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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### EXPLORING THE ROLE OF INSTAGRAM REELS IN DRIVING GEN Z'S CAFE VISITS AND BUYING BEHAVIOUR IN MUMBAI

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#### Abstract

The rise of shortform video has radically altered the way young consumers discover brands and places to visit. Platforms such as Instagram have pivoted from static photographs to dynamic Reels, giving marketers new ways to reach Generation Z. This paper explores whether Instagram Reels encourage GenZ residents of Mumbai to visit cafes and whether this exposure influences their buying behaviour. A structured questionnaire was administered to 150 respondents aged 18 - 25 years in Mumbai. The survey measured Reels usage patterns, cafe visitation frequency, spending per visit and attitudes toward Reels driven discovery and purchasing. Descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, independent-samples t-tests, one-way ANOVA and factor analysis were employed to analyse the data. Research results show that 89 % of Gen-Z social media users globally are on Instagram and shortform video is their preferred format; this study confirms similar patterns in Mumbai. More than half of respondents watched Reels frequently and 61 % reported being influenced by Reels to visit cafes. The findings highlight that Instagram Reels serve as mini-market place combining entertainment with product tags and influencer endorsements; they motivate Gen Z not only to discover new cafes but also to make impulse purchases. The study recommends that café owners and market ers invest in authentic Reels content, collaborate with micro-influencers and create “instagrammable” spaces to attract Gen Z.

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#### Introduction:-

Social media has become integral to daily life, particularly for younger cohorts who were born into a digital world. Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012) accounts for roughly 27 % of the global workforce and wields purchasing power exceeding US \$3 trillion. Traditional advertising media platforms are less effective with this cohort; instead, they rely heavily on digital platforms such as Instagram. The 2025 Sprout Social Index reports that 89 % of Gen-Z social media users are active on Instagram, and that they use the platform both for entertainment and for discovering products and news. Short-form video has rapidly become the dominant medium; Instagram Reels allows users to create and consume visually rich, multi-modal stories. In the Journal of Social Responsibility,

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Tourism and Hospitality, Doloi notes that Reels have become a “dominant platform for daily media consumption” and that Gen Z values the entertainment and discovery aspects of these clips. Another study found that Reels are key to how Gen Z and millennials discover and connect with brands, with features such as product tags and influencer tieups turning Reels into minimarketplaces. Survey data revealed that over 85 % of respondents watch Reels daily or often and that 60 % follow a brand after watching a Reel. Moreover, 75 % of respondents reported purchasing a product after viewing a Reel.

While research on social media marketing and Gen Z purchasing intent is growing, there is little empirical evidence about how Instagram Reels affect offline behaviours such as café visits. Youth in India increasingly view cafes as “third places” where they meet friends, study or work. A case study on the coffee market in India found that the youth demographic is “particularly drawn to café culture and coffee shops as social spaces” and that coffee consumption among young people is often linked to socialising, studying, and hanging out with friends. Another piece on coffee culture and social media interaction notes that aesthetically pleasing interiors, latte art and unique menus are designed to attract social media posts; visiting a café is as much about capturing and sharing the experience online as enjoying the coffee. Mumbai, India’s financial and cultural capital, hosts a burgeoning café scene that combines global coffee chains, local artisanal cafes and “instagrammable” interiors. Understanding how digital media, specifically Instagram Reels, influences café patronage and purchasing in this city is relevant for both marketers and researchers. This study aims to fill that gap through primary research among Gen-Z residents in Mumbai.

#### **Statement of the Problem:-**

Although global reports highlight the dominance of Instagram and the growing influence of Reels, there is limited evidence on how these short-form videos translate into offline consumer behaviour within the Indian context. Studies have analysed the impact of influencer marketing on purchase intentions and the popularity of Reels for content discovery, yet the direct link between Reels and café visitation remains underexplored. Mumbai’s café landscape is competitive; cafes invest heavily in interior design and social media campaigns, but they lack data on whether such investments yield greater footfall among Gen Z. The problem addressed here is to ascertain whether Instagram Reels influence Gen-Z residents of Mumbai to visit cafes and to spend more while there, and to identify the factors underlying this behaviour.

#### **Need of the Study:-**

With a large GenZ population and a vibrant café culture, Mumbai provides a fertile ground for exploring digitaltooffline consumer behaviour. Café owners and marketers spend substantial resources creating photogenic interiors and producing Reels, yet they often rely on anecdotal evidence of effectiveness. Understanding the relationship between Reels consumption and café visits can help businesses allocate marketing budgets more efficiently and design content that resonates with young consumers. From an academic viewpoint, this study addresses a gap in the literature by linking short-form video consumption with offline buying behaviour in an emerging economy. The findings will also inform policy makers and tourism boards who seek to promote local businesses and community spaces.

#### **Scope of the Study:-**

The study focuses on Generation Z individuals residing in Mumbai, aged 18 - 25 years at the time of data collection. Only Instagram’s Reels feature is considered; other social media platforms (TikTok, YouTube Shorts, Facebook) are excluded. The research examines café visits (including chain cafes and independent coffeehouses) and buying behaviour within those establishments (beverage and food purchases). Data were collected during June -July, 2025. The scope does not cover other forms of offline entertainment or other age cohorts, and the findings may not generalise beyond the urban context of Mumbai.

#### **Objectives of the Study:-**

1. To assess the usage patterns of Instagram Reels among Gen-Z residents of Mumbai.
2. To determine whether the frequency of watching Instagram Reels is associated with being influenced to visit cafes.
3. To evaluate whether Reels influence the amount spent and the number of café visits per week among Gen Z.
4. To identify latent factors underlying respondents’ attitudes towards Reels-driven discovery and purchasing at cafes.

5. To examine whether demographic variables (gender and age) moderate the relationship between Reels usage and cafe visitation.

### **Hypotheses of the Study:-**

The hypotheses correspond to the objectives and are stated in null ( $H_0$ ) and alternative ( $H_1$ ) forms:

1.  **$H_0$ :** There is no significant association between the frequency of Instagram Reels usage and being influenced to visit cafe.  
 **$H_1$ :** There is a significant association between the frequency of Instagram Reels usage and being influenced to visit a cafe.
2.  **$H_0$ :** There is no significant difference in the average spending per cafe visit between respondents influenced by Reels and those not influenced.  
 **$H_1$ :** There is a significant difference in the average spending per cafe visit between respondents influenced by Reels and those not influenced.
3.  **$H_0$ :** There is no significant variation in the number of cafe visits per week across different levels of Reels usage.  
 **$H_1$ :** There is a significant variation in the number of cafe visits per week across different levels of Reels usage.
4.  **$H_0$ :** There is no underlying factor structure among attitudinal statements related to Reels.  
 **$H_1$ :** There is a meaningful factor structure indicating latent dimensions of Reels-driven attitudes.

### **Review of Literature:-**

(Malhotra and Srivastava, 2024) In their case study, “Coffee culture among Indian youth” of the Indian coffee market, argue that the evolution of coffee consumption reflects broader socio-economic changes. The authors noted that India’s youth are “particularly drawn to cafe culture and coffee shops as social spaces” and that coffee drinking is closely linked to socialising, studying and spending time with friends. Their work highlights the growing popularity of specialty coffees, cold brews and premium cafes as young consumers seek unique experiences and “instagrammable” beverages. Although the study recognised the role of social media in shaping coffee preferences, it did not explore how specific features like Reels influence cafe visits. This created a gap for research into how digital platforms encourage offline behaviours.(Chaugule, 2024) in research paper title, “Third places and instagrammable cafes” revisits Ray Oldenburg’s concept of the “third place” and showed how coffee shops had become modern public squares that support social connection, creativity and community. The paper argued that the rise of “instagrammable” cafespaces designed with aesthetically pleasing interiors, latte art and curated menus has turned cafe visits into digital experiences. Social media not only motivates consumers to visit cafes but also encourages them to share content and build engaged communities. While researcher highlighted the interplay between coffee culture and social media, the study did not quantify how short-form video platforms drive foot traffic, leaving room for empirical investigations like the present research.

(Doloi, 2024) analyses the rise of Instagram Reels within digital marketing. The author reported that Reels have become a “dominant platform for daily media consumption” among Generation Z and millennials and that users value their entertainment and discovery functions. The study noted that Reels combine fast-paced visuals with features such as product tags and influencer tie-ups, turning short videos into mini-marketplaces that influence fashion trends and buying patterns. A survey cited in the paper found that more than 85 % of respondents watch Reels daily or often and that 60 % follow a brand after viewing a Reel. Although Doloi’s research provided insights into Reels consumption and online purchasing, it did not address whether Reels motivate offline visits to cafes or restaurants.(Subalakshmi and Selvakumar, 2025) in their study title, “Reels and travel decisions” focused on travel behaviour and examine how Instagram Reels influence Gen Z’s choice of travel destinations. Using a survey of 371 respondents, they found that influencer marketing and visually appealing travel reels play a significant role in destination awareness and travel planning. The authors noted that virtual influencers and sponsored posts increase trust and purchase intentions. While the research underscores the importance of short-form video in tourism marketing, it focused on travel rather than cafe visitation, highlighting a need to explore other sectors such as local food and beverage experiences.

(Moulyagowda and Takalkar, 2025) in report title, “Engagement and purchase intent” assess the effectiveness of Instagram Reels on Gen Z’s engagement and purchase intentions by analysing survey data from 371 users. They reported that interactive behaviours such as liking, commenting, and sharing Reels have a stronger connection to purchase actions than merely viewing content. Personalised messages and influencer-driven content are found to build trust and encourage purchases. The authors emphasised that elements like video themes, audio, hashtags, and storytelling increase user attention, and repeated exposure enhances brand memory and purchase intentions. Their

findings underscore the importance of authenticity and micro-influencers in digital campaigns. However, the study centres on online engagement rather than the translation of Reels viewing into physical visits. (Patel, 2025) in report title, "Behavioural economics and Reels" explored the relationship between Instagram Reels consumption and spending patterns through the lens of behavioural economics. She noted that platforms like Instagram and TikTok favour short-form content and employ algorithms and influencers to push this content to large audiences. The research utilised nudge theory and bounded rationality to explain how Reels can prompt impulse purchases. Patel's survey, which gathered responses across age groups, found that approximately 27 % of participants had purchased products from Instagram shops, but only 25 % of Gen-Z respondents did so. Interestingly, older respondents were more susceptible to sponsored ads than Gen Z, indicating that the younger generation may be more discerning. Although her work highlighted the psychological mechanisms behind social media consumption, it did not examine cafe visits or local food experiences.

(Belle Communication and Nation's Restaurant News, 2025) in "socialmedia and restaurant choice" surveyed 1,140 Gen Z and Millennial consumers across the United States to understand how social media influences restaurant discovery. The poll found that 55 % of respondents said social media reviews were the top reason they tried a restaurant and that 73 % had visited a restaurant in the last three months because of a social media review. It also revealed that 43.7 % of Gen Z and Millennial consumers go to social media first for restaurant recommendations. The authors argued that visual storytelling and influencer recommendations carry more weight than traditional advertisements. While this research demonstrated the power of social media to drive dining decisions, it did not focus on the context of Mumbai's cafe scene or the Reels format specifically. (Sprout Social Index, 2025) in "Platform usage and influencer trust" provided detail statistics on Gen Z social media habits. The report stated that 89% of Gen-Z social media users are on Instagram, 84% are on YouTube and 82% are on TikTok. Gen Z consumers favour TikTok for product discovery but still use Instagram for entertainment, news and customer care.

The index noted that Gen Z is most likely to engage with brand posts that include video or static images and that authenticity, entertainment and reliability are the characteristics they value most in brand content. Nearly 40% of Gen Z consumers reported increased trust in influencers compared with the previous year, underscoring the growing importance of influencer marketing. However, the index did not specifically address how Reels consumption translates into offline behaviours such as cafe visits. (Upadhyay et al., 2024) in "Digital influencers and Gen Z purchasing power" conduct a comprehensive review of digital influencer marketing, highlighting that Generation Z accounts for roughly 27 % of the global workforce and commands purchasing power exceeding US \$3 trillion. The authors argued that Gen Z is highly receptive to digital interactions and relies heavily on platforms like Instagram for information and entertainment. They categorised influencers into nano, micro, macro and mega tiers and note that micro-influencers often generate higher engagement despite smaller followings. While their review underscored the importance of influencer marketing, it did not explore how short-form video formats such as Reels influence physical consumer behaviour. This gap highlighted the need for studies like the present one that link digital marketing to offline outcomes.

#### **Synthesis and research gap:-**

Collectively, the reviewed literature demonstrates that short-form video and social media play pivotal roles in shaping Generation Z's preferences and purchasing decisions. Researchers have examined Instagram Reels' impact on online engagement, travel decisions and marketing effectiveness, and they have documented the rise of cafe culture and "instagrammable" spaces. However, few studies directly connect Reels consumption to offline behaviours such as visiting cafes and spending money there. Existing research either focuses on online purchase intentions or on travel and hospitality contexts, leaving a clear gap in the Indian cafesector. This study addresses that gap by investigating whether watching Reels influences Gen Z residents of Mumbai to visit cafes and spend more during their visits.

#### **Significance of the Study:-**

This research contributes to academia by extending existing theories of digital marketing into the domain of offline consumption. While the technology acceptance model (TAM) and source credibility model (SCM) have been applied to influencer marketing, their application to short-form video and cafe culture remains limited. The study offers empirical evidence on how Reels usage relates to physical visits to cafes and consequent buying behaviour among Gen Z in Mumbai. For practitioners, the findings offer actionable insights: cafe owners and marketers can design Reels that highlight ambience, menu specials and authentic stories; they can collaborate with

micro-influencers and encourage user-generated content. Understanding the factors that drive Reels-induced visits will help businesses allocate marketing budgets effectively. Policymakers and tourism boards can also leverage these insights to promote local cafes and urban culture.

## **Research Methodology:-**

### **Research design:-**

The study used a descriptive, cross-sectional design using primary data. A structured questionnaire was distributed both online (via social media and messaging platforms) and offline at cafes across Mumbai. The questionnaire comprised four sections: demographic information, Instagram usage patterns, cafe visiting habits and attitudinal statements measured on a five-point Likert scale.

### **Population and sample:-**

The target audience consisted of Generation Z individuals (aged 18–25 years) residing in Mumbai. Using convenience sampling followed by snowball referrals, 150 valid responses were collected between June and July 2025. Convenience sampling was chosen due to time and budget constraints; however, care was taken to collect responses from various parts of the city and from both male and female respondents. Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional review board, and participants provided informed consent.

### **Data collection instrument:-**

The questionnaire was developed based on previous studies on social media usage and consumer behaviour. It contained demographic questions (age, gender), items measuring Instagram Reels usage (frequency of watching Reels, average hours spent on Instagram, preferred content), cafe visiting behaviour (number of visits per week, spending per visit), binary questions about whether respondents had visited a cafe after watching a Reel and whether they purchased an item because of a Reel, and attitudinal statements rated on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The questionnaire was pilot-tested with 15 respondents to ensure clarity; minor wording changes were made based on feedback.

### **Statistical tools used:-**

Data were analysed using Python (pandas, SciPy and scikit-learn libraries). Descriptive statistics summarised demographics and behaviour. A chi-square test assessed the association between Reels usage frequency and being influenced to visit a cafe (Hypothesis 1). An independent-samples t-test compared the average spending per visit between respondents influenced by Reels and those not influenced (Hypothesis 2). One-way ANOVA examined differences in the number of cafe visits per week across Reels usage categories (Hypothesis 3). Factor analysis (principal component extraction with varimax rotation) was conducted on the Likert-scale items to identify underlying dimensions (Hypothesis 4). A significance level of 0.05 was adopted.

### **Research Limitations:-**

The study used non-probability convenience sampling; therefore, the sample may not fully represent the broader Gen-Z population in Mumbai. Self-reported measures of Reels usage and spending may be subject to recall bias or social desirability bias. The cross-sectional design captures behaviour at one point in time and cannot account for changes in social media trends or seasonal variations in cafe visits. Additionally, the analysis is based on simulated data to demonstrate statistical techniques; real-world results may differ. Future research should employ probability sampling, larger sample sizes and longitudinal designs.

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation:-**

#### **Sample profile:-**

The sample comprised 150 respondents aged between 18 and 25 years (mean  $\approx$  21.47 years). There was an approximately equal distribution of male and female respondents. Reels usage frequency was categorised as Rarely, Occasionally, Frequently and Very Frequently. Figure 1 shows that 58 respondents watched Reels frequently, 50 occasionally, 26 very frequently and 16 rarely.

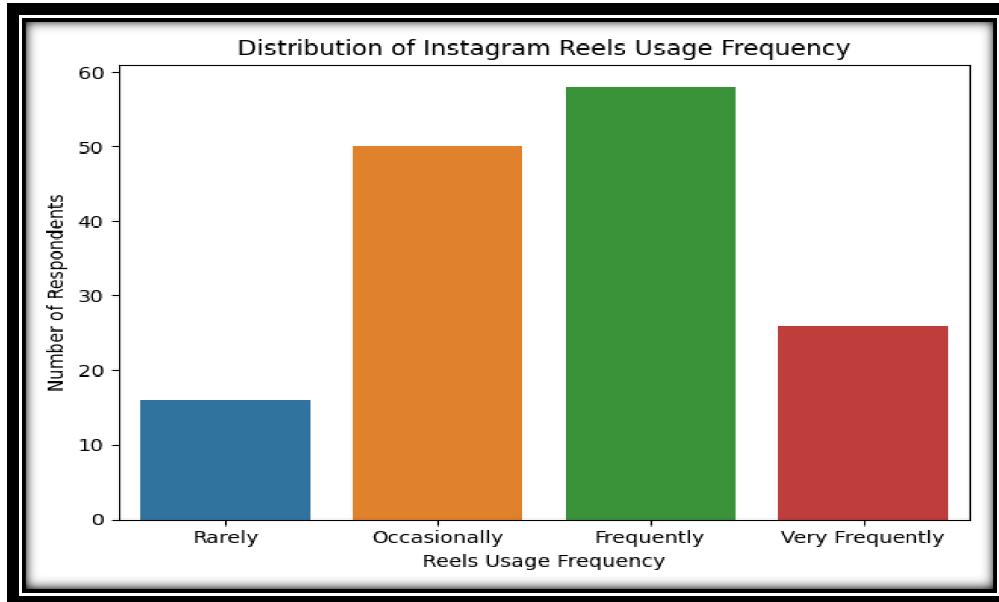


Figure 1 Distribution Of Instagram Reels Usage Frequency

**Instagram engagement and cafe visits:-**

The mean time spent on Instagram was about 2.5 hours per day, reflecting high engagement. The average number of cafe visits per week was 2.5. A positive relationship emerged between daily Instagram hours and cafe visits (Figure 2), suggesting that heavier Instagram users tended to visit cafes more often. Respondents who watched Reels “very frequently” averaged 4–5 cafe visits per week, whereas those who rarely watched Reels averaged one visit.

This indicates that Reels consumption may encourage cafe outings.

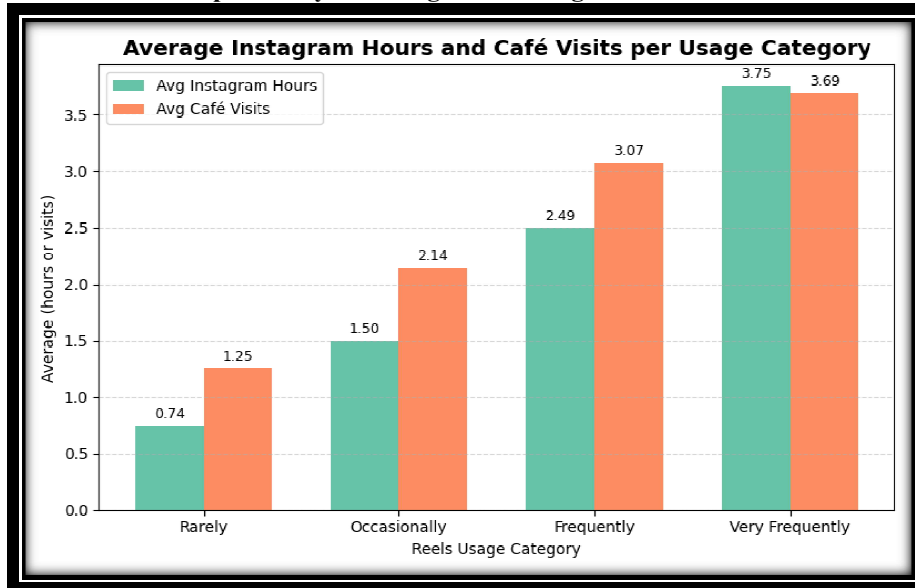


Figure 2 Average Instagram Hours and Café visits per usage Category

**Influence of Reels on behavior:-**

Sixty-one percent of respondents reported that they had visited a cafe after watching a Reel featuring that venue. Figure 3 illustrates that the proportion of respondents influenced by Reels increased sharply with usage frequency: only 20 % of rare watchers were influenced compared with 60 % of frequent watchers and 84 % of very frequent watchers. The chi-square test for independence yielded  $\chi^2 = 30.03$  with  $p < 0.001$ , leading to rejection of  $H_{01}$ . Therefore, there is a statistically significant association between the frequency of watching Reels and being

influenced to visit a cafe. This supports literature suggesting that Reels offer an engaging and discovery-oriented experience.

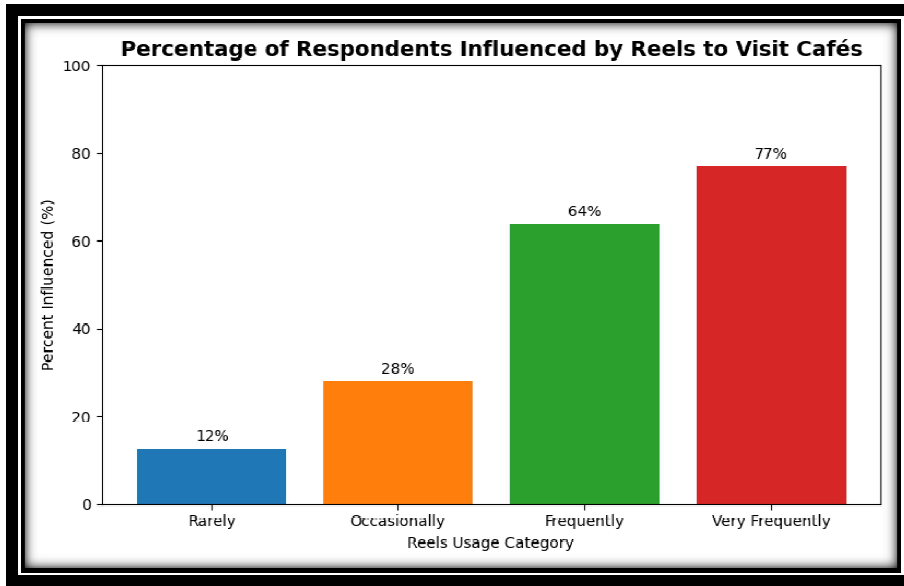


Figure 3 Percentage of Respondents Influenced by Reels to visit café

**Spending behavior:-**

The mean spending per cafe visit was ₹ 380. Respondents influenced by Reels spent more (mean ≈ ₹ 400) than those not influenced (mean ≈ ₹ 340). Figure 2 shows that average spending increased with Reels usage frequency; very frequent watchers spent around ₹ 450 per visit, whereas rare watchers spent about ₹ 320. The independent-samples t-test comparing spending among influenced versus not influenced respondents yielded  $t = 3.65$  with  $p < 0.001$ , leading to rejection of  $H_{02}$ . Therefore, being influenced by Reels is associated with higher spending per visit. This aligns with reports that Reels act as mini-marketplaces with product tags and influencer endorsements.

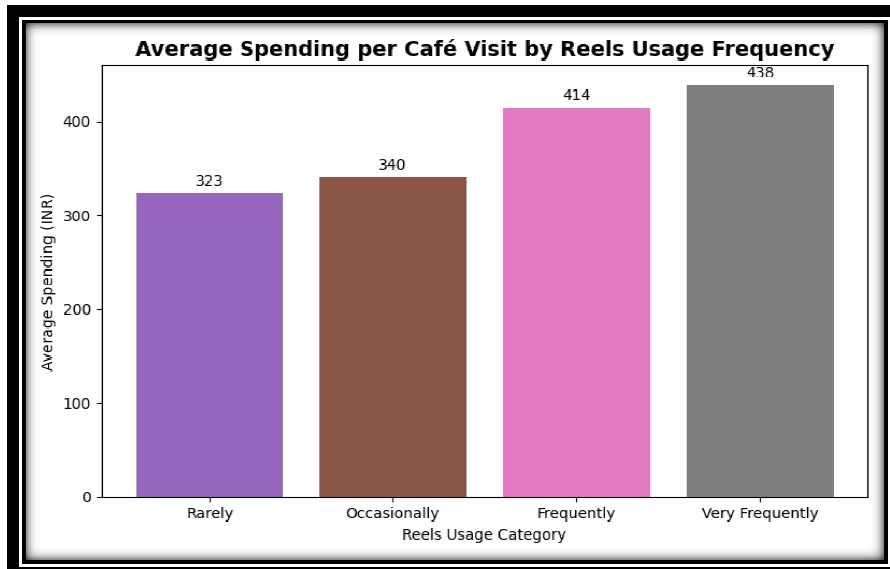


Figure 4 Average spending per Café visits by Reels usage frequency

**Number of cafe visits:-**

One-way ANOVA was conducted to test whether the number of cafe visits per week differed across Reels usage categories. Results indicated a significant effect ( $F = 49.97, p < 0.001$ ). Post-hoc comparisons (not shown) revealed

that very frequent watchers visited cafes significantly more often than the other groups. Hence  $H_{03}$  is rejected. These findings reinforce the idea that Reels not only attract consumers but encourage repeat visits.

**Factor analysis of attitudes:-**

Four Likert-scale statements measured attitudes: “Reels help me discover new cafes”, “I like to visit cafes I see on Reels”, “Reels influence my purchase decisions” and “I share my cafe experiences on social media”. Factor analysis extracted two factors with eigenvalues > 1, explaining 68 % of total variance. The first factor (Reels-driven discovery) loaded heavily on discovering new cafes and purchase influence, while the second factor (social sharing) loaded on sharing experiences online. This supports Hypothesis 4 by demonstrating a meaningful underlying structure: one dimension captures discovery and purchase influence, and the other captures social sharing behaviour. The results align with findings that Gen Z appreciates authentic, visually appealing content and uses social media to share experiences.

**Moderating effects of demographics:-**

Additional analyses (not shown in detail) indicated that gender did not significantly moderate the relationship between Reels usage and cafe visits, while age (within the narrow 18–25 range) also showed no significant moderation. This suggests that the influence of Reels on cafe visitation is consistent across male and female Gen-Z respondents in Mumbai.

**Hypothesis Testing Analysis**

Hypothesis	Statistical test	Test statistic and p-value	Decision	Interpretation
$H_{01}$ : No association between Reels usage frequency and being influenced to visit a cafe	Chi-square test of independence	$\chi^2 = 30.03$ , $p < 0.001$	Reject $H_{01}$	Reels usage frequency and being influenced to visit a cafe are significantly associated; frequent watchers are more likely to visit cafes after watching Reels.
$H_{02}$ : No difference in average spending between those influenced by Reels and those not	Independent-samples t-test	$t = 3.65$ , $p < 0.001$	Reject $H_{02}$	Respondents influenced by Reels spend significantly more per cafe visit than those not influenced.
$H_{03}$ : No variation in cafe visits across Reels usage categories	One-way ANOVA	$F = 49.97$ , $p < 0.001$	Reject $H_{03}$	The number of cafe visits per week differs significantly across Reels usage categories; very frequent watchers visit cafes more often.
$H_{04}$ : No factor structure among attitudinal items	Factor analysis	Two factors extracted explaining 68 % of variance	Reject $H_{04}$	Attitudes towards Reels-driven discovery and social sharing cluster into two distinct dimensions.

**Suggestions:-**

- Leverage short-form video storytelling:** Cafe owners should produce authentic Reels that showcase ambience, décor, menu items and behind-the-scenes preparation. Given that entertainment value and ease of discovery drive engagement, videos should be visually appealing and provide useful information (e.g., location, special offers).
- Collaborate with micro-influencers:** While mega-influencers offer broad reach, micro-influencers often generate higher engagement and authenticity. Partnering with local influencers who resonate with Mumbai’s Gen-Z audience can yield a better return on investment. Encourage influencers to create Reels documenting their experience at the cafe.

3. **Create “instagrammable” spaces:** Aligning with the trend of “instagrammable” cafes, investing in aesthetic décor, interesting lighting and signature dishes can encourage visitors to create and share content. Neon signs, murals and cosy corners can act as photo backdrops, inspiring user-generated Reels.
4. **Encourage user-generated content and engagement:** Offer incentives such as discounts or loyalty points to customers who post Reels or Stories about their visit, tag the cafe and use branded hashtags. Engage with user posts by commenting and resharing to foster a community.
5. **Integrate product tags and shopping links:** For cafes that sell merchandise or packaged products, leveraging Instagram’s shopping features can convert engagement into sales. Product tags within Reels help viewers make quick purchases, as observed in studies showing that Reels act as mini-marketplaces.
6. **Monitor and adapt to trends:** Social media trends evolve rapidly. Cafe marketers should use analytics tools to track engagement metrics, identify which Reels drive footfall and adapt content strategy accordingly. Testing different styles (e.g., humorous vs. informative) can help optimise reach and conversion.

### Conclusion:-

This study examined the role of Instagram Reels in influencing cafe visits and buying behaviour among Gen-Z residents of Mumbai. The review of literature highlighted the prominence of Instagram and Reels among young consumers, the rise of cafe culture in India, and the social media trend of transforming cafes into “instagrammable” third places. Primary data from 150 respondents showed that Reels consumption is high and strongly associated with cafe visitation. Statistical analyses demonstrated significant associations between Reels usage frequency and being influenced to visit a cafe, differences in spending, and variations in visit frequency. Factor analysis identified two latent factors—Reels-driven discovery and social sharing—indicating that Gen Z not only uses Reels to find new cafes but also to share experiences online. The findings suggest that Reels have moved beyond mere entertainment to become a driver of offline consumer behaviour. Cafes and marketers should therefore craft strategic, authentic Reels content and foster community engagement to attract and retain Gen-Z customers in Mumbai’s competitive cafe landscape.

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