



From promotion to emotion: Landlord legends
BT Sport Business
Marketing Society Awards Entry – Business to business
February 2018

Executive summary

Pub landlords, our primary target audience were being forced to close their premises at a rate of 23 pubs a week. With our target audience under pressure from both macroeconomic and industry pressures, BT Sport Business were tasked with driving sales of BT Sport subscriptions and reducing churn amongst pub landlords.

Eschewing traditional rewards and rational B2B incentive programmes, we went from promotion to emotion by celebrating landlords in our integrated B2B and B2C 'Landlord Legends' creative idea. The campaign reminded pub goers throughout the season of the vital role landlords play in bringing their community together by televising BT sport and in so doing, showed publicans we understood them and their business. The campaign was executed across print, AV and on-trade, whilst also securing national, regional and trade PR coverage for our landlords.

This resulted in improving BT Sport's brand perceptions amongst pub landlords by X, reduced churn year on year from 18% to 13% and smashed our sales targets by 19%.

Word count: 163



Background

BT Sport was established in 2012 and the start of the 16/17 season would be our fifth year selling the channel into a wide variety of premises including hotels, gyms, oil rigs, prisons but the biggest proportion of our revenue came from pubs.

Thanks to the strength of our rights (particularly in football and rugby which are the biggest drivers of out of home sports viewing), BT Sport Business had managed to secure the channel in over 30,000 premises – 33% of pubs across the UK, more than any other broadcaster.

Our advertising to publicans to date (fig 1) had been anchored in our exclusive rights and our pricing but in 2017, we needed to take a different approach.



Fig 1: 2015-16 BT Sport Business advertising



Publicans under pressure

Pub landlords, our primary audience were under pressure.

Spiraling business rates introduced by the government, coupled with changes in consumer demand for healthier ways to spend leisure time, rising labour costs, inflation and Sterling's depreciation were all contributing to 23 pubs a week being forced to close(1).

Against this context, BT Sport needed to remind publicans of the value we brought to their business despite impending price rises of our own, a more mature market with fewer publicans to sign up and no new football or rugby rights to bring them.



And feeling undervalued

Within the on-trade there is a vast array of different types of licensees, all with varying relationships to the bars they work at. From private landlords running their own country pubs to inner city sports bars run by a team of managers. But what united them was their great desire to show our sport. They loved our coverage as fans themselves, they knew their customers loved it and they loved how it brought their community together.

But they resented the rising prices they were being asked to pay whilst the sports they showed were seemingly awash with cash. For many, they felt we – the stakeholders of the sport they loved, simply didn't understand or were taking for granted the role they played.

They recognised our value but they felt we didn't recognise theirs.

The role for marketing

We believed that pubs and sport were intrinsically linked. Pubs help elevate the the social nature of sport for millions of fans. We wanted to strengthen the desire for pubs to show our sport by highlighting how core they were to the sports themselves and their fans.

Our role for marketing was clear:

Improve brand perceptions, reduce churn (by 8%) and drive 1k in new sales amongst UK publicans by demonstrating BT's understanding of the licensed trade in a way that celebrates the role of the publican in sport.



Our approach – More than just a publican: Landlords are legends

We realised landlords who signed up to BT Sport weren't just a pub to their customers. They were a place you could go to with friends or arrive on your own and connect with other sport lovers.

In the eyes of their public - Landlords don't just pull pints and show the game, they are sporting legends, often going above and beyond for their customers – helping fans feel closer to one another, their local community, their favourite clubs and of course, the live televised moments on the pitch.

Our strategy was to celebrate the landlords who exemplified this; who forged special relationships by going the extra mile for their club, their community, their customers. We summarised the approach as: BT Sport landlords get you closer to the sport you love



Campaign idea:

Every month, throughout the season, we invited the public to help us find one landlord from across the country who we would celebrate as our “Manager of the Month” (#BTMOTM), giving these legends of the game the full Premier League experience.

From literally putting them on a pedestal with their own life-size statues, award presentations to top BT Sport talent and regional press ads championing the work they do going above and beyond.

#BTMOTM

We kick-started the campaign by picking three Landlords who embodied the idea and immortalising them with their own life-sized statues, unveiled to them at their pub with guest appearances from BT Sport legends of the game. The story was picked up by regional and local journalists generating great coverage for us and our landlords. This was supported with trade and local press ads, digital display and short films telling the story of what made them so legendary.

We then replicated this formula each month but this time opening the nominations up to the public via a series of social media posts (Fig 3) from our talent and distributed in-bar inventory across the country to drum up nominations for more #BTMOTM (BT Manager of the Month) contenders.



Fig 2: Launch press



Fig 3: Celebrating our legends and recruiting for more via social post

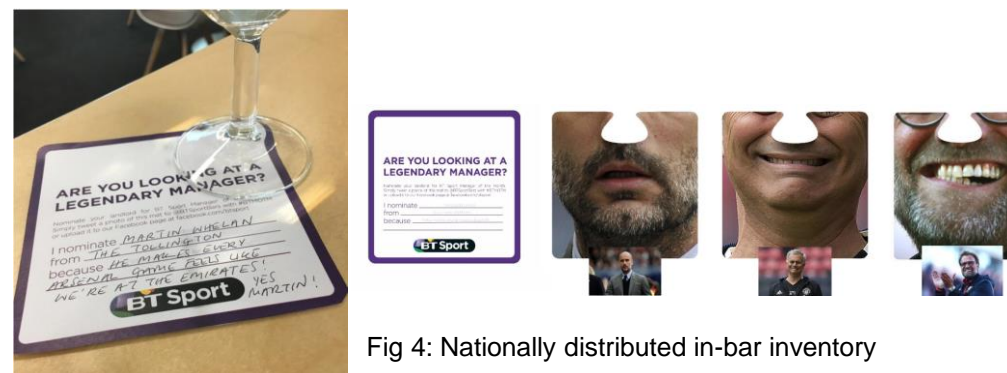


Fig 4: Nationally distributed in-bar inventory



Then, once we had our #BTMOTM, we invited a legendary manager, this time from the Premier League, to present them with their #BTMOTM trophy generating more column inches.

This has created a monthly groundswell of earned attention peaking every time we present our winner with the #BTMOTM trophy. Both from publicans in the trade putting themselves forward but also from consumers wanting to ensure their landlord legends would be recognised regionally and nationally by the award.



First London winner from Holloway gets visit from Arsenal legend Martin Keown

BT Sport is celebrating pub landlords across the UK who go the extra mile to create an amazing sporting experience for their customers and are rewarding them with their very own life-sized statue.

HOBGOBLIN The Unofficial Beer of Halloween

Pubs "vital" for sports claims Arsenal legend

By Ed Bedington 27 September 2017, last updated on 27 September 2017



Arsenal legend BT Sport has recognised the role pubs play in bringing sports fans together

Pubs offer a vital service for sports fans, offering a communal opportunity for like-minded people, Arsenal legend Martin Keown says. "In England and Europe, as well as in the rest of the world, as not everyone can get to a game in person, pubs offered a place where fans could meet and talk about the game."

BT Today

Is your publican worthy of an award?



Arsenal legend Martin Keown unveils a statue of Tollington pub landlord Mark Wheilan (Pic: BT Sport)

Arsenal legend Martin Keown paid a special visit to a Holloway pub to unveil a statue of the first London BT Sport manager of the month.



BT Sport is celebrating pub landlords across the UK who go the extra mile to create an amazing sporting experience for their customers. Monthly winners, until next June, will be presented with a trophy by a local sporting personality and a new 4K TV for their venue. To kick off the awards, BT Sport's Martin Keown, Robbie Savage and Jake Humphrey will be presenting the first trophy to the winner of the inaugural award.



Robbie Savage with landlord Brian Priest in Lutterworth, Leicestershire

BT Sport is celebrating pub landlords across the UK who go the extra mile to create an amazing sporting experience for their customers and are rewarding them with their very own life-sized statue. Launching this week, the BT Manager of the Month award celebrates landlords who make their pub more than a pub, highlighting their role in connecting sport with the community.

To kick-start the awards three statues are being unveiled across the UK, at The Chequers (Lutterworth), The Tollington (London) and The Gardener's Arms (Norwich), with Robbie Savage, Martin Keown and Jake Humphrey unveiling the statue of each respective landlord.

Brian Priest, pub landlord of The Chequers pub in Lutterworth, is the first Midlands winner of the BT Sport manager of the month. A statue now stands outside Brian's pub and he is set to receive a big screen TV prize too.

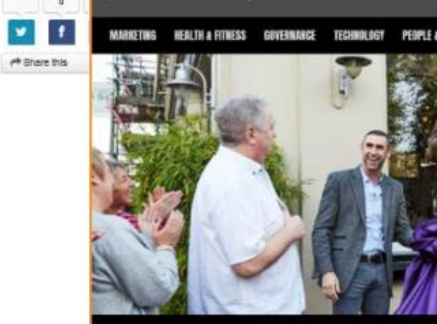
All the winning pubs stood out from the competition thanks to the uniqueness of their venues, whether it was a hidden gem or a well-known local favourite.

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BT Sport is on the lookout for pub landlords who give their customers something a bit extra when it comes to sport.

BT Sport has launched a Manager of the Month initiative, which will celebrate one licensee each month from now until June 2018. Winners will get a trophy presented to them by a local sporting celebrity and a new 4K TV for their pub. To kick off the awards today (September 19) landlords of The Tollington, London; The Chequers, Lutterworth; and The Gardener's Arms, Norwich, are being presented with a life size statue of themselves, unveiled by either Martin Keown (see above), Robbie Savage or Jake Humphrey. The winning pubs were chosen for the uniqueness of their venues, "whether it be painting the pub to match the local team's colours, TVs in the toilets, or getting the players from their local team in after the game," said Bruce Robertson, BT Sport's director commercial customers. "Pubs are at the heart of their communities and sport is a fantastic way of bringing people together. The BT Sport Manager of the Month gives us the opportunity to recognise the landlords up and down the country who go that extra mile for their customers and their community," he added.



BT Sport to celebrate

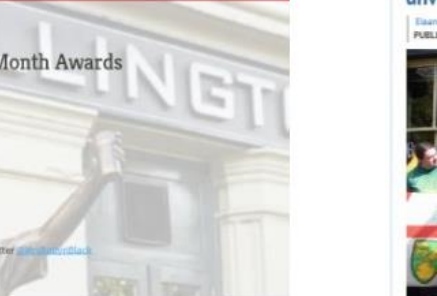
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BT Sport launches Manager of the Month Awards

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Results – brand perceptions

The campaign has run for five months and will continue until the end of May 2018 when the season ends. So far...

Have we shifted perceptions of BT Sport amongst publicans from the new brand that didn't understand them to a genuine business partner?

Yes.

Amongst our own customer base (important given reducing churn was critical), our call centre asks on every customer interaction how satisfied they are with the service and if they perceive it as valued. The average customer satisfaction levels have jumped by 12% from July 2017 (pre campaign) to January 2018.

Anecdotal feedback from CEO's of two of our biggest customers say that they feel we support the licensed trade far better than most brands in the market and much better than Sky.

We have also repurposed the content from 'legendary' licensees to demonstrate to others how best to make themselves more profitable. This content is consumed at a rate double our typical content and field sales colleagues say that in discussions with licensees some of the issues raised in the campaign have made them change their business for the better.

But don't take our word for it...



“In a market that has traditionally focused on attempting to extract as much money as possible it is really refreshing to see a campaign that heroes the our pubs and its people in this way”

Marketing Manager, Greene King

“Brilliant, inspiring and all of our pubs have been eager to get involved ”

Trading director, Stonegate

“The people at the heart of pubs bring communities together and this is a campaign that genuinely wants to give back to this exceptional group”

Matt Eley, Editor of Inapub





Results - sales and churn

Our other objectives were to drive sales and reduce churn.
So have we driven sales in an increasingly mature market?
Yes.

New sales are up 3% YOY but up 19% vs target.
ARPU (Average Revenue Per User) –has also risen by 6%. This has largely been driven by us having to offer smaller discounts (despite no new content to offer the market) and how the campaign has deepened our relationship with the pub trade encouraging customers to take additional products from us (such as Broadband, Wifi, Music streaming).

The campaign has also improved our pipeline ahead of next season –forming a key part of in season meetings with all major national accounts who have been proactive in promoting its venues as potential #BTMOTM winners for this season and next. This has resulted in an increase in managed pub sites across our estate of 6% as large chains have added sites from their portfolio that may not have previously had sport.

And have we reduced churn amongst an increasingly price sensitive audience despite raising prices?
Yes.

Our pub base YOY churn is down from 18% to 13% as of Jan 2018.

Plans are now afoot for 2018/19 season to find next year's legends.

Learnings

Eschewing traditional rewards and rational B2B incentive programmes, we went from promotion to emotion by celebrating landlords integral role in bringing their customers closer to the things that really mattered to them. By focusing on the emotional relationships generated thanks to live sport and great pubs, we were able to use marketing to give something back to our customers and grow our business with them.

World count: 1,803



References

1:

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