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Social marketing communication in a multicultural environment: practical issues and theoretical contributions from cross-cultural marketing

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Abstract

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This article presents a case study analysis of work undertaken by the New South Wales Multicultural Health Communication Service (MHCS). The Service's core activity is adaptation of social marcoms campaigns for use with CALD audiences. Data for the case was collected from staff, MHCS clients, and members of target audiences. Four key issues emerge as significant in the process of adapting social marcoms campaigns at MHCS. These are: segmenting and identifying the target audience; adapting message content; source credibility; and integrating the adapted campaign with its mainstream counterpart.

To provide theoretical insights and strategies to address these issues this article draws on cross-cultural marketing theory. For example, the theory of acculturation is used to provide an alternative to current segmentation practices. In the same vein, theories associated with the application of cultural typologies are used to explain why the practice of adaptation is not always successful. The article concludes by considering the implications of this study for further research.

Keywords

Social, Marketing, Communication, Multicultural, Environment, Practical, issues, theoretical, contributions, from, cross, cultural, marketing

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Social marketing communication in a multicultural environment: Practical issues and theoretical contributions from cross-cultural marketing

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Social marketing communication (social marcom) campaign production can be more challenging when the audience includes individuals from 'culturally and linguistically diverse' (CALD) communities. Additional issues such as culturally related values, practices, and attitudes need consideration. Normally, social marcoms campaigns for CALD audiences involve directly translating mainstream campaign material into various ethnic groups' languages. However, little is understood about the issues beyond translation that confront practitioners adapting mainstream campaigns.

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Introduction

The term social marketing was first used by Kotler and Zaltman (1971) to describe the application of marketing theory to solving social and health related issues. The fundamental purpose of any social marketing campaign is to change people's behaviour (Andreasen, 1997). Health promotion and education campaigns also attempt to change people's behaviour. However, social marketing is distinguished from these other campaigns by its use of commercial marketing principles. Like commercial marketing campaigns, social marketing campaigns adopt a consumer orientation and use integrated market analysis, segmentation, and marketing mix strategies (MacFadyen, Stead & Hastings, 1999). The social marketer's toolkit comprises a variety of co-ordinated interventions and techniques. However, mass media campaigns remain the most frequently used tool (Stead & Hastings, 1997). These types of campaigns are referred to as "social marcoms campaigns" (Rossiter & Bellman, 2005, p. 430).

Social marcoms campaigns are credited with a very poor rate of success in changing people's behaviour. Rossiter and Bellman (2005) claim they are only successful in 10% of cases. In contrast, approximately 50% of commercial marcoms are successful in increasing consumers' purchase or product usage rates (Clancy & Krieg, 2000; Sethuraman & Tellis, 1991). Several factors may contribute to this difference in success rates. Often, the behaviour social marcoms target is harder to change than the behaviours commercial marketers target (Rossiter & Bellman, 2005). It is more problematic to change an addictive behaviour like smoking than the low-involvement purchase of a product such as soap powder. The nature of the audience that social marketers

target is suggested as another reason (MacFadyen, Stead & Hastings, 1999). Social marketers frequently target audiences within the least accessible and hardest to reach sections of a society. These audiences often include members of minority ethnic groups. When the target audience includes individuals from 'culturally and linguistically diverse' (CALD) communities the challenge of producing successful social marcoms can become even more problematic. In these circumstances social marketers need to confront additional issues such as different cultural values, practices, and attitudes (Darley & Luethge, 2003).

It is rare for social marcoms campaigns to be developed from scratch for specific ethnic groups. With the exception of some Indigenous social marcoms campaigns it is common practice to simply adapt mainstream campaigns for use with different ethnic groups (Donovan, Mick, Holden & Noel, 1997). Often, adaptation is limited to directly translating mainstream campaign material or placing social marcoms messages in specific ethnic media. Limited resources, the number of ethnic groups, and the relatively small numbers in some groups are often given as the reasons for this approach (Donovan & Henley, 2003). Despite these issues some writers have identified the need for greater understanding of the processes involved in developing social marcoms for CALD audiences (e.g., Milat, Carroll & Taylor, 2005). However, we could find no empirical studies that have attempted to identify the issues involved in adapting social marcoms campaigns to different CALD audiences.

This article contributes to the theory and practice of social marketing in two ways. First, it identifies major issues that confront practitioners during the process of adapting social marcoms campaigns for CALD audiences. Second, the article discusses the relevance of concepts drawn from the extant cross-cultural marketing literature in providing alternative views and strategies to address practitioner concerns.

This article could draw on concepts and theories from a range of disciplines, including public relations and health communications. In particular, health communications would appear

relevant in providing a theoretical understanding to practitioner issues. As Parrott (2004) argues, health communications covers a broad range of topics from disease prevention to workplace safety, with many of these the focus of social marcoms campaigns. However, this article restricts itself to the contribution that cross-cultural marketing can make. There are two main reasons for this decision. First, it is beyond the scope of this article to identify and discuss the contributions that various disciplines could make to the adaptation of social marcoms for CALD audiences. Second, the practice of social marketing is built on the principles and practices of commercial marketing. Social marketing theory continues to evolve by drawing on emergent research from the more established areas of commercial marketing. In keeping with this tradition, this article has selected cross-cultural marketing as the area most likely to provide relevant theoretical insights to the process of adapting social marcoms for CALD audiences. There are persuasive arguments in the literature that concepts drawn from cross-cultural marketing (where the emphasis is on marketing across international boundaries and cultures) can be successfully applied to marketing within a multicultural society (Burton, 2003; Wilkinson & Cheng, 1999). The basis of these arguments is that multicultural marketing is essentially cross-cultural marketing "at home" (Wilkinson & Cheng, 1999, p. 106).

The next section discusses, justifies, and explains this study's methodology. Following this, the main findings are presented. Interwoven with the presentation of these findings is a discussion of how concepts taken from cross-cultural marketing theory could address practitioner issues and/or provide alternative insights into these issues. The final section of the article considers avenues for further research.

Methodology

This study's purpose is to identify and explore issues that confront practitioners during the process of adapting social marcoms for CALD audiences. The authors considered a qualitative research strategy most appropriate in

these circumstances (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Sarantakos, 1998).

The research method adopted in this study is a single case study design. This decision was based on two factors. First, the collection of data from a single case allows for the elucidation of context (Bryman, Stephens & Campo, 1996). That is, a single case study approach both facilitates understanding and accommodates the complexity of a particular situation. Second, the organisation selected for this case typifies what Bryman (2004, p.51) calls an “exemplifying case” and Yin (1994, p. 41) labels as an “exploratory case”. The organisation selected for the case study is the New South Wales Multicultural Health Communication Service (MHCS). This Australian state government organisation provides a distinctive location in which to gather data that is quite revealing in identifying issues associated with the practice of adapting social marcoms for CALD audiences. MHCS’s primary function is to assist health professionals in New South Wales communicate with non-English-speaking communities. The Service produces multilingual health resources, and has been responsible for over 400 publications on health issues in a wide range of languages. However, MHCS’s role goes beyond simple translation. It undertakes research, communication projects, and social marketing campaigns targeted specifically at CALD audiences. It engages in the entire process of developing and adapting social marcoms campaigns. This can include gathering market intelligence, segmenting the market, and developing appropriate marketing mix strategies. In recent years MHCS has extended its role to adapt social marcoms campaigns that not only target health but also issues such as public safety. For example, campaigns have addressed issues such as increasing smoke alarm use among CALD groups.

Data for this case study were collected using interviews, observation, and document analysis over a ten month period, and followed a theoretical sampling approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). That is, emergent themes were used to guide the ongoing data collection process. Consequently, data were collected in two phases. In the first

phase, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with staff from a range of organisational levels within MHCS, with the average interview length being ninety minutes. Questions in these interviews focussed on identifying the stages in the process of adapting a social marcoms campaign, as well as the main issues faced at each stage in the process. In addition, staff were observed during various meetings that planned a specific social marcoms campaign. The campaign that was observed concentrated on increasing the participation rate by members of three ethnic groups (Chinese, Arabic, and Italian) in a government service providing in-home care. Also during this first phase, promotional and other communication materials produced by MHCS were content analysed and compared with similar material produced for the mainstream English speaking community.

Once the stages in the process of adapting a social marcoms campaign had become clear and the key issues that faced practitioners at MHCS began to emerge, a second data collection phase began, which focussed on gaining more information on the issues that staff prioritised in stage one. Aspects of the emergent issues were discussed in more detail with staff in order to clarify and expand understanding of each issue. In addition, interviews were conducted during this stage with clients and members of the target groups of various campaigns. Clients were asked for their perspectives on the emergent issues and how MHCS social marcoms campaigns integrated with their organisation’s overall planning strategy. For target groups, questions probed their perspectives of the various campaigns and associated communication materials. These interviews provided rich insights into why certain issues had emerged as concerns for MHCS staff.

Many of the responses to questions included personal evaluations and points of view. Consequently, anonymity was a reporting condition, and individual respondents’ identities are not revealed in this article. Rather, respondents are identified by whether they were staff, client, or target group members. Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Observations and informal

conversations were noted in the field for future analysis.

Data from interviews and field notes were collected, coded, and analysed simultaneously using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This method involves inductive data coding with simultaneous comparison of all events, occurrences, and social interactions identified from within the data for similarities, differences, and general patterns. In its most elementary form, inductive coding requires fracturing the data into coded units then systematically grouping units into categories that show similarities and relationships. The notion of “conceptual ordering” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 19) was adopted. Conceptual ordering involves organising data into discrete categories according to their properties and/or dimensions, then using description to explicate those categories.

Adapting social marcoms campaigns for CALD audiences - The MHCS experience

MHCS functions in a manner similar to a commercial advertising agency. That is, it does not normally initiate development of a social marcoms campaign. MHCS’s work emanates mainly from government departments and agencies that contract it to adapt existing campaigns for use with CALD audiences. Analysis of the data in this study reveals that staff at MHCS consider four key issues as critical in the process of adapting a social marcoms campaign for use with CALD audiences. These issues are:

- Segmenting the audience and identifying the target audience
- Adapting pre-existing messages from mainstream campaigns to different cultural groups
- Dealing with source credibility issues
- Overcoming integration failure (some social marcoms campaigns for CALD audiences do not integrate with their mainstream counterparts).

In the section that follows these four issues are discussed in the order in which they present

themselves during the process of adapting a social marcoms campaign. That is, the first issue is deciding who the campaign is targeted at, followed by developing the message, then establishing its credibility, and finally considering how the campaign does or should integrate with a mainstream campaign.

Segmenting the audience - “People are different”

MHCS segments audiences on the basis of language and/or country of birth. This is the most common approach by marketers to segmentation within a multicultural society (Kotler, Brown, Adam & Armstrong, 2004). Reasons given for this practice at MHCS include issues of resource availability and simplicity. Limited resources require MHCS to, as one staff member stated, “roll out” social marcoms campaigns by adapting the communications material to each of the major language groups one at a time. This “roll out” involves translating advertising copy or overdubbing broadcast advertisements into the selected ethnic group’s language. This approach to dealing with language groups one at a time keeps social marcoms campaign adaptation simple, in that cultural issues are discussed and considered in terms of language differences only.

However, staff and clients recognise that segmenting audiences on the basis of language and/or country of birth may not be the ideal approach. For example, as one staff member stated:

You would not consider everyone that spoke English or were born in Australia the same but we are doing that...we are assuming that everyone that speaks a language like Arabic is the same...it [method of segmentation] is not ideal...but it is straightforward.

Similar views were expressed by other respondents. For example, as a target audience member commented:

People are different, we are not all new arrivals ... some have been here for years...some speak a bit of English, others not much ... just because two people speak the same language does not mean they think or act the same.

Just as staff, clients, and target audience members have concerns over the reliance on language and/or country of birth as primary segmentation variables, so do writers in the extant literature (McDonald & Dunbar, 1995). Lindridge (2003) suggests it is “at best naive” (p.78) to believe that language, country of birth, or other similar demographic variables associated with ethnicity adequately define homogenous market segments. In recent years, acculturation has received considerable attention in the cross-cultural marketing literature as an alternative to these traditional segmentation variables.

In a general sense, acculturation can be defined as the journey that immigrants travel as they enter and adopt cultural and social traits associated with their new host country. Acculturation provides insights into the determinants of an individual’s sense of identity. Acculturation is an important concept for social marketers as it provides understanding of the culturally determined attitudes, values, and behaviours an individual may subscribe to, and these can underlie behaviours that social marketers may be attempting to change.

There are two views as to how acculturation actually takes place. The first is a uni-dimensional view that sees immigrants travelling along a linear line, gradually losing their birth country’s cultural values and traits until they reach a point of totally adopting the host country’s culture (Laroche, Kim, Hui, & Tomuik, 1998). An alternative view sees this process as bi-dimensional. That is, immigrants can assume some aspects of the host country’s

culture without ever losing all of the cultural traits of their birth country. Empirical evidence supports a bi-dimensional model of acculturation. Ryder, Alden and Paulhus (2000) found that “people exposed to two cultures, either through birth or through heritage can incorporate, to varying degrees, two coexisting cultural self-identities” (p.63). In other words, individuals from CALD groups may have two coexisting sets of culturally determined beliefs, and this may affect their attitude towards a behaviour that a social marcoms campaign is targeting. For example, anti-smoking campaigns targeting CALD audiences need to recognise that although in many Western cultures the social acceptability of smoking is decreasing, it is still an accepted social practice in some Asian cultures (Kent, 1985; Ling & Glantz, 2002). Subsequently, campaigns exploiting the decreasing social acceptability of smoking may have only limited success with newly arrived immigrants from these Asian cultures.

As stated previously, acculturation has important implications for segmenting multicultural societies (Korgaonkar, Karson, & Lund, 2000; Lindridge, 2003). Hutnik (1991) suggests that acculturation helps identify four segments in a multicultural society, each with a different perspective on how they relate to the majority social group. These are:

- Assimilation – in this segment individuals identify fully with the majority group in the host country and deny their ethnic heritage and links
- Dissociation – in this segment the individual identifies most closely with their ethnic minority and not the majority group in the host country
- Acculturation – in this segment the individual identifies equally with both their ethnic minority and the majority group in the host country
- Marginality – in this segment the individual does not identify with either their ethnic minority or the majority group. Rather, the individual identifies themselves on some other social basis such as professional or work related status.

An advantage of using acculturation as a segmentation variable when adapting social marcoms campaigns is that it helps identify the degree to which a mainstream message needs changing for each acculturation segment. For example, social marcoms campaigns targeting the majority social group in a society will require little, if any, modification when directed towards members of the ‘assimilated segment’. However, the same campaign will require significant cultural adjustment to have an impact on individuals in the ‘dissociated segment’. When attempting to communicate to members of the ‘acculturation segment’, the campaign should not limit itself to using only target audiences’ native languages and culturally relevant symbols. Research suggests this segment reacts more positively to communication material of a bi-lingual nature (Holland & Gentry, 1999; Korgaonkar et al., 2000; Koslow, Shamdasani, & Touchstone, 1994; Palumbo & Teich, 2004).

In the context of organisations like MHCS, acculturation may be a viable alternative segmentation strategy to language and country of birth for two reasons. First, it is an attitude-based segmentation variable. It provides social marketers with some understanding of the degree to which different cultural attitudes, values, and beliefs may impact on their attempts to change a specific behaviour. Second, it provides social marketers with guidance on the degree to which a mainstream social marcoms campaign may need to be adapted for each acculturation segment.

Adapting pre-existing messages - “Getting a message that works”

Staff at MHCS spend considerable time and effort ensuring the message that is the basis of a social marcoms campaign relates to the ethnic group it is directed at. Of the four key issues this study identified, this was of most concern to staff, clients, and members of the target groups. It was the issue that the majority of respondents felt the strongest about. The nature of this issue is apparent in the following statement from a staff member at MHCS:

What works with one cultural group will not work with another. It is really difficult...in some cases a phrase may simply not have an equivalent in the other language...getting a message that works across all cultural groups is impossible.

The issue of “getting a message that works”, is often discussed by MHCS staff in terms of the technical details of making a direct translation from the English version to other languages. What may appear a relatively simple process to outsiders can be very problematic. For example, respondents gave examples of what they labelled language “fossilisation”, and how this influences message interpretation. Fossilisation of a language refers to how different words move in and out of vogue. An example in English would be the word ‘wireless’, which was common during the Second World War but was replaced in the 1960s by the word ‘transistor’ and more recently by the word ‘radio’. If a social marketer is attempting to reach recently arrived immigrants, getting the “right generation” of words is important to ensure the message is credible, does not sound as if it is from a bygone era, and does not appear condescending.

Often the messages creating most difficulty for MHCS staff are those involving witty use of the English language. These social marcoms campaigns can lose impact when direct translations are attempted. One example of this was a social marcoms campaign aimed at encouraging the general public to report shopkeepers whom they believed were selling tobacco products to children. This campaign’s impact rested on the tag-line, ‘be a smoke detector’. In pre-testing with CALD audiences the clever use of this phrase was found to have no significance. Subsequently the campaign was not run with CALD audiences. As one respondent described this campaign:

The English version worked on the idea that you have smoke detectors in your home and just as they sound an alarm, members of the public could also act as an alarm by reporting retailers selling cigarettes to young children. But when we made the translation ‘be a smoke detector’ a lot of cultural groups take the literal translation of the words and do not make the connection ... sometimes puns and other clever plays on words just do not work in other languages.

The issue of ‘getting a message that works’ reveals a need for social marketers working in this area to better appreciate how different cultural groups react to various types of encoded communication message and advertising campaign. To date, most cross-cultural marketing research in this area has been based on the use of cultural difference typologies. Two cultural typologies that are often used by marketers to elucidate how marketing messages may be received are those of Hall (1960, 1976) and Hofstede (1984, 1991).

Hall’s (1960) typology is especially relevant to this article as it is based on research that suggests cultures can be distinguished from one another by their use and acceptance of low and high context messages. In low context messages most of the information is contained in the explicit code—that is, the words, symbols, and other visible cues that form the message. In contrast, high context messages transmit most of their information via “the physical context...with little in the explicit transmitted part of the message” (Hall, 1976, p. 91). Hall argues that up to 90% of a high context message is communicated through its non-verbal aspects which are critical in decoding and understanding the intended message. Research (e.g. de Mooji,

1998) suggests that low context messages are commonly used in many Western cultures while high context messages are more common in Asian cultures. In more practical terms, these findings may help explain why some social marcoms designed for Western cultural audiences with explicit copy, facts, and data may not be as effective when directly translated and used without any consideration of cultural differences or delivery context.

The value and utility of cultural typologies in understanding and coding specific advertising messages is evident in the work of cross-cultural researchers such as Tai (2004). Tai’s examination of Hong Kong Chinese and North Americans’ cultural acceptance of informational versus transformational advertisements is relevant to social marketers because it focuses on how different marcoms types can change behaviour. Informational advertisements are concerned with changing behaviour by providing objective facts, while transformational advertisements “attempt to move a consumer emotionally” (Tai, 2004, p. 440).

From a social marketing perspective, transformational advertisements can be associated with fear and other similar emotional appeals, whereas informational advertisements can be associated with many health education advertisements which aim to provide objective, factual information (Wass, 2000). Tai (2004) concluded that transformational advertisements were used more often in the high context Hong Kong Chinese culture, whereas in North America, a low context culture, there was greater use and acceptance of informational advertisements. Tai’s findings support other research reporting emotional appeals to be more effective in Eastern cultures and rational appeals more effective in Western cultures (Cutler, Thomas, & Rao, 2000; Zandpour & Harich, 1996).

The work of Tai (2004) and others has implications for the practice of adapting social marcoms campaigns from one language to another without any other cultural modification. Tai’s research helps explain why simple translation alone is unlikely to be effective with every cultural group. Rather, this and other

research indicates that adapting message strategies for use with CALD audiences could be more effective if greater consideration was given to how each cultural group responds to different message structures.

Establishing source credibility - “What do I have in common with them?”

Source credibility is a third area of concern to MHCS practitioners. The experience of staff at MHCS is that CALD audiences perceive the credibility of its various government clients differently. MHCS has adapted social marcoms for a variety of government departments and feedback from target audiences suggests that some government departments have much higher levels of credibility and trust than others. For example, messages from government departments or agencies that are perceived as “helping” organisations, to use the term applied by one staff member, are often received more positively than those from other government organisations. As this MHCS staff member explained:

Different [ethnic] groups react to messages from different [government] departments differently ... services such as health, fire, ambulance are seen as helping ... there is a feeling that they can be trusted.

Perceptions of credibility and trust may have their roots in the historical past of some ethnic groups. For example, members of ethnic groups where government agencies such as the police and military have traditionally been feared may maintain those fears when they arrive in a new host country. The issue of gaining credibility and trust has also emerged in a report into the way the Victorian government communicates with CALD audiences (Marzio & Cultural Partners Australia, 2001). This report found that a message’s source is particularly important when communicating with certain ethnic groups, and that some ethnic groups are “more trusting of information delivered by a person

than an institution” (Marzio & Cultural Partners Australia, 2001, p. 1).

Source credibility’s importance in determining the level to which a message is accepted and acted on is well documented in the marketing literature (e.g. Simons, Berkowitz, & Moyer, 1970). In the area of cross-cultural marketing, Holland and Gentry (1999) report that advertisements using ethnic symbols are perceived more positively if the sender can be clearly associated with the cultural group the advertisement is aimed at. The Marzio report had similar findings, suggesting government departments may need to address low credibility by using culturally relevant spokespeople.

The trust and credibility issue further points to the complexity of social marcoms campaigns targeted at CALD audiences. Not only do social marketers working in this area need to consider whether the message itself translates to the language of various ethnic groups, they must also consider whether the message source is likely to be believed. This is particularly important where social marcoms campaigns rely on expert opinion to deliver the message and encourage behaviour change.

Co-ordinating and integrating campaigns - “A simple add on”

The data in this case study suggest that many social marcoms campaigns adapted by MHCS lack significant integration with their mainstream counterparts. The importance of integration and coordination of marcoms campaigns has led to the development of an area of marketing theory and practice labelled ‘integrated marketing communication’, or IMC (Schultz, Tannenbaum & Lauterborn, 1992). IMC’s importance has also been recognised in the cross-cultural marketing literature (e.g. Duncan & Everett, 1993; Gould, Lerman & Green, 1999). The IMC literature argues that campaigns have a greater likelihood of success when organisations carefully integrate and coordinate their communications to give clear and consistent messages. At MHCS, however, one manager suggested CALD versions were “add ons” to mainstream campaigns, an experience that may echo that of many other

similar organisations adapting mainstream social marcoms campaigns to CALD audience requirements. The implications of not integrating campaigns are made clear in the following statement from a MHCS manager:

In the majority of situations we are translating the English version to a new language ... not many promotion campaigns think about CALD groups early on ... it is after the main campaign is up and running that people then think about other cultural groups this can lead to problems. Because a message works with one group does not mean it is going to work with every other cultural group ... people often do not think outside of the square and think how the same campaign will work when run with different groups.

Issues in the very early stages of a campaign's development appear responsible for the low integration and coordination between social marcoms campaigns for CALD audiences and their mainstream counterparts. In many cases funding issues mean CALD audiences are viewed as secondary target markets for campaigns. Many campaigns are initially directed to the mainstream English speaking community and are only adopted for use with CALD audiences if new funding becomes available. The literature reports that this approach results in the cultural issues of campaign adaptation not being contemplated in the early development stages (Donovan & Henley 2003). As a consequence, situations arise where, in addition to translation issues, the basic values of a campaign may not be compatible with different cultural groups. For example, MHCS was asked to develop a social

marcoms campaign focussed on raising awareness in CALD communities of home care services for elderly citizens. The core values underlying the home care service included the notion that elderly citizens have a desire to maintain independence in later life, yet values associated with independent living are not universally accepted by all cultures. In many Eastern cultures, elderly family members expect to be looked after by their family, as the following quote from a member of this campaign's target audience indicates:

Many in my community [cultural group] see this as charity...family are there to take care of you....this is our way.

This divergence of basic values presented a major problem in the development of this campaign. Even the name of the service presented translation difficulties when attempting to accurately convey its purpose in some languages.

Conclusion

This article has addressed a gap in the extant social marketing literature by identifying some key issues that practitioners face in adapting social marcoms for CALD audiences. In this article, rather than a specific theory initially driving our understanding of practice, practitioners', clients', and campaign target audience members' perspectives have been allowed to emerge from the data and have then been used to drive our discussion of theory. We used the key concerns from the data to identify both aspects of the existing theory which help illuminate and explain the issues arising in applied contexts, and those issues which may need further theory development to be properly understood and addressed.

In the context of the organisation that this study investigated, there are four significant areas of practitioner concern. These are:

- Segmenting the audience and identifying the target audience

- The problematic nature of adapting messages from mainstream campaigns to different cultural groups
- Dealing with issues of source (and therefore message) credibility
- Overcoming the failure of some social marcoms campaigns for CALD audiences to integrate with their mainstream counterparts.

Cross-cultural marketing theory and research has been used to provide some views, techniques, and strategies for understanding and addressing these practitioner concerns. For example, the theory of acculturation may be a more efficient alternative to segmenting CALD audiences on the basis of language and/or country of birth. Understanding why some social marcoms campaigns are not effective when simply translated to another language may be explained through cross-cultural marketing theories associated with the application of cultural typologies such as those proposed by Hall (1960). Similarly, the importance of source credibility may help explain why some government departments appear to be more successful in communicating their social marketing messages than other departments.

Although cross-cultural marketing theory may have a contribution to make in improving current practices there are caveats to its contribution. For example, much of the cross-cultural research discussed in this article is based on studies undertaken in North American and/or Asian environments. This in itself means the validity and reliability of these findings to any context beyond those environments is unproven. Similarly, although there are arguments in the literature for the transferability of concepts from cross-cultural marketing to the multicultural marketing field and intuitively through to the area of adapting social marcoms for CALD audiences, there are as yet no studies testing whether these concepts transfer. There is a need for further empirical research to determine whether the theoretical concepts discussed in this article have wider application in the adaptation of social marcoms campaigns for CALD audiences. Does, for example, the use of acculturation as a segmentation variable for

CALD audiences improve the effectiveness of social marketing communications in such multicultural societies as Australia and New Zealand?

The issues raised in the data collected for this case study indicate that cultural differences can and do influence the successful adaptation of social marcoms campaigns for CALD audiences. However this view is challenged by some theorists who argue that too much emphasis has been placed on the role of cultural differences. Wang (2000) argues that individual responses to different forms of advertising appeals are better explained by how individuals perceive themselves in relation to those around them rather than their cultural orientation alone. Similarly, Pasick, D'Onofrio, and Otero-Sabogal (1996), researching in the area of cancer interventions for various ethnic groups in North America, argue that too much attention has been placed on the broad differences between cultural groups and too little on commonalities that override cultural differences. Pasick et al. (1996) argue that contextual factors such as socio-economic conditions may have a far greater influence on how an individual perceives a health related issue than their cultural background. Donovan et al. (1997) tested Pasick et al.'s theories with indigenous youth in Western Australia. They found that cultural differences did influence the reception and implementation of a social marcoms campaign. The findings of the present study also suggest that cultural differences are influential in determining what a message's content and structure should be as well as how it should be presented to different cultural groups.

The findings in this article are limited to the organisation that is the basis of the case study – MHCS. The authors do not attempt to generalise the findings beyond this organisation. However, the study does point to the complexity and problematic nature of adapting social marcoms for use with CALD audiences, and has identified important areas of concern where future theory-building could be focused. Our findings confirm that cultural differences influence the adaptation of social marcoms campaigns for CALD audiences. At this point the research and literature in this area is limited,

and lacks depth and integration. We could locate no empirical studies examining the specific issue of developing social marcoms for CALD audiences, nor any attempts to develop models or theories of the communication of social marcoms within multicultural societies. Just as this article has considered the contribution that cross-cultural marketing could make to this issue, others may wish to examine the contribution that health communications and public relations theory could also make.

As countries such as Australia and New Zealand become even more multicultural in their demographic composition, the need to gain greater understanding of the process of developing social marcoms for CALD audiences is likely to grow in significance. Case studies such as this one provide important early indicators of the practical issues that theory building can help us address.

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