

The bigger impact of experience vs. exposure

 By [Lauren Durant](#)

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The term 'brand activation' may not mean much to the average consumer, but if they've ever watched a live product demonstration in a supermarket, been handed a discount voucher for a particular cleaning detergent at a traffic light, or sampled a new brand of sports drink at an event then they've certainly been the target of this kind of brand-building exercise. Whether we want it to be or not, the world is a branded place and activation solutions can help distinguish brands in a crowded marketplace.



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Providing the much sought after two-way conversation between brand and consumer, brand activation campaigns generate interest by allowing the customer to experience a product or service in a personal way. Experiences are often aimed at educating and motivating, so that the customer begins to appreciate the brand, and this involves making sure that the brand connects on an emotional level with the customer. The stronger the emotional connection, the more meaningful the interaction between consumer and brand - resulting in customers re-buying a brand more frequently.

While traditional marketing is based on a volume of target audience impressions, activations involve engaging with consumers in a manner that enables them to 'feel' the brand versus simply being exposed to it. Perhaps only 1000 people experience a new product launch at a popular shopping mall, by the time the event is shared on Instagram or YouTube, the impact is far greater. Human beings are highly social animals and have the innate need to communicate and interact. So even if an event is small, what better way to spend marketing budget and make an impact than through brand activation?

The quality of the impact a brand has, is therefore often times more important than the high reach of the message. Maximising reach will mean very little if the message is not heard and internalised in some way by the target audience. If the audience is disconnected and regards the message as white noise, then they will probably ignore it altogether. The cost per reach is therefore directly related to the quality of the impact. When the cost per reach reduces, so too does the impact of the message. In contrast, as the impact increases, so too does the cost per reach. As such, best practice brand activation campaigns must be strategically led in order to deliver measurable results with a focus on ROI (Return on Investment).

While activations can achieve outstanding results, conducting a campaign that is not aligned with the brand strategy should be avoided. To complete a successful activation, a mix of the right elements is needed. If the campaign is not captivating, the product or service not aspirational, the campaign not promoted or the promotion not given enough time in market, etc., the activation may not meet the objectives set at the very beginning.

Some of these strategic elements include:

- **Communication Targets:** determine beforehand how many engagements/ direct communications are to take place with the audience
- **Distribution of Material/ Giveaways:** determine upfront how many units of product are to be issued to the audience during the campaign
- **Sales Targets:** Is there a direct action that must be measured at a till point or through a coupon redemption
- **Other Call-to-Action Activities:** execute well-structure digital media initiatives in support of the campaign
- **Conversion Targets:** determine the measure of communication versus the actual action. E.G.: sample product is distributed to 10 customers, resulting in one sale = 10% conversion
- **Measurement of the influence on/ changing in consumer perceptions or behaviour,** must be measured through independent market research at activation and /or beyond

ABOUT LAUREN DURANT

With 23 years in the marketing industry, Isilurko Activate executive Lauren Durant has no difficulty helping companies build emotional connections between their brands and their customers through live events and crafted experiences. A left and right brain thinker, Lauren is always in beta and it's this combination that makes her a creative, yet strategic force in the industry.

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