



Verification of GPDS planning framework for social marketing: a Delphi method

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Abstract

This paper presents the GPDS (Getting Started, Planning, Design, and Sustainability) Planning Framework for Social Marketing. A qualitative research design was employed. Data were collected from social marketing experts using the Delphi method and analyzed using the thematic analysis approach. The proposed framework includes key strengths of existing Social Marketing Planning (SMP) approaches. It also embeds emerging social marketing principles in the planning process, such as ‘Continuous Consumer Research and Feedback Loop’ (embracing key aspects of monitoring and evaluation) and ‘Expert Consultation’ to overcome the lack of clarity on the interdisciplinary language used in the field. Importantly, the critical aspect of ‘Sustainability’ in the changed behavior is incorporated, aligning with the global consensus definition of social marketing and the United Nations’ (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) focus on sustainable outcomes. Both theory and practice have been applied to the development and verification process of the proposed framework. The framework has consensus from 23 social marketing experts worldwide, drawing on current best practices and experts’ opinions/experience in the field. The GPDS Planning Framework for Social Marketing offers a comprehensive list of sources in the accompanying toolkit, including various activities for insight, design, implementation, and evaluation. This enables practitioners to prepare, plan and deliver social marketing programs to sustain behavioral outcomes. This research informs those working in social marketing, social policy, behavioral insight/design, public health, health communication, and service-user experience. These disciplines deploy social marketing practices in the design and delivery of interventions.

Keywords Social marketing · Planning framework · Consumer insight · Sustainability · Evaluation

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1 Introduction and background

Social marketing is an evolving discipline, well-positioned to drive social and behavioral change (French & Gordon, 2020; Gordon et al., 2016; Lee & Kotler, 2022). The discipline is a half-century old and entering a new phase of advancement and professionalization, as evidenced by its two academic journals (Social Marketing Quarterly and Journal of Social Marketing). It has seven worldwide associations representing Africa, Australia, Europe, Latin America, North America, the Pacific Northwest USA, and the International Social Marketing Association. The formation of the Asian/South Asian Social Marketing Association is underway. Recurring social marketing conferences (Verissimo, 2020), a listserv with several thousand members, over 60 books, over 200 academic and training opportunities (Lee, 2020), and the adoption of social marketing language by government agencies (Deshpande, 2019; Kassirer et al., 2019) further highlight the popularity of the discipline. Additionally, multiple systematic reviews, critical appraisals, and meta-analyses have demonstrated the utility and effectiveness of social marketing approaches within a wide range of contexts (Flaherty et al., 2020).

The progression of social marketing professional standards to advance core knowledge, criteria, and skills required to strengthen the performance of the field is a significant contribution. Similarly, adopting a statement of ethics to promote conscious engagement with diverse ethical issues arising in social marketing work (Kubacki et al., 2020) further solidifies the field's reputation as a competent approach to tackling social and behavioral issues. More rigorous program achievement will be demanded of practitioners, as evidenced by the call from the UN to work together in partnership to end poverty, improve health and education, reduce inequality and drive economic growth without jeopardizing the lives of future generations (UN, 2020), embodied in the 17 SDGs. No doubt, social marketing can address these and other social and behavioral challenges by judiciously using a holistic and practical planning approach; however, very little research has been conducted in this area. Social marketing practice would greatly benefit from an up-to-date planning approach, reflecting current and emerging social marketing themes.

Of late, several SMP approaches are developed, including the hierarchical model of social marketing (French & Russell-Bennett, 2015), the ADF (Accessibility, Desirability, and Feasibility) framework (Cohen & Andrade, 2018), and the SHIFT (Social influence, Habit formation, Individual self, Feelings and cognition, and Tangibility) framework (White et al., 2019). The main criticism of these approaches is that they are theoretically developed with no input from a wider perspective of social marketing practice. The same is the case with the CSD-IES (Consumer research, Segmentation, Design of the social program, Implementation, Evaluation, and Sustainability) planning framework, the most recent contribution to social marketing (Akbar et al., 2021a). The CSD-IES planning framework (see Fig. 1) is developed using the existing SMP approaches as a base. Even though the strengths of existing SMP approaches (see Table 1) are considered while developing the

Table 1 Strengths of existing SMP approaches, adapted from Akbar et al. (2019, 2021a)

Model/Framework/Criteria	New ideas offered for designing interventions
1. Wiebe's (1951) principles	Focuses on operational thinking
2. Chandy et al.'s (1965) seven-stage criteria	Addition of cost-benefit analysis and systematic nature with a straightforward start and endpoint
3. Kotler and Zaltman's (1971) planning system	Continuous feedback mechanism and environmental and competition analyses
4. MacFadyen et al.'s (1999) four features of social marketing	Consumer-driven strategy
5. Rothschild's (1999) MOA-EML framework	Emphasis on systematic segmentation planning and adopted principles from marketing, education, and law
6. Andreasen's (2002) benchmark criteria	Focuses on exchange theory and the upstream/downstream emphasis for designing interventions
7. The Centre for Disease Control USA (2005) CDCynergy model	Focuses on pre-testing, piloting, evaluation, and monitoring the intervention
8. Hastings' (2007) health behavior determinants	Offers ideas used in social cognitive, consumer behavior theory, and Bandura's social learning theory
9. Weinreich's (2010) planning process	Uses performance management tools and the idea of including wider stakeholders in interventions and focuses on financial resource analysis
10. Lee and Kotler's (2011) planning process for social marketing	Incorporates Lauterborn 4Cs, literature review, and budgeting
11. Robinson-Maynard et al.'s (2013) 19-step criteria as	Addition of sustainability in changed behavior and ethical practice while planning interventions
12. Tapp and Spotswood's (2013) COM-SM model	Inspiration from nudge theory
13. French and Apfel's (2014) STELa model	Systematic thinking and planning
14. French and Russell-Bennett's (2015) hierarchical model of social marketing	Value co-creation, relationship building and service dominance with focus on citizens
15. Cohen and Andrade's (2018) the ADF framework	Action-oriented and adopts ideas from social marketing, behavioral economics, and psychology
16. White et al.'s (2019) the SHIFT framework	Emphasis on social influence, habit formation, individual self, feelings and cognition, and tangibility

CSD-IES planning framework, selection bias is probable, i.e., some pertinent existing SMP approaches might have been missed. Reflecting on the 16 SMP approaches presented in Table 1, it is clear these approaches are deeply rooted in social marketing fundamentals and evolved over the years. More contemporary approaches mirror the recent development within the field as compared to approaches developed in the past. For a comparison, see detailed analysis of these approaches in the following two studies:

- A “critical review of social marketing planning approaches” (Akbar et al., 2019) offers a detailed examination of existing SMP approaches

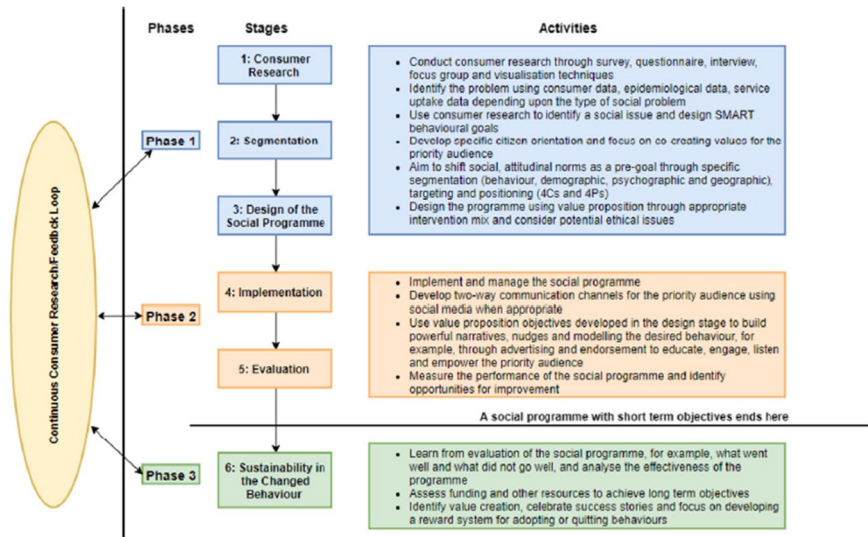


Fig. 1 CSD-IES planning framework (Akbar et al., 2021a)

- “Social marketing: Advancing a new planning framework to guide programs” (Akbar et al., 2021a), presents the CSD-IES planning framework that was developed in the light of key strengths of existing SMP approaches

Akbar et al.’s (2021a) analysis endorses the systematic approach used to develop the CSD-IES planning framework, allowing it to be an all-inclusive and robust starting point for designing interventions. Indeed, in its entirety, the framework advances the theoretical base of social marketing; further empirical testing is needed for practice to establish how far the CSD-IES planning framework can support and guide programs. It is also acknowledged that judgment is unavoidable in selecting and critiquing existing SMP approaches. *“There are many ways of doing this [critiquing]; no assurances are given that the SMP approaches selected to inform the CSD-IES framework are optimum”* (Akbar et al.’s 2021a, pp. 276).

The CSD-IES planning framework intends to overcome weaknesses in the existing SMP approaches by unifying social marketing principles with emergent themes such as ethical consideration, continuous consumer research, sustainability in the changed behaviors, and more. This synergy between old and new themes, bringing theory and practice together, is a great move for the progression of the discipline. At the same time, it raises some important queries. For example, the notion of ethics in social marketing is underdeveloped; there is a possibility that the role of ethics can be perceived differently in different situations, requiring a more concrete direction to design effective and ethically guided programs. The broadening social marketing literature acknowledges that the role of ethics needs to be better understood (Kubacki et al., 2020).

Similarly, the direction given on sustainability is limited, considering sustainability is a vast concept. It may mean different things for different stakeholders in

different programs signifying the multi-dimensional nature of sustainability. The CSD-IES planning framework links sustainability with the view of behavior maintenance, funding, the length of programs, and learning from past experiences. It, however, does not address the possible barriers and benefits of behavioral changes for associated stakeholders. In line with Gordon et al.'s (2016) view, there is considerable discussion about the need for more sustainable behavioral outcomes beyond individual behavior change; a more critical and deeper examination of the multi-domain nature of sustainability is required.

One reason for the aforementioned shortcomings of the CSD-IES planning framework is that, to date, its conception is only grounded in academic literature. Though the fundamental assumption of the CSD-IES planning framework is that it consistently characterizes nascent social marketing concepts, there remains the possibility that the framework may not be plausible to implement. This potential for failure should not be ignored. One way to make the CSD-IES planning framework more fitting in practice is by gaining insights from academics as well as practitioners by verifying it in a diversity of settings for further improvement.

Therefore, this research aims to verify the CSD-IES planning framework¹ using the Delphi method and addresses the following research questions to reach a consensus:

- What is missing from the framework?
- What is not required in the framework?
- What improvements can be made?

Holistic perspectives about the framework, and the details within it, are examined through the application of thematic analysis of respondents' comments. This allows for both a current- and future-oriented interpretation.

2 Method

2.1 The Delphi method

In ancient Greek, the term Delphi referred to an oracle that predicted the future (Thangaratnam & Redman, 2005). Today, the Delphi method is used in various disciplines for novel development and forecasting, for example, management and marketing (Brancheau et al., 1996), international business (Griffith et al., 2008), innovation management (Munier & Rondé, 2001), medical applications (Ferri et al., 2005), education (Broomfield & Humphris, 2001), information systems (Paré et al., 2013) and nursing (Akins et al., 2005). The foremost strength of the method is it

¹ The name CSD-IES was agreed upon based on the given stages in the framework (Akbar et al., 2021a). During the verification process, more stages are added, and each phase has been given a separate name. This results in a new name for the proposed framework as GPDS (Getting Started, Planning, Delivery, Sustainability) Planning Framework for Social Marketing based on the given phases.

seeks experts' opinions to enhance the practical relevance of a novel development (Reguant-Álvarez & Torrado-Fonseca, 2016). Obtaining consensus among experts is another strength (Paré et al., 2013), requiring long-term engagement with the research participants, which can also be seen as a limitation (Ferri et al., 2005). For example, Donohoe and Needham (2009) claim that “*the Delphi method is time-consuming and laborious for both researchers and participants, participants might also drop out due to the long temporal commitment, distraction between rounds, or disappointment with the process*” (p. 20). Still, the long-term commitment from the experts does not demand proximity, thus allowing experts to offer constructive feedback on the novel idea. The Delphi method is predominantly suitable for solving complex research problems (Donohoe & Needham, 2009), especially when there is incomplete knowledge about a particular phenomenon. The method is appropriate for exploring areas where a lack of clarity exists or subjects are contentious, justifying the need to engage with the experts over a longer period to gain clarity until consensus is reached.

An alternative to the Delphi method, the Nominal Group Technique (NGT), is suggested to achieve group consensus (McMillan et al., 2016). NGT is a well-known method in pharmacy research and is similar to focus group technique based on more structured face-to-face interaction (Harvey & Holmes, 2012). The four stages of NGT (Generating, Recording, Discussing, and Ranking ideas) help generate concepts in a relatively short period. However, the resultant ideas may not be fully developed due to non-demanding nature of NGT. Compared to NGT, the Delphi method is considered a systematic methodology, offering various stages to gain expert consensus (von Briel, 2018).

In contrast, NGT is a forthright and overly structured approach because of its controlled nature (Boddy, 2012). The Delphi method offers more flexibility in terms of time and gathering ideas from geographically scattered participants (Hsu & Sandford, 2007). The choice of a data collection method in Delphi research is dependent on the nature of the research. With the data collection process operating on each round, whereby respondents give feedback after every round and are then allowed to respond again till the verification is achieved through consensus (Hasson et al., 2000; Meijering et al., 2013). Therefore, the Delphi method was selected in the present study to verify the CSD-IES planning framework. Figure 2 illustrates the Delphi process used in this research.

2.2 Sampling

Sampling is selecting a representative group from the population (Marshall, 1996). Upon analyzing various sampling techniques, purposive sampling was considered appropriate for the present study. Purposive sampling requires researchers to have prior knowledge about the potential participants, in this case, social marketing experts, henceforth linking with the purpose of the study so that eligible participants can be selected. In addition, purposive sampling is used when researchers intend to access a particular subset of people, as all study participants may not be selected because they may not fit a particular profile

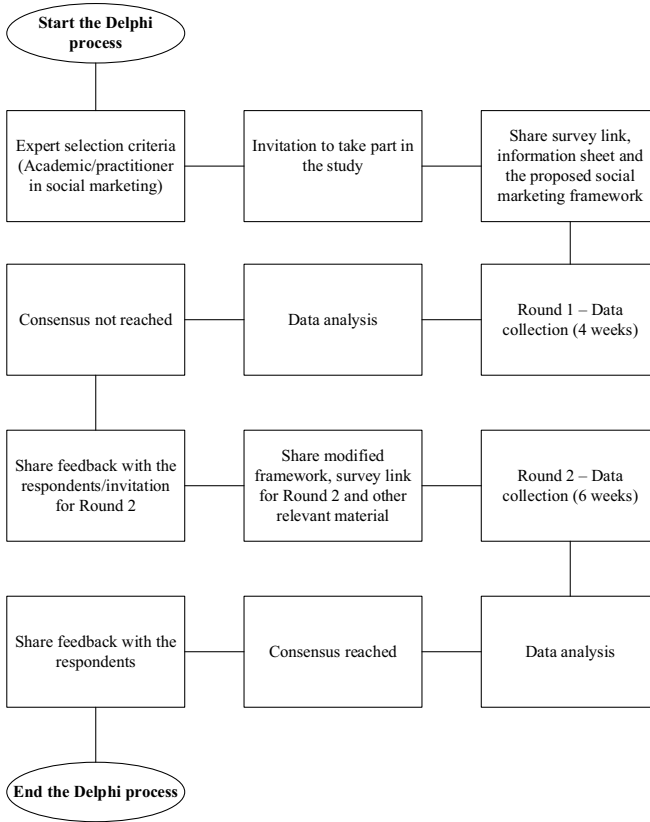


Fig. 2 The Delphi process

(Cohen et al., 2011; Palys, 2008; Tongco, 2007). A total of 60 potential participants were approached through social marketing listserv groups, LinkedIn, Twitter, emails, and social marketing/marketing conferences in the UK and Belgium. These conferences were timely for the research and considered adequate to access the profiles of the potential participants. Other social marketing/behavior change conferences in Australia and the USA could have been selected for the research. However, the authors believe that three conferences attended for this research accurately represent the social marketing community and attract social marketers worldwide, including thought leaders in the field. Of 60, 24 respondents were available, showed interest in the study, and were recruited (see Table 2 for respondents' profiles) based on the following inclusion criteria.

- Respondents must have a minimum of 5 years of experience as an academic, practitioner, or both in social marketing (5 years of experience is considered sufficient to understand social marketing fundamentals, theory, and applications)

Table 2 Respondents' profile

No	Job role	Location	Position	Source of communication	Round 1	Round 2
1	Professor	UK	Academic and Practitioner	Email	✓	✓
2	Ph.D. researcher (social marketing)	UK	Academic	Email and LinkedIn	✓	✓
3	Professor	USA	Academic	Email and LinkedIn	✓	✓
4	Project Director	USA	Academic and Practitioner	Email	✓	✓
5	Research and insight agent in social marketing	Australia	Academic and Practitioner	Email and LinkedIn	✓	✓
6	Research and insight specialist in social marketing	USA	Academic and Practitioner	LinkedIn	✓	✓
7	Associate professor	USA	Academic and Practitioner	Email	✓	✓
8	Associate professor	Australia	Academic and Practitioner	Email and LinkedIn	✓	✓
9	Architect & designer of public health/social change programs	USA	Academic and Practitioner	Email and LinkedIn	✓	✓
10	Lead change agent	USA	Academic and Practitioner	Email and LinkedIn	✓	✓
11	Behavioral design strategist for health and social change	Middle East	Academic and Practitioner	Email and LinkedIn	✓	✓
12	Director	Canada	Practitioner	Email and LinkedIn	✓	✓
13	Director	New Zealand	Practitioner	Email and LinkedIn	✓	✓
14	Behavior change and local development practitioner	UK	Practitioner	LinkedIn	✓	✓
15	Veteran Public Health & Social Marketing Professional	USA	Academic and Practitioner	Email and LinkedIn	✓	✓
16	Social and Behavior Change Agent	USA	Practitioner	LinkedIn	✓	✓
17	Director	UK	Practitioner	Email and LinkedIn	✓	✓
18	Director	Belgium	Practitioner	Email and LinkedIn	✓	✓
19	Social marketing professional	UK	Practitioner	Email and LinkedIn	✓	✓
20	Social and behavior change agent	USA	Practitioner	Email and LinkedIn	✓	Excluded
21	Director	Germany	Academic and Practitioner	Email and LinkedIn	✓	✓
22	Professor	UK	Academic and Practitioner	Email and LinkedIn	✓	✓
23	Regional social marketing manager	Pakistan	Practitioner	Email and LinkedIn	✓	✓
24	Behavior change marketer	UK	Academic and Practitioner	Email and LinkedIn	✓	✓

Table 3 Sample questions for data collection

Semi-structured questions to gain insight into the framework	Structured questions to reach a consensus
<p>The following questions were asked using the CSD-IES planning framework as a focus,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is missing in the proposed framework (including given phases, stages, activities, and continuous consumer research/feedback loop)? ● Which elements should not be included in the proposed framework (including given phases, stages, activities, and continuous consumer research/feedback loop)? ● Do you have any suggestions for further improvement of the proposed framework (including given phases, stages, activities, and continuous consumer research/feedback loop)? 	<p>The following Likert scale questions were asked based on the usage, applications, and feasibility of the proposed framework (on the scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree),</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Is the structure of the revised framework easy to follow? ● Would the revised framework be easy to use in practice? ● In the revised framework, the phases column is modified based on the feedback from round 1. Do you think this is an improvement?

- Respondents must have experience in planning, designing, and implementing at least one social marketing intervention (experience in planning, designing, and implementing a social marketing intervention is considered sufficient to understand the planning process of social marketing)

Evidence suggests that the Delphi method's optimal sample size varies from 10 to 1685 respondents (Reid, 1988); a justified number of participants depends on the nature, type, and size of the research (Avella, 2016). The selected sample for this study included young social marketers with fresh thinking and thought leaders with diverse experience in theory and practice. Overall, the selected 24 respondents collectively carry nearly 200 years of experience and correctly represent a small but globally scattered social marketing community (Lee, 2020); therefore, they are considered sufficient for round 1.

The respondents were allowed to participate in round 2. 23 out of 24 respondents from round 1 agreed to participate in round 2, eliminating one respondent from the study due to personal reasons. One of the main characteristics of the Delphi method is that the number of participants in each round does not have to remain constant throughout the entire process; participants can drop out or skip a round and return later (Wynaden et al., 2014).

2.3 Data collection

A semi-structured questionnaire was selected for rounds 1 and 2, the Delphi method's most successful data collection tool (Linstone et al., 2006; Cairns et al., 2015). The feedback from the pilot study further validates using a semi-structured questionnaire allowing the respondents to offer in-depth insights (Harris & Brown, 2010) on various phases, stages, and activities of the CSD-IES planning framework. For both rounds, the respondents were asked to complete a questionnaire that took

approximately 15 minutes using Google Forms, widely considered an appropriate digital data collection platform (Raju & Harinarayana, 2016). Table 3 presents sample questions asked during the data collection.

2.4 Data analysis

Clarke & Braun's (2017) six-step thematic analysis framework was used to generate codes and draw themes from the data gathered using NVivo software. This six-step framework is a systematic approach that emphasizes recording, pinpointing, and examining themes gathered from qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2017). All team members (a total of two) separately familiarised themselves with the collected data (reading and understanding the responses gathered through semi-structured questionnaires for rounds 1 and 2). Followed by the generation of initial codes, each data segment was coded as relevant to the CSD-IES planning framework. The team then generated themes, and initial codes with similar meanings/perceptions were categorized into themes related to the framework's given phases/stages. The themes were then discussed, reviewed, and agreed upon to reduce researchers' bias (Clarke & Braun, 2017). After review, the collected themes were defined and documented in the next section.

3 Results and discussion

3.1 Missing elements in the proposed framework (Round 1)

Concerns about missing *behavior selection* and *audience insight* elements from the 'Consumer Research' stage were expressed by Respondent 6. The proposed framework references aspects of consumer research in the 'Activities' column, but our results argue that consumer insight should be given more significance to understand the target audiences' needs and motivation to quit, adapt or change certain behaviors. French et al. (2010) authenticate that citizen-focused solutions can only be achieved by gaining audience insight as early as possible to select the right behavior. Brennan et al. (2015) agree that consumer insight-oriented research is required to gain meaningful engagement and understanding of consumers' socio-cultural backgrounds. Such comments indicate a lack of clarity in the 'Activities' section partly because they do not correspond with the stages supported by Respondent 2:

Activities column could be marked more clearly according to the stage it refers to.

The assessment of the context of a social marketing program early in the planning sequence was considered important; for example, Respondent 1 said:

Competition/Asset assessment and action, systems analysis, theory and evidence review, feasibility review, and partnership strategy are missing.

Respondent 11 stated that:

“...research stage needs to include analysis of the environment/context before consumer research...”.

The missing reference to situational awareness was further highlighted by Respondent 9. Indeed, historical and environmental analyses are significant in producing effective social marketing programs (Hastings, 2007; Smith & Berge, 2009; Wymer, 2011), and neglecting their use can be detrimental. Correspondingly, several SMP approaches include a direct reference to analyzing the environment, context, situation, or market (as opposed to the customer) research early in the sequence (Akbar et al., 2019). Some SMP approaches make a tangential reference, for example, ‘consumer research and customer experiences’ (Andreasen, 2002); ‘customer orientation: good market research and competition analysis’ (French & Blair-Stevens, 2006); ‘analysis’ (Weinreich, 2010); and ‘formative research’ (Robinson-Maynard et al., 2013). Our results demonstrate that program designers must be aware of the user’s social setting when planning an intervention to provide comprehensive support.

The use of various avenues, such as advertising, public relations, sales promotion, direct marketing, and social/digital media, is observed in social marketing to impact behaviors (Alden et al., 2011; Evans et al., 2022). Respondent 5 alluded, “... *other media must be used (in addition to social media) ...*”. The use of social media in the proposed framework highlights the importance of two-way communication. It acts as a source of feedback, especially when communication occurs from the target audience to the program designers. This is imperative because social marketing interventions vary and may require various communication techniques to reach the target audience. Elaborating on various communication tools and their applications would improve the practitioners’ clarity.

Similarly, the results require more detail and guidance on program design, specifically regarding capacity building, stakeholder engagement, and co-creation. For example, Respondent 10 mentioned, “*Capacity building and/or co-creation with the communities is missing.*” Likewise, Respondent 19 said: “*Stakeholder engagement and activation are critical areas that need to be clearer.*” These concepts are important to social marketers and exemplify how those designing and delivering interventions should collaborate with recipients. Such individuals should be perceived as co-workers, co-creators, co-learners, and mediators, recognizing the value to the target audience and stakeholders to achieve mutual value (Lefebvre, 2012). A clear reference to value co-creation in the proposed framework simultaneously offers efficiencies in social marketing programs and overcomes obstacles to dealing with wicked problems.

Concept testing/pre-testing is another common thread noted concerning the absence of explanation about the message and material development, communication, and media channels, i.e., how to execute prototyping, concept testing, or pre-testing, along with market testing and feasibility review. While prototyping and concept testing are relatively well understood in commercial marketing (Urban & Katz, 1983), particularly with the ascendancy of ‘Design Thinking’ (Lefebvre & Kotler, 2011), ‘Agile Project Management’ (Stare, 2014), and ‘Customer Experience’ (Maklan & Klaus, 2011), these terms are relatively new to

social marketing. However, such methods are increasingly used within non-profit contexts deploying behavioral design and user-testing. Further guidance will be needed to support practitioners in getting the most from these emerging strategies, which embrace rapid, responsive, iterative methods to design services/systems/processes/products/interventions that meet stakeholders' needs.

Several respondents raised concerns regarding the monitoring, evaluation, and feedback procedures presented in the proposed framework. Respondent 16 mentioned:

.... planning for monitoring and evaluation should be in the earlier stages of work to show that it is a cycle better via the feedback.

Other remarks include a lack of clarity on assessing program performance for effective social marketing interventions. Such comments validate Weinreich's (2010) position on the significance of evaluation and feedback, explaining that a social marketing plan must have various evaluation methods to assess the outcome and impact of the program. For example, formative evaluation (what should we do?), process evaluation (how are we doing?), and summative evaluation (did we do it?). Results indicate an absence of explanation about the length of objectives and learning from the evaluation stage to maintain the desired behavior. The omission of these elements could result in program failure (Akbar et al., 2021b).

A lack of guidance on the 'Sustainability' stage is an oversight. The requirement for greater direction regarding the sustainability of changed behavior is noted in the literature, discussing how it is an emerging concept that requires broader coverage in all planning stages (Trivellas et al., 2016). While sustainability/behavior maintenance is an important aspect of social marketing in Robinson-Maynard et al. (2013) 19-step criteria, no guidance is given on how sustainability can be developed. Peattie and Peattie (2009) argue that sustainability in behavior change can be achieved if the target audience is correctly segmented. In contrast, Brennan and Binney (2008) suggest that a greater knowledge of the target audiences' background is needed to influence their behaviors in the long term. Even though the 'Sustainability' stage in the proposed framework is valued, many requested further direction on how sustainability can be achieved for practitioners. This is because the notion of sustainability is broad and may have different meanings in different situations. The addition of sustainability in the CDS-IES planning framework is probably the first explicit mention in an SMP approach requiring greater details on sustainability applications and implementation and proposed ideas of short and long-term objectives. A few respondents enforced this; for example, Respondent 14 questioned, "*Interesting to know why a short-term program doesn't need to learn from evaluation or celebrate success.*"

Similarly, Respondent 12 said:

...., even a short-term program should measure effectiveness and share success stories.

Even though the proposed framework is aligned with the endorsed definition of social marketing (ISMA et al., 2017), a clearer reference to various social

marketing principles, such as competing behaviors, a key principle of Andreasen's (2002) benchmark criteria, would add the framework's appropriateness, ease of application, and explanatory power. Likewise, several participants reflected on the structural limitations of the proposed framework, recognizing an urgency to resolve issues on the linkage between various stages and the feedback loop. Illustrative commentary on activities given in the proposed framework would enable practitioners to understand interdisciplinary terminologies used in the proposed framework, an issue previously identified as a primary weakness of existing SMP approaches (Akbar et al., 2019).

3.2 Elements not required in the proposed framework (Round 1)

The results indicate that all the elements presented in the proposed framework are important and should be included. Yet, a misleading reference to social media has emerged as a major theme that should be excluded. Respondents 13 and 19 contend that ambiguous social media reference creates misperception about when and how to adopt social media in social marketing programs. Indeed, social media and social marketing integration create a powerful synergy to deal with social issues (Thackeray et al., 2012; Akbar et al., 2021c); social media's role is limited to communication. Therefore, the appropriate use of social media within the media mix must be clearly explained to the potential users of the proposed framework.

3.3 Suggestions to improve the proposed framework (Round 1)

Comments were made on the proposed framework being sensible (Respondent 22), comprehensive (Respondent 20), and "... *nicely done, and after completion, it could be a good webinar topic at International Social Marketing Association*" (Respondent 10). Respondent 4 believed that:

The proposed framework is like a high-level conceptual framework" and "It could be useful as a guidance tool but would need detailed resources to help program implementers conduct each step.

Respondent 11 had similar views:

As a general guide to thinking about the social marketing process, it gives a good overview. But there's no how-to for the stages that guide what to do practically.

The main criticism was that the proposed framework requires more focus on operationalizability by offering clarity to be useable in practice (Respondents 5 and 8). Others believe that while the proposed framework is easy to use, it is wrongly designed, and stages should not be presented in a specific order as it is a dynamic process (Respondent 1). Such feedback indicates modification and greater clarity needed in the 'Activities' section. Giving direction and detailed resources (as a guiding tool) would help practitioners conduct each step. This was echoed by Respondent 3:

There is a tremendous amount of published research, theory, and practice-based evidence on social marketing. The framework contains some parts of that evidence base but lacks others.

Respondent 1 further advised consultation with the ECDC technical guidance (European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, 2014) for a full list of steps and tasks. While Respondent 5 recommended incorporating Andreasen's (2002) benchmark criteria (already included except for 'assessment of competing behaviors'). Further, Respondent 16 proposed the following two changes in the proposed framework:

"In sustainability, I would also add next to "celebrating success stories" and "be comfortable discussing failures and expand the sustainability element on behaviors, goals of the programs, and available funds."

Ignoring the reasons for failures in social marketing is a significant oversight, a common issue noted in social marketing practice (Cook et al., 2020, 2021; Akbar et al., 2021b). Sharing failure stories in the proposed framework would add to the call of action on the absence of discussing failure within social marketing scholarship. Overall, the results demonstrate that the proposed framework is too simplistic to describe a quality SMP approach and yet too complex to help people with small budgets. Mention was made of similar stepped approaches currently in use, such as the National Social Marketing Centre's criteria (Respondent 14), OASIS framework (Respondent 19), Total Process Planning model (Respondents 17 and 19), and Johns Hopkins CCP program's 'P' Process (Respondent 4). These comments endorse that the proposed framework is consistent with current social marketing trends; a robust reference to emerging principles would add further strength.

3.4 Consensus on the proposed framework (Round 1)

Consensus can be reached through a percentage agreement in the Delphi method, depending on the research's nature (Diamond et al., 2014). Von der Gracht et al. (2008) provides evidence that 75%:25% criteria (i.e., 75% agreement and 25% disagreement) are suitable to reach a consensus. Therefore, the 75%:25% criterion was used (excluding neutral responses, merging agree/strongly agree and disagree/strongly disagree responses) to reach a consensus.

While there were several positive reviews after round 1, respondents were divided about the feasibility of using the framework in practice and the comprehensibility of the given phases, stages, activities, continuous consumer research, and feedback loop. The consensus was not reached; instead, several recommendations were made for further improvement, particularly regarding changes and weightings to the structure, the addition of certain elements, and the elimination of ambiguity through clarifying terminology used in the activity section. As the Delphi method's main purpose is to reach a consensus (Hsu & Sandford, 2007), a subsequent round was employed following changes to the framework based on round 1.

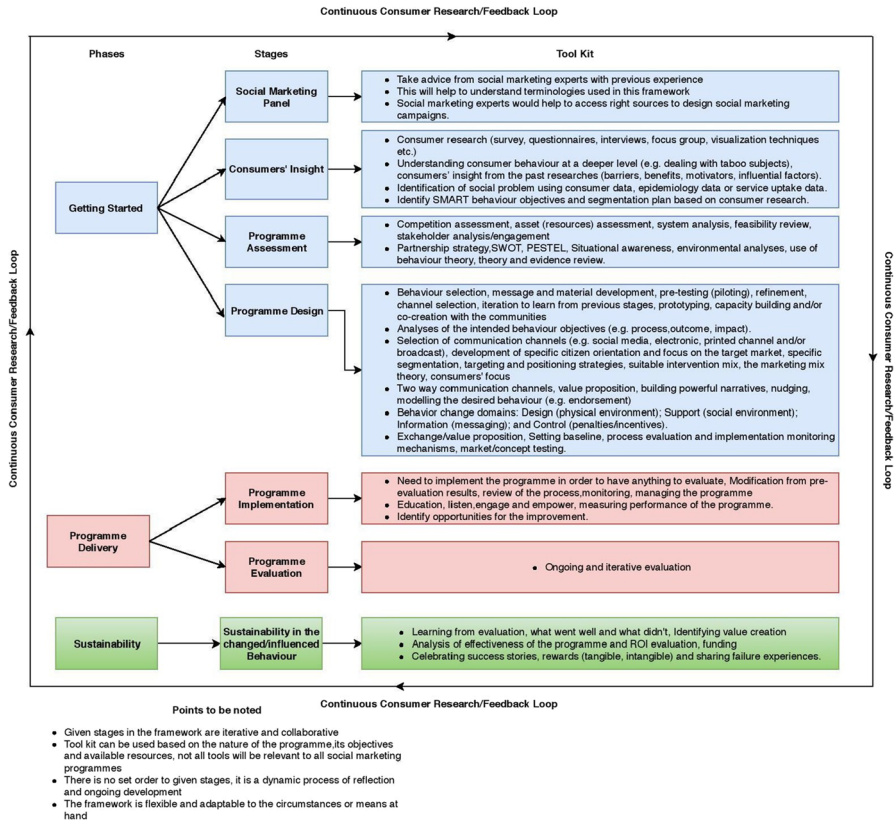


Fig. 3 Revised social marketing framework

3.5 Changes to framework after Round 1

Many changes were made to the proposed framework (see Fig. 3). The phases were given names (1- Getting Started, 2- Programme Delivery, and 3- Sustainability), indicating the purpose of given phases, stages, and activities while bringing clarity to the overall structure of the framework, thus supporting practitioners with limited social marketing program experience. The numeric order of stages was removed, demonstrating the overall process is iterative (French, 2017), signifying flexibility for practitioners regarding sequence. A new stage, 'Social Marketing Panel' in the 'Getting Started' phase, was introduced due to the lack of clarity and challenges around social marketing as a field (Deshpande, 2019; Kassirer et al., 2019; Lee, 2020; Akbar et al., 2021c) exemplified by a lack of appreciation of social marketing at the top management level, inadequate documentation of policy and publicity and lack of academic stature. The 'Social Marketing Panel' stage would help to eliminate ambiguities around some of the interdisciplinary terminologies used in the proposed framework. However, there will be a cost of consulting the 'Social Marketing Panel', which means that some

social marketing programs may not have the financial resources (Chang et al., 2019) to acquire social marketing expertise. It should be acknowledged that consulting experts is a common practice in many sectors including marketing and management to reduce barriers and produce effective results (Greiner & Metzger, 1983).

Another change was the merger of the ‘Consumer Research’ and ‘Segmentation’ stages into one stage named ‘Consumer Insight,’ endorsed by Dietrich (2016), who observes that segmentation requires an in-depth understanding of consumers to analyze their needs, behaviors, attitudes, and motivation for behavior change, adoption, or refusal. Luecking et al. (2017) highlight the significance of targeting the right segment and evaluating their wants and needs to build a program that meets the target audience’s identified needs.

A further revision was the ‘Design’ stage’s division into ‘Programme Assessment’ and ‘Programme Design’ stages, an approach supported by French & Apfel (2015). ‘Programme Assessment’ offers details on analyzing internal and external environmental factors, including assessing assets, competition, and stakeholders. In the ‘Programme Design’ stage, the original version did not include prototyping or pre-testing of messages and material, market testing, or feasibility review. The revised version provides relevant activities for such testing. Brown et al. (2008) argue that despite the pre-testing concept being desirable in social marketing literature, many interventions do not necessarily have the resources or time to conduct it. However, potential users of the proposed framework can take advantage of these activities, especially those who can afford pre-testing or concept testing. Additionally, a wider range of communication channels was added to the revised framework, giving practitioners various options depending on the social marketing program’s demands.

Despite the challenge of achieving sustainable, lasting behavior change, Coskun et al. (2015) explain how it can be measured and evaluated using continuous consumer research, a feedback loop, and regular evaluations. The continuous consumer research and feedback loop depict a continuous/ongoing process that can impact any program’s phase/stage based on the target audience’s changing needs. Furthermore, each stage has been given a separate toolkit in the revised framework, offering inclusive information and resources for each activity, eliminating concerns raised in round 1.

Simiyu-Wakhisi et al. (2011) view that sustainability is required only for long-term behavior change programs. Many programs lack funds to develop sustainability or are not designed for the long term. The note in the original framework (referred to planning for short-term programs ending after the ‘Evaluation’ stage) was dropped as it caused confusion. In response, the framework’s sustainability elements have been enhanced by including a relevant toolkit for both short-term and long-term social marketing initiatives.

3.6 Missing elements in the revised framework (Round 2)

Findings indicate that the toolkit for the ‘Social Marketing Panel’ stage should offer actionable steps. Respondents believed that co-designing aspects must be given more status than the social marketing expert panel, a view echoed by French et al. (2010, p.12), “*creating value for citizens is not about abdicating responsibility for*

defining what constitutes social good by just responding to what people say they need and want. It is about understanding, listening, and engaging people as partners in defining the nature of problems and selecting and delivering solutions". Correspondingly, an explanation of the terminology used in the toolkit is required. For example, the reference to the marketing mix is needed in the toolkit section, consistent with Akbar et al.'s (2019) views that the use of intricate terminology limits many existing SMP approaches, a common issue for social marketing (Lee, 2020). As social marketing is interdisciplinary, practitioners may require additional guidance on tools linked with other disciplines, such as traditional marketing, psychology, sociology, and behavioral economics. An additional commentary on such theoretical references would be useful for the uptake of the proposed framework in practice.

Several respondents noted the lack of balance between marketing and communication activities in the program design phase. Alden et al. (2012, p.167) stated that *"in social marketing, promotion 'P' must be integrated with the 'other' 3Ps of product, price, and placement because the focus of the communications is not on providing information but on pro-social behavior change and actions such as trial and maintenance."* Respondent 8 believed the revised framework missed the reference to the extended Ps (people, process, physical evidence) of the marketing mix framework, which is central to social marketing (Da Silva & Mazzon, 2016; Wood, 2016). A reference to the 4Cs (cost, convenience, consumer, and communication) of marketing (Lauterborn, 1990) or three additional Cs, including commitment, customer journey, and citizen (Akbar et al., 2022), would balance the toolkit for practitioners. This would allow practitioners to answer the calls to design interventions beyond the 4Ps of marketing (Peattie & Peattie, 2011).

Despite many criticisms (Peattie & Peattie, 2003; McAuley, 2014), the 4Ps are still acknowledged as an important part of the theoretical and practical process of social marketing. Although 'customers' and 'citizens' are more frequently mentioned and the need for citizen-centric delivery is promoted, the discourse is often about how to influence citizens rather than a narrative that emphasizes co-creation and citizen-directed programs. Peattie and Peattie (2011) argue that it is time for social marketing to develop its own terminology to cultivate consistency and clarity and reduce confusion. This can be done by replacing 'Product' with 'Social Proposition,' 'Price' with 'Social Cost,' 'Place' with 'Accessibility,' and 'Promotion' with 'Social Communication.' Adding the 3Cs (Change, Competition, Consequences) of social marketing (Akbar et al., 2022) in the toolkit would offer more options for practitioners to choose elements of the social marketing mix based on the need of the intervention.

The results present a further critique of the 'Programme Implementation' and 'Programme Evaluation' stages, arguing that these stages are the most substantial part of any intervention and must be given further thought with a broader range of activities. It is argued that the 'Programme Evaluation' requires detail, such as the type of evaluation needed, at what stage, and how a team will implement evaluation techniques. This concurs with Weinreich's (2010) and Lee and Kotler's (2011) views, which demonstrate the implication of evaluation while planning, designing, and implementing a social marketing program. Remarks regarding the link between these two stages were also noted; for example, Respondent 12 mentioned:

.... I'd like to see right in the implementation stage of the model the idea of (a) trying out / pilot-testing potential improvements and (b) a feedback loop that explicitly includes feedback from program monitoring and evaluation (not just from consumers).

In addition, respondents highlighted the missing explanation for how the feedback loop worked, stating that it should be included in the 'Getting Started' stage as that is where evaluation should be designed.

The 'Sustainability' phase is acknowledged as a standout point in the revised framework that will aid users' clarity, a view consistent with Brennan & Binney (2008) and Peattie & Peattie (2009), who believe social marketing requires a greater emphasis on sustainable outcomes in the desired behavior. Thus, more attention to this phase is recommended. Respondent 2 suggested:

The addition of sustainability is also one of the principal differences between this model and the existing ones. Therefore, this explanation could be developed a little more too.

3.7 Elements not required in the proposed framework (Round 2)

As round 2 progressed, the focus on structural issues, clarity on terminologies, and overall presentation became evident. Respondent 10 suggested:

... you might consider revising the name of "social marketing panel," which suggests only talking to social marketing experts. Most folks, I think, will start with literature review and environmental scan....

Similarly, Respondent 16 mentions,

I don't like the Social Marketing Panel section, but this seems new. As a practitioner, this seems out of reach. How will I find these "experts"? What is defined as an "expert"? How much will they charge me? I would rather see things like reviewing the literature and talking to colleagues versus 'experts.

Some concerns were raised regarding the imbalance of activities between various stages and phases of the framework. The level of detail provided for the 'Social Marketing Panel' stage is considered inadequate for mid-level specialists to understand and implement, for example, how to source social marketing experts and their likely charges. Getting advice from social marketing experts is not essential because lay workers could work through the requirements using other resources. There is the acknowledgment that some practitioners may prefer to consult the literature rather than seek 'expert' consultation. Regardless of the format of the consultation stage, the toolkit activities should be replaced with action to bring clarity to the practitioners. Another issue noted is the ambiguous reference to communication channels, including some repetition in the toolkit. Similarly, Respondent 4 thinks:

It's unclear how the getting started, program delivery, and sustainability pathways interact with/influence each other. Looks like three parallel but unconnected pathways.

3.8 Consensus and Suggestions for Improvement (Round 2)

The results showed consensus was reached on the feasibility/comprehensibility of given phases, stages, toolkit, continuous customer research, and feedback loop alongside the framework's overall design and structure using 75%:25% criteria (i.e., 75% agreement and 25% disagreement) with an average result of 82.52%:17.48%.

Overall, themes that were developed while gathering suggestions for improvement are deemed valuable to refine the proposed framework to improve its presentation and application. On the one hand, the revised framework is appreciated; for example, *"I think it is a good basic framework and refresher for most professionals to use"* (Respondent 21). On the other hand, some criticism is noted; for example, *"It is getting too complex for most mid-level non-specialists to do alone"* (Respondent 1), and *"... the framework [is] a bit wordy"* (Respondent 6). To achieve greater clarity in the toolkit, respondents suggest paring down the toolkit section to general concepts rather than the level of detail provided. An accompanying article would be useful to provide further details for potential users.

3.9 Changes to framework after Round 2

The revised framework is called the GPDS Planning Framework for Social Marketing based on the given phases (see Fig. 4). A separate toolkit was developed to accompany the framework offering additional commentary (see Table 4).

In the 'Getting Started' phase, the 'Expert Consultation' replaces the 'Social Marketing Panel' stage, retaining the premise that those new to social marketing should seek expert advice and/or conduct a literature review to offer guidance and link every stage in the framework. Confusion could arise from multidisciplinary terminology in social marketing (Akbar et al., 2021c; French & Apfel, 2015; Lee, 2020; Peattie & Peattie, 2003), drawn from competing disciplines such as behavioral economics, public health, psychology, and commercial marketing (Kassirer et al., 2019). Jothi et al. (2011) and Wymer (2011) maintain that social marketing planning may be limited by over-reliance on commercial marketing tactics and an over-emphasis on individual behavior change because of a lack of holistic understanding of social marketing applications. The criticisms from round 2 were deemed valid, resulting in changes in the 'Expert Consultation' stage and actions aiming to minimize the risk of failure of social marketing programs (Akbar et al., 2021b; Simiyu-Wakhisi et al., 2011), which is supported by the next stage, 'Consumer Insight.' Uniquely, this proposed framework includes the 'Expert Consultation' stage, which is important because of its capacity to guide every step of planning, thereby creating relevant linkages. This would include a contextual overview and potential access to resources, and stakeholders, aiding a collaborative partnership/co-creation approach. It would also prepare practitioners for the tasks ahead, notably signposting to prior learning that can guide evaluation criteria and sustainability strategies.

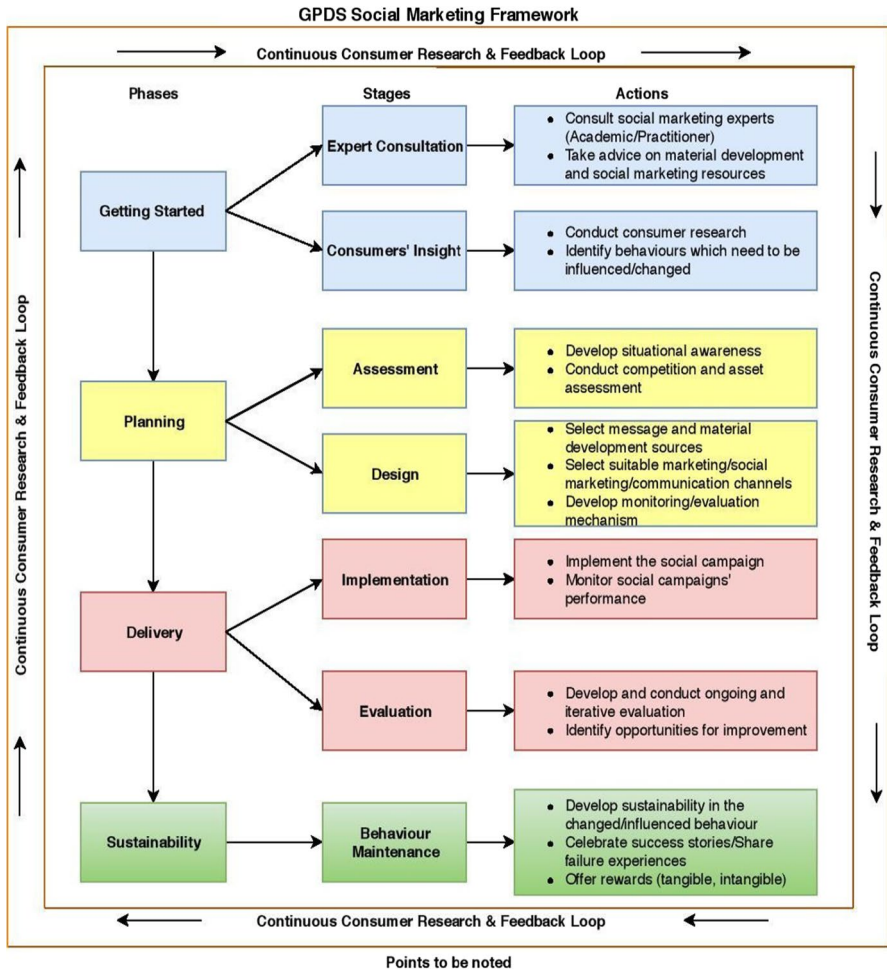


Fig. 4 GPDS planning framework for social marketing

The proposed framework argues that the 'Expert Consultation' stage would promise consistent outcomes, one of the major social marketing issues. Many interventions are not fully designed as social marketing programs because of a lack of understanding of the field, leading to inconclusive results (Akbar et al., 2020). Ultimately, the 'Expert Consultation' stage would strengthen social marketing's brand awareness, distinction, and credibility in far-reaching resources to diversify social marketing applications (Lee, 2020; Akbar et al., 2021c) and achieve consistent results.

Table 4 Toolkit for the GPDS Planning Framework for Social Marketing

Phases	Stages	Activities
Getting Started	Expert Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consult social marketing experts (academic or practitioner) via face-to-face or online surveys, questionnaires, interviews, etc. ● Take advice from previous social marketing campaigns' experience; lessons learned, etc. ● Understand terminologies regarding social marketing approaches/methods ● Gain advice on resources and material development ● Add beneficiaries (the recipient of the social marketing program) ● Consul literature review as an alternative if expert consultation is not affordable (those who can afford it may conduct both expert consultations as well as a literature review)
	Consumer Insight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consumer research (survey, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, etc.) ● Understand consumer behavior at a deeper level (for example, visualization techniques such as Zaltman Metaphoric Elicitation Technique, etc.) ● Consult consumers' insight from past research (barriers, benefits, motivators, influential factors) ● Identify social problems using consumer data, epidemiology data, or service uptake data ● Devise SMART behavior objectives ● Identify the right segment based on consumer research

Table 4 (continued)

Phases	Stages	Activities
Planning	Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conduct competition assessment, asset (resources) assessment, system analysis, feasibility review, stakeholder analysis/engagement ● Design partnership strategy, conduct SWOT, PESTLE analyses, other situational awareness analyses, and environmental analyses
	Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Select the audience, select the behavior ● Analyze intended behavior objectives (e.g., process, outcome, impact) ● Develop message and material, pre-test, pilot, refinement ● Select strategies such as the use of iteration to learn from previous stages, prototyping, concept testing, capacity building, and/or co-creation with the communities ● Select marketing methodologies (the marketing mix – price, place, promotion, product, people, physical evidence, process, social marketing mix, 4Cs of marketing – cost, convenience, consumer, communication, 3 extended Cs – citizens, customer journey, and commitment with 3Cs for social marketing – commitment, change and consequences) ● Select communication channels (e.g., social media, digital media, electronic, printed channel, and/or broadcast) ● Focus on specific segmentation, targeting, and positioning strategies, and select a suitable intervention mix ● Develop specific consumer/citizen orientation ● Select strategies such as two-way communication channels, exchange/value proposition, building powerful narratives, nudging, and modeling the desired behavior (e.g., endorsement) ● Use behavior change domains such as Design (physical environment), Support (social environment), Information (messaging), and Control (penalties/incentives) ● Use behavior theory, evidence review, and literature review ● Set baseline, monitoring, process evaluation, and implementation mechanism

Table 4 (continued)

Phases	Stages	Activities
Delivery	Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implement the social marketing campaign ● Modify the campaign from pre-evaluation results, review the process, and continuous monitoring ● Use strategies such as educating, listening, engaging, and empowering target audiences ● Regularly measure the performance of the social campaign ● Identify opportunities for the improvement
	Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop continuous evaluation channels ● Identify what is going well and what is not going well ● Evaluate the process, evaluate the cost-benefit, evaluate the return on investment ● Evaluate the impact, changes in behaviors, and the outcome/awareness
Sustainability	Behaviour Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Aim to develop sustainability among changed/influenced behavior ● Learn from evaluation what went well and what did not ● Identify value creation ● Celebrate success stories, offer rewards (tangible, intangible), and share failure experiences

Note: Consult the following resources for further guidance

- The National Social Marketing Centre <http://www.thensmc.com/>
- European Social Marketing Association <http://www.europeansocialmarketing.org/>
- International Social Marketing Association <https://www.i-socialmarketing.org/>
- Australian Social Marketing Association <http://www.aasm.org.au/>
- The Social Marketing Association of North America <https://smana.org/>

The ‘Consumer Insight’ stage intends to understand behaviors using various research techniques/sources and analyzing different viewpoints. Additionally, the first stage in the new ‘Planning’ phase is ‘Assessment’ to understand and articulate the context of the social marketing intervention, with practical activities provided. Such a comprehensive appraisal of the current situation will improve decisions (Shams, 2018) made at the ‘Design’ stage. French and Apfel (2015) suggest that an early assessment of internal and external factors helps design a social marketing program adding plausibility to the proposed framework and showing that successive stages build on each other in a specific sequential way. This is considered a primary advantage of the proposed framework compared to existing SMP approaches. Many existing SMP approaches incorporate consumer research, segmentation, and program design in various sequences (Akbar et al., 2019). A systematic approach where the three stages build upon one another is valuable. A deeper understanding of consumer needs helps identify the right segment to target, followed by the effective design of a social marketing program that develops the most relevant messages and material to meet the target segment’s identified needs, expanding the idea of systems-thinking (Domegan et al., 2016) through value-in-behavior for co-creation with citizens, stakeholders, and society.

Implementation means that the program utilizes the appropriate strategies to achieve objectives (Nutbeam et al., 2010). The revised ‘Implementation’ stage references performance monitoring, complementing the ‘Evaluation’ stage using the critical dimension of social marketing (Gordon, 2011). This highlights the importance of evaluating the range of activities throughout the planning sequence to determine the process, impact, and behavioral outcomes, including cost-benefit analysis and return on investment (ROI) evaluation. In contrast, evaluation assesses whether the campaign has been effective and whether it should be continued, modified, or discontinued (Egger et al., 1999). Providing detailed activities shows how all stages link back via the ‘Continuous Consumer Research and Feedback Loop’ by monitoring performance and evaluating each contribution in the process. The ‘Continuous Consumer Research and Feedback Loop’ is a novel contribution to the proposed framework. Another purpose of ‘Continuous Consumer Research and Feedback Loop’ is to identify factors that cause failures in various elements of social marketing intervention, a largely unknown practice in social marketing (Akbar et al., 2021b). Continuous research is a common practice in service marketing (Del Vecchio, 1990), adding to the debate on using value co-creation in social marketing, prioritizing and perceiving the priority audience as co-workers, co-creators, co-learners, and mediators with program design. Value co-creation theory is significant in social marketing practice because of its collaborative nature. It offers opportunities for a two-way interactional flow of power, knowledge, and communication between associated parties, as advised: “*value co-creation has the potential to provide focus and energy to what can otherwise be fairly slow-moving processes of social change*” (Domegan et al., 2013, p.250).

The addition of the ‘Behavior Maintenance’ stage is another unique aspect of the proposed framework contributing to the urgent calls for action requiring social marketing to deal with grand problems such as inequalities, unsustainable consumption, and production (Carvalho & Mazzon, 2020), issues deeply embedded in the

UN 2030 Agenda for SDGs (United Nations, 2020). The accompanying toolkit elaborates on a broader range of potential activities, depending on the program's nature, size, and available resources. Additionally, the toolkit will improve their understanding of their role and the tasks that lie ahead for novice practitioners. On the other hand, for experienced social marketers, the toolkit will provide a checklist and device to communicate intent, project plans, progress, and results. The toolkit answers the call for action to "get social marketing in orbit by 2025" (Lee, 2020), especially helping practitioners ensure campaigns labeled "social marketing" exemplify the core social marketing principles. We argue that the revised framework fits well within the new paradigms of strategic social marketing, emphasizing a more strategic and holistic approach and moving beyond the view of social marketing as a second-order operational delivery component to being seen as a core component and influence on social policy and strategy (French & Gordon, 2020) for effecting systemic change (Kennedy, 2016).

4 Reflection

Upon turning 50, social marketing emerged as a diverse discipline capable of tackling social and behavioral issues at micro, meso, and macro levels. The discipline has a global reach and is rapidly becoming one of the most popular fields for dealing with wicked problems. The variation in the application of social marketing ranges from public health topics (e.g., disease prevention, drug abuse prevention, food choice, and physical activity) to wider societal issues (e.g., environmental protection, including power, water, and wildlife, organ donation, and political participation, racial inequality) and many more. An inclusive planning approach with scale, power, diversity, and causation for practitioners on how social/behavioral change should be orchestrated is necessary. Such a planning approach is vital in advancing the intellectual development, theory, and practice of social marketing. The GPDS Planning Framework for Social Marketing has the potential to live up to such expectations.

The tension between social marketing theory and practice in designing interventions is paramount and calls for more rigorous planning approaches. While several existing SMP approaches guide practitioners working in social marketing, there is no particular framework that has consensus from a group of experts. The GPDS Planning Framework for Social Marketing received consensus from experts, including the western and non-western voices, drawing on current global practice and experts' opinions/experiences. Building on the existing SMP approaches, the GPDS Planning Framework for Social Marketing advances conversations by consulting/embedding social marketing principles early in planning interventions. The framework is also open to critique. Even though the framework discusses the significance of the assessment of resources, environment, competition, assets, and more, it misses the assessment of practitioners' bias, ethical standards, and elaboration on voluntary exchanges. These aspects are substantial for social marketing practice (Gordon et al., 2016). We can only speculate about such omissions that the research was undertaken prior to the re-development of ISMA standards and ethics processes. These

processes are currently underway; however, a reference to such processes was not highlighted by respondents of this study. We also argue that social marketing principles are constantly evolving; capturing such nascent principles in one study is difficult, highlighting a research gap for validating the proposed framework in a practical setting using a third round of the Delphi method. Such testing would overcome gaps in the GPDS Planning Framework for Social Marketing.

Reflecting on the application of the Delphi method, it should be noted that most respondents either have their own published social marketing framework/model or have a preferred planning approach to use in practice. Asking them to comment on a new framework built on existing approaches and offering new elements in the planning process was potentially controversial, especially when highlighting the limitations of existing SMP approaches. This deliberate decision to involve social marketing experts was unconventional, inviting direct criticism so that the resultant framework had been thoroughly critiqued before being agreed upon by consensus.

5 Research Limitations

Like any other research, the current study has its limitations. Firstly, in rounds 1 and 2 of the Delphi method, only 24 and 23 respondents took part, which can still be considered a small sample. Even though the selected sample size is justified for the current research, made up of social marketing experts, a larger sample would be helpful to explore some of the dominant and prevalent themes that emerged during the proposed social marketing framework verification. A large sample would, for example, allow the researcher to identify and compare the views of social marketers and health promotion or a comparison of social marketing academics and social marketing practitioners. Secondly, this research is limited to qualitative data; collecting and using quantitative data on consumers' views can strengthen the results' reliability. Using the target audience's views on applying the GPDS Planning Framework for Social Marketing in preparing, planning, delivering, and sustaining social marketing interventions, the precision of the results would further strengthen the framework. Lastly, the GPDS Planning Framework for Social Marketing has not been implemented in practice, highlighting a future research agenda to implement the framework in a real-life behavior change intervention.

6 Conclusion

The views from both academia and practice have been used to develop and verify the GPDS Planning Framework for Social Marketing, which has consensus from a wide, diverse group of social marketing experts. The GPDS Planning Framework for Social Marketing includes key strengths of existing SMP approaches and is rooted in the UN SDGs and the global consensus definition of social marketing. It offers emerging concepts previously missing from existing SMP approaches. It also

presents a comprehensive list of activities in the accompanying toolkit, enabling practitioners to prepare, plan and deliver social marketing programs, and achieve sustainable behavioral outcomes.

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