February 2020

Dear APEX/IFSA Members,

Sustainability: “Right here. Right now.” Greta Thunberg wisely challenged politicians, the media, and business leaders to do more to tackle global climate change.

Looking at aviation, a lot has already been done within the industry to reduce the carbon footprint per passenger by 54.3% since the 1990s. If every other industry had reduced per person carbon footprint by a similar percentage during that time, then we likely would not have the global climate crisis that our world faces today.

We then need to show how what we’re doing will allow Greta Thunberg’s generation to enjoy all the benefits of aviation, but in a sustainable way. Those arguments need to be communicated in a clear and simple manner to show that we are serious.

SimpliFlying has produced a special report looking at these questions and more. We’ve secured the rights to distribute this to all of our members.

As an APEX/IFSA member, please feel free to forward and distribute within your organization. APEX/IFSA’s work with the United Nations, IATA, ATAG, and our airlines will shine a positive example of advancing sustainability for our world’s future. For a more in-depth update, please feel free to sign up for an APEX/IFSA partnership webinar on airline industry sustainability efforts in February here: **http://j.mp/37mAtsc**

Sincere thanks,

Dr. Joe Leader
APEX/IFSA Chief Executive Officer

apex
airline passenger experience association

IFSA International Flight Services Association

About us

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Editorial

The recent World Travel Market in London featured a panel discussion on the Future of Aviation and the decarbonisation of travel.

Representing the 'green' side of the debate was Justin Francis of Responsible Travel. Many of the audience questions Justin fielded went something like this (and I am paraphrasing):

'I am from South Africa and many jobs depend on tourism' / 'Yes, but if the planet burns there won't be any jobs in tourism'

'What about tourism and travel supporting conservation projects' / 'But there may not be any conservation projects, if the planet heats up.'

And so on. That neatly summarises the problem the aviation industry faces. The issue of climate change is one that's quite simple to articulate and understand ('the planet is burning.') It has a sense of immediacy about it.

Yet, so far many of the industry responses are quite complicated, touching on a variety of different messages.

So far, most airlines respond something like this:

1. We're halving carbon emissions by 2050 (sounds like a long time away)
2. We're introducing the brand new A320neo (what's an A320neo?)
3. We're experimenting with biofuels (what's a biofuel? What difference does it make?)
4. You can offset your carbon emissions by paying at this website (what's a carbon off-set? Why should it be my responsibility?)
5. Look at how we're cutting down on single use plastics (wonderful, now what about greenhouse gases?)
6. In the case of Ryanair and Frontier - We're the green airline! (Are you? Can an airline be 'green'?)

That sets the scene of this edition of AMM.

For the first time ever, we've devoted an issue to one topic - flight shaming, for the reason that it is arguably the major challenge the industry faces over the next two decades.

That's because it takes aim at the core of an airline's business by encouraging people not to fly. And the calls for action on climate change will only increase, this issue is not going away.

As a result, in this issue we've looked at geen activism, how the airline industry is responding and how it should respond.

We look at whether flight shaming is working (research says yes, but we think it's more complicated than that), and how different airlines are trying to show that they are environmentally responsible.

With the global climate strikes having been driven by High School students, we examine what the next generation of travellers - Generation Z - thinks.

In light of easyJet announcing that it would be the first major airline to introduce carbon offsetting for all flights, we look at some of the objections many environmentalists have towards carbon offset projects, and we make some recommendations as to how you should talk about these projects if your airline uses them.

Finally, we move on to talk about what happens when passive protests moves to direct action. This is an issue our industry partner, crisis simulation company Polpeo, is particularly qualified to talk about.

A subsidiary company of social media specialists, The Social Element, Polpeo simulates any brand crisis, situation or social media experience.

It is the closest thing to managing a live, breaking situation on social media, but in a private and safe environment.

As a result, in addition to looking at the wider communications challenges around flight shaming, we will also spend time talking about what to do when things really start heating up.

Do you want to discuss this issue further, or do you want more information about some of the background to the different articles in this edition? Get in touch by emailing me - dirk@simpliflying.com

Green pressure groups and aviation - an overview

Which groups are currently calling for action by the aviation industry. 'Flight shaming' is actually only one part of a wide spectrum of opinion.

Some groups want to reduce flying to the absolute minimum, and want to do it now. Some want to cut demand by measures such as frequent flyer levies. And a few do engage with airlines on projects, albeit with qualifications.

What they have in common, is that they all believe that aviation is a major contributor to pollution and global warming.

Here's an overview of some of them:

The Flight Free Movement

Is exactly what it says, it has branches in Sweden, Denmark, the U.K, Belgium, France, Germany, the USA and Canada.

As the US website says, they are asking 100,000 people, to commit to not flying in 2020.

That's a very modest number in comparison to the millions who fly every year, but it forms a starting point which these groups hope to build on.

Fridays for the Future

Fridays for the Future is the global Climate Strike movement, popularised by Greta Thunberg. The different movement websites aren't about climate change solutions, but rather on the various events worldwide.

However, it is of course true that Greta Thunberg avoided flying to North America, taking a racing yacht. According to the Guardian, her trip on a yacht has now sparked a whole trend of 'sailboat hitchhiking.'

No Fly Climate Sci

This is a campaign by academics, to get other academics to fly as little as possible, for example to seminars, workshops etc.

Transport & Environment

T&E is a European group that focuses on sustainable transport as a whole, and not just aviation. For example, it recently released an article on the environmental cost of Uber.

However when it comes to aviation it's known for two things. It wants to cut what it sees as aviation tax breaks. And it has called carbon offset schemes ineffective, which we'll come back to.

Uecna

Uecna is a European group originally concerned with aircraft noise, but it's now branched out into wider issues around global warming and carbon emissions.

Uecna advocates extra taxes on air travel with the money being put into developing the rail network.

Plane Stupid

Plane Stupid is a network of groups against airport expansion, for example third runways in Munich and London Heathrow.

Stay Grounded

Stay Grounded is an international group, and held a conference in Barcelona in the Summer.

If you work in aviation marketing, you will find their proposals far reaching. That's because their 13 points for reducing the demand for air travel include this:

> **Systemic incentives for air travel should end. These include flight-related ads or other marketing by the travel, airline and aircraft manufacturing industries. Frequent Flyer Programs (FFP) should end as they strongly reinforce flying as a status symbol**

A free ride

A Free Ride is one of a number of campaigns that seeks to impose frequent flyer taxes. It's UK based, and it's proposals were recently largely adopted by Britain's third party, the Liberal Democrats.

It suggests everyone has one tax free flight a year, and that a tax applies for every subsequent flight which increases the more you fly. The group says that this way it isn't penalising ordinary families going on vacation, but reducing demand by taking aim at frequent travellers.

Extinction Rebellion

Perhaps the highest profile environmental group at the moment, Extinction Rebellion is a global movement, with an emphasis on direct action - such as occupying city centres and closing roads.

The movement has a loose leadership structure, meaning that there are a number of spin off groups, such as 'Heathrow Pause', which has threatened to disrupt flights at London's Heathrow Airport using drones.

Greenpeace

Greenpeace is one of the oldest, most established and well known environmental groups worldwide. It favours a slowdown of airport expansion, and does take direct action (for example it's done so at UK airports). It is planning a 'festival' at Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport in mid December.

Forum for the Future

We mention Forum for the Future, as its founder, Sir Jonathon Porritt, is an environmentalist who has engaged with airlines.

Jonathon Porritt is quoted in the easyJet announcement that it will offset the carbon emissions on all flights. He has also chaired Air New Zealand's sustainability panel.

Is flight shaming working? The research

If a recent study by UBS is to be believed, significant numbers of consumers are cutting down on the number of flights they take, with an eye on the environment.

The Swiss banking giant surveyed 6,000 consumers in the USA, France, Germany and the UK (via Fast Company). Just over one in five (21%) claimed that they had reduced the number of flights that they took over the past year due to environmental concerns.

Surprisingly, that figure was higher in the USA (24%), a country where air travel is often the only practical option, than the UK (16%).

UBS used this headline grabbing study to predict that in the EU, flight numbers will increase by only 1.5%, half the number originally predicted by Airbus.

Taking account of the value - action gap

It's a great study, to which we'd add a word of caution, namely you need to look at the value / action gap. The values that people profess to have don't always translate into concrete action.

Sweden is the country where flight shaming originated, and there's no doubt it's having an effect there, with SAS having seen passenger traffic shrink by 2% and Sweden's airports seeing a 9% reduction in domestic flights.

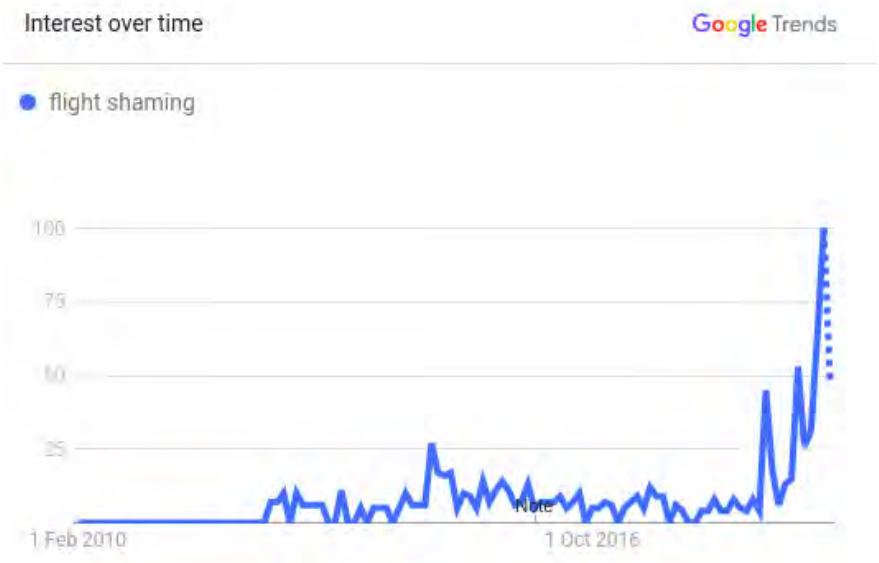
However, the latest US Bureau of Transportation Statistics still show good year on year growth, when it comes to air travel, so in reality it seems unlikely that almost one in four (24%) Americans flew less because of environmental concerns.

Rather, respondents may have mentally cancelled flights they would probably have never taken anyway (the 'wouldn't it be nice to....' trips) rather than actually not seeing the relatives at Thanksgiving or Christmas.

Flight shaming has entered public consciousness

However, even though we'd question the UBS statistic about people flying less, the overall findings are still significant.

The reality is very few people are active news consumers - no more than 14% of people in the US according to a giant Microsoft study referenced in the New Yorker.



It's been talked about enough and there have been plenty of eye catching and high profile protests by the Extinction Rebellion, Greta Thunberg et al, for it to start seeping into consumer consciousness.

So awareness is there. As is growing acceptance that air travel is a 'problem.' The next stage will be for there to be a tipping point where the value/action gap we talked about is bridged and intent turns into action.

With a lot of the climate change protests being driven by the youth, and with the most recognisable figure of the movement being Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg, that tipping point may well come with the next generation of air travellers - generation Z, and beyond them even, generation Alpha.

Top five countries for flight shaming searches

1. Canada
2. Australia
3. United States
4. United Kingdom
5. Germany

Source - Google Trends, since 2010

Is Gen Z no longer flying? Not yet, but that could change

> **“Taking climate action means re-addressing the foundations of our identities. It starts with flying. When I was growing up I was told that travelling would make me a well-rounded, employable person.”**

‘Climate Change Therapy’. From Screenshot magazine

A lot of the boom in air travel over the past decade has come from millennials, who have taken advantage of the ability to travel further for less money and more often.

One of the panels at the recent World Travel Market, was ‘Air born’, where Dr Hamish McPharlin, Head of Insight, BBC Global News gave a presentation showing what ‘affluent millennials’ want from travel.

The findings reinforced a number of other surveys conducted over the past few years, namely that millennials (and in fact travellers in general) want so-called authentic experiences.

There is a desire to travel more responsibly, for example 70% want to eat at local restaurants, 1/3 will choose tours from local people on the ground and say they have assisted with a local community project, they still want to travel.

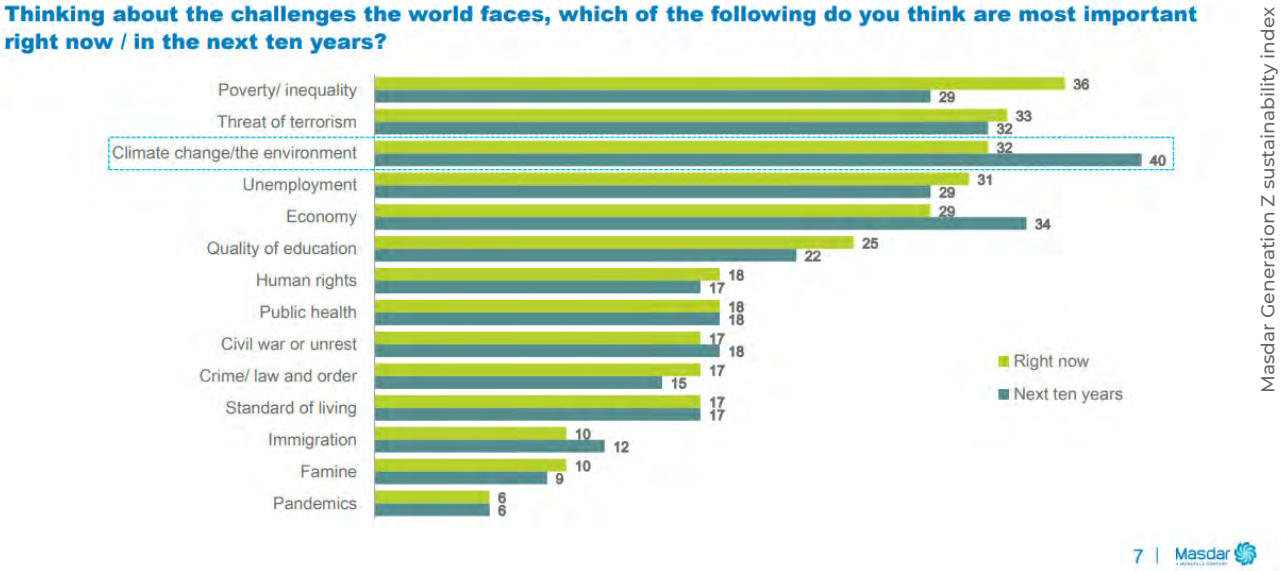
But what about the next generation down, Generation Z, which covers High School students and young adults in their early 20s?

A number of studies have been done about Generation Z and travel. However most of these have been done by companies such as Expedia or Priceline, whose business is to sell flights, hotels and vacations.

As a result, not surprisingly, the results show things such as 'Gen Z travelers prioritize experiences ahead of price.'

It may therefore be more useful to look at research about Gen Z and the environment. In the US, Pew Research showed that 81% of Gen Z believe that the earth is warming, 10% higher than other age groups.

Separately a study by Green Match found that 72% of Gen Z (USA) would spend more money on something that was sustainably produced, they would boycott companies who don't share their values, they have less brand loyalty and will switch to a more sustainable alternative.



Masdar Generation Z sustainability index

Looking beyond the USA, UAE-based renewable energy company Masdar carried out a 'generation Z sustainability index', the almost 5000 respondents included ones in countries such as Morocco, India, China and Brazil, hence it's not the usual US / UK skewed survey you find.

40% reported climate change as their top priority for the next decade, beating out the economy, terrorism, poverty, and unemployment. Meanwhile 81% believed that the private sector should drive the change towards cleaner energy.

Note that climate change won out as the top 10 year challenge, though in terms of immediate challenges poverty was top. That's probably a good sign of how this issue will develop for the aviation sector. No, Generation Z won't immediately stop flying on your aircraft.

But the awareness is there, and that awareness and the need for action will only increase, as the media and social media coverage of global warming increases.

After all, as others have pointed out, it will be Gen Z and Generation Alpha (children born today) who will be seeing the effects of a warming planet.

The dangers of painting yourself green as an airline

Is Ryanair 'the new coal' or is it Europe's greenest airline? That depends on who you talk to. According to Ryanair, it offers - 'lowest fares / lowest emissions.' Ryanair actually turned this claim into an advertising campaign (see above image).

The ad talks about new aircraft, lower carbon emissions, and features a visual of a Ryanair 737 flying over a green meadow. It appeared in Britain's Sunday Times newspaper among others, and was accompanied by a short video highlighting the airline's environmental credentials.

It also prompted complaints to the UK's Advertising Standards Authority by pressure group Airport Watch, among others, who called it, **'the misrepresentation that Ryanair is attempting, maybe as just the boldest of the aviation industry attempts to push back against increasing public concerns about its climate change impacts.'**

In a blog post, Airport Watch pointed out that Ryanair has form, having been criticised as far back as 2007 for what was seen as making misleading environmental claims.

However a lot of the media similarly didn't buy it. Earlier in the year, Ryanair was called 'the new coal' by Andrew Murphy, the aviation manager at the European Federation for Transport and Environment in the Guardian. This came as the Irish LCC joined nine coal fired power plants in the list of the top ten carbon emitters in Europe.

As a result, Oliver Smith, the Daily Telegraph's digital travel editor, wrote an article headlined, **'A low emissions airline? Ryanair must think we're idiots.'** Smith accused Ryanair of 'bare faced cheek from an airline that produces such a staggeringly vast cloud of greenhouse gases.'

Meanwhile Wired ran a piece with the title, **'Sorry Ryanair, there's no such thing as a green airline.'** The article quotes Christian Jardine, a research analyst at the University of Oxford's Environmental Change Institute, in saying that Ryanair is not necessarily green as such, it simply packs more people into aircraft.

As Jardine says in the piece, **"Ryanair's sole business model is to grow passenger kilometres,"** a by-product of that just happens to be that you reduce the average per passenger carbon emission.

On the other side of the Atlantic, Frontier came in for similar criticism on the back of its 'Fly Greener' initiative, complete with claims to be 'America's greenest airline.'

This included a flight to **Green**ville, Greenville, South Carolina, and a promo where having the last name 'Greene' or 'Green' would give you the chance to win free flights.

In the Washington Post, Hannah Sampson called Frontier's campaign a 'green stunt.' A number of activists and commentators in Hannah Sampson's piece claim initiatives like this are worse than doing nothing, as they lull flyers into a false sense of security.

As a result, it's problematic when an airline claims to be 'green'. As the Daily Telegraph piece says, it treats people like idiots.

There is enough awareness around aviation and climate change for flight shaming to already have had an impact on consumer behaviour.

An airline calling itself green doesn't look credible, and it could actually do more harm than good in masking some of the more concrete steps being taken by airlines and by the industry in being more environmentally responsible.

The challenge is to communicate those steps in a way that is clear, meaningful and easy to understand.

And here we'll finish off with something that Ryanair *is* doing right. The title for this video, 'Europe's greenest airline' raises a number of red flags for the reasons we've already mentioned.

However, much of the actual video content, which features the airline's CMO, Kenny Jacobs is good, because it explains what Ryanair is doing in very easy to understand terms. E.g.:

- 'Younger aircraft, younger engines produce lower CO2'

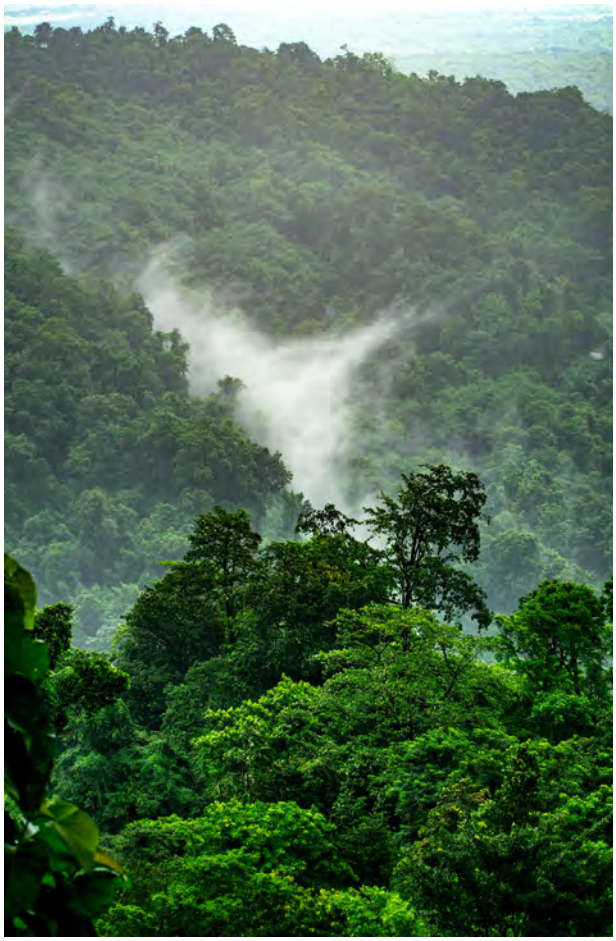
- 'Our flights are busy, which means we're not wasting any seats, and that also reduces our CO2'

- 'New aircraft, younger aircraft, more seats'

This is a good, simple explanation. Don't assume consumers know this stuff, spell it out. Except talking about 'load factors' Jacobs doesn't reach for jargon, and he positions what Ryanair is doing in language that someone who isn't an AV Geek can easily grasp.

Carbon offsetting - Do consumers buy it?

In 2017, an academic study found that one third of airlines were offering carbon offsetting programmes to their passengers. Since then, that number has certainly increased.



The latest airline to go big in this area is easyJet. On November 19th, the airline announced that it would be the first major carrier to offset the carbon emissions from the fuel used for all of its flights on behalf of all of its customers.

This goes further than the announcement by British Airways in October, that carbon emissions would be automatically offset on domestic BA flights from 2020.

easyJet's carbon offsetting projects are either Gold Standard or VCS (Verified Carbon Standard accredited) - two industry verification programmes.

The initiative will benefit forest conservation projects in Africa and South America, renewable energy programmes in India and community based clean water programmes in Eritrea and Uganda. The announcement also carried an endorsement from a leading UK environmentalist, Jonathon Porritt.

Crucially, the announcement that it would be offsetting carbon emissions for every single flight was positioned as part of an overall package of measures, which included an announcement about an MOU with Airbus to research hybrid and electric aircraft.

At the same time, easyJet is continuing to work with Wright Electric on the development of an electric aircraft.

The controversy around carbon offset schemes

Many climate change activists question the effectiveness of carbon offsetting programmes, criticising them as 'greenwash.'

They point to a 2017 European Commission Study, which claimed that most of the offset projects used by the EU under the UN's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) failed to reduce emissions.

In the introduction to this issue, we mentioned Justin Francis of Responsible Travel, who is a carbon off-set sceptic. In the video above, he lists seven reasons why he is against the schemes, which he calls 'discredited.' He claims:

1. It 'shifts the moral responsibility' for your carbon footprint from you to someone else. Justin Francis says this is not the kind of behaviour we should be encouraging
2. He says carbon offset schemes don't work (see the EU research we referenced above)
3. They don't act quickly enough, 'only real reductions can do that'
4. He claims many of the projects would have happened anyway
5. Carbon offset schemes are temporary and the trees are sometimes cut down later
6. It's a seeming quick fix, when the focus should be on the wider agenda, which is to make the industry decarbonise
7. Given that carbon emissions need to eventually be reduced to zero anyway, there will soon be noone or nowhere left to offset to

How the industry responds

We spoke to Verra, the body which develops and manages the 'Verified Carbon Standard' (VCS) - which easyJet's programmes adhere to. This is what they told us:

In terms of emission reductions and removals, our projects have issued more than 381,511,854 Verified Carbon Units (VCUs)* to date, the equivalent of taking 80,957,931 cars off the road for one year.

(*One VCU represents one tonne of carbon dioxide equivalent that was removed from the atmosphere or not emitted.)

"It is important to note that these VCUs are only issued after they have been achieved and verified, so after they have produced results and those results checked by a 3rd party auditor. Verifying VCUs involves a thorough process. A project first presents its proposed design which a third-party auditor reviews and approves ("validation").

"Next, the project implements its planned project activities. After that, the project undergoes verification during which an independent auditor reviews whether emission reductions have indeed been achieved. Only then do VCUs get issued.

"With regards to your question whether carbon offsets amount to greenwashing:

"Carbon offsets are part of a holistic approach to reducing emissions that should be one in a series of efforts to reduce emissions. Offsets are meant to compensate for those emissions that companies (airlines in this case) simply cannot avoid or can't feasibly reduce immediately (e.g., where the technology to do so is nascent or too expensive).

"Other efforts include measuring a company's footprint and reducing emissions where it makes sense - for example by investing in better, more fuel-efficient equipment and purchasing biofuels - and then to complement these efforts through investments in projects that are reducing emissions."

We also got a comment from Haldane Dodd, Head of Communications from the Air Transport Action Group:

"Offsets are a vital part of our industry plan for the mid-term. They are a legitimate and responsible approach as we work to bring in new fuels and technology to reduce emissions, assuming they meet robust sustainability criteria such as the Gold Standard or VCS, or the ICAO CORSIA recommendations once they are finalized.

"Importantly, this does not mean that airlines or the rest of the industry can avoid doing anything to reduce CO2 – they must be seen as a gap-filling measure to ensure that growth can take place sustainably and as we work to commercialise the energy transition towards new forms of flying: using sustainable liquid fuels or eventually electric and hybrid technologies."

What do consumers say?

But what about your customers. Do they believe in these programmes? Are they minded to voluntarily buy into them?

Sadly, the voluntary uptake of passengers buying into them is very small. The Ryanair corporate video that we referenced earlier uses the figure of 2% of passengers purchasing carbon offsets as a point of pride, saying that it's higher than other airlines.

One clue comes from a study by Dr Roger Tyers from the University of Southampton, who looked at whether consumers could be 'nudged' into buying into carbon offset schemes with various prompts.

By and large he found that nudges are unlikely to be effective when carbon offsetting is positioned negatively - as an add on cost, bundled with ancillaries like seat selection, extra bags etc.

However, his paper does give some clues as to what might work. Focus groups were given a number of nudges:

A 'descriptive norm' nudge (X million people have participated, the equivalent of taking Y million cars off the road), a third party endorsement nudge (from celebrities or public figures / institutions), and finally through 'affective framing' showing the end benefits of the scheme (e.g, the production of cooking stoves in the developing world).

Nudges using human stories and showing the benefits had mixed results, some respondents felt it made it all look more real, but others felt it looked like 'charity.'

The third party nudge didn't work, when large corporations were shown as using these programmes (e.g. participants didn't want their ethics to be guided by big business).

However, the descriptive or social norm 'held the most potential for encouraging offsetting.'

According to Dr Tyers, "Many participants also said that they liked the fact that the "meaningless figure" (of 101 million tonnes of carbon) was converted into something more "tangible" (e.g. 101 million tonnes of carbon into cars on the road.)

"Participants also often talked positively about being "part of something" bigger than their own individual action, which might otherwise seem pointless or insignificant."

How should you communicate your carbon offset programmes

So if you are introducing a carbon offset programme, how should you communicate it to your customers? We'd advise the following principles:

1. Use plain English

This should be a given, but as we've said throughout this issue, too many aviation environmental initiatives are still full of jargon. Explain the programme in as clear language as possible, which assumes no prior knowledge of aviation or indeed of carbon offset schemes.

2. Clearly quantify the difference it makes

We talked earlier about how a 'descriptive' or a 'social' nudge could work. Instead of simply talking about X tonnes of carbon, translate it into real world benefits. Also, show the scale of it, to demonstrate that carbon offsetting is established and substantial.

3. Put an emphasis on the now, as well as the future

One of the biggest criticisms of carbon offset schemes is that the results are factored in over decades, when action is needed now. As a result, it's important to show how these programmes are delivering in the short to medium, as well as long term.

4. Bring it to life, without positioning it as charity

Showcasing the projects and the people who benefit from them is effective, but at the same time this shouldn't be positioned as charity.

5. Show how it fits into the bigger picture

easyJet does a good job in showing how carbon offsetting is only part of a series of initiatives, which includes a commitment to developing hybrid and electric aircraft.

There will be less consumer cynicism, if you can show a real commitment to sustainability that goes beyond forestry or renewable energy schemes in the developing world.

6. Don't present as a cost or ancillary

easyJet is making carbon offsetting automatic for all flights. However, most other airlines still present as something you can pay for and opt in or out of.

If that's you, don't list it as a box to tick near ancillaries such as baggage allowance, seat selection, lounges or special meals. It's not surprising that the consumer buy-in into these programmes is less than 2%, if carbon offsetting is simply one in a shopping list of extra charges.

7. Finally, be honest. Don't pretend to be 'green'

In an earlier piece, we questioned Ryanair claiming to be 'green' when it has just entered the list of top ten EU carbon emitters, and it has been called 'the new coal.'

By contrast, we think easyJet gets it right in terms of positioning. When we asked easyJet for a comment about the effectiveness of their current sustainability programme, they had this to say:

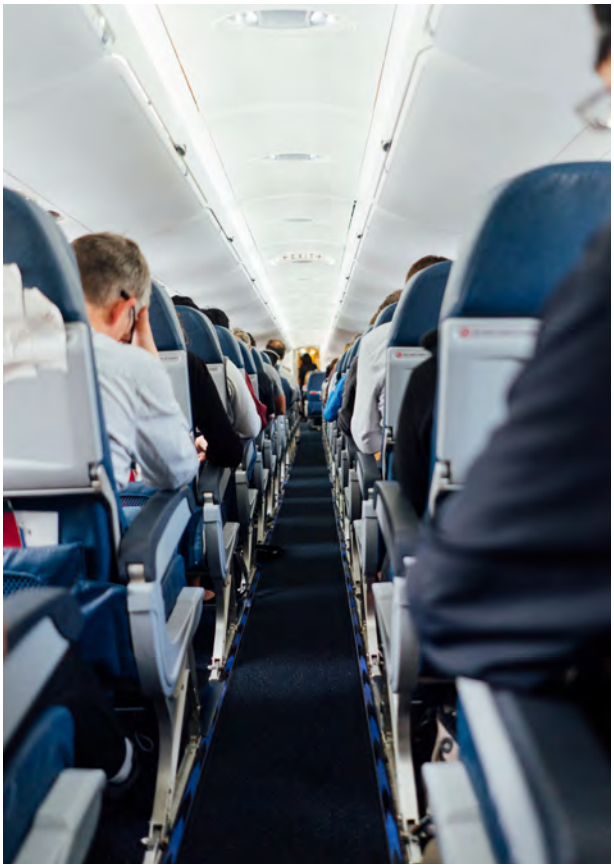
‘We know that carbon offsetting is only an interim measure while new technologies are developed, but at the moment we believe it’s the best way we have to remove carbon from the atmosphere.

‘In the short-term we will continue to work on reducing our carbon emissions and at the same time push to reinvent aviation for the long-term. Our focus has been on the development of electric flying and it will continue to be in the future. If people choose to fly we want to be one of the best choices they can make.’

That’s pretty much pitch perfect. easyJet is not pretending to offer a magic bullet, this is something they are doing now, while working to, as they put it, ‘reinvent aviation.’

Notice as well the emphasis on customer choice. Consumers may choose to fly, so it’s our responsibility to make that flight as sustainable as possible.

Time for a frequent flyer tax? A look at A Free Ride



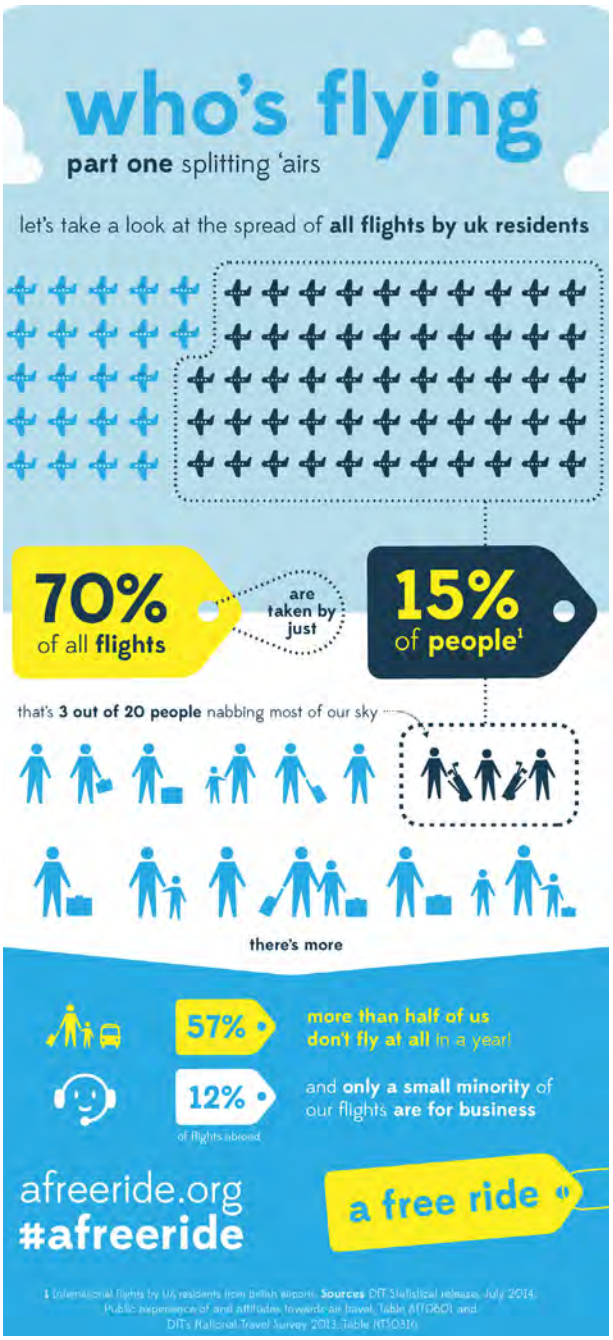
In the climate change movement, you'll find a spectrum of suggested actions when it comes to aviation.

At one end of the scale, groups such as the Extinction Rebellion feel that air travel should only be restricted to the most necessary cases unless it reaches a zero carbon target within five years. By comparison, the default airline industry position is a 50% reduction in carbon emissions by 2050, so 30 years away.

As we mentioned in the introduction, the basic argument (conveyed to us as well by Extinction Rebellion activists when we spoke to them outside the World Aviation Festival this year) was pretty straightforward and simple - this is an emergency, and so emergency measures need to be taken.

A few environmentalists will endorse, with qualifications, what some airlines are trying to do. As we said in the piece on carbon offsetting, easyJet got a cautious thumbs up from Jonathon Porritt in its recent announcement that it would carbon offset all flights.

In the middle however the most popular demand is one of a frequent flier tax, or for frequent flyer schemes to be banned altogether. To activists, they incentivise environmentally irresponsible behaviour to the point where some frequent flyers take mileage flights purely to preserve their status.



One of the most interesting projects which caught our eye, was the UK campaign 'A free ride.' What is noteworthy about this programme is that rather than take the line of all air travel being bad, it actually recognises that air travel has been a force for good:

"We really treasure the very real benefits that the technological miracle of human flight brings to our lives. So we need to find a way to maximise those benefits while minimising the harm caused."

The campaign proposes offering one tax free flight a year, which might actually help more people on lower incomes to fly, with a progressively higher tax kicking in for every flight made after that.

That idea has since been adopted by the third party in British politics, the Liberal Democrats, who announced it as part of their 2019 General Election manifesto.

The fact that second tier parties are starting to embrace these ideas are a sign that they are becoming more mainstream, and it's not unlikely that parties of Government will commit to these ideas in the coming years.

A note on the industry response

When CNBC contacted UK airline industry groups about frequent flyer tax proposals, they (according to CNBC) 'slammed' the ideas. 'This is a drop in the ocean as to what can be done by the Government' was one quoted response, while another talked about 'economic and reputational harm.'

We think a better reaction here would be to engage with the principle behind the idea - everyone needs to play their part, be it individuals, the Govt or the industry. And then show how airlines are doing that.

Aviation brands and sustainability

We've so far taken a look at easyJet, Ryanair and Frontier, all LCCs, to see what they are getting right and wrong when they talk about sustainability. But what are other brands in this space doing?

IAG - Flight Path Net Zero

Airline group IAG has committed to net zero CO2 emissions by 2050 going further than most airlines where the benchmark is only a 50% cut.

As 2050 is still much longer than most environmental groups demand (e.g. Extinction Rebellion lobbies for zero net emissions by 2025), IAG has set up two intermediary targets:

To have a modest 10% reduction in CO2 per passenger kilometre by 2025, and to have a 20% reduction in net CO2 by 2030.

At the same time, British Airways has committed to offset all its domestic UK flights from 2020.

IAG has produced a video on its sustainability page outlining the initiative, though curiously, it has not shared it more widely on its social media channels.

IAG and British Airways who claims to be environmentally responsible did take a knock when the media took a critical look at the practice of 'fuel tankering' - where planes are filled with extra fuel to avoid more expensive refuelling charges.

The BBC's Panorama programme discovered that BA generated an extra 18,000 tonnes of fuels due to this practice.

However, BA is not the only airline to engage in fuel tankering. Quartz calls it, 'A common cost-saving practice of airlines trashes the planet in the process.'

Lufthansa Group

Lufthansa's environmental policy was developed in 2008, and looks for a 50% reduction in net CO2 emissions by 2050 as compared to 2005 - so a more modest target than IAG, but one that many other airlines adopt.

The Lufthansa environment micro-site also makes a lot out of the investment in newer aircraft (e.g. in the A320neo).

However, one very impressive initiative is the one that made our front cover in September, where as part of the Upcycling Collection, Lufthansa recycled a full A340 and turned it to everything from furniture into rucksacks.

Finally, at the IATA Wings of Change conference (via Live and Let's Fly), CEO Carsten Spohr commented on Flight Shaming.

Carsten Spohr is reported to have said, "Airlines should not have to be seen as a symbol of climate change. That's just fake news", and then questioned whether industries representing 97-98% of other carbon emissions were doing as much as aviation.

Fake news is a problematic, loaded term, and we'd steer clear of it especially when it comes to environmental issues, something many consumers feel very strongly about.

This is especially as Lufthansa has pioneered some good initiatives. Spohr admitted that Lufthansa and other airlines have a responsibility to act, and outlined some of the measures they were undertaking, and that's what we'd recommend concentrating on going forward.

Emirates

Emirates environmental initiatives seem to be concerned with things around the edges - saving water when washing aircraft, using blankets made out of recycled material in economy and a paper saving 'think before you print' campaign at head office.

There is also a lot there that sounds like vague promises and warm words, e.g. 'naturally we are monitoring the development of biofuel technology with great interest' and 'Emirates is supportive of efforts around the world to improve the efficiency of air traffic management.'

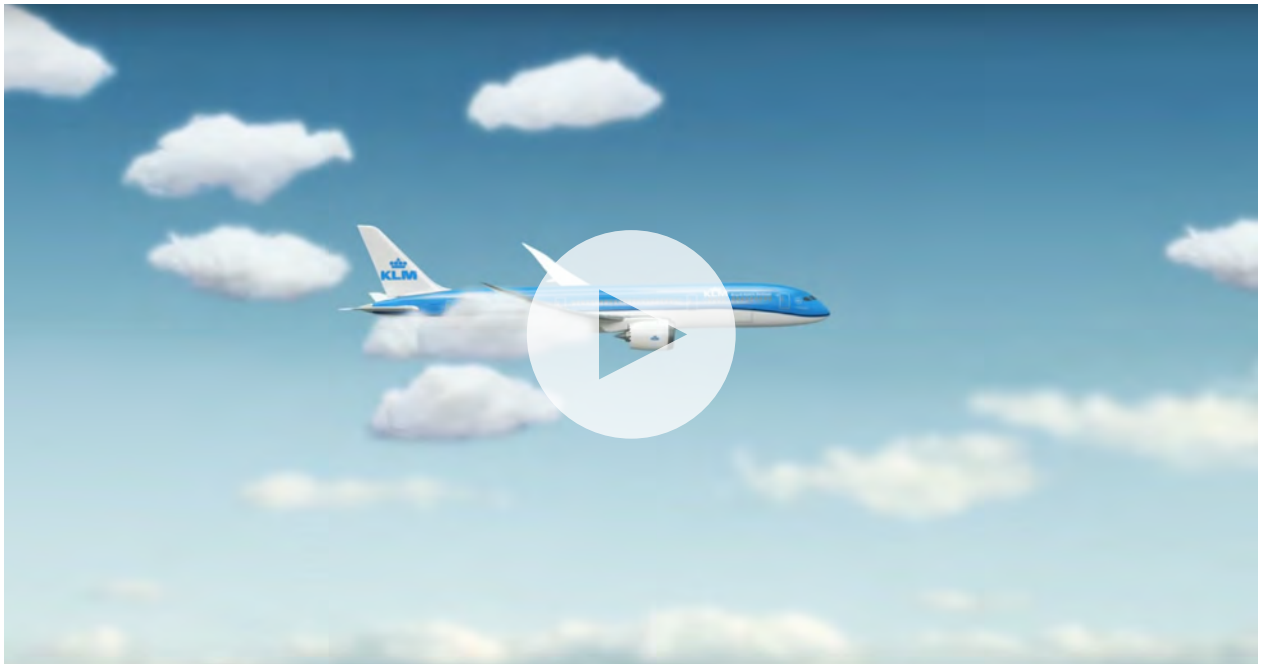
Emirates might not immediately be in the firing line as much as other carriers, due to it operating routes where there's no viable alternative means of transport, and due to much of its customer base being from outside Western Europe and North America where the bulk of climate change protests have taken place.

However, as we pointed out in our earlier piece about Generation Z, the research currently available shows that younger consumers in developing countries are also becoming more environmentally aware.

Also, Emirates of course flies to European countries, where Governments may soon start applying higher carbon taxes on air travel and / or frequent flier levies.

As a result, our recommendation would be for Emirates (and other airlines in a similar position) to start showing targets and to convert the expressions of intent into something more meaningful and concrete.

KLM Fly Responsibly



In the Summer, KLM got global media attention for its campaign urging passengers to Fly Responsibly. This included asking passengers whether other forms of transport might be better than flying.

When we covered this in July, we were sceptical as it looked like it could be a stunt, without concrete action behind it. Why for example, we asked, was KLM still running flights AMS - BRU and AMS - DUS, two routes which could be served perfectly well by train.

It turns out that KLM has put its money where its mouth is, and has done exactly that, cancelling one of its BRU / AMS flights in 2020 in favour of seats on board a high speed Thalys train.

The KLM micro-site has a lot of information about researching new aircraft development and about using biofuels and does it in a slick, user friendly way, we also liked how it groups everything into three - what you can do, what KLM is doing, and what industry / Govt is doing

United Eco-Skies

When flying to Austin, Texas earlier this year (via Houston) for SXSW, we watched this video. It's part of United's 'Big Metal Bird' series of videos which look inside the airline, and this one was about environmental initiatives and biofuels.

It presents what United is doing in an accessible way that's not filled with jargon, but also talks about tangible numbers and benefits. It's a good example for how this kind of information should be presented.

For one thing, United's video is one of the first we've seen from an airline that answers a very basic question - what's a biofuel?

The video also includes a look at how United recycles unused amenity kits and turns them into hygiene kits for those in need. It manages to do all this in under four minutes.

The micro-site is packed full of information, and when comparing it with KLM's site, it looks more substantial and real. The one thing we're not sold on is the name 'eco skies' as it seems to make a claim that the airline is green. As we talked about earlier in this edition, that's not a credible claim for an airline to make.

Delta - Offset your flight

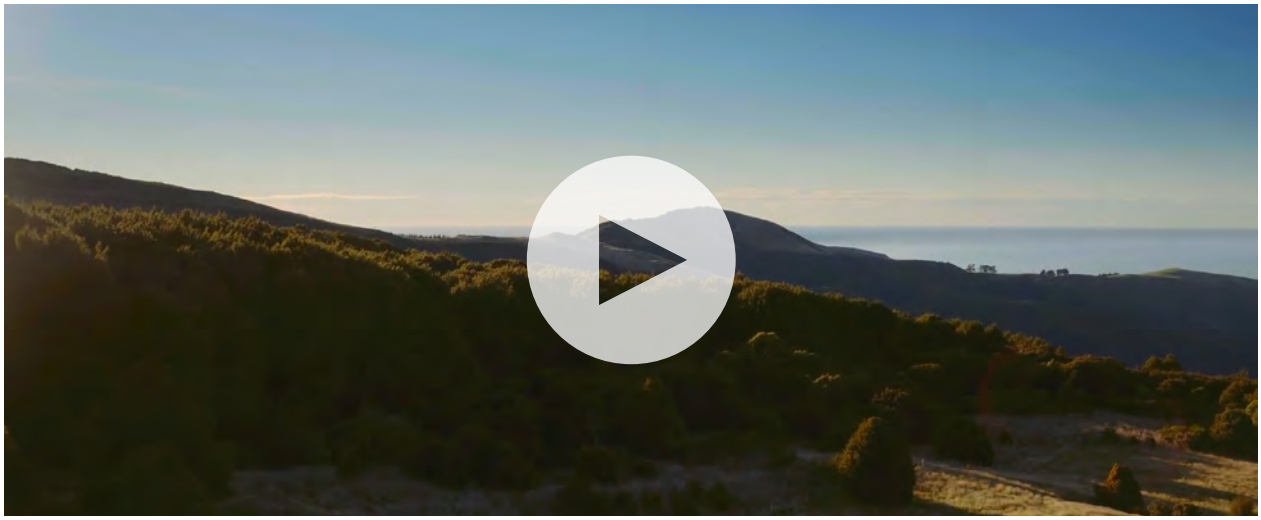
Like Lufthansa, Delta aims to reduce carbon emissions by 50 percent by 2050, compared to 2005.

A video on the Delta news hub gives statistics on some of the things that the airline is doing, such as 30% fleet renewal by 2020.

Delta also gives passengers the option to voluntarily purchase carbon offsets via a separate website.

Like many other major airlines, Delta has committed to eliminating single use plastics, and it is also involved in other CSR initiatives, such as the Habitat for Humanity Homes, which are built out of recycled materials.

Air New Zealand - Carbon Management



An article in Stuff talks about Air New Zealand attempting to become 'The World's least unsustainable airline.'

Air New Zealand is of course one of the country's biggest polluters by virtue of being the national airline, yet the location of New Zealand means that air travel is the only realistic way for New Zealanders to ever leave the country.

As Stuff reports, Air New Zealand releases a report annually about its carbon emissions, and has set up a sustainable advisory panel.

Like easyJet, Air New Zealand has also brought on board environmentalist Sir Jonathon Porritt, in this case to speak at sustainability-related events.

Digging into the detail of what Air New Zealand is doing, it includes the commitment (like many other airlines) to a reduction of 50% in net emissions by 2050 compared to 2005 levels.

Also like other carriers, the airline talks about fleet renewal, a voluntary carbon offset programme for passengers and the way it recycles waste.

Notably, what struck us, is the level of honesty by Air New Zealand, with the airline admitting that:

‘Air New Zealand is one of New Zealand’s largest carbon emitters. In 2019 our carbon footprint (greenhouse gas emissions) increased by 5.2%, primarily due to an increase in Air New Zealand’s network capacity and temporary fleet substitutions as a result of the Rolls-Royce engine issues.’

Unlike other airlines, Air New Zealand also doesn’t try to minimise the global impact of air travel. Its environmental website admits that while air travel is crucial to the New Zealand economy, globally the sector accounts for 2-4% of emissions.

This honest approach, something you can also see in how SAS deals with environmental issues, in turn makes the airline’s other green programmes seem more real and less than a PR exercise.

Singapore Airlines

Singapore Airlines is another major airline which is adopting a standard package of a 50% reduction in carbon emissions by 2050, introducing new aircraft and cutting down on single use plastic.

However, the environment page on the Singapore Airlines website contains a major fail. SIA talks about the 'Aspire' (Asia and Pacific Initiative to Reduce Emissions) programme, but when we clicked on the link to discover more...we were directed to a plastic surgery clinic called Aspire.

At the same time, SIA links to the Harapan Forest Initiative, a conservation project it says it is supporting. And the website (at time of writing) was non functional.

Hi Fly - Plastic Free

Wet lease carrier Hi Fly, makes a lot out of its commitment to go plastic free thanks to its links with marine conservation body, the Mirpuri Foundation.

The head of the Mirpuri Foundation, Paulo Mirpuri, also happens to be the boss of Hi Fly.

The airline staged the first ever flight with not a single use plastic item on board at the end of last year. Hi Fly also has 'Save the Coral Reef' type designs on the side of its aircraft.

Eliminating plastic is important, but what climate change activists really care about is carbon emissions. Here the airline has pledged to become carbon neutral by the end of 2021.

Loganair - Electric Aircraft

How does a small boutique airline deal with sustainability? For that, we looked at UK / Scottish regional airline Loganair.

Loganair has made one very impressive environmental commitment, to use electric aircraft as soon as possible on the short (two minute) Papa Westray-Westray flight in the Orkney Islands.

Despite the very short distance, these flights are essential for the local population in a very remote part of the UK, and are subsidised by the Scottish Government.

Loganair is working with Cranfield University to make the aircraft used on its route electric.

The biggest potential for electric aircraft is on short routes with small numbers of passengers, at least for now.

The Papa Westray - Westray flights would seem to be the perfect case study of how this technology can be utilised. It's also a flight that is essential and that can't really be replaced with any other mode of transport.

As a result, it seemed like a missed opportunity that Loganair doesn't really shout about this on its website. Indeed, we had to look around and read media articles elsewhere to find information on the initiative.

IATA - The business of freedom

We've covered the IATA Business of Freedom campaign in the past. Essentially it shows how aviation has been a force for good, and enriched people's lives in areas such as medicine, culture, business and family reunions.

The idea is sound, and many environmental groups will admit that yes, aviation has made the world a smaller place.

As we said when we previously covered the campaign, what is missing is real life case studies to bring this campaign to life.

Of course, a campaign like this needs to be run in tandem with one that accepts the need to be more environmentally responsible.

Again, a good example of how that's done is Air New Zealand, which is both honest about its environmental impact (see above), while stressing its vital role for the national economy.

Why can’t flights get an environmental rating

One of the main difficulties the industry faces is one of communicating what it’s doing in simple, easy to understand and meaningful terms.

One idea we’ve discussed internally is doing something similar to what happens when you buy a fridge or freezer in Europe, where every appliance comes with a sticker that is graded from A to E showing you how energy efficient and environmentally responsible that product is.

It gives you an instant snapshot and if you want a further explanation, you can go and look online for more details.

We put this to Haldane Dodd, Head of Communications at the Air Transport Action Group, which IATA feeds into, and which is taking the lead in much of the industry response on climate change. He told us:

“Interestingly, your suggestion of an energy label has been discussed for a number of years and is under development at EASA, but there are number of communications challenges with it, as aircraft are not like fridges or cars – they are not purchased by consumers.

“We also have a possible legal issue if people book a flight on an “A-rated” aircraft, but operational challenges mean it is replaced with a “C-rated” aircraft.

“Not only that, but we don’t always know the exact aircraft operating a flight when the tickets go on sale 12 months out. Flights are often booked according to routing, so if you have an A-rated aircraft from point X to Y (long-haul), but an F-rated aircraft on Y to Z (which is the shorter segment), which do you use?

“There are numerous other challenges which mean this is a complicated area, but one we are looking at.“

Images courtesy of ATAG

Haldane Dodd did share with us a number of visuals showing how airlines could communicate how they are (e.g.) introducing more fuel efficient aircraft, beyond just saying, 'we've brought in the new A320neo.'

We've shared some examples here, the images of course aren't from a real airline, but are just examples. However, these are good, and give a guide on how airlines should communicate these kind of things visually.

Images courtesy of ATAG

What's particularly important and effective is having this kind of information in the seat back pocket and / or the back of the seat. Just about everyone looks at this, especially while waiting to take off.

Environmental and sustainability programmes - take-outs and learnings

1. When you have something to shout about, do

We mentioned Loganair introducing electric aircraft on its Scottish island routes, that's the kind of thing that should get more attention.

Similarly, Lufthansa turning an old A340 into furniture and fashion items did get the kind of exposure it deserved.

2. Be honest and sincere

Watch out for two possible communications pitfalls:

As we talked about in detail in our earlier article, don't call yourself 'green' like Ryanair or Frontier, consumers don't believe it.

And don't call the Flight Shaming movement "fake news", as Carsten Spohr is reported to have done. Especially if like Lufthansa, you've actually made progress in this area.

Instead, we advocate honesty and engaging with the issue sincerely. Air New Zealand, easyJet and KLM are good examples.

easyJet's position on carbon offsetting, that this is only an interim measure for now, strikes the right note. It recognises that the airline and the industry at large has a bigger part to play.

Similarly, Air New Zealand is very honest about its environmental impact and doesn't try to hide it.

Consumers aren't fooled, so don't treat them like fools. Moreover, being honest actually makes your environmental initiatives look more credible.

3. Put your money where your mouth is, and show it

KLM introducing a train instead of one BRU - AMS flight, is something tangible people can wrap their heads around. It shows how you've translated a statement of intent into something real.

4. People care about plastic. They care about global warming more

Yes, plastic pollution is a big problem. But to people concerned about the environment, global warming is the biggest problem. In fact, Wired reports that some environmentalists are calling the focus on plastic a diversion from global warming.

As marine conservation is an area the airline's CEO is passionate about, Hi Fly has taken a lead on eliminating single use plastics.

But the no plastic message is all the more powerful, as the airline is also committing to go carbon neutral (via offset schemes) in 2021. It doesn't look like tokenism.

5. Use storytelling to bring what you are doing to life

Here United provides an excellent example of how that should be done. The Big Metal Bird video on biofuels, presented the subject in an accessible way, while also including concrete facts of how United is making a difference.

6. Be visual

We'd also recommend displaying this in seat back pockets, as the ATAG example showed, where you have a captive audience.

When activism turns into direct action

In the earlier introduction to climate change pressure groups, we mentioned that many are now in favour of direct action - including at airports.

Here are a few examples from the past year:

London City Airport

On October 10th, Extinction Rebellion protestors occupied London City Airport, demonstrating against the proposed £2 billion LCY expansion programme.

This included demonstrators climbing both onto the roof of the airport, as well as on top of a British Airways Embraer parked at LCY.

Geneva Airport

Extinction Rebellion was also active at Geneva Airport. On November 16th, 100 activists blocked the airport's private jet terminal.

Berlin Tegel Airport

Members of German activist group 'Am Boden Bleiben' (stay on the ground) occupied Berlin's Tegel Airport on 8 November.

They pre-announced the action by releasing short teasers showing 'penguins' entering the terminal.

The group also carried out a demonstration at Frankfurt Airport.

Stockholm Arlanda Airport

In August, activists from Swedish group, Flyglarm Arlanda, prevented fuel trains from getting into the airport.

Simply a warning that they intended to carry out a blockade, meant that management closed down the fuel depot for 24 hours for safety reasons, meaning that activists didn't actually have to go on the train tracks for their protest to have an affect.

Amsterdam Schiphol Airport

Greenpeace has announced plans to hold a multi-day 'protestival' at AMS in December, which Greenpeace says will result in the airport being transformed into a 'festival site.'

As reported in the NL Times, Greenpeace warns that they are 'not going to check out quickly.'

Noida International Greenfield Airport

Airport environmental protests are not restricted to the West. In India, 'environmentalists warn of major threat to biodiversity from the construction of the Noida International Greenfield Airport which will be 70 km away from the Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi.' (Mongabay, India).

The proposed development has seen a sit in protest of 200 farmers, opposed to it.

Bristol Airport

1,000 cyclists affiliated to the Extinction Rebellion, cycled around Bristol Airport while listening to 'cycling themed music.'

The cyclists were protesting the decision by the local council to back the expansion of Bristol Airport.

London Heathrow Airport

There have been several attempts to disrupt Europe's largest airport, London Heathrow, over the past year. The most favoured route involves flying drones and thereby stopping air traffic.

So far, these attempts have been stopped both by police intervention as well as technical issues. However, the chances are more likely than not, that the protestors will end up succeeding over the next year.

Paris CDG

Protestors from the 'Non au Terminal 4' group disrupted a public consultation by the airlines of Paris CDG. The group opposes the expansion of the new airport and the building of the terminal four, which could result in 40 million extra passengers a year.

The above is just a small selection of recent climate change protests at airports. Airports themselves are of course favoured protest spots, two non climate change related airport protests this year involved ones in Barcelona and Hong Kong.

Why airports? Quoted in Fortune, Wong Ka Ying, an official from the Hong Kong Artist Union pointed out that "It is an excellent platform to reach out globally."

If you work for an airport operator, the chances are that you have some kind of crisis plan in place. We're guessing that plan largely revolves around disruption, such as closure due to bad weather, or a serious incident such as a crash.

However, one of the more likely things to happen to you is protestors turning up at one of your hub airports, or at your head office. This is especially if you are based in Europe.

If you haven't planned for this, you should be doing so now, ideally using simulation software developed by Polpeo.

In the next section we'll talk more about this, and how Polpeo can help.

What is empathy? And how can you put it into action

By Kate Hartley, Co-Founder, Polpeo Author of the book, Communicate in a Crisis

A recurring theme in this edition has been the importance of empathy when it comes to dealing with climate change protestors and the wider public.

We think you need to show empathy that you understand the concerns levelled at you, rather than just reach for boiler-plate statements. But it's more than that, if an issue becomes a crisis and (say) protestors turn up, disrupting flights, you need to show empathy towards those affected.

So what is meant by empathy? And how can you use it in a crisis? Polpeo Co-Founder Kate Hartley explains more.

Want more insights on crisis communications? Take a look at Kate's book, 'Communicate in a Crisis.

When we run crisis simulations, we look for the participants to respond using empathy.

What we often see is teams that prepare an official statement on the crisis, and then copy and paste part or all of that statement to social media.

Not just in a general update post, but as responses to countless individuals who are all worried about different aspects of the crisis.

These people all have their own stories, and the formulaic response is frequently jarring.

When we give the participants feedback, we discuss the need for a response that uses natural-sounding language and expresses empathy.

But what is empathy? How is it different from sympathy?

Empathy is more than sympathy. Sympathy is empathy at a distance

I can see that someone is going through a tough time, and that makes me feel bad for them. I may take action as a result of feeling bad for that person – like send them a card (or, if we're talking about a brand, I may tweet something along the lines of "we're sorry about the disruption to your service"), but it still feels a bit arm's length.

Empathy is having the ability to imagine yourself in the other person's position. But that's not enough really is it? During any kind of crisis, personal or work-related, we only know that a person or brand has empathy for our situation if they take action.

Aaron Sorkin sums it up nicely in this West Wing Scene:

But, there's more than one kind of empathy.

Psychologist, Paul Ekman, argues that there are three kinds of empathy:

Cognitive

Cognitive empathy is being able to see a situation from the other person's perspective, but with enough distance not to feel it personally.

For example, if climate change protestors have turned up at the airport, cancelling flights, or if there is some

kind of weather or operational based disruption, instead of thinking:

"We need to get this back quickly, or people will start complaining, and we could lose customers", or "why does this person keep tweeting? We said that it could take until 8pm?", the social media team think: "A lot of our customers have connecting flights, or desperately need to be somewhere for work or personal reasons. They must be feeling anxious at being stuck, we need to get this sorted quickly."

Emotional

Emotional empathy is when you start to take on the other person's emotions. For example, if the crisis team is dealing with a major incident, and people are calling a helpline in tears, worried about a relative's safety, the person they are calling for help may start to feel just as upset because they're imagining what it would be like to be in that situation themselves.

The big problem with this type of empathy, in the long-term, is that if you don't find a way to manage it, it can lead to burnout. In the short-term, this empathy may not be helpful as the last thing most people want when they are contacting someone for help is to hear them breakdown too.

It's why we recommend that the crisis communications team works in shifts during a sustained crisis. You want your team to be empathetic, but it comes with a risk that they'll be overwhelmed by the range of emotional responses.

Compassionate

With compassionate empathy, you feel what the other person is feeling, but you can use that emotion to think of the best way to help them through the situation. It's asking, "what can I do to help?" or "would it help if I..?"

It's a useful ability for crisis communication professionals to have because it allows them to feel and express appropriate kinds of empathy, while also giving them the insight they need to make the situation right.

However, even if the brand has a stellar cast of empathetic communication specialists working for it, they still need to have the permission to express themselves to people during the crisis, and it helps if they have the authority to act.

For example, are they allowed to credit the customer's account or if they are a frequent flier, their mileage balance?

Words can be hard enough to get right, but empathy can often seem hollow if it's not followed by action.

How brands can act and communicate with empathy during a crisis

• **Let customer service representatives talk to customers like people –** rather than treating them as a problem or following a strict script.

• Give the social media team permission to **adapt brand messaging per platform and individual.**

• **Listen and ask questions.** People often communicate why the problem is so frustrating for them. Why is a delayed or cancelled flight so frustrating for them personally? Show these people that you understand that this isn't just a service issue, but something that impacts their life.

• **Follow-up where possible.** If you've had a long conversation with someone about disruptions to their flights, and the issue's supposed to be being sorted out, check-in with them later. It's a great way to show people that chatting with them wasn't just about managing an issue, but that you're genuinely concerned that they are okay.

You've got a crisis plan, but have you factored in your staff?

By Kate Hartley, Co-Founder, Polpeo
Author of the book, Communicate in a Crisis

Many if not most of the issues and crisis management plans we see overlook one very important factor: What about your staff? Have you thought about the impact on communications teams, or on frontline staff members when a crisis breaks?

That's particularly relevant when it comes to environmental protests, as these direct themselves at travel and aviation brands in two ways. You get online activism, where protestors post on your Facebook page, or organise hashtags on Twitter, which your social media team has to field.

And then you increasingly get direct action, where protestors actually show up at an airport or at a head office.

Here in London, that's already happened. In October, London City Airport faced disruption when protestors turned up and (among other things) climbed on an aircraft. And Heathrow has faced several threats from activists planning to fly drones around the runways, something that would of course close the airport (so far they've been unsuccessful).

However for a much better, and I think more common, example of what aviation brands are likely to face, it's worth looking at what Greenpeace has (at time of writing) got planned in Amsterdam.

The environmental group intends to show up for two days at Schiphol, but their aim is not to disrupt flights. Instead, they intend to hold a 'Prostestival', involving music, banners, noise and a visible presence.

According to the NL Times, Greenpeace said, "By claiming a central location inside, Schiphol Group literally cannot ignore the action. The visitors to the festival are not planning to check out quickly."

Polpeo's offices are near London's Oxford Circus, so this idea of 'not checking out quickly' is something I've seen first hand.

Extinction Rebellion activists have so far turned up twice this year, in the Spring and again in October. They didn't leave in a hurry either time, for example, in the Spring their protest involved setting up an encampment and stopping traffic.

Though Greenpeace has published a good conduct style 'action agreement' for Protestival participants, it's worth noting that on the Extinction Rebellion sub-thread on Reddit, there were comments accusing Greenpeace of being too moderate.

As a result, not everyone in the wider movement shares Greenpeace's commitment to good behaviour that avoids disruption.

So just imagine that a group turns up to where you are. They don't disrupt flights or stop your business from operating, and they do just enough to stop being immediately removed by Police.

But they form a kind of picket line, where they talk to staff as they go to work, or to passengers trying to check in. And they stay for a day or two before they are finally moved on.

Then imagine that there's social media and online activity running alongside this, where your team is having to field comments about your organisation "burning the planet' or being a polluter.

What's the effect on staff? For many it will be emotionally draining to have to encounter activists several times a day.

Some may even get angry at them.

When Lufthansa boss Carsten Spohr recently accused flight shaming of being 'fake news', he actually hit on a sentiment that you can often see expressed by aviation industry workers or the AV Geek community online.

For example, the One Mile at a Time blog reported Spohr's comments by concluding that "I do think the airline industry is disproportionately attacked when it comes to their emissions, because they're an easy target. "

Meanwhile, Live & Let's Fly actually congratulated Spohr for "a rare push-back in the politically correct world of corporate capitulation via lip service to the environmental movement."

So some people in the industry feel unfairly targeted by the climate change movement. And it wouldn't be a stretch to imagine a situation where a few employees get in an argument with climate change activists, with the exchange being captured on social media.

Then looking ahead into the future, you could perhaps see a scenario where even working for a so-called 'polluting' airline puts you in line for criticism, much as the same way as if you were working for an oil company.

Seems far fetched? Maybe, but remember that some of the more radical environmental groups are already calling for airline advertising to come with health warnings like tobacco ads do.

So how do you help your teams. First of all, make sure all frontline staff are on board, and are aware of how to act. Also, if you don't already do this, have an internal social media policy in place, making sure that staff can't use their personal accounts to comment on what the company is doing.

More widely you need to:

• Have a clear vision that everyone in the business is working towards and believes in.

• Communicate clear values that are inclusive - everyone pulls together.

• Build a culture of resilience: trust, collaboration, communication

• Create your resilience plan around three areas: physical, business and personnel

• Exercise your crisis plan regularly

When a crisis does break, you need to be mindful of the mental and physical health of your teams, including:

• Mindfulness

• Recovery breaks

• Changing their environment

• Keeping hydrated

• Taking time out

All of these things form part of our crisis training and crisis simulations. Get in touch with us to see how we can help.

Flight shaming and aviation - conclusions

We've presented you with a lot of information in this issue. Here we've summarised the conclusions

1. Flight shaming isn't yet having the kind of impact that some studies say it is having. But consumers are increasingly aware of aviation's impact on the environment. As a result, it's not a question of if awareness turns to action, but when. That's unless the industry is clearer about what it's doing now, and about what more it can do in the future.

2. Environmental pressure groups are united on one thing: aviation is a problem when it comes to global warming.

However, underneath that, there are a range of opinions on what to do about it. Some groups will be prepared to constructively engage with you. In those instances, it is worth doing so.

3. Generation Z hasn't stopped flying yet. However it's the generation that is driving many of the climate protests, and awareness of the issue among this group is growing.

As a result, the chances are that we could soon see a generational shift when it comes to attitudes towards flying

4. A few airlines are calling themselves 'green.' We strongly advise against it, this is not a credible position to take.

In fact, we recommend the approach both easyJet and Air New Zealand have taken in being honest and up front with consumers.

5. Over a third of airlines now use carbon offset schemes. These programmes are not uncontroversial, many environmental activists criticise them.

We'd argue they do have benefits, but they need to be positioned in the right way.

They shouldn't be positioned as a magic bullet, but rather as something that can be done now while longer term projects (e.g. electric aircraft) come to fruition.

6. The idea of a frequent flyer tax or levy is becoming more popular, and moving from activist groups to political parties in the West.

So far aviation industry groups have dismissed these schemes and ideas out of hand. We would advise that the correct response is to constructively engage with these ideas and groups - and suggest alternatives.

7. The idea of having some kind of environmental rating for flights isn't straight forward, but nevertheless, there are better, more meaningful and more visual ways of showing what kind of difference a new aircraft makes, we've shared some examples developed by the Air Transport Action Group.

8. Direct action by environmental groups should definitely be part of your crisis management plans. This is something you should simulate and prepare for, using software such as that provided by Polpeo.

In particular if you work for a European airport or airline the chances are this will be something you will face over the next year or two.

9. Those crisis plans and simulations should involve staff, including communications teams and frontline staff. Do they know what to do, are they on board with your objectives, have you thought about the stress they may face when dealing with crisis situations?

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To start with, we're offering free webinars in February where we'll give an update on some of the issues we touched on in this report.

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