

Bristol Social Marketing Centre

Spotlight on Social Marketing #2: Benchmark Criteria for Social Marketing

As the first 'Spotlight' highlighted, the concept of social marketing has evolved over the decades, leading to some confusion about what now qualifies as social marketing. This is important as academics and practitioners need to define the field in order to focus research and share best practice. Many people claim to be 'doing' social marketing when in fact they are simply developing a communications campaign or perhaps even promoting a commercial brand, while others are creating interventions that are social marketing, despite being called something else.

The original 6 benchmark criteria

To this end, Andreasen (2002)ⁱ developed 6 benchmark criteria for social marketing, which are:

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| 1) Behaviour change | - the intervention seeks to change behaviour and has specific measurable behavioural objectives |
| 2) Consumer research | - formative research is conducted to identify consumer characteristics and needs. Interventions are pre-tested with the target group. |
| 3) Segmentation and targeting | - different segmentation variables are used and a strategy tailored to the segments. |
| 4) Marketing mix | - the intervention must consist of communications plus at least one other 'P'
N.B. these Ps may include Policy or People |
| 5) Exchange | - the intervention considers what will motivate people to engage voluntarily with the intervention and offers them something beneficial in return, whether that is intangible or tangible. |
| 6) Competition | - the intervention considers the appeal of competing behaviours (including the current behaviour) and uses strategies to decrease competition |

National Social Marketing Centre – 8 benchmark criteria

The UK's National Social Marketing Centre use 8 benchmark criteria for social marketing, using Andreasen's 6 criteria as a starting point and adding two more. 'Theory' reflects the significant body of tried and tested knowledge that now underpins social marketing, while 'Customer orientation' emphasises the importance of placing the consumer at the heart of any marketing approach.ⁱⁱ

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| 7) Theory | - using behavioural theories to understand human behaviour, and to build programmes around this understanding |
| 8) Customer orientation | - attaching importance to understanding where the customer is starting from, their knowledge, attitudes and beliefs, and the social context in which they work. |

BSMC's view

These criteria provided a useful checklist for academics and practitioners. Many so-called 'social marketing' strategies adopt this now fashionable name without using the theory, tools and principles developed over the last forty years, which threatens to undermine the effectiveness and reputation of social marketing. These 8 criteria are generally an excellent starting point for any social marketing intervention.

ⁱ Andreasen, A.R. (2002). Marketing Social Marketing in the Social Change Marketplace. *Journal of Public Policy Marketing*, 21(1): 3-13

ⁱⁱ National Social Marketing Centre (2010). Available at <http://thensmc.com/what-is-social-marketing.html?start=1>: accessed 10/10/2010.

