



Instagram Digital Footprints and Employability: Implications for Career Opportunities of Aircraft Maintenance Technology Students and Alumni

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between Instagram digital footprints and employability among Aircraft Maintenance Technology (AMT) students and alumni at Indiana Aerospace University. In an era where employers increasingly review applicants' online presence, digital self-presentation has become a significant factor in career development. Using a quantitative descriptive design, data were collected from 100 respondents (80 students and 20 alumni) through structured questionnaires administered via Google Forms. A five-point Likert scale measured perceptions of Instagram use in relation to job opportunities, job placement, and professional image management. Results indicated that Instagram is perceived as a useful platform for showcasing certifications, internships, seminars, technical work, and industry engagement, contributing positively to professional branding and career visibility. However, respondents reported challenges such as limited aviation-related content, low professional engagement, and inadequate content curation, which may reduce employability potential. The findings suggest that a strategically managed Instagram presence can enhance career prospects in aviation-related fields. The study recommends integrating digital professionalism training into career preparation programs to help students and alumni develop responsible and career-oriented social media practices.

Keywords: *Instagram, digital footprint, career prospects, aircraft maintenance technology, professional networking*

Introduction

The expansion of social media has transformed how individuals construct identity, build networks, and access professional opportunities. Among various platforms, Instagram has evolved beyond personal expression into a space where digital footprints can influence employer perceptions. In competitive and image-sensitive industries such as aviation, online self-presentation may serve as an informal indicator of professionalism, technical involvement, and industry engagement.

Aircraft Maintenance Technology (AMT) students and alumni are entering a workforce where recruiters increasingly review candidates' social media profiles as part of screening processes. Content shared online—such as certifications, internships, technical projects, and professional interactions—can signal competence, motivation, and readiness for employment. Conversely, unprofessional or unrelated content may negatively affect hiring decisions. Theories such as Impression Management Theory and Signaling Theory explain how individuals strategically present themselves online to influence how others evaluate their abilities and professional identity.

Despite the growing relevance of digital footprints in employment contexts, limited research focuses specifically on Instagram's role in shaping career prospects in technical aviation programs. Most studies address social media and employment broadly, without examining platform-specific behaviors or the needs of specialized fields. This study addresses that gap by investigating how Instagram use affects job opportunities and job placement among AMT students and alumni.

The findings aim to guide students, alumni, educators, and career services in promoting responsible digital behavior and integrating social media professionalism into career development initiatives.

Research Objectives

This study aimed to critically examine the effects of Instagram digital footprints on the career prospects of alumni and students in

Aircraft Maintenance Technology at Indiana Aerospace University. Specifically, it aimed to answer the following subproblems:

1. The effects of Instagram Digital Footprint in terms of:
 - 1.1. job opportunities; and
 - 1.2. job placement?
2. Rank the problems encountered by Aircraft Maintenance and Technology alumni and students of Indiana Aerospace University.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to examine perceptions of Instagram digital footprints and their influence on career prospects. This approach allowed for systematic measurement of attitudes and behaviors using structured numerical data.

Respondents

The study involved 100 respondents from the Aircraft Maintenance Technology program at Indiana Aerospace University, including 80 students and 20 alumni. Participants were selected through snowball sampling, ensuring that respondents were active Instagram users and had relevant academic or industry experience.

Research Instrument

The study utilized a researcher-developed questionnaire composed of two primary components. The first component, the Instagram Digital Footprint Scale, assessed respondents' professional content sharing, engagement with aviation-related materials, management of privacy settings, and online branding behaviors. The second component, the Career Prospect Scale, measured perceptions related to job opportunities, job placement, and the role of Instagram in enhancing employability. All responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The instrument was pre-tested prior to data collection to ensure clarity, relevance, and suitability for the study objectives.

Procedure

Participants were screened based on eligibility criteria and provided informed consent electronically. The questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms, allowing convenient and secure data collection. Responses were collected and compiled for statistical analysis.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, weighted means, and ranking, were used to analyze the data. Weighted means determined the level of agreement on survey items, while ranking identified the most significant challenges related to Instagram use and professional digital presence.

Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Data were securely stored and used solely for academic purposes. Participants had the right to withdraw at any time without consequences.

Results and Discussion

Job Opportunities

A job opportunity in Aircraft Maintenance Technology refers to the chance to apply for available positions within the aviation industry, where individuals can use their technical skills to maintain, inspect, and repair aircraft. These opportunities can be found in airlines, maintenance, repair organizations, aircraft manufacturing companies, or government aviation sectors. Gaining access to job opportunities often depends on industry exposure, professional presence, and proven qualifications such as certifications and practical experience. In the current digital era, it functions as a platform for showcasing professional dedication and involvement in the industry, in addition to being a tool for personal branding.

Table 1 illustrates the perceived impact of Instagram's digital footprint on the job opportunities of Aircraft Maintenance Technology students and alumni from Indiana Aerospace University.

Table 1. *Job Opportunities*

<i>Aspects</i>	<i>Weighted Mean</i>	<i>Description</i>
Instagram users share content related to certifications, internships, seminars, or workshops to attract potential employers.	3.75	Agree
Instagram users share content related to certifications, internships, seminars, or workshops to attract potential employers.	3.70	Agree
My Instagram account contains aviation-related content that helps me establish a professional online brand.	3.62	Agree
I actively engage with aviation professionals and follow aviation pages to build industry connections.	3.62	Agree

I frequently post about aviation activities to increase my visibility to recruiters and companies.	3.42	Agree
AVERAGE WEIGHTED MEAN	3.62	Agree

Legend: 4.21-5.00: Strongly Agree, 3.41-4.20: Agree, 2.61-3.40: Neutral, 1.81-2.60: Disagree, 1.81 - 2.60: Strongly Disagree

Job Placement

Job placement is the process of obtaining employment in the aviation industry after completing the required education and training in Aircraft Maintenance Technology. It involves connecting qualified individuals with positions that match their skills and career goals. Effective job placement depends on factors such as professional branding, industry networking, and the ability to showcase qualifications through platforms like social media and career websites to attract the attention of recruiters and employers.

Table 2 below illustrates the perceived impact of Instagram's digital footprint on the job placement of Aircraft Maintenance Technology students and alumni from Indiana Aerospace University.

Table 2. Job Placement

<i>Aspects</i>	<i>Weighted Mean</i>	<i>Description</i>
I manage my Instagram privacy settings and filter content to protect my digital reputation.	4.08	Agree
Instagram allows me to upload photos or videos of my technical work and achievements to serve as an informal portfolio for recruiters.	3.85	Agree
On Instagram, I follow airline companies, recruitment pages, and aviation job boards to stay updated on job opportunities.	3.76	Agree
Instagram regularly shares my aviation goals and milestones to demonstrate my motivation and readiness for the field.	3.62	Agree
I maintain a clean and professional Instagram profile focused on aviation to improve my job placement chances.	3.61	Agree
AVERAGE WEIGHTED MEAN	3.78	Agree

Legend: 4.21-5.00: Strongly Agree, 3.41-4.20: Agree, 2.61-3.40: Neutral, 1.81-2.60: Disagree, 1.81 - 2.60: Strongly Disagree

Problems Encountered

Table 3 below illustrates the challenges faced by Aircraft Maintenance Technology students and alumni of Indiana Aerospace University in establishing a professional digital presence on Instagram.

Table 3. Problems Encountered

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Rank</i>
My Instagram account lacks aviation-related content, which makes it hard to establish a professional online brand.	44	1
Instagram rarely shares content related to certifications, internships, seminars, or workshops, reducing my appeal to potential employers.	42	2
Instagram rarely posts about aviation activities, limiting my visibility to recruiters and companies.	41	3
Instagram rarely engages with aviation professionals or follows aviation pages, which weakens my industry connections.	33	4
Instagram does not display posts from airline companies, recruitment pages, or aviation job boards on my feed, causing me to miss important job updates.	30	5
Improper Instagram privacy settings or content filtering could harm my digital reputation.	28	6
Instagram does not have aviation-themed pages, events, or discussions, which may show a lack of commitment to the profession.	23	7
Instagram profile is not clean or professional, which may harm my chances of job placement.	23	8
Instagram does not have specific aviation industry related contents.	22	9
Instagram does not post photos or videos of users technical work or achievements, missing an opportunity to showcase my skills.	15	10

During the data collection process, several problems were observed regarding the Instagram accounts of individuals pursuing a career in Aircraft Maintenance Technology.

The top 5 problems encountered are: My Instagram account lacks aviation-related content, which makes it hard to establish a professional online brand, Instagram rarely shares content related to certifications, internships, seminars, or workshops, reducing my appeal to potential employers, Instagram rarely posts about aviation activities, limiting my visibility to recruiters and companies, Instagram rarely engages with aviation professionals or follows aviation pages, which weakens my industry connections, Instagram does not display posts from airline companies, recruitment pages, or aviation job boards on my feed, causing me to miss important job updates.

First, Instagram doesn't show content related to aviation, which makes it difficult for others—such as potential employers, peers, or aviation enthusiasts—to recognize your professional interests or identity. Since social media is often used for building personal brands,

not having aviation content can make it harder for you to be seen as serious or involved in that field.

Second, Instagram rarely features posts about your certifications, internships, seminars, or workshops; it doesn't highlight your skills, experiences, or professional development. This makes it harder for potential employers to see your qualifications and commitment to the aviation field, which can reduce your chances of standing out among other candidates.

Third, Instagram seldom features aviation-related activities, such as flying experiences, training sessions, or aviation events—it doesn't accurately reflect your involvement or passion for the field. This lowers your visibility to recruiters or companies searching for aviation-minded individuals, making it harder to attract attention or opportunities.

Fourth, if you don't interact with aviation professionals or follow aviation-related pages on Instagram, you miss out on building valuable industry relationships and staying informed about trends and opportunities. This lack of engagement limits your professional network and reduces your chances of being noticed within the aviation community.

Lastly, Instagram feed doesn't show content from airline companies, recruitment pages, or aviation job boards; you're likely missing out on timely updates about job openings, career events, or industry news. This reduces your ability to stay informed and act quickly on potential opportunities in the aviation field.

Conclusion

The study revealed that Instagram digital footprints play a meaningful role in shaping the perceived employability of Aircraft Maintenance Technology students and alumni. A professionally curated Instagram profile that highlights certifications, technical experiences, and industry engagement can enhance visibility to recruiters and support job placement opportunities. However, the absence of aviation-related content, limited professional interaction, and poor content management may weaken career prospects.

These findings emphasize that social media presence has become an extension of professional identity. Educational institutions should therefore integrate digital professionalism, personal branding, and responsible social media use into career readiness programs. By guiding students and alumni in developing industry-relevant digital profiles, institutions can help improve employment outcomes in competitive technical fields such as aviation maintenance.

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