

SOCIAL MARKETING: CONCEPT AND APPLICATION

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Abstract — the author argues that social marketing has been defined improperly in much of the literature. A revised definition is proposed and the domain of social marketing defined. An example of a social marketing campaign (smoking during pregnancy) is shown to better explain the various factors, including the marketing mix, that come into play when social marketing is applied.

Keywords—social marketing, behaviour, marketing technologies, society, programs.

INTRODUCTION

It is clear that the term *social marketing* is now a well-established part of the marketing vocabulary in universities, government agencies, private nonprofit organizations, and private for-profit firms. [1-10]. However, it is still undergoing the constant improvement that is inherent in any field. This paper seeks to better capture the concept that is social marketing and includes an example that which links the central factors of social marketing together with the marketing mix and additional factors that are applied to better drive home the point.

RESEARCH METHOD

The review centric research approach in which a researcher reviews “existing theory and research” [11] p. 506, The focus is on combining the most important “previously established studies and concepts that I have identified in the academic literature based on which I provide a synthesis that advances our understanding” [11] p. 507”. This was carried out in conjunction with historical research [12-18] which looks at previous events that occurred in publications such as articles, journal etc. and try to establish a sense of the background concerning the topic discussed.

BACKGROUND

There have been critics of the expansion of marketing beyond its traditional private sector origins from the beginning (cf. Bartels 1974; Luck 1974). Nevertheless, the need to introduce the marketing concept to non-commercial entities, e.g. churches, trusts and charities, was stressed [19]. Thus, social

marketing was used by non-commercial organizations to market their cause and product to gain financial, political and social support. However, today, a great many scholars and practitioners now see social marketing as a viable subject of research, teaching, and practice. Social marketing applies marketing knowledge, concepts and techniques to increase social and economic ends. It is also concerned with the analysis of the social consequence of marketing policies, decisions and activities. [20] coined the term *social marketing* for their definition of “the design, implementation and control of programmes calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas and involving considerations of product, planning, pricing, communication, distribution and marketing research.” This is deemed as the origin of social marketing [21]. A recent definition and more accurate description has been put forward as the “adaptation of commercial technologies to programs designed to influence the voluntary behaviour of target audiences to improve their personal welfare and that of the society of which they are a part” [2]. Social marketing is very dependent on feedback about customer needs and research pertaining to customer’s perception of the organization’s cause e.g. exercise. The product or service espoused by the social marketing campaign should be rooted in values, be well-understood by the public and trustworthy. This is in accordance to the goal of social marketing to motivate people to adapt socially beneficial behaviours. Intended behaviours prescribed by social marketing have been communicated in such form as events, publications and mass media. The internet has served as a boon to social marketing as organizations can apply results from their research and get fast feedback from their target audience. There have been studies to evaluate the application of social marketing through the internet by the use of websites [22]

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY MODELS

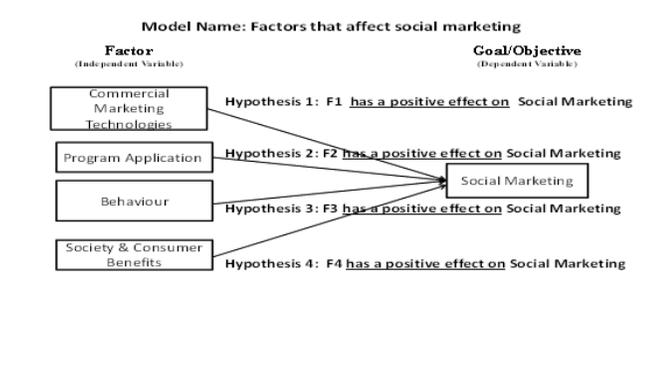


Fig. 1 – Path Diagram Showing the Factors That Affect Social Marketing

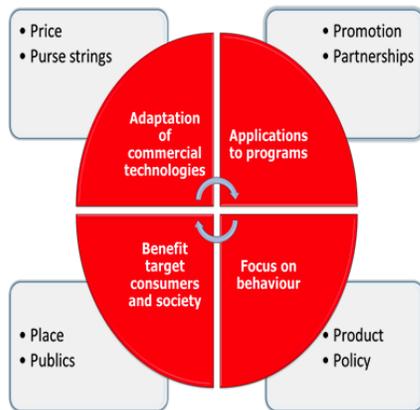


Fig. 2 - Model Showing the Relationship between the Variables and Additional Factors

Fig. 1 is further analyzed thus:

1) Goal/Dependent Variable (Social Marketing)

Goal: “Social marketing is the adaptation of commercial marketing technologies to programs designed to influence the voluntary behavior of target audiences to improve their personal welfare and that of the society of which they are a part (Andreasen, 1994) p.1”. [23-27]

2) Independent Variable 1 (Commercial Marketing Technologies)

IV1: “Social marketing is an adaptation of **commercial marketing technologies** (Andreasen, 1994) p.3”. [28-32]. The internet has ushered in the use of technology for the dissemination of information intended by the social marketing. This is carried out through email, websites etc. There is also the role that marketing engineering [33-35] plays in the execution of a practical medium with which to direct the myriad of activities that constitute the social marketing campaign. An example of such marketing technology is

customer relationship management (CRM) software. CRM [36-45] is responsible for creating and maintaining the two way communication between an organization and its customers during their interactions about a particular product.

3) Independent Variable 2 (Program Application)

IV2: “Social marketing is **applied to programs** (Andreasen, 1994) p.3”. [26, 46-51] that are targeted at a specific set of people. These programs can range from abolishing drunk driving, protected sex, weight loss and non-smoking. They are usually carried out by non-profit organizations, governmental bodies and, in some cases, for-profit corporate organizations.

4) Independent Variable 3 (Behaviour)

IV3: “The “bottom line” of social marketing is **behaviour change** (Andreasen, 1994) p.3”. [52-56]. The goal of any social marketing campaign is the alteration of a particular behaviour for the positive benefit of a targeted group of individuals. This is usually done by casting the behaviour in question under a positive or negative glare.

5) Independent Variable 4 (Society and Consumer Benefits)

IV4: “Social marketing programs **benefit either individuals or society** (Andreasen, 1994) p.4.” [57-70]. Such campaigns as “HIV awareness” by The Guardian Health Association Inc. are carried out to educate the populace on the damning effect of HIV to the individual. The end beneficiaries are always the consumer and the society at large.

Fig.2 shows the relationships between the independent variables and several factors included in the marketing process including the four P’s of the marketing mix: Product, Price, Place and Promotion. The example used to bring all this relationships together is the non-smoking during pregnancy campaign that is carried out by the Child Health Foundation. The variables are singled out and explained with their factors as follows:

1) Adaptation of Commercial Technologies (Price, Purse Strings): Price can be communicated through emails; websites etc. which are used to spread the consequences of smoking during pregnancy as this can lead to damaging and lasting effects to the unborn child’s development. Next are the purse strings. These are the people or organizations to be elicited for funds as it is hardly possible for any endeavor to be carried out without funds. Again, we can see the use of emails, websites and CRM sites to communicate the need for funding to interested stakeholders like the American Cancer Foundation.

2) Application to Programs (Promotion, Partnerships): The idea of social marketing is to spread the message! Hence, promotion is integral. This can be done through websites, online ads, posters, word of mouth, and media e.g. television,

radio, magazines and so forth. The Child health Foundation had a site and online ads that showed the message, in both images and words, of the dangers associated with and the advantages of abstaining from smoking during pregnancy. The author has also encountered online ads and sites that show, quite profoundly, the dangers of smoking during pregnancy. Partnerships should be readily made and utilized to further spread the message. Likely partners are clinics, hospitals, national women's groups, corporate organizations, media houses etc.

3) Focus on behaviour (Product, Policy): The end goal of social marketing to stimulate or stop the action of a particular behaviour being exhibited by a target audience. Hence, the product of the non-smoking campaign is the prevention of smoking during pregnancy. Policies enacted on a particular behaviour either serve to strengthen or weaken that behaviour. The federal government, for example, can increase funding to cancer research and enact policies that help support the message of the campaign i.e. non-smoking during pregnancy. This is one of the reasons why social campaigners should endeavor to reach the ears and capture the hearts of lawmakers!

4) Benefits to Target Consumers and Society (Place, Publics): A positive lasting benefit is what is being sought for the good of the targeted populace (in these case, pregnant women). Location, even in our internet age, of the message is very important. Significant places include hospitals, clinics, mobile vans, buses, trains, workplaces etc. This is what accounts for place in our marketing mix. Publics are the audience being sought out to be addressed i.e. the pregnant women. Also, people who have some form of influence on our interested demographic. These include husbands, other family members, physicians, TV hosts, policymakers, co-workers etc.

IMPORTANCE OF MODEL/NEW INSIGHT

The models clearly show important variables and factors in the social marketing process. A graphical and therefore more understandable relationship between these various factors and social marketing was thus illustrated. Model B in particular can help people or organizations who engage in social marketing better understand how these different factors come into play. Technology has also made it infinitely easier to track the effect social marketing campaigns have on a particular demographic and helps in easier application of methods designed to better penetrate an area with low feedback for example. Social marketing has a fair chance to fulfill the great potential many of us believe that it has for doing "social good" if this information is assimilated and applied.

CONCLUSION

A clear, accepted definition will ensure that social marketing is applied where it is appropriate and withheld where it is not. And it will ensure that those carrying out social marketing are not misapplying its basic tenets. As noted in the models

shown, marketing engineering is absolutely essential to the commercial marketing technologies that are being used to create, reinforce and track the exchanges of information that go on between the campaign and its sponsors and customers. . A practical look at the application of social marketing being used by a non-profit, public charity has also deepened an understanding of the various processes engaged and how the end result can be of benefit to the target audience.

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