



Research Article

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Social Marketing Communication and Change Outcomes in Selected Public Organizations in Edo State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Social marketing communication is identified as one strategic tool in influencing human behavior for the benefit of individuals and society. While it has been used extensively in fields like public health, environmental conservation, and social welfare campaigns, we explored in this study, social marketing communications and change outcomes in selected public institutions in Edo State, Nigeria. Our purpose was to examine how social marketing communication through its proxies like social offerings / benefit communication, economic trade-off communications, audience differentiation communication and social media influencer strategy would produce desirable behavioural change outcomes. We engaged four public sector institutions for data gathering using a cross sectional design executed through a survey. A properly structured questionnaire designed in a five Likert format scale was employed as our data gathering instrument and we utilized regression analysis for hypotheses testing. In overall, the findings show that social marketing communication had significant influence on human behavior for desirable changes. Specifically, the findings show that audience differentiation strategy ($t = 6.07, p = .000$); social offerings / benefit communication ($t = 3.43, p = .001$), and social media influencer strategy ($t = 2.20, p = .002$) were all statistically significant predictors with audience differentiation strategy exhibiting greatest effect on behavioural change outcome while economic trade-off communications did not show a statistically significant effect ($t = .974, p = .332$) on change outcomes. The result show audience differentiation strategy had the most effect on behavioural change outcomes and would strengthen social marketing communication as a potent tool in promoting behavioural change. Appropriate recommendations in line with the findings of the study were proffered.

INTRODUCTION

Social marketing communication is a strategic tool for influencing behavioral change at individual, group, and institutional levels. Globally, governments and organizations use it to promote public health, environmental conservation, and civic engagement (Lee, 2008; Lefebvre, 2013). Countries with effective social marketing communication strategies have witnessed improved levels of public health, better public service efficiency, and increased citizen participation (Kotler & Lee, 2008; Mahoney & Tang, 2024). However, challenges such as poor message targeting, low audience engagement,

and weak evaluation mechanisms often limit its impact (Randolph & Viswanath, 2004). Social marketing has been widely used in addressing public issues like disease prevention, sanitation, education, and governance. While some campaigns have succeeded, others struggle due to cultural barriers, illiteracy, limited media access, weak institutional support, funding gaps, inconsistent policies, and public mistrust (Grier & Bryant, 2005; Tweneboah-Koduah, 2013). These obstacles hinder its ability to drive sustainable behavioral change. In Nigeria, social marketing plays a key role in health campaigns, environmental sustainability, sanitation and governance. Specific contributions of social marketing in the Nigerian context

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includes the application of social marketing principles in campaigns for family planning and population explosion management, accidents reduction and safer highways campaigns, efforts against drug abuse, unsafe sexual behaviour, electioneering and political literacy campaigns etc. However, many government and NGO-led initiatives fail due to poor message framing, misinformation, resistance to change, and political interference (Kitulu, 2016; Bassey, 2017; Njoku, 2019; Ekpe, 2021). To improve effectiveness, Nigeria must adopt audience-centered messaging, utilize digital and traditional media, and integrate behavioral science principles into campaigns. Without these enhancements, social marketing will continue to fall short in driving long-term behavioral change and improving public service delivery (Bassey, 2017; Ekpe, 2021).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding Social Marketing and Behavioural Change

Social marketing is broadly defined as the application of commercial marketing principles and strategies to influence voluntary behavioral change for the benefit of individuals and society. Andreasen (2006) describes social marketing as the use of marketing tools and concepts to encourage behavioral shifts that enhance people's lives and the well-being of the communities they belong to. Kotler, Lee, and Roth (2006) define social marketing as a structured process that applies marketing principles to influence behaviors that enhance public health, safety, and community welfare (Kotler & Lee, 2008; Lefebvre, 2013). Introduced by Kotler and Zaltman in the 1970s, social marketing adapts commercial marketing techniques to drive social change (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971). It has been widely used in behavioural and public health campaigns in addressing issues like HIV/AIDS prevention, tobacco cessation, and obesity reduction (Grier & Bryant, 2005). Social marketing leverages commercial marketing tools to plan, execute, and evaluate programs that encourage voluntary behavior change. It integrates marketing communications, societal change management, and strategic communication to tackle social challenges (Kotler & Lee, 2008). This paper explores its potential as a strategic tool to eliminate undesirable employee behaviors and promote behavioural change in Nigerian public institutions. Behavioral change describes the process of modifying or transforming human behavior. It involves adopting new behaviors, reducing or eliminating undesirable ones, or reinforcing existing positive behaviors. Behavioral change is studied in psychology, public health, marketing, and social sciences to encourage healthier lifestyles, improve productivity, and promote social well-being. Forms of behavioural change would

include changes in health behavior, social behaviours and workplace behaviours like improving time management and adopting ethical practices.

Commendable positive attributes of some public sector employees

It is worthy of mention that despite the challenges in Nigerian public service organizations, many employees exhibit commendable qualities that contribute to effective service delivery. Several employees demonstrate resilience, dedication, and a strong sense of duty. Recognizing and supporting these positive attributes through better training, incentives, and reforms would enhance public service delivery in Nigeria. According to scholars like Oronsaye (2018) and Nwabuzor (2019) some identifiable positive attributes they demonstrate include: dedication and commitment, working diligently despite challenges to maintain essential services like immigration processing and road safety, demonstrating professionalism and expertise stemming from rigorous training, enabling them to enforce laws and contribute to national development. They also exhibit a public service orientation going beyond their duties to assist citizens in crises, they show innovation and adaptability and embrace technologies such as digital census methods and e-passport services to enhance efficiency. They enforce law and order, prevent smuggling and ensure road safety. They also demonstrate a willingness for personal improvement and self - development evident through continuous training and reforms, while their role in crisis response and emergency services helps manage disasters, border control, and emergency data collection.

Unethical Behaviours amongst public sector workers

Aside the positive behaviors, there are reports however of unethical practices in the Nigerian public institutions, particularly the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), and the National Population Commission (NPC). Imagha (2002), as cited in Ekpe (2021), criticizes the Nigerian public service for lacking the discipline necessary to adopt and implement new techniques for its overall benefit. Similarly, Jega (2003) argues that the public service is severely constrained, lacking essential elements of efficiency due to unprofessionalism, excessive partisanship, entrenched corruption, slow policy implementation, inefficiency, selfishness, and greed. Also personnel management practices within the Nigerian public service are poorly executed, marked by inconsistency, lack of coordination, and overlapping functions across departments and agencies (Ekpe, 2008; Ekpe, 2021). Gleaning from some National Dailies, Magazines, and Nairametrics etc. there have been reports relating to inefficiencies and unethical behaviours such as:

Corruption and bribery

there is alleged widespread corruption amongst the NIS officials demanding bribes for expedited passport processing, causing delays and distrust. One of the major concerns within the NIS is corruption and extortion. There are alleged cases that officers demand bribes from passport applicants, leading to unnecessary delays and public distrust. Additionally, technical glitches in the NIS online payment platform frequently disrupts passport processing, frustrating applicants and further complicating service delivery (Nairametrics, 2023). Similarly, NCS officers face accusations of bribery and fraudulent practices that compromise revenue collection and border security.

Inefficiency and bureaucratic delays are issues in the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS)

The NCS has been criticized for inefficiency and unprofessional conduct, which contribute to delays in cargo clearance and hinder trade facilitation. Furthermore, corruption is a significant issue, with allegations of bribery and fraudulent practices that undermine revenue collection and border security efforts. These challenges weaken the effectiveness of the agency and negatively impact economic activities. The NCS struggles with smuggling, under-declaration, and valuation inconsistencies, leading to delays in trade and importation. These inefficiencies call for structural reforms to streamline operations.

Lack of transparency and accountability

Public agencies often operate with little oversight. NIS, for instance, has been criticized for opaque processes and weak misconduct-reporting mechanisms, fostering a culture of impunity. This lack of transparency reduces accountability and service efficiency.

Poor customer service

Many NIS officials exhibit hostility and unprofessional behavior, discouraging citizens from seeking essential services. Training and ethical reforms are necessary to improve customer interactions.

Challenges facing Nigerian Public Institutions

There have been several challenges confronting the public sector organizations. The difficulties in the National Population Commission (NPC) includes struggle with ensuring data accuracy and reliability in conducting population censuses. The disputes over demographic data have made it difficult to implement effective planning and resource allocation. Additionally, inadequate funding and logistical constraints have limited the NPC's ability to conduct comprehensive demographic surveys and censuses, consequently affecting policy formulation and national development. In the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) despite the efforts to enforce road safety regulations, the FRSC continues to face challenges in reducing road accidents. Limited personnel

and other resources also hinder the commissions' ability to monitor and manage Nigeria's extensive road networks effectively. Strengthening enforcement mechanisms and increasing resource allocation are essential to improving road safety outcomes.

The Need for Reforms

In the view of the above unethical practices and challenges confronting the public sector institutions, the need for reforms is both undeniable and urgent. To enhance the effectiveness of these institutions, several measures must be taken. First, tackling corruption through stringent anti-corruption policies and transparent processes is crucial. Also, investing in digital infrastructure can help resolve technical inefficiencies and streamline service delivery. Furthermore, adequate funding and capacity building need to be prioritized to improve data accuracy, regulatory enforcement, and service efficiency. Finally, fostering a culture of accountability and professionalism will help rebuild public trust in these institutions. By addressing these challenges through strategic reforms, Nigerian public institutions can better fulfill their mandates and improve service delivery to citizens. Our purpose in this study is to advance to the frontiers the relevance of social marketing communications as strategically instrumental to securing social change in Nigeria.

Role of Social Marketing in Driving Social Change

At the core of social marketing is the principle of exchange, where individuals receive value in return for changing their behavior. Unlike commercial marketing, which focuses on financial gain, social marketing promotes behaviors that offer long-term societal benefits (Anaeto & Anaeto, 2010). Kotler and Lee (2008) highlight that social marketing advocates replacing harmful behaviors with beneficial ones through effective communication. Njoku (2019) emphasizes that communication is crucial in persuading individuals to adopt desired behaviors. This includes targeted advertising, educational campaigns, and personalized engagement strategies, ensuring messages resonate with the audience. A blend of mass media and interpersonal communication strategies would enhance outreach and impact. This paper posits that social offerings, economic trade-offs, audience differentiation, and social media influencers can be effective tools in social marketing communication to drive behavioral change.

Relationship between social offerings / benefit communication and behavioral change

Social offerings or benefit communication refers to the way in which organizations communicate the advantages or value of a product, service, or behavior to the target audience. In the context of behavioral change, effective communication about the benefits of adopting a specific behavior plays a crucial role in influencing individuals' actions (Kotler, & Lee, 2008). Effective communication



of social offerings and benefits is essential for driving behavioral change. By focusing on both tangible and intangible benefits, organizations can create messages that resonate with individuals' needs and motivations, increasing the likelihood of behavior adoption. The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) support this relationship by showing that individuals are more likely to engage in behaviors when they perceive positive outcomes and benefits. This can be used in various domains, including public health and environmental sustainability. Previous studies have explored the influence of benefit communication on behavioral change. For example, in the health sector clear communication about the benefits of preventive behaviors, such as vaccination or healthy eating, has been linked to increased adoption of those behaviors (Grier & Bryant, 2005). Similarly, studies suggest that highlighting personal benefits leads to higher rates of adoption of the preferred behaviors (Storey, Hess, & Saffitz, 2015). In the view of the above we hypothesize that

H1

Social offerings or benefit communication will have a significant effect on behavioural change outcomes;

Links between economic trade-off communications and behavioral change outcomes

Economic trade-off communications involve presenting information about the costs and benefits associated with certain behaviors or decisions. These communications typically highlight how engaging in a specific behavior or adopting a product involves trade-offs between short-term sacrifices and long-term gains. The Prospect Theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979) is relevant as it explains how people perceive potential gains and losses. According to the theory, individuals are generally more motivated to avoid losses than to acquire gains, meaning that when the costs (losses) of a behavior are communicated, it can discourage negative behaviors, while emphasizing gains can encourage positive behavior changes. By framing behaviors in terms of their financial costs and long-term economic benefits, individuals are more likely to make decisions that align with desired outcomes. Studies on economic trade-offs have shown that framing information in terms of costs and savings can lead to behavioral changes. Research by (Asensio, & Delmas, 2016; Dolan, Elliott, Metcalfe, & Vlaev, 2012) support that individuals are more likely to engage in changing behaviors when they are informed about the financial savings associated with such actions. For example emphasizing the long-term financial benefits of healthy eating has been shown to lead to better dietary choices. In the view of the above we hypothesize that

H2

economic trade-off communications will have a significant effect on and behavioral change outcomes.

The Links between audience differentiation and behavioral change outcomes

Audience differentiation involves segmenting the target audience based on demographics, behaviors, and motivations. This allows organizations to design tailored interventions, increasing the likelihood of successful behavioral change. According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), individuals process messages through either a central route (focused on content) or a peripheral route (emphasizing emotions or appearance). By adapting messages to these processing routes, audience differentiation enhances behavioral change interventions, leading to higher engagement and better adoption of desired behaviors. Research supports its role in improving the effectiveness of behavioral change campaigns. For instance, a study by Durkin, et al. (2012) found that targeting messages about smoking cessation to different subgroups, based on their readiness to quit, was more effective than a generalized messaging approach. Similarly, campaigns results were reported by Latimer, et al., (2012) that messaging tailored appropriately encouraged changing behaviors. In the view of the above we hypothesize that

H3

audience differentiation will have a significant effect on behavioral change outcomes

The Links between social media influencers and behavioral change outcomes

Social media influencers have become powerful agents of change, using their reach and credibility to shape followers' behaviors. As role models, their endorsements of behaviors, products, or causes significantly impact attitudes and actions. Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) emphasizes the role of observational learning, while Social Influence Theory suggests that people adopt behaviors endorsed by trusted figures. Influencers can drive behavioral change more effectively than traditional marketing or public health campaigns. Their media acceptability and wide reach make them key players in public health, consumer behavior, and social change initiatives. Research confirms their impact, particularly in health, lifestyle, and consumer behavior. For example, a study by Friedman, et al. (2022) found that influencers' endorsement of healthy eating behaviors led to positive shifts in their followers' dietary choices. Also, media influencers have successfully promoted eco-friendly behaviors, dietary changes and other forms of behavioural modifications. In the view of the above we hypothesize that

H4

Social Media Influencers will have a significant effect on the behavioral change outcomes

Theories on Social Marketing and Behavioral Change Outcomes

This study is anchored on the social cognitive theory, the theory of planned behavior the transtheoretical model

and the framing theory of communication. These theories provide framework for understanding how individuals assess risks, weigh benefits, and progress through stages of change.

Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986)

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) posits that people learn behaviors through observation, imitation, and modeling, which are reinforced by social and environmental factors. The theory highlights the role of self-efficacy (an individual's belief in their ability to perform a behavior) and reciprocal determinism (the continuous interaction between personal, behavioral, and environmental influences). Social marketing campaigns use role models (e.g., celebrities, peers, or community leaders) to encourage positive behavior adoption. Messages are tailored to reinforce self-efficacy by showing how individuals can overcome barriers to behavior change. It is often used in public health interventions such as anti-smoking or healthy eating campaigns, where exposure to positive role models can drive behavior change.

Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991)

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) expands on the Theory of Reasoned Action by adding the concept of perceived behavioral control, which refers to an individual's perception of their ability to perform a given behavior. According to TPB, behavioral intention is influenced by three factors: Attitude toward the behavior – Whether the person believes the behavior is beneficial or harmful. Subjective norms – The social pressures or expectations from peers, family, and society that influence behavior. Perceived behavioral control – The individual's confidence in their ability to perform the behavior successfully. Public sector campaigns use TPB to design persuasive messaging that changes public attitudes and norms regarding behaviors such as recycling, vaccination, or road safety. A public health campaign promoting hand washing during a pandemic can use TPB by emphasizing its effectiveness (attitude), highlighting societal approval (subjective norms), and providing easy access to hand sanitizers (perceived control).

Transtheoretical Model of Behavior Change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983)

The Transtheoretical Model (TTM), also called the Stages of Change Model, suggests that individuals move through six stages when adopting a new behavior:

- *Precontemplation*

The individual is unaware of or uninterested in changing behavior.

- *Contemplation*

The individual recognizes the need for change but has not yet committed to action.

- *Preparation*

The individual intends to take action and may start making small changes.

- *Action*

The individual actively engages in the behavior change.

- *Maintenance*

The individual continues the new behavior and works to prevent relapse.

- *Termination*

The behavior change is fully integrated, and there is no risk of relapse. TTM is widely used in long-term behavior change initiatives such as smoking cessation, weight loss, or sustainable living. Campaigns tailor their interventions based on the stage individuals are in, providing motivational messages in the early stages and support mechanisms in later stages.

Framing theory of communication

Framing theory, developed by scholars like Erving Goffman (1974) and later expanded by Entman (1993), explains that frames influence what people think about and how they think about it by selecting, emphasizing, and structuring information in specific ways. Framing describes how information is presented to influence audience perception. It involves emphasizing certain aspects of a message while downplaying others to shape opinions, attitudes, or behaviors. Media outlets, policymakers, and organizations use framing to highlight specific narratives, control public discourse, and guide interpretations of events or issues. For example, in political news, a protest can be framed as a "fight for justice" or as "civil unrest," leading audiences to perceive it differently. Similarly, in health communication, a campaign might frame smoking cessation as a "path to healthier living" rather than focusing on "avoiding death from lung disease.". The same is applicable to inducing changes in the public sector institutions.

Empirical Review

This review presents evidence from various studies across different contexts, illustrating the role of social marketing in shaping behavior and improving public welfare.

Evans et al. (2008) conducted a systematic review on public health branding and its effectiveness in influencing behavior change. Their study, based in the United States, evaluated how branding strategies have been utilized in public health campaigns targeting issues such as smoking cessation and obesity prevention. The results indicated that well-branded campaigns had stronger recall among target audiences and led to significant behavioral improvements. The researchers recommended that public health agencies adopt branding principles to enhance the effectiveness of their interventions (Evans et al., 2008). Similarly, Gordon, McDermott, Stead, and

Angus (2006) examined the impact of social marketing interventions on health improvement in the United Kingdom. Their systematic review analyzed multiple campaigns addressing alcohol reduction, tobacco control, and physical activity promotion. The findings revealed that social marketing efforts were particularly effective when they incorporated audience segmentation, clear messaging, and behavior-focused incentives. The study underscored the importance of integrating social marketing into public health strategies to drive long-term behavior change (Gordon et al., 2006). Further research by Stead, Gordon, Angus, and McDermott (2007) expanded on the effectiveness of social marketing across different sectors. Conducted in the United Kingdom, their review analyzed interventions in road safety, substance abuse, and dietary improvements. The results affirmed that campaigns utilizing social marketing frameworks achieved higher success rates than traditional information dissemination efforts. Their recommendations emphasized the need for evidence-based approaches in social marketing design to optimize outcomes (Stead et al., 2007).

In the health arena, Firestone, Rowe, Modi, and Sievers (2017) conducted a systematic review assessing social marketing interventions in low- and middle-income countries. Their study focused on health behaviors related to HIV prevention, malaria control, and maternal health. The findings demonstrated that interventions incorporating social marketing principles, such as targeted communication and incentives, significantly improved health behaviors. The researchers recommended scaling up social marketing programs in resource-constrained settings to enhance public health outcomes (Firestone et al., 2017). Another important contribution to the field came from Stead, Hastings, and McDermott (2007), who explored the effectiveness and future direction of social marketing. Their study in the United Kingdom reviewed multiple social marketing campaigns addressing obesity, smoking, and alcohol consumption. The results suggested that while social marketing is a valuable tool, its full potential remains underutilized. The authors advocated for a broader application of social marketing principles beyond health contexts to address complex social challenges (Stead et al., 2007).

Empirical studies have also examined the role of social marketing in behavior change related to environmental sustainability. Peattie and Peattie (2009) analyzed campaigns promoting recycling, energy conservation, and sustainable consumption. Their findings suggested that behavior change is most effective when social marketing interventions incorporate elements such as emotional appeals, convenience, and social norms. They recommended that policymakers integrate social marketing into broader environmental strategies to maximize impact (Peattie & Peattie, 2009). Similarly, Thackeray and Neiger (2000) investigated the use of social marketing in HIV/AIDS prevention programs.

Their findings indicated that campaigns employing peer influence, targeted messaging, and incentives led to higher adoption of preventive behaviors among at-risk populations. The study recommended expanding social marketing efforts in HIV/AIDS interventions to enhance outreach and effectiveness (Thackeray & Neiger, 2000). Lefebvre and Flora (1988) provided early empirical evidence on social marketing's role in public health. Their study examined mass media campaigns for smoking cessation and found that interventions combining advertising, public relations, and direct engagement led to higher rates of smoking reduction. Their recommendations emphasized the integration of multiple communication channels to reinforce behavior change messages (Lefebvre & Flora, 1988).

Truong (2014) conducted a comprehensive review of social marketing research from 1998 to 2012, analyzing its evolution and impact across different domains. Their study found that while social marketing has achieved success in areas like disease prevention and environmental conservation, there is a need for greater methodological rigor in evaluating interventions. The research recommended improving data collection methods and standardizing reporting frameworks to enhance the credibility of social marketing findings (Truong, 2014).

Research Gaps and Hypothesis Development

The empirical studies reviewed provide evidence that social marketing is an effective approach to driving behavioral change across multiple domains. The review suggests that incorporating audience segmentation, strategic communication, incentives, and behavioral nudges yield better outcomes than traditional approaches. The findings also highlight the importance of integrating social marketing into policy frameworks to enhance long-term behavior change. It is worthy of note however that most of the studies are of foreign origins with very few studies from Nigeria. This research is therefore imperative as it aimed to explore the Nigerian public sector institutions in Edo State for which to the best of the researchers' knowledge there exist an apparent paucity of studies. Addressing this gap would contribute to the social marketing and behavioral change literature as it would either provide more credence to the existing theories with empirical evidence from Nigeria or birth findings that would stimulate new perspectives and necessitate further intellectual engagements. Against this background, this research sought to examine how the identified components of social marketing communication would influence behavioural change outcomes in the selected public service institutions. In the view of the above all the earlier hypothesized relationships were tested.

METHODS

A cross-sectional design was chosen for this research. The study was implemented by carrying out a survey. This

Table 1: Distribution of study participants

| | <i>Institutions</i> | <i>Participants</i> | <i>Responses</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|----|--------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1. | Nigerian Immigration Service | 100 | 92 | 92% |
| 2. | Federal Road Safety Commission | 100 | 96 | 96% |
| 3. | National Population Commission | 50 | 36 | 73% |
| 4. | Nigeria Customs Service | 50 | 28 | 56% |
| | Total | 300 | 262 | 87.3% |

Source: Authors Compilation

method was chosen due to its effectiveness in managing large sample sizes and its ability to gather detailed insights on various issues, events, and challenges while presenting them as they are. Surveys are particularly useful for collecting descriptive data about a specific group of individuals or elements. The survey was executed using four public service organizations. The four public service organizations were intentionally chosen from among several public service organizations in the state capital stemming from several factors, including their large size workforce, the huge customer traffic, their active involvement in the daily affairs of the citizenry, and their several years of operating experience as national institutions.

The population of this study consisted of staff members of the sampled public institutions. The exact numbers of employees for each of the zonal offices were not immediately ascertainable as some were away on secondment, outside station duties, study/training leave, inter organizational collaboration etc. Using a blend of purposive, stratified and convenience sampling approaches a total of 300 copies of the research instrument were distributed to the four organizations with approximately 100 copies of the research instrument to the larger organizations and 50 copies each to the other two organizations. The reason for this was the difference in sizes of their workforce. The representativeness of the sample was assured by further engaging stratified sampling wherein we ensured that the respondents were from across the various strata of the sampled organizations. The response rate was 87.3% as only 262 copies of the instrument were duly returned and found usable (Table 1).

The instrument for the study was a properly structured 30 item questionnaire focused on the components of the independent and the dependent variables. The instrument had 30 items comprising selected six items for each of the five variables examined. The instrument was designed in a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree to assess the statement items. This afforded the respondents opportunity to express their opinions concerning the variables unhindered.

The studied variables were social benefits / offerings communication, economic tradeoffs communication,

audience differentiation, social media influencers, and change outcomes. The items measuring the variables were adapted from the literature on social marketing communications and change outcomes and were refined and modified to align with the objectives of this research. The validity of the instrument was assured using both the face and content validation method. We engaged academic experts in public sector management, social marketing communication and psychology to evaluate the instrument and incorporate their contributions before its administration. This ensured the instrument captured all aspects of the study based on the study objectives.

Furthermore, a preliminary study was conducted to verify the instrument's dependability and reliability. This was assessed through a reliability test using the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient. The alpha values for all the variables ranged between 0.71 and 0.92, exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70 for a reliable and standardized measure, as recommended by Nunnally (1978). The reliability results are presented in Table 2.

Model specification

The functional regression model is given as:

$$CO = f(SMC) \text{ ----- 1}$$

$$\text{Whereas } SMC = SBO, ETO, AD, SMI, \text{ ----- 2}$$

Then:

$$CO = f(SBO, ETO, AD, SMI) \text{ ----- 3}$$

The econometric form of the research model is given as:

$$CO = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SBO + \beta_2 ETO + \beta_3 AD + \beta_4 SMI + \epsilon \text{ ----- 4}$$

Where:

SMC = social Marketing communication (SBO, ETO, AD, SMI, CN)

Table 2: Reliability alpha values

| <i>S/N.</i> | <i>Variables</i> | <i>Alpha values</i> |
|-------------|---|---------------------|
| 1 | Social benefits offerings communication | 0.77 |
| 2 | Economic tradeoffs communication | 0.82 |
| 3 | Audience differentiation, | 0.88 |
| 4 | Social media influencer | 0.71 |
| 5 | Change outcomes | 0.92 |

Source: Researcher's computation



SBO = social benefits offerings made up of the following items: SBOI₁ - SBOI₇

ETO = Economic trade - offs made up of the following items ETOI₁ - ETOI₇

AD = Audience differentiation made up of the following items ADI₁ - ADI₇

SMI = Social media influencers made up of the following items SMI₁ - SMI₇

CO = Change outcomes made up of the following items: COI₁ - COI₇

ε_0 = Error term; β_0 = Intercept of model constant

$\beta_1 - \beta_4$ = are the regression coefficients,

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

At the inferential analysis stage, multiple regression was used to test the hypotheses at a 5% significance level. Regression analysis was chosen as it identifies associations and explains the effect of independent variables on the

dependent variable. The SPSS software was used to examine the relationships between the variables.

Descriptive Statistics:

A mean performance index was applied to summarize the data, as presented in Table 3.

Hypothesis testing

The hypotheses were tested using regression analysis.

Table 4 shows a coefficient R value of 0.850 (85%) which indicate that there exist a linear direct relationship between social marketing communication and Change outcomes. Also a coefficient of determination R square value of 0.722 (72.2%) reveals that social marketing communication for 72.2% of the organizational change outcomes; an adjusted R square of 0.719 (71.9%) and with an F stat of 23.669, and the p-value is 0.000 which is significant at 0.05. This suggests the model used in this study is suitable for the data.

Table 3: Mean index of change outcomes.

| Variables | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-------------------------------------|-----|---------|---------|------|----------------|
| Social benefits offerings (product) | 232 | 1 | 5 | 4.11 | .987 |
| Economic trade offs (price), | 232 | 1 | 5 | 3.98 | .992 |
| Audience differentiation, | 232 | 1 | 5 | 4.04 | .884 |
| Social media influencers, | 232 | 1 | 5 | 4.07 | 1.02 |
| Behavioural change outcomes | 232 | 1 | 5 | 3.65 | .887 |

source: Research Output

Table 4: Summarized regression result output

| Coefficients ^a | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | T | Sig. |
|---------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| Model B | | Std. Error | Beta | | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 1.717 | .218 | | 7.873 | .000 |
| | SOBC | .205 | .060 | .239 | 3.430 | .001 |
| | ETOC | .045 | .046 | .057 | .974 | .332 |
| | AD | .289 | .048 | .424 | 6.073 | .000 |
| | SMI | .063 | .028 | .127 | 2.203 | .029 |
| R= | .850a | | | | | |
| R square = | .722 | | | | | |
| Adj. R square = | .719 | | | | | |
| Std error of estimate = | .599 | | | | | |
| F stat = | 23.669 | | | | | |
| F sig = | 0.000 | | | | | |

a. predictors: (constant), social marketing communication

b. dependent variable: change outcomes

Source: Authors

From the results, with an R square value of 0.722 (72.2%) it implies that (1-0.72) i.e about 28% of behavioural change outcomes in the sampled public organizations can be explained by other factors. The relationship between social marketing communication and behavioural change outcomes is significant at 0.000. This supports the hypothesized relationship that the social marketing communication in aggregation is significantly related with and behavioural change outcomes. The multiple regression results show that all dimensions of social marketing communication explored were significant except for the economic trade-offs as shown in Table 4 above. Specifically, the findings show that audience differentiation strategy ($t = 6.07, p = .000$); social offerings / benefit communication ($t = 3.43, p = .001$); and social media influencer strategy ($t = 2.20, p = .002$) were all statistically significant predictors with audience differentiation strategy exhibiting greatest effect on behavioural change outcome while economic trade-off communications did not show a statistically significant effect ($t = .974, p = .332$) on change outcomes. The result also that for audience differentiation, ($\beta = 0.424$); Social offerings and benefits communications ($\beta = 0.239$); for social media influencers ($\beta = .127$); while for economic trade-off communication ($\beta = 0.057$). The results indicate therefore that audience differentiation component was the predictor that exhibited the greatest effect on behavioural change outcomes.

Discussion of findings

With respect to hypothesis one the findings show the presence of a positive and significant effect of social benefits communication on the behavioural change outcomes in the sampled public sector institutions. From the regression results ($t = 3.430; p = 0.001 < 0.005$) we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate that social benefits communication has significant effect on behavioural change outcomes in the sampled public sector institutions. These findings suggest that improving social benefits communications would improve desirable behavioural change outcomes. This result is in alignment with previous research like Fjeldsoe, Marshall, & Miller, (2009) who from their study reported that behavioural change communication through SMS-delivered interventions had positive short-term behavioral outcomes. Also, Grier and Bryant, (2005) affirmed from their work that social benefits communication supported behavioural changes.

In the case of hypothesis two, the findings show the presence of a positive but not statistically significant relationship between economic trade-offs / costs and behavioural change communication outcome in the sampled public sector institutions. From the regression results ($t = .974; p = 0.332 > 0.005$) we accept the null hypothesis and reject the alternate. We therefore conclude that there is no statistically significant relationship

between the economic trade-offs /costs and behavioural change outcomes; and suggests that economic trade-offs /costs on its own may not necessarily introduce the desirable behavioural change outcomes. This finding differs from results of previous studies like Rothman, & Salovey, (1997) who submitted that communications can be framed in terms of the benefits (gains) or costs (losses) associated with a particular behaviour, and the framing of such persuasive messages influence decision making. Asensio, and Delmas, (2016) from their study show that framing communication messages in terms of costs and benefits in which households consider the effects of their actions, induced desirable behavior of about 8 - 10% over a 100 day period. Furthermore, from Wang, et. al (2022) research shows people choose to adopt more beneficial behaviours when they understand the benefits better. A prime responsibility is how to frame communication messages / adverts and programs to effectively promote desired behaviours.

Concerning hypothesis three the findings show the presence of a positive and significant effect of audience differentiation on the behavioural change outcomes in the sampled public sector institutions. From the regression results ($t = 6.073; p = 0.000 < 0.005$) we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate that audience differentiation communication has significant effect on behavioural change outcomes in the sampled public sector institutions. This result aligns with previous research by Hine, Reser, Morrison, Phillips, Nunn, and Cooksey (2014) that audience segmentation and targeted messaging are potentially valuable tools for enhancing change communication regardless of sector. Also, scholars like Kreuter and Wray (2003) and Napoli (2011) reported that in aggregation tailored messages stimulated greater cognitive activity than non-tailored messages.

Regarding hypothesis, the findings indicate the presence of a positive and significant effect of social media influencers on the behavioural change outcomes in the sampled public sector institutions. From the regression results ($t = 2.203; p = 0.029 < 0.005$) we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis that using social media influencers has significant effect on behavioural change outcomes in the sampled public sector institutions. This result agrees with previous research such as Moorhead, Hazlett, Harrison, Carroll, Irwin, & Hoving, (2013) who reported that social media brings a new dimension to health care communication offering to society the possibility of potentially improving health outcomes. Vrontis, Makrides, Christofi, & Thrassou, (2021) provides a robust understanding on the role of social media influencers and sheds light on the mechanisms underlying their appeal and influential power in shaping attitudes and behavior. In a related study, scholars like Ilieva, et. al. (2024) affirm marketers can make informed decisions and optimize influencer marketing strategies



to increase conversion rates and create impactful and successful marketing campaigns that resonate with the target audience and drive meaningful results.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study examined the effects of social marketing communication on behavioural change outcomes. By engaging a regression model to analyze the data collected, the findings show that social marketing communication in aggregation significantly and positively influenced behavioural change outcomes in the sampled Nigeria's public institutions.

Stemming from the findings of the study the following recommendations were made:

- Government, policy makers and the leadership of each individual institution should continue to engage in social marketing communications to promote behavioural change outcomes.
- Leaders should emphasize the social offerings / benefits and gains of adopting the preferred behavioural change in their communication.
- Policy makers should extensively utilize audience differentiation strategies in their communication as it demonstrated evident capacity for influencing behavioural change
- Managers and leaders should engage more of credible and positively reputable social media influencers as they have a way of influencing behaviours and shaping societal views and values thus overcoming individual and institutional resistance to change.
- Policy makers and managers should improve the management of employees with better rewards and incentives as this would encourage them to embrace suggested behavioural changes.
- Also, further engaging in strategic and open communication with an effective feedback mechanism would promote overcoming resistance.

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