

REVIEW ARTICLE

Social Marketing Concept & Application of Social Marketing on Organizations

Kulter Demirgunes Banu^{1*}, Ozdemir Sami S.²

¹Ahi Evran University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Department of Management, Kırşehir /Turkey.

²Balıkesir University, Faculty of Tourism, Balıkesir /Turkey.

*Corresponding Author: Email: banu.kulter@ahievran.edu.tr

Abstract

While at the beginning a product and sales oriented concept was dominant in the business world since the industrial revolution, customer oriented concept has today become inevitable. Based on this concept, which is expressed as social responsibility concept, the business can fulfil its own purposes only as long as it meets the individual and community requirements. Social marketing concept has become one of the means which are commonly used for this purpose. This study handles social marketing concept, which is one of the new marketing approaches which develop along with the changing marketing concept. A literature examination has been made for reviewing articles and showing the fields of social marketing applications. The study includes the kinds of applications of social marketing in the world and in Turkey and is implemented as a theory and application oriented literature examination. Besides defining social marketing conceptually, the study sets forth the importance of social marketing for the businesses to gain competitive advantage and maintain their operations and it gives opinions about new social marketing applications.

Keywords: *Social marketing, Social marketing applications.*

Introduction

Marketing, in general, is the process of planning and application with respect to the improvement, pricing, promotion and distribution of goods, services and opinions to realize the changes that will lead to the achievement of marketing, personal and organizational goals. Marketing science, on the other hand, is always in change in parallel with the processes of change experienced by the communities. Therefore, marketing concept has also quite been differentiated when compared to the past. Today, marketing is closely associated with the consideration of long term targets, paying attention to its stakeholders, and the provision of the sustainability of social sources by the business [1]. As a result of the improvement and enhancement of production technologies, consumers' needs have arrived at a determinant position. This has made consumers the focus point for goods or service producing organizations. And this has showed up along a new marketing concept. As a part of the new marketing concept, marketing of several matters have been started by the businesses for the benefit of the community. Non-profit, utility marketing applications which aim to make the society to

adopt a social opinion are called social marketing [2].

Today, social marketing concept has become a highly important field for companies, which is proved by the works and planning exercised by many companies throughout the world in this field and it is specified that this is realized with the influence of the rooted change in social priorities. Recent studies which focus on social marketing applications in businesses have shown that consumers rather prefer the brands which participate in social marketing activities in their purchases.

This study handles social marketing concept, and explains the definition, occurrence, development process, characteristics of social marketing and the fields of application of social marketing and the problems in application. Furthermore, the importance of social marketing in terms of businesses is specified and social marketing applications in several businesses are given.

Social Marketing Concept

In today's modern marketing concept, companies'

use of marketing only for obtaining profit, increasing the sales, getting new customers, gaining income for the business is considered a kind of disturbance by target market. Businesses are expected to spend a part of the income they have received from the community through product sales for community oriented works. And social marketing concept is shaped in line with this expectation [3].

Kotler and Zaltman were the first users of Social Marketing concept by their article titled "Social Marketing an Approach to Planned Social Change" which was published in Journal of Marketing in 1971. The term social marketing was used for the first time in that study. Kotler and Zaltman perceived social marketing as similar to traditional marketing and revealed that the marketer focussed on target market and general community benefits -rather than profit. Based on this opinion, social marketing is expressed as "planned social change approach" [2].

Having been defined as planned social change approach by Kotler and Zaltman [2], social marketing is usually explained as the efforts developed to increase the promotion and acceptability of social opinions. And these opinions are spread in line with adapting traditional marketing elements - product, price, place, promotion- to social marketing. It could also be said that social marketing concept was developed to answer some needs such as emphasizing non-profit material consumption and eliminating the differences of opinion among the needs of the community as a result of the change in social marketing. [4].

The component which is called product in traditional marketing usually expresses a social opinion in social marketing. It is aimed to make the target market adopt this opinion. According to Brown [5], social product is assessed in three dimensions which are a behaviour which marketers attempt to influence (actual product), benefits recommended to a certain target market as a whole (essence product) and nonphysical products or services recommended by social marketers (expanded product). Price, which is considered the cost created by the changing behaviours in social marketing process, on the other hand, is not qualified with a monetary value [6]. In social marketing dimension, promotion activities are explained as the persuasion and communication strategies which will make the social product familiar, acceptable and even desirable for people. Places to reach information or education such as distribution channels,

physicians' offices, shopping stores, and mass media are defined as the last element of social marketing mix [2].

Andreason [7] defines social marketing as the analysis, planning, application and assessment works to increase personal and social welfare of the target market, create voluntariness phenomenon by using traditional marketing technologies and emphasizes that social marketing is also associated with influencing behaviours. In the study by Nathanson [8] it is also reported that social marketing is associated with changing not only opinions but also behaviours.

Social marketing concept is explained as targeting customer satisfaction and long term consumer welfare by a consumer oriented approach. Thus, businesses should also consider the social priorities in addition to their customer satisfaction goal [9]. Besides, in order to create a balanced social marketing perception, the balance between customer (satisfaction), business (profit) and community (welfare) should be achieved [10].

The goals of social marketing in line with social marketing related qualifications can be summarized as presenting applications which intend to create targeted behaviours in the community, change the behaviours and increase the qualifications, and providing change in beliefs [11]. Fundamentally, social marketing, which develops in line with the opinion of adapting traditional marketing applications to social activities, still shows some differences in structure from traditional marketing type. According to Andreason [7]; the main standing out differences are that social marketers' aim to "do something good" while commercial marketers wish to "earn money" and commercial marketing applications create funds by means of investments while social marketing activities create funds thanks to taxes and donations.

Fields of Application of Social Marketing

In line with the increasing need for social change, some fields of research have been created with regard to the use of social marketing method. These fields which are classified by Kotler and Lee [12] were determined as health, safety, environmental protection and provision of social participation. Accordingly, social marketing also provides benefits for health by reducing tobacco consumption, obesity, chest cancer, HIV, AIDS, diabetes etc. cases; for safety by preventing drunk driving and spreading the use of safety belt; for environmental protection by activities such as waste reduction, wild life protection; for social

participation by organ and blood donation, housing street animals etc. Dinan and Sargeant [13] classify certain subjects which attract attention in the community and in which social marketing applications have become common as general health, HIV infection and sexual responsibility, harms of smoking, alcohol and drug addiction, pollution and business ethics.

The subjects which are included within the areas of interest of social marketing undoubtedly show difference in every society. For example, while AIDS, environmental problems and obesity are some of the important headings in Europe and America and institutions carry out their social marketing applications mostly about these headings, education is seen prominent in the social marketing applications of Turkey. Many works have been signed in Turkey particularly in relation to sending female children to school. Besides, "environment" (green marketing) could be mentioned as the common and attractive social marketing subject in the whole world. When the fields of application are listed in general, "environment, health, education, sports, aid campaigns," could be mentioned as the most frequently specified social marketing subjects in literature.

Obstacles for Social Marketing Applications

While social marketing applications become rapidly widespread on one hand, there is confusion from time to time about what social marketing is and how it should be applied, on the other. The same problem is available among social marketing specialists [14]. Andreasen [15] states that the concepts, applications and programs which are mostly uttered as social marketing are not social marketing. It will not be correct to qualify the programs which do not focus on consumer behaviour, not create strategies in the consumer's mind, not involve sufficient marketing researches, not carefully segment the market and not take competition into consideration as social marketing [15].

Social marketing is a much more difficult process when compared to traditional marketing. This is because it requires changing uncontrollable behaviours and it usually has to be realized through very scarce sources. Social marketing undertakes the duty of creating change in behaviour and making an opinion adopted; and encounters a number of obstacles in application. Some of these obstacles originate from social marketing's own characteristics while others

originate from the perception of social marketing as the same thing with social advertisement.

One of the most important problems encountered in social marketing applications originates from the confusion between social marketing and social advertisement. It is not a correct approach to perceive social marketing as a public oriented social advertisement. Social marketing covers all elements of marketing mix beyond social advertisement dimensions [16].

Social advertisement should be maintained in integration with other elements of marketing mix. In this sense, social marketing expresses a much larger opinion than social advertisement and even social communication [2]. Besides the synonymous use of social marketing and social advertisement and the inability to comprehend social marketing as a more extensive concept than social advertisement; another matter which makes social marketing more difficult than traditional marketing is associated with the main purpose of social marketing. It is merely a highly difficult process to create change in behaviour, which is one of the main targets of social marketing. Creating change in behaviour in people is more difficult in social marketing when compared to traditional marketing, and changing beliefs and prejudices with regard to certain ways of behaviour requires a long - range process.

Literature Review

When compared to other disciplines, it could be said that social marketing is one of the areas where fewer studies are done but it could be misleading to classify it because of its fields of research which cover a great variety of subjects [8]. In his study where he includes the bibliometric analysis of his publication in the field of social marketing, Alves [17] states that social marketing oriented studies reached to the highest level in 2007. After Kotler and Levy [18] revealed social marketing concept, there were many studies which supported the importance of social marketing and mentioned the fields to be used. Graham [19] explained that marketing had the ability to guide all organizations whether it has profit motive or not. Jones [20] stated that marketing applications can also be assessed as operations such as teaching at school, making religious propaganda at the church and ensuring the application of orders at military service [20].

After the assessments of Laczinak et al., [21] which was generally accepted in mentioning social marketing to have the potential to provide benefit in many fields, the studies which are done in many

fields mainly including health are associated with social marketing.

Many researchers such as Manoff, Lefebvre, Flora, Meibach, Siegel and Donor who study in the field of health associate their studies with social marketing concept and mainly deal with alcohol and smoking, sexually transmitted diseases, family planning, obesity and nutrition topics [8].

Besides, family planning oriented social marketing studies are also frequently encountered in literature. One of the most important examples of these studies is the study by Fox and Kotler [22] which contains social marketing oriented specific programs and activities. This study reveals that most of the family planning oriented campaigns are implemented under the sponsorship of the state and economic & social gains could be obtained by creating an effective birth control and awareness against rapid increase in population [22]. Primarily, social marketing is a highly important marketing notion in spreading social reasons. The development of social marketing should be monitored by means of social ads and social communication. Its effects in family planning, prevention of heart attack and other fields of health and its spread within the community should be examined as an application, and many state organizations and associations which deal with social projects as a single unit should be directed towards social communication and social marketing [22].

Another study explains that public based health education programs raise the awareness of the public, lead to conscious changes in behaviours and effective changes in the field of public health. It is emphasized that social marketing technique and theories are effective in meeting the deficits [23].

Apart from these applications, there are also subject such as encouraging child adoption [24], female children's chance to further exploit education facilities in underdeveloped countries [25], preventing violence against women by supporting economic development in countryside [26] within the scope of social marketing.

Most of the social marketing researchers also focus on theoretical discussions in topics such as the advantages and difficulties of social marketing besides empirical and descriptive case studies [8]. They try to explain social marketing concept and its development, discuss the problems which are encountered in social marketing, present suggestions with regard to the

preparation of more effective social program by overcoming these problems [27]. "Phases of Changing Approaches, "Health Belief Model" [28], "Social Learning Theory" [29], "Personal Strength Theory" [30], "Introduction to Education Programs" [31] are among of the examples of the theoretical studies in the field of social marketing.

One of the subjects where social marketing is rather discussed theoretically is the ethic assessments. Ethic in social marketing is defined within theoretical framework and the importance of ethic assessments are mentioned [32]. In their study where they dealt with social marketing as a business strategy, Davidson and Novelli [33] reveals the non-ethic elements in social marketing. Kirby and Andreasen [34] also use ethic assessments in social marketing as a tool to assess cost and benefit analyses of any marketing program.

Social marketing studies have been implemented in several subjects in national literature. Subjects on social marketing application in different fields include handling environmental awareness in terms of social responsibility [35], marketing applications in non-profit organizations [36], supporting the education [37], making use of social marketing in order to remove the socioeconomic reasons of terrorism [38] promoting sports through social marketing [39]. And, there are also theoretical studies on the explanation of social marketing concept and obstacles of social marketing [27].

Social Marketing Applications in Businesses

Marketing activities are quite important in introducing the products of the businesses and providing solutions for consumers. Businesses have responsibility towards the community while meeting the wishes and needs of the consumers. Shareholders have to establish a balance between the community and the consumers. Particularly, the severity of competition between the brands forces businesses to assess their marketing strategies and primarily reaching the consumer. Within this scope, businesses which are engaged in activities for the benefit of the community gain a distinguishing competitive advantage.

As mentioned by Ingram et al., [40], if consumers perceive non-ethic behaviours of the business, it is inevitable to lose a loyal consumer group. For, the consumer's commitment to the brand or the business is a psychological and emotional commitment. Having ethical values, working for the benefit of the community etc. is closely

associated with creating a positive image in consumer's mind [40].

In the case of preference among similar products, consumers can purchase by making assessments on which business has more social responsibility. The result of a research which was made in England in 1996 also supports this judgment. Accordingly, if the quality and price of a product is equal, the 76% of the consumers prefer the social purpose associated brands. Likewise, 64% of the consumers have a tendency to pay 5% more, on average, to the brands associated with social purpose while this is approximately 10% on average for 20% of them. When these rates are taken into consideration, it is inevitable for the businesses to understand the importance of social responsibility and use it as a distinguishing characteristic. While defining an excellent company, Ford Motor Business stated that "it has to offer great products and work to make the world a better place", which is an important example to emphasize the importance of social marketing [41].

Within the context of balance among customer satisfaction, business profit and community welfare which are mentioned to be necessarily considered by businesses, Hewlett Packard Company required a change in the design of packages of printing boxes. Such an application was determined to be effective in protecting the environment. This application could make a contribution to the environment equal to withdrawing 3.600 automobiles from the traffic every year. It was also stipulated that material savings could be made by providing the reduction in transfer costs and by transition to the use of recyclable material thanks to lighter and smaller packages.

Another example in this regard is that the acceptance of the year 2007 as the year of Mevlana by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the organization of Mevlana events in the USA by Koç Holding could be evaluated within the application of social marketing. Upon the implementation of this event, it could be said that the business could provide a competitive advantage to increase brand recognition.

As another social project, Renault and Total started a banner contest on drawing safe roads as imagined by elementary school students through their projects called "First Steps on the Street". Through with this project, they aimed to reinforce the knowledge of the students and make them think about the traffic problem.

In addition to these examples, the support provided for the education of the children with limited financial status through Arçelik's project which was started together with the Ministry of National Education; the sponsorship applications of Ülker to promote social responsibility projects; Vestel's long term social responsibility projects which contribute to Turkish sports, mainly athletics can also be shown as other examples of social marketing applications which are implemented by businesses.

The businesses which carry out the mentioned social responsibility projects obtain advantages such as increasing their sales and market shares, strengthening their brand positions, enriching their corporate images, ensuring their employees' motivation, reducing their operating costs and becoming more attractive in mind of the investors. The activities within the content of social marketing appear in line with the opinion to create social benefit, and they also provide businesses with competitive advantage in promotion of their brands.

Conclusion

The change in the marketing applications as a result of the advancements in the community has led to the start of the sense of social marketing as of 1970s and the organizations started to apply the marketing principles and methods which are applied in the non-profit organizations. This is mainly because the businesses need to satisfy customer and to balance social welfare and profit. The consumers' tendency to prefer the brands which are engaged in social marketing activities is also another factor which encourages businesses.

As the activities which aim to change the opinions or behaviours to provide benefit for the community, social marketing applications are generally applied in the fields such as family planning, breaking the habit of smoking and drug addiction, fighting against transmitting diseases, changing nutritive habits, protection of the environment etc. In literature, studies on health which are mainly family planning, reducing smoking, alcohol and drug addiction, nutritive habits and obesity are prominent.

When these studies are evaluated, it is observed that more successful results are obtained in social marketing applications on family planning particularly in the developing countries. Besides, applications on nutrition and sport activities within the scope of protecting heart health and studies on quitting bad habits can also be

evaluated as the fields where social marketing obtains successful results.

Social marketing oriented applications and their benefits at several dimensions can also be expended to different fields. For example, social marketing can be used as a tool in removing socioeconomic level differences by working together with national and international aid organizations. Such an application can be considered a new field.

Social marketing can also be applied further on education particularly for the developing countries. More effective education and instruction process and obtaining the expected result within a short time can be aimed. Not only the continuation of education but also the ability to make research, effective learning and efficient working can also be promoted through social marketing. Within this view, a concept can be created to gain these skills in education and

instruction at schools. The current education problems can be identified and suggestions can be developed within the concept of social marketing.

Advertisement, which has an important place in traditional marketing, can also be evaluated within the concept of social marketing. The ethical aspect of advertisement can rather become an extensive application in the field of social marketing. As a matter of fact, advertisement can create negative effects on the consumers. Health, nutrition, ethic behaviours, deceptive and misleading behaviours etc. can be considered as social responsibilities that must be considered in advertising.

Expansion of the field of application of social marketing and provision of its sustainability will not only provide a long term competitive advantage for the businesses but also bring along customer satisfaction and social welfare.

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