

Paperback Publishing and Marketing

Paperback publishing was started in India in 1946 by one of the leading publishing houses of the day. What is the difference between publishing paperback and hardbound books? In the West, first the hardbound edition of a book is released in the market and after a gap of some time, the paperback edition is launched. The difference between the paperback and hardbound editions is in the 'price'. A paperback is much cheaper and because of its affordability caters to the mass market. Now, in India as well, most of the companies are launching paperback editions of text books as well as general books.

The market for paperback editions is growing very fast and it is very difficult to say that any particular company is specializing in it. Most of the leading companies in the publishing business are publishing both hardbound and paperbacks, but very specialize in paperback publishing. The demand for paperback editions is increasing with the rise in population and literacy levels. Before dealing in depth with the publishing and marketing of paperbacks in India, I shall discuss some of the important issues involved.

In the old days, most of the paperback publishers in India used to publish paperbacks without bothering about quality. Over time, the scenario has completely changed and now there are publishing houses in India producing the best quality paperback editions, with the result that their sales are burgeoning. The following points must be kept in mind before opting to print paperbacks:

1. **Area of Publishing:** One must decide very carefully in which area one wishes to specialize. Suppose that you want to enter into the general books category. The term 'general books' is very wide and you need to decide which area you would like to choose. For example, self-improvement books and books on health are in great demand. Once you have selected a particular area, you should conduct a survey on what books are available in the market and a thorough study should be made of the various issues and aspects involved before making the final decision to print. There are two ways to proceed; one, by seeking reprint rights of foreign publishers and two, by developing original books by Indian authors in accordance with Indian needs.
2. **Production Quality:** After deciding on a particular subject, you should concentrate on the second important factor—quality. It is imperative that the quality of production is on a par with international standards. The publisher has to use the best quality paper and ensure good printing and, above all, jacket design and printing have to be superlative attractive. Competition has increased and unless a book is nicely presented, the customer is not going to take it from the shelf. The quality should be so good that the customer should pick up the book immediately.
3. **Pricing and Content of the Book:** The contents of a book have to be well edited because, ultimately, a book sells on the strength of its contents.

Once a customer has picked up the book, he will look at the content, quality of production and finally, the price. Many publishing houses in India are setting high prices for their books and consequently they are not able to sell the desired quantity; while a few publishers, who are pricing their books very reasonably and maintaining good quality, are increasing their sales. This means the most crucial factor after content and quality is the price. It must be affordable and your price should be most reasonable as compared to other books available in the market on the same subject.

After going through the three major factors in paperback publishing—production quality, contents and price—it can be said that you have won the game, and this is my personal experience of 30 years. In the early days of paperback publishing, quality and price factors were not as important as they are today. The reason is the very stiff competition.

The market has opened up and multinational companies are also entering. Most important, today's customer has become very conscious and he has many options, as many books are available on the same topic. Now, I would like to discuss the marketing of books, which is very important, as the current market scene is completely different. It is essential that your books be displayed by booksellers in their show-windows and special space be created in the various show-rooms. Unless you are able to give proper exposure to your books, it is not possible to boost their sales. For this, your personal contacts or regular contacts of your sales team are essential. It is not easy to get your books displayed in the showroom since, with the increase in the number of books and publishers, the space for display is shrinking. It is not possible for a bookseller to display every book so it is very important to induce the booksellers to make sure that your books are regularly displayed. Sales can only be generated by giving a wide exposure to your books.

It is also important that books should be well advertised and well reviewed in major newspapers and magazines of the country. Unless the customers know that particular product is available in the market, you cannot sell it. The methods of marketing have completely changed, which calls for the introduction of innovative ideas for marketing. When I look back and compare the quality of the paperbacks which were produced 30 years ago and the quality of those produced now, there is a lot of difference and it has definitely improved. We all know, that it is only with good quality that we can survive, as today's customer is very thrifty.

We should also keep in mind the fact that today's generation is very different and we have to produce according to their needs and requirements. I mentioned that these days there is a good demand for self-improvement books and books on health. The subject may change from time to time and each publisher should study the market and accordingly, change and diversify the subject area. This information can be gathered by publishers by discussing with booksellers, visiting different book shops and spending time in big book-shops where they can interact with the customers and talk to them to assess the needs of the day.

Requirements, needs and interests of the people change over time and we have to act accordingly.

Art of Marketing

An Early Historical Overview

The term 'marketing' might be relatively new, but its philosophy has been practiced since the beginnings of the exchange or trade system. Marketing now refers to the discipline that assures lasting customer satisfaction and is now very much an integral part of modern management literature and thinking.

Marketing: It is a creative management function which promotes business and employment by assessing the needs of the end user of a product or service. It initiates research and development, and provides products and services which can profitably satisfy market requirements. It coordinates the resources of production and distribution of goods and services, and determines and directs the nature and scale of the total effort required to sell profitably the maximum production to the ultimate user.

Marketing has been defined in various ways. Some of the definitions commonly used are:

"...The system of value exchange" (Kotler)

"...The process of discovering and translating consumer needs and wants into product and service specifications creating demand for these products and services, and then in turn expanding this demand." (Hansen)

"The management function which organizes and directs all those business activities involved in assessing and converting customer purchasing power into effective demand for a specific product or service, and in moving the product or service to the final consumer or user so as to achieve the profit target or other objectives set by a company." (The Institute of Marketing, USA).

If one reads between the lines, the definitions quoted above seek to highlight marketing as an important function at the organizational level (micro), as well as the role of marketing at the societal level (macro). Peter Drucker presented an excellent synthesis of these two apparently divergent aspects viz. organizational/social, when he observed, 'There is only one valid definition of business purpose: to create a customer', and also that the very justification for the existence of a business unit in society is twofold, viz. innovation and marketing.

Successful Advertisement

It is very important to advertise and get books reviewed in magazines and newspapers. Advertising today is a large enterprise. It represents a very

considerable expenditure to a company and so has to be approached carefully and efficiently. Advertising is widespread because it serves a very vital purpose.

In a simpler society, or a smaller economy, or with a small population, relationships would be personal and direct, and there would be no need for anything other than personal dealings on an individual basis.

But in a complex, large, industrialized society, personal dealing needs to be supplemented and reinforced by communication of an indirect kind and, among other things, by advertising. Advertising serves a contemporary purpose. It is a purpose dictated by scale, size, distance, convenience and cost. We advertise because it helps us to do so.

Very large-scale advertising is very expensive and is neither possible nor economical. But you can have small ads in which you can advertise the name of your company and some social message can be used by which the name of your company becomes popular. This can be done in the classified columns and is an exercise to build the image of your company.

Mailing

For any publishing house, it is important to develop a mailing list of their customers. Many paperback publishing houses insert a business reply card in their mail and individuals can send it back to the publisher postage-free. This card solicits certain information, like the name of the book purchased, bookstore's name, city and the individual's complete address and subjects of interest. In this way, you can develop a data-base of your individual customers and build up a big mailing list, which is the back-bone of the paperback publishing house. As advertising is very expensive for a publishing house, individual mailers to the customers are the best alternative and help a lot. You can also create your own newsletter, which can be sent to individual customers, institutions, booksellers and companies. No publishing house can survive for a long time without direct promotion.

Branding

No One Ever Got Fired for Buying IBM'

What a wonderful testament to the power of a brand. This saying used to be common in the computer business, in the days when IBM (International Business Machines) dominated the world market in a way in which few companies have ever dominated any one field – with 60% of sales and upto 80% of world profits. From IBM's story, we can draw many lessons that will help us in trying to define exactly what it is that separates a brand from a mere product.

Decisions to buy IBM equipment were made by hard-core analytical business people, and those decisions were often about purchased amounting to millions of US dollars for products that might be fundamental to the buyer's operation. This is a business-to-business market, and one in which decisions are supposedly based on rational, unemotional calculations. Yet

in this case, customers were buying the brand. IBM machines were rarely the most technologically advanced, and were almost never the cheapest.

What IBM had created was a total offering of hardware, software and services – this gave buyers a set of benefits that no competitor could match. The benefits which customers were buying included confidence in the quality and reliability of the equipment and the longevity of the supplier. They bought business solutions – not technical specifications – and they felt complete confidence in IBM.

More recently, however, IBM lost touch with developments in their industry and very nearly gave away the priceless advantage that their brand building had given them. They allowed new competitors to steal their market share – and they let Microsoft take over the dominating position in the industry. We can see, then, that although a strong brand can confer enormous power, it is not eternal or immune to attack. It must be carefully built, and maintained with fierce commitment and unwavering focus.

As per the case study given above regarding branding, it has become important for the publishing business as well. I don't want to name the internationally and domestically known names in the publishing world with which the buyer feels confident of quality. This awareness has to be created by a publishing house. Customers should be aware of the name. You must have observed that most newspapers review the books of a few branded publishing houses whose names are well known and many other publishing houses are suffering as their books are not reviewed, though their quality of content and production may be on a par with those well-known publishing houses.

In the present environment and circumstances, it has become important for a publishing house to create its own brand image; otherwise, it won't be able to survive, as multinational companies enter into India with their brands, seeking to dominate the publishing market.

International Market

Indian exports within a span of 10 years have grown from approx. 33 crores to 323 crores (3.23 billion rupee). This shows that India is exporting a lot of books to the international market, and that Indian publishers must consider the international market. They can generate an additional market for the same product they are producing for the domestic market. There are some important points to keep in mind while producing books for the international market. For example, cartoons have to be of international quality, and the character should be international. Religious topics should be avoided. It is very important to keep this market in mind as it provides an opportunity to increase our sales.

International publishers are exporting their books to India and have created a big market for their books here, so we should also create a greater demand and produce better quality books for the international market. The time has come to give serious thought to this point. Many publishing houses are exporting a lot of paperbacks to neighbouring countries and it is possible to develop your product accordingly.

Successful Product Management

The following quotations are drawn from placement advertisements for product managers. They demonstrate that the product management system is alive and well.

“We need someone who not only can analyse the market for X but identify opportunities for new and existing products and develop the resulting spec and rationale. To do this successfully you must be able to isolate the factors which influence the market such as customer needs, product applications, installation practice and environmental issues.”

“The position

- Manage the range of Y products. Achieve sales and profile targets. Report to marketing manager.*
- Monitor market trend and product development. Develop supplier relationships.*
- Liaise effectively across functional disciplines. Motivate and manage small team.”*

“Growth in the UK has been outstanding ...Aggressive market is fundamental to success ...To further develop the potential ...a new Product Manager is required ...With a knowledge of the ‘Z’ market and at least 5 years’ product management experience. You will be a proven ‘Product Champion’ ...You will need strategic marketing and team leadership skills as well as being an expert negotiator with good communication ability at all levels.”

“The Product Manager will control a portfolio of innovative products, working with sales, marketing and development staff to ensure maximum profitability and exploitation of the portfolio through the development and execution of demanding business plans, often taking products to new market sectors. You will have a strong feel for business and work well in a multi-discipline team.”

It is very important to have a product manager in a publishing house who can develop and diversify the publishing programme from time to time, what is called at needs based programme.

It is not possible to cover in one article all the aspects of publishing and marketing of paperbacks, as this business is very complicated and you need to spend a lot of time learning the nitty-gritties. One can understand this business after gaining sufficient practical experience. Nevertheless I have tried my best to cover all the important points here.

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