

SOCIAL ORIENTATION OF MARKETING CONCEPT*

Viera Čihovská

University of Economics in Bratislava, Slovakia,
e-mail: viera.cihovska@euba.sk

Abstract

Marketing, which has been viewed as an effective philosophy and conception of managing the area of profit, shifts and extends its limits beyond material products and services towards other activities. Modern marketing concepts respond to increasing social problems of individuals as well as society and offer solutions on how to carry out changes in attitudes to negative social phenomena and to the change in the target public behaviour in order to achieve socially desirable attitudes and ideas. The mission of Social marketing is affecting voluntary behaviour of target groups in order to improve the quality of their lives and ensuring welfare for the entire society. The aim of the paper, in this context, is to give an insight into the problems of social marketing, i.e. the topic that has not been adequately worked out in our country, explain its essence and characteristic features, and identify main areas of social problems the solutions to which are offered by the society-oriented concept of marketing. In this paper were used heuristic, descriptive and comparative methods to apply ideas and approaches from world authorities which involve within this issue. Furthermore, the paper is based on the author's findings from surveys of social project in Slovak republic named as "Na veku záležití", in which will be continued. This original project aimed to strengthen the awareness of prohibiting the sale of cigarettes to minors respondents.

Keywords: marketing, social marketing, profit-oriented marketing, social responsibility, marketing techniques and approaches

Paper type: General review

1. Introduction

A rising interest of the public in problems of the environmental protection, shortage of raw material sources as well as in increasing social problems both in developing and rich countries lead in the nineties of the 20th century to expanding the marketing concept towards socially oriented marketing. This development was also encouraged by criticism focused on unfair marketing practices, high

* The paper was written within the work on the project VEGA No. 1/0047/11 "Concept of European Marketing and Segmentation of Common Market with Focus on Selection and Implementation of Marketing Strategies for Increasing the Competitiveness of Slovak Firms on EU Market, at the Faculty of Commerce, University of Economics in Bratislava".

prices, pressure activities on the consumer and the absence of business ethics, which were based on the firms' orientation to short-term interests and profit maximisation. The basic principle of contemporary marketing philosophy of businesses is gradually becoming a marketing effort inspired by the concept of socially responsible marketing, whose aim is the orientation to long-term well-being of consumers and society. It means that the aims of an organisation are based on the needs and interests of customer requirements of the firm's owners and long term social interests. In the twelfth edition of "Principles of Marketing" Armstrong and Kotler consider socially-responsible marketing to be marketing philosophy, according to which firms should take into consideration what is best for the entire society in terms of the present as well as in the long term (Kotler and Armstrong, 2007). Socially responsible firms should try to produce desirable products which provide this way immediate satisfaction as well as long term benefits not only to consumers, but also bring benefits also to the entire society. The aim of socially oriented marketing is this way to actively contribute to the improvement of quality of life. There is rising an increasing awareness that this type of marketing should be concerned about the lifestyle quality, namely not just from the aspects of quality, quantity, assortment, or prices of commodities, but they have to be interested also in the quality of physical and cultural environment (Hannagan, 1966). The public supports government campaigns for energy saving, campaigns against smoking, against drugs, drink driving, against AIDS, etc. In fact, these are marketing campaigns supporting the quality of lifestyle – mediating ideas and information of the public and arousing a wide interest of people in dealing with imminent questions of human civilisation. The fundamental principle of contemporary marketing philosophy is becoming this way into marketing efforts managed by the concept of socially oriented marketing, the aim of which is dealing with wider global problems of human society. The success of a firm, continuous satisfying of customers and other participating groups (stakeholders) are closely connected with adopting and implementation of high standards of business and marketing behaviour. The world-famous firms are bound by the code serving the interests of people, not only that of their own. The concept of socially responsible marketing emphasises not only consistent fulfilment and satisfying customer needs, but also the criterion of acceptability for the present-day and future community.

As Lazer and Kelly state socially responsible marketing uses knowledge, concepts and techniques in order to achieve social and economic objectives (Kotler and Roberto, 1989). Orientation to study and analysis of social consequences of marketing strategies and activities of firms for society and individuals resulted in the formation of an independent marketing concept – Social marketing, which fulfils the support function of the already accepted concept of socially-oriented marketing.

The main aim of our theoretical research in this paper is to clarify the basics and problems of social marketing, its substance and application in solving social problems of our society due to the fact that this topic is not adequately worked out in our country.

2. Characteristics and Importance of Social Marketing

Societies and individuals are looking for ways of how to overcome or relieve the influence of increasing social problems, improve lives of individuals and environment, whose part they are. Poverty, hunger, diseases, discrimination, and other problems outlast for many centuries not only in poor but also in rich advanced countries. Up-to-date technology, culture, and change in lifestyle did not merely promote the rise in the quality of lifestyle as proclaimed, but as a result of them numerous negatives and problems stepped up to the forefront. Globalisation, bipolarisation and negatives connected with them also call out the need to pay a greater attention to social issues.

Many Social and health problems however, have their basis in the very nature of human behaviour. Alcoholism, children and youth smoking, driving “under the influence”, domestic violence or bad regimen – all these problems arise on the basis of voluntary decision of an individual to act in a particular way, one that either harms themselves or even the entire society. Also civilisation diseases, traffic accidents and racism are results of everyday voluntary human activity.

Social marketing offers tools dealing with these problems, also offers immense opportunities for influencing behaviour and attitudes of not only individuals but also legislators and influential interest groups. The focus is also on media, organisations and other decision making entities in society, including government. Social marketing includes the change of deeply rooted opinions and opinions and a complex change of economic, social and political environment.

Kotler and Roberto refer to the concept of Social marketing as an organised effort led by one group, while the intention of this group is to persuade others to accept, change or give up some ideas, attitudes, practice, or behaviour. It combines the best elements of traditional approaches to social change in an integrated structure of planning and carrying out activities and utilises advances in technology of communication and marketing experience. This type of marketing draws on the theory of general marketing and uses the concepts of marketing segmentation, customer research, product development and product testing, managed communication in order to ensure the optimum (i.e. the largest possible) response from the target public (Kotler and Roberto, 1989). While the main target of the profit-oriented marketing is to fulfill expectations of owners or stakeholders, Social marketing has to satisfy the society’s need for improving the quality of life.

The roots of Social marketing are in the commercial sector, in classic marketing. Sixty years ago American academician Wiebe motivated people to thinking this way, when he analysed social advertising campaigns and pointed out that the best campaigns are those that imitate their commercial partners. In his paper he raised a rhetorical question: “Why can’t you sell brotherhood like you sell soap?” (Wiebe, 1951). He assumed that the success of mass persuasion necessitates five factors (requirements):

- a strong motivation of the public (this motivation has to be combined with individual pre-disposition for target-orientation),
- clear instruction, where and how to achieve social mechanism,
- executive/ implementation social mechanism,
- adequate and compatible mechanism facilitating the application of required behaviour,
- psychically and physically accessible social mechanism.

In the year 1971 Kotler and Zaltman were the first to have used the concept “Social marketing” in their paper on “Social Marketing: approach to planned social changes” published in *The Journal of Marketing* and defined it as “the design, implementation and control of programs calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas and involving considerations of product planning, pricing, communication, distribution, and marketing research” (Kotler and Zaltman, 1971).

Successively, several authors dealt with these problems, and their efforts led to various definitions. For example, Alan Andreasen describes social marketing as an application of commercial marketing technologies in analysis, planning, performance and evaluation of programmes proposed for influencing voluntary behaviour of target groups; the purpose is to improve their personal well-being and that of society (Andreasen, 2006).

Jeff French and Clive Blair-Stevens refer to it as a systemic application of marketing concepts and techniques to achieve specific behaviourist objectives relevant for the well-being of society. Kotler, Lee and Rothschild describe social marketing as the approach which applies principles and techniques of marketing, in the processes of creating, communicating and adding value in order to influence the target group behaviour. This is beneficial for public health service, security, the living environment, and communities) as well as the target group (Kotler and Lee, 2006).

These characteristic features show that social marketing focuses on affecting behaviour of target segment, while using traditional marketing principles and techniques. Social marketing belongs to basic activities of nonprofit organisations, or public sector agencies. In spite of the fact formal definitions vary from author to author, there are three common key elements of Social marketing:

- A primary goal of social marketing is to reach some “Social good” (rather than a commercial benefit) with clearly defined targets/goals of behaviour,
- It is a systemic process, which successively deals with short-term, medium-term and long-term problems,
- Utilises marketing techniques and approaches.

In Social marketing similarly as in commercially oriented marketing we endeavour to carry through products on the market; the difference is that it is mostly the matter of behaviour or attitude. Social marketing specialists for the most part try to affect the target market, in order to reach some of the four following reactions:

- Acceptance of new behaviour (e.g. re-cycling),
- Refusal of potentially undesirable behaviour (e.g. not to start smoking),
- Change in contemporary behaviour (e.g. more frequent medical checks),
- Drop an undesirable behaviour (e.g. telephone during driving).

The purpose could be encouraging one-time behaviour (e.g. register as an organ donor) or introducing long-term habit – repeated behaviour (e.g. repeatedly donate blood). The criterion could be established in the light of increasing knowledge and skills through education, while efforts could focus on changing existing attitudes, or feelings; however, a decisive factor is whether the target group has adopted the behaviour (Kotler and Lee, 2006).

Despite the various approaches and methods of influencing the behaviour of various entities (e.g. education, laws, mobilisation of community, political lobbying and personal persuasion), Social marketing offers a more flexible and efficient set of concepts and instruments at various levels of social process to influence the selected target group and a particular behaviour, which the society wishes to support or refrain.

One of the most demanding aspects of Social marketing is that it depends on voluntary approach and tends to operate on the basis of “rewarding for good behaviour” rather than on that of “punishing bad behaviour” by means of legal, economic, or pressure instruments. In several other cases Social marketing is unable to offer direct advantage or immediate countervalue in favour of the acceptance of the change in behaviour offered (e.g. within a campaign focusing on increasing voters’ participation we cannot guarantee the change in government). This is one of the reasons why it is necessary to apply a systemic, careful and strategic process of planning inspired by wishes, needs and preferences of target groups and concentrated on real, deliverable and feasible (in terms of time) advantages.

3. Commercial versus Social Marketing

Roots of Social marketing are in commercial marketing; the former uses the methods, techniques and tools of the latter; however, the two are not identical. The

bases of Social marketing can be found in profit-oriented marketing, and these, in turn, can be defined as follows.

The basic principle of social marketing is the orientation to customer, which is a prerequisite for understanding what barriers to change in behaviour are perceived by the target group, but also what advantages are anticipated and considered feasible by it. The process starts with marketing survey focused on the understanding of each market segment, their needs, wishes, attitudes, problems, worries, and related behaviour. The next step is to the choice of target markets, which can best, influenced and satisfied and then set forth clear aims and intentions. After this, in order to affect the target market, it is necessary to choose also marketing tools – marketing mix: product, price, distribution and communication. The product must be positioned so that it may capture the interest of the target market more than competitive offers. After implementing the plan, results have to be continuously monitored and evaluated and in case of need (e.g. changes in external environment) strategies proposed have to be adjusted or corrected.

Similarities of social and commercial marketing can be briefly summarised in the following items:

- Orientation to customer is crucial. The target group has to find the offer attractive; their offer has to be able to solve their problem or satisfy their wish or need;
- Exchange and theory of exchange is a basic pre-requisite. The target group has to perceive advantages, which equal to the perceived costs connected with the performance of behaviour, or possibly, exceed them;
- Marketing research is used in the course of the entire process. It is owing to research and the understanding of specific needs, desires, religious beliefs and attitudes of the target group that marketing workers are able to develop effective strategies;
- Need for market segmentation. Strategies have to be tailor-made to specific wishes, needs, sources, and behaviours of various market segments;
- All the marketing mix tools are considered. A successful strategy requires an integrated approach, which uses all tools and does not rely on marketing communication only;
- Results are measured and used for improving strategies. Feedback is very important, and inspiring to self-improvement.

Kotler and Lee explain main differences between social and commercial marketing in the third edition of “Social Marketing, Influencing Behaviours for Good” as follows (Kotler and Lee, 2006).

These authors consider the type of product as the main distinguishing feature. While in commercial marketing the marketing process concentrates on the sale of products and services; in social marketing the marketing process is utilised for the

enforcement of desirable behaviour. However, as already mentioned, principles and techniques used by both types of marketing are the same.

The main aim of commercial marketing is oriented to financial indicators; however, in social marketing the aim is the company profit. In terms of financial profitability, the primary choice in commercial marketing is often segments promising higher volume of sales; in social marketing segments are chosen on the basis of other criteria – e.g. increase in of social problems, ability to achieve the target group, readiness for change. In both cases is, however, there are efforts to gain maximum benefits for one's investments.

Despite the commercial and also social marketing view, the need to identify and position their offer in comparison with competition, the nature of competition differs considerably. As mentioned before, commercial marketing will largely focus on the sale of goods and services, competition represents other organisations offering similar products and services or those that satisfy similar needs.

In Social marketing, which deals with enforcement of the behaviour, competition is perceived as contemporary or preferred behaviour of the target group and the perceived advantages connected with the given behaviour, including status quo. This covers also every organisation, selling or presenting competitive behaviour.

For these reasons social marketing is more complex than the commercial one. It is hardly possible to compare how much finance e.g. tobacco industry has at its disposal to promote the sale of tobacco products in comparison with the projects focused on fight against smoking. Let us consider challenges that Social marketing has to cope with, when trying to affect people to persuade them to:

- Give up habit behaviour (stop smoking);
- Change a comfortable lifestyle, or change the level of their satisfaction (reduce consumption of electric energy or warm water);
- Resist the pressure of peers (refrain from drinking alcohol);
- Feel uneasy (donate blood); introduced new habits (exercise regularly);
- Spend larger sums of money (buy bio-products or recycled paper);
- Overcome a feeling of shame (purchase of condoms);
- Perceive bad news (test oneself for HIV); risk relations (take away car keys from the drunk);
- Give up their spare time (volunteerism), give up original image (wear ski helmets), spend more time (separate and decrease the volume of rubbish before throwing it out); learn new techniques (compost food), remember something (take one's own bags to the supermarket), risk revenge or ridicule (report an offender of vandalism) (Kotler and Keller, 2006).

We can state in conclusion that so that planned actions of submitter of Social marketing has to be much more efficient than a worker of commercial marketing. The reason is for instance a great diversity of demand and the difficulty of reaching

the target group, an all-round nature of the offer – product (enforcing the idea of desirable behaviour), or diversity of competition (competition can be viewed as an undesirable behaviour of the target group, as well as the organisation promoting competitive behaviour, e.g. tobacco firms).

4. Social Problems and Social Changes

Social marketing is oriented to areas and problems which are dependent on the changes in society and environment, whose part Social marketing is. Economic, cultural, and demographic, technological, and political influences of environment are always going to create new situations in the solutions to which Social marketing programmes will find opportunities for their further application. Activities of Social marketing can therefore be described as re-active because they respond to topical goings on in society. Society may be “fed up” with some problems – e.g. air pollution was a big issue ten years ago and despite the fact that the problem continues to exist without receding, the interest of the public at large is no longer so intensive. The interest in a particular problem area differs in terms of regions. Global warming and genetically modified crops are much more discussed topics in Europe than in America. The increase in child obesity worries England and Germany more than it does Eastern Europe.

The way social problems will be solved, may affect their importance and the way they are perceived by the public. In order to regulate problems of rising population in cities and an increased demand for housing connected with it, legislative solutions are necessary. However, when dealing with the problems of environmental pollution, it is necessary to use a combination of marketing tools, legislative interventions and activities on the part of individual communities. A prevailing opinion in the past was that drug addicts should go to prison; however, experience has showed that this approach has turned the individuals concerned into criminals, instead of helping them with their drug problem. Nowadays this problem is solved by means of medical institutions specialised in the change in behaviour.

We can see that social problems display dynamic and structural characteristics; they are partially realistic and partially created by our perception. It is their very importance and urgency that depends on how we perceive them. It is important to realise that the task of Social marketing is no longer just to operate so that “problem individuals” acted or rather did not act in some way, but its scope of operation should be much wider.

Programmes and campaigns should not only deal with the problem chosen, but concentrate on the prevention of their emergence.

When dealing with social problems the following two approaches need be applied:

- Vertical approach, which enables to understand, where social problems

arise, how they are presented in various social agendas, and the kind of reaction they call out;

- Horizontal approach, which is needed for assessment of the number of individuals and groups who will have to act, and for determining changes that will have to occur, so that the situation improved.

According to Alan R. Andreasen most social problems pass through the following stages (Andreasen, 2006): lack of attention devoted at first to the given problem, revealing and identifying the problem, description of alternatives leading to the solution, selection of the method of solution, initiating the first interventions, repeated evaluation of and targetting on a specific group, accomplishment of successful or unsuccessful solution or neglecting the problem.

Social marketing endeavours to affect and change behaviour of individuals, but also groups, organisations and societies. Levy and Zaltman suggested classifying the **types of social changes** by two dimensions: one represents time (short and long period) and the other represents the level in society (micro-, group, macro-). Table 1 shows that the influence of Social marketing is not restricted only to an individual, but it also affects environment, in which a moves and operates.

	Microlevel (individual consumers)	Group level (group or organisation)	Macrolevel (society)
Short-term changes	Change in behaviour	Change in norms, administrative changes	Change in politics
Example:	Stay at detoxication clinic	Removing advertise- ments from tobacco products from the sur- roundings of schools	Forbidding all the forms of advertise- ments for tobacco products
Long-term changes	Change in lifestyle	Organizational change	Socio-cultural development
Example:	Giving up smoking- abstinence	Penalising retailers for selling cigarettes to youngsters	Elimination of all smoking-related illnesses

Table 1.
Types of Social
Changes by Time
and Social Status

Source:
Hastings et al.
(1999).

Thus Social marketing monitors changes in society, and if they develop in an unfavourable direction, Social marketing starts acting. It means that it always responds only to particular events, while its aim is acceptance, change, or removal of ideas, attitudes, values, or behaviours. Even though Social marketing is at first glance oriented to nonprofit sector activities (environmental problematics, violence, racism, unemployment, illiteracy, hunger, and the like), it is increasingly starting to assert itself in the commercial sphere. The concepts of entrepreneurship within which firms make a voluntary decision to implement into their business

strategies the kind of programmes that contribute to the improvement of the state-of-the-art of society, while respecting the interests of all the stakeholders, are manifestations of socially responsible behaviour. The concept of social responsibility of firms emphasises the need for ethical behaviour and integration of social and ecological aspects into corporate interactions as well as voluntary interactions with all stakeholders. The aim is to contribute to permanently sustainable development of and increase in the quality of life and well-being of the entire society. The present-day developments in opinions confirm that economic objectives of firms have to be in contradiction with Social interests; however, their merging brings business entities synergetic effect, which is reflected in an increased credibility and in competitiveness of firms on the market and assists in this way in building a positive image.

5. Conclusion

Social marketing is a modern marketing concept concentrated on the adoption of changes, which enable to deal with social problems and improve life of people in society. The rise of social marketing is connected with the period when marketing academicians as well as the world of practice have understood that marketing can be utilised also in another way, not only for the sale of products to consumers and profit allocation. Methods, techniques and tools of profit-oriented marketing can be successfully applied also in persuading the target group to promote the change in ideas, attitudes and in behaviour. Expansion of marketing to this new area was a signal of the beginnings of the existence of Social marketing, which currently assumes an increasing importance, since also in our country the pressure on dealing with social problems is rising. Development in the world and also in our country indicates that social marketing, apart from the nonprofit sector, is increasingly more utilised also by the commercial sphere. The importance of marketing is rising especially in activities of profit organisations, where its role is to facilitate providing better services and searching for optimum effects. The reason is that under the influence of various social campaigns they tend to prefer more and more businesses and products that are useful and beneficial for society. The paper aims at familiarising readers with the essence and content of Social marketing and possibilities of its application in the efforts for relieving or eliminating negative phenomena of the contemporary development of individuals and also society.

The main benefit and contribution of this article is that it brought the essence and content of social marketing and enriched the domestic literary sources in the field of current approach to a new marketing concept which allows the application of marketing in addressing acute social problems. Analyzed social marketing methods give conditions for its application in supporting efforts to mitigate or eliminate the negative aspects of the current development of individuals and society.

References

- Andreasen, A.R. (1995), *Marketing Social Change*, Jossey – Bass, San Francisco.
- Andreasen, A.R. (2006), *Social Marketing in the 21st Century*, Sage Publication, Thousand Oaks.
- Baron, D.P. (2007), „Corporate Social Responsibility and Social Entrepreneurship”, *Journal of Economics & Management Strategy*, Vol. 16 No. 3, pp. 683–717.
DOI: [10.1111/j.1530-9134.2007.00154.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1530-9134.2007.00154.x)
- Čihovská, V. (2010), “Spoločensky zodpovedný marketing – neodkladný prístup firiem k trvale udržateľnému rozvoju. (Socially responsible marketing–urgent approach of firms to permanently sustainable development)”, *Studia Commercialia Bratislavensia*, Vol. 3 No. 9, pp. 33–38.
- Čihovská, V., Hanuláková, E., Harna, I., Lipianska, J. (1999), *Marketing neziskových organizácií*, Eurounion, Bratislava.
- Čihovská, V. (2010), „Spoločensky zodpovedný marketing – neodkladný prístup firiem k trvale udržateľnému rozvoju“, *Studia commercialia Bratislavensia*, No. 12.
- Ferrell, O.C., Friedrich, J., Ferrell, J. (2005), *Business Ethics*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.
- Ftorek, J. (2009), *Public relations jako ovlivňování mínění*, Grada, Praha.
- Hannagan, T.J. (1996), *Marketing pro neziskový sektor*, Management Press, Praha.
- Hastings, H. (2007), *Social marketing – why should the devil have all the best tunes?*, Elsevier, Oxford.
- Heath, R.L. – NI, L., *Corporate Social Responsibility*, available at: www.instituteforpr.org (accessed 25 September 2008).
- Kotler, Ph., Armstrong, G. (2004), *Marketing*, Grada, Praha.
- Kotler, Ph., Armstrong, G. (2007), *Principles of Marketing*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey.
- Kotler, Ph., Keller, K.L. (2006), *Marketing Management*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey.
- Kotler, Ph., Lee, N.R. (2006), *Marketing in the public sector*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey.
- Kotler, Ph., Roberto, E.L. (1989), *Social Marketing: strategies for changing public behaviour*, Free Press, New York.
- Kotler, Ph., Zaltman, G. (1971), „Social Marketing. An Approach to Planned Social Change”, *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 35 No. 3, pp. 3–12. DOI: [10.2307/1249783](https://doi.org/10.2307/1249783)
- Mackenzie, C. (2007), „Boards, Incentives and Corporate Social Responsibility“, *Corporate Governance: An International Review*, Vol. 15, September, No. 5, pp. 935–943.
DOI: [10.1111/j.1467-8683.2007.00623.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8683.2007.00623.x)
- Rawlins, B.L., *Trust and PR Practice*, available at: www.instituteforpr.org, (accessed 29 October 2007).