Social Marketing and Breastfeeding

Manjot Kaur Boparai

Department of Commerce, Mata Sundri College for Women, New Delhi, India.

Abstract

Health promotion work aims at enabling and empowering an individual, a community or an organization to find the strength and control to take action to improve their life situation and their health. Social marketing has currently emerged as a popular tool in health promotion, being given special attention in recent public health literature. This popularity is based on reasonable evidence that carefully managed social marketing programmes can be very effective. Looking at the statistics relating to breastfed babies and malnutrition rates in India, creating awareness about breastfeeding among mothers and society is even more imperative. There are many social taboos that prevent mothers from breastfeeding in India. It is well recognized that the period from birth to two years of age is the “critical window” for the promotion of good growth, health, and behavioral and cognitive development. Breastfeeding is nature’s best way of nurturing the child. In this paper we would review the data and statistics related to breastfeeding rates in India. We would see how we can use social marketing techniques to create awareness among different levels of society. We would also see why mothers prefer infant formula to breastfeeding. The study is based on review of secondary data collected from various websites and other published data. There are many initiatives taken by government in this regard but there are many other factors that can contribute in increasing the breastfeeding rates and giving infant the most precious gift.

Keywords: Social Marketing, Infant, Breastfeeding, Formula, Campaigns, Awareness.
1. Introduction
1.1 Introduction to Social Marketing
Social marketing seeks to develop and integrate marketing concepts with other approaches to influence behaviors that benefit individuals and communities for the greater social good. It seeks to integrate research, best practice, theory, audience and partnership insight, to inform the delivery of competition sensitive and segmented social change programmes that are effective, efficient, equitable and sustainable. It can be used to address various social issues such as HIV/AIDS, Save girl child, Smoking, drug abuse, family planning, depression, use of helmet, don’t drink and drive, right to vote and many more. Social marketing can be done by using potential medias such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines, internet, direct marketing (e-mail and phone), public appearances, film etc.

1.2 Introduction to Breastfeeding
Breastfeeding is the feeding of an infant or young child with breast milk directly from female human breasts (i.e., via lactation) rather than using infant formula. Babies have a sucking reflex that enables them to suck and swallow milk. Experts recommend that children be breastfed within one hour of birth, exclusively breastfed for the first six months, and then breastfed until age two with age-appropriate, nutritionally adequate and safe complementary foods.

Breastfeeding History
Breastfeeding has been important since the beginning of mankind. In the Egyptian, Greek and Roman empires, women usually fed only their own children. However, breastfeeding began to be seen as something too common to be done by royalty, and wet nurses (a wet nurse is someone who nurses another's baby regularly) were employed to breastfeed the children of the royal families. This extended over time, particularly in Western Europe, where noble women often made use of wet nurses. But lower class women breastfed their infants and used a wet nurse only if they were unable to feed their own infant.

The trend of wet-nursing gradually waned in developed countries throughout the last century, and during the post–World War II baby boom was replaced by the trend of bottle feeding, thanks to the extensive marketing and availability of infant formula. Bottle feeding became a new status symbol, particularly in the less developed countries because only rich families could afford formula milk.

Benefits of breastfeeding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BENEFITS TO BABY</th>
<th>BENEFITS TO MOTHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Superior Nutrition</td>
<td>• Burns extra calories and help in reducing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Easy to digest compared to formula</td>
<td>• Lowers risk of breast and ovarian cancer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. **Facts Relating to Breastfeeding and Malnutrition Rates in India**
   - 47 percent of India’s children below the age of three years are malnourished (underweight). The World Bank puts the number – probably conservatively – at 60 million. This is out of a global estimated total of 146 million.
   - 47 percent of Indian children under five are categorized as moderately or severely malnourished.
   - South Asia has the highest rates – and by far the largest number – of malnourished children in the world.
   - The UN ranks India in the bottom quartile of countries by under-1 infant mortality (the 53rd highest), and under-5 child mortality (78 deaths per 1000 live births). According to the 2008 CIA fact book, 32 babies out of every 1,000 born alive die before their first birthday.7
   - At least half of Indian infant deaths are related to malnutrition, often associated with infectious diseases.
   - Malnutrition impedes motor, sensory, cognitive and social development, so malnourished children will be less likely to benefit from schooling, and will consequently have lower income as adults.
   - The most damaging effects of under-nutrition occur during pregnancy and the first two years of a child’s life. These damages are irreversible, making dealing with malnutrition in the first two year crucially important.
   - Though 96% of children (both urban and rural population) under age five have ever been breastfed, only 29% started breastfeeding within half an hour of birth in urban population and 21% in rural population.
   - Only 30% of infants (in urban population) started breastfeeding within one hour of birth, as is recommended, the figure goes down to 22% in rural population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits of Breastfeeding</th>
<th>Drawbacks of Breastfeeding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contain antibodies that help baby fight against bacteria and viruses</td>
<td>Saves time and money as there is no need to buy and measure formula and sterilize feeding bottles etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve the immunity system of the baby</td>
<td>Give time to relax and bond with the baby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased risk of malnutrition, obesity and heart diseases</td>
<td>Cause mother uterus to contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduces baby risk of having asthma or allergies</td>
<td>During lactation, menstruation ceases, offering a form of contraception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes mother-baby bonding</td>
<td>Hormones created during breastfeeding creates feeling of warmth and calm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Almost 35% of infants (in urban population) did not start breastfeeding within one day of birth and almost half (48%) in rural population did not start breastfeeding within one day.

3. Social Marketing as a Tool for Promoting Breastfeeding
Marketing initiatives include promotions and advertising that support or encourage breastfeeding as well as imagery in the media that strengthen the perception of breastfeeding as a normal, accepted activity. Marketing can take place through broad venues traditionally considered part of advertising or can be more targeted and use methods such as professional endorsements, providing items to targeted audiences, and sponsoring events focused on a specific demographic group. Media campaigns are commonly presented to a wide audience and use public channels such as television, radio, printed materials, or outdoor advertising. Social marketing campaigns go beyond media campaigns. They are comprehensive, multifaceted approaches providing targeted, coordinated interventions to a variety of audiences, including consumers, their support systems, health care providers, the community, and the general public. (http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/pdf/BF_guide_6.pdf)

3.1 Initiatives taken to encourage breastfeeding
- **BPNI (Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India):** BPNI is a registered, independent, non-profit, national organization that works towards protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding and appropriate complementary feeding of infants & young children. BPNI believes that breastfeeding is the right of all mothers and children. BPNI works through advocacy, social mobilization, information sharing, education, research, training and monitoring the company compliance with the IMS Act.
- **Malnutrition Quit India:** ‘Malnutrition Quit India’ campaign was launched by the Ministry for Women and Child Development (MWDC), Government of India in Nov 2012. Actor Amir Khan, who is also the UNICEF brand ambassador for malnutrition, is the face of this campaign. He has shot 40 films to make people aware of malnutrition and its associated threats. It is really a good initiative.
- **World Breastfeeding Week (1-7 August, 2013):** World Breastfeeding Week 2013 is part of the GBICS (Global Breastfeeding Initiative for Child Survival) Programme. The GBICS Programme aims to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development - beyond the Millennium Development Goals - by scaling up breastfeeding and infant and young child interventions and transforming Policies into Practice which contributes to efforts aimed at addressing climate change and gender inequality in the framework of human rights.
- **World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative (WBTi):** The WBTi, which serves as a lens to find out gaps in policy and programmes, helps nations initiate action
to bridge these gaps. This programme is already running in over 80 countries. The brainchild of IBFAN (The International Baby Food Action Network) Asia, WBTi is an integral part of two global projects jointly funded by NORAD and SIDA. National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development and Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India jointly coordinated the India 2012 WBTi assessment. The India’s 2012 Report is the assessment of the state of implementation of the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding, and accomplished under the World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative (WBTi) of IBFAN Asia.

- **Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI):** Hospitals and maternity units set a powerful example for new mothers. The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI), launched in 1991, is an effort by UNICEF and the World Health Organization to ensure that all maternities, whether free standing or in a hospital, become centers of breastfeeding support. The initiative is a global effort for improving the role of maternity services to enable mothers to breastfeed babies for the best start in life. It aims at improving the care of pregnant women, mothers and newborns at health facilities that provide maternity services for protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding, in accordance with the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes. In India the earlier focus was on large hospitals but now the focus has spread to various parts of the country.

- Many Initiatives are being taken at state and village level to encourage breastfeeding. There are many advertisement campaigns on social medias and many initiatives are taken at hospital where babies are born and many more.

### 4. Recommendations

Though breastfeeding is done by mother alone, there are many factors working behind the decision to breastfeed baby or not. So initiatives should be taken to encourage even the family members to help the new mother in breastfeeding. The frequency of advertisement using different medias should increase. Normally advertisement promoting breastfeeding include rural women who are not recognized by audience at large. Initiatives should be taken by women who are role models such as famous bollywood divas, sports women and other known personalities. Women’s magazines should also throw light on benefits of breastfeeding. The breastfeeding information is not relevant or attractive so it should be made it such a way that it catches attention of all.

### 5. Conclusion

India is one of the countries where malnutrition is severe and malnutrition is a major underlying cause of child mortality in India. Breastfeeding is one of the most important solutions to decrease the malnutrition rate. Above 2/3rd of the deaths among children
less than five years of age, often associated with inappropriate feeding practices occur during the first year of life. While breastfeeding is a natural act, it is also a learned behaviour. Research has demonstrated that mothers require active support for establishing and sustaining appropriate breastfeeding practices. There are many social taboos associated with breastfeeding, so there is need to educate people. The decline of breastfeeding in 20th century can be attributed to the full-scale introduction of infant formula in the market and increasing use of women’s labour for production and management in work environment that don’t allow breastfeeding. The companies selling infant formula should not be allowed to advertise or promote their product in any form. Though the infant formula industry can’t advertise or personally sell their product, they are using other means of promotion. The infant formulas are being displayed at all the chemist shops. A breast milk bank should be set up so that mothers who can’t breastfed their babies due to any medical reason can take help of this bank.

References