

USE OF BRAND MANAGEMENT FOR THE CZECH RAILWAYS LONG-DISTANCE TRAINS FROM THE MARKETING PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Brand Management is a very important from the perspective of businesses because it helps businesses communicate with the target market. Brand management consists of tangible elements (product, design, packaging etc.) and intangible elements (customer experience and relationship with the brand). The Czech Railways company use brand management for specific long-distance train lines like for example “Metropolitan”, “Západní expres”, “Slovácký expres” or “Jižní expres”. The aim of the article is to analyse the use of Brand Management for long-distance train lines of Czech Railways and evaluate customer survey results.

Keywords

Brand Management, Czech Railways, Metropolitan, Západní expres, Slovácký expres, Jižní expres

1 INTRODUCTION

The problematics of Brand Management is a very important part of marketing. Brand Management, brand value, and consumer association associated with the brand can have a major impact on business economic results.

Historically, the entire railway network was operated by national carrier (ČD), former operator of Czech Railways. Since 2011, the market has been open to free competition. RegioJet entered the market in 2011, Leo Express entered the railway passenger market in 2012 and the last carrier was Arriva, which entered the railway passenger market in 2013.

Czech Railways started to use branding for selected long distance train lines (Ex3, Ex6, Ex7 and R18) from the timetable valid from 10 December 2017. One identical brand replaced the different names of the existing trains on each line. The aim of this article is to analyze the use of brand management for long-distance train lines of Czech Railways and evaluate customer survey results using primary marketing research.

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2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

One of the first marketing concepts was the concept based on the satisfaction of latent and expressed customer needs and it was customer-centric concept [1]. To implement this customer-centric concept within the companies was conceptualized a market-oriented strategy [2-6]. A few years later the contradictory but related brand orientation emerged which directly challenged a market-oriented strategy [1]. The first publication on brand orientation was publication by Mats Urde named Brand orientation – a strategy for survival in Journal of Consumer Marketing [7].

Urde defined brand orientation as *“an approach in which the processes of the organization revolves around the creation, development, and protection of brand identity in an ongoing interaction with target customers with the aim of achieving lasting competitive advantages in the form of brands”* [8]. Evans, Bridson and Rentschler defined brand orientation *“as the extent to which the organization embraces the brand at a cultural level and uses it as a compass or decision-making to guide four brand behaviors; distinctiveness, functionality, augmentation and symbolism”* [9]. Urde, Baumgarth and Merrilees emphasized its strategic importance and described it as *“a new approach to brands that focuses on brands as resources and strategic hubs”* and *“the continuous interaction between values and identity at three levels is a key proposition of brand orientation: the organization, the brand, and customer and non-customer stakeholders”* [10].

Brand management can also be defined as long-term effective brand management and related marketing decisions [11]. Management, building and image of the brand are the main factors of business success [12]. From the point of view of the business, brand management is absolutely crucial, as consumer responsiveness depends on brand value, brand associations, and all marketing activities implemented in brand management [11]. Brand management also exists to help customers simplify their lives by helping them navigate more quickly in their purchasing decisions [13]. Businesses often use brand spiraling, a way of using traditional media to promote and attract consumers to visit websites (television advertising, newspapers, magazines, billboards, etc.) where the main goal is raising brand awareness [12].

All long distance Czech Railways trains are run on regular routes and at regular intervals. All long distance lines have their numbers and are divided into international lines (E01 – E03), express lines (Ex1 – Ex4, Ex6 – Ex7) and fast trains lines (R5, R8 – R24, R26 – R27). The international lines routes are as follows: E01 (Hamburg – Berlin – Praha – Brno – Graz / Budapest), E02 (Praha – Olomouc – Vsetín / Ostrava – Žilina – Košice) and E03 (Praha / Wien – Ostrava – Warszawa). The express lines routes are as follows: Ex1 (Praha – Ostrava – Třinec / Opava), Ex2 (Praha – Olomouc – Vsetín), Ex3 (Děčín – Ústí nad Labem – Praha – Pardubice – Brno – Břeclav), Ex4 (Břeclav – Přerov – Bohumín), Ex6 (Praha – Plzeň – Cheb / Domažlice) and Ex7 (Praha – Tábor – Č. Budějovice – H. Dvořiště / Č. Krumlov). The fast trains lines routes are as follows: R5 (Praha – Ústí n. L. – Karlovy Vary – Cheb), R8 (Brno – Přerov – Ostrava – Bohumín), R9 (Praha – Havlíčkův Brod – Brno), R10 (Praha – Hradec Králové – Trutnov), R11 (Brno – Jihlava – České Budějovice – Plzeň), R12 (Brno – Olomouc – Šumperk / Jeseník), R13 (Brno – Břeclav – Přerov – Olomouc), R14 (Pardubice – Hradec Kr. – Turnov – Liberec), R15 (Ústí nad Labem – Česká Lípa – Liberec), R16 (Praha – Plzeň – Klatovy – Železná Ruda), R17 (Praha – Tábor – České Budějovice), R18 (Praha – Olomouc – Luhačovice / Veselí n.M. / Zlín), R19 (Praha – Česká Třebová – Brno), R20 (Praha – Ústí nad Labem – Děčín), R21 (Praha – Mladá Boleslav – Turnov – Tanvald), R22 (Kolín – Mladá Boleslav – Česká Lípa – Rumburk), R23 (Kolín – Všetaty – Ústí nad Labem), R24 (Praha – Kladno – Rakovník), R26 (Praha – Beroun – Písek – České Budějovice) and R27 (Ostrava – Krnov – Olomouc / Jeseník). [14]

The schematic overview of Czech Railways long-distance train lines is in the Fig. 1.

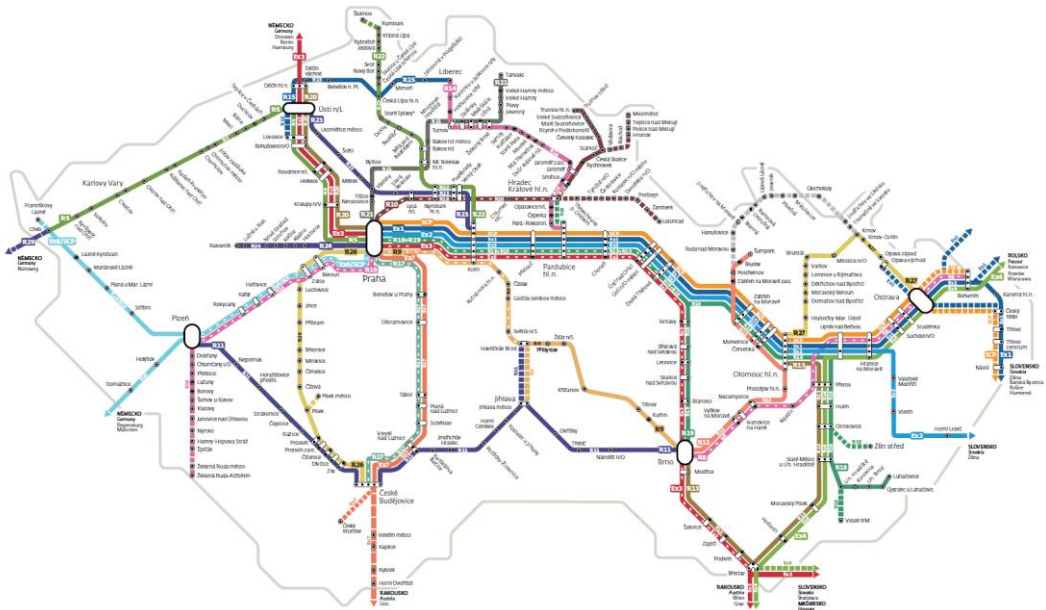


Fig. 1 The schematic of Czech Railways long-distance train lines [15]

This article is focused on these long-distance train lines: Ex3 (“Metropolitan” trains), Ex6 (“Západní expres” trains), R18 (“Slovácký expres” trains) and Ex7 (“Jižní expres” trains). The overview of “Metropolitan” trains is in the Tab. 1. Brand “Metropolitan” is used for trains connecting Budapest (Hungary) and Praha (Czech Republic) within the long-distance train line Ex3. Brand “Metropolitan” includes 12 EuroCity trains and 2 InterCity trains.

Tab. 1 The overview of “Metropolitan” trains [16-17]

Train category and number	Departure	Line	Arrival
EC 270	17:41	Budapest-Nyugati pu – Brno hl.n.	21:36
EC 271	06:22	Brno hl.n. – Budapest-Nyugati pu	10:19
EC 272	15:41	Budapest-Nyugati pu – Praha hl.n.	22:09
EC 273	05:51	Praha hl.n. – Budapest-Nyugati pu	12:19
EC 274	13:41	Budapest-Nyugati pu – Praha hl.n.	20:07
EC 275	07:51	Praha hl.n. – Budapest-Nyugati pu	14:19
EC 276	11:41	Budapest-Nyugati pu – Praha hl.n.	18:07
EC 277	09:51	Praha hl.n. – Budapest-Nyugati pu	16:19
EC 278	09:41	Budapest-Nyugati pu – Praha hl.n.	16:07
EC 279	11:51	Praha hl.n. – Budapest-Nyugati pu	18:19
EC 280	05:41	Budapest-Nyugati pu – Praha hl.n.	12:07
EC 281	15:51	Praha hl.n. – Budapest-Nyugati pu	22:19
IC 572	05:07	Břeclav – Praha hl.n.	08:07
IC 573	21:09	Praha hl.n. – Břeclav	00:35

The overview of “Západní expres” trains is in the Tab. 2. Brand “Západní expres” is used for trains connecting München (Germany) or Cheb (Czech Republic) and Praha (Czech Republic) within the long-distance train line Ex6. Brand “Západní expres” includes 30 Express trains.

Tab. 2 The overview of “Západní expres” trains [18-19]

Train category and number	Departure	Line	Arrival
Ex 350	17:33	Praha hl.n. – München Hbf	23:20
Ex 351	04:43	München Hbf – Praha hl.n.	10:31
Ex 352	15:33	Praha hl.n. – München Hbf	21:18
Ex 353	06:42	München Hbf – Praha hl.n.	12:31
Ex 354	13:33	Praha hl.n. – München Hbf	19:16
Ex 355	08:43	München Hbf – Praha hl.n.	14:31
Ex 356	11:33	Praha hl.n. – München Hbf	17:17
Ex 357	10:43	München Hbf – Praha hl.n.	16:31
Ex 358	09:33	Praha hl.n. – München Hbf	15:18
Ex 359	12:43	München Hbf – Praha hl.n.	18:31
Ex 360	07:33	Praha hl.n. – München Hbf	13:17
Ex 361	14:43	München Hbf – Praha hl.n.	20:31
Ex 362	05:33	Praha hl.n. – München Hbf	11:18
Ex 363	16:44	München Hbf – Praha hl.n.	22:31
Ex 550	20:33	Praha hl.n. – Cheb	23:27
Ex 551	04:32	Cheb – Praha hl.n.	07:31
Ex 552	19:33	Praha hl.n. – Plzeň hl.n.	20:58
Ex 553	07:01	Plzeň hl.n. – Praha hl.n.	08:31
Ex 554	16:33	Praha hl.n. – Cheb	19:27
Ex 555	08:33	Cheb – Praha hl.n.	11:31
Ex 556	14:33	Praha hl.n. – Cheb	17:27
Ex 557	10:33	Cheb – Praha hl.n.	13:31
Ex 558	12:33	Praha hl.n. – Cheb	15:27
Ex 559	12:33	Cheb – Praha hl.n.	15:31
Ex 560	08:33	Praha hl.n. – Cheb	11:27
Ex 561	16:33	Cheb – Praha hl.n.	19:31
Ex 562	06:33	Praha hl.n. – Cheb	09:27
Ex 563	18:33	Cheb – Praha hl.n.	21:31
Ex 564	06:05	Plzeň hl.n. – Cheb	07:29
Ex 565	19:35	Cheb – Plzeň hl.n.	20:55

The overview of “Slovácký expres” trains is in the Tab. 3. Brand “Slovácký expres” is used for trains connecting Praha and Luhačovice / Veselí nad Moravou / Zlín střed / Staré Město u Uherského Hradiště within the long-distance train line R18. Brand “Slovácký expres” includes 16 higher-quality fast trains.

Tab. 3 The overview of "Slovácký expres" trains [20-21]

Train category and number	Departure	Line	Arrival
Rx 880	18:20	Luhačovice – Olomouc hl.n.	20:00
Rx 881	06:00	Olomouc hl.n. – Luhačovice	07:45
Rx 882	16:31	Luhačovice – Praha-Smíchov	21:18
Rx 883	05:44	Hradec Králové hl.n. – Luhačovice	09:18
Rx 884	14:31	Luhačovice – Praha hl.n.	19:04
Rx 885	06:58	Praha hl.n. – Luhačovice	11:18
Rx 886	12:31	Luhačovice – Praha-Smíchov	17:18
Rx 887	08:58	Praha hl.n. – Luhačovice	13:18
Rx 888	10:31	Luhačovice – Praha-Smíchov	15:18
Rx 889	10:42	Praha-Smíchov – Luhačovice	15:18
Rx 890	09:44	Staré Město u Uh.Hrad. – Praha-Smíchov	13:18
Rx 891	12:38	Praha-Smíchov – Luhačovice	17:18
Rx 892	07:10	Veselí n.Moravou – Praha-Smíchov	11:18
Rx 893	14:42	Praha-Smíchov – Staré Město u Uh.Hrad.	18:14
Rx 895	16:42	Praha-Smíchov – Veselí n.Moravou	20:47
Rx 896	04:21	Staré Město u Uh.Hrad. – Praha hl.n.	07:36

The overview of "Jižní expres" train is in the Tab. 4. Brand "Jižní expres" is used for trains connecting Linz (Austria) and Praha (Czech Republic) within the long-distance train line Ex7. Brand "Jižní expres" includes 16 Express trains.

Tab. 4 The overview of "Jižní expres" trains [22-23]

Train category and number	Departure	Line	Arrival
Ex 530	16:53	České Budějovice – Praha hl.n.	18:57
Ex 531	07:48	Praha-Holešovice – Český Krumlov	10:55
Ex 532	14:07	Český Krumlov – Praha-Holešovice	17:08
Ex 533	14:48	Praha-Holešovice – České Budějovice	17:08
Ex 534	07:55	České Budějovice – Praha-Holešovice	10:08
Ex 535	16:01	Praha hl.n. – České Budějovice	18:03
Ex 538	06:55	České Budějovice – Praha-Holešovice	09:08
Ex 539	19:01	Praha hl.n. – České Budějovice	21:03
Ex 1540	08:00	Horní Dvořiště – Praha-Holešovice	11:08
Ex 1541	06:01	Praha hl.n. – Linz Hbf	10:07
Ex 1542	11:52	Linz Hbf – Praha-Holešovice	16:08
Ex 1543	09:48	Praha-Holešovice – Linz Hbf	14:07
Ex 1544	15:52	Linz Hbf – Praha hl.n.	19:57
Ex 1545	13:48	Praha-Holešovice – Linz Hbf	18:07
Ex 1546	20:00	Horní Dvořiště – Praha hl.n.	22:57
Ex 1547	17:48	Praha-Holešovice – Linz Hbf	22:07

3 METHODS AND DATA

The method of primary marketing research was chosen for analyse and evaluation of the use of brand management for long-distance train lines of Czech Railways. The primary marketing research was realized as electronic questioning combined structured personal questioning, while respondents were chosen in quotas in order to reach the representative sample.

Kozel et al. define the marketing research formula to set the right extend of selective sample. In this formula n is the minimum amount of respondents, z is the coefficient of reliability (when set as 1 the statement probability is at least 68.3 %, when set as 2 the probability of 95.4 % is ensured and when z set as 3 then the probability reaches at least 99.7 %); p and q are the amounts of respondents that are familiar with the issue (expressed in percent). When the values of p and q aren't known exactly the maximum product is used, i.e. $p = 0.5$ and $q = 0.5$; Δ is the set maximum acceptable incorrectness (5 % corresponds to $\Delta = 0.05$). [24]

$$n \geq \frac{z^2 \times p \times q}{\Delta^2} \quad (1)$$

$$n \geq \frac{z^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{0.05^2} \geq 400 \quad (2)$$

After substitution in the equation no. 1 the minimum amount of respondents $n \geq 400$ (equation no. 2) is counted, with that amount the structured questioning sessions were realized. The calculation reflects the probability of statements of 95.4 % ($z = 2$) and the maximum acceptable incorrectness of 5 % ($\Delta = 0.05$). The marketing research was realized from 19th March 2018 until 13th April 2018, while all the included respondents shall meet the condition that they are Czech Railways travellers.

Respondents were asked the following questions for each of the four analyzed lines:

- Q1: Did you hear about trains of Czech Railways called "Metropolitan" / "Západní expres" / "Slovácký expres" / "Jižní expres"? Possible answers: yes / no.
- Q2: Can you assign a train called "Metropolitan" / "Západní expres" / "Slovácký expres" / "Jižní expres" to a specific line? Possible answers: yes / no.
- Q3: Type one of the destination or transit stations of the train called "Metropolitan" / "Západní expres" / "Slovácký expres" / "Jižní expres". An open question followed by checking the correctness of the response.
- Q4: Do you agree with the branding of individual lines, and so with a common name for each line? Possible answers: definitely yes / rather yes / rather no / definitely no.

4 RESULTS

The overview of results of questions Q1, Q2 and Q3 is presented in the Tab. 5.

Tab. 5 The overview of results [authors]

Brand	Question 1 YES	Question 2 YES	Question 3 correct answer
Metropolitan	264 (66.00 %)	228 (57.00 %)	202 (50.50 %)
Západní expres	217 (54.25 %)	175 (43.75 %)	121 (30.25 %)
Slovácký expres	179 (44.75 %)	125 (31.25 %)	65 (16.25 %)
Jižní expres	238 (59.50 %)	189 (47.25 %)	117 (29.25 %)

The results show that the most famous brand is "Metropolitan", which was heard by 264 respondents (159 men and 105 women). This may be due to the extensive marketing

of the "Metropolitan" trains, where Czech Railways used TV, internet, newspaper, as well as outdoor advertising (backlight, citylight, led screens, rotunda, etc.). The "Metropolitan" trains within the Ex3 line are also passing through major cities (Praha, Pardubice, Brno, Břeclav, Bratislava and Budapest), where there is also a large passenger frequency. 238 respondents (59.50%), of whom 149 men and 89 women said they knew the "Jižní Expres" brand. The least known brand is "Slovácký expres"; only 179 respondents knew it (44.75%). This could be caused by tracing of this line. 57.00% of respondents were convinced that they knew a specific train line "Metropolitan", for "Západní expres" it was 43.75%, for "Slovácký expres" it was 31.25% of respondents and for "Jižní Expres" it was 41.25%. However, respondents' answers to the third question have shown that only a small number of respondents are actually able to assign a particular route to the train.

It was confirmed again that the largest number of respondents was able to identify a destination or transit station for "Metropolitan" trains where the proportion of correct answers was 50.50%, which is 6.5 percentage points less than the respondents declared they knew. The smallest number of correct answers was for "Slovácký expres" trains, where only 16.25% of the respondents were able to identify the correct destination or transit station. 330 respondents agree with branding on individual lines (49.00% definitely yes and 33.50% rather yes). 50 (12.50%) of respondents rather disagree and 20 (5.00 %) of respondents certainly disagree.

5 CONCLUSION

As has already been said in the introduction, brand management issues are a very important area of marketing. Brand is a trademark that has a market name and a weight for customers, and for some types of businesses, it is essentially a brand of essential ownership. Whether it is a name, a term, a designation, a symbol, a design, or a combination of these factors, it always serves to identify products or services and is essential to distinguish own production from the production of competitors. Therefore, it is important to continuously examine how the brand is perceived and what attributes are associated with it and, if necessary, take action in the field of PR, promotion, advertising, etc., leading to correction and reinforcement of brand perception in a desirable way. Most successful companies sooner or later reach a stage where their products sell mainly brand. The main selling argument is not the quality, but the inertia of the brand. People tend to trust the brand regardless of the quality of the products or services. People tend to trust the brand regardless of the quality of the products or services, which may be of particular importance in the area of services. This was also the reason for the survey described above, as Czech Railways started to be the first in the transport market to use branding for selected long distance train lines from 2017 onwards. This means that one identical brand replaced the different names of the existing trains on each line. Research results show that this was a step in the right direction because customers perceive this change, especially when it is associated with extensive marketing communications, as in the case of the "Metropolitan" brand, which was heard by 264 respondents.

The survey also revealed that 330 respondents agreed on the branding of individual lines and this step can therefore be recommended not only in other business areas of Czech Railways but also to other companies operating in the field of public passenger transport.



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