

# Social Marketing: Obstacles and Opportunities

DR. M. Shahul Hameed

\* Associate Professor, Iqbal College, Peringammala, Kerala, India

**Abstract-** Social marketing seeks to develop and integrate marketing concepts with other approaches to influence behaviors that benefit individuals and communities for the greater social good. It seeks to integrate research, best practice, theory, audience and partnership insight, to inform the delivery of competition sensitive and segmented social change programs that are effective, efficient, and equitable and sustainability. Although "social marketing" is sometimes seen only as using standard commercial marketing practices to achieve non-commercial goals, this is an oversimplification. The primary aim of social marketing is "social good", while in "commercial marketing" the aim is primarily "financial". This does not mean that commercial marketers cannot contribute to achievement of social good. Social marketing is a new approach to traditional marketing. It enables companies to fulfill their existing marketing needs (to produce the right goods, at the right time, in the right place, at the right price) while tackling social issues relevant to the company and its brands. Social marketing means that corporate investment will not only support communities, but also help to achieve key business objectives. But social marketing faces distinctive obstacles, which are not faced by commercial marketing, with regard to the ends it seeks, the rationale it offers for achieving those ends, and the effects it may have on its targets. The more social marketing attempts to address these obstacles, the more its nature as a form of social activism becomes apparent. Nevertheless, these are special obstacles social marketing needs to confront. The important obstacles are managing reputation, Delivering customer service, and Acquiring new customers, increasing sales from existing customers, increasing engagement with brand, harnessing insights (Analytics, ROI measurement and learning about brand preferences).

**Index Terms-** Traditional marketing, Social marketing, obstacles, new customers

## I. INTRODUCTION

Social marketing is the application of marketing technologies developed in the commercial sector to the solution of social problems and it involves "the analysis, planning, execution and evaluation of programmes designed to influence the voluntary behavior of target audiences to improve their personal welfare and that of society". Social Marketing is social change in a planning and action framework, utilizing communication technology and marketing skills. Social marketing had dual origins in the late 1960s – real world family planning applications on the practical side and intellectual ferment in the "broadening" academic movement emanating from the Northwestern marketing group. The decades since have seen ever-widening applications, rethinking of fundamental

propositions and a recognition that downstream targets – those exhibiting problematic behaviors – often need opportunities and abilities to act. The latter require attention to what are termed *upstream* targets of social marketing campaigns.

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Although "social marketing" is sometimes seen only as using standard commercial marketing practices to achieve non-commercial goals, this is an oversimplification. The primary aim of social marketing is "social good", while in "commercial marketing" the aim is primarily "financial". This does not mean that commercial marketers cannot contribute to achievement of social good. Increasingly, social marketing is being described as having "two parents"—a "social parent", including [social science](#) and [social policy](#) approaches, and a "marketing parent", including commercial and public sector [marketing](#) approaches.

Social marketing theory and practice has been progressed in several countries such as the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the UK, and in the latter a number of key government policy papers have adopted a strategic social marketing approach. Publications such as "Choosing Health" in 2004, "[It's our health!](#)" in 2006 and "[Health Challenge England](#)" in 2006, represent steps to achieve a strategic and operational use of social marketing. In India, [AIDS](#) controlling programs are largely using social marketing and social workers are largely working for it. Most of the social workers are professionally trained for this task.

Other social marketing can be aimed at products deemed, at least by proponents, as socially unacceptable. One of the most notable is [People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals](#) (PETA) which for many years has waged social marketing campaigns against the use of natural fur products. The campaigns' efficacy has been subject to dispute. Social marketing uses the benefits of doing social good to secure and maintain customer engagement. In social marketing the distinguishing feature is therefore its "primary focus on social good, and it is not a secondary outcome. Not all public sector and not-for-profit marketing is social marketing.

Public sector bodies can use standard marketing approaches to improve the promotion of their relevant services and organizational aims. This can be very important but should not be confused with social marketing where the focus is on achieving specific behavioral goals with specific audiences in relation to topics relevant to social good (e.g., health, sustainability, recycling, etc.). For example, a 3-month marketing

campaign to encourage people to get a H1N1 vaccine is more tactical in nature and should not be considered social marketing. A campaign that promotes and reminds people to get regular check-ups and all of their vaccinations when they're supposed to encourages a long-term behavior change that benefits society. It can therefore be considered social marketing.

Social marketing should not be confused with the societal marketing concept which was a forerunner of [sustainable marketing](#) in integrating issues of [social responsibility](#) into commercial marketing strategies. In contrast to that, social marketing uses commercial marketing theories, tools and techniques to social issues. Social marketing applies a "customer oriented" approach and uses the concepts and tools used by commercial marketers in pursuit of social goals like anti-smoking campaigns or fund raising for NGOs.

Eight essential components of social marketing are;

1. A consumer orientation to realize organizational (social) goals
2. An emphasis on the voluntary exchanges of goods and services between providers and consumers
3. Research in audience analysis and segmentation strategies
4. The use of formative research in product and message design and the pretesting of these materials
5. An analysis of distribution (or communication) channels
6. Use of the [marketing mix](#)—using and blending product, price, place and promotion characteristics in intervention planning and implementation
7. A process tracking system with both integrative and control functions
8. A management process that involves problem analysis, planning, implementation and feedback functions

Social marketing is also being explored as a method for social innovation, a framework to increase the adoption of evidence-based practices among professionals and organizations, and as a core skill for public sector managers and social entrepreneurs. It is being viewed as an approach to design more effective, efficient, equitable and sustainable approaches to enhance social well-being that extends beyond individual behavior change to include creating positive shifts in social networks and social norms, businesses, markets and public policy.

But social marketing faces distinctive obstacles, which are not faced by commercial marketing, with regard to the ends it seeks, the rationale it offers for achieving those ends, and the effects it may have on its targets. The more social marketing attempts to address these obstacles, the more its nature as a form of social activism becomes apparent. Nevertheless, these are special obstacles social marketing needs to confront.

## II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of this study were to identify the obstacles and opportunities of social marketing.

## III. METHODOLOGY AND DATABASE

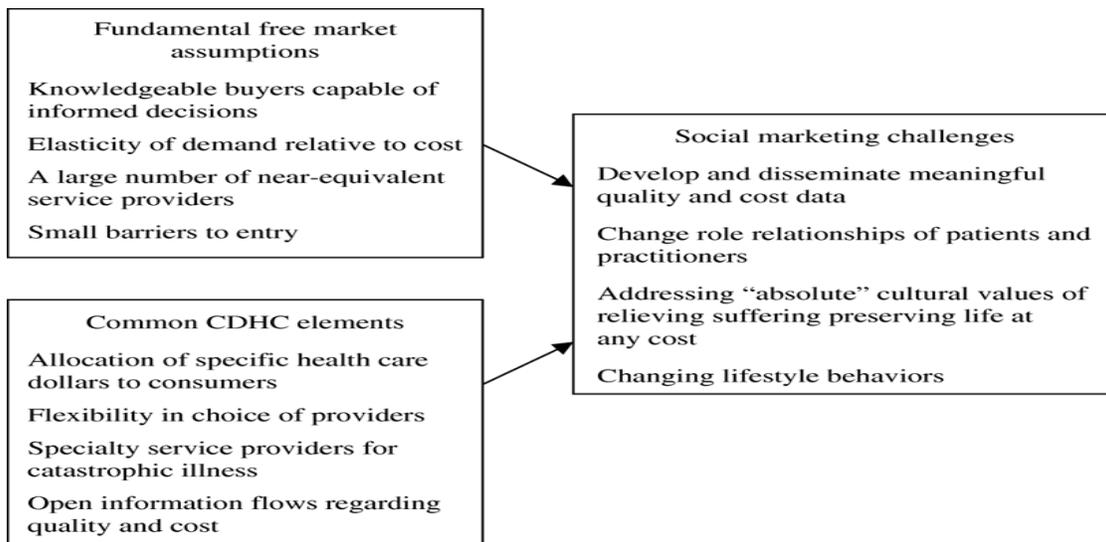
The study is based on secondary data and which is collected from available published sources.

## IV. OBSTACLES OF SOCIAL MARKETING

Social marketing had dual origins in the late 1960s – real world family planning applications on the practical side and intellectual ferment in the “broadening” academic movement emanating from the Northwestern marketing group. The decades since have seen ever-widening applications, rethinking of fundamental propositions and a recognition that downstream targets – those exhibiting problematic behaviors – often need opportunities and abilities to act. The latter require attention to what are termed *upstream* targets of social marketing campaigns. The mainstreaming of social marketing in recent years has yielded a range of consumer research insights but has provoked rethinking of fundamental definitions of marketing that would be applicable across social and commercial settings. Several fundamental and practical research issues at the macro- and micro levels should occupy the field's attention in coming years.

**Social marketing** seeks to develop and integrate **marketing** concepts with other approaches to influence behaviors that benefit individuals and communities for the greater **social** good. It seeks to integrate research, best practice, theory, audience and partnership insight, to inform the delivery of competition sensitive and segmented **social** change programs that are effective, efficient, equitable and sustainable. Although **social marketing** is sometimes seen only as using standard commercial **marketing** practices to achieve non-commercial goals Social marketing is when marketing techniques are used to improve social well-being. This is done by changing the behavior or an attitude regarding a certain concept. “Social marketing is the application of commercial marketing technologies to the analysis, planning, execution and evaluation of programs designed to influence the voluntary behavior of target audiences in order to improve their personal welfare and that of society.

- In general, social marketing is more difficult than conventional commercial marketing, requiring as much or more perseverance and greater ingenuity and imagination.
- For market analysis, social marketers have much more difficulty accumulating valid, reliable, and relevant marketing data.
- In the area of market segmentation, they often face pressures against segmentation, especially segmentation that leads to the ignoring of certain segments. Further, their target segments must often consist of those consumers who are most negatively predisposed to their offerings.
- Comparable difficulties, which the authors delineate, are encountered in the other decision-making areas discussed.



“The important obstacles of social marketing are:

- **Generating Awareness and Driving Traffic**

Many marketers face the challenge of not having a large enough volume of interested prospects, while some others just don't know which channels they should focus their efforts on for the highest return.

- **Targeting Effectively**

Targeting is a key component of all aspects of marketing. To be more effective at targeting, one of the first things any marketer needs do is [identify their buyer personas](#) to determine who it is they should be marketing to. In order for someone to even consider listening to message or reading\ content, it has to offer some sort of [value](#) to them. It needs to fulfill a need or desire of theirs, probably to learn or understand something about concerned industry or alleviate a problem that such product aims to solve. And most importantly, it must make sure that message and the value providing are as relevant to audience as possible. It's not easy to pull this kind of alignment off.

- **Using Social Media to Generate Customers and Revenue**

Social media was once a shiny new toy. But at first, many businesses hardly knew what to do in social media. They just knew they needed to be using it. That has all changed. Now most companies know there is real business value in social media marketing, but they don't know how to convert social engagement into dollars. It isn't enough to simply have a presence on social media -- there is a science to targeting, engaging, and nurturing with social networks that will allow building up a social following that use as a quality source of leads for business.

- **Keeping Up With Marketing Trends and Strategies**

Marketing has gone through many [transformations](#), especially in the last decade. Our marketing focus has shifted from print media to online media, and we have witnessed the decline of direct mail and cold calling. Because technology has introduced new tools that make our communication with potential customers more efficient and effective. Social media has risen as a dominant platform for two-way communication and feedback collection. These are only a few of the recent changes marketing has gone through, and every day, we're seeing

more and more changes -- new technologies pop up, different strategies are developed, new trends emerge

- **Increasing and Proving ROI**

With more and more advanced analytics tools available, marketers are being held to a higher standard. It's no longer enough to simply *do* marketing – it must be able to measure and understand the value of each of the efforts in terms of leads, customers, and revenue.

- **The behavior is always right**

Social Marketing is a model of practice not a theory of behavior it has no way of critically assessing the client's assumptions. Social Marketing almost invariably assumes the clients' prescribed behavior or action is right, just, appropriate, and do-able. As a result campaigns are often based around remarkable shallow and simplistic behavioral prescriptions.

- **Context blindness**

Social Marketing tends to neglect context. Context, as we discussed, is central to the adoptability of behaviors. It's more than a cursory consideration of the 4 Ps: “product, price, place, promotion”. Instead the entire contextual system needs to be the subject of strategizing and modification, including physical infrastructure, service design, place design, management and regulatory systems. Getting these right is usually what makes or breaks a change program, as we've seen in tobacco control, road safety, pollution control and littering.

- **Crop spraying**

Social Marketing, as almost universally understood and practiced, is about efficiency: the most people reached at the least cost per head. This inevitably leads to a focus on mass media advertising. This approach treats people as isolated individuals and sprays them from afar with messages the same way a crop duster sprays a crop of canola.

- **Claim creep**

The “guru of marketing”, Philip Kotler, says “Good marketing is about setting up expectations and fulfilling them...” This assumption is continually reiterated in his thinking and it's common in Social Marketing too. Marketing can set up expectations but it can't fulfill them. Its products and behaviors that fulfill, or fail to fulfill, expectations. And it's scientists and technical experts who design those products or behaviors,

whether they're health boffins or agricultural scientists or whatever.

- **Theory fetish**

It's a fine thing to have our thinking expanded by psychological and change theories, but it's another thing to arbitrarily impose a particular psychological theory on real people leading complicated lives in the real world. It's quite common to see social marketing and health promotion programs introduced with a statement that "this program is based on the Transtheoretical Model" or the Health Belief Model or Social Learning Theory, or whatever.

The theory of change that informs a program should come from one place only – the reality of people's lives and it will be very different for every set and every setting and every moment in time. Generic theories and models can help us think better as change agents, but only by getting to know people face-to-face and listening intently to their stories can we begin to construct solutions to their needs.

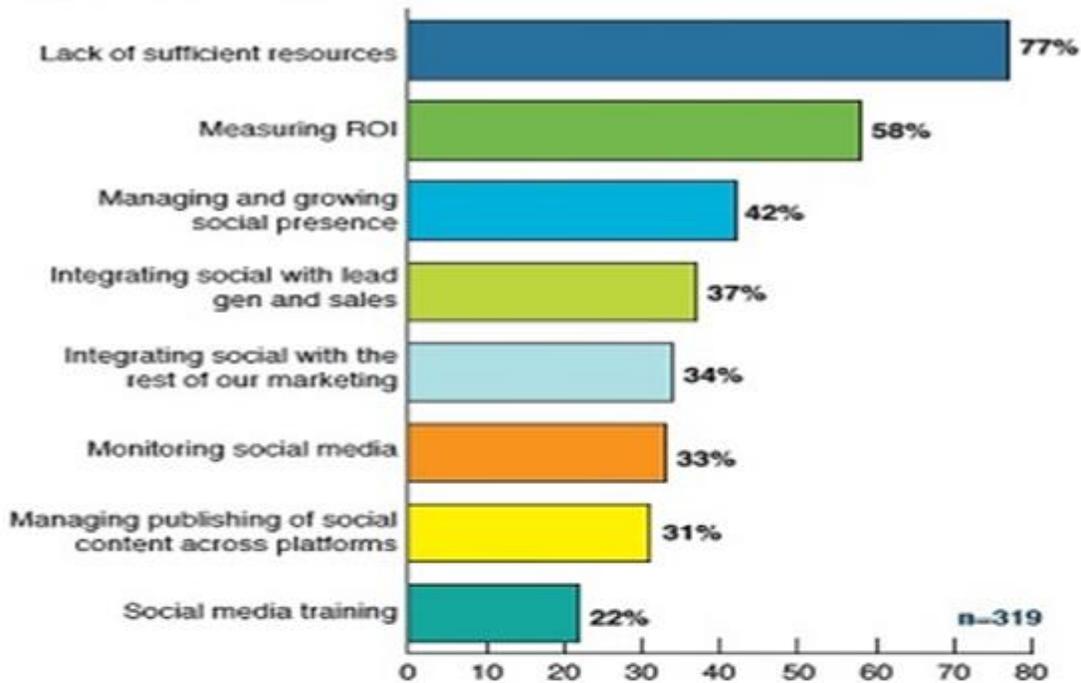
- **Power blindness**

Social Marketing campaigns tend to be one-sided exercises in power by government-employed professionals who decide what behaviors are wrong, what behaviors are right, who needs to change, and what they need to know. Only problem is: people HATE being given advice by strangers about how they should behave. Social Marketing doesn't even begin to have answers for the waves of denial and resistance that are evoked by well meaning attempts to tell people how they should live their lives.

- **Individual focus**

The focus of Social Marketing campaigns is the atomized individual. Yet community organization is one really effective method of achieving change. When change comes from a community's own collective efforts it is likely to be more appropriate, more credible, and more sustained than when it comes from government.

Top Social Marketing Challenges for 2012



“What are your top three challenges with social marketing?”



Base: 69 interactive marketing professionals

Source: Q4 2012 US Interactive Marketing Online Survey

Note: Not all responses are shown.

## V. CONCLUSION

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#### AUTHORS

**First Author** – DR. M. Shahul Hameedu, Associate Professor,  
Iqbal College, Peringammala, Kerala, India, Email –  
shahulparimanam@gmail.com