

Fourth Edition

# Public Communication Campaigns



Editors

Ronald E. Rice ■ Charles K. Atkin



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SAGE Publications, Inc.  
2455 Teller Road  
Thousand Oaks, California 91320  
E-mail: [order@sagepub.com](mailto:order@sagepub.com)

SAGE Publications Ltd.  
1 Oliver's Yard  
55 City Road  
London, EC1Y 1SP  
United Kingdom

SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.  
B 1/1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area  
Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044  
India

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte Ltd  
3 Church Street  
#10-04 Samsung Hub  
Singapore 049483

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Printed in the United States of America

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Public communication campaigns / editors, Ronald E. Rice, Charles K. Atkin.—4th ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4129-8770-7 (pbk.)

1. Publicity. 2. Advertising, Public service. 3. Public relations. 4. Advocacy advertising. I. Rice, Ronald E. II. Atkin, Charles K.

HM1226.P83 2013

659—dc23

2011048277

This book is printed on acid-free paper.



SFI label applies to text stock

12 13 14 15 16 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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# **Public Communication Campaigns**

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# Preface and Acknowledgments

## MISSION

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This new, fully revised and expanded fourth edition provides readers with a comprehensive, up-to-date look into the field of public communication campaigns. The subject of campaigns has become increasingly high profile in the academic world in the decade since the last edition, and hundreds of new studies on campaign theory and practice have been published since 2001. Moreover, the rise of new media has expanded the array of strategies for designing and implementing campaigns. Largely rewritten to reflect the latest theories and research, this text continues in the tradition of ongoing improvement and expansion into new areas, including AIDS; sun protection; organ donation; human rights; social norms; corporate social responsibility; risky sex; communities; ocean environment; entertainment–education (E–E); Internet, web-based or digital interventions; fear messages; and media advocacy. Classic chapters are updated on topics such as campaign history, theoretical foundations, formative evaluation, systems approaches, input–output persuasion matrix, design and evaluation, meta-analysis, and Sense-Making Methodology (SMM).

*Public Communication Campaigns, 3rd edition*, was a substantial extension and updating of the prior two editions. Interest in, research on, and implementation of public communication campaigns continues to grow in terms of application areas, theories and methods, international examples, and implications of new media. *Public Communication Campaigns, 4th edition*, has been significantly revised to reflect these changes while continuing classic and central topics and themes. While more books on specific aspects or areas of communication campaigns have appeared over the years, *Public Communication Campaigns* has provided a broad as well as comprehensive resource for students, researchers, and implementers. The fourth edition will continue in this tradition.

## MARKET

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This volume will be a valuable resource for students, researchers, and practitioners in the fields of communication, journalism, public relations, mass media, advertising, and public health programs. The book is intended primarily for advanced undergraduate and master's-level courses. Researchers and practitioners will continue to find this a useful resource; the previous edition is the most widely cited work on the subject of communication campaigns. *Public Communication Campaigns, 4th edition*, will be especially relevant to departments in mass communication, public relations, social marketing, marketing, and public health.

## MAJOR FEATURES AND BENEFITS

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Key features include state-of-the-art literature reviews; a broad range of campaign examples from specific at-risk populations to global population, both U.S. and international; contributors with extensive expertise and experience; shorter chapters; and more online resources. The contributions apply and explain a wide range of methodological approaches and research designs, both qualitative and quantitative, from longitudinal studies to meta-analyses. This edition provides insight into new theories, campaign applications, methods, research, and results from prior and new contributors. Updated or revised chapters include 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 20, 22, and 23; new chapters include 1, 3, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 21.

New topics covered include human rights, fear appeals, social norms, sun protection, condom use, organ donation, ocean sustainability, risk and efficacy, corporate social responsibility, and digital games.

The chapters are organized into sections on overview and history, design and evaluation, theory foundations, and applying theory and evaluation. These sequenced chapters treat all stages of public communication campaign motivation, design, implementation, and evaluation so that readers and teachers can sequence or combine chapters to emphasize different stages or the overall process.

## CHANGES FROM THE THIRD EDITION

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We conducted extensive research on how to best revise and update *Public Communication Campaigns*. This involved conducting a citation analysis of every entry, summarizing the reviewers' comments as to the top chapters to keep, reviewing recent International Communication Association programs and online databases for authors and topics in the area of public communication campaigns, searching for campaign resources in journals and online, identifying more recent treatments of central campaign topics, and applying our own awareness of both central and new topics and approaches. This broad review identified many more researchers and topics than could possibly be included in one book, of course. So, we then compared and discussed all the possibilities to arrive at a set of authors and topics that provide fairly comprehensive coverage within the nearly 75-page shorter limit of the fourth edition compared to the third edition. We also discussed with the contributors ways to include or focus on some of the topics raised by our review.

Not only is there a chapter devoted specifically to new media (online games, interactive digital media), but where appropriate, other chapters integrate the role of online and digital media in both campaign development and implementation. The fourth edition features fresh perspectives and 21st-century cases with chapters by new authors and substantial updates by returning authors. But, it also maintains key chapters that have been highly cited in the literature or that offer fundamental conceptual contributions to understanding campaigns. This edition has been designed to make the book more student friendly as a text for advanced undergraduate courses without sacrificing the scholarly priorities. This has been accomplished primarily through more careful editing of material, reducing

the length of chapters, and emphasizing topics of interest to students. The book's design presents a more coherent communication campaign resource by providing an appropriate sequence of sections: Overview and History, Design and Evaluation, Theoretical Foundations, and Applying Theory and Evaluation.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are grateful for all the students, teachers, researchers, and professionals who have used *Public Communication Campaigns* over the years.

John A. Banas (University of Oklahoma), Tomasz A. Fediuk (Illinois State University), Muhiuddin Haider (University of Maryland), Michel M. Haigh (The Pennsylvania State University), Marjorie Kruvand (Loyola University Chicago), John K. Mayo (Florida State University), Michael D. Slater (The Ohio State University), and Itzhak Yanovitzky (Rutgers University) provided incisive and helpful reviews of the third edition and recommendations for this fourth edition.

Todd Armstrong, Nathan Davidson, Elizabeth Borders, and Liz Thornton of SAGE Publications, Inc., managed the great support for and administration of the entire process, from development through production and marketing. We thank Pamela Schroeder for superb copyediting and Molly Hall for the very useful index.

It was a pleasure working with all the contributors to this edition. It's a humbling yet very collegial opportunity to be surrounded by so much expertise, experience, and goodwill. Finally, we thank Claire B. Johnson and Sandi W. Smith for their enduring encouragement, tactful feedback on our conceptions of campaigns, forbearance of our late-night editing, and cordial recognition of our unremitting updates about the arduous hurdles to accomplishing the fourth edition.



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## PART I

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# Overview and History



# Theory and Principles of Public Communication Campaigns

Charles K. Atkin and Ronald E. Rice

**P**ublic communication campaigns can be defined as purposive attempts to inform or influence behaviors in large audiences within a specified time period using an organized set of communication activities and featuring an array of mediated messages in multiple channels generally to produce noncommercial benefits to individuals and society (Rice & Atkin, 2009; Rogers & Storey, 1987).

The campaign as process is universal<sup>a</sup> across topics and venues, utilizing systematic frameworks and fundamental strategic principles developed over the past half century. Campaign designers perform a situational analysis and set objectives leading to development of a coherent set of strategies and implement the campaign by creating informational and persuasive messages that are disseminated via traditional mass media, new technologies, and interpersonal networks.

## THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CAMPAIGNS

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Although no specific theory has been developed to explain and predict public communication campaigns, a number of theoretical perspectives are regularly invoked to guide campaign strategies. The most comprehensive applicable conceptualizations are the *social marketing* framework and the *Communication-Persuasion Matrix*.

Campaigns across the spectrum of health, prosocial, and environmental domains share some similarities to commercial advertising campaigns. Thus, it is useful to apply social marketing, which emphasizes an audience-centered consumer orientation and calculated attempts to attractively package the social product and utilize the optimum combination of campaign components to attain pragmatic goals (Andreasen, 1995, 2006; Kotler, Roberto, & Lee, 2002; McKenzie-Mohr, 2011). Social marketing offers a macro perspective, combining numerous components, notably the multifaceted conceptions of product, costs, and benefits, as well as audience segmentation, policy change, and competition (see Bracht & Rice in Chapter 20 and Rice & Robinson in Chapter 16).

In McGuire's (Chapter 9) classic *Communication-Persuasion Matrix*, or input-output model, the communication *input variables* include source, message, channel, and audience; these factors, which are central to most communication models, will be discussed at length in subsequent sections. The *output process* posits audience responses to campaign stimuli as proceeding through the basic stages of exposure and processing before effects can be achieved at the learning, yielding, and behavior levels. *Exposure* includes the simple reception of a message and the degree of attention to its content. *Processing* encompasses mental comprehension, pro- and counterarguing, interpretive perceptions, and cognitive connections and emotional reactions produced by the campaign message. *Learning* comprises information gain, generation of related cognitions, image formation, and skills acquisition. *Yielding* includes acquisition and change in attitudes, beliefs, and values. *Behavior* in the campaign context involves the bottom-line enactment of the actions recommended in messages.

Specific central theories that are applicable to various aspects of public communication campaign strategies, processes, and implementation include:

*Agenda setting* (McCombs, 2004). The phenomenon of topical salience applies to campaign impact on the perceived importance of societal problems and the prominence of policy issues.

*Diffusion of innovations* (Rogers, 2003). This theory introduces the ideas of relative advantage and trialability of recommended behaviors, and the individual adoption decision process, as well as opinion leadership that shapes diffusion through interpersonal channels and social networks via multistep flows.

*Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)* (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) and *Heuristic Systematic Model (HSM)* (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). ELM and HSM highlight the role of audience involvement level as it shapes cognitive responses, thought generation, and central versus peripheral routes to persuasion.

*Extended Parallel Process Model* (Stephenson & Witte, 2001). Effectiveness of fear appeals is enhanced by understanding cognitive processes that control danger versus emotional processes, which control the fear via denial or coping; perceived efficacy influences type of response.

*Health Belief Model (HBM)* (Becker, 1974). Several concepts from HBM pertain specifically to the potency of health threat appeals: susceptibility multiplied by seriousness of consequences and the self-efficacy and response efficacy of performing the recommended behavior.

*Instrumental learning* (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953). As adapted to mediated communication, this learning mechanism features message-related concepts of source credibility, reinforcement incentives, and repetition of presentation.

*Integrative Theory of Behavior Change* (Cappella, Fishbein, Hornik, Ahern, & Sayeed, 2001). The multifaceted model integrates HBM, Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), and Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) to specify how external variables, individual differences, and underlying beliefs contribute to differential influence pathways for outcome behaviors, intentions, attitudes, norms, and self-efficacy.

*Message frames* (O’Keefe & Jensen, 2007; Quick & Bates, 2010). This framework focuses on how message appeals are packaged in terms of gain-frame promotion of positive behavior versus loss-frame prevention of negative behavior, especially for audiences likely to display reactance.

*Self-Efficacy* (Bandura, 1997). This key construct highlights the role of the individual’s perceived capability of successfully performing behaviors; those who are confident of carrying out recommended actions are more likely to attempt and sustain behavioral enactment efforts.

*Social Cognitive Theory* (Bandura, 1986). SCT emphasizes the processes by which source role models, explicitly demonstrated behaviors, and depiction of vicarious reinforcement enhance the impact of mediated messages.

*Theory of Reasoned Action* (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Ajzen, Albarracin, & Hornik, 1997). The TRA and the ensuing *Theory of Planned Behavior* (TPB) formulate a combination of personal attitudes, perceived norms of influential others, and motivation to comply as predictors of intended behavior. A key underlying mechanism is based on the *expectancy-value* equation, which postulates attitudes are predicted by beliefs about the likelihood that given behavior leads to certain consequences, multiplied by one’s evaluation of those consequences.

*Transtheoretical Model* (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). This stage-of-progression model identifies subaudiences on the basis of their stage in the process of behavior change with respect to a specific health behavior (precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, or maintenance), which shapes the readiness to attempt, adopt, or sustain the recommended behavior.

*Uses and gratifications* (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974; Rubin, 2002). This offers concepts useful in understanding audience motivations for selecting particular media, attending to media messages, and utilizing learned information in enacting behaviors.

## AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION AND CAMPAIGN DESIGN

### Identifying the Audience

Campaign design begins with a conceptual assessment of the situation to determine opportunities and barriers and to identify which outcome behaviors would be performed by which people (Atkin & Salmon, 2010; see also Dervin & Foreman-Wernet, Chapter 10). Rather than attempting to reach the broad public, campaign designers typically identify specific (often “at risk”) segments of the overall population. There are two major strategic advantages of subdividing the public in terms of demographic characteristics, predispositions, personality traits, and social contexts. First, message efficiency can be improved if subsets of the audience are prioritized according to their centrality in attaining the campaign’s objectives as well as receptivity to being influenced. Second, effectiveness can be increased if message content, form, style, and channels are tailored to the attributes and abilities of subgroups.



The design specifies *focal segments* of the population whose practices are at issue and the primary *focal behaviors* that the campaign ultimately seeks to influence. The next step is to trace backward from the focal behaviors to identify the proximate and distal determinants and then create *models* of the pathways of influence via attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, social influences, and environmental forces (ideally grounded in one or more theoretical models). The next phase is to examine the model from a communication perspective, specifying *target audiences* that can be directly (or, as noted below, indirectly) reached and *target behaviors* that can be influenced by campaign messages. A sophisticated campaign will seek to affect the most promising pathways guided by a comprehensive plan for combining manifold components and an appropriate theoretical framework matched to the desired outcome and the relevant audiences and social systems.

### Direct Effects on Focal Audience Segments

The nature of the substantive problem dictates the broad parameters of the focal audience to be influenced. Most campaigns aim messages directly at the focal segments, which are subpopulations who might benefit from the campaign because they are at risk for harm or in need of help or improvement. The potential for achieving direct effects depends on the relative prevalence of various types of receptiveness among target audience segments. A fundamental receptivity factor is stage of readiness to perform the practice; campaigns typically achieve the strongest impact via triggering or reinforcing messages intended for people who are already favorably predisposed (as argued by the Transtheoretical Model). Another key audience segment includes those who have not yet tried the undesirable behavior but whose background characteristics suggest they are at risk in the near future; many may be receptive to persuasive messages. Those committed to unsuitable practices are not readily influenced by directly targeted campaigns, so a heavy investment of resources to induce discontinuation tends to yield a marginal payoff. Among focal targets, there are demographic, social, and psychological-based subgroups such as higher versus lower income strata, high versus low sensation seekers, those experiencing psychological or social obstacles in accomplishing certain behaviors, and members of different cultures.

### Indirect Effects on Interpersonal Influencers and Policy Makers

Rather than relying predominantly on direct persuasion, campaigners may attain greater impact by investing effort and resources in campaign components affecting indirect or secondary target audiences who can 1) exert interpersonal influence on focal individuals or 2) help reform environmental conditions that shape behavior. Media campaigns have considerable potential for motivating interpersonal influencers in close contact with focal individuals as well as producing effects on institutions and groups at the national and community levels (Atkin & Salmon, 2010).

Thus, a second effects strategy is to initiate a multistep flow by disseminating messages to potential *interpersonal influencers* or opinion leaders who are in a position to personally influence focal individuals. Campaigns aim at opinion leader audiences because they tend to be more receptive to campaign messages, and their indirectly stimulated influences are likely