

**Marketing a race meeting, example of Punchestown Carnival
by Mr. Michael O'ROURKE, Director of Marketing and Communication,
Horse Racing Ireland**



"I want to give you a quick overview of the Irish racing market, some insight into our strategy around marketing, because we place a great emphasis on having proper marketing budgets and significantly we have a central budget for the marketing of Irish racing across the island, as well as having individual support for racecourses.

We would give an example of the Punchestown Festival of how we applied that approach both the national marketing campaigns which we operate, tying in with the local campaign, and it has become the most successful festival in Ireland.

There is an overview of the spread of racecourses in Ireland. For a population of just over 4 million, that is a lot of racetracks and it takes a lot of work to make each of those viable. Basically the task is to support those centrally and individually at local level.

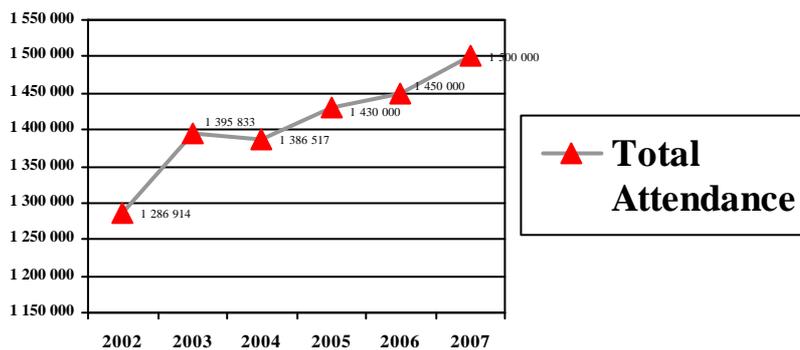
27 IRISH RACECOURSES



When Horse Racing Ireland set out with a five-year strategic plan for the industry – that is the attendance record HRI set itself – we are more or less on target for 1.5 million attendances by the end of this year despite the awful weather conditions, which have knocked us back slightly.

Behind that growth the two major drivers are the capital development programme and a significant marketing drive. I will emphasise that marketing drive sought to recruit new racegoers, particularly social race goers, people who had not yet entered the sport. There is a particular way of strategising around that.

FIVE YEAR ATTENDANCE STATISTICS



There is a overview of the profile of Irish racegoers. The column on the left-hand side represents the percentage of the population at large representing those sectors, and besides that we have the racegoers. It is predominantly male. However, under 35 years is a significant figure.

Sponsors are surprised at this and also at 60/40 male/ female because I think very often in racing and from other nations I spoke to, we are fighting perceptions. A lot of people still see racing as it was ten years ago. It has changed quite a lot already. We bring these figures to sponsors and encourage the racecourses to make the sponsors aware that this profile is healthy. There is an urban/rural divide : it is slightly more rural than urban.

I should also mention one of the key demographics, ABC1 are middle class. The sport is attracting significant ABC1 participation and this, of course, is also of interest to sponsors.

PROFILE OF IRISH RACEGOERS

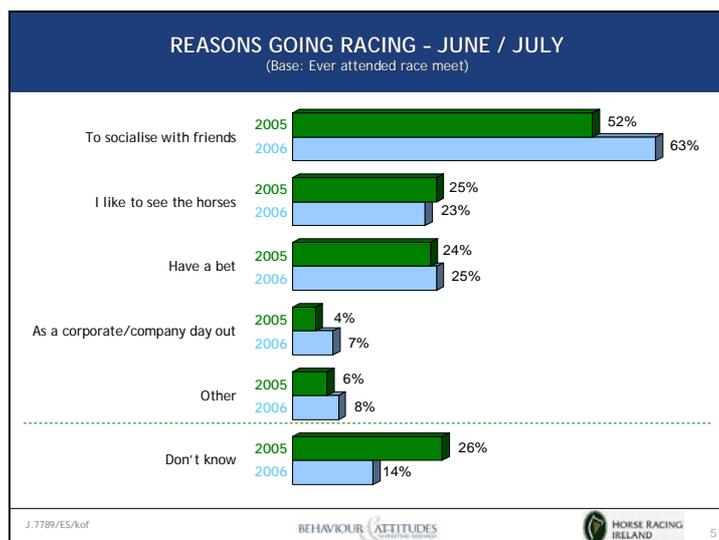
	Population	Racegoers
	%	%
Male	49	60
Female	51	40
Under 35yrs	41	47
36-64yrs	45	44
65yrs +	14	9
Urban	59	44
Rural	39	56

It is essential before you market anything that you have some understanding of the reasons people choose to buy your product or service, and this was based on a national survey by a professional company, "Behaviour and Attitudes".

I encourage people to literally go to their market and ask them why they go racing and also, why they do not go racing. The reason for most people is socialising. That is the most significant reason.

There are also people who are there principally to follow the horses and people who are there principally to have a bet. We have seen this in other markets. There is no reason to ignore any segment of this market, but we do know that the dynamic is changing all the time, particularly among the people who like to have a bet. There is no longer a compelling reason for people to go to the racecourse to have a bet. The technology available at home or on the High Street gives them more data and they can bet online, they can bet on their telephone.

So, we need to work very hard at thinking what is the compelling reason to get someone to the track to bet. This is not the same in all countries, but particularly in Britain and Ireland where we have an independent High Street betting market.



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So, the strategy we put behind our marketing programme for those five years was to position horseracing for our target audience as a leisure and social experience rather than a sporting one. It might sound counter-intuitive at first. Racing is a relatively complex sport for people who have not experienced it. They are carrying a lot of perceptions of how racing used to be in their father's time and it takes a certain amount of understanding to know what is going on, whether you are looking at a classic race or a maiden race. To the average person, that is not going to mean a great deal.

We feel that the appeal to recruiting new people is to sell position racing as a social activity. People understand how to socialise, particularly when we are targeting 20 to 29 year-olds. That is the age group you will recruit in because they are largely finishing education, not yet married, working for the first time, have high levels of disposable income. If you do not capture them at that age you probably will not get them into the sport later on.

This is just to emphasise further the effect of that social, race-going market, particularly as seen in Ireland.

HRI'S MARKETING STRATEGY

- Position Horse Racing (for the target audience) as a leisure/social experience more than a sporting one.
- Rationale:
Racing can be seen as a complex sport by new prospects, who lack familiarity, knowledge and understanding of the sport.

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The festivals: we have well over 300 races a year across those 27 tracks but 40 per cent of the attendances are concentrated into those few meetings. The defining characteristic of those meetings is high quality racing but also they are among the biggest social events in the country. I have highlighted the Punchestown Festival to give some examples of how we have approached that together with the racecourse. Once the strategy has been decided, the message must be decided.

IRISH RACING FESTIVALS 2006

Racecourse	Attendance
Fairyhouse Easter	33,000
Punchestown National Hunt	85,000
Curragh Derby	47,000
Galway Summer	217,000
Listowel Autumn	90,000
Limerick Christmas	30,000
Leopardstown Christmas	64,000
	566,000
National Total	1,450,000
Festivals as % of Total	40%

The creative approach is that we selected a celebrity to front up our ads, a popular presenter. He is not from the racing world directly but is known as a knowledgeable racegoer. We created a national TV campaign and a radio campaign to change the perceptions, because we were convinced at the start of this campaign that people had the wrong perception of racing.

The brand and tactical approach : we used central marketing to sell the idea generally that racing is a good sport, it is a good place to socialise, come in. We also created tactical ads to support individual race meetings”.

HRI'S CREATIVE APPROACH

- A celebrity endorsement campaign was created using a popular TV presenter known for his quirky and irreverent style.
- A National TV and Radio campaign was designed to radically change perceptions of the raceday experience for the target audience.
A 'brand' and 'tactical' approach was designed to raise overall awareness of racing as a leisure option and to drive attendances at selected meetings.

Mr. O'ROURKE showed a video of two TV commercials advertisements run throughout the year supporting the idea of racing as a social activity. The video also includes the Punchestown TV ad, which is an adaptation of that specifically to signpost that particular meeting.

“These video particularly give a very cheap and effective way of promoting a meeting. Ten second spots are not expensive. We can put those out in very intense bursts ahead of a specific race meeting.

What actually happened at Punchestown ? We used that to promote Punchestown. They themselves used radio, posters and other mechanisms locally so the radio that Punchestown recorded is directed very much at the sophisticated urban audience. They would play a lot of this in radio stations that would be well received in Dublin.

POSTER CAMPAIGN ON MAIN ROADS

c50km RADIUS OF PUNCHESTOWN



The emphasis is on fun. It is effectively speaking to office workers, the 1.2 million people living in the Greater Dublin area, to come down the road a small distance out of Dublin and enjoy the fun of the festival. That was carried over into a 48-sheet poster, a major motorway billboard campaign within a 50 km catchment of the racecourse. It is as simple as that, 'Funchestown', a very simple and direct communication from a poster which tells people when it is on.

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PUBLIC RELATIONS

PUNCHESTOWN PRESS LAUNCH

- All racing press invited.
- Selected Business & Social Press.
- Celebrity Guest of Honour.
- Speakers - CEO, Guest Trainer/ Jockey/Owner.
- MC for interviews and Questions & Answers Session.
- Press Pack.

We are fortunate in Ireland in that racing is very high profile. The national TV station worked with us to create a 30 minute special on the evening of the festival. It is the only meeting that they do that for.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

PRESS RELEASES

Issue releases for each key stage in advance of the race day:

- Sponsorship News
- Entries
- Declarations
- Raceday Entertainment Programme
- Ladies Day Prize Announcement
- All Celebrity/VIP News

Because of the long traditions of Punchestown, people are very interested in seeing this. This gave us a great opportunity to talk about the history and traditions of Punchestown.

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Mr. O'ROURKE showed a clip from the film which showed people walking the track in trainers and local people looking at the track to study the jumps and then the condition of the ground; features on fashion and, crucially, talking to the local community about how valuable this festival is for them, generating over 40 million euros worth of economic benefits.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

PUNCHESTOWN TV SPECIAL

HRI and Punchestown worked with RTE, the Irish National TV Station, to broadcast a 30 minutes eve-of-festival special TV programme on the Festival, covering:

- History and traditions of Punchestown.
- Inspection of the course and jumps.
- Profiles of leading Trainers.
- Fashion Feature
- Local Community involvement.

On the day itself it is important to have spectacle. How to create a sense of occasion and spectacle around the race meeting ?

From the moment you crossed the door the air was electric. You could feel that there was something happening and that is very subtle. That is the entertainment business. That is knowing how to create that sense of occasion. It sounds easy but it is not always easy to get the elements to integrate. Ladies' Day is always the best attended day of our festivals and the same applies in Britain. If you create that atmosphere you must persist with it and the momentum goes from year to year.

The event has become so successful; it is the single biggest corporate hospitality event in Ireland attracting 6,000 corporate seats at high prices. It has sustained extremely high levels of growth.

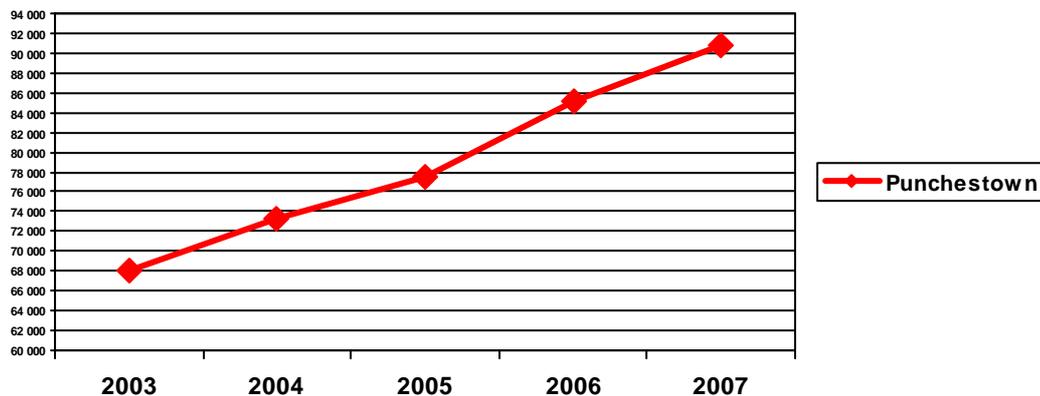
**PUBLIC RELATIONS
EVENT CREATION**

Opening day entertainment/spectacle - generates publicity from first day of Festival.
Ladies Day - always the best attended day of the Festival.
Create media momentum during the Festival and build anticipation for next year.

While Irish racing has been going well, that is going at better than twice the national growth rate and as of next year an extra day will be added to the festival, so it should be comfortably over 100,000.

Punchestown Festival 5 Year Attendance

2003 - 2007



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That is my summary of the key events there, just to say what we did.

PUNCHESTOWN FESTIVAL PROMOTION

KEY ELEMENTS

- National TV advertising campaign.
- Radio Campaign.
- Outdoor Posters.
- National TV Preview Programme.
- Press Launch.
- Event Creation – Ladies Day.

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