

Social Marketing in Thailand: Examples and Critics

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Abstract

Social marketing is widely known and practiced around the globe. This, however, poses some questions including popularity, practicality, and consistency of social marketing in Thailand. This academic paper, therefore, review and explore how social marketing is considered academically and professionally. In the greater details, this starts from giving a brief socio-cultural background of Thailand. It is followed and shared by giving current situations about social issues that are popularly talked by Thai people and social marketing campaigns initiated in the country. Under this social marketing initiatives session, there are some social marketing challenges and myths addressed. The later space is given for explaining and discussing how and how much social marketing is presently practiced in Thailand. Social marketing from both academic and professional dimensions are projected. Lastly, some commentaries are provided for future improvement in social marketing in Thailand. This study contributes all parties concerning rethink and reconsider the importance of social marketing practices as its popularity in Thailand is perceived undulatingly. Together with this, confusion and misunderstanding between social marketing and other words including corporate social responsibility, social media marketing, and the like can be minimized, or, luckily, eradicated.

Keywords: Social Marketing, Corporate Social Responsibility, Social Media Marketing, Thailand

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Introduction

Thailand is a land of smiles where gathers 77 provinces, with approximately 67 million populations together. The types of smiles can be presented differently, varying from the local characteristics and nature of the people from the north, the east, the west, to the south. Thailand is the good friends and neighbours of Cambodia, Laos PDR, Myanmar, Malaysia and is rich of the natural environments and tourist attractions including mountains, waterfalls, seas, and oceans. Economically, it can deem Thailand as one of the developing countries. The country has the better development in human development indicators, as a whole, when the Thai people live longer, learn longer, and earn money more.

Unfortunately, Thailand has still faced with socio-economic issues. Thus, those who are living in the poorer status are still suffering from the bad health and well-beings (United Nations Development Programme, 2020a; United Nations Development Programme, 2020b). For example, Thailand has long-time experienced and been tortured in the issues of the human inequality between the state and its populations, between the citizens and migrant workers, between the rich and the poor as well as between the males and their female counterparts (Human Rights Watch, 2021). Although Freedom House (2021) has revealed the better situation of the human rights in Thailand from a very few, limited spaces to express the people's speech to a window-up circumstance, it is difficult and cannot confidently say that the human right issues in Thailand has completely been resolved and managed. In consideration of the unequal gaps between the Thai citizens and their migrant workers, from time to time, the migrant workers

have been treated unwell and been in the not-good living and working positions and environments in Thailand (Satawedin, 2017). Up to date, gaps among migrant workers in Thailand remain prevalent and that need to be developed (Ono, 2019; Wiriyapong, 2021), even during the COVID-19 pandemic vaccinations (Quinley, 2021). The increasing disparity between those who are really wealthy and those who are not at all (ASEAN Post Team, 2020; Editorial, 2019; Karnjana Lao Nation Graphics, 2018; The World Bank, 2020) is found. The poverty is, moreover, attacked and hit more and more by the COVID-19 pandemic (Asadullah & Bhula-or, 2020; Freeman, 2021). The disparity, furthermore, even happens in genders. Referring to the latest statistical report provided by the 2020 UNDP Human Development Report, even though women have been given a chance to work in as the governmental persons and politicians, this number is only accounted for 14 per cent. In terms of the educational attainment and opportunities, the gender gaps have been discovered when the males outnumber their female counterparts at 48.6 per cent versus 43.5 per cent (in Kovavisarach, 2021). Consistently, Mathou, Cordova, and Naciri (2021) reported that the Thai women are inferior to their men, in terms of a low level of economic status, sexism, sexual abuse, and the like. As expected, the window for LGBTQs has not been widened yet, as reported by the World Bank's economic inclusion of LGBTQ groups in Thailand (Sabpaitoon, 2018). Although the same sex marriage bill has been pushed seriously, such attempts are unlikely to be well responded. Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been revealed that LGBTQs have a greater degree of sufferings from being discriminated, especially discovered in their personal and working lives (Nakhata, 2021).

Thailand is also challenged by the environmental issue, especially PM 2.5. Although, currently, IOAir (2021) reported the better environment in Thailand, Chiang Mai was placed as the top-three most polluted cities in the world (Tanraksa, 2021) and before that, in 2019, IOAir (2019) revealed that Thailand is in the 28th place.

In terms of health and wellbeing of the Thai populations, unsurprisingly non-communicable diseases remain the main causes of death. Healthdata.org (2019) has discovered and revealed that the top-ten factors and variables leading the Thai populations to death are the tobacco-related disease, high fasting plasma glucose, high body weights, high blood pressure, alcohol consumption, unhealthy dietary consumption, polluted air conditions, kidney dysfunction, risks and dangers from working, and sex intervention unsafely. These bad practices need to be changed and shifted so that they do not pass away before an appropriate time. The World Health Organization (2018) exhibited that, up to 2025, the Thai populations, both males and females tend to increasingly suffer from obesity. From the latest statistical reports of the Economic Intelligence Center, Siam Commercial Bank in 2017, together with the National Statistical Office of Thailand (2017), easily speaking, the cheat day is a normal eating and consumption habits and manners among the majority of the Thai people while a smaller number of the Thai respondents concern about food cleanliness and nutrition. Such statistics further disclosed that a larger number of the Thai people have enjoyed eating and consuming food that is sweet and brackish and that their health and wellbeing can be regarded as not in the good conditions. Moreover, the majority of the Thai people, especially children, single people, and private enterprise employees barely eat

and consume vegetables and fruits (in Katchwattana, 2019; Manager 360, 2019; National Statistical Office of Thailand, 2017). In consistent with this, M2F Editorial (2019) has online surveyed the Thai people's eating habits and consumptions by measuring their engagements and interactions.

Collapses and losses before a premature time can be the expected results unless people have changed their behaviours. One vital driving and encouraging strategy is social marketing. According to the National Social Marketing Centre (n.d.), it can be understood that people play an important role as an initial source and final remark for success and failure of a social marketing initiative. Likewise, it is necessary to have a campaign and initiative created and developed by a responsible and collaborative organisation to move this campaign forward and influence people for long-term individual and social contributions and changes. Indeed, Editorial Team (2024) elaborated that the tactics that can be used can be advertising and marketing ideas and the like. One of the main vital reason of taking social marketing strategy into account, especially in this paper is to solve such (long-term) social and environmental issues in order to help individuals and societies as a whole, i.e. social marketing rather than focus on giving benefits to a particular brand, i.e. corporate social marketing (Vazque-Brust, 2017).

Social marketing initiatives in Thailand

According to such social issues most considered in Thailand, as addressed earlier, the two social marketing initiatives that shall be grouped and elaborated here are 1) our beloved H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great's sufficiency economy philosophy as for the economic and social issue, 2) The PM 2.5

environmental social marketing initiative as for environmental issue, and 3) physical activities, together with an increase in sugar and salt and sodium taxes for the Thai people's health promotion and prevention as social and health issues.

1) Economic and social issue: The sufficiency economy philosophy social marketing initiative

The economic and social inequalities and gaps and environmental problems can effectively and sufficiently be helped by our beloved H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great's sufficiency economy philosophy. The core essence of this sufficiency economy philosophy to encourage the Thai people to rely and live on themselves by managing their lives so that the people can live sustainably and happily. For example, supposed that the people are doing agricultures and farming, the people can enjoy managing their lands, planting their agricultural products, keeping their products for their daily consumption, selling to and exchanging these products to their neighbours, and saving their money for their prosperous futures. Economically, being a tiger of the Southeast Asian continent is not purposeful for the sufficiency economy philosophy, though (Chetchotiros, 2020; The Chaipattana Foundation, n.d.). The philosophy, altogether with this, highly suggests and highlights the moderate practice (Oxford Business Group, n.d.). This can lead people and a country, i.e. Thailand to be sustainably adaptable and flexible, i.e. being protected from materialism, socialism, environmentalism, and culturalism (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, 2017). For instance, currently, the latest statistics from

Nida Poll and National Credit Bureau, Gen Y in Thailand is more likely to get into debt than the other generations. This is because this group of the people perceive that money is something that can find and earn easily. However, the Gen Y people have not much savings and sufficient (in Anonymous, 2021a). If an individual can buy and purchase such extravaganza without having any further financial hurdles and burdens, this person can be treated as being sufficient.

Dr Sumet Tantivejkul, Member and Secretary-General of the Chaipattana Foundation, delivering a special lecture, entitled 'King Rama 9 and his sufficiency economy' in the 2007 National Conference of Praboromarajchanok Institute and the statement can be concluded that this sufficiency economy philosophy, therefore, encourages the people not only in Thailand, but also around the globe to have understanding of, respect to, and practice something that is called a purposeful and sustainable life. In other words, the people can enjoy and experience their sustainable and happy lives as long as they do not put themselves in the difficult and problematic positions and circumstances, including financial and monetary, relational, and the like. The core essence of the sufficiency economy philosophy, repeatedly, underlined that not too much, not too less, but be neutral is an action the people should appreciate and apply (in Chayakul, 2007).

In consideration of the effectiveness and success of the sufficiency economy philosophy on the Thai people's ways of living, this approach has helped improve and develop the Thai people's lives in the different angles and perspectives. For example, together with the strong capability of the village headmen, community-based engagement, and collective culture,

cost for the funeral arrangement for Tha Toung Luang Sub District Administration Organization can be well-managed and saved properly, by applying the sufficiency economy philosophy (Pichayakul, 2013). The philosophy, furthermore, helps the physical and psychological development and improvement among the students from Boromarajonani College of Nursing in Surin province (Chularee, Roongroung, & Chiaranai, 2009). Moreover, this philosophy is used as a principle for creating so-called 'Being Sufficient is Good The Creator' initiative initiated in 2016. This initiative targets to a person because he/she is a starting point for change and development. Such changes and developments can be beneficial for both individuals and holistic societies (Porlaewdee, n.d.; The Cloud, 2017).

By understanding this sufficiency economy philosophy through the 4Ps, to encourage the people's sufficient actions and practices, honestly, the people have nothing to invest and push. The self-centric mindset is a benefit and reward the people and societies as a whole will be gaining.

2) Environmental issue: The PM 2.5 environmental social marketing initiative

Presently, the Thai Health Promotion Foundation has launched a new social marketing campaign, known as "Air You Can Eat" to raise Thai people's awareness and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) about fighting against PM 2.5. Such awareness and eWOM is strategically conveyed through four creative, sensory-used dishes to drive the target audiences' interpretation and engagement on the Airvisible application (Thai Health Promotion Foundation, 2022).

A professional Thai-Esam-cultured food chef, disclosed these four against-PM2.5 dishes, i.e. 1) a full-of-dust dish presents regionally pungent ingredients, for examples, perilla frutescens, southern Thai tai pla curry powder, and anchovy. These ingredients can be deemed as PM 2.5 which is dangerous for people's breath, body, and taste; 2) a smoking fish dish displays combustion engine as an original and important cause of PM 2.5; 3) a five-eating dish comprising puff pastry sticks, liver mousse, mulberry, malschco cheese, and minced pork terrine represents ease of digestion as a state of health, varying from excellent to dangerous and 4) a sweet smoke dish or a smoked coconut husk meringue is regarded as styrofoam sheet waste and plastic scraps as an original reason of PM 2.5 (Ad Addict TH, 2022; Jiarawnalee, n.d.; Thai Health Promotion Foundation, 2022).

3) Social and health issues: The physical activities social marketing initiative and the increasing taxes of sugar and salt and sodium

A variety of the governmental and non-governmental organisations, especially the Thai Health Promotion Foundation give their hands to encourage the Thai populations for physical activities and lessen unhealthy food consumption. Both of the legal and health promotional measures are, therefore, explained and exhibited.

As for the Thai Health Promotion Foundation, a variety of the strategic social marketing campaigns promoting and strengthening good health and wellbeing have been launched. These include a variety of social marketing campaigns to promote and strengthen the healthy people in Thailand. The campaigns target to a wide range of the target audiences, including the

teenagers, working people, and older people (analysed from the Thai Health Promotion Foundation, n.d.a). These groups of the target audiences are consistent with the challenges revealed and stated in the previous section that Generation Z has been suffering and experiencing the bad health status and conditions. Unless their physical health and wellbeing is promoted and protected at earliest, there is the prevalence for them to die before an appropriate time. Just recently, the Thai Health Promotion Foundation has received the 2021 award, in the remembrance of Nelson Mandela (Post Reporters, 2021).

Unavoidably, the campaigns have highlighted the importance of the 4Ps marketing mix. The products in this case are physical activities and vegetables. These mutual commodities' prices are not expensive, rather it is unnecessary for the Thai people to invest a large number of money for even buying and purchasing exercise equipment and materials and expensive vegetables. Good health and wellbeing is initially resulted from the Thai people themselves. Easily speaking, if the Thai people *per se* are able to overcome their physical and psychological difficulties and health and wealth is strengthened by providing them the positive and favourable consequences and outcomes they will be receiving and earning, there are no odds for the Thai people to actively exercise and look after their health and wellbeing. The Thai people should feel comfortable and convenience about the venues to exercise and buy and purchase the vegetables because they can implement their physical activities at home.

At the same time, the Thai people can plant a variety of vegetables themselves and cook and eat them. They actually do not have to push any hard

attempts to start their health and wealthy behaviours. Finally, the Thai people are aroused and stimulated by their peers and celebrities and latent outcomes and consequences they finally receive.

To evaluate and measure success of the social marketing campaigns, like physical activities and family relationship, generally speaking, the Thai people have changed their behaviour around 20 per cent, said Supattanuch Sorndumri (Isranews, 2020). The success can also be evidenced by Widyastari, Saonuam, Rasri, Pongpradit, & Katewongsa (2021) when the Thai young people are enjoying doing their physical activities and spending a longer time in doing so. However, the hit of COVID-19 pandemic and gender, i.e. females should not be the excuses for continuing exercising among the Thai children.

In relation to the initiative of the sufficiency economy philosophy mentioned and addressed above, this beneficial and valuable philosophy can be applied to encourage the people to exercise and enjoy physical activities. Self-centric is a must. And, pay less and nothing, be at home, and gain more and more for the people's physical and psychological health and wellbeing should massively be highlighted.

Because the Thai people are in risks and dangers of deaths from their unhealthy eating habits and consumptions, together with this, the measures to increase the taxes of sugar and salt and sodium in drinking products are seriously and strictly legitimised and lifted up in order to avoid the Thai people from the various diseases, especially that are not transmitted from humans to humans. And, the Thai people should be healthier and wealthier (Lindeman, 2017; Yongcharoenchai, 2019). Such taxes of sugar and salt and sodium are gone

well when a number of the Thai people who are experiencing obesity are declining (Anonymous, 2021b).

Current situations of social marketing in Thailand: Academics and Professionals

Academically, in Thailand, in the author's perspectives, although the Thai people have been facing and experiencing social issues and problems continuously, studies in social marketing is rather limited and few. The commercial marketing perspectives are prioritised, instead. The social marketing publications in Thailand are also limited. Surprisingly, when talking about social marketing, it seems that social media marketing and corporate social responsibility, or shortly CSR is understood, instead. When referring and relating to the marketing concept, in educational context, the widely-known, best-seller marketing books, from the first

to Marketing 5.0, written by Phillip Kotler, a father of the world marketing are recommended for the students. His books are always translated in Thai. The author has to confess that there are very few Thai social marketing books and textbooks originally written. Such publications are rather old and that need to be updated. Or, social marketing is an integral part of the marketing books and textbooks. The other books and textbooks have given more focuses and emphasises on (digital) marketing tactics and techniques.

Together with this, studies and researches on social marketing in Thailand is rather focused on a strategy than formative research and evaluation. The following table concludes the social marketing books, textbooks, studies, and researches in Thailand to be evidenced.

Table 1 Summary of the social marketing books, textbooks, studies, and researches in Thailand

Authors	Brief details
Books and textbooks	
Deshyangul (2019)	The social marketing MKT4311 book gives an overview of social marketing, social marketing processes and planning, marketing environment analysis, objectives and target audiences defined, segmentation and targeting, competitive circumstances, positioning, marketing mix strategies, budgeting and evaluation, and case studies .
Sampattavanija (2004)	The author would like to introduce the new social marketing concepts and strategies to encourage a greater amount of success in attitudinal and behavioural changes among the people in Thailand . The contents of this textbook comprise the development of the marketing eras, social marketing processes, social antecedents for success and effectiveness of social marketing, advantages and disadvantages of social marketing, and application of social marketing .

Table 1 Summary of the social marketing books, textbooks, studies, and researches in Thailand (Continued)

Authors	Brief details
Studies and researches	
Sakulpan et al. (2016)	The study revealed that social marketing for organic rice was certified, well represented three cultural dimensions of Uttaradit province, and an information exchange symbol between producers, consumers, and underprivileged .The product's price was reasonable .The target audience was niched .
Sianmekhun (2015)	The study targeted to figure out internal and external saliences of social marketing and its processes .The social marketing processes can be considered as a spider network .
Vantamay (2017)	In order to evaluate the effectiveness of social marketing campaigns, the study indicated the seven dimensions .
Vantamay (2015)	By using Delphi technique, there were the seven dimensions to evaluate and measure the success of social marketing campaigns .
Vantamay (2014b)	For social marketing communication to strengthen the Thai juveniles 'health, there were four dimensions to be considered .These included a number and a frequency of media outreach, an intention to circulate the information, and a size of communication networks .
Mahasinpaisan & Sakrunpongakul (2013)	Social marketing, as a business strategy, was used for helping and solving social issues and challenges in the ever-changing world .Such assistances can show the organisations 'corporate social responsibility .
Vantamay (2012)	Success of social marketing should be collaborated by all social layers, including family and friend, educational institutes, communities, and society as a whole .
Sangsirisyankul (2011)	BE magazine was turned to be a medium for the underprivileged for their betterment and improvement .However, there were a variety of problems and challenges found .
Vantamay (2010)	The author suggested the diverse social marketing agenda and issues to fit well with the different age ranges .That was to say, health and education issues should be underlined for the younger people whose age is between 0 and 14 years old .As for the working populations, aged between 15 and 59, the organisations should concern about their education, working skills and competencies, health, employment, and income distribution .Finally, for the aging and aged society, health, saving, income distribution, and social supports must be taken for granted .

From Figure 1, there is an odd that Professor N. Vantamay is the outstanding scholar who falls in love with social marketing continuously and consistently. His

thesis students were also conducting the studies and researches about social marketing with a variety of aspects and issues. For example, social marketing and

COVID-19 pandemic prevention (Sriputtirat & Vantamay, 2021), social marketing and environmental preservation (Sukswaschon & Vantamay, 2020), social marketing and rabies for the general Thai populations (Palawan & Vantamay, 2019), social marketing and the older people (Kaewduangta & Vantamay, 2018), social marketing and money saving (Suyala & Vantamay, 2017), and social marketing and health-risk reductions among university males (Kaokangplu & Vantamay, 2015). However, at a certain level, there is, presumably, a blurred line between social marketing and social media marketing in these studies. Professor Vantamay had also written a book/textbook, so-called Marketing Communications in 2014. Nonetheless, it seems that social marketing was

underlined only as a part of the whole marketing communications (see Vantamay, 2014a).

Social marketing should, therefore, be updated and that in the other perspectives should also be encouraged, for instance, to build social equality, to promote environmental-friendly products, to establish educational quality and improvement, and the like.

The limitation can, likewise, be noticed in the courses offered at the university level. The social marketing concept has also been expanded. The author has searched on Google search engine for social marketing in Thai words, the results of the courses are shown as follows.

Table 2 The conclusion of the universities' courses about social marketing and its expansion

Curriculum/University	Course code	Course name
BBA (Marketing), Faculty of Management Sciences, Suan Dusit University (Suan Dusit University, 2016)	3642504	Social and Environmental Marketing
Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna (Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, n.d.)	BBABA601	Green Marketing
BBA (Marketing), Kasetsart University (Kasetsart University, 2017)	01134315	Marketing for Social and Environment Responsibility
BBA (Marketing), Ramkhamhaeng University (Ramkhamhaeng University, n.d.)	MKT 4311	Social Marketing

From Table 2, a few interests in social marketing have been evidenced. The social marketing course that is provided in the BBA (Marketing) programme at Ramkhamhaeng University is clearly seen and observed. However, for the rest, social marketing is tied and related to the environmental and green issues and to a sense of corporate social responsibility. At a certain point, social marketing itself should be

empowered. While social marketing in other public and private universities are limited. Without considering a level of study, for example, Masters in Branding and Marketing (Thai Programme) Chulalongkorn Business School offers students with sustainable marketing as a free elective course (Chulalongkorn Business School, n.d.), Master of Science (Marketing Management) focuses on digital marketing including mobile marketing and

social media marketing (Thammasat Business School, 2018); Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Mahidol University provides bachelor's students with social enterprise (Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, 2017); University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce gives bachelor's students with digital marketing, especially social media marketing (University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, 2023), and the like.

The other outstanding, noticeable point is that social marketing is considered as a part of a business administration, majoring marketing, specifically. To the best of the author's understanding, social marketing should rather be included in the field of marketing communication because social marketing mainly involves in building knowledge and understanding and encourage the people to change their attitude and behaviour for one's and social betterment and improvement. The contents and messages tailored and crafted for such changes are very difficult and challenging since the people have their own existing beliefs, attitudes, traditions and cultures, and the like. This is meant that both scholars and professionals in marketing communications should help each other to fulfil and bridge the gaps.

In terms of professional dimension, the one main individual and two main organisations that devote their lives and times for social marketing, especially for health and wellbeing are generated. The author's research interest in health communication can be reasoned. The first main, outstanding individual social marketing person is Dr Mechai Viravaidya who has been dealing with the HIV/AIDS issue for a long time. The first main organisation is the Thai Red Cross Society. The second main organisation is the Thai Health Promotion

Foundation. The importance of the one outstanding person and the two highly-respected organisations are illustrated one by one.

In the health context of Thailand, the first person whom is in the Thai people's long-lasting remembrance is Dr Mechai Viravaidha, chairman, Mechai Viravidya Foundation, chairman, Population and Community Development Association, and member of the National Reform Council. Dr Viravaidha is a person who help fight and combat with the widespread of HIV/AIDS transmission in Thailand. Bill Gates, an American millionaire and a founder, Microsoft has respected and called Dr Viravaidha as 'The Condom King because Dr Viravaidha's health solution can help increase the life quality of the Thai people (Workpoint Today writer, 2018). Edutainment is an approach employed by Dr Viravaidha in discouraging the Thai people from the HIV/AIDS transmission risks and promoting them to have a safe sex. A picture showing the colourful flowers created from condoms (TEDxChange, 2010) is in not only the Thai people's, but also the global ones' splendid memory and remembrance. Andrew Biggs, a very famous English master of ceremony and teacher in Thailand has interviewed Dr Viravaidha. He gave some edutainment examples for empowering HIV/AIDS reductions in Thailand. The key rings containing condoms inside were given as the premiums to the delegates of the World Bank Conference held in Thailand. Condoms were provided for the guests who dine in at Dr Viravaidha's Cabbages and Condoms restaurant. For the celebration of the United Nations award winning, Dr Viravaidha's students from Mechai Pattana School were preparing and performing, so-called the Condom Dance. In this event, condoms were turned to be an attention-

grabbing event that led the people experience the largest-condom-made balloon competition (Biggs, 2017).

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (n.d.), since 2016, zero HIV transmitted risks between mothers and their children in Thailand, as the first country in Asia, has been approved by the World Health Organization. Thanks should also be given to Dr Viravaidha for his hard attempt and devotion.

In terms of the Thai Red Cross Society is one of the main social marketing organisations in Thailand where is committed to providing the four main interrelated services to the Thai people. These include 1) medical and health care services, 2) disaster preparedness and response, 3) blood transfusion services, and 4) quality of life promotion (The Thai Red Cross Society, n.d.). This organisation has been funded and supported by our beloved royal family and charity. Whenever Thailand has faced and encountered the problems, the Thai Red Cross Society is one of the front-line organisations to give hands to the Thai people for relieving and getting rid of their pains and sufferings.

As for the Thai Health Promotion Foundation, the organisation has a very clear mission and vision for the Thai people's health promotion and prevention. The importance of health promotion and prevention must directly be tailored to the Thai people. The organisation, thus, has established and created a website, i.e. socialmarketing.thaihealth.or.th. As indicated in the website, this website is a source of information and materials provided by the Thai Health Promotion Foundation for the benefits of the Thai people and those who are interested in social marketing. The organisation's hard attempt for social marketing is of high appreciation. Also, this organisation is a state enterprise, headed by the

prime minister of Thailand (Thai Health Promotion Foundation, n.d.b).

The organisation's health promotion and prevention campaigns and focuses cover all multi-dimensional aspects including on alcohol, smoking, accident, sex education, physical and psychological health, community and society, positive inspiration, youth and family, and the like (Thai Health Promotion Foundation, n.d.b). In order to achieve and accomplish such goals, the Thai Health Promotion Foundation is financially supported by 2 per cent of imported alcohol and tobacco excise taxes (Thai Health Promotion, 2019).

Success and effectiveness of social marketing in Thailand must, therefore, be collaborated and cooperated by all of the public, private, and people sectors.

Commentary for future

According to the literatures reviewed and discussions made above, there are the four main considerations the author would like to propose for the improvement of social marketing in Thailand. These include that 1) social marketing academia should be improved and encouraged, 2) clarification between social marketing and social media marketing and corporate social responsibility should be clarified, and 3) social marketing campaigns should be implemented consistently.

(1) The improvement and encouragement of the social marketing academia

From the information and discussion provided above, in Thailand, a greater extent of social marketing has likelihood to be perceived in the sights of the professional people than their academic ones.

Together with this, a variety of agenda and issues should be expanded. As the literatures mentioned above, social marketing studies and researches are more likely to be studied and examined for health prevention and promotion and environmental preservation in Thailand. In fact, there are the other agenda and issues that should be taken into serious consideration that has more or less been threatening the Thai citizens for a long time. Especially during this period of time, social marketing campaigns promoting and showing equality and humanisation, for instance, expression of freedom, women empowerment, LGBTQ movement, and the like. Understanding the insights of the Thai people involving, a variety of social marketing models studied and examined continuously, consistently, and systematically, the socio-cultural perspectives, the Thai people's knowledge, attitude, and behaviour, their innovation adoption, and the like. These findings of the studies and researches can help design social marketing campaigns more academically and professionally.

This critic shall be supported by the fact that mainstream commercial marketing is rather easier to be practiced and implemented than social marketing because of people's exchange value. In other words, if people receive more benefits and values in returns than they give, they, probably, change their desired behaviour (Thornley & Marsh, 2010). It, therefore, is time- and energy-consuming. Also, it takes some times to get results, outcomes, and outputs.

(2) The clarification between social marketing and social media marketing and corporate social responsibility and environmental and green marketing

Yes, it is. There are the blurred lines between social marketing and social media marketing and social marketing and corporate social responsibility. It will be no surprise when misunderstanding and misinterpretation about these triple words/phrases have been found.

The first misunderstanding is found between social marketing and social media marketing. The words that are quite similar can, presumably, be reasoned. While social marketing is a broader concept, social media marketing is an integral part of social marketing. In other words, for reaching the target audiences and arouse them to shift their actual attitude and behaviour for their own and social betterment and improvement, several important elements have to analysed and planned. One of them to be considered is social media planning and management.

The second misunderstanding is revealed between social marketing and corporate social responsibility. Such confusion can initially be reasoned by the Thai words translated. As for social marketing, it is translated into 'kam talad pua sang kom' meaning that the application of the marketing concept to tell and advertise the stories and narratives for the people to do and do not practice any attitude and behaviour.

In consideration of corporate social responsibility, likewise, its Thai word is 'kwam rub pid chob tor sang kom'. This mean that, normally, the purposes to gain monetary benefits and revenues are placed at most, in the sights of the brands, companies, and organisations. Corporate social responsibility, as one of the major visions and missions of the brands, companies, and organisations nowadays, should be taken for granted. In Thailand, corporate social responsibility is regarded as the giving of the brands', companies', and organisations' helps and

assurances to the people in Thai societies to relieve their physical and psychological sufferings and pains and, certainly, show the brands', companies', and organisations' social contributions. For instance, during several flooding situations in Bangkok and other provinces in Thailand, food boxes and packs have been delivered to those who were attacked and hit by such floods. In the winter time, some brands, companies, and organisations have done good deeds for the Thai societies by giving blankets and facilities to relieve the winter-hit people's freeze. In any cases and at a certain level, sustainability is unlikely to be expressed.

By comparing between social marketing and corporate social responsibility, one shared and common characteristic is social contributions. The consequences of social contribution are, however, viewed in the different ways. That is to say, while social marketing's goal is to CHANGE the individuals' attitude and behaviour, the corporate social responsibility's is to SHARE the brands', companies', and organisations' empathy and benevolence to the societies. Digital Trend Update (2023) supported that social marketing is mostly practiced by non-profit organisations and public agents. On the contrary, (big) private brands are conducting corporate social responsibility. Apart from this difference, in this sense, the actions are played by the different players, i.e. the people per se for the social marketing perspective and the brands, companies, and organisations for the corporate social responsibility. The other disparity is about the application of the academic approach. Social marketing applies the marketing principle and behavioural changes into account. Instead, this is not in the case of corporate social responsibility where prioritise to the ethical and legislative concepts

and midsets in running businesses. The final point differentiating between social marketing and corporate social responsibility is social marketing is rather a long-term, dynamic process. In contrast, corporate social responsibility, especially in Thailand is rather a short-term practice and consequence.

In any cases, moreover, it seems to the author that social marketing is something about environmental and green issues only. This can be argued and defended by the fact that because in the recent years and trends, the environmental problems, PM 2.5, specifically are the serious and critical issue the Thai people have been concerning and feeling worried. This is because huge effects like allergies and bad breathing can happen with the people. The environmentally-friendly campaigns have been encouraged and launched by the brands, companies, and organisations to convince the Thai people to use tote bags and environmentally-friendly materials and to say no to plastic bags. At this time, tote bags are regarded as a semiotic symbol and tool for the brands', companies', and organisations' social marketing campaigns. These are likely to be the successful marketing strategy to win the market share and the customers' and consumer's hearts and minds. As a result of this, social marketing is likely to limit to something so-called environmental and green marketing.

Not only in Thailand, but also in other countries, confusions between social marketing and other terms are existing and scholars and professionals try to differ such terms. For example, between social marketing and corporate social responsibility (Thomas, 2022), between social marketing and green marketing (Vazifehdust et al., 2011), and even between social

marketing and societal marketing (for example, Rusith, n.d.; UKEassays, 2018).

(3) *The social marketing campaigns should be implemented consistently*

Together with this, social marketing practices and applicability should be implemented continuously, consistently, and sustainably. To keep the people continuing doing some actions and manners, repetition has to be emphasised and insisted. Only a couple of time communication would not be effective. Nor do a current trend. What the author means by this is that, when a social issue happens, it is treated as a trendy matter. Some practices and actions should be taken place by public, non-profit organisations, and even private companies (e.g. media outreach and media coverages) for some reasons, including corporate social responsibility. When such trend has been faded out, such practices and actions have not been implemented continuously, consistently, and sustainably. In other words, a short- and mid-term outcome and consequence can be predicted.

One of the current examples that come into my mind is PM 2.5. As mentioned and addressed at the beginning of this article, especially prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Thailand is a country where is most hit by the PM2.5 environmental issue. Many anti-plastic, tote bag use campaigns from public, private, and non-profit organisations had been heavily launched and generated. Once the COVID-19 pandemic has happened, the social marketing campaigns promoting less use of plastic bags and more use of tote shopping bags are likely to be declined and left behind while the PM 2.5 environmental issue is still highly prevalent. This issue is likely to be

brought back, currently because the COVID-19 pandemic is in a better position nowadays. Discontinuity can, presumably, cause the social issues remained for infinite time and no one knows when the matters are going to end, within a governmental regime or across it. At the same time, more time, more money, and more energy have to be invested and spent. Possibly, the people's lives may be shortened.

Conclusions, limitations, and recommendations

This paper introduces some social challenges and issues found in Thailand and need to be resolved seriously. One strategy that can help reduce such social challenges and issues is social marketing, i.e. attempts to maintain and change a target audience's desired and sustained behaviour for their own and social sakes. Whether or not the target audience are willing to change and adapt their manners depend upon a greater extent of what they take than what they give. A couple of social marketing initiatives are addressed for shared and mutual understanding of how to make the betterment through the social marketing strategy. In Thailand, however, social marketing is under critical discussion and that need to be improved and practiced.

It is to accept that this article is not a perfect one due to some flaws. Some challenges and problems are not addressed in this paper. In order to respond to this, other social marketing initiatives are excluded in this paper, but should be included and studied in the future studies for more understanding about social marketing. Due to the fact that this paper focuses on understanding social marketing in Thailand only, also, social marketing

in other countries, especially in Asia should be considered to be good exemplars for organisations to develop and improve social marketing in Thailand.

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