



NOW didn't have the budget to compete with the global players but also felt that outspending these brands was never going to help us win the long-term battle. NOW needed to punch above its weight when it came to cultural relevance not share-of-voice. We needed to create talkability and engagement with the brand. They were the key levers to pull in order to help embed the brand within the cultural zeitgeist of the younger audiences who were the key segment we had to convert.

## The Strategy

NOW needed to grow cultural relevance to form a deeper engagement with younger prospect audiences. This would be the key to trial and loyalty for new customer prospects. This meant that we couldn't just "make an ad" and deliver it across many platforms which is usually the job of a media campaign. Cultural Relevance is about tapping into moments or movements that are important to the collective lives of the people that we want to reach.

It's also important to note that brands can't simply create culturally relevant moments on-demand. We felt that the best approach is to identify areas and communities where cultural moments are alive (music, entertainment, sport, etc), and figure out the best way to lean into these properties so there are shared moments between the brand, the audience and the culturally significant moment.

Unlike Netflix, NOW don't create their own content. They carry leading HBO programming (House of the Dragons), extensive back catalogue of favourite shows (The Sopranos) and exclusive Sky content (Gangs of London / Sport). Netflix generate a lot of PR and headlines via casting announcements and behind-the-scenes footage from sets... all the items in media currently about the production of the forthcoming series of the Crown create real buzz about shows months before they air.

For NOW to create talkability, they had to source a significant cultural event and use that as a platform to drive our own relevance. That's where Love Island came in! essencemediacom brought this partnership opportunity to NOW in 2021 and we had to weigh it up against some other sponsorship opportunities, namely.

- Was it big? Yes.
- Was it important to U35 audiences? More than any other show on TV during the year.
- Was it controversial / edgy? Very much so.
- Did it drive headlines across the country and beyond? Guaranteed.
- Would NOW be able to partner with the show and amplify their association with the show in a unique way? Definitely.

That last element was really important. There is no value in partnering with a leading show if all the sponsor is doing is just amplifying the show and not their association with it. Sponsorship stings are important as they guarantee a high level of reach and frequency, but they don't create cultural relevance. A brand has to curate that outside of the confines of the actual broadcast parameters of the show.

Once we decided to partner with Love Island, we knew we needed to build a comms plan based on the show but not exclusively at the times when the show was broadcast. The real challenge was creating activations outside of the show on other platforms that tied back into the conversations that were taking place about contestants by viewers to the show.

## The Plan

NOW had 3 key pillars when it came to building out their association with Love Island

1) Reach through traditional media delivery – Promote our association with the show to the widest audiences

NOW topped and tailed every ad break within the programme Monday to Friday along with the Aftersun and Unseen Bits operating on Saturdays and Sundays. Utilising 5" and 10" sec lengths, the campaign could vary creative messaging consistently to avoid any wear out of copy. Outside of these stings saw branding within all promos for the programmes along with 10" stings on live streams and catch up across the Virgin Media Player and Virgin Media On-Demand.

2) Own the Second Screen – Be Part of the right conversations

Between the hours of 8-11pm every night, targeting all placements where Love Island topics, scandals and drama will be discussed. Targeting on Twitter, Tik Tok and Reddit all meant the conversation between NOW and their audience continued beyond when the TV show ended. This was a really important step of the sponsorship as we know from industry research that

the attention of younger TV viewers is often dualled with a second screen, so we had to consider this behaviour in our communication.

3) Widen the Love Island community – use trusted voices to curate additional conversations about the show via NOW content  
The final area of the comms strategy was to leverage already established connections with some of Ireland's most recognisable content creators. Showcasing more than just the content NOW had to offer was central in demonstrating their relevance to Irish audiences.

A podcast sponsorship with Orlaith Condon's 'My Pod on Paper', the unofficial Love Island podcast kept the conversation going within the digital audio space.

We also built an association with Goss.ie to promote their association with the show. Goss.ie became a go-to source of content, gossip and scandal for the show and this allowed audiences searching for more and more content about Love Island would see NOW front and centre once more on anything Love Island.

The final piece of the puzzle was securing the hilarious anchor team of Anne Doyle (there is no more trusted a voice in Irish culture) and James Kavanagh (the is no more popular Irish influencer) as NOW ambassadors. They kicked off proceedings for the NOW and Love Island coupling for Summer 2022 and were the centre of the most entertaining live tweets, GIFs, and Memes around online Love Island conversations.

The evolution of what a TV sponsorship is or could be, is really what set this collaboration apart from anything done previously. Coupling with the right TV property was vital. Understanding how to communicate to the audience was essential to drive Cultural Relevance for NOW.

## The Results

We always knew that Love Island was going to be a winner for Virgin Media and audiences. It is such a cultural event in Ireland and the UK that headlines, ratings and conversations about the show are guaranteed. From a sponsor perspective though, NOW needed to be sure that they were partnering with a winning proposition that would deliver brand growth. In order to get quantifiable results NOW commissioned online pre/post research to n=623 Irish adults. This gave concrete data points of the success for the sponsorship.

Key findings were as follows:

- 66% saw NOW as a good fit pre-exposure and rises to 77% post exposure to executions.
- This sponsorship activity made NOW more relevant for 7 in 10 likely Love Island viewers, while for well over half of this cohort, the executions clearly help in terms of stimulating curiosity about NOW, making NOW seem more authentic and aiding a stronger emotional connection to NOW.
- Commercially, the indicators are also very positive with 6 in 10 likely viewers of Love Island feeling NOW has premium content as well as making them more likely to pay a subscription for NOW.
- The commercial potential on the back of the sponsorship is further emphasised with over 6 in 10 likely viewers more likely to consider NOW in the future as a result of seeing the executions.
- 72% of those that would consider NOW pre-exposure to the executions are more likely to consider NOW, and 56% of those that wouldn't consider NOW pre-exposure are more likely to consider.
- NOW also saw a baseline increase in subscriptions by 15% over the run of the show. This demonstrated a direct correlation between sponsorship awareness and consideration and sales. (Offer / Costs were similar vs other years so it was not a pricing incentive that drove additional subscriptions)

The research results had the proof points that NOW needed to demonstrate that a TV sponsorship of a culturally relevant show was the right way to succeed in a very cluttered market.

It couldn't have been done without a) the right platform to partner with and b) a willingness not just to let the show speak for the brand and hope for the best, but instead a commitment by NOW and essencemediacom to amplify their relationship with

the show across multiple platforms to create culturally significant moments that got people talking about the show and interested in subscribing to NOW

#### Client Involvement

“We wanted to do something different around our Love Island partnership with VMS and we certainly succeeded. The activations that we built around the series were all about talkability and relevance, and we know that these were the levers to pull if we wanted to deliver long term growth for our business. The results delivered against both our brand and sales metrics, and we couldn’t be happier with how this sponsorship worked across all the stakeholders who were involved at every stage”

Rebecca Stapleton, Campaigns & Partnerships Controller, NOW Ireland

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