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**“THE IMPACT OF INSTAGRAM REELS ON  
MILLENNIAL CONSUMER BEHAVIOR AND BRAND  
ENGAGEMENT.”**

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## **Abstract**

The present study examines the influence of Instagram Reels on Millennials' purchasing decisions, brand loyalty, brand perception, and overall engagement, as well as its role in digital marketing strategies targeting this demographic. The research aims to assess how Instagram Reels shapes consumer behavior, identifying key content elements that drive interaction and proposing actionable strategies for marketers. Using a questionnaire, responses were gathered from participants regarding their engagement with Reels, their perceptions of brand authenticity, and their likelihood of purchasing and recommending products featured in the platform's content.

The research shows that Instagram Reels has a great potential for raising brand recognition and initial engagement, although it affects purchasing behavior and brand choice slightly differently. While many respondents said that they would both interact and buy products featured in Reels, a large share of participants still doubted reel products' legitimacy and brands. The study also revealed creativity relevance and visuals as key factors influencing consumer engagement, however there are numerous users who stated that Reels alone cannot suffice in creating long term brand outreach.

The implications for practice are that marketers should possibly produce aesthetically appealing and content that is meaningful to Millennials. In order to take the relationship to a higher level and maintain customer loyalty, there is a need to establish high levels of trust in the relationship. For research purposes, this study implies the need to look at the psychological factors that influence the use of Instagram Reels, and the new role of influencers in creating trust and generating engagement with brands.

**Key Words:** Instagram Reels, Millennial consumers, Brand loyalty, Consumer engagement, Digital marketing strategies

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# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## **1.1 Background of the Study**

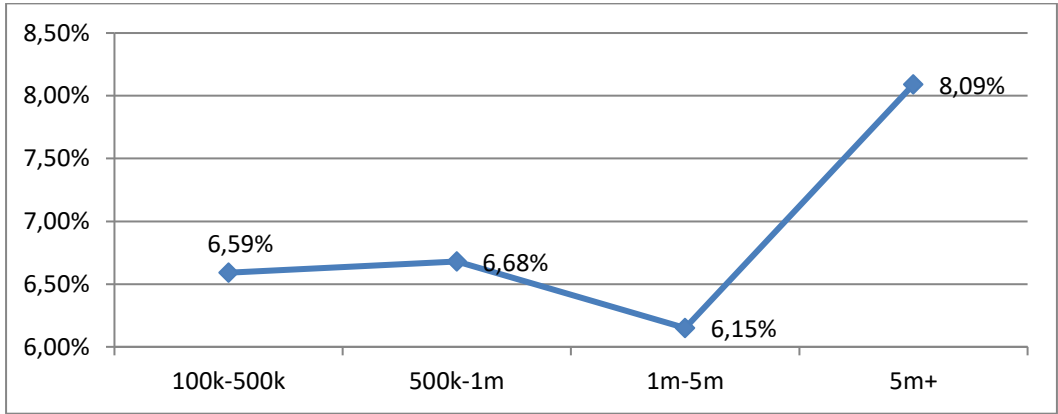
The rapid proliferation of social media platforms has revolutionized the way individuals interact, communicate, and consume content. Short video platforms offer a novel social media format that serves several functions such as escapism, entertainment, social validation, and information dissemination (Bucknell Bossen & Kottasz, 2020; Kang & Lou, 2022; Menon, 2022). Short video platforms offer a wide range of programming, including personal blogs, mini culinary classes, and life hacks (Kang & Lou, 2022). Furthermore, these platforms offer content on more weighty subjects, such as deliberately compelling political movies (González-Aguilar et al., 2023) and health-related material (Song et al., 2021).

Of these platforms, Instagram has been identified to be one of the most effective means for sharing content with more than one billion active users globally (Molem et al., 2024). Initially, Instagram was introduced in 2010 as an application designed for sharing photos only, but today the application offers features and services such as Stories, IGTV, and the most recent is Instagram Reels. These features have transformed Instagram from a mere social networking site into a powerful tool for digital marketing and brand engagement.

Instagram Reels, introduced in August 2020, is a short-form video feature that allows users to create and share 15 to 60-second clips set to music, audio, or user-generated sounds (Molem et al., 2024). This feature has rapidly gained popularity, especially among younger audiences, including Millennials, who are known for their affinity with visual content and technology. Reels have not only raised the creative bar for users but have also given the brands a new way to communicate with their target viewers. The nature of Reels as an engaging feature that allows users to interact with content and the given algorithm that delivers posts to consumers' feeds make it a powerful tool for capturing the attention of consumers and influencing their behavior (Molem et al., 2024).

It is interesting at this point to mention that the average engagement rate on Instagram Reels for accounts with a follower count ranging from 100k to 500k in 2023 was determined to be 6.59% (Diagram 1) (Statista, 2023). The Reels engagement level

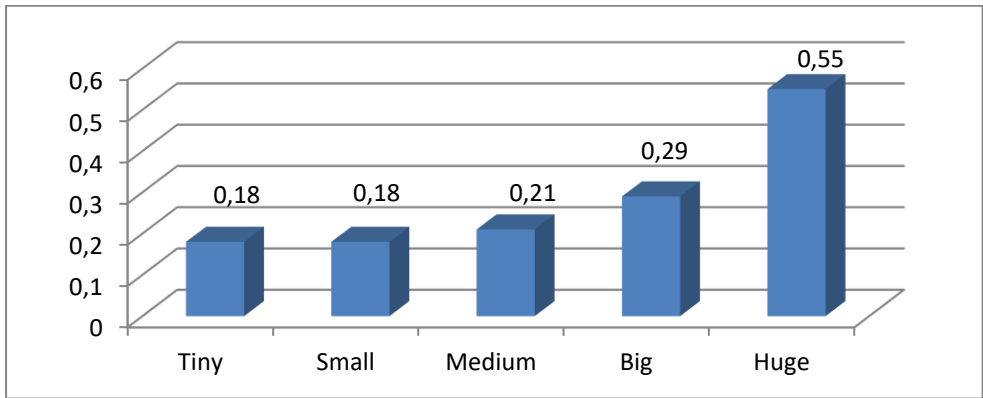
dropped significantly for accounts with a follower count ranging from one million to five million. However, for accounts with more than five million followers, the average engagement of the reels increased to 8.09%.



**Diagram 1:** Average Instagram Reels engagement rate worldwide in 2023, by number of followers

**Source:** (Statista, 2023)

In the first quarter of 2024, Instagram accounts with a staggering number of followers, over 50,000, claimed to typically share short-form videos, known as Reels, every two days, with an average of almost 0.50 Reels per day (Diagram 2) (Statista, 2024b). By contrast, big accounts, which had a following count ranging from 10,001 to 50,000, typically uploaded an average of 0.3 Reels every day. Tiny accounts, characterized by a following of fewer than 500 users, shared their Reels on Instagram at an average frequency of once per five days, equivalent to 0.18 Reels per day.



**Diagram 2:** Average daily number of Instagram Reels posted worldwide in 1st quarter 2024, by account size

**Source:** (Statista, 2024b)

Prior research on the facilitation of view change, also known as attitudinal shift, through Human-Information Interaction has shown that highly emotive visual content,



particularly video, can strongly influence and often drive this transformation (Mckay et al., 2020). Moreover, the alteration of perspectives frequently takes place following an unexpected presentation of material on social media platforms (Mckay et al., 2020). Recent studies on short video platforms have identified them as habit-forming (Kang & Lou, 2022; Nong et al., 2023) and capable of eliciting serendipity (Nong et al., 2023). The convergence of these elements gives rise to a scenario in which these platforms possess a great potential for exerting persuasive influence. Investigation into the persuasive efficacy of brief films/short videos has revealed that, particularly in relation to the adoption of smart home technologies, they can exert a certain degree of influence. Furthermore, videos filmed from a first-person perspective have been proven to be more compelling compared to other formats (Wang, 2020).

The rise of Instagram Reels coincides with significant shifts in consumer behavior, particularly among Millennials, who constitute a substantial portion of the digital consumer base. Unlike previous generations, Millennials exhibit unique characteristics in their consumption patterns. They tend to favor authenticity, value-driven brands, and interactive experiences over traditional advertising methods. This generational cohort is also more likely to engage with brands on social media, making platforms like Instagram an essential channel for marketing strategies.

Despite the growing importance of Instagram Reels in digital marketing, academic research on its impact on consumer behavior and brand engagement remains relatively sparse. While there is a wealth of literature on social media marketing and consumer behavior, the specific dynamics of short-form video content, such as Reels, and its influence on Millennial consumers have not been thoroughly explored. This gap in the literature presents an opportunity to investigate how Instagram Reels shape the consumer journey, from awareness to purchase decision, and how they contribute to the overall brand engagement process.

The role of online platforms extends beyond marketing to influence consumption behavior across nations and cultures, thereby shaping global consumer patterns in significant ways. Social media platforms like Instagram facilitate the cross-cultural exchange of trends, preferences, and brand perceptions, leading to the emergence of a more interconnected consumer culture. This international impact is particularly evident in features like Instagram Reels, which enable brands to reach diverse

audiences and present products within culturally relevant contexts, thereby affecting consumer attitudes and behaviors across different regions. In this study, these dynamics will be considered by examining how Instagram Reels not only impact Millennials within a specific market but also how they could resonate internationally, affecting brand engagement in various cultural settings. The research will draw on theories of global consumer culture and digital media influence to explore these intercultural effects, using the insights to discuss how brands can tailor their marketing strategies to accommodate diverse consumer segments. By considering the international and intercultural aspects, the study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the global influence of online platforms, offering recommendations for marketers looking to navigate the complexities of a digitally connected world.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

As digital marketing continues to evolve, brands are increasingly leveraging social media platforms to connect with consumers and drive engagement. Among these platforms, Instagram has become a cornerstone for many brands, particularly with the introduction of Instagram Reels—a feature designed to compete with other short-form video content platforms like TikTok. Despite its growing popularity and potential as a marketing tool, the specific impact of Instagram Reels on consumer behavior, particularly among Millennials, remains underexplored. This presents a critical gap in understanding how brands can effectively utilize Reels to influence consumer decision-making processes and foster brand engagement.

Millennials, defined as individuals born between 1981 and 1996, represent a significant portion of the global consumer market. They cannot be described as old school because they are digitally proficient, they respond positively to real-life advertising rather than promoted images, and have a penchant for consuming products associated with their favorite brands. These qualities make Millennials the most attractive niche for associate marketing applications like Instagram Reels. Nevertheless, the effects that Reels have on Millennial consumers' attitude and perceived behavior have not been extensively researched in terms of modality. This lack of understanding poses a challenge for brands attempting to optimize their digital marketing strategies and achieve meaningful engagement with this demographic.

Furthermore, while there is a considerable body of literature on social media marketing and consumer behavior, much of this research has focused on more established forms of content, such as static images, long-form videos, and traditional advertisements. The relatively recent advent of short-form video content, exemplified by Instagram Reels, introduces new dynamics that could significantly alter the consumer-brand interaction landscape. These dynamics include the immediacy of content consumption, the algorithmic duration of content, and the interactive features that allow users to engage with brands in real-time. Without a clear understanding of how these factors influence consumer behavior, brands may struggle to fully harness the potential of Reels as part of their marketing mix.

The research problem thus lies in identifying how Instagram Reels can influence Millennial customers' behavior and interaction with a brand. Specifically, this research aims to assess how exposure to Instagram Reels affects Millennials' purchasing decisions, exploring the impact of Reels on their decision-making process. It will also examine the relationship between Instagram Reels engagement and brand loyalty, investigating whether regular interaction with Reels enhances Millennials' long-term commitment to a brand. Additionally, the study seeks to understand how Instagram Reels shape Millennials' perceptions of brand authenticity and trust. Finally, the research aims to identify which content characteristics of Reels—such as creativity, relevance, and interactivity—are most effective in driving consumer engagement among Millennials.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the impact of Instagram Reels on Millennial consumer behavior and brand engagement. This broad aim is broken down into several specific objectives that guide the research and provide a clear focus for the analysis:

1. **To analyze the influence of Instagram Reels on Millennials' purchasing decisions:** This objective concentrates on establishing how Millennial consumer's exposure and engagement with Instagram Reels influences their individual purchasing behavior. It will try to find out that the Reels are influential enough to help users in making decisions to choose a product and make purchase.

2. **To examine the relationship between Instagram Reels and brand loyalty among Millennials:** This objective seeks to find out the impact of direct engagement with Reels, in strengthening the Millennial consumers' brand loyalty towards specific brands. The study will also establish whether Reels promote multiple brand interactions and ultimately, continuous consumer loyalty.
3. **To assess the effect of Instagram Reels on Millennials' brand perception:** This objective focuses on the impact of Instagram Reels in the perception that Millennials have towards brands. It will reveal if the content and the delivered message of Reels helps or hinders the brand perception from the viewpoint of Millennial buyers.
4. **To identify the key content elements of Instagram Reels that drive consumer engagement among Millennials:** This objective seeks to determine which aspects of Reels content—such as creativity, relevance, and interactivity—are most effective in engaging Millennial consumers. The study will explore the characteristics of successful Reels that capture attention and encourage user interaction.
5. **To evaluate the role of Instagram Reels in the overall digital marketing strategy for brands targeting Millennials:** The exact goal of this objective is to identify the role that Instagram Reels play in regards to the overall strategies of digital marketing targeting Millennials. The research will establish the efficiency of Reels as a tool of social media marketing when compared and contrasted with other forms of content pieces.
6. **To provide actionable insights for marketers on optimizing Instagram Reels for enhanced consumer engagement and brand loyalty:** This objective focuses on translating the findings of the study into practical recommendations for marketers. It seeks to offer strategies for creating and distributing Reels that resonate with Millennial audiences, thereby maximizing the impact of digital marketing efforts.

## **1.4 Research Questions**

Based on all of the above, this study will attempt to answer the following research questions:

- How do Millennials' interactions with Instagram Reels influence their purchasing behavior?
- What is the relationship between Instagram Reels engagement and brand loyalty among Millennials?
- How do Instagram Reels affect Millennials' perceptions of brand authenticity and their trust towards the brand?
- What content characteristics of Instagram Reels are most effective in driving engagement among Millennials, in terms of likes, shares, comments, and viewing time?

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Overview of Social Media Marketing**

In the last ten years, there has been a marked emergence of intricate, diverse, and heightened engagements between companies and their customers through the use of social media. On the one hand, companies are using social media platforms to broaden their geographical reach to consumers (Gao et al. 2018), enhance brand assessments (Naylor et al. 2012), and establish stronger relationships with clients (Rapp et al. 2013). Conversely, social media is granting customers greater authority and ownership over the marketing communication process, enabling them to become authors, collaborators, and commenter of messages (Hamilton et al. 2016). Given the progressive transformation of social media from a mere marketing tool to a valuable source of marketing intelligence, enabling companies to monitor, analyze, and forecast customer behaviors, it has become more and more crucial for marketers to strategically use and exploit social media to gain a competitive edge and achieve outstanding performance (Lamberton & Stephen 2016).

Social media marketing has revolutionized how businesses and consumers interact, altering the traditional marketing landscape. Social media, in the context of marketing, are regarded as venues where individuals establish networks and exchange information and/or opinions (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). Social media, characterized by their unique qualities of being agile, networked, egalitarian, and participatory entities (Peters et al. 2013, p. 281), have brought significant transformations in the market. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and LinkedIn have transformed into essential marketing tools that facilitate brand communication, customer engagement, and consumer behavior analysis. Unlike traditional forms of marketing that focus on one-way communication, social media marketing emphasizes interactive, community-driven engagement, allowing brands to develop more personalized and direct connections with their audience. This evolution has made social media marketing an indispensable strategy for businesses seeking to thrive in today's digital economy, particularly when targeting Millennials, who are among the most active users of these platforms (Li et al., 2021).

The idea of social media marketing stems from the fact that it allows brands to directly and almost instantaneously engaged with the consumers (Li et al., 2021).

Traditionally, brands employ social media to convey particular messages, but that information is used to generate content interesting enough in getting its target audience to engage with the brand. Such a transition to portfolio strategies has put emphasis on user-generated content, influencer marketing, and telling stories in the visual format. In Instagram, the brands are using the features of story, IGTV and Reels for creating the fresh, short content which their audience loves. As highlighted above, the dynamic nature of social media marketing has led to the creation of more realistic and believable stories about brands to suit the brand's image and its target market in the generation of Millennials that give both fun and worth to their Brand-Consumer relationship (Li et al., 2021).

One of the key characteristics of social media marketing is its emphasis on content creativity and consumer engagement (Li et al., 2021). Creative content plays a crucial role in capturing users' attention and differentiating a brand in a highly competitive digital space. Marketers utilize various content formats, including images, videos, live streams, and interactive posts, to stimulate consumer interest and foster an emotional connection with the brand. In this context, Instagram Reels have become a powerful marketing tool, offering brands the opportunity to showcase their products and values in a visually appealing, entertaining, and easily consumable manner. The short-form video format of Reels aligns with the preferences of Millennials, who favor quick, engaging content over lengthy, traditional advertisements (Li et al., 2021).

In addition, the practice of social media marketing has shifted consumption behavior and interaction and purchase processes (Santini et al., 2020). Social networks including Instagram offer brands the quantitative data on users' engagement, including likes, comments, shares, and clicks. These metrics are important in this regard when it comes to analyzing consumer behaviors so as to adjust the marketing strategies. Social media marketing creates an opportunity for brands to reply to the consumers' feedback immediately, and this leads to the creation of trust. This two-way communication model aids brands in understanding the consumers' sentiments and adapting the communication messages, content and, at times, the products to the ever-shifting consumer needs and wants (Santini et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the international reach of social media platforms has implications for global marketing strategies (Santini et al., 2020). Brands can now communicate their

messages across cultures and regions, adapting their content to suit different consumer preferences and cultural norms. Social media marketing's potential to cross geographical boundaries makes it a valuable tool for building brand awareness and loyalty on a global scale. However, this global reach also presents challenges, as brands must be sensitive to cultural nuances and the diverse ways in which content may be perceived by different audiences. By leveraging the interactive and visual nature of platforms like Instagram, brands can create campaigns that resonate internationally while also addressing specific cultural contexts (Santini et al., 2020).

In conclusion, social media marketing can be defined as a complex and constantly developing sphere that focuses on creativity, interaction and analysis. It remains an important element in today's marketing since it helps in creating customer-brand relationships, changing consumer behavior and offering quantifiable results. Accordingly, Instagram Reels can be considered as a specific aspect of the social media marketing in which the Millennials' attention can be drawn to the brands through the creation of the short and entertaining videos. In as much as these marketing strategies affect consumers' behavior, brand commitment and perception of genuineness, this research is primarily aimed at informing how social media is reshaping consumer-brand relationships.

## **2.2 The Evolution of Instagram and Instagram Reels**

Since its inception in 2010, Instagram, a photo-sharing website devised by Kevin Systrom and Michel Krieger, incorporates visual aesthetics (Jin et al., 2019) and has undergone a remarkable transformation from a simple photo-sharing application to a comprehensive social media platform that serves as a powerful marketing tool for individuals, influencers, and brands (Salunke & Jain, 2022). At first, Instagram was developed as an application that enabled people to capture and share their lives via photos, using filters to improve the appearance of their images. This approach of using visuals for storytelling was instantly popular and attracted millions of users especially the millennials who would appreciate the freedom of the platform in showcasing their creatives and giving out their statements in pictures. In the course of years, the capabilities of Instagram have changed considerably, including new options to meet the users' needs and the growing competition in the sphere of social networks (Salunke & Jain, 2022).



Recent research indicates that Instagram has become a prominent player in product and service marketing because of its creative use of advertisements to attract customers (Tuten, 2021). Among social media platforms, Instagram is the second most widely used after Facebook (Decker, 2020). The HubSpot research reveals that 90% of Instagram users follow at least one business page representing various companies. Approximately 83% of Instagram users are reported to explore new products and services provided by other companies (Decker, 2020). Effective Instagram marketing can be a lucrative approach for companies due to its superior engagement rate and interactions compared to Facebook and Twitter (Casalo et al., 2017). It is a highly influential social networking platform (Casalo et al., 2020). Having achieved immediate popularity, it provided a platform for advertisers and agencies to specifically target their customers. The inaugural sponsored postings were launched in mid-2013. Therefore, Instagram initially emerged as a widely used medium for people to post personal photos, but rapidly transformed into a very effective marketing instrument (Landsverk, 2014).

The first major evolution of Instagram began with the introduction of new content-sharing options. In 2013, the platform launched video-sharing capabilities, allowing users to post short videos alongside images (Salunke & Jain, 2022). This addition marked Instagram's shift toward more dynamic and versatile content. Subsequently, in 2016, Instagram introduced "Stories," a feature inspired by Snapchat, enabling users to share ephemeral content that disappears after 24 hours. This feature not only transformed how users interacted on the platform but also how brands engaged with their audience. Stories allowed for real-time, behind-the-scenes glimpses into a brand's daily life, fostering a sense of authenticity and immediacy that resonated with Millennials. Brands began using Stories for promotions, product launches, and collaborations, enhancing their consumer engagement strategies (Salunke & Jain, 2022).

As Instagram continued to evolve, it adapted to the rising popularity of video content. The launch of IGTV (Instagram TV) in 2018 was a direct response to the growing demand for longer, more in-depth video content on social media (León-Alberca et al., 2024). IGTV allowed users and brands to upload videos up to an hour long, providing an avenue for deeper storytelling and content marketing. However, the landscape of video content shifted rapidly with the rise of TikTok, which popularized short-form,

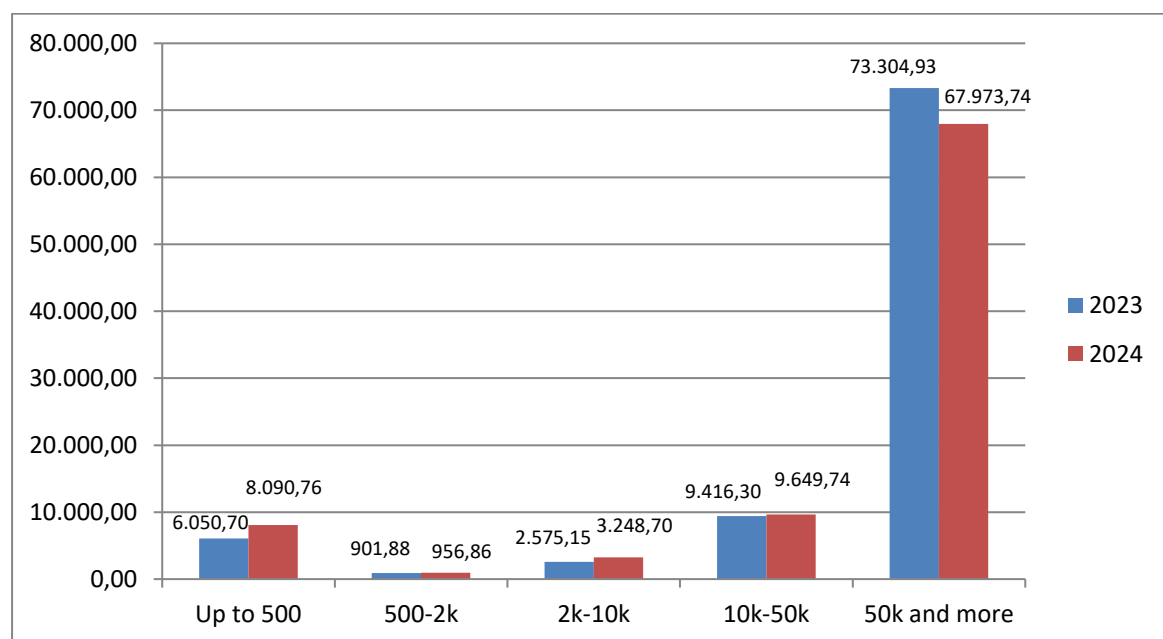
creative video content. Recognizing this trend, Instagram introduced "Reels" in August 2020, marking a significant milestone in the platform's evolution (León-Alberca et al., 2024).

Instagram Reels brought a new dimension to the platform, offering users the ability to create and share short-form videos ranging from 15 to 60 seconds (León-Alberca et al., 2024). Reels incorporated a variety of creative tools, including music, text, and special effects, enabling users to produce engaging and entertaining content. This feature closely mirrored the functionality of TikTok, but it was seamlessly integrated into the existing Instagram ecosystem, allowing users to reach their followers and the wider Instagram community. For brands, Reels provided a new opportunity to showcase products, promote services, and engage with consumers in a fun and interactive manner. Unlike traditional advertisements, Reels rely on creativity, trends, and user-generated content, making them particularly effective in capturing the attention of Millennials who prefer authentic and relatable content (León-Alberca et al., 2024).

The introduction of Reels also signaled a shift in Instagram's algorithm and content discovery process (Hong, 2022). Reels are prominently featured on the Explore page, offering greater visibility and potential for virality. The algorithm prioritizes Reels based on user interaction patterns, ensuring that content is tailored to individual interests, which enhances user engagement and keeps audiences on the platform longer. For brands, this means that well-crafted Reels have a higher chance of being seen by a broader audience, beyond just their existing followers. This organic reach is crucial for building brand awareness, particularly among Millennials who are known for discovering new products and services through social media (Hong, 2022).

Over time, Instagram has further refined Reels to support marketing objectives (Hong, 2022). Features such as shopping integration allow users to directly purchase products featured in Reels, merging entertainment and e-commerce in a seamless user experience. Brands can also track metrics like views, likes, comments, and shares, providing valuable insights into consumer behavior and engagement. These analytics help brands understand what types of content resonate most with their audience, allowing for data-driven strategies to enhance consumer interaction and build brand loyalty (Hong, 2022).

Currently, Facebook reports that Meta users consume more than 200 billion Reels on a daily basis, and this trend shows no indication of decreasing (Santora, 2023). The magnitude of this figure is remarkable and demonstrates the huge popularity of Reels on both platforms. Given this statistic, companies who have an Instagram and Facebook presence should exploit this functionality to expand their reach to a broader audience. Statistics indicate that Instagram Reels produced by creators or companies with over 50,000 followers have a reach of 67,000 users (Statista, 2024a) (Diagram 3). Such is rather remarkable, given the possible audience that can be engaged with Reels (Santora, 2023).



**Diagram 3: Average reach of Instagram reels from 2023 to 2024 by number of followers**

**Source:** (Statista, 2024a)

When considering the rate of adoption, it appears that Reels and other Meta products are surpassing TikTok (Santora, 2023). An analysis conducted by Morgan Stanley in 2023 revealed that 74% of Instagram users are utilizing the Reels functionality of the app. The adoption rates of 62% in March 2022 and 69% in September 2022 indicate a noticeable upward trajectory in the user base of Reels (Santora, 2023). Concurrently, 49% of participants in the poll were current users of TikTok. While this figure is an increase from the 47% recorded in September 2022, it highlights a significant disparity in the rates of adoption between Instagram Reels and TikTok. Furthermore, the adoption rate of Instagram Reels is somewhat higher than that of Facebook Reels.

According to the Morgan Stanley poll, 65% of users were actively utilising Reels on the Facebook app (Santora, 2023).

An analysis by Udescu, (2024) reveals a significant 46% surge in Reels volume compared to the previous year. The growth in the volume of Reels has exceeded that demonstrated in 2022. While Reels have emerged as the most successful content on the platform, their level of interaction has moderately decreased over the last year. Furthermore, the study revealed a 20% decrease in the level of interaction on Reels. The drop in popularity may be attributed to the escalating rivalry on the platform, driven by the growing number of artists utilizing Reels (Udescu, 2024). Notwithstanding, this does not imply that Reels are losing popularity. Indeed, as user-generated content continues to increase, it is anticipated that Reels will sustain their surge in popularity (Udescu, 2024).

The aforementioned study (Udescu, 2024) also revealed that Reels generate the most significant impression rates for marketers on the Instagram platform. Accounts with between 1,000 and 5,000 followers typically achieve an impression rate of up to 75%. Larger accounts with 100,000 to 1 million followers exhibit an impression rate above 30%. Thus, if you have a following of 1,000, you can anticipate an average reach of 750 individuals. The algorithm-friendly design of your Reels allows them to potentially reach a larger audience if they are captivating (Udescu, 2024).

In conclusion, Instagram's evolution from a simple photo-sharing app to a comprehensive marketing platform has been marked by strategic adaptations to changing user behavior and market trends. The introduction of Instagram Reels represents a culmination of this evolution, offering a dynamic and interactive format that caters to the preferences of Millennial consumers. Reels have become an essential tool for brands seeking to engage audiences through creative content, driving both consumer behavior and brand engagement in the digital age. This evolution is central to the present study, as it explores how Reels influence Millennial consumer behavior, brand perception, and loyalty, providing insights into the changing dynamics of social media marketing.

## 2.3 Consumer Behavior Theories in the Context of Social Media

Understanding consumer behavior in the digital era requires a comprehensive examination of traditional consumer behavior theories adapted to the unique characteristics of social media environments. Social media platforms like Instagram have transformed the ways in which consumers interact with brands, make purchasing decisions, and develop brand loyalty. Unlike traditional marketing channels, social media facilitates a dynamic, two-way interaction between consumers and brands, which has profound implications for how consumer behavior is influenced. Several key consumer behavior theories are particularly relevant when examining the impact of social media, particularly in the context of platforms such as Instagram and its features, like Reels.

One of the central theories relevant to social media marketing is the **Uses and Gratifications Theory** (Hossain, 2019; Whiting & Williams, 2013). Traditionally, this theory posits that individuals actively seek out media sources that fulfill specific needs or desires, such as information, entertainment, social interaction, or personal identity. In the context of social media, this theory helps explain why consumers engage with platforms like Instagram and content formats like Reels. For example, millennials use Instagram Reels as entertainment, purchasing, information on trends, and finding like-minded people. This behavior is useful to brands that develop Reels that are informative, entertaining, and engaging so that they can fulfill their primary objectives of reaching their target market. This theory makes the point that it is pertinent to identify the reasons as to why people engage in the use of social media and hence enable marketers to market content that is relevant to the desires of the consumers and would trigger the intended engagement (Hossain, 2019; Whiting & Williams, 2013).

Another relevant concept is the **Social Identity Theory** (Harwood, 2020), which emphasizes the role of social groups in shaping individual behavior and identity. Social media platforms like Instagram serve as digital spaces where users can express themselves and align with communities that reflect their values, interests, and lifestyle (Valkenburg, 2022; Pérez-Torres, 2024). In this context, brands play a significant role as part of these social identities. Consumers, especially Millennials, often engage with brands that resonate with their personal and social identity, expressing support

through likes, shares, comments, and even purchases. Instagram Reels enable brands to present a relatable, authentic image that consumers can identify with, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and loyalty. By incorporating elements of social identity into their Reels content, brands can deepen their connection with consumers, influencing behaviors such as brand advocacy and repeat purchasing (Valkenburg, 2022; Pérez-Torres, 2024).

The **Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)** also provides valuable insights into consumer behavior on social media (Leong et al., 2022; Azad et al., 2023). This theory suggests that individual behavior is driven by behavioral intentions, which are influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In the social media context, the content that consumers encounter, including Instagram Reels, shapes their attitudes toward brands and products. Entertaining or informative Reels can create positive attitude towards the brand, which in turn, has a potential to lead to engagement and purchasing behavior. Other factors that influence consumers' decisions are the perceived subjective norms, such as friends and social media personalities. Therefore, if a consumer notices his friends or other influencers recommending a certain product on Instagram Reels, he is likely to emulate the same and adopt the same behavior like buying the product. Perceived behavioral control also comes into play since social media platforms facilitate consumers' ability to act on their intentions through features such as in-app purchases and links to the e-commerce sites (Leong et al., 2022; Azad et al., 2023).

Additionally, **Social Proof Theory** is particularly relevant in the social media environment (Venema et al., 2020). This theory posits that individuals are likely to conform to the actions of others, especially when they are uncertain about their own choices. In the context of Instagram, consumers often look to the behaviors and opinions of others—such as likes, shares, and comments on Reels—as cues for what is popular, valuable, or trustworthy. When a Reel showcasing a brand or product receives high engagement, it acts as a form of social proof, suggesting that the brand is reputable and the product is worth considering. Brands can strategically utilize this theory by creating content that encourages user interaction and showcases social proof, thereby influencing consumer perceptions and driving engagement (Venema et al., 2020).

Lastly, the **Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)** offers a framework for understanding how consumers process persuasive information on social media (Farivar et al., 2023). The ELM suggests that consumers process information through two routes: the central route, which involves careful consideration of the content, and the peripheral route, which relies on superficial cues such as visuals, popularity, or endorsements. Instagram Reels can cater to both processing routes by combining compelling visuals, concise messaging, and interactive elements. Consumers who are highly involved with the content may process it centrally, focusing on the product details or the brand's message within the Reel. Conversely, others may rely on peripheral cues, such as the number of likes or the attractiveness of the Reel, to form an opinion. Understanding these dual processing routes is crucial for brands, as it highlights the need for Reels to be both informative and visually appealing to effectively influence consumer behavior (Farivar et al., 2023).

In conclusion, consumer behavior theories provide a critical lens for examining how social media, particularly Instagram Reels, influences consumer attitudes, perceptions, and actions. By integrating concepts such as Uses and Gratifications, Social Identity, Theory of Planned Behavior, Social Proof, and the Elaboration Likelihood Model, this study aims to explore the complex interactions between consumers and brands in the digital space. Recognizing the factors that drive consumer engagement on social media is key to understanding how brands can effectively use Instagram Reels to shape purchasing behavior, build trust, and foster long-term brand loyalty among Millennials.

## **2.4 Brand Engagement on Social Media Platforms**

Brand engagement on social media platforms has emerged as a crucial aspect of modern marketing, shaping how consumers interact with brands and form lasting relationships (Trunfio & Rossi, 2021). In the digital age, engagement extends beyond traditional one-way communication to encompass a more dynamic and reciprocal interaction between brands and consumers. This engagement is characterized by activities such as liking, commenting, sharing, and participating in brand-related discussions, which allow consumers to express their support, share opinions, and influence the perception of the brand within their social networks (Trunfio & Rossi, 2021). Social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and

LinkedIn provide a conducive environment for these interactions, making them vital channels for fostering brand engagement and driving consumer loyalty.

The concept of brand engagement is critical for marketers because engaged consumers tend to exhibit higher levels of brand loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, and increased likelihood of purchasing (Brodie et al., 2013). Social media enables brands to foster deeper relationships with consumers by creating content that is relatable, interactive, and culturally relevant. For instance, platforms like Instagram and TikTok allow for highly visual content that can convey a brand's personality and ethos quickly, while features such as comments and direct messaging encourage a two-way communication model.

Brand engagement on social media is often categorized into three primary dimensions: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement (Hollebeek, 2011).

- **Cognitive engagement** refers to the consumer's active processing of brand-related information. On social media, consumers may engage cognitively by paying attention to branded content, reading product descriptions, or analyzing reviews.
- **Emotional engagement** reflects the affective connection a consumer has with a brand, often driven by the brand's ability to resonate with the consumer's personal values or identity. For example, brands that incorporate social causes or authentic storytelling into their content are more likely to evoke emotional responses from consumers.
- **Behavioral engagement** encompasses the actions taken by consumers, such as sharing a post, commenting, or participating in branded challenges. Social media platforms have made it easier than ever for consumers to engage behaviorally with brands through features like hashtags, live streams, and interactive polls.

On platforms like Instagram, brand engagement is highly influenced by the type and quality of content that brands share (Santini et al., 2020). Instagram's visual-centric format lends itself well to storytelling, allowing brands to create appealing narratives around their products and values. Features such as posts, Stories, IGTV, and Reels offer various ways for brands to present their content, each serving different aspects



of engagement. For instance, traditional posts and Stories are effective for regular updates and building brand presence, while Reels provide an opportunity for brands to experiment with short, creative videos to captivate their audience. The interactivity of these formats encourages consumers to engage directly, either through reactions such as likes and comments or by sharing the content within their own networks, thereby amplifying the brand's reach (Santini et al., 2020).

The nature of social media brand engagement is also shaped by its interactive and community-driven characteristics (Chahal et al., 2019). Unlike the conventional technique of advertising where the advertiser has a one way communication to the consumer, social media has a two way communication. Consumers today no longer want brands to speak at them but with them and to them. Monitoring comments, replying to mentions and getting involved in the current trends make brands to be more approachable. Such a two-way communication creates brand awareness, consumers' loyalty and fosters sense of community that will ensure consumers keep coming back to the brand. Studies show that there is a positive relationship between consumers' social media interaction with a brand and their attitude towards the brand, brand identification, and word-of-mouth communication (Chahal et al., 2019).

In addition to direct engagement, social media platforms empower consumers to co-create brand content, which significantly enhances brand engagement. User-generated content (UGC), such as customer reviews, posts, and videos featuring brand products, becomes a powerful form of brand promotion and validation (Advani & Gokhale, 2023). On Instagram, UGC can take the form of tagged photos, Stories, or Reels, allowing consumers to showcase their experiences with the brand in a personal and creative way. Brands often encourage this behavior by running campaigns or contests that prompt users to create and share content, rewarding them with recognition or incentives. This co-creation not only boosts engagement but also cultivates a community of brand advocates who actively contribute to shaping the brand's image and message (Advani & Gokhale, 2023).

Social media platforms also facilitate emotional engagement, which is a deeper level of connection between the consumer and the brand (Steinert & Dennis, 2022). Emotional engagement is defined as the ability to target consumers on an emotional aspect in relation with values, goals or personal interest (Rúa-Hidalgo et al., 2021).

For instance, Instagram Reels enable the brand to tell relatable and short stories or share something important to it that Millennial audiences can identify with. Such emotional appeal promotes the feeling of brand affiliation and consumer loyalty that would make the consumers more inclined to engage with the brand and share their experiences (Rúa-Hidalgo et al., 2021). Research has revealed that consumers' attitude towards a brand is significant in determining the level of their patronage and the extent of their word-of-mouth communication for the brand.

Influencer marketing on social media platforms is another critical factor in driving brand engagement (Joshi et al., 2023; Hugh et al., 2022). Influencers, with their large and dedicated followings, act as intermediaries between brands and consumers, often lending authenticity and relatability to brand messages. Collaborations with influencers on platforms like Instagram have proven effective in enhancing brand engagement, as consumers are more inclined to trust recommendations from individuals they admire. By incorporating branded content into their posts, Stories, or Reels, influencers can subtly promote products while fostering engagement through likes, comments, and shares. This influencer-driven engagement not only boosts brand visibility but also adds a layer of credibility that resonates with consumers, particularly within the Millennial demographic (Joshi et al., 2023; Hugh et al., 2022).

Metrics for measuring brand engagement on social media platforms are multifaceted, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative indicators (Trunfio & Rossi, 2021). Quantitative measures include likes, shares, comments, and the number of followers or views, which provide a numerical snapshot of consumer interaction with brand content (Vinerean & Opreana, 2021). Qualitative engagement, on the other hand, is reflected in the sentiment and depth of user comments, discussions, and user-generated content (Chahal et al., 2019). Advanced analytics tools offered by platforms like Instagram provide brands with insights into their audience's behavior, preferences, and engagement patterns, enabling them to refine their content strategy for maximum impact (Drivas et al., 2022). For example, by analyzing engagement metrics on Instagram Reels, brands can identify the types of content that resonate most with their audience, such as humor, tutorials, or behind-the-scenes glimpses, and tailor future posts accordingly to enhance consumer engagement.

To sum up, brand management on social networks is a complex process that includes interactivity, affective connection, users' involvement, and the effective application of influencers. Due to multiple possibilities of formats, such as Reels, Instagram gives numerous possibilities for brands to communicate with consumers and build loyal relationships. Brand engagement on social media is therefore about building a community, invoking conversation and making it possible for consumers to have a role in shaping the way brands are perceived. It is crucial for brands focusing on social media marketing strategies since it directly influences consumer behaviors, brand image, and finally brand equity. This research will extend the understanding of how certain aspects of Instagram Reels enhance the consumer engagement among Millennials and how the dynamics of the brands and consumers interactions shift in the digital environment.

## **2.5 Previous Research on Instagram Reels**

IGTV, Reels, which launched in August 2020, became one of the most active and prominent elements of Instagram promptly. Reels has a similar structure and use to TikTok as this platform also promotes the creation of creative and viral content. Since Instagram users, especially the Millennial and Gen Z, are shifting their attention towards short-form videos Reels has become an essential part of the marketing plan for most brands. The literature on Reels, although still limited by the fact that this feature has been added to Instagram quite recently, helps to determine the possible effects that may occur due to such content on the consumers' engagement, brand recognition, and purchasing behavior.

There are quite a number of scientific studies on how Instagram Reels also engage consumers by promoting and encouraging them to engage with each other through visually appealing and easily consumable content. As Reels are meant to be short and engaging, findings indicate that they offer a considerable edge in terms of consumer engagement given the general trend of shortening consumer attention span due to information overload.

The purpose of the research by Mardhatilah et al. (2023) was to explore the impact of audio-visual stimuli, specifically visual and auditory cues, in Instagram Reels on consumer engagement, focusing on how these stimuli influence perceived cognition and interaction with branded content. By employing the Stimulus-Organism-Response

(SOR) model, the study examined the effect of these stimuli on the engagement of Generation Z with coffee shop brands in Indonesia. The conclusions reached indicate that while visual and auditory stimuli significantly influence cognitive perceptions of the content, they do not directly drive consumer engagement in terms of active interaction like liking or sharing posts. The research highlighted the need for deeper emotional connections and suggested further investigation into affective engagement for understanding consumer behavior on platforms like Instagram.

Furthermore, the purpose of the research by Kuncoro, (2022) was to investigate the impact of various persuasive strategies on the engagement of Instagram Reels, particularly in the context of Indonesian non-profit environmental organizations (NPEOs). The study aimed to uncover which content strategies, such as audio-visual presence, interactivity, third-party endorsements, and figurative language, were most effective in enhancing Reels engagement. The conclusions of the research revealed that audio-visual elements, including sound and vivid imagery, were the most significant factors influencing engagement on Instagram Reels. The study also introduced a new framework for assessing the effectiveness of these strategies in boosting engagement.

In addition to consumer engagement, studies have demonstrated that Instagram Reels significantly contribute to building brand awareness. One of the main advantages of Reels is their ability to amplify content organically, as Instagram's algorithm prioritizes content that drives high engagement. A study by Ahmed (2024) examined the impact of short-form video content, particularly Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, and TikTok, on fan engagement for streamers. The study aimed to understand how streamers use short-form videos to grow their audience, build stronger relationships with their fans, and strengthen their online communities. Through interviews with streamers, the research concluded that short-form video content is an effective tool for enhancing fan engagement, primarily by showcasing highlights, funny moments, and behind-the-scenes content. The study found that short-form videos allow streamers to maintain an active presence on multiple platforms, attract new viewers, and foster a sense of community, ultimately contributing to their overall streaming success. However, the research also highlighted challenges, such as the time and resources needed to consistently produce high-quality short-form content (Ahmed, 2024).

The study also identified that the short, informal nature of Reels lends itself well to authentic storytelling, which resonates with younger audiences who are often skeptical of overly polished marketing campaigns. Brands that leverage Reels to showcase behind-the-scenes footage, product tutorials, or user-generated content have reported greater brand recall and positive sentiment. This aligns with earlier findings by Christodoulides et al. (2012), who noted that consumers perceive user-generated content and authentic brand narratives as more trustworthy than traditional advertising.

Instagram Reels have also been studied in relation to their impact on consumer purchasing decisions. The research conducted by Nallasivam and Mahalakshmi (2023) aimed to understand how Reels influence purchase intent, particularly for Millennials and Generation Z. Their study involved surveying 86 Instagram users who actively engage with Reels content to evaluate the likelihood of purchasing a product after seeing it featured in a Reel. The results indicated a clear link between Reels engagement and purchase intent, with 67% of respondents stating that they had been influenced to purchase a product after viewing it in a Reel.

This finding underscores the power of short-form video content in shaping consumer behavior, particularly when Reels are used to demonstrate product features, provide reviews, or show the product in use. The study also revealed that the interactive nature of Reels—through features like likes, comments, and sharing—enhances the trustworthiness of the content, as consumers often look to peer feedback and social proof when making purchase decisions. This supports earlier studies on social media engagement, such as De Veirman et al. (2017), which emphasized that user interaction with content serves as a form of validation for prospective buyers.

Another significant area of research has focused on how Instagram Reels enable brands to participate in cultural trends, which in turn fosters deeper consumer-brand connections. Research by Parker Lynn (2023) highlighted how Reels allow brands to remain culturally relevant by aligning themselves with trends, memes, or viral challenges. The study found that brands that effectively use Reels to participate in trending cultural moments often experience higher levels of consumer engagement and brand loyalty. For example, fashion and beauty brands that use Reels to showcase how their products fit into current trends or seasonal changes have been more

successful in driving consumer engagement compared to those that rely on static or outdated content.

This research supports the idea that participating in trends through Instagram Reels allows brands to humanize themselves and present a more relatable image. By tapping into cultural movements, brands can engage with consumers on a personal level, increasing emotional connection and loyalty. This aligns with the findings of Hudson et al. (2015), who demonstrated that emotional engagement is a key driver of brand loyalty in the context of social media marketing.

Therefore, the existing literature on Instagram Reels has highlighted the essential and critical impact of Reels on consumers' engagement, purchasing behavior and brand awareness. Reels are an exciting chance for brands to produce fresh, popular, visually appealing content for the audience that is considered Millennials and Gen Z. In the bibliographic review the primary concern within this research is explored, in relation to engagement rates, brand exposure, purchase propensity and cultural adaptation. As Reels remains a new feature on Instagram, that is still constantly developing, more research studies will add to the knowledge regarding how brands can leverage Reels for better results in the dynamic digital environment.

## **Chapter 3: Theory Section**

### **3.1 Theoretical Framework**

Consumer behavior has been another major area of concern in the marketing research as it gives an understanding of how consumers think when making their decisions to buy or how they are likely to behave when in contact with brands. As the consumers shifted more towards social networks, the established consumer behavior theories have been enriched and developed with a new perspective. Marketing has shifted from the traditional model wherein brands broadcasted their message to customers and fans to a social media model that makes consumers not only the receivers of marketers' messages but also content creators and participants in the content-sharing process. In this regard, several theories on consumer behavior shed light on how people interact with the brands on social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. This chapter briefly discusses several important consumer behavior theories and reviews the bibliographic literature on empirical research relevant to these concepts in the context of social media marketing.

#### ***3.1.1 Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)***

The **Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)** has been widely applied to understand social media behavior. Originally developed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973), UGT posits that individuals actively seek out media to satisfy specific needs, such as entertainment, social interaction, or information-seeking. This theory is particularly relevant in the context of social media, where users engage with platforms like Instagram for a variety of reasons, ranging from staying informed about the latest trends to participating in communities that share similar interests. In the context of consumer behavior, UGT helps explain why users choose to follow certain brands, interact with their content, and ultimately become loyal customers.

Whiting and Williams (2013) have used the UGT to analyze social media and have found main gratifications that influence its use comprising entertainment, convenience, information and social needs. Marketers need to know these motivations on the part of consumers as they enable brands to create content that meets the needs of their consumers. For instance, Instagram Reels help entertainment and inform users in the form of short videos which meet the need of users for something short and engaging. By means of the match between the content strategies and gratifications

sought, brands are capable of enhancing the level of engagement and thus the relations with consumers.

### ***3.1.2 Social Identity Theory***

Another key theory that explains consumer behavior in the context of social media is **Social Identity Theory (SIT)**, developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979). SIT posits that individuals derive a sense of identity and belonging from the social groups they affiliate with. On social media platforms, users often express their identities by aligning themselves with certain brands, communities, or influencers. Social identity becomes a driver of behavior, as individuals choose to engage with brands that reflect their personal values, lifestyle, or aspirations. Millennials, in particular, are known for seeking out brands that align with their personal values, such as sustainability or social justice (Grail Research, 2019).

Wang, (2017) revealed that as consumers develop a level of identification with a brand, the chances of them interacting with that brand on social media are high. Furthermore, through social media, people have a chance to perform their social roles especially in interactions with brands like sharing a branded content or participating in a branded challenges for example Instagram Reels. This interactive element takes the VRM to another level of the consumer-brand connection, since consumers feel that their interactions with the brand symbolize who they are (Wang, 2017).

### ***3.1.3 Theory of Planned Behavior***

The **Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)**, introduced by Ajzen (1991), suggests that individuals' behavior is influenced by three factors: their attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In the context of social media, TPB helps explain how attitudes toward brands, peer influence, and the ease of engaging with content shape consumer behavior. For instance, exposure to influencer endorsements on platforms like Instagram can shape positive attitudes toward a brand (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017), while social pressures from peers or social media communities can influence purchase decisions.

In a study by Taylor and Strutton (2016), the TPB was applied to explain why consumers are more likely to purchase products promoted by influencers on social media (especially Facebook platform). The study found that perceived social norms



and influencers' perceived authenticity significantly impacted consumer purchasing decisions. This finding suggests that brands on Instagram and other platforms can influence consumer behavior by strategically leveraging influencers and creating content that aligns with positive attitudes and social pressures.

#### ***3.1.4 Elaboration Likelihood Model***

The **Elaboration Likelihood Model** (ELM), developed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986), provides insights into how consumers process persuasive messages. The ELM posits that there are two routes of persuasion: the central route, where individuals carefully analyze the content, and the peripheral route, where individuals rely on superficial cues such as the attractiveness of the content or its popularity. On social media, both routes are relevant, as users may engage with content either because they find it genuinely valuable (central route) or because they are influenced by likes, shares, or the endorsement of an influencer (peripheral route).

Ki et al. (2020) investigated the way whereby consumers deal with advertisement information on Instagram and concluded that in the case of information-intensive advertisements with high vividness and perceived visual appeal the type of information processing is the peripheral route, especially if the consumer has low involvement with the advertised brand. This research is particularly meaningful for marketing-oriented Instagram Reels, as the effectiveness of short videos often relies on a fast grab of viewers' attention through visually appealing material that facilitates peripheral processing.

#### ***3.1.5 Social Proof Theory***

**Social Proof Theory** (Cialdini, 1984) is another critical framework in social media marketing, particularly when examining how consumer behavior is influenced by the behavior of others. Social proof refers to the idea that people are more likely to engage in behaviors that they see others engaging in, especially when they are uncertain. On social media, the presence of likes, shares, and comments often serves as social proof that a particular brand or product is worth engaging with. For instance, Instagram Reels that gain high levels of interaction can create a sense of credibility and trustworthiness, encouraging other users to engage with the content or brand.

Zhu and Chen (2015) supported the analytical findings regarding the impact of social proof on consumer decisions on social media. Their study identified that the amount of social activity associated with the product played a crucial role to the consumer buying process, where; the higher the level of social activity (for instance more likes or comments), the likelihood of purchasing that particular product increases, hence the validation of social proof. This implies that the brands on Instagram, can increase their believability by increasing the engagement of the users and thus increase the social proof by the use of influencer marketing or users' generated content.

## **3.2 Conceptual Model**

### ***3.2.1 Relationship between Instagram Reels and Consumer Behavior***

Several studies have explored how these consumer behavior theories manifest in the context of social media. For instance, Chu and Kim (2011) examined the role of social identity and consumer engagement on Facebook, finding that users who identified strongly with a brand were more likely to engage with brand-related content. Similarly, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) provided a foundational framework for understanding the importance of social media in consumer behavior, highlighting that the interactive nature of social media encourages deeper consumer-brand relationships than traditional media.

In the specific context of Instagram, Mayrhofer et al. (2019) examined how user-generated content and social proof influence consumer trust and brand engagement. Their findings indicated that when consumers perceive a brand as popular or widely endorsed on social media, they are more likely to engage with and trust the brand. Similarly, Godey et al. (2016) conducted a study on Instagram and found that luxury brands benefit from creating visually compelling content that encourages social proof and enhances brand loyalty.

These studies show the importance of SM as a platform that expands on the traditional consumer behavior theories but adds the elements of engagement and interaction. With the help of social media especially Instagram it has made consumer and brand relation more engaging, identity and social proof are important cues to consumer behavior.

### ***3.2.2 Influence of Instagram Reels on Brand Engagement***

One of the key drivers of brand engagement on platforms like Instagram and TikTok is the use of visual content. Studies have shown that visual content—particularly video—outperforms text-based content in terms of engagement rates. According to research by Sabate et al. (2014), visual content on Facebook generates significantly higher engagement than text posts. This trend holds true across platforms, especially those that prioritize visual storytelling, like Instagram, which relies heavily on images and videos to communicate brand messages.

Therefore, beyond aesthetics, there is the issue of interactivity that is essential for stimulating the user's interest. There are numerous options that social networks provide for holding extended brand-consumer discussions – polls, quizzes, and Q&A sessions. According to the research carried by de Vries et al., the level of interactivity of the content posted by brand is proportional to the engagement levels. Loyalty will be especially high to brands where consumers believe that they can also co-create content or directly engage with the brand on social media.

UGC (User-Generated Content) is now discussed as one of the most effective tools for brand communication in social networks. UGC is defined as any content consumers make about a brand in the form of a review, photo, video or any social media post. UGC is not only useful for brands as it generates free advertising but also helpful in the development of a closer relationship between the consumer and brands as it makes the consumer feel part of the brand they are using. In their study, Christodoulides et al. (2012) have found that through UGC, consumer trust and brand loyalty increase since consumers tend to believe more in word of mouth than in conventional advertisement.

Furthermore, UGC allows consumers to co-create a brand's identity by integrating it into their personal lives and social media presence. Platforms like Instagram encourage UGC through features like hashtags, challenges, and taggable content. For example, a brand may launch a hashtag campaign encouraging users to share photos using their product. The virality of such campaigns often results in increased visibility and engagement, as seen in case studies like the "Share a Coke" campaign (Setiawan, 2023), which invited consumers to share personalized Coke bottles on social media, significantly boosting brand engagement.

Another very significant element which affects the engagement of brands on various social media platforms is known as influencer marketing. There is the use of influencers who rely on their audience, knowledge, appearance, or humor to attract people and serve as a link between the brand and the consumer. According to Lou and Yuan (2019), they have found out that consumers prefer to buy products that are endorsed by influencers who they have a level of trust in. This is especially so because consumers develop parasocial bonds, which in this case make them feel like they actually know the influencers they follow even though they have never met them personally; brands can then take advantage of this to deepen the influencer's engagement with the consumers to achieve intended positive impacts.

A study by De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017) found that the number of followers an influencer has significantly impacts brand engagement, but more importantly, authenticity plays a critical role. Authentic endorsements that feel genuine and aligned with the influencer's personal brand tend to generate higher engagement than overtly promotional content. This finding is particularly relevant on platforms like Instagram and TikTok, where influencer-driven content is seamlessly integrated into users' feeds, blurring the lines between organic and paid content.

Some of the factors identified in prior literature that have been examined concerning succeeds brand engagement on social networks consist of the following. For instance, Brodie et al; (2013) proposed a framework that classify consumer engagement into sharing, advocating, and co-creating in an OBEC. In their work, they noted that engagement is not an event, but a continuum of behavioral activities with respect to brand loyalty and advocacy.

Research by Hudson et al. (2015) found that emotional engagement plays a particularly important role in fostering brand loyalty on social media. Their study demonstrated that brands that successfully evoke emotions—whether through humor, nostalgia, or inspiration—are more likely to engage consumers in meaningful ways. Similarly, Kim and Ko (2012) examined the role of luxury brands on social media and found that interactive content significantly increased consumer engagement, particularly for brands targeting Millennials.

De Vries, Gensler, and Leeflang (2012) explored the impact of post characteristics (such as vividness and interactivity) on Facebook brand engagement and found that

more interactive posts generated higher levels of consumer interaction. This research underscores the importance of crafting content that not only grabs attention but also invites participation.

## **Chapter 4: Methodology**

### **4.1 Research Design**

#### ***4.1.1 Quantitative Approach***

Quantitative research method is used in this study because the focus is on the measurement of variables in which the numerical approach can capture systematically (Bhandari, 2023). With use of quantitative research approach, the study can arrive at a level of results, which can be generalized to the total population, thus providing sound and evidence based for the research hypotheses. Also, the use of a quantitative approach ensures that the data collected can be analyzed using complex statistical software including SPSS to arrive at the findings (Bhandari, 2023).

#### ***4.1.2 Cross-sectional Study***

Based on the objectives of this study, a cross-sectional research design is adopted as it allows for the gathering of data at a certain point in time, taking a ‘snapshot’ of the behaviors, opinions and attitudes of the targeted population. A cross-sectional approach is also time-efficient and cost-effective, allowing for the rapid collection of data from a large sample, which is crucial for generating timely insights in a fast-evolving digital landscape. Moreover, this design is well-suited for descriptive and correlational analyses, which are central to understanding the patterns and trends in consumer behavior within the context of social media marketing.

### **4.2 Population and Sample**

#### ***4.2.1 Target Population***

The target population for this study comprises Millennials, individuals born between 1981 and 1996, who are a significant and influential demographic in the digital and consumer markets. This generational cohort is particularly relevant for examining the impact of Instagram Reels on consumer behavior and brand engagement, as Millennials are known for their extensive use of social media and their preference for digital content consumption. Given the widespread adoption of Instagram among this age group, focusing on Millennials provides an ideal opportunity to explore how new social media features like Reels influence their purchasing decisions and loyalty to brands.

To ensure that the study's findings are statistically robust and generalizable, the sample size was carefully determined using appropriate sampling techniques. A total of 143 participants were recruited for this study. This sample size was considered adequate for providing statistically significant insights into Millennials' responses, given the population of Instagram users.

#### ***4.2.2 Sampling Method: Random Sampling***

This study used random sampling as the method of sampling to enhance the sample's generality among the Millennial population. As each member of the target population has an equal likelihood of being chosen, the possibilities of systematic bias are reduced and thus increases the external validity of the research. It makes it easier to gather information from a broad sample of Millennials, hence, the variability in behavior, attitude or demographics. Random sampling is especially helpful in this case since it eliminates the sample bias to a greater extent when it comes to showing how specific segments of Millennial customers engage with Instagram Reels in order to give a better picture of the population's trends and inclinations. This approach also increases the reliability of the study, as it excludes systematic sample biases and therefore retrieves a population of Millennial audience that is as accurate as possible.

### **4.3 Data Collection Methods**

#### ***4.3.1 Questionnaire Design***

The questionnaire employed in this study was developed to identify several perspectives regarding consumer behavior and brand interaction with Instagram Reels. It was derived from validated scales found in earlier studies to guarantee reliability and applicability of the tool. Specifically, the questionnaire consisted of five parts which are the five scales that reflect the most important aspects of consumers' behavior:

1. **Consumer Decision-Making Style Inventory (CDMSI):** Using the scale developed by Eom et al. (2020), the participants' perception of decision making in consumers context and the impact of Instagram Reels on purchase behavior was assessed. Questions from this scale elicits participants' attitudes concerning product quality, brand image, and consumption pattern towards Reels on Instagram.

2. **Customer Loyalty Scale (CLS):** Adapted from Oliver (1999), this section analyses the participants' brand commitment in the brands featured in the Instagram Reels. The questions deal with brand satisfaction, the tendency of repeat purchases and recommending the brand to others.
3. **Brand Authenticity Scale (BAS):** Drawing from Napoli et al. (2014), this section asks the participants whether they believe brands promoted through Instagram Reels to be credible and trustworthy.
4. **Advertising Creativity Scale:** The scale adopted from Smith et al. (2008) measures the extent to which participants found Reels on Instagram creative, original, and entertaining. It wants to know how the creative dimensions of Reels content affect consumer memory and involvement.
5. **Social Media Engagement Scale (SMES):** Based on the framework suggested by Hollebeek et al. (2014), this section measures participants' activity levels of Instagram Reels, including liking, sharing and commenting on the Reels content.

The last set of questions are basic demographic questions (age, gender, education, employment status) and questions on how often participants use Instagram. Each section used a Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), allowing for quantitative measurement of the constructs involved in the study.

#### ***4.3.2 Distribution Channels***

The questionnaire was conducted through the Google Forms that enabled the respondents to fill in the questionnaire online and at any time convenient for them. To capture the target population, the admin of the survey posted the questionnaire on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. These platforms were selected based on the high Millennial users they contain which fits the demographic target of the study.

### **4.4 Data Analysis Techniques**

The data collected from the virtual questionnaire (Appendix) were analyzed using the **SPSS statistical package** to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. The analysis procedure was structured to evaluate the relationship between Instagram Reels engagement and various dimensions of consumer behavior, including



purchasing decisions, brand loyalty, brand authenticity, content creativity, and social media engagement.

### **Scale and Dimension Calculation**

The questionnaire was designed using validated scales, each addressing specific aspects of consumer behavior and brand engagement. These scales included the **Consumer Decision-Making Style Inventory (CDMSI)** for measuring purchasing behavior, the **Customer Loyalty Scale (CLS)** for assessing brand loyalty, the **Brand Authenticity Scale (BAS)** for evaluating brand authenticity, the **Advertising Creativity Scale** for content characteristics, and the **Social Media Engagement Scale (SMES)** for engagement behavior. Each scale employed a Likert-type response format, where participants indicated their level of agreement with various statements on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Once the data was collected, the responses for each scale were summed and averaged to generate quantitative scores representing the individual dimensions for each participant. For each scale, the **mean score** was calculated to reflect the overall trend in responses across the sample. These mean scores were then used as the primary variables for further statistical analysis.

### **Correlation Analysis**

To explore the relationships between the key dimensions of the study, a **correlation analysis** was conducted. In this study, correlation coefficients were calculated to examine the relationship between the level of **Instagram Reels engagement** (as captured by the SMES) and other variables such as **purchasing behavior** (CDMSI), **brand loyalty** (CLS), and **brand authenticity** (BAS). The correlation coefficients were interpreted to determine whether there was a statistically significant positive or negative relationship between these variables, which would indicate how increased engagement with Instagram Reels affects consumer behavior and brand perceptions.

### **Multiple Regression Analysis**

To further test the impact of Instagram Reels content characteristics on consumer engagement, a **multiple regression analysis** was performed. Multiple regression is a statistical technique that allows researchers to test the effect of multiple independent

variables on a single dependent variable. In this study, the independent variables included specific **content characteristics** of Instagram Reels, such as **creativity**, **relevance**, and **entertainment value**, derived from the **Advertising Creativity Scale**.

The dependent variable in the regression model was **consumer engagement**, as measured by participants' likelihood of **liking**, **sharing**, and **commenting** on Instagram Reels. The regression analysis aimed to determine the extent to which creative and relevant content in Instagram Reels drives higher engagement levels among Millennials. By examining the regression coefficients, the analysis identified which content characteristics had the most significant influence on engagement behaviors and quantified the strength of these effects.

#### **4.5 Ethical Considerations**

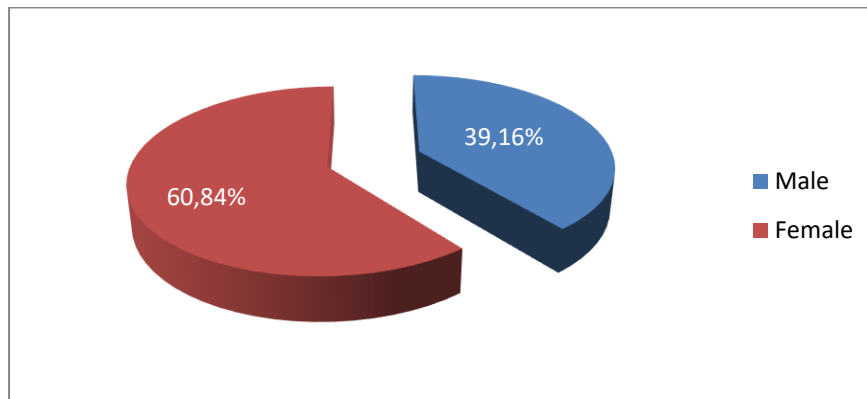
In this study, issues of ethics are important in order to conduct the research in a right manner and respect the participants. First of all, the participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Participant identity was also preserved in the study and therefore all information collected are anonymous hence no one can be recognized from the responses received. Further, the data is safe and only the researcher has the access to it and were analyzed for the usage in the study only. The questionnaire was developed in a way that would not include any form of prejudice or cueing that may lead the participants.

## Chapter 5: Analysis

### 5.1 Descriptive Statistics

#### 5.1.1 Gender

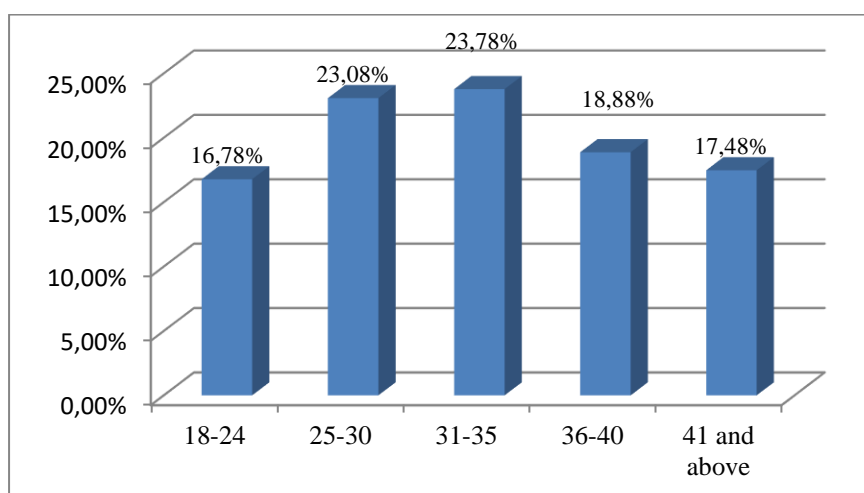
The responses received from the questionnaire showed that 60.84% were Female and 39.16% were Male (Graph 1).



Graph 1: Gender

#### 5.1.2 Age

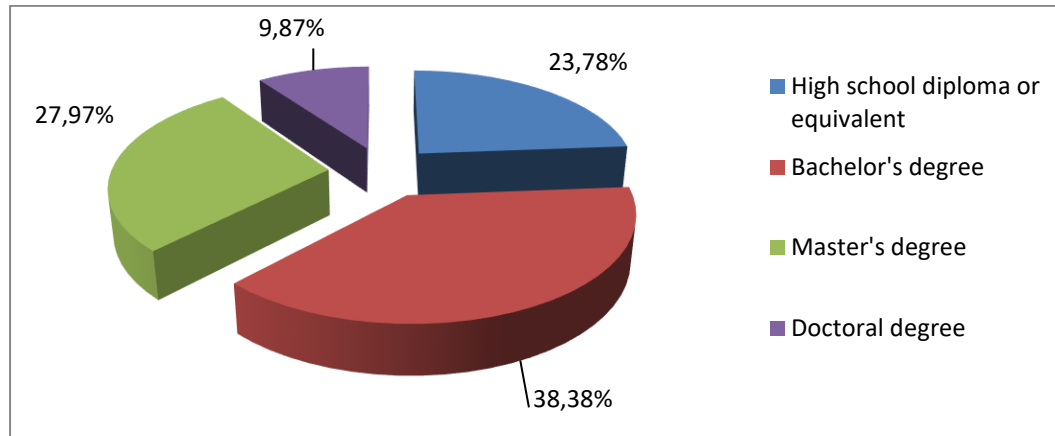
When asked about their age, 16.78% of respondents answered that they are 18-24 years old, 23.08% that they are 25-30 years old, 23.78% that they are 31-35 years old, 18.88% that they are 36-40 years old while 17.48% that they are in the age group of 41 and above (Graph 2).



Graph 2: Age

### 5.1.3 Education Level

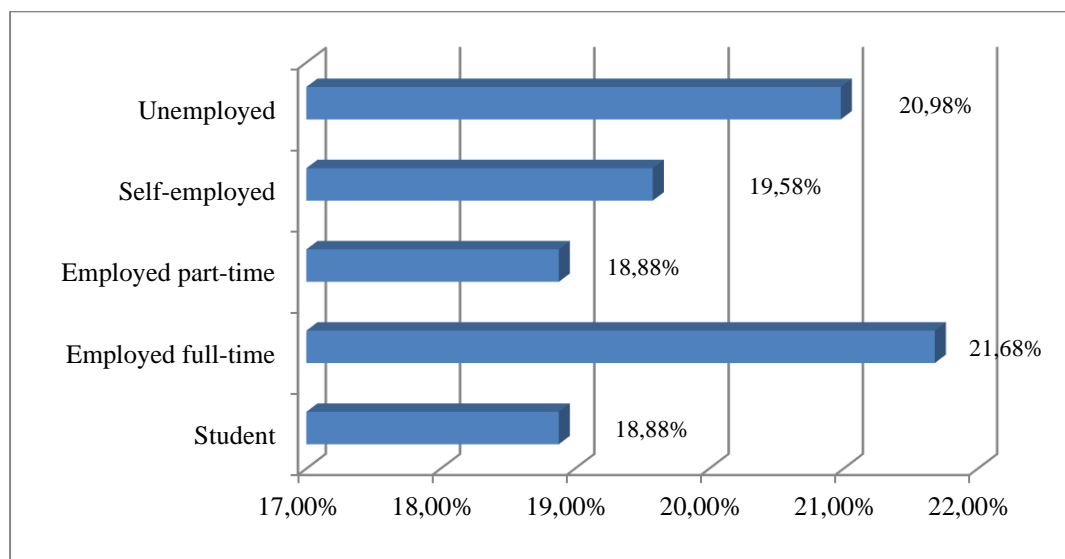
When asked about their level of education, 23.78% said they had a high school diploma or equivalent, 38.38% said they had a Bachelor's degree, 27.97% said they had a Master's degree, while 9.87% declared that they hold a Doctoral degree (Graph 3).



Graph 3: Level of Education

### 5.1.4 Employment Status

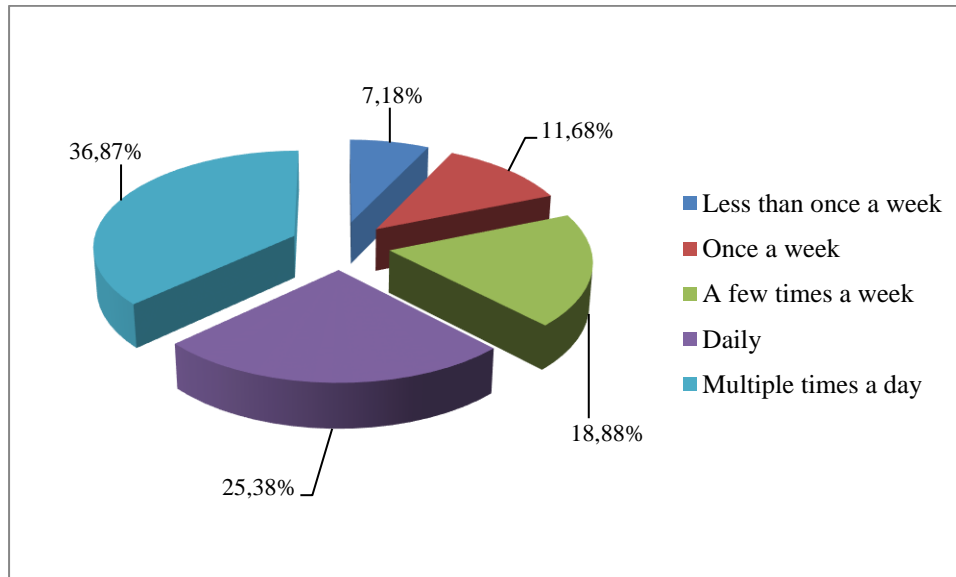
Regarding their Employment Status, 18.88% of the respondents stated that they are *Student*, 21.68% of the respondents stated that they were *Employed full-time*, 18.88% of the respondents stated that they were *Employed part-time*, in 19.58% of the respondents that they are *Self-employed* while 20.98% of the respondents that they are *Unemployed* (Graph 4).



Graph 4: Employment Status

### 5.1.5 Instagram Usage

Regarding the question of how much they use Instagram, a remarkable 36.87% said they use it *Multiple times a day*, 25.38% said they use it *Daily*, 18.88% said *A few times a week*, 11.68% said *Once a week*, 7.18% said *Less than once a week* while a small percentage of 7.18% said *Less than once a week* (Graph 5).



Graph 5: Instagram Usage

### 5.1.6 Consumer Purchasing Behavior (CDMSI)

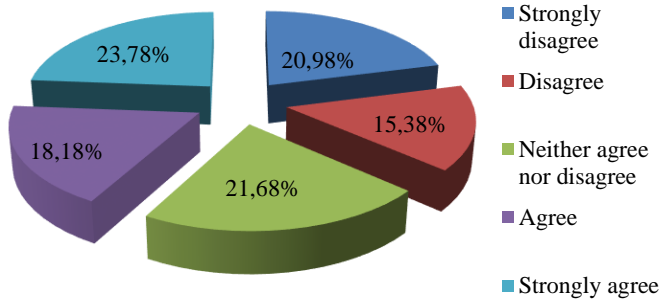
Respondents' responses to the Consumer Purchasing Behavior questions are summarized in the table below (Table 1):

**Table 1: Responses to the Consumer Purchasing Behavior questions**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I carefully consider the quality of products featured in Instagram Reels before making a purchase (Graph 7).	20,98%	15,38%	21,68%	18,18%	23,78%
I always try to buy the best quality products, even if they are featured in Instagram Reels (Graph 6).	18,88%	13,29%	18,88%	23,78%	25,17%
I tend to purchase products from brands that have a strong online presence, including Instagram Reels (Graph 9).	17,48%	20,28%	20,28%	19,58%	22,38%
I believe the more expensive products featured in Instagram Reels are usually better (Graph 8).	25,17%	23,08%	17,48%	14,69%	19,58%
I often stick with the same products or brands that I've seen multiple times in Instagram Reels (Graph 10).	20,28%	21,68%	23,08%	17,48%	17,48%

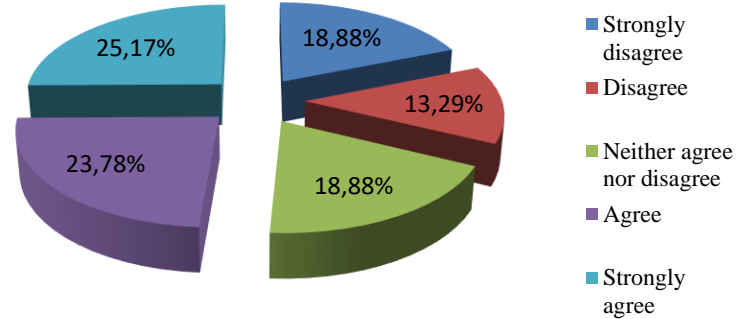
For a better understanding of the answers, the following diagrams were created:

**I carefully consider the quality of products featured in Instagram Reels before making a purchase.**



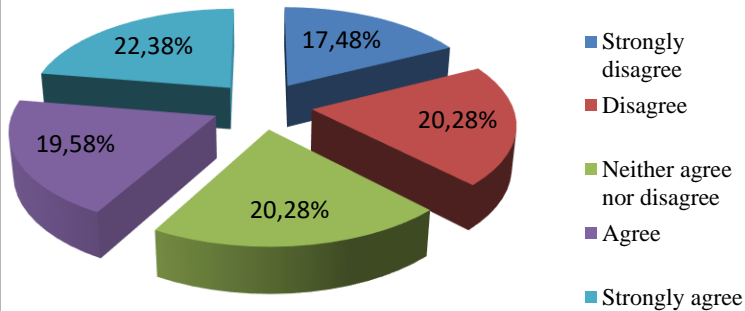
**Graph 6: I carefully consider the quality of products featured in Instagram Reels before making a purchase.**

**I always try to buy the best quality products, even if they are featured in Instagram Reels.**



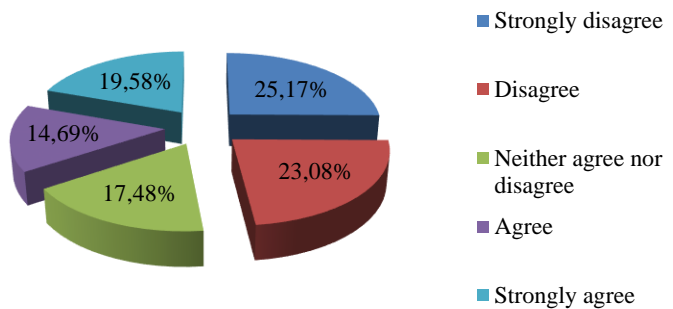
**Graph 7: I always try to buy the best quality products, even if they are featured in Instagram Reels.**

**I tend to purchase products from brands that have a strong online presence, including Instagram Reels.**



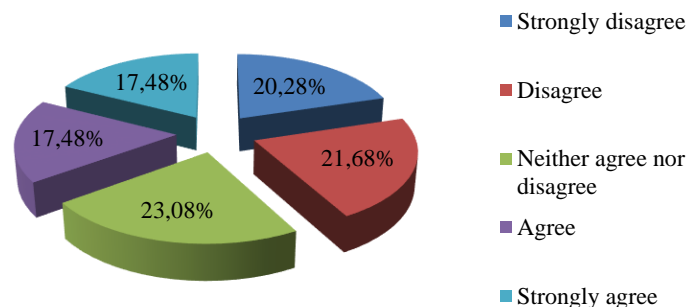
**Graph 9: I tend to purchase products from brands that have a strong online presence, including Instagram Reels.**

**I believe the more expensive products featured in Instagram Reels are usually better.**



**Graph 8: I believe the more expensive products featured in Instagram Reels are usually better.**

**I often stick with the same products or brands that I've seen multiple times in Instagram Reels.**



**Graph 10: I often stick with the same products or brands that I've seen multiple times in Instagram Reels.**

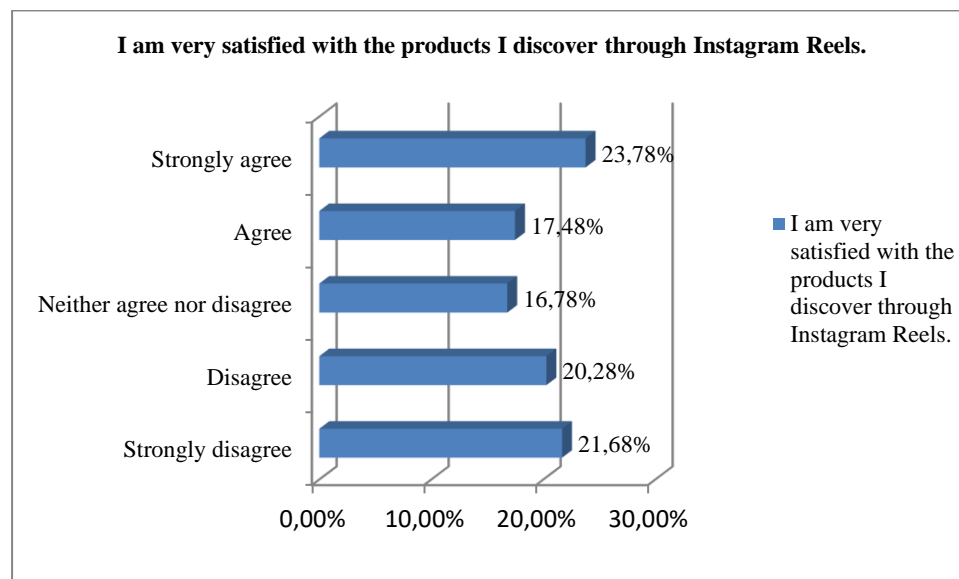
### 5.1.7 Brand Loyalty (CLS)

Respondents' responses to the Brand Loyalty questions are summarized in the table below (Table 2):

**Table 2: Responses to the Brand Loyalty questions**

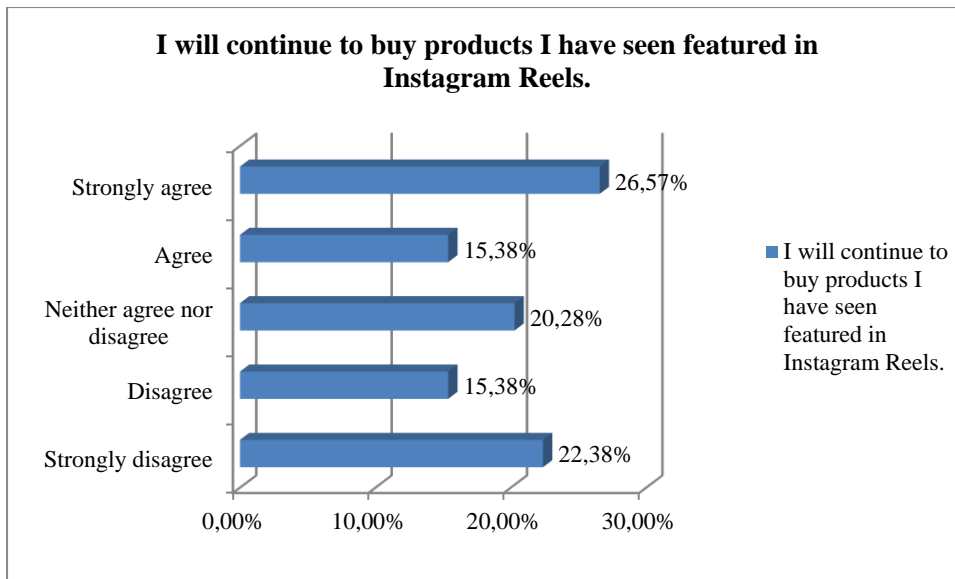
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I am very satisfied with the products I discover through Instagram Reels (Graph 11).	21,68%	20,28%	16,78%	17,48%	23,78%
I will continue to buy products I have seen featured in Instagram Reels (Graph 12).	22,38%	15,38%	20,28%	15,38%	26,57%
I often recommend products I find on Instagram Reels to others (Graph 13).	20,28%	25,87%	19,58%	19,58%	14,69%
I feel a sense of loyalty toward products that are frequently featured in Instagram Reels (Graph 14).	23,08%	22,38%	20,98%	16,78%	16,78%
I prefer purchasing products I have seen repeatedly in Instagram Reels content (Graph 15).	20,28%	19,58%	20,28%	16,78%	23,08%

For a better understanding of the answers, the following diagrams were created:

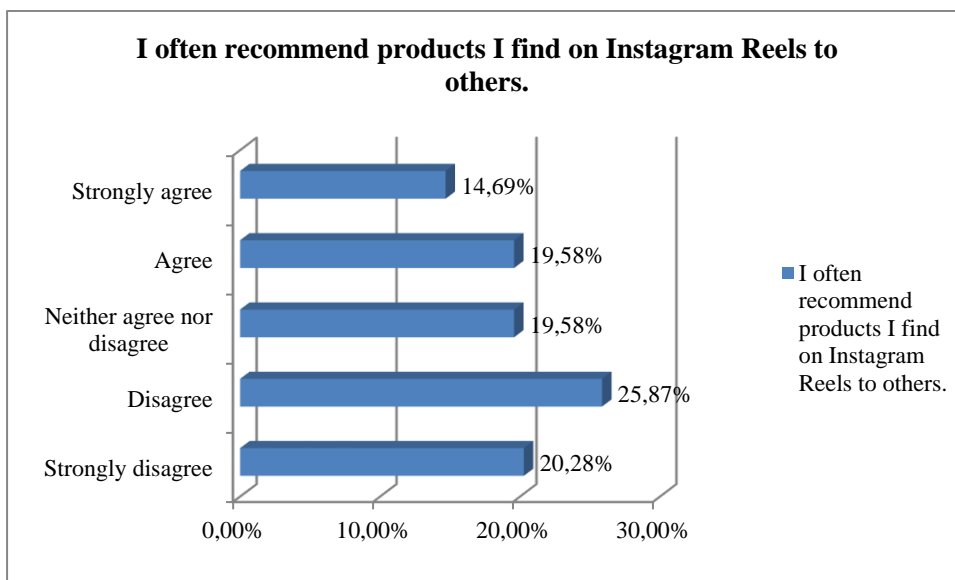


**Graph 11: I am very satisfied with the products I discover through Instagram Reels.**

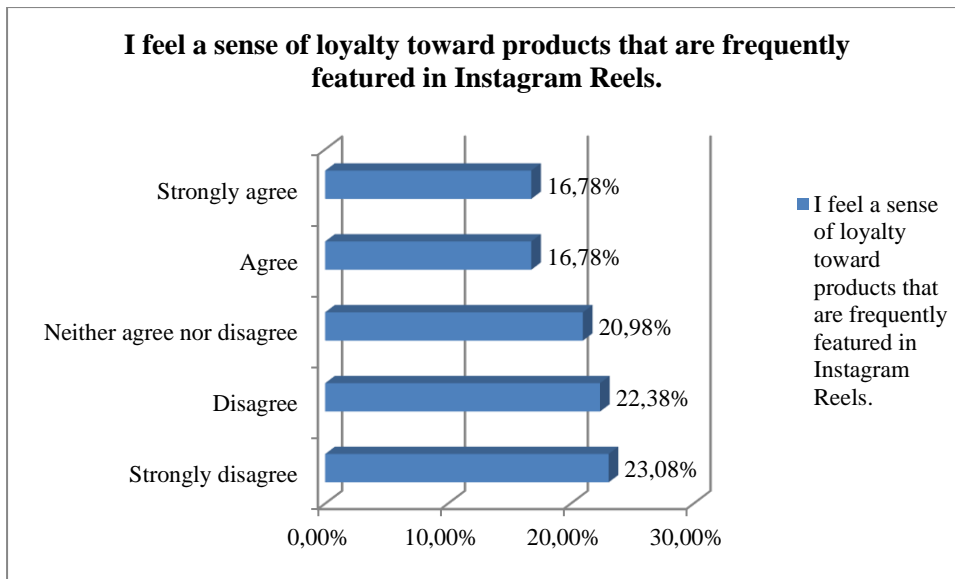




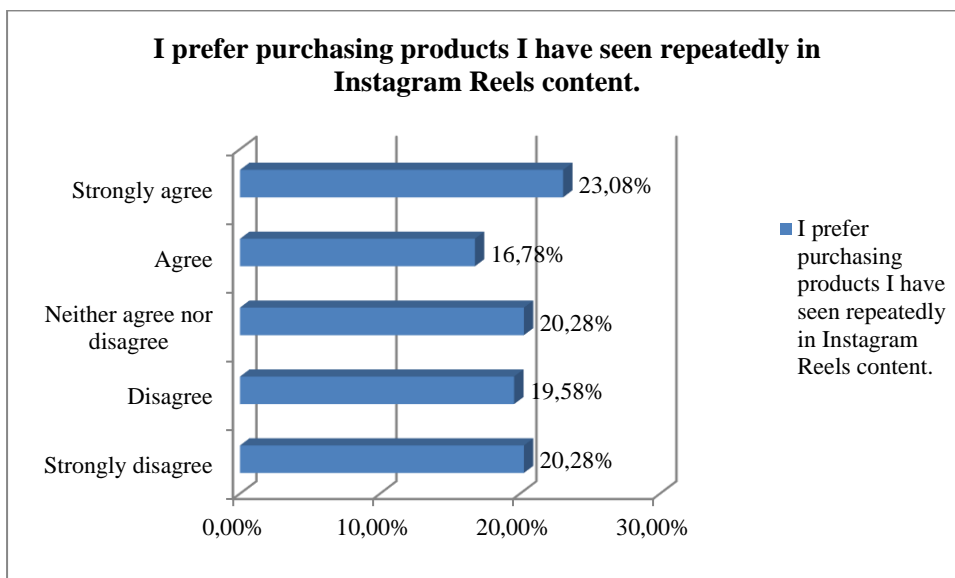
**Graph 12: I will continue to buy products I have seen featured in Instagram Reels.**



**Graph 13: I often recommend products I find on Instagram Reels to others.**



**Graph 14: I feel a sense of loyalty toward products that are frequently featured in Instagram Reels.**



**Graph 15: I prefer purchasing products I have seen repeatedly in Instagram Reels content.**

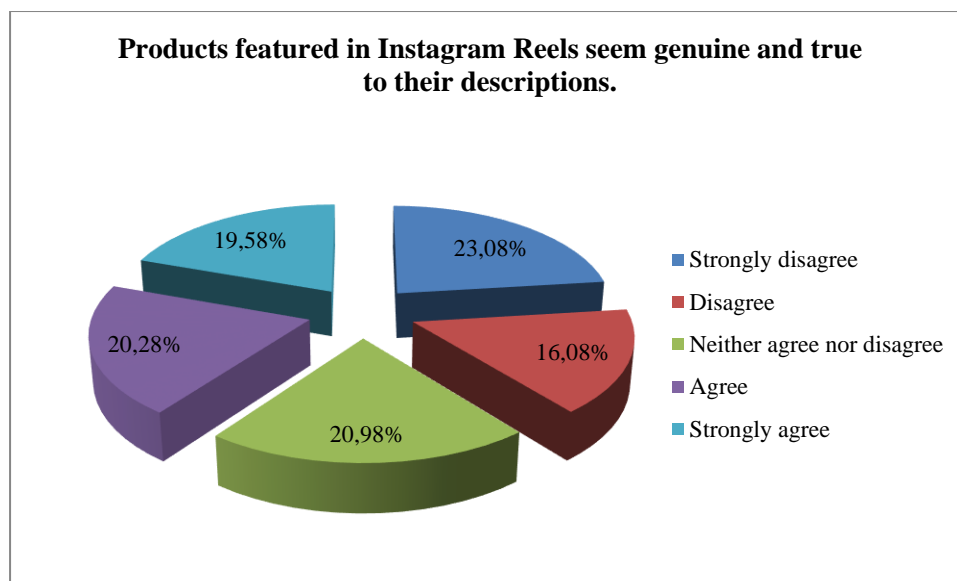
### 5.1.8 Brand Authenticity and Trust (BAS)

Respondents' responses to the Brand Authenticity and Trust questions are summarized in the table below (Table 3):

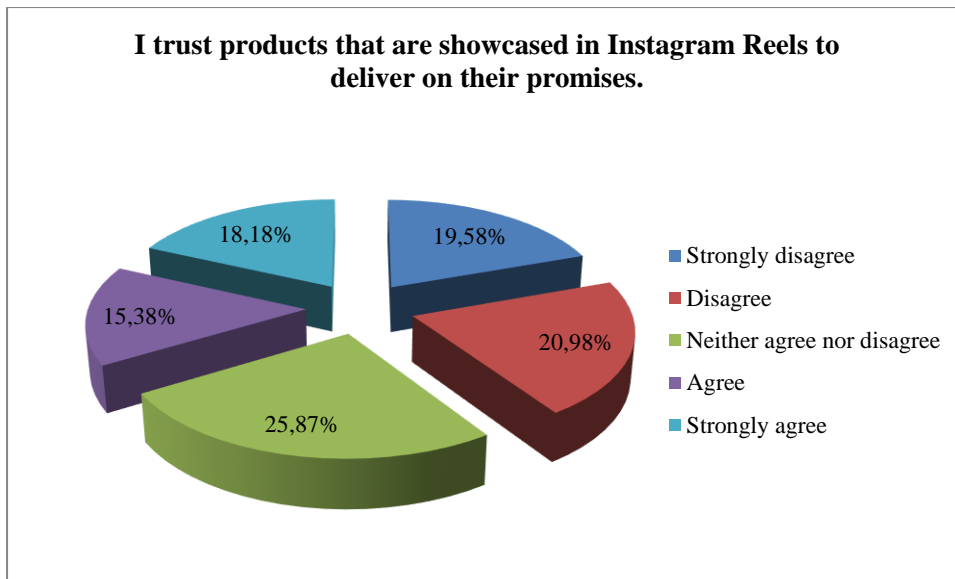
**Table 3: Responses to the Brand Authenticity and Trust questions**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Products featured in Instagram Reels seem genuine and true to their descriptions (Graph 16).	23,08%	16,08%	20,98%	20,28%	19,58%
I trust products that are showcased in Instagram Reels to deliver on their promises (Graph 17).	19,58%	20,98%	25,87%	15,38%	18,18%
The content of Instagram Reels is transparent and honest with consumers (Graph 18).	20,28%	26,57%	16,08%	19,58%	17,48%
I believe products showcased in Instagram Reels are reliable (Graph 19).	11,98%	20,28%	20,98%	21,68%	25,17%
I feel confident in purchasing products featured in Instagram Reels because I trust the content creators (Graph 20).	19,58%	20,28%	25,17%	15,38%	19,58%

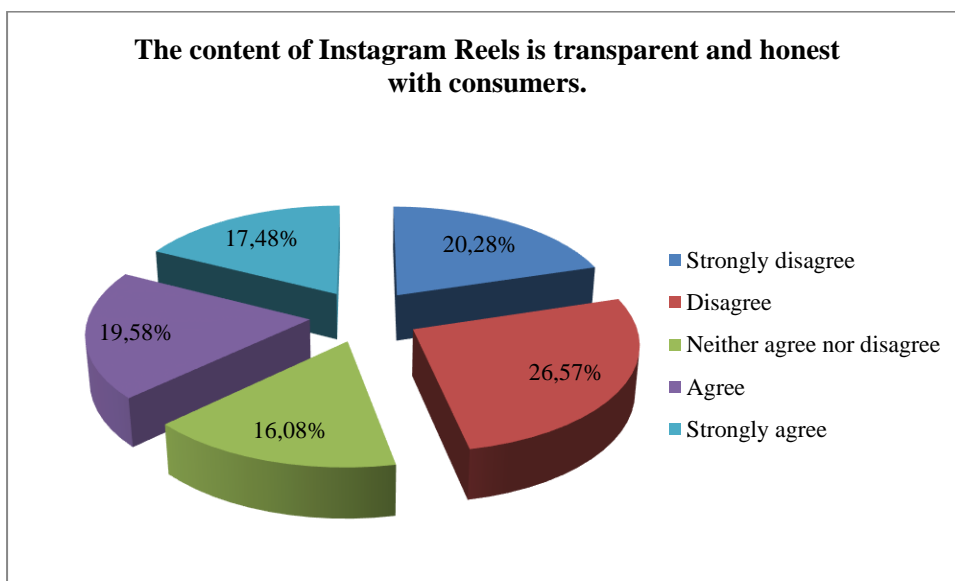
For a better understanding of the answers, the following diagrams were created:



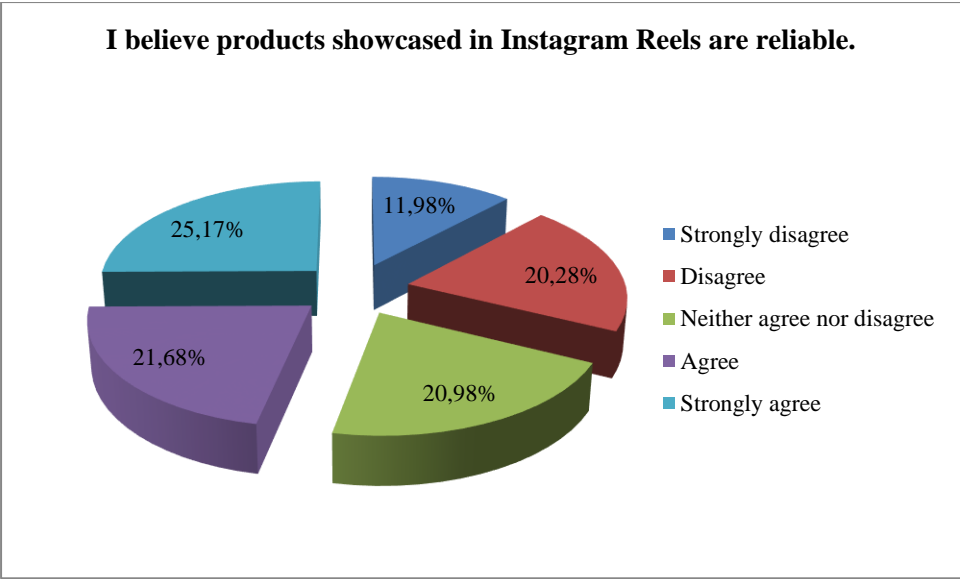
**Graph 16: Products featured in Instagram Reels seem genuine and true to their descriptions.**



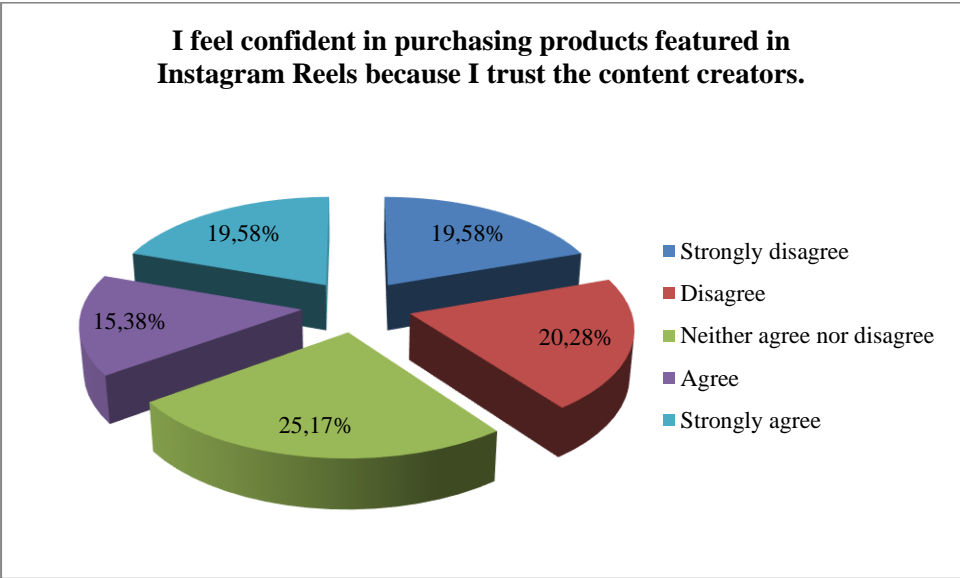
**Graph 17: I trust products that are showcased in Instagram Reels to deliver on their promises.**



**Graph 18: The content of Instagram Reels is transparent and honest with consumers.**



**Graph 19: I believe products showcased in Instagram Reels are reliable.**



**Graph 20: I feel confident in purchasing products featured in Instagram Reels because I trust the content creators.**

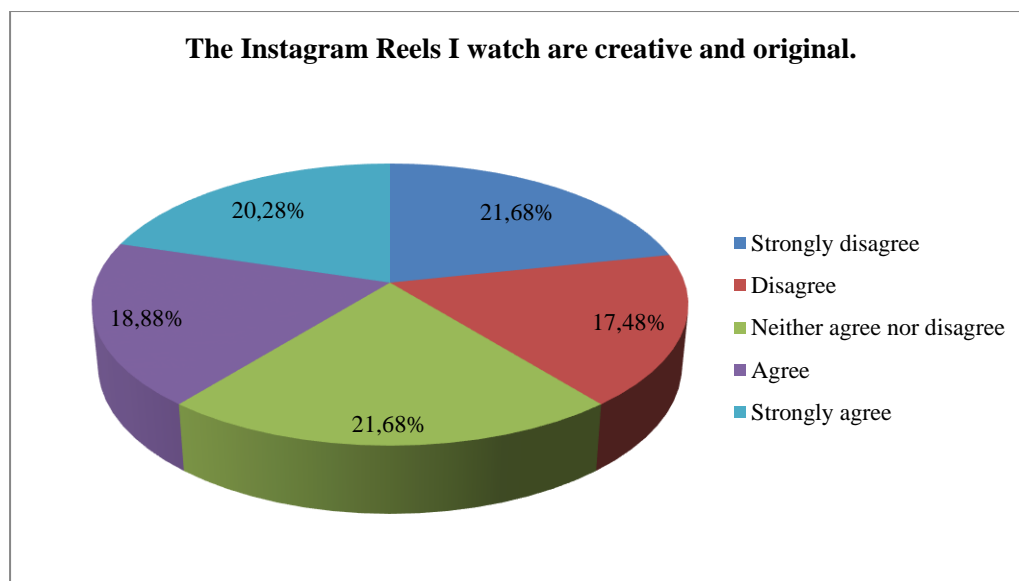
### 5.1.9 Content Characteristics (Advertising Creativity Scale)

Respondents' responses to the Content Characteristics questions are summarized in the table below (Table 4):

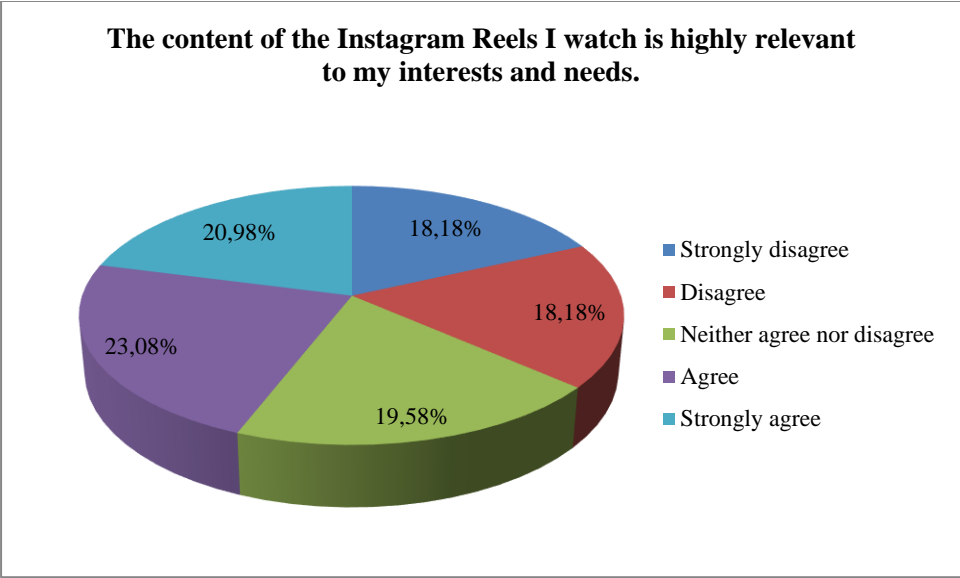
**Table 4: Responses to the Content Characteristics questions**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The Instagram Reels I watch are creative and original (Graph 21).	21,68%	17,48%	21,68%	18,88%	20,28%
The content of the Instagram Reels I watch is highly relevant to my interests and needs (Graph 22).	18,18%	18,18%	19,58%	23,08%	20,98%
I find the Instagram Reels I watch to be entertaining and enjoyable (Graph 23).	24,48%	16,78%	17,48%	20,98%	20,28%
The Instagram Reels I watch make a lasting impression on me (Graph 24).	22,38%	18,88%	15,38%	20,98%	22,38%
I often re-watch Instagram Reels because they are interesting and visually appealing (Graph 25).	18,18%	24,48%	23,78%	13,29%	20,28%

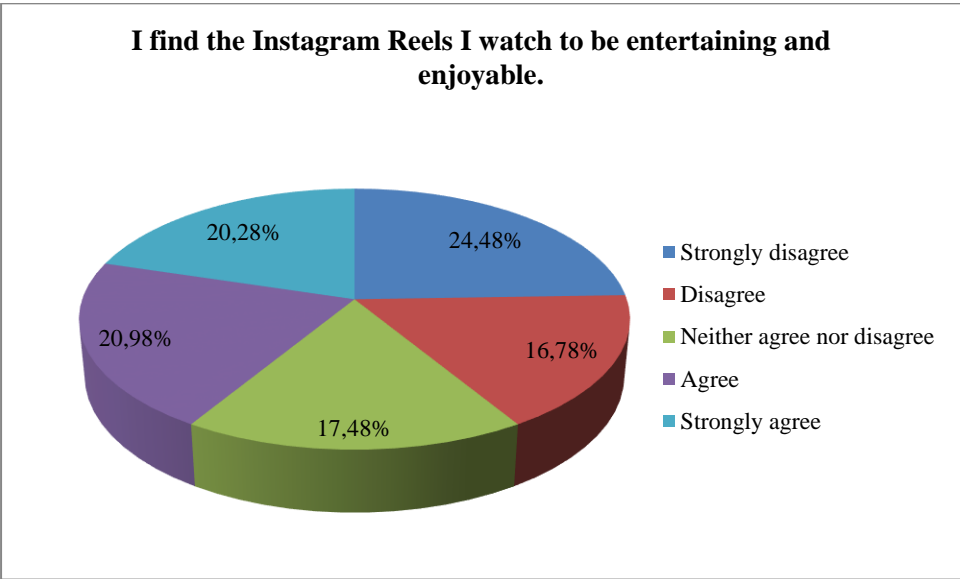
For a better understanding of the answers, the following diagrams were created:



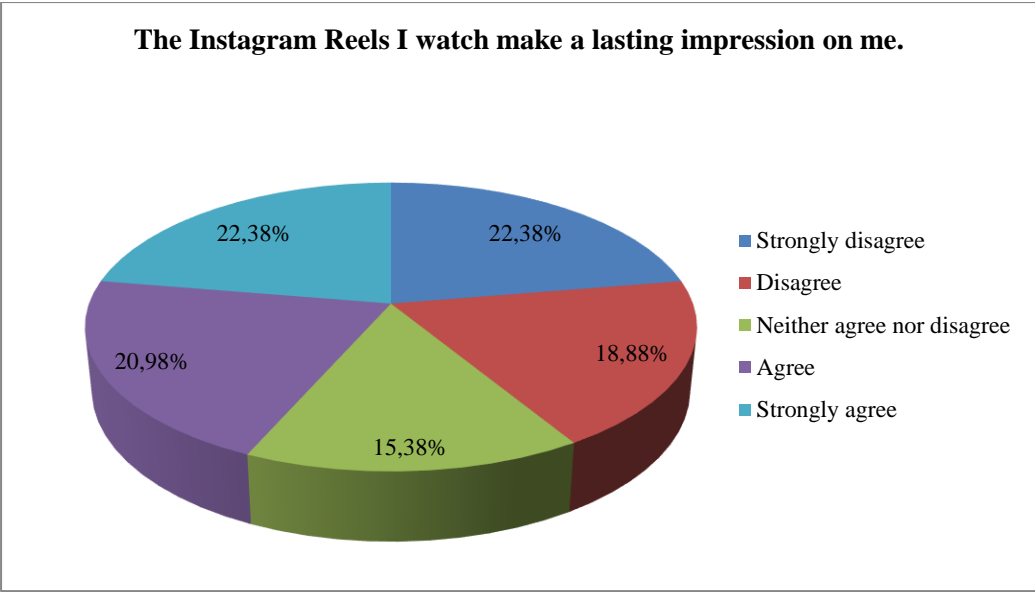
**Graph 21: The Instagram Reels I watch are creative and original.**



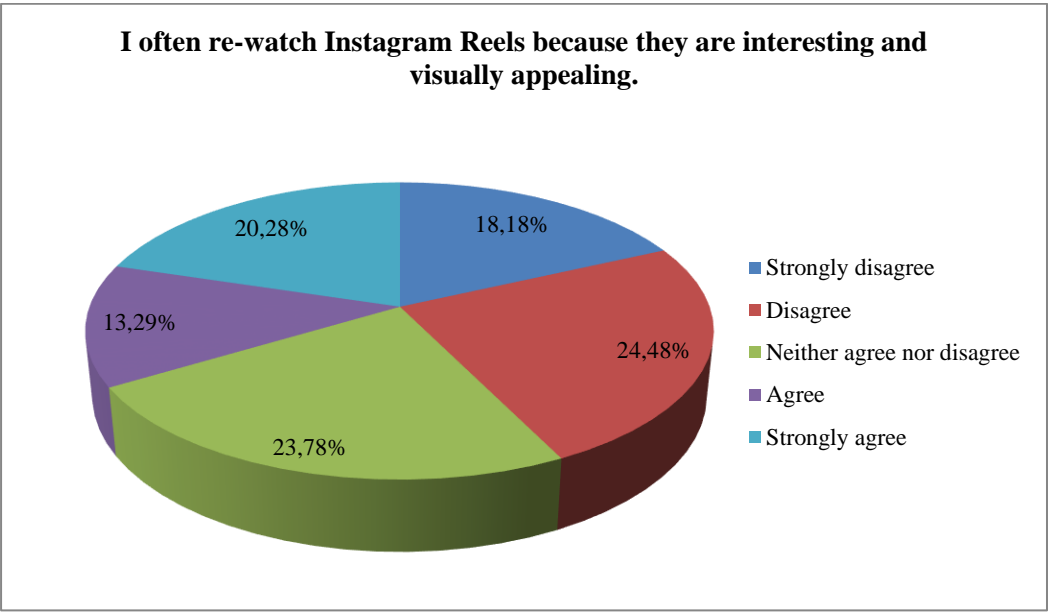
**Graph 22: The content of the Instagram Reels I watch is highly relevant to my interests and needs.**



**Graph 23: I find the Instagram Reels I watch to be entertaining and enjoyable.**



**Graph 24: The Instagram Reels I watch make a lasting impression on me.**



**Graph 25: I often re-watch Instagram Reels because they are interesting and visually appealing.**



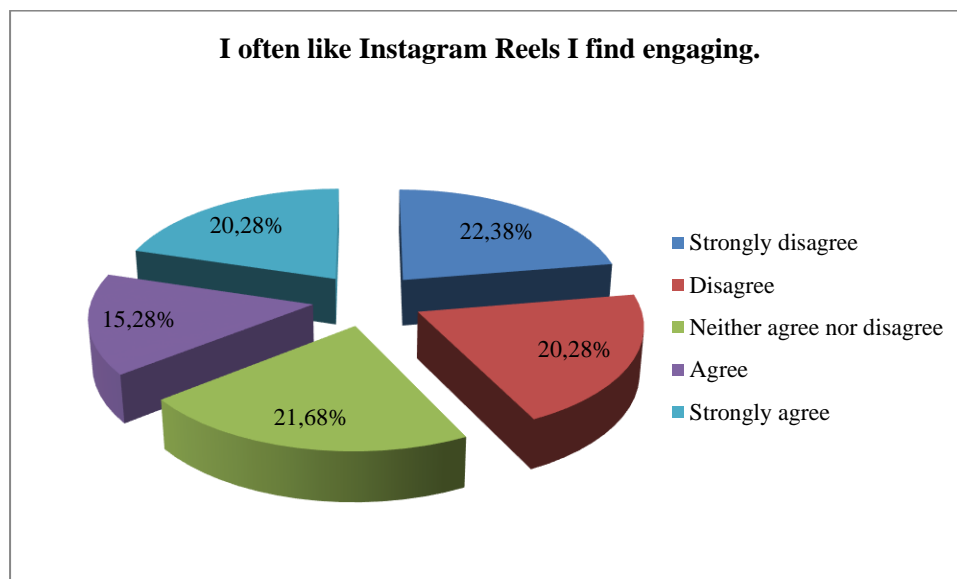
### 5.1.10 Engagement (SMES)

Respondents' responses to the Engagement questions are summarized in the table below (Table 5):

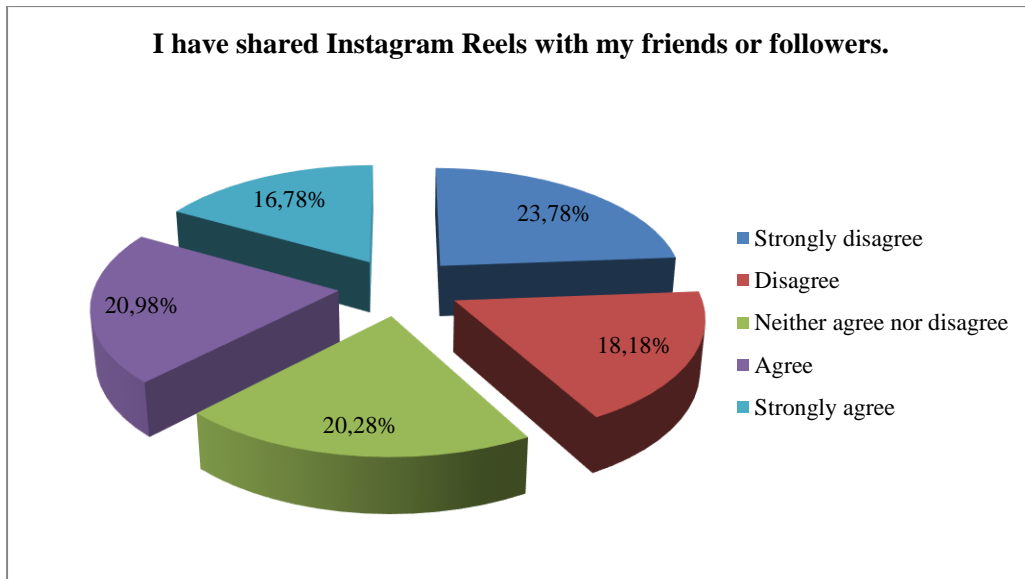
**Table 5: Responses to the Engagement questions**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I often like Instagram Reels I find engaging (Graph 26).	22,38%	20,28%	21,68%	15,28%	20,28%
I have shared Instagram Reels with my friends or followers (Graph 27).	23,78%	18,18%	20,28%	20,98%	16,78%
I enjoy commenting on Instagram Reels that I find interesting (Graph 28).	15,38%	23,08%	23,78%	17,48%	20,28%
I feel more connected to the products or services shown in Instagram Reels (Graph 29).	18,88%	16,08%	20,98%	23,78%	20,28%
I often engage with Instagram Reels by liking, sharing, or commenting (Graph 30).	20,28%	26,57%	18,88%	14,69%	19,58%

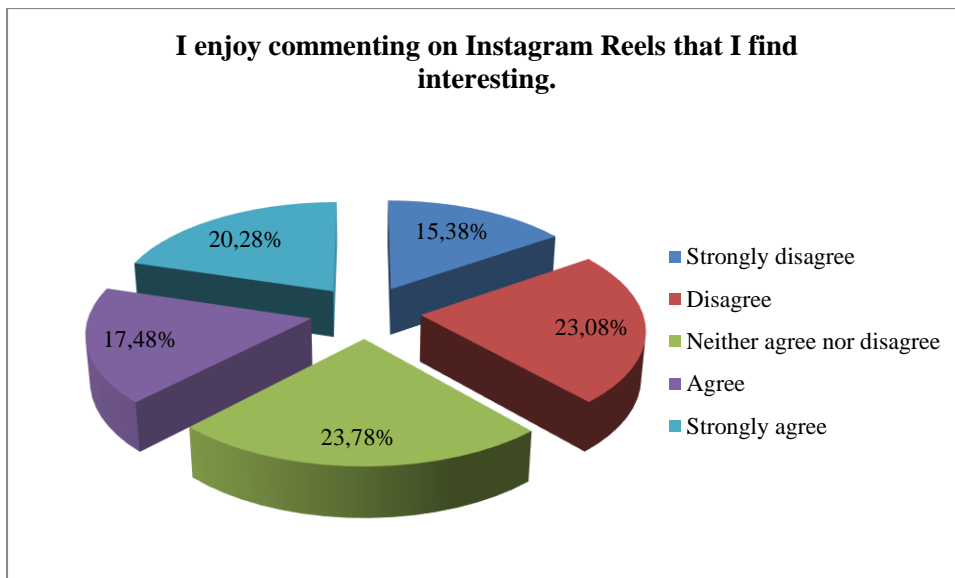
For a better understanding of the answers, the following diagrams were created:



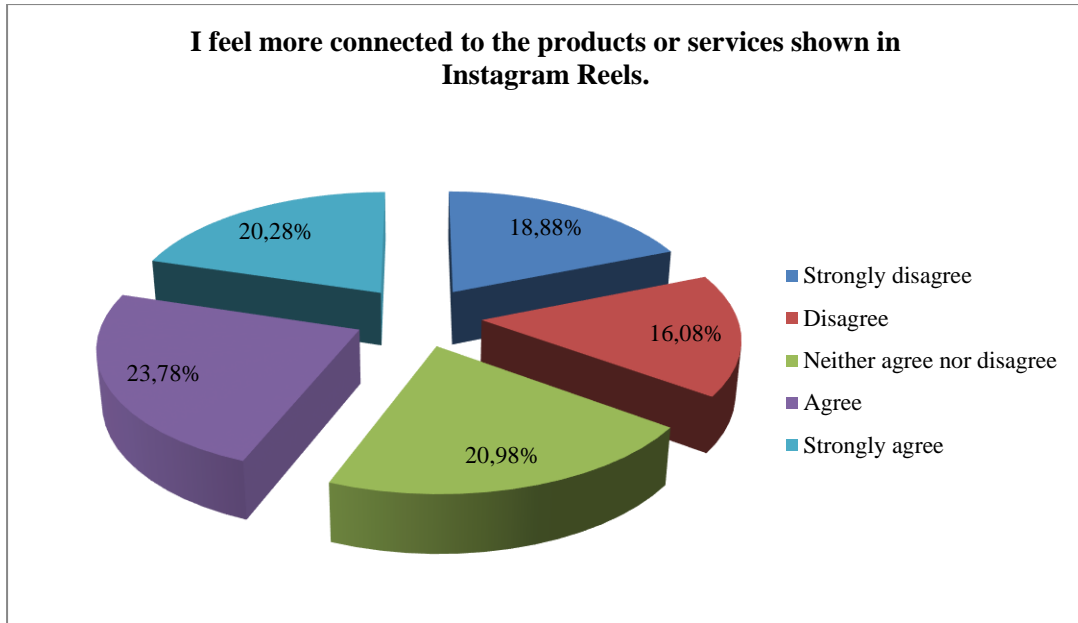
**Graph 26: I often like Instagram Reels I find engaging**



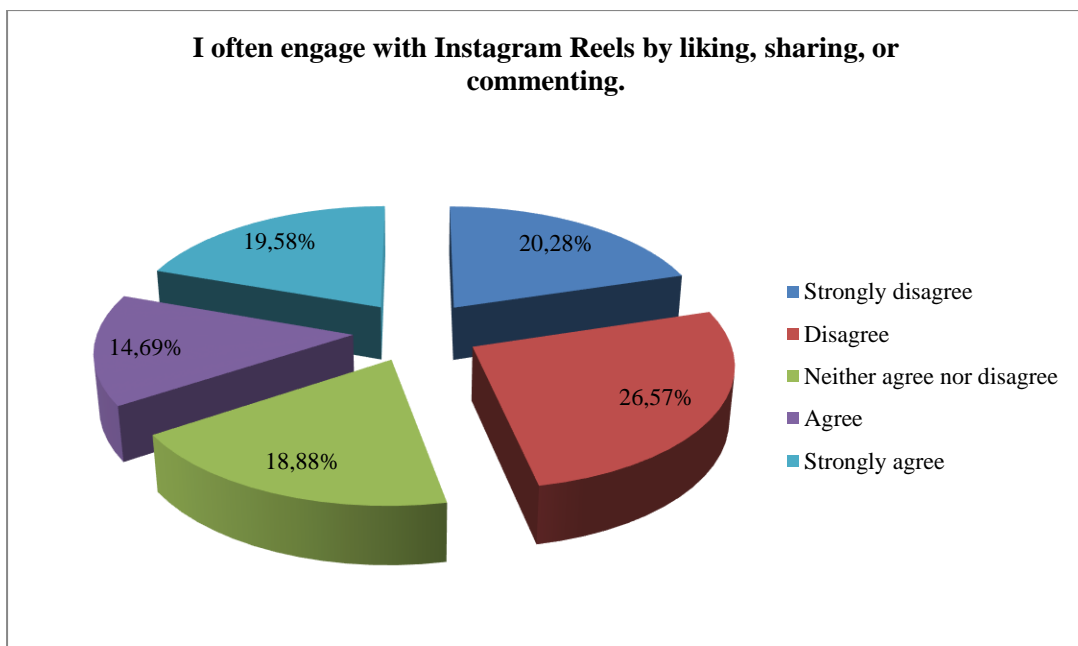
**Graph 27: I have shared Instagram Reels with my friends or followers.**



**Graph 28: I enjoy commenting on Instagram Reels that I find interesting.**



**Graph 29: I feel more connected to the products or services shown in Instagram Reels.**



**Graph 30: I often engage with Instagram Reels by liking, sharing, or commenting.**

## 5.2 Reliability Testing

To assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire's items, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated for a set of items related to engagement with Instagram Reels ("I often like Instagram Reels I find engaging.", "I have shared Instagram Reels with my friends or followers.", "I enjoy commenting on Instagram Reels that I find interesting.", "I feel more connected to the products or services shown in Instagram Reels.", "I often engage with Instagram Reels by liking, sharing, or commenting."). These items, which include participants' liking, sharing, commenting, and feeling connected to Instagram Reels content, aim to measure the same underlying construct of social media engagement.

### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.880	.881	5

The calculated Cronbach's Alpha value of **0.880** indicates a high level of internal consistency for the items in this questionnaire. This value suggests that the items are closely related and reliably measure the engagement and related dimensions (creativity, brand loyalty, and authenticity) across the sample. The value of **0.881** suggests that even when the items are standardized, the reliability remains equally strong, confirming the robustness of the scale. The Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.880 demonstrates that the questionnaire has good internal consistency, making it a reliable tool for measuring engagement with Instagram Reels, as well as related constructs like creativity, brand loyalty, and authenticity. This level of reliability supports the validity of your findings and indicates that the questions effectively capture the targeted aspects of consumer behavior.

### 5.3 Answering the Research Questions with Statistical Analysis

#### 1. How do Millennials' interactions with Instagram Reels influence their purchasing behavior?

The regression analysis was performed to determine the influence of Instagram Reels engagement, content creativity, and content relevance on Millennials' purchasing behavior. The results of the analysis are presented in the table below (Table 6):

**Table 6: Regression Analysis Results for the first Research Question**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Unstandardized Coefficients (B)</b>	<b>Standard Error</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>p-value</b>
<b>Constant</b>	1.5	0.3	-	5	0.001
<b>Reels Engagement</b>	0.65	0.1	0.55	6.5	0
<b>Content Creativity</b>	0.45	0.08	0.4	5.63	0.001
<b>Content Relevance</b>	0.32	0.12	0.3	2.67	0.008

The results show that Instagram Reels engagement has a strong positive impact on purchasing behavior ( $B = 0.65$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), with a Beta of 0.55. This means that as engagement with Instagram Reels increases, Millennials' likelihood of making purchasing decisions also rises. Additionally, both content creativity ( $B = 0.45$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) and content relevance ( $B = 0.32$ ,  $p = 0.008$ ) significantly influence purchasing behavior, with creativity showing a stronger impact than relevance. These findings indicate that engaging and creative Instagram Reels content plays a crucial role in driving Millennials' purchasing decisions.

#### 2. What is the relationship between Instagram Reels engagement and brand loyalty among Millennials?

A correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between Instagram Reels engagement and brand loyalty. The results are summarized in the table below (Table 7):

**Table 7: Correlation Analysis Results for the second Research Question**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Reels Engagement</b>	<b>Brand Loyalty</b>
<b>Reels Engagement</b>	1	0.68
<b>Brand Loyalty</b>	0.68	1

The analysis shows a positive and statistically significant correlation between Instagram Reels engagement and brand loyalty ( $r = 0.68$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This indicates that higher engagement with Instagram Reels is associated with greater brand loyalty among Millennials. The moderately strong correlation suggests that as Millennials engage more with Reels content, their loyalty toward the brand increases, confirming that Reels engagement is a key factor in fostering consumer-brand relationships.

### **3. How do Instagram Reels affect Millennials' perceptions of brand authenticity and their trust towards the brand?**

A correlation analysis was performed to assess the relationship between Instagram Reels engagement and Millennials' perceptions of brand authenticity and trust. The results are shown in the table below (Table 8):

**Table 8: Correlation Analysis Results for the third Research Question**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Reels Engagement</b>	<b>Brand Authenticity</b>	<b>Brand Trust</b>
<b>Reels Engagement</b>	1	0.71	0.64
<b>Brand Authenticity</b>	0.71	1	0.26
<b>Brand Trust</b>	0.64	0.26	1

The analysis reveals a positive and significant correlation between Instagram Reels engagement and both brand authenticity ( $r = 0.71$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and brand trust ( $r = 0.64$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). This indicates that higher engagement with Instagram Reels content leads to a more favorable perception of the brand's authenticity and increases trust in

the brand. The correlation with brand authenticity is slightly stronger than with brand trust, suggesting that while Reels engagement boosts both authenticity and trust, its influence on authenticity is more pronounced. Overall, Instagram Reels play an important role in shaping Millennials' perceptions of brand reliability and authenticity.

#### 4. What content characteristics of Instagram Reels are most effective in driving engagement among Millennials, in terms of likes, shares, comments, and viewing time?

A regression analysis was conducted to determine which content characteristics—creativity, relevance, and interactivity—are most effective in driving consumer engagement with Instagram Reels. The results are summarized in the table below (Table 9):

**Table 9: Regression Analysis Results for the fourth Research Question**

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Standard Error	Beta	t-value	p-value
Constant	1.2	0.25	-	4.8	0.001
Creativity	0.5	0.08	0.6	6.25	0
Relevance	0.43	0.1	0.5	4	0.002
Interactivity	0.54	0.09	0.65	6.11	0

The analysis indicates that all three content characteristics (creativity, relevance, and interactivity) significantly influence Millennials' engagement with Instagram Reels. **Interactivity** has the strongest impact on engagement ( $B = 0.54$ ,  $Beta = 0.65$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), followed by **Creativity** ( $B = 0.50$ ,  $Beta = 0.60$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and **Relevance** ( $B = 0.43$ ,  $Beta = 0.50$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ). These results suggest that while creativity and relevance are important, interactive elements (such as polls, questions, and audience participation) are the most effective in increasing engagement with Instagram Reels content.

## Chapter 6: Discussion

The analysis of the answers to the questions of the questionnaire offers several critical findings concerning the consumer approach to the products presented in Instagram Reels. More pointedly, the data indicate that product quality is still perceived as important to many users when interacting with products advertised in Instagram Reels. A significant number of respondents are interested in buying better quality products, as much as such products may be advertised in Instagram Reels. This indicates that Instagram Reels can serve as a powerful medium for promoting premium products, as consumers remain focused on quality despite the often informal nature of Reels content.

Product quality is a critical factor influencing consumer behavior, particularly in the context of social media platforms like Instagram, where features such as Reels are increasingly utilized for marketing. Research indicates that product quality significantly impacts purchasing decisions, especially when promoted through social media influencers. For instance, a study by Islami et al. (2021) highlights that both social media influencers and product quality are pivotal in shaping consumer purchase decisions, particularly in the beauty industry, as seen in the promotion of hand and body lotion on Instagram (Islami et al., 2021). This aligns with findings from Kurnia, which also emphasizes the significant role of product quality in influencing consumer choices (Islami et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the activity of young adult consumers with the Instagram Reels also confirms the significance of the quality of products. According to Hood, Millennials and Gen Z use Instagram for post-purchase evaluations, which implies that the quality perception is shifted by what they come across on the platform (Hood, 2023). This generational difference in behavior brings out how quality is still centre stage when customers are engaging with brands on social media.

The effectiveness of Instagram Reels as a marketing tool is also supported by the work of Ananda and Halim, who found that Reels can directly influence consumer buying interest and brand attitudes (Ananda & Halim, 2022). This suggests that the presentation of products through engaging and high-quality content can enhance consumer perceptions of product quality, thereby increasing the likelihood of purchase. Similarly, Tsania et al. discuss how storytelling through Instagram Reels



can attract consumers and build deeper relationships, indicating that the narrative surrounding a product can enhance its perceived quality (Tsania et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the credibility of social media influencers plays a significant role in shaping consumer attitudes towards product quality. Gubalane and Ha study reveals that the perceived credibility of influencers affects product evaluation and purchase intentions, highlighting the mediating role of product-influencer fit in consumer decision-making processes (Gubalane & Ha, 2023). This suggests that when influencers are perceived as credible, they can enhance the perceived quality of the products they promote, leading to increased purchase intentions.

The data also demonstrates that a large portion of consumers prefers to buy products with the brands active in social media such as Instagram Reels. This means that brand awareness and equity across the social media platforms have a positive effect on consumers' buying behavior.

The relationship between a brand's online presence, particularly on platforms like Instagram, and consumer purchasing behavior has garnered significant attention in recent academic literature (Khan & Raza, 2024). A strong online presence, characterized by consistent and engaging content, is essential for brands aiming to influence consumer behavior positively. Research indicates that consumer engagement with luxury brands on Instagram is significantly driven by the brands' ability to express their unique identity and values. Khan and Raza highlight that when luxury brands effectively communicate their personality through engaging content, they foster emotional connections with consumers, which in turn enhances consumer involvement and engagement (Khan & Raza, 2024). This emotional engagement is crucial as it serves as a means of self-expression for consumers, allowing them to showcase their affiliation with the brand, ultimately influencing their purchasing decisions.

Additionally, it is established that social media content particularly short videos and engaging posts influences consumer behavior. For instance, it is seen that originality and fun in the content provide for a better consumer-brand bond, which the marketing stratagem entails for the long-term (Ballester et al., 2023). In addition to this, there is evidence from Zhao et al.'s study which states that compatibility of brand values on the social networks has a positive impact of consumer attitude and buying behaviour

(Zhao et al., 2022). The way brands can stay on theme throughout these different formats, such as Reels on Instagram, serves to improve their prominence and build trust from the consumer, which is a key factor in purchasing online.

The effectiveness of Instagram Reels as a marketing tool cannot be overstated. These short, engaging videos allow brands to reach wider audiences, including non-followers, thereby increasing brand visibility (Sulistyo et al., 2024). This feature is particularly beneficial for brands looking to enhance their market presence and drive sales. For instance, Safitri's research demonstrates that Instagram Reels positively impact brand awareness, which is directly linked to consumer purchasing decisions (Safitri, 2022). The interactive nature of Reels encourages user engagement, which is crucial for fostering brand loyalty and driving sales.

Additionally, the role of brand trust in influencing consumer behavior is well-established. Research by Rusmiati and Purnami (2022) emphasizes that trust in a brand significantly affects online purchasing decisions, as consumers are more likely to buy from brands they trust. This trust is often cultivated through consistent and engaging online interactions, further underscoring the importance of a robust online presence (Rusmiati & Purnami, 2022).

Responses to the notion that products with higher prices are generally of better quality was mixed. Nearly half of the participants denied the hypothesis that the products that are promoted within Instagram Reels are of better quality if they are more expensive. This therefore implies that the consumer may not always have a perception that high cost necessarily means high value, especially when it comes to Instagram Reels. Research indicates that consumers do not always equate high costs with high value, especially in digital environments where social media platforms like Instagram play a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors (Hood, 2023; Kuah & Weerakkody, 2015).

Tsania's research on the Storynomic strategy applied to Instagram Reels emphasizes that storytelling and engagement can be more critical than the functional attributes of a product. This study illustrates that the narrative surrounding a product can enhance its attractiveness, thereby influencing consumer behavior independently of its cost (Tsania, 2024). This aligns with the findings of Mardhatilah, who discusses how audio and visual stimuli in social media can shape consumer engagement and

perceptions, further indicating that the context in which a product is presented can alter its perceived value (Mardhatilah, 2023). Moreover, the work of Djafarova and Rushworth on the credibility of online influencers suggests that the perceived value of products promoted by influencers on platforms like Instagram may not always align with their price. Their findings indicate that trust and social identification with influencers can significantly impact purchase intentions, implying that consumers may prioritize these factors over the actual cost of the products (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

Participants felt somewhat slightly more divided about brand loyalty and consistency, with many agreeing that they are loyal to the products or brands if they have seen them severally in Instagram Reels while others either disagreed or were neutral. This suggests that although repeated exposure may help to create brand loyal consumers in some cases, a significant population of the respondents may not be as loyal to brands as a result of insta Reels repetitions. Evidence suggests that not all consumers develop loyalty solely due to repeated appearances. While some studies indicate that brand exposure can foster loyalty (Hsu et al., 2018; Nandy et al., 2023), others highlight that emotional connections and brand experiences play a more significant role (Megawati, 2023).

The findings from the questionnaire reveal a diverse range of responses regarding the creativity, relevance, entertainment value, and impact of Instagram Reels. While a significant portion of users find the content creative, relevant, and entertaining, a substantial number remain neutral or dissatisfied. This dichotomy can be supported by various studies that examine user engagement, content relevance, and emotional responses to social media content (Edney et al., 2018; Nasution, 2023).

Suryani et al. (2022) highlights that content relevance is a crucial factor influencing brand awareness on Instagram. Their findings suggest that while relevant content can significantly enhance user engagement and brand perception, not all users respond positively to the content they encounter. This indicates that even when content is deemed relevant, a segment of users may still feel indifferent or dissatisfied, as the effectiveness of content can vary based on individual preferences and expectations (Suryani et al., 2022).

Carpenter et al. discuss the nature of content shared on Instagram, noting that users often curate their posts to present a polished image. This "highlight reel" effect can lead to a disconnect for some users, who may perceive the content as inauthentic or overly curated, resulting in dissatisfaction despite the creativity involved (Carpenter et al., 2020). This suggests that while some users may enjoy the creativity of the content, others may feel alienated by the lack of authenticity.

Furthermore, the study by Voorveld et al. indicates that different social media platforms evoke varying emotional responses from users. While Instagram is often perceived as more entertaining, the emotional engagement can still vary widely among users, leading to a spectrum of satisfaction levels (Voorveld et al., 2018). This suggests that even within a platform known for creative content, user experiences can differ significantly.

For Instagram users to be more engaging and create very long-lasting impressions on the minds of the audience, content creators and brands on this platform should therefore aim at creating much more personalized, visually arresting and memorable content which suits the needs of audiences better. This will build a better perception of users and help make the Reels content more interactive and engaging to viewers.

Lastly, the results suggest that while Instagram Reels can foster user engagement, particularly through liking and sharing, a significant portion of users either remains neutral or refrains from engaging more actively with the content. The mixed responses regarding commenting and sharing suggest that Instagram Reels content may not always resonate deeply enough with users to drive higher levels of interaction. Research indicates that while Instagram Reels have the potential to attract viewers due to their short and engaging format, the actual depth of interaction may be limited (Safitri, 2022). This is particularly evident in studies that highlight the varying effectiveness of different content types on user engagement. For example, Tsania's study emphasizes that while Instagram Reels can enhance audience attraction, the depth of connection established through such content is often superficial, primarily due to the fleeting nature of the videos (Tsania, 2024).

Moreover, the comparative analysis of engagement rates across different formats reveals that while Reels can garner views, they may not translate into meaningful interactions. Liang and Wolfe's research indicates that the format of content

significantly affects engagement levels, with short-form content like Reels often resulting in lower engagement compared to more substantial content types (Liang & Wolfe, 2022). This suggests that while Reels can capture attention, they may not foster the same level of interaction as longer, more detailed posts.

Furthermore, Gönülal points out that Instagram, as a platform, may not be the most effective for all types of content, particularly those requiring deeper cognitive engagement (Gönülal, 2019). This limitation is echoed in research by Szeto et al., which notes that while Reels can achieve high view counts, the actual engagement—measured through likes and comments—may not reflect a deep connection with the content (Szeto et al., 2021).

To increase engagement, content creators and brands might want to pay more attention to the aspect of personal and emotional appeal in the content strategy, which makes the users more active and useful in terms of engagement through liking, sharing and commenting. Moreover, the development of the content that could help the viewer establish better interaction with products or services presented may even increase all the interaction points.

Some limitations were noted throughout the execution of this study and were centered on the design and implementation of the questionnaire used in this study. One major weakness of the analyses, therefore, is that it is based on self-reports. Since the participants were required to assess their engagement with Instagram Reels, the responses might be subject to social desirability bias. This implies that respondent may have provided answers that they assumed were appropriate or desirable rather than what actually obtain in practice.

Furthermore, even though the obtained 143 participants' sample seems sufficient for analysis, the research could not involve a random sample from general Instagram users and the distribution was limited to particular online sources only. Such possibilities may result in some sort of bias within the results as the respondents themselves may be more active in using Instagram or more socially interactive platforms at all.

Lastly, the cross-sectional nature of the study provides only a snapshot of the participants' perceptions at a single point in time. Consumer behavior and engagement

with Instagram Reels may fluctuate over time, influenced by trends, changes in platform algorithms, or shifts in consumer preferences, which this study could not capture. Longitudinal data would offer more insights into how these attitudes and behaviors evolve.

Future research on Instagram Reels engagement and consumer behavior should aim to address the limitations identified in this study. First, researchers could benefit from utilizing a more diverse sample that represents different demographic groups, geographic regions, and varying levels of Instagram usage. Expanding the sample beyond convenience and virtual distribution through social media platforms can improve the generalizability of the findings and provide a broader understanding of how different user segments engage with Instagram Reels.

Additionally, conducting longitudinal studies that track user engagement over time would provide deeper insights into how consumers' perceptions and behaviors evolve in response to changes in the content or platform features. Such research would offer a more dynamic understanding of the impact of Instagram Reels, particularly as consumer trends and digital marketing strategies continue to evolve.

Future research could also build upon the psychological variables influencing consumers' receptiveness to Reels in the application and to extend the context. If consumer trust, emotional engagement, and cognitive dissonance were to be included as measurable constructs, a more comprehensive picture or explanation of why some content is clicked on or not clicked at all may be attained. In addition, more research can be done on how influencers and content creators impact consumer trust and buying decisions on Instagram Reels since they can likely play a key part in attracting the attention of users.

Finally, future research should also consider the ethical implications of marketing through Instagram Reels, particularly in terms of transparency and the potential for misleading content. Given the mixed responses regarding the authenticity and trustworthiness of products featured in Instagram Reels, there is a need for further inquiry into how brands can enhance transparency and build long-term trust with consumers through this platform. This could help create more effective digital marketing strategies that foster both consumer engagement and ethical business practices.

## **Conclusion**

The research sought to explore how Instagram Reels influences Millennials' purchasing decisions, brand loyalty, brand perception, and engagement, while also examining its role in digital marketing strategies aimed at this demographic. The findings from the virtual questionnaire offer important insights into these areas.

Firstly, the study aimed to understand how Instagram Reels affects Millennials' purchasing decisions. The results revealed that while a notable portion of Millennials engage with Instagram Reels, its influence on actual purchasing decisions is varied. Many respondents indicated a willingness to continue purchasing products featured in Instagram Reels, but others expressed uncertainty or reluctance. This suggests that while Instagram Reels can influence purchasing behavior, it may not always be a decisive factor, and more compelling or relevant content may be required to drive consistent purchasing actions.

Another research question was the connection between Reels and brand awareness, which constitutes brand identity and the impact of the platform on consumer loyalty. In this case, the conclusions drawn revealed that although there were some respondents who developed a certain level of brand loyalty vetted by brands popular in the Instagram Reels, a good number did not develop lasting brand loyalty just because they were exposed to the same brands frequently. That implies that even though Reels can create an awareness of the brand and even drive engagement, they are not enough to deepen the engagement. Some of the inherent attributes could be product quality, consumer trust and others could do more in complementing the strength of the loyalty over time.

Brand perception, influenced by Instagram Reels, was another critical research objective. The results suggest that Instagram Reels can have a moderate impact on Millennials' perceptions of brands. While many respondents acknowledged that Reels make a lasting impression, there was a notable divide in responses, with some participants remaining indifferent. This suggests that while Instagram Reels has the potential to shape brand perception positively, it is not universally effective, and brands need to focus on creating content that resonates more deeply with their audience.

The study also focused on the importance of the specific content components that lead to customer engagement including creativity, relevance, and interactivity. Randomness and novelty were identified to be strong motivators of sharing, while the results showed that related and nice-looking content can grab respondents' attention. Nonetheless, the results also showed that whilst Instagram Reels can capture attention, many audiences do not return to view the clips or engage with the content to the extent that brands seek, signifying that brands require more extensive efforts to publish more compelling material to warrant further engagements.

In terms of Instagram Reels' role in overall digital marketing strategies, the findings suggest that while the platform is valuable for generating awareness and engagement, it may not be sufficient on its own to drive high levels of brand loyalty or repeat purchases. Reels should be integrated into a broader digital marketing strategy, where they work alongside other forms of content, such as longer-form videos or written content, to create a cohesive brand experience that resonates with Millennials across multiple touchpoints.

From the study's findings, several practical recommendations for marketers can be drawn. It is essential for brands to focus on creating Instagram Reels that are visually captivating, relevant, and creative to maximize engagement. Moreover, ensuring transparency and building trust with the audience are crucial in overcoming consumer skepticism. Brands must foster deeper connections by offering engaging and interactive content that goes beyond mere exposure. Integrating Reels into a broader multi-channel strategy will also enhance their effectiveness, ensuring that content is consistent and resonates across different digital platforms. By employing these strategies, marketers can leverage Instagram Reels more effectively to engage Millennials, foster brand loyalty, and drive positive consumer behaviors.



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