

CONSIDERATIONS ON SOCIAL MARKETING IN ROMANIA

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Abstract: Social marketing, a concept that has only recently reached its maturity, it's starting to win ground in Romania as well, although it is many times used clumsily or confused with other concepts that are similar either from a phonetically point of view, either from the point of view of the ways of implementation. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to present briefly, from a theoretical point of view, this concept, to present the elements that distinguish it from the other branches of marketing and to present examples of good practice in its implementation abroad in order to be able to finally point out the concept of social marketing in Romania.

JEL classification: M31, M38

Key words: social marketing, social media marketing, consumer behaviour, social campaigns

1. INTRODUCTION

The idea, on which the concept of social marketing was built, has its origins¹ in 1951, when Wiebe dared the marketing community by asking: “Why can't you sell brotherhood and rational thinking like you sell soap?”². This question determined people to seriously take into account the possibility of using the methods of influencing the consumer behaviour from the commercial sector to the non-profit zone³. Thus, the specialists in the field realized that the success of the social campaigns was even the more impressive as these followed in the footsteps of the ones from the commercial marketing sector. The thinking and techniques of social marketing have gradually spread throughout the whole world, getting to represent most of the times the cornerstone of the campaigns promoting the improvement of public health, campaigns

1 Hannagan, T. - “Marketing for Non-Profit Sector”, the Macmillan Press Ltd., New York, 1992, p. 17-18.

2 Wiebe, G.D., “Merchandising commodities and citizenship in television”, Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 15 No. 4, Winter, 1951/1952, p. 679-91.

3 Hannagan, pg. 18.

realized with the purpose of preventing, influencing and changing positively the negative voluntary behaviours such as smoking, alcoholism and drug abuse⁴.

Thus, this paper starts by presenting a theoretical approach of the management marketing concept, its definition, the main features as well as the main elements that differentiate it from other branches of marketing such as: commercial(or classic) marketing or social media marketing. The theoretical presentation of the concept of social marketing is followed by the delimitation of the area of coverage of the concept and by the presentation of some examples of good practices from abroad, respectively the brief presentation of the campaigns “5 a Day for Better Health”⁵ and “Back to Sleep”⁶.

The structure of the paper was conceived so as to point out the differences between the social campaigns that enjoyed a real success and the representative and major campaigns conducted in Romania that didn't have in the end the expected outcome, such as the campaign “Stop fumat – Fumatul e singura ta plăcere?”.

The reason for choosing this theme is represented by the fact that, as a result of the documentation carried out in this field, we were confirmed the fact that social marketing represents an unknown for most part of the country population, but furthermore, from the examples of social campaigns implemented in our country (part of which are presented in this paper) it is obvious that those who deal with the implementation of these projects don't master well enough the theoretical notions included in the concept of “social marketing”. Another proof of the confusion that this concept arouses in our country is the fact that in many press articles there is confusion between social marketing, social media marketing and health education⁷, the differences between these being significant.

3. A CONCEPTUAL APPROACH OF “SOCIAL MARKETING”

One of the first definitions given to the “social marketing” concept belongs to the Americans Philip Kotler and Gerald Zaltman, who in 1973 considered that “social marketing represents the projection, the implementation and the control of marketing programs concerning the acceptance of some social ideas”⁸. Later on, Philip Kotler reformulates slightly this definition, considering that social marketing represents a “technique of managing the social exchanges, meaning the projection, the implementation and the control of marketing programs concerning the increase of the acceptability of an idea or a social action by the target groups”⁹.

Social marketing represents the systemic application of marketing together with other concepts and techniques, in order to achieve a specific behaviour for a social optimum, or, even more simple, the use of marketing principles to influence the human

⁴ Stremțan, F., “Promotion strategies for health care services”, presented at The 5th edition of the International Conference “New challenges for the Romanian Economy”, Oradea, 29-30 may 2009.

⁵ *** www.dole5aday.com.

⁶ Kotler, Ph., Lee, N., - “Marketing în sectorul public”, Edt. Meteor Press, 2008, p. 179-203.

⁷ Cordoș, M., “Factorii psihologici determinanți ai comportamentului consumatorului de servicii turistice și tipuri de consumatori”, The Annals of University of Oradea, Economic Science, Universitz of Oradea Publishing House, 2003, TOM XII, ISSN 1582-5450.

⁸ Kotler, Ph., Lee, N., pg. 202.

⁹ Hannagan, T., pg. 19.

consumer behaviour in order to improve life quality¹⁰. Practically, the campaigns that promote this program have as a purpose the changing of a negative behaviour or convincing the public to adopt a positive behaviour. Even if in the program there are used tactics that increase the degree of education or awareness, the accent is on changing the consumer behaviour¹¹. While generic marketing has as a purpose the influencing of consumer behaviour in general, social marketing is considered to be an extension of generic marketing, distinguishing itself from other forms of marketing through its objectives. The purpose of social marketing is to influence social behaviour in such a way as to be beneficial to the target public as well as the society in general, the welfare of society (the social optimum) representing the major objective pursued by this concept, while in the case of the commercial marketing the major objective is a financial one. This last statement though, doesn't mean that a commercial marketer can not contribute through his activity to the social welfare. Also, social marketing can be applied in order to promote valuable goods, as well as to determine the society to avoid compromised goods, in this way promoting the welfare of the society as a whole.

Born in the '70s and matured during the last decade, social marketing is, at its origins, considered to have two parents: a social parent, represented by the social sciences and policies and a marketing parent, respectively the approaches of public and commercial sector from the perspective of marketing.

In regard to the social marketing field, it can be considered the fact that this covers any planned effort to influence human behaviour and where the motives of the agent of change are more selfless rather than selfish. Social marketing presents some elements that have to be taken into account in the development of a campaign aimed at changing the consumer behaviour. A social marketing campaign pursues the changing of a negative behaviour into a positive one. This thing can be obtained through correct information and through the education of the target group of the campaign. Another essential thing in a social marketing campaign is the severity of the problem and the necessity of solving it as soon as possible. Also, this marketing category pursues profit, therefore, there has to be a direct connection between the profit of the company and the social problem. Following such a campaign, the company pursues the increase of sales, the increase of reputation and maybe even the customer awareness through the attempt of solving the problem that they deal with.

The efficiency of the campaigns using social marketing reaches its peak only when there are respected six real objectives^{12,13}: 1. the behaviour change – the campaign tries to change the behaviour of the target group and has concrete and measurable objectives; 2. consumer research – the intervention is based on the understanding of the experience, values and needs of the consumer, obtained through a research of the target group; 3. segmentation and targeting – in the selection of the target group are taken into account different segmentation variables, and the chosen strategy is specially created for the target group; 4. marketing mix – besides "the 4 Ps" there may also appear

¹⁰ Smith, W. A. - "Social marketing: An evolving definition". American Journal of Health Behavior, 2000, 24, 11-17.

¹¹ *** www.responsabilitatesociala.ro.

¹² Andreasen, A. R. - "Marketing Social Change", Jossey-Bass Publisher, San Francisco, 1995, p. 9-13.

¹³ Andreasen, A., "Social marketing: its definition and domain", Journal of Public Policy and Marketing, Vol. 13 No. 1, 1994, p. 108-14.

“policy change” or “people”, but it is important to specify the fact that the investments that use only the promotion but not the other “Ps” as well, represent social advertising and not social marketing; 5. exchange – the campaign takes into account what might motivate the persons to get involved voluntarily and offers them something in exchange, and the benefit offered in exchange can be intangible, like personal satisfaction for example, as well as tangible, consisting in different material rewards that can be offered to the person for accepting to participate in the campaign and the change of behaviour¹⁴; 6. competition – the forces that compete in the behaviour change are analysed, the social intervention takes into account the possible ways of attack of these competing behaviours and uses strategies that are aimed at eliminating or reducing this competition.

Besides the six objectives that need to be taken into consideration in order to achieve a successful social campaign, the social marketing specialists present us twelve principles¹⁵ which in their opinion will help at achieving the goal: 1. following the examples of successful campaigns of yesterday and today; 2. beginning with the most prepared for action target markets; 3. encouraging the adoption one at a time of some behaviours that are distinct, simple and easy to put into practice; 4. identifying and eliminating the obstacles that stand in the way of behaviour change; 5. bringing the real benefits closer to the present; 6. pointing out the competing behaviour costs; 7. promoting an object or a service meant to help the target public to act in the desired manner; 8. offering non-financial incentives in the form of recognition and appreciation; 9. using some amusing messages; 10. using the publication channels in the point where the decision is made; 11. obtaining the commitment or the promise of people; 12. appealing to opinions in order to sustain the desired behaviour in the long run.

The social marketing actions are sustained by the public sector institutions, national – The Health Department, local – the public utility societies such as the fire department, the police, the schools. The non-lucrative/non-profit organizations and the foundations get involved as well, most of the times encouraging behaviours that help them accomplish their mission. Last but not least, companies get involved in the social marketing actions, such as auto insurance companies which urge the drivers to drive cautiously, diapers manufacturers that try to educate sitters and parents in the raising of children in order to reduce the infant mortality rate during sleep.

4. THE COVERAGE AREA OF THE SOCIAL MARKETING

Concerning the activities carried out in the social marketing field, the parent of the marketing, Philip Kotler calls them social campaigns and are identified in the following fields of action: reforms in the health sector: combating smoking; eradicating drug consume; rational nutrition; fitness; reforms in the environmental protection sector: decreasing the degree of water and air pollution; maintenance of natural parks and forests; reforms in the education sector: increasing the degree of literacy; improving the public schools; increasing the performance in assimilating mathematics

¹⁴ Cordoş, M., pg. 4.

¹⁵ Hinescu A., Zetea, V., Bolog, A., “Rezistența la schimbare”, Tribuna economică, nr. 39, sept. 2005.

and natural sciences; improving the work conditions, seen as an incentive for teachers; economic reforms: revival of the old industrial towns; offensives in the direction of increasing the degree of qualification of the labour force; granting incentives to foreign investors¹⁶.

It is important to mention the social marketing features in relation with classic marketing. Thus, the first difference is represented by the fact that the organizations which apply the social marketing have as a main purpose, unlike the companies (which are considered to practise the commercial marketing – also known as classic marketing), to promote the interests of some groups or of the society as a whole. If, as a rule, the main purpose of a company is to obtain profit, for a social organization, obtaining some revenues may represent at most an auxiliary objective, subordinated to achieving the main purpose.

Secondly, most of the times, the products offered by the social organizations are not the same with the products made by companies. Alongside the traditional products and services, appear ideas and other immaterial goods. Usually, these represent the main objective of activity of the social organizations.

Thirdly, the organizations that practise social marketing don't strive to increase the demand for their products among certain consumer target groups, as the companies do. In most of the cases they strive to influence the image and behaviour of the target groups, sometimes even against their will. Out of habit or convenience, people don't adopt a new behaviour (for example: quitting smoking or going to regular medical checks) without a certain reluctance, even if this behaviour corresponds to their interests.

Another feature of the social marketing which differentiates it from the commercial marketing is the fact that it is not applied only to goods and services, but also to persons, places, ideas and the exchanges are not usually of financial nature. The benefits of the target public are most of the times not correlated with the payments made by these, as in the case of the social marketing, although the target groups they are addressed to, have a reduced purchasing power, being practically inefficient from the economic point of view.

Last but not the least, it is very important to mention the fact that social marketing is different from health education. The difference between the two is the fact that while health education is addressed to a large mass of persons, like the population of a country for example, the campaigns are usually carried out by the public institutions (the Health Department for example), the social marketing has as a main concern for the consumer, while the campaigns are usually carried out under the aegis of the Health Departments, by social organizations (usually NGOs) and /or companies.

5. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICES

There are many examples of good practices in the field of the social marketing, but we are going to present only three of them, the ones that we consider to be more relevant from abroad. The first example of good practice is the one of the company Procter & Gamble (through the brand Pampers), a leader among the diapers

¹⁶ Gavrilă – Paven, I., “Investițiile în economia contemporană”, Edt. Cartea Cărții de Știință, Cluj-Napoca, 2010.

manufacturers of the world¹⁷, which considered that it is its duty to join the campaign “Back to Sleep”, initiated by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and whose purpose was to educate parents to put their children to sleep lying on the back, the studies showing that sleeping with the face down increases the risk of infant mortality. Thus, the company used the campaign logo on its diapers, and furthermore it distributed educational packages to the parents, packages whose information could save the children’s life¹⁸. The packings of the smallest sizes of Pampers had a new message printed on them, in English, French and Spanish: “Back to Sleep”. Also, it was created a tag to hang on the door handle, which was distributed by means of the hospitals from Canada and of the Wal-Mart stores, and the message “Back to Sleep” was found in the television commercials and in the advertising for the Pampers brand through printed materials. The research carried out following the campaign, pointed out that the degree of awareness of the fact that the baby has to be put to sleep lying on his back increased from 44% in 1999 to 66% in 2001. Also, the number of specialists recommending this position increased from 21% to 67% and, most importantly, the number of sitters and parents that were putting their babies to sleep lying on the back increased from 41% to 65%¹⁹.

“From Fat to Healthy” is a large social campaign carried out in Finland in the ’70s, a period in which the traditions of the Finnish people posed serious problems, this population holding the world record for heart diseases. In order to combat the negative behaviours of the Finnish, the following strategies have been adopted: 1. important changes have been made to the legislation – the tobacco advertising has been banned, the rewards for the farmers were given depending on the protein and not the caloric content of the products; 2. funds have been transferred from Helsinki to the local authorities – the latter being entrusted with the task of promoting physical activity; 3. less common personal interventions have been carried out – middle-aged men from bars/pubs were drawn into discussions about physical exercises that they might be interested in doing and the necessary means to carry them out were made available to them; 4. there has been an obvious, deliberate mutation from the competition sports towards the physical activity meant to improve the state of health; 5. people have been encouraged to make a daily habit out of the physical exercises; 6. the promotion carried out in the private sector helped overcoming the obstacles standing in the way of physical exercises – the companies have been encouraged by the government to offer shoes that do not slip, and the elderly could ask for/request spikes that they could attach to their shoes for free; 7. the promotion carried out with the help of the organizations from the health protection field; 8. partnerships between the public sector institutions have been made, in order to help the elderly get access more easily to the spots/places in which physical activities took place/were carried out. Therefore/Thus, in only a few years, the Finnish authorities confirmed the fact that the number of men that died from heart diseases decreased by at least 65%, because of the physical activity carried out by these²⁰.

¹⁷ *** www.pampers.com.

¹⁸ *** http://pgbalkans.com/en/cc_programs.asp.

¹⁹ Hinescu A., Zetea, V., Bolog, A., “Rezistența la schimbare”, Tribuna economică, nr. 39, sept. 2005.

²⁰ Idem.

Another relevant/significant example is that of the Dole company, a well-known fruit and vegetables distributor, which in 1991, together with The National Cancer Institute (NCI) and Produce for Better Health Foundation (PBH) launched the program “5 A Day for Better Health”²¹, whose purpose was to persuade children to consume at least five fruit or vegetables daily²². The campaign goes on even nowadays through an interactive site, in which there is presented information on nutrition, in a form that is attractive for both children and parents. Also, the company organizes all kinds of events with the purpose to inform the citizens about the effects/consequences of an unhealthy nutrition/nourishment²³.

6. SOCIAL MARKETING IN ROMANIA

In Romania, an example of good practice is that of the cosmetic products company AVON, which through the cosmetic products marketing catalogues promotes the Pink Ribbon. The Pink Ribbon is the international symbol for the fight against breast cancer. The organizations and the campaigns that support and promote this symbol have as objectives the information and education of women in order to combat or diagnose early the illness, following the example of the social campaigns from abroad²⁴.

Another example of this kind of campaign is “Află că ești bine”. For a better understanding of this type of campaign we will carry out a brief analysis of the marketing mix concept. This, in the case of such a campaign, it is similar to the commercial marketing mix concept, but the final purpose is represented by the behaviour change of the target public. Thus, in this case, the product is represented by the monthly auto-examination, the yearly medical check with a specialist and the mammogram examination; the price is a combination between the tangible cost of the medical check and of the mammogram and the intangible cost represented by time and the potential discomfort. And, in order to be successful, the company must present the benefits as being superior to the effort made for the acceptance of the products²⁵.

The distribution or location where the educational services take place may be represented by education institutions, health institutions and the medical check can be carried out in hospitals and local clinics. The promotion of these campaigns is done through advertisements in the written press and online, on the radio and television, billboards and media events.

To these mix elements the public is added as well, which includes the target audience represented by women, but also by people that can influence their decisions

²¹ *** www.dole5aday.com.

²² Thackeray, R., Neiger, B. L., Leonard, H., Ware, J. & Stoddard, G. - “Comparison of a 5 a Day social marketing intervention and school-based curriculum”. *American Journal of Health Studies*, 18(1), 2002, 46-54.

²³ Stremțan, F., “Promotion strategies for health care services”, presented at The 5th edition of the International Conference “New challenges for the Romanian Economy”, Oradea, 29-30 may 2009.

²⁴ Kotler, Ph., Roberto, E. L. - “Social marketing: strategies for changing public behavior”, New York: Free Press; London : Collier Macmillan, 1989.

²⁵ Bryant, C. A., Forthofer, M. S., McCormack-Brown, K., Alfonso, A. L., & Quinn, G., 2000, “A social marketing approach to increasing breast cancer screening rates”. *Journal of Health Education*, 31, p. 320-328.

like the family, the doctors, those who make decisions regarding the health system, the media, as well as the persons involved in the campaign and that should reflect its image. Also, the partnership with women local associations, The Romanian Cancer Society, The Public Health Authority, corporate sponsors, media groups can represent a social marketing mix element.

The politics represents a mix element that can be quantifiable in the cheaper access to mammogram, the increase of the funds for research on breast cancer and the illness insurance. The necessary funds for running the campaigns can come from governmental grants and/or funds from non-governmental organizations. An example is "Pink Day", which is organized every year and consists in different events for raising funds, including theme parties where/to which people dress in pink. In 2006 this event raised 3.5 million pounds in one day.

All these elements represent the core of a social marketing campaign, and the success of the campaign is closely related to the choice and implementation of these elements.

The lack of experience of the Romanian companies and institutions in the social marketing field is evident in Romania by the fact that quite a few campaigns did not manage to achieve the expected success. A relevant example is that of the campaign against smoking, "Stop fumat – Fumatul e singura ta plăcere?", promoted by Mihaela Rădulescu, also a holder of the record for Romanian social, humanitarian and environmental campaigns, and conducted under the aegis of the Health Department/Ministry. A daring project at national level, through which it was attempted to discourage the smokers and to persuade them to give up this vice that favours impotence, lung cancer and many other serious illnesses. The campaign was set on imprinting the Romanians with the idea that the cigarette addiction can be harmful to interpersonal relations, only that the way in which the messages of the campaign were devised, gave birth to a real controversy. While other anti-smoking campaigns conducted abroad captured the attention in much more original ways, the messages of the Romanian campaign are not even as penetrating as the current messages on the cigarette packs, where there are presented the actual effects of tobacco on health.

It is obvious the fact that in Romania the social marketing concept is very little known and used, especially since in many press articles there is confusion between social marketing and social media marketing, which although there are two similar concepts in terms of semantics and content, essentially they are different. Thus, unlike the social marketing whose activities are aimed at changing the consumer behaviour, social media marketing is a concept that describes the use of social networks, online communities, blogs or any other means of online collaboration in order to promote, sell, and maintain public relations and to provide assistance. The instruments used to implement this concept are mainly: Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Flickr, Wikipedia, Orkut, YouTube²⁶.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The present article started as a theoretical presentation of the concept of social marketing and followed by the presentation of some examples of good practice from abroad and from Romania, pointed out, hopefully with success, the fact that social

²⁶ *** http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_media_marketing.

marketing has not reached yet its maturity in our country, but it is used more frequently and many times even successfully.

Although most of the social marketing campaigns carried out worldwide up until now were focused mainly on influencing individual behaviour, the tendency is to focus the attention on organizations, companies, political decision factors, policy makers, legislative bodies and other institutions and persons that can modify the infrastructure and can help make it a little easier for people to adopt that “appropriate behaviour”, with lower costs, in a convenient and even pleasant way. Practically, it is attempted a behaviour change carried out indirectly by those who conduct social marketing activities. In Romania, however, we consider that this tendency will make itself felt only after social marketing will have reached its maturity and campaigns such as those previously presented will be crowned with success.

Whichever the way of implementation of these social marketing actions, they must exist, are welcome and especially necessary in this globalized world, where the daily stress and the various food additives, as well as alcohol, tobacco, drugs and other vices decreased the life expectancy of the world population. In the modern society, characterized by consumerism, the society must establish an optimum for itself, which must be achieved at any cost in order to ensure the welfare of the future generations.

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