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Social Marketing in the Education Sector in Medellín, Colombia

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Abstract

The Colombian society faces a crisis of values due to the increase of unethical and illegal behaviours. This issue has permeated different sectors of the society including the educational. This paper aims to analyse the "Atreverse a Pensar" project as a social marketing campaign, identifying, through interviews to the team work of the program and an extended document review, the main features of the initiative and then compare it with the main ideas and theories developed in the field. It is suggested to educational institutions, to develop social marketing campaigns that may impact the Upstream, Midstream and Downstream environment of the target audience in order to achieve a greater impact on specific behaviour.

Keywords: Social Marketing, Upstream, Downstream, Education, Colombia

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Introduction

One of the most recognized books in the literature of Colombia and Antioquia is *"Que pase el aserrador"* written in 1914 by Jesús del Corral; this text, has a large cultural value, due to its effect on the Colombian society; It´s main character has become the archetype of the Citizen of Antioquia, a person that is recursive, daring, and bold; which, in turn, derives into a word with no translation in English: *"avispado"* (Mejía A, 2009). A person called "avispado", is someone ready to fulfil its objectives at any price, even deceiving people; this person uses his oral skills to convince others to do what they do not want and that considers deception as a technique of superior people.

This cultural element and the consequences of a drug dealing business tradition has had an effect on the society of Antioquia. Between 1991 and 2010, Colombia has lost around 4% of their GDP due to corruption in the public and private sector (DINERO, 2013); these behaviours have penetrated the general society, according to Transparency International (2013), 24% of Colombian citizens paid any type of bribery in 2010.

The education sector has been also affected by this issue; scandals regarding purchase of grades, falsification of sufficiency foreign language tests results, and a black market of purchase and sells of papers and tests, are just some of the cases that concern local universities. Due to this situation, the EAFIT University launched, in 2010, the initiative "*Atreverse a Pensar*" (In English "I dare you to think"). This project defines these types of behaviours as a manifestation of the current society and a deficiency in the value system, rather than an individual election or conduct; that´s why this campaign aims to promote a change on the values of the students in order to improve their ethical conduct (Universidad EAFIT, 2015).

This paper aims to analyse the "*Atreverse a Pensar*" project as a social marketing campaign. To do so, the main literature on the field will be reviewed, then the methodology used to develop the case is mentioned, and the article finishes with the conclusions and managerial implications of the study.

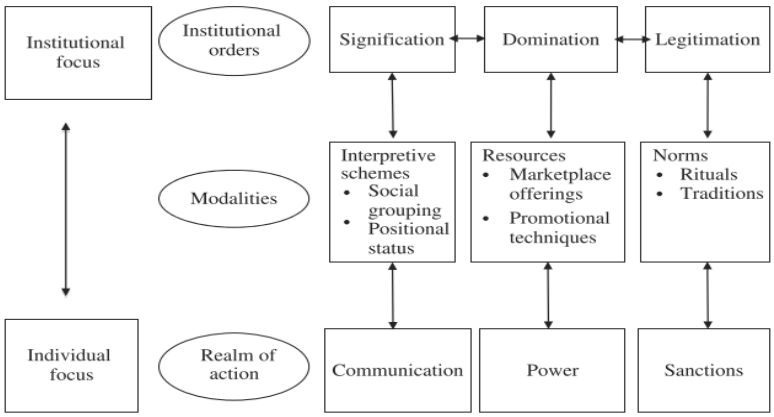
Literature Review

Social marketing takes advantage of traditional marketing concepts and techniques, applying them in social campaigns (McDermott, Stead, & Hastings, 2005), that look to influence a beneficial behaviour –like recycling or healthy eating (Peattie & Peattie, 2009). It´s wildly accepted that the main objective of this type of marketing is not promoting social ideas but influencing behaviour (Andreasen, 2014). Dann (2010, P147) developed a new definition of social marketing focusing on the objective of this subject: "The core objective of social marketing is to facilitate social change through increasing the adoption of a positive behaviour or decreasing the use of a negative behaviour, and attempts to facilitate the change by moving the individual's preference away from the negative actions towards the more positive outcomes for the benefit of the individual, group or society". This definition follows the

path of previous ones, making emphasis on individual behaviour -Downstream social marketing (DSM)- and ignoring the power of Midstream (MSM) and Upstream Social Marketing (USM).

As it was mentioned previously, the social marketing field develops three approaches: downstream, midstream and upstream. The first approach uses marketing tools to influence the cognitive process of individuals, aiming a behavioural change (Hoek & Jones, 2011). In this case, consumers are considered the only responsible for their consumptions decisions, that´s why all the activities of this Social Marketing approach focus on giving information and resources mainly to the end users (Cherrier & Gurrieri, 2014). The second approach focuses on helping people to deal with situations that represent a threat for their immediate social group such as family or community (Lagarde, 2014). Finally, the third approach does not target people directly but the actors that shape the context of those individuals, such as governments, communication media, educators, organizations and interest groups (Gordon, 2013).

Figure 1. *The Social Marketing System of Interaction*



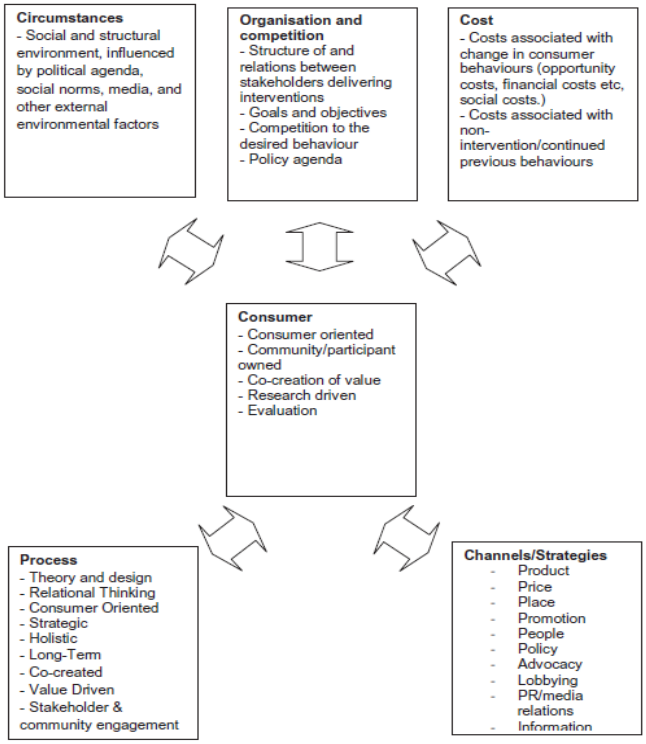
Source: Cherrier & Gurrieri (2014)

By developing USM activities, it is possible to change the environment in which consumers make choices and reducing the barriers that control people's misbehaviours (Hastings et al., 2000). Even though the definition of social marketing does not include the upstream approach, these elements have been previously studied. Kotler and Roberto (1989) mentioned the concept indirectly; they talked about ''influentials'' on social marketing of large audiences, they classified these groups as a permission granting group, a support group, an opposition group, and an evaluation group. As it was mentioned by Dann (2010), these four groups have not been developed by following studies. Upstream social marketing considers consumers as well, but recognises the impact of policies on behavioural change, just by varying a health policy you can impact directly the health of people, without expecting them to change their behaviours individually (Hastings, MacFadyen, & Anderson, 2000).

However, the afforded mentioned approaches are not exclusive. Hastings et al., (2000), Hastings, Anderson, Cooke, & Gordon, (2006), Lagarde (2014) and Cherrier & Gurrieri, (2014) mentioned the importance of all the approaches working together to generate a behavioural change. Figure 1 shows the social marketing system interaction developed by Cherrier & Gurrieri, (2014), explaining the dominance of upstream power, the influence of midstream institutional orders of legitimation and signification and how Individual behaviour is shaped by all of these forces.

Since every theoretical framework needs to be brought into practice, marketing practitioners have developed tailored strategies in order to trigger an actual impact on people behaviour. For this reason, numerous interpretation of classical McCarthy 4P's have been overcome in the past few years. For instance, Gordon (2012) proposed a consumer oriented approach based on social principles, commercial strategies, and relational think. His work introduces a brand new and more holistic social marketing mix that involves multiple aspects regarding human interactions and contemporary behavioural issues. In the centre of the proposed model, consumers appear to drive any value creation activity; their interaction is enabled by external environmental factors (Circumstances), mediated by Organizational decision, and pondered by Costs perception associated with changing or maintain a given behaviour. Furthermore, the marketing mix is supported by all internal processes, and implemented through typical marketing Channels and Strategies. Figure 2 represents the social marketing mix and its main elements.

Figure 2. *The Social Marketing Mix*



Source: Gordon (2012)

Previous Studies and Gap in the Literature

The SM studies have focused on DSM, while the upstream approach has been poorly studied. It is also important to highlight that the research on this field has been dominated by qualitative methods, although both quantitative and mixed methods are gaining prominence (Truong, 2014).

In terms of the area or industries studied, Truong, Garry, & Hall (2014) showed that public and global health is the industry with the larger amount of doctoral dissertations on social marketing, followed by environmental protection. Truong (2014) found similar results reviewing all the articles published between 1998 and 2012, more than half of the studies were performed in the area of public health and safety, leaving a large space for further research on the areas of tourism, poverty alleviation, civil society issues, and the education sector (See table 1).

Table 1. *Social Marketing Research by Topics*

Area	Type	Instances	Percentage
Public health	General public health	106	12.7
	Smoking prevention/cessation	55	6.6
	Alcohol prevention/cessation[a]	44	5.3
	Reproductive health[b]	36	4.3
	Chronic illness[c]	48	5.8
	Physical activity[d]	83	10.0
	Sanitation	15	1.8
	Immunization	3	0.4
	Oral rehydration	2	0.2
	Vaccination	13	1.6
	Family planning[e]	8	1.0
	Children health	20	2.4
	Men's health	4	0.5
	Nutrition	26	3.1
Global health epidemics	Use of condoms	27	3.2
	HIV/AIDS	67	8.0
	Malaria	38	4.6
Public safety	Transportation and traffic	6	0.7
	Occupational safety	9	1.1
	Other	4	0.5
Environmental protection	Waste reduction/recycling	31	3.7
	Water protection		
	Emission reduction		
	Energy use reduction		
Tourism and leisure		8	1.0
Civil Society	Gambling	4	0.5
	Domestic violence[f]	14	1.7
Organ/blood donation		4	0.5
Poverty alleviation		5	0.6
Community outreach		19	2.3
Social marketing theory[g]		86	10.3
Other		48	5.8
Total		833	100

Source: Truong (2014)

Additionally, Truong et al. (2014) found that the SM research is practice oriented, it is expected that future studies focus on developing the theory as well as applying it. Finally, as this study is meant to be developed in the frame of a developing country, it is important to underline that these type of countries have not been deeply studied on the field. The research have been focused on developed countries such as the United States (56.9%) , United Kingdom (11.5%), Australia (5.7%), and Canada (5.1%) (See table 2).

Table 2. *Social Marketing Research by Country*

Period	United States	United Kingdom	Australia	Canada	Other	Total
1971–1976	3	1	0	0	0	4
1977–1982	1	0	0	0	0	1
1983–1988	0	1	0	0	0	1
1989–1994	0	0	0	0	0	0
1995–2000	9	1	0	1	1	12
2001–2006	19	4	2	2	0	27
2007–2013	24	16	3	2	3	48
Total	56	23	5	5	4	93

Source: Truong et al., (2014)

Methodology

This research analyses the case of the program "*Atreverse a Pensar*" as a DSM initiative in the educational sector in Colombia. The study followed the case study methodology that Yin (2003) defines as the study of a phenomenon in a natural context, in which the variables or elements of interest are analysed in order to contrast them with the theory, based on the context of the situation. In this research, an exploratory case was developed, because it aims to familiarize the readers with a situation that has been poorly studied from the theoretical field.

The information was collected performing semi-structured interviews to the work group of the program, also using secondary sources, including videos of interviews to the Principal of the University, institutional documents of the program, news and reports published by other local organizations. Finally, the information was presented in a descriptive way, comparing it with the main theoretical elements mentioned in the literature review.

Discussion

EAFIT University is a private institution founded by a local business man in 1960 in Medellin, Colombia; nowadays the institution is formed by 5 different schools and has more than 12.000 undergraduate and postgraduate students. The program *"Atreverse a Pensar"* was born in 2010 as an initiative of the Principal of the aforementioned University to question the dishonest behaviour of today's society. Initially, it was only conceived as a communicational campaign, which in its early stage sought to question the advantageous and dishonest behaviour of our society, looking for a general change in future generations. The campaign had great recognition within different audiences, and the Institution decided to create a project that not only cover a communication strategy, but includes educational and academic elements as well. Then in 2012, this initiative becomes a program, after the declaration of integrity as one of the five values of the EAFIT University.

The process of identifying the problem starts with the concern of the Principal of the University, who is local reference in cultural issues; he identified that the Antioquia's culture is influenced by the lack of ethics and transparency, and detected cultural items like books, sayings, jokes, and traditions that influence this type of behaviours.

The project was initiated in 2010 only as a communication strategy that included tools such as billboards and displays in the classrooms and main campus, posters, flyers, digital advertising and other type of ads in print and digital media at the University such as students, administrative and graduates bulletin; being the ones with the greatest impact those that involved on campus and classroom intervention. Following the success of the initial campaign, six more stages were developed switching between macro themes (such as social behaviours, civic culture, and ethics) and micro themes, related integrity and the academy.

Regarding the target audience of the program, the initiative was primarily aimed to university students, faculty members and staff. Nonetheless, due to the impact generated in the media, the program´s activities began to involve the external community as companies and other educational institutions. Some of the activities replied were done through the International Association of Academic Integrity and others through partnerships with the private sector; during the five years of the program, 80 companies and two schools located in Colombia have partially replicated the communication strategy and some other universities in Colombia invited the program managers to share their experiences.

Impact of the Program

To diagnose and then measure the initial results of this program, a survey from the "Normas de papel: La cultura del incumplimiento de reglas", written by Mauricio Garcia Villegas, was used. Such a tool has already been tested in other Colombian universities like the University of the Andes and the National University. Two main outcomes of the program were identified: (1) students reported more cases of academic fraud, which in turn shows an increase of awareness, and (2) certain types of fraud as copying, incorrect or inexistent citation have decreased, but others like the use of electronic devices to commit fraud have increased. It is expected that during 2016 another survey will be performed to measure possible changes in the behaviour of students.

Contrasting the Theory

If the definition of Dann (2010) is taken as a guide, the initiative *"Atreverse a Pensar"* meets from its conception and implementation the definition of a social marketing program, because it seeks to facilitate a behavioural change to benefit the society. In this specific circumstance, it is

considered as a downstream initiative, because the aim is to change an individual behaviour. Nevertheless, it is important to notice that the effects of the campaign on the student´s behaviour is not clear, maybe due to its short implementation time or because their immediate context is more influential than the campaign itself. Based on this limitations, the model given by Hastings et.al (2000) is used to generate recommendations for social marketing campaigns in the education sector in Colombia, especially to the one developed by the EAFIT University. The following model is proposed:

Figure 3. *Social Marketing Model for the Education Sector*

Source: Own construction

The aim of the first phase of the program was to question the social and historical context of Antioquia using traditional marketing tools. This stage was clearly developed under an USM approach. In the following periods, they were looking to developed individual behavioural changes related to academic integrity, using in this case a downstream approach. Currently, the midstream elements (such as the family, the educators, peers and the high and primary school institutions) have not been attacked in any of the different stages. For this reason the recommendations of Hastings et al., (2000), Hastings, Anderson, Cooke, & Gordon, (2006), Lagarde (2014) and Cherrier & Gurrieri, (2014), that are suggested are, to develop strategies that may impact all the environments of the students (upstream, midstream and downstream), meaning, involving the families, developing more inclusive activities for the professors and structure punitive policies that allow to promote the academic integrity in and outside the institution.

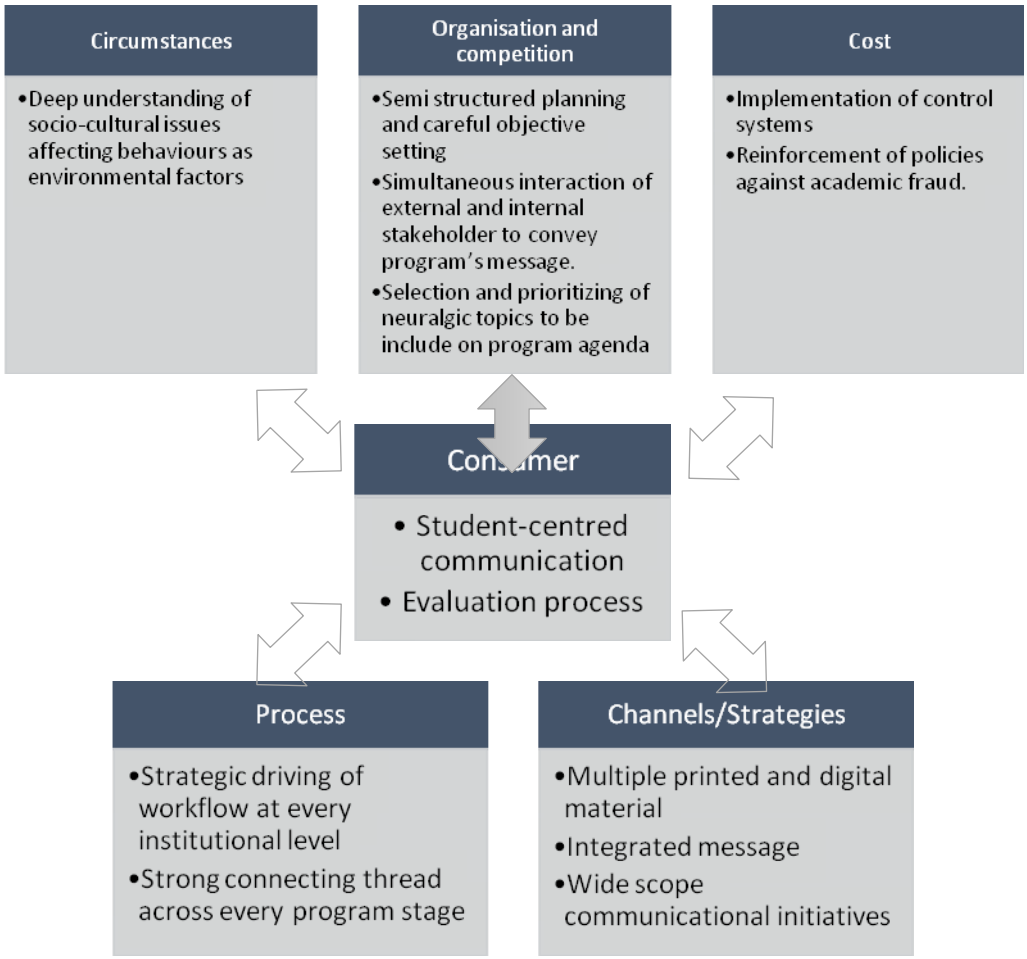
Structuring a Social Marketing Mix

Apart from the nomological and conceptual analysis, it is important to contrast the strategy used by EAFIT University with common social marketing structures. Thus, this analysis remains close to the methodological principles stated before.

Extracting substantial information about the motives driving *"Atraverse a Pensar"* program, it was possible to find a complex consumer-centred architecture of communicational actions. Furthermore, the continuous

emphasis on socio-cultural issues built the network structure to explore new methodologies capable of triggering a behavioural change. This is how the program unintendedly follows the relational and consumer based social marketing model outlined by Gordon (2012), which was influenced by the 7Cs model first devised by Shizumu (2003), and the ideas proposed by Lauterborn (1990), Grönroos (1994) and Dev and Schultz (2005a, b). The following figure aims to identify and categorize the most relevant elements of *"Atraverse a Pensar"* marketing strategy according to the structural framework developed by Gordon (2012).

Figure 4. *Social Marketing Mix*



Source: Own construction

As can be seen, EAFIT University and its Principal have developed a particularly accurate taste to identify social and cultural issues that create the environmental factors for this social marketing mix. Those factors can be interpreted as **Circumstances** within the proposed model. Consequently, the university has disposed important resources to articulate the program, planning the activities on a regular basis, interacting with external and internal stakeholders, and programming a topic agenda. This is how the University

developed its **Organizational** approach towards the strategic mix. On the other hand, both Circumstances and Organizational Elements drown the path to increase the **Cost** related to maintain negative behaviours through stronger punitive policies, and more sophisticated control systems. Thus, the **Processes** involved thrive based on efficient workflows, and strong connecting thread. Furthermore, the program was conceived to explore multiple **Channels** and promotional strategies in order to make the scope wider. Finally, all elements are integrated into a **Consumer** centric parameter, were students are the main target audience for communication and evaluation processes.

Opposite to this optimistic panorama, "*Atreverse a Pensar"* lacks of specific elements that could improve its results. Although it is clearly relational thinking centred, main strategic decisions were not oriented towards interactive applications. Consequently, students are usually passive receivers of information that struggle to catch people´s attention. Furthermore, the measurement tools do not provide an accurate perspective of how the strategies are impacting social behaviours at any level.

Conclusions

The program "*Atreverse a Pensar"* is the first social marketing initiative that superior educational institutions in Colombia develop to improve the dishonest behaviour of some people of Antioquia. The program oscillates from highly acceptable practices to precarious strategic decisions. Even if the university coordination is perfectly able to present a bright annual report, it is still far from a flawless performance. Therefore, it is necessary to intervene the communicational program from three different angles: firstly, the three social marketing approaches should be included in the program in order to impact the community deeply; secondly, behavioural change requires to be presented more explicitly by every stakeholder involved through experiential and social dynamics that might engage new audiences into a marketing momentum; and finally, new evaluating instruments need to be developed in order to fit the cultural reality surrounding of the program.

Limitation and Managerial implications

The results presented in this case analysis will derive in further empirical research that will aim to identify typical features of social marketing campaigns within the educational context of Medellín, where new dynamics are arising regarding academic processes, peer's interaction and direct connection with the out-of-campus community. Such research represents a powerful opportunity for private and public universities in Medellín to successfully develop social marketing programs, strategic toolkits and control instruments to positively impact society.

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