
Marketing Recipes for Popularizing and Creating Acceptance for Government Policies and Programmes in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Government is obliged to improve the standard of living of its citizens. Achieving this, most times, requires developing and implementing certain policies and programmes. However, a cursory check on government's policies and programmes shows that most of them were not easily "bought" by the populace due, largely, to government's inability to "market" properly the benefits therein. Thus, enhancing the acceptability of government policies and programmes, especially in rural areas where sizable number of the Nigerian population live, through the instruments of marketing, is the main thrust of this paper.

Keywords: Policy, Programme, Rural area, Social marketing.

INTRODUCTION

Government is obliged to improve the standard of living of its citizens. Achieving this most times leads to developing and implementing certain policies and programmes. However, a cursory check on government's policies and programmes shows that most of them were not easily "bought" by the populace due, largely, to government's inability to "market" properly the benefit therein. In view of the aforementioned, this paper focused on enhancing the acceptability of government policies and programmes, especially in rural areas where sizable number of the Nigerian population live, through the instruments of marketing.

Problem Statement

Government policies and programmes, especially new ones, have continued to fail at a disturbing rate (Onuoha, 2011. Eneh, 2010; Onwumere and Egbo, 2011), as they are faced with myriads of challenges. These include pushing through an idea without adequate research, overestimation of the target audience, ill-designed policy or programme, insufficient promotion, improper execution and lack of distinct advantages in the designed policies or programmes.

Given these challenges, one then wonders whether policies and programmes no longer stimulate government efforts at enhancing the well-being of its citizens. Nevertheless, this paper suggested marketing strategies for reducing high failure rates of government's policies and programmes in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Government, no matter the political or economic system in question, performs an array of functions. Such functions cover a wide-range of social, economic and political benefits accruable to the citizens on one hand, and government on the other (Ogwo and Onuoha, 2013). In performing its functions, government needs effective and efficient policies and programmes.

Policies and Programmes Explained

Government's decisions are directed by appropriate policies. Policies constitute the framework, and the backbone for meaningful decisions (Eboh, 1999). Policies are also individual principles or group of related principles with their consequent rules of action that condition and govern the successful achievement of certain business and or governmental objectives towards which they are directed. Policy ensures consistency in decision making from both a particular individual making the same or

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related decisions over and over again and different individuals deciding on the same matter at different times and places (Kadiri, 2012; Ezeokafor, 2003). This is possible given the fact that policy sets limits—a sort of zone of goodness within which managerial decisions and actions must fall in (Ezeh and Onodugo, 2002). This is the function of the “consequent rule of action” embodied in the definition above.

Gordon (1986) refers to public policies, which are usually made by government, as the organizing framework of purposes and rationales for government programmes that deal with specified societal problems. It is commonly assumed that governmental policies are targeted at solving—or at least coping with—major and minor economic problem (Ukoha, 2003); and the process involves all the demands, pressures, conflicts, negotiations and compromises, and formal and informal decisions that result in given policies being adopted and pursued through the actions of government (Ebi, 2012). Government policy instrument plays a major role in determining the shape, pace and flavour of economic activity (Osuka and Achinihu, 2014). In Nigeria, for instance, the annual budget details an array of fiscal as well as monetary policies aimed at regulating the economy (Okereke et al; 2009).

Programme, on the other hand, could be defined as an integrated plan of relatively large undertaking. Programmes usually specify which duties must be performed by whom and when, the resources required and their future deployment, and series of time schedules for accomplishment of tasks (Ezeh and Onodugo, 2002).

Typical examples of government’s policies and programmes, in Nigeria, include Due Process, Monetization, Bank Verification System, SIM Registration, Contributory Pension Scheme, Environmental Sanitation, Poverty Alleviation, War Against Corruption, Privatization and Commercialization, Deregulation of Downstream Oil Sector, National Health Insurance Scheme, Youth Empowerment Scheme (YouWin), among others.

Some of these policies and programmes, as they are, do not achieve their objectives because they are not properly articulated and “sold” to Nigerians. Several factors, as stated in the problem statement, may be responsible for their failures.

Given these challenges, a number of success factors are necessary. The number one success factor is a unique superior policy and programme. Products (in this case, policies and programmes), according to Kotler (2000) with high product advantage succeed 98% of the time, compared to products with a moderate advantage (58% success) or minimal advantage (18% success). Another key success factor is well-defined policy and programme (product) concept prior to development, where the government carefully defined and assessed the target audience, requirements of the policies and programmes, and benefits before proceeding. This is what Ogbuji (2013) termed situation analysis. Other success factors are relationship with other policies and programmes already in existence, quality of execution in all stages, and attractiveness to the target audience (Nwosu, 2003).

By adopting the strategies of marketing, which provide easy access to the success factors, government would effectively and efficiently sell her policies and programmes to the target audience (market).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Area of Study

The study was carried out in Abia State, South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. It consists of seventeen (17) Local Government Areas (LGAs) of only Igbo speaking ethnic group. However, only less-populated non-urban areas in each of the LAGs of the state were selected for study.

Instrument

Primary data were generated using face-to-face interview of sampled respondents from 17 LGAs of the State. The face-to-face interview also generated non-verbal information, observed from respondents’ facial expressions.

Samples and Sampling Technique

The first step in determining the sample size is finding out the population. For the current study, our population of interest included all “Abians”. By 2006 Census figures, the population of Abia state was 2,833,999 (FGN, 2007). However, as this study focused on acceptability of government’s policies and

programmes, especially in rural areas, only rural communities in the 17 LGAs were selected, on the basis of one community per LGA. The ratio of one community per LGA was to ensure that each LGA in the State was equally represented.

Due to similarities in the elements of the population, a sample was drawn from the population. The Sample Size Determination Table developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), as adopted from Igwe (2012), was used to determine the sample size. In the Sample Size Determination Table, the sample size that corresponded with the population of 2,833,999 (a number within the range of 1,000,000 and above) is 384. Thus, the sample size for this study is 384. However, all elements that constituted the sample size were people who were available in their respective village squares as at the time the researchers visited the communities. This method of non-probability sampling is referred to as convenience sampling by Ezejelue et al (2008).

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

Table 4.1 shows the communities, with their corresponding LGAs, used for the study. The Table also shows that 232 (60.4%) of the respondents were males while 152 (39.6%) were females.

Table 4.2 had a multiple response with many respondents choosing more than one option (see the frequencies and percentages). Evidenced from the Table, deregulation of oil sector (subsidy removal) was the most known government policy. However, 179 (46.6%) of the respondents were not aware of any of the policies and programmes.

Table 4.3 had a multiple response with many respondents choosing more than one option (see the frequencies and percentages). From the Table, word- of- mouth by urban dwellers was the most popular means of the respondents’ knowledge of the selected government policies and programmes, followed by visit to urban areas, news, bills and other unspecified means in that order. Apparently, none of the respondents was aware of any of the policies and programmes through SMS.

Table 4.4 had multiple responses with many respondents having detailed knowledge of the implications of more than one policy or programme. From the Table, the implications of Bank Verification System are known to 63 (30.7%) out of the 205 respondents, followed by Contributory Pension Scheme with 43 (21%).

Table 4.5 shows that all the respondents indicated interest in knowing the detailed implications of the policies and programmes, they hitherto do not know.

This study has revealed so far that only few people in rural areas are aware of government policies and programmes. Nonetheless, only a handful of those aware of these policies and programmes actually know their detailed implications. We, therefore, believe that the discipline of marketing could help in popularizing government policies and programmes thereby increasing their acceptability.

THE PLACE OF MARKETING IN POPULARIZING AND CREATING ACCEPTANCE FOR GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

Marketing: An Introduction

The nature of marketing can be summed up in three words: eclecticism, controversy and convertibility (Okpara, 2012). However for the purpose of this study, only the third and crucial nature of marketing (its convertibility) would be discussed.

The convertibility of marketing implies that it is a dynamic field of study, which can be applied to all aspects of human endeavors. This informs the necessity of the application of marketing strategies in facilitating the acceptability of government’s policies and programmes (Ogwo and Onuoha, 2013).

Marketing consists of institutional or individual activities created to ensure customer satisfaction by making offers and acceptance favourable to the parties involved (Okpara, 2012). It could be seen from the definition that marketing could be executed by the government (an institution) to create customers’ (citizens’) satisfaction by making offers (policies and programmes) and their acceptance by the citizens easier and favourable to both parties (government and citizens).

Marketing and Acceptance of Government Policies and Programmes

In order to effectively “sell” government policies and programmes to the citizens, government should adopt certain marketing tactics and strategies. Specifically, the following strategies, among others, could be adopted:

Research

Research is an important strategy that has to be adopted, first, by any government that wants her policies and programmes to be accepted by the target audience. There is need to know if there are possible threats to the policy or programme and what should be done to avert them. There is need, therefore, to:

- i. assess the probable public response to the proposed policy or programme;
- ii. determine people’s predispositions and attitude to the policy or programme; and
- iii. Devise means to promote a favourable response.

People who should be considered for a research assignment, as this, are expected to be versatile in marketing, in general, and marketing research, in particular. This is necessary because there is need to know who the target audience are, what is likely to satisfy them, and any possible threats to the policy or programme.

The “5 Ps” Social Marketing Model

Social marketing was “born” as a discipline in the 1970s, when Philip Kotler and Gerald Zaltman realized that the same marketing principles that were being used to sell products to consumers could be used to “sell” ideas, attitudes and behaviours (Weinreich, 2007).

Social marketing has been defined in many different ways since the original offering by kotler and Zaltman in 1971. Such definitions include Lefebvre and Flora (1988), Andreasen (1995), Donovan and Henley (2003), French and Blair (2005), Kotler, Ned and Lee (2002), and McKenzie – Mohr (2000).

Central to most of the definitions is that social marketing is the application of the ideas, processes and practices of marketing discipline to improve conditions that determine and sustain personal, social and environmental health and well-being (Weinreich, 2007).

Social marketing is constantly evolving from “influencing ideas” as presented by Kotler and Zaltman (1971) to “large scale, broad-based behavioural change focused programmes” offered by Lefebvre and Flora (1988).

Social marketing adopts the marketing mix elements, often called the “Four Ps” of marketing, and also adds a few more “Ps”. The other “Ps” include publics, policy, partnership, and purse strings (Weinreich, 2007) and politics (Nwosu, 2003).

For the purpose of this paper, we propose a “5P” model of social marketing that should be applied systematically in the management of resistance to government policies and programmes.

The first “P” refers to **product** – “anything that can be offered to a market to satisfy a want or need” (Kotler, 2000). Product that are marketed include goods, services, persons, places, organizations, ideas, and events.

In social marketing, product refers to the ideas, habits, activities and so on that we are trying to market or demarket to the target population or groups (the customers), or asking them to adopt or reject.

For the purpose of this paper, product refers to the policy or programme that government is trying to market to Nigerians.

The policy or programme, as a product, should be carefully conceived, developed and packaged in such a way that the perceived benefits, by the consumers, outweigh any possible threats. This will reduce the incidence of resistance to the policy or programme as people, according to Torben (2011), resist change when the benefits and rewards for making the change are not seen as adequate for the trouble involved.

The second “P” refers to **price** - the amount of money that customers pay for the product. Price, in social marketing, according to Nwosu (2003), represents such things as the time, energy, habit change, efforts and the few sacrifices to be spent or made by the members of the target population in order to get the benefits of responding positively to the message of government’s programmes. It is the job of the marketers of the policy to present the benefits being marketed as much higher than whatever “**price**” to be “**paid**” by members of the target population.

Place, the third “P”, includes the various activities an organization undertakes to make the product accessible and available to target customers. In social marketing, borrowing from Nwosu (2003), it requires the marketers of government’s ideas to develop as many appropriate channels or methods for making contacts with the target population members to make the ideas, innovation or materials available and accessible to members of the target population, so that with little or no effort they will get whatever the marketing team is trying to “sell” to them, using the social marketing strategy.

Appropriate delivery outlets that could be considered and used in social marketing include special event, public lectures, town union meetings, public rallies, and meetings with opinion leaders (Ogwo, 2009).

Promotion, the fourth “P”, includes all the activities the organization undertakes to communicate and promote its products to the target market. It demands from the social marketers the ability to use appropriate promotional mix or marketing communications mix to ensure that the message of the campaign reach and have the desired impact on members of the target population in focus. The government’s marketing team has to set up communication and promotion programmes consisting of advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling, and direct and online marketing.

The media to be used, especially for advertising, sales promotion and public relations, include the print (newspaper and magazine); electronic (radio and television); and outdoor (billboard, signpost and transit).

Government can also adopt personal selling strategies in advancing its policy. Government officials could be sent to the target publics to physically explain, in details, the intent of the policy or programme. This could be done at schools, churches, mosques, markets as well as town hall meetings. In the absence of adequate staff in the relevant government Ministry or parastatals, ad hoc staff should be engaged to propagate this.

Also important, is the distribution of sales promotional incentives like T-shirts, key rings, exercise books, and calendars with, for example, pro-deregulation campaign messages written on them. This could be a great way to solidify the pro-deregulation messages in the minds of the citizens.

The fifth and last “P” of the social marketing strategy refers to **politics** – a set of political views or beliefs. This requires the social marketers to make adequate considerations of the political dimensions of their efforts, factor them into their campaign plan and take appropriate actions to address whatever negative impacts these might have on the social campaign as well as exploit the positive potentials of these political actors and factors for the greater success of the social campaign. Thus, the marketing team, in this case, should bring to bear its public relations acumen, to be successful.

CONCLUSION

If government would avoid the pitfalls, and adopt the strategies listed in this paper, incidence of government’s policies and programmes failure will be greatly minimized, if not eliminated completely.

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APPENDICES

Table4.1. Areas Covered/Gender of Respondents

S/N	Community	LGA	Number		Total
			Male	Female	
1	Uratta	Aba North	15	8	23
2	Obuohia	Aba South	13	10	23
3	Atani	Arochukwu	14	9	24
4	Ugwueke	Bende	13	10	23
5	Nchara Oloko	Ikwuano	16	6	22
6	Ohuhu Nsulu	Isiala Ngwa North	12	11	23
7	Obuba Nvosi	Isiala Ngwa South	14	8	22
8	Uturu	Isiukwuato	13	9	22
9	Nenu	Obingwa	12	10	22
10	Amangwu	Ohafia	17	6	23
11	Ekeakpara	Osisioma Ngwa	14	9	23
12	Asannentu	Ugwunagbo	15	7	22
13	Ndoki	Ukwa East	12	10	22
14	Ozaa	Ukwa West	13	9	22
15	Umuagu	Umuahia North	12	11	23
16	Agbama Oloko	Umuahia South	13	10	23
17	Nneato	Umunneochie	14	9	23
	Total		232	152	384

Source: Field Survey, 2015.

Table4.2. Awareness of Selected Government Policies and Programmes (n=384)

Policies and programmes	Frequency	Percentage
Deregulation of oil sector	151	39.3
National Health Insurance Scheme	44	11.5
Due process	46	12.0
Monetization	53	13.8
Contributory Pension Scheme	57	14.8
YouWin	56	14.6
Bank Verification System	118	30.7
None	179	46.6
Multiple Response		

Source: Research Data, 2015.

Table4.3. Means of Knowledge of the Policies and Programmes (n=205)

Means	Frequency	Percentage
News	61	29.8
Visit to urban area(s)	98	47.8
Word-of-mouth	124	60.5
SMS	-	-
Bills	33	16.1
Others	16	7.8
Multiple Response		

Source: Research Data, 2015.

Table4.4. Knowledge of Detailed Implications of the Policies and Programmes (n=205)

Policies and programmes	Frequency	Percentage
Deregulation of oil sector	32	15.6
National Health Insurance Scheme	24	11.7
Due process	21	10.2
Monetization	27	13.1
Contributory Pensions Scheme	43	21.0
YouWin	39	19.0
Bank Verification System	63	30.7
None	109	53.2
Multiple Response		

Source: Research Data, 2015.

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Table 4.5. Willingness to know the Detailed Implications of the Policies and Programmes (n=109)

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	109	100
No	-	-
Total	109	100

Source: Research Data, 2015.

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