

The role of social marketing in promoting quality of life through the lens of sustainable consumption

Promoting
quality of life

419

Lorna Christie

*Department of Life and Consumer Sciences, University of South Africa (UNISA),
Pretoria, South Africa, and*

Marike Venter De Villiers

*Department of Marketing, University of the Witwatersrand,
Johannesburg, South Africa*

Received 20 April 2022
Revised 30 August 2022
23 November 2022
15 March 2023
Accepted 12 April 2023

Abstract

Purpose – This paper presents a unique conceptual model that promotes behaviour change with the goal of creating a more sustainable conscious society. It aims to provide social marketers with insight on how to influence consumers' buying behaviour, which is often guided by their misperception of what is a good Quality of Life (QoL).

Design/methodology/approach – By means of a comprehensive, analytical review of relevant literature, this paper took a conceptual approach that included the thematic analysis of data sources such as accredited journal articles, books and other credible published materials.

Findings – Against the backdrop of South Africa's socio-economic conditions, this model emphasises the crucial role of individual's social and personal environment in shaping behaviour. The role of social marketers is to capitalise on consumers immediate environment to persuade them to consume more sustainably. It further gives way to the long-term, positive consequences of behaviour change on consumer's Quality of Life. The basic premise underlying the conceptual model is eudaimonia, the long-term subjective well-being of consumers, as a result conscientious consumption practices. The authors integrate Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986) and Christie's Nested model of Quality of Life (2018) and presents the Social Cognitive Model of Quality of Life.

Research limitations/implications – Such an integrative conceptual model can be used to justify policy implications, social marketing strategies and behavioural change for the individual consumer to promote their own subjective QoL while addressing and perhaps mediating the broader social and environmental concerns. However, the application of this concept within an emerging economy, remains to be a challenge, as the awareness around sustainable consumption is still in its infant stage.

Originality/value – With the rise of globalisation, consumers in emerging economies aspire to portray wealth through the acquisition of materialistic possessions. This is even though the majority live in poverty and cannot sustain a lifestyle that is driven by conspicuous consumption. As a result, social marketers have a significant responsibility to influence consumers buying behaviour towards



© Lorna Christie and Marike Venter De Villiers. Published by Emerald Publishing Limited. This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) licence. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this licence may be seen at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

Journal of Social Marketing
Vol. 13 No. 3, 2023
pp. 419-433
Emerald Publishing Limited
2042-6763
DOI 10.1108/JSOCM-04-2022-0089

sustainable consumption. This paper presents a model that guides social marketers on how they can encourage pro-environmental behaviour and create a more sustainably conscious society.

Keywords Social marketing, Sustainable consumption, Emerging economy, Quality of life, Satisfaction with life

Paper type Conceptual paper

1. Introduction

In recent years, South Africa has experienced a rapid increase in population levels from 40.6 million people in 1996, to more than 60 million in 2022 (Worldometers, 2018; StatsSA, 2022). The number of people in the emerging middle class is matched by the immense number of people living under the poverty line (Worldometers, 2018). Furthermore, South Africa is considered to have the highest rates of income and wealth inequality worldwide (Helliwell *et al.*, 2022; Head, 2018; Sulla and Zikhali, 2018). Social inequality is closely related to “relative deprivation” (RD), which refers to the subjective experience of being socially or economically deprived compared to peers (Balsa *et al.*, 2013; Wickham *et al.*, 2014). This is (somewhat ironically) particularly evident amongst affluent consumers in South Africa, who feel a sense of deprivation towards their social peers in terms of material wealth (Christie, 2018).

One of the main drivers of RD is the need to ease the burden of economic anxiety. This can be termed as affluenza, which refers to the unsustainable addiction to economic prosperity that lacks fulfilment (Hamilton and Denniss, 2005). Affluenza stems from cultural values and not from wealth, reiterating affluenza’s roots in social comparison (Archer, 2013; Husic and Cicic, 2009; Lui, 2014). Lui (2014) further states that affluenza is not exclusively concerned with the “rich”, but affects all strata of a population seeing that what was considered as a luxury item has now become a necessity (for example a smart phone). Consumers justify their purchases as fulfilling needs but in actuality, it is a subconscious pursuit to accumulate status symbols. Consumers, and more specifically highly materialistic people, believe that well-being can be enhanced through their relationships with possessions, despite the fact that such individuals are less happy and more dissatisfied with life (Hamilton and Denniss, 2005; Schiffman and Wisenblit, 2015). Consumers have long since associated the acquisition of materialistic possessions with increased Quality of Life (QoL) (Muncy and Eastman, 1998), with current sentiments still reflecting such preconceived notions (Christie *et al.*, 2016).

In fact, material consumption beyond the point of need can actually reduce the well-being of people (Burroughs and Rindfleisch, 2002; Costanza *et al.*, 2008), decrease life satisfaction (Belk, 1985), while increasing depression (Kasser and Ryan, 1993). Materialism may therefore have severe negative connotations for both consumers and society (Belk, 1985; Chancellor and Lyubomirsky, 2011; Schiffman and Wisenblit, 2015; Sheldon and Lyubomirsky, 2012), and is a major cause of damage to the natural environment (Pereira Heath and Chatzidakis 2012; WWF South Africa 2021). Seeing as though materialism and overconsumption are not considered to be in the best interest of consumers, promoting such consumption practices can in fact, be seen as socially irresponsible (Muncy and Eastman, 1998).

The relationship between social marketing and QoL has only recently been applied in areas such as public health and welfare, education, governance and or environmental issues (Alves *et al.*, 2022), however a dearth in literature remains. Constantinescu (2012) reiterates that QoL is influenced by a consumer’s consumption decisions, and that social marketing should be regarded as a platform to promote responsible behaviour from both consumers and corporations to increase satisfaction with life.

Florence *et al.* (2022) state that in response to addressing eco-health and individual well-being, the prerogative of sustainability has come to the fore. As such, social marketing becomes crucial in the complimentary approach to encourage individuals to perform behaviours that supports sustainability initiatives. Social marketing has been implemented fundamentally to promote the adoption of environmentally friendly behaviours and consumption of “green” products. The approaches that social marketers recommended, have essentially been aimed at understanding consumer motivation, attitudes and behaviours and then use said information to implement campaigns that changes consumer behaviour to such an end. Examples of such initiatives include campaigns that promote the use of public transport, increasing awareness regarding the reduction of carbon emissions, increasing the uptake of recycling/reuse/reduction behaviours to name a few (Florence *et al.*, 2022; Kotler, 2002; McKenzie-Mohr, 2000; Peattie and Peattie, 2010; Pearson and Perera, 2018). The pursuit of (unattainable) well-being through affluenza is, however, still prevalent in society.

The main question that arises is as follows:

- Q1. How can social marketers influence consumers (misguided) perceptions of life satisfaction and persuade them to consume more conscientiously and by doing so promote individual QoL?

Christie’s (2018) Nested Model of QoL propositions conscientious consumer decision-making that rather takes into account consideration of future consequences on an economic, social and environmental level to promote QoL as opposed to unsustainable, hedonic pursuits of momentary, materialistic happiness. However, the review argues that this model should be re-evaluated and should be promoted and supported from a social marketing perspective to achieve actual behaviour change. This paper therefore proposes an integration of Bandura’s (1986) social cognitive theory (SCT) and the Nested Model of QoL (Christie, 2018) as a tool for social marketers to promote conscientious consumption in pursuit of improved QoL for citizens of an emerging economy (in particular).

The SCT is a psychological perspective on human functioning and emphasises the critical role of one’s environment on your behaviour. The theory posits that human functioning depends on three interacting sets of factors: behavioural, environmental and personal (Bandura, 1986). This triadic reciprocity emphasises the interplay between people’s internal state, and their environment, and how actions are formed as a result of this interplay. This theory is an extension of the social learning theory that highlights the effects of cognitive processes on an individual’s behaviour and on the environment that influences them (Nickerson, 2022). Rather than passively absorbing information, the SCT emphasises that learning is an active process that influences the outcomes of individual’s behaviour, and can in turn alter subsequent behaviours (Schunk, 2012). The main goal of this theory is to explain how people can achieve goal-directed behaviour through reinforcement, which can be maintained over time. Bandura (2001) elaborates that the capacity to exercise control over one’s QoL is the essence of humanness, and people are producers as well as products of social systems. In light of this assumption, this theory is merged with Christie’s (2018) Nested Model of QoL, which emphasises a pursuit towards conscientious consumption to promote eudaimonia (and thereby increase QoL) through a consideration of economic, social and environmental factors, rather than an unsustainable pursuit of immediate gratification and momentary happiness.

Against this backdrop, social marketers bear the responsibility of influencing consumers actions to consume more consciously and ultimately enhancing their QoL. Marketing’s primary focus has always been viewed as enhancing human well-being by satisfying consumer needs (Sirgy *et al.*, 1982). Social marketing has in the past focussed on a social advertising approach which consisted mainly of articulating information to influence

attitudes and behaviours. This later changed to a social communication and promotion prerogative which aims to promote personal selling and editorial support (Truong, 2014). Marketers, and social marketers in particular, must however play a role as agents of social change by serving an all-encompassing message. Wood (2018) concurs with the fore mentioned but continues to state that social marketing undertakes a shift away from views such as products needing to be sold, focussing on an individualistic approach and reiterates Truong's (2014) sentiment towards a need for a new perspective, which recognises and addresses the complexities of behaviour change to focus on human beings within a broader (sustainable) system. This idea of collective input to maximise economic welfare, is evident in *The Darwin Economy*, in which Robert Frank (2011) challenges the notion of competition in an open market and reiterates the prominent role of policymakers in influencing collective actions. Frank's ideas in his work, *The Darwin Economy*, draws on the notion that the actions and pursuits of self-interested individuals, are likely to have a detrimental effect on society as a whole. In other words, individual incentives and interests are often at odds with wider interest groups. Goals should therefore be set with the focus on the well-being of the group, while enforced by higher entities, such as the government and policymakers.

This study builds on the SCT while incorporating the fundamental elements of sustainable consumption, with the aim of promoting QoL. The main purpose of the review is to propose a conceptual framework that merges the Nested Model of QoL (Christie, 2018) with the SCT (Bandura, 1986) in persuading consumers to change their behaviour and adopt sustainable consumption practices, which will not only promote sustainable consumption, but perhaps more importantly for the consumer, increase their individual perspective of their lived QoL as this is a subjective concept. It contributes to and expands on existing literature within the field of social marketing and the multi-dimensionality of the QoL concept. Such an integrative conceptual model can be used to justify policy implications, social marketing strategies and behavioural change for the individual consumer to promote their own subjective QoL while addressing and perhaps mediating the broader social and environmental concerns.

2. Methodology

To achieve the aforementioned considerations, this review undertook a conceptual approach through thematic analysis of relevant literature. According to Truong (2014), conducting systematic reviews is fundamental to evaluate the academic growth of a discipline, as it reveals (amongst other factors) theoretical awareness, methodological sophistication and identifies the direction in which research should progress.

To complete the current review, the authors identified the main dimensions underlying the theoretical positioning of the study, such as QoL, SCT, satisfaction with life and sustainable consumption. An analysis of the topics was done by conducting a systematic literature review through various academic platforms that contained information on the identified topics. Data sources included accredited journal articles, books, reports and other credible published materials. To ensure credibility of the data, the authors read the abstracts and key words of the articles/data sources before continuing with the search. It is important to acknowledge that only sources published in English were considered for the analysis. The search was focussed on identifying research particularly related to sustainable consumerism and enhanced QoL, and included disciplines related, but not limited to social marketing, marketing and consumer behaviour. However, the approach that social marketing has undertaken to promote sustainable consumption and improved QoL were of key importance, and in particular, identifying research to this end that incorporated the SCT. While these were the guiding constructs used to obtain relevant literature, two theoretical frameworks, Bandura's (1986) SCT and Christie's (2018) Nested Model of QoL, were merged to provide

social marketers with insight on how they can directly influence consumer's behaviour through cognitive and environmental factors. By conducting a thorough analysis and detailed review of these two particular theories, the authors conceptualised a holistic framework that captures the essence of social cognition, particularly from an emerging economy's perspective where the emphasis is on the creation of material wealth and the growth of the economy, with a drive towards a more sustainable future. This was undertaken from the perspective of social marketing.

As stated by [Kennedy and Laczniak \(2016\)](#), we reiterate that this is by no means considered as a comprehensive review of the encompassing social marketing literature. However, the purpose of the review was to identify the current ideologies surrounding the promotion of QoL for the consumer in an emerging economy, to provide societal implications for marketing and other scholarly interpretation to this end, and is therefore deemed adequate.

3. Literature review

3.1 *The concept of social marketing*

The concept of social marketing originated in 1971, by Kotler and Zaltman, as an attempt to address socially relevant issues that began to arise within the broader discipline of marketing. Although the definition that the authors gave to the concept subsequently became problematic. [Andreasen \(1994\)](#) has since done extensive research regarding the topic, and suggested the following definition:

[...] the adaptation of commercial marketing technologies to programs designed to influence the voluntary behaviour of target audiences to improve their personal welfare and that of the society in which they are a part.

The author has since continued to promote a clear understanding of social marketing, specifically focussing on behaviour change ([Andreasen, 2003](#)). Social marketing has now become a well-known concept that is commonly used to promote behavioural change regarding sustainability issues in particular ([Lynes et al., 2014](#)). It focusses on influencing individuals, communities, policies and societies to encourage positive social change ([Zainuddin and Russel-Bennet, 2017](#)). Contemporary social marketing involves a multi-disciplinary approach with strategic considerations spanning across upstream (policy), midstream, (service/community) and downstream (individual) levels to achieve societal well-being ([Zainuddin and Russel-Bennet, 2017](#)). In other words, it spans across an entire eco-system of living organisms ([Russell-Bennett et al., 2019](#)). This eco-system approach operates around individual behaviour that inhibits overall well-being (article author). The inherent assumption in the eco-system approach is that institutions, people and technology work together with consumers, firms or government entities to co-create value ([Vargo and Akaka, 2012](#)). As reiterated by [Andreasen \(2003\)](#), social marketing should by all accounts be used to promote social change and must be used to compliment approaches to such social change, for example, to increase consumers' QoL and by implication the sustainability prerogative.

3.2 *Quality of life*

QoL refers to the notion of living a good life, which is attained by practical codes of conduct to engage in a certain positive attitude to life. In other words, it means living a life with a high quality ([Ventegodt et al., 2003](#)). QoL is often differently perceived by individuals based on their cultural and socio-economic environment, which comprises of three dimensions, namely, the subjective QoL (individual appraisal of one's life based on personal evaluation), the existential QoL (individual appraisal of one's life based at a deeper level, including

spiritual and religious resulting in fulfilment) and the objective QoL (an appraisal of one's life by the onlookers, and is influenced by cultural contexts) (Ventegodt *et al.*, 2003). These dimensions are loosely grouped with notions relevant to the QoL, which tend to overlap and are therefore best presented on a spectrum ranging from the subjective to the objective. The closer to the centre represents the unification of the subjective and the objective and is symbolic of the depth of humanity, i.e. a higher state of being (Ventegodt *et al.*, 2003). Promoting QoL for consumers of an emerging economy is however more complex. While materialistic possessions, and increased consumption, indicate economic growth and welfare, materialism and conspicuous consumption is detrimental to the individual's well-being (Muncy and Eastman, 1998) and to the broader sustainability agenda. QoL and consumption in an emerging economy is therefore a multi-faceted issue, but equally as important as within developed nations (Peattie and Peattie, 2010).

3.2.1 *The Nested Model of Quality of Life* (Christie, 2018). Ryan *et al.* (2008) state that the definition of human happiness is centred on the premise of a good life that represents human excellence. The authors go on to mention that living well should reflect in decision-making and voluntarily behaving in a manner that realizes the highest human natures. Although Deci and Ryan (2000) do however draw a distinction between happiness and eudaimonia, with the former being a momentary state that may not necessarily lead to increase QoL and which may even be detrimental in the long term, with the latter representing a manner of living, intrinsically worthwhile to humans. According to Christie (2018), for a person to hold a favourable regard for their QoL, a eudemonic pursuit of consumption should be followed. Satisfaction with life for a person will therefore influence a person's perceived subjective well-being. If such satisfaction with life is deemed favourable, it is assumed that a person's subjective well-being will also be favourable. The author goes on to state that this should then reflect in conscientious decision-making, whereby the consumer will consider long-term meaningfulness associated with consumption choices, as opposed to immediate gratification (short term happiness), which may indeed represent materialism and accompanying negative sustainability associations. This is depicted in Figure 1.

Although the model presented was indeed confirmed, the question remains why prevalent overconsumption and materialism are still being experienced both within the developing economy, but also on a global scale on unprecedented levels. This may be addressed through investigating human motivation behind the continuation of overconsumption through incorporating theories related to social cognition within the broader scheme of social marketing.

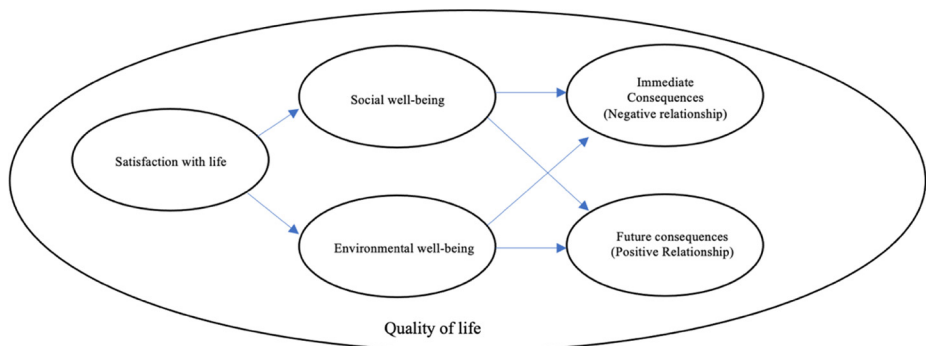


Figure 1.
Nested model of
quality of life

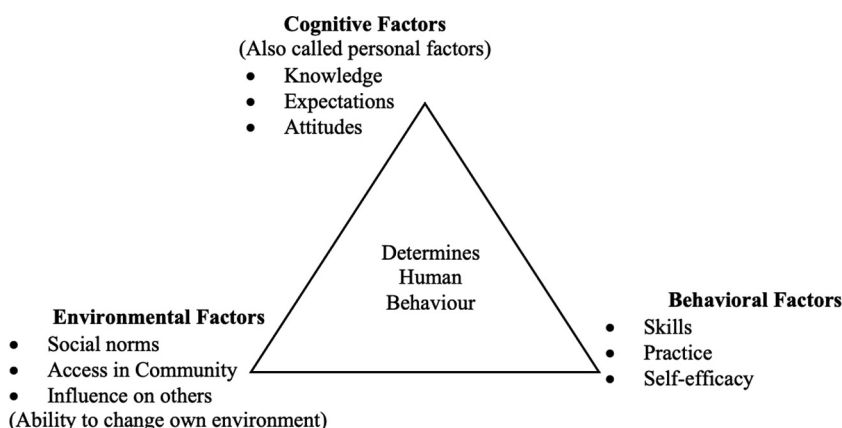
Source: Christie (2018)

3.3 Social cognitive theory

The SCT (Bandura, 1986) has become a fundamental resource for evaluating human motivation and stresses the continuous interaction that exists between the environment, personal factors and behaviour (Bandura, 1986). The environment is the social and physical environments that people are exposed to, such as family, friends, colleagues, as well as the size of the room, the ambience, visual stimuli. Personal factors, also called cognitive factors, are the cognition of a person, such as personality, self-efficacy, curiosity, attitudes, expectations. Behavioural factors refer to the impact of the situation, the cognitive representations of the environment and constant influence of the three components on each other (Bandura, 1986). Figure 2 presents Bandura's (1986) SCT.

- *Cognitive factors*: The cognitive or personal factors refer to people's knowledge, their expectations and attitudes towards objects and others. It includes the processes that assist with instigating and sustaining motivational outcomes. Other cognitive factors are people's belief and values systems and social comparisons with others.
- *Environmental factors*: Environmental influences largely refers to the role of others as socially modelled influences. These influences include celebrities, influencers, peers, family and any other social influences that consumers are exposed to in their daily lives. This exposure and observation leads to social comparisons, which affect motivational outcomes.
- *Behavioural factors*: Key behavioural influences on motivational outcomes are people's choice of activities, their skills, practices they engage in, and self-efficacy. In the model of reciprocal interactions, these factors are both influencers on motivation, and motivational outcomes. Self-efficacy plays an important role as part of the behavioural factors, as motivational outcomes can affect people's self-efficacy positively and maintain motivational outcomes.

Social marketing approaches that incorporated the SCT has mostly focussed on parental experiences (Maas *et al.*, 2022; Rai and Biswas, 2022); health behaviour and or food consumption (Harris *et al.*, 2022; McDivitt *et al.*, 2011; Ryan *et al.*, 2022); and more recently,



Source: Bandura (1986)

Figure 2.
Social cognitive
theory

technology related subjects (Saleme *et al.*, 2020). When the SCT has been incorporated regarding pro-environmental behaviours, it has been in conjunction with other theories, such as goal-framing theory (Rohenkohl *et al.*, 2023). It is imperative to promote social marketing campaigns in conjunction with behavioural theories to ensure behavioural change (Fraze *et al.*, 2010), but more specifically, to promote enhanced QoL through conscientious decision-making. To this end, the consumer might be more inclined to participate in such activities, seeing as though their subjective experience will translate into improved QoL as a personal consideration while also addressing broader contextual issues.

Although Christie's (2018) model can be used to promote conscientious consumption, and Bandura's (1986) theory explains the triadic relationship that forms human behaviour, it is evident that people are still consuming more than what is sustainable. This unsustainable consumption is not only detrimental to the environment but also holds severe negative consequences for the individual consumers' QoL. Seeing as though consumers are lackadaisical in changing their consumption habits on their own, social marketing now has a fundamental role to play in ensuring behavioural change to this end. Through reiterating the aim of promotion of QoL through conscientious consumption, social marketers have the opportunity to persuade consumers to become engaged citizens with a regard for the outcome of their consumption choices as opposed to consumers who discount the future. This review therefore suggests that the Nested Model of QoL be combined with the SCT, to form the basis of a behavioural change model from which social marketing can operate. The main contribution of the proposed model is that it uses the concept of social cognition to promote an individual's QoL through the act of sustainable consumption. Social cognition, which is grounded in the SCT (Bandura, 1986), emphasises the role and importance of individual's social and personal factors in influencing their behaviour. It therefore highlights how social marketers can use social (environmental) and personal (cognition) factors to encourage pro-environmental behaviour. The proposed conceptual model extends this concept further by emphasising the (long-term) consequences that individuals will benefit from if they change their behaviour to be more sustainable, which ultimately lead to a better QoL. Previous studies have not merged these two concepts of social cognition and QoL.

4. Proposed merged model

The authors therefore propose a conceptual framework, the *Social Cognitive Model of QoL*, that suggests the following: to motivate people to consume more sustainably, social marketers should attempt to reduce consumers' levels of cognitive dissonance. Seeing as though people are indeed products of the system in which they find themselves (Bandura, 2001), a consumers' personal factors, such as economic and social contexts, will influence their perceived satisfaction with life as stated by the Nested Model of QoL (Christie, 2018). Additionally, the model also proposes that environmental factors will influence satisfaction with life. If a consumer's personal and environmental factors are therefore deemed favourable, the consumers' satisfaction with life should also be favourable (Christie, 2018). Therefore, proposition one is presented:

- P1.* Personal and environmental factors have a significant influence on satisfaction with life.

To this end, social marketers can influence consumers' perception of what it means to hold favourable "satisfaction with life" (Ventegodt *et al.*, 2003; Constantinescu, 2012), through applying the SCT (Bandura, 1986). If consumers deem themselves to have such life satisfaction, it should increase the likelihood of more sustainable consumption practices as

evident from the Nested Model of QoL (Christie, 2018), leading to the formulation of the second and third propositions:

P2. Personal and environmental factors have a significant influence on sustainable consumption.

P3. Satisfaction with life has a significant influence on sustainable consumption.

Through considering such sustainability principles (resulting from social marketing campaigns implementing the SCT (Bandura, 1986)), the consumer will practice conscientious consumption and exhibit a greater care for the outcome of their consumption choices, as opposed to immediate gratification only (Lynes *et al.*, 2014; Peattie and Peattie, 2010). The concepts of social, environmental and economic well-being can therefore be achieved (Christie, 2018) and thus the fourth proposition is presented:

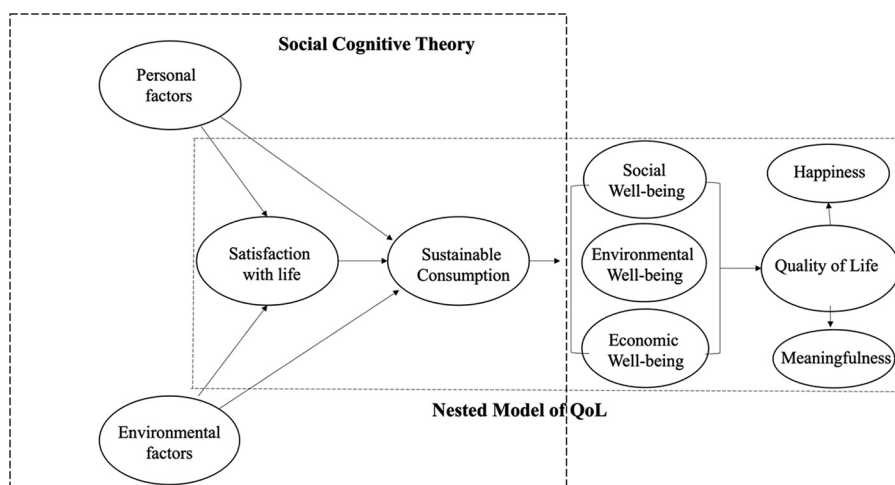
P4. Sustainable consumption has a significant influence on social, environmental and economic well-being.

Through promotion of consumption choices that takes into account the triadic reciprocity of social, environmental and economic well-being, social marketers may therefore promote the agenda of behaviour change that ultimately improves QoL (including momentary happiness, but more importantly, a more long-term approach to meaningfulness in life) (Peattie and Peattie, 2010) as derived from combining the principles of the Nested Model of QoL (Christie, 2018) and Bandura's (1986) SCT, which leads to the final proposition, namely:

P5. Social, environmental and economic well-being has a significant influence on a consumers' QoL.

The new conceptual model is presented in Figure 3.

Derived from the proposed propositions, this paper presents the development of the Social Cognitive Model of QoL (article author), a theoretical framework that merges



Source: Authors' own work (2023)

Figure 3.
Social cognitive
model of QoL

Bandura's SCT (1986) and Christie's Nested Model of QoL (2018). While [Christie's \(2018\)](#) theory presents the consequences of "satisfaction with life" on people's consumption habits and ultimately their QoL, it lacks clear direction for the how social marketers can use social and environmental factors to influence consumer's buying behaviour. Thus, the first half of the model (SCT) encapsulates the interplay between personal factors and environmental factors, and its impact on consumer's buying behaviour, whereas the second half of the model extends this concept and proposes a better QoL for individuals if they consumer sustainably. Therefore, social marketers can encourage sustainable consumption using cognitive (personal) and environmental factors, which will lead to general well-being (social, environmental and economic), and consequently, lead to better QoL as a subjective measure, but which in turn will also promote the sustainability agenda. Previous studies on this topic have explored these concepts in isolation or incorporated typical theories and constructs, such as goal-framing behaviour, behaviour change and promoting pro-environmental behaviour ([Alves et al., 2022](#); [Constantinescu, 2012](#); [Florence et al., 2022](#); [Grummon et al., 2022](#); [Peattie and Peattie, 2010](#)). What distinguishes this study from others is that it extends the SCT by merging the concepts of life satisfaction, individual well-being and QoL (derived from Christie's Nested Model of QoL, 2018) as consequential variables of behaviour change and the long-term benefit it poses to individuals. There is evidently a lack of theoretical and empirical studies that link the concepts of social cognition, life satisfaction sustainable consumption in an attempt to promote QoL.

5. Implications for social marketers

Thus, from a practical perspective, this paper poses several implications for various stakeholders to create awareness and promote sustainable consumption through enacting behavioural change. From a holistic perspective, it is the responsibility of policymakers, non-profit organizations, companies and brands, as well as ground level society to bring change by using a unified voice to educate consumers on the consequences of consumption practices.

For instance, social marketing organisations can promote the negative consequences of conspicuous consumption by implementing campaigns to create awareness on this matter. An example could be "buy nothing day", which is a popular and established annual initiative in America, that aims to change consumer's perception towards conspicuous consumption, and ultimately to change behaviour. Within a South African context, non-profit organisations that promote social change, can implement campaigns to educate consumers on the negative consequences of shopping in abundance, by drawing on the impact it has on society, the associated indebtedness of overconsumption and the environment. For example, providing informative messages about the amount of clothes that end up in landfills, which is a result of excessive consumption. By handing down, or donating clothes or upcycling clothes into materials that can be used by less affluent consumers, for example, the more affluent consumers will result contribute to not only uplifting the poor's QoL but also reducing environmental waste. By means of social media campaigns, non-profit organisations can use media influencers to educate consumers and create awareness about the devastating consequences of excessive consumption, both on the environment and less affluent consumer groups. An example is to create a #hashtag campaign and educate consumers on the meaning of the concept "less is more", as a backlash against modern society's belief that "more is more".

Non-profit organisations can run campaigns that aim to reduce the inequality gap, by promoting a model of "conscious consumption" that follows a circular path to encourage consumer to buy quality rather than quantity. If consumers are motivated to buy less

products, for better quality, the circular economy would benefit greatly. And ultimately, this is a global goal that all countries should strive for.

Policymakers can implement policies that prohibit brands and retailers from using persuasive messages that are used to convince consumers to buy products and brands that are not a necessity. Such messages can focus the concept of “QoL” by promoting “quality products” that have a longer life cycle, which will consequently decrease frequent consumption and encourage better, more sustainable and ultimately conscientious decision-making. This can be achieved by means of social marketing messages that focus on consumer values and motivations that aim to encourage consumers to engage in sustainable buying behaviour; For instance, educating consumers on the consequences of excessive buying on the environment and society. Companies and brands should re-evaluate the messages that they convey through their campaigns. In a culture where excessive consumption is promoted as a tool for conveying “a successful life”, brands should consider the long-term effects of their campaigns and shift their focus to “quality of life”, rather than “quantity in life”.

It is inevitable to assume that within the context of such research, socio-economic factors should be considered, and the proposed relationships may vary amongst different social groups. Therefore, testing this conceptual model amongst different social groups, in both emerging and developed economies, may yield interesting results. Future research could consider a qualitative, quantitative or mixed method study by testing the proposed framework. Further, an empirical study that is comparative in nature can be conducted across countries with different socio-demographic profiles. The social implications of the adoption of such a framework within social marketing may therefore lead to improved QoL for the consumer, while focussing on creating behavioural change for the betterment of not only society but also the environment on a global scale. In a country such as South Africa, this may then promote social cohesion between the consumer groups, reducing the income inequality and social inequality gaps currently being experienced. This in turn may then promote the overall happiness index of the country as well. A better understanding of the interdependence between the aforementioned variables will provide valuable insight to policymakers and marketing practitioners on strategies that can be employed to promote more sustainable consumption practices. Policy can be used to guide marketing campaigns, once again focussing on a more holistic approach of promotion of QoL, and not the mere increase in the GDP or economic gain.

6. Concluding remarks and originality

Through a theoretical analysis, this study presents a comprehensive model that social marketers can use as a persuasive communication tool to motivate people to change their behaviour and adopt sustainable consumption practices. The model further emphasises the significance that people’s personal factors and their environment have on their satisfaction with life and their buying behaviour. If social marketers can change people’s perceptions of what life satisfaction means and motivate them to consume more sustainably, it will have a positive impact on society’s well-being, as well as environmental well-being and economic well-being. And as a result, people’s QoL will improve.

The proposed framework drew on a number of noteworthy databases related to the QoL concept, such as SAGE, Francis and Taylor, Springer and other related resources. The conceptual model proposes that consumers’ QoL has a profound effect on both social and environmental factors, which consequently influence future consequences of their consumption behaviour. This has been argued from the perspective of social marketing, as [Hastings \(2017\)](#) mentions that it is indeed crucial for social marketing to reawaken our moral agency.

As stated by [Truong \(2014\)](#), it is imperative to evaluate the existing literature within a field to determine the direction in which research should proceed. Additionally, [Fraze et al. \(2010\)](#) stress the importance of behavioural theories in contributing towards effective theoretically orientated social marketing campaigns. Taking cognisance of the current state of overconsumption in pursuit of increasing QoL, it has become apparent that such an approach is not only unsustainable but also detrimental to the population and to the environment on a global scale. The theoretical implication of this review is thus to stress the importance of re-evaluating the role of social marketing with the greater reference of responsibility to curb and more importantly to mediate such frivolous pursuits. This should however be promoted in conjunction with behavioural theories to ensure lasting behavioural change.

Social marketing should be used to promote behavioural change to complex problems created by human beings. This is relevant because consumers remain to perceive materialism as a reflection of a successful life, and therefore indulge in consumption practices, or overconsumption, that has negative consequences to themselves and the environment. This research aims to promote the idea of sustainable consumption and the role that marketers and policymakers can play to influence consumer perceptions of the idea of a “successful life” and its’ manifestation through conscientious consumption of materialistic possessions. Consumers tend to misperceive their level of life satisfaction with the ownership of materialistic possessions, which is especially prevalent in South Africa, an emerging economy infamous for its income and wealth inequality.

References

- Alves, H., Galan-Ladero, M.M. and Rivera, R.G. (2022), “Theoretical background: social marketing and quality of life”, in Galan-Ladero, M.M. and Rivera, R.G. (Eds), *Applied Social Marketing and Quality of Life*, Springer, Cham.
- Andreasen, A.R. (1994), “Social marketing: its definition and domain”, *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing*, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp. 108-114.
- Andreasen, A.R. (2003), “The life trajectory of social marketing: some implications”, *Marketing Theory*, Vol. 3 No. 3, pp. 293-303.
- Archer, D. (2013), “The affluenza epidemic. Forbes, 16 December”, available at: www.forbes.com/sites/dalearcher/2013/12/16/the-affluenza-epidemic/ (accessed 9 June 2018).
- Balsa, A.I., Micheal, T. and Regan, L. (2013), “Relative deprivation and risky behaviors”, *Journal of Human Resources*, Vol. 49 No. 2, pp. 446-471.
- Bandura, A. (1986), *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.
- Bandura, A. (2001), “Social cognitive theory: an agentic perspective”, *Annual Review of Psychology*, Vol. 52 No. 1, pp. 1-26.
- Belk, R.W. (1985), “Materialism: trait aspects of living in the material world”, *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 12 No. 3, pp. 265-280.
- Burroughs, J.E. and Rindfleisch, A. (2002), “Materialism and well-being: a conflicting values perspective”, *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 29 No. 3, pp. 348-370.
- Chancellor, J. and Lyubomirsky, S. (2011), “Happiness and thrift: when (spending) less is (hedonically) more”, *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, Vol. 21 No. 2, pp. 131-138.
- Christie, L. (2018), “The pursuit of subjective well-being and the complexity of consumers’ conscientious decision making in the South African white goods industry”, Ph.D. diss., University of South Africa, Pretoria.

- Christie, L., Sonnenberg, N.C. and Gous, I.G. (2016), "The pursuit of subjective well-being and the complexity of conscientious consumer decision making in the South African white goods industry: a literature review and proposed conceptual framework", *Journal of Consumer Sciences*, Vol. 44.
- Constantinescu, M. (2012), "The relationship between quality of life concept and social marketing development", *International Journal of Economic Practices and Theories*, Vol. 2 No. 2, pp. 75-80.
- Costanza, R., Fisher, B., Ali, S., Beer, C., Bond, L., Boumans, R., Danigelis, N.L., Dickinson, J., Elliott, C., Farley, J. and Gayer, D.E. (2008), "An integrative approach to quality of life measurement, research, and policy", *SAPI EN Surveys and Perspectives Integrating Environment and Society*, Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 17-21.
- Deci, E.L. and Ryan, R.M. (2000), "The 'what' and 'why' of goal pursuits: human needs and the self-determination of behaviour", *Psychological Inquiry*, Vol. 11 No. 4, pp. 227-268.
- Florence, E.S., Fleischman, D., Mulcahy, R. and Wynder, M. (2022), "Message framing effects on sustainable consumer behaviour: a systematic review and future research directions for social marketing", *Journal of Social Marketing*, Vol. 12 No. 4, pp. 623-652.
- Frank, R.H. (2011), "The Darwin economy: liberty", *Competition, and the Common Good*.
- Fraze, J.L., Rivera-Trudeau, M. and McElroy, L. (2010), "Applying behavioural theories to social marketing campaign", *Social Marketing Quarterly*, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp. 2-14.
- Grummon, A.H., Goodman, D., Jaacks, L.M., Taillie, L.S., Chauvenet, C.A., Salvia, M.G. and Rimm, E.B. (2022), "Awareness of and reactions to health and environmental harms of red meat among parents in the United States", *Public Health Nutrition*, Vol. 25 No. 4, pp. 893-903.
- Hamilton, C. and Denniss, R. (2005), *Affluenza. When too Much Is Never Enough*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW.
- Harris, J.A., Carins, J., Rundle-Thiele, S. and David, P. (2022), "Can social cognitive theory explain breakfast frequency in workplace institutional feeding populations?", *Journal of Social Marketing*, Vol. 12 No. 4, pp. 373-394.
- Hastings, G. (2017), "Rebels with a cause: the spiritual dimension of social marketing", *Journal of Social Marketing*, Vol. 7 No. 2, pp. 223-232.
- Head, T. (2018), "Inequality has increased in South Africa since apartheid' – world bank the concept is ludicrous. Yet it's very, very real", available at: www.thesouthafrican.com/news/inequality-increase-apartheid-south-africa/ (accessed 27 October 2018).
- Helliwell, J.F., Layard, R., Sach, J.D., De Nerve, J.E., Lara B A., Wang, S. and Paculot, S. (Eds) (2022), "World happiness report 2022", available at: <https://happiness-report.s3.amazonaws.com/2022/WHR+22.pdf> (accessed 14 November 2022).
- Husic, M. and Cacic, M. (2009), "Luxury consumption factors", *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal*, Vol. 13 No. 2, pp. 231-245.
- Kasser, T. and Ryan, R.M. (1993), "A dark side of the American dream: correlates of financial success as a central life aspiration", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 65 No. 2, pp. 410-422.
- Kennedy, A.-M. and Laczniak, G.R. (2016), "Conceptualisations of the consumer in marketing thought", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 50 Nos 1/2, pp. 166-188.
- Kotler, R.L. (2002), "Social marketing in the 21st century", *Psychology and Marketing*, Vol. 19 No. 11, pp. 961-974.
- Lui, S. (2014), "Affluenza: an American epidemic", *Dialogue Humanities Review*, Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 6-13.
- Lynes, J., Whitney, S. and Murray, D. (2014), "Developing benchmark criteria for assessing community-based social marketing programs: a look into Jack Johnson's 'all at once' campaign", *Journal of Social Marketing*, Vol. 4 No. 2.
- McDivitt, J.A., Kerr, N.A., Chawla, P. and Miscally, M.E. (2011), "Using social science theory and consumer research to develop social marketing strategies and messages on healthy eating and physical activity for girls", *Social Marketing Quarterly*, Vol. 6 No. 3, pp. 72-76.

- McKenzie-Mohr, D. (2000), "Fostering sustainable behavior through community-based social marketing", *American Psychologist*, Vol. 55 No. 5, pp. 531-537.
- Maas, V.Y., Blanchette, L.M., van Amstel, W., Franx, A., Poels, M. and Koster, M.P. (2022), "A social marketing strategy to promote preconception care: development of the woke women strategy", *Journal of Social Marketing*, Vol. 12 No. 2, pp. 154-173.
- Muncy, J.A. and Eastman, J.K. (1998), "Materialism and consumer ethics: an exploratory study", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 17 No. 2, pp. 137-145.
- Nickerson, C. (2022), "Social cognitive theory: how we learn from the behaviour of others", *Simply Psychology*, available at: www.simplypsychology.org/social-cognitive-theory.html (accessed 21 November 2022).
- Pearson, D. and Perera, A. (2018), "Reducing food waste: a practitioner guide identifying requirements for an integrated social marketing communication campaign", *Social Marketing Quarterly*, Vol. 24 No. 1, pp. 45-57.
- Peattie, K. and Peattie, S. (2010), *Green Marketing: Opportunity for Innovation*, Routledge, London.
- Pereira Heath, M.T. and Chatzidakis, A. (2012), "Blame it on marketing': consumers' views on unsustainable consumption", *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, Vol. 36 No. 6, pp. 656-667.
- Rai, S. and Biswas, S.N. (2022), "Adoption of safe motherhood practices and the moderating role of facilitating conditions", *Journal of Social Marketing*, Vol. 12 No. 4, pp. 436-455.
- Rohenkohl, D.C., Grunert, K.G. and Dutra de Barcellos, M. (2023), "Goal-framing theory in environmental behaviours: review, future research agenda and possible applications in behavioural change", *Journal of Social Marketing*, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp. 20-40.
- Russell-Bennett, R., Fisk, R.P., Rosenbaum, M.S. and Zainuddin, N. (2019), "Commentary: transformative service research and social marketing—converging pathways to social change", *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 33 No. 6.
- Ryan, R.M., Huta, V. and Deci, E.L. (2008), "Living well: a self-determination theory perspective on eudaimonia", *Journal of Happiness Studies*, Vol. 9 No. 1, pp. 139-170.
- Ryan, S.T., Kariippanon, K.E., Okely, A.D., Stanley, R.M., Waqa, G. and Randle, M. (2022), "Social marketing benchmark criteria use in health behaviour change interventions in pacific islands populations: a systematic review", *Journal of Social Marketing*, Vol. 12 No. 2, pp. 124-153.
- Saleme, P., Dietrich, B., Pang, J. and Parkinson, T. (2020), "A gamified approach to promoting empathy in children", *Journal of Social Marketing*, Vol. 10 No. 3, pp. 321-337.
- Schiffman, L.G. and Wisenblit, J.L. (2015), *Consumer Behaviour*, 11th ed., Pearson Education, Harlow.
- Schunk, D.H. (2012), "Social cognitive theory", in Harris, K.R., Steve Graham, T., Urdan, Christine, B., Gale M.S. and Sweller, J. (Eds), *APA Educational Psychology Handbook, Theories, Constructs, and Critical Issues*, American Psychological Association, Washington, DC, Vol. 1, pp. 101-123.
- Sheldon, K.M. and Lyubomirsky, S. (2012), "The challenge of staying happier: testing the hedonic adaption prevention model", *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. 38 No. 5, pp. 670-680.
- Sirgy, M.J., Coskun Samli, A. and Meadow, H.L. (1982), "The interface between quality of life and marketing: a theoretical framework", *Journal of Marketing and Public Policy*, Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 69-84.
- StatsSA (2022), "60,6 Million people in South Africa", available at: www.statssa.gov.za/?p=15601 (access 14 November 2022).
- Sulla, V. and Zikhali, P. (2018), "Overcoming poverty and inequality in South Africa: an assessment of drivers, constraints and opportunities (English). Washington, D.C. World bank group", available at: <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/5304815>

-
- [21735906534/overcoming-poverty-and-inequality-in-south-africa-an-assessment-of-drivers-constraints-and-opportunities](#) (accessed 28 October 2018).
- Truong, V.D. (2014), "Social marketing: a systematic review of research 1998–2012", *Social Marketing Quarterly*, Vol. 20 No. 1, pp. 15-34.
- Vargo, S.L. and Akaka, M.A. (2012), "Value cocreation and service systems (re) formation: a service ecosystems view", *Service Science*, Vol. 4 No. 3, pp. 207-217.
- Ventegodt, S., Merrick, J. and Andersen, N.J. (2003), "Quality of life theory I. The IQOL theory: an integrative theory of the global quality of life concept", *The Scientific World Journal*, Vol. 3, pp. 1030-1040.
- Wickham, S., Shryane, N., Lyons, M., Dickins, T. and Bentall, R. (2014), "Why does relative deprivation affect mental health? The role of justice, trust and social rank in psychological wellbeing and paranoid ideation", *Journal of Public Mental Health*, Vol. 13 No. 2, pp. 114-126.
- Wood, M. (2018), "Resilience research and social marketing: the route to sustainable behaviour change", *Journal of Social Marketing*, Vol. 9 No. 1, pp. 77-93.
- Worldometers (2018), "South African population (live)", available at: www.worldometers.info/world-population/south-africa-population/ (accessed 20 October 2018).
- Zainuddin, N. and Russel-Bennet, R. (2017), "The many paths to societal wellbeing: charting a course forward", *Journal of Social Marketing*, Vol. 7 No. 4, pp. 350-354.

Further reading

- Atik, D. and Ertekin, Z.O. (2022), "The restless desire for the new versus sustainability: the pressing need for social marketing in the fashion industry", *Journal of Social Marketing*, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp. 1-19.
- Bandura, A. (1997), *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control*, Freeman, New York, NY.
- French, J. and Blair, C. (2015), "Social marketing for public health", *Annual Review of Public Health*, Vol. 36, pp. 69-88.
- Kotler, P. and Zaltman, G. (1971), "Social marketing: an approach to planned social change", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 35 No. 3, pp. 3-12.

Corresponding author

Lorna Christie can be contacted at: chrisl@unisa.ac.za

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website:

www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm

Or contact us for further details: permissions@emeraldinsight.com