I am What I Believe: The Importance of Socially Shared Beliefs for Social Marketing Programs

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My girl is going to die soon

Right away she is at risk of losing a leg or going blind

Karen’s Parents
I could have prevented it.

She was not well fed.

They let her eat lots of sweets.

Juan’s Mother

Karen’s Sister
We can cure Ximena. I know a doctor that sells some pills that can cure her.

Juan’s Cousin

I know a shaman that can cure her.

Karen’s aunt
Insulin has side effects. They should not use insulin in Ximena.

Insulin shots are forbidden in my religion.
INTRODUCTION
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Social Representations Theory

Behavior

Shared Beliefs
Twofold purpose:

1. To typify shared beliefs that can interfere with social marketing
2. To identify the main sources of these beliefs
Social Representations Theory

- Triad

Object (Insulin)

Surface = Common sense

Insulin has side effects

S1

S2
Social Representations Theory

- Dynamic

Surface = common sense meaning at time t

Project in the past

Project in the future
It is imperative to identify the social representations that could generate resistance in order to develop successful social marketing programs.
METHOD

• **Case Study:** Type 1 Diabetes

• **12 In-depth interviews** with health professionals. Diabetes educators, working for more than 5 years with the disease.

• Experts’ interview guide: **3 critical themes**
  1. types of patients’ beliefs,
  2. effects of beliefs on behavioral change,
  3. main sources of beliefs

• Thematic analysis
Two types of shared beliefs that could be obstacles to behavioral change:

- Misconceptions
- Ideological Convictions
• Misconceptions

The problem

Type 1 Diabetes can be cured

The desired behavior

Insulin has side effects
• Ideological Convictions

The problem

A shaman can cure type 1 diabetes

The desired behavior

Insulin shots are forbidden in my religion
12/12 described misconceptions about type 1 diabetes that have been obstacles to treatment attachment:

- problem
- desired behavior
“There are many misconceptions about the disease, for example, regarding the origin, many patients think that they got sick because of a scare, stress, eating too many sweets, being obese or sedentary” (endocrinologist, misconception about the problem).

“They think that insulin is harmful, that it is going to cause blindness, harm their kidneys, generate complications or kill them. So, they do not comply with the treatment” (pediatric endocrinologist, misconception about the desired behavior).
5/12 interviewed mentioned that ideological convictions have been impediments to patients engaging in the treatment:

- problem
- desired behavior
“Many times, faith is what moves them; they fervently believe that their shaman is going to achieve what science cannot: cure diabetes” (general physician, ideological conviction about the problem).
• Sources of beliefs that could be obstacles to a desired change in behavior:
  
  1. primary groups (12/12)
  
  2. communication media (11/12)
  
  3. authority figures (11/12)
“Religious leaders promise them that God will cure them; teachers tell them that they get sick if they do not eat enough fruit; doctors do not understand the disease and spread lies about it” (psychologist, example of authority figure influence).
When defining the social marketing strategy, practitioners must pay special attention to two different types of beliefs:

• Misconceptions
• Ideological convictions
## Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Misconception</th>
<th>Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes has immediate consequences and is a death sentence</td>
<td>People with diabetes can live a long and healthy life if they control their glucose levels and follow their treatment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes can be cured</td>
<td>So far nothing has been found that will cure diabetes; However, it can be effectively controlled through a balanced diet, physical exercise and taking medications or insulin.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social marketing

About the problem: re-evaluate, reformulate, adapt, or discard

Behavior

Ideological Conviction

About the desired behavior: conceive another solution
Sources of misconceptions and ideological convictions are influencers and should also be target audiences of social marketing campaigns.
The effectiveness of social marketing campaigns requires identifying the types of shared beliefs that could represent barriers to behavior change.
THANK YOU!

Q&A