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THE TRENDS OF SOCIAL MARKETING DEVELOPMENT IN KAZAKHSTAN

Abstract. Whilst social marketing has been continuing to capture increasing research attention in different settings across the globe, local movements and organizations in Kazakhstan are getting more involved in social marketing activities as well. The research objective of the current study is to explore the trends and challenges of social marketing in Kazakhstan. The study uses qualitative depth interview method. Combined mixed purposeful sampling approach was employed with maximum variation sampling technique used to select the participants. The phenomenological research was used to analyze qualitative data to generate meaning units and develop descriptions. The analysis of the sixteen interviews with experts revealed the major trends and challenges representing the current state of social marketing in Kazakhstan. The key findings of this study include the following: social marketing is growing and developing in Kazakhstan; the challenges facing social marketing in Kazakhstan include general misconceptions about marketing and social marketing, lack of funding and marketing expertise, and weak governmental support and regulation.

Key words: social marketing, social advertising, development.

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Қазақстандағы әлеуметтік маркетингтің даму үрдістері

Аңдатпа. Әлеуметтік маркетинг бүкіл әлемнің назарында, бүгінгі күні Қазақстанда да жергілікті ұйымдар әлеуметтік маркетингті белсенді қолданып жатыр. Бұл мақаланың мақсаты Қазақстан Республикасындағы әлеуметтік маркетинг пен әлеуметтік жарнаманың негізгі үрдістерін зерттеу болып табылады. Зерттеу барысында іріктеудің үйлестірілген мақсатты тәсілін және респонденттерді таңдау үшін максималды вариация әдісін пайдалана отырып, сапалы талдау әдісі қолданылды. Феноменологиялық тәсіл сапалы мәліметтерді талдау және Қазақстандағы әлеуметтік маркетингтің дамуы мен жай-күйін сипаттайтын негізгі трендтерді айқындау үшін қолданылды. Сарапшылардан алынған он алты сұхбаттың мазмұнын талдау барысында Қазақстанда әлеуметтік маркетингтің ағымдағы дамуы мен жай-күйін көрсететін бірқатар үрдістер мен мәселелер айқындалды. Негізгі тұжырымдар әлеуметтік маркетингтің Қазақстанда өсіп, дамып келе жатқандығын көрсетеді, алайда дамуда кедергілер кездеседі, олар – коммерциялық маркетинг пен әлеуметтік маркетингтің арасындағы айырмашылықты жалпы түсінбеу, әлеуметтік маркетинг пен әлеуметтік жарнама бағдарламаларын жеткіліксіз қаржыландыру, мемлекеттік органдар тарапынан жеткіліксіз реттеумен қатар әлеуметтік маркетинг саласындағы білікті кадрлардың жетіспеушілігі болып табылады.

Орталық Азиядағы әлеуметтік маркетинг бойынша аз ғана зерттеулер жүргізілгендіктен, Қазақстандағы әлеуметтік маркетингтік тұжырымдамаларды қолдану туралы зерттеулер академиктер, практиктер және саясаткерлер үшін үлкен маңызға ие болады.

Түйін сөздер: әлеуметтік маркетинг, әлеуметтік жарнама, даму.

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Тенденции развития социального маркетинга в Казахстане

Аннотация. В то время как социальный маркетинг продолжает привлекать внимание по всему миру, местные организации Казахстана так же все более активно практикуют социальный маркетинг. Целью данной статьи является исследование основных тенденций в развитии социального маркетинга и социальной рекламы в Республике Казахстан. В исследовании используется качественный метод анализа с использованием комбинированного целевого подхода для выборки и техники максимальной вариации для выбора респондентов. Феноменологический подход был применен для анализа качественных данных и выявления основных трендов, описывающих состояние и развитие социального маркетинга в Казахстане. Анализ содержания шестнадцати интервью с экспертами выявил ряд тенденций и вызовов, которые отражают текущее состояние развития социального маркетинга в Казахстане. Основные выводы говорят, что социальный маркетинг растет и развивается в Казахстане, но существуют препятствия в развитии, такие как общее непонимание разницы между коммерческим маркетингом и социальным маркетингом, недостаточное финансирование программ социального маркетинга и социальной рекламы, нехватка квалифицированных кадров в области социального маркетинга наряду с недостаточным регулированием со стороны государственных органов.

Ключевые слова: социальный маркетинг, социальная реклама, развитие.

Introduction

The research objective of the current study is to explore the trends and challenges of social marketing in Kazakhstan. Whilst social marketing has been continuing to capture increasing research attention in different settings across the globe, local movements and organizations in Kazakhstan are getting more involved in social marketing activities as well. With little research conducted on social marketing in Central Asia, the study on applications of social marketing concepts in Kazakhstan becomes of high value to academicians, practitioners, and policy makers. Having the top priority and importance of the development and improvement in social security and well-being of the citizens, social marketing is becoming of a growing interest and potential for academicians, practitioners, and policy makers in “applying marketing interventions directed at social issues at the policy, tactical and operational levels of practice” (French, 2011: 154). The use of conceptual and practical tools of social marketing, introduced as an approach to planned social change (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971) and further defined as “the systematic application of marketing concepts and techniques to achieve specific behavioral goals, relevant to a social good” (French & Blair-Stevens, 2005: 4), opens new horizons for social change in Kazakhstan.

Literature Review

Continuing and growing interest in social marketing

Since the term social marketing was first coined by Kotler and Zaltman (1971), it has gained increased attention of academicians and practitioners in different areas as proved by the growing number of published articles (Truong & Hall, 2013). Along with the interest in the evolution of the marketing thought (Bartels, 1988; Wilkie & Moore, 1999), social marketing has attracted specific attention as a particular area of research within the marketing literature (Duhaime et al., 1985; Kotler & Levy, 1969). Thus, Fox and Kotler (1980), in their review of first decade of social marketing development, indicated the shift in social marketing from social advertising to social communications approach. Bloom (1980) in a study on evaluation of social marketing programs, reported that many studies were weak in design and implementation. A need for more rigorous theoretical foundation for the social marketing was highlighted by Bloom and Novelli (1981); they pointed out such issues as organization and management, long-term positioning strategies, audience segmentation, and media channels. Later, Lefebvre (1996), in the review of the 25-year development of social marketing, indicated more issues to be considered, such as theoretical, strategic and creative

development of social marketing campaigns, children and teenagers as target audiences, social marketing applications for the private sector, and new research agenda and techniques. In the review of the effectiveness of social marketing interventions in different settings, the evidences were found that social marketing programs were effective across a spectrum of behaviors and can influence individuals, professional practitioners, and policy makers (Stead et al., 2007). In a systematic review of the body of social marketing knowledge, Truong (2014) analyzed the content of social marketing articles published in refereed journals from 1998 to 2012. This research indicated that social marketing continued to capture increasing research attention, with a focus on downstream social marketing, especially in the public health sector. Given the growing interest in social marketing in different settings, the following section will provide more details on the definition of social marketing as a concept and as a discipline.

Social marketing defined

Social marketing as a discipline has developed significantly since its inception in early 1970's and had a pervasive impact on the issues in the areas of public health, environment protection, sustainable development, tourism, safety, communication, transport, human rights, poverty, and others. However, social marketing as a term is often misunderstood and misused by both practitioners and academicians. Social marketing has its roots in the commercial sector. During the 1950s and 1960s, marketing researchers, including Bill Novelli, Paul Bloom, Dick Manoff, Karen Fox, and others, considered applying marketing concepts and techniques to the new areas such as social or political (Manoff, 1985; Walsh et al., 1993). Many of the early programs, in developed world and developing countries, were mostly social communications, but they were important for the development of social marketing as a discipline (Bloom & Novelli, 1981; Lefebvre, 1987). Wiebe (1951) rose a question "Can brotherhood be sold like soap?", and suggested that the more social change campaign use the techniques of commercial marketing, the greater the chances of its success. Kotler and Levy, in their pioneering article 'Broadening the Concept of Marketing', suggested that marketing as a 'persuasive societal activity' goes far beyond the selling of the soap and toothpaste, and marketing academicians and practitioners are to consider "whether traditional marketing principles are transferrable to the marketing of organizations, persons, and ideas" (Kotler & Levy, 1969: 10). Subsequently, the term social marketing

was coined by Kotler and Zaltman in 1971 in their seminal article 'Social marketing: An approach to planned social change'. They defined social marketing as "the design, implementation, and control of program calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas and involving considerations of product planning, pricing, communication, distribution and marketing research" (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971: 5). Kotler and Zaltman were the first to formalize a definition of social marketing, addressing the use and application of marketing for social change already practiced by a number of researchers during the 1960s (MacFadyen et al., 1999). Although social marketing has a relatively short history, it is an evolutionary concept. It has been developing gradually along with the growth of public and non-governmental organizations and movements, and other socioeconomic developments. There are many contributors to social marketing. Several modifications have been made to the early definitions, thus the social marketing concept was redefined as:

- the application of commercial marketing technologies to the analysis, planning, execution, and evaluation of programs designed to influence voluntary behavior of target audiences in order to improve their personal welfare and that of the society (Andreasen, 1995: 7);
- the adaptation and adoption of commercial marketing activities, institutions and processes as a means to induce behavioral change in a targeted audience on a temporary or permanent basis to achieve a social goal (Dann, 2010: 151);
- the application of marketing knowledge, concepts, and techniques to enhance social as well as economic ends. It is also concerned with the analysis of the social consequences of marketing policies, decisions and activities (Lazer & Kelly, 1973);
- the use of marketing principles and technologies to influence a target audience to voluntarily accept, reject, modify, or abandon a behavior for the benefit of individuals, groups, or society as a whole (Kotler et al., 2002: 5);
- the systematic application of marketing concepts and techniques to achieve specific behavioral goals, relevant to a social good (French & Blair-Stevens, 2005: 4).

It can be noted from the definitions listed above, that with all the variations in the wording, they were "relatively consistent in the use of commercial marketing principles and techniques, voluntary action by the target of the social change, and the accrual of benefit to the individual and the broader society through the self-interest motivated actions

of the individual” (Dann, 2008: 94). The essence of social marketing is that it is a distinct discipline within the marketing area, it is for the good of the target audience and society as a whole, and it uses commercial marketing techniques and principles.

At the emerging stage of social marketing, the idea of expanding commercial marketing to social problems was repulsive for some academicians. Following the traditional approach to the rightful role and purpose of marketing, researchers raised concerns about the threat to the economic exchange concept by replacing a tangible product with an idea (Luck, 1969; 1974) and doubts about the power of using marketing for propaganda and social change (Laczniack et al., 1979; Lusch, 2007). The conflict between social and commercial marketing appeared when the American Marketing Association (AMA) redefined marketing as “an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders” (AMA, 2004). Discussions have started about fundamental differences between social marketing, with direct benefits to the target groups and society, but indirect benefit to the organization and commercial marketing, with the direct benefit to the organization. Questions were raised on “whether models developed to explain sales and practices designed to generate them, apply to these social marketing challenges” (Andreasen et al., 2008). Furthermore, Andreasen (2002) pointed out the barriers to grow in the field of social marketing, such as poor brand positioning.

These limitations were overcome to some extent when the American Marketing Association released a new definition of marketing in 2007, “as with the dawn of each era of commercial marketing, social marketing academics and practitioners had the opportunity to revisit how commercial marketing can be adapted into the development of social marketing theory and practice” (Dann, 2008: 93). The AMA’s revised version of definition describes marketing as “the activity, set of institutions and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large” (AMA, 2013). Social marketing has benefited from the use of the new AMA definition of marketing by adopting such concepts as ‘clients as the recipient of offerings of value’ that matches consumer centric system of social marketing approach that addresses social needs. The concept of exchange among customer, partners, clients, society, and organization

fits social marketing in balancing the needs of the target market, society, and various stakeholders such as partner organization, government, donors, and others. Having described various definitions of social marketing and its relationship to commercial marketing and the fact that “there are too many definitions of social marketing being used, and these definitions conflict in major and minor ways” (Andreasen, 2002: 4). Recent studies showed the effectiveness of social marketing interventions at different points in complex dynamic system (Hodgkins et al., 2019; Kassirer et al., 2019; Saunders & Truong, 2019). Whilst social marketing has been continuing to capture increasing research attention in different settings across the globe, local movements and organizations in Kazakhstan are getting more involved in social marketing activities as well. Thus the research objective of the current study is to explore the trends and challenges of social marketing in Kazakhstan.

Methodology

As the objective of this study was to explore the state of social marketing and major trends and challenges in social marketing in Kazakhstan, a qualitative depth interviews method was used. Combined mixed purposeful sampling approach was employed with maximum variation sampling technique used to select the participants. Based on the value of variety of opinions, potential areas were first selected for this study, namely marketing and advertising, public health, education, movements, government and youth organizations. Sample organizations were identified. Based on education and work experience in related fields potential participants were selected and informed about the purpose of the study and procedure for conducting interviews. Sixteen individuals agreed to be interviewed. The same interview protocol was used for both audio-recorded and notes interviews. After an introduction about the project, respondents were asked questions about social marketing in general and specifically the trends, challenges, and effectiveness of social marketing in Kazakhstan. The interviews varied in terms of content depending on the areas of expertise of respondents. The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed into text. The texts were analyzed first for the general sense of the information and subsequently analyzed in more details employing coding process, whereas coding was used as a process of organizing the collected information into “chunks” before interpreting the meaning of those “chunks” (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). The

results of the coding process were used to generate a description of themes for further interpretation and analysis. Thus, the phenomenological research, as recommended by Moustakas (1994), was used to analyze qualitative data to generate meaning units and develop descriptions. Finally, descriptions of themes were developed using short and long text-embedded quotations, wording from participants, and special formatting of the paper to draw attention to quotations from participants.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of the sixteen interviews with experts revealed the major trends and challenges representing the current state of social marketing in Kazakhstan. There was a complete agreement among all respondents that social marketing has been growing in the recent times. The further analysis benefitted from unique opinions of each interviewee bringing marketing and advertising, educational, medical and public health, governmental, movements and youth organizations perspectives on the state of social marketing in Kazakhstan. Common issues reported by experts included the content of social marketing message, media channels used, selection of the target audience, lack of funding and marketing expertise, and weak governmental support and regulation. Every respondent admitted that social marketing has been developing rapidly in the recent years. Respondents state that:

- “When social marketing emerged on the market of Kazakhstan, it used to be like small sparkles, however with the government paying more attention to social issues in the country and with the development of marketing and advertising in Kazakhstan, social marketing is becoming of high importance and better level of implementation”(Respondent ID: MKAD_02);

- “Nowadays wherever you go, you can see a social ad. They are on every corner” (Respondent ID: EDU_01);

- “Social marketing has penetrated our everyday life to a deep extent ...people see, hear, and notice it every day”(Respondent ID: MED_01);

- “Social marketing is quite developed... in terms of quantity, there are lots of social ads, the total amount of social advertising is twice higher than the biggest commercial clients on all media platforms” (Respondent ID: MKAD_04).

The expert in advertising explained that media and marketing research companies counted ads by commercial clients, however there were no statistics on non-for-profit and social marketing by client.

Therefore, the numbers in reports indicate that social marketing tops all lists, but it is important to note that the reports indicate the aggregate numbers for all social ads produced for the period. Another expert from the Department on the Control of Advertising in Almaty city (Respondent ID: GOV_02) indicated that their Department exerted control over commercial advertising, while social advertising was executed under the local administration or organizations of interest for example public health or road police. Therefore, there was no statistics on social ads by area or topic.

Despite the increasing numbers of social ads and social marketing interventions in Kazakhstan, as one respondent noted “the level of social marketing in our country is not up to the highest standards... there is a room for improvement” (Respondent ID: YOUTH_01). Common issues reported by experts included general misconceptions about marketing and social marketing, lack of funding and marketing expertise, weak governmental support and regulation, the content of social marketing message, media channels used, selection of the target audience and value proposition, and unrealistic expectations and poor implementation. Specifically, respondents commented that:

- “There are lots of social marketing, however often it does not reach the target audience due to its content; seems that there is a message in the ad, but the audience is interpreting it differently” (Respondent ID: MKAD_04);

- “Organizations who do social marketing are often NGOs or movements. They do not know how to do effective ads, how to do social ads, and they do not have money for execution and production” (Respondent ID: GOV_02);

- “Consumers preferences in media consumption are changing, especially among youth. Old TV, radio and press do not work any more” (Respondent ID: MKAD_03).

The common issue identified by respondents is the fact that social marketing is usually practiced by small movements or big organizations and institutions lacking marketing expertise. Employees in the public organizations involved in design and implementation of social marketing activities have weak understanding and comprehension of marketing. Therefore, often there are mistakes at both strategic and tactical level. Many social ads are designed without “an idea of who the target market is” as one marketing expert emphasized (Respondent ID: MKAD_03). Another expert pointed out that especially for the risk behavior “individuals, taking drugs, consuming alcohol or smoking, get pleasure

from these activities and they do not want to change and they do not want to listen to your ads ... , ads against smoking are designed by non-smokers who do not understand smokers at all” (Respondent ID: GOV_01). Thus, from the strategic analysis and planning down to concept development, execution, and evaluation, social marketing is often performed by organizations lacking marketing competences and therefore at suboptimal level.

Participants in the interviews drew special attention to the message and media decisions. Opinions about the content of the message varied among interviewees. Some suggested that the threat and fear appeals were not effective for individuals already exhibiting risk behaviors, while these messages can work well for adolescences and those who do not perform risky activities and therefore framing techniques can be used to design social marketing messages. Others believed that threat appeal and shock messages should be used to the greater extent than now to prevent and reduce risk behaviors. Another trend confirmed by respondents was changing media preferences of consumers and shifting to the use of digital and social media.

Most of the interviewees shared an opinion that social marketing is represented in the areas of public health, safe driving, ecology and animal protection, and charity. The public health issues included preventive medicine and regular medical examination, family, women and kids’ health issues, transmitted diseases, and substance use (alcohol, tobacco, drugs). The analysis of the interviews revealed that activities and communications related to the issues of political parties and elections, patriotism, art, heritage and culture, city and events, such as Nauryz or Victory Day, were considered as social marketing as they were not related with commercial profit making and were aimed at creating favorable attitudes towards politicians, art and heritage assets, or events. However, respondents stressed that the critical role of social marketing was to change attitudes and behaviors of the groups at risk in the areas related to current social problems existing in the country. The section below describes the findings related to the objective of social marketing to change behavior and solve social problems.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter provides a summary of the major findings of this study along with recommendations and implications of the study’s findings for social marketing academicians, practitioners, and policy

makers. The research objectives of the current study were to analyze the trends and challenges of social marketing in Kazakhstan. Based on the findings of the qualitative depth interviews used in the current study, the following conclusions can be made in regard to social marketing in Kazakhstan: a) Social marketing is growing and developing in Kazakhstan; b) The challenges facing social marketing in Kazakhstan include general misconceptions about marketing and social marketing, lack of funding and marketing expertise, weak governmental support and regulation, the content of social marketing message, media channels used, selection of the target audience and value proposition, emphasis on the tactical level with insufficient understanding of the social marketing strategies; c) The two main areas of social marketing applications are country related and risk related. The country stream includes promoting patriotism, art and culture, and marketing of city and country events. The risk stream covers public health, including substance use, ecology and environmental risks, safe deriving, financial risks, hazards and emergencies; d) Marketing research, segmented and targeted social marketing communications, proper message and media decisions can improve the effectiveness of social marketing interventions.

Based on the review of the literature and findings of the current study, the following recommendations are proposed as to improve the effectiveness of social marketing communications. The recommendations address the challenges facing social marketing in Kazakhstan identified in this study such as general misconceptions about marketing and social marketing, lack of funding and marketing expertise, weak governmental support and regulation, the content of social marketing message, media channels used, selection of the target audience and value proposition, emphasis on the tactical level with insufficient understanding of the social marketing strategies. Whilst marketing has become a common practice in commercial organizations and a part of the core curricular in business education, public sector in Kazakhstan still lacks knowledge and practices of marketing. These findings are supported by the studies in other counties as well demonstrating that despite the growth and popularity of using social marketing in public sector, many public professionals have an incomplete understanding of the field (Grier & Bryant, 2005). Therefore, the recommendation for educators is to add courses on social marketing such as social marketing, marketing for public health, sustainable marketing, green marketing, and community based

marketing, to the curricular in public administration educational institutions. Moreover, various trainings and seminars can be offered to employees at the public sector to provide them with knowledge and develop their competences to design and implement effective social marketing intervention. In designing social marketing courses and training programs, it is important to provide knowledge about both strategies and tactics of social marketing. As the core of social marketing is voluntary change of behavior for the benefit of individual and society as a whole, consumer orientation and client centered approached are to be emphasized and robust understanding of the customer needs to be developed with a focus on their behaviors, attitudes, beliefs and understanding the factors that influences them. The major elements or benchmarks of social marketing identified in the literature (Andreasen, 1995; 2002; French & Blair-Stevens, 2006; French et al., 2010) must be discussed in the course including the adoption of the customer centric marketing philosophy; using market research to make decision and track the implementation of campaigns; segmenting target audiences; creating mutually beneficial exchanges between the organization and its client base incorporating an 'exchange' analysis that provides understanding about costs, and benefits associated with target behaviors and the development of possible interventions; using all elements of the 'marketing mix'; and analyzing competition to understand what competes for the time and attention of the audience and competition planning to reduce the impact of these factors. This recommendation is supported by the recent review social marketing interventions and their evaluations published between 2000 and

2014 (Kubacki et al., 2015) where authors suggest that the absence of complete benchmark criteria limits effectiveness of social marketing and propose to enhance the reputation of social marketing as an effective change agent via more comprehensive application of social marketing benchmark criteria.

The findings about the lack of funding, weak governmental support and regulation confirm the results of other studies indicating that "despite growing popularity among public health professionals, resistance by senior management, community advocates, policy makers, and others can create barriers to the use of the social marketing model" (Marshall et al., 2006: 206). The situation will potentially change for better as Kazakhstan implementing its 2050 program aiming to become one of the 50 developed countries in the world. Moreover, the educational programs proposed above could help to reduce resistance among practitioners and policy makers in applying social marketing principles and techniques. However, further research is recommended to examine the reasons of resistance.

The study has several limitations related to sampling and data collection. For the qualitative depth interviews, there were difficulties in recruiting participants, thus the most knowledgeable experts having access to the statistics on social marketing or being heavily engaged in production of social marketing communications were difficult to reach. Despite using maximum variation sampling technique to select the participants, the final sample was suboptimal for this study. The future research can explore selected specific areas where social marketing is applied.

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