



Isentia TH Trendspotting Report: The Airlines Industry in Thailand



The Take-Off

This study covers all discussions relating to Airlines Industry in Bangkok, Thailand.

In terms of social media channels, this report covers data from Facebook and Twitter. Data from **August 1-30, 2021**, was harvested via *Isentia's social media listening dashboard Workbench*, while *Pulsar* and *Google Trends* were used as tools to support the data.

This report aims to provide the airlines industry with an understanding of the public's perception and conversation drivers, specifically, the common topics discussed regarding the airlines industry and which companies are gaining public attention.



Are we there yet?

A quick look into the conversation on the airlines industry of Thailand in social media



Leaving on a jet plane, or maybe not.

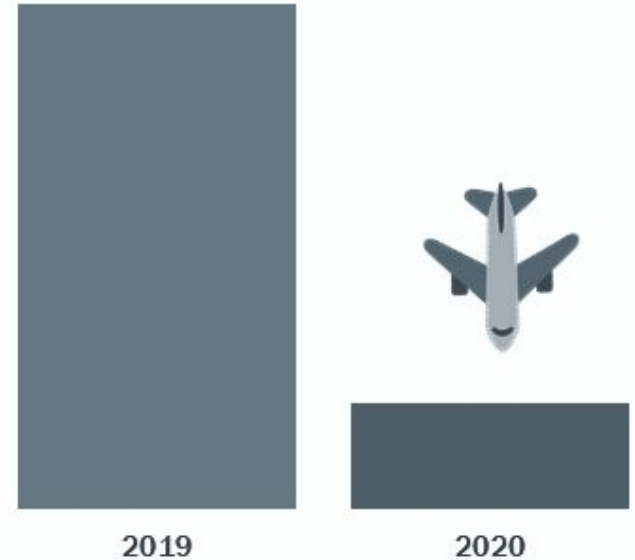
A look into the airlines industry

It was evident that the pandemic affected the airlines industry the most and not in a good way – from job loss to struggling to keep revenues high.

Before Covid-19, the airlines sector contributes around US \$63.7 B or roughly 15.5% of Thailand's GDP, including the revenue coming from tourist flying by air. According to the Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (CAAT), domestic and international flights in Thailand dropped by 79% during the first quarter of 2021.

But with more people getting vaccinated, airline companies are hoping for a better outlook in the next months, starting with the gradual resumption of domestic flight operation.

Thailand Air Passenger Traffic
2019 vs. 2020

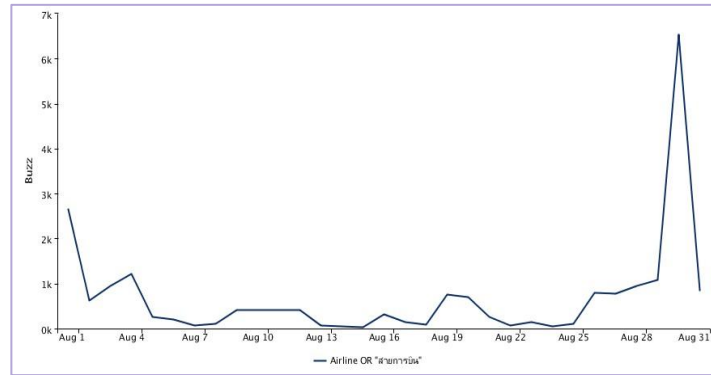
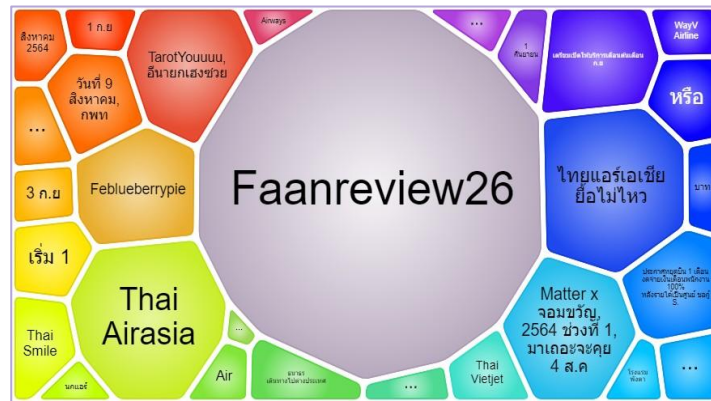


What's brewing, Nok Air?

The peak in buzz on August 30 was driven by a tweet from a netizen criticizing Nok Air for its strategy to becoming a 'Premium Airline'. It was reported that Nok Air is revitalizing its business with a major makeover including the purchase of new aircrafts and diversifying its travel options.

But what caught the netizen's attention was the co-branding with famous coffee chain Starbucks, where premium customers will be served with free coffee.

Netizens reacted negatively to this announcement, as they felt that Nok Air should focus on improving its service and not just by giving away free coffee to call it 'premium'.



Data is retrieved from ISENTIA's Workbench

The Reopening: But Is It Safe?

After a long lockdown, the Government recently announced its plan to gradually open Thailand for tourists in phases, starting with Phuket in the first phase and Bangkok in the second phase. By mid-October, the government plans to open up to 21 key destination for tourists.

Along with the government's announcement to reopen Thailand for tourists, airline companies have announced new flight plans from September onwards. Vietjet, AirAsia, THAI Smile, and Nok Air have all posted on their respective social media pages that it will reopen for domestic flights, with each one having their flight cancellation, refund, and rebooking policies.

However, a few shared concern about the resumption of leisure travel due to the slow vaccination rollout, especially in the rural areas. Netizens asserted that reopening of travel destination could lead to another outbreak and expressed dismay towards the Government protocols.





Looking for Greener Pastures: *How companies are exploring other business opportunities*

The COVID-19 pandemic may have pulled down the revenues of airline companies, but this did not stop them from pushing forward and expanding their businesses.

Thai Smile launched its side operation with cargo services, using its passenger plans into air cargo. Thai Smile provides fast cargo services that covers ten airports nationwide, where customers can receive their parcels within 24 hours.

AirAsia announced that it is entering the Food delivery business after taking over Gojek's operation in Thailand. This expansion is part of the AirAsia's aim to become one of Southeast Asia's superapps.

Meanwhile, Thai Airways is selling its properties to boost cash flow, as the company struggles to keep its business afloat.

More Promos, More Fun:

How did netizens reacted to the surge in promos?

Airline companies have pumped up their promotional efforts in line with the resumption of air travel for leisure, both for local and foreign tourists. Some airlines are offering flights with 100% full refund for canceled flights, while other airlines are offering flights that are cheaper than land travel fares. In order to help local tourism, airline companies are partnering with various hotels and travel agencies to give the best package for interested travelers.

A mixed reception was observed from the digital public, with some showing interested to take advantage of the promo. But on the other side, many seemed to be taking a second thought due to fear of the flight being canceled again and the hassle that they will go through in requesting a refund.



Taking ads to new heights, literally.

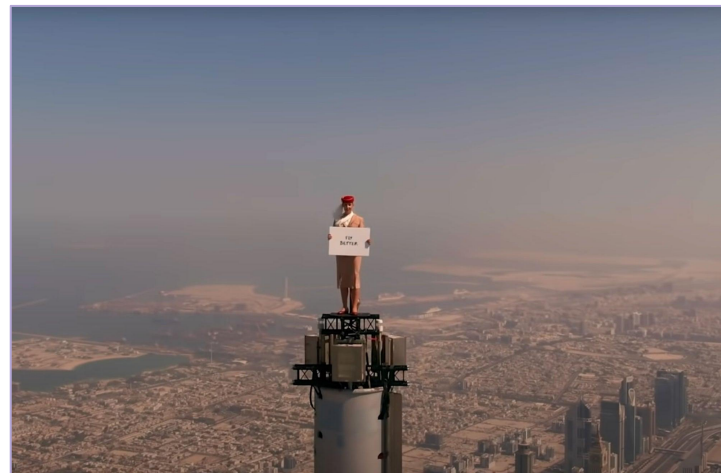
Emirates Airlines shocked the world, Thais included, when it released its 30-second ad of a woman at the top of Burj Khalifa.

The digital public was impressed by the ad, patting the woman on the back for doing the stunt flawlessly.

Meanwhile, a few were still skeptical whether it was just CGI or good editing skills.

While airline companies are laying off employees, Emirates Airlines announced its job openings for crew members.

This announcement earned a lot of good response and interest from many Thai netizens, sharing the post to their friends whom they think would be interested or are qualified for the position.



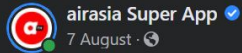
Can I Book a Flight, Please?

ความคิดเห็นที่ 1

ไม่มีใครรู้ล่วงหน้าขนาดนั้นหรอกครับ ตอนนั้นก็อัปเดตสถานการณ์รายครึ่งเดือนอยู่

ความคิดเห็นที่ 2

ตอนนี้ไม่มีใครบอกได้ครับ ว่าถึงเวลานั้นจะได้มีเที่ยวบินหรือไม่
อย่างตอนนี้หลายๆสายที่ออกจากกรุงเทพทั้งสองสนามบิน ก็งดบินถึงสิ้นเดือนสิงหา
ซึ่งดูแล้ว จากสถานการณ์ช่วงนี้ เดือนตุลา ก็ยังไม่น่าจะได้อินตามปกติละครับ



airasia Super App
7 August · 🌐

8.8 MEGA SALE บินปลายปี หรือต้นปี...เลือกราคาดีได้ จองเลยคลิก!
<https://air.asia/rj8UP>

เที่ยวบินในประเทศจะเริ่มบินได้อีกเมื่อไหร่

สายการบิน | สิงห์แอร์คาร์ท | THAI Smile (สายการบิน) | Thai Lion Air | Noksool (สายการบิน)

จขกทมีความจำเป็นต้องเดินทางจากกรุงเทพฯ ไปจังหวัดนครพนมในช่วงตุลาคมนี้มี
อยากสอบถามความคิดเห็นหรือข้อมูลค่ะ ทราบว่าปัจจุบันมีการยกเลิกเที่ยวบินในประเทศแล้วซึ่งน่าจะเป็นแบบชั่วคราว
ในช่วงตุลาคมมีแนวโน้มจะสามารถบินได้ปกติไหมคะ ขอขอบคุณ

The easing of flight restrictions leads to many netizens questioning if they can already book a flight. Some expressed the need to travel for either business or personal matters. However, many netizens were still anxious to book a flight despite all the promos offered by airline companies.

Where is my Refund!?!?

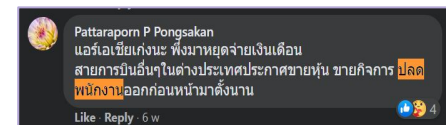
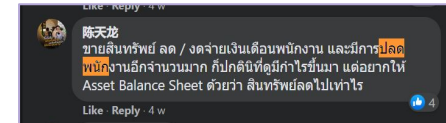
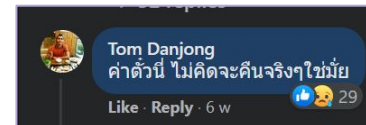
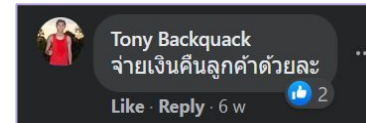
While most airline companies in Thailand are slowly resuming flights, netizens could not help but call out airline companies, especially AirAsia, for their slow processing of refunds. Netizens insisted that airline companies should expedite the refund process of the canceled flights last year before they go on about their promos and discounts.

Angels With Torn Wings:

Employee Layoffs and Pay cuts

Despite announcements that airline companies will resume operation and would reopen more flights starting off with domestic routes - it did not stop companies to declare layoffs or paycheck cuts. Thai AirAsia announced last August that it temporarily ceased all operations due to a lack of revenues, due to the cancellation of flights in the “dark red” provinces.

This announcement sparked criticisms from netizens, as they felt that the company did not care for its employees nor its customers. On the other hand, regardless of this bad news towards the employees of AirAsia, many of the digital public seemed to be unperturbed, as most of them pursued AirAsia for their long-overdue refund request.





So far, what do we know?

As most industries begin to recover from the turmoil brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, it may be a long battle for the airline industry.

In Thailand, the Government has executed plans on easing out travel restrictions, both local and international, with the aim of fully opening the country for travel and tourism by 2022.

However, the slow rollout of vaccination causes concern for the majority of the digital public, as only 25% of the population has been fully vaccinated.

Another key concern of the public was the possible outbreak once the borders opened.

Some netizens fear that the influx of international tourists may cause the further spread of the virus.

So far, what do we know?

Promotions, while very apparent nowadays with airline companies, do not create as much excitement as it did pre-COVID days. Thai airlines are marketing personalized promos to entice people to book a flight, with one of those is the full refund option.

The number of documents and requirements needed to secure before traveling by air seemed unbearable to some people who are interested to take advantage of the promo. At the same time, the unpredictable schedule of flight cancellations is among the pressing concerns of the public. **Companies need to be more experimental with the type of promos they will release in the following months. Turn customer concerns into opportunities to improve marketing strategies.**



So far, what do we know?

It is nothing new that social media is now the new complaint center of customers, especially during COVID-19 when face-to-face interaction became more restricted than ever.

Invest time in improving your online customer service that customers would feel that they are being heard and attended to, even digitally.
Sharing statements from spokesperson regarding the refund process could help ease the mind of the public.

The logo for flightrefund features the word "flightrefund" in a dark blue, lowercase, sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a stylized orange graphic consisting of a curved arrow pointing left, with three vertical lines of varying heights to its right, resembling a signal or broadcast icon.

flightrefund

What our Insights leaders in TH say

Kawin Salinukul

Senior Insights Analyst, Thailand



“The airlines industry tried to find ways to keep their business afloat through various business strategy. But the key ingredient is righteousness, starting with gaining back the trust of their customers.”

Krit Charumani

Senior Insights Analyst, Thailand



“The Airlines Industry plays a big role in driving tourism in Thailand. However, when Covid-19 strikes the whole world, everything seemed to stop. Even though that Airline operations in Thailand was badly affected by the numerous government restrictions and protocols, including flight cancellations, airline companies continue to adjust, adapt, and expand their business, by learning the demand of the public.”

What our Insights Leaders in TH say

Rachel Ann Cardenas
Senior Insights Manager, Thailand




“What we can learn from conversations on social media is that a good service can beat a good marketing scheme, especially in the time of a pandemic. The airline industry needs to hear the cry of the public when it comes to providing the services, instead of focusing on a good promotion. People nowadays need the assurance that they are safe and secured when flying.”



Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us
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