ACADEMIC WEEKLY DIGEST

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GENDERED INSTAGRAM REPRESENTATIONS IN THE AVIATION INDUSTRY

Instagram plays a constitutive role in materialising gender and is a space in which gendered representations and traditional gender norms continue to be reinforced.

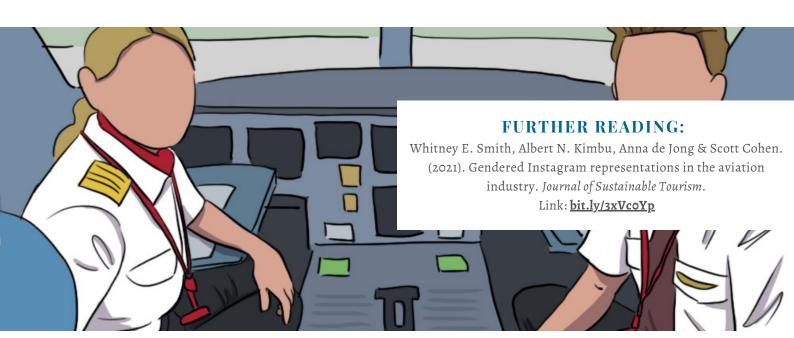
Airlines are increasingly using Instagram, and social media more broadly, as a way to communicate with customers and shape a desired organisational image. Through a critical analysis of airline organisational images, Whitney E. Smith and colleagues deconstruct normative gendered assumptions that exist within the aviation sector's use of Instagram.

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Media is a global power that plays a crucial role in transmitting information that reflects society, as well as shaping and constructing it. Gender is shaped and reproduced within aviation media imagery (i.e. television, advertisements, brochures) and, more recently, social media. This article focuses exclusively on Instagram as an integrated part of modern society that contributes significantly to societies that are increasingly becoming dependent on visual stimuli. Adopting a feminist poststructuralist lens, the article explores how airline organisational images may portray

employees in gendered ways through
Instagram across four airlines – Emirates,
KLM, Qantas and Virgin Atlantic.
Netnography is used to uncover the
dominant discourses, as well as the complex
representations of gender as portrayed by
airlines on Instagram. Findings reveal that
while there are some images that defy
stereotypes, the airlines consistently
construct and distribute playful imagery
that objectifies female staff and hyperfeminises the cabin space.



Thus, though some advancements in the representation of gender have altered gendered scripts, progress is gradual, and much work remains in challenging restrictive gender systems. This article contributes to breaking down the male/female dichotomy and broaden societal perceptions of what airline work looks like and who can perform them.