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SPECIFIC FEATURES OF MARKETING ACTIVITIES OF RAILWAY TRANSPORT COMPANIES IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

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Abstract
The thesis compares the marketing practices of railway companies in Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Japan and China. It shows that revenue management, low-cost brands, loyalty programmes and digital ecosystems are the main instruments of foreign railway marketing. Using Spain as an example, where passenger numbers rose by 42% and fares fell by 33% after market liberalisation, it assesses the impact of competition on marketing activity.

Keywords: Railway marketing, foreign experience, revenue management, loyalty programme, liberalisation, digital sales.

INTRODUCTION

For a long time, national railway companies operated as monopolies whose main task was to provide transport capacity rather than to compete for passengers. Over the past three decades, the situation has changed: railways now compete with low-cost airlines, intercity buses and private cars, and in the European Union domestic passenger markets have been opened to new operators [1]. As a result, marketing in leading railway companies has become a core management function. Studying this experience is relevant for Uzbekistan, where the 2023 reform separated

passenger operations from infrastructure and made the operator's results dependent on market revenue [2].

MAIN PART

Railway services have the general features of services – intangibility, inseparability, variability and perishability [3]. Foreign practice shows that the most important of these for marketing is perishability: an empty seat cannot be sold after departure. For this reason, almost all leading operators have built their marketing around revenue management, in which fares depend on the time of purchase, demand and train occupancy [4].

The analysis of foreign experience makes it possible to identify four specific features. The first is fare segmentation combined with loyalty instruments. Deutsche Bahn combines discounted advance fares with the BahnCard discount card and the BahnBonus programme, which rewards repeat travel [5]. The second is multi-brand positioning: SNCF created the low-cost brand OUIGO (2013), and Renfe launched AVLO (2021) to compete for price-sensitive passengers without lowering the price of the main brand [6]. The third is a digital ecosystem: JR East has developed the Suica IC card (since 2001) into a payment and loyalty platform that links travel with retail services at stations [7], while China Railway has built its ticket sales around the 12306 online system. The fourth is the systematic measurement of service quality based on SERVQUAL and EN 13816 [8, 9].

Competition strongly accelerates marketing activity. This is clearly demonstrated by Spain, where Ouigo (2021) and Iryo (2022) entered the high-speed market (Figure 1).

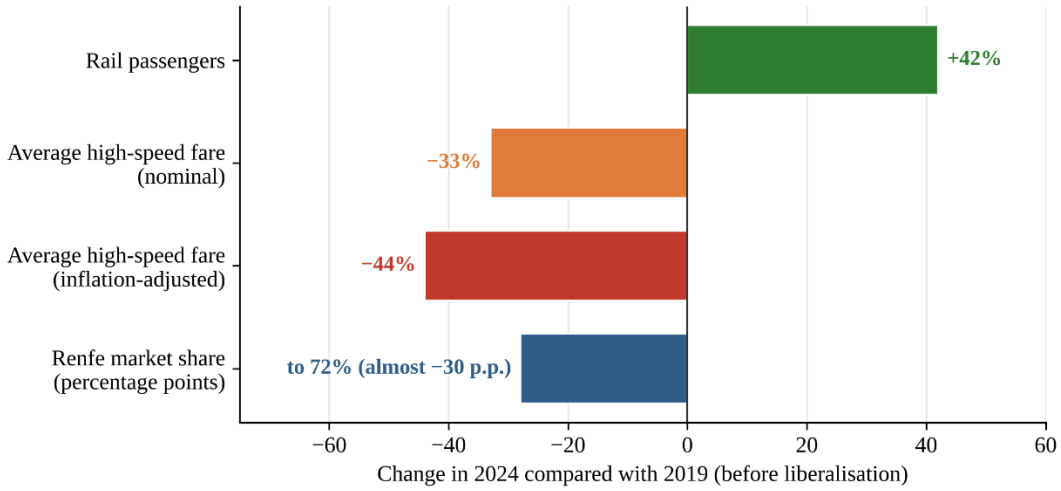


Figure 1. Results of the liberalisation of the Spanish passenger rail market, 2024 compared with 2019

Source: compiled by the author based on CNMC data [10].

As Figure 1 shows, in 2024 the number of rail passengers in Spain reached 49 million, 42% more than in 2019. Average high-speed fares fell by 33% (44% in real terms), and the incumbent Renfe's market share fell to 72% [10]. Thus, competition did not simply redistribute existing passengers but expanded the market. Renfe responded to new entrants with its own low-cost brand, which confirms the value of multi-brand positioning. It should be noted that low fares are effective only when passengers perceive them as fair, so dynamic pricing must be transparent [11]. Another common feature is omnichannel sales, in which the website, mobile app and ticket offices form a single customer journey [12].



CONCLUSION

Foreign experience shows that railway marketing differs from marketing in other sectors: it is built around managing perishable capacity, combines commercial and social objectives and relies on digital data about passengers. For "O'ztemiryo'lyo'lovchi" JSC, the most applicable instruments are: revenue management with transparent fare rules; a loyalty programme for regular passengers; separate positioning of an economy offer for price-sensitive domestic passengers; and the development of the online sales channel into a platform for customer relationship management. These instruments should be adapted gradually, taking into account the social significance of domestic routes and the absence of competition between operators in Uzbekistan.

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