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Marketing Strategy in Britain's Mainline Railways, 1923–38

Historians have long regarded Britain's railway companies in the interwar period as by and large devoid of commercial acumen. Aldcroft, Dyos, Savage and Channon are among those who saw the railways as failing to adjust to the changing economic and business environment (Dyos and Aldcroft, 1969; Savage, 1959; Pollins, 1971; Crompton, 1985). Channon wrote that the railway companies had little understanding of the need to conceive 'an approach to strategy that focused on marketing' (Channon, 2001, p. 50). Even for relatively mild critics such as Bonavia, the railways only started to address commercial policy issues, if at all, from around 1930 when the commercial lethargy of railway companies became the target of severe criticism by the 1931 Royal Commission on Transport (Bonavia, 1978). But even then, according to the existing accounts, their commercial efforts remained superficial and half-hearted. This article challenges this largely accepted view, and instead argues that the railway companies were far from lagging behind in the growing field of transport marketing. Rather, the available records suggest that the railway companies of the interwar period can be viewed as sufficiently marketing conscious business organisations.

A reassessment of railway marketing during the interwar period requires an explanation that accounts for both the relatively advanced position of railway marketing and the decline of rail travel in the interwar period. The chief cause for the relative decline of the railways' passenger business was clearly the intense inter-modal competition (Barker, 1986). However, the conventional account of the railways' loss of passenger business scarcely incorporated marketing as a factor affecting the industry's business performance. It has generally been assumed that the condition of the passenger business is dependent upon exogenous elements such as the economic condition, or simply the *necessity* to move (Preston, 2001). Hence the alleged failure of the railways' commercial policy has been identified as an insufficient response to market demand, rather than a failure of proactive policy. Such an argument is a retrogressive evaluation of the situation, in which the decline

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3 of relative market share is supposed to indicate absence of marketing strategy (Aldcroft, 1968, pp.
4 63–64). There is an alternative scenario. There was a marketing strategy that worked, but it had a
5 limited impact on the railways' passenger business, which was not enough to redeem the passenger
6 business as a whole. The latter argument fits with historians' recent research into the railways'
7 publicity work. As a series of studies have demonstrated, railway publicity in the interwar period was
8 highly sophisticated commercial propaganda (Bennett, 2000; Divall, 2011; Harrington, 2004; Medcalf,
9 2011; Thompson, 2012; Watts 2004). Both the quantity and quality of the interwar railways' publicity
10 material seems to confirm the claim of these scholars that the railways were adept advertisers. Then
11 how can this be compatible with the decline of passenger business? This unresolved question points
12 to our insufficient understanding of the comprehensive business context within which railway
13 publicity was created and consumed, and the link between railway marketing and the business
14 performance of the railway companies.
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29 The following sections address three topics related to marketing of the railways during the
30 interwar period: organisation of marketing, advertising expenditure and marketing alliances. The aim
31 of these examinations is not just to elaborate on developments within the railway industry. In spite
32 of the growing popularity of marketing history, we have only limited knowledge of how institutional
33 marketing was conducted in the early twentieth century, especially in Britain. At the same time, due to
34 marketing history's traditional focus on commodity marketing, we are only beginning to understand
35 the corresponding marketing development in the service sector in the early twentieth century (Corley,
36 1987, p. 65; Church, 2000; L'Etang, 2004; Heller, 2016a and 2016b; Schwarzkopf, 2012). The recent
37 scholarly attention to service marketing calls for a revision of the development of Britain's transport
38 business (Heller, 2010; Gladden, 2014; Pirie 2012). This paper aims to contribute to the growing
39 literature on the history of consumer service marketing by examining one of the biggest industries in
40 interwar Britain. As the discussion chiefly concerns the consumer market, its main focus is railways'
41 passenger business.
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56 The first topic to be discussed is organisation: how railways' marketing was organised in
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3 terms of a corporate structure. This also entails the personnel involved in railway marketing, and
4
5 their work. These considerations reveal that the railway companies clearly recognised the strategic
6
7 value of marketing, and the same recognition becomes apparent in an examination of a series of
8
9 re-organisations from the late 1920s. The railway companies' marketing strategy appeared in terms of
10
11 financial calibration. At a time when marketing functions were yet to be clearly defined in business
12
13 corporations, advertising expense is the closest, though incomplete, financial data we have for seeing
14
15 how much the interwar railway companies invested in marketing. The railway companies' allocation
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17 of advertising expenditure reflects the wider commercial strategy regarding their passenger business.
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19 The next question is how did the marketing strategy appear in terms of sales? A case study is drawn
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21 from industry-wide marketing activity, mostly appearing in a nascent form of marketing alliances
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23 among the railway companies, such as joint marketing through coordinated service introductions and
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25 sales efforts.
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29 By examining the railways' marketing orientation in three areas, this article demonstrates
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31 the railway industry's relatively advanced position in terms of its willingness to adopt various
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33 marketing techniques in the contemporary business context. It also re-connects railway marketing
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35 and the railways' passenger business more broadly. Rather than separating railway marketing from the
36
37 decline of railway business, the railway companies' marketing efforts during the interwar period can
38
39 be better understood as the industry's response to its loss of business chiefly caused by the
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41 inter-modal competition from road traffic. Such an understanding enables an alternative
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43 interpretation of the railway business during the interwar period, addressing the seemingly
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45 contradictory views of existing studies on Britain's railways in a period that has been regarded as both
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47 the golden age of railway advertising and, at the same time, a period characterised by the railways'
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49 un-enterprising commercial policy.
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52 The main primary sources for this article are drawn from the archives of the mainline
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54 railway companies' business records held in the National Archives, UK. As the article focuses on the
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56 formative period of railway marketing, when the marketing organisation for each company was still
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3 fluid, the companies' internal records relating to marketing can only be found scattered across
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5 different sections of the companies. There are two exceptions. The first is the Railway Clearing
6
7 House's (RCH) meetings conducted with advertising and publicity representatives, which took place
8
9 throughout the interwar period as a forum for industry-level discussions on marketing policy and
10
11 operations. Second is the Great Western Railway (GWR) in which passenger marketing was discussed
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13 by the Traffic Committee and presented in the Annual Report of the Traffic Department. Records
14
15 are less consistent regarding the marketing work in the London Midland and Scottish Railway (LMS),
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17 the London & North Eastern Railway (LNER) and the Southern Railway (SR). Occasional reviews
18
19 and situation reports of their marketing developments, such as the LNER's report on advertising
20
21 organisation (LNER, 1923) and the LMS's 1929 report on publicity arrangements (LMS, 1929a), are
22
23 invaluable historical records of marketing in these companies. Of particular importance is the
24
25 LNER's advertising expenditure, reconstructed in Table 1, based on the company's internal accounts
26
27 (RAIL 400/64–73). Hughes (1990) in his study on the LNER, located only aggregate figures of
28
29 advertising expenditure for the years 1924 and 1929 (Hughes, 1990, p. 131). Table 1 of this article
30
31 provides the details of expenditure—the original 59 items were grouped into 13 categories—allowing
32
33 us to look more closely into the company's financial control on marketing activity.
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38 The railway companies' business records are supplemented by the railway companies' staff
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40 journals. Originating in the 1880s, the publication of staff journals became a common practice in the
41
42 railway industry by the early twentieth century. In the interwar period, all four mainline companies
43
44 had their house journals: *GWR Magazine*, *LMS Magazine*, *LNER Magazine* and *Southern Railway*
45
46 *Magazine*. Toward the end of the 1920s, topics related to marketing began to feature in these journals
47
48 regularly as railway marketers employed the media not just to report on their work but also to
49
50 cultivate employee loyalty and nurture a culture of salesmanship among all levels of the company
51
52 workforce. For example, *LNER Magazine* ran a regular feature called 'Advertising Notes', starting in
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54 December 1928, written by the company's advertising manager C. G. Dandridge (LNER, 1928b, pp.
55
56 630–631). Together with the railway industry's chief publication, *Railway Gazette*, railway staff
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journals contain a wealth of information concerning railway marketing.

The Business of Railways in Interwar Britain

Britain's railway companies, about 120 of which existed before the First World War, were consolidated into four group companies by the Railways Act of 1921. The 'grouping' created four massive commercial organisations, known as the Big Four: the LMS, LNER, GWR and SR. The Big Four companies inherited a business that was suffered by major problems. The frenetic development of railway construction in the nineteenth century led to the creation of an inefficient network. In 1923, Britain's railway lines stretched over 20,334 miles and contained a number of infrastructure duplications. For instance, inter-city traffic that connected London with Exeter, Plymouth, Birmingham and Manchester had two to four routes (Haywood, 2009, p. 21). Route duplication often entailed overinvestment in facilities such as passenger stations and goods depots. The interwar period saw some reduction of line mileage with 1,200 miles of railway lines closed between 1923 and 1938; line closures were concentrated in the early 1930s, when over 200 miles were trimmed from the network each year (Loft, 2006; Patmore, 1966). Although the closures addressed duplication and over-provision to some extent, their scope was usually limited to the withdrawal of particularly unremunerative services. The companies rarely had sufficient capital to rationalise their network (Patmore, 1966, pp. 114–117). The direct cause of the railway industry's financial hardship was the First World War, which left companies with a considerable backlog of repairs and maintenance after the extensive use of the railway system under wartime government control. The £60 million compensation from the government was hardly enough to recover the railways from war damage, let alone to modernise their fleet and tracks. Most of the gross railway investment of £238 million during the interwar years was cancelled out by depreciation and replacement of the companies' assets (Bonavia, 1978, p. 77). Under the circumstance, network upgrading was equally limited. In 1938, only 5.3% of Britain's rail tracks were electrified, and electrification was mostly confined to the south of the Thames by the Southern Railway (Foreman-Peck and Millward, 1994, p. 246). Furthermore,

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3 despite the expectations of the Ministry of Transport, the grouping did not eliminate inter-firm
4 competition. Rivalry between railway companies continued for some routes, notably for
5 Anglo-Scottish traffic (Butterfield, 1986, 24–26). Britain's mainline companies had to face intensifying
6 competition from road traffic with heavy burdens that carried over from their predecessors.
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11 From the turn of the twentieth century, the supposedly oligopolistic position of the
12 railways had already started to become threatened both by the introduction of electric trams, and
13 after the war, by rapidly growing road traffic (Barker, 1986; Barker and Gerhold, 1993; Bagwell, 1988;
14 Scott, 2002). Figure 1 shows the general trend of railways' passenger revenue. Although the initial
15 drop in 1926—mostly attributed to the General Strike—was considerable, the subsequent reduction
16 of passenger receipts was halted after the 1932 trough (LMS, 1946; Crompton, 1985, pp. 230–231).
17
18 Apart from the negative impact of the strike on passenger traffic, the railway companies interpreted
19 the initial decline of their passenger business as resulting from road competition. The LNER's report
20 of 1927 pointed out that where direct competition with motorbus services existed, there was as
21 much as a 90 per cent reduction of traffic, and the diminished traffic was inversely related to the
22 increase in motorbus traffic (LNER, 1927). Similarly, the Railway Companies' Association stated that
23 15 per cent of the total 17.3 per cent decline in passenger receipts between 1923 and 1930 was due to
24 road competition, both from the motorbus and the private car (RCA, 1932).
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46 Figure 1. Big Four Passenger Revenue, 1924–1938

47 Source: TNA, RAIL 398/42–55
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52 The railway companies tried to meet the road competition by lowering passenger fares and
53 introducing various reduced price tickets, but such a strategy was naturally accompanied by a decline
54 in receipts per unit (GWR, 1924; Barker and Gerhold, 1993, p. 67). This price strategy also needs to
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3 be considered in conjunction with the fact that the railways' passenger business had already been
4 taking the low-margin, high-volume business model from the last quarter of the previous century,
5 through the opening up of long-distance services to third class passengers, and the abolition of
6 second class travel (Freeman, 1988, p. 47; Smith, 1988, pp. 62, 66–67). Consequently, by the interwar
7 period, the major part of passenger revenue came from third class passenger traffic. In addition to
8 the low-margin, high-volume service orientation, a significant change in passenger revenue occurred
9 around 1930. This was the clear shift of the chief revenue source from standard fares to reduced
10 fares (Bonavia, 1978, pp. 69–71). Reduced fares in this article refer to the types of ticket with fares
11 lower than the 'full-fare', including excursion tickets and the tourist ticket.¹ The so-called workmen's
12 ticket and season ticket are excluded from the discussion of this article, as their shares in the railways'
13 revenue were small, and they were fairly constant throughout the period (Hughes, 1990, p. 173). As
14 clearly seen in the passenger receipts on the Big Four companies, the share of reduced fares
15 surpassed that of the full-fare from 1930, and the former grew constantly during the remainder of
16 the interwar period (Figure 2).

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39 Figure 2. Big Four Passenger Receipts by Ticket Type, 1923–1937

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41 Source: *Railway Returns*, various years
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46 Whether the railways' reduced fare policy was effective in compensating for lost traffic is
47 debatable, but the policy is indicative of the existence of the railway companies' focused marketing
48 policy. The introduction of reduced fares was accompanied by substantial publicity so as to make the
49 new arrangement known to the public (LNER, 1930, p. 390). At the same time, reduced fares were
50 usually accompanied by certain restrictions, for example, on the route, timing, and period of validity,
51 all of which required an extra flow of information to the customers (*The Times*, 1923; *The Times*,
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3 1927; Aldcroft, 1968, p. 40; LNER, 1929, p. 231). This naturally called for extra marketing effort. As
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5 such, the change in revenue structure was likely to have been supported by marketing organisation.
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8 9 **Railways' Marketing Organisation**

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11 Many of Britain's railway companies had an advertising department from at least the last quarter of
12
13 the nineteenth century. In the early years of rail travel promotion, the advertising function was firstly
14
15 placed directly under the General Managers, as it was mostly about choosing appropriate advertising
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17 agents and making orders for print notices (Shin, 2014, pp. 191–192; Wilson, 1970, pp. 19–21). When
18
19 the need for advertising increased, the office of the Superintendent of the Lines, which could
20
21 respond to the change of services quickly, generally came to assume the function. From around the
22
23 1890s and 1900s, the specialisation of advertising led to the setting up of dedicated advertising, or
24
25 publicity, departments in many companies. These new departments became increasingly independent
26
27 from the operational side of the company, and accordingly, their work became more imaginative and
28
29 technical (Shin, 2014, pp. 196–199). The marketing sections of the Big Four were direct descendents
30
31 of these departments. A certain degree of continuity from prewar railway advertising is clear with
32
33 regard to the LMS, the largest of the Big Four. In March 1923, T. C. Jeffrey, the former
34
35 Superintendent of Advertising on the Midland Railway, was appointed Superintendent of Advertising
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37 and Publicity of the LMS (Cole and Durack, 1992, p. 12). Jeffrey's post was initially placed under the
38
39 General Superintendent's Department at Derby, and the company soon recognised that separating
40
41 publicity work from their headquarters was not the most effective arrangement; hence the
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43 Advertising Department was transferred to Euston in 1925, placing it under the direct supervision of
44
45 the General Manager (*Railway Magazine*, 1926, p. 78; *Railway Gazette*, 1923, p. 426).
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50 The early advertising work of the LNER, Britain's second largest railway company, was also
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52 led by a career railway advertiser. The LNER's first Advertising Manager, W. M. Teasdale, came from
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54 the North Eastern Railway, where he had been the Trade Advertising Agent and, from 1920,
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56 Advertising Manager (Middleton, 2002, p. 13; North Eastern Railway, 1921, p. 18). As with other
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3 companies, the policymaking of the LNER's advertising functions was fairly concentrated, and the
4
5 Advertising Manager was responsible for overseeing advertising policy across all the company's
6
7 territories, from issuing advertisements and controlling expenditure and freight advertising (LNER,
8
9 1923). The LNER's Advertising Department had, apart from its head office in London, three area
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11 offices in Southern, North Eastern, and Scottish areas. Teasdale travelled between these offices,
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13 directing regional advertising clerks.
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15
16 In terms of company structure, the GWR was the company which most firmly maintained
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18 continuity in its corporate structure, including its Publicity Department within the General Manager's
19
20 Office. However, with regards to its personnel, the GWR was not averse to introducing new blood.
21
22 Unlike Jeffrey and Teasdale, William Henry Fraser had no experience in pre-war railway advertising
23
24 when he was appointed as the GWR's Publicity Agent in 1924 (GWR, 1943, p. 62). Since he started
25
26 working for the pre-war GWR in 1892, he spent most of his career in the company's engineering
27
28 department. It was only at the outset of the First World War that Fraser came to the field of publicity
29
30 as the Publicity Officer for the Railway Executive Committee. The circumstance of his career change
31
32 is unclear, but a possible explanation lies in his family connections: Fraser was the younger brother
33
34 of a journalist, Lovat Fraser who contributed to *The Times* and other newspapers (*The Times*, 1926). It
35
36 is highly likely that his appointment was based upon his personal connection with the press. In fact,
37
38 the GWR's keenness to maintaining strong ties with the press was shown by the establishment of a
39
40 Press Bureau in 1923 under the Superintendents of the Line, which was said to be the first of its kind
41
42 in the railway industry (GWR, 1923; Wilson, 1970, p. 46). Another example of the GWR's
43
44 connection with the press is the company's employment of journalist Geo E. Beer. Beer was the
45
46 news editor of *The Times* between 1914 and 1920, and after the war, worked on 'propaganda' for the
47
48 GWR before returning to journalism as the editor of the *Daily Mail* in 1924 (Pole, 1968, pp. 84–85;
49
50 *The Times*, 1938). While the LMS and LNER relied on experienced advertising managers for directing
51
52 the newly established publicity departments, the GWR cultivated personal connections with relative
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54 newcomers to railway advertising in order to build up its publicity work.
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3 The grouping negatively affected advertising organisation on the SR. The setting up of a
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5 publicity section was delayed until October 1923, with the delay resulting in the establishment of two
6
7 departments dealing with the same function divided by geographical areas. Sectional differences soon
8
9 became indistinctive, but SR publicity in the immediate postwar period was far from commendable
10
11 (Cole and Durack, 1992, pp. 10–11). This changed around 1924, when criticism of the SR's suburban
12
13 services was at its height (Bonavia, 1987, pp. 62–63). Herbert Walker, the SR's General Manager
14
15 employed a young journalist, John Elliot, who had worked for *The New York Times* in the United
16
17 States, and the *Daily Express* and the *Evening Standard* in Britain (Elliot, 1982, p. 16; SR, 1933, p. 322).
18
19 On the appointment of Elliot as Public Relations and Advertising Assistant to the General Manager,
20
21 the former two publicity sections were merged into one. The SR's publicity section was then
22
23 effectively centralised, with indoor and outdoor sections, and a Press Information Bureau (Elliot,
24
25 1928, p. 167; Lamb, 1926, Fig. 1). The SR's publicity took root in a similar fashion to the GWR, by
26
27 recruiting an outsider to lead its publicity. Unlike Beer of the GWR, Elliot remained in the industry,
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29 successfully establishing himself in the company (Harrison and Moloney, 2004, p. 209).
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33 As the railway companies became keenly aware of the significant effect of the rise of road
34
35 transport from the mid-1920s, a series of reorganisations were conducted by most of the Big Four
36
37 companies. Until then, whether maintaining the continuity in personnel (LMS and LNER) or
38
39 accepting outsiders (SR and GWR), the early advertising policy of the Big Four was based on the
40
41 skills, experience and ingenuity of individual advertising managers. This was, in a sense, an old model
42
43 of marketing, dating back to the period when railway managers dominated the selling side of the
44
45 business and little effort was made to systemise marketing. However, in the late 1920s, this started to
46
47 change. In 1927, the LMS's publicity policy changed with the retirement of T. C. Jeffrey, who was
48
49 succeeded by G. H. Loftus Allen, with his experience of freight services on the continent and in the
50
51 US, which presumably involved the development of traffic (LMS, 1927, p. 240; Ellis, 1970, p. 47).
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53 Together with Allen's appointment, the LMS obtained the service of Sir Charles Higham, one of the
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55 most influential advertising agents at the time, who was taken on to advise on the company's
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3 publicity (LMS 1929b). In the following year, 1928, the LNER went through a re-organisation by
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5 attaching the Press Section to the General Manager's Office: this reorganisation created a new post,
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7 that of Information Agent to deal with public relations. The LNER's re-organisation, like the LMS
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9 case, coincided with the departure of the former chief of Advertising, Teasdale, who was promoted
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11 to the Chief General Manager in 1927. The post of the head of the Advertising Department went to
12
13 an ex-Great Central man, C. G. Dandridge who had a varied railway career in France, Russia and
14
15 Turkey during the war (Middleton, 2002, p. 14; LNER, 1928a, p. 106). Dandridge further boosted the
16
17 company's publicity work, including, for example, making a regular contribution to the company
18
19 magazine publicising the Department's work, as well as familiarising the workforce with the idea of
20
21 railway marketing (LNER, 1928b, p. 630). This reorganisation also shows the growing importance of
22
23 public relations in railway companies, though the separation of advertising/publicity and public
24
25 relations was by no means typical of railway companies of the time.
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28
29 In 1930, the SR also undertook reorganisation, in that the responsibility of running the
30
31 trains and procuring traffic came under the control of a Traffic Manager, E. C. Cox (SR, 1930a, p. 90;
32
33 Bonavia, 1987, pp. 34–35). Elliot was appointed Assistant to the Traffic Manager—an old fashioned
34
35 name for a marketing assistant, as Elliot later explained—dealing with the development of traffic
36
37 (Elliot, 1982, p. 43). The responsibility of Elliot's post covered 'procuring passenger, freight, parcels
38
39 and miscellaneous traffic, and will take steps to develop the traffic' as well as control the company's
40
41 direct sales force (SR, 1930b, p. 200). Compared to other companies, the GWR's approach was
42
43 cautious, though not entirely conservative. Each of Fraser's two successors—K. W. C. Grand and G.
44
45 E. Orton—had spent a few years in the US as the company's General Agent, dealing with the
46
47 company's overseas promotion (Wilson, 1970, pp. 31–32; GWR, 1929a, p. 165). In 1932, Grand took
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49 over Fraser's post on the latter's retirement. In the following year, the post of Commercial Assistant
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51 to the Superintendent of the Line was created and Grand was duly appointed. In 1934, Orton
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53 followed a similar career path, from the Publicity Agent to the Commercial Assistant. It is not clear
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55 what the experience in the US gave to the two GWR Publicity Agents, but the trajectories of the
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3 career of the two men suggests the GWR's growing awareness of marketing to a wider audience,
4 including overseas customers. This reading of the situation fits with the appointment of Orton's
5 successor in 1934. The GWR recruited the former chief of outdoor publicity for the Empire
6 Marketing Board, M. J. M. Dewar (GWR, 1934a, p. 419). In sum, the GWR's chief publicity officers
7 after 1932 were consistently those who had some experience in overseas marketing, showing that the
8 GWR embraced one of the most forward-looking personnel policy with regards to its marketing
9 section. To a varying degree and means, all the Big Four went through reconfiguration of their
10 marketing functions, and with this, the scope of railway marketing was extended.

11
12 We do not know how intentionally the above mentioned marketing section of the SR was
13 created. By contrast, the LMS's commercial section was clearly based on the idea of marketing.
14 Instigated by the Vice President Ernest Lemon, in 1932, the LMS Board decided to place its entire
15 commercial operation under the control of an independent Chief Commercial Manager, in order to
16 'produce a really saleable article, and for the sales effort in respect of all descriptions of transport
17 provided by the Company' (LMS, 1940; LMS, 1946, p. 16; Jenkins, 2011, pp. 66–67). At the same time,
18 the company's direct sales section—known at the time as 'canvassing'—came under the Chief
19 Commercial Manager. Not only did traffic canvassers come to work in the new section, a
20 Commercial Research Section was established in October of the following year to conduct research
21 into commercial aspects of all types of rail traffic. This was described by the company as 'an entirely
22 new feature in British railway administration' (LMS, 1940). In 1934, the LMS's territory was divided
23 into 35 districts and various information was assembled for the Research Section (LMS, 1946, p. 16).
24 Ashton Davies, the company's Chief Commercial Manager, stated that the LMS was conducting
25 detailed statistical traffic analyses including some sort of demand forecasting, and its excursion
26 programmes were related to the densities of population, general spending power, and to the distance
27 between industrial areas and pleasure resorts (Davis, 1934).

28
29 This re-organisation series goes against Bonavia's claim that the railway companies only
30 started to address the allegedly lethargic commercial policy in the early 1930s (Bonavia, 1978, pp.

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2
3 54–55). As shown above, in the late 1920s, their commercial policy had already started to show signs
4
5 of change. These organisational changes were not innovations that entirely originated in the railway
6
7 industry: public relations, marketing departments and market research were previously adopted by
8
9 other industries. Nevertheless, the early accommodation of a set of innovations contrasts sharply
10
11 with the traditional image of the railways' 'conservative and unenterprising' commercial policy (Dyos
12
13 and Aldcroft, 1969, p. 329).

16 Situating the railways' marketing in relation to other industries casts light on the relative
17
18 degree of development in railway marketing. Most especially, a comparison with some public utility
19
20 companies is revealing of its contemporary standing. For instance, from the first decade of the
21
22 twentieth century, gas companies embraced the importance of advertising and publicity. Since 1903,
23
24 Francis Goodenough had been worked as Controller of Gas Sales, a position that dealt with
25
26 marketing, for the Gas Light and Coke Company (GLCC). When Goodenough was appointed to this
27
28 position, the gas companies started to face competition from the new source of energy, electricity,
29
30 which was slowly but steadily gaining ground (Clendinning, 2002, p. 117). The situations of the gas
31
32 industry and that of the interwar railway industry were fairly similar, in the sense that both of them
33
34 faced significant competition from newcomers: the gas industry faced competition from electricity,
35
36 and the railways was struggling to compete with the motor car. The difference between the gas
37
38 companies and railways was that, until the 1930s, the former group chiefly relied on outside agencies
39
40 for its advertising and public relations while railway companies had long been internalised their
41
42 marketing work. It is true that, from 1912, the gas industry had developed an industry-wide publicity
43
44 group, the British Commercial Gas Association, but the GLCC used the London Press Exchange
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46 until it established its own Publicity Department in 1931 (Clendinning, 2002, pp. 123–124). The
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48 GLCC's head of publicity was A. P. Ryan who came from the Empire Marketing Board. Although
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50 this appointment was made three years before Dewar came to the GWR, for the extent of corporate
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52 level adoption of marketing, the railway companies were by no means running behind even the gas
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54 industry.
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3 Indeed, the railways' use of market research shows the relatively advanced position of the
4 industry in terms of marketing technique. Compared to the United States, where, from the 1910s,
5 public opinion polls and market research were conducted by organisations like Gallup and the Curtis
6 Publishing Company, British firms generally lagged behind (Jeremy, 1998, p. 486; Marchand, 2011, p.
7 86). American manufacturers such as Coca-Cola and General Motors had already seen the value of
8 market research and incorporated it into their corporate organisation and strategy by the 1920s.
9 However, as Schwarzkopf has demonstrated, the gap between British and American marketing was
10 not as wide as previously thought. For instance, J. Walter Thompson agency (JWT) conducted
11 large-scale market research for Liver Brothers during the 1920s, and by 1930 the company had
12 established the in-house advertising group that eventually became Lintas (Schwarzkopf, 2009; Sharpe
13 1964). JWT also assisted Rowntree, which also came to have its own research departments,
14 employing market testing techniques between 1933 and 1936 (Dickinson, 1928, p. 7; Fitzgerald, 1995,
15 pp. 31–32). Similarly, the BBC set up a Listener Research Department from 1936 (Jeremy, 1998, pp.
16 479, 486; Moser, 1949). The LMS's Research Department, established in 1932, was among these
17 earliest practitioners of market research in Britain.

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35 The organisation of railway marketing and its series of reorganisation reveal the fairly high
36 level of sophistication of railway marketing, with its openness to organisational innovation and
37 marketing techniques. At the same time, the railway companies carefully selected suitable personnel
38 to lead their marketing sections. At the organisational level, therefore, the railways' incorporation of
39 marketing in their commercial policy is fairly apparent. Then the question is whether the railways'
40 marketing organisation worked efficiently? The administration of marketing needed to achieve results
41 with an eye to effective—which usually meant economical—marketing with the maximum possible
42 impact on sales. Both objectives involved the strategic allocation of resources, which chiefly meant
43 controlling expenditure. The following section examines the financial calibration of railway
44 marketing.

Financial Control over Railway Marketing

Owing to the lack of data and the idiosyncrasy of itemisation in railway accounting; there is no complete data series showing the comparative publicity expenses of all the Big Four companies. Possibly the most consistent record of advertising expenditure is that of the GWR's advertising budget, which covers the entire interwar period. The company's advertising budget shows that its annual total advertising budget had kept around the £100,000 mark, representing 1.17 per cent of passenger receipts in 1927. The GWR was not the largest spender in railway advertising, however. In the same year, the LNER and the LMS spent £264,604 and £264,006 respectively on advertising, equivalent to 2.16% and 1.39% of their passenger receipts (LMS, 1929a).

In Kaldor and Silverman's analysis of contemporary press advertising across Britain's industries in 1935, the service sector in general was underrepresented. While manufacturers' spending was estimated at £46 million and retailers' £9.7 million, accounting for 52% and 10.9% of the total, service advertising (including that of real estate and financial services) accounted for around £13 million, a 14.5% share in national spending on press advertising (Kaldor and Silverman, 1948, p. 10). Although the significance of the transport sector in service marketing was acknowledged—40% of service advertising came from the 'travel and transport' industry—press advertising alone is an insufficient indicator of the scale of railway marketing. In railway marketing, press notices were supplemented by guidebooks and timetables. Popular guidebooks were an effective marketing tool, and they were often cost-effective too. The GWR's guidebook *Holiday Haunts*, which circulated 200,000 annually, consistently brought in more than £14,000 to the company throughout the 1930s, when the GWR's total expenditure on printing publications and posters was around £24,000 per annum (GWR, 1930, p. 33). The ability of railway companies to advertise their own services at numerous railway stations also needs to be taken into account. Station advertisements were a source of revenue. In 1935, public transport operators were making £2.2 million from their commercial advertising (Kaldor and Silverman, 1948, p. 15). Although the figure is a national aggregate, the railway companies could probably subsidise their own advertising expenditure from the revenue

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3 arising from their advertising service for other industries.
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5 Compared with consumer goods advertising, the scale of railway advertising appears
6 relatively small. Indeed, some of the manufacturers of tangible goods were spending enormous sums
7 on advertising, for example, the tobacco manufacturer, Player & Sons was spending more than
8 £600,000 annually in the 1930s (Hilton, 2000, p. 94). However, this does not drastically change the
9 relative importance of railway publicity. Already in the late 1920s, the LMS, LNER and GWR were
10 spending £60,000 to £120,000 on press advertising, sums equal to the press advertising spending of
11 companies such as Austin, Morris, Shell, Prudential and the BCGC a decade later (GWR, 1934b;
12 LMS, 1929a; *Statistical Review of Press Advertising*).
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22 Generally speaking, in the railway industry, financial control through budgetary planning was
23 yet to be widely adopted (Quail, 1996, p. 165). Advertising was a fairly exceptional case in this regard.
24 In the case of the LNER, the annual advertising budget was divided into two broad headings of
25 'fixed' expenditure and 'fluctuating' expenditure. The items related to excursions and special trains
26 came under the latter heading. By 1938, the advertising budget headings consisted of about 70 items
27 and, at the end of the financial year, these headings were subjected to detailed analysis, while the ratio
28 of advertising expenditure to traffic receipts was calculated for each item. These analyses provided
29 the basis for the following year's advertising budget (Dandridge, 1938, p. 237; LNER, 1930, p. 389).
30 There is also evidence to show that the LNER's Advertising Department used the excursion traffic
31 returns for allocating advertising expenditure (LNER, 1925). The existence of budgetary control
32 strongly suggests that railway advertising was a dynamic field of business strategy, rather than
33 something subordinate to the operation of train service. In 1926, Teasdale stated that the monthly
34 statement of passenger bookings was 'of extremely great value from the advertising point of view'
35 (LNER, 1925).
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52 In fact, the LNER's allocation of advertising expenditure did change in response to the
53 business conditions (Table 1). The impact of the Depression is apparent in the drop in most items of
54 the advertising expenditure in 1930, except for press, resorts, overseas and maritime advertising. This
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3 suggests that the LNER tried to weather the storm by promoting tourism, particularly that from
4 overseas. But in 1931, such hope seems to have disappeared, as the decrease in expenditure was
5 across-the-board. Moreover, road-related advertising (both for the company's own road service and
6 for road competition), suffered a significant blow. The effect of the Depression receded from 1934,
7 when advertising expenditure picked up again. The constant increase of the expenditure on
8 excursion advertising from 1933 until 1938 is especially conspicuous. In 1938, the level of
9 expenditure on that item returned to 87 per cent of the amount spent in 1929, while the expenditure
10 on total traffic advertising recovered only to 81 per cent of the 1929 level.
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20 The relative weight of different items of expenditure points to each company's general
21 marketing strategy. Promoting resorts, for the LNER, was of secondary importance compared to
22 advertising on 'train services', as some historians have noted (Ward, 1998, p. 49). The direct spending
23 on resort promotion was, except for 1938, less than what was spent on overseas promotion. Resort
24 promotion was usually conducted as a collaborative scheme in which a railway company paid 50% of
25 the cost for promoting a specific resort on the premise that the local authority bore the equal amount
26 (*Railway Gazette*, 1950, p. 507; LMS 1929a; GWR 1928). The Great Depression made the railway
27 companies less eager to invest in this type of resort promotion, a shift in attitude that was reflected in
28 the LNER's advertising accounts. As discussed above, international traffic was a major item of
29 promotion, which was closely connected to the advertising of waterborne service. Under this
30 category, the largest spending, accounting for more than £10,000 each year between 1929 and 1938,
31 was on the company's steamboat service connecting English ports with Hook in Holland and
32 Zeebrugge in Belgium. The relatively large sum spent on the steamboat service promotion was
33 justified by the feeder traffic carrying passengers to and from the company's territory. Similar logic
34 applied to railway hotels. Although less extensive than the LMS's Scottish hotel business, the LNER
35 operated a number of hotel establishments including the Sandringham Hotel at Hunstanton (Pope,
36 2000, p. 63). Railway managers recognised that a successful hotel service could attract passenger
37 business, which explained the fairly small but constant spending on hotel advertising.
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Insert Table 1 About Here

Table 1. LNER Advertising Expenditure, 1929–1938

Source: TNA, RAIL 400/64–73

The railways' prioritisation of discretionary travel is evident in a contemporary document of the comparative data of the LMS and LNER advertising expenditure, which distinguishes three categories of advertising—press, posters, and guidebooks—according to their target market. In 1928, LMS's press advertising was both targeted at general traffic (43 per cent) and excursions and other reduced fares travel (57 per cent) while its guides, programmes, and handbills, as well as posters, were overwhelmingly aimed at the latter type of travel (83 per cent for the first three and 82 per cent for the posters) (LMS, 1929a). This shows that, while press advertising promoted both types of travel, other media were used chiefly to advertise excursions and reduced fares.

At any rate, the cost consideration was a significant factor in railway marketing, and it explains why the companies steered towards press advertising, publicity and public relations. Among others, free publicity became an important conduit of information flow to supplement other marketing activities. For that purpose, the companies' internal report often emphasised the importance of maintaining 'friendly relations with the Press' (GWR, 1928). The LMS employed a publicity agent to secure free editorial references to the company, which in 1928 alone, brought in a total of 13,413 *free* announcements, which according to the company's estimate, saved the company £73,771 (LMS, 1929a). A similar effort was made by the GWR, in which Maxwell Fraser of the Publicity Department sent numerous contributions to newspapers (Wilson, 1970, p. 46). Cost-consciousness among the railway companies also helped, to some extent, to overcome long-standing rivalry among the railway companies, and, as a consequence, joint press advertising gradually became an established practice.

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3 The available evidence suggests that the railway companies were continuously adjusting
4 their advertising expenditure, both the total amount and the allocation to different media, in view of
5 improving the effectiveness and efficiency of its promotional activities. Yet, considering that the
6 railway companies came to use free publicity and public relations techniques as well as publicity
7 media that were *sold* to potential customers, the examination of expenditure needs to be regarded as
8 showing just one aspect of railway marketing. In other words, railway marketing during the interwar
9 period became a more knowledge-based and less capital intensive endeavour than in the previous
10 period: this further encouraged the coordination of railway business in which scale economy in
11 advertising could have achieved by joint marketing efforts.
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24 **Marketing Alliance and the Birth of the 'British Railways'**

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26 The railways' embracing of public relations, and the shift to knowledge-based publicity, indicate the
27 growing 'image consciousness' present among the railway companies, which went beyond individual
28 company (Casson, 2009, p. 309). A forum to discuss various railway matters existed from the 1840s
29 in the form of the Railway Clearing House (RCH). The RCH was established in 1842 to facilitate
30 inter-company financial transactions, especially those related to passenger travel across more than
31 one company ('through' traffic). In the late nineteenth century, the organisation, under the aegis of
32 the majority of railway companies, rapidly expanded its operations, and came to cover wide-ranging
33 operational and policy matters.
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43 The standardisation of railway operation and commercial practice was largely achieved by
44 coordination at the RCH, compensating for the operational difficulties stemming from the existence
45 of numerous privately-run railway companies. Supposedly, the need for RCH's function in
46 standardisation diminished after the grouping of the railway companies in 1923. However, as
47 Edwards has recently argued, the role of the RCH was not so much diminished as changed, and in
48 some areas, it was rather expanded (Edwards, 2008, pp. 1–2). Advertising, publicity and public
49 relations were examples of the changing role of the RCH. From the 1860s to the 1900s, the railway
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3 companies managed the amount of advertising through the RCH's Conference of Superintendents
4 and that of Advertising Representatives. The RCH's advertising oversight was abandoned in 1906
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6 when discord among the railway companies over advertising restrictions made some companies
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8 militate against the coordination process (Shin, 2014, pp. 200–201; RCH, 1907). After the First World
9
10 War, the RCH meeting was revived, and the Big Four's advertising officers again regularly met to
11
12 discuss issues pertaining to marketing issues (RCH, 1919).
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16 The RCH Advertising Committee was widely regarded as the public front for the railway
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18 industry. The meeting regularly received various requests, solicitations, and information from diverse
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20 groups outside the railway industry. The railway companies dealing with the mass media also came to
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22 be coordinated by the RCH. In 1928, the RCH decided to include public relations in its remit and,
23
24 accordingly, the committee was renamed as the Advertising and Public Relations Committee. At the
25
26 same time, the Railways Information Bureau was renamed as the British Railways' Press Bureau,
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28 which distributed the publicity materials of the railway industry, being probably one of the earliest
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30 examples of a commercial industry issuing press releases (RCH, 1928; LNER, 1924b). From 1935,
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32 this arrangement was further institutionalised in the shape of the RCH Press Sub-Committee.
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35 The railway companies' close coordination of publicity and public relations at the industry
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37 level showed that the railway industry was keeping steps with the growing trend of product-based
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39 marketing alliances (Taylor, 1934, p. 28). The gas industry had an industry-wide publicity group in the
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41 form of the British Commercial Gas Association, which was set up in 1912, and the electricity
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43 industry created the Electrical Development Association in 1919 (Darling, 2007, p. 139). Similarly,
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45 from the late 1920s, the large oil companies collaborated with each other on marketing, and from
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47 1933, the brewing industry started its Collective Advertising Campaign (Brown, 1993, p. 356;
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49 Gourvish, 1994, pp. 352–353). For its origin, the railway industry's advertising coordination in the
50
51 RCH, which started in the 1860s, was one of the earliest. Just as the inter-firm competition in the
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53 later nineteenth century gave birth to an industry-wide coordination of railway advertising, the
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55 inter-modal competition in the interwar period increased and strengthened the railway industry's
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3 marketing alliance.
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5 The RCH Advertising Committee did not directly influence the advertising policies of
6 individual companies, but instead concentrated on arranging joint publicity efforts (Orton, 1936, p.
7 33). The four companies issued joint-advertisements, which, at first, had four names, though later
8 they started to use the identifier 'British Railways'. Also, the railway companies' began to make
9 collaborative efforts in trade fares and exhibitions, usually coordinated by the RCH committee. In
10 one of their earliest joint enterprises in 1927, the railway companies participated in the Olympia
11 Advertising Exhibition as the 'British Railways' (Figure 3) (GWR, 1927, pp. 318–320).

12 Thenceforward, joint publicity became a visible trend. In addition, the introduction of new service
13 products came to be coordinated to some extent. For example, the highly successful 'summer ticket'
14 was introduced in 1933 by all the Big Four, showing that the railway companies' joint marketing now
15 extended to product introduction (LMS, 1934; LMS, 1946, p. 17).
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37 Figure 3. "British Railways" at Advertising Exhibition, Olympia
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39 Source: *GWR Magazine* (1927), p. 318
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44 The joint sales activities were also apparent in the overseas activities of Britain's railways. The
45 Big Four had operated overseas offices, mostly to promote international tourism, since as early as
46 1907 (RCH, 1926; British Transport Commission, 1957; GWR, 1907; Smith, 1988, p. 157). By the late
47 1920s, for example, the LMS had established offices in Paris, Brussels, Antwerp, St Malo and the
48 Channel Islands, as well as a number of agents throughout Europe, the US and Canada. Overseas
49 offices of the individual companies often worked together, and in some cases, like the Associated
50 British Railways Inc., even merged their activities (GWR, 1929b). Around the time of the Olympia
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3 Exhibition in 1927, the RCH's advertising committee expressed the need to 'sink the individuality' for
4 advertising in the United States. It was based on this collaborative ethos that the US office of the
5 Associated British Railways Inc. was established in 1934. The 'Come to Britain' movement was
6 formed around the same time, which was no coincidence (Beckerson, 2003, p. 112; Day, 1981, pp.
7 90–93; Ward, 1998, pp. 46–47). This movement started in 1926 as the initiative of Sir Francis Towle
8 of Gordon Hotels who was a son of the former catering manager of the Midland Railway, one of
9 the predecessors of the LMS (Advisory Committee to the Department of Overseas Trade, n.d.; *The*
10 *Times*, 1926). The involvement of the railway companies in this international tourism promotion was
11 apparent from the earliest stage. When the Travel Association of Britain took over the movement in
12 1929, the GWR's General Manager Felix Pole was among its six provisional committee members
13 (Taylor, 1981, p. 94; Wilson, 1970, p. 34).

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33 Figure 4. British Railway Office, designed by H. T. Cadbury Brown, 1936

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35 Source: Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Collections, SD59/3

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39 The British Railways, in the form of a collective service brand of the four railway companies,
40 came into existence in the domestic travel market in the 1930s. An example of the railway companies'
41 collective branding was the 'British Railways' ticket offices (Dandridge, 1938, pp. 236–237). Each of
42 the Big Four had, by the interwar period, developed a network of ticket sales offices. In 1935, the
43 GWR's list of ticket sales points—excluding railway stations—referred to at least 269 of them,
44 including three British Railway Offices (GWR, 1935). In 1936, the railway companies, along with the
45 Royal Institute of British Architects, held a competition for the architectural design of railway offices
46 in London, with H. T. Cadbury-Brown's design winning first place (Figure 4) (RIBA, 1936, pp. 60,
47 107). The new, standard design was to be implemented in 71 railway offices across London, of which
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3 at least two were actually built (in Queensway and the Strand) before the Second World War
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5 (Dandridge, 1938, p. 237; *The Times*, 1939). The modernist style of the British Railways office,
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7 designed along simple lines which matched the British Railways' logo in Sans Serif, anticipated the
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9 office design of the 1960s, making it a striking contrast with cluttered station ticket offices or
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11 shop-style town offices of the previous period. The inter-availability of tickets had already been
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13 achieved before the establishment of the British Railways' office, but the joint sales office, with a
14
15 standardised design, was well beyond simple joint sales. The marketing alliances of the Big Four were
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17 thus anything but an ad-hoc publicity arrangement: rather, it was an eloquent testimony to the height
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19 that the railways' marketing had reached in the late 1930s.
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24 **Conclusion**

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26 This paper's examination of the marketing organisation of the Big Four railway companies reveals
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28 that Britain's mainline railway companies had developed a highly sophisticated marketing machinery
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30 by the 1930s. All the four companies had internal departments that were led by expert marketers who
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32 often came from outside the railway industry. Railway marketing benefitted from a growing pool of
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34 marketing experts and their specialised knowledge. The companies also invested a substantial amount
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36 of financial resources in their marketing activity, and, at the same time, carefully managed
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38 expenditure in view of the broader business conditions. Far from being an industry without a
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40 marketing strategy, the Big Four companies from the mid-1920s were at the forefront of service
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42 marketing development. Contemporary marketing professionals generally regarded railway marketers
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44 as seasoned experts in the art of advertising. Tom Purvis, the well-established commercial poster
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46 artist, described LNER's William Teasdale and C. G. Dandridge as 'two of the most appreciated and
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48 sympathetic men it has been any artist's delight to work for... stand out to me as shining examples of
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50 artists in commerce' (Purvis, 1930, p. 12). In contrast, Purvis regarded Jack Beddington of Shell 'a
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52 comparative newcomer to advertising'. In interwar Britain's marketing world, railway companies
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54 undoubtedly had a conspicuous presence.
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Insert Figure 5, 6, 7 and 8 About Here

Figure 5. LNER, “Dine Well by LNER” by Tom Purvis, 1935

Source: NRM 1978-8940, ©Science & Society Picture Library

Figure 6. SR, “Hike for Health”, printed by The Baynard Press, c.1930

Source: NRM 1996-7432, ©Science & Society Picture Library

Figure 7. LNER, “East Coast Joys” by Tom Purvis, 1932

Source: NRM 1978-9362, ©Science & Society Picture Library

Figure 8. GWR/LMS/LNER/SR, “Take Your Dog”, by Mabel Gear, c.1935

Source: NRM 1978-9637, ©Science & Society Picture Library

As a number of cultural historians have demonstrated that railway art flourished during the interwar period (Cole and Durack, 1992; Hewitt, 1995 and 2000; Watts, 2004). By the 1920s, railway posters had become an established form of commercial art, and the inter-firm and inter-modal competition of the time stimulated its further development. In 1924, the advertising consultant Thomas Russell noted that railway advertising featuring ‘a locomotive’ belonged to the generation of ‘our grandfathers’, and modern advertising should focus on ‘not the product but the service it gives’ (Russell, 1924, p. 550). Although locomotives still appeared in railway posters, especially when express trains were being promoted, the focus of railway posters in the interwar years was less on brute mechanical speed than on the smooth riding of the train embedded within Britain’s natural landscape (Shin and Divall, 2011). Generally speaking, railway posters kept up with—and in some

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3 cases led the way in—the contemporary development of commercial art. Travelling experience was
4 depicted not just as comfortable but also as glamorous and luxurious, as shown in the LNER's 1935
5 poster promoting restaurant cars (Robinson-Tomsett, 2016, pp. 50–53). In this poster by Tom Purvis,
6 a lady in a modern dress enjoys a cigarette and a cup of coffee at the dining table—a scene that could
7 just as well have been set in an up-market restaurant in London rather than in a train carriage (Figure
8 5). Travel destinations remained a favourite theme of posters, but an increasing number of posters
9 featured generic scenery of the seaside or countryside and were concerned less with the peculiar
10 quality of the place than with the activities one could enjoy at the destination, like swimming, hiking,
11 golfing and shopping. (Figure 6) The images of playing children frequently appeared in posters and
12 guidebooks, targeting family holiday makers by appealing to the parents' sense of duty to their
13 children (Figure 7; Medcalf, 2011). While the themes in poster illustration diversified, the format of
14 railway posters became increasingly standardised within a company, with company logos and fonts
15 expressing brand identity, distinguishing one company from another (Hewitt p. 298; Cole and Durack,
16 1992, p. 17). In the 1930s, however, in line with the marketing alliance in the railway industry,
17 collective advertising by the Big Four companies became a new trend, promoting overseas travel and
18 introducing new services such as household removals, cash on delivery services and discounted
19 return tickets for dogs (Figure 8). Railway posters thus reflected the wider development in the railway
20 industry's marketing strategy and organisation.

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The series of re-organisations in the Big Four's marketing departments in the late 1920s showed that railway marketing did not stand still, but evolved in order to adjust to the changing business situation. The adoption of market research and closer collaboration between companies through the RCH were clear testimony that Britain's railways embraced modern marketing ideas. Simultaneously, the timing of the re-organisation is suggestive of the underlying business rationale for the Big Four's revision and expansion of their marketing departments. The late 1920s were the time when the main line companies came to the realisation that rail travel was losing out to rapidly developing road traffic. The railways' chief competitor was the motorbus, but private cars were also

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3 eroding the Big Four's customer base. Railway managers were by no means optimistic about the
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5 future of rail travel. In 1928, the GWR Traffic Department noted that 'the consistent and rapid
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7 growth in the number of private cars is a serious menace to the railway companies and there is little
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9 to be done to attract this class of traffic' (GWR, 1928). Railway marketing was accompanied by the
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11 sense of decline in the rail business. The marketing strategy centred around reduced fare
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13 travel—criticised by some historians and commentators as an imprudent business decision that
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15 would contribute to a dilution of passenger revenue—made more sense as the railways' rear-guard
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17 battle against road competition rather than expansionary business tactics (Aldcroft, 1968, pp. 61–63; ;
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19 Fenelon, 1939, p. 139; Butterfield, 1986, p. 35).
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22 The degree to which railway marketing worked to improve the industry's performance in
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24 the inter-modal competition requires further examination. What is clear from this paper's review of
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26 railway marketing is that a plausible assessment of railways' passenger business in interwar Britain
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28 needs to incorporate the railway companies' marketing strategy. Marketing played a pivotal role in the
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30 railways' commercial policy such as promoting reduced fares, introducing new facilities and enticing
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32 people to travel. It is also important to give equal attention to the successes and failures of railway
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34 marketing. The Big Four's marketing might have contributed to the arrest or slowdown of the decline
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36 of their passenger business, but there is also the possibility that the companies could improve their
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38 business conditions by investing more in, for example, expanding high-speed service, better
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40 point-to-point connection or standard fare travel. After all, an evaluation of railway marketing should
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42 be linked with the railways' business performance. However, the decline of railways' passenger
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44 business cannot be attributed to the absence of marketing strategy—rather, the decline occurred
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46 *despite* the fairly advanced state of railway marketing. By acknowledging the place of marketing in the
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48 railway business, we would begin to understand how the golden age of railway advertising coincided
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50 with the commercial failure of the railways' passenger business in interwar Britain.
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3 1. The railway industry's passenger returns were divided into full-fare and reduced fares. The
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5 four main categories of reduced fares were excursion tickets, workmen's tickets, season tickets
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7 and tourist tickets. Tourist tickets were originally sold only during summer holiday season,
8
9 but in the early 1930s, their sales period was eventually extended to all year. Around the
10
11 same time, the variety of excursion tickets expanded to include discount tickets on special
12
13 excursion trains (serving tourist destinations like pleasure and health resorts and special
14
15 events like race meetings, football matches and Christmas shopping), day, half-day, weekend,
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17 period and monthly return tickets on both short and long-distance routes. Effectively,
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19 excursion tickets became a category that covered various types of reduced price tickets.
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	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1938 (1929=1.00)
Publications	38,262	35,261	23,434	23,950	22,881	23,207	23,939	23,299	23,222	25,989	0.68
Press	21,360	25,145	12,631	14,570	12,133	13,178	13,933	11,525	11,400	10,995	0.51
Resorts	17,630	19,546	16,113	14,558	10,365	11,765	10,991	10,937	11,765	13,545	0.77
Train Services	37,093	34,322	26,421	24,688	24,223	25,869	26,712	26,051	32,611	31,356	0.85
Posters and Bills	19,999	16,181	13,863	14,899	12,644	13,207	12,665	14,519	15,729	14,671	0.73
Excursion	120,288	100,040	79,740	75,815	80,100	85,802	93,308	98,237	103,403	104,553	0.87
Overseas	21,504	21,656	21,049	20,693	15,889	18,750	16,781	14,472	11,883	13,183	0.61
Sea, Canal, Docks etc.	21,491	23,079	19,500	14,470	14,475	16,699	13,977	13,767	14,830	13,317	0.62
Hotels	4,008	3,185	3,881	4,236	3,734	3,697	4,539	3,877	3,646	4,414	1.10
Office Expenses and Salary	31,947	32,402	30,488	29,706	29,410	29,287	29,952	30,546	30,432	31,364	0.98
Road	9,915	5,085	2,603	2,107	2,092	2,065	2,130	1,820	1,760	1,068	0.11
Goods Department	1,476	1,182	1,116	1,420	992	1,411	1,704	3,474	2,550	5,159	3.50
Others	7,559	7,976	5,142	6,236	6,215	6,280	7,307	7,087	8,168	13,370	1.77
Total	352,532	325,060	255,981	247,348	235,153	251,217	257,938	259,611	271,399	282,984	0.80

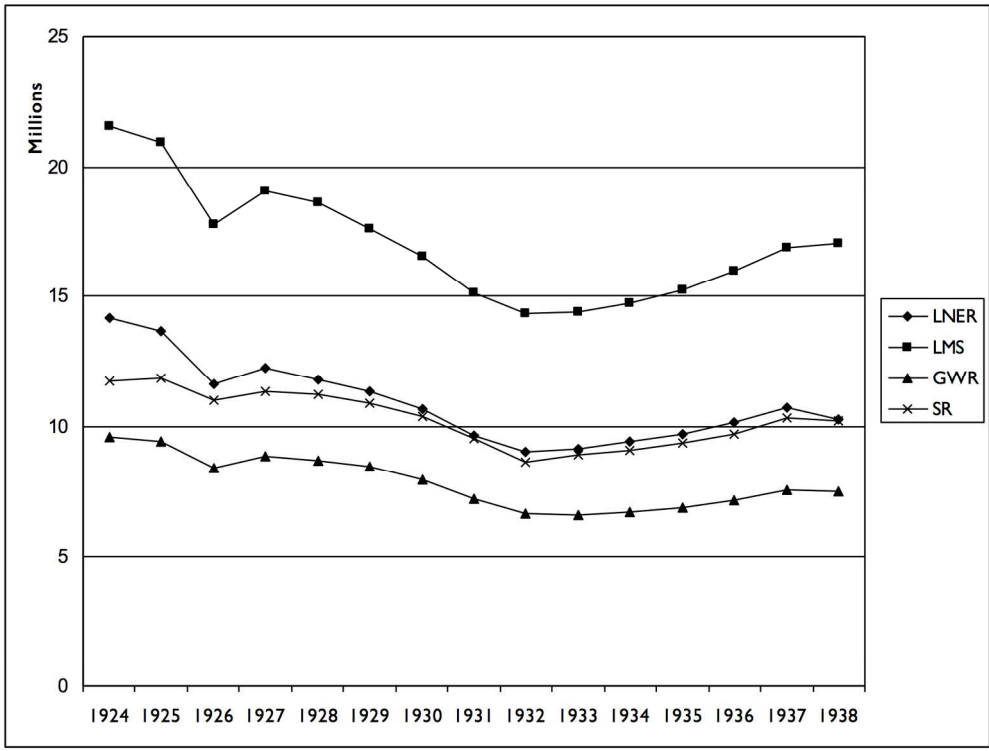


Figure 1. Big Four Passenger Revenue, 1924-1938
Source: TNA, RAIL 398/42-55

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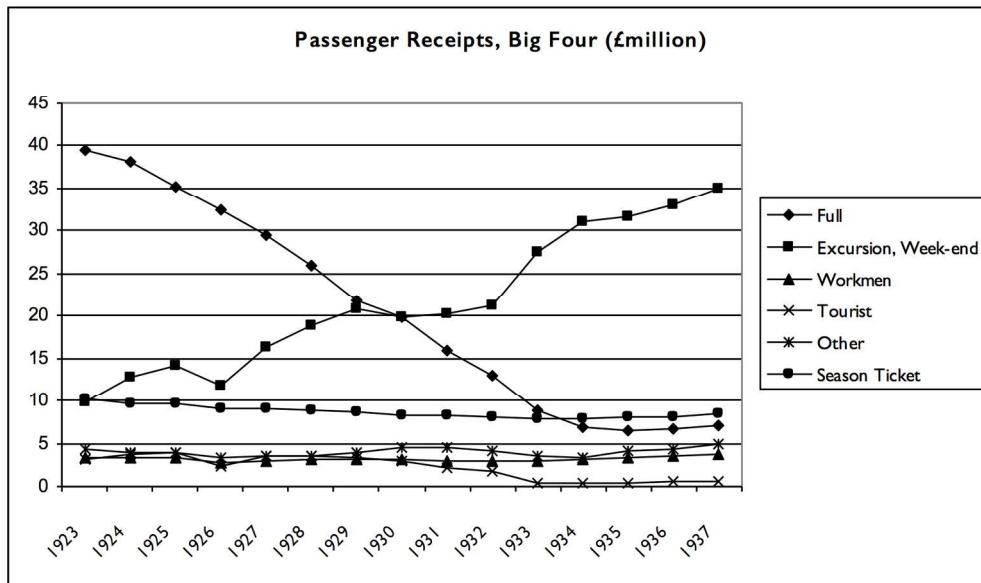


Figure 2. Big Four Passenger Receipts by Ticket Type, 1923–1937
 Source: Railway Returns, various years

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Figure 3. "British Railways" at Advertising Exhibition, Olympia
Source: GWR Magazine (1927), p. 318

469x291mm (144 x 144 DPI)

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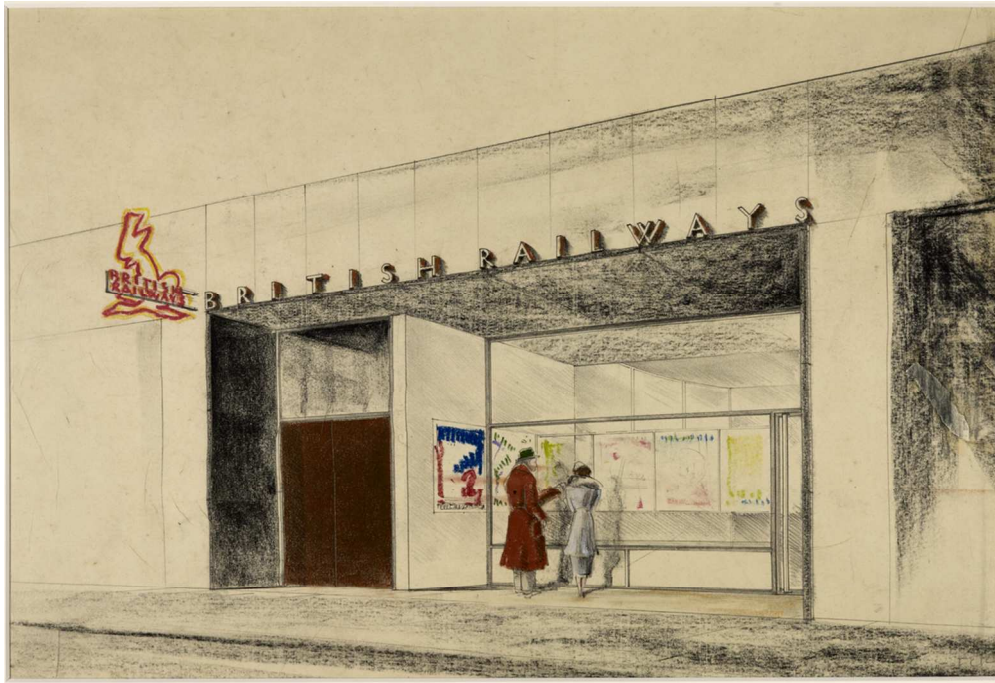


Figure 4. British Railway Office, designed by H. T. Cadbury Brown, 1936
Source: Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Collections, SD59/3

207x141mm (150 x 150 DPI)

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Figure 5. LNER, "Dine Well by LNER" by Tom Purvis, 1935
Source: NRM 1978-8940, ©Science & Society Picture Library

233x184mm (150 x 150 DPI)

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Figure 6. SR, "Hike for Health", printed by The Baynard Press, c.1930
Source: NRM 1996-7432, ©Science & Society Picture Library

296x480mm (150 x 150 DPI)

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Figure 7. LNER, "East Coast Joys" by Tom Purvis, 1932
Source: NRM 1978-9362, ©Science & Society Picture Library

296x470mm (150 x 150 DPI)

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Figure 8. GWR/LMS/LNER/SR, "Take Your Dog", by Mabel Gear, c.1935
Source: NRM 1978-9637, ©Science & Society Picture Library

296x478mm (150 x 150 DPI)