

# Three

# #holidayspam

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Three.co.uk

This is a story about how planning influenced the creation of a powerful new business proposition, an insightful campaign idea, and an innovative media approach.

In the mobile network market, where everyone is seen as the same and as bad as each other, Three needed an innovative point of difference if it was to achieve its goals: reducing churn and acquiring new customers.

We went upstream into the business to create a powerful proposition:

Three would be the only network to allow customers to use their phones abroad at no extra cost.

We had championed the internet at home, now we would champion it abroad.

We then uncovered an interesting insight into data usage - customers were using their social networks to brag about their holidays to people back home.

Our insight became the centre of our campaign idea. We apologised on behalf of our customers for the #holidayspam and urged them to 'please brag responsibly'.

We developed an integrated media approach spanning the summer and taking inspiration from corporate crisis management.

We created a new social media lexicon and a new 'medical' term.

By the end of 2014, over 1m customers had used their phones abroad and #holidayspam was out of control.

The campaign influenced Three's business performance, helping reach an all time high market share.

Word Count: 217

Three. 'Holiday Spam' APG Paper



# Sorry for all the holiday spam.

Our customers are now using  
their phones abroad at no extra cost.  
**#holidayspam**



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Visit [stopholidayspam.com](http://stopholidayspam.com) for destinations.

With Feel At Home, you can use your allowance to call and text back home and use data in 16 destinations worldwide. Pay As You Go customers require an Add-on. See [three.co.uk/Feelathome](http://three.co.uk/Feelathome) to find out more.

By mid 2013, Three had 9m customers and 12% share of the mobile network market.

However, Three was still 4th behind the big boys: EE, O2 and Vodafone.

Three's parent company demanded more.

More customers joining. More customers staying. More margin. More quickly.

Achieving growth would be tough.

The market is competitive and customers are apathetic.

**‘A mobile market where you  
can **run around the streets**  
**naked** shouting ‘everything  
free forever’ and people  
would ignore you’.**

Richard Huntington, Marketing Magazine

## A man running around the streets naked

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## How we uncovered the challenge

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**We began by analysing our customer base.**

**Three over-indexed with tech-savvy, heavy 'internetting' trendsetters.**

**They had joined Three for low priced data deals.**

**This presented two problems.**

**Firstly, these hipsters were caning the network with their internet addictions.**

**Tethering their phones and downloading #OrangelsTheNewBlack on all-you-can-eat data plans.**

**One student was tethering over a terabyte a month to run his business (we offered him a job).**

**As a result, Three only had 12% share of market, but 43% share of data.**

**Secondly, these trendsetters were disloyal.**

**They were attracted to shiny new phone deals and would drop us in a heartbeat.**

**Three had the worst churn rate in the category.**

**We needed to change and offer added brand value, not just the cheapest price.**

**We wanted to build on our established position as the network 'built for the internet' and the success of moonwalking ponies and singing kittens.**

**Would a third blockbuster ad, a tap-dancing squirrel maybe, take Three to the next level of business success?**

**Or could we create LOLs at expense of a more fundamental brand reason to choose Three?**

## How we understood the category

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**We needed an innovative way to make Three distinctive in the market.**

**Everyone was seen as much of a muchness.**

**It's difficult to stand out when everyone is selling wobbly air.**

**Further still, the category suffers from a perception problem.**

**Mobile networks are like banks, energy providers and politicians.**

**All the same. As bad as each other.**

**Customers felt ripped off and opaquely overcharged.**

**We concluded that the mobile industry sucks.**

**We delved into the 'pain points' causing dissatisfaction.**

**One that repeatedly came up was being charged extra for roaming.**

**Many people told first or second-hand stories of discovering astronomical bills on their return from holiday.**

**Many customers were avoiding being stung by keeping their phones off or restricting themselves to hotel Wi-Fi.**

**Only 25% used mobile data abroad, with 25% turning their phones off altogether.**

## How we went upstream to create a powerful proposition

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**In light of our findings, we went upstream into Three's business to work closely with the propositions team.**

**We asked a bold question:**

**What if we abolished roaming charges?**

**Would that be business madness?**

**Amazingly, Three's business analysts didn't think it was totally bonkers.**

**(They had seen more bonkers business ideas from us, which might have helped).**

**Sure, the brand would lose some revenue.**

**However, being smaller meant it would cost Three less than the competition.**

**We hypothesised that Three could more than earn it back.**

**Existing customers would use their phones abroad more and be more inclined to stay with Three.**

**New customers would have a reason to join Three.**

**We could break category convention by being the only network that allowed customers to use their phones abroad at no extra cost.**

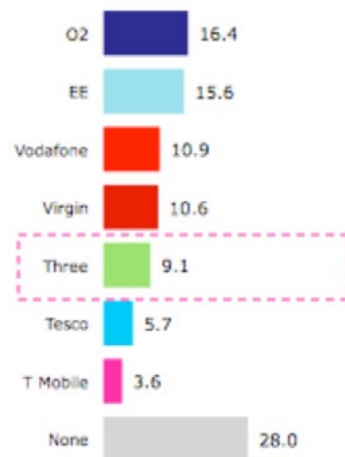
**We had championed the internet at home, now we would champion it abroad.**

**Quant research revealed the proposition's potential power...**

# From 5th choice

Choice share if no roaming offers available

Resultant Share of Choice

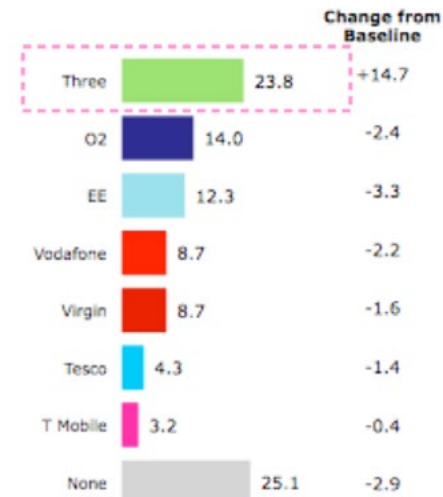


TNS

# To 1st choice

Choice share if Three offers 30 destination Feel at Home including International calls and calling local numbers

Resultant Share of Choice



TNS

**By going upstream, planning had helped create a powerful brand point of difference.**

**Three would be the only network to let customers use their phone abroad at no extra cost.**

**We 'soft launched' our offer to customers in a few destinations.**

**We observed how they used their phones to see what we could learn.**

**It turned out that customers were using their phones just like they did at home.**

**Their usage replicated the trends we had seen back home: declining texts and calls, increasing data usage.**

**But when they took advantage of our offer abroad, they were making twice as many calls and texts, but they were using x71 more data.**

**How were they using their data?**

**The long list included...**

**Google Maps for finding local attractions**

**Google Translate for local phrases**

**Trip Advisor for local restaurants**

**TimeOut.com for cultural recommendations**

**Social networking with those back home**

**The 'right' area for focus was that Three was improving customers' holidays by helping them explore their destination, but that felt like boring travel cliché.**

The more 'interesting' answer that planning uncovered was that customers were spending loads of time on social networks.

Even on holiday, people couldn't resist keeping up with their social newsfeed. 'FOMO' was an even greater affliction when abroad.

More specifically, customers were using social media to brag about their holidays.

They were sharing an overload of perfectly-filtered, prolifically-hashtagged, hilariously-clichéd images on social media.

They needed to show everyone back home how much fun they were having.

This felt like a light-hearted observation that could tap back into Three's continued positioning of being 'built for the internet'.

And culturally, we found that 'holiday bragging' was really beginning to bubble up as a phenomenon.

The Daily Mail proclaimed 2014 was set to be the year of the 'braggie'.

And the best place to brag from was on holiday.



# The rise of braggies and hot dogs legs

**TRAVEL**  
PLAN WITH THE EXPERTS • BOOK WITH CONFIDENCE


Home Hotels Destinations Cruises USA Family Rail

HOME • TRAVEL • TRAVEL NEWS

## Forget the 'selfie': holidaymakers go for 'braggie' photos

The Oxford Dictionary may have named "selfie" the word of the year for 2013, but British tourists are using their holiday photographs as "braggies" to boast about their travels to friends and family on social media

f 145 t 68 p 0 in 0 s 213 Email



## 1 in 7 women are 'beach braggers' on holiday

Monday, Jun 3 2013 WRITTEN BY

### More of us spend time on social media whilst sunning it up



## Hot legs or hot dogs? It's the internet's daftest craze - taking photos of your legs looking like hot dogs... and hot dogs looking like legs

By DAILY MAIL REPORTER  
PUBLISHED: 02:02, 29 August 2013 | UPDATED: 09:53, 12 November 2013

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5 View comments

The latest selfie craze, the holiday leg photo - where happy, mostly women, take a photograph of their tanned glossy legs in the sun - have been hilariously hi-jacked by hot dogs.

The eternal question of the Hot Dog Legs Tumblr remains forever unanswered as sausage fans and holiday-makers keep posting the confusing photos.

Can you tell the difference?



Is it a pair of hot dogs? Are they legs? Life's big mystery

## Forget selfies - it's all about the 'BRAGGIE': One in three upload photos to social networks just to show off

- A 'braggie' is a photo posted to social networks to make friends jealous
- The most popular place to take these bragging photos is on holiday
- 70% of people admitted to tweaking photos before uploading them
- Men were the worst offenders editing photos more often than women

By VICTORIA WOOLLASTON  
PUBLISHED: 13:31, 21 November 2013 | UPDATED: 13:53, 21 November 2013

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52 View comments

Selfie may have been voted the word of the year, but a new term is set to challenge it in 2014 - the 'braggie'.

A 'braggie' is an image posted to social networks designed purely to show off or make friends jealous, and according to new research one in ten users do this regularly.

The poll also found that 5.4 million people in the UK post these bragging photos within 10 minutes of arriving on holiday, for example, as well as of hotel rooms, in bars and nightclubs and even of their bed.



© iC Ken Orlowski/Art Gensets Photos/Gensets

A third of people in the UK admit to sharing bragging photos on social networks with almost half of them claiming holiday pictures are the best way to show off. The poll found 5.4 million people post these bragging photos within 10 minutes of arriving on holiday

**We had uncovered  
a mobile centric,  
social insight.**

**Three was fuelling  
holiday bragging  
on social media.**

## How we influenced creative development

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We decided to show how people were really using their phones on holiday.

We trawled social networks for examples of holiday bragging.

Sunsets, cocktails, beach feet, palm trees, plane wings, yoga poses, mini-monuments, little lizards, local cuisine, hotel pools...

We found 37 different types of braggies, each with loads of identical photos.

Like an observational comedian, we had uncovered a funny truth.

Everyone felt like they had been a perpetrator or a victim of holiday bragging.

We developed a campaign encouraging our customers to 'brag away' now they could use their phones abroad at no extra cost

However, something didn't feel right.

Encouraging holiday bragging, even playfully, felt wrong.

Plus, planning realised we were directly talking to existing customers, rather than non-customers.

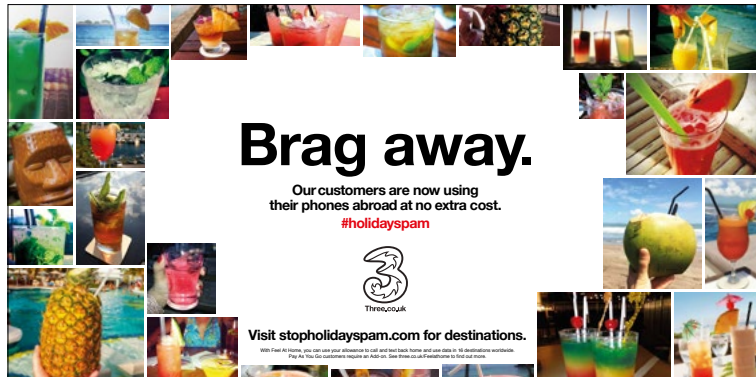
Non-customers were at home unable to take advantage of our offer and were suffering our customers' 'holiday braggies'.

This strategic intervention dramatically changed the campaign for the better.

**Rather than advocate holiday bragging with existing customers,**

**Three would apologise to non-customers for the onslaught of holiday bragging.**

## How the strategic shift influenced the creative work



**Brag away.**

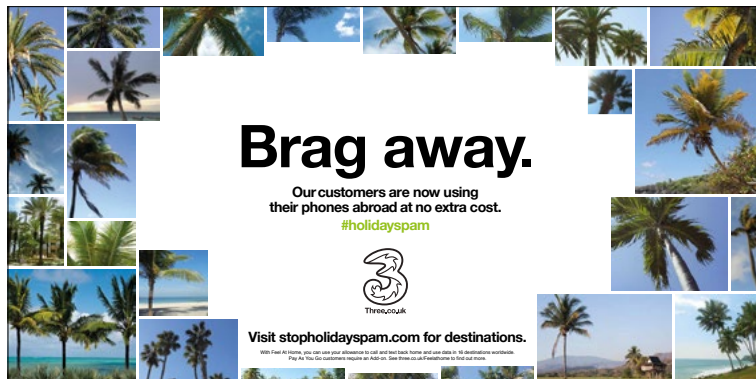
Our customers are now using their phones abroad at no extra cost.

#holidayspam

3  
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Visit [stopholidayspam.com](http://stopholidayspam.com) for destinations.

With Fast At Home, you can use your allowance to call and text back home and use data in 16 destinations worldwide. Pay As You Go customers require an Add-on. See [Three.co.uk/Paidphones](http://Three.co.uk/Paidphones) to find out more.



**Brag away.**

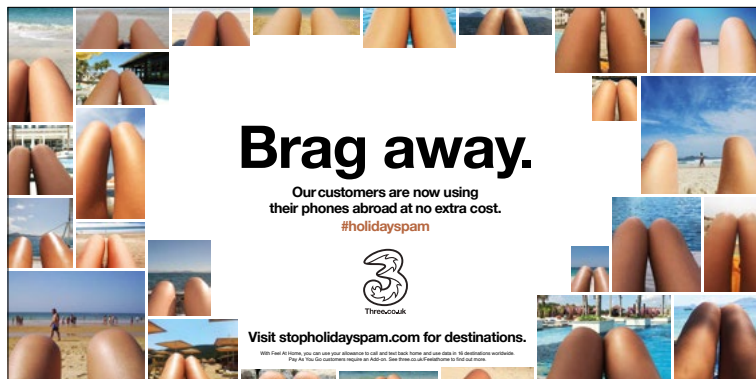
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**Sorry for all the cocktails.**

Our customers are now using their phones abroad at no extra cost.

#holidayspam

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**Sorry for all the palm trees.**

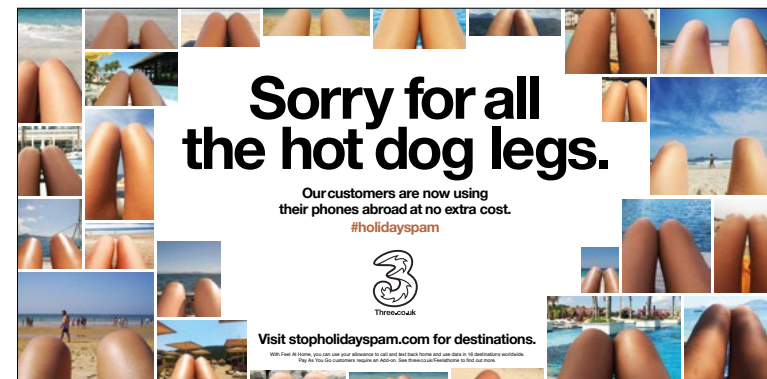
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#holidayspam

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**Sorry for all the hot dog legs.**

Our customers are now using their phones abroad at no extra cost.

#holidayspam

3  
Three.co.uk

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With Fast At Home, you can use your allowance to call and text back home and use data in 16 destinations worldwide. Pay As You Go customers require an Add-on. See [Three.co.uk/Paidphones](http://Three.co.uk/Paidphones) to find out more.

Three would publicly apologise for all the holiday bragging it was inadvertently responsible for.

This would playfully highlight the generosity of Three's offer to their customers, whilst also making non-customers jealous, encouraging them to join Three.

The change in direction was the inspiration for a new term, 'holiday spam', that perfectly captured the issue of over-sharing.

When we presented it to Three's Director of Marketing she said...

**You want me to  
apologise for the  
best thing we've  
ever done?!  
I love it.**

## How planning influenced the media strategy

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The idea of an apology was planning's inspiration for our media strategy.

We decided to playfully subvert the corporate public apology.

In other words, planning asked: 'what would BP do in an oil spill crisis'?

They would put open letters in newspapers.

They would put an awkward spokesman in PR.

They would hastily create a website trying to explain themselves.

They would try and make amends for the mess they'd made.

With this as inspiration, we worked with Mindshare to orchestrate a 3 phase campaign.

It would build across the entire summer (as opposed to the usual short-term 'bang' of our previous campaigns).



# Phase 1. F\*\*k Up

**Three inadvertently creates an outbreak of 'Holiday Spam' by encouraging customers to 'Brag Away' now they can use their phone abroad at no extra cost**

## Phase 1 - F\*\*k up

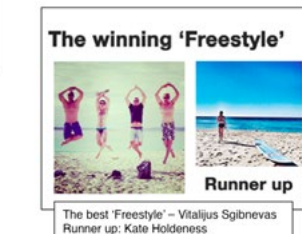
We kicked off by using our original 'brag away' creative work, directed only at existing customers, using airport media and boarding passes.

We created a #holidaybraggie competition which generated a wealth of user-generated content for Phase 2.



## #HolidayBraggie.

Meet the winners.



## Phase 2. Apology

**Three releases a public apology on behalf of all our customers for all the ‘Holiday Spam’ and urges them to ‘please brag responsibly’**

Media was inspired by 'corporate crisis' and included open letters in national press, a public announcement TV ad, and social media.



Social post



TV

# We're sorry.

Recently, you may have noticed a dramatic rise in sunsets appearing in your social media feed.

We're sorry.

Responsibility for this holiday spam rests entirely on our shoulders.

We thought allowing our customers to use their phones in 16 destinations worldwide, like they would at home, was a good thing.

No extra cost for calling and texting back home.  
No extra cost for data.

But we failed to consider the consequences.

We're sorry.

Sorry for all the sunsets, the fancy cocktails,  
for plane wing after plane wing after plane wing.

Sorry for the mini monuments, the beach feet, the street food,  
the #nofilters, the hot dog legs.

We deeply regret the frustration this has caused.

We urge all Three customers, when abroad,  
please brag responsibly.

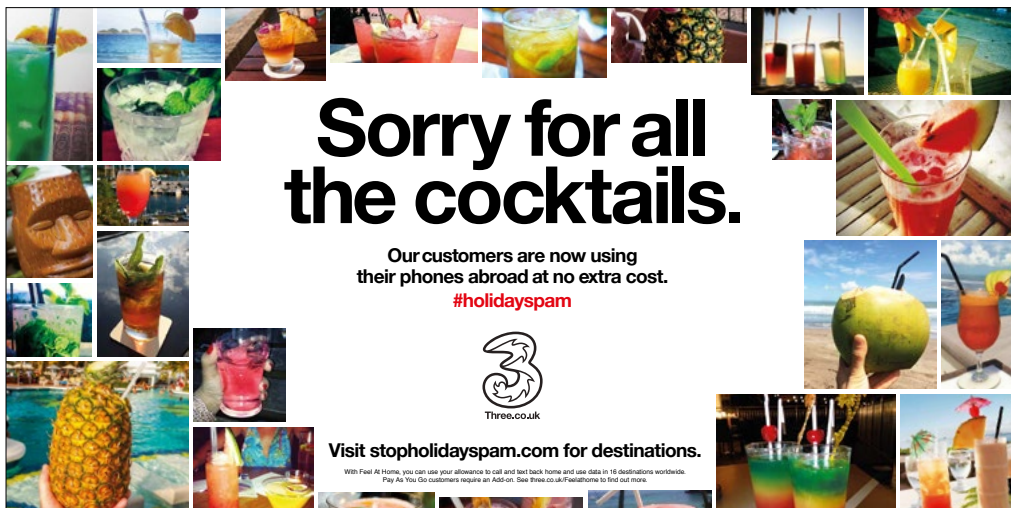
Thank you.



Full page press








# Sorry for all the cocktails.

Our customers are now using their phones abroad at no extra cost.

#holidayspam



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# Sorry for all the hot dog legs.

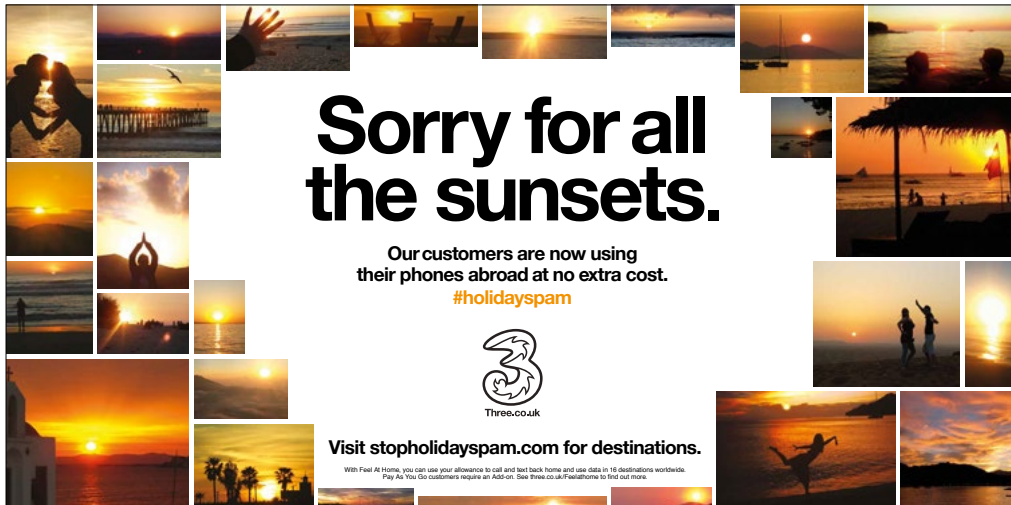
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# Sorry for all the sunsets.

Our customers are now using their phones abroad at no extra cost.

#holidayspam



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# Sorry for all the little lizards.

Our customers are now using their phones abroad at no extra cost.

#holidayspam



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Outdoor





## Phase 2 - Apology

Our campaign sparked counter campaigns from Virgin Holidays and Surrey Police, which we playfully responded to...



# We're sorry.

Recently you may have noticed an influx of chiselled abs flexing in your social media feed.

We're sorry.

Responsibility for these midsections rests entirely on our shoulders.

We thought encouraging people to brag responsibly would result in less holiday spam.

However, we failed to consider the consequences.

The spin-off advertising campaigns.

We're sorry.

Sorry for all the billboards, the tweets, the beautiful models in red trunks and bikinis.

Sorry for the beach bods, the smiley faces.

The airbrushed hot dog legs.

We are deeply sorry for the frustration this has caused.

We urge all beachwear models, when enjoying your holiday, to please brag responsibly.

Thank you.



Three.co.uk

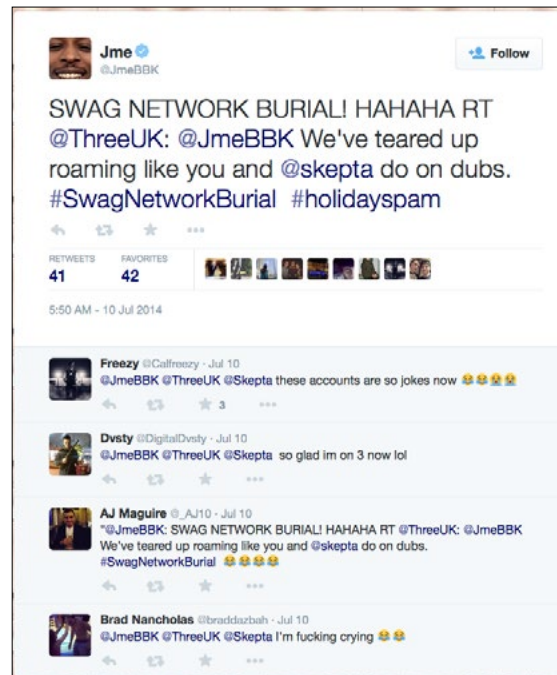
## Phase 2 - Apology

Everything fuelled discussion in social channels where the #holidayspam crisis was at large.

The language from our campaign has become part of popular culture.

Jody Burns retweeted  
**Tim Brown** @timbrown30 · Jul 4  
The @ThreeUK #holidayspam advert is pure genius! Spot on consumer insight. #hotdogsorlegs

Jody Burns retweeted  
**Gail Whyte** @GailWhyte · Jul 4  
3's new Holiday Spam advert is absolutely brilliant, tapping right in to the mindset of their audience #holidayspam #greatadvertising



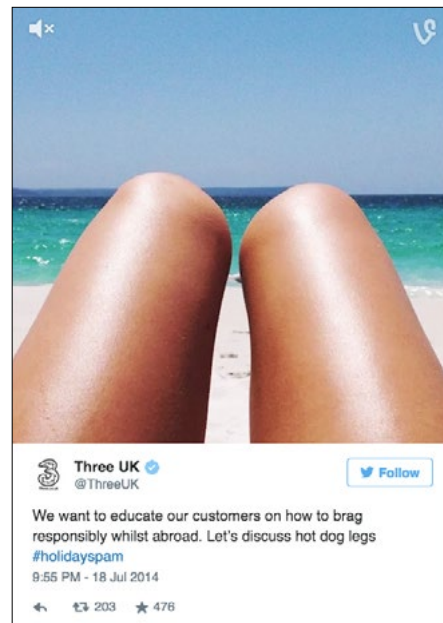
# Phase 3. Clean Up

**Three desperately tries  
to curtail the onslaught of  
'Holiday Spam' but only makes  
things worse**

## Phase 3 - Clean up

We created a series of educational online and in-flight films explaining what holiday spam was and offering guidance on how to avoid it.


Each film highlighted a different type of holiday spam (hot dog legs, sunsets, plane wings, cocktails, little lizards). We optimised which films were served in real time by monitoring shares and click-throughs.





## Phase 3 - Clean up

We created stopholidayspam.com to offer people advice and #holidayspam forecasts as the offer launched in more destinations.



# Holiday Spam Crisis Centre

**Our customers now use their phones abroad at no extra cost.**

If you're reading this, we're sorry. Chances are you've been subjected to numerous cases of holiday spam shared by our customers. If you would like the freedom that comes with posting your hot dog legs, sunsets, and cocktails abroad like you would at home, click below.


But remember to please brag responsibly.

Feel at Home lets you use your UK allowance to call and text the UK and use data without paying a penny more.

[LEARN MORE](#)

**THREAT LEVEL**




VERY HIGH  
HIGH  
MODERATE  
LOW



Use your phone in the following destinations at no extra cost:

Australia	Coming soon	Italy	Sri Lanka
Austria	Coming soon	Malaysia	Sweden
Denmark	Coming soon	Indonesia	Coming soon
Coming soon	Coming soon	India	USA

**WARNING:** Numerous Hot dog legs reported in the French French



**We're sorry**

An Apology From Three - We're Sorry

Plane We

**Tag A Bragger**

Help us fight holiday spam by tagging a bragger's holiday spam. Each and every tagged photograph is catalogued and the perpetrator will may be contacted by Holiday Spam Crisis Representatives.

Thank you for your help. Together, we can stop holiday spam.

**052107**  
Braggers Tagged

**#holidayspam** **\*LIVE**

spamming off, and do not delete images along that escalation alone

spamming off, and do not delete images along that escalation alone

spamming off, and do not delete images along that escalation alone


[Tweet #holidayspam](#)

**Do you suffer from Travel Selfie Disorder?**

To learn how you, or someone you know can be cured of TSD download a free brochure by clicking below

[DOWNLOAD](#)

Holiday spam prevention by Three



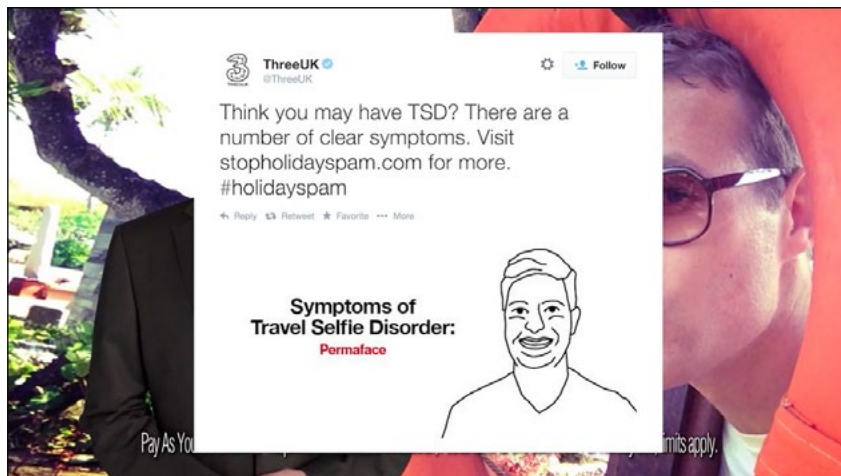
**Take the Spam Pledge**

Do you agree to limit the frequency of holiday spam in which you are posting abroad? Do you vow to think of your friends, back home in the rain, before posting a cocktail from a hotel pool bar? Then click here.

☒ **I AGREE**

## Phase 3 - Clean up

It included a downloadable brochure to help people suffering from TSD (Travel Selfie Disorder), a new 'medical' condition Three was responsible for.



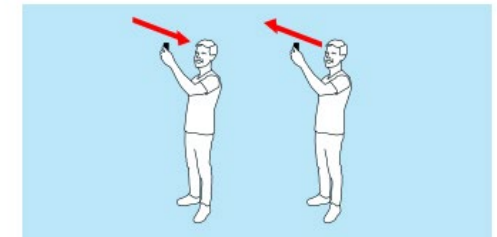
### What is TSD?

TSD or Travel Selfie Disorder is a common, chronic disorder characterized by the uncontrollable urge to photograph one's face while abroad. These urges range from mild to severe depending on the region travelled, weather, and readily available mobile data. With the dawn of the digital age and Three's new Feel At Home offer, TSD has become a widespread epidemic plaguing many UK travellers, today.

### Symptoms



### Treatment



#### Shoot away from face

- Turn mobile camera away from face.
- Take photo away from face.



#### Engage third party photographer

- Engage fellow traveller.
- Take photo.



#### Hands in pockets technique

- Place hands in pockets.
- Keep hands in pockets.

## Phase 3 - Clean up

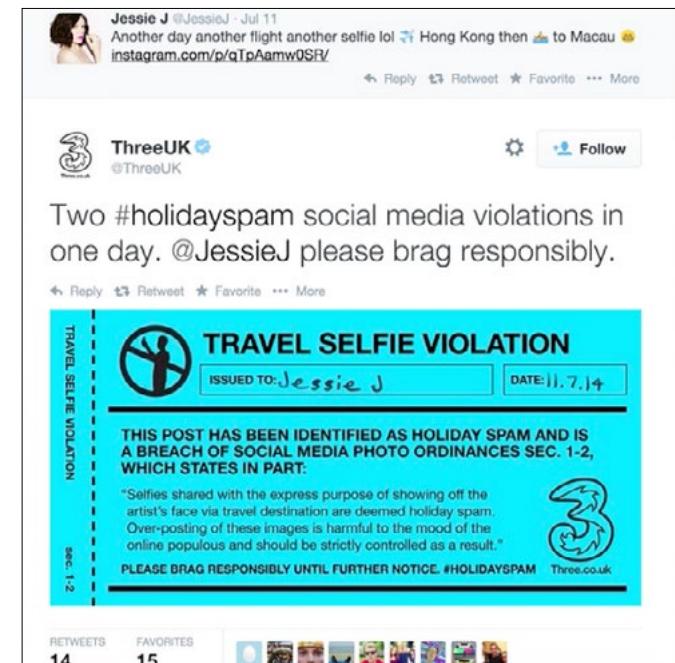
We encouraged victims of holiday spam to fight back and 'Tag A Bragger' with #holidayspam and send 'violation' warnings to perpetrators of holiday spam. People could win a holiday with Three, which would of course add to the crisis. The campaign was reactive across the summer, across all social channels.





## Phase 3 - Clean up

We also gave some playful social media 'violation' warnings to send back to friends who posted holiday spam.





## Phase 3 - Clean up

We went to French beaches to stop the onslaught of holiday spam.

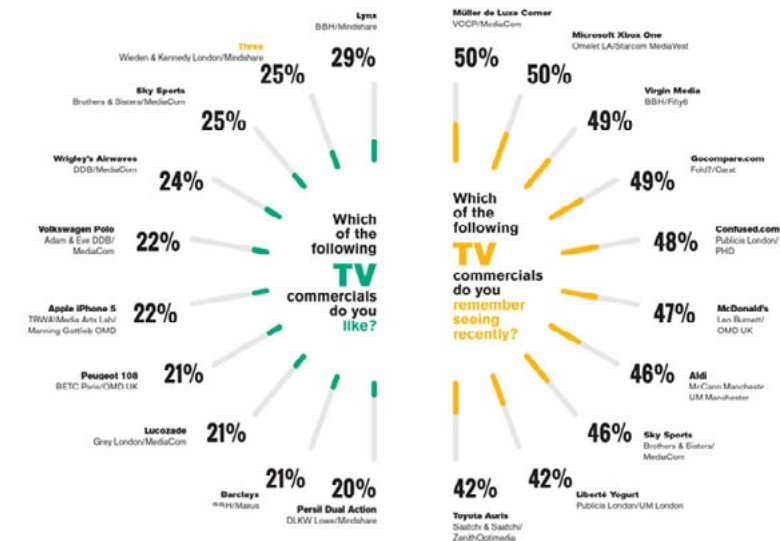
We even explored the possibility of 'wingvertising' (we are still working on a way to make this happen).



## How we influenced industry leaders...

'This work delivers the business proposition like a sledgehammer. In a mobile market where you can run around the streets naked shouting "everything free forever" and people would ignore you, that's no mean feat. A nice proposition, a sharp insight and decent work from what appears to be a very tight client and agency team'.

Richard Huntington,  
Marketing Magazine.



Marketing Magazine, Adwatch

Hello Martin,

This is just a personal opinion really but I bloody love #holidayspam. A few reasons why it helps, in no particular order...

- it's based on a product benefit - it's more than just a brand thing, it actually works back to a real reason to choose 3.
- it's brave - rather than leading with the benefit (free data roaming) it turns a positive into a tongue in cheek negative. Not many brands would do that. Brave planning. Brave client.
- it extends the audience beyond 3's customers - by apologising to everyone it brings everybody into the idea whether a 3 customer or not. Not seen that done so skilfully for a while - probably since 02 Priority.
- it has a lovely human insight - it raises a smile - we can all relate to the way people use their phones and the smug holiday snaps on social media
- it's an idea not a single execution - I'm not aware of a single "event spot" (I may have missed it) but it's a strong enough idea to let people piece it together themselves. It doesn't really on people seeing a single hero execution.
- it came back! How many campaigns do we see that are around for a couple of months and then disappear to be replaced by something else? I really like how it's come back in 2015. The implication is very strongly that it succeeded.
- It ladders all the way back up to the brand - the whole celebration of internet silliness thing.
- it's flexible and uses media really well - it adapts itself brilliantly to its environments. The Vines for example were a fantastic use of a very unique environment.
- it was beautifully agile and evolved brilliantly over the course of the campaign without ever being forced. I loved how it built it's own momentum over the summer. I wrote a piece about it recently [here](#)
- it inspired spoofs and responses from other brands - always a way to show it captured the public's imagination.

I'm sure there are other things too but that's just 7 minutes spent spouting off the top of my head. Happy to lend any quotes etc if you think it will help (feel free to use any of the above).

Apart from that it was rubbish :-)

David Wilding  
Head of Planning, Twitter UK  
[@dwwilding](#)

## The campaign was Three's most influential campaign, ever...

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The campaign influenced social discussion...

+5,000 'holiday braggie' competition entries.

4,211 uses of #holidaybraggie on Twitter.

#holidayspam organically trended with +2000 uses in the opening weekend, and 8,422 use of the # post campaign in 2014 on Twitter.

The language of #holidayspam entered pop culture, took on a life of its own and made the internet even more fun.

Pre-campaign there were 96 uses of the hashtags, but in the proceeding 6 months there have been +40,000 uses of hashtags across Twitter and Instagram alone.

65% of those that used the hashtag going on to visit stopholidayspam.com.

2/3 of those aware of the campaign also aware of #holidayspam.

+19% conversation volume and Three's NSS from -12% in June to +7% in July (Source: Beyond).

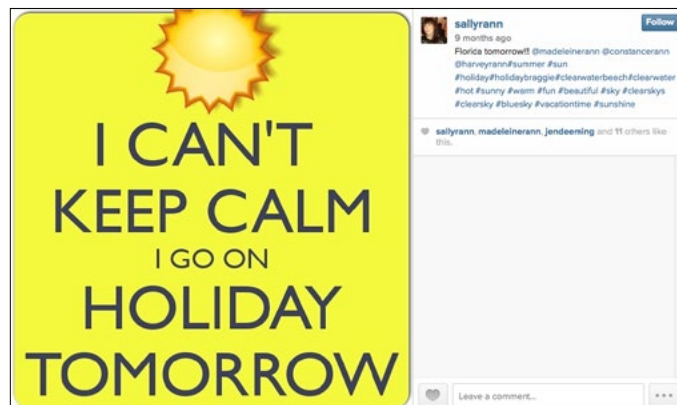
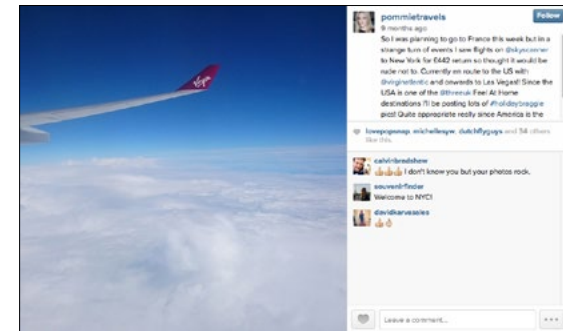
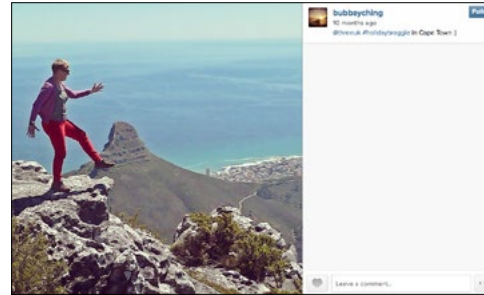
The campaign influenced visits to stopholidayspam.com...

Had over 600,000 visits, with 45% from people searching the URL.

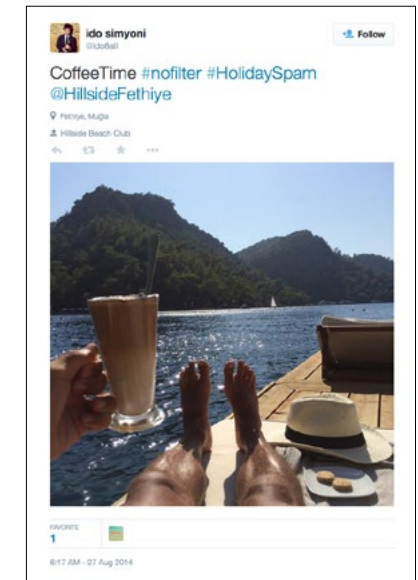
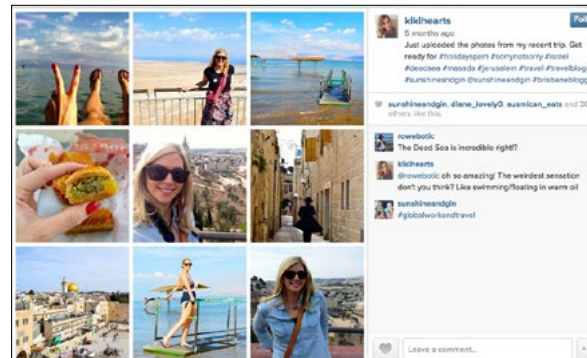
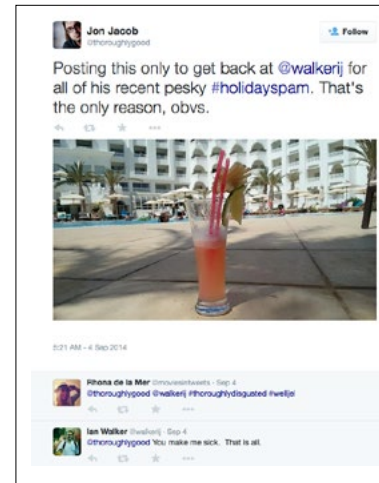
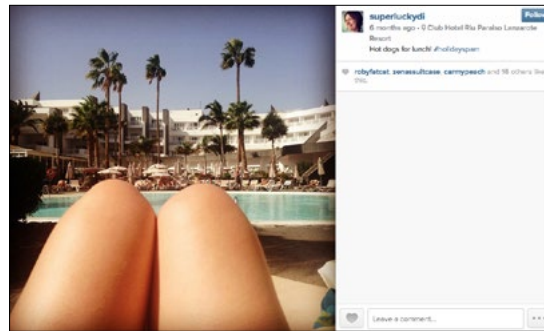
Generated 23,961 clicks to find out more and 1,648 direct clicks to buy a phone.



# #holidaybraggie highlights



# #holidayspam highlights



## The campaign was Three's most influential campaign, ever...

The campaign influenced brand tracking...

+5% rise in brand salience and a +4% rise in brand appeal during the 1st month of the campaign, with additional uplifts for those who were aware of the campaign (Source: Brainjuicer).

The campaign encouraged customers to stay...

332,000 customers used their phone abroad at no extra cost in July, which was +36% above target.

The number of people saying 'Feel At Home' was an extremely important reason to stay doubled.

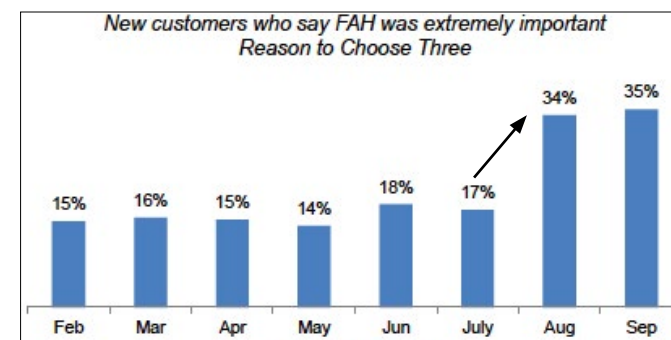
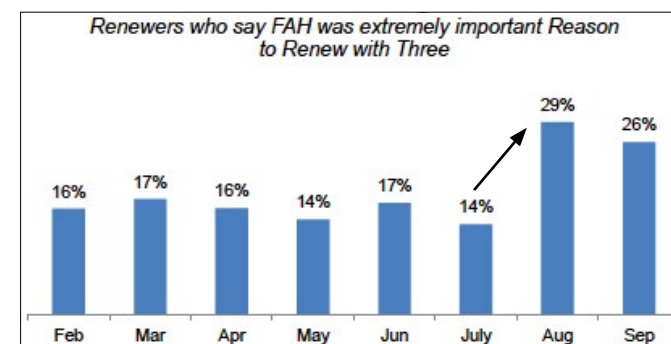
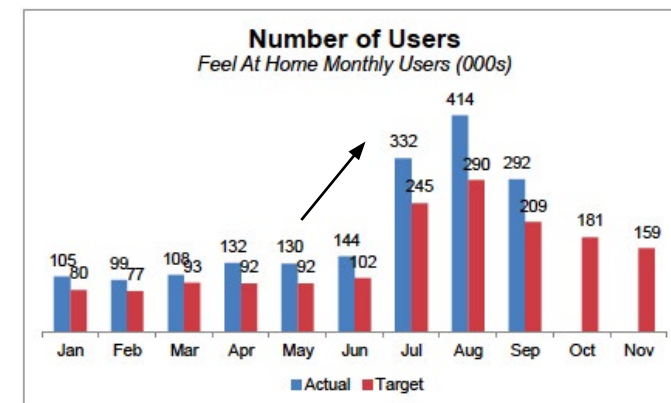
Those using their phone abroad at no extra cost reported higher satisfaction and were 25% less likely to churn.

Overall customer churn has fallen by 2% in the last year.

The campaign encouraged customers to join...

The number of people saying 'Feel At Home' was an extremely important reason to join doubled.

Footfall was up +3.9% during the campaign.



**Three reached  
9.8m customers and  
13.1% market share,  
an all time high.**



**By the end of 2014, over  
1m Three customers had  
used their phones abroad  
at no extra cost, so  
#holidayspam  
was out of control.**

## In 2015, the campaign came back...

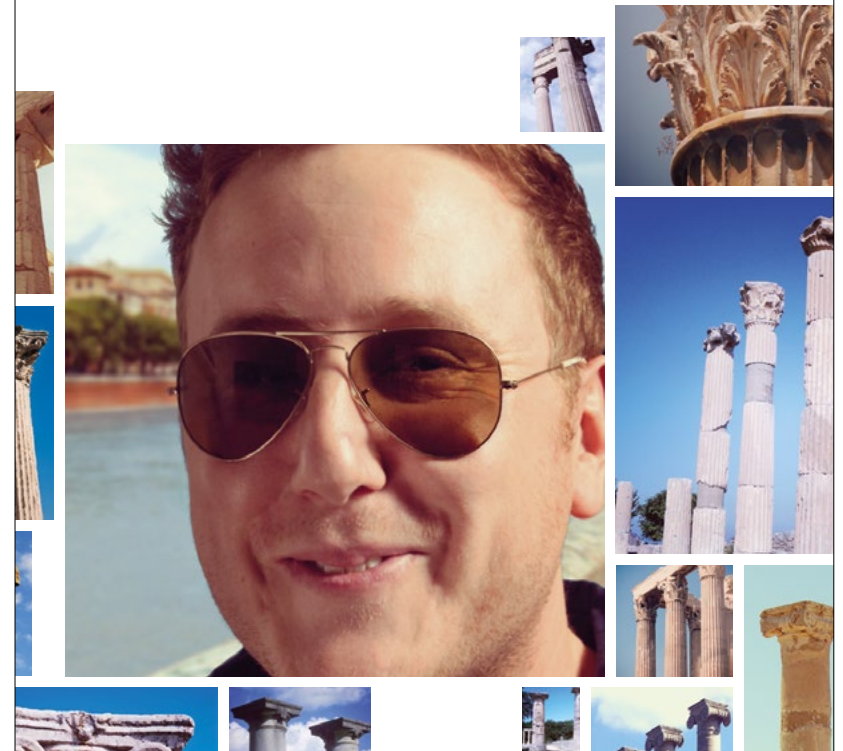
In January, Three warned the public that its customers were booking their summer holidays, so they should 'prepare themselves' for even more spam.

In April, we issued a #holidayspam alert when the offer was extended to Spain.

In May, we will show how widespread and extreme the 'holiday spam' epidemic has become, and urge customers to 'please spam responsibly'.



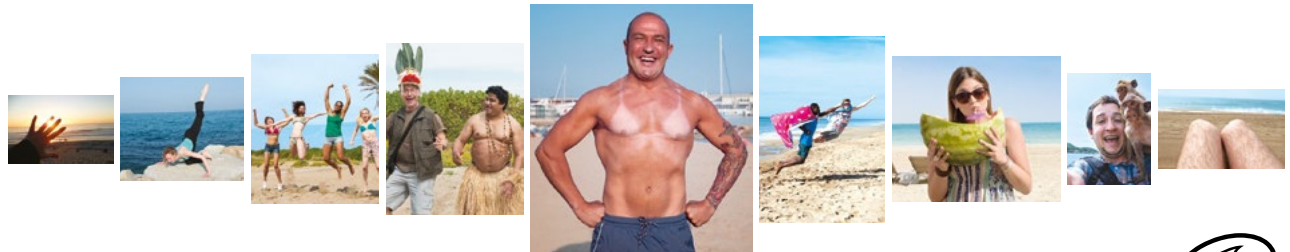
# Prepare yourself for Kenneth's columns.





# Please spam responsibly.

On Three you can use your phone **abroad at no extra cost,**  
in even more destinations.



**#holidayspam**

Use your inclusive allowances to call and text back home and use data in 18 destinations. Pay As You Go customers need an Add-on. See [three.co.uk/feelathome](http://three.co.uk/feelathome).

