

# Three: How The Perfect Surprise won Christmas

Boys and Girls & MediaVest

## AGENCIES



## CLIENT



## AWARD

IT/TELECOMMUNICATIONS & DIGITAL  
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## COMPANY PROFILE

### Boys and Girls

Boys and Girls is a creative agency founded in 2009 on the principle of “Daring Simplicity”. We believe that the simpler an idea, the more it resonates and the more it inspires action.

Over the last six years we have grown rapidly, and now produce award-winning campaigns for a range of clients from indigenous brands to large international companies as far afield as the Caribbean, the USA and Europe.

We work above the line, below the line, through the line, in areas where there is no line, in both analog and digital. Wherever we work, we believe that ‘Great work, works’.

### MediaVest

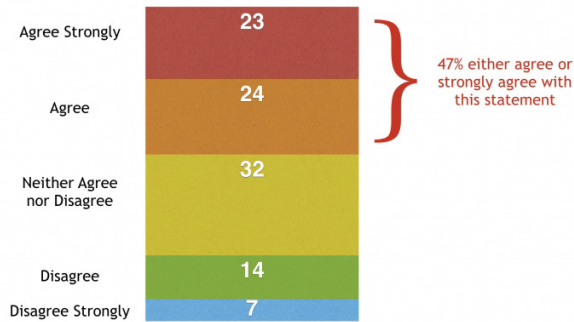
Established in 2000, MediaVest is a data-led media communications agency with one ambition, to unite insight gained from data, technology and creativity. Personalisation, mobility, responsiveness and connectivity are now the bedrock of everything we do. Central to all of this is the talent, curiosity and imagination of our people.

We are part of Core Media, Ireland’s largest media group, with over 230 people working across technology, data, innovation, creative, social and media planning and buying. With combined group billings of €195m, we have a 25% share of the market, giving us the scale to deliver the best trading terms available in Ireland.

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### Attitudinal Statement of O2 Customers Towards Takeover 'I would be worried what this means for me as a customer'



Source: Red C - Three; O2 Takeover Research September 2014

## INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

In July 2014, everything changed for Three Ireland. They had purchased O2 Ireland in a deal worth €780m, growing their market share from 9% to 34% by acquiring approximately 1.5m active customers. The takeover was a huge investment, repositioning Three to rival the market leader, Vodafone. But for it to be commercially successful, we had to keep the numbers up on both the Three and O2 customer bases until March 2015, when the O2 brand would cease to exist and its customers would migrate to Three.

Although other marketing plans were underway to specifically ensure retention of the combined Three and O2 customer bases until brand migration, any activity undertaken by Three before March 2015 had to have one eye on the future. In the run-up to Christmas 2014, O2 had been experiencing negative net porting<sup>1</sup>, meaning they were losing more customers than they were gaining. With the most important sales period of 2014 – Christmas – approaching, Three's campaign would have to work even harder than usual to deliver positive net porting (acquiring new customers) to continue to grow the Three business and offset any loss on the O2 base.

We also had to address a brand issue that could contribute to the O2 loss. O2 customers felt they didn't know Three and didn't trust them, with 47% of the O2 base expressing worry about what the takeover meant for them (see chart opposite). They had been attracted to O2's 'big' brand presence, seeing Three as smaller fare and questioning their ability to understand them and meet their needs. Christmas was an opportunity to emotionally connect with them, and reassure them that Three was a brand they could trust and depend on – an opportunity to encourage them to stay put until March 2015 and beyond.

This is the story of how Three 'won' Christmas in 2014, both commercially and emotionally, with a brand response campaign.

<sup>1</sup> 'Porting' is an industry term for customers migrating from brand to brand. Negative net porting means you're losing more customers than you're gaining. Positive net porting means you're gaining more customers than you're losing.

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## MARKETING OBJECTIVES

Three's primary objective was to 'win' Christmas in the market, gaining more customers than anyone else and avoiding any potential loss to the combined Three and O2 bases. We also had to work to change any negative opinions O2 customers had about the Three brand, reassuring them about becoming Three customers in advance of the brand migration in March 2015.

### Commercial Objectives:

1. Achieve an ambitious sales target (the biggest Christmas sales target Three ever had).
2. Achieve highest positive net porting (customer additions) in the market over the Christmas period, and thus 'win' Christmas in the market.
3. Prior to the takeover O2 had been losing customers. As the O2 brand would disappear in March 2015, there was no desire to further invest in it. As such, we had to expect continued losses. An objective of this campaign was to try and mitigate against such loss as much as possible by encouraging O2 customers to stay put until they would become Three customers. We wanted to at the very least maintain the negative net porting of the acquired O2 base at the previous year's level, or if possible improve on it.

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## MARKETING OBJECTIVES

### Marketing Objectives:

1. Achieve positive changes in Three's brand health performance, combatting negative brand sentiment by reassuring the new members of our base that Three is a 'big' brand they could trust.

Brand Pillars Measured	Christmas Campaign Target
Brand Image	+2
Brand Disposition	+2
Overall Brand Health	+2
Trust	+2
Innovation	+1
Loyalty	+1

2. Achieve high levels of advertising cut through versus competitors despite smaller spend.

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## THE TASK

Our Christmas communication had a lot of pressure on its shoulders. Here are the key challenges we were faced with:

### 1. The Balance of Brand and Tactical:

Our communication had to deliver both a tactical and brand effect – driving sales primarily, while also changing brand perception. To complicate this, we had multiple tactical offers to communicate, including a €30 Ticketmaster gift card with certain device purchases.

### 2. The Competitors:

Christmas time is the most critical sales period for Telco brands in Ireland. We knew that our biggest competitors, Vodafone and Meteor, would be spending heavily to acquire new customers, leveraging a moment of possible vulnerability in the O2 customer base. We also knew that we wouldn't have as much money to spend. Our immediate competitors wouldn't be the only challenge either, as almost every advertiser plays the emotional card at Christmas – so whatever we did would have a lot of clutter to cut through.

### 3. The Consumer:

Our campaign audience was not 'business as usual'. We had two distinctly different consumer groups, with different motivations, both of whom we wanted to behave differently as a result of this campaign:

A. Those considering buying a phone at Christmas, who Three were looking to acquire.

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## THE TASK

B. Those O2 customers who would be Three customers in March 2015, but not through their own choice and who needed reassurance about this change.

For the first group, our campaign would need to cut through the reach of our competitors, positioning Three as the right choice for a Christmas purchase with a tactical offer. For the second group, our campaign would have to combat potential brand prejudice to reassure them about becoming Three customers.

### **4. Growing Negative Sentiment Towards the O2 Brand:**

In the months since the announcement of the takeover, customers had lost faith in their once safe and trustworthy brand. O2 brand detractors had increased by over 33% <sup>1</sup>. To exacerbate this, many of those detractors were part of a particularly profitable segment of the combined customer base. Keeping these O2 customers where they were would be challenging.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Red C - Three; O2 Takeover Research September 2014

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## THE STRATEGY

We had a lot to do, so we broke our strategy into three pillars.

### **Insight:**

We believed that a simple human insight would cut through the other Christmas messages. The insight had to be an obvious truth, to show that Three understands its customers.

The insight had to work on two levels; it had to emotionally connect consumers to the Three brand as well as providing a platform on which we could layer our tactical messages. So we decided that the insight needed to be around gifting, but with a unique spin. It also had to be borne out of Three's existing brand architecture to ensure consistency with previous campaigns. Three believe in doing things 'as they should be done', so we needed to define what 'Christmas as it should be' was and use this to inform the creative idea.

### **Tactics:**

Our strategy needed to be balanced to deliver on brand and tactical effect. We decided to create separate executions for brand and tactical messages so that we could get the appropriate message in front of the right person through our media selection. Our brand ads were purely brand. Our tactical ads were purely tactical. But both were to be seamlessly connected through a creative idea.

Our main TV ad would be used to build the emotional connection with consumers by telling a unique Christmas story based on a human truth.

Tactical TV stings, press, outdoor and digital display would then be used as a separate but connected execution to promote our Christmas offers without affecting the emotional outcome of the main TV ad.

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## THE STRATEGY

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Social media and PR would be used to bring the creative idea to life, driving further engagement with our branded activity through competitions and a special feature on The Late Late Toy Show.

### **Production / Scale:**

We wanted to reassure consumers that we were a big brand that could be trusted, so we had to behave like one. We had a strategic objective to create a 'big' Christmas ad to demonstrate the scale of Three, and position it as having the wherewithal to be one of the leading players in the market. Our ad needed to look big and feel reassuring, reflecting Three's standing in the market.



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## THE IDEA AND COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITY

### Campaign Insight:

Whether giving or receiving, getting the right kind of surprise is Christmas as it should be.

When it comes to Christmas gifting, the element of surprise is the Holy Grail. Parents stop at nothing to answer the 'I want a surprise' request on Santa letters – no matter how difficult the task. People stress about finding the ideal surprise for their loved one that will show how much they mean to them. We hide gifts around the house, and conduct secret detective work to find out what they really want.

We go to great lengths to pull the surprise off, because when you get the surprise right, it feels amazing. For the receiver, you're reassured in what you'd hoped – that the loved one buying the present has been listening and understands you. For the giver, you feel like you've accomplished something really important, taking pride in how much joy it brings to another. Getting the right surprise for someone else shows understanding and love, getting one yourself is pure joy.

This insight was powerful on two levels:

1. At its core was the platform to communicate the tactical message; that the 'right' surprise is a handset from Three.
2. It allowed us to tap into consumer behaviour at Christmas time, creating an emotional connection and showing a deeper level of consumer understanding to deliver brand effect.

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## THE IDEA AND COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITY

### Creative Idea:

#### The Perfect Surprise

We created the story of an Irish father, travelling and working far from home – a scenario that had become more prevalent in post-recession Ireland. On the TV ad, we see him navigating snowy woods and scaling mountains in an epic quest before returning home to Ireland with a mysterious gift for his young daughter, answering her Christmas request for a ‘surprise’. On Christmas morning, the little girl runs down the stairs to unwrap the present. Her eyes fill with wonder as a small, magical snow cloud emerges, floating through the living room and out the window to their garden, where it snows on the happy family. The perfect surprise all children wish for on Christmas day – snow.

Although the insight was true and simple, the story was an original, channelling the insight in an imaginative and emotional way, not before seen on Irish television. It avoided Christmas advertising clichés to cut through, while also leveraging the power of a beautiful music track to dramatise our story and make it more memorable (a learning from the success of John Lewis Christmas campaigns). Wolf Larssen’s ‘Would I Be Wrong’ was chosen to perfectly capture the magic of the cloud and the emotions of getting the surprise right.

The production of the ad positioned Three as a big, trustworthy brand. The scale of the father’s quest and its surroundings mirror the scale and size of Three, reassuring those who queried Three’s capabilities and demonstrating Three’s new position as a market leader.

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## THE IDEA AND COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITY

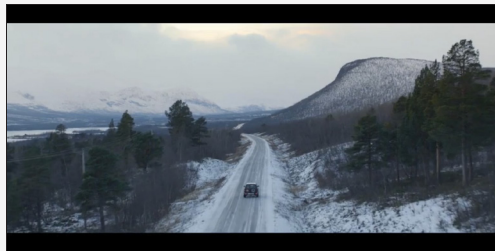
### Communication Strategy:

#### Brand:

We released a 10-second teaser TVC to build intrigue before airing the 60-second TVC, of which we also had 40-second cut downs and an extended 90-second edit.

#### Tactical:

Once established through the brand TV, the magical cloud was our perfect vehicle to 'hold' our tactical offers. We created two executions for each medium - one featuring the range of handsets on offer, the other supporting the €30 Ticketmaster gift card - across tactical TV stings, print, outdoor and digital display.



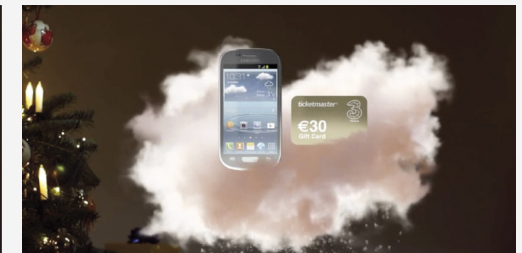
10-second TV teaser



90-second TV



Tactical TV - Handset Range



Tactical TV - €30 Ticketmaster Gift Card

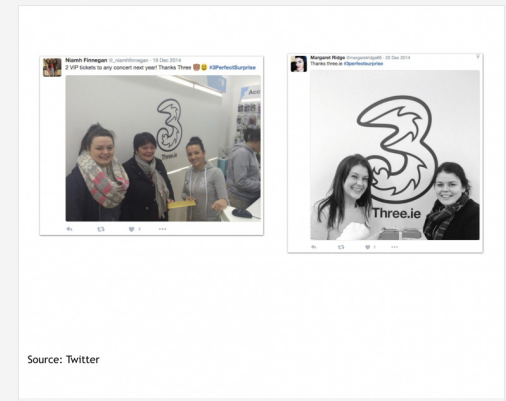
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## THE IDEA AND COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITY

### Social, PR & Retail:

The idea worked flawlessly in social and PR, which were used to further the reach of the TV ad, as well as bring the 'perfect surprise' idea to life. We asked fans and followers of our channels what perfect surprise they would deliver to a loved one and why. We then made some of these real-life perfect surprises come true, including a magical Christmas time proposal and a very special visit from Ronan O'Gara. We also organised Ed Sheeran to appear on The Late Late Toy Show to meet a young and totally surprised fan. Our magical cloud was used to create theatre in Three stores during the Christmas season, where we also had some 'perfect surprises' for unsuspecting customers.



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## THE IDEA AND COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITY

### Media Strategy:

With an emotional and connecting creative platform developed, our main objective was to devise a media strategy that would launch the Three Christmas message. We needed to be noticed and ensure that spend, although less than our competitors, would work harder.

Anticipation for Christmas builds in November, where we believe the true battle for Christmas is won and lost as mobile phone searches peak. Our media strategy needed to follow suit. We would launch with a BIG November focusing on “scale”. This would be followed by a “hard working” December that would focus on sales in the run-up to Christmas.

### TV:

We ran both brand and tactical TV throughout the Christmas season, working them together to successfully achieve Three’s goals.

We needed to tease the launch of the much-anticipated television commercial which had been built through social and PR channels. The 10-second teaser would generate excitement and create a buzz for the release.

We ran our teaser from the 10th – 14th of November, ensuring we were the first to market with the beginning of our Christmas activity. This was a strategic move in our bid to “Win Christmas”.

Specific spot buys provided excellent programme access

- ▶ RTÉ The Late Late Toy Show 602,670
- ▶ All Adults 242,000
- ▶ Ads 25-44

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## THE IDEA AND COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITY

We couldn't afford to run the 90-second ad as part of our campaign but we knew that Christmas Day would be the perfect time to air the advert on TV, the only time we would show it. The long version content ran in the 'Mrs. Brown's Boys Christmas Day Special', reaching 387,650 adults.

### **Cinema:**

Cinema gave us the opportunity to run our 60-second ad over 6 weeks cost effectively. In November, the admissions were 9% above the average monthly footfall in 2013, confirming our thinking regarding the timing. We delivered 6,639,369 admissions across the campaign.

### **Outdoor:**

A BIG November meant we would need to choose our formats wisely to deliver high impact and mass reach. "Hard working" December would focus on retail specific formats, driving sales and footfall in store.

The large multi-format campaign consisted of 48 Sheets, Golden Squares, Adshel, Adbox, Adshel Vinyl Wraps, Metropanels, Forward Stem T-Sides and City Impacts.

57% of all adults recalled seeing the outdoor campaign according to the PML Poster Impact Report.

### **Print:**

"Hard working" December was when our print activity would come into effect. The visual medium of the cloud was key here to showcase the handsets on offer and the €30 Ticketmaster gift card.

We ran a 2-week campaign across national print to reach a large audience. To generate cut through in press, we wrapped the Metro Herald (morning free sheet) on the 5th of December.

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## THE IDEA AND COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITY

### Digital:

Digital's aim was to engage and excite people with the Three Christmas campaign and to drive conversions with special offers. It was led by a seeding strategy that ran from the 7th-14th of November (the 14th being the day our 60-second TV ad would launch). This included contextual targeting on YouTube and content generated by news sites.

We began our search activity with a test. Three were driving customers to two online stores: an online Christmas shop and their regular online shop. We tested keywords in November to establish which shop was getting the most traffic. It was mainly going to the regular store, so this learning informed our search strategy into December.

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## RESULTS

This campaign surpassed all of our expectations, with all of our objectives either met or exceeded.

### Commercial Objectives:

#### 1. Achieve an ambitious sales target (the biggest Christmas sales target Three ever had).

Three over achieved on its sales targets, delivering a result of 113% against the campaign target, making 2014 Three's biggest Christmas ever! Not only did we hit this target, but we also saw an 11% YOY increase in the volume of devices being sold in the more profitable mid-tier range. This was very effective given that only 22% of the ATL budget was allocated to the tactical smartphone message.

#### 2. Achieve highest positive net additions (net porting) in the market over the Christmas period.

Three were the clear winner for Christmas 2014, gaining the most acquisitions out of the market with a net port positive share 44% higher than the competitor in second place. A brilliant result, especially considering the difference in spend and SOV between Three and its competitors.

#### 3. Maintain net porting of acquired O2 base at previous year's level or if possible improve on it.

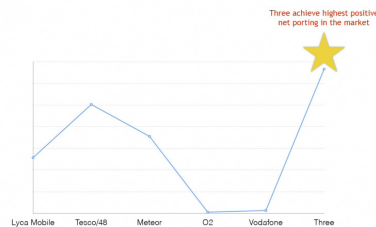
Based on the decreased investment in the O2 brand, we were expecting continued loss. Our target had been to maintain the net port level of the previous year, or if possible improve on it. We overachieved on this target, with a +17% improvement on the net porting score for O2 versus the previous year.

Three Christmas Campaign Sales Target vs. Actual Sales



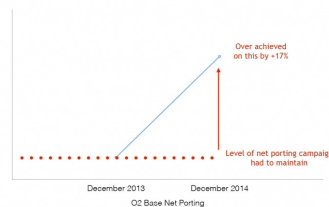
Source: Three

Total Market Net Ports - December 2014



Source: Three

Net Porting of O2 base December 2013 vs December 2014



Source: Three



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## RESULTS

### Marketing Objectives:

#### 1. Achieve positive changes in Three's brand health performance.

The Christmas campaign successfully achieved all brand pillar objectives, as well as overachieving in the particular pillars of 'Innovation' and 'Loyalty'.

Brand Pillars Measured	Christmas Campaign Target	Christmas Campaign Result
Brand Image	+2	+2
Brand Disposition	+2	+2
Overall Brand Health	+2	+2
Trust	+2	+2
Innovation	+1	+2
Loyalty	+1	+2

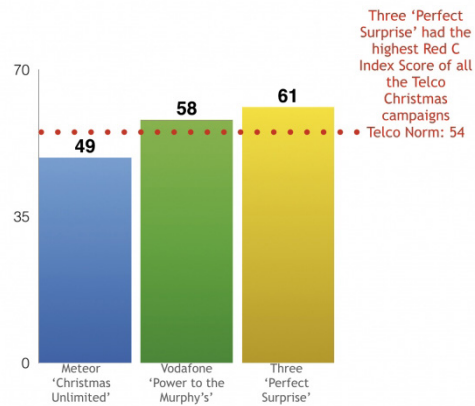
Source: Red C - Three Ad and Brand Tracking Q4 2014

We knew from the offset that the most challenging brand metric to move would be 'Trust'. Our creative had set out to solve this problem by communicating the scale of the brand, while the insight for the campaign showed we understood our audience. As a result, the Trust pillar saw positive growth in every one of its contributory statements:

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Red C Index Scores



Source: Red C - Three Ad and Brand Tracking Q4 2014

## RESULTS

Trust Statements	Score
Is a company that is here to stay	+6
Is a high quality brand	+4
Its coverage is as good as other networks	+1
A brand that you can believe in	+3
Is a brand I can trust	+1
Reliable	+3

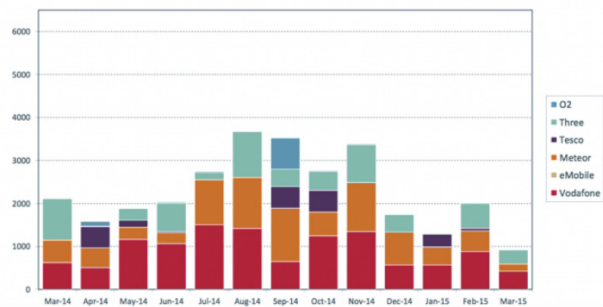
Source: Red C - Three Ad and Brand Tracking Q4 2014

The Perfect Surprise TV creative was the best performing Christmas ad of the Telco sector in December 2014, scoring a 61 on the Red C Red Star Index; 3 points ahead of Vodafone's Christmas ad 'Power to the Murphy's', and a staggering 12 points above Meteor's 'Christmas Unlimited'. It also beat the average Telco ad score of 54 by 7 points.

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TVR's & SOV – Three vs. Competitors



Source: Red C - Three Ad and Brand Tracking Q1 2015

## RESULTS

The ad scored particularly high on feelings of interest, happiness, contentment and warmth versus competitors Vodafone and Meteor.

Feeling from Ad	Three 'Perfect Surprise'	Vodafone 'Power to the Murphy's'	Meteor 'Christmas Unlimited'
Interested	36	27	31
Happy	30	29	15
Content	25	16	8
Warm	46	27	7

Source: Red C - Three Ad and Brand Tracking Q4 2014

### 2. Achieve high levels of advertising cut through versus competitors despite smaller spend.

Despite smaller spend than our competitors Vodafone and Meteor, the Perfect Surprise campaign had, according to Red C tracking, an effective cut through that was 7% higher than both its competitors.

The Perfect Surprise achieved all the commercial and marketing objectives it was tasked with, as well as overachieving on many of them. Can we prove the advertising was as effective as we believe it was? Sure we can.

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## RESULTS

### Spend & SOV:

Three's spend was smaller than that of its biggest competitors, Vodafone and Meteor, so it's not a case that we simply outspent the competition. In fact, Vodafone and Meteor maintained higher SOV than Three throughout November and December, but we still trumped them when it came to net ports, effective cut through and emotional score of the ad with consumers.

### Negative Sentiment:

The former O2 members of the combined base had negative sentiment towards the takeover with the O2 detractor score increasing, yet we managed to improve on O2's net port figures from the previous year by reassuring those who would soon be Three customers, and encouraging them to stay put.

### The Gift:

Some people buy phones as gifts for others at Christmas. We want the receiver to activate the Sim and join the network, but they might just take the phone and throw away the Sim, never joining the network. The €30 Ticketmaster gift card was never intended to drive acquisition; it was to ensure Sim activation in 2015. The voucher couldn't be redeemed until the following year, so was never intended to have an effect on sales. We were also not the only brand with an offer like this on the market – Vodafone arguably had the better incentive, with 6 months' Netflix included with certain device purchases.

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## RESULTS

### Payback: Return on Marketing Investment

To measure the overall effectiveness of the 'Perfect Surprise' Christmas 2014 campaign, and without the benefit of having econometrics available, Three use the following equation to evaluate the financial impact of their campaign. Their ambition is to understand the return on investment for each €1 of campaign spend.

Equation:  $(\text{Adds} \times \text{€LTV}) / \text{€Campaign Spend} = \text{ROI for each €1}$

#### NOTE

Adds = Number of customers acquired during campaign

€LTV = Average Life Time Customer Value in €; a different value is applied for Pre Pay and Post Pay customers

€Campaign Spend = Total media spend and ATL production costs in €

A number of assumptions are made:

- ▶ Only connections made during campaign periods are included
- ▶ All connections during tactical ATL campaigns are attributed to advertising

Based on the above, ROI on the Three Perfect Surprise Brand Response Campaign 2014 is €5.50 for every €1 spent.

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## RESULTS

### Unexpected Results:

In addition to hitting all its objectives and achieving an impressive ROMI, the campaign creative received positive critique from the advertising industry, chosen as Ad of the Day by The Drum 2. It would also go on to win three creative awards at the coveted Kinsale Shark Awards in 2015 3, including an International award.

*1 Red Star from Red C Research is an advertising evaluation model that tracks performance against – Affection, Brand Impact and Connection. It facilitates comparability and target setting with industry and market benchmarking ultimately producing a one number outcome for every execution providing a snapshot of advertising effectiveness.*

*2 <http://www.thedrum.com/news/2014/11/28/ad-day-three-ireland-perfect-surprise>*

*3 Three awards won at Kinsale Sharks 2015:*

- > Silver in International Film (TV/Online and Cinema - Computing, gaming and telecommunications)*
- > Silver in Irish Film Craft (Best Cinematography)*
- > Silver in Irish Film (TV, Online and Cinema - Irish TV/film 30 seconds or over)*

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## IMPACT ON BEHAVIOURAL ACTIVITY AND PAYBACK

In the months leading up to March 2015, when the O2 brand would disappear and all its customers would migrate to Three, every piece of activity undertaken by Three had to have one eye on the future. Each campaign had a shared objective that they individually contributed to; to maintain the total customer base of the 'new Three' business in advance of the brand merger. Three of these are entries in this year's awards. Each campaign played a role in this singular objective, so it's difficult to isolate the precise influence of the Christmas campaign.

However, our results demonstrate how this campaign was specifically effective in driving positive sentiment towards the Three brand at a really critical time for the business. We connected with consumers on an emotional level, scoring higher than any of our competitors on feelings of happiness, interest, contentment and warmth. We achieved particularly high levels in the trust statements, indicating that people felt increased reassurance about the Three brand following the campaign.

Brand health scores continued to rise in early January following the success of the Christmas campaign. We believe that the Christmas campaign laid a new foundation from which the brand could speak, and from which the other campaigns could build on. Through Christmas, we had raised the levels of trust and reassurance in the Three brand. We kick-started a change in the O2 customers' sentiment, which would play a vital role in influencing their decision as to whether they would stay with Three or not in advance of brand migration.

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## NEW LEARNINGS

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In November, we set out to test two of Three's websites using split testing landing pages for PPC. This would test the conversion rate of the different landing pages; the Christmas online shop and the regular online shop. We found that the Christmas ad copy had a higher CTR but a lower conversion rate. The regular online shop, on the other hand, had a higher conversion rate. Using this information, we adapted our media strategy to use the Christmas messaging in the ad copy, sending customers to the regular online shop where the conversion rate was higher.



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## SUMMARY

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This is the story of how an award-winning brand response creative campaign delivered real commercial effect at the most commercially and emotionally competitive time of year – Christmas. And how that campaign not only delivered on ambitious targets, but was also instrumental in changing brand perception of Three at a crucial time for the business. This is the story of how the Perfect Surprise won Christmas in 2014.

# Three: How The Perfect Surprise won Christmas

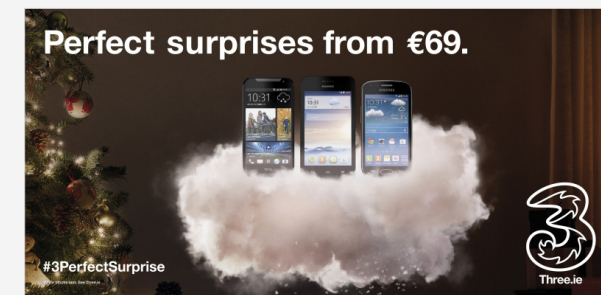
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## MEDIA GALLERY

Tactical Print



Tactical Outdoor



Digital Display

