

ANALYSIS

Euro 2016 may be over, but there are lasting lessons to be learned from Iceland's hugely successful social media campaign, reports **Gemma Goldfingle**

#WIN – How Iceland's Twitter campaign won the social media Euros

There's always a wildcard contender in any big sporting event – after knocking England out with conviction Iceland faced hosts France in the quarter finals. Iceland lost, but the team went home heroes. Retailer Iceland capitalised on its namesake's phenomenal performance and created a tongue-in-cheek social media commentary throughout the tournament.

@IcelandFoods has been one of the must-follow Twitter accounts of the Euros for those seeking out football LOLs. The retailer created reams of fun content for the campaign, which centred around its support of the Icelandic national team.

The frozen-food retailer posted a comedic commentary on the team's performance, fun (though not strictly true) 'facts' about the country and has even enlisted the help of the Iceland football team, which it has sponsored throughout the tournament.

Joel Davis, founder of social media specialists Agency 2, applauds the efforts of Iceland – both the grocer and the football team. "It's hit the sweetest spot. Content is great when it is about something people are passionate about or the timing is right, or when it fits with the DNA of a brand. Iceland has hit all three of these."

A red-card decision?

Many might assume the grocer's social media push is impromptu and opportunistic, but Iceland social media manager Andy Thompson says it was months in the planning.

"It all started last autumn," he says. "When Iceland qualified [for the Euros] we started getting tweets congratulating us. We thought we'd use that to ride on the crest of a social media wave during the Euros."

Thompson says the grocer then approached the Football Association of Iceland to sponsor its national team during the tournament.

Some might see the approach as a risky one for the British grocer, whose headquarters straddle the English/Welsh border. With the fiercely proud English, Welsh and Northern



Irish all supporting their teams in the Euros, the grocer's sponsorship of Iceland could have led to its core shoppers giving it the red card.

Thompson says that the grocer's aim was to make Iceland "the UK's second team". Suky Stroud, senior writer at social media agency Zone Digital, says the grocer has benefited from the Iceland football team's underdog status – not to mention its team's popular war cry celebration. "Everyone loves an underdog," she says.

And, importantly, Iceland got the tone right. "They were reverential and self-aware and people loved it," says Stroud, who won an industry award for her work as community manager of Tesco's social media.

Iceland was dealt its greatest challenge when a surprisingly strong Iceland football team got into the final 16 of the Euros and were drawn against England. "It certainly shook things up," admits Thompson.

Iceland decided to take an impartial view ahead of the big game. "We even used the

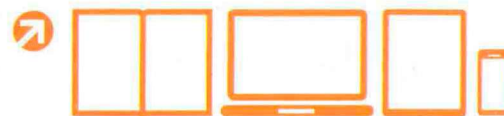
hashtag #impartial when Iceland scored, which was really well received," he says. The retailer also changed the fascia of its Leicester store to 'England or Iceland' and posted a video of its chief executive Malcolm Walker explaining his split allegiances as he wore a half English, half Iceland football strip.

A far-reaching campaign

Iceland's social campaign was far-reaching. It filmed segments with the Iceland football team, brought on board social influencers such as former Wigan and Hull footballer and *I'm a Celebrity...* star Jimmy Bullard and worked with specialist sports social agency Ball Street to widen its reach.

It also invested in Google search terms. For example, when Iceland played Hungary in their qualifying group, the grocer invested in the two search terms and browsers were met with a message that said "Iceland won't be beaten on hunger".

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The retailer also reacted well to unfolding events in the Euros. When a whinging Portuguese captain Cristiano Ronaldo complained about Iceland's "small mentality" after the football team grabbed a surprise point against Portugal, the retailer tweeted the footballer: "@Cristiano No need for tears over last night, mate. Just get our frozen chopped onions on the job."

It also interacted smartly with other consumer brands. It tweeted to Nando's "unlucky lads" after the Portugal match (although the fast food brand pointed out it was South African and not Portuguese) and had a Twitter-based wager with Euro 2016 official sponsor Carlsberg, whereby the lager brand said it would provide the drinks if Iceland beat England. Carlsberg came good with the bet after Iceland dumped England

out of the tournament and delivered a van-full of booze to the retailer's Deeside HQ.

Davis says Iceland were smart in the brands that it targeted, with Nando's and Carlsberg likely to resonate with potential customers.

Measures of success

The focus of the campaign was building engagement, according to Thompson. "We know we can't out-shout the [big four] competition but we can out-engage them," he says.

On this basis, the campaign has been a rousing success, helped by the stellar performance of the Iceland football team.

So far, the retailer's tweets have reached more than 52 million people and its video content has been viewed more than one million times. It has added a whopping 20,000

followers to its social media in the three weeks leading up to Iceland's quarter-final match with France and has benefited from free publicity in popular publications such as the Metro and LAD Bible. Thompson adds the consumer response has been overwhelmingly positive.

Davis says Iceland could have promoted its content to get maximum exposure. "If you want a campaign to reach new customers then unfortunately you're going to have to pay," he says.

However, Thompson points out that its hashtag #ComeOnIceland has organically trended three times so far this tournament and has been interacted with three times more than one of the tournament's sponsored hashtags.

Iceland could have also included more of a call to action in its content to try to drive sales, says Davis. "It could have promoted comfort food when England went crashing out, for example. It's important that the content is not just building sentiment but increasing sales," he says.

However, Stroud disagrees and thinks it might have been inappropriate to overtly push sales, which could have turned off its followers.

Thompson says Iceland will be analysing data to see if its social-media push has boosted sales during the tournament, but in the meantime will be hoping that its efforts will see it being crowned the social media champion of Euro 2016.



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