

Footprint Marketing Awards - How Successful is Marketing in Shopping Centres?

The first South African Footprint Marketing Awards, recognising excellence in Shopping Centre marketing, will take place at the 8th African Congress of Shopping Centres in Cape Town Convention Centre from 12-14 October 2003.

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The awards will honour outstanding achievements made by marketers in the Shopping Centre Industry, recognising their initiative and creativity.

According to Kristi Maree, Managing Director of Lifestyle Communications, an estimated R160 million is spent annually on the marketing of shopping centres in South Africa. With over 250 shopping centres in excess of 10 000m² mainly catering to the higher LSM groupings, the competition for customers is fierce. Sophisticated marketing and promotional strategies are implemented at many of the shopping centres. However, the question every marketer is asking is: "How do we measure the impact of marketing?"

"Traditional promotional strategies are not adequate." states Maree, "Demanding and sophisticated landlords/developers/owners are increasingly searching for measurable and tangible marketing activities. The pressure is on marketing professionals to deliver campaigns that make an impression on customers. Part of the success is measuring it."

Measuring of shopping centre marketing, otherwise referred to as "window dressing", has traditionally been done on gut feel instead of being measured against a list of requirements or system.

Maree continues, "How do you accurately measure things like advertising, public relations and marketing, all of which have dynamic effects that play out over time? In order to measure anything, one needs to be clear on the objective of the marketing exercise. You need to ask: Why are we doing this event or promotion? What do we want to achieve? Unless we know why we are doing something, we cannot determine whether it was successful or not."

In South Africa, shopping centres are spending their money on Advertising - including banners, posters, below-the-line and above-the-line material; Promotions such as Fashion shows, Valentine's Day and Christmas; Gifts with purchase and corporate gifts; PR Campaigns and Direct Marketing to the target market.

The question begs - Can this money being spent be justified and how can it be measured?

"Measuring your marketing activities seems to be the most natural thing to do, but it is a complicated process. In order to start the measuring process, ask yourself the following four questions: Who is measuring? What are we measuring? Why are we measuring? and When are we measuring?" says Maree

Various external factors impact on a marketing effort, issues such as financial insecurity, the political turmoil in neighbouring or global conflict, high interest rates and even increased spending on cellular telephones, impact significantly on consumer confidence.

The complete shopping experience, from the moment the shopper parks his car to the moment he walks

the door, determines how positive the experience was. While the shopper is in the centre they are in contact with the shopping centre personnel, as well as with various tenants and their employees. Obviously, the more pleasant the experience, the more regularly the shopper will visit the centre.

Maree concludes, "The marketing function has to function within this hive of activity. The overall success of any promotion or event at a centre will be affected by the total shopping experience. Hence it is vital that all key role players act as a united team to create an optimum venue for a holistic shopping and entertainment experience."

Entry forms are available from the South African Council of Shopping Centres offices, via the Internet or from Cutting Edge Marketing, Communications and Special Promotions on (011) 784-7804. The website can be accessed on www.shoppingcouncil.co.za, or contact the Council's office on (011) 784-2837.

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