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**PAPER ON:**

**“Strategic Decision-  
Making with special  
reference to Social  
Marketing”**

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## INTRODUCTION:

A considerable amount of literature on the definition of Social Marketing (Lazer and Kelley, 1973; Sheth and Wright, 1974), the ethics of Social Marketing (Laczniak, Lusch and Murphy, 1979), the appropriateness of broadening the marketing discipline to include social marketing (Luck, 1974) and the potential of applying various social science theories in social marketing contexts (Winyard S. and Ray, 1977) reveal the complexities and issues encountered by social marketers. Several case studies on social marketing, (Blakely, Schutz and Harvey, 1977; Gutman, 1978) has been contributed to social marketing ever since its introduction by Kotler and Zaltman (1971) focusing the challenges involved in social program.

Problems more prevalent in non-business cases include the intangibility of non business products, the nonmonetary price of purchase, the extreme lack of frequency of purchase, the lack of behavioral reinforcers, the need for marketing to an entire but heterogeneous society/ market and the extreme levels of involvement varying from very low to very high. (Rothschild, 1979) (Bloom Paul N. and Novelli William, 1981) draws attention towards **eight strategic** basic decision making areas encountered by Social Marketers that are not faced by typical commercial marketers. The researcher has incorporated them with special reference to Indian senerio.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

### 1. **Market Analysis Problems:-**

- a. Shortage of Secondary Data Most social organization have done little consumers research and what has been done has been weakened by small budgets and consequently poor samples and simplistic analysis procedures.
- b. Difficulty of obtaining data on sensitive issue Valid, reliable measures on salient variables while conducting primary data collection in regards to sensitive questions on smoking, sickness, aids, sex and charity which touch people's deepest fears, anxieties and values is experienced
- c. Relative influence of multiple determinants Difficulty is faced in sorting out the relative influence of identified determinants on consumer behaviour which are extremely complex and usually hinge on more than just one or two variable e.g. The reasons for teenaged driving may be related to an individual's limited self-discipline, lack of family support, style of family system, lack of time with parents, personal preferences due to personal reasons etc. or a combination of these.
- d. Funding and timely Completion There is a great difficulty in getting consumer research studies funded, approved and completed in a timely fashion.

### 2. **Market Segmentation Problems:-**

- (a) **Pressure against segmentation, in general and especially against segmentation that leads to ignoring certain segments**

The social marketer is therefore frequently asked to avoid segmenting or to try to reach an unreasonably large number of segments. (Lovelock and Weinberg, 1975)

- (b) **Lack of accurate behavioral data to use in identifying segments**

Utilizing self reports on behaviours like breast self-examination and contraceptive usage can be very misleading and it may be impossible to obtain other behavioral measures as observational data as the issue touches personal and sensitive attitude of the respondents.

- (c) **The target segment often consists of those consumers who are the most negative pre-disposed to their offerings** This segmentation approach creates situations where social marketers face target markets having the strongest negative dispositions towards their offerings -- the exact opposite of the situation faced by most commercial marketers.

### **3. Product Strategy Problems:**

**(a) Less flexibility:**

Unlike the conventional marketers decision making is complicated as less flexibility exists and marketers cannot adjust product characteristics, packaging, product name, product concept and the product position to increase the likelihood of sales to the targeted segments.

**(b) Difficulty in formulating product concepts:**

Marketers find that the complex behaviour to be sold has to be repeated over a considerable period of time.

**(c) Difficulty in selecting and implementing long-term positioning strategies:**

It is very difficult for social marketers to select and implement long-term positioning strategies that will be attractive and acceptable to extremely diverse publics as stated by the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA).

### **4. Pricing Strategies Problems:**

**(a) Pricing Strategies:**

Social marketers find that the development of a pricing strategy primarily involves trying to reduce the monetary, psychic, energy and time costs incurred by consumers when engaging in a desired social behaviour as they are primarily concerned with shifting birth rates, death rates, pollution levels, etc.

**(b) Difficulty in measuring the price:**

Social marketers have difficulties measuring their prices (Rothschild, 1979) both monetary and non-monetary because, they tend to have less control over consumer costs.

### **5. Channel Strategy Problems:**

Selecting appropriate intermediaries through which the product can be distributed and offered as well as formulating ways to control the intermediaries to ensure their support, pose complexities in front of social marketers.

### **6. Communication Strategy Problems:**

Several approaches used by marketers to communicate with their target markets are advertising, public relations, sales promotion, personal contact, etc.

**(a) Paid form of advertising difficult:**

Social marketers usually find paid advertising difficult to use because of the cost or because of “**media fears**” of offending certain advertisers or audiences for carrying messages about controversial social issues.

**(b) Problems of deciding appeals:**

Social marketers often face pressure not to use certain types of appeals in their messages (Houston and Homans, 1977; Lovelock and Weinberg, 1975). Donors and other influential parties desire to see a social change by the use of hard shell, fear or humor appeals. However, these appeals may back fire and solidify a person’s feelings against behaviors such as helmet usage, smoking cessation or responsible drinking.

**( c ) Communication Problem:**

Social marketers want to communicate relatively larger amounts of information to strike a complex social behaviour along with the benefits of the behaviour (reason why), time and a place for implementation.

**( d ) Difficulty of conducting meaningful pretests of messages:**

Pretests of social messages run up against the same funding and measurement problems.

**7. Organizational design and Planning Problems:-**

Social Organizations normally lack a person in a key position at the top of the organizational chart who is well-trained in marketing skills unlike commercial organization.

**(a) Poor Performance of Social Marketers in Social Organization:**

Social organizations have a tendency to adopt marketing in small doses. They perform marketing activities which are poorly understood, weakly appreciated and inappropriately located.

**(b) Competitive Pressure:**

What seriously impedes the social marketing effort is lack of competitive pressure on the part of employees as they do not lose jobs or gain promotions based on how well the organization does.

**(c) Poor maintenance of past records:**

Unlike commercial organization, social programme frequently do not have information about the past results for using free samples, contests, price cuts and so on. Hence, social organizations suffer from ‘**institutional amnesia**’.

**(d) Difficulty in predicting competitors behaviour:**

The social marketer often faces difficulty in predicting the behaviour of both friendly and unfriendly competitors.

**8. Evaluation Problems:**

Social marketers face problems in evaluating studies and doing market analysis as also there are serious problems with regards to measurement and getting support and approval for the research.

**(a) Problem in defining “Effectiveness”:**

Social marketers face difficulties trying to define effectiveness measures.

**(b) Measuring Success and Failure:**

There is also a difficulty in estimating the contribution the marketing programme has made towards the achievement of propagated behaviour. Measurement of success or failure of a programme depends upon the **effectiveness of a programme** and the impact it has been able to create on the segment.

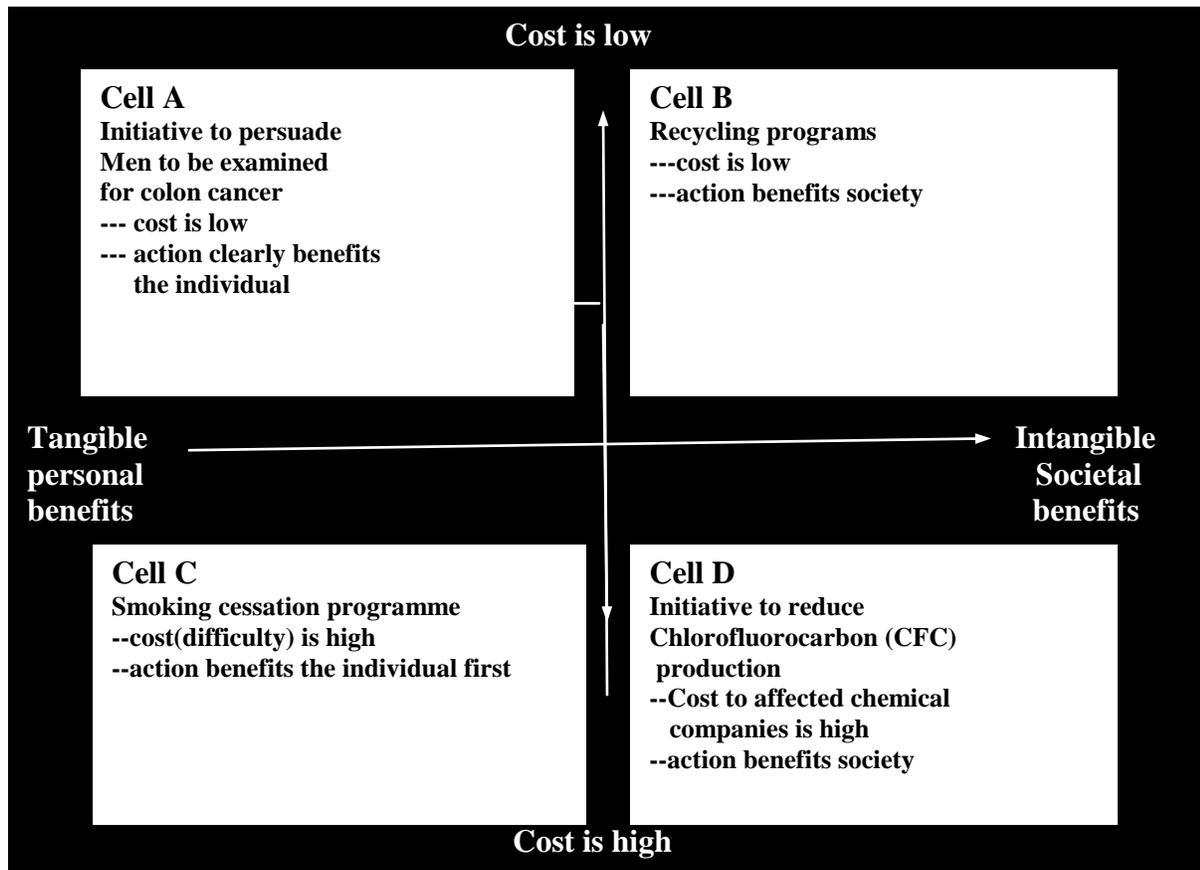
Over and above these, other crucial decision making areas explored by researcher are:

**Analyzing the Cost/Benefit of change:**

A framework has been developed to allow social marketers to examine the change advocated from the potential adopters’ perspective and to plan the marketing strategy accordingly.

“Marketers must make clear the benefits of the proposed behavior change to the proposed community”. (Rangan V. Kasturi, Karim Sohel and Sandberg Sheryl K.) The theory developed, revolves around four cells. Located along a vertical axis represents the cost dimension and a horizontal axis represents the benefits.

## Type of Initiative.....



(Source: Rangan V. Kasturi, Karim Sohel and Sandberg Sheryl K. -Do better at doing good)

Here, the cost signifies not only the monetary cost of adopting a behavior but also the costs in terms of time, efforts and other psychological or organizational discomfort for the adoption of behaviour. Similarly, the benefit dimension includes all non-monetary advantages that could be earned by adopting the recommended behaviour. These advantages range from physiological and psychological benefits at individual level to improved corporate image for organization and environmental or sociological benefits to the society at large.

To understand the cost benefit each cell is presented through an example.

Cell- A – Initiative to persuade men (Examination for Colon Cancer)

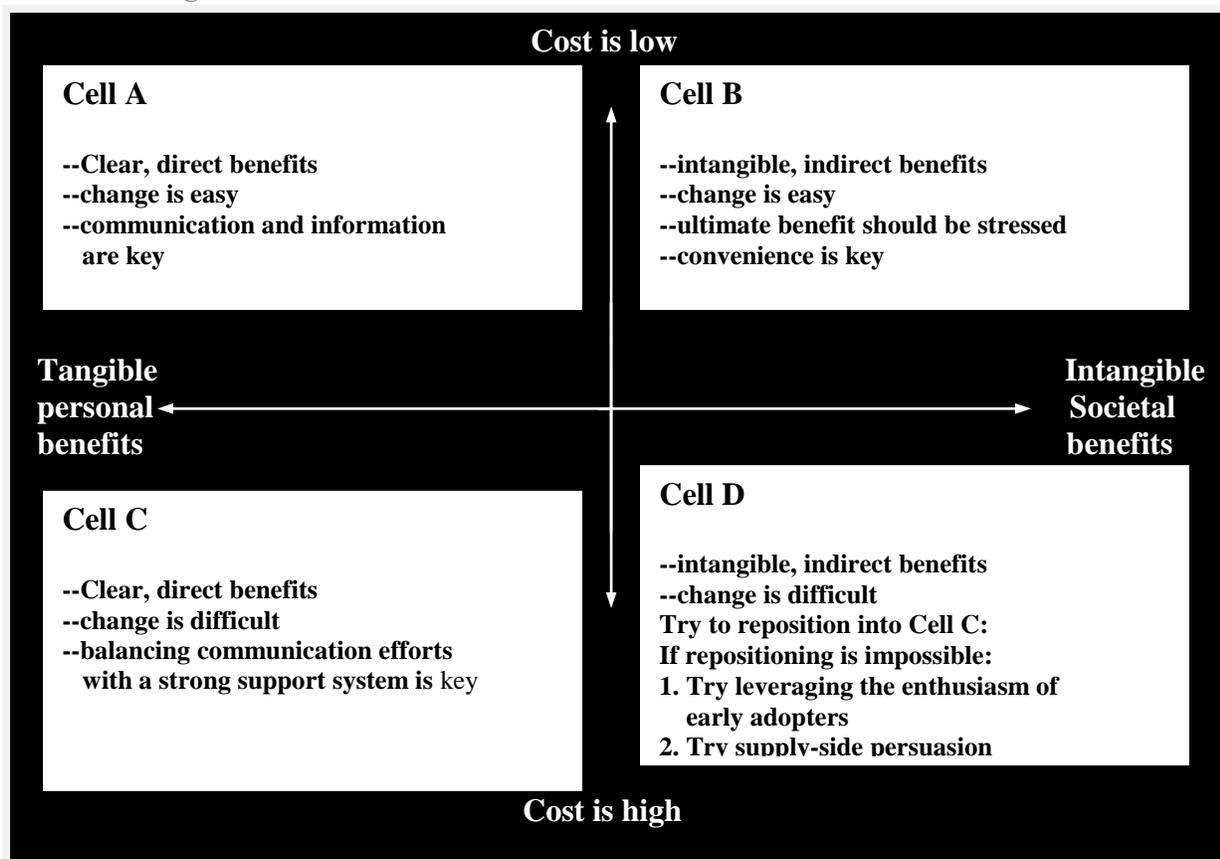
Cell- B – Recycling programme

Cell- C- Smoking Cessation programme

Cell – D- Initiative to reduce CFCS production

The challenges that are confronted in each case are also tackled differently:

## The Challenges....



(Source: Rangan V. Kasturi, Karim Sohel and Sandberg Sheryl K. -Do better at doing good)

- It is very difficult to denote the cost/benefit in numerical terms. In cell A, many social marketing campaigns unnecessarily oversell the morbid consequences of not adopting the recommended behaviour. Some employ a heavy-headed tone in an attempt to change the underlying attitude, when simply providing information and support would be more effective.
- In cell B, projects do not require fundamental shifts in the attitudes or lifestyles and are not compelling as there are no direct individual benefits. Marketers therefore need to focus on providing a catalyst for change in the form of a convenient way to the targets.
- Cell C, clearly states the individual benefits but the cost is daunting. Social change campaigns falling into this zone emphasize on “push marketing”, in addition to strong communication campaigns.
- From the potential adopter’s perspective, the cost benefit ratio in Cell D endeavor is terribly disadvantageous. The benefits are intangible in the short run and the cost of change is too high.

Yet, moral persuasion, peer pressure and demarcating activities aimed at the infrastructure supporting the supplier and effective tactics for both Cell C and Cell D are required as they influence the social as well as cultural attitudes.

### CONCLUSION:

Correctly analyzing the nature of social marketing initiatives, chances of success increase with the zeal of the marketers, enthusiasm of the organizations and the dedication of the voluntary staff or organizations.

However, the challenges today are very complicated. Yet in the face of obstacles, social marketers have to remain “mission driven but market led”. (Rangan, et.al) These problems are common to all research studies and the researcher has given utmost importance to draw out the critical areas of decision making as they reflect on the result drawn by social marketers.