THE IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MARKETING APPLICATIONS ON CUSTOMER'S BEHAVIOR AND CUSTOMER LOYALTY

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the impact of social marketing applications on customers behavior and loyalty. Besides it is aimed to specify difference of opinions in terms of demographic variables. For this purpose, a questionnaire was applied to 400 respondents between January-February 2016 in Istanbul, Turkey. 9 of the surveys were not come back and answers of the 8 participants were not appropriate for the research and these 8 surveys were ignored. SPSS V21.0 program was used for analyzing the survey data. Findings showed that social marketing activities affect the behaviors of customers and they have a great impact on customer loyalty. Due to the applied social marketing activities, customers' preferences regarding firms and companies are being affected in a positive way and brand awareness (the rate of coming to mind) which provide customer loyalty is increasing. Research results suggest to the firms that using of marketing activities effectively and efficiently for a specific period of time with a skilled workforce and enough budget is a key factor for them to accomplish their responsibilities to the community. Firms and companies are to accept social marketing activities as a long term strategic investment tool instead of as an unnecessary expense.

Keywords: Social Marketing, Customer Loyalty, Customer Behavior, Social Benefits, Preferences of Customers, Brand Loyalty

INTRODUCTION

Recently, unexpected increase in economic, social and especially environmental problems have pushed firms to work together with customers. Firms have updated their business objectives for both getting top place in the global competitive environment and cultivating eco-friendly and

social consciousness (awareness) customer groups. Firms have intent to reach the customers via social marketing for adopting themselves to the modern-day business environment.

Kotler and Zaltman alleged that social marketing isn't a theory by itself. Conversely, it is a framework or approach which is impressed by the other theories as psychology, anthropology and communication and aims how to affect people's behavior. (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971:35) In accordance with Kotler and Zaltman's studies, literature history has hundred of studies and books regarding social marketing approach. Social marketing approach, customer behaviors, the impact of social marketing on customer behaviors and customer loyalty subjects will be discussed in the following parts of the study.

Consequently, in this study it has been examined that how the customers demographic status, choices, attitudes and opinions are affected by social marketing activities such as campaigns, advertisements promotions, etc.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Definition and Characteristics of Social Marketing

Since the second half of the 20th century, all over the world social problems have started to become more and more important. Creating a system that adopts the social responsibility of a firm has become inevitable due to the various activities of that firm related to public.

Social marketing aims to improve the health and well-being of the society by affecting target group. Moreover it is the usage of traditional marketing techniques to improve the positive behaviors of customers (Weinreich, 1999:3-4).

Ewing, defined social marketing as the design of some programs to create social amendments and to engage them into activities and implementation (Ewing, 2001).

According to Fox and Kotler, the development of social marketing starts with basically unaltered campaigns to ensure the public interest. Afterwards developing social communication in the form of social advertising began to turn into social marketing applications. However, instead of promotion with all elements of the marketing mix is a combination of marketing research (Mucuk, 2014:20-21).

Social marketing aims to facilitate the adoption of social ideas of the community by using the elements of marketing mix. In addition, social marketing follows the process involving the implementation of programs designed to raise public awareness and public control. Social marketing consists of whole, to create the designated idea and litigation, continue this idea and litigation and is the whole effort of the aim to change behavior and attitudes of people in this framework (Tek, 1999:46).

Social marketing approach played an important role for the adoption of technology among both the private and public sectors and as well as non-profit organizations (Goldberg, etc., 1997:3-4).

In the light of the definitions of various researchers, social marketing is the marketing of the ideas guiding customers' attitudes and behaviors. It affects the purchasing and choosing behaviors of the society and guides people towards products and services having social benefits. In some sources, social marketing is referred as case marketing or idea marketing. Social marketing is the adaptation process, which consists of the beneficial behaviors for the society, without intending profits. Also, social marketing is one of the techniques that used for the dissemination of ideas which are the beneficial for solving the social problems.

Andreasen (1995:13-18) has summarized the characteristics of social marketing as below;

- Social marketing should contribute to behavioral objectives.
- Range of the organization capital has to be narrow.
- Beliefs and values of customers are to be ignored.
- The desired behavior of the customer is to be provided in an attractive way.
- Behaviors of the customers can be considered as successful when they trust the product wholeheartedly.
- Researches are to be executed frequently and consistently to support customer-oriented approach.
- Instead of debating mass market, firms have to consider clear segmentation of market.

Functioning Process of Social Marketing

Kotler and Lee have described social marketing as the acceptance of a new behavior on target audience, rejection of the unwelcome behavior, changes on existing behavior or totally abandoning the old and unwelcome behavior (Kotler& Lee, 2008:8).

First of all, firms should manipulate the target audience for the desired activity or product by using effective promotion. Convincing the public/target audiences is an important complement of this manipulation process (Raghunathan and Trope, 2002:510). Also companies, organizations and individuals are obliged to spend more labor and effort. Since the formation process of new behavior is much difficult than process as it presumed. The stages of social marketing process can be summarized as follows; definition of the problem, goal setting and selection of the target market, customer analysis, analysis of the channel to be used in the campaign, implementation and evaluation of the program (Cemalcılar, 1988).

Customer Behaviors

Customer behaviors consist of 3 basic processes; obtaining, consuming and disposing (Blackwell, Paul, Mınıard, Engel, 2001:6).Unlike the previous decades, nowadays consumption is emerged as a means of communication providing satisfaction of physiological needs and the basis of communication with external world and environment (Koç, 2007:19).

Customer behavior focuses on the factors that affect the people's decision regarding how to spend their valuable resources (time, money, effort)(Schiffman, Kanuk,8). Customer behavior is a process that focuses on marketing by using product and service bought for satisfaction of needs from the starting of necessity feeling. Customer's purchasing decisions and purchasing behaviors are two different processes and there is an important distinction between them regarding the aims of them now that social marketing applications target to affect customer behavior permanently (Torlak, Altunışık, Özdemir, 65).

Although it seems that it is like a direct influence for customers' purchasing behavior, social marketing is much more effective way for altering the customers purchasing decisions therefore.

Relationship between Social Marketing and Customer Loyalty

The differences between customer loyalty and customer satisfaction are affected by 2 types of behaviors; reason based behaviors and behaviors emerged from random decisions. A loyal customer has a repeated purchasing behavior in a way that examines his/her previous purchasing habits instead of deciding on what and where to buy (Griffin, 1995, s.4-21).

Shortly, customer loyalty can be defined as the devotion to a brand or company. Directed behaviors and attitudes for the benefit of the company create customer loyalty on specific circumstances (Palmer, McMahon-Beattie & Beggs, 2000:s.48). The repeated purchasing behavior can be addressed as a significant determiner of customer loyalty. Repeated purchasing behavior may be determined by some factors like availability of product, the amount of money that the customer is willing to spend, time spent and quantity.

In social marketing approach, expectation of customer loyalty is neither spending more money nor buying more products. There are two basic expectations from customer loyalty/ first one is changing the customer behaviors constantly and definitely to the desired direction. And the other one is abandoning of the unwanted behavior and commencing the implementation of targeted behavior.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aims of this study are; to measure the effectiveness of social marketing applications on purchasing behaviors and to create customer loyalty. The study was designed as cross-sectional and descriptive. The research was conducted in January - February 2016. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed and 392 of them have returned. As a result of the elimination of the incomplete and faulty surveys sample size of 384 people was obtained.

All customers living in Turkey are the population of this study. However, reaching all the customers is a difficult process in terms of both time and cost. Hence a mass sample has been established. This is the most important constraint of the study. Despite this constraint, the research has been applied on customers from different regions and different demographic characteristics, that the result can be evaluated closer to the general. Simple random sampling method is used to determine the participants. This means, each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected as subject. This study is expected to contribute to be a beneficial reference for firms and customers.

There are 3 groups of questions in the questionnaire used. The first group consists of questions to determine the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The second group consists of the questions to measure the purchasing behaviors and attitudes toward social marketing applications. The third group consists of the questions to measure the effectiveness of social marketing applications on customer loyalty and purchasing decisions of customers. There are 17 questions on influence and attitudes via 5s Likert Scale. Options are formed as; " Absolutely Agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2), Absolutely Disagree (1)".

Data collected during the research process were analyzed with SPSS statistical software. In the analysis process of data and information; reliability and correlation analysis and the technique percent and average calculation are used. And the coefficient of significance was accepted as 0,01.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,904	17

Testing was conducted on the reliability of the scale. Cronbach's alpha value, which is the most commonly used method, was used to determine the reliability of scales. The Cronbach's Alpha

α = 0,904 was found regarding the choices of business, customer loyalty and business' social benefits according to participants.

These result shows that scales have high validity and reliability. If Cronbach's Alpha value is greater than 0.70, the scales' reliability is high as the principle as generally accepted in the literature (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994:264).

Characteristics of Survey Participants

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Woman	212	55,2
	Man	172	44,8
Occupation	Nor Working	40	10,4
	Student	44	22,5
	Public Staff	207	53,9
	Private Sectors Employees	85	22,1
	Retired	8	2,1
Income Status	0-500 TL	52	13,5
	501-1500 TL	53	13,8
	1501-2500 TL	48	12,5
	2501-4000 TL	187	48,7
	4001 TL and above	44	11,5
Educational Status	Graduate	140	36,5
	Postgraduate	244	63,5
Age	18-25	116	30,2
	26-35	236	61,5
	36-45	8	2,1
	46 and above	24	6,3

Demographic data shows that, most of the participants are woman, public staff, postgraduate, 26-35 years old and have 2501-4000 TL income per month.

Descriptive Statistics

As can be understood from the table below, participants prefer companies which have social marketing practices, by taking out extra charge if necessary.

Table 3: The Opinions of the Participants about the Effects of Social Marketing
Applications in the Process to Choose Company

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I prefer the companies supporting social projects as the price and quality is similar.	384	2,00	5,00	4,2109	,74734
I try to be supportive to the companies performing social projects via purchasing products/services.	384	1,00	5,00	3,9089	,92515
Providing social benefits the companies affect my choices.	384	1,00	5,00	3,8229	,92536
The activities and sponsorships of the firms regarding health, sports, culture, environment and energy via mass media affect sensitivity to social issues.	384	2,00	5,00	3,8229	,87905
Social marketing activities affect my thoughts about company.	384	2,00	5,00	3,8854	,81590
I may pay more to the product creating social benefits than the other product.	384	1,00	5,00	3,2188	1,13066
I think myself as active in social issues when I prefer the enterprises in social marketing activities.	384	1,00	5,00	3,6094	1,00833
I do not hesitate to spend more money to businesses that create social benefits.	384	1,00	5,00	3,2995	1,00464

As can be seen from the table 4, it has been evaluated by the participants, that the social marketing applications of firms about social marketing and creating social benefits make a positive effect on both commercial sense and communal.

Table 4: The Opinions of the Participants about the Companies Creating Social Benefits

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I think that performing social projects of companies is not communal but profit-oriented.	384	1,00	5,00	2,8411	,96046
I believe that companies' social marketing activities can disseminate social awareness to the general public.	384	1,00	5,00	3,5625	1,02003
I believe that the effectiveness of social marketing projects can rise if the firm collaborates with NGOs.	384	2,00	5,00	4,0339	,84976
Reserving budget and conducting studies towards social issues should be a legal obligation for companies.	384	1,00	5,00	4,0026	1,05092

Participants emphasized that, the firm's point of view to social marketing applications is important for the customer loyalty (see Table 5).

Table 5: The Opinions of the Participants about the Social Marketing Applications
Affects on Customer Loyalty

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I'm interested in social projects of the firm which I have dealings.	384	1,00	5,00	2,7656	1,09462
My loyalty is higher that the brands found in social marketing applications.	384	1,00	5,00	3,5156	,98276
Firm's social marketing activities are important factors for me to choose this firm again.	384	1,00	5,00	3,5807	,94427
The probability of my preference is increased when I saw the social marketing activities of the firm are consistently.	384	1,00	5,00	3,8464	,85798
I would recommend the firms which have social responsibility to the people around me.	384	1,00	5,00	3,7708	,95299

Research Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses testing was done through inferential analysis.

H1: Generating social benefits of firm affects customers' purchasing behavior in a positive way.

Table 6: Correlations between Preferences of Customers and Social Benefits of a Firm

		Preferences of Customers	Social Benefits of a Firm
Preferences of Customers	Pearson Correlation	1	,743(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
	N	384	384
Social Benefits of a firm	Pearson Correlation	,743(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	N	384	384

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The data results show that, there is a significant (α=0.01) and positive correlation between choice process of a firm by customers and creating social benefits of a firm (R=0,784 p<0,01).

H2: Generating social benefits of firm affects customers' loyalty in a positive way.

Table 7: Correlations between Social Benefits of a Firm and Customer Loyalty

		Social Benefits of a Firm	Customer Loyalty
Social Benefit of a Firm	Pearson Correlation	1	,739(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
	N	384	384
CustomerLoyalty	Pearson Correlation	,739(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	N	384	384

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The data results show that, there is a significant (α=0.01) and positive correlation between customer loyalty and creating social benefits of a firm (R=0,739 p<0,01).

H3: Social marketing applications affect loyalty to the brand in a positive way.

Table 8: Relationship between Social Benefits of a Firm and Brand Loyalty

		My loyalty is higher that the brands found in social marketing applications.	Social benefits of a firm
My loyalty is higher that the brands found in social marketing applications.	Pearson Correlation	1	,632(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000

		384	384
	N		
Social benefits of a firm	Pearson Correlation	,632(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	N	384	384

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The data results show that, there is a significant (α=0.01) and positive correlation between brand loyalty of customers and social marketing activities of a firm (R=0,632 p<0,01).

H4: Customers think that the social marketing applications are more effective when firms work together with NGOs (Non Governmental Organizations)

Table 9: The Opinions of Participants about NGOs Supports to Social Marketing Applications

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I believe that the effectiveness of social marketing projects can rise if the firm collaborates with NGOs.	384	2,00	5,00	4,0339	,84976

According to the analysis outcome, most of the participants stated that, collaboration of firms with NGOs can raise the effectiveness of social marketing projects.

H5: Customers think that social projects of firms are non-profit projects and they are just for social benefits.

Table 10: The Opinions of Participants about Social Marketing Applications
and Profit-Oriented Practices

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I think that performing social projects of companies is not communal but profit-oriented.	384	1,00	5,00	2,8411	,96046

According to the analysis outcome, most of the participants stated that, performing social projects of companies is not profit-oriented but communal.

H6: Ideas affected by social marketing campaigns have some distinctions according to the demographic characteristics,
H6.1: Ideas affected by social marketing campaigns have some distinctions according to the gender perspective.

Table 11: Correlations between Gender and Social Marketing Campaigns

	N	Correlation	Sig.	Sig. (2-tailed)
Gender& Social Benefits of a Firm	384	-,039	,446	.000
Gender& Customer Loyalty	384	,033	,516	.000
Gender& Preferences of Customers	384	,074	,146	.000

The data results show that, there is a significant (α=0.01) and negative correlation between gender of participants and choice process of a firm by customers (R= - 0,039 p<0,01). Additionally, there is a significant (α=0.01) and low levels of positive correlation between gender of participants and customer loyalty (R=0,033) and also social benefits of a firm (R=0,074 p<0,01).

H6.2: Ideas affected by social marketing campaigns have some distinctions according to the educational status.

Table 11: Correlations between Educational Statusand Social Marketing Campaigns

	N	Correlation	Sig.	Sig. (2-tailed)
Educational Status& Preferences of Customers	384	-,037	,471	.000
Educational Status& Social Benefits of a Firm	384	-,065	,200	.000
Educational Status&Customer Loyalty	384	-,080	,118	.000

The data results show that, there is a significant (α=0.01) and low levels of negative correlation between educational status of participants and choice process of a firm by customers (R= - 0,037), customer loyalty (R= - 0,080) and also social benefits of a firm (R= - 0,065 p<0,01).

H6.3: Ideas affected by social marketing campaigns have some distinctions according to the working status.

Table 12: Correlations between Occupation and Social Marketing Campaigns

	N	Correlation	Sig.	Sig. (2-tailed)
Occupation& Preferences of Customers	384	-,080	,120	.000
Occupation& Social Benefits of a Firm	384	-,109	,032	.000
Occupation& Customer Loyalty	384	-,072	,159	.000

According to the data results, there is a significant (α=0.01) and low levels of negative correlation between occupation of participants and choice process of a firm by customers (R= - 0,080), customer loyalty (R= - 0,072) and also social benefits of a firm (R= - 0,109 p<0,01).

H6.4: Ideas affected by social marketing campaigns have some distinctions according to the age.

Table 13: Correlations between Age and Social Marketing Campaigns

	N	Correlation	Sig.	Sig. (2-tailed)
Age& Preferences of Customers	384	-,207	,000	.000
Age& Social Benefits of a Firm	384	-,221	,000	.000
Age& Customer Loyalty	384	-,217	,000	.000

As understood from the data results, there is a significant (α=0.01) and negative correlation between age of participants and choice process of a firm by customers (R= - 0,207), customer loyalty (R= - 0,221) and also social benefits of a firm (R= - 0,217 p<0,01).

H6.5: Ideas affected by social marketing campaigns have some distinctions according to the income status.

Table 13: Correlations between Income Status and Social Marketing Campaigns

	N	Correlation	Sig.	Sig. (2-tailed)
Income Status& Preferences of Customers	384	-,090	,078	.000
Income Status& Social Benefits of a Firm	384	-,120	,019	.000
Income Status &Customer Loyalty	384	-,111	,029	.009

As understood from the data results, there is a significant (α=0.01) and low levels of negative correlation between income status of participants and choice process of a firm by customers (R= - 0,090) and social benefits of a firm (R=- 0,120)(p<0,01). However, there is no significant correlation between income status of participants and customer loyalty. (R= - 0,111 p>0,01).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With the impact of globalization and the spread of social facts, nowadays' businesses take into consideration not only non-profit projects but also social benefits. Beside these projects, they also enhance their marketing applications in peace with nature and society.

Businesses have the chance to establish emotional connection with their customers via social marketing applications. And also these campaigns ensure to the firm to recognize their customers better and to work with them again. Creating social benefits, engaging in social

activities and spending money and time for these activities can change the location of firm in the eyes of customers in a positive way. Social marketing activities contribute to increase the brand recognition and loyal customers of a firm.

As can be understood from the research; some variables such as gender, age, income status, educational status and occupation don't have more effect on choice process of businesses implementing social marketing activities and creating loyal costumer portfolio. Customers, in whom they are involved in occupational group or the age, they may pay more attention to activities that create social benefit. And even if necessary they can face up to spend more money for supporting these firms.

Creating loyal customer is less costly than gaining new one, due to this present-day businesses are adopting customer-oriented approach rather than production-oriented. Businesses will roll back the provision of labor, time and money which they spent for social marketing activities, as gaining loyal customers or with the increase in spending by loyal customers. Conscious customers keep in view businesses social benefits besides the benefits of the products as they purchase.

For the businesses, creating social benefits in their activities, make positive effect on customers as becoming loyal customers and the first time choosing process. If firms support their social marketing practices collaborating with NGOs, which are more experienced on these types of activities, they can change the senses of customers regarding the firm and they can reduce business expenses.

There are also some restrictions on social marketing applications. Businesses may consider that high cost of social marketing applications reduce their profitability. The size of firms can also make differences in the budget earmarked for social marketing. The most important constraint of social marketing activities is insufficient knowledge on the issue of consumers. Therefore, firms have to inform consumers on social issues as a priority. Another important constraint is related to the firms. Firms can make a mistake such as expecting the results of social marketing applications in the short term. However, the results of social marketing applications are to gain loyal customers and profitability in the long term.

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