

Role of Media in Transforming the Considerable Potential of Commercial Marketing into Social Marketing

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Abstract

This paper is a result of detailed research in social marketing sector being affected with the role of media. The future of social marketing depends on continuing the learning from commercial marketing, and in particular, its recent moves towards relational paradigms. Over the last 50 years, social marketing has taken ideas from commercial marketing and used them to address various social problems. Social marketers have targeted the citizen to bring about individual change, as well as policy makers and stakeholders to bring about institutional and social change.

However, in the last ten years there has been an important development in commercial marketing that has been overlooked by social marketers. Starting in the business to business and service sectors, but moving more widely across the discipline, the focus has shifted from isolated transactions to a longer term perspective that emphasizes the importance of building mutually beneficial relationships with customers and other stakeholders. Customer satisfaction, trust and commitment are all crucial considerations here. This oversight is surprising as relationship marketing would seem to have considerable potential in a social marketing context where the behaviors being targeted are often of high involvement and multifaceted.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last 50 years, social marketing has taken ideas from commercial marketing and used them to address social and health problems. The marketing concept of consumer orientation and tools such as the marketing mix has been successfully applied to health and social behaviors like substance use and safer driving. Social marketers have targeted the citizen to bring about individual change, as well as policy makers and stakeholders to bring about institutional and social change.

The approach has provided genuinely new learning. Practice in fields like tobacco control and traffic safety has changed as a result of its influence. However, in the last ten years there has been an important development in commercial marketing that has been overlooked by social marketers. Starting in the business to business and service sectors, but moving more widely across the discipline, the focus has shifted from isolated transactions to a longer term perspective that emphasizes the importance of building mutually beneficial relationships with customers and other stakeholders. Customer satisfaction, trust and commitment are all crucial considerations here. This oversight is surprising as relationship marketing would seem to have considerable potential in a social marketing context where the behaviors being targeted

are often high involvement (eg. quitting smoking) and multifaceted (eg. teen smokers are more likely than their non-smoking peers to misuse drugs and alcohol).

On the other hand, relational thinking could also create difficulties for social marketers, particularly in terms of funding. They typically depend on relatively short term, publicly funded contracts. This generates pressure to show immediate behavioral returns, with subsequent funding tied to these bottom line results. Furthermore, the fact that the funder and the customer are different entities is likely to reduce the importance given to the satisfaction of the latter.

This paper argues that despite these obstacles, and, perhaps because of them, relational thinking does have a lot to offer social marketing.

THE FIRST 50 YEARS OF SOCIAL MARKETING

When Wiebe (1951/52) first suggested that we could consider selling brotherhood like soap the very idea was revolutionary. For the first time people began to think seriously that methods used very successfully to influence behavior in the commercial sector, might transfer to a non-profit arena. Wiebe evaluated four different social change campaigns, and concluded that the more similarities they had to commercial marketing, the more successful they were. In 1971, Kotler and Zaltman developed the idea into a recognizable discipline of social marketing. They coined the term ‘social marketing’ and defined it 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.” Social marketing did not go unchallenged. Arnold and Fisher (1996) describe how the emerging discipline was flanked on the one hand by marketing ‘apologists’ who wanted to keep marketing clearly defined within the firm. Social marketing ideas were innovative, and made distinct changes to the practice of what was then almost exclusively called health education. In the early 1980’s, for example, the idea of pretesting communication materials with the target audience prior to use was new to health professionals.

DEVELOPMENTS IN COMMERCIAL MARKETING

Main stream marketing theory emerged in the 1950’s largely out of experiences in the fast moving consumer goods market, although it rapidly expanded to other sectors. It was formally codified by McCarthy (1960), who, building on Borden’s (1964) ideas¹, saw it as an efficient management system for satisfying consumer needs using the four ‘P’s tool box. Marketing was focussed on managing discrete exchanges, which had to satisfy clearly defined customer needs on the one hand, and provide profit on the other. The transaction was placed at the core of the discipline. This thinking continued to dominate until the mid eighties, when serious criticisms emerged, particularly from research done in the fields of both services and business to business marketing. These sectors found the dominant orthodoxy uncomfortable. Services differ from tangible products in that they are not pre-prepared and packaged, but are, to a large extent, manufactured at the point of delivery. Like commercial marketing, the primary focus is on the consumer--on learning what people want

and need rather than trying to persuade them to buy what we happen to be producing. Marketing talks to the consumer, not about the product. The planning process takes this consumer focus into account by addressing the elements of the "marketing mix." This refers to decisions about 1) the conception of a Product, 2) Price, 3) distribution (Place), and 4) Promotion. These are often called the "Four Ps" of marketing. Social marketing also adds a few more "P's." At the end is an example of the marketing mix.

Product

The social marketing "product" is not necessarily a physical offering. A continuum of products exists, ranging from tangible, physical products (e.g., condoms), to services (e.g., medical exams), practices (e.g., breastfeeding, ORT or eating a heart-healthy diet) and finally, more intangible ideas (e.g., environmental protection). In order to have a viable product, people must first perceive that they have a genuine problem, and that the product offering is a good solution for that problem. The role of research here is to discover the consumers' perceptions of the problem and the product, and to determine how important they feel it is to take action against the problem.

Price

"Price" refers to what the consumer must do in order to obtain the social marketing product. This cost may be monetary, or it may instead require the consumer to give up intangibles, such as time or effort, or to risk embarrassment and disapproval. If the costs outweigh the benefits for an individual, the perceived value of the offering will be low and it will be unlikely to be adopted. However, if the benefits are perceived as greater than their costs, chances of trial and adoption of the product is much greater.

In setting the price, particularly for a physical product, such as contraceptives, there are many issues to consider. If the product is priced too low, or provided free of charge, the consumer may perceive it as being low in quality. On the other hand, if the price is too high, some will not be able to afford it. Social marketers must balance these considerations, and often end up charging at least a nominal fee to increase perceptions of quality and to confer a sense of "dignity" to the transaction. These perceptions of costs and benefits can be determined through research, and used in positioning the product.

Place

"Place" describes the way that the product reaches the consumer. For a tangible product, this refers to the distribution system--including the warehouse, trucks, sales force, retail outlets where it is sold, or places where it is given out for free. For an intangible product, place is less clear-cut, but refers to decisions about the channels through which consumers are reached with information or training. This may include doctors' offices, shopping malls, mass media vehicles or in-home demonstrations. Another element of place is deciding how to ensure accessibility of the offering and quality of the service delivery. By determining the

activities and habits of the target audience, as well as their experience and satisfaction with the existing delivery system, researchers can pinpoint the most ideal means of distribution for the offering.

Promotion

Finally, the last "P" is promotion. Because of its visibility, this element is often mistakenly thought of as comprising the whole of social marketing. However, as can be seen by the previous discussion, it is only one piece. Promotion consists of the integrated use of advertising, public relations, promotions, media advocacy, personal selling and entertainment vehicles. The focus is on creating and sustaining demand for the product. Public service announcements or paid ads are one way, but there are other methods such as coupons, media events, editorials, "Tupperware"-style parties or in-store displays. Research is crucial to determine the most effective and efficient vehicles to reach the target audience and increase demand. The primary research findings themselves can also be used to gain publicity for the program at media events and in news stories.

Additional Social Marketing "P's"

Publics--Social marketers often have many different audiences that their program has to address in order to be successful. "Publics" refers to both the external and internal groups involved in the program. External publics include the target audience, secondary audiences, policymakers, and gatekeepers, while the internal publics are those who are involved in some way with either approval or implementation of the program.

Partnership--Social and health issues are often so complex that one agency can't make a dent by itself. You need to team up with other organizations in the community to really be effective. You need to figure out which organizations have similar goals to yours--not necessarily the same goals--and identify ways you can work together.

Policy--Social marketing programs can do well in motivating individual behavior change, but that is difficult to sustain unless the environment they're in supports that change for the long run. Often, policy change is needed, and media advocacy programs can be an effective complement to a social marketing program.

Purse Strings--Most organizations that develop social marketing programs operate through funds provided by sources such as foundations, governmental grants or donations. This adds another dimension to the strategy development--namely, where will you get the money to create your program.

Enhancement of social marketing with the entrance of Media:-

Media is engaging with consumers online. According to Wikipedia, Media is using internet-based tools for sharing and discussing information among human beings. Now a days

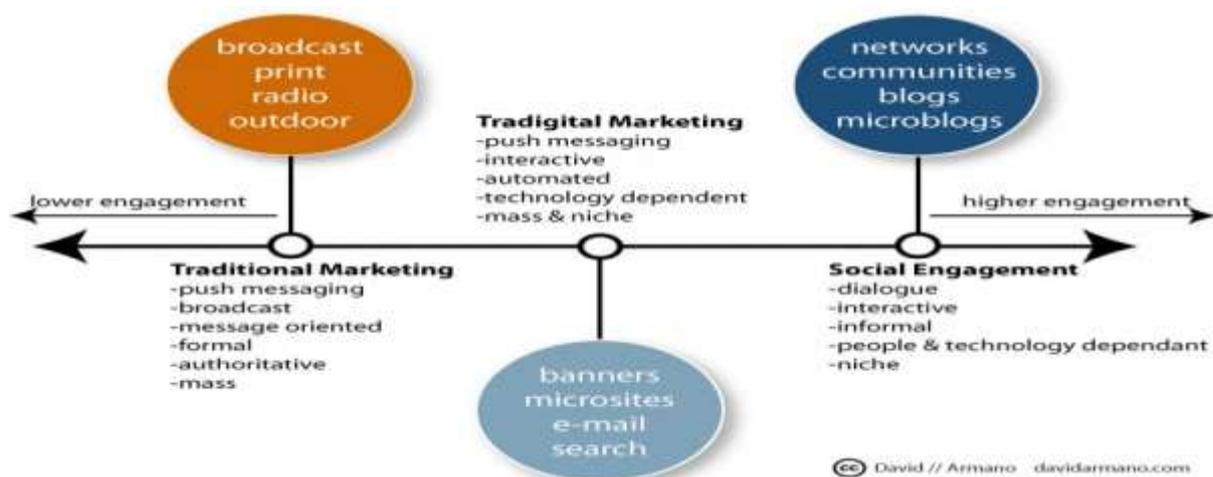
its all about networking and networking in a way that espouses trust among parties and communities involved. Any website which allows user to share their content, opinions, views and encourages interaction and community building can be classified as a social media. Some popular social media sites are: Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Digg, MySpace, StumbleUpon, Delicious, Scribd, Flickr etc. There are two **benefits** of media that are important to businesses, they include:

1. Cost reduction by decreasing staff time.
2. Increase of probability of revenue generation.

It **enables** companies to:

- Share their expertise and knowledge.
- Tap into the wisdom of their consumers.
- Enables customers helping customers.
- Engages prospects through customer evangelism.

Thus the benefits of media include: brand reach and awareness, consumer interactions through transactions, referrals and reputation management.



Growth of social marketing with media:

A recent study, “The State of Small Business Report,” sponsored by Network Solutions, LLC and the University of Maryland’s Robert H. Smith School of Business, points to economic struggles as the catalyst for social media’s rapid popularity. The study results show that social media usage by small business owners increased from 12% to 24% in just the last year, and almost 1 out of 5, actively uses social media as part of his or her marketing strategy. In 2009, only 23% of marketers were using social media for years. Now that number has grown to 31%.

Here’s a breakdown of what the small businesses reported as the main uses of social media marketing:

- 75% have a company page on a social networking site.
- 69% post status updates or articles of interest on social media sites.
- 57% build a network through a site such as LinkedIn.
- 54% monitor feedback about the business.
- 39% maintain a blog.
- 26% tweet about areas of expertise.
- 16% use Twitter as a service channel.

According to the study, different industries are adopting social media marketing at different rates, and while many industries have started using social media marketing in their efforts to reach more customers, many still have not positioned it as their top priority. A research shows that charitable organizations are still outpacing the business world and academia in their use of social media. In a study conducted in 2010, a remarkable eighty-nine percent of charitable organizations are using some form of social media including blogs, podcasts, message boards, social networking, video blogging and wikis. A majority (57%) of the organizations are blogging. Forty-five percent of those studied report social media is very important to their fundraising strategy. While these organizations are best known for their nonprofit status and their fundraising campaigns, they demonstrate an acute, and still growing, awareness of the importance of Web 2.0 strategies in meeting their objectives. In just the last few months, marketers have shifted their attitudes toward social media marketing spending. This was recently affirmed in the new study, “The CMO Survey”, from Duke University’s Fuqua School of Business and the American Marketing Association. A key finding: Social media marketing budgets continue to rise. According to the results, businesses currently allocate 6% of their marketing budgets to social media, an allotment they expect to increase to 10% during the next year and 18% over the next 5 years. Back in August 2011,

marketers had already planned on devoting more money to social media. However, in February 2012, marketers reported that they plan to allocate one-fifth of their marketing budgets to social media marketing in the next 5 years. This is a definite increase from the 2011 projections. The study features the following comparison from August 2011 to February 2012:

Current marketing budget spending on social media:

February 2011: 3.5%

February 2012: 5.6%

Marketing budget spending on social media in the next 12 months:

August 2011: 6.1%

August 2012: 9.9%

Marketing budget spending on social media in the next 5 years:

13.7% to 17.7%

It can be understood that even though many are still experimenting and learning how best to use social media tools, these results indicate that marketers think social media marketing is here to stay and will play an increasingly important role in their work in acquiring and retaining customers in the future.

Future Benefits of media in marketing:

Significantly different from conventional marketing strategies, Social Media Marketing (SMM)

offers three distinct advantages. One, it provides a window to marketers to not only present products / services to customers but also to listen to customers' grievances and suggestions.

Two, it makes it easy for marketers to identify various peer groups or influencers among various

groups, who in turn can become brand evangelist and help in organic growth of a brand. And,

three, all this is done at nearly zero cost (as compared to conventional customer outreach programmes) as most of the social networking sites are free.

Social media marketing helps in:

1. Generating exposure to businesses.
2. Increasing traffic/subscribers.
3. Building new business partnerships.
4. Rise in search engine rankings.
5. Generating qualified leads due to better lead generation efforts.
6. Selling more products and services.
7. Reduction in overall marketing expenses.

Companies in the west are investing increasingly in SMM to get in touch with their customers.

They are indulging in constant interaction with their prospects in order to understand their needs and hence make products better. It's the best way to learn from your customers about their needs and your own shortcomings. However, SMM is a very personalized way of advertising and promotions can be targeted only to particular groups which are interested in a particular domain, quite unlike conventional advertising.

CONCLUSION

Social marketing's most fundamental feature is that it takes learning from commerce. This has provided key insights such as consumer orientation, mutually beneficial exchange, the need to focus on behavior change and address the context as well as the individual. Because commerce is very practically based, these ideas have been backed by tools such as segmentation, targeting and the marketing mix. Although the transfer from commercial to social marketing has sometimes been uncomfortable, it has brought benefits and - passing the litmus test for new disciplines - provided new thinking. However the last decade has seen a paradigm shift in commercial marketing, from transactional to relational thinking – and social marketers need to grasp the opportunity this presents. It has dramatic implications for the discipline, changing it from a branch line of public health, to a whole new way of thinking about social problems. There is no escaping social media these days, either for individuals or for businesses. Today, it is impossible to separate social media from the online world. The social media conversation is no longer considered a Web 2.0 fad -- it is taking place in homes, small businesses and corporate boardrooms, and extending its reach into the nonprofit, education and health sectors. From feeling excitement, novelty, bewilderment, and overwhelmed, a growing number of people now speak of social media as simply another channel or tactic. And as the media wave dissipates into the vast ocean of connected experiences, the term itself will become an entry in dictionaries and encyclopedias and we will embark on a new era of knowledge, accessibility and experiences unbound by distance, time or physical walls. It is high time that every business adopts social media and takes it seriously!

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