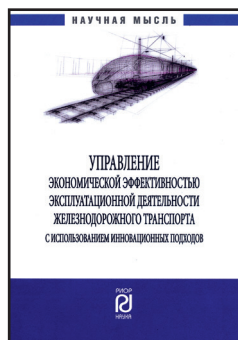


INNOVATIVE DRIVERS AND GROWTH DYNAMICS

Management of economic efficiency of operational activities of railway transport using innovative approaches: Monograph. D. A. Macheret, A. V. Ryshkov, N. A. Valeev [et al]; Ed. by D. A. Macheret and A. V. Ryshkov. Moscow, RIOR, 2018, 212 p.



ABSTRACT

In the collective monograph, the dynamics of economic efficiency of operational activities of railways and use of certain types of industrial resources of the industry are analyzed, influence of innovations and market conditions is shown, and a scientifically based tool for managing economic efficiency in the sphere of operation of rail transport in conditions of innovation-oriented development is proposed.

The book is intended for managers and specialists of industry companies, government regulation bodies, researchers and university professors.

Keywords: railway transport, operation, economic efficiency, management, innovations.

The restructuring of the railway industry is fifteen years old. What-no, but an anniversary. And although the collective monograph on management of economic efficiency of operation of railways was unlikely to be prepared for this date, it inevitably became also an appraiser of a transitional period that the railwaymen had lived through. After all, the industry economy has undergone very serious changes and – we will not dissemble – tests.

The transformation dealt with all levels of management and structures of transport and industry system. New independent companies emerged, freight, passenger and container transportation became autonomous processes, and wagon roling stock is now in the ownership of forwarders and cargo owners instead of former ministry of railways. It is of interest to outline that there are now many parallel lines of responsibility, let's call it like that, and many new problems. The nature of the problems sometimes, if we follow e.g. the publications in WTT, does not correspond to the program objectives of the reforms, on the contrary it is opposite to them, and cause doubts about the synchronicity of actions of actors of different modes of transport, who are now mastering and developing their roles in the transportation market. It is clear that timely corrections should be made in the areas of development. And the environment gives birth to innovative prompters, growth drivers, those who generate further growth by searching solutions that meet social expectations.

Avoiding to exacerbate the subtext of the problems that are born from restructuring of the industry and its fragmentation, there is no sense to turn to a discussion on obvious market realities while it is better to return to the essence of scientific analysis, in which the authors of monographic research are engaged. They have a rational goal – starting from the situation of the 2000s, to show the

logic and dynamics of the changes that have taken place, including the motives for innovative approaches in restructuring economic mechanisms, technologies and management tools, justifying the indicators of efficiency of operational activities of railways that are adequate to new requirements.

From this point of view, the content of the peer-reviewed scientific work fully answers the authors'. In the sequence of the chapters of the book, clearly marked by the cross-cutting theme, not only the target task is preserved, but also the desire to support development of the research plot with logically connected intermediate conclusions. They are not formalized, they are not divided into clauses and subparagraphs, but they are evidently present as peculiar semantic bridges on transitions from one topic or problem to another – in fact, navigators if they are associated with modern transport terminology.

The first chapter is laconic and at the same time absolutely clear, it substantiates the initial conceptual positions that the authors occupy in relation to the subject of the research. Operational activities in the broadest sense – this is the whole work of the railways to transport cargo and passengers, in the narrow sense – only the transportation work of rolling stock. For economic efficiency of such activities, the indicators of net profit and profitability are usually used. In the opinion of monographists, these results are significantly influenced by the results of financial transactions, and to eliminate such a strong influence, it is more economical to evaluate economic efficiency, it is more appropriate to use a measure that is independent of indirect activity – the operating cost coefficient of a transport company, which is the ratio of operating costs to revenue transportation of goods (p. 6).

Arguing further in favor of their choice and showing the essence of its advantages on the ex-



ample of the dynamics of economic indicators of Russian Railways and foreign railway companies (in particular, the USA), the authors propose a classification of values of the operating cost factor, which allows the use of zonal levels of these values as a criterion for economic efficiency of operational activities. Without motivating details: the best for the practice level of costs – extra optimal (less than 70 %), the next step is optimal (70–80 %), then – acceptable (80–90 %), excessively high (90–100 %), unacceptable more than 100 %). For the holding company of Russian Railways in the period under review, the operating cost ratio was in the range of 90–100 %, that is, it was excessively high and could not give the system full-fledged opportunities for development (pp. 9–12).

Actually, the subsequent chapters are designed to show how to improve efficiency of operational activities, reduce the expense through more productive use of existing resources. At the same time, the potential of the railway infrastructure and rolling stock, the fleet of freight cars and locomotives, the possibilities for expanding the fronts for container transportation (mainly international ones) are separately assessed. Moreover, each type of resource requires its evaluation indicators with regard to productivity, and this is the special problem, the solution of which is detailed in the book on the basis of different approaches and allows for different interpretations of meanings, not in all a coinciding understanding of distant goals.

In my opinion, the seventh chapter is fundamentally important, in which, at the same time, there is a response to «emotions» about attempts to seek controlled operational efficiency when there is unlimited property pluralism in the country's car fleet, and one of the real examples of innovation in the scientific organization of the transportation process, adequate reaction of transport economists to market conditions.

The main point: the previous general index of efficiency and quality of operational work – car turnover – against the backdrop of separation of owners has significantly lost its power, being in the role of an analytical, and even more so of an administrative indicator. But a direct analysis of the railway practice demonstrates the new economic significance of the outstripping growth of the net weight of the train in comparison with the gross weight, and the sector speed compared to the technical one (Chapter 6), and this gives the motive that no longer a car, but a train is considered an integrated resource unit of railway transport. That is, the train economy becomes the focus of the entire sectoral

economy, and the overall performance indicator of operational activities is the average hourly capacity of the train, defined as the product of its net weight per sector speed. The higher is the coefficient of useful work of train work (the ratio of the average hourly capacity of the train to the average hourly work performed by him), the other things being equal, the higher will be incomes (pp. 128–129).

Its special logic can be seen in the fact that the last, ninth chapter of the monograph is devoted to management of operating costs, taking into account the economic conjuncture. Actually, in market conditions, the duty to respond in a timely manner to changes in supply and demand, which are related to transportation, the situation with a multifactorial economic environment in a country where raw materials, energy, labor and other resources sometimes have unpredictable dynamics, has long become decisive for optimizing operating costs, reducing the cost of train work, if we are talking about the prevalence of these performance indicators in assessments.

In the study of the conjuncture, clear relationships and even regularities can be traced. For example, the conjuncture of the freight transport market depends on the conjuncture of the markets of the goods transported, and the situation of passenger traffic – on the labor market situation. At the same time, the common property of the conjuncture factors is that they are formed outside the railway transport (p. 167). I think there is one inestimable nuance: the notorious, by default, rejection of its active participation and influence in the processes of creating conjunctural trends. Speaking in a simple way, we need the notorious «game of anticipation». Why is the domestic railway not looking for its own breakthrough versions of modern container technologies, mechanisms, «cargo cases», but only hopes for a European or Chinese innovator? And it is just important not to look for something that is already ready, but also to offer a fundamentally new, unfolding conjuncture in the direction of their interests.

The chapter with calls not to forget about the requirements of the conjuncture, in fact, assumes the function of concluding to the monograph. Besides it would not be redundant if logically connected with each other and arranged in a certain sequence parts of the book, written by different authors, are concluded by a general part, summarizing the topics developed along the scientific text.

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