

Applying Marketing Concepts to Book Publishing in Nigeria

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Abstract

Book publishing will constitute a wasted effort if worthy books are not placed in the hands of readers. The signs are that Nigeria is under-served and the potential book market largely untapped. Although various reasons could be adduced for unwholesome book reading development, publishers need to play their own part in changing situations by publishing books that readers can read and make sure that readers want to read them, and then put them within readers' reach. Book marketing (and publishing) in Nigeria leaves a lot to be desired. To create a reading nation, Nigerian publishers need to operate within the marketing concept in their pursuit of profit and survival by satisfying readers. By so doing, the publishing industry should witness a tremendous change. A change that is not only beneficial to the book industry as a whole but the nation as well, since a reading nation is also a development-oriented nation.

Key Words: marketing, book publishing

Introduction

Book publishing in Nigeria resembles that in other countries in some respects, but must need advance in many others in order to serve a nation grappling with illiteracy and low-level advancement in socio-economic variables, politics, science, technology and general well-being of the people. As in advanced countries, book publishing is controlled by a few publishers, which however are educational; and because of this inclination, perhaps, the perception of books as a means for academic attainment is perpetuated among the people. A vicious circle results from this misconception – while writers complain that publishers shun non-educational manuscripts, publishers show evidence of fruitless investment in the area. It is no surprise that a managing director of one the foremost publishers describes publishing as “this most challenging of the knowledge industries” (Olajide, 2005: 60). He is not alone, and his assertion is true of any publishing business, educational or not; thus Camenson (2002) begins his book *Career in Publishing* with this warning: “The field of publishing is exciting and competitive. There are risks and surprises, and sometimes, disappointments.” Valdehuesa (1985) agrees that publishers are risk-takers. Nonetheless, Nigerian publishers need to esteem their importance in society much higher than they do presently by seeing themselves as a member of a fourth estate that should direct certain aspects of development in Nigeria through information provision, irrespective of government's level of attention or inattention in book development and reading. As succinctly put by Valdehuesa (1985: 710), “in the task of nation-building, one fact is often overlooked: A developed nation consists of developed people.” The implication of this assertion is that people will pursue development to the extent that they are developed. On the other hand, and more pertinent here, is that books and literacy are the means to developing people – people cannot become developed if their minds are not.

The level of technological application demarcates the industry into traditional and electronic publishing, with both types depending extensively on online marketing of products. Educational e-books are also becoming attractive as alternatives to more expensive traditional textbooks, as Marshall (2009) reports of the move by the California governor: “California's Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has launched an initiative to ban textbooks from high school classrooms and replace them with digital material.” Much as this may sound as a pipe-dream in Nigeria's situation today, publishers may have to fast-track in many areas to align the book industry with development in other information and communication industries. As Nigerian publishers would have observed, their products lag behind other information products in the country in terms of attracting patronage, high poverty level notwithstanding. A key strategy in marketing in developed countries is meeting the customers where they are with products that augment or fit into their present life-style. Thus, as other media get more attractive and sophisticated, and thus lure potential customers away from the traditional means of communication, book publishers in Nigeria should take advantage of developments in information technology to push their products to consumers as well as bring in as much attraction (and bizarre) as possible from other media into book publishing, as part of their marketing strategy. Nollywood (Nigeria's film industry) is catching on around

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the world with no interrelations between publishers and film producers on rights issues for one(s) to reproduce the works of the others, and extend markets.

A good trend is that el-hi textbooks in Nigeria are becoming more attractive and are replete with colour illustrations. However, ensuring higher sales (which is healthy to publishers' bottom line and national development through superior education of larger numbers) calls for improved marketing know-how, for example by offering special discounts to buyers who make orders through the Internet. This should require the expansion of publishing interests to include subject matters that can be marketed online. Making the customer always the focus calls for alignment of all publishing activities with the principle of market orientation. Moreover, the goal of marketing communications is to adequately reach target audiences with information about the existence and availability of book products.

While concentrating on the problems of distributions, not much has been said about promotion in writings on book marketing in Nigeria, the reverse seems the case in the discourse of book marketing in developed countries where transportation, distribution and communication networks, including concessional postage rates on books are well established, and attention is focused on the development and application of marketing strategies as well as the promotion of reading. This difference in marketing approach is indicative of constraints in the Nigeria book situation in which the focus and know-how in publishing are more or less limited to skills in manufacturing and presenting textbooks for adoption by the Ministry of Education and private schools, and subsequently distributing successful titles. The uppermost desire in most Nigerian publishers' minds is how to win as much portion of the school book market as possible through the adoption process of the Federal and State Ministries of Education.

However, low textbook availability ratios in schools (Read, 1990) reveal that not enough is being done to persuade parents and guardians to acquire books for their children and wards. Considering that educational books could constitute the lion's share of publishing in Nigeria (Ike, 1991), the low book availability ratios (less than 1% in some school) indicate that the book market is largely untapped in Nigeria. Ike (2004: 3) laments the situation further:

An estimated 90% of the annual output of books published in Nigeria is in the area of textbooks for primary and secondary education. This results in lopsidedness in favour of primary and secondary school texts and against tertiary education (including polytechnics, colleges of education, and universities). It also militates against the availability of professional books, reference books and general books (including creative writing, general interest books, and books for lifelong education). Even in the primary and secondary school texts, it has not been easy to produce them in the vast quantities required.

The lopsidedness in book publishing in favour of educational books has often been criticised (e.g. Ike, 1991) and for good reasons. Ike is worried that concentration on textbooks stifles the publication of creative writing. Mathematically, if education is geared at eradicating illiteracy, then non-educational books should surpass educational books in output and sales since schooling feeds a teeming population of potential (literate) readers yearly. It stands to reason that publishers should be overwhelmed by the demand of non-textbook market in a country with a population of about 150 million people, of which 68% of the adult population is counted as literate (Country Report, 2009). However, Nigeria is unlike developed countries such as US and UK where educational books usually account for less than 30% of the revenues that accrue to the publishers, even though school book availability ratio is high or at optimum levels in these places; for example this category of books accounted for \$6.1 billion (or 25%) of the total US publishing revenue of \$24.3 billion in 2008 (http://www.publishers.org/main/IndustryStats/indStats_02.htm). The concentration of attention and investment on school books has delayed the industry from growing to maturity, and proved disastrous in years when socio-political crises coincided with book seasons, leading to poor sales, and subsequent loss of trained manpower through retrenchments.

Some factors in the potential market also contribute to the sluggish development of readership: low intellectual awakening and poverty, among other factors, limit the spread of books and reading at the lower socio-income level while the entertainment media take the leisure time of the average and the rich. Therefore, the publisher that will sell his products must find some ways to win the attention of the potential book audience, get it to buy and read books, and sustain its interest in books, in collaboration with other publishers and interested NGOs.

I posit in this article that Nigerian publishers are yet to explore the book market in Nigeria and advocate that there is a need for publishers to apply marketing concepts to the whole process of book publishing in Nigeria by shifting from its present approach to publishing business to market orientation.

Shifting Paradigm

Arboleda's (1985) observation that publishers in developing countries assume that once a book is produced it will sell still holds true today, for example, many lecturers do not get to learn about books published locally in their fields. Further, assuming that there is a ready market waiting, some writers venture out on their own with the hope to make optimum sales and money through self-publishing. They fail to appreciate that publishing entails book production and book promotion, as defined by Grannis (1967:3): "the whole intellectual and procedures of selecting and arranging to make a book and of promoting its ultimate use." Unwin and Unwin (1976) particularly emphasise the importance of marketing communications or promotion in saying that the work of publishing begins after the book is produced. In a similar vein, Priestley (1993) agrees with Scott Walter that fifty percent of publishers' job lies in the successful marketing and distribution of books.

It could be said that this view of publishing demarcates Nigerian publishers from their counterparts in the developed countries. Most Nigerian book publishers generally manufacture books and offer them for sale without promoting their use, since they usually are producing in line with government curriculums. Thus, the indigenised multinational publishers (University Press Plc, Macmillan, Longman, etc.) remain the leaders in the industry because the basic infrastructure for "promotion" and distribution was already established before the withdrawal of, or reduction in, foreign interest.

The failure to adequately market books truncates the communication chain between the author and the reader, because until the reader receives the message the communication process is not complete. The manufacturing of the message is important, but adequately luring the target readers to accept that the product put at their disposal is right for them through the publisher's promotion and distribution machinery is of great importance, if the target audience is to be reached, investment recouped and profit made optimally.

Taken together, the book industry will serve the public at a profit if it adopts the marketing concept as an organisational philosophy. According to Bearden, Ingram and LaForge (2001: 4) the marketing concept consists of three interrelated principles:

- 1) An organisation's basic purpose is to satisfy customer needs.
- 2) Satisfying customer needs require integrated and coordinate efforts throughout the organisation.
- 3) Organisations should focus on long-term success.

The authors give 15 crucial guidelines for executing the philosophy one of which is: "Grow with partners and alliances" (Bearden et al., 2001: 6). As publishers aim to satisfy customers, they also need to create and develop better relationships with their booksellers, and perhaps prefer the cultivation of regional wholesalers to establishing depots across the country. This will save overheads for big publishers and create avenues for small ones to grow. As an element of holistic marketing, "relationship marketing builds strong economic, technical and social ties among parties" (Kotler and Keller, 2006: 18).

Experience gained implementing the marketing concept has lead organisations to adopt market orientation which entails growing with the customer by continuously collecting information about customers' needs and using the information (across departments) to create customer value (Bearden et al., 2001; Berkowitz, Kerin, Hartley & Rudelis, 2000). Kotler and Keller (2006) extend our understanding of marketing orientation further by identifying reactive market orientation and proactive market orientation which together make up total market orientation. While reactive market orientation concerns response to customers' expressed needs, proactive market orientation (the authors citing Narver and his colleagues) attempts to respond to customers' latent needs; thus resulting in creating services and goods that are mutually beneficial to customers and organisations. In a developing nation as Nigeria where the majority of the populace is yet to realise its information needs beyond limited appreciation of the importance of books in academic achievement, publishers stand to gain and become more relevant to society if they individually and collectively adopt total market orientation. Creating desirable products depends on proper market research, and attracting potential customers to products requires marketing communications.

Applying Marketing Concepts to Book Publishing In Nigeria

The aim of book promotion in Nigeria should be to create readership and to satisfy identified needs and wants in books; including “felt need” (Ogunleye, 2005: 81), unfelt but existing need, pronounced need (as in el-hi textbooks), anticipated need (as imagined by authors or publishers), etc. To a large extent people understand their need for educational books; usually for academic attainment – after which books become irrelevant once desired certification is achieved. Thus, specialised and professional books remain relevant just to the extent that they provide information that one needs to pass examination, not for further personal professional development. Many fail to see the need for specialised books, general interest books and books for reading pleasure or spiritual development (even though Nigerians are very religious); the reason being that book reading is yet to be integrated into the Nigerian culture, and the fact that many are not sufficiently literate to derive pleasure from the available books.

Therefore, as Bordenave (1977) suggests, because the culture of a society is an integral element of the people’s life, new systems and new ways of life should be introduced through persuasion. There is a need for the promotion of books and reading in Nigeria, and for those concerned to adopt a marketing approach that will ultimately reach target markets segmented according to prevalent characteristics. Two important issues to be borne in mind in developing a reading society, and in improving book publishing and sales are that:

- (1) marketing is matching product with customer, and
- (2) products should be in harmony with the other Ps in the marketing mix.

The book (product), their customers’ accessibility (or lack of it) to where products are sold (place), the *price* they will be willing to pay, and how to persuade the potential customers to purchase books (promotion) are all crucial in successful book marketing. Matching books with customers in Nigeria calls for a shift from the present-day product and production conceptual approaches to publishing to the market orientation approach. According to Kotler and Keller (2006: 15), those operating within the product concept marketing approach aim to make goods “widely available and inexpensive” while those that try to offer products with “the most quality, performance, or innovative features” are using the production concept approach. In Nigeria, these approaches seem to favour educational books which are comparatively easy to write, produce and apparently easy to sell, since the subject matters and markets are already pre-determined. Nonetheless, it is evident that improvement in production and marketing skills is still needed for publishers to adequately tap the textbook market. Further, some forays into other areas of publishing tend to fail because of lack of valid marketing research (Ogunleye, 2005). Perhaps Ogunleye is right to say that “the biggest hidden cost in publishing is the cost of inventory or unsold stock due to bad publishing decisions of publishing books which should not have been published because they would not sell” (p. 83).

However, the contention here is that a holistic approach to book publishing in Nigeria should see every literate and emergent literate constantly supplied a diet of books and other reading materials. A marketing orientation to book publishing business demands that all effort should be geared towards satisfying customers, and at a profit to shareholders. According to McCarthy and Brogowicz (1981), each of the three ideas in the marketing concept demands a related change:

- (1) a *customer orientation* (idea) demands a change in management attitudes,
- (2) a *total company effort* calls for changes in the company’s organisational structure, and
- (3) *profit, not just sales as the firm’s goal* demands changes in management methods and procedures.

The Nigerian publisher that can tap into the products of educational institutions and regularly make good book sales needs to adopt a new orientation toward publishing as a business and as a cultural responsibility (Gedin, 1992). The Nigerian potential book market is large; if school book market is tapped and the products of literacy and mass education campaigns are sustained with books. Books for the classroom constitute a very small market when compared with the teeming (potential) literate portion of the society.

In furtherance of the argument for the adoption market orientation, this conclusion by Atasié (2000: 43) is in consonance with the proposition being made:

Success in the new economy and competitive landscape will come to those companies that build an integrated set of customer facing capabilities and cultivate a dynamic culture which genuinely places customers at the centre. Also, its organizational

structure must be centred around the customer and reflect sufficient flexibility to respond to changes in the market place. Ultimately, every individual action, communication, customer touch point, new product development or service enhancement has to reinforce commitment to the customer and consistently deliver the promise of value.

Mindset about, and perception of, the audience of publishing products should change from that of doing a favour to a would-be reader to that of setting that reader as the centre (king/queen) of all activities; that is, how to satisfy the customer. For only then can a process of luring customers to read a book specially designed for them can be done meaningfully and successfully. A publishing house operating with the customer orientation marketing principle starts a book project with a marketing research to find out either what message to publish for an already identified audience or what audience would accept/buy an already identified idea. Also, a market research informs decisions on how messages should be packaged for a target audience: “you can shape the scope and contents of the book to meet their needs”, says Chambers (2006: 37). Once a publisher has determined what to publish, it is easy to find the author and communicate to him what and how to write for a specified audience. Then the message can be packaged to suit and appeal to the target audience.

A clear understanding of who the target audience is: its taste, and location, status in the social strata, what magazines and programmes it reads, watches and listens to, etc. can be used in determining the best strategies to adopt in promoting and supplying the relevant books to that market. In other words, the editors and the marketing planners of a book require answers to: Who are the target readers? What constitute their taste? Where do they read? Where do they go? Where are they located? How can they be reached? etc. to design a marketing plan whose execution will yield high sales and profit for the books/series in hand. According to Bailey (1970), readership can be defined intellectually, occupationally and geographically. Furthermore, Lavine and Wackman (1988) and Berkowitz et al (2000) recommend a segmentation of audience and market using customer characteristics and buying situations. Customers can be categorised by

1. geography – region, size, locality;
2. demography – age, size, sex, income, education, occupation, family size, family life cycle, tribe, religion, etc;
3. socioeconomic status – income level/social class and education
4. psychological factors/life styles – life style, self concepts, etc;
5. product usage pattern – high, moderate or low; non-user, prospect, regular user;
6. benefits: benefit of product to user. This could be latent or sought after.
7. awareness and intention: unaware, aware, informed, interested, uninterested

When information products are directed at only certain people, the product can be fine-tuned by the producer. Just targeting any or all audiences with a print product does not guarantee message reception; although fortune may smile on a publisher if a book targeted at, say children, also appeals to adolescents and adults. The products directed at only the groups defined by age, income, occupation, geographical area, culture and interest will be easy to market. Moreover, marketing analysis and product planning enable the publisher to fine-tune promotion activities so that the potential customer finds the product appealing. According to Lavine and Wackman (1988:14), “the choice of market(s) profoundly affects the type of message that is produced and the strategies that are developed for promoting or distributing it”.

In the publishing process, a market research generates information for developing ideas, which if accepted by the publication decision-making committee is (1) developed into book and produced by the editorial and production section, and (2) the information is used by the marketing department to develop marketing strategies (Bodian, 1983). The steps identified by Lavine & Wackman (1988) for manufacturing and marketing information product encapsulate the process of book publishing:

1. Gathering information and developing the message;
2. Producing finished copies of the message;
3. Promoting and selling to the audience; and
4. Distributing the message.

“The ultimate goal of marketing communications is to reach some audience to affect its behavior” (Bearden et al, 2001: 369) and “elicit a behavioural response” (Kotler and Keller, 2006: 7). Further, Bearden et al. (p.369) indicate that “there may be intermediate steps on the path to that goal, such as

developing favourable consumer attitudes.” All of these require a shift in paradigm among publishers, preceded by a change in the perception of the book market and marketing in Nigeria. Additionally, promotional efforts can be carried out in conjunction with other practitioners in the industry as well as marketing experts outside the industry; and innovative methods can be employed, such as the online marketing and text-messaging.

Marketing can be successful if it is planned: “a marketing plan is the heart of a business plan” (Berkowitz et al., 2000: 563). Nigeria’s development may depend a lot on publishers devising plans that contribute significantly to literacy development and its sustenance so that emergent literates can grow into knowledge seekers and developers. Thus a publisher’s marketing plan could contain short term, mid-term and long-term plans. While at it, a major failing in Nigerian publishing should be addressed, that is poor integration of bookselling/booksellers in publishers’ marketing programme.

Conclusion

Clear cut description of the reading and potential reading market is crucial in developing the product and designing an efficient marketing process to reach those for whom the right product has been created. Besides, at any given point in time, the publisher can determine to what extent segments of a potential market are being catered for, since the Nigerian book market is largely untapped. We may consider for example that Nigerian publishers allow large populations of students to pass through secondary schools and tertiary institutions unexploited. People pass through these periods of their active life without developing pleasure for reading largely because publishers have not captured the vision nor developed marketing skills for developing appropriate products and delivering them to these captive audiences. Even in the area (and era) of textbook marketing, the indication is that lecturers are usually unaware of books published in their fields as lecturers are yet to be cultivated as allies in the knowledge industry.

Established publishers seem overly preoccupied and content with the el-hi market, when they can develop imprints in other publishing areas. Publishers ought to monitor and respond to changes in the socio-economic environment, such as economic growth and downturn, and designing products accordingly. Furthermore, the government has implemented different forms of mass literacy programmes which publishers should buy into by monitoring trajectory of literacy development and presenting reading materials that will promote and sustain functional literacy. Writing about Ghana’s development goal in book publishing, Djoletto (1991: 42) avows that:

The place of general book is to keep in motion the vitality of the generality of the book industry culture of the country. This would eventually lead to a full boom of the National book industry and the book patronage which must develop along with it. Then the book culture would have become inseparably merged with the day-to-day lives of each and every member of the entire community.

The Nigerian publishing environment could be volatile sometimes, and as most business environments, presents opportunities and threats. Yet, publishers, individually and as a group, owe it to the developing nation to respond to those challenges and place books in the hands of people, while not losing their grounds.

The Nigerian publishing industry, in spite of having been severely affected by declining readership and unstable economy, shows development in the area of technological transfer which has led to the production of more appealing books; but not enough has been done in developing know-how in book marketing. Books should be promoted with the same vigour that beverages and household goods are promoted. If publishers employed trained marketers and exposed them to further training in bookselling, they would be in a good position to design strategies for book and reading promotion.

In addition, few Nigeria marketers could benefit from research findings in communication and consumer behaviour in Nigeria, one of which is the influence opinion leaders have on people’s attitude and product adoption. Marketers need to know how people acquire and accept or reject information, ideas and beliefs, and how they use their knowledge and act on the basis of conviction.

Furthermore, having identified the obstacles in book and reading promotion, publishers should aggressively lobby for government support in publishing books for, and breaking into, the various book markets. As Bordenave (1977:22) concludes, for “communication to be really effective, (it) must be organically integrated with such processes as conscientisation, organisation, politicisation and

technification.” Publishers can take advantage of the new political dispensation and have a voice at the legislative assemblies. It is dangerous to remain at the present level of satisfying just a fraction of the educational book market when the rest of the world is gravitating towards electronic publishing and marketing; and importantly, using book products to affect lives, development and economy. The market must be created through expanded publishing programmes, improved book marketing know-how and aggressive promotion of reading.

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Keywords: Publishing, Publishing Industry, Publisher, Nigeria. Introduction Book publishing is an economic function which involves the production and distribution of a commodity known as book. Publishing is the profession or business of preparing and printing books, CD-ROMs and selling or making them available to the public. Publishing affords permanent record and preservation (Duru, 2006). However, book publishing requires the cooperation of different stakeholders for its sustainability. i. Understanding the Concept and Importance of publishing. ii. Determining the Book Publishing to undertake iii. Steps to follow in establishing a publishing outfit/company. iv. The history of book development in Nigeria can be traced to the Scottish Presbyterian Mission, led by Rev. Hope Waddell, who arrived at Calabar from Jamaica in 1846 bringing with him a lithographic press and a conventional press for letter press printing. He published the first printed materials in Nigeria in the same year namely "Twelve Bible Lessons" and "Efik Vocabulary". While the first Nigerian newspaper "Irohin" was published in Yoruba land in 1859 by the Methodist Missions at Abeokuta, the first, privately owned newspaper, "Anglo-African", was issued in 1863 by a Jamaican Immigrant Hire the best freelance Marketing Consultants in Nigeria on Upwork, the world's top freelancing website. It's simple to post your job and we'll quickly match you with the top Marketing Consultants in Nigeria for your Marketing Strategy project. Talent Hire professionals and agencies. Projects NEW Buy pre-defined projects. Jobs Apply to jobs posted by clients. Talent Hire professionals and agencies. Projects NEW Buy pre-defined projects. Jobs Apply to jobs posted by clients. How it works. Log in. PATILAD Book Publishing company is involved in the printing of quality and affordable books around Mowe, Ogun State, Nigeria. Our company is being founded to build upon an extensive array of technological education, experience, and the research of its founders. The benefits of our products and services are. We help institutions and organizations to write concepts and implement Business Plan and also train on business Plan writing in Nigeria. We can help you write a detail, strong and winning business Plan for any use. Call any of our business plan consultants on: 08105636015, 08076359735 and 08113205312. or Send me an email at: dayohub@gmail.com . Diamond Publications is a renowned publishing and printing company that has long been engaged in the services of book publishing, contract publishing, events management, training and consulting. 13 Ellaimpress & Services. 50 Abakiliki Street by Emenike Street, Diobu Mile 1 Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. Theosmedia specialises in corporate stationery, graphic design, printing of marketing materials, branding and corporate identity. 23 Todah Contracting. 10 James Street, Palmgroove, Lagos State, Nigeria.