

## Corporate Social Responsibility in Airline Companies: The Example of 6 February Kahramanmaraş Earthquake

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose** – The aim of the research is to examine the activities carried out by airline companies within the scope of their corporate social responsibilities, to examine their connections with the airline business model and their contributions to society. For this purpose, the social responsibility projects implemented by airline companies were examined within the scope of the February 6 2023 Türkiye earthquake.

**Design/methodology/approach** - For research purpose, the corporate social responsibility activities implemented and carried out by airline companies approved by the General Directorate of Civil Aviation in this process are discussed. The population of the research consists of airline companies in Türkiye, and the samples are Turkish Airlines, Pegasus Airlines, Sunexpress Airlines, Corendon Airlines and MGA Airlines. Qualitative research method was used in the study and in June-August 2023 the data collected was analyzed in October 2023 using the descriptive analysis method. In the data collection process of the research, airline companies' web pages, social media accounts, managers' press releases and news pages were used.

**Findings** – The scope of the research includes social responsibility activities carried out by Turkish Airlines, Pegasus Airlines, Sunexpress Airlines and other airline companies during the earthquake period. In this context, it is seen that activities in general such as financial aid, free flight organization, technical maintenance activities and search and rescue support are carried out by airline companies.

**Discussion** – As a result of the analysis, the dimensions and consequences of the disaster caused by the earthquakes that occurred in Türkiye on February 6, 2023 are revealed. It is observed that companies that implement the traditional airline business model play a more active role in the social responsibility activities implemented by airline companies. When looked at in the General framework, it can be seen that the competition in the Turkish market, where Turkish Airlines, Pegasus Airlines and Sunexpress Airlines are more active in this process, is also reflected in the corporate social responsibility activities implemented. Although airline companies attach importance to corporate social responsibility activities, it is observed that they act more sensitively in disasters such as earthquakes that deeply affect society. Based on this, it can be interpreted that companies exhibit a holistic approach by seeing these activities as a mandatory need rather than a social responsibility.

## 1. Introduction

Considering that businesses cannot continue their existence independently of society, they are expected to be effective and active in their relations with society. Businesses that are aware of the importance of corporate social responsibility gain a good image in the eyes of society with the activities they carry out, and this creates a difference between businesses and their competitors serving in the same field (Erkman and Şahinoğlu, 2012). In addition, the relationship between the business and the consumer includes dynamic and emotional characteristics. Corporate social responsibility activities are used as a corporate communication tool, create a positive effect on organization employees and positively affect customer preferences (Kurt and Besler, 2019, p. 543). When consumers buy a product or service, they expect not only their needs to be met, but also to be emotionally satisfied through the brand, to feel privileged and sometimes to experience the feeling of being a

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responsible citizen. Airlines, which provide relatively affordable and fast transportation to customers, provide services to a large number of customers and have now become a part of our lives (Romanova, 2004, p.133). Businesses mostly organize activities for society, environment, customers and legal regulations (Kurt and Besler, 2019, p. 213). Businesses that want to meet the expectations of consumers carry out corporate social responsibility activities based on environment, legal regulations and society.

In accordance with the main subject of the study, corporate social responsibility activities implemented by airline companies during the February 6, 2023 Kahramanmaraş earthquake in Türkiye were examined. When the literature was scanned, no such study was found before due to the earthquake being very recent. The study in question is a reference in this respect. Therefore, it is thought that the framework of the study can be further expanded in the coming years and the information obtained will contribute to future studies.

## 2. Conceptual Framework

### 2.1. Corporate Social Responsibility

It would be more accurate to define the concept of responsibility before defining corporate social responsibility. TDK defines responsibility as "one's responsibility, undertaking, and liability for one's own behavior or the consequences of any event that falls within one's jurisdiction" (TDK, 2023). Responsibility arises when a person is given some tasks. Since duties enable the achievement of goals, they change according to the existing purpose and accordingly affect the responsibility. The concepts of authority also affect responsibility. In terms of management, the concepts of authority and responsibility should be considered as a whole (Güngör, 2016). Businesses, like people, have responsibilities towards their society, country and world. The basis of responsibility is ethical rules, and responsibility studies should be carried out within the framework of these ethical rules. While businesses maintain their profitability targets, they have also begun to carry out their activities in a "responsible" manner in moral, social, conscientious and legal dimensions. Responsible behavior has developed social responsibility awareness along with the social work of businesses.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is an organizational process that aims to protect the welfare of society, ensure its development, and take action for the benefit of the organization. CSR tries to provide a social benefit without considering the interests of employers. An example can be given when a company tries to prevent environmental pollution. CSR includes social and environmental issues, aiming to eliminate issues of concern and suffering (Tiraki, 2021). There is no common definition in the literature on CSR. According to another approach, the feature of increasing social benefit comes to the fore. Accordingly, CSR activities implemented by businesses seek solutions to environmental and socio-economic problems. Today, businesses and institutions are expected to meet the social expectations brought by social responsibility. Businesses carry out their CSR-related activities on a voluntary basis (Arslan, 2019).

### 2.2. Areas of Corporate Social Responsibility

To understand CSR areas, it is useful to first understand stakeholder theory. Businesses are in contact with many segments of society. Businesses must manage these relationships well to be successful. The concept of stakeholder can be briefly defined as the segment that is affected by the activities carried out by the business and affects the business with its own activities. If businesses want to be successful in their strategies, they must positively develop and strengthen their relationships with their internal and external environment. While the internal environment of businesses consists of shareholders, managers, employees and so on, the external environment consists of society, government, customers and so on. Businesses have responsibilities towards their internal and external stakeholders.

These responsibilities constitute CSR areas and are classified as follows (Aktan, 2007):

- Responsibility towards competitors
- Responsibility to the state
- Responsibility towards suppliers
- Responsibility towards customers (consumers)
- Responsibility towards shareholders

- Responsibility towards employees
- Responsibility towards nature and the environment
- Responsibility towards society

### **2.3. Aviation Industry and Corporate Social Responsibility**

Air transport is at the center of aviation. All civil aviation activities such as design, production, maintenance, airport, ground services, navigation, communication and air traffic exist to ensure safe, secure and effective air transportation (Gerde, 2002, p. 3). Airline companies care about their assets in a personal and customer-oriented way. Airline companies are open systems that interact with their environment. While these businesses are affected by the environment, they are also affected by environmental elements. When looking at airline companies in terms of their fields of activity, it can be seen that they are service businesses. The basic functions of airline companies are passenger, cargo and mail transportation. However, businesses may also operate in other business areas that have a direct or indirect relationship with the provision of this service (SHGM, 2023).

Consumers have many different demands that impose more responsibility on companies regarding environmental, social and working conditions (Schmeltz, 2014). Therefore, airline companies, in addition to their main activity task of transportation service, also carry out studies on issues concerning society, environment, customers and legal regulations. One of the activities carried out in this context is corporate social responsibility projects. The relationships between corporate social responsibility criteria in aviation companies can be addressed in the subjects of fuel and resource efficiency, environmental protection, safety, transportation and service process design, financial transparency, relations with employees and improvement of employee well-being, leisure activities with communities, support for voluntary social work, charity offers, consideration of consumer interests and rights and provision of flights at reasonable and affordable prices (Tsai and Hsu, 2008, p. 191).

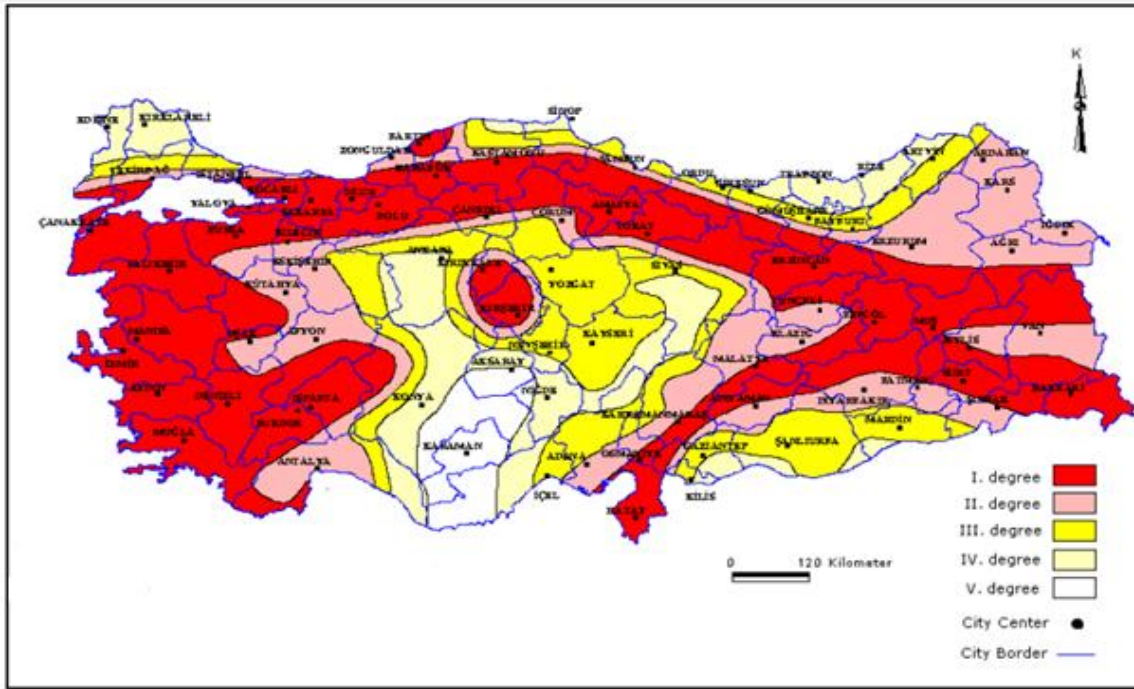
In a study conducted by Williams, it was concluded that the products of companies that give importance to CSR are more popular (Williams, 2005, p. 34-35). Some companies think that CSR activities create extra costs for the companies, but a study has shown that the financial statements of companies that engage in CSR activities are better than those that do not (Fraser, 2005, p. 43-47). Another study has shown that stocks of companies with high social performance are preferred more (Graves et al., 1994, p. 1034-1046) and that one of the issues that many funds and institutional investors pay attention to before making an investment is the company's social responsibility performance (Yön, 2006, p. 253). Initiatives taken by companies in the name of social responsibility guarantee their success and secure their profits in the long term. In addition, these initiatives increase the company's reputation and increase the loyalty of employees to the company. These factors are also the main elements for competitive advantage (Sen, 2001, p. 17). Chen et al. (2012) found that CSR activities carried out in the Taiwanese airline market increased behavioral and attitudinal loyalty among customers, and that customers considered safety, consumer rights and environmental protection important. Asatryan (2013) found in his study that customers who prefer airlines attach importance to the concept of CSR, but the activities carried out were not sufficient. Based on these studies, it is understood that corporate social responsibility activities benefit businesses and that airlines generally include corporate social responsibility activities in their projects.

### **2.4. 6 February 2023 Kahramanmaraş Earthquakes**

Natural disasters are natural events that cannot be prevented by humans and are generally unpredictable. Natural disasters often cause deaths and property losses. Natural disasters occur beyond people's control and cause loss of life and property if necessary precautions are not taken.

Earthquakes are vibrations that spread as waves and cause shaking in the places they pass through, as a result of sudden breaks in the rocks that make up the earth's crust, due to many reasons, some of which people have been able to detect beforehand and some of which they still cannot fully detect. These vibrations, which occur suddenly and cannot be prevented, cause material and moral losses. Türkiye is located in an active earthquake zone. For this reason, the most common type of natural disaster in Türkiye is earthquake. There have been many earthquakes that resulted in destruction in Türkiye during the past century.

Türkiye is located in the Mediterranean earthquake zone, which is one of the most important earthquake zones in the world. That's why significant earthquakes occur from time to time.



**Figure 1.** Earthquake Zoning Map of Türkiye (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Public Works and Settlement, 1996, <http://www.deprem.gov.tr/depbolge/>).

On February 6, 2023, a major earthquake with a magnitude of 7.7 occurred in the Pazarcık district of Kahramanmaraş at 04.17. Approximately 9 hours after this earthquake, a second earthquake with a magnitude of 7.6 occurred in the Elbistan district of Kahramanmaraş at 13.24. This earthquake was described by experts as a devastating terrestrial 'double' earthquake that caused the highest loss of life in the century. These earthquakes deeply affected the provinces of Kahramanmaraş, Hatay, Adıyaman, Gaziantep, Malatya, Kilis, Diyarbakır, Adana, Osmaniye, Elazığ and Şanlıurfa. The earthquake, which was felt strongly in these provinces, caused many deaths, injuries, collapse and damage to buildings. Aftershocks continued for a few days after the earthquake.

It was documented as the largest earthquake to occur in Türkiye after the earthquake of August 17, 1999, causing destruction not only in Kahramanmaraş but also in Syria and at least 10 provinces along the fault line. Among those provinces, Kilis, Diyarbakır, Adana, Osmaniye, Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Adıyaman, Malatya and Hatay were affected, and even in these provinces, there was loss of life and property. Due to the magnitude of the shaking and destruction, state authorities declared a level four alert for the earthquake zone, which included international assistance (Euronews, 2023).

### 2.5. Effect of Earthquake on Airline Transportation

The earthquake in Kahramanmaraş Pazarcık caused devastating effects in many provinces, and public buildings turned into rubble. The runway of Hatay Airport, where the warning "There is a fault line" was repeatedly stated by experts, was also affected by the earthquake and fault fractures occurred on the runway (Evrensel, 2023). In the examinations carried out by experts before its construction, it was concluded that, in addition to the main problems experienced in location selection, the airport was at risk of floods and earthquakes, especially due to its proximity to the old Amik Lake mirror (Sözcü, 2023).

The damage to the Hatay Airport runway, which became unusable due to heavy damage due to the earthquakes and where all flights were stopped, was repaired by Istanbul Airport construction and technical teams. The runway of Hatay Airport, which is of vital importance for the delivery of aid sent to the disaster area, was repaired after 96 hours of work. Following the repairs, Hatay Airport started operating again on February 12, 2023 (Anadolu Agency, 2023).

From the first minutes of the disaster, the General Directorate of Civil Aviation, together with civil aviation stakeholders, provided both humanitarian aid and intensive evacuation flights to the provinces affected by the earthquake. With this organization, which is the largest-scale air evacuation operation, people affected by the earthquake, especially the sick, elderly and injured, were evacuated quickly and safely. Thus, it is understood how important the aviation industry and airports are for Türkiye. Operating in Türkiye; Turkish Airlines, Pegasus Airlines, SunExpress Airlines, Hürkuş Airlines, Cortex Aviation, Touristic Air Transportation, Tailwind Airlines, Air Anka Airlines, Mavi Gök Aviation, MNG Airlines and Transportation, ULS Airlines Cargo Transportation and ACT Airlines were carried out many free evacuation flights from Adana, Adıyaman, Diyarbakır, Elazığ, Gaziantep, Kahramanmaraş, Kayseri, Malatya, Şanlıurfa and Hatay. In addition, aid flights were organized to these provinces and the materials needed by the people of the region were transported. Between 6-28 February, 617 thousand 593 earthquake victims were evacuated with a total of 3 thousand 540 flights, and a total of 14,288,701 kg of cargo was transported by air with 292 flights organized to carry relief materials to earthquake regions. Additionally, 690 foreign aircraft supported the region by bringing aid supplies (Airportnews, 2023).

### 3. Research Method

Qualitative research method was used in the research and descriptive analysis method was performed. During the data collection process; In the February 6 2023 Türkiye earthquake, airline companies' web pages, social media accounts, manager statements and news pages were used to determine the social responsibility activities implemented by airline companies. The collected data in June-August 2023 are presented to the reader with direct quotations and an interpretive approach is presented. When looking at the qualitative research method, the researcher's perspective on the subject is of great importance (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008, p. 39). In order to produce similar results when the same research is carried out by another researcher, the collected data were analyzed in October 2023 by two academicians. It is aimed to provide information to the reader about the subject by interpreting the findings obtained in the research. Based on the social responsibility activities implemented by airline companies, addressing social problems and their approaches in case of natural disasters such as earthquakes were examined.

#### 3.1. Trustworthiness

One of the most important factors for a research to be accepted as scientific research is the validity and reliability of the research. However, validity and reliability are approached from a different perspective in qualitative research. It is seen that there are different conceptualizations regarding the validity and reliability of qualitative research in the literature (Guba and Lincon, 1982). When these concepts are examined, it is seen that their contents are similar. In this study, Lincon and Guba (1994) suggested that trustworthiness was adopted (Arastaman et al., 2017, p. 48).

The concept of trustworthiness includes the concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Korstjens and Moser, 2018, p. 121). Strategies such as long-term participation, continuous observation, diversification, member control and expert review are applied to increase credibility (Korstjens and Moser, 2018, p. 121; Creswell, 2013, p. 246). Accordingly, a single data collection area was not applied in this study, and the web pages, social media accounts, press releases and news pages of the airline companies taken as samples were used. Detailed explanations are needed to ensure transferability, and therefore researchers frequently include direct quotations in their studies (Guba and Lincon, 1982, p. 248). In this regard, visuals of the collected data were shared directly and it was revealed that no changes were made to the data.

Reliability is the expression of whether the study will yield similar results when repeated with similar participants under similar conditions (Korstjens and Moser, 2018, p. 122; Başkale, 2016, p. 24). In this context, the collected data and analysis were examined by two academicians who are experts in the field and necessary arrangements were made by consulting their ideas and suggestions. In this study, several methods were used to ensure reliability. During the analysis of the data, the opinions and suggestions of more than one researcher were obtained. In addition, instead of using a single platform, multiple source web pages, social media accounts, administrator statements and news pages were used.

### 3.2. Importance and scope of the research

Social responsibility projects implemented by businesses are one of the factors that increase the competitiveness of businesses. These projects, which are very important in terms of being preferred by customers, positively affect the image of businesses. Social responsibility projects implemented by airline companies are important in order to increase the awareness of the companies, improve the corporate image and increase the brand value. In this study, the social responsibility projects implemented by airline companies within the scope of the February 6 Türkiye earthquake were examined. The aim of the research is to examine the activities carried out by airline companies within the scope of their corporate social responsibilities, their connections with the airline business model and their contributions to society. For this purpose, the corporate social responsibility activities implemented and carried out by airline companies approved by the General Directorate of Civil Aviation in this process are discussed. The scope of the research consists of airline companies operating in Türkiye, and the sample consists of Turkish Airlines, Pegasus Airlines, Sunexpress Airlines, Corendon Airlines and MGA Airlines. Qualitative research method was used in the study and the collected data was analyzed using the descriptive analysis technique. In the data collection process of the research, airline companies' web pages, social media accounts, managers' press releases and news pages were used.

### 3.3. Findings

According to the data of the General Directorate of Civil Aviation, there are a total of ten airlines in Türkiye that continue their activities by transporting passengers and freight with scheduled and non-scheduled flights (SHGM, 2023). The CSR activities of these airlines during the February 6 Kahramanmaraş earthquakes are examined below.

#### 3.3.1. Corporate social responsibility activities implemented by Turkish Airlines

Turkish Airlines provided support in coordination with all ministries and government departments.

*“Turkish Airlines has abolished the mandatory vaccination certificate requirement for pet transportation, specific to the earthquake zone” (Hürriyet, 2023).*

*“Turkish Airlines’ search and rescue team, consisting of 300 people, participated in the activities carried out in the disaster area. This team is led by experts, mostly technicians. In addition, the Airport Rescue and Firefighting team of Turkish Airlines Flight Academy, THY’s flight school in Aydın, also participated in the excavations in Iskenderun” (TRT news, 2023).*

*“In the statement made by Turkish Airlines, it is stated that all domestic flights and flights arriving in Kahramanmaraş, Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Malatya, Diyarbakır, Adana, Kayseri, Adıyaman, Hatay, Elazığ between 6 February 2023 and 31 May 2023, provided that they are arranged on or before 28 February 2023. It has announced that it can change or refund international flights from/to free of charge. Only ticket changes or refunds can be made through the website and mobile application until May 31, 2023” (Turkish Airlines, 2023).*

*“Turkish Airlines donated 5,000 tablets to the Ministry of National Education to support students affected by the earthquake. It has also created a support campaign under the title #TabletForYouth” (Turkish Airlines Twitter Page, 2023).*

*“According to the statement made by Turkish Airlines, groups of twenty people each, consisting of cabin, cockpit and ground services, deliver humanitarian aid materials to Gaziantep, Adıyaman and Hatay, primarily on a voluntary basis. A group of 300 people with first aid experience carried out search and rescue activities in the disaster area. The search and rescue personnel provided to the earthquake area, THY and THY Technic employees provided financial aid by collecting a total of 2.3 million lira. In addition, nearly 10 thousand personnel provided support and 350 people, including psychologists, went to the earthquake regions to support the disaster area” (Anadolu Agency, 2023).*

*“The name of the aid and support campaign created after the earthquake disaster in Türkiye was determined as One Heart. For this reason, Turkish Airlines decided to name the 400th aircraft joining its fleet as Tek Yürek. @TK\_TR aircraft made its first flight on March 4” (Turkish Airlines Technical Twitter Page, 2023).*

*“Turkish Airlines delivered approximately 240 tons of aid collected by the United Nations Organization for Migration in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, to the earthquake zone. The aid collected in Nairobi was brought to Adana Incirlik Base*



by B777F wide-body cargo plane with flight code TK6631 from Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. With this expedition, a total of 100 tons of aid materials, including 85 tons of tents and tent equipment and 15 tons of blankets, were delivered to Adana. Later, tents, tunnel tents and various aid materials were shipped to the earthquake zone in two expeditions. With approximately 240 tons of aid, 352 tents, 18 thousand 245 plastic tarpaulin sheets, 1261 plastic tarpaulin rolls, 26 thousand 565 blankets and 34 thousand 705 sleeping mats were taken to the earthquake zone” (Anadolu Agency, 2023).

“Within the scope of the ‘Türkiye One Heart’ campaign carried out in Türkiye after the disaster, Turkish Airlines Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer Ahmet Bolat delivered a check worth 2 billion liras to Istanbul Governor Ali Yerlikaya on February 25, 2023” (NTV News, 2023).

“THY Technic, which provides free line maintenance fees to international airlines serving disaster areas, expressed its gratitude to the airlines that provided assistance” (Turkish Airlines Twitter Page, 2023).

“With the Take-off 101 activity, they announced that they will offer job opportunities to one person from 1000 families affected by the earthquake in the earthquake region at Turkish Airlines and its affiliated companies for 3rd and 4th year university students who will graduate in 2024” (Turkish Airlines, 2023).

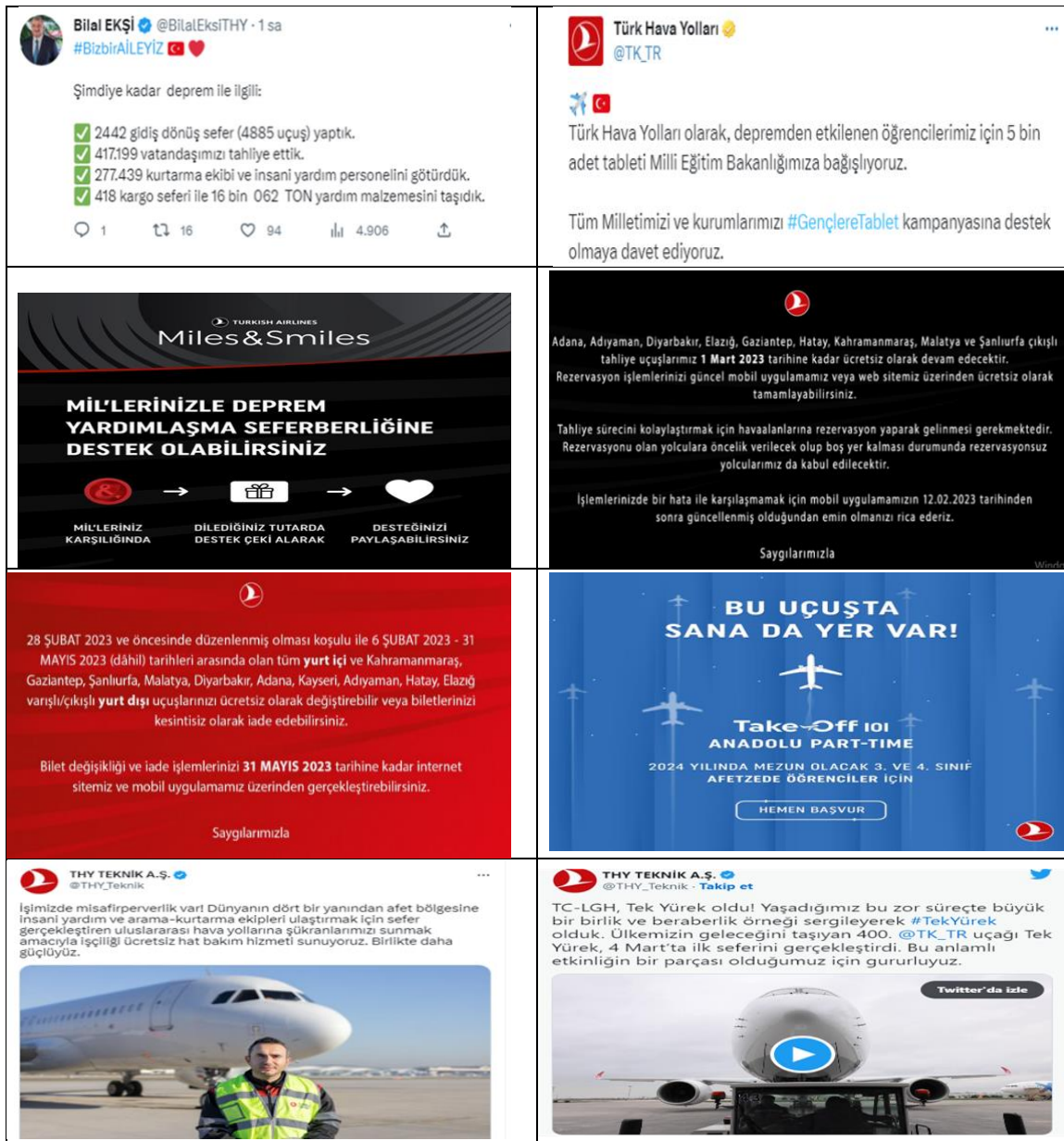


Figure 2. Quotes related to findings related to Turkish Airlines.

“Turkish Airlines brought 67.3 tons of humanitarian aid materials collected for the earthquake zone in Switzerland to Istanbul” (Airport News, 2023).

"The miles accumulated in Turkish Airlines' Miles&Smiles reward program can be used to help the earthquake zone. It has been announced that THY will also contribute to this aid of the citizens, and within the scope of the Earthquake solidarity mobilization, the program partnership with LC Waikiki will provide support to the citizens in the earthquake zone by converting the miles into support checks, and in return for each support check, THY will contribute on behalf of its members" (Turkish Airlines, 2023).

"Turkish Airlines announced that they want to build a THY Neighborhood of 1000 houses for earthquake victims at a location to be determined in the disaster area" (Hava Social Media Twitter Web Page, 2023).

"THY has launched free evacuation flights for citizens who want to leave the region, departing from Adana, Adıyaman, Diyarbakır, Elazığ, Gaziantep, Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, Malatya and Şanlıurfa. They stated that these flights will continue until March 1, 2023" (Turkish Airlines, 2023).

"THY provided free flights for 11,780 volunteer citizens who wanted to serve the earthquake region for search, rescue and aid purposes" (Bial Ekşi Twitter page, 2023).

### 3.3.2. Corporate Social Responsibility Activities Implemented by Pegasus Airlines

"Pegasus Airlines offered the right to change, suspend and cancel flights free of charge for flights between 6-12 February due to changes in the travel plans of passengers affected by the earthquake disaster in Türkiye. Later, by making statements at regular intervals, it updated these dates as 6-21 February and 6-28 February, respectively, and determined the last transaction period as 31 March for all of them. In its last statement, it extended the period further and offered the right to free changes, suspensions and cancellations until May 31 for flights that will operate between February 6 and March 31" (Pegasus Airlines Twitter Web Page, 2023).

"Pegasus Airlines tried to meet the transportation needs by organizing additional flights for aid teams and other people who wanted to go to the earthquake zone" (Pegasus Airlines Twitter Web Page, 2023).

"Following THY's decision to fix its flights from Adana, Diyarbakır, Elazığ, Gaziantep, Kayseri, Malatya, Şanlıurfa and Kahramanmaraş to 100 TL, Pegasus Airlines also fixed its flights from these provinces to 100 TL between 7-13 February. With another decision taken immediately afterwards, flights departing from the earthquake zone between these dates became completely free" (Pegasus Airlines Instagram, 2023).

"Pegasus Airlines extended the decision to make evacuation flights departing from the earthquake zone free of charge between 7-13 February and first made them free until 19 February. Later, it updated this period again on February 19 and extended it until March 1. Thus, sufficient time was given for the evacuation of the people in the region" (Pegasus Airlines Twitter Web Page, 2023).






**Figure 3.** Quotes related to findings related to Pegasus Airlines.

"Pegasus Airlines informed those who want to deliver aid to the earthquake zone that they will provide free transportation if they bring this aid to Sabiha Gökçen Airport in cooperation with the authorized units. Pegasus Airlines donated 5 million TL to AFAD and 3 million TL to the Ahbap Association on behalf of Pegasus employees in order to provide financial support to people affected by the earthquake. They also showed that they did not forget about pets by delivering pet transport containers to airports in the earthquake zone. Pegasus Airlines carries out all these activities within the framework of civil aviation rules" (Airportnews, 2023).

"Due to the change in the academic calendar of universities, Pegasus Airlines has given the right to free cancellation and refund for tickets purchased on certain dates in order not to inconvenience university students" (Pegasus Airlines Twitter Web Page, 2023).

"Pegasus Airlines has provided another convenience to university students by granting 15 kg of free additional baggage to university students leaving their dormitories" (Pegasus Airlines Twitter Web Page, 2023).

"Pegasus Airlines stated that in order to avoid confusion during evacuation flights, passengers should buy their tickets before arriving at the airport, and that passengers who have not purchased their tickets will be taken on the flight if there are empty seats on the plane" (Pegasus Airlines Twitter Web Page, 2023).

"Immediately after Hatay airport started to operate again, Pegasus Airlines started to organize free evacuation flights from this province" (Pegasus Airlines Instagram Page, 2023).

"Pegasus Airlines helped 220 employees and their relatives affected by the earthquake by evacuating from the region, accommodation and meeting their basic needs" (Pegasus Airlines Instagram Page, 2023).

"Pegasus Airlines carried out a total of 785 flights between February 6 and March 1, evacuating 152,950 people from the region" (Pegasus Airlines Instagram Page, 2023).

“Purple Campus Activity aims to improve the conditions of women, children, disabled individuals and people who need care due to their age in the earthquake zone, and to build psychosocially safe spaces for them by meeting their basic needs. This activity is an activity implemented by the Federation of Women’s Associations of Türkiye. Pegasus Airlines contributes to this activity by providing air transportation support. Güliz Öztürk, general manager of Pegasus Airlines, published a message on March 8, International Working Women’s Day, and called on the business world to support the activity” (Airportnews, 2023).

“Pegasus Airlines did not forget the children in the earthquake zone on April 23 National Sovereignty and Children’s Day and cooperated with the Needs Map. During this collaboration process, it delivered the products it procured from local producers to meet the needs of children in the region” (Pegasus Airlines Twitter Web Page, 2023).

### 3.3.3. Corporate Social Responsibility Activities Implemented by Sunexpress Airlines

SunExpress Airlines made a statement regarding the changes that may occur in passengers' travel plans after the earthquake disaster. According to this statement, tickets for domestic flights that were booked before February 5th and took place between February 14th and March 31st are entitled to free exchange and refund until February 28th. The new flight date must be March 31 at the latest. In addition, passengers are given the right to change tickets without penalty if the new flight date is between 1 April and 28 October.



SunExpress Airlines provided assistance by starting to operate special flights for search-rescue and medical teams to reach the earthquake area as soon as possible. In addition, it announced that it will transport aid materials to the region free of charge from all destinations where it operates domestic flights.

In its first statement, SunExpress Airlines fixed all ticket prices for departures/arrivals from Adana, Diyarbakır, Gaziantep, Kayseri, Malatya and Mardin to 100 TL between 7-13 February in order to facilitate transportation in the provinces affected by the earthquake. Then, they made a new statement and announced that they would operate their flights in these provinces free of charge until February 13 (including February 13). He later extended this period and updated it to March 1. After the repair of the airport in Hatay, Hatay was added to the provinces where free evacuation flights were made.

SunExpress Airlines has provided convenience to its passengers by granting them 15 kg of free additional baggage on all flights departing/arriving from Adana, Diyarbakır, Gaziantep, Kayseri, Malatya, Hatay and Mardin until February 21. Later, it made an update on this right and extended the period until February 28.

“SunExpress Airlines informed the passengers that they should make a reservation before arriving at the airport for the free flights it operates in Adana, Diyarbakır, Gaziantep, Hatay, Kayseri, Malatya and Mardin provinces, and that if they do not make a reservation, they will be taken on the flight if there is an empty seat on the plane. Thus, it tried to prevent the chaos that might occur at the airports” (SunExpress Airlines Twitter Page, 2023).

“Providing assistance through relief efforts, evacuation flights and cargo transportation, SunExpress Airlines carried out more than 443 special flights during this period and evacuated more than 18,600 people affected by the disaster from the earthquake zone. It also reported that they transported more than 7,800 search-rescue and medical personnel and nearly 327 tons of aid materials to the earthquake zone” (Sunexpress, 2023).

<p>Yaşanan deprem felaketi nedeniyle rezervasyonu 5 Şubat 2023 öncesinde yapılmış ve <b>14 Şubat-31 Mart 2023 tarihleri arasında</b> gerçekleşen veya gerçekleşmesi planlanan yurt içi uçuşlarınıza olan biletlerinizi, 28 Şubat 2023 tarihine kadar <b>yeni uçuş tarihi en geç 31 Mart 2023</b> olmak kaydıyla <b>hiçbir ücret ödmeden</b> değiştirilebilir ve bilet tutarının tam iadesini alabilirsiniz. Yeni uçuş tarihinin 1 Nisan-28 Ekim 2023 tarihleri arasında olması halinde ise cezasız bilet değişikliği yapabilirsiniz. Bu durumda, fiyat farkı uygulanabilir.</p> <p>Söz konusu uçuşlarınız için ücretsiz bilet değişikliği veya iptal işlemlerinizi <a href="http://sunexpress.com">sunexpress.com</a> veya mobil uygulamamızda yer alan “Rezervasyonlarım” adından yapabilirsiniz.</p> 	<p>SunExpress olarak, arama-kurtarma ve sağlık ekiplerini mümkün olan en kısa sürede deprem bölgesine taşımak için özel uçuşlar planladık.</p> <p>Ayrıca, Türkiye’de yurt içi uçuş gerçekleştirdiğimiz tüm destinasyonlarımızdan bölgeye gönderilecek yardımları ücretsiz olarak taşıyacağımızı paylaşmak isteriz.</p> 
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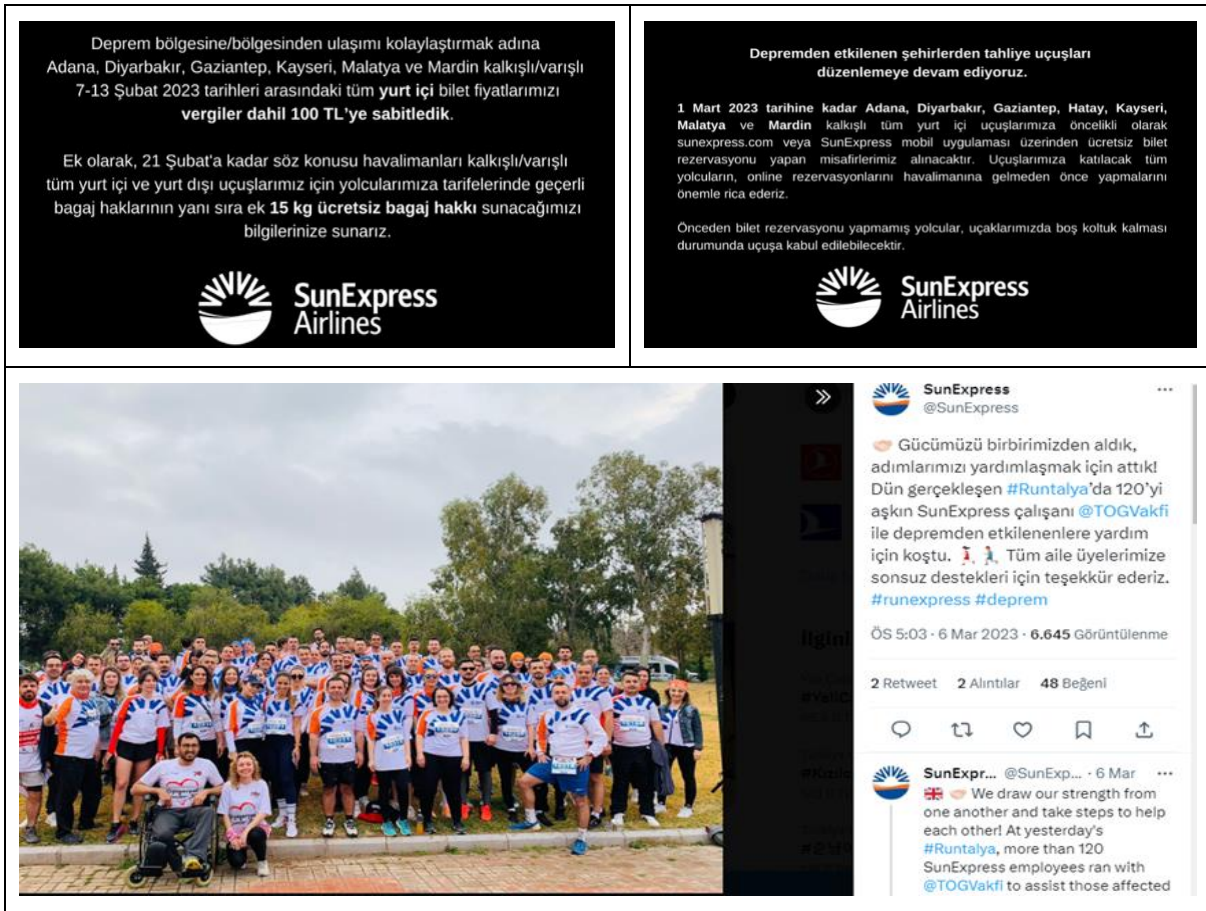


Figure 4. Quotes related to findings related to Sunexpress Airlines.

"SunExpress airlines, DPD (Package transportation specialist), Lufthansa Cargo (Cargo airline), FIEGE (Logistics company), time: matters (Express transportation specialist) and CB Customs Broker GmbH (Customs service provider) under the name 'We Support Together' has created a helping community by collaborating. The aim of the community is to deliver the aid materials urgently needed to the earthquake region. This air bridge, established for anyone who wants to send aid materials from Germany, ensures continuous, fast and reliable transportation of donations. This activity has been implemented since February 16" (Sunexpress, 2023).

"When the news of SunExpress Airlines, a joint company of THY and Lufthansa, is examined, airportnews shared the latest data regarding the amount of cargo transported through the air bridge established between Germany and Türkiye. According to this news, SunExpress airlines carried more than 450 tons of aid materials to the earthquake zone with the 'Together We Support' initiative. Although it is predicted that the aid materials transported will reach 1000 tons, there is no shared data on this" (Airportnews, 2023).

"In a statement made on March 8, Women's Day, SunExpress airlines announced to the public on this special day that they support the Women's Labor Evaluation Foundation and OXFAM, which helps all women affected by the earthquake rebuild their lives, on behalf of every woman working at SunExpress" (Airportnews, 2023).

### 3.3.4. Corporate Social Responsibility Activities Implemented by Other Airline Companies

"Corendon Airlines conveyed their condolences to our citizens who were affected and lost their lives by the major earthquake disaster that occurred on February 6, 2023. They also provided support to aid flights in coordination with the competent authorities" (Corendon Airlines Twitter Web Page, 2023).

"Corendon Airlines transported the aid materials provided by the TigReisen company in Germany to Antalya with a B737 type aircraft belonging to Corendon, in partnership with the Red Crescent" (Hava Social Media Twitter Web Page, 2023).

- Corendon Airlines sent a condolence message to the disaster victims and supported the delivery of aid to the earthquake regions through DGCA.



- It ensured that the materials prepared by a German company for the disaster area were delivered to Antalya.

*“Turkish Airlines, Pegasus Airlines, SunExpress Airlines, Hürkuş Airlines, Cortex Aviation, Touristic Air Transport, Tailwind Airlines, Air Anka Airlines, Mavi Gök Airlines and BBN Airlines continue their activities in Türkiye by carrying passengers and freight with scheduled and non-scheduled flights” (SHGM, 2023).*

*“Izmir-based Air Anka Airlines allocated its planes to the Izmir governorship and delivered aid materials from Izmir and surrounding provinces to the earthquake zone. He also provided aid by transporting aid teams to the earthquake zone” (Airportnews, 2023).*

*“When the CSR activities of Hürkuş Airlines, Cortex Aviation, Tailwind Airlines and Mavi Gök Aviation are examined after the earthquake disaster in Türkiye, it is seen that they played an important role in the rapid evacuation of people in the earthquake zone, especially the sick, elderly and injured. In addition to carrying out many evacuation flights from Adana, Adıyaman, Diyarbakır, Elazığ, Gaziantep, Kahramanmaraş, Kayseri, Malatya, Şanlıurfa and Hatay, these airlines also carried cargo by organizing aid flights to these provinces” (Airportnews, 2023).*

#### 4. Conclusion

Airline companies try to fulfill their responsibilities towards the environment in moral, conscientious and social dimensions. As a result of these studies, CSR activities emerge. The main aim of CSR activities is to increase the welfare level of the society and provide benefits to the institution. These activities aim to improve society in many areas such as environment, ethics, sustainability, education and art. Businesses carry out their CSR activities on a completely voluntary basis. In addition to having a positive impact on the society in which they operate with their CSR activities, businesses also provide advantages to their institutions in matters such as increasing their corporate image, reputation, awareness and customer loyalty.

The earthquakes that occurred on and after February 6, 2023 affected 10 provinces, causing many people to lose their lives and buildings to be destroyed. The needs of our citizens living in the provinces affected by the earthquake have emerged in the areas of food, drink, shelter, health and security. As a result of the earthquake disrupting transportation on land, sea and railways, air transportation, one of the fastest and safest transportation modes, has gained importance.

The needs of the people in the region were tried to be met by delivering many aid teams and aid materials to the earthquake zones in a safe, effective, efficient and fast manner by air transportation. In addition, many creatures affected by the earthquake in the region were evacuated and transported to safe areas thanks to air transportation.

THY, Pegasus Airlines and SunExpress Airlines have given passengers the right to change tickets, uninterrupted refunds and suspensions in order to prevent the passengers who cannot fly between certain dates due to the earthquake to suffer. In addition, these three airline companies transported citizens who wanted to reach the earthquake zone for various reasons to these regions free of charge.

All airlines operating in Türkiye have provided the transportation of people in disaster areas to safe areas without charging any fee.

THY and Pegasus Airlines facilitated the evacuation of animals by placing pet carriers at airports in the provinces affected by the earthquake. In addition, THY has removed the vaccination certificate requirement for the transportation of pets, making the process easier.

THY, SunExpress and Corendon airlines carried out relief materials to the earthquake region through various collaborations. Apart from these airlines, other airlines operating in Türkiye also carried relief materials to the earthquake zone free of charge and met the various needs of the society there.

In addition to THY's aid team consisting of 300 people participating in the rescue activities in the disaster area, Turkish Airlines Flight Academy's Airport Rescue and Fire Fighting team also supported the search and rescue efforts in Iskenderun. The volunteer team called 'Guardian Angels', formed by SunExpress Airline employees, took part in support activities in the region during their off-duty time.

THY donated a total of 2 billion TL for the earthquake victims, and Pegasus Airlines donated 8 million TL to the earthquake victims.

Pegasus Airlines grants 15 kg of free additional baggage allowance between certain dates, only for university students. SunExpress Airlines has provided this right to all citizens.

Pegasus Airlines published a special message on March 8, Women's Day, stating that they contributed to the Purple Campus Activity by providing air transportation support and called on the business world to support this activity. This activity aims to create psychosocially safe spaces for women, children, disabled individuals and people who need help due to their age in the earthquake zone. SunExpress Airlines also published a message on this special day, stating that it supports the Women's Labor Evaluation Foundation and OXFAM in order to increase the welfare level of women in the earthquake zone.

Turkish Airlines delivered 5000 tablets free of charge to students affected by the earthquake in recognition of the continuity and importance of education in disaster areas. It also created a support campaign to deliver tablets to more students. THY created a team of 350 people and sent this team to the region to help the earthquake victims who were negatively affected socially. In addition, THY Technic employees supported by collecting 2.3 million TL among themselves in order to reduce the cash aid gap in disaster areas. An earthquake campaign was created in Türkiye under the title 'One Heart'. In order to draw attention to this campaign, THY named the 400th aircraft added to its fleet as 'One Heart'. THY Technic provided free line maintenance service to support airlines helping disaster areas. In addition, THY will make positive discrimination for disaster-affected students and offer job opportunities to one person from every 1000 families. It provided assistance by converting the points collected through Miles&Smiles, THY's point collection campaign, into support checks in partnership with LC Waikiki. THY started an activity by announcing that they would build a neighborhood of 1000 houses in the disaster area.

Pegasus Airlines showed that it stands by its employees by making positive discrimination for its 220 employees and their relatives affected by the earthquake, by providing evacuation from the region, accommodation and basic needs. On April 23 National Sovereignty and Children's Day, in cooperation with the Needs Map, various aid materials were delivered to children in the disaster area to meet their needs.

Employees of SunExpress Airlines participated in the running organization in cooperation with the Community Volunteers Foundation and aimed to raise awareness about the earthquake.

The CSR activities implemented by 10 airline companies that carry passengers and freight with scheduled and non-scheduled flights in Türkiye during the February 6 Kahramanmaraş earthquakes have been examined above. According to this review, it is seen that THY, Pegasus Airlines and SunExpress Airlines carry out many activities. When these three airline companies are compared among themselves in terms of the CSR activities they carried out after the earthquake disaster, it is seen that THY carries out CSR activities in more areas than other airline companies. The reason for this may be that THY is a traditional airline and that it carries out more activities than its competitors by applying a differentiation strategy. Following THY, Pegasus Airlines and SunExpress, which implement the low-cost business model, were the airlines that carried out the most CSR activities.

Hürkuş Airlines, Cortex Aviation, Corendon Airlines, Tailwind Airlines, Air Anka Airlines and Mavi Gök Aviation did not carry out any other CSR activities other than carrying relief materials to the earthquake region and organizing evacuation flights from this region. BBN Airlines differs from others by not engaging in any CSR activities in this process.

As a result, this study examined the social responsibility activities implemented by airline companies during the February 6, 2023 Kahramanmaraş earthquake. According to Kurt and Besler, (2019), social responsibility activities of companies are mostly organized for society, environment, customers and legal regulations. In this study, it was concluded that they carry out these activities for the benefit of society, support for voluntary social work, offers of assistance and legal obligations. In addition, companies that are aware of the importance of corporate social responsibility gain a good image in the eyes of society with the activities they carry out, and this creates a difference between them and their competitors serving in the same field (Erkman and Şahinoğlu, 2012). Another result of the study is that airline companies took an active role in the scope of social responsibility activities during the earthquake process, were affected by the activities of their competitors and implemented similar practices.



Considering the date the study was conducted, the fact that there are not many studies in the literature due to the earthquake being very recent limits the study. However, it is recommended that studies be conducted by making comparisons with social responsibility activities in earthquakes that occurred in previous years and including studies after the earthquake.

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