CHRISTMAS 2026 AD EFFECTIVENESS

RED C DIRECT AD TESTING RESULTS - UK

25TH NOVEMBER 2026

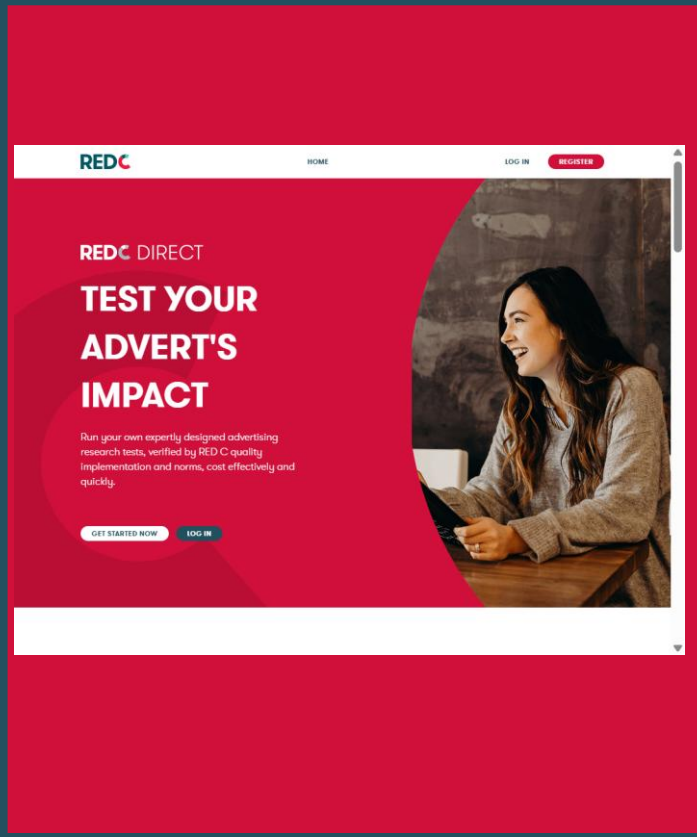




We used RED C Direct to test ten Christmas ads in the UK

- Ads were tested using our DIY Online platform RED C Direct
- 10 ads tested in UK
- Using RED Star ad effectiveness model, we measured effectiveness on a range of metrics including:
  - Creativity
  - Emotional Response
  - Emotional Impact
  - Brand impact
  - Distinctiveness
  - Fame
- Ads are compared to our norm database of over 3,000 adverts tested over the past 10 years

www.redcdirect.com



The RED Star test measures what makes advertising effective

Creativity

Future desire to see this ad again

"Creativity helps drive long-term business success, providing a powerful antidote to the short-term nature of so much activity today."

Peter Field

Distinctiveness

It was clear who the ad was for

"We live in a constant state of 'zombie'. So attention to ads is not sustained and certainly not undivided. This means it's vital your ad at the very least drives brand connections"

Karen Nelson-Field

Fame

How likely you were to share or talk about the ad

"Fame is the driver of successful advertising and a social construct. It emerges from the interactions between people, the media, and each other."

Paul Feldwick

Emotional Response

The emotional response to the ad

"The more emotional a response to an ad is, the bigger the long term impact of the ad."

Binet & Field

UK CHRISTMAS 2026 AD EFFECTIVENESS

RED Star ad test ensures emotion is at the heart of testing

Building on years of communications testing experience and rigorous analysis, RED C devised RED STAR (Structured Test of Advertising Response) to measure and evaluate brand communication.

We can compare ads to a comprehensive UK & Irish benchmark database (3,000+ ads) for advertising performance, with norms available for a wide range of sectors, and branding & tactical ads.

RED Star can be used across media and channels including TV, Radio, Print, Online (VOD & static), and OOH

EXAMPLE RED STAR OUTPUT:

65 (+8)

Connection metrics

Allows you to understand creativity and distinctiveness of the advert

45 (-7)

Affection Metrics

Provides core instinctive emotional response and fame reaction to comms



STAR INDEX
One number rating gives clear direction

All measures can be compared to overall and within category norm database

50 (-10)

Brand Impact Metrics

Delivers the ultimate emotional and rational impact of the comms

Key	
⬚	Overall norm
( )	vs. overall norms

RED C Direct Christmas Results 2026





What makes Christmas advertising work best in 2026

1

Emotion works hardest when the brand owns it

The strongest ads combine warmth and entertainment with clear brand attribution and impact

2

Established assets provide a head start

Familiar characters and slogans provide a powerful platform for effective storytelling

3

Attention alone does not guarantee effectiveness

Talkability can be positive or negative. It should translate into emotional connection, brand impact or a reason to choose for stronger effectiveness

2026's strongest Christmas ads turn festive emotion and entertainment into meaningful impact for the brand





M&S returns to form by successfully combining the magic and warmth people want from a Christmas ad with humour, star power and desirable products, creating something that is highly emotional, entertaining and distinctively M&S



REDC

M&S takes the Christmas crown by combining festive warmth and entertainment with unmistakable brand appeal

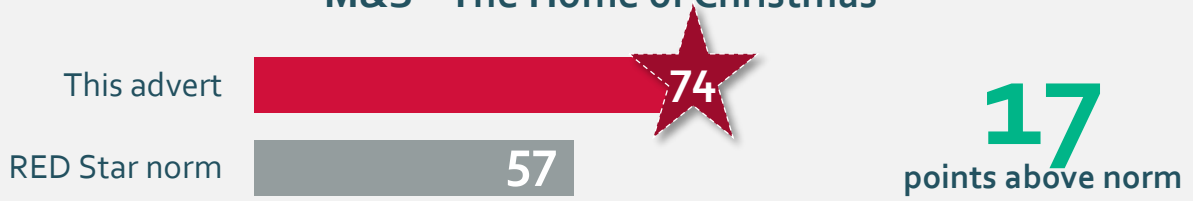
#1



"I love the fun, cheeky adult element to it. It made me feel festive, excited and engaged in the ad. I thought it was a great choice of song, that went well with the storyline. The celebrity/characters was a clever move from M&S."

RED STAR SCORE

M&S – The Home of Christmas



17 points above norm

Traffic Jamming 2025: 62; The Christmas make-over 2024: 74

OVERVIEW OF PERFORMANCE

	Fame	Emotional Response	Distinctiveness	Emotional Brand Impact	Rational Brand Impact
	83	95	64	73	74
Norm	35	69	49	59	62

+5 or more points **above** the norm / -5 or more points **below** the norm

Familiar festive assets provide a powerful platform for fresh stories, building emotion while keeping the brand front of mind



Sainsbury's delivers Christmas magic through a nostalgic, feel-good story that brings everyone to the table

=#2



"The BFG is a beloved and nostalgic character, it feels warm and recognisable for this Christmas advert. The animation is fantastic, giant country looks nice and full of wonder. The message that good food connects everyone, even giants, is inclusive. It balances storytelling and showing off the festive food range really well."

RED STAR SCORE

Sainsbury's – Sainsbury's Big Delivery

This advert	69
RED Star norm	57

12 points above norm

BFG The Unexpected Guest; 2025: 69 BFG 2024: 71

OVERVIEW OF PERFORMANCE

	Fame	Emotional Response	Distinctiveness	Emotional Brand Impact	Creativity
	73	88	62	69	71
Norm	35	69	49	59	64

+5 or more points **above** the norm / -5 or more points **below** the norm

Kevin continues to prove his value as a distinctive Aldi asset, driving instant brand recognition alongside festive warmth and fun

=#2



> "It's instantly recognisable with their Christmas characters, it has a lovely story compacted into a short time frame and also manages to showcase the varieties of things you can get from Aldi this Christmas."

RED STAR SCORE

Aldi - Will it be a paw-fect Christmas?



12
points above norm

Kevin the Carrot Mission Impossible 2024: 71

OVERVIEW OF PERFORMANCE

	Fame	Distinctiveness	Emotional Response	Emotional Brand Impact	Rational Brand Impact
	61	68	87	68	67
Norm	35	49	69	59	62

+5 or more points **above** the norm / -5 or more points **below** the norm

Imaginative storytelling can engage people by creating emotion and talkability, but distinctive brand cues are needed to ensure the brand gets the credit



REDC

Playful Goldilocks twist gets people talking and delivers festive warmth, but could work harder to make Morrisons unmistakable

#4



"I think this is one of the best adverts I have seen, love the way the bears get going when they know their son is visiting for Christmas, then he arrives with his girlfriend. Only then realise it is Goldilocks and the Three Bears which makes me smile and it confirms to me that Christmas is all about family."

RED STAR SCORE

Morrisons – Christmas Made Just Right



10
points above norm

OVERVIEW OF PERFORMANCE

	Fame	Emotional Response	Emotional Brand Impact	Rational Brand Impact	Distinctiveness
	68	86	69	68	49
Norm	35	69	59	62	49

+5 or more points **above** the norm / -5 or more points **below** the norm

A magical, uplifting Christmas story captures hearts, but weak brand connection limits its impact for The National Lottery

#8



> "It shows a beautiful, cinematic snowy landscape, feels magical and festive. The reindeer is charming, the twist with the couple checking their ticket is warm and hopeful. It could be you message feels uplifting and relatable."

> "I genuinely had no idea what it was advertising till it told me that it was for the lottery."

RED STAR SCORE

The National Lottery – The Reindeer Who Believed



2
points above norm

OVERVIEW OF PERFORMANCE

	Emotional Response	Fame	Creativity	Rational Brand Impact	Distinctiveness
	83	48	69	60	42
Norm	69	35	64	62	49

+5 or more points **above** the norm / -5 or more points **below** the norm

A familiar brand promise can become a powerful creative asset when it’s brought to life through the story



Tesco returns to form in 2026, getting people talking with a heartwarming story that brings ‘Every Little Helps’ to life

#5



“It is heartwarming, obviously the two women had fallen out sometime in the past and the Tesco delivery brought them back together especially with the Tesco driver going above and beyond to help the customer. ”

RED STAR SCORE

Tesco – Because this Christmas, every little helps



That’s what makes it Christmas 2025: 47; Gingerbread 2024: 57

OVERVIEW OF PERFORMANCE

	Fame	Distinctiveness	Emotional Response	Emotional Brand Impact	Rational Brand Impact
	72	71	77	62	59
Norm	35	49	69	59	62

+5 or more points **above** the norm / -5 or more points **below** the norm

Iconic assets continue to build powerful recognition, while emotional engagement depends on how they are brought to life



REDC

CHRISTMAS 2026 AD EFFECTIVENESS

Coca-Cola's iconic Christmas assets remain unmistakable, but this year's new execution is less emotionally engaging

#6



"I liked the familiar Christmas music and the festive atmosphere. It always gives me that feeling that Christmas is just around the corner."

"This felt like AI with the slow mo on the weirdly smiling people. I have much preferred when Coca Cola film actual vans travelling and real people."

RED STAR SCORE

Coca-Cola – Refresh your holiday spirit AI



5 points above norm

Holidays are coming AI 2025: 72; Holidays are coming AI 2024: 74

OVERVIEW OF PERFORMANCE

	Distinctiveness	Fame	Creativity	Emotional Brand Impact	Rational Brand Impact
	83	55	62	55	55
Norm	49	35	64	59	62

+5 or more points **above** the norm / -5 or more points **below** the norm

Emotional response remains in line with norms (70) but has fallen sharply from 2025 (94). Coca-Cola's iconic Christmas assets continue to deliver strong recognition, but this year's execution connects less strongly emotionally, with AI visuals adding to the challenge

Festive storytelling works harder when it gives people a reason to choose the product



Festive charm and strong brand recognition land well, but Thatchers could give the product more of a starring role

#7



> "I loved the animation and the warm vibe of it. The snow and the music, festive but not cheesy."

> "It doesn't really tell me anything about the product."

RED STAR SCORE

Thatchers – Saving Tasting Time this Christmas



3
points above norm

OVERVIEW OF PERFORMANCE

	Distinctiveness	Fame	Emotional Response	Creativity	Rational Brand Impact
	60	45	76	66	59
Norm	49	35	69	64	62

+5 or more points **above** the norm / -5 or more points **below** the norm

Talkability creates opportunity, but conversation only has value when it builds positive feeling towards the brand



Boots brings energy and humour to Christmas gifting, but the over-the-top execution is polarising, limiting emotional and brand impact

#9



"I liked how playful and funny the advert was. It showed the excitement of giving and receiving Christmas presents in a way that was entertaining."

"A bit annoying as the reactions to presents were a bit over the top and silly."

RED STAR SCORE

Boots – Give it some Boots



Puss in Boots 2025: 64

4 points below norm

OVERVIEW OF PERFORMANCE

	Fame	Distinctiveness	Emotional Brand Impact	Creativity	Emotional Response
	49	57	52	52	52
Norm	35	49	59	64	69

+5 or more points **above** the norm / -5 or more points **below** the norm

JOHN LEWIS

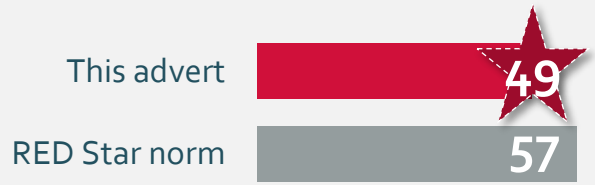
#10



John Lewis gets people talking, but a divisive family story weakens emotional connection and relevance to the brand

RED STAR SCORE

John Lewis – Gloria and Pickles



-8
points below norm

Where Love Lives 2025: 52; The Gifting Hour 2024: 51

OVERVIEW OF PERFORMANCE

	Fame	Creativity	Emotional Brand Impact	Rational Brand Impact	Emotional Response
	65	54	45	46	48
Norm	35	64	59	62	69

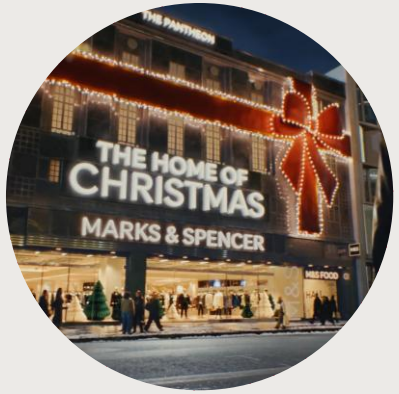
+5 or more points **above** the norm / -5 or more points **below** the norm

> "The ad was filled with so much negativity and such an unbelievable family dynamic that I found the whole thing off-putting, and I'm not sure what the present at the end was supposed to be."

> "I like the concept of a Grandma trying to be closer to her grandchildren and giving a special gift rather than money."

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How to make Christmas ads work harder for your brand



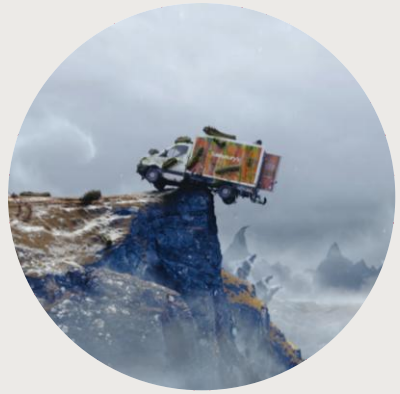
Create feeling, but make sure the brand owns it

Emotion is most valuable when viewers immediately know who the ad is for and the positive response transfers back to the brand.



Familiar assets can build powerful recognition and engagement

Kevin, the BFG and "Every Little Helps" demonstrate the value of established brand assets, while Coca-Cola shows that how those assets are brought to life can shape the emotional response.



Give entertainment a commercial purpose

Talkability and festive charm are not endpoints. The creative should leave people feeling better about the brand or with a clearer reason to choose its products.

THANK YOU

Please visit
www.redcdirect.com
to test your advertising effectiveness against the norms


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