

IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)  
New Worlds - Non-Traditional Space Education and Outreach (7)

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INSTAGRAM IN SPACE AND HOW ENGAGING THE PUBLIC THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA IS  
ESSENTIAL TO NEW SPACE

**Abstract**

Today social media's effect on the public's perception of commercial space and space exploration is nearly as impactful as traditional forms of media during the 1950s and 1960s space race. This paper will look at the use of social media, particularly Instagram, to highlight best practices and data regarding social media's use in space exploration and the commercial space sector in order to implore new strategies that the commercial space industry can use to gain public support. While this paper will focus on different types of social media, the focus will be on Instagram to not only streamline the discussion but to highlight why the youngest of the major social media platforms is the best suited for space outreach.

The first section of this paper begins by examining the effect public support has had, and continues to have, on the United States government's role in the space industry. From traditional forms of media during the 1950s and 1960s space race to NASA's unprecedented presence and leverage across social media today, this section serves as an introduction to the decades old relationship between mass media and the space industry. In addition, this section expands on previous attempts to provide empirical evidence through social media on the role of public support in generating new innovations and reaching new socioeconomic heights. This section concludes by explaining the economic benefit of engaging the public sector through social media to leverage private investment and help enable commercial space industry growth. The next section presents a qualitative analysis on the effectiveness of different types of social media platforms in engaging public support for the space exploration and commercial space sector. The final section of this paper explains why Instagram's algorithm is set to be the most effective social media platform related to how public support for commercial spaceflight is organized and measured. In addition, In order to capture the best practices and enhance the promotion of space exploration through social media, this section concludes with recommendations for the commercial space sector to better engage public support through Instagram.