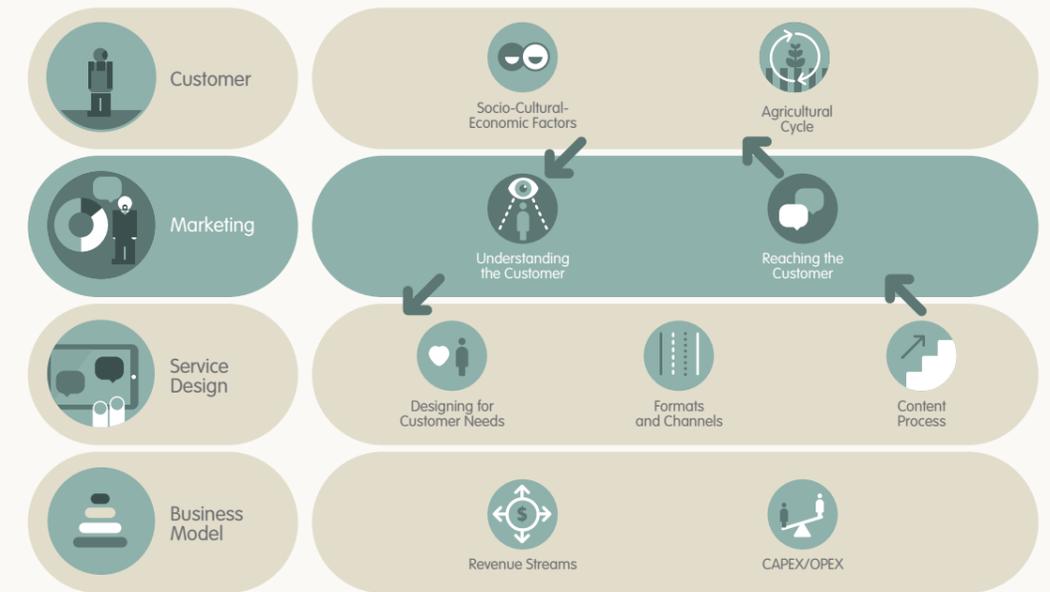




Chapter 3 Marketing



When introducing new products and services, the role of marketing is twofold and serves to:

1. Understand the consumer and their changing information needs (continuously incorporating new insight into the marketing strategy and service design).
2. Drive consumer demand through advertising, sales and optimised distribution.

This section briefly reviews consumer needs and then examines the marketing process in more depth.

Understanding the Customer

A thorough understanding of the consumer’s unmet needs and requirements is critical to designing relevant products and services.

Some things to consider before embarking on designing the service and marketing campaigns include:

- Are there potential partner organisations with on-the ground expertise that can provide insights into customer behaviour and help to shape the marketing strategy?

- Qualitative research (backed up by quantitative data) should provide the basis for customer segmentation; information needs mapping, language preference, level of technical capability, channels, formats and frequency of information delivery.
- What are the on-going methods of collecting the information on customer needs? How will the customer feedback be incorporated to make sure that changing information needs are reflected within the service design?

Reaching the Customer

The Customer Journey

The complexity of the adoption process (along with the requisite tools and methods of facilitation) can be mapped out with the help of a customer journey framework. Based on findings from GSMA experience with Agri VAS deployments in Kenya and India, and from research conducted on current best practice in mobile for agriculture space, this framework provides a simplified tool for structuring a marketing strategy for Agri VAS:

The Customer Journey				
	Aware	Understand	Try	Regular Use
Challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Low Media Consumption. ■ Illiteracy, Language etc. ■ Low Distribution Reach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Communicate: 'What', 'How', 'Why' of Agricultural VAS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Modify Consumer Behaviour. ■ Gain Trust. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Engage Users. ■ Personalise Service. ■ Address Broader Needs.
Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Existing Brand Equity. ■ Local Media. ■ Local Events/Meets. ■ Agricultural Cycle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Simple Procedures. ■ Face-to-Face. ■ Align Incentives to Communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cost of Trial. ■ Accessibility. ■ Comparative Benefits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ User Profiling. ■ Service Rendering. ■ Complimentary Needs. ■ Innovation Access.
Marketing Tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Above-the-Line & Below-the-line ■ Posters. ■ Radio & TV Spots. ■ Mobile Van Promos. ■ Village Events. ■ Agricultural Events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiential ■ Partner Agents. ■ Canopy Events. ■ Experts. ■ Peers/Family. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiential ■ Discounted Trials. ■ Agricultural Cycle Based Trials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct ■ Free (push) Information Messages. ■ Interactivity. ■ Feedback Drives.
Leverage Partner Networks				
Align Planning and Execution with Agricultural Cycle				

Following the steps of the customer from “unawareness” to “regular use” helps identify and understand bottlenecks within the adoption process. Each bottleneck needs to be addressed with relevant marketing activities designed to bring the customer to the next stage.



Examples of poster campaigns by M-Kilimo (Kenya) and IKSL (India)

A. Awareness phase

Any proposed Agri VAS is likely to constitute a new concept to target consumers. Therefore, expect initial awareness of the brand or value proposition to be extremely low. Further complicating the awareness stage are the low levels of media consumption and literacy rates in rural areas, making print advertising ineffective or redundant.

Things to consider in the awareness phase include:

- Does the service have a strong, relevant, memorable brand that is sensitive to the local culture and aesthetics of the target market? We know of at least one Agri VAS whose visual marketing had to be 'translated' from developed world-designed collateral into something more adapted for the visual traditions of its target audience after an initial rejection of its advertising campaign.
- Leveraging the existing brand of the MNO or agricultural partner organisations in rural areas may allow the service to build awareness and establish credibility in a swift, cost-efficient way, providing the MNO's brand is well-received in that community.
- How will the brand be visible to consumers? For regions with low literacy levels, these advertising messages need to be intuitively understood and should not be dependent purely upon text. Rather, image-based marketing channels should focus on trying to capture the value proposition of the product in simple, visual terms using people who are representative of the target market.
- Radio normally has the highest penetration rate among available media channels. Explore the possibility of collaborating with existing agriculture-related radio programmes to reduce the cost of airtime and optimise efficacy.

B. Understand Phase

Moving customers from awareness of the service to understanding the value proposition of the service is a complicated process and one best served, we find, by using experiential marketing techniques.

Attitudinal segmentation suggests that only a minority of any given market have a proclivity to take up new techniques and ideas. These people then become powerful exponents of

the product and influence adjacent segments, gaining crucial market penetration. For the service's value proposition to be clearly communicated, it is vital to have field agents who can demonstrate the product in action. These are (relatively) more costly as they rely upon face-to-face interaction and therefore require a trained sales force of mobile field staff. However, they have proved to be much more effective at successfully explaining the product to new customers and demonstrating its value than traditional channels.

It may be useful to explore partnerships with existing networks of field extension workers. An agricultural organisation, network of cooperatives or an NGO may have existing channels of communication to farming communities which already benefit from high levels of access and trust with the audience and can be leveraged for such campaigns. A more thorough understanding of a product's workings and value will also prevent customer churn and in this sense, experiential activity is good not only for customer acquisition but also for repeated usage.



Canopy marketing activity undertaken by IKSL field agent to local farmers.

C. Trial Phase

Experiential marketing techniques are important when it comes to encouraging customers to try the service. The focus should be on minimising the cost-barrier of service trials for prospective users and ensuring service trials are easily available in the rural areas.

Scheduling focused trial campaigns to coincide with the phases of the agricultural cycle might increase the effectiveness. For instance, right before harvesting, a marketing drive focused on the Agri VAS offering of up-to-date market information and access, coupled with a free trial and registration offer, could demonstrate the relevance and value of the service and drive customer acquisition.

D. Regular Usage

There is a crucial difference between buying a service or product and having one sold to you that is often over-looked at product launch. In the case of the former, the customer recognises the potential benefits, comprehends how to use it and acts upon this understanding. The latter case tends to result in a service being bought but not used. Indeed, converting 'fallow' customers to regular users is a big challenge for the majority of Agri VAS providers. Absolute numbers of subscribers do not necessarily indicate the actual demand for the service. Indeed, it's not uncommon for regular users to constitute less than 10% of a total subscriber database.

Regular usage comes after trust is built and value to the end user is demonstrated. Once the service is able to solve a particular issue for the user, they are more likely to come back and re-use the service.



Example

When mobile inputs insurance service, Kilimo Salama in Kenya, opened a customer care call-centre to support their insurance services, farmers seized upon the opportunity to call in with a raft of generic agriculture questions. This demand for agricultural tips and best-practice information was not anticipated by Kilimo Salama. However, they quickly saw the opportunity to expand the scope of their offering to include these types of service and reinforce their value and convenience to their customer base.

In this sense, a comprehensive customer relationship management (CRM) system that captures customer data and feedback would help service providers understand how subscribers are using the services. Clearer insight into usage patterns and an understanding of the user's in-demand information needs will enable the service to remain useful and relevant. This will have a concomitant and positive effect on usage frequency.

Additional Drivers of a Successful Marketing Campaign

Trust

- Trust is difficult to build. Farmers will only begin to trust a service after seeing it resolve real life issues. It may take multiple interactions of this nature to prove that the service is trustworthy.
- Trust is easy to break. Even a single negative experience can erode previously established trust, especially if it results in farm losses and impacts livelihood. Similarly the trust in the service's name could be ruined if it's used for aggressive or unrelated advertisement and sales of other products.
- Partners of the Agri VAS (and their brands) also have a direct impact on the development and maintenance of trust. Farmers have limited ability to differentiate between services provided by different partners under the same initiative, as overall perception is blended. It's important to ensure all stakeholders are committed to work to maintain and nurture consumer trust.

Partners/Roles

- Working with partners who have already established trustworthy relationships with farming communities allows the Agri VAS to benefit from these pre-extant positive relationships with the end user.
- There is no need to invest in assets that can be leveraged through partnerships. Scan the market: are there available distribution networks, strong consumer brands to leverage, established on-the-ground, face-to-face networks to use?

Gender Inclusion

- Women make up the majority of the agricultural labour force in many developing countries. How do planned marketing strategies incorporate female farmers? Female agents, female imagery and voice used in marketing messages help reach out to, and include, women.
- Men are often the decision makers in a farming household. How do planned marketing strategies educate male farmers on the value of the service to women?
- Explore the ecosystem: which partners could market and distribute the service to women farmers? What networks of female farmers exist and could be leveraged for marketing and distribution?