

HOW TO MAKE RAILWAY FREIGHT TRANSPORT MORE COMPETITIVE

КАК СДЕЛАТЬ ЖЕЛЕЗНОДАРОЖНЫЙ ГРУЗАВОЙ ТРАНСПОРТ БОЛЕЕ КОНКУРЕНТОСПОСОБНЫМ

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Abstract: In this century information more and more affect decision process of man and business. The transport sector is not exception. Carrier with his mean of business wants to make the best decision with the best and relevant information. The article deals with importance of railway goods transport, the position on the transport market, reasons of the low attractiveness and the modern trends in the informatics in the railway freight transport.

KEY WORDS: INFORMATION, RAILWAY GOODS TRANSPORT, WWW PAGES

1. Introduction

The last decades are often characterized as the period of the information technology. The information technology are more and more important in all decision processes of the persons and business entities as well, and the transport section is not an exception. Thanks to globalization of the market the transport constantly increase its performance. The gradual expansion of the European Union also contributes to overcome the artificial barriers, which interfered the goods transfer among the countries. The number of transported goods raises and the transportation distances become longer. The transport demand increases as well. The carriers search directly or through the forwarding agents for such the carriers who are able to meet their requirements within the maximum range. And this is the very moment, when it is important to keep at disposition the whole complex of information about transport possibilities as soon as possible.

2. Prerequisites and means for solving the problem

Even though the railway transport is to be considered as the transport which is expedient especially in the transport of the bulk substrata and in the long-distance haulage, its share of the whole transportation output is constantly on the decrease (Table 1, 2).

Table 1 Comparison of freight transport by mode in Slovakia - part 1

Year		1995	1998	1999	2000	2001
Transport of goods - total	10 ³ t	266 356	243 401	201 917	244 686	242 764
Railway transport	10 ³ t	60 776	56 569	49 115	54 177	53 588
	%	22,8	23,2	24,3	22,1	22,1
Road transport	10 ³ t	203 918	185 659	151 294	188 901	187 624
	%	76,6	76,3	74,9	77,2	77,3

Table 1 Comparison of freight transport by mode in Slovakia - part 2

Year		2002	2003	2004	2005
Transport of goods - total	10 ³ t	215 990	226 122	230 166	244 942
Railway transport	10 ³ t	49 863	50 521	50 445	48 089
	%	23,1	22,3	21,9	19,6
Road transport	10 ³ t	164 427	174 149	178 085	195 406
	%	76,1	77,0	77,4	79,8

Source: Statistical office of the Slovak republic

Table 2 Comparison of freight transport by mode in Slovakia - part 1

Year		1995	1998	1999	2000	2001
Transport performance - total	10 ⁶ t.km	41 680	30 937	30 039	26 957	25 743
Railway transport	10 ⁶ t.km	13 674	11 753	9 859	11 234	10 929
	%	32,8	38,0	32,8	41,7	42,5
Road transport	10 ⁶ t.km	26 536	17 879	18 516	14 340	13 799
	%	63,7	57,8	61,6	53,2	53,6

Table 2 Comparison of freight transport by mode in Slovakia - part 2

Year		2002	2003	2004	2005
Transport performance - total	10 ⁶ t.km	25 907	27 461	28 941	32 665
Railway transport	10 ⁶ t.km	10 383	10 113	9 702	9 374
	%	40,1	36,8	33,5	28,7
Road transport	10 ⁶ t.km	14 929	16 859	18 517	22 550
	%	57,6	61,4	64,0	69,0

Source: Statistical office of the Slovak republic

In Slovakia particularly the domestic railway transport is subject to decrease, in this sector the cut-down of the number of transported goods almost in 60% has been noticed since 1995. The decrease in the sector of the international transport (import, export, transit) was minimal up to now (Table 3).

Table 3 Railway freight transport in Slovakia in 10³ t - part 1

Year	1995	1998	1999	2000	2001
International transport of goods - total	43 956	41 638	36 738	42 300	42 271
National transport of goods - total	16 820	14 931	12 377	11 877	11 317

Table 3 Railway freight transport in Slovakia in 10³ t - part 2

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005
International transport of goods - total	39 425	42 162	42 514	41 183
National transport of goods - total	10 438	8 359	7 242	6 893

Source: Statistical office of the Slovak republic

While many countries support ecologically preferable railway transport, the situation for instance in Slovakia is different. There incomparably more investments of public resources are used to support the road-traffic infrastructure than to support the railway infrastructure (Table 4).

Table 4 Total investment expenditures in transport infrastructure in Slovakia (current prices) (in mil. SKK) – part 1

Infrastructure type	1995	1998	1999	2000	2001
Railway	1 668	2 522	1 638	2 330	7 366
Road	2 069	11 833	8 974	9 680	8 718

Table 4 Total investment expenditures in transport infrastructure in Slovakia (current prices) (in mil. SKK) – part 2

Infrastructure type	2002	2003	2004	2005
Railway	10 269	3 644	3 616	6 212
Road	9 191	9 253	9 611	14 558

Source: Ministry of Transport, Posts and Telecommunication of the Slovak Republic

If we want to name the main reasons of the low attractiveness of the railway freight transport, we have to look at it by customer's eyes, i.e. by carrier's or forwarding agent's eyes.

As the great disadvantage of the railway transport are often quoted the low flexibility and the limited possibilities of the transport by door-to door system, since the railway transport is fixed to the traffic route. In the case of regular carriers this could be eliminated by the construction of railway siding, but that is more capital-intensive.

Another disadvantage is the disintegration of the whole railway network in Europe and the reciprocal incompatibility in the term of various kinds of gauge, various traction systems and also in the term of error protection equipment. If we wanted to eliminate those disadvantages as well, it would be not only capital-intensive, but also time-intensive.

The third area is the disunited legislative in the countries and the disunited rules that are defined by the individual railway administration in the form of transport and tariff conditions.

The union in this area is a long-time process of negotiations and receiving of consensus.

In order the railway freight transport could become more competitive, it has to acquire the logistical principles in the preservation of adequate quality, speed and price. If a railway transport undertaking is able to meet those requirements, its offer has to get to the prospective customers. And that is another problem that must be solved at present by each carrier or forwarding agent who would like to avail the railway freight transport services. [1]

In regard to the autonomy of the individual railway administrations there is a huge disunity in the information structure they provide. That is why it is difficult for the carrier, who wants to realize a goods transportation among several countries, to gain the relevant data about transport possibilities in the individual countries.

3. Solution of the examined problem

Trend monitoring becomes the necessary requirement for the development and rendition of the competitive services of the transportation companies which are active on the railway freight transport market. The information systems provide the incomparable contribution in term of information recording, information distribution as well as in term of information gaining. The information systems become an extraordinary competitive advantage. The transportation companies have no trouble in gaining or utilization of the part of information technologies, which is represented by hardware and software.

What is irreplaceable is the mentioned information not only in term of its gaining in a good time and in sufficient quality. It is important not only to gain information, but also to distribute information with the utilization of modern communication channels. The most prominent communication channel is internet and its most used

service world wide web (www). The beginning of this service is dated to mid-1990. Since then it became the irreplaceable form of information distribution and information gaining. The transportation companies functioning on the transport market should monitor the trends quoted. Just the www presentation can become their new address, their new business card, which may be presented in whichever contact with the transport market.

The website of the transportation company can be not only the source of the company's presentation, the simple possibility of providing contacts, but first of all the possibility of the presentation of the portfolio of the activities and products it provides.

The users can access to this information source without limits in term of time, geographic locality or reference to the company. The assumption is that the utilization of information must be realized especially by customers. In term of the division of the users we can presume their following division:

- searchers – they search for the possible contacts, addresses, etc.
- accidental visitors – they gained the specific website e.g. from the www-locators
- non-commercial readers – they use general information
- commercial readers – they use the information according to the commercial terms

The www-presentation quoted is one of the best and the most flexible possibilities for the railway transportation company to present itself, to provide not only the static information (i.e. information invariable in time, e.g. contacts, references, information about company), but also, and especially, the dynamic information, i.e. information variable in term of the offered services, time and accessing person (personalized access).

4. Results and discussion

The most important parts of the websites of the railway transportation companies are the primary information about company itself, about its activities and contacts. It creates the initial image for the visitor who searches for the detail information about the offered services and products and the possibility to choose the language mutation of the websites. The good image of the company is created also by implemented section, that monitors the news, the information (i.e. the image of the active events in the company) and by the company's publicity in the media. The visitors are interested in the offered products and services, but also in their financial aspect, i.e. for instance the domestic and international tariffs or service charge. As there are various group of visitors on the websites, also the possibility of the searching in the website content, reference to futher relevant websites and the map of websites (the transparent ordering of the company's website sections) are quoted.

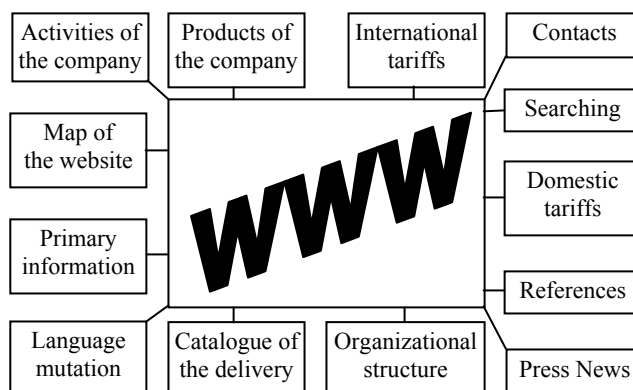


Figure 1 Concept of www presentation

5. Conclusion

The current trend is to create a portal, i.e. the comprehensive websites, in which various offered services of one or more companies are integrated. The employees of the companies quoted are enabled by those portals to access through so called CMS (content management system). It provides the change of whichever

portal content without the technology skills for the website development.

In term of the website's content analysis we can differentiate some spheres or units of information, that are important both in term of the electronic offer of the transportation company (companies) and naturally in term of the information sought by the visitor of the website.

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