

SOCIAL MARKETING: AN APPROACH TO SOCIAL CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

Social marketing is educating people to adopt such behaviors that will make them healthier or happier. The purpose of creating positive social change and making the world a better place. Companies use social marketing to understand and connect with their audience by addressing the values, needs and desires that motivate them. Social marketing uses the same tools and techniques of commercial marketing, but its purpose is to bring about positive health and social change rather than focusing on sales or funds raised as the ultimate outcome; Social marketing's bottom line is behavior change. By using social marketing methods, one can boost the effectiveness of programs and activities that are the reason organization exists in the first place—to make a difference. Social marketing provides innovative solutions to many of the world's most pressing problems, from HIV/AIDS to global warming. Social marketing uses the benefits of doing social good to secure and maintain customer engagement. In social marketing the social good is the primary focus, and it is not a secondary outcome. Not all public sector and not-for-profit marketing is social marketing.

Keywords: Society, Commercial marketing, Behavior Change, Health, Social 4P's

INTRODUCTION

Social marketing is the systematic application of marketing, along with the other concepts and techniques, to achieve specific behavioral goals for a social good. Social marketing can be applied to promote merit goods, or to make a society avoid demerit goods and thus promote society's well being as a whole. For example, this may include asking people not to smoke in public areas, asking them to use seat belts, or prompting to make them follow speed limits. Although "social marketing" is sometimes seen only as using standard commercial marketing practices to achieve non-commercial goals, this is an oversimplification. The primary aim of social marketing is "social good", while in "commercial marketing" the aim is primarily "financial". This does not mean that commercial marketers can not contribute to achievement of social good. Over the past 30 years, social marketing has been used successfully to increase health care and health education program, improve client satisfaction, and achieve social and individual health behavior change. It has been effective in increasing contraceptive use, reducing blood pressure, increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables, and increasing public awareness of the association between certain risk factors and particular health conditions. The term social marketing was first coined by Kotler and Zaltman in 1971 to refer to the application of marketing to the solution of social and health problems. Marketing has been remarkably

successful in encouraging people to buy products such as CocaCola and Nike trainers, so, the argument runs; it can also encourage people to adopt behaviours that will enhance their own - and their fellow citizens' - lives. Many social and health problems have behavioral causes: the spread of AIDS, traffic accidents and unwanted pregnancies are all the result of everyday, voluntary human activity. The most dramatic example of this is tobacco use, which kills one in two smokers (Peto 1994) - an estimated 6 million people in the UK alone since the health consequences were first established in the early 1950's. Social marketing provides a mechanism for tackling such problems by encouraging people to adopt healthier lifestyles. Social marketing, like generic marketing, is not a theory in itself. Rather, it is a framework or structure that draws from many other bodies of knowledge such as psychology, sociology, and anthropology and communication theory to understand how to influence people's behaviour (Kotler and Zaltman, 1971). Like generic marketing, social marketing offers a logical planning process involving consumer oriented research, marketing analysis, market segmentation, objective setting and the identification of strategies. Marketing is sometimes seen as antithetical to public health, but applying its principles can serve to effectively promote public health goals. This course explores how social marketing can promote and influence public health behaviours, including applications to tobacco control, safer sex practices, and reductions in drinking and driving. As a marketing discipline, social marketing is consumer-orientated and promotes mutually beneficial exchanges. A marketing strategy commonly involves specifying target markets and establishing a corresponding marketing mix, which is commonly broken down into four classes known as the 4Ps (i.e., product, price, place, and promotion). It is important for those in public health to recognise that marketing is much broader in scope than advertising or promotion.

Defining Social Marketing

Social marketing has been defined as "the application of commercial marketing technologies to the analysis, planning, execution, and evaluation of programs designed to influence the voluntary behavior of target audiences in order to improve their personal welfare and that of their society" (Andreasen, 1995). This definition encompasses several key aspects of the social marketing approach; it is seen as:

1. A focus on behavior, not awareness or attitude change
2. Results in a benefit to individuals and/or society; is not focused on profit and organizational benefits as commercial marketing practices are
3. An approach centered on the target audience's having a primary role in the process, and more and more audience's having an interactive, not one way, role in the program.
4. One that considers the competitive landscape and plans for ways to manage the competition
5. One that considers how each element of the marketing mix could be applied to the situation and selects the best elements to address based on goals and resources.
6. Divides large audience groups into smaller segments for the purpose of finding and addressing common benefits and barriers.

Most social marketing efforts are applied to:

- **Improving public health** (e.g. HIV/AIDS, tobacco use, obesity, teen pregnancy, tuberculosis)
- **Preventing injuries** (e.g., traffic collisions, domestic violence, senior falls, drowning)
- **Protecting the environment** (e.g., water quality, air quality, water conservation, habitat protection)
- **Contributing to communities** (e.g., voting, volunteering, crime prevention)

The Social Marketing Mix

When social marketers develop a program strategy, we should consider the same elements of the marketing mix as commercial marketers. However, the social marketing mix has to be adjusted somewhat to take into account the unique nature of the types of products and environments with which we work. The marketing concepts of product, price, place and promotion are also important components of social marketing efforts.

- **Product** is the thing you are marketing. In commercial marketing the products are almost always tangible goods or services. In social marketing terms, the product is usually the behavior or action being promoted. The social marketing product is not usually a tangible item, though it can be (e.g., condoms). Generally, social marketers are trying to sell a particular behavior. While you may be promoting a life-saving or life-improving practice, quite often social marketing behaviors are things that people don't particularly want to do—eat more fiber, conserve water, exercise, and get a colonoscopy.
- **Price** is the cost of the product or service. The price in a social marketing campaign is the giving part of the exchange. What does the person give up in exchange for the benefits of the new behavior or action? The price in social marketing efforts is more often time, effort, comfort or some other non-monetary cost. The strategic issue here is to figure out how to reduce the price as much as possible and make it easy and stress-free to perform the behavior
- **Place** is where the product or action is available or takes place. For example, if a social marketing campaign asks people to recycle their used motor oil, how convenient do the project sponsors make it for people to recycle? Do they have to drive a few blocks to a neighborhood parts store? Do they have to travel several miles to a landfill or other recycling center? If a project calls for people to pick up after their pets on public trails near the river, those trails become the place. However, part of the place is having the bags and waste receptacles conveniently located so people are more likely to do the action.
- **Promotion** refers to the mediums used by campaign sponsors to get the message to the target audiences. Social marketing success often hinges on determining and using the proper mix of communication channels. Social marketers may need to be very creative in the ways we promote our products to these hard-to-reach populations, such as those who are homeless, illegal immigrants, drug users, or sex workers.

The Social Marketing Process

Once you've understood the public's attitudes, recognized society's trends, and reconciled your concerns with the concerns of your audience, you're ready to begin building your social marketing plan. There are six basic steps in the social marketing process. Every step should be committed to paper for future reference:

Step 1 - Getting Started

Define your issue and research its key details. Learn all you can about the subject. Then assess your resources, the things in your favour. Remember public attitudes and society's trends as you do this. Something that was a valuable resource a decade ago may now be a liability.

Step 2 - Planning and Developing Your Strategy

Identify your target audience, establish your goals and objectives identify the benefits to you and your audience, and select the techniques you'll use to assess your progress. You must be very careful at this stage. Being honest with yourself and realistic about your objectives is essential.

Step 3 - Develop Your Materials and Activities

Decide what your message will be. Then plan the media activities, special events and other promotions that will help communicate the message.

Step 4 - Write Your Communication Plan

This is the 'make or break' point. Carefully review everything you've done so far and note the following: issue; goal; objectives; target audience; benefits to audience; delivery methods; resources; potential problems; indicators of success; and assessment methods. Then set a manageable time frame for the program. This is your road map. It must be written down.

Step 5 - Implement the Plan

Prepare the launch of your campaign. Work with community leaders to help ensure your message is at least considered by the people who count. As the plan unfolds, don't hesitate to review and revise as necessary. Nothing is so damaging as going ahead with something you know is flawed.

Step 6 - Measure Your Results

Here's where you find out if it worked. Write an honest, detailed assessment report. This can help pinpoint both the weak and strong points for any future campaigns.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Social marketing evolved in parallel with commercial marketing. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, marketing academics considered the potential and limitations of applying marketing to new arenas such as the political or social. Luck (1974) objected on the grounds that replacing a tangible product with an idea or bundle of values threatened the economic exchange concept. Others feared the power of the marketing, misconceiving its potential for social control and propaganda (Lacziack et al 1979). Despite these concerns, the marketing concept was redefined to include the marketing of ideas and the consideration of its ethical implications. During the 1960s, commercial marketing technologies began to be applied to

health education campaigns in developing countries (Ling et al 1992, Manoff 1985). In 1971, Kotler and Zaltman published their seminal article in the Journal of Marketing 'Social marketing: an approach to planned social change'. This was the first time the term "social marketing" had been used and is often heralded as its birth. They defined social marketing as "the design, implementation and control of programs calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas and involving considerations of product planning, pricing, communication, distribution and marketing research." (p5). In practice, social marketing was being explored by a number of people at the same time, including Paul Bloom, Karen Fox, Dick Manoff, and Bill Novelli. Early examples of social marketing emerged during the 1960s as part of international development efforts in third world and developing countries (Manoff 1985, Walsh et al 1993). For example, family planning programs in Sri Lanka moved away from clinical approaches and examined the distribution of contraceptives through pharmacists and small shops (Population Services International 1977). They began to experiment with marketing techniques such as audience segmentation and mass communication. Similarly, oral rehydration projects in Africa began to take a more consumer oriented approach to programme development. Important initiatives in the developed world included the Stanford Heart Disease Prevention Program, the National High Blood Pressure Prevention Program, and the Pawtucket Heart Health Program (Farquar et al 1985, National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute 1973, Lefebvre 1987). While many of these early programs were primarily exercises in social communications, they were important for the inception of social marketing. By the 1980s, the question was not if marketing should be applied to social issues, but rather how should this be done? During this period, practitioners shared their experiences and made suggestions for the development of social marketing theory and practice (Ling et al 1992). Fox and Kotler (1980) described the evolution of social advertising into social communications. Bloom (1980) explored the evaluation of social marketing projects and found that many studies were poorly designed and conducted. In 1981, Bloom and Novelli reviewed the first ten years of social marketing and advocated more research to dispel criticism that social marketing lacked rigour or theory. They identified a need for research to examine audience segmentation, choosing media channels and designing appeals, implementing long term positioning strategies, and organisational and management issues (Bloom and Novelli, 1981). Lefebvre and Flora (1988) and Hastings and Haywood (1991, 1994) then gave social marketing widespread exposure in the public health field, generating lively debates about its applicability and contribution.

CONCLUSION

Social marketing has been successful at changing a wide range of health behaviors, especially in the domains of tobacco use, nutrition and physical activity, and HIV/AIDS. Social marketers have become increasingly adept at using commercial marketing strategies to craft competing messages and reduce the percentage of children and adolescents responding to commercial messages. In some cases, despite their relatively small budgets and slender resources, social marketers have been successful at taking market share away from the commercial sector. For successful marketing of programs and ideas, the direction in which society is moving should be understood. Recognizing public attitudes will help implement a solid social marketing program. The basic objective underlying every program is that the public wants to know how it will benefit them.

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