

## Abstract

This thesis argues that during the early twentieth century the Great Western Railway changed its attitudes to customers. Previously, passengers were viewed as a captive market needing little encouragement. This thesis finds that around 1900 the company's attitude shifted; it began to consider passengers as individuals with wants and desires that required satisfaction. During the next forty years, the GWR continued to hone its strategies in an effort to become customer orientated. The reasoning behind this and how the company's marketing strategy was enacted is exposed using overlooked corporate photographs, sources which provide the greatest evidence for a reconceptualisation of attitudes towards customers. The company's photographs were never merely illustrative or secondary to more commonly analysed sources such as pictorial posters; the taking and publication of photographs was closely supervised by individuals with a developing approach to marketing. This thesis argues that the photographs represent a window onto corporate policy, specifically, that associated with marketing holiday travel to railway passengers. In particular, the sheer amount of varied photographic narratives reveal how the GWR segmented the market, persuading the 'lover of the picturesque', the family, women, sportsmen and outdoorsmen to use its holiday services by researching their background and interests. As little is known about railway marketing between 1906 and 1939, with historians vigorously debating whether railway companies rivalled other businesses in their attempts to understand consumers, the different visual techniques, framing devices and use of symbolic content in the photographs means that they should be acknowledged as significant sources. In this sense this thesis builds on attempts to align transport history with the fields of consumption and commercial cultures, heeding calls that there is still much to be done in achieving this marriage.