



Showcase
& Awards
2025

Chester Racecourse – Boodles May Festival
'For the Grace. And for the Glory' Campaign

Marketing Award

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Objectives



The Boodles May Festival is the highlight of the Chester Racecourse season. Featuring Epsom Derby Festival trials and an array of high calibre races, it is the jewel in Chester's crown and should be promoted as such.

Since 2022, we've seen a decrease in attendances, with a 2.1% decrease between 2022 to 2023, and a 0.4% decrease between 2023 to 2024. Furthermore, when looking at racegoer geodemographic data, we noticed that since 2022 we'd seen a decrease in racegoers coming from our neighbouring city of Liverpool, seeing an 8% decrease from 2022 to 2024. As a core geo-demographic group for the remainder of fixtures in the season, it was concerning that it was not being mirrored during the May Festival.

In addition, after the May Festival in 2024, we conducted research as part of our post-race day surveys, in which we asked our guests how important a range of factors were when they chose the fixture. When asked how important 'racing' was in their decision to come to the May Festival, nearly 40% of survey participants said that it was not an important factor in coming to the festival.

With this in mind, we needed the 2025 Boodles May Festival campaign to be bigger and better than ever. After numerous planning sessions, we arrived at 'The Boodles May Festival. For the Grace. And for the Glory' campaign, which had the following objectives:

- **Increase Boodles May Festival attendance by 2% vs previous year.**
- **Increase Boodles May Festival attendance from people with a Liverpool postcode by 5% vs previous year.**
- **Elevate the calibre and quality of the racing through digital channels.**

We set three clear target audiences to help us achieve our objectives:

The Big Eventer: Age range: 25-44. 1 hr drive time of the Racecourse. Younger people that live in urban locations with lots of opportunities to socialise and spend. Incomes are above average. Digitally savvy and will use social media/read blogs to research events and days out.

The Racing Fan: Age range: 35-64. 1 hr drive time of the Racecourse. Live comfortably in stable areas in suburban and semi-rural locations. Stable families and empty nesters. Go racing multiple times throughout the year. Incomes are above average, but they are savvy with their spending.

The Experience Seeker: Age range: 45-64. Local/regional. High income people, successfully combining jobs and families. High disposable income and enjoying spending it trying new experiences.

Delivery



The concept 'For the Grace. And for the Glory.' was chosen to reflect the Boodles May Festival's status as a prestigious and unmissable fixture in the racing calendar. 'The Grace' pays homage to the elegance and style that define the event. 'The Glory' celebrates the exceptional calibre of racing on display, and it also captures the personal triumphs of racegoers.

We created an omni-channel campaign focusing on three key areas; out of home, organic social media and race day activations. To drive increased attendance among racegoers living in Liverpool postcodes, we strategically focused our out-of-home (OOH) campaigns within the Liverpool region. The campaign included varied media types and sites. Timing played a crucial role in our approach in which we aligned some of the campaign with the Grand National Festival, leveraging its high local engagement and to ensure our messaging was present during a period of heightened interest in horse racing.

Social media provided the perfect channel to engage our existing audience and attract new fans to the sport. We developed a campaign-led social strategy that aligned seamlessly with our broader social objectives, with one clear goal, to make racing feel fun, exciting, and accessible. To maximise impact, we adopted a dual-content approach tailored to different segments of our audience. Drawing on platform insights and audience behaviours, we split our content into two key formats:

Long-form content – In-depth interviews packed with insight and behind-the-scenes access. These were crafted for racing enthusiasts who crave detail and insider knowledge.

Short-form content – Fast-paced, engaging clips that blended interesting racing facts with personality-driven storytelling. These were designed to appeal to casual viewers and newcomers to the sport.

The exceptional calibre of racing at this year's May Festival provided a wealth of storytelling opportunities. Minnie Hauk's triple Oaks win, and Lambourn's double derby wins meant we were able to capitalise on these success stories creating compelling follow-up content that reinforced the importance of the May Festival as a proving ground for top-tier talent.

As part of our broader 'Elevating Racing' initiative, we felt it was essential to extend the campaign beyond traditional channels and into the heart of the guest experience, bringing the 'grace and glory' of the sport to life. In partnership with racing stakeholders, we delivered a dynamic and immersive activation that included; jockey masterclasses, meet and greets with jockeys, a virtual reality racing experience, and a racing education zone. This activation bridged our digital and out-of-home campaign with an engaging on-site experience, offering racegoers a fully integrated, 360-degree journey through the world of racing.

Results



The 2025 Boodles May Festival campaign, 'For the Grace. And for the Glory,' delivered resounding success, boosting attendance figures, re-engaging a key regional audience, and repositioning the racing experience through targeted digital storytelling. Through a focused, insight-led strategy and precise audience segmentation, the campaign achieved and exceeded all key objectives. A core objective of the campaign was to reverse the downward trend in attendance. Following consecutive year-on-year declines of 2.1% (2022–2023) and 0.4% (2023–2024), 2025 saw a significant turnaround. **The campaign drove a 7.9% increase in total attendance compared to 2024**, marking the most substantial year-on-year growth since pre-2020, beating our initial attendance objective and confirming the festival's renewed appeal as a must-attend event.

Attendance from Liverpool postcodes increased by 26.3%. Reconnecting with Liverpool-based racegoers was a critical KPI due to a concerning 8% drop in attendees from this key catchment area since 2022. Through hyper-targeted digital campaigns, Liverpool-focused creative, and tailored messaging for our “Big Eventer” segment, the 2025 Festival achieved a fantastic uplift in attendees from Liverpool vs. 2024, exceeding the target of 5% growth and recapturing vital regional interest.

Post-2024 survey data indicated that nearly 40% of guests didn't consider the racing itself a key motivator for attending. To reposition racing as both high-calibre and central to the May Festival experience, we developed a digital content strategy showcasing the prestige, heritage, and stories behind the May Festival's races and contenders. Across all platforms, engagement with **racing-focused digital content increased by 28.6% compared to 2024.**

The May Festival's trial races received enhanced attention, with two of the Festival's winners going on to win at the Epsom Derby Festival, content which was used dynamically across owned and earned media.

Supporting Information

