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ACADEMIC WEEKLY DIGEST

School of Hospitality & Tourism Management

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ARE AIRLINES SENDING THE WRONG MESSAGE?

Before COVID-19, the global aviation system produced a large and growing portion of the world's transport-related emissions. **Prof Scott Cohen**, **Nicole Cocolas** and colleagues explored the role that airline marketing communications play in shaping the *user practices and cultures* of air travel, in relation to demand volume and the turnover time of air travel consumption.

RECONFIGURING AVIATION FOR A CLIMATE-SAFE FUTURE: ARE AIRLINES SENDING THE WRONG MESSAGE?

PROF SCOTT COHEN & NICOLE COCOLAS

High transport emissions are a roadblock to global climate change mitigation. SHTM's researchers were part of a team led by Professor James Higham (University of Otago), that addressed the need for systemic change in aviation to meet global emissions reduction targets. Their work focused on the role of online marketing communications in promoting excessive consumption of air travel and, in turn, carbon-intensive lifestyles. Through analysing online marketing communications, the researchers found airlines perpetuated three prominent tropes.

Adventure and discovery was deployed to create consumers-as-travellers, differentiating individuals from perceptions of the mass tourist. *Privilege* was used to construct cultural capital by conferring prestige and class distinction. Most notably, all airline communications used strategies to create a *sense of urgency* and fear of missing out on cheap flights, to accelerate air travel decisions. Time was artificially constricted through references to closing flight sales and limited seating availability, creating the impression of resource scarcity.



FURTHER READING:

Higham, J. Hanna, P. Hopkins, D. Cohen, S. Gössling, S. Cocolas, N. (2021). Reconfiguring Aviation for a Climate-Safe Future: Are Airlines Sending the Wrong Message?. *Journal of Travel Research*.

Link: bit.ly/3BNICF6

Aviation remains important to geographically distant destinations, however, interventions are needed to shift the industry from volume demand to a climate-safe model of production and consumption. While the industry rebuilds from the disruption of COVID-19, conditions such as marketing regulations should be incorporated into government bailouts to ensure a just transition towards more climate-friendly transport systems.