

Social Marketing: A Tool to Seek Equity with reference to N.E

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Abstract

The paper here tries to advocate the application of social marketing in bringing about expected social changes. The north eastern region of India has always lagged behind in development mostly due to external factors issues like insurgency. With passage of time people of the region have voiced against it and the depletion it has brought to the victim states in north east India. The paper defines the conventional meaning of social marketing but tries to bring forth certain views that will enable to ensure equity and sustainability of development. The paper is conceptual where practical implementation to the problem highlighted awaits.

Keywords: Behaviour change, equity, development.

Introduction:

It has always been observed that whenever a new department store comes up, especially in small town areas in India, people of all section flock to it on its opening day itself creating an unmanageable traffic. For this achievement hats off to the power of commercial marketing or promotional techniques. The same unmanageable rush doesn't turn up maybe for an awareness camp on health issues or reduction of tobacco usage. Harping to one of the problem, let's say level of income inequality, because of which India is being listed as developing country, we need to adopt a vision and make ourselves come out of it. Coming to the socio-economic scenario of India, it has always been a priority of Government of India to eradicate poverty, reduce unemployment, lessen inequality and result in improved social standard. Since post-independence, observing the past statistics related to Indian economy show that though we see growth it is not even when individual region or state is taken into consideration. Also, during the recent periods the country has witnessed concentration of wealth in fewer hands as implied by accentuating inequalities and disparity in the level of living. If we focus on north east India, comprising of eight states, its socio economic status presents quite a diverse report. Records highlight that in one point of time the finding of underground coal and oil in Assam had led to simultaneous growth of forestry and mining in the region. But the growth was stunted once insurgency crept in the society. Along with it came in huge expenditure to maintain law and defence of the entire region. Instead of growth and equity, less work on development started indicating towards unfairness and inequality. Accepting challenges and hurdles as an inevitable part, we need to chalk out a competent way out of it. The apparent solution seems to be to convince people to change their behaviour. The tools to bring so, at the hour are the application of Social Marketing and think ways to bring about positive changes by it apart from only in behavioural aspects. While comparing with commercial marketing experts have defined social

marketing that as commercial marketing tries to change people's behaviour for the benefit of the marketer; social marketing tries to change people's behaviour for the benefit of the consumer, or of society as a whole.

Objectives:

1. To understand Social Marketing as a tool for social transformation.
2. To highlight ways to make it sustainable.

Role of Social Marketing:

The application of Social Marketing may sound a much unsophisticated way to prevent the causes of inequality prevailing in the north eastern part of India. A simple glance may just give the idea of spreading awareness by putting up banners and posters – the basic identity of Social marketing. Consequently, scholars have issued a call to broaden the intellectual and disciplinary horizons of social marketing and consider its purpose and role beyond behaviour change as explained by Brennan and Parker. The strength of Social Marketing is its underlying power to bring forth a paradigm shift and initiate the changes sought after. Community Tool Box Service of Kansas University, has highlighted three major advantages of applying this concept. These are:

It helps us reach the target audiences you want to reach.

It helps us customize your message to those targeted audiences.

It helps us create greater and longer-lasting behaviour change in those audiences.

Learning the benefits of the process we have to understand means to implement it and bring out the desired outcome.

Discussion:

Taking into consideration the problem of suppressed development in north east India, we have to go for spreading of awareness to the mass consisting of not only with difference in economical class but in every sphere like thought, attitude, literacy and many other factors. In spite of this divergence, the people of this region have to be delivered with the message. It has to percolate to one and all in the mass. At the same time the message also have to be well understood. The changes observed after getting the message; positive attitude to handle the issues- in all these we see the effectiveness of social marketing. Once positive attitude is built we can see necessary actions coming up to handle the situation. The very first will be observed in the behavioural change of the people. Kotler and Zaltman have very well explained that social marketers would be able to “influence the acceptability of social ideas” by designing, implementing and controlling “calculated” social marketing programmes, which involved “product planning, pricing, communication, distribution, and marketing research”. It has been very rightly forwarded by Andreasen that most social marketers genuinely attempt to deliver social change programmes in an equitable, fair and sustainable way, as the discipline encapsulates well-established ethical guidelines. The current scenario can be mended only with social marketing that will enable intention into physical doing – not in papers or only by words.

As the researcher has identified the issue to be dealt with, this helps to determine the group to be targeted for social marketing campaign. To make the campaign effective, it is always necessary to understand the full view of the target group with reference to the issue to be resolved. Along with grasping their perspectives, a track of their literacy, economic background and means of

livelihood has also to be gathered. Once the detail of the target market is known, the social marketer can have a direction to guide the target group to pave the way towards achieving the desired outcome. The social marketing concept also emphasises on knowing the driving factor that will entice change in the target group. In this case the agent of social marketing should elucidate upon the utilitarian rules that will ensure greater development.

However, the social marketing process will have to know the means to extract information to proceed in the right direction. One of the ubiquitous ways is just to interact and observe the target group. A routine observation will present an estimated picture of the people and their behaviour. Surveys and interviews are other alternate ways to learn in-depth about the people to be studied. For these purposes a well-designed questionnaire is required. These instruments assist in accumulating qualitative data regarding the specific group of people. The preliminary campaign that will be carried out amongst the targeted group can also implement a feedback mechanism. This will act as a controlling step if the process of social marketing adopted is on the right track or getting deviated. Here both the facilitator and the client will know the areas to be further worked upon. Focus group method if applied allows the people to talk out relevant issues which leads to information which otherwise might not have surfaced.

The information through these methods will enable the social marketing process choose appropriate strategic means. Similarly resources to be used may be human resource medium, counselling sessions, repeated awareness campaigning, upholding a secured future dream will be dependent on the strategy chosen. Considering the demographic aspect of the target group of the north eastern region divisions might arise. Statistics show that literacy, economy, means of livelihood differ among the eight states of the region. Hence strategies and resources will need to differ to tackle the diverse challenges though the goal of achieving symmetric development eliminating social disturbances remains the same. The decision while calculating the best strategy should also fore analysis its end, means, motive and foreseeable consequences. This will allow having measurable objectives and also calculating estimated duration to reach so. As we have almost assumed that the target group will be diverse in nature therefore delivery of the messages should be designed so as to overcome the diversity. A very appropriate way has been explained by taking an example of smoking by the Community Tool Box, the University of Kansas, "ads talking about the negative consequences of smoking can be followed by the creation of smoking cessation classes--which could be followed in turn by a support group for those who have quit. Using this method is an effective way of moving people along the continuum of understanding." The way so used is known as panel design. The same way can also be done in this case with the difference that the target group has to understand what behavioural changes and attitude are to be brought in. The primary point is that people have to be repeatedly followed up with the messages.

The social marketing campaign after deliberate choosing of strategy, message and resources will have to identify a medium of communication. Prior to this how well their effort of percolating the message has been successful has to be judged by themselves. The amount of time spent with the groups; feedback of the ways initiated will help to know the strength of the work done. At this point, if any loopholes are observed these can be rectified. Communication medium can be various like print media and the press, photography, advertising, cinema, broadcasting through radio and television, publishing and point of sale. Just like the message delivery the media

selection will again be related to the background of the groups, availability and affordability. Here the social marketer will have to monitor his or her budget allotted for the campaigning. Seminars and word of mouth are other effective ways.

Conclusion:

Gerald M. Meier, has pointed out that development is a combination of growth and change. So it must essentially have qualitative dimension. To some extent the delayed development in north east India is due to both insurgency and negligence of government. As remarked by Debasis Neogi only various schemes were introduced, without confirming the qualitative norms of the projects. Because of such a lop-sided development practice, India's Northeast is still identified as one of the most underdeveloped regions in the country. Now policy makers and the process of social marketing will have to invent ways to bridge the gap which will get highlighted in the social consciousness and transformation.

Social marketing has to be continued after transmitting messages through media. Constant monitoring will be required. Effectiveness of the messages has also to be known and measurable. This will enable to realise the trend of the region and if there are changes in certain significant areas. Consumer preferences towards the issue over time may change. Relocation of people from other region may require further campaigning. Messages may have to be accordingly redesigned. Simultaneously, the social marketing process needs to be updated or else whatever is being tried to put across will not be delivered.

Social marketing can bring about meaningful changes not only profit but also economic upliftment of a state or region. In a research paper *Redefining social marketing: beyond behavioural change* it has been very appropriately said that such an approach would, therefore, be very useful to social marketing, as it explicitly recognises the need to measure the effects (efficiency and effectiveness) as well as the process (equity, fairness and sustainability) of social marketing programmes. Its continuity depends upon effective controlling of efficiency and strategy. Falling in line with marketing of products and services, here too efficiency will be determined by its performance review in territory progress, competition and channels of distribution. At the same time strategies success can be judged from the influence of the campaigning and its reflection in social transformation.

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