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# PUBLIC MARKETING IN PUBLIC GOVERNANCE: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW USING THE TCCM FRAMEWORK

**Dr. Harleen Kaur**
*Delhi Technological University*

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study presents a systematic literature review of public marketing, examining its theoretical foundations, empirical applications, and methodological approaches. Using the Theory–Context–Construct–Methodology (TCCM) framework, the review analyzes 56 peer-reviewed articles published between 2005 and 2025. Findings reveal that public marketing integrates principles from social marketing, public value theory, and relationship marketing but remains theoretically fragmented. Empirical studies are concentrated in public health and environmental sectors, with limited exploration of areas like taxation, urban transport, and civic engagement. Methodologically, the field is dominated by qualitative case studies and cross-sectional surveys, with few experimental or longitudinal designs. This review identifies key research gaps and proposes future directions to advance public marketing as a critical governance capability, enhancing policy communication, citizen engagement, and public trust.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary governance, the success of policies depends not only on their technical soundness but also on how well they are communicated, framed, and embraced by citizens. Traditional top-down approaches, centered on regulation and compliance, often fail to address the behavioral and trust-related challenges governments now face. In this context, public marketing has emerged as a strategic tool to align policies and services with citizen needs, using frameworks historically rooted in the private sector.

Drawing on traditions such as social marketing, public value theory, and relationship marketing, public marketing applies segmentation, branding, and behavior change techniques to public sector goals (Kotler & Lee, 2007; French & Gordon, 2019). Unlike commercial marketing, which pursues financial outcomes, public marketing aims to generate societal value and foster trust between governments and citizens.

Applications of public marketing span public health, environmental campaigns, and urban branding (Peattie & Peattie, 2009; Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013). Governments increasingly recognize its role in communicating policies effectively and encouraging voluntary citizen compliance. Yet, despite its expanding practice, the field remains theoretically fragmented and methodologically limited, with research dominated by qualitative studies and descriptive surveys.

This article addresses these gaps by conducting a structured review using the Theory–Context–Construct–Methodology (TCCM) framework. By analyzing literature from 2005 to 2025, it synthesizes key theoretical perspectives, empirical contexts, and methodologies, identifying both convergence and fragmentation.

### METHODOLOGY

This study employs a systematic literature review approach, guided by the Theory–Context–Construct–Methodology (TCCM) framework (Paul & Criado, 2020). Widely used in management and marketing reviews (Kumar et al., 2020), TCCM offers a structured way to synthesize fragmented fields. The review aims to map the theoretical foundations, empirical contexts, constructs, and methodological approaches defining public marketing from 2005 to 2025.

A comprehensive search was conducted using Scopus, Web of Science, and Emerald Insight, following systematic review protocols in social sciences (Snyder, 2019). Targeted searches were also performed in core journals such

as *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, *Journal of Social Marketing*, and *Social Marketing Quarterly* (Santos et al., 2025). Keywords like "public marketing," "social marketing," and "public policy communication" were selected to capture both core and adjacent streams (French & Gordon, 2019).

The review applied strict inclusion criteria. It included only peer-reviewed journal articles published in English in ABDC-ranked A or B journals, covering the public sector context (Paul et al., 2021). Nonprofit and commercial marketing studies were excluded unless directly relevant to government applications (Bryson et al., 2014). After screening 314 articles, 56 were retained for detailed coding.

Each study was analyzed using the TCCM dimensions. Theories ranged from social marketing and public value to behavioral and relationship marketing. Contexts covered regions, sectors, and institutional settings. Constructs such as trust, satisfaction, and compliance were extracted, while methodologies were classified by design and analysis approach (Snyder, 2019).

Thematic synthesis revealed dominant trends and gaps. While the review is comprehensive, it is limited by the database scope and the exclusion of practitioner or regional insights (Tranfield et al., 2003). Nevertheless, it offers a structured foundation for advancing public marketing research and practice.

## FINDINGS

### 1. Defining the Boundaries of Public Marketing

Public marketing has developed as a distinct field at the crossroads of marketing, public administration, and policy communication. It applies marketing principles—such as segmentation, branding, and relationship management—to public sector goals, aiming to create societal value rather than profit (Kotler & Lee, 2007). Emerging from social marketing (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971), it broadens the focus from individual behavior change to the strategic management of citizen relationships, trust, and public value (French & Gordon, 2019).

While social marketing focused on health and environmental behavior change (Andreasen, 2002; Lefebvre, 2011), public marketing extends to the design of services and policy narratives. Yet, its conceptual boundaries remain debated. Some scholars view it narrowly as a communication function (Laing, 2003), while others frame it as a governance orientation shaping services and participation (Bryson et al., 2014). Reviews (Santos et al., 2025) reveal fragmented sectoral applications—health, education, social economy—without cohesive theory (Gordon, 2013; French & Russell-Bennett, 2015).

Public value theory (Moore, 1995) has shaped public marketing's purpose, positioning it as a way to align citizen needs with government capabilities. However, debates persist over whether marketing's role in governance risks commodifying public goods (Peattie & Peattie, 2003).

The rise of digital platforms and citizen co-creation has further shifted public marketing toward dialogic, participatory models (Bryson et al., 2014). Still, tensions remain between strategic communication and democratic accountability.

### 2. Theoretical Perspectives and Evolution of Public Marketing

The intellectual foundations of public marketing are drawn from multiple disciplinary streams, each offering partial insights into the role of marketing in the public sphere. Unlike its commercial counterpart, which is anchored firmly in consumer behavior and market competition, public marketing sits at the crossroads of public administration, social marketing, behavioral science, and relationship marketing, among others. This disciplinary diversity has enriched the field, yet simultaneously left it fragmented and lacking a unified theoretical core.

Early explorations of marketing in public contexts were largely normative, advocating for the application of marketing tools to improve the efficiency and responsiveness of government services (Kotler & Levy, 1969). At the time, marketing was proposed as a means to enhance the delivery of services such as public transport, utilities, and municipal activities—domains traditionally viewed as bureaucratic and far removed from citizen choice. However, these early discussions often failed to grapple with the distinct institutional logics, power asymmetries, and value orientations of the public sector.

The arrival of social marketing theory, particularly in the works of Andreasen (2002), marked a significant conceptual advance. Social marketing reframed marketing not as a profit-generating activity, but as a behavior change mechanism aimed at social betterment. Rooted in disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and public health, social marketing provided a robust framework for designing interventions that sought to influence

voluntary behaviors—be it smoking cessation, safe driving, or environmental conservation. Yet, social marketing, while impactful in public health and environmental domains, tended to focus narrowly on individual behavior modification, often neglecting the broader systemic and institutional dimensions of public sector management.
In parallel, the public value discourse emerged from public administration scholarship, most notably in the work of Moore (1995). Public value theory shifted attention from service outputs and citizen satisfaction to the co-production of societal value, emphasizing outcomes that citizens collectively perceive as beneficial. Here, the role of government is not merely to deliver services efficiently, but to align its activities with citizen needs and societal goals. Scholars like Bryson, Crosby, and Bloomberg (2014) argued that public agencies must move beyond passive service provision to actively engage in value creation through stakeholder dialogue, collaborative governance, and adaptive management. Public marketing, in this context, is conceptualized as a facilitator of such engagement—aligning policy offerings with citizen expectations and societal values.

Simultaneously, relationship marketing, a concept originally developed in business-to-business and services marketing (Grönroos, 1994), found new relevance in the public sector. Relationship marketing's emphasis on trust-building, long-term engagement, and co-creation of value resonated with the goals of contemporary public management. Laing (2003) and others suggested that governments, like service firms, could benefit from cultivating sustained relationships with their constituents, rather than viewing interactions as one-off transactions. This relationship perspective broadened public marketing's scope from campaign-based communication to the strategic management of citizen relationships.

More recently, the rise of behavioral public policy and nudge theory (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008) has influenced public marketing thinking. Behavioral insights into decision-making biases, heuristics, and social norms have led governments to design policy interventions that subtly steer citizens towards desired behaviors. While behavioral public policy and public marketing operate from different disciplinary traditions, both fields recognize the importance of audience segmentation, message framing, and context design in shaping behavior. Integrating these approaches could enrich public marketing's behavioral toolkit.

Despite these theoretical contributions, public marketing remains an interdisciplinary field without a singular dominant paradigm. Scholars have called for greater theoretical integration, urging the field to reconcile its roots in social marketing, relationship management, and public value theory (French & Russell-Bennett, 2015). Such integration could provide a more holistic understanding of how marketing contributes to policy effectiveness, public trust, and societal outcomes.

Furthermore, digital transformation has introduced new theoretical considerations. The growth of e-governance, digital citizen engagement, and platform-based service delivery raises questions about how public marketing operates in online spaces where interactions are increasingly mediated by algorithms and social media platforms (Linders, 2012). Digital environments alter the dynamics of segmentation, personalization, and public discourse, challenging public marketers to rethink traditional communication strategies.

In sum, the evolution of public marketing theory reflects a gradual shift from transactional models of service promotion to relational and value-oriented frameworks. Yet, the field's theoretical landscape remains fragmented, with parallel discourses on behavior change, public value, stakeholder relationships, and digital engagement developing in isolation. Future research must work towards bridging these silos, creating integrated frameworks that reflect the complex realities of modern governance.

**3. Empirical Contexts of Application**

Public marketing's empirical applications have grown across public service domains, though research remains concentrated in public health and environmental behavior change, reflecting its roots in social marketing. Public health is the most studied context, with numerous campaigns on smoking cessation (Gallopel-Morvan et al., 2011), vaccination uptake (Athey et al., 2022), and obesity prevention (Peattie & Peattie, 2009). These campaigns employ segmentation, message design, and targeted media but often frame citizens as passive recipients rather than active partners in public value creation (French & Gordon, 2019).

Environmental marketing has also been a major focus. Governments use marketing to promote recycling, energy conservation, and sustainable transport (Barr et al., 2011), applying traditional marketing mix tools. However, this domain, like public health, is dominated by Western case studies, limiting insights from developing economies where environmental behaviors and contexts differ.

Urban governance and place branding have emerged as newer application areas. Cities apply marketing strategies to build civic pride, attract investment, and shape resident engagement (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013). Although initially conceptual, recent studies have empirically examined how branding influences citizen satisfaction and participation.

In public sector service delivery, marketing principles guide citizen-centric design, enhancing services like tax administration and public transport (Bryson et al., 2014). Governments employ feedback mechanisms, service quality assessments, and user journey mapping to align services with citizen needs (Laing, 2003), but rigorous evaluations of long-term trust and service outcomes remain scarce.

Policy reform communication is another complex area where public marketing has potential. Ighomereho and Ezeabasili (2024) illustrate how marketing strategies shaped citizen acceptance of Nigeria's fuel subsidy reform, suggesting a role for marketing in contentious policy contexts.

Digital governance is a rapidly expanding but under-theorized field. Governments use social media and mobile apps for policy dissemination and engagement, as seen in the UK's "Stay Home Save Lives" COVID-19 campaign (Athey et al., 2022). However, empirical research on the long-term effectiveness of digital public marketing remains limited.

Geographically, public marketing research is dominated by high-income democracies in Europe, North America, and Australia. Limited studies explore low- and middle-income countries, where citizen trust, media landscapes, and governance models differ.

Overall, while public marketing's empirical base is expanding, much of it focuses on campaign outcomes and perceptions. Future research should explore sectors like education, taxation, and financial inclusion, and expand to underrepresented regions in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

**4. Constructs and Measures in Public Marketing Research**

The constructs explored in public marketing research are as diverse as the theoretical and practical domains the field inhabits. While much of the early work borrowed heavily from commercial marketing and social marketing constructs, more recent studies have begun to integrate concepts from public administration, psychology, and behavioral economics. Despite this interdisciplinary richness, there remains a lack of consistency in how key constructs are defined and measured across empirical studies.

A central construct in public marketing literature is citizen trust. Trust is repeatedly positioned as a critical antecedent to both policy acceptance and long-term engagement with public services (Bouckaert, 2020). Scholars conceptualize trust as a multifaceted phenomenon, encompassing trust in government competence, fairness, transparency, and intent. Measurement approaches vary widely: some studies use single-item indicators of perceived trustworthiness, while others adopt multidimensional trust scales adapted from the service marketing and political science literatures. The inconsistent operationalization of trust limits cross-study comparability and highlights the need for more unified measurement frameworks.

Closely linked to trust is citizen satisfaction, another construct frequently examined in public marketing contexts. Drawing on service quality literature, researchers have adapted the SERVQUAL framework (Parasuraman et al., 1988) and public sector service quality models to measure satisfaction with government services such as licensing, tax collection, and utilities (Laing, 2003). Yet, some scholars argue that satisfaction alone is insufficient to capture the relational and value-creation dimensions of citizen-government interactions (Bryson et al., 2014). They propose broader constructs like public value perception, which reflects citizens' assessments of how government activities contribute to societal well-being.

In the realm of behavior change, public marketing studies frequently draw on constructs from social marketing and behavioral psychology. Awareness, attitudes, intentions, and self-reported behaviors are commonly measured outcomes in campaigns addressing public health, environmental conservation, and safety compliance (Peattie & Peattie, 2009). These studies often employ standard psychometric scales, although some use ad-hoc survey instruments developed for specific campaigns. Constructs such as perceived risk, perceived behavioral control, and social norms are borrowed from frameworks like the Theory of Planned Behavior and Protection Motivation Theory (Ajzen, 1991; Rogers, 1975).

Another key area of construct development relates to stakeholder engagement and co-creation. As public marketing moves beyond unidirectional campaigns towards participatory service design, researchers have begun exploring constructs like citizen participation, co-production, and collaborative governance (Bryson et al., 2014). However, empirical measurement of these constructs remains nascent. While some studies use qualitative indicators—such as the presence of feedback mechanisms or participatory workshops—quantitative operationalizations of citizen co-creation are still underdeveloped.

Several studies, particularly in the area of place branding, focus on constructs such as place identity, place attachment, and civic pride (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013). These constructs are used to assess the affective and symbolic relationships citizens form with their cities or regions as a result of branding and communication efforts. Measurement approaches here often involve adapting brand equity and organizational identity scales to the context of places and public institutions.

More recently, digital engagement has introduced new constructs into public marketing scholarship. Studies of e-governance and digital campaigns examine constructs such as online trust, digital service satisfaction, and social media engagement (Linders, 2012). However, metrics for these constructs are fragmented, with some studies relying on social media analytics (likes, shares, comments), while others use surveys of digital service users. Few studies rigorously link digital engagement metrics to policy awareness or compliance outcomes.

Despite the breadth of constructs explored, a recurring critique in the literature is the dominance of proximal outcomes such as awareness and attitudes, rather than distal outcomes like sustained behavior change or policy compliance (French & Gordon, 2019). Moreover, much of the empirical work in public marketing relies on self-reported data, raising concerns about social desirability bias and the validity of behavioral claims.
Methodologically, most constructs are measured using cross-sectional survey designs, limiting the ability to infer causal relationships between marketing interventions and citizen outcomes. Only a handful of studies employ longitudinal designs or experimental methods to assess changes in constructs over time or across treatment groups (Athey et al., 2022).

In summary, public marketing research has explored a wide array of constructs spanning trust, satisfaction, awareness, attitudes, and behavior. Yet, these constructs are often measured inconsistently, with limited theoretical integration and methodological rigor. Future research could benefit from the development of validated, context-specific measurement instruments and from longitudinal and experimental studies that trace the evolution of these constructs in response to public marketing interventions.

**5. Methodological Approaches in Public Marketing Research**

Public marketing research reflects the interdisciplinary nature of the field, combining qualitative richness with emerging quantitative rigor. However, it remains largely descriptive and exploratory, with limited use of causal or longitudinal designs.

Qualitative case studies have been foundational, offering deep insights into public marketing campaigns, city branding, and citizen engagement. Gallopel-Morvan et al. (2011) used interviews and document analysis to study tobacco control campaigns in France, while Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013) explored how Utrecht and Manchester shaped their city brands. Laing (2003) demonstrated how Australian public agencies adapt marketing internally. While insightful, these studies often focus on specific contexts, limiting generalizability.

Quantitative survey research has gained traction, particularly in exploring constructs like trust and satisfaction. Bouckaert (2020) examined trust in European governments, and Bryson et al. (2014) studied stakeholder engagement's role in creating public value. East et al. (2021) applied the Net Promoter Score (NPS) to public services. However, these studies are mostly cross-sectional, relying on self-reported data and lacking causal depth. Beyond primary studies, systematic reviews and bibliometric analyses contribute to mapping the field. Santos, Ardigo, and Pacheco (2025) identified thematic clusters across sectors, while Shekhar and Venugopal (2025) charted influential publications and trends. Though valuable for theory-building, these works lack empirical validation of citizen outcomes.

Experimental designs remain rare but promising. Athey et al. (2022) conducted a randomized experiment on digital COVID-19 messaging, offering a rare causal analysis. Hunter et al. (2017) used a mixed-method approach to assess a skin cancer prevention campaign. Such studies demonstrate the potential of experiments, but ethical and logistical challenges have limited their wider adoption.

The rise of digital governance has introduced new methods. Social media analytics, as used by Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) and Smith et al. (2021), explore engagement patterns but often stop short of linking them to behavior change or trust.

Despite methodological diversity, gaps persist. Longitudinal studies and experimental approaches are scarce. Most studies remain Western-centric, neglecting emerging economies and diverse governance contexts where public marketing could play a critical role.

To advance, the field must adopt more rigorous causal designs and expand empirical inquiry to new regions and sectors. As governance challenges intensify, methodological innovation will be essential for public marketing to generate actionable, globally relevant insights.

**7. Theoretical Contributions**

The body of research on public marketing, though still nascent, contributes to several intersecting theoretical conversations within marketing, public administration, and behavioral policy. One of the core contributions of public marketing scholarship is its expansion of marketing theory into non-market contexts. By demonstrating how marketing principles operate in environments where profit is not the primary driver and where stakeholder relationships are complex and politically mediated, public marketing extends the applicability of marketing theory beyond its traditional commercial boundaries (Kotler & Lee, 2007; French & Gordon, 2019).

Moreover, public marketing contributes to the advancement of public value theory, offering a more citizen-centric lens on how governments design, deliver, and communicate their services (Moore, 1995). While public value theory emphasizes the creation of outcomes that benefit society, public marketing illustrates the processes through which citizens' perceptions of that value are shaped—through message framing, relationship-building, and participatory engagement (Bryson et al., 2014). This dynamic suggests a more interactive, co-creative process of public value generation, where citizen perceptions and government offerings mutually influence each other.

Public marketing also adds to the discourse on social marketing and behavioral change models, but with a distinct emphasis on the institutional and policy dimensions. Unlike traditional social marketing, which often focuses on individual behaviors in isolation, public marketing situates behavior change within the broader context of government policy, public trust, and societal outcomes. This positioning challenges the field to consider not only how behaviors are shaped, but also who shapes them, with what authority, and toward what collective goals.

Furthermore, by drawing on relationship marketing (Grönroos, 1994) and stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984), public marketing advances the conceptualization of citizen-government relationships as long-term, trust-based partnerships, rather than transactional exchanges. This relational perspective moves beyond the idea of the citizen as a passive service recipient, framing them instead as a co-producer of public value and an active participant in governance processes.

Finally, the emerging research on digital public marketing—although limited—raises important theoretical questions about how public marketing operates in digitally mediated environments, where citizen interactions are fragmented, real-time, and algorithmically shaped (Linders, 2012). This opens pathways for integrating digital engagement theories and platform governance studies into public marketing discourse.

**Research Gaps and Future Research Directions**

Despite increasing interest, public marketing remains an emerging and fragmented field. While scholars have demonstrated how marketing principles help governments communicate policies and build citizen trust, the field lacks integrated theoretical frameworks and rigorous methodologies. Current research largely borrows from social marketing (Andreasen, 2002), public value theory (Moore, 1995), relationship marketing (Laing, 2003), and behavioral economics (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008), yet fails to reconcile these perspectives into a cohesive model. As French and Russell-Bennett (2015) note, public marketing still requires unified theories explaining how marketing shapes citizen behavior and public value creation.

Empirical studies are mostly concentrated in public health and environmental sectors, such as anti-smoking campaigns (Gallopel-Morvan et al., 2011) and recycling behaviors (Barr et al., 2011), with emerging work on COVID-19 messaging (Athey et al., 2022). However, areas like taxation, education, and civic engagement remain underexplored. Moreover, public marketing research is geographically biased toward Western democracies, limiting insights from emerging economies or non-democratic regimes.

Methodologically, the field is dominated by qualitative case studies and cross-sectional surveys. Experimental designs and longitudinal studies are rare, limiting causal understanding of how marketing interventions influence long-term citizen trust and compliance (Hunter et al., 2017). Constructs such as trust, satisfaction, and engagement are inconsistently defined and measured, and tools like public value perception and co-creation are conceptually discussed but rarely empirically validated.

Digital governance and citizen co-creation present emerging but understudied contexts. While digital campaigns increasingly shape public engagement, few studies link online interactions to deeper behavioral outcomes (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012).

Future research should develop integrated theories, expand empirical contexts, adopt experimental and longitudinal designs, and create validated measurement tools. Such advancements are essential for public marketing to evolve as a robust academic domain and a practical tool for citizen-centered governance.

**Practical Implications**

Public marketing offers practical strategies for governments to enhance citizen engagement and policy compliance, especially in an era of institutional distrust. By applying marketing tools such as audience segmentation and message tailoring (Peattie & Peattie, 2009), public agencies can build trust and shape behavior. Beyond campaigns, public marketing emphasizes relationship-building through participatory governance and transparent communication (Bryson et al., 2014). In digital contexts, governments must adapt to real-time citizen interaction (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). Ethical considerations remain central, as scholars warn against manipulative practices, advocating for citizen-centered, transparent approaches (French & Gordon, 2019).

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