
MARKETING STRATEGY MODEL FOR ZIMBABWE RURAL ENTERPRISES

Dr Elizabeth Marunda

Fettmer Consulting (Pvt) Ltd

Dr Edmond Marunda

Faculty of Commerce, University of Zimbabwe

ABSTRACT

A Micro Enterprise can be operated in the form of rural household sector-based-economic activity in the production of raw materials and value addition. Establishing markets for rural produce is of paramount importance as this ensures sustainability of household livelihoods, rural and national economies. The objective of this study is to design a marketing model with a competitive advantage facilitating the efficient and effective access of rural products by local and external markets. A critical review of literature through secondary research highlights the development level of communication infrastructure and the marketing strategies of rural products to local and external markets in other successful rural economies. Jointly, the marketing strategies and the development level of the communication infrastructure are intended to contribute meaningfully towards the formulation of the model, for the effective promotion of Zimbabwe rural products, in both the local and external markets thereby abetting and improving the livelihoods of households, consumers, employees and communities concurrently increasing government's revenue base.

Keywords: *Marketing, Rural Enterprise, Model, Strategic Management*

1. INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwean rural communities earn their livelihood from farming and marketing of their agricultural produce. Agricultural communities from areas such as Honde Valley grow bananas; before transporting the produce for sale at Mbare Market place in Harare, the capital city. Family representatives who come to Harare literally stay out in the open for long periods of time, until their produce is sold. At times, middlemen go to the communities and collect the fruits for wholesale to vendors at a price much higher than the price offered the producers from the communities.

Rural communities constitute in turn markets for dealers in agricultural inputs. The marketing of any products relies on decent communication infrastructure in the form of roads, rail, air, and sea transportation augmented by well-developed information communication technology. In Zimbabwean rural communities, road, rail, air and ICT networks are at preliminary levels of development, thereby presenting challenges in the marketing of the rural products since roads are either gravel or narrow tarred roads. ICT is dominated by telephone land lines whose operation is adversely affected by unreliable electricity supply, old desk top computers and laptops at times furnished with software that is incompatible with other more modern packages of corresponding parties. Cell phones, although prevalent often fail to accommodate new services offered by internet providers and this is true as well for tablets and smart phones.

A critical analysis of the literature highlights how communication infrastructure is made suitable for the marketing of agricultural produce, and what marketing strategies are utilised to ensure the efficient and effective competitive marketing of agricultural produce. The model is derived from this critical review of the literature. Most of the literature analysed was obtained from the Zimbabwe investment centre.

1.1 Background to the problem

The varying levels of road and ICT development in Zimbabwe can be attributed to the historical, socio-cultural, economic and political perspectives. The rural urban divide with respect to poverty has intensified in rural areas over the years due to misplaced budget prioritisations, thereby leaving most rural areas with poorly maintained gravel dust roads with hazardous narrow bridges, no fibre optic provisions nor wide area networks.

Consequently the combined scenarios of the road and ICT communication infrastructure emerging in Zimbabwean communities are the following:

- dust roads with no rail, no airport, no cell phones and no internet; or
- dust roads with no rail and no airport, but cell phone networks are available but there is no internet; or
- tarred roads, rail, no airport, cell phone networks available but no internet; and
- a situation where tarred roads, rail, airport, cell phones and internet are available.

Some communities with varying road and ICT communication infrastructure combinations grow consumer (maize, small grain) and cash (cotton and tobacco) crops, as well as engage in horticulture (flowers and cabbages). Given the expansiveness and complexity as well as the variability of the above presented scenarios of road, rail, air and ICT communication infrastructure, the marketing of Zimbabwean agricultural produce becomes a challenge. Communities are facing challenges of marketing their produce and value addition to their agricultural produce as each household enterprise has to work out their own marketing plan to sell their agricultural products or sell to a middle man thereby compromising their profits considerably. Evidently, marketing at household level leads to high marketing costs and reduced profits. It is therefore critical that a national Marketing Model for rural produce by the communities with their complex and varying road, rail, air and ICT communication infrastructure be designed so as to address the needs of all communities.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Given the complex and varying development levels of the road, rail, air and ICT communication infrastructure in different rural communities, the marketing of rural products becomes very difficult for household enterprises. There is a need to develop strategies to ensure viable marketing of rural produce.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The objective of this study is to design a marketing model that addresses the developmental level of the communication infrastructure, making agricultural products available, accessible,

and affordable to local and external markets thereby enhancing the standard of living of households, communities and the whole nation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Rural production, according to Ahmed (2013) is on the increase as more people regard farming as a means of earning a livelihood in India. Agricultural yield in Zimbabwean rural communities is bound to increase due to the utilisation of conservation farming through which production increases with the passage of time. Besides crop rotation, the same hole or trench is nurtured by fertiliser or manure over and over again.

Conservation farming facilitates the growth of consumer and cash crops, fruits, vegetables and flowers as well as traditional local crops for consumption and for sale to local and external markets in fresh, frozen or dried form. Through proponents of conservation farming, it has been stated that a family farming with just a hoe can attain the level of 'best farmers in the world' [www.foundationsforfarming.org](http://wwwFOUNDATIONSforfarming.org) visited 15/11/2014. To come up with a meaningful marketing strategy for agricultural produce, according to www.unite.nokiasiemensnetwork.com visited 18/11/2014 the strategies include four pillars, consumer segmentation, integrated consumer marketing, consumer enablement and hyper local activities.

2.1 Consumer segmentation

Rural farmers should use international market research by marketing consulting firms engaged by respective governments, classify their markets accordingly, and grow traditional local vegetables, the European based vegetables, fruits, flowers, white meat (pig, chickens, fish and rabbit) and red meat for the respective markets.

2.2 Integrated consumer marketing

Integrated marketing involves forming partnerships with exclusive successful organisations in agriculture, health, banking and retail for instance. Through these partnerships rural products are distributed to the local or external markets or agricultural inputs are taken to rural communities.

2.3 Consumer enablement

The consumer market should be made to understand the usefulness of agricultural products to human health. Once the products are identified, rural household enterprises are placed in a position to grow relevant crops for sale.

2.4 Hyper local activities

The utilization of local marketing and distribution strategies is less costly than mass media campaigns that often fail to reach out to everyone.

2.5 ICT based Marketing

The content of the advertisement depicting each of the four pillars of marketing strategies are: goods for various consumer tastes (consumer segmentation); blending with the mandate of partners (integration consumer marketing); expressing usefulness of the product (consumer enablement); and indicating the location of the market place and means of distribution (hyper local activities). These advertisements can be transmitted through ICT technologies.

2.6 Google AdWords

Google AdWords enables marketing of rural products at community centres. Buyers in towns and in other countries on the global village can see the advertisement on what the rural enterprise offers, its website address and the telephone address when they click on google. According to www.google.co.uk/adwords/start/testimonials visited 19/11/14, a quoted testimonial from the Humble Pie Food expressed that, at the beginning, since August 2009, management had been uncertain as to the outcome of the enterprise advertisement on Google AdWords, but later realised that their sales went up far better than was originally anticipated. The implementation of marketing strategies for the selling of products faces challenges to which interventions have been proposed.

3. MODEL FOR RURAL PRODUCE

3.1 Introduction of the marketing strategy model

The design of the Marketing Strategy Model is based on the literature review, marketing strategies, participating agricultural stakeholders, establishment of infrastructure and a training programme. The marketing strategies include consumer segmentation, integrated consumer marketing, consumer enablement, hyper local activities, ICT based marketing, Google AdWords, local marketing in villages and communities, transportation of agricultural produce within villages and distribution to communities, towns and cities. In addition the Model includes roles played by households, the Ministry of Agriculture and its partners, the locally designed farmer training programme and the establishment of a clinic, transport and information communication technology. Customer segmentation calls for the need to conduct market research in order to ascertain the different consumer segments. This

will give direction to the farmers as to what to grow for locals in towns and cities and for the external markets. Through integrated consumer marketing stakeholders can meet and agree on the bank funding, interests charged and duration of payment. Agricultural stakeholders such as the Ministry of Agriculture and institutions promoting Foundations for Farming continue to train, monitor and evaluate farming activities to ensure high productivity. Retail shops will focus on the range of crops to be grown since they do have a large local market share both in the rural community stores and urban areas. The Ministry of health influences the growth of traditional crops which contribute towards healthy eating.

In consumer enablement the Ministry of health plays an important part together with the two ministries of education in educating consumers such as learners and out of school youths as well as the adult population on food nutrients and the function they play in enhancing the state of the human body.

Hyper-local activities mean that in villages posters can be placed around the village and along roads indicating what is sold at the village market. In order to take goods to the community market villagers can use wheel barrows, bicycles, small cars and scotch carts from within the village thereby providing employment to those who own these means of transport. On roads leading to the community centre, posters can be used to publicize what is on sale at the community market. Along major roads near the community centre at least one bill board indicating the location of the community market should be erected. Placed at the Community market itself should be at least one banner highlighting the name of the Community market and what agricultural products are on sale.

3.2 Marketing strategy aspects of the model

1. Household enterprises are to conduct targeted market farming, satisfying consumers such as the family itself, the village consumers, the local community, towns and cities and external markets.
2. Local marketing in the villages and community centres is done by the rural farmers themselves.
3. Transportation of farm produce within the village and to the community market should be done by locals themselves.
4. Marketing and distribution of farm produce into towns is to be done by transport and marketing enterprises from towns.

5. AdWords on Google can be utilised as a publicity platform for farm produce reaching out to communities with internet at community centres, and internet run community centres in towns and cities and far afield in the regional and global markets. The advertisement can be seen and read at the point of clicking on Google.
6. A farmers' training programme to include courses like Marketing, Risk Management, Finance for non-financial Managers, Sources of funding, Record Keeping, Procurement, Financial Statements and Investment so that small holder farmers can manage their own finances, whilst commercial farmers have an understanding of internal and external audit reports.
7. Each village should have a clinic, transport and information communication technology to contact doctors, nurses and midwives when needed.
8. At rural, town and city community centres, pamphlets, emails, websites and social platforms like face book, twitter and blogs are to be used for communicating information on legal issues, farming issues, food and nutrition, as well as diseases in order to keep all village and community members informed thereby removing the rural urban divide.
9. The Ministry of Agriculture should continue to work on policies with participants from consumers, trainers in farming, agricultural input providers and distributors and collectively ensure the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of agricultural outputs thereby ensuring maximum productivity in agriculture.
10. The Ministry of Agriculture, Health, National Food Council and Ministry of Education should produce:
 11. pamphlets for adult learners and youths out of the education system and
 12. the Food and Nutrition syllabus from ECD to University in order to teach learners agricultural production, nutrients from agricultural produce, functions of those nutrients to the body and what is constituted in a balanced diet and its preparation.
13. The National Food Council should develop a policy that makes it mandatory for public eating places to offer meals with a balanced diet. Ultimately farming of crops will be relevant for healthy consumption.
14. Commercial farmers should rely on college and university students for labour; during holidays on condition they provide high standards of hostels and facilities. This way production is ensured and students learn financial independence earlier on as they not

only pay fees for themselves but are in a position to raise seed capital for starting enterprises when they complete college or university studies.

15. Light industrial factories for processing agricultural produce should be set up.

4. CONCLUSION

It is a prerequisite that household enterprises, communities, Ministries of Agriculture, Small to Medium Enterprises and Cooperative Development, Industry and Commerce, ICT, Media and Publicity, Transport and Energy, agricultural stakeholders in the non-government organisation sector, United Nation Agencies, youths in and out of the education system, as well as the business community, work closely together as proposed in the Model. That way, agricultural productivity, processing of agricultural produce, distribution of finished goods to local and external markets will be enhanced, thereby ensuring a high standard of living for the rural communities and remarkable wealth creation for the nation by rural enterprises.

REFERENCES

- Ahmed, A. (2013) Rural Marketing Strategies for Selling Products & Services: Issues & Challenges, Journal Of Business Management & Social Sciences Research Vol. 2, No 1, [www.foundationsforfarming.org](http://wwwFOUNDATIONSFORFARMING.org) visited 15/11/14 Free Pfumvudza Training Pamphlet www.unite.nokiasiemensnetwork.com visited 18/11/14 www.google.co.uk/adwords/start/testimonials visited 19/11/14