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Social Marketing in Public Administration

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ABSTRACT

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The relevance of the study is determined by contemporary transformational processes in society, globalization, digitalization, increased social activity of citizens, and the need to improve the effectiveness of communication between the state and the population. The purpose of the study is to define the essence of social marketing, its methods and technologies, as well as ways of integrating it into the public administration system to strengthen social trust and ensure sustainable development. The research methodology combines systematic and structural-functional analysis, content analysis of scientific sources and regulatory documents, comparative analysis of international and national experience, secondary analysis of sociological and statistical data for 2015–2024, as well as expert assessment. The results of the study show that the use of social marketing in public administration contributes to an increase in the level of public trust in state institutions (from 18.4% in 2015 to 55.1% in 2024), increases public participation in social and volunteer initiatives (from 12.1% to 37.2%), and creates an impression of government openness (from 14.7% to 45.8%). The comprehensive use of strategic communication platforms, digital technologies, educational campaigns, and mechanisms for engaging citizens stimulates active participation in social processes, shapes socially responsible behavior, and increases social cohesion. The study also showed that social marketing is effective for implementing sustainable development strategies, particularly in the areas of energy conservation, environmental awareness, and social inclusion, and contributes to the consolidation of society in crises, such as war or economic challenges. Thus, social marketing in public administration is not only a communication tool, but also a mechanism for transforming social values and behavioral patterns of citizens, strengthening partnerships between government and society, and achieving sustainable development goals.

KEYWORDS

social marketing, public administration, social trust, sustainable development, public policy, civic participation, social responsibility, public communications, inclusion.






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СТАТТЯ

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Актуальність дослідження зумовлена сучасними трансформаційними процесами в суспільстві, глобалізацією, цифровізацією, зростанням соціальної активності громадян та необхідністю підвищення ефективності комунікацій держави з населенням. Метою дослідження є визначення сутності соціального маркетингу, його методів і технологій, а також шляхів інтеграції у систему публічного управління для зміцнення соціальної довіри та забезпечення сталого розвитку. Методологія дослідження поєднує системний і структурно-функціональний аналіз, контент-аналіз наукових джерел і нормативних документів, порівняльний аналіз міжнародного та національного досвіду, вторинний аналіз соціологічних і статистичних даних 2015–2024 рр., а також експертне оцінювання. Результати дослідження показують, що застосування соціального маркетингу у публічному управлінні сприяє підвищенню рівня довіри громадян до державних інституцій (з 18,4% у 2015 р. до 55,1% у 2024 р.), зростанню участі населення у соціальних і волонтерських ініціативах (з 12,1% до 37,2%) та формуванню враження відкритості влади (з 14,7% до 45,8%). Комплексне використання стратегічних комунікаційних платформ, цифрових технологій, освітніх кампаній та механізмів залучення громадян стимулює активну участь населення у суспільних процесах, формує соціально відповідальну поведінку та підвищує соціальну згуртованість. Дослідження також засвідчило, що соціальний маркетинг ефективний для реалізації стратегій сталого розвитку, зокрема у сфері енергозбереження, екологічної свідомості та соціальної інклюзії, та сприяє консолідації суспільства в умовах кризових ситуацій, таких як війна або економічні виклики. Отже, соціальний маркетинг у державному управлінні є не лише інструментом комунікації, а й механізмом трансформації соціальних цінностей і поведінкових моделей громадян, зміцнення партнерства між владою та суспільством і досягнення цілей сталого розвитку.

КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА

соціальний маркетинг, публічне управління, соціальна довіра, сталий розвиток, державна політика, громадська участь, соціальна відповідальність, публічні комунікації, інклюзія.

1. Introduction

Modern transformation processes in society, caused by globalization, digitalization and the growth of social activity of citizens, require qualitatively new approaches to the organization of the public administration system. In these conditions, the use of innovative tools that ensure effective communication between authorities and the public, increase the level of public trust in state institutions and contribute to the formation of socially responsible behavior is of particular relevance. One of these tools is social marketing, which combines the principles of marketing management with humanistic values and a focus on the public good.

Social marketing in public administration is considered a mechanism for influencing social processes through communication, education, motivation and involvement of citizens in the implementation of state policy. Its application allows state institutions not only to implement social programs more effectively, but also to build partnerships with citizens based on transparency, participation and trust. This approach is in line with the concept of good governance, which implies openness, accountability and orientation to the needs of society.

In the context of military challenges, economic crises and information threats, the issue of improving the interaction of the authorities with the public is of particular importance. Social marketing can become an effective tool for forming a positive image of the state, consolidating society, mobilizing public resources and supporting reforms.

2. Literature Review

The concept of social marketing arose at the intersection of marketing theory and social sciences as a response to society's need to influence social behavior through tools of communication, motivation and citizen engagement. The foundations of the concept were laid by F. Kotler and J. Saltman, who in 1971 defined social marketing as the process of creating, communicating and implementing ideas aimed at changing people's behavior for the public good [11]. Subsequently, the concept was developed in the works of such researchers as A. Andreasen [2], who notes that social marketing has great potential for the public and public sectors, but its implementation in the field of public administration requires a clearer conceptualization, professional infrastructure and a long-term strategic approach. Silva E. and Las Casas A. [23], believe that social marketing can act as a powerful tool of public administration aimed at changing consumer behavior (in particular, fan aggression) through partnerships between authorities, sports clubs and the community to increase social well-being and reduce the level of violence, which have expanded its understanding in the context of public policy, healthcare, education, ecology and public safety.

In scientific research in recent decades, social marketing is increasingly considered not only as a tool for influencing behavior, but as a philosophy for managing social change [8], in particular, a special approach to the formation of voluntary and socially desirable consumer behavior [14]. Its key difference from commercial marketing is the focus on changing the behavior of the target audience for the sake of public benefit, and the return here is measured not financially, but through social benefits [13].

In the Ukrainian scientific literature, the issues of social marketing in public administration are studied in the works of such scientists as N. Mazii [15], Z. Buryk and V. Chernyakhivska [6], K. Romanenko and S. Isaeva [22], who consider it as an innovative tool of the state's communication policy. In particular, it is emphasized that social marketing can ensure the implementation of the principles of openness of power, the formation of social capital and an increase in the level of public participation in decision-making.

Thus, in modern research, social marketing is considered an innovative management technology that can ensure not only the effective delivery of state initiatives to citizens, but also the active involvement of the population in the joint solution of social problems. This determines its significant importance for the development of a modern system of public administration in Ukraine, focused on democratic principles, openness and social responsibility.

3. Problem Statement

The purpose of the study is to reveal the essence of social marketing as an innovative tool of public administration, to determine its role in the formation of socially oriented state policy and to improve the mechanisms of interaction between the authorities and the public.

4. Methods and Materials

In the process of the study, an interdisciplinary approach was used, which combines the methodological principles of public administration, social marketing, communications and sociology, which made it possible to comprehensively reveal the role of social marketing in the formation of socially oriented state policy. Systemic and structural-functional analysis is used to identify the relationships between institutional, communicative and behavioral aspects of social marketing. A content analysis of scientific sources, regulations and state strategies has been carried out in order to identify trends and practices of its implementation in the field of public administration. The comparative method made it possible to summarize the experience of the EU countries and Ukraine on the use of social marketing to increase social trust and citizens' participation in managerial decision-making. The empirical base was formed on the basis of a secondary analysis of sociological and statistical data for 2015–2024, which made it possible to trace the dynamics of public trust and public activity. To specify the factors of effectiveness of social marketing, expert assessment was used, and to generalize the results, methods of induction, deduction, modeling and graphic interpretation. The results obtained confirm that social marketing is an important tool for building trust, partnership between government and society, and achieving sustainable development goals.

5. Results and Discussion

The analysis of scientific publications proves that social marketing is an effective tool for improving the efficiency of public administration, focused on satisfying public needs and forming socially responsible behavior. Its key role is to reorient managerial practices from a directive model to a communicative-partnership one, where the citizen is not an object of influence, but a co-creator of policy. Social marketing ensures the legitimacy of managerial decisions, strengthens the population's trust in state institutions and contributes to the formation of a positive image of public authorities.

Among the modern theoretical approaches to understanding the role of social marketing in public administration, three main ones can be distinguished: communication, behavioral and institutional-managerial (Fig. 1).

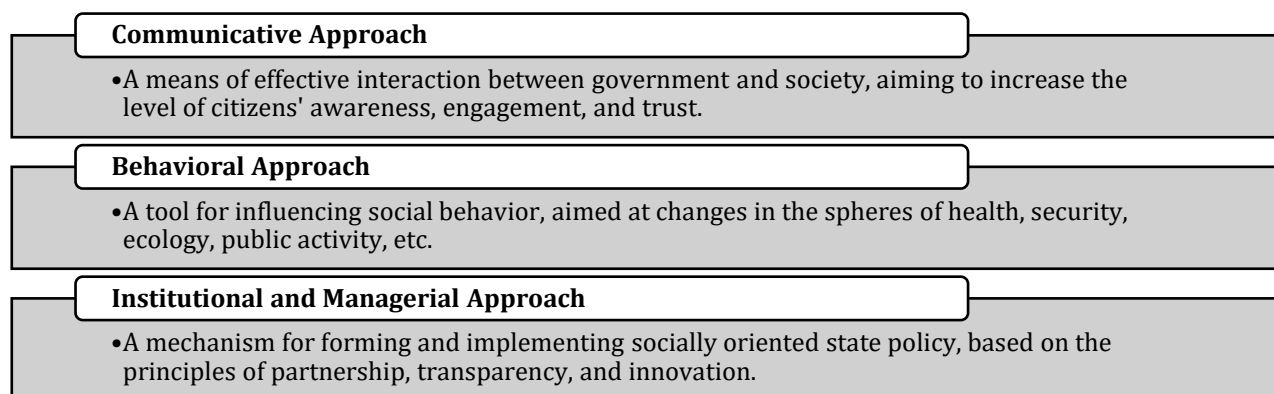


Figure 1. Scientific and theoretical interpretation of the essence of social marketing in public administration

Source: Summarized by the authors based on [4; 5; 11; 12; 16; 17; 20; 25].

From the point of view of public administration, social marketing is integrated into management processes through social communications, educational campaigns, electronic services, mechanisms of public participation, as well as through the formation of the image of state institutions. Its application

contributes to the transition from an administrative model of management to a participatory one, in the center of which are the needs of the citizen.

To ensure the effective integration of social marketing into the practice of public administration, it is necessary not only to understand its conceptual essence but also to understand the specific mechanisms of its implementation. The transition to a participatory model of governance requires the institutionalization of socially oriented tools that ensure interaction between the government and citizens based on partnership, transparency and trust. In this context, the development and implementation of mechanisms that combine marketing approaches with administrative, information, communication and educational tools of public administration is of key importance. They determine the practical implementation of the principles of social marketing in the activities of public institutions.

The main mechanisms for the introduction of social marketing in the field of public administration include: communication and information campaigns, network partnerships, digitalization of marketing, and monitoring of social effects (Fig. 2).

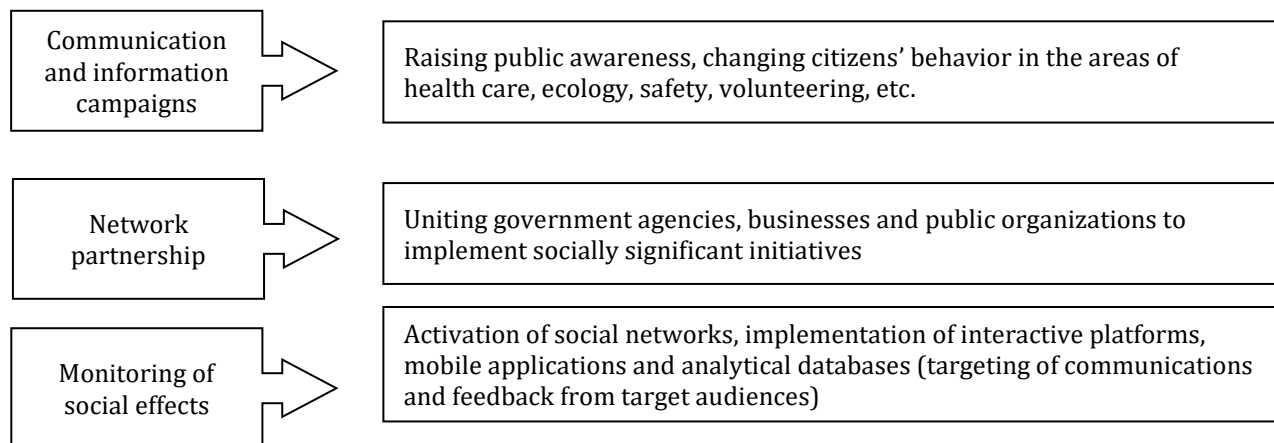


Figure 2. Main mechanisms for the implementation of social marketing in the field of public administration

Source: Summarized by the authors based on [2; 16; 26].

To illustrate the effectiveness of social marketing in public administration and confirm its impact on public activity and trust in state institutions, it is advisable to refer to statistical data. Let us consider the dynamics of indicators of trust in the authorities and citizens' participation in social initiatives for the period 2015–2024, which clearly demonstrates a positive trend and confirms that the introduction of social marketing contributes to the strengthening of partnerships between the government and the population (Fig. 3). These data allow evaluating the specific results of the application of communication, educational and interactive tools in public administration processes.

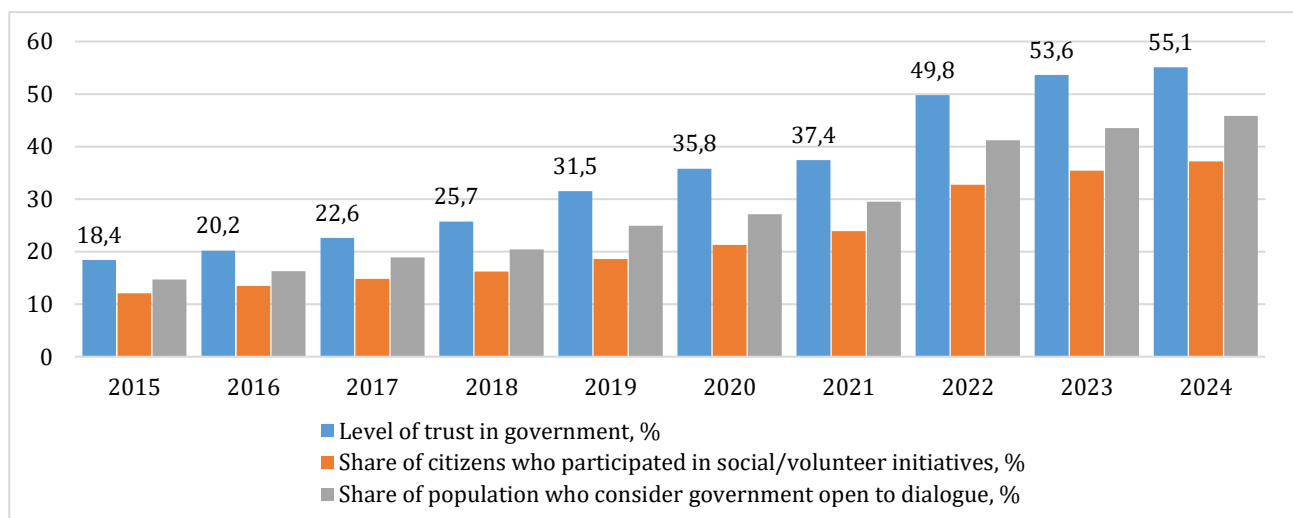


Figure 3. Dynamics of indicators of trust in the authorities and participation of citizens of Ukraine in social initiatives for the period 2015–2024

Source: Summarized by the authors based on [18; 21; 24].

Data analysis shows that for the period 2015–2024. There is a clear upward trend in the main indicators related to social marketing in public administration. The level of trust in the authorities increased from 18.4% to 55.1%, which demonstrates an increase in the legitimacy of state institutions as a result of communication and education campaigns. At the same time, the activity of citizens in social and volunteer initiatives is growing (from 12.1% to 37.2%), as well as the share of the population that considers the authorities open to dialogue (from 14.7% to 45.8%). This confirms the growing role of social marketing as a tool for the formation of participatory management and strengthening mutual trust between the government and society. In 2015–2024. There is a steady increase in citizens' trust in public authorities and their involvement in social initiatives. This indicates a gradual increase in the efficiency of state communications and the strengthening of interaction between the authorities and the public. The most noticeable increase is in 2022–2024. It is explained by the intensification of social campaigns aimed at supporting national unity, the volunteer movement and mutual assistance under martial law.

Social marketing contributes to the strengthening of social capital, the growth of public activity, the increase of trust in the authorities and the legitimacy of their decisions. Its effect is measured not by economic indicators, but by the level of social cohesion, readiness for collective action and stability of socio-management systems. Thus, social marketing in the public sector is turning from a communication tool into an adaptive management mechanism that allows the state to flexibly respond to social challenges, form new values and support sustainable changes in society.

Social marketing is an effective mechanism for the implementation of socially oriented state policy, because its strategic goal is not only to inform or persuade, but to transform social values and behavioral models to achieve the common good. Its key feature is that it aims to change people's social behavior through a system of motivation, communication and participation, forming a responsible and trusting relationship between the state and citizens.

From the standpoint of sustainable development, social marketing plays the role of a platform for social dialogue and behavioral change. It helps the state promote policies of rational consumption, environmental consciousness and social inclusion through clear, emotionally appealing messages. European initiative "Green Deal Communication" [9] uses social marketing to increase the environmental responsibility of citizens, promotes energy saving, waste sorting and the use of renewable resources. Through a combination of educational campaigns, interactive platforms and youth engagement, the initiative contributes to the formation of a culture of sustainable development as an element of everyday behavior. In Ukraine, the campaign "Clean City Starts with You", implemented at the level of local self-government, demonstrates how social marketing contributes to the development of environmental culture and civic responsibility, combining media communication with real practices of separate garbage collection and public actions [3; 7]. In the field of increasing social trust, social marketing strengthens the communication bridge between the authorities and citizens. Thanks to the principles of transparency, bilateral dialogue and the involvement of communities in joint actions, it becomes a means of building social capital. In particular, the Ukrainian campaign "Let's Unite for Victory", aimed at maintaining the unity of society under martial law [25]. It is based on positive narratives, stories of solidarity and mutual assistance that increase trust in state institutions and strengthen civic identity. The international initiative "Trust in Government" (OECD) demonstrates how social marketing helps governments form open communication strategies, increase transparency and create a positive image of the public service [19].

Thus, social marketing in public administration is a tool for humanizing politics that combines social goals with innovative communication technologies. It contributes not only to the implementation of state programs, but also to the formation of a new paradigm of interaction between the government and society, based on trust, partnership and responsibility.

Social marketing in the system of state and local government is a strategic tool for the formation of a socially oriented policy aimed at increasing social trust, participation of the population in social processes and ensuring sustainable development. Its peculiarity lies in its ability to transform social values, motivations and behavioral patterns of citizens, ensuring effective interaction between the authorities and society. In practice, social marketing is implemented through a set of tools, methods and technologies that allow state authorities and local governments to inform, attract, motivate and analyze the behavior of the population (Table 1).

Table 1. Main tools, methods and technologies of social marketing in the field of public administration

Category	Tool/Method	Description and example of application
Communication campaigns	Media and digital platforms	Bulk and targeted messages to inform about programs; Example: Facebook Energy Efficiency Campaigns
Branding of social initiatives	Logos, slogans	Formation of a recognizable image of programs; Example: "The community is active"
Citizen engagement	Surveys, participation platforms, incentives	Public consultations, electronic petitions, bonuses for active participants; Example: participatory budget
Educational and outreach activities	Trainings, webinars, and gamification	Raising awareness and developing competencies; Example: Energy efficiency workshops
Analytical and behavioral tools	Sociological research, beliefs	Study of citizens' behavior and its delicate influence on it; Example: Automatically connect to power saving apps
Digital technologies	Mobile applications, web portals, VR/AR	Operational communication and visualization of projects; Example: interactive portals of participatory budgets

Source: Compiled by the authors.

The integrated application of social marketing tools, methods and technologies allows state bodies and local governments not only to effectively communicate with citizens, but also to stimulate active participation in social and environmental initiatives, increase the level of social trust and ensure the implementation of the principles of sustainable development (Table 2).

Table 2. Ways to integrate social marketing into public administration

Direction	Characteristics of the direction
Strategic communication platforms	Unified government strategies through offline and online channels; Example: social networks and web portals to inform about energy efficiency programs
Performance monitoring and evaluation	Sociological research, surveys, analysis of social networks for campaign correction; Example: focus groups for local initiatives
Citizen engagement and motivation	Electronic petitions, participation budget, volunteer initiatives; Example: Encouraging active participants
Integration into sustainable development policies	Formation of environmental and social awareness (in particular, energy saving campaigns, support for local initiatives)
Digital and innovative technologies	Mobile applications, interactive portals, VR/AR; Example: Project visualization and personalized messages

Source: Compiled by the authors.

The integration of social marketing into public administration ensures systematic, transparent and effective interaction between the authorities and citizens. The use of strategic communications, digital technologies, public engagement mechanisms and performance monitoring allows the state not only to inform citizens, but also to stimulate their active participation, form social norms and behavioral models that contribute to sustainable development. Social marketing is becoming an integral part of modern state communication policy, strengthening social trust, legitimacy of decisions and social capital of society.

6. Conclusions

Social marketing in public administration is a strategic tool for increasing the effectiveness of public policy focused on the public good, citizens' trust and strengthening social capital. Its application combines humanistic values with innovative communication approaches, which is in line with the principles of openness, participation and accountability of the authorities.

The results of the study prove that the integration of social marketing contributes to the growth of social trust, civic activity and legitimacy of institutions. Increasing the level of trust in the authorities and citizens' participation in social initiatives confirms the effectiveness of communication and educational campaigns as tools for forming partnerships between the state and society.

The most effective mechanisms are recognized as strategic communication platforms, digital technologies and network partnerships that ensure the adaptability of management and increase its social orientation. Social marketing is being transformed from an information tool into a means of social change that forms responsible behavior, cohesion and sustainability of society.

Thus, the development of social marketing is a key direction of modernization of public administration in Ukraine, which ensures effective communication between the authorities and citizens, supports the values of trust and partnership, and contributes to the achievement of sustainable development goals.

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