Memo No (1005)

Health Services Marketing:
The Case of family Planning

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Feb. 1972
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During more than sixty years in which marketing has been studied seriously in universities, research institutions, business enterprises, and government agencies, researchers have gradually chipped away our ignorance about the main factors involved in marketing of goods and services. Their research work has been concentrated on people, activities, and institutions in marketing field. These efforts, no doubt, have made much, but incomplete, head way in yielding marketing knowledge. (1)

Along with these assaults on our marketing ignorance there have appeared various studies relating to the desirability and feasibility of developing the science of marketing to cover the field of non-business activities. "As in case of health service" while the various expressions of opinions have not revealed anyone who is opposed to the application of some marketing ideas and activities in such field, there are others who just as strongly assert the contrary.

Since acceptable proof of the possibility or impossibility of applying some marketing methods to non-business activities has not yet been forthcoming, one might suggest that, we must try to know whether such a feat is possible or not. To my opinion success will be attained when obtaining some marketing knowledge which can meet the requirements of such application in the respective specific field. In this connection it is perhaps appropriate to mention that in 1950 few people believed that man would ever land on the moon. To day it is no doubt safe to say that these few have been joined by many others who now hold this belief.

(1) The beginning of marketing thoughts might be dated at the beginning of the twentieth century (1900-1910).
After presenting this lecture, I hope that many of you who are physicians will be convinced to the possibility of applying marketing in the field of non-business institutions of which health services and family planning institutions are only but a part.

I know beforehand that your work as doctors is relatively far off the work in the field of marketing which represents a part of economic sciences. But, I am fully convinced with the fact that all of us have their roles in the society. The marketing specialist in his role seeks knowledge about the main aspects of the field with which he is concerned or to introduce new application for his marketing thoughts to new fields since he has the necessary ability, to do that.

I have been using the term marketing as though it had a widely accepted meaning, which is however not the fact. Let us now look at what marketing is and what is social marketing, what are the marketing research areas that can be existed in the health market, and finally to show what is the marketing concept in case of family planning campaign.

I - What is Marketing?

There is no universal agreement on what marketing is. It has been described from several points of view. I will try here to examine the term marketing from the point of view of the institutions groups engaged in it. Mainly the group of institutions which is dealing with business activities and the second group which is concentrating upon non-business activities.

First: From the point of view of the institutions dealing with business activities.

Regarding this category, economists groups recognize marketing as "the performance of business activities directed at, and incident to the flow of goods and services from the producers to the consumers or users". (2)

Prof. Peter Drucker, an expert and consultant in the field of management and marketing, offers several definitions. Thus he says:

"I have learned in my consultant work that I can not use a single definition ... If I define marketing in the economy, I would define it as the demand view of the company, as against the typical business man's supply view: it is the sum of all activities that are needed to enable a producer to give satisfactory value to a consumer .... A third definition is that marketing is not a function of a business, but a view of entire business seen as the economic organ to provide goods and services. That is a marketing view of business. Everything that business does in that respect is marketing. (3)

Special definition to use marketing as a factor in the product planning process in the enterprises acting in a planned economy has been presented by the author. This definition considers marketing (in the business enterprises) in relation to the national economy as well as the other aspects of the social and cultural totality in a respective society. The definition is:

"Marketing is a concept of vital importance to decision-making which with the help of the state can organize the interacting activities of the enterprises designed to plan, produce and distribute need-satisfying products and services to the actual and potential consumers". (4)

Beside the definitions just presented there are many definitions of marketing which can be read in specialized text books. The definitions mentioned above are the mostly accepted although some of them having a rather broad, and others a narrow meaning.

Second: From the point of view of the institutions dealing with non-business activities.

Although marketing has traditionally been preoccupied with business activities and profit making organizations, recent developments suggest that it has contributions to make to the other non-business and social sectors as health care.

An increasing number of non-business institutions have begun to examine marketing logic as a mean to furthering their institutional goals and ideas (products). It is not a strange example to say that marketing men have advised churches on how to increase membership, or charities on how to raise money, or art museums and symphonies on how to attract more patrons.

The core idea of applying marketing to the non-business institutions lies in the exchange process. We must be aware of the fact that marketing does not occur unless there are two or more parties, each with something to exchange, and both or all are ready and able to carry out communications. This idea corresponds to and derived from the typical subject of marketing which deals with the exchange of goods and services for other goods and services or for money.

In fact, this may be a simple approach to introduce marketing to non-business institutions. But, I believe that marketing in this special field is still in its elementary stage. More studies are needed to apply marketing to the institutions engaged in social activities. The special application of marketing to such special field of activities gives marketing some specific features. Marketing in this sense is called social marketing which represents in its essence the design, implementation, and control of programs calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas.
II - The Social Marketing Approach

The main variables in is that marketers view the marketing problem (in business activities) as one of developing the right product backed by the right promotion and put in the right place at the right price. Thus, product, promotion, place, price are the main variables. So, the examining of these designated variables in term of well known social issues may represent the base when trying to discover the social marketing approach.

1. Product:

In business marketing, sellers study the needs and wants of present and potential buyers with an attempt to design products and services that meet their desires. If well-designed and affordable these products will be purchased and therefore the business succeeds.

In social marketing, institutions as sellers for certain ideas and services have to study the target audiences in order to design appropriate products (ideas-services). They must package these ideas in a manner which their target audiences find desirable and are willing to purchase (accept). For example, if we consider the problem of health service and family planning we find that their social objectives are to create some habits or attitudes in population. In this case there is no one product that can accomplish this target. But various products (ideas) have to be designed to make partial contributions to our social objectives. A public education media campaign providing family planning and its impact on the women health may be one product. The offering of defensive health course is another. The creation of health insurance policies for children is still a third product. When marketing such types of ideas and services identical reasoning is required e.g. For personal health causes (no smoking, better nutrition). This also means that the social marketer has to define logically his thoughts which usually include a change in value, beliefs, affects, behavior, or some mixture. In doing this he must meaningfully segment the target markets and therefore design products for each market which instrumentally serve the social objectives.
2. Promotion:
Promotion represents the communication persuasion strategy and tactics that will make the product familiar. It is also the task of promotion to make the ideas acceptable and even desirable to the audience. Any social campaign strategist will tend to think of a mass media communication, but promotion is actually a much larger idea.

An example of careful promotional planning for social objectives is found in India (6). They consider family planning as one of the social objectives which must be handled as a marketing problem. In such case, marketers are promoting or selling the ideas of birth control. In carrying out this job, the same marketing and promotion methods used to sell birth control idea since it is as much a marketing job as selling any other consumer product. (7)

Again, in determining the character of any family planning campaign, the marketing science is applicable. The manufacturers use marketing methods to introduce a new product. These marketing methods give them thorough understanding of the variables of the market. This is actually what we need to do in case of the preparation for family planning campaign or when presenting the health service. We can use marketing research to understand all the variables of the market and to manage distribution of contraceptive devices and not to be blind to the importance of promotion and advertising.


3. **Place:**

The third element of marketing approach to social objectives calls for providing adequate and compatible distribution and response channels. Motivated persons should know where the product can be obtained. The poor result of many social changes can be attributed in part to their failure to suggest clear action outlets for those motivated people to acquire the product. Thus, place in this sense means arranging for accessible outlets which permit the translation of motivations into actions. Any plan in this area must entail selecting or developing appropriate outlets, deciding on their number, average size and location, and giving them proper motivation to perform their part of the job.

4. **Price:**

In marketing concept, price represents the costs that the buyer must accept in order to obtain the product. Price in this sense represents money costs. But, prices may also present opportunity cost, energy cost, psychic costs. Thus, the cost of giving up smoking may be largely psychological, since there is no actual financial saving in breaking the habit. On the other side, it is clear that smoking represents money cost.

The functioning of this concept can be in terms of an interesting phenomenon in health care services where many poor patients prefer to patronize unlicensed practitioners and pay a fee instead of going to the free hospital. Why? Because of the following reason: while there is no charge at the free hospital, there is a substantial cost to the patient in terms of energy and psychological abuse. When a patient arrives at the hospital he has to wait to see a clerk first. When he is finally interviewed, another clerk asks many questions. Then the patient sees a number of other hospital staff members for various tests. Finally, he is allowed to see the doctor who might discover that he really needs to see a specialist who will not be available for several weeks. Therefore, it is not surprising that he wishes to avoid this energy (cost-energy) and psychological cost even if it means paying for the service.
In other words, the patient compares the cost of energy and psychological costs of the service with the money cost he pays to the private doctor. Such example mentioned, gives us a surprising discovery that even free medical care presents a marketing problem since problems of cost and pricing is a part of marketing totality.

The marketing man's approach when pricing the social product or service must be based on the assumption that members of a target audience perform a cost-benefit analysis when considering the investment of money, time, or energy in the issue. The marketer's approach to sell a social product or service must notice the reward for buying these products or services which can be increased relative to the costs or the costs reduced relative to the rewards.

As it has been illustrated, specific social activities as health services could benefit from marketing thoughts. It is also explained that social marketing is sufficiently distinct from business marketing. Therefore, social marketing requires fresh thinking and new approaches. To my opinion, the main difference between social marketing and business marketing is that, while the former has to deal with the market's core, beliefs, and values, to promote social causes, the later oftenly deals with superficial preferences and opinions.

III - The Health Market

The health market is rapidly becoming one of the most significant markets in the economics of developed as well as less developed countries. It is, therefore increasingly important that attempts be made to gain further insights into the human behavior in health situation. In other words, it is very important to discuss social marketing in health context.
In order to understand the scope of social marketing in health organizations, I am going to outline the major typical areas of marketing research which corresponds to health services activities. These areas are as follows:

A - Research in the service of health care

Health service research, testing and analysing represent some of the most important research activities. In social marketing the output of the services represent the main target for the coming marketing efforts and for the planners to introduce the service in its broadest sense. Thus, research in the service of health care in its widest implication is the primary means of reaching the target of modern social marketing in the field of health care.

The changes in the social circumstances in which the service is introduced should be followed closely when appraising the present service introduced by the health service institutions and when planning the necessary adjustments in it. The needs to develop the service of health care or even the needs for introducing new additions to the health service should be reflected in the analyses of the results given by the research in the service.

The main objects in doing such research in the service of health care are:

* Determining the social acceptance of the presented service or of the proposed new services added.

* Determining the sources of the social dissatisfaction with the service.

* Making comparative studies of the services and how it is presented in similar countries or in other developed countries.
B - Research in health market

Health market will be defined here as the frame that embodies people in need to such service which is necessary or useful for existence and development and are waiting to obtain satisfaction for their needs. So market research in health service encompasses both market analysis as well as forecasting of the scope of the health market.

Research in health market has as its basic function the provision of information necessary for planning future objectives of this specific market. Ordinarily health service institutions determine the market potential for their service, gathering data from all fields and sources to have complete information about the market.

The most widely performed and important tasks in doing such research are:

- Analysing the size of the market for existing health services.
- Estimating the need for new types of services in the framework of health care.
- Determining the characteristics of the market for the services presented and studying the trends in potential market size.

C - Research of methods and policies used in introducing the health service

In the light of research and studies in health service and its market, research of methods and policies takes place in order to make use of certain results in establishing new methods or policies for the health services institutions with a view to reaching the planned goals. This kind of research area helps also to evaluate the present and proposed methods and policies used to introduce the health service to the society. It is the task of such kind of research to give careful selection and measurement of the effectiveness of the current policies and to determine the methods of improving the introduction performances.
The conclusions that emerge from research of methods and policies used in introducing health services can help in:

- Establishing new methods or revising the old policies.
- Evaluating present and proposed methods and policies.
- Studying the costs of the new methods in comparison to the old one.
- Setting the main steps in developing the methods and policies used in introducing the health services.

D - Research in advertising

As a vehicle of persuasive communication, advertising in health services deserves special attention. Advertising in its simple form is a way of sending messages about the service from the producers (i.e. health institutions) to the people (i.e. society). These messages explain the desirable aspects of the service, place strong emphasis on the service improvement, teach people the importance of such services, and transmit the necessary information about the way the society can receive the introduced services. The health service may be also so technical that advertising can only communicate a general idea of what it is like. In this case advertisements tell people where to get the right information they may need, and whom they may consult.

Research in advertising can give real indicators related to the field of health service and help to:

- Evaluate advertising effectiveness in the respective field.
- Select suitable advertising media.
- Make qualitative studies in advertising methods.

The four mentioned types or areas of research involved in social marketing research for health services are the main ones. They also are explained in a brief way. There may exist some other fields of
research which may be closely connected to some special activities in the health service market. But, generally, carrying out the mentioned marketing research areas in health service market can give us the base when using marketing research concept to any special activity related to the same field.

The further application shows us the possibility of using some marketing research areas to the health services field. To my mind, marketer's experience with market, planning, and evaluating test market can help in assessing potentials, setting targets and evaluating alternative strategies. Such market tests might also provide information to help to overcome administrative difficulties that have plagued the introduction of certain health service program.

IV - Marketing Concept in Case of Family Planning

On an even more advanced level, many marketing concepts might be useful in creating a viable information system for family planning programs. (8)

It is the impact of expanding population that makes us give additional efforts to overcome the problems of over population and in turn preparing family planning programs. This problem can not be overlooked in any contemporary discussion of changing social and technological environments. Every nation in the world is threatened by some aspects of the problem.

The idea of family planning can be examined from social marketing view as the following aspects:

First: It is a social need which must be promoted. In this sense it is not a need of any individual taken separately, but it is the need of the society as a whole. In other words, the Family planning may not be a reflection of any individual need, it corresponds to the national need.

Second: It is also possible to speak about the family planning idea from another angle which is: Family planning is a social need in the sense that it's particular object and form are determined by the society. The society feels that such idea leads it to attain certain degree of civilization and development.

Thus, the discussion of both the two sides gives us the same result which is: The idea of family planning represents a social need which has to be promoted and marketed. In other words, family planning programs represent a social needs which may be marketed. A discussion of the role of marketing in promoting these family planning programs may be clear if we discuss the role of marketing in promoting the family planning campaign as an exercise. This example will show the points of agreement on which marketing knowledge can serve. The areas of discussion will include:

A - Information System

At the beginning, family planning campaigns depends mainly upon information and facts which are the main concept of modern marketing. Today, the knowledge is the prime mover of the economies. Planners, marketers, managers and specialists who use information effectively as a corporate resource are the key to the corporate success. Information has social dimensions because of it's impact on the individual and the social system. The controlling of information regarding analysis for the purpose of extracting conclusions and decisions-making is of importance to planners and managers who want to reach the target of either planning or control, strategic or routine policy. In this sense, the marketing technique and methods can be applied for gathering a certain quality of information. If I compare the marketing technique applied when introducing new product, with the methods applied when introducing family planning campaigns, I find it synonymous since both are at the innovation stage.
B - Communication

In communication sphere a famous marketer's concept which is "Get to the prospect when consumer is in buying mood" can fit completely the methods used in marketing the family planning ideas. For example, one must know the right time, right place and right media when contacting new mother to see her opinions about the family planning idea - and the methods of the family planning campaign.

C - Promotion

In promoting the product, marketing depends upon the self-interest which is a powerful motivating appeal. The essence of marketing concept is that, the needs and wants of consumers should be served rather than shaped. However, practical application requires to bring the customer into the decision structure. In seeking to achieve the consumers point of view marketing specialist have increasingly sought council from social scientists, economists, psychologists, and cultural anthropologists - each of whom brings to the area of marketing his professional tool kit of theories, concepts and hypotheses. In my opinion the same instruments are applicable in promoting the family planning campaign. The family planning officials have to apply the above mentioned tools used in promoting the product with the aim to show the people how such campaign will benefit them as individuals in direct or in an indirect way.

D - Advertising

Advertising is used in the total marketing effort as an effective tool of selling the products, services and ideas. In case of promoting family planning campaign, it is necessary to joint the advertising efforts toward the market. Some of the family planning communicators claimed of the used messages and show the necessity to offer a variety of advertisements to illustrate what the family planning campaign is. Thus, it is necessary that we must call the advertising men who have had experience in mail order operations and other types of advertisement to know the several different messages before deciding which to use as stamples.