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Marketers weigh in on Skims' $148 advent calendar criticism



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The internet is not feeling so merry about Skims' 2026 advent calendar. The Kim Kardashian co-founded brand's $148 holiday offering has **received critical reviews** on social media, where some customers expressed dissatisfaction with the value of the 12-day calendar, which includes scrunchies, keychains, and hair ties. "The audacity to drop a $148 advent calendar with things you can find at the bottom of your purse," beauty industry marketer **Jenn Lyles writes on LinkedIn**. Skims, known for its shapewear and intimates, **advertises** the product as an "accessories advent calendar."

EDITORS' PICKS

Christina Minshull
1h

Marketing tinfoil hat on… I have a theory that SKIMS intentionally designed an awful Advent calendar to get people talking about the brand.

It’s just a little too awful to be real.

ICYMI, every December, beauty and fashion brands compete to create the most extravagant Advent calendars. And every December, TikTok creators unbox them, review them and rank which brands delivered the best value.

It’s become an entire content category in itself.

But the best brands know you can’t beat the competition by doing exactly what everyone else is doing.

So what if SKIMS decided not to compete for the best Advent calendar, but for the most talked-about?

Make something so underwhelming, so questionable, that creators can’t resist reviewing it. Suddenly, you’ve got thousands of people making content about your brand, audiences debating whether it’s worth the money and an enormous amount of earned media. Outrage becomes the distribution strategy.

1 · 1 Comment

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Megan Brady
29m · Edited

£158 advent calendar flop or marketing genius???

unless you've been living under a rock you'll have seen the **SKIMS** advent calendar controversy over the weekend

people were left VERY underwhelmed after opening their calendars to find

- hair bobbles
- hair clips
- stuffed toys
- bra straps

basically stuff you'd find under your car seat 😭 LOL

BUT here's where it gets interesting

SKIMS have quickly responded by offering customers a full refund OR store credit and despite the backlash, EVERYONE is talking about the brand

and my vote is almost a very high percentage of people will be taking store credit for black friday (because we all have a skims wishlist right)

PR nightmare? yes BUT they've responded quickly + given customers options and kept everyone talking

sooo was it intentional? probably not but kimmy k you've got everyone's attention

marketing genius or absolute flop??? what do we think

17 · 4 Comments

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Francesca Linney
1h · Edited

I think there's an interesting conversation to be had around the **SKIMS** advent calendar.

Priced at £158, currently sold out and with a UK waitlist, the calendar blew up across social media over the weekend, with one TikTok unboxing surpassing 64 million views.

But not quite for the reasons you'd expect.

Customers quickly took to social media to share their unboxings, with many questioning the value of what was inside. Rather than the premium products they might have expected, the calendars were largely filled with smaller accessories, particularly hair scrunchies.

What followed was a huge wave of UGC.

SKIMS was quick to respond, offering customers a full refund upon return or store credit.

But here’s where it gets interesting.

The calendar launched alongside SKIMS’ wider holiday offering, including some seriously good PJ sets.

So, was the calendar ever really the main event?

Or was it a way to get people talking about SKIMS, drive traffic to the brand and ultimately encourage customers to shop elsewhere across the holiday collection?

I find it hard to believe Kim Kardashian and her team wouldn’t have anticipated some level of scrutiny around the calendar. They’re certainly no strangers to understanding how social media works and how quickly a conversation can gain traction.

Whether the backlash was intentional or not, SKIMS has generated millions of views, a huge volume of UGC and continued demand for a product that’s now sold out.

It does make you question whether the calendar was ever the main focus, particularly when it launched alongside a much wider festive collection.

Could the controversy have been a way of driving attention towards the brand as a whole, rather than the calendar itself?

So, did SKIMS get it wrong, or did they know exactly what they were doing?

1

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Nicole Jasmine Scott
2h

“And visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads.”

Until they opened an advent calendar and found a candle lid.

Welcome to the wonderful world of LUXURY advent calendars!

Confession: The only advent calendars I’ve ever bought myself were chocolate ones. As an ADULT!

And NO, not Lindt.

I’m talking bargain-bin supermarket chocolate. Basically pure sugar.

Is it good? YES.
The best chocolate I’ve ever eaten? HAHA. No.

Growing up in a Jewish family, we didn’t have advent calendars at home.

But at school? We had a cheap chocolate one. Every day, the teacher picked someone to open a door.

Was I ever picked? NOPE.

So adult me bought her own. Little me was THRILLED.

Somewhere along the way, advent calendars became BIG business.

Naturally, I fell down a rabbit hole… AGAIN.

There are calendars for skincare, coffee, LEGO and even TINNED FISH.

And TikTok has turned unboxings into Christmas entertainment.

Especially when they're TERRIBLE.

Remember Chanel's $825 calendar in 2021?

STICKERS. Actual stickers.

Dior's $3,500 calendar in 2022?

Day four: A candle.
Day six: THE CANDLE LID.
Day thirteen: THE CANDLE STAND.

I'M SORRY, WHAT?

For $3,500, I would expect that candle to take me out for dinner.

And possibly pay my electricity bill.

Then Dior faced backlash AGAIN in 2025. A $1,000 calendar with miniatures that reminded people of FREE beauty-counter samples.

So tiny, I wondered if Dior had designed it for the mouse from 'Twas the Night Before Christmas.

"Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse."

WELL, THAT MOUSE WAS STIRRING.

He's at the Dior counter demanding a refund and questioning his life choices.

Now SKIMS has entered the chat with its $148, 12-day accessories calendar.

Keychains. Hair ties. Bobby pins. A bra-elastic headband. A squishy toy.

I'M SORRY, WHAT?

The packaging? ADORABLE. Little woodland animals and pretty Christmas colours.

The contents? Apparently, my bathroom drawer has been a luxury advent calendar this entire time.

The wild part? SKIMS sold a $450 underwear advent calendar last year.

So it's not like the brand has nothing else to put behind those doors.

To be fair, SKIMS DID list the accessories in its product description.

But knowing what you're buying and feeling like you got your money's worth are two different things.

And here's the plot twist: despite the backlash, the calendar reportedly SOLD OUT in some markets.

So SKIMS made the sale. But did it win over the customer?

THAT'S where my marketing brain kicks in.

Every advent calendar door is a chance to delight your biggest fans.

Or become TikTok's next punchline.

Brands control what's behind the doors.

They DON'T control the unboxing.

Because going viral and earning customer trust are two VERY different things.

Personally, I'll stick to my cheap chocolate.

At least I know what I'm getting.

#AdventCalendars #LuxuryMarketing #BrandMarketing #TikTokMarketing

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Mel Vandersteen
3h

This is how you handle a PR crisis 👏🏽

I think there's an interesting marketing lesson in the recent **SKIMS** Advent Calendar situation.

People paid $150 for the calendar and, understandably, were disappointed with what they received.

But what happened next is arguably more interesting than the campaign itself.

SKIMS sent a personalized email to every customer who purchased the calendar, offering two options:
- Return the product for a full refund.
- Keep the value as store credit.

And this is where I think the real marketing lesson is.

A disappointing product experience doesn't necessarily have to become a disappointing customer relationship.

SKIMS couldn't undo the product disappointment. But they could control how they responded to it.

A few things worth noting:
- They acknowledged the problem rather than pretending it didn't exist.
- They gave customers a choice instead of forcing a one-size-fits-all resolution.
- They used email as a direct customer relationship channel, not just another sales opportunity.

Will this fix the campaign? No.

Will it make everyone happy? Probably not.

But handling a mistake well is also part of customer experience. And sometimes, how a brand deals with disappointment says more about it than the campaign that caused it.

Retention isn't just about getting customers to buy again. It's also about giving them a reason not to walk away when things go wrong.

2

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Heidi Ruse
3h · Edited

I think SKIMS made a terrible advent calendar on purpose...

Let's talk about it.

Kim Kardashian has released a $148 SKIMS accessory advent calendar, and the response has been... Interesting.

The biggest criticism of the calendar was the contents. 12-doors, not related to shapewear or underwear, but rather hair ties and keychains. For nearly $150...

To put it plainly, many customers are comparing the contents to what you'd find down the side of the car seat. It's garbage.

And the fact many people don't see this as intentional actually blows my mind.

Advent calendar reviews have shook the internet for years. And the press surrounding a disappointing celebrity product launch makes noise like nothing else. I've been watching them myself since I was 12. She KNEW people would review it.

And naturally, after this year's mess of a calendar, next December will come around, Kim will release an updated advent calendar and there will be ONE thing happening: people will be dying to see if it has improved after the controversy.

And it will have. Because it was bad on purpose. It's almost humorous. And, ultimately = more money, more press, more reviews, more noise.

In my opinion, Kim knew what people would say about this calendar.

And you might be thinking: It's crazy to have people spend their hard earned $150 all for a marketing strategy... That's truly a waste of people's cash.

But SKIMS has already refunded everyone who bought the advent calendar.

It’s the perfect crime.

Anyway, this IS all just my opinion at the end of the day. Maybe I’m wrong.

But just remember that nothing in marketing is a mistake.

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Elena Mikhailova
4h

Can a brand become so powerful that it forgets what makes its products valuable? SKIMS might have just given us an interesting example.

The brand launched a $148 advent calendar featuring 12 surprises, including hair ties, clips, keychains, and other small accessories. Then the unboxing videos started appearing.
Instead of excitement, customers shared their disappointment, questioning whether

the contents were worth the price. And the criticism quickly went viral.

1) The lack of variety
The problem wasn't necessarily that the accessories were inexpensive. It was how little variety and excitement they offered.

SKIMS already has a broader accessories range. A pair of socks, a more distinctive hair accessory, or one exclusive item could have made the unboxing experience feel completely different.

When a brand has so many options, disappointing curation becomes much harder to justify.

2) The debate about profit margins
I've also seen people online defending SKIMS by trying to calculate the calendar's margins, arguing that the brand probably made little or no profit on it.

But since when is that the customer's responsibility?

Customers shouldn't have to worry about a brand's profit margins to justify the value of a product they paid for.

Pricing, production costs, and profitability are the brand's responsibility. Customers should be able to judge whether the product and experience are worth the price.

3) Brand power vs. perceived value
So was the backlash really justified?

I think the answer lies in the gap between **brand power and perceived value**.
The stronger the brand, the higher the expectations. And SKIMS seems to have underestimated just how much customers expected from this experience.

And an advent calendar isn't just a collection of products. It's 12 little moments of anticipation, discovery, and excitement.

Interestingly, despite all the criticism, the calendar sold out. SKIMS also responded by offering customers a full refund or store credit. The initial demand was clearly there. But a sellout doesn't necessarily mean customers were satisfied. Because viral attention can sell a product once. It's the experience that determines whether customers come back.

What do you think about this case?

#BrandStrategy #Marketing #CustomerExperience #SKIMSadventCalendar #SKIMS #BrandManager #ProjectManager #MarketingManager #AccountManager #CreativeCampaign

1

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Sarah Shapiro
8h

My feed this weekend was all **SKIMS** new Accessories Advent Calendar.

If you missed it: $148, 12 doors of scrunchies, bobby pins and keychains, one TikTok unboxing with 60 million+ views (and counting) with a negative review, and by the end of the weekend Skims had offered every buyer a refund or credit.

I'm a big fan of advent calendars when they're done right (trial, loyalty, margin!), so of course I did the math. At Skims' own prices the box isn't crazy. Their scrunchie 4-pack

is $42 and a keychain is $24. But Skims never showed shoppers that so customers did the math on their own and likely considered Amazon and Shein pricing and felt nothing meaningful with the "merch" items in the advent calendar.

I broke down the full scorecard of how the beauty industry has handled advent calendars versus what Skims did and what I'd do differently in a bonus send of Private Label.

Link in comments to read the full story including the financial breakdown and how I would have handled.

1 · 1 Comment

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Eric Hazard
9h · Edited

A $150 advent calendar. Social media backlash. And an expensive lesson in corporate

communications.

SKIMS recently found itself on the receiving end of a familiar holiday tradition: opening a white elephant gift and wondering who thought this was a good idea. The $150 advent calendar, filled with hair clips, scrunchies and other small accessories, became the subject of viral unboxing videos and considerable criticism over its perceived value.

The internet, as it tends to do, was delighted to participate. Across TikTok and Instagram, people posted videos and memes comparing the contents to the detritus found beneath couch cushions and questioning just how many bobby pins one person could possibly need during Advent. One unboxing video reportedly attracted more than 47 million views.

Everyone was watching. And perhaps nobody understood the implications of that audience better than Kim Kardashian and the **SKIMS** team.

One of the great challenges facing corporate communications today is that culture moves considerably faster than most companies are equipped to respond. A customer complaint becomes a TikTok video, the video becomes a meme, and the meme becomes the prevailing narrative about a brand. All before the communications team has finished scheduling a meeting to discuss the situation.

SKIMS, however, moved at the speed of culture.

According to a November 8 statement provided to TODAY, the company personally contacted every customer who purchased the calendar, offering two options: return it for a full refund, with shipping covered, or keep it and receive $150 in store credit. The accompanying apology was refreshingly direct: “We fell short this time.”

There is also a commercial calculation in allowing customers to keep the calendar and receive its full value in store credit. SKIMS absorbs an immediate cost while creating another opportunity to earn the customer's business. And in doing so, it gives disappointed customers something considerably more valuable than another explanation of what was supposed to be inside the box.

Whether that investment ultimately restores goodwill remains to be seen. But the response illustrates something increasingly important about the relationship between culture and corporate communications. When millions of people can participate in a conversation about your brand in real time, the ability to recognize the moment, acknowledge a mistake and offer a meaningful resolution becomes a competitive advantage.

The speed of culture demands a corresponding speed of accountability.

And sometimes, the most effective crisis communications strategy begins with the simplest possible sentence.

“We're sorry. Here's how we're going to make it right.”

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Wendy Eldridge, MBA, CFP®, CPFA
9h

Remember that SKIMS Accessories Advent Calendar? The one that cost $148 for hair ties, bobby pins, scrunchies, and keychains?

One creator opened all 12 days on TikTok, 45 million people watched, and the whole

internet quickly decided it wasn't worth the price.

Now, a buyer has shared an email from **SKIMS** offering an apology and a full refund.

According to the email making the rounds, SKIMS admits "we fell short this time" and is offering buyers a full refund with free return shipping, or full store credit if they keep it.

A single viral post can now cost a company hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Building a reputation used to take years, and losing it could take just as long. Today, one video can shift public perception in an instant.

There's no need for a press release, a lawsuit, or a boardroom meeting. Just one person with a phone and an opinion can make a massive impact.

Every business, whether you're big or small, needs to understand this: your customers are your marketing team now, whether you like it or not.

What do you think - did SKIMS handle this the right way?
#reputation #401ksrock

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