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Author(s): Philip Kotler and Gerald Zaltman
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Social Marketing: An Approach to Planned Social Change

PHILIP KOTLER
and
GERALD ZALTMAN

Can marketing concepts and techniques be effectively applied to the promotion of social objectives such as brotherhood, safe driving, and family planning? The applicability of marketing concepts to such social problems is examined in this article. The authors show how social causes can be advanced more successfully through applying principles of marketing analysis, planning, and control to problems of social change.

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IN 1952, G. D. Wiebe raised the question "Why can't you sell brotherhood like you sell soap?"¹ This statement implies that sellers of commodities such as soap are generally effective, while "sellers" of social causes are generally ineffective. Wiebe examined four social campaigns to determine what conditions or characteristics accounted for their relative success or lack of success. He found that the more the conditions of the social campaign resembled those of a product campaign, the more successful the social campaign. However, because many social campaigns are conducted under quite un-market-like circumstances, Wiebe also noted clear limitations in the practice of social marketing.

A different view is implied in Joe McGinniss's best-selling book *The Selling of the President 1968*.² Its theme seems to be "You can sell a presidential candidate like you sell soap." Once Nixon gave the word: "We're going to build this whole campaign around television . . . you fellows just tell me what you want me to do and I'll do it," the advertising men, public relations men, copywriters, makeup artist, photographers, and others joined together to create the image and the aura that would make this man America's favorite "brand."

These and other cases suggest that the art of selling cigarettes, soap, or steel may have some bearing on the art of selling social causes. People like McGinniss—and before him John K. Galbraith and Vance Packard—believe everything and anything can be sold by Madison Avenue, while people like Wiebe feel this is exaggerated. To the extent that Madison Avenue has this power, some persons would be heartened because of the many good causes in need of an effective social marketing technology, and others would despair over the spectre of mass manipulation.

Unfortunately there are few careful discussions of the power and limitations of social marketing. It is the authors' view that social marketing is a promising framework for planning and implementing social change. At the same time, it is poorly understood and often viewed suspiciously by many behavioral scientists. The application of commercial ideas and methods to promote social goals will be seen by many as another example of business's lack of taste and self-restraint. Yet the application of the logic of marketing to social goals is a natural development and on the whole a promising one. The idea will not disappear by ignoring it or rallying against it.

¹ G. D. Wiebe, "Merchandising Commodities and Citizenship on Television," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 15 (Winter, 1951-52), pp. 679-691, at p. 679.

² Joe McGinniss, *The Selling of the President 1968* (New York: Trident Press, 1969).

This article discusses the meaning, power, and limitations of social marketing as an approach to planned social change. First, this will require delineating the generic nature of marketing phenomena and some recent conceptual developments in the marketing field. This will be followed by a definition of social marketing and an examination of the conditions under which it may be carried out effectively. The instruments of social marketing are defined, followed by a systems view of the application of marketing logic to social objectives.

What is Marketing?

The following statement testifies that there is no universal agreement on what marketing is.

It has been described by one person or another as a business activity; as a group of related business activities; as a trade phenomenon; as a frame of mind; as a coordinative, integrative function in policy making; as a sense of business purpose; as an economic process; as a structure of institutions; as the process of exchanging or transferring ownership of products; as a process of concentration, equalization, and dispersion; as the creation of time, place and possession utilities; as a process of demand and supply adjustment; and many other things.³

In spite of the confusing jumble of definitions, the core idea of marketing lies in *the exchange process*. *Marketing does not occur unless there are two or more parties, each with something to exchange, and both able to carry out communications and distribution*. Typically the subject of marketing is the exchange of goods or services for other goods or services or for money. Belshaw, in an excellent study of marketing exchange and its evolution from traditional to modern markets, shows the exchange process in marketing to be a fundamental aspect of both primitive and advanced social life.⁴

Given that the core idea of marketing lies in exchange processes, another concept can be postulated, that of marketing management, which can be defined as:

Marketing management is the analysis, planning, implementation, and control of programs designed to bring about desired exchanges with target audiences for the purpose of personal or mutual gain. It relies heavily on the adaptation and coordination of product, price, promotion, and place for achieving effective response.⁵

³ Marketing Staff of the Ohio State University, "A Statement of Marketing Philosophy," *JOURNAL OF MARKETING*, Vol. 29 (January, 1965), p. 43.

⁴ Cyril S. Belshaw, *Traditional Exchange and Modern Markets* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965).

⁵ Philip Kotler, *Marketing Management: Analysis, Planning and Control*, Second Edition (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972).

Thus marketing management occurs when people become conscious of an opportunity to gain from a more careful planning of their exchange relations. Although planned social change is not often viewed from the client's point of view, it involves very much an exchange relationship between client and change agent.⁶

The practice of marketing management as applied to products and services has become increasingly sophisticated. The responsibility of launching new products on a national basis involving the investment and risk of millions of dollars and the uncertainties of consumer and competitor responses, has led to an increased reliance on formal research and planning throughout the product development and introduction cycle. Marketing management examines the wants, attitudes, and behavior of potential customers which could aid in designing a desired product and in merchandising, promoting, and distributing it successfully. Management goes through a formal process of strategy determination, tactical programming, regional and national imple-

⁶ Arthur H. Niehoff, *A Casebook of Social Change* (Chicago: Aldine, 1966); Warren G. Bennis, Kenneth D. Benne and Robert Chin, *The Planning of Change* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969).

• ABOUT THE AUTHORS. Philip Kotler is A. Montgomery Ward Professor of Marketing at the Graduate School of Management, Northwestern University. He is the author of *Marketing Management: Analysis, Planning and Control* and *Marketing Decision Making: A Model-Building Approach*. Professor Kotler is also advisory editor of the Holt, Rinehart and Winston Marketing Series, former chairman of the College on Marketing of the Institute of Management Sciences, and presently a director of the American Marketing Association.



Gerald Zaltman is associate professor of behavioral science, Department of Marketing, Graduate School of Management and Faculty Associate of the Center for the Interdisciplinary Study of Science and Technology at Northwestern University. He holds an MBA degree from The University of Chicago and a PhD in sociology from The Johns Hopkins University. Professor Zaltman is author of *Marketing: Contributions from the Behavioral Sciences*, co-editor of *Creating Social Change* (in press), *Perspectives on Social Change* (in press), and a contributor to numerous books and journals. His major research interests and writing concern the diffusion of innovations, communication, social change, and the sociology of science.



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mentation, performance measurement, and feedback control.

There has been a shift from a sales to a marketing orientation in recent years. A sales orientation considers the job as one of finding customers for existing products and convincing them to buy these products. This sales concept is implicit in *The Selling of the President 1968*, since one is actually not developing a new "product" for the job, but rather trying to sell a given one with a suggestion that it is somewhat "new and improved." The marketing concept, on the other hand, calls for most of the effort to be spent on discovering the wants of a target audience and then creating the goods and services to satisfy them. This view seems privately and socially more acceptable. In private terms, the seller recognizes that it is easier to create products and services for existing wants than to try to alter wants and attitudes toward existing products. In social terms, it is held that this marketing philosophy restores consumer sovereignty in the determination of the society's product mix and the use of national resources.

In practice, since at any time there are both products in existence and new products being born, most marketing efforts are a mixture of selling and marketing; that is, a change strategy and a response strategy. In both cases, marketing management is becoming a sophisticated action technology that draws heavily on the behavioral sciences for clues to solving problems of communication and persuasion related to influencing the acceptability of commercial products and services. In the hands of its best practitioners, marketing management is applied behavioral science.

Social Marketing

An increasing number of nonbusiness institutions have begun to examine marketing logic as a means to furthering their institutional goals and products. Marketing men have advised churches on how to increase membership, charities on how to raise money, and art museums and symphonies on how to attract more patrons. In the social sphere, the Advertising Council of America has conducted campaigns for social objectives, including "Smokey the Bear," "Keep America Beautiful," "Join the Peace Corps," "Buy Bonds," and "Go to College." In fact, social advertising has become an established phenomenon on the American scene. Sandage says:

True, (advertising's) communication function has been confined largely to informing and persuading people in respect to products and services. On the other hand, it can be made equally available to those who wish to inform and persuade people in respect to a city bond issue, cleaning up community crime, the "logic" of atheism, the needs for better educational facilities, the abusive tactics of given law and enforcement officers, or any

other sentiment held by any individual who wishes to present such sentiment to the public.⁷

Social advertising has become such a feature of American society that it is no longer a question of whether to use it, but how to use it. It has been very successful in some cases and conspicuously unsuccessful in others. At fault to a large extent is the tendency of social campaigners to assign advertising the primary, if not the exclusive, role in accomplishing their social objectives. This ignores the marketing truism that a given marketing objective requires the coordination of the promotional mix with the goods and services mix and with the distribution mix. Social marketing is a much larger idea than social advertising and even social communication. To emphasize this, the authors define social marketing in the following way:

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. Thus, it is the explicit use of marketing skills to help translate present social action efforts into more effectively designed and communicated programs that elicit desired audience response. In other words, marketing techniques are the bridging mechanisms between the simple possession of knowledge and the socially useful implementation of what knowledge allows.

The Requisite Conditions for Effective Social Marketing

Some clues concerning the difference between social advertising and social marketing are contained in early papers by Lazarsfeld and Merton and by Wiebe which attempt to explain the limitations of social advertising.⁸

Lazarsfeld and Merton's Analysis

Lazarsfeld and Merton took exception with the view of many people that mass media can easily be used to control people's minds: "It is our tentative judgment that the social role played by the very existence of the mass media has been commonly overestimated."⁹ They believed that the effectiveness of mass media for propaganda purposes depended on three conditions, one or more of which is lacking in most propaganda situations. The first

⁷ C. H. Sandage, "Using Advertising to Implement the Concept of Freedom of Speech," in *The Role of Advertising*, C. H. Sandage and V. Fryburger, eds. (Homewood, Ill.: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1960), pp. 222-223.

⁸ Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton, "Mass Communication, Popular Taste, and Organized Social Action," in *Mass Communications*, William Schramm, ed. (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1949), pp. 459-480, and same reference as footnote 1.

⁹ Lazarsfeld and Merton, same reference as footnote 8, p. 462.

condition is real or psychological *monopolization* by the media; that is, a condition marked by the absence of counterpropaganda. This characterizes the totalitarian state and accounts for the greater effectiveness of these regimes in molding public opinion through mass media. It is found occasionally in free societies under special circumstances, such as a wartime effort. For example, Kate Smith's effectiveness in selling war bonds over the radio during World War II was partially due to the marathon nature of the event and the fact that everyone believed in the cause; i.e., there was no counterpropaganda. However, most campaigns in a free society in peace time compete with so many other causes and everyday distractions that the monopoly condition is lacking, and this condition reduces the effectiveness of such campaigns.

Lazarsfeld and Merton said the second condition required for effective mass propaganda is *canalization*, the presence of an existing attitudinal base for the feelings that the social communicators are striving to shape. They asserted that typical commercial advertising is effective because the task is not one of instilling basic new attitudes or creating significantly new behavior patterns, but rather canalizing existing attitudes and behavior in one direction or another. Thus, the seller of toothpaste does not have to socialize persons into new dental care habits, but rather into which brand of a familiar and desired product to purchase. If the pre-existing attitudes are present, then promotional campaigns are more effective, since canalization is always an easier task than social reconditioning.

The authors accept this idea but would add that many business marketing situations also involve the task of reshaping basic attitudes rather than canalizing existing ones. For example, consider business efforts to influence farmers to change time-honored farming practices, doctors to try out new drugs, and males to dress with more fashion and flair. Canalization is always easier, but the authors would like to emphasize that business marketers, like social marketers, often try to diffuse fundamentally new products and services which require major attitudinal reorientations.

Lazarsfeld and Merton call the third condition *supplementation* by which they mean the effort to follow up mass communication campaigns with programs of face-to-face contacts. In trying to explain the success of the rightist Father Coughlin movement in the thirties, Lazarsfeld and Merton observe:

This combination of a central supply of propaganda (Coughlin's addresses on a nationwide network), the coordinated distribution of newspapers and pamphlets and locally organized face-to-face discussions among relatively small groups—this complex of reciprocal reinforcement by mass media and personal relations proved spectacularly successful.¹⁰

¹⁰ Lazarsfeld and Merton, same reference as footnote 8.

This approach is standard in many closed societies and organizations and suggests another key difference between social advertising and social marketing. Whereas a social advertising approach contrives only the event of mass media communication and leaves the response to natural social processes, social marketing arranges for a stepdown communication process. The message is passed on and discussed in more familiar surroundings to increase its memorability, penetration, and action consequences. Thus supplementation, monopolization, and canalization are critical factors influencing the effectiveness of any social marketing effort.

Wiebe's Analysis

An additional contribution was made by Wiebe in his attempt to understand the differential effectiveness of four social campaigns.¹¹ He explained the relative effectiveness of these campaigns in terms of the audience member's experience with regard to five factors:

1. *The Force*. The intensity of the person's motivation toward the goal as a combination of his predisposition prior to the message and the stimulation of the message.
2. *The Direction*. Knowledge of how or where the person might go to consummate his motivation.
3. *The Mechanism*. The existence of an agency that enables the person to translate his motivation into action.
4. *Adequacy and Compatibility*. The ability and effectiveness of the agency in performing its task.
5. *Distance*. The audience member's estimate of the energy and cost required to consummate the motivation in relation to the reward.

To show how these factors operate, Wiebe first analyzed the Kate Smith campaign to sell bonds during World War II. This campaign was eminently successful, according to Wiebe, because of the presence of force (patriotism), direction (buy bonds), mechanism (banks, post offices, telephone orders), adequacy and compatibility (so many centers to purchase the bonds), and distance (ease of purchase). In fact, extra telephone lines were installed on the night of the campaign at 134 CBS stations to take orders during her appeal. The effort to buy bonds

. . . was literally reduced to the distance between the listener and his telephone. Psychological distance was also minimized. The listener remained in his own home. There were no new people to meet, no unfamiliar procedures, no forms to fill out, no explanation, no waiting. . . .¹²

In the case of a campaign to recruit Civil Defense volunteers, many of the same factors were present except that the social mechanism was not

¹¹ Same reference as footnote 1.

¹² Same reference as footnote 1, p. 633.

prepared to handle the large volume of response, and this reduced the campaign's success. Teachers, manuals, equipment, and registration and administration procedures were *inadequate*, and many responding citizens were turned away and disappointed after they were led to believe that their services were urgently needed.

The third campaign, a documentary on juvenile delinquency, did not meet with maximum success because of the *absence of a mechanism*. Instead of being directed to an existing agency, people were urged to form neighborhood councils themselves. This certainly takes far more effort than simply picking up the phone to buy a war bond, or "stopping in" to register at the nearest Civil Defense unit.

The fourth campaign revolved around the goal of the Kefauver committee hearings to arouse citizens to "set their house in order." This campaign met with a notable lack of success, however, because citizens were not *directed* to an appropriate mechanism despite the fact that one existed in principle in the political party organizations. Political party organizations apparently left much to be desired in terms of availability and compatibility. The skepticism prevalent at the time concerning the chances of anything beneficial happening as a result of the hearings was ample evidence that considerable psychological distance existed between the audience and the mechanisms for action.

The Social Marketing Approach

The Lazarsfeld and Merton conditions and the Wiebe factors provide a useful background for viewing the conceptual framework used by marketing strategists. Marketers view the marketing problem as one of developing the right *product* backed by the right *promotion* and put in the right *place* at the right *price*. These key variables in the marketing mix have been named the four P's by McCarthy.¹³ The authors shall examine each of these variables, designated control variables, in terms of some well-known social issues.

Product. In business marketing, sellers study the needs and wants of target buyers and attempt to design products and services that meet their desires. If well-designed and affordable, these products will be purchased. In social marketing, sellers also have to study the target audiences and design appropriate products. They must "package" the social idea in a manner which their target audiences find desirable and are willing to purchase. This corresponds to Wiebe's idea of a mechanism.

Product design is typically more challenging in the social area than it is in the business area. Consider the problem of marketing "safer driving." The social objective is to create safer driving habits and

attitudes in the population. There is no one product that can accomplish this. Various products have to be designed that will make partial contributions to the social objective. A public education media campaign providing tips on safe driving is one such product; the offering of "defensive driving courses" is another; the creation of insurance policies which reduce premiums for safer drivers is still another product. In general, the social marketer remains aware of the *core product* (safer driving) and tries to create various tangible products and services which are "buyable" and which advance the social objective.

Identical reasoning is required by those who market *altruistic causes* (e.g., charity giving, blood donation), *personal health causes* (e.g., nonsmoking, better nutrition), and *social betterment causes* (e.g., civil rights, improved housing, better environment). In each case, the social marketer must define the change sought, which may be a change in values, beliefs, affects, behavior, or some mixture. He must meaningfully segment the target markets. He must design social products for each market which are "buyable," and which instrumentally serve the social cause. In some social causes, the most difficult problem will be to innovate appropriate products; in other cases it will be to motivate purchase.

Promotion. The marketing man's second control variable is promotion. It is the communication-persuasion strategy and tactics that will make the product familiar, acceptable, and even desirable to the audience. Wiebe's counterpart to promotion is "force." The social campaign strategist will tend to think of this as mass media communication, but promotion is actually a much larger idea. To the marketing man, promotion includes the following major activities:

Advertising: Any paid form of nonpersonal presentation and promotion of products, services, or ideas by an identified sponsor.

Personal Selling: Any paid form of personal presentation and promotion of products, service, or ideas by an identified sponsor.

Publicity: Any unpaid form of nonpersonal presentation and promotion of products, services, or ideas where the sponsor is unidentified.

Sales Promotion: Miscellaneous paid forms (special programs, incentives, materials, and events) designed to stimulate audience interest and acceptance of a product.

Each of these promotional tools involves complex issues in strategy and tactics. With respect to advertising, the marketer has to determine the size of the total advertising budget, the choice of appeals, the development of attention-getting copy, the selection of effective and efficient media, the scheduling of the advertising inputs, and the measurement of overall and segment-level results. With respect to personal selling, the marketer must determine the size of the total sales force, the de-

¹³ E. Jerome McCarthy, *Basic Marketing: A Managerial Approach*, Third Edition (Homewood, Ill.: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1968), pp. 31-33.

velopment of sales territory boundaries and assignments, the development of personal presentation strategies, the degree and type of salesforce motivation and supervision, and the evaluation of salesforce effectiveness. Publicity necessitates arranging for significant news about the product to appear in various media. Sales promotion calls for developing special display, premiums, programs, and events that might be useful in stimulating interest or action.

Each of these activities is a specialty in which the experts have achieved sophisticated levels of knowledge and techniques. This is especially apparent when one examines social campaigns developed by amateurs where the appeals and copy seem very naive. Even behavioral science consultants to social campaign organizations often fail to make a maximum contribution because of their inability or reluctance to view the issue in broad marketing terms instead of in strictly social or ethical terms.

Recently Nathaniel Martin criticized the Indian government for failing to handle family planning as a marketing problem.

Selling birth control is as much a marketing job as selling any other consumer product. And where no manufacturer would contemplate developing and introducing a new product without a thorough understanding of the variables of the market, planners in the highest circles of Indian government have blithely gone ahead without understanding that marketing principles must determine the character of any campaign of voluntary control. The Indians have done only the poorest research. They have mismanaged distribution of contraceptive devices. They have ignored the importance of "customer service." They have proceeded with grossly inadequate undertrained staffs; they have been blind to the importance of promotion and advertising.¹⁴

This is not to deny that the Indian government has undertaken some innovative promotional approaches. Referral fees are paid to salesmen, barbers, and others who bring in consenting males for sterilization. The consenting male is given a transistor radio or a small payment to cover his costs of being absent from work. Women have been offered gifts for consenting to use intrauterine contraceptive devices. But Martin feels that the total program lacks the qualities of an organized, well-planned, and continuous marketing effort.¹⁵

¹⁴ Nathaniel A. Martin, "The Outlandish Idea: How a Marketing Man Would Save India," *Marketing/Communications*, Vol. 297 (March, 1968), pp. 54-60.

¹⁵ For two analyses of the marketing issues and opportunities in the family planning issue, see Julian L. Simon, "A Huge Marketing Research Task—Birth Control," *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 5 (February, 1968), pp. 21-27; and Glen L. Urban, "Ideas on a Decision-Information System for Family Planning," *Industrial Management Review*, Vol. 10 (Spring, 1969), pp. 45-61.

An example of careful promotional planning for a social objective is found in the American Cancer Society efforts to raise money for cancer research. In their brochure directed to local units, they attempt to educate the volunteer and professional chapters on the handling of newspapers, pictures, company publications, radio and television, movies, special events, and controversial arguments. For example, in terms of special events:

Dramatic special events attract attention to the American Cancer Society. They bring color, excitement, and glamour to the program. Well planned, they will get excellent coverage in newspapers, on radio and TV, and in newsreels. . . . A Lights-on-Drive, a one-afternoon or one-night House-to-House program have such dramatic appeal that they stir excitement and enthusiasm . . . keep in mind the value of bursts of sound such as fire sirens sounding, loud-speaker trucks, fife and drum corps. . . . A most useful special event is the ringing of church bells to add a solemn, dedicated note to the launching of a drive or education project. This should be organized on a Division or community basis, and the church bell ringing may be the signal to begin a House-to-House canvass. Rehearsals of bell ringing, community leaders tugging at ropes, offer good picture possibilities.¹⁶

Some readers might be critical of this approach to a worthwhile social objective, but two things should be mentioned. The first is that this should not be identified as the *marketing approach to social objectives*. Many persons mistakenly assume that marketing means hard selling. This is only a particular style of marketing, and it has its critics both inside and outside the profession. There are many firms that market their products with taste and sensitivity; examples include Xerox, Container Corporation, and Hallmark. It is important to recognize that this is not nonmarketing but rather a style of marketing that was chosen in the belief of its greater effectiveness in accomplishing the goals of the organization.

Second, the issue is not whether a particular approach suits one's personal taste, but whether it works. If a "hard" marketing style raises substantially more money for cancer research than a "soft" marketing style, it must be respected by those who think cancer research is more important than personal aesthetics.

Place. The third element of the marketing approach to social campaigns calls for providing adequate and compatible distribution and response channels. Motivated persons should know where the product can be obtained. Place is equivalent to two of Wiebe's five conditions for an effective mass communication campaign (direction, and adequacy and compatibility). The poor results of many social

¹⁶ *Public Information Guide* (New York: American Cancer Society, Inc., 1965), p. 19.

campaigns can be attributed in part to their failure to suggest clear action outlets for those motivated to acquire the product. The current campaign to interest people in the pollution problem may suffer from this defect. It is succeeding in making everyone not only aware of environmental pollution but also fearful of it. People want to do something about it. But for the most part they cannot act because there is not a clear product to "buy" (such as a petition to sign, an election in which to choose an antipollution candidate, or a pending piece of national legislation). Nor does the average person have a clear picture of the alternative channels of action for expressing his interest in the issue. There are so many ad hoc organizations working without coordination and at times with cross-purpose, that the average person is likely to "tune out" from further messages because of personal frustration. Saturation campaigns unaccompanied by the provision of adequate response channels may result in "interest overkill."

The importance of place has been recognized in several campaigns. The most notable example is the Kate Smith bond-selling campaign and its imaginative establishment of telephone order channels during the broadcast. Strategists of anticigarette campaigns have recognized the need for action channels by setting up smoker's clinics in many large cities. They could even go further and provide telephone advice and even social calls if the economics would justify these additional channels. An advertising agency is planning a campaign called "Pick Your Issue" in which several different social issues would be individually featured. The point would be made that because the busy citizen does not have time to become involved in all issues, this should not be an excuse to remain uninvolved in any issues. The good citizen should "pick an issue." Each issue advertisement will contain information on the organizations active in that area and inform the citizen about where to write for further information.

Thus, place means arranging for accessible outlets which permit the translation of motivations into actions. Planning in this area entails selecting or developing appropriate outlets, deciding on their number, average size, and locations, and giving them proper motivation to perform their part of the job.

Price. The final control variable that must be planned is price. Price represents the costs that the buyer must accept in order to obtain the product. It resembles Wiebe's concept of distance and incorporates some aspects of adequacy and compatibility. Price includes money costs, opportunity costs, energy costs, and psychic costs. Thus, the cost to persons asked to appear for immunization shots includes any possible money charge, any opportunities foregone, the expenditure of energy, and the psychological concerns aroused by inoculation.

The cost of giving up smoking is largely psychological, since there is actually a financial saving in breaking the habit. The cost of using seat belts is the charge for buying them, the effort to lock and unlock them, and the psychological cost of not being completely sure one is better off in an accident wearing them or not wearing them.

The functioning of this concept can also be illustrated in terms of an interesting phenomenon in health care services where many poor patients prefer to patronize unlicensed practitioners and pay a fee instead of going to the free hospital. In Caracas, Venezuela, for example, although there is a free hospital for the indigent, many of them patronize private clinics which cost them 20 bolivares for consultation. Why? Because while there is no charge at the free hospital, there is a substantial cost to the patient in terms of energy and psychological abuse. When a patient arrives at the hospital, he has to wait to see a social worker first. When he is finally interviewed, the social worker asks many questions about his income to determine whether he is really indigent. Then he sees a number of other hospital staff members for various tests, and again is asked about his income. Finally, he sees the doctor who might discover that he really needs to see a specialist who will not be available for several weeks. Throughout the experience, the person is made to feel inferior and a nuisance. Therefore, it is not surprising that he wishes to avoid these energy and psychological costs even if it means paying for the services.

But even monetary charges may play a useful role in leading the poor back to free hospital services. In private correspondence, a social psychologist suggested:

It is a surprising discovery that even free medical care presents a marketing problem. Maybe we should apply dissonance theory and introduce such medical care at a high price to make it look more desirable. Then let us apply a cents-off special introductory offer to make the service attractive.

The marketing man's approach to pricing the social product is based on the assumption that members of a target audience perform a cost-benefit analysis when considering the investment of money, time, or energy in the issue. They somehow process the major benefits and compare them to the major costs, and the strength of their motivation to act is directly related to the magnitude of the excess benefit. This type of conceptualization of behavior is found not only in the economist's model of economic man, but also in behavioristic theory with its emphasis on rewards and costs, in Gestalt theory with its emphasis on positive and negative valences, and in management theory with its emphasis on incentives and constraints. The marketer's approach to selling a social product is to consider how the rewards for buying the product can be increased relative to the costs, or the costs reduced relative

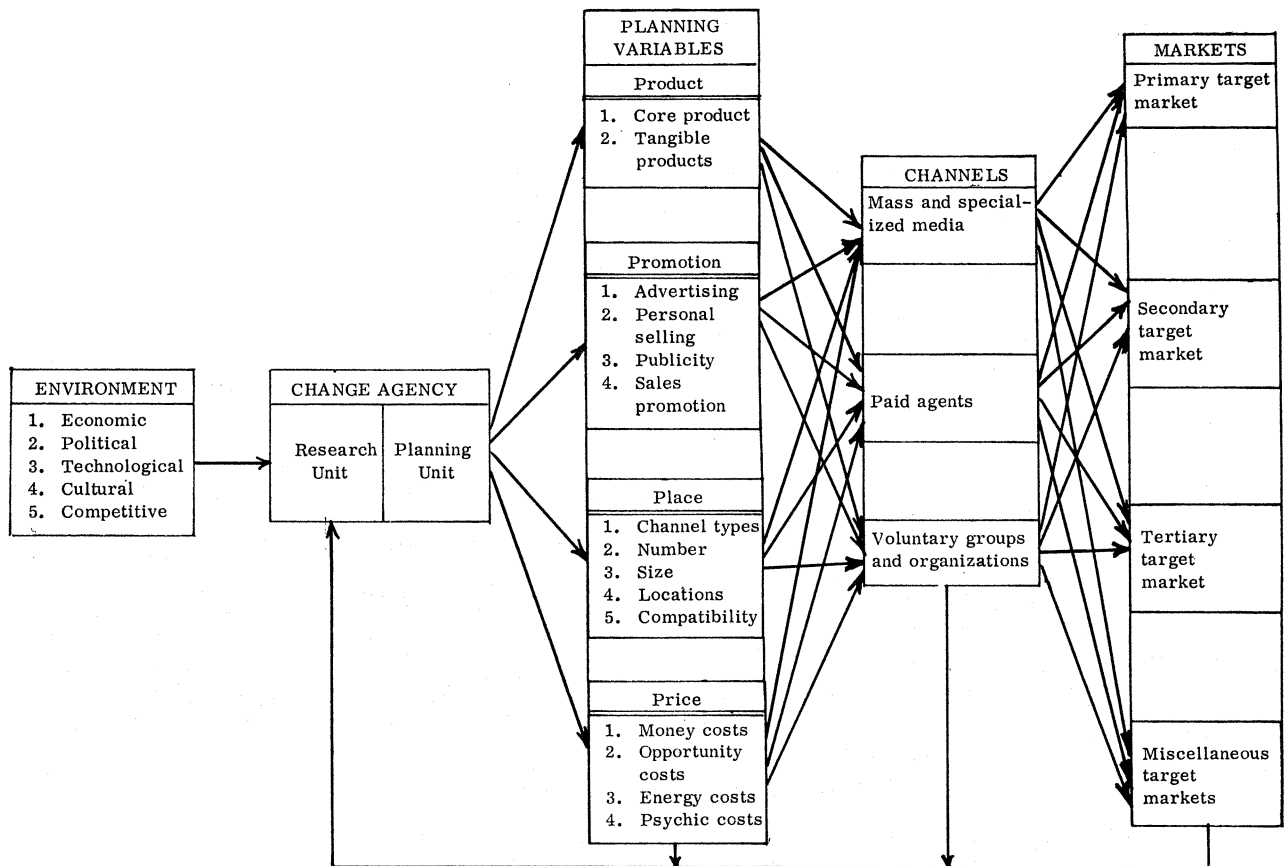


FIGURE 1. Social marketing planning system.

to the rewards, or trying to find a mix of product, promotion, place, and price that will simultaneously increase the rewards and reduce the costs. The main point is that social marketing requires that careful thought be given to the manner in which manageable, desirable, gratifying, and convenient solutions to a perceived need or problem are presented to its potential buyers.

The Social Marketing Planning Process

The "four P's" of marketing management are integrated in an administrative process framework in Figure 1. Continuous information is collected from the *environment* by the *change agency*. *Plans and messages* are created and sent through *channels* to *audiences*, and the results are monitored by the *change agency*.

The change agency operates a research unit and a planning unit. The research unit collects several types of information. It monitors the environment—economic, political, technological, cultural, and competitive influences—for important developments affecting its social policies and objectives. For example, a family planning agency would monitor economic-demographic developments (income and population trends), political developments (liberalization of birth control information), technological develop-

ments (new birth control techniques and devices), cultural developments (attitudinal changes toward birth control), and competitive developments (actions of similar and competing groups). The research unit also collects information on the past effectiveness of various programs as well as information on audience attitudes, desires, and behavior.

The change agent's planning unit formulates short- and long-range social marketing plans on the basis of this information. For example, the family planning organization carefully considers the role of different products, promotions, places, and prices. It would identify the major channels of communication and distribution, such as mass or specialized media, paid agents, and volunteer groups. It would differentiate the programs intended for its primary target market (large and low-income families), secondary target market (other child-bearing families), tertiary target market (sources of funds and additional volunteer efforts), and miscellaneous target markets (politicians and church groups). Finally, it would continuously gather effectiveness measures on these programs for recycling its planning.

This approach represents an application of business marketing principles to the problem of marketing social change. It is already manifest in some of the larger social change agencies. For example,

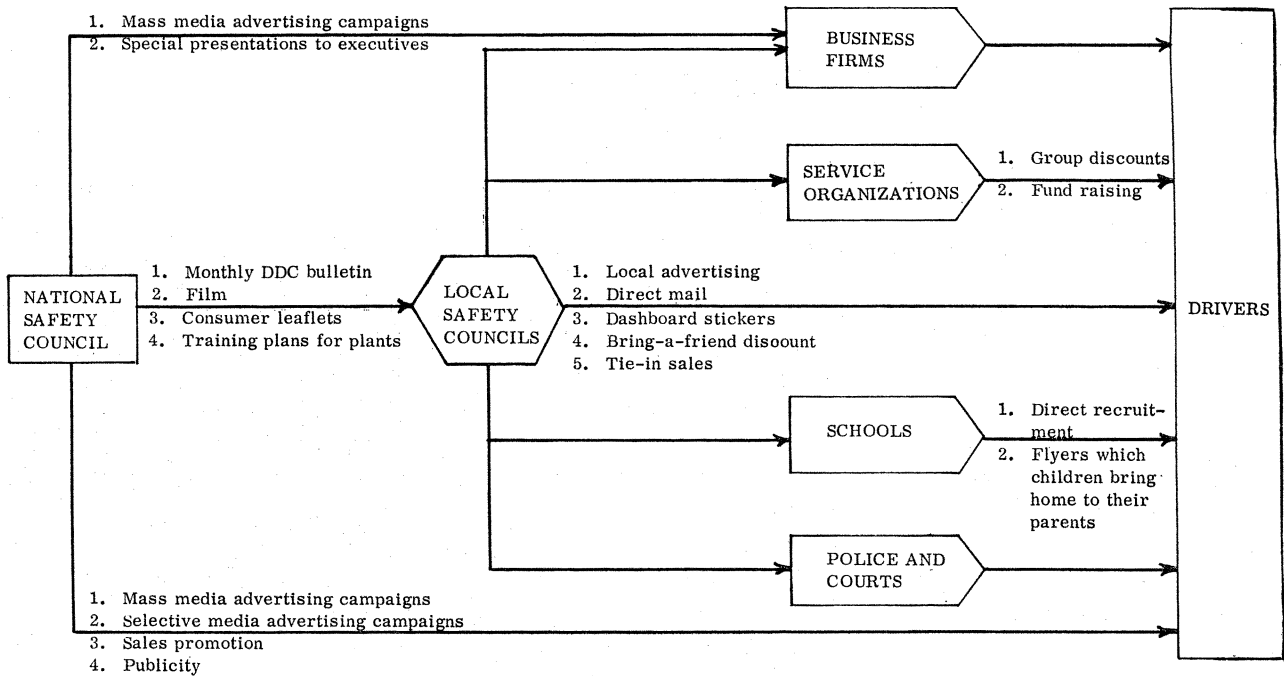


FIGURE 2. Marketing channels and tools: Defensive driving course.

consider the work of the National Safety Council. Its staff includes an advertising manager, a sales promotion manager, an Advertising Council of America coordinator, a research director, and a program director. One of its products is a defensive driving course. Figure 2 shows the various channels through which this course is marketed along with the promotional tools it uses. The National Safety Council reaches potential prospects through business firms, service organizations, schools, and the police and court system. For the 1970s, the National Safety Council has adopted

... a four point marketing program. . . . One of the first objectives is to increase the sales effectiveness of our existing 150 state and local safety council cooperating agencies. . . . The second part of the program is to create 500 new training agencies in communities not now served by safety councils. . . . A third part of the marketing program will be aimed at selling big industry on adopting DDC as a training course for all employees or selected categories of employees in plant-run training programs. . . . The fourth part of the marketing plan deals with a nationwide promotional effort built around a series of community special-emphasis campaigns running from February 1 through Memorial Day each year of the decade.¹⁷

This example illustrates the possibilities of the marketing approach for furthering social causes. The National Safety Council and several other social agencies have graduated from occasional cam-

paign organizations to full-time marketing organizations which go through cycles of information gathering, planning, product development, measuring, and reprogramming.

Social Implications of Social Marketing

The authors believe that specific social causes could benefit from marketing thinking and planning. Problems of pollution control, mass transit, private education, drug abuse, and public medicine are in need of innovative solutions and approaches for gaining public attention and support. Marketing men by their training are finely attuned to market needs, product development, pricing and channel issues, and mass communication and promotion techniques, all of which are critical in the social area.

At the same time, social marketing is sufficiently distinct from business marketing to require fresh thinking and new approaches. Social marketing typically has to deal with the market's core beliefs and values, whereas business marketing often deals with superficial preferences and opinions. Social marketing must search harder for meaningful *quid pro quos* to gain acceptance or adoption of its products. Social marketing has to work with channel systems that are less well-defined and less pecuniarily motivated. Only through applying marketing concepts and tools to a large number of cases will the powers and limits of the social marketing approach be learned.

In addition, there is the definite possibility that the overt marketing of social objectives will be resented and resisted. There will be charges that it is "manipulative," and consequently contributes

¹⁷ Chris Imhoff, "DDC's Decisive Decade," *Traffic Safety Magazine*, Vol. 69 (December, 1969), pp. 20 and 36.

to bringing the society closer to Orwell's 1984. There will be charges that even if not manipulative, social marketing will increase the amount of "promotional noise" in the society, which is found distasteful both because it emphasizes "trivial differences" and because it is "noise." Finally, social marketing will be accused of increasing the costs of promoting social causes beyond the point of a net gain either to the specific cause or the society as a whole. In the charities industry, professional marketing increases the absolute cost of raising money, but it usually succeeds in raising more money after these costs are taken into account. However, when one considers the entire picture, it is possible that the total amount donated to charities may not increase by the same amount as the professional marketing costs.

The authors are concerned with these possible dysfunctional consequences, and they must obviously be subtracted from the potential benefits that social marketing might produce. Since social marketing is just emerging, those concerned are encouraged to monitor it closely in the same dispassionate spirit that business marketers have so ably analyzed and documented the many manifestations of business marketing practice over the years.

Summary

This article considered the applicability of marketing concepts to the problem of promoting social causes. Social marketing was defined 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.

Too often, social advertising rather than social marketing is practiced by social campaigners. Lazarsfeld and Merton attributed the failure of many social advertising campaigns to the frequent absence of conditions of monopolization, canalization, and supplementation in the social arena. Wiebe, in his examination of four campaigns, concluded that a campaign's effectiveness depended on the presence of adequate force, direction, an adequate and compatible social mechanism, and distance. To the marketer, the success of the campaign depends on the proper development of product, promotion, place, and price considerations. These concepts were defined and were shown to have applicability to social causes. The social marketing process calls for marketing research and the subsequent development of a well-conceived product and appeals moving through mass and specialized communication media and through paid agents and voluntary groups to reach targeted audiences. The marketing style may be hard or soft, depending on which is deemed most effective in accomplishing the social objectives.

A marketing planning approach does not guarantee that the social objectives will be achieved, or that the costs will be acceptable. Yet social marketing appears to represent a bridging mechanism which links the behavioral scientist's knowledge of human behavior with the socially useful implementation of what that knowledge allows. It offers a useful framework for effective social planning at a time when social issues have become more relevant and critical.

MARKETING MEMO

The Marketing Concept and Technology . . .

. . . It is a mistake to think of technology as entirely autonomous, although it has secured for itself a great deal of autonomy. And it is a mistake to think that the technological system is self-justifying in its own terms. The present ecological crisis and fundamental rethinking of technology's role in the society of the future is the *prima facie* illustration of this point. We are going to abandon many technological developments even though the existing technological order justifies their further development. We are going to introduce many new technologies for which there is no need in the existing technological system. And we are going to evolve and invent many new forms of technological knowledge which are either unnecessary or simply go against the grain of the existing technological system. We are going to do these things because we are in process of changing the nature of the dialogue concerning the needs of society and the potentials of technology.

—Henryk Skolimowski, "Problems of Truth in Technology," *Ingenior 8* (Winter, 1970/71, College of Engineering, The University of Michigan), pp. 5-7, 41-46, at p. 42.