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Case Study of British Airways as a Model for Pakistan Airline Industry with Respect to Strategic Management and Factors Impacting Organization within UK Sector

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	Abstract
Hadia Ashraf LLM International Business Law and Management, University of Gloucestershire, UK. hadiaashraf420@gmail.com	Airline industry is not only the major source for transportation but is also supporting global economy by generating huge revenue. Pakistan airline industry has been facing tumultuous situations since decades due to its defective strategies and other factors. Other countries round the globe are running their airline industry efficiently and successfully with their effective strategic management. It is important to deeply analyze the policy and measures adopted by the advanced word to run this industry so that Pakistan may also be guide to take necessary steps towards improvement of its own airline industry. This research work is designed to conduct case study of British Airways, applying different analysis techniques and models to find out various factors which this industry considers in particular, the organizational behaviour, its internal and external challenges and the ways of dealing with those along with its future strategies and the previous measures taken by it for its growth. Information and important data have been collected from reliable sources and databases. The research is a novel and original work of the author and was done as part of her study project.
Keywords:	British Airways, flight operations, merger, competitive advantage, Business level strategies, cost leadership, business life cycle, supply chain, directional strategy, Ansoff Matrix SWOT analysis



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Introduction

Air transport provides significant economic and social benefits and facilitates tourism, trade, connectivity, generates economic growth, provides jobs, improves living standards, alleviates poverty, provides a lifeline for remote communities and enables a rapid response when disaster occurs (Dodd, 2022). Air transport is a major global employer, supporting a total 86.5 million jobs worldwide and providing 11.6 million direct jobs (Dodd, 2022). Aviation's total economic impact is estimated at \$4.1 trillion (Dodd, 2022). Pakistan airline industry has evolved significantly over the years with both challenges and advancements shaping its current landscape. Pakistan flight market is expected to generate revenue of \$6.32bn during the year 2025 (Statista, 2025).

Pakistan airline industry is undergoing fluctuations and needs an effective strategic management and organizational development for its stability and sustainable growth. This research work consists of case study of British Airways and is analyzing various factors which are contributing towards its success as an international airline. Outcomes of this research work can be taken into consideration for betterment of our airline industry as well. This is an original work of the author which was submitted as part of project during her degree at University of Gloucestershire.

Research Methodology

This report involves the detailed analysis of the business and strategies of British Airways. Case study research strategy has been used to address the questions (Hohannesson & Perjons, 2014). The report has been prepared with a qualitative approach using secondary sources for collection of information, analysis of available data and statistics, comparative analysis with other competitors and study of various academic theories and models to be applied on the British Airways to establish its position and study other factors in line with the question statements (Elkatawneh, 2016). Online sources were used for searching the relevant information from books, journal articles, published reports, news reports and organizations' websites. Snowball referencing was used for collection of data and searching material from the most relevant site with the specified time frame (LibGuides).

Data range used for research: Information for points 1 and 2 has been collected from the fresh reports published in 2022 and 2023. Point 3 has been discussed on the basis of information collected from the sources available since 2020 to onwards. The references used in point 4 are mostly from the year 2020-2023 with few of the citations from previous years.

Database Used For Research: The information has been collected from the databases of Mntel, IBISWorld, Statista and Google scholar. Search engine used was Google and Yahoo for browsing. The organization's websites were also used for exact information and media reports with recent announcements. News reports, BBC reports, Financial Times news reports and other related websites were also used. Images and statistics used in the report have been taken from databases of Intel, Statista and IBISWorld. The model images have been developed by the researcher as per information collected, using available theories and models.

Analysis of UK Airline Industry: Case Study of British Airways

UK airline industry is a major revenue contributing sector to the UK economy through its commercial and passenger flight operations at domestic and international level. British Airways (BA) is a full-service global airline bringing diverse cultures closer for more than 100 years with a team of 30,000 dedicated employees and wide range of newer fuel-efficient aircrafts (Airways B. n.d.). The national flag carrier airline of UK, is a major source of financial contribution with 45.2% market share towards airline industry (Appendix-2). The airline is subsidiary of International Airline Group (IAG) with extensive operational network to Europe, America, Africa, Asia and Australia, from its three hubs at London i.e. Heathrow Airport, Gatwick Airport and London City Airport (CAPA, n.d.).

This report is based on the impact of key drivers, operational, business and directional strategies and its leadership and organizational structure by observing its position within UK as its primary sector. The British Airways comprises of macro-environment as well as micro-environment prone to be influenced by certain drivers (kasi, 2022).

Key Drivers Shaping the UK Operating Environment and the Airline Sector over the next 6 Months

Key drivers affecting the business of British Airline can be observed and identified using PESTLE Analysis (Aguire, 1967) as following:

Government Decision relating to Airline Taxes

For sustainable aviation, Air Passenger Duty (ADP) was previously imposed in lieu of environmental tax, which the UK Prime Minister has recently refused to further increase, rather decreased it to one half for domestic flights with no effect for long-haul flights, which is being considered to affect the Net Zero Aviation plan (Seet, 2023). This policy is being anticipated to impact the industry in process of using Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF) for climate goals and technology shifting.

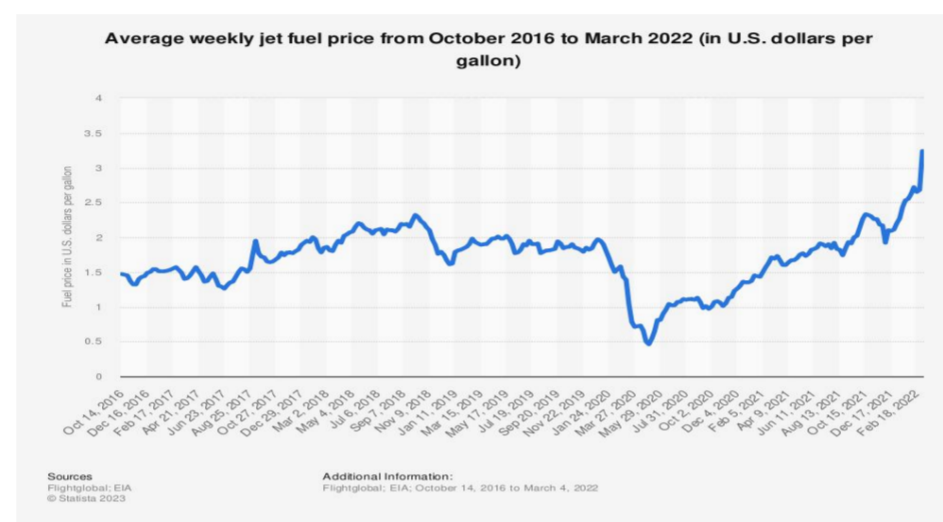
Immigration Policies

Government policies regarding immigration, increase in visa fee and healthcare surcharge, requirement of job offer letter with higher salary of at least £38,700 from April 2024 are amounting to affect the connected business sectors, including the airline industry (BBC, 2023). These policies may affect the number of passengers coming to and going out of UK and consequently the net profit of the industry.

Fuel Price Fluctuations

Due to geo-political conflicts, particularly after Ukraine-Russia war, the fuel cost is highly fluctuating and is adversely impacting the profit trends in the UK airline industry (IBISWorld, 2023). Fuel is one of the main expenses of the airline representing 35% of its operating cost (AEROAFFAIRS, n.d.). Fuel price volatility affects the supply chain resulting into budget adjustment either through increasing air-fare or cutting labor costs by laying-off workers or reducing their financial incentives (Investopedia, 2023).

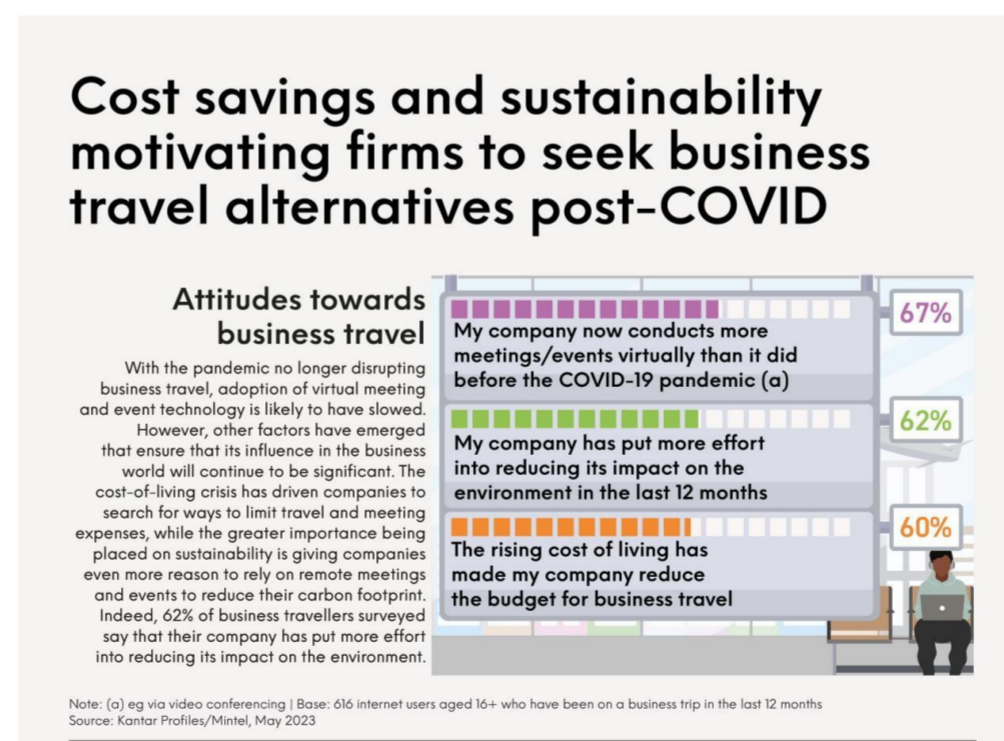
Figure 1: Jet fuel price fluctuation from October 2016 to March 2022 (Statista, 2023)



Consumer Trends due to Perception and Affordability

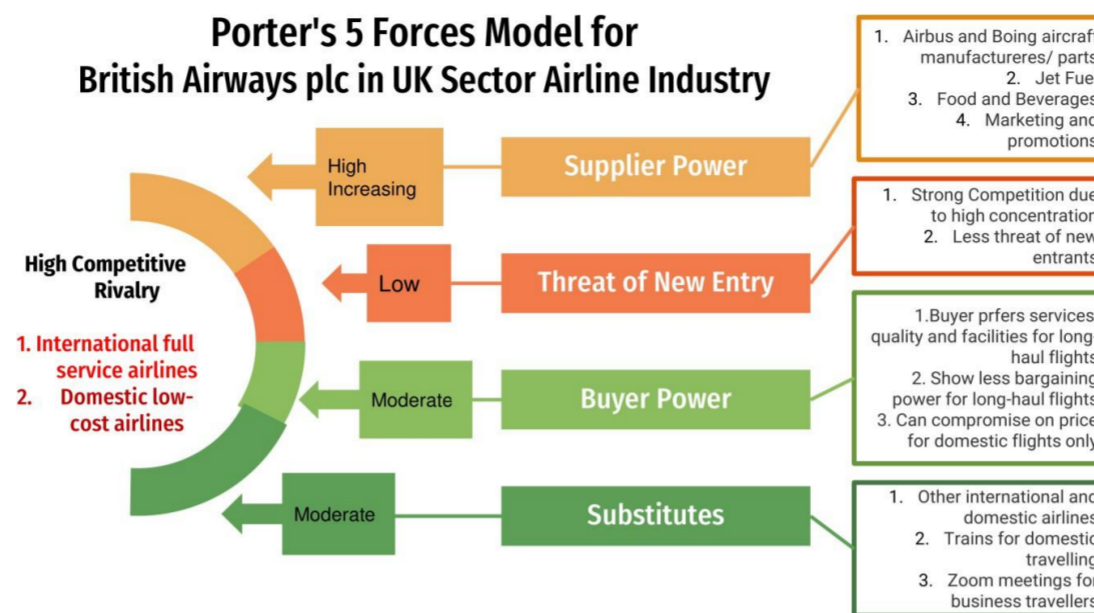
Consumer behavior, build on perception, use of technology, affordability and changing trends, highly impacts the airline industry (Rajagopal, 2019). Inflation, individual's disposable income, technological advancements, remote-working and sustainability preferences derive such behavior (Mintel, 2023). Reduced number of travelers is again impacting the profits of the industry.

Figure 2: Consumer attitude towards business travel (Mintel, 2023)



Five competitive forces shaping the airline industry in UK sector and BA can be explained using Porter's 5-Forces Model (Porter, 1979), on the basis of information collected from the reports published by IBISWorld (Lythe, 2023).

Figure3: Analysis of competitive forces through Porter’s 5 Forces Model (Porter, 1979)



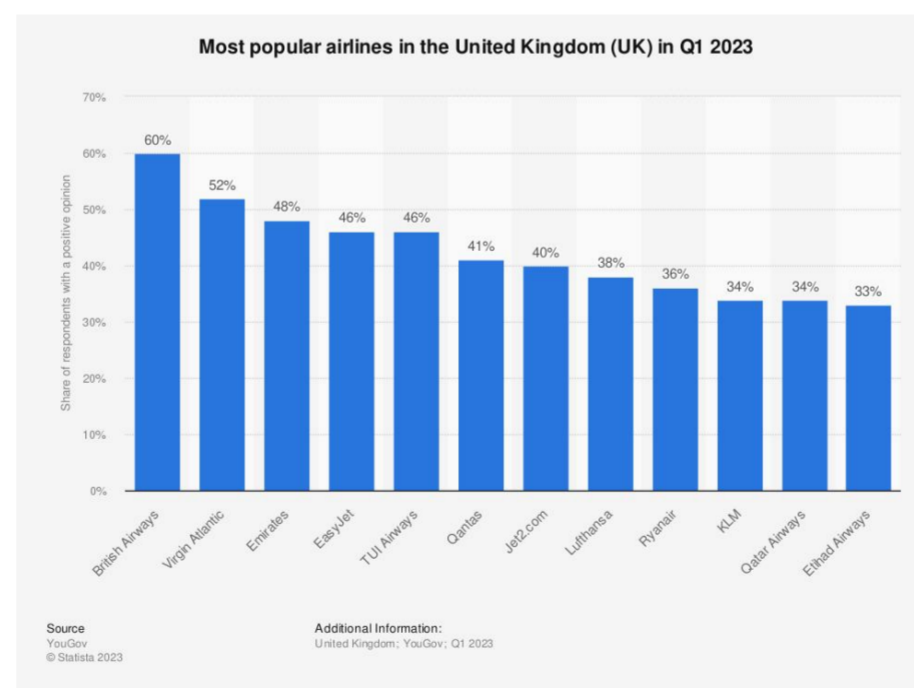
This analysis reveals that the suppliers bargaining power is stronger than the customers because the expenditures in airline industry cannot be cut down to maximum extent. The customers have moderate bargaining power as they have choices to compromise on quality by selecting cheap flights for domestic use but mostly the passengers ignore high ticket price for their comfort travelling. Although substitutes are their impacting the industry but the threat of new entrants is minimum due to high competition and heavy investment required to enter the market.

Position of British Airways in UK Sector Airline Industry

Competitive Rivalry

On the basis of Porter’s 5-Forces Model it can be established that the market structure of UK airline industry is Oligopoly, with British Airways as the largest national airline with its other competitors both at domestic as well as international flight routes including Qantas, Virgin Atlantic, Deutsche Lufthansa, Delta Air Lines, American Airlines Inc, Air France, easyJet and Jet2.com Ltd (SWFI, 2023). All these airlines are competing with one another with strong assets and internal resources to invest for improving the quality of services to attract customers.

Figure 4: Popularity and competition analysis of British Airways in UK sector (Statista, 2023)



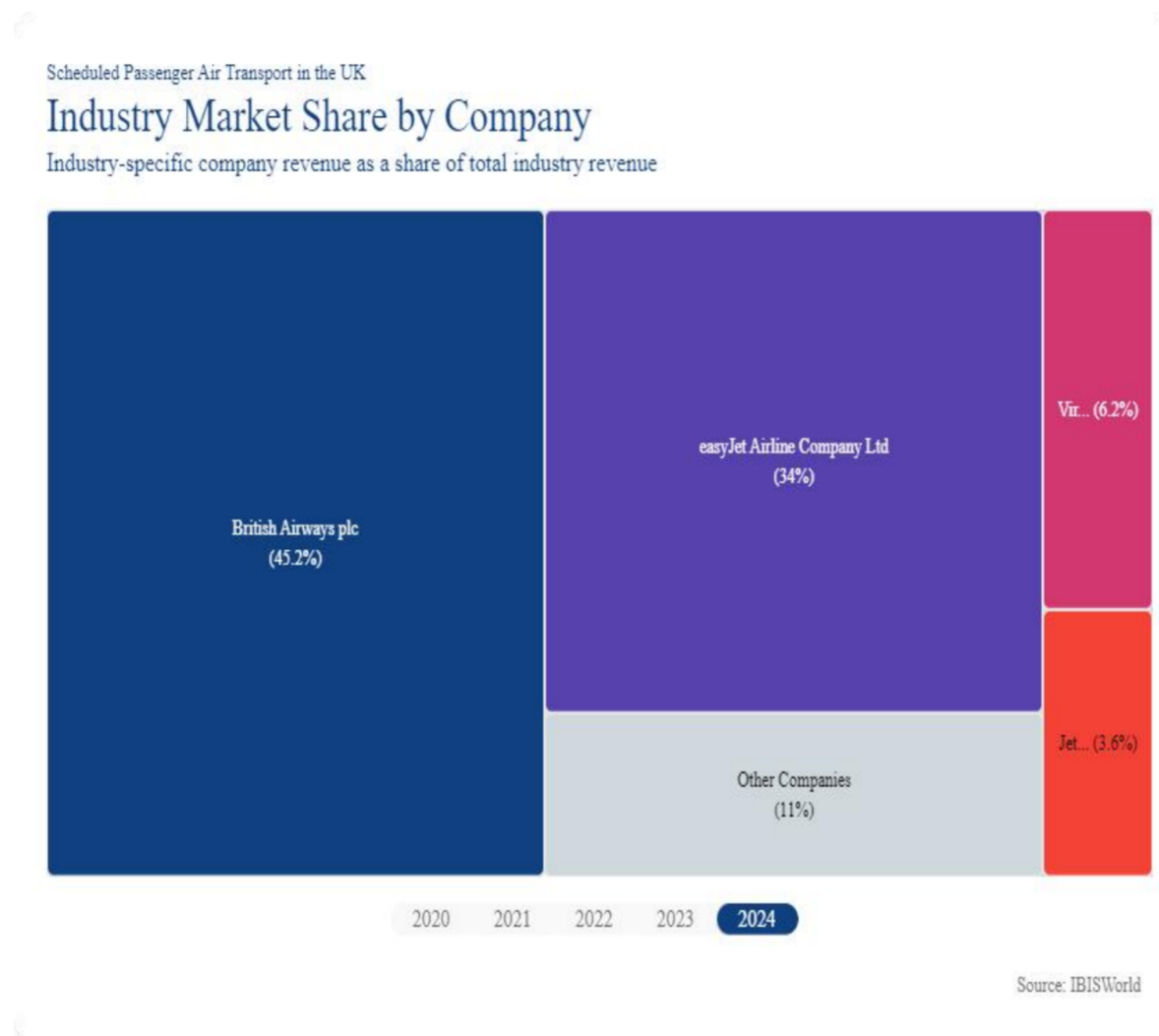
Financial Position of British Airline

The position of airline can be better understood through Resource Based Analysis and Value Chain Analysis. The statistics collected from (IBISWorld, 2023) relating to revenue and market share of British Airways and its rivals are:

Table 1: Comparison of market share, revenue and assets of BA with competitors in UK sectors (IBISWorld, 2023)

Airline	Market Share (%)	Revenue (£m)	Assets (£)
Virgin Atlantic Airways Ltd	6.2	1,506.2	3.1 bn in 2020
British Airways plc	45.2	10,899.0	20.8 bn in 2022
easyJet Airline Company Ltd	34.0	8,201.0	2.6 bn in 2021
Jet2.com Ltd	3.6	868.9	1.8 bn in 2012

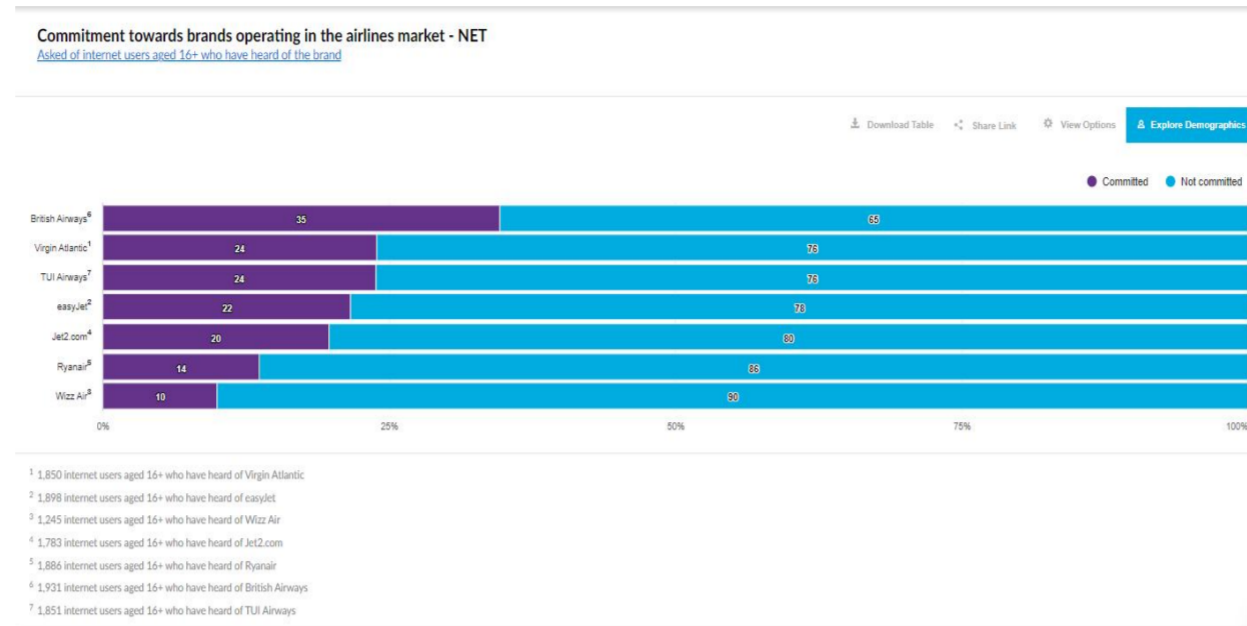
Figure 5: Industry market share by company in UK airline industry (IBISWorld, 2023)



Human Resource and Customer Services

British Airways is prioritizing its customer satisfaction by recruiting employees, 7,400 were recruited in 2022, and focusing on quality of in-flight food and beverages, overcoming technological lapses and accessibility to customers with better PR. The passengers like to travel through BA due to its outstanding customer services and commitments (MiNTEL, 2023).

Figure 6: Consumer Response As To Commitment Of Ba As a Brand In UK Sector (Mintel, 2023)



Innovation and Fuel-Efficient Aircrafts

British Airways is adamant to achieve the target of ‘net zero aviation’ by 2050 to compete its rivals. The airline is also providing the passengers facility of free in-flight wi-fi. The company is also investing on marketing campaigns and technological tools (kasi, 2022).

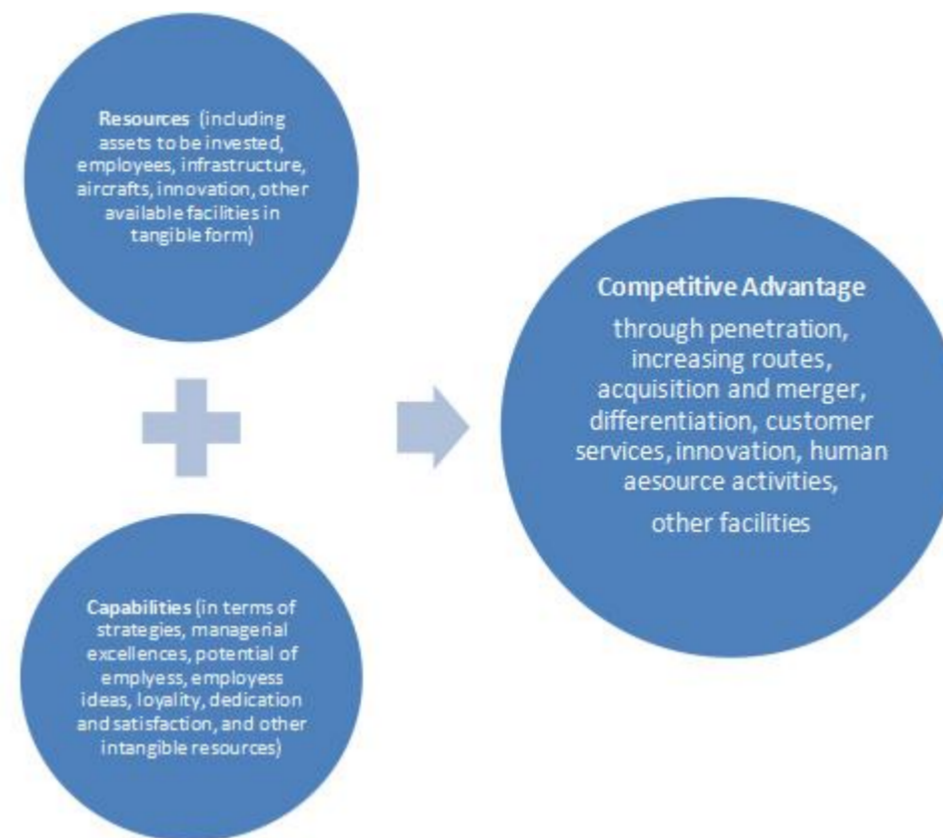
Flight Operations and Destinations

The airline is extending its flight services to 13 domestic destinations and 194 international destinations in 76 countries as of December (Flight Connections, 2023). The EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement and Open Skies Agreement have opened the unrestricted access of the airline to international business market for business expansion (Lythe, 2023).

Competitive Advantage

British Airways is the leading airline of UK which is preferred by the passengers for multiple reasons (Statista Research Department, 2023). The major competitive advantage of British Airways have been discussed above. Its operational base is the Terminal 5 of the world’s busiest airport, London- Heathrow, which is a hub for international air traffic holding a strong strategic position and a lucrative sight for so many airlines (British Airways, 2020). It is a subsidiary of strong group IAG which was formed by the merger of four airlines and is considered to be at good and influential position in the industry dealing in major areas of passenger airline, cargo services, aircraft maintenance etc. British Airways is striving to achieve and maintain its competitive advantage by utilizing its resources and capabilities.

Figure 7: Strategy To Achieve Competitive Advantage

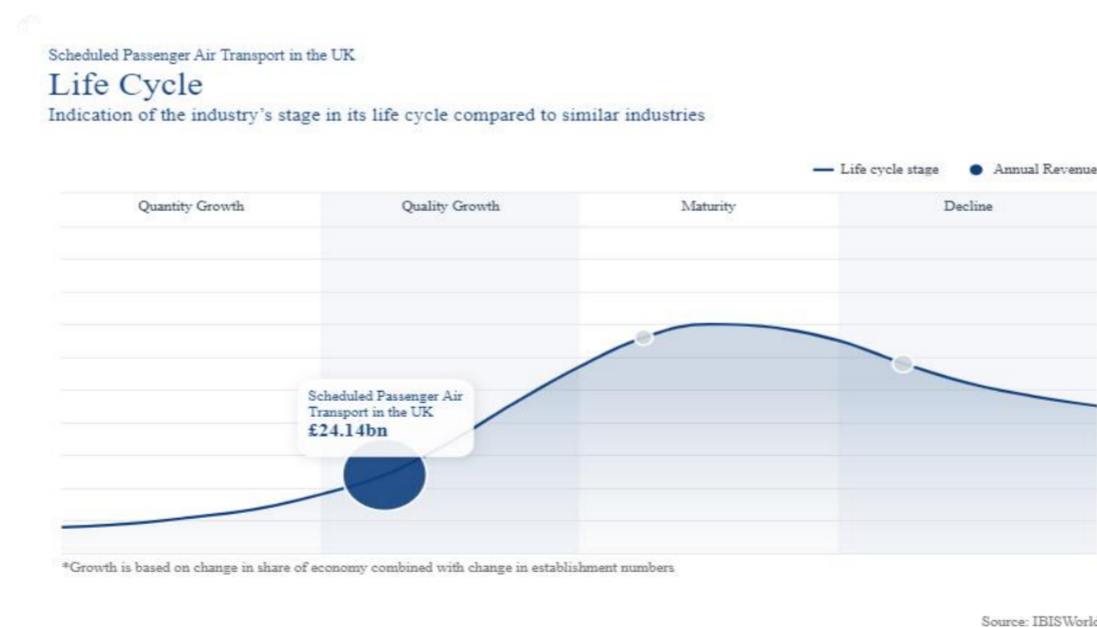


Business level and Directional Strategies and the rationale behind their adoption

Business Level Strategies

The life cycle of airline industry of UK shows that it is at its growth stage and provides the British Airways being the oldest existing company an opportunity to achieve competitive advantage through effective business strategies.

Figure 8: Life cycle of UK airline industry (IBISWorld, 2023)



Business level strategies of British Airways can be observed by applying Generic Strategies Model of Porter (1980). The main focus of company is its commitment to provide exceptional services to its customer, better workplace environment and sustainability initiatives against its rivals. British Airways is excelling in achieving its goals through its business strategies particularly focusing on “Differentiation” with considerable focus on “Cost Leadership”.



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Differentiation

AI Advancements

After suffering from a few high-level meltdown issues of the industry, the British Airways has decided to turn the system to the greater use of artificial intelligence for its smooth flight operations and customer satisfaction by investing £750 mn in its IT system and website (Georgiadis, 2023), since 2020. This plan is including fault detection and maintenance of more than 250 aircrafts. It will not only cut the cost but also will boot the efficiency.

Sustainable Aviation

British Airways and the group of investors including Horizons ventures, Breakthrough Energy Ventures, Ecosystem Integrity Fund, Summa Equity, Shell Venture and SYSTEMIQ have invested an amount of \$24.3m USD for developing a program of demonstrating technology with hydrogen-powered engines and using aircrafts by 2026. British Airways is confident of having potential of reaching zero emission on short-haul routes by 2025 by introducing planes with the capacity of 70 passengers initially by 2027 (Mulder, 2022). The organization is also replacing its fleet of aircrafts with 25-40% more fuel-efficient aircrafts including A350 and 787 (British Airways, 2021). The airline has also entered into an agreement with Lanzajet and Nova Pangaea Technologies to accelerate Project Speedbird to develop cost-effective sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) for commercial use in UK and aviation decarbonization (Airport Technology, 2022).

Innovation

British Airways has recently opened “Call BA”, a call center in Gurugram, India with 1,400 trained staff to provide round-the-clock services to thousands of customers from USA, Europe and Asia Pacific. BA has also entered into partnership with IndusInd Bank and Qatar Airways and has launched a new multi-branded airline credit card to enable the holder to collect Avios with better travel experience (Times Aerospace, 2023).

For the purpose of ensuring equal access to information, services and products for the Deaf and hard-of-hearing customers, the British Airways has taken again a leading step of partnering with SigncodeUk, an organization committed to serve people with hearing impairment. The partnership is aimed to facilitate more than 15,000 people with British Sign Language (BSL) .

Expansion and Acquisition/Merger

New routes have been added to BA’s short-haul flight operation including flights to Nuremberg, Luxembourg, Barcelona, Guemsey, Jersey, Mila, Thessaloniki, Portland and Los Angeles (British Airways, 2022) with its flight operation to Latvia (British Airways, 2023). Over the years the British Airways has merged with several airlines to maintain its dominance (Singh & Garbuno, 2023).

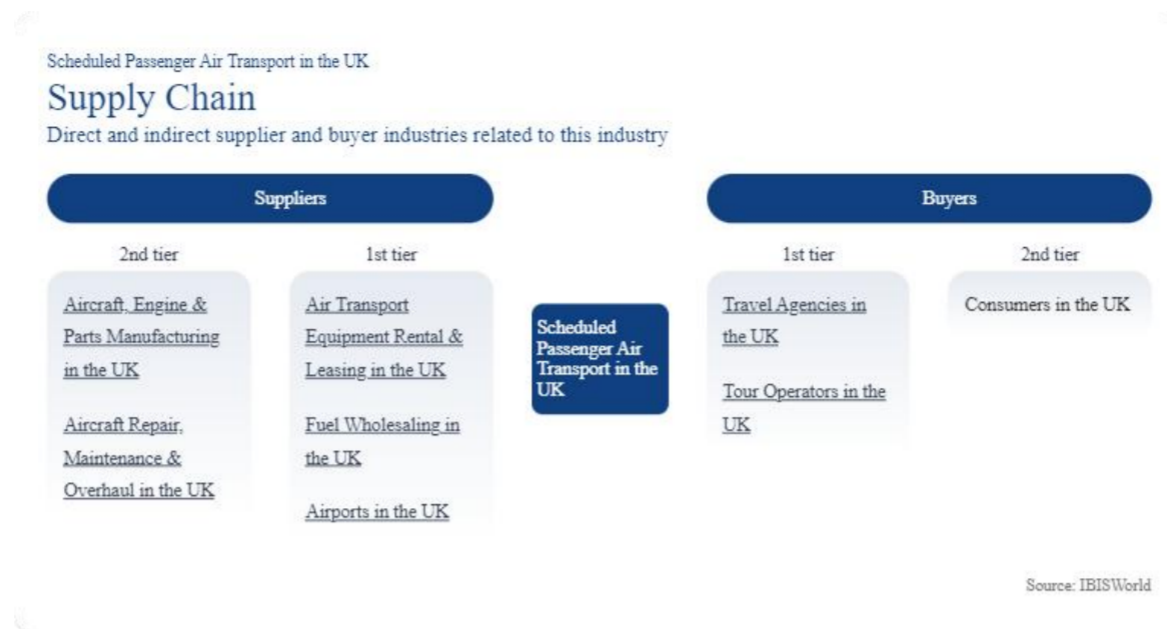
Passenger Classes

The main feature of differentiation of British Airways is its variety of passenger classes in Economy Class; with Euro Traveler and World Traveler Cabins, Premium Economy Class; with World Traveler Plus Cabin, Business Class; with Club Europe and Club World Cabins, and First Class with the exceptional comfort and luxury. All classes provide the exceptional services to the passenger at short-haul and long-haul routes with trained and hospitable cabin crew and fresh food. The airline is committed not to compromise its standards and quality against cost (British Airways).

Cost Leadership Strategy

British Airways is trying to cut down its cost through various strategies including use of AI for maintaining aircrafts, commitment to use hydrogen-powered fuel-efficient aircrafts, engineering and ground handling services for aircrafts, laying-off extra staff etc. It can be better explained through this supply chain of the airline industry.

Figure 9: Supply Chain Analysis of British Airways (IBISWorld, 2023)

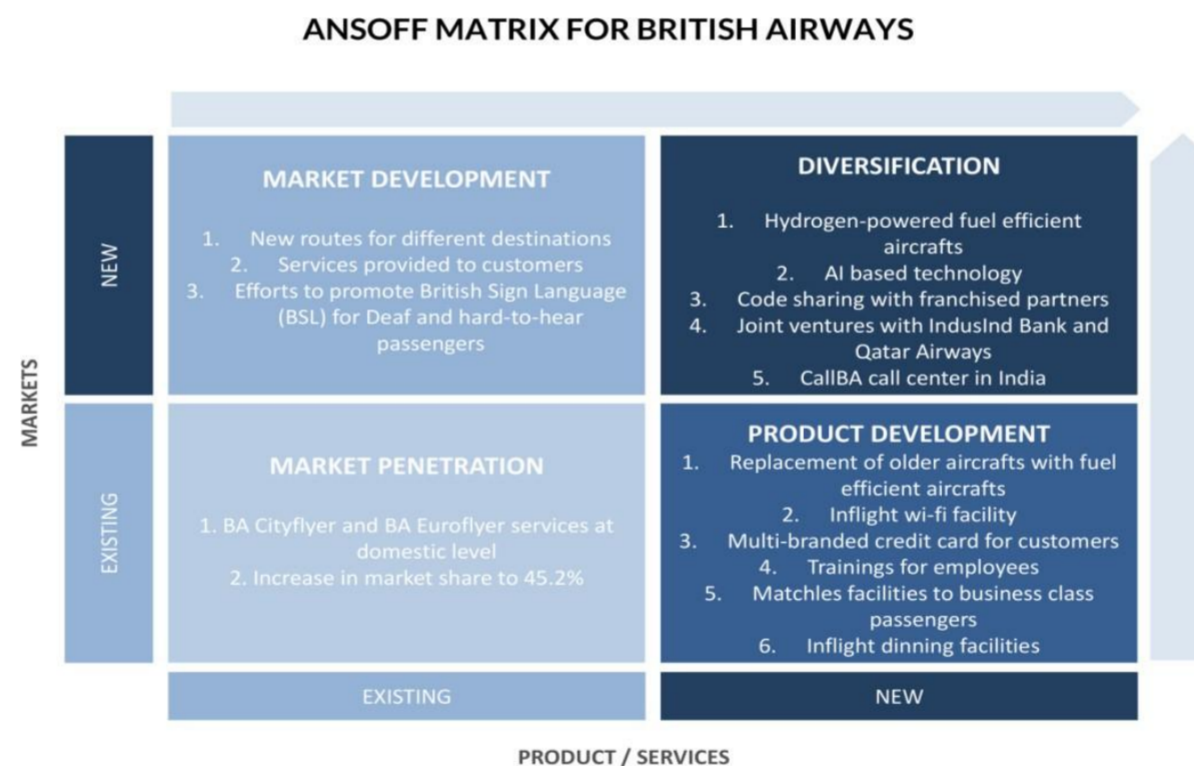


The airline makes adjustments in its cost and profits through adjusting its supply chain back and forth.

Directional Strategies of British Airline

On the basis of business level strategies of British Airline, the directional strategy of the organization can be determined by using Ansoff's Matrix (Ansoff, 1957).

Figure 10: Analysis of Directional Strategies of British Airline through Ansoff Matrix (1957)



Managerial Consideration behind adopting these Strategies

The potential managerial considerations behind adopting these strategies are to secure the competitive advantage of the airline in UK sector against its rivals and to expand its operation globally with sustainable aviation and customers' satisfaction. 2022 Sustainability Report of the airline clearly mentions the vision and mission of the organization of its focus on the three elements of BA Better World---People, Planet and Responsible Business, for which these strategies have been formulated (Harris, 2023). These strategies are also necessary due to the competitive forces shaping the industry, countering the potential threats and overcoming the weakness of the organization for its sustainable growth, as discussed above in sections 1 and 2.

Role of Leadership and Culture in Shaping and Driving Strategy and Strategic Innovation

Organizational culture is generally considered as a set of belief, values, attitude and experience of an organization which influences the behavior of its employees and is based on the elements of respect and trust, accountability, psychological safety and alignment with business objectives for performance driven environment (GMS, 2023). Attributes of the organizational culture contribute to the team building, strategic innovations, goals orientation and future plans of the organization (Kumar & Shrankhla, 2014), impacting the motivation of the employees and influencing their efficiency, target achievement and retention rate (Cote, 2023).

The culture of an organization is shaped by the individuals at leading position (Bass & Avolio, 1993) by inculcating emotional intelligence, promoting adaptability and inclusiveness, empowering employees, reducing discrimination and encouraging open communication, decision-making and ethical conduct (Spence). Leadership styles may include authoritarian, participative, delegative or servant leadership styles (Reynolds, 2022). The most common leadership can be determined either through transactional leadership theory (Webner, 1947) which focuses on rewards and punishments within the existing culture of the organization (Zeghaty, n.d), or transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978) which involves the change or transformation of individuals by motivating them, inspiring them and valuing them (Northouse, 2001).

Transactional leaders mostly focus on compliance and short-term goals (Cherry, 2023). It is done by the leader in managerial capacity by motivating the followers for the things appealing to their own interest e.g. pay, incentives etc. but with a status quo situation (WGU, 2021).

Transformational leaders are more passionate, enthusiastic and energetic than the transactional leaders (Cherry, 2023). The four elements of transformational leadership are: intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation and idealized influence (McLeod, 2023). Organizational culture, leadership style and employees' satisfaction are closely connected (Tsai, 2011).

The leader has to choose the required and effective leadership style keeping in view the goals of organization and the people involved (Reynolds, 2022). In either way it must be strategic leadership anticipating the opportunities and threats for the organization, fostering its vision and empowering its people through effective strategic development (Nahak & Ellitan, 2022).

Leadership has a close relation with the strategic development of the organization as it determines the vision and mission of the organization (Jabbar & Hussein, 2017). This is the role of leadership to identify the weakness of the organization, to assess the effectiveness of existing processes and to make fresh strategies (Jabbar & Hussein, 2017). The leadership is considered to be the essential and vital element for the successful outcomes of the strategies (Jabbar & Hussein, 2017). Corporate sector cannot achieve its goals without strong leadership for strategic development and its implementation, which is able enough to use the skills and competencies by involving its people and utilizing its resources, identifying relevant departments, making their teams, extending communication to stakeholders, monitoring staff and results and reviewing the process for better outcomes. (Root, 2022).

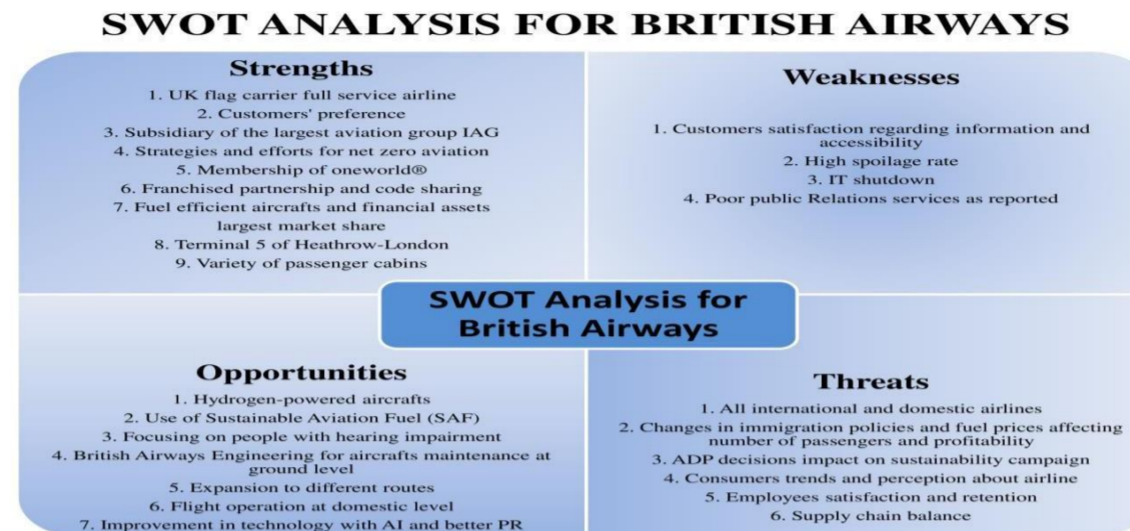
Conclusion

It has been established that the strategic leadership basing on the dynamism, management abilities, problem solving abilities, effective and timely decision-making power and inclusiveness of the leader is the only key to transform the organization into a successful firm (Banda, 2022). Strategic leadership role is also necessary to achieve the competitiveness and above-average-target of the organization as it directly effects the efforts of the organization towards its goals orientation (Nahak & Ellitan, 2022).

British Airways is an example of excellent transformational and strategic leadership which is evident from the competitiveness and growth of the organization. Decision for privatization of the organization in 1987 was basing on reducing company borrowing and improving its efficiency through extended and wider share ownership to meet its financial needs and to maintain its standards (Cozmuta, 2021).

Decisions of BA as to acquisition in the past and particularly the establishment of International Airline Group (IAG) by merging with Iberia-a Spanish based company, are the clear strategically effective to cope up with the situation of global inflation, fuel price fluctuation and expansion of routes by sharing resources and costs (Bailey, 2021). Aviation Industry is striving to achieve green technology and emission reduction to minimize carbon footprints due to air traffic (Flightworx, 2021). The UK government has undertaken the responsibility of "Decarbonizing Aviation" by introducing 2022 Jet Zero Strategy to achieve "net zero aviation" by 2050 (Transport, 2023).

Figure 11: SWOT Analysis of British Airways (Humphrey, 1960)



Moreover, the strategies relating to empowering people, sustainable decarbonized aviation, transition to fuel efficient aircrafts and AI use, organizational cultural harmonization, employees empowerment with female representation, expansion of flight operation, the goals achieved so far and all the log-run strategies of the airline as discussed in section 1 and 2 are clear example of effective strategic development. The leadership is in a challenging position to maintain the position of the airline and competitiveness through its exceptional leadership skills. SWOT Analysis (Humphrey, 1960) of the present research is provided below for future operation and strategic development basing on the anticipated impact of the identified key driver on the industry and economy of UK within next 6 months.

It can be identified through case study of the British Airways that the airline is following impactful strategies in a sustainable approach and take prompt measures whenever and wherever needed for its survival and growth. At the same time, it is keeping an eye on the market demands, customers needs and competitors to take competitive advantage among others. Pakistan can also follow such strategies to improve its airline industry for the long-term benefits.

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