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A Content Analysis of airline mission statements: Changing trends and contemporary components

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Abstract: Mission statements have an important bearing on business and in the airline industry mission statements inform and connect international and heterogeneous stakeholders. While significant research was conducted on airline mission statements over a decade ago, the industry has since transformed with the rise of new global carriers and changing consumer trends. The purpose of this study is to examine current airline mission statements to update findings from previous studies. The analysis evaluates mission statement content of 79 passenger airlines from around the world. The outcomes reveal products/services, customers and location/markets as the three most prevalent components. Additionally, it appears mentions of safety in mission statements have become increasingly crucial as airlines seek to ensure trust and confidence among consumers. The results and conclusions build on a framework of ten mission statement components and make comparisons between airlines and regions of the world.

Keywords: Mission Statements; Airlines; Stakeholders; Content analysis

1. Introduction

Mission statements have an important bearing on the airline industry, and are used to inform and connect stakeholders. Additionally, mission statements give meaning to an organization and emphasize company qualities and values to attract customers (David, 2012). Mission statements outline future goals, directions, existence, and responsibility (Eden & Hyndman, 2001), and scholars argue that mission statements are integral to a company's intentions to deliver service quality (King et al., 2014). Furthermore, businesses implement strategies and plans aligned with these statements to ensure consumers are aware of a company's intentions and business practices (David et al., 2014; Powers, 2012; Wang & Lin, 2011) so consumers can better measure the effectiveness business operations (Braun et al., 2012).

Previous studies on mission statements in the business and management literature have analyzed the content of company statements within given industries operating in different countries (Baetz & Bart, 1996; Verma, 2010; King et al., 2014; Bartkus et al., 2004; Wang & Lin, 2011). In this sense, the broader tourism industry differs little from other sectors. The hospitality industry uses such statements to reinforce a company's brand, and clarify a business's values and provision of services, to inform their guests and motivate staff (e.g., Nankervis & Debra, 1995)

In the airline industry, mission statements can distinguish one company from its competitors although each airline offers a service of transporting passengers. Given this, the airline industry represents a unique industry for assessing mission statements because of (a) the similarity of the core service and (b) the different points of emphasis that airlines highlight in their mission statements. Equally, it has been claimed that from business, marketing and management perspectives, these mission statements have an important bearing on airline operations as they seek to connect international and heterogeneous stakeholders (Kemp and

Dwyer, 2003). Moreover, mission statements help airlines differentiate from competitor statements as a way to express unique corporate personalities (Kemp and Dwyer, 2003). Since 2003, the industry has rapidly transformed with the rise of new global carriers and changing consumer trends (especially Emirates, Etihad and Qatar Airways). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine recent airline mission statements to update past findings and to assess in what ways they have changed, and implicitly to evaluate broader trends, company strategies, immediate future plans and longer-term visions for growth inasmuch as these are revealed in these documents (Wang and Lin, 2011).

A content analysis method is therefore used in this paper to examine the airlines' statements and focuses on 79 passenger airlines to understand how industry missions have changed in the past decade, building in part on the previous study conducted by Kemp and Dwyer (2003). The next section will discuss the literature on the purpose and components of mission statements before assessing those specific to the airline industry. The research method (content analysis) will be outlined before indicating the results and a broader discussion of the findings. The concluding section summarizes the findings and offers some insight into managerial implications. Such research is vital to update because of changes and increased competitiveness in the passenger airline industry. Today, companies are pressured to respond to changing consumer demands and safety standards; mission statements put forward a framework showcasing how company intends to deliver quality to its passengers.

2. Mission Statements and the Airline Industry

Research assessing mission statements has seen increased attention among businesses, corporations, and industries, resulting in sustained interest among academics over several years (Baetz & Bart, 1996; Williams, 2008; King et al., 2010; Yozgat & Karatas, 2011; Rajasekar, 2013). To businesses, mission statements communicate a company's intentions to inform relevant stakeholders, such as customers, employees, suppliers, investors and community about

the organization, what they offer, their goals/aspirations, the delivery of service quality and value, and how they meet consumer demands while additionally providing insight into the future plans and directions of the company (Ackoff, 1987; Bartkus et al., 2004; Eden & Hyndman, 2001; Genç, 2012; Jyoti & Sharma, 2012; King et al., 2014; Wang & Lin, 2011). Regardless of whether a mission statement is a short sentence or a long paragraph, it helps the organization to differentiate itself from competitors (Bart, 1997; Kemp & Dwyer, 2002). Moreover, the statement expresses the personality and corporate character of an organization (Chun & Davies, 2001). Kemp and Dwyer (2003, p. 636-637) further argued: “a mission statement needs to be specific enough to instill purpose in—but broad enough to effectively reconcile differences among—the organization’s diverse stakeholders.” For instance, a non-profit organization will focus on public benefits in its mission statement in order to create social value (Wang & Lin, 2011). Regardless of the service delivered, management teams will refer to their mission statement when making decisions (Moin et al., 2012). Furthermore, mission statements help create a sense of belonging and promote company culture by inspiring employees to act in accordance with the organization’s values (Lin, 2012). This has been an important component of corporate culture for decades (Klemme et al., 1991), and today there is more emphasis on both employee and customer satisfaction (David et al., 2014; Jyoti & Sharma, 2012).

Building on this overview of the purpose of mission statements, Kemp and Dwyer (2003, p. 636) state “a good mission statement describes an organization’s purpose, products and services, markets, philosophy, and basic technology.” Likewise, David et al. (2014, p. 98) state: “mission statements should be informative, inspiring, enduring, concise, clear, and conducive to both employees and customers forming an emotional bond with the firm.” Campbell and Yeung (1991a, 1991b) suggested four components that need to be included in mission statements: namely 1) purpose; 2) strategy; 3) behavior and 4) company values. Similarly,

Pearce and David (1987) focused on how companies define mission statements by analyzing particular content based on eight pre-determined components; however, David (1989, 2007) has since modified this approach to suggest nine components. According to David (2007), the nine components are: 1) customers/clients; 2) products or services; 3) location; 4) technology; 5) concern for survival; 6) philosophy; 7) self-concept; 8) concern for public image; and 9) concern for employees. Relevant to this study, safety has also been perceived as an important component in airline mission statements because transport safety is at the forefront of airline management and company image, especially in the advent of aircraft failure (Genç, 2012, Lin, 2012).

Bringing the above perspectives together, Kotler and Keller (2012) suggest a strong mission statement should have the following attributes: focus on specific company goals; stress major policies and company values; define major competitive dimensions of the company and its long-term vision. What is more, mission statements should be concise, meaningful and memorable (see Kotler & Keller 2012) to clearly identify a company's intention and commitments to their stakeholders (Bartkus et al., 2004). As noted by Ackoff (1997), and further emphasized by Bartkus et al. (2004), well-structured mission statements can help an organization meet the demands of the different stakeholders' groups: customers, employees, investors, suppliers, and communities. Moreover, as recommended by Chun and Davies (2001), mission statements allow stakeholders to know 'who' a company is by permitting it to express a corporate character or personality linked to business sense, identity, and strategy. Generally, a mission statement also includes information outlining how a company will better achieve and sustain growth and serve the interests of shareholders (Terrill & Middlebrooks, 2003; Wang & Lin, 2011).

Verma (2010) reinforces the above-mentioned points by suggesting that a well-crafted mission statement can influence how people perceive a company's intentions, thereby

influencing people through the implementation of particular philosophical or ethical aspects. While numerous scholars have assessed mission statements, most are more concerned with their content and how companies communicate business objectives and markets to consumers (Campbell & Yeung, 1991a; Chun & Davies, 2001; David, 1989; Leuthesser & Kohli, 1997; Lin, 2012; Terrill & Middlebrooks, 2003; Wang & Lin, 2011). Castro and Lohmann (2014) discuss how mission statements offer a vision into current and future operations that can help emphasize a company's brand or corporate character (Chun and Davies, 2001).

In terms of general business insight, mission statements are also guidelines for non-routine decision-making and may be perceived as a control mechanism to ensure everything and everyone is on the right track and working towards shared objectives (Bartkus et al., 2004). Similarly, Lin (2012) places emphasis on creating a sense of belonging, or company culture, inspiring employees to contribute to the values of the company. Finally, Baetz and Bart (1996) noted that stakeholders would be more satisfied if they can provide their input when companies outline mission statements state their voices and interests are integral to the company.

The global aviation industry has become one of the more competitive service industries, especially given the rapid expansion of low cost carriers (Detzen et al., 2012; Pels, 2009; Yetiskul & Kanafani, 2010). Therefore, it is crucial for each airline to create a strong impression about who they are, what they promise their customers and the benefits of flying with them in such a competitive business environment. The aviation industry inherently differs from many other service industries because passengers, employees, and investors are heterogeneous, and internationally, the sector transcends cultural business boundaries. Hence the potential importance of mission statements in not only notifying passengers but also in establishing a corporate culture among current and prospective employees. Similarly, from an organizational and internal operations perspective, mission statements inform employees and investors about the benefits an airline provides with the aim of achieving a designated standard of service

quality. By reading and understanding mission statements, stakeholders not only gain insight about a particular airline's core values and benefits, but they are also informed of options based on aspirations and commitments, all of which help distinguish an airline from its competitors.

3. Method: content analysis

Qualitative content analyses attempt to seek meanings to determine broader themes that gain a greater understanding of what is being communicated to consumers about a destination or a company such as an airline (Ellingson, 2011). Thus, content analysis in tourism studies is about evaluating communication, insight, and perspectives put forward (see Ateljevic & Doorne 2002; Hammett 2014; Hennessey et al. 2010; Lai & Vinh 2013; Wise & Mulec 2012; Wise & Mulec 2015). According to Hammett (2014), content creates an image, and mission statements are important sources of information that help consumers identify with a particular company and helps them shape an awareness of a company to decide if they wish to purchase a product or travel with a specific airline (David et al. 2014; Kemp & Dwyer 2003).

Content analyses have been used in a number of studies in business research (e.g., David et al. 2014; Harwood and Garry 2003; King et al., 2014) including transport management (Halpern & Regmi, 2013; Kemp & Dwyer, 2003). A content analysis was used in this study to evaluate and understand the mission statements provided by each airline. As previously indicated the purpose of this study is to examine the components included in recent airline mission statements, thereby updating findings from previous research conducted by Kemp and Dwyer (2003) over a decade ago. There are 240 airlines from 118 countries registered with the International Air Transport Association (IATA), which carries 84% of global air traffic including both passenger and cargo airlines (IATA, 2014). The mission statements of 79 passenger airlines, including both full service carriers and low cost carriers located in the five regions as identified by IATA (namely the Americas, Europe, Africa and Middle East, China

and North Asia, and the Asia Pacific) were selected for analysis (see Table 1). It must be noted that while most companies have a mission statement, not every mission statement is complete and adequate. The criteria for selecting the 79 global passenger airlines were as follows. Foremost, the airline had to be registered with the International Air Transport Association (IATA), and mission statements needed to be sufficiently comprehensive to be analyzed. This meant dismissing those statements deemed vague, or which did not provide insight into the company's purpose. Additionally, in some cases, airlines registered with IATA did not include their mission statement on their website, and because these mission states were not accessible, these airlines were also excluded.

[Table 1 about here]

Ellingson (2011) suggests linking content to existing frameworks to determine what is being communicated. The questions that directed the research are indicated in Table 2 and were informed by the above literature review. A deductive approach was selected because it permits researchers to update previous studies (Julien, 2008, King et al., 2014; Patton, 2002; Gold & Grotti, 2013) and thereby create new frameworks based upon prior studies (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Specific to this paper, by adopting the guidelines identified by Pearce and David (1989), updated by David (2007), Kemp and Dwyer (2003), and Lin (2012), the ten components outlined in Table 2, therefore, represent the coding scheme used to evaluate the mission statements. The table also provides definitions for each mission statement component, and keywords or phrases noted in each airline's mission statement were used as criteria to determine if a particular element existed in the statement.

[Table 2 about here]

The mission statements of the selected airlines were acquired from official airline websites. Two coders were involved in the study. Kotler and Keller (2012) and David et al. (2014) argue, when interpreting mission statements, that criteria such as company goals, policies, company

vision, being clear and concise, and being inspirational in nature, are considered necessary, and must be interpreted based on links across different components of interpretation, as this coding does. After reading and identifying keywords from the mission statement of one airline, each of the coders independently analyzed and recorded the components of the selected mission statements. The number '1' was assigned to the component if present and '0' was assigned to the component if absent from the mission statement. For example, KLM Royal Dutch included seven mission statement components and there were five components in China Airlines' mission statement (see Table 3). Following the evaluation, the coders then compared interpretations. In order to test the inter-rater agreement of the content analysis, Cohen's Kappa was calculated using SPSS. Cohen's Kappa is used to measure inter-rater agreements of categorical (qualitative) items (Landis & Koch, 1977). The average inter-rater agreement based on Cohen's Kappa was 0.75, which implied substantial agreement between the coders. In terms of regions, the inter-rater agreement of the coders on the Americas, Europe, Africa and the Middle East, and the Asia Pacific were 0.71, 0.76, 0.70 and 0.72, respectively. In China and North Asia region, the coders achieved a high rate of agreement (0.87 Cohen's K value).

[Table 3 about here]

4. Results, data analysis, and discussion

This section will present first the descriptive results, which is then followed by a discussion that considers the main components found in this updated study. Since five main components were consistently observed, the authors interpreted these based on changing business trends, consumer demand patterns, and regional differences.

4.1. Descriptive results

As shown in Table 4, products/services, customers, and location/markets emerged as the common features found in the assessed airline mission statements. Out of 79 airlines, 63 (79.7%) explicitly stated the products/services they provided to passengers. Of these, 52 (65.8%)

highlighted customers in their mission statement, and 46 airlines (58.2%) indicated specific locations and/or markets. In contrast, only 4 (5.1%) mentioned technology in the mission statement. Safety features were noted by 27 in their mission statement (34.2%). Figure 1 presents all ten components organized by each designated IATA region.

[Table 4 about here]

[Figure 1 about here]

Table 5 shows percentages of components that exist in airline mission statements. When compared to Kemp and Dwyer's (2003), very different results emerge. In 2003, most companies emphasized self-concept (88.0%), followed by statements about their philosophy (80.0%) and then a customer focus (72.0%). In contrast, more recently airlines are focusing more on their products/services (79.7%), customers (68.8%) and location/markets (58.2%). As the current results show, airlines today pay less attention to self-concept and general statements of company philosophy. As compared to 2003, the concern for employees saw an increased focus, and this aspect has seen an overall percentage increase in frequencies from 22.0% (2003) to 41.8%. The component with the least attention was technology, decreasing from 22.0% to 5.1%. An explanation for this points to the ubiquity of technology as being essential to contemporary business practices, whereas, in 2003, an emphasis on technology perhaps attempted to suggest a competitive advantage in the market.

[Table 5 about here]

To address differences across regions, (shown in Table 6), five different components consistently ranked among the top three by region. Airlines in the Americas region were those most concerned with customers (73.3%) in their mission statement, followed by products/services (66.7%) and concern for employees (53.3%). For their part, European airlines mentioned customers the least (60.9%), but products/services and location/markets were frequently stated in the statements, with both achieving a score of 78.3%. Because each country

in Europe has a flagship airline (i.e., France: Air France; Germany: Lufthansa; Great Britain: British Airways), it is not surprising that location/markets were commonly observed given national significance and geography. In Africa and the Middle East region only two airlines did not refer to products/services. There has been rapid growth in the Middle East carriers such as Emirates, Etihad, and Qatar Airways highlight their service quality in their marketing (see O'Connell, 2011). In Africa and the Middle East customers are ranked second in mission statements (68.8%), followed by safety (50.0%). In China and North Asia 81.8% of the airlines mentioned products/services, 72.7% focused on safety, and 63.6% noted concern for employees. Lastly, Asia Pacific airlines were most concerned with products/services (85.7%), followed by customers and location/markets (both with 71.4%).

[Table 6 about here]

4.2. Discussion of content and changing trends

The existing literature suggests that an increased emphasis on products/services and customers, especially when linked to perceived values, experience, and branding, will positively contribute to consumer satisfaction (Brakus, et al., 2009; Iglesias et al., 2011; Şahin et al., 2011, .Nam et al., 2011). The outcomes of this study reveal products/services, customers and location/markets are the top three global features included in airline mission statements. The results highlight a number of differences when compared to Kemp and Dwyer's (2003) earlier study, and suggest a greater emphasis on the customer and, for the legacy airlines, the quality of service being provided. LCC carriers' emphasis value for money and also adherence to schedules.

Such claims are independently assessed by services such as Skytrax that rank airlines by perceived service quality based on customer feedback. Of the leading airlines, six are from the Asia Pacific. Given this, it is understandable why airlines from Asia Pacific region often highlight their products/services in the mission statement. Products/services focus on what is

offered or sold by the airline. Other examples include “Jetstar’s mission is to offer all day, every day low fares to enable more people to fly to more places, more often”, or Ethiopian Airlines who note: “to become the leading Aviation group in Africa by providing safe and reliable passenger and cargo air transport, Aviation Training, Flight Catering, MRO and Ground Services”. In such instances, one can find a specificity related to tangible service components.

On the other hand, mission statements that focus on customer tend to reinforce the less tangible and more experiential components of service. For example, “To maintain profitability, efficiency and excellence in aviation services to meet the expectations of our customers” (AeroMexico), “We seek to earn customer loyalty by consistently exceeding our customers’ expectations” (American Airlines), “The customer is the centre of our attention: we provide reliable services for passengers” (Lufthansa) and “providing heart-to-heart service to our customers” (China Eastern Airlines). Austrian repeatedly places emphasis on customers: “our customers expect technical reliability, punctuality, and an orientation to service [...] ‘We carry Austria in our hearts and ever more customers into the world,’ we do everything to ensure our customers look forward to their next flight.” Such statements sustain the customer focus and encourage policies designed not only to attract more potential passengers but also maintain long lasting relationships with their passengers. This is based on the desire to deliver a high value product to ensure consumer satisfaction and is consistent with the notion that meeting consumer demands requires providing services that match the particular customer needs of a given target market(s) (David et al., 2014).

From the findings, it can be seen that the airlines from the Americas often mentioned their customers the most in their mission statements, when compared to airlines from other regions (Figure 1). The reason for this lies outside the evidence generated by this study, but in passing it can be noted that comments on social media about the quality of service being provided by the US airlines indicate some dissatisfaction on the part of US passengers with legacy airlines

(Baker, 2013). Monthly reports issued by the US Department of Transport also show higher levels of complaint about US carriers than foreign airlines, although of course the latter provide very few domestic flights in the USA (see, for example, <https://www.transportation.gov/individuals/aviation-consumer-protection/may-2018-air-travel-consumer-report>), Equally Skytrax in 2017 did not list any US based airlines among the top 30 globally (<http://www.airlinequality.com/info/top-100-airlines-2017/>).

Unlike the Americas, the airlines from Europe are more likely to concentrate on the location/markets. Europe (as a continent) consists of many countries, which results in numerous airlines from different countries operating in a competitive multi-country environment. European airlines thus tend to identify a specific geographic scope in order to distinguish themselves from competitors.

To extend the markets served, airlines join alliances, or strategic partnerships, and use techniques such as code sharing, and even franchising, for particular routes (Morrish & Hamilton, 2002). Such collaborations allow airlines to improve their effectiveness globally so they can better concentrate on serving their familiar/original market or location. Emphasizing location helps the airline to convey the spirit of its origin (country) to the passengers, for example: “to ensure Jordan will be proud of us because we represent the best of Jordanian hospitality and culture” (The Royal Jordanian Airline) and “To be an ambassador and guide for Malta” (Air Malta). Other airlines are focused on increased connectedness, for instance, Croatia Airlines “has connected Croatian cities with the most important European centres” and Alitalia is “Proud to show the best of our country” (Italy).

Safety is, of course, paramount in this industry and the airline business is highly vulnerable to accidents and mishaps as indicated by the unfortunate disappearance of Malaysian flight 370. Consequently, many airlines feel it necessary to emphasize safety, either in terms of aircraft safety or even security measures during transactions. Safety could be one

factor that contributes to brand trust and the overall reputation of an airline. According to the statistics published by Boeing Commercial Airplanes (2013), the numbers of fatal accidents among the accidents of worldwide commercial jet fleet recorded, were reduced dramatically, from 533 cases (happened before 2003) to 75 cases (post-2003 to 2012), and 2017 saw the lowest number of aircraft failure with no loss of life in commercial passenger flights (IATA, 2017). Some airlines have placed safety at the forefront. For instance, Thai Airways stated: “In 5 decades, safety and security in flight operations have been the Company’s main concern as its number one mission.” Air Macau seeks “to achieve the highest standards of safety and reliability,” and both EVA Airways and Cathay Pacific clearly stated, “safety is the core value of the airline.” Other examples include: “To be a safe and reliable airline by selecting and operating new, modern aircraft” (Arik Air, Nigeria), “Our aim is to provide a safe, reliable and seamless flying experience” (Oman Air), “We take safety and punctuality as the primary principles of our aviation services” (Hainan Airlines) and “As an international airline, we will provide the greatest flight service for each one of our customers in the safest way” (Asiana Airlines).

There are various potential reasons that explain why some airlines from Africa and the Middle East, as well as China and North Asia, emphasize safety in their mission statements. Some airlines from African nations receive lower scores in ICAO aviation safety audits, and Africa is the least safe continent for flying according to the Aviation Safety Network (2014). As such, this interpretation suggests, safety was stressed with the intention of boosting passenger confidence.

As noted previously, when comparing the current results with those of 2003 (that emphasized self-concept and philosophy), the outcomes of the study imply that airlines have changed their core values from being self-centered (in terms of the business) to being customer oriented to cater to changing demand. Nonetheless, an appeal to self-concept remains, albeit

linked to passenger comfort and well-being. For example, Caribbean Airlines mission statement includes: “To raise customer satisfaction by delivering our promises in providing the highest standards of service and reliability marked by genuine Caribbean hospitality [...] delivered by passionate people”. Again, Singapore Airlines stated that they focus on “providing air transportation services of the highest service quality” and Emirates seek “to be the world’s most admired air services provider”. As a regional discount airline, Ryanair takes a different approach in how they distinguish themselves: “Ryanair’s objective is to firmly establish itself as Europe’s leading low-fares scheduled passenger airline through continued improvements and expanded offerings of its low-fares service”. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that self-concept is associated with consumer satisfaction, especially as consumer satisfaction is important in brand marketing and shaping brand image (Genç, 2012; Nam et al, 2011).

5. Concluding remarks

Based on the findings of this content analysis, airlines from different regions tend to emphasize different components in their mission statements. For instance, airlines from USA emphasized customers while European airlines highlighted location/market in their mission statements. This might be due to the business environment or culture, or distinct regional differences because of the numerous national carriers in close proximity in the case of Europe. There is implicit evidence that management teams broadly assess the contemporary business environment when determining their mission statements—because of regional variations, perceptions, catering to consumer demands, meeting standards and ensuring quality and safety. Moreover, companies are adopting more consumer oriented approaches to increase service quality to satisfy passengers. Awareness of industry change is crucial in any business. To grow in an increasingly competitive industry, successful businesses need to adapt their product and delivery standards to ‘keep up’ with the pace of change. The academic literature tends to the conclusion that that mission statements are based on internal perspectives of an organization,

where management teams meet to assess/examine the relationship between their mission statement and performances. This study, by focusing on mission statement content across the airline industry and comparing it with the work of Kemp and Dyer (2003), indicates that some change in management thinking has occurred since their study. Notably there is less emphasis on introspection and a switch to a more evident customer orientation, and greater emphasis on service quality.

While mission statements are not the most critical factor that determines an organization's success, they are thought to be useful in assisting short-term management decision-making and the framing of long-term goals (Eden & Hyndman, 2001; Genç, 2012; Jyoti & Sharma, 2012; King et al., 2014; Wang & Lin, 2011). Overall, the content included in mission statements differ by regions to reflect culture, business environment, and company policies. Future research could involve a closer examination of cross-regional differences, and more frequent monitoring of airline mission statements as these do offer an insight into changing business practices in the airline industry. Equally, comparative reports would aid management to assess how their own companies compare with their competitors.

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Table 1

Airlines mission statements analyzed in this study by identified IATA region

Region	Americas	Europe	Africa and Middle East	China and North Asia	Asia Pacific
Airline	Air Canada	Alitalia	Air Arabia	Air Macau	Air New Zealand
	Alaska Airlines	Adria Airways	Airlink	AirChina	Air Asia
	Hawaiian Airlines	Air Malta	Air Mauritius	Cathay Pacific	Air Tahiti
	Aerolineas Argentinas	Austrian	ALS (Kenya)	China Airlines	All Nippon Airways
	Aeromexico	British Airways	Air Seychelles	China Eastern Airlines	Asiana Airlines
	American Airlines	Brussels Airlines	Arik Air	EVA Air	Garuda
	Caribbean Airlines	Bulgaria air	Egyptair	Dragonair	Japan Airlines
	United Airlines	Blue Panaroma Italy	Ethihad Airways	Hainan Airlines	Jetstar
	Cubana	Croatia Airlines	Emirates	Mongolian Airlines	Korean Air
	Delta Air Lines	Estonian Air	Ethiopian Airlines	TransAsia Airways	Malaysia Airlines
	Lan Argentina	Finnair	Jazeera Airways-Kuwait	Xiamen Airlines	Qantas
	Volaris-Mexico	KLM Royal Dutch	Kuwait Airways		Singapore Airlines
	AVIANCA	Lufthansa	Oman Air		SriLankan
	Southwest Airlines	Luxair	The Royal Jordanian Airline		Thai Airways International
	Surinam Airways	Montenegro Airlines	Qatar Airways		
		Ryanair	South African Airways		
		SAS			
		SATA Air Acores			
		SWISS			
		TAP Portugal			
		TAROM S.A			
		Turkish Airlines			
		Virgin Atlantic			

Table 2

Components of Mission Statement

Component	Definition
Customer	Target customers of the airline
Products/ Services	Major products or services sold by the airline
Location/ Markets	Competing area, or main competing market of the airline
Technology	Airline's concern about technology
Concern for survival, growth and profitability	Airline's commitment to economic/company growth objectives
Philosophy	Basic beliefs, values, aspirations, and philosophical priorities of the airline
Self-concept	Competitive advantages, unique selling points and image of the airline
Concern for public image	Concern for social, community and environmental issues
Concern for employees	Concern for and appreciation of employees
Safety	Emphasis on safety of passengers and employees

Source: Pearce and David (1987), Kemp and Dwyer (2003) and Lin (2012)

Table 3

The component and mission statement of sample airlines

Sample airline	Component	Mission statement
KLM Royal Dutch	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Customer 2. Products/Services, Location/Markets 3. Concern for survival, growth and profitability 4. Self-concept 5. Concern for public image 6. Concern for employees 7. Safety philosophy 	With Air France, KLM is offering reliability and a healthy dose of Dutch pragmatism, 32,000 KLM employees ⁵ work to provide innovative products ² for our customers ¹ and a safe ⁷ , efficient, service-oriented operation with a proactive focus on sustainability. KLM strives to achieve profitable growth ³ that contributes to both its own corporate aims and to economic and social development ⁵ .
China Airlines	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Customer 2. Products/Services 3. Technology 4. Philosophy 5. Safety philosophy 	CAL's objective is to become a first-rate world-class airline by providing the best service ² , upgrading the quality of hardware and software ³ , achieving first-rate flight safety ⁵ with watertight inspection and maintenance, and providing first-rate pricing with affordable value enabling passengers ¹ to feel they have received value back from the price of their tickets ⁴ .

Table 4

Number of each components existed in mission statement of 79 airlines

Component	Number	Percentage
Customers	52	68.8%
Products/Services	63	79.7%
Location/Markets	46	58.2%
Technology	4	5.1%
Concern for survival, growth and profitability	28	35.4%
Philosophy	23	29.1%
Self-concept	19	24.1%
Concern for public image	16	20.3%
Concern for employees	33	41.8%
Safety	27	34.2%

Table 5

Comparison on the percentage of airline mission statements' components

Component	2003		2013	
	Percentage	Ranking	Percentage	Ranking
Customers	72.0%	3	68.8%	2
Products/ Services	32.0%	6	79.7%	1
Location/ Markets	42.0%	5	58.2%	3
Technology	22.0%	8	5.1%	10
Concern for survival, growth and profitability	48.0%	4	35.4%	5
Philosophy	80.0%	2	29.1%	7
Self-concept	88.0%	1	24.1%	8
Concern for public image	30.0%	7	20.3%	9
Concern for employees	22.0%	8	41.8%	4
Safety	-	-	34.2%	6

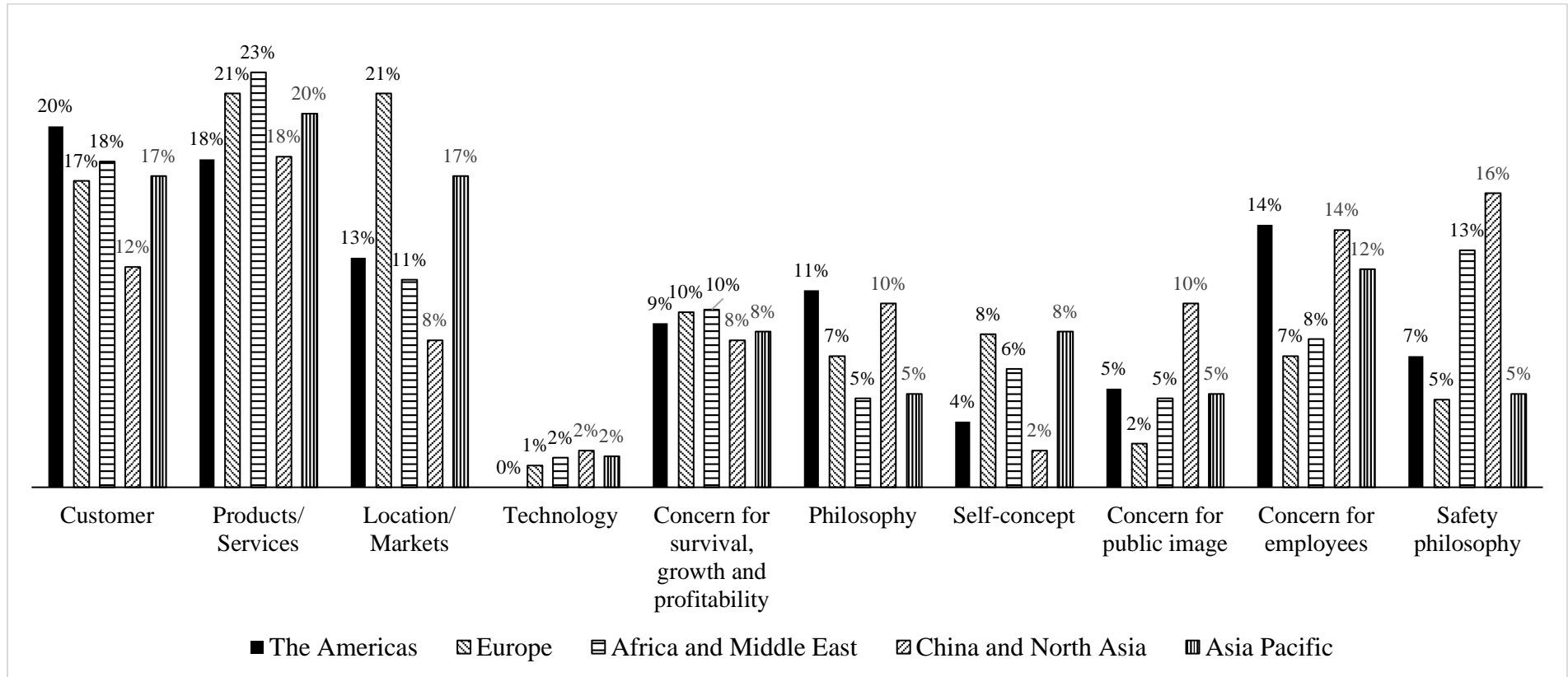
Table 6

Number of each components existed in mission statement of different region

Region	Component	Ranking 1	Component	Ranking 2	Component	Ranking 3
Americas	Customers	11/15 (73.3%)	Products/Services	10/15 (66.7%)	Concern for employees	08/15 (53.3%)
Europe	Products/Services	18/23 (78.3%)			Customers	14/23 (60.9%)
	Location/Markets	18/23 (78.3%)				
Africa and Middle East	Products/Services	14/16 (87.5%)	Customers	11/16 (68.8%)	Safety	08/16 (50.0%)
China and North Asia	Products/Services	09/11 (81.8%)	Safety	08/11 (72.7%)	Concern for employees	07/11 (63.6%)
Asia Pacific	Products/Services	12/14 (85.7%)	Customers	10/14 (71.4%)		
			Location/Markets	10/14 (71.4%)		

Figure 1

Each assessed mission statement component organized by IATA region to show comparisons across each region



Appendix. List of mission statement component with 79 airlines

Region	Airline	Customer	Products/ Services	Location/ Markets	Technology	Concern for survival, growth and profitability	Philosophy	Self- concept	Concern for public image	Concern for employees	Safety philosophy
Americas	Air Canada		Y	Y							
	Alaska Airlines		Y	Y			Y	Y	Y	Y	
	Hawaiian Airlines	Y		Y		Y	Y			Y	
	Aerolineas Argentinas			Y		Y					
	Aeromexico	Y	Y			Y	Y			Y	Y
	American Airlines	Y				Y			Y	Y	Y
	Caribbean Airlines	Y	Y	Y			Y				Y
	United Airlines	Y								Y	
	Cubana	Y	Y	Y				Y			Y
	Delta Air Lines	Y		Y			Y		Y	Y	
	Lan Argentina	Y	Y							Y	
	Volaris-Mexico		Y								
	AVIANCA	Y	Y					Y			
	Southwest Airlines	Y	Y							Y	
	Surinam Airways	Y	Y				Y				
Europe	Alitalia			Y							
	Adria Airways	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y				Y	
	Air Malta			Y							
	Austrian	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y		Y	
	British Airways			Y			Y				
	Brussels Airlines	Y	Y	Y				Y			Y
	Bulgaria air	Y	Y	Y				Y			
	Blue Panaroma Italy		Y					Y			
	Croatia Airlines		Y	Y		Y					
	Estonian Air	Y	Y	Y				Y			Y

	Finnair		Y	Y								
	KLM Royal Dutch	Y	Y	Y		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	
	Lufthansa	Y	Y	Y		Y			Y	Y		
	Luxair	Y	Y	Y					Y		Y	
	Montenegro Airlines											
	Ryanair	Y	Y	Y		Y		Y				
	SAS	Y		Y					Y			
	SATA Air Acores	Y	Y	Y								
	SWISS (Switzerland)		Y	Y								
	TAP Portugal	Y	Y			Y				Y		
	TAROM S.A	Y	Y						Y			
	Turkish Airlines		Y	Y								
	Virgin Atlantic	Y	Y			Y				Y		
Africa and Middle East	Air Arabia		Y						Y		Y	
	Airlink	Y	Y	Y		Y					Y	
	Air Mauritius	Y		Y		Y			Y	Y		
	ALS (Kenya)		Y								Y	
	Air Seychelles	Y	Y									
	Arik Air		Y		Y					Y	Y	
	Egyptair	Y	Y						Y		Y	
	Ethihad Airways	Y	Y	Y					Y	Y		
	Emirates		Y						Y			
	Ethiopian Airlines	Y	Y	Y					Y	Y		
	Jazeera Airways-Kuwait	Y	Y	Y		Y			Y			
	Kuwait Airways	Y	Y								Y	
	Oman Air	Y	Y	Y		Y		Y				Y
	The Royal Jordanian Airline	Y	Y	Y		Y					Y	Y
	Qatar Airways											

	South African Airways	Y	Y			Y				
China and North Asia	Air Macau		Y			Y				Y
	AirChina	Y	Y			Y	Y	Y	Y	
	Cathay Pacific		Y	Y		Y		Y	Y	Y
	China Airlines	Y	Y		Y		Y			Y
	China Eastern Airlines	Y						Y	Y	
	EVA Air	Y	Y					Y	Y	Y
	Dragonair	Y		Y			Y		Y	Y
	Hainan Airlines		Y	Y			Y		Y	Y
	Mongolian Airlines		Y	Y						
	TransAsia Airways		Y				Y			Y
	Xiamen Airlines	Y	Y			Y			Y	Y
Asia Pacific	Air New Zealand	Y		Y		Y		Y		Y
	Air Asia	Y	Y	Y	Y			Y		Y
	Air Tahiti	Y	Y	Y		Y			Y	
	All Nippon Airways			Y			Y			Y
	Asiana Airlines	Y	Y						Y	Y
	Garuda	Y	Y	Y		Y		Y		
	Japan Airlines	Y	Y				Y		Y	Y
	Jetstar	Y	Y					Y		
	Korean Air		Y	Y				Y		
	Malaysia Airlines	Y	Y							Y
	Qantas		Y	Y						
	Singapore Airlines		Y	Y		Y				Y
	SriLankan	Y	Y	Y		Y			Y	Y
	Thai Airways International	Y	Y	Y			Y			