

IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF AIR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT

MASTER THESIS

**TURKISH AIRLINES, QATAR AIRWAYS AND
EMIRATES' SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIES BEFORE,
DURING, AND AFTER COVID 19**

TATYANA KIM

THESIS SUPERVISOR
PROF. ALİ OSMAN KUŞAKCI

ISTANBUL, 2023

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by

TATYANA KIM

**A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in
Air Transport Management**

**THESIS SUPERVISOR
PROF. ALİ OSMAN KUŞAKCI**

ISTANBUL, 2023

APPROVAL PAGE

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that, in our opinion, it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science in Air Transport Management.

Thesis Jury Members

Title - Name Surname

Opinion

Signature

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

This is to confirm that this thesis complies with all the standards set by the School of Graduate Studies of Ibn Haldun University.

Date of Submission

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ACADEMIC HONESTY ATTESTATION

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name Surname:

Signature:



ÖZ

TÜRK HAVAYOLLARI, KATAR HAVAYOLLARI VE EMİRATES'İN KOVİD-19 ÖNCESİ VE SONRASI SOSYAL MEDYA STRATEJİLERİ

Kim, Tatyana

Hava Taşımacılığı Yönetimi Yüksek Lisans Programı

Öğrenci Numarası: 214038002

Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORC-ID): 0009-0004-9167-9035

Ulusal Tez Merkezi Referans Numarası: 10595172

Tez Danışmanı: Prof. Dr. Ali Osman Kuşakcı

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Havacılık sektörü, son yıllarda dijital teknolojilerin ve sosyal medyanın iletişim ve pazarlama açısından hayati bir araç haline gelmesiyle önemli bir dönüşüm geçirdi. KOVİD-19 salgını bu değişimi hızlandırdı ve havayollarına benzeri görülmemiş zorluklar getirdi. Bu tez, Türk Hava Yolları, Qatar Havayolları ve Emirates'in pandemi öncesinde, sırasında ve sonrasında sosyal medya stratejilerini incelemektedir. KOVİD-19 salgını, küresel hava yolu süreçlerini aksattı; bu durum seyahat kısıtlamalarına, yolcu sayılarının azalmasına ve havacılık sektörü üzerinde mali baskıya neden oldu. Buna yanıt olarak havayolları yolcularla hayati bağlantıları sürdürmek, gerçek zamanlı güncellemeler sunmak ve bu belirsiz ortamda yol almak için sosyal medyaya yöneldi. Bu çalışmanın amacı üç yönlüdür: (i) Bu havayollarının pandemi öncesi sosyal medya stratejilerini değerlendirmek, (ii) bu stratejilerin pandemi sırasında nasıl geliştiğini araştırmak ve (iii) sosyal medya stratejilerinin pandemi öncesi ve sonrasındaki etkinliğini karşılaştırmak. Bu araştırma, bu havacılık devlerinin salgının zorluklarına uyum sağlamak için sosyal medyayı nasıl kullandıklarına dair bilgiler sunmaktadır. Bulgular havacılık paydaşları, pazarlama profesyonelleri ve araştırmacılar için önemli ipuçları sunmakta ve sosyal medyanın kriz iletişimi ve pazarlamada gelişen rolüne ışık tutmaktadır. Tez, literatür taraması, araştırma metodolojisi, sonuçlar ve tartışmalar dahil olmak üzere bölümler halinde yapılandırılmıştır. Çalışma, benzeri görülmemiş küresel olaylar sırasında havacılık endüstrisindeki sosyal medya stratejilerinin değişen ortamına ilişkin önemli değerlendirmeler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Havacılık Endüstrisi, KOVİD-19, Kriz İletişimi, Sosyal Medya Stratejileri.

ABSTRACT

TURKISH AIRLINES, QATAR AIRWAYS AND EMIRATES' SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIES BEFORE AND AFTER COVID-19

Kim, Tatyana

MSc in Air Transport Management

Student ID: 214038002

Open Researcher And Contributor ID (ORCID): 0009-0004-9167-9035

National Thesis Center Reference Number: 10595172

Thesis Supervisor: Prof. Ali Osman Kuşakcı

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The aviation industry has undergone a significant transformation in recent years, with digital technologies and social media becoming a vital tool for communication and marketing. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this shift, presenting unprecedented challenges to airlines. This thesis explores the social media strategies of Turkish Airlines, Qatar Airways, and Emirates before, during, and after the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted global air travel, resulting in travel restrictions, reduced passenger numbers, and financial strain on the aviation sector. In response, airlines turned to social media to maintain vital connections with passengers, deliver real-time updates, and navigate this uncertain landscape. The aim of this study is threefold: (i) to assess the pre-pandemic social media strategies of these airlines, (ii) to investigate how these strategies evolved during the pandemic, and (iii) to compare the effectiveness of social media strategies before and after COVID-19. This research offers insights into how these aviation giants utilized social media to adapt to the challenges of the pandemic. The findings have significant implications for aviation stakeholders, marketing professionals, and researchers, shedding light on the evolving role of social media in crisis communication and marketing. The thesis is structured into chapters, including a literature review, research methodology, results, and discussions. It concludes with important insights into the changing landscape of social media strategies in the aviation industry during unprecedented global events.

Keywords: Aviation Industry, COVID-19, Crisis Communication, Social Media Strategies.

DEDICATION

In the pursuit of knowledge, this thesis is dedicated to:

My family, whose boundless love and unwavering belief in me have been the cornerstone of my academic journey.

My esteemed professors and mentors, whose guidance, expertise, and encouragement have illuminated the path of my intellectual growth.

Turkish Airlines, Qatar Airways, and Emirates, whose innovative social media strategies have been the lodestar of my research, shaping my understanding of the evolving world of marketing.

May this work stand as a testament to the collective effort and inspiration of these remarkable individuals and entities.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ÖZ	iv
ABSTRACT	v
DEDICATION	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x
LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS	xi
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. General Introduction.....	1
1.2. Impact of COVID-19 on Aviation.....	1
1.3. Importance of Social Media Strategies	2
1.4. Research Problem and Objectives	2
1.5. Significance of the Study	2
1.6. Thesis Structure	3
CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW	4
2.1. Introduction	4
2.2. Use of Social Media by Airlines before the Covid-19 Pandemic	13
2.3. Covid-19 Impact on Airline Operations	15
2.4. Use of Social Media by Airlines during the Pandemic	16
2.5. Post-Pandemic Use of Social Media by Airlines	17
CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY AND APPLICATION	18
3.1. Theoretical Framework	18
3.1.1. Product (Services) Promotion on Twitter.....	19
3.1.2. Pricing Strategies on Twitter	19
3.1.3. Customer Engagement on Twitter.....	20
3.1.4. Distribution of Information on Twitter	21
3.1.5. Integration of 4Ps on Twitter.....	21
3.2. Content Analysis	21
3.2.1. Data Collection.....	22
3.2.2. Coding Scheme Development	22
3.2.3. Coding Process with MAXQDA.....	23
3.2.4. Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis.....	23

3.2.5. Data Visualization	23
3.2.6. Interpretation and Conclusion	23
3.3. Data Collection.....	24
3.3.1. Data Inclusion.....	24
3.4. Data Analysis	25
3.5. Ethical Considerations.....	25
3.6. Limitations.....	25
CHAPTER IV RESULTS AND FINDINGS	27
4.1. Introduction to Tweet Characteristics	27
4.2. Pricing Strategies.....	33
4.3. Promotion and Advertising Strategies.....	35
4.4. Distribution of Information	39
4.5. Audience Engagement.....	41
4.6. Implications	42
4.6.1. Qatar Airways.....	42
4.6.2. Emirates.....	43
4.6.3. Turkish Airlines:.....	43
CHAPTER V CONCLUSION	45
REFERENCES.....	48
APPENDIXES	51
APPENDIX A	51
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	62

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1. Organizational Values and Hashtags Associated with the Image of the Organization.....	10
Table 2.2. Organizational Values and Hashtags Associated with the Image of the Organization.....	12
Table 3.1. Airlines’ Twitter Accounts.....	22
Table 4.1. Tweets Overview: Content Analysis.....	27
Table 4.2. Tweet Extracts Presented as Evidence for the Messaging Tones Identified in the Analysis.....	32
Table 4.3. Pricing Strategies for the Respective Airlines Alongside the Tweet Extracts Supporting These Strategies.....	35
Table 4.4. Comparing the Promotion Across the Three Time Periods (before, during, and after Covid-19)	37
Table 4.5. Tweet Extracts for the Respective Promotion Strategy Identified during the Coding Process.....	37
Table 4.6. Tweet Extracts Supporting the Relevance of the Information Distribution Identified from the Coding Process	40
Table A.1. Code System Table	51

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1. World Passenger Traffic Evolution 1945-2021	5
Figure 2.2. Most Used Emojis of Qatar Airways.....	11
Figure 2.3. Singapore Airlines' Most Used Emojis	12
Figure 3.1. Methodology Used	18
Figure 4.1. Proportion of Tweets Using Different Numbers of Emoji before, during, and after The Covid-19 Pandemic.....	29
Figure 4.2. Messaging Tone in the Tweets by Emirates before, during, and after the Pandemic.....	30
Figure 4.3. Messaging Tone in the Tweets by Qatar before, during, and after the Pandemic.....	31
Figure 4.4. Messaging Tone in the Tweets by Turkish Airlines before, during, and after the Pandemic	31
Figure 4.5. Pricing Strategies Used by the Three Airlines (Turkish, Qatar, and Emirates); as Identified in the Tweets.....	34
Figure 4.6. Promotion and Advertising Strategies Identified from the Tweets by the Three Airlines (Turkish, Qatar, and Emirates).....	36
Figure 4.7. Strategies for Information Distribution Through the Use of Tweets.....	39
Figure 4.8. Proportion of the Tweets for the Respective Information Distribution Strategies	40
Figure 4.9. The Different Ways the Airlines Used to Engage Their Audience and Customers Through Their Tweets.....	41

LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
ESG	Environmental, Social, and Governance
IMC	Integrated Marketing Communications
RPK	Revenue Passenger-Kilometers
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
UV	Ultra Violet



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The aviation industry has faced a transformation in recent years, marked by the increasing reliance on digital technologies and social media as powerful tools for communication, engagement, and marketing. The unprecedented global event has significantly accelerated this transformation - the COVID-19 pandemic. The aviation sector, which has historically been characterized by its resilience and adaptability, faced immense challenges as the pandemic led to travel restrictions, reduced passenger numbers, and severe financial implications. In this context, aviation companies turned to social media as a lifeline to connect with passengers, provide crucial updates, and navigate uncertain terrain. This thesis delves into the realm of social media within the aviation industry, with a specific focus on Turkish Airlines, Emirates, and Qatar Airways, both before and after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.1. General Introduction

The advent of the digital era has revolutionized the way companies interact with their customers. In particular, social media platforms have emerged as indispensable tools for marketing, brand promotion, customer engagement, and crisis communication. For aviation companies, social media offers a unique avenue to connect with passengers, share real-time information, and build brand loyalty. The aviation industry's embrace of social media was further intensified in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted the industry on an unprecedented scale.

1.2. Impact of COVID-19 on Aviation

The COVID-19 pandemic has left an indelible mark on the aviation industry. Travel restrictions, lockdowns, and widespread fear of the virus brought air travel to a standstill, forcing airlines and aviation companies to reevaluate their strategies. Many airlines faced financial crises, staff layoffs, and the need for government bailouts to

stay afloat. The pandemic challenged the aviation industry to rethink its traditional methods of operation and compelled companies to explore innovative approaches to customer engagement and crisis management.

1.3. Importance of Social Media Strategies

Amidst the turbulence caused by the pandemic, social media strategies became critical for aviation companies. Social media platforms allowed these companies to communicate directly with passengers, provide real-time updates on safety measures, and manage public perceptions during a period of uncertainty. As we explore Turkish Airlines, Emirates, and Qatar Airways, we aim to unravel the dynamic nature of their social media strategies, especially Twitter, and how they adapted in response to the unique challenges posed by the pandemic.

1.4. Research Problem and Objectives

The primary research problem addressed in this thesis is to analyze the social media strategies of Turkish Airlines, Emirates, and Qatar Airways before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. To achieve this overarching goal, we have set forth the following research objectives:

- To assess the social media strategies employed by Turkish Airlines, Emirates, and Qatar Airways before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- To examine how these companies adapted their social media strategies in response to the challenges posed by the pandemic.
- To compare the effectiveness of social media strategies before and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.5. Significance of the Study

This research holds significant importance as it contributes to understanding how aviation companies, particularly Turkish Airlines, Emirates, and Qatar Airways, navigated the uncharted waters of the COVID-19 pandemic using social media. The findings of this study can provide valuable insights for aviation industry stakeholders,

marketing professionals, and researchers seeking to adapt to the evolving role of social media in crisis communication and marketing.

1.6. Thesis Structure

This thesis is structured into several chapters to facilitate a comprehensive analysis of Turkish Airlines, Emirates, and Qatar Airways' social media strategies before and after COVID-19. Chapter 2 presents a thorough literature review, grounding the research in existing scholarship. Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology employed, detailing the data collection and analysis processes. Chapter 4 presents the results and discussions. Lastly, Chapter 5 will discuss the conclusions.



CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant negative effect on the aviation industry, both on a global and domestic level. The closure of international borders and travel restrictions led to a substantial decline in air travel, resulting in a loss of nearly \$134 billion in revenue for the aviation industry in 2020, representing a 55% decrease compared to the previous year. The travel and tourism industry, including airlines, were particularly affected by the pandemic (Tunali, 2022).

The pandemic not only affected airlines' flight operations but also led to changes in the business environment. Airlines had to operate with minimal flights, ground some aircraft, and furlough staff. While lower oil rates benefited airlines in terms of fuel costs, sanitation costs increased significantly due to the need for enhanced safety measures (Tunali, 2022).

The structure of airplanes, where passengers share common spaces such as washrooms, increased the risk of virus transmission during flights. As a result, international travel, which is predominantly carried out by air transportation, posed a significant threat for virus spread. Many countries implemented travel restrictions and airlines canceled or limited flights to various destinations (Tunali, 2022).

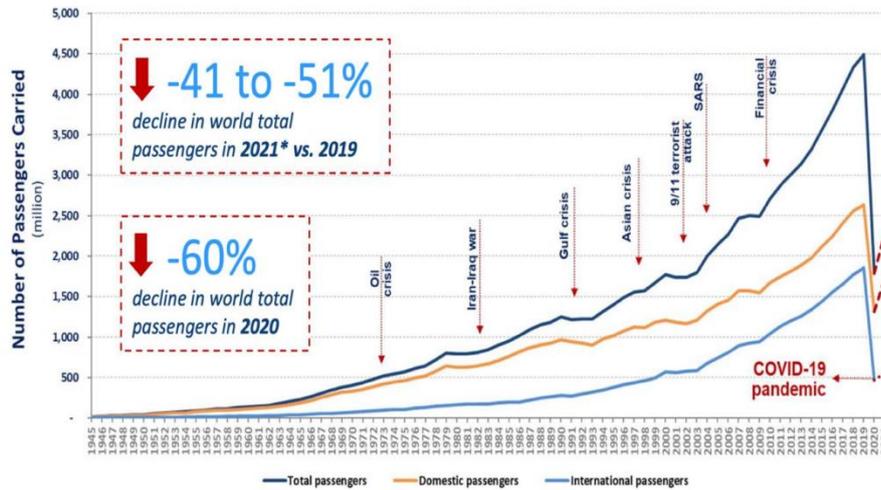


Figure 2.1. World Passenger Traffic Evolution 1945-2021

Source: ICAO Air Transport Reporting Form A and A-S plus ICAO estimates. Accessed on 07.04.2021

https://www.icao.int/sustainability/Documents/COVID-19/ICAO_Coronavirus_Econ_Impact.pdf

With almost 173 million cases and 3.7 million fatalities, the COVID-19 pandemic has had catastrophic economic and social effects on the entire world (Amankwah-Amoah, 2021). Both international and domestic passenger traffic experienced significant declines, with a loss of \$250 billion for international travel and \$120 billion for domestic travel (Tunali, 2022). Economic crises may result in less money being spent on innovation, but they can also spur collaborative efforts and quick-thinking methods to solving problems, leading to the development of creative products, services, and processes (Amankwah-Amoah, 2021). The pandemic has intensified the already chaotic global business environment, resulting in context-specific and inspired innovations. The outbreak exposed weaknesses in business models and accelerated business collapses, emphasizing the need to rebuild disrupted systems and processes for greater responsiveness (Amankwah-Amoah, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic had a substantial impact on global airports' revenue loss in 2020, with Europe being the most affected region, losing \$40.8 billion. Asia-Pacific reported the highest loss during the first quarter, totaling \$29.6 billion, followed by North America with a \$22.1 billion loss. The Middle East experienced a \$9.7 billion

loss, while Latin America-Caribbean and Africa reported losses of \$6.6 billion and \$2.97 billion respectively (Tunali, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused the industry to face unprecedented challenges, including a drop in consumer spending, job losses, and border closures. Remote working measures have been implemented, but service-oriented businesses reliant on face-to-face contact have struggled in the era of social distancing (Amankwah-Amoah, 2021). The virus originated in China and spread to over 200 countries, with Europe, the US, India, and Brazil being the hardest hit. Lockdown measures were implemented, leading to significant economic repercussions, such as a sharp decline in GDP and revenue loss for businesses (Obembe et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic had a devastating impact on the aviation industry. In 2020, passenger numbers decreased by 60.2%, resulting in net losses of \$126.4 billion and a significant reduction in aviation jobs (Sun et al, 2022). Crises disrupt established norms and can impact organizational operations, performance, and reputation (Obembe et al., 2021).

The introduction of social media has changed how organizations communicate with stakeholders. It provides a cost-efficient means for active engagement and real-time data access. However, it also poses challenges as stakeholders can voice complaints to a wider audience, potentially damaging an organization's image and reputation (Obembe et al., 2021). Previous studies have examined the effectiveness of social media platforms, crisis response strategies, and the interplay between strategies and multiple platforms. Scholars are interested in how organizations can engage in dialogic communication with stakeholders on social media, fostering mutual understanding and resolving disagreements (Obembe et al., 2021).

During crises, it is important to adopt appropriate communication strategies, including adaptive risk communication, to ensure targeted messages are effectively received by different cultural and behavioral groups of inbound tourists. Some tourists, known as "crisis-resistant" tourists, are less influenced by crises and more inclined to explore crisis events due to their high propensity for risk-taking and resistance to change. Tourists' behavior is also influenced by their perceived susceptibility and self-efficacy in relation to the crisis, particularly in health-related crises. Crisis communication is no longer limited to government agencies and organizations; tourists themselves play

an active role in shaping crisis communication through social media, influencing travel intentions. Effective communication is crucial in managing the impact of crises on tourism, as demonstrated by the different effects of SARS and Avian Flu outbreaks. The effectiveness of communication between key stakeholders plays a significant role in shaping tourist perceptions and intentions (Obembe et al., 2021).

Social media has transformed how organizations interact with stakeholders, providing cost-efficient means for active engagement and real-time data access (Roshan et al., 2016). However, it also presents challenges as empowered stakeholders can voice complaints to a wider audience, potentially damaging an organization's image and reputation (Crijns et al., 2017; Gaspar et al., 2016; Triantafillidou and Yannas, 2020). Organizations have limited control over user-generated content on social media platforms, making them susceptible to aggravating or new crises (Etter et al., 2019; Welbers and Opgenhaffen, 2019; Zhai et al., 2019).

Despite its critical role in crisis response, organizations struggle to effectively leverage social media (Roshan et al., 2016). Studies have compared social media platforms to traditional platforms, examined crisis response strategies on specific platforms, and explored interactions across multiple platforms (Triantafillidou and Yannas, 2020). Scholars also focus on how organizations can use a dialogic communication approach to engage stakeholders on social media platforms, emphasizing the expectation of intersubjectivity and the willingness to reach mutually satisfying positions (du Plessis, 2018; Wang and Yang, 2020; Kent and Taylor, 1998).

The growth of internet technology has provided airports with various communication channels, including websites and social media platforms like Facebook. While websites are still commonly used, there is a current trend of airports utilizing Facebook as a key communication channel. With over 1 billion users, Facebook offers a gathering place for consumers and a means to spread information, building market presence for airports (Wattanacharoensil and Schuckert, 2015).

Using Facebook allows airports to update customers about important information that may affect their travel, manage crises such as bad weather or strikes, and engage in positive customer relationship management. Airports can also use Facebook to support

the distribution of services and products of their partners, promote destinations, and increase awareness. Despite these benefits, the use of Facebook in airports' social media strategies is still in the experimental stage for many, with only a small percentage of airports worldwide offering access to social media platforms (Wattanacharoensil and Schuckert, 2015). Among social media platforms, Facebook is observed to be one of the most popular choices for airports. While the content and function of websites can be customized, Facebook pages share similar features, with differences mainly in the posted content and interaction frequency or type. The top 10 airports, based on their 2012 Skytrax ranking, have utilized Facebook as a social media tool to communicate with users (Wattanacharoensil and Schuckert, 2015).

Social media platforms like Facebook are particularly popular because they offer a large pool of users and enable users to generate their own ideas and content. Users are not just consumers but also producers, creating and sharing content on these platforms. For businesses, social media platforms provide opportunities to engage with customers, increase online presence, and publicize their offerings. They also facilitate the transparency of business operations (Wattanacharoensil and Schuckert, 2015).

However, incorporating social media into existing marketing strategies can be challenging for companies, as they may lack guidance on how to effectively utilize these platforms. Integrated marketing communications (IMC) strategies help coordinate various elements of the promotional mix, and social media should be incorporated within these strategies. To use Facebook effectively, businesses need to adopt a strategic approach, understanding its features and choosing options that align with their eMarketing and viral marketing goals (Wattanacharoensil and Schuckert, 2015).

Social media platforms have gained popularity in the aviation industry, receiving serious attention from airports and airlines. The impact of social media has helped the industry grow, with examples like American Airlines experiencing increased brand awareness after launching their loyalty program on Facebook (Wattanacharoensil and Schuckert, 2015).

Qatar Airways serves as a case study to assess its strategy during the pandemic. Despite financial losses, Qatar Airways managed operations efficiently during peak pandemic times, maintaining flights, introducing safety measures, and forging partnerships (Turnali, 2022).

The aviation industry has faced historic challenges, including 9/11, the Global Financial Crisis, SARS, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Qatar Airways' successful operation amidst the pandemic is highlighted as an example of effective crisis management. The company adapted quickly, maintaining flights, expanding destinations, and implementing safety measures to provide a safe travel experience (Turnali, 2022).

Qatar Airways responded to the pandemic by providing passengers with protective kits and disposable face shields for free. The airline introduced the Ultraviolet Cabin System from Honeywell for disinfection. It encouraged travel with flexible booking options, offering two-year ticket validity, unlimited date amendments, and more. The airline also refunded over \$1.65 billion for canceled flights and extended loyalty program benefits (Turnali, 2022).

Despite the pandemic, Qatar Airways continued to innovate, releasing an updated mobile app and enhancing onboard services. It also supported communities by sending medical supplies to China, giving away tickets to healthcare workers and teachers, and contributing to various relief efforts (Turnali, 2022).

Qatar Airways Cargo remained resilient, increasing its market share during the pandemic. The cargo carrier launched new routes, increased daily flights, and played a vital role in transporting medical supplies globally. Doha Airport entered the top 15 airports globally based on freight volume, with significant growth in February 2020 (Turnali, 2022).

In terms of Revenue Passenger-Kilometers (RPK), Qatar Airways was among the top 15 airline groups, recording a growth rate of +8.7 percent in February 2020. However, the airline industry saw significant impacts due to COVID-19, leading to changes in rankings and volume declines in March 2020. Despite challenges, Qatar Airways

demonstrated adaptability and resilience in navigating the aviation industry during the pandemic (Turnali, 2022).

Social media represents a contemporary and dynamic channel through which brands engage with their intended audiences. Using social media platforms, marketers reach out to their target groups precisely when and where they prefer, fostering closer and more personal connections with them (Sahir, 2018).

Social networks, whether personal or professional connections among individuals, have become integral to daily life and are growing in significance. Users leverage the various features offered by these modern communication platforms for continuous sharing. These networks represent contemporary gatherings, akin to familiar places like parks or cafes where individuals with mutual acquaintances converge. Their role in shaping the public sphere is socially significant (Boyd, 2007), and this explains the widespread interest in social network sites, with Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram being some of the most prominent examples (Sahir, 2018).

Qatar Airways for example has established its organizational identity as a global brand that assists and values its customers, operates like a family business, and places a strong emphasis on interaction.

Table 2.1. Organizational Values and Hashtags Associated with the Image of the Organization

Organizational Values	Acronym	Hashtags associated with the image of the organization
Global Brand	GB	Location Notice
Helping Passangers	HP	Team Work, Workfard, Team Workmakes, Choose Qatar, Good Chief, Qatar is best, Welcome Qatar
Family	FM	Miss you , Family is every time, fatherandson, Travelwithkid, homesweethome,mommylife, mykids
Adventure	AD	Adventure,worltravel,excited

Table 2.1. (cont.)

Social Media	SM	Instagram, vscocam, qatarinstagram, following
Emotional	EM	Love, happy, thankful, miss you, Lovetravel, excited, awesome, amazing, lifetime dream, my love, best friends, enjoy, funny
Innovator	IN	Worldclass, fivestar, travelinstyle, fashion, businessclass, premiumcustomer. jets, dreamlines, a350, a330

Source: Sahin, D. (2018). Power of Universe: How Do Have Social Media Effect of Organizational

When customers assess the content shared on social media, they find that these values align with the majority of what customers share. In this regard, Qatar Airways has effectively conveyed its organizational image to its customers. The Instagram account of Qatar Airways frequently employs emojis like.



Figure 2.2. Most Used Emojis of Qatar Airways

Source: Sahin, D. (2018). Power of Universe: How Do Have Social Media Effect of Organizational

The sharing of emojis serves as evidence that customers comprehend and resonate with the organizational image. The use of the "world emoji" alongside the "acceptance emoji" signifies that the global brand identity is widely embraced (Sahir, 2018).

Upon examining the desired organizational image of Singapore Airlines and scrutinizing social media posts associated with these keywords, it is evident that there is a degree of alignment between the intended image and how passengers perceive it. However, a perfect match is not achieved. To convey its organizational image more effectively, Singapore Airlines should invest greater attention in this area. An analysis of the most frequently used emojis on Singapore Airlines' Instagram account, as shown

in Figure 3, reveals that while elements of the organizational image are conveyed, a precise match is lacking. Therefore, Singapore Airlines should prioritize its efforts in social media and social media marketing (Sahir, 2018).

Table 2.2. Organizational Values and Hashtags Associated with the Image of the Organization

Organizational Values	Acronym	Hashtags associating with the image of the organization
Excellence	EX	Luxury life style, Great Meal, Excellence First Class Meal Service, Rich Life, First Class travel, Premium Show Case
Confidence	CF	Alhamdullilah, Best Travel Agent, Great Business, Thanks so
Environment	EN	Sunrise, Penguin, Night Darkness, Above the clouds, Beautiful, Winterday
Staff	ST	Cabin crew, Flight attendant, Pilot, Great Singapore Girl
TeamWork	TW	Confor, Luxury Life Style, Great Meal, First Class meal, First Class travel, Premium showcase, music is good

Source: Sahin, D. (2018). Power of Universe: How Do Have Social Media Effect of Organizational



Figure 2.3. Singapore Airlines' Most Used Emojis

Source: Sahin, D. (2018). Power of Universe: How Do Have Social Media Effect of Organizational

2.2. Use of Social Media by Airlines before the Covid-19 Pandemic

The use of social media in the pre-pandemic era has been shown by past studies to be dominantly used for crisis management and communication by airlines (Ngai and Jin, 2016; Pohl et al., 2015; Tian et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2016). The effectiveness of social media during crisis management is not unique to the aviation industry as social media has been used elsewhere to manage crisis communication, for example, during flooding to identify affected areas and channel emergency services to places of need (Akhgar et al., 2013; De Albuquerque et al., 2015). According to a past study, social media platforms were leveraged for stakeholder interactions to allow for effective communication as well as response to crisis situations (Ngai and Jin, 2016).

Additionally, the social media platforms were critically beneficial to the airlines as they allowed for open and transparent communication during a crisis, with an example given during the Malaysia Airlines accident, during which customers and families or friends of the affected passengers could follow up on their concerns receiving frequent updates (Wang et al., 2017).

Social media was also helpful in restructuring and improving crisis management and communication strategies (Tian et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2016). The reactions from the public as a result of the crisis communication were publicly and readily availed through social media platforms, which helped the affected airlines to re-strategize their crisis communication and management to properly address the concerns of their customers (Tian et al., 2022). The diverse and lots of data that could be extracted from messages, responses, and engagements from the audience was reported to help fine-tune the crisis communication strategies used by the airlines (Pohl et al., 2015; Tian et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2016). Through multiple messages, the airlines could discern the prevalent concerns of their customers and address them promptly (Zhang et al., 2016). The availability and access to diverse data allowed by the social media platforms were also reported to be helpful to the decision-makers during airline crises, as they could analyze the messages through sentiment analysis and adequately respond to customers during crisis situations (Zhang et al., 2016). Pohl et al. (2015) reported that integrating advanced data analysis techniques like clustering and machine learning in analyzing the diverse messages from audiences in social media platforms helped the

airlines to identify the different sub-event concerns within a given crisis, this they could achieve without the traditional labor and time-consuming method of going through each message manually to identify the concerns raised by the consumers.

Additionally, the use of social media for crisis communication accelerated the process as it altered the status quo in the traditional crisis management and communication practice, by allowing for fast reporting and updates throughout the crisis management process (Husain et al., 2014). This access to accelerated crisis communication and management is consistent with the view from Pohl et al. (2015) that clustering data extracted from social media messages gave faster insights compared to the traditional time-consuming ways of collecting and analyzing customer sentiments.

Besides the use of social media for crisis communication and management, the airlines also used social media to engage with their customers and also engage in promotions and advertisements (De Fátima Silva Piedade et al., 2022). Through engagements with their customers, the airlines could model and improve their relationships with their customers, through understanding their customers better by analyzing the data from the responses provided by their social media audience (Chen et al., 2016). This way, the airlines are able to effectively address the complaints the passengers have during their flight experiences (Loo, 2020). For promotions and advertisement purposes, social media platforms served as crucial marketing tools, giving airlines with dominant social media engagements a competitive advantage over other airlines that had not embraced social media marketing as much (Avinash, 2017; Kavoura and Kefallonitis, 2018). Additionally, the airlines leveraged social media platforms for enhanced brand awareness and brand marketing (Chumwatana and Chuaychoo, 2017). The dominant social media platforms for engagement and promotions were Facebook and YouTube as they allowed for diverse engaging content types including promotional videos (Al Maazmi, 2020; Avinash, 2017; Loo, 2020).

In summary, the social media use pre-pandemic comprised of crisis management, customer engagements, brand image building and awareness, and promotions and advertisements. Crisis management and communication was highlighted as the main aspect of social media use, involving addressing concerns by customers and giving regular updates throughout the crisis management. In all these, past studies showed

that social media allowed for effective communication and also accelerated the crisis management process. Additionally, the most used social media platform pre-pandemic was Facebook, followed by YouTube as the two platforms allowed for diverse, dynamic, and engaging content to keep the audience informed and enticed. However, it is important to note that there was only a little literature on the social media use of airline companies before the COVID-19 pandemic. The next sections present the literature on the impact of COVID-19 on the aviation industry, the use of social media through this impacted period, and the re-strategy of social media communication by airlines in the post-pandemic era.

2.3. Covid-19 Impact on Airline Operations

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the aviation industry ranges from profit loss, decline in staff numbers, price increases, and additional regulations, procedures, and guidelines to adhere to (Göv and Erbay, 2021). With the disruptions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the airlines adopted and embraced new technologies to ensure effective service to their customers as well as convenience for their customers (Shiwakoti et al., 2022; Waramontri, 2023). The increase in technology implementation with the airline customer service was seen in the e-services, cleaning robots, and UV light cabin cleaning, all to ensure the safety and convenience of their customers (Shiwakoti et al., 2022; Waramontri, 2023). The adoption of these technologies was positively received by their customers (Fadhilah et al., 2022; Shiwakoti et al., 2022).

These impacts, disruptions, and adjustments require adequate and effective communication, and that is where social media comes in. For instance, the airlines informed and directed their passengers and target customers on the required health guidelines mandated before taking a flight (Göv and Erbay, 2021). Additionally, the airlines reported the impacted financial performance through social media to their shareholders (Göv and Erbay, 2021). The next sub-section discusses the role of social media in addressing and communicating the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic from the airlines to their customers. The strategies used during this period will also be discussed.

2.4. Use of Social Media by Airlines during the Pandemic

Without a doubt, the COVID-19 pandemic presented a crisis to the aviation industry, be it halted flights, social distancing that affected the number of passengers onboard, and even reduced profits (Göv and Erbay, 2021). Managing these crises required effective crisis communication, for which the social media platforms were leveraged (Chevtaeva and Guillet, 2021; Chmielewska-Muciek et al., 2021; Scheiwiller and Zizka, 2021). For example, some airlines communicated to their shareholders through social media platforms briefing them on impacted financial performances, and their new strategies to overcome the negative impacts on the profits made (Chmielewska-Muciek et al., 2021). Among the adjustments to social media-based crisis communication was the dominant use of Twitter (now X) for primary communication to replace the Facebook app during the COVID-19 pandemic (Scheiwiller and Zizka, 2021).

Social media was also used to promote the brands of the different airlines during the COVID-19 pandemic as reported in the study by Dias et al. (2021). The airline companies were focused on improving and maintaining a positive brand image during the pandemic by focusing on CSR responsibilities, safety, as well as compliance with the health measures to ensure their customers are not exposed to covid-19 virus (Dias et al., 2021; Fadhilah et al., 2022).

The airlines also used social media to maintain relationships with their customers during the pandemic era (De Fátima Silva Piedade et al., 2022). The relationship was maintained through audience engagement and promotional content posted by the airline on its social media pages (De Fátima Silva Piedade et al., 2022).

In summary, the use of social media platforms by the airlines has been crucial to the relationship with their customers, having real-time insights to effectively address the concerns of their customers during the pandemic. Social media was also used by airline companies to build and maintain their brand image by communicating compliance and dedication to CSR and ESG responsibilities. The next sub-section looks into the adjustments in social media communication and marketing strategies after the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.5. Post-Pandemic Use of Social Media by Airlines

The experiences of the airlines during the COVID-19 pandemic era presented opportunities for the airlines to adjust their social media communication strategies in the post-pandemic era (Chevtaeva and Guillet, 2021). Other uses of social media by airline companies like maintaining customer engagement and relationship was consistent even in the post-pandemic era (De Fátima Silva Piedade et al., 2022). Another consistency was the promotion of airline products, services, and affiliations through the different social media platforms (De Fátima Silva Piedade et al., 2022).

Observably, there has been only a limited number of studies that have focused on the social media use by airlines in the post-pandemic era, with none (according to this literature review), doing a comparison in the use of social media before the pandemic, during the pandemic, and after the pandemic.

Social media has proved to be an important and crucial communication tool for airline companies to effectively manage their crisis communication before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. It allowed the airline companies to quickly respond to the concerns presented by their customers, as well as offer information and updates on given guidelines and airline operations. One of the noticeable shifts in social media communication was the shift to Twitter (now X) as the primary communication platform for the airlines during the pandemic. However, there seemed to be a consistency in the purpose of using social media by the airline companies mainly to engage with their customers, respond to concerns, enhance their crisis communication management, brand imaging, and awareness, and for promotion and advertisements of the products, services, and offers by the different airlines. The literature review has identified a gap in the limited or no focus on the specific social media marketing strategies by the airlines consistently through the three different stages; pre-pandemic, during the pandemic, and post-pandemic era. To fill this research gap, this study looks into the dynamics of social media marketing and communication strategies in the three time periods comparing the strategies implemented by the airlines through their social media communication and marketing before the COVID-19 pandemic, during the pandemic, and after the pandemic.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND APPLICATION

3.1. Theoretical Framework

Social Media Marketing Mix (4Ps for Twitter) (McCarthy, 1960) has been taken as a theoretical framework. Turkish Airlines, Qatar Airways, and Emirates have been observed on how they used Twitter for product promotion (tweets about services), pricing strategies (discounts or fare announcements), customer engagement (replies, retweets, likes), and distribution of information (flight updates). Turkish Airlines, Qatar Airways, and Emirates were chosen for this study due to their global prominence in the airline industry, diverse markets, and competitive nature. They have substantial global reach and employ varied marketing strategies on Twitter, offering insights for product promotion, pricing, customer engagement, and information distribution. Their Twitter practices may serve as industry benchmarks, and their substantial online presence facilitates data collection for analysis (See Figure 3.1).

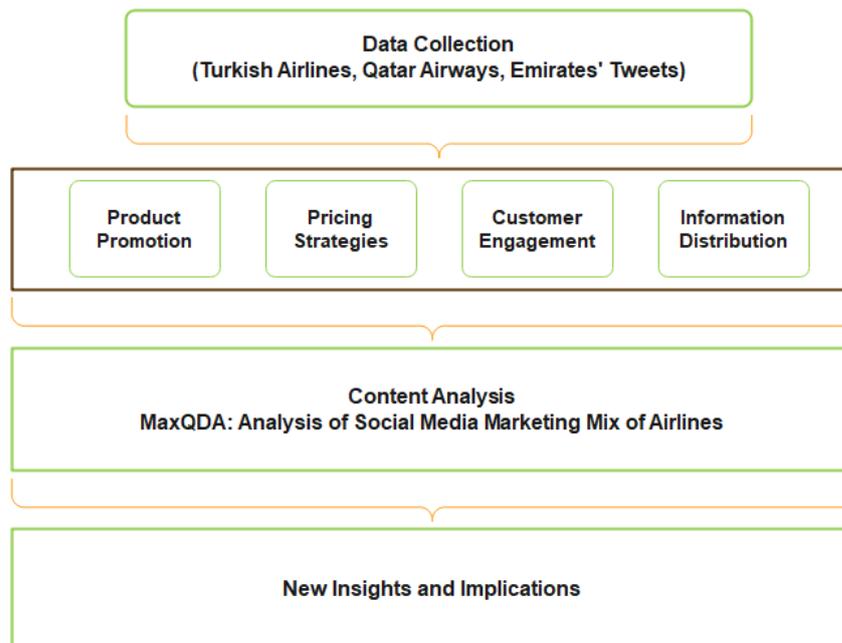


Figure 3.1. Methodology Used

3.1.1. Product (Services) Promotion on Twitter

In the context of airlines, the term "product" pertains to the range of services provided by Turkish Airlines, Qatar Airways, and Emirates. These services encompass everything from in-flight amenities to booking procedures and customer experience.

The significance of this study lies in understanding the crucial role of Twitter in promoting airline services. Through Twitter, these airlines can effectively showcase their unique features, amenities, and USPs (Unique Selling Propositions). This platform offers a space for differentiation in a highly competitive industry, allowing them to connect with existing and potential customers.

The application of this research centers on examining how these airlines utilize Twitter for service promotion. It involves a detailed analysis of their content strategies, promotional approaches, and the engagement methods they employ to captivate their audience.

Moreover, the study aims to investigate how the strategies for promoting airline services on Twitter have adapted and transformed during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic significantly impacted the travel industry, compelling airlines to adjust their communication and promotion strategies. Thus, this research will delve into whether and how these airlines have evolved their product promotion strategies on Twitter in response to these challenging times and the changing landscape of air travel.

3.1.2. Pricing Strategies on Twitter

Within the airline industry, pricing strategies encompass various elements, including fare announcements, discounts, and promotional offers.

The importance of studying these pricing strategies lies in the fact that transparent and competitive pricing is a critical factor for both attracting and retaining customers in a highly competitive market.

This research is focused on investigating how airlines utilize Twitter as a platform to communicate pricing information to their audience. The role of Twitter in disseminating pricing details and its effectiveness in reaching and engaging customers is a central aspect of this study.

Furthermore, this study aims to determine whether and how airlines modified their pricing strategies on Twitter during the COVID-19 pandemic, given the substantial effects of the pandemic on the travel industry. Additionally, it aims to assess the influence of these pricing adaptations on customer engagement, providing insights into how airlines responded to a changing landscape and customer expectations during a challenging period.

3.1.3. Customer Engagement on Twitter

Customer engagement in the context of this study encompasses a spectrum of interactions, including replies, retweets, likes, and direct messaging, between the airlines and their Twitter audience.

The significance of studying customer engagement on Twitter is rooted in its role in building brand loyalty and customer satisfaction. Effective engagement can foster positive relationships and lead to long-term loyalty.

This research focuses on examining how airlines engage with their Twitter audience, both before and after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. It delves into the practices employed by these airlines in interacting with their online community.

Furthermore, the study seeks to evaluate the impact of customer engagement practices on brand perception and loyalty during the pandemic. The unique circumstances of the pandemic presented challenges and opportunities for airlines to engage with their customers, and understanding how these interactions influenced brand perception and loyalty is a key aspect of this research.

3.1.4. Distribution of Information on Twitter

The criticality of this research lies in recognizing that timely and accurate information distribution is vital for managing customer expectations and ensuring their safety and satisfaction. In the context of this study, the research focuses on investigating how airlines utilize Twitter as a platform for sharing such information, especially during critical periods like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moreover, the research aims to evaluate the effectiveness of using Twitter for information distribution in crisis management. Assessing how well airlines used Twitter to inform and assist their customers during challenging situations provides insights into the role of social media in maintaining trust and managing customer expectations during crises.

3.1.5. Integration of 4Ps on Twitter

The study examined how these four components, namely product promotion, pricing strategies, customer engagement, and information distribution, are interrelated.

Strategic integration, as identified in the research, can be viewed as the process through which these elements are harmoniously combined to develop a comprehensive social media marketing strategy.

Additionally, the research included an assessment of how changes in one of these aspects might have an impact on the others when applied on Twitter. This analysis aimed to offer insights into the relationships and interdependencies among these components within the realm of social media marketing strategies.

3.2. Content Analysis

In this study, content analysis was employed as the primary research methodology to investigate and compare the social media marketing strategies of Turkish Airlines, Qatar Airways, and Emirates on Twitter. Content analysis is a systematic and

structured approach to examine textual, visual, or multimedia content to derive meaningful insights and identify patterns within the data (Neuendorf, 2002).

3.2.1. Data Collection

A comprehensive dataset of tweets from Turkish Airlines, Qatar Airways, and Emirates was collected, covering three distinct periods: the pre-COVID-19 era, the COVID-19 era, and the post-COVID-19 pandemic period. The dataset was compiled by extracting tweets directly from the official Twitter accounts of these airlines. To ensure representativeness, tweets related to product promotion, pricing strategies, customer engagement, and information distribution were included. The links to the Twitter accounts for each airline are provided in the table below:

Table 3.1. Airlines' Twitter Accounts

Airlines	Twitter account
Qatar Airways	https://twitter.com/qatarairways
Emirates	https://twitter.com/emirates
Turkish Airlines	https://twitter.com/TurkishAirlines

3.2.2. Coding Scheme Development

A detailed coding scheme was developed to categorize and analyze the content of each tweet. This scheme was designed to align with the four fundamental elements of the Social Media Marketing Mix (product promotion, pricing strategies, customer engagement, and information distribution).

The coding scheme incorporated variables to capture sentiments, tone, engagement metrics (e.g., retweets, likes), and other relevant criteria to facilitate comprehensive analysis.

3.2.3. Coding Process with MAXQDA

MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis software, was utilized for the coding process. The software facilitated the systematic organization and coding of the tweets per the established coding scheme.

3.2.4. Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis

Quantitative analysis was conducted using MAXQDA to calculate frequencies, percentages, and patterns within each category and subcategory of the coding scheme. Qualitative analysis involved a thorough examination of the content of tweets within the MAXQDA environment to identify emergent themes, trends, and notable examples.

3.2.5. Data Visualization

Visual representations, such as charts, graphs, and word clouds, were created using MAXQDA to illustrate key findings and make them more accessible to the audience.

Triangulation: To enhance the credibility and validity of the findings, cross-referencing of the content analysis results from MAXQDA with other relevant data sources, such as customer surveys and Twitter analytics, was undertaken.

3.2.6. Interpretation and Conclusion

Findings from the content analysis conducted in MAXQDA were interpreted in the context of the research questions and the theoretical framework. Conclusions were drawn regarding how Turkish Airlines, Qatar Airways, and Emirates adapted their social media marketing strategies in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with an emphasis on trends, changes, and significant insights derived from the analysis.

The implications of the findings for the airline industry and social media marketing strategies during times of crisis were discussed. Practical recommendations were

formulated based on the insights gained from the content analysis conducted using MAXQDA.

3.3. Data Collection

Data for this comprehensive study will be collected from a diverse array of sources, including both primary and secondary sources, to facilitate a thorough examination of the social media marketing strategies employed by Turkish Airlines, Emirates, and Qatar Airways. The primary sources of data will include the official Twitter accounts of these airlines, while secondary sources will encompass their official company websites and pertinent industry reports.

The data collection process spans three distinct and crucial time periods.

“Pre-COVID-19” (September 2019 to December 2019): This period encompasses the months leading up to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and represents the baseline conditions of the airline industry before the crisis.

"During COVID-19" (September 2019 to December 2022): This time frame corresponds to the period when the world faced the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. It extends from September 2019, encompassing the initial stages of the pandemic, to December 2022, reflecting a period of transition and recovery.

"After COVID-19" (January 2022 to September 2023): This period commences in January 2022, signifying the post-pandemic phase, and extends through September 2023. It reflects the evolving landscape of the airline industry as it adapts to the new normal and strives to regain its footing.

3.3.1. Data Inclusion

The dataset for this study will comprise a rich assortment of content, including:

Social Media Posts: An extensive collection of tweets and posts from the official Twitter accounts of Turkish Airlines, Emirates, and Qatar Airways will be gathered. These tweets will encompass a wide range of topics, including product promotion, pricing strategies, customer engagement, and information distribution.

User Interactions: Beyond the tweets themselves, interactions from Twitter users such as comments, likes, and shares will be considered. These interactions provide valuable insights into the audience's response and engagement.

3.4. Data Analysis

Content analysis techniques will be employed to analyze the collected data. This analysis aims to identify recurring themes, communication strategies, and changes in social media content and engagement. MAXQDA technology may be utilized to facilitate the content analysis process and enhance data organization, allowing for systematic coding and categorization of the collected content. The analysis will encompass both quantitative aspects (e.g., changes in post frequency, engagement metrics) and qualitative aspects (e.g., content themes, messaging strategies) of social media strategies.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations will be closely observed throughout the research process. As the data collected are publicly available on social media platforms and company websites, issues related to privacy and consent are not anticipated. Proper citation and attribution of sources will be ensured, and all data will be used per the copyright and fair use guidelines.

3.6. Limitations

During the course of this research, a comprehensive analysis was conducted to investigate the communication strategies employed by Turkish Airlines, Qatar Airways, and Emirates on Twitter, specifically focusing on their flight cancellation policies from 2019 to 2023. Despite diligent efforts in searching official Twitter

accounts, relevant hashtags, and user interactions, no specific information pertaining to the flight cancellation policies of these airlines during the specified period was found.

It is important to note that the absence of data on Twitter does not necessarily imply a lack of action or communication by the airlines during this time frame. The limitations in accessing proprietary information, privacy settings, or a potential reliance on other communication channels for policy announcements could contribute to the absence of relevant content on this platform.

For a more comprehensive understanding of the flight cancellation policies during the specified period, additional avenues such as official statements, press releases, or direct communication with the respective airline's customer support may be explored.

This limitation underscores the challenges associated with relying solely on social media platforms for comprehensive data collection and emphasizes the need for a multi-faceted approach when studying the communication strategies of organizations during critical periods.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction to Tweet Characteristics

The analysis was applied to tweets, collected from the twitter accounts of the three airlines for pre-pandemic, during the pandemic, and post-pandemic periods. For the pre-pandemic period, the 2019 tweets for each of the airlines were collected. For the tweets during the pandemic, the study collected the 2020 tweets to represent the tweets during the pandemic. Lastly, the study collected the 2023 tweets from the three airlines to represent the post-pandemic era.

Table 4.1. Tweets Overview: Content Analysis

Theme	Category	Codes
Visual Appeal	Visual Elements	No visual element Both Emoji and Image Images Only Emoji Only
	Type of Emoji	Diamond gem emoji Calendar Emoji Coast and Palm Emoji Party Emoji Recycling symbol emoji Chocolate bar emoji Magnifying Glass Emoji Earth Globe Emoji Sports Related Emoji Arrow/hand Emoji Airplane Emoji

Table 4.1. (cont.)

	Number of Emoji	Five Emoji Four Emoji Three Emoji Two Emoji One Emoji No Emoji
Hashtag Analysis	Number of Hashtags	Three hashtags Two Hashtags One Hashtag No Hashtag
	Type of Hashtags	Advocacy Hashtags Thematic Hashtags Trend Hashtags Destination Hashtags Event-Specific Hashtags Branded Hashtags
Message Tone	Gratitude	Gratitude
	Inquisitive and Engaging	Inquisitive and Engaging
	Enticing	Enticing
	Welcoming and Friendly	Welcoming and Friendly
	Reflective and Nostalgic	Reflective and Nostalgic
	Invitational tone	Invitational tone
	Well Wishing	Well Wishing
	Hopeful and Calming	Hopeful and Calming
	Celebratory	Celebratory
	Anticipation	Anticipation
	Achievement and Pride	Achievement and Pride
	Informative	Informative
	Convenience and Efficiency	Convenience and Efficiency
	Aspirational	Aspirational
Promotional	Promotional	

A descriptive overview of the tweets was conducted on the visual elements used to keep users engaged or interested, the types and number of hashtags, and lastly, the message tone conveyed in the tweets. Content analysis was used for this overview analysis of the tweets, and the results are presented in Table 4.2.

The limited number of emojis in the airlines' tweets was largely before the COVID-19 pandemic, as not a lot of emojis were used in the tweets. So before the pandemic, the airlines largely used at most two emoji in their tweets, and some tweets never had an emoji to provide a visual appeal to the audience. This changed through and after the COVID-19 pandemic, where multiple number of emoji was used in the tweets. For example, some of the tweets after the pandemic contained up to five emoji, those were the highest number of emoji identified in a single tweet in the analysis done in this study. While the airlines used multiple emoji in their tweets during the pandemic, a large number of tweets analyzed (57%) did not have any emoji across the three Twitter accounts of the airlines under study (see Figure 4.1). This partial limitation in the number of emoji in the tweets was because most of the tweets during the pandemic were answering the concerns of their stranded customers during the pandemic.

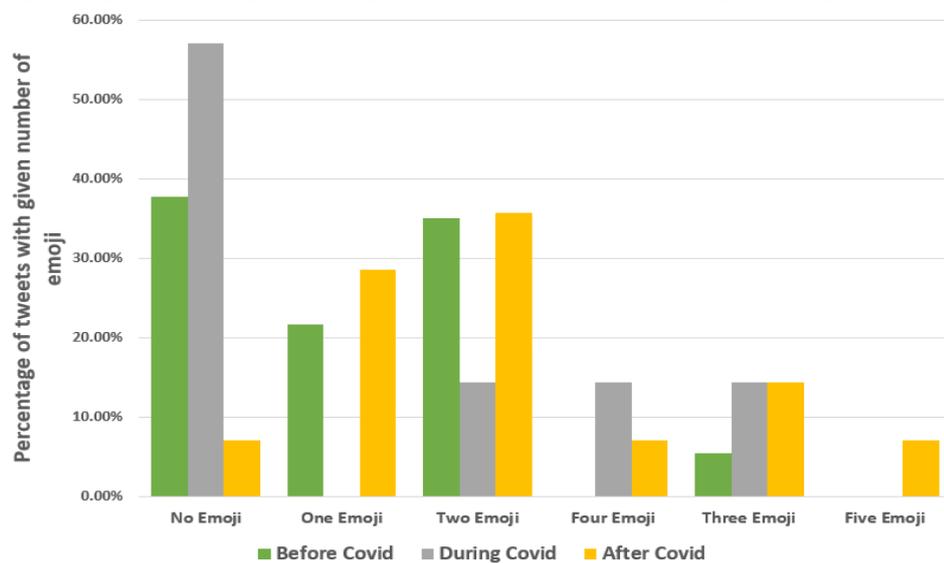


Figure 4.1. Proportion of Tweets Using Different Numbers of Emoji before, during, and after The Covid-19 Pandemic

The messaging tone also varied a lot between the three time periods; before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the pandemic, the messaging tone in the tweets for the three airlines was mainly invitational, enticing, promotional, welcoming and friendly, and showing gratitude. However, this began to shift through the covid-19 pandemic, and also after the covid-19 pandemic. The messaging tone during the pandemic largely communicated hope and calmness, well-wishing, convenience and efficiency, achievement and pride, and was occasionally celebratory. Now past the pandemic era, the tone is back to being promotional. Additionally, some of the tweets post-pandemic have an aspirational tone, communicating career aspirations to a young audience wishing to pursue an aviation career. The post-pandemic tweet had messaging tones communicating convenience and efficiency from the airlines to their audience. The tweets also made use of anticipatory tones to prepare their audience for upcoming events that are associated with the respective online. Figures 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4 present the messaging tones identified in the tweets by the three airlines for the three time periods; before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Table 4.3. presents the identified messaging tones alongside tweet extracts to act as evidence for the analysis that resulted in the respective messaging tones.

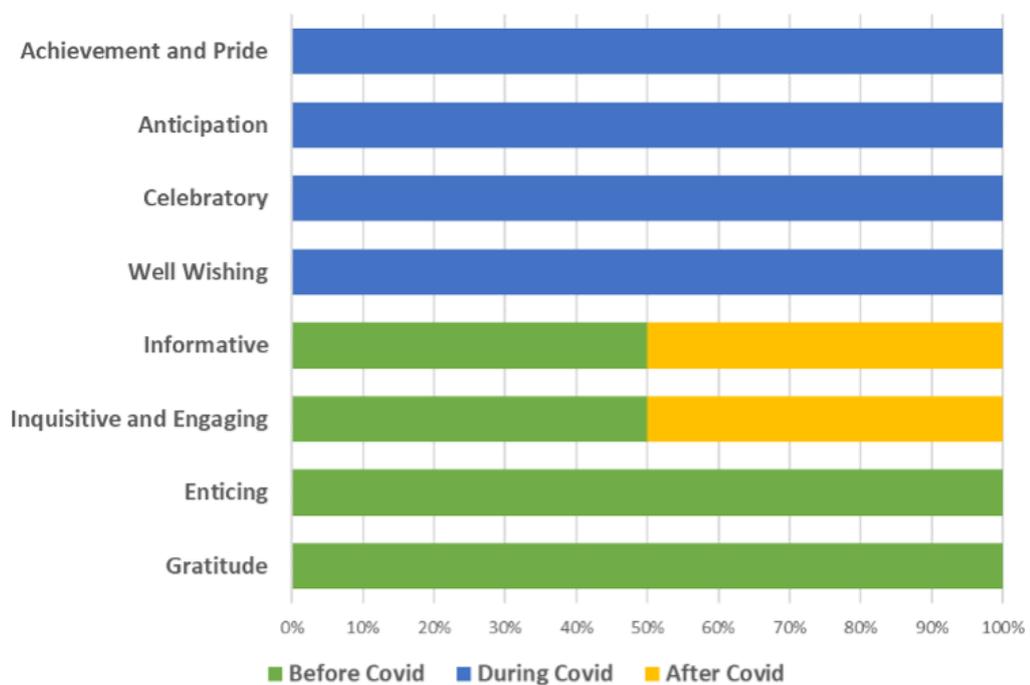


Figure 4.2. Messaging Tone in the Tweets by Emirates before, during, and after the Pandemic

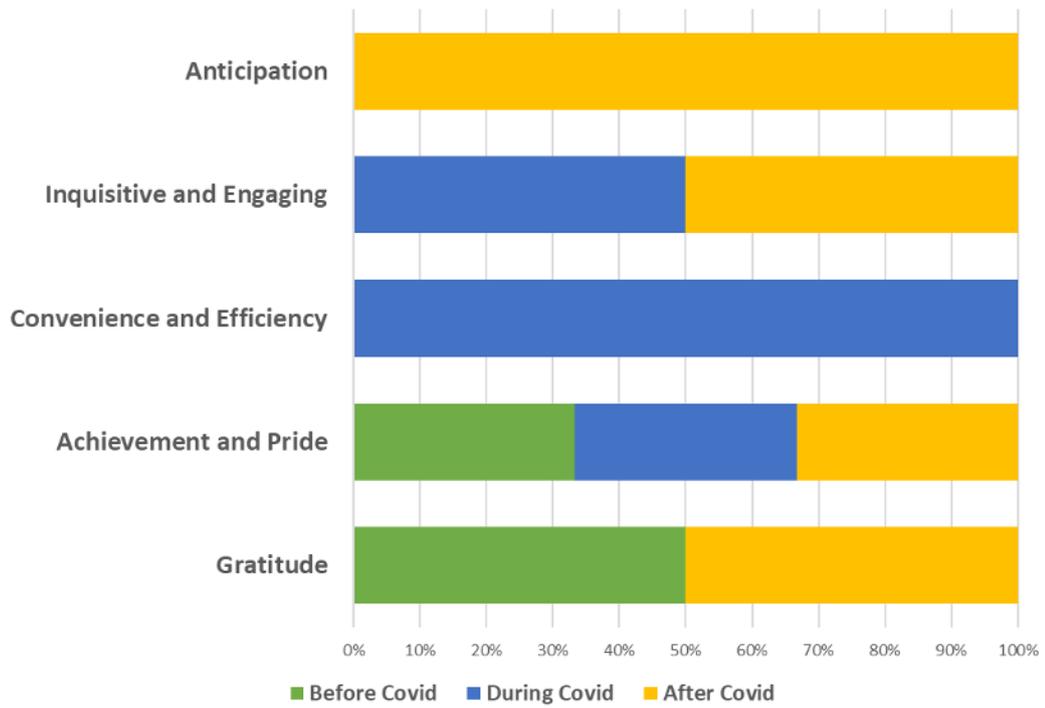


Figure 4.3. Messaging Tone in the Tweets by Qatar before, during, and after the Pandemic

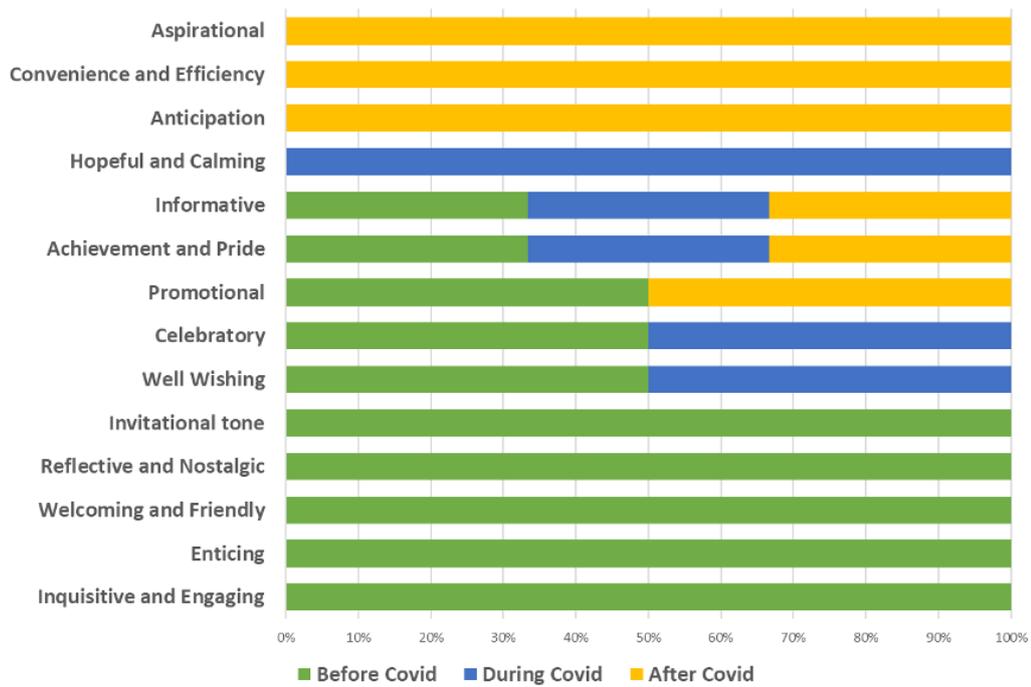


Figure 4.4. Messaging Tone in the Tweets by Turkish Airlines before, during, and after the Pandemic

Table 4.2. Tweet Extracts Presented as Evidence for the Messaging Tones Identified in the Analysis

Messaging Tone	Tweet Extract
Aspirational	<i>“Your future is in the sky!”</i> (Turkish Airlines – after Covid)
Promotional	<i>“Plan an unforgettable vacation now by booking your seat on our Istanbul-Shanghai flights starting as of January 13th, 2023.”</i> (Turkish Airlines – after Covid)
Gratitude	<i>“... Thank you for making us the airline of choice for your journey.”</i> (Qatar Airways – before Covid)
Enticing	<i>“11 million pieces of fine chocolate are served in Emirates First and Business Class every year... for passengers with a cocoa craving.”</i> (Emirates – before Covid)
Welcoming and Friendly	<i>“Welcome to the crossroads of history! See you on your next flight!”</i> (Turkish Airlines – before Covid)
Reflective and Nostalgic	<i>“...👉👈Here is the sunset, us and excitement. #TurkishAirlines #TBT”</i> (Turkish Airlines – before Covid)
Invitational tone	<i>“The nature, architectural beauty and delicious cuisine of Podgorica is waiting for you to discover it all!”</i> (Turkish Airlines – before Covid)
Inquisitive and Engaging	<i>“Where are you flying to next with us?”</i> (Emirates – before Covid)
Informative	<i>“Our January flight plan has been updated so you can kick off 2023 with brand new and exciting routes.”</i> (Turkish Airlines – after Covid)
Anticipation	<i>“...Mark your calendars 📅”</i> (Qatar Airways – after Covid)
Achievement and Pride	<i>“We are the first airline to achieve this milestone...”</i> (Qatar Airways – after Covid)

Table 4.2. (cont.)

Convenience and Efficiency	<i>“Enjoy quickly changing your ticket or fare via our mobile app in case of operational changes regarding your flights.”</i> (Turkish Airlines – after Covid)
Well Wishing	<i>“We wish you the sweetest of journeys around the world with us!”</i> (Turkish Airlines – before Covid)
Celebratory	<i>“Emirates celebrates the spirit of the 49th UAE National Day across six continents.”</i> (Emirates – during Covid)
Hopeful and Calming	<i>“We instil hope in our country for better days!”</i> (Turkish Airlines – during Covid)

4.2. Pricing Strategies

The analysis revealed that not much about the pricing strategies is revealed through the tweets by the three airlines; Turkish airlines, Qatar Airways, and Emirates. Despite this limitation, the study identified strategies around discounting models, tiered pricing models, and bundled pricing models for the services offered by the airlines. **Figure 4.5** displays the pricing strategies used by the three airlines (Turkish, Qatar, and Emirates), as identified in the tweets. Through the discounting model, the airlines provide price discounts to students, promo codes which can be redeemed by their passengers for reduced flight costs, free tickets, and vouchers. The airlines also provided tiered pricing models where the passengers could pay for what they were willing to spend between the prices charged for the economy, premium economy, business, and first-class flights. Additionally, the airlines had a bundled pricing strategy where the airline could present all applicable services as one package, and the passenger or customer would only have to pay once for it.

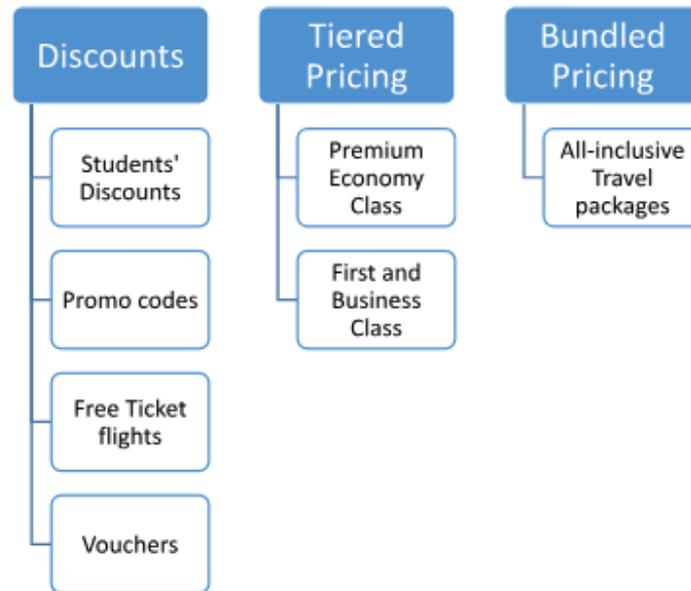


Figure 4.5. Pricing Strategies Used by the Three Airlines (Turkish, Qatar, and Emirates); as Identified in the Tweets

Airlines like Qatar Airways and Emirates extended discounts to students and their travel companions (like their parents or family) during the covid-19 pandemic. Additionally, Qatar Airways provided vouchers to their passengers which they could exchange with their travel tickets, along with an additional 10% value. The voucher was awarded to all the passengers who booked through their websites.

The airlines also offered some additional premium features to their economy class passengers at an additional extra cost. This model of pricing was identified in the tweets posted after the covid-19 pandemic. Lastly, the bundled pricing model was identified in a tweet by Qatar airways after the covid-19 pandemic where the airline was offering an all-inclusive package where the passengers could make a lump sum payment that would cover the flight ticket and also additional services. Table 4.4. presents these pricing strategies alongside the tweet extracts that provide evidence of the analysis that resulted in the strategies identified.

Table 4.3. Pricing Strategies for the Respective Airlines Alongside the Tweet Extracts Supporting These Strategies

Pricing Strategy	Tweet extract
Discount	<p>“Students and their travel companions can enjoy 10% discount on Economy Class fares or 5% off on Business Class fares, in addition to one free date change and extra baggage allowance. Book by 31 October 2020 using promo code STUDENT.”</p> <p align="right">(Emirates – during Covid)</p> <p>“We are making the option to exchange your tickets for a travel voucher with 10% additional value a permanent feature for customers booking travel via our website. The process for redeeming a voucher is quick and easy – apply online and receive it within 48 hours.”</p> <p align="right">(Qatar airways – during Covid)</p>
Tiered (Premium) Pricing	<p>“Our Premium Economy experience is taking off to São Paulo from 19 November and Tokyo Narita from 20 December. Customers will enjoy the elevated experience, featuring extra legroom, premium features and amenities.”</p> <p align="right">(Emirates – after Covid)</p>
Bundled Pricing	<p>“Qatar Airways Holidays all-inclusive travel packages allows fans around the world to experience pit lane walks, guided track tours and access to special events with appearances by top F1® drivers.”</p> <p align="right">(Qatar airways – after Covid)</p>

4.3. Promotion and Advertising Strategies

The airlines applied a number of promotion and advertising strategies through their tweets. The key promotion and advertising strategies identified through the analysis of the tweets were; ESG strategies, user convenience, geographic focus and highlight, event promotions, emotional elicitation, timing and seasonality, sports sponsorships,

and industry partnerships. Figure 4.6 provides frequency bars for each of the promotion and advertising strategies identified in the tweets, showing the proportion of the tweets in which the respective strategy was identified.

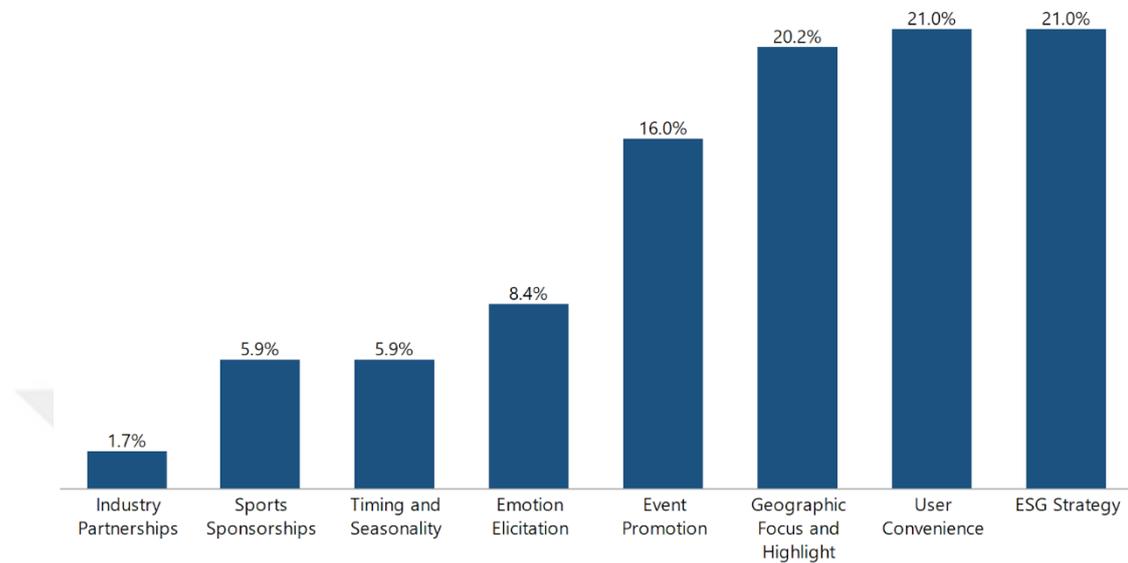


Figure 4.6. Promotion and Advertising Strategies Identified from the Tweets by the Three Airlines (Turkish, Qatar, and Emirates)

Table 4.5 provides a comparison of the promotion and advertising strategies used across the three time periods. Except for industry partnerships, all the other promotion and advertising strategies were applied by the airlines across the three time periods (before, during, and after covid-19 pandemic). Strategies like events promotion and sports sponsorships or partnerships were understandably limitedly used during the covid-19 era when compared to the periods prior to or post-pandemic. The post-pandemic tweets revealed that the airlines were heavily invested in sports sponsorship, event promotions, ESG strategies, user convenience, and providing geographical highlights to their audience.

During the pandemic, the airlines used strategies like partnering with other industry stakeholders (e.g. other airlines), aligning their promotions with seasons and holidays, user convenience, and ESG strategies.

Before the covid-19 pandemic, ESG strategies were implemented by the airlines but in limited proportions when compared to the post-pandemic or during the covid-19

era. The pre-pandemic era focused on industrial partnerships with other airlines, eliciting emotions, geographic focus and highlights, and events promotions.

One consistent strategy irrespective of the time period (pre, during, or post-pandemic) was the use of geographical highlights. This strategy involved featuring a given city or country and promoting the interesting things about the place to attract potential travellers to the given place, for example, holiday and vacation destinations.

Table 4.4. Comparing the Promotion Across the Three Time Periods (before, during, and after Covid-19)

Promotion Strategy	before Covid-19	during Covid-19	after Covid-19
Industry Partnerships	50%	50%	0%
Emotion Elicitation	50%	25%	25%
Timing and Seasonality	25%	50%	25%
Geographic Focus and Highlight	33%	33%	33%
User Convenience	25%	38%	38%
ESG Strategy	25%	38%	38%
Event Promotion	33%	17%	50%
Sports Sponsorships	25%	25%	50%

Table 4.5. Tweet Extracts for the Respective Promotion Strategy Identified during the Coding Process

Promotion Strategy	Tweet Extracts
Industry Partnerships	<p>“Happy 10th birthday to our friends flydubai. Together, our partnership continues to open up the world for travelers through more codeshare destinations, better connectivity and one loyalty programme. #FlyEmiratesFlyBetter #10Yearswithflydubai”</p> <p>(Emirates – before Covid)</p>

Table 4.5. (cont.)

Emotion Elicitation	<p>“A chalet holiday awaits you with peaceful views.”</p> <p>(Turkish – after Covid)</p>
Timing and Seasonality	<p>“Nice is nestled between sea ☺ and mountains ▲ and June is the best time to visit. Book your flight ☺ through #QatarAirways.” (Qatar – before Covid)</p>
Geographic Focus and Highlight	<p>“Holiday options are limitless in #Tanzania and so are our flight options. Enjoy seven weekly flights to Tanzania on board your favorite, reliable airline. #QatarAirways”</p> <p>(Qatar – during Covid)</p>
User Convenience	<p>“☺Enjoy limitless freedom in your travels with flexible changing rights!”</p> <p>(Turkish – during Covid)</p>
ESG Strategy	<p>“Emirates SkyCargo transports first batch of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccines for Dubai Health Authority. The vaccines were transported free of charge in recognition of the invaluable contribution by the healthcare ecosystem.” (Emirates – during Covid)</p>
Event Promotion	<p>“The ICC begins in India today! Cricket legend Dinesh Karthik has a message for you. ☺ If you’re flying with us, catch all the action live with on ice inflight entertainment.”</p> <p>(Emirates – after Covid)</p>
Sports Sponsorships	<p>“As the first airline to sponsor the UEFA, whose final will be held in İstanbul, we launched an A330-300 with a special livery. Keep an eye on the sky for the next ones!”</p> <p>(Turkish – after Covid)</p>

4.4. Distribution of Information

The airlines used Twitter to communicate with their customers as well as potential customers regarding three main issues, namely; Operational updates, travel advisories, and achievement and milestone announcements (see Figure 4.7 and Figure 4.8).

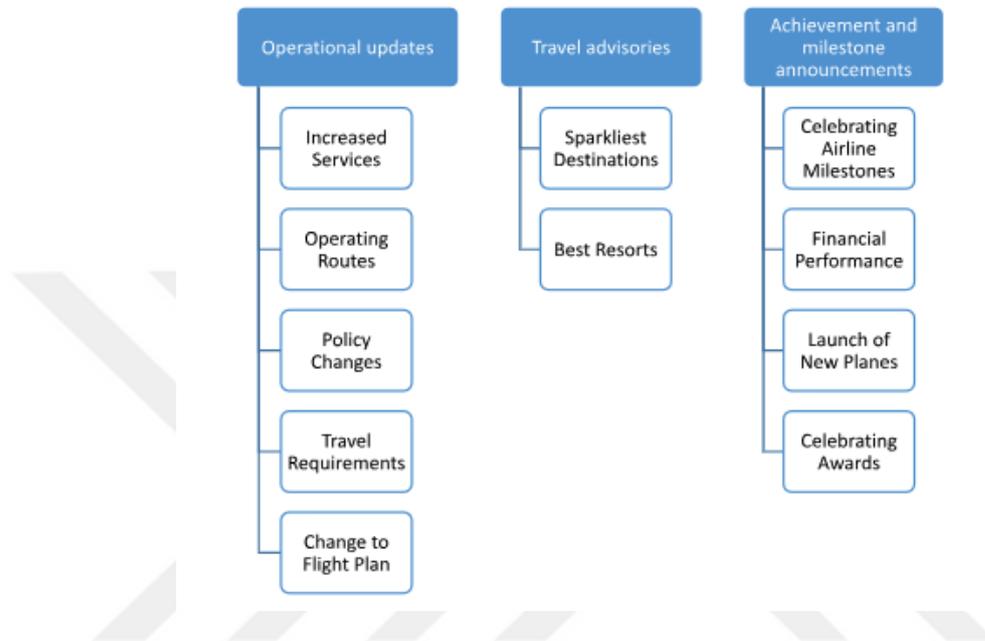


Figure 4.7. Strategies for Information Distribution Through the Use of Tweets

Most of the tweets identified for the information distribution were largely focused on providing operational updates to their audience. The operational updates involved information on changes to flight plans and schedules, travel requirements, policy changes, operating routes, and increased or decreased services.

This was followed by information distribution that focused on achievement and milestone announcements. For this, the airlines informed their audience of their financial performance for a given time period, celebrating awards and milestones (like 10 years in service for a given route or destination), and announcing the launch of new planes.

Lastly, the information distribution strategy also focused on providing travel advisories to their audience. This involved recommendations for the sparkiest

destinations and the best resorts that their customers (and potential ones) could visit or consider.

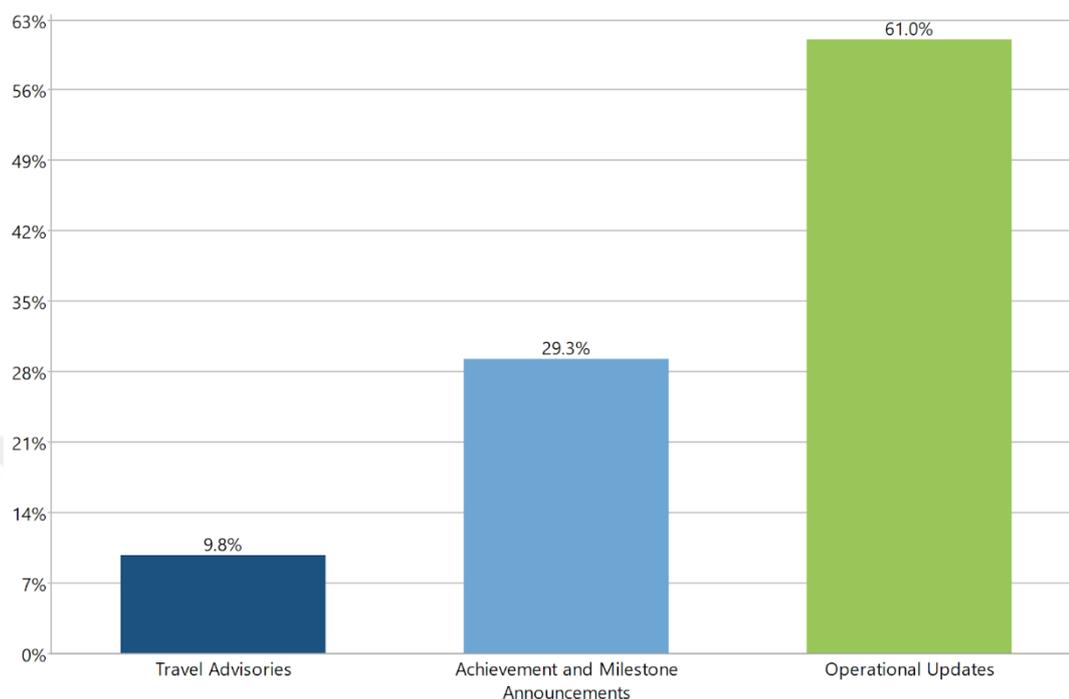


Figure 4.8. Proportion of the Tweets for the Respective Information Distribution Strategies

Table 4.6. Tweet Extracts Supporting the Relevance of the Information Distribution Identified from the Coding Process

Distribution of Information Strategy	Tweet Extract
Operational Update	“Emirates will ramp up its passenger services to 5 cities in Pakistan, offering customers 60 weekly flights and enhanced connectivity to 70 cities worldwide ...” (Emirates – during Covid)
Travel Advisories	“We’ve rounded up the best ski resorts in Europe.” (Turkish – after Covid)
Achievement and milestone announcement	“Who else can take this away? We are the Airline of the Year 2019” (cont.) (Qatar – before Covid)

4.5. Audience Engagement

The airlines through their tweets sought audience engagement in a number of ways; call to action, direct reply to audience, and audience targeting. Figure 4.9 presents the strategies used by the airlines to seek audience engagement through their tweets.



Figure 4.9. The Different Ways the Airlines Used to Engage Their Audience and Customers Through Their Tweets

One of the strategies used was the call to action strategy. For this, the airlines through the given tweets asked the audience to answer some random quizzes, click on external links or blogs for additional details to their tweets, and also ask their audience to participate in paid contests:

“WIN two tickets* to the final eight of the #FIFAWWC in Paris by playing the #360FanPic Treasure Hunt!”

(Qatar – before Covid)

Another strategy for audience engagement was seen through the direct replies to customers and audiences by responding to their concerns and their feedback. Additionally, through these direct replies, the airline showed that they were mindful of the special occasions for their audience. This was seen through the wishes for a happy birthday or honeymoon, or just wishing their customers a positive experience with their flight:

“Hi there, your son is very talented. Thank you for sharing, we love the drawing. 🎨”

(Emirates – during Covid)

Lastly, the tweets utilized an audience-targeting strategy, where some of the tweets targeted a broader audience while some targeted a specific category of the audience. For example, the airline would single out a specific category of passengers and given them a message that only applies to them:

“We welcome our Business Class passengers with branded travel kits.”

(Turkish – after Covid)

4.6. Implications

Based on the analysis of the tweets from Qatar Airways, Emirates, and Turkish Airlines, there are several implications for marketing managers of these airlines. These implications are based on the observed trends in tweet characteristics, pricing strategies, promotion and advertising strategies, distribution of information, and audience engagement. Here are some specific lessons for marketing managers.

4.6.1. Qatar Airways

Three main findings can be listed based on the review of the company’s tweets.

- **Customer-Centric Communication:** Qatar Airways exhibited a high level of customer care during the pandemic, offering travel vouchers with additional value to passengers. This customer-centric approach should be a core value. Marketing managers should ensure that passengers' concerns and needs are addressed promptly, even during challenging times.
- **Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) initiatives:** ESG actions were among the prominent marketing endeavors by the airline. The company transported COVID-19 vaccines free of charge, highlighting its ESG commitment. Marketing managers can leverage this commitment to promote the airline's responsibility and ethical practices, especially in a post-pandemic world where sustainability matters.
- **Geographic Focus:** Qatar Airways effectively highlighted destinations. To attract travelers, marketing managers should continue promoting unique travel

experiences at their destinations, especially by emphasizing safe and exciting travel options post-pandemic.

4.6.2. Emirates

Similarly, three characteristic policies are extracted from Emirates' twitter account.

- **Diversified Pricing Models:** Emirates successfully utilized tiered pricing for premium economy class. Marketing managers can further diversify pricing strategies, tailoring them to various customer segments. Offering premium features to economy-class passengers can enhance the customer experience and increase revenue.
- **Customer Engagement:** Emirates engaged its audience through interactive contests like the "360FanPic Treasure Hunt." Marketing managers should continue fostering engagement by creating fun and rewarding interactive content to keep passengers connected with the brand.
- **Celebrating Achievements:** Emirates celebrated its 10-year partnership with Flydubai. Marketing managers should seize opportunities to celebrate milestones, partnerships, and achievements, strengthening the airline's reputation and credibility.

4.6.3. Turkish Airlines:

- Based on the analysis of Turkish Airlines's twitter account, the following three dimensions are identified as providing vital implications for managers.
- **Aspirational Messaging:** Turkish Airlines effectively used aspirational messaging post-pandemic to attract a young audience interested in pursuing an aviation career. Marketing managers should continue to inspire and engage this demographic through career-oriented content.
- **Industry Partnerships:** The airline's partnership with Flydubai showcased cooperation and connectivity. Marketing managers should actively seek industry partnerships that can provide more options and enhanced services to passengers, ultimately improving the customer experience.

- Audience Targeting: Turkish Airlines targeted specific passenger categories with tailored messages. Marketing managers should maintain a balance between broader audience engagement and focused targeting to reach different customer segments effectively.

These specific insights for Qatar Airways, Emirates, and Turkish Airlines reflect their unique strengths and opportunities. Marketing managers should adapt their strategies accordingly, addressing the distinct needs and preferences of their customers while staying customer-centric and responsive to changing circumstances.



CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this extensive analysis of tweets from Turkish Airlines, Qatar Airways, and Emirates during three distinct time periods—pre-pandemic, during the pandemic, and post-pandemic—has provided valuable insights into the dynamic nature of social media marketing in the airline industry. The study's findings offer a deeper understanding of how these airlines adapted and evolved their Twitter strategies to engage with their audience and navigate the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The analysis of Turkish Airlines' Twitter activity before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic uncovered valuable insights. The airline underwent a significant transformation in its use of emojis and messaging tone. Pre-pandemic, emoji usage was limited, but during and after the pandemic, it significantly increased, reflecting efforts to engage and reassure customers during uncertain times. Messaging tone evolved from promotional to conveying hope and well-wishing during the pandemic, then back to a promotional tone with elements of aspiration post-pandemic. Pricing strategies demonstrated flexibility with discounting, tiered pricing, and bundled packages. Promotion and advertising strategies, including ESG, user convenience, geographic focus, and emotional elicitation, were consistently applied, with a post-pandemic emphasis on sports sponsorships and ESG. Information distribution centered on operational updates, travel advisories, and achievements. Audience engagement was facilitated through calls to action, direct customer replies, and audience targeting.

In our analysis of Qatar Airways' Twitter activity over the three distinct time periods, we found a consistent commitment to customer engagement and trust-building. The airline's use of emojis and messaging tone transformed significantly, with increased emoji usage and evolving messaging tone. Pricing strategies showcased flexibility through discounts, tiered pricing, and bundled packages. Promotion and advertising

strategies, including ESG, user convenience, geographic focus, and emotional elicitation, were consistently applied, with a post-pandemic focus on sports sponsorships and ESG. Information distribution emphasized operational updates, travel advisories, and achievements. Audience engagement was a key focus, achieved through calls to action, direct customer replies, and audience targeting.

Our analysis of Emirates' Twitter activity before, during, and after the pandemic revealed an innovative and customer-centric approach. The airline's use of emojis and messaging tone transformed significantly. Pricing strategies displayed flexibility through discounts, tiered pricing, and bundled packages. Promotion and advertising strategies, including ESG, user convenience, geographic focus, and emotional elicitation, were consistently applied, with a post-pandemic emphasis on sports sponsorships and ESG. Information distribution centered on operational updates, travel advisories, and achievements. Audience engagement was facilitated through calls to action, direct customer replies, and audience targeting.

In summary, these findings underscore the adaptability and responsiveness of Turkish Airlines, Qatar Airways, and Emirates in their social media marketing strategies. Understanding how these strategies evolved in response to changing circumstances, especially during the pandemic, provides essential insights for their ongoing efforts to engage customers, build loyalty, and navigate the complexities of the ever-evolving digital landscape. These insights offer actionable guidance for shaping future social media marketing practices, enabling these airlines to maintain meaningful connections with their audience in an ever-changing environment. Throughout the tumultuous COVID-19 pandemic, each airline displayed strategic shifts to address evolving customer needs.

Turkish Airlines underwent a significant transformation, increasing the use of emojis and shifting the messaging tone to emphasize safety and reassurance during the pandemic. They successfully communicated with their customers, enhancing loyalty and trust.

Qatar Airways consistently maintained customer engagement and trust-building strategies. Their adaptability was evident in the evolving messaging tone, reflecting

hope and well-wishing during challenging times, fostering a sense of community and support among passengers.

Emirates, known for innovation, adjusted its messaging to maintain passenger engagement. They continued to focus on customer experience and embraced creative content, even during challenging times.

These insights provide valuable guidance for shaping future social media marketing practices, allowing these airlines to maintain meaningful connections with their audience in an ever-changing digital landscape. The ability to adapt and respond to shifting circumstances, as demonstrated by Turkish Airlines, Qatar Airways, and Emirates, is a vital asset in the dynamic and ever-evolving aviation industry.

As we conclude this study, it is important to acknowledge the dynamic nature of the aviation industry, especially in the face of unexpected challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic. While this research has provided valuable insights into social media strategies of airlines, there remains a rich avenue for further exploration. In the future, it would be beneficial to delve deeper into the practical applications of artificial intelligence within aviation companies during times of crisis. Specifically, a detailed analysis of how AI technologies have been employed, their impact on operational resilience, cost management, and overall business strategies would provide a more comprehensive understanding. This could involve gathering and examining real-world data from aviation companies, considering factors such as the types of AI applications implemented, their success rates, and the challenges faced. By doing so, we can not only enhance our understanding of AI's adaptability in the aviation context but also contribute practical recommendations for the industry's future resilience against unforeseen challenges.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Table A.1. Code System Table

Code System	Memo	Frequency
Code System		634
Visual Appeal	Explores the visual appeal strategies used in the tweet;	180
Type of Emoji	Highlights the type of emoji used for the given tweet.	0
Diamond gem emoji	The emoji may signify treasure to be discovered;	1
Calendar Emoji	The tweet contains a calendar emoji;	2
Coast and Palm Emoji	The emoji communicates the idea of being at a costal/beach location for a vacation;	1
Party Emojis	This group of emojis represent celebrations and festive occasions like Christmas etc.	2
Recycling symbol emoji	The tweet has a Recycling symbol emoji to show that the airline is committed to environmental sustainability.	1
Chocolate bar emoji	The tweet contains a Chocolate bar emoji to represent world chocolate day.	1
Magnifying Glass Emoji	The tweet has a Magnifying Glass Emoji to represent the idea of exploring and discover a given place.	12
Earth Globe Emoji	The earth globe emoji represents a global presence and a sense of inclusion for all cultures around the globe.	3

Table A.1. (cont.)

Sports Related Emojis	The emoji used in the tweet is related to a given sporting event/ or just sports.	3 (cont.)
Arrow/hand Emoji	The tweet contains Arrow/hand Emoji; to direct the audience towards a call to action.	4
Airplane Emoji	The airline has an airplane emoji in its tweet emphasizing an aviation theme.	33
Number of Emojis	How many emojis does the tweet contain?	0
Five Emojis	The tweet contains five emojis;	1
Four Emojis	The tweet consists of four emojis.	2
Three Emojis	The tweet has three emojis.	5
Two Emojis	The tweet has two emojis;	19
No Emoji	The tweet has no emoji.	19
One Emoji	The tweet has only one emoji.	12
Visual Elements	Highlights the types of visual elements used in the tweet to attain a visually appealing message/tweet.	0
No visual element	The tweet has no visual element; just plain text	3
Both Emojis and Image	The tweet makes use of both emojis and images;	26
Images Only	The tweet contains images (but no emojis)	22
Emojis Only	The tweet contains emoji(s).	8
Hashtag Analysis	Highlights how the airline uses hashtags in its tweets;	148
Type of Hashtags	Outlines the types of hashtag used by the airline in the tweet.	0

Table A.1. (cont.)

Advocacy Hashtags	These hashtags advocates for a course for public good;	2
Thematic Hashtags	Such hashtags communicates relationship to certain themes/topics like zero waste, zero emissions etc.	3 (cont.)
Trend Hashtags	The airline makes use of trend hashtags like (#TBT); which tend to trend weekly.	2
Destination Hashtags	The tweet contains a hashtag about a given destination.	7
Event-Specific Hashtags	The tweet contents hashtag about a given event or holiday.	11
Branded Hashtags	The hashtag communicates the airline brand name; just that.	59
Number of Hashtags	Highlights the number of hashtags contained in a tweet by the airline.	0
Three hashtags	The tweet contains a total of three hashtags.	6
Two Hashtags	The tweet contains two hashtags;	15
One Hashtag	The tweet contains only one Hashtag.	35
No Hashtag	The tweet has no hashtag;	8
Message Tone	Explores the tone of the message (tweet)	66
Gratitude	The tweet shows that the airline is thankful to its passengers.	3
Inquisitive and Engaging	The tone of the tweet is Inquisitive and Engaging; it looks to engage the audience to interact with the tweet	8
Enticing	The tweet is enticing, to entice the audience in choosing to fly business class.	2

Table A.1. (cont.)

Welcoming and Friendly	The tone in the tweet is welcoming and friendly.	1
Reflective and Nostalgic	The tone in the tweet tends to be Reflective and Nostalgic.	1
Invitational tone	The tweet invites the audience to discover certain areas.	7
Well Wishing	The tone in the tweet communicates well wishes to the audience.	5 (cont.)
Hopeful and Calming	The tweet exhibits a tone that communicates hope and calm in the face of adversity; the pandemic;	1
Celebratory	The tone in the tweet is a celebratory one.	5
Anticipation	The message tone communicates anticipation for something the audience are told to expect; a launch of something that resonates with the audience.	3
Achievement and Pride	The message tone communicates Achievement and Pride that the airline has made.	9
Informative	The message tone is informative.	11
Convenience and Efficiency	The tweet communicates a focus on Convenience and Efficiency that the audience can attain from using their products/service;	2
Aspirational	The tone used in the tweet communicates career aspirations to its targeted audience.	1
Promotional	The tone of the tweet is promotional	7
Pricing Strategy	Explores the pricing Strategy exhibited in the tweet by the given airline.	18
Bundled Pricing	The pricing models feature more items other than the flights; that the customer will get from a single payment.	0

Table A.1. (cont.)

All-inclusive Travel packages	The airline offers an all-inclusive travel packages;	3
Premium Pricing	The airline offers different categories of flight classes; this definitely differs in prices;	0
Premium Economy Class	The airline offers premium economy class;	1
Economy Class	For this pricing model, the customers get basic accommodations; unlike the premium ones;	3 (cont.)
First and Business Class	Some of the premium prices are paid for the business class.	8
Discounts	The airline extends discounts; to make it more appealing to the target customers;	0
Promo codes	The airline allows the use of promo codes; this allows for discounted prices;	1
Free Ticket flights	The airline is offering free ticket flights opportunities; this with the aim to attract customers; also loyalty etc.	0
Vouchers	The airline presents vouchers to the customers; so that they can at times exchange their tickets with the given vouchers;	1
Students' Discounts	The discount targets students specifically.	1
Distribution of Information	Outlines the distribution of information to the audience through the tweets;	41
Achievement and Milestone Announcements	The airline uses the tweet to announce their achievements and milestones to the audience;	0
Celebrating Airline Milestones	The airline shares there milestones with the audience;	2
Financial Performance	The airline displays their financial performance for a given year or half-year;	2

Table A.1. (cont.)

Launch of New Planes	The tweet lets the audience know of a new launch of a new plane.	4
Celebrating Awards	The airline, through the tweet, lets the audience know that they have won a specific award.	4
Operational Updates	The tweet informs the audience of any operational changes.	0
Increased Services	The airline informs the audience of their increased service;	4 (cont.)
Operating Routes	The airline informs the audiences of their operating routes; and destinations.	2
Policy Changes	The airline communicates their policy changes through twitter;	1
Travel Requirements	The airline presents travel requirements to their audience.	4
Restored Destination Networks	The airline reports to the audience that they have restored their operations along certain routes and destinations;	5
Change to Flight Plan	The tweet informs the audience of the changes and updates to a flight plan for the airline; the schedules etc.	9
Travel Advisories	The airline offers travel advisory on the best resorts; etc; through the tweets and blogs.	0
Sparkliest Destinations	The airline provides advisory on the sparkliest destinations for a given holiday, season, or event.	2
Best Resorts	The airline provides a list of best resorts to their target audience.	2
Promotion and Advertising Strategy	Highlights some of the promotion and advertising strategies evident from the tweets.	114
SDG Global Goals Strategy	The airline incorporates their dedication to achieving SDGs in their promotions; and tweets;	0

Table A.1. (cont.)

Sustainable Tourism	The airline shows that it is dedicated to sustainable tourism;	1
Industry Partnerships	The tweets shows that the airline partners with other airlines in the industry;	0
Partnership with other airline	The airline acknowledges their partnerships with other airlines; and how that is impactful.	2
User Convenience	The tweet promotes the aspect of user convenience and flexibility that comes with using their mobile apps; or their service or through flying with them.	0 (cont.)
Flexible Tickets	The airline is offering flexible flights to accommodate more customer convenience.	1
Shopping Opportunity	The customers have an opportunity to shop while travelling with the given airline.	2
In-Flight Culinary Offering	The tweet lets the audience know that if they travel with their airline, specifically the business class, the have a choice for In-Flight Culinary Offering.	5
In-Flight Entertainment	The tweet lets the audience know that they can have in-flight entertainment when they fly with the given airline.	3
Utility Apps	The airline promotes a utility app for users to conveniently make bookings.	7
Comfort	The airline associates the sense of comfort with their flights;	3
ESG Strategy	The promotional content incorporates an element of ESG factors; to communicate a sense of Economic, Social, and Governance responsibility.	0
Governance Responsibility	The airline shows it achieves its economic responsibility through tweet displaying financial achievement over a given time period;	0

Table A.1. (cont.)

Diversity in Staffing	The airline has a considerate amount of female or diverse staff;	2
Environmental Responsibility	The tweet highlights the environmental responsibility taken by the airline to ensure environmental sustainability;	0
Zero Carbon Emission	The airline is dedicated to ensure zero carbon emissions; this they do through partnerships etc.	1
Zero Waste Principle	The airline holds a zero-waste principle to ensure their environmental responsibility is met.	1(cont.)
Social Responsibility	The airline communicates a sense of corporate social responsibility. This include things like vocational training opportunities.	0
Relief Efforts	The airline donated relief food and medicine to affected regions/countries;	3
Culturally Sensitive	The airline demonstrates cultural competencies; through acknowledging diverse cultural happening from royal weddings to special occasions etc.	5
Pharma Shipments	The airline has a dedicated pharma handling facility.	2
Transporting Covid-19 Vaccines and Supplies	The tweet shows an aspect of corporate social responsibility; the airline took part in transporting covid-19 vaccines; and doing so in the most ideal conditions.	6
Education and Training Programs	Presenting opportunities for education and training to train future aviation leaders; This communicates social responsibility.	3
Product Placement	The tweet advertises other products that the audience can buy;	2
Sports Sponsorships	The tweet contains sports endorsements and sponsorship deals.	0

Table A.1. (cont.)

Team Sponsorships	The airline sponsors sports teams (football teams, etc.)	1
Associating with Sports Influencers	Associating with sports icons/greats	1
Partner with Sports competitions	The airline partners with sports competitions/events.	2
Sponsoring Sport Competitions	The airline sponsors a whole sports competition.	3
Emotion Elicitation	The tweet tries to elicit emotions in their audience; to drive them to participate on the promoted events and/or to travel with the airline.	0 (cont.)
Nostalgia	The tweet leverages nostalgia to evoke emotions of joy/excitement they had in the past; that they could possibly recreate by flying with the airline again.	2
Potential for Positive Experience	The tweet suggests that the audience could have a positive experience by going for their vacation using the given airline.	4
Well Wishes	The airline uses the tweet to wish their audience (some target customer) a pleasant travel with their airline. This can indirectly elicit their emotions to choose to fly with the given airline.	3
Event Promotion	The tweet promotes an event; with the aim to fly the target audience to the given event.	0
Formula One Event	The tweet promotes formula one events;	2
Rugby Events	The airline promotes rugby events;	1
Cricket Event	The airline promotes cricket events;	4
Tennis Events	The airline promotes tennis events;	3
Sports Result Highlights	The airline through its tweets provides highlights on sports events occurring.	4

Table A.1. (cont.)

Golf Events	The tweet shows a support or promotion of golf events;	1
Football Event	The tweet promotes an upcoming football event.	4
Timing and Seasonality	Does the given tweet/message maximize or takes advantage of a given season that the audience relates to.	2
Specific Month	The tweet suggest that the best time to visit a given place is on a specific month.	1
International Holidays	The tweet targets customers; by aligning their promotions to international holiday; and special holidays like New Year, Christmas, Ramadhan etc.	2 (cont.)
Seasonal Sports	The promotional strategy on the tweet takes advantage of seasonal sports to promote their airline services; e.g winter sports etc.	2
Geographic Focus and Highlight	The promotional content has a specific focus to a given region.	23
Audience Engagement	Highlights instances where the tweet seeks customer engagements;	67
Direct Reply to Audience	The tweet collected in a direct reply to a specific user/fan/follower in the audience.	0
Replying to Customer's Feedback	The tweet is a reply to a customer's feedback	11
Addressing Customer Concerns	The tweet seeks to address concerns by the customers;	26
Wishing them a good flight experience	The direct reply seeks to wish the customer of a positive experience when flying with the airline.	7

Table A.1. (cont.)

Mindful of Customer's special days	The tweet is a reply to a customer to wish them of an amazing honeymoon.	8
Audience Targeting	Highlights the type of audience targeted by the tweet. Who is the tweet addressing?	0
Specific Audience	The tweet addresses specific audience; In some cases, it is their passengers; at times more confined to passengers from a specific route.	2
Broader Audience	The tweet is not specific about a category of audience; it is for all readers; maybe great for picking up potential customers.	1
Call to Action	The tweet involves a call to action that seeks the audience participation and engagement; These calls to actions included clicking on external links; checking on blogs for additional details or information.	0 (cont.)
External Links	The tweet contains and tells the audience to click on the links (e.g. for additional information); these links are not labelled as blogs.	5
Check out blog page	The tweet calls on the audience to check out the blog page for additional information or details.	2 (cont.)
Polls and Quizzes	The airline through social media, involves customers (and potentials) in participatory polls; with awards (not necessarily of monetary value).	0
Ask for Replies	The tweet asks the audience to reply to the given tweet;	2
Paid Participation or Contest	The airline awards or pays their audience who participates on a contest they are associated with	4
Random Quizzes	The tweets presents the audiences with random quizzes seeking the participation and engagement from the audience;	3

CURRICULUM VITAE

Personal Information:

Name - Surname: Tatyana Kim

E-mail (1):

E-mail (2):

Education:

2021-2024 Master's Degree in Air Transport Management, Ibn Haldun University,
Türkiye

2017-2021 Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration, Bahcesehir University,
Türkiye

Experience:

Feb 2023 - Present Messaging Deliverability Specialist, Insider, Türkiye

Feb 2022 – Feb 2023 Business Development Manager, Exadot, Uzbekistan

Dec 2020 - May 2022 Digital Marketing Specialist, Halic University, Türkiye