

## **Understanding the role of social marketing in wellness behavior outcomes**

I chose to read the article by Julia E. Carins and Sharyn R Rundle-Thiele, published July of 2014, entitled “Eating for the Better: A Social Marketing Review (2000-2012).” This article conducted a comprehensive literature review, limiting its scope to the past 10 years, and focused on the components necessary for effective social marketing to influence positive eating behaviors. Of the sixteen studies reviewed, fourteen of them were found to impart positive results on healthy eating behavior. Additionally, it was found that studies that engaged with more of the social marketing criteria offered by Alan Andreasen’s six benchmarks were the most effective. These results lead to the authors concluding that social marketing may have a positive impact on encouraging healthy eating habits.

There are five core concepts associated with social marketing: behavioral outcomes, emphasis on consumer benefit, engaging with consumer perspectives, creating a marketing mix to relay important information, and segmenting content for subgroups. Social marketing uses analysis, planning, execution, and evaluation of programs to influence audiences to engage with healthy behaviors. Health literature deficiencies of social marketing were closely analyzed to create effective plans and to execute them. The programs were studied, evaluated, and reviewed. Implementing strategies in the planning process, systematic application of techniques was used for the benefit of individuals or society and not for commercial gain.

Analysis changes were reported in measurable values (awareness, knowledge, attitude, or belief) or physiological results. Andreasen’s work separates the reviewed literature into two subsets. Subset 1 studies include consumer-oriented research to produce intervention involving a

full marketing mix. There were positive changes to healthy eating behavior from the studies of subset 1 and nutritious diet information provided by optimal healthy eating. Subset 2 studies were not consumer oriented and were determined to be closer to advertising than to marketing. The results indicated that social marketing is largely effective in encouraging a variety of healthy eating behaviors.

### **Five Social marketing principles in the article**

Principle 1, of the five social marketing cores, is described in a textbook by Glanz, Rimer, and Viswanath as focusing on influencing behavioral outcomes (Glanz, Rimer, & Viswanath, p. 414). In the review by Carins and Rundle-Thiele, the objective was to discern the factors that encourage or limit healthy eating behavior through social marketing strategies. Many of the studies reviewed show a focus on one behavioral outcome compared to tackling several of the possible focuses at once.

The second principle is described as prioritizing consumers' benefits, which emphasizes exploring and trying the audience's way; it targets better health, stable environments, and the current consumer's needs or desires (Glanz et.al., p. 414-415). In the article by Carins and Rundle-Thiele, social marketing campaigns were also made for the consumer's benefit. The campaigns for better healthy eating habits and wellness websites are driven and written for obesity or overweight audience's needs and their perceptions.

The third principle is described as maintaining an ecological perspective (Glanz, et al., p. 414-415). This includes strategies such as upstream, downstream, and cross-stream marketing, competing favorably with other options, increasing desirably, consumer orientation, and consumer needs. An example of upstream marketing, which focuses on structural changes, given

by Carins and Rundle-Theale is introducing new foods in canteens and vending machines. Downstream marketing works with the results of individuals. Rather than reading about downstream marketing, I found that the article discussed midstream marketing, an example of which is influencing group culture of better nutrition and physical activity. Another marketing strategy from the course lecture is that of the three E's: Engineering, Enforcement, and Education (University of Wisconsin, n.d.). The three E's take advantage of both upstream and downstream marketing to produce effective outcomes. Engineering works to increase desirability and use easily understood contexts so that information for healthy eating can compete favorably with other negative options. Enforcement refers to the administration of policies such as nutrition policies made for schools. The final 'E', Education, refers to relaying information to audiences such as informing parents and faculty members on serving sizes.

The fourth principle, the Marketing Mix, is a communication approach based on the four P's: Product, Price, Promotion, and Place (Glanz et al., p. 414-417). The Product for Carins and Rundle-Theale, or the behavior provided to the audience, was to eat healthy and offer holistic solutions that are attractive and valuable. Price can take form as money, time, energy, discomfort, loss of relationships, opportunity, and time spent for socializing, being physical, and psychological care. New behaviors are often accepted when the benefits exceed the risks, or when the product outweighs the price. Maintaining or changing social behaviors can be key to social marketing (University of Wisconsin n.d.). From the review article, monetary price took the form of the cost of healthy food, time and energy were spent in taking the time to buy and eat healthy foods, and opportunities included food samples, coupons, vouchers, prizes, and extra time off. The new behavior was further incentivized by product trials with rewards and prizes offered for partaking in the behavior. Place includes creating opportunities for products,

audiences to engage in behaviors, and have access to products and marketing such as through use of vending machines, advertisements, local broadcasts, direct mail, and telemarketing (University of Wisconsin, n.d.). The review article discusses Place by observing website advertisements and social communication publications. Examples of Promotion are, communication materials which can be combined with another marketing mix such as the Walkable Policy and Smoking Prohibition Policy (University of Wisconsin n.d.). The article focused on competition with other resources related to healthy eating.

The fifth principle of social marketing in Segmentation. Social marketing uses subgroups of unique characteristics to assist with determining the focus group of an audience (Glanz et al., p. 414-418). In the article, the subgroups are: adults at a worksite, children at a school, and a community in a certain region.

## **Reflection**

Doing this task enhanced my understanding of the five core social marketing concepts, marketing strategies such as the three E's, and the four P's communication elements of social marketing. The article indicated that using those approaches helped to develop and promote useful products that influence healthy behaviors for individuals and communities. From this article, I learned that well-written social marketing, read by audiences of both sponsors and consumers, influenced healthy eating habits. However, there are also some limits to the effectiveness of advertising or communication approaches. In the future, when creating programs for healthy eating, incorporating Marketing mix may give better results.

## Resources

Carins E,J. & Rundle-Thiele R, S. (2013). *Eating for the better: A social marketing review*

(2000-2012). Retrieved from

[http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/healthy%20eating/PHN\\_Carins-and-Rundle-Thiele2013.ashx](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/healthy%20eating/PHN_Carins-and-Rundle-Thiele2013.ashx)

Glanz, Karen., Rimer K, B., and Viswanath K. (Ed.) (2015). *Health Behavior: Theory, research, and practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

University of Wisconsin. (n.d.) *Understanding and Effecting Health Behavior Change: Social marketing*.

*Spring 2019 [09, 12, 13, 14, 15]*. Retrieved from

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