

# Chapter 1

## The Use of Social Media by Air Transport in the Process of the COVID–19 Outbreak in the Context of Ethics: The Example of Turkish Airlines

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Since the COVID-19 pandemic began affecting the whole world, various institutions and/or organizations have faced a negative situation. In this sense, one of the important organizations is the civil aviation enterprises. As is known, civil aviation enterprises, which were affected by social events and ensured the presence of a large passenger mass, had to take various measures during the COVID-19 pandemic. Likewise, civil aviation enterprises, which include a large passenger capacity, that is, ensuring the coexistence of large masses, had to take various precautions during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this study, Turkish Airlines (THY), which is selected as the most valuable brand of Turkey as a result of the research conducted by Brand Finance in 2021, was investigated.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

As a result of the Covid-19 epidemic affecting the whole world, various institutions and/or organizations have faced difficulties “related to the sale of their products or services”. One of the most negatively affected sectors during the global epidemic period was the airline transportation sector (Kurnaz, 2020a: 118). As it is known, airline transportation, which is affected by social events and enables a large passenger mass to come together, has suffered various losses during the Covid-19 epidemic and had to take some measures as a result. In addition, airline companies have had to take various measures during the Covid-19 epidemic. These measures are also disseminated through social media, which has some advan-

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tages in terms of “*speed, cost and interaction*”. However, it has become commonplace that some ethical violations occur while the aforementioned measures are being taken. In this direction, it is necessary to understand how companies share “*content*” and whether they comply with “*ethical principles*” when sharing news / information via social media during the epidemic process.

From this point of view, answers to the following research questions were sought:

- Are there ethical violations on social media platforms in air transport during the Covid-19 epidemic?
- During the Covid-19 epidemic, are measures against the epidemic presented in a realistic way in the shares on social media platforms in air transportation?

In air transport, the approach of companies to the ethical phenomenon through social media has been examined with the example of Turkish Airlines (THY). Since THY is one of the leading airline companies in the world, social media posts during the Covid-19 outbreak should be handled ethically. In this direction, the content named “*We Miss So Much*”, which is the most watched YouTube video among all the posts made as of December 2019, was included in the scope of the study. Afterwards, the posts made by THY on the social media regarding the Covid-19 outbreak were examined in terms of ethics and discourse analysis. As a result, the social media posts of THY, one of Turkey’s most valuable brands, regarding the Covid-19 outbreak were analyzed in terms of advertising and ethics.

As a result of the analysis of THY’s advertising content “in terms of ethical principles”; In the process of informing the target audience in the said period, a perspective was presented from “how the information was presented and whether ethical principles were followed”. In general, it is expected that social media posts will be made “in accordance with ethical principles” during the epidemic process, which is a health problem and requires various measures.

## **BACKGROUND**

The ethical dimension of the social media posts about the pandemic and similar health issues is very important. Likewise, the rapid growth of social media in recent years has not been overlooked in the health sector, and social media has been increasingly used to transmit information between healthcare professionals and patients. However, as it is known, social media, by its very nature, blurs the boundary between “public and private spaces” (McKee, 2013) and leads to ethical violations. In general terms, the fact that social media allows all kinds of news or advertisements to be made creates some ethical problems. In this direction, Boddy and Dominelli (2017) draw attention to the fact that the issue of ethics in social media is a very important element.

In Bayram’s (2020) study, it was stated that “*while the internet provides many benefits and advantages for people and societies, it also brings many dangers and threats*”. In the related study, the concepts of “*ethics, social media, traditional media and new media*” are discussed. Thus, unethical behaviors in social media are examined and points to be considered in order to comply with ethical rules in social media are explained. In this direction, a literature review was conducted, and the data used were collected, analyzed and evaluated by referring to recorded/written sources. In the light of the data obtained, suggestions were made in order not to violate the ethical rules in social media. With the results and evaluations, it is aimed to reduce the dangers and threats that may occur in the use of social media.

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