



DIGITAL MEDIA AIRLINE CRISIS COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

This article explains what social media is and how influential can social media be. Focus of this paper is on usage of digital media by airlines during times of crisis. This article explains what digital media and Twitter are, how airline use Twitter as a social media platform to communicate with its stakeholders, customers and employees during crisis and how digital media can be used by airlines to efficiently communicate with interested parties. Furthermore, examples of inadequate crisis communication made by airlines during major crisis incidents will be shown as an example of what consequences can incorrect crisis communication cause.

Keywords

crisis management, crisis communication, social media, online user-generated content

1. INTRODUCTION

Digital media airline crisis communication refers to the strategies and tactics used by airlines to manage their reputation during a crisis that has spread through social media platforms. The airline sector has recently gone through several crises that have seriously impacted both its operations and reputation. Airlines are a unique kind of business that offer perishable products which is very vulnerable to economic instability, political unpredictability, and crises. Airlines need to be ready to respond swiftly and effectively to crisis events, including natural catastrophes, technological malfunctions, and human errors, particularly in the digital era. Considering the continuous increase in popularity of social media sites like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, airlines need to be ready to react immediately and effectively to any potential negative publicity. Effective crisis communication strategies through social media may have a significant impact on a company's reputation, brand loyalty, and customer retention.

Over the past years, social media influenced our everyday lives. More than half of the Earth's population currently uses at least one social media platform. The growing influence of social media offers more opportunities for companies' advertisements, brand promotion, the easily accessible reach of customers to companies and vice versa, receiving customers' feedback, and crisis communication.

The purpose of this thesis is to provide an in-depth content analysis of crisis communication strategies used by airlines and whether the provided information was appropriate, using correct SCCT strategies, and if the shared content based on the key performance indicators for social media has been effective during and after the crisis. This thesis will focus on a social media platform called Twitter. Twitter as one of the biggest social media websites offers a perfect platform to share straight-to-the-point messages (tweets) that suites crisis communication perfectly. On average, around 6000 tweets per second and around 500 million tweets per day are posted on this social media platform. Given the amount of information being shared

among users every day companies must always stay on top to be ready to respond anytime

RQ1. How effective the crisis communication of an airline is?

RQ2. What are the crisis communication strategies used by a selected airline during a crisis?

2. DIGITAL MEDIA

All forms of media that are produced, viewed, and shared utilizing digital technologies are referred to as digital media. Anything that may be sent via a computer network or the Internet, such as text, photos, audio, and video, is included in this. The way we communicate, learn, and consume information has been completely changed by digital media, which has integrated itself into every aspect of our everyday life. Social media is used by billions of people worldwide and has quickly emerged as one of the technologies that defines our age. As of March 31, 2019, Facebook as one of the most popular social media websites, for instance, claimed having 2.38 billion monthly active users and 1.56 billion daily active users. It is not surprising that marketers have embraced social media as a marketing medium given the sizable potential audience accessible who spend several hours a day using social media across the many platforms. According to Statista the number of social media users worldwide in 2022 was 4.59 billion and this number is projected to grow in upcoming years [1] [2].

Digital media's interaction is one of its most important features. Digital media, as opposed to traditional media like print or broadcast, allows for two-way communication between the sender and the receiver. By commenting, sharing, and responding to the content they consume, individuals can engage with it. Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are great examples of interactive digital media that have completely changed how we communicate with one another. The accessibility of digital media is another crucial aspect. We can access information and content at any time and from anywhere thanks to digital technologies. Because of this, we are

now able to entertain ourselves, acquire new skills, and keep informed all from the convenience of our own homes. Furthermore, the availability of several platforms, such as websites, social media, and email marketing, has made it simpler for companies and organizations to contact their target audience.

Also, the manner in which we receive news and information has changed thanks to digital media. We now have access to a wide range of internet news sources, including both conventional news organizations and alternative media platforms. This has made it possible for us to access a variety of viewpoints and keep up with events taking place around the world in real time. The development of digital media has raised questions about the reliability and validity of information as well as the influence of false information and fake news on public discourse.

3. METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this paper, content analysis was selected as the best approach to respond to the research questions. A dataset of information was gathered during several crises in different regions of the World. A dataset of tweets from the past was acquired from the Twitter platform using the Python program- snsrape. Using social media metrics proposed by Bonsón and Ratkai (2013) in Table 2 to evaluate stakeholders' engagement and social legitimacy on a company's social media page. To make data as relevant as possible to the date of crisis occurrence we have used an internet archive database called "wayback machine" which allows you to look at the chosen page's available "snapshots" in time. This proved to be useful in acquiring the number of followers at the time of crisis. Selected airlines that receive the best results in social media metrics of popularity, virality, and customer brand engagement will be evaluated based on the crisis response strategies used in their tweets.

Table 1 - Social media metrics Source [3].

Construct	Measure	Formula
Popularity	Percentage of posts with "like"	Number of posts with likes/total posts
	Average number of "likes" per post	Total likes/total number of posts
	Popularity of messages among followers	$(\text{Total likes/total number of posts/ number of followers}) \times 100$
Virality	Percentage of posts with "retweet"	Number of posts with retweets/total posts
	Average number of "retweets" per post	Total retweets/total posts
	Virality of messages among followers	$(\text{Total retweets/total posts/ number of followers}) \times 100$
Customer Brand Engagement	Percentage of posts with "comment"	Number of posts with comments/total posts
	Average number of "comments" per post	Total comments/total posts
	Customer brand engagement of followers	$(\text{Total comments/total posts/number of followers}) \times 100$

4. USE OF DIGITAL MEDIA BY AIRLINES

The airline industry has been one of the early adopters of digital media. Airlines have benefited from the growth of the internet and mobile technologies by utilizing these digital media to

provide clients a smooth and personalized travel experience. In their marketing and advertising activities, airlines utilize digital media in a very direct manner. Airlines market their brands and interact with their customers on social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

4.1. Attracting customers

Airlines can draw in new business and keep their current clientele by developing aesthetically appealing content and engaging in marketing initiatives. As for an instance, airlines frequently employ influencer marketing to promote their offerings to a larger audience. They work together with social media influencers to produce interesting material, including photographs and videos, that showcase the distinctive qualities of their airline. Another tool used by organizations is target marketing. For instance, Facebook service Dynamic Advertising for Travel, which was introduced in April 2017 is a great example. This service is intended exclusively for airlines and is made to assist them in efficiently and personally promoting their campaigns and announcing their flights and destinations via Facebook. The platform provides airlines the ability to create dynamic, personalized marketing based on Facebook users' searches and interests [4].

4.2. Online check-in and booking options

Offering online check-in and booking options to clients is another way airlines leverage digital media. Nowadays, customers may use airline websites or mobile applications to book tickets, select seats, and even pay for supplementary services like extra luggage. Customers now find the booking procedure to be more convenient, while airline employees now have less work to do. Customers who use online check-in services may skip the lengthy airport lines and get right to the boarding gate.

4.3. Notifications regarding flight information

Airlines also use digital media to give consumers up-to-the-minute flight information. Consumers may now sign up to get push, SMS, or email notifications for information on gate changes, flight delays, and cancellations. This makes it easier for passengers to plan their journey and less stressful when a flight gets delayed.

4.4. Customer's feedback

To get client input and enhance their services, airlines utilize digital media. Airlines collect information about consumer preferences and identify areas for improvement through online surveys and feedback forms. This has made it possible for airlines to improve their services and adapt to the changing needs of their customers.

5. ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA DURING AVIATION CRISIS

Social media has a significant influence on how we react to and interpret crisis situations. Social media gives people a platform to communicate, share information, and offer support during emergencies like natural disasters, terrorist attacks, or public health crises. On the one hand social media enables the quick broadcast of information, such as government updates and

eyewitness accounts. This can be especially helpful when traditional news sources are unavailable or sluggish to reply. Furthermore, social media gives people a platform to express their feelings and experiences with others, forging bonds of support during difficult times. However, there are limitations to the quickness and scope of social media. False reports and rumors have potential to spread swiftly and inflict undue anxiety and confusion. Due to the enormous volume of frequently upsetting content that users are exposed to, social media can also intensify dread and anxiety. Additionally, particularly during times of crisis when people are looking for explanations and answers, it may also be a source of false information, hoaxes, and conspiracy theories. Sharing graphic photos and videos can violate people's right to privacy and traumatize others who view the content. Social media companies have occasionally come under fire for how they handle sensitive content, particularly when it comes to censorship and algorithms that amplify or repress sorts of content.

So far social media has played a dual role in how we react to and interpret crisis situations. While technology has numerous advantages, such as the capacity for information sharing and social interaction, it also has drawbacks, including the propagation of incorrect information, ethical issues, and the exaggeration of anxiety and terror. People should therefore view social media content during times of crises with care and critical thought. It is essential for social media companies to handle sensitive content responsibly and openly when there is a crisis. This can entail taking measures to confirm information, eliminating harmful or inaccurate content, and working with trusted organizations to give users correct information. When absorbing information from social media during crisis situations, governments and other organizations can also play a role in developing media literacy and encouraging critical thinking [4][5][6].

5.1. What is Twitter

Twitter is a well-known social media network that has affected modern day conversation. It has revolutionized the way we share and consume information because to its straightforward design and stringent character restriction of 280 characters. Posts on Twitter called "tweets" can possibly contain photos, videos, and links to other websites. Tweets may be retweeted(shared), liked and commented on by other Twitter users. Twitter is a helpful instrument for networking and being informed since it enables users to search for particular topics and participate in conversations about them. Hashtags are a type of user-generated tagging that are used on social media platforms like Twitter to facilitate cross-referencing of material by topic or theme. For instance, a search for the hashtag #aircraft on Twitter or other social media network finds all posts that have been tagged with that phrase. With more than 330 million active users today, Twitter has developed into an essential network for people, businesses, and organizations to interact with their audiences. The majority of Twitter users come from the United States, where political and government figures often utilize it for their campaigns.

5.1.1. History of Twitter

In 2006, Jack Dorsey, Biz Stone, and Evan Williams founded Twitter. The website was initially intended to serve as a message

tool for a limited group of friends, but it soon acquired popularity and developed into a platform for the general public to communicate their views and thoughts.

In 2022 Elon Musk acquired Twitter, Inc. for US\$44 billion, gaining control of the platform and fired the majority of the management team, disbanded the board, and took the company private. On December 20, 2022, Musk announced he would step down as CEO once a replacement had been found. He is currently Twitter's chairman and CEO, in charge of all business operations.

5.1.2. Use of Twitter by airlines

Airlines utilize Twitter to interact with passengers and offer customer service. Customers can reach airlines on Twitter quickly and easily, and they'll get a response right away. The majority of airlines have social media staff who constantly check their Twitter feeds, which enables them to spot issues early and offer consumers prompt solutions. Customers can tweet the airline using the airline's Twitter name to voice their opinions or inquire about a specific issue. Then, airlines can reply to the tweet and provide support. By keeping users on their platform, Twitter also enables airlines to manage their brand identity and experience.

By retweeting customers comments and attaching a brand message, airlines may utilize Twitter to encourage favorable experiences. In order to keep its clients informed about their flights and find solutions to any of their issues, Jet Airways uses the hashtag #JetInstant. American Airlines strengthens their relationship with customers by using the hashtag #AATeam to refer to its social media team.

Customers who want to feel like a real person is paying attention to their issues might benefit from Twitter. Customers can tweet about their problems in the public Twitter feed to receive replies in a confidential, private message format. In a poll conducted by Millward Brown and Twitter, 73% of respondents reported feeling happier after receiving a response from a travel organization [7].

Figure 1 represents twelve different airlines with the most amounts of followers on Twitter platform. This graph's follower count was updated on March 25, 2023, using data from the previously mentioned airlines' Twitter accounts.

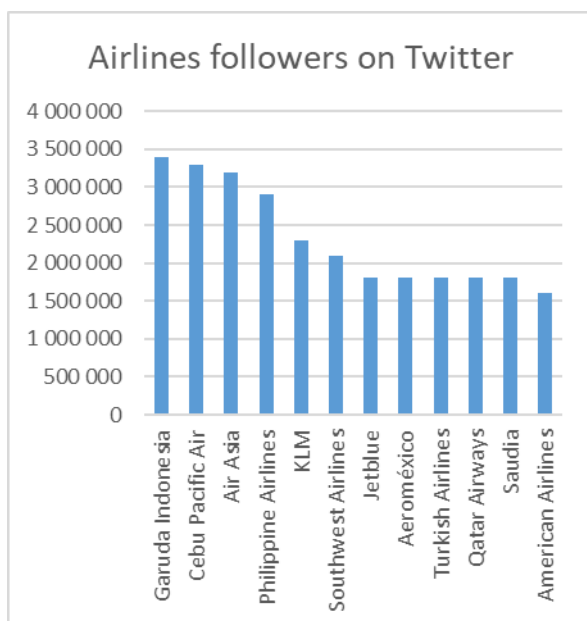


Figure 1 - Airlines with highest amounts of followers on Twitter Source [Author]

5.2. Social media used as a tool for public reporting Aviation accidents

In recent years, social media has developed into a potent instrument for the public reporting of aviation accidents. While an aviation catastrophe unfolds, observers and passengers can immediately post images, videos, and updates because of the widespread usage of smartphones and social media platforms. Social media has proved crucial in giving real-time updates and information regarding aviation catastrophes, especially when traditional media channels are slow to react. However, it's crucial to remember that not all information shared on social media is correct or trustworthy. On social media, incorrect information or rumours can sometimes spread quickly, confusing people and impeding the operations of the investigation and reaction teams. As a result, while using social media as a source of information regarding aircraft accidents, it's crucial to double-check the information. Despite these drawbacks, social media has developed into a crucial instrument for the public reporting of aircraft accidents, giving passengers and eyewitnesses a platform to tell their stories and promoting awareness of issues related to aviation safety [5][9].

In each of following situations, social media significantly influenced how the general public perceived the events and exerted pressure on the airlines to act more promptly and effectively.

5.2.1. Asiana Airlines flight 214

When attempting to arrive at San Francisco International Airport, Boeing 777 Asiana Airlines Flight 214 on the 6th of July 2013 crashed. While the airline was still having trouble informing the public, images, and videos of the smoking wreckage were posted within 20–30 seconds of the aircraft touching down, the first tweet and photo of the disaster were sent out to the public, before anybody had even had time to process what had just happened [10].



Figure 2 - Asiana Airlines flight 214 Twitter report Source

The incident occurred at SFO at 11:28 a.m. on the 6th of July. The initial response from Asiana Airlines was posted on their Twitter account @AsianaAirlines at 4:39 p.m. "Our thoughts and prayers are with all the passengers, and flight crew on the flight. We hope to provide you with further info asap."

Seven hours after the crash, Asiana finally released its first press release on Twitter, Facebook, Google+, and Asiana's official website. The press release stated that Asiana Airlines is cooperating with the ongoing investigations.

Yoon Young-doo, CEO of Asiana Airlines, stated his company has excluded mechanical failure as the reason for the crash in the first hours following the incident. Afterwards, he supported the pilots, calling them "extremely experienced and skilled pilots". Yoon personally apologized to the families of the three deaths on July 9 before boarding Flight 214 and travelling the same route as the downed plane to San Francisco to meet with NTSB investigators.

Furthermore, The U.S. Department of Transportation fined Asiana Airlines \$500,000 on February 25, 2014, for failing to promptly and appropriately assist crash victims and their families. Some families weren't contacted by the airline until five days after the crash [10] [11].

5.2.2. Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370

In 2014, a scheduled flight from Kuala Lumpur International Airport to Beijing Capital International Airport operated by Malaysian Airlines Flight MH370 vanished with 227 passengers and 12 crew members. The crew of the Boeing 777-200ER, last communicated with air traffic control (ATC) around 38 minutes after take-off when the flight was over the South China Sea. Malaysian Airlines Flight MH370 took off from the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur, headed for Beijing at 12:41 a.m. At 2:40 a.m. Malaysian air traffic controllers told Malaysia Airlines that Flight 370 was missing from the radar. At 3:45 a.m. Malaysia Airlines said it issued a "code red" alert that the plane was

missing from the radar. Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 should have landed in China's capital at 6:30 a.m.

At 7:24 a.m. Malaysia Airlines announced the plane's disappearance on its Facebook page. The first official statement was posted on their Twitter account @MSA at 8:13 a.m.: "MEDIA STATEMENT released at 7.24 am/8 Mar 2014 - MH370 Incident - <http://bit.ly/1kDkjiS>"



MEDIA STATEMENT released at 7.24am/8 Mar 2014 MH370 Incident

Sepang, 8 March 2014: Malaysia Airlines confirms that flight MH370 has lost contact with Subang Air Traffic Control at 2.40am, today (8 March 2014).

Flight MH370, operated on the B777-200 aircraft, departed Kuala Lumpur at 12.41am on 8 March 2014. MH370 was expected to land in Beijing at 6.30am the same day. The flight was carrying a total number of 227 passengers (including 2 infants), 12 crew members.

Malaysia Airlines is currently working with the authorities who have activated their Search and Rescue team to locate the aircraft.

The airline will provide regular updates on the situation. Meanwhile, the public may contact +603 7884 1234 for further info.

Figure 3 - Malaysian Airlines media statement on MH370 incident
Source: [Twitter]

Users of social media circulated theories, rumours, and conspiracy theories over what transpired to the plane while the search for it stretched on for weeks. Meanwhile, the airline came under fire for its patchy and sluggish contact with both the public and the families of the passengers. Public communication from Malaysian officials has been criticized: people say the airline consistently released imprecise, incomplete, and sometimes inaccurate information [12].

5.2.3. Southwest Airlines Flight 1380

Twenty minutes after take-off from New York-LaGuardia Airport to Dallas Love Field Boeing 737-700 experienced a left engine containment failure on 17th of April 2018. Explosive depressurization resulted from the engine cowl being shattered during the failure, and cowl pieces damaging the fuselage. Other fragments caused damage to the wing. One passenger died after being partially ejected from the airplane. Eight more passengers had minor injuries. On-board passengers soon turned to social

media to share pictures and videos of the occurrence, which generated a lot of online discussion and sharing [13].

Incident reportedly happened at 11:03 a.m. On Facebook, a passenger by the name of Marty Martinez chronicles the terrifying experience. At 11:12 a.m. cabin reached 10 000ft. Flight 1380 landed in PHL at 11:23. First statement regarding this accident from Southwest Airlines Twitter account @SouthwestAir was posted at 12:39 p.m.:

" We are aware that Southwest Flight #1380 from New York LaGuardia (LGA) to Dallas Love Field (DAL) has diverted to Philadelphia International Airport (PHL). We are in the process of transporting Customers and Crew into the terminal. The aircraft, a Boeing 737-700, has 143 Customers and five Crewmembers onboard. We are in the process of gathering more information. Safety is always our top priority at Southwest Airlines, and we are working diligently to support our Customers and Crews at this time. We will share updates to the flight as they are confirmed."

The airline was criticized on social media for its delayed and insufficient initial response.

At 05:21 p.m. Southwest CEO Gary Kelly issued a video message expressing his condolences on Twitter.

In each of these situations, social media significantly influenced how the public perceived the events and exerted pressure on the airlines to act more promptly and effectively.

6. DATA COLLECTION

Obtaining data from Twitter is difficult without the help of a program. Multiple sites offer to obtain data from tweets on Twitter but they have limitations in terms of the amount of data that can be collected as well as their design doesn't allow them to reach further in time than a couple of days or weeks. Twitter itself offers an application called Twitter API which stands for an application programming interface. Using a set of definitions and protocols, APIs are mechanisms that allow two software components to interact with one another. With Twitter API users can retrieve posts from the past with a limitation of 3200 tweets. Similar to Twitter API for scraping Twitter data is an alternative program called sncscrape. Opposed to Twitter API, sncscrape is free and can retrieve more data, and can be used anonymously. Sncscrape uses Twitter's advanced search options to look for specific data which can be: tweets from or to a user, exact time intervals, use of hashtags filter for replies, etc.

An important step is to turn on the Hyper-V function in Windows features. Hardware virtualization is provided by Hyper-V particularly. This implies that each virtual computer uses virtual hardware to execute. Virtual switches, virtual hard drives, and a variety of other virtual devices can all be added to virtual machines thanks to Hyper-V.

6.1. Sncscrape

To receive tweets using the sncscrape program, Windows users must first install the Linux subsystem for Windows. With the help of Windows Subsystem for Linux, programmers can operate a Linux environment without the need for dual booting or a separate virtual machine. Windows Subsystem for Linux

(WSL) is a freeware program that is available to all Windows users from Windows Store. After downloading the Windows subsystem through Windows features WSL must be turned on to enable the functionality of Linux OS. The next step is installing the current Python version which is Python 3.11 (snsrape requires Python 3.8 or higher). The Python language is a collection of C libraries that you obtain when you download Python. You must have access to the Python compiler and language libraries to build your Python code. Lastly, the user needs a terminal environment to make a cross-platform application without leaving Windows, in my case I used Visual Studio Code. In the terminal environment user can download the snsrape package using the command line:

```
pip3 install snsrape:
```

7. ANALYSIS OF SELECTED AIRLINE CRISIS COMMUNICATION

In this section, we will examine how selected airlines have handled crisis communication in the past, with a focus on their response to the crisis and the effectiveness of their communication strategy on social media platform Twitter. This section will analyse three different crisis scenarios and airlines that were impacted by them.

7.1. Malaysian Airlines

The first accident is Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 (MH17), it was a scheduled passenger flight from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur that was shot down on 17th of July 2014, over eastern Ukraine (Donbas region), by pro-Russian separatists. All 15 crew members and 283 passengers on board of Boeing 777-200 died. The flight route was at the time declared safe and unrestricted by ICAO and IATA. At the time of the accident, Malaysian Airlines had approximately 515 700 followers on Twitter [14].

7.1.1. Crisis stage

Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 departed from Amsterdam at 12:15 CET. At 16:15 CET Ukrainian aviation authorities reported to Malaysian Airlines that they lost contact with the MH17 30 miles from the Russia-Ukraine border. During the crisis stage airline dealt with two major issues. The first issue was the crash of flight MH17 itself which immediately obtained a lot of worldwide attention. The second one was negotiating with pro-Russian separatists to obtain the remains and flight recorders from Malaysia Airlines Flight 17's crash site in eastern Ukraine.



Figure 4 - Initial response from Malaysian Airlines on MH17 accident Source: [Twitter]

The first tweet (Figure 4) was posted by Malaysian Airlines at 17:36 CET hour and 21 minutes after the Ukrainian aviation authorities report. The initial response from Malaysian Airlines

was stating facts that Malaysian Airlines lost contact with MH17. The airline's response did not show any emotion or remorse while waiting for more information.



Figure 5 - Media statement 1 of MH17 accident Source: [Twitter]

At 18:43 CET Malaysian Airlines released their first media statement (Figure 5) containing a link to their Facebook page with the message:

"Malaysia Airlines confirms it received notification from Ukrainian ATC that it had lost contact with flight MH17 at 14:15 (GMT) at 30km from Tamak waypoint, approximately 50km from the Russia-Ukraine border. Flight MH17 operated on a Boeing 777 departed Amsterdam at 12:15 pm (Amsterdam local time) and was estimated to arrive at Kuala Lumpur International Airport at 6:10 am (Malaysia local time) the next day. The flight was carrying 280 passengers and 15 crew onboard. More details to follow."

In the first media statement, Malaysian Airlines informed the public about information provided by Ukrainian aviation authorities and details about the flight and souls on board.



Figure 6 - Statement of Prime Minister of Malaysia Source: [Twitter]

At 23:24 CET Malaysian Airlines tweeted (Figure 6) a Statement by Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato' Seri Najib Razak, who was in charge of negotiating with the leader of pro-Russian separatists – Alexander Borodai over recovering of remains and flight recorders of the MH17 flight. In this statement, the Malaysian Prime Minister stated that s all remains of bodies will be moved by train to Kharkiv where they will be handed over to representatives from the Netherlands responsible for additional transfer to Amsterdam on board of Dutch C130 Hercules. After the necessary forensic work is done, the remains of Malaysian citizens will be flown to Malaysia.

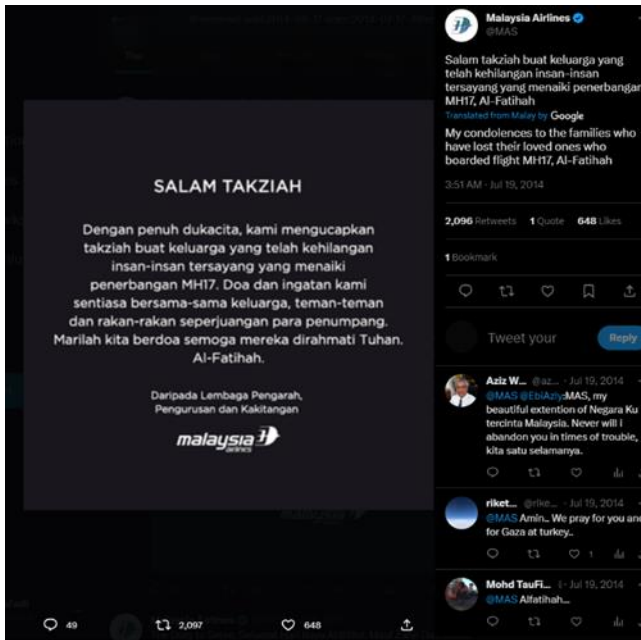


Figure 7 - Malaysian Airlines tweet towards victim's relatives Source: [Twitter]

The first tweet addressed to the victim's families was posted on 19th of July 2014 at 3:51 AM CET 35 hours after the accident (Figure 7). The tweet was written and posted in Malay, translation of the tweet is as:

“OUR SINCERE CONDOLENCES

With sadness in our hearts, we express our sincere condolences to the families of the occupants of Flight MH17. Our thoughts are with the relatives, friends, and colleagues of all 298 passengers. Let us pray together for the precious lives lost.

The Board of Directors, management, and staff of Malaysia Airlines”

The post showed compassion and condolences towards the families that lost their loved ones on flight MH17. Expressing compassion shows the company as a powerless victim, which makes stakeholders less critical and increases the likelihood that the company will be viewed favourably. However, Malaysian Airlines should have used English when they posted on their social media considering that the majority of victims on board MH17 were not Malaysians.

7.1.2. Post-crisis stage of MH17

The post-crisis period is when an organization begins to rebound back and return to business activities as usual. According to (Coombs, 2011 cited in Andreas, 2015) The time to fulfil any responsibilities made during the crisis communication phase, such as victim compensation and follow-up communication, is during the post-crisis period.

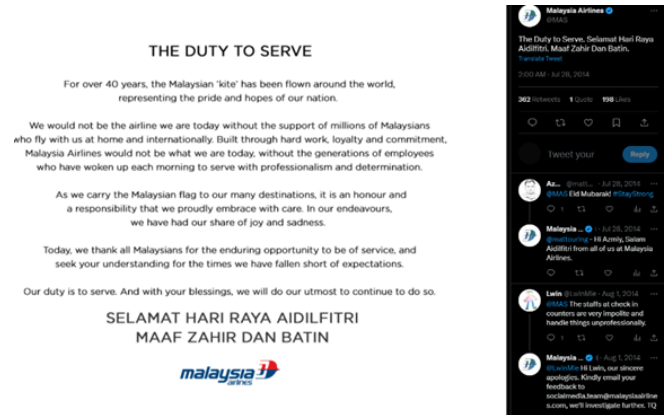


Figure 8 - Malaysian Airlines post crisis stage tweet Source: [Twitter]

As one of the first post-crisis stages of MH17 tweets, we can consider the post (Figure 8) from the 28th of July 2014 which is eleven days after the accident. The content of the tweet was reminding readers that Malaysian Airlines has a long history of 40 years. Airline appreciates their customers as well as their hard-working employees without whom they would not be where they are today. The airline seeks forgiveness for disappointing its customers and wants to keep improving in the future.



Figure 9 - Malaysian Airlines post crisis bolstering tweet Source: [Twitter]

Figure 9 is an example of tweets posted in the post-crisis stage by Malaysian Airlines. The catastrophic accident of MH17 left victims' relatives grieving over the loss of their loved ones. The airline used a bolstering crisis management strategy to create bonds and uplift or perhaps motivate the stakeholders.

“Tough times do not last, tough people do #staystrong”



Figure 10 - Malaysian Airlines tweets content Source: [Author]

Figure 10 shows that Malaysian Airlines during 1 month posted a total of 43 tweets. Malaysian Airlines chose to keep stakeholders informed about the crisis and posted 29(67%) of their tweets addressing the crisis. Brand engagement- 11 (26%) of tweets were the company's supportive and empowering thoughts addressed to stakeholders and victims of the accident. The company in this situation chose an adequate bolstering crisis response strategy to forge bonds in difficult times. The rest of the tweets were informational -3 (7%).

Table 2 - Social media metrics Malaysian Airlines Flight MH17 Source: [Author]

Airline	Malaysian Airlines
Percentage of posts with "like"	100%
Average number of "likes" per post	610.16
Popularity of messages among followers	11.8%
Percentage of posts with "retweet"	100%
Average number of "retweets" per post	2360.09
Virality of messages among followers	45.76%
Percentage of posts with "comment"	100%
Average number of comments per post	90.74
Customer brand engagement of followers	1.76%

8. CONCLUSION

This paper aims on the use of digital media as a medium for crisis communication by airlines. Nowadays businesses have variety of options when it comes down to social media websites. Amongst the most popular social media platforms are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and TikTok. All of above-mentioned social media sites have its advantages in different fields. When it comes down to product promotion businesses tend to use mostly Instagram or Facebook because of their reach, amounts of traffic on websites and their overall design. On the other hand, businesses tend to use Twitter as a platform to post quick, short but relevant information. These characteristics make Twitter ideal platform to inform stakeholders, customers and employees about situations that have recently occurred.

Twitter's design allows organizations to use their platform as their main tool for providing information during crisis. In this paper three different examples of accidents that followed with incorrect use social media are shown. All of these examples have one crucial mistake in common and that is a slow response time. In order to avoid criticism of public companies should improve their usage of social media and adapt to the fast paced social media environment.

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