



FINAL CLIENT REPORT

AMERICAN AIRLINES' COVID-19 RESPONSE

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ABOUT SARAH



Sarah Eissmann is a public relations practitioner with broad experience in health care, education and hospitality. Sarah uses her experience to craft research-based campaigns guaranteed to draw attention from all targeted audiences.

PROBLEM & OPPORTUNITY

Background

American Airlines is a multinational airline based in Fort Worth, Texas. It has a mission to provide reliable and safe flights to everyone, crew members and passengers alike. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, this commitment to ensure passengers are safe has never been more important, but how is American Airlines keeping its passengers safe? First, it has installed HEPA filters in the cabins of each of its flights, which circulates fresh air every 2-4 minutes. These filters are hospital grade (American Airlines, 2020). Next, American Airlines requires masks for all passengers. This has recently changed, as now children also have to wear masks (American Airlines, 2020). Although this is not the main problem, in late September 2020, an American Airlines employee kicked a family off a flight because a toddler refused to wear a mask (Ebrahimji, 2020).

Airlines always face scrutiny or praise based on what their crew members do. Airlines need to have crisis plans in place for almost anything a flight attendant, pilot or other airline worker could do. In this instance, the American Airlines employee was just upholding the safety measures, but there is a fine line between that and customer care. During COVID-19, there have been countless times incidents similar to this one have occurred, but on a grander level, American Airlines' COVID-19 safety plan has been heavily scrutinized when put up against other airlines (Glusac, 2020). How can an airline claim to champion the safety of everyone if it does not block off middle seats and flies at almost full capacity? This, coupled with impending layoffs (Bloomberg, 2020), puts American Airlines in a tough situation. Policies should align with company values, but in a tough situation like this, the messaging coming from American Airlines needs to be spot on and show how it is doing the best thing for all of its publics.

Consequences

Almost all of American Airlines' stakeholders are affected by COVID-19, safety implementation and communications problems. First, the pandemic has cut the number of flights and the number of passengers, but because American Airlines did not take the step to block the middle seats, despite all of its other safety measures, people have opted for other airlines, further decreasing how many people fly on the airline (Glusac, 2020).

This directly relates to the next stakeholder who suffers as a result of this problem. As finances drop and lobbyists try to get more funding to keep the airline afloat in several cities across the country (Bloomberg, 2020), American Airlines' employees have been hit hard by the decrease in volume and loss of revenue. The airline already started out 2020 with more debt than any other American-based airline (Josephs, 2020), so the pandemic increases the risk of loss of employment. Finally, because the finances are so low, its stockholders are also affected by this pandemic problem. Stocks have fallen (Yahoo, 2020) as people become weary of the state of the travel industry, especially with an airline that appears wishy-washy on COVID-19 safety measures. Because of all of this, American Airlines will eventually have to close locations and stop flights if passengers, flights and stocks do not begin to make a significant rise.

Resolution

The broad problem of COVID-19 is not going away anytime soon, but in order for American Airlines to build trust across its publics is to listen to the research about what its key stakeholders, especially its passengers, want to see from the airline regarding COVID-19. When the passengers fly more, it will boost revenue, stock sales and eventually work its way to the employees to help the company as a whole, so that's why this public is so vital to listen to and talk with. This is a great opportunity for deep-rooted corporate social responsibility related to the pandemic. These CSR efforts will benefit both the airline and the passengers so long as American Airlines uses the stakeholder investment theory to really involve its publics in its CSR, from idea through evaluation.

Surrounding this CSR opportunity related to the pandemic that more research will determine, American Airlines must create a campaign to bring public support. Many dissatisfied airline users head to Facebook to complain, and news organizations often pick up on this sensational news. With a stronger Facebook presence and getting ahead by pitching positive, enticing and hard-hitting stories to the media, American Airlines can cultivate a positive brand image. It will truly care for its customers and employees, as it will be evident by not only its words but also its actions, and its safety measures and policies will be intertwined, showing American Airlines to be a leader in travel safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research Program

Research into what the stakeholders want and expect from an airline during the pandemic will dramatically help to solve this problem. Most importantly, research on the consumers and what motivates them to fly will be especially helpful in finding solutions for this deficit (beyond just financial) during the COVID-19 pandemic. One great tool to research and help solve the problem is social media listening, most importantly sentiment analysis. Although tools like Social Studio may have a sentiment tracker, it will be important to set specific criteria and see what passengers actually mean. Recently, there will most likely be negative sentiment based on the mask policy, and it will be important to research this further and see how it fits into the bigger puzzle of the COVID-19 pandemic. To go farther than this, specific survey research on what attracts and deters people from flying during the pandemic will be key for American Airlines' communication.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

American Airlines Introduction

American Airlines is a multinational organization headquartered in Fort Worth, Texas. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, it had 130,000 team members and served over 200 million customers annually (American Airlines, 2020). Also, before the pandemic, its flights flew to 365 destinations across the world on 6,800 flights a day (American Airlines, 2020).

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, American Airlines has had to not only make some changes to its own safety measures and flight itineraries but also to its public relations messaging. American Airlines is running at a smaller capacity to adapt to fewer people flying, is requiring all passengers adhere to its strict mask policy, and is using 99.999% effective spray to disinfect its flights (American Airlines, 2020). It has already been using HEPA filters, but it has needed to ramp up messaging about them cleaning air in every flight. These are hospital-grade filters that continuously filters air, making it safe to be inside an aircraft (American Airlines, 2020). While these filters are not new at all, American Airlines has increased messaging about them because it wants its customers to know they are safe when flying on American Airlines. American Airlines has been adapting to the pandemic world as new information and challenges unfold.

Analyzing American Airlines

American Airlines is a primarily U.S. based company; however, it extends internationally. Therefore, some of its competition are not only U.S. airlines but also international airlines. With that being said, its biggest competitors are Delta, Southwest and United. There are many other airlines, but these are the ones that come close to American Airlines as far as market share in the United States. American Airlines has 18.1% of the market share, both Delta and Southwest Airlines have 17% of the market share and United has 13.9% of the market share (Mazareanu, 2020). These airlines also directly compete in terms of prices, amenities and locations.

American Airlines has had its own share of mishaps along the way which has led to opposition against it. Very recently, American Airlines changed its mask policy. Before, children under 10 did not have to wear a mask, but now, all children over the age of two have to wear masks (American Airlines, 2020). A mother and her young child were kicked off of a flight in July when the 2-year-old child was not keeping her mask on. This annoyed many people who did

not think children should have to follow the mask rules, and for other people, they were glad to see the airline was strict on its rules (Kaji, 2020). Regardless of if people were okay with American Airlines' decision, others were very perturbed by it and publicly scrutinized it, especially coming off of American Airlines not kicking Ted Cruz off the flight for continuously lowering his mask (Gilbertson, 2020). Some found this was hypocritical of American Airlines, which caused much opposition to the company.

Additionally, American Airlines has faced a lot of opposition for its middle seat policy. Now, more airlines are going back to a fuller capacity because they need profit, but American Airlines never closed off its middle seat. Although the airline had all the other safety measures in place such as hospital-grade HEPA filters, a strong and unwavering mask policy and other sanitation standards, the no middle seat policy deterred many people from flying with American Airlines.

American Airlines has recently come into more scrutiny for its financials and its furloughing of 19,000 employees. After the industry plummeted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it has not yet been able to recover. It has asked for government bailout money several times, but it ultimately had to temporarily get rid of several thousand employees and also get rid of some of its destinations (Frias, 2020). Many employees have publicly expressed their concerns about being furloughed, and this encouraged opposition from customers as well.

American Airlines oftentimes gets roped in through the negative spillover effect when other airlines get into trouble. For example, when a United Airlines flight attendant refused to allow a dog out of the overhead compartment, and it died, not only did United catch a lot of heat and hate for its policy and negligence, but other airlines, such as American Airlines, were also deeply investigated to uncover their policies and their mishaps (Chappell, 2018). American Airlines had to prove itself as a decent and caring airline after that incident and other incidents of the sort.

COVID-19 is another external impediment that the entire airline industry and travel industry must endure. Unfortunately, airlines have not seen drops in revenue this large in many years (Reed, 2020). All airlines have to go through the decrease in revenue, the decrease in destinations and the eventual furloughing of employees, but it is how airlines handle these predicaments and handle their customers and employees that help them get through these times. The above information came from the following sources: the American Airlines newsroom, NPR, Business Insider, USA Today, Statista and Forbes.

Analyzing the Publics

American Airlines has a variety of customers who use its services, specifically one-way and round-trip flights. American Airlines also offers lounges within airports, a cash-back credit card and discounts on hotels and car rentals through flying through the airline (American Airlines, 2020). It serves more than 200 million customers annually, during a normal non-pandemic year. Customers range from babies to grandparents, though young to middle aged businesspeople who keep up with their miles and the rewards are the most common target audience (American Airlines, 2020).

American Airlines' employees are the flight attendants, the airport workers, the maintenance workers, the air traffic controllers, the pilots and the engineers who all come together to make sure flights work and run as smoothly and as safely as possible. Other producers are the vendors for anything from food to the airplanes themselves and the International Air Transport Association (IATA). Some of the plane producers are Airbus, Boeing, CRJ and ERJ (American Airlines, 2020). The IATA is the airline trade organization that represents 82% of the entire airline industry (IATA, 2020). All of these people and organizations work together as producers of American Airlines.

American Airlines has a large set of enablers who provide authority and control, allowing it to exist. One of these groups is the Board of Directors. This board includes James Albaugh, Advisor, Global Advisory and Asset management Firm; Jeffrey Benjamin, Senior Advisor, Cyrus Capital Partners, L.P.; John Cahill, Vice Chairman, The Kraft Heinz Company; Michael Embler, Former Chief Investment Officer, Franklin Mutual Advisors, LLC; Matthew Hart, Retired President & CEO, Hilton Hotels Corporation; Susan Kronick, Retired Vice-Chairman, Macy's, Inc.; Martin Nesbitt, Co-CEO, The Vistria Group; Denise O'Leary, Private Venture Capital Investor; Ray Robinson, Non-Executive Chairman, Citizens Trust Bank; Doug Steenland, Former President & CEO, Northwest Airlines Corporation; and Doug Parker, Chairman & CEO, American Airlines Group & American Airlines (American Airlines, 2020). American Airlines, as are other airlines, is regulated by the Federal Aviation Administration, which offers licenses and certificates (Federal Aviation Administration, 2020). Finally, American Airlines, more so than some other airlines, has taken money from the government, especially during these tough pandemic times, to help fund itself, keep afloat and pay its employees (Sider, 2020). These are three of the largest enablers for American Airlines.

The largest limiters of American Airlines are the government's ability to give or not to give bailout money and climate activists and environmentalist groups. Airlines ran out of \$25 billion worth of government bailout money within six days of receiving it. The airline industry desperately needed money in order to keep its flights flying and its crew in jobs (Berger, 2020). This was, and still is, especially an issue for American Airlines because it had to furlough so many thousands of people because it could not get its hands on more government bailout money in time. The government has massive limiting power over American Airlines. Additionally, climate activists like Greta Thunberg have sworn off flying for climate reasons, and the global movement "We Stay On The Ground" deters people from flying, thus having them opt for other modes of transportation, limiting American Airlines' and other Airlines' reach (Irfan, 2019). While American Airlines has many cheerleaders and organizations to help it out and move the company forward, these limiters can be very detrimental to the growth of the airline.

All the information for this section came from news organizations and internally produced communications. These sources include American Airlines, the International Air Transportation Association, the Federal Aviation Administration, The Wall Street Journal and Vox.

SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

- American Airlines has strong customer loyalty, which is fostered through its AAdvantage and mileage program.
- Its CEO, Doug Parker, has made national news multiple times for being a caring, kind and socially aware person, most recently for sitting down with a flight attendant from another airline to talk about race.
- American Airlines has state-of-the-art systems in place to clean and purify the air in the cabins.
- American Airlines offers flights to both large and small airports around the country and globe, providing versatility and availability of flights.

Weaknesses

- American Airlines did not have an official middle seat policy, and people remember that when booking flights.
- Its internal funding is running short, and it has not found a way to keep all of its employees on payroll.
- Its flight attendants have the power to monitor whether people are being kept safe, which means they also have the ability to say or do something that could negatively affect the public opinion of American Airlines.
- It is shutting down some flights to lesser-used destinations, thus forcing potential customers to fly on another airline.

Opportunities

- As vaccine trials ramp up and eventually become available to the public, more people will travel on airplanes.
- Aircraft companies that American Airlines partner with are working on making each flight safer.
- After being cooped up in their homes for so long due to the pandemic, people are ready to get out, hop on a flight and go on a vacation.
- As holiday season begins, students and individuals will fly home on the most convenient flights possible, regardless of price.

Threats

- With winter and colder temperatures well on their way, people will be stuck inside, thus COVID-19 cases may rise due to the lack of outdoor activities.
- The United States recently had its highest single-day spike in COVID-19 cases, showing the virus has not gone away.
- Not all states require mask policies, even though the airline does.
- United States citizens are still limited in where they can travel outside of the U.S. due to it having higher COVID-19 cases than many other places outside of the country.
- As California vows to get rid of gasoline-powered cars, the switch to other forms of energy across the country will follow suit, including pertaining to airplanes.

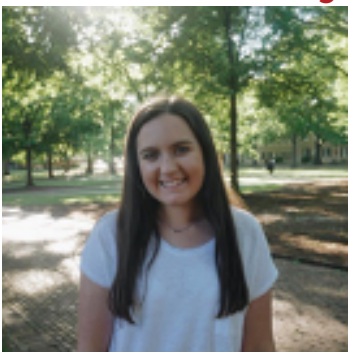
KEY PUBLICS

Business Ben



Business Ben is a 47-year-old accountant from Boston working for a top 4 accounting firm. This means he is no stranger to travel, and he travels on an airplane multiple times a month. He makes \$90,000 a year, but he is often stressed by his travel schedule. His company pays for his flights, but he still has the autonomy to pick which airline with which he would prefer to travel. During the summer of 2020, he began traveling again for work as COVID-19 conditions appeared to clear. He takes precautions, as he has a wife and two children, Kimberly and Daniel, ages 12 and 15, respectively. When not working, he enjoys spending time with his family and relaxing, not thinking about the stress of work or travel (Loosvelt, 2020).

Studios Stacy



Studios Stacy is a 21-year-old college senior. She goes to school in South Carolina but lives in New Jersey. She does not have a car, so she must fly home for school breaks (Shapiro, 2020). She is also on her sorority's executive board, so she travels to multiple conferences a year. Although her parents pay for most of her tuition and her housing, she is on her own for incidentals. She works at the university's student union making \$8.25 an hour. She lives with two roommates and likes to go out to the college bars with friends. She is disappointed by the pandemic, but she does not let it stop her from having fun. She takes reasonable precautions but still maintains the attitude that she will be fine if she gets sick.

Vacation Vicky



Vacation Vickie is a proud millennial who likes all things millennial- from savoring experiences to being budget conscious (Saiidi, 2016). She is a 28-year-old who rents a house in LA with her partner. She lives the LA-influencer lifestyle and loves to travel both around the United States and across the world. Her favorite place she's been is Brussels, and she hopes to travel to every European country. She is both a planner and spontaneous, so she sometimes books flights far in advance and other times books flights on a whim last minute. When not traveling and blogging about traveling, she is an extra on TV shows and movies. She's upset by the pandemic, but she still flies.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- **To understand the attitudes and perceptions of American Airlines during the coronavirus pandemic through businesspeople, frequent travelers and students.**
- **To analyze the conversations trending on social media about American Airlines regarding the pandemic.**
- **To understand the factors used to decide which airline to fly during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

METHODOLOGY

This research consists of a survey, a focus group and social listening of both current and past American Airlines passengers. This research will determine the attitudes and perceptions of customers during the pandemic as well as analyze what is being said about the airline online. Additionally, the primary research will aim to see which factors potential and current customers use to decide which airline to fly, especially during a global pandemic. By using Social Studio for social listening, Qualtrics to make the online survey and a network of people who travel via air, this primary research will lead to a better understanding of both the positives and the shortcomings in business, safety and communications issues with American Airlines.

Research Method 1: Social Listening Analysis (Social Studio)

Sampling Frame: The Social Studio sampling frame is specific to make sure the posts are relevant to the research at hand. The sample is small and manageable, with 1,200 posts over 30 days. It includes the keyword groupings of “American Airlines and testing,” “American Airlines and coronavirus,” “American Airlines and middle seat,” “American Airlines and COVID,” “American Airlines and safety” and “American Airlines and pandemic.” Results are limited to Twitter posts, Instagram posts, comments and reviews.

Rationale: I chose to use Social Studio to conduct social listening primarily for the sentiment report as well as demographic reports. It’s important to see if the conversations on social media are positive or negative and to see which demographics say what about the airline. This way, American Airlines can work to better target customers and potential customers who may have a negative view of the airline while lifting up the positive conversations while continuing to engage those customers and potential customers. The two objectives this social listening research covers are “to understand the attitudes and perceptions of American Airlines during the coronavirus pandemic through businesspeople, frequent travelers and students” and “to analyze the conversations trending on social media about American Airlines regarding the pandemic.” The sample is kept small, so most of the posts are related to the research objectives, notably excluding mainstream news. While mainstream news provides pertinent updates and information and does contribute to the overall conversation surrounding American Airlines, it muddies the passenger-generated content I am analyzing.

Execution:

Recruiting Method: None

Location: Online (Social Studio)

Length: None

Incentive: None

Number of Social Media Posts: 1,200

Data Analysis Method: Social Studio analysis

Research Method 2: Online Survey

Sampling Frame: Because American Airlines services hundreds of cities in many countries, it was important this survey reached a representative sample of 5,000 people, with more than half of the respondents having had flown on American Airline. The only criteria to complete the survey is to have flown on an airplane before. The survey is U.S.-based, as it focuses primarily on the American COVID-19 protocols and the four largest airlines in the United States: American Airlines, Southwest Airlines, United Airlines and Delta Airlines. A demographic question asks which state the respondent is from, so the results show how far the survey has reached.

Rationale: With the survey results, I can get a broader sense of what motivates both American Airlines customers and non-American Airlines customers to fly, purchase flights and choose airlines. Through questions identifying the reason for flying and gauging the COVID-19 motivations for choosing an airline, as well as questions about the communication efforts of American Airlines, I can clearly see what American Airlines is doing well, who American Airlines is doing well with and how American Airlines can improve its COVID-19 response and communication to fill the gaps in its efforts and encourage specific populations to trust and fly American Airlines. This survey looks deeper into two of my research objectives: “to understand the attitudes and perceptions of American Airlines during the coronavirus pandemic through businesspeople, frequent travelers and students” and “to understand the factors used to decide which airline to fly during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Execution:

Recruiting Method: An email was sent to people who have flown on American Airlines or signed up for an American Airlines account. Additionally, the survey was posted to MTurk, available for anyone in the United States to take.

Location: Online

Length: 18 questions

Incentive: None

Number of Participants: 5,000 participants

Data Analysis Method: Qualtrics Data Analysis, See Appendix A

Research Method 3: Focus Group

Sampling Frame: The sampling frame for the focus group included respondents of the survey. I split the people who showed interest in the focus group into two categories: have flown American Airlines and have not flown on American Airlines. From there, I split those groups into subgroups: have flown since March 2020 and have not flown since March 2020. I picked six people at random from each group and had three people from each group at both focus group sessions.

Rationale: The focus groups allow me to dive deeper into the sentiment and opinions determined in both the survey and the social listening stages of primary research. With a mix of previous and current American Airlines passengers and previous and current passengers of other airlines, the focus groups allow me to uncover the personal stories, decisions and feelings of different types of airline passengers. This, in turn, allows me to make sense of all the data and hear direct feedback about what American Airlines has been doing well and what it can do better. This method covers the same two objectives as the survey, though the responses go more in depth. These objectives are “to understand the attitudes and perceptions of American Airlines during the coronavirus pandemic through businesspeople, frequent travelers and students” and “to understand the factors used to decide which airline to fly during the COVID-19 pandemic.” This qualitative research is ultimately vital to making recommendations regarding the COVID-19 safety and communications efforts of American Airlines.

Execution:

- Recruiting Method: Collected emails independently from the survey results and sent a request to participate in the focus group.
- Location: Zoom
- Length: 1 hour per focus group
- Incentive: \$25 Visa gift card
- Number of Participants: 24 participants, split up into two focus groups

Data Analysis Method: Content Analysis, See Appendix B

RESEARCH RESULTS AND ANALYSIS-SOCIAL STUDIO

The sentiment is overall 69% negative. This is not surprising, given American Airlines has never blocked its middle seat during the entirety of the pandemic. As cases are rising, American Airlines is decreasing flights and flying full capacity at lower rates during the holiday season. This information came from an analysis

of individual Twitter posts. Some of the most common negative posts include the following themes: no middle seat closure, packed flights, lackluster protocols and tone-deaf marketing and social media posts, among other Twitter posts from customers. A majority of the negative posts came from customer Tweets, while more positive sentiment came from posted news articles related to the new testing endeavor.

 **7micks.**
@byemicks 20d

american airlines playing trivia trying to convince themselves that filling a plane to full capacity is safe during a **pandemic**. i can't.

 **americanair**
@AmericanAir

Let's clear the air with a quick question. Check out the replies for the answer! #Travel #CleanCommitment #covidtravel #covid19 #coronavirus #cleaning



 Sarah Individual **Sentiment**





Tina Grider-Cannon
@tinacannonTX

2h

Sooooooooo disappointed with **American Airlines** and their full flights. Not one open seat on our flight today. No distance in jetway, no signs about **Covid**. Never again. [#americanAirlines](#) [#fail](#)



Jamual
@LedMueTallit

American Airlines does the bare minimum **COVID 19** protocols just so they can say they're checking off all the boxes lol. Don't fly with them folk no time soon if you have to fly.



DMN Business
@DMNBiz

2d

American Airlines teams with British Airways on **COVID-19** testing in push to kick-start London flights buff.ly/3nyr9t5

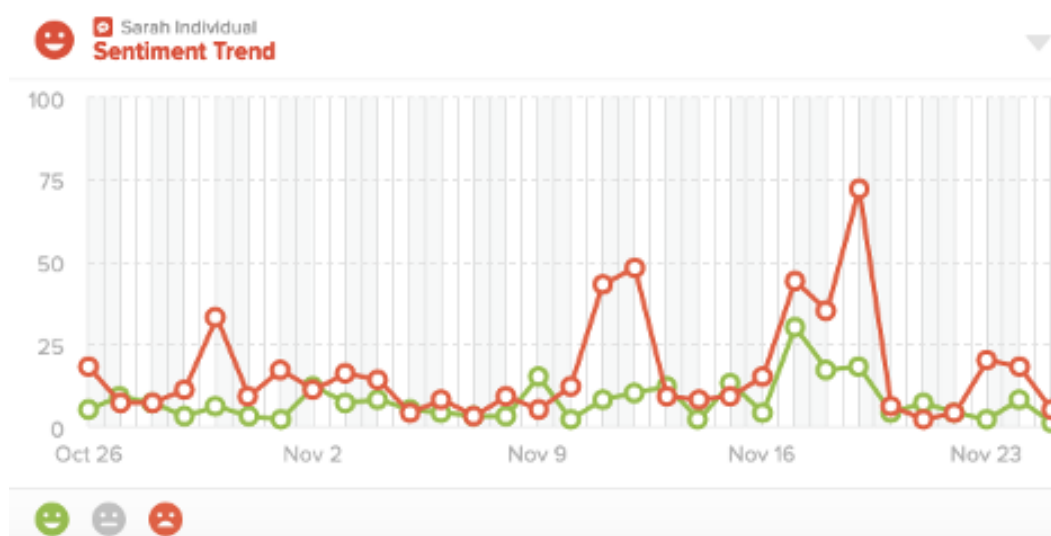


Chlo McLovin
@rowsloah

20d

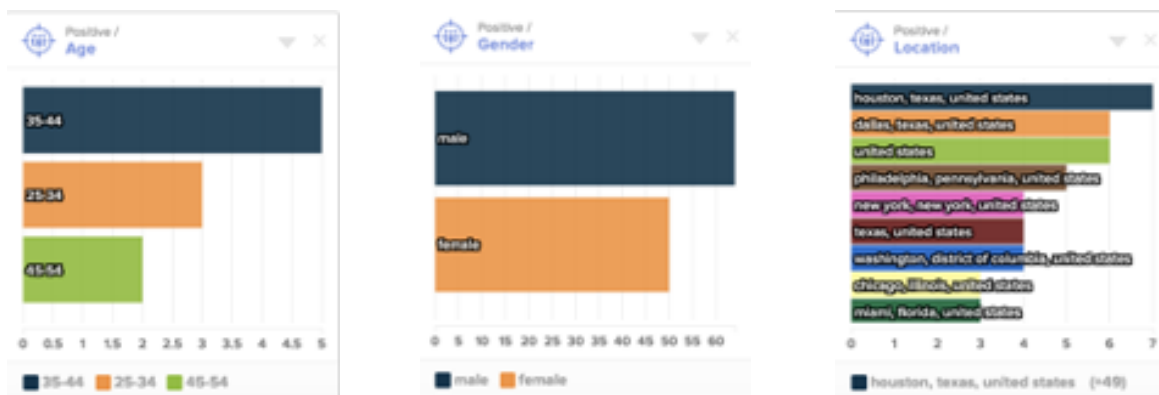
I wish **American Airlines** blocked off the **middle seat** on their flights

The sentiment trends match the exposure of American Airlines in the news. As negative sentiment rises, so does positive sentiment, but they rise and fall at drastically different levels. Some notable days the negative sentiment is high are November 11-12 and November 19. On November 11-12, American Airlines announced the launch of a new app and its plan to resume flights to China. These both caused a spike in conversations surrounding American Airlines, going farther in-depth than these two catalysts. On November 19, American Airlines posted a video detailing all of its cleaning procedures. This again invited conversation about American Airlines as a whole, especially people who were dissatisfied by the capacity of the flights.

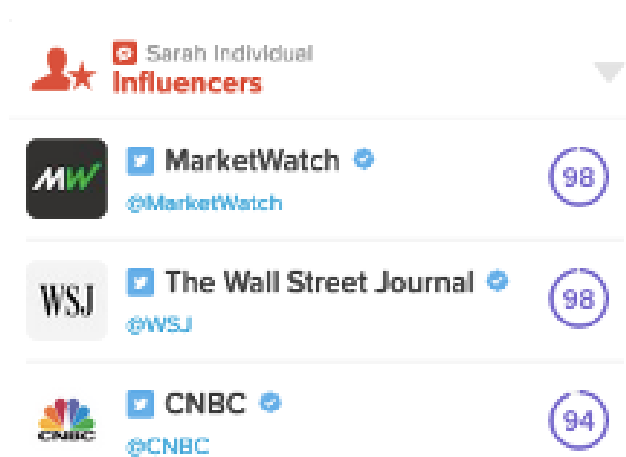




Of the posts labeled by Social Studio as having negative sentiment, a majority of them were written as people who have self-identified as men, who are between the ages of 35 and 44 and who live in or post from the United States. Of the 337 posts with gender attached, 210 were written by men. Of the 27 posts with age attached, 7 were written by people who are 35-44 years old. Generation X overwhelmingly leaves negative comments over the other age groups. Although most 35 out of the 235 posts with location attached are from the U.S. in general, this shows that the people making these posts come from all over the country and the world.



For the positive sentiment about American Airlines, the top age breakdown and the gender breakdown is similar to that of the negative sentiment. There were only 10 posts attached to age, and of those posts, half of them fall within the 35-44 age group. This shows only millennials and generation x posted positively about American Airlines, though the sample is too small to tell that with 100% certainty. Of the 114 posts tied to gender, 64 men posted positively, and 50 women posted positively, which is a higher percentage of women posting about positively about American Airlines than negatively. Finally, of the 97 posts with location tied to them, the most posts came from Texas. This makes sense because American Airlines is headquartered in Texas. Philadelphia, New York, Washington, Chicago and Miami all make sense as well because American Airlines has hubs in those cities.



Overall, American Airlines has had a large portion of negative sentiment surrounding the pandemic, even when it posts and shares positive content. The demographics of the people who do speak either positively or negatively about the airline are very similar – generation x men from the United States.

Some good news for American Airlines, though, is the stock prices are going up. While there are many consumers who have negative posts about American Airlines on social media, there are also some stockholders who have positive posts on social media about the American Airlines stocks rising in value. This news is especially trending with some of its top influencers, which are major news sources that tend to focus on money: Market Watch, The Wall Street Journal and CNBC.

APPENDIX A - SURVEY

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

I am a Syracuse University graduate student conducting a survey on American Airlines during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please help me by completing the 5-minute survey below. Your responses are completely anonymous and no identifying information will be collected during the course of this survey. If you have any questions about this survey, please feel free to contact me at skeissma@syr.edu. Thank you for participating in this survey.



Have you ever flown on an airplane?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No



How often do you fly?

- ☐ A few times a month
- ☐ Once a month
- ☐ A few times a year
- ☐ Once a year
- ☐ Once every few years
- ☐ Almost never

Select the top reason you typically fly.

- ☐ Business
- ☐ School
- ☐ Visit Family
- ☐ Vacation
- ☐ Other



Have you ever flown on American Airlines?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No



Click to write the question text

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
American Airlines has done a adequate job with its COVID-19 safety precautions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
American Airlines has done a good job communicating its COVID-19 safety precautions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I know where to find information about American Airlines' COVID-19 safety precautions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I know what American Airlines' COVID-19 precautions are.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Compared to other airlines, American Airlines is handling the COVID-19 pandemic well.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
If I had to fly during the pandemic, I would consider flying on American Airlines.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Rank the U.S.-based airlines you are most likely to fly. 1 is most likely to fly and 4 is least likely to fly.

- American Airlines

- Delta Airlines

- United Airlines

- Southwest Airlines

Rank the most important factors for choosing an airline. 1 is most important, 7 is least important.

- Health and Safety Precautions
- Overall Reputation
- Price
- Customer Service
- Amenities (free checked bags, TSA precheck, etc.)
- Brand Loyalty
- Destinations

The following questions ask about your perceptions on airplane safety.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel safe knowing my airplane has hospital-grade filters.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel safe knowing nobody will sit next to me on a flight.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel safe knowing everyone on the flight must wear a mask correctly at all times.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I will only book a flight if the middle seat is blocked off.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Have you flown since March 2020?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Did you fly on American Airlines?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No



Briefly explain your experience flying on American during the pandemic.

Why did you choose the airline with which you flew?



The following questions are demographic questions.

What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other, please specify:
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Please indicate the racial or ethnic group(s) with which you identify. Check all that apply.

- ☐ African American/Black
- ☐ Asian American/Asian
- ☐ Hispanic/Latinx
- ☐ Middle Eastern/North African
- ☐ Native American/Alaskan Native
- ☐ Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
- ☐ White
- ☐ Preferred response not listed, please specify:

Where do you currently live?

How old are you?

- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ 65-74
- ☐ 75+

- If “no” for “Have you ever flown on an airplane?” then skip to the end.
- If “no” for “Have you ever flown on American Airlines?” then skip to “The following questions ask about your experience with American Airlines.
- If “no” for “Have you flown since March 2020?” then skip to demographic questions.
- If “no” for “Did you fly American Airlines?” then skip to “Why did you choose the airline with which you flew?”

APPENDIX B - FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE

Welcome
(2 Minutes)

Good afternoon and thank you for coming to the American Airline's discussion group. My name is Sarah, and I will be the moderator today.

Today we will be talking about the airline industry's response to COVID-19, specifically American Airlines' response to COVID-19. This focus group is intended to help American Airlines understand the wants, needs and perceptions of not only its response to the COVID-19 pandemic but also its communication about its response.

I will ask you a few questions, which I ask one person answers at a time. Please respect each other's opinions. Please say your first name and last initial before every answer.

I will also record this discussion; however, it will be kept confidential. Your names will not be disclosed in the study.

This focus group will last about an hour, but if you would like to stop at any point, let me know. Do any of you have any questions?

Ice Breaker
(3 minutes)

[START RECORDER NOW]

I would like to start by having each of you say your name and say one thing you've been doing during the pandemic to keep you entertained.

Group Discussion
Topic 1
(15 Minutes)

What safety measures do you look for in an Airline?

Probes:

Raise your hand if you've flown during the pandemic.

Which safety measure is a dealbreaker for you?

Which safety measures do you wish you saw on all airplanes?

Thumbs up if you feel that middle seats must be blocked off on an airplane.

Group Discussion
Topic 2
(15 minutes)

Now, let's talk about American Airlines specifically.

Do you think American Airlines is doing enough to prevent the spread of COVID-19 on its flights?

Probes:

What do you know American Airlines does to keep its customers safe?

What do you think American Airlines could do better?

What experience or news has stuck out to you about American Airlines' COVID-19 response?

Raise your hand if you would fly on American Airlines during the pandemic.

What are your thoughts on the new testing measures on select American Airlines flights?

Group Discussion
Topic 3
(15 minutes)

Now, we'll talk about American Airlines' communication surrounding the pandemic.

What kind of communication from American Airlines have you seen or heard from or about American Airlines?

Probes:

Put a thumbs up if you

- Have seen an American Airlines email about the pandemic*
- Have seen information from American Airlines social media about the pandemic*
- Have seen information on the American Airlines website or app about the pandemic*
- Have seen positive information about American Airlines in the news.*

Do you think the communication is too much? Too little?

What type of communication would you like to see?

Final Thoughts
(7 minutes)

To end our focus group, I would like to ask one final question.

What advice would you give American Airlines on anything pertaining to the COVID-19 or COVID-19 communication?

Review and Wrap
Up
(3 minutes)

[I will summarize the discussion]

Did I correctly summarize your comments in today's discussion? Is there anything I got wrong?

Thank you for participating in this focus group today. Your discussion will be helpful in our overall research. Please check your emails today for the \$25 Visa gift card. Thank you!

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