

# Poor in-store activations dilute brand presence

The poor execution of in-store promoters or brand ambassadors undermines the power of in-store activations, as they often do not do justice to the vital role they play within a brand owner's marketing strategy. Instead of providing an engaging customer experience that allows customers to interact with the brand positively, in the retail environment, they merely provide free samples and at best, a diluted brand presence.

"Repeatedly, this is what we see on South African store floors when assessing clients' in-store retail promotions as part of our mystery shopping research service. This potentially highly influential platform is all too often let down by ambassadors' poor product knowledge, limited brand awareness and weak execution. This not only costs brand owners financially, but costs them customers as well," explains Sandra Steenkamp, mystery shopping and quality assurance manager at BMI Research.

The company's mystery shopping research methodology evaluates a company's products and/or services from a customer perspective, on the floor, and provides strategic input around service and compliance standards. A core focus area is its Promoter Verification Programme (PVP) that evaluates and provides critical insights on the execution of promotional campaigns.

Given that global research from OgilvyAction shows nearly 30% of consumers only decide which brand to buy once inside the store and one in 10 shoppers switch brands in the aisle, the power of well-executed in-store activations in attracting customers and facilitating successful sampling and sales cannot be underestimated.



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"Having a brand ambassador to tell your product story, bring it to life for the customer in a tangible way and provide stimulating interactions that nurture brand awareness is a powerful medium. In the face of growing e-commerce, well-executed in-store promotions offer brand owners unrivalled opportunities to make the customer connection. This is exactly what we look for when measuring the efficacy of a promotion as part of our PVP. We assess everything from the ambassador's personal appearance and confidence to their level of product and brand engagement.

"This promotional verification is generally conducted at a sample of the entire store universe representative of region and any other attributes considered necessary by the client. Audits can be covert or overt depending on the location and type of promotion, and can be undertaken in conjunction with other forms of research, such as customer intercepts to determine consumer reaction to the promotion or interviews with the store manager, which provide valuable insights.

"All this feedback paints a picture for brand owners that highlights the strengths and the weaknesses of their in-store promotional activities. It allows them to turn what is a potentially damaging experience for the both the customer and the brand into a positive one that effectively drives sales, grows the customer base, reinforces brand and product knowledge, and bolsters brand loyalty."

## Tips to better in-store promotions

While this hindsight offers the best clarity, there is much brand owners can do to ensure their in-store promotions get off to the best possible start.

Use a reputable promotions company that employs enthusiastic, motivated and confident brand ambassadors who are comfortable engaging potential customers on the store floor. Ambassadors should also always adhere to in-store activation times and be well-groomed, correctly attired and behave appropriately.

"It is imperative that ambassadors are able to succinctly convey your brand's message and actively drive product sales through their sound knowledge of not only your products but what differentiates them from similar products on the shelf as well," concludes Steenkamp.

BMi Research's promoter verification programme provides brand owners with these exact insights, empowering them to take remedial action where necessary and enabling them to ensure their promotional campaigns are highly efficient and highly effective.

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