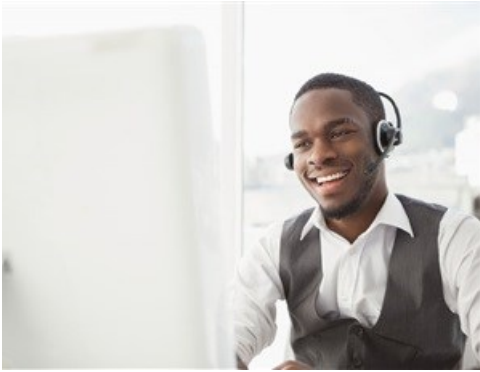


# Successful brand experience innovation, tips and examples

For marketers, brand experience innovation is more important than ever, because today's consumers are far more interested in what a brand does than what a brand says. They remember how brand experiences make them feel and link those feelings to the brand.



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Brand experience innovation is anything 'new' a brand does in culture to bring its purpose to life. Without brand experience innovation, new products or services can have limited impact, especially in mature markets where competitors can replicate quickly and people are already spoilt for choice.

Added Value's innovation experts, Dennis Wong, Sally Smallman and Bec Lauder, came up with five 'must dos' they believe businesses should follow for successful brand experience innovation and have also unpacked several examples of innovating brands.

## Five tips for brand experience innovation

- Brands must have 100% clarity on the brand purpose and character. Brand purpose is why you exist. Brand character is who you are as a brand – the values and beliefs that determine how you behave. Clarity here is a crucial foundation for any brand activity and particularly for brand experience innovation. It provides direction on the type of experience that you want to create for your customers and how to do it in a way that is unique to your brand. In South Africa, Castle Lite shows it has this down pat with its Making Music at -2.5° campaign.

- Deeply understand your target consumer and the culture that surrounds them. Knowing what is important to them, the tensions that they experience, allows you to identify how your brand can make a valued contribution to that culture.

Credibly resolving the tensions that exist means you can create valued brand experiences that build vibrancy into your brand in a meaningful way. The Color Run is a global phenomenon, because it tapped into a cultural tension (we all know we should go for a run, but it is so lonely and boring) and resolved it by injecting fun into a shared experience. In South Africa, Park Runs are fulfilling a similar purpose.

- Creating a mission for your brand focuses your attention and effort on a specific goal. The most powerful brand experiences are focused on a single goal, avoiding over-complication and helping consumers to understand instantly the brand's point of view. A mission is something your brand has a right to do, that will bring value to your consumers' lives. It should be audacious and stretching, but also tangible and real. This mission creates coherence across every brand experience you create, ensuring that they all build towards bringing your purpose to life. The commitment that Always has made to building self-esteem among young women during puberty is a fantastic example of a brand on a mission.
- Understand the key moments of truth along the customer journey, and build your brand experience to deliver at these moments. Every customer has a journey with your brand, both holistically and over time. Bringing value to people's lives in the key moments that matter drives engagement with the brand. It is a great way to demonstrate that the brand understands and cares about its customers. Brand experience innovation can entertain, solve problems or create new utility across the journey. IKEA's delivery and furniture building service recognises that their customer journey does not end when they leave the store, but only when the furniture is built and being used at home.
- Focus on growth in the long term. Brand experience innovation creates meaningful relationships between people and brands that endure over time. It creates strong perceptions about brands in the minds of consumers. While brand experiences may not always have an immediate commercial payoff, the value comes from playing a vibrant role in culture, constantly re-engaging consumers using innovative approaches, and driving consumer advocacy of your brand. You are building long-term brand value.

## Brand innovation examples

- Samsung's exploratory flagship with no product on sale - February 2016 saw the inauguration of the Samsung 837 Center in the meatpacking district of New York City. The three-floor facility gives people a chance to dive into the Samsung universe – although no products are sold in store. The flagship was designed as a 'digital playground': among other installations, visitors can experience 4D virtual reality or enter the 'Social Galaxy', a tunnel lined with screens that display their own Instagram posts. Artistic and community-related special events will also be hosted inside the venue. Locally, Samsung is enhancing brand experience with its Galaxy Studio at Sandton's Mandela Square.
- Echo: Amazon's play to own the living room - Remember when Amazon used to be just an online retailer where consumers could buy pretty much anything? Not content with this modest role, Amazon's expansion into hardware has given the company a new dimension: Echo provides a physical foothold in people's homes with a voice-activated personal assistant and smart-home hub. The daily interactions that Echo owners can have with the device are one example of the new directions being explored by the Amazon brand.
- Experiencing luxury brands through art - In recent years, luxury brands have had to find innovative ways to distance themselves from premium insurgents. A key lever has been their involvement in art: Initially, they curated exhibitions in the most prestigious museums across the world. The Alexander McQueen retrospective hit record attendance levels both at the MET (New York, 2011) and at the Victoria and Albert Museum (London, 2015). Some have gone a step further and opened their own museums, displaying works from contemporary artists - the Gucci Museo in Florence, or the Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris.
- More than a cycling apparel manufacturer, Rapha is a lifestyle brand - Rapha is a niche, high-end cycling gear brand. It entered the market with a disruptive objective: to become a lifestyle brand, rather than a functional sporting goods retailer. Today, Rapha stores – called Cycle Clubs – include a café where visitors can enjoy fine coffee and

food. In addition to cycling clothing, the range of products comprises books, skin care, coffee sets and even an espresso tamper. For a \$200 annual fee, members gain access to a like-minded community of cyclists and join one of Rapha's annual cycling tours in California and Italy. Perfect for a wealthy Gen X cohort of males hunting for a low-impact sporting hobby. In Cape Town, BMW Motorrad offers a similar experience.

- Arby's is mastering real-time marketing - Most of Arby's posts on social media are witty references to external events, such as the season premiere of a TV show. The editorial line is consistent - geeky and light-hearted - and photos typically feature Arby's products in a clever context. The social media teams are on the lookout for opportunistic engagement - remember the "Hey @Pharrell, can we have our hat back?" tweet during the Grammy's, noting the resemblance between Pharrell's hat and Arby's logo? A smart example of how to maintain a brand-enhancing conversation with your consumer target.
- Burberry's flagship: a brick-and-mortar website - In 2012, Burberry opened its flagship store in London, with the key aim of continuing the modernisation of the brand, while appealing to its new Millennial target. According to Angela Ahrendts, then CEO of the company, "Walking through the doors is just like walking into our website." Select products are equipped with RFID tags that trigger content on some of the 100 screens around the store – including the fitting rooms. The company is constantly enriching the experience by regularly adding both temporary and permanent features.
- Nike's ecosystem expands beyond product - With Nike+, the company has developed an ecosystem of services that widens its relationship with consumers beyond shoes and apparel. Via the Nike+ Running and Training apps, the Oregon-based sporting goods manufacturer turns into a coaching companion that can be carried around in your pocket. The brand aims to help users keep track of their performances and strives to provide the extra motivation and inspiration they need to achieve their goals. Nike+ training clubs exist alongside the apps, allowing the local community of users to work out together under supervision from a Nike+ coach.
- Immerse yourself in YSL's Black Opium Nuit Blanche - Yves Saint Laurent's Black Opium franchise targets Millennials. To launch the Nuit Blanche edition of the fragrance, the company developed an experience based around second-screen technology. When you launch the website [yslblackopium.com](http://yslblackopium.com) from a computer, users are prompted to connect their smartphone to another website. The computer screen then starts showing the commercial film: viewers follow Edie Campbell's night endeavours, while their smartphones act as if they were hers – they even vibrate when she gets a text.

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