Courtesy and Kindness: Social Marketing and Cultural Control in Singapore

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Abstract

This paper critically examines how the Singapore government has used social marketing campaigns espousing courtesy and kindness to mold the young nation's culture. Following a brief overview of state-sponsored social marketing, the paper draws from both primary data sources and the secondary literature to investigate the Singapore campaigns in terms of: 1) the unique political, social, and cultural environments that motivated them; 2) the themes, slogans, and visual representations used in their executions; and 3) the level of success they achieved in instilling and reinforcing a variety of positive interpersonal behaviors. Implications for macromarketing ethics, theory, and policy are discussed.

Keywords

Singapore Courtesy Campaign, Singapore Kindness Movement, social advertising, social marketing, social engineering

Introduction

Nation states around the world have long employed social advertising and marketing campaigns to change people's opinions and behaviors, but over the past half-century few can match Singapore for its unstinting efforts to shape the local culture and control its citizens. Since 1959, various government bodies and statutory boards have mounted over 200 national campaigns for social change (Teo 2004). This paper critically examines two examples: the Singapore National Courtesy Campaign, which began in June, 1979 under the direction of the Ministry of Culture, and the Singapore Kindness Movement, a government funded non-profit organization launched in 1997. These initiatives merged in 2001. The Courtesy Campaign has sought to instill positive social behaviors, especially among service workers interacting with the public, whereas the Kindness Movement has addressed deeper values of caring and graciousness in Singaporean society.

Three sets of empirical questions guide this study: 1) How has Singapore's economic, political, and cultural environment influenced the creation of these campaigns and motivated policy makers to pursue them over more than three decades? 2) What themes, slogans, visual representations, ephemera, and organized events and activities have been used to promote courtesy and kindness behaviors? 3) Have these campaigns actually resulted in positive social change? With this factual understanding established, the ultimate purpose of the research is to then critically evaluate these efforts by the Singapore government to shape public behavior through social advertising and social marketing.

When a state uses social marketing techniques on a broad scale to control the culture of an entire nation, significant macromarketing issues are raised. Encouraging courtesy and kindness are respectable social goals that few people anywhere would question. Nevertheless, the processes through which these behaviors are selected as social problems, and the means through which they are addressed by marketing campaigns, have ethical implications (Brenkert 2002). We do not intend to question the integrity and goodwill of the many Singaporean officials and ordinary citizens who have formulated and executed the courtesy and kindness campaigns for over three decades, but we do wish to raise some questions about their guiding philosophies, social problem definitions, and target market relationships. Such macromarketing analysis will lead to more informed public policy for future social marketing by governments.

The primary data sources assembled for this study include speeches, newspaper accounts, posters, and a variety of other ephemera generated by the Courtesy Campaign and the Kindness Movement. This material is analyzed in terms of the government ministries involved, the social behaviors addressed, and the message appeals and imagery used. Visual materials were accessed online from the National Archives of Singapore starting with a collection of 25 courtesy campaign posters (1978-1985) and six kindness posters (undated), all of which are available at http://www.a2o.com.sg/posters/. Six "photonews" posters from 1979 and 1981 are in landscape rather than the typical portrait orientation. Featuring black and white photographs of National Courtesy Campaign events, they visually document some of the publicity and personal selling components of the social marketing activities. Other relevant visual data were located via different keyword searches on Google Images, and by visits to eBay where some additional ephemera (e.g. postage stamps) were discovered.

Evidence of the effectiveness of the campaigns over time was assembled from survey research reports from the 1980s, commentaries on these campaigns published in *The Straits Times* and other sources, and a personal interview with a knowledgeable informant from the Singapore Kindness Movement. The unpublished research reports were inspected in person at the Singapore National Library in July 2011. Singapore law strictly limits the amount of material in library holdings that can be photocopied; so detailed note taking was necessary. To the extent these sources were originally commissioned by the two campaigns' ministerial mentors, there is reason to be on the alert for any possible analytical slant or tendency to reaffirm the government position. For the most part, however, the reports appear honest and professional. Other written sources were accessed via the National Library's NewspapersSG, a searchable, digitized collection available at http://newspapers-stg.nl.sg/.

The remainder of this paper is divided into four key sections. The first section reviews some relevant concepts and literature on state-sponsored social marketing, social advertising, and social engineering. Section two then describes the economic, political, social, and cultural environments in Singapore and how they relate to the Courtesy Campaign and Kindness Movement. Section three presents an account of the courtesy and kindness marketing in terms of the philosophical rationale, the behaviors addressed, and the various message appeals, slogans, visual images, and media used. The final section examines two ethical issues raised by Singapore's state-directed social marketing: the definition of a social problem by government and the relationship between state social marketers and the target population of citizens.

State-Sponsored Social Marketing

Several important terms used in this paper require some clarification. <u>Social marketing</u> is defined as "the application of commercial marketing technologies to the analysis, planning, execution, and evaluation of programs designed to influence the voluntary behavior of target audiences in order to improve their personal welfare and that of society" (Andreasen 1995, 7). Herein, we consider government sponsored social campaigns, but religious groups, civic organizations, and businesses also run them. <u>Social advertising</u> seeks to provide information to induce positive behavior change that addresses social issues and enhances personal well-being. Social marketing has similar goals, but goes beyond the largely communication approach of social advertising to include marketing research and testing different approaches; product development to meet the needs of target audiences; the use of incentives to motivate audiences to change behavior; and facilitation programs, making it easier for people to change behavior (Fox and Kotler 1980). The Singapore Courtesy Campaign and Kindness Movement have used a variety of communications media, but also entail events, activities, and research. Thus, they better fit the description of social marketing than the more circumscribed concept of social advertising.

<u>Social engineering</u> has been defined as ". . . effectively the state-based equivalent of commercial private sector marketing" (McMahon 2002, 77), but other authors see it much more broadly as the "arranging and channeling environmental and social forces to create a high probability that effective social action will occur" (Alexander and Schmidt, 1996, 1). This more pervasive effort in social control can be exercised through fines, subsidies, tax incentives, and other inducements that influence voluntary compliance (Yap 2010). Even public spaces can be designed to channel behavior, such as when iron fences built around intersections compel pedestrians to walk a bit and cross the street in a safer location. Social engineering sometimes has negative connotations through association with the "dark social engineering" of totalitarian states such as Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, and Maoist China. Some of the literature on Singapore's efforts to create an ordered and disciplined society has used the term, social engineering, but not quite in the "dark" sense (Kuah 1990; Wilkinson 1988).

State-sponsored social advertising campaigns have used a number of different media, the most ubiquitous being posters. Posters became popular as an advertising medium following the spread of chromolithographic printing in the latter part of the 1800s. In the 20th century, poster campaigns were used to mobilize the home fronts of combat nations during both World Wars. During World War I, for example, various campaigns in Britain urged women to secure jobs in munitions factories, to volunteer for nursing duties, and to persuade men to enlist. In their rhetoric, these campaigns reflected the tensions between traditional social roles and female emancipation (Hupfer 1997). British propaganda posters of the Second Word War used lofty rhetoric that seemed less down-to-earth than the language of commercial advertising (Clampin 2009). The U.S. government launched a number of social advertising campaigns during World War II. Many emphasized frugality themes (Witkowski 2003). Hundreds of different posters created by dozens of different artists preached being thrifty with goods and services, recycling metals and other materials, growing and storing food at home, obeying price and ration controls, and buying war bonds. Fox (2009) analyzed social advertising posters from the Soviet Union that conveyed health messages. Over a long period, these campaigns fought to eliminate infectious diseases, promote cleanliness, urge better infant and childcare, and attack harmful

habits. Fox (2009) also studied the different types of message appeals including the use of statistics and graphical presentation, rational appeals, testimonials and appeals to authority, appeals to fight the external enemy and bandwagon, shame, and omnibus appeals. Poster art has figured prominently in many of Singapore's social campaigns (Teo 2004).

The Singapore Environment for Social Marketing

Economy, Politics, and Society

After 140 years as a colony of Great Britain, Singapore achieved full internal self-government in 1959. The passage of a referendum backed by the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) led to a merger with newly formed Malaysia on September 16, 1963. Because of ethnic tensions and divergent economic interests, the union lasted less than two years and Singapore formally declared itself an independent nation on August 9, 1965. Cambridge-educated lawyer Lee Kuan Yew (born 1923) was elected Prime Minister and held this office continually until 1990. PAP, which originally had strong socialist leanings, has remained in firm control to this day. Despite some losses in the May 7, 2011 election, PAP still retains 81 out of 87 seats in Parliament and is deeply entrenched in the government and civil bureaucracy.

The party has had an admirable record of governance. Singapore has experienced very rapid and generally constant economic growth since independence and today is Asia's richest country outside of Japan. As a modern city-state, Singapore is safe, clean, efficient, well-maintained, and reasonably attractive in terms of its buildings and public spaces. It ranks 27th out of 169 countries on the United Nations *Human Development Index* and 10th best on its *Gender Inequality Index* (UNDP 2010). Singapore does even better on more economics-focused indicators. It comes in second out of 179 countries on the *2011 Index of Economic Freedom* (Heritage Foundation 2011) and number three on both the *2011 World Competitiveness Yearbook*, which rates 58 national economies (IMD 2011), and on *The Global Competitiveness Report*, which rates 139 countries (World Economic Forum 2011). PAP has pursued free market policies and has collaborated closely with foreign transnational corporations (Wong 2002).

However, according to the *Freedom in the World* survey (Freedom House 2011), which assesses political rights and civil liberties across 194 countries, Singapore only rates as "partly free" (where 87 countries are rated "free", 60 "partly free", and 47 "not free"). Censorship, the imposition of limits on print distribution (known as "gazetting"), and strict libel laws have strongly discouraged criticism of the government and have curtailed the press and other forms of free speech (Wilkinson 1988; Wong 2002). On the *Press Freedom Index 2010* (Reporters without Borders 2011), Singapore ranks 136 (tied with Mexico) out of 178 countries. This contradiction between an open economic system and strictly controlled media, government apologists would argue, has been necessary to keep out foreign influences, to ensure social stability, and, ultimately, to achieve Singapore's remarkable economic development (Wong 2002). The government's control over the media has undoubtedly facilitated its numerous social advertising and marketing campaigns.

Lee Kuan Yew's role in the development of Singapore has been exceptionally important. He has been Prime Minister (1965-1990), Senior Minister (1990-2004), and Minister Mentor (2004-2011) to his son, Lee Hsien Loong, who is currently Prime Minister. Lee senior stressed the creation of a unique Singaporean identity within a multicultural framework, a policy of

"cultural integration" (Wong 2002). Tolerance of different groups has been crucial. The country is ethnically, religiously, and linguistically diverse. It is populated by Chinese (76.8%), Malays (13.9%), and Indian Tamils (7.9%). Religious preferences in Singapore are divided among Buddhist (42.5%), Muslim (14.9%), Taoist (8.5%), Hindu (4%), Catholic (4.8%), other Christian (9.8%), other (0.7%), and none (14.8%). Four languages are official – Mandarin (35%), English (23%), Malay (14.1%), and Tamil (3.2%) – and several more are spoken including Hokkien (11.4%), Cantonese (5.7%), Teochew (4.9%), and other Chinese dialects (1.8%) (all data from CIA Factbook 2011). The question has been how to bring this disparate population into social harmony. Lee Kuan Yew believed that as a young society with many immigrants, Singapore would be more open to change than a traditional society (Nirmala 1999). From the outset, he was quite willing to utilize the state and its ministries as agents for positive social change.

Since 1979, when Lee Kuan Yew brought up the topic in a letter to the moral education team (Kuah 1990), Confucianism has played an important ideological role in the efforts of the Singapore government to control society through social advertising, marketing, and engineering. In 1982, the government invited eight scholars to lecture and hold seminars on the topic (Wong 2002) and the subject of Confucian Ethics was introduced into school curriculums in 1984 as an option for moral education. The philosophy ". . . provides a set of moral and ethical values that legitimizes the perpetuation of a highly centralized and authoritarian system of government" (Kuah 1990, 374). A cardinal requirement, however, is that the leader should be wise and rule with virtue. Confucianism thus informed the common values used to promote national ideology. These include the family as society's basic building block, a stress on community over self, the resolution of issues through consensus, the preservation of different heritages, and racial and religious tolerance (*Straits Times* 1989). This policy raised concerns among some Malays, Indians, and English-educated Chinese who did not want to be integrated under a philosophy so identified with mainland China (Wong 2002).

Culture and Courtesy

When immigrants came to Singapore they mostly brought the manners and customs of their rural villages in China, India, and the Malay world. These were the mores of peasants rather than the cultural rituals of homeland elites. The fast-changing society in which they assimilated did not have a dominant host culture. Consequently, courtesy and kindness rituals in Singapore have been syncretic. They mix the traditional and Asian with the modern and western, the latter including holidays and observances such as Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Teacher's Day, and Secretaries' Week. These imports were already commercialized celebrations on arrival, but market values and the mass media have also penetrated Singapore's interpretation of Chinese New Year, Hari Raya Puasa (i.e. Muslim Eid), and Deepavali (i.e. Hindu Diwali) through the promotion of gift-exchange among celebrants (Kuo, Mani, and Wee 1987).

Some forms of courtesy are asymmetrical in that inferiors are expected to supplicate to their social betters (Elias 1978). In their cross-cultural research, Brown and Levinson (1987) showed that social distance and relative power are associated with degrees of politeness in that people in weaker positions are more likely to exhibit polite and especially non-threatening behavior. However, in more modern societies, interpersonal relations are marked less by respect than by patterns of mutual goodwill and friendliness between equals who are not in a position to exert social pressures on each other. Rules of courtesy also govern familial interactions in mundane, everyday matters, such as eating, sleeping, and dressing. With declining birthrates and

smaller families, children in Singapore are accorded more attention and care than previously (Kuo, Mani, and Wee 1987).

Kuah (1990) believes that Confucian values have been a very important unifying force across the various Chinese communities in Singapore. Among the many Confucian prescriptions described in school textbooks, one is particularly relevant to courtesy and kindness:

"Tolerance—Confucians consider that 'within the Four Seas all men are brothers.' They uphold the principle of universal brotherhood were one should 'overflow in love to all' and not merely to one's relations and friends. If we treat all people with the same respect and love just as we treat our brothers or sisters, the world will surely be a more peaceful and happier place to live in" (cited in Kuah 1990, 375).

In contrast, Kuo, Mani, and Wee (1987) contend that although Confucianism specifies five cardinal relationships, the philosophy gives no clear prescriptions for how strangers should interact. Thus, a Chinese person who is

". . . docile and warm with family and friends, can become aggressive and hostile in a non-personal context such as driving on a crowded street. Courteous conduct is supposed to be reserved for friends and kin, but not strangers. As contemporary urban society is characterised by frequent contact between people with secondary rather than primary relations, the traditional concept of courtesy may be found to be inadequate (Kuo, Mani, and Wee 1987, p. tbd).

Courtesy norms in Singapore differ from one ethnic community to another. Malay society, drawing upon indigenous and Islamic traditions, emphasizes stricter regulation of the behavior of those who are socially inferior, compared to those who are socially superior or senior. In some situations, being courteous might be seen as an admission of weakness, while presuming higher status than what is due would be taken as discourteous. Malay social norms stress an attitude of humility in relation to others. Boastfulness constitutes very bad manners and an ostentatious lifestyle should be avoided (Kuo, Mani, and Wee 1987). Malay Singaporeans probably adhere to these traditional values in varying degrees, just as their Chinese neighbors are likely to follow Confucian precepts with different levels of conviction.

The Courtesy Campaign and Kindness Movement

Forerunners

The roots of the National Courtesy Campaign can be traced to the "Bus Safety and Courtesy Campaign" of 1968 and the "National Safety First Council Road Courtesy Campaigns" and the "Safety and Courtesy Campaign Week" held between 1972 and 1973. Lack of public buses gave rise to rude and unsafe behaviors by commuters – pushing to get into overcrowded vehicles, haggling over fares, swearing at bus drivers for missing stops – which gave the government further impetus to improve its public transportation, but in the meantime to campaign persistently for greater courtesy. The recognition that road safety and courtesy were linked was made public in a 1972 press release. The Road Courtesy Campaign was a concerted effort to reduce injury and death by encouraging motorists and pedestrians to be courteous and polite to each other (Tadin 1972). This campaign used several methods of persuasion including poster exhibitions, motor vehicle relays, talks and seminars about road safety and courtesy, film screenings at movie theatres, 'Spot the Courteous Drivers' competitions, and the distribution of

prizes and souvenirs. Marketing support from the private sector was also elicited as oil companies offered prizes, free posters and car stickers.

Leadership and Rationale

In a 1971 speech, Lee Kuan Yew talked about the importance of courtesy in hospitality and tourism (Lee 1971). Tourism was a growth industry for Singapore and a good source of foreign exchange as more and more westerners were flying to Asia to sample its different cuisines and cultures. The government wanted Singapore to be competitive as a tourist destination and saw courtesy and hospitality as part of the nation's tourism value proposition. Tourists should not "depart with the impression that we (Singaporeans) are a nation of cold and hard-hearted people whose only ambition was to acquire material wealth" (Sia 1973). In 1972, government-owned Singapore Airlines introduced its successful "Singapore Girl" campaign based upon a positioning strategy of gentle, courteous service (Chan 2000). To enhance the value proposition of Singapore tourism, tipping was also discouraged on the basis that it was not an Eastern custom (Sia 1973). Since then, many campaigns have targeted service workers in order to inculcate a hospitable culture that would leave foreign visitors with a positive impression of Singapore and so encourage them to return. In 1978, for example, the Singapore Tourism Promotion Board launched a courtesy campaign to encourage Singaporeans to be more polite to tourists.

In the 1971 speech, Lee Kuan Yew remarked that people with scarce resources living in a "young migrant society" unavoidably rub against each other and "this causes friction, unless you lubricate with courtesy" (Lee 1971, p.2). He conceded that Singaporeans were by nature "businesslike, abrupt, and brusque" and had not yet acquired courtesy as a habit. His vision was to inculcate this habit among school children by incorporating this into the national curriculum, while targeting adults through television, radio, cinema, and newspapers. This vision was realized when the National Courtesy Campaign was launched in 1979.

Campaign Execution

The Singapore Courtesy Campaign was officially launched in 1979 with July designated as "Courtesy Month." The vision was to maximize participation from all sectors of society: the civil service, trade unions, private sector employers and employees, school children, and the general public. The campaign would last for two months, be suspended, and then be re-launched in successive years with the anticipation that after five or eight years, Singaporeans would feel "uncomfortable and embarrassed about being discourteous" (Ong 1979). In 1985, the campaign became a yearlong event and an advertising agency was appointed to help oversee the campaign. A "saturation" campaign was used in 1988 and commemorative postage stamps issued. The following year the campaign opened with a full-page ad in local newspapers. In 1992 more specific groups starting with road users were targeted. In 1993, which saw the inception of the Singapore Courtesy Council, the campaign targeted citizens traveling, studying, and working abroad as Singapore "ambassadors." Two years later the focus was turned on youth. In 1998, annoying mobile phone, pager, and Internet users became target audiences.

The Courtesy Campaign has been built around slogans that have expressed the central positioning strategies. The inaugural slogan – "Make courtesy our way of life" – was aimed especially at civil servants. It was replaced in 1981 by a new saying: "Courtesy is part of our

tradition, it's so nice to be courteous." Two years later other catchphrases started being used including "Courtesy and social responsibility, let's go the courtesy way" and "Courtesy is in us. Let's show it." In 1987, still another new slogan – "Courtesy. It begins with me" – was introduced and remained in force for the next five years. "Courtesy. Try a little Kindness" appeared in 1996. Reflecting the rapid spread of talking on mobile phones in public, the 2000 campaign implored "Let's use handphones with courtesy."

Visually, the Courtesy Campaign has favored bright color schemes and cartoons for most illustrations. At first, a smiley face was used as the campaign symbol (Figure 1). In 1982, Singa, the courtesy mascot (Figure 2), was introduced "to inject an element of fun into the campaign" (Nirmala 1999, p. 13). Singa has been used in a variety of ways (see Figure 3). He has changed little in 30 years other than wearing different color T-shirts with different emblems. In materials obtained in 2011, he is finally depicted wearing shorts.

Figure 1. Early Courtesy Campaign Poster, Logo, and Slogan
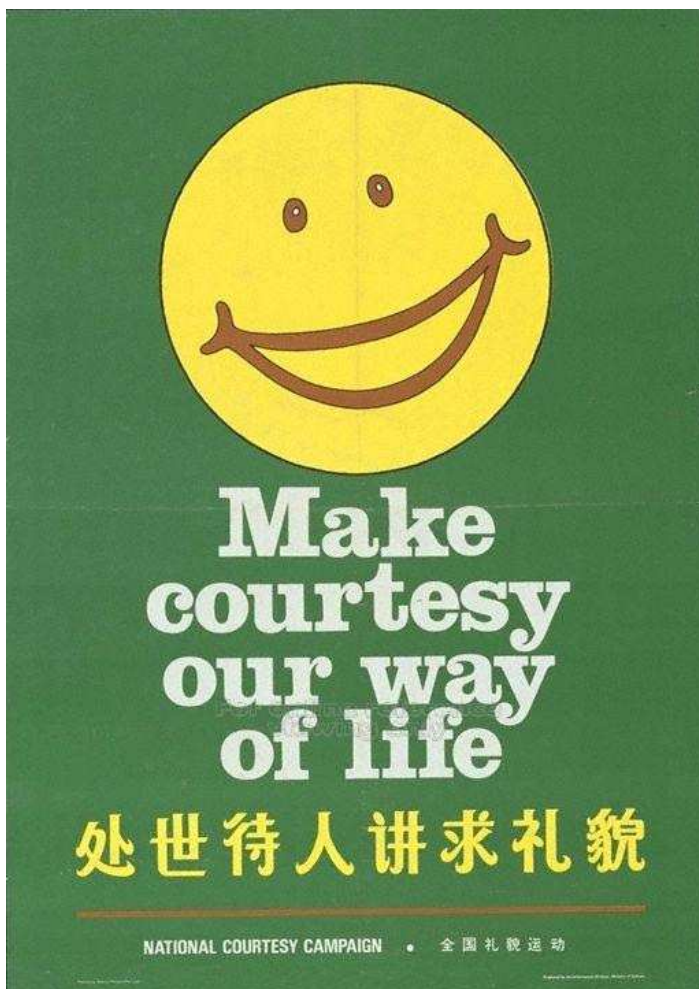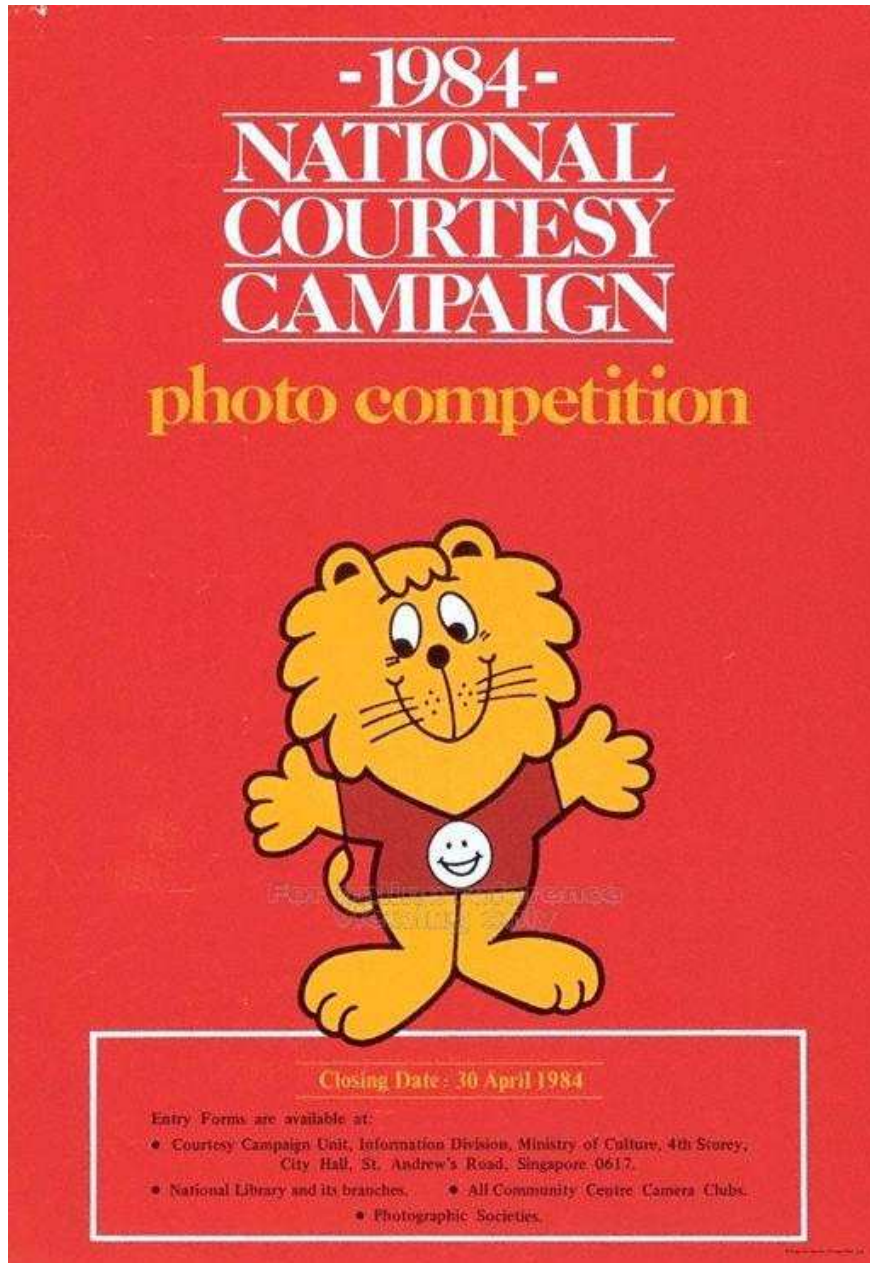
Source: Singapore Ministry of Culture (1979) [http://www.postersonline. com.sg/posters/]

Figure 2. Singa the Courtesy Lion

Source: Singapore Ministry of Culture (1984) [http://www.postersonline.com.sg/posters/]

Figure 3. Courtesy Campaign and Kindness Movement Ephemera

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Courtesy_Campaign_(Singapore)

Singapore 1988 SG#583-5 Courtesy Campaign MNH Set (Found on eBay 7-4-2011)

Singapore Courtesy Greetings Stamp Booklets MNH st1927 (Found on eBay July 4, 2011)

Singapore Kindness Movement first day cover released by Singapore Post on 8th February 2007 to celebrate the Singapore Kindness Movement. (Found on eBay October 2, 2011)

The Singapore Kindness Movement was initiated in 1996 and the two campaigns were united in 2001 (Nirmala 1999; SKM 2010). The SKM has published a newsletter featuring its

activities. Posters and ephemera have listed examples of courteous behaviors and simple acts of kindness, such as opening the door for someone, being punctual, and so forth. As part of Singapore Kindness Week, the public has been encouraged to nominate deserving individuals for a "good neighbour" award and SKM was also present at Citizenship Ceremony. Grassroots activities in schools have included quizzes, skit competitions, assembly talks on acts of good neighborliness, "Friend of Singa" awards, and "Caught you doing right" initiatives. Programs in residential areas have included block parties, charity drives to help needy residents, and visits to homes for the elderly. "Kindness Angels" volunteers have given free hugs and smiles, as well as small gifts such as T-shirts, balloons, and badges. Kindness seminars have targeted parents, pre-school educators, and early childhood practitioners; the "I Love my Library" campaign has raised awareness of library etiquette; and the "Tray Return Movement" encouraged patrons at food courts to bus their trays, dishes, and utensils to return points after their meal. Even wedding guests have been encouraged to arrive on time so that dinner can commence punctually. Bookmarks with a punctuality message were distributed to hotels and restaurants (later printed in Mandarin red to match the auspiciousness of the occasion) for insertion in wedding invitation cards.

The corporate sector and other government agencies have been involved in the Kindness Movement programs. Shell has been a strong supporter of the road safety/courtesy campaigns and Carl's Jr. has encouraged the public to upsize their drinks so that the additional proceeds could be donated to SKM. To promote this initiative, a person dressed as the company's Happy Star emblem joined another wearing a Singa costume and walked along Orchard Road and Raffles Place visiting Carl's Jr. outlets. NTUC Fairprice Cooperative, a supermarket chain, has printed the Singapore Kindness Week motif on its plastic bags, while hotels have nominated employees for Service Gold Awards. In the public sector, Singapore Post has issued commemorative stamps and Singapore Pools (the state lottery) has sponsored banners for display in libraries.

Social Marketing and Cultural Change

Two surveys on the effectiveness of the courtesy campaign were conducted soon after its inception in 1979. In the People's Association (1980) survey, 88% of respondents said they were familiar with the campaign theme and, on average, respondents participated in three courtesy campaigns programs. The areas of Singapore life found most lacking in courtesy were service at counters of government departments (64%), public transportation (55%), road courtesy (54%), queuing (48%), dealing with elderly people (37%), service at shops and eating places (34%), telephone calls (30%), and greetings and salutations (29%). Sixty percent of respondents believed courtesy had improved in most of these areas; 70% believed that they personally were either more or slightly more courteous; and 84% expressed a need for another campaign. Kuo (1981) obtained similar results. Interestingly, a third of his respondents were critical of the number of such campaigns and believed that people were only courteous during the duration of the campaign. A majority of respondents "agreed that family upbringing is more important than the courtesy campaign and that education in courtesy should begin at home" (Kuo's 1981, p.?).

A few years later, the Ministry of Communications and Information hired Survey Research Singapore (1985) to conduct a series of focused group interviews on courtesy behaviors and the courtesy campaigns. The panels were comprised of different ethnic groups. Informants believed that the courtesy campaign had been effective in improving courtesy but the effect was

only temporary and that people reverted to their normal discourteous behaviour soon after the campaign had ended. Interestingly, they thought that Singapore people were more courteous to tourists and foreigners than to their fellow citizens or to their families. Some informants found the campaign's stress on specific acts of courtesy to be counter-productive. To them this approach was irritating and patronising and could give foreigners a poor impression of Singaporeans (Survey Research Singapore 1985).

What were the longer-term effects of these campaigns? Writing on the campaign's 20th anniversary, Nirmala (1999) observed:

"Survey after survey seems to confirm that the campaign is succeeding. More Singaporeans think that they and their fellow countrymen are more courteous now. They are also more willing to be the first to show courtesy. Yet, despite nearly 20 years of effort, there are [sic] still no concrete proof that Singapore has become a truly courteous nation . . . there are indications that many people have become blasé about the campaign and are immune to even the most hard-hitting messages (pp. 16-17).

More than a decade after Nirmala's doubts, skepticism about effectiveness is still present. In a 2011 personal interview, Cesar Balato, the Associate Secretary General of Singapore Kindness Movement, detected a change in tone in the social advertising. The courtesy campaign had been too preachy and so recently top officials have recognized that the previous approach was too heavy-handed. The construct of the campaign had changed from courtesy to kindness to incorporate an element of intrinsic altruism, a deeper value beyond just outward behavior and conduct (Balato 2011).

The change of approach is evident in recent television advertising produced by the SKM. Two spots, including an "ambush marketing" ad wherein the public gives daisies to a courteous bus driver, have won national advertising awards. These ads did not target specific behaviors, but just displayed general kindness "without an agenda." These ads registered high recall rates in the Graciousness Survey and, anecdotally, Singaporeans appeared to be receptive to them. Specific behaviors were still targeted through other programs such as bumper stickers and the distribution of pamphlets, but these have not been as high profile.

Balato (2011) indicated that kindness had regressed in part because of migrants who are new to Singapore and have not been exposed to earlier campaigns. Regression in courtesy/kindness behavior is most apparent in public transportation because the population has increased, but transportation has not expanded at the same rate. The SKM is now targeting passengers to give up seats to those who need it more, such as the elderly, infirm or pregnant, again with an emphasis on kindness.

Macromarketing Implications

Researching and evaluating the interactions among marketing systems and society are core objectives of the macromarketing discipline. Usually, these systems facilitate private enterprise, but they can also serve the ends of the state. The remainder of this section focuses on two ethical issues: how courtesy and kindness came to be defined as social problems and how the relationship between the Singapore social marketers and their target audiences has been articulated.

Courtesy and Kindness as Social Problems

Finding fault with the goals of the Singapore Courtesy Campaign and Kindness Movement might appear somewhat churlish. Courteous behavior and graciousness would seem almost always to provide social benefits at the individual level and, to the extent they create social cohesion, advantageous at the national level as well. However, definitions of courtesy may differ across cultures and imposing a particular model of courtesy may not be entirely appropriate for different groups. In Singapore, Confucian Chinese virtues may not always be aligned with Islamic Malay or Hindu Tamil ideals. Interestingly, all the source materials examined were either in English or in Chinese. Nothing has been found in the Malay or Tamil languages. Furthermore, not all Singapore Chinese necessarily endorse Confucianism and its values. Our research has not uncovered any evidence showing that the opinions of these different stakeholders were taken into account by the elites who defined the social problem.

The rationale for these campaigns when first proposed had reasonable face validity. Singapore people did not always behave as courteously to others as they perhaps should have. But this was largely anecdotal evidence and similar incidents probably could have been reported from anyplace in the world. No comparative survey evidence was produced to show that courteous behavior among Singaporeans lagged behind that found in other nations. Social problems are matters of social definition and how they are selected and framed can be manipulated for political purposes.

The Relationship with Singapore Citizens

Upon examination, the posters and other visual images produced to convey courtesy and kindness themes have a patronizing side to them. The usually chipper and colorful characters, especially Singa the Courtesy Lion, have a childlike quality to them, even though campaign targets have usually been adult workers. This suggests that Singapore's social marketers may consider themselves superior to the audience. Asymmetrical relationships often characterize social marketing (Brenkert 2002).

Moreover, as Kuo (1981) found in his survey research, some Singaporeans have felt that the government's cumulative attempts at social control were overbearing. In the focus groups conducted by Survey Research Singapore (1985), one informant felt shame about the number of campaigns and that Singaporeans needed to be told how to behave. If social campaigning became too excessive, people may refuse to comply "in the case of a father and son relationship, if the father is too stern, it doesn't work, Singapore is in such a situation" (p. tbd). These views may have been in the minority, but do indicate resentment toward the authoritarianism inherent in this social marketing.

Conclusion

As a young country controlled by an authoritarian, but clearly successful government, Singapore has proven to be the perfect laboratory for social marketing campaigns. The Courtesy Campaign and Kindness Movement have addressed a variety of public behaviors and interactions among people. These campaigns have been coordinated efforts using visual media, but also mobilizing support through organized events and other forms of personal selling. Focus groups and self-report survey data has indicated short-term improvements in courtesy and anecdotal

evidence suggests some progress in overall graciousness. Still, there remains a need to assimilate newly arrived immigrants into the social vision of Lee Kuan Yew and the PAP.

These findings have implications for macromarketing ethics, theory, and policy. The way social issues are defined and how target audiences are treated are ethical issues that need to be considered by social marketers. The courtesy and kindness campaigns are "easy" ethical cases in that relatively few people would object to their goals. This makes government control less controversial. Social marketing that addresses other values and behaviors (e.g. family policy campaigns) may be much more problematic when implemented from the top down.

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