

Chapter 3

Crisis Management and Seeking Solutions of Air Transport in Social Media From the Perspective of the COVID–19 Outbreak: The Example of Turkish Airlines

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic, which negatively affected all humanity in the “social, cultural, economic, psychological” sense, also negatively affected aviation businesses and caused a crisis. In this crisis period, it can be said that social media is frequently used in the efforts of aviation enterprises to survive. In addition, during the COVID-19 pandemic, social media has been an area that activates the strategic structure of institutions. Social media platforms, which are used to reach more target audiences especially in crisis situations, have also been decisive in terms of maintaining their existence and protecting their target audience potential.

INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 epidemic, which started in China in December 2019 and became a global crisis, has threatened all humanity. In the face of this threat, institutions or organizations have made various attempts to maintain their existence. Social media is a part of these initiatives. Social media, which can reach large masses instantly and enable interactive communication, has been a platform actively used by institutions throughout the Covid-19 epidemic.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-2319-6.ch003

Crisis Management and Seeking Solutions of Air Transport in Social Media

As it is known, social media is one of the areas where the policies of institutions or organizations are applied, and various strategies are used in order to gain more customer base. In the process of the Covid-19 epidemic, despite the disruptions caused by the crisis, social media platforms have become an inevitable area to be used for institutions to continue their strategies and implement policies appropriate to the conditions. At the same time, it can be said that social media, which is used by institutions or organizations to find a solution to the crisis, has the function of being the “*fastest information and news channel*” in the crisis management process.

This study was carried out to determine the potential of THY for “*crisis communication*” in social media during the global crisis in which the Covid-19 epidemic was experienced. Social media platforms, which are used to reach more target audiences in crisis situations, are important for aviation enterprises to maintain their existence and to protect their target audience potential. In this direction, answers to the following research questions were sought:

- How often did THY post about the Covid-19 outbreak on Facebook during the epidemic process?
- What is the liking, commenting and sharing status of the target audience for the posts made by Turkish Airlines about the Covid-19 outbreak on Facebook?
- What are the main themes that are emphasized the most in the posts made by THY on Facebook during the Covid-19 epidemic process?

Based on these questions, the research was limited between December 2019 and July 2021. Within the scope of the research, “*The search of THY for a solution to the crisis through social media*”, one of the most prestigious airline companies in the world, was examined. The study was examined in the context of “Facebook”, the most used social media platform in the world, as seen in the We Are Social (2021) report. On the other hand, this study was designed with the “*case study*” pattern among the qualitative research methods and analyzed by obtaining data with the “*content analysis*” technique.

In general, this study focuses on how to find a solution to the global crisis created by the Covid-19 epidemic, which affects the whole world “*socially, culturally, economically and politically*” and causes various damages to institutions or companies, through social media. The study is of great importance in terms of presenting a perspective on how crisis management is implemented in these platforms. On the other hand, the limited number of studies dealing with the “*crisis created by the Covid-19 epidemic in airline companies in the context of social media*” also reveals the necessity of this study.

BACKGROUND

Looking at the literature in general, it has been seen that the studies on the relationship between “*crisis management and social media*” in the aviation industry during the Covid 19 epidemic (Sniedziewski, 2014; Çerci, U. Canöz, & Canöz, 2020; Arabacı Koç, 2020; Çelebi, 2021) are quite limited. In this direction, in the study of Dube, Nhamo and Chikodzi (2021), who discussed the crisis management in the aviation sector during the Covid 19 epidemic, it was stated that the Covid-19 epidemic started a worldwide economic decline due to the disruptions in the supply and demand chain of the travel market. Therefore, in this study, it examines how the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are reflected on the global aviation industry and how the aviation industry can get rid of the crisis. In particular, the study used archival and secondary data from Flightradar24, ICAO, IATA and EUROCONTROL. The

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