



Introduction to Social Marketing

The Five P's

The marketing concepts employed in information campaigns based upon the social marketing approach are numerous. The “5Ps” are perhaps the best known among these. The purpose of the 5Ps is to develop a message strategy that offers consumers the optimal “marketing mix” of *product*, *price*, *place*, *promotion*, and *positioning*. When applied to social marketing, these concepts can be conceived of as follows:

Product: the behavior or health idea that the campaign planners would like the targeted individuals (a.k.a., “consumers”) to adopt. The product can be an action (e.g., performing breast self-examinations regularly) or material item (e.g., fat-free dairy products).

Price: the costs associated with “buying” the product. Costs can involve sacrifices related to psychological well being (e.g., increased anxiety), sociality (e.g., possibility of ostracism), economics (e.g., financial sacrifice), or time (e.g., inconvenience).

Place: the distribution channels used to make the product available to target audiences. When the product is a physical item, it must be easily obtainable by consumers. When it is an idea, it must be “socially available” – supported within the consumer’s social sphere. The target audience must be informed of where, when, and how it can obtain the social marketing product(s). An important placement issue is the competition for finite space in the marketplace for food products, healthy and otherwise.

Promotion: the efforts taken to ensure that the target audience is aware of the campaign. These publicity efforts should be designed to cultivate positive attitudes and intentions regarding the product that pave the way for behavior change.

Positioning: the product must be positioned in such a way as to maximize benefits and minimize costs. “Positioning” is a psychological construct that involves the location of the product relative to other products and activities with which it competes. For instance, physical activity could be repositioned as a form of relaxation, not exercise. Serving low-fat meals to one’s family could be positioned as an act of love.

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