

The Effectiveness of Social Marketing in Reducing Cardiovascular Disease

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Nowadays, cardiovascular diseases are the main reason for death. The number of patients is steadily increasing; for instance, in the UAE, it comprises 40% of all diseases, and globally it constitutes one-third of all deaths (Roth et al., 2020). Thus, it is important to find proper instruments that could influence the situation. Social marketing can be regarded as the means of increasing people's awareness about cardiovascular diseases and ways of their prevention.

Statistics Concerning Cardiovascular Diseases

The statistics of cardiovascular diseases reveal that for the last three decades, the number of deaths caused by this reason is rising. This is supported by the World Health Organization (2018) and Denova-Gutiérrez & Lorkowski (2020) statistics: the number of cases of CVD nearly doubled from 1990 to 2019. As Roth et al. (2019) note, primary stroke prevention strategies do not seem to be effective as the number of lethal cases increases. However, the number of researches in this field increases, which can lead to a better understanding of mechanisms underlying people's behavior.

Benchmarks of the Social Marketing Strategies

Social marketing strategies are prepared and can be analyzed based on different factors. According to Shams (2018), six benchmark criteria are involved in a social marketing strategy. The first one is behavior change, which means that social marketing intervention aims to change people's behavior and has measurable objectives. The second benchmark is consumer orientation, which means that the intervention should be based on the consumer's experience, needs, and values. The third benchmark refers to segmentation and targeting, as the strategy should be tailored for a particular target group. The fourth benchmark is "marketing mix,"

involving price, promotion, product, and place. The fifth benchmark is exchange, which means that the strategy offers the people something valuable for them, making them consume the product. The last benchmark is competition, as competition is expected to change people's behavior and stimulate their activity.

Thus, according to these benchmarks, the product of a social marketing strategy aimed at decreasing the rate of cardiovascular disease should be the change in people's behavior and lifestyle. Aceves-Martins et al. (2021) claim that using at least five of these benchmarks is able to increase the effectiveness of the school-based marketing interventions. In addition, analyzing the drivers of the issue is a relevant approach to follow.

Different Factors Causing Cardiovascular Diseases

Cardiovascular problems are caused by a range of different factors. According to the statistics provided by the World Health Organization (2018), the main causes of these diseases are the use of alcohol, lack of physical activity, obesity, tobacco use, and salt intake. Thus, the strategies should also be multilateral, encouraging people to maintain a number of different healthy attitudes. As Shams (2018) puts it, social marketing can promote health products and motivate people to refer to health facilities. The researches by Mostafavi et al. (2021), Shakir et al. (2020), and Berends and Halliday (2018) reveal the effectiveness of social marketing strategy in encouraging young people to change their lifestyles. Thus, some strategies turn to be effective, which means that it is important to continue their implementation.

Evaluation of a UAE Salt or Transfats Reduction Social Marketing Campaign

The given paper analyzes the approaches implemented in the framework of a UAE campaign aimed at promoting low-fat milk, presented in the research by John et al. (2020). The

key audiences for the strategy are the Oklahomans that will be involved in the Supplemented Nutrition Program. The main objective of the program is to reduce food insecurity among people who live below the federal poverty level. The program promotes healthy habits, which also includes the reduction of the amount of fat contained in the food. In addition, the priority audience will include the people who prefer the “healthiest” products for themselves and for their families. In Figure 1, the components of the marketing mix are reflected (John et al., 2020). The analysis of the marketing campaign is based on the marketing mix components, including price, place, promotion, and product.

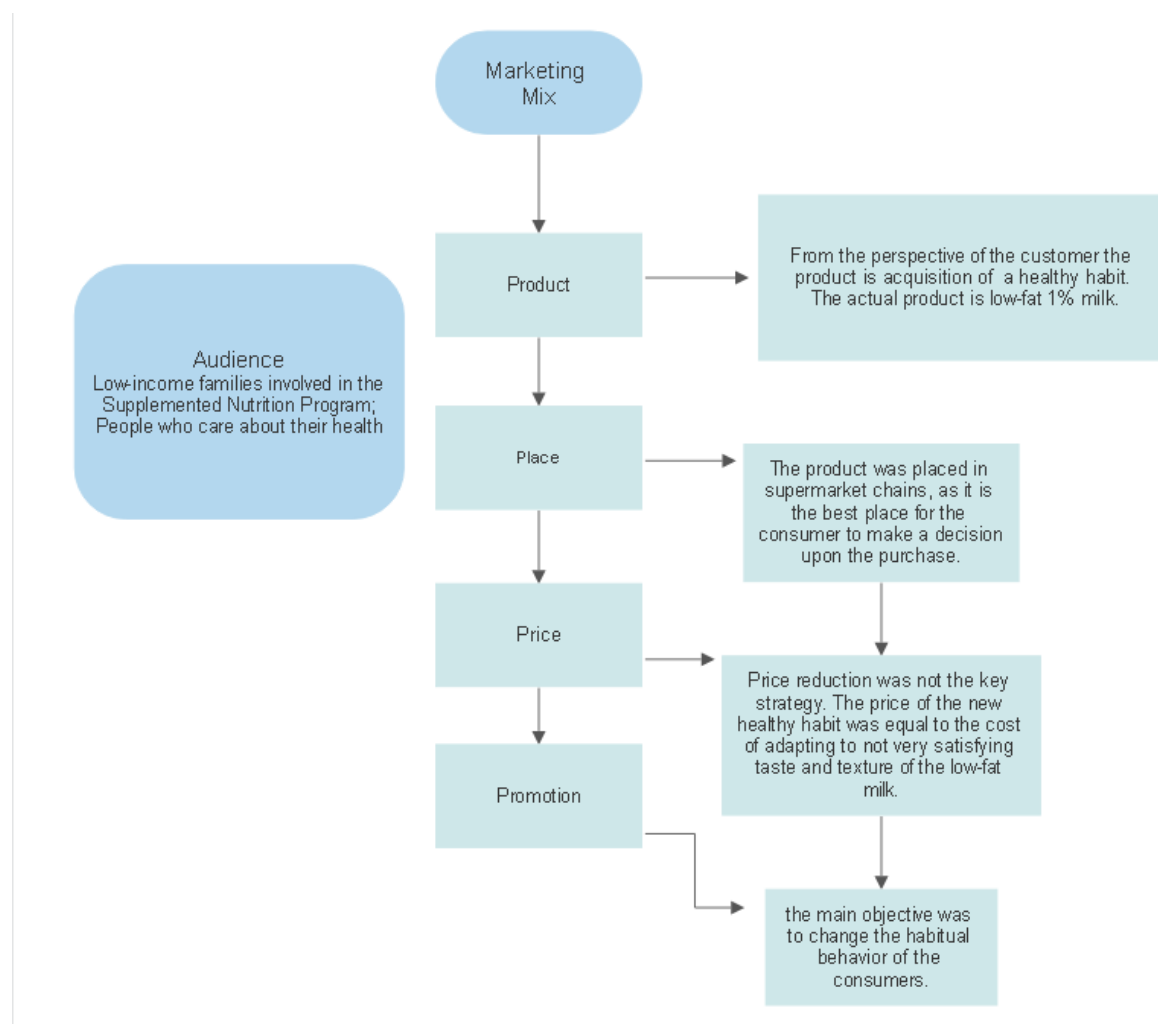


Fig 1. The marketing mix in the UAE strategy (John et al., 2020).

Social Marketing Framework

To decrease the rate of cardiovascular diseases by promoting low-fat 1% milk, a relevant social marketing framework should be compiled. It consists of three main phases, and each of them has individual phases to implement to achieve the desired outcomes. Following these steps by performing specific activities will help realize the set objective and identify the optimal algorithm for intervening and maintaining changed consumer behavior.

Phase 1

Phase 1 of the social marketing framework is extended since it includes three stages – customer research, target audience segmentation, and program design. The analysis of the required parameters, particularly the consumption levels of 2% and 1% milk, will be carried out through online surveys, which is a convenient data collection method. Segmentation involves identifying the target audience, and as a population in need, people with cardiovascular diseases and tendencies to them will be engaged. The social issue – the need to buy low-fat 1% milk containing vitamins and minerals – will be identified by utilizing the survey results obtained. SMART behavioral goals will be drawn up, which will include detailed objectives for changing buying behavior and assessing the intermediate outcomes of the intervention by comparing sales over specific periods. At the design program stage, the determined value proposition will be compiled, which will be based on the aforementioned marketing mix. Ethical factors will also be taken into account, particularly the willingness of consumers to participate in the change program and provide feedback on its outcomes.

Phase 2

Phase 2 includes two stages – implementation and evaluation, and each of them involves specific practical actions. Since the key objective is to change consumer purchasing behavior, the social program should be conducted in places that the public often visits, and for this purpose, traditional outlets are suitable, for instance, supermarkets. Individual booths and tasting points will work to attract consumers and explain the value of buying low-fat 1% milk instead of 2%. For the convenience of communication, customers will be offered social media accounts for leaving feedback and product suggestions. Based on the value propositions developed during the design stage, the target audience will receive all the information they need through educational brochures, and attracting new buyers will be welcomed. To evaluate the marketing program, the level of sales of 1% milk will be measured, and in case of a significant increase in this indicator, the project will prove its effectiveness.

Phase 3

The final phase implies ensuring the sustainability of the changed behavior through specific steps. Conclusions regarding successful and unjustifiably low results will be obtained through customer feedback assessments. In addition, the resource base will be evaluated from the perspective of providing the target population with 1% milk permanently. Periodic advertising materials in the online environment and bonus programs for regular customers will warm up sustained interest in the target product and ensure stable demand.

As a result, the proposed social marketing framework will have a clear structure that will allow implementing the set objectives and achieving the desired outcomes. Reducing the incidence of cardiovascular diseases in the population through the consumption of low-fat 1% milk will prove to be effective in the long term, which requires maintaining the sustainability of

the changed purchasing behavior. The resources involved are not numerous and available within the framework of the declared program, which makes its implementation relatively simple and convenient.

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