



British Shops & Stores Association



Energy PR MD Louise Findlay-Wilson reflects on the recent launch of an attention-grabbing report into the 'Health of the High Street' conducted on behalf of client British Shops and Stores Association (bssa). Substantial media coverage really helped to put the Report and bssa on the map, both on a national level and within key vertical trade titles.

The Issue

Few would argue that the way we shop has changed enormously. The growth of out of town shopping centres, the rise in e-tailing, the ever-expanding footprint of the major multiples, Sunday trading, plus the pressure on leisure time have all had a huge knock on effect for the retail sector and in particular the UK's high streets. These high streets are crucial to the long-term viability of our smaller retailers.

So when bssa, the leading trade association for such retailers, asked Energy PR to help drive up its membership and cement its position as the authoritative voice for Britain's independent retailers, a Report looking at the Health of the High Street seemed the perfect place to start.

The Solution

Working closely with bssa, Energy PR developed a definitive consumer study exploring the changing way in which people are shopping on their high streets and what spend is migrating to the Web. We examined the high street's role in people's lives, how far they travel to reach their preferred 'local' high street, what else they want to do there, what ingredients are crucial in a successful high street, and how many of these ingredients are currently missing. These findings were overlaid with data from bssa members to provide that all-important retailer's view. The end result was a high profile report, The Health of the High Street, which explored how high streets up and down the country are changing and impacting on the lives of the various communities within every demographic group.

Key Report Findings

- Around 70% of consumers believe that a local high street is a vital part of a healthy society
- 65% of consumers fear that national chain stores are causing local shops to close
- 52% of consumers feel their local high street has lost much of its character and identity over the last five years
- 40% of consumers feel that local councils are not doing enough to encourage town centres



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An event in a prestigious central London venue was held as the focal point for the launch of the Report, together with an intensive media campaign encompassing national print and broadcast media, online media, local radio and trade press.

The Results

National Press - embargoed press releases were issued to all national media; subsequent follow-up reinforced the appeal of the story with the Daily Telegraph, Independent, Daily Mail and Evening Standard all carrying the feature on launch day.

Broadcast - a great kick-start to the day was provided by interviews with bssa Chief Executive John Dean on BBC Breakfast, BBC 1's The One Show and on BBC Radio 5 Live.

Trade Media - the launch event was well-attended by a variety of trade and specialist press titles including Drapers, Retail Week, The Bookseller, Property Week and Progressive Greetings, amongst others.

Regional Radio - throughout launch day bssa undertook numerous live and pre-recorded local radio interviews which were subsequently broadcast across the country, resulting in over 12 hours of coverage at an equivalent rate card comparison cost of over £170,000.

After the Event - post launch coverage saw bssa's message being spread across an array of key trade media, including in-depth features and column inches in Cabinet Maker, ERT Weekly, Hardware Today, The Jeweller, Art Business Today and Gifts Today, amongst others, as well as generating interest in local press.

The launch of the 'Health of the High Street' Report has not only repositioned bssa as an authoritative spokesperson with key media, but has also provided the Association with a strong platform from which to champion the cause of the independent retailer.

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More about bssa

The bssa offers unrivalled support and commercial advantage to small and medium-sized non-food retailers, through an incredibly competitive portfolio of business and professional services. Today it has in excess of 4,000 members who have a combined annual turnover exceeding £3 billion, trading out of 6,200 outlets and employing over 45,000 staff.