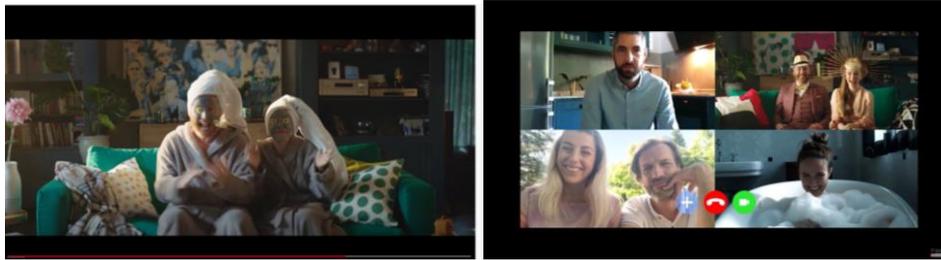


Best use of TV in a Crisis



Horse Racing Ireland bring you...

“Racing on Your Terms”

Entry Details

Client: **Horse Racing Ireland**

Product / Service: **Promoting Racing in Ireland**

Campaign Name: **Racing on Your Terms**

Entrant Company: **OMD**

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Summary: Horse Racing Ireland was in crisis after racing was shut down during the first lockdown in Ireland. But being the first live sport back on air gave them an opportunity to grow interest in the sport among a new sport loving audience. TV was central to this as it was 'Racing on Your Terms'

1. Background & Objectives

Horse Racing Ireland, the national authority responsible for the development and promotion of horse racing in Ireland exists to grow the sport in Ireland and abroad. Our five year plan has two clear KPI's – grow interest in the sport and grow attendance at race days. Progress towards and achievement of these KPI's is essential to secure ongoing funding from the Irish government, landing future sponsorships as well as powering growth for an industry that employs 29,000 people nationwide.

These two KPI's require different communication strategies and our focus has been on 'growing attendance'. The reasons for this are many including budget constraints, faster more tangible results and an easier win for the racecourses. Our brand platform 'Every Racing Moment' celebrates the vast array of moments that can be enjoyed in the world of racing. Our previous communications were largely tied to the live experience and bringing these moments to life. This strategy was working for attendances to big race meetings, but we knew that this was a short term measure of success. We also needed to grow long term interest in the sport.

Covid 19 hit and shut all live sport down for 2 months. After the initial lockdown the country was opening back up in phases and horse racing was the first live sport to be allowed to resume albeit behind closed doors. Without the experience of race day at our disposal, meeting our attendance KPI was impossible. It was unthinkable to have race days with no crowd to cheer on the horses; to take the social element away. There was however an opportunity for HRI in the face of a huge time of challenge. Interest in the sport is a more long term KPI and is a bigger driver of growth for the future of horse racing. If we get more people genuinely interested in and understanding the sport, they will become advocates for the sport and will naturally attend more regularly. Racing is on almost every day of the year in Ireland and there is huge potential for the smaller race days on the calendar.

People during this time were craving entertainment and excitement. TV and VOD viewership were up, radio and digital audio listenership was up, and social media was getting a lot more of people's attention. We needed to look at how we could present racing as an exciting, entertaining and accessible sport while we were all at home. So, our objectives for the long and short term changed to -

1. Consideration – grow interest in horse racing among sports fans from 28%
2. Make racing behind closed doors attractive to racing fans and sports fans at home. Satisfaction score for racing attendance was 7.5.
3. Drive interest in attending races in the future.

We knew what we needed to do but all of our current creative was based around ‘Every Racing Moment’ which promoted the race day experience and we needed a different message. We worked very closely with Folk, Wunderman, Thompson to get new creative assets across the line despite a lock down. We knew that with the scope of this opportunity we needed TV to lead this campaign with support from other media. This was for a number of reasons –

1. Scale, we needed to reach a mass audience. TV is unbeatable in terms of scale, In 2020 TV reached: 61.6% of the Irish population in a day, 77.5% in a week and 88.7% in a month. (Nielsen)
2. Emotion, during the times that we were in we needed to have an emotional impact on people to get them to act. 58% say that TV ads evoke an emotion versus 9% saying social media evokes emotion, and TV is the most trusted source of information and advertising in Ireland (48% ranking TV as most trusted) ahead of Radio at 23% (TAM Ireland)
3. Shared Experience, we wanted people to watch together in their homes. To celebrate the wins and create an atmosphere that was different to the rest of the week. In order for the messages to resonate and change perceptions, we need to build memory structures with viewers over time, so as to not only reach the short-term results of a tactical push, and then be forgotten once the campaign is over. TV is the perfect medium for this.
4. TV’s ability to boost other media. We knew that it couldn’t be a TV only campaign but that it would enhance all the other elements of the campaign. TV boosts the effects of Online display by 31% (TAM Ireland), and for video assets, TV generates 2.4x greater impact than Facebook.

2. The Strategy

Our audience is segmented into racing fans and ‘experience hunters’ – those who love big weekends with friends and family – of whom we had been investing in converting into the ‘racing fan’ category for some time now.

However, without the social element of being at the races to entice our experience hunters we had to cast the net wider. We looked to sports fans as with very little new sport on we could tap into this part missing from their lives and encourage them to watch the top-class racing free to air on their TV. This was a once in a lifetime opportunity, to catch the sports

fan while not many other sports were on. It would be far easier to convert sports fans than non-sports fans into horse racing fans.

Using TGI and OMD bespoke tool Audience Explorer we knew that there were 1.5 million sports interested people in our audience. 28% of these were currently interested in horse racing. This audience is more likely to be male, age 25-54, working full time, and C1C2. Attitudinally this group like to work hard and play hard. They watch sport and play sport and combine that with time with mates and love the social aspect of sport. They are also big gamers and with sport and socialising off the table they would turn to gaming (TGI Index for heavy usage 115), TV (TGI Index for heavy viewers 107) and VOD (TGI Index 115 for heavy viewers) for entertainment. They are also heavy social users with 55% using social media 5+ times per day.

With regard to the creative message, research conducted by FWT identified that for most, unless you understood racing or had always 'been a fan', racing at home potentially wasn't for you. But the beauty of racing is that there's something in it for everyone. We created a new advertising campaign 'On Your Terms', that aimed to reignite the thrill and pulse-racing excitement of the final stretch by creating unique experiences from home. It announced that racing was back and really tapped into the mood of the moment. Yes, people were at home but that didn't mean that it had to be boring, you could dress up, dress down, turn the living room into a form room, watch it with mates on Zoom. The opportunities were endless and all on your own terms. Led by TV, the fully integrated campaign shows a couple discovering the joy of racing from the comfort of their couch.

3. The Plan

We needed to strike the balance between reach and relevance to create engagement and excitement within people's homes. According to Red C research those who follow racing do so on TV (69%) and online (55%). Of those who follow racing on TV 86% do so on RTE. Sports fans in general are also heavy viewers of RTE with 48% tuning in today/yesterday (TGI 2020)

RTE were enjoying increased audiences on TV and they had also committed to showing 11 additional racing programmes across the summer. We partnered with RTE in a 360 package which included TV sponsorship of the additional racing programmes, TV spots across summer, an audio package, dynamic digital across RTE.ie and VOD. We also agreed a racing package with Virgin Media across significant UK racing meetings.

Targeting the racing on RTE and Virgin Media allowed us to tap into the sports audience who would be seeking out any sports programming that was on at the time. They were looking for a sport fix and we were there when they found it. It was also a good opportunity for HRI to show support to those who were getting behind racing during this difficult time.

In terms of our TV buying strategy we wanted to lead everything back to the race meetings and getting people to tune into them as they went out live on TV. We upweighted our

campaign on Thursday's and Friday's in the lead up to the weekend when the racing was being shown. We looked at programming that had high affinity for our sports fans and we saw that news and current affairs along with sports news and documentaries indexed highly. Therefore, we used this programme strategy and RTE had plenty of this programming on offer. We replicated this strategy on VOD, specifically on the RTE player to catch the lighter or later viewer.

Outside of the RTE deal and the Virgin Media racing packages we also partnered with Joe.ie to educate sports fans about racing and again drive them back to RTE to watch the live racing that was being shown. Our social campaign ran from Weds-Sat of each week when people were looking for activities for the weekend coming and again drove people back to their TV to watch the racing from the comfort of their own homes. All of the activity had the same goal, to get people to watch and engage with racing on TV.

The racing sponsorship kicked off in June and the spot campaign followed closely behind. This allowed us to be active in the lead up to the Galway Races, one of the most popular of the Irish race meetings. We upweighted our activity for the Galway week and we even had a garden party for one lucky family where they got a bar, big screen a tent, live music and lots of craic.

After the summer and the initial launch of the campaign we expanded out the TV campaign to a wider station mix, RTE, VMS, TG4, Sky, C4 and Eir Sport and we carefully target race meetings on the calendar with our Racing on Your Terms message. It is a recency strategy coming up to each significant racing festival of which there is at least 1 per month. This strategy has continued into winter and remains our strategy today while racing remains behind closed doors.

4. The Results

2020 was a year that saw interest in most sports grow as people had more time on their hands and were lapping up any sports that they could consume. However, our strategy of pivoting KPI's and getting behind the sport was unique to horse racing. Our campaign specifically encouraged people to watch the sport from home and gave people permission to lose themselves in the thrill of the sport.

- Interest in horse racing grew from 28% to 44% among those interested in sport (Red C). This increase in interest was significantly more than any other sport at 26% points increase. The average jump among other sports was 7% points. This proves that it was not just the Covid effect that drove this increase, that it was our campaign.
- Claimed frequency of following horse racing has increased from 67% following occasionally to 88% (Red C)
- HRI's average satisfaction score for racing in real life sits at an average of 8.6. Racing at home received a score of 7.5 which tells us that the key components and excitement of the sport were maintained. (Two Circles, 2020)

- A third of people (all ads) said that they would be more likely to watch racing from home or attend a race day after watching the On Your Terms ad. (Red C)
- 75% of those who watched Longines Irish Champions Weekend from home in 2020 said that they would be more interested in attending a race meeting in the future. (Two Circles 2020)
- TV viewership for the Irish Grand National and Punchestown festivals in 2021 were up 43% and 30% respectively for all adults v's 2019. (these festivals were cancelled in 2020)

Client Quote - *Due to the onset of Covid 19, we faced the challenge of trying to engage people in horse racing when they could no longer attend in person. We devised our 'On Your Terms' campaign which encouraged sports fans to engage with horse racing via TV and online channels. OMD implemented a very targeted media strategy to engage sports fans using a mix of AV and social media advertising and negotiated media partnerships with RTÉ and Joe.ie to amplify horse-racing content. We were delighted with the campaign's success with interest in horse racing increasing from 18% to 44% among sports fans.*

Significant uplift in proportion claiming any interest in Horse Racing

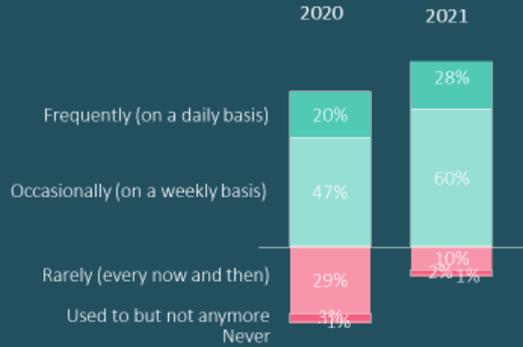
Significantly higher interest amongst those interested in sports, and showing positive uplift since 2020.

Any interest in Horse Racing



Claimed frequency of following horse racing has increased

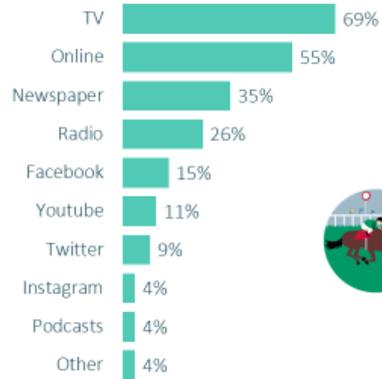
Frequency of following horseracing



Q9. How often, if at all, do you follow horse racing by reading, watching or listening?
 Base: All respondents who are interested in horse racing

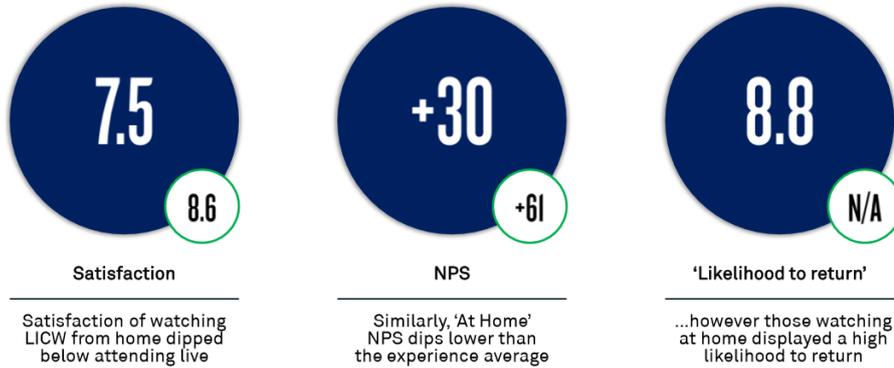
More than half of those who follow horse racing do so via TV and online.

How people typically follow horseracing



KEY METRICS

Overall, people were moderately satisfied with the experience of watching LICW at home, however the experience dips below KPIs set by HRI attendee event experience.



How satisfied were you with your experience watching and following LICW 2020 from home? (n=408)
 How likely are you to recommend LICW to your friends or family? (n=408)
 How likely are you to consider returning to watch other Horse Racing Ireland race days or its content in the future? (n=408)

LICW @ Home

HRI Experience Average

Galway VIP Garden Party



