

New Beginning

When Virgin Trains acquired a rail franchise in 1997, it was promptly engulfed by the public disappointment and cynicism that defined British rail travel. However, Virgin Trains soon found itself at the receiving end of renewed anger as the industry declined further in the ensuing years and people felt Virgin was failing to deliver on its brand promise.

Advertising helped Virgin Trains overcome these negative perceptions. It provoked people to perceive Virgin Trains in a more positive light and to feel good again about train travel.

Our staggered media strategy was designed to educate and inform at a local level with local press, radio and outdoor, before going national with TV, national press, cinema and online. Over one hundred towns and cities were targeted with local messages, with prioritisation based on detailed mapping and location analysis, expected revenue, service increases and size of audience.

OMD Metrics econometric modelling has been in place since October 2000 and has enabled us to isolate the impact of this campaign on total Virgin Trains revenue - an increase of over £62m, an almost six-fold return on investment.

The judges view:

"Virgin's audacious move into the rail travel area brought two potentially competing marketing agendas: to generate sales and to contribute to the credibility of the Virgin brand. This case study painstakingly models the sales return on marketing spend and inventively measures Virgin Trains' contribution to the master brand's reputation."

