A Brief History of Social Marketing

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Chapter Overview
Learning from the past can help increase our chances for success in the future. Savitt (1980) believes that marketing scholars have not paid sufficient attention to our history, and this is important for social marketing. There are many benefits to be gained from examining our history. In this chapter, we provide a brief history of social marketing, to help us understand where we have been, how we got here, and to orient our social marketing practice for the future. There are several specific benefits of reviewing our history. First, understanding the history of social marketing helps delimit the concept and scope of the enterprise. Historical analysis illuminates the use of technical terms and identifies the boundaries of its application. Therefore, a review of history strengthens our general understanding of the field. Second, the study of our history facilitates informed discussions, critical reflections, and analytical thought that the development of any discipline needs (Domegan, 2010). That is, history is a vehicle for diagnosing the current context and understanding changes with the aim of imbuing our potential praxis with meaning. Third, as long as we learn from experience, the past can provide a source of wisdom and good sense. As a result, this can help us improve social marketing tools' efficacy and efficiency in future endeavors. Though our history may not progress linearly, advances are unlikely if they are not based on a firm knowledge of where we have been. An understanding of our history allows us to of bridge the past, present, and future (Domegan, 2010).

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A Look Back

The establishment of what we call social marketing can be traced to several possible points. One event was Wiebe's 1952 article that asked, "Why can't you sell brotherhood like you sell soap?" The value of his idea is reflected in the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) variety of communication efforts to improve people's lives in developing countries. These efforts included radio programs on topics such as family planning and rural math education (Khan & Choldin, 1967; McAnany, 1973; Schramm, 1968). Similar communication efforts were instigated around the world on behalf of the UK, Germany, and the United Nations (Cairns, Mackay, & MacDonald, 2011).

In 1969, Kotler and Levy identified the relevance of the marketing approach to a wide variety of non-commercial efforts including political campaigns and marketing of non-profit ventures such as universities. Using marketing strategies, they argued, would make these efforts more successful. Two years later, Kotler and Zaltman further explained the limitations of traditional communication-only approaches, such as family planning efforts in India, and delineated how a marketing-based approach could improve these efforts. They termed this "social marketing."

Although we can point to particular milestones, is there a better way to understand the history of social marketing? One strategy is to look for distinguishing events and classify the field's development into "periods." Several academics have attempted to identify the phases and events, and their efforts have resulted in the derivation of particular periods, milestones, and turning points. Although it offers a welcome simplification, there are several limitations of periodization. First, it may introduce possible problems such as oversimplification. Second, it may suggest an artificial consistency between the history of social marketing practice and the history of social marketing thought. Third, it may even offer a false sense of progress (Hollander, Rassuli, Jones, & Farlow, 2005). However, since the main objective of this chapter is to shed light on general social marketing trends, we believe that paying attention to historical divisions can provide insights into our history.

The following periodization identifies several stages in the development of social marketing, its conception in the 1950s, its birth in the 1960s, early development in the 1980s, adolescence in the 1990s, and finally adulthood in the new century (Andreasen, 2003). These stages are seen in Table 5.1.

This chapter will attempt to identify theoretical and scientific tensions and debates that have practical and professional implications. Finally, the chapter will also try to bring into focus current tendencies and trends.

Trends and Tensions in the Theoretical World

Like most fields, the discipline and practice of social marketing have faced hindrances throughout its evolution that have impeded its development (Andreasen, 2002). In social marketing's case, there were problems related to formulating a

Table 5.1 Periodization of history with milestones and turning points

Periods	Milestones and turning points
Conception (1950s)	Wiebe (1952) asked, "Why can't you sell brotherhood like you sell soap?"
Birth (1960s–1970s)	Kotler and Levy (1969) propose that commercial marketing strategies can also be applied to non-profit and public policy issues
	Kotler and Zaltman (1971) distinguish the additional contribution of social marketing over other social science approaches such as mass communication, especially the importance of the acceptability of ideas
Early development (1980s)	Kotler and Roberto (1989) explain the steps that can be used to apply social marketing to a wide range of social problems
Adolescence (1990s)	1994. Social Marketing Quarterly is the first journal dedicated specifically to the practice of social marketing.
	Andreasen (1995) explains that the mission of social marketing is changing behaviors and puts forward the benchmarks that distinguish social marketing from other social science approaches. He explains social marketing upstream, midstream, and downstream efforts
	MacKenzie-Mohr (1999) explains a system-based approach to social marketing
Adulthood (2000s)	2006. With the establishment of the National Social Marketing Centre, social marketing is institutionalized. It is implemented by consultants and public policy organizations. Professionalism and a common vision are laid out
	The planning process is explained as a series of 10 steps
	2011. Our second social marketing journal—Journal of Social Marketing—is established, providing a more international focus

Source Dibb and Carrigan (2013), Andreasen (2003), Brychkov and Domegan (2017)

definition, identifying the field, and developing a solid theoretical basis. Although some problems may have occurred at a specific point in time, there are other issues that continue to be important.

Confusion about the nature of the field was common from the birth of the field in the 1960s through its early development in the 1970s (Kotler, 2017). As social marketing was born from commercial marketing, there was a tendency to retain the old paradigms, such as the four Ps (Wood, 2012) and exchange theory (Hastings & Saren, 2003), and some social marketing scholars have argued that these concepts don't match well with the current practice and positioning of social marketing.

A struggle for self-identity arose primarily during the field's adolescence in the 1980s. There seemed to be a lack of consensus in drawing a distinct boundary between what might be considered a social marketing approach versus other kinds of social science approaches including social advertising, education, and persuasion. There was a conflict between those upholding the view of social marketing as a marketing of ideas versus those highlighting the importance of changing behaviors (Dinan & Sargeant, 2000). This generated an identity crisis, partly as a result of an ambiguous subject matter and a lack of boundaries with other

disciplines (Andreasen, 2003; Shaw & Jones, 2005). Finally, different terms were used whose meanings were confused for social marketing, such as societal marketing, socially responsible marketing, and non-profit marketing (McDermott, Stead, & Hastings, 2005). In this respect, the term "social marketing" was often applied incorrectly and in inappropriate areas (Andreasen, 1994).

Part of the difficulty in delineating social marketing from other fields can be traced back to the original interdisciplinary nature of marketing. Marketing draws from economics, psychology, sociology, and anthropology. Drawing from these disciplines made social marketing richer and more complex, but it also resulted in less clarity and precision about the disciplinary boundaries. It was difficult to import such divergent theories and approaches while forming a unique perspective (Bartels, 1976). As a result, researchers and practitioners sometimes found it hard to adapt their methods and forge them into a coherent discipline (Brennan, Voros, Brady, 2011). Social marketers were confused with health educators, mass communicators, social mobilisers, social advertising creators, and so on (Dinan & Sargeant, 2000), so social marketing efforts were often mislabeled. Social marketers were not easily recognized as being part of one unified profession; therefore, academics and practitioners were not working together as a single integrated force. As a result, advances in building an academic and professional home were slow. Until recently, there were no academic degrees granted in "social marketing"; the discipline is typically housed under other academic umbrellas such as business and engineering (Truong & Dietrich, 2018) and social advertising (Smith, 2011). So, even in what should be adulthood, social marketing students still do not have a common home, but instead graduate from many different departments rather than sharing a common discipline. The geographic location and disciplinary homes of social marketing theses are shown in Fig. 5.1.

The variety of theoretical approaches, plus the lack of professional accreditation, often led to the value of social marketing being questioned or underrated. Some critics accused the commercial marketing profession of not acting with integrity, and denigrating its knowledge, claiming the field is "ethically challenged" (Bartels, 1976). The negative reputation of commercial marketing bled into the reputation of social marketing, which spurred some social marketers toward a critical approach. As a result, they have developed what is called "critical marketing." On the one hand, critical marketing represents a sign of integrity as it emphasizes the rationality over emotionality of consumers and denounces the propaganda, deplores the worst side of competition, reveals the deceiving myth of beauty, and advocates some ground for ethics. On the other hand, critical marketing disparages marketing and so, to some extent, joins forces with those reluctant to accept this new field, reinforcing the negative aspects of the field's reputation (Tadajewski, 2010).

Although the negative reputation of social marketing may be somewhat undeserved, it is probably not entirely without warrant when the above shortcomings are considered. Specifically, by associating social marketing with commercial marketing, links are formed with the manipulative perceptions of commercial marketing; the lack of a separate identity with respect to commercial marketing did not help to improve the picture. In addition, the undeveloped theoretical framework as
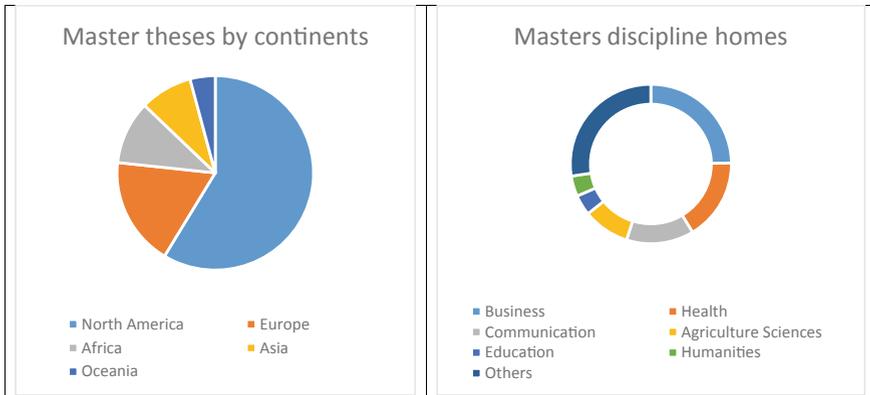
Fig. 5.1 Indicators of the interdisciplinary background of social marketing education. *Source* Truong and Dietrich (2018)

well as a lack of professional identity and formalization is still actively undermining it. In fact, some authors interpret social marketing as being as self-serving and self-interested as commercial marketing by supposing that behind any advocacy for a social cause lay the interests of the lucrative industries of condoms, recycling, sport, insurance, and so on (Fox & Kotler, 1980).

Trends and Tensions in the Applied World

It is worth noting that social marketing was not free of imperfections in its implementation either. In the early 1980s, social marketing showed sluggish progress and there was a glaring difference between its potential and real implementation, between theoretical efficacy and real obtained outputs. Not all of these barriers have been overcome today. Specifically, according to Bloom and Novelli (1981) and Fox and Kotler (1980), there were seven categories of problems, as follows:

- Market analysis complications resulted from the scant secondary sources of information as well as the lower financial resources associated with the vast majority of the non-profit causes. In addition, the determinants of human behavior are more complex and so it is harder to measure the key variables with reliability and validity.
- Segmentation is often maligned because they appear to be in conflict with egalitarian rights that act against discrimination. This complicates segmentation and treating people differently. For example, in many segmentation schemes, the

segments with priority are those groups with a higher level of risk; however, many public health agencies are expected to provide treatment for all of their clients.

- The intangible nature of much behavior often makes the concept of the product more difficult to articulate. Product formulation can also be limited by regulations of the authority in charge of the social marketing campaign.
- In some cases, price is often intangible and therefore can only be measured and explained through external expressions such as the monetary value. At other times, price is a 'non-controlled' variable which cannot be set by the social marketing campaign itself.
- Location (Place) is often problematic because intermediaries are under less control by the social marketer than they are in the commercial field.
- Promotion is often more complicated because we typically cannot afford the high cost of advertising. Also, the messages often need to convey intense content such as fear. As a result, social marketers often need to steer clear of innovative or potentially controversial appeal strategies such as using humor.
- The planning function is often performed by organizations who do not have a good understanding of or appreciation of marketing. Similarly, their evaluations often are not oriented toward measuring results. These evaluations are often further complicated when the results are in more abstract form such as an idea, as invisible as people's values and attitudes, or as intangible as a behavior, compared to more direct measures such as sales or deaths.

After two decades of social marketing practice, many of the problems seem to persist and demonstrate the same difficulties in planning as well as the marketing mix and strategic functions (Dibb & Carrigan, 2013; Stead, Gordon, & Angus, 2007).

Merritt, Kamin, Hussenöder, and Huibregtsen (2017) explain the delay by arguing several factors, such as the general skepticism about marketing, language barriers, and the tradition of other disciplines presented direct and fierce competition for social marketing. Finally, there were very few developments in social marketing in Africa, Asia, and Latin America (White, 2018; Truong & Dietrich, 2018).

As a result of the trends identified above, some believe that social marketing thought has not moved forward as rapidly as it should. Because the theories and the practice of social marketing have evolved differently from commercial marketing, some believe that social marketing has not kept pace with that of commercial marketing. The practice of social marketing also differs depending on the level of economic development across countries where it is applied. Specifically, in developing economies the concerns have often focused on products and services linked to health while in developed economies social marketing has focused on the prevention and reduction of the risk behaviors related to chronic diseases and addictions (Lefebvre, 2011). As a result of these factors, the adoption and advancement of social marketing have been quite varied, perhaps more than that of commercial marketing. There seem to be specific tensions and discussions that

account for this particular evolution around the dichotomy between the nature of social marketing efforts in developed and developing countries (Lefebvre, 2011).

Social Marketing and the New Millennium

As the discipline of social marketing reaches maturity, social marketing has begun to establish a unique identity to distinguish itself from other social sciences. Part of this identity may have been a result of Andreasen's six benchmarks of social marketing (Andreasen, 2003; McDermott et al., 2005). These benchmarks put emphasis on the following essential criteria: behavior change, audience research, segmentation principles, motivational exchange, four Ps, and competition.

Research in social marketing began to flourish as a result of the establishment of two specialized journals—Social Marketing Quarterly and the Journal of Social Marketing. Providing a unique home has helped to establish the name and boundaries of social marketing. In addition, there were a number of special issues by the European Journal of Marketing, the Journal of Macro Marketing, and the Journal of Marketing Management which helped recognize and identify social marketing (Truong & Dietrich, 2018). These publications were also important as they resulted in substantial knowledge generation. These factors, in turn, may have also been important in the development of social marketing courses around the world (Kelly, 2013).

In the professional arena, new social marketing centers were established, initially in the English-speaking world, especially the USA, and social marketing was applied to solving a wide range of social problems by governmental agencies and consultants (Andreasen, 2003). Similarly, professional associations dedicated to Social Marketing flourished all over the world, such as the International Social Marketing Association, European Social Marketing Association, Australian Association of Social Marketing, Social Marketing Association of North America, Finish Social Marketing Association, and International Association on Public and Non-Profit Marketing (Truong & Dietrich, 2018). This growth reflects the achievement of a significant level of maturity by the field (Lefebvre, 2012).

Furthermore, at the dawn of the new century, social marketers began to gain a reputation for providing an effective managerial tool that could deal with a variety of problems such as sedentary lifestyles, binge drinking, and drug consumption. This effectiveness was a result of the social marketing approach comprising downstream, midstream, and upstream interventions as well as the acknowledgment of competitive forces (Stead et al., 2007). These advances were partly achieved as a result of new planning tools that were developed through pooled contributions from both the academic and professional worlds (Dibb & Carrigan, 2013). This planning process was typically divided into 10 steps, as follows: (1) background, purpose, and focus, (2) situation analysis, (3) target market profile, (4) marketing objectives, (5) barriers, benefits, and competition, (6) positioning, (7) marketing mix, (8) evaluation, (9) budget, and (10) implementation (Dibb & Carrigan, 2013).

Current Tendencies and Budding Trends

What are the new tendencies and trends in the field of social marketing? Nowadays, the definition of social marketing and its theories are being rebuilt to (1) assimilate upstream and midstream interventions (Dann, 2010; Truong, 2014), (2) expand social marketing's scope beyond mere transactional terms so that it falls into a more relational perspective that highlights interest groups, quality, and sustainability (Hastings, 2003), and (3) provide more consideration of coopetition, including the notion of cooperation with what could be traditionally seen as competition. Social responsibility has also become important to commercial marketing. As a result, social marketers can sometimes join forces with commercial marketers to achieve their goals. For example, fast food companies may be persuaded to provide healthier alternatives that meet with social marketing approval. In this way, social marketing has the potential to become part of a total market approach (Lefebvre, 2011) in which networking, macro marketing, systems, and ethics take center stage and serve as a force behind a highly integrative understanding and way of marketing.

The recognition of social responsibility has meant that educators of marketing need to teach not only technical tools, but also about more critical and ethical issues. Tadajewski (2010) argues that commercial marketers are exploring beyond the traditional sources of marketing and realizing how important it is to consider the consequences of certain techniques and tools. Commercial marketing, from the inside, is making efforts to distinguish between real and fake needs, reveal the fetishism associated with maladaptive consumption, interrogate the genuine nature of satisfaction, and propose social amelioration, responsibility, and distributive justice. Thus, social and commercial marketing are assuming critical marketing sensibility and the education of marketing studies is becoming more transformative. Layton (2017) advocates a search for meaning in marketing since technology is not sufficient. Ethics education in marketing is too often a mere training activity, but as commercial marketing education is becoming more ethical and principled, social marketing education can play an important role.

Social marketing is also learning from new technologies and so transforming its theory and practice toward social innovation, design thinking, and social media (Lefebvre, 2012). As a consequence, the research methods used within social marketing are changing toward encompassing more combined procedures that employ qualitative techniques such as in-depth interviews in conjunction with quantitative techniques such as surveys (Truong, 2014).

As mentioned earlier, until quite recently there was neither a specialized social marketing master's program nor a social marketing degree title anywhere in the world. This may have played a role in holding social marketing back from reaching its full potential. Now that social marketing has achieved some status, it is important for new social marketing initiatives to be infused with social marketing theory and implemented by highly qualified marketers. Partly as a result of social marketing's late arrival, the sense of belonging to the same profession is also in its

infancy. However, as social marketing becomes more mainstream and starts to build alliances with commercial marketing, the profession of social marketer will become more distinct and accredited. Hastings and Saren (2003) affirm that not only is there a mutual influence between commercial and social marketing, but also critical marketing plays a key role for achieving this influence. In fact, social marketers and commercial marketers are strengthening their collaborations (Dibb & Carrigan, 2013). Unfortunately, commercial marketing has been in the center of the recent financial and real estate crisis (Dibb & Carrigan, 2013) and the word marketing is associated with the four Ms, as follows: manipulation, materialism, malevolence, and misrepresentation. For this reason, a branding campaign for social marketing is still necessary if we want to have a stronger, more distinct, and better professional positioning (Andreasen, 2002).

After analyzing the new tendencies and trends in social marketing, we should raise our voices to ask for inclusion in the historical perspectives in marketing. Schwarzkopf (2015) states that historians have overlooked the history of social marketers and their target audiences as authentic co-creators. The time is opportune to enrich the traditional approach from the mere description of social marketing to include the intellectual thought processes. Therefore, the discipline of marketing history should be renewed so that the study of social marketing can enhance marketing's frameworks, common vision, and implementations. In short, the new history of social marketing should be developed to embrace a broader variety of both theories and methods while driven by a critical and constructive rigor.

In conclusion, the story of marketers and consumers is the nature of marketing. In the search for meaning, history is always crucial, but we believe that a broader approach to marketing is in order. While the current trajectory of marketing is rooted in history, the field is rapidly evolving toward a more digital, technical, and commercial approach. The same is occurring in social marketing. Social marketing is also developing its reputation both inside and outside the academy. For this reason, we hope that one day when asking consumers about the reputation of marketing, they will speak more positively, because the reputation of commercial marketing is intricately intertwined with the reputation of social marketing.

Ultimately, we hope this book on social marketing will become a source of inspiration for social marketers and for those who interact with social marketers. We hope that both academics and practitioners of social marketing will find value here.

Appendix: Additional Resources for the History of Social Marketing

Michael D. Basil

This appendix provides supplementary information for the history described in Chapter 5. A brief description of the link contents and online links is provided.

Other histories of social marketing:

Andreasen (2003). This article summarizes the history of social marketing. http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.1000.3024&rep= rep1&type=pdf

Fox and Kotler (1980). This academic article from the Journal of Marketing outlines the first 10 years of social marketing. https://archive.ama.org/archive/ ResourceLibrary/JournalofMarketing/documents/4997928.pdf

Honeyman (2008). This article from Population Services International summarizes the highlights in social marketing from 1969 through 2000. https://www. shopsplusproject.org/sites/default/files/resources/5009_file_Historical_ Highlightshonemanp3.pdf

Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_marketing

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