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## THE EVALUATION WITH SWOT ANALYSIS OF AIR TAXI COMPANIES FROM A STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PROCESS PERSPECTIVE <sup>1</sup>

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### Öz

Özellikle 20. yüzyılın ikinci yarısından itibaren işletmeler zamanla değişen çevre şartlarının etkisini daha iyi değerlendirebilmek için SWOT analizini yaygın olarak kullanmaya başlamışlardır. Bu doğrultuda, bu çalışmanın genel amacı kapsamında hava taksi şirketlerinin güçlü ve zayıf yönleri ile dış çevrenin oluşturduğu fırsatlar ve tehditlerin SWOT analizi aracılığı ile incelenmesidir. Çalışmada, finansal ve faaliyet raporları, şirketlerin web siteleri ve akademik literatürden elde edilen verilerden faydalanılmıştır. Bunun yanında, çalışmada tam sayım örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın sonucunda geniş müşteri profili, ulaşımında kolaylık imkânı, uçuş süresince zamandan tasarruf, uçuşların hizmet kalitesi, uçak bakım hizmetlerinin artırılması ve büyüyen iç pazar hava taksi şirketlerinin güçlü yönleridir. Bunun yanında, tanınırlıktaki düşüklük, büyük havayolu şirketleriyle rekabet edememek, pazar payının düşük olması ve büyük havayollarına göre marka bilinirliğinin olmaması, uçak çeşitliliğinin az olması, servis maliyetlerinin yüksek olması ve bakım onarım maliyetlerinin yüksek olması zayıf yönlerdir. Hava taksiler için fırsatlar turizmin gelişmesi, hava trafiğinin ve uçuş ağlarının artması, son yıllarda iş ve tatil amaçlı seyahatler için yeni uçuş noktalarının oluşturulması ve uçakla ilgili teknolojik gelişmelerdir. Son olarak, rakip firmaların faaliyetleri, artan vergiler ve çeşitli ekonomik krizler, hizmet sektöründe artan maliyetlerin firmaların filolarını bir veya iki tip uçakla sınırlandırması, akaryakıt fiyatlarının artması ve yüksek hızlı demiryolu ağlarının artması hava taksi şirketleri için tehditlerdir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Stratejik Yönetim, SWOT Analizi, Hava Taksi Şirketleri, Havacılık.

### Abstract

Companies started using SWOT analysis extensively, especially since the second half of the 20th century to better evaluate the impact of changing environmental conditions over time. In this direction, the general purpose of the study is to examine the strengths and weaknesses of air taxi companies and the opportunities and threats created by the external environment through SWOT analysis. The data obtained from financial and annual reports, websites of companies, and academic literature were used in this study. Besides that, the full-count sampling method was used in the study. As a result of the study that the strengths of air taxi businesses are having a broad customer profile, offering easier access to destinations, saving time through flight, the service quality of flights, increasing aircraft maintenance services, and growing domestic market. Besides that, recognition is low, the lack of competitiveness with large airline companies, smaller market share, and no brand awareness compared to large airlines, low aircraft diversity, high service costs, and high maintenance and repair costs are their weaknesses. According to the opportunities of air taxis; the development of

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tourism, the increase in air traffic and flight networks, the creation of new flight points for business and leisure trips in recent years, and technological developments related to aircraft. Finally, activities of rival companies, increases in taxes and the various economic crises, increasing costs in the service sector limiting companies' fleets to one or two types of aircraft, rising fuel prices, and increasing the high-speed railway networks are their threats.

**Keywords:** Strategic Management, SWOT Analysis, Air Taxi Companies, Aviation

## **1.Introduction**

Since the second half of the 1960s, the intensive pressure on competition and the desire to make a difference have forced companies to create new strategies, especially with the changing economic parameters and customer-oriented trend (Özköse et al., 2013; as cited in Merdan & Okuroğlu, 2016: 3; Hill & Westbrook, 1997: 47). In this direction, companies needed to analyze internal and external environmental conditions to compete with rival companies, increase their profit shares and render better service to their customers. In this case, companies have started to exert efforts to increase their productivity and efficiency using various analysis techniques (Özköse et al., 2013; as cited in Merdan & Okuroğlu, 2016: 3). One of these analysis techniques is SWOT analysis, which started to be used in the 1970s (Uçar & Doğru, 2005: 2; Chermack et al., 2007: 386).

There are long life cycles and efforts to achieve success by obtaining productivity and efficiency of work among the main goals of the companies. Therefore, companies should know the environment in which they will compete in the best manner. In this case, SWOT analysis will become crucial for companies. Using their past data, knowledge, and experience within the framework of SWOT analysis will make it easier for companies to understand the internal environment. In this context, when the company analyzes the internal environment, it uses the strengths and weaknesses related to the company (Girsang, 2021: 1196; Pickton & Wright, 1998: 41). In addition, within the scope of the external environment, companies use their labor force, technological assets, and financial resources to be successful in the environment. The external environment usually includes rival companies and technological and cultural changes. Thus, companies use opportunities and threats to define the external environment (Şahin & Tektaş, 2021: 90; Gepner et al., 2022: 182; Girsang, 2021: 1196). In this direction, the SWOT analysis is performed in the direction of the environmental analysis (Pickton & Wright, 1998; as cited in Pazouki, et al., 2017: 208). This kind of analysis is vital to evaluate the positive and negative aspects of the companies in the internal and external environment. In this context, it is of great importance for the companies to analyze the external and internal environment within the framework of SWOT analysis in the highly competitive environment of air taxi companies and in today's arena of struggle where there is a strategic war between these companies (Igliński, et al., 2015; as cited in Molamohamadi & Talaei, 2022: 72).

There is only one study in the literature that includes a SWOT analysis of air taxi companies and in this respect, it is similar to our study. This is the study named “Comparative Analysis of Traditional Air Taxi and Urban Air Mobility” by Savaş and

Gökşen (2023). In their study, the researchers examined internal and external environmental conditions as in our study within the scope of SWOT analysis.

Within the scope of the other parts of the study, the definition and scope of air taxi companies, strategic management, and SWOT analysis are mentioned in the first part. In the second part, the methodology section, information is given about the purpose, importance, and method of the research. In the third part, the research findings are given. Finally, in the conclusion and discussion part, evaluations regarding the research were made.

## **2. Conceptual Framework**

### **2.1. Air Taxi Companies**

Air taxi companies are part of air transport companies. According to Turkish sources, companies with a maximum capacity of nineteen seats that carry out commercial air transportation with registered aircraft of Turkey are defined as air taxi companies (SHGM, 2023). Air taxi operations can be defined as flights that are carried out to act without being bound by a determined schedule (Şahin, 2016: 13). The demand for air taxi companies has increased day by day in Turkey, especially with time constraints, day trips, increase in the number of business people, and security and comfort need (Şahin, 2016: 13). Generally, business people and domestic and foreign tourists use air taxis. It requires air taxi companies to render better quality service to their customers.

Air taxis operate by aircraft such as helicopters, propeller planes, and light private planes. Helicopters are more advantageous at close points where there is no airport. Aircraft, on the other hand, have more capacity and can travel longer distances than helicopters. However, crafts need an airport at their landing and take-off points. Generally, air taxi service in Turkey is provided by private enterprises (Savaş & Gökşen, 2023: 23). The increasing number of air taxi companies in recent years has further increased the competition in this sector. Besides that, air taxi companies also provide air ambulance service, especially in recent years, due to time advantage. Air taxi companies are successful in meeting the regulatory requirements within the strict policies implemented by DGCA and the procedures of other international organizations (ICAO, EASA). Many ISO quality certificates obtained by air taxi companies also increase the service quality of flights. It enables air taxis to serve their customers safely and securely.

### **2.2. Strategic Management**

The strategy was first used as a concept in the military and defense field. This concept has also been used in the field of business management over time, especially after the 1970s (Vafaei & Harati, 2010: 171; Aktan, 2003: 71; as cited in Kahveci, 2008: 1; Güçlü, 2003: 65; Bushnell & Halus, 1992; as cited in Vinzant & Vinzant, 1996: 203; Martinet, 2010: 1485). Every business should determine various strategies related to its objectives for their benefit (Nickols, 211: 2). While the strategy specifies the long-term goals, it shows how to achieve these goals and can be expressed as a declaration of will that guides the achievement of the goals (Armstrong, 2017: 28). Strategic management, on the other hand, refers to analyzing and regulating the relations between the companies and its environment and using

operating assets efficiently (Dinçer, 1998: 7; as cited in Güçlü, 2003: 67). Strategic management is related to companies developing effective and efficient strategies, performance and implementing them, making various evaluations on the results of the strategies, and making provisions and activities to ensure the control of these strategies (Amason, & Ward, 2020; Eren, 2005; Bracker, 1980: 221; Fauzi et. al., 2020: 38). In this case, companies that adopt strategic management can take more advantages against their rival companies (Dess et al., 2010: 5). Strategic management refers to the planned use of resources by companies to achieve their goals. The main purpose of strategic management is to provide compatibility between the resources and capabilities of the organization and environmental conditions (Steiss, 2003: 1; Dinçer, 1998: 7).

In strategic management, the definition of the objectives and strategies of the companies takes place. This management style includes the goals that reveal the vision of what will happen in the future and the tools that show how it can be realized (Armstrong, 2017: 27; Clark, 1997: 417; Biggadike, 1981: 621). That causes managers to develop long-term perspectives for companies, thus gaining advantages for them (Smircich & Stubbart, 1985: 724).

According to some authors, there exist seven basic features and advantages of strategic management. These are as follows (Güçlü, 2003: 73): (a) Strategic management plays a role as a function of the senior management in the organization (b) Strategic management is related to the vision of the company. Essentially, this kind of management is efficient in creating future and long-term goals. (c) The effects of strategic decisions taken in the company affect the entire company. (d) Since companies are open systems, the environment is an efficient factor that should be followed very closely within the framework of strategic management. (e) The company bears a social responsibility towards its external environment within the scope of strategic management, (f) Strategic management effectively distributes the resources necessary for the fulfillment of the main objectives of the company, and (g) Objectives, decisions, and activities determined within the framework of strategic management constitute the common starting point of everyone up to the lowest management unit of the company

### **2.3. SWOT Analysis**

The concept of SWOT analysis was first used in business management in the 1970s (Uçar & Doğru, 2005: 2). The introduction of SWOT analysis into the academic literature was first used by Heinz Wehrich (1982) in an article on this type of analysis (Özköse et al., 2013: 45; as cited in Merdan & Okuroğlu, 2016: 3). SWOT analysis is generally a way of strategic thinking created to get information about the future and to design future applications (Nikolaou & Evangelinos, 2010: 229). According to another definition, SWOT analysis is a strategy that companies use to measure and evaluate their overall performance and the performance of their competitors from an objective perspective. In this case, the easiest way to reveal the current status and expectations of a sector, a company, or activity is to conduct a SWOT analysis in that respect (Akça, 2005: 516). In other words, SWOT analysis, included in the strategic analysis in companies, is a type of analysis that occurs through the efficient use of environmental conditions. Strategic analysis is a process that

includes determining the goals and objectives of a company and developing strategies suitable for them. In addition, it is important for examining both the internal and external environment of the company (Hill & Westbrook, 1997: 47; Bozkıran, 2018; as cited in Esmer & Gezer, 2021: 120).

Some authors define SWOT Analysis as a structural approach technique that helps to evaluate the strategic position of the business by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of a company and the opportunities and threats related to the company (Demirdöğen, 1997; as cited in Özköse et al., 2013: 45; Gepner et al., 2022: 182; Weihrich, 1982; Piercy & Giles, 1989: 5; Chang & Huang, 2006: 158; Ommani, 2011: 9448). With SWOT analysis, companies see their current situation and determine their future goals. SWOT analysis provides advantages for companies in terms of protecting their strengths, trying to eliminate their weaknesses, evaluating opportunities, and minimizing threats (Özan et al., 2015: 4-6; Kong, 2008: 283). Strengths are characteristics that provide advantages over other businesses. Weaknesses are characteristics that put businesses at a disadvantage compared to other businesses. Opportunities include the advantages of the business concerning the opportunities in the environment. It is related to the elements that environmental conditions can create problems for businesses (Piercy & Giles, 1989: 5; Rowe et al., 1994; Chang & Huang, 2006: 158). In this context, the SWOT analysis scheme is presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Scheme of SWOT Analysis**

	Helpful	Harmful
Internal origin	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
External origin	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>

Source: Iglinsket al., 2015: 144.

In Figure 1, according to Iglinsk and his friends (2015: 144) the SWOT analysis scheme showed that strengths and weaknesses are internal factors. Besides that, opportunities and threats are external factors. in addition to these, strengths and opportunities are helpful factors but, weaknesses and threats are harmful factors (Iglinsk et al., 2015: 144). Internal factors are more related to the goals of the organization. Besides that, external factors are related to the external environment.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1. Purpose and Significance of the Research**

The general purpose of the research is to investigate the strengths and weaknesses of the air taxi companies that create their internal environment and the opportunities and threats created by the external environment through SWOT analysis. The significance of the research is due to the limited number of SWOT analysis studies on air taxi companies in the national and international literature. Another significance of the research can be determined as trying to enable the making of strategic plans and operation schedules by revealing the strengths-weaknesses and opportunities-threats in terms of air taxi companies.

#### **3.2. Research Method**

##### ***3.2.1. Research Sample***

The target population of the study consists of 51 air taxi companies in Turkey, which were obtained by searching the DGCA (Directorate General of Civil Aviation) website. The research sample consisted of all air taxi companies in Turkey obtained using the full-count sampling method. In this case, the number of samples reached for air taxi companies statistically represents the target population.

##### ***3.2.2. Data Collection Method***

In this study, the full-count sampling method was used. The full-count sampling method can be expressed as the examination of all units in the target population of the study (Gürtan, 1982: 39). The population that will be evaluated with the full-count method generally has a limited number. Since this method involves all units, it can give an accurate idea about the nature and size of the population surveyed. In this context, when detailed information is needed for some variables, the use of this method will serve the purpose (Gürtan, 1982: 39).

This study was carried out with data obtained from financial and annual reports, websites of companies, and academic literature. In the study, SWOT analysis was used to determine the strengths and weaknesses of air taxi companies in their internal environment and their opportunities and threats in their external environment. Companies registered with DGCA were identified for SWOT analysis of air taxi companies and a study was carried out on them. When the literature is examined, it is seen that there are a limited number of studies on air taxi companies. This increases the importance of the study.

### **4. Research Findings**

#### **4.1. Swot Analysis Results for Air Taxi Companies**

In this part, in addition to the examination of the strengths and weaknesses of air taxi companies, the opportunities, and threats arising from the external environment of the companies are emphasized.

#### ***4.1.1. Strengths of Air Taxi Companies***

According to the research results, saving time through flight is an important advantage for air taxi companies, as we live in an age in which time is of the essence. Because air taxis generally use business people, tourists, and patients who want to get ambulance service. Air taxi service draws the attention of business people and tourists in terms of saving time, especially due to the advantage of optional departure time and the absence of delay problems. Air taxis offer easier access to the destinations of customers instead of large and crowded airports, thanks to their landing and take-off capabilities on short runways. Another strength of air taxis is that they provide easy access for passengers to hard-to-reach places. Especially after the pandemic in 2021, an increase was observed in the utilization rates of air taxis in Turkey. In this context, people from all walks of life preferred air taxis. It has led to the expansion of the customer profile.

Especially with the DGCA's giving due importance to the control of service policies, the number of experienced pilots and crew of air taxi companies has increased. In addition, various ISO quality certificates obtained by air taxi companies enhance the service quality of flights. Nevertheless, the importance of aircraft maintenance services under safety and security procedures by the DGCA has increased the aircraft maintenance services in these companies. Finally, the domestic market for air taxi companies has extended with the increase in the customer profile and the foreign tourist flow that reached a certain level. In this context, all these factors constitute the strengths of air taxi companies.

#### ***4.1.2. Weaknesses of Air Taxi Companies***

Although the recognition rate of air taxi companies is not very high, the recognition of large airline companies is high. In this case, the lack of competitiveness of air taxi companies with large airline companies, their smaller market share, and brand awareness compared to large airlines are their weaknesses. Air taxi companies generally also have a tight budget, and this results in less variety of aircraft. In addition to this, it was found that the factors such as the high service costs and the high maintenance and repair costs are the weaknesses of air taxi companies.

#### ***4.1.3. Opportunities for Air Taxi Companies***

Turkey is a developed country in terms of tourism due to being the intersection point of Asia and Europe and the diversity of its natural resources and historical artifacts. Accordingly, Turkey has high power in terms of attracting domestic and foreign tourists. This creates an opportunity for air taxi companies in terms of the increasing number of customers. In this context, the increase in air traffic and flight networks has reached higher levels, especially with the increase in the number of tourists and business people in recent years. This creates different opportunities for the said companies. In addition, people from every walk of life have used air taxi transportation with the creation of new flight points for business and leisure trips in recent years. Increasing demand for air ambulance services can also be seen as another opportunity for air taxi companies. Finally, as the necessities of the time, technological developments related to aircraft have contributed to the increase in the use of air taxis. It has been another factor of opportunity for air taxi companies.

#### 4.1.4. Threats for Air Taxi Companies

Among the threat risk for air taxi companies are the activities of rival companies, which have started to rise with the increasing number of customers, especially after the pandemic. The increase in taxes and the various economic crises that occur at times can also be considered another threat. Increasing costs in the service sector and limiting companies' fleets to one or two types of aircraft may also result in few choices available to the customer. Besides that, rising fuel prices with the rise in exchange rates can be seen as another threat. Finally, the customer mass, who wanted to gain an advantage economically, used high-speed trains with the increase in the high-speed railway networks. This situation poses another threat to air taxi companies. In Table 1, the SWOT analysis of air taxi companies in Turkey is shown.

**Table 1. SWOT Analysis of Air Taxi Companies**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Saving time	Inability to compete with major airlines
Air taxis offer easier access to the destinations	Smaller market share
Having a broad customer profile	No brand awareness compared to major airlines
Having experienced pilots and crew	Low aircraft diversity
Increasing aircraft maintenance services	High maintenance and repair costs
Growing domestic market	
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
Development of tourism	Increased competitor activity
Increasing air traffic	Higher taxes
Growth in flight networks	Economic recessions
New destinations for business	Limiting the fleet of air taxi operators to one or two types of aircraft
Leisure passengers	Rising fuel prices
Technological developments related to aviation	Increase in the high-speed rail network

Table 1 shows strengths-weaknesses and opportunity-threat factors for air taxi companies.

## 5. Conclusion and Discussion

Companies have to determine and meet the expectations of the environment to continue their life course and develop themselves more (Pasch, 2019: 581; Dess et al., 2010: 5). In this case, companies use several analyzes to know their internal and external environments well (Dess et al., 2010: 5). In this direction, one of these analysis methods that has survived to the present day and is still used in many companies is SWOT analysis. SWOT analysis is performed to enable easier decision-making and the development of strategic plans by making certain evaluations within the company (Speth, 2023). Briefly, it is a generally used tool in strategic planning (Chermack et al., 2007: 386; Martinet, 2010: 1485). SWOT analysis for companies is carried out through various situations. While the internal factor indicates the strengths and weaknesses of the companies, the external factor is the opportunities and threats introduced to the companies by the external environment (Kajanus et al., 2004: 499). The emergence of SWOT analysis and its application by many companies in cooperation have been caused by the need for change and development in themselves, the rapid technological and technical changes in the sectors, globalization, the development of the market, and the needs created by many other factors (Speth, 2023).

The study revealed that the strengths of air taxi businesses are having a broad customer profile, offering easier access to destinations, saving time through flight, providing easy access for passengers to hard-to-reach places, increasing the number of experienced pilots and crew, the service quality of flights, increasing the aircraft maintenance services and growing domestic market. Besides that, recognition is low, the lack of competitiveness with large airline companies, smaller market share, and no brand awareness compared to large airlines, low aircraft diversity, high service costs, and high maintenance and repair costs are their weaknesses. According to the opportunities of air taxis; the development of tourism, the increase in air traffic and flight networks, the creation of new flight points for business and leisure trips in recent years, increasing demand for air ambulance services, technological developments related to aircraft. Finally, activities of rival companies, increases in taxes and the various economic crises, increasing costs in the service sector limiting companies' fleets to one or two types of aircraft, rising fuel prices, and increasing the high-speed railway networks are their threats.

In the literature, only one study was found in which a SWOT analysis was performed on air taxi companies, and in this respect, it was similar to our study. In this context, in the study titled "Comparative Analysis of Traditional Air Taxi and Urban Air Mobility" by Savaş and Gökşen (2023), they focused on environmental conditions in their Swot analysis. Besides that, some strengths-weaknesses, and opportunity-threat factors that they determined for air taxi companies are similar to our study. Within the scope of these similarities, time-saving is mentioned in terms of strengths. The weaknesses are the high operating and maintenance costs and usage fees of air taxi services. The opportunity to achieve technological innovations is specified within the scope of chances. Finally, the inability of air taxis to compete with other means of transportation in urban areas has been identified as a threat (Savaş & Gökşen, 2023: 34).

It is expected to determine the strengths and weaknesses of air taxi companies with this study, to have an idea about how and in which areas the strengths can be used for companies, to use the possible opportunities most efficiently by trying to strengthen the weaknesses of the companies and to gain various advantages for companies in terms of precautions against probable threats. In this case, it is thought that this study will be beneficial for companies and researchers. Since there are limited studies on air taxi companies in the literature, it is intended to contribute to the literature with this study. The limitation of this study is that the sample was only about air taxi companies, and it was performed in a certain period and only with the data of a specific sector. This study, which evaluates air taxi companies, can be adapted to aviation companies in different sectors. In future studies, more detailed analyses can also be made by using SWOT analysis together with other analytical decision-making methods.

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