

Viewpoint Q&A

Dr David Schmidtke

Can you tell us about yourself and your current role?

I have recently commenced as a Lecturer in Marketing at the University of the Sunshine Coast. Most recently, I was a Lecturer in Marketing at the University of Adelaide. Prior to this, I worked as a Peer Assisted Study Session (PASS) Program Coordinator at Griffith University. I have completed a Bachelor of Business with Honours and a PhD in Marketing, both at Griffith University. My PhD was titled "Applying social marketing principles in low and middle-income countries: A design thinking research approach".

I am a passionate teacher and believe students play an integral role in co-creating the learning experiences in the classroom. My teaching is underpinned by active learning, providing mentorship to students and designing learning experiences for a diverse range of students. My research is focused on social impact. Specific research interests include social marketing, transformative consumer research, young consumers, impoverished consumers and sustainable development goals.

What attracted you to social marketing?

I majored in marketing as an undergraduate student at Griffith University and was contemplating completing an Honours project. I discovered social marketing through an Honours information session. The idea that I could apply the marketing knowledge I had acquired throughout my degree to address social issues was something that really appealed to me. Completing an Honours dissertation in social marketing allowed me to converge my academic background with my values around making a positive impact.

What are the most satisfying parts of your work as a social marketing researcher?

There are a number of areas of my work that are very satisfying. First, it is great knowing that the



work I do is aimed at creating a better world. Second, because social marketing is dedicated to addressing societal issues, I find the work I do is practical and has real-world application. Finally, I enjoy collaborating with community stakeholders. For example, I completed an ethnography study in South Africa, where I worked with over 100 community members. I find working with others to build knowledge is intellectually stimulating and rewarding.

Can you share with us a project you worked on that went particularly well?

One project that I am proud to have worked on is a social marketing intervention in Bali, Indonesia. This social marketing intervention focused on increasing physical activity among adolescents. Through formative research, we were able to identify some of the key barriers preventing Indonesian adolescents from performing the recommended levels of physical activity. Subsequently, we designed a sports program intervention that addressed these key barriers. Results from the intervention demonstrated an increase in physical activity among participants, along with increasing their motivation, opportunity and ability to play sports.



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In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges faced by social marketers and/or social marketing today?

I would like to share three of the biggest challenges, I believe social marketing is facing today. First, a key challenge impacting social marketing work is acquiring sufficient funding. Insufficient funding can make it challenging in terms of conducting rigorous social marketing research, as well as implementing long-term interventions, which are needed to achieve sustainable behaviour change. Second, social marketing work to date has largely been undertaken in Western country contexts. A key challenge moving forward is applying social marketing more extensively to address some of the biggest challenges present in the Global South (e.g., inequality, poverty, and discrimination). Finally, a key challenge facing social marketers is closing the loop, in terms of social marketing research and practice. More needs to be done in terms of filtering social marketing research insights into practice, where greater real-world impact can be realised.

Finally, what tips would you give to other social marketing researchers?

I would like to share three tips with emerging social marketing researchers. First, it is important to stay up to date, as social marketing is a rapidly evolving field. For example, networking at conferences, joining professional associations and subscribing to key information sources (e.g., journals, newsletters) can help ensure you stay up to date. Second, consider adopting participatory methods within your research design. We know that involving individuals who are experiencing a particular challenge, in the process of determining a social marketing solution, can improve outcomes and help avoid unintended consequences. Finally, work with practitioners wherever possible. Engaging with practitioners throughout the research process can increase the likelihood of your research having real-world impact.

