

Media and Social Marketing

Definition

Marketing initiatives include promotions and advertising that support or encourage breastfeeding as well as imagery in the media that strengthen the perception of breastfeeding as a normal, accepted activity. Marketing can take place through broad venues traditionally considered part of advertising or can be more targeted and use methods such as professional endorsements, providing items to targeted audiences, and sponsoring events focused on a specific demographic group. Media campaigns are commonly presented to a wide audience and use public channels such as television, radio, printed materials, or outdoor advertising.

Social marketing campaigns go beyond media campaigns. They are comprehensive, multifaceted approaches providing targeted, coordinated interventions to a variety of audiences, including consumers, their support systems, health care providers, the community, and the general public.

Rationale

Increasing the amount of positive images of breastfeeding to counteract advertising that markets infant formula should help to promote breastfeeding as a viable option for infant feeding. Normalizing the concept of breastfeeding makes it a more feasible choice for many women, who often see it as an unattainable ideal.

Social marketing uses established principles in commercial marketing to encourage healthy behaviors or support behavioral change.⁵³ Social marketing uses many different approaches simultaneously to effect synergistic change, which is particularly appropriate for breastfeeding because of the many complex issues and barriers involved.

Evidence of Effectiveness

A 2000 **Cochrane review**³ suggests that media campaigns, particularly television commercials, have been shown to improve attitudes toward breastfeeding and increase initiation rates.



Photo by Margo Geist, courtesy of La Leche League International



Social marketing has been established as an effective behavioral change model for a wide variety of public health issues.⁵⁴ Specific to breastfeeding, Khoury et al.⁵⁵ demonstrated that a comprehensive social marketing approach including interventions to increase public awareness (through media and other outlets) increased rates of initiation and duration while also improving perceptions of community support for breastfeeding.



Description and Characteristics

Social marketing campaigns for breastfeeding follow the major principles of commercial advertising and should address each issue appropriately. To conduct high-quality campaigns, social marketers engage in extensive background research before they develop campaign messages or products. Steps include formative research, testing concepts, creative development, testing and then producing materials, and dissemination. Social marketing campaigns are consumer driven and designed to address specific barriers identified during formative research.

The major principles of both social marketing and commercial marketing are “the four Ps”: product, price, place, and promotion.⁵⁶ The *product* is the behavior change being promoted, in this case, breastfeeding itself. In promoting breastfeeding, marketers must find the unique quality that makes their product (breastfeeding) more desirable than the competition (using infant formula). The *price* includes the emotional, psychological, physical, and social costs of breastfeeding as perceived by a target audience. The *place* refers to the optimal venues to deliver the message to the target audience: the best place for a media campaign about breastfeeding might differ widely from one demographic group to another. *Promotion* strategies should resonate with the target audience and be delivered in a well-coordinated fashion.

The Four Ps of Social Marketing	
Product	desired behavior change
Price	costs to make the change
Place	locations to deliver message
Promotion	messages to encourage change

Program Examples

Babies Were Born to Be Breastfed is the campaign tag line of the U.S. National Breastfeeding Awareness Campaign launched by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office on Women's Health and the Advertising Council. This campaign targets first-time parents through television, radio, out-of-home, Internet, and print advertising that highlights the health consequences of not breastfeeding.

The goal of the U.S. National Breastfeeding Awareness Campaign is to increase initiation and exclusive breastfeeding rates at 6 months. The public is encouraged to call the National Women's Health Information Center Breastfeeding Warmline at 1-800-994-WOMAN or visit their Web site at <http://www.4woman.gov> for breastfeeding information. In addition, 18 community demonstration projects support the campaign by providing breastfeeding services, community coalition building, and out-reach to local media.

Loving Support Makes Breastfeeding Work is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children) National Breastfeeding Promotion Program, a comprehensive social marketing strategy conceived by Best Start Social Marketing for the WIC program. The *Loving Support* campaign has been used in all 50 states by many groups, such as WIC agencies, hospitals, community organizations, and breastfeeding coalitions. The campaign includes public awareness materials; print materials; promotional items for diverse audiences; training for WIC staff, community advocates, and peer counselors; counseling skills development; and technical support to those implementing the strategies.

The Texas Department of Health maintains a *National Breastfeeding MediaWatch Campaign* to monitor both positive and negative media mentions of breastfeeding and formula. *MediaWatch* volunteers who find positive images of breastfeeding coordinate recognition to the media outlet or responsible party. The goal of *MediaWatch* is to bring about more positive references to breastfeeding in media and thus shape societal views in favor of breastfeeding.

Resources

Babies Were Born to Be Breastfed:

<http://www.adcouncil.org/campaigns/breastfeeding>

Loving Support Makes Breastfeeding Work:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/Breastfeeding/lovingsupport.htm>

Texas Department of State Health Services

National Breastfeeding MediaWatch Campaign:

<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/wichd/lactate/media.shtm>

Potential Action Steps

- Identify local experts who can pitch stories to the media that highlight breastfeeding.
- Provide *Loving Support* materials to interested local physicians, schools, clinics, hospitals, and child care centers.
- Approach local media outlets (television, radio, print) and request them to air or feature the public service announcements they have available as part of the *Babies Were Born to Be Breastfed* campaign.