

AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC RELATIONS 2024

PRCA
PUBLIC RELATIONS CONSULTANTS ASSOCIATION



Best Corporate Communication

Over €30,000



Campaign

The People's Retailer: Penneys' Corporate Reputation Programme

Description of Campaign

The winning entry was a very impressive campaign which started with a reminder of the company's Irish heritage. The judges said it was comprehensive, clever and creative – what a corporate communications strategy should be, and a good demonstration of thought leadership.



Public Relations Consultant

Edelman

PRIMARK®

Client

Primark

Background to the Campaign

Penneys, or Primark internationally, was founded by Arthur Ryan in 1969, as one shop on Mary Street, Dublin, with the goal of bringing affordable and fashionable clothing to Ireland. Today, we have 38 stores in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) and employ 5,000 retail colleagues and over 1,200 people in our international headquarters at Arthur Ryan House, Dublin. We're an international fashion retailer with 80,000 employees working across 440+ stores in 17 countries, and have ambitious plans to reach 530 stores by 2026.

As Primark's home and third biggest market, ROI is a priority market with significant investment plans, investing €250 million in Ireland over a ten-year period, including new stores, refurbishments and opening a new distribution centre in Newbridge, Kildare, to service the island of Ireland. While Penneys has high awareness and affinity as a brand in Ireland, in the last year, we have amplified our communications strategy with the aim of strengthening our corporate reputation in Ireland, reaffirming our place to our customers and stakeholders, as one of Ireland's leading retailers at home and internationally. This strategy focused on three key pillars:

- 1. Storytelling:** Through compelling narratives that resonate with our audience, Primark will forge connections with new and existing customers, increasing awareness of our people and business behind the brand, fostering brand loyalty.
- 2. Products:** We're committed to offering more sustainable and accessible fashion at affordable prices to everyone, solidifying our position as a value leader.
- 3. Expansion:** Primark's in-store experience is an important attraction for customers, and we are committed to reaching new audiences with new stores, and untapping our potential by investing in the redevelopment of existing stores.

As a result, we developed a strategic corporate communications plan to include key activities happening in 2023/2024, encapsulating both public relations and public affairs elements.

Statement of Objectives

Pillar 1: Storytelling: Sharing the Penneys Story

- Through sharing compelling narratives that foster a sense of community with new and existing customers, we will drive awareness of the Penneys/ Primark brand and obtain an increase in digital traffic and in-store footfall.
- We will become an industry thought leader by commissioning bi-annual waves of consumer research, allowing us to create a regular index that captures a snapshot of the Irish consumer's mindset and spending habits, serving as a platform to engage with political and media stakeholders.
- Enhance our reputation by securing increased visibility of our brand through positive coverage in national media.

Pillar 2: Products: Maximum Joy at Minimum Cost

- We will build on our commitments to making great fashion and everyday essentials affordable for as many people as possible, by introducing more adaptive items and apply inclusive design to more product ranges.
- We will drive sales in new product ranges in stores by maximising our target customers' awareness of said ranges.
- We will generate positive publicity and educate audiences that Penneys is democratising availability of specialist ranges and more sustainable clothing.

Pillar 3: Expansion: Ambitious Plans at Home and Abroad

- We will position Primark as a leader in the retail industry, showcasing our investment in physical retail on the high street. Through our new store opening communications strategy, we support the understanding of our domestic and international growth plans.
- We will maximise awareness of our store expansion plans, securing high profile media coverage to coincide with store opening and investment announcements, and driving brand affinity in our home market.
- We will strengthen relationships by engaging key political stakeholders to reinforce our commitments within the communities we operate in.

Programme Planning and Strategy

Pillar 1: Storytelling

As Ireland's leading fashion retailer, thousands of people shop in Penneys' stores every day. Our customers' baskets reflect what is happening in the country - whether it's matching pyjamas for the family for the Late Late Toy Show, or wearing snuddies to wrap up in winter - we are uniquely positioned to see how Irish consumers are feeling. We are part of the fabric of Irish life - best summed up by the fact that the phrase 'Thanks hun, Penneys' is now part of the nation's vocabulary. We wanted to bring this unique connection to the fore through targeted storytelling activities in Ireland.

Penneys Pulse of the Nation Index Volume.1,2,3

The Penneys Pulse of the Nation Index was born from a desire to illustrate the bond between our brand and the public mindset, by using consumer data layered with insights from Penneys' business. By establishing this research series, we could regularly tap into the public mood to gauge how people feel about certain topics, while also giving us a platform to talk to consumers, media and stakeholders. Working with Amárach Research, we established a new index to monitor how people were feeling at a given moment of time, ran it through a specific lens such as the cost-of-living crisis and overlaid it with our sales data. E.g. the first Index had a focus on the cost-of-living crisis and found that consumers were cutting back on home heating, which was corroborated by mass sales increase of warm clothing at Penneys.

In 2023 and early 2024, we launched three research reports, with a targeted communications plan to support each, including media briefings, stakeholder engagement and digital comms. We hosted a roundtable event with 15 political and retail stakeholders including Kieran O'Donnell, Minister of State with responsibility for Local Government and Planning, and representatives from Dublin Town, Retail Ireland, and Dublin Chamber of Commerce for our second report launch, driving discussion on the impact of retail in communities, strengthening our relationships with these key groups.

RTÉ One Inside Penneys Documentary (January - February 2024)

While Penneys is synonymous with Irish life, many people are unaware of the global scale of the business. From one store in Dublin's Mary Street to more than 440 locations across 17 countries, Penneys has grown from humble beginnings to become a global fashion retailer. We saw an opportunity to leverage the curiosity about our brand and tell our story via earned channels by working with Motive Television and RTÉ to create a fly-on-the-wall documentary series that would give an insight into what has made Penneys such a success story, and capture the spirit of our staff.

'Inside Penneys' placed great focus on our people and customers, showcasing new store openings, our international business, global campaigns and importantly, the amazing people in our stores and head office who drive our business. The show was a huge success from a brand awareness and reputation standpoint; anecdotal feedback from RTÉ was that the series was the most anticipated new show in their January schedule. Audience figures were very high with approximately 340,000 viewers per episode.. Internally, a great sense of pride was fostered as colleagues came together each week to watch the latest episode.

Pre-publicity for the show allowed us to speak first-hand about what makes Penneys so special, securing feature articles with key characters in outlets such as the Irish Independent Review supplement and Newstalk's Hard Shoulder.

Pillar 2: Products

Everything we do is built around everyday affordability. Everyone is welcome at Penneys, but we understand that there are many types of products that have historically not been affordable to everyone – such as clothes made from more sustainably sourced materials, or products using specialist technology to fit a specific customer need. Recognising this, we wanted to leverage our scale and make more sustainable and specialist clothing as accessible as possible. Over the past year, milestones have included:

- Primark Cares Circular Collection– a first of its kind collection of 35 items based on Primark's Circular Product Standard, designed to be recycled at the end of their life-cycle. This forms part of Primark's ambition to move towards a more circular future.
- Supporting Women for Life: our ongoing commitment to supporting women through all of life's stages, from first period through to menopause. We have developed several ranges to meet women's needs using the latest product innovations, including a maternity and post-partum line, period and menopause ranges. In the last year, we launched our annual Breast Cancer collection that helps support women during treatment, recovery or post-surgery, and our Adaptive underwear range designed for people with disabilities, making it easier to change in and out of the clothing thanks to magnetic closures and softer fabrics.

For each milestone, the ranges were unveiled to media and targeted interviews were secured. For our Adaptive launch, we worked with our PR agency Edelman to secure a media opportunity for Dr Shani Dhanda, an accessibility specialist and disability expert who partnered with Penneys on the collection.

Pillar 3: Expansion

Penneys plays a key role in boosting the economies of town centres across the country, with plans to invest €250 million in our Irish business. We know that the Penneys "halo effect" is a real phenomenon – it is evident that the presence of a Penneys store in a community boosts employment and local commerce, so our communications plan focused on this narrative.

Clonmel Extension

The expansion of Penneys Clonmel provided a significant boost to the county's local economy, creating 20 new positions as part of a €5.7m investment. Working with our Public Affairs team, we invited the Mayor of Clonmel, Cllr. Pat English to visit the revamped store. He welcomed the investment, pointing out the boost it brought to the town.

Dundrum Relocation

The most significant milestone in our calendar was the relocation of our Dundrum store to a new 60,000 sq ft premises

in Dundrum Town Centre following a €16m investment. We developed a communications plan to leverage the huge anticipation for the store. The store was officially opened by Neale Richmond TD, Minister of State for Retail Business, who highlighted Penneys as “an example” that other retailers should follow. This opening day and the colleagues that helped make it a success were featured in the RTÉ documentary, helping to showcase investment in our store network.

Mary Street Refurbishment

A €10m refurbishment of our first ever store, Mary Street, was completed in August, with the revamped store reaffirming how Penneys continues to deliver the best retail experience to consumers with new features like self-checkout technology, a nail salon and vintage clothing concession, and new energy saving features like LED lighting, using 30% less energy. To promote the refurbishment, an exclusive feature with The Sun was secured, leading to a two-page spread in print that highlighted how the flagship store is part of the fabric of everyday life in Dublin City Centre.

Measurement

Pulse of the Nation

- 77+ pieces of positive coverage, including Newstalk, Virgin Media’s Ireland AM and The Group Chat, the Irish Times.
- 360+ report downloads
- 64,800 impressions and 1,000+ engagements across launch posts on LinkedIn.
- Feature on LinkedIn News Europe (2 million followers).

‘Inside Penneys’ Documentary

- Approximately 340,000 viewers per episode, beating top shows in the same time slot e.g.: Coronation Street.
- 139% increase in customer website traffic following first episode
- 17,896 followers on Primark’s global LinkedIn channel since the launch

Breast Cancer

- 75+ pieces of global coverage with hero pieces in UK and ROI including Marie Claire, Daily Mail and FM104’s Switched On with Louise Tighe.

Adaptive

- 70+ pieces of global coverage with hero coverage in UK and ROI including the Irish Examiner, RTÉ, and BBC’s The Last Word.

Expansion Announcements

- 95+ pieces of positive coverage across store announcements. Communications drove awareness and led to high footfall and sales. E.g. Dundrum store opening:
 - Queue of 1,000 customers on the morning
 - Positive testimonials from Minister Neale Richmond and Centre Director of Dundrum Town Centre, Don Nugent
- Strengthened relationships with key publication The Sun by inviting them into Mary Street for a tour and offering exclusive interviews with colleagues, resulting in a double page print feature and prominent coverage online.
- Key political attendance at our Clonmel and Dundrum reopening days.

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