

# HOW SWISSPORT INTERNATIONAL PROMOTE ITS DIFFERENT PRODUCTS1

Topic: Operation Management

Paper Title: How Swissport International Promote its different products?

Word Count: 4912

Pages: 25

Referencing: Harvard

Education Level: Masters

How Swissport International Promote its different products?

[Name of Student]

[Name of Institution]

[Course]

### **Abstract**

This paper identifies different ways, how effectively Swissport international promotes its different products in a competitive environment, to identify the competitors and new strategies of Swissport to keep business successful and analyse gathered data and make predictions about the future.

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## **Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

Swissport International Limited is a private, independent company established in 1996; formerly known as Swissair Ground Services. The company provided ground handling for Swissair AG since the mid-1950s. Swissport, after its establishment, started global expansion, creating international subsidiaries and joint ventures. In January 1997, the company acquired a 40 percent holding in Munich Airport's, Airport Services Muenchen GmbH unit and began providing ground services at London Heathrow Airport. Later on, Swissport's operations had spread to Israel, Brazil, Puerto Rico and Kenya. The expansion did not stop here and the operations of Swissport were also expanded to South Africa, Turkey, France, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Peru, and the United States. (Swissport International 2016).

Swissport Cargo Services has joined Cargo 2000, the IATA interest group and quality management system for the international air cargo industry. Cargo 2000 brings together airlines, freight forwarders and their suppliers with the goal of implementing a new quality management system. Swissport is one of only a handful of ground handling organisations to have been accepted into the group, following a decision by the Cargo 2000 board to open up membership to ground handling agents (Swissport Customer Journal, 2004).

Swissport International with headquarters in Opfikon close to Zurich Airport in Switzerland is the world's leading Service Company to airlines and airports. Swissport International Ltd., the world's leading provider of ground and cargo handling services to the

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aviation industry, is proud to announce that Swissport Cargo at Liège Airport in Belgium has successfully completed the validation process for IATA's "Center of Excellence for Independent Validators" (CEIV) on Pharmaceutical Logistics. Pharmaceuticals are among the most delicate products transported as air cargo, and therefore, it is essential to ensure their transport follows a global standard and strict temperature control guidelines.

Following regulatory approval, Swissport officially acquired Servisair as of December 2013 bringing together more than 55,000 dedicated personnel across 255 locations in 44 countries and look after over 224 million passengers per year and the great services that they have come to expect from Servisair are now part of the world's largest aviation handling company.

### **1.2 Aim of the Study**

The basic aim of this study is to identify how Swissport international Ltd aviation promotes its different products in a competitive environment

### **1.3 Rationale of the Study**

Aviation is one of the most tightly regulated industries in the world. Airport operators and Airline are continually looking for opportunities to be more efficient and, at the same time, improve the customer experience. To passenger the airport is not the destination, but merely a point a long a journey, the goal should be to move passenger through that point as expeditiously as possible. This improvement is the result of more efficient flow through the airport, because the overall airport space is used more efficiently. Congestion, queues and general crowding can be better manager and peaks in flight schedules can be spread across the airport more efficiently (Bellitti 2008).

The significance of this study is that it discusses different ways and strategies used by Swissport international to effectively cope with these challenges and promote its products in a competitive environment.

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

- To identify the competitors and new strategies of Swissport to keep business successful;
- To explain the role of social media in global marketing with in Swissport;
- To device strategies to improve employee retention, productively and motivation

## Literature Review

### 2.1 Strategies of Swissport

According to Mudyawabikwa (2011) effective strategies are essential to become profitable in a competitive environment. Swissport International believes in eliminating its competitors, as well as diversifying its revenues through continuous acquisitions (Kramer, 2010). Swissport International Report (2004) said that Swissport's acquisition of Groundstar in April doubled the group's UK business volume and added five airports to its overall network. Just as importantly, it also marked the coming together of two organisations that share the same quality ethos.

“We can now give our UK operations even more drive and further expand both our station network and customer base” (Joseph In Albon, 2004)

Groundstar also offers Swissport an enviable customer list that covers a broad cross section of scheduled, charter and low-cost carriers, including British Airways, First Choice Airlines, Ryanair, Monarch, Britannia, Thomas Cook Airlines, EasyJet, Flybe and Eastern Airways. Most recently, Groundstar signed a contract to handle Virgin Atlantic's six daily B747-400 flights from London Gatwick.

“What will not change is our commitment to controlled growth built on quality. And Swissport is 100% behind that.” (Nigel Daniel 2004)

According to the Swissport product and service report (2013), in August 2013, Swissport announced the acquisition of competitor Servisair, who bought Handlex in Canada which was part of the group Transat in 2012. Over the years, Swissport has been the recipient of several industry awards including Ground Handling Award 2013, Air Cargo Handling Agent of the Year 2014 (for the sixth year in succession) and Global Aviation Ground Services Company 2012 (for the twelfth year in succession).

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The biggest impact on Swissport's 2014 results was the successful integration of Servisair after the closing of the acquisition on 23 December 2013. Swissport could not only strengthen its overall market share, but also became the largest ground handler in the UK & Ireland with operations at more than 30 airports, and further increased its footprint in LATAM by being present in 10 countries in the region (Swissport 2015)

In addition to acquisitions, Auerbach & Koch (2007) said that Swissport International also uses the strategy of alliances. For example, it signed an agreement with AGN Aviation Services (AGN), the third biggest ground handling provider in Mexico, on jointly providing ground handling services. With this agreement, Swissport expands its network in Mexico to 28 stations; the combined company will offer its customers country- or multi-station-wide solutions for passenger and ramp handling services (Swissport, 2014). Similarly, Swissport and KLM have signed a long term global cooperation agreement that covers the provision of ground handling services at more than 60 of the carrier's outstations worldwide. It is a move that could set a bold new trend within the industry.

Swissport's main objectives with this reorganisation are to step closer to customers and promote even better cooperation around the world, while at the same time ensuring transparency and high operational quality. Following Swissport's recent success in obtaining detailed cooperation with two major global airlines (KLM and Swiss 2014)

According to Gavin, the Committee also recognised the international esteem in which Swissport is held.

“This is exemplified most recently by Swissport's new-style, long-term global collaboration with KLM Royal Dutch Airlines,”

“We look forward to witnessing the company's continued commitment to delivering the highest levels of customer satisfaction and the provision of enhanced and cost-effective services to an even wider and broader base.” (Richard Rowe 2004)

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The extended relationship between Swissport and KLM involves the following, Handling 27,046 flights, Passenger, ramp handling a more than 30 station, Cargo handling at more than 45 station Handling 333,476 tonnes of air cargo. In February 2004, Swissport announced the acquisition of fellow Swiss company Protects Aviation Security. The move has generated considerable industry interest and confirmed once more that Swissport has entered the aviation security market with a strong base.

“We have already been able to demonstrate the added value of professional document control, saving client airlines more than CHF 12.5 million in fines in 2003,”

(Swissport Customer Journal 2004)

Swissport Kazakhstan (2015) announced the start of passenger handling operations at Astana International Airport in Kazakhstan. Together with Astana International Airport and AMG, the trust management company for the chain of airports in Kazakhstan, Swissport Kazakhstan will jointly raise the quality of ground handling services to international standards.

According Swissport Limited report (2015), it has decided to withdraw from ground handling operations at London Gatwick (LGW) and that Swissport and Aviator LGW Limited (Aviator) have signed a binding agreement on the disposal of Swissport's London Gatwick ground handling operations to Aviator. The transaction is including ground handling related assets, contracts and staff. Both companies work closely together to ensure a smooth transition.

Wintersberger et al., 2013 described that Swissport is a people focused organisation; without people companies cannot meet their goals and achieve to vision, such as to focus on the principles of sustainability and compliance, living by the “Three Ps” (Malaval et al., 2013)

- People: Swissport to show respect towards to people and their values and compromise on safety and work with enthusiasm and enjoyment;

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- Professionalism: Swissport pioneers; working constantly on achieving sustainable results and creatively explore new options and improved solutions;
  - Partnership: Continually striving to exceed the expectations of their clients and Swissport commitments will deliver excellent service in any place at any time.
- (Swissport 2014)

### **2.2 Products and Services**

Halttula (2013) says that there are diversity of services which are provided by Swissport. For example, the company also provides security services for around 40 customers in over 10 countries worldwide. The team working within the organisation is highly trained in both security and vulnerability assessments, providing complete solutions for customers. Swissport Aviation Security customers have the flexibility to choose the solution fit for them; be it on a local or a global level, the Check port entities guarantee full flexibility for the obtaining of security services.

In a study by Sweet(2014), services and expertise in this specialised field are based on more than 20 years' experience within Aviation Security with a clear focus on and commitment to quality solutions and integrated products for customer convenience. Working with a company like Swissport allows clients to purchase security services via Ground Handling and Cargo and benefit from the interaction realised by the integration of security tasks in existing processes, such as: Check-In Security, Combined Check-In and Security Services, Gate Security, Combined Gate and Security Services, Cabin Clean & Search, Combined Cleaning and Security Services.

According to Halttula, (2013) the passenger services provided by Swissport International includes, Passenger Services, Airport Ticketing Sales Desk, Arrival and Transfer Services, Check-in Services, Dedicated Passenger Services, Gate Services, Lost and Found Services, Lounge Services, Special Passenger and VIP Services. Aircraft loading ,

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Unloading, Baggage Sorting and Transportation, Cabin Cleaning, Crew Transport, De/Anti-Icing, GPU, Push-Back, Unit Load Device Control, Toilet and Water Services.

Other services include, document verification, Access Control (airport premises, warehouses, aircrafts), Passenger screening , profiling, Extraordinary security services for US carriers, Aircraft security services (guarding / search), Cargo and baggage screening, Integrated Security, API-, No Fly-, Watch list handling, Various other aviation security activities, training (Swissport back ground 2014).

According to Forsyth et al (2010) Airport need to attract both airlines and surface operators to use them as one of the needs in their networks. They provide the physical infrastructure to make that possible and usually the management to operate the airport, remove military airfields can and do handle commercial flights, but these to be attractive to passengers there needs to be some way for them to reach their final destinations. According to Lüthi(2008), Swissport Cargo Services plans to introduce a new, to use to tracking and tracing tool that will provide immediate competitive advantage for airlines, agents and freight forwarders.

In a study by Schmidberger et al (2009) it is explained that competition should be considered in terms of door to door service, time, and price rather than just on an airport to airport basis. Birmingham airport is large airport in the west midland and it has a large number of destination served nonstop, many of these are long haul and of relatively high frequency. They only alternative is to involve back tracks. This may appeal to price sensitive leisure traveller but not to business passenger who may also be keen to a mass frequent flyer points on the national carrier.

### **2.3 Main Competitors**

Squalli(2014) reviews that Emirates first launched its route to Birmingham Airport on 18 December 2000 as a daily service to Dubai, operated by a 278-seat Airbus A330 which is

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signed contract with Swissport International. As passenger numbers have risen, Emirates has added more aircraft to the route, including a third daily service introduced 2014. In the last 15 years, Emirates has carried over five million passengers between Dubai and Birmingham, with over 500,000 travelling in 2015 so far.

Permanent feature as Emirates will be replacing the current Boeing 777 to a two-class Airbus A380 on the lunchtime service into Birmingham, carrying 557 passengers in Economy Class and 58 in Business Class. Birmingham will be the fifth route operating the new two-class A380 since it was unveiled at the Dubai Air show in November 2015 by Emirates (Grimme, 2014). The upgrade will increase daily capacity to and from the region by 15%, and means Emirates will now offer 77 A380 flights into the UK each week, more than any other country on the Emirates network.

Emirates' wider contribution to the Midlands economy has grown alongside its expansion at Birmingham Airport, connecting local people and businesses to global destinations and markets. It now employs 31 permanent staff at the airport, with the Emirates SkyCargo team employing a further four people. Over five million meals have been made locally in Birmingham to serve Emirates passengers travelling to Dubai and up to 60 crew members stay at local hotels in Birmingham every night between flights (Squalli, 2014). The airline also invested over £1 million in the Emirates Lounge at Birmingham Airport, which opened in October 2012. Passengers flying from the Midlands with Emirates can travel to Dubai and beyond, to an ever expanding global network, including Bali, Multan and Mashhad which all launched in 2015. Popular destinations on the Emirates network from Birmingham include Dubai, Islamabad, Bangkok, Mumbai and Hong Kong. As with all Emirates flights, passengers enjoy the extra generous Emirates baggage allowance of 30kg in Economy Class, 40kg in Business Class and 50kg in First Class. (Travel daily UK 2015).

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According to Racht(2014) Ryanair is operating with Swissport and uses a number of these airfields in Europe and often need to make sure bus services are operated to the nearest city or towns. Airport compels with other airport to attract airlines. Once the airlines decide to serve the airport other service provides will also be attracted. These would include aircraft, passenger, cargo handlers, fuel supplier, shop, car park operators as well as taxi and bus companies and this is a key feature of a network (Forsyth 2012).

Qatar Airways has since become one of the fastest growing carriers in the world with unprecedented expansion averaging double digit growth year on year (Ahmed et al., 2015). Qatar Airways announce that new service between Birmingham and Doha will launch from March 2016 from Birmingham airport. The announcement of this new route further strengthens Qatar Airways' commitment to the UK regions, with Birmingham being the centre for the largest concentration of businesses outside of London, boasting 34,285 companies including over 700 international firms (Ahmed et al., 2015). Residents of Birmingham and the surrounding areas will be able to enjoy greater choice and convenience when travelling without the need to transfer through London. Swissport will remain competitive to continue to operate and serve their customers, striving to further strengthen and grow their business and proud to announce that Swissport successfully have the Qatar Airways contract from March 2016 over the Aviator aviation.

However, despite the competition, according to Malaval et al (2014), Swissport is the most competitive aviator and keep their business successful every year sing new contract with new airlines; in 2016 they have two new low cost airline contracts from Birmingham airport. Iberia Express, group's low cost carrier, will operate four flights a week to the Spanish capital starting on 27 March. Czech Republic, Commencing flights to Prague five times a week from April 2016, the flag carrier for the Czech Republic will deliver an additional 50,000 passengers through the airport a year and open up more connections

through Eastern Europe. The flights are scheduled to offer connections with another 34 Iberia destinations in Spain, Portugal, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America. Swissport and Aviator are the most competitive aviation ground handling in Birmingham airport. Swissport is the most successful international aviation and have excellent reputation in competitive environment.

### **2.4 Human Resource Management**

Narkovičiūtė & Alonderienė (2015) said that the Swissport International is providing development and training schemes, improving commitment, recognition and rewards for performing good job and providing training and career development opportunity for every employees and are offered a wide range of training and development programme to meet the different needs of employees across to Swissport Company.

The key to success for any company is ensuring that it has happy and motivated employees (Vermeeren et al., 2014). Each employee is an individual and what motivates one may be totally ineffective for another, being a manager it's important that employees in the business and make that business grow and succeed using different motivations techniques. Employees' motivation is important in organisation success, achieving excellent service and customers' satisfaction in tourism industry. Personally thanking employees for doing a good job, good praise, being willing to take time to meet with and listen to employees giving them as much time as they need or want, Providing specific feedback about the performance of the employees, Provide information about upcoming products and strategies and how the company makes and loses money, Involving employees in decisions, especially those decisions that will directly affect them (Vermeeren et al., 2015).

Encouraging employees to have a sense of ownership of their work and in their work environment, creating a partnership with employees, giving them a chance to grow and learn new skills to feeling confidence and showing them how they can help to meet their goals

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within the context of meeting the organisation's goal, celebrating the successes of the company, the department and individuals in it, using performance as the basis for recognising, rewarding and promoting people and treating employees with respect, as adults and equally (Sharlyn 2005).

Swissport introduces a structured exit interview for voluntary leavers in management in order to find out about the "real" reasons for a resignation. The analysis and obtain intelligence will help in identifying any issues individual or systematic as soon as possible and will allow to address them in a quick and appropriate way. Further to structured exit interviews, Swissport has engaged in a study of general retention means for senior management and its current situation. Findings on the reasons for leaving and motivators are essential to understand the needs and requirements of the senior management in order to address them appropriately and effectively.

Swissport is fully committed to information sharing with employees and provides business news and performance updates to staff on a regular basis and recognise the legitimate role of responsible trade unions and employee representatives and establishes appropriate mechanisms to enable the effective representation of staff. Swissport believes that good people management practice generates a working environment where employees are committed and dedicated to giving their also believe in the importance of listening to staff and using staff knowledge in solving business issues.

Swissport wants to be and remain an "employer of choice". Therefore, Swissport to be fixed to all national laws relating to the recruitment of staff, and to any of the more stringent requirements of its own internal policies. Swissport is fully compliant with its Corporate Core Values (People, Professionalism and Partnership) and its Code of Conduct (Sustainability report 2013). No job applicant will be discriminated against or treated less favourably based on gender, race, colour or ethnic origin, marital status, religion or any other

category protected by law. Any such discriminatory behaviour will constitute gross misconduct under the Code of Conduct. The company also recognises that, as an employer, and fully comply with all legislation that renders certain types of discrimination unlawful.

The Swissport training programme provides level adequate training from base to top for all operations staff, to supervisory and first line management, as well as middle and senior managers. All staff levels are in extent for technical and developmental training as reflected in the Training Pyramid represented below (Sustainability report 2013)

## **2.5 Use of Social Media**

Airlines and Social Media Companies and organisations are becoming more and more in tune with the digital, social customer and airlines have not been left behind. According to Dijkmans et al (2015) the use of social media in the airline industry has become a rapidly increasing trend. Airlines are using the social media as a platform for brand development and product marketing, improving customer service and improving passenger experience for example, through updating and responding to customers' feedback. Data from Mindshift Interactive, a digital outreach firm (2014), suggests that 40% of airlines are actively growing their social media team to incorporate representatives from marketing, customer service, e-commerce, corporate communications and other departments.

In this case using Social media by Swissport allows an airline to respond to many customer requests and to build up better relationships with their customers (Berthon et al., 2012). Most of the time customers simply want someone to listen to them. Social media provides the perfect platform towards that end since it not only reduces the cost of operating other communication platforms, but it also allows customers to take advantage of special promotions offered only on these channels.

Mobile devices and the emergence of always connected traveller have created huge opportunities for consumer technology giants to help shape the passenger experience of the

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future. Passenger can check-in and download a boarding pass, manage their booking, and view member ship cards.

## **Methodology**

The research technique used in this particular research project was secondary research. Secondary research is defined as an analysis and interpretation of primary research. Whether to go for primary data or secondary data collection can choose one of qualitative or quantitative methods.

Quantitative and qualitative are two key research methods that were applied by the author to achieve the aims and the objectives of this project. Quantitative research is based on the measurement of quantity or amount and qualitative research is especially important in the behavioural science where the aim is to discover the underlying motives of human behaviour (Kumar 2008).

### **3.1 Secondary Research**

Veal (2006) is of the opinion that the most widely used method for collecting data is through secondary data collection and this process involves collecting data from the originator or a distributor, finding information from third party sources such as marketing research reports, company websites, academic sources, information from books using Google scholar, Usearch, journal and other from internal sources such as accessing material from previous market research, innovation campaign.

The benefits of using secondary sources include, save time and also to provide information and access to historical data, used to prove or disprove an argument or theory look out existing audience of whether social media works and can offer general background information and be useful for putting the research into context.

Secondary data collection is often used to help set the stage for primary research. In the course of doing so researchers may find that the exact information they were looking for is available via secondary sources thus eliminating the need and expense to carrying out their own primary research (Knowledge source for marketing since 1998).

### **3.2 Rationale for Using Secondary Research**

In this particular case Swissport aviation researchers are often attracted to secondary data because getting this information is much less expensive than if the researchers had to carry out the research themselves. Secondary research relates to the collection of data from sources which already exist, such as minutes of meeting, financial records, company website, marketing research report, academic sources etc. and other from internal sources such as accessing material from previous market research, innovation campaign and company report.

## **Analysis and Application**

Swissport international is the most competitive aviator and to attract passenger always offer products and services to be Safe, comfortable and affordable air travel is a common desire of passengers and crews alike. This is why having airlines to compete freely with each other, based on the best product, quality service and price is a welcome and necessary precondition for aviation. But to grow, connect people and create jobs, Europe's airlines should compete on a level playing field with a common set of rules.

Performance management is one of the most important competencies in Swissport. Swissport's skills gap analysis is called Development Assessment Swissport Management (DASM). The DASM project was launched in 2009 and conducted over the duration of 2.5 years for all senior management positions at Swissport worldwide. The project goal was to gain a holistic and fair assessment of the senior management group to understand both Swissport's strengths and shortcomings in order to accelerate them and to address them respectively.

Swissport is not only fully committed to finding the right people for the right job at the right time, they are also dedicated to providing an attractive work environment and company Culture where the employees feel respected and appreciated for the great work that they are performing every day. Retention of their dedicated staff and talents is key to Swissport successful (Wintersberger et al., 2013).

Dealing with passenger enquiries about flight departures and arrivals, checking passengers in giving seat numbers, providing boarding passes and luggage labels telling passengers about luggage restrictions, weighing baggage and collecting any excess weight charges taking care of people with special needs, and unaccompanied children calming and reassuring nervous passengers. They may sometimes help passengers through immigration

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and customs, or escort passengers who have night flight connections and could also specialise in different areas of airport work, such as computer control. (National Career Service 2015)

Swissport Facebook page is a key passenger experience tool used in the airport to send passengers messages about the length of the security queues, to give a better plan of the airport opening times, restaurant, shops offers, and to promote new products and services (Ghee 2015). Social media is usually called are fundamentally changing the way travellers and tourist search, find, read and trust as well as collaboratively produce information about tourism suppliers and tourism destinations. In using social media the travellers coproduce and share a huge amount of information and knowledge namely user generated content and social intelligence. The wide application of social media by the travellers and the tourist industry alike has boomed research during the last decade. (Sigala 2012).

Most airlines usually offer incentives for cheaper flights if passenger book online. As with most things relating to holidays the earlier to book the more likely will get a discount, although this has to be balanced with the possibility of cheaper deals if book at the very last minute. Last minute deals are still available, but they are not as widespread as they would have been a few years ago. Booking online means that it's also easy to track prices, the prices can fluctuate daily so passenger can get a good deal by simply watching the prices on a price comparison website.

## **Conclusion**

Aviation has been and will always be a very dynamic and cyclical business. This is why it is so important that its various players maintain great flexibility in responding to the Industry's constant shifts and realign their processes as swiftly as possible to the many Changed and changing conditions. Therefore, it is imperative to customers that Swissport is able to navigate these challenges on their behalf in order to keep their operations and their businesses running smoothly.

The award-winning Swissport Ground Handling business currently provides passenger and ramp handling at over 220 stations worldwide and serves in excess of 224 million passengers per annum (Halttula, 2013). Swissport is recognised as the biggest independent global ground services provider with the largest number of hub and LCC base operations globally.

Swissport International adopted many strategies such as expansion, acquisitions and alliances to remain competitive in the present business environment. In addition to that Swissport International is also use social media for its business promotion.

The Health & Safety, Crisis Management and Environmental Management policies of Swissport International operate in alignment with one another to ensure that Swissport's staff work in an environment that has processes when unexpected events occur, is safe and environmentally aware. All Swissport entities are required to be fixed to the standards given in this policy to ensure a safe working environment for its staff and customers and to avoid damage to property.

The CEO of Swissport and the entire Group Executive Management are committed to the development of all employees: endorsing that each individual has the relevant knowledge, skill and proficiency to deliver the highest standards of work consistently and safely in the

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workplace. Swissport recognises that training and development is fundamental to maintaining and continually improving operational performance, and an integral part of the organisation in the achievement of their strategy and goals. Therefore, Swissport is striving for excellence at all levels in the organisation. Swissport is dedicated to supporting all employees in reaching their full potential through a wide variety of training and development techniques and continuous performance management.

With the rapid growth of social media, staying offline would be a huge competitive disadvantage for an airline. In an industry where there is a race to get more customers, online engagement is seen as an important way to create value for more customers. Key Drivers of Airline Media Campaign whilst dealing with social media, airlines have to remember the key factors when designing and implementing an airline social media campaign. They have to engage the audience, maintain good customer service and quality and make an emotional connection with customers (Airline trends 2014).

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