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Cyberactivism: Empowering Advocacies for Public Policy

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This paper endeavours to introduce cyberactivism as an emerging social marketing paradigm for public policy, awareness and support. In particular, the paper introduces the concept of social marketing and examines how cyberactivism can be used as a social marketing tool for public policy, awareness and support using two case study analyses. The outcome from the analyses indicated that cyberactivism enables a fast dissemination of information among social advocates and the general public in the cyber space in delivering advocated social information and feedback, and has been successful in changing public policy and increasing public awareness and support towards social goals. The prospects and future research directions for activism in the cyberspace are also presented. Notably, the paper empirically elucidates the imperative need to address improved strategies and tactics, technology and education for cyberactivism engagement in order for the Internet to become a force for the public social marketing cause agenda.

Field of Research: Social Marketing

1. Background

In the social and behavioural science context, social marketing is no longer a new concept – the development of social marketing in the conventional marketing context has long been established as a mode of influencing societal behaviour towards the goods and services offered by sellers in the marketplace. However, it was not until in the late 1950s and early 1960s that marketing academicians considered that the conventional marketing theory has its potential and limitations when it comes to dealing with political and social matters. For example, in 1951, Wiebe questioned whether brotherhood could be sold like soap. Wiebe (1951) further argued that it takes more than a simple conventional marketing campaign for social change as compared to the traditional commercial marketing. The idea of expanding the application to social causes was further abhorrent when Luck (1974) objected this idea on the grounds that the replacement of a tangible product with an idea threatened the economic exchange concept, while others simply feared the power of marketing - misconceiving its potential for social control and propaganda (Laczniak *et al*., 1979).

Despite these concerns, a trajectory of events has proposed that the marketing concepts for social change to be redefined to include the marketing of ideas and the consideration of its ethical implications. According to MacFadyen *et al* (1999), the expansion of the marketing concept to include the ideas of practice adoption and prevention and the negative consequences of exaggerated or puffery statements combined with a shift in public health policy has lead towards a communal act for

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health preservation and disease prevention, which aid in paving the way for the development of social marketing. Ling *et al* (1992) and Manoff (1985) added that commercial marketing technologies have also played its part in facilitating social change, such as the promotion of health and educational campaigns using media technologies across developing countries. Notably, social marketing emerged as a concrete social and behavioural science discipline when Philip Kotler and Gerald Zaltman (1971) realised that the same marketing principles that were being used to sell products to consumers could also be used to sell ideas, attitudes and behaviours. Their seminal article entitled *'Social marketing: an approach to planned social change'* in the Journal of Marketing entailed the first time the term '*social marketing'* had been used and is often heralded as its birth.

Social marketing was defined as '*the design, implementation and control of programs calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas and involving considerations of product planning, pricing, communication, distribution and marketing research'* (Kotler and Zaltman, 1971, p.5). In 1991, Kotler and Andreasen further refined the definition of social marketing as a differing area of marketing only with respect to the objectives of the marketer and his or her organisation. They added that social marketing seeks to influence social behaviours not to benefit the marketer, but to benefit the target audience and the general society. From these definitions, it is clear that social marketing can be used as an instrument in planning for social change. Hence, this paper adopts an integrated definition of social marketing: the application of marketing principles and techniques to promote and influence the acceptability of social causes and behavioural goals for a social good. As the above scholars argued that the principles of marketing that was used to sell offerings (i.e. goods and services) to consumers can be used to change attitudes and behaviours of society, it can be observed that social marketing offers an avenue for a paradigm shift towards these offerings to facilitate societal change – an internalised change in the mindset, attitude and behaviour of the consumers or citizens in a society. While many research papers have looked into the extensive use of this marketing technique, especially in the healthcare industry (e.g. Andreasen, 1995; Gordon *et al*., 2006; Hastings, 2006) and the promotion of pro-environmental behaviour (e.g. Haldeman and Turner, 2009; Kennedy, 2010; McKenzie, 2000), the area of its application as a tool for public policy, awareness and support seems to be an infertile area of research. Therefore, this paper endeavours to introduce cyberactivism as an emerging social marketing paradigm for public policy, awareness and support. Scholars endeavouring to study social marketing issues for public policy, awareness and support should be clearly aware of the distinct social marketing ambitions of the public sector and private sector to avoid any miscommunication of social marketing messages to the target audience. The following sections in this paper provides a collection of broad definitions, differences between public and private social marketing, cyberactivism conceptualization and case study analyses, and the prospects and future research directions for activism in the cyberspace.

2. Defining Public Policy, Public Awareness and Public Support

According to Wolf (2010), public policy is the course of action that is taken by the government with regard to a particular issue. Kilpatrick (2010) extended the prior scope to include any course of action, regulatory measures, laws or funding priorities

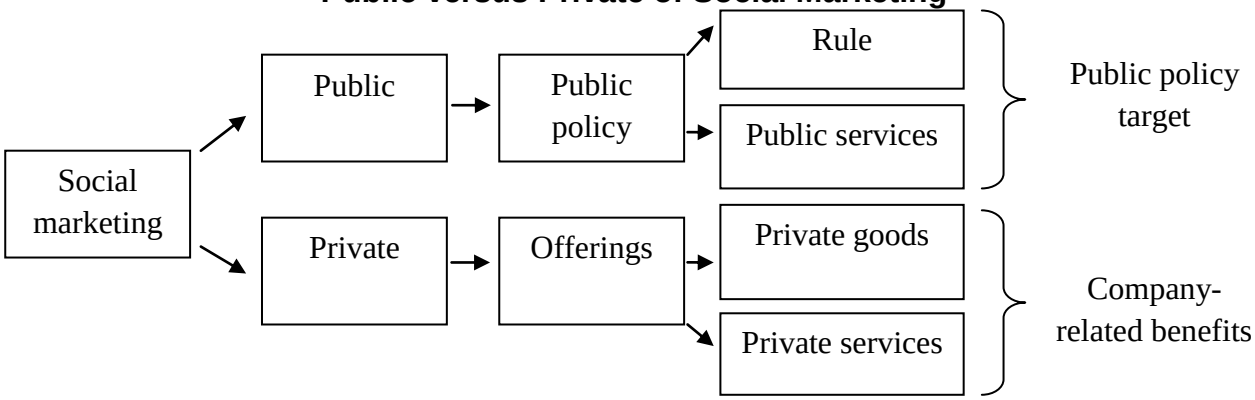
concerning a given topic promulgated by a government entity or its representatives. In many countries around the world, this concept refers not only to the end result of policies, but more broadly to the decision-making and analysis of governmental decisions that impacts on its citizens (Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, 2010). This paper adopts an integrated designation for public policy based on the above definitions: any course of actions, measures and decisions made by the government or its representatives that has an end-result aimed to have a societal impact on the people of its country. On the other hand, public awareness is the process of informing the general population, increasing levels of consciousness about benefits or risks, and how people can act to support, do not support, adopt or do not adopt a particular cause (ISDR, 2004). Notably, public awareness activities foster changes in behaviour leading towards a culture of benefit increment and adoption or risk deterrence and reduction which involves public information, dissemination, and education. Lastly, public support is referred to as the backing and aiding of a cause or policy or interests of a particular subject or issue (Miller, 2010).

3. Public versus Private of Social Marketing

According to Purwanti and Yusuf (2010), social marketing is an instrument which is not only focused to achieve societal change towards a marketed offering, but rather on the effort of changing the behaviour of its target market. As proposed by Andreasen (1994), social marketing is an 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 the society of which they are a part. Hence, in the context of public policy, social marketing can be used as an instrument for policy implementation. In particular, social marketing is able to influence the society to adopt proactive behaviours, such as healthy dietary plans, pregnancy protection, and the importance of immunisation, with an aim to increase the reach of the public to use such services (Ntawukuliryayo, 2006). The promotion of the usage of condoms is an illustration of a public policy for social marketing, whereby its promotion its focused on changing the behaviours and perceptions on the use of condoms, rather than a main and direct purpose of making a sale for a particular condom-producing company (Fox, 1980).

Other social and behavioural scholars have suggested that the application of the private sector marketing principles, audience research and strategic planning to non-profit and government initiatives to help achieve social goals is a form of applying private marketing principles within the public sector (Brookes, 2009; Pirani, 2006) . However, in fact, there is a difference between conventional marketing and social marketing.

Fig.1
Public versus Private of Social Marketing



There are significant differences between the purposes of marketing that are implemented by conventional private organisations and the purpose of social marketing in the public sector. In particular, the social marketing goals by the private sector for the marketing of goods and services produced are often aimed to obtain maximum profits or benefits to the organisation itself, such as embracing corporate social responsibility or cause-related marketing by engaging in societal-benefited activities in an attempt to enhance their corporate image in the eyes of its customers (Benjamin and Stoler, 2001). In contrast, the imperative aim of social marketing by the public sector is to market policies for the benefit of the society (Bates, 1991). Typically, social marketing for the public sector aims to sell an idea that will change the attitudes and behaviours of a society as a whole. Notably, the primary focus of social marketing in the public sector will not deviate from its goal to achieve a social good, as compared to the private sector, which often place this goal as a secondary outcome. In an attempt to advocate for a change in public policy, promote public awareness, and garner public support towards the social goal, the understanding that its nature lies as a public sector social marketing concept suggests that the dissemination of attitude and behaviour altering social ideas are obliged to be the primary goal of social marketers and advocates. Relationally, such an understanding acts as a guideline to public sector social advocacies and prevents its advocates from deviating its focus to promote goals that are related to company benefits or profits. As such, social marketing in the public sector becomes more complex due to the complexity of actors and behaviours of those that the government or its representatives and social advocates want to change.

The cyberspace has revolved over the last 22 years since the inception of the Internet for public consumption in 1989 (Schestowitz, 2010). The potential and opportunities that are presented by the Internet are ones that are without any boundaries (e.g. the continuous growth of the public engaging into the cyberspace and the continuous technology advancement of social networking technologies). In order for social marketers to capitalise on such lucrative prospects in their attempt to achieve the targeted social good in a contemporary era where the Internet has evolved from what used to be a want to a need in present times to more and more people (Lagler, 2010), a good understanding on how social advocacies can be campaigned and rallied over the Internet is imperative. The following sections provide such knowledge by looking into the concept of cyberactivism and how it can

be capitalise as a contemporary social marketing tool for public policy, awareness and support.

4. Cyberactivism

4.1 What is Cyberactivism?

Cyberactivism follows a process which is similar to activism, but it is the result of new dynamics that has undeniably led to a new shift of pressure on various stakeholders – governments, profit and non-profit organisations, and the society at large (McCaughey and Ayers, 2003). According to Ayers and McCaughey (2003), cyberactivism is the use of electronic communication technologies, such as email, the World Wide Web, and podcasts for various forms of activism to enable faster communications by societal movements and the delivery of local information to a large audience. Following the introduction of communication technologies, information technology and the internet, the environment in which these stakeholders deal with each other have changed significantly (Illia, 2002). In the work of Wernli and Frank (2000), it was argued that the pressure is now no longer the outcome of an aggregation in governmental and organisational systems, but rather on the result of relationships established. Indeed, cyberactivism revolves around issues which are selected through the interconnection of many kinds of players: traditional pressure groups that go online, spontaneous aggregation, and individuals in the society (Bimber *et al*., 2005). As a timeless, location-free agency medium, the internet moves the emphasis from a territorial to a functional selection of issues (Gregory, 1999; Levi, 1999; Maiocchi, 2000). As such, the issue selection, which has a functional logic in itself, is empowered by the loss of territorial limits. This is supported by Clark and Lapiski (1999) as it was suggested that the advent of the Internet is a plural network in which a multiple-to-multiple communication medium allows individuals to be a sender or a receiver, modifying and elaborating information. Relationally, Wernli and Frank (2000) added that the cyberactivism process no longer necessitates a long time in development as it can now even be the outcome of an instant action, and it had been evident that cyberactivists' visibility needs only mass media coverage to reach public policy results. This development is illustrated by Illia (2003) in Table 1 which projects its results from the shifts at the business and governmental levels.

Table 1
Cyberactivism: How Dynamics of Activism Changed

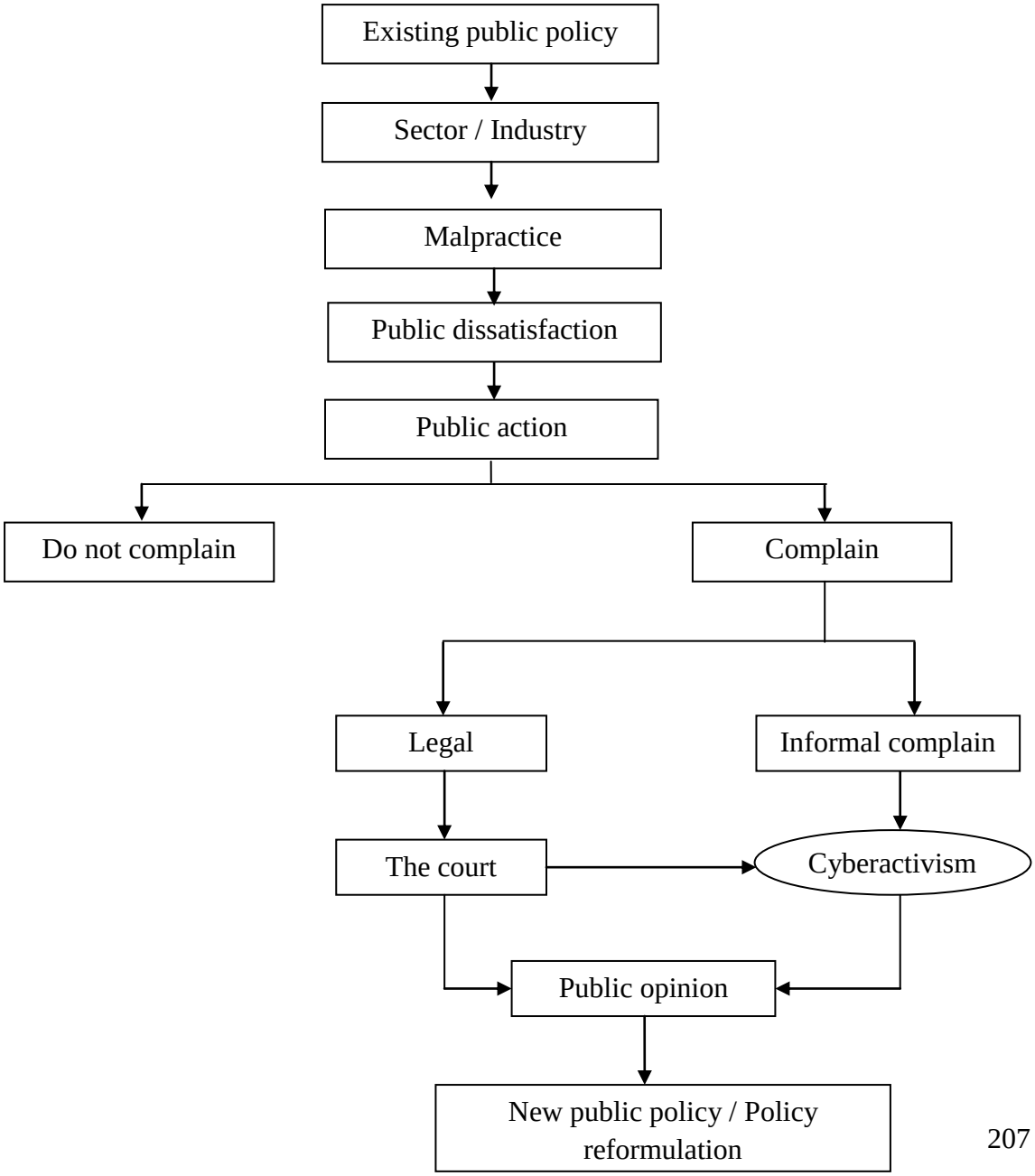
	Activism	Cyberactivism
1	Originates from society's complexity and pluralism.	Originates from an increase in the complexity of society that is due to the loss of communication control within the plural network.
2	Originates from the heterogeneity of society.	Originates from a greater heterogeneity due to two characteristics of the Internet: agency and mutability
3	Grows from an issue selection caused by failed expectations related to corporate social responsibility (CSR).	Grows from an issue selection caused by a failed expectation related to a major responsible public opinion in regard to CSR issues and non-CSR issues.
4	There is a tendency to rise and focus around an issue. The selection of the issue has a functional logic that is limited by a territorial boundary.	There is a tendency to rise and focus around an issue. The selection of the issue has a functional logic that is empowered by the functional logic of the issue development in cyberspace.
5	Activism consists of a protest of two or more individuals. The aggregation into a group of people is a prerogative of activism.	Cyberactivism consists of a protest of a single individual or two or more individuals. The aggregation is not a prerogative of cyberactivism.
6	Activism expresses and reaches a situation of pressure on a corporation or the government or its agency into a movement of protest. Pressure on corporations or the government or its agency is reached within the aggregation.	Cyberactivism expresses in spontaneous aggregations, individual actions, movements of protest taking place offline and online. The pressure on corporations or the government or its agency is reached within every singular relationship.
7	Visibility is reached due to a mass media coverage that contributes to the increase in pressure.	Visibility is reached through both the mass media and the Internet. Both contribute to gain visibility, but a public policy result can only be achieved only if there is mass media coverage.

The following section will look into the first issue: how cyberactivism can act as a social marketing tool for public policy.

4.2 Cyberactivism as a Social Marketing Tool for Public Policy

Cyberactivism in many developing countries, such as Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia and Pakistan, is still relatively new (Purwanti and Yusuf, 2010). Nonetheless, the magnitude of potential for cyberactivism in such countries in mobilising public opinion synergised with the use of various contemporary electronic communication technologies, typically blogs and social networking sites, is particularly encouraging due to its ability to become a medium which facilitates public communication for policy makers and implementers. Notably, the provision for feedback from the society can be obtained and is a rather significant input to the formulation or reformulation of public policy (Brennan and McCashin, 2000; Sidney, 2007). Figure 2 below illustrates an example on how cyberactivism can act as a social marketing tool in both developing and developed countries to influence the formulation or reformulation of public policy.

Fig. 2
Cyberactivism as a Social Marketing Tool for Public Policy



Shaping public policy is a complex and multifaceted process that involves the interplay of numerous individuals and interest groups competing and collaborating to influence policy makers to act in a particular way (Dingalo, 2009). Typically, such policies are generally established to represent a set of standard guidelines to govern industry practices (Ackermann, 2010). This is observed in Figure 2 as there are currently existing public policies which governs the industry practices of a sector or industry. In order to gain enlightenment on the above process representing how cyberactivism can act as a social marketing tool for public policy, a case study from a law enforcement industry is investigated.

4.2.1 Case Study on the Alleged Misconduct of the Royal Malaysian Police Force

A case of Malaysia, on the 6th of May 2010, The Sun newspaper[1] (page 4) reported two incidents of alleged corruption at a police roadblock along Jalan Cheras, Kuala Lumpur, one of the main roads in the Federal Territory of Malaysia. The report was entitled "*Cop held over alleged bribery, sexual harassment*" (Harun, 2010).

Few victims were involved in the case; a lady was driving alone at 1.15 am when she was stopped at a police roadblock. In the incident, the police alleged that she was driving beyond the speed limit. As there are many cases of suspicion of police bribery that have been reported before, it has become somewhat of a local culture to suspect what seems to be a common inferred situation of bribery. Knowing that it would be highly probable that such an unethical action is bound to happen, the lady took out her phone and voice recorded the whole investigation process secretly. From the recording, the police officer was quoted "*masalah ini boleh 'settle' sekarang"*, which means that the matter could be settled on the spot. She then offered RM15[2] and the officer agreed to take that sum as 'settlement'. Subsequently, the money exchanged hand. However, the officer then allegedly told her that she was sexy. He was recorded to have asked her to lift her t-shirt and pulled up her skirts. She immediately drove off after she had settled with the inducement – she paid him RM15 and drove off. The next incident happened to a nightclub singer, about 30 minutes later. The same thing happened. Although there was no recording in this case, it was reported that the lady had given RM20 to the policemen as settlement. A different officer allegedly made similar advances on her. The lady drove off as well. Both women were reported to have sought the help of Cheras Member of Parliament (MP) but did not lodge a formal complain as they feared of further harassment by the police.

The Anti-corruption Act 1997 is an existing public policy which forbids the practice of bribery in all sectors and industries in Malaysia, which includes the sector in the current case study – the Royal Malaysian Police Force. Any action which is in conflict with the ethical conduct of not accepting bribes is considered as a malpractice and an offence of corruption under this Act. In the current case, the women are observed to have shown their dissatisfaction towards the conduct of the police. The first lady, in particular, has taken a step ahead by taking action to voice her complain, but in an informal manner. Notably, the recording from the first lady was posted on YouTube and thereby initiating the impetus of cyberactivism for this issue. The recording has gained many viewers and comments from many Malaysians, as many as 158,000 views and over 50,000 comments within 7 days. In those comments, one obvious theme was observed – Malaysians were sick of such

unethical actions and have riled together to voice their disappointment and dissatisfaction towards the government who had not done enough to tackle the unethical practices. In other words, such a theme can be regarded as a form of public opinion on this issue. Indeed, such activism in the cyber world had led to more publications in social networking mediums, such as Facebook and Twitter, and newspapers of its advocacy for a new and effective policy to eradicate corruption and to protect the interest of information givers.

The incident from this case was acted upon by the government and policy makers; a new public policy and a reformation of the construction of an existing independent agency were observed. The Whistleblower Protection Act 2010 was created and implemented to offer protection to individuals with information that could lead to the prosecution of those involved in graft (Star, 2011). A reconstruction of the Malaysian Anti-corruption Commission (MACC) was also implemented, notably the sending of anti-corruption officers for training to and modelling the reformed agency based on the Independent Commission against Corruption (ICAC) in Hong Kong (Koshy, 2010).

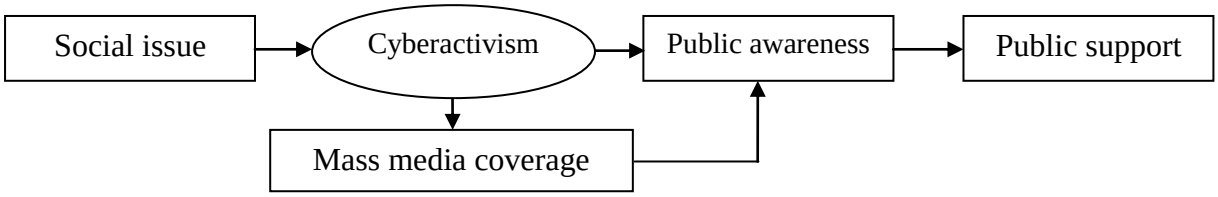
The next section will look into another distinctive issue: how cyberactivism can act as a social marketing tool for public awareness and support.

4.3 Cyberactivism as a Social Marketing Tool for Public Awareness and Support

The growth of the Internet has created communities in the cyberspace (Rheingold, 2002). According to McNutt and Menon (2008), some communities are based on personal characteristics, such as interest, race and ethnicity, while others are reflections of actual physical communities. Leung (2008) added that the behaviour of these communities has consequences because the people in them participate in the non-virtual world as well. In addition, the movement towards social issues and deliberative processes, such as electronic social group movements and communal issue advocacies, (McNutt and Menon, 2004), makes online communities even more consequential as it enhances their efforts to promote their advocacies to the public and achieve the goals for the causes that they are advocating for. In particular, electronic communication technologies are picking up an increasing rate of diffusion and are now widely used as an adjunct to traditional techniques, such as sit-ins, demonstrations, lobbying, and other types of advocacy techniques, to create public awareness (Browning, 2002; McNutt and Boland, 1999; McNutt and Boland, 2000; Schwartz, 1996). Various social movement organisations, including environmental organisations (Zelwietro, 1998), groups working on women's issues (Drost and Jorna, 2000), human and animal rights advocates (Menon, 2000; Metzl, 1996), and others have used this technology in an effort to become more successful in their attempt to increase public awareness and empower groups in society. Notably, electronic communication technologies allow traditional interest groups to extend the reach of their methods and engage new supporters. McNutt and Menon (2008) illustrate an example which argues that an email newsletter is much cheaper than a mailed newsletter, which allows traditional social movements to stretch their limited budgets. This suggests that electronic communication technologies facilitates organising over a wider geographical range and makes possible to engage people who are not able to come to meetings or be reached in door-to-door campaigns. Figure 3 below illustrates an example on how cyberactivism can act as a social

marketing tool to promote public awareness and gain public support on an advocated social issue.

Fig. 3
Cyberactivism as a Social Marketing Tool for Public Awareness and Support



Erraji (2009) argued that the spark of a new cause for advocacy is usually identified by cyber activists as a contemporary social issue that is felt to be unjust. Stringer (2006) added that cyber activists who rally on such issues usually involve speaking their mind and calling for change in the cyber space to help the advocated issue that was identified. Relationally, cyberactivism takes place when facts and opinions which support their advocacy are discussed and presented in networked cyber groups and society through electronic communication technologies, such as online discussion forums, advocacy groups, specialised newsgroups, activist web sites, and social networking sites (Price and Foos, 2000). As the discussions becomes more intense, there would be an injection of awareness on the issue among the general public, and in most instances, such rallies would gain mass media coverage, which further contributes to an increase in public awareness and subsequently generate public support towards the advocated issue (Shangapour *et al*.,2011) – as seen in Figure 3. In order to better understand the above process representing how cyberactivism can act as a social marketing tool for public awareness and support, a case study on a recent issue regarding animal abuse in Malaysia is investigated.

4.3.1 Case Study on an Evident Dog Abuse in Malaysia

On the 27th of January 2011, a new social issue in Malaysia was brought to light - a 15 minute video of a man who was seen using brute force on a poodle in an attempt to force the dog to stand up on its hind legs was reported to have been posted on the Internet and has enraged many dog lovers and neutral observers (Bedi *et al*., 2011), leading to a heated activism in the cyberspace. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) has led the fight to bring the man in the video that is responsible for brutally abusing the dog to justice. Many Malaysians and non-Malaysians who have seen the video online are becoming increasingly furious with such inhumane acts that have gone unpunished. According to an unofficial statistic by the *Malaysia Dog Abuse Protest Counter*, the number of enraged status of users which are posted in relation to this issue is estimated to be more than 800,000 status updates and more than 2,000,000 in related discussions in various Facebook groups (Syed, 2011). According to Syed (2011), there are many cyber activists who have posted and shared a copy of the video clip and expressed their opinions on this issue on their blogs, social networking sites, discussion forums, and also on their personal instant messenger status to show and publicise their disagreement with such acts. In most cyber-discussions on this issue, it was argued that these mentally-unstable or wilfully-cruel people often get away with cruelty to animals and

are indirectly encouraged to continue when authorities are lax in enforcing animal cruelty laws. Izham (2011) added that the act of filming such acts, posting the recordings in the cyberspace, and causing a reaction makes them feel confident and glorified. He added that many cyber activists believe that these heartless beings are the hidden monsters that start with animals, and then continue to children, women and the society in general, and strongly believe that such persons must be stopped and brought to justice swiftly. Indeed, this issue has gain the intended public awareness and much media coverage as all national newspapers in Malaysia has published multiple articles on this issue since it was first reported on the 27th of January 2011. Since then, a large majority of the public has shown their outcry of such actions and has given on-going support in bringing the abuser to court, thereby creating an intense pressure on the law enforcers to catch the person responsible as seen clearly in the video. From the public support observed, it is suggested that the final outcome of cyberactivism on this issue is that the authorities are mounted with a strong societal pressure to send a very strong message – that cruelty to animals is a crime. Consequently, the police have released a statement that the law enforcers and the government are abhorred by this act of blatant abuse and urge the public to assist them in finding the culprit (Chiew, 2011). It was also proposed that Section 44 of the Animal Act 1953 (2006 Amendment), which says that anyone guilty of an offence of cruelty to animals shall be liable to a fine of RM200 or imprisonment for a term of six months or both, to be amended as the current sentence is too light and those found guilty hardly get the maximum sentence.

The subsequent section will look into the prospects and future research directions for social marketing studies focusing on cyberactivism. Notably, the encouraged directions are not a direct result from the case studies but rather avenues of research expansion thoughts to enhance the use of cyberactivism as a social marketing tool for public policy, awareness and support. While the following section is not directly related to the case studies, it is nonetheless directly related to the main idea of cyberactivism. Indeed, the case studies ought to present scholars with an understanding on how cyberactivism works and subsequently, the next section will look into what are the implications of this knowledge gained and how future research could be fertilised.

4.4 Prospects for Activism in the Cyberspace

In order for the Internet to become a force for the activist agenda, it is imperative to address improved strategies and tactics, technology and education for cyberactivism engagement. Typically, these factors form the cornerstones of a truly effective progressive presence in the cyberspace.

4.4.1 Strategies and Tactics

The innovation for new, technology-friendly organising strategies and tactics is essential to cyberactivism (Noronha, 2009). While it is imperative for approaches to be well-suited with the situation (Ferrell and Hartline, 2008) and the culture and understanding of the people (Friedland and Rogerson, 2009), it is even more crucial for advocates of cyberactivism to use the technology in ways that maximise its contribution (McNutt and Menon, 2008). Smith (1999) argued that it is less important to make the technology look like traditional interventions and is instead more important to ensure that it is effective. While it is fair to say that technology alone

was once perceived to be not effective enough without traditional advocacy techniques as many issues could not be addressed electronically and more importantly, many in the society were not yet sufficiently 'brave' to engage in the process (Ayers and McCaughey, 2003), this is no more the case today as the advancement in technology has facilitate for functions which acts rather similarly to conventional advocacy techniques (Brookes, 2009) – for instance, the use of digital public forums to share opinions compared to the traditional way of organising a mass public face-to-face forum. MoveOn, for example, has conducted large-scale advocacy campaigns without any of the traditional elements of face-to-face campaigns (see Cornfield, 2004). Nonetheless, the amount of research available in the current scholarship on the strategies, tactics and its subsequent outcomes of its advocacies is rather diminutive. It is encouraged that future researches look into the design interventions around technology and practice knowledge and then test them in cyber field situations. Empirical research on the possible combinations of electronic communication technologies to support cyber activist movements and the satisfaction levels towards cyberactivism using such modes of communication should be worthwhile issues for further investigation.

4.4.2 Technology

Many technologies used in cyberactivism today were developed for other uses and was adapted for social advocacy by governments and various social groups, such as emails and social networking sites. New technology is constantly emerging and is suggested to have important ramifications for activism – it is being tailored even more closely to fit towards social marketing efforts. In particular, many special types of software are now being marketed for social advocacy work. Get Active is an example of a social marketing advocacy tool developed by environmental activists and is used in the cyber world. The open source movement, which indicates more freely available source code for software that can be adapted to specific needs, promises a wide range of potential software tools for activists.

The idea of ubiquitous or pervasive technologies is particularly important in cyberactivism (Lohmann and McNutt, 2002). Notably, such technologies will be highly mobile and will work with other technologies seamlessly. As such, this will present activists with an access to their cyber technology in places where much of the social change occurs. Germany (2006) added that the development of social technology, typically those that makes networking and relationship development easier, such as social networking sites (e.g. Facebook and MySpace) and blogs, and Web 2.0 also promises much to technology. While many research around the area of technology has look at the technology acceptance level of consumers in general, it would interesting to see at a microscope focus on the technology acceptance level among cyber activist on the various cyberactivism technologies. It is recommended for future research to look at technology-related theoretical frameworks, such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989) and the Uses and Gratifications Theory (U&G) (Luo, 2002), in relation to the ubiquitous and pervasive cyberactivism technologies. Creative, innovative and visionary ideas and developments for cyberactivism technologies with more omnipresent characteristics are also encouraged.

4.4.3 Education

If advocates and social marketers are to make the best use of technology for cyberactivism, it is essential that social activism educational programs prepare them for these roles. The community media and technology program in many prestigious and research-driven international universities, such as Middlesex University and Monash University, is an excellent example as their program prepares its Information Technology and Business Information Systems students to use media in both traditional and emerging technologies in community social change situations. Such programs should be replicated to ensure bigger scales of Internet users are well-educated towards the effective use of cyberactivism tools. The acquisition of such knowledge and skills would in turn facilitate an increase in the use of these tools to further raise public awareness and support on both new and existing social issues. Future research are encouraged to investigate for effective and accessible modes of educational and training resources for using and engaging with cyberactivism tools as a medium of social marketing in the cyber world. Social preferences and degree of voluntary participation in relation to the distances and costs of social activism educational programs are potentially fruitful research areas to better understand the behaviour of its target market as a preliminary step before fully offering its educational services to the general public.

5. Conclusion

The use of the Internet and related technologies offers social marketers and advocates the promise of a new and exciting set of tools to promote causes, develop change efforts and support, and promote real change (i.e. public policy, awareness and support). While the current practices of social marketing have been so far impressive, the future holds much promise for newer and more exciting efforts in this emerging social marketing paradigm. Notably, social work advocates cannot ignore the promise that the cyberspace and technology have to offer. Such an obvious lucrative opportunity would undeniably give social activists an added advantage in the battle for a just society.

End Notes

[1] The Sun newspaper used in this article is based in Malaysia and is an official and authorised
newspaper by the government for sales distribution to the general public.

[2] Exchange rate as of 13th February 2011 - USD1 = RM3.09

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