

10 best airlines of 2019

(according to passengers)

✈ Overview of the airline industry

✈ Best low-cost airlines of 2019

✈ Airlines with the best customer service

✈ Airlines with the best in-flight meals

✈ Airlines with the best cabin crew

✈ Airlines with the best PR

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About this study

Every business is struggling to get as much data as possible on their customers and competitors, and the aviation industry is no exception. How much are your customers enjoying the in-flight experience, and how would they rate it against a competitor's? Is your customer service efficient enough, and how does it impact customer loyalty? What do the passengers think about your menu? How would they rate your cabin crew? What is the general public sentiment towards your brand, and how does it compare to the industry average?

This report is an attempt to help airlines answer these questions, and, with any luck, demonstrate how useful social listening data can be, perhaps in more ways than you expect: from informing product decisions and performing competitive analysis to measuring the success of marketing campaigns and new initiatives.

For this report, we selected 52 of the world's leading airlines based on several online rankings (including rankings of the best airlines by [Skytrax](#), [Wikipedia](#), and [TripAdvisor](#)). We've been tracking social media and news mentions of the 52 airlines in Awario, a social listening tool, over the last 3 months (May 15th through August 15th, 2019). We ended up with 2,860,554 mentions which we analyzed from different perspectives to determine which companies in the airline industry are the most popular with consumers.



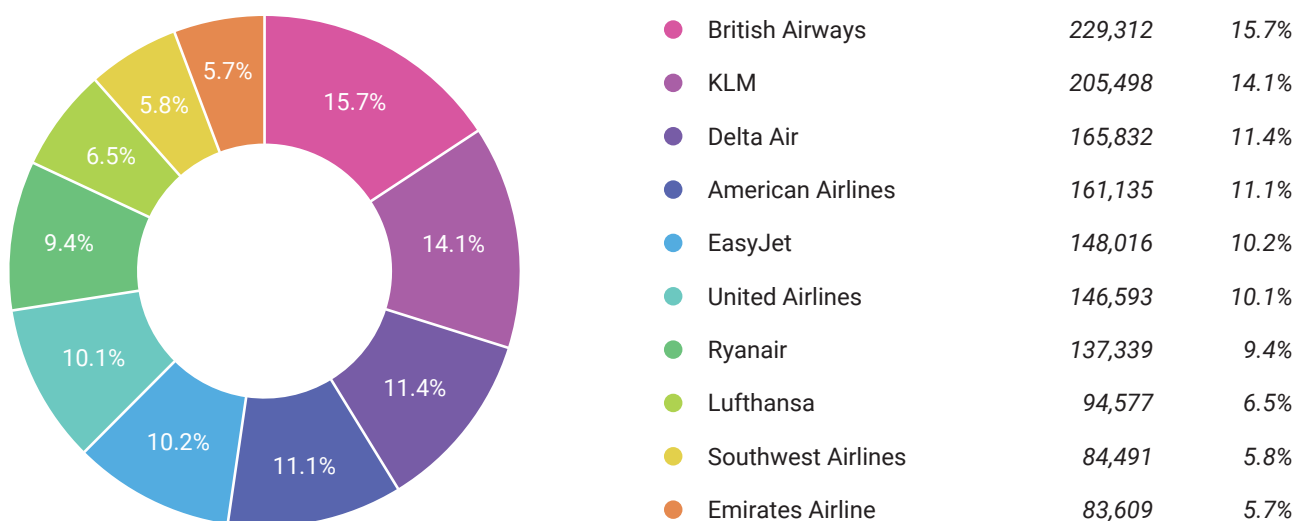
The airline industry: an overview

Before we get to the actual rankings, let's take a look at the data as a whole. What can we learn from the mentions of all the airlines, combined?

Share of Voice on social media

Let's start with an obvious question: which airlines are dominating the conversation on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Reddit)?

For any company in the aviation industry, measuring Share of Voice is a great starting point. It lets you see exactly where your brand falls on the spectrum and identify the most discussed companies in the industry (so you can delve into those conversations and explore what's working the best for your competition).



Social media Share of Voice for the 10 most discussed airlines

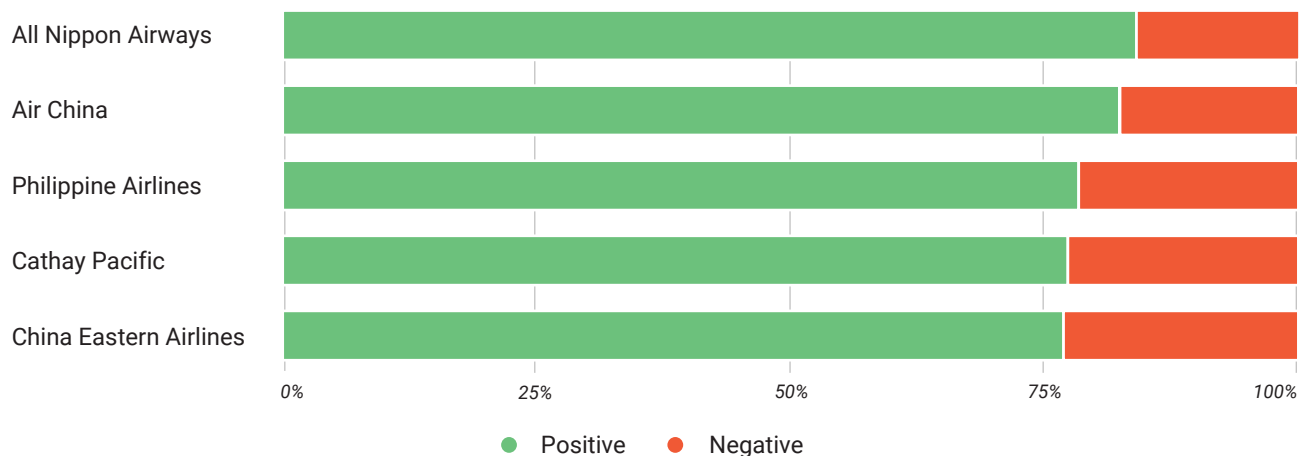
Across our data set, British Airways, KLM, and Delta are the three airlines with the biggest social media Share of Voice. You may have noticed that 7 out of the 10 most talked about companies are traditional airlines - only 3 low-cost airlines (EasyJet, Ryanair, and Southwest) made the list.

Sentiment

There are a little more positive mentions across the data set than negative ones: 57.31% vs. 42.69%. This can be a good benchmark for airlines who are measuring the sentiment around their brand, letting them see how it compares to the industry average.



But benchmarks shouldn't be confused with goals: aiming for the average won't get you very far. Here are the top 5 airlines in terms of sentiment, headed by All Nippon, an impressive 84.31% of whose mentions are positive.

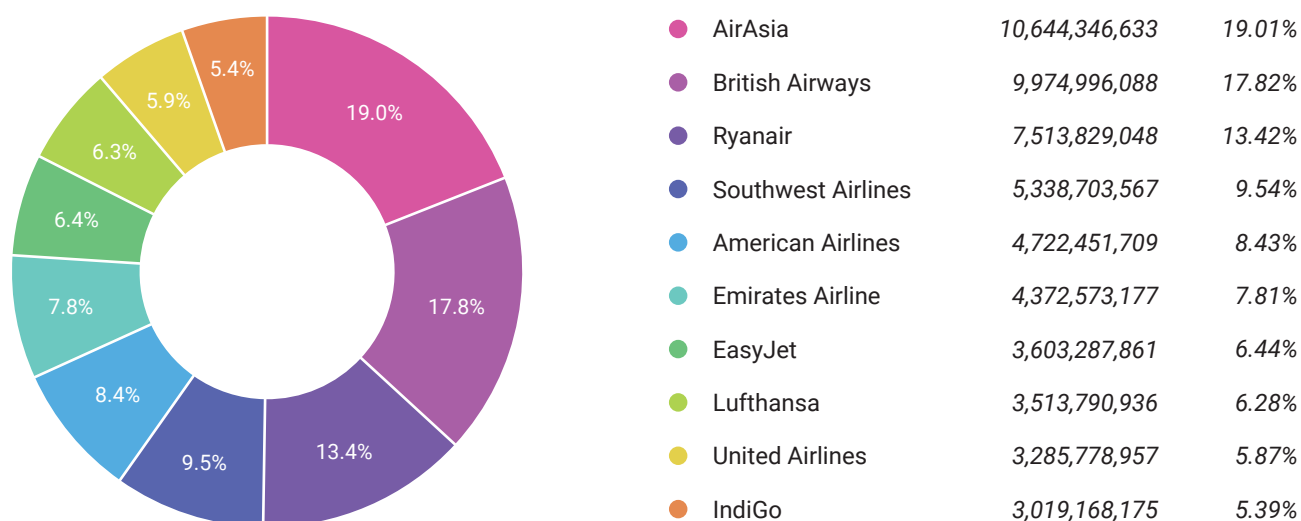


Best airlines by net sentiment

Reach on social media

Let's take a look at another crucial social listening metric, reach, or an estimated number of impressions a company's mentions have received. You may expect this distribution to be fairly proportional to Share of Voice, but it isn't: although 7 of the top 10 most discussed airlines made it to the top 10 brands ranked by reach, they appear in a completely different order.

The 3 newcomers are low-cost airlines: AirAsia, EasyJet, and IndiGo. AirAsia occupies the #1 spot: it even outranked British Airways, despite the fact that the latter has generated about 3x as many mentions. This tells us that, on average, people who mention AirAsia have about 3 times the number of followers compared to those who mention BA. Looks like someone has been doing some influencer marketing!



Social media reach distribution for the 10 airlines with the highest reach

Topics

Finally, let's take a quick look at the key themes within our data set. For the word cloud below, we analyzed all the social media mentions in English to reveal the most frequently mentioned words. We've deliberately filtered out the airlines' names to find out what passengers tend to talk about - besides the airlines themselves.



The word cloud above includes plenty of words that are pretty obvious: flights, airports, and planes. However, if you look closer, you might stumble upon a few exciting discoveries. For example, passengers are talking a lot about Boeing and Airbus (particularly the A380 and A350 airliners). Airline staff and cabin crew are among the most discussed topics. Perhaps less surprisingly, delays and cancellations also get their fair share of mentions.

Best airlines of 2019 (according to passengers)

Methodology

To come up with this ranking, we analyzed the traditional airlines in our data set (37 airlines out of 52) and measured every company's performance against 3 crucial social listening metrics:

1) Number of mentions, or the volume of conversations mentioning each airline across Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Reddit, and YouTube.

Why? The volume of mentions is a basic indicator of how well-known a brand is, especially when compared to other brands in the industry.

2) Sentiment. For every airline, we calculated net sentiment - the difference between the percentage of the company's share of positive mentions and negative ones (excluding neutral mentions all together).

$$\text{Net Sentiment} = \frac{\% \text{ Positive Mentions} - \% \text{ Negative Mentions}}{\% \text{ Positive Mentions} + \% \text{ Negative Mentions}}$$

Why? A lot of mentions isn't always a good thing. If social media users generate a lot of buzz by complaining about a brand's customer service, this doesn't make the company popular with consumers. Our goal was to produce a ranking of airlines that aren't just talked about a lot, but are also loved by their customers.

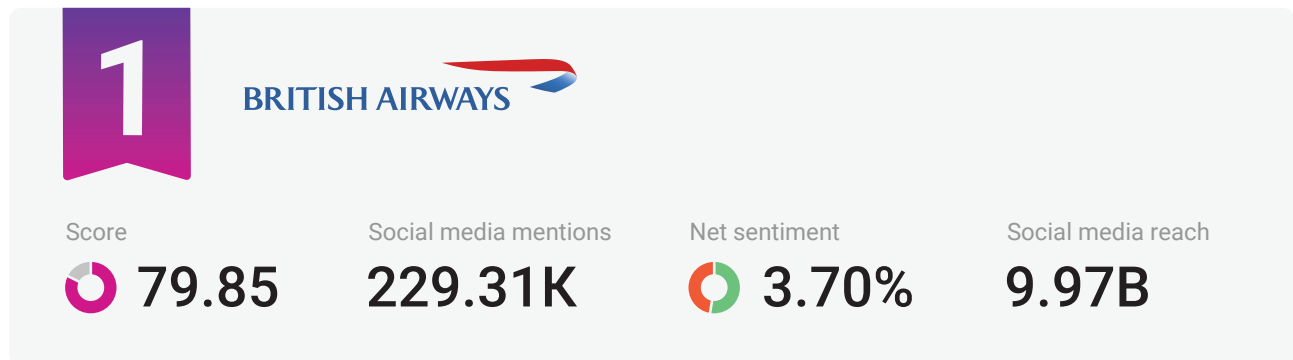
3) Reach - Awario's estimate of the number of impressions the mentions of each brand received (based on the authors' follower counts and the posts' engagement).

Why? While we focused on the number of mentions to measure the volume of conversations around each brand, with reach we're measuring brand awareness, or the impact of those conversations. Reach is important to measure because not all mentions are created equal. For example, if you compare Delta Air and American Airlines, you can see that even though more people *talk* about Delta on social media, American wins in terms of the number of people who *hear* about them - simply because social media users who mention the brand tend to have a bigger audience.

For every metric, we normalized the data and assigned a score of 100 to the airline with the best result, and a score of 0 to the one with the lowest value. Finally, we added up the scores and divided the final value by 3 to come up with an overall social listening score.






$$\text{Social Listening Score} = \frac{\text{Mention score} + \text{Sentiment score} + \text{Reach score}}{3}$$

World's top 10 airlines



This summer hasn't been plain sailing for British Airways. But while the news about the company's IT meltdown, a plane filling up with smoke, and a substantial fine over a data breach did spread on social media, they didn't shake the company's reputation - BA's net sentiment remains positive. The brand doesn't just win in the overall ranking; it came first both in terms of reach and volume of social media conversations. And it's no surprise: it's hard not to win customers' hearts with an odd mention from the likes of Conan O'Brien and Jeremy Clarkson.

Top influencers:

Conan O'Brien @teamcoco 	<i>"In London, on our way to Ghana and hanging out in the British Airways children's lounge. We were quickly asked to leave. #ConanGhana #conanwithoutborders #travel #teamcoco #ghana #africa"</i>
George Takei @georgetakei 	<i>"Following in their fathers' footsteps. 🇬🇧✈️ British Airways Celebrates Father's Day Giving Dads A Chance To Work Alongside Their Children"</i>
Imran Khan @imrankhanofficial 	<i>"Chief Commercial Officer British Airways Andrew Brem, British High Commissioner H.E Thomas Drew & officials from British Airways called on Prime Minister Imran Khan at office as British Airways resumed its flight operations to Pakistan after over a decade earlier today."</i>
Jeremy Clarkson @jeremyclarkson 	<i>"Azad. @British_Airways check-in at London City. Thankyou. You should get a pay rise immediately for being so kind."</i>
Piers Morgan @piersmorgan 	<i>"Superb service on BA282 from LA-LON. Thanks to Carol & all the @British_Airways cabin crew team, and to the fabulous Nicole Branch for saving me after my flight was cancelled. Please keep your Special Services teams in the US, @alex_cruz - they're irreplaceable."</i>


American Airlines


Score

 **54.23**

Social media mentions

161.14K

Net sentiment

 **10.09%**

Social media reach

4.72B

American Airlines' social media presence is very balanced: there haven't been viral news stories about it this summer, neither positive nor negative. But even though the company didn't get a 100 score in any of the 3 parts of our assessment, its performance has been very strong in all 3: it scored 69.9 for the volume of mentions, 45.5 for its sentiment, and 47.3 for reach. An overall score of 54.23 puts American Airlines in second place.

Top influencers:

50cent

@50cent



"American air lines terminal is TYCOON ready POWER SEASON 6 Boom
[#lecheminduroi](#)[#bransoncognac](#)[#TheKing](#)🍷"

Antoine Griezmann

@antogriezmann



📍 **American Airlines** Arena X miamiheat."

Jonas Brothers

@JonasBrothers



"Next round of [#HappinessBeginsTour](#) pre-sales start now for **American Airlines**
[#AAAdvantage](#) Mastercard credit card holders on the East Coast! Tickets will
 become available at 10am local venue time in each city 🔥"

Mandy Moore

@mandymoorem



"I was today years old when I finally visited my dad at work. He's been a captain at [@americanair](#) since before I was born (he just celebrated his 40 year anniversary at the company- go dad!) and today was my first time ever flying with him! Also my stepmom (an AA flight attendant) was working our flight as well so I got some face time with both them on their breaks (and took the requisite cockpit shots before we left London). Also, the landing was 👍 dad. BEST TRIP HOME EVER. [#captaindon](#)
[#prouddaughter](#)"

Busy Philipps

@busyphilips



"I was honored to be able to chat with this dream team at the Baby2Baby National Network Summit Presented by [@AmericanAir](#) and discuss ways we can all work together to help underserved families across the country. This amazing group led by Baby2Baby is serving hundreds of thousands of children in poverty in over 35 cities across the country every year, and they provide millions of basic essentials to children devastated by disasters. ❤️❤️❤️"



Score



50.87

Social media mentions

205.50K

Net sentiment



4.74%

Social media reach

2.26B

KLM came second in terms of its social media Share of Voice, just 14,000 mentions behind British Airways. But because American beat KLM both in terms of sentiment and reach, the company comes in third in the overall ranking. One story that really took off with social media users - and that is partly responsible for KLM's 3rd place in this ranking - was the airline's plans to build a futuristic V-shaped jet with in-wing seating that will use 20% less fuel.

Top influencers:

Milind Deora

@milinddeora



"How cool is this! My favourite guitar, the @gibsonguitar Flying V inspires @KLM & @tudelft to jointly design a lighter & more aerodynamic V-shaped aeroplane. The "Flying V" aeroplane will seat passengers in its wings to make it more fuel efficient"

Ken Rutkowski

@kenradio



"This fuel-efficient **KLM**'s Flying-V airplane that seats 314 passengers in its wings. It uses 20% less fuel than the Airbus A350, today's most advanced aircraft."

Adventuregirl

@adventuregirl



"#KLM reveal new fuel-efficient 'Flying-V' plane which uses 20 per cent less fuel +carries 314 passengers in dual-wing cabins #wow #plane #travel 🤔"

Headhunterz

@headhunterz



"You can lose our bags but you can't touch our swag. @klm"

Tom Coronel

@tom.coronel



"Bye 🙋 bye all! It's holiday time to Bali 🇮🇩👍 quality time with the 🧑🏠 family 🙌🏠 flying ofcourse with **KLM** Royal Dutch Airlines our dutch 🇮🇩🇳 pride now time for 🇮🇩🇳
🍹🍹🍹🍹🍹🍹 for 2 weeks.
Amsterdam Airport Schiphol ➡ Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia

4

DELTA

Score



50.50

Social media mentions

165.83K

Net sentiment



23.18%

Social media reach

2.19B

5

UNITED

Score



48.24

Social media mentions

146.59K

Net sentiment



13.16%

Social media reach

3.29B

6

Emirates

Score



48.08

Social media mentions

83.61K

Net sentiment



30.78%

Social media reach

4.37B

7

Philippine Airlines

Score



44.86

Social media mentions

38.40K

Net sentiment



57.31%

Social media reach

2.94B

8

CATHAY PACIFIC

Score



42.17

Social media mentions

30.92K

Net sentiment



55.01%

Social media reach

2.68B

9

Lufthansa

Score



40.90

Social media mentions

94.58K

Net sentiment



11.72%

Social media reach

3.51B

10

QATAR
AIRWAYS القطرية

Score



40.44

Social media mentions

78.98K

Net sentiment



31.66%

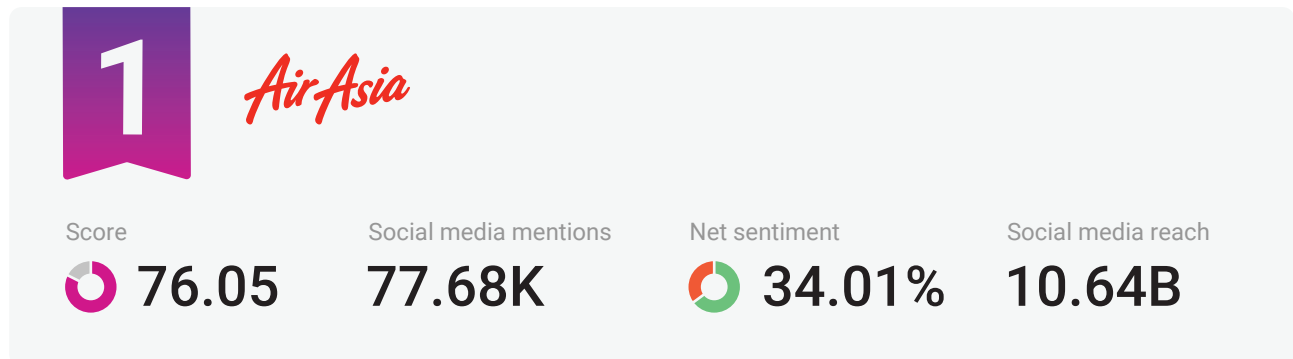
Social media reach

2.21B

Other awards




Best low-cost airlines

For this ranking, we used the same metrics and methodology as for the ranking of traditional airlines above. We analyzed the social media mentions of 15 low-cost airlines, calculated a social listening score for each company, and ranked them according to that score to produce a list of top 5 brands.



You may not have expected to see AirAsia take the #1 spot. In terms of Share of Voice, the company has only generated about half of the mentions that EasyJet has; its sentiment is impressive, but it isn't as great as Peach's. Why is the company listed first on our list then? It's all due to its clever work with Malaysian influencers: with a reach of 10.64 billion (over 3 billion ahead of Ryanair, the company with a second-best reach score), AirAsia is the absolute winner in terms of the number of impressions of its social media mentions.

Top influencers:

Diljit Dosanjh @diljिटdosanjh 	<i>"The wait is over! Shout out! Hear out! Sing your heart out! Har Dil Bole Udippa is out now. #Udippa #AirAsia #BigFm @airasia_indian @bigfmindia"</i>
Mira Filzah @mfmirafilzah 	<i>"Remember Jared from "Cinta Bertemu di Jeju" on YouTube @airasia? Yessssss he's the guy in the video! And he's also the Director for "Hajat Ali" a mini series for uniqlomyofficial! An easygoing person and easy to work with! Thank you jaredle3 and thegrimfilm team! 🌟👏 #uniqlomyofficial #winterclothing #MiraFilzah"</i>
Ayda Jebat @aydajebat 	<i>"A flight that i will forever remember! A perfect added booster when getting a concert up in the air a joyful one. One thing came in mind, enjoying the mid air view and bringing the sounds of music and laughter to everyone on board AirAsia where music connects everyone. Wohooo! 🥰"</i>

Chesca Kramer

@chekakramer



"It doesn't matter what month or what place, when it comes to spending quality time with my family, we take it! Especially when we know that @airasiafilipino's #RedFlashSale is happening this week! I saw that booking period is only till July 21, 2019, so have to book now at www.airasia.com #AirAsiaPH"

Bella Dally

@belladally



"If you have an upcoming **AirAsia** flight. Do use promo code (ABCD) to get RM100 off! Valid till 3 July 2019 only so hurry! #AirAsiaDutyFree #AirAsia"

2

RYANAIR

Score



67.73

Social media mentions

137.34K

Net sentiment



5.84%

Social media reach

7.51B

3

Southwest

Score



56.26

Social media mentions

84.49K

Net sentiment



23.30%

Social media reach

5.34B

4

easyJet

Score



46.48

Social media mentions

148.02K

Net sentiment



-20.22%

Social media reach

3.60B

5

peach

Score



34.66

Social media mentions

9.37K

Net sentiment



51.21%

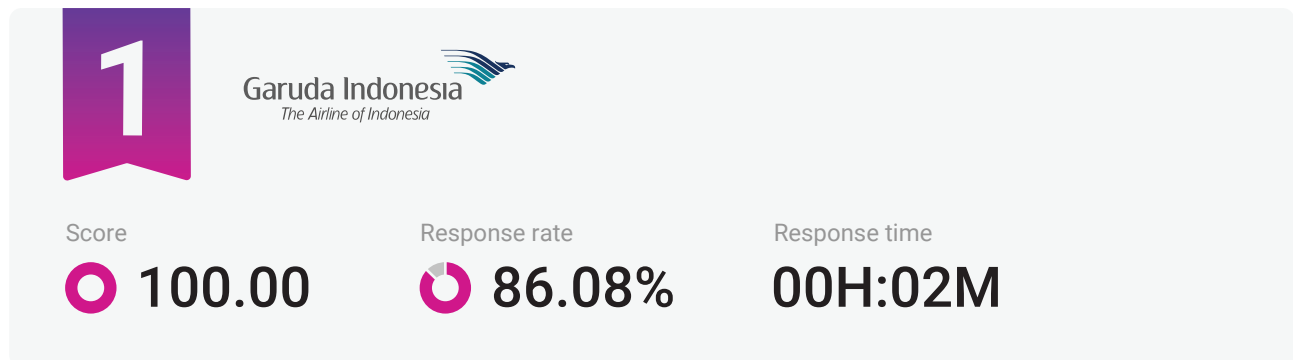
Social media reach

129.77M

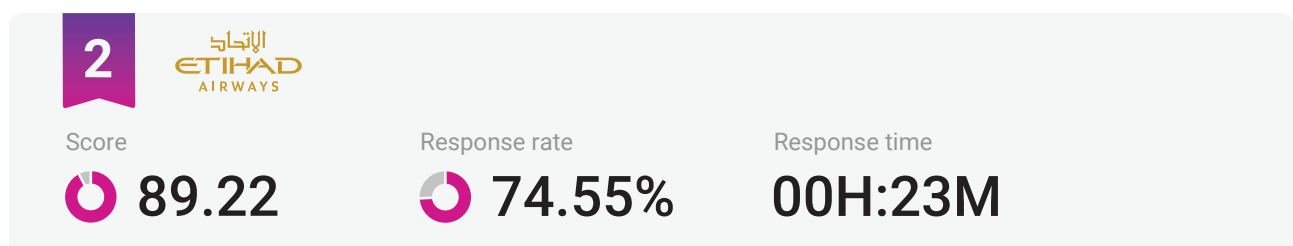
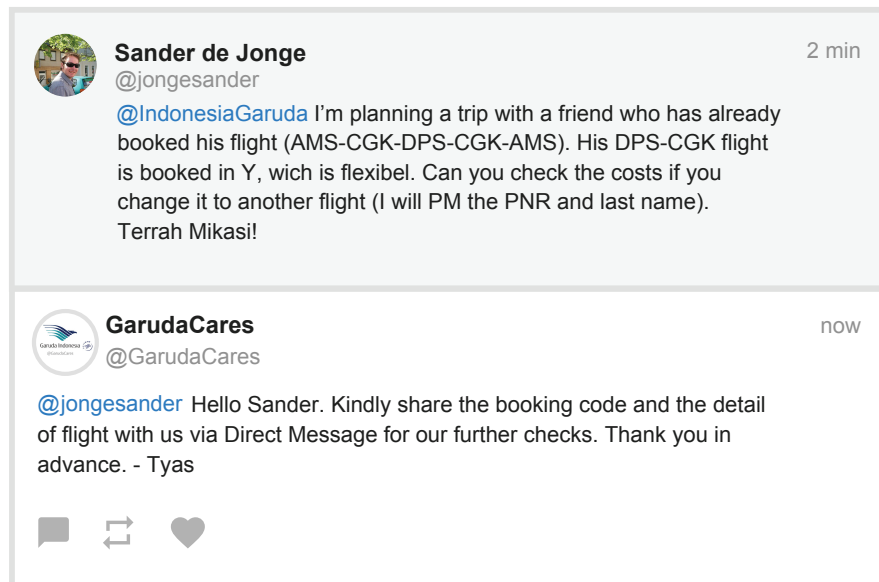
Airlines with the best customer service

Increasingly, social media is becoming *the* place for customer service. Did you know that while 80% of companies believe they deliver "superior" customer service online, only 8% of customers think these same companies actually do? A few more fun statistics: on social media, most people expect brands to reply within four hours, and 30% of people will go to a competitor if a brand doesn't respond.

With this in mind, we wanted to see how airlines handle customer service on social media. We analyzed the 52 airlines' official Twitter accounts (or a dedicated customer care account when there was one) and measured the response rate and response time for every brand. We filtered out companies with a response rate of less than 30%, and, finally, calculated a customer care score for every airline by dividing the sum of the two scores by two.



What Garuda is doing in terms of online customer service is truly amazing: they came in first both in terms of response rate and response time. With an average reply taking only 2 minutes, we were skeptical before we looked at the actual data: is it possible for a human agent to provide a meaningful reply so quickly? Turns out it is: Garuda's replies to customers' tweets are both helpful and unbelievably fast.



3

Jetstar

Score

89.14

Response rate

80.50%

Response time

06H:22M

4

AirAsia

Score

78.99

Response rate

64.55%

Response time

01H:39M

5

QATAR
AIRWAYS
الخطوط القطرية

Score

77.53

Response rate

72.81%

Response time

11H:26M

Airlines with the best staff & cabin crew

For this part of the analysis, we wanted to look at the brands' social media mentions that discussed airline staff and cabin crew. We narrowed the data down to English mentions, and further filtered it so that it only includes mentions with words like "staff", "crew", "flight attendant", etc. Lastly, we excluded companies who had under 200 mentions of their cabin crew from the list.

Just like with every other ranking, we calculated a score for each parameter we were measuring (in this case, the percentage of mentions of airline staff within the total number of the airline's mentions and net sentiment), and ended up with a final score by dividing the sum of the two values by two.

1

CATHAY PACIFIC

Score

62.58

Mentions of cabin crew

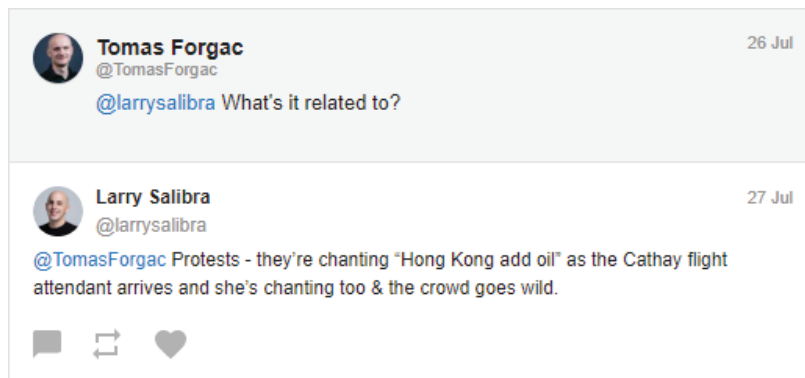
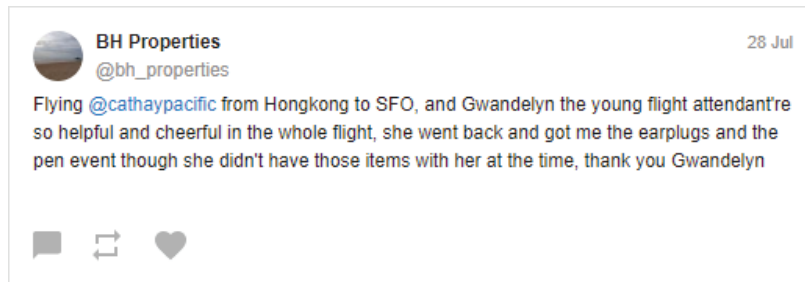
1.17K

Net sentiment

33.02%

Cathay Pacific is the winner of our ranking. Apart from general positive reviews of its crew, the company's staff got bombarded with compliments on social media for supporting Hong Kong's pro-democracy

movement at the end of July.



2

RYANAIR

Score



60.26

Mentions of cabin crew

5.27K

Net sentiment



1.63%

3

ANA

Score



58.06

Mentions of cabin crew

206

Net sentiment



84.95%

4

Southwest

Score



54.24

Mentions of cabin crew

3.85K

Net sentiment



24.29%

5

AIR NEW ZEALAND

Score



43.85

Mentions of cabin crew

675

Net sentiment

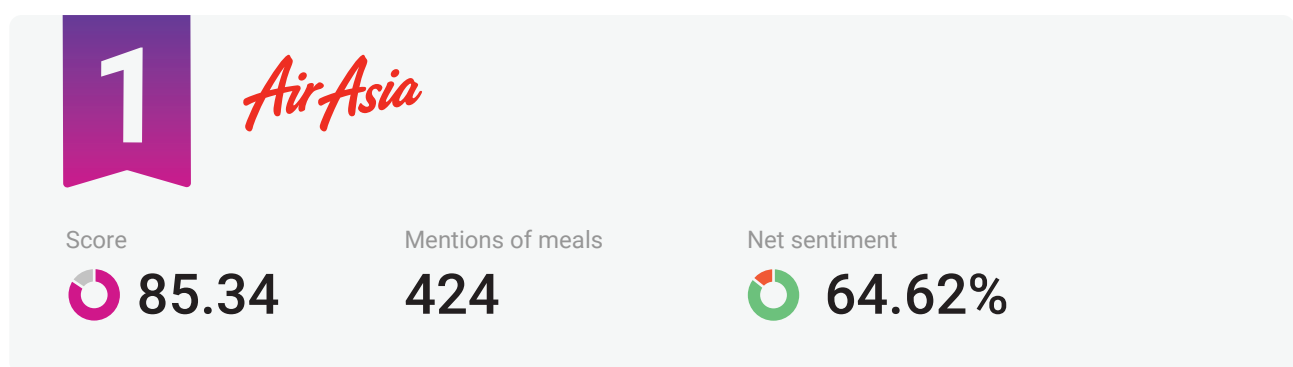


10.52%

Airlines with the best in-flight meals

For this ranking, we looked at the airlines' social media mentions that discussed their food and drink. We only included those English mentions into the analysis that contained words like "food", "meal", "menu", etc. Companies with under 200 mentions of their in-flight meals weren't included in the ranking.

For scoring, we measured each company's percentage of mentions of in-flight meals and the net sentiment of those mentions. Based on the value of each of the two parameters, airlines were assigned a score (from 0 to 100). Finally, we divided the sum of the two values by two, which resulted in the final score.



You probably didn't expect a low-cost airline to win this rating. How can an airline that doesn't offer free meals get better reviews of its food than traditional airlines with their fancy lunches? Turns out it can. The sentiment of AirAsia's food reviews is overwhelmingly positive - the best out of all 52 airlines. And yes, the company's INSPI(RED) Inflight Meal initiative, launched to help end HIV/AIDS, is partly responsible for the win - it was a massive success on social media.



What To Eat PH 21 Jul
 9-C Villa Isabel Townhomes, Makati, 1300, Philippines
 Eat (RED), Save Lives: Know what AirAsia's INSPi(RED) Burger is!



AirAsia unveils (RED) inflight meal
 AirAsia Group Head of Brand Rudy Khaw and (RED) Chef Ambassador Hong Thaimée launching the new INSPi(RED) Burger flanked by cabin crew BANGKOK, 3 July 2019 – AirAsia and Santan have teamed up...
 WHATTOEATPH.COM

2

 **Philippine Airlines**


Score

 **80.62**

Mentions of meals

421

Net sentiment

 **62.95%**

3

 **SINGAPORE AIRLINES**

Score

 **62.53**

Mentions of meals

318

Net sentiment

 **28.30%**

4

 **norwegian**

Score

 **61.88**

Mentions of meals

352

Net sentiment

 **31.25%**

5

TURKISH AIRLINES

Score



51.29

Mentions of meals

258

Net sentiment



40.70%

Airlines with the best PR

For this ranking, we analyzed mentions of every airline on our list across news websites and blogs. Just like we did with social media mentions, we ranked the companies by their overall score which is based, in equal parts, on 3 metrics: the brand's number of mentions, sentiment, and reach.

1

American Airlines



Score



90.38

News mentions

15.07K

Net sentiment



30.03%

Reach

885.63M

American Airlines is a clear winner of this ranking, with maximum scores for both the volume and reach of its news mentions. Its sentiment score is also impressive: 71.13 out of 100. Whatever you're doing PR-wise, American, it's totally working.

Top stories:

Forbes

Ranked: The Best Hotel and Airline Rewards Programs Of 2019

BUSINESS
INSIDER

Boeing 737 Max: American Airlines CEO predicts delays over 'politics'



Stocks making the biggest moves premarket: 3M, Comcast, Raytheon, Southwest, Tesla & more

YAHOO!

The Best New Flight Routes This Summer

The New York Times

What Is a Reward Point Worth? It Depends

2

UNITED 

Score



74.88

News mentions

14.02K

Net sentiment



24.18%

Reach

574.81M

3

 DELTA

Score



66.09

News mentions

9.78K

Net sentiment



35.55%

Reach

518.69M

4

BRITISH AIRWAYS 

Score



63.50

News mentions

14.58K

Net sentiment



25.56%

Reach

574.81M

5

Southwest 

Score



53.44

News mentions

5.88K

Net sentiment



27.96%

Reach

464.44M

P.S.: Social listening metrics and business KPIs

It's often hard to tie marketing data to business metrics. If your social media following has grown two-fold, how does it translate into tangible benefits? If your PR team is doing a great job and your brand's news coverage is growing exponentially, how exactly does that impact your revenue?

A lot of executives struggle with similar questions. How do you decide if something that *seems* to be the right thing to do *actually is* the right thing to do, with no direct way to measure the impact of that decision?

Here's an interesting observation that may give you some food for thought. Our team was excited to see if the social listening metrics in this report correlated in any way with business metrics for the companies we analyzed. So we took a list of airlines from [Forbes' 2019 ranking](#) of the world's largest public companies (by revenue), picked the brands that overlapped with the list of airlines in our analysis, and calculated the correlation between the companies' revenue and their social listening performance to see if there was a relationship between the two.

The result was surprising: the correlation between the companies' revenue and their social listening scores turned out to be very strong: **+0.84**.

This finding is definitely a great basis for a study of its own. Can a reliable estimate of a competitor's revenue be drawn from social listening data? Can an improvement in a key social listening metric be a predictor of the business' growth? In theory, the idea makes sense: whatever a company does, product- or marketing-wise, generates a response from customers; the magnitude and sentiment of that response is likely to affect whether or not consumers are willing to buy from the company and how much they are willing to spend.

While we're working on exploring this hypothesis, you may want to experiment with social data yourself and see if our findings are true for your market. [Start a free Awario trial](#), and see if social listening data can help your answer questions about your business and competitors.



About Awario

Awario is a social listening and analytics platform trusted by over 5,000 companies worldwide. The tool gives brands access to meaningful insights on their customers, industry, and competitors through real-time social media and web monitoring. Awario monitors social media networks, news websites, blogs, and the rest of the web in real time, crawling over 13 billion pages daily to ensure you never miss important conversations that spark out online.

START FREE AWARIO TRIAL

Get in touch

Sales inquiries: sales@awario.com

Press inquiries: pr@awario.com