

abstract and editorial

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Academic Writing

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**Abstract**

Although COVID-19 has had a negative impact on global aviation, private aviation services have been presented with unprecedented growth potential by the pandemic. This report critically analyses the opportunities given to private jet operators during times of travel restriction. The paper also aims to identify prospective strategies companies can implement to tap into a wider pool of high-income consumers.

The report initially examines the current condition of private aviation and highlight the economic growth witnessed by the industry in addition to typical operating models used by service providers. This growth is subsequently explained in the following section of the research, which investigates the growth opportunities presented by the pandemic. The paper then outlines the major challenges restraining growth and analyse Wheels Up – the top private flight operator in the US – to discover the potential strategies for unlocking the growing total addressable market of private aviation. More specifically, the three major strategies implemented by Wheels Up will be assessed with respect to their results on the growth of the company; these strategies include digital transformation, mergers and acquisitions, and subscription-based business model. For the case of Wheels Up, the paper heavily utilizes reports synthesized by major investment banking companies for in-depth data analysis and comparative evaluation.

The findings in the research suggest a positive outlook for the private aviation industry in the post-pandemic economy. Results from the Wheels Up case study indicate that companies should adopt the use of new technology such as machine learning and big data analytics to balance supply and demand and attract optimize the operating models of the industry. Furthermore, as indicated in the case study, the strategy of mergers and acquisitions might lead to a widescale market expansion. Moreover, private aviation services can expect a growing adoption rate post-pandemic because consumers have realized the health and security benefits offered by private flying. Finally, findings from the research indicate the possibility of the industry to competitively fare with first-class commercial aviation.

**Editorial**

In a world where money and the economy revolve around trucks, ships, and planes, you would think a pandemic that has halted the flow of all transports for months on end will mark the end for these logistics industries; and you would be quite right. Indeed, many big guys in the US like the trucking industry and commercial airlines are taking the brunt of the economic losses, and the day when they would finally recover to their former glories is far and blurry. But just when you think all hopes are lost, somewhere in the niche market of aviation has risen an industry blessed with opportunities and growth brought about, ironically, by the pandemic itself. That industry is, of course, none other than the private aviation industry.

This smaller brother of commercial aviation has taken it all for himself thanks to the high-class perks private flying offers to the “1%” of the population. Despite the pandemic, the millionaires and billionaires can still travel freely with even less restriction in destinations thanks to the 5,000 accessible airports compared to a mere 500 offered by bigger commercial airlines. Not only so, travelling in private jets is accompanied by pick-ups by limousines and direct transport to aircrafts. This edge private flying has over commercial flying, once unnoticed, is now a crucial factor boosting growth within the industry since it reduces the normal 700 contact points in an average public flight down to merely 20. In short, the amazing bundle deal that comes with private flying has made the industry far more appealing to the eyes of the wealthy, and the number of wealthy individuals and elites who opt for private aviation services is, quite literally, skyrocketing.

Now, of course, with every new change into any industry comes problems, and private aviation is not an exception. For many players in the field, pre-existing problems such as an excess in manual labour and a reluctance to implement new technology are stopping them from reaching the golden goose of the industry. However, some major companies, such as the top operator Wheels Up, have already figured out how to cope with the new nature of private aviation by implementing new strategies like integrating machine learning into their flight management systems as well as introducing more appealing business models. These strategies will likely be the guiding compass for the entire industry to follow suit and grow during this time of great opportunities. In conclusion, private aviation is witnessing never-before-seen economic growth and the outlook for a post-pandemic world is very positive with some even suggesting that private aviation might one day replace the aged-old first-class commercial services.