



PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE REPORT

INSTITUTE OF SPORT BUSINESS, LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY

LLP 317
STRATEGIC SPORT SPONSORSHIP

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INTRODUCTION

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) is the national governing body for Cricket in Wales and England, across all levels from the grassroots to the elite. The ECB manages the national squads for both Men and Women across all levels of seniority and age groups, as well as overseeing the sport for domestic and recreational purposes.

The ECB is also responsible for nurturing the sport by making it accessible and creating opportunities for all communities, including disabled enthusiasts who were previously overlooked.

Through strategic sponsorships, the ECB creates a window for brands and partners to creatively engage with fans of Cricket on a national platform. Such a partnership creates various active and long-term benefits for a brand such as a boosted visibility and recognitions, along with the possibility of improved brand perception and reputation.

In a recent study on sports sponsorship, Silva (2022) notes that fans are likely to develop favourable attitudes and positive feelings towards a brand that sponsors a team that they support. This positive disposition is also found to have scope for converting fans into loyal customers of the brand.

This report examines the performance of the partnership between the ECB and Brand B. As a relatively new player in the grocery and supermarket industry of the UK, the primary objective for Brand B is to organically create widespread awareness and expand their reach across the nation by forging a partnership with the ECB.

Through this partnership, Brand B aims to connect with fans of Cricket across the country, by gaining their confidence and creating a preference for the brand during future purchase opportunities.

To assist Partner B in achieving their objectives across a wide range of demographics, the ECB has focused on high volume exposure tactics at both the Domestic and International levels, tailored campaigns such as the “Trolley Test Match”, and generating a positive brand outlook through unique participation programs involving youth players, who sports fans believe are the most in need of support in a sponsorship context (Silva, 2022).

The ECB and Brand B are keen on utilising this partnership for connecting with families that attend and participate in cricketing activities, while simultaneously growing an extensive audience database through collaborative competitions and data-capturing initiatives.

For this partnership to be effective for Brand B, the development of a positive attitude towards the brand is a crucial element for cultivating favourable behavioural intentions among potential customers (Alexandris et al., 2007, Alexandris et al., 2012, Biscaia et al., 2013).

For the remainder of the report, Brand B shall henceforth be referred to as “Lidl” in all cases for the sake of convenience and improved readability.



PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE

ECB 2022 HIGHLIGHTS

Through the 2022 season, the ECB along with the sport of Cricket in the UK, have enjoyed vast success through distinguished sporting success on the field, as well as radical breakthroughs off the field through inclusive community initiatives.

The Senior Men's team continued to improve upon their recent achievements across all three formats of Test, ODI, and T20I Cricket with successful Series victories at home, and on tour against challenging opponents such as New Zealand, South Africa, and Pakistan. The team also reached the pinnacle of International Cricket this year by winning the ICC T20 World Cup which was held at Australia.

Similarly, the England Women's team performed spectacularly across all three formats this year, reaching the Finals of the ICC Cricket World Cup in New Zealand, along with dominating Series victories against West Indies and South Africa. Both teams were recently ranked at #2 for the ODI and T20I formats in the ICC Rankings.



Off the field, the popularity of Cricket in the UK has steadily grown with a record high of over 14 million fans of the sport attending, participating, or being involved in cricketing activities this year.

The ECB's focus on cultivating Cricket at the grassroots level saw over 105,000 children including 27,000 girls participate in the All Stars and Dynamos training programs. Community building activities such as the Big Desi Women program were instrumental in inspiring over 2000 South Asian women to participate in volunteering roles. The ECB also continued their initiative of making Cricket an inclusive sport for all with the 2nd season of the acclaimed Disability Premier League.

These achievements are significant for both the ECB and their partners such as Lidl, towards the common goal of cultivating interest and establishing a strong connection with fans of the sport. Koronios et al. (2016) support this with their statement that a fan's attachment to a team they support is strongly associated with a more positive "sponsor image" that leads to a significant intention of purchasing products/services associated with the sponsor.



AUDIENCE METRICS

As a key objective for Lidl through their partnership with the ECB is to increase brand awareness and broaden their reach and visibility amongst fans of Cricket in the UK, it is important for the ECB to maximize the exposure that Lidl receives across all channels.

This is primarily achieved through highlighting the partnership between the ECB and Lidl when broadcasting sporting action, and by creatively distributing media across digital channels.

According to Quester and Farrelly (1998), awareness of a sponsor’s brand increases when fans view or attend sponsored events, which could result in the brand gaining potential customers.

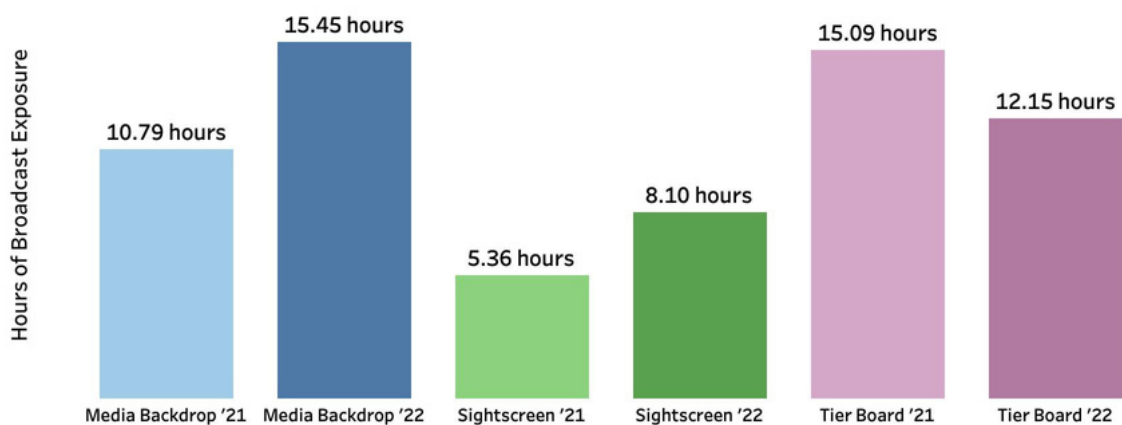


Figure 1. Cumulative Hours of Broadcast Exposure (2021 vs 2022)

The graph above shows a comparison of Lidl’s brand exposure during the broadcast of ECB’s cricket matches in the 2021 and 2022 seasons. The brand’s logo was prominently displayed on different touchpoints such as media backdrops, sight screens, and tier boards. Olson and Thiomoe (2009) state that relatively short exposure on touchpoints such as perimeter boards can subtly provide comparable recognition as traditional advertising.

The exposure of the brand’s logo is measured across the entire season with the cumulative number of hours of visibility during Live matches, Highlights, and Repeat broadcasts.

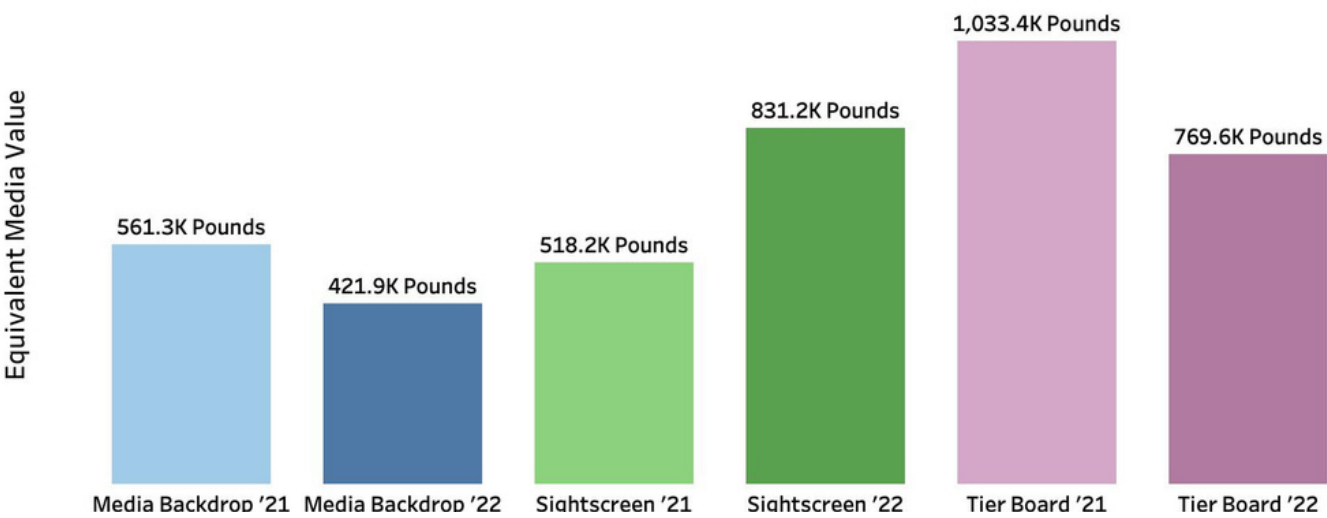


Figure 2. Equivalent Media Value from Broadcast Exposure (2021 vs 2022)

Cornwell and Kwon (2019) note that marketers and brand managers adopt different approaches to assess the value of exposure of televised sponsored events, relative to similar advertising costs.

This is commonly achieved through appraisal of a perceived equivalent cost of media exposure as seen in the graph above.



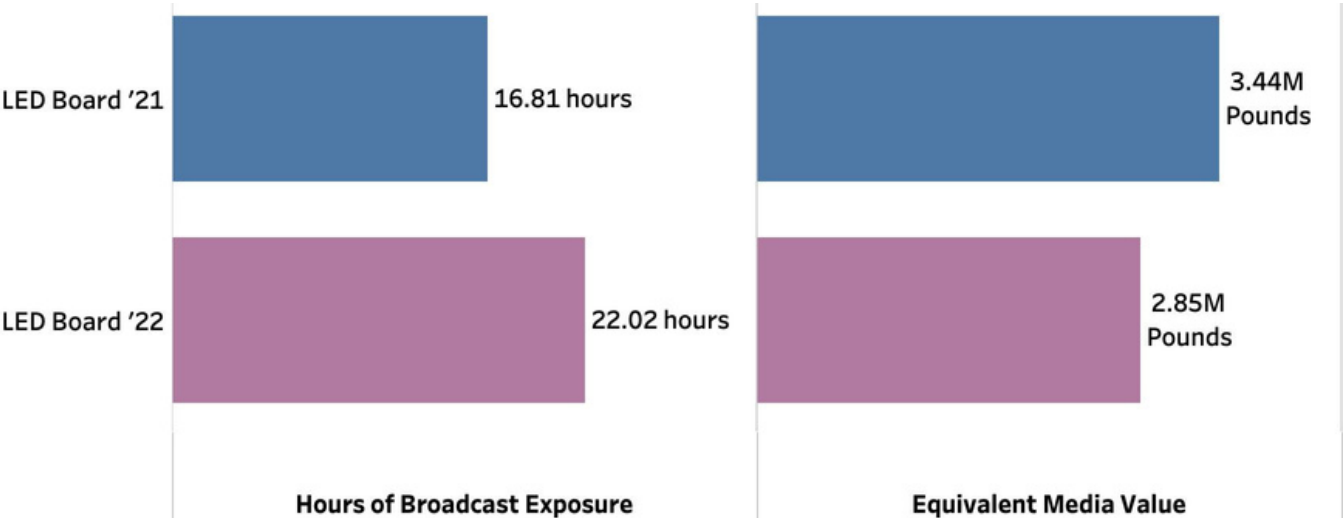


Figure 3. Broadcast Exposure through LED Boards (2021 vs 2022)

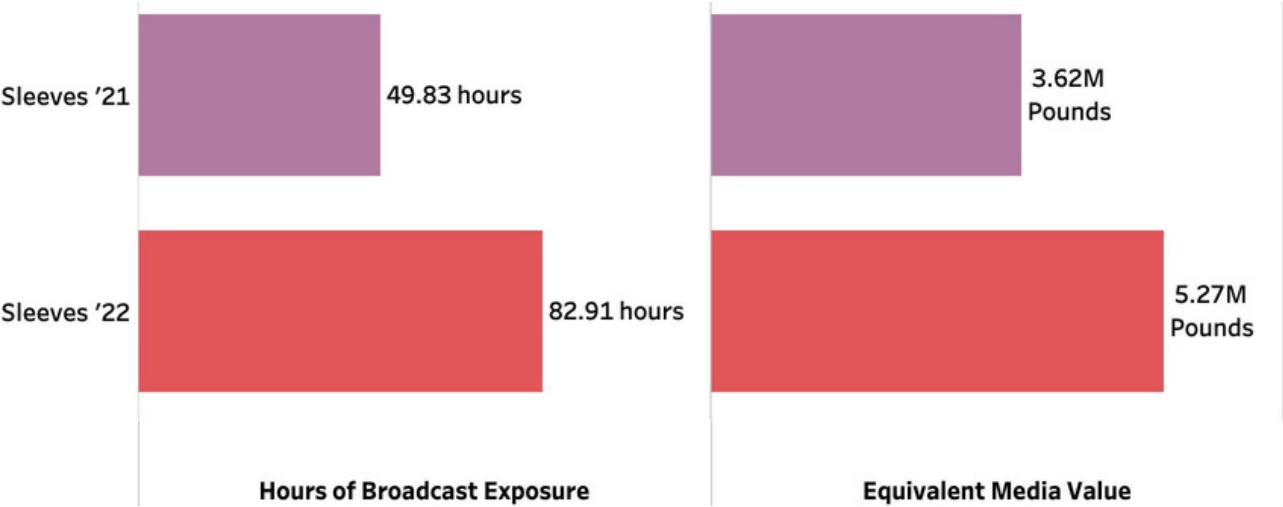


Figure 4. Broadcast Exposure through T-Shirt Sleeves (2021 vs 2022)

Here, we can see that the bulk of broadcast exposure that Lidl receives is through logo visibility on the LED sign boards across the perimeter of the boundary, and on the sleeves of all the players on the team.

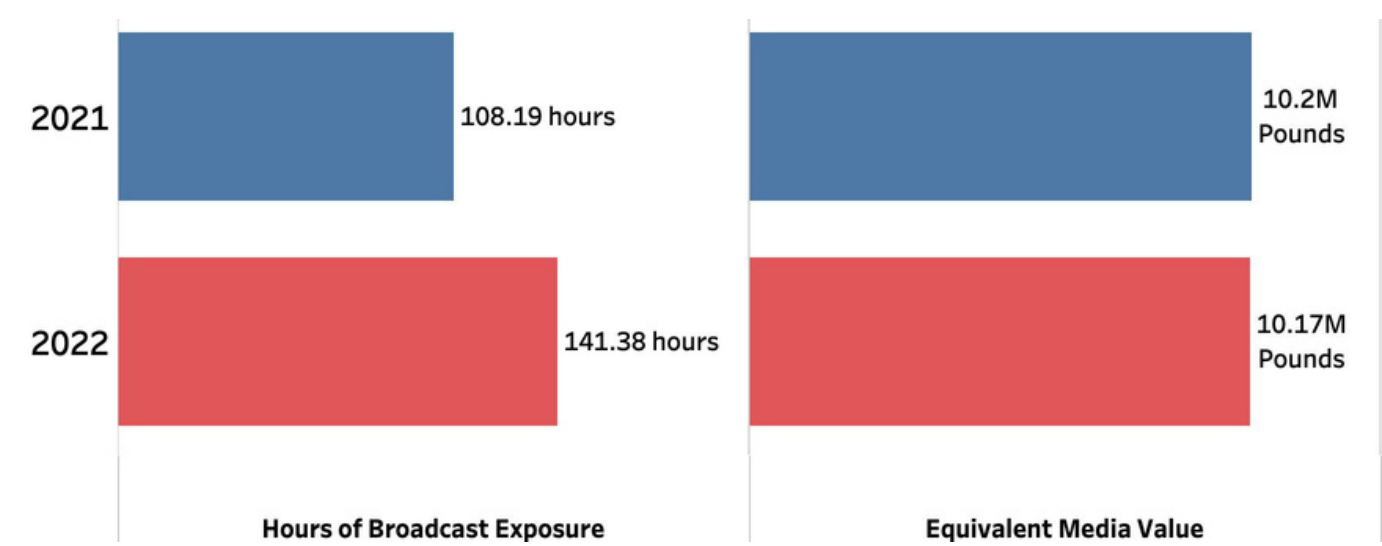


Figure 5. Comparison of Broadcast Exposure (2021 vs 2022)

Although the equivalent media value of broadcast exposure for Lidl has remained the same across both seasons as seen in the graph above, the cumulative exposure time has significantly increased.

As the goal for Lidl is to increase visibility of their brand and boost awareness among fans of Cricket, this growth in exposure is a crucial positive development for the brand in their partnership with the ECB.



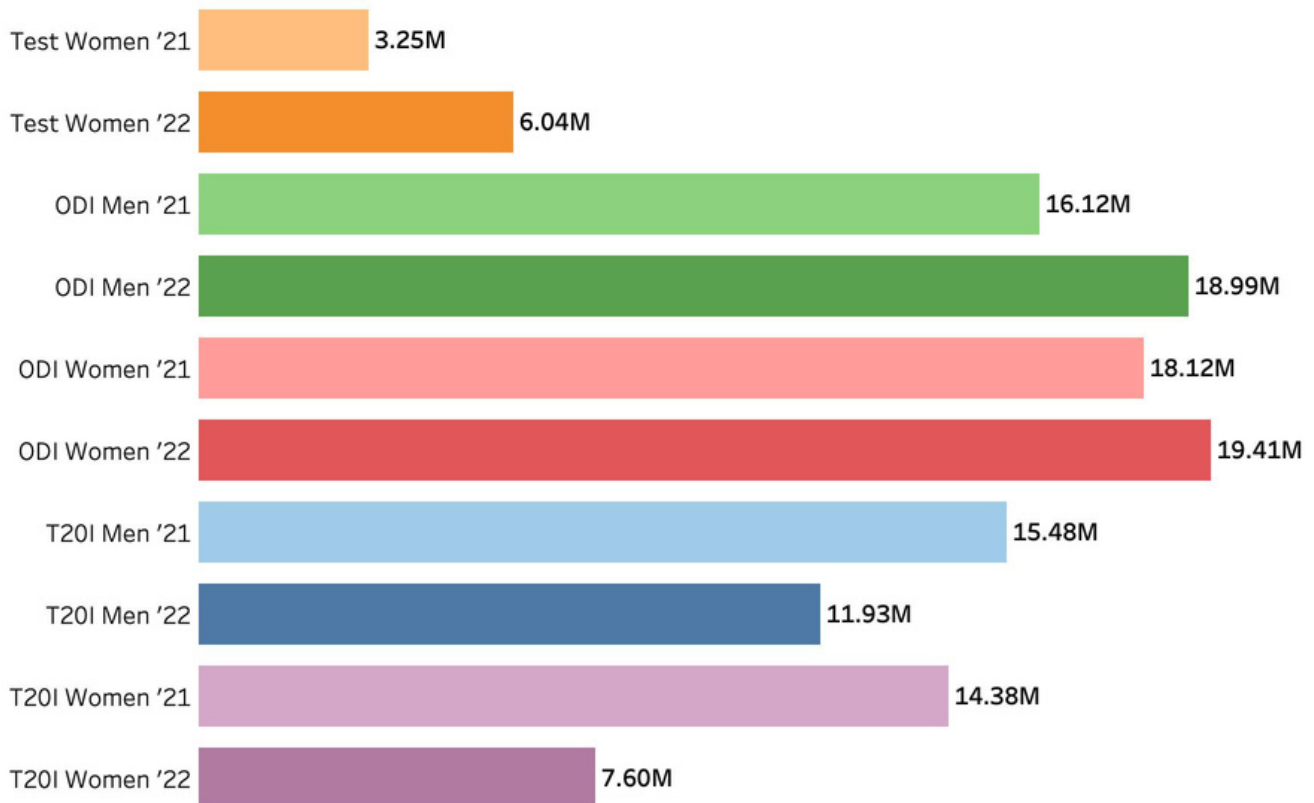


Figure 6. Digital Impressions per Series (2021 vs 2022)

Similarly, brand exposure through digital channels that supplement and support broadcast action is vital for growing the presence of Lidl's brand in the UK. The graph above highlights the performance of Lidl's digital exposure through their partnership with the ECB, expressed in terms of online Impressions for each Series that ECB teams participated in.



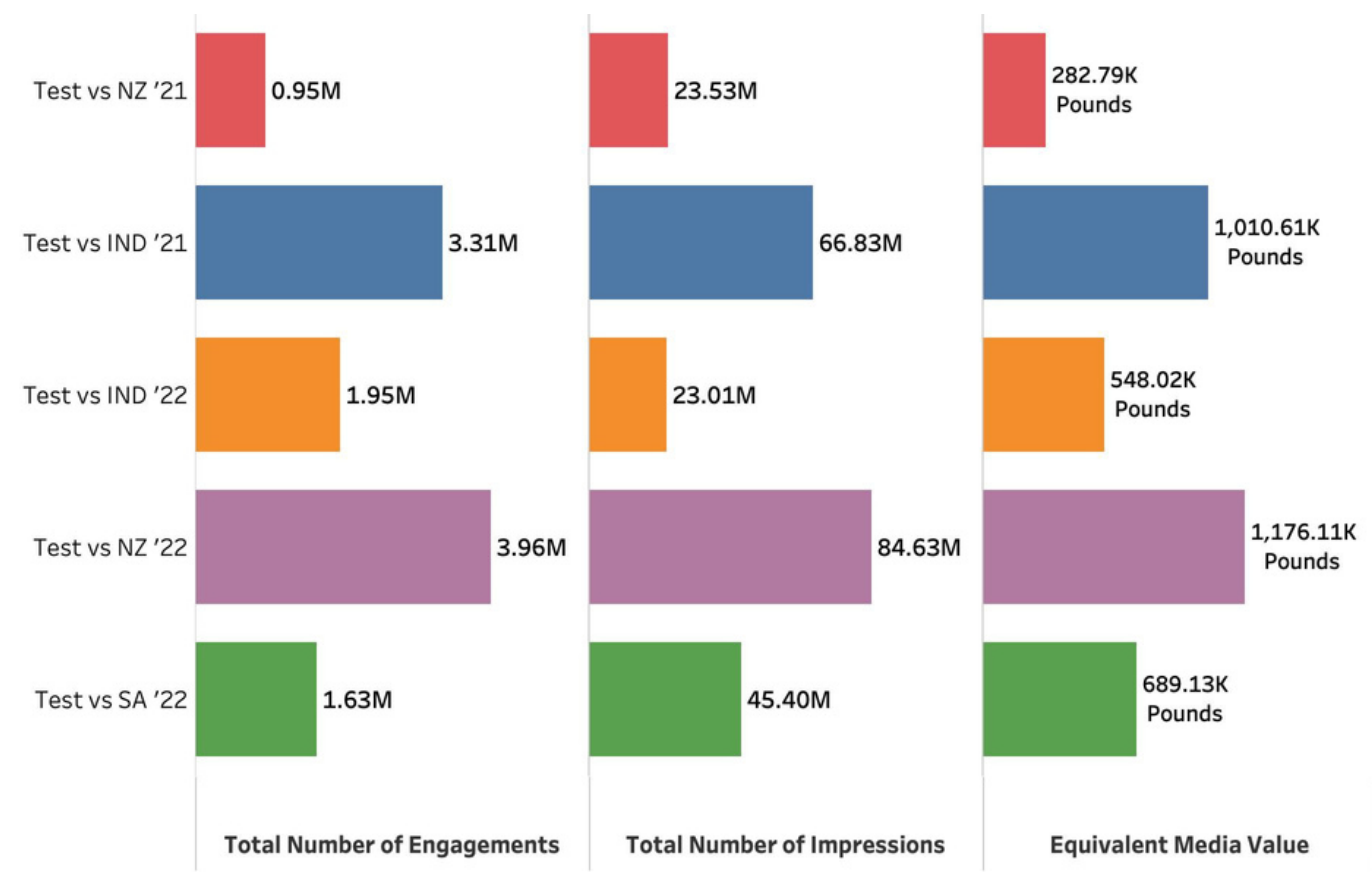


Figure 7. Digital Exposure per Men's Test Series

As seen in the graph above, Test matches featuring the England Men’s team is by far the most effective method of digitally promoting Lidl’s partnership with the ECB amongst fans of Cricket in the UK.

The bulk of this exposure is through features on the BBC Sport and Sky Sport websites, which is a unique advantage that Lidl can benefit from through their strategic partnership with the ECB.

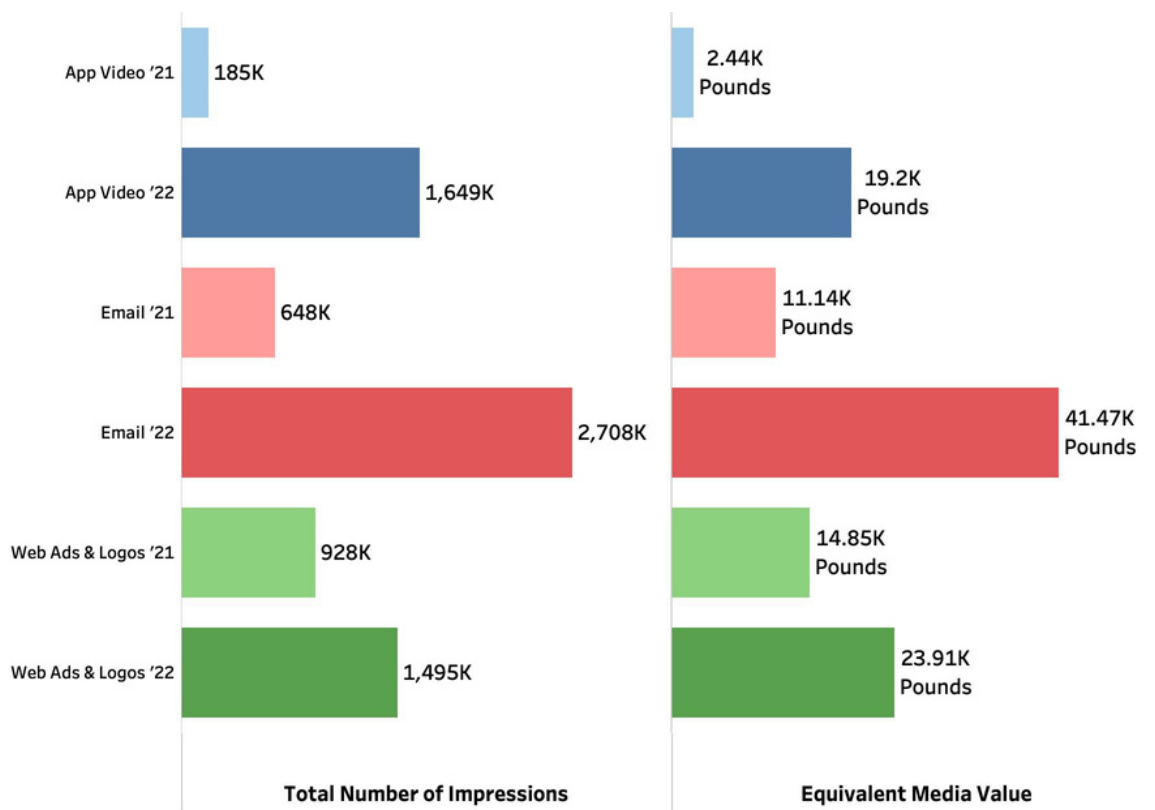


Figure 8. Digital Exposures from Platforms (2021 vs 2022)

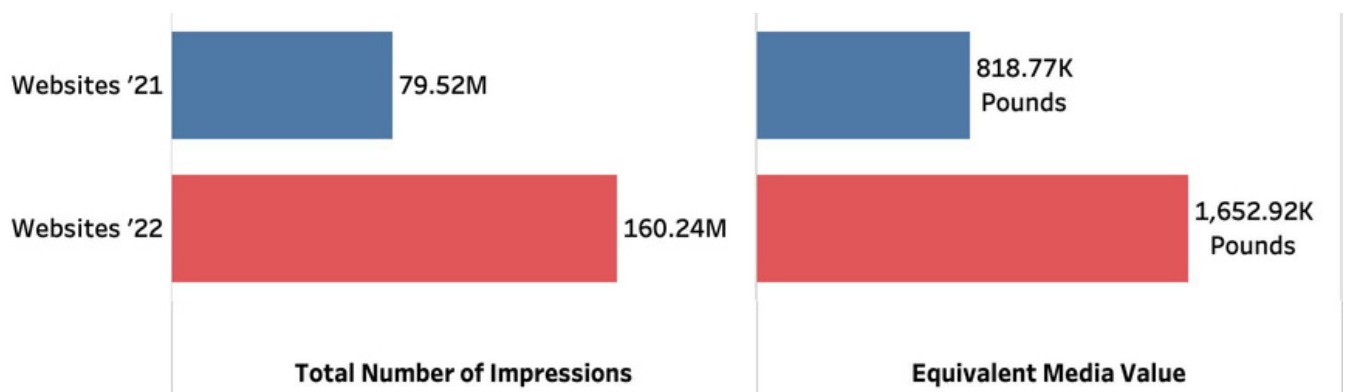


Figure 9. Digital Exposure from BBC Sport and Sky Sports Websites (2021 vs 2022)

As seen in the graphs above, less-traditional digital formats employed by the ECB such as App Videos, Emails, Web Ads, and Website features have seen significant growth in traction for Lidl over the past year.

These channels could be strategically employed for leveraging maximum digital exposure in the future.

IMPACT OF PARTNERSHIP

As part of the partnership, the ECB collaborated with Lidl in organizing a campaign, “The Trolley Test”. This campaign was activated by both Lidl and the ECB through organic and paid digital channels including social media.

For Lidl, the objective of this campaign was to build on their audience database through data collection from entries for the campaign’s competition. Another objective for Lidl was to improve their brand’s perception through opt-ins for their marketing promotions.

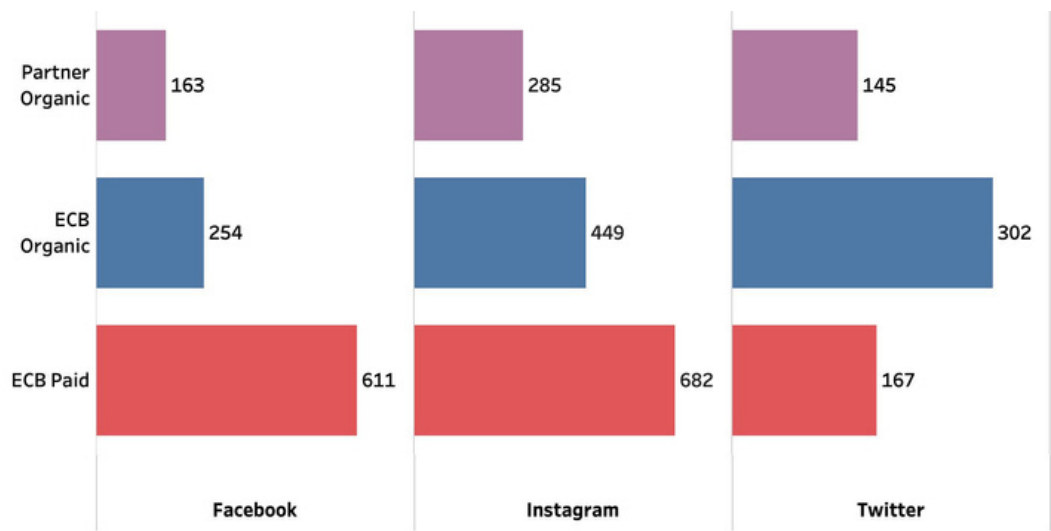


Figure 10. Competition Entries from Facebook, Instagram and Twitter

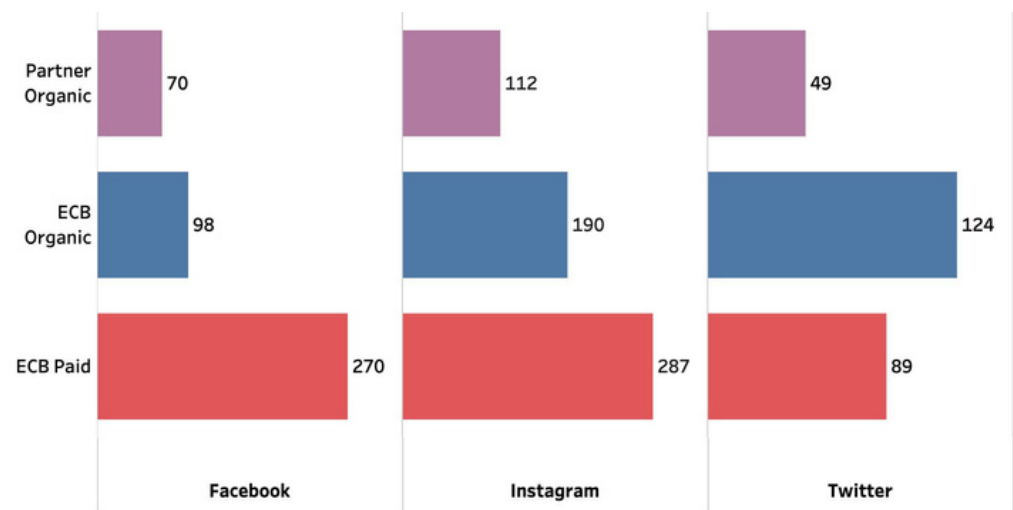


Figure 11. Marketing Opt-Ins through Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter

As seen in the graphs above, partnering with the ECB was hugely significant for Lidl in achieving their objectives. Promotion of the campaign through organic ECB channels outperformed those used by Lidl, and paid promotion through the ECB captured greater numbers.

A key insight here is the organic use of ECB's Twitter platform for even better performance than paid advertising of the campaign.

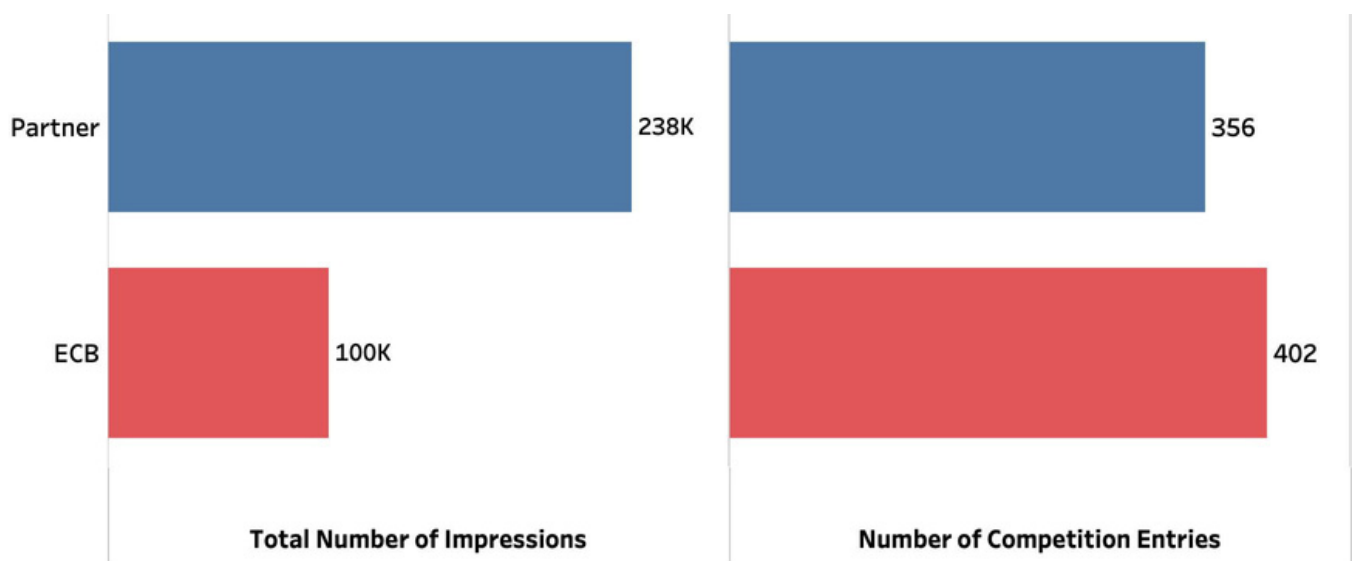


Figure 12. Impressions and Campaign Entries through Email (Partner vs ECB)

Even with fewer impressions, the greater number of competition entries through the ECB's mail campaign as seen in the graph above further highlight the unique access to an audience that has congruence with the vision of Lidl and their campaign.

To assess the real-world impact of Lidl's partnership with the ECB in terms of their objectives, Grohs (2016) suggests a target consumer survey that includes a control group of the representative population. They suggest this to be an effective method of capturing brand image change for consumers before and after the partnership.

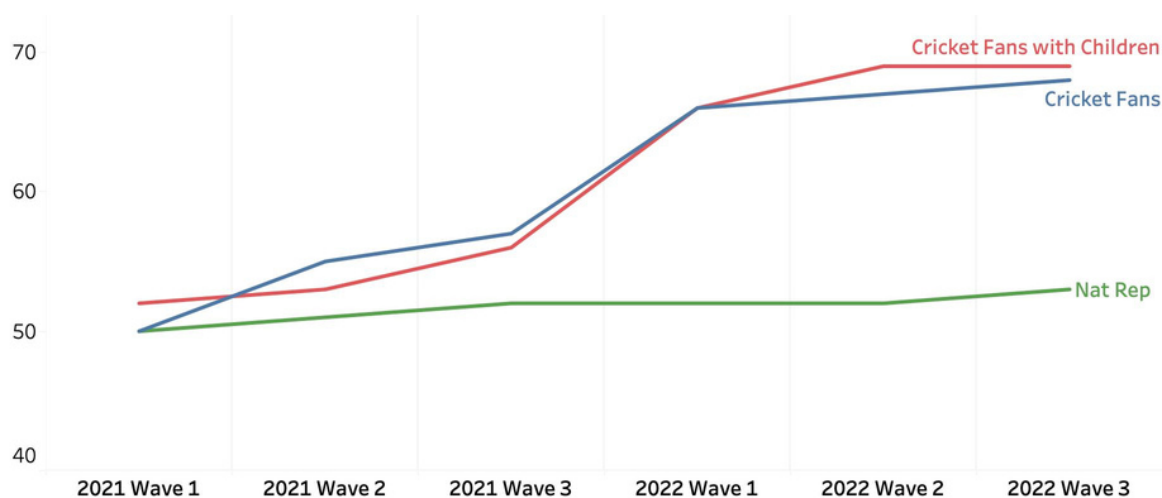


Figure 13. Change in Brand Awareness from 2021 through 2022

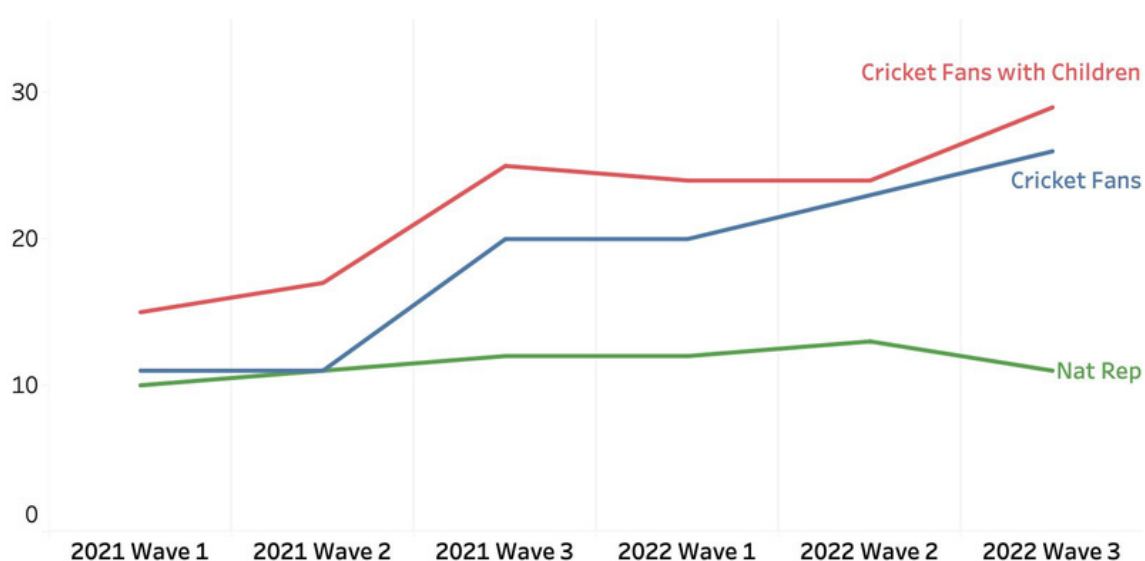


Figure 14. Change in Brand Consideration from 2021 through 2022

In line with Lidl's primary objective for their partnership with the ECB, fans of Cricket have grown more aware and strongly consider the brand for future purchases when compared to the opinion of a control group which has remained stagnant as seen in the graph above.

Amongst the target audience of the partnership, Lidl is now firmly among the more established competitors in terms of visibility.

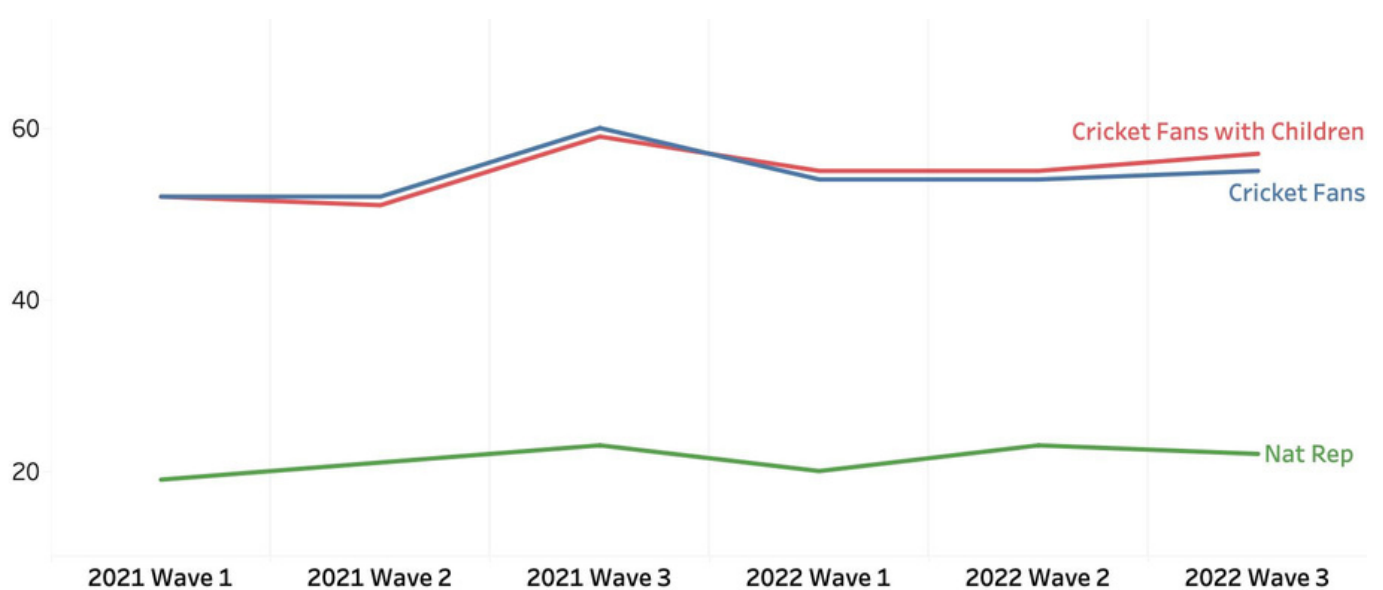


Figure 15. Change in Prompted Partnership Awareness from 2021 through 2022

Although Lidl has enjoyed increased brand awareness among the target audience, the awareness of their partnership with the ECB has plateaued among both Cricket fans, and the national representative audience, highlighting a key area for improvement.

A sponsorship is only effective when the target audience know of its existence (Meenaghan et al., 2013; O'Reilly & Madill, 2009).

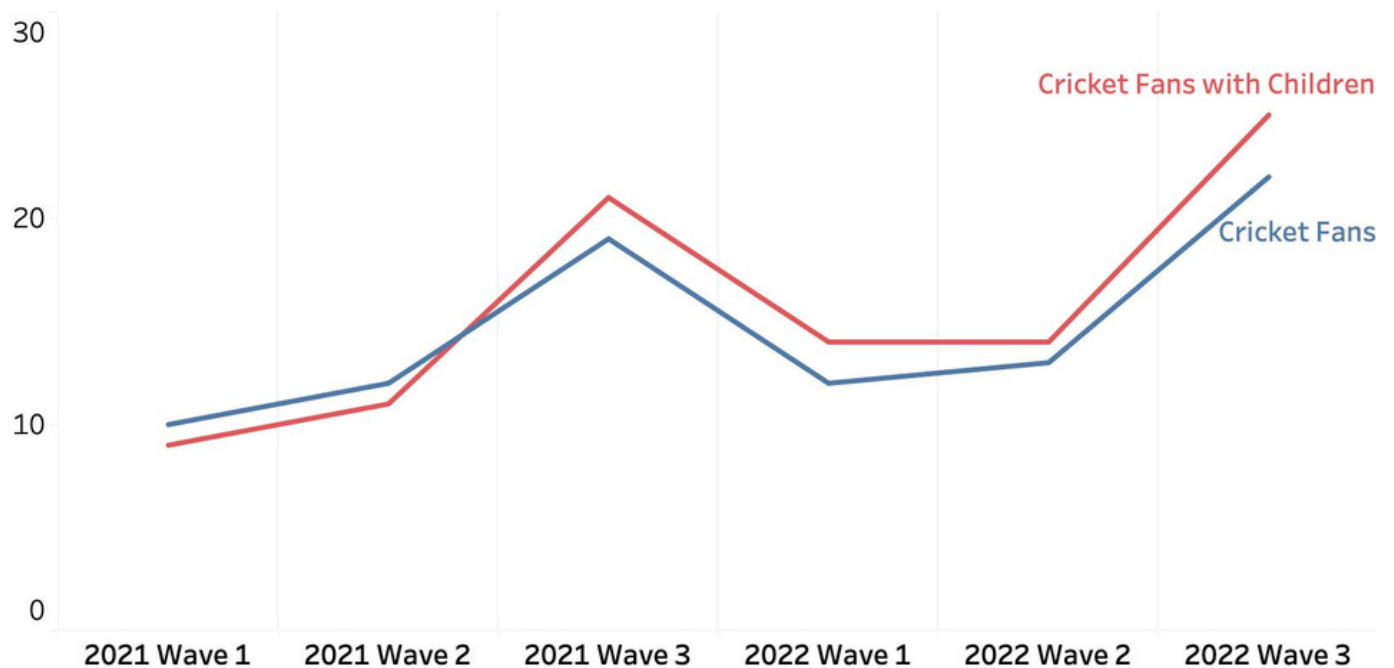


Figure 16. Change in "The Trolley Test" Campaign Awareness from 2021 through 2022

As seen in the graph above, the population of the target audience that is definitely aware of the campaign steadily grow through the first year before seeing a drastic fall and then rising again.

This could imply a lack of campaign activation in between Seasons that causes a decrease in awareness among the target audience.



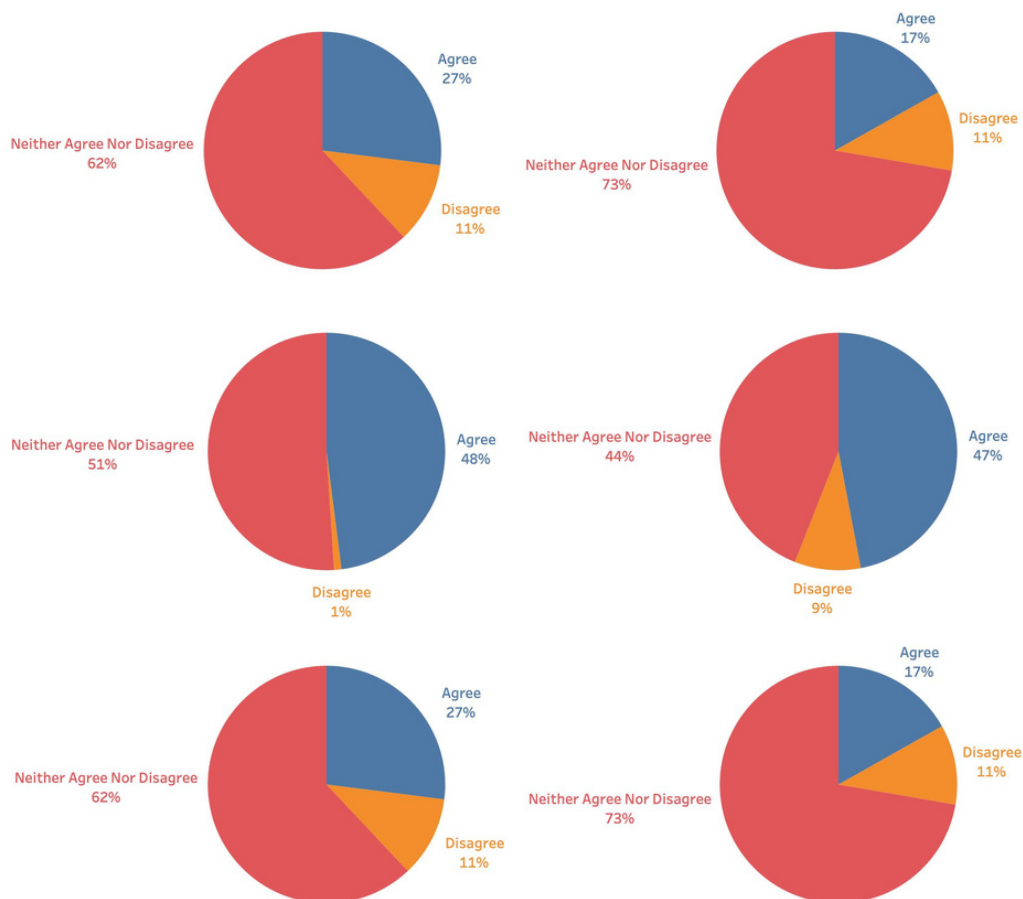


Figure 17. Responses for Statements regarding Brand Perception

A survey on the brand perception of Lidl based on questions about the brand highlight the fact that a significant percentage of the population including the target audience do not hold a strong opinion about the brand.

This could signify a lack of awareness about the services offered by the brand, and is an area that requires immediate attention.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To build upon and improve the partnership between Lidl and the ECB, there are a few areas of concern along with potential opportunities for growth that could help both parties achieve the objectives and goals of the partnership.

Significant resources must be allocated towards publicising the nature of the partnership between Lidl and the ECB to improve recall among the target audience.

A break in Campaign activation between Seasons should be avoided to help build upon the success achieved in the previous season.

The partnership between Lidl and the ECB could be leveraged through offers and promotions to increase footfall for the supermarket. Direct exposure to the brand's quality of service could swing the passive perception and lack of strong opinions on the brand.

Lesser used, highly performing digital platforms such as App Video, Web Ads, Website features etc. must be leveraged and used extensively for Campaign activations to improve the audience database of both partners and their data-collection efforts.

CONCLUSION

The partnership with the ECB has significantly helped Lidl move towards their objective of breaking into the UK market by increasing brand awareness and creating a genuine preference for the brand among fans of Cricket.

Collaborative activation of the campaign with the ECB has assisted with Lidl's goal of generating an audience database.

Although brand awareness has improved through broadcast and digital exposure, there is still scope for working on brand perception of the target audience.



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