

Six tips for sensible in-store marketing in the silly season



By [Natasha McClymont](#)

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With Christmas closing in on us, we've all been bombarded by cheap tinsel, Boney M and a gaudy plethora of competing product displays in most of the supermarkets we've frequented over the past month or so. Most marketers view the festive season as a prime opportunity to boost product sales, and it can be, if it's done smartly.

Clawing through the clutter

The reality is that a boost in sales is not as obvious as one might think over this season. Although there is increased store traffic and increased expendable income (due to annual bonuses), there is also increased competition with many brands implementing all manner of displays and specials.

Different goals require different approaches

The challenge for marketers then, is to stand out from the clutter, rather than simply adding to it. While novel approaches can play a great part in successfully achieving this, that alone is not enough. As with any other time of year, a successful in-store marketing strategy requires insight into consumer behaviour, like knowing, for example, that consumer engagement plays a different role depending on the category of your product. Take a low engagement category product like chocolates; an effective point of sale display can easily sway the purchase decision, whereas in high-engagement categories like skincare products, the purpose of the point-of-sale remains that of building the brand personality and remaining top of mind with shoppers.

Once you've identified what the actual goal of your in-store marketing effort is (try to be more specific than 'boost sales'), it's time to implement.

Six practical tips

1. Plan early

Your festive season promotion has to form part of your overall brand strategy. Plan in advance to ensure a smooth transition, both into and out of the festive season.

2. Fight for location

A great in-store display will have little effect if it is not situated in a prominent and logical place. Displays situated at exits are a waste of time and budget. In-store marketing is about swaying behaviour in the moment. Be where it counts.

3. Think festive

Many products can be transformed into gifts with some clever packaging and pairing. Ever seen those packs of various chocolates wrapped in the reindeers? Compare the prices of the individual chocolates and you'll see that you're simply paying for packaging, while buying brands you wouldn't have normally chosen. Similarly, adding a festive ribbon to a standard bottle of wine sets it apart as a potential gift.

4. Take the gap

In-store promotional tactics are great if they haven't been exhausted yet. Remember the buzz when those motion sensor coupon dispensers came out? Now, not so much. Keep an eye on novel marketing approaches and make sure you jump on the right bandwagon, especially when it comes to social media and digital hype. Consumers, especially the younger generations, are very informed and connected, and anything uncool will fall flat.

5. Personalise without being a pain

Promo people with tasters and samplers are well received on a leisurely shopping trip, but in the craziness of December, they can be viewed as a nuisance and an unnecessary extension of the consumer's time in store. Think creatively about brand activations and ensure that they add value to the shopper within the current situation. Offering shoppers a wet wipe or some cold water on a hot day could achieve very positive brand affinity. It is all about setting your product apart from the others and creating a brand experience right there in the retail space. Be very clear as to what you want to achieve, is it product awareness, sampling, building a database or incentivising sales with a value offer?

6. Entice help

Bearing in mind the sheer volume of competition your product is likely to face, trade incentives with reps briefs can be your greatest asset in setting your product apart from the rest. Fully engage the sales force and provide retailers with the tools and incentives to scoop as much of the consumer spend during the silly season as possible. Give the retailer a good reason to buy additional stock and to achieve the sales by offering enticing incentive trips and lavish prizes to reward management and staff.

The bottom line though, as ever, is that successful marketing requires working on the full spectrum. On its own, some brief December brilliance is not enough to build a brand, nor are in-store marketing displays. Your festive season marketing has to complement your broader marketing strategy across various relevant channels for sustained brand success. The reality of silly season marketing is that very few brands can afford to be absent.

ABOUT NATASHA MCCLYMONT

Natasha McClymont is MD of Fresh Brand Activation, a Cape-based agency specialising in below-the-line marketing boasting clients such as Three Ships Whisky, CapeNature and BP.
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