

Horse Racing: A Clear Opportunity for Brands

By Tom Rosier, Senior Account Executive

Horse racing is the second most attended sport behind football in the UK, with over 5.7 million people attending racecourses up and down the country in 2018. Given its obvious popularity, why haven't brands from sectors outside of alcohol and gambling (Table 1) fully embraced horse racing as a sponsorship platform and are things about to change?

Table 1

Sponsor	Industry	Property	Location	Sponsorship Type
Pernod Ricard	Alcohol	Ascot Racecourse	England	Official sponsor
Moët & Chandon	Alcohol	July Festival at Newmarket	England	Title sponsor
Crabbies	Alcohol	The Grand National	England	Title sponsor
Stella Artois	Alcohol	Ascot Racecourse	England	Official sponsor
Hennessy	Alcohol	Newbury Gold Cup	England	Official sponsor
Aspall	Alcohol	The Jockey Club	UK	Official sponsor
Bombay Sapphire	Alcohol	Goodwood Festival	England	Official sponsor
Greenall's	Alcohol	The Jockey Club	UK	Official sponsor
Investec	Banking	Epsom Derby Festival	England	Title sponsor
Ladbrokes	Betting	Newbury Gold Cup	England	Title sponsor
UniBet	Betting	Epsom Derby Festival	England	Official sponsor
Betfair	Betting	British Horseracing Authority	UK	Official sponsor
Coral	Betting	Coral Eclipse	England	Title sponsor
Betway	Betting	British Horseracing Authority	UK	Official sponsor
Betway	Betting	Cheltenham Queen Mother Champion Chase	England	Title sponsor
Betway	Betting	The Grand National	England	Official sponsor
Sky Bet	Betting	Ebor Handicap	England	Title sponsor
Sky Bet	Betting	British Horseracing Authority	UK	Official sponsor
188Bet	Betting	British Horseracing Authority	UK	Official sponsor
McBookie	Betting	British Horseracing Authority	UK	Official sponsor
Boylesports	Betting	Irish Grand National	Ireland	Title sponsor
32Red	Betting	Lanzarote Hurdle Day	England	Title sponsor
Sporting Index	Betting	British Horseracing Authority	UK	Official sponsor
32Red	Betting	Tolworth Hurdle Day	England	Title sponsor
National Express	Bus operator	The Jockey Club	UK	Official sponsor
Dubai Duty Free	Duty Free	Shergar Cup	England	Title sponsor
Randox Health	Health insurance	The Grand National	England	Title sponsor
Timico	Information technology	Cheltenham Gold Cup	England	Title sponsor
Gigaset	Mobile phones	Ascot Racecourse	England	Official sponsor
QIPCO	Savings and investments	British Champions Series (BCS)	UK	Title sponsor
QIPCO	Savings and investments	Guineas Festival at Newmarket	England	Title sponsor
QIPCO	Savings and investments	Prix du Jockey Club	France	Title sponsor
QIPCO	Savings and investments	British Champions Day Ascot	England	Title sponsor
QIPCO	Savings and investments	Irish Champions Weekend	Ireland	Title sponsor
Qatar Racing	Sports authority	Goodwood Festival	England	Title sponsor

Source: Sports Business, Deals Tracker

Perhaps it is misconceptions about the audience that has put brands off with racegoers considered too elitist or too 'hardcore racing' to take notice of 'non endemic' brands entering the sport as partners. Maybe it's the fact that there is an assumption that racing only happens intermittently throughout the year.

In reality, the audience dynamic is far removed from common misconceptions with a wave of highly engaged brand-savvy millennials making up 44% of British horse racing attendees every year (Racecourse Association 2018).

When it comes to event frequency, horse racing is unrivalled with at least two race meets staged on 361 days of the year.



How then does horse racing compare to other sports properties when one looks at the opportunities for brands to engage fans? In short, it is much the same!

On-course branding opportunities deliver broad exposure and reach through broadcast deals with ITV, Sky Sports Racing and Racing TV. Open race courses and long race days mean there is ample space and time for brands to deliver on site experiences to engage attending fans. High profile Jockeys and trainers are available to partner with to deliver emotional and engaging stories around brand activations. Throw into the mix that the sponsorship landscape is totally uncluttered outside of betting and alcohol brands and the horse racing landscape really does look to be a truly untapped brand communications platform.

There are various examples of brand involvement; Radox Health signing a 5 year deal with the Grand National in 2017 and QIPCO's continued support of high-profile flat racing. Another change in the sport to look to address this is the launch of the inaugural Championship Horse Racing (CHR) series in 2019. A focus on using sport and entertainment to engage fans, gender equality, horse welfare and a revolutionary new team format might be just what horse racing needs to convince brands of its potential. A conscious decision not to have gambling brands associated with any of the teams is also a very clear sign of their intentions.

Oli Harris, Chief Marketing Officer of Championship Horse Racing, commented, *"The concept for CHR was conceived really by looking at what other sports do well. Racing is extremely well attended, has passionate fans and a very good product, it is just seen as niche apart from a few days each year. Our aim is to attract new partners, so changing the format and providing a complementary addition to the calendar gives us a great excuse to introduce new brands to the sport."*



Incredibly well attended, a passionate younger audience, events 361 days of the year and an uncluttered sponsorship landscape, I believe horse racing is full of potential as a communications platform for brands. The introduction of the Championship Horse Racing Series to this year's race calendar might just be the tipping point that makes brands realise the full potential of the sport.

Either way the opportunities for brands are there and it's time they took notice and saddled up for the ride!