



THE MARKET

In most instances, if you're talking "books" in Kenya, you're talking Text Book Centre (TBC). The brand's major target market is kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, tertiary colleges and universities, professionals, libraries, offices, foreign missions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and government organisations. TBC's annual turnover for its last complete financial year was KSh 1.4 billion (20 million US dollars).

Product sales vary throughout the year as educational books are seasonal, based on the national school year and curriculum. Sales are promoted largely through newspaper advertisements, sales personnel and direct mail. The company currently controls about 20 percent of the market share in the educational books sector and holds a substantial share of the stationery trade.

While parallel imports provide a challenge to TBC, the ethos of offering quality products and providing excellent service has seen the company survive in what has become a competitive business.

TBC's policy is to reinforce its brand status in the book-selling industry through more professionally managed retail outlets located in the city environs, expanding to prime locations countrywide, and later spreading throughout East Africa. Management is looking at franchising the TBC brand as it strives to double turnover in the next five years. The brand is sensitive to dynamic market trends and is looking at embracing the ebook concept in the near future.

ACHIEVEMENTS

TBC made history in the 1970s for staging Kenyan's first-ever outdoor book festivals in Nairobi, Mombassa and Kisumu.

The brand has been a major sponsor of the

Kenyatta Prize for Literature from 1992 to date. This is an initiative designed to develop and enhance the value and status of creative writing in the country.

In 2005, TBC achieved a target turnover of KSh one billion, and was the first company in its field to have a fully stocked stationery section alongside a book selling section. TBC was also first to integrate the academia book section with general interest sections.

TBC has the largest and most diverse mix in a retail setting - 18 000 sq. ft of space for all types of books and stationery requirements. The brand was also the first to import specific and individual stationery requirements for customers.

HISTORY

TBC was founded in 1964 by two dynamic businessmen - Mr MJ Rughani and Mr SV Shah - to meet the book requirements of the increasing number of schools in newly independent Kenya. The company's provincial bookshops merged and moved to a central location in Nairobi to service bookshops across Kenya and neighbouring countries. The founding team was augmented by several people already trained as booksellers in the UK.

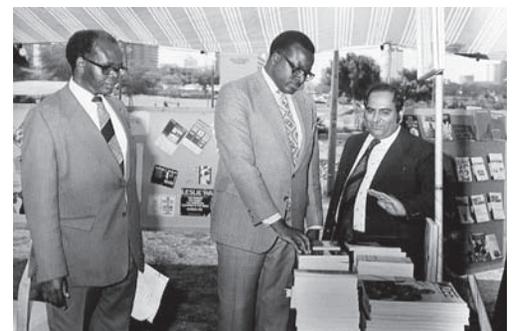
The bookshop began operating in 500 sq ft. premises on Kijabe Street, Nairobi, with five employees. Sales at that time could not even pay salaries and it took much marketing and travelling throughout the country to create awareness of the company's services. Financial constraints and difficulties at one point saw a partnership with EJ Arnold Publishers. Supply to neighbouring countries was initiated and fairly good business opportunities developed - but sadly, they failed due to payment defaults.

TBC however, continued to grow and undertook distributorships for UK publishers

and local authors wishing to take advantage of its distributional network. Stationery and general interest books were introduced in 1980. Four years later, TBC opened retail outlets in shopping malls.

From its modest start, TBC grew to acquire a plot of 5,000 sq ft in 1968 and later a further expansion of 5,000 sq ft as the wholesale business thrived countrywide. The company opened a retail branch on Kijabe Street for general interest books and later moved to a larger space at Sarit Centre shopping complex in 1984.

In the 2000s, the company increased its retail space at Sarit Centre to almost 10,000 sq ft and opened another branch in the same shopping centre that focused on professional books. TBC



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TBC

...much more than a Bookshop!

for School Supplies” and “Where Quality Counts”. The best of all for TBC - and now the corporate slogan - is: “Much More than a just a Bookshop....”

Direct mailing of the company catalogues to the educational fraternity has been the company stronghold for many years. The catalogue contains a full list of products and items available at the TBC shops. There has not been any pro-active marketing on the Internet as the majority of clients do not have access to computers.

BRAND VALUES

The TBC brand likes to be associated with service, quality, reputation and pricing. The brand promises to serve the needs of customers on time and is committed to educating, providing books to the nation and excellent pricing.

The “Much more than a bookshop....” and “Supermarket for school supplies” slogans are some of the motivational factors that reflect the company ethos. TBC has an in-house policy of ensuring it meets the needs of Kenya’s educational sector by stocking all current titles required.

now has over 70,000 sq ft of retail space and a staff complement of 150. The most recent growth has come through a distribution deal with Safaricom mobile phone air-time cards.

THE PRODUCT

The business deals mainly in school books for all levels from kindergarten to university level; professional books, academia and general interest books covering various interests including gardening, yoga, sports, Africana, cookery, self-help and motivation. Text Book Centre also stocks branded stationery products and is an agent for Rexel staplers, shredders, overhead projectors, box files, art material and office equipment.

The TBC branded products help provide education and knowledge and increase literacy in Kenya. Low mark-ups keep prices affordable, making it possible for millions of Kenyans to read and improve their education.

The company uses canvas and jute bags for the packing of books and stationery. These products are environmentally friendly and heavy duty, lasting longer.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

A completely comprehensive section of Information Technology (IT) products and supporting material

was recently introduced to the already vast TBC product range to complement the stationery and office requirements.

TBC’s largest retail outlet - 10,000sq ft - was revamped to make it more modern and consumer friendly. The company also introduced a new professional bookshop - the Academia Unit - with a view to serving the needs of professionals.

TBC’s most recent development is the cooperation agreement with mobile phone provider Safaricom to act as a product dealer.

PROMOTION

The brand is promoted through various channels across the media, except television where the company no longer advertises. Print includes *Nation* and *Standard* newspapers, while radio ads are flighted on *Capital FM*, *Kiss FM*, *East Fm*, *Sound Asia* and *Kameme FM*.

Other promotional activities include road shows in conjunction with radio stations and outdoor advertising which involves placing banners on main highways. Exhibitions at schools, universities and libraries and participating in book fairs every September and October are other ways in which the brand is promoted.

TBC’s original promotional slogan was “The Book Worm”. Others include “Supermarket



THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT TBC

- In the 1960s the Educational Inspectorate released a list of new lines and products, and TBC stocked the exact products. This led to the brand’s immediate popularity as other vendors did not stock these ranges
- The company retains consultants to help upgrade, modernise and revamp the company systems, retail outlets, reporting, stock keeping, IT, accounting and point-of-sale for the business, keeping TBC constantly abreast of modern business methods
- TBC offers continual in-house training courses for all levels of staff enabling them to keep up with current trends

