

ORGINISATIONAL CULTURE: INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATION

STUDENT NAME: KARIMOT A OGUNSOLA

STUDENT ID: 2328162

AN ANALYSIS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AT BRITISH AIRWAYS

Organizational culture is an important part of how a business works. It affects how employees behave, how managers make decisions, how people work together, and how customers are treated. Mullins and Christy (2016, p.574) explain that organizational culture can have a strong effect on decision-making, organizational structure, teamwork, motivation, job satisfaction, and management control. This means that culture is not only about how employees feel at work. It can also affect the success and performance of an organization.

British Airways (BA) is one of the UK best known airlines and operates in a very competitive and changing industry. The company must manage thousands of employees, customers from different countries, safety rules, technology, competition, and changes in customer expectations.

INTRODUCTION

Organizational culture is an important part of every organization. It describes the shared values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that influence how people work. In simple terms, organizational culture can be described as “The way things are done around here”.

British Airways is a major international airline. It has a large workforce made up of different groups, including pilots, cabin crew, engineers, airport workers, customer service employees, managers, and office staff. These employees have different responsibilities, but they all need to work together to provide a safe and reliable service to passengers.

British Airways also operates in a changing environment. The airline industry is affected by technology, customer expectations, economic conditions, competition, environmental concerns, and government regulations. Therefore, British Airways needs a culture that allows employees to follow important rules while also being able to respond to changes. British Airways describes its current values as Excellence, Caring and Open-Mindedness.

British Airways and Organizational Culture

British Airways is a large organization, so having a clear culture is important. Employees need to understand what the company expects from them and what type of service they are expected to provide.

For an airline such as British Airways, culture is especially important because employees have a direct effect on the customer experience. A passenger may remember how a member of cabin crew treated them, how an airport employee dealt with a problem, or how quickly a customer service worker responded to a complaint.

The company's culture can also be seen in its current transformation programme. British Airways has been investing in technology, aircraft, lounges and its operational systems. The company has also invested around £100 million in technology to improve its operations and punctuality.

This shows that the organization is trying to create a culture that is more open to change and new ways of working.

How Organizational Culture Affects Structure and Decision-Making

Organizational culture can have a strong effect on how a company is structured. A large company such as British Airways cannot allow every employee to make any decision they want. There must be clear responsibilities and rules. This is especially important in aviation because passenger safety is extremely important. For example, pilots have specific responsibilities. Engineers have specific responsibilities. Cabin crews have specific responsibilities. Airport employees also have their own duties.

It also makes it easier for managers to control the organization. When something goes wrong, the company can identify which department or employee is responsible for that area.

If there are too many levels of management, employees may have to wait for permission before making decisions. This can slow down the organization's progress.

Safety-related decisions must follow strict rules. However, employees should also have some freedom to solve normal customer problems.

A culture that supports new ideas can encourage employees to find better ways of doing things.

Schein's Model of Organizational Culture

Schein's model is useful for understanding organizational culture. Schein (2010) divides culture into three levels:

1. Artefacts
2. Espoused Values
3. Basic underlying assumptions

Artefacts are the things that can see and observe in an organization. They include uniforms, buildings, offices, language, system, company logos, employee behavior, and the way customers are treated.

Employees who deal directly with passengers are expected to behave professionally. This helps create a consistent customer experience.

Training is another example of an artefact.

British Airways provides training for employees so that they can understand different customer needs. The organization also provides accessible training for customers facing employees. This shows that the company wants employees to be able to support different types of customers.

Espoused Values are the values that an organization says it believes in.

British Airways currently focuses on Excellence, Caring and open mindedness.

Excellence: It means trying to provide a high-quality service.

For British Airways, this is important because customers expect a high level of service from a major international airline. Employees need to be professional and reliable.

Caring: It means treating customers and employees with respect.

This is important in the airline industry because passengers may be sometimes nervous, tired, or stressed.

Open-Mindedness: It means willing to listen to new ideas and accept changes.

This is important because the airline industry is changing quickly. These values can help British Airways create a positive culture.

Basic Underlying Assumptions

These are the deep beliefs that influence how people behave without always thinking about them. At British Airways, one important assumption appears to be that customers should receive a safe, reliable and high-quality service. “Safety is especially important in aviation”.

Handy’s Cultural Typology

Charles Handy identified four types of organizational culture:

- * Power culture
- * Role culture
- * Task culture
- * Person culture

These theories can be used to be understand British Airways.

Power culture:

British Airways is where decision making is mainly controlled by a small number of powerful people.

British Airways obviously has senior managers and executives who make important decisions.

Role culture:

Role culture is based on clear jobs roles, rules and procedures. British Airways needs role culture because aviation is highly regulated.

Task culture

This focuses on teamwork and solving specific problems. The organization has been using different teams to improve its operations, technology, and customer service.

Person culture:

This is where individual employees have a very high level of freedom and the organization mainly exists to support the individual. British needs employees to work towards a shared goal.

Hofstede Cultural Dimensions

Hofstede studied differences between national cultures. This is Important for BA because it operated internationally and has employees and customers from many different countries. Power distance looks at how comfortable people are with differences in power and authority.

Some cultures expect managers to have a lot of authority, and employees may not question them.

External Factors Affecting British Airways Culture.

British Airways operates in a changing environment.

There are several external factors that can affect its culture.

Technology²

Technology is one of the biggest changes affecting the airline industry. BA has invested heavily in technology, including AI, machine learning, and automation. The company says these systems are helping improve its operations and reduce delays.

Globalization

BA serves customers from many countries. This means employees need to understand cultural differences. A diverse workforce can help BA understand these differences. This company says it values different backgrounds and experiences. This can support better customer service.

Competition

BA operates in a highly competitive market. It competes with airlines such as Virgin Atlantic, Qatar and many European airlines.

BA needs to provide a service that makes customers want to return. A strong customer-focused culture can help the company achieve this.

Environmental Concerns

Airlines also face increasing pressure to reduce their effects on the environment.

Customers, government, and organizations are becoming more concerned about carbon

emissions. This means BA needs employees who are willing to support new environmental practices.

Government and Safety Regulations

Airline must follow strict safety regulations. This creates a need for a strong culture of responsibility. Employees cannot simply choose to ignore rules. This is the one reason why BA needs its role culture.

Culture as an Enabler

A Strong can help BA provide better customer service. The company's focus on caring encourages employees to think about the needs of customers. The focus on excellence encourages employees to provide a high standard of service. This shows that changes in systems, technology, and working methods can support better performance.

Technology investment, new systems, staff, and other business decisions also contributed.

Cultural as a Barrier

Culture can also become a barrier. This could make it harder for BA to introduce new technology; another problem always needs permission to make decisions; customer service may become slower.

Therefore, BA needs to make sure that its stated values are actually experienced by employees.

The Impact of Culture on Organizational Performance

Organizational culture can affect the performance of BA in several ways.

The first is" Customer Satisfaction"

When employees provide friendly and helpful service, customers are more likely to have a positive opinion of the airline.

The second is "Employee Performance"

Employees who understand what the organization expects from them may be more motivated.

The third is "Teamwork"

When employees work together, problems can be solved quickly.

The fourth is "innovation"

Employees who feel comfortable sharing ideas may help the company find better ways of working.

The fifth is "Safety"

A strong safety culture helps employees understand that safety must come before speed.

British Airways has reported improvements in operational performance. Its technology investment has helped improve punctuality, with 86% of Heathrow flights recorded as on time in the first quarter of 2025 (BA media center 2025)

This is important because delays can have a major effect on customers. This shows that culture works together with other parts of the business.

Recommendation

Based on the analysis above, several recommendations can be made.

Recommendation 1: Give employees more opportunity to speak

British Airways should continue to give employees opportunities to share their opinions.

Employees who work directly with customers often understand customer problems better than senior managers.

The company should therefore create regular opportunities for employees to provide feedback. This could include employee surveys, meetings, suggestion systems and direct communication with senior managers.

This would support the company's value of being open-minded.

Recommendation 2: Give Frontline Employees more responsibility

British Airways should give trained frontline employees more freedom to solve simple customer problems.

Employees could be given a set of levels of authority to deal with certain complaints without asking a manager.

However, safety decisions should always remain controlled. This would create a balance between role culture and task culture.

Recommendation 3: Improve Teamwork Between Departments

British Airways should continue using teams made up of employees from different departments.

This would help employees understand how their work affects other departments. It could also help reduce problems caused by poor communication.

Recommendation 4: Continue Supporting Diversity and Inclusion

British Airways should continue its work around diversity and inclusion. The company says that it values different backgrounds, experiences, and opinions.

This should continue to be supported through training, fair promotion, equal opportunities, and employee networks.

The company should also make sure that employees feel safe speaking about problems.

Diversity is most useful when people feel included and are allowed to share ideas.

Recommendation 5: Measure Employee Culture.

The company could measure:

- *Employee satisfaction

- *Employee turnover

*Staff absence

*Customer satisfaction

*Complaints

*Teamwork

*Communication

This would help managers understand whether the company's value is being experienced by employees.

Conclusion:

This report has examined organizational culture at British Airways and considered how cultures affect the organization structure, decision making and performance.

The analysis shows that organizational culture is very important to BA because the company depends heavily on its employees.

Pilots, cabin crew, engineers, airport staff, customer service workers and managers all work together.

A positive culture can improve teamwork, customer service, employee motivation, and the organization's ability to respond to change. However, culture can become a barrier if the organization becomes too focused on rules, hierarchy, and tradition ways of working.

References List British Airways (2026) People: Inclusion, Diversity & Representation. British Airways.

British Airways (2026) Customer Experience: A message from the chairman and CEO. British Airways.

Handy, C. (1993). Understanding Organizations. 4th edn. London: Penguin.

Hofstede, G., Hofstede G.J and Minkov, M (2010). Cultures and Organizations: Software of the mind.

Mullins, LJ and Christy G (2016) Management and Organizational Behavior. 11th edition.

Schein, E.H (2010). *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. 4th edition. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.