

# Book Marketing and Publicity Strategies as Determinants of Book Sales

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## **Abstract**

*Books have been the conventional means of spreading, preserving and sharing information and knowledge. The book publishing process is divided into conception, production, and marketing which involves publicity, promotion and distribution of published books. Hence the study investigates the effect of book marketing and publicity strategies on book sales. The study adopted a descriptive survey design for a target population which comprises of Eight (8) publishing houses in Ibadan with a total of 140 staff. The purposive sampling technique was used to select 80 staff (from marketing, editorial and finance section) with accurate and relevant responses to the study. To achieve the objectives of the study, four (4) research questions were developed to pilot the study. The results indicated that Advance Information Sheet was the most used way of creating awareness on published books and publishing firms find out the impression of readers about their books mainly through marketers. Moreover, it was also revealed that adequate book marketing and publicity strategies will increase book sales and subsequently profit. The study recommends increase level of training for marketers and that the use of internet should be exploited as a tool for book marketing.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Book Marketing, Book Sales, Publicity Strategies, Publishing Houses*

## **Introduction**

Books have been the conventional means of spreading, preserving and sharing information and knowledge. They link past with present when our memories fail us. Books are the mirror of every society. If it is agreed that a country's development depends on the reading habit of her populace then it must be believed that this development cannot be achieved without books. The book is the primary means of communicating knowledge as it is central to providing information, entertainment, analysis and education to millions throughout the world. The book publishing process is divided into three stages: conception, production and marketing. Whereas, conception has to do with coming out with a publishable idea, the production of a book involves four stages: editing, designing, typesetting, and printing. However, marketing entails the social and economic activities involved in creating awareness of a product, taking into full consideration the satisfaction of customer's wants and needs while attaining organizational objectives. Book marketing thus, is the socioeconomic activities involved in creating awareness and necessitating purchase of a book that meets the information need of a society. It involves publicity, promotion and distribution of a book that has been published.

Publicity is a key concept in the marketing of books as it brings about mutually satisfying exchanges with the

target market by informing, educating, persuading and reminding prospective buyers of the benefit they stand to gain from the product (book). It comprises personal selling, advertising, sales promotion and public relations. In this era of Information and Communication Technologies, the internet has become a major publicity tool reaching a wide audience within a short time (Blanco, 2000). However, the focus of this work will be on conventional tools for publicity/promotional strategies: advance information sheet; catalogues and new book lists, jackets and covers; leaflets and flyers, press release, direct mail promotion, advertising, book launches among others.

Marketing constitutes just one of the functions available to every business, but it performs a very important function that can never be neglect. Book published will be a fruitless effort if they are not placed in the hand of readers. This can only be done through marketing and publicity of those books to the readers. Marketing contributes to the ability of a publishing business to succeed. The existence of publishing business depends on the sale of books produced, which in turn rely on successful marketing (Woll, 2002). Thus this research is to study the effect of book marketing and publicity strategies on book sales.

## **Statement of the Problem**

This research is set to investigate the effect of book

marketing and publicity strategies on book sales. The various form of publicity strategies that different publishing house use will be considered. Marketing constitute just one of the functions available to every business, but it performs a very important function that can never be neglected. Book publishing will be a fruitless effort if they are not placed in the hands of readers. This can only be done through marketing and publicity of those books to the readers. Marketing contributes to the ability of a publishing business to succeed. The existence of publishing business depends on the produce realised from sale of books, which in turn relies on successful marketing.

In view of this, the specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Examine the various way of creating awareness about books that are published;
2. Examine how publishing firms find out the impression of readers about their books;
3. Investigate the challenges publishers face in marketing of books;
4. Examine the effect of publicity strategies on book sales.

### Literature Review

Okwilagwe (2001) defined publishing as a creative process through which different categories of books are manufactured and published. He further described book publishing as a formidable succession of activities not one of which can by itself be called publishing. It is only when a manuscript has been transformed into a book and then distributed to its intended market place, that the process of publishing is completed. Sanusi & Okere (2014) asserted that publishing is changing, despite the fluid state of the industry, the audience for books remains. Gioia (2009) recorded a 2008 study released by the National Endowment for Arts which found out that literary reading was on the rise for the first time in 26years of the NEA's periodic survey of U.S adult participation in the Arts. The study went on further to conclude that the absolute number of literary readers had grown significantly, to the highest absolute number of literary readers in the survey's history with 16.6million adults. Thus it could be said that with ease of access, readership potential will continue to flourish. However, regardless of the readership potential that is on the increase, there is an increased difficulty encountered in getting books that are not "Sellers" in the public eye without an amount of advertisement, discounts and promotional tactics, (Cosser, Ksdushun & Powell, 1982 in Sanusi & Okere, 2014). This implies that publishing is aimed at getting the published books

into the hands of readers using certain publicity strategies and promotions.

Smith (1990) lists out six items of promotion that book publishers may consider as strategic marketing plans to include:

1. Jacket or printed cover of the book itself
2. Review copies for newspapers and journals
3. Presentation of copies to selected individuals
4. Announcements to the book trade
5. Sales representative calls
6. Printed advertising

Marketing is a discipline uniting activities aimed at enhancing the potential for sales of goods and services, (Linn, 2010). So-Hung Pi (2003) stated that in a publishing house, publicity and marketing function as key components in campaigns to increase book sales by developing public awareness and generating customer loyalty. Publicity and marketing are thus aimed at persuading prospective buyers to accept and exchange resources for the product (book).

### Methods

This study surveyed book marketing and publishing strategies and their effects on book sale. The descriptive survey method was adopted for this study by taking a sample from a population and generalizing the result on the whole population. The target population for this research work comprises eight publishing houses in Ibadan: three large scale, three medium scale and two small scale publishing houses. They include: Evans publishers (40), HBN publishers (30), University press (30), Rasmed publisher (15), Straight gate publisher (10), Stirling Horden publisher (5), Kunlaj publisher (5) and Scholarship (5). The population of staff is 140 staff selected from the marketing, editorial and finance sections. The purposive sampling technique was employed for this research. The members of staff with accurate and relevant response to the study were selected from among staff in finance section, editorial section and marketing section. The total number of 80 members of staff of eight publishing houses questioned therefore constitutes the sample size as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1-Spread of respondents in different publishing houses

Names of publishing house	Population of staff	Sample size
Evans publishers	40	20
HBN publishers	30	15
University press	30	10
Rasmed publishers	15	10
Straightgate publishers	10	10
StirlingHordens publishing Ltd	5	5
kunlaJ publishers	5	5
Scholarship publishers	5	5
Total	140	80

A structured questionnaire which was given face validity was distributed to the respondents personally and also retrieved immediately in a bid to ensure high percentage response. Descriptive statistics of tables containing frequencies and percentages was used in analyzing the data collected and also to show the questionnaire response rate. The score of 50% and above was considered adequate; while the score below 50% was considered inadequate. The cut-off score of 50% was adopted because it is a performance level which is generally considered as adequate (Erwat, 2002).

## RESULTS

	Yes		No	
	Freq	%	Freq	%
Advance information sheet	63	78.7	17	21.3
Catalogues and new booklist	55	68.8	25	31.2
Jackets and Covers	50	62.5	30	37.5
Leaflets and flyers	67	83.7	13	16.3
Press Releases	45	56.3	35	43.7
Direct mail publicity	40	50.0	40	50.0
Radio jingles	46	57.5	34	42.5
TV jingles	56	70.0	24	30.0
Back Cover Blurb	49	61.3	31	38.7
Book launches	43	53.8	37	46.2
Review Copies	47	58.7	33	41.3
Book Exhibition	49	61.3	31	38.7
Examination /Inspiration copies	48	60.0	32	40.0
Point of scale	45	56.3	35	43.7
Freebies	51	63.7	29	36.3

**Table 2: Ways of creating awareness for published books**

Table 2 above reveals that 67(83.7%) of the respondents indicated leaflets and flyers as a way of creating awareness on published books which is closely followed by advance information sheet, 63(78.7%), whereas the least of them was direct mail publicity, 40(50%). This is in contrast with the findings of Akpena (2007) who identifies promotional strategies to include media review, exhibition/book fair, new arrival list, trade announcement, Sales Representatives' calls, direct mail, advertising complementary copies, windows/shop display, authors' interview on radio/television, postal's/publishers' catalogue.

**Research Question 2 -** How do publishing firm find out the impression of readers about their books?

Table 3: How publishing firms find out the impression of readers about their books

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Suggestion box	13	16.2
Direct mail to publishers	13	16.2
Customers care line	15	18.8
Bookshops	10	12.5
Schools especially for educational titles	12	15.0
Marketers	17	21.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>

Findings in Table 3 above show that 17(21%) of the respondents suggest marketers as the most viable means of finding out the impression of readers about a book published and that is currently on sale. This is closely followed by customer care line, 15(18.8%) while the least avenue was through bookshops as represented by 10(12.5%). This agrees with the findings of Clement, Propper & Rott (2007), who went further to opine that marketers will talk about certain books with strong negative or positive effects, such that publishers will seek "extreme" reviews to generate publicity for such books.

**Research Question 3;** What are the challenges publisher's faces in marketing a book?

marketing is lack of funds and poverty which lead to

Table 4: Challenges publishers face in marketing a book

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of funds	20	25.0
Language barrier	9	11.3
Shortage of staff	10	12.5
Poor reading culture	15	18.7
Poor road network	6	7.5
Poverty which leads to lack of sales	20	25.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>

Findings as seen in Table 4 above show that the major challenge faced by publishers in book

lack of sales as represented by 20(25%) of the respondents, followed by poor reading culture, 15(18.7). the least of which is poor road network as represented by 6(7.5%) of the respondents. In line with this finding, Lewis, Kadushin & Powell (as cited in Okere & Sanusi, 2014) noted that because of limited resources publishers have to specialize in specific areas and make their imprint stand for things that concern people as well as let very few of their books go out of print.

**Research Question 4;** What is the effect of publicity strategies on book sales?

Table 5: Effect of Publicity strategies on Book Sales

Statements	SA	A	D	SD	X <sup>2</sup> cal	df	X <sup>2</sup> crit	P	rmk
Sale revenue of the book publishing firms will be low as a result of publicity strategies	19	3	30	28	23.7%	3	37.5%	35.0%	
Adequate publicity strategies will lead to increase in book sales and subsequently, profit	30	34	10	6	37.5%	6	22.08	12.59	0.05 sig
Sales revenue is boosted maximally when the right publicity strategies are adopted	34	43	3	-	42.5%	3	53.8%	3.7%	

Table 5 above shows 22(27.5%) respondents agreed that sale revenue of the book publishing firms will be low as a result of publicity strategies while 58(72.5%) respondents disagreed, 64(80.0%) respondents agreed that adequate publicity strategies will lead to increase in profit while 16 or 20.0% respondents disagreed, 77(96.3%) respondents agreed that sales revenue is boosted

maximally when the right publicity strategies are adopted whereas, 3(3.7%) respondents disagreed. The  $X^2$ cal value of 22.08 is greater than the critical value of 12.592 at a 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, adequate publicity strategies will lead to increase in book sales and subsequently, profit.

### Conclusion

Book marketing and publicity strategies are very important facets of book publishing as the process of publishing will constitute a wasted effort if books published are not placed in the hand of readers. The improvement of the marketing and publicity strategies of publishing firms will help to persuade prospective buyers and subsequently increase book sales which would have positive financial implications to publishing houses. This invariably might lead to better academic performance of students as they would gain greater access to the required materials as published books are disseminated to the target audience at the appropriate time.

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### Recommendations

In the light of these findings, the following recommendations are made:

- All the known publicity strategies should be adopted by the publishing houses so as to promote sales including use of online media. Thus, publishers should endeavour to dive into this area in a bid to reach their target audience in short time with low long-run cost.
- The publishers should increase the level of training of their marketers, exposing them to international standards as this would improve them and ease their fieldwork.
- The publishing houses should be encouraged to produce books which are durable and can stand tear and wear as time goes on to avoid double acquisition.
- The publishing houses should adopt effective publicity strategies with the tendency of reaching a wider audience, engage in book promotion strategies and have discount sales in order to increase book sales.