



THE CONTENT, ESSENCE AND TYPES OF MARKETING IN RAILWAY SERVICE ENTERPRISES

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ABSTRACT	KEYWORDS
<p>This article examines the content, essence, and main types of marketing in railway service enterprises under the conditions of the modern service economy. The study is based on the idea that marketing in railway transport should be interpreted not only as a tool for promoting services, but also as an integrated management mechanism aimed at creating customer value, improving service quality, and strengthening the competitive position of railway enterprises. The article analyzes the evolution of marketing theory and summarizes the scientific approaches of leading scholars to the definition of marketing in relation to the service sector.</p>	<p>Railway services, marketing, service marketing, customer value, railway enterprises, service quality, customer loyalty, IHIP model, marketing mix, transport services.</p>

Introduction

In the modern market economy, the strategic role of marketing in transport services is steadily increasing. Railway transport, as a multi-sector, infrastructure-based, and socially important field, requires a systematic application of marketing principles not only to enhance competitiveness but also to improve service quality and fully satisfy passenger needs [2; 7]. In many countries, including Uzbekistan, railway reform is closely connected with the modernization of transport infrastructure, the growth of passenger flows, and the transition of railway companies toward market-oriented management models [8]. Under such conditions, the scientific interpretation of the content, essence, and types of marketing in railway service enterprises becomes an urgent methodological task [8].

The concept of marketing has undergone substantial conceptual transformation over the last century. Initially, marketing was largely associated with the distribution and sale of products. Later, it evolved into a broader managerial philosophy focused on identifying consumer needs, creating value, managing service quality, and building long-term customer relationships [1; 2]. In the service sector, marketing has become particularly significant because it does not only shape demand, but also governs the consumer’s entire service experience [4; 6]. This is highly relevant for railway services, where customer satisfaction is determined by multiple interactions before, during, and after the trip [8].

Therefore, the purpose of this article is to analyze the theoretical foundations of marketing in railway service enterprises, to clarify its essence, and to identify the main types and characteristics of railway marketing in the context of modern service management.

Main Body

The main body of the article discusses the main issues related to marketing in railway service enterprises. It considers the role and importance of marketing in this field and explains its contribution to the development and improvement of railway services.

1. Theoretical foundations of marketing in railway services

The theoretical interpretation of marketing has been shaped by different scientific schools. Peter Drucker viewed marketing as a function aimed at understanding the customer so deeply that the product or service sells itself [1]. In the railway context, this means that high service quality, punctuality, safety, and convenience naturally generate demand [8]. Philip Kotler and Kevin Lane Keller defined marketing as a social and managerial process through which individuals and groups satisfy their needs by creating and exchanging value [2]. This definition is highly significant for railway services because the value of a train journey is not limited to transportation from one point to another; it also includes time-saving, comfort, emotional assurance, and trust [2; 8].

E. McCarthy's 4P model emphasizes product, price, place, and promotion as the practical foundation of marketing [3]. However, in service sectors such as railway transport, this model is insufficient by itself. Booms and Bitner expanded it into the 7P model by adding people, process, and physical evidence [4]. This extension is especially important for railway enterprises because service quality depends on staff behavior, boarding and ticketing procedures, station infrastructure, wagon conditions, and other tangible elements surrounding an intangible service [4; 8]. Grönroos further developed relationship marketing, stressing the importance of long-term, trust-based ties with customers [5], while Zeithaml and co-authors introduced the SERVQUAL model for evaluating service quality through reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles [6]. The American Marketing Association broadened the concept even further by emphasizing value creation not only for customers, but also for partners and society at large [7].

These theoretical perspectives show that marketing in railway enterprises should be interpreted as a comprehensive management system rather than a narrow sales function. It is a value-oriented mechanism integrating service quality, customer satisfaction, loyalty, and social responsibility [2; 5; 7].

2. Service-specific essence of railway marketing

Railway transport produces not a tangible product but a service. Therefore, railway marketing must first be understood within the logic of service marketing. A useful framework in this regard is the IHIP model, which identifies four core service characteristics: intangibility, inseparability, variability, and perishability [4; 8].

Intangibility means that a passenger cannot physically inspect the railway service before purchasing a ticket. As a result, marketing must make the invisible visible through carriage photographs, reviews, safety certificates, route visualizations, and brand communication [8].

Inseparability means that the production and consumption of the railway service occur simultaneously. A train journey is created and consumed at the same time. This implies that each point of customer interaction, from digital booking to ticket control and in-train service, becomes part of the marketing process [4; 8].

Variability refers to the fluctuation of service quality depending on staff performance, wagon condition, weather, and operating circumstances. Railway marketing must therefore support standardization, staff training, and continuous service monitoring [6; 8].

Perishability means that an empty seat on a departing train represents an irreversible loss. Once the train leaves, the unused capacity has no economic value. Hence, railway marketing must use dynamic pricing, advance booking incentives, and demand stimulation strategies during low seasons [3; 8]. Taken together, these four characteristics reveal that railway marketing is inseparable from operational management. It is not simply about promotion but about managing customer experience, balancing capacity with demand, and ensuring a stable and high-quality service process [4; 6; 8].

3. Specific characteristics of railway service marketing

Railway marketing differs from marketing in many other service sectors due to the institutional and social nature of the railway system. The most important sector-specific features can be summarized as follows.

Table 1. Sector-specific characteristics of railway services from a marketing perspective

No.	Characteristic	Description	Marketing significance
1	Limited competitive environment	Railway infrastructure and core transport services are often provided by a single operator	Marketing focuses less on fighting rival brands and more on creating advantages over alternative transport modes
2	Social and strategic significance	Railways ensure territorial connectivity and social stability in addition to commercial operations	Marketing must combine profitability with social accessibility and public service goals
3	Multi-stage customer experience	Passengers pass through many contact points: booking, station, boarding, travel, arrival	Marketing should manage a consistent and positive experience at every stage
4	Seasonal demand fluctuations	Demand rises sharply during holidays and vacation periods and falls in off-peak periods	Marketing must regulate demand in peak seasons and stimulate it in low seasons
5	Priority of safety and reliability	Passengers often value safety, punctuality, and dependability above price	Marketing communication should position safety and reliability as core values

Source: developed by the author on the basis of the provided analytical material [8].

The table shows that railway marketing should be designed with a clear understanding of these structural characteristics. Unlike conventional competitive markets, railway operators often do not primarily compete against another railway company; instead, they compete against buses, automobiles, and air transport [8]. Thus, the strategic focus of marketing shifts toward emphasizing comparative advantages such as safety, affordability, environmental friendliness, and convenience [2; 8].

Another important feature is the strong social and strategic role of railway services. Railway enterprises are expected to generate revenue while also ensuring territorial integration, affordability, and social inclusion. Therefore, railway marketing cannot be based solely on commercial logic. It must reconcile economic efficiency with public obligations [7; 8].

4. Types of marketing in railway service enterprises

Based on the theoretical discussion, several interrelated types of marketing can be distinguished in railway service enterprises.

First, **service marketing** forms the general foundation, since railway transport belongs to the service economy. It emphasizes quality, customer satisfaction, and value perception [4; 6].

Second, **relationship marketing** is highly important because railway companies benefit from long-term passenger loyalty. Loyalty programs, CRM systems, and personalized communication contribute to repeat usage and stable income [5].

Third, **internal marketing** is crucial in railway services because employees directly influence customer perceptions. Ticket agents, train attendants, station staff, and technical personnel all shape the service experience. Training and motivation of staff therefore become an important part of marketing policy [4; 8].

Fourth, **interactive marketing** emerges in the actual contact between the service provider and the passenger. In railway transport, this includes ticketing, platform navigation, onboard communication, and customer support [6; 8].

Fifth, **social marketing** has particular significance because railway transport is socially and environmentally important. Marketing in this context is aimed not only at profitability, but also at promoting public mobility, social inclusion, and sustainable transport choices [7; 8].

Finally, **digital marketing** is gaining special relevance. Online ticketing systems, mobile applications, customer feedback platforms, and digital information services make railway communication faster, more transparent, and more customer-centered [8]. Although railway transport has unique institutional features, the growing role of digital channels confirms that railway enterprises should increasingly adopt contemporary marketing technologies.

Conclusion

The analysis demonstrates that marketing in railway service enterprises is a multidimensional and evolving concept. It has moved far beyond its traditional understanding as a sales-support function and has become a strategic management framework centered on customer value, service quality, loyalty, and long-term sustainability [1; 2; 5]. Classical and modern marketing theories provide a strong conceptual basis for interpreting railway marketing as a system that integrates commercial goals with social responsibilities [2; 7].

The study also confirms that the essence of railway marketing is shaped by the specific features of services, particularly intangibility, inseparability, variability, and perishability [4; 8]. In addition, railway marketing is influenced by limited competition, strategic importance, a multi-stage customer journey, seasonal demand fluctuations, and the dominant role of safety and reliability in consumer choice [8]. These factors distinguish railway marketing from other service sectors and require a specialized managerial approach.

In conclusion, effective marketing in railway service enterprises should be understood not simply as promotion or sales stimulation, but as a comprehensive management mechanism aimed at improving customer experience, balancing demand and capacity, strengthening trust, and supporting the sustainable development of the railway system [5; 7; 8].

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