



# Thank you for not flying

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# THANK YOU FOR NOT FLYING:

## BRITISH AIRWAYS 2012 OLYMPICS SPONSORSHIP

### SUMMARY

Sponsorship shouldn't be just about handing over cash in exchange for kudos. At its best, it harks back to the values of patronage many centuries ago, of a desire to see the sponsored person or property be the best it can be.

This is a story about how planning asked how British Airways could be a true sponsor of London 2012, how it could give more than 'just' money. And in doing so, how it turned standard sponsorship thinking on its head – what could British Airways do for the Olympics rather than what could the Olympics do for British Airways? As the nation's flag carrier, it's also a story about how it asked what the nation might do as its part of the bargain.

When it realised that the answer to these questions involved the ultimate commercial sacrifice, it's also a story of how planning not only made the case for that sacrifice but also bravely created the environment, structure and thinking to deliver it.

But there is a happy ending: British Airways achieved its aim of being the Games' 'most patriotic sponsor'.

To paraphrase Lord Coe, "When BA's time came, it did it right."

Cue Coldplay...



## OPENING CEREMONY

Like Tom Daly's backward two-and-a-half somersaults, this is a story of turning standard thinking on its head. Rather than ask what the Olympic sponsorship could do for British Airways, we asked what British Airways could do for the Olympics. And in a climate where advertising's primary job is to sell, we asked a nation not to fly.

And like Team GB itself, it is a story of how planning orchestrated profound acts of sacrifice, bravery and teamwork.

## WINNING THE BID

On 6th July 2005, Britain won the bid to host the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. In 2008, British Airways was announced as its Official Airline Partner.

Being the 'official sponsor' of anything comes with communication challenges. Sponsors' desire for the associated kudos of the sponsorship vehicle frequently results in undifferentiated, borrowed-interest campaigns.

Being an official sponsor of the Olympics comes with a greater challenge - standing out from the clutter of other brands. At London 2012 there were eleven 'Worldwide Olympic Partners', seven 'London 2012 Partners', seven 'London 2012 Supporters' and twenty-eight 'London 2012 Official Suppliers & Providers'.

Being the Official Airline Partner came with two challenges for BA. Firstly, it was still emerging from an incredibly difficult trading period and so budgets were going to be tight. Secondly, it was roughly six months into its programme to restore leadership with the ethos 'To Fly. To Serve.' This was spearheading its brand and commercial recovery and it was essential that the momentum be maintained, not lost in the distracting excitement of the Games.





## IN TRAINING

'To Fly. To Serve.' was designed to reassert British Airways' leadership and to bring the brand and the nation closer again. When BBH received the brief to devise the Olympic campaign, we realised that if we managed to connect with the nation on a deeply cultural level at this time, we could keep the leadership momentum started by 'To Fly. To Serve'. The answer, we believed, would be to tune in to how the host nation would be feeling come Games Time.

So we spoke to ex-Olympians, interviewed journalists who had been on the ground at previous Games, and ran groups with Australians who'd been at the Sydney Games and Greeks who'd been at Athens.

It was clear that the country was going to feel a full gamut of emotions. The responsibility of welcoming the World; Wonder at the potential of the human body and spirit; A renewed sense of community, of shared purpose and national identity; Offset by somewhat British cynicism and self-doubt.

But one emotion stood out.

It became clear that the pride that every spectator experiences is intensified for those in the home nation. They aren't just proud of their athletes, they're proud of their country. Not only did tapping into the pride of the nation offer the opportunity to maintain leadership momentum, but further research identified that the role of the most patriotic sponsor was British Airways' for the taking.

The way in for British Airways was to be the most patriotic sponsor.



SOURCE: IMG



# SACRIFICE

We expected other brands to have unearthed similar insights. This would, no doubt, result in enthusiastic proclamations of corporate support and earnest flag-waving.

If British Airways was to prove itself the most patriotic sponsor it needed to dig deep. It needed to take its own act of patriotism as far as it could go.

According to the key philosophical book on patriotism by Stephen Nathanson, 'Patriotism Morality & Peace', patriotism is defined as:

1. Special affection for one's own country
2. A sense of personal identification with the country
3. Special concern for the well-being of the country
4. Willingness to sacrifice to promote the country's good

Our attention was drawn to points 3 and 4.

If British Airways was going to act as the most patriotic sponsor, then, we told them, it was going to have to actively give something to the cause. The question was what?

Around this time, the press started to run stories about the predicted mass exodus from the UK during the Games.

No doubt people were imagining using the ironically termed 'nation's flag carrier' to escape. In its hour of need, millions of people were threatening to leave the country.

A profound act of sacrifice was staring us in the face.

If British Airways was going to be the most patriotic sponsor, it was going to have to 'take one for the team', do right by the nation it served, and make a commercial sacrifice.

It was going to have to ask people not to fly.

**It's the Olympics... get me out of here! Third of Britons holidaying abroad this summer have deliberately chosen dates to avoid London 2012**

SOURCE: DAILY MAIL



# BRAVERY

But how to persuade the board of British Airways that a public declaration of commercial sacrifice would not be commercial suicide, but rather an act of leadership that would ultimately lead to commercial advantage?

Anyone can have a great idea, but sometimes it takes bravery to make those ideas happen.

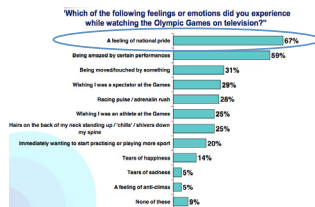
We knew the idea had to be presented in context. It was a surprising, counter-intuitive idea that only a leader could pull off. This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for British Airways to do something of cultural significance that would reap dividends for the brand. Planning argued that case.

## EXTRACTS FROM THE STRATEGIC DECK USED TO 'SELL' THE IDEA

We want a campaign that taps into the mood of the nation



The leading emotion during any Games is national pride



An emotion that is heightened in the host nation



Of all the Olympic sponsors, the Flag Carrier has the most right to get behind the national team



We won't be the only brand getting behind the team – we need to find an ownable way to demonstrate our support



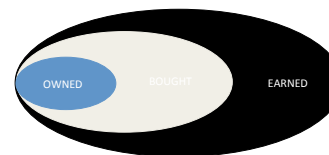
Don't Fly is more than a hollow message of support – it's a demonstration of our service to Great Britain



It follows a rich heritage of confident, tongue in cheek, British campaigns



It will help us seize the earned media opportunity – in a fiercely competitive environment



It has huge PR potential

**BA urges Britain not to fly during the Olympics**

Airline says supporting Team GB is more important than going on holiday

SOURCE: BBH



Planning also did its homework. The planes are generally full over the months when the Games are held. In other words, the campaign would run at the period of minimal risk to the business.

What's more, we realised we could sell off the back of the idea. British Airways uses sales to fill up the planes during quieter months either side of the summer. Therefore, we got the BA UK Tactical team to agree to run a themed 'Thank You For Not Flying Sale' so that people could get away afterwards.

In research, people got it and they liked BA more for it. The idea challenged even the conventions of commonly-used research tools - Millward Brown declared that an ad asking people not to fly was 90% likely to drive short-term sales!

Covering all bases, we worked with BA Internal Communications to understand how the story could be communicated, so we could be confident that 36,000 members of staff would understand why we were telling people not to fly.

Most importantly, it took strong leadership from clients, in this case, the vision of Abigail Comber<sup>1</sup>, Frank van der Post<sup>2</sup> and Drew Crawley.<sup>3</sup>

Willie Walsh, the CEO of IAG<sup>4</sup>, said "This is the sort of idea, that if it doesn't work, heads will roll". The clients put their necks on the block and by definition, so did we.



"THE DEATH OF NELSON" BY BENJAMIN WEST 1806

1. Head of Brand and Marketing
2. Managing Director of Brand & Customer Experience
3. Commercial Director
4. British Airways' holding company



# TEAMWORK

It was all very well BA asking the nation not to fly, but if that just resulted in people staying home to watch the Games on television, then the campaign would not actually benefit Team GB. So we needed the public to do its bit too.

Our planning team had met with Olympian, Goldie Sayers, who spoke about the psychological advantage of having home support behind you.



SOURCE: GOOGLE IMAGES

*“The bigger and louder the support in the stadium, the higher my adrenaline, and the further my throw. I expect competing on home soil will take this to a whole new level.”*

This was the crucial second part of the strategic jigsaw. If British Airways was saying ‘Don’t Fly. Support Team GB’, then we needed to be clear on the role of the public. It was to create Home Advantage.

Every piece of communication needed to be pointed at the cause, from Executive Club mailers through to broadcast advertising. To do this, a number of agencies<sup>5</sup> had to work as a team around a single communication strategy and against a single plan.

Planning instilled understanding and belief in the team with one purpose: ‘To make the Home Advantage As Big and Loud as Possible.’

5. IMG, Cake, Zenith Optimedia, OgilvyOne, 12th Floor, M

## CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

### OBJECTIVE

BE THE MOST PATRIOTIC SPONSOR

### INSIGHT

THE HOME ADVANTAGE WILL MAKE TEAM GB SUCCEED – YET THE COUNTRY IS PLANNING AN EXODUS DURING THE OLYMPICS

### ROLE OF BRAND

DON’T FLY. SUPPORT TEAM GB

### ROLE OF PUBLIC

BE THE HOME ADVANTAGE

### ROLE FOR COMMUNICATIONS

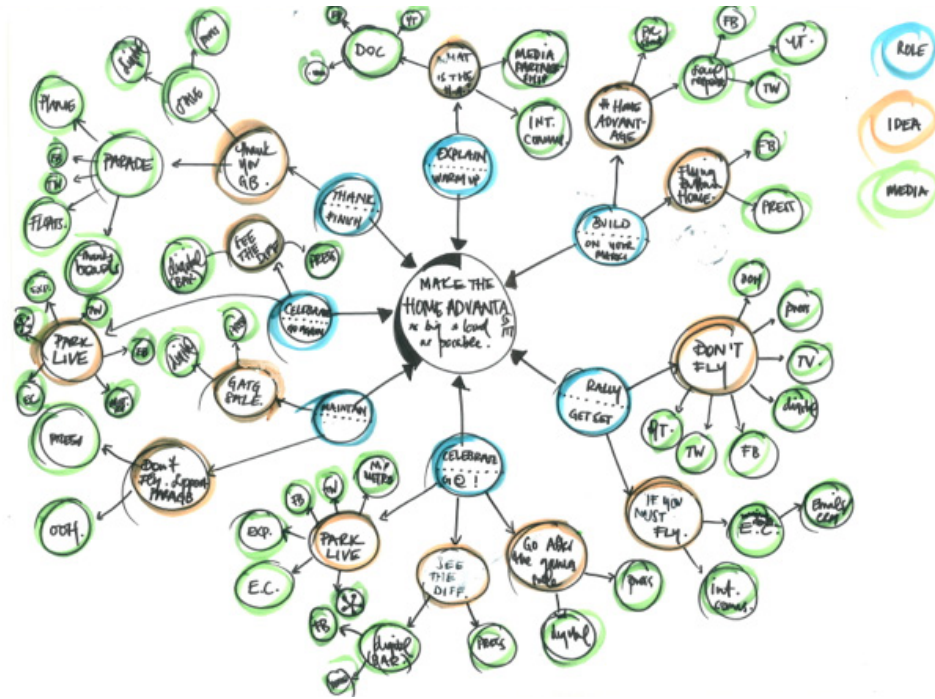
MAKE THE HOME ADVANTAGE AS BIG AND LOUD AS POSSIBLE





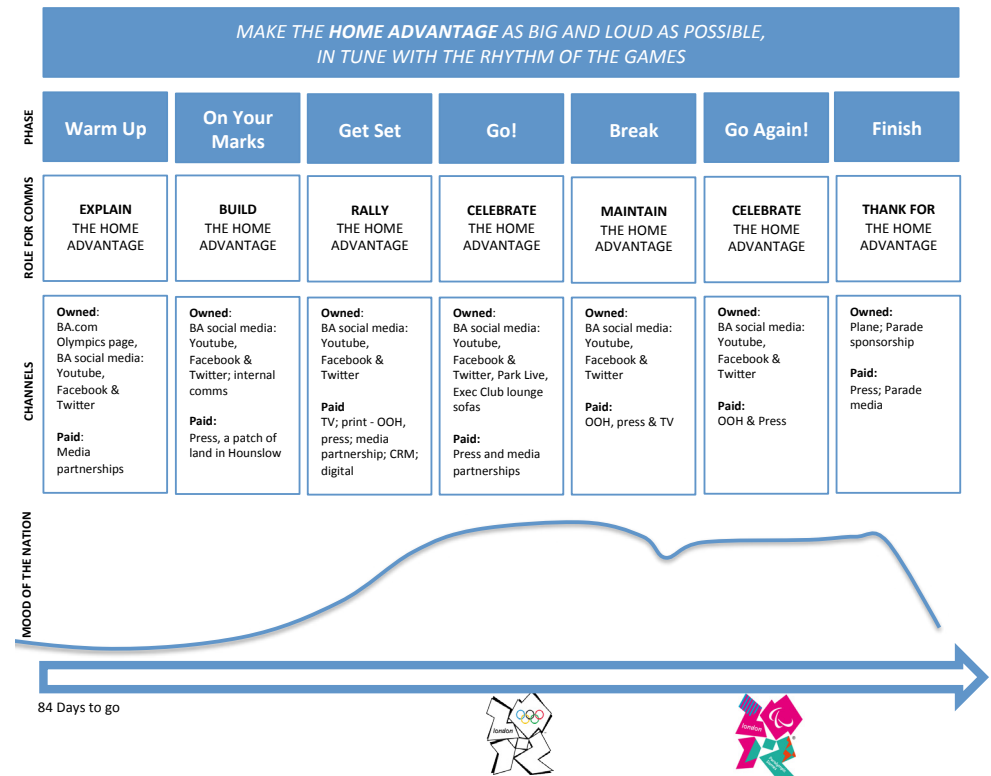
# 'THE RACE PLAN': A MODEL FOR INTEGRATION

Through a series of inter-agency working sessions, the apparent chaos of the notes on the white board...



SOURCE: BBH

...was ordered into this highly orchestrated 'Race Plan' plotted against the anticipated mood of the nation. Delivered across time and by channel.



SOURCE: BBH

For each phase of the plan, task briefs were distributed to each agency team. Assets were created and ways of working drawn up for creating more work while the Games were live.

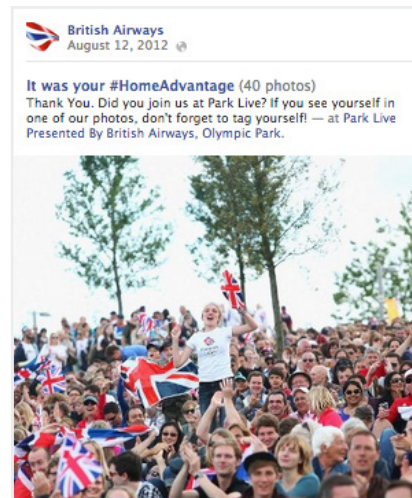


## HOME CROWD: SOCIAL MEDIA

To be effective, it was key to rally the public at every stage to act on behalf of the cause, to do its part and spread the word. Therefore, social elements were pivotal to the campaign.

The hashtag - #HomeAdvantage - ensured all was connected, and conversation could become dialogue.

To help propagate it, British Airways specially created a social response team to express thanks to and maintain momentum with the creators of Home Advantage.



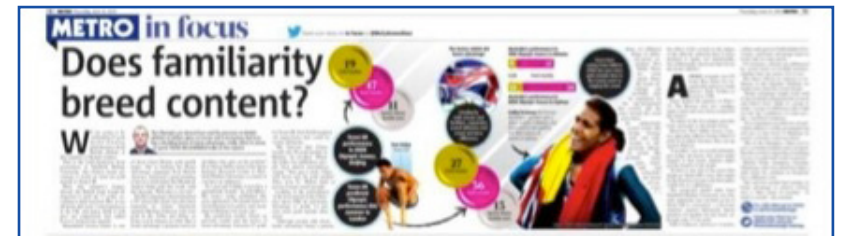
SOURCE: BA

IMAGES:  
LEFT: BA SOCIAL MEDIA RESPONSE TEAM  
CENTRE & RIGHT: SOCIAL RESPONSE IN ACTION



## WARM UP: EXPLAINING THE HOME ADVANTAGE

Home Advantage was far from just the wish of Goldie Sayers. It had been researched by academics and felt by athletes competing on home soil throughout history. We created a documentary. Editorial was generated with our media partners, The Metro and The Telegraph. The aim was to ensure our role in creating Home Advantage was credible.



SOURCE: BBH

IMAGES:

LEFT: STILL FROM THE #HOMEADVANTAGE DOCUMENTARY (to view documentary visit : <http://vimeo.com/bbh/london/apg> - password: apg)

RIGHT: METRO HOME ADVANTAGE EDITORIAL

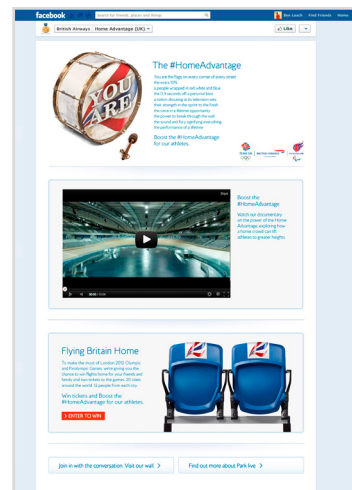




# ON YOUR MARKS: BUILDING THE HOME ADVANTAGE

To help British Airways assert its intent to create a Home Advantage, PR partners, Cake, unveiled a huge painting of Jessica Ennis on a field in Hounslow, welcoming the world to 'our turf' as they flew into Heathrow.

At the same time, we encouraged people to bring expatriate friends and family members home to create Home Advantage, via the Flying Britain Home Facebook competition.



SOURCES: BBH, BA & CAKE

IMAGES:  
LEFT & CENTRE: FLYING BRITAIN HOME – PRESS & FACEBOOK  
RIGHT: JESS ENNIS FIELD PAINTING, HOUNSLOW

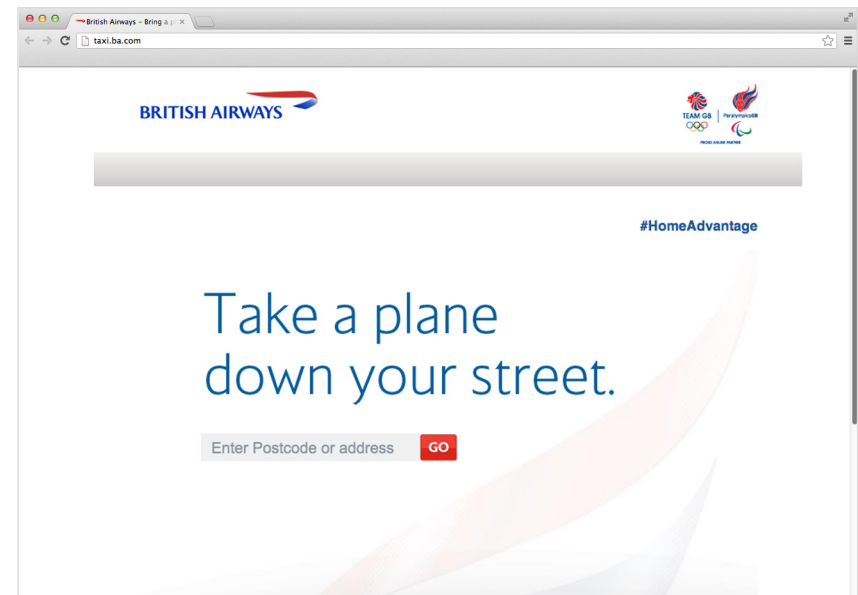


# GET SET: RALLYING THE HOME ADVANTAGE

In the final weeks leading up to the Games, Don't Fly was launched in broadcast media, drawing on Super Bowl, Super Social principles<sup>6</sup> to earn standout and conversation.

Bold presence in out-of-home and press ensured Don't Fly would be seen everywhere. The film of a Boeing 777 not flying, but taxiing through London to Stratford, set to The Clash's 'London Calling', broke on TV during England's last group match of the Euros to ensure maximum reach.

To increase engagement and personal involvement, all activity drove to an interactive version of the film. By using the Google Street View API, and for the minimal effort of entering a post code, people could send a plane down their street. 5.5 million did so.



SOURCE: BBH

IMAGES:

LEFT: STILLs FROM DON'T FLY TV AD (to view the ad visit: <http://goo.gl/X34if>)

RIGHT: INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCE (to take a plane down your street visit: [taxi.ba.com](http://taxi.ba.com))

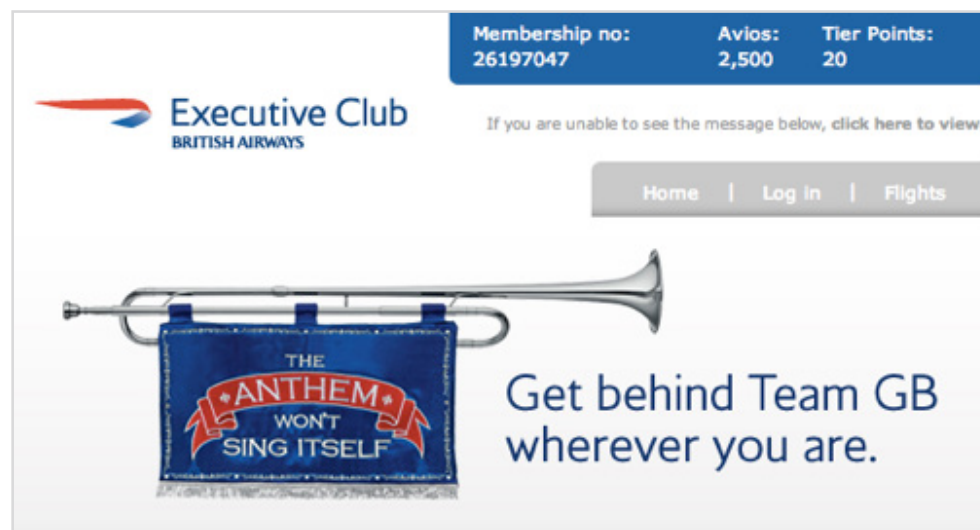
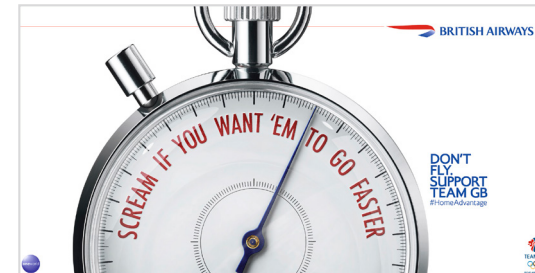
6. BBH Super Bowl Super Social principles:

- 1) pre-seed to prepare for launch
- 2) be seen everywhere in a bold burst of paid media
- 3) consolidate and continue conversation via owned and earned media

7. Unfortunately, we are not allowed to reproduce Street View images from the experience, so please visit the link provided to see it in action.







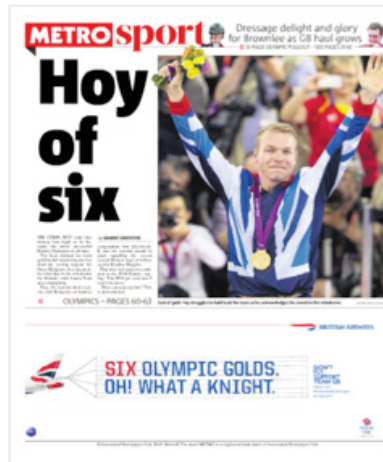
SOURCE: BBH

IMAGES:  
TOP LEFT: DON'T FLY EVENING STANDARD COVER WRAP  
TOP RIGHT: DON'T FLY PRINT  
BOTTOM: EXEC CLUB EMAIL



# GO! GAMES TIME: CELEBRATING THE HOME ADVANTAGE

By linking to Team GB and Paralympic GB's success via real-time planning with tactical work in press and at the on-site experience Park Live, we celebrated with the nation.



SOURCE: BBH

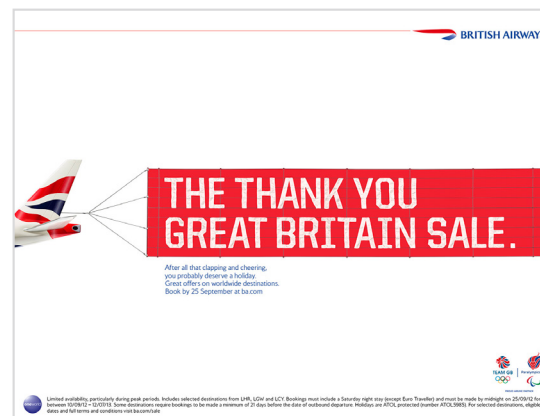
IMAGES:  
TOP: REACTIVE PRESS  
BOTTOM: BA OLYMPICS HOSPITALITY SUITE, PARK LIVE, EDITORIAL COVERAGE





# FINISH: THANK YOU FOR NOT FLYING

Finally, once the Games were over, it was only polite to thank the nation for not flying and creating the Home Advantage. We expressed our thanks on the underbelly of a plane flying over the Heroes Parade and ran our 'Thank You For Not Flying Sale'



SOURCE: BBH

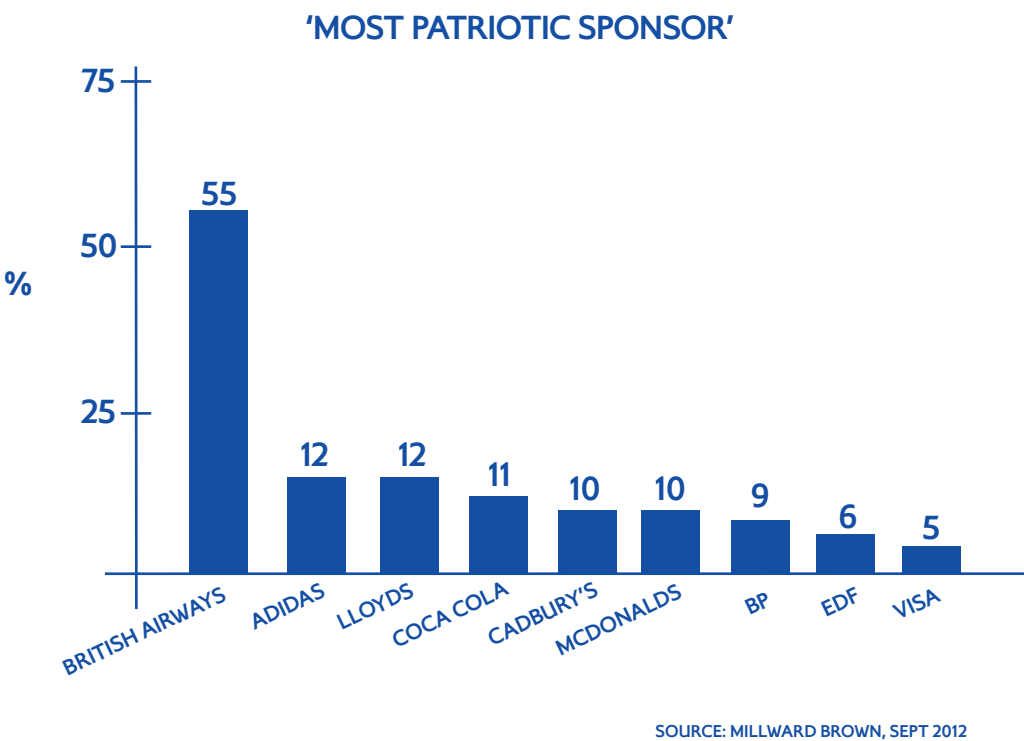
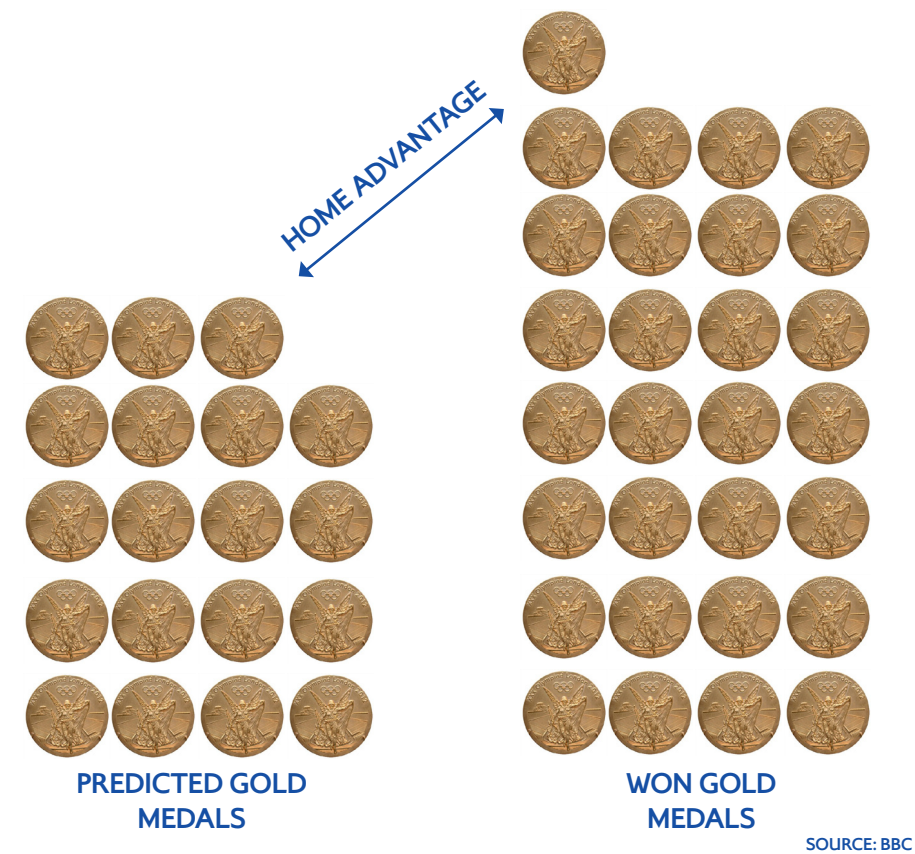
IMAGES:  
TOP: PARADE FLYOVER PLANE  
BOTTOM: SALE COVER WRAP & PRESS



# THE RESULTS

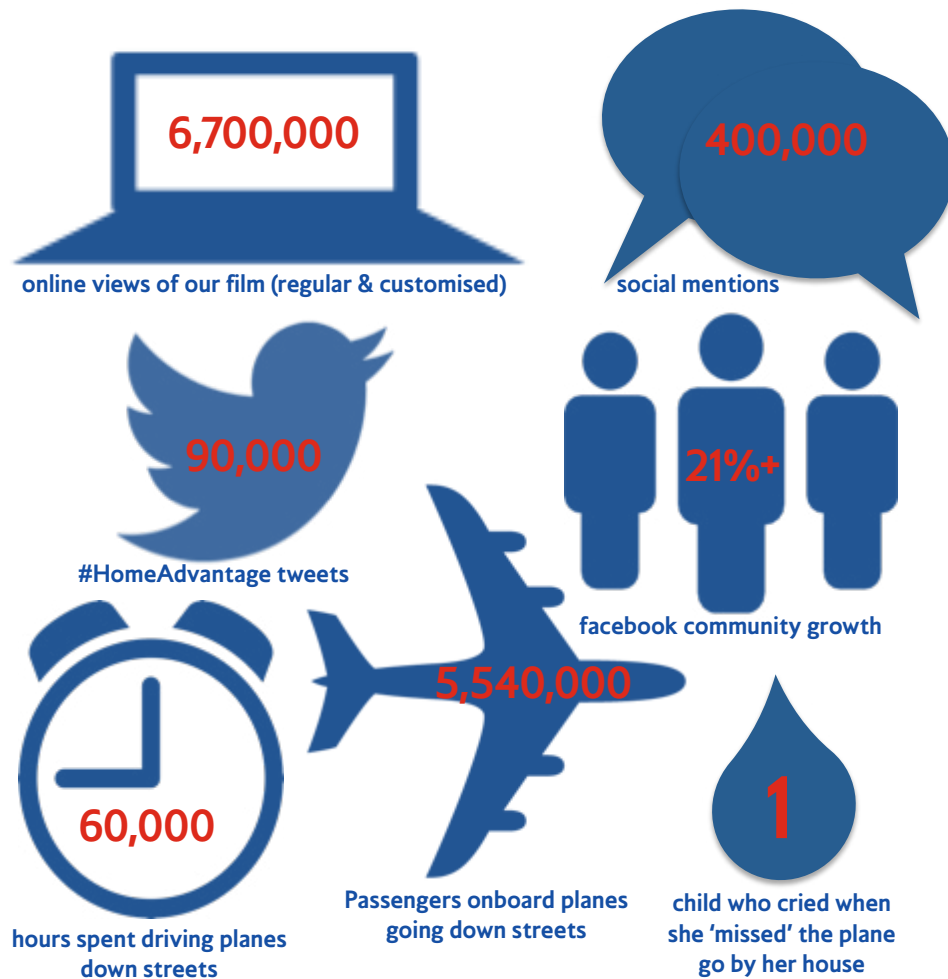
The Home Advantage gave Team GB the edge; gold medals won exceeded the number of medals predicted.

Despite a 4% share of voice, the campaign helped British Airways achieve its objective of being the most patriotic sponsor of the Games, 43% ahead of its nearest competitor.



# CROWD SUPPORT

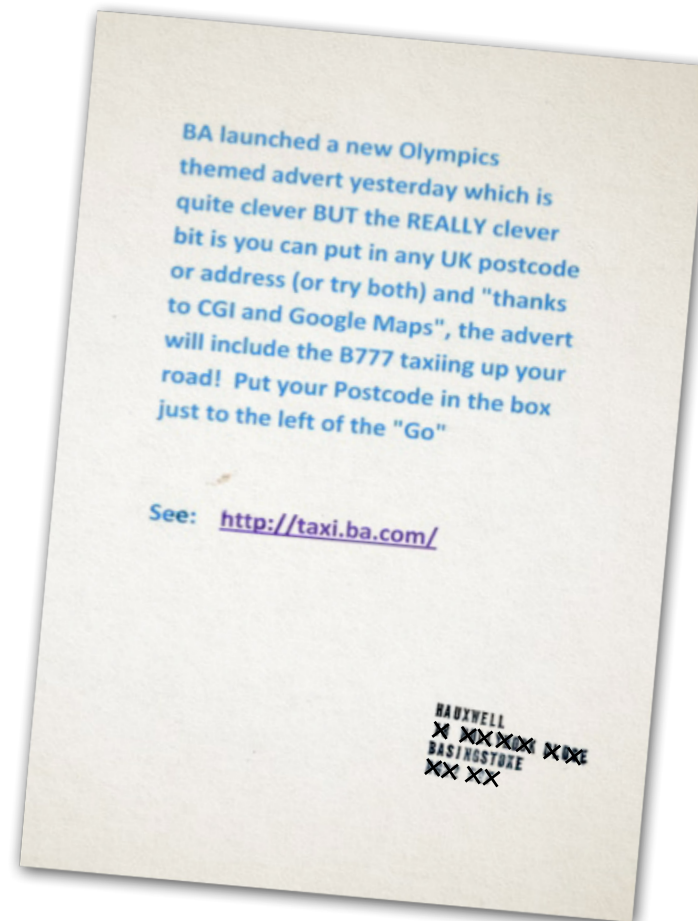
On top of intense social buzz, media organisations took notice of British Airways' efforts, earning them the title of 'Best Sponsorship of the Games' from PR Week.



SOURCE: BBH, GOOGLE ANALYTICS, SYSOMOS, RADIAN 6, 12TH FLOOR, BA, FRAMESTORE, IMG



We even heard of an enthusiast in Basingstoke, who had made his neighbours aware of the campaign by posting this note through their letterboxes:

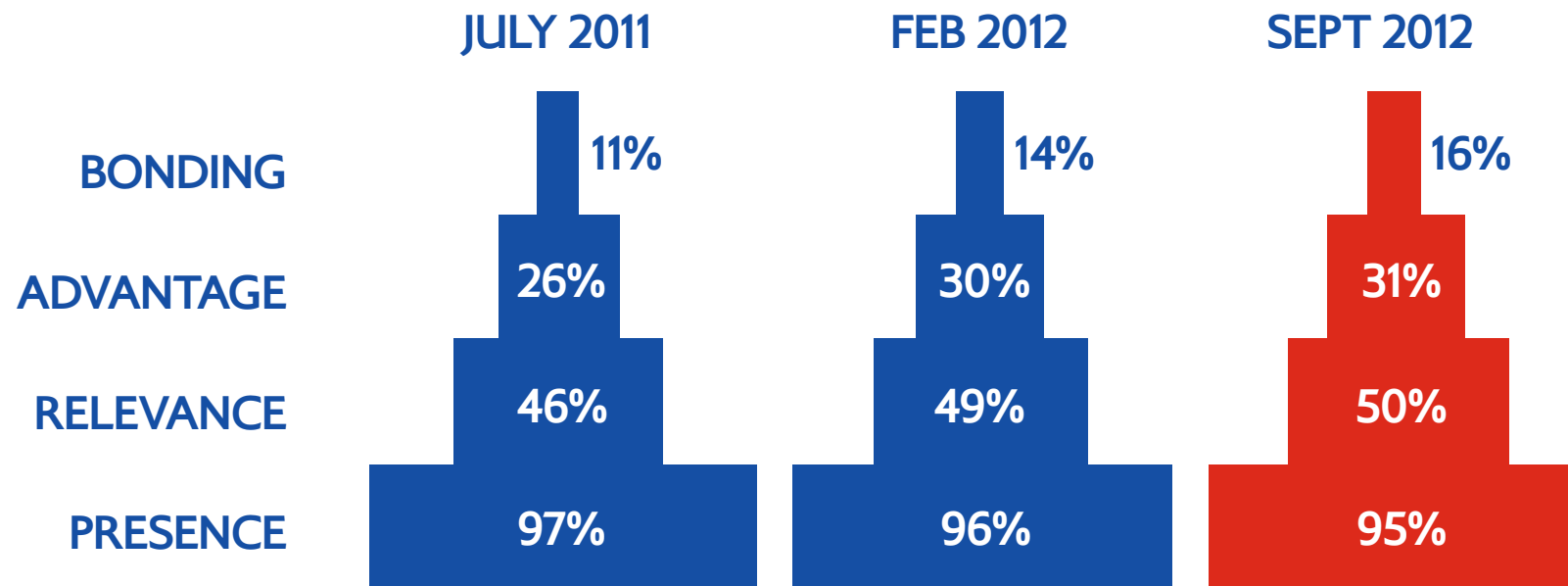


SOURCE: BBH





Finally, the British Airways brand's most important performance index - Bonding - saw an uplift of two percentage points over the campaign period. Just as importantly and as predicted, the campaign helped increase immediate revenues for the airline, up 4.2% from 2011.



SOURCE: MILLWARD BROWN, SEPT 2012



## CLOSING CEREMONY

When it comes to sponsorship, if you aim to make a difference to the event, you are more likely to make a difference to your brand.

If you are going to turn a big brave idea into big brave reality, planning doesn't stop at the idea - it needs to inspire the bravery to go for it, and instil belief in the teams to deliver it.

***"FOR EVERY BRITON, JUST AS THE COMPETITORS, THIS IS OUR TIME. AND ONE DAY WE WILL TELL OUR CHILDREN AND OUR GRANDCHILDREN THAT WHEN OUR TIME CAME, WE DID IT RIGHT"***

LORD COE, 27TH JULY 2012



Word count: 1948

