

CHANGING HEALTH BEHAVIOR OF YOUTH THROUGH SOCIAL MARKETING (GEORGIAN CASE)

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Abstract

The paper presents the study of young consumer's perception and attitudes regarding healthy lifestyle, particularly consumption of fitness services in Georgia. The study relies on the different scientific publications on social marketing, consumer's behavior and marketing promotions. The research underlines, that the effective social marketing campaigns should be based on the triangle of interventions: education, marketing, and law. Research revealed the strong relationship between youth's physical activity, health and education through the use of social marketing approach. Lack of knowledge about the significance of physical education at Georgian public schools and universities makes barriers for popularization of fitness service among younger audiences. There is a need to change behavior of the youth, to identify the different needs and preferences, which should be linked directly with creation of customer oriented affords. The survey emphasizes the significant role of integrated marketing communications for increasing demand of young people on the health products. The research notes, that social media could be a driving force for the long-term customer retention, financial performance and business continuity in this field. Collaborative working between civil society, government, private sector and media will increase motivation of youth to engaging in health behavior change.

Key words: *healthy lifestyle, behavior change, fitness service, triangle of social intervention, youth*

JEL Classification: *M31*

I. INTRODUCTION

Ensuring healthy lives and promoting the well-being are essential to the sustainable transformation of the world. Promoting healthy lifestyle is crucial for helping young people to learn and develop life skills. Social marketing is influencing behavior, that will improve health, utilizing a systematic planning process, that applies marketing principles and techniques, capturing on priority target audience segment and delivering a positive benefit for society (Lee and Kotler, 2011; Andreasen, 2006). Conceptually social marketing is relayed on the behavior change theories. According the Trans Theoretical Model the campaign of social change needs to pass six stages. Attitude is generated from cognition (source of information) affect (feelings, emotions associated with an object which can influence attitude) and past behavior (Prochaska, 2006). Social Marketing explicitly recommends combining multiple types of tool in an intervention mix. There are many literatures and study about successful marketing campaigns regarding healthy lifestyle (Donovan, 2011; Evans and Hastings, 2008; French et al., 2010; French and Apfel, 2014; Glanz et al., 2008; Lefebvre, 2011). Social marketing campaigns based on the triangle of social interventions: education, marketing, and law. Social marketing uses education as one of the important tools for increasing awareness of the youth population. Education relies on sending messages to inform or/and persuade the target audience to adopt the desired behavior voluntarily, but does not provide direct or and immediate benefits. The favorable environment is vital to support and promote behavior change of individuals (Rothschild, 1999).

Legislation regulating the norms of behavior in the society and marketing mix creates a favorable environment for the formation of new social product (Gordon, 2011; Wood, 2012; Wymer, 2011, Hastings, 2003). Young consumers, whose lifestyle are easily integrated with health and fitness clubs and have positive attitudes to exercise are the most predictable segments. However, consumer's needs and preferences change in key areas of their lifestyle and family stages and perhaps offer niche or more customized opportunities (Zhang and Li, 2014). In recent years the public health benefits of reducing passive lifestyles and promoting physical activity have become increasingly apparent. Increased awareness of the need for theory-driven research on the process of health behavior change. Investigation provided by the different scholars outline that young people have positive attitudes to exercise offered by fitness service. But challenges of global social economic factors have an influence on development of fitness industry and on the consumption of fitness services.

II. FITNESS DEVELOPMENT TRENDS IN GEORGIA

Georgia announces healthy lifestyle as one of the national priorities. In the era of new technologies it is crucial to promote a healthy lifestyle of youth based on the World Health Organization's approach. In order to achieve this objective it is essential to create an environment supporting the young people to enhance their physical activity. The government should collaborate with private and civil society to initiate social marketing interventions, increasing public awareness about a behavioral risk factor of physical inactivity. Tbilisi is the capital of Georgia - main industrial, social and cultural center with population 1.5 million (2014 Census), one can find an increasing number of gyms and fitness centers with swimming pools and brand new training equipment. Fitness became very popular among the youth. Services offered by fitness clubs require a great deal of contact with the customers. As in the other pure services, a unique characteristic of fitness services is that customers participate in their production process. Fitness services are significant for young generation to promote their health and wellness, but unfortunately the involvement of the youth in the healthy lifestyle campaigns is not sufficient. Physical fitness is associated with a person's ability to work effectively, enjoy leisure time, be healthy. The development of physical fitness is not possible without regular exercise. It is important to explore the conceptual meaning of social marketing in the public health as well, as the significance of its practical implication. There are the positive changes in Georgian society, but it had little impact on the youth attitudes and behaviors. It should be emphasized that, awareness of the public health is essential to support behavior change of youth individuals. Despite, that fitness industry grew rapidly last decade in Georgia, but due to the social-economic problems young people have little access to fitness services. Policy and regulation change became crucial tool, while social marketing promotes behavior change, help people to adapt to the new behavior (Jashi, 2012; Jashi and Todua, 2013; Todua and Jashi, 2013).

III. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DISCUSSION

The materials for this study were collected from several sources, such scientific articles, books, journal and statistical data. For obtaining new original data, quantitative and qualitative research methods have been applied. Formulated the working hypothesis and questionnaire, the methods of focus groups and expert interviews were applied. Approximately of 500 young respondents were interviewed. A survey was provided among the youth respondents from 5 fitness centers, schools and universities in Tbilisi. A survey was done on a structural questionnaire, which was divided into four blocks, namely, customer motives, factors affecting satisfaction, behavior in the fitness club, demographic information. A five-point Likert scale was used in the questionnaire. Focus group interviews were questioned to the representatives of the fitness managers, Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, Ministry of Education and Science, sport business and youth groups. Focus groups and in-depth interviews with the respondents revealed, that cooperation between schools, universities and private sectors are very weak. Regular participation in physical activity is particularly beneficial for the students and pupils teaching at the schools and universities. The survey was conducted only in Tbilisi. Public schools and universities have no essential mechanism to provide popularization of fitness service among younger audiences. This investigation finds that health and fitness consumers can be segmented by their needs, drives, recognized rewards and youth's lifestyle. The study approved, that regular participation in physical activity is particularly beneficial for the students and pupils teaching at the schools and universities. But the youth segment is not well motivated. The private sector should take into account the target customers' individual needs and should capture on the youth encouragement. Social media became a strong instrument for the long-term customer retention, financial performance and business continuity. Through social marketing interventions young people provided with essential knowledge, improved legislative environment and supported the behavior changing for creating the desired social product. Changed the activity of fitness services, which tailored to the need of students, young people. Price policy has been regulated to improve youth access to healthy products. Increase the role of mass media in facilitating youth's physical activity, to develop a national media campaign to change youth's health behavior. Most of the respondents highlighted behavior changes among the youth in the country, increasing health-fitness programs in Tbilisi. The respondents particular prefer -two types of physical activity each week, aerobic training was more popular among the female respondents and strength exercises - among the male respondents. 45% the respondents welcome opening of SNAP fitness in Tbilisi, but 55% of respondents were not aware about this event. SNAP fitness offering "world class" the gym, which would be "affordable" and accessible to a wide range of young people- considered as significant event by the respondents (see Table 1).

One of the important aspects of the respondents were proper screening and risk stratification of consumers, who is starting to consume fitness service. It should be noted, that 91% of respondents were not carried out screening and no information was gathered from their health history. It indicates, that young consumers don't pay proper attention to the health behavior. From the point of the respondents the main factor

to become a member of the fitness club are the following: sufficient environment, including good equipment and service, the price, which had great influence on the consumer's decision to join fitness clubs. The professional staff is also the key element for the respondents. Personal fitness trainers (PFTs) must be able to utilize the proper tools and understand the information gathered from the exercise screening. Components of this screening include the health history questionnaire (HHQ); physical activity readiness questionnaire (PAR-Q) risk stratification. Unfortunately, this aspect was not always considered in the fitness clubs - argued 70% of respondents. Women ages 18-35 were more focused on their appearance-related issues than men.

Table 1. The main factors to be involved in the fitness center

Motives	Mean	Response categories
To stay healthy	4,40	Strongly agree
To lose weight	3,75	Agree
To reduce stress	3,20	Neutral
To socialize	2, 60	Disagree
It is trendy	2,35	Not important at all

Likert scale from 1= not important , 5= most important

To the question “how often do you exercise?” only 37 % answered 3 times a week. 14% had never used the fitness services and majority of them turned out to go spontaneity. There are many barriers, that prevent them to join regularly fitness clubs. Social change is modification is not always adopted by them, healthy lifestyle improves the quality of life, but it is not essential -argued some respondents (see Table 2).

Table 2. Frequency of Exercise

Response categories	Percent
Three times a week	37%
Once a week	25%
Daily	13%
Spontaneity	11%
Never	14%

The more than half of the respondents were dissatisfied with the current fitness services. Dissatisfaction was linked to a lack of resources, long waiting times and higher price. The main statement of the respondents was, that prices of fitness services should be decreased, but it does not mean to offer consumers low quality services (see Table 3).

Table 3. Flexible Price with Quality Service

Response categories	Percent
Strongly agree	39 %
Agree	45%
Neutral	7 %
Disagree	3%
Not important at all	6%

It should be highlighted that the respondents emphasized the significance of the Marketing Promotion Mix. Different type of promotion activities, like advertising, PR, sales stimulations influence on the change behavior of the respondents. But particular sales stimulations have become very popular in Georgia. This fact is proved from respondents' answers regarding the question if coupons motivated them to join the fitness club and 35% said that it was one of the biggest motivations to work out. During 2-3 years the popularity of this kind of websites offering discounts has been increasing. Companies are actively promoting discounts on their products or services via this website and one can easily find the results. There is frequently more than 100 purchasing fixed in the particular service a day. Especially, beauty salons and fitness clubs have high demands on the web, because many consumers buy their products with the coupons. Social media stands in the first position to be as the driving force for the long-term customer retention, financial performance and business continuity. Marketing communications should be effective to promote fitness and healthy lifestyle for the young audiences (see Table 4).

Table 4. IMC Preferred by Respondents

Response categories	Percent
Advertising	12%
PR	8 %
Word of mouth	20 %
Sales promotion	25 %
Social media	35 %

The majority of respondents agreed, that fitness is necessary and everyone should work out. Though, their attitude regarding the necessity of fitness turned out only to be their readiness or desire to be involved in fitness activities. It is important to inform Georgian citizens more about the benefits of a health lifestyle. Increase confidence among the young segments, that a healthy lifestyle is prevention of obesity and many diseases needs strongly support. Qualitative research revealed, that collaboration between state institutions, private sectors and civil society should be coordinated and strengthened.

IV. CONCLUSION

Social marketing interventions facilitated structural changes on three levels: government, private sector and civil society. State institutions should collaborate closely with private sectors, and help them fulfill their activities considering customers' needs and demands rather than focusing on their value interests. New Strategy of the government, particularly of Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry Sport and Youth Affairs of highlight importance of healthy lifestyle and development of appropriate infrastructure for mass sport throughout the country. To equip with essential knowledge, improve legislative environment and facilitate behavior change for creating desired social products became one of the priorities of the youth policy strategy. Clubs of fitness changed the activity tailored to the need of students, young people. Price policy regulated to increase of access of youth consumers to healthy behavior. Despite of realization of some successful cases of social marketing interventions in Georgia, there's an urgent need for stronger advocacy and consolidated action of all stakeholders for the integrated healthy lifestyle in the country. Social marketing is a driver of social changes and guarantee well-being of all segments of the population. This issue should be more incorporated in the academic sphere. It is important to expand the research and dialogue for understanding the role of social marketing in achieving social change in all levels of the public life. The private sector should take into account the target customers' individual needs and not focusing on the policy of youth encouragement in common. The conceptual meaning of social marketing in the public health as well, as the significance of its practical implication should be strengthened at all levels of public life.

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