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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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GENDERED INSTAGRAM REPRESENTATIONS IN THE AVIATION INDUSTRY

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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 hyper-feminises the cabin space.



FURTHER READING:

Whitney E. Smith, Albert N. Kimbu, Anna de Jong & Scott Cohen. (2021). Gendered Instagram representations in the aviation industry. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*.

Link: bit.ly/3xVcoYp

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.