

SOCIAL MARKETING - An Indian perspective

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Abstract

Social Marketing is a well established part of the marketing vocabulary in universities, government agencies, private non-profit organizations and private for-profit firms. Social marketing can have a major impact on society's myriad social problems. The goal of Social marketing is to get people to think differently about old ideas and focus on new concepts that will add value to their lives. The social marketer's task is to find new products of new production methods which do not pollute, damage or deplete scarce resources. The article addresses an attempt to ascertain whether consumers are really receiving satisfaction and whether the products in offer provide long term benefits to the quality of life. This article identifies the corporate institutions as equal partners in executing value based social programs . The paper concludes that the role of the firm must internalize into it's marketing strategy about societal needs as necessary complements, not substitutes.

Key words : Social Marketing & Values

Introduction :

The unprecedented rise in economic inequalities in the last 25 years of globalization in India has led to dehumanization of the poor, which in turn has led an adverse impact on democracy. Six reasons could be cited for the growing divide – the withdrawal of the state from sectors that mattered to the poor such as water, sanitation, education and healthcare; huge cuts in development and welfare spending; the slashing of subsidies and life support to the poor while increasing subsidies to the rich; the privatization of everything “from intellect to soul”; the unprecedented rise of corporate power across the world and the imposition of user fee on everything in ways the poor could not afford .The National commission for enterprises in the unorganized sector released the report on conditions of work and promotion of livelihoods in the unorganized sector. The 376-page document said that 836 million Indians or 77 percent of India 's population, earn less than Rs 20 per day. They are the officially-designated “poor and vulnerable segment of the Indian population. While India had the fourth largest number of dollar billionaires in the world, it was ranked 126 in the human development index. The last 15 years has seen unprecedented prosperity at the top and unspeakable deprivation at the bottom of the pyramid. Social Marketing acts as a viable subject of research , teaching and practice. It is an approach to planned social change Social marketing acts as a catalyst to remove all the above inequalities that have completely dehumanized the poor. Social marketing posses the biggest opportunity for Indian organizations in bridging this growing gap. It is an approach to planned social change. 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.

Need for Social Marketing :

Social Marketing in basic terms refers to selling of ideas. In more complicated terms, it's the creation, execution and control of programs designed to influence social change. It uses many principles of commercial marketing- from assessing needs to identify audiences, developing products and measuring results. The goal of

social marketing is not just a one time business transaction. The goal of social marketing is to build a long-term relationship between your organization and it's different audiences. The success of ITC's e-choupal for upgrading farmers lives shows how a well-planned social marketing campaign can influence the way society thinks and acts. There are two keys to social marketing for organizations , firstly you must understand the attitudes of the society in which your organization exists, secondly you must tackle your social marketing campaign in an orderly step-by-step.

Development of social marketing :

Marketing management has been exceptionally efficient in satisfying their material wants and needs of consumers. With this in mind, many economists and sociologists alike believe that, for large sections of the world, the needs of consumers now centre on the 'quality' rather than the quantity of life and that this shift of attention is a feature of the post-industrial society. Of course, the high demand for consumer goods and services is unlikely to abate, but a change in the priority of needs is likely to accelerate. Maslow has called these new priorities the 'Metal needs' of society. This change is undoubtedly the result of affluence. Related to this, but not as easily explained are marked value changes. These have also contributed to the emergence of the social marketing concept. Certainly, consumerism has shifted it's emphasis from what might be termed 'micro' to societal issues, these being social costs, social values, social products and social benefits. Some progressive companies have been quick to recognize this and they in turn have heightened this level of social awareness. Marketing's success in providing for our material needs and wants have also created widespread pollution, congestion, waste, and ecological imbalance. Marketing is in fact only partly responsible for these phenomena, but it must share the burden of finding products and methods that reduce or eliminate their harmful effects. Whatever the precise reasons for the development of a social marketing system, it is clear that there remains vast scope for further development and that like consumerism, this movement will endure.

Boundaries of social marketing :

The traditional view point of marketing would hold that the principal responsibility of marketing is to provide products that satisfy consumers needs efficiently and profitably, provided that this done in a socially responsible way, the socio-economic status quo will be maintained to the mutual benefit of consumers and producers. The difficult question is in the definition of social responsibility. Is this fulfilled by the production of safe products, the publication of honest advertising or the reduction of pollution ? Proponents of social marketing would greatly extend this responsibility. They see marketing as a social force which not only transmits a standard of living but also serves as a force that reflects and influences cultural values and norms. Thus the boundaries of marketing extend far beyond purely economic criteria. This would concern those areas where there are clearly recognizable links between marketing and it's social effects. For instance Cars-pollution and congestion, Food Stuffs - pesticides and preservatives, Manufacturing- atmospheric pollution, noise and safety. If business is so efficient in satisfying the most detailed wants of consumers, surely this expertise could and should be used to find ways of providing this satisfaction at a reduced social cost, this would have the effect of creating markets as well as making individual firms and whole industries more attractive to the consumer.

Some regard marketing as being so powerful and intrinsic to society that it should concern itself with welfare issues, such as poverty, education and healthcare. It is not in fact uncommon for businesses, both large and small, to involve themselves with such issues. The cynical may respond this as sophisticated image building. Whatever the motives may be, the fact remains that business and marketing expertise is beginning to develop and exhibit social as well as economic roles. It is not clear where the boundaries of social marketing should be erected, but it does appear that there are clear advantages both to society and to business if a social orientation were to be incorporated in to marketing strategy. The transition from 'managerial' to 'social' marketing does not imply a replacement of the traditional marketing concept, but rather it's extension so as to recognize and encompass the wider needs of society. This additional dimension suggests that profit need no longer be marketing's sole goal. However, the need for profit undoubtedly remains the most essential element of a

company's survival and even the most enlightened firm cannot begin to implement a social program without sufficient funds to initiate and perpetuate its actions.

CSR (corporate social responsibility) : a new tool for social marketing

CSR is a phrase that is growing popular as business in India expands. Businesses either because of personal conscience or careful corporate forethought are beginning to undertake activities in the community, whether close to their businesses or well outside them. In the days of the command and control economy, most businesses were prevented from growing as they wished to. All their managerial decisions were subject to government permissions. The primary criterion for success was the ability to get government to give them or relax them in favor of the business. Tax rates were at penal levels for individuals and companies. Most business managers did not see any need for them to do things for the community. Government was expected to do them. If a business got involved in some kind of community work, it was usually to honor the behest of a politician from whom favors could be expected or as personal favors. Tata's were an exception to this rule with their emphasis on CSR and value systems that pervaded all their companies and their setting aside a portion of annual revenues for social causes that might have little to do directly with their businesses. Business managers saw their corporate responsibility as Milton Friedman wrote : Here is one and only one social responsibility of business is to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits game, which is to say, engage in open and free competition without deception or fraud. But he also wrote, make as much money as possible while conforming to the basic rules of society, both those embodied in law and those embodied in ethical custom. The Global Compact- an initiative of UN addresses issues related to environment, safety and governance (ESG). Indian companies like Tata motors, Tata steel and Tata power are celebrated as some of the best on the compact. The other notables are NTPC and Infosys. Over 75 percent respondent companies have got into cross-sector partnerships to take the ESG agenda ahead. A recent McKinsey survey bolsters the claim. Over 90 percent of the 391 chief executive officers surveyed are now doing more than they did five years ago to incorporate ESG into their company strategy and operations. The below table clearly shows that CSR orientation towards social marketing will provide more scope towards building its corporate business strategies.

Reference Studies	Main Topics	CSR Concept
Davis (1960, 1967) McGuire (1963) Walton (1967)	Significant attempts to formalise the meaning of CSR.	It supposes that organisations have not only economic and legal obligations, but also certain responsibilities relative to society.
Johnson (1971) Steiner (1971) Davis (1973) Sethi (1975) Preston and Post (1975) Carroll (1979)	Proliferation of CSR definitions and attempts to define distinctive features and rules of CSR. The analysis of the relationship between CSR and performance did start.	It is the pursuit of socioeconomic goals through the elaboration of social norms in prescribed business roles. The firms have the responsibility to produce goods and services that society wants and to obtain profit.
Jones (1980) Carroll, (1983) Drucker (1984) Freeman (1984) Frederick (1986)	Few definitions did appear. There are additional research and alternatives themes.	It involves the strategic conduct of firms and is composed by four parts: economic, legal, ethical and voluntary or philanthropic.
Wood (1991) Carroll (1991, 1994, 1999) Donaldson and Preston (1995)	CSR is integrated in alternative topics of research. The importance of stakeholders did increase.	It was oriented to alternative themes, such as, business ethics, international social issues, and corporate social performance.

Business Ethics leads to social marketing :

Ethics is essentially about the definition of what is right and wrong. No two people have precisely the same opinions, so critics would argue that ethical considerations are of little interest to business. It can also be

difficult to distinguish between ethics and legality. Culture has a great effect in defining ethics and what is considered unethical in one society may be considered perfectly acceptable in another. For example a drug company may advertise a product and provide information which is technically correct, but omit to provide vital information about side effects associated with using the product. Should a marketing manager be required to spell out the possible problems of using it's products as well as the benefits. It is suggested that society is becoming increasingly concerned about the ethical values adopted by it's commercial organizations with expanding media availability and an increasingly intelligent audience, it is getting easier to expose examples of unethical business practice. Moreover many television audiences appear to enjoy watching programs which reveal alleged unethical practices of household name companies. Firms are responding to increasing levels of ethical awareness by trying to put their own house in order. There are some examples of how firms have gone about the task : (a) Greater attention to training can make clear to staff just what is expected of them. For example that it is unethical for a pension company's sales personnel to try to sell a policy to a person when it really does not suit their needs. Training may emphasis the need to spend a lot of time finding out just what the true needs of the customer are. (b) More effective control and reward systems can help to reduce unethical practices within an organization. For example, sales personnel employed by a financial services company on a commission only basis are more likely to try to sell a policy to a customer regardless of the customer's needs compared to a salaried employee who can take a longer term view of the relationship between the company and it's clients. There are many documented cases to show that acting ethically need not conflict with a company's profit objectives and indeed can add to profitability.

Redefining the social marketing process :

Once an organization understands it's public attitudes, recognizes society's trends and reconciles it's concerns with concerns of it's audience. Now the organization is in a position to leverage it's social marketing plan. There are six basic steps in the social marketing process :

Step 1 – Getting Started

Define your issue and research it's key details. Learn all you can about the subject. Then assess your resources, the things in your favor. 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.

Corporate Evidences on Social Marketing Programs :

COMPANY	MAJOR SOCIAL MARKETING ACTIVITIES
TCS	Accelerating adult literacy program through computers based in rural areas
ADITYA BIRLA	Focus on education, agriculture & watershed development
ACC Ltd	Support to national sports, mason's training, healthcare, disaster relief, conservation of heritage structures
TATA MOTORS	Restoring ecological balance, health & sanitation, employment generation, community development
IOC	Promoting art & culture, health, safety & environment, supporting economically & socially challenged sections of society
KALE CONSULTANTS	Adoption program for children, child welfare, foster care and rehabilitation.
I-FLEX	i-flex for children programs
INFOSYS	Focus on the underprivileged in rural areas, healthcare for the poor, education, rehabilitation and promotion of Indian art & culture, Infosys Hyderabad development centre has launched a computer literacy program for Hyderabad police personnel
L&T Ltd	Supports health, education, environment, response to natural calamities & employee volunteering
RELIANCE ENERGY	Maintenance of parks, environment management, AIDS awareness programs & computer literacy for rural youth
GEOMETRIC SOFTWARE	Children and youth with education as the focus area
VERITAS	Education, Healthcare, and Environment
HUL	Economic empowerment of women, Water conservation & Harvesting, Health & Hygiene education, Special education & Rehabilitation, and Project-Shakti

Conclusion :

To successfully market your programs and ideas on social marketing, you must understand the directions in which society is moving. Some regard marketing as being so powerful and intrinsic to society that it should concern itself with welfare issues such as poverty, education and health care. The government also has a large influence on the speed and degree to which companies adopt improvements, which can benefit society. Social marketing concepts has to be carefully considered , so that a minority pressure group does not have undue

influence stopping something which many others feel may benefit the majority of the population. Newer interactive technologies should be applied to tailor messages to meet societal needs in a quick and efficient manner. Use of computers in generating messages and use of the world wide web/internet to facilitate the dissemination of social marketing efforts will greatly enhance marketer's ability to target customer group with relevant information. Social marketing programs will surely help organization to link their business strategies towards value creation. The imbalances existing in the societal environment can be resolved only through the initiatives of corporate social programs.

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