

Home Alone in 2020

A Holiday Like Never Before

Themes of Holiday ads from this year



Ogilvy

Little reason to be jolly this year

Italy bans Christmas travel and midnight mass after nearly 1,000 people die in one day

By Lauren Chadwick • last updated: 04/12/2020



Telegraph.co.uk

US will enter 'a really dark time' after Christmas coronavirus spike

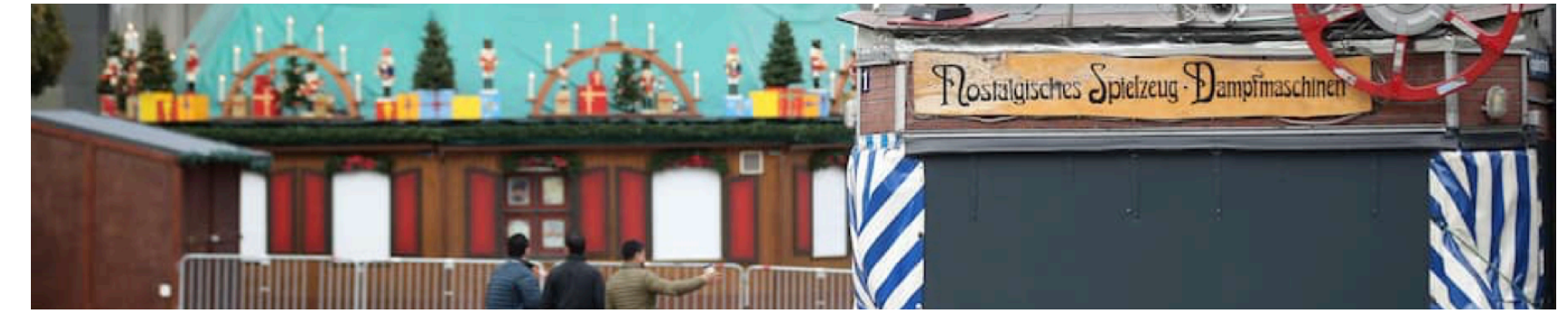
Here comes Santa Claus - with face masks and plexiglass

By JOSEPH PISANI November 13, 2020



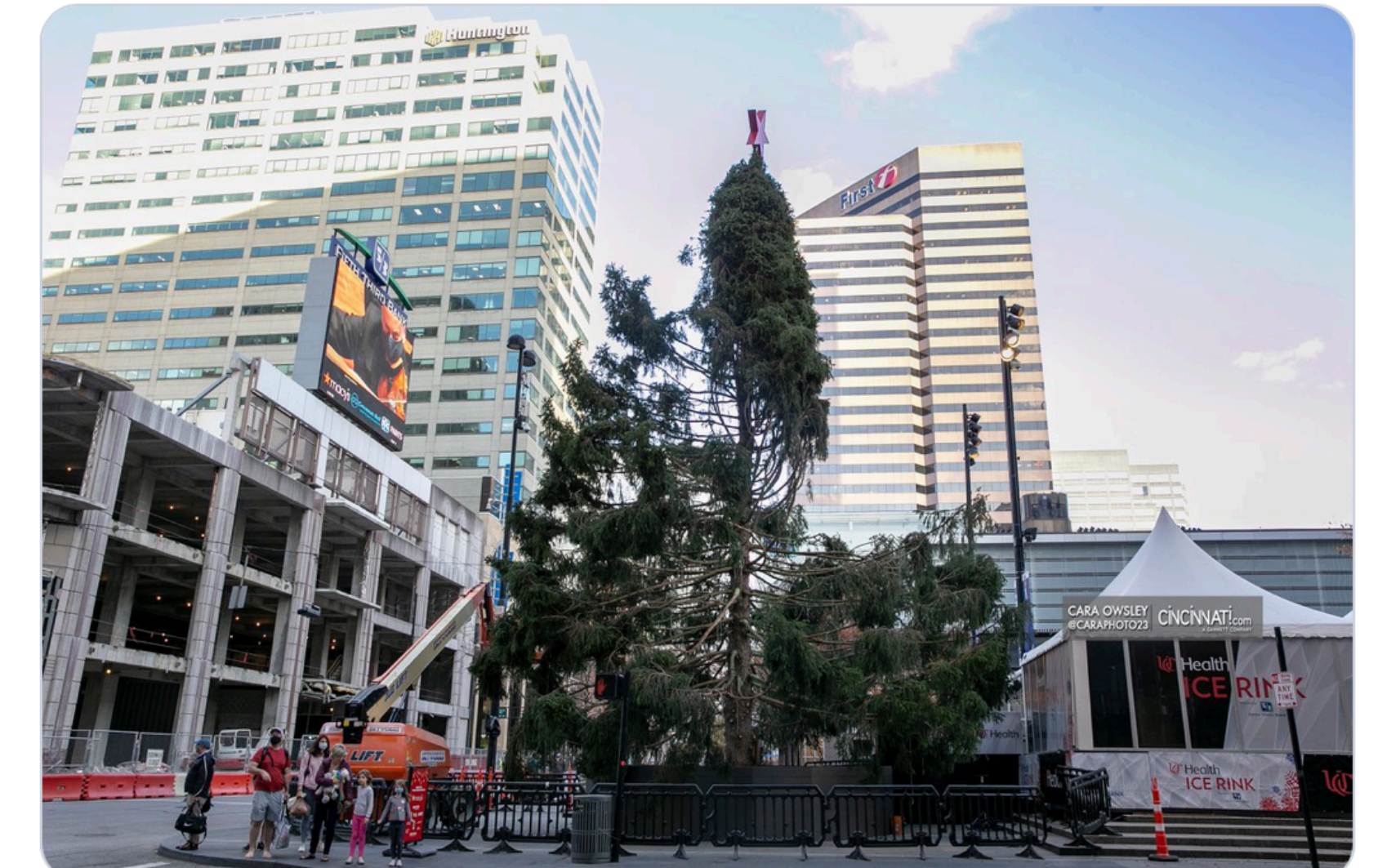
World

'A different Christmas': World leaders warn that the coronavirus will put holiday celebrations in jeopardy



Cara Owsley
@caraphoto23

Not sure what happened to the Christmas tree at Fountain Square but it's the most #Christmas2020 tree ever @Enquirer





The Year with Mr. Scrooge Vibe

If there was any year that could personify Ebenezer Scrooge from Charles Dickens's 'A Christmas Carol', it would be 2020.

This year was brutal, miserly and just unpleasant. Life came on a hold as this year disregarded all cheer and joy and made all of us feel somber and sad.

We saw the worst with the pandemic causing millions to lose their lives and their livelihood. But, we also saw some redemption with people unifying for racial equality and stepping up for one another

This year's holiday ads are a great reflection of the year gone by. As we looked at themes, we noticed the appearance of the ghosts of holiday past, present, and yet to come.

We noticed three macro trends

Joy in the times gone by: The Ghost of Holiday Past

These ads brought us back to what a "normal" holiday season looked like. They tapped into sentimentality and fond memories to give us a chance to pretend everything was normal, even in this crazy year.

It's Christmask: The Ghost of Holiday Present

Ads that fell under this macro trend leaned into the sentiments of a 2020 holiday season. They embraced the good, the bad, and the ugly of a universal reality we lived through and couldn't escape.

Everything's gonna be all right: The Ghost of Holiday Future

This macro trend left us with hope for the future. As we near the light at the end of the tunnel of this year, they made us believe in brighter days ahead.





The Ghost of Holiday Past

Finding joy in the past

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas

In a rather uncertain year, we saw brands tapping into the familiar. Like past years, we saw kindness, empathy and the magic of the holiday spirit come through.

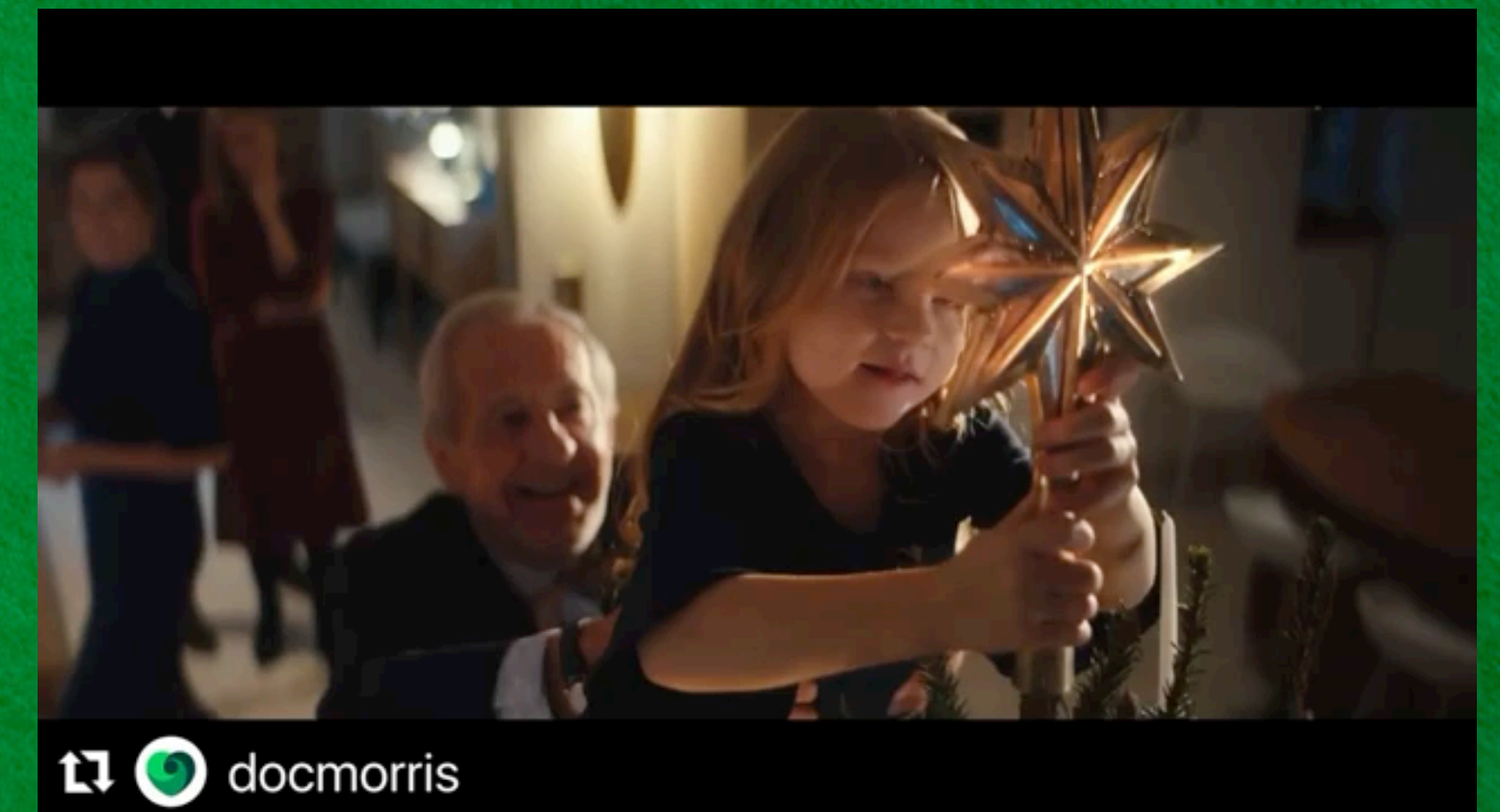
This year, nearly all spots had kinder, gentler attitudes along with warmer tones and melodious vocals. In a year where nothing looks the same as it has in the past, it was a refreshing break to see some holiday ads that made Christmas seem just plain normal.



Macy's tapped into the Christmas spirit with a little girl stepping into her dad's shoes to find him the perfect gift.



SuperValu left us bawling with a little boy's heartfelt wish for the holidays



Doc Morris touched our heart with the journey of an elderly man to get in shape so that he can lift her grand daughter

The Kid Within

During this uncertain year, we are all looking for some comfort. After dealing with many difficult months, people are gravitating towards that soothing, warm feeling that was so comforting to us as kids.

These holiday ads brought that familiarity and comfort. Mostly driven by production restrictions that limited in-person shoots, a great number of ads this year featured animation and claymation, bringing us back to our childhoods. Beyond the executional formats, these ads told short stories that allowed us to get lost in them, even for a few minutes.



In the always-anticipated John Lewis & Partners spot, a variety of animation techniques are used to tell a simple yet powerful life lesson.



McDonald's rekindled the childhood spirit by showcasing our inner child.



Chick-fil-a released a "Holiday short film" which told the story of a young girl looking to switch back on the holiday spirit.



The Ghost of Holiday Present

It's Christmask!

Santa MacGyver

This year, some of us discovered that we have a gift for problem solving. Several ads demonstrated the power and determination that we have to handle the challenges life throws our way.

A reflection of this attitude we were forced to adopt this year, these ads put a playful spin on the challenges that came throughout 2020. They show that we can overcome hardships by going above and beyond.



In Xfinity's spot, Santa Claus and his elves feel the pressure to find new gifts for the holidays, and demonstrate the possibility of solving big problems even over video conferencing.



Amazon crafted its narrative around how the show must go on, telling the story of a ballerina who can't go back to school, learns ballet from Zoom, and performs on the snow as people applaud from their balconies.



In USPS's spot, we see the behind-the-scenes magic worked to deliver holiday cheer, no matter what obstacles are in their way.

Happy holidays to all

2020 brought an outcry for racial equality and inclusion across the world, and we finally saw brands take notice.

Holiday spots this year made a conscious spot to be inclusive. While inequality remains a major issue, it was encouraging to see diversity and multi-cultural representation in major brand ads.



Etsy's spot titled 'Shiori' showcases a Japanese family.



Vodafone, Macy's, Toyota, Apple, Meijer amongst many others led with African American families.



Disney's story revolves around Filipino traditions in a heartwarming story about a grandchild and her Lola.



Tim Hortons showcase diversity with diverse snowpeople- carrots, sticks and a dose of everyone's unique culture- Indian, Middle Eastern, African, and many more

Cut the BS

A counter-trend to the ads that felt sentimental and sweet, these spots showcased a more authentic perspective of how many people feel about 2020. While some people no doubt want the comfort and escape of emotional holiday ads, these ones appealed to an audience that wanted to cut the BS.

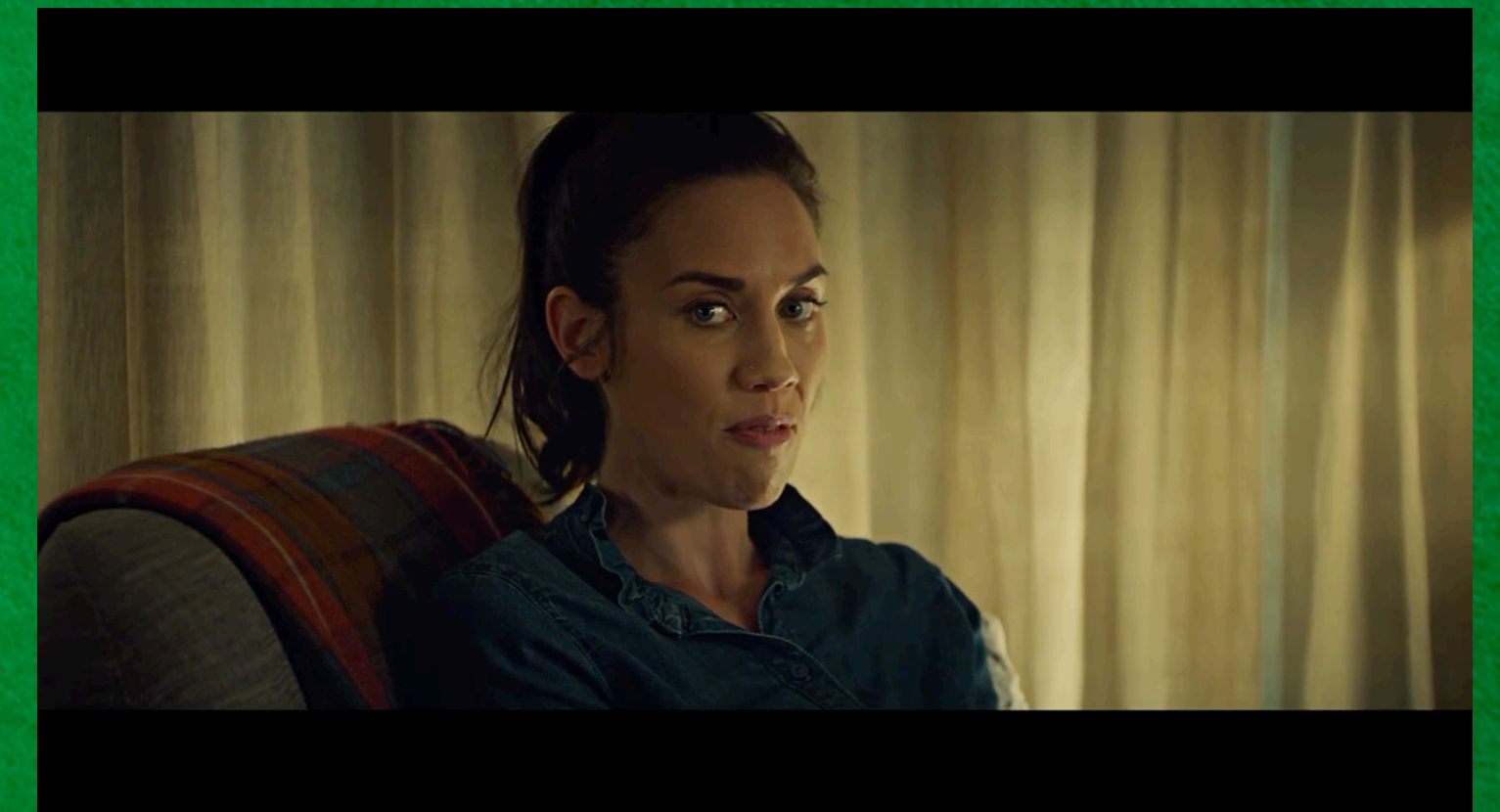
The festive spirit may be nice to some, but many people feel like they are barely hanging on to get through this year. Using dry humor, these spots stripped away the fluffiness of the holidays.



Plenty gave a cut and dry (and pretty graphic) picture of the mess that is 2020.



Lidl cut out the bells and whistles by simply stating that it was an ad ("Could a friendship be ahead? No- its a Christmas ad from Lidl with great prices instead.")



Very calls out the real moments of the holiday which are messy and not always perfect.

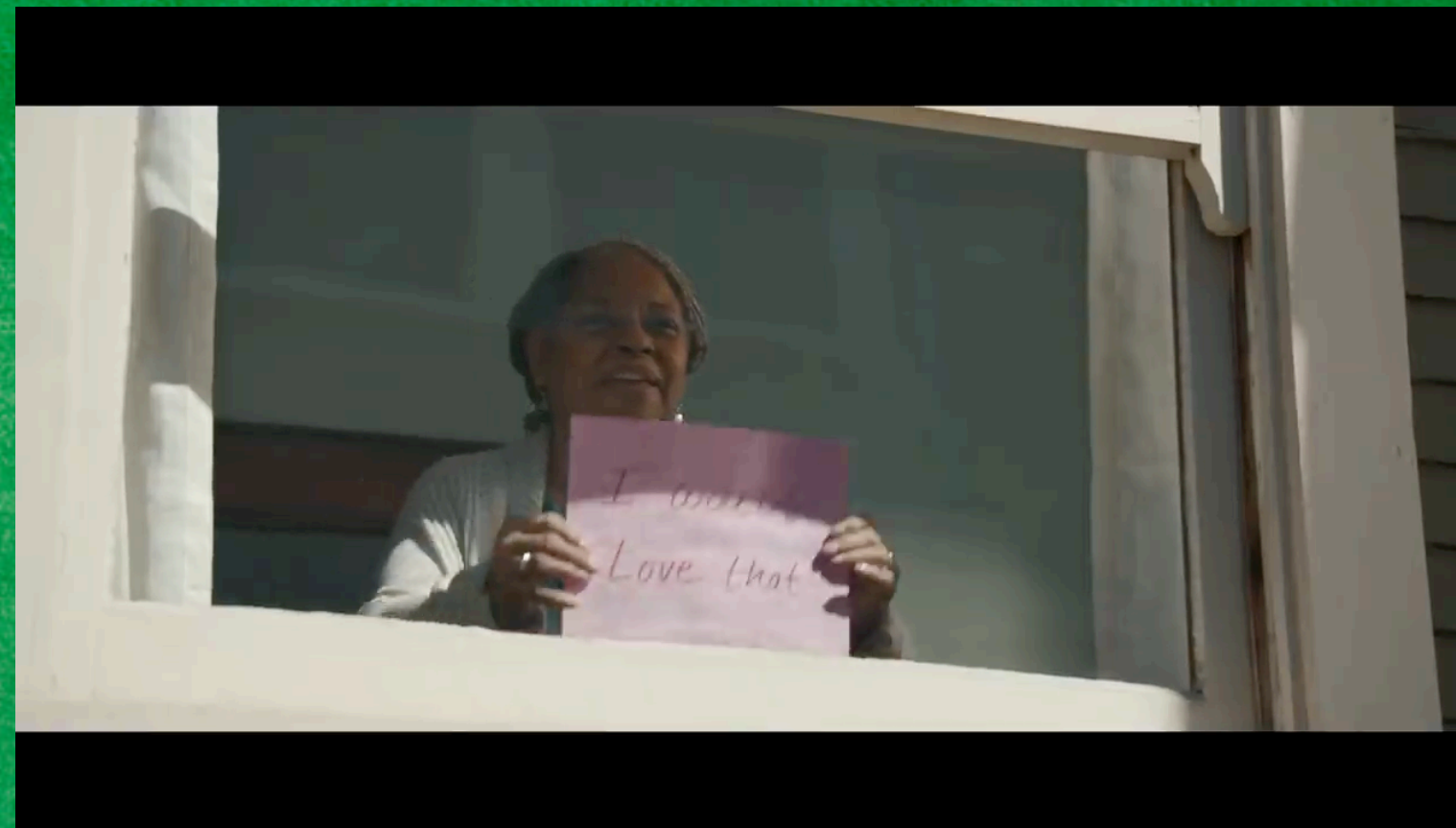
Mirror, Mirror on the Wall

2020 was a challenging year for everyone, with people confined in their homes, dealing with some harsh realities.

Brands realized that this year was unlike any year before. Hedonistic ways of celebrating the holidays gave way to real, human stories which showcased the struggles and the realities of 2020.



Shutterfly's spot took us through how we survived 2020—from becoming pet parents to taking up a hobby.



Kohl's spot weaves its narrative around a little girl and an unassuming friendship with her elderly neighbor.



IKEA keeps it real with the imperfect perfect holiday season we are all going to experience.

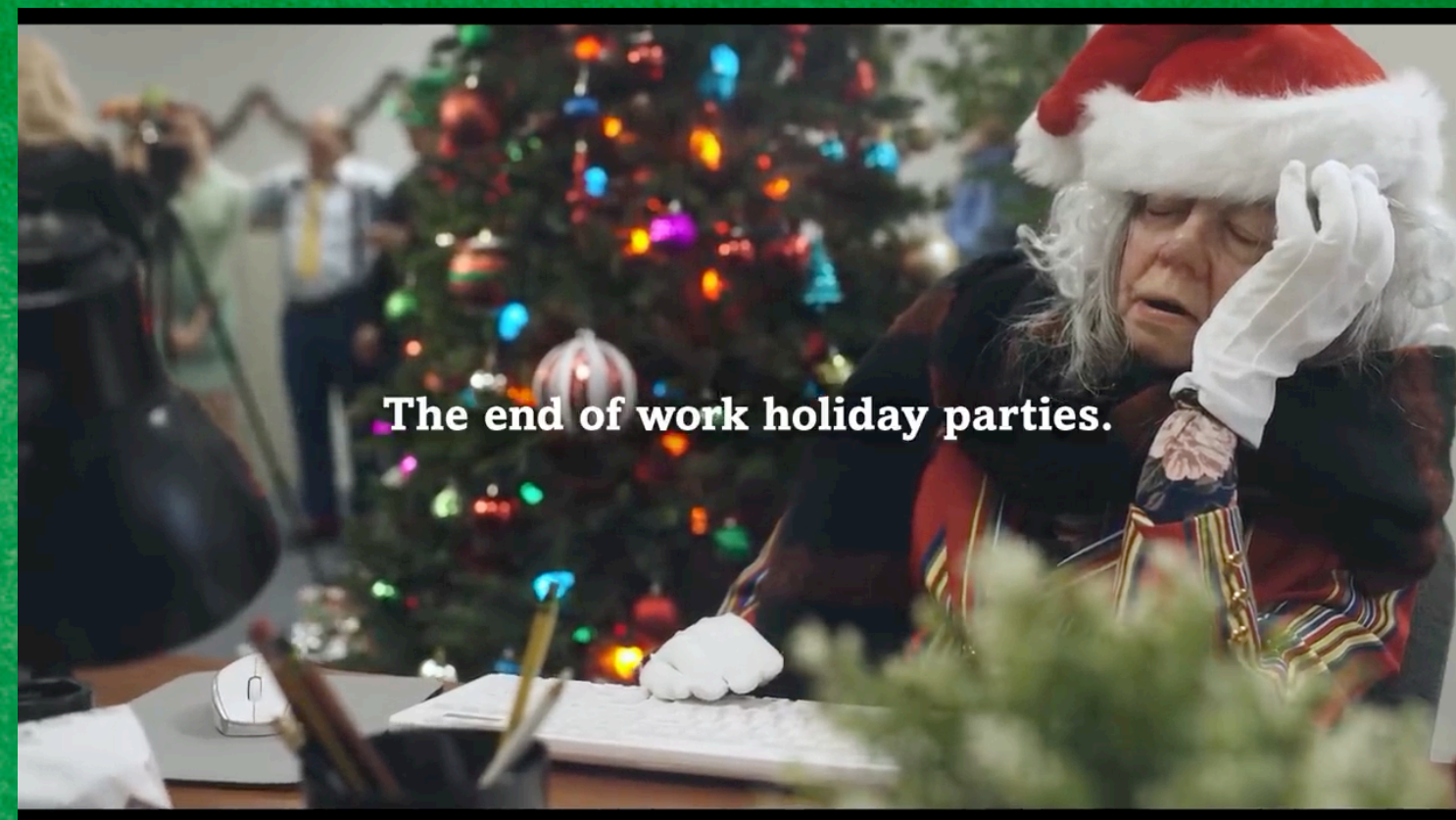
All I Want for Christmas is a Break

This year finally gave us an excuse to skip the holiday traditions we always wanted to escape. We had a default excuse to get out of the awkward, the cringey and the dreadful commitments we typically have to make. At least one good thing came out of 2020!

A crop of holiday ads this year gave a real depiction of how we feel about these traditions.



Tesco and Virgin Hotels called-off the naughty list and put everyone on the nice one, even for those who had pushed the boundaries a bit.



Miller Lite finally said "no more" to dreaded, awkward holiday office parties.



Heineken gave us a smile by showcasing all the things we dislike about the holidays.



The Ghost of Holiday Future

Everything's gonna be all right!

A Holiday Odyssey

With bans on travel and cancellations of big events, people have searched for escape and adventure throughout the year. Adding a dose of excitement to an otherwise very stationary year, these ads made us get lost in their grand sense of adventure. They followed a hero on a grand adventure.

Acting as a metaphor for making it through 2020, these ads showed us that after a long journey, we are nearing the light at end of the tunnel.



In Coca Cola's spot, a father embarks on a National Geographic-worthy journey to deliver his daughter's letter to the North Pole.



Kevin the Carrot returns in a spot from Aldi, as he embarks on a rather treacherous mission to reunite with his carrot family in time for Christmas.

Winds of Change

Hope for a better, brighter future made us get through 2020. And we saw brands igniting that hope with holiday ads.

We saw stories of possibilities, hope, and belief in better things. These ads reaffirmed the happier days that hopefully lay ahead.



LEGO's spin on 'What a wonderful world' helped us imagine the possibilities of the future.



Zalando made us believe that we will hug again.



H&M urged to look at the future and create a better future for 2021.

What we saw less of...



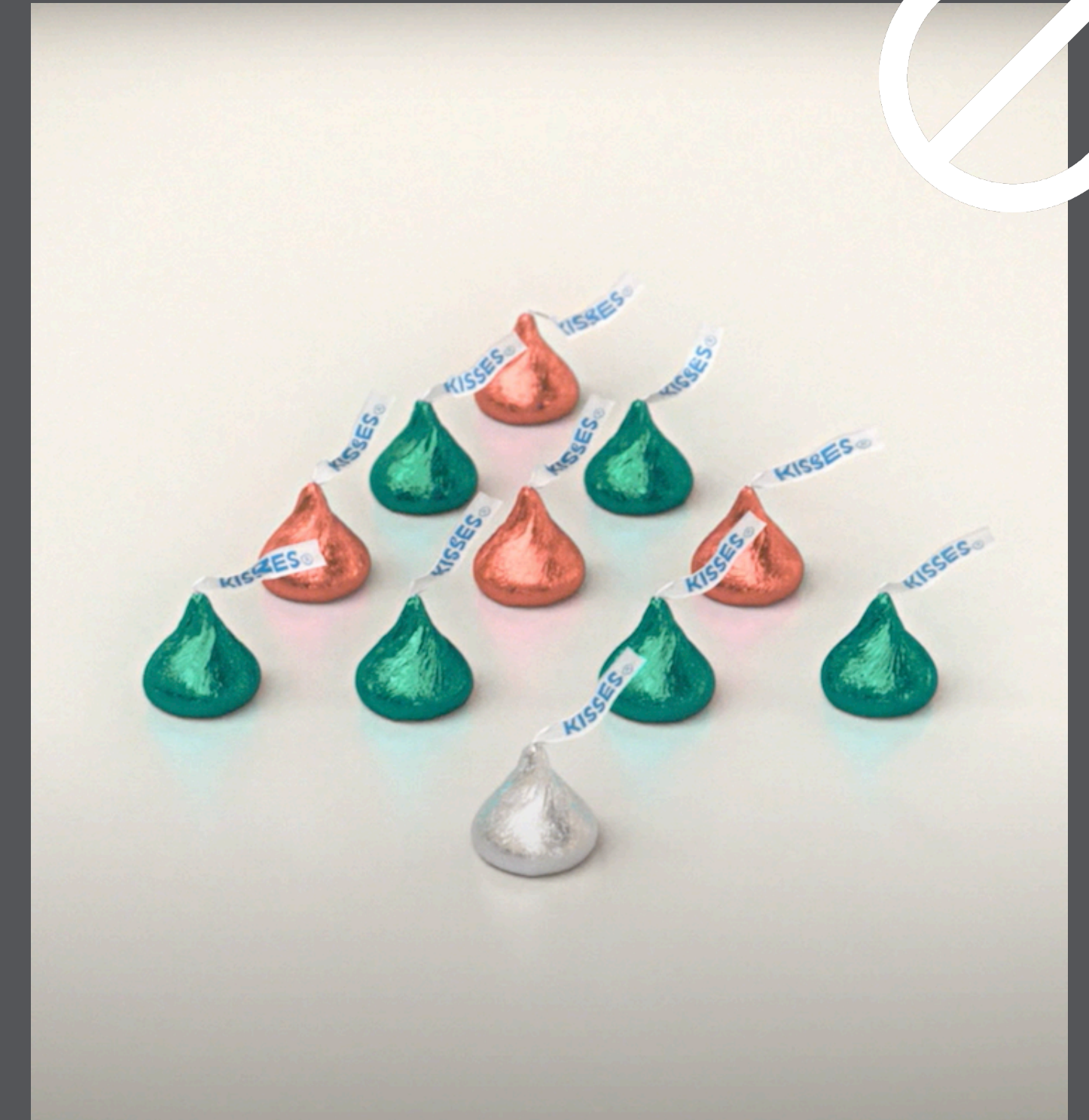
MASKS OR SOCIAL DISTANCING

As new safety guidelines became widely adopted to stop the spread of COVID-19, advertisers debated whether to tweak their creative to reflect these new rules. While we didn't see very many masks, many ads still felt relevant for the times (virtual gatherings galore).



ESSENTIAL WORKERS

Earlier in the pandemic there was a massive wave of advertising focused on COVID response: thanking essential workers and assuring consumers that "we will get through these trying times." That trend did not seem to carry into the holiday season, where few ads expressed their thanks to the essential workers keeping things afloat.



STRONG BRANDING

Some of the ads this year could have easily been attributed to any brand. Without a ton of strong branding, distinctive assets or fluent devices leveraged, the spots seemed to focus more on the story than their own brand.

Thank You!

*Cheers to brighter
spirits ahead*



Happy Holidays!

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