A hierarchical model of social marketing

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to set out a new hierarchical and differentiated model of social marketing principles, concepts and techniques that builds on, but supersedes, the existing lists of non-equivalent and undifferentiated benchmark criteria.

Design/methodology/approach – This is a conceptual paper that proposes a hierarchical model of social marketing principles, concepts and techniques.

Findings – This new delineation of the social marketing principle, its four core concepts and five techniques, represents a new way to conceptualize and recognize the different elements that constitute social marketing. This new model will help add to and further the development of the theoretical basis of social marketing, building on the definitional work led by the International Social Marketing Association (iSMA), Australian Association of Social Marketing (AASM) and European Social Marketing Association (ESMA).

Research limitations/implications – This proposed model offers a foundation for future research to expand upon. Further research is recommended to empirically test the proposed model.

Originality/value – This paper seeks to advance the theoretical base of social marketing by making a reasoned case for the need to differentiate between principles, concepts and techniques when seeking to describe social marketing.

Keywords Social marketing theory, Principles, Benchmark criteria, Concepts, Techniques, New conceptualization

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction

Social marketing is a dynamic and evolving field of theory, research and application. Like any modern multidisciplinary field of inquiry, social marketing is subject to a number of differing schools of thought (Wood, 2012) and dissent (Tapp and Spotswood, 2013). To date, there have been numerous attempts to define and codify the core components of social marketing theory and practice, work which is vital to the further development of the field. Without some level of agreement about its nature and focus, social marketing is in danger of being perceived as trying to be all things to all people or, alternatively, a field of limited scope that adds little to social policy or social intervention delivery.

If social marketing is to develop both theoretically and in terms of its practice, an ongoing dialog and analysis about its nature is required. This paper seeks to make a contribution to this dialogue with the aim of improving the understanding about the nature and contribution of social marketing to social policy and social policy interventions. In this paper, we also seek to use contemporary principles of marketing theory and practice to examine and differentiate existing social marketing benchmark criteria and set out a new hierarchical and differentiated model of social marketing principles, concepts and techniques that builds on, but supersedes, the existing lists of non-equivalent and undifferentiated benchmark criteria. However, it must be recognized that social marketing, like many other fields of study (Peters and Hirst, 1971), is what Gallie (1956) called an "Essentially Contested Concept". What Gallie means is that fields of study that contain concepts that are contested by various commentators and practitioners because they are rooted in fundamental ideological, moral and philosophical concepts, such as the nature of value and exchange, responsibility, mutuality and relationships, will by their nature never reach a point of total agreement about their nature and focus. This is true for most complex fields of study; what is important, however, is that such fields, including social marketing, need to engage in an ongoing debate about their focus if they are to develop over time. This debate can be negatively characterized as one that leads to introspection; however, we are more convinced by the arguments put forward by Gallie that such a process of challenge and debate is the means by which fields of study such as social marketing actually progress.

Benchmark criteria and the contribution of social marketing

Social marketing has developed rapidly over recent years as part of a wider movement in social policy circles that seeks to engage and influence citizens to act in socially responsible ways. Social marketing's role within a broader array of forms of intervention encompasses but is not limited to: behavioral economics, social psychology, community engagement, health promotion, social design and the application of digital media and social networks. It has been argued, however, by French and Gordon (2015) that social marketing is a different category of social intervention. Rather than being a single frame of reference it seeks, through a critical and systemic approach, to bring together all understanding, data and insights to assist in the development and implementation of effective, efficient and ethical social programs. In doing so, it seeks to respond to some of the criticisms that are directed at singular approaches to behavior change, such as the application of behavioral economics (House of Lords Science and Technology Committee, 2011).

To differentiate social marketing contributions to influencing citizens' behavior, a number of French and Blair-Stevens sets of benchmark criteria have been developed to date, including Andreasen (2002), French and Blair-Stevens (2005). These attempts have sought to codify the core elements of social marketing practice as a distinct approach to behavior change intended to bring about social good. In particular, these attempts have sought to distinguish social marketing from other forms of social intervention. While social marketing "criteria" developed to date have been well-received and globally applied, developments in marketing theory and practice over the past decade raise questions about the contemporary relevance of all the criteria identified (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Bagozzi, 1975).

Developments in marketing theory and practice also question the relative importance of each criterion, their completeness and the nature of the criteria themselves in terms of

their equivalence. The very term "criteria" which is commonly held to mean "A principle or standard by which something may be judged or decided ", Oxford Dictionaries[1], implies that all the criteria are equally important in deciding if an intervention can be described as social marketing. However, not all current criteria are seen by practitioners and academics to be of equal importance (iSMA, 2014)[2].

Since its inception there has been a debate about the nature and scope of social marketing (French, 2014). This debate has, to some extent, followed and reflected the debate within marketing about its nature and the contribution it makes to business activity and wider society (Shaw and Tamilia, 2001; Tadajewski, 2010). This debate is also an active one in the field of social marketing. Some advocates portray social marketing using the traditional marketing mix offered by McCarthy (1960), while others advocate for a different conception of social marketing that reflects more recent marketing theory focused on exchange, value co-creation and mutually beneficial relationships (Gordon, 2012; Domegan, 2008).

A key logical consideration when seeking to define the nature and scope of social marketing is to be mindful that the nature and scope must logically derive legitimacy from its foundations as a branch of marketing. Tautologically, this means that the core concepts of social marketing must reflect the core concepts of marketing.

Social marketing and marketing

If it is accepted that social marketing is a branch of marketing – albeit one of considerable and growing importance – by logical extension, social marketing must be based on the fundamental principles that define marketing. However, this association with marketing, unlike other sub-disciplines of marketing such as services marketing, seems to sit uneasily with some of the social marketing community (Wood, 2012). It is curious that some of the advocates of social marketing feel a sense of potential embarrassment or unease at being directly linked to marketing. Indeed, drawing a similar example from the field of psychology, the branches of psychology are defined as sharing a common goal of studying and explaining human behavior with the different branches focusing on different problems or concerns from a unique perspective[3]. As is the case with psychology, there are a multiple branches of marketing that share the common goal of understanding and managing markets from a customer and or citizen perspective with a principle focus on creating value, be it personal, social, environmental or economic, while marketing has other operational aims, such as promoting demand and anticipating needs, these are directed at supporting the central aim of creating some form of value. As one of the major branches of marketing and, as Andreasen (2012) has argued, possibly the future major branch of marketing, social marketing is concerned with the social marketplace and making a significant contribution to solving social challenges. Social marketing seeks to make this contribution through the application of marketing principles, methods and systems to influence not only the behavior of citizens but also the behavior of social service providers, policymakers, politicians and other stakeholders associated with particular social issues, including the for-profit sector, the not-for-profit sector and the media sector.

So, what are the core concepts of marketing, and how are these reflected in the new, globally endorsed definition of social marketing? The current American Marketing Association (AMA) definition of marketing is:

Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating,

delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large (AMA, 2007).

Inherent in this definition are the four concepts of offerings (goods, services and ideas), value creation, systematic processes and stakeholders. The definition of social marketing, endorsed by the European Social Marketing Association (ESMA), the Australian Association of Social Marketing (AASM) and the International Social Marketing Association (iSMA) is:

> Social Marketing seeks to develop and integrate marketing concepts with other approaches to influence behaviour that benefits individuals and communities for the greater Social good.

> Social Marketing practice is guided by ethical principles. It seeks to integrate research, best practice, theory, audience and partnership insight, to inform the delivery of competition sensitive and segmented social change programmes that are effective, efficient, equitable and sustainable (iSMA, 2013).

This definition explicitly accepts that marketing concepts (offerings, value creation, systematic processes and stakeholders) are central to social marketing and that they will be integrated with other approaches to delivering social progress.

It is possible to conclude from these two definitions that social marketing is based on and applies marketing concepts but is also not confined to using marketing concepts. Like marketing, social marketing is essentially a practical, applied field of study and research that, through a process of evidence collection, theory building and data analysis, seeks to bring together everything that is known about how to influence behavior for social good. It is not alone in this pursuit, as many other fields of applied social policy also adopt such an approach.

However, social marketing's real added value is the marketing lens that it brings to social challenges. This lens is defined by a focus on the creation of social value through a process of exchange and the provision of social offerings. These social offerings come in the form of ideas, understanding, systems, products, services, policies and environments that are valued by citizens and have a positive social impact though influencing behavior. It is the fundamental principle of using exchange to create social value that sits at the heart of our attempts to understand and define social marketing theory and practice.

Levels of social marketing
Social marketing has its origins in social advertising, when the need to use more than education and advertising to elicit behavior change was identified (Kotler and Zaltman, 1971). Social advertising focused on the individual to change their behaviors, and when social marketing emerged, this same focus remained on the individual. One of the legacies of this origin is the dominance of the downstream marketing approach, which focuses on the individual rather than the structural or environmental factors. The upstream approach in social marketing gained traction in the mid-2000s when Andreasen (2005) noted there were multiple levels of social marketing practice, with upstream and downstream levels at opposite ends of an intervention continuum, the midstream level being in the middle. Since then, discussion has become more pronounced about when each approach should/could be used with advocates forming for each level. In particular, there has been recent discussion surrounding the midstream

level, with scholars suggesting the need for social marketing interventions to include service strategies as a way of generating social change (Russell-Bennett *et al.*, 2013).

The original benchmark criteria of social marketing were largely written at a time when downstream approaches were more the norm, and this is reflected in the assumption that the criteria are downstream-focused. However, we would argue that the criteria can be equally applied at any level. For example, in the behavior change criteria, a social marketing intervention could target soft drink suppliers to change their products to be healthier) or policymakers could influence the supply of soft drink in government agencies, such as hospitals and schools, while also targeting individuals to change their choice behavior. In this paper, we include the application of the proposed codification at all three levels to illustrate this point.

Evaluating past social marketing criteria

To date, a number of attempts have been made to codify elements that make up social marketing practice or what have been called benchmark "criteria". While the literature related to the theory of social marketing is relatively thin (Spotswood *et al.*, 2012; French *et al.*, 2010), more recent text and papers have begun to add weight and depth to the exploration of the nature of the field (Wood, 2012).

The origins of codifying social marketing principles starts with Andreasen's (2002) delineation of six key principles of social marketing, followed by French and Blair-Stevens' (2005) description of eight social marketing benchmark criteria. These attempts to codify social marketing have been quoted extensively (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2005; Department of Health, 2008). They have also been used to inform national and international policy (Department of Health, 2011; USA Department of Health and Human Services, 2010; World Health Organisation, 2012), teaching curricular development (Russell-Bennett, 2012) and program design (Merthyr Tydfil Unitary Authority Area, 2011).

More recently, Robinson-Maynard *et al.* (2013) have built on French and Blair-Stevens' (2005) criteria, setting out what they call an "evaluation template grid" that lists 19 "benchmark criteria" that can be used to assess if an intervention can be classified as "social marketing".

These efforts to codify the core elements of social marketing were driven by a need to describe the focus and practice of social marketing and also to provide a checklist that could be used to help identify if an intervention or strategy could be classified as being a social marketing intervention. Recent work initiated by the iSMA with the support of the AASM and ESMA to develop a consensus definition of social marketing underpinned by an agreed set of principles (AASM, 2013), also demonstrates the desire on the part of practitioners and academics across the globe to bring some documented consensus to the field.

The task of codifying the key elements of what constitute social marketing is an important task for at least three reasons: first, there is confusion between social marketing and other forms of marketing, such as social media marketing (Wood, 2012); second, government agencies and not-for-profit organizations do not fully understand how social marketing relates to, contributes to and challenges other approaches to social policy delivery (French, 2011a); and third, there is a lack of clarity among some practitioners and policymakers about the differences between social marketing and its sub-interventions, such as social advertising (McAuley, 2014).

One of the central dilemmas when seeking to distinguish social marketing from other forms of social intervention is to decide how many and potentially what types of criteria are essential and which are desirable. There is also a need to be able to classify interventions as fully or partially applying a social marketing approach, so they can be included or excluded in reviews of evidence and practice. Finally, there are the twin practical needs to be able to construct education and training programs that give participants a comprehensive understanding of the nature of social marketing, and how to apply and evaluate its contribution to the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of social programs.

All of these reasons constitute a call for a more scholarly examination of the criteria that have, to date, been used to conceptualize the theory and practice of social marketing. This paper attempts to review and further develop our understanding about the nature of each of these criteria and how they relate to each other, and addresses issues of completeness and uniqueness of the core elements that constitute social marketing.

Codifying social marketing
Early descriptions of social marketing by authors such as Kotler and Zaltman (1971) and Smith (1998) simply described social marketing by direct reference to marketing theory and practice at the time. These early descriptors were based on the dated and waning view of the marketing mix as depicted by Borden (1964) and codified by McCarthy (1960). However, over the past 20 years, a more thorough examination and depiction of social marketing has emerged. In this section, we evaluate the three main past approaches to developing benchmark criteria: Andreasen (2002), The UK Centre for Social Marketing criteria developed by French and Blair-Stevens (2005) and revised by French in 2012, and Robinson-Maynard *et al.*'s contribution in 2013.

The first attempt to set out a clear set of distinct criteria for identifying social marketing was by Andreasen (2002). Andreasen described what he called "six benchmark criteria" that could be used to ascertain if an intervention could be described as being social marketing (Table I).

Andreasen (2002) asserted that social marketing was potentially unique because it places behavior change as the bottom line, is customer-driven and emphasizes creating attractive exchanges that encourage positive social behavior. These tenets, in turn, imply a central role for: consumer research, pretesting and monitoring; market segmentation; and strategies that seek to provide beneficial, popular and easy-to-implement exchanges to encourage behavior change. In the same paper, Andreasen (2002, p. 7) goes on to state:

> It is inevitable that many will have heavy doses of advertising – because this is one thing marketers do well – and more limited roles for other elements of the Marketing mix. However, campaigns that are purely communications campaigns are not Social Marketing. Indeed, it is when campaigns move beyond mere advertising that the power of the approach is manifested.

This is the view that continues to dominate much of the discourse about the nature and value of social marketing. According to this view, the key feature and added value of social marketing is that it is a more sophisticated approach to behavior change than just the use of social advertising and promotions – that it is more than just the "P" that stands for "Promotion" in the 4Ps model. This reflects of a view dominated by continuous references to the central role of the 4P-model in which a view of social marketing's value is to move planners away from just considering promotional campaigns to also think about product offerings, pricing strategies and issues related to place. The general

Criteria	Description
1. Behavior change	Behavior is the benchmark used to design and evaluate interventions rather than attitudes
2. Research	Projects consistently use audience research to: understand target audiences at the outset of interventions (i.e. formative research) routinely pre-test intervention elements before they are implemented monitor interventions as they are rolled out
3. Segmentation	There is careful segmentation of target audiences to ensure maximum efficiency and effectiveness in the use of scarce resources
4. Exchange	The central element of any influence strategy is creating attractive and motivational exchanges with target audiences
5. Marketing mix	The strategy attempts to use all 4Ps of the traditional marketing mix, e.g. it is not just advertising or communications. That is, it creates attractive benefit packages (products) while minimizing costs (price) wherever possible, making the exchange convenient and easy (place) and communicating powerful messages through media relevant to – and preferred by – target audiences (promotion)
6. Competition	Careful attention is paid to the competition faced by the desired behavior

Table I.
Andreasen's (2002)
six benchmark
criteria

premise of this view is, however, seen by many to be a very narrow casting of what marketing brings to understanding and solving social issues as it is entrenched in a conception of marketing rooted in the 1960s, as argued by Peattie and Peattie (2003).

One of the limitations of Andreasen's (2002) criteria is the lack of clarity surrounding which, if any, of the six criteria are mandatory for social marketing. Andreasen indicated that he felt some criteria were core (insight, exchange and behavioral focus) and by omission that some were less important, he states: "At this stage of the field's development, I do not argue that programs must have all six elements in strong measure to qualify for the label 'Social Marketing' (Andreasen, 2002, p. 7)". Unfortunately, Andreasen does not indicate which elements of social marketing he believed were essential.

Building on Andreasen's (2002) work, French and Blair-Stevens (2005), as part of a national review of social marketing for the UK Government (French and Mayo, 2006), developed an updated set of the criteria. They felt that the some of the descriptors of the Andreasen criteria were not precise enough, for example, changing the wording of "behavioral change" to "behavioral influence" was felt to be important as sometimes we want people to sustain behavior and not change it. After an extensive review of global social marketing practices, they concluded that two further criteria should be added. The first additional criterion of "theory" was included to reflect evidence (MRC, 2011; Darnton, 2008) that the use of theory in the examination, implementation and evaluation of social interventions increases the likelihood of effectiveness. The "theory" criteria was also included to reflect the need to acknowledge the vast amount of understanding derived from the social and natural sciences about what factors influence behavior (Michie, 2005).

The second additional criterion added was that of "customer orientation". This criterion was added to reflect modern conceptions of relationship marketing (Grönroos, 1994; Gummesson, 1987) and contributions from the service marketing field proposing

that perceived service value is central to satisfying customers' and citizens' needs, wants and desires (Lusch and Vargo, 2006). This criterion was also included to reflect the importance and efficacy of placing the citizen or consumer at the heart of social policy development and delivery (typically operationalized as public services) that had been observed in the review of international social marketing practice (French and Mayo, 2006).

In addition to the two new criteria, several alterations were made to Andreasen's (2002) original six criteria, including an expansion of the meaning of "marketing mix" – that is the 4Ps – to "methods mix", suggesting that interventions beyond product, price, place and promotions should be considered. This was important given the newly emerging alternatives to the 4P mix (Peattie and Peattie, 2003).

The final set of benchmark criteria posed by French and Blair-Stevens in 2006 is shown in Table II. This set of criteria has been continuously updated, with the most recent update in 2012 (French, 2012) to further clarify the details of each element and remove some of the original ambiguity in the wording, such as "customer in the round"

French and Blair-Stevens (2006) criteria	French (2012) update
1. *Customer orientation*: "Customer in the round" develops a robust understanding of the audience, based on good market and consumer research, combining data from different sources	*Citizen orientation*: Understanding of the audience, based on research, combining data from different sources and perspectives
2. *Behavior*: Has a clear focus on behavior, based on a strong behavioral analysis, with specific behavior goals	
3. *Theory*: Is behavioral theory-based and informed. Drawing from an integrated theory framework	*Theory*: Behavioral theory is used to assist the development implementation and evaluation of programs
4. *Insight*: Based on developing a deeper "insight" approach focusing on what "moves and motivates"	
5. *Exchange*: Incorporates an "exchange" analysis. Understanding what the person has to give to get the benefits proposed	*Exchange/value*: Incorporates an "exchange" analysis that provides understanding about costs and benefits associated with target behaviors and the development of possible interventions
6. *Competition*: Incorporates a "competition" analysis to understand what competes for the time and attention of the audience	*Competition*: Has two elements: competition analysis to understand what competes for the time and attention of the audience and "competition planning" to reduce the impact of these factors
7. *Segmentation*: Uses a developed segmentation approach (not just targeting). Avoids blanket approaches	*Segmentation*: Identifies groups who share similar views and behaviors and can be influenced in similar ways
8. *Methods mix*: Identifies an appropriate "mix of methods"	*Methods mix*: Brings together the most effective mix of interventions to influence the target behavior

Table II.
Comparison of two benchmark criteria approaches

and substituting the label of "citizen" rather than "customer", to better reflect the social rather than commercial focus of social marketing.

The most recent attempt to codify the key elements of social marketing was produced by Robinson-Maynard *et al.* (2013). These authors not only developed a set of 19 criteria to identify social marketing interventions but also assessed if they have incorporated approaches and strategies that have been shown to increase the probability of an intervention being successful.

The 19 "benchmark variables" identified are listed in Table III, with an indication of their match within previously identified criteria. Robinson-Maynard *et al.* (2013) add criteria related to systematic and transparent intervention design and evaluation, including the use of pretesting, piloting and continuous evaluation. In support of this approach, it has also been argued (French *et al.*, 2012) that one of the defining characteristics of social marketing is its rigorous, systematic and data-driven approach to intervention design, review and evaluation.

The list of 19 "benchmark variables" is helpful in its comprehensiveness, but in its comprehensiveness also sits its biggest weakness. By setting out all possible markers of effective social marketing interventions in an attempt to develop a comprehensive model, Robinson-Maynard *et al.* (2013) have inevitably included a majority of criteria that are clearly not unique to social marketing. For example, peer review and formative

Robinson-Maynard, Meaton and Lowry Criteria	Comparison with French and Blair-Stevens (2006)
1. Peer review	New criteria linked to the feature of systematic planning
2. Formative research	New criteria linked to the feature of systematic planning
3. Pilot testing	New criteria linked to the feature of systematic planning
4. Questionnaires/in-depth interviews	Element of insight criteria
5. Piloting	New criteria linked to the feature of systematic planning
6. Segmentation and targeting	Element of segmentation criteria
7. Further segmentation and targeting	Element of segmentation criteria
8. Upstream targeting	Element of segmentation criteria
9. Relationship building	New criteria linked to the feature of systematic project delivery
10. Clear benefits	Element of behavioral benchmark
11. Measurable benefits/stand up to scrutiny	Element of behavioral benchmark
12. Sustainability	New criteria linked to the feature of systematic project delivery
13. Marketing mix/extra "Ps"	Element of methods mix
14. Multimedia initiatives	Element of methods mix
15. Understanding the concept of the target audience's environment	Element of insight criteria
16. Marketers' systematic analysis of own results	No equivalent
17. Biases and flaws	Element of behavioral benchmark
18. Incentives	Element of methods mix
19. Disincentives	Element of methods mix

Table III.
Comparing
Robinson-Maynard
et al. (2006, 2012) and
French and Blair-
Stevens (2006)

research are used in many approaches to social action. In fact, all of the criteria cited can and often are used in other forms of social intervention. There is no attempt to set out what is unique about social marketing practice, and 19 criteria is a long list that would be difficult to operationalize. The criteria, like those of Andreasen (2002) and French and Blair-Stevens (2006), are also not differentiated into any form of hierarchy of importance.

These three descriptive sets of criteria attempt to distinguish social marketing from other forms of social intervention. However, on close scrutiny, the social marketing criteria developed to date contain a number of contradictions and ambiguities. Three key issues arise when assessing the existing criteria:

(1) *The issue of equivalence*: The current criteria do not appear to be of the same type; some are principles, others concepts, and other criteria are descriptions of processes or techniques.

(2) *The issue of relative importance*: The question here is, are some criteria more important than others in classifying or assessing if an intervention is social marketing?

(3) *The issue of essentiality*: A further question that needs to be addressed is, how many or which criteria need to be identifiable for an intervention to be classified as social marketing?

The issue of equivalence

In this section, we address the question "Are some concepts more important than others in classifying an intervention as social marketing?" The criteria that are included in existing lists are assumed to be equal in value, potentially mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive. In this section of the paper, we set out to examine the implications of this assumption and, in so doing, we derive some conclusions about a logical hierarchy among the elements that can be used to describe and classify social marketing.

To date, authors have indicated a hierarchy of importance in relation to the criteria that they set out, while not explicitly stating that a hierarchy exists. Both Andreasen (2002) and French and Blair-Stevens (2005) indicate, by the ordering of the criteria they identify and through their accompanying commentaries, that an order of importance exists. For Andreasen, the most important criteria are behavioral focus, research and segmentation, and for French and Blair-Stevens the most important criteria are customer orientation, behavioral focus and the application of behavioral theory.

One of the central problems that flows from current lists of criteria is that they have been developed for the twin purposes of describing social marketing in general and also as checklists that can be used to identify projects as being social marketing interventions. The desire on the part of authors to be inclusive has resulted in comprehensive but unstructured lists of disparate and not necessarily similar potential elements of social marketing. In this paper, however, we propose that there is a discernible hierarchy, but that it is a hierarchy of types of criteria rather than between criteria themselves.

Proposed three categories of criteria

We propose that social marketing criteria can be classified into three categories that have a hierarchical relationship. These categories of criteria are labeled as:

(1) principle;
(2) concepts; and
(3) techniques.

The core principle of social marketing, proposed in Table IV, is social value creation through marketplace exchange. This core principle, which is a unique feature of social marketing, is supported by four essential social marketing concepts. These concepts reflect the globally endorsed definition of social marketing and constitute essential elements in any social marketing intervention. The third category of criteria are techniques, these are a wide array of methods, models and tactics that are often used in social marketing but are not exclusive to it. Five such techniques are listed as examples rather than as a definitive list. The principle, concepts and techniques can be applied at any level of social marketing: upstream, downstream or midstream.

The social marketing principle
As stated above, we propose that what makes social marketing distinct from other forms of social intervention is its focus, derived from marketing, on "social value creation through the exchange of social offerings (ideas, products, service, experience, environments and systems)". Clearly, questions arise about the fundamental nature of value itself, such as who defines it, how is it measured, how is it created and how does exchange (itself a contested concept) support such value creation? A full exploration of these deeper marketing questions is beyond the scope of this paper, but we believe that such an exploration is needed to further develop both marketing and social marketing theory and practice. This core principle reflects the central feature of the consensus definition of social marketing developed by the iSMA, ESMA and AASM. The principle of value creation also sits at the heart of the AMA definition of marketing. What makes social marketing unique is the interplay between this core marketing principle and its four supportive, marketing-derived concepts. Social marketing is less dependent on a wider range of techniques, such as segmentation and user insight, as these are used by many other forms of social intervention, such as health promotion.

Four core social marketing concepts
We propose that there are four core concepts that flow from social marketing's marketing roots which support the core social marketing principle:

(1) social behavioral influence;
(2) citizen/customer/civic society-orientation focus;
(3) social offerings; and
(4) relationship building.

Five core social marketing techniques
The remaining criteria are, we argue, a cluster of techniques that are common features of social marketing practice but are also features of many other social program

	Criteria	Descriptor
1 The key social marketing principle	Social value creation through the exchange of social offerings (ideas, products, service, experience, environments, systems)	The aim and objectives of bringing about social value and improvement/and or the reduction of social problems through a reciprocal exchange of resources or assets at the individual, community, societal or global level. Social policy, strategy, understanding ideas, products, services and experiences are developed that will enable and assist citizens to derive social benefits individually and collectively
4 Core social marketing concepts	1. Social behavioral influence	Behavioral analysis is undertaken to gather details of what is influencing behavioral patterns and trends. Interventions are developed that seek to influence specific behaviors and clusters of related behaviors. Specific actionable and measurable behavioral objectives and indicators are established. A broad range of behavioral theory is used to analyze implement and evaluate interventions. These behaviors could be upstream, midstream or downstream
	2. Citizen/customer/civic society-orientation focus	Policy planning, delivery and evaluation are focused on building understanding and interventions around citizen beliefs, attitudes behaviors, needs and wants. A range of different research analyses, combining qualitative and quantitative data gathering, is used and synthesized to plan deliver and review interventions
	3. Social offerings (idea, product, service experience)	Target markets (citizens, policy-makers or stakeholders) are offered products, ideas, understanding, services, experiences, systems and environments that provide value and advantage. In most cases, such social offerings are positive in nature, for example, they provide protection or the promise of better health. However, these social offerings can also involve the imposition of restrictions on freedom such as speed limits on motorways that have collective support and benefit
	4. Relationship building	The establishment of collective responsibility and the collective right to wellbeing is developed through a process of engagement and exchange. Citizens, policymakers or stakeholders are engaged in the selection of priorities, and the development, design, implementation and evaluation of interventions

Table IV.
The social marketing principle and four core concepts of social marketing

interventions and policies. At this stage, we would like to point out that these core techniques can be applied upstream, midstream or downstream, depending on where the intervention is being focused.

The three categories of criteria are set out in Tables IV and V and summarized in Figure 1. This classification is designed to distinguish those elements that must be present for an intervention to be labeled as social marketing and those criteria which are supportive but nonessential.
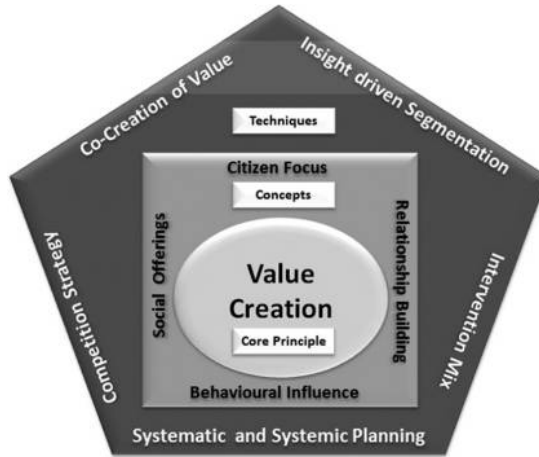
Core social marketing techniques
The final cluster of characteristics of effective and efficient social marketing is that of social marketing techniques. These techniques are not unique to social marketing as they are used in many other types of social and commercial programs and projects. The presence or absence of a particular social marketing technique is not critical in judging if an intervention can be described as being "social marketing", but they do indicate that an intervention has been well planned and based on sound analysis.

Previous social marketing benchmark criteria include a number of these techniques. Social marketing, like many other forms of social improvement approaches, applies in addition to its core principle and concepts a number of techniques that have been shown to increase the efficacy and efficiency of social program design and delivery.

Social marketing techniques	Description
Integrated intervention mix	Driven by target market insight data, segmentation analysis, competition analysis and feasibility analysis to develop an effective mix of "types" and "forms" of interventions that are selected and coordinated to produce an effective and efficient program to influence target group behaviors
Competition analysis and action	Internal (e.g. internal psychological factors, pleasure, desire, risk taking, genetics, addiction, etc.) and external competition is assessed (e.g. economic, social, cultural and environmental influences). Strategies are developed to reduce the impact of negative competition on the target behavior
Systematic planning and evaluation	Interventions use proven strategy and planning theory and models to construct robust intervention plans that include formative research pretesting, situational analysis, monitoring evaluation and the implementation of learning strategies
Insight-driven segmentation	The aim is to develop "actionable insights" and hypotheses about how to help citizens that are drawn from what target markets know, feel, believe and do and the environmental circumstances that influence them. Segmentation using demographic, observational data and psycho-graphic data is used to identify groups that are similar and can be influenced in common ways. Segmentation leads to the development of an interventions mix directly tailored to specific target market needs, values and circumstances
Co-creation through social markets	Citizens, stakeholders and other civic and commercial institutions are engaged in the selection, development, testing, delivery and evaluation of interventions. Strategies are developed to maximize the contribution of partner and stakeholder coalitions in achieving targeted behaviors

Table V.
Core social
marketing
techniques

Figure 1.
Model of three
categories of social
marketing criteria

We identify five core techniques that are commonly, but not universally, applied on all social marketing interventions. As argued previously, in this paper, principles, concepts and techniques associated with social marketing practice have not been adequately differentiated from each other. While social marketing techniques, such as the application of a full mix of interventions or the use of insight-driven segmentation, are powerful tools they can and are applied by social interventions that are clearly not social marketing. For example, designers and urban regeneration specialists often use these techniques to help them understand and design better social housing programs or community facilities. The identified five core social marketing techniques are set out in Table V. These particular core techniques have been selected due to their regular association and use in social marketing efforts because they have been demonstrated to increase the efficacy and efficiency of social interventions, and because they are often applied in for-profit and not-for-profit marketing programs.

The issues of relative importance and essentiality

The question "Are all criteria mandatory for an intervention to be classified as social marketing?" has been partly addressed by the setting out of a single essential criterion in the form of what has been described as the "social marketing principle" and the subsequent description of two other types of criteria that sit below this principle and are, in turn, hierarchical in relation to each other.

The relevant importance of different types of criteria has then been addressed. It is self-evident that there is an implied, logical hierarchy of importance between types of criteria. The principle of social marketing informs the concepts, which, in turn, inform the selection and application of congruent techniques.

Within clusters of concepts and techniques, there is no obvious or logical way of delineating an order of importance of criteria of similar types. We argue it is more important to distinguish and recognize the key hierarchical relationship between criteria of different kinds rather than the importance of hierarchies within clusters of similar criteria.

The third and final question, "How many criteria need to be identifiable for an intervention to be classified as social marketing?" will now be addressed.

We argue that the core principle of social marketing must be identifiable for an intervention to be classified as social marketing; however, its presence is not enough to classify an intervention as social marketing. For this to be the case, an intervention should also be able to demonstrate that the entire next category of concept criteria are being considered and applied. These four core concepts of social marketing indicate that planners and practitioners are applying best practice in marketing theory and practice and have accepted that the bottom line for social marketing success is an impact on observable behavior.

The presence or absence of what we have called "techniques" are not critical because they can and are applied in other forms of intervention. For example, a social project applying a community engagement approach might segment residences in an area, while a health education intervention might use competition analysis to determine the impact of suppliers of counter information. A further example is the application of systematic planning – most well-conceived social interventions seek to apply some form of rational planning and review, for example, in the field of health promotion models such as COMBI (World Health Organization, 2002) and PRECEDE-PROCEED (Green and Kreuter, 2005) are often utilized.

Putting it all together: a hierarchical model of social marketing

Figure 1 contains a proposed delineation of social marketing criteria showing three different categories of descriptive criteria that can be used to identify social marketing practice.

The model depicted in Figure 1 indicates that the central bedrock and defining feature that all social marketing should be able to demonstrate is the clear aim of bringing about social good through a process of exchange and value creation. The exchange may be positive in nature and tangible, such as a payment or some other form of incentive for using a product that, for example, produces less Co_2. Exchanges may also be negative, such as fines or exclusions for negative social behavior where individuals give up rights or in some cases elements of their freedom in exchange for safer and healthier communities, for example, by obeying speed limits while driving. The balancing of possible trade-offs between individually perceived benefits or losses and social benefits is one that requires interventions that are perceived by a majority of citizens to be fair and proportionate by both beneficiaries and those negatively affected. Exchanges may also be characterized as being rational, involving considered decisions or may alternatively be brought about through appeals to unconscious motivators, such as chance of reward or fear (French, 2011b). What all such social exchanges have in common is that they are driven by the aim of bringing about social and individual benefit rather than (or just) economic advantage, and are informed by consideration of ethical standards and have the broad popular support of citizens.

The core concepts that enable the successful creation of social value are focused on influencing social behavior. Influencing and being able to measure the impact on behavior is a key marker of social marketing practice. Social marketing pursues its goals of creating social value by influencing social behavior through the development, promotion and supply of social offerings in the form of ideas, tangible

products, services, experience, systems, policies and environments. To optimize the impact of these social offerings, social marketing interventions are based on citizen-centric planning and program building. Such an approach includes a commitment to building meaningful and sustained relationships with citizens and stakeholders who can help foster beneficial social relationships that result in sustained, positive social benefit.

So when is a program social marketing?

We contend that the features of the suggested hierarchy that are unique to social marketing are the principle and four concepts. The social marketing techniques are not exclusive to social marketing, for instance health promotion uses segmentation when developing interventions (e.g. global health organization PSI's malarial bed nets are segmented on the basis of ability to pay, usage, family life stage, etc.). Therefore, we pose that all social marketing programs, regardless of the level of intervention, must have:

- value through exchange;
- social behavioral influence goals;
- citizen/customer/civic society-orientation focus);
- social offering (idea, product, service experience, policy, etc.); and
- relationship building.

These criteria will vary in importance based on context, and thus should be used with caution. It is also possible that, for practitioners especially, these core components of social marketing will be matched in importance to some of the techniques associated with social marketing, such as systematic planning, but such techniques while important are not unique to social marketing and so cannot be used as core markers for it.

Conclusions

Up to this point in the development of social marketing's theoretical base, authors have been content to set out descriptors of activities and actions together with some concepts and principles of practice that have been observed to be associated with what practitioners and academics have called social marketing. Writers have described the features that they have observed and advocated as the basis of social marketing as "criteria". The word "criteria" itself indicates an undifferentiated approach to describing and categorizing what makes up the essential elements of what can be described as social marketing practice.

This essentially reflective, observational approach to analysis has helped to focus the debate about what social marketing is, but it has not assisted the field in more explicitly delineating the uniqueness of social marketing and its distinct contribution as a field of study and application. Previous attempts to set out social marketing criteria have not been analyzed in terms of their relative relationship with each other, their relative importance in terms of their ability to define social marketing, their nature (for example, are they principles or techniques) or their equivalence. This limited analysis represents a major weakness in current social marketing theory and has serious consequences for teaching, research and the practical application of social marketing.

This paper has sought to advance the theoretical base of social marketing by making a reasoned case for the need to differentiate between principles, concepts and techniques when seeking to describe social marketing.

What is clear from social marketing practice described in the literature and observed in the field is that few interventions labeled as "social marketing" meet all previously described "criteria". To do so is obviously a considerable challenge given the policy, management and marketing sophistication needed and the time and resources required. This means that many projects fall short of achieving all the criteria specified as being markers of social marketing practice and are often, as a consequence, screened out of reviews of practice and evidence of impact.

To set up the assumption that it is necessary to apply all the criteria described is, therefore, potentially setting people up to fail, given that many social interventions are not managed by social marketing experts with large budgets, plenty of time to research and test interventions and sustain them over time. Taken literally, it might be seen that it is very difficult for most people to apply social marketing if they cannot meet most of the criteria generally accepted to constitute good practice. However, what is equally clear is that if people only apply what has been called the "social marketing mind-set" (French and Blair-Stevens, 2005), this itself can add value to social program design, intervention and evaluation. This is the essential practical implication of this paper. We contend that the social marketing mind-set is encapsulated within the core social marketing principle set out in this paper, reflecting the core principle that underpins contemporary marketing theory, together with the four core concepts of social marketing that also reflect the internationally developed consensus statement on social marketing practice.

If we accept that the key added value of social marketing is derived from the application of the key principle and the four key concepts described in this paper and not necessarily all of the five techniques described and the many others that are often used by practitioners, social marketing becomes an approach that can be more readily applied, and consequently add value to and be more readily incorporated into more social programs and interventions.

We are not suggesting that the planning rigor associated with social marketing and the importance of competition analysis or the benefits of segmenting audiences are not important elements in social interventions. In some contexts, the rigor associated with a systematic approach to planning an intervention with an equally rigorous situational analysis will be the key to success or failure. However, the application of such an approach or technique is not a marker of social marketing, as a similar response would be promoted by advocates of many other forms of social program design and development. Rather, we argue that social marketing is not defined by these techniques; what defines social marketing is its central focus on social value creation using exchange, relationship building and the provision of social offerings to influence behavior that will result in positive social change. We also contend that to be classified as an intervention that is applying a social marketing approach, an intervention or program should be able to demonstrate that it is informed by the core social marketing principle and the four key concepts of social marketing described in this paper.

This new delineation of the social marketing principle and its four supporting concepts are illustrative, but not exhaustive; five techniques represent a new way to conceptualize and recognize the different elements that constitute social marketing. It is hoped that this new model will help add to and further the development of the theoretical basis of social marketing, building on the definitional work led by the

iSMA, AASM and ESMA. It is also hoped that the hierarchical model set out in this paper will also aid future research, teaching, planning and evaluation of social marketing interventions. We do, however, recognize the limitations of the analysis presented within this paper and recommend that further testing of this model is undertaken by interested organizations and individuals. In particular, we encourage others to examine the suggested model for its ability to describe and identify existing social marketing interventions, its utility as a teaching aid and its usefulness as a model for assisting planners and commissioners of services to set out clear specifications for work and develop appropriate responses.

Notes

1. www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/criterion

2. International survey conducted by iSMA, ESMA and AASM 2013 of members in preparation for the development of the global consensus definition of social marketing. Survey results available from Jeff.French@strategic-social-markeing.org

3. http://psychology.about.com/od/branchesofpsycholog1/tp/branches-of-psychology.htm

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