A Behavioural Perspective on Social Marketing: A Commentary on New Trends in Thinking

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Summary

This paper offers a theoretical perspective that conceptualises the behavioural aspect of social marketing. The purpose of the paper is to provide the basis for a debate that elucidates opportunities and possibilities of application for the social marketing tool kit. Methodologically, the approach adopted is a comprehensive and critical literature review. This method sets a solid foundation for examining relevant research on social marketing and also drawing together various elements from social psychology and other related fields in which human behaviour has been explored. The paper critically describes the origins and developments of social marketing, identifies gaps in the current literature and analyses an operational definition of social marketing. It finds that despite the massive advances in the area there is still no consensus around which sorts of behaviours are due to it. The paper puts such a matter into a larger context arguing that target behaviours of social marketing are those oriented to perform voluntarily activities that help cope with behaviourally caused social problems. The value of this paper lies in the integration of different viewpoints that expand the way of thinking about the field. This critique can help social marketers, both academics and practitioners, to enhance the understanding of their audiences, clarifying who they are, how they interact and what opportunities exist for interventions. Another key implication is to reinforce the conceptual trend in social marketing that recognises behaviour as its focus, consequently instigating further theoretical and empirical work into it.

Key-words: social marketing, human behaviour, social problem.

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1   Introduction

Though acknowledged by the valuable contributions to the management of public and non-for-profit organisations, social marketing is irrefutably seen as a generating area for polemics. Social marketing arose from the discussion on the intricate relationship between marketing and society. Its principles and practices have been the target of criticisms and inquiry since they began to be structured into a unique conceptual framework.

This paper explores a behavioural perspective that clarifies what might be a pattern for behaviours in social marketing, that is, what sorts of behaviours are suitable for studies and interventions in the area. The major question this paper attempts to address is: what are the target behaviours of social marketing? That is to say, what sorts of behaviours can be studied and approached by social marketing?

The paper is divided into five main parts, including this introduction (part 1). The second part revisits the evolvement of marketing concept towards the assimilation of societal issues with particular attention to social marketing. It starts by elucidating the broad approach of marketing from which social marketing arose. It reviews the origins and development of society-related topics in marketing and goes on to highlight the contribution of social marketing to marketing thought. The third part examines an operational definition of social marketing as per its three major assertions (i.e. application of mainstream marketing technology; the target is the voluntary behaviour and; the end is the social good), pointing out gaps in the literature that still need to be addressed. Based on this, the fourth part focuses on behaviours in social marketing considering the following topics: (i) behaviourally caused social problems; (ii) prosocial behaviours and finally; (iii) socially desirable and undesirable behaviours. Having identified a potential behavioural pattern for the field, the fifth and last part consists of a set of theoretical implications and practical recommendations for social marketers to develop and employ a tool kit that can positively and effectively influence behaviours.

2   Origins and Development of Social Marketing

Why cannot you sell brotherhood like you sell soap? Wiebe's provocative question (1951-1952) started out a new perspective for marketing based on societal considerations. This section describes early developments of social marketing until the present time.

a)   Responding to the Broad Approach of Marketing

The origins of marketing thought are uncertain[1]. However, it is generally agreed that the origins of marketing as an academic discipline date from the early twentieth century (Shaw and Tamilia 2001, p. 159). In the initial stages, the study of marketing was essentially limited to tangibles goods and companies looking for profit. It was not until the 1950s that a broader conceptualization started to gain strength and recast the understanding of the field (Bartels, 1962, 1976, Wilkie and Moore 2003). Brown (1995) calls this period the 'marketing revolution' of the 1950s.

McInnes' (1964) and Alderson's pioneering works (Alderson and Cox 1948, Alderson 1958, Alderson and Martin 1965) had a strong impact in this process by endowing the marketing discipline with a dialogue about the perspective of social exchange. Bagozzi's statement (1975) summarises which was the pivotal contribution for broadening the concept of marketing: "marketing exchanges often are indirect, they may involve intangible and symbolic aspects, and more than two parties may participate" (p. 32). This understanding made clear that marketing, so far confined to business domains, should have a broad spectrum of options open for study and debate. With the paradigm shift "marketing becomes no less than a universalised synonym for organised human exchange" (McCole 2004, p. 533), which ensured its extension to non-commercial areas including arts, politics, religion and ideas (Kotler and Levy 1969) and contexts involving individuals, groups, organisations, communities or nations (Kotler 1972a).

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[1] Concepts linked to marketing such as market, production and competition had been debated from the time of the ancient Greeks through the time of the eighteenth century philosopher and economist Adam Smith (Wilkie and Moore 2003, p. 116). Wilkie and Moore (2003) identify this period as 'the pre-marketing era'. The first stage of marketing thought is commonly placed between 1900-1910, when the term 'marketing' is believed to have been used as a noun in the United States for the first time (Shaw and Tamilia 2001). This notion comes from the work of Bartels (1962), a marketing theorist who devoted large part of his career to the development of marketing thought. During this first stage, theory was borrowed from economics and marketing activities were mainly related to distribution (Bartels 1976). However, more recent studies on the history of marketing have found different dates for the origins of the term. For example, Bussière (2000) believes that the term was used for the first time in 1897 and Shaw (1995) traced it back to 1561. For a more detailed discussion, see Shaw and Tamilia (2001) and Tamilia (1990).

The broad approach legitimises the claims to look at society and social problems from a marketing perspective. Regardless of certain disagreeing positions (c.f. Luck 1969, Carman 1973, Bartels 1974, Gaski 1985) the broad view has prevailed and the barriers precluding its theoretical development have been overcome. One piece of evidence is the increase in the number and sorts of society-related marketing journals over the past years[2]. The broad view fostered the development of a new branch of studies focused on marketing and society, of which social marketing is part.

b)   Emergence of the Theme 'Marketing and Society'

Discussions on marketing and society retrace the pre-marketing era (Wilkie and Moore 2003). But the peak for the introduction of marketing subjects primarily interested on societal issues took place from mid-to-late 1960s.

The study of the theme was led by the acceptance and diffusion of the broad concept of marketing and by the work of prominent scholars. For example Bell and Emory (1971, p. 41), who criticized the 'faltering concept of marketing' arguing that consumers and social problems should take precedence over operational considerations. And Feldman (1971, p. 57), who noticed the role that societal satisfaction[3] could play as a purchase incentive. In an influential article, Lazer (1969, p. 3) affirmed: "marketing must serve not only business, but also the goals of society". A reaction to this scenario was the emergence of particular areas in marketing drawing attention to such issues as social responsibility and nonmaterial consumption.

In 1971 Kotler and Zaltman launched the article 'Social Marketing: An Approach to Planned Social Change'. The publication is often heralded as the birth of social marketing as an independent field (MacFadyen 1999). The term 'social marketing' was proposed to designate "programs calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas and involving considerations of product planning, pricing, communications, distributions, and marketing research" (Kotler and Zaltman 1971, p. 5). At that time, the idea of demarketing came up by influence of the article 'Demarketing, yes, demarketing' (Kotler and Levy 1971). Demarketing is an attempt to reduce temporarily or permanently overfull demand (Kotler and Levy 1971, Cullwick 1975, Gordon 2006). And as such, it was soon recognised as a way to

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[2] Examples are Journal of Consumer Policy, Journal of Macromarketing, Journal of Public Policy and Marketing, Journal of Non-Profit and Public Sector Marketing, Social Marketing Quarterly, International Journal of Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Marketing and Journal of Research for Consumers.

[3] Societal satisfaction is the buyer's knowledge that the purchase can benefit the larger society (Feldman 1971).

tackle public matters, like energy crisis and tobacco and alcohol consumption (e.g. Harvey and Kerin 1977, Frisbie 1980, Comm 1997, Wall 2005).

Societal marketing appeared in sequence, i.e. the year 1972, as a managerial philosophy questioning corporate activities based solely on profit and short termism and instead suggesting more active role for organisations (Kotler 1972b). The societal marketing concept called for marketers to add a third element, namely long-run consumer welfare, to the two basic elements of the marketing concept – customer satisfaction and profitability (Crane and Desmond 2002, p. 549). It has co-influenced the development of studies on corporate social responsibility (e.g. Browne and Haas 1971) and marketing ethics (e.g. Patterson 1966, Bartels 1967, Clasen 1967).

Completing the panorama, the consequences of large marketing systems on social welfare started to be examined by macromarketing in mid-1970s (e.g. Bartels and Jenkins 1977, Fisk 1981, Hunt 1981). The first seminar on the topic was led by Professor Slater in 1976 (Shultz 2004, Shapiro 2006). The study of macromarketing has covered a range of issues ever since, e.g. "environmental deterioration and renewal, economic development of national economies, the influence of marketing on quality of life, and marketing efficiency in mobilizing and allocating resources" (Fisk 1981, p.3). Some more specific fields came out from the late 1980s onwards. This was the case of cause-related marketing (e.g. Varadarajan and Menon 1988, Pringle and Thompson 1999) and green marketing (e.g. Prothero 1990, Vandermerwe and Oliff 1990, Peattie and Crane 2005), which respectively claim the creation of brand values through social contributions and sustainable production and consumption.

c)   **Contribution of Social Marketing to Marketing Thought**
Overall, the last decades have witnessed a flourish of subjects in marketing advancing towards their consolidation, e.g. social marketing, macromarketing, cause-related marketing etc. Far from signifying incompatible factions, the multiplicity of areas has brought innovation and reflected the richness of the discipline (Morgan 1996, p. 23). Social marketing was the seminal exemplar of its realm and constitutes nowadays a crucial reference for a contemporary understanding in marketing. Arnold and Fisher (1996) have stated: flanking between apologists, who wanted to maintain the status quo of marketing within the firm, and reconstructionists, who seemed to challenge even more the very foundations of the field, the role of social marketing on the development of marketing thought has been "to reconcile the fundamental worth of marketing with the idealistic goals propounded by society" (p. 118). An operational definition of social marketing is examined next.

3   Towards an Operational Definition of Social Marketing

Social marketing has been maturing and is reaffirming the separate identity achieved decades ago. Andreasen (2003) endorses this stance when he argues: "the field has had its infancy and adolescence and […] it is just now entering early maturity" (p. 293). The revision of its conceptual focus migrating from the promotion of ideas, as Kotler and Zaltman (1971) originally suggested, to the behavioural influence, is perhaps the most relevant evolution in theoretical terms since it was introduced as a scholarly field of study (Andreasen 2002a). Comprehensive definitions have been proposed in an attempt to reflect this state-of-the-art. Such endeavours have been particularly important to end misinterpretations that have plagued the field, causing semantic inaccuracy and confusions with other related approaches (Andreasen 1993, 2003, Rothschild 1999, Donovan and Henely 2003). A frequently cited version is the definition by Andreasen (1994, p. 110):

> social marketing is the application of commercial marketing technologies to the analysis, planning, execution, and evaluation of programmes designed to influence voluntary behaviour of target audiences in order to improve their personal welfare and that of their society.

Social marketing has more recently been described by Kotler and his associates as "the use of marketing principles and techniques to influence a target audience to voluntarily accept, reject, modify, or abandon a behaviour for the benefit of individuals, groups or society as a whole" (Kotler et al. 2002, p. 5). In 2006, the National Social Marketing Centre in the UK went through the historic description of social marketing and created an updated definition that complements and supports the foresaid: "social marketing is the systematic application of marketing concepts and techniques to achieve specific behavioural goals, for a social or public good" (French and Blair-Stevens 2006).

Altogether, these definitions subscribe three major assertions which are essential for explaining what social marketing is. First, the assertion that social marketing draws on a range of practices from traditional marketing. Second, that social marketing stresses voluntary behaviour. Third, that the end of social marketing is the social good. As Andreasen (1994, p. 112) puts it:

to be labelled social marketing, a programme must apply commercial marketing technology, have as its bottom line the influencing of voluntary behaviour and primarily seek to benefit individuals/families or the broader society and not the marketing organisation itself.

These three assertions are briefly discussed in the next sections, revealing trends for further developments with implications for theory, research and leading practices.

a)   Application of Mainstream Marketing Technology

Social marketing's first assertion resembles the broad marketing approach. Tenets embracing cost-effectiveness, competitive analyses, marketing planning and so forth confer authenticity to social marketing programmes phased at short, medium and long-terms, as they do to conventional marketing. Lefebvre and Flora (1988) defined eight essential elements of social marketing whose roots retrace mainstream marketing. In a recent interview in the Social Marketing Quarterly, Lefebvre confirms their accuracy (Bryant 2004). They are: (i) consumer orientation, (ii) exchange theory, (iii) audience analysis and segmentation strategies, (iv) formative research, (v) channel analysis, (vi) marketing mix, (vii) process evaluation and (viii) management. Ironically, social marketing scholars have encountered problems in a plethora of dependence on commercial marketing, as follow.

Traditional marketing theory might be ill suited to deal with certain issues in social marketing, which has challenged concepts and established frameworks. Bloom and Novelli (1981) were pioneers in describing how these approaches differ. They compare them to 'football' and 'rugby', stating that "the good player of one game may not necessarily be a good player of the other" (Bloom and Novelli 1981, p. 87). Researchers still have to investigate the conditions under which transfer is adequate (Andreasen 2001b). Peattie and Peattie (2003) have pushed for an exacting task, arguing that social marketing needs the development of its own distinctive vocabulary, ideas and tools.

Another criticism that also reflects social marketing's commercial origins is the inclination to provide solutions based merely on communication (Newton-Ward et al. 2004). Social marketing programmes have been critiqued on the grounds that they consist largely of informational and exhortative campaigns which rely on to a disproportionate extent on social advertising (Foxall 2002, p. 463). Hence it is clear that social marketing's reliance on

conventional marketing does have its flaws. Foremost is the idea that conventional marketing is not a panacea for social marketing. Further theoretical developments are required, as well as a full integrated application of the social marketing tool kit.

b)   Targeting Voluntary Behaviour

The emphasis on voluntary behaviour resides in the core of the second assertion. Social marketing activities are people-oriented and based on freely made decisions. The primary beneficiary from social marketing is not the marketer who initiated the programme, but the target audience itself and society at large (Andreasen 1994, Maibach 2002), which indirectly includes members of diverse groups. The miscellany of beneficiaries notwithstanding, the decision to engage in a behaviour change lies ultimately in the hands of the target market. In simple terms: "if individuals choose not to act, social change will not happen" (Andreasen 2002b, p. 41).

Hastings and Saren (2003, p. 309) remind social marketers that one of the prerequisites for an exchange to take place is that each party is free to accept or reject the offer, which goes to the heart of marketing theory and the perspective of social exchange (see 2a). This explanation helps to distinguish the field from its disciplinary competitors: social marketing does not embrace laws and other policies that make performance of behaviour compulsory (Maibach 2002). Nevertheless it remains of interest to learn how related approaches – i.e. law, education and attitude change – can complement social marketing to achieve social change (Rothschild 1999, Maibach 2002, Andreasen 2003).

c)   The End is the Social Good

The third assertion stresses the purpose and consequently, the boundaries of social marketing. The notion of social good as the primary aim of the field has been made explicit by many writers. Kotler et al. (2002), for example, think about social marketing as a tool to improve quality of life. Hasting (2003, p. 19) reinforces its credentials as a force for social good. Donovan and Henley (2003) link social marketing's achievements to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Despite the consensus around personal and society welfare, an unquestionable ethical judgement is present in such an approach.

In 2006, the international social marketing mailing list (SOC-MKT) debated the implicit value statement that social marketing can only be used for good and that social marketers are 'doers of good' (Dann 2007). The discussion revisited the allegation that such organisations as Ku Klux Kan could make use of social marketing, and concluded

metaphorically equating social marketing to a 'hammer' which cannot be held responsible for its own misuse.

Paraphrasing Andreasen (1994, 2001a), social marketers confront two challenges: first is to teach and advise the very best social marketing practice. Second is to make personal judgements about the types of organisations and individuals its principles and techniques are to be applied. If social marketing is to promote the social good, then it makes sense to ask which sorts of causes, and consequently behaviours, it should look at to achieve this end. This question engenders another query which revolves around the preceding debate, which is: what does social good actually mean? Defining social good is complex and needs to be framed in a meaningful way. Next section continues this discussion by defining social good in an effort to identify a pattern for behaviours in social marketing.

4   Identifying a Behavioural Pattern for Social Marketing

The interpretation of the social marketing's scope is not unequivocal and can provoke disagreements over which can be deemed a matter of social marketing. In this sense, the identification of social marketing's potential target behaviours is particularly problematical and can turn into a complex and challenging process that gives rise to ethical considerations. Such an ambiguity comes predominantly from the notion of social good, which is a difficult concept to clarify (Udoidem 1988). The formal concept of social good is rooted in the human's capacity to reflect upon own actions, grasp deficiencies and incompleteness, and choose to press onward toward the full development of the entire range of human possibilities (Novak 1989). "In utopia, everyone gladly does what is good for all" (Jordan 1989, p. 1), but in practice disputes over whether this or that is 'good' and 'for whom' it is good are constant causes of interest clashes. This conflict can be further examined on grounds of the nature of social problems.

a)   Coping with Behaviourally Caused Social Problems

Heidmets (1995) has stated that social good means solving contemporary problems. Social problems have a dual nature involving an objective and a subjective dimension. "The objective dimension is the concrete, measurable human harm associated with a societal phenomenon; the subjective dimension is the general level of concern about that phenomenon registered by the members of a society" (Jones et al. 1988, p. 16). This implies that for a social condition to become a social problem, "a significant number of people – or a number of

significant people – must agree both that the condition violates an accepted value of society and that it should be eliminated, resolved, or remedied through collective action" (Julian and Kornblum 1983, p. 2).

From this debate emerges a potential pattern for uncovering behaviours linked to social marketing, which is rather tricky to infer at first glance from the definition. In Brenkert's view (2002), social marketing seeks to solve social problems as its primary goal and by doing so, promote the well-being or 'the good' of a group of people and therefore society. The link between social marketing on one hand and concerns with problems affecting society on the other is quite reasonable. One could argue thus that target behaviours of social marketing are those oriented to perform voluntarily activities that help cope with social problems. Many intricate social ills like lung cancer and racism are, at least partly, seen as problems of human behaviour (Hastings and Saren 2003, p. 306). Targets for social marketing would include the behaviour of individuals in need of help (e.g. alcoholics), vulnerable or exposed to risky situations (e.g. drivers and traffic accidents, women and breast cancer) or in conditions to assist society (e.g. recyclers, blood donors) (e.g. Bagozzi and Moore 1994, p. 56). As behaviourally caused social problems multiply, there are plenty opportunities for social marketing (Newton-Ward et al. 2004, p. 18).

b)   Lessons from Prosocial Behaviours

Social psychology has faced an equivalent discussion concerning the definition of prosocial and helping behaviours, which are closely related to issues that social marketing considers. In this vein, it is worthy to clarify the extent to which prosocial and helping behaviours coincide or differ from those behaviours suitable for social marketing. Before proceeding to such an analysis it is appropriate to define both terms.

Although often used interchangeably, prosocial behaviour and helping behaviour carry different meanings. Dovidio et al. (2006, p. 21) explain that prosocial behaviour is the label for a broad category of actions that include helping behaviour. The term 'prosocial behaviour' refers to acts valued positively by society (Hogg and Vaughan 2002, p. 530). They are actions "defined by society as generally beneficial to other people and to the ongoing political system" (Piliavin et al. 1981 p. 4). In contrast, the term helping behaviour is construed to include "any act of giving and receiving aid that is intended to alleviate suffering or to improve quality of life" (Gross and McMullen 1982, p. 305). Helping behaviour has

been used to name voluntary acts that benefit others and are intended to do so (Dovidio 1995)[4].

It follows the foregoing discussion that prosocial behaviour, which embraces helping behaviour, is guided by desirable and undesirable criteria stipulated by society in a specific moment in time. According to the authors' understanding and analysis, all this debate points to the perspective that social marketing, using marketing technology to achieve behavioural goals for a social good, often deals with prosocial behaviour. Social marketing does not limit the study to behaviours that intent to help others (helping behaviours), but promotes actions that, likewise prosocial behaviours, are in accordance to present values of society in areas of health, education, ecology, safety and so on. Equally, not all behaviours are the object of social marketing, but those involving voluntary actions (or inactions) whose repercussion enables or inhibits a social problem occurrence, and consequently impacts individuals and the general welfare.

c)   **Socially Desirable and Undesirable Behaviours**

Behaviours aiming at the promotion of well-being and life quality or at the reduction of social problems are likely to be considered 'positive' or 'socially desirable'. Otherwise, they can be considered controversial or even deemed as 'negative' or 'socially undesirable'. Both types should be recognised as targets of social marketing. Social marketing can be used to encourage preventive health behaviours such as breastfeeding and exercise, as well as to prevent hazardous behaviours such as binge drinking. Kotler et al. (2002) have set four categories for social marketing, in which both socially desirable and undesirable behaviours fall, they are: (i) health improvement, (ii) injury prevention, (iii) community involvement and (iv) environmental protection. Using these categories and the lists provided by Kotler and his co-authors (2002) and Weinreich (1999) as starting points, table 1 illustrates major behavioural concerns that social marketing addresses.

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[4] An example can help to make clearer the difference between prosocial behaviour and helping behaviour. If someone assists a blind man cross the road, it can be considered both a helping and prosocial behaviour. It is helping behaviour because the good deed is driven to a third person, the blind man. And it is also prosocial behaviour in the sense that many societies nowadays perceive such action as positive. Healthy eating is seen as a prosocial behaviour for the same reason, which means that members of society recognise it as beneficial. But if healthy eating benefits only the person who is performing the action, the behaviour cannot be considered a helping behaviour. That is why prosocial behaviour may not necessarily be the same as helping behaviour.

Table 1: Domains, Behavioural Concerns and Examples of Issues in Social Marketing.

Domain	Behavioural concern	Examples of issues
Improved health	✓ Healthy eating	Fat intake; fruits and vegetable intake; high cholesterol; obesity; eating disorders; nutrition
	✓ Physical activity	Exercise; sedentariness
	✓ Substance abuse	Binge drinking; tobacco use; drug abuse; alcohol use during pregnancy
	✓ Safe sex	Sexually transmitted diseases; teen pregnancy; family planning
	✓ Other health-enhancing behaviours	Breastfeeding; immunizations; oral health; prevention, treatment and control of diseases (e.g. cancer, malaria, diabetes, osteoporosis, asthma, infectious diseases, high blood pressure, panic disorder, depression)
Injury prevention	✓ Traffic safety	Drinking and driving; traffic accidents; seat belts; booster seats; bicycle helmets
	✓ Assault	Domestic violence; sport violence; child abuse
	✓ Other injury preventive behaviours	Suicide; falls; sexual assault; drowning; gun storage; household and other poisons
Community involvement	✓ Charitable giving	Volunteerism; donation of money; gits in kind
	✓ Blood and organ donation	Blood donation; organ donation; tissue donation
	✓ Other pro-community behaviours	Responsible citizenship; community activism
Environmental protection	✓ Waste reduction	Recycling; reuse
	✓ Conservation of natural resources	Water conservation; watersheds; conserving energy
	✓ Other ecological behaviours	Air pollution; litter; forest destruction; wildlife habitat protection; toxic fertilizers and pesticides; unintentional fires; acid rain

Source: this paper, adapted from Kotler et al. (2002) and Weinreich (1999).

5   Discussion

Overall, the perspective outlined has offered a theoretical notion to conceptualise the behavioural aspect of social marketing. The paper elucidates that social marketing deals with behaviourally caused social problems and by doing so, it looks at socially desirable and undesirable behaviours. This section presents key implications of the ideas debated hitherto from theoretical and practical standpoints.

a)   General Implications for Theory

From the theoretical perspective, a central aspect stressed in the paper is about defining behaviours for social marketing in terms of social problems, which seems to be a more clear approach to delineate the scope of the discipline. Basically it implies that whatever a behaviourally caused social problem is, it is a matter for social marketing. And likewise, whenever there is a behaviourally caused social problem, there is an opportunity for interventions. This approach clarifies the possibilities of application for the social marketing tool kit and enlarges the opportunities for the area to include all societal issues which are seen as a consequence of human behaviour. It is worth noting that this perspective is commensurate with the definition of social marketing itself and the view of several scholars like Brenkert (2002), Hastings and Saren (2003) and Newton-Ward et al. (2004), who although have never discussed the matter deeply, have mentioned the link between social problems and social marketing in previous works.

The present critique has borrowed from a related area, i.e. social psychology, the concepts of prosocial and helping behaviour to enrich the discussion. At the time the paper was planned, the authors were not aware of any attempts to understand and compare both prosocial and helping behaviours with behaviours studied in social marketing. The emphasis on the labels 'socially desirable behaviour' and 'socially undesirable behaviour' has also a theoretical importance. As the critical literature review has shown, both terms have been found in the literature of social sector with no clear reference to what exactly they mean. Such a terminology makes sense under the umbrella of social marketing since it matches the general idea that social marketing is to cope with behaviourally caused social problems, and as such should look at 'positive' and 'negative' behaviours. On basis of what has been debated so far, next section discusses theoretical implications for the social marketing system. Figure 1 presents a simplified illustration of how elements of the social marketing system interact.

Figure 1: Simple Elements of the Social Marketing System
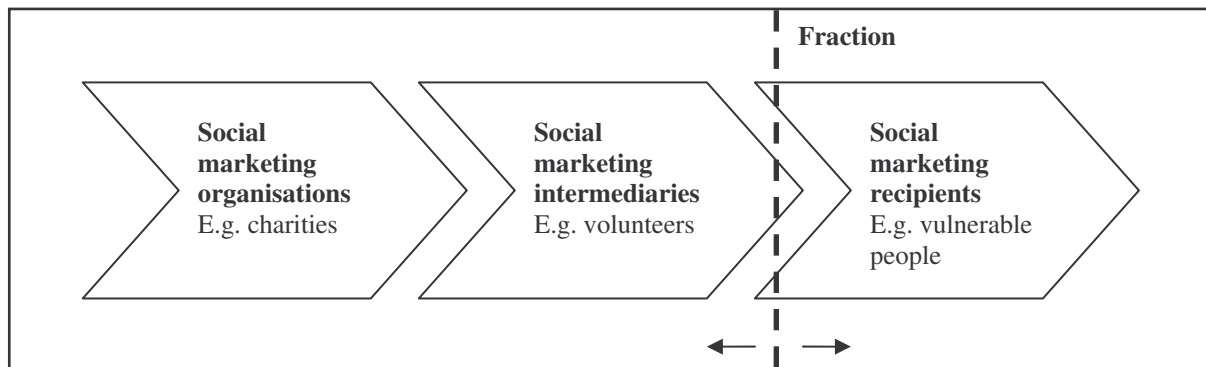
Source: this paper.

b)   **Theoretical Implications for the Social Marketing System**

Social marketing activities are designed by non-for-profit organisations, government or public agencies to influence target audiences. Recipients are whoever is benefited by the social marketing activities either directly (e.g. target audience) or indirectly (e.g. wider society). Social marketing intermediaries are those who assist the exchange between organisations and recipients, facilitating the flow of services, goods and ideas from one side of the system to the other, e.g. volunteers and donors. The marketing system, construed in theoretical terms for the traditional marketing, cannot be transposed to social marketing without thought as they vastly differ at operational levels.

Perhaps one of the major differences is that participants of the traditional marketing system are widely aware about market rules. Making money is the explicit goal of companies. Customers know that their role in the system consists basically in buying a product, paying for it and then, making use of it. You buy, you consume, as simple as that. In opposition, the process of exchange in social marketing is often overlooked. The system in which social marketing activities take place is particularly complex and most of the players do not possess a clear understanding of what is really being exchanged. As Andreasen (1993, p. 2) has explained, what is consumed in the process are benefits: giving blood or abandoning drugs are benefit-generating activities. The benefits transferred are typically intangible and difficult to measure. Instead of financial expenses, the participation of recipients and intermediaries is more likely to involve self-sacrifice and investment of time. And again, the design and organisation of a charity may look like the same as a company, but they fundamentally diverge in the bottom line: social good versus profit.

The core premise of the marketing system is to fulfil human needs and wants through exchange and both conventional marketing and social marketing are guided by such a tenet. The peculiarity lies in the classes of needs and wants each one attempts to meet, whether materialistic or not. When compared to conventional marketing, social marketing seems to concentrate more on basic needs rather than on wants. The transaction itself tends to be much more emotional and attached. It is not about selling soft drinks and beverages to drink and feel fresh; it is about offering the chance to fight malaria, alleviate poverty or incorporate healthy habits into life.

The global economy has reflected human nature, which has consistently proved to be acquisitive and greedy. There is plenty of room in the marketplace for offering luxury items at fancy prices via stylish distribution and communication channels. The reason is simply because demand exists for such a marketing-mix. However, human nature cannot be thought as consisting of money-orientated values only as it is charitable and compassionate too. So, in contrast to this scenario, social marketing has delved into the very facet of human nature that cares about altruism, justice, philanthropy, and life quality. Instead of exploring the idea of accumulation for the sake of further accumulation, social marketing has explored moral and humanitarian traits and by doing so, it has also accomplished the basic marketing task of satisfying needs and wants.

Another intricate aspect of the social marketing system is that there seems to be a friction separating organisations and intermediaries from recipients. Social marketing managers and collaborators are undoubtedly in a much more privileged position than people who need help or are exposed to risk, even if they belong to the same system and 'share' social marketing values (see figure 1 and 4a). Another particular challenge for social marketing is to deal with people who do not want to adhere or commit to the cause, called here reluctant recipients or reluctant intermediaries. The way in which social marketing operates in the marketing system is a plausible reason why social marketing cannot be considered simply an extension of marketing and thus requires a more specific theoretical development.

c)   **Implication for Practice**

Turning now to how these ideas apply to the world of practice, there are a couple of recommendations. For example, it is necessary to define ways to measure the impacts of social marketing activities on the social problem. How to measure behavioural outcomes, potential gains and benefits? Is the measure just a belief that social marketing is doing right?

In a recent presentation to the 37th European Marketing Academy, Lister (2008) has addressed this matter. In an attempt to understand the societal costs and values of such issues as smoking, obesity and unsafe sex, he has pondered that the measure should take into account many aspects and groups, ranging from the individuals directly touched by the interventions to wider social values. This is in tune with the perspective outlined in this paper in the sense that the social problem is to be evaluated in all its dimensions.

Another practical implication comes from the marked characteristic of the social marketing process that both recipients and intermediaries are free to choose whether they will promote or engage in the social change or not. There is indeed social pressure among recipients and intermediaries to adhere to what is recognised as the correct way to behave. Nevertheless, social marketers often face situations in which recipients and intermediaries are reluctant and decide not to co-operate. Smokers who do not want to quit are a classical example of reluctant recipients. An exemplar of reluctant intermediary is the volunteer who does not commit to the cause or project as expected and sometimes turn out to cause more harm than good. The challenge for social marketers lies in addressing recipients and intermediaries to the extent to which they agree, permit or want to be involved in its activities. Yet, special circumstances exist. Some smokers might not want to quit, but they might want to smoke fewer cigarettes. Some people who wish to help society might need some guidance to find out the right project to volunteer their time, money or gifts. Social marketers should be aware of the needs and wants of each group involved in the social problem. Moreover, social marketers must develop the competence to adapt and conform to these needs and wants. This is crucial to set realistic behavioural goals and achieve them.

A best practice in defining targets of interventions requires that stakeholders are taken into consideration in both the strategic planning and operational implementation. There are many more people involved in the solution or amelioration of a social problem than what is usually thought. The typical customer is very likely to be only the tip of the iceberg. Additional recipients, for example, should be identified to the extent to which a behaviourally caused social problem is examined and understood. A detailed analysis of the social problem can reveal not only potential targets for interventions, but also desirable and undesirable behaviours that are feasible to influence. Bringing out diverse behaviours will give rise to ideas for developing social programmes. The greater the variety of behaviours elicited from this task, the more likely there will be the profusion of schemes articulating successfully norms and aspirations of particular groups. The procedure suggested is nothing but a strategic exercise that can provide a much broader picture of the situation and that can impact

effectively the decision-making process of non-for-profit and public organisations. However, at this point of the discussion it is worth recalling that social marketing does not include legal considerations that make behaviours obligatory. Hence, social marketing should target people who somehow have the chance to decide whether they perform the behaviour or not.

d)   Limitations and Future Research

This paper is only a small step toward understanding what sorts of behaviours are suitable for social marketing. Although entirely based on literature review and no other method of research, the discussion on social problems is anchored by a vast literature that extrapolates marketing. The authors proceed from the premise that the strengthening of social marketing depends on the capacity to connect it to other areas and make a combined use of concepts. The plea is for an improved integration with different disciplines that are also interested in human behaviour, so that social marketing can expand its boundaries beyond marketing technology and theory. There is a growing body of social science research addressing the practices adopted in everyday life to support causes linked to education, safety, human rights, ecology, health, and so on under a countless diversity of approaches. However, to date, the majority of the theoretical discussion on social marketing has primarily focused on comparisons with the traditional marketing with little attention being paid to other areas. This lack of dialogue is surprising since a variety of disciplines in social sciences and humanities has greatly influenced the marketing literature over the years. A more open dialogue is needed to bring together and link the diverse perspectives that can inform social marketing.

Another aspect that deserves mention is that there has been very little attention to the categorization of behaviours in the field. Thus, a suggestion for future research is to explore more extensively potential behavioural categories of social marketing. This could be done at different levels. For example, exploring a specific behavioural domain (e.g. environmental protection, see table 1). Or alternatively, putting a mixture of behaviours together and analysing them according to smaller categories (e.g. waste reduction) or larger categories (e.g. desirable and undesirable behaviours). Indeed, behaviours of recipients should be investigated much more carefully because they are likely to be reluctant. To find out what different behaviours have in common would help to explain why they belong to a particular class and the circumstances in which the categorisation applies. Studies in this direction are valuable to gain deeper insights into the so-important behavioural aspect of the field.

e)   Concluding Remarks

A final comment, the recognition of the broad marketing concept and the consequent emergence of several sub-disciplines arguing that marketing should embrace a social and ethical agenda seem not to be enough to end the misinterpretation that still remains on topics involving social marketing. Despite plenty of examples showing how levels of performance in promoting social marketing programmes have been higher with value creation to society, goal accomplishment and efficient appliance of resources (e.g. Fox and Kotler 1980, Malafarina and Loken 1993), social marketing has a long way to go towards its complete success in practice. As Andreasen (2001, p. 83) has commented: "marketing still is limited in its applications in the non-commercial sector and suffers from a negative connotation in many quarters". The area is seen with suspicion by many who work in the social sector, wherein is often misinterpreted as a top-down approach which emphasizes products through mass media (McKee et 2000, p. 91).

It is clear that social marketing lacks an effective brand positioning (Andreasen 2002a). And there is no remedy for such a condition but to reiterate its position as a branch of learning. Wide acceptance will be achieved as long as the discipline keeps showing theoretical robustness and usefulness for practice. This paper makes evident how fast social marketing is progressing towards its development and how challenging is to evolve it further. In the classical article 'Marketing Myopia', Levitt (1960) encouraged marketers to think about what business they are in. Perhaps, social marketers may answer the question saying: ours is to help solve social problems. Strongest society values lead the activities and decisions of many organisations. The extent to which society respects human life is what influences the self-determination of people who step aside and challenge themselves to think and behave in a different manner. Society is growing globally, but many social problems are still local. Solution for social problems around the world hinges on the coordinated efforts of individuals who emerge from society as 'willingness to help' groups. In this sense, social marketing has a lot to contribute. Questioning underlying assumptions, classifications, practices and impacts is fundamental to advance the knowledge and understanding of social marketing.

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