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MECHANISMS FOR EVALUATING AND IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MARKETING STRATEGIES IN THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT SECTOR

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Abstract. This article analyzes the mechanisms for assessing and improving the effectiveness of marketing strategies in the public transport sector. During the study, the impact of service quality, digital payment systems, pricing policy and marketing communications on passenger flow was studied. The dynamics of the development of the Tashkent city public transport system in 2020-2024 was assessed based on statistical data. The results of the analysis showed that digital services, electronic payment systems and infrastructure modernization influenced the increase in passenger flow and the level of service utilization. A multi-level model for assessing marketing effectiveness was developed and scientific recommendations were formulated for transport enterprises on the development of service quality, customer loyalty and digital communications.

Keywords: public transport, marketing strategy, service quality, digital payment system, passenger flow, marketing effectiveness, SERVQUAL, digital communication, MaaS, transport infrastructure.

INTRODUCTION

Public transport is the foundation of modern urban mobility and performs an important economic and social function in meeting the daily mobility needs of the population. The acceleration of urbanization processes, increasing environmental demands and the digitalization of consumer behavior have led to the need to reconsider the marketing policies of transport enterprises. In most major cities of the world, metro passenger traffic in 2024 reached 93% of 2019 levels, and the economic activity of public transport has entered a phase of sustained recovery [1].

The effectiveness of marketing strategies is measured by multifaceted indicators such as service quality, pricing policy, channel convenience, digital interaction and brand acceptance. In the service sector, subjective consumer perception is no less important than objective parameters, therefore, it is considered appropriate for evaluation mechanisms to rely on a combination of theoretical models and empirical evidence [2]. In passenger transport, the marketing approach is based on intangible nature, the effect of customer participation and the real-time nature of the service use process, unlike traditional product policies.

Tashkent city has seen significant changes in public transport in recent years. The expansion of the fleet, the introduction of a digital payment system, and the development of the metro network have increased passenger traffic several times. In 2024, the Tashkent metro transported 270.3 million passengers, which is 57.2% more than in 2023, or 98.3 million passengers [3]. Such dynamics have increased the need for a consistent systematization of mechanisms for documenting and improving the practical effectiveness of marketing strategies.

The purpose of the research is to generalize the theoretical foundations of the evaluation of marketing strategies in public transport, to substantiate practical mechanisms using international experience and the example of passenger transport in the city of Tashkent, and to develop scientific recommendations aimed at improving strategies. The object of the research is urban passenger transport services, and the subject is the mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of marketing strategies aimed at positioning these services on the market, increasing their competitiveness, and forming consumer loyalty.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scientific research on the development of a marketing approach in public transport has a history of more than half a century. An expanded marketing complex adapted to the service sector, consisting of seven elements - product, price, place, promotion, people, process and tangible evidence - provided a comprehensive management tool for passenger transport enterprises. This approach opened up the possibility of strengthening the competitiveness of transport organizations in the market, taking into account the intangible and multidimensional characteristics of the service [4].

The service quality assessment model developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry - SERVQUAL - allowed to quantify the difference between the expected and perceived service by the consumer through the dimensions of tangible characteristics, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. In passenger transport, this model linked subjective parameters such as schedule stability, comfort in the vehicle, the level of courtesy of staff and safety with operational indicators, forming the basis for an in-depth study of marketing effectiveness [2].

A large-scale empirical study of the European railway network showed that the impact of advertising and sales promotion activities on passenger flow and customer satisfaction is statistically significant. The researchers argued that, although the elasticity of advertising is low compared to traditional product markets, it is possible to significantly increase the level of service acceptance by building brand trust [5]. These findings highlight the need to adapt marketing communications to the intangible service nature of the transport sector.

A major methodological review of the relationship between service quality and passenger satisfaction concluded that service quality should be measured not only through objective operational indicators but also through subjective perceptions. Researchers compared factors analysis, structural equation modeling, and importance-performance analysis in processing passenger survey results, revealing the strengths and weaknesses of each method [6].

A new generation of research has tested the three-factor theory on public transport quality. An empirical study conducted in a sample of Vietnamese cities showed that ease of use and personal attention for passengers make the service experience an exciting quality factor, while reliability and safety remain at the baseline level [7]. This approach provides a theoretical foundation for tailoring marketing strategies for different passenger segments.

Strategic documents aimed at modernizing the transport sector in the Republic of Uzbekistan have strengthened the marketing approach at the institutional level. Specific tasks have been set to expand the fleet, introduce environmentally friendly vehicles, and bring the quality of service to international standards, leading to practical results at the regional level [8]. Digital transformation at the network level has been implemented within the framework of the national digital development strategy, forming an integrated ecosystem of regional transport hubs and e-services [9].

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a mixed methodological approach to assess the effectiveness of marketing strategies in the public transport sector. The information base of the study was formed by official data from the Agency for Statistics of the Republic of Uzbekistan, UITP, ITF-OECD, the World Bank, as well as Tashkent Metro and transport operators for 2020-2024. The methods of theoretical generalization, comparative analysis, statistical analysis and a systematic approach were used during the study. The effectiveness of marketing strategies was assessed based on service quality, passenger flow, digital payment systems and communication channels. The SERVQUAL model, the 7P concept of the marketing complex and digital transformation indicators were used in the analysis. Based on the results obtained, a multi-level model for assessing marketing effectiveness was developed and scientific recommendations were formulated for improving the activities of public transport enterprises.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The growth dynamics of Tashkent city passenger transport between 2020 and 2024 served as a bright indicator of the practical effectiveness of marketing strategies. The number of metropolitan passengers increased from 38.8 million in 2020 to 270.3 million in 2024, an almost sevenfold increase in five years [3]. This growth was interpreted as the result of a comprehensive marketing approach that combined pricing policy, service quality, and digital channel integration, not just infrastructure expansion.

The annual dynamics of passenger traffic are summarized in the table below (Table 1).

Table 1
Dynamics of passenger flow in the Tashkent metro¹
(2020-2024)

Year	Number of passengers, million	Annual growth, million	Source
2020	38.8	-	Statistics Committee [3]
2021	101.8	63.0	Statistics Committee [3]
2022	136.7	34.9	Statistics Committee [3]
2023	162.7	26.0	Statistics Committee [10]
2024	270.3	98.3	Statistics Committee [3]

The data in Table 1 documented a steady recovery in passenger traffic after a decline during the pandemic in 2020, and an unprecedented increase in 2024. The annual growth rate was 19.0% between 2022 and 2023, and 57.2% between 2023 and 2024 [3]. The development of the bus network also followed a similar path: in May 2023, an average of 782,000 passengers were transported daily, an increase of 63% compared to May of the previous year, and the number of daily bus departures reached 1,330 units, an increase of 40% from the previous figure [11].

In the first quarter of 2025, the Tashkent Metro carried an average of 780,000 passengers per day, an increase of 12.6% compared to the same period in 2024 [12]. These figures indicate the long-term sustainability of the marketing strategy and the continued positive trend in the elasticity of demand for the service.

The widespread introduction of the digital payment system has had a significant impact on the channel and process elements of the marketing mix. The "ATTO" automated payment system has replaced cash payments and turned the price difference between electronic payment tariffs (1,700 soums) and traditional tariffs (3,000 soums) into an economic incentive. The introduction of new services into the system - bank cards, mobile applications and QR-ticket integration - has expanded the passenger's freedom of choice and increased the speed of service use [13].

The demand for payment cards clearly demonstrated the level of consumer acceptance of digital transformation: 250,000 ATTO cards were sold throughout 2024, while 150,000 cards were purchased in December 2024 and the first 20 days of January 2025 [14]. Such demand dynamics documented that digital channels have become a familiar and convenient tool for passengers.

The five-dimensional model of service quality in assessing the effectiveness of marketing strategies - tangibles, reliability, accountability, assurance, and empathy - has found practical expression in the example of Tashkent city passenger transport [2]. The expansion of the fleet by 40% in May 2023 and the increase in the number of daily flights by 60% have strengthened the tangibles dimension [11]. The stable operation of the digital payment system and the simplification of the service use process have significantly contributed to the reliability and accountability dimensions.

A holistic conceptual model for evaluating marketing effectiveness is presented in the following image (Figure 1).

1 Source: Compiled by the author based on official data from the National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Tashkent Metro [3], [10].

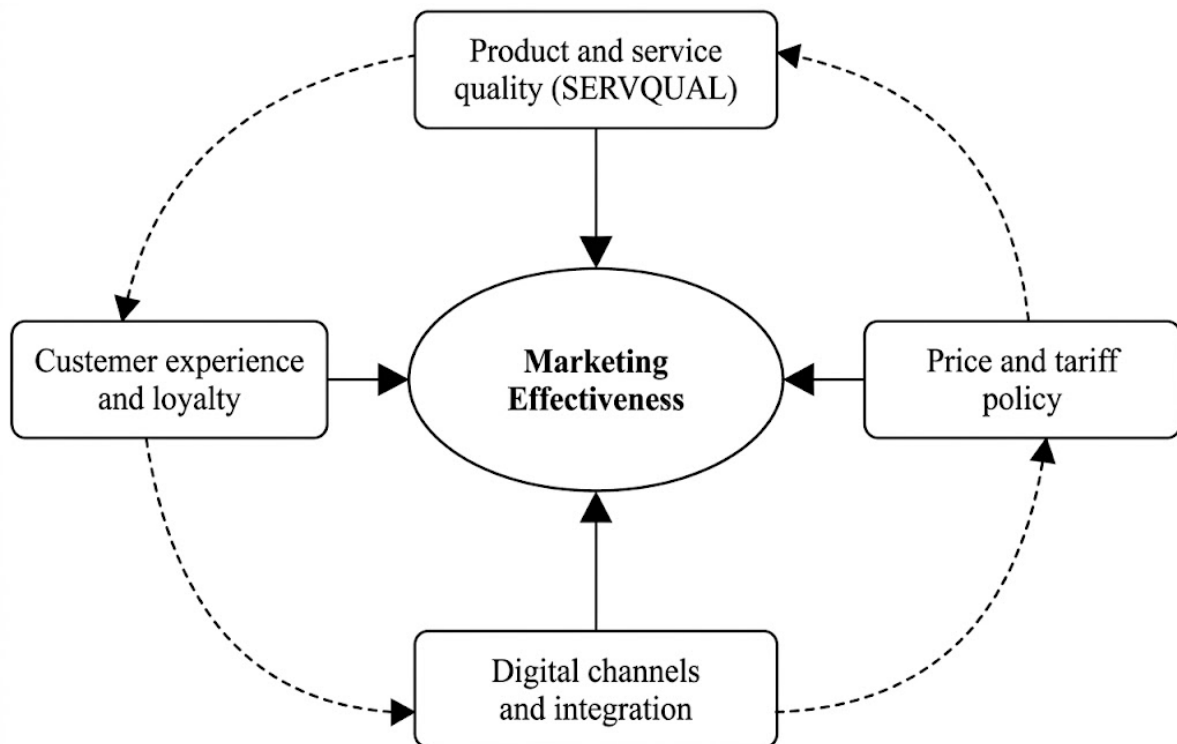


Figure 1. Conceptual model of a marketing effectiveness assessment mechanism in public transport²

The conceptual model holistically represents the interrelationship between the four main dimensions of the marketing mix - product and service quality, pricing policy, digital channels, and customer experience. These dimensions complement each other and form the overall marketing effectiveness and can be improved through a continuous feedback process.

International experience has confirmed the following conclusion in a comparative presentation: although the elasticity of public transport advertising is lower than that of advertising in the commodity market, economic efficiency can be achieved by strengthening brand trust and increasing the frequency of service use [5]. In the practice of Tashkent city, this conclusion was confirmed through measures to renew the fleet, a single transport card project, and increase the speed of service use [11]. Large metropolitan networks around the world also showed a steady increase in the number of passengers in 2015-2024, documenting the long-term sustainable effectiveness of marketing strategies [15].

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The analysis demonstrated that assessing the effectiveness of marketing strategies in the public transport sector requires a multidimensional approach. The combination of the classic extended marketing mix, the five-dimensional model of service quality, and digital channel integration allowed the formation of a comprehensive evaluation apparatus that combines the theoretical and practical aspects of marketing strategy.

In the case of passenger transport in Tashkent, marketing measures implemented between 2020 and 2024 - expanding the fleet, generalizing the digital payment system, transforming price differentiation into economic incentives, and strategic programs aimed at improving service quality - ensured a steady increase in passenger traffic. The number of metro passengers increased almost sevenfold in five years, documenting the economic and social effectiveness of the marketing approach [3].

The conducted scientific research allowed us to put forward the following proposals. First, it is advisable for public transport enterprises to adopt a four-level system that combines indicators of input (resources), process (service delivery), output (flow, revenue), and perception (satisfaction, loyalty) to assess marketing effectiveness.

Second, it is recommended that the large amount of transactional data collected from digital payment platforms and e-service channels be systematically used as a strategic asset to regularly adjust marketing strategies and formulate segmented offers [14].

² Author's development

Thirdly, in improving marketing strategies, it is important to introduce international experience - the conclusions of European transport companies on advertising elasticity and passenger loyalty programs in major metropolitan networks around the world - adapted to national and regional characteristics [15].

Fourth, the sustainability of marketing effectiveness for regional transport enterprises is ensured by monitoring the five-dimensional model of service quality through regular passenger surveys, conducting comparative analysis by segment, and consistently updating service channels [7].

As a final conclusion, it can be noted that an approach that combines the theoretical foundation of mechanisms for evaluating and improving marketing strategies with empirical data opens up a reliable path to increasing the sustainable competitiveness, customer loyalty, and economic efficiency of public transport enterprises.

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