

## Is Social Marketing Experiencing an Identity Crisis?

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### Abstract

This article aims to discuss the crisis of identity and ethical issues addressed to social marketing and understand its current proposal. This is a critical paper built from researches of several publishing material such journals and books on social marketing in order to know why social marketing principles are misrepresented. It was possible to find numerous concepts addressed to social marketing, like cause related marketing, societal marketing, social responsibility, green marketing and institutional advertising. Three criticisms are emerging in social marketing: lack of focus on strategies; clear goals of organisation of the campaign producers; and the unethical pattern of the professionals. Social marketing is an alternative for improving services in social campaigns aiming at getting better results. The main purpose of social marketing is the behaviour change any other purposes do not concern social marketing. These misunderstandings about social marketing are increasingly producing misrepresentations regarding its principles.

**Keywords:** social marketing orientation, behaviour change, crisis of identity, ethical issues, social marketing goal

### 1. Introduction

Kotler and Zaltman coined the term social marketing, from the article *Social Marketing: an approach to planned behaviour change*, published in 1971. On that occasion, the authors sought to introduce social marketing as the design, implementation and control of programmes to influence the acceptability of social ideas, considering research, product, price, distribution and communication in marketing (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971). Social marketing was concerned with the application of knowledge of commercial marketing for social and economic purposes. Thus, social marketing has been designed in terms of social ideas in order to assist a society, whose opinions on a particular social cause could be modified. Perhaps, it was an audacious proposal for applications of marketing for that time, as proposed to undertake activities with the purpose of creation, modification and maintenance of behaviours using ideas to remedy social causes, regardless of the sponsoring person or organisation.

Since the 1970s, several literatures have emerged in order to contribute to the construction of the social marketing principles. Kotler (1975) uses the theory of stages of behaviour change to explain its implications in long term to assist non-profitable organisations in order to design social marketing in social campaigns. Manoff (1985) locates social marketing application as an alternative to assist in the public health. Lefebvre and Flora (1988) introduce social marketing as a tool for intervention and education for public health. Andreasen (1994) believes that social marketing results in benefits to target audience and society instead of organisations, as suggested by the commercial marketing. Davidson and Novelli (2001) present and discuss examples of profitable organisations in the United States that have engaged in social marketing campaign. Rothschild, Mastin and Miller (2006) discuss the emphasis in behaviour change and respect the free will of the individual. Kotler and Lee (2008) point out the focus on the customer orientation as the commercial marketing practices. Wood (2012) reports the importance of social networks to promote the benefits of behaviour change and raise society awareness.

Actually, social marketing arose as an instrument to improve the life pattern in a given society, in terms of social welfare and quality of life. Thereby, the practices in social marketing allow managers to know the social issues in

a given area and produce campaigns addressed to needs, desires and expectations of individuals in order to improve the health conditions through behaviour changes. Therefore, this paper aims to discuss the crisis of identity and ethical issues addressed to social marketing and understand its current proposal. This paper intends to make progress on the study introduced by Ross Gordon: *Critical Social Marketing: Definition, Application and Domain*, published in 2011 on the *Journal of Social Marketing*.

This paper is splitted in five topics: misrepresentation of social marketing; criticism to social marketing in ethical issues; the social marketing campaign has a behaviour goal; social marketing tools for development of a plan; and conclusion. These topics are lined up with the purpose of this study. We expect to give their contribution to improve and establish social marketing.

## 2. Misunderstanding about Social Marketing

Social marketing is a strategy for changing behaviour and uses the best practices of commercial approach to behaviour change in a planning framework and integrated actions associated with the benefits of communication technology and marketing skills (Smith & Higgins 2000). The social marketing cannot be mistaken by cause related marketing, societal marketing, green marketing, institutional advertising and corporate social responsibility, because the central idea of benefits, value proposition, purposes and strategies are distinct in terms of approach to target audience. The social marketing has been conceptualized as an exchange of value and not necessarily physical or economic, but, may be social, moral or political, and used for sell ideas or purposes that provide welfare to community. Aldamiz-Echevarría (2000) distinguishes the social marketing from other concepts, as these maintain a profitable purpose, although they can also assist social causes; however, with the intention of improving the image and positioning of the companies. The social marketing mix has another purpose, since the social product is an idea that may be beliefs and values (right and wrong); or a practice that represents actions and behaviour.

Pringle and Thompson (1999) published the book *Social Marketing: Marketing for Social Causes and Construction of Brands*. However, its content refers to the concepts of cause related marketing, as it emphasises the partnership between profit companies and civil society organisations that use the power of their brands on mutual benefits. Ptacek and Salazar (1997) explain this version of social marketing (actually the cause related marketing) requires knowing who the stakeholders are involve, such as: charitable organisations looking for sources of funding for their activities; corporations seek to increase their sales and enhance their image with its stakeholders; and consumers desire social responsibility and quality for a fair price. For Smith and Higgins (2000), Cause related marketing aims to attract consumers, who want to make a difference in a consumer society, i.e., obtain competitive advantage to dispose something for someone, besides respecting the regulations of the laws. Consequently, efforts in cause related marketing might be included among the psychological influences that add value in view of the consumer to the brand. Table 1 introduces an analogy between social marketing and cause related marketing.

Table 1. Social marketing versus cause related marketing

	Social Marketing	Cause Related Marketing
Benefit focus	Individuals and society in general.	Cause of group or association; Corporate support and partnership.
Goals and outcomes	Behaviour to increase well-being; Norms, values, knowledge and attitude addressed to behaviour.	Buying or donation; Attitude relative to image and products; Loyalty to the brand.
Target audience	Large, diversified and require services.	Large and concerned about social cause.
Voluntary change	Economic and non-economic costs; Product is intangible.	Economic costs; Product is tangible or intangible.
Market perspective	Product is less tangible; Competition is less tangible and more diversified; Economic factors are not important.	Product is tangible or intangible Competition is more tangible and categorical; Economic factors are relevant.

Source: Smith and Higgins (2000).

The corporate social marketing is more associated with sales results than with philanthropy. Gordon (2011) defends social marketing and criticises corporate social marketing, whose strategy is sale-oriented instead of being a charitable contribution. The companies spend more resources promoting their contribution to causes than on the causes themselves, as promotions are tax deductible. The most discerning consumers may interpret the

efforts of corporate social marketing as opportunism. Pringles and Thomson (1999) believe that the corporate social marketing arose when organisations realised that a sustainable product produces the best outcomes. Thus, the commercial market improves activities of producing products through sustainable practices, in order to convert into valuable component for the marketing strategies.

Maignan and Ferrell (2004) say that corporate social marketing and societal marketing are synonymous, but they are not. These researchers say that the proposal of corporate social marketing or societal marketing is an association of organisations for causes, revealing an emphasis on social activities that benefit individuals and companies in the long term. The term social marketing coined by Kotler and Zaltman (1971) is not the same as corporate social marketing, because this presupposes that the organisation delivers superior value to customers or society in terms of social welfare and quality of life with goal to maintain or even improve, without waiving the company’s objectives and profitability. Wood (2012) explains which the difference between the corporate social marketing and societal marketing is: the first has synergy with social responsibility; and the second with sustainable issues.

It is recognized that societal marketing, also known as green marketing is defined as the individual who seeks to use only products that cause less (or none) damage to the environment and society. The individual seeks to change consciously the consumption behaviour, with intention to produce a null or positive effect on the environment and society as a whole. Despite all favourable clamours to the ecological cause, is fact that in the academic community this subject has not affected so much. Over the last 15 years, some studies have been conducted to evaluate rigorously the effect of the use of arguments in the ecological character with persuasive purposes. Maignan and Ferrell (2004) highlight the fact that ideas about societal marketing initially gained momentum in the consumer goods sector, but moved to the service sector. The difference of societal marketing and social marketing is the fact that the former is an extension of marketing strategies, are already developed by the organisation with respect to commercial marketing; and the latter is another application of marketing. Table 2 presents an analogy between social and societal marketing.

Table 2. Societal marketing versus social marketing

	Societal Marketing	Social Marketing
Who uses it?	Profit organisations	Profit and non-profit organisations
Triggering factor	Social investment	Social conditions
Main focus	Acceptability of products	Social behaviour
Orientation	The consumer	The citizen

Source: authors.

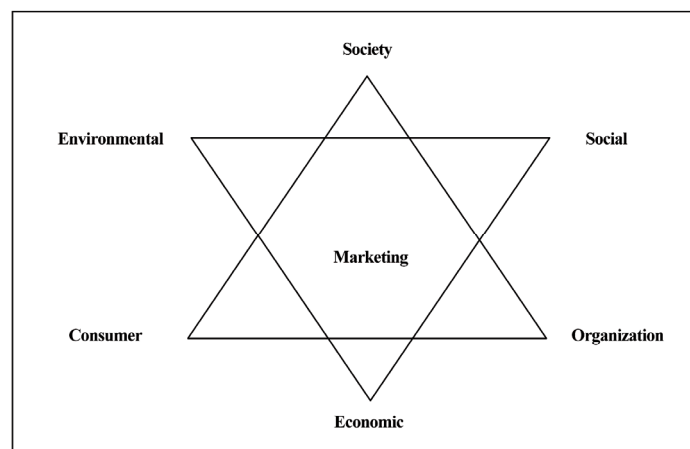


Figure 1. Societal marketing and sustainability

Source: authors.

Maignan and Ferrell (2004) as well as Ottman, Stafford and Hartman (2006) believe that the emergence of societal marketing is a result of the realisation that organisations are evaluated not only based on the performance of their products or services, but also on their responsibility and commitment to the contemporary

society. According to Hoeffler and Keller (2002), to incorporate sustainability-related values, in an ethical way, may promote an opportunity for the organisations to do the right thing, and may increase corporate image and brand, save money and open markets for products. In order to get better outcomes, these researchers recommend improving activities and actions from six axes: profits, customer satisfaction and the company's interest in view of the societal marketing; and environmental, social and economic, perspective on sustainability (see Figure 1). Societal orientation requires organisations to include the social, ethical and sustainable issues into their marketing practices, in order to produce the value proposition to get competitive advantage. Societal marketing and sustainable issues continents are intrinsically connected.

In respect to the other concepts that are constantly confused with social marketing: social responsibility and institutional advertising. The first has similarity with the cause related marketing, and may be used in two ways: through social actions such as donations to charity institutions; or processes that contribute positively to society (e.g., the adoption of day-care or asylums) incorporated into the marketing plan of the organisation. The institutional advertising focuses on the organisational promotion instead of the products or services. This may be part of the communication plan of marketing, with intentions to improve relations with various groups, considering consumers, channel members, suppliers, shareholders, employees and the public. Thus, the other strategies in the social arena are not social marketing. Therefore, social marketing is concerned with the use and knowledge, concepts and practice in marketing as well as their social consequences in the target audience, because the goal is influencing behaviour.

### 3. Criticisms to Social Marketing: Ethical Issues

In general, three criticisms have been usually addressed to social marketing. First, the lack of transparency of research about the data and information collected from the social arena and how these are understood and handled within the scope of social marketing campaigns. Second, the unethical behaviour of social marketers who intervene with the target audience in order to meet interests beyond of behaviour change, in campaigns prepared by private companies. Third, the private organisations do not follow entirely the social marketing principles, i.e., plan and communicate the benefits of the behaviour changes and respect the free will of the target audience, not forcing or imposing on these individuals the adoption of a behaviour they do not want (Gordon & Moodie, 2009; Gordon, 2011). The organisation should explain in their promotional materials, the hazards of adopting the benefits of the change in behaviour. The organisation cannot make a decision on behalf of the individuals, the act of changing begins with them; otherwise, there will be no voluntary change. This guiding question made Dann (2010) and Andreasen (2006) prepare the table 3 comparing the duties and responsibilities performed by commercial marketers and social marketers.

Table 3. Analogy between commercial and social marketers

Commercial Marketers	Social Marketers
Wish to make money	Wish to do well
Financed by investments	Financed by taxes and donations
Accountability to shareholders	Accountability to public
Performance is profit and market share	Difficult to measure performance
Goal is behaviour in short-term	Goal is behaviour in long-term
Products can be controversial	Targets with controversial behaviour
Accessible targets	High-risk target
Managers take risks	Managers are risk reluctant
Hierarchical decision-making	Participatory decision-making
Relationship frequently competitive	Relationship based on trust

Source: Dan (2010) and Andreasen (2006).

Thus, a question arises: Are non-profit-organisations and the public sector the only ones able to only public sector able to develop social marketing campaigns? Of course not, private organisations can produce social marketing campaigns, however, the companies should explain their intention in attempting to ensure that behaviour change is the goal, and not profit, image or product sales. There are authors who argue that social marketing campaigns can only be developed by non-profitable bodies; but others authors argue that campaigns can be developed by private organisations (Gordon & Moodie, 2009), such as: Benetton (Italian clothing company), introduced a campaign in their stores with respect for ethnic and racial groups; Zero Casualties (American clothing company) developed some campaigns against violence in the city; The Black Pearls (beauty

and care salon in New York) produced STDs campaigns; The Fidelity Investments (U.S. Investments company) has developed campaigns for people to eat at least five fruits daily; The Newspaper Association of America has designed campaigns to encourage reading; The Food Marketing Institute and the Grocery Manufacturers of America have prepared campaigns for the consumption of organic products; Denny's has supported of racial diversity campaigns; Pepco and Pacific Gas & Electric have made campaigns to promote energy; Anheuser-Busch (German brewery) has promoted the campaign to drink responsibly, say it is enough; and Philip Morris has invested in campaigns to reduce smoking among young people (Davidson & Novelli, 2001).

However, these companies should be careful when preparing these campaigns, because the organisations can develop a social marketing campaign to set a demand for another product of the organisation. E.g., the Brazilian company Souza Cruz (owned by British American Tobacco), specialized in tobacco and cigarettes, may produce a campaign encouraging healthy behaviour of individuals, in order to stimulate consumption of some products of another organisations owned by Souza Cruz company, in this case Maguary. This organisation manufactures and markets natural juices. Thus, Souza Cruz can develop a social marketing campaign; however, it should explain in its communication that the goal is not to encourage a consumption of another product of the company, considering that tobacco consumption generates controversy in society, which does not happen with the natural juice. This is the ethical motto of social marketing should be questioned.

Davidson and Novelli (2001) explain that the social marketing may be applied to profit organisations, when the emphasis is on the doing and not on the who is doing. For Andreasen (1997), the orientation of these organisations is given internally, with the intention of generating a profit; there is nothing that excludes private organisations. According to Davidson and Novelli (2001) there are two misunderstanding that should be discussed in an agenda: First, there is nothing in definitions that exclude social marketing activities from private organisations, the emphasis should be on what to be done and not on who does it. Second, the social marketers are more altruistic than commercial marketers. Nevertheless, the actions and decision of public or private organisations' managers will always include some personal and organisational benefits. In other words, the actions will never be 100% altruistic. But, several authors disagree with Davidson and Novelli (2001) and Andreasen (1997), among them Lefebvre (2011), Wash (1993), Weinreich (1999), Wood (2012) and Wymer (2011), who recommend social marketing application only for public organisations.

If a manager of the public health in a particular city starts a social marketing campaign designed to make population to aware about the need for blood donation, this manager will be judged on the effectiveness of this campaign, and will have a personal interest in its outcome. If the Minister of Health, based on the campaign goals, decides that the efforts of this public health campaign were successful, the resources allocated to this city may increase. The manager as well the city as a whole has altruistic interest in the decision and initiative of social marketing campaigns. There is great potential for the social marketing to do well in the social arena. The goal of this type of marketing is not to satisfy the social marketers' interests, but improving the services for the individual or society well-being. An unethical behaviour would reduce the chances of achieving great results and would disqualify the social marketing field (Andreasen, 2006; Wymer, 2011).

The social marketers work within the public trust. Thus, unethical conduct may be a violation of that trust. The ethical concern of social marketers may have a humanising effect that optimises the way in which they deal with customers. The social marketing may help as well as harm the individuals (e.g., promoting behaviour change that would be detrimental to target audience) through unwanted programmes. The social marketer should be the one who determine whether a programme promotes the individual or society well-being. The alignment of interest is not always the case in social marketing. It is understandable that social marketers may try to influence the behaviour of target audience, due to interest of society (at least in their opinion), although, it is not necessarily the best interest of the target individuals. The personal well-being of one citizen in health programmes and the interest of the society may be antagonistic (Weinreich, 1999).

The intent of the social marketers may also lead to use of more coercive tactics, arguing that the end justifies the means. (e.g., to appeal to the individuals' fear in the ads, like in the cigarettes packs with images of diseased or convalescent individuals on stretchers in hospitals). The social marketers may also precipitate to take advantage of scientific discoveries to promote a behavioural change (e.g., the campaigns against smoking in public places often justified by weak evidence of adverse health effects to passive smoking). These situations may contribute to intensify the stigmatisation of smokers, but, thus is not the recommendable way to introduce behaviour change. This kind of campaign provides benefits solely to society, since smokers continue smoking, at least in their homes. The challenge of the social marketers is to propose benefits for both, but it is hard to satisfy all expectation (Bernhardt, Mays, & Hall, 2012).

Social marketing is a democratic and efficient tool that applies the principles and tools of marketing in order to create and confer a social value proposition. The social marketing rediscovers the consumer through interactive dialogue, which creates conditions for the elaboration of the process of reflection, participation and behaviour change. However, its effects are not immediately perceived, as in commercial marketing. The effectiveness of behaviour change depends on the individual (Kotler & Lee, 2008). The actions addressed to influence behaviour are not flexible, since the benefits will not be achieved whether a large proportion of the target audience adopt the change. In addition, the target audience can oppose the changes, because the change is a result to be achieved in long term and the costs (or price) are immediate, i.e., the individual starts the change today to get the results in the future (e.g., campaign against obesity and a healthier diet). The initiative to adopt a kind of behaviour will produce immediate losses, in other words, the benefit is in detriment of something or waives something (Raval & Subramanian, 2004).

#### 4. Social Marketing Campaign Has a Behavioural Goal

Every social marketing campaign has a behavioural goal. The social marketers want to change behaviour (e.g., individuals are doing one thing; the social marketers want them to do another). Social marketing aims to benefit an individual or society overall. If individuals are safer and healthier, they will put less of a strain on the health care system. If individuals use mass transit, the highways will not be clogged and the air will be cleaner. But, if these things are ever going to happen, society needs some help. Individuals have to change their behaviour, then; behaviour change is what social marketing proposes for them. Indeed, there are thousands of ways to work towards social goals, but not all involve social marketing practices. Attempts to accomplish social goals can be divided into two categories: behavioural and non-behavioural. Preventing highway fatalities, once could install air bags in cars (non-behavioural) or one could persuade more individuals to wear seat belts (behavioural). Non-behavioural solutions tend to be in the area of technology; and behavioural solutions often require social marketing (McDermott, Stead & Hastings, 2005).

How does social marketing work? Smith and Strand (2009) introduce through Figure 2 where each process above the dotted line is involved in changing behaviour. The behaviour is the goal, i.e., the specific action the social marketers want a specific audience to undertake. Whether individuals engage in such behaviour is based on how they view that decision, or their perceptions: What are the benefits? Does it seem difficult to do? Can someone like me do it? Are other individuals doing it? Will individual laugh at me if I do it? Trying to figure out which perceptions influence a behaviour (known as determinants) is the challenge of social marketing. If the social marketers are unaware of which determinants influence behaviour, they cannot know what sort of marketing solution will be required. It is important to identify in the correct way what individuals view as benefits and as barriers. Benefit is something that individuals want. Some benefits might include an improved self-image, good health, peace of mind, convenience and the approval of individuals who matter. Barrier is something that stands between an individual and an action. These barriers may be monetary or non-monetary costs.

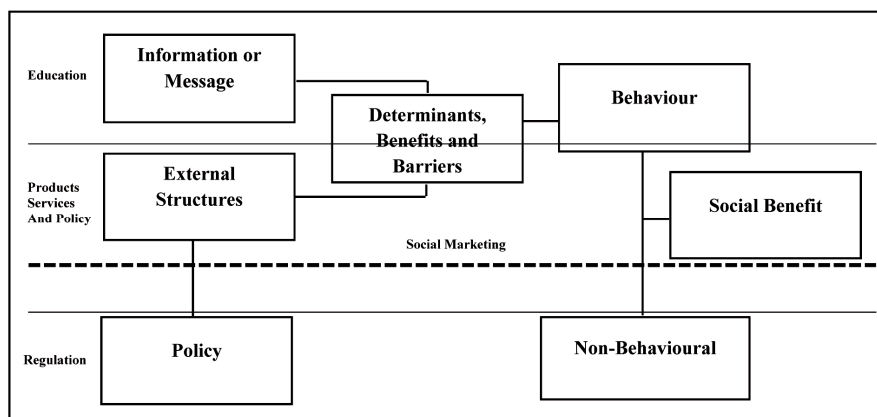


Figure 2. Social marketing framework

Source: Smith and Strand (2009).

Rothschild (1999) believes that there are three classes of behaviour change problems: education, regulation and Marketing. Indeed, the most common reason for the failure of social marketing programmes is the focus on

education problem, leaving out regulations required for a marketing solution and ignoring the power of the marketing mix to help individuals make behaviour change. The characteristics of these three problems are listed below. To help identify which category of problem the programme will address, the social marketer should use all the data collected about the problem and the potential audiences.

- Education problems: individuals need some basic facts to change. Behaviour is relatively simple. Action requires no outside resources. It is not in conflict with major societal norm nor does it carry any significant stigma. It has benefits that are apparent to the audience, but the audience lacks basic understanding (e.g., throwing garbage in the litter);
- Regulation problems: behaviour is extremely difficult to perform. Understanding of behaviour is widespread and multiple attempts have been made to influence it voluntarily. Certain patterns of behaviour can cause great damage to society and there is now a consensus it should be regulated. Thus, do not limit your thinking of regulations to the government forbidding certain actions; regulation can take many forms. Indeed, it can regulate through discouraging individual behaviour like smoking, or organisational behaviour like the marketing of cigarettes to children. It can also add benefits by providing tax exemptions. And, it can increase barriers like taxing commodities and services (e.g., seat belt laws; smoking restrictions; laws on illegal drugs);
- Marketing problems: behaviour is somewhat complex; individuals need resources, tools, and/or new skills to perform it well. It is not widely accepted, although it is often widely known. It has significant immediate barriers and few immediate benefits people care about (e.g., oral rehydration of infants at home; using malaria bed nets; using condoms).

The stages of change theory, also called the transtheoretical model, assists to explain how individual's behaviour change. Thus, this theory was developed after studying how individual quit smoking, and has been used since to understand other complex behaviours, such as condom use. The stage of change theory states that individuals go through a process, on their own and in their own way, of changing to a new behaviour. At each stage, they may have unique needs. For example, someone in the pre-contemplative stage may need information about behaviour but is not ready to discuss how to integrate the behaviour into his or her daily life (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983; Prochaska, 2008). The five stages are as follows:

- Pre-contemplative: individuals in this stage do not intend to change their current behaviour in the foreseeable future, are unaware of the benefits of changing their behaviour, or deny the consequences of their current behaviour;
- Contemplative: individuals are aware that a change might be good, are seriously thinking about changing their behaviour, but have not yet made a commitment;
- Preparation/decision-making: individuals intend to take action in the near future and may have taken some inconsistent action in the recent past;
- Action: individuals modify their behaviour, experiences, or environment to overcome the problem; the behaviour change is relatively recent;
- Maintenance: individuals work to prevent relapse and maintain behaviour change over a long period.

The purpose of social marketing is to produce behaviour change. Nevertheless, when adding social behaviour to customer's perspectives, the emphasis on creating attractive exchanges encourages changes through a value proposition (when the benefits outweigh the costs). The social behaviour is a guide for all action plans to be developed by social marketers. These behaviour changes are assessed by the degree of difficulty of the social marketing campaigns in order to obtain favourable results. Thus, social marketing is intended to solve social issues, which require attention, acceptance and individual's effort as well as the societies (Kotler & Lee, 2008). Then, the focus on social marketing is convincing an individual to adopt behaviour changes.

In social marketing, the customer is an active participant in the exchange process; and the exchange happens when the two sides (supply and demand) seek to satisfy their needs in their own way. Dunfee, Smith and Ross (1999) believe that social marketing has some key elements that define its performance in terms of efficiency and effectiveness: (i) an author: someone who produces and sponsors the products; (ii) a reason: the act of making products available to someone; (iii) an offer: product, service and behaviour; (iv) an act: in which context it happens; (v) a target audience: the intended and unintended consequences. Due to the consequences and processes of planning a social marketing campaign, it is recommendable for social marketers to include social and society variables in order to understand social causes: dwelling, literacy, social capital, working condition, public, policy and resources to prepare the behaviour changes and then social products.

If social marketing is the application of strategies, techniques and practices of commercial marketing to the social context, then, what are the real differences between them? Table 4 introduces an analogy between commercial marketing orientation and social marketing orientation by means of market; needs, desire and demand; product or service; value, satisfaction and quality; and exchange process. According to Pharr and Lough (2012), the establishment of a marketing-oriented vision should be structured through five principles: customer needs; customer benefits; value proposition; marketing as philosophy; and differences among customers. However, for Kotler and Lee (2008), in the social marketing orientation the elements that define are: behaviour change is the goal; the customer is the focus of the change; and the creation of attractive exchanges to encourage behaviour at minimum costs.

Table 4. Marketing orientation versus social marketing orientation

Marketing Cycle	Marketing Orientation	Social Marketing Orientation
Market	Consumer or organisation	Citizen or population.
Needs, desire and demand	Needs: individual; Desire: product or goods; Demand: buying power.	Needs: social problem; Desire: welfare and quality of life; Demand: buying power is not important.
Product or service	Benefits, experiments or solutions.	Ideas and interventions.
Value, satisfaction and quality.	Value: benefits are bigger than costs; Satisfaction: feel good; Quality: durability and compliance,	Value: healthy lifestyle and waives; Satisfaction: not immediate; Quality: services performance.
Exchange process	Exchange: buying products; Transaction: monetary (money); Relationship: in long-term.	Exchange: buying the idea; Transaction: non-monetary; Relationship: behaviour changes in long-term.

Source: authors.

The social marketing activities have been effective when integrated with intervention programmes in public health, such as: (i) consumer-oriented planning, since the initial process of intervention in health, when managing programmes which raise acceptance in the long term; (ii) improving of the management and evaluation of programmes implementation, which should apply an integrated effective programme in social marketing; (iii) more effective development of information campaign, aiming to achieve the cognitive and get the individual's attention to the benefits of behaviour change in the campaigns; (iv) improving the quality and public satisfaction, in order to identify levels of satisfaction among individuals, detecting problems and trying to understand how programmes can be developed to respond to any complaints and dissatisfaction of individuals; and (v) solutions to public health problems, once the social marketing seeks to solve problems that require attention, acceptance and satisfaction of individuals, to consider their welfare (Lefebvre, 2011; Marchioli, 2006).

Social marketing is concerned about the negative consequences of commercial activity and political influence to reduce inequality and raise the chances of social welfare of disadvantaged. It means that social marketing is a modality of institutional marketing programme that aims to reduce or eliminate social problems, the needs of society, mainly those related to standards of hygiene and public health, labour, education, dwelling, nutrition and transportation (Bernhardt, Mays, & Hall, 2012). Social marketing is necessary: when new information or certain social practices need to be disseminated; when the aim to develop campaigns to reduce the consumption of certain products, or behaviour perceived as dangerous to health; and when the action or activation of an idea is necessary to move individuals from the intention to the action (Peattie & Peattie, 2009).

In our definition, Social marketing is transforming social reality of a given society through actions, attitudes, ideas and behaviours that reflect in the individual the opportunity of a healthier living pattern, with purposes to ensure through marketing strategies, the desired and planned behaviour change. Thus, social marketing is to recognise a social cause and make use of tools to solve it, yet, respecting the free will, desires and decisions, even if they are contrary to the proposed benefits of behaviour change. Social marketing defends the principle that behaviour change should arise out of individuals, because they are the active element of the process, and not be imposed on them at any cost. If behaviour change does not happen: (i) social marketers consider if the individuals did not understand the benefits of change; (ii) the benefits of change were not well designed; (iii) the individuals perceive the benefits but are not willing to leave their lifestyle to practice the change. Any organisation has permission to prepare social marketing campaigns, provided that it promotes behaviour change without aiming at getting profit.



## 5. Conclusions

Social marketing is a tool for potentialising behaviour change, once social marketing orientation seeks to solve issues that require attention and acceptance of an idea, as well as the target audience satisfaction by means of social services, balancing the individual and society welfare in which the social programme will be developed. Behaviour change is the motto and the goal of social marketing. On the one hand, it is commendable when a company introduces social marketing while organisation proposal. On the other hand, the company manager needs to fit the behaviour change as the main purpose, and not encourage individuals' consumption of its products through benefits like sustainability, support to charitable organisations or investment in cancer campaigns. This company may allege in the media that its practices are in social marketing, but, actually, this company is practicing another sort of marketing strategy. The companies see philanthropy as a way to gain a positive perception in several sectors in order to leverage better outcomes.

The objective of social marketing is to become an element of transformation in the social arena. However, social marketing strategies have been appointed to describe business activities in the social field in order to take competitive advantages without the purpose to introduce behaviour change. It is a misrepresentation about social marketing. In Brazil, there are several academic articles, business magazines and newspapers publishing these actions and practices as being social marketing. The Medias highlight some benefits of social marketing as a way to potentialise the institutional image, sale of products and the profits; however, all are favourable solely to companies. Thus, due to unfamiliarity or lack of knowledge of what social marketing means in its essence, many professionals are misrepresenting and informing a different concept instead. They call these actions and practices cause related marketing, societal marketing, green marketing, institutional advertising or corporate social responsibility, depending on the focus of the strategy; but, never social marketing strategy. Therefore, social marketing has experienced a crisis of identity, since its application is misunderstood and its real proposal is unknown.

Social marketing aims to encourage behaviour change to help individuals to improve their health and social conditions. Therefore, when adding behaviour change into customer's perspective, the emphasis on creating attractive exchanges encourages changes through a value proposition, i.e. when the benefits outweigh the costs (monetary and non-monetary). Behaviour change is a guide for all action plans to be developed by social marketers. These behaviour changes are assessed by the degree of difficulty of the social marketing campaigns in order to reach favourable results. Social marketing is intended to solve social issues, which require attention, acceptance and individual's effort as well as the society. The role of social marketers is to promote behaviour change. Therefore, the focus of social marketing is convincing an individual to adopt behaviour changes through marketing mix (product, price, place and promotion).

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