Social countermarketing: brave new world, brave new map

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Abstract

Purpose – Conceptual advancement underpins the progress of social marketing and countermarketing research but has been neglected in recent years. This paper aims to describe a new integrative framework of social countermarketing (SCM) concepts, techniques and defining characteristics, based on research tracing the conceptual evolution of the field and contrasting commercial (profit-focused) and social (public good-focused) countermarketing.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper undertook searches of electronic databases to examine how socially oriented countermarketing has been characterised in the research literature. Search terms included “countermarketing”, “critical marketing”, “de-marketing” and “counter-advertising”. Broad inclusion criteria allowed consideration of reports, conference and media outputs, as well as peer-reviewed articles published since 1971. Selected marketing journals were searched individually.

Findings – After screening of 408 initial search results, 80 studies were retained and full papers retrieved. Main ideas, definitions, scope, concepts and terms used were mapped to identify the common and distinguishing features, as well as higher-order organising themes. This led to the development of a new conceptual framework for SCM comprising eight domains.

Research limitations/implications – The integrative conceptual framework offers a foundation for future research and SCM practice.

Originality/value – This paper introduces a framework designed to advance the conceptual basis of SCM research and practice with particular reference to the field of public health and disease prevention.

Keywords Social marketing theory, Techniques, Concepts, New conceptualisation, Countermarketing, Social countermarketing

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction

Conceptual frameworks – why bother?

Theories and conceptual frameworks represent the “maps” which help us explain how campaigns, programmes or initiatives are expected to work. Conceptual advances underpin progression in research and practice (Glanz and Rimer, 2005). In the case of marketing research, recent analyses suggest that conceptual development has been neglected.
difficulties, perhaps even more so with respect to countermarketing or marketing that is oppositional in nature (Blythe, 2014). Separate streams of marketing practice can be classified in terms of commercial (for profit) and social (for public good) marketing. Commercial and social marketing have some shared and some distinct theoretical foundations (Ansoff, 1957; Glanz and Rimer, 2005; Hoff and Stiglitz, 2001; McCarthy, 1960; Nutbeam et al., 2010; Truong, 2014). Commercial profit-centred marketing influenced the development of social marketing concepts focused on the public good, including “counter-advertising”, a term first used by Dorfman and Wallack (1993). Oppositional marketing practice can also be seen in separate commercial and social streams. A plethora of oppositional marketing concepts and terms have emerged in the research literature (for example, de-marketing, critical marketing and critical social marketing) but few authors have addressed the development of an overall conceptual framework for socially focused countermarketing.

An integrative framework – what value?

Where different maps purport to represent the same or similar territory or where many new terms have appeared without a consistent point of reference, it is helpful to synthesise the diverse maps and their terminology so that a shared basis for understanding and future exploration can be proposed. We call this synthesis an integrative framework. The need for an integrative framework in this field is underscored by technological and thematic diversity in modern countermarketing and by changes in the participants, platforms, channels, reach, speed and accessibility of the communications (Serra and Gonçalves, 2016; Koc-Michalska et al., 2016; Hamill et al., 2015; Krueger and Haytko, 2015; Hefler et al., 2013; Chou et al., 2013).

What the research team set out to achieve

Preliminary investigations suggested that a conceptual contribution to the field of socially focused countermarketing would be of value. We postulated that an exploration of published literature about oppositional forms of marketing in both commercial and social streams could inform the construction of an integrative conceptual framework for socially focused countermarketing (which we call “social countermarketing” (SCM). We considered that such an exploration would be complemented by a re-examination of the earlier developments in propositional forms of marketing – both commercial and social. Key research themes emerged in the process of building the conceptual framework. These included:

• identification of key characteristics of current practice as defined in our suggested framework of SCM;
• examination of theories or frameworks guiding contemporary SCM practice or potentially guiding it in the future;
• exploration of what characteristics may define effective (and ineffective) SCM efforts;
• clarification of the specific contribution of new media technologies (such as organisation websites, social networking and social media sites) to SCM effectiveness; and
• consideration what impacts may be expected from SCM practice and under what conditions.

This paper describes our research methods, main findings and proposed conceptual framework for SCM; our stipulated key research themes are addressed as far as current evidence allows, and we set out a prioritised agenda of research for the rapidly evolving field of SCM.
Methodology

Search strategy
This research synthesis aimed to:

- trace the evolution of conceptual development from the initial marketing mix to the development and refinement of social marketing concepts, as well as the development and refinement of countermarketing ideas; and
- identify the concepts, terms and techniques used in both commercially and socially focused countermarketing.

We undertook searches of electronic databases Medline, PubMed, Scopus, Business Source Premier (BSP) and World Advertising Research Center (WARC); internet searches using Google and Google Scholar were also used. Additionally, we employed snowballing techniques based on searches of references in retrieved papers using “similar articles”, “related documents” or “cited by” functions. Selected journals (specifically, *Journal of Social Marketing, Social Marketing Quarterly, European Journal of Marketing and Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*) were searched individually. Search terms comprised “counter-marketing”, “critical marketing”, “de-marketing”, “counter advertising”, “advocacy advertising”, “corrective advertising” and “denormalisation”; spelling and grammatical variations of these terms were included in the search strategy (see supplementary online material in Appendix 1). Studies had to be available in English language. Research design was not a criterion, which allowed reports, conference presentations, blogs, campaign media and media articles to be considered, as well as peer-reviewed journal articles published since 1971. This year was selected, as Kotler *et al.* were used as the conceptual and temporal starting point (Kotler and Levy, 1971a; Kotler and Zaltman, 1971b) apart from two earlier historical references (Ansoff, 1957; McCarthy, 1960).

Screening
Two authors undertook initial screening of titles and available abstracts for basic relevance after removal of duplicates (Figure 1).
From 455 unique results of initial searches, titles and abstracts were examined for general relevance, yielding 383 studies/reports; 25 studies were added from grey literature and snowballing techniques. This number (408) was reduced to 256 results after screening for specific relevance to countermarketing; these studies were then coded by conceptual approach/nomenclature and by health theme. This first conceptual/thematic mapping informed the design of a preliminary template by the team which then served as the basis for further screening of the retrieved studies. We retrieved full versions of all retained studies; these were analysed and discussed by the writing team, iteratively to build an integrative framework of SCM concepts, techniques and define characteristics with particular reference to application in the field of public health and disease prevention.

**Conceptual development – mapping the journey of propositional and oppositional marketing**

In this section, we trace and comment on the conceptual evolution in propositional marketing from the genesis of the commercial “marketing mix” through to the development of social marketing and in oppositional marketing from commercial de-marketing through to critical social marketing. The historical journey is mapped in three phases:

1. from marketing to social marketing;
2. from counter-advertising to de-marketing; and
3. from critical marketing to critical social marketing.

**From marketing to social marketing**

The conceptual evolution of the marketing mix, 1960 onwards, is well-documented from the initial 4Ps (McCarthy, 1960) to the 7Ps (Booms and Bitner, 1981; Rafiq, 1995) and beyond (Lauterborn, 1990; Londre, 2007; Professional Academy, 2016). The conceptual evolution of social marketing has also been well-mapped since Kotler and Zaltman (1971b), Macfadyen et al. (1999), Andreasen (2002), French and Blair-Stevens (2005), Donovan and Henley (2010), National Social Marketing Centre [NSMC] (2010), Donovan (2011), Lefebvre (2011a, 2013), Saunders et al. (2015), French and Blair-Stevens (2015).

Davidson and Novelli (2001) and Anker and Stead (2009) discussed the idea of commercial (for-profit) social marketing, identifying ethical concerns about paternalism and asymmetric power relations; however, this line of discourse has not gained traction. Social marketing is not a theory in itself; rather, it draws upon different theories and models to identify determinants of behaviour change and thereby develop appropriate intervention strategies (Truong, 2014; Donovan and Henley, 2010; Luca and Suggs, 2013; Thaler and Helmig, 2013; Kotler and Zaltman, 1971b; Lefebvre, 2013). There is recent emphasis on the engaged citizen perspective and the role of individuals and groups in achieving social outcomes through self-determined action (Saunders et al., 2015) and through co-creation via social markets (French and Russell-Bennett, 2015), and there is an emerging emphasis on systems thinking (Gordon et al., 2016; Domegan et al., 2016). The engaged citizen and the contribution of individuals and groups also emerges as an important idea in our conceptual framework for SCM, which is discussed in a later section.

**From de-marketing to counter-advertising and back again**

“De-marketing” was introduced by Kotler and Levy (1971a). Taking a commercial focus, the authors identified three different categories of de-marketing:

1. **General** de-marketing: A company wishes to reduce the level of total demand.
2. **Selective** de-marketing: A company wants to discourage demand from a particular
customer demographic (this could include selective de-marketing of a product within a given product category – although Kotler and Levy do not specifically mention this).

(3) Ostensible de-marketing: A company wants to give the appearance of trying to discourage demand while actually aiming to increase it.

The term “counter-ads” was proposed by Dorfman and Wallack (1993) within their proposed spectrum, which ranged from individually oriented public service advertising to socially oriented counter-advertising. (Dorfman and Wallack, 1993). These authors characterised “advocacy advertising” as being focussed on promoting policy rather than on products, and similarly argued that the primary purpose of “counter-advertising” was to challenge the dominant view that public health problems reflect personal health habits (Dorfman and Wallack, 1993). The term “counter-advertising” was also used by Dixon et al. to describe their innovative food marketing studies with pre-adolescent children (Dixon et al., 2014a) and parents (Dixon et al., 2014b). The researchers acknowledge the “food marketing defense model” (Harris et al., 2009), but mainly locate their research within the conceptual framing of Dorfman and Wallack, that is, emphasising public policy as the solution rather than the placing the onus on individuals to develop skills and resilience in the face of a barrage of unhealthy product marketing.

In the late 1990s, Murray took a social activism approach to his proposed redefinition of “countermarketing” and “de-marketing”, introducing the term “social activist marketing” (Murray, 1997). According to Murray, the practice of countermarketing and de-marketing in the social marketing context should be referred to as social activist marketing, that is:

A more precise term would be ‘social activist countermarketing & de-marketing’. Social activist marketing is defined as: that branch of social marketing that fosters social change through the elimination (or reduction) of the supply of, and/or the demand for, a socially (morally or health-related) and/or economically harmful product (Murray, 1997).

Murray’s work was further enhanced by the author’s 2003 discussion of the survival–revenue–cost (SRC) threat hierarchy. In the SRC hierarchy, an organisation that is the target for oppositional activism will resist most strongly when its survival is threatened, least strongly when its cost structure is threatened and between the two extremes when its revenue structure is threatened. In a rebellious adaptation of the target audience segmentation principle, Murray suggests a customised framing of oppositional communications based on SRC hierarchy classification (Murray et al., 2003). These concepts of social activist marketing and SRC hierarchy are highly relevant to what we term the modern practice of “social countermarketing”, and they are incorporated in our proposed framework. Unlike Murray et al., however, we see SCM not as a part of social marketing but as a related but separate concept in its own right. Although some techniques are shared, the very different power relationships involved and citizen-centric nature of oppositional activity undertaken in SCM indicate a paradigm difference.

De-marketing was revisited by Lawther et al. (1997) in their paper, which was very much in the tradition of Kotler and Levy’s original work (Kotler and Levy, 1971a). De-marketing is not simply the inverse of conventional but includes the use of marketing tools to address particular requirements of reducing demand and to avoid detrimental effects on consumers in the long term (Lawther et al., 1997). Lefebvre and Kotler (2011b) also used the term “de-marketing” as part of their discussion of behavioural economics and design thinking within social marketing. These authors consider the use of de-marketing techniques for public health to be in the early stage of development and research. They encourage the application of these techniques where the goal is to reduce consumption or use of specific...
products and services, discourage specific behaviours, change organisational or business practices or craft healthier public policies. Lefebvre further discusses “de-marketing” in a blog post on “de-marketing obesity”; drawing on the successes of tobacco control, he argues for regulation of advertising, restricting access to unhealthy products in vending machines in schools and worksites and fiscal strategies, such as taxing energy dense, nutrient-poor foods to create market disincentives for obesogenic business practices and incentives for healthier social and commercial environments (Lefebvre, 2014). The discourse on de-marketing provides useful insights, but in our view, the prime movers of de-marketing are likely to be government agencies or health organisations, while the role allowed for the citizen is predominantly a passive one. Jones et al. (2014) introduced the term “social de-marketing” under the umbrella of countermarketing in their discussion of the “wicked problem” of cocaine but did not define their concepts precisely. Consistent with Lefebvre and Kotler’s assessment that de-marketing was at an early stage of development, Blythe’s (2014) recent review found that conceptual clarity and/or a typology of de-marketing is lacking.

**From critical marketing to critical social marketing**

From its early association with the so-called “Frankfurt School”, the term “critical theory” was devised in 1937 and is rooted in “critical activity”, meaning that it is oppositional in nature and involved in a struggle for social change and for the unification of theory and practice (Kellner, 1990). Hansen was the first to use the term “critical marketing” in conjunction with critical social theory (Hansen, 1981; Tadajewski, 2010), while, two decades later, Burton (2001) discussed the relevance of applying critical theory to marketing. She observed that conceptual advancement had been neglected, whilst also setting out a blueprint for progress and identifying implications for “critical marketing” in terms of practice, education, research and publication.

Hastings (2009) used the term “critical marketing” several years later, describing it as a “vital part” of social marketing; critical marketing sought to determine not only what is “wrong and bad” about commercial marketing but also to reflect on its nature, learn from its successes and analyse its weaknesses. Hastings also characterised critical marketing as “moving upstream”, i.e. thinking beyond individual change. Because social marketing involves by definition a focus on individual behaviour change, Hastings’ views represented an important step for social marketing theory, principles and practice. Saren (2009) distinguished three modes of engagement in critical marketing research:

1. **Oppositional mode**: A mode that is in opposition to the mainstream, a separate, alternative and self-contained approach.

2. **Revivalist mode**: A mode including the engagement with the mainstream to return it to its original methods and values.

3. **Therapeutic mode**: A mode in which mainstream marketing is seen in terms of power relations of marketing knowledge in the academic system (Saren, 2009).

Gordon (2011) defined “critical social marketing” as:

Critical research from a marketing perspective on the impact commercial marketing has upon society, to build the evidence base, inform upstream efforts such as advocacy, policy and regulation, and inform the development of downstream social marketing interventions (Gordon, 2011).

In this definition, the perspective is that of the marketer (or researcher) more than the citizen or the community, with as much apparent emphasis on downstream social marketing interventions as on upstream advocacy or policy.
Discussion

From marketing products to marketing social change

Our research elucidated three phases of conceptual development from the initial framing of the marketing mix in the 1960s through to contemporary countermarketing ideas. Commercial marketing concepts informed and were incorporated into early conceptual development of social marketing in the 1970s and beyond. Recent conceptual iterations such as the benchmark criteria placed greater emphasis on a citizen-centred perspective within social marketing. These developments held the promise that social marketing would include a more proactive and self-determining role for individuals and groups in achieving social outcomes through action, and allow a co-creation role for citizens. Our review did not uncover evidence to suggest that this aspiration has been achieved.

The times they are a changing

Bob Dylan’s song “the times they are a-changin” first appeared in the early 1960s and became a popular anthem of social change. In 1984, Steve Jobs recited the second verse to launch the Apple Macintosh to shareholders (KSTS TV 48 San Jose [Television Channel] via Macessentials, 1984); by 2005, it had been used in TV advertising for insurance by Kaiser Permanente (2005). By the end of 2010, Dylan’s handwritten lyrics of the song were sold at auction by Sotheby’s, New York, for $422,500 to a hedge fund manager – an action and a motivation far removed from the original aspirations of the younger Dylan (Rolling Stone Magazine, 2010). How well has social marketing lived up to the original aspiration that it could serve as a platform to deliver change for a better society? Despite the greater prominence recently afforded to the citizen/the community in social marketing discourse, there is a pervading sense that marketers, researchers and larger organisations (whether government, non-government and corporate) are the ones setting the agenda and determining the desirable directions of change, mainly through downstream approaches focussed on the behaviour of individuals. Meanwhile, community awareness of and hostility towards ubiquitous marketing of unhealthy and harmful products (especially to children and young people) is increasingly apparent. This opposition finds its modern expression online-driven techniques, such as personal Facebook and Twitter posts, crowd-sourced campaigns created either by individuals or by groups such as the Australian political action organisation Get Up! (CommunityRun.org, 2016) that funds paid counter-advertising and independent blogs critiquing unhealthy marketing. Recent examples include a crowd-sourced campaign to replace all commercial advertising in a London underground train station with images of cats (Glimpse [weGlimpse.co], 2016; Gwynn, 2016) and the concerted opposition of academicians and journalists who exposed Coca-Cola’s manipulation of obesity research (O’Connor, 2015). Recent discourse locates critical marketing as a part of social marketing (Hastings, 2009) and critical social marketing as a research endeavour (Gordon, 2011), but this does not account for the shifting power relationships, the citizen-centric and citizen-funded dimension of the oppositional activity undertaken nor for the rapid uptake and application of new media technologies in modern countermarketing. These changes have ushered in hybrid interventions and activities that draw upon the techniques of advocacy, social activism, coalition building and marketing to create a new phenomenon, which we call “social countermarketing”.

Brave new world – brave new map

From the search of the literature, our mapping of the conceptual development and analysis of our main results, we concluded that further conceptual development, specifically of
countermarketing, could be of value. Commercial and SCM concepts and practices were considered side-by-side (see supplementary online material in Appendix 1) and obvious contributions from social marketing were also included. Main ideas, nomenclature, definitions and scope of the frameworks were assessed to determine common and distinguishing features. These led us to develop eight domains for an integrating framework that could better accommodate new and emerging practice: definition, value, main theories and models, techniques, origination, target audiences, opposition focus and goals (change focus). Through iterative team discussion, we agreed on these proposed domains of SCM (Table I).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domains</th>
<th>Social countermarketing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>A social change process, drawing on advocacy and social marketing techniques, undertaken in opposition to existing marketing activity of a business organisation (or its representative agents), to wider socio-cultural norms, or to the policy positions of governments or decision-influential agencies, in order to create social, environmental and health benefits for people and society as a whole</td>
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<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>Public good: benefits accrue for people and for society as a whole</td>
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<td>Main theories and models</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual/Downstream Focus</td>
<td>System/Upstream Focus</td>
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<td>Social cognitive theory</td>
<td>Community Mobilisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theory of reasoned action/planned behaviour</td>
<td>Community Coalition Action Theory</td>
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<td>Transtheoretical model</td>
<td>Social Activism Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elaboration likelihood model</td>
<td>Survival-revenue-cost threat hierarchy</td>
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<td>Health belief model</td>
<td>Hierarchy of effects model</td>
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<td>Social – ecological model</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Diffusion of innovations theory</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Demarketing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Techniques [from marketing, activism, advocacy]</td>
<td>Logic Models or other Integrating Frameworks</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Creation, Co-creation by citizens and social networks: individuals, groups, networks, NGOs/CSOs taking action via advocacy/marketing hybrid interventions, including: *re-purposing * crowdsourced funding * paid media * earned media * social media * publicity/PR events * calls to action * consumer-generated advertising [CGA] * protest rallies * letter/postcard campaigns * advocacy * position statements</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Integrated intervention mix: product, price, place and promotion (advertising and sponsorship)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Competition analysis &amp; action Systems approaches</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Insight-driven segmentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Origination</td>
<td>Individuals (CGA), groups, networks, civil society organisations, government organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Target audiences</td>
<td>Industry, Industry coalitions/associations, Industry representatives/Front groups, Legislators, Policymakers and Community/Community sub-groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition focus</td>
<td>Harmful marketing activity(ies) of industry, Bogus Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activity, Socio-cultural norms, Government policy positions that conflict with the public good, cause harm and fail to protect against harm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goals (change focus)</td>
<td>Support for public policy or regulation for one or more of: product, price, place and promotion (including advertising or sponsorship); change in or cessation of harmful marketing practices by industry</td>
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</table>
Social countermarketing – definition and conceptual framework

We define a new concept, SCM as follows:

A social change process, drawing on advocacy and social marketing techniques, undertaken in opposition to existing marketing activity of a business organisation (or its representative agents), to wider socio-cultural norms or to the policy positions of governments or decision-influential agencies, in order to create social, environmental and health benefits for people and society as a whole.

Working in practice but not in theory? Social activism, community mobilisation and community coalition action theory

We have previously noted the quest for social change and for the unification of theory and practice in the roots of “critical theory” (Kellner, 1990), but it was in the late 1990s and early 2000s when Murray first described social activism within his consideration of countermarketing (Murray, 1997; Murray et al., 2003). Andreasen (1997) indicated the possibility of a collaborative approach across social marketing and social mobilisation in addressing social issues; this is a useful idea which we incorporated in our conceptual framework but as a separate entity from social marketing. We also recognise the dynamic nature of ideas and theories of social mobilisation as discussed recently by Campbell (2014).

The impact of new technologies on social engagement and activism has been recognised (Rolfe, 2006). Digital technology provides a platform for citizen engagement, information collection and publication, dialogue and debate and a venue for fundraising and social activism. Rolfe (2006) proposes a model for the expansion of the “electronic repertoire of contention” and identifies the implications this may have for social movements that make use of digital media. The development of social networks and coalitions that may include individual citizens, groups, civil society organisations and others is a commonly observable feature of modern SCM; there is, however, little mention in the research literature of relevant theory in this context, even though community coalition action theory has been set out as long ago as 2002 (Butterfoss and Kegler, 2009), measurement tools have been described (Granner and Sharpe, 2004) and supportive empirical research has been published (Kegler and Swan, 2011). Social activism theory, community coalition action theory and models for social activism in the context of new media appear to us as strikingly relevant to SCM, but remain as opportunities that are under researched. MacInnis (2011) provides a framework for conceptual development together with a set of recommendations which may assist us in thinking through this endeavour.

Upstream, citizen-focused, hybrid techniques (advocacy + social marketing + new media)

Dorfman and Wallack (1993) reinforce the importance of upstream focus in their definition of media advocacy as “the strategic use of mass media in combination with community organising to advance healthy public policies”. This technique takes a citizen rather than consumer approach – people are participants in the democratic process rather than consumers of information (Dorfman, 2013). We argue that policy and media advocacy techniques contribute importantly to the activity mix in SCM, and that they do so in new hybrid forms in combination with social marketing techniques and integrating new media technologies such as organisation websites, social networking and social media sites (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat), video-sharing platforms (e.g. YouTube) and smart device applications (“apps”). For example, repurposing graffiti methods used by the BUGA UP (Billboard Utilising Graffitists Against Unhealthy Promotions) activists in the mid-1970s to mid-1980s (British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC] - QED Programme, 1983) were reflected in the 2014 Canzilla campaign with a giant Coke can re-labelled Diabetes (Youth Speaks, 2015) and in the 2015 Share a Coke with Obesity campaign where a
marketing campaign to allow people to customise their Coca-Cola can with their name or the name of a friend was re-purposed to share a Coke instead with “Obesity”, “Diabetes”, “Heart Disease”, “Tooth decay”, as well as with “Steven N. Blair – one of the scientists Coke has reportedly been paying to shift the blame for obesity away from their products” (Centre for Science in the Public Interest, 2015). Whilst these approaches echo those used by BUGA UP activists some 30 years earlier, the modern practitioners of SCM have the added advantages and techniques afforded by digital photography and editing software, accessible website development tools, online crowdsourcing opportunities and social media platforms to accelerate and amplify the campaign to the many other networked citizens and coalitions ready and willing to make their campaign a global phenomenon.

Some researchers have begun to explore the use of new technologies in these more citizen-focused, hybrid techniques. Cova and White (2010) have discussed the advent of counter-brand and alter-brand communities – the phenomenon of tribal marketing, which they describe as increasingly fuelled by the development of online groupings using new media technologies. Guidry et al. (2014) examined the strategic use of Twitter in interactions of citizens with 50 non-profit organisations. The researchers found that the most successful engagement came from Twitter posts that asked questions of social media followers and encouraged them to respond to online and offline calls-to-action rather than simply focusing on publicity and information sharing; however, only 13 per cent of Twitter posts examined were in the “successful engagement” category, 19 per cent focussed on promotion/mobilisation, whereas the vast majority (68 per cent) were in the less-engaging information-sharing category (Guidry et al., 2014). Hamill et al. have reported on the use of Facebook, online ads and new media to mobilise tobacco control communities in low-income and middle-income countries (Hamill et al., 2015). These authors suggest that social media may have a role to play as an efficient engagement and mobilisation mechanism rather than being a low-cost alternative to traditional broadcast media with a focus on behavioural prompts. Kite et al. recently studied the features of Facebook posts that are associated with higher user engagement on Australian public health organisations’ Facebook pages. Video posts attracted the greatest amount of user engagement; posts that featured a positive emotional appeal or provided factual information attracted higher levels of user engagement, while conventional marketing elements, such as sponsorships and the use of persons of authority, generally discouraged user engagement, with the exception of posts that included a celebrity or sportsperson (Kite et al., 2016).

Oppositional stances on unhealthy policies, marketing or social norms
We define SCM as essentially oppositional in nature, typically opposing a policy position (or lack thereof) or marketing activities that are considered harmful; but, SCM also encompasses tackling unhealthy socio-cultural norms that may have been created or promoted through corporate activities. For example, SCM has been used effectively for the denormalisation of tobacco products and the tobacco industry (Kushnir et al., 2013; Bayer and Bachynski, 2013; Bell et al., 2010; Hammond et al., 2006), to counter the use of e-cigarette advertising designed to “renormalise” tobacco smoking (Measham et al., 2016) and to counteract media portrayals of the thin-body ideal for adolescent girls (Veldhuis et al., 2014).

Case studies: social countermarketing in action
In the supplementary online material, we provide a series of case studies of SCM to illustrate the conceptual framework [Youth Speaks, 2015; Evans et al., 2002; Centre for Science in the Public Interest, 2015; Cancer Council Victoria, 2016; Glimpse (weGlimpse.co), 2016; Time’s Up Tobacco Coalition, 2014; Alcohol and Drug Foundation, 2016; Parents’ Voice, 2015;
Junkbusters, 2016; Powell, 2015, Unhealthy Marketing and Industry Interference Network (UMIFNET), 2016]. The themes and descriptions of these case studies are shown as Table II.

So what’s new and different here? Distinguishing features of social countermarketing
As noted in Table I, SCM has strategies in common with commercial marketing and social marketing such as an integrated intervention mix, systems approaches and audience segmentation. Like social marketing, SCM is not a single theory in itself but draws on a range of theories and models. SCM has quite different values and goals, different originators, distinctive target audiences and a more socially legitimised mandate which derives from its citizen-centredness and orientation to the social good.

These are the distinguishing features which we argue mark SCM as a separate conceptual entity from social marketing and commercial countermarking. To be more specific about these distinguishing features, as set out in the domains of SCM (Table I):

- is a social change process driven from the grassroots community level rather than a marketing process driven by social marketers;
- can be initiated by individual citizens and groups (tribal counter-marketing, counter-brand communities) rather than by a national/multinational-driven marketing strategy;
- involves social activism and community coalition action, typically using new technologies, rather than market penetration through new media marketing and consumer-generated product advertising;
- places priority on the public good and not on private profit;
- emphasises an upstream social policy focus rather than an individual behavioural focus or a “brand-community” creation/targeting focus;
- goes beyond raising awareness of issues causes and incites political and/or upstream action;
- is oppositional to a policy (including lack of a policy), to marketing activity(ies) of a business organisation(s) or to unhealthy/harmful sociocultural norms;
- aims to generate support for public policy or regulation for a community, group or population of one or more of product, price, place and/or promotion (including advertising or sponsorship); and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Case study</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marketing overload</td>
<td>1. The Citizens Advertising Takeover Service (C.A.T.S.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marketing of Sugar Sweetened Beverages (SSBs)</td>
<td>2. Rethink Sugary Drink</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Share a Coke with Obesity</td>
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<td>Marketing of Tobacco</td>
<td>4. #Truth</td>
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<td>Marketing of alcohol to young people/disingenuous CSR marketing</td>
<td>5. Take a Selfie, Take a Stand</td>
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<td>Marketing of energy dense nutrient poor (junk) foods to children</td>
<td>6. GrogWatch</td>
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<td>Manipulation and distortion of science through industry funding</td>
<td>7. Parents Voice</td>
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<td>8. Junkbusters</td>
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<td>10. Unhealthy Marketing &amp; Industry Interference Action Network (UMIFNET)</td>
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Table II. Social countermarketing: list of case studies (online supplementary materials)
Towards a research agenda for social countermarketing

What key research questions have we addressed in this paper and what additional research is needed in SCM? We have taken some initial steps to build a conceptual framework and to define the characteristics of SCM practice through a selection of case studies (online supplementary material in Appendix 1). Relevant theories used explicitly or (in our assessment) implicitly in the case studies are identified, but ongoing work is needed to refine this as SCM evolves. What can we say about SCM effectiveness? As a relatively new and evolving field, empirical evidence is lacking for SCM proper (lacking, that is, for the integrated hybrid of policy and media advocacy in combination with social marketing techniques and new media technologies). SCM does, however, draw very clearly on some established theories, as well as methods and techniques with an existing evidentiary pedigree; from this base, researchers may suggest an indicative mapping of “promising practices”. This mapping of “promising practices” will, in turn, require confirmatory research to define, with greater confidence, what effective (and ineffective) SCM may comprise. We have begun to define the contribution of new media technologies to SCM in the supplementary case studies – but this just takes us to the “end of the beginning”. Future research to verify “promising practices” must dive deeper into the specific contribution of new media technologies to the effectiveness of SCM. Taking stock of progress in addressing key research themes identified in our introduction, we suggest the following priorities for inclusion in the SCM research agenda.

Priority research questions

Descriptive research – current and evolving practice

RQ1. What are the characteristics of contemporary practice in terms of the eight domains of the SCM framework?

RQ2. What theories (e.g. social activism theory, community coalition action theory, community mobilisation) are being applied by citizens? By researchers?

Defining promising practices

RQ3. Using established theories relevant for SCM, as well as evidence-informed methods and proven techniques derived from Social Marketing, how can promising practices in SCM be defined? (What promising practices can be defined specifically for new media technologies?)

RQ4. Using relevant theories and logic models of SCM within defined “promising practices”, what performance indicators, research methodology (ies) and data sources can be suggested?

Evaluation research – effectiveness and cost-effectiveness

RQ5. Is there an association between SCM effectiveness and compliance with defined principles of “promising practice”? Which, if any, of the “promising practice” principles appear to make the greatest contribution to SCM effectiveness?
Additional research questions

**RQ6.** What are the (i) knowledge/mental models (ii) attitudinal and behavioural profiles among population sub-groups in terms of “citizen” vs. “professional” (researcher, policymaker and communication professional) with respect to their engagement in SCM and to their use of new media technologies?

**RQ7.** How are the roles and power relationships currently negotiated and allocated among private citizens, marketing researchers, social marketing experts, health (or other) professionals, policymakers and others in the development, implementation and evaluation of SCM initiatives?

**RQ8.** Can optimal roles in SCM be defined for social marketing practitioners and researchers in the light of evidence on the most promising practices?

Conclusion

In this paper, we have assessed SCM concepts, techniques and defining characteristics, through research into the conceptual evolution of the field, and we have subsequently developed an integrating framework that can accommodate new and emerging practice. We acknowledge certain limitations in the research presented. Whilst the study aimed at reviewing all pertinent research pertaining to countermarketing and searched for a broad range of keywords, we cannot be certain that the articles identified represent the full range of relevant research publications. It is possible that some relevant articles were not captured by the search terms, and other relevant articles might not have been part of the searched databases.

Our search strategies, together with a suite of case studies of SCM in action, are set out in supplementary online material. Together, these represent tools that others may access and use more systematically to investigate, classify and understand SCM and to undertake additional empirical research. This new map provides some clarity and consistency in the language used to describe SCM practice and research. It may direct attention to the range of theories to help researchers, practitioners and community groups plan and design SCM interventions, predict result pathways, identify priorities for evaluation and better interpret findings.

MacInnis has provided a framework for conceptual development in marketing together with a set of recommendations for advancing conceptualisation in the future. This paper represents progress in three of the four contribution areas she identifies: *Envisioning* (identifying/revising), *Explicating* (delineating/summarising) and *Relating* (differentiating/integrating). We hope it may prompt engagement in MacInnis’ fourth stage – debating (advocating/refuting). We look forward to that debate.

Supplementary material is available online./* <add hyperlink to URL>.

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AQ2— Please provide the link for the supplementary material.