

## **The Airline Industry & Brand Sentiment during COVID-19**

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Sister company to Rapid Access International, TextOre, Inc, has partnered with social media monitoring company, Zignal Labs, to analyze social media sentiment for the airlines during the COVID-19 pandemic. This effort has involved accessing the full feed of Twitter, as well as publicly posted content from other social media sites, and broad range of news sources available through Lexis Nexus. The search has focused on content posted during May and June 2020.

A couple of the key findings of our analysis included the following:

### **Health Screening and Testing**

The social media narrative is mostly in favor of health screening during air travel, and generally demonstrates desire for testing of both passengers and employees.

- English language commenters have praised the COVID-19 response in Asian countries for their rigorous screening, contrasting it with the US ([Tweet](#) - 89 Re-tweets [RTs], 385 Likes; [Tweet](#) - 83 RTs, 331 Likes; [Tweet](#) - 16 RTs, 60 Likes).
- Airline companies have largely been exempt from direct criticism regarding health screening as the burden is generally perceived to be on the government ([Tweet](#), [Tweet](#), [Tweet](#)) and on airports ([Tweet](#), [Tweet](#)).

Airlines, such as Emirates and Lufthansa, that are offering testing for passengers have received high positive sentiment on the topic (60% positive and 75% positive respectively) and favorable mentions from commenters ([Tweet](#), [Tweet](#), [Tweet](#)). In comparison, airlines that have not instituted pre-flight testing such as American Airlines have received lower positive sentiment on the topic (36% positive) as well as calls to begin testing ([Tweet](#), [Tweet](#), [Tweet](#)).

- Furthermore, there appears to be support for widespread testing of airline employees ([Tweet](#) - 772 RTs, 997 Likes). For example, news of Delta Air Lines testing its employees ([Reuters](#)) has been received favorably on social media with 254 Twitter mentions and 66% positive sentiment ([Tweet](#), [Tweet](#)). However, various commenters have questioned the viability of the testing, particularly the need for its recurrence ([Tweet](#), [Tweet](#)).

### **Emirates Proactive Communication on Safety Precautions**

Conversation around Emirates and COVID-19 registered 5k Twitter mentions with 62% overall positive sentiment. This is partly due to their ability to control the social media narrative around their brand through their own proactive messaging on safety standards (2.6k engagements). By contrast, sentiment related to Delta Air Lines, which had 4k Twitter mentions on COVID-19, was 32% positive with the company's own messaging gaining less traction (381 engagements).

- The top shared story on COVID-19 regarding Emirates was the airline's own [press release](#) on safety standards (5k mentions). @Emirates' top [Tweet](#) (1.3k RTs, 4.4k Likes) on air travel safety was generally met with positive responses and praises ([Tweet](#), [Tweet](#), [Tweet](#)).
- Despite having more followers than @Emirates, @Delta's messaging on the subject gained less traction (its top [Tweet](#) received 149 RTs and 669 Likes) and was met with more criticism than Emirates' ([Tweet](#), [Tweet](#), [Tweet](#)).
- Notably, Emirates' top Tweets ([Tweet](#), [Tweet](#)) on improving safety standards use photos and live video, whereas Delta's top Tweets ([Tweet](#), [Tweet](#)) use graphics and animated video.

Successfully controlling the narrative through owned messaging is key for maintaining positive brand sentiment in relation to the COVID-19 conversation. All Nippon Airways (ANA) controlled the narrative around its measures to address COVID-19 and, though with significantly less mentions, received higher positive sentiment (80%) than Emirates.

- ANA's own content accounts for its top ten Tweets by retweets (e.g. [Tweet](#), [Tweet](#)).
- Both the Japanese and English language reaction to ANA's content is generally positive, showing deep loyalty to the brand ([Tweet](#), [Tweet](#), [Tweet](#)).

### **Other Topics of Focus**

In addition to Health Screening/Testing and Emirates Proactive Communication, we also focused on the following topics:

- Listing of top COVID-19-related issues by volume, number of mentions, sentiment, unique authors, etc.
- Sentiment related to the increase in the volume of air travel
- Sentiment related to health & Safety Measures, including face masks, social distancing, and disinfecting
- Review of sentiment related to top-mentioned British Airways, due to significant layoffs
- Competitor breakdown focusing on the mentions, positive sentiment, share of conversation, and top issues for 10 major airlines.

For any member of the Platinum Society who would like to obtain a full copy of this report, or any related details, please contact Mike Morgan, VP of Global Affairs at TextOre. He can be reached via email at [mmorgan@textore.net](mailto:mmorgan@textore.net)