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Original scientific paper

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## SOCIAL MARKETING AND ITS APPLICATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

### Abstract

This paper analyses the principles, characteristics, meaning and application of social marketing in the Republic of Macedonia. For this purpose, a primary research was conducted in terms of several ground criteria elaborated by several authors in the literature, with the standpoint of Andreasen being the most popular. Following the aspects he emphasized as most relevant, the research conducted in the paper shows where weaknesses and strengths of the implementation of social marketing in the Republic of Macedonia can be defined up to now, with the opportunity to promote its future application. Considering the global importance of this concept, this paper stresses its importance for the Republic of Macedonia and gives directions for improvement, obtained through empirical research.

**Key words:** social marketing, social campaign, marketing mix

**JEL classification:** M3

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## **Introduction**

Over the past few decades, social marketing has been applied as a tool to promote initiatives, campaigns and programmes for change of awareness and behaviour around the world. Social marketing provides the greatest contribution in different areas of social progress such as preventing/quitting smoking, global health epidemics, transport and traffic safety, drugs and alcohol abuse, etc.

The research in this paper concerns the application of social marketing in the Republic of Macedonia. Based on survey results from social programmes in the Republic of Macedonia (in governmental, non-governmental and commercial sectors), information about the current development of social marketing in the country is presented. Primary data obtained through empirical research were analysed, addressing the use and representation of the marketing features in social programmes and their evaluation according to the generally accepted and applied Andreasen criteria<sup>1</sup>. Possible guidelines and recommendations for wider application of social marketing in the country were defined from the conducted analysis.

## **1. CONCEPT AND IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL MARKETING IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

An increasing number of people across different countries are ready for social changes in their lifestyle, economic and social systems, their behaviour, beliefs and values. Social marketing implies achieving certain goals through knowledge, marketing techniques and technology in the organization and implementation of social programmes. It basically represents applying marketing concepts in social programmes (projects, campaigns, interventions, etc.) that bring benefit to society (public health, safety, environment and communities)<sup>2</sup>. Social marketing can shape an effective framework for social programmes for behav-

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<sup>1</sup> Andreasen, A. R. (2002). Marketing social marketing in the social change marketplace. *Journal of PublicHealth Management and Practice*, 21(1), p7.

<sup>2</sup> Kotler, P., and Nancy, R. Lee (2008).” *Social Marketing: Influencing behavior for good*”. Sage Publication, California, p.7-12

itorial change and can offer useful tools to organizations that are trying to make changes in behaviour.

The most commonly used approach to define social marketing is that of Andreasen, which describes social marketing as applying commercial marketing technologies in the analysis, planning, implementation, and evaluation of programmes designed to affect the free conduct of the target groups in order to improve individual well-being and societal welfare<sup>3</sup>. This definition illustrates four key features:

- The first is focusing on the change of free behaviour/conduct: social marketing is not connected to coercion or duress;
- The second is that social marketers are trying to initiate change by applying the principle of exchange - the notion that a clear benefit for the consumer must exist for change to take place;
- The third refers to the need of use of marketing techniques, such as consumer oriented market research, segmentation and targeting, and marketing mix.
- The ultimate goal of social marketing is to improve individual well-being and general social welfare, not just organisational welfare which distinguishes social marketing from traditional marketing.

In the Republic of Macedonia, social marketing represents a relatively new and popular issue that needs to be monitored in order to improve and increase the effectiveness of social programmes, thus benefiting society as a whole. The significance of social programmes emphasises and increases the necessity of applying global trends, more specifically, national governments should increasingly transfer the implementation of these programs to NGOs. It is also helpful that social marketing is quite developed in Western countries, thus enabling implementation of successful and investigated techniques through good practice in the country.

In order to assess the current application of social marketing in the country, the results from the conducted survey on the application of social marketing in the Republic of Macedonia are presented below.

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<sup>3</sup> Andreasen, A. 1995. *Marketing social change: Changing behavior to promote health, social development and the environment*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, p.7

## **2. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON THE APPLICATION OF SOCIAL MARKETING IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

### **2.1. Objective and methodological approach**

**The research** was conducted in order to obtain primary data on the use and representation of the marketing characteristics of social marketing and their evaluation according to the generally accepted and applied Andreasen criteria<sup>4</sup>.

Relevant data was obtained by using a questionnaire to systemise information from people that design social programmes. In addition, organizations that implement social programmes in the Republic of Macedonia (Red Cross, MCIC, UNDP, USAID, World Bank, REC and 25 local non-governmental organizations) were asked to identify programmes (campaigns) aimed at solving a social problem. The programme coordinators were identified and asked to present leading programmes addressing social problems in various fields: health, community participation, injuries, environment, poverty and the like. These efforts led to the identification of twenty-seven programmes, but it was found that four of them did not have enough documents to support further analysis or the documents were not available to the public.

The standardized questionnaire was implemented to people who devised the programmes. The questionnaire included the possibility of a free answer, and multiple choice answers that assessed the knowledge and use of social marketing, programme features and social marketing features.

Testing was conducted with several people who devised programmes before the implementation. The analysis included qualitative data that helped clarify whether the criteria were met for it to be considered as social marketing.

Knowledge of social marketing and its acceptance among the survey participants was assessed through four questions. Participants were asked whether they had heard of social marketing, had they used it previously, had any of their colleagues used it, and whether it was used in the programmes concerned by the questionnaire. In order to assess the features of the campaign, information regarding the pro-

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<sup>4</sup> Andreasen, A. R. (2002). Marketing social marketing in the social change marketplace. *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice*, 21(1), p7.

grammes was collected through questions concerning the name of the programme, country and region of its implementation, its starting date, the purpose of the programme, the target group, its objectives and intentions, theoretical information, exchange and research of the competition, the research methods used in the strategic development of marketing mix, the product (the idea and specific product), the price (incentives and disincentives), the place, the promotional elements (the message, channels and target group) and “partnerships” and the previous testing. More questions were asked regarding the monitoring (results, outcomes) and adjustment during the implementation of the programme. The final section included questions about the assessment of the result, the process and the outcome of the programme.

Questions assessing each of the six Andreasen criteria of social marketing were used to determine the extent to which current practices correspond to social marketing, namely behavioural change, target group research, segmentation, exchange, marketing mix and competition.

The survey identified 25 programmes. In 16 cases, the people who devised the programmes did not participate in the questionnaire and did not provide additional material for analysis. Therefore, the results are comprised of data from 9 programmes that had questionnaires completed about them. The findings are supplemented by secondary data collected from existing official sources in this area.

## 2.2. Survey results

Regarding the findings of the survey, the results are presented in Table 1 according to the research key points. To get a clearer picture of the analysis, the data from the survey are presented in percentage (%).

Thus, in terms of *knowledge and acceptance of social marketing*, only 33.3% of participants said they had heard of social marketing. The remaining 66.7% said they did not know of social marketing, although according to the definition of its techniques, they had used some them. 22.2% said they had colleagues who have used social marketing.

*Types of programmes.* The analysed programmes involved the field of healthcare (three programmes), environmental protection

(three programmes), community involvement (two programmes) and combating poverty (one programme).

*Purpose, goals and intentions.* All programmes had a clearly identified purpose. While some of them aimed at the facilitation of specific problems (e.g. Increased number of people that measure blood sugar levels, increased number of people trained for emergency or an increased number of blood donations, enabling greater citizen participation in decision making and creation of policies at the local level), more than half of the programmes (5 cases) determine rather broad categories such as “poor students who do not attend secondary school” or “daily increasing waste” as a problem to be solved.

In all the programmes, there are listed goals which at least partially focus on the behaviour of target groups. In 66.6% of cases, these goals were expressed in common terms and were not specific to each target group or segment separately (e.g. “Environmental education for students” or “sustainable waste management”). More than half of the programmes failed to explicitly define methods to measure the attainment of the goals.

The goals for change at the policy level were explicitly mentioned in three cases (33.4%). Three programmes had clearly stated intentions. Methods for measuring the fulfilment of intentions in the implementation phase were defined in one of the cases.

*Target groups.* Although all campaigns are focused on at least one specific target group, these target groups were defined in fairly general terms. Segmentation variables were often limited by age, geographical area or general behaviour (e.g. “Blood donor”) or role (parent, student, teacher, etc.). Other behavioural or psychographic characteristics (e.g. Health, social class or personal beliefs) in most cases were not explicitly taken into account.

In over half of the cases, the main target groups were children, students or young people.

*Theory.* The use of the behavioural theory was not explicitly observed in the analysed sample. Two cases, or 22.2% indicated they had used theory, including a model for attention-interest-desire-action (AIDA) and the theory of equal access.

*Exchange.* Over 44% of people who devised the programmes had conducted some kind of research to identify ways of encouraging

the target group to behave as predicted by the campaign (benefits) and/or ways that could hinder it from doing so (costs). Benefits were not identified in 55% of the cases (5 programmes), and costs were identified in 33.3% (3) of the cases. About 11.1% of campaigns (1) gave an explicit definition of the exchange, wherein they tried to develop an exchange that would motivate the target group to follow the intentions of the programme.

*Competition.* Research was conducted in 2 cases (22.2%) in order to identify the external competition for the campaign. Measures to counter the competition were also reviewed in this case.

*Product.* The majority of sampled programmes promoted at least one specific behaviour. Almost all programmes (89%) highlight the advantages of accepting the promoted behaviour. About 77% of the campaigns promoted improving individual social reputation as one of the main advantages. Health aspects were also promoted frequently. Finally, the main target of the campaign, which was reducing the problem itself, was promoted as a major benefit in three cases (33%) and 44% of participants stated they chose which benefit to promote based on research.

*Price.* About 77% of the performed effects used means of encouragement, where more than half used tangible (e.g. financial aid, rewards, meals) as well as intangible means. Disincentive measures were used less commonly, by 11% of programmes, and only in combination with the means of encouragement. The choice of measures of encouragement and/or disincentive was based on research in 3 cases (33% of the total sample, which means that in over half of the cases, the choice to use measures to encourage and/or discourage was based on research).

*Place.* Places where the target groups would be exposed to the offers of the programmes were explicitly defined in 89% of cases. Most campaigns (44%) chose their place strategy based on evidence. Locations where everyday life takes place (e.g. Schools, municipalities, streets, organizations, etc.) and places that had organized special events (such as sports and other cultural events) were used frequently. Educational institutions (all types of schools, including universities) were used in 44% of cases.

*Promotion.* In each programme the Internet (websites) was also used for promotion. The most popular include: websites (89%), billboards (22%), leaflets (44%) and posters (33%). The number of projects that aim at live interaction with the target group or direct communication is also high (89%). Use of electronic mail or social networks is listed in only 11% of cases. Less popular were the forums, blogs and chat channels that were used in only one case. Print media advertisements were used in 55% of the cases, and other “traditional” media channels like radio, TV or cinema were used in 22% of the programmes. In 33% of cases, the selection of these channels was based on research.

*Previous testing.* The programme material was previously tested with the target group (target group only or target group and experts) in 22% of cases.

*Monitoring and assessment.* The implementation phase was followed in terms of outcomes (e.g. number of distributed leaflets, training courses, debates or website visitors) in 89% of campaigns. The monitoring (behaviour) results were listed in 44% of cases. In 11% of the impacts, the need for adaptation of the campaign elements was assessed.

The efficiency of the programme was assessed in 22% of cases in terms of the awareness and involvement of the target group (e.g. number of people who are considering behavioural change). The effects of the programmes on the target group behaviour and the general well-being (within the community/society of the target group) were assessed in 33% of cases. The impact of the campaign on social norms was not assessed in any of the cases. In assessing the effectiveness of the campaign, the results were almost always positive.

Table 1. Results obtained on the use of social programmes

<b>Research is used to:</b>	<b>do not know</b>	<b>%</b>
Support the selection/definition of target groups	1	11.1
Support the selection/definition of realistic, specific goals	1	11.1
Use the most appropriate theory for the situation	5	55.6
Identify what can hinder the target group from pursuing the objectives of the program/campaign (obstacles, costs)	1	11.1
Identify means to motivate the target group in pursuing the objectives of the program/campaign (motivations, benefits)	1	11.1
Identify potential threats/competition for the success of the programme/campaign	1	11.1
Identify measures to combat such threats/competition	1	11.1
Identify which benefits from the recommended behaviour should be emphasised for the target groups	1	11.1
Choose from incentives and disincentives (monetary and non-monetary incentives and disincentives) which are likely to be most effective for the target groups	1	11.1
Identify the best/most appropriate locations and/or time for the given target group	1	11.1
Identify the message/messages that are likely to be most effective for the given target group	1	11.1
Identify channels for transmission of messages that are likely to be most effective for the given target group	1	11.1
Measure outcome and/or evaluate the results of the programme/campaign	1	11.1

*Source: Results obtained from the survey*

<b>No</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Primary</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Primary and secondary</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
3	33.3	3	33.3	0	0	2	22.2	5	55.6
3	33.3	4	44.4	0	0	1	11.1	5	55.6
2	22.2	2	22.2	0	0	0	0.0	2	22.2
5	55.6	2	22.2	0	0	1	11.1	3	33.3
4	44.4	2	22.2	0	0	2	22.2	4	44.4
6	66.7	1	11.1	0	0	1	11.1	2	22.2
6	66.7	1	11.1	0	0	1	11.1	2	22.2
4	44.4	2	22.2	0	0	2	22.2	4	44.4
5	55.6	2	22.2	0	0	1	11.11	3	33.3
4	44.4	3	33.3	0	0	1	11.11	4	44.4
3	33.3	4	44.4	0	0	1	11.11	5	55.6
5	55.6	2	22.2	0	0	1	11.11	3	33.3
2	22.2	6	66.7	0	0	1	11.11	7	77.8

## **Conclusion**

Numerous conclusions can be made based on the conducted research, with one of the more general ones concerning the incompatibility of the objectives regarding programme creation and functioning according to social marketing criteria.

Regarding the terminology used in “social marketing”, it is not properly used in the Republic of Macedonia and it has different connotations (e.g. Social media marketing, marketing of non-profit organizations, marketing for a cause, social advertising, healthcare communication, social media). This underlines the need for dissemination of knowledge of social marketing, the tools or criteria used to help people who plan the programmes and researchers in the development and assessment of programs to address social problems.

Crucial for the development of social marketing in the Republic of Macedonia are the policies that support social marketing and encourage its use. Certainly, if there is such a policy, integration of training courses on social marketing will be required, including extending the opportunities for education by organizing workshops, seminars and so on. It is worth noting that an important link in the development of social marketing in the Republic of Macedonia is the development of a database for implemented programmes and including data on the results. Such an extensive database can be used to invite major investments in new programmes or expanding the programs that have proved effective. The implementation of impartial assessments of social marketing can also contribute to more comprehensive solutions for the policies in the Republic of Macedonia in various fields.

The development of social marketing in the Republic of Macedonia requires broadening of the social marketing knowledge, tools or criteria used to help programme planners and researchers in the development and assessment of programmes designed to address social problems. This involves creating educational programmes for people who work on the creation of social programmes in the public sector, NGOs, and the commercial sector as a future major partner in solving a wide range of social problems. The necessity of terminological understanding of social marketing is emphasised, to detailed knowledge of the tools and models

used by it: introduction to the theories and models of behavioural change, introduction to the various kinds of research and methods of their use, knowledge of the theory of exchange and definition of the benefits as equal or greater than the cost for each promoted behaviour, knowledge of many methods and variables that can be used to identify different target groups, proper application and understanding of the strategies of the marketing mix, especially the various incentives and disincentives, use of digital and new social media, identification of the competition, introduction to the various methods and tools for assessment of the results, understanding of the process of planning a social marketing programme, etc.

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