

ADROIT PRACTICES OF SOCIAL MARKETING IN INDIA: THEORETICAL STANDPOINT

Kalyani Divya¹ and Koppala Venugopal²

1. Student, Department of MBA, Aditya Institute of Technology and Management, Tekkali, Srikakulam

2. Professor, Department of MBA, Aditya Institute of Technology and Management, Tekkali, Srikakulam

Abstract: *In order to supply goods and services more effectively and efficiently than the competition, social marketing takes into account the interests, requirements, and wants of the target market. This helps to maintain and improve society's well-being. Social marketing is the process where marketing concepts and practises are used to develop, convey, and provide value to influence target audience behaviour in a way that benefits both the target audience and society at large in terms of health, safety, and the environment. Many entrepreneurs feel it real responsibility and some feel it compelled in the way of taxations and mandatory activity to be accomplished in India. Certain practices of different companies have been studied and the behavioural aspects of corporates have also been studied to give certain conclusions. This study was carried out to identify and analyse the prospects and problems of establishing social marketing practices in India. Literature review of theoretical and empirical were examined using the exploratory study. Data were gathered utilising material from books connected to the topic, media, newspapers, pedagogical pieces, reports from industry-based websites, and research publications. The status of social marketing applications and the predictions in future about the continuity of practices are dealt in this paper.*

Keywords: Social Marketing, Philanthropic Values, CSR, Indian Practices

1. Introduction

Social marketing can be traced back to the mid-20th century, with the concept evolving and gaining popularity over the years. In the 1950s and 1960s, scholars and practitioners started exploring the idea of applying marketing principles to address social issues. Researchers like Kotler and Levy examined how marketing techniques could be utilized to promote ideas, behaviours, and attitudes that would benefit society.

The focus of social marketing was to influence individual behaviours and promote positive social outcomes rather than merely selling products or services.

The social marketing definition illustrates five key elements of the approach:

- A program management process (sequenced action steps);
- Designed to influence human behavior on a large scale;

- By creating benefits and reducing barriers that matter to specific audiences;
- Through consumer oriented decision making (audience behavior is key);
- Leading to increased societal benefit (as defined by somebody).

Social marketing is a concept used to influence, plan and effect social change through various advertising approaches, often using provoking methods different from commercial marketing. It can raise awareness of public health, environment, safety, community and social related topics and influence public opinion, tolerance or behaviour. Social marketing gained momentum in the 1970s and 1980s, primarily in the field of public health. Initiatives such as anti-smoking campaigns, promoting safe sex and contraception, and encouraging healthy eating and physical activity were undertaken using social marketing approaches.

Environmental conservation, sustainability, education, poverty alleviation, and other social issues began to be addressed through social

marketing strategies. Non-profit organizations, government agencies, and international bodies started incorporating social marketing techniques to address societal challenges. Social marketing continues to evolve, incorporating new tools and techniques such as digital and social media platforms to reach and engage target audiences. The integration of insights from behavioural economics, psychology, and communication theories has enhanced the effectiveness of social marketing campaigns. Social marketing has also gained recognition in academic circles, with universities offering specialized courses and programs in the field.

The presentation of yet another new definition of social marketing into a crowded field of existing definitions is not without controversy. Forty years of social marketing has produced more than forty five peer reviewed academic definitions of social marketing? The proliferation of definitions prompted Andreasen Alan *et al.* (2008) raise the lack of consensus as a possible barrier for social marketing's future development. However, Stead *et al.* (2007) offers a counterpoint by viewing social marketing not as a single theory, but rather as a structural framework, much in the same light as Burton (2001) described critical marketing as a conceptual cluster rather than centrally defined concept.

Social marketing foundation refers to the fundamental principles and concepts that underpin social marketing as an approach aimed at influencing people's behaviour for the betterment of society. It involves the application of marketing strategies and techniques to promote positive social change, such as encouraging healthy behaviours, environmental conservation, or addressing societal issues.

At its core, social marketing foundation emphasizes understanding the target audience and their motivations, desires, and barriers to adopting desired behaviours. It involves conducting research to gain insights into the target population, designing interventions based on these insights, and implementing marketing tactics to influence behaviour change.

2. Related literature

“Social marketing is 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”, (Kotler and Zaltman, 1971).

Social marketing is “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 society of which they are a part” (Andreasen, 1994).

“Social marketing is the use of marketing principles and techniques to influence a target audience to voluntarily accept, reject, modify, or abandon a behavior for the benefit of individuals, groups, or society as a whole”, (Kotler, *et al.*, 2002) Social marketing is a consumer-centered, research driven approach to promote voluntary behavior change in a priority population (Grier and Bryant, 2005).

Social marketing is “a process that applies marketing principles and techniques to create, communicate, and deliver value in order to influence target audience behaviors that benefit society as well as the target audience” (Kotler, Lee and Rothschild, 2006).

“Social marketing is the systematic application of marketing alongside other concepts and techniques to achieve specific behavioural goals, for social or public good”, (National Social Marketing Centre, 2006).

Kotler and Lee (2008) define social marketing as “process that applies marketing principles and techniques to create, communicate, and deliver value in order to influence target audience behaviour that benefit society (public health, safety, the environment, and communities) as well as the target audience”.

It is clear from the aforementioned criteria that social marketing aims to improve society as a whole. The intended audience, however, might be an individual, a group, or the whole society. The same principles used in commercial marketing also apply to social marketing. The objective of social welfare is attained via voluntarily changing behaviour.

Social marketing in public health include programs like increase in physical activity, increase in fruit and vegetable consumption, smoking cessation, and sexually transmitted disease prevention etc. For success of social marketing, several commercial marketing strategies may be applied. These may be social exchange theory, audience segmentation, the four Ps (price, place, product, and promotion), consumer orientation, and evaluation of the marketing campaign (Grier and Bryant, 2005).

Services marketing thinking has been positioned as a mid-stream approach to social marketing. To achieve sustainable behavior movement between policy makers and people need to be facilitated (Russell-Bennett et al., 2013).

Informational and rational are not effective with all kind of social problems. Due to this reason advertising practitioners rely on emotional appeals in formulating message (Terblanche-Smit and Terblanche, 2010).

Andreasen (1995) suggests that to build an effective communication campaign to change the behavior, understanding of the needs and perceptions of specific target audience is necessary.

Covello (2003) suggests techniques like interview, group discussions, information exchanges, toll free numbers, and surveys to understand what people think, know and want to know about an issue. To make the communication effective, knowledge and perception of public on the issue and level of motivation towards it must be determined.

Venugopal, K. (2013) stated that the rural places would be the best places to establish social marketing activities in the way of transforming the technology for their necessitate activities and for which the corporates are supposed to strive in the form of corporate social responsibility.

Santosh Ranganath N. et al. (2012) explored that the environmental consciousness among the marketers which would route to philanthropy centered activities through green marketing and the way that the marketers promote their operations can be benefited in the form of social marketing.

Another study from Santosh Ranganath N. and Venugopal, K. (2011) stated that Indian entrepreneurs hailed from rural places have an

enthusiasm of doing business with certain social responsibility since most of their businesses are associated with agriculture and the derivatives of concerned always have the maximum possibility of adding noble value to the customers could come under social marketing.

Koppala Venugopal (2022) in his article entitled 'Intricacies between Organised and Unorganised Sellers during Covid Pandemic' concluded that the pandemic has made the business more critical which allowed many detrimental activities through unorganised business practices irrespective of rural and urban places.

There have been many ill practices in the businesses in the name of social marketing especially in online shopping which has been well-spread to the integral parts of India and many are getting cheated by certain online fraudulent activists promoting bogus philanthropic services (Gopalakrishna, V., et al. 2021).

Global business operations have narrowed the concept of social marketing and in future it can also be turned into one of the promotional activity in comparison with the domestic brands (Koppala Venugopal, et al. 2020)

There have been many companies promoting their businesses through social media especially by touching some emotional elements such as activities bringing up the emotion of mercy and kindness since most of the social media platforms are run on the basis of emotional exchange and relationships (Koppala Venugopal et al. 2020).

After Covid, it is observed that there is a change in the customers in the way of the preferences of products and services, at the same time the change in the attitude of the marketers is not changed and the traditional ways of commercialisation is continuing. Health insurers are advised to make the claim more feasible since the health issues are sensitive and vary between the information given at the time of application and claiming (Murlikrishna, P.N., et al. 2020).

Some of the philanthropic activities are generally witnessed by most of the persons as well as corporates at the religious places and destinations of religious tourism since it attracts masses. These

charities are also considered as a part of social marketing since many deprived communities depending on such needy help (Koppala Venugopal and Vishnu Murty, D. 2019).

Employees should be able to understand the philosophy of the corporates with respect to the activities associated with social marketing and corporate social responsibility which can be well and better executed with additional quality and productivity (Gashaw Tibebe et al. 2018).

Gopalakrishna, V., et al. (2018) have expressed that the emotional buying behaviour pretty lucrative element in India which is applicable through associating the emotional element with the product or services and concluded that some segment of customers buy the products of Patanjali because it is produced and marketed by a divine personality.

3. Objectives and methodology of the study

The objective of the study is to understand and identify the factors influencing the consciousness of social marketing practices in India.

The methodology of this study was with exploratory design and qualitative approach. The researchers have carried out this research through secondary data of the material from books connected to the topic, media, newspapers, pedagogical pieces, reports from industry-based websites, and research publications

4. Applications

In recent years, Social marketing is attracting the interest of Non-profit institutions like educational institutions, hospitals, Govt. Organisations and Non-Govt. Organisations for marketing their services. Social marketing has a wider scope. Social marketing techniques has been used successfully in health promotion programmes such as family welfare, heart care, human organ donations, physical fitness, immunisation, awareness against AIDS, smoking and drinking. Social marketing techniques are being applied in important areas such as provision of safe drinking water, soil conservation, preservation of wild life, forestation, protection of environment etc. Social leaders have been applying social marketing

strategies in areas like protection of human rights, abolition of castes and racism. Since the 1970s the western countries have accepted environmental approach to developmental strategies. Business organisations have been applying social marketing techniques for implementation of their business policies satisfying consumers, long term welfare of the Society, attracting investors, motivating and training the workers. The developmental strategies adopted so far are responsible for all sorts of pollution, (i.e. air, water, sound, etc.) Imbalanced ecology and have endangered the very existence of human beings. For example, detergents used for cloth washing is responsible for water pollution and loss of aquatic lives. Popular plastic products are not disposable and create environmental problems. All sorts of vehicles add to air and sound pollution. On the contrary, the govt. has to spend crores of rupees on oil import bill. A number of research studies have shown that consumables like tobacco products, injurious, cosmetics are injurious to health. Still injurious products are being poured in the market. McDonalds and Kentucky, the pioneers of Fast food Culture are making huge profits at the cost of consumer health. The indifferent attitude of marketers has brought irreparable loss to human life and the universe. Wrong marketing strategies are resulting in creating health problems, slims, pollution and ecological imbalance, the cost of which must be borne by the organisations making huge profits

Social marketing is being applied the world over and India is no exception. This concept has altered the traditional concept of marketing. Society oriented development strategy can be helpful in overcoming the serious problems like pollutions explosion, ecological imbalance, world over poverty, imbalanced development and meeting the basic needs e.g. drinking water, food and shelter, education and health care. Social marketing can be applied in any sphere of life and can help in enriching the life of human being and care for safety of the universe. The explosion of information technology made communication very dynamic. The leaders of social change will have to adopt information technology for communication is interacting and confidence building among masses.

5. The foundation of social marketing rests on four key pillars:

- a. **Audience Orientation:** Social marketing starts with a deep understanding of the target audience, including their needs, values, attitudes, and behaviours. By analysing their motivations and barriers, social marketers can develop tailored interventions that resonate with the target audience.
- b. **Behaviour Change:** The primary goal of social marketing is to bring about positive behaviour change. It involves identifying specific behaviours that need to be addressed and developing strategies to encourage individuals to adopt these desired behaviours.
- c. **Marketing Principles and Techniques:** Social marketing utilizes marketing principles and techniques to effectively promote behaviour change. This includes segmentation (dividing the target audience into meaningful groups), targeting (focusing on specific segments), positioning (developing a persuasive message and value proposition), and utilizing the marketing mix (product, price, place, and promotion).
- d. **Exchange and Benefit:** Social marketing recognizes that individuals make decisions based on perceived benefits and costs. To encourage behaviour change, social marketers must emphasize the benefits of adopting the desired behaviour and minimize perceived costs or barriers. They aim to create an exchange relationship where individuals perceive the value of the behaviour change as greater than the effort required to make that change.

6. Logic framework

The efforts of social marketing can be triggered by the structural changes needed to be identified in the society and have a zeal to adopt it at the standpoint of environmental preservation. Similarly the messages given by eminent personalities that motivate to change while hearing from credible channels are also encouraged. The both environmental and messages will lead to interventions to have distinguished perceptions of pragmatic and dogmatic behaviours which is needed to be changed trespassing the barriers and benefits reduction. Then the achievement of social benefit will be viewed which is framed in the figure.

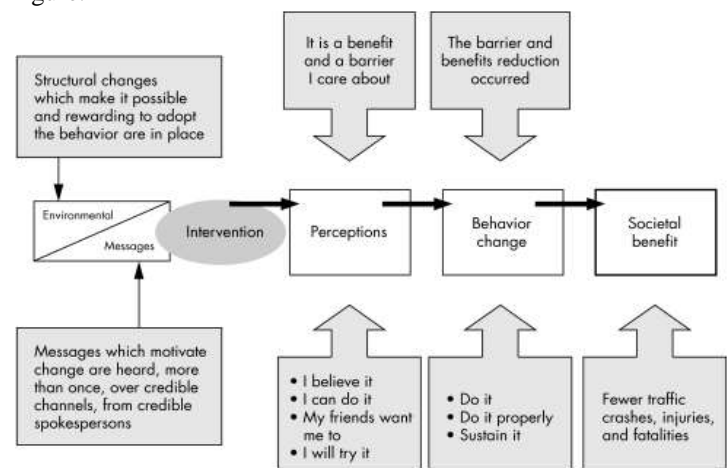


Figure 1: Logic framework useful in conceptualizing social marketing efforts. (Smith, W. A., 2006)

Figure 1 is a logic framework that illustrates the variables marketers consider important in establishing the success of a social marketing effort. In sum, social marketing is a flexible, eclectic practice of large scale social change. It is a way of thinking that places emphasis on an “exchange of value” with the audience rather than social control or education alone.

7. Illustrative initiations

In India, there are several companies and organizations that focus on social marketing or have foundations dedicated to social marketing initiatives.

Tata Trusts: Tata Trusts is one of the oldest philanthropic organizations in India and engages in various social development activities, including social marketing initiatives.

The Piramal Foundation: The Piramal Foundation works toward creating sustainable solutions for social issues. They have initiatives in healthcare,

education, and water, among others, which may include social marketing components.

Grameen Foundation India: Grameen Foundation India focuses on leveraging technology to address poverty and promote financial inclusion. They work on innovative social marketing approaches to reach underserved communities.

CRY (Child Rights and You): CRY is an organization dedicated to promoting child rights and well-being in India. They may utilize social marketing techniques to raise awareness and advocate for children's rights

Azim Premji Foundation: The Azim Premji Foundation is involved in educational reforms in India. While their primary focus is education, they may incorporate social marketing strategies to promote awareness and engagement.

8. Conclusion:

This study adds to the body of knowledge by identifying, emphasising, and illuminating key success criteria that have arisen from current practise and are required for creating and implementing successful health and well-being social marketing initiatives. The success criteria that are developing from the contemporary social marketing practise are now little to no acknowledge. Therefore, we think the success indicators identified in our study are sufficient to guide and support the practise going forward. Additionally, this study has demonstrated the worth of conventional ways to social marketing strategy and emphasised the fact that modern social marketing practise tends to go beyond.

In this examination of the literature, social marketing definitions were looked for. As a distinct academic discipline, social marketing is still in its infancy. Few ideas have been produced thus far, but there is little literature on their application.

Social marketing uses the same strategies as traditional marketing. The primary goal of social marketing has switched from behaviour modification to target audience attitude modification. Social media integration allowed social marketing to advance to a new level. However, there is a digital gap in our culture. In order to solve their social concerns, social marketing must concentrate on the target population that lives outside of the digital realm.

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