

Consumer Education Using Social Marketing

by

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Abstract. In the context of the new knowledge-based economy aims this article to present the ways in which social marketing can help society with of the correction of irrational consumption and sustainable development. The emergence of this discipline is due to several factors such as the excesses of classical marketing, irrational consume exacerbations and false advertising. Deviations are today a central topic in current social and economic conditions, with lower income for consumers and companies. Thus, it is necessary to further investigate the conditions that enabled these, and with the help of various research techniques to understand consumers today, to find ways to reduce (the irrational) consume for a simpler life, the healthier and sustainable.

Key words: Irrational consume, social marketing, 4Ps, sustainable development;

JEL classification: A2, M31, Z1

1 Introduction

The global recession of the recent years can be seen from a new perspective, the emergence of a new type of consumption. Decreased income for the population and large corporate scandals led to social problems throughout society: family problems, difficulties with repayments to banks, problems at workplace. All these events make people every day change their attitude towards banking services, mobile phone companies, distributors of electricity, of heat, towards state institutions and their ways of marketing themselves. Their confidence decreases gradually in all their services.

As people gain a better knowledge / information on products and services they purchase and will realize their usefulness in meeting real needs, planning of the income and expenditure of each household will be healthier. Thus having more control over their lives, people will lead to a sustainable development of their society. However, to reach such a society requires radical solutions (Jamrozy, 2012) and not the creation of new products or substitutes for consumers, but the majority of people taking the concepts of responsible drinking, reduce

consumption and voluntary simplicity lifestyles sustainable.

This should apply not only to industrialized societies, but also the least industrialized economies with growing populations. Consumption reduction means not a radical change of life by decreasing standards of living, but rather increase happiness and well-being through non-consumption such as division of labor, in exchange for lower power consumption, more attention to art, music, family, culture and community (Helm, Wooliscroft, Rahtz, 2012). Such anti-consumerism challenges include several critical questions about how to promote these concepts to be accepted by consumers. However, this will be the role of social marketing in this process to find solutions. (Peattie K, Peattie S.: Social marketing A pathway to consumption reduction, Journal of Business Research 62 (2009), pg.261).

2 The importance and applicability of social marketing during and after the crisis

To the above mentioned issues it could be interfered with the help of the social marketing, which is considered by Rob Donovan, Professor

at Curtin University, the instrument "social capitalism" compared to classic marketing known as the instrument of "capitalists". To explain this concept social marketer have fallen largely agree that this matter deals with "influencing behavior using systematic planning processes and applying traditional marketing principles and techniques with the intention to deliver positive benefits to society." (Kotler, Lee, 2007, pg.8)

Social marketing is based on "sending educational messages, aimed at influencing social behavior, leading eventually to a better quality of life both for proper target market and society." (Constantinescu, 2012, pg. 76)

Efficiency in social marketing and the power to influence behavior change regarding the consumption of goods and services comes with understanding how best to target public perception barriers to the change. Social marketing actions should focus basically on elimination of barriers from the human activities while promoting the benefits of these changes. Most times there is a tendency for individuals to respond positively to actions that are beneficial and not just because of some barriers resist. (Kotler, Lee 2007, pg.155)

3 The consumer transformation. From the yesterday's consumer to the one of today and tomorrow. The key role played by the consumer in developing a sustainable marketing system

In this chapter we aim to have a better understanding of the role that it can play consumer (citizen-consumer) as a partner in developing a sustainable marketing system. Consumer behavior starts from a business perspective at the following axiom: consumers are the ones that determine a firm's sales and profit through their purchasing decisions, so that the motivations and actions actually determine the economic viability of a company. As we all know the science of marketing is used by traders to bring higher profits, and for this you need to anticipate and meet consumer needs. Marketing also says that the consumer should be the focus for any company.

Consumer behavior is actually included in the economic behavior of people, which in turn, is a manifestation of human behavior in general. For a better understanding of it must be highlighted some general features of consumer behavior:

- a. Regardless of education level, age, sex, occupation, income, social affiliation, lifestyle etc., consumers have needs and goals that are individually tracked and with a specific devotion for their own interests;
 - b. There is an emotional and social cooperation shown between consumers on the one hand, between consumers and producers, on the other hand, which mean that a consumer behavior determines interactions, which generally are based on the interest;
 - c. Consumer behavior is dynamic; this statement is explained by the fact that there are very few absolute rules of human behavior so that the ideas or approaches are adapted constantly, implicitly and approaches that involve the study of consumer behavior;
 - d. Consumer behavior involves exchanges between human beings (with direct reference to the seller and the buyer) to satisfy their mutual interests. For example a consumer who wants a "martini" in a bar, drink wants more than money representing its cost unlike bartender who wants above all money. The two parties involved in the transaction-the consumer and the barman-will be at the end of the day satisfied with the result of the act of sale;
 - e. The hope of satisfying their own best interests and necessities stimulates simultaneously consumer behavior and producers. (Morariu, Pizmaş, 2005, pg.5)
- The purpose of this paper is to help consumers in reshaping their fulfillment, "desires and needs" in a way that allows them to redefine their lifestyle while maintaining or increasing living standards and wellbeing perceived rather than having options unilaterally imposed by others, or through simplistic exhortations to "eat less", which are known for failure.
- First you need to understand consumers, their perceived needs and desires;

- In the second place, the need for the consumer to grasp compromise in terms of the macro limited choice;
- Thirdly, exploring meaningful ways for consumers and companies to co-create value around a common goal of sustainability.
- Fourth, and most important, there should be a value in the "scenario based on" research, which facilitates consumer participation to satisfaction questions by non-consumption or less intensive ecological consume, which relies less on novelty and change in material goods and more on human relationships. (Thirkell, 2012)

If we understand how consumers use information received through various classic marketing strategies of different industries before purchasing some products would help social marketers to determine what steps are to be followed to help the consumer: should it be through consumer protection, consumer education, or by realizing it with reference to various products.

4 Sustainable consumption

According to recent studies on emotional reasons underlying sustainable behavior (which often are only environmental) has been demonstrated that cognitive moral perspective of the reasons underlying a sustainable consumer behavior is complemented by moral emotions. And they are: the outraged about the lack of pollution control by others, anger about too many pro-environmental decisions, and feelings of guilt about their poor decisions in sustainable consumption. Another source is considered emotional affinity or simply love of nature. While moral emotions are drawn from moral perceptions, feelings of love towards nature are based on experiences in nature, which should ideally be experienced with others. Instead, environmental fear and contaminated sites are less important. Kals and Maes (., 2002, p 113), summarized as follows: "With regard to socio-ecological dilemma, the meaning of a moral basis makes sense because there are only less direct personal benefits derived from sustainable behavior. This moral

dimension is reflected not only cognitive, but also emotional lived. Sustainability should not be assessed only cognitive, but also as an internalized norm, which is interconnected with personal experiences and even the feeling of love."(Reisch, Bietz, Kreeb, 2007. Pg.541)

5 Ways to induce behavioral change

From social marketing research developed by Andreasen (1995.2001) arise clear empirical results on their ability to influence consumers. Campaigns which convey positive emotional messages showed that they are effective in changing the status of the target audience from the state of uninterested and ignorant to the state of contemplation about changing their behavior (Monhan 1995). It has been shown that fear-based messages were more counterproductive than effective - creating defense mechanisms and preventing attention (Hale and Dillard 1995) – the messages with positive emotions have been shown to be of higher generating behavioral changes.

If we follow the writings of Andreasen, we could split the ways that could cause behavioral changes in five different categories of approach:

- a. Educational approach - with a focus on educating the target audience - but here is the effect boomerang risk;
- b. Persuasive approach - used in social advertising with a focus on arguments and motivational "hot buttons" that will motivate the consumers to change behavior - but there is a risk of being seen as a too forced approach;
- c. Behavioral modification approach of those who behave properly, which emphasizes the principles of learning theory, for example. – learning based on reward or punishment, no matter how great the success, the approach is very expensive and therefore only applicable to individuals or small groups; the policy of social influence uses campaigns designed to influence community norms and collective behavior; although it seems promising, the approach is limited to situations where problems and social norms are well known and accepted, and the pressure to conform is

strong enough, and the behavior to influence is important and visible in terms of social; as the individual consumer is more educated and emancipated, the group norms play a lesser role;

- d. Social marketing approach that includes features described above in an integrated manner places in center the customer behavior, uses the 4Ps as of intervention, is based on market research and carefully distinguishes target market segments.

In promoting sustainable consumption issues the latter approach seems to be the most promising. Presents the most features unique to this area, ie invisible benefits and consequences (while the costs are real); benefits for others (geographically and temporally remote); intangible things that are hard to portray; the need for long-term involvement due to the large amount of complex information; the need to change basic values; and the need to attract leaders from outside;

According to research on consumer behavior, those behaviors with high involvement are designed following well-defined steps. Until today several such models in stages have been proposed (Maibach and Cotton 1995; McGuire 1976). In order to "balance the project", the Transteoretical Behavior Change Model (Prochaska and DiClemente 1984) was chosen as conceptual basis. According to the model, consumers act following five stages: pre-contemplation (eg, consumers do not think what is the appropriate behavior for them, this may be due to ignorance of the alleged irrelevance, or principles), contemplation (eg, consumers think and evaluate the recommended behaviors), preparation (eg, consumers have decided to act and prepare, for example, search for brands and stores), action (eg, consumers use this behavior for the first time or first few times), and confirmation (for example, consumers are engaged in behavior and have no desire or intention to return to the previous behavior). The model has undergone significant field trials (eg, Mohr, Webb and Harris 2001), and has been validated to be equally useful. According to this research, it is possible to separate the target consumers in these five

groups and use appropriate intervention strategy for marketing the task in question, namely: creating awareness and interest, changing values, motivating behavior change, creating action, and maintaining change (Andreassen 1995). The goal is to move consumers to the next stage, not to bring all to the "confirmation stage." This will be probably reached with the help of personalized messages and use of appropriate media.

In order to evaluate the initial results, we followed (1995) Andreassen's description of the marketing tasks in proper steps:

- (1) Awareness and interest creation;
- (2) Values amendment;
- (3) Motivation;
- (4) And (5) Creation of action and maintain change (Reisch, Bietz, Kreeb, 2007, pg. 541)

6 The 4 Ps of social marketing

Marketing progress was based on the important concepts of commercial marketing applied similar in solving social issues. However there may be difficulties and controversy on what constitutes concepts of product, price or competition in a new social context. As the discipline of social marketing matures, and it applies to wider variety of social purposes, it will be required a new mix of social marketing with a well-adapted approach. Such a tailored mix, that will be more useful in the context of social marketing for anti-consumerism could include the following changes:

6.1 Proposals instead of products

Proposals as "we need to consume less," "you don't buy happiness in a store," "new does not always mean better", "maintenance and repair of products is a wise strategy" or even "fashion follower can make a victim". A simple example of a specific proposal to reduce consumption used in social marketing campaigns in countries like Australia, Denmark or Canada sounds like that "cycling (and walking) instead of using the car is healthy both for you and the planet". This type of campaign is trying to clear the people from the intensive way of consuming, both

material and economic, and to conduct them to a much lower intensity behavior that satisfies the same need.

6.2 Accessibility instead of placement

As long as social marketing does not rely mostly on natural products, it is not appropriate to talk about the problems of distribution or sale. Social marketing is closer to services marketing, where the biggest problem is availability. If we speak about the promotion of reducing consumption, it includes access to alternative means to achieve satisfaction or other means for consume reducing with help of access to repair services, access to information and expertise online. The previous example promoting cycling rather drive may be right thing; in this case trough information about access to the cycle lanes, to trails, to bicycles, to secure bicycle parking or maintenance services that are fully suited to motivate and maintain positive behaviors cycling.

6.3 The cost of participation instead of price

Most times the cost of behavioral changes are not financial in nature (although some expenditures are for). Costs can be time and effort overcoming psychological or physical dependence (for smoking cessation). If anti-consumerism, as the price does not have to be economic, resulting in savings rather than spending. From the long-term perspective the cumulative effects of some anti-consumerism increases could lead to a reversal of the spiral of economic growth, the revenue growth and the growth of the consumer base expenditures. Short-term cost could be psychological if we refer to keeping up with fashion and consumption levels to match those of a development based on consumption. For example, in encouraging people to cycle than drive, change can be a cost increase driving through congested areas or by restricting parking. Here could be considered to reduce any financial costs or any psychological costs involving cycling.

6.4 Social communication instead of promotion

Social marketing is an evolution of previous efforts to obtain social changes that were based on health promotion and social communication (and social education). Instead of dissemination in one direction of the information which symbolizes promotion, social marketing divides commercial marketing interests in two directions of communication, interaction and relationship building. So as commercial marketers communicate to encourage testing, adoption, identification with a normal purchase of their products, so do social marketers communicate to encourage acceptance, adoption and maintenance of specific proposals or social behaviors. If anti-consumerism it should agree to communicate the benefits of a simpler lifestyle, a rational one. To complete the marketing mix examples we can refer to promote the use of reduced drive and instead use cycling which consumes fewer resources.

The benefits of adopting such a model are at the level where it is oriented towards the consumer, towards the conventional mix model, which is centered on product, price, placement or distribution and promotion. Alternative mix based on social proposals considers that the involvement costs for the consumer, the consumer accessibility and the communication with the consumer are very important in comparison to the classic mix.(Peattie, Peattie, 2009, pg.263-264)

7 Conclusions

Combining legislative and educational factors with social marketing will be necessary to find the best possible solutions for behavior change that can be very complex. With the desire to create a sustainable society development there should be identified the main problems of irrational consumption, seek solutions for them and then be put on the public agenda of the society. As Tim Jackson says (2009, pg.102), "only through such changes will be possible to abstain ourselves from growing, free us from the relentless flow of innovation that leads to

materialism and instead of finding a lasting prosperity - the potential to flourish within the ecological and social."

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