5

STRATEGIC SOCIAL MARKETING

Learning objectives

By the end of this chapter, readers should be able to:

- understand the nature and components of strategic planning within the context of social programme design
- describe, identify and define the contribution and added value that social marketing can make to the development of social programmes aimed at influencing behaviour
- give examples about how social marketing can help to optimise the selection and delivery of social programmes in terms of their effectiveness and efficiency.
Introduction

Marketing in the commercial sector is not solely about creating demand for products and services that people do not necessarily need or want. As we have discussed so far in this book, contemporary marketing is often focused on value creation, service delivery, brand loyalty and relationship building – delivered and facilitated through a process of mutually beneficial exchange. These core marketing principles are ones that can be used to positive effect in the not-for-profit and social programme sectors. For those interested in advocating the use of marketing in the governmental and wider not-for-profit sectors, these principles also have the potential to enhance the development and delivery of more effective and efficient social interventions. However, this revolution in contemporary commercial marketing thought and practice has hardly been reflected in any social marketing textbooks or programmes to date. Many books still advocate a model of social marketing that is based on marketing theory and practice that date back to McCarthy’s (1960) ancient and outmoded 4Ps model (Eagle et al., 2013; Hastings and Domegan, 2014; see Chapter 4 for a fuller review of the social marketing mix).

As discussed in Chapter 2, much of social marketing practice and many practitioners are stuck in the past, using a limited and limiting set of principles and conceptual tools to analyse, develop, implement and evaluate social challenges. This problem is further magnified by the fact that the vast majority of social marketing effort to date has been focused on downstream or tactical project delivery rather than on influencing upstream social policy. This limited approach together with a status quo bias in favour of existing approaches to social policy development, which does not recognise the potential contribution from marketing, has resulted in social marketing being confined to a largely tactical role within social policy delivery. However, academics and practitioners have begun to advocate that social marketing should go beyond just a focus on developing effective social behavioural interventions to embrace and make a contribution to social policy selection and development. Social marketing, it is argued, has a bigger contribution to make to informing and shaping the overall policy and strategic planning of social programmes aimed at making a positive impact on social, cultural and economic problems (Dann, 2006; Lee and Kotler, 2011). This argument has been characterised by calls to focus upstream on developing strategies that tackle the casual conditions of social problems, and ensuring the development of more comprehensive and coordinated intervention programmes (Gordon, 2013) rather than just focusing on downstream responses delivered through operational projects and campaigns. The complex challenges faced by countries around the world, ranging from infectious and chronic diseases, aging populations and water shortages, to global warming and economic, social and cultural inequality, will not be fixed by short-term project interventions alone. What is required is long-term, sustained and coordinated action focused on unambiguous measurable goals. This implies the need for a more strategic approach to social programme selection, coordination and delivery, a process that can be greatly enhanced by the application of social marketing principles, concepts and techniques.
Strategic Social Marketing

Social marketing is essentially ‘focused on developing and applying marketing principles, concepts and techniques to create value for society and individuals through the integration of research, evidence and theory’ (iSMA, ESMA and AASM, 2013). Strategic social marketing has the potential then to be used to select and implement behavioural interventions aimed not only at citizens but also at politicians, policy makers, community leaders and organisations. Social marketing can assist overall policy selection and strategy development by influencing the selection and mix of interventions that might be applied in tackling any given social behavioural challenge by ensuring that understanding about citizens’ views, beliefs and needs has a direct impact on which interventions are selected and how they are delivered. Social marketing, just like marketing in the for-profit sector, has a contribution to make to the process of strategy review, analysis and formulation.

Defining marketing strategy

There are many reasons why organisations tend to avoid or at least not fully adopt a strategic approach to defining their priorities, understanding their operating environment and developing coherent integrated interventions to deliver their identified organisational or social goals. Bowman (1990) has identified seven reasons why organisations in both the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors do not tend to apply strategic thinking and analysis:

1. Lack of awareness about the true situation of the organisation.
2. Senior management delude themselves about the organisation’s position.
3. Some managers have vested interests in sticking with the status quo.
4. Managers get locked into operational problem solving and management.
5. Past success can make people blind to current or future threats and opportunities.
6. Changing direction can be seen as an admission that what was done before was a mistake.
7. Lack of awareness within senior management about quite why the organisation is successful.

All of these reasons can individually or collectively conspire to reduce strategic thinking, management and planning.

There is no single, universally accepted definition of marketing strategy. Strategy is a contested concept but it is mainly viewed (Wensley, 2003) as a process that is focused on agreeing a clear mission and set of objectives for an organisation that is then, via a set of analytical steps, developed into a short-, medium- and long-term intervention plan informed by evidence and data. Strategy typically consists of three main clusters of actions and decisions, as depicted in Figure 5.1.

First is the process of strategic analysis to understand the operating environment and internal capabilities and goals of the organisation, next comes a set of choice
processes to select the most appropriate strategic approach, and finally strategy also involves the development, execution, coordination and review of the strategy. All three of these tasks are iterative in nature rather than being undertaken in a simple mechanistic linear fashion.

Figure 5.1  The three key strategy processes

In terms of implementation, strategy can also be seen as the process of developing a detailed plan for achieving the stated goals of the organisation, in a social programme context this might be the eradication of absolute poverty or the attainment of a certain level of youth employment. Strategy can also be viewed as a stream of significant decisions taken over time that are focused on the development of a consistent approach to achieving an organisational or social objective.

As Kotler and Armstrong (2008: 29) state, strategic planning sets the stage for the rest of the planning:

We define strategic planning as the process of developing and maintaining a strategic fit between the organisation's goals and capabilities and its changing opportunities. It relies on developing a clear company mission, supporting objectives, a sound business portfolio and coordinated functional strategies.

Marketing strategy starts with articulating business goals, or in the case of social programmes, the social mission and goals that are to be achieved. Critically this involves decisions about which business to be in, or when focused on social issues which social issues to focus on.

In the case of social challenge a key strategic choice involves decisions about which social problems are capable of being influenced, their relative priority and to what extent effective, sustainable and affordable interventions exist. The next stage in the strategy process is the generation and selection of the optimal mix of methods to achieve these goals.
Strategic Social Marketing

A key part of the marketing strategy process is an assessment of external environments and trends and internal organisational strengths and weaknesses. Strategy also considers an organisation’s ability to develop and take advantage of market or social opportunities or respond to existing or probable threats. Marketing strategy is a continuous process that runs over the long term. However, it also is influenced by and influences short- and medium-term planning and delivery cycles. Marketing strategy in the commercial sector is essentially about ensuring a continued competitive advantage; in the social sector marketing strategy is about ensuring an optimal impact and return on investment related to specific social challenges.

Marketing strategy consists of the seven sets of actions depicted in Table 5.1. For more details on each of these steps see Chapter 11. Strategy is not something that is developed and then set on a shelf while delivery takes over. Rather strategy is an iterative process of reflection focused on ensuring that the right goals and objectives are being pursued and the right mix of interventions and tactics is deployed to deliver the goals that have been agreed.

Table 5.1 The seven strategic processes

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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Determine the mission, aims and objectives of the social programme.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Analyse the current intervention strategy and assess its strengths and weaknesses.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Assess current and future external and internal threats and opportunities.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Generate new options, analyse each against conclusions from internal and external analysis and mission goals and objectives.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Agree the criteria and apply those for selecting any new strategy.</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Summarise the results of analysis and conclusions and articulate a new strategy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Plan and deliver the new strategy through selected operational and tactical approaches.</td>
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As stated above, strategy is a continuous process rooted in the gathering and feedback of data about the success or failure of the mix of interventions deployed to achieve the strategy. These seven processes can also be thought of as a cyclical process involving feedback and iterative development, as set out in Figure 5.2.

The strategic mindset

Strategy is essentially about future-proofing organisations and allowing them to prepare and be ready for unfolding new challenges, threats and opportunities. In the case of social programmes being able to predict, spot and develop plans to prevent harm associated with trends such as a massive growth in dementia or the adverse consequences of food insecurity, this enables responsible organisations to put in place strategies that perform better than ones based on a reactive response.
Determine the mission, aims and objectives of the social programme

Assess the current intervention strategy and assess its strengths and weaknesses along the trend, scale and scope of the problem

Generate new options, analyse each against conclusions from internal and external analysis and mission goals and objectives

Agree the criteria for selecting any new strategy

Summarise the results of analysis and conclusions from internal and external analysis and goals and objectives

Plan and deliver the new strategy and tactics via selected operational and tactical approaches

Review as needed

Redefine as needed

Figure 5.2 The strategic management process

Source: adapted from Thompson and Strickland, 1993
Just like strategic marketing there is no single definition of what constitutes strategic thinking or what characteristics and competencies can be observed as representing strategic thinking (Hussey, 2001). What is agreed by many marketing experts is that strategy is more than just the formulaic application of a set of standardised processes (Chussil, 2005). Strategy, it is argued, is more about responsive, critical and creative problem solving, augmented by a number of systematic processes for analysing and making decisions about the optimum strategy that should be selected and delivered. McKeown (2011) makes the point that what is needed are strategic thinkers who can accurately assess future trends, as well as existing circumstances, and develop new and creative strategies that do not simply react to environmental conditions or social challenges but rather aim to proactively shape such future environments and challenges. However, according to Johnson and Scholes (1989) there are a number of characteristics associated with strategic thinking and decision making, and these include the following:

- A focus on the scope of an organisation’s activities.
- Matching the activities of an organisation to the environment in which it operates.
- Seeking to match the organisation’s activities to its resource capability.
- Consideration of the resource implications of various potential strategies for an organisation.
- Strategic decisions are likely to affect operational decisions, and set off waves of lesser decisions.
- Strategy will be affected not only by environmental forces and resource availability, but also by the values and expectations of those who have power in and around the organisation.
- Strategic decisions are likely to affect the long-term direction of an organisation.

The development of organisational strategy is closely linked in the commercial sector to the development of its marketing strategy. As discussed above, strategy consists of three major tasks: strategic analysis, strategic decision making and strategic implementation. All of these tasks have a number of specific elements such as competition and SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis. These processes are set out in Chapter 11 alongside their relevance and application as part of a social marketing approach. Strategy development is an iterative process primarily concerned with ensuring in the for-profit sector that companies continue to thrive in new circumstances. In the social policy arena strategy is focused on the development of programmes that will be capable of tackling both existing and future threats to health and wellbeing in the most cost effective and publically acceptable way.

**Discussion question**

Consider the organisation where you work or an organisation that you know. How strategic is it in terms of applying the seven strategic processes set out above?
Defining strategic social marketing

Before the full potential of social marketing can be realised in the development and implementation of social policy it needs to be acknowledged that there is still a major under-utilisation and misinterpretation of marketing and social marketing by many governments and not-for-profit institutions. Social marketing is often viewed as a second order task in many public sector policy and strategy development circles. So before social marketing can bring value to the policy table it is necessary to consider how it can best be embedded into the policy making and strategy development process. Chapter 13 is focused on how this can be achieved.

Without an acceptance of the added value of applying the concepts, principles and techniques of social marketing, the social marketer is forever playing a game of peripheral influence and disconnected project delivery. While it is not a bad thing to attempt to convince organisations on a project-by-project basis to apply a social marketing approach, this is a recipe for getting stuck in a reactive or ‘add on’ mode of operation. The probable impact of such an approach is that the potential of social marketing’s contribution to social policy and strategy delivery will be greatly diminished.

The case for applying strategic social marketing, as defined in this book, is not new, as others have called for such an approach and described it in terms of macro-social marketing (Domegan, 2008; Wymer, 2011; Kenny and Parsons, 2012) and upstream social marketing (Stead et al., 2007). In essence all these authors and many others make the case for applying a more strategic approach and moving beyond social marketing being viewed as a second order operational delivery component to being seen as a core part of all social policy and strategy.

A strategic social marketing approach is focused on both the selection of which social changes to address and shaping the nature of the social policy and subsequent strategy as well as making a contribution to the coordination and evaluation of operational delivery. Much of the social marketing literature and examples of practice currently lie at the ‘operational social marketing’ end of the spectrum, where social marketing programmes or campaigns are developed to address specific topics, such as condom use or water conservation. A strategic social marketing approach, in contrast, needs to be developed to look at ways in which a stronger citizen understanding and insight approach, aligned with more strategic audience segmentation work and whole systems planning, can inform issue selection, policy development and strategic planning. As Craig Lefebvre (2008: 12) suggested:

We need social marketers to be at the policy table when options are being discussed and presented, not just sat at the side-lines. There are glimmers visible of people in policy areas asking for social marketing viewpoints for policy analysis and creation stages. We need to ensure they know and understand the social marketing viewpoint – be part of the discussions. This is about having an upstream focus, not just advising for the policy status. Change needs to be part of the discussion.
A key challenge for social marketing then is to focus upstream to influence policy that in turn can impact on factors that affect people’s behaviour such as fiscal policy, food policy and transport policy.

Lazer (2013: 329–330) has stated in a recent reappraisal of his famous article ‘Marketing’s changing social relationships’ (1969) that:

Social marketing is more than a technology or a set of problem solving tools. It is more than the marketing of social programmes ... social marketing views marketing activities through social lenses just as previous marketing approaches utilized institutional, commodity and functional lenses. As the 1969 article noted marketing is indeed a key element in understanding and influencing lifestyles around the world.

A clarity of focus on what social issues to target at government and other social resources is key to the development and implementation of effective government and broader social policy. As Osborne and Gaebler (1992) have argued for many years one of the most important aspects of effective social policy delivery is a focus on selecting the right mission or, as they call it, ‘mission driven government’ rather than bureaucratic government. Social marketing has a role to play in ensuring not only that social programmes are effective and efficient but also that the right social challenges and intervention programmes are selected in the first place. The selection of those social challenges where there is both a good chance of success and a reasonable return on investment sits at the heart of the added value of what social marketing can bring to the social policy selection and development process. In essence strategic social marketing seeks to influence corporate level strategy that in the private sector would be focused on the question ‘What business should we be in and how do we manage it?’ When considering social programmes the question can be reframed as ‘What social issue is key and how do we tackle it?’

Andreasen (1995) first wrote about strategic social marketing and defined it as ‘A strategy is the broad approach that an organisation takes to achieve its objectives’. Andreasen lists ‘Six key stages that make up the strategic social marketing task’:

1. Listening.
2. Planning.
3. Structuring (establishing a marketing organisation, procedures, etc.).
4. Pre-testing.
5. Implementing.

Andreasen goes on to set these six tasks out in a continuous cycle of progressive reflection. He also states that there are two key features of the strategic process: first the process is continuous and second the ‘customers are central’. By customers Andreasen means citizens who are to be influenced in terms of their attitudes, knowledge or behaviour. In Andreasen’s view strategic social marketing is essentially a
planning process designed to ensure that effective programmes are developed. Andreasen does not consider the application of social marketing principles to the development of wider social issue selection and policy development; however, in later works he does stress the potential contribution of social marketing to these tasks (Andreasen, 2006).

The authors of this volume believe that the strategic social marketing process is not confined to ensuring that social marketing programmes and projects are systematically constructed with long- as well as short-term perspectives as advocated by Andreasen. The real added value of applying social marketing in a strategic as well as an operational way to the selection of social issues and the development of policy and strategy flows from the application of marketing principles in informing the development of an organisation’s overall mission and goals, reviewing its operating core and environment, and developing and selecting the right mix of interventions that may or may not involve direct marketing activity to bring about positive social development.

In this sense social marketing is not seen as a discreet, standalone activity that sits alongside other approaches to policy development and implementation. Rather strategic social marketing is concerned with making a contribution to all social policy development regardless of any direct marketing activity that may be associated within it. Conceived in this way strategic social marketing can be defined as:

The systemic, critical and reflexive application of social marketing principals to enhance social policy selection, objective setting, planning and operational delivery.

As can be inferred from the above definition, strategic social marketing is concerned with informing policy selection, development and strategic goal setting, selecting effective interventions, assisting with the process of determining how success will be measured and ensuring that the mix of interventions selected is managed and coordinated.

Social marketing also has a critical role to play in ensuring that understanding and insights about the beliefs, values and needs of target groups for any social intervention, such as citizens, community leaders, politicians and professionals, are captured, analysed and fed into the policy selection and development process. The added value of applying a social marketing approach to social policy selection and development is directly related to its:

- strategic and operational focus on creating social value for communities and individuals, based on respect and a willingness to engage in the co-creation and delivery of solutions
- focus on mutuality, exchange and reciprocity as positive social goods in their own right and as key enablers of social development and more effective and efficient social programme delivery
- a reflexive learning orientation that encompasses both logical positivism and social reflexivity and takes account of social, economic, cultural and environmental influences on the human condition and behaviour.
It is helpful to think about social marketing influencing policy, strategy, tactics and operational delivery levels of social programmes, as depicted in Figure 5.3. In order to facilitate consistency of language we use the phrase ‘strategic social marketing’ to encompass the added value that social marketing can bring to all of these levels of social programme design. We use the term ‘operational social marketing’ to cover tactics and operational project management issues only. The overlap in the area of tactical selection is influenced by both the need for constancy with policy and strategic decisions and consideration of operational issues such as the skills and competences of the staff delivering the tactics selected.

The first and most important level is the selection and articulation of the social challenge. Adding value at this policy level is about informing decisions about which social challenge is to be tackled, what needs to be achieved and how success in terms of influencing behaviour and its causes will be defined and measured.

The second strategic level is focused on analysing internal capability and external factors, alongside evidence, data and trends related to the social challenge. The outcome of this second strategic level is the development and final selection of the optimum mix of interventions that meet agreed selection criteria and together form a credible array of interventions capable of having measurable impact on the social challenge selected.

**Figure 5.3** Four levels of social marketing influence
The third level of strategy is the development and coordination of the selected tactical intervention mix. At this level the key tasks are to ensure that all those responsible for delivering and evaluating the mix of interventions agreed are clear about their responsibilities and contribution to the strategy and that they have the capability and capacity including all necessary resources to deliver their part of the strategy.

The fourth level is related to operational management issues associated with delivery and review. At this level the focus is on the effective management, implementation, risk management and coordination of specific interventions and tracking the interventions' impact in support of the overall mission, aims and goals of a programme. Social marketing can and should be applied at all of these four strategic levels.

**How social marketing adds value to social policy selection, development delivery and evaluation**

Figure 5.4 sets out the four key contributions that social marketing can make within the social policy selection, development and implementation process.

**Figure 5.4** The contribution of social marketing to social policy selection and strategy development and implementation
Figure 5.4 illustrates how social marketing can help the social policy development and the strategy selection process. The input of citizens’ views about what policy imperatives exist and how to prioritise among these is a process that most politicians use when developing their manifestoes. Social marketing can assist at this formulation stage but also with the refinement of political or other forms of public commitments into more developed working policy proposals. As indicated earlier in this chapter, one of the key weaknesses of many social policies is the lack of clear objectives and congruent behavioural evaluation targets. As illustrated in Figure 5.4, social marketing can assist with the collection and analysis of citizen understanding, views, needs and behaviour. Through this process social marketing can assist the development of achievable behavioural objectives using behavioural modelling and competition analysis based on theory, insight data, situational analysis, evidence and assessments of existing practice. Social marketing can help policy makers with the development of targeted intervention strategies consisting of the optimum mix of interventions. Social marketing also has a role to play in assisting with ongoing policy and strategy development through an impact evaluation and assessment of the return on social investment. Table 5.2 provides further examples about how social marketing can assist the social issue selection process and the policy and strategy development process.

All social marketing is centred on an approach to problem definition and solution generation that is built around understanding and creating value for citizens, rather than a process that is just dominated by expert narrative about what should be tackled

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<tr>
<th>Table 5.2</th>
<th>How social marketing assists social issue selection, policy and strategy development</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Setting clear, measurable policy objectives and targets.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Collection and analysis of citizen behaviour, and causes of behaviour, understanding views and needs about potential social behavioural challenges.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Situational and environmental analysis including, PESTLE (Political, Environmental, Social, Technological, Legal, Economic) and SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) and competition analysis.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Gathering citizens’ views on the evidence regarding the acceptability, costs and value of possible policy and potential tactics to influence behaviour.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Stakeholder, partnership and assets analysis and management.</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Informing programme design and highlighting potential intervention approaches based on theory and evidence reviews, user experience and feedback.</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Development, prototyping and pre-testing of services, products, campaigns and other interventions.</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Audience and stakeholder insight and segmentation development.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Understanding and formulating the most cost effective and acceptable mix of behavioural influence strategies and tactics.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Modelling and measuring impact, outcome costs and gains including ROI, VFM and cost-benefit analysis.</td>
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and how success should be delivered. A strategic approach also recognises that there are multiple 'types' and 'forms' of intervention that can be applied (see Chapters 3 and 4). Taking a strategic social marketing approach also recognises that action will be required to be directed at the causal conditions of social behaviours as well as the provision of direct support for individuals and families to assist them personally to adopt or sustain positive social behaviours.

A strategic approach to social marketing is built on the foundations of research, data, evidence and target group insight and environmental scanning, which includes competition, stakeholder and environmental analysis. A strategic approach to social marketing is informed by theory that includes both marketing theory and theory from other related and relevant fields focused on the human condition and behaviour, such as behavioural economics, sociology, psychology and anthropology. A strategic social marketing approach is fundamentally defined by its systematic, transparent analytic processes together with a pragmatic assessment of the political and social acceptability of potential social policy initiatives. At its core strategic social marketing seeks to influence social policy selection, development and programme delivery to reflect citizens’ wants, needs and values.

Social marketing can be used in this way to ensure that understanding about participants' behaviour and preferences directly informs the identification and selection of appropriate social issues, policy and interventions.

Any social policy seeking to influence citizen behaviour that does not have the broad support of the public and does not meet the needs of the target audiences is unlikely to be successful. There is a need then, if successful social programmes are to be developed, to engender a sense of ownership among the intended recipients. Delivering any social policy also needs the involvement of the widest possible coalition of interests if a sense of ownership is to be created and if all available expertise and resources are to be used to inform the development and delivery of the policy. Social marketing has a role to play in creating this sense of ownership and buy-in to social policies. Social marketing can also help politicians and public officials to test potential policies and refine them through a process of target audience engagement and consultation as well as through a process of market research. The use of focus groups, surveys, interviews, observational studies and other forms of gathering citizens' views can be a powerful tool for ensuring that policy and strategy are developed in such a way that they will be supported and taken up by those whom they are designed to help. However, such policy/strategy/intervention testing is still comparatively rare in many countries despite the obvious advantages to policy makers of testing and refining potential interventions using marketing research and marketing principles to engage and gather citizens' views. The application of this kind of citizen focused approach to the development and testing of policy and strategy will need to be use more often by governments and political parties to help them develop manifestoes and social programmes that carry popular support and are feasible.
Social marketing and the health policy development process in the United States

The dream of creating a national public health policy that both recognises and promotes social marketing in the United States began many years ago. It started in the 1980s when social marketing took on a central role in the design of two large community-based cardiovascular disease prevention programmes in Rhode Island and California. The work of the Pawtucket, RI Heart Health Program and the Stanford Five City Project was captured in one of the seminal social marketing and public health articles (Lefebvre and Flora, 1988). The authors established a key point – that social marketing provided a critical strategic planning framework for designing and implementing programmes aimed at achieving population-wide behaviour change (risk behaviour reduction).

During that same period, public health leaders began the process for creating national disease prevention and health promotion objectives for the next several decades, i.e. Healthy People 2000: Objectives for the Nation, where Crain Lefebvre participated as a reviewer of the initial set of objectives.

In essence, our objective was to encouraged public health policy makers to think ‘big change’, and not be satisfied with clinical encounters and small group programmes for behaviour change.

Over the following decade many local and state public health programmes embraced marketing and mass communications. Following on from this work the new Healthy People 2010 health strategy for the first time included a discussion and definition of social marketing: ‘The application of marketing principles and techniques to program development, implementation, and evaluation to promote healthy behaviours or reduce risky ones’ (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2010).

However, the application of social marketing continued to be developed and deployed in a disjointed way. The major reasons appeared to be the reluctance of the Healthy People policy team to explicitly or implicitly endorse a social marketing approach to disease prevention and promotion over other methods. However, during the course of the next decade, this reluctance eased as the practice and evidence base for social marketing continued to grow. That process set the stage for the development of a specific Healthy People 2020 objective to increase the use of social marketing in health promotion and disease prevention programmes.

A new openness towards establishing a specific strategic social marketing objective by policy makers led to a group of social marketers working to develop

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a consensus about what a formal social marketing objective or objectives might focus on in the new health strategy. Three major areas of agreement evolved: (1) objectives for using social marketing principles in federally funded public health programmes, (2) increasing access for current and future public health professionals to training opportunities in social marketing, and (3) promoting increased investments in applied prevention research and demonstration projects. The Healthy People policy work group and steering committee reviewed these objectives and encouraged further action to refine ideas. A revised set of objectives was developed and submitted for consideration:

- Increase the number of programmes that use evidence-based social marketing for health promotion and disease prevention.
- Increase undergraduate/graduate training in schools of public health.
- Increase continuing education for public health practitioners.
- Increase evidence-based research in prevention research centres and schools of public health, business and other related disciplines.

These objectives were made available for public comment. Robert J. Marshall and R. Craig Lefebvre orchestrated a concerted effort by social marketing advocates to promote these objectives among social marketers and others in the public health community. This work included extended personal outreach to officers in national public health organisations including the Association of State and Territorial Health Officers (ASTHO), the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD), the National Public Health Information Coalition (NPHIC), the Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) and others. These organisations, as well as many state health departments and individuals, submitted letters in support of the social marketing objectives. The comments included:

We must address the critical need for social marketing as a ‘gold standard’ approach to planning and executing health communications.

By adding an objective to HP2020 that specifically recognises social marketing, we will be able to spread the use of this paradigm and have a greater impact in improving the health of the public in the next decade.

We believe that social marketing, along with the many other programmes, disciplines and professions already included in HP2020, will play an essential role over the next decade to create a healthier population at every phase of the lifespan. Please help us assure that the practice, training opportunities and research basis of social marketing continue to be a valued component of our national strategy.
The ‘truth’ is that social marketing is a successful tool in developing healthy people. Much sadness will be in the neglect of using what we have already learned from social marketing programmes. Please do not allow this to be an opportunity missed, include social marketing in the 2020 objectives.

Now is the time to take the lessons and evidence-based experience of the last decade (and longer) to recognise the key role that social marketing can play in achieving a healthier population.

Increase social marketing in health promotion and disease prevention.

1. Increase the proportion of state health departments that report using social marketing in health promotion and disease prevention programmes.
2. Increase the proportion of schools of public health and accredited MPH programmes that offer one or more courses in social marketing.
3. Increase the proportion of schools of public health and accredited MPH programmes that offer workforce development activities in social marketing for public health practitioners.

A final challenge was raised before these objectives could be accepted for inclusion in the new Healthy People 2020 strategy; namely, how would progress towards these objectives be measured, and what are their baselines? This led us to confer with colleagues at NPHIC and the Florida Prevention Research Centre (PRC) at the University of South Florida about how we might design and sustain surveys that could provide baseline, mid-decade and end-of-decade data points for each of the sub-objectives. Until such data could be provided, the objectives would be considered ‘developmental’ and subject to periodic reviews to determine if they would remain in Healthy People (i.e. was progress being made on measuring them?).

Fortunately, both NPHIC and the PRC agreed to identify resources, opportunities and sampling plans to make the baseline assessments happen. Briefly, the surveys documented that eight of the 50 state health departments surveyed reported using social marketing in at least one or more of their disease prevention and health promotion programmes. In a separate survey, four out of 50 schools of public health reported offering a graduate-level social marketing course, and six others offered a combined health communication/social marketing course. Only two schools offered any postgraduate professional education opportunities in social marketing (Birosck et al., 2014).

With the availability of the new baseline data, the Federal Interagency Workgroup for National Health Objectives for 2020 reviewed and approved
(Continued)

proposed changes to objective a, which now reads: ‘Increase the number (“proportion” in the earlier version) of state health departments that report using social marketing in health promotion and disease prevention programmes’. The Workgroup also approved moving the objective from its previous ‘developmental’ status to a measurable one, and set the proposed target for 2020 to 50 (or all) state health departments.

Acknowledgements to Robert J. Marshall and R. Craig Lefebvre for this case study.

How social marketing can assist with policy coherence and integration

Social marketing is focused on creating social value and in so doing contributing to the development of social good. This can involve action to bring about behaviour change, but also action to influence social norms, change attitudes, change structural, systems and physical environments or the maintenance of positive behaviours/norms/structures.

It is vital that social policy that seeks to influence social good is developed and implemented in a way that encourages coordinated contributions from all relevant agencies, stakeholders and partners, as well as citizens (see Chapter 7 on systems thinking and social marketing). Most behavioural challenges facing governments will require the development of delivery coalitions with private sector organisations and NGOs and citizens to ensure that sufficient weight of effort and resources can be brought to bear on the issue over a sustained period of time. A multi-faceted approach, where a number of sections of government or departments together with stakeholders and partners develop a joint vision of what they want to achieve, has a much higher chance of success than single initiatives developed in silos (Perri 6, 1997).

It is always critical to ensure policy coherence as there are numerous examples of programmes across government which have contradictory aims and objectives. For example, health departments encouraging vegetable consumption while at the same time agricultural departments remove subsidies for growing them. There is rarely a single intervention or remedy that can fix complex clusters of behavioural patterns in society. As we have learned from our experience with tobacco, it requires a prolonged commitment of skills and resources in a multi-setting, multi-factor, multi-strategy approach to achieve success (Ministry of Health Planning, 2003).

The most successful interventions in reducing smoking rates have involved combinations of policies, including price increases, advertising restrictions, smoking site
restrictions, consumer education and smoking cessation therapies (Goodman and Anise, 2006).

All successful behavioural programmes utilise a combination of strategies across government/NGOs/stakeholder organisations to achieve change. Part of this approach is the development of stakeholder coalitions. It is ‘vital that any behaviour change programme should be developed in partnership with stakeholder organisations’ (NICE, 2007). Working with external stakeholders can provide:

- useful insight into consumer behaviours – for example, the development of the obesity social marketing strategy in the UK involved many retail organisations who contributed valuable insight into the behaviours of key groups of consumers/target groups
- strategic advice and support within the wider political environment – often stakeholders circumnavigate the hierarchical processes of government by their direct access to ministers
- organisations close to the target group acting as ‘main message givers’ – for example, UK tobacco campaigns fronted by charities to avoid the perception of ‘stop smoking’, and in the Netherlands a ‘Fat watch’ campaign run in partnership with supermarkets and other private sector allies brought favourable changes in the consumption of saturated fats.

We know that in any area of policy where there is a strong knowledge base, and broad consensus about what to do, a high degree of central policy specification can work, so long as it focuses on a few key priorities. However, where there is less knowledge about what works, management by setting out broad policy objectives is more likely to succeed, leaving more freedom for front-line managers and staff to develop and test new approaches (Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit, 2006).

We also know that involving practitioners in policy making and ensuring that their knowledge is used early in the policy development process will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of interventions. Both of these areas of policy understanding lend themselves to the application of social marketing with respect to setting agreed behavioural objectives and to engaging people and service delivery workers in the development of programmes of action. We also know that effective policy making results when horizontal networks are developed to assist in the capture and sharing of best practice (Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit, 2006). Effective policy making involves the following eight characteristics:

1. Policy should be designed around outcomes.
2. Policy should be informed by end user wants and needs.
3. Policy should be, and be seen to be, inclusive and fair.
4. Policy should be evidence based.
5. Policy should avoid laying unnecessary burdens on delivery agencies or other sectors.
6. Policy making should involve all the relevant stakeholders.
7. Policy making should be forward and outward looking.
8. Policy should have systems in place to learn from experience.
   (Adapted from Mulgan and Lee, 2001 and Bullock et al., 2001)

This core policy making process is essentially about understanding the problem, the context and the stakeholders who are affected by the issue and who might be part of the solution, and then going on to develop solutions based on a deep understanding of the evidence and experience that exist. On the basis of this knowledge the next phase of the policy making process is to formulate and test possible interventions and combinations against agreed criteria and risks. Next follows the selection of strategies and agreeing achievable objectives and how they will be measured. As discussed above, social marketing concepts and principles can be used strategically to ensure that a strong citizen focus informs the identification and selection of appropriate issues and interventions to address them. Social marketing can also assist with all eight of the effective policy making characteristics listed above.

Developing policy that can have an impact on many of the big behavioural challenges faced by governments also requires simultaneous short-, medium- and long-term strategic planning centred on at least eight levels of action, as indicated in the policy matrix in Table 5.3 (French, 2011).

### Table 5.3 Policy level and duration matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Short (1–2 years)</th>
<th>Medium (2–5 years)</th>
<th>Medium to Long (5–10 years)</th>
<th>Long (&gt;10 years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional, State or Province</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Region (IE EU)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Source: French, 2011*

This framework demonstrates the need to develop policy and strategy spanning different levels of intervention and over differing time-frames. In addition to developing and sustaining a consistent and coherent policy there is a need for the policy to be supported by congruent strategies, programmes and projects. This requirement sets out considerable challenges for national governments and even more challenges for international organisations. It requires the development of a long-term vision and the
tenacity to stick with it often over time-frames that span more than one political administration or ministerial term in office.

Given the nature of politics in democratic countries governments will change and policy directions will shift. However, to tackle complex social challenges, shift ingrained social norms and support behaviour change at a population level requires the development of a consensus about what the evidence and market research indicate is the correct strategy. This represents a challenge to politicians for it requires the building of as much cross-party consensus as possible. Such consensus is possible and has been achieved in areas such as energy supply and transportation and health protection involving long-term projects such as nuclear building programmes, but this is not an easy task. A broad consensus still allows for different political approaches to be developed and enacted at the level of strategy development and implementation. For example, the World Health Organization has done much to build a consensus about the policy for health while still leaving individual countries to develop their own interpretations of this broad policy. Social marketing can assist with this broad consensus development process about the best way to tackle large behavioural issues by helping to bring together the concerns and understanding from target audience insights, evidence about what works and is possible, stakeholder concerns and wider political imperatives.

Conclusion

Adopting a strategic social marketing approach results in the development of a strategic marketing plan to support a specific social programme that is being developed. In Chapter 12 the process of developing and delivering an operational social marketing plan is set out. Ideally operational planning should be commenced within the context of and preferably after the development of a strategic plan to tackle a specific social challenge. The process for developing a strategic social marketing plan is set out in Chapter 11.

In this chapter we have sought to define the nature of social marketing’s contribution to the policy strategy development process. Strategy can be thought of as both a set of processes to ensure that there is clarity of purpose within an organisation and the development of congruent intervention tactics. Strategy can also be conceived as a series of decisions that seek to ensure that organisations are prepared to address changing social and environmental circumstances. In the case of social issues, the development of a strategy is intended to ensure that future challenges and opportunities are predicted and plans put in place that are capable of minimising social harm and promoting maximum social wellbeing.

Social marketing has to date made a significant contribution to developing more effective and efficient social projects and interventions designed to influence behaviour across a wide range of topics and groups within societies all over the world. It
also has the potential to add to this success story by ensuring that marketing principles, concepts and techniques are applied to the selection and development of social policy and strategy. This chapter has sought to demonstrate that through its focus on data gathering and building programmes that reflect citizens’ needs, beliefs and attitudes, social marketing has a significant contribution to make to the social policy, strategy and delivery process.

Reflective questions

- Describe how strategy can be defined and its key features.
- Discuss the consequences for social programme selection and design of adopting a more strategic social marketing approach.
- List the main ways that social marketing can add value to policy selection, development, implementation and evaluation.
- What are some of the ways that social marketing can add value to policy and strategy making and delivery processes?

Further reading


References


Lefebvre, R.C. (2008) Interview for the National Social Marketing Centre, February 27.


