

# Feed the Common Good- Impact of Social Marketing on Consumer Behaviour - A Study Based in Kolkata

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## ABSTRACT

To keep pace with the fast growing and quickly evolving world of today, marketers have shifted their focus from a profit driven marketing to social marketing. Social marketing is a set of marketing theories which is essentially an adaptation of commercial marketing, and its aim is not to maximize profits but to achieve an impact in the behaviour of the target audience and influence the same for the benefit of the society. Behaviour can be said to be the end point of social marketing.

**Keywords**— Social Marketing, Consumer Behaviour, Common Good

## I. INTRODUCTION

Social marketing is a set of marketing theories which is essentially an adaptation of commercial marketing, and its aim is not to maximize profits but to achieve an impact in the behavior of the target audience and influence the same for the benefit of the society. It is important to understand that the definition attempts to emphasize on influencing behavior as opposed to obtaining a change in attitudes or an increase in knowledge. It recognizes that behavior change is voluntary and therefore does not force the audience to act in a certain manner, as laws do. At the same time, it does not restrict itself to mere sharing of information as in case of education. What it seeks is to motivate behavioral change by effective application of the principles of commercial marketing.

Behaviour can be said to be the end point of social marketing. However, it has been noticed that many a times social marketers fail to keep this in mind. They often think that their work is to spread the word or provide information without considering whether their actions will lead to the desired behaviour. This negligence can actually lead to wastage of scarce productive resources.

The emphasis on behaviour enables marketers to focus on their customers. It enables them to understand how their strategies will affect their audience. Besides, marketers are forced to engage in deep and informative market research to understand their customers before they can launch a social marketing programme. The focus on consumer behaviour has the advantage of preventing marketers from diverting away to the fields of

education and propaganda which is not the basis of social marketing.

In context of the above, it would be important to mention that there are several structural barriers to consumer behaviour. Changing behaviour will require consumers to have more convenient and affordable alternatives. For instance, a consumer switching to healthy food will first require affordable eating options which is mostly difficult because restaurants generally charge a higher price for healthier foods as compared to the less healthy options.

An effort to change behaviour is worthless if people do not have the means or ability to undertake such change. Thus, along with keeping its focus on consumer behaviour, a social marketing programme should also try to reduce, if not eliminate the barriers that restrict or prevent change in behaviour by creating an infrastructure that fosters such change.

## II. NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

The world is changing rapidly, and social marketing has now entered another stage. This paper studies the need for social marketing to become more customer centric and to go a step forward to understand how consumers perceive social marketing and how social programs are positioned in the minds of consumers. A lot of research has gone into assessing the success and accomplishment of a social marketing campaign but there has been little to no emphasis on the consumer's take on the same, whether they are affected by social marketing, whether such campaigns stimulate them to contribute to the society, whether their actual purchase is impacted, whether they favor social marketing over commercial marketing techniques.

This has been identified as the research gap and this paper aims to bridge this gap by throwing light on the customer side of the story to establish consumer perception as an integral part of social marketing.

## III. LITERATURE REVIEW

- Andreasen, (2002) in his article, "Marketing Social Marketing in the Social change Marketplace", issued in the Journal of Public Policy and Marketing, postulates that changing to sustainable living patterns is becoming an important issue in the society and asking people

to change their behaviour is in a way, asking them to change their identities. This a lot to ask for as most people prefer to stay in their comfort zones, which is to say, their own value system.

- Glouberman and Zimmerman, (2008) in the article, “Social marketing: Perception and Past”, postulated that managing a complex adaptive socio-economic system is like raising a child. What is in our hand is raising the child and not its assured success. Just as every child is unique, every community too, is unique.
- Rose and Dade, (2007) in the book, “Education and Social Change: Connecting Local and Global Perspectives”, studied that the success of a program lies in consideration of the local conditions and comparing them to global solutions. Behaviour and awareness of local conditions play an important role in environmental movements.
- Kotler et al (1996) in the article, “Social Marketing: Implications For Contemporary Marketing Practices Classification Scheme”, published in the Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing, postulated that a social marketing campaign contains a mixture of certain elements. Customers are the most essential elements of social marketing and bring progress in social marketing.

#### IV. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are as follows-

1. To ascertain whether consumers are responsive to social marketing.
2. To determine their attitudes and opinions towards social marketing.
3. To determine whether social marketing has an impact on consumer decision making and actual purchase.

4. To ascertain the appropriate platforms for social marketing.

#### V. ANALYSIS

##### *Demographic Statistics*

When the demographic statistics were studied, it was found that there was a significant difference between male and female responses with female responses making 63.2% and males amounting to 36.3% of the total respondents.

Most respondents were between the age group 18-24 years and the respondents of the age 20 years amounted for 35.3% of the total respondents. The number of respondents beyond the age of 30 have been found to be significantly low. The frequency of respondents has further moved downwards with the increase in age.

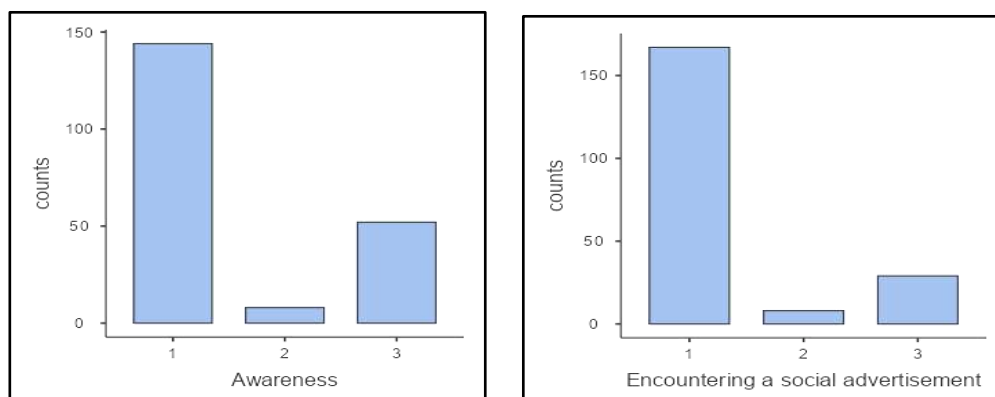
##### **OBJECTIVE 1- To ascertain whether consumers are responsive to social marketing**

Consumers were asked whether they were aware of the concept of social marketing and whether they had come across any social advertisements. The responses were analysed and the graphs above were generated.

The awareness levels were identified as 1-meaning aware, 2-meaning unaware and 3 represented individuals who had only a vague awareness on the subject. The responses of the category 1 were found to be 144 which showed that 70.6% of the respondents were aware of social marketing.

The encountering of a social advertisement was identified by 1-meaning encountered, 2-meaning not encountered and 3 represented the respondents who were not sure whether they had encountered a social advertisement. Upon analysis, it was found that 167 respondents, i.e., 81.9% of the respondents had encountered a social advertisement at some point or the other.

From the analysis, it was concluded that the consumers (represented by majority respondents), were aware and responsive to social marketing.



**Figure 1:** Graph Showing Awareness and Frequency Of Encountering A Social Advertisement

**Source:** Author's Compilation

**OBJECTIVE 2- To determine the attitudes and opinions of consumers towards social marketing.**

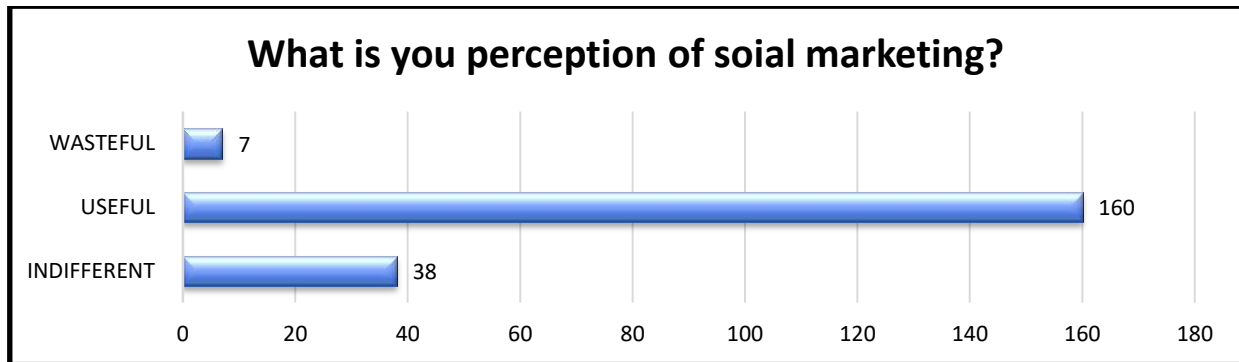
The respondents were questioned about their perception of social marketing. The responses were analyzed and the graph above was generated.

It was observed that majority i.e., 160 respondents considered social marketing useful. Furthermore, a small segment of the respondents (38 in number) was found indifferent.

Only about a fraction of the respondents (7 in number) considered social marketing wasteful.

From the analysis, it was concluded that the consumers (represented by majority respondents) considered social marketing as useful.

There is a scope for marketers to turn around the section of the respondents who were indifferent, by increasing their promotional efforts.



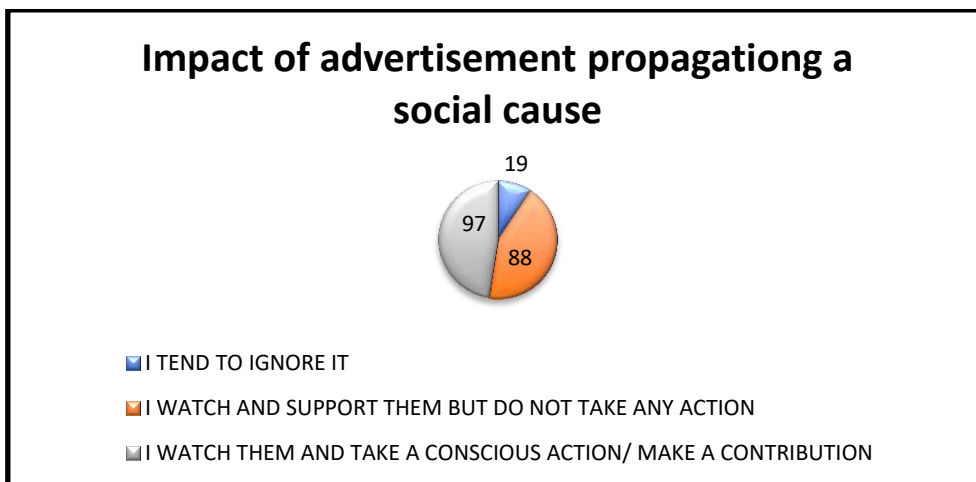
**Figure 2:** Graph Showing Perception of Consumers Towards Social Marketing  
**Source:** Author’s Compilation

**OBJECTIVE 3- To determine whether social marketing has an impact on consumer decision making and actual purchase.**

Respondents were asked their responses on the impact of an advertisement propagating a social cause on them so as to determine the impact of social marketing on consumer’s decision making. The responses were analyzed and the graph above was generated. 97 respondents were seen to watch social advertisements and the same time take a conscious action/ contribute to the social cause highlighted therein. However, there were also 88 such respondents who watched social advertisements and supported the cause but did not make

any contribution or take any action. There was also observed, a small section of the respondents who ignored such advertisements.

It was concluded that the majority consumers could be divided into two categories- those who contribute and those who do not. While the respondents who do contribute to a social cause are large in number, it cannot be overlooked that an almost equally divided segment of respondents are only psychologically supportive of a social cause, their actions do not work in the same direction. Marketers should focus their energy on converting this segment of respondents to action-taking consumers.

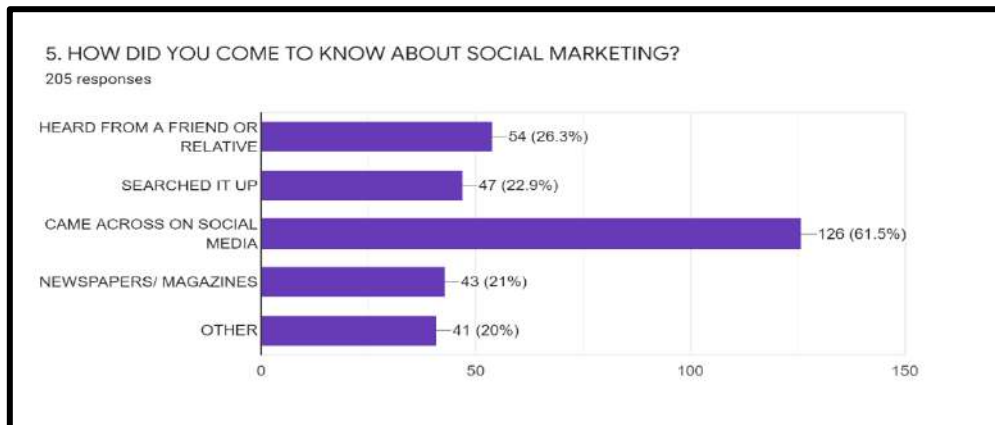


**Figure 3:** Graph Showing Impact of Advertisement Propagating A Social Cause  
**Source:** Author’s Compilation

**OBJECTIVE 4- To ascertain the appropriate platforms for social marketing.**

The respondents were asked about the platforms through which they came across social marketing, to ascertain the appropriate social marketing platforms. The responses were analyzed and the graph above was generated. The question was presented in checkbox format, giving the respondents an opportunity to select more than one option. From the various responses, it was

observed that social media had the highest weightage. 126 respondents were seen to have come to know about social marketing through social media. The next highest number was of such respondents who had come to know about the same from their friends and relatives. It was also observed that considerably low number of respondents had come to know about social marketing through newspapers and magazines or through self-search.



**Figure 4:** Graph Showing Source of Knowledge About Social Marketing  
**Source:** Author’s Compilation

It was concluded that social media played a very important role in distributing social messages to the respondents. Additionally, word of mouth publicity was seen to supplement social media network in disseminating useful social marketing information.

**Relationship between Awareness and Gender**

It was observed under of demographic data analysis that female respondents were almost double the number of male respondents. To determine whether there existed any relationship between gender and awareness, regression analysis was carried out. The value of R, which represents correlation between the two variables (gender and awareness) was obtained as 0.122. The value obtained satisfies the mathematical measurements of correlation. It was however seen that the value of p, which represents the level of significance was found to be >.05 with respect to gender. This showed that the result was not significant. It was concluded that there was a weak positive correlation between awareness and gender based on the sample collected but with respect to the population, there was no sufficient evidence that the positive correlation between the two variables would hold true.

**Relationship between Age and Impact of Social Advertisements/Campaigns**

To determine whether there was any association between age and the impact which a social marketing message has on the respondents, Chi-square test was carried out. Chi-square test is a statistical hypothesis test to show a relationship between two categorical variables. Herein, a Chi-square Test of Independence was performed.

Hypotheses:

The ‘null hypotheses’ might be –

H0 – Age is not associated with impact and an ‘alternative hypotheses’ might be –

H1 – Age is associated with impact

$\chi^2$  Tests

	Value	df	p
$\chi^2$	162	130	0.030
N	204		

From the table above, Pearson Chi-square statistic,  $X^2 = 162$  and  $p < .005$  i.e., a very small probability of the observed data under the null hypothesis of no relationship. The null hypothesis is rejected since  $p < 0.005$ . It can be concluded that age and impact of social advertisements and/or campaigns are related. Majority respondents in the age group of 18-24 have been seen to fall in the category of respondents who watch and support social campaigns but do not take any action in furtherance of the same. The respondents of the age above and below this range have been seen to respond to such advertisements by taking an action towards the same. It is inferred that the young population lags in taking a conscious action towards social marketing campaigns.

**VI. FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS**

<b>OBJECTIVE 1</b>	It was observed that majority respondents were aware of social marketing and had come across a social advertisement at some or the other point. It was also observed that majority respondents considered social marketing to be informative because it makes the larger population more aware. A small portion of the respondents were seen to ignore social marketing advertisements, but their number was found to be insignificant. The relevant objective was thus, satisfied and it was found that consumers are responsive to social marketing which as was apparent from their awareness.
<b>OBJECTIVE 2</b>	It was observed that majority of the respondents considered social marketing to be useful. A very small segment of the respondents was indifferent to the relevant question and only a negligible number considered it as wasteful. It was thus, concluded that the attitudes and opinions of consumers towards social marketing was supportive, positive, and favourable
<b>OBJECTIVE 3</b>	It was observed that the respondents were divided into two categories namely those who take conscious actions to support social marketing campaigns and those who, though supportive of such campaigns, do not take a conscious action to support the same. The two categories were almost equally divided with a small proportion of those who chose to ignore it.
<b>OBJECTIVE 4</b>	It was observed that most respondents had come across social marketing through social media platforms and through word-of-mouth publicity. There were very few such respondents who had looked up or searched about social marketing driven by personal stimulus.

### Recommendations

- Most consumers merely support social marketing; they do not bring about a behaviour change and often do not take any productive action to bring a change. Marketers should conduct more real-life campaigns and organize programs in comparison to simply focusing on advertisements, wherein consumers can participate to be a part of and support a social cause
- Since social media has been found to be the most appropriate platform for social marketing, marketers should focus all their energy in using social media efficiently to communicate social marketing messages and to capture a larger audience. Further, word of mouth publicity could prove to be a strong driving force in determining the fate of social marketing
- A large number of consumers have been seen to be positively impacted by social advertisements and some have even shown behaviour change based on the same. Hence, the number and frequency of such advertisements should be increased to widen consumers exposure. It is now the role of social marketers which will ascertain what the future of social marketing will be and if they are able to play a constructive role, it will be possible to establish social marketing as the most potent tool which will bring about social change.

### VII. CONCLUSION

Social marketing has been an ever-growing discipline and yet it has not been established full-fledged. Social marketing requires better assimilation of the theories of commercial marketing in its own way and develop its own matters. This will enable social marketers to distinguish themselves from other different forms of marketing such as CSR. Bringing behaviour change is the toughest job involved in social marketing and this is accompanied by a huge cost, both financial and psychological. Hence, the promotional campaign should be so built as to help the target group understand that the benefits of changing behaviour are greater than the costs. This exchange, only, can bring the desired behavioral change. It is now the role of social marketers which will ascertain what the future of social marketing will be and if they are able to play a constructive role, it will be possible to establish social marketing as the most potent tool which will bring about social change.

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