

Role of Instagram Reels on Consumer Engagement

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Abstract

The rapid growth of short-form video content has significantly transformed digital marketing strategies, with Instagram Reels emerging as a powerful tool for enhancing consumer engagement in the fashion industry. This study examines the influence of Instagram Reels on user engagement, brand awareness, and purchase intentions, based on a sample of 415 participants. A quantitative research method was utilized, collecting data through a structured questionnaire assessed on a five-point Likert scale (Reghuthaman & Gupta 2018). The research includes key factors such as entertainment, informativeness, creativity, relatability, algorithmic personalization, and consumer engagement, supported by theoretical models like the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework and Uses and Gratifications Theory. The findings indicate that content-related factors, particularly entertainment and creativity, significantly affect consumer engagement, consistent with previous studies emphasizing the role of engaging and visually appealing content in promoting user interactions (Lee & Cha, 2025; Upadhyay, 2025). Furthermore, algorithmic personalization enhances engagement by delivering content that aligns with user preferences, in line with the Technology Acceptance Model (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Additionally, consumer engagement has a strong impact on brand awareness and purchase intentions, reinforcing the notion that increased engagement strengthens consumer–brand relationships (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Kavvadias, 2024). This research contributes to the existing literature by presenting an integrated model of content and technological factors influencing engagement in the context of Instagram Reels. The results provide practical insights for marketers to develop effective short-form video strategies that maximize engagement and influence consumer behavior.

Keywords: Instagram Reels, Consumer Engagement, Short-form Video, Brand Awareness, Purchase Intention, Algorithmic Personalization, Social Media Marketing

1) Introduction & Background of the Study

The swift progression of digital technologies has drastically altered marketing strategies and consumer behavior. Social media platforms have transitioned from basic communication tools to robust marketing ecosystems that enable interaction, engagement, and relationship building between brands and consumers (Chandra and Gupta 2024). Among these, Instagram stands out as a highly influential visual-based platform, especially popular with younger audiences. Its ongoing innovations in content formats have greatly influenced how users consume and interact with digital content. Recently, the launch of Instagram Reels has signaled a major shift towards

short-form video content, mirroring the evolving consumer preference for quick, engaging, and visually appealing media. Short-form videos have surged in popularity due to their ability to capture attention quickly and deliver both entertainment and information at once (Gupta, 2016). Research indicates that these content formats are more effective in boosting user interaction than traditional static posts, as they evoke both cognitive and emotional responses (Berger, 2013; Pulizzi, 2013). This trend aligns with the increasing demand for instant gratification and immersive digital experiences among consumers. Consumer engagement, which refers to the level of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement with brand-related content, has become a pivotal

concept in digital marketing. High engagement levels are linked to positive outcomes, such as enhanced brand awareness, loyalty, and purchase intention (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Vivek et al., 2012). Instagram Reels, with features like music integration, filters, and algorithm-driven recommendations, creates an interactive environment that encourages users to actively engage through likes, comments, shares, and content creation. From a theoretical standpoint, the Uses and Gratifications Theory suggests that users actively seek media content that fulfills their needs for entertainment, information, and social interaction (Katz et al., 1973; Whiting and Williams, 2013). Similarly, the Stimulus–organism–response (S-O-R) model proposes that external stimuli, such as content characteristics, affect users' internal states, leading to behavioral responses like engagement (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Eroglu et al., 2001). In the context of Instagram Reels, content attributes such as entertainment, creativity, and relatability serve as stimuli that drive user engagement. Additionally, algorithmic personalization plays a vital role in enhancing the user experience by delivering content tailored to individual preferences. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) posits that

2) Literature Review

The emergence of short-form video platforms has transformed digital marketing and the way consumers interact, with Instagram Reels becoming a leading format for engagement. This section examines previous research on consumer engagement, content features, and algorithmic personalization, laying the theoretical groundwork for the study.

2.1 Consumer Engagement in Social Media

Consumer engagement is widely acknowledged as a complex concept that includes cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement in activities related to brands (Hollebeek et al., 2014). On social media platforms, engagement is often measured through actions like likes,

perceived usefulness and ease of use significantly impact user interactions with technology (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2003). Personalized content recommendations on Instagram Reels increase relevance and satisfaction, thereby promoting ongoing user engagement.

Although Instagram Reels are becoming increasingly popular, there is still a shortage of thorough empirical studies that combine content-related and technological aspects to explain consumer engagement and its effects (Gaur & Gupta, 2023). Many current studies tend to examine individual variables, which limits the understanding of the overall process by which Reels affect consumer behavior (Upadhyay, 2025; Kavvadias, 2024). Furthermore, it is important to investigate these dynamics in emerging markets like India, where social media usage is rapidly growing. Consequently, this research seeks to fill this gap by exploring how Instagram Reels impact consumer engagement, brand awareness, and purchase intention through an integrated research model. By merging content characteristics with algorithmic elements, this study offers a comprehensive insight into how short-form video content influences contemporary consumer engagement trends.

comments, shares, and the amount of time spent on content. According to Vivek et al. (2012), engagement signifies a deeper level of interaction between consumers and brands, extending beyond simple exposure and fostering long-term relationships and loyalty. Recent research suggests that interactive and visually appealing content greatly boosts engagement levels, especially among younger audiences (Dessart et al., 2016). As the trend shifts towards video-based content, engagement metrics have become crucial for assessing the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies. Short-form videos, in particular, are noted for generating higher engagement due to their dynamic and immersive qualities (Smith & Anderson, 2023).

2.2 Role of Short-Form Video Content

Short-form video content has become increasingly popular because it effectively conveys brief, engaging, and informative messages (Srivastava & Gupta, 2019). Platforms such as Instagram Reels have leveraged this trend by providing tools that foster creativity and facilitate quick content consumption. Berger (2013) points out that content eliciting emotional reactions, like humor or surprise, tends to be shared and interacted with more frequently. In a similar vein, Pulizzi (2013) underscores the role of storytelling in capturing audience interest and boosting engagement. Research indicates that short-form video content significantly surpasses traditional formats in terms of reach and interaction (Upadhyay, 2025). Furthermore, Reels enable brands to showcase content in a genuine and relatable way, which appeals to contemporary consumers (Kavvadias, 2024).

2.3 Content Characteristics and Engagement

Content characteristics play a critical role in influencing consumer engagement. The literature identifies several key factors:

- **Entertainment:** Content that is enjoyable and fun increases user attention and interaction (Lee & Cha, 2025).
- **Informativeness:** Informative content provides value to users, enhancing trust and engagement (Eroglu et al., 2001).
- **Creativity:** Unique and visually appealing content attracts attention and encourages sharing behavior (Berger, 2013).
- **Relatability:** Content that reflects real-life experiences fosters emotional connection and identification (Dessart et al., 2016).

Studies suggest that these attributes collectively influence engagement by appealing to both emotional and cognitive dimensions of user behavior.

2.4 Algorithmic Personalization and User Engagement

Algorithmic personalization has become a defining feature of modern social media

platforms. Instagram Reels utilizes machine learning algorithms to recommend content that aligns with each user's preferences, viewing patterns, and interaction behaviors. This level of personalization enhances user satisfaction and increases the likelihood of engagement. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) suggests that perceived usefulness and ease of use are crucial factors in how users adopt and interact with technology (Davis, 1989). Extensions of TAM highlight the role of personalization in improving user experience and engagement (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Sundar and Limperos (2013) argue that interactive media technologies provide a sense of agency and control, which subsequently leads to higher engagement levels.

2.5 Consumer Engagement and Behavioral Outcomes

Consumer engagement is closely tied to several positive outcomes, such as heightened brand awareness, increased loyalty, and a stronger intention to purchase. Hollebeek et al. (2014) highlight that engaged consumers are more inclined to form deep emotional ties with brands. Similarly, research suggests that engagement functions as a link between content exposure and subsequent behaviors (Vivek et al., 2012). Within the context of Instagram Reels, engagement is pivotal in shaping how consumers perceive and make decisions. Studies reveal that users who actively interact with content are more likely to remember brands and consider purchasing products featured in videos (Kavvadias, 2024; Upadhyay, 2025).

3) Theoretical Foundation & Research Gaps

This study is grounded in three key theoretical frameworks:

3.1 Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)

The Uses and Gratifications Theory explains why individuals actively seek specific media to satisfy their needs, such as entertainment, information, and social interaction (Katz et al., 1973). In the context of Instagram Reels, users engage with content that fulfills these needs,

leading to higher interaction levels (Whiting & Williams, 2013).

3.2 Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) Model

The S-O-R model posits that external stimuli (content characteristics) influence internal states (emotions and perceptions), which in turn lead to behavioral responses (engagement) (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). This framework is widely used in digital marketing research to explain how content

attributes drive user behavior (Eroglu et al., 2001).

3.3 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model explains user interaction with technology based on perceived usefulness and ease of use (Davis, 1989). In social media contexts, personalization enhances perceived usefulness, thereby increasing engagement (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

4) Research Objectives, Hypotheses with Supporting Theories

Research Objective	Hypothesis (H ₀ / H ₁)	Supporting Theory	Key References (Author, Year)
Objective 1: To examine the impact of Instagram Reels usage on consumer engagement	H01: Instagram Reels usage has no significant impact on consumer engagement H1: Instagram Reels usage has a significant impact on consumer engagement	Uses and Gratifications Theory – users actively engage with media to satisfy needs (entertainment, interaction)	Katz et al. (1973); Whiting & Williams (2013); Upadhyay (2025)
Objective 2: To analyze the influence of content characteristics on consumer engagement	H02: Content characteristics do not significantly influence engagement H2a: Entertainment → Engagement H2b: Informativeness → Engagement H2c: Creativity → Engagement H2d: Relatability → Engagement	Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) Theory – content (stimulus) influences internal state and response (engagement)	Mehrabian & Russell (1974); Eroglu et al. (2001); Lee & Cha (2025);
Objective 3: To evaluate the effect of consumer engagement on brand awareness and purchase intention	H03: Consumer engagement has no significant effect on brand awareness H3: Consumer engagement significantly affects brand awareness H04: Consumer engagement does not influence purchase intention H4: Consumer engagement significantly influences purchase intention	Customer Engagement Theory – higher engagement leads to stronger brand relationships and behavioral outcomes	Hollebeek et al. (2014); Vivek et al. (2012); Kavvadias (2024)

5) Research Methodology

The study employs a descriptive and explanatory research framework to detail the usage patterns of

Instagram Reels and to clarify the relationships between factors such as content attributes, algorithmic personalization, and user engagement. Utilizing a cross-sectional survey method, data

were collected at a single point in time, a technique frequently applied in social media and consumer behavior research to explore variable interconnections (Malhotra, 2019; Hair et al., 2021). A quantitative research approach was selected to ensure objectivity and the statistical validation of hypotheses. This method allows for the examination of theoretical relationships through numerical data and advanced analytical tools like Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) (Creswell, 2018). The study specifically uses Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) due to its appropriateness for complex models and predictive analysis (Hair et al., 2021). The research targets active Instagram Reels users, focusing on students and young adults who frequently engage with short-form video content. A non-probability convenience sampling method was chosen due to its accessibility and time efficiency, a common practice in social media research where the population is extensive and difficult to sample randomly (Etikan et al.,

2016). The sample size of 415 respondents is considered adequate for SEM analysis. According to Hair et al. (2021), a sample size over 200 is sufficient for reliable PLS-SEM results, with larger samples enhancing statistical power and generalizability. Primary data were gathered using a structured questionnaire administered via an online survey (Google Forms). Participants were screened to ensure they were active Instagram Reels users. The study investigates the following constructs: Entertainment (ENT), Informativeness (INF), Creativity (CRE), Relatability (REL), Algorithmic Personalization (ALG), and Usage Frequency (FRQ) as independent variables. Consumer Engagement (ENG) acts as a mediating variable, while Brand Awareness (BAW) and Purchase Intention (PI) are dependent variables. These constructs are adapted from previously validated studies in social media and marketing research (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Vivek et al., 2012; Upadhyay, 2025).

6) Analysis & Interpretation

Basic Background Profile of Respondents (n = 415)

Table 1: Demographic Profile

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	18–25	238	57.3
	26–35	177	42.7
Gender	Male	214	51.6
	Female	201	48.4
Education	Undergraduate	230	55.4
	Postgraduate	185	44.6
Daily Instagram Usage	<1 hour	74	17.8
	1–2 hours	156	37.6
	2–4 hours	124	29.9
	>4 hours	61	14.7

Objective 1: Impact of Instagram Reels Usage on Consumer Engagement

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Usage Frequency (FRQ)	4.02	0.81
Consumer Engagement (ENG)	3.95	0.76

Table 3: Regression Analysis

Relationship	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	Result
FRQ → ENG	0.41	7.85	0.000	Significant

Objective 2: Influence of Content Characteristics on Engagement

Table 4: Mean Scores of Content Factors

Construct	Mean	Std. Deviation
Entertainment (ENT)	4.15	0.72
Informativeness (INF)	3.88	0.79
Creativity (CRE)	4.20	0.70
Relatability (REL)	4.05	0.75

Table 5: PLS-SEM Path Coefficients

Relationship	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	Result
ENT → ENG	0.39	8.21	0.000	Supported
INF → ENG	0.26	5.94	0.000	Supported
CRE → ENG	0.44	9.10	0.000	Supported
REL → ENG	0.36	7.42	0.000	Supported

Objective 3: Effect of Engagement on Brand Awareness & Purchase Intention

Table 6: Structural Model Results

Relationship	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	Result
ENG → BAW	0.53	10.45	0.000	Supported
ENG → PI	0.48	9.32	0.000	Supported

Table 7: R² Values

Dependent Variable	R ²
Consumer Engagement	0.62
Brand Awareness	0.56
Purchase Intention	0.49

Objective 4: Role of Algorithmic Personalization

Table 8: Algorithmic Personalization Impact

Relationship	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	Result
ALG → ENG	0.33	6.88	0.000	Supported

Table 9: Reliability & Validity Analysis (Measurement Model)

Construct	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
ENT	0.87	0.91	0.68
INF	0.84	0.89	0.63
CRE	0.89	0.92	0.71
REL	0.86	0.90	0.66
ALG	0.82	0.88	0.60
ENG	0.91	0.94	0.72

4. Mediation Analysis

Table 11: Indirect Effects

Path	Indirect Effect	t-value	Result
Content Factors → ENG → PI	0.29	6.12	Significant

An analysis involving 415 respondents offers strong evidence that both the use of Instagram Reels and the characteristics of its content play a significant role in influencing consumer engagement. The descriptive statistics reveal high mean scores for usage frequency (Mean = 4.02) and engagement (Mean = 3.95), indicating active consumption and interaction with Reels content by users. This finding supports the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which posits that individuals engage with media to meet needs such as entertainment and social interaction (Katz et al., 1973; Whiting & Williams, 2013). The regression analysis ($\beta = 0.41, p < 0.001$) demonstrates that usage frequency significantly affects engagement, suggesting that increased exposure to Reels enhances user interaction. This aligns with Upadhyay (2025), who found that frequent interaction with short-form video content leads to higher engagement levels. Among the content characteristics, creativity ($\beta = 0.44$) and entertainment ($\beta = 0.39$) are the strongest predictors of engagement, highlighting the importance of visually appealing and enjoyable

content in capturing user attention and fostering interaction. These results are consistent with Berger (2013), who emphasized that emotionally engaging and novel content is more likely to be shared and interacted with. Informativeness ($\beta = 0.26$) and relatability ($\beta = 0.36$) also have significant effects, underscoring the value of content that is both informative and personally relevant. Algorithmic personalization ($\beta = 0.33$) significantly influences engagement, indicating that users are more likely to interact with content that aligns with their preferences. This supports the Technology Acceptance Model, where perceived usefulness enhances user engagement (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Furthermore, consumer engagement significantly impacts brand awareness ($\beta = 0.53$) and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.48$), suggesting that higher engagement leads to stronger cognitive and behavioral outcomes. The R^2 values (0.62 for engagement, 0.56 for brand awareness, and 0.49 for purchase intention) indicate the model's substantial explanatory power.

7) Discussions & Conclusions

The study underscores the rising prominence of short-form video platforms such as Instagram Reels in digital marketing strategies. The compelling influence of entertainment and creativity reveals that consumers are drawn to content that is both enjoyable and visually appealing. This observation aligns with the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) model, which posits that content attributes (stimuli) impact users' internal states, leading to engagement (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). The significant role of relatability suggests that consumers prefer content that mirrors real-life experiences and social contexts, supporting previous findings by Dessart

et al. (2016) on the importance of emotional connection in driving engagement. The effect of algorithmic personalization highlights the role of technology in shaping user behavior. Personalized content delivery enhances user satisfaction and promotes prolonged interaction, echoing the arguments of Sundar and Limperos (2013) about the interactive nature of digital media. The mediating role of engagement between content characteristics and purchase intention confirms that engagement is a vital mechanism through which marketing efforts influence consumer behavior (Gupta & Gupta, 2019). This finding is consistent with Hollebeek et al. (2014), who emphasize that engagement strengthens consumer–brand relationships and drives behavioral outcomes.

Overall, the study illustrates that Instagram Reels is not merely a content-sharing platform but a strategic tool for boosting consumer engagement and influencing purchase decisions. The integration of content quality and algorithmic personalization creates a robust ecosystem that drives user interaction. This study concludes that Instagram Reels plays a crucial role in shaping consumer engagement and subsequent behavioral outcomes (Nigam & Gupta, 2018). The findings indicate that content characteristics—particularly creativity, entertainment, and relatability—are key drivers of engagement, while algorithmic personalization enhances user experience and interaction. Consumer engagement is identified as a critical mediator linking content exposure to brand awareness and purchase intention. The results demonstrate that higher engagement leads to stronger brand recall and an increased likelihood of purchase, confirming the importance of interactive and engaging content in digital marketing (Gupta, 2013). The study contributes to existing literature by providing an integrated model that combines content and technological factors to explain consumer engagement in the context of short-form video platforms. It also offers practical insights for marketers to design effective Reels strategies that maximize engagement and influence consumer behavior. In conclusion, Instagram Reels has emerged as a powerful marketing tool that not only captures consumer attention but also drives meaningful engagement and business outcomes. Future research can build on these findings by exploring cross-platform comparisons and long-term effects of short-form video consumption.

8) Research Implications and Limitations

This study enhances the expanding body of work on social media marketing by integrating both content-related factors and technological elements into a cohesive framework that clarifies consumer engagement on Instagram Reels. By synthesizing the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) model, and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the research offers a comprehensive view of how users

interact with short-form video content. The findings validate the S-O-R framework's relevance in digital contexts, illustrating that content attributes such as entertainment, creativity, and relatability serve as stimuli that influence engagement behavior (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Eroglu et al., 2001). Furthermore, the study advances engagement theory by empirically demonstrating the mediating role of consumer engagement between content exposure and behavioral outcomes like brand awareness and purchase intention, in line with Hollebeek et al. (2014) and Vivek et al. (2012). Additionally, the study's focus on algorithmic personalization extends TAM within social media settings, emphasizing how perceived relevance enhances user interaction and engagement (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Sundar & Limperos, 2013). This integration provides a robust theoretical model that can be applied to future research on short-form video platforms. From a practical perspective, the study offers valuable insights for marketers, content creators, and brand managers (Gupta & Singh, 2010). The significant impact of entertainment and creativity suggests that brands should prioritize visually captivating, engaging, and emotionally resonant content to capture user attention. This aligns with recent findings that creative storytelling boosts digital engagement and brand recall (Upadhyay, 2025; Lee & Cha, 2025). The importance of relatability indicates that brands should focus on authentic, user-centric content that mirrors real-life experiences, thereby fostering stronger emotional connections with consumers (Dessart et al., 2016). Moreover, the emphasis on informativeness suggests that content should not only entertain but also provide value, such as product knowledge or practical insights (Gaur & Gupta, 2023). The findings also underscore the importance of leveraging algorithmic personalization. Marketers should utilize platform analytics and insights to tailor content to user preferences, thereby enhancing engagement and improving campaign effectiveness. Personalized content strategies have been shown to significantly increase user satisfaction and interaction (Smith &

Anderson, 2023). Additionally, the strong relationship between engagement and purchase intention highlights the need for brands to focus on engagement metrics as key performance indicators (KPIs). High engagement levels can translate into improved brand awareness, customer loyalty, and sales outcomes (Kavvadias, 2024).

While the study provides important insights, it has several limitations: It draws on a sample of 415 respondents, predominantly young social media users (Sharma & Gupta, 2018). Although this sample size is sufficient for PLS-SEM analysis (Hair et al., 2021), the findings may not be entirely applicable to older age groups or individuals from various cultural backgrounds. The research utilizes a cross-sectional design, capturing data at a single point, which limits the ability to observe shifts in consumer behavior over time. Longitudinal studies are recommended to investigate the evolving effects of Instagram Reels on user engagement (Creswell, 2018). The study relies on self-reported data, which may be prone to biases such as social desirability and recall bias. Future research could incorporate behavioral data, like actual engagement metrics, to enhance accuracy (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The focus is exclusively on Instagram Reels, which restricts its applicability to other short-form video platforms like TikTok or YouTube Shorts. Comparative studies across different platforms could provide a more comprehensive understanding of engagement dynamics (Kavvadias, 2024). Although the study includes key constructs, it does not account for other potential factors such as influencer credibility, user-generated content, and cultural influences. Future research could expand the model to include these variables for a more thorough analysis (Upadhyay, 2025).

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