

## Dialogue in the Air

Airlines are to welcome 3.6 billion passengers in 2016 according to statistics by IATA, and only in Turkey about 250 million people are to fly through 2015. Such big numbers show that airline companies play very important roles in our daily lives as we spend a lot of time and money travelling. Economically, airlines mean a lot (billions of Euro) to countries, either they are owned by the governments or private companies. In addition to their contribution to countries' economies through sales and job opportunities, airlines companies play other significant roles: representing countries at international level and being dialogue ambassadors among cultures. From the perspective of national identity, well-known companies such as Turkish Airlines, British Airways, Lufthansa, Swiss Air, Air France, KLM, TAROM or Olympic Air seem to include more national symbols in their marketing and service strategies –even their names gives a big clue. Another significant characteristic is that “national” airline companies make their in-flight announcements primarily in their own languages, plus in English. However, relatively small and low-cost companies act more as international actors, not reflecting a lot of national symbols. Many people don't even know where those companies are from. Ryan Air, for example, doesn't have any Irish symbol except the harp as the company logo.



Nowadays, it is quite impossible to find someone who hasn't flown, so almost everyone has an opinion about airline companies. They have their favourite ones, or they complain about some others. But why and how do we like or dislike airline companies? I asked this on social media, and there were a lot of experiences and opinions shared under my posts [in Turkish](#) and [in English](#). Let me explain main points about how airline companies play important roles in intercultural dialogue:

Prices are important. Most of the passengers, especially young people choose their flights searching for lowest prices, so low-cost airlines are quite well-known among the young generations. Some flight search websites such as Skyscanner, Momondo and Ekobilet are more famous than many airline companies! [Here is the list](#) of some low-cost airlines. I think I have to include the comment from a Greek friend of mine here: “even being helpful to travellers, those companies belong to the same financial mafia, for whom the intercultural dialogue is only a way to get rich.”

Service is also important. Everybody wants to feel valuable during their travel experience. Some people take it more emotionally, seeking good smiles at flight attendants' faces, but some look for good taste and wants to land in their destination with a full stomach, while some would be more than happy sleeping comfortably on large seats. Here, we don't have a long list as [Turkish Airlines](#), a member of Star Alliance, is the first and the best option for almost everyone in Turkey, even in Europe, proving the meaning of the slogan “Globally yours”. It has been chosen "Best Airline in Europe", "Best Airline in Southern Europe" and awarded "Best Business Class Onboard Catering", "Best Business Class Lounge Dining" in Skytrax World Airline Awards in the last 5 years in a row! Maybe, we can create a list for Turkish Airlines for the services that contribute to intercultural dialogue especially through promoting Turkey and Turkish culture.

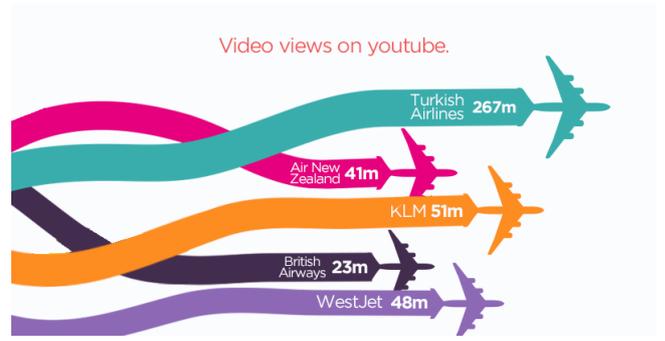


- **Service**, or let's say "Turkish hospitality" means a lot for everyone, and it has a lot of dimensions: comfort, food, entertainment, communication, timing, customer services, and accessibility. Turkish Airlines satisfies the passengers at almost all the headings. The company has been proud of flying to more countries than any other airline in the world!
- **The food** served on TK flights is always fresh, delicious and culturally symbolic. Sometimes, there are some items on the menu that even Turkish passengers taste the first time. Also, all the food served is halal, and passenger can choose their menu and drinks according to their personal or religious preferences.
- **In-flight Magazine: SkyLife** has a rich content and interesting design, and every passenger has a complimentary copy free of charge. It is both in Turkish and English, and also available online on [www.skylife.com](http://www.skylife.com). There are a lot of collectors of this magazine. I, personally have about 200 copies in my library!
- **Creative Commercials** by Turkish Airlines frequently become viral on social media. As a concrete example proving the quality of those ads, "Kobe Vs. Messi: The Selfie Shoutout", originally released in December 2013, has been voted [the favourite YouTube video ad](#) from the last ten years. In addition, despite being made for economic purposes, sometimes these advertisements serve as great promotions for companies for countries. Check the recent campaign "[4 Seasons Balkans](#)", for example. I don't think these countries have such nice promotion videos produces their tourism and culture departments.
- **Sponsorships** to famous sports clubs and events have made Turkish Airlines something that Turks are proud of. The company have spent millions of Euros to sponsor [Manchester United](#), [Barcelona](#), Galatasaray, Schalke04, [Euroleague](#), and a lot of domestic events such as [Presidential Cycling Tour of Turkey](#), and Turkish Airlines has an [online](#) open call for sponsorships!
- **Corporate social responsibility campaigns**, just like sponsorships, create a positive image in customers' mind, and you can see people talking about airline companies as if they are the owners. Turkish Airlines supports a lot of Turkish companies and promotion campaigns. If you have flown with Turkish Airlines recently, you must have seen those ads about [hazelnuts](#) or other organic products, and they are even sold on board or [online](#).



In fact, regardless of the airlines you take, flying itself is a big step into cultural diversity and dialogue as it is always possible to meet new people during your flight. Most of the time, you don't know who will be the person flying next to you. I, personally, still keep contact with some people I met on air, and I have heard a lot of interesting stories such as people in their traditional costumes, trying to talk about their cultures, and sharing their personal experiences. There are some surprising stories like praying on the plane, too. For example, it is possible to see Jewish passengers reading Torah and Muslim passengers reading Quran on the same flight from Poland to Istanbul.

I would like to close this article by focusing on the use of media. Of course, all the airlines do their best to promote themselves in the best way primarily on their websites, but my appreciations and congratulations will again go to Turkish Airlines. The company uses [social media](#) and digital platforms very effectively, and millions of visitors and followers are not surprising. Also, the media productions made by Turkish Airlines are always quality. Check the [Youtube](#) channel, and you'll enjoy watching every single video there! By the way, have you watched [the first live broadcasted flight](#)? What about [the wedding above the clouds](#)? All and again, by Turkish Airlines!



**Best Airline on Social Media**  
*Finalist*



**Murat Akbiyik**  
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References:

[www.iata.org](http://www.iata.org)

[www.turkishairlines.com](http://www.turkishairlines.com)

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