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MARKETING DEVELOPMENT AS THE BASIS FOR IMPROVING PASSENGER TRANSPORTATION SERVICES AT RAILWAY STATIONS

Abstract. Overcoming the losses in auxiliary activities of domestic railway stations and achieving the desired level of customer satisfaction requires the implementation of marketing and the improvement of passenger transportation services based on it.

The article identifies the differences between the categories of "transport service" and "transport service provision", "railway station" and "railway station complex". A list of the main and additional functions of domestic railway stations is formulated. The existing classifications of railway station services are summarized, and a classification of commercial services is proposed. The main problems in providing additional services for passengers are formulated, and the reasons for their formation are identified.

The essence of marketing for railway passenger transportation is presented and its role in overcoming the losses in auxiliary activities of railway stations and increasing customer satisfaction with additional services is substantiated.

Keywords: *railway station, passenger transportation services, marketing for railway passenger transportation, primary and additional services, customer satisfaction.*

Introduction. Railway stations and station complexes as nodal elements of transport infrastructure occupy an important place in it, particularly in its passenger sector. In modern trends of development of the service sector economy, railway stations also become an important urban development element, in many ways determining the directions and possibilities for further development of populated areas (Shvets, 2017, pp. 27-28). Under such conditions, issues of improving the organization of transport traffic, the passengers' comfort level increasing, expanding the functions of stations, improving their architectural and artistic image, and a range of others become an

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urgent demand of time and are impossible without the implementation of new technologies for serving visitors to stations / station complexes.

At the same time, the chronic unresolved problem of functioning of domestic railway stations, especially those located in medium and small cities, remains the low profitability of their auxiliary activities and the unprofitability of many additional services for passengers. It should be noted that foreign stations also face such a problem (Kurosaki, Alexandersson, 2018; Alexandersson, Bondemark, Henriksson & Halten, 2018; Hagen, Oort, 2019; Oliveira, Bruen, Birrell & Cain, 2019; Yamashita, Hibino & Uchiyama, 2007). However, most stations have significant potential for increasing the profitability of auxiliary activities, increasing passenger traffic, attracting paying customers to their services, improving passenger transportation services, and strengthening the positive image of the railway. The complex situation proves that a new approach to serving passengers and other visitors to stations and station complexes is needed for this.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The issues of formation and development of marketing, logistics, and serviceology in railway passenger transport are comprehensively examined in numerous works by domestic and foreign authors, including O. Bakalinsky, Yu. Barash, D. Lomotko, O. Matusevich, L. Mirotin, M. Oklander, W. Kriswardhana, X. Hao, R. Shi, Z. Záhumenská, J. Zhu, and others. The study takes into account a number of works dedicated to the study of railway station complexes by authors such as I. Drevale, M. Mishchenko, V. Mironenko, O. Ovchinnikova, S. Pshinko, L. Shvets, A. Conceição, A. Perić, J. Preec, B. Scholl, and others.

Despite the significant number of works by domestic researchers on the studied problem, numerous proposals regarding the improvement of services at railway stations and increasing customer satisfaction do not provide an answer to the question of overcoming the loss-making (low profitability) of auxiliary activities of railway stations at the current stage of their functioning and increasing the demand for additional services for passengers. No foreign developments on this issue have been found, probably due to the absence of chronic loss-making at railway stations. However, for railway stations and station complexes in Ukraine, overcoming loss-making should no longer be considered a strategic task, but as an urgent need of the present.

The purpose of the article is to study the marketing aspects of improving the passenger transportation services at railway stations.

Formulation of the main material. The dominance in the competition of a particular type of passenger transport largely depends on the quality of transport services and services provided to customers by the transport company. Our study of literature sources has shown that many authors disregard the difference between the categories of "transport service" and "transport service provision". However, a fundamental understanding of the differences and interrelationships between these categories, arising from their essence, is necessary to determine the quality of transport service and transport service provision. In addition, railway transport products, which belong to the service sector of the economy, have a complex nature, so their quality is associated with different characteristics and indicators in the mind of each consumer (Hao, Zhu, Shan & Li, 2022; Kriswardhana, Hayati & Desy, 2018; Shi, Feng, Li & Tao, 2021; Cascetta & Coppola, 2013). Therefore, we will stop at this point and

present our own point of view on the interpretation of the specified categories.

We consider Myrotin L.B. researcher's definition to be most accurate one. It characterizes transportation services as the activity of moving goods and passengers in space and time and providing related transportation services. From this definition, it is clear that transportation services are an element of transportation services. Expanding on L. Myrotin's position, it should be noted that transportation services are the result of transportation activities, while service is the process of providing services (Melnyk, 2020, p. 268). These understandings of the terms "transport service provision" and "transport service" fully explain their meaning and the difference between them.

The passenger transportation service of the railway begins and ends at railway stations. A railway station is a specialized building or a complex of specialized buildings, structures, and devices at stopping points of railway transport, intended for serving passengers, managing train traffic, and accommodating service personnel. The station includes a passenger building and pavilions, passenger platforms with or without canopies, pedestrian crossings over railway tracks at one or various levels (ground, underground), small architectural forms, and visual communication means. Depending on local conditions, a separate station may not have all the mentioned components.

Railway station complex is a multifunctional architectural and urban planning and transport-technological complex that performs transportation and communication functions, as well as satisfies certain socio-economic needs of different serviced consumer segments. The station complex includes a station building, a passenger station with its platforms, postal and baggage facilities, as well as a station square.

In this article, the term "railway station" or simply "station" will be used, taking into consideration that this also includes station complexes, since the services for passengers provided by these elements that distinguish the railway station complex from the railway station are almost not provided.

The technology of railway station operation involves performing the main operations of quality service to railway passengers with minimal time costs. Passengers and visitors to railway stations have certain expectations for service consumption, and railway workers must strive to meet their expectations to the fullest.

At railway stations, taking into account the specific functioning of railway transport, all services provided to the population, organizations, and enterprises are traditionally divided into two types:

- services of the main activity;
- services of auxiliary activity.

The main services include those that are directly related to the transportation of railway passengers, which generate the main revenue that railway stations receive from passenger transport, baggage, and cargo.

Auxiliary services include those that are not directly related to the transportation process, i.e., additional services such as luggage carriers, automatic and stationary storage rooms, passenger restrooms, and others. Railway stations also generate revenue from these services, but auxiliary and ancillary activities are often low-profit or unprofitable due to exceeding costs over income and insufficient demand for certain services. In addition, some of these services are provided to passengers on a complimentary basis, although

their provision requires costs.

Currently, railway stations perform the following primary and additional functions for passenger service (Table 1).

Table 1

Primary and additional functions of the railway station

<i>Main functions</i>	<i>Additional functions</i>
Existing: – providing boarding and disembarkation of passengers; – organizing the transfer of passengers to other trains; – organizing the transfer of passengers from one direction of travel to another; – carrying out transfers of passengers between long-distance express, accelerated, high-speed, and suburban trains; – creating conditions for the transfer of passengers from railway transport to all types of urban transport and air transport.	Existing: – ticketing service; – waiting room services; – baggage storage services; – luggage carrier services; – information services; – inquiry services; – lounge services; – restroom services; – service-center services.
New: – barrier-free accessibility; – unified navigation.	New: – safety and security; – retail trade; – rental of commercial spaces; – Wi-Fi and communications; – entertainment and leisure.

Source: created by the authors using (Pshinko, Charkina & Bozhok, 2020, p. 40)

As mentioned above, in addition to the main functions, railway stations also perform a number of additional functions. Some of them are mandatory for passenger transportation, while others are optional. It should be noted that the relatively wide range of services currently offered by Ukrainian railway stations is insufficient to fully meet the needs of modern passengers due to the outdated nature of some services and the absence of other services, especially those related to high technologies. In addition, a significant number of services are low-income, and some station areas are often used irrationally, which prevents the SC branch of Joint Stock Company "Ukrainian Railways" from receiving due profits.

In scientific literature, another classification of services for passengers is often encountered based on dividing the trip into separate stages: before the trip, during the trip, and after the trip (The main directions... [Online]; Teslenko, 2019; et al.). Generalizing primary sources regarding this characteristic of classification has made it possible to systematize the list of services offered to passengers at different stages. According to researchers, passenger service before the trip in modern conditions of passenger transportation in Ukraine includes the following elements:

- accuracy and timely informing of passengers at ticket sales points;
- actions, behavior, and professionalism of passenger service personnel at ticket sales points;
- availability of additional services related to the purchase of a ticket (availability of discounts, delivery of tickets, assistance in determining the route, loyalty programs, etc.);
- punctuality of train departures;
- luggage storage;
- accuracy and timely informing of passengers at the station;
- actions and behavior of service personnel at the station, professionalism in service;
- availability of additional services at the station (waiting rooms, dining options, conference rooms, comfortable rest areas, provision of office equipment, internet services, etc.).

The following elements are attributed to passenger service after the trip:

- punctuality of arrival at the destination;
- availability of additional services at the station for passengers arriving at night after the cessation of city transport services (waiting rooms, food points, comfortable rest rooms, provision of office equipment, internet services, hotel room reservation, taxi call service, etc.);
- luggage storage;
- response time to passenger complaints and feedback, satisfying their claims, etc. (The main directions... [Online]; Teslenko, 2019).

From the given list, it can be seen that some researchers do not distinguish between the type of service and the element of passenger service, and mistakenly attribute the characteristics of the service to the service itself. Requirements for the personnel of railway stations, which are an integral part of service standards, are also mistakenly attributed to service elements. However, all sources emphasize the significant contribution of the activities of railway stations to creating consumer value of passenger service in rail transport, shaping the quality of transport services, influencing the image of railway passenger transport, attitudes of society and users towards it, passenger loyalty and intentions.

The development of the transportation market and increased competition therein lead to a rapid change in the situation in which railway companies operate. In order to succeed in such conditions, the focus of railway companies' functioning should become a long-term goal, not an episodic benefit (Záhumenská, Vojtek & Gašparík, 2019; Oliveira, Bruen, Birrell & Cain, 2019, pp. 2-3). To achieve this, it is necessary to constantly adapt to the demands and needs of passengers and actively influence them by regulating the demand for both passenger transportation and additional services for passengers. This means that the management of any enterprise's activities should be purposeful and based on marketing principles. Therefore, the proposal of additional services at railway stations and their sales requires keeping information from potential and existing consumers of these services to a much greater extent than is necessary for the sale of travel documents (Ischenko, 2013; Kucheruk, 2011; Lomotko, 2016; etc.). The absence of information about passengers, their preferences and demands, loyalty level and satisfaction leads to an unjustified replenishment of

the list of additional services and therefore, an unjustified expenditure of railway station funds.

At present, all railway stations and terminal complexes in Ukraine are part of and subordinate to the branch "Station Company" of the Joint Stock Company "Ukrainian Railways" (hereinafter – the SC branch of Joint Stock Company "Ukrainian Railways" or the branch). Since its creation in 2020, the marketing and advertising sector (department since 2022) has been formed within the SC branch of Joint Stock Company "Ukrainian Railways". However, none of its employees have special training or experience in the field of marketing, and they do not understand the essence of marketing. Without realizing the need and benefits of this activity, the marketing specialists of the SC branch of Joint Stock Company "Ukrainian Railways" are unable to demonstrate to the management of the branch the relevance of marketing research, justify the potential and role of marketing in increasing the profitability of auxiliary activities, and the effectiveness of the branch's overall functioning. As a result, the entire activity of the marketing and advertising department is reduced to maintaining contacts with existing advertisers and preparing reports on revenues from providing advertising services (placing and responding to commercial advertising).

Similar reports on revenue from auxiliary activities in general and an analysis of the dynamics of these revenues are carried out by the department of financial planning and economic analysis of the branch. Additional services for passengers (auxiliary activities) are considered by the department only as a potential area for generating revenue, without focusing on the demand and consumers of these services. Therefore, this department, like the SC branch of Joint Stock Company "Ukrainian Railways", organizes the division of railway station services into: main services – determined by the branch's mission and related to the performance of technological processes in its responsibility zone; commercial services – aimed at obtaining additional revenue.

Commercial services serve as an additional source of financial revenue for the SC branch of Joint Stock Company "Ukrainian Railways" and include:

- business-to-business (B2B) services – rental of premises and spaces; provision of advertising services for placing commercial advertisements on railway station infrastructure objects;
- business-to-consumer (B2C) services – all services provided to passengers as additional paid services in railway station complexes.

The branch of Railway Stations of Joint Stock Company "Ukrainian Railways" has the right to independently establish markups for commercial services (the cost calculation is the basis for pricing), regulate the range and assortment of commercial services offered by subordinate production units, focusing on the requests of passengers, demand for these services, and the level and quality of their provision. However, such information needs to be constantly updated to be relevant, objective, and complete. The only source of this information is marketing research, which the SC branch of Railway Stations of Joint Stock Company "Ukrainian Railways" does not conduct on its own and is unable to organize with the involvement of third-party marketers.

The absence of a marketing information collection system regarding passenger transportation services at railway stations in the branch leads to subjective planning of additional service offerings, their cost, and consequently, revenue from auxiliary activities. The quality of marketing research and

marketing activities depends on the qualifications of employees in relevant structural units, and the lack of information, knowledge, and experience in this area forces them to act randomly, making mistakes more often than guessing, which negatively affects the financial results of the activities of the branch of Ukrainian Railways.

Marketing of railway passenger transportation is a management system aimed at fully and effectively satisfying the transport needs of the population (Oklander, Zharska, 2010; Teslenko, 2019; Melnyk, 2020; etc.). It includes: analysis of the state and dynamics of demand in the market for transport services for the population; identification and study of consumer needs; study of the external environment; analysis of competition in the transport market; determination of the capacity of the market for transport services for the population and the market share of railway transport; market segmentation; identification of promising segments; study of passenger flows and identification of connections with unsatisfied demand; development and promotion of new services for passengers on the market; tariff and pricing policy for transport and service services; informational and advertising support and accompaniment of passengers; study of determinants of consumer value of transport services; methods of stimulating demand for transport and service services for passengers (Regulations on the Marketing Research Department..., 2013).

The result of marketing should be justified management decisions that allow retaining existing passengers and attracting new ones through created (strengthened) competitive advantages and providing the population with services of the desired quality level. Justified management decisions are based on marketing research, which is the basis of all marketing activities in the field of passenger transportation.

Recently created branch of SC of Joint Stock Company "Ukrainian Railways" has no experience and knowledge in this field, so the marketing direction is not yet developing. The absence of marketing has a negative impact on the results of auxiliary activities, passenger transport services, their satisfaction with railway services, including station services, and ultimately on the image of railway passenger transport. Both producers and consumers of these services suffer from slow and ineffective solutions to the problems that have accumulated in the field of providing additional services by railway stations. The main problems in providing additional services by railway stations, which in our opinion have formed at the moment and restrain their development, reduce the profitability of auxiliary activities and the satisfaction of consumers, are summarized in Table 2.

Considering the importance of the issue, we propose our own vision for the development of marketing at railway stations in Ukraine (Table 2).

The Table 2 shows that the leading role in organizing activities aimed at overcoming the problems in the provision of additional services at railway stations in the country belongs to the marketing department. The existing marketing and advertising department of the branch of Joint Stock Company "Ukrainian Railways" does not perform any marketing function, and its advertising activities are focused on reporting on revenues from commercial advertising and organizing entertainment events for visitors during holidays.

Table 2

Main problems in the provision of additional services
at railway stations in Ukraine and ways to overcome them

<i>Problem</i>	<i>The party that suffers from the problem remaining unsolved</i>	<i>Measures to overcome the problem</i>	<i>Required activities</i>	<i>Executing departments*</i>
Inadequate demand for most paid services	Service provider	Identifying the causes of insufficient demand, developing measures to address them	Marketing research (field studies)	DM
			Marketing and economic analysis	DM, DFE
			Positive practices monitoring	DM, DFE, DSO
Prolonged absence of demand for certain services	Service provider	Modernization, repositioning, and rebranding of services with no demand	Improvement of service delivery technologies, service modernization	DSO
			Marketing analysis, trial marketing	DM
			Advertising, rebranding	DA
Low affordability of the majority of customers	Service provider	Formation of a flexible pricing policy targeting various consumer segments	Research on the price elasticity of demand for additional services	DM
			Research on the seasonality of demand for additional services.	DM
			Expenses analysis	DFE
			Formulation of pricing policy taking into account demand elasticity	DFE, DM
Visitor dissatisfaction with the conditions at railway stations	Service consumers	Implementation of monitoring of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the conditions at the stations and a system for prompt	Marketing research (field studies) combined with "mystery shopper"	DM, MK
			Development of standards for station business units (centers for	DSO, DM

<i>Problem</i>	<i>The party that suffers from the problem remaining unsolved</i>	<i>Measures to overcome the problem</i>	<i>Required activities</i>	<i>Executing departments*</i>
		response and addressing the causes of dissatisfaction	providing additional services)	
Insufficient quality of providing a range of services	Service consumers	Identification of the reasons for inadequate service quality and exploration of opportunities for its improvement, establishment and maintenance of an optimal price-quality ratio, development and implementation of station service standards	Service provision quality monitoring	DSO
			Marketing research on the development of additional services from the customers' perspective (using the focus group method)	DM
			Development of standards for additional services at railway stations	DM, DSO
			Identification of price limits and consumer value of services	DM, DFE
Insufficient customer loyalty for reliable retention of clients to railway transport	Service provider	Identification of the reasons for low loyalty, activation of social marketing at the stations, strengthening interaction with mass media, support of the image using all available information resources	Marketing research (field studies) on the level of customer loyalty index NPS (<i>Net Promoter Score</i>)	DM
			Systematic implementation of social marketing measures	DM, DSO, DA
Insufficient customer awareness regarding services at the	Service provider, Service consumers	Selection of the most effective communication channels with customers,	Development of customer communication channels	DA
			Targeting of customer communication	DA, DM, DFE

<i>Problem</i>	<i>The party that suffers from the problem remaining unsolved</i>	<i>Measures to overcome the problem</i>	<i>Required activities</i>	<i>Executing departments*</i>
railway stations		their development, engagement of new information dissemination sources, activation of advertising for own services, establishment and development of customer feedback	channels and target audiences	
			Promotion of railway station services, corporative advertising	DA, DSO
			Continuous interaction with mass media	DA, DM, DSO
			A section on the official website of Ukrainian Railways maintaining, systematic updating and its content improvement	DA, DM, DSO
Increasing costs (high expenses) of service provision	Service provider, Service consumers	Implementation of factor and correlation analysis of expenses with subsequent identification of ways to reduce them, targeting expenses for core and additional station services	Systematic factor and correlation analysis of costs for additional services	DFE
			Formation and optimization of the consumer value of additional services	DM
			Systematic targeting of expenses on additional services and optimization of the set (list) of offered services	DM, DFE

Source: developed and proposed by the authors

* Note: the abbreviations of the departments of the branch of Joint Stock Company "Ukrainian Railways" were adopted as follows: DM – department of marketing; DFE – department of financial planning and economic analysis; DSO – department at stations of passenger service organization; DA – department of advertising; MK – independent specialized marketing company.

However, we are convinced that the main attention should be paid to corporate advertising, that is, advertising of the own services offered by railway stations using all possible means of delivering information to potential consumers.

Conclusions. Considering the above, we believe it is reasonable and highly necessary to strengthen the marketing component in the activities of the SC branch of Joint Stock Company "Ukrainian Railways" regarding passenger

transportation. The main objectives of marketing, in our opinion, should be:

- facilitating the implementation of the Strategy of Joint Stock Company "Ukrainian Railways" for 2019-2023 and the Stabilization and Improvement Program of the SC branch of Joint Stock Company "Ukrainian Railways";
- enhancing passengers' and society's loyalty to railway transport;
- ensuring an increase in demand for railway station services;
- promoting revenue growth from service provision to station visitors and passengers (through auxiliary and support activities);
- ensuring the provision of high-quality, safe, reliable, competitive, and customer-oriented additional services by the business units of the branch;
- improving passenger transportation services by enhancing station services;
- implementation of service standards and customer conditions at railway stations.

The effect of strengthening the marketing component is undeniable and will manifest in the following ways:

- gradual increase in demand for additional services at railway stations and, consequently, increased revenue from their provision (through auxiliary and support activities);
- rationality and quality of pricing, communication, informational, and other policies of the SC branch of Joint Stock Company "Ukrainian Railways";
- improvement in the level and quality of service for consumers of railway station services;
- enhancement of visitor experience at railway stations;
- ensuring a balance between service price and service quality;
- prevention of the outflow of economically beneficial customer segments for additional services at railway stations;
- strengthening loyalty to railway transport and fostering a positive image of the SC branch of Joint Stock Company "Ukrainian Railways" and the railway as a whole;
- various associated effects benefiting other structural (production) units of Joint Stock Company "Ukrainian Railways" involved in passenger transportation.

And vice versa, the failure to perform marketing functions by the existing Marketing and Advertising Department within the structure of the SC branch of Joint Stock Company "Ukrainian Railways" leads to a lack of marketing information in the formulation of strategic and current functional plans, the decision-making process, and the development of tasks aimed at improving passenger transportation services as well as disallows resolving the problem of insufficient demand for additional services at railway stations and overcoming their unprofitability. Convincing evidence from international experience (Dube, 2021; Osztera, & Kövesdib, 2014; Liang, Song & Dong, 2021) demonstrates that the enhancement of additional passenger services based on marketing information should be considered a promising direction for the development of railway stations and station complexes, as well as the first step towards transforming them into modern transport and transfer complexes.

Conflict of Interest and other Ethics Statements

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Тетяна МЕЛЬНИК, Олег ХРИСТОФОР

РОЗВИТОК МАРКЕТИНГУ ЯК ОСНОВА УДОСКОНАЛЕННЯ ТРАНСПОРТНОГО ОБСЛУГОВУВАННЯ ПАСАЖИРІВ НА ЗАЛІЗНИЧНИХ ВОКЗАЛАХ

Анотація. Зручне розташування залізничних вокзалів у більшості населених пунктів, перетік пасажирів з інших видів транспорту, викликаний останніми подіями в країні, величезний спектр пропонованих сервісів та наявний потенціал нарощування попиту на основні і додаткові послуги для пасажирів досі не дали можливості повною мірою подолати збитковість підсобно-допоміжної діяльності вокзалів та досягти бажаного рівня задоволення споживачів послуг. За відсутності маркетингу на залізничних вокзалах удосконалення транспортного обслуговування пасажирів наразі відбувається на підставі керівних вказівок, безсистемно, зводиться до необґрунтованого розширення переліку пропонованих послуг та частіше призводить до невиправданих додаткових витрат.

Розробка та обґрунтування запровадження маркетингового підходу до управління транспортним обслуговуванням пасажирів на залізничних вокзалах в контексті сучасних тенденцій їх розвитку, який дозволить подолати основні проблеми, що сформувались у сфері надання пасажиром додаткових послуг.

Визначено відмінності між категоріями «транспортна послуга» і «транспортне обслуговування». Уточнено поняття «залізничного вокзалу» і «залізничного вокзального комплексу». Сформовано перелік основних і додаткових функцій вітчизняних залізничних вокзалів з поділом на існуючі і нові. Узагальнено найбільш поширені класифікації послуг залізничних вокзалів та запропоновано авторський варіант класифікації комерційних послуг. Сформульовано головні проблеми у сфері надання додаткових послуг для пасажирів, та причини їх утворення. Через визначення сутності маркетингу залізничних пасажирських перевезень обґрунтовано його роль у вирішенні існуючих проблем, запропоновані необхідні для цього маркетингові активності.

Завдання, які потрібно вирішити для подолання збитковості підсобно-допоміжної діяльності залізничних вокзалів і підвищення задоволення споживачів додаткових послуг лежать у площині маркетингу. Запровадження вокзалами маркетингової функції дасть змогу підняти транспортне обслуговування пасажирів на бажаний рівень. І навпаки, ігнорування ролі маркетингу має тривалий негативний ефект, особливо у сервісній сфері, до якої відноситься транспорт.

Ключові слова: залізничний вокзал, транспортне обслуговування пасажирів, маркетинг залізничних пасажирських перевезень, основні і додаткові послуги, задоволення споживачів.