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Describing Value in a Social Marketing Service: What is it and How is it Influenced?

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Abstract

One of the challenges of social marketing is the maintenance of behavioural change in individuals. Consumers of social marketing services must first see value in adopting socially-desirable behaviours before committing to changing their behaviours. This paper proposes that in order to achieve sustained behavioural change in individuals, social marketing organisations must create and deliver value to their customers. A value creation process model is proposed which identifies four different types of value at different stages of the process. Sources of value that are likely to influence the value types are also identified. The paper concludes with recommendations for future empirical work which focus on identifying specific social marketing value types and sources that exist at specific stages of the social marketing service process.

Introduction

A key outcome of social marketing is the achievement of individual behavioural change that is sustained over the long-term. Often, government organisations participate in social marketing activities that support individual behaviour change in order to achieve socially-desirable goals. In social marketing campaigns, the provision of services is an important component in achieving socially desirable ends, particularly in the area of public health. This research proposes that the creation and provision of value in government social marketing services is paramount to achieving sustained behavioural change in individuals.

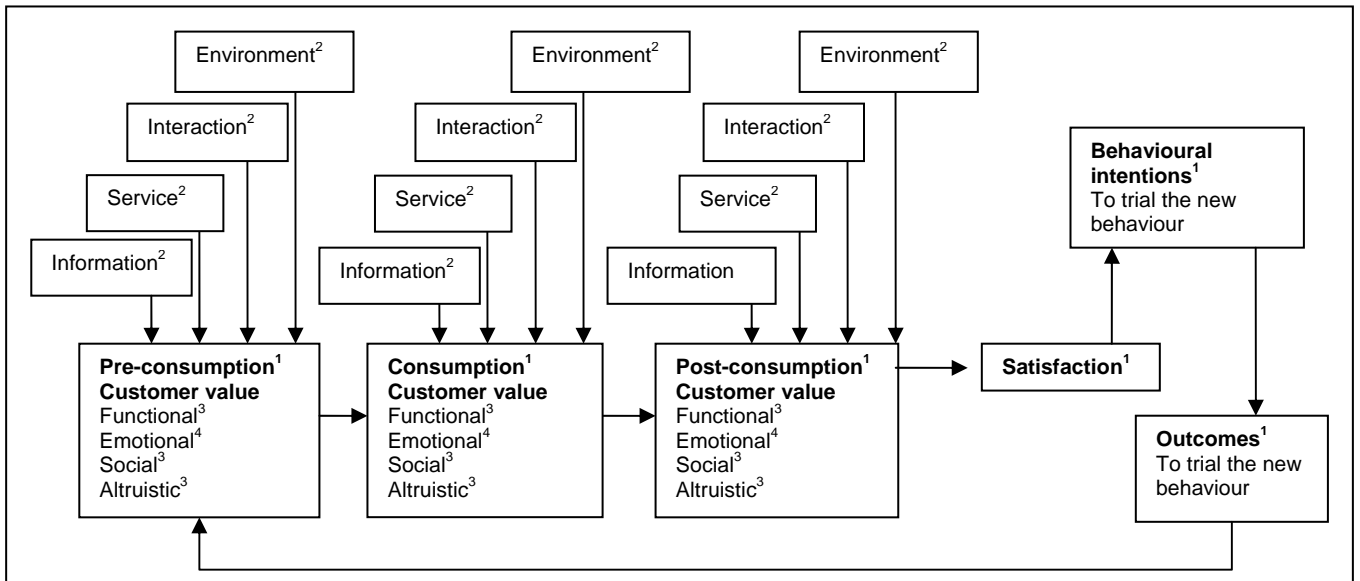
Literature Review

This paper begins with a brief discussion of the proposed value creation process model. Next, it identifies and describes the types of value and sources of value that exist within the model. Lastly, the proposed theoretical framework is applied in a real-world context, demonstrating its applicability to practice.

Proposed value creation process model

In order to understand value creation in a government social marketing service, a value creation process model has been developed that builds on Sweeney's (2003) Customer Value Development Model. This model shows the process that consumers undergo when consuming a social marketing service (see Figure 1). The process model commences with the pre-consumption stage, followed by the consumption stage, post-consumption and satisfaction. Then, intentions to perform (or not perform) this behaviour occurs, followed by outcomes. At this final stage in the process an individual either continues with the behaviour (thus achieving sustained behavioural change) or they choose not to perform the behaviour again (a negative outcome of social marketing) because the requisite value has not been created.

Figure 1: Proposed value creation process model



The process model illustrated in Figure 1 identifies the types of value that consumers may experience during the consumption process of a social marketing service. It has been identified that value is experienced at the pre-consumption, consumption and post-consumption stages of the process, and this ultimately influences satisfaction and subsequently, behavioural intentions and outcomes. Four types of value that consumers may experience are identified, these are defined as: functional value, emotional value, social value and altruistic value. These types of value are derived from Sheth, Newman and Gross (1991), Sweeney and Soutar (2001) and Holbrook's (2006) analysis of marketing's influence in a commercial context. To date, there has been no published work that adapts and modifies the service process for government social marketing services.

These types of value are expected to be influenced by various sources. This influence has been categorised as "sources of value". Four different sources of value that may influence the types of value experienced by consumers are identified as: information sources, service sources, interaction sources, and environment sources. The following section now turns to a brief explanation of each influencer in the social marketing value creation process.

Types of value

Functional value is value focussed on performance and functionality. Sweeney and Soutar (2001) refer to it as "price-quality" while Holbrook (2006) refers to it as "economic." The term "functional" is used by Sheth, Newman and Gross and this is retained in this research as "price-quality" and "economic" are terms that regularly imply monetary value. In social marketing, monetary value is not as relevant as in commercial marketing as consumers in social marketing often experience non-monetary exchanges such as psychic costs and or the time and effort required in making lifestyle changes that inhibit or facilitate behaviour change. Emotional value focuses on consumption for the emotional experience and for no other end-goal. Holbrook (2006) refers to it as "hedonic" but the term "emotional" used by Sheth, Newman and Gross (1991) and Sweeney and Soutar (2001) is used instead. Hedonism implies positive emotions such as pleasure and excludes negative emotions. Value in social marketing may include the prevention or reduction of negative emotions such as shame or fear. As such, a broader term is required to embrace the spectrum of emotion that might change during the adoption of a new social or health behaviour.

Social value focuses on influencing others as a means to achieving a desired goal for one's self, such as status or influence. This term is used consistently by all three groups of authors. As such it is retained in the conceptual model as it usefully describes the social influences that might create barriers or facilitate individual behaviour change goals. On the other hand however, altruistic value is derived from Holbrook (2006) only. Altruistic value is intrinsically-motivated but directed at others for the achievement of self-fulfilment or a sense of well-being. This value type is included as it is highly relevant to social marketing, as many consumers might be motivated to change their behaviour in order to contribute to the greater good and derive a sense of satisfaction from doing 'good' to help others in society.

Sources of value

Five sources of value are identified by Smith and Colgate (2007), which are expected to influence the types of value received during the value creation process. They are information, products, interactions, environment and ownership/possession transfer. This latter value source is omitted from this research as services are neither owned nor possessed, thus is not relevant. The remaining sources of value defined by Smith and Colgate are useful in understanding the value creation process in a social marketing service.

Information sources of value which are those that provide information and educate consumers, allowing them to make informed choices and speedy decisions (Smith and Colgate, 2007). These include activities such as advertising, public relations or direct marketing. Smith and Colgate (2007) refer to products as those created by value-chain activities that include product development and production. However the term "product" is relabelled in this research because "service" as the context of this research falls within the delivery of services, rather than the production and development of physical products. Service sources of value include service delivery processes, or the systems used by the organisation. Interaction sources of value include interactions between consumers and employees of the service organisation, with the organisation's systems, or even with other co-consumers of the service. Environment sources of value relate to consumption environment, or servscape. This includes facilities, interior design or décor. The preceding literature review section has described each element within the value creation process, which is assumed to influence an individual's adoption of a social marketing service. The following section will now apply this conceptual model to a government breast screening service in Queensland.

From theory to practice: applying value creation to BSQ

Queensland Health's BreastScreen Queensland (BSQ), is selected as the context for this research because it is a government organisation, providing a service and uses social marketing. BSQ is a government service organisation, which is a public health program that offers free breast cancer screening and follow-up assessment services to women in Queensland aged 40 years and above (BSQ, 2007a). BSQ uses social marketing in achieving its goal of sustained behavioural change in its target audience (i.e. having a breast screen every 2 years).

BSQ uses a fixed operating process which corresponds with the first three stages of the value creation process model (Figure 2). The first two stages of the operating process fall within the pre-consumption stage of the value creation model. This is when consumers receive a reminder letter to have their breast screens, or for first time users, a personal invitation letter. The types of value experienced at this stage could be influenced by information sources of value which could include the letter received by the consumer. Alternatively, this stage might

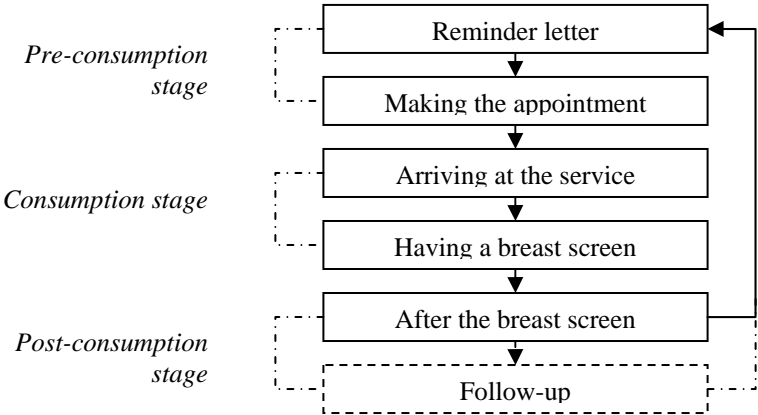
be influenced by interactions with existing BSQ customers who might have had positive or negative service experiences from their last breast screening service.

The second stage is arranging an appointment with BSQ. Customers are able to organise an appointment over the phone which will connect them to the nearest BSQ service for the cost of a local call (BSQ, 2007b). The types of value experienced at this stage could be influenced by information sources, service sources, or even interaction sources of value. Information sources of value could include whatever information received from the phone call if any. The telephone system used by BSQ could be considered as a service source of value. The interaction between the consumer and the employee taking the call could be considered as an interaction source of value.

The next two stages correspond with the consumption stage of the value creation model. This is when consumers arrive at the service and have their breast screen. The types of value experienced at these stages could be influenced by all four different sources of information. Information sources could include whatever additional information is provided to consumers at this point of contact. Service sources of value could include the waiting system in place. Interaction sources of value could include face-to-face interaction between the consumer and the employees or other co-consumers. Environment sources of value could include the facilities available or décor of the clinic.

The last two stages of the screening process correspond with the post-consumption stage of the value creation model. This is when consumers leave after completing their breast screens, receive their results approximately 10 working days later (BSQ, 2007b), and any follow-up that may be necessary. The types of value experienced at this stage could be influenced by information sources of value, service sources of value, or interaction sources of value. Information sources of value could include whatever information that is provided to the customer together with the results of the screen. Service source of value could include the process by which consumers are provided with their results and advised on what they have to do next. This could include the way they are advised to have a follow-up check or the way they are advised about their next appointment in two year’s time. Interaction sources of value could include any interaction between the consumer and an employee, should the consumer contact BSQ for further information.

Figure 2: Screening process for BSQ & stages of value creation model



Future Research: Proposed Method

The following future directions of research suggest a useful method to explore the value creation process in Queensland Health's Breast Screening Service. Critically, at the commencement of the research it is important to acknowledge that it is unknown if all four types of value are present at the first three stages of the value creation process model as illustrated. It is also unknown which sources of value are present at each of these three stages that would influence value types. Thus, in order to identify the different types of value and sources of value that exist in the value creation process, qualitative individual interviews and focus groups are recommended. Qualitative methods are most appropriate at this discovery stage as it will enable the researcher to document participants' experiences without biasing or categorising data too early in the research process. Taking a narrative approach to the qualitative data collection will enable participants to freely express their experiences based on their personal expectations and knowledge. After the data is collected, researchers can then organise and index the participants' narratives using thematic analysis techniques (*see* Miles and Huberman, 1994).

In order to identify types of value and sources of value at the pre-consumption stage, the method of focus groups is recommended. A first focus group could comprise of a sample of women in the target age group, 40 years and above, who have never used the BSQ service before (i.e. have never had a breast screen). A second focus group could then be comprised of a sample of women in the same age group, but who are previous users of the service (i.e. have had a breast screen before). Focus groups are appropriate for this type of research as the nature of this study is exploratory (Babbie, 2001). Furthermore, focus groups are a technique appropriate for socially-oriented research (Krueger, 1988) and group dynamics have the ability to bring out unanticipated aspects of the topic that would otherwise not have emerged in individual depth interviews (Babbie, 2001). Similarly, in order to identify types of value and sources of value at the post-consumption stage, focus group method would also be useful. This group would be comprised of a sample of women in the target age group who have had previous experience with the service.

In order to identify types of value and sources of value at the consumption stage, individual depth interviews would be more appropriate. Participants will be need to be interviewed on the same day they have their screens to capture the sample while they are still in the consumption stage, but before they leave the clinic and move on to the post-consumption stage of the process. As a result, focus groups would be difficult to organise for data collection at this stage. Thus, individual-depth interviews are suitable as this yields explanatory data (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006).

Conclusion

Any combination of one or more of the types of value can potentially be present at each of the three first stages of the value creation process. Similarly, any combination of one or more of the sources of value can be potentially present at each of the first three stages as well. The use of qualitative techniques will allow for the identification of the specific value types and sources that exist at the different stages. Taking this research approach will establish a good starting point for further research in empirically validating the existence of the types and sources of value at stages in the consumption process of a social marketing government service. Subsequently, using a large-scale quantitative design, the model can be used to

empirically show how value is created in a social marketing service and how value creation influences social marketing outcomes.

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