

Savanta:

# Planning for In-Season Success



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make better decisions.



# It's never too early to think about Christmas!

If you're a marketer, that is. As a shopper, you might feel quite differently and there is a time when mentions of Christmas, baubles, carols and mince pies are a definite no-no! But for marketers, understanding when the tipping point occurs is critical to a successful in-season campaign.

For marketers, preparing for in-season - Christmas or any other key trading season for their category - can be a year-round job because the stakes are so high. Whilst the [Centre for Retail Research](#) estimates that gift spending was 9% down in 2020, Christmas Season sales were still predicted to be **£73.5 billion**. And assuming we can safely shop in store and meet loved ones this Christmas, spending will most likely be on the rise.

It's all to play for and we, as shoppers and marketers, tend to focus on what retailers are doing, but in-season is a key trading period for manufacturers across many categories. Music, books, electronics, perfume, jewellery, clothing, alcohol and food all see a sharp increase in spending at Christmas and all need to plan their marketing strategy accordingly.



# Some would argue it's not Christmas until the John Lewis ad airs!

It's no wonder that brands and retailers in particular, put so much attention into their Christmas ads with the unveiling of the ad a bigger and bigger event each year. Some would argue it's not Christmas until the John Lewis ad airs!

**Whilst advertising expenditure was down 7.2% in 2020 to £23.4billion, Christmas ad spend was forecast to have fallen by 10.25%.**

However, social media ad spend doubled across 2020 compared to 2019 and is expected to scale to new heights in 2021.

Each year the marketing community goes a bit crazy reviewing, commenting on and betting on the best and worst in-season ads. I'm not sure non-marketers are as interested in dissecting these ads, but there is no doubt they have an impact on brand engagement, footfall and ultimately sales.

Advertising agency AMV BBDO estimates that every £1 spent on Christmas advertising can create a £24 profit.

There is much discussion about the creatives, focussing on the emotional engagement or lack of, as well as obtaining the right balance of featuring brand and product, which is hugely important.

**The first airing of a brand's Christmas ad is carefully planned but, again, we don't talk as much about media planning overall.**

- Which channels offer the best ROI?
- When to start your in-season campaign?
- How to activate ATL and BTL channels most effectively?
- How to carry the campaign through to point of sale?

You could have the best in-season creative in the world, but if the right people don't see it, it will have no impact. Media planning and activation campaigns must work hand in hand with the creatives for in-season success.



# Keys to successful in-season planning and how we can help

In theory, it's easy. It's marketing 101. You just need to deliver the right message to the right people at the right time and place, right? In practice, it's a bit more complicated!

## Do you know who to talk to?

Understanding who is involved in in-season purchase decision-making and the gifter/giftee dynamics is key in order to meet each group's needs.

The difference between shopper and consumer is more acute in-season when brands need to target both the consumer/giftee to generate interest and hopefully requests or at least provide subtle hints as to what they would like to see under the tree, versus the shopper/gifter who will eventually make the purchase decision. Who should brands talk to? Should there be different messages and communication strategies for different groups?

## With Savanta you can:

- Identify who the decision makers and decision influencers are and who to target
- Outline who has more weight in decisions and who to focus efforts convincing
- Explore who makes each of the decisions and tailor messages around what matters most to each group

## Do you know when to start in-season messaging?

**Pinpoint when in-season behaviour starts, in-season thinking time as much as purchase time, to be able to influence those early considerations and extend the purchase season.**

Understanding when children start expressing wishes, when Secret Santa season starts, or when families discuss the pros and cons of a traditional Christmas dinner (yes, there are cons!) is key to planning in-season marketing activities. It is the prime time for brands to influence early purchase decisions. Understanding the role of Black Friday on purchase behaviours for your category will also be critical to the promotional strategy for years to come.

### With Savanta you can:

- Pinpoint when purchase considerations start and when to start your in-season campaign
- Highlight the different in-season phases (inspiration, research, purchase), to ensure messages and activities are relevant
- Understand the role of Black Friday and what it means for ranging and discount strategy
- Explore when in-season messaging is appropriate and when it's not

## Do you know which touch-points to invest in?

**Identify the touch-points to be used in order to gauge how influential they are when targeting key groups, at the time it matters the most.**

As purchase decisions tend to take longer and competition is often fiercer, the path to purchase is even more fragmented during the Christmas period. Consequently, there are more touch-points serving different purposes to help boost engagement across different audiences.

### With Savanta you can:

- Understand which touch-points are used for different purposes to ensure the relevant messages are shown at each touch-point
- Quantify which touch-points have the most influence on brand purchase decisions, to ensure marketing resources are allocated where ROI will be highest

## Do you know what decision drivers to leverage?

**Understand what triggers interest, consideration or conversion for effective messages and creatives.**

Messaging is key, this goes without saying, but in-season brings its own sets of challenges. For global brands, is a global brand message appropriate, or should local traditions be reflected? And when does it become appropriate to include Christmas messages and creatives? For each touch-point, is it about brand building, consideration or is it about conversion?

**With Savanta you can:**

- Understand how needs and decision drivers change throughout the season and which can be leveraged through messaging to drive the desired outcome
- Highlight where brand versus product messaging would be more beneficial
- Explore the benefits of global versus local campaigns for different desired outcomes



## Do you know how people are engaging with your advertising campaign?

### Create ads that drive profitability.

Every major study in advertising effectiveness shows that TV plays a key role in maximising effectiveness for brands providing high ROI.

Creative execution is the biggest factor driving advertising profitability that marketers can influence. This means that optimising your creative can potentially multiply your brand's profits. It is critical therefore to achieve the best possible execution of your TV campaign.

### With Savanta you can:

- Pinpoint how strongly the ad communicates at an implicit as well as more rational level
- Identify those creative elements which positively influence your brand
- Demonstrate and quantify the potential payback of each improvement to your advert

## Can you translate it all into a global and local in-season plan?

### Enabling all stakeholders to sing from the same hymn sheet.

Brand marketing, media planning, creative agency, trade marketing, category management, global versus local marketing... a lot of departments and stakeholders will have different views, objectives and hypotheses, sometimes similar, sometimes conflicting. Making sure all stakeholders understand how their different parts work together will ensure a more integrated and therefore more effective campaign.

### With Savanta you can:

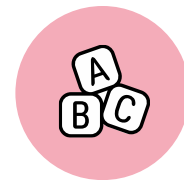
- Engage stakeholders to delve into the implications for their area but also work collaboratively on designing integrated campaigns across markets/channels/categories etc.
- Create a play-book for in-season success plotting activities across the season
- For all activities, include who to target, which touch-point(s), what message(s) and desired outcome



# Our Work In Action

## CASE STUDY

### Developing a global in-season marketing plan



A leading toy manufacturer, wanted to understand the adult/children dynamics around the ‘in-season’ period in order to develop both a global and individual market strategy, highlighting key touch-points and messaging to engage relevant audiences throughout season – with a focus on the 12 weeks leading to Christmas.

We combined an online community with a weekly quantitative tracking study and a final post-event survey to track and explore attitudes and behaviours over the three months and uncover which impacted purchase decisions the most.

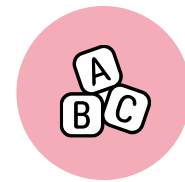
We were then able to develop detailed strategy timelines highlighting how to influence consideration and trigger purchase and crucially when communication and specific touch-points should be activated; mapping out activation plans at a global and market level.



# Our Work In Action

## CASE STUDY

### Tweaking in-season activation in the moment



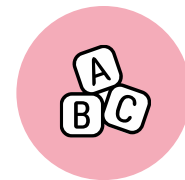
A major high street department store wanted to explore how their key shopper segments shopped at Christmas, in order to identify opportunities within each segment for the long-term, but also to test ideas and implement “quick wins” immediately.

We set up an online community with shoppers’ representatives of their segments for three weeks in the run-up to Christmas. Interactivity was key to this project’s success. Access to the community and real-time feedback allowed our client to engage stakeholders and debunk some myths ahead of the final results, but also helped some very specific operational decisions to be made quickly. It also allowed them to adapt in-store activation activities and emailing campaigns within a few days of testing.

# Our Work In Action

CASE STUDY

## Creating new gifting occasions at Easter



Our client, a toy manufacturer, wanted to leverage a growing trend of buying toys as well as chocolate for Easter. As this was a relatively new occasion for toys, they wanted to test their in-store activation material to make sure they had the tone right, in order to increase penetration without damaging the brand.

As the toy category was not strongly associated with Easter yet, the campaign needed to deliver on strong stand-out and clear message (a toy for Easter). This is why we used eye-tracking to test overall stand-out of the posters, as well as identifying the creatives and messages that caught people's attention and resonated the most. As a result, we were able to advise on the best creatives to take forward in order to create strong call to action, while keeping to the brand image and the occasion traditional imagery.

## Our approach to in-season research

We have developed flexible methodologies to capture in-season behaviour and test current activation in order to optimise planning and marketing budget for the current season and the ones to come.

All our solutions are bespoke, but draw on our extensive experience of shopper research across a variety of categories and for key trading periods (Christmas, Easter etc.)

Our research and data science expertise enables us to apply the best methodologies to each in season challenge.



### Julian Dailly

EVP,  
Consumer

Julian leads the Consumer practice at Savanta providing oversight and guidance to the team, ensuring clients receive the best possible service.

Julian specialises in advising on linking commercial aspects of consumer brands to their research.

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### Julie Vigne

Director

Julie has worked on understanding customer experience and purchase decisions across a wide range of categories and markets since joining Savanta. Julie's experience spans path to purchase, purchase decisions, category development and in-store activation for a variety of FMCG, toy, and jewellery clients.

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### Mark Pingol

Vice-President

Mark has over 20 years' experience leading projects for a wide variety of clients to help them shape and influence behavior through understanding what people think and the context in which decisions are made. He has extensive experience conducting large, global mixed methods projects that include ethnographic and implicit approaches.

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### Lisa Fourie

Director,  
Client Development

Lisa leads client development for our Consumer practice, bringing together the full range of Savanta's methodological and sector expertise to design optimal solutions for each client. Lisa's background is in management consultancy and strategic marketing specializing in branded goods and experiences.

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