

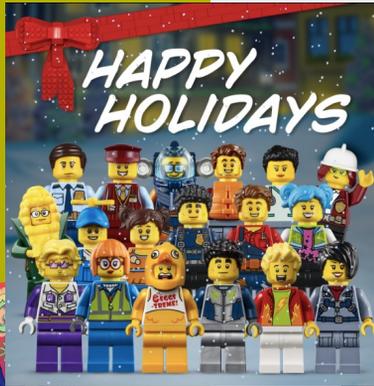
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# Joy to the World

The Cultural Context of Joy is not Just for  
Christmas



December 2022



## Introduction

Joy is often wished upon us over the festive season, and in our wishes to others. A word usually used to connote an intense feeling of happiness, it has biblical associations with Christmas which have now expanded to include a strong secular association with this time of year. With roots in ancient traditions of celebration, togetherness and emotional warmth to alleviate the darkness and bitter cold of winter in the Northern hemisphere, the joy of the festive season speaks to a deep human need, but it is also a feeling experienced year-round.

*Images (Clockwise): Lego (Instagram); Who Gives A Crap - The Celebrate Edition; Kin Euphorics (Instagram); Just Eat (Instagram)*

Ephemeral in comparison to, for example, contentment, joy can be a moment – an uplift to the everyday, an unexpected pleasure, a trip back to child-like wonder. With many people facing financial hardship and difficult circumstances this winter and beyond, finding these moments of joy (as opposed to, say, a festive backdrop of exaggerated mass consumerism) is of increasing relevance, and something that brands must be sensitive to.

**It's also something that successful 'happy' brands are able to bring their customers throughout the year – let's take a look at some campaigns, products and initiatives that do this well.**



## 1. Just Eat

The decision to order takeaway encapsulates a moment of everyday joy for many consumers. You opt to treat yourself – to remain comfortable at home but bring in the celebratory mood that restaurant food can offer. Just Eat has captured this, while emphasizing the service’s flexibility, with their iconic “Did somebody say” adverts.

First, the name of the ads – and chorus line of the catchy song featured – epitomizes the moment of joyful excitement many feel at the suggestion of ordering in. Posing the question suggests that the listener is not the initiator, but rather feels the unexpected uplift of somebody else’s good idea. ▶



*Snoop Dogg as protagonist of the original version*



The most recent version of the advert features Katy Perry reimagining the tune made iconic by Snoop Dogg for the brand. Each artist's version is tailored to their musical style, bringing a sense of auteurship to the performances: the artists are interpreting the brand meaning as themselves, not just passing on a message. This aligns with emergent narratives of joy as subjective, personal expression.

Similarly, Perry's new version brings an edge of useful self-awareness, with the artist's well-known kitsch style adding an element of irony. This makes the repeat of a well-known campaign seem purposeful, not stale, and adds a sense of joyful anticipation around who might be the next Just Eat star.

Perry's sense of style also brings a particular sense of playful joy to the content. The fantastical doll's house setting and outlandish food-themed costumes are certainly on-brand for her – she is quoted as saying that “Coincidentally, most of my records and eras have had food undertones to them, from strawberries, to peppermints, to now mushrooms.” They also suggest imaginative wonder, coding Just Eat as boundless joyful possibilities of creative flavour.

*Imagery from the new version with Katy Perry*



## 2. Who Gives A Crap

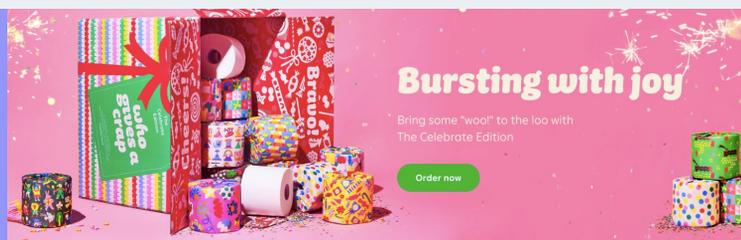
Ethical toilet paper company Who Gives A Crap brings joy by uplifting the everyday, wrapping an otherwise mundane but necessary item in brightly patterned paper. The eye-catching outer layer fulfils the dual purpose of aligning with the brand's mission to keep the packaging plastic-free, yet at the same time brightening up customers' bathrooms – usually a functional space – and positioning each individual roll as a kind of mini-gift through the magic of unwrapping.

Who Gives A Crap also taps into the child-like element of joy with a sprinkling of tongue-in-cheek toilet humour – beginning with the name, but also encompassing passing references to bums, poos and farts. These moments of context-appropriate immaturity bring the reader back to a childhood sense of taboo, coding the brand as a knowing, cheeky peer and bringing the buyer the joy of being in on the joke. It also provides strong differentiation from the euphemistic discretion of more traditional brands, positioning Who Gives A Crap as refreshingly sincere and expectation-defyingly human. ►

Who Gives A Crap tagged images on Instagram



Finally, with both of these cues, Who Gives A Crap are also successful in uniting their ethical proposition (producing sustainable toilet paper and donating 50% of profits “to ensure everyone has access to clean water and a toilet within our lifetime”) with this sense of playful wonder, coding these two dimensions as compatible with one another and playing into the joy of giving. By speaking about their ethical initiatives in a down-to-earth, peer-to-peer tone of voice with simple words and syntax, and using language that brings customers into the action of working towards the company’s goals, the brand codes doing good through this purchase choice as light, easy and attainable. And by mixing this focus on virtue with their positioning as bringers of everyday, childlike joy, the brand reconciles what are often seen as disparate spaces – responsibility and fun.



Website imagery, including 2022 festive Celebrate Edition – ‘Bursting with joy’



### 3. Lego x Yinka Ilori: Launderette of Dreams

As a toy brand, it might be expected that Lego's coding of joy would also focus on invoking the child-like elements of that emotion. However, their 2021 collab 'Launderette of Dreams' with designer Yinka Ilori takes that purity of feeling to the next level, to showcase how children "rebuild the world around them for the better and use play to transform the mundane into a magical experience" – positioning joy as creativity and optimism for good.

The installation recreates the interior of a launderette using over 200,000 Lego bricks, making it interactive and colourful – for example with vending machines dispensing not soap but Lego toys. Ilori says he was inspired by childhood trips to the launderette – an often-forgotten mundane space with importance as a community hub and a place he often found himself dreaming about achievement in when young. As part of Lego's Rebuild the World campaign, the joyfully reimagined launderette draws on children's creativity to imagine and build a better world. ►

An important feature of *Launderette of Dreams* is that Lego is not overtly telling customers to feel joy, but instead collaborating with an artist to make a space where they can feel it for themselves through interactive play. This codes the brand as a tool for joy, not provider of joy itself, positioning Lego enthusiasts young and old as architects of their own happiness as well as inventive solution-finders. With the focus of this piece on the launderette as a community setting of cultural and idea exchange, it highlights the power of creative togetherness – what joy can we build together? Not to mention that taking a launderette and making it brightly coloured and full of interactive gadgets is just plain good fun – a joy in itself.

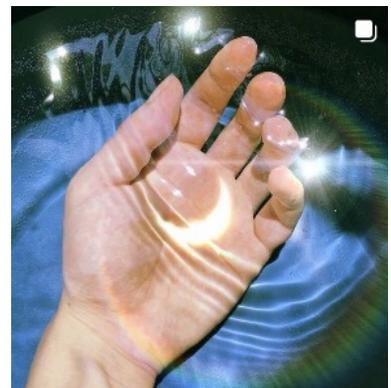




## 4. Kin Euphorics

The non-alcoholic beverage sector is rapidly expanding as consumers adopt and experiment with health and wellbeing practices around no or low alcohol consumption. However, dominantly, alcohol is often part of celebration, and a signifier of joyful togetherness. A new guard of non-alcoholic brands are also looking to capture and leverage this joy.

Kin Euphorics is one of the more established players in this field – early to the US market, and now available in the UK online and in selected retailers. The brand name itself – i.e. reference to ‘Euphorics’ – highlights the feeling of joyful uplift that drinkers seek from the product, with a word choice connoting almost transcendental or mythical happiness. Meanwhile, presenting it as a noun renders this an essential, active property of the drink. ▶



*Instagram imagery positioning joy as atmospheric relaxation*



Kin has also recently brought out a new, specifically joy-targeted variant called Bloom. The product is described as “infused with adaptogens, nootropics, and botanics... to awaken passion, conjure a calmer mind, and unlock heart-opening joy any time of day.” This explanation links both passion and calm, steering joy away from pure exuberance and towards a sense of mellow relaxation, while “heart-opening” evokes emotionally available togetherness – all portraying joy in line with wider emergent narratives of mindful social connection.

The aesthetics of joy conveyed by the imagery of the product on the brand website also align with an emergent vision of joy. Dreamlike, retro image quality and nostalgic touches to the fonts code the brand as imaginatively atmospheric. Meanwhile, shots filled with fruit, flowers and glasses alongside sparkly lens flares and even a snake suggest sociable excitement and abundance, but the fruit and flowers also cue natural purity – in all, coding hedonism without the hangover.

*Bloom product images on website*

# 4 key takeouts for brands:

## 1 Joy is more than one-size-fits-all

Bringing in elements of creative self-expression to the way it is portrayed aligns with emergent – and therefore increasingly relevant – conceptualisations of joy.



## 2 Joy and good conscience are not incompatible

In fact, these brand examples show that the cultural context of joy is shifting from an individual to collective focus.



## 3 Interactivity allows people to discover their own joy

or, as Lego suggest, to build it together. This taps into a wider cultural shift towards self-definition and DIY involvement. Keeping up with these shifting expressions of joy allows brands to stay relevant.



## 4 Joy does not *have* to be full-on, exuberant extroversion

Emergently, a slightly calmer, more mindful approach is also relevant, balancing excitement with mellow human connection.





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**Thank you  
& wishing you much joy for the year ahead**

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