

The power of informal cinema

Distributing content to video halls



Key Findings

- Tapping into the video distribution network in order to reach small video hall operators in Uganda proved to be challenging: of the list of 1,000 registered video halls, only 185 could be reached for a brief interview.
- Among the 185 video hall operators surveyed, 96% purchase movies from video libraries, while 18% purchase movies from movie distributors (Twaweza partners).
- Only 16% of video hall operators had received a text message from distributors about the arrival of new movie titles, many of which had Twaweza messages inserted in them. Nevertheless 41% could recall showing videos with Twaweza messages inserted in them, and most reported a positive reaction to the messages from the audience.

Introduction

At Twaweza we remain convinced of the power of moving image as a behavioral change communications tool. The core determinant to action, or behavior change, of motivation is much more likely to be impacted by inspiring examples portrayed through video. Nonetheless, the data show us that the reach of television in East Africa is still limited.

In Uganda we decided to try to expand the reach of our video content focused on increasing motivation and efficacy for citizens by developing an innovative partnership centered on Uganda's ubiquitous video halls and commercial video distributors.

Dubbing over foreign films is a huge industry in Uganda and the VJs who do the dubbing develop their own local followings as celebrities in their own right. We worked with a partner, Home Needs Network, to insert short clips of Twaweza content into 240 distinct dubbed films. The VJs were also asked to insert references to the messages of this content into the audio for the films themselves.

These were then distributed for free to a database of 295 distributors in all 80 districts of Uganda, while 1000 video hall operators were notified that this content was available to buy at their local distributor or video library.



Methodology

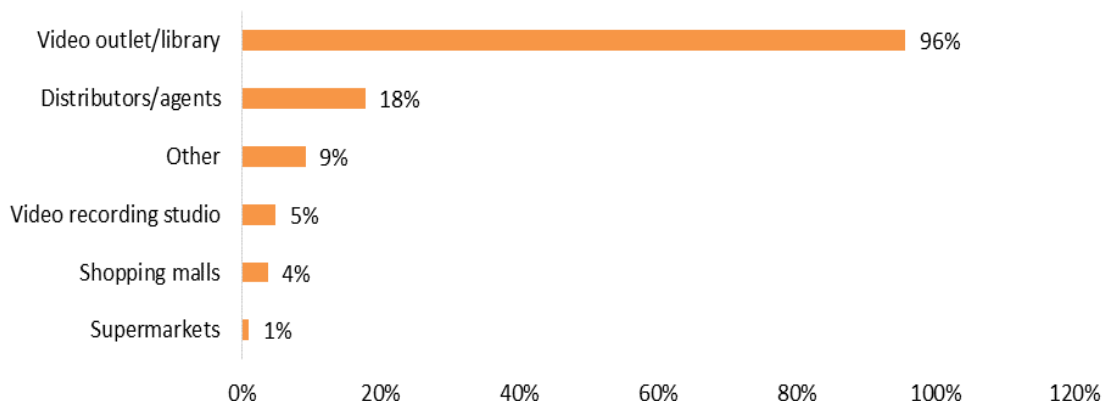
The aim of this exercise was to identify whether the DVDs reached the video halls as intended; to identify the most popular DVDs; and to clarify whether video hall operators got information about the arrival of new titles. Ipsos collected the data in Uganda through telephone interviews with video hall operators selected from a list of video halls that was provided by Twaweza. Out of a total of 1,000 video hall operators who were sent text messages, Twaweza randomly selected 300 numbers for this exercise. However, in total, only 185 video hall operators were reachable; they participated in this monitoring exercise.

Main Findings

The first important finding is the difficulty of obtaining and maintaining an up-to-date database of video operators. Twaweza had initially requested a sample of 300 interviews from the entire list of 1,000 contacts; in the attempt to reach the desired sample size, the survey agency called *all* the contacts, and was able to successfully conduct only 185 interviews. Part of the reason for this could be that video halls are small businesses which may turn over (appear and disappear) quickly, making it difficult to obtain a reliable database. On the other hand, the database could arguably be updated on a regular basis, to address the volatility of the trade.

The exercise showed that video operators purchase movies from various sources. The majority (96%) of the video operators said that they use video libraries for obtaining movies, while 18% also reported ordering videos from distributors. Figure 1 shows an overview of where video operators purchase their movies. Note that video hall operators can order from several sources. There is some possibility that the categorizations were not well understood – there isn't an entirely clear distinction, for example, between a video library and a distributor.

Figure 1: Places video operators purchase their movies that they show (n=185)



Video operators reported that within the last six months the TV show *24* was the most popular program (reported by 19% of operators), followed by *The Expendables* (15%) and *Jumong* (12%).

Despite confirmed transmission reports that showed monthly text messages about new titles being sent to video hall operators, only 16% of the operators recalled receiving any of these messages within the last six months (Figure 2a). Among those, about half said that, as a result of receiving this text message, they had purchased the advertised titles (Figure 2b). The low levels of receipt of these messages are of concern and are most likely related to the currency of the database of video hall operators, which had perhaps not been updated for some time.

Figure 2a: Respondents who have received a SMS within the last 6 months (n=185)

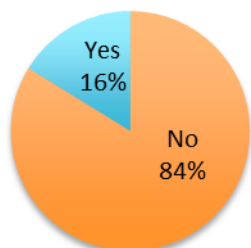
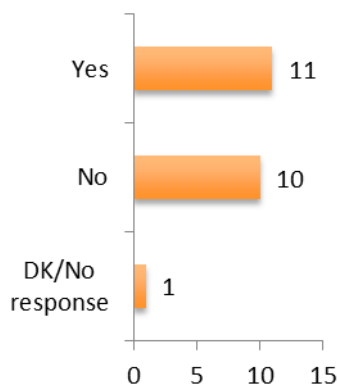
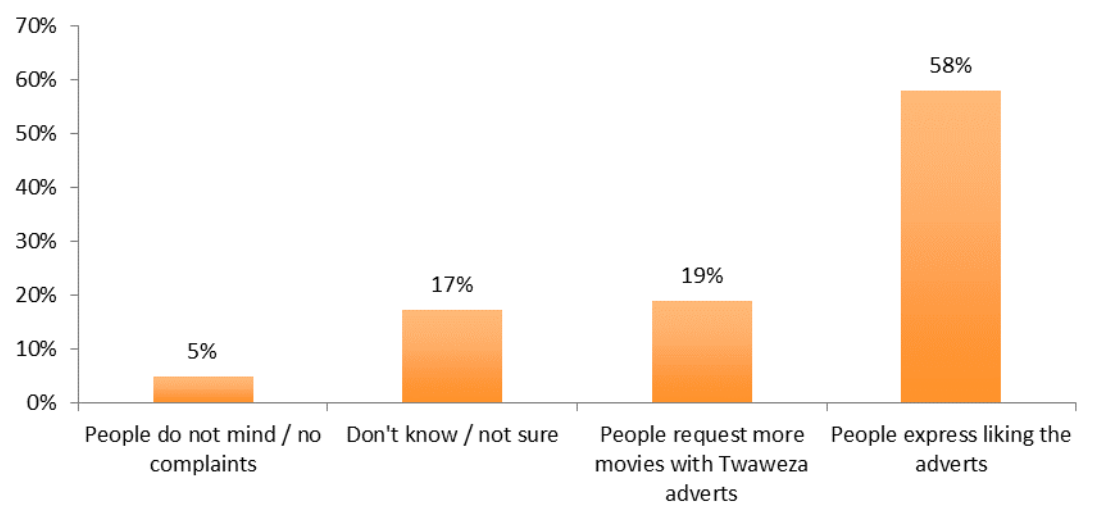


Figure 2b: Total number of respondents who have bought a DVD as result of receiving SMS (n=22)



Although few respondents had received a text message, 41% of 185 the interviewed video hall operators had, within the last six months, screened a video that contained public service announcements from Twaweza (data not shown). Furthermore, 77% of those who had showed videos with Twaweza messages in them could recall getting a reaction from the audience. As Figure 5 also shows, there was, overall, a positive response to these messages, although part of the positive response could be due to courtesy bias (that is, the respondent reporting positive impression out of politeness).

Figure 5: Reactions amongst customers in the video halls to the Twaweza messages (n=58)



Conclusion

There is no doubt that video halls reach where standard television generally does not, and Twaweza has been trying to find ways to tap into this distribution chain for some time. Providing videos directly to video halls had prohibitively high costs associated in terms of sourcing and copying the DVDs. We also felt that this was not a sustainable way to distribute video content and were looking for ways to integrate our content more seamlessly into the chain of video distribution. Using the distributors seemed like a sensible option, and we were drawn by the fact that it was a commercial transaction. However there are clearly issues in the method currently used, including the difficulty of obtaining an up-to-date database of small video halls. Furthermore, it is hard to predict what videos will be sold in any given month, and video distributors do not keep strong records of the sales of individual items. There is also no guarantee that the video halls will purchase the particular titles provided by Twaweza. Nevertheless, in the sample of the 185 interviewed video hall operators, 4 out of 10 had recalled screening a video with Twaweza messages, suggesting a reasonably high level of reach. If Twaweza continues to target video halls for the spread of key messages, it may be useful to understand more about the video delivery mechanisms as well as to think of new, and cost-effective, ways working with video hall operators more directly in the future.