Extra Gum Celebrates Offline Connections Among Generation Z

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People are spending more time staring at screens during the pandemic, with various apps such as Zoom and TikTok becoming the default place where friends, family and work colleagues come together.

But a new 30-second ad from Mars Wrigley's Extra gum, created in partnership with BBDO, seeks to celebrate the connections that occur offline. Part of the brand's "Give Extra, Get Extra" ad campaign, the clip features two young sisters hanging out at home. The younger one stares into her mobile device, while the older one dances to get her sibling's attention, but fails. Later, the older girl passes a note written on an empty gum wrapper to her sister. "NEW FRIEND: LENA/[ ] CONFIRM/[ ] DENY" reads the message, which is greeted with a smile.

"This campaign was driven by a desire to transform the way people engage with chewing gum while navigating life at home," said Kenny Blumenschein, svp and executive creative director at Energy BBDO, in a statement. "More specifically, it shares the message that it's human to look for digital distractions in this new normal, but that what really nourishes our souls is taking the time to reconnect with those around us."

Chanel Gant, a brand manager at Extra, added that Extra gum has always focused on meaningful connections through the power of small gestures, and that "2020 has certainly changed the ways we interact with others, including our loved ones."

The campaign is coming at a time when the brand could likely

use a boost. Throughout the pandemic, sales of gum and mints have declined due to fewer trips to convenience stores and less demand for breath-enhancing products.

Mondelez International, the company behind Trident and Stride, reported last week that net revenue for its gum and candy division declined 22% in North America for the quarter ending June 30. Likewise, Hershey's CEO Michele Buck recently said the company's refreshment segment, which includes Ice Breakers and Breath Savers, dropped between 20% and 25% in June.

Competitors have been leaning into advertising in this moment, too: In May, Hershey's Ice Breakers released a 15-second spot encouraging people to consume a mint before donning a mask to help eliminate unpleasant "mask breath."

While Mars Wrigley, which manages brands such as Juicy Fruit, Spearmint and Altoids, declined to share specifics on gum sales, Gant said Extra is the top-selling gum brand in the U.S., and that its gum and mint products are vital to the company's bottom line.

"Gum purchases happening at checkout have been compromised during the pandemic, which has changed gum consumption, including freshening up, chewing on-the-go, at school and at work," Gant told Adweek. "So, we've evolved our strategies to meet consumer demand and offer brand innovations—like this campaign—to remind people of the reasons they chew gum and to keep gum top-of-mind to propel category growth."

Extra's latest spot, titled "Real Friend Request," debuted today and is set to air on television, Hulu, Roku and Amazon Fire TV.

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