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A cause for concern



Companies are increasingly jumping on the CSR bandwagon, without familiarising themselves with the ins and outs of social marketing.

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, anthropology and communication theory, to understand how to influence people behaviour (*Kotler and Zaltman, 1971*). Like generic marketing, social marketing offers a logical planning process involving consumer-oriented research, marketing analysis, market segmentation, objective settings and the identification of strategies and tactics. It is based on the voluntary exchange of costs and benefits between two or more parties (*Kotler and Zaltman, 1971*).

Social Marketing is a planned process for influencing change. However, it is more difficult than generic marketing, involving changing intractable behaviour in complex economic, social and political climates with, often, very limited resources (*Lefebvre and Flora, 1988*). Furthermore, while for generic marketing, the ultimate goal is to meet shareholder objectives, for the social marketer, the bottom line is to meet society's desire to improve its citizen's quality of life. This is much more ambitious — and more blurred — bottom line.

There is still a fairly common misconception that social marketing is simply advertising, public relation and the slick packaging of communications material.

Almost as common is the negative reaction to the very idea of marketing, the attitude which holds that marketing is an intrusive, manipulative, morally suspect device used to benefit the few at the expense of the many, and that its aims and practice must necessarily be antithetical to those of social cause. Yet, regardless of its connections to the endless merry-go-round chase of spending and getting, getting and spending of consumer society, marketing is, in fact, a neutral methodology; a methodology which organizations with a social cause can use to help them better achieve a social effect.

Before proceeding further, let us pause and see what it takes to change behaviour. People are unlikely to change their behaviour — especially if they are comfortable with it — unless certain conditions are met. Following are eight conditions* which must be present for a person to change his/her given behaviour:

- The person forms a strong positive intention or makes a commitment to perform the behaviour.
- There are no environment constraints that make it hard for the behaviour to occur.
- The person possesses the skills necessary to perform the behaviour.
- The person believes that the advantages (benefits, anticipated positive outcomes) of performing the behaviour outweighs the disadvantages (cost-anticipated negative outcomes), producing a positive attitude towards performing the behaviour.
- The person perceives more normative pressure to perform the behaviour than not to perform the behaviour.
- The person perceives that performance of the behaviour is consistent with his or her self image and that it does not violate personal standards.
- The person's emotional reaction to performing the behaviour is more positive than negative.
- The person perceives that he or she has the capability to perform the behaviour under a number of different circumstances. In other words, the person has "self-efficacy" with respect to executing the behaviour in question.

(*Fishbein, M — *Developing Effective Behaviour Change Intervention: Some lessons learned from behavioural research*)

BOX 1 : TYPE OF SOCIAL CHANGE, BY TIME AND LEVEL OF SOCIETY

	Micro Level (Individual Consumer)	Group Level (Organization or Group)	Macro Level (Society)
Short-Term Change	Behaviour Change	Change in Norms/ Administrative Change	Policy Change
	e.g. Attendance at stop smoking clinic	Removal of tobacco advertising from outside	Banning of all forms of tobacco marketing a school
Long-Term Change	Lifestyle Change	Organizational Change	Socio-cultural evolution
	e.g. Smoking cessation	Deter retailers from selling cigarettes to minor	Eradication off all tobacco related disease

The development of Social Marketing

Social marketing evolved in parallel with commercial marketing. During the late 1950's and early 1960's, marketing academics considered the potential and limitations of applying marketing to new arenas, such as the political or social.

In 1971, Kotler & 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" has been used and is often heralded as its birth. They defined social marketing as 'the design, implementation and controls of programs calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas and involving considerations of product planning, pricing, communication, distribution and marketing research.'

Many of the early exercises in social communication came handy for the inception of social marketing. In 1980, academics were no longer asking if marketing should be applied to social issue, but, rather, how should this be done?

Elements of Social Marketing

A social marketing campaign or program contains the following elements:

- A consumer orientation;
- An exchange; and,
- A long-term planning outlook.

The consumer is assumed to be an active participant in the change process. The social marketer seeks to build a relationship with target consumer over time and their input is sought at all stages in the development of a program through formative, process and evaluative research.

Marketing is exchange between two willing parties.



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Exchange in social marketing puts a key emphasis on voluntary behaviour. To facilitate voluntary exchange, social marketers have to offer people something that they really want. Social marketing has a long-term outlook based on continuing programs rather than one off campaigns. It should be strategic rather than tactical.

Commercial marketing's Four Ps — Product, Price, Place, and Promotion — can be seen in successful social marketing campaigns.

- The Product may be a change in behaviour, or support for a new program or policy.
- The Price may be breaking with tradition, or giving up a comfortable belief or habit.
- The Place is where people can embrace a program or pursue a new course of conduct.
- Promotion is the means used to communicate messages and images justifying the change and making it appealing.

Social Marketing seeks to influence the behaviour not only of individuals but also of groups, organisations and societies. Levy and Zaltman (1975) suggest a six-fold classification of the types of change sought in social marketing, incorporating two dimensions of time (short-

term and long-term) and three dimensions of level in society (micro, group, and macro). In this way, social marketing influences not just the individual but also the environment in which they operate. (See Box 1: Type of social change, by the time and level of society)

The above can also be looked in the form of five additional 'P's for social marketing, which are:

Partnership: Social issues are often so complex that one agency cannot make a dent by itself. One needs to tie up with other groups.

Policy: It is difficult to sustain individual's motivation for behaviour change until the environment around him supports the change in the long run. For this, policy change is required.

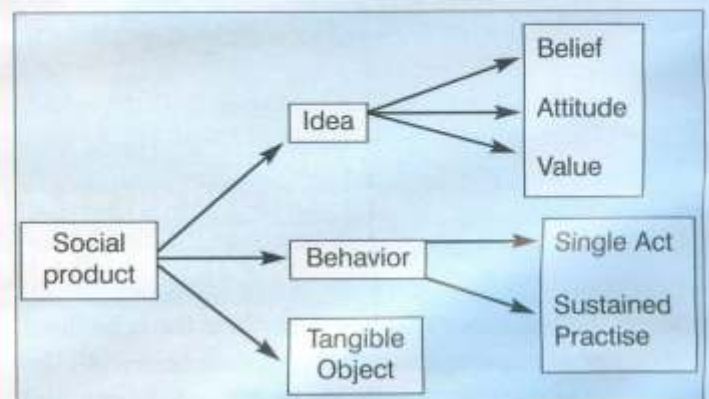
Politics: To handle sensitive issues, political diplomacy is a must.

Persistence: It needs to be persistent with its consumer.

Patience: To see new traditions take the place of the old.

Departure from Commercial Marketing

In social marketing, the products tend to be more complex. The product is extended from physical to tangible to encompass ideas and behaviour change. Following picture (adopted from Kotler and Roberto) depicts different types of product:



- The complexity makes social marketing products difficult to conceptualize. As a consequence, social marketers have a bigger task in defining exactly what their product is and the benefits associated with its use.
- There is negative demand for the social marketing product: Drug users may see no problems with their current behaviour. The product benefits are intangible and relevant to society rather than the individual, and it is in such situation that social marketers have to work much too hard to generate a need for the product.

- Social marketers often target groups who are least accessible, hardest to reach and least likely to change their behaviour. This poses considerable challenge for segmentation and targeting.
- Their level of involvement with the existing product and consumer is very intense or very low, e.g. drinking problem on one hand and saving water on the other.
- Inertia is the most powerful competitor in social marketing. Commercial marketing is the biggest competition as far as tobacco and liquor are concerned.
- Social marketing has to often deal with highly sensitive issues and everyone is an expert on social subjects
- High level of public scrutiny is there as for as social marketing is concerned
- Budget is always a constraint in social marketing projects
- Social marketing projects are difficult to evaluate or monitor progress
- Most behaviour patterns require immediate cost/change but promise only long-term benefits. E.g. stopping smoking will result in longer life.
- Decision making is participative between consumer and the organization in social marketing
- Social Marketing's goals are huge, e.g. making everyone of the target population use condoms

Not all social marketing works, and there are reasons why so much of it fails. Sometimes it fails because, simply, one does not have the leverage needed to change an ingrained attitude or behaviour — the time, money or energy required to overcome inertia, heredity or human chemistry.

Sometimes, it fails simply because of communication failure; communication to whom and what can either break or make social marketing. So, social marketing can help mobilize support for policy changes by targeting audience affected by alcohol, or other drug-related problem, but whose behaviour is not the cause of it, e.g., people who realize their health is threatened by 'second hand smoke' often become a powerful source for support for new laws limiting cigarette smoking in public places and at their work place.

Messages based on fear may be used cautiously, if at all. Research has indicated that campaigns based on fear are difficult to carry out and may actually be counterproductive by appealing to risk taking in some members of the target audience. If the threat is too strong, people may tune out the message, refuse to believe it, or adopt a fatalistic attitude.

BOX 2 : PERSUASION

Commercial Marketing	Social Marketing
Builds on existing action tendencies/satisfy existing wants (accepts wants as given)	Has to create action tendencies/change what people want
"Choose ours" — it suits you better than the competitors	"Don't do this" (STOP) or "Do this not that" (STAR)
Carry on choose ours MODIFY slightly	"Change" by Motivating action tendencies or Change the environment supporting undesirable tendencies

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Last but not the least; ethics have a very important role in social marketing. One of the major concerns of social marketing is the raising of expectations and aspirations without providing the necessary supportive environment. Social marketers must apply three different ethical criteria, which are implied in the following question: "Did the program ethically cause a right or desirable change in a right or desirable way?"

- The first criterion concerns the ethical consequence of a program's impact.
- The second criterion — "right change" — refers to the rightness or desirability of the program's objective. For example, the ethical character of the segmentation and targeting of groups.
- The third criterion — "the right way" — refers to the ethical issue of selecting proper means to achieve the program's objective.

Social marketers must regard themselves as being ethically responsible for all aspects of their social marketing efforts, because they deal with the issues that are real and meaningful. Then only social marketing will continue to find ways to give articulate, sustained and empowering voice to these issues, and to make them a more dynamic and relevant force in our collective lives.

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