

**New Insights Lecture on  
“Social Marketing – Influencing and Sustaining Social Change”**

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### **Defining Social Marketing**

Social Marketing seeks to influence and sustain social behavioural change. At his lecture on “Influencing and Sustaining Social Change”, Dr Ned Roberto stipulated that by applying marketing “technology” (marketing concepts and strategies) to the management of social and development initiatives, Social Marketing can facilitate an exchange of socially undesirable/harmful current behaviours for socially beneficial behaviours through an understanding of stakeholders’ priority values, creating the product/service that embody these values and delivering this product/service to the target audience.

In this regard, Social Marketing and Behavioural Economics share similarities as both fields address the psychology of stakeholders to ensure that incentives and strategies are delivered effectively to achieve desired behavioural outcomes.

### **Application of Social Marketing Principles**

Dr Roberto also expounded on the application of Social Marketing principles to achieve sustainable behavioural change in the following points:

*i. Behaviour Change Is Only Possible When the New Behaviour Presents a Greater Value Proposition than the Old Behaviour*

Dr Roberto stressed that successful Social Marketing must address behavioural change from the stakeholders’ perspective rather than that of the change agent’s (public service, non-profit organisations, etc). For the target audience to be persuaded to adopt the new behaviour, it will have to present a greater value proposition than the old behaviour.

Dr Roberto cited the example of an anti-smoking campaign, where findings revealed that most smokers perceive the psychological benefits of smoking—an effective de-stressor and having private time to oneself—to be greater than the health benefits of quitting. Therefore, social marketers have to present a greater value proposition than these perceived psychological benefits before they can persuade smokers to quit their habit.

*ii. Leveraging on the Behaviour Adoption Process*

As Social Marketing budgets are often limited, planning and managing the diffusion of the new behaviour requires an understanding of how different segments of the population adopt behaviours:

- a. Innovators – between 3% and 5% of total adopter population. They will be the first to embrace the new behaviour and will also persuade the early adopter group to adopt the new behaviour.
- b. Early adopters – between 10% and 15% of total adopter population. Will recognise value and benefit of new behaviour through contact with innovators.

- c. Early majority – about 34% of total adopter population. Will be persuaded by innovators and early adopters to adopt the new behaviour.
- d. Late majority – about 34% of total adopter population.
- e. Laggards – about 5% to 15% of total adopter population.

Hence, promoting behavioural change using Social Marketing principles is not about targeting the majority through mass marketing but to focus on getting the innovators and early adopters (about 20% of population) to spearhead behavioural change. The latter approach would be more effective and efficient, and also help to maximise the returns from the Social Marketing project.

Social marketers must also be cognisant of how other groups—interest groups, knowledge groups, implementers, support groups and communicators—can work for or against desired behavioural outcomes and seek to mitigate the risks and/or strengthen the support that these respective influence groups pose to the target audience.

### *iii. Identifying the Drivers/Motivators for Behavioural Change*

Contrary to common assumptions of public campaigners, target audience are rarely homogeneous even within a given profile. Often, each group can be further divided according to the particular motivator behind their behaviour—beliefs, cultural and social influences—and how they compete against the new behaviour. Social marketers need to have a good grasp of how to segment the target audience (e.g. according to the differences in their behaviour patterns and their motivators), and also do so to a sufficient level of differentiation (e.g. not just one but up to three levels of segmentation) so that messages to each sub-profile can be customised for maximum impact and reach.

Dr Roberto cited the example of a seat belt promotion campaign to illustrate the importance of addressing the drivers and motivators behind people's behaviour. The campaign revealed that the psychological fear of disfigurement was a greater motivator to use seat belts than the fear of death. Once the campaign was modified to make the possibility of disfigurement (rather than death) more salient, seat belt use increased from about 70% to 90%.

### *iv. Communicating the Message: the What and How of Information, Education and Communication (IEC)*

IEC denotes the three stages of influencing behavioural change through: i) creating awareness of new behaviour through information ii) deepening knowledge and understanding of the new behaviour through education, and iii) reinforcing the value and benefit of the new behaviour through communication to persuade the target audience to adopt it.

Social Marketing focuses on the both “what” (the value proposition for target audience to adopt new behaviour) and “how” (delivery and presentation of the value proposition of the new behaviour) of communicating the desired behavioural change. Both the “what” and “how” are *multiplicative* determinants of the success of Social Marketing, i.e. if a campaign stresses only the “what”—the value and benefit of the new behaviour, with poor handling of the “how” of communicating the message, the overall effectiveness of the campaign will be very much undermined.

Successful campaigns thrive on conversation value—word of mouth, which has a multiplier effect among social networks. Word of mouth can leverage on all forms of media, particularly the Internet and mobile phone technology to create awareness and interest in the desired behavioural change.

v. *Sustainable behavioural change can be achieved by influencing small behavioural changes that eventually lead to a fundamental attitudinal change within the target audience.*

Typically, marketing strategies aim to change attitudes and values, in order to re-shape people's behaviour. This is often resource-intensive and slow. A quicker alternative is to focus on initiating small behavioural changes within the target population. This will eventually lead people to experience a form of "cognitive dissonance", where their behaviour may not square with their underlying beliefs. In an attempt to rationalise this dissonance, they will allow their attitudes and beliefs to be re-shaped over time, in order to justify their outward behaviour and choices, which will in turn reinforce and sustain the behavioural change over the long-term.

Dr Roberto concluded that as an eclectic science, Social Marketing had to work in tandem with other levers such as education, legal and policy measures to be effective in influencing and sustaining behavioural change.