

SOCIAL MARKETING - A HOLISTIC CONCEPT OF MANAGEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Human beings, all over the world, are born with certain potential capabilities. The purpose of development is to create an environment in which all people can expand their capabilities, and opportunities could be enlarged for both present and future generations. The real foundation of human development is universalism in acknowledging the life claims of everyone.

The concept of growth at all costs, which governed development policies around the world up to eighties, is now being replaced with the concept of sustainable development in and after nineties. This is in fact, the result of heavy price in terms of decreasing health standard of human life which we have started paying for unsustainable consumption pattern, particularly of the developed countries. In the name of growth, fossil fuels have been burnt, chemicals harmful to atmosphere have been created in abundance, land has been poisoned by dumping poisons in and on land, in rivers and oceans and natural resources. For example, deforestation has been made to such an extent that it is in the trend of extinction. The result is global warming, accumulation of gases like carbon-dioxide and depletion of ozone-layer.

Is this the way of achieving our target of growth? No, certainly not. Now, when it has been proved by nature herself that economic growth and environmental protection are strongly linked, it is crystal clear that the quality of present and future life depends upon fulfilling the basic human needs and his dreams without disturbing and destroying the environment on which all life of universe depends. The Business Council for Sustainable Development (BCSD) - a high level consortium of leading industrial organization has already realized this fact and stressed on it in following words:-

Business will play a vital role in the future health of the planet. As business leaders, we are committed to the concept of sustainable development, improving the needs of the present without compromising the welfare of the future generations.

But the real implementation of this strategic policy lies in changing the basic monetary & profit oriented attitude of human beings oriented minds. Marketing concepts and techniques are highly useful to achieve this.

SOCIAL MARKETING - A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Marketing concepts and techniques are now widely used to promote social welfare schemes. Marketing, as a highly versatile tool is used for promoting goods and services, people, places, institutions and ideas. Be it be personal or institutional, commercial or philanthropic, political or social, religious or legal, in almost all facets of human life marketing has fast gained importance and acceptance.

Simply speaking, social marketing is the application of marketing tools and techniques for marketing socially beneficial ideas and causes to a particular group of people or community as a whole. The basic motto behind it may be either to alter beliefs, values and attitudes or to

motivate them to take action or mould their behavior. Philip Kotler, the Indian expert for marketing management defines it as the design, implementation and control of programs seeking to increase acceptability of social idea, cause or practice in target group(s) involving the considerations of product, planning, pricing, communications and market research. Social marketing also referred as societal marketing is thus related to the determination of social needs and wants vis-a-vis assisting their interests which is possible when marketers make possible a fair blending of social and commercial considerations in tune with holistic concept of management.

Social marketing has been applied to variety of causes like family planning, pollution control, health care, energy conservation, higher literacy, fund raising and immunization.

DIMENSIONS OF SOCIAL MARKETING

Marketing people do concentrate on profit maximization with priority, followed by customer satisfaction and social interest. Fulfilling the first priority gives them rare chance to think of customer satisfaction, no question of social interests! Is it our goal? Will it keep our planet safe for next generations too? No, certainly not.

Not knowing the destination and still keeping on travelling amounts to being in a state of absolute drift.

The dimensions of social marketing in fact, are determined by the attitudinal changes in organization. The major dimensions are

- i) Product mix of an organization;
- ii) Promotion;
- iii) Computation and level of cost, profit and price; and
- iv) Distribution strategy.

The organization follows only that product mix which is most profitable to them. Social marketing emphasize on environment- friend product mix with optimal profit level, industries like cement, glass, automobile, steel, leather industries, fast food and packing industries seem to be indifferent about health of human beings and our planet. The same is with service generating organizations. Quality of educational institutions, hospitals, communications, financial institutions are failing in providing good quality to society. Misuse of public funds by charitable trusts, Red Cross Society and Minister's Relief Fund are horrible even to think about. Product mix has to be considered both at micro and macro level of countries.

Promotion as an element of marketing mix motivates and communicates the prospects. But presently, majority of advertising messages are promoting even anti-environment and anti-society products. Also, only a statutory warning regarding the product would hardly give positive result. What is expected is to promote but for the right cause. This is what societal marketing principle emphasizes upon, i.e. promoting in a right way, the right messages to the right prospects.

The strategy of maintaining 400% to 500% of profit on cost in industries like pharmaceutical industries also gives birth to an additional dimension. The societal marketing aims at **rational pricing decisions** with an appropriate consideration of both society and commercial benefits.

A social marketer simplifies the task of designing an optional **distribution structure** to avoid heavy payment of commissions to various types of middlemen. This helps society in getting product/ service of right cost.

The above four dimensions are commonly observed in marketing policies of various organizations. In addition, other societal marketing related dimensions are -

- i) Marketing of education;
- ii) Minimizing of birth rate, and
- iii) Marketing of hospital services.

The aforesaid dimensions of social marketing thus make it clear that an attitudinal change in organization decides the functionality of social marketing. Thus the crying need of the hour is to motivate an attitudinal change.

APPLICATION OF SOCIAL MARKETING CONCEPT: INSURANCE OF NEXT GENERATIONS' SAFETY.

One thing is true, our present development approaches if continued for a long time, will certainly be ruining our next generations. This is a naked fact. A study conducted by Centre for Science & Environment reveals that air pollution in various cities and towns of our country is so high that nearly 52,000 people die prematurely every year in 36 cities by inhaling polluted air. The hospitalization of people due to pollution has increased from 19 million to 26 million. The problem is more acute in 20 cities like Pune, Ahmadabad, Meerut, etc. An economic loss of more than Rs 2,30,000 crores have been recorded in 1997 due to deforestation taking at a fast speed. Bhopal is slowly becoming a gas chamber with 20% rise in pulmonary problems, Ludhiana - the Manchester of Punjab is becoming one of the most polluted centers in northern part of country and 70,000 electricity generators used in Agra are ruining the beauty of Taj Mahal - one of the seven wonders of the world.⁶ This all calls for reviewing of our development process. Application of social marketing concept in policy making shall benefit organization, customers as well as society.

If a society prospers, the organization will find its sales life cycle without saturation. If the society is reasonably charged with quality goods and services, it will reveal a holistic concept of management sensing, serving and guiding prospects in right direction. For society, social marketing is becoming more and more relevant due to feeling of insecurity for present and coming generations. This paves the way of social orientation.

THE INDIAN SCENARIO

In Indian business environment also there are a number of adversely affecting developments. The scientific developments are resulting in social, cultural, economical, environmental and health degradation due to its wrong application. Increasing problems of pollution, population explosion, illiteracy and other problems are making application of social marketing principles an unavoidable practice.

A study by Tata Research institution states that at least 10 percent of Indian national income is lost due to environmental degradation. Fresh water availability has declined by 2/3rd, soil degradation has increased by 800 lakh hectares and more than 2,000 crores liters of sewage waste water per day is being generated in major cities but only 1/10th is treated.



The TV culture has not only spoiled the urban areas but even the poor rural population. Mobilization of small savings is becoming tough day by day. But of late, Indians have realized this social degeneration process working like a social poisoning. This positive attitudinal change is concluded through various examples like edible oil producing industries stressing on fat and cholesterol free oils, automobile industry promoting research in smoke regulating process, leather industry trying to throw filtered water, fast and food industry concentrating on nutritious food and so on. The rational composition of slogans and portraying of culturally acceptable photographs by few big advertising agencies are the symbol of social orientation.

A basic change in Indian developmental philosophy has begun. Let us hope that all the innovative policies are sizably influenced by slogan – **“Marketing for social interests”**.

CONCLUSION

The sensitive areas like controlling population, developing qualitative basic amenities, afforestation, mobilization of small savings, qualitative human capital formation and medical facilities and socially productive communication systems if applied with social marketing approach will certainly ensure a fair developed country. This Concept will help in creating healthy growth of each sector and minimize the adverse effects of manmade disasters.