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<td><strong>Author(s)</strong></td>
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Trends In Social Marketing

by

Chuo-Ng Peck Hiang
TRENDS IN SOCIAL MARKETING
-- with special reference to the National Family Planning and Population Programme and the Family Life Education Programme in Singapore


By
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Social marketing strategies have been used in both the National Family Planning Population Programme in the past and the Family Life Education Programme at the present in Singapore.

National Family Planning and Population Programme (NFPPP)

The NFPPP, first launched in 1966, under the charge of the former Singapore Family Planning and Population Board (SFPPB), was probably the first social campaign in Singapore that used some form of social marketing approaches in the planning and implementation of the programme.

In the first 5 years of NFPPP, 1966 - 1970, the concern was to establish a good family planning service and the key communication objective was to create the awareness of family planning amongst the population, particularly the married women. Certain rudimentary social marketing approaches could be identified;

- identification of the problem
- identification of target group (all married women were treated as one massive target group)
- setting of objectives
- message design
  (decided by decision makers)

Although mass media were used, the use and selection of media were decided by another ministry not involved in the planning and implementation. The message was not tested and no evaluation was planned.

The key messages used used in the first 5 years were:

"Plan your family"

"Plan your family small"

"Plan for a small, healthy and happy family"
In the second 5 years of NFPPP, 1971 and 1975, marked improvements in social marketing approaches were observed.

- problem identified and more defined
- target segmentation
  (married women, newlyweds, youths)
- objectives more specific
- educational and publicity materials planned and produced
- involvement of an advertising agency in the concept and message design
- first KAP Survey on Family Planning conducted
- involvement of supporting organisations in the implementation of the programme

The overall picture was more engineered and structured. However, there was no testing of messages and no evaluation on the communication and educational programme was planned. The only record done was the number of attendances at the various activities. There was no study on mass media mix and media reach.

The key messages used in the second 5 year were much more focussed:

"Please stop at two"

"Girl or Boy, Two Is Enough"

This trend was followed throughout the 70's. The visible improvement was in the quality of the production of mass media and educational/publicity materials. Media reach was evaluated in a small way as part of KAP survey in 1977. There was still no testing of messages and no proper evaluation of the programme.

In the very late 70's and early 80's after the achievement of the Replacement Level in 1975, directions were shifted from recruiting more family planning acceptors to married couples, advising them to space their 2 children, and to teenagers and young adults, advising them not to rush into marriages. Family Life Education and Population Education in secondary schools were intensified. Social marketing approach remained the same as in the 70's.

The key messages used in late 70's ad early 80's were

"The Second Can Wait"

"Put Some Years Between Us"

"Teenage Marriage Means Rushing Into Problem"

"Take Your Time To Say Yes"
With the appearance of a more persistent declining fertility trend, the NFPPP was brought to an end in 1984 with the closure of the SFPPB. Family planning clinical services were continued in polyclinics and maternal and child health clinics while other activities were completely stopped.

**Family Life Education Programme**

With the declining trend of fertility continued and worsened in 1986, against the earlier projection of a second baby boom to be brought on by the post-war babies, a New Population Policy was introduced in 1987. The key message of the New Population Policy is "Have 3, and more if you can afford it." With the incentives provided in the New Population Policy, it is hoped that the trend of declining fertility can be reversed back to the Replacement Level.

A new population programme under the umbrella of Family Life Education Programme was launched in 1987 following the announcement of the New Population Policy. The Family Life Education Coordinating Unit was set up within the Ministry of Health and charged with the responsibility to promote the New Population Policy, through the Family Life Education Programme.

The main task of the Family Life Education Programme is to promote marriage and family formation mainly through the mass media and to help create the awareness on the population trend and problem. It will also help to complement the work of social development agencies and the parenting education programme under the Ministry of Community Development.

Facing the problem of a more educated target groups and a complete change in socio-economic situation, as compared with those of the NFPPP in the late 60's and 70's, and the change from "Two is enough" to "Have 3 and more", the approach of Family Life Education Programme has to be more sensitive and more carefully planned.

The planning and implementation of the Family Life Education Programme, with the first phase started in late 1987, was done with carefully planned social marketing strategies.

A total of 4 phases and 15 concepts of the Family Life Education Programme has been planned and implemented since 1987. From the start of the Family Life Education Programme, the following social marketing approaches were carried out:

- **Target audience were segmented.**
  
  **Primary target groups:** singles of marriageable age, males and females  
                           married couples with no children  
                           married couples with one child  
                           married couples with 2 children  
  
  **Secondary target groups:** secondary school and high level students  
                              parents/grand parents  

- **Pre-programme Benchmark Survey** was conducted to check on the attitudes of the primary target groups towards marriage and parenthood.
Problems were identified for each target group.

Objectives were set for each target group.

Existing study resources were used for planning the programme. (eg. social development organisations)

Related agencies/organisations were involved in the formulation of directions and approaches

Advertising agencies were involved in the creative concepts and media planning.

All concepts were pretested, fine turned and modified before they were produced.

Mass media were extensively used and selected for target groups.

Media mix and media reach were studied.

Process and summative tracking studies were conducted at intervals.

Other relevant programmes were coordinated to avoid duplication or overlapping of efforts.

The Family Life Education Programme is able to go into more refined social marketing approaches with the availability of funding and technological advancement, as compared with the former NFPPP.

Despite all the careful planning and testing, reactions from the public on messages can be quite unpredictable as people tend to have different interpretations of messages from their own experiences and expectations. Special care was taken to avoid and minimise any possible adverse reactions in the process of concept and message design. It was fortunate that only 2 out of the 15 concepts introduced received strong response through the media. Yet, these are the two that have the highest recall in our tracking studies.

Conclusion

The trend of social marketing in Singapore is progressing steadily in techniques and approaches. We are now more involved with the measurement of message effectiveness, cost-effectiveness and achievement results. The transition shown in the National Family Planning and Population Programme and the Family Life Education Programme is an example showing the changing trend in social marketing taking place in Singapore.

CNPH
24 June 93