

SOCIAL MARKETING INTERVENTIONS FOR DOWNTOWN PROBLEMS

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Abstract:

Within a two-year research project, we have examined social marketing questions and solutions. The findings moved beyond the institutional approach to social marketing as an integrated model and practice with the objective of providing more complex solutions to social problems. We interpret social marketing as a kind of stakeholder management shaping behaviour acting along value communities. This study aims to present a special field: giving solutions for downtown problems in the third largest town of Hungary (Miskolc) with the help of social marketing tools, by elaborating the City Partner Strategy for the newly established Downtown Economical Development Cluster.


Keywords: *social marketing; stakeholder management; value community; social problem identification; strategy for downtown areas*

INTERVENCIONES DE MARKETING SOCIAL PARA PROBLEMAS DEL CENTRO DE LAS CIUDADES

Resumen:

A través de un proyecto de investigación bianual se han examinado cuestiones y soluciones de marketing social. Los hallazgos han ido más allá del enfoque del marketing social como modelo integrado y prácticas al objeto de lograr soluciones más complejas para los problemas sociales. El marketing social se interpreta como un tipo de gestión de grupos de interés que da forma a actitudes comportamentales a lo largo de comunidades de valor. El estudio trata de presentar un campo especial: dar soluciones para los problemas del centro de la ciudad en la tercera localidad más grande de Hungría (Miskolc) con la ayuda de herramientas de marketing social, elaborando la Estrategia Socio-Ciudad para el recientemente constituido Clúster de Desarrollo Económico del Centro de la Ciudad.

Palabras clave: *marketing social; gestión de grupos de interés; comunidad de valor; identificación de problemas sociales; estrategia para zonas centrales urbanas*

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1. Introduction

Social marketing has become the most frequently used compound word in the technical literature of marketing theory in the past few years, since more and more areas, environmental, climate and health situations as well as difficulties experienced in the operation of public administration cry out for new problem solving practices, new approach and behaviour. In a situation like this social responsibility, responsible behaviour in social issues and its encouragement make solution opportunities of social marketing more important.

The social marketing concept was firstly introduced by Kotler and Zaltman (1971) for planning and execution of those marketing programmes targeting the acceptance of social and societal solutions, that is, considering social marketing as the application of the ideas, processes and practices of the marketing discipline to improve conditions that determine and sustain personal, social and environmental health and well-being issues. Later on, the original definition was given a broader interpretation and a deeper social insight.

Social marketing has been defined as “the application of commercial marketing technologies to the analysis, planning, execution, and evaluation of programs designed to influence the voluntary behaviour of target audiences in order to improve their personal welfare and that of their society” (Andreasen 1995). On the other hand, Kotler et al. (2002) defined social marketing as the use of marketing principles and techniques to influence a target audience to voluntarily accept, reject, modify, or abandon a behaviour for the benefit of individuals, groups or society as a whole.

The definition of social marketing applied by us is as follows: planning, organisation, execution and control of corporate and institutional marketing strategies and marketing activities and their integration, which are directly or indirectly targeting social tasks and problems. There are two directions in fundamental marketing theories, namely institution-oriented and problem-oriented perspectives (Bruhn-Tilmes 1994). The institution-oriented perspective focuses on organisational peculiarities while discussing marketing issues, for instance, public-service institutions (railways, post office, public utilities and public transport), state or state-controlled institutions (health and social organisations), political organisations, cultural and religious institutions, civil and non-profit foundations.

In our problem-oriented social marketing research programme that has been in process for two years we attempted to build a coordinated and integrated marketing model of activities for solving problems (activities with several players, different directions and motivations, etc.). Areas requiring an integrated approach are as follows: place marketing dealing with city and regional developments and population well-being as well as marketing related to environmental protection issues, health protection, rehabilitation, humanisation of working life, poverty, aiding problems, leisure time issues, decreasing and prevention of delinquency, development of education and training, or minority, culture and value protection.

This study is specifically related to Miskolc, which is the third largest town in Hungary. During the last decade, Miskolc downtown area suffered from several situations, like big reconstruction projects (e.g. reconstruction of former parking lots and insignificant areas into modern and now characteristic squares, building renovations, rebuilding of old tramway line), disadvantageous transformation of the shops in the main street (lot of banks, mobile phone shops and second-hands), and building of two big shopping centres.

Even when a number of the above changes can be considered as clear signs of development, the real situation is that they had disastrous effects on downtown: the streets are almost empty after the closing hours, in spite of some programs and a few bigger festivals the very centre of the town is not a popular place to stay, walk around, sit down and talk. Imagine an empty city centre at Saturday or Sunday afternoon... A few years ago there was an attempt called “*Downtown Plaza*” to balance the situation of the small shops versus shopping centres, but the obligations were too severe and the rental fees became very high.

In our study we present a recent research result, strategy built on social marketing tools as a solution for these downtown problems. The initiation was made by the Chamber of Commerce, and a new Downtown Economic Development Cluster has been established. The strategy, called “*City Partner*”, is our response to the existing problems.

2. An integrated model of social marketing

Through the wider interpretation, beside the settlement of many issues social marketing raises many unsolved scientific and professional problems. Some of them are the following:

- On the one hand, there are still disputes and reservation about the approach of non-profit oriented marketing, that is, mainly about the content of plural view of marketing science, dealing with the interpretation of marketing that concerns special exchange and transactional relationships (Kandler 1980; Hill and Rieser 1990; Bruhn and Tilmes 1994).
- On the other hand, opinions are different about the frames and limits of social marketing, for example in what extent business marketing covers these issues, how it connects if it connects the corporate social responsibility of business marketing.

What does social marketing have to do? It has to change attitudes, behaviours in order to achieve something good (for example to make pregnant women give up smoking, to make people and organizations prevent catastrophes, use condoms in certain sexual situations, improve water quality, etc.). "Social marketing is the application of marketing for influencing a target in order to accept or refuse, change or give up certain problematic behaviours, so with these they serve individuals, groups or the whole society" (Dinya et.al. 2004, p. 85). So the aim of social marketing is *to develop constructive solutions* in order to achieve the desired change in behaviour, to make the target group understand that the new behaviour has bigger utility than the effort of the behavioural change.

Social marketing also focuses on understanding the necessities, demands, perceptions and barriers of the target group; to understand them it creates an *effective plan* so it achieves the desired behavioural results. The exchange that is the essence of marketing can also be interpreted because behavioural change, the change values, costs, advantages and disadvantages are realized.

Social marketing is a process that applies marketing principles and techniques in order to create values, to communicate and transmit in order to change the behaviour of the target group in such a way that the given target group and the society has also benefit (health, security, environment, public life, etc.).

How does business and social marketing differ? i) While at business marketing the marketing process is a concrete product, service, activity supporting sales at social marketing it is rather a process that affects the sales of the desired behaviour; ii) while business marketing is driven by market, financial or profit aims, social marketing is driven by individual or social utility, profit; iii) while at business marketing choosing the target group happens on the bases of demand capacity at social marketing the target group is assigned by the effect of their undesired activity; and iv) while at business marketing the competitor is another business, at social marketing the competitor is the present undesired activity and its advantages and costs and competitive values and the organizations interested in it.

In most cases social marketing is a more difficult task than solving a commercial situation because it requires a complex, multi-player, multi-factorial problem handling. In this case more levels of marketing have to be co-ordinated and integrated (state as government and local governments, professionals and NGOs and companies).

Beside the differences, there are many similarities between the two fields of marketing:

- client and target group orientation cannot be avoided;
- transaction theory is further valid and determining;
- there is need for conscious analyses, specific market researches;
- target groups have to be segmented from many aspects;
- stakeholders have to cooperate and work together;
- well-known elements of marketing tools should be applicable; and
- results have to be measurable.

The most important characteristics of social marketing that it develops the traditional business marketing practice as well because handling social values, questions and social responsibility appears not only as external duty, sacrifice but as organic part of business interest. It increases practical efficiency, based on

widening network cooperation that is also needed. So it can legally fit to Meffert's marketing development trend.

One of the most important objectives of social marketing is to create common values for both profit and non-profit organizations. The significance of social marketing is realized through activities in connection with certain social values. In order to carry out a given activity we are searching for those individuals and organizations that have same values, are open to these values and have same interests in connection with these values. The basis of social marketing is the analysis of values because it is more difficult to judge, understand what kind of values somebody has. It is obvious that different social researches are connected with social marketing analyses because in order to have success in social marketing programs we have to find those who share our values. Definition and creation of value based communities will be the basic conditions of successful marketing.

Social marketing acts within the market of internal values where same objectives do not mean that the members also want the same. It is not easy to agree so in order to make the competent members, organizations sit at one table we have to be precise when handling values and defining behavioural standards. Values direct practice, activity and accepting certain things. The more obvious point of view we have in connection with the value the more certain we lose those who share other ideas. Deep relations come true only by equal values.

Two value strategy alternatives can be imagined by responsible, coordinator organizations in the area of social marketing when handling different problems (Gromberg 2006):

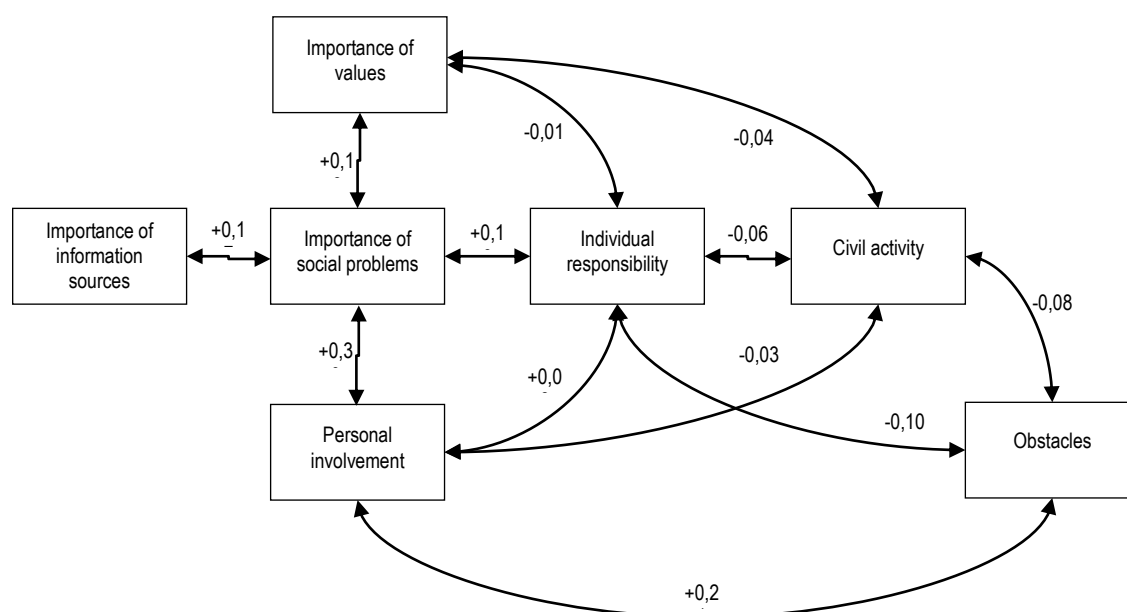
- searching values that can be shared by the largest publicity; or
- specialization in value set.

For the success of marketing that is trying to solve social problems *planning and strategic thinking is essential*. Organizations and co-operators involved first have to determine *mission and vision* during their conscious activity. Defining a short, efficient mission is the essence of what goals, values guide an organization, community. Of course mission is not a conception but only a conceptual approach, a starting point that is detailed after many issues, analysis and becomes a document assigning leading activities and goals. In this process vision has a significant role because it defines a future desired state. We can reach this state and the goals behind it by series of strategic and tactics decisions.

In case of social problems it is also true that *marketing is the art of opportunities*, therefore opinions are also different whether planning and conceptual activity is necessary or not. Planning inappropriately often happens when only reactions take place without real planning, when our everyday is determined by practical happening and when we design the details without strategy and tactics. In case of over-planning formal documents are made all the time. The plans are not realized consistently and organizations do not have progressive initiatives and projects.

In our two-year social marketing research project, the measuring of conscious participation of individuals in solving social problems was extended to different civil and professional organisations (charity, green, cultural, sports and so on) as well. Low active participation was measured with the exception of organisations belonging to some religion (20%). There was an identifiable segment where people expressed their intension to increase their activity in this kind of work (18,4%).

On the basis of the evaluation of the responses, an explanatory model was created (Figure1) in which statistical methods were applied to assess the relationship between particular factors and correlations explaining behaviour. All the factors in the model, without any exception, underwent a period of operationalization in the form of a variable set each of which was reduced to one variable for analyses. The applied method selected for performing reduction depended what measuring scale the variable set contained measured variables. The principal component analysis was applied, when the mean and the frequency of a particular response were calculated. The common feature of the methods was that the obtained variables, without any exception, could be measured on the proportional scale and a stochastic connection was established between them, this enabled the pair analysis of stochastic connection between them by applying the Pearson simple linear correlation coefficient. The figure shows these correlation coefficients and supplements them with the fact that the t-tests was run to test the significant character of the correlation and signalled a significant connection. In all cases variable pairs involved in the experiment showed a significant connection.

Figure 1. Model of social problem sensitivity

Source: own elaboration

The findings show that a relatively weak positive relationship strengthens our assumptions that the stated scale of values, the importance of values, the experienced problems and their seriousness correlate, the difference between the direct involvement and the seriousness of the experienced problems has the strongest correlation and shows that the respondents are mainly deal with their own and directly experienced problems and try to find solutions to them. The more serious the social problem is, the more the individual responsibility is felt, the more the activity increases, however, civil organisational activity is not linked to this. This is mainly due to the fact that Hungary is weak both in an organisational sense and instruments and is strongly attached to state institutions for some reasons. It also has an underdeveloped civil sphere.

We will see later in the third section of the paper that this fact has very disadvantageous effects in solving some concrete social problems. The relationship between factors hindering direct involvement emphasises shifting personal responsibility and low activity of respondents to external factors. A very weak relationship was measured between individual greatness, the extent of individual responsibility and the role of hindering factors.

In case of social marketing there are a number of design models and methods available, mostly from corporate practice and consulting sources. In this case, it is also important to find a bridge between the world of numbers and strategic creativity but complicated planning rules and hinders activities and events.

The first solution of planning social marketing and activities is the so called *modified six-phase model* in international practice (Gromberg 2006):

Phase I: preparation, initiation of program and action.

Action: defining task, what to achieve for what time, what kind of problem to solve, how much chance we have for that.

Phase II: determining tasks and analysing situation.

Action: positioning corporate identity, mission, action, identifying groups, existing communicational paths.

Feasibility analysis: collecting external-internal ideas, opinions, cooperation, opponents, weaknesses, opportunities, defining hypotheses, structural questions (Mind Mapping), SWOT, determining final task.

Phase III: goals and strategy.

Action: defining marketing-goals, basic strategy, determining budget, time schedule, responsibilities.

Phase IV: tactics and planning.

Action: planning tactic happenings, planning ideas creations, communication actions, criteria of controlling, action plan, Brief preparation, tests, detailed cost plans, media planning, etc.

Phase V: preparing realization.

Action: contracting, production and distribution, preparing media and service contracts, operative planning, quality assurance.

Phase VI: carrying out actions.

Action: carrying out actions, controlling, feedback, reactions to change.

Another six-phase similar approach, *Social Marketing CDCynergy*, introduces a more complex program planning process and focuses more on multi-organisational cooperation process that we also prefer:

Phase I: describing and identifying the problem.

- Problem description, data evaluation, summarizing rationality.
- Analysing the content of strategic teams, organisations and individuals.
- Summarizing SWOT analysis.

Phase II: carrying out analysis and marketing research.

- Preparing research plan (confirming resources, analysing roles, evaluating mechanism, processes).
- Research report (answers to the segmentation of the stakeholders, analysing advantages and barriers, competitive behaviour, etc.).

Phase III: creating marketing strategy.

- Defining target group and determining behaviour and methodology, program resource, budget, intervention-mix.

Phase IV: planning interventions.

- Detailed program, services, initiations, educating employees, detailed work plan and communication plan.

Phase V: monitoring and evaluation planning.

- Determining indicators, monitoring methods, evaluation plan.

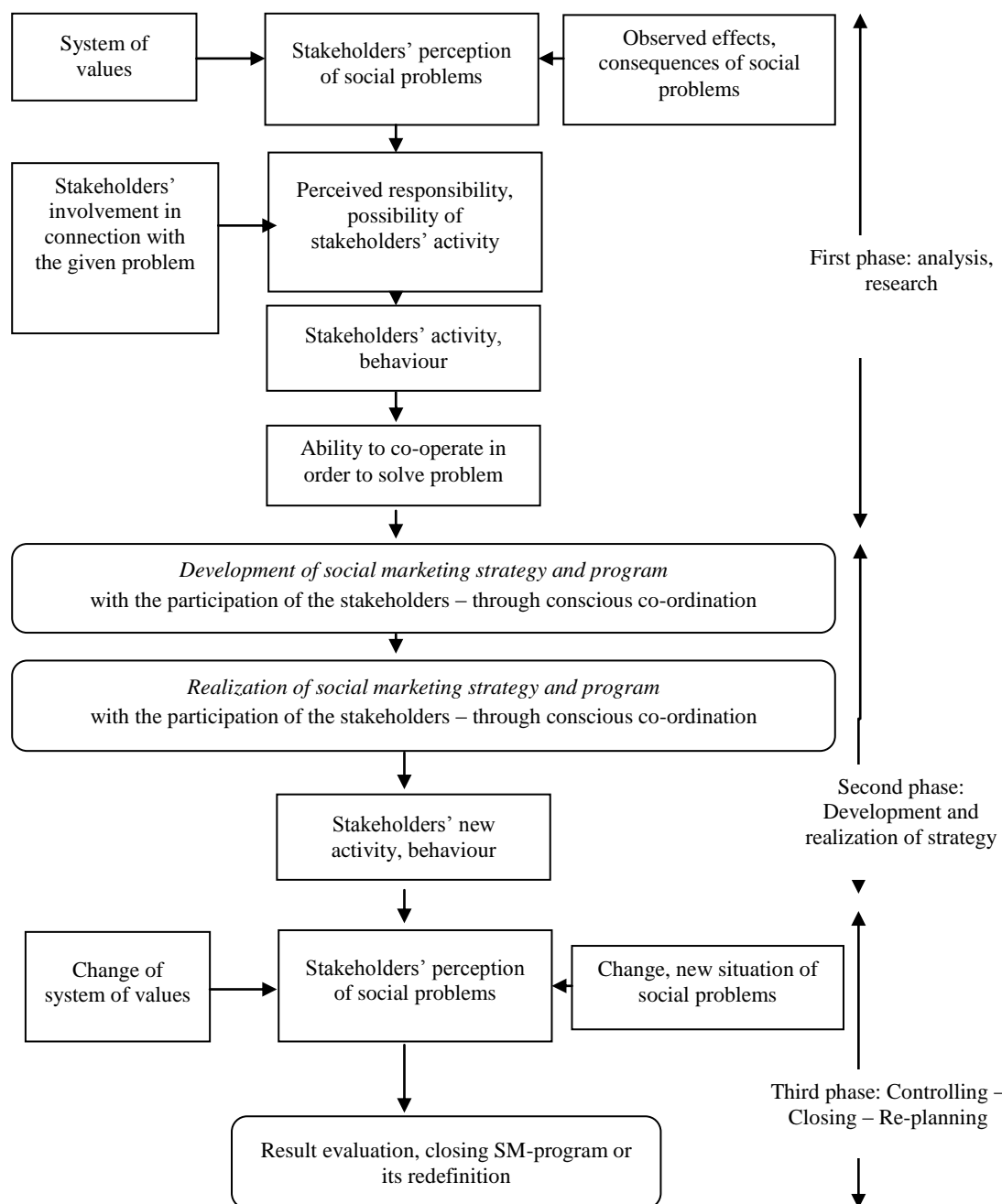
Phase VI: implementation and evaluation.

- Carrying out interventions, feedback to partners and stakeholders.

According to these approaches we have defined such a theoretical process that models the conscious, coordinated-handling steps of a social problem and a possible operation of social marketing based on the previously introduced planning objectives (Figure 2). This process can be applied to solve small local and complex national problems. Of course, at the end we have to involve more members with significantly differentiated behaviour, different interests therefore re-planning should be carried out more times.

Basic feature of the model is the *stakeholder coordination*, the so called stakeholder management approaches social marketing based on reasonable activity and planned behaviour theory.

The status quo of social marketing is permanently changing, developing and getting more precise and extended in the last decade. Problem solving and activity of social marketing need more complex and integrated handling with lots of members and different relationships. It is obvious that the processes of social marketing appear rather as special “*network stakeholder management*”. According to a wider concept, stakeholder can be a group, individuals who are able to influence to reach organizational objectives or they are influenced by them. According to a narrower concept stakeholder can be a group or individual from whom the long term operation of the organization depends (Freeman and Reed 1983).

Figure 2. Integrated social marketing as an analysing, decision and execution process

Source: own elaboration

We can meet as typical stakeholders in the practice of social marketing not only internal groups, but also and typically external groups as, for example, a given non-profit organization, those who are targeted by the social objective or performance, clients, private supporters, cooperative partners, regulatory organizations, administration (governmental, local governmental organizations), service providers, consultants, coordinators, wide publicity, communication channels and media, competitors, or others with different interests.

Of course we meet different roles among stakeholders. For example, many of them are addressed by social marketing. "Clients" and others are "producers", i.e. contributors of achieving the given social objectives, where every stakeholder has particular coordinator, integrator role whether it is a non-profit

organization or an institute of the state. Therefore in our model social marketing is not only the marketing of non-profit organizations but they have significant role, responsibility in solving social issues, problems. Many people are convinced that it is good when a problem is represented by a non-governmental coordinator.

Thus, a final thesis could be formulated on the basis of the analysis: *a finished model of integrated social marketing is an analytical, planning, decision, executive process. It tries to create a value community involving every stakeholder in order to solve a given social problem. It explores problem consciousness, involvement, responsibility and action motivation, stakeholder relationships, cooperation willingness and realizes a conscious stakeholder management with the help of well-coordinated strategy and programs.*

3. City Partner Strategy as a possible solution for a new cluster

3.1. Backgrounds and frameworks of the strategy

The aim of the establishment of the Downtown Economical Development Cluster is to help the development and revitalisation of the city of Miskolc –mainly on the basis of the commercial opportunities– and to form such an environment where life and staying quality of all affected actors (residents, enterprises and tourists) can increase and become sustainable.

The “crisis” of downtowns is not a recent phenomenon. We can face this problem in many other towns of Europe or the world. Those who could revive reversed the deterioration processes by close cooperation, with the economical actors, mainly merchants, carrying an outstanding, initiative role. Downtown areas are functional, economical, cultural, intellectual and identical centres of towns, which can also form the image of the whole settlement. This is the case of Miskolc, too, being not only the seat of the county, but also a significant town of the Northern Hungarian region.

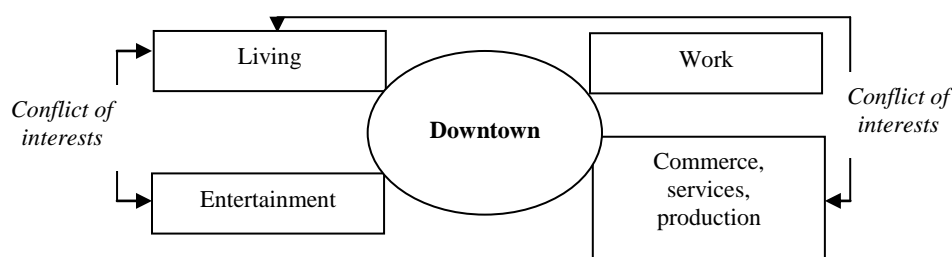
Recent international town researches show that downtown areas are again in their renaissance. They are in the centre of the development priorities of towns.

The most common problems of downtowns are: empty (closed) shops, problems from the use of the real estates, traffic and parking issues, problems of the townscapes, attendance and traffic. There are the consequences of certain historical events, crisis of identity, complicated (and sometimes unregulated) ownerships, increasing role of private sector, impoverishment and its social conflicts, and the underdevelopment of the civil sector.

The elements, which can determine the renewed attractiveness of downtowns, can be ranked as follows: (1) lot of shopping facilities, (2) walking street, shopping arcades, (3) good approach and traffic, (4) street cafés, (5) cultural events, (6) tended green areas and (7) presence of training and public institutions. Thus, downtowns are, and must be, functionally complex units (see Figure 3).

The problems are definitely present in case of the town of Miskolc as well: the characteristics of the economical changes after the political transformation, inconsistency of commercial development and town building, the effects of the global and national economical crisis, the weaknesses of the social-economical closing up. All these call the attention to the fact that the present local situation, social and economical environment cannot offer suitable and favourable solutions for the existing downtown problems.

Figure 3. Multi-functional, integrated situation of downtowns



Source: own elaboration

On the other hand, there are very good examples, best practices from all over the world. There are complex town- downtown development models for 30 years in North-America, with the cooperation of all actors, bearing the characteristics of *unified, open development, overall development orientation, cooperative resources and functional versatility*. European solutions are mainly based on these examples. We have also taken some of them into consideration prior to carrying out the local field research in Miskolc (Vienna, Bremen, Linz, Canterbury and Villach as foreign experiences, and Budapest, Győr, Zalaegerszeg, Szombathely, etc. as examples of practices in Hungarian towns) as well as general new trends of “conscious consumers”: i) polarized demands, narrowing average segment (10-20%), strong higher and lower (cross-oriented) segment (40-50 %), this latter being even higher in Hungary; ii) getting something special (increasing role of experience) centric behaviour; iii) growing demand for individual, limited products; iv) growing demand for matured services; v) time-sensitiveness is very typical; vi) “concept stores” are in focus where there is some kind of concept, like lifestyle, quality, theme, etc. in the offer; vii) moral reflections are more and more influential (e.g. social responsibility, environment, origin of production) in consumer decisions; viii) downtowns are not only the areas of price reductions; ix) we can build on the paradox behaviour of consumers, i.e. they are price sensitive in certain situations but also open-handed in other segments; and x) we have to move from the classic mass marketing (through segment-oriented and milieu-lifestyle marketing) to individual, direct, so-called “one to one” marketing.

In case of Miskolc, current situation regarding the service offer in downtown can be summarized as follows: 10% of establishments are restaurants and other catering services, 42% are commercial units (shops), 36% are other services (2% of these cultural, 88% personal and 10% public services by Administration), and 12% are empty (closed) places.

Regarding the general situation of the buildings, 26% should be renovated, while only 1% are under renovation, 17% are renovated, 53% can be considered as being in a “normal” or “proper” appearance, and 3% are new.

At any case, almost all the problems of downtowns can be derived from the lack of coordination and cooperation between the actors.

3.2. City Partner Strategy – with social marketing solutions

As a first step in strategy formulation, the assessment of the environment has led to the following SWOT-analysis. As shown in Figure 4, main identified *strengths* are: i) historical, tourism and architectural values; ii) attractiveness of the occasional festivals and programs (e.g. International Opera Festival, Antiquity Market); iii) living traditions, merchant and commercial culture; iv) good basis for service function; and v) support and openness for cooperation from professional partners.

On the contrary, identified *weaknesses* are: i) disadvantages of buildings and styles (narrow street, no place for big events); ii) not competitive shops and services; iii) weak tourism attractiveness; iv) lack of attractive events for the residents; v) lack of cooperation and common strategy; vi) lack of professional management and marketing; and vi) difficult parking situation, very high parking prices.

When considering *opportunities*, we should refer to: i) changes of consumers’ behaviour; ii) increasing cooperation abilities of the actors; iii) intentions from town leaders to develop and support downtown; iv) further development of the former Integrated Town Development Strategy; v) realization of downtown investments; vi) existing (inter)national best practices; and vii) increasing of tourism attractiveness.

Finally, *threats* are: i) further development and strengthening of shopping centres; ii) lasting effects of the economical crisis (decrease in demand, investors’ intentions, uncertainty); iii) lasting underdevelopment of the region; iv) narrowing financial resources, tender possibilities and abilities; v) moving of commercial units, bankruptcy; vi) further decrease of downtown image; and vii) increasing crime.

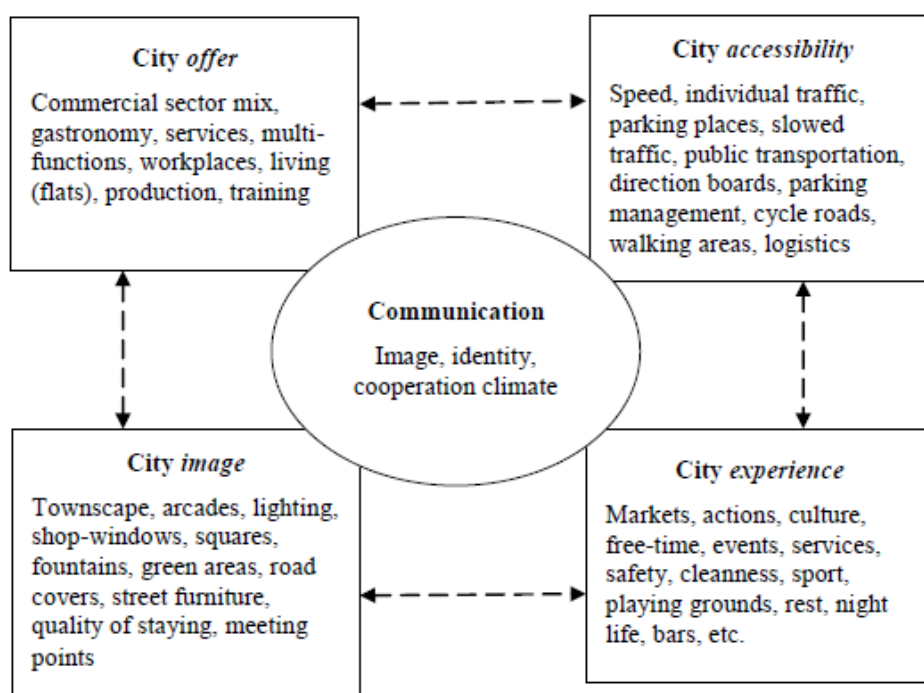
Downtowns should build a unique own profile to be able to increase attractiveness, but this needs a complex strategic way of thinking and an integrated model for city management, including four dimensions (see Figure 5): *city offer, accessibility, image and experience*.

The development of commerce, economical and tourism potential of downtowns can only be realised through a complex conception. Thus, City Partner Strategy is presented as a part-strategy of a complex program, which represents the necessity of an overall (down)town development conception, by taking the initiative role in some fields (mainly affected by economical actors). It has to be designed taking in mind both the suitable time and the aims of the strategy.

Figure 4. SWOT analysis of Miskolc downtown

<p style="text-align: center;">Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical, tourism and architectural values • Attractiveness of the occasional festivals and programs (e.g. International Opera Festival, Antiquity Market) • Living traditions, merchant and commercial culture • Good basis for service function • Support and openness for cooperation from professional partners 	<p style="text-align: center;">Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disadvantages of buildings and styles (narrow street, no place for big events) • Not competitive shops and services • Weak tourism attractiveness • Lack of attractive events for the residents • Lack of cooperation and common strategy • Lack of professional management and marketing • Difficult parking situation, very high parking prices
<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes of consumers' behaviour • Increasing cooperation abilities of the actors • Intentions from town leaders to develop and support downtown • Further development of the former Integrated Town Development Strategy • Realization of downtown investments • Existing (inter)national best practices • Increasing of tourism attractiveness 	<p style="text-align: center;">Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further development and strengthening of shopping centres • Lasting effects of the economical crisis (decrease in demand, investors' intentions, uncertainty) • Lasting underdevelopment of the region • Narrowing financial resources, tender possibilities and abilities • Moving of commercial units, bankruptcy • Further decrease of downtown image • Increasing crime

Source: own elaboration

Figure 5. Main field of interventions: a City Management Model with the elements of an attractive downtown

Source: own elaboration

The suitable time of the strategy –on the basis of international experiences, and for the sake of real results– is 3-5 years, when, in the first period, it is necessary to demonstrate renewing abilities, consciousness, to give a firm base for increasing trust for mid-term economical and development decisions. At the same time, the strategy aims to give and realise direct, short-term initiations, too.

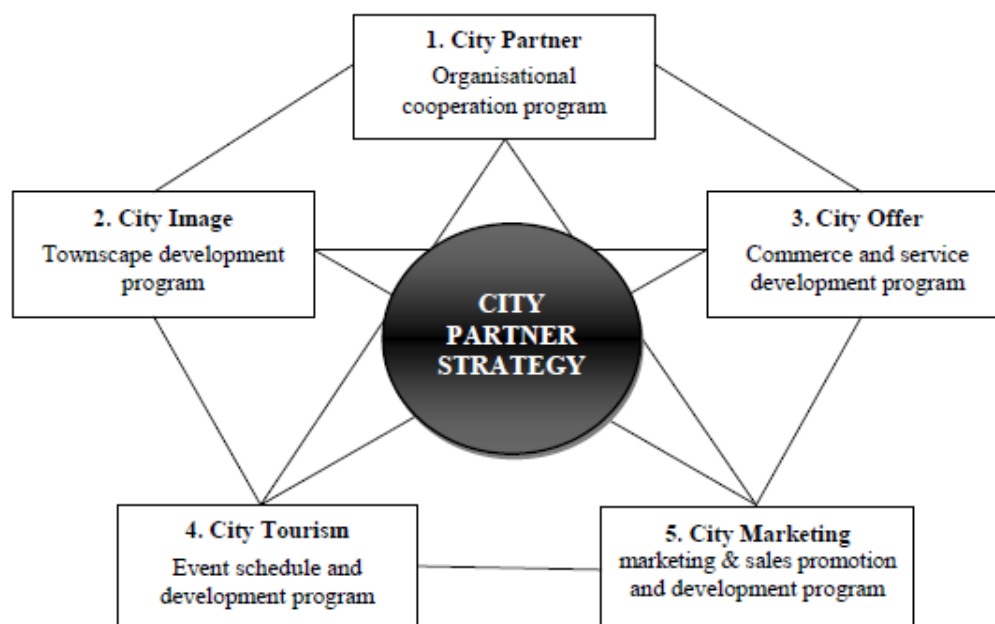
Concrete aims of the strategy are:

- contribution to the complex downtown development program for increasing attractiveness;
- establishment of extensive cooperation system along professional values and interests;
- increase of the relevant and more complete utilisation of the downtown real estates and business units;
- increase of the commercial trade (attendance, spending);
- increase of tourism attractiveness of downtown by the development of tourist-friendly services, thus significantly increase the number and spending of tourists;
- contribution to the improvement of downtown event structure and way of life, by organising own, targeted programs; and
- elaboration and realisation of a conscious city marketing program, by establishing the identity and brand of downtown, operating a sales promotion project, thus supporting the community targets of the strategy.

When thinking about positioning, we are often asked to decide what we really want from downtown: developing commerce or tourism. The answer of the strategy is: we do not need a “limiting” positioning, but –as we have pointed out before– we need a multi-functional, complex positioning, building on several attraction elements of a modern town. One main idea is related to the concept of “colourful world” or “downtown of colourful values”, that is, building on the values of our history, most beautiful traditions and eras, where all the townscape, service, content and formal elements can strengthen the authenticity and attractiveness.

What we need for the success are the following: management organisational cooperation, attractive image and townscape, attractive offer of downtown services, people and consumers in downtown. Thus, different strategic programs are required for each sub-field, and that is the reason why we have suggested five sub-programs for operation (Figure 6): i) *City Partner*; ii) *City Image*; iii) *City Offer*; iv) *City Tourism*; and v) *City Marketing*.

Figure 6. Sub-programs of City Partner Strategy



Source: own elaboration

First of all, the *City Partner Program* aims to establish a conscious organisation and management, instead of the present, loose cluster relations, to be able to define tasks, responsibility and possibilities, duties, within legal frameworks. The most commonly used forms are associations or foundations, which can offer motivated participation for anyone, not only for the active, initiative actors. There are professional organisations, chambers of commerce behind these formulations in most cases, and this is the reason why it is necessary to have a separate project organisation to avoid possible interest conflicts.

Internal cooperation is a fundamental factor, as the success of the programs depends on the number of participants, especially of those who are directly influenced. Although the membership is voluntary, we argue for the definition of some minimum quality requirements. It is very important to keep the internal quality control throughout the whole project period, and possibly, after it as well. This can be done by, for instance, a “City Partner Member” sticker on the shop windows, or something similar. The task of the project organisation is to build business cooperation on the basis of trust. A possible structure can be seen later on Figure 7.

We also suggest forming a *Downtown Forum*, where others who are not directly involved –like local politicians, civil (cultural, social, etc.) organisations, media, scientists and researchers– could also participate. We also support to shape working groups like townscape development, service quality development, tourism and event development, and, marketing and sales promotion development.

Secondly, the *City Image Program* directs the improvement of the overall judgement of the town, regarding townscape, safety and operation. The main fields of intervention are: continuation of renovations in the city centre, squares and meeting points, street furniture, more information and direction boards, slowing tramway speed (the main street of Miskolc is pedestrian street, with a tramway line), free moving out for shop owners in front of their properties. Last, but not least, the questions of parking in the centre is a basic problem, as there are not enough places and they are quite expensive, in spite of the insufficient quality. Free parking periods can also increase tourism activity and establish a more tourism friendly environment.

Thirdly, the focus of the *City Offer Program* is to establish a property management service, on the one hand, and local product shops and cooperation on the other. Supporting brands and “magnet-points” in the centre is efficient to attract more tourists at the same time. Local products can also be an element of tourism friendly services.

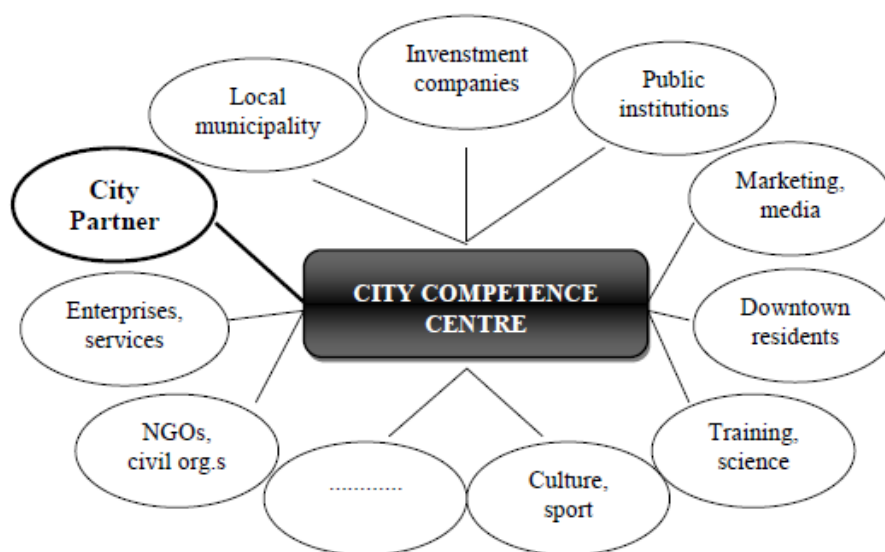
Fourthly, the *City Tourism Program* is vital in the overall life of the town as well, not only for downtown area. There is another process in the town recently faced, the establishment of the local tourism destination management agency. Strong cooperation is needed with them to develop guaranteed programs, tourism products (e.g. sight-seeing tours), unique attractions in the city centre, too (as main attractions of the town are in other districts, suburban parts and holiday areas). A cultural manager of the City Partner program, for instance, can be a member in the TDM organisation, too.

Empty shops can also be utilised through tourism, e.g. by organising exhibitions, lending for artistic or event purposes in certain periods of time. Improvement of language knowledge, information points in shops, shopping guide map could be suitable solutions. We argue for positive discrimination for tourism friendly offer, like in the case of brands or in calculating renting fees. Another positive task of the project organisation can be the advisory activity regarding newly opened shops and event-coordination, or building relationships between merchants and other institutes (e.g. schools and university) for getting new ideas.

Finally, the *City Marketing Program* targets to improve the sales and commerce of the downtown area, by suggesting such solutions like: electronic sales, booking and ticket ordering, home-delivery service, own newspaper, joint sales promotion for downtown shops, organisation of thematic markets, and the development of an own city brand. The “Miskolc City Open (Night)” project aims coordinated and prolonged opening hours, shopping evenings, special offers and other possibilities.

The program and its elements do not form a closed, final system but, on the other hand, mean an interconnected package; all the elements have to be realised for success, to reach perceivable, positive effects.

As it has been stated above, the suggestion for a possible suitable social marketing and management tool is the necessity of the establishment of a stakeholder management model, what we called *City Competence Centre* (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. The *City Competence Centre* as a stakeholder management model

Source: own elaboration

The next steps are: i) wide social discussion of the proposal, ii) establishment of the working groups; and iii) elaboration of the priorities and action plans of the five main sub-programs and the establishment of the City Competence Centre.

The Miskolc Downtown Economical Development Cluster has been initiated by the Chamber of Industry and Commerce, having its seat in the city centre, in the main street. They fulfil a double function as, on the one hand, they are in close relationship with the entrepreneurs (as membership is compulsory in Hungary); on the other hand, they can face the problems day by day as located in the problem area. As responsible organisation, they have asked marketing researchers of the local university to collaborate. We could shape a promising strategy on the basis of our previous research results on social marketing, and could test in practice what theory supposed.

4. Conclusions and suggestions for future research

In this study we present two results of our recent research projects. The integrated model of social marketing is a new approach to many social questions, but there are still other undiscovered areas too. The City Partner Strategy deals with a present, serious local, economical and social problem of the downtown. We could successfully combine theory with practice and worked out a model building on social marketing tools. Moreover, we will continue cooperation in the development of exclusive offer of the downtown area, supporting appearance of cultural and artistic activities and the conscious improvement of local products and tourism offer.

We have found new directions as well for further research, for instance in the field of tourism, as Miskolc was previously an industrial town of metallurgy and iron industry. Parallel with the political transformation in 1990, the coal mines and the steel factory in the middle of the town were closed, and the area was privatised. This caused high unemployment and serious social problems in the town. Recently some projects have dealt with the issues of industrial heritage, tourism usage, parallel with the re-opening of production, establishing industrial parks. The debates have led to the same questions: lack of strategy (even conception) and lack of any management and coordinative body among the several owners, depressed by social problems in a difficult economical environment. The solutions and tools of social marketing can be an answer, but they are beyond the limits of current findings.

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