

PRIDE AWARDS 2017

Category: Consumer Relations Campaign

Company: One Black Bear

Entry title: National Express - #notsuchadrag

Brief and objectives:

Following ongoing issues with Southern Rail trains on the Brighton to London route, National Express Coach wanted to take commercial advantage and communicate to the commuters suffering via a press ad. One Black Bear (OBB) saw this as an opportunity to get a much bigger impact while providing some light relief and cheer up people that were enduring a miserable commute.

OBB's objectives were:

- To increase awareness of the coach as an alternative and viable travel method
- To increase ticket sales on the London to Brighton journey (year-on-year)
- To promote audience interaction across the social platforms
- To achieve an engagement rate of 2%+ (on the day of the stunt)
- To achieve coverage with national and regional (London and Brighton) press
- To raise a smile.

Rationale behind campaign, including research and planning:

As summer 2016 began, the ongoing situation with Southern Rail had been quite literally dragging on; first with delays and cancellations, then a reduced timetable. To add insult to injury, strikes were announced causing even more disruption for commuters. #Notsuchadrag was an idea OBB pitched to National Express to communicate there was another more 'fabulous' way to travel with guaranteed seats, regular services and cheap tickets. OBB conducted research amongst the target audiences using social listening tools. The anger of the Brighton<>London commuters quickly became apparent, with many taking to social media to voice their frustration.

Given the conversation was taking place online, it was clear that using National Express' social channels to reach out directly to this group with a stunt would be a good tactic to increase awareness of the alternative travel method.

Having decided on video content as the best channel option, OBB reviewed previous video based campaigns to draw on the successes and avoid the pitfalls of previous campaigns.

Strategy and tactics, including creativity and innovation:

The campaign targeted Brighton<>London commuters directly using social media and by targeting key publications that were London/Brighton centric:

Social Media: Through a mix of organic and paid social media (across Twitter, Facebook and Instagram) OBB was able to target National Express' commuter audience to increase awareness of the coach as an alternative and viable travel method as well as pre-promote the stunt and increase audience interaction across National Express' social platforms.

Media relations: OBB secured coverage by providing alternative content which could then be used by press online and through their own channels. OBB developed a creative, fun response to the ongoing Southern Rail disruption that was well timed as the issue was already high on the press agenda.

Implementation of tactics:

OBB hired three drag queens, to be flanked by a promo team handing out discounted tickets. Leading the charge for #notsuchadrag was La Voix – an award-winning performer with an iconic look and powerful voice, she'd recently starred in Absolutely Fabulous the Movie and was a semi-finalist in Britain's Got Talent 2014. La Voix had the help of two other artists, Vanity Von Glow and Nancy Clench, to really rally support from travellers at Victoria Train Station.

Before the event, using National Express' organic and paid social media, OBB teased that National Express was going to be doing something very 'fabulous' on Tuesday 9th August. OBB wanted to make people aware of the event, as well as encouraging them to use the coach as an alternative mode of transport in light of all the Southern Rail delays between London and Brighton.

Along with social seeding via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram OBB delivered some paid social advertising to train travellers doing the Brighton to London commute advising them that National Express would be giving out discounted travel.

OBB also carried out a considerable amount of social outreach to various journalists and relevant Twitter accounts including the parody Southern Rail Twitter account to make them aware of what National Express was intending to do.

Measurement and evaluation:

OBB measured the campaign against its objectives, analysing the success of the event against the results of the social media posts and ROI after the event, using National Express average engagement rate and reach as a baseline.

On the day, the event was a hit, not only in terms of everything that was happening at Victoria Train Station (which the public loved), but also across social media too. Throughout the day OBB was live-tweeting as well as posting across Facebook and Instagram too.

By the end of the day, National Express' Twitter had tallied up a total of 39,155 impressions, 1851 interactions and achieved an engagement rate of 4.73%. This compares to an average of 1.5%, and exceeds the engagement rate target of 2%+, while realising the objective to promote audience interaction.

Within just 24hrs, a tweet received 4,250 impressions, 18 retweets, 27 likes and a 17.4% engagement rate.

On Facebook, OBB posted at the beginning and the end of the stunt, which alone, resulted in a reach of 32,428 for just that day, 5.2k video views and an engagement rate of 4.08%. This was also OBB's first opportunity to use the, then new, Instagram feature, 'Stories' which was used to post highlights from the event, resulting in 659 views.

The reaction to the event was hugely positive and really did put a smile on commuters faces. Here's an example of one of the reactions received on the day: 'Loving the response to the #notsuchadrag campaign for @nationalexpress #southernstrike #goteamnx.'

One of the key outcomes of the event was a 94% increase in ticket sales year on year, as well as features in the Metro online, Guardian, The Times and local press in the Brighton area – hitting the awareness, ticket sales and coverage objectives that were set out.

It had a specific mention when the stunt featured as Mark Bridge's 'Share of the Week' in The Times – which resulted in an increase in the National Express share price.

Budget and cost effectiveness:

One Black Bear delivered this campaign for £17,800 broken down as follows:

Project fee: £5,400

Operational costs: £1,500

Pre-event site visit: £750

Pre-event promotion: £2,000

Drag Queens (with expenses): £3,750

Props: £500

On the day promotion (staff/leaflets): £1,100

Photography: £300

Videography: £2,500

The £17,800 delivered a 94% increase in ticket sales year on year.