**Social Marketing Product**

The social marketing "product" is not necessarily a physical offering. A continuum of products exists, ranging from tangible, physical products (e.g., condoms), to services (e.g., medical exams), practices (e.g., breastfeeding, or eating a heart-healthy diet) and finally, more intangible ideas (e.g., environmental protection). In order to have a viable product, people must first perceive that they have a genuine problem, and that the product offering is a good solution for that problem. The role of research here is to discover the consumers' perceptions of the problem and the product, and to determine how important they feel it is to take action against the problem.

• The ***core product***, the benefit promised, is an opportunity for self expression, healthy rebellion, and the health benefits of being a nonsmoker.

• The ***actual product***, the desired behavior, is for youth to reject smoking.

• The ***augmented product***includes a variety of opportunities for youth to express themselves, including sharing tobacco-related information with their friends through social networking sites and playing games that educate them about tobacco while entertaining and holding their interest.

**Designing a Social Marketing Offer:**

The primary question is; whatever the offer is (Tangible good, Idea, Attitude, Behavior, and Service), does it offer the optimal mix of barrier, benefits and competition?

The product must be a solution to a problem, for example, promoting the benefits to adopting a healthier behavior. It also has to be unique and cognizant of the competition. The product must be defined in terms of your target audiences’ beliefs, practices, and values, hence a challenging job.

In recent years, a slew of books—*Nudge*, *Predictably Irrational*, *Switch*, *Sway*, *Freakonomics,* and others have popularized the field of behavioral economics as a source of ideas for understanding and changing human behavior. ***The foundation behind this field is that people do not always rationally weigh out the costs and benefits of a particular choice as classic economics would have us believe.*** ***Rather, people are often irrational (though they may not realize it) in choosing behaviors that may not be in their own best interest, but they do so in a predictable way.***

People have predictable mental biases that affect how they perceive situations and make decisions. If social marketers can take those inclinations into account and stack the deck in favor of the more advantageous choice, we may be able to overcome people’s impulses to do things that are not necessarily in their best self-interest. According to Thaler and Sunstein, people are more likely to make an irrational choice if:

**Types of Mental Biases**

Some of the cognitive biases people are susceptible to include the following:

\_ ***Anchoring***—The estimate of the size or value of something depends on what you start out comparing it with, such as different price points for similar products.

\_ ***Availability***—People tend to overestimate the likelihood of events that are easily remembered, such as a plane crash, versus less familiar but more likely events such as an asthma attack.

\_ ***Representativeness***—People often impose patterns where none actually exist, such as in coin tosses or in stereotypes based on a few members of a group.

\_ ***Unrealistic optimism***—Most people estimate that they will do better than average on a task than they actually will and that problems happen to someone else.

\_ ***Loss aversion***—The level of unhappiness that people feel about something being taken away from them is much higher than the happiness they feel when they first receive it; once something is theirs, they value it more.

\_ ***Status quo bias***—Most people have a hard time overcoming inertia and will keep going on autopilot rather than making a change.

\_ ***Framing***—People will respond differently to the same information presented in either a positive or negative way (e.g., 10 out of 100 will die vs. 90 out of 100 will survive).

\_ ***Priming***—Simply asking someone what they intend to do in a given situation can affect his or her subsequent behavior.

Another method of pinpointing what behaviors will be the most effective in tackling the problem is to identify the positive deviants—those who have positive health or social outcomes despite having similar characteristics to those who are most at risk for the problem—and figure out what they’re doing differently to get the good results. Chip and Dan Heath, in their book *Switch,* call this “finding the bright spots” so you can clone them, rather than only focusing on what’s broken and how to fix it.