

# SOCIAL MARKETING FOR WATER - CASE STUDY FROM RURAL UGANDA

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## ABSTRACT

Social marketing is a process using commercial marketing techniques such as the marketing mix to change the behaviors of individuals for social benefits. This paper intends to find out strategies from social and commercial marketing methods that can be of practical use in selling clean water to a rural Ugandan village. The approach was to interview commercial companies, social marketing agencies, and a rural village in Uganda, in order to learn about their marketing communication experiences and acquire insights from the “customers”. Lastly, a social marketing strategy for water will be proposed for the village Katunguru-Rubirizi.

Key words: social marketing, water, Uganda, behavior change communication strategy

## INTRODUCTION

The Millennium Development Goal 7 – ensuring environmental sustainability aims to “halve, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation”. People living in rural areas are in fact the ones with least access to clean water (UN Secretary General, 2011). Fontes Foundation is a specialized NGO that provides innovative and appropriate technologies to developing countries. It has installed a water treatment system in a rural Ugandan village Katunguru-Rubirizi in 2004, and also established a community-based organization to monitor and operate the water scheme (Fontes Foundation, 2012). Yet with the existence of a clean water system, it is still observed that some people in the village tend to use free water from the lake, which is heavily contaminated.

Social marketing is a method of using commercial marketing techniques such as the marketing mix to change behaviors and make social impacts. It is believed that this method is effective due to its focus on the customers and their needs (Kotler, 2009). The purpose of this research is to build a marketing strategy for promoting treated water in rural Uganda using marketing methods. This research tries to answer the question of “what techniques from social and commercial marketing strategies can be of practical use in selling clean water to a rural Ugandan village?” This paper will first explore the social marketing theory along with best practices and lessons learned from international organizations. Results from interviews with social

marketing agencies, NGOs working on sanitation marketing, and commercial companies in Kampala are then presented in the report. To gain an insight to the target audience of the case study, a field research in the village was also conducted. Lastly, a marketing strategy combining the experience of the social marketing agencies and commercial companies with the interviews will be proposed.

## SOCIAL MARKETING – CONCEPT AND APPLICATION

Philip Kotler, professor and author of many marketing publications described social marketing as “a process that applies marketing principles and techniques to create, communicate, and deliver value in order to influence target audience behaviors that benefit society as well as the target audience.” He is convinced that social marketing should be part of the solution of poverty reduction because of its focus on the consumers and their needs. Social marketing programs work for behavior changes such as persuading people to get regular immunization, put mosquito nets over their beds, use condoms, quit smoking, refuse drugs, purify their water and wash hands with soap before meals (Kotler, 2009).

Major principles of the social marketing concept include 1) the focus on behaviors. It could be accepting a new behavior (using mosquito nets), rejecting potentially undesirable behavior (start smoking), modifying current behavior (using condom), or to abandon an old undesirable behavior (excessive alcohol use). 2) Recognizing that behavior changes are usually voluntary. These behaviors are not legally binding and often do not promise immediate and direct benefit. 3) Using traditional marketing principles and techniques. They use a customer orientation overview to understand the market segments and choose the target markets that they can best satisfy. Social marketers then use the marketing mix to influence the target audience. 4) Selection of a targeted market. For each target market different marketing mixes are designed. 5) Recognizing that the beneficiary is the individual, group or society as a whole rather than the sponsoring organization such as private donors (Kotler, 2009).

Social marketing sells a desired behavior for societal gain. It persuades the target audience that the benefits of the new behavior outweigh the cost of adopting it. Social marketers use the four Ps - product, price, place and promotion to improve the attractiveness of the desired behavior, and sometimes certain products or services are offered to support this behavior. When there are no tangible products involved, the “products” would be the “desired behavior”. To make the new behavior easily adopted, social marketers change the “price” or cost of the behavior, and the access of the “place”. Then they “promote” the benefits of the new behavior. Social marketing is about making the environment easier to perform the desired behavior, and communicating the benefits of the new behavior (Kotler, 2009).

## EMOTIONAL BRANDING

Gobé, co-founder at the Emotional Branding Alliance believes that brands nowadays have to understand the changes of consumer-focused concepts and values, moving the meaning of a concrete product beyond its values. For example, food is no longer just about cooking, but it means “home/lifestyle design” and “sensory experiences”.

To differentiate products, it is the emotional aspects that will decide customers' choice and the price they pay. Gobé was also convinced that consumers think more with their heart than head when choosing a product, therefore emotional branding is about delivering a "personal dialogue" with the consumers, and address to what is most relevant and meaningful to them (Gobé, 2001).

Gobé introduces four **pillars** of an emotional branding strategy: **relationship, sensorial experiences, imagination and vision**. **Relationship** means to understand the lives and environment of the customers. It's about identifying the decision maker at home. Women nowadays are well-informed and they care about information of products. They look for brands to trust and remain loyal. **Sensorial experiences** are branding tools that can deliver memorable emotional brand experience that builds brand preference. Sensory appeals also stresses the lifestyle and image associated with the product. Strategies of sensorial experience include choosing music played in the store, colors that create the emotional mood, images on packaging, in the store or on advertisement, and scents. It's about stimulating the customers with the five senses to create associations and identifications to the brand. For example, many shops provide food tasting or restaurant and café service in store, to enhance the shopping experience. It is not only a chance for customers to sample the products, but also a place to relax and for further shopping. Demonstrations of in-store chefs in culinary or kitchen shops can allow shoppers to interact with the chef and learn more about the product. A store should be a product playground and let the customers explore the products. **Imagination** is the design of products, retail stores and advertisement that surprises the consumers. Gobé believes that "Design is all about personalization and customization", which allows people to identify a real personality behind the product. When it comes to communication approaches, street theater would be an excellent retail branding strategy, which is even better than traditional advertising. The importance of packaging is also stressed: customers prefer packaging that are easy to identify, and it must also have an emotional contact with the customer. Lastly, **vision** is about having strong, long-term brand vision that helps the brand last (Gobé, 2001).

## METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative research using case study and literature review to develop a strategy for practical use. The collection of data are from observing the marketing environment in Kampala, the village Katunguru-Rubirizi, and also through interviews in Kampala with NGOs specialized in social or sanitation marketing, marketing departments of commercial companies in order to learn about successful factors and lessons learned from marketing campaigns in rural Uganda. The field interview was conducted in September 2011, at the village of Katunguru-Rubirizi, to gain basic insights from the target audience. The documents used in this research are reports from Fontes Foundation, books about social marketing, and reports from many international organizations with field lessons.

# LESSONS LEARNED FROM ORGANIZATIONS AND COMPANIES

## SOCIAL MARKETING IN PRACTICE

To run a social marketing campaign, the organization has to start with products with brand names (PSI, 2003). PACE (Population Services International, PSI Uganda), UHMG (Uganda Health Marketing Group) and Marie Stopes International all have a portfolio of branded products that are easy to recognize. The organization has to acknowledge that behavior change takes time, and prepare for long-term funding efforts (POUZN, 2007). To foster long-term financial support, the organization would have to educate donor about the importance of behavior change communication (BCC), and why consistent funding would be vital (HIP, 2007). It is also widely recommended to have human resources in communication and marketing in the process of designing the campaigns (POUZN, 2007).

## ADDRESS TO USER'S CONCERNS AND MARKET INSIGHTS

Most of the marketing campaigns are developed around certain market insights. Unilever observes how people use the washing powder, and communicates the right way to use it. UHMG have learned that the cost of boiling water is far higher than using the water tablet to clean the water, and communicates that their product AquaSafe is the most efficient way to create safe drinking water. When designing a marketing campaign, it is also important to answer this question: "What's in it for the customer?"

## THE MARKETING MIX

Target audiences in rural areas are usually the mothers who take care of the children and carry water at home, and fathers who are the financial decision makers (WaterAid, 2003). When it comes to price, Warid Telecom and Nile Breweries both recommended that there should be a portfolio of package options for people to choose from. So that different affordability issues can be addressed. In cases of sanitation marketing, where latrines are their major products, the organization usually partner with micro credit institutions to assist the villagers in payments. SNV (Netherlands Development Organisation) has even developed alternatives for people to contribute, if they are not able to pay for the use of latrines. Monetary or nonmonetary incentives such as coupon or status also encourage the desired behavior (HIP, 2010).

## COMMUNICATION APPROACHES

The best mass media communication approaches in rural areas is radio in their local language. Sport and music events, road shows with quizzes and prizes, skits and demonstrations are very popular in most villages as well. Demonstration can show people how water purifier works (especially in the case of water tablets or PUR, a water purification powder). Printed materials such as one-page fact sheets and posters that use pictures or local languages are also effective (POUZN, 2007). Some organizations only use the logo of Ministry of Health, MOH (and also with their support) on printed materials to gain authority. Local leaders, influenza from the music or sport industry are often trusted people, and it is quite influential when they can attend the marketing events, or simply express their support of the product

through radio or printed materials (POUZN, 2007). The local council meetings, water committee meetings, health center meetings and the primary school are also effective communication channels, where people can discuss about the importance of using clean water and explain the misconceptions of chlorine. Interpersonal communication or the direct sales (door to door) are also approaches that worked well because personal issues regarding the water can be easier understood and addressed. PSI for example, has mobile sales persons or trained health teams to directly talk to people to also increase local involvement (PSI, 2009). The HIP project even believes that these locals involved should be certified. UHMG's "water ambassador" at boarding schools is a good example of acknowledging the efforts of changing the community.

## MAKE THEM "OWN THE SYSTEM"

Throughout the entire creation and implementation of a marketing campaign, make sure that the people in the community are involved and receive important roles in the process. UHMG's school "water ambassador" has successfully created the pride and honor for young people to be changemakers in their community.

## BRANDING STRATEGY

Branding is about a lot of visibility, colors, and sensorial experiences. All successful brands have unforgettable colors and logos. The colors and logo must be visible on all marketing materials such as posters and T-shirts. Package designs for water related product often use children and family images (POUZN, 2007). Marketing managers have all mentioned that people in the rural areas like to show that they are part of a branded product. MTN (Mobile Telephone Networks) makes sure that its logo and the color yellow is "in the face" of the customers in rural areas. Bright, point-of-sale materials are also considered to be very important to commercial companies. HCPU (Health Communications Partnerships Uganda) even created two fictional characters of "Fred and Bernard" to represent a comparison between small and big family issues in radio, community drama skits and printed materials. Marketing expert Fireworks Advertising also suggested that emotional branding should be about what "experience" the brand can bring to the consumer through different "senses". For example, the music, color, and atmosphere in the store.

## PARTNERSHIPS

Many social marketing organizations have partnered with companies to benefit from funding, manufacturing, technologies and distribution channel. Companies also like to partner with NGOs to gain from its local insights and long-term commitment. Partnerships can assist the organization in acquiring resources and expertise that is out of its capacity (HIP, 2007).

## CASE STUDY FROM KATUNGURU-RUBIRIZI

### FISHING VILLAGE IN NATIONAL PARK

The field research took place at the Katunguru-Rubirizi village in the Queen Elisabeth National Park, southwest Uganda. The main economic activities are restricted fishing, hunting and cotton production. Located next to the Kazinga Channel, the

villagers fish, wash clothes and retrieve the water for household use. Fontes Foundation has installed a water treatment system in 2004, so that the villagers can not only have access to safe drinking water, but also avoid the danger of fetching water from the lake where hippos and crocodiles are hidden. This small pipe water scheme is based on surface water treatment technologies because the ground water is rather salty, and the process of desalination is expensive. The water system pumps water from the lake to the village, and the flocculation is done with aluminum sulfate. Pressurized sand and activated carbon are then used to filter the dust, and chlorine is added to kill bacteria in the water. The funding for the water scheme installation came from Norway, and the consumers have to contribute money for the fuel and chemicals. Fontes Foundation also continuously trains the community members to maintain the water treatment through the operation of a water committee. However, it is still observed that even when safe drinking water is available, there are people fetching water from the lake. According to the water committee, there are approximately 145 families in the village, and 90~100 families are using the water tap. The field interview is focused on the habits of using water, barriers and competitors (other options) of using the tap water, and about aspirations and challenges in their lives.

## INSIGHTS FROM THE VILLAGE

### HABIT OF USING WATER AND AWARENESS

People mainly use water for cooking, drinking, bathing, and washing clothes. In some cases, they use tap water for drinking and washing clothes, but use lake water for cooking. However, there are also completely opposite situations. So it is often a mix use of tap water or lake water for different purposes. Most people are aware that the tap water is safer than lake water. Yet people who use lake water frequently don't claim to have stomach problems. Some people believe that the link between dirty water and disease is not clear to many villagers.

### BARRIERS AND COMPETITORS OF USING TAP WATER

Poverty is the most frequent answer to why some people are not using the tap water. Some people believe that chlorine is dangerous, while some just couldn't stand the smell of chlorine. Residents near the lake tend to use the lake water more. Many people mentioned that fish is not delicious when cooked with tap water, and that porridge from millet flour could only be cooked with lake water, because the chemicals do not allow the porridge to become thick. There are also beliefs that the lake water can treat diseases. Other water purification products like WaterGuard and PUR are available in shops or from the village health team. They have also heard about PUR on the radio, but the actual use of them is rare.

### PERCEPTION OF THE PRICE OF THE WATER

The price of 20 liters of tap water has increased from 75 shillings to 100 shillings because of fuel and chemical prices. People have different views on the price. While water committee members believe that most people accept the price, some mentioned that there are complaints. They suggest a lower price to make it easier for more families to use the tap water. However, some people also argue that the price shouldn't be a concern since there are villagers spending 200 to 500 shillings buying lake water delivered to the village. And people are also willing to buy cold

water for drinking. In brief, many people suggest that 50 or 75 shillings are the ideal price.

### DAILY LIFE AND CHALLENGES

Poverty is mainly resulted from the restrictions of living in the national park. Fishing is not a reliable source of income, because only 30 licenses for fishing boats are allowed while there are approximately 200 households. Most fishermen fish in the morning, and rest for the rest of the day. Fishermen without licenses had to fish during the night. Income source of most women are making mats, but there are only three months in the year when they are allowed to get the material papyrus. A women is very busy during the day, taking care of all the household chores and weaving carpets and baskets for selling. With more money, the villagers hope that they can afford to bring all children to elementary and secondary school, and then they would buy clothes or better tools for generating income. Young people like to play netballs.

### LOCAL SUPPORTS TO ENCOURAGE USE OF TAP WATER

Many villagers have mentioned that the water committee should put more efforts in sensitizing the people, especially during the monthly meeting. Getting support from the local leaders such as the sub-county and enforcing law to prohibit the use of lake water can also make some difference. The principal of the primary school has also expressed interest in assisting with sensitizing the use of treated water. Both of the chairman of the local council 1 and 3 think that the local leaders should attend the monthly meetings of the water committee, and be more active in talking to people. There is a health center (local clinic) assembly once a month, where they sometimes also talk about the importance of safe drinking water. They are also willing to put more efforts in promoting clean water.

### SOCIAL MARKETING FOR WATER – STRATEGY

Taking the lessons learned from various experience in the rural areas, the strategy proposed aims to use the insights from the field to create a marketing campaign that addresses to the situation in the village.

### PREPARE SUFFICIENT RESOURCES FOR A SOCIAL MARKETING CAMPAIGN

BCC needs to be supported with continuous human and financial resources. Fontes could start a social marketing team with people specialized in BCC. A long term funding strategy is needed, and the sources can be companies interested in water issues such as Unilever and Nestlé. Recruiting volunteers from Kampala or even from university students worldwide can allow them to design and implement events such as educational workshops, music and sport competition, or road shows and performing skits. A group of volunteers from the same organization might even be able to raise funds for the marketing materials. It will be important to ensure that the volunteers can understand and respect the context of the village.

### LOCAL SALES TEAM

The local sales team will not only facilitate the marketing events and interpersonal communication to the villagers, but this method also creates job opportunities. They have to strategically map out the families who are not using the tap water, and

address to their concerns. They should receive allowances and bonus (when a new constant user appears) from the social marketing fund. Hiring from poor families who have potential talented members to work in the sales team or to provide the water home delivery service might also give the family an opportunity to pay for the water.

### DESIRED BEHAVIOR AND TARGET AUDIENCE

The goal of the marketing campaign is to encourage people who are partly using the tap water to use it for more purposes, and to people who only use the lake water to start using the tap water at least for drinking. The target audience of the campaigns should be parents who wish to be responsible and bring health to their families.

### COMMUNICATION MESSAGES

Concerns of the villagers are affordability, misconception of chlorine and the taste of lake water. The messages should be 1) the cost of not using the tap water, such as sick members in the family 2) chlorine is safe, and people in Kampala also drink water treated by chlorine 3) emphasize the benefit of using the tap water and create incentives for the villagers such as “health”, “modernity” and “responsibility (to protect family members)”. Messages regarding the danger of drinking and washing from contaminated water are also important. In fact, the more people use the tap water, the more economic benefit they can bring to the village.

### THE MARKETING MIX

1) **Position** – to let people in Katunguru-Rubirizi to see using clean water from the tap as necessity and as more important and beneficial than using water from the lake.

2) **Product & Services** – the tap water needs a brand name and logo. Regarding the strong taste of chlorine, perhaps the dosage has to be adjusted, and quality control needs to be improved. The water committee should also sell 10 liters for 50 shillings. Another product to consider would be selling jerry cans in 10 or 20 liter, because the design of the color and shape can make them a charming and modern product. Other possible product and services are cold water, and water home delivery service.

3) **Price** – renegotiate the fuel and chemical prices to reduce the costs of producing the water; or propose alternatives for payments for the poorer families, such as assisting with the local sales teams or the water committee in operation.

4) **Place** – the local sales team would be the agents to implement interpersonal communications. The “water home delivery service” can increase the availability of treated water. At the tap, it is also important to create a shopping experience and branding environment by making the theme color, images and logo strongly visible, or even create a kiosk by putting a couple of seats and table with radio where people can sit and enjoy cold water.

5) **Promotion** –

- The local council, water committee, and health center have to constantly bring the issue of safe drinking water in their **monthly meetings**. They should also be accurately informed about the facts and arguments.

- **At the primary school, a weekly “water and hygiene education hour”, and a water campaign competition can be initiated, where children compete in drawing posters for water campaign. Voted by villagers, they should not only be awarded with prizes, but also be certified as “water ambassador”.**
- **Printed materials** in the form of comics, one-page fact sheets and posters, calendars, sticker, collectable pictures to decorate at home, and T-shirts should be prepared in all related events as awards and prizes. Contents of the printed materials better be all images, or written in the local language. It would be interesting to create fictional characters in the comics, and every month or quarterly produce new versions of how those characters’ story revolve around safe drinking water.
- **Use local radio programs.** The characters created in the comics can also be present in commercials or skits in the radio shows and local theaters.
- Sponsoring and hosting **music events, sport competitions (netball) or road shows.** Demonstrate and compare the taste of tap water and lake water.
- Invite local leaders and influenza to support in radio shows or events.
- If the national park doesn’t have restriction on sounds, the local sales team members can also ride bicycles with megaphones behind to speak about the messages and play certain music that the organization hopes to associate with.

## BRANDING STRATEGY

The color and design of the logo of the water brand is crucial. It can be designed by villagers or professionals in the social marketing team. If the villagers can choose their own logo, they will also feel included in the process. Producing special designed jerry cans can make the product distinct and modern. The local sales team has to wear T-shirts of the theme color, which should be easy to identify in the village. Since the shopping experience is very important, the cement areas around the tap should be painted in the theme color, and become a small water kiosk for people to enjoy cold water and enhance the brand experience. Radio show or music recording that are related to the brand can also help forming the atmosphere.

## PARTNERSHIPS

Fontes can consider private partnerships to sponsor prizes, printed materials or even market research. Some companies might be able to produce jerry cans especially for the water brand. Partnering with NGOs specialized in social marketing which are also working in Katunguru can provide expertise in the marketing campaign.

## CONCLUSION

This report concludes that in order to implement an effective social marketing campaign for save drinking water, the successful factors are gaining human resource and expertise in social marketing, preparing long-term funding, creating a branding strategy for the products, address to user’s concerns and market insights, make sure the community “owns the system”, proper design of the marketing mix and communication approaches that are popular in the rural areas, and lastly, create strategic partnerships. The proposed strategy incorporates the insights from the field research, and included suggestions such as creating a portfolio of water and

related products and services, creating a brand name and logo, preparing marketing materials that support the brand theme. Initiating events and collaborating with local organizations are also recommended to ensure high involvement of the community.

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