

# IMPACT™

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USING EVIDENCE & INSIGHT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

## Sweet Spot

An 11-page special report on  
how customer data and market  
research can work together



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# SWITZERLAND

## All aboard

The latest research on domestic travellers' behaviour in Switzerland can offer valuable insight for the rest of the European railway industry, says DemoSCOPE's Janusz Kołodziejski

**W**hen it comes to railway travel, Switzerland is a country to watch. And not just for its stunning scenery: it's the European leader for modal share (percentage of travellers using a particular type of transport) and passenger-kilometres travelled.

According to Eurostat, Switzerland has a substantially higher modal share of trains in total inland passenger transport than any of the EU countries (in 2012 it was 17.2% compared with 11.5% in Austria, 10.1% in both Hungary and Denmark, and 9.5% in France).

One of the main priorities for Swiss Federal Railways (SBB) – the national railway company of Switzerland – is to adapt to local passengers' needs. To that end, RailAway, an affiliate of SBB, has a mission to develop and introduce all-in-one inland travel deals, to combine the train journey and various activities at the destination.

While the idea of collaborating with other industries to create new

revenue streams is not new, it is still not fully exploited in other European countries. And partnerships between railways and other sectors mean so much more than revenue growth. They can also mean shared learning.

As with the UK, where National Rail attracts customers with '2 for 1 offers when you go by train', it is also RailAway's mission to create offers beyond rail travel. For its latest attempt to understand the habits and expectations of its potential customers, it called on DemoSCOPE to gather insights through an online study.

The research was conducted between April and May of this year with members of the DemoSCOPE Community. It produced more than 4,000 interviews nationwide, giving interesting insights into domestic travellers' preferred means of transportation and typical destinations, as well as the particular motivation for choosing (or not choosing) combination deals.

The results showed the average Swiss traveller would choose a longer distance destination (25km from their home) over a local one. Mostly opting for mountains and the outdoors, they are usually joined by their family or partner and are more inclined to take the car, instead of the train, because of the added flexibility and freedom.

When they do choose to go by train, it is because it gives better accessibility to the destination. Swiss travellers like to think of themselves as

spontaneous excursion-takers, although this self-perception may be linked to unpredictable weather conditions. The average domestic holidaymaker likes to get inspired by friends, family and information found online. They usually compare different travel offers before making a purchase. While 64% of combination deal customers admitted that habit influenced their decision, convenience was often a factor.

So what can European railway companies take from this research? It is that revisiting their offers and better understanding the individual passenger is key to growing businesses. It pays to target and convince car owners to consider a rail combination deal next time they think of a getaway.

Overcoming hurdles such as the fear of losing flexibility and freedom will be one of the ways of making rail travel more appealing.

**Janusz Kołodziejski** is community manager at DemoSCOPE.