

# Getting a Feel of Instagram Reels: The Effects of Posting Format on Online Engagement

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## ABSTRACT

This study analyzed the effects of posting format on an Instagram post's engagement. Posting formats, including pictures, videos, and Reels, are different ways of sharing content on Instagram. Prior research shows that short-form content has grown in recent years, spurring formats such as Instagram Reels. Nevertheless, a comparison of short-form content and traditional posting formats had not yet been observed. Quantitative data was collected through the content analysis method, which analyzed Instagram posts from small jewelry business accounts. Reels were found to receive the highest average engagement, allowing posts to gain more likes and comments than pictures and videos. However, limitations included the presence of outliers and the narrow scope of studied accounts. By utilizing these findings, struggling business accounts on Instagram may be able to increase the likes and comments of their posts more efficiently, ultimately increasing the chances of their success on the platform.

## **Introduction**

The continued increase in the access of the Internet and the COVID-19 pandemic have caused people to spend large amounts of time on social media platforms, such as Instagram. The online platform is not only a space where people connect with others, but it has also become an important medium for businesses and companies to promote their brands and products. Large and small business alike have begun regularly utilizing the site to market new ideas and appeal to consumers. One reason for this is because social media platforms are low-cost ways to broadcast brands to millions of potential customers, as opposed to traditional advertising. According to the Pew Research Center, 72% of adults in the U.S. use a social media platform, and 59% of Instagram users are daily users (Social media, 2021). For large companies, reaching their target audience and increasing brand awareness come naturally, as these brands are often already known by the public. However, for small businesses, using social media for marketing can often be a difficult task. Coupled with the difficulty for an unknown account to gain traction, the complexity of Instagram's algorithm makes it difficult for small business to grow and share their content with users (Agung & Darma, 2019). This creates many problems for small business owners, who are ultimately trying to increase their brand exposure and sales. A possible remedy to this situation could be research on different posting tactics on Instagram and their efficacy in increasing engagement.

Scholars in the field have performed studies on the effects of different posting formats and posting categories. Posting formats reference the different ways a post can be shared, such as pictures, videos, and Reels. On the other hand, posting categories concern the purpose and subject of a post, such as showcasing and crowdsourcing, which display products and ask for interaction, respectively. This project will reference prior research on the effectiveness of different posting formats and categories and compare them with Instagram Reels, a new format introduced in August of 2020 amidst the success of the short video platform, TikTok. By determining methods for increasing engagement, this research can allow struggling businesses on Instagram to gain knowledge to grow their accounts more quickly and efficiently.

## Literature Review

### Social Media Marketing and Instagram

Social media marketing is growing, especially on Instagram. Businesses often choose to advertise on social media because it offers a cheaper and easier alternative to reach a large audience and advertise their brands. Currently, there are over 25 million active business accounts on Instagram, and 200 million users visit these accounts daily (Asanbekova & Maksudunov, 2018 as cited in Instagram for Business). Furthermore, 90% of users on the platform follow a business account (Instagram internal, 2019). With this, it can be seen that using social media for marketing is becoming increasingly popular with both businesses and consumers in the modern age. Millions of people use these sites daily, serving as potentially lucrative audiences for the millions of businesses trying to generate interest and popularity with their accounts. Contributing to the growth of social media has been the COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused hardships on businesses across the world. The State of Small Business Report, by Facebook and Small Business Roundtable, found that many small businesses moved to using online resources during the pandemic and that interactions in online spaces increased for 51% of businesses (2020).

Next, as the online population expands, the ages of people on social media websites has also diversified. Although young adults are still the most likely population to be on social platforms, with 84% of U.S. adults aged 18 to 29 using at least one, older adults are not far behind, with 81% of the 30- to 49-year-old age group and 73% of the 50- to 64-year-old age group transitioning to digital spaces (Social media, 2021). Thus, due to the diverse ages of social media users, businesses do not need to worry about lacking an audience, but instead must find ways to connect with and reach their target population. For example, many hotels in Kyrgyzstan use Instagram to share information about their services, as well as interact with and attract potential customers. In return, users responded by liking the posts but rarely leaving comments, showing a need for greater user interaction (Asanbekova & Maksudunov, 2018). On the other hand, small businesses, such as individual owners or shops, have also found success on the platform. Wassan Alkhowaiter's (2016) study of Saudi women on Instagram features many positive opinions from the entrepreneurs, who use the platform to share their work and finished products. The ability to write comments about a post was also determined to be useful, since account owners were able to get opinions and feedback from their followers. Comments also helped the owners make decisions and gain a better understanding of the needs of their audience (Alkhowaiter, 2016).

Over 50% of businesses use Instagram as a means of advertising and sharing their brand (Alkhowaiter, 2016). Moreover, Instagram users who follow businesses on Instagram have the highest levels of commitment and interaction as opposed to other platforms (Doney et al., 2020). By utilizing Instagram, businesses can directly interact and connect with potential customers around the globe. Users subsequently provide feedback through likes and comments, which accounts can use to improve their services. Most importantly, creating posts on the platform does not require a subscription or fee, making it an appealing alternative to traditional advertising. Due to the ease and reach of social media, specifically Instagram, businesses are expanding the use of their accounts to ultimately attract new customers.

### Effects of Using Videos Versus Pictures

Many businesses now use social media such as Instagram as a primary source of advertising their brand. However, there are many ways that an account can choose to make a post. On Instagram, the major ways to share a post are in the forms of pictures and videos. Many studies have compared the efficacies of using pictures versus videos. For example, videos have been found to be more useful for focusing attention on the original and novel elements of a product, which allows viewers to better understand the creator's message (Berni et al., 2020). Pictures were found to cause viewers to look at the background and unimportant aspects of a product. In relation to marketing on Instagram, this demonstrates the importance of videos for highlighting the unique features of a brand's product. If a particular

business wants to underscore the originality of their products, using a video can allow potential customers to understand the purpose and appeal of their post more easily.

Similarly, using videos has also led to increases in sales when used on brand websites. A study by Anuj Kumar and Yinliang Tan (2015) compared the effects of using videos as opposed to pictures for displaying clothing on an online website. When the pictures on the online store were switched out for 360-degree videos of the articles of clothing, sales increased. For specific products, the use of a video increased sales by 14.5% and resulted in a 28.4% sales increase for associated pieces of clothing. However, during the “switch-off period,” when the videos were taken off the website, the same increases were not observed, showing that the addition of the videos directly impacted the brand’s sales (Kumar & Tan, 2015, p. 4). Not only do videos allow studied participants to notice important details, but in real world applications, videos have also been shown to be more effective in generating sales than photos. One reason for this phenomenon is that the attributes of a product are more strikingly displayed in videos, where music and other effects can be added (Kumar & Tan, 2015). Additionally, using videos can give an audience “a virtual product experience, which helps them evaluate product attributes in a manner similar to that of a direct shopping experience in a real-life setting” (Kumar & Tan, 2015, as cited in Jiang and Benbasat, 2005 & 2007; Li et al., 2001; Suh and Lee, 2005; Klein 2003, p. 3).

On the other hand, pictures tended to “draw consumers’ attention away from textual information” (Teo et al., 2018, as cited in Kroeber-Riel, 1984; Rossiter, 1982, p. 323). An important factor to consider when posting pictures online is their quality, which can affect both how consumers react and their intentions to buy the product. Studies show that higher quality images cause viewers to see the product as higher quality and be more likely to purchase it. A larger image was also found to have similar effects (Teo et al., 2018). Thus, although pictures often are less effective at grabbing users’ attention and focusing users on important characteristics, posting higher quality pictures can balance these shortcomings by making the product look more appealing.

## The Rise of TikTok and the Short Video Format

Starting in 2017, shorter length videos were noticeably present on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat (Wang, 2020). The growing trend of consuming shorter content may reflect the speed of modern life (Wang, 2020). With this, TikTok, a social media platform based in China, has begun to dominate the sphere of online video content. Founded in 2016, TikTok is a platform that focuses on vertical short videos, where users can post three to sixty second videos with a variety of different music and effects (Kennedy, 2020). By 2018, the app had been downloaded around 800 million times around the world and had unseated social media apps such as Instagram and YouTube atop the Apple App Store charts (Zhang et al., 2019 as cited in Yurieff, 2018; Salinas, 2018). Even during the beginning of lockdown, people turned to the platform, with downloads increasing 27% in the United States compared to the prior weeks of February (Kennedy, 2020 as cited in Stassen, 2020).

The success of the TikTok demonstrated the viability of the short video format, and other platforms soon challenged with their own version of short-form content. Instagram announced Instagram Reels in August of 2020, and YouTube premiered YouTube Shorts in September (“Introducing Instagram”, 2020; Jaffe, 2020). Although these came amid TikTok’s success, Reels has been found to be rising against its competitor. One study from Szeto et al. (2021) compared the engagement of dermatologists on Reels and TikTok. While TikTok accounts gained a higher average number of followers, Instagram Reels accounts had higher median engagement levels, which was hypothesized to be due to the platform’s long history with sharing photos and videos (Szeto et al., 2021). As short-form videos continue to increase in popularity, especially on Instagram, business marketers on the platform may turn to using this format for their posts.

## Effects of Posting Category on Engagement

As aforementioned, a posting category relates to the subject and purpose of a post. Posts can be shared to promote a new item or announce an upcoming event, which represent different posting categories. Research in the field has specifically focused on the effect of different posting categories on a post's engagement on Instagram. Some utilized the schema of Stuart et al., which lists six categories for Instagram picture posts, while others created their own definitions and categories (Doney et al., 2020; Na & Kim, 2019). One study conducted on academic libraries and their use of Instagram followed Stuart et al.'s schema and determined that posting categories did largely affect the number of likes a post received. Specifically, crowdsourcing posts, which ask users to engage with the post, gained the highest average number of likes and comments. On the other hand, the most frequently posted category, showcasing, gained the lowest average likes and near lowest comment count (Doney et al., 2020). Similarly, research following fashion brands and their posting categories found that posts that offered incentives for interacting saw increased interaction. However, it was also found that "broadcasting ads" and "product photos" were engaged with as well (Na & Kim, 2019, p. 30). Existing research shows that posts that ask for or offer incentives for engagement are interacted with the most, but other categories such as ones showing products or announcing events also attract interest.

Due to social media marketing on Instagram rising, more small businesses have joined the platform to promote their brand and products. TikTok has been a rapidly growing platform and has increased the popularity of short form videos, causing similar formats to arise. Many sources show that videos are more effective for marketing compared to photos, and that certain categories of posts, such as showcasing and crowdsourcing, receive more engagement than others. My aim is to combine previous research and Instagram Reels to see whether the short video format can be competitive against regular videos and pictures, which predominantly fill Instagram.

My gap relates to the fact that I am comparing posting formats and categories together, which has not been seen in any surrounding literature. A specific emphasis on Reels and the short video format also forms my gap. Although there is extensive research on the use of social media as a marketing tool, pictures versus videos on engagement, and the impact of different posting categories on user engagement, there has yet to be a study that combines all three. Additionally, my focus on small jewelry accounts on Instagram differs from existing research on fashion and food brands. A content analysis will be performed to survey posts from current small jewelry businesses on the platform. Three posting formats will be compared—Reels, pictures, and videos—and split into separate posting categories for further comparisons. The data collected will ultimately be used to answer the following question: to what extent does using Instagram Reels increase the engagement that small jewelry business accounts get on Instagram as opposed to using more traditional posting formats such as pictures and videos? I hypothesize that the use of Instagram Reels will increase the engagement of posts from small jewelry accounts more than pictures or videos will.

## Methodology

The chosen method of inquiry for this study was a content analysis in which Instagram posts were selected and analyzed. Columbia Public Health defines content analysis as "a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data" ("Content analysis", 2019). This method was chosen because it allowed me to analyze an array of information, such as likes and comments, and organize posts into specific categories for further analysis. I was then able to numerically compare the resulting quantitative data, allowing me to determine the most effective posting format.

A mixed method approach combining a content analysis and a survey was considered, but ultimately disposed of. The survey would have been sent out to small jewelry accounts and analyzed to gather opinions regarding Instagram Reels and their usage of it. Although this would have produced both qualitative and quantitative data, the mixed method approach was decided against due to a limitation of time and sample size, as well as unpredictable factors

such as whether the accounts would respond to the survey. Thus, the research in this study was conducted solely through a content analysis.

First, before any posts were examined, guidelines were established to determine the accounts that would be analyzed. As aforementioned, small business accounts advertising jewelry were chosen to be the focus of this study to fill a gap between the focus on food and fashion brands in the surrounding literature. A search on Instagram led me to the hashtag, #smalljewelrybusiness, in which all the jewelry accounts were chosen from (Laestadius et al., 2018). Due to the hashtag consisting of over eighty-five thousand posts from thousands of accounts, accounts chosen for the study fell under additional criteria: the account needed to have between one thousand to one hundred thousand followers, have at least twenty posts of each posting format (Reels, pictures, and videos), and be an active account, meaning that it had posted at least once in the week that data had been collected. The range for followers was originally planned to be smaller, but since small jewelry business accounts varied greatly in their number of followers, a smaller range would have resulted in a limited sample size. Similarly, since five posts of each posting type were chosen from each account, having at least twenty posts to choose from was a necessity to uphold a truly randomized selection. Finally, active accounts were chosen because they would be more likely to have consistent engagement data across posts than inactive ones that posted irregularly and infrequently. If an account met all three guidelines, they were followed and subsequently used in the study. To make following accounts and saving posts easier, a new Instagram account was created solely for the purpose of data collection. In the end, a total of 22 accounts met the criteria and were selected for the study. A complete list of accounts and their follower counts at the time of data collection can be found in Appendix A.

Next, in order to choose the posts that would be analyzed, Microsoft Excel’s random number generator formula was used (Stuart et al., 2017). After a count of the total number of Reels, picture, and video posts of an account was taken, their respective totals were inputted into the ending value of the random number generator, and the formula was run for fifteen different posts—five posts for each of the three posting formats. Once the formula generated the fifteen numbers, another count was taken to find the post that the number corresponded to. This process was repeated for each account. Although time consuming, a manual process was used instead of software such as Netlytic because it allowed me to make changes as circumstance saw fit. For example, if a post did not have publicly available engagement data due to its age, I was able to quickly generate another random number to replace that post. Other newer features such as the ability to hide the number of likes a post had also prompted me to randomly select another post, which was most convenient when doing post collection manually. With all the posts collected, their engagement data was then compiled into data tables. Likes and comments were recorded for each posting format, while views were only noted for Reels and videos since views were not displayed for pictures. In total, 330 posts were analyzed.

To calculate each post’s engagement score, I utilized a formula inspired by Adegbola et al. (2018). Adegbola et al.’s total engagement score formula consisted of “taking the number of likes for each post and dividing it by the total number of followers, then adding that score to the total number of comments per post divided by the total number of followers” (Adegbola et al., 2018, p. 242). Similarly, my formula to calculate a post’s engagement score was as follows: the number of likes for each post added to twice the number of comments for each post, then divided by the number of followers of the account in question and multiplied by one hundred. I decided to give more weight to comments since comments generally take more time and effort to post compared to simply liking a post. Posts with more comments, therefore, translated to a more engaged audience for this study.

**Equation 1:** *Formula to calculate a post’s engagement score*

$$\text{Engagement score} = \left( \frac{\text{Number of likes} + (2 \times \text{Number of comments})}{\text{Number of followers}} \right) \times 100$$

Finally, posts from each format were split into three categories according to Stuart et al.’s (2017) schema so that their combined effect on engagement could be studied. Specifically, out of the six categories in the schema, I

chose the humanizing, showcasing, and crowdsourcing categories to separate posts into. The original schema had three other categories, but due to a lack of relevance to small jewelry business accounts and this study, they were not included. Definitions for each category were also slightly changed to align with the present study: humanizing characterized a post intended to make the account seem more personable and humorous, and included posts of memes and the account owner or owners' personal life; showcasing defined posts made to display a product or advertise a service, encompassing new products and announcements; crowdsourcing posts were made specifically to gain interaction, such as asking for likes or comments for an upcoming giveaway (Stuart et al., 2017). After splitting the posts up into their respective categories, each posting format was compared within a category to determine the most effective format to post each category.

Despite my accounting for changing circumstances and possible sources of error, there are still several limitations to this method. One limitation comes from the sample size, which is relatively small. Due to some accounts only having twenty posts per format, I decided to randomly choose only five from each format. However, other accounts had hundreds to thousands of posts. Five randomly selected posts would not be representative of the entire format for those cases, which limits my data. Additionally, due to many accounts having an immense number of photos compared to Reels and videos, I decided to not include photos posted before 2018 to target both a relevancy and maximum-number problem. Posts made before 2018 would be less relevant, since the accounts have likely grown and acquired a larger fanbase. Moreover, accounts having over 2000 posts would make it incredibly difficult for my manual method to work efficiently. However, despite these reasons, this decision still limits my data in that the randomization isn't truly random for many accounts. As a whole, the research is also limited by the fact that it doesn't examine the effort required behind the scenes to produce the different posting formats. Thus, it only considers the benefits of engagement, which may or may not be worth the work put in to create these posts.

## Results and Analysis

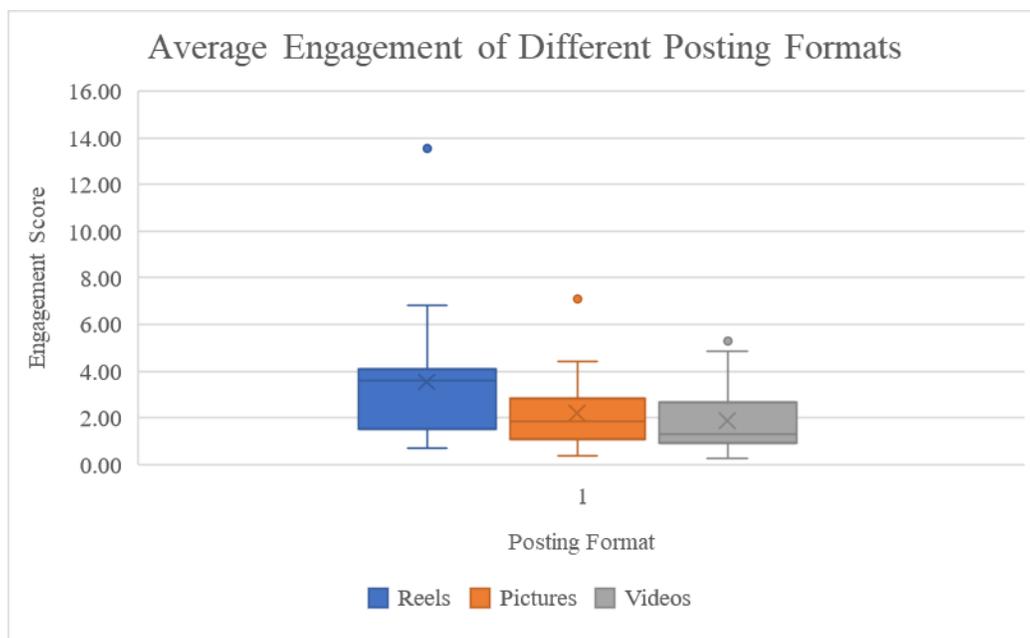
As stated above, engagement data was collected for a total of 330 posts, with each posting format making up one-third of the total amount of posts. The engagement score formula was applied to each post, and an average engagement score for Reels, pictures, and videos was calculated for each account. A complete list of the analyzed posts and their engagement data and scores can be found in Appendix B. Below, Table 1 depicts the average engagement scores for each posting format of the 22 accounts that were analyzed. The last row represents the cumulative average for the Reels, picture, and video posts within this study.

**Table 1.** Average engagement scores per posting format of each account (higher values mean higher engagement)

	Reels	Pictures	Videos
Account 1	4.07	3.04	4.85
Account 2	4.07	1.77	1.18
Account 3	3.42	2.18	2.59
Account 4	2.73	2.28	2.11
Account 5	3.86	1.98	4.61
Account 6	5.95	7.09	5.29
Account 7	0.70	1.08	0.94
Account 8	1.18	1.01	0.33
Account 9	13.53	1.93	1.15
Account 10	3.76	1.09	0.76
Account 11	1.92	0.90	0.69
Account 12	0.70	1.06	0.27

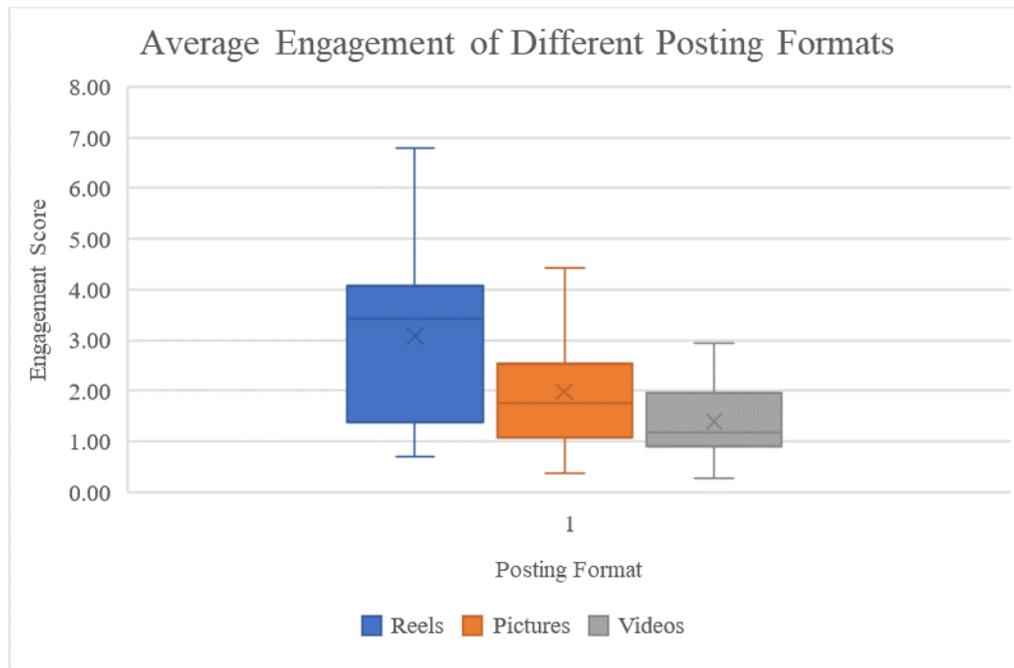
Account 13	4.19	2.74	1.37
Account 14	0.74	0.38	0.95
Account 15	1.60	1.03	1.37
Account 16	0.85	1.11	0.89
Account 17	4.00	2.35	1.96
Account 18	2.95	3.65	2.80
Account 19	4.11	4.24	2.95
Account 20	3.22	1.63	1.12
Account 21	3.72	1.72	1.28
Account 22	6.80	4.42	1.75
Average	3.55	2.21	1.87

To determine the statistical significance of the relationship between posting format and engagement, two-sample t-tests were performed. However, before the analysis could be conducted, I created a box and whisker plot to verify that there weren't any outliers among the engagement scores, which are not allowed for two-sample t-tests. It was discovered that the Reels category had one outlier of 13.53, the pictures category had one outlier of 7.09, and the videos category had three outliers of 4.61, 4.85, and 5.29. These values were subsequently taken out of the total so that the t-



tests could be carried out, reflecting the yellowed-out values in Table 1 above.

**Figure 1.** Box and whisker plot of the average engagement values for each posting format before accounting for outliers



**Figure 2.** Box and whisker plot of the average engagement values for each posting format after accounting for outliers

Next, I performed two t-tests: one comparing Reels with pictures and another comparing Reels with videos. Both were conducted using the Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances t-Test data analysis function in Microsoft Excel. For the first test, the null hypothesis was that the difference between the engagement of Reels posts and picture posts would equal zero; in other words, the average engagement scores of the two categories would be the same. The alternate hypothesis was that the difference would be greater than zero. I then established 0.05 to be the alpha value with which the analysis would be compared to. After running the function, the p-value was calculated to be 0.0094. Since the p-value was less than the alpha, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternate hypothesis was confirmed. Therefore, the mean engagement that small jewelry business accounts received from posting Reels was higher than the mean engagement of picture posts. The two-sample t-test for Reels posts and video posts was performed in a similar fashion. The null hypothesis predicted the difference between the engagement of Reels and videos to be zero, and the alternate hypothesis predicted that it would be greater than zero. The alpha value was kept at 0.05 to ensure consistency, and the t-test yielded a p-value of 0.00016. Again, the p-value was found to be less than the alpha value, confirming the alternate hypothesis and rejecting the null hypothesis. Thus, the mean engagement of Reels posts was also greater than the mean engagement of video posts from small jewelry business accounts on Instagram.

Furthermore, an analysis of the mean engagement of posting formats within posting categories was also conducted. The three posting categories chosen for this study were showcasing, crowdsourcing, and humanizing, which were derived from Stuart et al.'s schema (2017). Showcasing posts displayed products and announcements, crowdsourcing posts were posts that asked for interaction, and humanizing posts illustrated the personal side of the business account, such as personal life updates or Internet memes. These represented the content of a post and divided the posting formats of Reels, pictures, and videos into subgroups for additional evaluation. Each of the 330 posts were categorized into one of the three categories, and their engagements were compiled. The percentages for each category within each posting format are displayed in Table 2. In terms of the total population, showcasing posts took up 77% of all posts, while crowdsourcing and humanizing took up 3% and 20%, respectively. Due to large disparities between the number of posts in each posting category, comparisons of the mean and median engagement scores of each category were used for analysis. Table 3 displays the mean engagement scores of each posting category while Table 4

displays the median engagement scores of each posting category. Medians were utilized in conjunction with means due to their ability to resist outliers.

**Table 2.** Percentages of each posting category within each posting format

	Showcasing	Crowdsourcing	Humanizing
<b>Reels</b>	76%	4%	20%
<b>Videos</b>	71%	1%	28%
<b>Pictures</b>	85%	4%	12%
<b>Average</b>	77%	3%	20%

For all three posting categories, Reels posts had the highest mean and median engagement scores. The mean engagement value of 3.40 and median engagement value of 2.02 for showcasing Reels were over 68% and 27% higher than their picture and video counterparts. Crowdsourcing Reels had mean and median engagement values that were over 37% and 16% larger than crowdsourcing pictures and videos, respectively. Finally, the mean and median engagement values for humanizing Reels were over 25% and 64% greater than humanizing pictures and videos, respectively.

**Table 3.** Mean engagement scores of each posting category

	Mean		
	Showcasing	Crowdsourcing	Humanizing
<b>Reels</b>	3.40	7.21	3.45
<b>Videos</b>	2.02	3.84	1.43
<b>Pictures</b>	2.00	5.26	2.76

**Table 4.** Median engagement scores of each posting category

	Median		
	Showcasing	Crowdsourcing	Humanizing
<b>Reels</b>	2.02	6.31	3.08
<b>Videos</b>	1.47	3.84	0.89
<b>Pictures</b>	1.58	5.40	1.87

## Implications

By quantifying the effects of different posting formats and categories on Instagram engagement, this research can impact small business owners, who gain information on how to more effectively utilize the tools available to them on the platform. Specifically, the Reels format can be used more often than pictures and videos to promote new products and increase the engagement of an account. As more users join Instagram, the importance of gaining interactions and exposure to one's account greatens; this paper contributes to the growing literature regarding social media and techniques to improve one's following and reach.

## Conclusion

My results ultimately conclude that posting with Instagram Reels significantly increases the amount of engagement a post receives compared to posting with pictures and videos. The dominance of Reels over pictures and videos reflects

similar trends regarding the impact of short-form video platforms such as TikTok (Kennedy, 2020; Szeto et al., 2021). Even when divided into categories based on the content being posted, Reels received more engagement than pictures and videos. Thus, although this posting format was introduced less than two years ago, Reels is already establishing its influence within Instagram for small business owners.

These findings support my hypothesis that Reels would increase the engagement of posts from small jewelry business accounts more than pictures and videos would. For accounts that are struggling to get their brand and business exposed to interested consumers, making posts using Reels may increase their chances of reaching a wider audience and going viral.

However, despite my accounting for outliers and using means and medians to compare the posting categories, several limitations exist. First, since I chose to focus on small jewelry business accounts, my results may not be applicable to the whole of the platform. The small and specialized sample may represent a trend that is only present within the scope of my focus. Additionally, as mentioned before, many outliers were present in my data due to the randomized selection of posts. Although I removed them for the t-tests, this meant that there was an uneven number of values in each format, which may have caused the results to skew. Finally, since a large majority of the posts selected were showcasing, results for the category analysis may not be fully representative. The comparison between posting categories may have resulted in different findings if a more even sample was examined.

Therefore, future research is necessary to confirm the results of my research and expand upon the knowledge of this area. Others in the field of social media marketing may want to increase the sample size and number of posts analyzed in future research to combat against the limitations brought up in this paper. Additionally, future directions may also involve a deeper dive into posting categories and their effect on engagement or how they can be paired with posting formats to achieve more significant results. Future research that analyzes a balanced set of posts from each posting category may build upon the findings found in this study.

Nevertheless, this study presents several important findings, with the most important one being that it quantifies the effect of Reels on Instagram engagement and compares it to pictures and videos. In addition, it fills a gap in the literature regarding posting formats on Instagram and their effect on user engagement. Small business owners on Instagram can utilize this research to increase the engagement of their posts and attract new people to their accounts. With the growing importance of social media marketing, the results of this study will only become more and more relevant. As small as it may seem, changing the way an account posts content can dramatically impact the reach and success of that post, and, ultimately, the business itself.

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