

# ADVENT OF A NEW APPROACH



Premiumising the M&M's **advent calendar**.

**Client:** Mars Wrigley  
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**For publication**



Our 3D pop-up advent calendar for M&M's was the result of an in-depth, collaborative process with Mars Wrigley's brand innovation team. It derived from a key consumer insight that traditional advent calendars quickly become ripped, dog-eared and tatty as Christmas Day approaches. By exploring the role that advent calendars play in the Christmas ritual, with the witty and sociable brand character of M&M's, we were able to create an innovative and interactive pop-up advent story that builds throughout December. The added value resulting from an innovative design approach has demonstrated the potential for a new premium sector within mainstream confectionery advent.

We were given two key objectives:

1. To generate innovative seasonal concepts and **(REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA)** across the company's mainstream confectionery brands
2. To help Mars Wrigley **approach global seasonal opportunities in a different way**, marrying consumer seasonal rituals with key brand assets

So, how did we do?

## **1. (REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA)** **(REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA)** (REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA)

### **A roaring online success**

It was the **#1** Mars Wrigley Christmas production Amazon.fr and the **#1** food Christmas calendar on Amazon.de, where it was also the **3rd most searched product** across all categories, behind Sony's PlayStation 5. **73%** of Amazon customer reviews gave the product 4 or 5 stars. It was **restocked three times** on MyM&M's.com and had completely **sold out** across MyM&M's and Amazon by **20th November 2020**. It achieved a rate of sale **36% higher** than expected in France. Net sales value was **2.5x target** in Belgium. Expected demand for Christmas 2021 is **double** on Amazon.fr and **6x** on MyM&M's.com<sup>+</sup>.

## **(REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA)**

## **2. A new approach to seasonal opportunities** **Challenging the myth that mainstream confectionery advent can't achieve a price premium**

Previous attempts to create more premium products for Mars Wrigley in mainstream seasonal confectionery had not been successful. The 3D advent calendar is evidence that consumer-driven design innovation, married with appropriate brand values, has the potential to achieve **(REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA)**.

## **Changing the way the company employs design as a strategic innovation tool**

A new, more collaborative, 'prototyping to learn' innovation process, with iterative development and consumer input at every stage, set a precedent for the way Mars Wrigley employs design. The company plans to continue this process for seasonal gifting in global markets, across all its confectionery brands.

## **Influencing factors** **(REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA)** (REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA)

<sup>+</sup>Source: Mars Wrigley internal Post Launch Review analysis

## Outline of project brief

The Mars Wrigley portfolio includes a number of global confectionery brands, including Mars, Galaxy, MilkyWay and M&M's. Our brief was innovation-led, spanning the breadth of the company's confectionery brands, seasonal opportunities and global markets. The ambition was to work collaboratively with the in-house brand innovation team to exploit key seasonal consumer rituals, by creating a brand-first portfolio of value tiered propositions.

## Two key objectives

1. To generate innovative seasonal concepts and (REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA), across the company's mainstream confectionery brands
2. To help Mars Wrigley use a new **innovative design approach to address global seasonal opportunities**, marrying consumer rituals and insights with key brand assets

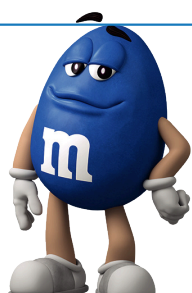
## (REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA)

For any confectionery giant, seasonal events represent an opportunity to drive incremental penetration. This is especially true of Christmas where it's permissible – almost necessary – to bring chocolate into the festivities, and where the Christmas 'moment' can offer brand owners the potential to build a broader repertoire, (REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA) and create new occasions with consumers.

However, this is a far bigger challenge at the mass-market lower end of the confectionery category, where price plays a big role in the purchase decision and competition is fierce. Mars Wrigley had been working to drive growth in the seasons for a number of years. This project was seen as an opportunity to use innovation and design to test the potential for a more premium seasonal sector for the company's mainstream brands. The aim was to achieve a (REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA).

## Approaching seasonal opportunities in a different way

Mars Wrigley's aim was to enhance key celebratory seasons by creating a portfolio of leading brand propositions to respond to different price points and maximise sales. As part of this wider strategic review of seasonal gifting, the company was determined to explore ways of tying together the distinctiveness of brands like M&M's with the emotional hooks of a seasonal opportunity such as Christmas. We were briefed to explore global 'keys to win', looking across product, pack and brand innovations to determine the levers that best delivered these objectives.



(REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA)

Standard 2D M&M's advent calendar (France)



The standard M&M calendar follows a traditional 2D format of a thin box with 25 windows, not self-standing

## Description

### A process like no other, leading to a place not previously reached

Our collaboration with the Mars Wrigley brand innovation team was central to the process. The brand team orchestrated innovation workshops and used consumer research to draw out the emotional response around seasonal rituals, and the way in which these differed across local markets. They then focused on marrying consumer experience of a season with the unique assets of each brand – seasonal ‘dating’ if you will.

We were given an open brief to innovate opportunities for each brand across all the gifting seasons. Advent calendars with experiential executions that could trade up consumers from the traditional category norm were seen as a key opportunity, since they trigger the countdown to Christmas, delivering a series of individual but connected moments and excitement throughout December. The brand innovation team was able to ensure that the consumer experience of advent was accurately translated into five key ‘wins’: build anticipation, be festive and display worthy, thrill with reveals, save the best till last and keep it quick and mess free.

These requirements were then explored for various Mars Wrigley confectionery brands, of which M&M’s is a key priority. The six M&M’s characters are bold, witty, dynamic and social, providing a rich mix of brand assets for an interactive Christmas advent calendar. A ‘prototyping to learn’ process then allowed individual elements of the concept to be tested to assess which were the key levers in the consumer experience. Iterative development, with consumer input at every stage, led to a design solution that was a real ‘first’ in this market, delivering on consumer experience, and beautifully designed and detailed.

Another agency followed the standard M&M’s branding and applied graphics to our structural concept, which is the focus of this award entry.

### A 3D pop-up advent ‘book’

Our concept relied on a key insight garnered through design research to address the real problem: traditional advent calendars quickly become ripped, dog-eared and tatty as Christmas Day approaches. This allowed the design team to come at the project from a very different perspective and ask:

**“How can we flip this experience on its head, so the calendar actually improves over time? And how can we make it more about the consumer experience than the 25 individual (and in reality very mass-market) chocolates?”**

The result is an advent calendar that is effectively a story, building over the Christmas period. A self-standing, A3 sized pop-up, the opening experience delivers an unexpected M&M’s winter landscape, with a secondary panel that starts to build the 3D scene that is so integral to the concept. Each daily window ‘pop-up’ adds a new element to the story, not just revealing a small bag of M&M’s but adding M&M characters and props to the scene. In this way the story gradually builds, leveraging the brand’s distinctive personality, with the calendar improving rather than detracting in appearance as Christmas approaches. On day 25, M&M’s Crispy is the final surprise.

Details mattered. It was crucial that the lid stayed open, and the pop-up doors remained standing upright from 1 through to 25. The 3D pop-up concept also needed to be clearly communicated in-store and online. The characters of the individual M&M’s in Christmas mood were key – the story depicting and reinforcing the fun, social aspect of the brand and Christmas cues of red and green balanced with M&M’s instantly recognisable yellow.



Our 3D pop-up calendar provides a completely new advent experience

## Overview of the advent calendar segment

### Launching a more premium advent calendar for mainstream confectionery brands

The confectionery advent calendar segment is significant; chocolate is synonymous with Christmas and in some countries (e.g. the UK) it's an established segment and most families will purchase at least one advent calendar. In other countries such as the US and France this remains an untapped opportunity.

Six European markets were identified. France was seen as potentially the largest, with a more emerging advent category than here in the UK (where price promotions dominate). Online was

identified as a key channel. (REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA)

The added value needed to be self-evident, with the concept convincing them that the product would offer an attractive (REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA), or the product would not have been listed.

### Key facts

**Launch date: 18.10.12**

**Design fees: (REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA)**



We were given two key objectives:

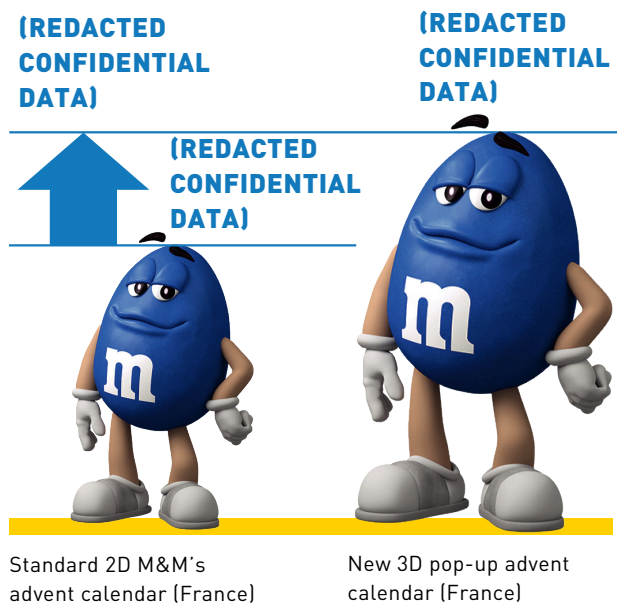
1. To generate innovative seasonal concepts and **(REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA)**, across the company's mainstream confectionery brands
2. To help Mars Wrigley **approach global seasonal opportunities in a different way**, marrying consumer seasonal rituals with key brand assets

So, how did we do?

## 1. (REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA)

### (REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA)

Our 3D pop-up concept builds a Christmas story, is tailor-made for the M&M's brand, and turns an advent calendar into an enhanced consumer experience. (REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA).



Standard 2D M&M's advent calendar (France)

New 3D pop-up advent calendar (France)

It also sets a precedent, showing that there is huge potential for a new premium sector in the mass-market confectionery advent segment.

(REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA)

### A roaring online success

The advent calendar was launched in six European markets, including France, Germany, Belgium and Denmark, primarily online through Amazon and via the M&M's online store.

**France:** France was the biggest market for the new calendar. It was the **#1** bestselling product at Amazon.fr, selling out by 20th November 2020. The rate of sale was **36% higher** than expected. Out of 10 Mars Wrigley's innovations in Christmas 2020, it ranked **#1**. There was no promotion. Mars Wrigley is gearing up for **2x** demand for Christmas 2021 on Amazon.fr.<sup>+</sup>

**Germany:** The pop-up advent was only available online in Germany. On Amazon.de, it ranked **#1** in all 'advent calendar' searches, **#1** in Food Christmas calendars, and was **#3** most searched keyword on Amazon.de, behind Sony's new Playstation5/PS5. It ranked **#2** bestselling advent SKU.<sup>+</sup>

**Belgium:** It was **#1** Mars Wrigley Christmas item in terms of value sales and **#2** biggest Christmas SKU across the whole market. Net sales value was **2.5x target**. Several buyers have already confirmed in-store quantities for Christmas 2021.<sup>+</sup>

**My M&M's online store:** This was the first ever seasonal item sold on MyMMs.com and is now included as part of the European 'menu card' going forwards. It was restocked three times and had sold out completely by 17th November 2020. Mars Wrigley is gearing up for **6x** demand on MyM&M's.com for Christmas 2021.

<sup>+</sup>Source: Mars Wrigley internal Post Launch Review analysis

<p><b>France</b></p>	<p>Rate of sale <b>36% higher</b> than expected in France (largest market)  <b>#1</b> Mars Wrigley's advent innovations for Christmas 2020  <b>#1</b> bestselling Mars Wrigley Christmas product on Amazon.fr  <b>Sold out by 20th November 2020</b> on Amazon.fr          Expected demand for Christmas 2021 <b>2x</b> 2020<sup>+</sup></p>
<p><b>Germany</b></p>	<p><b>#1</b> Food Christmas calendars on Amazon.de  <b>#1</b> total categories searched 'advent calendar' on Amazon.de  <b>#2</b> advent SKU on Amazon.de  <b>#3</b> most searched key word on Amazon.de, behind Sony's new PlayStation 5 (#1) and PS5 (#2)  <b>73%</b> of Amazon customer reviews gave the product <b>4 or 5 stars</b><sup>+</sup></p>
<p><b>Belgium</b></p>	<p><b>#2</b> Christmas SKU across the Belgian market  <b>#1</b> Mars Wrigley Christmas SKU in Belgium          Net sales value was <b>2.5x target</b><sup>+</sup></p>
<p><b>MyM&amp;Ms.com</b></p>	<p><b>Restocked three times</b> on MyM&amp;Ms.com, and <b>sold out by 17 November 2020</b>          Expected demand for Christmas 2021 <b>6x</b> 2020<sup>+</sup></p>

<sup>+</sup>Source: Mars Wrigley internal Post Launch Review analysis

## (REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA)

It was essential that the added value provided by the pop-up storytelling concept was clearly communicated. We needed to convince Mars Wrigley marketeers to take this project on, (REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA). Design played a fundamental role in uncovering the insight (i.e. the problem with traditional advent calendars), in developing an innovative, carefully crafted solution (REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA), and in selling this into the business.

**“As with many confectionery players, the marketeers at Mars Wrigley have the final say on new products. If they don’t feel they can sell something in, either because the concept might not be understood by consumers, (REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA), then it doesn’t see the light of day. They saw the potential immediately, and the results speak for themselves”, Jo Sinisgalli, Regional Marketing Manager.**

## 2. A new approach to seasonal opportunities

### Challenging the myth that mainstream confectionery advent can’t be offered to trade (REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA).

The idea of trading up Mars Wrigley’s mainstream confectionery brands in this category had been explored in previous years, leading to an internal myth that they could not be offered to trade (REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA). We have succeeded in shattering this myth, but only through a collaborative process between our designers and the company’s brand innovation team. It’s our belief that the product’s success was a result of choosing an agency with commercial, structural design expertise, developing ideas through an iterative, physical prototype-driven process, and identifying a concept which focused on consumer experience and interaction. Only in this way were Mars Wrigley able to arrive at a structurally led concept that completely changes consumer perception of advent calendars.

### Changing the way the company employs design as a strategic innovation tool

This project has led to a change in the way that Mars Wrigley thinks about, and employs, design. The company has now instigated new projects across other key strategic seasonal brands to build upon the learnings from the 3D advent’s success. It means:

- Thinking globally about seasonal opportunities that promote storytelling and consumer interaction, at the same time as recognising local differences in culture, habits and consumer perceptions
- Ensuring that seasonal innovations are intrinsically linked with, and enhance, individual brand values
- Starting with big brand creative ideas at a strategic level to provide ‘stretch’ into the season, then developing specific propositions based on consumer insights, design strategy, storytelling and brand concepts, and finally using prototypes as stimulus to test with consumers in key markets
- Collaboration between brand team and external agency, giving the design team a broad and innovative brand remit, guided by consumer insights
- Continuing to create physical prototypes and iterate the design to ensure that all details are fully resolved (because the concept would have failed if the lid always fell down, or the doors didn’t remain upright)



“In my seven years at Mars Wrigley, we had consistently attempted to innovate and create more premium seasonal opportunities, across all our brands. The difference with this project was that design was embedded at an early stage, with an integrated internal and external design team, to help us explore and achieve key strategic objectives. There is absolutely no question in my mind that the properly effective and creative use of design was instrumental and will change the way Mars Wrigley view new product development going forwards.” Richard Walzer, former Mars Wrigley Head of Design, Europe, Middle East and Asia.

**Influencing factors:**

(REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA)

(REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA)



