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Comparative Analysis of Marketing Strategies Adopted by Public Sector Enterprises: Global Practices and Indian Perspectives

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ABSTRACT: Public sector enterprises sell in opened markets while remaining instruments of public purpose. Their marketing cannot be read as a copy of private-firm technique. It is a set of choices about intent, brand, price communication, channels, promotion, digital service and complaint standards under ministerial and audit constraint. This paper compares those choices in leading international public enterprises with the post-reform experience of Indian public sector enterprises in energy, finance, transport and related lines. Global practice after corporatisation shows professionalised marketing, designed brand architecture and published service numbers. Indian practice moved in the same direction after 1991, fastest where private rivals stood at the next counter. Convergence is visible in retail identity and digital platforms. Divergence remains in pricing autonomy, clearance speed and the tone of official communication. Portable lessons for Indian enterprises are numerical service promises, designed brand architecture and digital channels treated as products. Direct copies of foreign pricing freedom do not travel. Effective marketing in the Indian public sector is adaptation under constraint.

KEYWORDS: public sector enterprises; marketing strategy; state-owned enterprises; branding; service marketing; India; global practices; public value; customer orientation; competitive positioning.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Public Enterprises in Opened Markets

Public sector enterprises are legal persons owned wholly or predominantly by the state and charged with producing goods or services that a government regards as strategically, socially or fiscally important. Steel, petroleum, power, railways, ports, airlines, banks, insurers, telecom operators and mining firms have all sat inside this category in different countries and at different times. Ownership by the state does not, by itself, remove them from markets. Once a customer can choose a private bank, a private airline or a private fuel pump, the public enterprise is market-facing whether its charter admits the fact or not. Marketing then ceases to be an optional staff function and becomes the set of decisions through which the enterprise presents an offer, sets or explains a price, reaches a user, keeps a promise and repairs a failure.

The market-facing character of these organisations has intensified over four decades. Corporatisation converted departments into companies. Partial disinvestment listed some of them on exchanges. Trade liberalisation and domestic entry rules brought private rivals into sectors once reserved. Digital platforms lowered the cost of comparison for households and firms. A citizen who once accepted the single public supplier as a fact of geography now compares turnaround time, mobile applications, complaint redress and brand reputation. The public enterprise that continues to speak only in the language of allocation and quota discovers that allocation language does not hold a customer who has an alternative.

Market-facing status does not dissolve public purpose. A state oil company may still be asked to hold prices during a shock. A public bank may still be asked to extend credit in a district that private banks have left. A public insurer may still be asked to cover risks that commercial underwriting would refuse. Marketing strategy in this setting is the attempt to make the commercial offer intelligible and attractive without pretending that the public mandate has vanished. That attempt is the subject of this paper.



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1.2 Marketing Character of Public Enterprises

Private-firm marketing assumes a relatively clear principal, a profit test that can settle most disputes, and a price that the firm may set within the law of competition. Public-enterprise marketing works under several principals at once. The administrative ministry, the finance ministry, the legislature, the regulator, the organised workforce and the consuming public all claim a say. A campaign that would be routine in a private firm—seasonal discounting, withdrawal of an unprofitable line, aggressive comparison with a rival—can become a political event when the seller is owned by the state. The marketing function therefore operates inside a thicker web of vetoes.

The product itself is often a service with public-good features. Electricity, rail seats, crop insurance and small-savings products are not toothpaste. Failure is visible, sometimes tragic, and is read as a failure of the state rather than as a brand mishap. Marketing communication must therefore carry two loads. It must also explain obligation, shortage and rule. The second load is unfamiliar to private brand managers and is frequently discharged badly, as circular language or as silence.

Accountability after the sale is tighter. Audit, legislative questions and media scrutiny follow pricing, advertising spend and dealer appointment. A marketing budget that would pass unnoticed in a private group can become an audit paragraph. Risk aversion in campaign design is a rational response to that environment, not merely a cultural lag. Any comparative account that treats Indian public enterprises as simply late private firms misses this structural difference.

1.3 From Administered Supply to Competition

For much of the twentieth century the dominant public-enterprise stance toward the user was administered supply. Quantity, specification and price were set by plan or by notification. The user queued. Marketing, where it existed, announced availability and collected indent. The stance was coherent in closed economies with few substitutes. It became incoherent once substitutes arrived.

The shift to customer-facing competition did not occur on a single date. In Western Europe it accompanied the single market and the unbundling of network industries. In East Asia it accompanied export discipline and later domestic liberalisation. In India it accompanied the 1991 reforms, subsequent sector laws in telecom, electricity and insurance, and the gradual opening of petroleum retail and civil aviation. Each opening created a customer who could leave. Retention, not allocation, became the practical test.

Customer-facing competition changes the internal hierarchy of skills. Engineering and production remain necessary. They no longer suffice. Enterprises that once promoted only engineers into general management discovered that pricing, retail design, digital interface and complaint handling decide whether volume holds. The marketing function, long a publicity cell attached to administration, had to become a line activity with targets, data and dealers. That internal shift is incomplete in many Indian public enterprises and is further advanced in several European and East Asian counterparts.

1.4 Globalisation and the New Operating Field

Globalisation placed public enterprises in sight of foreign buyers, foreign rivals and foreign standards of service. A national airline selling tickets online competes with carriers that treat the booking path as a core product. A steel plant selling into export markets meets specifications and delivery terms written by private traders. A bank with overseas branches meets conduct rules written in other capitals. Marketing strategy becomes, in part, an exercise in meeting those external standards without abandoning the domestic mandate.

Liberalisation at home is the more immediate pressure. When a private pump stands across the road from a public-sector pump, the public pump must decide whether its brand means reliability of supply, cleanliness, loyalty points, or merely the residual custom of habit. When a private bank offers a same-day digital loan, the public bank must decide whether its branch density is still a sufficient advantage. These are marketing decisions even when they are taken in a board paper that never uses the word.

The new operating field also includes platforms that the enterprise does not own. Comparison sites, social media and rating applications make service failure public within hours. Official press notes travel more slowly than a recorded complaint. Marketing strategy that ignores this asymmetry leaves the enterprise speaking after the customer has already judged.



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II. NATURE AND PURPOSE OF PUBLIC ENTERPRISE MARKETING

2.1 Dual Mandate

The dual mandate is the first fact of public-enterprise marketing. Commercial viability requires a price that covers cost, a product that a customer will choose, and a cost structure that a lender or a disinvestment banker can read. Public purpose requires supply in thin markets, employment in designated regions, reservation in procurement, and sometimes a price below cost. Marketing sits between these requirements. It cannot resolve the contradiction. It can make the commercial half intelligible and can explain the public half without destroying the brand.

Enterprises that suppress the commercial half become fiscal dependents and lose the right to speak as market actors. Enterprises that suppress the public half invite the charge that public ownership has no remaining justification. Strategy that names both halves, assigns them to different product lines or different geographies, and measures each on its own scorecard is more stable than strategy that pretends the halves are one.

2.2 Marketing Instruments and Accountability

The classical four instruments remain usable. Product in a public enterprise includes specification, reliability and the bundle of after-sale service. Price includes the notified tariff, the cross-subsidy and the communication of why a price moved. Place includes branches, pumps, booking offices, ports and now applications. Promotion includes advertising, sponsorship, dealer contests and the official spokesperson. A fifth instrument is unavoidable: public accountability. Annual reports to Parliament, audit paragraphs, tariff orders and citizen charters are part of the offer as the customer experiences it. A marketing plan that treats them as external noise plans only half the conversation.

Accountability changes promotion more than it changes product. Claims must survive later scrutiny. Superlatives that a private brand can retire after a season become questions on the floor of the House. The resulting tone is often cautious to the point of dullness. Caution is not the same as silence. Clear, dated, checkable claims are compatible with scrutiny. Vague national-pride copy is not.

2.3 Stakeholder Map

The owner is the government in its shareholder capacity and often in its policy capacity at once. The citizen is the residual claimant who may never buy the product and still pays for failure through tax. The customer is the person or firm who can, in an opened market, walk away. The employee is both a cost and a constituency. The regulator writes the rules of tariff, conduct and interconnection. Marketing messages leak across these groups. A discount announced to hold customers can be read by the owner as a raid on dividend and by the employee as a threat to bonus. Strategy that does not map these readings will be surprised by resistance that looks, from the marketing desk, irrational.

2.4 Brand and Trust

In public enterprises the brand is first a promise of continuance and fairness and only second a promise of style. Households stay with a public insurer or a public bank in part because they believe the state will not let the institution fail. That belief is an asset. It is also a liability when service is poor, because the customer feels entitled to complain as a citizen rather than as a buyer. Brand work that spends only on logo refresh and television spots, and spends nothing on visible reliability, consumes the asset.

Trust brands travel badly if they are stretched across unrelated lines. A public oil company that enters groceries under the same mark risks both businesses. Brand architecture—corporate mark, product marks, endorsed marks—is therefore a strategic choice, not a design choice. Several European corporatised firms separated the corporate owner-brand from the retail brand. Several Indian firms still print the same heavy official name on every offering.

2.5 Service Logic in Core Sectors

Most large public enterprises sell services or service-product hybrids. The customer participates in production: a passenger uses a station, a depositor uses a branch or an application, a power consumer maintains an internal wiring standard. Marketing in this setting is operations made visible. Queue design, outage communication, claim settlement time and the honesty of an error message are marketing acts. Enterprises that locate marketing only in the advertising budget misunderstand their own product.



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Infrastructure and energy add a further feature. The customer cannot inspect quality in advance. Interruption is the test. Communication during interruption—estimated restoration, cause, compensation rule—decides whether the brand survives the event. Utilities in several jurisdictions have professionalised this communication. Others still treat outage as an engineering secret.

III. GLOBAL MARKETING PRACTICES

3.1 European State Enterprises

European public enterprises in post, rail, energy and telecom passed through corporatisation and, in many cases, partial listing. The marketing consequence was the construction of retail brands that could stand beside private rivals in the same advertisement break. Customer charters, service-level publication and unbundled product names replaced the single departmental identity. Pricing, where the regulator allowed, moved toward time-of-use and bundled packages. The marketing department acquired a seat near the commercial director rather than near the information officer.

The European path was not a free market idyll. Public-service obligations remained. Rural delivery, night trains and social tariffs continued to constrain the offer. What changed was the explicit naming of the commercial offer and the obligation as separate lines. Indian enterprises often still present both as one inseparable block, which makes neither line easy to price or to promote.

3.2 East Asian Public Firms

Public and public-linked firms in parts of East Asia treated export markets as a discipline on quality and on delivery. Marketing strategy borrowed private export practice: specification, certification, after-sales networks abroad, and a brand that carried a national quality story. Domestically, the same firms often retained a developmental role in employment and in supplier development. The dual face was managed by separating export brands from domestic utility brands more cleanly than Indian heavy-industry firms have usually done.

National-brand linkage is a double-edged instrument. It lends credibility in some markets and invites political boycott in others. Enterprises that lean on the national story must also invest in product-level reputation that can survive a change in diplomatic weather. That investment is marketing in the strict sense: consistent specification, visible service and a name that can be judged apart from the flag.

3.3 Utilities in Latin America and Africa

Utilities with a large informal or low-income customer base have had to invent marketing that is also inclusion policy. Prepaid meters, community collection points, vernacular explanation of tariff slabs and campaigns against illegal connection are marketing instruments with a social target. The lesson is not that every Indian enterprise should copy prepaid meters. The lesson is that price communication in a politically sensitive tariff regime is itself a strategy, not a residual circular.

Where these utilities failed, they failed by treating inclusion as a slogan and collection as a police action. Where they improved, they treated the low-income user as a customer with a usable interface and a predictable rule. Indian electricity distribution companies face the same pair of tasks and often still separate 'consumer awareness' from 'revenue protection' as if they were unrelated.

3.4 North American Public Corporations

Crown corporations and public authorities in North America have, in several cases, published service standards with measurable waiting times, digital application paths and ombudsman routes. Marketing here is less about mass advertising and more about the design of the service encounter. Airports, transit agencies and public insurers that treat the website and the application as the primary branch have moved the marketing function into product design.

Digital service does not abolish the physical counter. It changes the default. The customer who can complete a transaction without a visit judges the remaining visit more harshly. Public enterprises that digitise forms but not decisions produce the worst of both channels: an electronic queue in front of a paper desk.



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3.5 Recurring Global Patterns

Across these clusters five patterns recur. First, the marketing function is named, staffed and given commercial targets. Second, brand architecture is designed rather than inherited from the ministry letterhead. Third, digital channels are treated as products. Fourth, service promises are published in numbers. Fifth, social and environmental claims are tied to auditable actions rather than to festival copy. None of the five requires private ownership. All five require a board that will defend a marketing decision against an informal ministerial preference for silence or for a favoured agency.

These five patterns are organisational before they are creative. A beautiful campaign attached to an unnamed function with no target and no right to stop a launch will not survive contact with a rival who resets price every week. Pattern is therefore first a matter of seat, mandate and number, and only then a matter of copy.

IV. INDIAN PERSPECTIVES

4.1 Planned Economy and Limited Marketing

Indian public enterprises were built inside a planned allocation system. Steel, coal, petroleum products, rail freight and many producer goods moved on indent and on notified price. The marketing department, where it existed, was a sales office attached to production. Advertising announced a new plant or a national campaign. It did not position a brand against a rival, because the rival was not supposed to exist. Dealer networks in petroleum and in fertiliser were exceptions that still operated under administered margins.

The inheritance remains visible. Many enterprises still describe their external work as ‘publicity and public relations’ rather than as marketing. Budgets sit under administration. Campaigns are cleared as if they were official speeches. The customer is named ‘consumer’ in a legal sense and is not always named as a person who can leave. Reform of this inheritance is slower than reform of the product market, because the product market can be opened by a notification while the internal function changes only when boards insist.

Internal change is slower for a second reason. Publicity cells are staffed by people whose skill is official prose. Market orientation requires people who can read a share-of-counter number and change a script. Retraining helps. Redesign of posts helps more. An enterprise that adds the word marketing to a publicity officer’s door without changing the post has performed a relabel, not a reform.

4.2 Post-1991 Market Orientation

Liberalisation admitted private capital into telecom, aviation, insurance, banking expansion, petroleum retail and selected manufacturing. Public enterprises in those lines met rivals who advertised continuously, priced flexibly and designed applications as products. Retention of share required an answer. Oil marketing companies rebuilt retail visual identity, loyalty programmes and highway networks. Public banks invested in core banking and later in mobile applications. Insurers redesigned agency and bancassurance channels. Air India, before and after later ownership change, lived the cost of a brand that had not kept pace with the service encounter.

Market orientation in this period was uneven. Enterprises still protected by entry barriers changed more slowly. Those exposed to daily consumer choice changed faster. The pattern confirms that competition, not ownership sermons, is the usual trigger for marketing investment in the public sector.

4.3 Sector Snapshots

In energy, the downstream oil companies built some of the most visible public-sector retail brands in the country. Cleanliness, forecourt service and loyalty cards became competitive instruments once private pumps appeared. Upstream and generation firms remained closer to business-to-business marketing, with relationship management and contract reliability as the core offer. Distribution utilities, mostly at state level, still struggle to present a customer interface that matches the sophistication of the upstream brand.

In banking and insurance, public institutions hold trust and branch reach. Private rivals hold speed and product design. Marketing strategy has therefore split between defending trust—safety of deposit, sovereign association—and copying digital convenience. The copy is necessary. The defence is an asset that private firms cannot purchase cheaply. Strategy



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that abandons the trust story in order to sound like a fintech start-up wastes the one advantage that does not have to be invented.

In transport, railways combine an unmatched network with a communication style that still often resembles a gazette. Aviation public enterprises learned, expensively, that livery without punctuality is not a brand. Ports and shipping market to a professional buyer; their marketing is contract, turnaround and digital documentation more than mass media.

Telecom public enterprise faced the sharpest consumer market in the reform period and lost share where tariff, recharge ease and network perception lagged. Heavy industry and mining market to firms and to government buyers. Their marketing problem is specification, delivery and after-sales spares, not television. Treating all public enterprises as consumer-brand problems is a category error.

State-level public enterprises deserve a separate note. Many electricity distribution companies, state road transport corporations and state industrial development corporations face the customer more often than some central maharatnas and possess less commercial room. Their marketing problem is daily service and tariff explanation, not national brand architecture. A paper that spoke only of central oil and banking firms would miss the larger public-enterprise surface that households actually touch.

4.4 Instruments in Use

The instruments actually used by Indian public enterprises are fewer than the textbooks list and more constrained than the global clusters suggest. Corporate identity manuals exist. Retail formats have been redesigned in oil and in some banks. Digital platforms—payment applications, booking engines, grievance portals—are now ordinary. Alliances with private firms appear in downstream retail, in insurance distribution and in technology. Corporate social responsibility spend is large and is often asked to carry a reputation load that operations have not earned.

Advertising remains heavily routed through empanelled agencies and official media schedules. That routing protects propriety and slows invention. Sponsorship of sport and culture is used as a softer brand path. It works when the enterprise already keeps its service promise. It does not repair a broken promise.

4.5 Ministries, Audit and Social Obligation

Ministries appoint directors, clear large decisions and receive complaint. Audit examines advertising rates, dealer appointment and hospitality. Social obligation—reservations in employment and procurement, supply in unprofitable lines, festival-season price restraint—remains written into practice even when it is not written into the marketing plan. These constraints are not decorations. They are the medium in which Indian public-sector marketing is done. A comparison that treats them as temporary friction, due to disappear once professional managers arrive, misreads the constitutional setting.

The correct reading is not despair. It is design inside the medium. Campaign calendars can be pre-cleared. Dealer rules can be published once and applied many times. Social obligation can be assigned to named product lines with their own scorecards. Constraint that is designed around is still constraint. It is no longer surprise.

V. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

5.1 Strategic Intent

Globally, the clearer enterprises separate commercial lines from obligation lines and report both. Indian enterprises more often carry both in a single reported number and a single public story. The global separation makes marketing copy easier to write and easier to check. The Indian fusion makes every price change a political event and every advertisement a claim about the state. Intent is therefore less readable in the Indian case, even when the underlying work is serious.

5.2 Brand and Identity

European and some East Asian public firms invested in brand architecture: a holding name, retail names, product names. Indian public enterprises still lean on the full official title and the emblematic association with government. That lean protects trust. It also makes the brand heavy, slow to extend and slow to retire after a failure. A lighter endorsed architecture—government-owned, separately named retail marks—has been used only in patches.



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5.3 Pricing and Value Communication

Where regulators or ministries set price, marketing reduces to explanation. Global utilities that must live with set tariffs have professionalised slab communication, prepaid options and outage compensation rules. Indian practice still often announces a revision as a gazette fact and treats public anger as a law-and-order problem. Value communication—what the customer receives for the rupee—is weaker than price announcement. The gap is strategic, not merely editorial.

5.4 Channels and Last-Mile Access

Indian public banks and oil companies possess last-mile networks that many foreign public firms would envy. The comparative weakness is not density. It is the quality of the last mile: waiting time, cleanliness, digital completion, and the authority of the person at the counter to solve a problem. Global practice that impresses here is the treatment of the counter and the application as one designed journey. Indian practice still often designs them in different offices.

5.5 Promotion and Communication

Promotion in global public firms has moved toward targeted digital spend, service-story content and measurable response. Indian public-enterprise promotion still carries a large official-media and outdoor component and a tone of national announcement. The official tone has a use in moments of shortage or of patriotic supply. It is a poor instrument for everyday product competition. The comparison is not that one side advertises and the other does not. Both advertise. They advertise in different registers.

Register is not a minor stylistic fact. Official announcement trains the audience to wait for a circular. Market register trains the audience to compare an offer this week. An enterprise that must do both—announce a tariff revision and sell a packaged product—needs two voices under one brand discipline, not one voice used for both tasks.

5.6 Digital Marketing

Digital capability is the dimension of fastest recent convergence. Indian public banks, insurers and oil retailers now run applications, loyalty data and targeted offers that would have been implausible two decades ago. The remaining gap is less the existence of a platform than the use of data to change the offer in weeks rather than in annual campaigns. Governance of data, procurement of vendors and fear of audit still slow that use. Global peers that operate under lighter procurement rules move the same data more quickly.

5.7 Service Standards and Complaints

Published numerical standards and independent ombudsman routes are more settled in several Western public corporations than in many Indian public enterprises, though Indian banking and insurance already possess ombudsman systems. The comparative test is not the existence of a portal. It is the cycle time from complaint to visible remedy and the willingness to publish that cycle time. Enterprises that hide the number treat complaint as a reputational risk. Enterprises that publish it treat complaint as a marketing instrument.

5.8 Sustainability and Social Messaging

Global public firms have folded climate and inclusion claims into brand stories that investors and regulators now read. Indian public enterprises have long practised social obligation without always converting it into a coherent brand claim. The work exists. The narrative is often a list of expenditures. A list of expenditures is not a strategy. It becomes a strategy when the customer can see a connection between the obligation and the offer—clean fuel, last-mile banking, disaster supply—rather than a separate brochure.

5.9 Location of the Marketing Function

In the stronger global cases marketing reports into a commercial directorate and sits on product committees. In many Indian public enterprises it remains adjacent to administration, public relations or human resources. Location predicts behaviour. A cell that cannot stop a product launch or change a service script is not a strategy function. It is a decoration that will be blamed after the product fails in the market.

5.10 Autonomy and Ministerial Control

Autonomy is the condition that most sharply divides the clusters. Where boards can set a promotional calendar, a discount rule and a dealer policy without file-by-file clearance, marketing can keep pace with rivals. Where each visible act returns to the ministry, rivals write the timetable. Indian public enterprises vary along this axis. Some Navratna and Maharatna



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firms have usable commercial room. Many others do not. No amount of training in brand theory compensates for the absence of that room.

Autonomy here does not mean independence from the owner. It means a pre-agreed band within which the board may act without a fresh file: a discount ceiling, a media mix, a local campaign calendar. Owners that refuse even that band should not expect marketing outcomes that resemble those of firms that possess it.

VI. CONSTRAINTS ON INDIAN PRACTICE

6.1 Multiple Principals and Delay

Several offices can stay a campaign, a price experiment or a channel partnership. Delay is the marketing cost of that structure. A festival offer cleared after the festival is not an offer. Process reform that shortens clearance for routine commercial acts would change outcomes more than a new slogan.

6.2 Sensitive Prices

Fuel, power, food-related inputs and passenger fares are not only market prices. They are political facts. Marketing cannot pretend otherwise. What it can do is explain the composition of the price, the subsidy that remains and the service that accompanies it. Silence around a revision invites the customer to invent a motive. Explanation is the remaining instrument when the price itself cannot move.

6.3 Marketing Cadres

Recruitment into public enterprises still favours generalist and technical streams. Marketing specialists arrive late, if at all, and often without a career path that leads to the board. Training programmes teach tools. They do not create a profession inside the firm. Until marketing is a named cadre with rotation into operations and back, strategy papers will continue to be written by people who will not live with the retail consequence.

6.4 Procurement and Empanelment

Rules that protect against favouritism also flatten creative and media choice. Empanelment is defensible. Annual lock-in to a single official look is not required by propriety. Room for tested digital formats and for rapid low-value experiments can exist inside transparent rules. The constraint is real. It is not total.

Transparent panels, published rate cards and short-cycle digital tests can coexist with empanelment. The administrative task is to write a rule for experiments below a stated value, with a recorded outcome, so that invention is not treated as irregularity. Without that rule, every new format waits for a precedent that never arrives.

6.5 Uneven Digital Capability

A few enterprises run contemporary platforms. Many still run portals that accept a form and return a reference number without a decision. Unevenness across the public sector confuses the citizen, who expects the best public application to be the standard. Group-level shared platforms, already visible in payments and in some grievance systems, are a marketing asset as well as an administrative one.

6.6 Legacy Reputation

Decades of queue, shortage and opaque refusal sit in public memory. New livery does not erase that memory. Marketing that denies the memory is disbelieved. Marketing that names the improvement in checkable terms—minutes of waiting, hours of restoration, days of claim settlement—has a chance. Legacy is a constraint. It is also a brief, if the enterprise is prepared to be specific.

VII. CONTEXTUAL ADAPTATION

7.1 Portable Principles

Three principles travel. Service promises should be numerical and published. Brand architecture should be designed, with a distinction between the owner-mark and the retail mark where the product set is wide. Digital channels should be treated as products with owners, release cycles and complaint data feeding design. None of the three requires a change of ownership. Each requires a board minute that survives the next complaint to the ministry.



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7.2 Limits of Transplantation

Full pricing freedom, aggressive comparative advertising against private rivals on politically visible goods, and complete separation of the enterprise brand from the state are not portable into the present Indian setting. Copying them produces either a file that will not be cleared or a controversy that consumes the campaign. Adaptation means refusing those copies rather than failing at them.

7.3 Adaptation Frame

A usable frame has four tests. First, name the commercial offer and the public obligation on separate lines so that each can be priced and explained. Second, put marketing in the commercial line of command with authority over the service script. Third, publish three or four service numbers and report them every quarter. Fourth, use digital data to change the offer inside a quarter, within procurement rules written for that speed. Enterprises that pass the four tests will still not look like private consumer firms. They will look like public firms that can keep a customer.

The frame is deliberately modest. It does not promise that a public oil company will market like a private consumer-goods firm, or that a state electricity board will price like a spot market. It promises that a public firm can be intelligible, punctual in complaint, and consistent in the name it presents at the counter. That is a marketing achievement inside public ownership.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Public sector enterprises market under a dual mandate. Global practice after corporatisation professionalised that marketing: clearer brands, published service numbers, digital journeys and a named commercial function. Indian practice moved in the same direction after 1991, fastest where private rivals stood at the next counter, slowest where administered price and ministerial clearance still set the timetable. Convergence is real in platforms and in retail identity. Divergence remains in autonomy, in the tone of public communication and in the willingness to publish uncomfortable service numbers. The comparison does not yield a ranking of countries. It yields a ranking of conditions. Where boards can decide ordinary commercial acts, marketing strategy exists. Where every visible act returns to a secretariat, marketing remains publicity. Comparison also clarifies what Indian public enterprises already do well. Branch and pump density, sovereign association in deposit and insurance, and the capacity to supply through a shock are marketing assets. They are under-used when communication treats them as background facts rather than as claims that can be timed, measured and placed next to a rival's claim. Strategy begins by naming the asset in the customer's language, not in the ministry's language. A further comparative observation concerns time. Private rivals reset offers by the week. Public enterprises reset them by the quarter or the year. The difference is not only culture. It is clearance. Shortening the cycle for routine tactical acts—a festival pack, a digital fee waiver, a local dealer contest—would close more of the competitive gap than a once-in-five-years identity exercise. Time is a marketing variable.

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