

“The king is dead, long live the king”: when a low-cost carrier becomes the national airline

Abstract

The thesis studies the effects of the bankruptcy of the Hungarian national airline, *MALÉV*, on the country's tourism and aviation industry and particularly the development of *Wizz Air*, a low-cost carrier that has become the country's biggest air carrier. The study has shown that the market exit of the national carrier did not result in major disruptions in air transport in Hungary; moreover it invigorated the Hungarian aviation market resulting in increased arrivals and bigger variety of destination choices for the customers. Apart from losing a company, which was considered a historical piece and stood close to the hearts of many Hungarians, the country only benefited from such loss. Most importantly it gave space to low-cost carriers, first and foremost to *Wizz Air*. The Hungarian low-cost airline became the sole air travel operator originated in Hungary and took over many of the routes and destinations of the former national carrier. In a couple of years *Wizz Air* managed to get close to the size of *MALÉV* and today it is considered the most significant role-player of the Hungarian aviation industry, proving to be able to reach the level of the former national airline and on the verge for the title of being the new 'unofficial national carrier' of Hungary. Even though *Wizz Air* technically doesn't suffice as a national airline, it serves the country with dedication and commitment just as how a national carrier should do so and therefore proving to be able to fill the space that *MALÉV* left behind.