

CHAPTER 1

Definitions, Strategies, and Background Information

WHAT ARE PUBLIC COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGNS?

Public communication campaigns are found everywhere and it is nearly impossible to elude them in our modern-day environment of traditional communication and social media. By and large, a **campaign** is a comprehensive and organized attempt at shaping the behavior, attitude, or decision-making status within a community of people. It is a strategic course of action carried out during a specific time limit and for a precise outcome.¹ A **public communication campaign** consists of a set of coordinated messages or other communicative efforts aimed at accomplishing predetermined goals and objectives: to sway a high number of people's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors.² Atkin (1981)³ defines "public communication campaign" as a method that uses "promotional messages in the public interest disseminated through mass media channels to target audiences." Public communication campaigns tend to be waged by state or nonstate actors who seek to inform or affect behaviors in large audiences through an organized set of communication processes. They are designed with two phases in mind. The first phase generates awareness about a certain topic. Thus, a campaign has a purpose; the desired outcomes can be diverse—ranging from individual-level cognitive impacts to social or systemic change. The second phase uses that awareness to instill behavior change and shape the thoughts or actions of the audience; it is typically aimed at a large audience. "Large" is an important concept here because it helps differentiate campaigns from interpersonal persuasive endeavors by one—or a few—person that seek to influence a handful of others.⁴

A Method of Reform and Governance

The element of reform is inherent in all public communications campaigns. **Reform** refers to action that improves society or the lives of individuals. In the eyes of campaign designers, change within the audience's behavior will make life better. "**Better**" is aligned with emerging values in society during each historical era.⁵ "Better" implies that one group intends to influence other groups' beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors on the basis of communicated appeals.⁶ Campaigns should also be viewed as a governance strategy. **Governance** is "conduct of conduct." It motivates a group of people to govern themselves in a novel manner. Since requests for behavior change are usually not mandatory in modern societies, public communication campaigns need to employ the cleverest appeals to self-governance. This kind of strategy, "turning us into decent people," can have moral and normative effects on a whole class of citizens.⁷ Overall, the concept of governance illustrates how public communication campaigns are prosocial in their efforts to influence behavior towards desirable social outcomes. The consequences of those behaviors may be that individuals, families, and communities are healthier, or that particular policy results bring about better outcomes for those individuals, families, and communities.⁸

Public Communication Campaigns vs. Advertising

Most public communication campaigns are not made to attain financial outcomes, even in commercial organizations. Rather, such campaigns are undertaken to raise awareness (i.e., of an issue, policy, or law), to transform attitudes, and/or to improve reputation. Almost half of public communication across the globe is undertaken by public-sector and non-profit corporations that do not have financial interests.⁹ As Atkin and Rice (2012)¹⁰ put it, public communication campaigns contain "an array of mediated messages in multiple channels generally to produce noncommercial benefits to individuals and society." The objectives and processes inherent in commercial advertising are not appropriate for public communication campaigns. The fundamental differences between advertising and public communication lie in the kind and quality of issues, the procedures involved in promotion and, evidently, in the type of audiences. In general, advertising by itself does not cause fundamental changes in behavior. It does not produce substantial effects on potential consumers, as some critics might believe. Nevertheless, incremental changes in market share for a specific product that are achieved as a result of advertising may lead to significantly higher sales and profits.¹¹

Two Main Types of Public Communication Campaigns

There are two main types of public communication campaigns: (1) Individual behavior-change campaigns and (2) public will campaigns. **Individual behavior-change campaigns** attempt to change individual behaviors that create problems in society or promote behaviors that better individual or social well-being. Also known as **public information campaigns** or **public education campaigns**, they shape beliefs and information about a behavior and its impact. They influence attitudes in favor of behavior that will be perceived positively among one's peers. In other words, they create social norms about the acceptability of a desired behavior (and the intentions to perform it). They are more likely to induce behavior change if complemented by supportive program elements. Effective campaigns of

this type target behaviors such as smoking, using drugs, recycling, driving responsibly, using the seat belt, and preventing fire and crime. Many are found within the public health arena. This type of campaign has also evolved into other sectors like education, criminal justice, and early childhood.¹²

Public will campaigns serve to muster public action for policy action and change. Although less understood, they are growing in numbers. As long as they spread visibility of a social issue and its magnitude, they can shape perceptions of such issues—and identify who is responsible—and criteria that the audience needs to judge policies and policymakers. Hence, they impart knowledge about solutions (based on who is portrayed as responsible) and help determine what can be done for service introduction and public support. They engage and galvanize interested individuals into action. A public will campaign focuses less on the person who takes harmful actions (e.g., smoking, polluting, or doing drugs), and more on the public's duty to make decisions that will foster an environment conducive to behavior change.¹³

A public will campaign searches for the various factors that are hurting communities and builds on current efforts or develops new ones to heal those communities. By definition, **public will** is a manifestation of how the community feels and acts. For instance, public will on problems that concern children and families may constitute a shared sense of community-based ownership of the welfare and comfort of children and families, as well as a collective commitment to make the indispensable changes to improve it. Public will has more commonalities with public engagement than with education and awareness. This is why it is also called a **public engagement campaign**.¹⁴ Public will entails more than public opinion or awareness. It entails the inclination to act in favor of how an individual feels about an issue. Effective communications campaigns want to be clear as to what actions people should take. As such, the actions should strengthen policy agendas and enable people to carry them out in their own backyards. Certainly, it is not unusual for campaigns to include both individual change and public will components within the same project.¹⁵

COMMUNICATION

Communication is the fundamental pillar of our society. John Dewey (1916)¹⁶ famously said that “society exists... in communication.” Williams (1976)¹⁷ agreed with Dewey when he stated that “society is a form of communication.” Human communication is an exceedingly more multifaceted, ambiguous, and variable process than many of us would admit. We are well aware that communication is a practice that all humans do, to varying degrees, from the cradle to the grave. However, to presuppose that attempts at communicating are automatically, or even frequently, effective is to disregard the conflicts, divorces, breakdowns of relationships, family feuds, miscommunications, and other disturbances that take place on a daily basis in human society.¹⁸

Definitions

Communication is the “process of exchanging information, imparting ideas and making oneself understood by others and understanding others in return.”¹⁹ It is the process of conveying a message from a sender to a receiver. The study of communication in Western civilization dates back to roughly 2,500 years and ostensibly originated in Ancient Greece with Aristotle's *Rhetoric and Poetics*.²⁰ He, too, thought that communication was an exchange of

meanings represented by signs. The term “communicate” stems from the Latin *communi-care* (“to make common”). Communication is an act that makes something common; it reflects the need to participate in shared or common action. What makes human communication exceptional among all species, and most likely not transferable to other species, is that it can take place through multiple media of transmission.²¹

Contemporary communication comprises both mass communication and networked communication. **Mass communication** diffuses information from a major source via consolidated media, like TV, newspapers, and radio. This category of mass-mediated exchange is regulated by big corporations, some of which are government-owned; it also disseminates information through mainstream vehicles of distribution.²² **Networked communication**, on the other hand, sends information from a wide array of sources, including nontraditional ones (e.g., average citizens on the street) and, as such, reflects many different views. It can happen through a mixture of formats, such as email, teleconferencing, and social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook.²³ By the same token, a **network effect** develops when individuals or groups are more willing to use a particular medium of communication if other people have done it successfully (and are fully associated with that medium).²⁴ If truth be told, Devji (2005)²⁵ calls this network effect the **global media effect**, because no single actor will have total control over the effects of other individuals or actions.

Communication as a Mediator of Social Change

Since communication is the sharing and diffusion of information, it is also the enabler of the initiation of any contact and relationship within communities. From this perspective, communication is a mediator of social change because it must be theorized in terms of various parties involved in producing meanings, by way of dialogue.²⁶ Change is a communicative challenge and appropriate communication approaches can abate the resistance to change. Since change is a communicative challenge, serious consideration needs to be paid whenever a change “project” is to be undertaken. Communication procedures are components of change implementation itself.²⁷ Information technologies, media organizations, and effective media coverage contribute to the creation and preservation of such social change. Accordingly, communication plays a vital role on the social map.²⁸ It allows the obtaining of new knowledge (as well as the reusing of old knowledge) for audiences and the persuasive appeals, based on that knowledge, to change their beliefs, attitudes, and/or behaviors.²⁹

Community-Based and Interpersonal Communication

It is clear, by now, that public communication campaigns are (1) an organized communication enterprise, (2) directed at large audiences during a specific period of time, (3) designed to achieve definite goals and objectives, and (4) and ultimately attempting to create change. Such campaigns rely on the media, messaging, and a variety of communication activities to produce desired outcomes.³⁰ To amplify their likelihoods of success, public communication campaigns often combine media efforts with a *mélange* of community-based and interpersonal communication means.³¹ Examples of community-based channels include, but are not limited to, TV, radio, newspapers, billboards, email, and social media. Examples of interpersonal channels include, but are not limited to, face-to-face gatherings, home visits, and workshops. Printed materials, such as brochures and pamphlets, are sometimes considered mass media or can also be incorporated in interpersonal contexts.³²

Public communication campaigns have become more sophisticated and strategic. Messages are crafted on the basis of both form and content, and care is taken as to what appropriate communication channels and media should be selected. By combining media efforts with a *mélange* of communication channels, campaign designers can expand the reach and frequency of the messages and increase the probability that they will successfully lead to change.³³ Campaigns will differ based on the types of communication activities used, including posters, handouts, public service announcements (PSAs), discussion forums, workplace meetings, in-school exhibitions, and even clinic-based counseling. Campaigns that include at least one category of media to diffuse their messages are termed **mediated campaigns**.³⁴

Messaging

Messaging is essential to the success of public communication campaigns. **Messaging** refers to a system or practice of sending messages, through community-based or interpersonal communication channels. A **message** is a statement of a certain scope that tends to contain only one central idea and relates to the objectives stipulated by a specific communication intervention.³⁵ Messaging entails more than using words or phrases that sound appealing and instill a feeling of persuasiveness. In fact, when messaging includes suitable means and words (like facts), it is more likely to educate individuals or communities *per se*. Campaigns transmit one or a mix of categories of knowledge—namely, impact, procedural, and normative knowledge.³⁶ **Impact knowledge** is general information about a topic with the inclusion of facts and figures.³⁷ When campaigns want to prompt action, **procedural knowledge** is used. It is knowledge of how to do something. The goal of employing procedural knowledge is to keenly engage the audience.³⁸ **Normative knowledge** focuses on the norms of audiences, at a larger level.³⁹

THE “PUBLIC” ASPECT OF CAMPAIGNS

The supreme goal of public communication campaigns is to influence the public so as to change its behavior or attitude. Therefore, it is important to define the “public” aspect of campaigns. **Public** refers to the overall entity of humankind, or of a country or community. It is the people, indefinitely. Put simply, the public is a particular body or aggregation of individuals.⁴⁰ The origins of the word “public” lie in *poplicus* (“of the people”), which evolved into *publicus*, seemingly under the effect of its restriction to *pubes* (“adult men”). The evolution of the term reflects a general notion of open access and, more specifically, interpretations of who can have membership in the public.⁴¹ The concept of public also stems from Greek and Roman understandings of the rightful members of polities. In many Greek city-states, **polity** was a gathering of citizens who took part in the political process. Suffrage excluded women, slaves, serfs, and foreigners. The polity included only a minority of the adult men.⁴²

A distinction should be drawn between public and publics. Coca-Cola, for instance, addresses its communication campaign to the general public because the company sells highly popular products for all. On the other hand, **publics** refers to particular audiences who are the intended target of a message (a distinction from the general public). They are based on more precise audience characteristics. For example, the American Diabetes Association tends to target individuals who have contracted that illness.⁴³ Coca-Cola’s

deliberate attempt to manipulate the public's perception of its products is called **publicity**. The subjects of publicity are people (e.g., youths or performing artists), products and services, all types of organizations, and works of art or entertainment—to name a few. A **publicist** is an expert whose task is to create and manage publicity for a product, public figure (like a celebrity), or a work such as a book or film. Publicists are often employed by large corporations that handle multiple clients.⁴⁴

Public Communication

The study of **public communication** relates to the production and management of messages in public settings. It is the practice of delivering a message (or a piece of information) from which audiences can learn. Its purpose is to inform and persuade, develop relationships and connections, and cultivate networks. Public communication allows people to remain in touch with everything that happens in their environment. It is essential to be open to communicate and exchange information.⁴⁵ Public communication is more inclusive than mass communication in the sense that it is concerned with all channels employed for direct and mediated communication, and it is directed as a wide collection of audiences with various interests and views (instead of one “imagined” mass audience).⁴⁶ At the same time, public communication also includes more than media campaigns, especially traditional media. Online media like popular websites (often known as **information hubs**), telephone hotlines for support (e.g., smoking “quit lines”), and social networking sites are part of public communication. Public communication practitioners do, nonetheless, acknowledge the advantages of using direct audience engagement approaches—like meetings, events, and cooperative community-based projects.⁴⁷

At a macro level, public communication needs to be viewed as the constant communicative interaction between organizations and their many audiences—and vice versa. Today, public communication occurs around the clock, not only within the semicontrolled boundaries of campaigns. It happens every time an official delivers a speech, every time a user posts a tweet or comment on Facebook, and every time a photo is uploaded on Instagram, or Pinterest. Even simple individuals use public communication on a regular basis. Examples include independent media reporters, people who file public complaints, protesters, petitioners, social media commentators, and various other individuals who express the “will of the people.” Still, entities such as organizations and institutions are tasked with monitoring and assessing what others say.⁴⁸

Public Sphere

As opposed to interpersonal communication between two people (dyads) and within small clusters, public communication entails communication activities that occur in the public sphere⁴⁹ rather than the private sphere⁵⁰—albeit the demarcation between private and public can be blurred in modern-day societies.⁵¹ The **public sphere** is the aspect of life in which a person interacts with others in society.⁵² When discussing the public sphere, the role of public place is something to behold. **Public space** is a place open to anyone without exclusion, even if this may not necessarily be the case in the real world. One of the earliest examples of public spaces are **commons**. In the case of commons, no permission or registration is mandatory for entry; nor are people discriminated based on who they are.⁵³

Those at whom public communication campaigns are aimed are commonly referred to as people in a public sphere or public place. With this said, not all individuals and groups have a vested interest in a public communication campaign or the entity that organizes it. Nor are they directly affected by the activities of that entity. Those who are, however, can be attentive citizens, customers, partners, affiliates, employees, and even entire communities. They are also referred to as **stakeholders** because they have an investment (i.e., moral or financial) in the entity.⁵⁴ When people influenced by a campaign interact and influence each other in the public sphere as a result of that campaign, they form rhetorical strands. **Rhetorical strands** are rhetorical dimensions that form among individuals as a consequence of public communication. Such strands emerge in the public sphere and expand as people interact in their homes, workplaces, and locations where they spend a significant portion of their time. The public sphere of communication campaigns can be a neighborhood, town, or any public place that a number of individuals share in common or visit frequently.⁵⁵

SEGMENTED COMMUNICATION

When campaign designers locate specific (often at-risk) segments of the entire population (rather than attempting to reach the broad public), they tailor their communication based on the type of audience, a phenomenon called **segmented communication**.⁵⁶ Segmented communication comes from **segmented marketing**, whereby advertisers focus on the lifestyle approach. They strive to reach markets through finely targeted, personalized marketing campaigns that focus on demographics, attitudes, values, interests, and community activities. By extension, **lifestyle marketing** involves creating a resemblance or emotional attraction to a certain product or service by associating it with the favorite lifestyles of potential consumers.⁵⁷ There are two main benefits of subdividing the audience based on demographic characteristics, tendencies, personality traits, and social contexts. First, message efficiency can be enhanced if subsets of the audience are prioritized in accordance with their centrality in achieving the campaign's objectives as well as the likelihood to being influenced. Second, effectiveness can be enhanced if message content, genre, style, and routes are adapted to the characteristics and abilities of subgroups.⁵⁸

Personal Messaging

The era of mass mailings is long past. Instead, citizens are now getting personally customized messages according to age, gender, and/or background history. These personalized messages help them take action and are sent via the internet, over the phone, and by snail mail. Communication campaigns select and define their intended targets in very much the same way. They can divide the potential audience into segments based on characteristics of social diversity—like age, income, gender, and education. Even a single segment of the campaign typified by one demographic variable may consist of several subgroups. For example, the target audience of a mammography campaign for older women will include various female groups based on race, income, education, age, family history, sexual orientation, and beliefs.⁵⁹ An effective approach for improving the impact of communication strategies is **tailoring**, whereby messages are designed in relation to the audience's knowledge, beliefs,

circumstances, and past experiences on certain issues.⁶⁰ Tailoring often involves computer-assisted personalization of letters, brochures, websites, or smartphone apps, and gives audiences feedback and personal advice at a reasonable price.⁶¹

Information about audiences can be acquired through current national or local data or by performing formative research. These processes consist of data collection on a population's sociodemographic characteristics (e.g., age, education, gender, employment, race, marital status, sexual orientation), behavior predictors or backgrounds (e.g., audience beliefs, values, skills, attitudes), and existing behaviors. For instance, a nutrition campaign designed for Hispanics and non-Hispanic Whites from the Southwestern United States may further segment their targeting according to age, but organize the age groupings differently for the two ethnic populations—e.g., according to lifestyle differences. Single White youths not living with their parents can become a new segment for which particular nutrition messages are created. Conversely, young Hispanics, usually more likely to live with their parents, may be sent nutrition messages similar to the ones created for their parents. In this event, it would be wiser to segment communication based on variables like lifestyles, social values, or language when crafting a culturally-specific campaign.⁶²

Focal Segments

A successful campaign design details focal segments of the audience whose habits are at issue and the main focal behaviors are what the campaign wants to influence. Most campaigns direct their messages at the **focal segments**, which are subgroups who benefit more from the campaign because they were targeted based on their at-risk situations or their need of assistance or improvement.⁶³ Within focal segments, there exist demographic, social, and psychologically-based subpopulations. Examples include higher- versus lower-income strata, high- versus low-sensation seekers, those undergoing psychological or social challenges in performing certain behaviors, and individuals of different cultures. One central audience segment includes those who have displayed the unwanted behavior and whose background characteristics indicate they are at risk in the short term; they tend to be more receptive to persuasive messages. In fact, campaigns normally yield the biggest impact when triggering or strengthening messages intended for those who are favorably predisposed. Another central audience segment consists of people who have yet to try the unwanted behavior but who, unfortunately, remain at risk in the short term.⁶⁴

A judicious communication campaign acknowledges the importance of heterogeneity in its audience. All members of the audience do not have the same status *vis-à-vis* a behavior. For an antismoking campaign aimed at youths, the latter may be heavy smokers, casual smokers, recent quitters, and individuals who have never smoked but are curious about it. On the other hand, there are those who have never smoked and, irrespective of a campaign, are highly unlikely to become smokers. Each of these categories of the youth population may be subject of different interventions. The audience can be further subdivided based on existing behavior and the behavior objective that campaign designers might elaborate for each group. However, even for each of these behavioral subpopulations, there is additional heterogeneity. Even if a single message (e.g., smoking causes bad health) might influence all of these groups in similar ways, much past research on such campaign models suggests otherwise. Rather, it is important to assume that, if heterogeneity exists in the roots of audience behaviors and in what triggers behavior change, then there is a requirement for heterogeneity in message designs too. This is segmented communication.⁶⁵

Experiential Identity

Experiential identity constitutes the characteristics of a person with respect to his or her culture of origin, language, age, and gender, along with life experiences and cultural practices. Therefore, an individual whose mother and father were raised in different cultural and linguistic groups may, in turn, have been raised in a multicultural city, lived in a rural location during college, and started to work in another city with a different cultural mix from the place of origin. All of these events, including the discovering of a new profession, contribute to the person's experiential identity. Experiential identity may be relevant when determining individual response to behavior change approaches. The individual is at the crossroads between multiple life experiences that are also shared by others. Many people are affected by intersecting strands of social and cultural routes. The strands, individual or group-based, rather than the individuals themselves, lay the groundwork for public communication efforts that transcend the individual level. Frequent grouping variables—like the ones mentioned previously (i.e., age, occupation, and gender)—suggest a higher likelihood of shared experiences among people, but the markers mostly direct attention. They do not represent the point of interest in and of themselves.⁶⁶

DIFFUSION OF INNOVATIONS (DOI): AN INTRODUCTION

Created by Everett Rogers, **Diffusion of Innovations (DoI)** is a theory that describes how innovations (i.e., ideas, movements, or inventions) are diffused via selected channels over time across communities and cultures. DoI presents the notion of relative advantage and trialability of desired behaviors. It also introduces the procedure for personal adoption decision and opinion leadership that influences diffusion through interpersonal channels and social networks (i.e., via multistep flows).⁶⁷ When a public communication campaign seeks to encourage behavior change, the principles of DoI can clearly inform campaign design and analysis. DoI emphasizes the importance of local players and opinion leaders as points of reference in their communities.⁶⁸ This means that campaigns should first try to persuade those members of a target audience who exert the highest influence. Public communication campaigns are also an example of planned, rather than spontaneous, diffusion. **Planned diffusion** refers to active interventions that seek to change behavior by disseminating programs to targeted populations. **Spontaneous diffusion**, on the other hand, occurs when the proliferation of messages within a specific population is not planned.⁶⁹

Five Steps of Diffusion

During the diffusion process, people accept innovations through five steps:⁷⁰ knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. Individuals decide whether or not to adopt an innovation during any of these five steps.

1. **Knowledge** occurs when a person is presented with an innovation for the first time. He or she has not been exposed to the innovation before and has yet to decide whether he or she needs to look for more information about the innovation.
2. **Persuasion** occurs when he or she is persuaded to look for more information on the innovation and to actively acquire this information.

3. **Decision** is the critical point at which the person evaluates the benefits and shortcomings of the innovation and, then, chooses whether or not to adopt it.
4. **Implementation** occurs when the individual carries out the innovation, determines its actual practicality, and looks for additional information.
5. **Confirmation** happens when he or she makes his or her final decision regarding the adoption. If the person opts to fully embrace the innovation, then he or she will use it to his or her advantage.

Adopters of any new innovation or idea are categorized as (1) **innovators** (2.5%), (2) **opinion leaders** (13.5%), (3) **early majority** (34%), (4) **late majority** (34%), and (5) **laggards** (people who adopt the innovation much later) (16%), based on a bell curve. Each adopter's readiness and capacity to adopt an innovation depend on his or her knowledge, interest, assessment, trial, and adoption.⁷¹

Four Elements of DoI

The first element of DoI is the **innovation**. It is the idea, movement, or invention that is regarded as new by a person or other unit of adoption. The second element is the **communication channel**—the means by which a message gets diffused from one person to the next. Communication plays a vital part in the spread of innovations. DoI postulates that mass media are the most influential in increasing knowledge of the innovation, whereas interpersonal communication is the most effective in changing attitudes in regards to the innovation. Newspapers, television, and the internet have contributed tremendously to informing people of the dangers of unhealthy lifestyles. It should come to no surprise that many people are now aware that smoking causes cancer, wearing a seat belt saves lives, and unprotected sex can lead to HIV/AIDS. In like fashion, many people know they can reduce their cancer risk by quitting smoking, promote longevity through physical exercise, or prevent HIV/AIDS by using condoms. The media has informed us about these things. Although the media is criticized on a daily basis, it deserves credit for diffusing information about harmful lifestyles and how to live a healthier life.⁷² The third element is **time**—the amount of time needed for an innovation to diffuse and be accepted, or rejected, by audiences. The fourth element is the **social system**: a set of interrelated units integrated into a collective problem-solving task to attain a common goal.⁷³

Communication channels can be further categorized as either cosmopolite or localite. **Cosmopolite channels** connect potential adopters with sources external to their social system. **Localite channels** connect potential adopters with sources inside their social system. Information about innovations usually moves into a system thanks to mass-mediated, cosmopolite channels. However, as the innovation makes its way through the system, localite channels become increasingly used as well. It is important to note that all mass media channels are cosmopolite. Conversely, not all interpersonal channels are localite.⁷⁴ According to Rogers (2003),⁷⁵ “interpersonal channels may be either local or cosmopolite while mass media channels are almost entirely cosmopolite.” And a potential adopter may have interpersonal communications with a person outside of his or her social system.

When a public communication campaign has successfully diffused its messages within specific audiences, as witnessed through their change of behavior or attitude, the diffusion is said to have reached **critical mass**, the moment in the diffusion process at which the increase in new adopters is magnified by communication within the aforementioned social system.⁷⁶ This moment may occur when there is a sense that most people in the system have adopted the innovation; the value added by the innovation becomes significant.⁷⁷ Rogers (2004)⁷⁸

argued that critical mass is the point where an abundant number of individuals have adopted an innovation that “further diffusion becomes self-sustaining.” Before achieving critical mass, external organizations and institutions must devote their resources and energy towards driving adoption. This may entail creating and diffusing messages through campaigns. Once a point of critical mass is reached, additional interpersonal pressures (from friends, neighbors) drive even more adoption, while external attempts to urge adoption become less efficient.⁷⁹

DIFFUSION OF INNOVATIONS (DOI): SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital is a key element of community-level adaptation in public communication campaigns. **Social capital** refers to “the social norms, networks of reciprocity and exchange, and relationships of trust that enable people to act collectively.”⁸⁰ Social capital can be divided into two major construct dimensions, **structural capital** and **cognitive capital**. The former includes social networks, the latter includes norms, values, attitudes, and beliefs that influence factors like interpersonal or intergroup trust and readiness to exchange knowledge or resources.⁸¹ Successful adaptation calls for social networks, in combination with leadership and trust, and is considered by some as “the glue for adaptive capacity and collaboration.”⁸² Strengthening social ties and assessing their impact on behavioral outcomes can be explained by Social Network Analysis.⁸³

Social Network Analysis

Social Network Analysis predicates that **nodes** (people in a network) are connected to each other via clear or unclear relationships. Nodes and their impact are regarded as interdependent (rather than independent). These connections are created by such interdependent connections and form a “network.” The network is mapped through a diagram and can be analyzed without looking at anything else.⁸⁴ Although the majority of nodes within the network are interconnected and interdependent, it is essential to recognize that a certain number of them fulfill roles that are more central to the missions of the network than others. Within a network, some individuals are charged with meeting the function of facilitator. These individuals are generally more visible, less discreet, and interconnected to varying degrees with the other nodes or **hubs** (i.e., the key nodes in the network). The position of facilitator is highly relevant because it links the network to other networks or entities of the outside world. It also allows nonconnected parts to become linked with each other within a network. As the famous phrase goes, “no man is an island.” Rather than being islands of noninteracting units, there is a widespread interconnected network of individuals who have more influence than mere operational cliques. Facilitators also try to ensure that certain parts of the world have high levels of participation in the network through their simple presence.⁸⁵ The next section describes three examples of networks.

Centralized, Decentralized, and All-Channel Networks

Centralized networks are networks in which centrality keeps the flow of communication smooth. “Centrality” denotes the state of being the hub in the network, like a go-to node. It is expected to yield more impact and influence thanks to a higher volume of contact and access. Based on the principles of Social Network Analysis, the metric ascertains the

frequency with which a node is on the shortest conduit with other nodes. Nodes with high volumes become hubs and perform the most central role in the network. This state explains why the hub is more important than nodes on the margin, even if the simple number of links stays the same. Thus, social capital depends on how many “friends” one has. Developing connections with those who have many connections is best.⁸⁶

Decentralized networks are networks with the most efficiency because they not only consist of numerous direct communication lines among nodes; they also manage to balance the need to operate cooperatively and the need to maintain trust and secrecy within collaborative undertakings.⁸⁷ Such networks do not generally hasten their plans or magnify the likelihood of their interventions; rather, they avoid frequent communication and retain a low profile.⁸⁸ Actors with many connections to other actors are perceived as powerful. Like the centralized network, however, those who act as brokers between disparate groups will have sizeable control over the amount of knowledge (and/or resources) within the network.⁸⁹

All-channel networks are networks that allow individuals to communicate with each other or with those involved in the same process. In an all-channel network, information exchange flows upward, downward, and laterally among all members. In this case, all nodes communicate with all others. An all-channel network is a system in which the influence of active players in the network is equivalent, and where every node communicates with every other node. This mode of communication nurtures an egalitarian and unobstructed participative culture and promotes cross-functional efforts. Communication is quick and accuracy is modest.⁹⁰

Case Study: The Guy-to-Guy Project

Launched in 1999, the Guy-to-Guy Project is a DoI program conducted by PROMUNDO, a nongovernmental organization based in Rio de Janeiro. The project demonstrated how young men became involved as key nodes in communities with a high risk of gender-based violence and in need of sexual and reproductive health promotion interventions. The innovation created for PROMUNDO was education to challenge stereotypes of men as the “better” gender that is worthy of wielding power over women. In order to do so, the Guy-to-Guy Project recruited young men who were disseminated through all-channel networks within manifold communities in the Rio de Janeiro area. As peer mentors, these young men were trained to influence other young men. They mostly used interpersonal communication channels with the assistance of educational materials, condoms, a lifestyle magazine, and a short stage play with the theme of reducing violence against women.⁹¹

An important part of the Guy-to-Guy Project was designing and implementing a condom social marketing program for and with young men, with a distribution and sales initiative promoted by the young men themselves—both as a way to champion condom use and generate a constant income for the project. Young men joined forces with a graphics company to devise a logo for condoms that would diffuse the message of new, youthful, and safe pleasure. The message was pretested through one-on-one interviews and focus groups in the community. The Guy-to-Guy Project decided to publish a magazine that young men would sell one-on-one along with three condoms. The reasoning was that, by purchasing a magazine, the target audience would be less embarrassed than buying condoms. The magazine also contains tips on safer sex behaviors and communicates gender-equitable ideas.

The Guy-to-Guy Project also developed a series of rap songs about condoms and a short sketch to promote condom use, which they present to young audiences and schools in the community.⁹² By the early 2000s, the public communication campaign bore its fruits. As innovators, the young trained men developed legitimate influence in the adoption process of less risky sexual behaviors by other young men. In fact, by now, more young Brazilian men became knowledgeable about gender equality and reproductive health issues.⁹³

DIFFUSION OF INNOVATIONS (DOI): OPINION LEADERSHIP

Opinion leadership is the practice of using influential individuals to change people's beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors in a desired manner with relative frequency. An opinion leader acts as a **change agent**, a person who stimulates innovation decisions in a direction deemed appropriate by a campaign. A change agent enacts sociocultural or behavior change either purposefully or through his or her natural character. Campaigns that include giving away objects like caps or T-shirts that display the campaign logo can help standardize the message and keep it noticeable. Interpersonal connections through one-on-one or small groups give outreach staff an opportunity to adapt messages to the audience and address issues directly. Prompt interpersonal interventions have been successful in modifying a number of behaviors, even when staff members are insufficiently trained in the content area.⁹⁴

Opinion leadership also exemplifies the **two-step flow of communication**, a two-step model that works on human agency. According to the model, mass media messages are diffused to the "masses" by way of opinion leadership. People with most access to media, and having a more informed grasp of media content, explain and spread the content to others.⁹⁵ The two-step flow model laid the groundwork for the DoI theory. Interpersonal diffusion of campaign messages can be just as effective without mass media messages. Opinion leaders can easily share what they have acquired, recommend messages, and increase the impact of the media endeavors. Interpersonal communication entails a great deal of participation where interaction and feedback are present.⁹⁶

Friends and Colleagues as Opinion Leaders

A good approach for a campaign is to diffuse messages to prospective interpersonal influencers or opinion leaders who are in a position to influence individuals whom they know personally—friends and colleagues. Campaigns cherish the involvement of opinion leaders because they can be trusted to adroitly diffuse campaign messages within target audiences. Their kindled influences are likely to be more accepted than campaign messages that directly target the focal segment.⁹⁷ Interpersonal influencers can induce behavior change through activities like bestowing positive and negative reinforcement, wielding control through rule making and enforcement, enabling better behavior with reminders at opportune times, and acting as role models. A benefit of such interpersonal connections is that, since the influencer knows individuals personally, he or she can tailor the messages to the distinctive needs and values of those individuals. Communication, here, becomes more precise and context-relevant than most mass media messages. Change agent-oriented campaigns are helpful when targeted to friends and members of the influencers' circles.⁹⁸

Opinion leaders have attempted to diffuse messages about an assortment of health behaviors throughout their communities. The shattering COVID-19 pandemic pushed a great many people to act as influencers in their attempt to convince others to wear a facial covering or take the vaccine. An opinion leader in a community could be the priest, rabbi, or imam whom people have known since their childhood. It has been ascertained that the community changes its overall attitude about protecting itself from HIV thanks to the influence exerted by community members. As a result of peer-to-peer conversations, opinion leaders correct misperceptions, address the value of HIV prevention, and offer the best strategies to decrease risk (e.g., always having condoms, avoiding sex when inebriated, and resisting pressure for unprotected sex). They express their personal appreciation of the desired risk-reduction behavior—by incorporating the “I” pronoun in their approval as a way to emphasize personal endorsement. By now, readers have come to realize that friends and colleagues can be opinion leaders. In fact, it is not unusual for colleagues to be more important sources of information and influence than the mass media.⁹⁹

Social Influencers in the Internet Era

People can become social influencers by developing a reputation in their respective online media communities. Internet-based influencers post their own content and direct their followers to other relevant news items, photos, and videos.¹⁰⁰ Here, again, the role of such influencers is similar to that of opinion leaders in the classic two-step flow model; it is comparable to that of innovators and early adaptors in the DoI theory. In the pre-internet age of opinion leadership, mass-media influencers were the ones who introduced new ideas that trickled down to opinion leaders who, in turn, further diffused them to their peers via face-to-face or interpersonal communication. Today, many of these interactions take place online where influencers expose audiences to new issues, raise unanswered questions, and trigger conversations on a multiplicity of topics. As online communities intersect with offline social networks, they perform an increasingly important function in the circulation of ideas, norms, and practices in the world.¹⁰¹ In scores of online communities, content-creating users have become so influential as opinion leaders that they can set the agenda for conversations in their giant social circles. It should not be surprising that these social media influencers have caught the attention of campaign managers. Collaboration with these change agents provides ample opportunities to engage with global audiences; for example, by exhibiting correct health behaviors, breaking taboos, and sparking conversations.¹⁰²

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGNS IN HISTORY

Public communication campaigns are fundamental pursuits, focused on using communication channels and persuasion to change current conditions in society. They have a long, proud chronicle in the history of humankind.¹⁰³ Of course, as this section will demonstrate, campaigns from past centuries were much less sophisticated than the ones today. Nevertheless, long before it became trendy to publicize one’s antagonism towards smoking or drugs, activists were speaking from the pavement, preaching, and proselytizing. Health communication campaigns, in particular, have a long history in the United States (for three centuries). In fact, it is important to note that campaigns to improve individual and public health stem from a long-established practice of noncommercial, media-based persuasion.¹⁰⁴

Case Study 1: The United States

In the early 1720s, the Reverend Cotton Mather fronted a community-based initiative to endorse inoculation and prevent the spread of smallpox in Boston. This was partly done by distributing leaflets that underlined the effectiveness of immunization.¹⁰⁵ In the 1830s, William Alcott and Sylvester Graham set up a health food store that delivered fresh fruits and vegetables. For them, a proper diet was made up of wheat bread, grains, vegetables, fruits, and nuts. As they continued, by eating healthy meals and shunning food that abused the body, people would enjoy longer, healthier lives. Alcott and Graham were dedicated health crusaders, but their campaign was about 200 years ago.¹⁰⁶ Born in the late eighteenth century, they were early promoters of health education, innovators of a clean-living campaign that has subsisted to this day. Alcott's publications can be located in various libraries across the country. Graham—or at least his name—is still known thanks to his graham cracker.¹⁰⁷

In the 1840s, a woman named Dorothea Dix relied on books, newspapers, and published materials to campaign against the substandard treatment of mental patients in New England. By the 1870s, well-coordinated national campaigns against alcohol sales employed a mix of media, such as newspapers and publications, interpersonal communication (e.g., community meetings and church interventions), and the opinion leadership of the clergy, medical practitioners, public officials, and others to raise awareness of alcohol's harmful effects.¹⁰⁸ It was intended to sway public opinion, champion cultural change, and pass new legislation in a manner analogous to present-day public health communication approaches advanced by Wallack (1993)¹⁰⁹ and Wallack and Dorfman (2001).¹¹⁰

In the late nineteenth century, a myriad of social change organizations sought to move mass audiences through print media. The abolitionist movement to eliminate slavery had already printed materials *en masse* a few decades earlier. The intent was to change beliefs and attitudes towards slavery and it eventually succeeded, earning the ire of protesters who damaged printing facilities. Unquestionably, this clever use of media played a crucial role in shifting the narrative at that time.¹¹¹ In fact, the practice of producing and circulating content around a specific narrative can be interpreted as **narrative exchange**.¹¹² During the same epoch, the cholera epidemic resulted in immense changes in sanitation. It also galvanized public health campaign efforts in the United States. Over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as a reaction to contagious diseases and public health problems, activists devised campaign after campaign. These included advocacy of “do-it-yourself,” herb-based therapies for illnesses, religious restoration movements in the 1880s that associated physical fitness with moral fitness, and venereal disease education programs that began in the early twentieth century and have continued to this day.¹¹³

Public communication campaigns did not focus solely on health. Some of the most potent campaigns in the United States centered on political concerns. The Revolutionary Generation—Washington, Jefferson, Adams, and Revere—took advantage of newspapers and symbolic moves like the Boston Tea Party to persuade their peers to rebel against England. The nineteenth century experienced the emergence of antislavery abolitionists, the Women's Suffrage (Right to Vote) Movement, and—regrettably so—crusades to block “undesirable” immigrants (like Irish Catholics) from moving to the United States.¹¹⁴ By the early twentieth century, the new tradition in US journalism

recommended that journalists (and the mass media) exploit their potential to catalyze public awareness, boost social consciousness, and engender political pressure to create reforms, which encompassed improvements in public health. Although reform-minded journalists published on diverse socioeconomic issues, inadequate public health conditions proved by childhood employment, pitiable food safety, and disregard of occupational and urban hygiene were also frequent topics. The popularity of reform-minded journalism is widely understood as putting pressure on US legislators to adopt multiple public health changes during the first third of the 20th century.¹¹⁵

By the mid-twentieth century, campaign managers began using social scientific approaches to devise and evaluate their campaigns. Early opinions argued that mass media campaigns had very little effect on their targeted audience and those audiences did not pay attention. More recent theories advance the notion that well-designed campaigns are more able to generate moderate success if they employ a balanced *mélange* of social transformation, media support, community participation, audience segmentation, message design, channel use, and time frames.¹¹⁶

Case Study 2: The Temperance Movement

In Anglo-Saxon countries, temperance societies began to emerge in the 1820s to campaign against alcohol. It was propagated by Christian temperance activists and among the middle classes. In the United Kingdom, for example, the **temperance movement** campaigned against the recreational use and sale of distilled spirits and advocated total abstinence. In the nineteenth century, high volumes of alcohol consumption and intoxication were viewed by social reformers as a threat to society's well-being, causing social problems like poverty, child neglect, moral depravity, and economic regression.¹¹⁷ The movement also championed alcohol education and insisted on the adoption of new legislation against the sale of alcohol, regulations on the amount of alcohol in stores, or the total prohibition of it.¹¹⁸

In the United States, the Prohibition was a community-level movement that changed the face of the nation. Some of the Prohibition's dynamic campaigners included Carry Nation who carried her ax to break up saloons, and Frances Willard who spearheaded the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Another active objector was Purley Baker, the influential lobbyist who induced lawmakers into carrying out the plans of his movement, the Anti-Saloon League, and prohibit the sale and production of distilled liquor.¹¹⁹

Taken as a whole, temperance proponents regarded the alcoholism issue as the most dangerous one in Western civilization. Alcoholism was perceived as causing secondary poverty and all kinds of social problems. It was the enemy of goodness—anything that modernity and science could offer.¹²⁰ Temperance proponents thought that abstinence could alleviate crime, reinforce family values, and improve society at large. Although the temperance movement started as nondenominational, it consisted predominantly of church-goers. Temperance campaigners nevertheless communicated scientific arguments to support their views, even if the centerpiece of the temperance philosophy was moral and religious.¹²¹

One of the landmarks of the movement was the **temperance fountain**, a fountain usually built by a private donor and inspiring citizens not to drink alcohol by the provision of free, clean water. Beer was the main substitute for water, and commonly safer. The temperance societies found tea and coffee to be too expensive, so drinking fountains became highly popular.¹²² In California, fountains had a pedestal that released water and were ornamented with decorative sculptures, particularly a statue of Henry Daniel Cogswell, one of the frontpeople of the temperance movement in that state and, later, in the rest of the country.¹²³

Case Study 3: Singapore

On August 9, 1965, Singapore seceded from Malaysia to become an independent and sovereign state. With a population of approximately six million people today, the island city-state can pretend to have implemented one of the longest and most successful public communication campaigns in the history of humankind.¹²⁴ The primary objective of the campaign led by then-Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and his People's Action Party was to stimulate social symbiosis, shared values, a common will, and a unified national identity among the Chinese, Malaysian, and Indian peoples. In the 1960s, the "anti-litter" and "lungs for Singapore" campaigns fostered not only a clean and green environment, but also a general feeling of belonging to the nascent city-state. Thousands of volunteers were involved in such campaigns. Overpopulation and unemployment issues also pushed program managers to implement a vigorous family planning education program.¹²⁵

By the mid-1970s, public communication campaigns had become so effective that they uplifted the morale and civic dignity of the Singaporean people. The campaign strategies involved oral presentations and displays at community centers where projects were also directed at youths. The Singaporeans arguably embraced these campaigns because they embodied the institution of a national culture, with national pursuits being prioritized over group-based sectional, ethnic, or linguistic interests. The Singaporean people did not seem to object to the reality that the actual mode of communication was directive and one-way. Furthermore, as time passed, the citizenry acknowledged the economic advantages that they experienced thanks to fruitful family planning and health campaigns. The authenticity of the campaigns never wavered: the standard of living skyrocketed, in consort with a thriving economy and the rise of a consumer society.¹²⁶

Lastly, the Singaporean government instituted a productive literacy and "learn English" campaign. Literacy levels rose meaningfully on account of well-financed public education projects. English quickly became the language spoken in education, in the business sector, and at government functions. These factors, along with the popularity of television, smoothed the progress for public communication campaigns. In point of fact, the mass media were so well adapted to the new forms of campaigns that they could induce both attitude and behavior changes. They included "accident-free road/safety," "seatbelt," "anti-drug abuse," and "safety in construction and shipyard industries." Consequently, as the economy transformed, so did the character and strategy of the nation-building campaigns.¹²⁷

CURRENT STRATEGIES OF COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGNS

Strategy is the backbone of a successful campaign. Take strategy out of the campaign and you will see it fail. It devolves into a set of advertisements, commercials, or communication elements that may excite the audience without any durable impact.¹²⁸ Campaign message strategies belong to one of two broad categories: content strategies and executional strategies. **Content strategies** represent the type of informational content on which campaign messages should focus. An important phase in developing content strategies is recognizing certain beliefs that carry some weight for the campaign-targeted behavior change.¹²⁹ Frequently called target beliefs, these are principles strongly associated with the behavior or behavioral intention at hand. Nonetheless, it is also primordial that these beliefs be given enough room for change and be conducive to the production of strong messages.¹³⁰ **Executional strategies** are assessments about the presentation of the informational content of campaign messages so that they get positively received by the target audience. Creativity is a core component of these decisions, but serious research needs to be conducted so as to impart thinking and strategizing on this matter.¹³¹ The best executional strategies typically consist of emotional arousals, message framing, narrative persuasion, and visualization of risk—among others. Whereas general conclusions about these message strategies may or may not always be convincing, evidence in specific contexts may be sufficient to influence decision-making.¹³²

Reaching agreement or concordance among disciplines with distinct philosophies and methodologies is easier said than done, but it can be done. Three principal approaches can be used to combine expertise from diverse disciplines: multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary. **Multidisciplinary approaches** integrate involvement from different disciplines independently. The result may be an assortment of nonintegrated interventions, which may hypothetically clash with each other. In **interdisciplinary approaches**, individual disciplines collaborate to produce input, but participants remain within their respective disciplinary boundaries.¹³³ Without proper coordination, this approach may, too, give rise to flawed cohesion, integration, and incompetent use of resources. The **transdisciplinary approach** is synergistic through its employment of models, theories, research methods, analytical tools, and strategies for the explanation of findings so as to create shared conceptual frameworks that incorporate relevant concepts, theories, and knowledge from various disciplines. The main characteristics of this approach that make it distinct from the multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches are that the transdisciplinary approach rests on the recognition that no one entity or discipline should monopolize information. Moreover, agreement or concordance must be reached not only between diverse disciplines, but also between all scattered stakeholders who have vested interests or expertise in the issue.¹³⁴

SOCIAL MARKETING

Social marketing is “the process of designing, implementing, and controlling programs to increase the acceptability of a prosocial idea among population segments of consumers.”¹³⁵ Social marketing is also defined as a program-planning procedure that implements commercial marketing models and techniques to bring about voluntary behavior change. This approach enables the recognition, rejection, adaptation, abandonment, or preservation of specific behaviors by groups of individuals—i.e., the target audience.¹³⁶ Social marketing

strives to build and combine marketing concepts with other strategies for social change. The purpose is to present competition-sensitive and segmented social change initiatives that are productive, efficient, fair, and durable, and that, in due course, benefit citizens and communities.¹³⁷

Social marketing has the fundamental objective of achieving social good.¹³⁸ Occasionally referred to as the **common good**, **commonwealth**, **general welfare**, or **public benefit**, **social good** refers to either what is common and beneficial for all or most individuals within a community, or what is attained through citizenship, collaboration, and active participation in the arena of politics and public service.¹³⁹ **Social choice theory** can explain social good by highlighting the procedures by which social good may or may not be achieved in societies. This is done through the analysis of collective decision rules. Social choice integrates essentials of welfare economics and voting theory; it takes penchants and behaviors of individuals into account.¹⁴⁰

Marketing Perspectives

Social marketing has gained extensive popularity as a method of inducing behavior change in individuals for social good. It is viewed as a noncoercive method of persuasion and compatible with, or complementary to, marketing and behavioral economics.¹⁴¹ However, a common misconception subsists: that social marketing only pertains to the use of mass media or “social advertising.” Put another way, the misconception is that successful interventions are based on mass media advertising such as television to diffuse the desired messages. A second misconception is that social marketing concerns mostly the use of online media platforms, especially social networking sites. The latter phenomenon has spawned the term “social media marketing.” In reality, social marketing tends to involve both social advertising and social media. It is not unusual to allude to mass media-based initiatives as “campaigns” and full social marketing-based ones as “interventions.” Marketing is most effective when social objectives are not directly and immediately in line with people’s self-interests. Yet, citizens’ attitudes and behaviors can be made to change by turning consequences into more advantageous ones. Like education, marketing gives humans freedom of choice but, in contrast to education, it modifies the behavior outcomes instead of expecting them to surrender privileges, rights, or favorite habits on society’s behalf.¹⁴²

Five Types of Social Marketing

There are five types of social marketing: (1) Push social marketing, (2) pull social marketing, (3) upstream social marketing, (4) midstream social marketing, and (5) downstream social marketing.

1. **Push social marketing:** a promotional technique that vigorously advocates products/services/ideas to audiences through adapted distribution channels. Also known as **direct marketing**, push marketing is a type of general advertising. Intervention is concerned about what motivates individuals to engage willingly with the intervention, and what to offer them in return (i.e., something beneficial). The benefit may be immaterial (e.g., personal satisfaction) or material (e.g., rewards for taking part in the campaign and showing behavior changes).¹⁴³

2. **Pull social marketing:** a promotional strategy that targets audiences by allowing them to pull the product/service/ideas. While push marketing takes it to the consumer, pull marketing brings the consumer to it. The purpose is to cultivate a base of loyal customers by employing marketing techniques that express what they are looking for. A downside to this approach is that campaign designers might cater to the wrong target audience. To be able to connect to the right consumers, it is vital to know who they are and what they want.¹⁴⁴
3. **Upstream social marketing:** a broader approach to social marketing that operates at the macro level and that can influence policymakers.¹⁴⁵ Upstream social marketing is a method to stimulate policy and solution adoption, as it centers on structural leadership. A useful approach for an upstream social marketing enterprise occurs when marketers employ a long-term, well-thought-out strategy to get policymakers, for example, to change the physical environment for the advancement of society.¹⁴⁶
4. **Midstream social marketing:** a social marketing approach that targets social groups, opinion leaders, business owners, or municipal employees for causing change of individual behaviors and attitudes within their own communities. These are changes towards progress and solutions to contemporary problems. Midstream social marketing can seek to understand how local retailers should sway and endorse individual behavior change goals.¹⁴⁷ An example would be asking retailers to abide by the minimum legal drinking age.¹⁴⁸
5. **Downstream social marketing:** a social marketing approach that functions at the micro level to influence and change an individual or small group. Social marketing started as a downstream undertaking, targeting specific groups for behavior change. It is beneficial to base the social or attitude change not just within people themselves, but influencers as well (e.g., local leaders).¹⁴⁹ Downstream social marketing often implements a full marketing combination to go beyond simple messaging. It considers competition an interesting asset that can offer a valuable exchange for the target audience.¹⁵⁰

SOCIAL NORMS MARKETING

Sometimes confused with social marketing, **social norms marketing** postulates that, after people correct the perceived norm to match the actual norm, they will modify their behavior accordingly.¹⁵¹ Social norms campaigns employ traditional marketing approaches that focus on people who overestimate the true norm of use.¹⁵² However, in any campaign, some members of the target audience will overestimate (i.e., the overestimators), whereas others will underestimate (i.e., the underestimators). And a small number will interpret the norm with accuracy.¹⁵³ Social norms marketing originated on US college campuses.¹⁵⁴ The approach has a theoretical basis supported by four principles.¹⁵⁵ First, perceived norms are steadily and positively linked to drinking. Second, individuals often overestimate the drinking habits of their peers (i.e., normative misperception). Third, this overestimation of peer drinking is correlated with even higher subsequent drinking. Fourth, successful correction of such misconceptions should cut drinking. The first three principles have been reliably established in peer-reviewed empirical studies among college students.¹⁵⁶ The fourth

tenet has received moderate support in rigorous studies assessing the correlation between modifications in perceived norms and reductions in drinking.¹⁵⁷

Social norms marketing also describes situations in which individuals continue to believe that their peers' behaviors are different from their own (when in reality it is not the case). This phenomenon has been termed **pluralistic ignorance**.¹⁵⁸ These misperceptions pertain to problematic or risky behaviors (which are generally overestimated) and to healthy or positive behaviors (which are generally underestimated). One of the corollaries of pluralistic ignorance is to get individuals to modify their own behavior to match the misperceived norm. This, in turn, can normalize problematic or risky behavior and, at the same time, inhibit or suppress healthy or positive behavior.¹⁵⁹ All individuals with those misperceptions develop a climate that allows those negative behaviors to occur, whether or not they enact such behaviors. Perkins (2002)¹⁶⁰ coined the term **carriers of the misperception** to characterize those individuals. Thus, social norms marketing campaigns strive to correct the misperceptions of all individuals on college campuses—even if they do not engage in problematic or risky behaviors. Social norms marketing campaigns have been used to develop interventions that center on three levels of prevention: universal, selective, and indicated prevention. **Universal prevention** targets all members of a community without specifying who is at risk of abuse. **Selective prevention** targets all members of a community who are at risk for a precarious behavior. **Indicated prevention** targets certain individuals who already show signs of the problem. Interventions at all three levels of prevention can be integrated and intersected to generate a comprehensive solution that is theoretically sound and has mutually strengthening program components.¹⁶¹

Social Norms

Social norms guide individual behavior by advising members of a community what behaviors the group expects from and requires of them. Social norms are important standards for behavior because they are enforced unofficially and socially (e.g., by dishonoring or blackballing norm violators). Therefore, social norms have profound consequences that are less resource-intensive, than, for instance, a judicial or incentive-based framework for preventing or penalizing unwanted behaviors.¹⁶² Social norms are philosophies of conduct as to what others do and approve of. Enter the following example: "People around me go to church and people important to me expect me to do likewise." This statement is powerful: someone may go to church not because that is what he or she really aspires to (attitude), but because he or she meets the expectations of society.¹⁶³ People tend to look to social norms to acquire a sound understanding of social situations and effectively respond to them, particularly in times of uncertainty.¹⁶⁴

Social norms are essential to manifold behavior change interventions, and it is true when the objective is massive-scale and sustained behavior change. Within the public sector, private industry, and academia, the concept of social norms is gradually perceived as a key factor of motivation and behavior and, therefore, a centerpiece of behavioral stimulus and change. Social norms are perhaps "one of the most central theoretical constructs in the social sciences including sociology, law, political science, anthropology, and increasingly economics."¹⁶⁵ Social norms shape situations that, among a myriad of possibilities, "others (as a group, as a community, as a society) think are the correct ones, for

one reason or another.”¹⁶⁶ By establishing the socially accepted ways of behaving in particular environments, social norms are a crucial element of social regulation, the process through which “other stakeholders regulate our activity.”¹⁶⁷ In doing so, they also solidify our membership and place in a community, how we interpret social situations, and how we communicate with others.

Types of Social Norms

Past studies have revealed many types of social norms that motivate human action. Based on the postulate that behavior is determined by perceptions of individuals’ actions in a social group, each of the types of social norms below provides a model for understanding behavior.

1. **Descriptive social norms** influence perceptions of the behaviors performed by individuals with whom one has affinities. They are efficient because they “describe” the desired behavior—enacted by a majority—and they push the minority in the desired direction. Descriptive social norms are a guide from which others should not deviate. Because people gauge the suitability of their behavior by how distant they are from the norm, deviance will be measured as above or below the norm.¹⁶⁸
2. **Injunctive social norms** influence perceptions of what behaviors should be approved or disapproved by an individual’s in-group. These norms can direct people’s behavior irrespective of what most people do. They are efficient when people perceive the desired behavior as harmonious with their own selves and the nature of the in-group. Injunctive social norms are also called **subjective norms**. They constitute perceptions of what is normally acceptable or unacceptable within the culture.¹⁶⁹ Focus theory asserts that, if either descriptive or injunctive social norms are prominent in a person’s consciousness, it will wield the stronger influence on behavior. Hence, in contexts where descriptive normative information would produce an unwanted boomerang effect, it may be the case that including an injunctive norm message that signals that the wanted behavior is approved may prevent that effect.¹⁷⁰ The present intersubjective agreement in academia is that interventions should target injunctive norms because they have the most accumulated theory and evidence to demonstrate that they can work. In a nutshell, social norms marketing campaigns that use injunctive norms should strive to replace an old norm with a new norm.¹⁷¹
3. **Collective norms** are maneuvered at the social level or at the level of the social network, whereas **perceived norms** are used at the individual level. The difference between these two norms matters for a specific reason. Collective norms may not be consistent with perceived norms. In fact, people’s perceptions about collective norms in their communities may clash with actual collective norms.¹⁷² Information overload in the media is partly to blame for this.
4. **In-group norms** are used when people come together in groups to cultivate a notion of what they share in common and the characteristics that differentiate them from other groups. People argue that the informational merit of a response or its “persuasiveness” is equivalent to the extent to which it is perceived as representative of certain in-group norms or agreements.¹⁷³

Peer Groups

The term **peer group** includes four types of groups that share similarities with each other: (1) The **peer cohort** (students who are in the same age group), (2) the **reference group** (those students in the cohort with whom the student has the most affinities), (3) the **peer cluster** (a small clique of friends with similar values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors), and (4) the **dyad** (two best friends). Under these circumstances, it is hard to determine with which group (or groups) of peers students identify—i.e., in order to have valid social comparisons.¹⁷⁴ Studies¹⁷⁵ reveal that college students overestimate occurrence of sexual relations among peers and the average number of sexual partners, while underestimating the commonness of safe-sex practices like condom use and the morning-after pill. In regards to high-school students, Hillebrand-Gunn, Heppner, Mauch, and Park (2010)¹⁷⁶ report that the majority of boys overestimate their peers' support of rape conspiracies and rape-supportive attitudes. Other scholars report similar findings for college men with respect to attitudes about sexual assault, the inclination to behave in a way that ensures consent, the inclination to prevent a sexual assault, and/or peers' unwillingness to use inappropriate language and actions towards females.¹⁷⁷

Because a social norms marketing campaign includes descriptive normative knowledge that can be used as a yardstick of measure for an individual's own behavior, the descriptive norm can be appealing to individuals whose behaviors are either above or below the norm. A social norms marketing campaign targeting alcohol consumption on campuses might encourage students who used to consume less alcohol than the norm to actually drink more. Consequently, although giving descriptive normative knowledge may moderate an unwanted behavior among individuals who behave above the norm, the same information presented to them may actually increase the unwanted behavior among those who enact that behavior at a rate below the norm. Although social norms marketing campaigns aim at decreasing problematic or risky behaviors—and, by the same token, increasing prosocial behavior—by conveying the message that harmful behaviors happen less frequently than most people think, for individuals who refrain from performing the undesirable behavior, such normative information can produce unintended consequences or dangerous long-term effects.¹⁷⁸

Third-Person Effect

The **third-person effect** predicts that individuals have a tendency to perceive that mass media messages are more impactful on others than on themselves, because of personal biases. The third-person effect is evident when an individual overestimates the impact of a mass-mediated message on other people, or underestimates the effect of a mass-mediated message on themselves.¹⁷⁹ The third-person effect can enlighten the degree of perceived media influence on peers. Studies demonstrate that people tend to believe that others were more impacted than themselves by advertisements for liquor and beer.¹⁸⁰ Shin and Kim (2011),¹⁸¹ in particular, found that teenagers perceived higher effects of alcohol product placement in movies made for youths on other people than on themselves. Third-person effects are particularly noticeable when the message is perceived as unwelcome—that is, when individuals infer that “this message may not be so good for me” or “it’s not cool to admit you’re influenced by this media program.” Consistent with these predictions, people usually perceive content that is deemed to be antisocial to have

a stronger impact on others than on themselves (e.g., violence in movie, pornography, and antisocial rap music).¹⁸²

The Theory of Planned Behavior

Although many people, particularly teenagers, often see themselves as their own persons in their actions, a substantial degree of peer influence is constantly documented in laboratory experiments, social surveys, and examinations of crowd behavior. In public communication campaigns that emphasize antecedents of individual health-related behaviors, widespread evidence supports the **Theory of Planned Behavior**, which presents norms as an indicator of personal behavior in addition to personal attitudes and perceived behavior control.¹⁸³ The Theory of Planned Behavior integrates individual attitudes, perceived norms of charismatic others, and motivation to conform as predictors of intended behavior. A foundational mechanism rests on the **expectancy-value equation**, which posits that attitudes are predicted by beliefs about the probability that a given behavior results in certain consequences, amplified by one's assessment of those consequences.¹⁸⁴ Three major elements guide those intentions: (1) An individual's attitude towards the behavior, (2) an individual's subjective norms about the behavior, or (3) the principle that the people important to the individual think that he or she ought to perform the behavior. Attitudes and subjective norms are, in turn, shaped by behavioral and normative principles.¹⁸⁵

The social norms that produce such mental pictures of proper behavior act become standard in daily life and can transcend a person's (rational) perceptions or attitudes.¹⁸⁶ The effect of social norms on behavior is what the Theory of Planned Behavior describes. Social norms, together with perceptions of a behavior and behavioral control, influence people's behavioral intentions and, as a result, actual behaviors.¹⁸⁷ A great deal of research¹⁸⁸ confirms that other people's behaviors in the social environment mold individuals' interpretations of, and reactions to, the situation. This is particularly the case under new, ambiguous, or uncertain circumstances. When consumers become aware that seven out of 10 individuals select one brand of automobile over another, that teeth-whitening toothpaste is now more popular than its less useful counterpart, and that many others at the local dining hall do not eat the "spamburger surprise" entrée, they are absorbing information about social norms. More precisely, they are obtaining information about descriptive norms and how they should behave in certain situations.¹⁸⁹

An oft-cited field study on descriptive norms tells of the motivation of hotel customers to reuse their towels. The message was that reusing towels helps the environment by cutting laundry, thereby reducing water and energy.¹⁹⁰ As the experiment demonstrated, after reading the message indicating that previous hotel patrons had reused their towels (i.e., a descriptive social norm message), the new hotel guests felt more inclined to reuse their towels than after reading a message that simply stated that towel reuse is beneficial to the environment (i.e., an informational message).¹⁹¹ With hotels adopting this environmental strategy, more and more customers are motivated to reuse their towels to help preserve environmental resources by reducing the volume of detergent-related pollutants discharged into the environment. In many instances, the persuasion is formatted through a strategically placed card in the hotels' bathrooms. On top of the intrinsic benefit to the environment and to society, such descriptive norms approaches are adopted by an increasing number of hotel chains owing to the substantial economic benefits.¹⁹² In addition to the direct reductions of costs such as labor, water, energy, and cleansing agents, there is a growing portion of

consumers who praise corporations that tackle environmental issues through their business practices.¹⁹³

Another oft-cited field experiment demonstrated the impact of descriptive social norms on energy consumption. It was developed in 2008 by the American company Opower and its partnering energy providers.¹⁹⁴ Over 600,000 households were placed into a treatment group and a control group. The households in the treatment group were given frequent reports with numbers on their energy consumption as compared with their neighbors (i.e., a descriptive social norm). The households in the control group did not receive this data. The households in the treatment group decreased their energy consumption after being told that they consumed more than the normal household in their areas. The program offers additional evidence that nonprice interventions can significantly reduce costs and alter consumer behavior. The effect corresponds to that of a short-term increase (in the electricity bill) of 11% to 20%, and the cost effectiveness compares positively to that of conventional energy conservation plans. Lastly, because the experiment on the treatment group incorporated descriptive social norms, effects are mixed: households in the highest bracket of pretreatment consumption reduced usage by 6.3%, whereas consumption in the lowest bracket reduced it by only 0.3%.¹⁹⁵

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