Chapter One

Marketing Holiday Travel: Theory and Practice on the GWR 1906-1939

This chapter seeks to qualify the subsequent qualitative analysis of the GWR's photographic marketing by examining the context in which it was produced. As has already been identified, lack of records prevents a definitive account of how the concept of the passenger as customer emerged, the picturing process as understood by the GWR, and even the procedures which led to a photograph being selected for publication. This presents a substantial obstacle. However, this chapter argues that some of this important information can be arrived at indirectly. By studying the activities of the GWR's publicity department as represented in the company magazine, committee minutes, debates and reports, this chapter demonstrates that what we see in terms of the material photographic marketing was the product of a sophisticated and evolving selling culture. Although this chapter argues this culture developed in earnest at the beginning of the twentieth century and intensified in the ensuing years, it owed its origins to nearly seventy years of railway development. Historians are by no means agreed on when, why and if railways marketed before or after this time, therefore, to better understand the GWR's position regarding selling in 1900, we must briefly analyse practices beforehand.

Section 1: Selling travel since 1830

On one hand the earliest passenger railways of the 1830s had some grasp of the need to entice customers and some understanding of the means for doing so. People were initially sceptical of the safety, comfort, and demeanour of railway services. Contemporary satirists

portrayed railways negatively as fire-breathing monsters which devoured passengers and countryside.[1] These uncertainties prompted the first railway public relations exercises, brands and advertisements.[2] Railway companies countered public hesitation by employing artists to illustrate the safety and normality of rail travel, and to allay fears that social classes would merge as never before.[3] Further initiatives, such as elaborate opening ceremonies, suggest that railway pioneers were aware of the benefits of marketing themselves.[4] Image conscious from the start, they selected grandiose names, used crests, heraldic devices, and colourful vehicle liveries to create distinct corporate identities.[5] Companies recognised that passengers needed to know that the service would perform without causing injury, but that it would also say something about their personality as consumers.

On the other hand, rail's novelty and speed compared to anything else available stunted ideas about marketing. With few exceptions, whenever a new line opened there was a spectacular increase in numbers travelling along the route compared with those previously using roads.[6] In one decade, railway passenger journeys throughout Britain rose from a handful to 27,763,602 by 1844.[7] Advertising aided this increase; it was used by railways to persuade passengers to forgo stage coaches. However, some scholars see this output as poor, crowded with information and above all indicative of an 'undeveloped' attitude to

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[1] James Taylor, 'Business in Pictures: Representations of Railway Enterprise in the Satirical Press in Britain 1845-1870', *Past and Present*, 189 (2005), pp. 118-20.
[2] Michael Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian Imagination*, (London, 1999), p. 217; Mark Casson, *The World's First Railway System: Enterprise, Competition and Regulation on the Railway Network in Victorian Britain*, (Oxford, 2009), p. 309.
[3] Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian Imagination*, p. 217.
[4] Even the death of politician William Huskisson, at the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway did not put off the paying public such was the grandeur of the event; Simon Garfield, *The Last Journey of William Huskisson*, (London, 2002).
[5] Casson, *The World's First Railway System*, p. 310; George Dow, *Railway Heraldry and Other Insignia*, (Newton Abbot, 1973); Keith Lovegrove, *Railway: Identity, Design and Culture*, (London, 2004), pp. 118-54.
[6] Phillip Bagwell, *The Transport Revolution*, (London, 1988), p. 95; Terry Gourvish, 'Railways 1830-70: The Formative Years', in Michael Freeman and Derek Aldcroft, *Transport in Victorian Britain*, (Manchester, 1988), p. 73.
[7] Peter Lyth and Philip Bagwell, *Transport in Britain: From Canal Lock To Gridlock*, (London, 2002), pp. 52-55.

marketing.[8] This is an unfair generalisation. Moreover, stamp duty, levied between 1712 and 1855, was a major disincentive to the development of press advertising for all businesses, as were the technical challenges imposed by contemporary printing machinery.[9] These restrictions offer a different explanation to that of immature promotional minds, but it does not obscure the fact that once the railways achieved mastery over the stage coach they saw little benefit in improving advertising.[10] As the railways were the new wonders of the world their marketing did not need to be at all sophisticated.

This attitude is confirmed in the provision of passenger amenities. Most companies saw little need to improve comfort or safety for passengers beyond first class. It was left up to the government, for example, to require basic standards. Gladstone's well-known Act of 1844 stipulated that a third class train should run every day at one penny per mile, and that it should provide seats and basic protection from the weather.[11] Yet even after the Act these statutory conditions remained exceptional. The GWR presents a case in point. When asked about provision for third class passengers in 1844, the company stated that it would provide services once a day, possibly at night, in carriages of an inferior description, at a low price and a very low speed.[12] The GWR, or for that matter many other companies, did not grasp the possibilities of a mass market for travel, but neither, arguably, did they want to. This mind-set influenced the efforts of the next forty years.

Britain's railway's continued to expand, especially after 1850. Suburbanisation, particularly around London, provided a steady commuting market particularly amongst a middle-class clientele and 'working-men's' trains.[13] Still little effort was made to persuade consumers to travel but this was down to the historical fact that the lack of demand for large-

[8] Jack Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, (London, 1991), pp. 253-54.
[9] James Moore, 'Communications', in Colin Chant (ed.), *Science, Technology and Everyday Life, 1870-1950*, (London, 1989), p. 203; Elizabeth McFall, *Advertising: A Cultural Economy*, (London, 2004), pp. 155-64.
[10] Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, p. 261.
[11] Bagwell, *The Transport Revolution*, pp. 96-98.
[12] Bagwell, *The Transport Revolution*, p. 96.
[13] Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, pp. 324-27.

scale discretionary travel did not warrant it. Demand was based on largely regional markets over which railways had good control. In reality, with prices, speeds and conditions as they were, most people did not regularly travel far from home for leisure. There were no factory days and few public holidays.[14] It was not until the 1870s, when this began to change, that railways really began to renegotiate their appeals to consumers and seriously consider the means to grow the market.

In 1871 the Bank Holiday Act was introduced.[15] The effect was limited at first but it paved the way for subsequent initiatives which afforded a larger proportion of the population access to greater leisure.[16] Demand for travel also rose as incomes climbed.[17] The rise of mass market seaside resorts such as Brighton and Blackpool, both post-1870 phenomena, reflected this.[18] The secularisation of society provided further assistance. The powerful Victorian Sabbatarian lobby which frowned upon Sunday travel, for many their only day off, diminished after 1870.[19] Various factors therefore offered companies the potential to increase traffic.[20] But what is certain is that although passenger journeys at this time amounted to 288,632,921, an astronomical rise on the 27,763,602 taken in 1844,[21] this was not the peak of the market. Some railways recognised further potential for growth by further encouraging the middle and lower end of the market. As the choice for transport was now, in some cases, on a national scale, competitive measures also needed to be implemented. The 1870s witnessed the first rudimentary attempts to implement wider and more aggressive marketing strategies in an effort to pursue new customers.

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[14] John Hassam, *The Seaside, Health and The Environment in England and Wales Since 1800*, (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 34-37.
[15] James Walvin, *Beside The Seaside: A Social History Of The Popular Seaside Holiday*, (London, 1978), pp. 59-60.
[16] Sandra Dawson, *Holiday Camps in Twentieth Century Britain: Packaging Pleasure*, (Manchester, 2011), pp. 9-10.
[17] Hassam, *The Seaside, Health and The Environment*, pp. 34-37.
[18] Gourvish 'Railways 1830-70: The Formative Years', p. 78.
[19] Walvin, *Beside The Seaside*, p. 40.
[20] P. Cain, 'Railways 1870-1914: The Maturity of the Private System', in Michael Freeman and Derek Aldcroft, *Transport in Victorian Britain*, (Manchester, 1988), p. 118.
[21] Lyth and Bagwell, *Transport in Britain*, pp. 52-55.

The Midland Railway (MR) pioneered the truly mass market for discretionary rail travel. It announced in 1872 the provision of third class accommodation on every train at the Parliamentary fare of a penny per mile. Two years later the company abolished second class and raised the standard of third.[22] The MR's experiments helped popularise a number of carriage design improvements, most notably heating. Prior to the 1870s the only heat provided in British railway carriages was from 'footwarmers', tins filled with hot water.[23] As well as steam heating, in 1881 the London, Brighton & South Coast company was the first to equip a carriage with electric light.[24] After the 1870s third class passengers were increasingly able to travel more cheaply in smoother, quieter, generally more comfortable trains. This represented substantial progression in considering passengers' wants and needs as a way of increasing business. Alongside speed and price, comfort became a saleable feature and an advantageous one in competition.[25] Britain's railways decisively shifted towards a low-margin, high-volume business model.[26] But this brought wider implications for selling. Passengers might now be persuaded that a more comfortable service awaited them on different lines. Initially regarded as foolish by competitors, the Midland's example was quickly followed as most other companies saw such innovation as an important means of retaining market share and winning passengers.

Change was encouraged by a new breed of railway managers. Few of the railway pioneers were professional men and there was considerable mobility between manual and clerical positions until the 1860s.[27] The technical problems of railway management were

[22] Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, p. 84.
[23] Jack Simmons, *The Railways of Britain*, (London, 1986), p. 145.
[24] Simmons, *The Railways of Britain*, p. 145.
[25] Hiroki Shin, 'Rapid Travel In Comfort: Quality of Passenger Experience In The History Of Britain's Railways', (Unpublished paper, European Social Science History Conference, Ghent, Belgium, 13-16th April 2010), p. 4.
[26] Walvin, *Beside The Seaside*, p. 36.
[27] Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, p. 102.

only partially understood,[28] and men influential in building the railways, such as Stephenson and Brunel, continued to exercise considerable authority.[29] After the 1860s the growth of railways as big businesses reduced the incentive for executives to act opportunistically and encouraged more systematic career routes.[30] There was a better understanding of the boundaries between the separates spheres of directors and managers and an increasing commitment to public service and profit.[31] For instance, Gourvish identifies the increasing importance of the railway general manager, a position created in response to the need for strategic direction in a company's operation.[32] As well as reconceptualising operating policies around the notion of 'public service', astute railwaymen began to study the tastes and needs of customers.[33] Ultimately some began to sponsor the idea that passengers were not a disorganised mass but functioned as groups which could be manipulated.

We see their influence on promotional activities and greater investment in advertising after 1870. This happened slowly at first, but quickened in the 1890s. The style and quality of press advertising became clearer and more professionally presented compared to the 1860s, even though the basic information conveyed was similar.[34] In addition, a new attitude to travel as pleasurable in itself began to develop.[35] Partly this was down to new technologies such as photography and the lithographic poster. Although it was used by the manufacturing

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[28] Terry Gourvish, *Mark Huish and the London and North Western Railway: A Study of Management*, (Leicester, 1972), p. 29.
[29] Gourvish, *Mark Huish and the London and North Western Railway*, p. 23.
[30] Mike Savage 'Discipline, Surveillance and the 'Career': Employment on the Great Western Railway 1833-1914', in Alan McKinlay and Ken Starkey (eds.), *Foucault, Management and Organisation Theory*, (London, 1998), pp. 79-80; Geoffrey Channon, 'The Business Morals of British Railway Companies in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', *Business and Economic History*, 28:2 (1999), p. 76.
[31] Channon, 'The Business Morals of British Railway Companies in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', p. 76.
[32] Gourvish, *Mark Huish and the London and North Western Railway*, pp. 260-67.
[33] Geoffrey Channon, *Railways In Britain and The United States, 1830-1940: Studies In Economic and Business History*, (Aldershot, 2001), p. 34; Terry Gourvish, *Railways and the Victorian Economy 1830-1914*, (London, 1980), p. 47; R.J. Irving, 'The Profitability and Performance of British Railways, 1870-1914', *Economic History Review,* 31:1 (1978), pp. 46-66.
[34] See, for example, the difference in designs collected together in William Fenton, *Railway Printed Ephemera: Being a Tragi-comic Picture of the Rise and Fall of the Railways in Great Britain Deduced from Some of the Bits and Pieces of Paper They Left Behind*, (Woodbridge, 1992).
[35] Beverley Cole and Richard Durack, *Happy as a Sandboy: Early Railway Posters*, (London, 1990), p. 13.

arm of companies since the 1850s,[36] photographs gradually began to be used to entice passengers.[37] Companies commissioned photographs to improve the attractiveness of carriages and show off their system.[38] The Great Eastern Railway was the first to experiment with this in 1884, followed by other companies.[39] However, the photographic sales publication, indeed quality sales publications of any kind, was some years away, the railways preferring the lithographic poster instead. Developed in the 1880s,[40] railways were amongst the first to use posters to advertise. The use of stock imagery meant that companies depended on the artistic direction of the printers used.[41] By the 1890s posters became more professional as companies appointed specialist designers. Further development of seaside holidays provided additional impetus. Although some companies had previously viewed holiday traffic as a frivolous interference in 'proper' railway running,[42] growing customer prosperity and increased demand made holiday travel an important source of revenue. Destinations were the enticing lure to get more people to buy a railway ticket. The poster was regarded as crucial in persuading passengers first to travel and then to choose one railway over another. Some historians argue that the poster's variety of scenery represented a rudimentary take on market segmentation.[43] This is difficult to corroborate fully – there is no textual evidence – but the point holds that companies tried, by the breath and range of their advertising, to appeal to all their potential customers in turn.[44] At the same time several railways organised advertising departments. Although the true extent of their activities is

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[36] Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, p. 149.
[37] The London and North Western Railway established a photographic department at its Crewe locomotive factory in the mid-1870s and the Midland Railway employed photographers from the early 1880s: Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, p. 149.
[38] Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, p. 149.
[39] Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, p. 149.
[40] For more information on the development of poster advertising please see Terence Nevett, *Advertising in Britain: A History*, (London, 1982), pp. 86-92; Margaret Timmers (ed.), *The Power of the Poster*, (London, 1998); Catherine Haill, *Fun Without Vulgarity: Victorian and Edwardian Popular Entertainment Posters*, (London, 1996); McFall, *Advertising: A Cultural Economy*, pp. 158-72.
[41] Cole and Durack, *Happy as a Sandboy*, pp. 11-12.
[42] Cole and Durack, *Happy as a Sandboy*, pp. 13-14.
[43] Cole and Durack, *Happy as a Sandboy*, p. 17.
[44] Cole and Durack, *Happy as a Sandboy*, p. 14.

largely unknown beyond arranging advertising space in a range of periodicals and commissioning posters,[45] their existence demonstrates a new commitment to selling if only at the level of more frequent announcement.

It is tempting to take this information as evidence of gradual dedication to more professionalised selling amongst railway companies before 1900. However, new initiatives were not collectively adopted or universally acclaimed. One correspondent in the *Railway Times* labelled the numerous pamphlets, flyers and programmes 'absolutely useless', only swelling the waste-paper baskets of recipients'.[46] Others were undecided on the respectability of advertising which was viewed on the railways and beyond as a public nuisance.[47] The meagre comment on advertising matters in transport industry magazines before 1900 suggests the subject was regarded with ambivalence or as a novelty which would fade.[48] There was similarly little discussion of passengers as customers: they were still perceived largely as a mass divided only by class. Furthermore, it is difficult to tell whether companies 'believed' in the usefulness of advertising or whether they practiced it because others did. The same was broadly true of the developments in passenger comfort which did not all come quickly into general use.[49] Improvements were costly and companies were possibly sceptical of how much additional custom would be gained in order to justify the financial outlay.

This was the condition of the wider industry before 1900, but how did the GWR compare? Initially the company followed a roughly similar developmental pattern as that

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[45] David Smith, *The Railway and Its Passengers: A Social History*, (Newton Abbott, 1988), pp. 156-58; Cole and Durack, *Happy as a Sandboy*, pp. 12-13.
[46] *The Railway Times*, 3rd July 1897, p. 19.
[47] Christian Barman, *The Man Who Built London Transport: A Biography of Frank Pick*, (Newton Abbot, 1979), pp. 29-30; Catherine Flood, 'Pictorial Posters in Britain at the Turn of the Twentieth Century', in David Bownes and Oliver Green (eds.), *London Transport Posters: A Century of Art and Design*, (Aldershot, 2008), pp. 15-17; Nevett, *Advertising in Britain*, pp. 136-37; E. S. Turner, *The Shocking History of Advertising*, (London, 1952), pp. 84-85; D.L. LeMahieu, *A Culture For Democracy: Mass Communication and the Cultivated Mind in Britain Between the Wars*, (Oxford, 1998), p. 155.
[48] For example, aside from the negative comments referenced above, between 1890 and 1900 the *Railway Times* carried little information on the subject even at a time when the amount of advertising employed by companies was increasing rapidly.
[49] Simmons, *The Railways of Britain*, p. 148.

outlined above. By the 1850s it had grown large by absorbing smaller companies and had fashioned a position of national prestige thanks to idiosyncratic, if at times snobbish, treatment of passengers.[50] But by the 1860s the outlook was bleak: the GWR faced bankruptcy. Although it was rescued, financial stringency dominated the next thirty years.[51] Unlike other companies the GWR's management was hardly dynamic. In 1885 its general manager, James Grierson, had held office since the 1860s, and the superintendent of the line, G.N. Tyrell, was an elderly individual opposed to change.[52] As an old colleague of the Chairman, Tyrell possessed great influence which he usually exercised in opposition to plans for improvement.[53] Like Queen Victoria, Tyrell was horrified by speeds in excess of forty miles-an-hour and he confined the bulk of GWR trains to this limit during his regime.[54] In this way, and others such as impoverished carriage design,[55] the GWR provoked negative public attitudes.

Advertising was reluctantly acknowledged as a necessity at this time despite cost-saving measures. It is difficult to pinpoint an exact year, but it was probably during the early 1870s that the GWR created its own in-house advertising department to manage press activities.[56] An annual report from the Advertising Department, dated January 1876, reveals something of its duties. The Department employed a chief, assistant clerk and two inspectors. Rather than designing and arranging its own advertising the department facilitated the inclusion of advertising designed by outside companies into newspapers, guides and other publications. The cost of these activities amounted to £2493 for the half year. The report claimed that these measures had resulted in an increase of nearly £5000 in

[50] C.R. Clinker and E MacDermot, *History of the GWR: Volume One 1833-1863*, (London, 1964), pp. 72-99.
[51] C.R. Clinker and E MacDermot, *History of the GWR: Volume Two 1863-1921*, (London, 1964), p. 169; O.S. Nock, *The GWR in The Nineteenth Century*, (London, 1962), pp. 99-101.
[52] Roger Wilson, *Go Great Western: A History Of GWR Publicity*, (Newton Abbott, 1987), pp. 21-22.
[53] Clinker and MacDermot, *History of the GWR: Volume Two*, p. 193; Wilson, *Go Great Western*, pp. 21-22.
[54] Clinker and MacDermot, *History of the GWR: Volume Two*, p. 193.
[55] Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, pp. 259-60.
[56] Wilson claims that the department was formed in 1886: Wilson, *Go Great Western*, p. 19.

receipts from excursion traffic during the previous half year, thereby justifying its existence. How it knew this is unclear, nevertheless advertising was shown to work. The staff also negotiated discounts on advertising space, and a total saving of £190 covered roughly the cost of their salaries.[57] Yet the expenditure was considerably lower than a range of contemporary businesses.[58]

This snapshot does not confirm whether, ultimately, the management saw advertising as a worthwhile activity, but the fact that it was retained at a time when the company faced economic constraints gives a sense of its importance even then. For example, at the same time the GWR was ordered to replace its 'broad-gauge' track and rolling stock.[59] Encumbered with this expense, exacerbated by the general economic stagnation of the 1870s and 1880s, the GWR invested little in improved conditions for second and third class passengers.[60] Parsimoniousness extended to other areas;[61] the company favoured the use of 'slip-coaches' where guards released coaches allowing them to glide into stations without the rest of the train stopping. Further, when the MR decided to carry third-class passengers on all trains in 1872, the GWR offered to do the same, but with an extensive list of exceptions.[62] Until 1882 the GWR charged higher express fares between London and Bristol even for trains taking more than three hours to complete the journey; hardly 'express' standard by the 1880s.[63] Advertising did not tackle a sustained poor impression amongst travellers at a time when other companies were experimenting with improvements. As a result the company lost

[57] The National Archives (TNA), RAIL 267/30, Report On Advertising Department For Half-Year 31st January 1876.
[58] Nevett, *Advertising in Britain*, pp. 70-74.
[59] 'Broad-gauge' - a gap between the rails of seven feet compared to the 'narrow-gauge' of 4ft 8.5 ins employed throughout the rest of the country - Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, p. 71.
[60] Nock, *The GWR in The Nineteenth Century*, pp. 99-101.
[61] David St. John Thomas, *A Regional History of The Railways of Great Britain Volume 1: The West Country*, (Newton Abbot, 1981), p. 167.
[62] Clinker and MacDermot, *History of the GWR Volume II*, p. 208
[63] Clinker and MacDermot, *History of the GWR Volume II*, p. 208.

out to competitors, particularly the London and South Western Railway and the MR, which offered quicker and more comfortable services.[64]

From the brink of despair the GWR was saved by men who redressed its financial position and began an overall modernising policy including attitudes to passenger and selling.[65] Between 1885 and 1895 the company's administration changed significantly. A new general manager was appointed and a new chairman elected. Under their sponsorship the passenger service was re-cast and corridor trains with steam-heating, restaurant services and accommodation for all three classes became common by 1900.[66] New lines were built, allowing the company to shorten journey times, open up opportunities to encourage people to travel further and to compete with rival services. This was enhanced by additional building projects such as the Severn Tunnel (opened 1886) and the Paddington-Didcot widening (1877-1899).[67] The modernisation plan sought to sweep away the leisured and roundabout travelling long a feature of the GWR.[68]

The Advertising Department was also nurtured. After 1886 it was attached to the general manager's office which brought its activities closer under the watch of the company's creative direction.[69] It was some time before these arrangements bore fruit in the company's own literature and pictorial posters,[70] but this was ultimately assisted by investment in the stationery department. In 1897 J. R. Townsend became stationery superintendent and under his guidance the department grew from one man with a hand press to a staff of seven with several machines. The company could now conveniently produce bills and circulars under its

[64] Clinker and MacDermot, *History of the GWR Volume II*, pp. 247-49.
[65] Nock, *The GWR in The Nineteenth Century*, pp. 99-101; Wilson, *Go Great Western*, p. 25; Clinker and MacDermot, *History of the GWR Volume II*, p. 193.
[66] Michael Harris, *Great Western Coaches: 1890-1954*, (Newton Abbot, 1966), pp. 11-12.
[67] Clinker and MacDermot, *History of the GWR Volume II*, pp. 186-95.
[68] Nock, *The GWR in The Nineteenth Century*, p. 192.
[69] Wilson, *Go Great Western*, pp. 24-25.
[70] Wilson, *Go Great Western*, pp. 24-25.

own stewardship and at short notice.[71] A sense of crisis had made the company receptive to change, ultimately placing it favourably at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Although posters, press advertisements and handbills were probably directed by burgeoning rational thought about demand, ideas about marketing were far from codified, generally accepted or 'sophisticated'.[72] The railways were not far behind the efforts of other businesses however, who, in the final quarter of the nineteenth century, began to benefit from the redefinition of advertising as a systematic, scientific and professional activity with standardised systems of trade practices and knowledge.[73] Although it was still in a state of evolution,[74] advertising had, by 1900, reached the stage at which commentators and specialists began to discuss not only its ethics but its psychology, its economics, and its value, if any, to the community.[75] How far railway managers began to consider the viewpoint of the consumer, in more than purely abstract terms, is harder to establish, but what is clear is that from these initial discussions and experiments came a torrent of theories and methods for marketing railway travel after 1900. Although an understanding of passengers as customers was thus in development for many years, this chapter argues that it flourished under various regulatory and technological changes in the first decades of the twentieth century.

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This chapter has three aims. Firstly, in taking up the story in 1900 it analyses the development of the GWR's customer-centred approach. It argues that this began in earnest at the start of the twentieth century when comment on who the passenger was and how to sell to them began to be discussed, codified and explored in journals and at dedicated conferences.

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[71] GWRM, May 1904, pp. 71-72.
[72] Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, p. 253.
[73] McFall, *Advertising: A Cultural Economy*, p. 177.
[74] Nevett, *Advertising In Britain*, p. 137.
[75] Turner, *The Shocking History of Advertising*, p. 157.

It periodises this development into three stages; 1900-1914; 1921-1929; 1930-1939, during which understanding passenger marketing was influenced by outside factors such as war, amalgamation, road competition and changing holiday consumption. Although the information on the picturing process is incomplete, neglected sources such as company magazines and the records of *Holiday Haunts'* 1930s editor, Maxwell Fraser, can be used to better understanding how photographic marketing was constructed with customers in mind and how far it reflected advances in marketing thought. It shows that the GWR did not always respond as expected, or as has been written of it.

Secondly, whilst the GWR certainly discussed a customer-centred approach, this chapter also explains how these thoughts conditioned photographic procurement and publication construction. By demonstrating that photographic marketing was forged in a considered selling culture this chapter qualifies and grounds the qualitative analysis in subsequent chapters. Establishing what the GWR thought about passengers in a conceptual sense and how this translated into photographic marketing assists understanding how and why photographic marketing appeared as it did. Whilst other analyses of railway marketing look mainly to the social context to explaining appearance,[76] this chapter concentrates on the production context to demonstrate that photographic marketing was 'authored' by greater corporate understanding of the passengers with which the company came into daily contact. This prevents a superficial reading of the photographic messages, instead grounding them in the broader marketing messages which the organisation as a whole transmitted. The reader will wish to know how the GWR's operation compared to contemporary rivals, and where possible this comparison is undertaken. Although space, and available secondary literature, precludes a more in depth discussion of how the GWR's use of photographic marketing compared to other companies, both within and outside the railway industry, this chapter

[76] For example, D.C.H Watts, 'Evaluating British Railway Poster Advertising: The London and North Eastern Railway Between The Wars', *Journal of Transport History*, 3rd ser. 25:2 (2004), pp. 23-56.

suggests that the company at least kept pace with wider theories on marketing between 1906 and 1939 and in some cases provided innovations which were widely applauded.

Finally, this analysis questions the conclusions of other historians and curators who suggest that the GWR's marketing lagged behind that of other railways.[77] Examining the production context, this chapter argues that the GWR's efforts have been somewhat misrepresented by those who focus purely on an analysis of poster content for example. Like posters, the photographs are useful but to prevent miss-interpreting their messages we must first understand the selling culture from which they came.

Section 2: A New Dawn - Selling after 1900 – Stage 1

For the GWR, and the wider railway industry, the preceding years had witnessed the increasing importance of discretionary and holiday traffic. Although greater demand might appear as a corollary factor on the development of promotional activities, inter-company competition on increasingly national basis enforced the need to market more intensely.[78] Furthermore, although the public wished to travel, after 1900 the railways increasingly considered where to go, what to do and how frequently to do it as largely undecided factors which could be manipulated. This necessitated a customer focus and consideration of passengers less as a homogeneous mass who needed to be transported as quickly as possible, and more as individuals grouped by wants and interests who could be analysed and segmented to the company's advantage.

[77] Michael Bonavia, *The Four Great Railways*, (Newton Abbott, 1980), p. 39; Beverley Cole and Richard Durack*, Railway Posters, 1923-1947: From the Collection of the National Railway Museum, York, England*, (New York, 1992), p. 9.
[78] Cole and Durack, *Happy as a Sandboy*, pp. 13-17.

The GWR's company magazine, described by contemporaries as having a 'zeal' for advertising,[79] displays the emerging notion of passengers as customers, and an increasing preoccupation with a customer focus. Granted, the magazine had only recently developed into a medium for recording business matters,[80] and thus any increase in advertising comment was likely. But the tone of the discussions suggests a heightened level of consideration, and not, for example, simply an attempt to justify new roles and expenditure connected to publicity. For instance, company officials outlined the desire to remove 'chance' from passenger inducement and make it more akin to a 'science'. In 1907 a publicity clerk wrote that the GWR's goal was to take holiday selection from a process of accident or impulse to one which manipulated potential customers through directed advertising.[81] This desire reflected the tone of several other articles after 1900,[82] but was perhaps best conveyed in 1909 in a piece entitled, 'The Science of Commercial Advertising'.[83] The author argued that the passenger's 'consciousness' could be influenced to augment discretionary travel, and to achieve this the GWR needed to look at consumers not from the point of view of the company but to tell the public 'what can be done for them'.[84] The perception of advertising as a commercial 'science' reflected the need to know more about potential customers and devise new and varying ways of communicating with them. It reflected a shift from an intuitive understanding of demand to ideas which could be supported through, for example, research. Furthermore, telling the public what was being done *for* them was also a major shift from a largely take-it-or-leave-it mentality to serving the public. Although the intricacies of how to

[79] 'Railway Advertising', *Railway Times*, August 31st 1912, p. 223.
[80] The company had recently purchased the magazine from the Temperance Union: see the section on sources in this thesis' introduction and Mike Esbester, 'Organizing Work: Company Magazines and the Discipline of Safety', *Management and Organisational History*, 3:3-4 (2008), p. 220; Wilson, *Go Great Western: A History of GWR Publicity*, p. 164 for details.
[81] GWRM, May 1907, p. 99.
[82] GWRM, May 1911, p. 138; March 1912, p. 79; August 1912; May 1913.
[83] GWRM, May 1909, p. 101.
[84] GWRM, May 1909, p. 101.

sell were still in genesis, these discussions offer an insight into the increasing centralisation of the customer and the better-defined role for marketing.

As well as imagining the passengers and their wants, GWR publicists found that they could draw on significant internal information, statistical as well as anecdotal, about customers' travel habits. Since 1840, the Regulation of Railways Act had required every company to deliver statistics on the aggregate traffic in passengers and freight to the Board of Trade.[85] It is difficult to discern how far this information was attended to even after 1900: some historians argue that companies were unaware of the costs of operating particular types of services and that the aggregate picture of profitability for the entire organisation was what mattered most.[86] However, there is evidence to suggest that quantitative statistics at least afforded a fairly rudimentary understanding of passengers as customers. The GWR had a good idea, based on this statistical evidence, of what services to put on and where, and which passenger groups to focus its energies on. In 1880 seventy-seven per-cent of GWR passengers travelled third class, in 1904 the percentage was up to eighty-nine.[87] This large increase made clear that the public's travel habits were changing. The company endeavoured to improve its third class accommodation as a result, and took the decision to abolish second class, completed on all lines by 1912.[88] The company's use of statistics will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Seven. Nevertheless, here it emphasises the point that at the turn-of-century the GWR's developing marketing strategies were not sightless. Although rudimentary, passenger numbers showed when a change in strategy was necessary.

But the statistics still treated passengers largely as a mass. After 1900 we see the GWR begin to acknowledge that the railways had to sell to people with varying tastes and degrees of wealth. But this presented a problem: what should be advertised and where? This

[85] Phillip Bagwell, *The Railway Clearing House In The British Economy 1842-1922*, (London, 1968), p. 19.
[86] Smith, *The Railway and Its Passengers*, p. 86.
[87] GWRM, May 1905, pp. 84-86.
[88] A Brief Review of the Company's Hundred Years of Business: The Growth of Traffic Since the Railway Was Opened', GWRM, September 1935, pp. 495-501.

question was taken up in the magazine when one writer asked 'Do Railways Believe in Advertising?'. The anonymous author criticised railways for not embracing the practices and techniques of other industries.[89] A member of the GWR's Advertising Department responded strongly, claiming that it was not a simple case of following other industries. He highlighted a problem specific to the railways, the heterogeneous product and equally diverse market.[90] Unlike manufacturers of chemical products, food, beverages, or drugs, the railways' 'commodity' was hard to define. Transport was the obvious answer, but in this decade the GWR wanted people to consider railways differently in an attempt to make them consume more. Promoting all the things that rail could allow one to do was one answer, but it was not enough simply to have an attractive poster; 'advertising men must study their audiences'.[91] Although the first attempts at market segmentation were seen in the developmental poster content in the 1880s and 1890s, the subject was discussed more fervently throughout the Edwardian years. The GWR knew that communicating with varied markets was the vital component in growing the market, as well as the need to present these marketing messages in an 'attractive, convincing and forceful manner'.[92] As we will see presently, acknowledging segmented activities and interests had a direct influence on the way photography was procured and literature constructed and released. In this decade therefore, the overarching movement was towards marketing that was carefully planned, both because it was shaped by a desire for more 'scientific' passenger inducement, and because a catch-all appeal was now seen as insufficient.

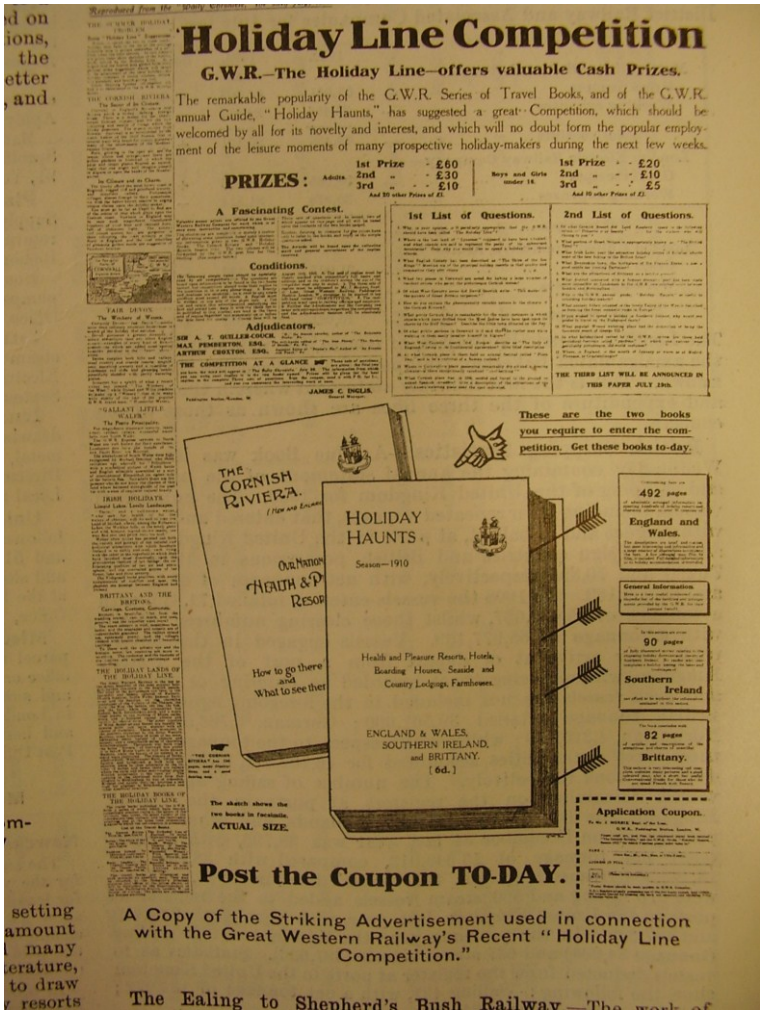
Reaching more and varied consumers meant that traditional publicity avenues including bill posting, timetables, postcards, and press announcements were supplemented by an array of new mediums such as sales publications and photographs. In addition, further

[89] GWRM, April 1913, pp. 102-03.
[90] GWRM, May 1913, p. 141.
[91] GWRM, May 1913, p. 141.
[92] GWRM, May 1909, p. 101.

innovations at the point of sale helped the GWR to better market to its customers. The company introduced thought-provoking and captivating slogans such as 'The Holiday Line', suggested by South Wales artist Archibald Edwards and adopted by the GWR in 1908,[93] alongside experiments with a roundel to 'brand' the company.[94] These efforts were joined by regular poetry, essay, and poster competitions, amongst the staff and the public, which encouraged customers to connect more deeply with the company's messages as well as making its advertising stand out.[95] *The Advertising World*, for example, commended the GWR's 'Holiday Line Competition', (Figure 1.1) for which entrants had to answer a number of questions about the GWR's holiday destinations.[96] *The Railway Gazette* proclaimed it 'one of the most notable advertising schemes ever undertaken by a railway company'.[97] Competitions highlight the GWR's early interest not just in promoting the company and its services, but also in using customer feedback to better its own communications.[98] As well as inducing thousands to pay closer attention to its advertisements, competition entries provided a rudimentary means of market research into what was popular, attractive or generated the most interest. Below, we will explore in greater depth what this meant for photographic marketing. In addition to going to the consumer via competitions, motor buses filled with promotional material toured the countryside, and company stands and tents were erected at national events.[99] Clearly, after 1900 the GWR took a more aggressive attitude to marketing. It is this aggressiveness, according to Fullerton, that forms the ethos of modern

[93] Wilson, *Go Great Western*, p. 24.
[94] GWRM, April 1905, p. 137; The GWR's early attempts to use branding as part of corporate identity requires a study all of its own, but it nevertheless suggests that the GWR, like other commercial organisations adopting this strategy, wanted the public to consider the company as an indication of quality, as well as to help consumers find and recognise its services; Teresa Da Silva Lopes and Paul Duguid (eds.), *Trademark, Branding and Competitiveness*, (New York, 2010), pp. 1-3.
[95] Ellen Gruber-Garvey, *The Adman In The Parlour: Magazines and the Gendering of Consumer Culture, 1880s-1910s*, (New York, 1996), p. 6.
[96] *The Advertising World*, August 1910, p. 159.
[97] 'Progressive Advertising in the Great Western', *The Railway Gazette*, 26th August 26 1910, p. 257.
[98] GWRM, August 1912; '...suggestions deal with posters, handbills, pamphlets and a few outline recommendations which, for commercial reasons that will be obvious, it is undesirable to publish'.
[99] GWRM, June 1914; Wilson, *Go Great Western*, pp. 135-36; GWRM, April 1905, p. 136.

marketing, setting it apart from earlier campaigns.[100] But there is a greater distinction: the GWR was aggressive both in its attempts to understand passengers as well as in applying this consideration to promotional activities.



Holiday Line Competition

G.W.R.—The Holiday Line—offers valuable Cash Prizes.

The remarkable popularity of the G.W.R. Series of Travel Books, and of the G.W.R. annual Guide, "Holiday Haunts," has suggested a great Competition, which should be welcomed by all for its novelty and interest, and which will no doubt form the popular employment of the leisure moments of many prospective holiday-makers during the next few weeks.

PRIZES:

Adults: 1st Prize £60; 2nd £30; 3rd £10. And 20 other Prizes of £2.

Boys and Girls under 14: 1st Prize £20; 2nd £10; 3rd £5. And 10 other Prizes of £1.

A Fascinating Contest.

Conditions.

Adjudicators.

SIR A. T. QUILLER-COUCH.
MAX PEMBERTON, ESQ.
ARTHUR CROXTON, ESQ.

THE COMPETITION AT A GLANCE

JAMES C. INGLIS.

1st List of Questions.

2nd List of Questions.

THE THIRD LIST WILL BE ANNOUNCED IN THIS PAPER JULY 23rd.

These are the two books you require to enter the competition. Get these books to-day.

The sketch shows the two books in facsimile.
ACTUAL SIZE.

Application Coupon.

Post the Coupon TO-DAY.

A Copy of the Striking Advertisement used in connection with the Great Western Railway's Recent "Holiday Line Competition."

The Ealing to Shepherd's Bush Railway

Figure 1.1: 'Holiday Line Competition' form[101]

It would be difficult to declare, in overall terms, whether then GWR 'pioneered' this more aggressive attitude to marketing. A significant change from the 1890s, the *Railway Times* asserted in 1911 that 'The directors and managers of railway companies...are fully alive to the advantages to be obtained from publicity'.[102] This engendered a competitive spirit

[100] Ronald Fullerton, 'The Historical Development of Segmentation: The Example of the German Book Trade 1800-1928', *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, 4:1 (2012), pp. 57.
[101] Reproduced in *The Railway Gazette*, 26th August 26 1910, p. 257.
[102] 'Advantages of Publicity', *Railway Times*, 18th November 1911, p. 490.

as companies strove to prove to passengers how much they now cared about them.[103] At the most basic level companies acknowledged increased advertising expenditure as preferable to running half-empty trains or building new lines to capture a portion of a rival's business.[104] Figures on numbers of holidaymakers prior to and after advertising campaigns were collected by some to prove the value of advertising.[105] But others began to focus more on the passenger as a specific entity. Like the GWR's desire to work 'for' the passenger, the North Eastern Railway's publicity manager claimed that the most ideal advertisement was a satisfied customer: 'he must be treated well, for everything else would be in vain unless the guards, porters and stationmasters were attentive, obliging and courteous'.[106] There was, similarly, some expression of the need for market segmentation based on buyer preferences although, again, in very general terms:

> The business of a railway company is to sell transportation, in large or small amounts, to people of varying tastes and with varying amounts of money to spend. Moreover this selling of transportation is inevitably attended by competition. In the case of passenger traffic, especially holiday traffic, it can be said that competition is universal, since every inhabitant of a country is a possible traveller.[107]

The problem remained however, how these varying tastes could be satisfied. Railway industry journals now debated advertising's benefits, how it should be done and who did it best.[108] Translating a general understanding of marketing's principles into more 'formal' thought can be seen in these pages. But some companies also appointed specialists to put

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[103] See for example, 'Clever Railway Advertising', *The Railway Gazette*, 3rd June 1910, p. 597.
[104] *The Railway Times*, 3rd June 1905, p. 542.
[105] *The Railway Times*, 25th October 1913, p. 403.
[106] Railway Advertising', *The Railway Gazette*, '23rd February 1912, pp. 219-20.
[107] *The Railway Times*, 28th June 1907, p. 326.
[108] *The Railway Magazine*, June 1900, pp. 510-16; *The Railway Magazine*, June 1903, pp. 514-18; *Railway Times*, 3rd June 1905, p. 542; *The Railway Gazette*, 25th January 1907, p. 75.

ideas into practice. The 'advertising man' began to be admitted as a professional as necessary to the overall railway business as engineers and technicians.[109] Frank Pick had shown what a specialist could do for the London Underground railway, transforming a naive promotional policy into one which inspired customers to make discretionary journeys based on the thrill and ease of travel. [110] Pick's efforts did not go unnoticed, and the goal more generally became to, 'induce people who would otherwise not do so, to travel by rail, and to encourage such as would travel a little, to travel more'.[111] By 1910 therefore, other companies considered the potential customer's desires beyond quick and inexpensive travel, although the exact nature of this beyond the GWR requires further research.

Although the railways are often neglected in histories of advertising and marketing, their ideas were not far from other businesses which now began to debate the pitfalls and benefits of a customer-oriented approach more variously. As Corley concluded, although a great deal of British consumer marketing prior to 1914 was poor, amateurish and unimaginative, some able entrepreneurs were more receptive to consumers' wishes.[112] Like the railways, businesses that began to compete on an increasingly national basis recognised that to differentiate, selling needed to do more than simply announce.[113] Efforts were reorganised to take into account the more serious attention on the 'psychology of advertising'.[114] A more structured approach also took over.[115] The campaign rather than the individual advertisement became the core focus of advertising activity; this reflected the rationalisation of the industry, and the turn away from brilliant individuals to a more planned,

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[109] 'Is the Railway Advertising Man Properly Recognised as a Force in Modern Railway Work, *The Railway Gazette*, 25th August 1911, pp. 172-73; 8th September 1911, p. 216; 15th September 1911, p. 248.
[110] Barman, *The Man Who Built London Transport*, pp. 26-27.
[111] Douglas Knoop, *Outlines of Railway Economics*, (London, 1913), p. 235.
[112] T.A.B. Corley, 'Consumer Marketing in Britain 1914-60', *Business History*, 29:4 (1987), p. 70.
[113] Nevett, *Advertising In Britain*, pp. 139-40.
[114] Raymond Williams, 'Advertising: The Magic System', in Simon During (ed.), *The Cultural Studies Reader*, (New York, 1993), p. 329.
[115] Stefan Schwarzkopf, 'Respectable Persuaders: The Advertising Industry and British Society, 1900-1939', (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 2008), p. 35.

professional system of production.[116] As a result of careful planning advertisements began to be integrated into a coherent and appropriate marketing strategy.[117] Advertising was now seen as a profession for specialists, like the railway advertising man, and greater respectability came thanks to the activities of organisations such as the Advertisers Protection Society.[118] Railway companies rarely shared their advertising expenditure and thus it is difficult to contrast this to the wider industry where expenditure grew apace.[119] Nevertheless there are a number of parallels between the railways and wider advertising initiatives, the increasing reliance on experts especially, and the conviction that heavy advertising was not an infallible road to commercial success.[120] It needed to be planned, taking into account the interests and desires of the target markets.

One must exercise caution however: some of the ideas outlined above represented what railways *wanted* to do, or what could be achieved in an ideal world. In many ways railway marketing had far to go to become truly sophisticated; customer research, for example, was conducted in a very rudimentary fashion if at all. But this does not dismiss the argument that the GWR invested new energy in debating the position of the passenger, and how best to use it to grow the business. It is clear that a passenger-centred approach had begun to dominate the way railway marketers considered their activities in the first decade of the twentieth century. Indeed, the following analysis of sales publications and photographic procurement before 1914 demonstrates that burgeoning marketing theory was applied to marketing communications.

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[116] McFall, *Advertising: A Cultural Economy*, p. 156.
[117] McFall, *Advertising: A Cultural Economy*, p. 156.
[118] Williams, 'Advertising: The Magic System', p. 329.
[119] Nevett, *Advertising In Britain*, p. 171.
[120] Nevett, *Advertising In Britain*, p. 171.

2.2: Sales Publications and Photographic Marketing

The emerging discourse on passenger inducement was clearly applied to the GWR's new Edwardian sales publications. These volumes represented a monumental shift in marketing the railway. They showcased attractive imagery to appeal to customer desires as a stimulus to travel. They included practical information on how to holiday, seeking to serve the passenger by making the holiday selection process easy. The guides appealed to diverse groups, recognising that whilst every reader was a potential customer, each had their own specific requirements. Unlike posters, the company could also determine efficacy through sales figures – it was a more 'scientific' way of selling. In short, publications imbibed the progressively escalating knowledge about marketing outlined above. Whilst railway literature had been available since the earliest railways, these were mostly 'unofficial' guides released by commercial publishers describing where the railway in question passed through.[121] Improvement came in the 1880s with the seminal 'Guides to the Great Railways of England' series, published by Messrs. Morton and Co. The Guides covered eight principal railways and sold well enough to encourage some railways to issue their own attempts, but even by the 1890s this was not general practice.[122] The post 1900 publication was therefore a decisive material progression onwards from the standards of guides which had been available since the earliest railways.

No other railway in Britain arguably achieved the output or quality of the GWR's twentieth century publications.[123] In 1904 it released its first volume of *The Cornish Riviera* which combined literary descriptions, accommodation information and photogravure plates.

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[121] G. H. Martin, 'Sir George Samuel Measom (1818-1901), and His Railway Guides', in A.K.B. Evans and John Gough (eds.), *The Impact of The Railway On Society In Britain*, (Aldershot, 2003), p. 227.
[122] Martin, 'Sir George Samuel Measom (1818-1901), and His Railway Guides', pp. 229-32.
[123] Wilson, *Go Great Western*, p. 83. For example, the London and South Western Railway released a guide but this included fewer photographs of an inferior quality. Moreover the title, whilst informative, was not very enticing: *The Company's Official Illustrated Guide and List of Hotels, Boarding Houses and Apartments*, (1912).

Riviera proved immensely popular selling 250,000 copies.[124] Its success convinced the GWR that a much larger publication was needed, and in 1906 *Holiday Haunts* was offered as a comprehensive guide to all destinations available by GWR services. By including accommodation, timetable and fare information alongside lyrical descriptive passages and far more illustrations, *Holiday Haunts* could create the desire to travel and show how to satisfy it. To do this required a great deal of skill and coordination. The descriptive text and historical matter in *Holiday Haunts* was the work of travel writer A.M. Broadley, subsequently being updated by advertising department staff who worked in conjunction with local authorities and station masters.[125] Composing *Holiday Haunts* began in the summer before release when new information was collected from across the system. Arranging the text around the hundreds of advertisements and photographs occupied staff until the winter. The completed copy was then sent to the printers and was ready for distribution in March.[126] From the 1920s onwards it was common for members of the publicity department to decamp to the printers, taking with them office equipment and machinery to supervise this enormous undertaking.[127]

As the name 'sales publication' suggested *Holiday Haunts'* aim was to smooth and shape the process of selecting the holiday, and to do this a customer focus was now deemed essential. *Holiday Haunts'* introduction stated that it was for 'the lover of the picturesque', 'the sportsman', 'the antiquarian' as well as families who were 'rich or poor, noble and simple'.[128] These opening statements are initial confirmation that the GWR segmented the holiday market based on lifestyles as well as demographics. Their individual interests were appealed to; 'the antiquarian has Oxford and Stratford on Avon to say nothing of fifteen

[124] Wilson, *Go Great Western*, pp. 83-84.
[125] Wilson, *Go Great Western*, p. 112.
[126] Wilson, *Go Great Western*, pp. 116-18.
[127] Wilson, *Go Great Western*, p. 118.
[128] GWR, *Holiday Haunts*, (1906).

cathedrals and a hundred ruined abbeys and castles to choose from'.[129] 'Nowhere will the sportsman find such a redundancy of choice as the GWR affords him.....'.[130] By 1910 the guide had come to resemble the form it would take for the next twenty years; alphabetised regions which included details on climate, rail links, local amenities and activities and accommodation information.

But *Holiday Haunts* was not merely descriptive; on opening the guide a reader first came across dozens of photographs. The placement of imagery before the text indicates how the GWR saw the selling process; the potential customer was first targeted emotionally before a more rational appeal to where to stay, likely cost, and other details. This too required a customer focus which suggested that photographs were never merely used decoratively but were rather a fundamental part of the quest to anticipate and satisfy the desires of diverse passengers. Content was updated annually, using half-tone photographs in the early volumes before moving to gravures.[131] Scenic valleys and rural idylls targeted the lover of the picturesque; beach scenes and children' donkey rides were selected for the family; and sportsmen and women experienced a totally different appeal. Castles and cathedrals suggested what the antiquarian might like to do. *Holiday Haunts'* first volume featured 70 photographs but the number quickly rose, reaching 296 by 1908. These now also included images of interest of Americans disembarking from trans-Atlantic steamers and some of the company's own vehicles. One can reasonably assume that most GWR photographs were taken primarily for *Holiday Haunts*. Although the company's other publications included photographs, *Holiday Haunts* was the only volume to be released annually. Photographers were tasked with going out each year to take new scenes for it. Part of this photographic library was then used in other guides, although one cannot discount that when a special image was needed it was sent out for directly.

[129] GWR, *Holiday Haunts*, (1906), p. 2.
[130] GWR, *Holiday Haunts*, (1906), p. 3.
[131] Wilson, *Go Great Western*, p. 106.

The content of these photographs and what they reveal about the GWR's perceptions of customers will be examined in more depth in the following chapters. But we can corroborate the highly constructed nature of these images by examining the procurement process. Despite the lack of formal information on how and why photographs were taken, it is clear that corporate marketing messages informed their appearance and use. One exceptional insight into this process comes in a lecture given by Mr Harold Cooper to the GWR's Debating Society in 1909.[132] As a company photographer, Cooper's presentation described various duties encompassing photography for legal and engineering purposes in addition to publicity work. It was the latter, producing imagery for the holiday market, which tasked Cooper most greatly, both in an artistic and occupational sense. Rather than a pretty picture, so to speak, Cooper was charged with procuring interesting imagery which emulated the textual focus of the guidebooks, a fact revealed in his description of the procurement process concerning an image of Burrington Combe. Behind this there was little artistic merit, rather, it was taken because the famous hymn 'Rock of Ages' was composed there by Reverend Augustus Toplady in 1763 whilst sheltering from a thunderstorm in a cave.[133] As the following chapter argues, the GWR used England's past to market many destinations.[134] This intended to satisfy consumers the GWR defined as 'lovers of the picturesque', those believed to be fascinated by the history of place. Whilst no image of Burrington Combe was ultimately published, and none survives in the NRM's collection, for illustrative purposes it is possible that a similar process conditioned the appearance of 'Arthur's Stone, Darstone' (Figure 1.2). As above, the image itself held little aesthetic value until it was weaved into the textual and visual narratives operating in *Holiday Haunts*. Upon knowing more details the

[132] TNA, ZPER 38/6, Great Western Railway (London): Lecture and Debating Society Proceedings 1908-1909, meeting of 5th November 1908 'Experiences of Railway Photography' by Harold Cooper, pp. 1-10.
[133] TNA, ZPER 38/6, meeting of 5th November 1908 'Experiences of Railway Photography', pp. 1-10; (The poem was published in 1775).
[134] A fact also observed by Alan Bennett in his analysis of company guidebooks: Alan Bennett, 'The Great Western Railway and The Celebration of Englishness', (Unpublished DPhil thesis, University of York, 2000), pp. 1-9.

photograph becomes a key signifier of a much more attractive world of fantasy and mystery. The caption assisted interpretation: who was Arthur – was this the Arthur of legend? Why was this stone significant to him? Unlike poster artists, about whom more is known,[135] there is little additional evidence about who the GWR's photographers were, their background, their relationship to the company or their ideas regarding artistic direction.[136] However, the key point to register here is the deeper level of construction directing photographic procurement which sought to influence passengers' reading of the advertising and thereby their consumption.

Figure 1.2: 'Arthur's Stone, Darstone', 1909

Further evidence of an intricate picturing process comes from a comparison of published and unpublished photographs. Take for example 'Dolgelly – Torrent Walk' (Figure 1.3), a picturesque hideaway which had similarly mythical qualities to Darstone. The unpublished variants show that the GWR was not satisfied with a small choice of imagery,

[135] John Hewitt, *The Commercial Art of Tom Purvis*, (Manchester, 1996), Cole and Durack*, Railway Posters, 1923-1947*, pp. 4-12.
[136] Bartholomew and Blakemore's examination of railway photography reveals some insights into this but largely corroborates the fact that there exists little information publicly available; Ed Bartholomew and Michael Blakemore, *Railways In Focus: Photographs From The National Railway Museum Collections*, (Penryn, 1998), pp. 12-15.

often requiring dozens of photographs before making a decision as to which was ultimately most effective. Each figure below (Figures 1.4 - 1.6) offers a slightly different perspective, some with man-made intrusions, others left completely natural. Their value to this chapter is as further evidence that the GWR sought the best possible appeal. The process was endlessly repeated for each destination. Seaside resorts, for example, appeared diversely with pier views, promenades and beaches, and the publicists selected views to show resorts in their best light. Later versions featured black tape which signalled which elements should be highlighted, cropped or magnified. This once again confirms the importance of the published images as authored artefacts, carefully chosen from a range of possibilities. Given this, and taking into account Cooper's comments, GWR photography certainly did not lack artistic or marketing vision.

Figure 1.3: 'Dolgelly – Torrent Walk', 1914

Figure 1.4: GWR B Series Negative 1305

Figure 1.5: GWR B Series Negative 1311

Figure 1.6: GWR B Series Negative 1313

The enhanced demand for promotional photographic material meant that periodically the company looked elsewhere for its photographs. Commercial photography was increasingly demanded in Britain at this time as both private individuals and businesses requested effective imagery.[137] Although rarely included in the daily press before 1930, in the Edwardian years sales photographs began to be used in a range of publications supplied by photographic agencies.[138] Commercial photographers were highly regarded amongst publishers and advertisers because their livelihoods necessitated a keen grasp of which imagery best suited different markets.[139] For this reason, and to take the strain off its own men, the GWR employed commercial companies such as the 'Clarke and Hyde' and 'Topical' Press Agencies.[140] In December 1907 the GWR agreed to pay Topical's photographers £1 per day, and an additional cost of 3/6d per negative, stipulating that negatives would then be the property of the GWR with free rights of reproduction in all publications and advertisements. A similar agreement was made in 1908 with Clarke and Hyde.[141] These were mutually beneficial relationships. The photographers received free travel and board at the company's hotels.[142] But the GWR received the services of a professional photographer, regularly travelling the system, who understood the kinds of

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[137] John Taylor, 'The Alphabetic Universe: Photography and the Picturesque Landscape', in Simon Pugh (ed.) *Reading Landscape: Country – City- Capital*, (Manchester, 1990), pp. 179-81.
[138] Gerry Beegan, *The Mass Image: A Social History of Photomechanical Reproduction in Victorian London*, (Basingstoke, 2008), pp. 160-85.
[139] Robin Lenham, 'British Photographers and Tourism in the Nineteenth Century Three Case Studies', in David Crouch and Nina Lübbren (eds.), *Visual Culture and Tourism*, (Oxford, 2003), pp. 95-6.
[140] Wiltshire and Swindon Archives (WSA), 2515 210 Box 150/6, Letter from Clarke and Hyde Press Agency to GWR's Superintendent of the Line concerning use of photographs in advertisements; 2515 210 Box 146/6, Memorandum of arrangement between Topical Press Agency and GWR for special photographic work.
[141] WSA, 2515 210 Box 150/6, Letter from Clarke and Hyde Press Agency to GWR's Superintendent of the Line concerning use of photographs in advertisements. Not all companies were successful. the case of the Railway Photographic Advertising Company Ltd is a case in point. Although little information survives, the company was established to provide a ready pool of photographs for the railways. It ultimately failed, indicating that even from an early stage the railways preferred their own avenues of procurement, be they company photographers or agencies, which they could exercise a degree of control over. TNA, BT 31/11253/85987, Railway Photographic Advertising Company Ltd.
[142] WSA, 2515 210 Box 146/6, Memorandum of arrangement between Topical Press Agency and GWR for special photographic work.

photographs which best appealed to the public. Imagery connected to railway matter was interpreted loosely however, and the GWR used images, credited to Clarke and Hyde, of steamers entering port and passengers disembarking, presumably, GWR ferry services.

As well as using professional agencies, the GWR encouraged its staff and general public to contribute photographs. The GWR's Photographic Society was formed early in the twentieth century.[143] Although surviving records are sparse,[144] further details on its activities are available via the company magazine. After the success of an exhibition at Paddington in 1908, the company sought to utilise the popularity connected to photography via competitions amongst the staff and readers of the magazine.[145] Above all these stipulated 'popular interest',[146] but reviews of later competitions reveal changing fashions. Whereas in the earliest competitions railway matter was sought, in 1909 'pictures of stream and woodland and the glories of the seashore' were highly praised and where figures were depicted, their 'naturalness' was commended.[147] This acted as a further barometer of taste. The fact that the GWR keenly promoted photographic competitions, as well as stipulating that winning entries would become the company's property,[148] suggests it saw this as a rudimentary form of research into customer appetites. What consumers chose to photograph, as well as how they represented themselves and others, helped the GWR more effectively 'imagine' potential passengers. For example, in July 1912, Mr E.S. Perkins won a competition with his photograph 'Sea Nymphs' which featured two young girls relaxing on a beach.[149] The image (Figure 1.7) evidently caught the imagination of the publicity department, and the idea was mirrored, including the name, in numerous compositions

[143] GWRM, September 1912, p. 265.
[144] The surviving information chiefly concerns the 1930s : TNA, RAIL 258/428, Records Relating to the GWR Photographic Section.
[145] GWRM, April 1909, p. 82.
[146] GWRM, June 1908, p. 118.
[147] GWRM, April 1909, p. 82.
[148] GWRM, September 1912, p. 265.
[149] GWRM, July 1912, p. 245 and 265.

throughout *Holiday Haunts'* existence.[150] Other views reflected the diversity of preferences with imagery which included landscapes, seascapes, historic buildings as well as traditional railways subjects as trains and stations (for example Figures 1.8 and 1.9).[151]

Figure 1.7: 'Sea Nymphs' by E.S. Perkins,[152]

Figure 1.8: 'The Mill, Ramsbury', by E.R. Pole[153]

Figure 1.9: 'A headland near St Ives', A.H. Edwards[154]

[150] Many examples of 'Nymphs' appear, particularly in the 1930s when the term was applied to women posed seductively on the beach, in the sea, or on rocky outcrops.
[151] GWRM, July 1912, p. 245 and 265.
[152] GWRM, July 1912, p. 245.
[153] GWRM, July 1912, p. 265.

The company's innovation in this respect is evident when compared to the later efforts of others who perceived photography's ability to reveal consumer preferences. The GWR continued photographic competitions in the 1930s,[155] by this time joined by many others such as the Southern Railway (SR), and The Red Funnel Steamer Company. The latter clearly saw competitions as nominally free research. Its holiday brochure asked 'how many pictures are taken by our passengers that are just the shots we want to publish in this book of ours?'[156] As with the regular holiday competitions, photographic contests achieved two things: first, they created excitement around this activity; secondly, they highlighted the GWR's early interest not just in promoting consumer interest in the company and its services, but also in using this feedback to better its own communications.

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Railway marketing, in terms of conceptualising thought about passengers and what would attract them, had developed significantly by 1914. Emerging discourses on the psychology of advertising, recognition that different markets needed to be appealed to in different ways, catering *to* the customer, and appealing to them through varied means, demonstrate that the GWR no longer perceived the public as a homogeneous mass and captive market. The application of these ideas is demonstrated clearly in the photographic and sales publication production. Far from being unconsidered masses of information and dreary images, these were at the forefront of offering passengers something new and to their tastes. As marketing mediums they deserve consideration alongside the more commonly cited posters. This information in this section develops a picture of a company, and wider industry, whose marketing was developing rapidly. On the one hand the outbreak of war in

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[154] GWRM, July 1912, p. 265.
[155] Andrew McRae, *British Railway Camping Coach Holidays: The 1930s and British Railways*, (Stockport, 1997), p. 28.
[156] The Red Funnel Steamer Company, *Red Funnel Stuff*, (1939).

1914 curtailed promotional activities by rationing paper and limiting outdoors photography for example.[157] But during these dark years, the need to convince the nation to keep fighting meant publicity and propaganda were appreciated at the highest levels.[158] This laid the groundwork for post-war development both on and off the railway tracks.

Section 3: Continuity and Change 1921-1929 – Stage 2

The 1920s saw the emergence of powerful advertising personalities, novel promotional media, and the increased professionalization, organisation and respectability of the wider advertising industry. The 1924 World Advertising Convention, held in London, was billed at the time as the 'commencement of the effective organisation of British advertising'.[159] National expenditure on advertising rose from an estimated £31 millions in 1920 to £57 millions in 1928.[160] Significant progress was made in both the visual qualities of adverts and the sophistication of the marketing messages conveyed.[161] The 1920s also saw the term 'marketing' applied to promotional activities. One advertising manager from Portsmouth argued that when thinking about releasing a product, consumers' habits and tastes should be investigated.[162] Some years later, in 1926, the Empire Marketing Board was established to devise promotional strategies to reverse Britain's declining international trade. The Board sought to master every means and every art to communicate with people and sell England. Its members included experienced men like Frank Pick and William Crawford, head of a successful London advertising agency.[163] Companies began to employ large-scale

[157] John Taylor, 'Kodak and the 'English' Market Between the Wars', *Journal of Design History*, 7:1 (1994), p. 29.
[158] Nevett, *Advertising In Britain*, pp. 138-44.
[159] LeMahieu, *A Culture For Democracy*, pp. 160-67
[160] Nevett, *Advertising In Britain*, p. 145.
[161] Turner, *Shocking History of Advertising*, pp. 166–225.
[162] Nevett, *Advertising In Britain*, p. 152.
[163] LeMahieu, *A Culture For Democracy*, pp. 166-69.

market research techniques as a regular part of its campaign planning.[164] The goal was to compete for business by conceptualising and reaching customers in new ways.

Some scholars identify the interwar years similarly as the juncture between 'haphazard' and 'modern' attitudes to marketing on Britain's railways.[165] Britain's railways resumed marketing activities in 1921 after their release from state control, but war's social and economic impacts profoundly influenced the way railways envisioned selling. In 1914 the Government had taken control of the railways, intending to guarantee pre-war revenue levels. For four years this guarantee appeared a decent bargain. Yet when conflict ceased, lack of maintenance, reduced investment and massively increased costs left the railways in a precarious financial position. Recognising that further intervention was necessary, the 1921 Railway Act amalgamated Britain's 123 railway companies into four regional concerns (Figure 1.10).[166] Put into practice in January 1923, the theory behind this was that fewer, larger companies would increase efficiency and reduce uneconomical competition. Substantial economies could be made by reducing administrative expenses, standardising equipment, and rationalising operation.[167] The larger, financially stronger, railways at the time of amalgamation would compensate for the weaker ones.[168] Each new company was in theory to obtain a virtual territorial monopoly, although they were subject to a high degree of state regulation to ensure that this was not unfairly exploited.

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[164] LeMahieu, *A Culture For Democracy*, p. 10.
[165] Watts, 'Evaluating British Railway Poster Advertising', p. 23; Cole and Durack, *Railway Posters*, pp. 9-11.
[166] Channon, *Railways In Britain and The United States, 1830-1940*, pp. 130-37.
[167] Harold Dyos and Derek Aldcroft, *British Transport: An Economic Survey From The Seventeenth Century To The Twentieth*, (Leicester, 1969), p. 330.
[168] Lyth and Bagwell, *Transport in Britain*, p. 59; Geoffrey Hughes, *LNER*, (London, 1987), pp. 9-11.

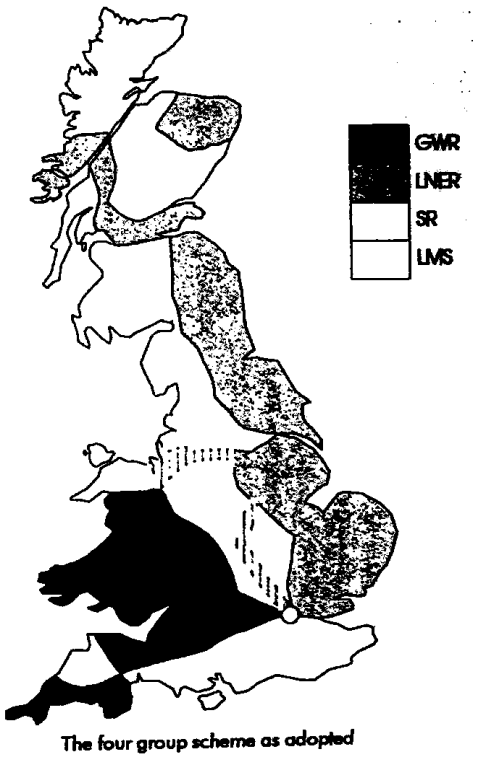

Figure 1.10: Evolution of plan to consolidate the railways under the British railways act of 1921[169]

The Act altered how Britain's railways presented themselves to the public. Firstly it renamed them. Formerly large individual concerns such as the Great Northern Railway and the MR were absorbed into new companies, the London and North Eastern Railway (LNER) and the London Midland and Scottish (LMS) respectively. Thus what we might now call well-established brands lost their history and public presence. This necessitated quick reaffirmation of corporate identity which, in reality, took time to achieve.[170] Secondly, amalgamation engendered a new marketing spirit. Although for the LNER, LMS and SR operations were inefficient in the first years owing to infighting, forced to re-brand and re-appeal to consumers they nevertheless benefited from the collective experience of previously separate departments. A number of key figures emerged. W. M. Teasdale, the LNER's advertising manager, is recognised amongst the preeminent railway marketers of the 1920s.

[169] Channon, *Railways In Britain and The United States, 1830-1940*, p. 130.
[170] *The Railway Gazette*, 14th September 1923 p. 330; Bonavia, *The Four Great Railways*, pp. 20-26.

He implemented sweeping change, drafting in well respected commercial artists such as Tom Purvis, who had achieved success with Shell, to redefine the LNER's publicity, earning Teasdale the respect of the wider advertising world.[171] Teasdale spread his own message about how railway advertising should be practiced, continually pressing the image of the LNER as a forward-thinking concern.[172] At advertising conventions in Britain and the United States he spoke of the LNER's recognition of advertising as 'one of the greatest modern sciences'.[173] Other companies followed suit. The LMS made its own bold and costly experiments, commissioning seventeen Royal Academicians to paint posters illustrating the life and work of the railway and scenery it served.[174] These initiatives were joined by a fervent discourse more generally on selling the railways which regularly appeared in the railway press and company magazines.[175] Undeniably, this quickened in response to road competition.[176] War had sped-up development and increased the number of vehicles on Britain's roads. Buses and coaches offered a door-to-door travel alternative to rail whilst the private car carried more cachet.[177] For these reasons, scholars argue that this period represented more serious consideration about whether marketing could grow passenger receipts, exhibited in new streamlined locomotive designs which gave the railways a 'forward thinking' image, mirrored in poster artwork which utilised renowned commercial artists. [178]

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[171] Allen Middleton, *It's Quicker By Rail!: The History Of LNER Advertising*, (Stroud, 2002), pp. 13-15; Hewitt, *The Commercial Art of Tom Purvis*, pp. 14-18.
[172] As well as 14th September 1923 p. 330, see for example *The Railway Gazette* 2nd July 1926, pp. 16-19; 18th February 1927, p. 216.
[173] For a report on Teasdale's paper at the Philadelphia Convention of the Associated Advertising Clubs of the World see *The Railway Gazette*, 2nd July 1926, pp. 16-19.
[174] 'LMS Posters by RA's', *The Railway Gazette*, 28th December 1923, p. 808.
[175] 'Wider Railway Publicity Wanted', *The Railway Gazette*, 2nd November 1921, p. 361; 'Railway Advertising', *The Railway Gazette*, 3rd October 1924, p. 436; 'Railways and Public Relations', *The Railway Gazette*, 11th April 1924, p. 552; 'Railway Salesmanship and Public Relations Work', *The Railway Gazette*, 23rd December 1927, p. 786; 'Commercial and Advertising Psychology', *The Railway Gazette*, 18th February 1927, p. 216; 'Joint Railway Publicity', *The Railway Gazette*, 8th March 1929, p. 355.
[176] John Hewitt, 'East Coast Joys: Tom Purvis and The LNER', *Journal Of Design History*, 8:4 (1995), pp. 291-311; Middleton, *It's Quicker By Rail!*, pp. 40-46; Cole and Durack, *Railway Posters*, pp. 6-27.
[177] Lyth and Bagwell, *Transport in Britain*, pp. 79-80.
[178] Smith, *The Railway and Its Passengers*, p. 161; Rachael Holland, 'LNER Posters 1923-47: Aspects of Iconography, Railway and Social History', (Unpublished MA thesis, University of York, 1999), pp. 2-9.

Far from a 'simple thing', selling the railways was believed to be 'technically, psychologically and commercially bestrewn with difficulties and pitfalls'.[179]

The GWR, however, was unique. It retained its name and corporate identity, thanks to negotiations by Felix Pole, its general manager, and the fact that it was by far the largest company in its region.[180] Whilst its competitors frantically reorganised, the GWR experienced little upheaval. Some scholars argue that whilst other companies began a new phase of railway publicity work, the GWR's strengths and weaknesses remained unaltered.[181] Whereas others experimented with modern art, the GWR's posters in the 1920s continued largely to focus on sublime landscape which, according to those who have compared poster output, left it disadvantaged, 'conservative' and unresponsive.[182] Although well positioned in principle, the GWR is said to have suffered a malaise in passenger operations and marketing,[183] and this has led to the impression that it did not 'picture' passengers as well as it had done so in the Edwardian years. But as this section demonstrates, the existing scholarship does not tell the whole story. Other historians, notably Jack Simmons, argue that the GWR's interwar progress was less striking because it started in better order and needed less improving.[184]

To some extent the GWR did not advance as might be expected, but direct comparison to Britain's other railways misrepresents what actually happened on the GWR. The 1920s constituted *change* as much as continuity on the GWR. Furthermore, the 1920s should not be straightforwardly combined with the 1930s: the development of marketing in these years was more variegated. For this reason, this section argues that more information is needed before one can draw conclusions on the GWR's promotional abilities. Posters and

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[179] 'LMS Posters by RA's', *The Railway Gazette*, 28th December 1923, p. 808.
[180] Felix John Clewett Pole, *His Book*, (London, 1968), p. 50; Bonavia, *The Four Great Railways*, p. 38.
[181] Bonavia, *The Four Great Railways*, p. 39; Cole and Durack, *Railway Posters*, p. 9.
[182] Cole and Durack, *Railway Posters*, pp. 6-9.
[183] Julia Wigg, *Bon Voyage! Travel Posters of the Edwardian Era*, (London, 1998), p. 9; Cole and Durack, *Railway Posters*, p. 6; Bonavia, *The Four Great Railways*, pp. 39-45.
[184] Simmons, *The Railways of Britain*, p. 43.

photographs are revealing sources, but they must be understood in terms of wider social and corporate context. When this is done, one finds that the 1920s represents a much more complex period of railway marketing.

3.1: The GWR Resumes Marketing

There are three areas which *outwardly* suggest that the GWR was complacent in its marketing in the 1920s; advertising expenditure, poster design and photographic marketing. Taking expenditure first, 1924 was the first year that this was clearly categorised and discussed annually at the Traffic Committee, (Table 1.1). The figures show that, with the exception of 1928 when economic depression enforced cost saving, advertising expenditure remained relatively stable. Press advertising, posters and guidebooks received the largest sums, and much more was spent on the passenger side of the business compared to freight. Judged against other contemporary businesses the GWR's expenditure was fairly low. In 1913 Cunard had spent over £54,000 advertising its trans-Atlantic service; in 1928 its annual public relations expenditure had reached £370,000.[185] Of Britain's chocolate manufacturers, Rowntree's planned a promotional budget of £275,000 for 1931 whereas Cadbury spent an estimated £700,000 in 1930.[186] On the surface the GWR's figures suggest promotional inactivity; one might expect increasing recognition of the value of advertising to be supported by a rise in expenditure. However, these figures belie a more complex administration.

Indeed, the promotional budgets of Rowntree's and Cadbury, for example, included provision for giving away free samples and promotional items, something the GWR did not do. In fact, it sold a portion of its publicity allowing it to offset cost. Railway officials concluded that there was no way of prescribing an accurate figure for railway expenditure;

[185] Bernhard Rieger, *Technology and the Culture of Modernity in Britain and Germany, 1890-1945*, (Cambridge, 2004), p. 163.
[186] Robert Fitzgerald, *Rowntree and The Marketing Revolution, 1862-1969*, (Cambridge, 1995), p. 286.

one per-cent of gross receipts was said to be a good guide.[187] The LNER's Advertising Manager used this formula but claimed that it was an imperfect science.[188] Comparing advertising expenditure to passenger revenue (Table 1.2), the GWR appears to have followed this formula. In this case the railways were no different to other businesses which believed in the value of advertising but were unsure which parts worked best and how much to spend.

Table 1.1: Advertising Expenditure 1924-29[189]

	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929
Press Advertising	50000	50000	50000	50000	60000	75000
Printing of Publications & Posters inc. Holiday Haunts	40000	50000	66500	65000	33600	28000
Advertisements on omnibuses & underground trains	2200	2000	4200	3200	2700	2700
Misc. Inc. Commercial Advertising Publicity	10000	6000	NA	2000	2000	4500
Freight/ Goods Advertising	6500	5000	NA	4000	4000	5000
Total	108700	113000	120700	124200	103000	115200
Less estimated Receipts from sale publications	5065	9800	25700	16200	23300	15200
Total	103635	103200	95000	108000	80000	100000

Table 1.2: Passenger Revenue Intervals[190]

Year	Total Receipts from Passenger Traffic (£)
1913	7,286,416
1924	13,917,942
1929	12,781,195
1932	10,525,861
1934	10,589,140

The statistics are an inaccurate guide to the GWR's promotional abilities. For one thing we do know not how many press advertisements or posters these totals purchased. The large sum for press advertising, for example, does not indicate whether the GWR had most faith in this medium. Freight would seem to require little encouragement, but these figures

[187] 'British Railway Advertising Problems' *The Railway Gazette*, 2nd July 1926, pp. 16-19.
[188] 'British Railway Advertising Problems' *The Railway Gazette*, 2nd July 1926, pp. 16-19.
[189] Compiled using data from TNA, RAIL 250/354, Traffic Committee Minutes 1923-1926; RAIL 250/354, Traffic Committee Minutes 1926-1929.
[190] 'A Brief Review of the Company's Hundred Years of Business: The Growth of Traffic Since the Railway Was Opened', GWRM September 1935, pp. 495-501.

do not reveal the extent to which this side of operations relied on contracts. In another case, the costs associated with *Holiday Haunts'* promotion and production actually declined, but this was probably due to better working relationships with printers,[191] as well as the GWR's practice of conducting its own printing more economically.[192] For 1920s businesses more generally, spending excessive amounts of money on advertising and releasing it indiscriminately began to be viewed as wasteful; more careful spending, and quality over quantity, was encouraged.[193] The salaries given to publicity staff somewhat broaden the picture. For example, in November 1929 the GWR's Board of Directors granted the head of the publicity department an increase in salary, from £950 to £1000 per annum.[194] This was a decent salary within the company; at the same time the Assistant Superintendent of the Line earned £2250 and an area managers' salary was between £300 and £800 depending on importance.[195] But this again suggests that we cannot rely on figures alone.

Secondly, the GWR's posters are not straightforward evidence of marketing trajectory in this decade. We have already seen the opinions of curators and historians today,[196] and contemporary judgements were not entirely favourable either.[197] It is true that the GWR released fewer posters than the LMS and LNER and, although difficult to judge impact, the GWR's posters received less coverage in the railway press than the aforementioned companies.[198] However, whilst other railways went on record as being great believers in posters,[199] the GWR regarded their importance as waning. A later Commercial Officer revealed why this was so: the poster was attractive and popular with the public, but its effect

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[191] See for example GWRM, 'The Production of Holiday Haunts', March 1930, pp. 101-04.
[192] 'GWR Stationary and Printing Department', GWRM, January 1926, pp. 18-19; 'The Production of Holiday Haunts', GWRM, March 1930, pp. 101-04.
[193] Turner, *The Shocking History of Advertising*, p. 181.
[194] TNA, RAIL 250/56, Minutes of the Board of Directors, meeting of 1st November 1929.
[195] TNA, RAIL 250/56, meeting of 1st November 1929, 29th November 1929, 20th December 1929.
[196] Cole and Durack, *Railway Posters*, pp. 6-9; Bonavia, *The Four Great Railways*, pp. 39-45.
[197] Walter Shaw Sparrow, *Advertising and British Art: An Introduction to a Vast Subject*, (London, 1924), p. 114.
[198] The LNER was the most represented, followed closely by the LMS.
[199] LMS in *The Railway Gazette*, 28th December 1923, p. 808; LNER, *The Railway Gazette*, 14th September 1923 p. 330.

was immeasurable.[200] The GWR was not alone in this opinion. The London Underground, which had made good use of posters, argued that 'all the Royal Academicians in the world will not help alter the present situation...a late-Victorian policy will not function in 1924'.[201] Similarly, one advertising commentator, speaking at the company's debating society, argued that one of the greatest failings of contemporary railway advertising was the too common use of the poster.[202] The GWR's poster output is thus an inaccurate means of judging its commitment to marketing, and we should treat with some caution the claims of scholars and contemporaries that the GWR lacked ambition.

Thirdly, the GWR made clear that its efforts were much more concerned with other mediums; it excelled at both textual and photographic guidebooks. The number and range of GWR pamphlets, books and guides increased substantially in the 1920s. Volumes such as *Cotswold Ways* (1924), *Camping Holidays* (1923), and *Glorious Devon* (1928) were all inaugurated in these years.[203] However, all of these shared a visual style common to the company's Edwardian publications which might lead one to identify complacency. Given that it was the GWR's chief publicity medium, one would expect any significant advances in marketing thought to be evidenced in *Holiday Haunts*. Yet there was no significant design shift for the guide until 1927, and even this change, which was mostly to rewrite the textual content, was minor compared with those ushered in at the beginning on the 1930s. The same was true for *The Cornish Riviera* which, despite three editions in the 1920s, merely received a change of cover art.

Examples from the kind of views included in *Holiday Haunts* in the 1920s support the idea that the photographs of this decade were procured and shaped in ways similar to the

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[200] TNA, RAIL 1107/9, Railway Students' Association, Proceedings of Sessions 1934-1936, meeting of 13th February 1936.
[201] *The Railway Gazette*, 18th July 1924, p. 96.
[202] TNA, ZPER 38/17, Great Western Railway (London): Lecture and Debating Society Proceedings 1924-1924, Meeting of 5th February 1925, pp. 1-20.
[203] Wilson, *Go Great Western*, pp. 171-78.

Edwardian practices discussed above. The subjects, and the ways of framing and presenting them, had changed little in around fifteen years. The views of Weston-Super-Mare (Figures 1.11 and 1.12) and two secluded, rustic villages (Figures 1.13 and 1.14) were typical of many others which sought to capture holiday destinations in a pleasing manner not unlike what had gone before. The question is, would one necessarily expect to see radical change however? *Holiday Haunts* still proved popular with the public and was, until the mid-1920s the only all-line publication available. It took a reluctant LNER until 1929 to launch *The Holiday Handbook* which collected disparate guides together.[204] Even by the 1930s, when the GWR had begun to change, other railways' publications looked similar to the GWR's early 1920s output.[205] Little change on the GWR, therefore, might have been because it was already ahead of the competition. Indeed, it would be unfair to say that the GWR's interest in marketing declined in this period even though photographic techniques did not develop at anything like the pace of the Edwardian imagery. For example, one should not overlook the fact that, as Chapter Two of this thesis shows, the GWR designed itself as Britain's line to history, myth and legend to attract a particular market segment. What modern scholars might see as 'stagnation' was rather a conscious decision by the GWR based on perceived customer tastes.

[204] Middleton, *It's Quicker By Rail!*, pp. 41-43.
[205] See for example LMS, *Guide to Scottish Resorts*, (1931); LNER, *The Holiday Handbook*, (1930); The LMS's Holidays by LMS of 1930 did appear to be a little more forward thinking by including more images of people however.

Figure 1.11: Weston-Super-Mare (1914)

Figure 1.12: Weston-Super-Mare (1928)

Figure 1.13: Buckland Village (1909)

Figure 1.14: Lustleigh (1928)

One must resist becoming preoccupied with the 'change' and 'modernity' on display in the posters of the LNER, a company with a specific modernising agenda to portray.[206] It neglects that not all customers desired 'modernity'.[207] We must go beyond a superficial comparison of posters with photographs and an obsession with 'modernity' to reveal how photographic marketing operated in this period. By the 1920s, although photographic advertising in general was being championed as a way of successfully appealing to the customer and 'proving' the high quality of a product,[208] there was still much debate about what should be depicted and how it should be presented. Aside from the radical German New Photography and experiments in America, artistry on the photographer's part was still

[206] Holland, 'LNER Posters 1923-47', pp. 32-53.
[207] Bennett, 'The GWR and The Celebration of Englishness', pp. 172-75.
[208] T.J. Jackson-Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America*, (New York, 1994), p. 324.

some years away: the photograph's realism dominated sales messages.[209] These sources show the value of the exercises in this chapter. Photographs offer considerable value, but unless one questions their background one risks miss-interpreting them. Certainly the lack of formal comment on how photographs were procured in this decade hinders this. But as the rest of this section shows, the GWR was more developed than is commonly thought. To say that it neglected the passenger's point of view, or to take photographs at a superficial glance as evidence of 'stagnant' marketing, would be to ignore the GWR's developed practices prior to the war and in the 1920s which evaluated marketing to remain competitive.

3.2: Explaining Continuity and Change: From the 'Advertising' to the 'Publicity' Department

Geoffrey Channon argues that men ingrained with particular, company-specific ways of doings things limited broader strategic issues such as the need for marketing strategies.[210] This is an unfair generalisation. For example, William Fraser, who became the GWR's advertising manager in 1924, had already worked for the company for over thirty years.[211] He had followed a traditional career path of promotion through various divisional offices, accounting and estate departments. But his longevity did not necessarily lead to stagnation as it did in under the management of the 1870s. Undoubtedly possessing a profound understanding of the company and its aims, Fraser succeeded in improving sales of *Holiday Haunts* before retiring in 1931.[212] His success can be measured in high sales and an increase

[209] Patricia Johnson, *Real Fantasies: Edward Steichen's Advertising Photography*, (London, 1998), pp. 3-4; Elspeth Brown, *The Corporate Eye: Photography and the Rationalization of American Commercial Culture, 1884–1929*, (Baltimore, 2005), p. 185; Roland Marchand, *Advertising The American Dream: Making Way For Modernity, 1920-1940*, (Berkeley, 1986), pp. 149-53; David Mellor, *Germany, The New Photography, 1927-33: Documents and Essays*, (London, 1978).
[210] Channon, *Railways In Britain and The United States*, p. 50.
[211] GWRM, November 1931.
[212] GWRM, November 1931.

in salary to £1000 per annum by 1928.[213] It is true that it took Fraser several years to revise *Holiday Haunts* completely, and thus there was a continued similarity between Edwardian and 1920s volumes up until 1927.[214] But, as argued, why change a winning formula? Instead Fraser's tenure saw further sales publications released in support of the larger guides, and he was supported by others similarly invigorated by the challenges of selling travel. The General Manager, Felix Pole, took a keen interest in promotional activities and was responsible for the enlargement and renaming of the Advertising Department as the 'Publicity Department' in 1924. Pole's memoirs reveal his belief that publicity was altogether different from advertising. For him 'publicity' captured a more useful understanding of communication, encompassing the promotion of goodwill and good relations with the public.[215] This appeared, in name at least, to recognise that advertising was now an outdated way of characterising the totality of the department's activities. As discussed in the Edwardian years, the company had to go beyond mere announcement to induce more traffic. Pole continued this by valuing the marketing campaign which combined the need for quality advertising with an appreciation of the often unique demands of consumers. Fraser and Pole were joined by myriad others who frequently appear in the company's magazine to voice their opinions on the new selling cultures of the railway.

The GWR was innovative in other ways. Historians analysing railway advertising lament the fact that few records give an insight into effectiveness or whether any companies sought to find this out.[216] The kind of systematic market research that might have made this possible became widespread in Britain after 1945. But the GWR's investigations into the reach and popularity of its marketing began in the 1920s. A team of publicity department clerks, sent to manage the GWR's Empire Exhibition, reported on the effectiveness of GWR

[213] TNA, RAIL 250/56, Minutes of Board of Directors – Meeting 1st November 1929.
[214] Wilson, *Go Great Western*, p. 115.
[215] Pole, *His Book*, p. 84.
[216] Watts, 'Evaluating British Railway Poster Advertising', p. 24.

publicity on the public as well as the lengths taken to establish this. For 166 days in 1924 the GWR's stand at Wembley attracted considerable attention in its efforts to extol the advantages of travel on the GWR. Produced by a Mr Hearn for the Superintendent of the Line, the team's report includes abundant information revealing the seriousness with which the public-facing role of the company and its publicity was taken.[217] Hearn wrote that the team's efforts had;

> secured many holidaymaking passengers to various parts...I feel confident that our presence at the British Empire Exhibition has been fully justified...The combined effect of our exhibits, conversations and literary propaganda must assuredly show itself to our advantage in the future.[218]

Statistics on the sales for each piece of literature showed the meticulous nature of this research, alongside more anecdotal evidence; 'the demand for anything pertaining to Devon and particularly Torquay was almost insatiable'.[219] Hearn went to great lengths to determine the impact of his efforts. His team interviewed organisers and cleaners to ascertain how much free literature was discarded at the end of each day. The answer: very little. The report demonstrates a desire on the part of the company to determine, at least in a rudimentary fashion, its effectiveness.

These kinds of measures were carried over to the transport side of the business. Where previously the collection of passenger statistics was a rudimentary guide to demand, the 1920s saw moves towards a qualitative understanding. In this decade the GWR began to publicly analyse its customer correspondence in its magazine as a way to improve

[217] TNA, RAIL 267/389, Report Upon Great Western Railway Arrangements at British Empire Exhibition Wembley 1924.
[218] TNA, RAIL 267/389, Report Upon Great Western Railway Arrangements at British Empire Exhibition, p. 6.
[219] TNA, RAIL 267/389, Report Upon Great Western Railway Arrangements at British Empire Exhibition, p. 5.

performance. Inaugurated in July 1922, the 'People We Have Pleased' section showed staff that their efficiency and courtesy was appreciated by the travelling and trading public. Employees were encouraged to observe this comment and improve their conduct. The section was broadened in 1926 to include 'People We Intend To Please', which detailed negative feedback. As well as persuading staff to acknowledge their key role in safeguarding the company's business fortunes, these sections also suggest that comment received from the public was assessed seriously. The initiative was a key development in the ongoing consideration of the passenger as consumer. Discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six, passenger correspondence provided the company with useful insights on how to renegotiate the public appeal of rail travel against road transport. But the GWR also discovered a useful public relations exercise. Public relations became a crucial part of selling the railways as they came under increasing attack from the roads and public opinion which often expected more than the war-beleaguered railways could delivery. Although ostensibly for the staff, the GWR knew that members of the travelling public read the magazine and it was sold at stations.[220] All members of the Big Four had their own ideas on public relations:[221] the SR, for example, championed an extensive 'propaganda' campaign to redress its negative public image.[222] But the GWR was the only one for which as yet there is clear evidence that it used passenger correspondence in this way.

The GWR also looked to outside help. In 1925 it invited an advertising consultant to discuss the wider industry and the different challenges the railways faced. This practice was intended so that GWR publicists could 'see ourselves as others see us'.[223] The consultant had some praise and some criticisms for the GWR. He agreed that the 'people we have pleased'

[220] GWRM, January 1925, p. 14; the magazine was also advertised alongside other publications at the back of *Holiday Haunts* in this decade.
[221] The LNER: 'Railways and Public Relations', *The Railway Gazette*, 11th April 1924, p. 552; The GWR: 'Railways and the Public', *The Railway Gazette*, 27th March 1825, p. 441; The SR: 'Railway Salesmanship and Public Relations Work', *The Railway Gazette*, 23rd December 1927, p. 786.
[222] 'Propaganda Publicity on the Southern Railway', *The Railway Gazette*, 7th January 1927, pp. 8-16.
[223] TNA, ZPER 38/17, Meeting of 5th February 1925, p. 15.

section was good, but too modest. Any one of the letters, he said, would be a prize for any commercial house, and would find a much wider publicity sphere than in a house journal. He praised *Holiday Haunts*: 'if you can induce people to travel to Devon, the question of which place they shall stay at can be much more adequately dealt with in a handbook where all the details of health statistics, rainfall, sunshine, and local matter would be given for each town'.[224] In the post-paper discussion the GWR's publicity department conceded that they were always learning, and welcomed the points even though they defended the criticisms vigorously. The department was not insular; it periodically looked outwards to others' strategies.

Additional, and sometimes novel, means to promote the GWR were also introduced in the 1920s. For instance, the company instigated Matinee Excursions to London which combined a theatre ticket with rail travel.[225] Photographic advertising machines, devices similar to revolving advertising boards of today, were pioneered by the GWR.[226] The company collaborated with department stores and shops, producing displays which linked travel to commodity culture.[227] The GWR also extended its relationship with the Press. Pole's quest for 'publicity' led to a fortunate encounter with George Beer, a former News Editor of *The Times*. Beer suggested that he could use his connections to keep the GWR and its achievements in the public eye. He encouraged staff to identify and produce news items to circulate to newspapers to further enhance a public persona. The success of this strategy was made evident in a circular sent to LNER employees which read; 'you will have noticed other companies, particularly the GWR, are obtaining publicity in the press by means of short paragraph and editorials...To enable us effectively to counteract this please send me...any

[224] TNA, ZPER 38/17, Meeting of 5th February 1925, p. 11.
[225] *The Railway Gazette*, 2nd November 1928.
[226] The Postergraph was an illuminated poster. Advertising Machines Limited advertised that they could offer an illuminated poster shown on the Postergraph, 16.5 hours per day from 8am till 12.30am, 'A circulation of millions for 5 guineas per week', *Advertiser's Weekly*, April 24th 1925, p. 165.
[227] GWRM, September 1924, p. 341.

items of interesting character'.[228] Clearly, the GWR's actions suggest a company with a vibrant attitude to marketing.

3.3: Explaining Continuity and Change II: Depression, Competition and Social Change

Three main factors precipitated a change in how the company considered its customers and marketing towards the end of the 1920s. The first was the economic slump between, roughly, 1928 and 1932.[229] Railways had initially developed to serve a range of traditional industries which fell into un-arrested decline during this period. The corresponding development of new, lighter industries in the south did not compensate the railways sufficiently,[230] and they turned to more heavily to passenger traffic and aggressive marketing. In this case they did not differ from many businesses which recognised that in times of depression more advertising was needed, not less.[231]

This was not, however, a straightforward shift thanks to road competition. In 1925 advertising commentator Percy Bradshaw asked why the railways should advertise? He answered with statistics: whilst the population of Great Britain had increased by two million in nine years, in the same time railway journeys had *decreased* by two million.[232] Until 1920 the passenger side of the business had been relatively well insulated from road competition owing to the expense and unreliability, over long distances, of private cars. But greater reliability and a burgeoning second-hand market increased car ownership by the late 1920s.[233] To encourage a modal shift, car and 'bus companies developed marketing which in some cases directly targeted the railways. As well as proclaiming to be more luxurious, the

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[228] Pole, *His Book*, p. 84.
[229] Simmons, *Railways of Britain*, pp. 41-42.
[230] Dyos and Aldcroft, *British Transport*, pp. 325-26.
[231] Turner, *The Shocking History of Advertising*, pp. 192-93; Kathy Myers, *Understains: The Sense and Seduction of Advertising*, (London, 1986), p. 22.
[232] Percy Bradshaw, *Art in Advertising*, (1925), p. 258.
[233] Sean O'Connell, *The Car In British Society*, (Manchester, 1998), pp. 11-38.

Jowett Motor Company, for example, declared that its latest model could beat the Royal Scot train London to York time.[234] Jowett subsequently admitted it knew that the Royal Scot did not in fact run to York, but the damage was done. Simultaneously, Shell came to recognise the importance of its marketing. Its posters used the same artists as the LMS and LNER and thus the style of advertising was in some ways in direct competition.[235] But Shell's marketers expressed a different take, displaying a great deal of humour as well as concern for Britain's countryside.[236] In these ways Shell made customers look out for its advertising, also ascribing travel a more whimsical yet considerate nature, something which became associated with the car over the 'outdated' values of the railways. Car manufacturers and those in the associated industries fully grasped the appeal of modernity, but looked out for the customer in other ways. By the late-1920s the Wolseley motor company's brochures included lavish artwork over technical description.[237] The customer was shown little about the actual mechanics or performance of the car, but emerged fully-versed in the style that automobility could offer.

The GWR's fears regarding this challenge are evident in its magazine and Traffic Department Reports towards the end of the decade.[238] 1927's report explained decreased regional revenue from passenger traffic by direct road competition;[239] in 1928 the number of private cars was identified as 'a serious menace to the railways'; [240] and in 1929 it said that rail could do little to compete with cars.[241] But despondency did not last, and road competition contributed to a re-negotiation in the way that the company approached consumers and also the extension of salesmanship amongst all staff. A new vocational

[234] *Advertiser's Weekly*, 11th April 1930.
[235] Hewitt, *The Commercial Art of Tom Purvis*, pp. 14-18.
[236] John Hewitt (ed.), *The Shell Poster Book*, (London, 1998), pp. 1-10.
[237] British Motor Industry Heritage Trust (BMIHT), Wolseley Brochures model range 1919-1929.
[238] TNA, RAIL 258/425, Great Western Railway Traffic Department: Annual Reports 1924-1930.
[239] TNA, RAIL 258/425 Great Western Railway Traffic Department: Annual Report 1927, p. 25.
[240] TNA, RAIL 258/425 Great Western Railway Traffic Department: Annual Report 1928, p. 1.
[241] TNA, RAIL 258/425 Great Western Railway Traffic Department: Annual Report 1928, p. 2.

course encouraged employees to consider 'Is it right?' and reflect on their actions in the broader terms of the company. The company recognised that all employees were potential salespeople,[242] and that an inconsiderate word or unhelpful manner would lead to lost custom. For this reason the philosophy of selling the railway extended out from the Publicity Department in the 1920s and down to all levels of staff. Indeed, to encourage a similar company-wide message on the LNER, Teasdale produced in 1929 an educative guide entitled *Selling LNER Transport by the Help of The Advertising Department*.[243] As on the GWR, it was recognised that good publicity was wasted unless it was followed across the company.

Thirdly, a revolution in holidaymaking practice forced the GWR to reconsider its marketing. Before around 1925 holidaymaking continued essentially Victorian anxiety to mixed bathing, the display of flesh and class divides at resorts.[244] But social developments, rights for women, higher incomes, broadening of the middle-classes, and the maturity of a generation keen to forget wartime austerity, began to reshape the British holiday.[245] Before the 1920s, exposure of the skin to the sun's rays had been a mark of working-class roughness, especially in women. Now tanned skin became a sign of affluence.[246] People were encouraged to forgo their usual reticence and reserve and consider time away from work and the city as, above all, fun.[247] This culminated, at the dawn of the 1930s, in the 'Bathing Boom' with enjoyment and hedonism now the main watchwords. Relaxing morals surrounding bathing, the construction of swimming pools, and new beliefs about the health benefits of sunbathing embodied a new ethos of sunshine and freedom.[248] Although this

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[242] GWRM, December 1928, p. 459.
[243] Middleton, *It's Quicker By Rail!*, p. 22.
[244] John K. Walton, *The British Seaside: Holidays and Resorts in the Twentieth Century*, (Manchester, 2000), pp. 97-98.
[245] Walton, *The British Seaside*, pp. 98-99.
[246] Catherine Horwood, "Girls Who Arouse Dangerous Passions': Women and Bathing, 1900-39', *Women's History Review*, 9 (2000), p. 658.
[247] Horwood, 'Girls Who Arouse Dangerous Passions', pp. 659-60; Ralph Harrington, 'Beyond The Bathing Belle: Images of Women in Interwar Railway Publicity', *Journal of Transport History*, 3rd ser. 25:1 (2004), p. 22.
[248] Walton, *The British Seaside*, pp. 99-101.

might outwardly suggest a boom in traffic, railways such as the GWR recognised that to effectively respond to these changes the appeal of the railway had to be altered. Railways had long catered to an intellectual upper middle-class market but they now needed to present themselves more attractively to the sun-worshipping masses.

Recognition of the twin challenges of inter-modal competition and a changing holiday culture revealed itself in an apparent panic within the GWR Publicity Department and further up the management hierarchy. The issue was, again, taken up in the company's official and unofficial arenas, but attempts to address change can also be seen in the GWR's interactions, at the end of the decade, with resort managers. In this respect, Bennett's work on the GWR's literary record demonstrates the need for a change in marketing strategy. He shows that the GWR encouraged resorts to follow the example of progressive Teignmouth and invest in new attractions and facilities: it criticised those slow in adopting popular entertainments.[249] Bennett argues that the need for a livelier, more dynamic and humorous presentation across the company's advertising media led the company to redress the textual format of many guides in favour of the more modern visual image.[250] At the same time, Felix Pole became increasingly frustrated with the 'romantic' appeal of destinations in Cornwall and wanted to align the region more prominently with modern tourist practice.[251] A greater degree of 'Friendliness' in the company's publicity was considered essential to communicate effectively with new consumers with an increasing choice in where to holiday and how to get there.[252] The company had already begun this for some resorts,[253] but rejuvenation of

[249] Bennett, 'The GWR and The Celebration of Englishness', pp. 155-57.
[250] Bennett, 'The GWR and The Celebration Of Englishness', p. 161.
[251] Bennett, 'The GWR and The Celebration of Englishness', pp. 164-65.
[252] Bennett, 'The Great Western Railway and The Celebration of Englishness', p. 161.
[253] The Cambrian resorts, having come under the GWR's operation in 1922, claimed that the company had 'taught' them the value of publicity. See for example *The Manchester Guardian*, 30th September 1932, p. 18 and also 3rd February 1933.

marketing activities across the system was deemed necessary. As in the 1880s, awareness of crisis once again made the GWR receptive to change.

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On the one hand, advertising expenditure and poster and photographic appearance suggests that the GWR struggled to adapt to post-war conditions at a time when other businesses on the rails and beyond adapted their marketing.[254] But this section argued that the GWR knew of its shortcomings and strove to improve. Innovation characterised many areas. Felix Pole was influential in shifting company outlook from 'advertising' to 'publicity', but also in demanding that the company and the resorts it served rethink their activities. It faced difficulties but so did others: Rowntree's struggled to meet new markets and adopt appropriate marketing in this decade.[255] J. Walter Thompson's efforts for General Motors frightened British consumers.[256] Moreover, Britain's other railways did not advance unchecked. The LMS's public emphasis of modern business efficiency hid shortcomings that affected staff morale and public attitudes.[257] The SR's steady rise in public esteem was marked because it started from a rather low level of popularity.[258] The 1920s was truly a period of change and continuity for the GWR, presenting a contrasting way of interpreting the marketing photographs produced in this decade. Although little is known about the formation of photographic marketing in this period, placing them into this context suggests that they were not merely decorative or lacklustre attempts to entice passengers. Rather they probably benefitted from much of the good work achieved in the decade. However, although

[254] Nevett, *Advertising In Britain*, pp. 145-50.
[255] Fitzgerald, *Rowntree and The Marketing Revolution,* p. 5.
[256] Jeff Merron, 'Putting Foreign Consumers on the Map: J. Walter Thompson's Struggle with General Motors' International Advertising Account in the 1920s', *The Business History Review*, 73:3 (1999), p. 479.
[257] Bonavia, *The Four Great Railways*, p. 35.
[258] Bonavia, *The Four Great Railways*, p. 72.

many good strategies were trialled in the 1920s, it was in the 1930s that they were properly consolidated, codified and used to better company practices.

Section 4: Reinvention 1930-1939 – Stage 3

Britain's railways saw the 1930s as the beginning of a 'new era' in which competition, depression and the changing market had transformed the rules of business.[259] Renewed discussion on 'The Importance of Publicity' and 'The Value of Advertising' abounded alongside articles which encouraged new forms of promotion.[260] The preceding sections demonstrated that this was not an awakening as such; commentators were now more concerned with the character of advertising, whether it was on the 'right lines', than whether companies actually did it. There is much evidence both of widening reach and greater formality of marketing ideas. All four railway companies, for instance, attended advertising conventions and conferences and paid more attention to the work of other marketers at home and abroad.[261] This served further to codify how marketing should take place, the methods it should employ and the various technical issues to address. There was continued interest in 'marketing' used in a context we would recognise today. *The Railway Gazette* included a report on 'Planned Publicity for a Specialised Market'. It concluded that;

> ...a man will buy a motorcar for many reasons other than to provide transport or because his old one is worn out and these reasons involve personal idiosyncrasies,

[259] *The Railway Gazette*, 24th March 1933, pp. 416-17.
[260] See for example *The Railway Gazette*, 23rd January 1931, pp. 105-06; 3rd June 1932 p. 821; 18th October, 1932, p. 499; 16th December 1932 p. 761.
[261] For just a small sample of this cross-company comment see *LMSR Magazine*, 'Printed Words', August 1934, pp. 309-311; *LNER Magazine*, 'Advertising', May 1929, pp. 231-34; *The Railway Magazine*, 'Advertisements in Carriages', October 1939, pp. 243-44; *The Railway Gazette*, 'Effective Publicity Coordination', 2nd August 1935, p. 179; 'High Speed – An advertising Asset', 9th July 1937, p. 52; 'Debate on Modern Advertising', 4th March 1938, p. 438.

> personal taste, personal needs and personal emotions. He may deny himself other things to buy it; he will make sacrifices.[262]

In 1936 the GWR had made a similar observation; 'the successful salesman is the man who...can "put over" his subject in such a way that the prospective customer judges not only from the point of view of price but is also persuaded by the subtle more appeals'.[263] As in wider debates about the consumer, passenger psychology was examined in greater detail in an attempt to anticipate and satisfy a variety of wants and desires connected to travel. The unifying factor once more was the necessity of a customer focus which dealt more with personal needs and tastes.

In the 1930s businesses also confronted a public increasingly accustomed to more sophisticated forms of visual communication. Thanks to declining cost and improved reproduction, the daily newspaper became an altogether more visual experience. Before 1930 it was standard practice to include one picture page; afterwards there were photographs on every page.[264] In addition, the cinema became one of the most forms of popular entertainment.[265] Cinema's exceptional popularity led commercial photographers to abandon authenticity in favour of a carefully staged 'story' about consumption which would spark an emotional response in the viewer.[266] In 1932 one advertising expert warned that advertising was glanced at rather than studied: it needed to be carefully planned to capture the ephemeral glance of the popular reader.[267] Advertisers looked to the texts of professional psychologists for information on determining the nature of commercial appeals.[268] For the railways who

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[262] 'Planned Publicity', *The Railway Gazette*, 18th March 1938, pp. 520-521.
[263] GWRM, June 1936, pp. 289-90.
[264] LeMahieu, *A Culture For Democracy*, p. 258.
[265] Martin Francis, 'Leisure and Popular Culture', in Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska (ed.), *Women In Twentieth-Century Britain*, (Edinburgh, 2001), p. 238.
[266] Brown, *The Corporate Eye*, pp. 188-97.
[267] LeMahieu, *A Culture For Democracy*, pp. 256-57.
[268] LeMahieu, *A Culture For Democracy*, pp. 256-57.

had considered, in a rudimentary fashion, the customer, their ephemeral glance, and their emotions for some thirty years, the 1930s engendered a greater understanding of the conceptual differentiations between advertising, publicity and propaganda, as well as how to use these in an exceptionally 'visual' generation. This called into question the established ways of doing things, and in the1930s we see a reappraisal of photographic marketing joining the calls for a more 'friendly' passenger-centred approach at the end of the 1920s.

4.1: Changing Personnel

In the 1930s, the GWR's Publicity Department experienced comprehensive reorganisation. In 1931 a new general manager, James Milne, was followed quickly by publicity men, and women, with different philosophies about marketing and the place of the customer. William Fraser himself retired in November 1931 and was succeeded by K.W.C. Grand.[269] Grand spent little time in the post (being promoted in 1933) although during his tenure he was instrumental in developing a new emblem for the company.[270] Designed by Arthur Sawyer, head of production in the Publicity Department, this emblem built on earlier experiments with branding and was used exhaustively on the company's property and promotions. Grand's successor, George Orton, was in the post for an even shorter tenure. His capabilities were recognised and he was promoted to the position of Commercial Assistant where his ideas on selling the GWR continued to shape the company.

All of these people were railwaymen through-and-through, promoted from within. But Orton's successor in 1934, Major John Dewar, broke this mould. Dewar's background, aside from distinguished service in the army during the Great War, was assiduously marketing. Prior to his appointment as Publicity Officer, Dewar had been in charge of

[269] TNA, RAIL 250/56, Minutes of Board of Directors, Meeting 9th October 1931. Grand's salary on promotion climbed from £650 to £800 per annum.
[270] Wilson, *Go Great Western*, p. 31.

outdoor publicity for the Empire Marketing Board.[271] His appointment to the GWR suggests both the recognition that advertising was a business which necessitated professionalism, and that the best person to tackle rail's public image was someone not already fully committed to the career. Despite little surviving information on Dewar, correspondence in Maxwell Fraser's archive and reports on his activities in the company magazine suggest that he was a key figure in the new marketing direction of the 1930s which embraced salesmanship, aspirational advertising and increased market segmentation.[272]

These men were instrumental in ensuring that the good work of the 1920s was built upon. There was renewed reflection on marketing matters at railway meetings and conferences, recorded and summarised in the pages of the GWR's magazine and other industry journals. At one such presentation to the Railway Students' Association in 1936, George Orton (in his role as Commercial Assistant) provided a detailed overview of the GWR's activities, their origins and prospects. Orton outlined the diverse publicity mediums used by the company, photography, film, press arrangements, posters and a host of others, and emphasised that these were allocated with their likely influence on the target market in mind.[273] He reiterated what was broadly known since the Edwardian years; that there was 'hardly a soul in the country that cannot be attracted to [the railway] at some time or by some means', but getting the appeal right to these assorted individuals was crucial.[274] For the GWR, this meant that segmenting appeals based on different lifestyles and tastes was taken even further in this decade. We will see in Chapters Five and Six that during the 1930s women and ramblers joined the company's existing chief markets, such as families and the

[271] The Empire Marketing Board was an organisation empowered to spend £1,000,000 annually on improving trade with the Commonwealth – Turner, *The Shocking History of Advertising*, pp. 187-88; Details of Dewar's appointment can be found in the GWRM, September 1934.
[272] He was the grease in the machine, corresponding with myriad officials and in constant contact with Maxwell Fraser regarding *Holiday Haunts:* The National Library of Wales (NLOW), GB 0210 MAXSER: F /1-593, Correspondence and papers, 1929-1968, relating to Maxwell Fraser's publicity work for the GWR.
[273] TNA, RAIL 1107/9, Meeting of 13th February 1936, pp. 32-37.
[274] TNA, RAIL 1107/9, Meeting of 13th February 1936, pp. 32-37.

lover of the picturesque, but other smaller groups such as golfers, theatre-goers and dog owners, represented further niche groups.[275] This built on the overall perception of the market:

> ...there are the single men and or women, the honeymooners, the family man, the rambler, the sportsman, the camper, the tourist, the sightseer, and those with only an occasional half-day or day to spend. In the GWR holiday provisions there is something to suit everyone, either in the general arrangements or by the special arrangements to meet particular needs.[276]

The GWR spelt out a process which had been in genesis for some thirty years; it was dividing consumers into target groups to deploy its appeals more effectively. The notion that everybody was a potential customer was continually reflected upon and adapted to help shape individual provisions. With the appeal even to small groups such as dog owners,[277] consideration of contrasting passenger needs had reached a high pitch.

Orton claimed that the railways were still working out the best division of resources, but as the table below shows, in the 1930s press advertisements continued to draw the bulk of expenditure whilst costs of other areas remaining at similar levels. The railway advertising man had to work to a strict budget. It was impossible to advertise everything that the railways had to offer the public, and the men tasked with this had to pick out 'what are considered the most attractive items'.[278] The consistent expenditure suggests again that, as well as relatively stable economic conditions, the GWR had refined its marketing process.

[275] TNA, RAIL 1107/9, Meeting of 13th February 1936, pp. 32-37.
[276] GWRM, May 1936, p. 209.
[277] TNA, RAIL 1107/9, Meeting of 13th February 1936, p. 36.
[278] TNA, RAIL 1107/9, Meeting of 13th February 1936, pp. 32-37.

Table 1.3: Advertising Expenditure 1930-39[279]

	1930	1931	1932	1933	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
Press Advertising	74,510	62, 650	62,150	64,000	68,000	68,000	75,000	75,000	74,000
Printing of Publications & Posters inc. Holiday Haunts	25,000	24, 000	24,000	24,000	24,000	24,000	25,000	25,000	25,000
Advertisements on omnibuses & underground trains	2350	2350	2350	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000
Misc. Inc. Commerical Advertising Publicity	7500	5000	5000	4000	4000	4000	6000	6000	7000
Freight/ Goods Advertising	7500	7500	7500	6000	6000	6000	6000	6000	6000
Total	116, 500	101, 500	101,000	100,500	104000	104,000	114000	114000	115,000
Less estimated Receipts From sale publications	14, 000	15,000	15,000	14,500	14000	14,000	14000	14,000	14,000
Net cost	102, 500	86,500	86,000	86,000	90000	90,000	10000	100000	101,000

Orton also argued for the importance of publicity which could not be described as advertising but was just as valuable,[280] and here again we see that a customer focus was at the forefront of considerations. Keeping the company in the press, turning company employees into salesmen, and increasing cooperation between railways were all key topics. As competition from road transport intensified during the 1930s, the Big Four cooperated on several initiatives: the 'It's Quicker By Rail' (1930) and 'Square Deal' (1938) campaigns intended to improve public image and boost staff morale.[281] But inter-company rivalries died hard and companies continued to release their own publicity. The GWR was the only

[279] Compiled using annual statistics from TNA, RAIL 250/357, Traffic Committee 1932-1937. The vote for advertising expenditure happened on different dates but roughly occurred in the first weeks of November, sufficient time to establish the success of the outgoing campaign and to begin the following year's preparations.
[280] TNA, RAIL 1107/9, Meeting of 13th February 1936, pp. 32-37.
[281] Smith, *The Railway and Its Passengers*, pp. 165-66; In 1933, for example, the railways held a joint information bureau at the national Advertising and Marketing Exhibition, *The Railway Gazette*, 21st July 1933, p. 112.

company to place public enquiries under the heading of publicity; 'what better publicity can you have than good service in the shape of swift and accurate answers to public enquiries?'[282] As seen in the 'People We Have Pleased' case, this not only allowed the company to swiftly satisfy public concerns but enabled the research of the public's attitudes to the railway.[283] At all levels employees were encouraged to see a moment's discourtesy, indifference or thoughtlessness undid the good work of the company's advertising.[284] Though Orton did not use the terms, it is clear within the mix of diverse promotion, keen and varied pricing, public relations as well as rudimentary market research, a good public persona was deemed essential for selling the company indirectly.

Orton's presentation reflected broader developments in marketing such as the use of the work of psychologists.[285] The GWR recognised that its most effective appeals were 'seen and not read',[286] and that the company required less an informative appeal to the calculating mind, and more 'a scientific appeal to the conscious and subconscious'.[287] Whilst in previous decades the customer's travel patterns could be shaped or induced, now they were open to manipulation through correct appeals. The company's debating society engaged a similar set of issues. A prize winning essay entitled 'The Creation and Development of New Demands for Transport' saw Mr Potter of the Chief Goods Manager's Office argue that passenger traffic offered the greatest opportunities because there was no particular limit to the number of passenger journeys that might be made.[288] Notwithstanding other forms of entertainment such as the wireless and cinema, Potter discerned a rapidly growing desire in the majority of people to travel chiefly for pleasure. To capture this he advocated making people look upon

[282] TNA, RAIL 1107/9, Meeting of 13th February 1936, pp. 32-37.
[283] TNA, RAIL 1107/9, Meeting of 13th February 1936, pp. 32-37.
[284] TNA, RAIL 1107/9, Meeting of 13th February 1936, pp. 32-37.
[285] Nevett, *Advertising In Britain*, p. 150.
[286] GWRM, June 1936, pp. 289-90.
[287] GWRM, June 1936, pp. 289-90.
[288] GWRM, February 1935, pp. 87-88.

the railway as if it was something brand new. As will be seen, this was an idea already in genesis at the company.

These beliefs conditioned other elements of the GWR's operation, such as the development of targeted services like the 'Hikers' and 'Kiddies' expresses of 1932,[289] the appointment of female canvassers to tap the burgeoning market for travel amongst women,[290] the use of film as a publicity tool,[291] and further courses to educate the staff. On this last point, an 'Ideas and Suggestions' scheme was extended, and the amount of suggestions relating to advertising suggests that the staff took selling the company to heart.[292] These included advertising loudspeakers at stations,[293] ideas to get children 'railway minded'[294] and potential company catchphrases.[295] Of course a monetary reward was offered for successful suggestions, and some suggestions merely represented extensions of existing schemes, but such efforts suggest the management's desire to attempt to improve corporate image as much as to directly sell.

The most substantial indicators of this mindset which placed the passenger as customer were the revisions prepared for *Holiday Haunts*. It became a mouthpiece for lifestyle and aspirational marketing, allowing different groups to be more effectively and emotively appealed to. *Holiday Haunts'* new visual styles and segmented marketing epitomised the customer-centred approach which saw passengers as agents in the construction of their own desires in the 1930s.

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[289] GWRM, June, 1932, p. 229.
[290] GWRM, October 1936, p. 505.
[291] GWRM, January 1939, pp. 26-27.
[292] See for example, TNA, RAIL 787/12, GWR Suggestions Forms Aug – Nov 1924; RAIL 787/44, GWR Suggestions Forms Sept – Nov 1936; RAIL 787/52, GWR Suggestions Forms May – Sept 1939.
[293] TNA, RAIL 787/44, GWR Suggestions Committee: 29th September 1936.
[294] TNA, RAIL 787/44, GWR Suggestions Committee: 13th November 1936.
[295] 'Where to go, how to go, that is the question – the answer is simple – Go Great Western!'; TNA, RAIL 787/44, GWR Suggestions Committee 13th October 1936.

4.2: Modernising Holiday Haunts

Although *Holiday Haunts'* sales had declined in 1929 following economic depression,[296] the publication remained the company's most popular publicity medium.[297] This was largely thanks to Dorothey 'Maxwell' Fraser's efforts. The daughter of the head of publicity, and a well-travelled Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, in the summer of 1929 Fraser was selected to completely re-write *Holiday Haunts*. Agreeing to work exclusively for the GWR, Fraser took a considerable pay cut, accepting £150 plus £50 travel expenses. She agreed however that working for the GWR itself was of considerable value:[298] the company's reputation for excellent travel literature was obviously not just self publicity. Fraser dealt mainly with the heads of the Publicity Department, in the later years particularly with John Dewar. Personally visiting each destination, Fraser's impact was quickly felt. She was instrumental in creating a more user-friendly structure for the guide which grouped destinations regionally, rather than alphabetically. This made districts more comprehensible 'with a view to assisting the reader'.[299] 1931's guide was the first revolutionary break with tradition. The introductory pages proclaimed that this was 'The New *Holiday Haunts*'.[300] Textual revision was substantial, but, as we will see below, the chief change of the 1930s was the recognition that to market a destination it was no longer enough to picture a place; it was increasingly sold as a human experience. The predominant focus on landscape was reduced in favour of a more intimate focus on individual passengers with the goal seemingly to reveal through their poses, actions and expressions what 'they' thought about the destination. This turn captured more explicitly the desirable quality of 'Friendliness' cited above.

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[296] Wilson, *Go Great Western*, pp. 16-19.
[297] TNA, RAIL 250/772 GWR Minutes and Reports 1936.
[298] NLOW, GB 0210 MAXSER: F 1-150, Letter to Nicholls from Fraser 9th December 1929.
[299] GWR, *Holiday Haunts*, (1931), p. 15.
[300] GWR, *Holiday Haunts* (1931).

In these endeavours the GWR was directed by comment from consumers as well as wider theories based on interactions with resorts and the media. Fraser received a continual stream of correspondence on the guide, forwarded from the publicity department. In 1935, for example, she received a letter from a gentleman planning a holiday using *Holiday Haunts*. The correspondent offered a suggestion to enhance the usefulness of the guide; to do away with descriptions of the history of destinations in favour of what to do there in the present day. A family man, he found the descriptions of what happened centuries ago interesting but said he would prefer to know 'first is the beach sandy and is the bathing good?'[301] Another letter, this time from the Newquay Advertising Committee, asked Fraser to remove the reference to 'jingles' – a traditional pony-and-trap ride – in favour of information on a growing attraction, surfing.[302] Characteristic of many of the comments from the public and resort management, the letters not only showed the company that many contemporary holidaymakers preferred sun and sea to history, the fact that this was acted upon confirms *Holiday Haunts'* up-to-the-minute and customer-directed messages.

Such correspondence ultimately led Dewar and Fraser to re-evaluate what the modern consumer wanted from the company. This was seen in the annual changes to the guide. But as the years progressed Fraser was viewed by the GWR as increasingly out of step with the modern consumer's wants. In the summer of 1939, regarding the publishing of the subsequent volume, Dewar confronted Fraser on descriptions of 'what happened centuries ago'. In no uncertain terms he advised her;

> it is of course not desired to increase the amount of descriptive matter...I think you can very well go through the existing book and revise quite a large number of the paragraphs avoiding as much as you can superlative and over-flowery

[301] NLOW, GB 0210 MAXSER, F 1-150, Letter to Maxwell Fraser, 27th May 1935.
[302] NLOW, GB 0210 MAXSER, F 1-150, Letter to Maxwell Fraser, 1st August 1934.

> language... although this is quite a charmingly written piece, I feel that the present day holidaymaker would really like something more definitely informative.[303]

Indeed, in line with Dewar's recommendations Fraser revised the piece for Newton Ferrers from, 'the charm of the twin villages is too intimate to be conveyed in mere words – it is compounded of shady lanes and thatched cottages, gardens gay with flowers, and rich pasturage where sleek cows graze contentedly...'[304] to 'Newton Ferrers and Noss Mayo are so closely linked with Plymouth by bus that they are rapidly developing as residential suburbs of that city...there are innumerable beautiful walks and drives in the neighbourhood'.[305] The passage reveals a number of considerations for *Holiday Haunts* in the late 1930s. It was a visual brochure, the modern consumer was no longer thought to be interested in lyrical descriptions of history and beauty. Anticipating the wants of the 'present day holidaymaker' influenced Dewar's attack on Fraser's descriptive language. As the following chapter shows, ultimately this could be left to other publications which now filled this particular niche.

Maxwell Fraser's archive of correspondence reveals glimpses of GWR marketing strategy, yet the surviving information is probably a small percentage of the detailed interactions between the GWR, resorts and customers. Presumably *Holiday Haunts'* construction process was similar to that of other company guides. The content was not updated on the whim of a publicity clerk; customer responses were an essential part of its annual revision. By liaising with GWR staff, resort officials, and communicating with passengers, Fraser ensured that *Holiday Haunts* continued to best fulfil the diverse wants and desires of a range of customers. The same is true of the photographs which adorned the volume. A shift in photographic style and content corroborates the idea that the GWR was

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[303] NLOW, GB 0210 MAXSER, F 151-300, Letter from Dewar to Fraser, 14th June 1939.
[304] GWR, *Holiday Haunts*, (1939).
[305] GWR, *Holiday Haunts*, (1940).

thinking increasingly deeply about what the 'present day holidaymaker' wanted to see, as well as what they wanted to read.

4.3: New Photographic Strategy

In the 1930s the GWR embraced new ways of capturing, posing and presenting photography in line with selling 'experiences' linked to products. In this way, 'lifestyle marketing', that is selling not products or services as much as the intangible pleasures associated with them,[306] became a definite feature of the GWR's strategy. In the 1930s companies which sought a new appeal to the masses used photographs of ordinary people who had been made glamorous through their consumption.[307] Getting the public to think less about products as functional and more as part of lifestyle choices rested on portraying 'news' about the world of style, prestige, and glamour.[308] The GWR's usage conveyed its re-imagining of the consumer as one highly interested in contemporary styles and fashions, and one who increasingly defined themselves via conspicuous consumption. Overall, the GWR's photographic strategy heeded the call for more 'friendliness' and the most substantial move was to depict people, a trend common throughout the advertising industry at the time.[309]

Rather than take spontaneous images of the destination or wide-angle shots of populous beaches, the company began to select and pose individuals drawn from its own staff and holidaymakers. Facial expressions, gestures, costumes and placement were all carefully staged in order to illustrate a story about consumption (Figures 1.15 and 1.16). Lighting techniques to direct the viewer's attention to certain points in the photograph, disciplining the

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[306] Helen Wilkinson, '"The New Heraldry": Stock Photography, Visual Literacy, and Advertising in 1930s Britain', *Journal of Design History*, 10:1 (1997), p. 34.
[307] *Advertiser's Weekly*, 2nd March 1933.
[308] Stefan Schwarzkopf, 'Discovering The Consumer: Market Research, Product Innovation, and the Creation Of Brand Loyalty In Britain and The United States In The Interwar Years', *Journal Of Macromarketing*, 29:1 (2009), p. 14.
[309] Wilkinson, '"The New Heraldry", p. 23.

eye's movements, featured in some of the most innovative contemporary commercial photographic work.[310] That the GWR was experimenting with and perfecting these techniques from the beginning of the 1930s suggests that whilst it was some years behind the pioneering work of Hiller and Steichen in the United States,[311] it could ably compete with the kinds of imagery produced by Britain's stock advertising studios.[312] This also had further benefits for segmenting the market; the GWR could now show which type of customer 'belonged' at which destination as opposed to just showing the destination or activities. The images below, for example, would have had particular resonance with the family. These examples also show that photographic captions had evolved from simply naming the destination to directing 'suggested reading' of the content. This helped viewers approach GWR photography in the 'correct' corporate way, in these cases suggesting that 'happiness' and 'high spirits' cost only the price of a railway ticket.

Figure 1.15: 'High Spirits on the Merionethshire Coast', 1933 Figure 1.16: 'Happiness in Industry', 1939

[310] Brown, *The Corporate Eye*, p. 201.
[311] Johnson, *Real Fantasies*, pp. 3-4; Brown, *The Corporate Eye*, p. 185.
[312] Wilkinson, 'The New Heraldry', pp. 24-37.

Although its photography was probably not avant-garde, the GWR attempted to include cutting-edge techniques. For example, Fox's Model Agency,[313] specialists in photographic models and posed photography, was employed by the GWR at first to provide shots of its carriage and hotel interiors. Later the models posed at destinations. Using a model agency constituted a novel means, for a railway at least, to communicate with consumers. It also allowed the company to make connections to a world of aspiration available through consumption because, thanks to mass media photography, the 'model look' began to achieve fame in its own right.[314] Even though standard holiday imagery might have shared a similar visual grammar with the more constructed examples, smiles, expensive clothing and sunshine all meaning relatively the same things, models packaged these connotations more slickly (Figure 1.17). Contrast the image below, for example, with the GWR photographers' efforts above: although the basic visual messages about happiness and weather, for example, are the same, the Fox imagery had a more professional sheen. This gave the GWR's photographs a further competitive edge as it had done with Edwardian press agencies.

[313] See for examples: National Railway Museum (NRM), GWR B Series, Negatives 12115, 13486, 12114.
[314] Johnson, *Real Fantasies*, pp. 3-4; Cheryl Buckley and Hilary Fawcett, *Fashioning the Feminine: Representation and Women's Fashion from the Fin de Siecle to the Present*, (London, 2002), pp. 110-12.

Figure 1.17: 'Devon Mermaids', 1937

The GWR was secretive regarding its collaboration with the Fox agency. We do not know who the models were, how much they were paid, or when Fox ceased to exist. No fanfare in the company magazine, where novel initiatives were usually broadcast, suggests that the company perceived an advantage over the way other railways advertised. Indeed, Orton made enigmatic mention of the excellent results secured by co-operating with photographic and film agencies.[315] Yet rather than simply providing 'stock' photography, Fox's was clearly acting under GWR directives on what should be presented, using GWR hotels and rolling stock as backgrounds. These photographs best demonstrate the GWR imagining customers as aspiring to certain lifestyles. The polished visions of people were subject to a rigorous selection process: although dozens were taken only a few made it into the publications (Figures 1.18 and 1.19). The images were cropped, the no-smoking sign

[315] TNA, RAIL 1107/9, Meeting of 13th February 1936, pp. 32-37.

removed, and an artificial landscape substituted. One will not fail to note that the models were conventionally attractive, the lighting good, the scene more 'composed' and the clothing fashionable. This is an important point and will be elaborated on separately in the following chapters, but here it demonstrates that although the GWR still used outside agencies, these were controlled by the overarching design philosophy of the company.

Figure 1.18: 'By GWR Third Class', 1939

Figure 1.19: GWR B-Series Negative 12120b

Above all *Holiday Haunts* was not simply a gallery that aided selection of a holiday. Each issue was the meticulous result of input from the GWR on what they desired to be emphasised such as early holidays; what consumers wanted, increasingly defined as emphasis on fun or the family; and how the destinations envisioned their portrayal. A succinct and effective way of doing this was through photography. The company could illustrate a number of 'myths' and support these textually. Photography was the opening salvo to draw the potential consumer more deeply into the practicalities of the holiday which publications also dealt with neatly. The quality and range of the photographs worked on wider society's

photographic literacy and, as Chapter Four examines, the popularity of personal photography and its meanings of escape, enjoyment, togetherness and fun.[316]

A final comparison reveals the GWR's place amongst the other members of the Big Four. By the 1930s each released 'all-line' photographic publications which included similar numbers of photographs to *Holiday Haunts*. The major tropes were also universal; beach scenes, children, carriage imagery and the ubiquitous bathing belle. Figure 1.20, from *Holidays by LMS* of 1938, suggests that this company probably also employed models, posing them in ways which conferred associated qualities with the destination. In other cases the quality varied. In Figure 1.21, 'Cruden Bay Hotel', the LNER experimented with a rudimentary form of graphic alteration, superimposing images of couples onto an original photograph. Although we cannot tell how these efforts were received, one assumes that the contemporary holidaymaker would not have been so naive as to miss the notable differences in perspective and colouring. Finally, Figure 1.22, 'On a Clyde Pleasure Steamer', whilst an accurate representation a steamer trip, made the people look tired, uncomfortable and un-amused. The image is poorly composed, cluttered and obscures the passengers; it appears more as an average snapshot than the considered work of a professional. Whilst not indicative of the majority of LNER photography, the significance is that the GWR never allowed this kind of image into its guides. For the GWR, it was rare for anybody who appeared unhappy, conventionally unattractive, or even conceivably over the age of forty, to appear as the sole focus of an image. As a result of this comparison we must recognise the GWR as having an advanced set of capabilities to its rivals. Although more research is required to corroborate this fully, the suggestion once again is that the GWR's output benefitted from a dedicated customer focus which took even apparently small details into careful consideration.

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[316] Patricia Holland, *Picturing Childhood: The Myth of the Child in Popular Imagery*, (London, 2004), p. 10; Patricia Holland, '"Sweet it is to scan..." Personal Photographs and Popular Photography', in Liz Wells (ed.), *Photography: A Critical Introduction*, (London, 1997), p. 136.

Figure 1.20: 'Come to Kent', 1938[317]

[317] LMS, *Holidays by LMS*, (1938).

Figure 1.21: 'Cruden Bay Hotel', 1939[318]

Figure 1.22: 'On A Clyde Pleasure Steamer', 1939[319]

[318] LNER, *The Holiday Handbook*, (1939).
[319] LNER, *The Holiday Handbook*, (1939).

Section 5: Conclusions

This chapter began by identifying the need to know more about how the GWR understood marketing, to what degree it considered the customer as a central component in its business and how far this influenced promotional strategies. It has shown that by the end of the 1930s the GWR exhibited many facets of improved marketing identified in other contemporary businesses. For example, GWR publicists regularly reflected on how to segment individual customers based on preferences; since the Edwardian years the company knew that when approaching the family man, the sportsman or the lover of the picturesque, it had to take into account different motivations to consume. The GWR also employed a low-pressure sales approach, recognising customers as individuals who had to be carefully coerced into spending.[320] Aspirational marketing, a growing strategy amongst interwar British companies,[321] became a clear component of GWR activities which portrayed consumption as simple and enjoyable, as well as having social benefits.[322] For the GWR however, marketing evolution rather than revolution better characterises developments. As one GWR publicist commented, they were 'always learning',[323] and a customer-centred approach was arguably being developed between 1906 and 1939.

Each section also examined how far the GWR 'researched' its customers. The GWR looked at how to do this - using sales statistics as well as qualitative evidence drawn from correspondence – albeit in a rudimentary fashion. The company did not employ the large-scale market research which other contemporary businesses began to exploit, although it is

[320] Peter Scott, 'Marketing Mass Home Ownership and the Creation of the Modern Working-class Consumer in Interwar Britain', *Business History*, 50:1 (2008), p. 12.
[321] Scott, 'Marketing Mass Home Ownership', p. 13; Schwarzkopf, 'Discovering The Consumer', p. 14.
[322] Roy Church, 'New Perspectives on the History of Products, Firms, Marketing, and Consumers in Britain and the United States Since the Mid-Nineteenth Century', *The Economic History Review*, 52:3 (1999), p. 623.
[323] TNA, ZPER 38/17, Meeting of 5th February 1925, p. 11.

impossible to tell whether the GWR suffered as a result of this.[324] This chapter also argued that marketing was rarely a one-way relationship. It showed how, through competitions and correspondence, passengers could help shape the marketing themselves. This illustrates an additional degree of receptiveness as well as the foresight to ask customers to review the company in this way. Divall and Shin argue that there was no handbook available to guide railway publicity men in their campaigns: railwaymen only half understood their experiments to create a differentiated market out of a public which had previously been viewed as largely homogenous.[325] It was far from an exact science, and there was no handbook, but this chapter has demonstrated the GWR's developing interaction with customer perspectives and how to satisfy them in more meaningful ways.

The conclusions in this chapter have important implications for the following qualitative analysis of the company's photographic marketing. Each section has shown that, contrary to what other historians and curators have written, the men and women at the GWR were committed to a customer focus, and nurtured a forward-thinking attitude to sales. Moreover, by analysing the procurement process the chapter has argued that the photographs and the guides they appeared in were directed by this culture; the photographs are significant indicators of a more developed attitude to passengers. We can now place the far more abundant photographic sources in this context and examine what individual examples reveal about the company's attitudes to customers as divided into market segments. We start, in the following chapter, by examining the body of photographs selected to entice a group of customers defined by the GWR as 'lovers of the picturesque'.

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[324] Schwarzkopf, 'Discovering The Consumer', pp. 8-9; Fitzgerald, *Rowntree and The Marketing Revolution,* p. 5.

[325] Colin Divall and Hiroki Shin, 'Cultures of Speed and Conservative Modernity: Representations of Speed in Britain's Railway Marketing', in Benjamin Fraser and Steven Spalding (eds.), *Trains, Culture, and Mobility: Riding the Rails: Volume 2*, (Lanham, 2012), pp. 18-19.