



Persuasive Policy Conference
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Social Marketing

ABSTRACT

Social marketing was a phrase originally coined by Kotler in 1971 to describe the integrated use of commercial marketing principles for public good programmes by industry and government organisations. Social marketing has been defined “as the provision of products and services meeting individual needs to achieve industry and societal outcomes”. The marketing principles associated with social marketing are really no different from any other area of marketing, the difference is the nature of the product or service. With social marketing, the benefits to society from the product or service are greater than the benefits calculated by adding together the benefits obtained by all the individuals participating in the product or service. Social marketing campaigns will generally involve (1) persuading social groups and individuals of the need for change and motivating them throughout the process of change, (2) providing information in an objective way to assist decision makers make changes effectively and be able to appropriate any benefits available for themselves and their communities, and (3) advocating for changes in peoples’ socio-political environment to support the processes of change and so that any behaviour changes can work to society’s greatest advantage.

Social marketing is a refinement of media campaigns that might be used to promote various government products or services to the public. The main difference is that social marketing addresses the specific individual behaviours that are needed for practice change in society. Social marketing includes addressing the contextual conditions affecting change as well the provision of communication and information.

Social marketing is different from educational campaigns that might be used to inform people in a neutral way about the advantages and disadvantages to society of holding particular sets of values or engaging in particular behaviours. In contrast, social marketing is clear about the range of choices in behaviour available to decision makers, the behaviour preference of industry or government organisations with the reasons for that preference, and the advantage for individuals in aligning themselves with the industry or government preference. However, social marketing may include an educational campaign as part of its overall strategy.

Social marketing is different from the practice of extension. Extension activities are generally designed to create one-to-one encounters with practice change agents. The agents then “tailor” a policy product or service to meet the needs of that individual. Extension activities are generally associated with the implementation of agricultural policy, and now-a-days are considered by some people to be old-fashioned. Social marketing depends upon targeting a social group rather than individuals and requires more prior research to develop specifications for the target

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group compared to extension which relies upon the technical knowledge and personableness of the agent to match the product or service to the client's idiosyncrasies. The capability of modern databases and communication media to adapt information to the needs of individuals enables social marketing to achieve some degree of tailoring to individual's needs but without the personal contact that personal sales or extension had for building trust and decision making confidence.

Policy strategies for encouraging voluntary change are known to be required to make practice changes more widespread and sustainable. The main benefits of including rules in policy strategies is to encourage learning, reinforce social norms and minimise free-loading. Social marketing combined with appropriate levels of economic incentives can provide an integrated policy strategy for achieving practice changes that can enhance biodiversity outcomes.

Further Reading

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Kotler P, Roberto N and Lee N (2002). Social marketing: improving the quality of life. Sage, Thousand Oaks.

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