

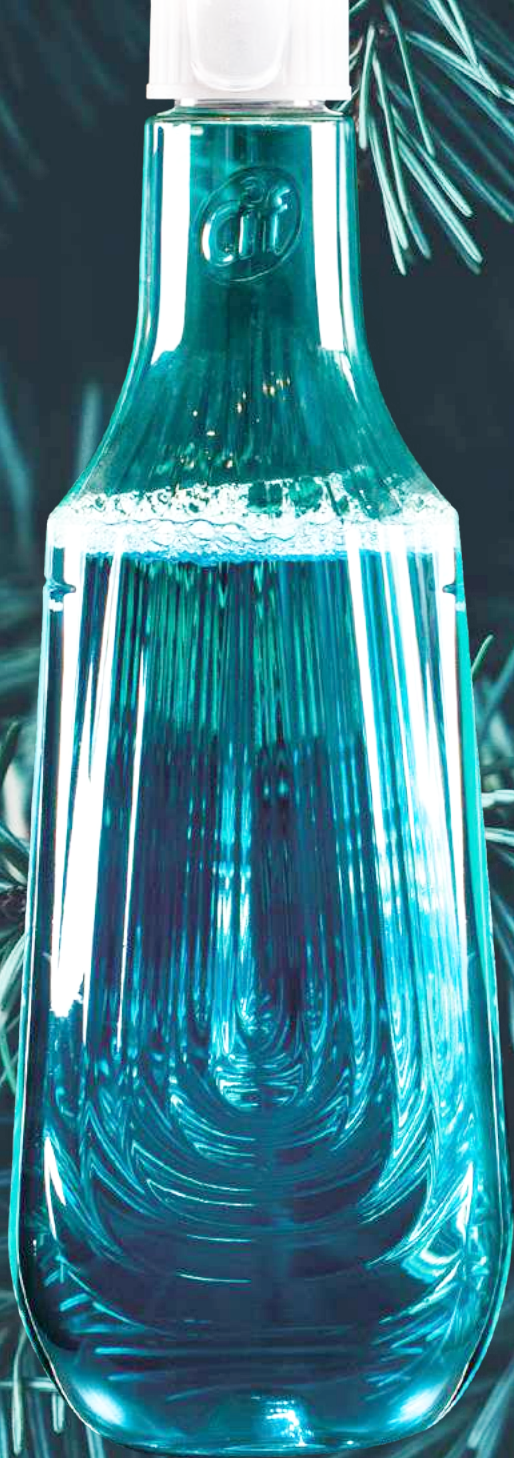
The background of the entire page is a vibrant red color, covered with a repeating pattern of white starburst or sunburst designs. Each starburst consists of numerous thin white lines radiating from a central point, creating a festive, holiday-like atmosphere.

cue

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE FROM IHO

Yule love it!

07



A bottle for life. Not just for Christmas.

The Cif beautiful bottle design is a big step towards a more sustainable future.
Keep it and refill it using the eco-refill pods designed specially for it.

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Comms of Christmas past.



Presents past

What the toys that topped Christmas Lists over the last 50 years have to say about changing times and evolving tastes.



PRESENT

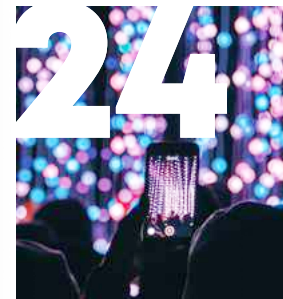
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Contributors



Andrew Collins

Chief Strategy Officer
1HQ UK

After an early career as a client-side marketer, Andrew's agency experience has focussed on positioning, innovation and design for FMCG businesses and brands. Amongst the challenges faced have been the evolution and adaptation of heritage brands to changing markets and consumer tastes, as well as the demands on global brands to accommodate local nuances and needs.



Rhona O'Leary

Senior Creative
Comms Designer
1HQ UK

Since formally training as a product and structural designer, Rhona has built over 10 years' experience in brand and communications design, with in-depth knowledge across artwork and print, bolstering her passion for advertising as part of 1HQ Comms team.



Andy Kirk

Design Strategy Director
1HQ UK

Andy has built and guided creative strategies for global FMCG brands including Lipton and Hellmann's for Unilever and Tuborg and Super Bock for Carlsberg. He created Somersby Cider and KP Space Raiders and was co-founder of Tynan D'Arcy and Nineyards. He is an active advocate for brand personality, identifying what it is, what it means and translating it into real character so that brands come to life with a story worth hearing and seeing. Andy is a writer, author and lecturer in Brand Strategy.



Graham Wall

Executive Creative Director
1HQ UK

Graham has lived and breathed the world of brand design and beyond, for nearly 3 decades, he's moulded, shifted, created, challenged and charged hundreds of brands from power tools to pea protein. Inspiring the global creative team, by guiding and leading by example, cutting through the pretentious and proud to just say it how it is. Passionate to pass on his experience to the next generation of creative talent.



Bas van Herten

Managing Director
1HQ AMSTERDAM

Bas built his career working in leading brand, design and communications agencies in London, Sydney and Amsterdam. Through his involvement with multinationals including Unilever, Mondelez and FrieslandCampina he has gained in-depth experience with both local and global brand challenges in the FMCG category. Passionate about brands with purpose and their power to shape and deliver deep and engaging consumer experiences, Bas now leads the Amsterdam studio for 1HQ.



Amelia Boothman

Brand & Innovation
Strategy Director
1HQ UK

Amelia utilises her degree in Experimental Psychology to unlock cultural codes, signs and symbols from the unconscious using semiotic methods and qualitative projective analysis. With over 20 years' experience in this area, Amelia is passionate about harnessing the latest and most relevant trends and uncovering emotional drivers to enable brands to become more meaningful.



Rhona O'Leary

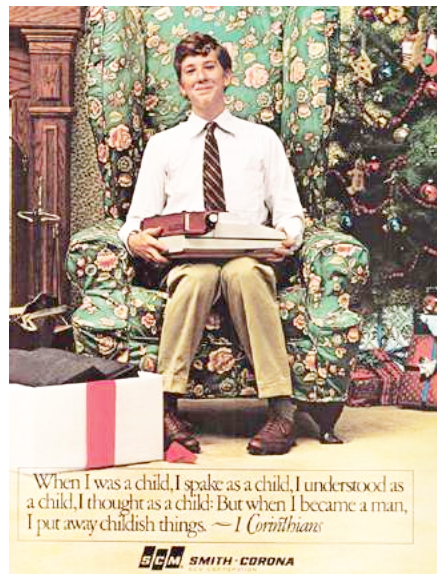
Senior Creative Comms Designer - 1HQ UK

Vintage ad-vent

In simpler times, before Elton's piano and a trampolining dog came to stand for everything we could wish for, Christmas ads sold stuff. How quaint...



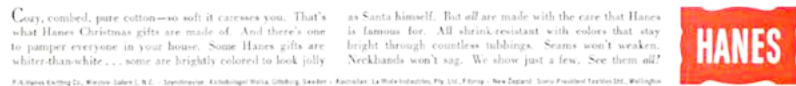
► **Daddy not included.**



► **For the sensible type.**



► **Because nothing says 'I love you' like spoons.**



A black and white photograph of a young boy lying in bed, looking up at a Christmas tree in a dimly lit room. The boy is in the foreground, partially covered by a blanket, with his head resting on a pillow. He is looking towards a Christmas tree on the left side of the frame. The room is dark, with light coming from a window in the background, creating a soft glow. A chair is visible near the window. The overall mood is quiet and contemplative.

What do you give a bed-wetter for Christmas?

All the wonderful gifts all children love—plus one thing more. The gift of a dry bed forever after. Pacific Research International is the largest organization of its kind in the world. During the past 15 years, we've helped tens of thousands to stop bed-wetting. Safely. Permanently. We can help your child, too, providing the bed-wetting isn't caused by organic defect or disease. This year give your child a merry Christmas and a very dry new year.

► Nightmares?



► **Ok! I'll peel the sprouts...
just put the gun down.**



► **The present that really sucks.**



► Fresh from Santa's sack.



► **Have you met Derek's latest bird?**

Presents past

1952

1976

1981

1984

1992

2001

2014

2019



Andrew Collins

Chief Strategy Officer - 1HQ UK

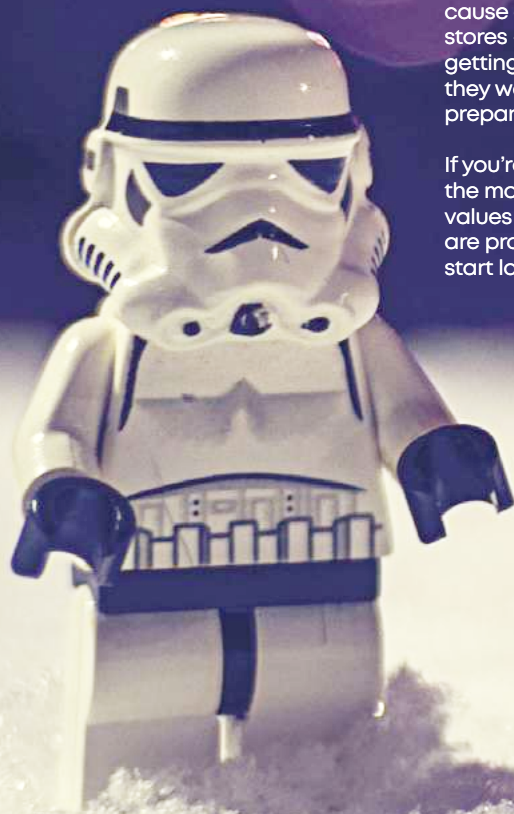
Boppi the Booty Shakin Llama, makes it to several of this year's must-have Christmas toy lists. With three different tunes to twerk and spin to, this battery-powered camelid is described as 'adorable, hilarious and good fun for all the family'... to which hard-pressed parents across the country will respond 'ask me on Boxing Day.'

As electronic pets go, Boppi is relatively unsophisticated, with none of the developmental capabilities of its Furby or Tamagotchi forebears – but it does point to a technology-

facilitated trend towards toys doing more, so kids don't have to. Compare the sedentary joy of watching a dancing llama with the effort that owners of the original Mr Potato Head had to go. When launched in 1952, heads were not included. Instead, children had to find their own potato in which to insert the famous facial features. This left open the potential for other vegetables to be pressed into service – although it's debatable whether Mr Cabbage Head would have taken off in the same way.

It seems then, that growing sophistication may have come at the expense of imaginative play. Even the perennial champion of dream-it-yourself creativity, Lego, has had to move with the times. Through the 1970's and 80's, it continued to emphasise the endless possibilities that could be built from the basic brick. But things look very different today – with a child's imagination limited only by their interest in Hogwarts or the Millennium Falcon and Dad's ability to decipher the instructions. >>>

This leads neatly to another key theme in the cross-over between toys and film and TV franchises. Star Wars, Ghost Busters, High School Musical, Toy Story, and Frozen have all spun-off into best-sellers, proving there's nothing like screen-time to stoke demand for play-time. But it's not all been one-way traffic with popular toys and games including Dungeons & Dragons, Masters of the Universe and Transformers all making the leap from shelf to screen.



These cross-overs have often played a starring role in another modern phenomenon: the Christmas Craze. Characterised by intense spikes in demand, limited supply and insanely inflated prices, the Christmas Craze is every parent's worst nightmare – and frequently hair-raising for retailers too. As one shop-worker, caught up in a stampede for Tickle Me Elmo's in 1996 reported: 'I was pulled under, trampled – the crotch ripped out of my brand-new jeans... I was kicked with a white Adidas before I became unconscious'. Likewise, in 2014, Frozen Elsa dolls were the cause of fist-fights breaking out in stores – proving that in pursuit of getting the little ones exactly what they want, parents are no longer prepared to let it go.

If you're hoping for a reminder of the more wholesome, innocent values of Christmas gift giving, dolls are probably not the best place to start looking. Contrast the

most popular choices of the 1980's and 1990's and their 21st Century sisters. In 1983 and 1984, Strawberry Shortcake and the Cabbage Patch Kids charmed us with their dimples, bonnets and pinafores. By 1992, Barbie's Weekend Denim ensemble represented more grown-up tastes – but was still a girl you'd introduce to your mother with a clear conscience. And then, in 2001, a bomb went off in the peculiar shape of Jasmin, Chloe, Jade and Sasha. According to their manufacturers, the Bratz girls represented core values of 'friendship, hair play and a passion for fashion.' Parents' groups and the American Psychological Association amongst others, thought otherwise – raising concerns about the doll's 'adult-like sexuality'. Whatever your views on the controversy, it's striking how the signature Bratz look, with its over-sized eyes, exaggerated

lips and vanishing noses, was so wildly popular a decade before a legion of Instagram accounts followed suit.

So, what about boy's toys (if gender specificity isn't an outmoded concept)? From Action Man and GI Joe, through Darth Vader, Mutant Ninja Turtles and on to the Skylanders, action figures have been a staple favourite. Light sabres and Nerf guns also make an appearance. All of which confirms that boys are never happier than when fighting in one form or another. A less aggressive character, Stretch Armstrong, was a hit in 1976. Bizarre as it may sound, the key feature of Stretch (indeed the only feature) was that he was extremely stretchy. This adds 'a man with very long arms' to the list of boys' heroes – but doesn't do much for the reputation of the male intellect. >>>

The exercise of brain power generally hasn't been a popular requirement for top-selling toys – with the notable exception of the Rubik's Cube in 1981 and before that, in 1974, the board game Risk. What today's kids would make of a map-based game of Napoleonic power-politics, is anyone's guess. They would almost certainly be mystified to know they could start a game on Sunday afternoon and still be waiting for a result by bed-time on Tuesday. Who can blame them then, for preferring the instant and very much more lively gratification of the GameBoy, Wii and Playstation?

But are they missing something? In the progress from Mr Potato Head to Boppi the Lama, and from Risk to the immersive thrill of computer games, have the virtues of simplicity, innocence and the imagination been sacrificed?

It's tempting to cast the past in a rose-tinted glow – and all too easy to persuade ourselves that things were better in our day. Doing so rather misses the point, however. Because as toys change, expectations do too – and that's a tide you can't hold back. Not convinced? Then ask yourself how you would have felt if instead of that BMX you were desperate for, your parents had got you a penny-farthing?

Some things are slower to change, though. Looking back at top-selling toys from the 1960's until today, an almost universally common ingredient is plastic. Given the contemporary demonisation of the material, could this be a catalyst for a return to more traditional play-times? Possibly. But you wonder if a cardboard-booty-shakin' Boppi will have quite the same appeal. **Q**

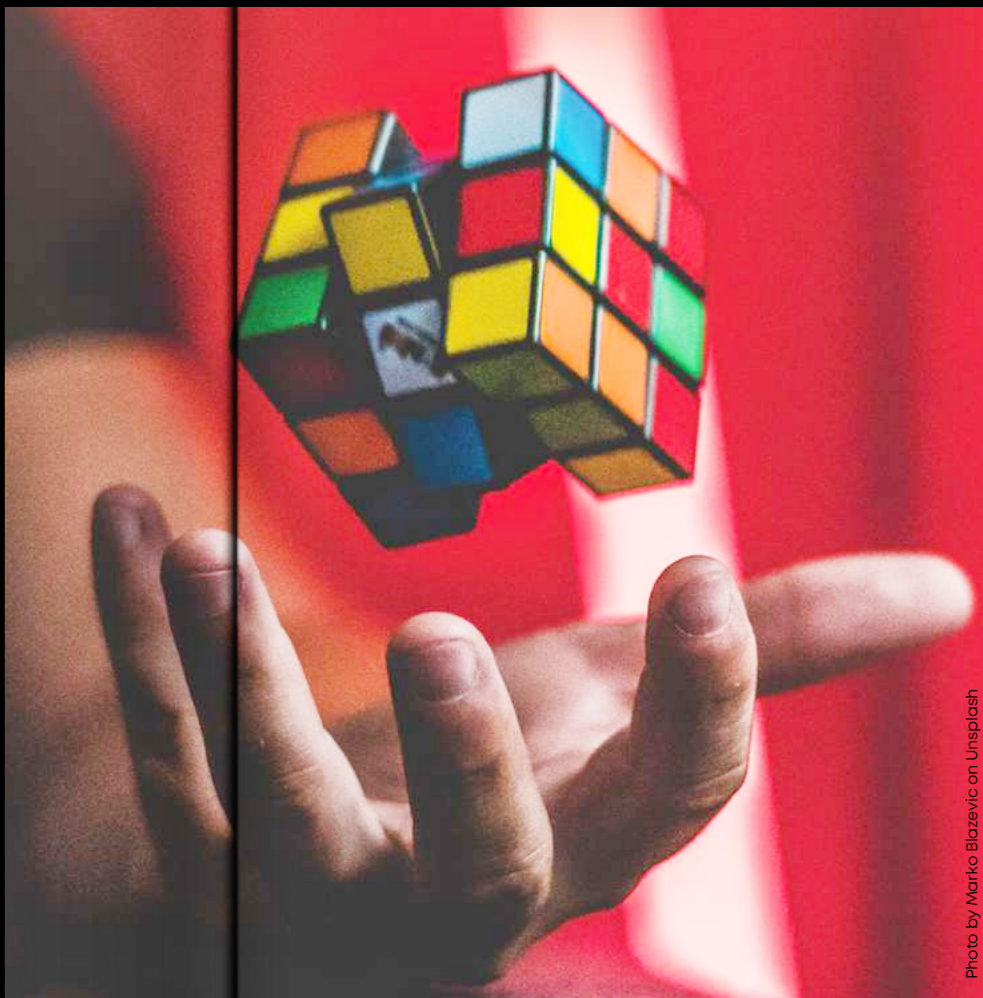


Photo by Marko Blazevic on Unsplash

**Bas van Herten**

Managing Director - IHC Amsterdam

Lessons from Sinterklaas

Similar to Christmas, we have a lovely tradition in the Netherlands where on the 5th of December we celebrate Sinterklaas. And like Christmas everywhere else in the world, it involves getting together, singing and lots of eating. But most importantly it involves presents. Especially for the littlest ones.

Isn't it funny that no child ever questions just exactly how these presents end up in their homes, at exactly the right time and (in our case) with a personal poem. And neither should they, as it would simply spoil the magic of the moment.

This got me thinking about the importance of providing a thoughtful and seamless experience as a brand. More and more we demand that products and services are delivered where, when and how we'd like. This direct to consumer (DTC) expectation is simply a prerequisite for staying in business nowadays. In that context, Sinterklaas or Santa were true pioneers.

Let's interrogate the Sinterklaas brand and see if it adheres to our 3 best practice principles of DTC trade. >>>

DTC PRINCIPLES

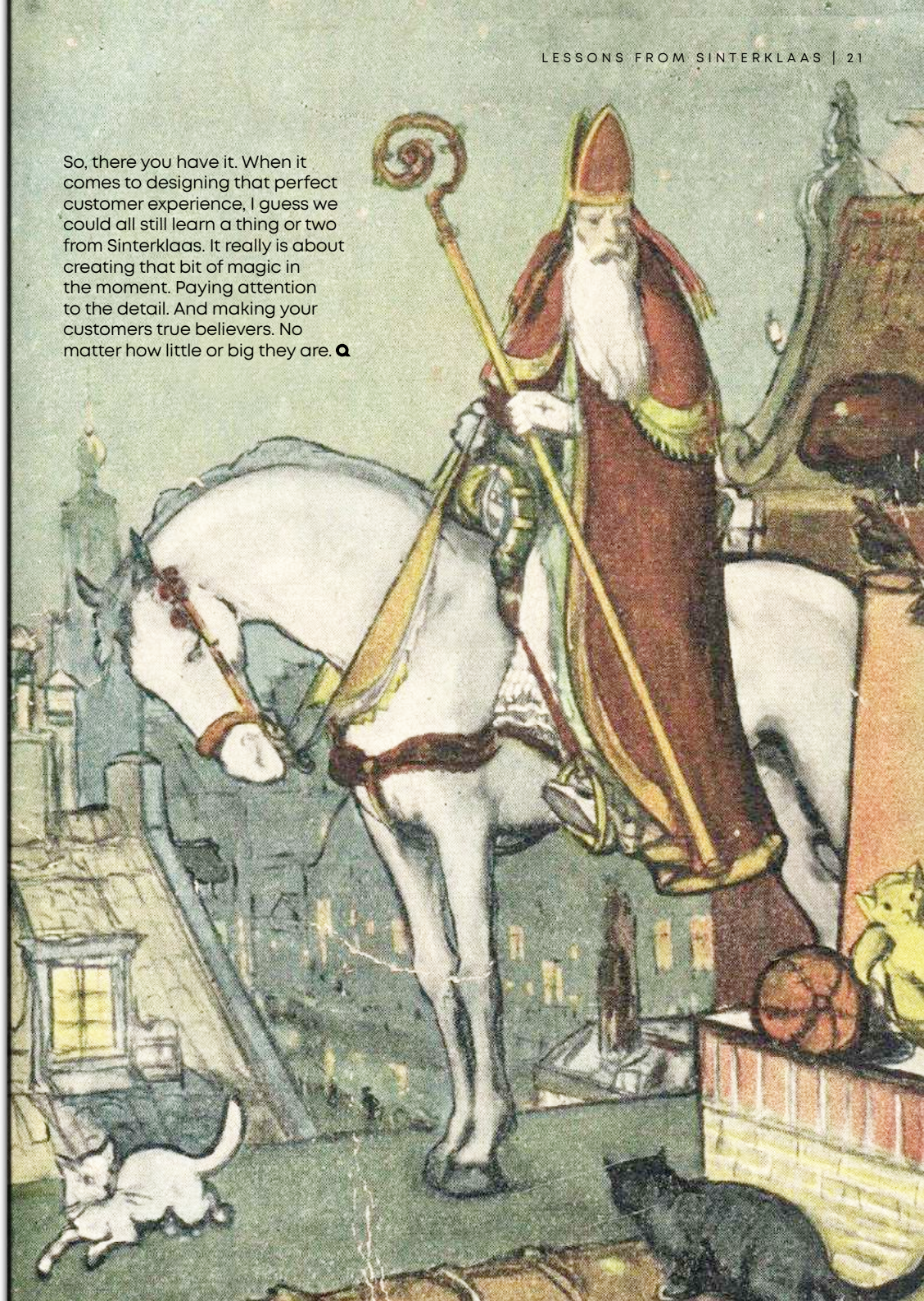
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First of all, we should look for the signs of an engaging story and strong brand identity. Well, I guess that is a tick, it doesn't become more engaging than a mythical hero dressed in red and with an entourage to turn one of the darkest days of the year into a true collective celebration.

Secondly, does Sinterklaas smartly use social and alternative media to build a community of believers? Absolutely, in the truest sense of the word Sinterklaas is one big social media event. From the start of November onwards it gains media momentum right up to the main event.

And finally, how about the overall experience? Is it convenient, direct, data driven? Of course, there is very little left to ask for if you get exactly what you had on your wish list of presents, beautifully wrapped and hand delivered, at the perfect time, on your door step.

So, there you have it. When it comes to designing that perfect customer experience, I guess we could all still learn a thing or two from Sinterklaas. It really is about creating that bit of magic in the moment. Paying attention to the detail. And making your customers true believers. No matter how little or big they are. **Q**



Two go beyond.



Graham Wall

Executive Creative Director - 1HQ UK

At the office Christmas party this year, a bit of magic happens when two individuals, who have noticed each other in the coffee queue but never spoken, suddenly start talking and discover a passion they both share, sparking something they never expected, pure rocket fuel, causing everyone around to stop and take notice, the unlikely and jaw dropping attraction of Sam from accounts and Brad from the creative team, who knew?

Introduce two brands in this way, and you have the power to launch brand and product experiences into the stratosphere of "I have to have that" or the "What just happened" space in time.

Compelling brand collaborations are happening all the time, most of them end up no more than just another exciting limited edition box, or the obvious co-branded piece of merch we all saw coming, however there are others where I can't help doffing my proverbial tweed cap to the creative director who pitched the impossible brand mash up and then had the balls not just to see it through, but to make it happen in such a way that both brands become suddenly and utterly desirable.

STAR WARS have a moment of pure C3PO gold in their hands now they've joined forces with Le Creuset. Now anyone who's anyone can have Han Solo frozen in the carbonite lid of their 33cm roasting dish.

SMEG got their voilà moment, with FIAT when together they created hands down the coolest object to chill your drinks in. The MADE IN ITALY FIAT 500 fridge begs you to lift the bonnet and grab another Peroni as your mates drool over its beauty, perfectly parked up in the corner of your decked rooftop terrace.

We're not just wondering what the next fantastic fusion will be. We're already approaching brands and saying "Is it enough to just pull off the next 'must have' trick by joining forces, or is there a more responsible and credible future partnership that can really change the world". **Q**



What's going on?

Stay inspired and up to date

LONDON
NEW YORK
AMSTERDAM
SINGAPORE

LONDON

01 The Great Christmas Feast

greatchristmasfeast.com
December 2019 – January 2020.

Somewhere in the City is a door that will lead you to the streets of Dickensian London and a spellbinding Victorian Christmas. As the night draws in you will be invited to take your seat in Dickens' study and embark on an interactive feast woven into the heart of the story of a Christmas Carol. A bewitching performance with stunning live music will unfold as you come face to face with Scrooge, the Ghost of Christmas Past and other famous characters.

02 Backyard Cinema

Capital Studios, 13 Wandsworth Plain, London, SW18 1ET.
Throughout December 2019.

Backyard Cinema started as a project in its founders' very own back garden. The concept has now grown to be one of the leading alternative cinema experiences in London and is the UK's only themed cinema. This Christmas, as well as showing your favourite seasonal films, Backyard Cinema are ready to transport you to two different multi-sensory worlds, complete with live music, artisan food stalls and drinks terrace. To find 'The Winter Night Garden' and 'The Snow Kingdom', you must uncover hidden entrances, navigate Narnia wardrobes, find secret passwords and explore the enchanted forest.

NEW YORK

03 Holiday Train Show

2900 Southern Boulevard Bronx.
Various dates December 2019 – January 2020.

All aboard for a magical childhood Christmas experience with an adult twist. Exclusively for over 21's, grab a festive tippie and prepare to be amazed. Step into a miniature NY city, with more than 175 scaled iconic buildings and 25 model trains that hum along a half-mile of track, all displayed under thousands of twinkling lights. Warm up around handcrafted fire pits, and enjoy ice carving performances, piano singalongs and DJ sets curated by Uptown Vinyl Supreme.

04 New York Road Runners Midnight Run

Central Park.
10pm onwards. 31 December 2019.

What better way to kick start your 2020 resolutions than with a four-mile run on New Year's Eve? Warm up at the pre-race show with live DJs and on-stage performances before setting off at the stroke of midnight. Runners can expect to begin their race in style with a firework display at the start and a sparking toast at the halfway mark. By taking part, not only can you compete for prize money, but you will also be supporting NYRR's free youth and community programs, helping to inspire people through running.

AMSTERDAM

06 Amsterdam Light Festival

Throughout the city.
28 November 2019 – 19 January 2020.

This 53-day long exhibition showcases new artists, art activities and light events both on and alongside the beautiful waters of Amsterdam. This year's theme, 'DISRUPT!' will showcase how disruption is able to provide a positive, vital motivation for change. Installations will transform the city's existing architecture to give us a fresh look at our surroundings. Along the route, look out for artworks interacting with places and building that have a connection with the theme, from large scale renovations and redevelopments, to stories of wars and riots.

06 Sprited Union

Spirited Union Distillery
Helicopterstraat 32, 1059 CG.

All we want for Christmas is... rum. As the first botanical rum distillery in the World, Spirited Union is on a quest to bring a new approach to rum, away from artificial aromas and sickly-sweet spirits. Give yourself and a friend the gift of a tour to see the distillation process as they extract natural botanical flavours. You can make your own personalised bottle and then taste a flight of different rum types in the lab.

SINGAPORE

01 Christmas Wonderland

Gardens by the Bay, 18 Marina Gardens.
29 November – 26 December 2019.

Gardens by the Bay becomes an even more magical place at Christmas time, complete with Yuletide favourites and festive fun for everyone. Experience 'snowfall' in the tropics, dazzling luminaire light sculptures, charming market stalls and carnival games. Take a magical trip to the North Pole to visit the all new Santa's Workshop or embark on a whimsical journey through the Nordic countries at the Poinsettia Wishes floral display.

08 Singapore Symphony Orchestra's Christmas Concert

Esplanade Concert Hall.
12 & 13 December 2019, 7.30pm.

Esplanade Concert Hall is one of the busiest arts centre in the world with around 3,000 performances presented yearly, inspiring audiences and cultivating the arts scene. For the first time, the Esplanade will host the Singapore Symphony Orchestra, who will perform a mix of much-loved Christmas music alongside modern classics. At this year's Christmas Concert, Joshua Tan will conduct a programme including excerpts from Handel's Messiah, John Williams' score for Home Alone, Tchaikovsky's The Nutcracker as well as music by John Rutter and Prokofiev.





Changing Christmas traditions

Spare some change for Christmas.



Andy Kirk

Design Strategy Director - IHQ UK

With a seemingly growing environmentally and philanthropically driven sensibility toward the Season of Goodwill (or 'Festival of Stuff', depending on your viewpoint), it feels like it's time for brands to find ways to create a better, future Christmas. Can we change - and is it only eco-gestures that need to be made to satisfy consumer attitudes?

Christmas is the ultimate representation of the Experience Economy, as we seek out new ways to celebrate it, or to break with tradition because we no longer want to be restricted by its timing, location, dishes or the company we feel obliged to keep.

There's a hunger for change for the 'Holidays', whether it's driven by anti-consumerism, anti-waste, animal revolution, or simply because everyone has at least one reason why they "hate" Christmas. This might not be driven by an ethical, moral or religious stance, it might simply be through being tired

of it all; we've developed a Seasonal Fatigue, an ennui that can make the festivities a drag, unless you happen to be very young, or capable of blocking out any mumbles of "Humbug".

Some will bemoan that we are just giving lip service to the background story. We're pretty quick to twist religious traditions to accommodate our immediate secular needs, like the 'third lobster' taking a bigger part of the action in the Nativity play, with the old stars taking a more supporting role, actually.

But there's absolutely nothing new about Christmas irreligion. In fact, it's almost been totally banned in the past because of paganism, idolatry and excess. In 17th-century England, a Christmas knees-ups actively encouraged carnival behaviour, role inversion, home invasion, heavy drinking and sexual liberties. How very modern. >>>

So how are we going to change our classic Christmas staples and give them a shot in the arm with some new traditions?

Firstly, perhaps there's space for a new faith system, possibly based on personal improvement and wellbeing to help us avoid family tensions. Mindfulmas or ChillaXmas, anyone? The festivities can become a retreat, where we perform mindfulness exercises together, instead of wasting hours over divisive Monopoly and Scrabble games.

Experience Advent(ure) Calendars could replace the piles of stuff with experiences, as we sign up for an adventure every day of the build-up to the big one (choose between a 12 or 24 day package). These might be casual adventures to have on the way to work, or maybe dare you to go to Timbuktu on a shoestring. Definitely one for Insta-mas.

How about 'borrowing' someone else's Christmas for a few days? You no longer have to pretend to be homeless for just one night, or feel obliged to spend time keeping older people company to make yourself feel good. Instead, we can ship a whole village from remote parts of the world to a disused warehouse near you. Enjoy real-time interactions with the real deal (not improv actors) and fully immerse yourself in the clever ways they survive the holiday. There's an optional big party at the end to recover from going without luxuries for a week and to roast the goat and chicken that you kindly donated. The perfect Ox-mas.

Genetically Modified X-mas. Not only will our food look and taste like turkey (but be made wholly from vegetable protein), Science is also creating 'self lighting trees', a genetic crossover of pine trees and glow worms which could save wasteful strings of lights that are too good to throw away when the last of the Ur-key curry is gone. And this idea is already out there, folks.

Faith Popcorn proposed a set of gifts for 2035, one of which was 'intelligence booster chips', a great way for us to overcome our stupidity to trounce everyone at Trivial Pursuit. Obviously, we'll all be operating in self-contained virtual worlds in our own heads, so we can play or watch anything we want without making Grandad sulk. Just to point out that television won't exist in the future, so that's going to mess up a lot of Christmases. Trivial Pursuit may already be extinct, too.

The trend is for us to get away, or to have somebody else do all the hard work, but now we can take our family with us wherever we go in a very cost effective and interactive way. Taking its lead from the virtual performances from stars who are no longer with us (Michael Jackson, Roy Orbison, Whitney Houston, Elvis et al), The Perfect Party Guest means that we can take whoever we want along to entertain us or to share our experience without actually having to cater for them. This comes with a few warnings; holographic guests could mean that there is no longer an effective way to totally escape from our families – they'll expect to be there every time. >>>



Photo by Nong Vang on Unsplash.

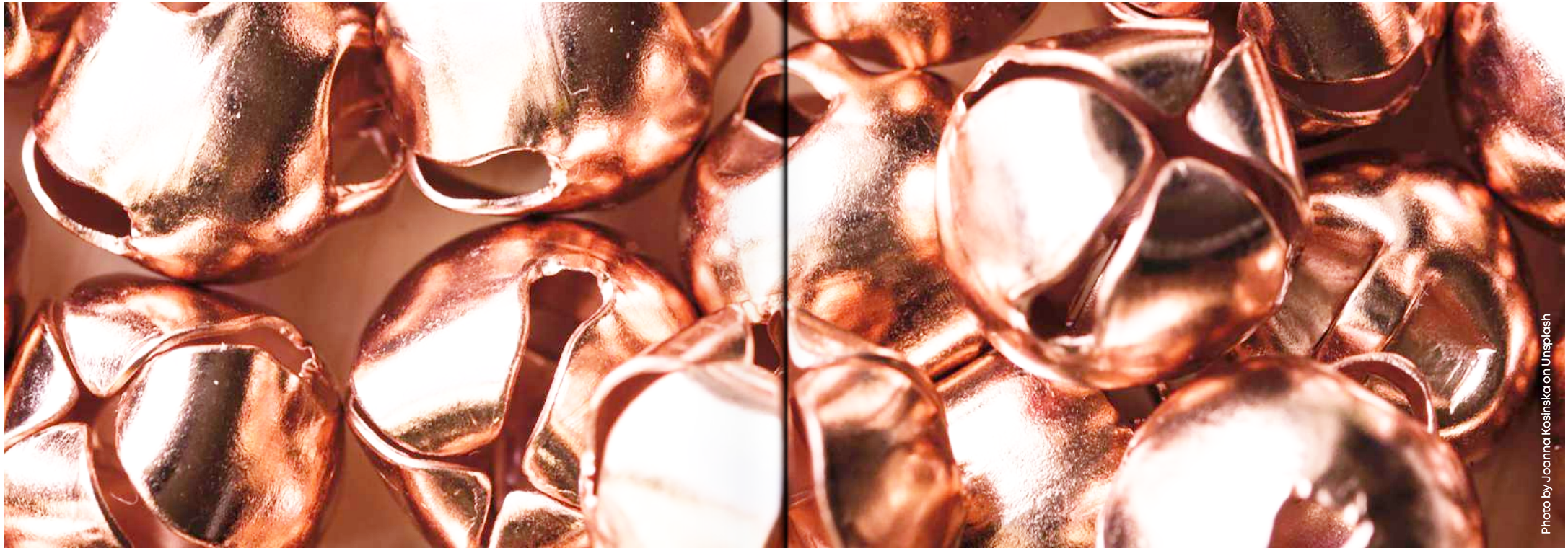


Photo by Joanna Kosinska on Unsplash

Finally, why not try a Retro-mas? We all still need to belong and be where friends are the new family, so how post-ironic to gather round one of those old television sets and try the foodstuffs that the 'Old Ones' used to eat. It'll even be still possible to buy dead animals and stuff them with nuts and pulses, puddings will never go out of fashion, and there are plenty of celebrity robot chefs to show us how to get someone else to cook it for us. We can watch those old movies where someone has a miserable life and can't see the meaning of it all until something terrible/amazing happens, which is just like a social media life-hack, pointing out what makes life - and therefore Christmas - so special. And that's what

we all really want when it comes down to it, isn't it, someone to tell us how to get it right?

All very good, I hear you cry, but how do brands really tap into 'Futuremas'? Is it even possible to establish new traditions, when our current ones seem so deeply rooted?

If nothing else, these flippant examples prove that there's enormous scope for new ideas. We regularly change our fundamental view of Christmas; Dickens and Prince Albert changed Victorian attitudes and reframed our Christmas-card perfect image; Coca Cola hijacked Santa and rebranded him from green to red (a fantastic

marketing story, even if there are pictures of Saint Nick dressed in red that pre-date Coke's founding in 1892). Retailers are already taking the plastic out of crackers.

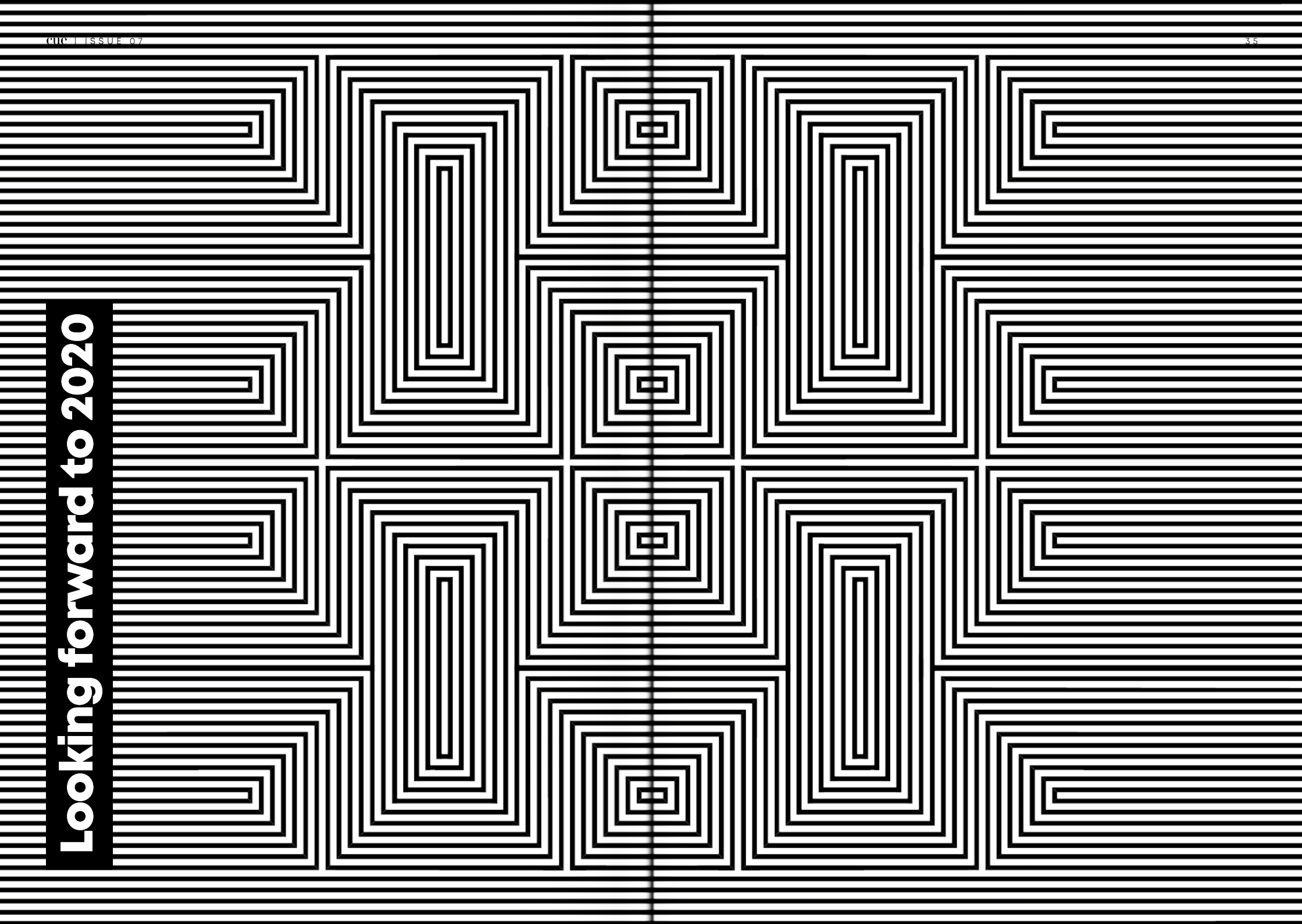
All it takes is a tipping point, a new experience to change a few families' way of doing things. It might be as simple as repackaging and reframing existing traditions (as Coke did). Thanksgiving (that amazing extension to the Season) means we're putting American-influenced ingredients into our Christmassy food, like marshmallows (unbelievable but true). Could the trend for unpackaged fruit and veg reinstate the excitement of a satsuma and a walnut at the

bottom of every kid's Christmas stocking? Could the growth in alcohol free 'gin' and a myriad of flavoured tonic waters influence new twists on the Christmas morning Snowball or Buck's Fizz? New spins on old ways.

Rethink. Reframe. Regift. Anything is possible, that's the magic of Christmas.

Peace. And please remember that, if you don't believe in something, it fades away altogether and you get someone else's version of Christmas, which might be the one you (or your brand) deserve. **Q**

Looking forward to 2020



Christmas Future



Amelia Boothman

Brand & Innovation Strategy Director - 1HQ UK

It's a truth universally acknowledged, that Christmas has turned into a consumerist festival of conspicuous consumption in all its ugly forms and therefore it came as no surprise, in the current climate, to see organisations urge us to do something different in 2019.

This year our work with The Food People, uncovered that the theme 'Securing the Future' would drive 2020-2021 trends. This topic has already emerged as a central shift, following a series of big affirmative actions from Extinction Rebellion and Greta Thunberg to name a few.

With more ethical gift purchases on trend this year, retailers, services providers and manufacturers might be left playing catch up in the run up to Christmas. Asking friends, colleagues and clients I've rounded up a few festive examples. >>>

THE HIERARCHY OF GIFTING*

GIVE MEMORIES

GIVE YOUR TIME

UPCYCLE

**BUY SECOND
HAND**

MAKE

**ETHICAL
BUY**

BUY

Magazine subscriptions

'The gift that keep on giving' with online subscriptions also offering a paperless alternative.

Smellies gift boxes

Who doesn't get a selection box of smellies for Christmas from those more distant or perhaps elderly family members? Well this year your Aunt is bang on trend with her old-fashioned soap gift which takes 5 times less energy to make than liquid soap, as well as saving on plastic packaging.

Charity secret santa

Secret Santa isn't just for the office, pick a family member out of the hat and buy them a present from your local charity shop. The Charity shop wins a second time if you decide to re-gift your present.

Wrapping paper

People are more likely to be posting Instagram pictures of wrapped presents rather than the present itself this year, with gift givers using beautiful brown recycled paper with handmade stamps, ribbon and mistletoe to add a festive touch.

Homemade food

Bliss balls, chocolate coated nuts and crystallised ginger, mince-meat, tomato ketchup, mince pies, Yule log and cranberry jelly all go down well as gifts. More personal, thoughtful and who doesn't like festival food treats!

Gift tags

Upcycle your old Christmas cards by cutting them into gift tags.

Crackers

Let's be honest, crackers are usually a bit naff, with their funny bits of plastic you can't identify, hats made from cheap tissue paper in boring colours and the jokes that are often the same each year. Surely, we can do better and not melt the planet?? John Lewis/Waitrose are making us wait until next year for their sustainable version and Dunelm apparently ran out sustainable ones straight away, so instead take a trip back to 1983 Girl Guides and make your own.

The roast

This one's a little obvious, go Vegan! But what if you love your Turkey? Look for organic or local meat and get creative with leftovers: cold meat, curry, risotto, soup, stock, giblets for stuffing, livers for pate.

The tree

The dilemma of a tree got to me a few years ago, do I kill another tree or go plastic, save the trees but not the planet and miss out on the natural beauty Prince Albert encouraged us to use centuries ago? Instead I bought a driftwood tree from Cornwall. Beautiful and unique and I can use it again and again guilt free...

This year, it seems that lots of people are re-creating ideas passed down from grandparents and great grandparents. Perhaps the Christmas Future may in fact look much like the Christmas Past and I'd raise a toast to that. **a**

Top 5



Photo by Jennifer Pollan on Unsplash

Festive treats

01 Battle of the cheese boards

Our Christmas cheese board has never looked so extra. Aldi is offering experimental flavours including Wensleydale with white chocolate chunks, raspberry and prosecco whilst at Asda you can pick up an after-dinner milk truckle that mixes crumbly cheese with a burst of peppermint flavour. Go one step further with an Ilchester Cheese Advent Calendar from Lidl - 24 windows conceal mini cheeses, including a limited-edition Wensleydale with gingerbread.

02 Let it be-gin

Sparkle the night away with an M&S clementine gin liqueur snow globe that contains edible gold leaf, adding some festive zest to your Christmas cocktails. Or feel good this holiday sipping the UK's first wild gin that gives 20% of proceeds to preserve the Flow Country's threatened peatland, helping to store carbon. The gin is made by Edinburgh's Old Curiosity Distillery with wild botanicals indigenous to the Flow Country, including bog myrtle and nettle. Presented in a box to re-use as a bird box this wild gin also has a tag full of British wildflower seeds and a label that is made from 30% grass.

03 Tempura brussel sprouts

Did Iceland just win Christmas? Last year the supermarket covered the offending vegetable in Marmite, which only divided the nation further. This year, Iceland have transformed our Christmas dinner sprouts by giving them a fresh twist. Coated with a light and crispy Tempura batter with Japanese flavourings and spices, Iceland have given us a one-of-a-kind creation that might tempt even the fussiest of eaters to try just one sprout this season.

04 This little piggy went vegan

Some would argue that Pigs-in-Blankets are the highlight of the season. This year, Morrisons are spoiling us with a jackfruit and chickpea alternative sausage, wrapped in 'streaky pastry' instead of bacon whilst Sainsbury's are offering a selection of 10 vibrant and peppery vegan mushroom sausages wrapped in vegan bacon.

05 Sweet tooth

Had enough of Mince Pies by Christmas day? Asda is bringing a Winter Village Millionaire's dessert to the table, with lashings of chocolate honeycomb, salted caramel sauce and white chocolate mousse topped with bronze and gold houses. Or opt for Aldi's gingerbread flavoured white chocolate bauble centre piece, with intricate designs carved using 'water-cutting technology'. Alternatively, indulge in a fresh panettone crumb Christmas pud at Morrisons, filled with amaretto-soaked fruits and a hidden dark cherry sauce centre.

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