



The process for sanitation marketing

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A good toilet is one of the basic necessities for every day life, yet millions of households in developing countries lack this basic facility. There are many sociological, psychological, financial and health related benefits of owning a toilet. The majority of toilets in less developed countries are built by the 'informal private sector' (small independent providers) and paid for by the house owner, tenants or a combination of both. This indicates that sustainable access to sanitation can be achieved by supporting the informal sector to develop the sanitation market, (Cairncross 2004). In marketing, the key is to ensure the right 'marketing mix' – Product, Price, Place and Promotion - and the same rule applies to sanitation marketing. This fact sheet provides an insight into the process of sanitation marketing. Sanitation in this fact sheet refers to hygienic disposal of human excreta.

The story so far

Having a hygienic means of disposal of human excreta is a basic human need, which many people in developing countries lack. It is estimated that over 2.4 billion people globally (the majority in Asia and Africa) do not have access to basic sanitation. The health benefits of sanitation are often sighted as one major justification for improving access to sanitation. Although sanitation leads to improved health, people associate toilets with other benefits as pointed out by Jenins (2004). Good toilets provide privacy and safety (particularly for women), comfort and convenience, dignity, less embarrassment for visitors, financial gains, and they are easy to use and maintain. Many people including the poor are willing to pay for good sanitation that will satisfy their requirements if the technology is packaged and marketed appropriately and the supply mechanism is easily accessible. Applying a marketing approach to sanitation is not just about advertising; it is also about ensuring that appropriate sanitation options are made available and that suppliers have the necessarily capacity to provide the desired services. Sanitation marketing is about ensuring a balance between demand and supply.

The current situation

In developed countries, a toilet is a basic facility in every type of living accommodation. In developing countries, it is common for a house to have no toilet.

A recent mid-term assessment report (WHO and UNICEF, 2004) of the progress made towards meeting the MDG sanitation target indicates that much effort is needed if the global target for sanitation coverage is to be reached. The report shows that global sanitation coverage rose from 49% in 1990 to 58% in 2002, an annual rise of less than 1%. If the MDG target for sanitation is to be achieved by 2015, an approach is needed that will accelerate both demand and supply.

Low sanitation coverage is often attributed to a lack of demand; however poor coverage is also due to inappropriate toilet technologies and weak supply mechanisms. In order to accelerate the

demand for and uptake of sanitation, there needs to be a balance between demand and supply (products and provider). Previous attempts have tended to concentrate on one more than the other, such as developing and promoting a particular latrine technology (often termed 'low-cost'), subsidising or providing free toilets, health education or enacting or enforcing sanitation by-laws.

In many developing countries, the informal sector – rather than externally supported efforts – provides the majority of houses with sanitation facilities. Most toilets are built through the natural market i.e. households pay the informal private sector (usually small independent providers) to provide them with toilets. It follows that one of the sustainable ways of improving access to sanitation is to work in partnership with the private sector to develop the sanitation market. This would include not only applying commercial marketing approaches to create demand for sanitation but also ensuring that the informal private sector has the capacity to supply appropriate good quality toilets. The case for sanitation marketing has been fully justified by Cairncross (2004).

Sanitation as a business

It is evident that sanitation marketing could help to close the big gap in access. To develop the sanitation market, suppliers need to make reasonable profits and consumers need to feel satisfied with the products and services that they are getting. Sanitation therefore needs to be treated like a consumer product, attractively packaged to suit various wealth categories and marketed widely.

In commercial marketing, market research is conducted in order to understand the market. Based on the findings, products are then developed or modified, priced, tested and promoted, targeting groups who are most likely to purchase the product. In sanitation marketing, a more social approach known as 'social marketing' is advocated. The difference between social and commercial marketing is in terms of who gets the profits from the sale. In social marketing the benefit goes to the consumer or the community as whole, while in commercial marketing, the profit goes to the funding party (ies). Social marketing is explained in greater detail in another WELL Fact Sheet (Scott 2005).

How do you market sanitation?

The practical steps to sanitation marketing can be summarised as follows:

Market research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify market research expertise • Establish and train the research team • Conduct consumer research • Conduct producer research
Programme aims and objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop preliminary marketing mix (<i>Product, Price, Place, Promotion</i>)
Product identification and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and develop marketable sanitation facilities & services (<i>eg. latrine technologies /options, latrine information service, latrine centre</i>)
Set up supply mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify potential suppliers of latrines & other related services • Assess and develop their capacity to provide desired services • Identify and/or set place(s) where consumers can access the sanitation services being marketed (eg toilet centres) • Work with the public sector to establish strategy for disposal of sludge from toilets

Message and material development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify partners with expertise for the design and development of marketing concepts • Develop marketing concepts and creative design • Pretest and refine creative design • Develop promotion strategy
Implement promotion campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce promotion materials (eg posters, flyers, radio jingle, billboard) • Launch a campaign (eg road show, launch event) • Run a promotion campaign for about 3 months
Monitor and feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the programme (spread/ response to the campaign, quality of services provided etc) • Feedback and modify the programme as appropriate

Box 1. Dar es Salaam case study

As part of sanitation marketing pilot project in a high-density low-income urban settlement in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, a group of informal toilet builders has been trained to build various types of toilets. With help, the group has set up a toilet centre where people can obtain information, buy toilet components and get toilet builders to install toilets for them. Since launching the campaign, the group has been attracting customers from all parts of Dar es Salaam. This illustrates how organising artisans of the informal sector into semi-formal groups can help to increase people's confidence in informal providers.

You can listen to the radio jingle on <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/wedc/projects/sm/>

Box 2. Translation of the radio jingle

The joy of a house, a clean toilet
Pride of a man and woman, cleanliness
Knock; Knock at a neighbour's toilet
An outdated fashion
That is not acceptable

You give so many stories
But all your thoughts (mind, plans, mathematics) are in the toilet
You are "driving" (diarrhoea, bruuuum...) like a lorry driver
The whole living room area is uninhabitable

Chorus

Our toilet (Choo chetu- This is the brand name)
Reasonable price
Without disturbance
Our modern toilet
Our toilet
Knock; Knock and disturbances
All will reduce
Use our toilet

Who is involved in sanitation marketing?

The good thing about sanitation marketing is that it creates an opportunity for public and private sectors and non-profit making organisations to join efforts to improve household sanitation. Sanitation marketing is consumer-focused, which makes it different from other promotional approaches that focus on technology and the quantity of health education materials distributed. In sanitation marketing, the products and their promotion are based on consumer motivation and preferences. It goes further to reduce or remove the barriers that prevent house owners from installing hygienic sanitation facilities. A partnership for sanitation marketing could be made up of the following groups:

- Households
- Informal toilet builders
- Pit emptying truck operators
- Market research agencies
- Communication/advertising agencies
- NGOs
- Government agencies
- Financial institutions

All the partners benefit in one way or another. Households get better quality sanitation of their choice, private sector agencies make financial gains and have the experience of marketing a social product, and NGOs achieve greater and more sustainable coverage and gain experience of marketing from the private sector. Sanitation marketing gives more recognition to informal sector providers and boosts demand for their services. Government agencies are better able to act as facilitators rather than implementers, leaving them more time for general coordination.

Although a marketing approach is considered new to sanitation, it offers a possible solution to the enormous sanitation problems faced in developing countries. It is not only consumer-focused but has the ability to bring together and enhance co-ordination among most of the key stakeholders in sanitation.

Summary

There are indications that sanitation marketing is an effective approach for increasing demand and uptake of improved household sanitation. However, government and development initiatives need the expertise of professional marketers to assist in developing and planning sanitation marketing programmes. Sanitation marketing brings together many different types of skills (including those of market researchers, concept and advertising agencies, NGOs, government agencies and toilet builders) in order to develop and market desirable toilets. Sanitation marketing has advantages over other sanitation promotion methods because it does not focus on educating people or promoting a particular type of toilet. Rather, it tries to understand what users want and works with toilet builders to satisfy these demands.

Reference and further reading

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