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The Indonesian Experience In Social Marketing

By

M Alwi Dahlan
THE INDONESIAN EXPERIENCE  
IN SOCIAL MARKETING  

- Development support communication,  
Information campaign, or social marketing?  

M. ALWI DAHLAN

Indonesia "discovered" social marketing five years ago, when the first regional seminar on the topic was held in Bali. The response from many sectors was positive. Academics from the disciplines of communication and (business) economics saw the possibility for a combined approach in the application of their knowledge. Development officials and planners were interested in its potential use to support a wide range of programs. In the few days of the seminar the participants were presented with the experience of various countries in the marketing of complex social ideas - such as social reformation, national discipline or new attitudes toward nutrition and health practices - as well as relatively simpler programs, e.g., the campaign against drug abuse. The press perceived it as a fresh approach in national development and communication. Since social marketing had a consumer orientation, they thought that it may be able to help rectify the tendency for top-down planning and one-way of information. Other practitioners saw the opening of new opportunities, for instance for development advertising.

Although the term social marketing was new, the techniques were actually quite familiar. The paper on family planning presented at the seminar, for example, showed that a marketing approach has been used in Indonesia is selling the idea of birth control since 1970. From the earliest

stages of the campaign, all the steps could be translated in marketing terminology. KAP (knowledge-attitude-practice) surveys were basically marketing studies to find our consumer's behavior and needs; contraceptives were products to be sold, offered in several "models" to be selected according to individual suitability for each consumer; clinics became sales outlets as well as after sales service stations, and they were established at locations close to the market; pamphlets and billboards were advertising materials, and information activities could be called corporate public relations.

Other case studies on public education presented at the seminar also contained techniques and concepts considered analogous to those of social marketing. This was particularly true with papers dealing with advertising - all showing the efficacy and efficiency of the marketing approach in dissemination of ideas and diffusion of innovations.

It was reasonable that the seminar raised expectations among many factions. For some development officials, social marketing appeared to be the solution to problems faced in development communications. If abstract ideas could be paraphrased into a few attractive sentence or an easily memorizable jingle, perhaps people would rush to adopt and practice them - not unlike the rush to buy Coca Cola or a new brand of consumer goods during an introductory sale. Every year, the annual national development plans called for hundreds of social project, and many of the thousands of physical projects also involved a social component or, at least, would require social acceptance. This created wide anticipations in the advertising industry.

The Marketing of National Development

Subsequent developments, however, have not been able to fulfill the hopes. In general, it seems that SM has not been - and still is not being - used or applied widely in public
education campaigns in Indonesia. Most of the social campaigns are still following the traditional propagandistic approach. True, many communication strategists employ some of the techniques commonly associated with it and some claim that they are doing social marketing. But SK is not being used as a total approach in the strategy. Campaigns purporting to be SK may not, in fact, be so. Consider, as an example, the case of a project which uses plenty of print media and outdoor advertising to carry lengthy ideological slogans. Other examples are campaigns which cannot define the social product it is offering, lack clear "marketing" objectives, or conducted without a specific "social market" or well defined target segments.

Currently, the term "social marketing" is no longer popular and seldom discussed. Contrary to expectations, not much effort has been done on the research, development, and training of social marketing. The Association of Indonesian Advertising Companies (more known by its acronym P3I) did organize a panel discussion on social marketing as part of its annual congress in 1984 but there is no followup action. Except for general statements on the potentials of this tool and the appeal to the government to employ SK in development information campaign, there is no marketing of social marketing.

The reason for this lack of progress may be traced to several factors. First, the concept of social marketing is not fully understood, even by many who are interested in its application. Instead of recognizing it as a complete strategy which, for analytical purposes, views the diffusion of innovation process in analogy to the marketing process, they regard SK purely as the range of concrete techniques borrowed from commercial marketing. Most speakers at the P3I conference, for example, define SK as the use of advertising to sell an idea. They ignore the whole marketing process and its preparation, and limits the scope to only one of the components, namely (of SK) that of promotion. In fact, they look at only one aspect of promotion and disregard the others, e.g., image building and public relations.
Such a narrow view, applied in some social campaigns under the banner of social marketing, decreases its credibility. The use of advertising per se failed to turn up the promised results. The conditions for success do not exist, among others, because they have not been prepared through the application of the other SM components from the very beginning. The formulation of the campaigns did not start where it should, namely starts with the product itself, including its formulation, design and packaging. As in the marketing of goods, the social marketing process must also involve the essential components well known as the 4Ps: product, price, promotion and place. Despite its attractive jingle and all that, even Coca-Cola would not sell if these elements are not prepared appropriately.

Second, national development and other social ideas are much more complex than consumer products. Although consumer products may claim

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to aim at idealistic goals in reality they deal only with very small, and perhaps only indirectly related, parts of these goals. Consumer products translate lofty goals into concrete, segmented, simple and microsolutions. (Their answers to the goal of "to build a strong nation", for example, is vitamin B or a pat particular brand of nutritious food). Development innovations and ideas on the other hand, usually require a series of interrelated solutions or actions, many of which have to be implemented simultaneously to achieve the desired result. The acceptance of just one particular practice or a new behavior will not bring change at once. Very often ideas cannot be simplified in a few catchy slogans.

For instance, the relationship between population and economic relationship have been simplified into the relationship between family planning and welfare; hence family planning also is a medium at one time presented the picture the family which become prosperous and happy-two kids, a nice house, a new scooter, all smiles, etc. since they joined family planning. But the use of contraceptives would not automatically make you rich and also have been critized as misleading.

In addition, many development ideas and programs relate to abstract concepts which are difficult to explain to the general public. This bring us to the third reason, i.e., the problem of formulating the diffusion of innovation into the scheme of social marketing. The many proponents of interested in applying SM get discouraged when they face the basic problem of translating the social ideas to fit the JPs of marketing. A social product is tangible but not very intangible idea or concepts could designed as a marketable product; that is to say, as a social commodity that can be clearly identifiable to be separated from other production products, well designed an attractively packaged, specified according to measurable standards, have a warranty (guaranteed to function and achieve the goal) and complete with after mile service. The price of the product is difficult to calculate; it may have to be subsidized and even so, many still require social cost-sacrifice on the part of the "buyer" and his community.
Reason number four concerns with decision making. The process in accepting social ideas are different than those of commercial products. A social product may have to "brought bought" by the whole society or community. Decision must other cultural factors.

Specific to Indonesia, there is also reason number five. Historically, national; development and social ideas have been based on political and cultural thoughts, not economic or commercial considerations. There has been a strong tendency to resist commercialism in the country. Public communication—including the media and other channels—have been dominated by a political orientation, and the main approach has always been that of propaganda. A marketing approach therefore, would encounter culture and psychological resistance.

Integrated programs

It appears that SM has never been applied as a total strategy of any development program or project in Indonesia. Nevertheless, a number of the programs have adopted some SM techniques combine with the promotion aspects—and perhaps partially, the "product and "place" aspects of SM. In this connection, three development programs may be worth mentioning here—as illustrations of the Indonesian experience in social marketing, e.g. family planning, transmigration and environment programs.

Family planning is probably the only program which intentionally use SM approach, especially in terms of promotion. It is perhaps the most successful SM effort in Indonesia, which in combination with other approaches, is credited with success of bringing down the population growth from around 4.2-4.5% to 2.2% within 10-15 years. This is probably due to the least special characteristic as a social product, i.e. closely related to tangible technologies and hence could be in terms of a physical products.

This is not to say that EP does not have any problem in terms of product formulation. The social concept behind EP touches on deep rooted attitude toward children and families,
which are related to strong religious and cultural values. This aspect was overlooked for a duration of time when the product was viewed primarily in relation to economic concepts. However, this was corrected by designing the "product" in terms of cherished social values, e.g. parent's responsibility to their children and the society.

The plans make use of all potential channels to reach its intended targets, including religious and other social networks, mass media, government information channels as well as the bureaucracy down to the village levels. New information linkages are also formed, e.g. between the village head and women associations. Combining FP with other activities (e.g. cooking lessons, baby weighting, premarital consultation, etc) opens up information flow as well as opportunities for the sale of the social and its related physical products.

In terms of the "Place Component, FP is extremely lucky because there already existed a network of sales outlets which can both dispense both products (information and contraceptives) at the same time, i.e. health centers, doctors, and transitional midwives. All these facilitate the promotional aspect of FP marketing. Various types of special promotions could be organized together by involving the various networks to create favorable local conditions and social support. Among others, the institution of acceptor and/or health-interest discussion groups, a daily "pill time" calls through public address system or traditional signals, establishing social status and recognition for acceptors (e.g. by displaying signs symbolizing contraceptive method accepted by a family in front of the house like house numbers).

Transinformation program. In this case the social product can also be manifested by a related physical product, i.e. the physical movement of people and the tangible benefit they received in the form of land ownership. Different than EP, however, transinformation has no existing social marketing infrastructure. Furthermore, the program is complex, involving many sectors and has to deal with a variety of target groups.

The program is composed of many complex stages from: motivating farmers who have deep attachments to their ancestors
land to leave the land, solving the economic problems in the originating location, logistics and transportation, preparing the local inhabitants in the destination area, physical preparations of the land, building physical infrastructures, public services in the new location, and integrating the newcomer with the local population. Almost each of these stages can be viewed as a separate social product.

The Environment program is even more complex. It deals with abstract concepts. Although they may be manifested in physical conditions the connection that cannot readily be seen by the common population. The scope of the program is wide, encompassing everything from the top of the mountains down to the river basin, the cities, the coastal areas and to the depth of the seas. It is difficult to be compressed into a single product, because it may looked differently by different people in different location.

The problem of formulation of the social product is made even more difficult because the objective - a better environment - require sacrifice from the consumer; there is no immediate reward, indeed, it offers a disincentive or a negative reward. Furthermore, misunderstanding on the environment is so deep that people believe as if the environment program is anti development.

Faced with this immense task, the program has to be directed at selected priority areas, most of which are very physical in nature. Nevertheless, to achieve all the objectives, awareness must be created first about the true nature of environmental problems. This means the promotion and public education campaigns for various targets of population, including the bureaucracy and development planners. Various networks are utilized to create favorable conditions and social pressure toward behaviour and attitude change.
Beside the awareness campaign and physical programs to rehabilitate priority environmental degradation, a number of other nonphysical programs have to be carried out, e.g. new regulations, new systems for budget allocation, alternative solutions, changing the orientation of education system, etc.

It is impossible to describe the whole program in this short paper. Nevertheless, the difficulty of applying social marketing approach to the environment program can readily be seen from the brief description above.

In conclusion, the SI approach may be useful as a framework in formulating, planning and implementation of certain types of social objectives. Yet it alone is not sufficient or all powerful, as any other approaches. Further thoughts and development are needed before it could be applied to most social development programs.
The seminar, held in Denpasar in December 1982, was jointly sponsored by AMIC and Indonesia's Ministry of State for Development Supervision and the Environment. It was attended by participants from different sectors interested in social marketing: development and information officials, communications and economic scholars, mass media and advertising practitioners. Presentations were made on the experience of various countries in the region, i.e., India, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and the host country.