

Broadening cultural horizons in social marketing

The Australian Association of Social Marketing (AASM) is the national peak body for social marketing, bringing together a critical mass of academics, practitioners and government agencies. The social marketing community is a global community, and it is through events, such as the AASM International Social Marketing Conference (ISMC), that insights can be shared and new collaborations nurtured. The bi-annual ISMC was last held in Singapore, which is the first time the conference has been held outside of Australia. The conference achieved its aim, being to develop a network of like-minded professionals in the Asia-Pacific region. Social marketing draws from a suite of disciplines to help inform and shape social change including marketing, economics, sociology, psychology, public health, environmental sciences and policy change. Conferences like the ISMC are important mechanisms in the pursuit of social wellbeing, social justice and betterment as it provides a venue for the cross-pollination of perspectives, knowledge and experiences that can help manifest real and effective social change.

The 2018 ISMC encouraged participants from around to globe to share case studies, conceptualisations and empirical papers on challenges unique to their regions with the theme of the conference being *Broadening Cultural Horizons in Social Marketing*. Participants were invited to submit papers for this special section of the *Journal of Social Marketing*. This special section includes practitioner and academic contributions – both conceptual and empirical – from Australia, New Zealand and the USA on food, alcohol, well-being and poverty topics and complex interplay of environmental, social and country factors which create context-based behaviour dynamics and, equally, shape social change programmes.

Social marketing continues to evolve. Year-on-year there has been an ever-expanding range of topics, contexts, theories, approaches, goals, stakeholders, lenses and learnings. The individual and more often combined efforts of practitioners, academics and governments seek to bring about positive behaviour change that improves the quality of people's lives (Kassirer *et al.*, 2019). But experience shows that bringing forth change is not easy, and it is through our sharing that we, the social marketing community, are learning together and adding to the stock of knowledge provides a strong foundation for future work (Goldberg *et al.*, 2018). Complex social marketing phenomena needs complex thinking, and over time reductionist thinking (looking for the “silver bullet” panacea) has proved unhelpful and given way more recently to systems thinking (Domegan *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, Rundle-Thiele *et al.* (2019) Ten Social Marketing Theory Development Goals also provide a pathway forward. Organised in terms of research design goals (e.g. use available theory), building social marketing theories (e.g. build theories explaining why people do not change) and methodological innovations (e.g. extend theory to understanding desired and undesired change), the pursuit of these ten goals will bring help shift the social marketing needle in meaningful and useful ways.

This special section contributes to the social marketing stock of knowledge. Comprised of four articles, the authors share their experiences, learnings and findings with a view to not only achieve positive changes in the specific behaviour of interest but to help others tangibly improve people's lives. As an editorial team, we felt that

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practitioner insights were somewhat silent in the published social marketing discourse and thus were keen to include a Critical Review article. Furthermore, we sought to support research students and emerging researchers and those adopting non-traditional approaches, such as ethnography, by providing a platform for their work in this special section.

The first article in this special section is by practitioner Phill Sherring from the New Zealand Ministry for Primary Industries. Phill's article, a Critical Review, details a case study programme aimed at changing the behaviour of international travellers so as to protect New Zealand's horticultural and agricultural industries. In *Declare or dispose: protecting New Zealand's border with behaviour change*, a programme comprised pre-travel, in-journey and upon arrival interventions for travellers to New Zealand in an effort to encourage them to leave risk items at home, declare them to border staff or dispose of them at airports in dedicated bins. While the Border Compliance Social Marketing programme has been active for a decade, it was extended to high-risk travellers from overseas. In extending the programme, the theory of planned behaviour provided a framework help with efforts, such as understanding how social reference groups can influence behaviour with much of the programme's interventions focussed on travellers perceived behavioural control. Phill explained how ethnographic research and observational research was used to understand traveller behaviour and interviews were used to help validate that which was observed. Passenger journey mapping played a key role in determining key touch points and the development of three staged interventions. Beyond the passenger journey map, the article outlines how these interventions were tailored for passengers arriving from different countries. Pre-journey, in-journey and post-journey interventions have been successful with on-going compliance demonstrating that the theory-based, evidence-informed and nuanced intervention model has effectively improved voluntary behaviour change.

The second article by Khai Trieu Tran, Kristen Robertson and Maree Thyne examines university students' attitudes towards moderate drinking in a wet (New Zealand) versus a dry (Vietnam) drinking culture. Their empirical paper compared and contrasted students in wet and dry drinking contexts and found intrapersonal, interpersonal and environmental barriers at play. While excessive or episodic alcohol consumption has been the primary focus of social marketing, moderate drinking has been largely overlooked. As the authors note, non-drinking is not realistic, especially among young adults, and a more pragmatic approach would be in the middle ground, of moderate drinking. Adopting [Room and Mitchell's \(1972\)](#) wet-dry typology to distinguish between drinking cultures, analysis of data from 226 New Zealand university students and 277 Vietnam students identified positive attitude towards drinking, low self-control, habit, and boredom, amongst others as intrapersonal barriers to moderate drinking. Fear of missing out (FOMO) was an interesting interpersonal barrier identified by the researchers where students did not want to be socially excluded by others in their peer group. Environmental barriers included drinking culture, events and socialising activities. A range of differences between wet and dry cultures were reported with the conclusion being that promoting moderate drinking requires a multifaceted approach. The ecological framework used to organise the barriers was also found to be useful in furthering understanding of the complexity of alcohol consumption and where interventions are best placed.

Raechel Johns conceptual paper titled *Consumer wellbeing research: Integrating social marketing and service research* is the third article in this special section. Raechel's literature review compared the social marketing and transformative service research (TSR) literatures and using anti-smoking as a social cause. The article explored the differences between the

two within the service ecosystem. Through this process, it was found that social marketing tends to stay within the confines of not-for-profit contexts with an upstream focus, while TSR spans both for-profit and not-for-profit contexts with a focus on consumer and employee wellbeing. The article found evidence that both social marketing and TSR operate at all levels of the service ecosystem. The points of parity and points of difference between social marketing and TSR have been a tension among researchers in trying to understand where they intersect and how. The article offers a research agenda to assist, with six ideas that suggest cross-pollination in that social marketing can gain from TSR perspectives in particular ways and vice versa, but the author concludes that both are and are likely to remain distinct fields.

In the final paper of this special section, Sharon Schembri used an ethnographic research design to investigate the interplay between food, poverty and health. Sharon's study of the lived experience of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistant Program (SNAP) in the USA. SNAP, formally known as Food Stamps, is the primary anti-hunger policy in the US welfare system. The article unpacks the paradox of poverty in an affluent world with assumptions of food availability, yet this is not always the case. Using participant observation and fieldwork via shadow shopping with phenomenological interviews, the researcher collected data at a food bank in South Texas. The findings reveal a range of circumstances that brought people to the food bank. Participants shared stories of embarrassment, judgement, loss of hope and fear, as well as gratefulness and the analysis showed several of the myriad of ways food, poverty and health intersect. It is concluded that the findings should encourage policymakers to invest further in welfare programmes such as SNAP to bring positive change at the macro-system level.

In summary, we hope you enjoy this special section Broadening Cultural Horizons in Social Marketing. We wish to thank the authors of this special section as their critical review, conceptual and empirical papers provide valuable insights. The 2018 ISMC in Singapore was a gathering of the social marketing community, and this special section draws through some of the many perspectives and experiences shared at the event. Beyond adding to the stock of knowledge in social marketing, and in the lead up to the 2020 ISMC, we hope this special section encourages continued academic-practitioners-government partnerships that improve the wellbeing of individuals, communities and society as a whole.

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