



RESEARCH PAPER

Rethinking the Idea of Social Marketing: A Case for Upstream Social Marketing

Dr. Mir Sadaat Baloch

Assistant Professor, Institute of Management Sciences, University of Balochistan, Quetta, Balochistan, Pakistan

***Corresponding Author** sonybaluch@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to review the idea of social marketing in light of latest development. This paper will contribute towards the debate of upstream social marketing and why it is vital for success of social marketing. The people working for a social marketing campaign can hail from many different fields such as public health, politics, environmental issues, social justice and other social sciences, including marketing. This paper uses literature review a research method for analyzing and synthesizing pervious researches to build an argument. The study uses both integrative and narrative reviews to discuss the pertinent issues in social marketing. The paper further presents an argument for why we need to rethink the concept of social marketing and upstream social marketing. This study concludes that for effectiveness of social marketing campaigns we need shift our focus from individual level to the context that influences behaviours.

KEYWORDS Social Marketing, Upstream Social Marketing, Value Creation, Value Destruction

Introduction

During the growth of social marketing in the 1980s and 1990s, numerous streams of thoughts and disciplines informed the field (Akbar *et al.*, 2022). Gordon (2012) claims that the public health sphere dominated the application of social marketing and has also taken ideas from health and behavioural sciences.

He asserts that a social marketing campaign can use concepts and frameworks such as the theory of planned behaviour or the health belief model, paving the way for social marketing practitioners to be not only marketers. This implies that the people working for a social marketing campaign can hail from many different fields such as public health, politics, environmental issues, social justice and other social sciences, as well as marketing (Saunders, Barrington, & Sridharan, 2015). The inflow of knowledge and ideas in social marketing is from a wide set of disciplines.

This keeps the idea debatable and flexible to accommodate knowledge according to the issue or context (Akbar *et al.*, 2022 and French, 2011). The UK National Social Marketing Centre (NSMC) acknowledges this in its description: 'It is the systematic application of marketing, alongside other concepts and techniques to achieve specific behavioural goals for a social good' (NSMC, 2007:32). This signifies that any activity that can be an aid to a campaign and aimed at specific behavioural goals can be considered under the framework of social marketing (Nwoba *et al.*, 2022). A campaign can use any activity as an instrument to achieve its goal, as indicated by Stead *et al.* (2007). It may even include managerial activities such as training of staff or planning.

Bryant (2000) elucidates that social marketing represents a new approach to healthcare issues and organisations, where success is often measured vis-à-vis behavioural change. French and Gordon (2015) and Peattie and Peattie (2009) think that it can be useful to a range of social problems and leading among them is healthcare. Donovan (2011)

explains that social marketing clarifies that the behavioural change can be voluntary or involuntary and focused on an individual or a community. He states that when the social marketers provide free and open choices without any force or coercion it is called voluntary behaviour change. On the other hand, when they provide a behavioural change without the will or conscious control of the final consumer, it is termed an involuntary behaviour change (Nwoba *et al.*, 2022). For example, adding iodine in salt requires a voluntary behavioural change among the salt producing company executives, whereas the final consumers' change in iodised salt intake is involuntary behavioural change.

Health campaigns are studied as a significant part of social marketing when the emphasis is on a community-based campaign for sustainability (Peattie & Peattie, 2009). They assert that with the growth of social marketing it is being implemented on a range of social issues and to better fit in it needs an improved and better-adapted social marketing mix.

Lefebvre (2013), while reviewing the history and domains of social marketing, highlights two courses for the conceptualisation of social marketing. The first route concerns the business systems and related academic research. In the 1960s a debate looked beyond the commercial application of marketing to address the needs of non-profit organisations, cultural and educational institutions and social change campaigns. Kotler (1969:10) started the debate about broadening the concept of marketing; at that time, the idea was seen as 'a function peculiar to business firms'. Marketing activity was already present in politics, education and anthropology, but was ignored by the students of marketing (Kotler, 1969). The debate paved the way to use the principles of marketing for the promotion of social ideas. The discussion originated in a society where the shortage of food and shelter was not a major problem, so they focused mainly on ideas such as: 'win friends and influence people' and 'visit your police station' to improve community relations (Lefebvre, 2013:11). The focus was turned towards social and health issues such as poverty and HIV when campaigns were initiated in developing countries such as Pakistan.

The second course of conceptualisation started when social change and public health practitioners around the world faced challenges to find innovative ways to implement effective and efficient changes. The health practitioners had to look beyond these proposals to add innovation (Saunders, Barrington, & Sridharan, 2015). Social marketing is considered a framework that may add innovation to social problem-solving (French & Gordon, 2015).

Primarily, product offering to consumer was the focus of social marketing to create valuable exchange and immaterial result (Akbar *et al.*, 2022). This has developed as tool to offer transformation among recipients that can be sustainable (French & Gordon, 2015).

The Australian Public Service Commission reported that while addressing social problems/issues, three conventional approaches could be used (Lefebvre, 2013). Through an *authoritative* strategy, a group or individuals having coercive powers ensure that the entire stakeholders abide by their decisions (Lefebvre, 2013). Secondly, through *competitive* strategies stakeholders search for power and influence to implement a decision (Lefebvre, 2013). Finally, with the help of a *collaborative* model, power is shared among the stakeholders, and this approach is becoming popular among governments (Lefebvre, 2013).

In this paper, the conceptualisation of social marketing is analysed. The paper further presents an argument for why we need to rethink the concept of social marketing and upstream social marketing.

Social Marketing

Before any further discussion the paper desires to clarify his view of the concept of social marketing. This section will form a case to respond to the question, 'What is social

marketing?' The literature on it clearly indicates that social marketing as a theoretical term is debatable (Akbar *et al.*, 2022 and Dietrich *et al.*, 2022).

Alves (2010) emphasises that clarity is limited about social marketing, that causes misperception among researchers and scholars. French (2011) claims the potential canvas of social marketing is vast: civic engagement, social responsibility, parenting, health, crime and the environment to name a few. He suggests it is a rapidly developing field and there is a need to understand how it can contribute to different types of campaigns in more efficient ways. While contributing to diverse forms of campaigns, the efficiency of social marketing is continuously discussed.

Over the years, research has been carried out to examine the effectiveness of social marketing (Dietrich *et al.*, 2022; Wettstein & Suggs, 2016; Truong, 2014; Helmig & Thaler, 2010; Stead *et al.*, 2007; Gordon *et al.*, 2006). The review by Stead *et al.* (2007) suggests that there is evidence of social marketing effectiveness when the aim is to achieve change at an individual level (downstream), but the effectiveness is limited when it comes to policy or environmental change (upstream). Helmig and Thaler (2010) imply that the effectiveness of social marketing is also influenced by the environmental impact.

This means that social marketers should also consider upstream activities along with downstream activities for the effectiveness of campaigns. However, as French (2011) explains, there is an ongoing debate about the concept, the debate will not reach a fixed and final resolution and will remain an 'essentially contested concept'.

Kotler and Zaltman (1971) describe it as a tool to improve wellbeing of a person through the application of marketing skills. Lazer and Kelly (1973) add an economic dimension to the process of social marketing and suggest that after achieving the targets, the impact should be analysed. There is an indication that policies and techniques should be evolved through evidence and research. Kotler and Zaltman (1971) and Lazer and Kelly (1973) both reflect that commercial marketing knowledge is sufficient for the resolution of social issues/problems. Andreasen (2000b) combines the themes of Kotler and Zaltman (1971) and Lazer and Kelly (1973) to identify that social marketing influences people's voluntary behaviour for their personal welfare and the overall societal benefit.

Hastings (2003) imparts the importance of exchange in social marketing. He challenges the view of previous researchers and proclaims that social marketing takes learning from commerce instead of commercial marketing. He further argues that the concept of exchange stems from commerce and for it to be mutually beneficial the focus should also be on the context along with the individual.

Dann (2008) arguing on similar lines claims that instead of using commercial marketing tools, social marketers adapt those tools according to the requirement of a campaign. He suggests that the primary aim of social marketing is to meet social ends with help of behavioural change and the span of that behaviour change can vary (from individual to group).

Earlier, Andreasen (1995) claimed that social marketing is about voluntary behavioural change. Donovan (2011) challenges this view as he claims that we also need to consider involuntary behaviour change while designing a social marketing campaign. He is critical of Rothschild's (1999) assertion that education, law and regulation are the fundamental methods to achieve the desired social change while using marketing efforts. He indicates that as well as downstream activities, upstream activities can be helpful in achieving the desired change.

Social marketing can be contemplated as a framework rather than a theory of behavioural change that borrows concepts, primarily from commercial marketing (Dietrich *et al.*, 2022). This paper considers social marketing to be about practical considerations,

emphasising that the needs and demands of a campaign change according to the context and related social issue. We need to look beyond the application of commercial marketing technologies (Wymer, 2009) and to understand it as a framework commissioned by different fields in order to tackle any social issue. The discourse of social marketing has evolved over the years from a subsidiary of commercial marketing to an entity of its own.

The Discourse of Social Marketing

It was during the 1990s when the discourse of social marketing took a stride, and some critical research was published (Alves, 2010). Hastings and Haywood (1991) started an ever-growing debate within the field when they deliberated on the implications of social marketing in health services. Their work is significant as they explain the concept of exchange from a social marketing perspective. They indicate the importance of the external and internal environment while implementing social marketing. Their indication is more implicit than that of Lazer and Kelley (1973), as they imply the significant aspects of the environment. Buchanan *et al.* (1994) critically respond to Hastings and Haywood's (1991) claim about social marketing. They challenge the novelty of social marketing by raising ethical concerns while it is implemented in health services. Their work has raised questions regarding the assumptions made by social marketers and it claims that altruism is confused with the concept of exchange. The debate between Hastings and Haywood (1991) and Buchanan *et al.* (1994) reveals a clear divide between the social marketers and health promoters, as both parties are sceptical about each other.

By the end of the decade, Rothschild (1999) in his work tries to bridge the gap; he explains how marketing can be a strategic tool in the management of a social issue. He identifies the concept of power in social marketing regarding manager and customers. The conceptual framework developed by Rothschild (1999) is a useful tool for the analysis of a target population. However, he does not state the power relations between the social marketer and the financier of a campaign and the implication of power relations for partnerships in social marketing campaigns. Alves (2010) claims that in the early 2000s, social marketing lacked its tools and benchmarks. However, Andreasen (2002) develops six benchmarks for social marketing now used as a means to measure the effectiveness of campaigns. He suggests that practitioners must increase their attention past products associated with behavioural change, but fails to explain how to do this. Hastings (2003) introduces concept of relationship in social marketing and argues that relational thinking is not a tool but a central aspect of social marketing. Unlike Rothschild (1999), Hastings (2003) recognises all the likely relational aspects in the field and presents a multi-relationship model of social marketing, which can be a useful tool to explore relationships.

He asserts that the social marketer has to prioritise relationships but does not comment on how that can be done. The work of Stead *et al.* (2007) is important to the field of social marketing as it gives detailed evidence on its efficacy in behavioural alteration management. They claim that social marketing is also effective in upstream activity, whereas, the criteria used to judge the effectiveness of a campaign only has four Ps (Product, Place, Price, Promotion) and the remaining 3Ps (Policy, People, Partnership), which are vital for upstream activity, are missing. In the present era, Donovan (2011a) has made a fair attempt to clarify the misunderstandings about social marketing. He challenges Andreasen's (2002) claim that social marketing is only about voluntary behaviour and argues that it is also about involuntary behaviour. He contends that law, education and media advocacy are part of social marketing, contrary to Rothschild's (1999) claim that they are different from social marketing.

The concept of exchange is a highly debated aspect of social marketing. For this paper, creating an understanding about the process of exchange is fundamental as most of the concepts in the framework are influenced by it. Moreover, creating a valuable exchange is central for any social marketing campaign.

Implications of Exchange in social Marketing

Hastings and Haywood (1991) discuss the validity of social marketing in health services and examine the applicability of several commercial marketing ideas for example consumer orientation, exchange, environments, segmentation, targeting and marketing mix. Their opponents claim that in commercial marketing products or services are exchanged for money, whereas in social marketing the economic trait is missing so the social marketer confuses altruism with exchange (Buchanan *et al.*, 1994). Hastings and Haywood (1994) argue that exchange is confused with pricing and profitability, and the exchange of values is ignored. Peattie and Peattie (2003) claim their work involves exchange as they offer information, tangible products to their consumers to change their behaviour, and when the change in behaviour occurs an exchange takes place. So, exchange does occur in social marketing campaigns, but it is not as tangible, certain, immediate and direct as in commercial marketing (Mah *et al.*, 2006). Peattie and Peattie (2003) argue that there are also instances in commercial marketing when the exchange is not direct; for example, a consumer buys an insurance policy or a vacation, and when the terms have been agreed, the parties enter into a contractual obligation, but the exchange can happen later. They further explain there can of course be a direct exchange in a social marketing campaign, for example when consumers are rewarded for visiting a clinic.

This implies that the concept of exchange can be more complicated in social marketing compared to commercial marketing (Kim, So & Wirtz., 2022). Peattie and Peattie (2003) clarify that commercial marketers can evaluate the element of exchange against the level of sales and profits. On the other hand, for a social marketer the evaluation of exchange is complicated, because it is hard to measure the level of change in behaviour, and in many campaigns at times it is even harder to measure the number of consumers (Kim, So & Wirtz., 2022). Morris and Clarkson (2009) argue that in commercial marketing, it is easier (compared to social marketing) to calculate the opportunity cost associated with exchange, because of which value creation is more effective. They explain that the opportunity cost in social marketing exchange can involve financial, emotional and social costs, loss of preferred behaviours, and the time cost of learning new practices, which make value creation more challenging.

The concept of exchange in social marketing can also be examined with the help of social exchange theory (Kim, So & Wirtz., 2022). Social exchange theory explains that human exchange interactions are based on two fundamental processes: the friendship building process and the power relation process (Kim, So & Wirtz., 2022). When both the parties are satisfied by the value after the exchange and are willing to reciprocate, they enter into a friendship building relationship, whereas if one party is dissatisfied and is forced into a further exchange, a negative reciprocity with an asymmetrical power distribution occurs (Blau, 1964). In the case of social marketing, asymmetrical power can occur between the social marketer and financier of a campaign, where the social marketer can force further exchange based on knowledge and expertise, and the financier can force exchange based on resources. In this paper, such force exchanges may be witnessed between the IDAs and local partners that can surface in power relations. The following Figure 1 can be used to probe exchange in social marketing. Figure 1 Social Exchange (Jancic & Zabkar, 2002)

SYMMETRY OF EXCHANGES Reciprocal	Conventional Marketing Exchange	Marketing Relationships
	Power Relations	Intrusive Selling
Asymmetric/ Unilateral		
NEARNESS OF PARTICIPANTS	Extrinsic (impersonal exchanges)	Intrinsic (personal exchanges)

The exchange in social marketing traditionally involves three parties, the financier of the campaign, the social marketer and the target audience. The symmetry of exchange between the social marketer and target audience is asymmetric and the nature of exchange is intrinsic, as one side is more interested in making the exchange than the other. As Hastings (2003) suggests, for social marketing to be more effective, the social marketer has to move to the upper-right quadrant and create a relationship based on valuable exchange.

This discussion on exchange indicates that the process of exchange implies a balance of power whereby the individual voluntarily takes a decision, where the consumer is capable of communication and able to reject or accept an offer. If the consumers lack personal and educational skills to respond beneficially, then the situation can turn exploitative. The change in situation creates an imbalance in power resulting in inequality, especially in social exchange. Andreassen's (2002) voluntary behaviour resonates with a balanced exchange whereas Donovan's (2011) involuntary behaviour in social marketing indicates the imbalance that can occur during an exchange. If the exchange is not perceived as valuable, power relations can surface resulting from an asymmetric exchange that can marginalise value creation.

Value Creation in Social Marketing

French, Russell-Bennett and Mulcahy (2017) claim value is an essential concept of marketing and social marketing and is reflected in current definitions of these subjects. They assert that academic curiosity about value creation has also developed with growing idea of service-dominant logic (SDL), which suggests that value is not a deliverable outcome but is co-created. McHugh, Domegan and Duane (2018) claim value creation will permit stakeholders the prospect of preparing and implementing change. It helps stakeholders to adapt previously held ideas and assumptions.

French, Russell-Bennett and Mulcahy (2017) highlight that creation of value is an important concept for social marketing as it shapes practitioners' and scholars' perspectives on markets and marketing. They think it is particularly vital in social marketing campaigns related to health care and transformative services. In such campaigns the target audience is seen as being a vital source for value creation. Presently, the attention of research in value creation focuses on downstream, where the concentration is on relationships between target audiences and organisations (French, Russell-Bennett, & Mulcahy, 2017). However, discussion on value creation advocates that it can be taken upstream as well. Therefore, French, Russell-Bennett and Mulcahy (2017) argue that there is a present want in literature for more theorisation, deliberations and understanding of value creation.

Wood (2016) argues that SDL logic claims that the motivation of social marketers should be about supporting and aiding a process of value creation. He asserts the SDL theory supports inclusion of target audience input as a necessary factor that determines the value creation and service outcomes. He believes that a target audience does not constitute inactive receivers of a product or service but they keenly create value jointly with other stakeholders. Lefebvre (2012) further claims that the target audience is a collaborator in implementing new behaviours or ceasing them. He states that they create value, while social marketers can only suggest prospects. 'According to this view, service, skills and knowledge – rather than products – constitute the unit of exchange' (Wood, 2016:283).

For the last ten years, social marketing has moved away from conventional marketing approaches and opted for service-oriented theory (Luca, Hibbert, & McDonald, 2016a). It has tried to incorporate models from other disciplines.

Luca, Hibbert and McDonald (2016) argue that the traditional view of social marketers about value creation was linear and dyadic where the main focus was on an exchange between the target audience and social marketers. They claim that the contemporary researcher has challenged this view after realising that there are many factors

that influence the behaviour of target audiences; hence value creation is not a linear process and social context plays a crucial role in value creation.

Luca, Hibbert and McDonald (2016) and Park and Vargo (2012) maintain that SDL views value creation as a systematic process. SDL comprises collaboration of actors and integration of resources at different levels during a campaign and understands that value is created by social contexts. SDL theory claims that value creation is a process in which the target audience has to be active within social contexts to create value through networks of relationships (Luca, Hibbert, & McDonald, 2016; Park & Vargo, 2012). This perspective holds that value is established through interactions within multiple networks of relationships along with dyadic interaction. This implies that besides value propositions, relationships with target audiences are also vital for value creation (Park & Vargo, 2012). Identifying and building relationships are central for the sustainability of any social marketing campaign. Luca, Hibbert and McDonald (2016) assert that apart from this, SDL holds that sharing experience and best practice with a target audience nurture learning and help in formulating strategies to address social issues.

The preceding discussion implies that value creation helps in the resolution of social issues and SDL can be practically implemented to create value (Luca, Hibbert, & McDonald, 2016a). SDL has the potential to identify the range of a target audience in social issues and understand the value from their perspectives.

Value Destruction in Social Marketing

Leo and Zainuddin (2017) claim that services are a significant part of social marketing campaigns as they contribute towards the achievement of desired social goals by creating value propositions for a target audience. They explain that when a service experience leads to a decline rather than augmentation of users' wellbeing then value destruction can occur. Value destruction is described as 'an interactional process between service systems that results in a decline in at least one of the system's wellbeing' (Plé & Cáceres, 2010: 431), meaning that misuse of resources by actors in a dyadic exchange can lead to value destruction (Vafeas, Hughes, & Hitton, 2016).

Apart from work by Echeverri and Skálén (2011), Smith (2013) and Zainuddin, and Dent and Tam (2017), the thoughtfulness about destruction of value is limited in the field. On the other hand, the existing research on value is mostly focused on the creation of positive value while overlooking the destruction of value (Leo & Zainuddin, 2017). Lintula, Tuunanen and Salo (2017) explain that value destruction is a negative outcome and it leads to the cessation of positive behaviours. In this process a target audience's value judgements about a product or service become more negative than positive (Lintula, Tuunanen, & Salo, 2017). This in turn ends in a negative effect on value perceptions. This destruction of value can affect the improved well-being of a target audience negatively as they may decide to stop using a product or service. This implies that value destruction can increase barriers to changes and make it harder to sustain a preferred behaviour (Leo & Zainuddin, 2017).

Rethinking the Idea of Social Marketing

With the evolution of social marketing, it is being applied to a range of social issues and to better fit in it needs an improved social marketing mix (Saunders, Barrington, & Sridharan, 2015; Tapp & Spotswood, 2013; Peattie & Peattie, 2009). Social marketers unwilling to expand the boundaries of social marketing need to understand that negative influences that daily affect individual behaviour cannot be tackled with the limited scope of downstream social marketing (French & Gordon, 2015).

When the popular culture is reinforcing an unhealthy behaviour, such as drinking, then developing persuasive messages cannot change that behaviour (Szmigin *et al.*, 2011).

Under such circumstances, the social marketers need to remove the negative environmental influences (Harris, 2022).

Saunders, Barrington and Sridharan (2015) and Gordon (2012) assert that the characteristics of social marketing require a re-think given that the mainstream marketing discipline has reconfigured its features considering the changing environment. They argue that a comprehensive approach that recognises strategies such as upstream social marketing activities and relational thinking will be more suitable.

Harris (2022) proclaims that social marketing research and practice need to use a more open-minded social marketing mix that has less reliance on the four Ps model of commercial marketing. Initially, social marketers mostly followed the four Ps model while working on a health-related campaign (Tapp & Spotswood, 2013). Andreasen's (2002) six benchmark criteria have been used for years to constitute what a social marketing campaign is. This model clearly states that social marketing should 'use all four Ps of the traditional marketing mix' (Andreasen, 2002:7). However, researching on the effectiveness of social marketing during recent years, it has been noted that many effective campaigns that could be classified as social marketing campaigns have used other strategies such as policy change or training people (Saunders, Barrington, & Sridharan, 2015; Stead *et al.*, 2007).

Wymer (2010) thinks that social marketers that are unenthusiastic about expanding the boundaries of social marketing may view any new strategy as being out of social marketing. He claims the need is to improve public health and solve social problems in a highly competitive environment. Hence, social marketers should expand the domain and allow themselves the creative freedom to develop more effective means to tackle social and health issues.

At this time when traditional social marketing campaigns are compromised by corporate marketing activities that create environments encouraging unhealthy behaviours (Szmigin *et al.*, 2011) social marketers have to choose what their role can be (Harris, 2022). In today's consumer-oriented market, commercial goals may work well, but social marketing goods and ideas do not fit in the system (Szmigin *et al.*, 2011).

How should social marketers react when the actions of industry harm public health and welfare? Previously, social marketers' focus was at the individual level, but this emphasis may have limited effectiveness in today's dynamic context. Wymer (2010) maintains that effectiveness can be compromised if we ignore the context that influences individual behaviour. The public health scholars especially argue that we need to focus on the marketing activities that create an unhealthy context more than the individual.

'If social marketers really want to make substantial improvements in public health and welfare, they need to enlarge the boundaries of social marketing' (Wymer, 2010:102).

Szmigin *et al.* (2011) indicate that social marketing is facing indirect opposition from commercial marketing as over the years the opportunities for drinking alcohol have increased. They claim Britain's 'culture of intoxication' was created by developing a targeted range of products supported by marketing techniques like point-of-sale promotions, sponsorship of national music events, effective distribution and extensive advertising. Wymer (2010) claims that under such conditions, social marketing campaigns tend to become ineffective. Due to this borrowing, social marketing practitioners are often left uncertain and confused about how to counter the activities of marketing. Szmigin *et al.* (2011) further argue that in current social marketing campaigns, the notion of individual responsibility is used, whereas the perception of a person regarding an issue is created from the society. It is not only the individual who has to be responsible but also the whole community needs to act responsibly. Social marketers need to look beyond this individual-centric approach. At present their campaigns mainly focus on changing individual behaviour (Kotler *et al.*, 2009). Their messages often target internal behavioural influences on the

individual (Kotler, 2005). Wymer (2010) asserts that the effectiveness of a campaign can be at risk if social marketers ignore the context within which individual behaviour is influenced. The social marketing campaign designed to address the 'culture of intoxication' among the young target audience failed to produce certain results because the social marketers did not consider the context that created this culture (Szmigin *et al.*, 2011). When there are negative inspirations that strengthen an undesirable behaviour, then targeting the individual is unlikely to return significant improvements (Wymer, 2010).

Thus, it can be inferred that for any campaign to be effective, the social marketers need to consider the environment (French & Gordon, 2015). We have partial control over our behaviours, and the social environment has a significant impact on it (Hastings, 2007). French and Gordon (2015) and Stead *et al.* (2007) suggest that there is evidence of social marketing effectiveness when the objective is to effect change at an individual level (downstream), but the effectiveness is limited when it comes to policy or environmental change (upstream). Helmig and Thaler (2010) also argue that the effectiveness of social marketing is influenced by environmental impact. Together with this the argument of Szmigin *et al.* (2011) clearly supports the idea that social marketers have to move upstream for the effectiveness of their campaigns.

This means that social marketers should also consider upstream activities along with downstream activities for the effectiveness of campaigns (French & Gordon, 2015). Yet it does not mean that in social marketing the focus should shift totally towards upstream activities; there should be a blend of both activities that should complement each other (Harris, 2022).

This paper makes a case for innovations in the theory and practice of social marketing. Such thinking may be challenging for the current order, as has been the case previously. Broadening the concept of marketing was challenged by Carman (1973) and Luck (1969), declaring it against its interests as it threatens its identity. The test of time proved otherwise when marketers pushed for a broader and macro marketing perspective (Donovan & Henley, 2011).

Given all these changes and developments in the field, it would not be unsurprising if social marketing scholars expanded the idea of social marketing to incorporate further elements such as planning, policy or beneficiaries, to name a few. Recognising these debates, it seems appropriate to rethink and reassess the idea of social marketing.

Conclusion

The characteristics of social marketing require a re-thought given that the mainstream marketing discipline has reconfigured its features with the changing environment (Saunders, Barrington, & Sridharan, 2015; Tapp & Spotswood, 2013; Gordon, 2012). Social marketers have to choose what their role can be. In today's consumer-oriented market, commercial goals may work well, but social marketing goods and ideas do not fit in the system. How should social marketers react when the actions of industry harm public health and welfare? Previously, the social marketer's focus was at the individual level, but this focus may have limited effectiveness in today's dynamic context. Effectiveness can be compromised if we ignore the context that influences individual behaviour (Wymer, 2010). The public health scholars especially argue that we need to focus on the marketing activities that create an unhealthy context more than the individual. Wymer (2010) asserts that if social marketers ignore the context within which individual behaviour is influenced, the effectiveness of a campaign can be at risk.

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