

## **An Assessment of Promotion And Distribution Techniques Of Book Publishers In Nigeria**

**BY**

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### **Abstract**

Various techniques are employed by book publishers to promote and distribute their products. Book promotion and distribution revolves around creating awareness and communicating the benefits contained in books to existing and potential buyers. Findings on the various distribution methods employed by book publishers in Nigeria shows that 88.5% (23) of the companies studied use sales representatives calls as one of the most popular techniques. Book distribution through schools and directly to individuals were also identified among the highly rated techniques. Personal selling was ranked as the most effective tool of promoting books. The opening of book depots, use of aggressive promotion programmes and the pooling of resources to improve book distribution through joint transportation and warehousing arrangement are recommended in the study.

### **Introduction**

The business of book publishing involves not only the communication of ideas from the writer to the reader, but the transfer of knowledge from generation to generation. Over the years, there has been efforts by book publishers to adopt various marketing techniques to boost the promotion and distribution of books and to expand the horizon of their trade. Thus, the task of organizing a commercial network to dispose of books has remained the constant and central preoccupation of book sellers..

Nigeria, with large number of educational institutions, requires the availability of good books to service the need of the market. The application of effective and efficient book promotion and distribution techniques has become a sine qua non for achieving high sales volumes by book marketers.

A key role of marketing is to influence the way a product or service is perceived, and promotion is the key tool to achieve this. As Coote (1993) puts it, the continuing success of any business venture depends on its ability to attract and retain satisfied customers. It has to be carefully planned, structured, executed, assessed and changed if necessary.

On the other hand, Mohammed (1988) and Dipeolu (1983) identified poor distribution techniques as one of the problems that is bedeviling the availability of published materials in Nigeria. Invariably, the absence of satisfactory book distribution channel provides a weak link in the entire chain from publishers to readers.

Smith (1990) identified the process of selling books into three major groups. These are (i) promotion, (ii) getting the order and (iii) filling the orders and delivering the books. In

today's book publishing business, the challenge is for firms to orchestrate winning techniques that would position them where they would be seen, heard and patronized in the crowded "book market". Generally, the promotional and distribution techniques employed by book marketers is critical to the overall success of its marketing efforts. This study therefore aims at investigating the promotion and distribution techniques of book publishers in Nigeria.

### **Literature Review**

According to Kotei (1981) as in Europe, the beginning of the book trade in Africa was characterized by the entrepreneur who was an author, printer, bookseller, and publisher alone and at the same time. However, by the twentieth century, increasing specialization has made publishing to become a distinct occupation. By implication, the functions peculiar to the publishers, that is selecting, editing, and designing the material, arranging its production and distribution, and bearing the financial risk often merged with those of the author, the printer, or the book sellers become the order of the day.

Interestingly, advancements in information and communication technology (ICT) which has made electronic publishing possible and the use of the Internet in selling books has thrown a new challenge in the marketing of books. Employing appropriate book promotion and distribution techniques to penetrate every segment of the book market has become inevitable for book sellers.

Ojeniyi (2002) observed that supply and distribution are the weakest links in the book chain in Nigeria today. While the publishers and book sellers share a common objective of improving access to books, the appropriate

technique for a given market has to be understood and approached accordingly.

In the opinion of Christopher (2004), the marketing practice in the publishing sector, has gone beyond just producing books to hoping that potential buyers will buy. According to her, publishers should become more reader-oriented, seeking out the reader's needs and tastes and then crafting (promotion and distribution plans) to meet identified needs at a profit.

Promotion, as the communication element of the marketing mix (others being product, price and place), is any technique that persuasively communicates favourable information about a seller's product to potential buyers, either directly or through others who can influence purchase decision, Schewe (1987). The essence of promotion is to inform, persuade and remind potential and existing customers about an offer. What this entail is that, the publisher that will sell his products must find some ways to win the attention of the audience, get them to buy and read books and sustain their interest.

The bottom line is that the book marketer must know who his customers are, as well as their needs and make efforts to make books available where and when they are needed.

#### **Problem Statement**

The task of organizing a commercial network to dispose of books involves decisions and choices in terms of methods and tools employed to promote and distribute same to end users. Book convey ideas which are not physical by nature. Communicating the benefits in the idea of the author as contained in the book is the daunting task of the marketer.

The marketing of books is so demanding in that it requires the use of appropriate promotion and communication techniques to push the physical product and ideas to the consumer. According to Momoh (2006), the purpose of the book business is to ensure adequacy of the right materials and services in the right place, in the right quantities, and at the right time. However, to achieve this goal, a lot of effort has to be put in by the book marketers in the aspect of promotion and distribution.

Generating the required public awareness to embrace new ideas and placing published books in the hand of the consumer is challenging enough. The availability of

#### **Findings**

published books and their sales on the Internet and the possibilities this offers to the reader necessarily call for a rethink on traditional techniques of book promotion and distribution in Nigeria. To the book seller, these scenarios has thrown up complex development impacting on the art and science of book marketing in Nigeria today.

#### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study includes the following:

- To investigate the type of book promotion techniques employed by Book publishers in Nigeria.
- To identify the types of promotional methods and tools adopted by book publishers in Nigeria.
- To find out the type of distribution channels used by book publishers in Nigeria.
- To find out how useful the promotional tools and distribution channels being used facilitate book availability.

#### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the course of the study.

1. What type of promotion techniques do book publishers in Nigeria employ?
2. What are the type of distribution channels used by book publishers in Nigeria?
3. What are the types of promotional methods and tools adopted by book publishers in Nigeria?
4. How useful are the promotional and distribution techniques being used by book publishers in Nigeria?

#### **Methodology**

The survey research method was adopted for the study. Survey research method according to Osuala (2005) is the one in which a phenomenon, group of people or items are studied by collecting and analysing data from a sample considered to be representative of the entire group understudy. Consequently, a number of trade book publishing companies in Nigeria were surveyed via questionnaire to ascertain the promotion and distribution techniques adopted by them in the marketing of books. The subject of the study compose of marketing managers and sales representative from selected Book Publishing Companies in Nigeria.

The random sampling technique was used. Informal interview and documentary sources were also used to collect data. The data gathered were analysed descriptively.

The data collected. The analysis and discussion of data obtained is presented below.

**Table 1: Type of promotional methods employed by trade book publisher**

	Publisher	Promotional Methods									
		Media reviews	Exhibition/book fair	New arrival list	Trade announcements	Sales representative calls	Direct mail advertising	Complimentary copies	Window/shop display	Radio/television	Posters/publishers catalogue
1	University press plc, Ibadan	√	√	√	-	√	√	√	√	-	√
2.	Macmillan Nig publishers ltd, Lagos	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	-	√
3.	Evans Brothers (Nig Publishers) Ltd Ibadan	√	√	√	√	√	-	√	√	√	√
4.	African first (Nig) Ltd, Onitsha	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
5.	Bounty press Ltd Ibadan	-	-	-	-	√	-	√	-	√	√
6.	Delta publications Nig. Ltd, Enugu	√	-	-	-	√	√	√	-	-	√
7.	Heinemann Educ. Books (Nig) Plc, Ibadan	-	√	√	-	√	-	-	√	√	√
8.	Gaskiya Corporation Ltd, Zaria	-	-	-	-	-	-	√	-	-	√
9.	Onibonaje publishers Nig. Ltd, Ibadan	-	-	-	-	√	√	-	√	√	√
10.	Spectrum Books Ltd, Ibadan	√	√	√	√	√	√	-	-	-	√
11.	African university press Ltd, Ibadan	-	√	√	-	√	-	-	√	-	√
12.	Northern Nigerian Pub. Co. Ltd, Zaria	-	-	-	-	-	-	√	-	-	-
13	Malthouse press Ltd, Lagos	√	-	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	√
14.	Nelson publishers Ltd, Lagos	-	-	√	-	-	√	-	-	-	√
15.	Literamed pub. Ltd, Lagos	-	√	-	-	√	-	-	√	√	√
16.	Longman Nig. Plc, Lagos	√	√	√	√	√	-	√	√	-	√
17.	Pacific publishers, Enugu	-	-	√	-	√	√	-	√	√	√
18.	Fourth Dimensions pub. Co. Ltd, Enugu	√	√	-	√	√	-	-	√	√	√
19.	Gabelks publishers Ltd, Ibadan	-	-	√	-	-	√	√	√	-	√
20.	Ahmadu Bello University Press, Zaria.	-	-	√	-	-	-	√	√	-	-
21	Paramount publishers, Benin city	-	√	√	-	--	√	√	√	-	-
22	Bells publication, Yola	-	-	-	-	√	-	√	√	-	-
23.	Academic press Ltd, Lagos	√	√	-	√	√	-	√	√	√	√
24	Topdam Educ. Publishers Ltd, Abeokuta	-	-	-	-	√	-	-	√	-	-
25.	Abic Books and Equipment, Enugu	√	-	-	-	√	√	-	-	√	-
26.	Ethiope publishing Corporation, Benin city	√	√	√	√	-	√	√	-	-	√
	Total	11	13	14	8	23	13	16	18	11	20

The findings on the various promotional methods employed by book publishers as

indicated in table 1 above shows that 88.5% (23) of the companies studies see Sales

Representative calls as the most popular method of promotion. The use of publishers catalogue 76.9% (20) and Window/shop display 69.2% (18) as method of promotion were equally identified among the highly rated method of promotion employed by book publishers in Nigeria.

This findings confirms the researcher's observation in the field of the high level of involvement of Sale Representatives in the book promotion chain in the book market in Nigeria. However, the high cost associated with this method has implication for the final price of books in the market. But as Amanda (2006) observed, the publishing business has changed over the years and it has become more important for publisher to communicate with their existing and potential market through sale representation.

**Promotional Tools Employed by Trade Book Publishers in Nigeria**

With regard to the choice and application of promotional tools employed by the book publishing companies studied, the opinion of the sales representatives were sought. Being the operatives on the field, they are the best to assess the usefulness or otherwise of these tools. The opinion of the sales personnel is presented in table 2 below.

As shown in the above table, personal sale 95.4% (44) of publications was ranked as the most useful tool of promoting books. This

position is in agreement with earlier responses on the promotional methods obtained from the marketing managers. The high score obtained under personal selling justified the use of sales representatives to reach out to customers. This indicate that at the level of execution, the appropriate tool is being employed to achieve the objectives of the chosen promotional method.

However, the implication of this finding is that the cost of selling books may likely become high as a result of the high personnel costs associated with engaging many sales representatives. This cost is likely to be transferred to eventually the buyer. Invariably, this contributes to the high cost of books in the Nigeria market.

**The Distribution Channels Used by Book Publishers to Reach the Market**

The fourth objective of this study was to identify the types of distribution channels used by the trade book publishers to distribute books to various parts of the marketing Nigeria. In line with this, the marketing managers of trade book publishing companies were asked to indicated the frequently use distribution channels as well as their opinion as to the suitability of the channels. Table 3 below shows the responses.

**Table 2: Sale Representatives' opinion on the promotional tools employed by the book publishers.**

Promotional tools	Type of Responses				
	Most % Useful	% Useful	% Undecided	Not Useful %	Not useful at all %
1. Personal selling	30(69.8)	11(25.6)	-	2(4.7)	-
2. Advertising	2(4.7)	24(55.8)	4(30.2)	13(30.2)	-
3. Sales promotion	2(4.7)	24(55.8)	-	11(25.5)	6(13.9)
4. Publicity	1(2.3)	12(27.9)	3(6.9)	27(62.7)	-

**Table 3: Analysis of the opinion of marketing managers and sales representatives on the usefulness of distribution channels.**

S/N	Distribution Channels Adopted	Respondents									
		Marketing Managers Responses					Sales Representatives Responses				
		Most useful %	Useful %	Undecided %	Not useful %	Not useful at all %	Most useful %	Useful %	Undecided %	Not useful %	Not useful at all %
1	Wholesaler	10(38.5)	9(34.6)	3(11.5)	4(15.3)	-	9(20.9)	16(37.2)	-	16(37.2)	2(4.6)
2	Retailer	8(30.8)	11(42.3)	-	7(26.9)	-	9(20.9)	21(48.8)	-	13(30.2)	-
3	Bookshops	15(57.7)	10(38.5)	-	1(3.8)	-	24(55.8)	18(41.9)	-	1(2.3)	-
4	Libraries	13(50.0)	8(30.8)	2(7.7)	3(11.5)	-	12(27.9)	20(46.5)	4(9.3)	9(20.9)	-
5	Agents	14(53.8)	6(23.1)	-	3(11.5)	3(11.5)	15(34.9)	13(30.2)	-	7(16.3)	5(18.6)
6	Schools	17(65.4)	6(23.1)	1(3.8)	2(7.7)	-	26(60.5)	13(30.2)	-	4(9.3)	-
7	Subscription	2(7.7)	2(7.7)	-	16(61.5)	6(23.1)	9(20.9)	18(41.9)	-	10(23.2)	6(13.9)
8	Mass distribution companies	9(34.6)	4(15.4)	-	9(34.6)	4(15.3)	4(9.3)	10(23.2)	5(11.6)	24(55.8)	-
9	Mobile booksellers	2(7.7)	15(57.7)	-	6(23.1)	3(11.5)	7(16.3)	18(41.9)	-	18(41.9)	-
10	Direct sales to individuals	8(30.8)	13(50.0)	-	5(19.2)	-	16(37.2)	16(37.2)	-	11(25.6)	-

From the table 3 above, it can be seen that the book publishers employ various distribution channels to get books to the customers. According to the opinion of the marketing managers Bookshops 96.2% (25) and schools 88.5% (26) stand out as the most useful distribution channels used by book publishers in Nigeria. In the same vein, the opinion of sales representatives on the usefulness of the distribution channels being used by trade book publishers in Nigeria indicate that Bookshops 97.7% (42) and schools 90.7% (39) ranked high.

The findings above correlate with an earlier finding by Momoh (2006) in which he revealed that Bookshops and schools are the two most effective outlets for the distribution of books in Nigeria.

These were closely followed by distribution through libraries (80.8%) (21) and 74.4% (32) and Direct Sales to individual 80.8% (21) and 74.4% (32) as indicated by marketing managers and sales representatives respectively.

The implication of this finding is that even though the book market in Nigeria is large, the distribution outlets are not evenly spread across the country. In view of the fact that most of the Book publishing companies are concentrated in the southern part of the country than in the northern part, it is necessary to employ aggressive distribution methods to reach customers located far away from the places of publication located northern down south.

#### Concluding Remarks

In the light of the findings of the study, the following remarks were made that:

1. for more effective distribution of books, to all parts of Nigeria, book publishers should open book depots in all the local Government Council Areas. This would go along way to improve availability to published books.
2. an aggressive book promotion programme should be embarked upon by book publishers in Nigeria. This is to generate wider awareness among the populace.
3. promotional materials should be published and circulated to all nooks and crannies of Nigeria.
4. book publishers should make frantic efforts to conduct community surveys/analysis to determine the book needs of the people.
5. book publishers should pool their resources together to improve book distribution through

joint transportation and warehousing arrangements so as to reduce costs of books sold to the public.

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