

Study on the Marketing Strategy of the Family Planning Policy

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Abstract

The marketing theory has important guidance and reference value in many fields in modern society, and is applied widely in practice. The study shows that the family planning work also has various attributes of the marketing, so the marketing can be widely used to carry out the marketing of family planning. Its basic framework is the 6Ps marketing mix of the family planning policy marketing.

Key words: Social marketing; Policy marketing; Family planning; Marketing mix

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1. THE CONNOTATION OF THE FAMILY PLANNING POLICY MARKETING

The analysis on the connotation of the family planning policy marketing cannot do without the definition of “marketing” “policy marketing” “social marketing” and other concepts that have a close contact with it. What is marketing? The marketing master, Philip Kotler (2000) has determined a classic definition that it is the social management process to meet the demands and desires of individuals and groups through creating and changing products and values. The definition of American Marketing Association (A.M.A) is that marketing is a process of planning and implementing the ideas, pricing, promotion and distribution of goods, service

and originality, to create the exchange meeting the target of individuals and groups. The policy marketing is a kind of marketing mode that really develops and practices in recent years. Coffman (1996) has thought that the policy marketing is a continuous and cyclic process of the public service’s designing, planning and studying public feedback or changing, redesigning, and re-implementation. However, Buurma (2001) has thought that the policy marketing is public sectors using the ideas and activities of the marketing to make the public policy gain public acceptance and support. Part of domestic scholars, such as Xu (1996) has obtained through examples that the policy marketing is that the government studies the target of public market and tries to find the best solution to problems. Li and Ge (2002) think that the policy marketing is the process to operate according to the marketing ideas and to provide public goods in marketing means. In fact, the policy marketing is a kind of social marketing strategy widely adopted by the government departments, public and private institutions all over the world in recent years. As an emerging guidance pattern of social behavior reform, the social marketing develops very quickly in many countries all over the world. It is not only promoted in population and family planning, health and other public service fields, but also tried consciously by many enterprises through applying the social marketing ideas combined with the marketing operation methods, to reach the aim of a win for individuals, groups and society. Kotler and Robertoe (2002) think that the social marketing influences the target audience by using the principles and technology of marketing to make them voluntarily receive, reject, change or give up a certain behavior, so as to promote the overall interests of individuals, groups or society. Andreasen (1995) has defined the social marketing as the project to influence the voluntary behaviors of target audience through applying the technical analysis, plan, execution and

assessment of the business marketing and its aim is to promote the benefits of individuals and society.

In summary, we think that as a kind of public policy, the implementation of the family planning policy is the process of applying various means (such as education and guidance, contraception, medical care, interest motivation and restraint, legal regulation, administrative intervention and so on) to guide and induce the target audience for right reproductive behaviors (including sexual behaviors), so as to realize the ultimate goal of the win for the country, society and families, enhancing family happiness and promoting the population development, which adapts to the economic and social development. This process actually contains the connotation of policy marketing and the essential attribute of social marketing. Therefore, we think that the marketing of the family planning policy is to apply the concept and tools of business marketing in the management of family planning, and to design, implement, control and assess the propaganda, education, implementation, execution and other links of the family planning policy. From the point of view of the marketing, the marketing of the family planning policy actually refers to the process of taking advantage of market segmentation, consumer investigation, product concept development, testing, pricing, communication, distribution, promotion, exchange theory and other marketing tools, to pursue optimal implementation effect of the family planning policy.

2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF IMPLEMENTING THE FAMILY PLANNING POLICY MARKETING

Throughout the definitions of the family planning policy, we think that it shows the theoretical and practical significance in at least three aspects as follows.

First of all, we should reform the traditional management pattern of the family planning and improve the implementation efficiency the family planning policy.

At present, in terms of our country's current situation of the family planning management, most of it is still restricted to traditional compulsive administrative means, legal means and economical means leading to not ideal effects. In fact, the management of family planning is not a simple up-to-down process of the policy promotion, but should be rooted in the entire marketing process. It must be assisted by product planning, market segmentation, channel selection, price strategy, exchange mechanism and other comprehensive marketing measures, and must cooperate with related organizations and the public to build a good fertility consumption environment, to help the government with the rational allocation of the fertility, reproductive health care resources in the social development, so as to realize the healthy operation of the entire society and economy. The facts have shown that the

organizations and relevant workers of the family planning management all have their own products of the family planning policy, target consumers, special distribution and promotions channels and policy marketing plans. Only by implementing these measures explicitly and exactly, can due implementation effect of the family planning policy be achieved. For each management organization of the family planning, how to determine its own products, how to determine its own target consumers, how to choose promotion channels, how to communicate, how to analyze the costs and values of the target consumers and how to carry out the marketing management of the family planning policy and other issues can be solved immediately after studying the marketing of the family planning policy in details.

Then, the marketing of the family planning policy is the decisive factor for the performance of the family planning workers.

On the basis of having relevant professional knowledge, all kinds of family planning workers must know and master the theory, methods and means of the family planning policy marketing, so as to improve work efficiency and to make work products filled with economic and social efficiency. However, many family planning workers cannot accurately recognize the nature and levels of products served by them, cannot understand the demands of work objects, lack the analysis on the values of target consumers and costs, and also have not mastered the methods of systematic marketing management and effect assessment. Therefore, the marketing of the family planning policy is the important theoretical support to guide the family planning workers to improve job performance (Zhou et al., 2005).

Thirdly, the marketing of the family planning policy is the important approach to promote the voluntary behaviors and good fertility accomplishment of the target public.

On one hand, the marketing of the family planning policy can change people's cognition and values. At first, it should sell the knowledge and ideas of the family planning to the target groups, to make the target groups obtain cognition as far as possible, so as to change their own accomplishment and behaviors. For example, the sales of contraceptive knowledge can make target groups realize the relationship between proper contraception and reproductive health, to evoke target publics' understanding the significance of proper contraception. When the target groups' cognition reaches to a certain extent, their values will change slowly. Then good fertility consciousness and accomplishment will be established.

On the other hand, the marketing of the family planning policy can stimulate the voluntary behaviors of target groups, to deepen and realize the ultimate significance of the family planning policy accordingly. The propaganda of the family planning policy has been the important work content of the family

planning departments and its aim is to popularize the family planning policy and to gain the target groups' understanding of and participation in the family planning policy. However, the author thinks that the ultimate goal of the family planning policy should not just be the public's understanding and participation in the policy, but should be the emergence of the scientific, rational and voluntary behaviors of the public. Because there is no inevitable relation between the cognition and behaviors, and the change of cognition does not represent the transformation of behaviors. If the goal of the family planning policy is just to make everyone know the policy, then it does less good to the society even the goal is realized. A simple example is that many families know that the family planning policy in our country is to encourage males to have ligation operations. The reason is that the benefits of males having ligation operations are greater than those of females, but in reality the proportion of males having ligation operations is very low (about 8%) and tends to decrease in recent years. The marketing of the family planning policy designs, implements, controls and assesses the procedure of the family planning policy in the systematic view, controls and assesses the whole marketing process with the starting point of complete product design and the standard of "the completion of the transaction". Accordingly, the implementation of the policy of encouraging males to have ligation operations is an incomplete practice of the product marketing, and is an unsuccessful transaction necessarily in the view of the family planning policy marketing, because its products are not totally accepted by target consumers, and its marketing process does not have due application of consumption demand analysis, market segmentation, distribution, promotion means and assessment of marketing effect. If the policy of male ligation can be included in the complete product project of "male ligation" for sale based on the theoretical guidance of the marketing, then it is perfectly possible to achieve good effects of the family planning policy. For example, many communities make quite a lot male residents voluntary to receive the ligation operation, through the running of the "male voluntary ligation" project. In fact, a large number of cases prove that the marketing of the family planning policy helps arouse conscious and voluntary behaviors of the public, and plays a better role in changing public behaviors, so as to really improve the fertility accomplishment of the public.

3. THE BASIC STRATEGY OF THE FAMILY PLANNING POLICY MARKETING

The basic strategy of the family planning policy marketing refers to the important marketing mix that plays a role in the marketing activities. Jerome McCarthy generalizes the elements of marketing mix as the well-known 4Ps, that is, product strategy (Product), price strategy (Price),

place strategy (Place) and promotion strategy (Promotion), which basically lays the framework of modern marketing theory. Based on the reality of the family planning work and using relevant marketing theories as reference, this article puts forward the "6Ps" strategy of the family planning policy marketing.

3.1 The Product Strategy of the Family Planning Policy Marketing

In the marketing, products are the goods served to the market for satisfying some demand or desire of people. It can be tangible articles and also can be intangible service and creative ideas. The product concept in the marketing of the family planning policy is different from that in common marketing. The products in the marketing of the family planning policy can be called the products of the family planning policy, referring to the things sold by the marketers of the family planning policy, which are the information of the family planning policy, all kinds of reproductive health care knowledge, expected public behaviors and all kind of relevant interests that they mean to deliver. It also includes any tangible items and intangible services for supporting or facilitating the target groups' cognition and behavioral change.

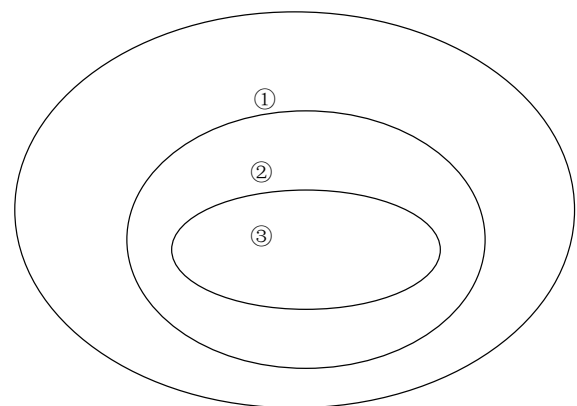


Figure 1
The Three Levels of the Marketing Products of the Family Planning Policy

①The additional product, ②The actual products, ③The core product

Traditional marketing theory thinks that the overall concept of products includes these three levels as the core product, the actual product and the additional product, (see Figure 1). This kind of level difference also exists in the products of the family planning policy marketing. Using this principle to analyze the products of the family planning policy can help us have accurate knowledge of the product concept of the family planning policy marketing, and help us make product decisions in the marketing activities of the family planning policy.

(a) The core product. The product in the center of product hierarchy is the core product. The core product refers to the benefits that the target groups obtain or experience in the process of consumption and that they

think are the most valuable, such as the new knowledge gained by a participator of a lecture of the family planning policy.

(b) The actual products. The actual products, which are tightly around the core products, are the carrier or behavioral pattern when the marketers of the family planning policy sell the policy products. For example, the contraceptive products delivered by the family planning departments or all kinds of monetary grants served by the family planning departments or fertility health care lecture on a certain subject, or a certain proposed behavior. In order to get the interests of the core products, the actual products are inevitable. The reason is very simple and is that what the public needs is a lecture, but the provided knowledge of family health,; using condoms is not the aim of public behaviors, but to gain the actual benefits of contraception and avoidance of the spread of the venereal disease. If the scientific researches show that condoms make no contribution to the contraception or the avoidance of the spread of venereal diseases, probably no one will insist on using them.

(c) The additional product. This product level includes all tangible items and services spreading with the policy products themselves. Though the additional products can be regarded as alternative ones, they are necessary in some situations. They not only contribute to the marketing of the policy products, but also provide stimulation and remove obstacles for the behavioral transformation expected by the marketers of the family planning policy, and even can maintain the effect of the behavioral transformation, make the marketing activities of the family planning policy become “tangibility” “branding”, so as to make the marketing activities and products of the family planning policy more attractive and charismatic. For example, for the workers of the family planning policy, in order to sell the policy products of “birth control”, the marketers must offer all kinds of medical services, contraceptive knowledge, contraceptives or drugs. In this way, the product types, which must be designed in the marketing scheme of the family planning policy, should be added accordingly to make the product plan and development more complicated.

The marketers of the family planning policy must divide and analyze the three levels of the policy products in the practical work, and make corresponding marketing strategy towards different levels of products. For example, in the level of the core product, we should consider from the point of view of the public (consumers), decide to highlight which potential benefits, and consider whether the public (consumers) can perceive these interests, and think of the comparison between the interests brought by the expected behaviors and the costs caused by the rival old behavioral patterns.

In the level of the actual product, we need consider to name the entire marketing activities of the family planning

policy, find appropriate sponsors and supporters for the marketing of the family planning policy, and communicate with the target groups, so as to increase the reliability and attraction of the marketing of the family planning policy.

The additional level of the products of the family planning policy has a close relationship with the target groups and directly influences the target groups’ perception of the entire marketing of the family planning policy, and there are more things to pay attention to in the actual operation. The decision related to this product level should be included in the product decision, placement decision, promotion decision and other links of the marketing and throughout the entire marketing process.

The analysis on the product concept of the family planning policy marketing is only the beginning of the product strategy, and the classification, positioning (segmentation of the target market, determination of the target groups), product development and design, and a series of links of the products of the family planning policy marketing are included thereafter. It is impossible to discuss everyone here.

3.2 The Price Strategy of the Family Planning Policy Marketing

The price of the family planning policy marketing refers to the costs undertook by the target groups in the consumption process of the family planning policy products. Adam Smith thinks that the real price of any goods is the costs must be paid by the person who wants to get, and is the hardship and difficulties encountered to get it. So, the price of the family planning policy products is the acceptable costs of them; the price strategy of the family planning policy marketing is carried out around controlling the acceptable costs of the target groups.

The acceptable costs of the family planning policy products can be divided into monetary costs and non-monetary costs. In general, monetary costs are the monetary price for getting the tangible products or service in the family planning policy products, for example, using condoms for contraception in order to implement (consumption) birth control policy, we should pay certain monetary costs. Non-monetary costs usually are intangible, but really exist for the target groups of the family planning policy marketing. Non-monetary costs are related to the following factors: Consuming the products of the family planning policy (or represents as implementing or executing the family planning policy) or the time, efforts and energy needed to form new behaviors; the psychological risks and losses that can be perceived or experienced; and any psychological discomfort related to it. For example, a male is forced to receive a ligation operation, then his psychological discomfort will be very intense, which means the non-monetary costs he has paid will be very high. Because monetary costs are relatively easy to be measured, while

most of non-monetary costs are short of explicit ways or standards to be expressed or measured, and the specific standards to measure non-monetary costs differ from man to man, this makes it more difficult for marketing subjects of the family planning policy to apply price strategy than that of business marketing.

The price strategy of the family planning policy marketing can be designed with the exchange theory: (The interests) provided by the marketers of the family planning policy to the target groups must be equal to or more than the costs they must pay. Thence, its strategy can be divided into two steps; the first is to discern the relevant monetary costs and non-monetary costs of the public for obtaining the products of the family planning policy. What need to be paid attention to here in particular are the costs caused by new demands and the exit costs produced by negative demands. The second step is to formulate specific strategies, to reduce total costs and increase profits, and to try to get the best balance between the two by appropriately using price subsidy mechanism. For example, We can consider giving some monetary price subsidies to increase its profits in response to the phenomenon of high non-monetary costs of men who have ligation.

3.3 The Place Strategy of the Family Planning Policy Marketing

In the commercial departments, the distribution channels are the intermediaries (pathways) that exist between the producers and the ultimate users to play different roles and have different names, and they urge the products or services to be successfully consumed and used. Accordingly, in the marketing of the family planning policy, the distribution channel is the channel to send the products of the family planning policy to the target groups. It is a set of interdependent organizational networks to send the tangible products or services of the family planning policy marketing to the target groups.

How to send the products of the family planning policy marketing to the target groups is the problem than the marketers of the family planning policy must pay attention to. If the target groups do not have access to the products of the family planning policy, they are impossible to try to accept the products of the family planning policy marketing or to directly experience products. The distribution channels are the bridges to connect the target groups and the products of the family planning policy. Compared with that in the marketing activities of the commercial departments, its components of the distribution channel in the marketing of the family planning policy probably are more complex. Taking the policy marketing of eliminating fetal sex diagnosis for non-medical needs as an example, the distribution channels in the marketing include schools, hospitals, communities and other different places, help the target population gain the product information in the most convenient and easiest place through the information dissemination and service of the teachers in schools, doctors in hospitals, cadres of the resident committees, community volunteers and other personnel, so as to eliminate the behaviors of fetal sex diagnosis for non-medical needs.

The distribution channels of the family planning policy products are similar with those of the products we usually see. We should mainly take the following problems into consideration in the management of the distribution channels: the type selection of the distribution channels, the quantity of distribution points, excitation of distributors, management of distributors and so on, among which the excitation and management of distributors are especially important. The distribution channels have various grades under the marketing of the family planning policy, and each type of intermediary in the channel network forms a channel grade and determines the length of the channel. Figure 2 lists several possible distribution channels.

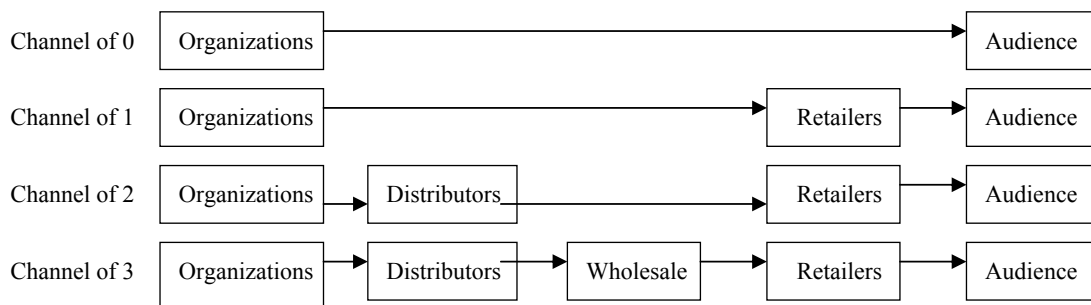


Figure 2
Distributors of Different Grades

The channel of Grade 0 (direct distribution) is constituted with the management organizations of the family planning who directly serve the products of the family planning policy to the target groups, and it can be carried out through dropping in from door to door,

mailing, internet or self-built channels. In the channel of Grade 1, there is a distribution intermediary, which usually is a retailer, for example, the family planning departments sell the birth control policy through medical institutions. The channel of Grade 2 has two

intermediaries, the distributor and retailer. For example, add distributors on the basis of the channel of Grade 1, community family planning service institutions. There are three intermediaries in the channel of Grade 3, distributor, wholesaler and retailer.

The reason why the marketers of the family planning policy conduct the distribution of the family planning policy products through intermediaries but not in a direct way is that in general the marketing of the family planning policy should send its products to many target receivers, which needs storage facilities, sales management and promotion, retail facilities and transport facilities. The intermediaries have higher efficiency in widely sending the products to the target groups. What they provide to the marketing institutions of the family planning policy through own relationship, experience, specialization and operation scale are more than what can be done by the marketing institutions of the family planning policy themselves.

3.4 The Promotion Strategy of the Family Planning Policy Marketing

The promotion of the family planning policy marketing is to make the target groups know and identify the products of the family planning policy and even to cause the behavioral transformation through the marketing means. For example, for the products of the family planning policy of encouraging the use of condoms, how to make relevant products received, implemented and maintained by the target groups is the key to success of the project. Here the marketers can promote the contents for the audience plans with the guidance of the customers. For instance, they can make small calendars of health every year; they can deliver the contraception and other contents about health to families in the form of comics and limericks that are loved by people; they can bring the knowledge of the harm caused by unsafe sex to newlyweds and school classes; they can post public service advertising of advocating to use condoms on the prominent positions in the community; they can also propose the construction of healthy families. In terms of the routes of the transmission, we can take advantage of the combination of a variety of media and channels (newspapers and periodicals, TV and other news media reports, publicity leaflet, self-reading manual, layout roving exhibitions, contraceptive knowledge contests, and the proposing of the community leaders). While designing the content of dissemination information, it can use the rational appeals that emphasize the relationship between the unsafe sex and diseases, and contain the emotional appeals of influences on family, children health, economy and happiness caused by unsafe sex.

In addition, the means to promote the products of the family planning policy include: the mass media, selective media (direct mail and e-marketing) and interpersonal communication (oral communication and one-to-one

communication). These three means of communication are mutually enforced, and should be used together.

3.5 The Continuous Strategy

The marketing of the family planning policy mainly is the sales of intangible products, and the result is the emergence of the public's conscious family planning and giving a good birth and good care. But this is a relatively long-lasting transformation process, and its results are hard to measure directly. In order to make the marketing of the family planning policy realize its organizational goals successfully, the marketing agencies are necessary to draw up a continuous transformation plan, to guarantee achieving the marketing goals of the family planning policy, but not to simply send the products of the family planning policy to the target groups.

Firstly, we should establish a perfect information feedback mechanism. The marketing activities of the family planning policy are in a dynamic marketing environment. In this environment, all kinds of factors are changing, thus to have great influences on the target receivers' reaction of the family planning policy marketing, market demands and competition, the marketing organizations of the family planning policy, and the implementation of the marketing activities of the family planning policy. Establishing perfect information feedback mechanism makes the marketing project managers of the family planning policy be able to check the implementation effect of the marketing strategy in all stages, and then to decide whether it is necessary to appropriately modify the current strategy, or whether there are opportunities to promote the current strategy to a deeper level. The information feedback undoubtedly has positive effects on drawing up more effective behavior change strategies.

Secondly, we should establish a perfect evaluation system. The evaluation system has relationships with success in the marketing of the family planning policy. On one hand, the marketing decision makers of the family planning policy need to evaluate and examine each link in the marketing activities, find out the gap between the practical results and our goals from the evaluation results, and find out the reason causing the gap, modify and perfect the marketing strategy of the family planning policy.

The marketing project of the family planning policy should be evaluated after each link is completed. In the process of evaluation, the problems in two aspects should be considered. The first is whether to finish the intended target, and whether there are other factors contributing to the achievement of the target. The second is whether the results of the family planning policy marketing are desirable in the aspect of society and ethnics, whether these results are achieved in the right means.

3.6 The Cooperation Strategy

The success of the family planning policy marketing can not do without the strong support of external resources.

To get the external resources, the marketing agencies of the family planning policy must conduct beneficial cooperation with organizations of all types, and this is also the aim of putting forward the cooperation strategy of the family planning policy marketing. The cooperation strategy of the family planning policy is the cooperation relationship between the marketing agencies of the family planning policy and other organizations to better meet the behavioral demands of the target receivers, such as the cooperation between the family planning departments and medical institutions, and IPPF supplies manufacturers.

What needs to be explained is that the cooperative marketing of the family planning policy has particularity in cooperative object selection and relationship coordination, which should be paid much attention to.

First of all, we should grasp the social welfare guidance of the family planning policy marketing. In reality, there are all kinds of institutions implementing the cooperative marketing of the family planning policy, they can be government, non-profit organizations, and also can be enterprises. Because different organizations have different missions, they probably have different aims from the implementation subject of the family planning policy marketing while taking part in the cooperative marketing activities of the family planning policy, for example, the enterprises participate to enhance the image and to expand the brand's influence, while the governments participate in the activities based on their own social functions. Then there comes a problem of the activity goal guidance. We think that no matter what kind of institutions implement the marketing of the family planning policy, their aim cannot be profitable. For the purpose of transforming social behavior and solving social problems, the marketing of the family planning policy is the responsibility of every organization (No matter it is a for-profit organization, or a non-profit organization) in the society. When the marketing subjects of the family planning policy select partners, they should fully consider organizations of all types' role in the marketing project of the family planning policy, and include the governments, non-profit organizations, enterprises and even individuals into the project, forming the complementary situation.

Then the ways of cooperation can be diversified. The ways marketing agencies of the family planning policy

to cooperate with other organizations can be diversified. According to the areas of the cooperation, it can be divided into production cooperation, market cooperation, technical cooperation and capital cooperation; according to the degree of participation in the cooperation, it can be divided into long-term strategic alliance, partnership cooperation, equity cooperation, contract cooperation, informal cooperation and so on.

CONCLUSION

At present, the marketing of the family planning policy is still a brand new field no matter in the aspect of theory or in practice, and the study of it at home and abroad is still in the initial stage. Here the author only discusses and builds the theoretical framework of the family planning policy marketing from some development in its boundary field, and only talks about some basic problems, hoping to cast a brick to attract jade.

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