

MARKETING GUIDE



STUDENTS
ORGANISING FOR
SUSTAINABILITY
UNITED KINGDOM

MARKETING GUIDE

MARKETING YOUR SUSTAINABLE FOOD ENTERPRISE

WHAT IS MARKETING

Many people assume that marketing refers only to the promotional activities that an enterprise undertakes in order to sell their products e.g., advertising, promotional campaigns, social media activity. However, marketing can be so much more!

Marketing is the name we give to the whole process of meeting consumer needs - creating the right product, placing the product in the right place at the right time, for the right price, and making sure it is seen by the right people. It includes branding and product development, as well as creating strategies and promotional campaigns.

You could have the best viral ad campaign that is seen by millions, but if at the end the people who see that campaign are not interested in your product, then all that promotional activity will be wasted. So, getting it right for your enterprise is essential to success, therefore it is worth looking at the best possible ways to market your product to reach your customers.

Typical challenges for new enterprises in marketing their products can be:

- Product is failing to meet customer needs
- Ineffective branding
- Design or production faults
- Bad timing (luck?)
- Overestimates of market size
- Poor promotion or market position, and inefficient distribution

In this guide, we hope to provide you with a few tools and additional resources that can help you create an effective marketing strategy for your social enterprise.

WHERE TO START

Conducting market research will help lay the foundation for an effective marketing strategy. If you do not know what your customers like or dislike, it is all a gamble. If you have no idea of the size of your target market, how do you know how much you can sell? Market research falls into two main categories, primary- and secondary research.

Primary research is information you gather yourself, and this can include surveys (online or face-to-face), focus groups, interviews, product trials and test trading. Test trading means testing the viability your (new) product before launching it on a larger scale. This is a particularly useful method as you get to sell your test products and get direct feedback (people buy it or they don't).

Secondary research is generally desk based and uses other people's research such as population and demographic data or published market research e.g. academic reports, media reports of surveys.

Market research not only helps you decide on your product offer, but also helps you to analyse the trading environment.

THE MARKETING MIX

You can analyse what you learn from the market research and what you already know about the way your product interacts with your customers to create a marketing strategy that is effective and targeted. In the process of reviewing this marketing mix, themes and opportunities may appear, and links can become clear.

The marketing mix has traditionally taken the form of the 4Ps:

Product

- What do you sell? Products or services? What is in the range?
- What benefits to your customers do these products offer?
- What is your production capacity or limits on service availability?

Price

- What is your pricing strategy for each of your products? (See resources)

Place

- Where is your product sold?
- What is the marketplace? Where are you located within that marketplace compared to the competition.
- Do you need walk-by trade, do you need to go to people, or will people come to you?

Promotion

- A strategy to promote the product that meets the customers' needs in the marketplace at the right price.
- Sell the benefits to the consumer.
- What are your key messages?
- How will they be delivered to your target customers?

However, it is also possible to use the 4Cs to review your marketing mix from a customer viewpoint instead:

Customer

- What is the market you are serving? Can you describe the paying customers?
- Is it possible to "segment" the market into different types of customers?
- What needs or desires does your target customers want met?
- Is there a "typical customer" or different types of customers?
- What do you know about them?

Cost

- What is the cost to the customer? Consider more than the sale price. E.g. food delivery services target people who are cash rich but time poor, so are willing to pay for delivery/convenience as the time cost matters.
- Do they have to buy anything else to access your products?
- What is the cost for you to deliver?

Convenience

- How easy is it for customers to find you?
- How easy is it to buy your product, and can you make it easier?

Communication

- How does your target audience communicate? Instagram, Twitter or another channel?
- Communication is a 2-way process. How will you communicate with your customers?
- How can you capture customer needs and interests?

MARKET SEGMENTATION

Market segmentation means dividing a market into segments of customers who have something in common. By breaking the market into segments, it is possible to understand and respond to different interests and needs. For example, if you were to look at the population of a city, you can break that into segments by age, ethnicity, geographical location, socio-economic group etc.

You can also segment an existing market by the nature of their trading relationships. For example, a veg bag scheme that serves students and the local community could segment its market into:

- Volunteers/”Members”
- Students
- University staff
- Local community

In this example you could segment some of these groups even further. Students could be segmented by campus/faculty or by year to see if that reveals anything about buying habits.

When you segment your market, it can allow you to focus on a particular group within the market. Not only does it enable you to find out how many people are within that potential market, but it can also help you understand how best to target promotional activities and communication. You might find that one segment’s buying habits are very different from another. Different segments can receive tailored messages.



WRITING A MARKETING STRATEGY

Once you have done your research, got an overview over your market and have a clear vision of what you would like to achieve, it is time to make a marketing strategy for your enterprise. This can be something really simple to start off with, perhaps just thinking 2-3 months ahead of time. First, you have to decide whether you are going to opt for a customer-led or product-led strategy

A customer led strategy is designed to be responsive to customers' needs, interests and desires, and may lead to tweaking the product or pricing, giving people what they are already looking for. A customer led strategy will focus more on two-way communication and learning from customers.

A product led strategy on the other hand, is designed to prompt customers that they need or want the product. Understanding customer needs is still crucial, but the strategy will consider how to demonstrate to customers how the product contributes to meeting those needs. A product led strategy may focus more on advertising and sales strategies to convince the target market to buy the product or identify the right market to target.

A good marketing strategy will outline the strategic approach you intend to take and then provide detail of implementation, including costings and timescales.

BRANDING

When we use the term “brand” people will often assume that you are talking about an enterprise or product’s logo, but the logo that you see is just one facet of an enterprise’s branding. A ‘brand’ can also include messaging, the way that an enterprise communicates, how products are packaged and even where the products will or will not be sold.

Developing a brand is a process that involves identifying and projecting the core values of your enterprise or product. It also includes incorporating your vision (what you are trying to achieve) into your brand message. The aim of branding is to create the right perception for your target customers, to which you believe they will respond positively.

For example, providers of organic products will use words, images, colour choices and packaging materials that represent nature and the enterprise’s commitment to sustainability.

So why bother?

- A brand marks the enterprise as different.
- A brand serves to be memorable to the consumer and encourage repeat business.
- A brand is a way of forming a bond with customers which could lead to a conversation.
- A brand can also serve to reinforce and promote values and should tie in with your marketing strategy and business plan.

EXAMPLE:

Rice Up Wholefoods created a brand which encompasses their values as a vegan grocer and promoter of organic healthy foods which is run as a workers' co-operative. Along with their strapline "We're for a different world", their logo is used on aprons, throughout the shop, on the shop front (below) and on social media. Their use of reclaimed timber for the storefront (before it had become popular!) was part of their commitment to sustainability, sourced from a wood recycling project.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Marketing for Growth](#). Web content, templates and downloads from Co-operatives UK's The Hive, introducing marketing for co-operatives. Relevant for all social enterprises.
- Creating a [Marketing strategy and plan](#) from Birmingham and Solihull Social Economy Consortium.
- An overview of [market research methods](#).
- [SWOT analysis content and templates](#) from Businessballs.
- British Library guide to [Market segmentation](#).
- Wikipedia entry for [Market segmentation](#).
- Page from the Co-operatives UK's The Hive focusing on Marketing strategies. [Includes marketing plan template download](#).
- Chartered Institute of Marketing blog on [marketing strategy](#).
- Example marketing plan: [Whistlewood Common](#).
- [Video introduction to branding](#): Branding 101, understanding branding basics and fundamentals.
- [The Power of Branding](#) - introduction to branding from The Design Council.
- Blog from Chartered Institute of Marketing about [the meaning of brand](#)
- Chartered Institute of Marketing content including [top tips for improving branding](#).
- [Canva content on branding](#) including guidance on colour usage.

MARKETING GUIDE

Since 2017 SOS-UK's Student Eats programme has worked with almost 80 student and staff groups to help them establish sustainable food social enterprises on campus. These have included zero waste shops/stalls, vegbox schemes, growing to sell and food preserving enterprises, pay-as-you-feel cafes, beekeeping and many more.

We have been working with universities and colleges across the UK to bring social enterprise ideas to life. These enterprises have changed their local food systems and encouraged students and staff to choose ethical, healthy and affordable food.

Visit [SOS-UK](https://www.sos-uk.org) and learn more about setting up a [social enterprise](#), access additional resources and sign up to our [newsletter](#) for news and updates.

[WWW.SOS-UK.ORG/project/food-and-farming](https://www.sos-uk.org/project/food-and-farming)

Special thanks to Nathan Brown of Co-op Culture, for contributing to this document.



STUDENTS
ORGANISING FOR
SUSTAINABILITY
UNITED KINGDOM

