UNIT 4   BOOK PROMOTION METHODS

Structure

4.0 Aims

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Purpose of Sales Promotion

4.3 Sales Promotion Plan

4.4 Promotion Methods

4.5 Point-of-purchase Publicity

4.6 Materials for Mailing

4.7 Advertisements

4.8 Author’s Participation

4.9 Book Reviews

4.10 Utilization of Sales Force

4.11 Other Miscellaneous Methods

4.12 Summing Up

4.13 Aids to Answers

4.14 Select Reading List

4.0 AIMS

The main aim of this unit is to explain to you the importance of book of book promotion in the whole process of publishing. After defining the concept of book promotion, an attempt has been made to explain the objectives of book promotion. After going through the unit, you will be able to understand:

- What is promotion;

- Various conventional and unconventional methods of promotion;

- What is a sales promotion plan;

- The utility of advance notice;

- Use of mailing materials

- The importance of book reviews in book promotion;

- The role of author in book promotion;

- Effectiveness and economy of book review as promotion tool; and

- The promotion needs specific to the nature of the book.

These days sales promotion has emerged as an important function in a publishing house, as this what brings back publisher’s investment back to the publishing house by way of book sales.
4.1 INTRODUCTION

Sales promotion can be defined as activity, which consists of marketing of a product or promotion of a service. It includes functions such as personal selling, advertising, displays, exhibitions and other activities, which increase sales and expand the market of a product.

Sales promotion consists of certain materials and techniques, which are used to help sell the product. Sales promotion materials are usually not directly aimed at the actual buyer by the publisher, but are prepared for the use of the retail seller. Sales promotion is a diverse collection of incentive tools, mostly of short term nature designed to stimulate quicker or greater purchase of a particular product by the actual user or the trader.

Sales promotion aims to provide direct stimulus to produce a desired response by customers. It is also defined as a 'direct inducement which offers an extra value or incentive for the product to sales force, distributors or the ultimate consumer.' In our context the product, which is pushed forward for sales, is the book.

A sales department consists of the sales manager and his staff working as sales representatives or salesmen. The financial success or failure of a publishing project depends on the effectiveness of the sales manager or the person heading the department.

In the context of book publishing, promotion consists of all the methods used by a publisher to inform the world about the existence of a book and make people want to buy it.

4.2 OBJECTIVES OF SALES PROMOTION

Promotion is done to achieve the following objectives:

1. To attract new customers;
2. To reward loyal customers;
3. To get results faster than advertisements alone; and
4. To combine it with advertisements to get higher/quicker yield of customers.

The consumer, the trade and the sales force are kept in mind while preparing sales promotion for a product. The tools of consumer promotion include samples, coupons, cash refund offers, discounts, prizes, and patronage awards. Free gifts etc. are also used in book promotion. Trade promotion tools may include buying allowance, free goods delivery, sale or return facility, cooperative advertising, display allowances, push money incentives and dealers, sale contest. Sales promotion sometimes includes bonuses, contests, promotions, incentives etc. A combination of these tools is usually employed by a publisher to promote a book. The Sales Promotion department of a publishing house prepares a marketing plan for each book that is published.

Activity 1

Define the term ‘Sales Promotion’

..............................................................................................................................................................................

..............................................................................................................................................................................

..............................................................................................................................................................................

..............................................................................................................................................................................

..............................................................................................................................................................................

..............................................................................................................................................................................

(Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit)
4.3 SALES PROMOTION PLAN

Each book is different and, therefore, the promotion needs for each book will also be different. In developing a sales promotion plan or a marketing strategy, the most important component in the entire process of book promotion is the book itself. The strategy to promote and sell a desired number of copies will depend upon (1) the nature of the book, and (2) the corresponding market. Since the promotion budget is always inadequate, the promotion manager has to be judicious in the choice of methods which are applied to get the desired results.

A promotion plan should be designed to achieve the highest sale potential of the book. A wisely thought of marketing campaign can achieve up to 80 to 90 percent of the target sales where a poor marketing effort would achieve only 20 to 25 percent of them.

The time and energy spent in advance planning and developing a suitable marketing plan for individual book will bring in more sales and profit, the lack of these will result in slow sales and no profit.

It is generally said that charity begins at home. So is the case with book promotion. The information about the new book, before it goes out in the market, is spread first within the publishing house. This may also be termed as internal promotion. The event, which triggers the process of selling books and serves as the basis of internal promotion within the publishing house, is called the sales conference.

**Activity 2**

What are the objectives of Sales Promotion?

(Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit)

4.3.1 Sales Conference

In publishing language sales conference is also known as concept meeting or advance meeting. In medium size publishing house such meetings are held twice or three times a year depending upon the number of titles being published by publishing house. Though the timings of the conference would differ from publisher to publisher, yet most conveniently these are held at the middle or the end of the year.

The agenda of the sales conference would normally be:

- To introduce new and forthcoming titles;
- To initiate promotion techniques;
- To outline advertisement and publicity plans;
- To announce special packages or discounts to attract higher / quicker sales;
- To spell out the markets for the books;
- To fix a sale quota, if necessary, for the sales staff;
Sales Promotion

- To provide dust jackets, circular letters and other pieces of printed information; and
- To take stock of the selling position of back list and current list titles and other related topics.

Who attends the sales conference: The sales conference is attended by the sales and promotion manager, sales staff including field representatives, staff dealing with advertising and publicity and persons looking after the subsidiary rights and persons from the accounts branch. The Editor of the book is the most indispensable participant because it is the editor who introduces the title to the conference audience. The conference may last a couple of hours or days depending upon the number of titles being introduced in the meeting.

Proceedings: The Sales manager generally presides over the meeting and the editor plays the part of the chief speaker. The editor introduces each title giving information about the author, title, subject coverage and other plus point of the title and also explains the possible markets for a title. The main listeners are the sales staff. They are encouraged to ask questions about the books.

Some of the essential details about the titles are provided on separate sheets, which may either be typed or printed. This information sheet is usually called advance notice/sheet. This sheet would provide information about the author, title, brief description of the contents, possible competitive titles and production details etc.

4.3.2 Advance Notice/ Sheet

Some of the essential details about the titles are provided on separate sheets, which may either be typed or printed. This information sheet is usually called an advance notice/sheet. This sheet provides information about the author, title, brief description of the contents, possible competitive titles and production details etc. The format of the advance sheet would more or less be as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advance Notice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author’s/ Editor’s name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative Titles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Books By The Author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target Market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publication Details (Book Size, Number of Pages, Price, Publication date)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Discount Policy, If Any</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity 3

What is the purpose of holding a sales conference?

.................................................................

.................................................................

.................................................................

.................................................................

.................................................................

(Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit)
4.4 PROMOTION METHODS

There are as many ways of promoting a title, as there are titles to promote. There are certain methods of book promotion which are basic and fundamental to all kinds of books produced while there are others, which are optional, which may be used or applied keeping in mind the nature of the book, availability of budget and other related factors.

For a successful sales promotion programme, the sales manager must establish the objectives, select the most suitable methods of promotion, develop a well-organised programme, implement it, control and evaluate it.

Any book promotion plan will keep the potential market in view while finalising the strategy. The word ‘market’ includes the following three areas of possible sale:

1. Trade
2. Institutions
3. Individuals

For every book published there would be trade outlets, wholesalers, retailers and specialised booksellers, institutions doing teaching and research work in that specific area or discipline and individuals pursuing studies in that area of knowledge.

A model promotion plan would, therefore, adopt a strategy that will cover all the three segments of a market. This may include directing promotion methods in the following areas:

1. Point-of-purchase publicity
2. Materials for Mailing
3. Advertisement
4. Author’s participation
5. Book reviews
6. Utilisation of sales force
7. Other miscellaneous methods

4.5 POINT-OF-PURCHASE PUBLICITY

The Point of Purchase is the retail book store from where a book can be purchased. It is the most suitable place to make the presence of the book felt by way of displays) In other consumer products like soaps, shampoos and chocolates, the retail store is flooded with creative and attractive point-of-purchase display materials to attract the attention of the potential buyers. The idea is to remind the customer of the presence of the stocks.

In the book industry the competition is not as fierce as in other consumer products. Since the availability of space in a book-shop is always scarce, the display material should be designed in such a way that, without occupying more space, it should prominently display the message—the title or jacket of the book.

The point of purchase displays are promotional items that are designed to sell books in and outside the store. This includes items like (i) Posters or Hangers, (ii) Window stickers, (iii) Display racks and (iv) Pre packs and such other materials, which can provide an extra handle to the books and offer the buyers an incentive for buying.
4.5.1 Posters/Hangers

These are usually made of cardboard, pulp paper or art paper sheets, printed generally on one side only and meant for vertical display. The poster may have the book jacket or title prominently printed. These posters become an identification device and remind the customers of the presence of the title and help them to identify it. Modern improved processes and techniques have made it possible to prepare colourful and attractive posters at fairly low cost. The posters are also used as mailing material.

4.5.2 Display racks or Wire Racks

As part of the promotion plan a tie up can be done with a bookstore by providing the bookseller a wooden rack or wire rack on the understanding that “for a certain period of time the bookstore will display publisher’s title(s)” and after the expiry of time agreed upon, the rack may be retained by the bookseller for its use. The purpose of this kind of arrangement is to provide prominent display to books and giving them an edge over other books lying in the bookstore.

4.5.3 Pre-packs

This means special packaging of books before they reach the point of sale. Pre-packed books may contain a gift coupon or some other attractive offer for the buyer. Sometimes pre-packed books may have special kind of binding in order to attract customers.

These are not the only items of point of purchase display.

Imagination and alertness of the promotion manager can create so many other things subject to budget available for promotion. Bookmarks, display buttons and such other materials are used to influence the customers. Many publishers, these days, pay a lot of attention to point of purchase display materials as they have become increasingly important to attract the attention of impulse purchase.

Even though books do not come under impulse purchase category of goods but visibility is of crucial importance. The more innovative the display at the bookstore, the greater is the chances of getting noticed and finally picked up by the purchaser.

Activity 4

Discuss some of the items publishers use for point of purchase publicity.

..................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................

(Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit)

4.6 MATERIALS FOR MAILING

Promotion of books through mail or post is an important component of the composite promotion policy of a publishing house. This is done to promote and publicise the books. A variety of mailing materials in various shapes and forms is mailed to wholesalers, retailers, institutions and individual buyers. The material for mailing would depend upon the promotion budget and size of the potential market. Publishers use a variety of materials for mailing. The most commonly used materials for mailing include:
Jacket: Jacket is the printed outer cover placed over the binding of a hard cover book which provides space for visual display.

Trade Announcements and Circular Letters: Trade announcements and circular letters are sent to wholesalers and retailers in quantity so that they can send these to their customers or as part of their mailing.

Brochure: A Brochure is a booklet devoted to advertising matter, often illustrated and using a good deal of display type.

Catalogues and Publishers’ Lists: A catalogue serves as a ready reckoner of a publisher’s publishing programme. These catalogues are also mailed to the trade, institutions and libraries and potential buyers of publisher’s books.

Depending upon the number of books published by a publishing house a catalogue is published once, twice or more times in a year. It is also called publisher’s list. It contains information about the books already published, books in press and books to be published in a near future.

4.7 ADVERTISEMENTS

Every publisher would do some sort of advertising for every book that is published. An Advertising is an obligation on the part of the publisher. How much advertisement is needed to promote a given title would depend upon the nature of the book, the nature of the potential buyers and number of copies printed and amount of budget available for the purpose.

An Advertisement is a very costly way of promoting a book. Therefore, it should be used very cautiously. It is necessary (along with other methods) to get the book to the target audience and also to make the retailers and other trade market aware of the product. It also has certain advantages in book promotion plan. It provides and appeal to the trade, the bookstore and individual buyers. It also has an influence on the sale of the subsidiary rights.

For authors, an advertisement is a tool to project their image. If their book is not advertised, they sometimes believe that publisher is not promoting the book properly. Advertising is a costly affair. What authors do not realise is that the cost of a quarter page or half page of advertisement in a popular magazine or a newspaper is sometimes equal to the total book budget. Moreover, people read newspapers and magazines for their news value and not advertisement value. Publisher should, therefore, be the best judge as to which book should be advertised and where. Normally a publisher allocates approximately 10% of the anticipated net sales in a year and then decides which title should be advertised prominently.

Does advertisement sell books? Opinions vary on the effectiveness of book advertising. Max Perkins, the celebrated editor (of Scribner) compared advertising a book to the problem of a car that is stuck. He believed thus. “If a car is really stuck in the mud, then people can’t budget it. But if it is moving a little bit one man can push it down the road. By the same token, if the book is absolutely dead, all advertisement in the world isn’t going to help. If it is got glimmer of life, it is selling a little bit may be in one or two, it is moving enough to give a push”.

Every book need not be advertised in the press. There are books, which can sell more by direct point-to-point sale if the market is identified. Still advertising in major national newspapers is generally most effective for books of wider appeal.

Television is another medium of advertisement. But even television advertisement is also very costly. Radio advertisement on the other hand, is cheaper. Options such as coupon advertisements where the coupon printed in the advertisement can be used by a potential buyer for some concession or special rebate is another way that books can be advertised.
Because of the prohibitive cost, a group advertisement combining several titles or cooperative advertisement associating another bookselling agency or some other body is also used as another option to minimise the cost of advertisement.

Though some publishers feel that other methods aggressively followed can compensate the need for advertising still the results of book advertisement as a method of promotion is worth the money spent on it.

4.8 AUTHOR'S PARTICIPATION

Author's involvement as well as utilisation of the author's own resources is an integral part of publishing and promotion of books. As every author wants publicity, he can also provide publicity to the publishing house.

There are many areas of book promotion where the author can play a significant role. Author's participation and the methods used for the same would largely depend upon the nature of the book and the status of the author.

The areas where author can contribute in book promotion include:

- Letters
- Tours
- Autograph sessions
- Interviews
- Subsidiary rights selection and sale
- Selection of review media
- Personal connections

Detailed information on author's role in promotion is separately dealt with elsewhere.

4.9 BOOK REVIEWS

For every book published there would be a potential review in the media-newspapers, magazines, journals etc. which, along with other literature on the subject of the book, may carry review pages. A wise promotion manager would maintain a file of review policies and practices of various newspapers and journals to which copies of the books may be sent for reviewing. This is important because getting a book reviewed in a journal totally unrelated to the subject of the book may do more harm than good.

Reviews are vital for successful selling of professional and scholarly books. Review media help to reach the potential market. As we have already told you, the author's help should be sought in identifying the right review media.

How many copies should be sent for review would differ from book to book. Usually 10% of the edition is set aside for review and presentation.

The following factors play a great role in deciding how many copies should be sent for reviewing:

- Size of the country
- Language of the book
- Number of review media
- Coverage of the book
- Nature of the book
- Size of the edition
Book reviews carry a lot of weight in decision making in the institutional book purchase. A librarian may be influenced more by a small piece of book review than a prominent advertisement. Book reviews can be mailed to institutions with other mailing material. A book review, therefore, has a multiplier effect and can be used as public relations tool with the author. Sending a copy of the review to the author would serve two purposes.

i) The author would feel grateful for the interest you are taking in the promotion of the title.

ii) If the media has been recommended by the author, it will give a feeling of confidence in the publisher that his suggestion has been respected. The author will willingly join hands with the publisher in his efforts to promote the title.

Some newspapers and magazines publish a list of books received for reviewing. Mere listing evokes some interest and generates query, which sometimes results in sale orders. Publication of book reviews also provides word of mouth publicity and helps in book sale.

There is also a practice to send advance copies for the review to coincide preferably with the date of release of the book. If the review is good, excerpts from it can be used as blurb on the jacket or can be used in the copy for advertisement and other promotional material.

No matter whether the book is reviewed before publication date or after, a wise use of book review can be the least expensive and most effective method of book promotion.

Activity 5

Why are reviews important in book promotion? Answer in about 40 words.

...........................................................................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................................................................

(Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit)

4.10 UTILISATION OF SALES FORCE

For publishers, the sales representatives constitute their sales force. There is no substitute for utilization of the sales force for selling books by the publishers. All other promotional methods can achieve the desired results only if the sales staff is covering the market.

As already discussed, the agenda of the sales conference is always to inform and familiarise the sales force with the new and forthcoming books, providing them the promotional materials like brochures, catalogues, posters, jacket etc. and informing them the sales promotion plan for a book or set of books.

Sometimes a target of sales is also given to the sales force.

The sales staff serves the following useful purposes:

1. It helps the publisher to sell larger number of copies of a title.

2. It also carries back information about the titles already published (back list) and how these titles are selling in market and whether there is any more demand for these books.
3. It provides a feedback about publicity efforts made by the publisher and helps redirecting or repositioning the promotional efforts.

4. It serves as public relations department of the publishing house as it can provide information about the publishing programmes and policies.

5. It suggests the areas where the book is faring well and the areas where promotional efforts need to be strengthened.

6. It can help finalizing arrangements for cooperative advertising with retailers.

7. It would inform the bookstores, wholesalers and institutions about forthcoming publications and any special incentives, which can be offered on, selected new and backlist titles.

8. It may finalise the arrangements of an author’s appearance for autograph session at a particular bookstore.

9. The feedback from the sales staff in the form of reports provides an overview of the publisher’s efforts regarding success or failure of promotional efforts.

There is, therefore, no substitute to the use of sales force in the implementation of the book promotion plan.

Activity 6
List some of the purposes of having sales staff.

(Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit)

4.11 OTHER MISCELLANEOUS METHODS

It is generally said that there are as many ways of promoting a title, as there are titles to promote. What is required is the imagination of the promotion manager and pulling the right cord. The list of methods, which can be and have been tried, is endless. From cinema slides to paper caps anything can be used as promotion tool. From book events to stunts and gimmicks, anything can be tried that is suitable to your kind of books. Some more commonly used miscellaneous methods are discussed below.

4.11.1 Exhibitions

Organisation of exhibitions of any product(s) for demonstrating quality and service to the consumers is becoming very popular these days for special sale appeal. In such exhibitions products are demonstrated and sold at special discount to the customers.

In the same fashion, books can also be promoted and sold through exhibitions. The participation in an exhibition provides the potential buyers an opportunity to handle the books and see the contents etc. before actually buying them. Books are sold directly to customers or orders may be procured to deliver the books at a later date. When an event of this kind is arranged, invitations are sent to potential buyers.
and the event is also advertised and special discounts are offered to attract more
visitors.

4.11.2 Sample/Specimen Copies

Specimen or sample copies, different from review copies are sent to people who
may directly or indirectly influence the sale of the book. These copies are sent to
professors, and lecturers in universities and colleges, school teachers, administrators
and people in position who may help in popularising the book. Sometimes authors
also provide a list of persons whom such copies may be sent. The list should be
followed with caution because in many cases it may only include the names of
author’s friends.

4.11.3 Launching Party

Launching an author or book is an ideal public telethon event. There should be a
rational reason for such a party. In such a party, reviewers and members of the press
are invited. Free copies of the book are distributed after light refreshments. Teachers
and professors are also invited to such launching parties. It is basically a publicity
event, which involves a lot of money. Only such authors and books, which are
newsworthy, should be launched at such events.

4.11.4 Book Release Function

Book release function, apart from launching party is an other important promotion
method. (Important - books are released at a well organised function where a
prominent figure in the subject area is asked to speak a few words on the author and
his work and the book is released to the public. The audience for such function
consists of university teachers, administrators, traders and potential buyers of the
book. The function if properly organised gets free publicity in the press because
press is also invited for the coverage of the function.

4.11.5 Radio and Television

Radio and television can provide a big boost to book promotion and book sale.
There is a number of radio and TV programmes which discuss books and authors.
Author’s appearance can be of great help in popularising the book. A television
programme interviewing the author and introducing the subject of the book to the
viewers can be a great booster of book sale. Not all authors and books can be
promoted on radio and television. Authors with quick thinking and articulate
knowledge should be exposed to- kind of promotional method.

4.11.6 Participation in Book Fairs

The primary objective of book fairs has been to foster ‘book mindedness’ to
promote the growth of publishing. Participation in book fair of national and
international level gives an opportunity to expose the product to lakhs of people
who visit the book fair. Book fairs help to keep abreast of the latest publication in
the country and in the world. They also serve as a meeting place for authors,
publishers and librarians and the readers. The fairs bring all the potential readers to
a platform where books from hundreds of publisher are displayed. The fairs are
great national and international events. Most publishers eagerly await participation
in such fairs.

The basic purpose of book promotion is to bring an author’s work to public attention.
A successful promotion may depend upon the conventional methods but the ability
to carve out new ideas to project the title is key to successful book promotion. A
promotion manager will not be tied up with the conventional approaches but continue
to seek, to find new areas of experimentation to bring profits to the publisher and
satisfaction to the author.
Activity 7

Mention some of the miscellaneous methods of book promotion.

(Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit)

4.12 SUMMING UP

In this unit we have learnt that the basic purpose of book promotion is to bring author's work in public attention and that there are as many ways of promoting a title, as there are titles to promote. We have learnt that any promotion plan has to be made keeping in mind the nature of the book and the available budget. The commonly used methods of promotion include:

- Point-of-purchase publicity
- Materials for Mailing
- Advertisement
- Author's participation
- Book reviews
- Utilisation of sales force
- Other miscellaneous methods

A successful promotion may depend upon the conventional methods but the ability to carve out new ideas to project the title is key to successful book promotion. A promotion manager will not be tied up with the conventional approaches but continue to seek and find new areas of experimentation to bring profits to the publisher and satisfaction to the author.

4.13 AIDS TO ANSWERS

Activity 1

Sales promotion can be defined as activity, which consists of marketing of a product or promotion of a service. It is also defined as a 'direct inducement which offers an extra value or incentive for the product to sales force, distributors or the ultimate consumer.

Activity 2

To attract new customers.

To reward loyal customers.

To get results faster than advertisement.

To combine it with advertisement to get higher/quicker yield of customers.
Activity 3
To introduce new and forthcoming titles.
To initiate promotion techniques.
To outline advertisement and publicity plans.
To announce special packages or discounts to attract higher / quicker sales.
To spell out the markets for the books.
To fix sale quota, if necessary, for the sales staff.

Activity 4
Posters/hangers, window stickers, display racks

Activity 5
Book reviews carry a lot of weight in decision making in the institutional book purchase. Book reviews can be mailed to institutions with other mailing material. A book review, therefore, has a multiplier effect and can be used as public relations tool with the author. Sending a copy of the review to the author would serve two purposes.

Activity 6
1) It helps the publisher to sell larger number of copies of a title.
2) It also carries back information about the titles already published (backlist); how these titles are selling in market. Whether there is any more demand for these books.
3) It also provides a feedback about publicity efforts made by the publisher and helps redirecting or repositioning the promotional efforts.
4) It also serves as the public relations department of the publishing house as it can provide information about the publishing programmes and policies.

Activity 7
Exhibitions, sample/specimen copies, book release function, participation in book fairs.

4.14 SELECT READING LIST