

Chapter 42

Using Successful Cases to Promote Environmental Sustainability: A Social Marketing Approach

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ABSTRACT

The success of encouraging environmental sustainability by means of social marketing programs is partially determined by identifying certain actions that can favourably influence people's behaviours towards a more ecologically benign lifestyle. In this chapter, such actions (remodelling businesses and the economy by means of non-market capitals, social enterprises, and economic democracy; transforming food systems; renewable energy and energy reductions and simplifying lifestyles) are gleaned from a description of Cuba's transition period, the Findhorn Ecovillage and the BedZED development where greater levels of environmental sustainability have been attained. Associating the actions to social marketing theory reveals that they are well positioned to influence behaviours towards improved levels of environmental sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

As has been uncovered in Beachcroft-Shaw and Ellis's chapter on social marketing and its application to sustainability, social marketing is theoretically speaking a useful mechanism that, by means of collaboration and creative thinking, has the capacity to influence individual and societal behaviours towards increased levels of environmental sustainability. It is defined as an instrument to influence behaviours that is steeped in traditional marketing's theory, tools and techniques (Kotler & Lee, 2011). Based on the underlying factor that behaviours are difficult to influence (Jackson, 2005; Kilbourne, McDonagh

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-3817-2.ch042

& Prothero, 1997), the applicability of social marketing to the essence of collective creativity and collaboration is summed up well by Domegan (2008: 137): [s]ocial marketing is “the co-creation of complex social and economic benefits and value ‘with’ customers among/throughout an entire community network of relationships”. In other words, to begin with behaviours are tricky to influence and because of this require multiple and integrated ways of thinking. So, if benefits are created together with customers by developing relationships and networks of relationships with them (Eagle, Dahl, Hill, Bird, Spotswood & Tapp, 2013; Hastings & Saren, 2003; Marques & Domegan, 2011), then the complex and relationship- and behaviour-driven nature of social marketing deeply favours multiple and integrated ways to solve problems i.e. collective creativity and collaboration across several stakeholders. For example, when attempting to influence people’s behaviours towards a healthier lifestyle, social marketers would likely need to involve multiple influential bodies. These could include medical practitioners such as dieticians and doctors, local businesses such as gyms, sports facilities and supermarkets, local or national government to for example pave more bicycle paths for people to cycle more frequently, groups of people who have successfully adopted a healthier lifestyle who can reflect on their changes to the broader population. Within this network of relationships, a creative and collaborative environment would be a factor of a social marketing program’s success (Marques & Domegan, 2011).

In reality, some social marketing campaigns have not succeeded in the past due to the complexity of people’s behaviours and the factors influencing it (Jackson, 2005; Kilbourne *et al.*, 1997). However, there have also been some cases where collaboration and creative thinking has led to successful social marketing interventions that improved environmental sustainability (e.g. Frame & Newton, 2007; French, Merritt & Reynolds, 2011; Kotler, Roberto & Lee, 2002; McKenzie-Mohr, 2000; The NSMC, 2010). Successes can be attributable to several factors, one of which is uncovering a specific set of actions¹ that can influence behaviours in the right direction (Kotler *et al.*, 2002). More specifically, actions that can act as a foundation for social marketing programs (those that dovetail well with social marketing theory) targeting people to behave in more environmentally sustainable ways are vital for social marketers. One area that social marketers can turn to for actions that could underpin social marketing interventions aimed at increasing environmental sustainability are successful cases where improvements in environmental sustainability exist in the real world.

To derive such actions that could be useful for social marketers, the chapter is divided into two sections. The main purpose of the first section is twofold: firstly, it describes three instances (Cuba, Findhorn Ecovillage & BedZED) where increases in environmental sustainability have been attained and; secondly it isolates actions common to at least two cases that can be used in social marketing programs to influence behaviours towards a more environmentally sustainable society. After drawing out actions from the three cases, the section thereafter takes these actions and collectively relates them to social marketing theory, which intrinsically represents collaboration and creativity due to its multiple-stakeholder nature.

Successful Cases of Environmental Sustainability

By examining cases in which shifts in behaviours led to a more environmentally sustainable lifestyle, social marketers can extract useful actions that could form the foundation of social marketing programs, which will likely require collaboration and creativity across multiple stakeholders such as consumers, businesses, international organisations, national governments etc. The forthcoming cases were chosen because they represent such shifts in behaviours that resulted in a greater potential of environmental sustainability. One national-level case (Cuba) discusses how an entire country shifted to more envi-

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