

DARIUSZ SOBOTKIEWICZ
 PAWEŁ WANIEWSKI

**Influence of the
 organizational structure
 of Polish passenger
 railways on the process
 of communication with
 customers**

1. Introduction and research assumptions

Constant maintenance of effective communication with customers is one of the key success factors in the modern market, the characteristic feature of which is, among others constantly increasing level of competition. The enormous amount of information coming from the environment means that enterprises must pay special attention to the organization and management of communication processes. The desire to break through the “information noise” requires taking more and more original actions based on detailed knowledge about the organization and planned projects. It is also necessary to learn the rules governing relations with clients and to constantly maintain and enrich relations with them. This is especially important in the service sector, with its specific characteristics and relational character (Gronroos 2000).

These problems are particularly evident in industries with many different entities, offering the same or similar products, directly competing with each other in the fight for customers. Such a situation occurs in Poland

Professor Dariusz Sobotkiewicz,
 University of Zielona Góra,
 Faculty of Economics and Management,
 Poland,
 ORCID: 0000-0002-8570-5303.

Professor Paweł Waniowski,
 Wrocław University of Economics
 and Business,
 Faculty of Management,
 Poland,
 ORCID: 0000-0002-8054-984X.

on the passenger rail transport market, where the organizational structures and relations between individual entities are particularly complicated. While analyzing the problems of Polish railways, it is true that, first of all, many years of neglect in investments are emphasized. On the other hand, the railway does not even use the funds from EU subsidies that are at its disposal (Gawrychowski 2011, p. 6; Tokarz 2021, p. 6). However, it can be argued that one of the crucial problems significantly contributing to the low popularity of rail services compared to other countries and the poor image of Polish railways are deficiencies in communication with customers, which result from an extremely complicated and incomprehensible organizational structure for customers. Such a structure means that solving any problem requires a series of arrangements between individual entities. Therefore, the aim of the article is to show the influence of the complicated organizational structure of Polish railways on the process of communication with customers. It was assumed that most communication problems result from imperfect relations between individual entities manifested in duplicating activities and undertaking projects that may be assessed by clients as chaotic and inconsistent. This assumption has been verified both on the theoretical and empirical levels. The theoretical part is based on literature studies, and the empirical part uses the results of in-depth interviews conducted in 2020 and 2021 with employees of railway companies responsible for communication with customers, and numerous secondary sources of information, including primarily data from websites and documents published by carriers providing services in the field of passenger transport.

The issue of the impact of organizational structures on communication processes, which is the subject of this article, is rarely explored in the management literature. One can even speak of an apparent gap in this regard. Conducting research in the rail industry is necessary for the development of innovative solutions in the field of organizational structures, communication with customers and management methods. Access to reliable information collected in a professional manner is also conducive to making the right marketing decisions. According to the authors of the study, the presented subject matter may be used by railway companies to reorganize their organizational structures in the direction of improving communication with customers.

2. Review of the literature

The organizational structure is one of the basic components of an organization and is of great importance for its functioning (Lichtarski J.M 2011, p.13). It is a useful

tool that guides individuals' behavior through shared values, norms, and goals (O'Neill, Beauvais, Scholl 2001; Liao, Chuang, Pui-Lai To 2011). Organizational structures are considered important components of an organization because of their importance for operating efficiency and achieving goals (Conner, Douglas 2005; Armstrong, Rasheed 2013). The organizational structure is the whole of functions and relations that formally define the mission of a given organization, which should be fulfilled by all organizational units in accordance with the developed principles (Strategor 2001, s. 281). Thanks to the structure, organizations are differentiated and integrated through the division of roles and activities at work (Quangyen, Tian 2013). The structure can also be treated as a communication network between internal organizational units and the external environment. It determines the level of decision-making independence and the scope of decision-making powers of managers at various organizational levels.

In a "classic" enterprise, functions, relations, communication are limited to one economic organism, and in the case of many entities functioning, as is the case on Polish railways, there is a network of connections between functions, relations between economic entities (including their workstations, departments, organizational divisions). The scale and complexity of these links depends on the degree of cooperation in achieving their statutory goals. In industry organizations, the degree of cooperation is high, and in conglomerate organizations - low. Werr, Blomberg and Lowstedt concluded that there are so-called hierarchical relations (Werr, Blomberg, Löwstedt 2009, p. 451) showing the division of power and responsibility. The traditional model of organizing railways is based on the fact that one company (usually public) controls the entire infrastructure, as well as operational and administrative responsibilities (Cantos, Pastor, Serrano, 2012, pp. 67-72). In the case of railway companies, the superior unit is appointed by the competent local government and the railway companies subordinate to it act as subsidiaries. Introducing any changes in such a fragmented structure is more complex and complicated than in "classic" private enterprises, because the consequences of these changes concern the structure of the entire organization as well as its internal economic entities.

Polish railway enterprises are internally organized according to the criterion of function. The functional structure itself has many disadvantages that affect communication processes with the external environment, incl. strong internal and external boundaries, bureaucratization, narrow functional specialization and, as indicated by De Smet and A. & Gagnon, C., it corresponds to the structure of a silo (De Smet, Gagnon 2018). In literature reports, one can come across the view that the functional structure is characterized by a high degree of

specialization, limiting the possibilities of the members of the organization and making it difficult for them to see their contribution to achieving its goals (Hopej 2017, p.101). The decision-making independence of managers of individual organizational units (units, departments, divisions) is to a greater extent controllable by the top management of enterprises. Usually, they can limit it to a greater or lesser extent, thus affecting the quality of communication processes with the external environment.

Germany has chosen the model of a vertically integrated (holding) structure, when the railway infrastructure is managed and transportation services provided by the companies belonging to a single group of companies. The holding structure has a strong coordination of carriers and infrastructure managers and ensures a long term development of a single railway system. The German holding structure allowed reaching a system synergy (effective use of resources, a single management policy, etc.), the costs economy and to avoid the duplication of functions. P.87 (Nikitina, Dailydka, 2016, p. 87).

In recent years, researchers have tried to determine which structure brings the most benefits to organizations and proposed that organizational structures respond to the various individual needs of enterprises. (Conner, Douglas 2005). On the other hand, another group of researchers concluded that the organizational structure that has worked well in economic practice is characterized by a more flattened structure, decentralized decision-making, greater cooperation and coordination, knowledge sharing between employees, teamwork, horizontal communication, flexibility (Bryant 2014; Lazarević, Lukić 2015; Lee, Edmondson 2017; Lazarević, Lukić 2018). Recent studies give high priority to the study of relationships and recommend studying, for example, the interaction between externally and internally induced structural changes (Argyres, Zenger 2013) or the linkages of communication and formal and informal structure (McEvily, Soda, Tortoriello 2014). Contemporary organizational structures, unlike the classic ones, are characterized by (Zakrzewska-Bielawska 2007, p. 31):

- simplicity, assuming flatness of structures and reducing functional divisions to a minimum,
- loosely defined nature of tasks, resulting from the circumstances and expectations of superiors and colleagues,
- autonomy, assuming decentralization and delegation of powers down the organizational hierarchy,
- various means of coordination, developed direct contacts between people in different directions, informal flow of information,

- less formalization, leading to a reduction in the number and stringency of regulations and orders.

Designing an efficiently functioning organizational structure requires the identification of the influence of factors shaping the actually existing structural solutions and causing them to change (Kraśniak 2012, p. 11). The shape of the organizational structure is influenced by many factors. These include external factors (i.e. micro-environment and macro-environment) and internal factors (i.e. age, size of the organization, organizational culture, economic and financial situation, level of personnel qualifications, level of experience of staff, authority and approach to delegating powers and functions, level of technological advancement of the enterprise, the degree of product diversification, etc.) and the organization's strategy. The presented factors constitute significant determinants of changes in the organizational structure of the enterprise. Their impact may be stimulating (favoring the development of organizational structures), barrier (inhibiting, limiting and slowing down the development of structures) and bi-directional (on the one hand favoring the development of structures, and on the other limiting them). The organizational structure also influences the organization's ability to adapt to the changing environment, and the environment is one of the key structure-shaping factors, which means that it influences the creation of the organizational structure and the changes taking place in it. (Zakrzewska-Bielawska 2015, p. 106). A structure becomes necessary, the intention of which is to obtain a form adequate to the tasks carried out by the enterprise, according to the situation in which the enterprise is currently located, without the need to make permanent transformations (Malara, 2006, p. 80). A properly designed organizational structure should be flexible to changes taking place in the internal and external environment of the organization. As a result, it should permanently support running a business at every stage of the company's development. According to M. Hopej, it is important to maintain the simplicity of the structure. It can be achieved by limiting to the necessary minimum the level of shaping particular structural characteristics, including the number of basic organizational units (Hopej 2017, p.101). At this point, one may agree with the view of J. Brilman, which is still valid today, who, pointing to the features of a flexible organization, which, as a result, determine the shape and size of the organizational structure, distinguished (Brilman 2002, p. 391):

- ability to keep up with changes in the environment and develop faster than competitors,
- an efficient system of getting to know customers' opinions and quick response to their expectations,

- short decision-making processes - flat structure, empowerment of executive employees,
- staff used to changes (see: Gamon, Gomez 2019, pp.1-10).

3. Research methodology

The aim of the research was to identify changes that have occurred in the structures of Polish railways and to identify and evaluate communication activities of Polish railways. A thesis was formulated that one of the significant problems significantly contributing to the low popularity of rail services compared to other countries and the poor image of Polish railways are deficiencies in communication with customers resulting from an extremely complex and incomprehensible organizational structure for customers. In order to verify this thesis, the results of in-depth interviews conducted in 2020 and 2021 with employees of railway companies responsible for communication with customers were used, as well as numerous secondary sources of information, including, in particular, data from websites and documents published by carriers providing services in the field of passenger transport.

4. The structure of Polish railways

Polish carriers providing passenger transport services are owned by the State Treasury (PKP group) and provincial governments. One company, Polish railways, which has a monopoly on passenger transport, was divided into several theoretically independent companies under the Act of September 8, 2000 on the commercialization and privatization of state-owned enterprise Polish railways (Dziennik Ustaw, 2020). These companies started their operations on July 1, 2001, and the most important of them were:

- PKP Intercity, servicing the so-called qualified passenger transport services provided by eurocity, intercity, express and express trains,
- PKP regional transport, whose task was to handle passenger traffic by passenger and express trains,
- PKP Cargo, dealing with freight traffic,
- Polish railways, whose task is to organize and manage rail traffic and ensure the safety of train traffic,
- Warsaw Commuter Railway (PKP), serving the suburban line connecting Warsaw with Grodzisk and Milanówek,

- PKP Fast Urban Railway, managing passenger transport in local traffic between Gdańsk, Gdynia and Wejherowo,
- PKP Hutnicza Broad-Gauge Line (formerly known as the Metallurgical and Sulfur Line) starting at the Polish-Ukrainian border near Hrubieszów and ending in Sławków, 25 km from Katowice. Built for political reasons in the mid-1970s, it was to serve the transport of goods: coal from Silesia and sulfur from Tarnobrzeg to the USSR and copper ores in the opposite direction. To this day, it is used quite intensively, and there were even plans to extend it to the Czech Bohumin.

The division of the whole enterprise, although probably beneficial from the point of view of the possibility to conduct privatization processes, nevertheless caused a significant growth of bureaucratic structures and, what is particularly important from the marketing point of view, an increase in particular interests of individual companies, which did not always want to remember that they are part of a larger whole. In the following years, there were further transformations in the structure of Polish railways, the most important of which was the transformation of the PKP regional transport enterprise into a local government company owned by local governments of all 16 Polish voivodeships. It happened on December 22, 2008, and in the following year the company removed the PKP member from its name, and in 2020 it changed its name to Polregio. Since 2015, the majority of shares in the company have been taken over by Industrial Development Agency.

In 2004, the self-government of the Masovian Voivodeship established Masovian Railways, which quickly dominated the local passenger transport in the Mazovia region. A little later, Silesia Railways was established, providing passenger transport on the local lines of Lower Silesia. Then Wielkopolska Railway started its expansion in the Poznan area, and on February 17, 2010 Silesian Railway started its expansion in Upper Silesia. In 2014, the Łódź Agglomeration Railway and the Małopolska Railway were established. At the same time, Arriva, the Polish branch of the British-German concern, providing transport in many European countries, has been operating in the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship since the end of 2007. It was the first time that a foreign company operated in the passenger transport sector in Poland. The first railway to be independent of PKP was the Lubuska Regional Railway, established under the Ordinance of the Minister of Transport and Maritime Economy of October 8, 1992. However, this self-government company operated for only two years in the former Zielona Góra Province, after which it was liquidated due to losses caused by its activities. Another significant change was the fact that in 2008 PKP

Intercity took over the service of fast trains from the then regional transport, which resulted in the creation of a permanent monopoly in the long-distance transport segment.

The structure of Polish railways differs significantly from the standards of countries where travel by train is more popular than in Poland. In Germany, Italy or the Czech Republic, the organizational structure of railways is based on a single dominant state-owned enterprise¹ that has to compete with private hauliers. These companies support both long-distance and local transport (sometimes through subsidiaries), which facilitates the rationalization of the network of connections, shaping a logical ticketing system, and the processes of communicating with current and potential passengers. The structure of the German railways, based on the public activities of Deutsche Bahn, is particularly transparent. Its characteristics are presented in part 2 of the article.

The Polish model is somewhat similar to the British model in which the rail market consists of many companies competing with each other. However, most of them are private companies, and in Poland they are owned by the state treasury or local governments. Competition between them in Great Britain is apparent and the constant increase in tariffs is not accompanied by an increase in speed and punctuality and the quality of services provided (Collins, 2012).

Polish railways are therefore a conglomerate of many relatively loosely connected enterprises, which in recent years have been carrying around four times less passenger kilometers than France or Germany. There is also a significant difference in the number of trains launched. On average, slightly over 4,000 passenger trains travel on Polish tracks per day. This number, seemingly impressive, seems to be meager in relation to the dynamically operating German railways (an average of 30,000 trains a day), as well as in comparison with the Czech and Hungarian railways. The Czech Republic, a country with an area and population almost four times smaller than Poland, runs more trains per day. On the other hand, the enormous development potential of Polish railways, which are considered an important link in the European rail transport system, has been emphasized for many years. (Batisse 2004, p. 25).

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1 See: <https://www.deutschebahn.com/de>; <https://www.trenitalia.com/it.html>; <https://www.cd.cz/>.

5. Communication activities of Polish railways in the context of organizational structures

Communication with current and potential customers must be an important area of operation of any service company. This is especially true for those services that are characterized by diversified demand, both in terms of time and quality requirements. Therefore, all transport service companies need to communicate with passengers on a regular basis, using different communication channels and constantly improving their activities in this area.

The communication problems of Polish railways largely result from the organizational structure and the significant fragmentation of entities, which has its consequences in shaping lasting relationships with customers. A significant part of these relationships undertaken by one of the companies is made as if the company was the sole carrier. No account is taken of the fact that the railways are usually treated uniformly by existing and potential passengers, so that their services are used to move from one place to another, and only then is attention given to which company the train comes from. However, the communication of offers takes place separately for each company. Before the entry into force of the new timetable, information about the trains of individual companies is first presented, and only at the last minute the entire timetable. It is also important that the standard in European countries is to popularize the new timetable a few months earlier, in Poland, due to the need to make numerous arrangements between individual companies, the new timetable is available to passengers only a few weeks before its entry into force. Another fundamental communication problem of Polish railways is the instability of the offer. Timetables in Poland are changed almost every now and then, often for no good reason. For many years, Poland has been the only country in Europe where the timetable changes not once a year, but as many as 5 times. This is explained by numerous modernization works on railway lines. These changes, however, are significant and concern not only the renovated sections. Meanwhile, one of the key conditions for increasing the number of passengers is the long-term stability of the offer.

In Poland, on the other hand, it happened that it was communicated, usually at special press conferences, that new connections would appear in the next timetable, to liquidate these connections after a few months, often due to the launch of an alternative connection by a competitor. This is the result of a flawed organizational structure of the entire railway industry and the omission of horizontal communication between companies offering passenger transport. And the importance of the synergy effect is more and more emphasized,

especially in related services (Wierzbicki 2020, p. 18). Integrated organizational structures on the railways definitely facilitate the optimization of marketing strategies and the use of modern information technologies, which in turn may effectively improve the quality of passenger service (Wu, Qiu, Chen 2018, p. 657). It is also not without significance that the commissioning of a new train and its subsequent liquidation require specific costs, among which an important item is the costs related to the very likely deterioration of the image, not only of a specific company, but of the entire industry. The users of transport services appreciate the stability of the offer not only in terms of the timetable. In Germany or the Czech Republic, care is taken not to change the names of long-distance trains for decades without a clear necessity, because stabilization in this area increases the number of travelers. In Poland, on the other hand, the Stocznowiec express train can run on the Gdynia - Bielsko-Biała route in one timetable, in order to change the route to Gdynia - Krakow in the next one, to appear on the Gdynia - Katowice route after a year, and even to Wrocław after some time. In a certain period, PKP Intercity completely ignored the meaning of the names, when fast trains were taken from Przewozy Regionalne and transformed into Low-Cost Railway Lines, at the same time giving up their names, often very well-established in the minds of travelers. Everyone, who rides trains from time to time, clearly associated the names: Ślązak, Sudety, Gryf or Kujawiak. These names very quickly took over the then regional transport, trying to use their marketing potential. The nonsensical name changes combined with the changes or shortening of routes to this day lead to numerous absurdities, such as the train called Wawel, which traveled between Wrocław and Berlin a few years ago.

Another problem is communicating train categories. For decades, there were passenger, fast and express trains, which, in line with European trends, were gradually transformed into Intercity trains. This division was clearly understandable to all passengers of Polish railways. In 2005, PKP Intercity introduced the Low-Cost Railway (TLK) trains covered by seat reservation, treating them as a higher category of fast trains, which were then a product of transport regional. Apart from the unfortunate name, it was the creation of another format, with a new, very slightly different from the fast trains, tariff. After taking over the fast trains from regional transport in December 2008, all the fast trains were renamed TLK. On January 1, 2011, the name of the Low-Cost Railway Lines was changed to Your Railway Lines without any campaign promoting this change. At the same time, self-government regional transport transformed passenger trains into "regio" trains, soon after introducing direct competition for TLK in the form of Interregio trains. In December 2014, with

the appearance of Pendolino on Polish tracks, a new category of Intercity Premium Express appeared, and Intercity trains became the equivalent of the old express trains. Each change of this type means considerable costs related to the change of plates on trains and stations or ID badges, but most of all the marketing cost related to passengers getting used to these names previously unknown in Poland. On the other hand, it can be concluded that each category of trains is intended for a strictly defined group of passengers. Intercity machines, especially in the Premium version, by far the most expensive, but guarantee the highest speed and the best driving comfort, are intended mainly for wealthy passengers who want to travel between the largest cities in the country in good conditions and relatively quickly. The image of this category of trains promoted by PKP Intercity differs significantly from that created in Western countries. The ICE brand in Germany or TGV in France is promoted as suitable for anyone who wants to travel longer distances (e.g. from Paris to Lyon or from Berlin to Munich). In Poland, however, the exclusivity of this product is emphasized, striving for customers to recognize the journey as something special. Such an image is presented in advertisements presented, among others, in business letters. This is largely due to the willingness of the PKP Intercity company to distinguish itself from competitors who provide transport services on shorter routes and have inferior rolling stock.

One of the key parameters determining the process of selecting a train as a means of transport is the price of train tickets. The problems related to the pricing strategies of carriers were examined primarily in relation to high-speed lines, where the improvement of economic results can be obtained by optimizing the structure of ticketing fares, which must take into account both benefits for carriers and passengers (Wei, Chen, Jiang, Wang, Shao 2015).

A characteristic feature of transport services in Poland is the largest in Europe differentiation of ticket prices depending on the train category (travel by trains of the highest category may be several times more expensive than the ticket price for passenger trains) and the use of degressive tariffs (i.e. the ticket price per 1 km decreases with increasing distance, although the scale of this degressivity varies).

According to the research of the Office of Rail Transport, travelers positively assess the level of ticket prices in regional transport, with a clear lack of acceptance for prices for travel in EIC and EIP trains (Railway Transport Office, 2019). PKP Intercity has the greatest possibilities of active price management, but only recently has it introduced on a larger scale active demand management for individual trains and encouraging (through price cuts) or discouraging (through

price increases) passengers from using services at a specific time. There is also no relationship between the ticket price and the standard of services provided, as the standard of IC and TLK trains differ significantly in terms of quality at the same prices. It is similar in the case of Polregio trains, where there are modern multiple units or rail buses and worn out trains over 40 years old. The prices of PKP Intercity train journeys over the shortest distances are also very high, which means that a lot of potential passengers is lost. However, the biggest problem for users of transport services is that each company has separate tariffs that must be communicated separately.

The complicated organizational structure of Polish railways is the cause of the lack of mutual honoring of tickets, and if such honoring does occur, there are usually many exceptions to it. The so-called Common Ticket, enabling the purchase of one ticket for travel on trains of different carriers, but the financial benefits associated with it are limited.

Another important factor is the privileged role of PKP Intercity in relation to other companies, and above all, its protection against foreign competition, and the tendency to change is shaped by competition. Only recently have Czech RegioJet trains entered the Polish tracks, creating a substitute for competition. There are several important railway lines in our region of Europe, on which various carriers have been guaranteed free access to tracks. In the Czech Republic it is the Prague - Ostrava line, in Austria it is Vienna - Salzburg, and in Slovakia the section Žilina - Košice. On these lines, a significant increase in the number of trains was observed, numerous additional services for passengers and, above all, significant price reductions. However, free access to tracks, which means significant benefits for customers, also causes a significant increase in operating costs for carriers and the need to deal with aggressive competition, for which passenger transport companies are not always prepared (Tomes, Jandova 2018).

The system of entitlements to purchase tickets at a discount is also too extensive. They can be divided into statutory (reimbursed by the state budget) and commercial (offered by a given carrier and financed by it). Both within one group and the other one can find such powers that have little or no effect on the frequency of train journeys. The number of categories entitling to discounts is so large and different in different companies that the average passenger has no chance to use them rationally. On the other hand, loyalty programs are weak, in most cases limited to the trains of one or at most several companies, which definitely distinguishes Poland from countries where one national carrier is dominant. Loyalty programs based on key factors influencing loyalty in transportation, such as value for money, cleanliness, staff behavior, and the

image of a particular carrier and the industry as a whole, have not yet been launched (Lierop, Badami, Geneidy 2018, pp. 52-72).

It can also be recommended to improve the way of informing about ticket prices. It varies considerably from one carrier to another and is often difficult to access, even on their websites. In the era of the development of Internet technologies, there should be no communication barriers through which this information could reach potential travelers with a delay or distortion.

Much better than providing information about the timetable, types of trains and prices, it is possible to evaluate the process of shaping relations with current and potential buyers of transport services in terms of informing about its history, mission, products offered and plans for the future. Detailed information can be found on each carrier's website, generally illustrated with numerous diagrams, drawings and videos. The only problem is that you need to visit more than one website to find out about the shipping offer. All pages have detailed information about the current timetable, but usually only own trains. A common problem is also the low stability of offers and the need to constantly check current connections, although one of the key utilities of Internet communication is its stability in the long term.

The basic online source of information about train traffic is portalpasazera.pl, run by the manager of Polish railway lines, the company PKP Polish Railway Lines. There you can find information about the current location of each passenger train that is currently on Polish tracks. Currently, "the location of the train is displayed on the basis of comprehensive and integrated sources of data about the train passage". Earlier information said that the information is updated on the basis of traffic dispatcher data. This may be surprising, because the information on analogous systems presenting the current location of the train in other countries comes from the GPS system, which does not require any activity of the people leading and supervising the train movement. The explanations about the reasons for train delays also seem too vague, as they seem to be too template and general, not explaining the essence of the situation. Why, for example, the necessity to wait for communication with a delayed train is explained as "other reasons related to the activity of the railway undertaking"? The presented delay times are always forecast in the most optimistic version, i.e. assuming that the train will continue to move in the shortest possible time, taking into account only the maximum speed allowed on a given section. At the same time, for each delayed train, the system assumes the length of stay at each station as provided for in the timetable. Meanwhile, one of the ways of reducing the delay time is to shorten the train stopping time at some stations. The system

also does not take into account the capabilities of locomotives and rolling stock. Some delays result from the fact that a given train is driven by a locomotive whose maximum speed is lower than assumed in the timetable, and the system provides the delay time adjusted to the capabilities of the faster locomotive.

Locomotives are the property of a specific carrier and it happens that one of them has an excess of them in a certain period, while another has shortages. Possibilities of transferring locomotives, as well as wagons or multiple units, do exist, but require a number of arrangements between companies, and the procedures are too time-consuming to be applicable in emergency situations.

Until today, PKP has not been able to develop ways of reacting in crisis situations, which is the norm in the railways of other countries. In Germany, where Deutsche Bahn definitely dominates in passenger transport, precise scenarios of how to proceed in the event of a minor accident in which they are at most slightly injured, and a completely different algorithm in the event of a major disaster have been developed. It is easier to organize a crisis management team in one large company than in many smaller ones. One can even notice a similarity in this respect to reputable airlines, which very carefully prepare scenarios of actions in crisis situations. It is different in Poland, therefore, in the event of extraordinary circumstances, the statements and actions of representatives of PKP and local government companies are either impulsive or deviating from the essence of the matter or pushing the responsibility away from the company. This causes disgust in the feelings of the public and increases the negative attitude of the media.

6. Conclusion

The described problems are to a large extent the result of the specific relations between companies providing passenger transport in Poland, which deviate significantly from the standards established in countries where the use of trains is more popular. However, it should be emphasized that communication processes related to shaping a positive image and informing passengers about the timetable, prices and conditions of transport can be significantly improved even in the current conditions. However, this requires establishing closer cooperation between individual companies and prioritizing the processes of shaping relations with customers as a key factor of success in the contemporary market.

The organizational structure is a management tool and an important element supporting and organizing the processes taking place in the organization. It is

not a permanent “element” but is subject to various modifications as a result of the impact of various factors. There are no optimal organizational structures. There are only temporary solutions that work for a certain time and under certain circumstances. That is why the flexibility of organizational structures becomes so important. The role of managers is to design and implement such structural solutions that, on the one hand, facilitate the achievement of goals, reduce conflicts, improve communication inside the organization and with the external environment, and on the other hand, allow for further modifications resulting from the experience of the company and the industry. While the decentralization of the organizational structure of Polish railways seems to be the right direction, and it should result in many benefits for the organization, communication processes with customers within the autonomous structures of railway companies do not meet the market expectations. There is no coherent communication policy of Polish railways within autonomous structures.

The conducted research shows the need for continuous improvement of the organizational structure of Polish railways and increasing the attractiveness of the services provided. Therefore, conducting research in the sector is necessary for the development of innovative solutions in the field of organizational structures, management methods and communication with clients. Conscious making changes in railway companies, designing new organizational solutions requires access to reliable information, collected in a professional manner, which will limit making wrong decisions affecting the level of customer satisfaction.

Summary

Influence of the organizational structure of Polish passenger railways on the process of communication with customers

The aim of the article is to show the influence of the complicated organizational structure of Polish railways on the process of communication with customers. A thesis was formulated that one of the significant problems significantly contributing to the low popularity of rail services compared to other countries and the poor image of Polish railways are deficiencies in communication with customers resulting from an extremely complicated and incomprehensible organizational structure for customers. The theoretical part presents the contemporary understanding of organizational structure. On the other hand, the empirical part shows, based on the analysis of secondary sources, communication problems resulting from imperfect relations between individual

entities manifested in the duplication of activities and undertaking projects that are assessed by clients as chaotic and inconsistent. The results of the research can be used by Polish railways to reorganize their organizational structures towards improving communication with customers.

Keywords: *organizational structure, communication processes, Polish railways.*

Streszczenie

Wpływ struktury organizacyjnej polskich kolei pasażerskich na proces komunikacji z klientami

Celem artykułu jest ukazanie wpływu skomplikowanej struktury organizacyjnej polskich kolei na proces komunikacji z klientami. Sformułowano tezę, że jednym z istotnych problemów w znacznym stopniu wpływających na niską w stosunku do innych krajów popularność usług kolejowych oraz na słaby wizerunek polskich kolei są niedociągnięcia w zakresie komunikacji z klientami wynikające z wyjątkowo skomplikowanej i niezrozumiałej dla klientów struktury organizacyjnej. W części teoretycznej przedstawiono współczesne pojmowanie struktury organizacyjnej. Natomiast w części empirycznej ukazano, na podstawie analizy źródeł wtórnych, problemy komunikacyjne wynikające z niedoskonałych relacji między poszczególnymi podmiotami przejawiającymi się w dublowaniu działań oraz podejmowaniu przedsięwzięć, które przez klientów są oceniane jako chaotyczne i niespójne. Rezultaty badań mogą być wykorzystane przez polskie koleje do przeorganizowania swoich struktur organizacyjnych w kierunku poprawy komunikacji z klientami.

Słowa

kluczowe: *struktura organizacyjna, proces komunikacji, polskie koleje.*

JEL

Classification: L92, M31, L22

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