

## **THE IMPACT OF INSTAGRAM REELS ON THE CONTENT PREFERENCES AND PURCHASING DECISIONS OF YOUNG ADULTS IN POLAND AND LITHUANIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the influence of Instagram Reels on content preferences and purchasing decisions among young adults in Poland and Lithuania. Despite similarities in platform usage, the two countries exhibit distinct patterns of engagement. Polish users are usually active on Instagram Reels, frequently liking, sharing, and searching for products featured in the content. In contrast, Lithuanian users engage less often but put their focus on product reviews and influencer-driven content. Both groups value creative and authentic content equally, although Polish users tend to enjoy entertainment-based themes, while Lithuanians prioritize content featuring products and celebrities. The study finds that Instagram Reels has a significant influence on purchasing decisions. Lithuanians are more likely to save Reels for future reference or visit brand profiles, while Polish users are directly searching for products online. Additionally, Lithuanian users demonstrate a higher consistency in content creation, with many regularly producing Reels, unlike Polish users who participate less frequently in content creation. The findings suggest that to increase engagement, brands targeting Polish consumers should focus on

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dynamic, entertaining content, while those targeting Lithuanian audiences should prioritize product-centric and influencer-led campaigns. Across both markets, authenticity and credibility remain crucial factors in capturing user attention and building brand trust. These researches offer valuable guidance for brands seeking to optimize their social media strategies in Poland and Lithuania.

**Key words:** social media, Instagram Reels, Lithuania, Poland.

## 1. Introduction

Instagram Reels, launched in 2020, has rapidly transformed the landscape of short-form video content, becoming a prominent feature of the platform's ecosystem. This feature enables users to create, share, and consume engaging videos, blending creativity, entertainment, and discoverability. Among younger demographics in Lithuania and Poland, Instagram Reels has gained considerable popularity, serving as both a medium for personal expression and a powerful tool for brand engagement. This research aims to analyze the trends, behaviors, and cultural nuances associated with Instagram Reels usage in these two countries, providing valuable insights for marketers and content creators. This study is grounded in the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974), which explains the motivations driving media consumption, including entertainment, information-seeking, and social interaction. Additionally, Kaplan and Haenlein (2020) emphasize the significance of social media platforms in shaping consumer behaviour, fostering community engagement, and enhancing brand loyalty. The increasing prominence of short-form video content, as high-lighted by Phua et al. (2021), underscores its role in influencing audience behaviour and driving brand awareness. These theoretical foundations provide a lens through which the impact of Instagram Reels on user engagement and cross-cultural differences may be explored.

The primary goal of this research is to investigate how young adults in Lithuania and Poland interact with Instagram Reels, with a focus on motivations, engagement patterns, and brand-related behaviours. Specific objectives include identifying the key factors that drive user engagement with Instagram Reels, exploring the role of Instagram Reels in influencing brand perceptions and purchase decisions, and comparing cultural and behavioural differences in Instagram Reels usage between Lithuanian and Polish users. Based on preliminary findings, the hypothesis suggests that Polish users exhibit higher levels of engagement with Instagram Reels compared to their Lithuanian counterparts. This variation is attributed to differences in digital adoption, cultural preferences, and content consumption habits. The purpose of this research is to provide actionable insights for brands, marketers, and content creators seeking to optimize their strategies on Instagram Reels. By understanding the cultural and behavioural dynamics of users in Lithuania and Poland, businesses can craft more

targeted and effective campaigns. Moreover, this study contributes to the broader academic discourse on digital media and cross-cultural social media usage, offering a nuanced perspective on the interplay between technology and user behaviour. As Instagram Reels continues to evolve as a dominant platform for digital engagement, this research highlights its potential as a tool for fostering meaningful connections between users and brands. By bridging the gap between user expectations and content delivery, the findings aim to empower businesses to thrive in an increasingly competitive digital landscape.

## 2. Analysis of original research

The research sample consisted of 360 people, coming from Lithuania (180 people) and Poland (180 people). In terms of gender, the majority of participants were women: 226 persons (62.8% of the sample), of which 98 women were from Lithuania and 128 from Poland. Men accounted for 130 persons (36.1% of the sample), including 79 from Lithuania and 51 from Poland. Additionally, 4 people (1.1% of the sample) declared a different gender - 3 from Lithuania and 1 from Poland.

The age of respondents ranged from 19 to over 25 years. Among women, the largest age group was 21–23 years old (107 women, including 36 from Lithuania and 71 from Poland), and the smallest group was over 25 years old (16 women, including 7 from Lithuania and 9 from Poland). Men were also dominated by those aged 21–23 (62 participants, including 37 from Lithuania and 25 from Poland), while the least numerous group was men over 25 (9 participants, including 6 from Lithuania and 3 from Poland). People of a different gender were mainly participants aged 24–25 (3 people: 2 from Lithuania and 1 from Poland), and one person over 25 (from Lithuania).

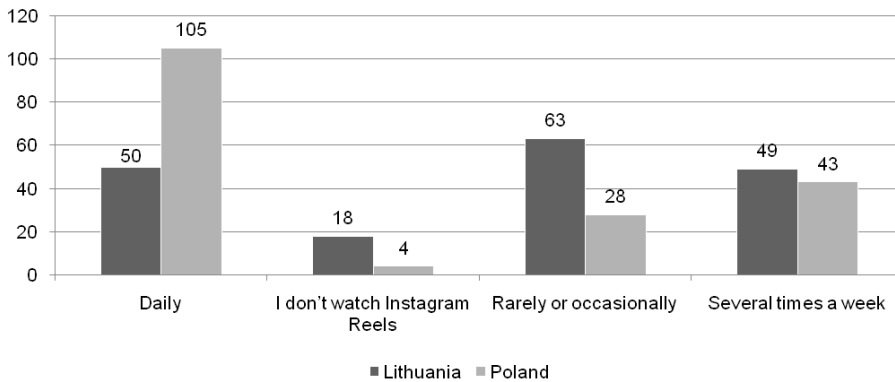
Respondents also differed in terms of educational level. Among women, the largest group were third-year university students (69 people, including 23 from Lithuania and 46 from Poland), and the smallest group were students at master's/postgraduate level (10 people, 5 from each country). Among men, third-year students were the most numerous (42 persons, including 25 from Lithuania and 17 from Poland) and the least numerous were students at master's/postgraduate level (4 persons, including 3 from Lithuania and 1 from Poland). Those declaring a different gender were mainly fourth-year students (2 persons: 1 from Lithuania and 1 from Poland).

The survey was conducted remotely using a Google Form, which allowed to effectively reach a wide range of respondents from Lithuania and Poland. The data collection process started in November 2024 and ended in December 2024. The chosen research method ensured the anonymity of the participants and enabled the collection of responses at a convenient time for the participants, which increases the reliability and representativeness of the results.

The results of the research provide valuable information that can be useful for brands and marketers looking to optimise their activities on Instagram. The results show differences in the preferences of Polish and Lithuanian users, as well as their different way of using Reels. The study can form the basis for further analysis to better understand how social media content influences the behaviour of young adults in both countries.

## 2.1. Frequency of use and involvement

Usage frequency and user engagement are two important indicators of the popularity of social media platforms. Instagram, as one of the most frequently used applications, is characterized by its wide reach, easy accessibility, and usability, which makes it an important communication tool in the social space (Chobot, 2019). This section focuses on the analysis of the frequency of viewing Instagram Reels to better understand how intensively users engage with this content format. The research results provide valuable information on users' habits in the context of everyday use of the platform.

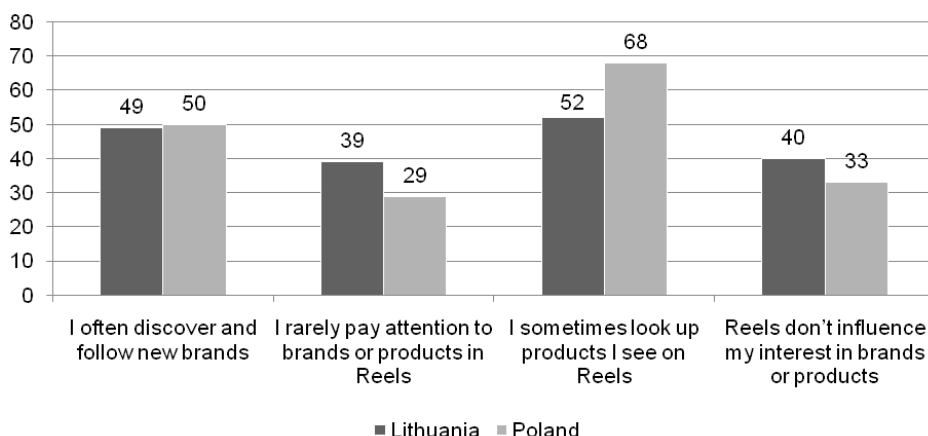


**Figure 1.** How often do you watch Instagram Reels?

*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

The graph shows the frequency of viewing Instagram Reels in two countries - Lithuania (darker bars) and Poland (lighter bars). When analysing the similarities and differences between Lithuania and Poland, it can be seen that in both countries a small percentage of people do not use the Instagram Reels feature (18 in Lithuania and 4 in Poland). Also, the number of people viewing Reels several times a week is similar (49 in Lithuania and 43 in Poland). The biggest differences concern daily use – in Poland as many as 105 people watch Reels daily, while in Lithuania it is only 50. Lithuanians, on the other hand, are much more likely to use this feature rarely or occasionally (63 people), which contrasts with the result in Poland (28 people).

In summary, Poles are more involved in using Instagram Reels on a daily basis, which may reflect a greater interest in the feature or a higher level of engagement with social media. Lithuanians, on the other hand, are more likely to treat Reels as an occasional source of entertainment, indicating differences in digital habits between the two countries.



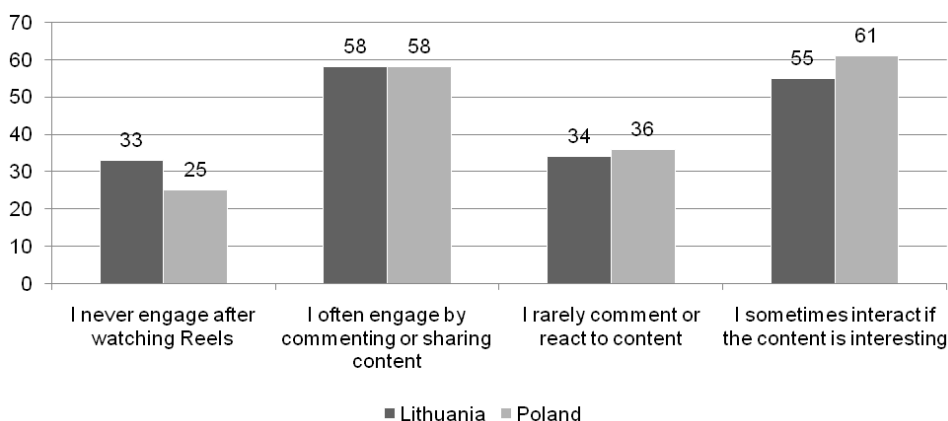
**Figure 2.** How do Instagram Reels influence your engagement with brands or products?  
*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

The graph illustrates the impact of Instagram Reels on user engagement with brands or products in two countries - Lithuania and Poland. Analysis of the results shows both similarities and differences in user behaviour from these countries. In Lithuania, 49 people declare that they often discover and follow new brands thanks to Instagram Reels, a result similar to Poland, where 50 people indicated so. In Lithuania, on the other hand, 39 people admit that they rarely pay attention to brands or products on Reels, while in Poland this answer was selected by 29 people, indicating a greater interest in products among Polish users.

One of the more prominent categories is the search for products seen on Instagram Reels. In Poland, as many as 68 people admit that they sometimes search for information about products they have seen on Reels, which is the highest result in this group. By comparison, in Lithuania, 52 people chose such a response, indicating less engagement in this aspect. Regarding the lack of impact of Reels on interest in brands, 40 people in Lithuania said that this feature does not affect their interest in brands or products, while in Poland this opinion was expressed by 33 people.

In summary, in both countries Instagram Reels helps users discover new brands, which shows a similar level of interest in the feature. However, Poles are much more likely to use Reels as a source of inspiration to find products, while Lithuanians are more reserved in this regard. The results suggest that Instagram

Reels plays a more important role in building user engagement in Poland than in Lithuania, which may be due to cultural differences or the level of social media use in both countries.



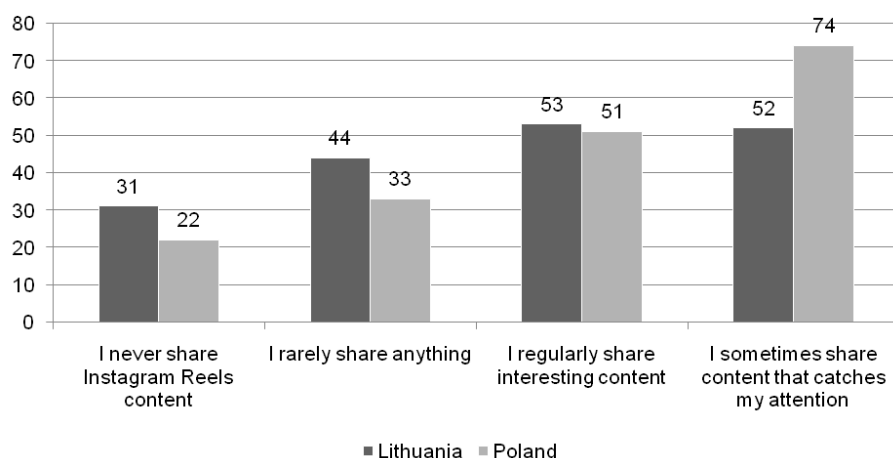
**Figure 3.** How encouraged do you feel to interact (e.g., comment, like, share) after watching Instagram Reels?

*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

The graph shows the extent to which Lithuanian and Polish users engage in interaction after viewing Instagram Reels, such as by commenting, liking or sharing content. In Lithuania, 33 people declare that they never engage after viewing Reels, while in Poland, such a response was selected by 25 people, indicating greater reticence on the part of Lithuanians. The most popular category in both countries is 'I often engage by commenting or sharing content', with 58 people in both Lithuania and Poland selecting this answer each, showing a similar attitude to this form of interaction.

As for those who rarely comment or respond to content, in Lithuania this answer was selected by 34 people, while in Poland the number was 36, indicating a very similar level of engagement in this category. On the other hand, for those who sometimes interact if the content is interesting, Poles are more active – 61 people in Poland compared to 55 people in Lithuania. This suggests that Poles are more likely to respond to attractive content, while Lithuanians are slightly more reserved.

In summary, both user groups show similar patterns in commenting on and sharing content, but differ when it comes to not reacting or responding to interesting content. Poles seem to be more engaged on the Instagram platform, especially when the content is attractive to them, while Lithuanians are more passive in their activity.



**Figure 4.** How often do you share Instagram Reels content with your friends or on social media?

*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

The next graph shows how often Lithuanian and Polish users share content from Instagram Reels with friends or on social media. Among Lithuanians, 31 people declare that they never share content from Instagram Reels, compared to 22 people in Poland, suggesting that Poles are more likely to share material. Rare sharing was declared by 44 people from Lithuania and 33 people from Poland, which also indicates that Poles are more active in this aspect.

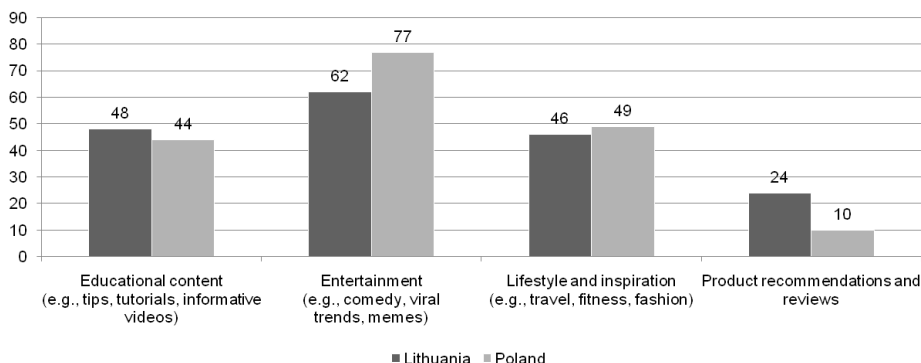
Regular sharing of interesting content is equally popular in both countries - this answer was selected by 53 people from Lithuania and 51 people from Poland, which indicates similar habits of users in this category. On the other hand, the biggest difference can be seen in the case of people who occasionally share content that catches their attention. In Poland, such an answer was indicated by 74 people, while in Lithuania the number was 52, which shows a much higher propensity of Poles to spontaneously share interesting material.

In summary, Poles are generally more active in sharing content from Instagram Reels, especially in situations where the content seems interesting. Lithuanians, on the other hand, are more likely to report a lack of engagement in sharing content. Nonetheless, in terms of regularly sharing interesting material, the differences between the two countries are minimal, suggesting some similarities in the habits of social media users.

## 2.2. Content preferences and their impact on purchasing decisions

Content preferences are key to the impact of social media on consumer decisions. Instagram Reels, as a dynamic and engaging form of communication, are playing an increasingly important role in shaping users' purchasing choices.

This section examines three key aspects related to the reception and impact of this content format. Respondents were asked about their favourite types of Instagram Reels content, their assessment of its impact on purchasing decisions, and the features that distinguish this format from others. The results will allow us to understand how Instagram Reels fit into consumer habits and brands' marketing strategies.



**Figure 5.** What type of content do you enjoy most on Instagram Reels?

*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

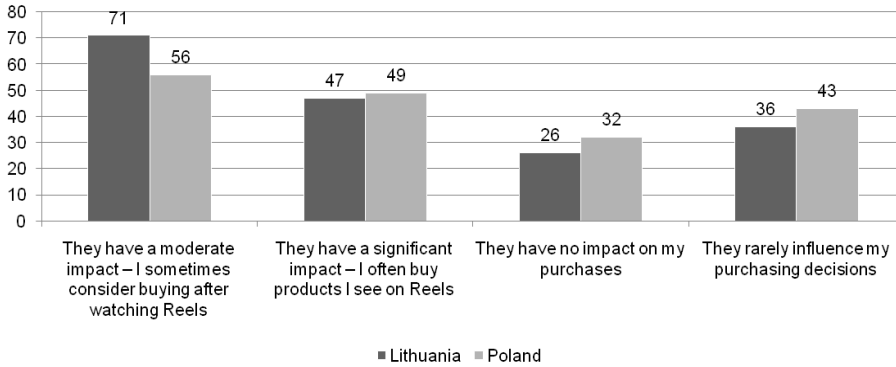
The fifth chart shows the preferences of Lithuanian and Polish users for the type of content on Instagram Reels that they enjoy the most. In the category of educational content, such as tips, tutorials or informational videos, similar results were achieved by Lithuanians (48 people) and Poles (44 people), indicating a similar interest in this type of material in both countries.

When it comes to entertainment, including comedy, memes or viral trends, Poles show much more interest - as many as 77 people from Poland compared to 62 people from Lithuania chose this category. Entertainment seems to be definitely more popular among Polish users.

In the category of lifestyle and inspiration, such as travel, fitness or fashion, the results are similar – 46 Lithuanians and 49 Poles prefer this type of content, indicating little difference between the countries. The biggest difference can be seen in the case of product recommendations and reviews. In this category, 24 people from Lithuania declared that they like this type of content, while only 10 people in Poland chose it, suggesting that Lithuanians are more likely to look for such content on Instagram Reels.

In summary, the biggest differences between Lithuania and Poland are in entertainment content, which is more popular in Poland, and content related to product reviews, which Lithuanians prefer. In other categories, such as educational and inspirational content, users from both countries show similar interest.





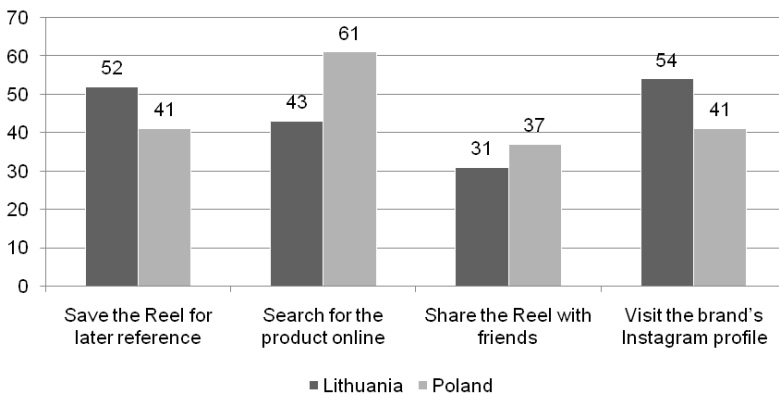
**Figure 6.** To what extent do Instagram Reels influence your purchasing decisions?

*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

The sixth chart compares the reactions of Lithuanian and Polish young adults after viewing a product on Instagram Reels. The most common reaction, “moderate impact,” was chosen by 71 Lithuanians and 56 Poles, showing a higher tendency among Lithuanians to consider purchases.

For “significant impact,” results were similar, with 47 Lithuanians and 49 Poles indicating frequent purchases influenced by Reels.

In contrast, 26 Lithuanians and 32 Poles reported no impact on their buying decisions, while 36 Lithuanians and 43 Poles said Reels rarely influence their purchases.



**Figure 7.** What is the most common reaction from young adults after viewing a product in an Instagram Reel?

*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

In summary, the chart reveals that Lithuanians are slightly more inclined to consider purchases based on Instagram Reels, with higher numbers in the

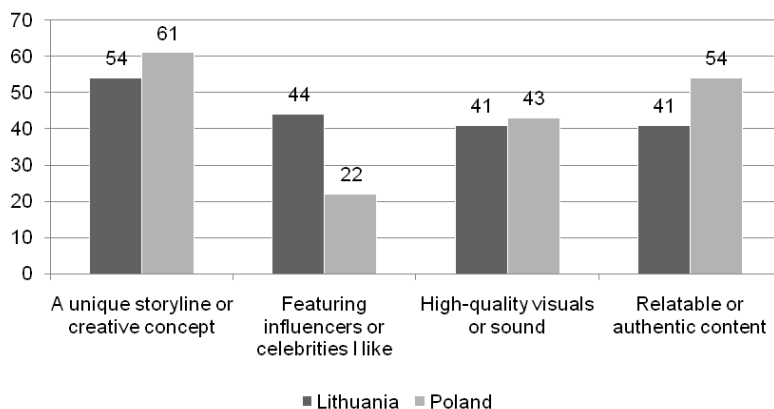
moderate impact category. On the other hand, Poles show a slightly higher tendency to report no or minimal impact on their purchasing decisions. Overall, the data highlights varying degrees of influence that Instagram Reels have on young adults in both countries, with differences in preferences and purchasing behavior.

The graph shows the most common reactions of young adults from Lithuania and Poland after seeing a product on Instagram Reels. For Lithuanians, the most popular reaction is to save Reels for later – 52 people chose this response, compared to 41 people in Poland.

Poles are more likely than Lithuanians to search for products online after seeing them in Reels – 61 people from Poland declare this action, compared to 43 people from Lithuania. When it comes to sharing Reels with friends, Poles also lead the way, although the difference is not large – 37 people in Poland share content with friends, compared to 31 people in Lithuania.

Visiting a brand's profile on Instagram is a more popular response among Lithuanians, with 54 people indicating this response, compared to 41 people in Poland.

In summary, Poles are more likely to engage in searching for products online and sharing content with friends, while Lithuanians are more likely to save Reels for later and visit brand profiles on Instagram. Both groups show various approaches to responding to product content, which may be due to different consumption habits and preferences.



**Figure 8.** What makes an Instagram Reel stand out to you?

*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

The chart shows the factors that make Instagram Reel stand out in the eyes of Lithuanian and Polish users. For Lithuanians, a unique scenario or creative idea is most important – 54 people indicated this factor, compared to 61 in Poland, making it the most popular in this group as well.

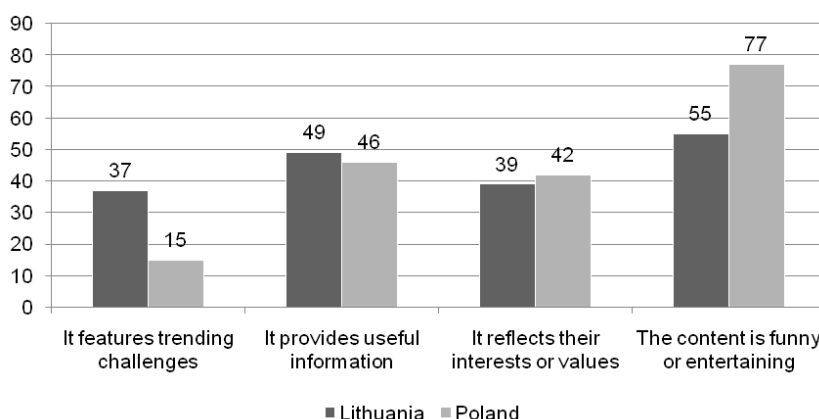
The presence of influencers or celebrities that users like is more important for Lithuanians – 44 people indicated this answer, compared to only 22 people from Poland, showing a clear difference in preference between the two countries.

Reel visual or audio quality plays a similar role in both countries – in both Lithuania and Poland, this answer was selected by 41 and 43 people respectively. Content that is relatable or authentic is equally important to both groups – 54 people in Lithuania and 41 people in Poland consider it important.

In summary, Poles value creative ideas more, while Lithuanians show more interest in content featuring influencers or celebrities. Both countries place a high value on visual quality and authenticity, indicating universal values in the reception of content on Instagram.

### 2.3. Motivations for sharing and authenticity

The motivations for sharing content on social media, especially on platforms such as Instagram, are extremely complex and diverse. Users are often driven by the need to belong, the desire to be accepted, and the desire to express themselves in an authentic way. Contemporary social media provide a space where individuals can not only present their lives, but also build and maintain social relationships. Authenticity plays a key role in this process, as it influences how users are perceived by their communities. As Filipek (2023) notes, sharing on social media combines the individual dimension with broader cultural and social contexts, making it an important element of contemporary communication practices. Analyzing questions about young adults' motivations for sharing content and their approach to authenticity will allow us to better understand what values and needs drive their actions on Instagram.



**Figure 9.** What motivates young adults to share Instagram Reels with their network?

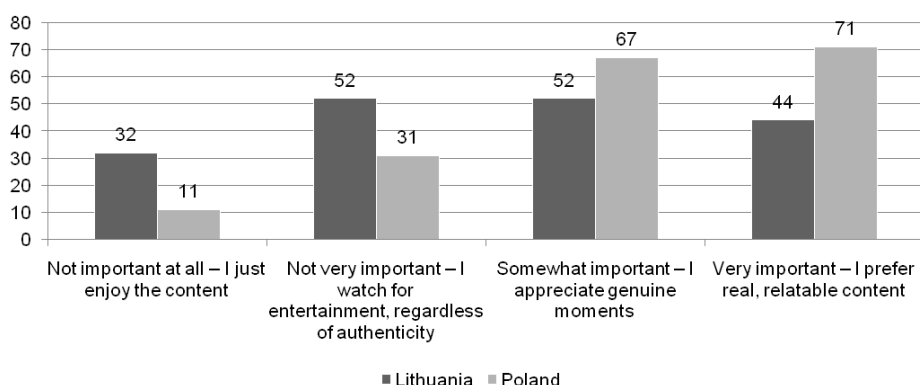
*Source: Own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

The ninth graph illustrates the factors motivating young adults from Lithuania and Poland to share Instagram Reels on their social networks. Among Lithuanians, 37 people indicated that they share Reels if they contain popular challenges, while in Poland only 15 people selected this option, showing less interest in this type of content in Poland.

Content providing useful information is important to 49 people from Lithuania and 46 people from Poland, making it one of the more popular motivations in both countries. Reels reflecting users' interests or values received almost comparable support in both countries – indicated by 39 people from Lithuania and 42 from Poland.

The biggest differences can be seen for fun or entertainment content, which is the main motivation for 77 people from Poland, while it was indicated by 55 people in Lithuania. This factor is by far the most important for both groups, although it is clearly more popular in Poland.

In summary, while both Lithuanians and Poles value useful and entertaining content, Poles clearly prefer humorous content, while Lithuanians are more likely to respond to challenges and practical information.



**Figure 10.** How important is authenticity in Instagram Reels to you?

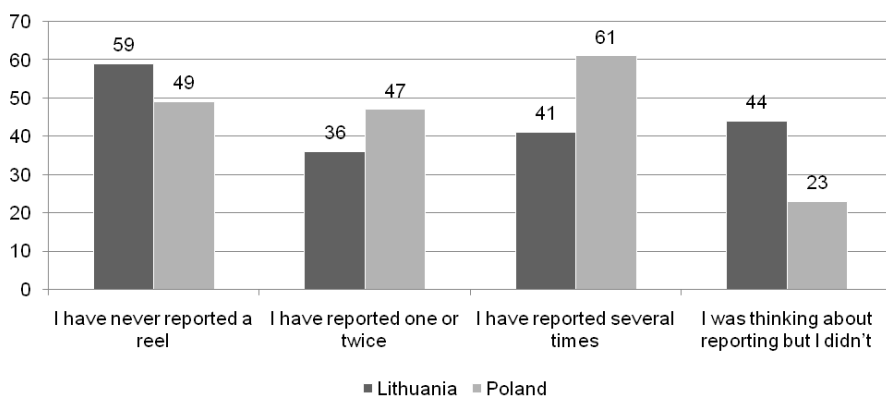
*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

The data on the importance of authenticity of content on Instagram Reels shows the different attitudes of Lithuanians and Poles. 32 people from Lithuania and 11 people from Poland said that authenticity does not matter - all that matters to them is the enjoyment of the content. In contrast, 52 people from Lithuania and 31 people from Poland said that authenticity is not particularly important to them, as they watch Reels mainly for entertainment.

However, the largest number of users from both countries believe that authenticity is moderately important, with 52 people from Lithuania and 67 people

from Poland appreciating content that depicts real moments. In contrast, authenticity is of particular importance to 44 people from Lithuania and 71 people from Poland, who prefer real and relatable content.

The results indicate that Poles attach more importance to the authenticity of content than Lithuanians, who are more divided in their preferences. For Poles, real and relatable content is key, while Lithuanians are more likely to treat authenticity as a secondary element, focusing more on entertainment.



**Figure 11.** Have you ever reported Instagram Reels?

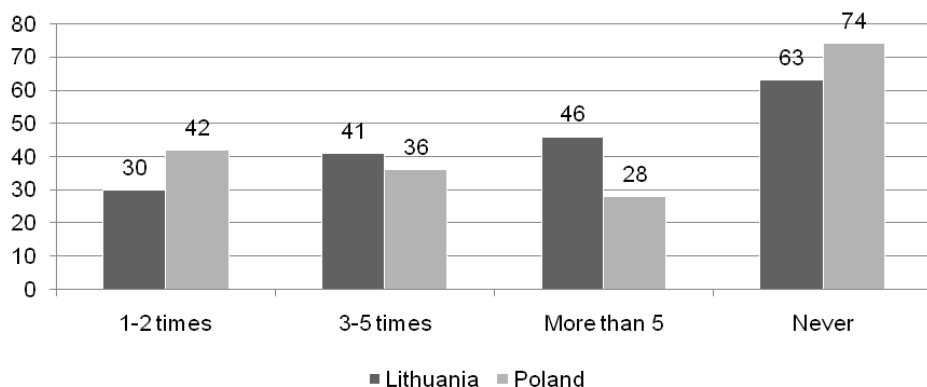
*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

The data on reporting content on Instagram Reels highlights interesting behavioral differences between users in Lithuania and Poland, as reflected in the numerical responses. A notable proportion of users from both countries have never reported a video, with 59 people in Lithuania and 49 in Poland falling into this category. However, when it comes to occasional reporting, 36 Lithuanians and 47 Poles admitted to reporting content once or twice, suggesting that Polish users are slightly more inclined to act in such cases.

The contrast becomes more pronounced with users who report content more frequently. Here, 41 Lithuanians compared to 61 Poles indicated they had reported several times, showing that Poles are significantly more proactive in addressing content they find problematic. Conversely, hesitation to report was more common among Lithuanian users, with 44 Lithuanians saying they thought about reporting but didn't, compared to just 23 Poles who expressed similar hesitation.

In conclusion, the data reflects a clear pattern where Polish users are more active and decisive in reporting content on Instagram Reels, while Lithuanian users show greater hesitation and are less likely to engage in regular reporting. These trends suggest distinct regional attitudes toward content moderation and

highlight opportunities for platforms to tailor their user education and engagement strategies accordingly.



**Figure 12.** Have you every created Instagram Reels?

*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

The data on the creation of Instagram Reels shows some interesting differences between Lithuanian and Polish users. Firstly, there is noticeably more activity among Lithuanians in creating Reels on a regular basis. 46 people from Lithuania created more than 5 Reels, compared to only 28 people from Poland. This suggests that Lithuanians are more engaged in creating content on this platform, which may be due to greater creativity, a need to share their lives, or better familiarity with Reels' features.

In contrast, among Poles, a higher proportion of users have never tried to create Reels – 74 people compared to 63 in Lithuania. This may indicate that the format is less popular in Poland, that users are less confident in creating such content, or that there are cultural differences in the approach to social media.

An interesting phenomenon is the similar result in the '3–5 times' category, where the difference between Lithuania (41 people) and Poland (36 people) is small. This means that the moderation of Reels creation activity is quite similar in both countries.

Finally, the group of people who have created Reels only 1–2 times also differs – in Poland it is 42 people, while in Lithuania it is 30 people. This may suggest that Poles experiment with the format more often, but do not develop this activity on a wider scale.

In summary, Lithuanians appear to be more regular users of the Reels feature, while Poles are more likely to be among the group that has never developed it or has only experimented with the format. These differences may be due to technological factors, demographics or cultural preferences.

### 3. Conclusions

Instagram Reels has a significant impact on young adults in Poland and Lithuania, although their usage habits differ. Polish users are very active, often liking, sharing, and searching for products discovered on Reels. Lithuanian users, on the other hand, engage less often but show a greater interest in product reviews and influencer-inspired content. While both groups value creative and authentic content, Poles tend to gravitate towards entertainment-themed content, while Lithuanians prioritize content featuring products and celebrities. The impact of Reels on purchasing decisions is moderate in both countries. Lithuanians often save Reels for later or visit brand profiles, while Poles are more proactive in searching for products online. Furthermore, Lithuanians are more consistent content creators on the platform, with many of them regularly creating Reels compared to Polish users who have less experience creating this type of content.

To increase engagement, brands targeting Polish audiences should prioritize entertaining and visually dynamic content, while campaigns in Lithuania should focus on product-centric and influencer-led strategies. In both markets, authenticity and credibility remain key factors in capturing user attention and building trust.

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