ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL MARKETING

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In the last ten years there has been considerable spend on Social Marketing. There is no systematic way of proving the effectiveness of Social Marketing. This paper considers how the effectiveness of Social Marketing should be assessed, the extent to which effectiveness is currently determined and suggests a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of Social Marketing.

This paper suggests that best practice in assessing the effectiveness of Social Marketing requires systematic assessment at five levels of change (Awareness, Engagement, Behaviour, Social Norm and Wellbeing). To comprehensively assess the effectiveness of Social Marketing campaigns their contribution at all five levels of effectiveness need to be considered.

SOCIAL MARKETING

There are a range of definitions of Social Marketing, the following captures the essence of most of the definitions: *'Social Marketing is the use of commercial marketing concepts, tools and programs designed to influence individuals' behaviour to improve their well being and that of society'* (Social Marketing Institute).

In the last ten years there has been, and continues to be, a considerable spend on Social Marketing. The New Zealand government asks its citizens to:

Eat moderately	Be active
Stub out cigarettes	Slow down cars
Apply sunscreen	Have safe sex
Have mammograms	Regulate alcohol intake
Teach children to read	Use recycling bins
Immunise children	Save for retirement
Conserve water	Prepare homes for earthquakes
Understand mental health issues	Install smoke alarms
Use public transport	Conserve electricity
Fasten ladders	

Passionately Social Marketers design creative approaches to guide their Social Marketing. Typically Social Marketers:

o   Establish a brand to govern their campaigns;
o   Using multi-mode approaches (programmes, education, communication);
o   Target young people and hard to reach audiences;
o   Use creative and innovative approaches.

The expectations of Social Marketing are high.

o   *'The end goal of any social marketing campaign is to contribute to achieving a socially just society'* (Donovan 2003).
o   Kotler et al (2002) title their text *'Social Marketing: Improving the Quality of Life'*.

On the basis of these definitions researchers are left with a significant challenge: establishing the effectiveness of Social Marketing in improving quality of life.

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assessed, the extent to which effectiveness is currently determined and suggests a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of Social Marketing.

DEFINITION

In this paper '*Social Marketing campaign*' is used to describe Social Marketing for the purpose of shifting a specific behaviour (or set of behaviours), with a view to achieving an improved quality of life. While individual programmes are considered to be enablers and contributors (i.e. Get Sorted and Quit) they are not considered to be stand-alone Social Marketing campaigns.

FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL MARKETING

Social Marketing texts explain the myriad of techniques for research to support Social Marketing, but shy away from definitive views on how to assess effectiveness (outcome measurement) of Social Marketing. Noting the difficulty of assessing the effectiveness of Social Marketing, Donovan (2003) suggests that 'campaigns should be evaluated in terms of immediate measures such as beliefs and attitudes, self report behaviour change and sales data'.
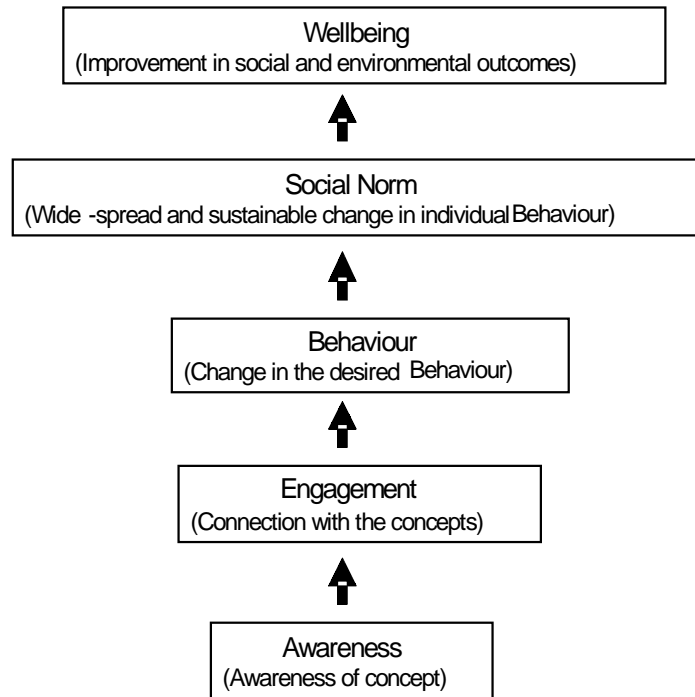
Given that Social Marketing sets out to achieve an improvement of quality of life, are intermediate measures of effectiveness sufficient?

This paper suggests that best practice in assessing the effectiveness of Social Marketing requires systematic assessment at five levels (Awareness, Engagement, Behaviour, Social Norm and Wellbeing). To comprehensively assess the effectiveness of Social Marketing campaigns contribution at all five levels of effectiveness need to be considered. (See figure 1.)

The effectiveness of Social Marketing campaigns is dependent on success at all levels of the framework. This means that:

o   Failure at any level will undermine efforts to achieve subsequent levels.

o   Failure at latter levels may be interpreted as weakness at the earlier levels, thus giving a powerful interpreter of reasons for failure.

o   However, early level effectiveness does not guarantee latter level effectiveness.

Figure 1
LEVELS OF SOCIAL MARKETING EFFECTIVENESS

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┌──────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                  Wellbeing                     │
│  (Improvement in social and environmental      │
│                  outcomes)                     │
└──────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                       ↑
┌──────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                 Social Norm                    │
│  (Wide -spread and sustainable change in        │
│            individual Behaviour)               │
└──────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                       ↑
        ┌──────────────────────────────┐
        │           Behaviour           │
        │  (Change in the desired        │
        │          Behaviour)            │
        └──────────────────────────────┘
                       ↑
        ┌──────────────────────────────┐
        │          Engagement           │
        │   (Connection with the         │
        │          concepts)             │
        └──────────────────────────────┘
                       ↑
            ┌──────────────────────┐
            │       Awareness       │
            │ (Awareness of concept)│
            └──────────────────────┘
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There is inherent causality between each level: Engagement is a necessary precursor to behaviour change; both are precursors to Social Norms; and all are precursors to Wellbeing changes. There is also recursive causality between the levels.

It is important to note that only the most mature and evolved Social Marketing campaigns will be seeking change at the latter levels. At campaign commencement the focus should be on the earlier levels (Awareness and Engagement).

Change is sought at each level of effectiveness as follows: (see figure 2)

Figure 2
CHANGES SOUGHT AT EACH LEVEL OF EFFECTIVENESS

Levels	Key changes sought	Result level
Awareness	Increase in awareness of issue	Individual changes in awareness
Engagement	A change of attitude and contemplation of behaviour change. Behavioural responses to individual programmes	Individual changes in attitude and responses to programmes
Behaviour	Individual behaviour change	Individual changes in behaviour
Social Norm	The desired behaviour change has permeated widely and sustainably and is therefore maintained	Normative changes in attitude and behaviour
Wellbeing	The behaviour change has resulted in an improvement in quality of life for individuals and society	Changes in social and environmental outcomes

Measurement and action on the basis of findings is needed at each level. That is decisions (including whether to continue the campaign) need to be made on the basis of success or failure at each level.

Understanding effectiveness at each stage is critical in the planning and evolution of Social Marketing campaigns. The results at each level should be considered to be key influencers of a campaign's future direction.

Decisions for campaigns at an early stage of evolution, based on research findings may, for instance, include:

o   Once success at Awareness levels is achieved it is timely to implement programmes seeking specific action (Engagement or Behaviour)
o   Failure at Awareness and/or Engagement levels suggests that the philosophy of the Social Marketing campaign should be re-thought.

Key decisions for mature campaigns, on the basis of research findings, are:

o   Achievement of indicators at all levels suggests the campaign should convert to maintenance mode.
o   Flat lining at latter levels, pre-achievement of indicator goals, should initiate re-consideration at the Awareness and Engagement levels to address campaign fatigue.

o   Flat lining at latter levels should also initiate consideration of whether it is possible for the Social Marketing activity to be effective (i.e. without further investment it is always going to be a drop in the bucket?)

A key use of the framework is in identifying when it is time to rethink the campaign focus. Most successful campaigns experience a period of impact on outcomes (i.e. reduction in tobacco consumption) and then flat line as campaign fatigue sets in and the audience becomes more entrenched. By using the framework, early indicators of campaign fatigue can be identified, so that it is clear when action is needed.

CASE STUDIES

Most New Zealand Social Marketing campaigns measure effectiveness at the *Awareness* and *Engagement* level, but stretch to make robust assessments at the *Behaviour* and *Social Norm* levels, and generally do not approach the *Wellbeing* level. (One exception is the evaluation of the initiative to improve road safety – see case study 4).

Factors inhibiting ability to establish effectiveness at the latter levels include:

o   The outcomes timeframe – for many programmes the outcomes sought are very long term, especially the social outcomes;
o   Inability to establish causality:
   ∗   The clutter of activity – separating the effectiveness of Social Marketing from other activities (i.e. enforcement, education, media activity and Hollywood),
   ∗   Lack of will and funding for experimental design – (i.e. control case studies),
   ∗   Unstable, non-existent or weak benchmarking;
o   Lack of reliable indicators of success (i.e. empirical measures of effectiveness);
o   Lack of clarity in change sought (i.e. seeking intangible or immeasurable change);
o   A focus on programme level effectiveness (i.e. a lack of long term outcome focus).

Using four studies we can explore the extent to which effectiveness of Social Marketing is currently considered at the five levels of Social Marketing effectiveness.

Case Study 1: Increase in Physical Activity

This Social Marketing campaign is championed by Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC). SPARC's role is to ensure New Zealand remains a thriving, healthy, dynamic country that can compete with the best in the world and promote itself with confidence.

SPARC works with schools, community clubs, sports organisations, iwi, regional sports trusts and local authorities to create opportunities for all New Zealanders to be active and reach their potential in their chosen sports.

Core to encouraging active living has been the following Social Marketing campaigns:

o Push Play: Push Play is about New Zealanders enjoying the benefits of healthy active lifestyles. Thirty minutes a day is all it takes. Mediums for communication have included above the line advertising.

o Green Prescriptions: New Zealand's GPs are now writing Green Prescriptions for their patients, as well as increasing the number of practice nurses.

o He Oranga Poutama: Healthy active Maori is about getting "more Maori, more active, more often" using the medium of sport and recreation to deliver its message.

Effectiveness of this Social Marketing campaign is assessed using the following means:

o A regular survey of New Zealanders sport and physical activity

o Membership in sporting clubs

o Point in time surveys following campaign activity (awareness, engagement, intention to act)

o Take-up of green prescriptions

o Survey of obstacles to action

o International surveys of activity (country comparisons)

Other less formal measures include:

o Observation of increased physical activity and discussion about physical activity

o Big brands increasingly associating their brand messages with health messages.

Multi-source reporting is collated annually. The focus on effectiveness is currently primarily at the Awareness and Engagement levels (though some

latter level data is collated). Strength could be added to the assessment of effectiveness by more consciously integrating Social Norm and Wellbeing measures into the assessment of effectiveness.

Case Study 2: Reduction in Tobacco Consumption

Reduction of tobacco consumption and exposure to tobacco is led by the Health Sponsorship Council. Other critical contributors include ASH, the Cancer Society, the Quit group and the Ministry of Health.

Social Marketing activity to reduce the incidence of tobacco consumption has been in place for the last 20 years. Activity has included:

o   Quit programme (a quit line providing free support to people seeking to quit smoking)
o   Smokefree brand replacing tobacco sponsorship
o   Smokefree Sports and Smokefree Teens programmes
o   Advertising regarding the health related dangers of smoking
o   Advertising encouraging smoking cessation
o   Auahi Kore brand – grass roots, sponsorship and communication encouraging Maori people not to smoke. Translated as 'no smoke'.

Effectiveness is assessed in the following way:

o   Regular surveys of brand awareness, attitudes and behaviour
o   Political willingness to implement enabling legislation
o   Media monitoring
o   National surveys of the incidence of tobacco use
o   Tobacco sales.

The campaign to reduce the incidence of tobacco use in New Zealand is a mature campaign. Evidence of campaign effectiveness has been strong across all levels of effectiveness (and is at near absolute levels of awareness) However, of late there has been a lack of impact at the Behaviour level (percentage of the population who smoke tobacco). This suggests a need to rethink the campaign at the Engagement level.

Case Study 3: Increase in Tolerance and Fair Treatment of People with a Mental Illness

The Like Minds Campaign was initiated as a result of the Mason Report (1996). "We must support a public awareness campaign – it is a must, it is fundamentally wrong that a vulnerable group of people in our society should

be continually subjected to the comments and actions of those who possess an outcast mentality…"

As a result of the Mason report the Ministry of Health initiated a public health communications project to reduce the stigma of mental illness and the discrimination experienced by people with mental illness. The key elements of the project are public relations, advertising and development of national policy and curriculum guidelines.

Activities at a national level have included three advertising campaigns (the third is currently underway). Other activities have included: media training for providers, resource development, encouraging the media to report on mental illness in an accurate way, a quarterly newsletter, a documentary and local level activities.

Measurement of effectiveness is primarily established via regular monitoring of the public. Regular surveys assess awareness and attitudes to the campaign. Other feedback includes anecdotal responses to the campaign and levels of community participation.

Behaviour changes have been measured via surveys (and qualitative research) with people who have experience of mental illness. This 2003 research explored the extent to which participants had noticed a change or experienced reduced discrimination against mental illness.

The campaign is measured thoroughly at the Awareness, Engagement and Behaviour levels. Assessment at the Wellbeing level is particularly difficult to quantify for this initiative, but should include measures such as: levels of participation in the workforce for people who have experience of a mental illness.

Case Study 4: Safe Behaviour on the Roads

There has been an array of activity supporting road safety messages. The activity is lead by the Land Transport Safety Authority (LTSA). The Authority champions the 'Road Safety Strategy to 2010'.

The LTSA is responsible for changing attitudes to road safety. This work is supported by the NZ Police who reinforce the strategy by enforcing road safety legislation. LTSA promotes four major messages:

a) The faster you go, the bigger the mess.

b) If you drink then drive, you are a bloody idiot.

c) Always wear your safety belt.

d) Take another look at intersections.

Promotion of the message is via multi-media campaigns. The campaigns include TVCs, radio advertising and billboards.

The focus on effectiveness for LTSA is firmly fixed at the Wellbeing level (road toll). The road toll is regarded as 'sales' for LTSA (inversely related). While measures are sought at the Awareness, Engagement and self-report Behaviour levels it is the road toll that the LTSA assesses performance against. Ability to make firm assessment at the Wellbeing level and maturity of the social marketing activity has led to a focus on outcome measures.

Critically the LTSA are now facing road toll statistics which are trending upwards. The LTSA now needs to consider success at the earlier levels. If there have been corresponding levels of decline (or plateau) at earlier levels (i.e. Engagement), the strategies for communication at these levels need to be redressed.

USING THE FRAMEWORK

A high level view, beyond programme mechanics, is required to establish the effectiveness of Social Marketing campaigns. Social Marketers should set clear objectives (and associated indicators of success) at each level of effectiveness and work with researchers to determine how best to measure effectiveness at each level.

Critical to the use of the framework is establishing indicators of success. Some will be identifiable as the campaign commences, others will emerge as the campaign evolves. Potential indicators and means of measuring the indicators follow (see figure 3):

Figure 3
INDICATORS OF SUCCESS AT EACH LEVEL OF EFFECTIVENESS

	Indicators	*Means of measurement*
Awareness	X% awareness of issue	Audience surveys
Engagement	X% at pre-contemplation X% at contemplation X% discussed issue X% have responded to the issue in some way (i.e. use of website) X% have participated in a programme (i.e. called the Quit Line)	Audience surveys Behavioural data (i.e. website hits, calls to helpline)
Behaviour	X% self report behaviour change X% behaviour changes recorded	Audience surveys Behavioural data (i.e. participation in sorts clubs, road speed data)
Social Norm	X% positive attitude towards issue X% volume of support media articles X% individual committed to behaviour change Anecdotal feedback and observation of issue prevalence Political environment (i.e open to legislating to enforce desired behaviour change)	Audience surveys Media and political tracking Anecdotal feedback Observation
Wellbeing	X% increase in social outcome X% increase in environmental outcome	Social Report (annual compilation of indicators of wellbeing) Epidemiological data Environmental data

The appropriate information collection tools need to be used to gather the findings necessary to establish effectiveness at each level.

Figure 4
INFORMATION COLLECTION TOOLS

Engagement	○ Audience surveying ○ Programme participation data
Behavioural	○ Secondary statistics ○ Experimental
Social norm	○ Attitudinal surveying ○ Media tracking Anecdotal feedback ○ Qualitative research
Wellbeing	○ Longitudinal surveying (cohorts) ○ Social outcome indicators ○ Environmental outcome indicators

As critical as collecting quality information at each level of effectiveness, is the systematic collation, analysis and reporting of the findings. The finding should be compiled no less than annually and should be followed by a review of the Social Marketing campaign.

A good example of multi-method reporting is SPARC Facts. This report contains the facts and figures about New Zealanders' involvement in sport and physical activity. These have been compiled from the New Zealand Sport and Physical Activity surveys run by SPARC. The reports are compiled annually.

Failure to meet the levels of success desired should always be regarded seriously and the implications for the campaign considered.

RESEARCH CHAMPION

All Social Marketing campaigns need a lead researcher to be appointed at the stage of campaign germination. Generally the lead researcher should not be the Social Marketer. This is because of the need to have objectivity and an overview approach that is distanced from programme mechanics. The researcher should also generally not be aligned to a major provider of research services, so that decisions of research need are not influenced by commercial drivers (i.e. research company revenue).

The lead researcher needs to be experienced enough to advise the lead Social Marketer on appropriate research design and methodology. The lead

researcher Champion needs to have significant experience at both the client and agency side of the research process (at least five years relevant research experience).

CONCLUSION

The effectiveness of Social Marketing campaigns need to be considered at all five levels of effectiveness (Awareness, Engagement, Behaviour, Social Norm and Wellbeing). For each level measurable indicators of success need to identified. Regular reporting on the indicators needs to be compiled, and decisions made on the basis of the findings.

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