



Impact of Dance Movement Styles on Audience Engagement in Short-Form Social Media Content: Evidence from Instagram

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Abstract

Social media has grown rapidly in the last decade, transforming the way people consume digital content. Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok prioritise short and visually appealing media made to capture attention quickly. This research's aim was to analyse the impact of different dance movement styles on audience engagement on Instagram. An experiment was conducted where three different videos (Jazz, ballet, and trend-based styles) were posted on the same account, and aired for 28 days. All the Instagram engagement metrics were later collected and compared to learn which video received the most interactions. The results showed that the jazz video received the highest number of views, likes, interactions, and reached the most accounts. It was accessed more by non-followers, which indicates strong reach and growth potential. On the other hand, the ballet video appealed to a smaller audience, with fewer views, shares, and saves. This suggests that skill-based content may not attract as broad an audience on platforms like Instagram, where viewers often prefer relatable and easily consumable content. Similarly, the trend-based video also received moderate views, indicating that although trends can increase visibility, their effectiveness may still depend on the timing, relevance, and how strongly they resonate with the target audience. Moreover, the results suggest that the Instagram algorithm and the order in which the videos were posted impacted the success of the jazz video, with the most recently posted content performing better. In conclusion, influencers, marketing firms, and other social media users should prioritise energetic, relatable styles to maximise reach and algorithmic promotion.

Keywords: *Dance; Social Media; Ballet; Jazz; Audience; Trend*

1. Introduction

1.1. General Background

Social media has developed at a high rate, and currently, more than 5.3 billion individuals across the globe are active social media users, and this demonstrates how much it has become a part of our lives (Arash F., 2026). Different applications like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube Shorts are gaining popularity, bringing about a big change in how users consume digital content. They focus on small bite-sized content that can be looked at and consumed in seconds and are visually appealing (Dodds, 2024).

The algorithmic feed is primarily focused on highly engaging content, and it is crucial that creators should know consumer preferences and interests to reach the maximum number of people. Dance has become one of the most commonly consumed media of short format particularly because this is readily consumable to viewers with limited attention span (Dance Project Studios, 2025).

Dance content appeals to diverse demographics and often transcends geographical and cultural boundaries through viral trends. Popular dance trends often spread rapidly over the internet, influencing global social media behaviour (Lisowski, 2025). There are multiple types of content on social media, including travel vlogs, voiceovers, and dance. Visual and kinetic appeal play a large role in determining the success of dance videos (Orlandi et al., 2020). All movement styles vary in complexity through the number of body parts and coordination involved. Differences in tempo in styles such as Salsa or contemporary also showcase intense movements as compared to flowing movements. The expressiveness and energy again make each style uniquely engaging for viewers.

Viewers may react differently to various dance styles. For example, highly intricate choreography, such as classical ballet, may captivate an audience through technical precision, while others may enjoy the fast-tempo movement of hip-hop (*The Role of Dynamics and Expression in Captivating Performances*, 2025). The relatability felt by the viewer also impacts their opinion. Most viewers prefer short videos, which are 15-30 seconds long and demand immediate attention since they are easier to consume (*Lafayette*, 2025). Content creators tend to use distinct movement styles in the first few seconds to engage the viewers and capture attention (*Sociallyin*, 2025). The main indicators of success on a video include likes, shares, comments, and watch time. These help to learn about the content appeal and virality. Moreover, average watch time can be used to find whether viewers are actually captivated enough to watch the full video, or if the engagement goes down within the first few seconds (*Manoukian & Manoukian*, 2025). The audience perception for all videos may vary based on familiarity, current trends, and social media norms. Different dance forms carry distinct cultural connotations, such as ballet being considered classical and TikTok dances being characterised as exaggerated.

1.2. Specific Background

The dynamics of short-form videos on social media have been discussed thoroughly in the literature. In the same realm, a research paper talks about how social media has changed the way people use and understand nonverbal communication (Wajahat, 2024). The focus was to investigate the influence of such platforms as Instagram, WhatsApp, and Snapchat on facial expressions, gestures, and eye contact. The research was primarily concerned with the way individuals convey their feelings on the Internet and whether the messages are received similarly to the way they are in real life. Regarding the methodology, the authors gathered answers from individuals aged 18-35 on open-ended questions. They also noted the way people interact using features such as emojis, filters, video calls, and selfies to substitute the normal nonverbal communication. The results indicated that although individuals tend to be more expressive on the Internet because of emojis and filters, it is also simpler to misunderstand what a person really wants to convey. Some users claimed that they feel better to express themselves over the internet, yet they have more difficulty discerning the complete message in the absence of body language or tone. Generally, the paper concluded that social media has contributed positively and negatively to nonverbal communication, simplifying communication in certain aspects and complicating in others.

In the same realm, a research by Leng et al. (2024) analysed how model position is portrayed in adverts and how that affects consumer behaviour. The research paper shows 3 studies which were done to come to the conclusion that model position and physical characteristics greatly affect consumer attitudes. Study 1 was an experiment done where 60 adults were shown advertisements with models standing on the right or left sides of the advertisement. The results showed that most participants had higher attention preference for the models shown on the right side. Study 2 had 40 participants judge the attractiveness of models and how that affected their clothing preferences. They had to imagine that they were in a store and

they were told to stand in front of a mirror and observe themselves. Participants with low body image responded faster to less attractive models that were repeatedly positioned on the right. The last study examined how makeup impacts consumer attitudes. Participants were divided into two groups (makeup and no makeup). This study once again proved that models standing on the right are seen to be more appealing and attractive than those on the left.

Another research paper talks about how the way brands tell stories in social media ads affects how much people engage with them (Chang et al., 2019). The paper focuses on whether brands should use a first-person or third-person voice in their ads, and how that works differently depending on whether the brand seems warm or competent. To test this idea and determine the best combinations, the researchers conducted five studies. Study 1 was a test of the impact of first-person or third-person narration on ad engagement on WeChat Moment ads. The findings revealed that the warm brands with the first-person voice received more likes, whereas the competent brands were more successful with the third-person voice. Study 2 concentrated on the effect of self-monitoring (degree to which individuals are concerned about social approval) on the response of users. High self-monitors were more likely to prefer competent, third-person ads and low self-monitors preferred warm, first-person ads. Study 3 reproduced the findings using a new group of ads and once again demonstrated that the correspondence of brand type and narration style have an impact on likes. Study 4 discussed more the reasons why this occurs and concluded that the feelings of belonging and self-enhancement had a significant influence on the responses of people. The last study put all those ideas to the test and once again proved that the combination of the appropriate narration style and the appropriate brand image results in increased engagement.

The fourth research paper explores how exposure to idealized images of women on social media affects female body image and how it impacts their mood (Al-Owaidi & Çengel, 2023). The paper showed three experiments that show consistent negative effects on self-perception and body satisfaction. In Study 1, there were 144 women who were either presented with idealized Instagram photos of thin, attractive women or with neutral photos of travelers. These findings indicated that the women who viewed those images were much more dissatisfied with their bodies and in a lower mood. In Study 2, the role of appearance comparison in these effects was studied. The images were idealized and 130 women were questioned about the frequency of comparing themselves with others. Individuals who made comparisons more with the attractive women were more affected negatively on their body image. Study 3 examined the effect of warning labels, including the alert the post is digitally altered, to minimize the adverse effect. The findings revealed that the impact of disclaimers was rather insignificant, and the level of body dissatisfaction was the same, regardless of the warning. Generally, the study concludes that idealized social media content has a negative effect on the body image of women, particularly the ones who are pre-disposed to comparison. It also implies that usual measures such as disclaimers might not be effective at mitigating these impacts.

The following study examines the impact of various kinds of tiktok dance challenge videos on the body perception of young women (Joiner et al., 2023). The idea was to determine whether the viewing of videos with thin and fat dancers can affect female attitudes to their bodies. Study 1 had 262 women aged between 18-25 who watched slim dancer, plus-size dancer, or neutral (animal) video. The findings revealed that plus-size and neutral videos enhanced body satisfaction, whereas slim dancer videos had a low impact on reducing body satisfaction. Study 2 was done with 280 women exploring why these findings were there. It discovered that social comparison was a major contributor whereby slimmer dancers videos elicited upward comparisons (worse feeling when compared to more attractive people) whereas plus-size videos elicited downward comparisons and resulting in more satisfaction. Study 3 involved 375 women, but to prevent bias, the study was disguised. Findings once again proved that thin dancer videos reduced body dissatisfaction and large dancer videos increased it. On balance, it is possible to conclude that the content of Tik Tok dances can directly influence the body image of young women.

Videos of slim dancers can decrease satisfaction, whereas the videos of plus-size can prevent it and even enhance it.

This paper examines how Tik Tok is transforming and altering the cultural and social meaning of music, especially in the way individuals find, appreciate and experience music (Borelli, 2022). The aim of the study was to understand whether TikTok influences individuals' perceptions of music's cultural and social meaning and if so, how does it do that? It dwells on three major processes that have been influenced by Tik Tok and include the discovery, listening, and creation of music. Having studied the existing literature on the role and significance of music in society, the researcher used qualitative interviews to conduct interviews with nine professionals who are both artists and production/distribution oriented in the music industry. The analysis revealed important themes of these discussions to demonstrate the greater industry influence of Tik Tok. The results emphasize the fact that Tik Tok is a digital and worldwide platform that has provided music with increased accessibility in terms of creation, consumption, and promotion. It makes a considerable change in the process of music discovery and appreciation, but accessibility also brings up the risk of homogenizing music and culture.

1.3. Literature Gap and Rationale for the Study

Recent sources on short-form digital content note the recent rise in the popularity of dance-based content on Instagram Reels and Tik Tok, but it is clear that the literature lacks a distinct gap considering movement styles as an independent variable affecting the engagement. The majority of studies fail to draw a fine line between these styles, intensities, and choreographies. They are more apt to divide dance into a whole category and make it less specific. Furthermore, the majority of the research is based on qualitative observations or user opinions and preferences; therefore, no quantitative analysis is provided of such engagement metrics as likes, shares, and comments. The studies involve opinion-based assertions, and extremely minimal supporting measures that assist in justifying their opinions.

This study seeks to fill these gaps by examining the effect of various movement styles in the content of short-form dance on the audience to provide a quantifiable response. This area should be studied to understand more about the psychology of the engagement of the audience, particularly due to the growing dependence on brands, marketers, and influencers on dance-based videos as a significant element of the social media campaigns. It will assist in knowing what types of movement are the most engaging to create and potentially give practical ideas on how to optimise content strategy. The study will add to the academic literature by providing evidence based on data on a relatively unexplored part of short-form media, which will enhance the theoretical knowledge on audience behaviour in a digital context.

2. Material and Methods

2.1. Research Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to examine the impact of distinct dance movement styles on audience engagement in short-form social media content. To assess the same, the following objectives are being explored.

- To compare audience engagement levels for the given videos
- To analyse which movement style generates the highest engagement
- To evaluate the patterns of audience interaction

2.2. Research Design and Experiment

An experimental study was conducted to examine how different dance styles affect the audience's perception and engagement. Three distinct dance movements - ballet, jazz, and trend based movements-

were chosen due to their contrasting movement qualities, so that there was a clear observation that could be drawn. The experiment was conducted in an empty indoor space with a white wall as the background to minimise visual distractions. To maintain consistency, the outfit was identical throughout the three videos, consisting of flared black pants and a white t-shirt. The audio track used in all videos was *Sarà perché ti amo*. All videos were posted on the same Instagram account to maintain consistency in audience exposure. The first video that was posted showcased ballet movements which emphasised an overall elegant and refined style. Then the video that showcased exaggerated and trendy dance movements, inspired by popular TikTok dances, was posted. The last video showcased jazz movements, which were more bouncy and expressive, was posted. Instagram Reels was chosen due to its strong emphasis on short-form video content and its popularity for dance-based media. All three videos were aired for 28 days to ensure reliable comparison.

2.3. Data

For this research, the independent variable was the dance style- Ballet, Jazz, and trend-based movement . Focusing on movement style allows us to directly see how they impact viewer response, without being impacted by anything else. The dependent variables were the audience engagement metrics, such as views, likes, shares, saves, comments, interactions, accounts reached and watch time. These engagement metrics are important performance indicators because they are widely used by influencers to measure the success of digital content. Analysing these variables provides quantitative, platform-relevant data that enables an objective comparison of how different dance movement styles perform in engaging audiences on Instagram Reels.

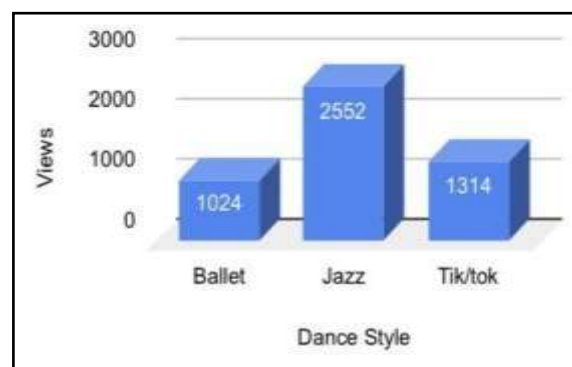
2.4. Data Analysis Method

The data was collected in many different types of graphs, including pie charts and histograms. It was converted into bar charts for better analysis, where 3 bars were created, which represented ballet, jazz, and trend-based styles. This was useful since it is easy to understand and effective for summarising large amounts of data. Converting all the different metrics into a common type of chart helped in interpreting the data quickly and allowed me to draw clear comparisons. It was easy to identify trends such as where the bar representing jazz was longer, and it stood out in almost all metrics.

3. Results

This section shows the observations made during the experiment.

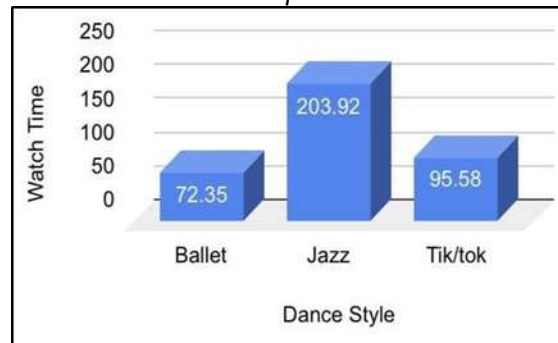
Figure 1
Number of views for each video



The above graph shows that the jazz video had the highest number of views, with a total of 2552 views, which was significantly higher than the ballet or trend-based videos. The trend-based video gained

1,314 views, while ballet had the lowest reach at 1,024 views. This shows that Jazz may be the most visually appealing to a wider audience, leading to higher initial exposure (Liu et al., 2024). The trend-based video received moderate views, even though it is well-known, possibly due to high competition on Instagram when it comes to that dance type (Sharma, 2022).

Figure 2
Watch Time for each video



Supporting the results of views, the watch time graph (Figure 2) showed that Jazz held the audience's attention for the longest duration, with a total watch time of 203.92 minutes. The trend-based video had 95.58 minutes, while ballet had the lowest watch time at 72.35 minutes. This suggests that viewers clicked on the video showing Jazz more, and also stayed to watch for more time. Trend-based dance, despite being designed for quick consumption, had a lower watch time, while ballet's lower watch time reflects people dropping off early. The significant difference between jazz and the other styles suggests that Jazz performances are more effective at sustaining viewer attention.

Figure 3
Number of Accounts reached by each video

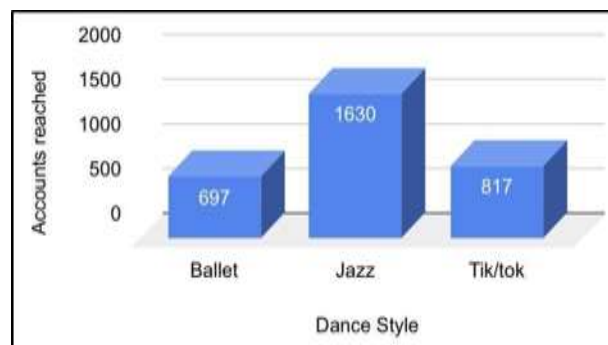
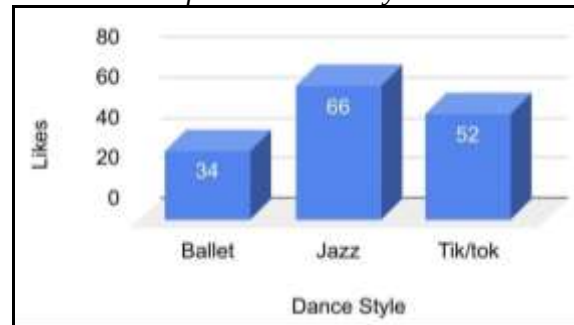


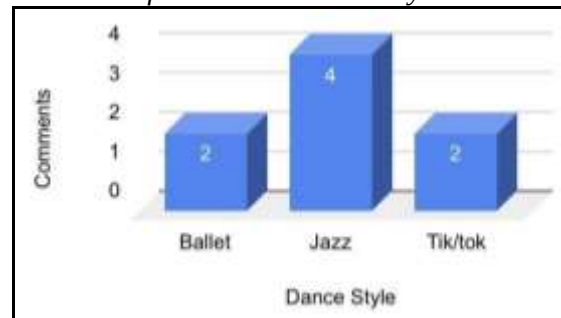
Figure 3 demonstrates that Jazz has the most accounts of 1630 which is by far above ballet (697) and trend-based content (817). This indicates that Jazz had the most advantage in accordance with Instagram algorithms (Nekvasil, 2026). This finding can be attributed to the order in which the videos are being posted. The trend-based video was uploaded after the ballet video and the jazz video was uploaded last. The findings show jazz as the most effective form in growing the visibility, and ballet content can be more appropriate to keep the attention of a small but committed audience. The trend-based dance once again had a moderate number of accounts reached. The result of this graph is also consistent with the number of views and watch time. Therefore, the more the video is shared by accounts, the more views and watch time are generated concomitantly.

Figure 4
Number of likes received by each video



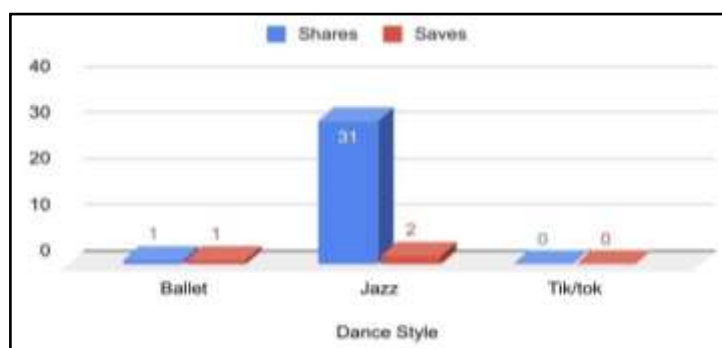
As seen in Figure 4, Jazz received the highest number of likes at 66 likes, while the trend-based video received 52 likes, and ballet received 34 likes. This pattern suggests that people are more inclined towards energetic and expressive content, which is commonly associated with jazz or trend-based videos (Admin, 2025), while ballet is seen as a more formal dance style. Although the trend-driven dances are commonly seen everywhere, this data may show that it is consumed passively, rather than people actively engaging with it. Ballet is often seen as a dance form that many people appreciate, but most don't engage with it frequently.

Figure 5
Number of comments received by each video



The graph in Figure 5 shows lower activity, as compared to other graphs; however, there are still differences. The jazz video received 4 comments, while the other two received 2 comments each. Comments take more effort than other ways of interacting, so the low numbers are also meaningful here. The low numbers overall may show that viewers prefer passive engagement, such as liking or watching, rather than actively expressing how they feel. Ballet and trend-based dance having equal comments suggests similar levels of discussion, despite differences in views and likes.

Figure 6
Number of Shares and Saves received by each video



The above figure shows that Jazz received 31 shares and 2 saves, while ballet received 1 share and 1 save. The trend-based video received zero shares and zero saves (Brooks, n.d.). The low saves across all three suggest that people use dance as entertainment, rather than for future reference. Jazz's high number of shares shows that people found it to be highly enjoyable. The trend-based dances lack of shares and saves may indicate short-term engagement driven by trends rather than lasting impact. Overall, as seen above as well, Jazz emerged as the most shareable dance style.

Figure 7
Number of Interactions for each video

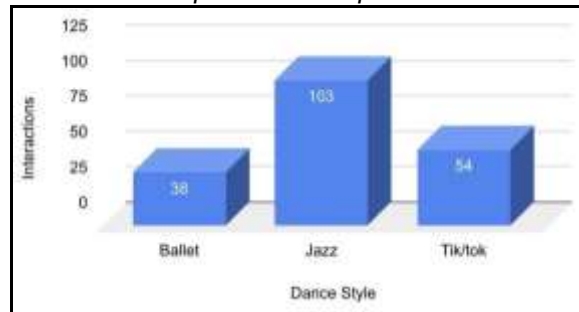
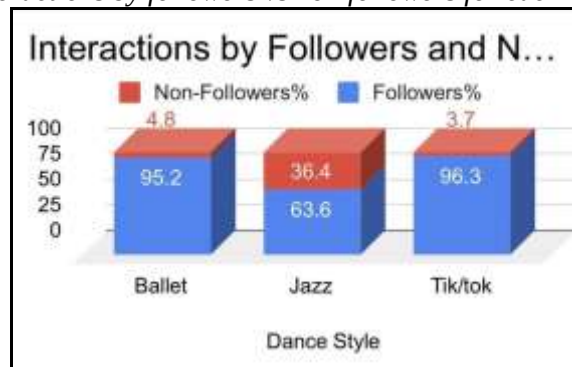


Figure 7 depicts that jazz generated the highest level of engagement (Burkhart, 2025), with 103 interactions, far exceeding ballet and trend-based video. The trend-based video had 54 interactions, while ballet had the lowest at 38. Interactions help to understand the overall engagement with the video as they include likes, comments, shares, etc. The high interaction count on the jazz video suggests that viewers prefer to engage properly with the video rather than just watch it. The trend-based video shows moderate interaction, which shows interest, but only for a few seconds. Ballet's lower interaction again shows that it appeals to a smaller, more reserved audience.

Figure 8
Interactions by followers vs non followers for each video



Finally, Figure 8 represents that Ballet and trend-based content show extremely high engagement from followers, at 95.2% and 96.3% respectively, indicating that these formats resonate most with the existing audience. However, Jazz had 36.4% interactions from non-followers, suggesting that jazz content is more discoverable and appealing to new viewers. This implies that jazz videos have greater potential for audience growth.

Discussion

The results show that Jazz had the highest engagement amongst most of the metrics, followed by trend-based, and ballet. The Instagram algorithm played a large role in jazz being the video that reached the most accounts since Instagram actively promotes video content such as reels (Vick, 2025). It was accessed by many non-followers, indicating that the video reached the feeds of people who do not follow this account. As a result, it gained increased visibility and overall reach (A. Sharma, 2026). Additionally, the order of posting videos was first ballet, second the trend-based video, and third jazz. The results show that the video posted last received the most views. This may mean that content freshness plays a role in views, since people view only the latest content while viewing the feed (A. Sharma, 2026). It can be seen that views are gained effectively on the latest reel on the account. Moreover, newer posts tend to appear more frequently on followers' home pages as compared to older ones. Jazz was accessed more by non-followers, making it the most discoverable, and it has the greatest growth potential. Jazz style is also quite familiar and common, which could have influenced the results. Reels containing familiar visual styles often get bonus algorithmic preference because users are more likely to keep watching or interact (Dwivedi, 2025). The sharp movements used in jazz make the video visually stimulating, which increases the chances of users liking, commenting, or sharing it with others. Ballet, on the other hand, is a more niche dance form that is not as popular as jazz in the demographic targeted in this study, since it is viewed as an elegant style (Callahan & Mangum, 2025). Although ballet requires high technical skill (higher than jazz or trend-based), its slower pace may not immediately capture attention when users are quickly scrolling through content (Orlandi et al., 2020b). Finally, the trend-based dance is based on viral dance moves, making it familiar, however, the video was posted on an Instagram account with a large percentage of followers aged 35- 45 years, and older generations would be less aware of it, leading to fewer likes and views. Overall, all of the data collected showed that jazz was the dance form that attracted the most viewers, which suggests that combining popular dance styles with good timing and energetic choreography is essential for maximising visibility on Instagram.

Conclusion

Social media has grown significantly in the last decade, which makes it a crucial part of our lives. This research investigated the impact of different movement styles (Jazz, ballet, and trend-based dances) on a viewer's mind and how this influences engagement. The objectives were to compare videos on Instagram, and to analyse which style gains the highest reach and non-follower discovery. An experiment was conducted where three different dance videos of styles ballet, trend-based, and jazz were posted on the same Instagram account, in a controlled order. For this experiment, the clothing, music, and background were kept constant to control the other factors that might lead to differences in the audience response. The videos were aired for 28 days. The data collected from these videos was analysed by comparing performance metrics such as views, likes, reach across the three videos, and identifying patterns related to engagement and discoverability. The results showed that the jazz video received the highest number of views, likes, and interactions. Moreover, the watch time, comments, reach, shares, and saves, and accounts reached were also significantly higher for jazz. It was accessed by significantly more non-followers than the other two videos, indicating strong reach. On the contrary, the ballet video received fewer views, since it is less popular and more niche, so it appealed to a smaller audience. Finally, the trend-based video performed moderately but did not attract as much attention as jazz, since it is not familiar to the older audiences viewing this Instagram account.

After exploring the justifications of the results, it was found that Instagram's algorithm played a major role in the success of the jazz video. Reels are promoted widely, especially to users who do not follow the account, increasing reach. Subsequently, the order in which the videos are posted, impacted the viewer's engagement. Posting the jazz video last resulted in higher reach because newer content is more likely to be seen by users. Moreover, jazz is more energetic, which keeps viewers watching longer, leading to more watch time. However, Ballet and trend-based dances are less attention-grabbing, as can

be seen. This could be due to more traditional movements which are less relatable to the general audiences. In conclusion, movement styles such as jazz, which are more energetic, are favoured the most, leading to higher audience engagement, in comparison to more technical forms such as ballet or trending styles.

Policy recommendation and limitations

This research may be relevant to third parties, including influencers, content creators, as well as marketing agencies that are interested in expanding their following on Instagram. The results indicate that familiar and energetic types of content, e.g. jazz, are more likely to reach the greater number of people, as a result of the algorithm and increased interactions. Therefore, Influencers will be able to make more appealing dance videos to receive more likes and views. Marketing companies can use this information during their social media campaigns by publishing the videos sequentially and publishing content that corresponds with the target market. To reach more people, people can customize their content with more interesting choreography and music. Moreover, it is important to learn that more recent posts are likely to get more attention, so third parties like influencers and marketing agencies should organize regular schedules of posts to keep their accounts current. Altogether, this study assists external users to understand how the mind perceives various movement styles to enhance the appearance, participation, and development on Instagram.

Although this research was handy, it had a few shortcomings. The research was carried out using one Instagram account only, which restricts the level of generality of the results as varying accounts may have different audience groups, number of followers and interaction behaviors to influence their performance and hence the findings might be skewed by the followers of this particular account. Besides, it compared only three types of dances, thus, it does not encompass all possible content that may be viewed on Instagram. Because of it, the findings cannot be of much use to some creators that specialize in other forms of dance like contemporary etc. Lastly, the algorithm of Instagram is also subject to periodical changes, and therefore the results might not be true in the long run. In order to eliminate these gaps, the research is to be conducted 2-3 times, on other accounts, and more dance styles should be used.

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