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**Getting Reel: A Quantitative Analysis of Facebook & Instagram Reel Usage Among Small,  
Independent Clothing Boutiques in Fayetteville, Arkansas**

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**An Honors Thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Bachelor of  
Science in Business Administration in Marketing**

**Sam M. Walton College of Business  
University of Arkansas  
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## **Abstract**

Small businesses have increasingly turned to social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram to promote their business. According to Statista, in 2021, 66% of small businesses advertised through Facebook while 41% advertised through Instagram.

This research looked at how small, independent clothing boutiques in Fayetteville, Arkansas used Facebook and Instagram Reels to promote their businesses for the 2022 calendar year. Specifically: two research questions were considered: (1) Do small, independent clothing boutiques in this small college town use Facebook and/or Instagram Reels? (2) What engagement level, in terms of likes and comments, is associated with this usage?

The research suggests small, independent clothing boutiques in Fayetteville, Arkansas are making use of Reels to promote their business. Furthermore, this research may indicate that these businesses achieve greater engagement through Instagram Reels than Facebook Reels.

## Introduction

Businesses have turned to social media marketing as a cost-effective way to promote their brand (Bajwa, 2022). With over 3.2 billion active social media users, and 70% of small businesses using at least one social media platform to promote their business, social media platforms have become powerful marketing channels for small businesses (Ibrahim, 2021). Facebook and Instagram, in particular, offer businesses innovative content formats such as Reels. Reels can be defined as “short, entertaining videos” (Instagram, 2020) that allow businesses to share their creativity with their audience. When consumers are looking to discover and experiment with new products, 47% of global consumers turn to Reels (Meta, 2022).

With fewer resources than large corporations, small clothing boutiques have especially strong incentive to use social media platforms to organically (i.e., at no direct cost) increase visibility among prospects and customers (Hiner, 2022). At the moment, however, there is limited knowledge on the utilization of Reels by small, clothing boutiques in Fayetteville, Arkansas, despite many small businesses using Reels as a marketing tactic.

**The purpose of this quantitative analysis was to examine how small, independent clothing boutiques in Fayetteville, Arkansas used Facebook and/or Instagram Reels to organically promote their business during the full 12 months of 2022.** This research addressed the following two research questions:

1. Do small, independent clothing boutiques in Fayetteville, Arkansas organically promote their business with Facebook and/or Instagram Reels?
2. What engagement level, in terms of likes and comments, is associated with these organic Facebook and/or Instagram Reels?

To address these questions, the researcher reviewed the Facebook and Instagram feeds of 15 Fayetteville-based boutiques. With the use of a structured instrument, the researcher recorded the presence and engagement metrics of organic Reels published by each boutique between January 1, 2022 and December 31, 2022.

## **Literature Review**

### **What is Social Media?**

“Social media” as a term originated from Matisse, a Tokyo online media environment in 1994, and it has stuck ever since (Aichner, 2021). Social media can be defined as “web-based services that allow individuals, communities, and organizations to collaborate, connect, interact, and build community by enabling them to create, co-create, modify, share, and engage with user-generated content that is easily accessible” (Sloan & Quan-Haase, 17). In the U.S. alone, there are 302.2 million social media users (Statista, 2022).

### **Different Types of Social Media**

There are many forms of social media. As summarized by Sloan and Quan, Tim Grahl categorized social media by specific technology types for marketing and/or research purposes:

- Social networking: web-based services that allow people and organization to connect with one another through personal/organizational profiles
- Bookmarking: offers direct and indirect navigational advice for users through public applications
- Social news: users can post news items or links to various outside news articles, and users can vote on these posts
- Media sharing: users can upload and share pictures and videos for other users to see
- Microblogging: users can publish short updates to their profile, and subscribers will be notified
- Blogs & forums: members of online forums are allowed to have conversations with other users through messages (17)

Facebook and Instagram are examples of social networking sites, also known as SNSs. Sloan and Quan-Haase defined SNSs as “web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (18).

### **How Businesses Promote With Social Media**

There are many low-investment advantages to marketing a business with social media (Bajwa, 2022). From increasing brand awareness to increasing engagement with customers (Ford, 2023), social media allows businesses to create loyal relationships with current and prospective customers alike.

Social media has changed the way businesses promote, as they now compete with other businesses through social media (Arora, et al, 2020). Since 95% of adults aged 18-34 follow at least one brand through social media, businesses have sought social media as a promotion tool. Businesses promote through social media by posting organic content, sponsored posts, and collaborations with influencers and celebrities.

## **How Small Businesses Promote With Social Media**

A small business can be defined as a firm that has anywhere from 100 to 1,500 employees, and its overall revenue ranges from \$1 million to over \$40 million (Hait, 2021). 70% of small businesses rely on social media to reach target customers (Ibrahim, 2021). When using social media to promote a small business, these businesses, compared to larger companies, must be particularly mindful of their budget and the return on investment (ROI).

Small businesses utilize social media platforms to provide entertainment and information through their social media business page and to connect customers around their business (Fink, et al, 2020). Creating a social media channel allows small businesses to create a presence not only for local consumers, but businesses can also reach global markets. Small businesses can also gain loyal customers by establishing genuine connections and driving active engagement with social content.

## **Engagement on Social Media Platforms**

Engagement can be described as connectedness and community within a social media network, whether it is between two users, or a brand and a customer (WARC, 2022). Social platforms facilitate socializing with friends and family, online dating, professional networking, and many other forms of engagement, including engagement between small businesses and their customers or markets (Aichner, 2021). To a greater or lesser degree, all social media platforms are driven by the desire of users to engage with one another as well as the organizations they patronize. SNSs in particular, including Facebook and Instagram, thrive on user-engagement.

## **Facebook & Instagram Usage**

According to Mintel's *Social Media Trends – US – May 2021*, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram are the top three social platforms for daily visits (Poelking, 2021). In a 2021 survey, 75% of social media users identified Facebook as one of their top platforms, while 54% identified Instagram. When first starting social media marketing, small businesses usually turn to Facebook. Both owned by Meta, Facebook and Instagram are dominant forces within the social media space. According to Statista, Meta earned \$166 billion in 2023, and their annual advertising revenue has been estimated at \$113 billion (Dixon, 2023).

## **Social Media Marketing Formats Available on Facebook & Instagram**

When businesses think of using Facebook and Instagram for marketing purposes, they might first consider the specific goals they want to achieve (Bajwa, 2022). From this, they can determine whether the goal of their social media marketing is to increase brand awareness, drive website traffic, generate sales, or something else. In turn, this decision can influence the content format used by the business, whether it is an organic post, paid/sponsored post, or an influencer collaboration (Ford, 2023).

Organic social media might be defined as any post that receives free, unpaid distribution to active followers of an organization's Facebook or Instagram page (Quesenberry & Coolsen,

2018). Even though, in this case, businesses are not paying for social advertisements, businesses can still use organic posts to promote their products or brands to existing followers. This allows brands to create a community and “enhance relationship quality and shape customer brand loyalty” (Fink, et al, 2020). Such posts can be formatted similarly to sponsored social advertisements; options include still images, videos, carousels, and stories (Facebook, 2023).

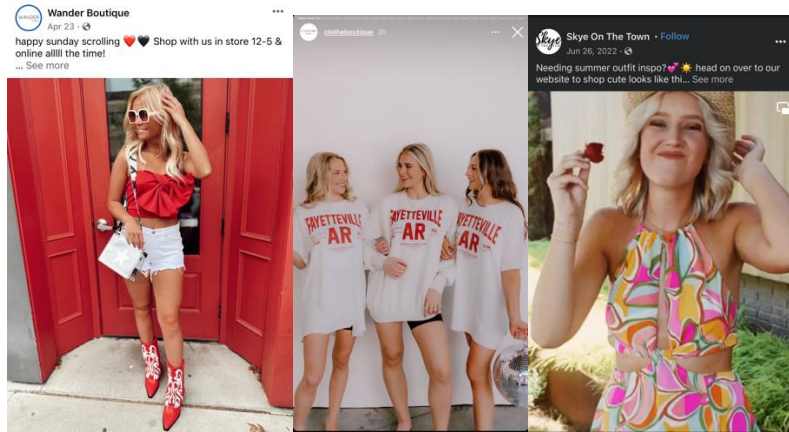


Fig. 1. Examples of Instagram & Facebook Formats

## Organic Social Media Posts on Facebook & Instagram

Organic reach has become more limited on Facebook and Instagram in recent years. However, organic content still has value, especially with the possibility of “going viral” (Meta for Business, 2023). Organic social can also help brands develop affinity among customers, and such trust can, in turn, improve engagement with future organic posts (Quesenberry & Coolsen, 2018). In 2016, Facebook announced that engagement with an organic post, including likes, comments, and shares, would more heavily impact how many users see the post.

## How Businesses Promote With Facebook & Instagram Reels

Facebook and Instagram Reels are defined as “short entertaining videos” (Instagram, 2020), and they offer a new level of creativity opportunity for many businesses (Instagram, 2020). Any video under 15 minutes will be distributed as a Reel, and videos under 90 seconds can be seen by more people.

According to Meta for Business, 47% of global consumers use Facebook Reels to find and even shop for new products (2022). Joey Kovac, the vice-president of marketing for Manscaped stated, “Since we started publishing content on Reels in 2020, we’ve driven over 10 million video views and a 40% increase in followers, which has been a huge win for our brand” (Meta for Business, 2022). Facebook Reels not only offer a chance to increase engagement, but they give businesses more freedom to express their creativity and brand personality to customers.



## **How Small, Independent Clothing Boutiques Promote With Organic Facebook & Instagram Reels**

Small, clothing boutiques can use their Facebook and/or Instagram pages for static posts, but Reels are another efficient way for boutiques to create brand-loyal customers and build a trustworthy reputation. According to Statista, Instagram Reels generate more likes and saves than regular static posts (Metricool, 2022). On average, Reels capture over 1,000 likes, compared to only 700 likes with regular posts. Reels, likewise, get 230 saves compared to 45 saves for static posts. With more likes and shares, Reels are often favored by the algorithm and rewarded with greater organic reach.

According to Meta, businesses, including small, independent clothing boutiques, can use Reels to create engaging content for their audience (2023). Such content may enhance trust between the business and its audience. Reels let businesses “engage viewers with transitions and effects, emphasize key points with timed text, and bring...clips to life with audio.” By adding captivating captions and helpful tags, Meta claims that businesses can expand their target audience and make their page more discoverable.

### **The Clothing Industry**

The clothing industry is a global industry that caters to billions of people around the world. Statista reports that the revenue of the global apparel market is \$1.53 trillion, and the U.S. makes up \$312 billion of this revenue (Smith, 2023). In 2022, Americans alone spent over \$300 billion on clothing and clothing accessories (Jocelyn & Biagi, 2023).

There are over 337,000 apparel manufacturers worldwide (IBISWorld, 2021). The U.S. claims 7,400 of these companies (IBISWorld, 2023). The largest apparel-specific retailers in the U.S. include Nike, TJX (TJ Maxx, Marshalls, Home Goods, etc.), and The Gap (Smith, 2023). In 2022, women’s clothing stores earned \$40.5 billion in sales, and the U.S. women’s apparel market, which includes accessories, jewelry etc. as well as clothing, earned \$160 billion. Women’s apparel accounts for 52% of overall apparel sales (Jocelyn & Biagi, 2023).

### **Small, Independent Clothing Boutiques**

Clothing boutiques strive to give customers a unique experience. These boutiques pride themselves on offering clothes, jewelry, shoes, and other accessories that are carefully curated, and that customers would not be able to find at large retailers (Hiner, 2022). At small, independent clothing boutiques, owners and employees cultivate a more intimate and personal shopping experience, which can result in greater brand loyalty (DeNardin, 2015).

Boutique customers generally prioritize uniqueness and seek to support their community by shopping locally (DeNardin, 2015). They are also willing to spend more. Yet, boutiques face above-average failure rates, especially at a time when e-commerce and national chain retailers have taken priority.

Small boutiques do not capture the economies of scale enjoyed by retail chains, which in turn forces boutiques to sell their inventory at a higher price (Hiner, 2022). Despite having fewer

resources at their disposal, boutiques can sometimes establish a loyal clientele. Social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, can help boutiques facilitate such loyalty.

### **Small, Independent Clothing Boutiques & Social Media Promotion**

A social media presence has become an important success factor for many small businesses (Öztamur & Karakadilar, 2014). Small clothing boutiques do not have the same resources of large retailers and so may be unable to hire someone to focus on social media marketing (McClure, 2017). Boutique owners may run the social program themselves.

Small, independent clothing boutiques use social media for a variety of reasons. These reasons include but are not limited to:

- Increasing communication between the business and customer
- Increasing brand awareness
- Creating online shopping experiences
- Eliminating unnecessary costs (McClure, 2017)

Social media promotion may be a cost-effective way to grow a clothing boutique. With the right strategy, boutiques can flourish not only locally but nationwide (McClure, 2017). Owners can also create brand loyalty and trust with customers in ways not seen with traditional media promotion (Öztamur & Karakadilar, 2014).

### **The Use of Facebook and/or Instagram by Small Clothing Boutiques**

Boutiques today are increasingly using a “snapshot aesthetic,” in contrast to the traditional “studio aesthetic,” in their Reels (Noonan, 2019). A snapshot aesthetic provides a relatively relaxed and relatable appeal, more personable and attractive to many everyday consumers. The snapshot aesthetic “appears as if it [the photograph] could have been taken by the average consumer,” whereas a traditional studio aesthetic is more posed and less natural (Noonan, 2019).

### **Small, Independent Clothing Boutiques in Fayetteville, Arkansas**

With a population of 95,230 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021), and home to the flagship campus of the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville is a prospering college town. Fayetteville is also home to a rapidly growing fashion industry. Largely due to the University of Arkansas’ apparel program and NWA Fashion Week (Experience Fayetteville), Fayetteville has become a center for fashion brands and designers alike. Whether the customer wants sustainably and ethically manufactured clothing, or upscale and elegant fashion, boutiques in Fayetteville serve a variety of clienteles.

As a hub for entrepreneurs, many aspiring small business owners have brought their ideas to life in Fayetteville (Experience Fayetteville). The community emphasizes the importance of supporting small, independent businesses, as embodied in the phrase “Shop Local” (Empire Creative).

## Methodology

This quantitative analysis reviewed the individual Facebook and Instagram profiles of 15 small, independent clothing boutiques in Fayetteville, Arkansas. The researcher collected data on the presence and engagement levels of organic Reels posted to each platform in 2022, between January 1 and December 31. For each Reel, the researcher recorded the number of likes and comments.

To be included in the sample, boutiques had to meet the following three criteria:

- Must sell women's clothing, shoes, and/or accessories
- Must be located in Fayetteville, Arkansas
- Must have only one storefront in Fayetteville, Arkansas

Fifteen boutiques met these sampling criteria, including A-Team, Blythe Boutique, By Request, Clothe Boutique, Darcy Apparel, Fox Trot Boutique, Honeyville Clothing, In Motion Boutique, Lola, Maude Boutique, Maven Boutique, Riffraff, Skye On The Town, Stache, and Wander Boutique.

The researcher used a structured instrument to collect data. This instrument contained 10 questions:

1. Does the boutique have an Instagram account?
2. Does the boutique have a Facebook account?
3. How many followers does the boutique have on their Instagram account?
4. How many followers does the boutique have on their Facebook account?
5. How many organic Instagram Reels were published for the time period?
6. How many organic Facebook Reels were published for the time period?
7. How many likes did the boutique receive per organic Instagram Reel?
8. How many likes did the boutique receive per organic Facebook Reel?
9. How many comments did the boutique receive per organic Instagram Reel?
10. How many comments did the boutique receive per organic Facebook Reel?

The data were then compiled to calculate the mean, median, and range of followers, likes, and comments for each boutique. Averages across all boutiques were also calculated.

## Analysis

For this quantitative analysis, the researcher reviewed the Facebook and/or Instagram pages of 15 small, independent clothing boutiques in Fayetteville, Arkansas. First, the researcher checked for the existence of a Facebook and/or Instagram page.

All boutiques had an Instagram profile, and all but one had a Facebook profile.

**Table 1**  
**Facebook and/or Instagram Account**

<b>Fayetteville Clothing Boutiques</b>	<b>Does the Boutique Have an Instagram Account?</b>	<b>Does the Boutique Have a Facebook Account?</b>
A-Team	Yes	Yes
Blythe Boutique	Yes	Yes
By Request	Yes	Yes
Clothe Boutique	Yes	Yes
Darcy Apparel	Yes	Yes
Fox Trot Boutique	Yes	Yes
Honeyville Clothing	Yes	Yes
In Motion Boutique	Yes	Yes
Lola	Yes	No
Maude Boutique	Yes	Yes
Maven Boutique	Yes	Yes
Riffraff	Yes	Yes
Skye On The Town	Yes	Yes
Stache	Yes	Yes
Wander Boutique	Yes	Yes

The researcher then recorded the number of followers per platform. Information about the number of followers could provide context for understanding data more directly associated with the research questions. Not including the boutiques with a hidden follower count, the boutiques averaged a mean of 50,261 followers on Facebook and 14,620 on Instagram. However, the median follower value was 2,250 on Facebook and 10,400 on Instagram. The range was 524,713 for Facebook and 62,030 on Instagram. One boutique, Riffraff, had a disproportionately high number of Facebook followers, 525,000.

**Table 2**  
**Number of Followers**

<b>Fayetteville Clothing Boutiques</b>	<b>How Many Followers Does the Boutique Have on Their Instagram Account?</b>	<b>How Many Followers Does the Boutique Have on Their Facebook Account?</b>
A-Team	3,567	287
Blythe Boutique	4,119	1,900
By Request	3,900	2,400
Clothe Boutique	12,300	2,100
Darcy Apparel	10,000	1,500
Fox Trot Boutique	2,670	N/A
Honeyville Clothing	10,500	685
In Motion Boutique	4,530	261
Lola	13,500	N/A
Maude Boutique	41,700	52,000
Maven Boutique	8,908	4,500
Riffraff	64,700	525,000
Skye On The Town	17,700	10,000
Stache	10,400	N/A
Wander Boutique	10,800	2,500

The researcher went through each Facebook and Instagram account to record the number of organic Reels published during the 2022 calendar year. Every boutique in the sample published at least one Instagram Reel in 2022, while exactly two-thirds of boutiques published at least one Facebook Reel for the same period.

Not including boutiques without Reel activity, boutiques averaged a mean of 10.53 organic Reels on Facebook and 59.33 on Instagram. The median organic Reels value for Facebook was 4 and 52 on Instagram. The range for the number of organic Reels was 55 on Facebook and 101 on Instagram. By Request had 108 Reels on Instagram, the largest value of all boutiques. In Motion had 56 Reels on Facebook, the largest value of all boutiques.

**Table 3**  
**Number of Organic Reels Per Boutique**

<b>Fayetteville Clothing Boutiques</b>	<b>Number of Organic Reels Per Boutique on Instagram</b>	<b>Number of Organic Reels Per Boutique on Facebook</b>
A-Team	52	N/A
Blythe Boutique	7	3
By Request	108	38
Clothe Boutique	88	1
Darcy Apparel	52	7
Fox Trot Boutique	47	14
Honeyville Clothing	93	N/A
In Motion Boutique	33	56
Lola	53	N/A
Maude Boutique	66	6
Maven Boutique	85	N/A
Riffraff	38	3
Skye On The Town	64	4
Stache	11	N/A
Wander Boutique	93	3

The researcher then reviewed every organic Reel on Instagram per boutique to compile its mean number of likes and comments. The boutiques together averaged a mean of 55.44 likes and 2.86 comments per organic Instagram Reel. The median value for likes was 51.79 and 1.13 for comments. The range for likes was 141.39 and 14.74 for comments.

**Table 4**  
**Average of Instagram Likes & Comments Per Boutique**

<b>Fayetteville Clothing Boutiques</b>	<b>On Average, How Many LIKES Does the Boutique Receive Per Organic Reel on Instagram?</b>	<b>On Average, How Many COMMENTS Does the Boutique Receive Per Organic Reel on Instagram?</b>
A-Team	36.29	0.92
Blythe Boutique	33.00	0.50
By Request	51.79	4.14
Clothe Boutique	74.29	1.13
Darcy Apparel	73.69	3.80
Fox Trot Boutique	64.87	1.74
Honeyville Clothing	27.72	0.77
In Motion Boutique	13.75	0.063
Lola	57.33	1.12
Maude Boutique	57.22	1.58
Maven Boutique	46.44	0.26
Riffraff	155.14	7.60
Skye On The Town	56.25	4.05
Stache	33.20	0.40
Wander Boutique	50.64	14.80

The researcher reviewed each organic Reel on Facebook per boutique to compile the average number of likes and comments. The boutiques averaged a mean of 1.43 likes and 0.04 comments per organic Facebook Reel. The median value for likes was 0.9 and 0 for comments. Compared to the mean averages and the median value of Instagram organic Reels, the data may suggest boutiques generate higher engagement with Reels on Instagram than Facebook. The highest average and the range for likes was 3.42 and 0.29 for comments.

**Table 5**  
**Average of Facebook Likes & Comments Per Boutique**

<b>Fayetteville Clothing Boutiques</b>	<b>On Average, How Many LIKES Does the Boutique Receive Per Organic Reel on Facebook?</b>	<b>On Average, How Many COMMENTS Does the Boutique Receive Per Organic Reel on Facebook?</b>
A-Team	N/A	N/A
Blythe Boutique	1	0
By Request	3.42	0.29
Clothe Boutique	4	0
Darcy Apparel	1.14	0
Fox Trot Boutique	2.43	0.14
Honeyville Clothing	N/A	N/A
In Motion Boutique	0	0
Lola	N/A	N/A
Maude Boutique	.80	0
Maven Boutique	N/A	N/A
Riffraff	0.33	0
Skye On The Town	0.50	0
Stache	N/A	N/A
Wander Boutique	0.67	0



## Select Screenshots of Reels Used by Fayetteville-Based Boutiques



Fig. 2. Riffraff Instagram Reel



Fig. 3. Darcy Apparel Instagram Reel



Fig. 4. Maude Boutique Facebook Reel

## Discussion

When businesses are looking for a cost-effective marketing tactic, they often turn to social media marketing (Bajwa, 2022). Social media platforms have become a powerful marketing channel, as there are over 3.2 billion active social media users worldwide. Seventy percent of small businesses use at least one social media platform to market their business (Ibrahim, 2021). Through Facebook and Instagram Reels, businesses can create short, entertaining videos to expand their target audience (Instagram, 2020). Forty-seven percent of global consumers indicated that Reels help them learn and try new products (Meta, 2022).

This quantitative analysis examined the Facebook and Instagram pages of 15 small, independent clothing boutiques in Fayetteville, Arkansas. Data were collected on both the presence and engagement levels of Reels.

Specifically, this research addressed two research questions:

- Do small, independent clothing boutiques in Fayetteville, Arkansas promote their business with organic Facebook and/or Instagram Reels?
- What engagement level, in terms of likes and comments, is associated with these organic Facebook and/or Instagram Reels?

The results of this effort will now be discussed for both research questions.

### **RQ1: Do Small, Independent Clothing Boutiques in Fayetteville, Arkansas Promote Their Business with Organic Facebook and/or Instagram Reels?**

The researcher found that each boutique used Instagram Reels to promote their business, while 10 of 15 used Facebook Reels. As Instagram Reels generate more likes and saves than regular in-feed, static posts (Metricool, 2022), it is not altogether surprising that these businesses would demonstrate such widespread usage of the format.

The data suggests that small, independent clothing boutiques in Fayetteville, Arkansas are using organic Facebook and/or Instagram Reels to promote their business.

### **RQ2: What Engagement Level, in Terms of Likes and Comments, is Associated with These Organic Facebook and/or Instagram Reels?**

With Reels favored by the algorithm on both Facebook and Instagram, businesses can potentially generate higher engagement levels with these short videos than with traditional, static posts (Metricool, 2022).

The data suggest that boutiques had higher engagement levels with their Instagram Reels when compared to their Facebook Reels. Moreover, the researcher found that boutiques using giveaways on their Instagram pages had a higher mean average of likes and comments than boutiques who did not participate in giveaways. Through these giveaways, participants were prompted to like, comment, and share the post.

Altogether, this research seems to indicate that small, independent clothing boutiques in Fayetteville, Arkansas are making use of Reels to promote their business. Furthermore, this

research may suggest that such businesses achieve greater engagement through Instagram Reels than Facebook Reels.

### **Direction for Future Research**

This quantitative analysis focused exclusively on organic Facebook and Instagram Reels. Future researchers might consider examining Reels as sponsored content. Reel usage might also be examined for other industries such as beauty and technology and in different geographical areas, outside the small college town setting of this research effort. Boutiques may show different Reel activity, and followers may demonstrate different engagement levels, on an industry-by-industry and market-by-market basis.

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