

Does Economic Motivation Determine the Continuance of Social Media Use? A Technology Continuance Theory Perspective: A Case of Facebook

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates whether economic motivation—specifically through the Facebook Reels monetization feature “Stars”—significantly influences users’ continued engagement with the platform. Drawing on Technology Continuance Theory (TCT), this research integrates financial and social drivers including remuneration motive, recognition, and reciprocal benefits to examine their effects on attitude, continuance usage intention, and word-of-mouth (WoM) behavior. Data were collected from 174 active Facebook Reels users in Manokwari, Indonesia, and analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). Results reveal that network exposure significantly enhances remuneration motive, recognition, and reciprocal benefits. However, only reciprocal benefits positively influence user attitude, which in turn predicts both continued usage and WoM intention. The model’s relatively low R-square values suggest that future research should consider broader psychological and platform-related variables. These findings underscore the need for a holistic approach in designing monetization systems that balance economic rewards with social engagement to ensure sustainable user retention.

Keyword: Facebook reels, social media monetization, technology continuance theory

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1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has evolved into a pervasive force reshaping how individuals interact, communicate, and consume digital content across the globe. As a software-based digital technology, social media provides an online infrastructure—both public and private—that enables users to exchange information, express opinions, and build communities without temporal or geographic constraints. Platforms such as Instagram, Twitter (now X), and Facebook have flourished by offering dynamic features that blend entertainment, communication, and creative expression (Khansa & Putri, 2022). The growing reliance on mobile devices and ubiquitous internet access has further accelerated this digital engagement, transforming social media from a supplemental medium into a primary source of both information and leisure (Akbar et al., 2023; Thahir & Wahyuni, 2023). Amid this transformation, short-form video content has emerged as a dominant mode of engagement, captivating users through platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, and Facebook Reels.

One particularly salient feature in this landscape is Facebook Reels, which allows users to create short, music-embedded videos and share them with wide audiences (Antari et al., 2022). Recognizing the

popularity of this format, Facebook has expanded the functionality of Reels by introducing a monetization mechanism known as “Stars”—a virtual gifting system that enables viewers to financially reward creators directly. This initiative transforms Facebook Reels from a purely social-sharing platform into a potential income-generating space for content creators. The availability of such monetization tools reflects an increasingly competitive environment among social media platforms, each striving to attract and retain content creators by offering compelling economic incentives. However, despite the strategic integration of financial rewards, it remains unclear whether economic motivation truly sustains users' continued engagement with Facebook Reels. While some creators may be incentivized by the potential for revenue, others might be more influenced by non-monetary factors such as social validation, creativity, entertainment, or community influence. Moreover, not all users gain sufficient financial returns through the “Stars” feature, which could impact their motivation to remain active on the platform.

Although prior studies have examined user behavior on digital platforms, the majority have emphasized social and technological factors over economic considerations. For example, [Hamari & Koivisto \(2013\)](#) found that social influences significantly affect attitudes and continuance intentions toward gamified services such as Fitocracy, a fitness-oriented social platform. Their study highlighted those interpersonal dynamics—such as recognition, belonging, and peer influence—can be strong drivers of engagement in digital contexts. Other studies have explored usability, interface satisfaction, and innovation adoption in shaping user retention across social platforms. Yet, few have focused specifically on how economic motives, particularly those enabled through monetization features like virtual gifting or direct fan contributions, shape user intentions to continue using these platforms. This gap is particularly relevant in the context of Facebook Reels, where monetization is still in its formative stage, and empirical evidence on its behavioral implications remains sparse.

Given the intensifying competition among digital platforms to build creator ecosystems, understanding the motivational underpinnings of sustained usage has become critically important. Platforms such as TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels have established structured monetization pathways, whereas Facebook Reels continues to refine its competitive positioning through tools like “Stars.” Against this backdrop, the current study investigates the extent to which economic motivation influences continued usage of Facebook Reels. Specifically, it examines how financial drivers—including remuneration motive, network exposure, recognition, and reciprocal benefits—affect user engagement. To ground this analysis, the study employs Technology Continuance Theory (TCT), a well-established model that integrates attitudes, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions to explain prolonged system usage. The findings are expected to advance theoretical understanding of digital platform engagement and offer practical insights for platform developers seeking to design more effective and sustainable monetization strategies. Ultimately, the study aims to clarify whether economic incentives alone can foster long-term platform loyalty, or whether such mechanisms must be embedded within a broader spectrum of motivational drivers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW, HYPOTHESES, AND METHODS

2.1 Literature Review

Understanding the factors that influence the sustainability of digital platform usage has been a central focus of recent scholarly work. Previous studies have contributed significantly to this domain by identifying various psychological, social, and technological determinants of continued user engagement. [Kusumawardani et al. \(2023\)](#) underscored the importance of social influence and utilitarian value in shaping user attitudes and fostering sustained participation within gamified e-commerce platforms. Likewise, [Azad Moghddam et al. \(2024\)](#) demonstrated that specific technological features in social e-commerce environments can trigger impulsive purchasing behaviors, thereby reinforcing platform usage. Furthermore, [Pasupuleti & Thiyyagura \(2024\)](#) highlighted the roles of perceived usefulness, user attitude, and satisfaction as key antecedents in the continued adoption of artificial intelligence technologies. Collectively, these studies offer a robust conceptual foundation that informs the present research, particularly in identifying the mechanisms that underpin users' continued engagement with social media platforms such as Facebook Reels.

2.2 Hypotheses

This study applies the Technology Continuance Theory (TCT) framework [Valeri et al. \(2020\)](#) to explain users' long-term engagement with Facebook Reels. The proposed model (Figure 1) integrates six key constructs—network exposure, recognition, reciprocal benefits, attitude, continuance usage intention, and word-of-mouth (WoM) intention—while adding remuneration motive as the focal economic driver. In this context, economic motivation refers to the pursuit of tangible rewards derived from social-media participation, whereas recognition and reciprocal benefits denote social and relational gains rather than direct financial incentives.

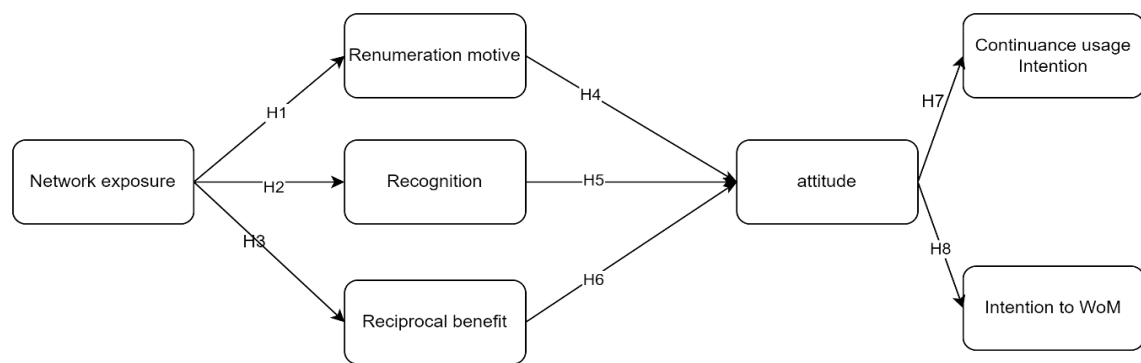


Figure 1. Proposed research model

Network exposure is theorised to serve as a catalyst for multiple downstream effects. Users who are broadly visible within an online community are more likely to gain recognition, receive reciprocal support, and develop stronger expectations of monetary returns. Empirical evidence supports these links: [Annamalai et al. \(2021\)](#) show that highly engaged community members secure greater incentives, and [\(Kusumawardani et al., 2023\)](#) demonstrate that gamification-driven exposure amplifies reciprocal benefits. Accordingly, the hypotheses in this study are developed as follows:

H1: Network exposure has a significant influence on remuneration motive.

H2: Network exposure has a significant influence on recognition.

H3: Network exposure has a significant influence on reciprocal benefits.

Remuneration motive refers to a consumer's desire for future rewards—such as coupons, discounts, or direct monetary gifts—that enhance engagement with social-media features [\(Azad Moghddam et al., 2024\)](#). Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Remuneration motive has a significant influence on attitude.

Recognition functions as social feedback that reinforces reciprocal interaction and elevates users' perceptions of service value. Although [Azad Moghddam et al. \(2024\)](#) report that recognition alone may not shift attitude, its effect can become salient when coupled with relational benefits. Hence:

H5: Recognition has a significant influence on attitude.

Reciprocal benefits—mutual advantages such as support, professional connections, and shared experiences—strengthen a user's perceived role within the platform ecosystem. [Colvin et al. \(2021\)](#) find that such benefits enhance users' sense of value, which in turn shapes their attitudes. Thus:

H6: Reciprocal benefits have a significant influence on attitude.

Attitude, defined as a user's overall evaluative judgement of the platform, is a pivotal determinant of future behaviour. [Vu et al. \(2023\)](#) establish its direct effect on continuance intention, while [Mobarak et al. \(2022\)](#) link attitude to willingness to engage in positive WoM. Accordingly:

H7: Attitude has a significant influence on continuance usage intention.

H8: Attitude has a significant influence on intention to WoM.

2.3 Methods

This study adopts a quantitative research design tailored to structural-equation modelling with partial least squares (SEM-PLS). The approach privileges numerical data to facilitate rigorous statistical testing (Lante et al., 2024). An a-priori power analysis conducted with G*Power determined the minimum sample size, using an effect size of 0.15, a significance level of 0.05, and statistical power of 0.80 to ensure adequate sensitivity (Kang, 2021; Peterson & Foley, 2021).

Data were gathered through online questionnaires distributed via Google Forms to active Facebook users residing in Manokwari, the capital of West Papua Province and one of the fastest-growing regions in eastern Indonesia. A convenience-sampling strategy was employed, selecting respondents based on accessibility, geographic proximity, and willingness to participate. The instrument comprised demographic items, clear completion instructions, and statement measures for each construct, rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5).

This methodological configuration provides a robust basis for testing the eight hypotheses derived from the TCT-based research model, thereby advancing empirical understanding of how economic and social drivers jointly sustain engagement with Facebook Reels.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data collection for this study was conducted over a three-month period, from October to December 2024, in Manokwari City, involving a total of 174 respondents. The demographic characteristics of the participants were categorized by gender, age group, and educational attainment. This demographic profile provides essential context for interpreting the results of the study, particularly regarding the representativeness and diversity of the sample. The distribution of respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents

No.	Category	Item	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	96	55.2%
		Female	78	44.8%
2	Age	< 17 Years	25	14.4%
		17-35 Years	124	71.3%
		36-55 Years	25	14.4%
3	Education Level	High School	83	47.7%
		Associate Degree (D3)	19	10.9%
		Bachelor's Degree (S1)	65	37.4%
		Master's Degree (S2)	1	0.6%
		Others	6	3.4%

3.1 Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement model evaluation was conducted to ensure that the relationships between indicators and their respective latent constructs were both valid and reliable. Following the procedures outlined by Patabang et al. (2024), this evaluation involved tests of convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability.

Convergent validity was assessed using two key indicators: loading factor (LF) and average variance extracted (AVE). According to Inan et al. (2023), an indicator demonstrates strong convergent validity when its loading factor exceeds 0.70. Additionally, AVE values above 0.50 indicate that the construct explains more than half of the variance in its observed indicators (Inan et al., 2022, 2024; Rahakbauw et al., 2024). All constructs in this study met these criteria.

Reliability was evaluated through Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha (CA). As stated by Azizah et al. (2024), both CA and CR values exceeding 0.70 are considered acceptable, demonstrating internal consistency and measurement reliability. The results of these tests are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Confirmatory analysis of constructs

Construct	Statement Item	Code	LF	CA, CR, AVE
Network Exposure (NE) (Annamalai et al., 2021)	I have many friends on Facebook who are active in the Reels community.	NE1	0.891	CA: 0.725, CR: 0.844, AVE: 0.644
	Many people follow and view my content on Facebook.	NE2	0.877	
	I follow many people on Facebook.	NE3	0.806	
Remuneration Motive (RM) (Azad Moghddam et al., 2024)	I use Reels videos to earn extra income.	RM1	0.948	CA: 0.875, CR: 0.941, AVE: 0.888
	I am interested in Facebook Reels videos because they can generate money.	RM2	0.954	
	I create Reels videos on Facebook hoping to earn money from ads or sponsors.	RM3	0.947	
Recognition (RECOG) (Azad Moghddam et al., 2024)	I am happy when my achievements on Reels are noticed by others.	RECOG1	0.905	CA: 0.851, CR: 0.910, AVE: 0.771
	I like it when others like and comment on my Reels videos.	RECOG2	0.940	
	I am happy when my friends pay attention to the Reels videos I upload.	RECOG3	0.918	
Reciprocal Benefit (RECIP) (Colvin et al., 2021)	I feel that my participation in the Facebook Reels community is beneficial to both me and others.	RECIP1	0.896	CA: 0.803, CR: 0.884, AVE: 0.717
	Reels videos on Facebook not only motivate me to exercise but also inspire me in daily activities.	RECIP2	0.890	
	Joining the Facebook Reels community motivates me to create and share my own videos.	RECIP3	0.893	
Attitude (ATT) (Vu et al., 2023)	I enjoy Facebook Reels because the videos are short, engaging, and keep me connected with new trends.	ATT1	0.885	CA: 0.803, CR: 0.884, AVE: 0.717
	I find using Facebook Reels a fun way to relax and de-stress.	ATT2	0.923	
	Reels help me stay updated with the latest information.	ATT3	0.910	
Continuance Usage Intention (CUI) (Vu et al., 2023)	I feel comfortable watching videos on Facebook Reels.	CUI1	0.929	CA: 0.863 CR: 0.916 AVE: 0.783
	I enjoy using Facebook Reels and want to continue using it.	CUI2	0.948	
	I would like to use Facebook Reels more often.	CUI3	0.922	
Intention to WoM (WOM) (Mobarak et al., 2022)	I will recommend Facebook Reels to my friends.	WOM1	0.902	CA: 0.814, CR: 0.884, AVE: 0.718
	I am interested in using Reels videos to earn extra income.	WOM2	0.938	
	I hope to make money from ads or sponsors on Facebook.	WOM3	0.911	

Discriminant validity was subsequently assessed to verify the empirical distinctiveness of each construct. The Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio was applied, with values below 0.90 considered acceptable (Rosli & Saleh, 2023). As shown in Table 3, all constructs met this criterion, except for the relationship between Remuneration Motive (RM) and Word-of-Mouth (WOM), which recorded an HTMT value of 0.938.

This high correlation indicated a lack of discriminant validity between the two constructs, likely due to conceptual redundancy. To address this, indicator RM3—identified as having the highest cross-loading

with WOM—was removed. Following this adjustment, all HTMT values fell within acceptable ranges, confirming that the revised measurement model satisfies the criteria for discriminant validity.

Table 3. HTMT discriminant validity results

	ATT	CUI	NE	RECIP	RECOG	RM	WOM
ATT							
CUI	0.697						
NE	0.426	0.673					
RECIP	0.616	0.740	0.689				
RECOG	0.464	0.463	0.799	0.738			
RM	0.472	0.637	0.565	0.636	0.446		
WOM	0.468	0.825	0.672	0.800	0.555	0.893	

3.2 Structural Model Evaluation

The structural model evaluation determines whether the hypothesised paths are meaningful and whether the model possesses adequate predictive power. After confirming that the measurement model is both valid and reliable, the analysis proceeded with two diagnostic steps: (i) multicollinearity testing and (ii) assessment of the coefficient of determination (R-square) for each endogenous construct (Saputra et al., 2024).

Multicollinearity was examined by calculating the inner Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for every predictor–criterion pair. VIF values greater than 5 are commonly regarded as problematic, whereas values below 2 suggest no serious multicollinearity (Pendi, 2021). Table 4 shows that all VIF scores fall below the conservative threshold of 2, indicating that the latent predictors are sufficiently independent and that parameter estimates are interpretable.

Table 4. Inner VIF results

	ATT	CUI	NE	RECIP	RECOG	RM	WOM
ATT	—	1.000	—	—	—	—	1.000
CUI	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
NE	—	—	—	1.000	1.000	1.000	—
RECIP	1.917	—	—	—	—	—	—
RECOG	1.606	—	—	—	—	—	—
RM	1.405	—	—	—	—	—	—
WOM	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Predictive accuracy was assessed with the coefficient of determination (R-square). R-square values of 0.75, 0.50–0.74, 0.25–0.49, and below 0.25 are interpreted respectively as substantial, moderate, weak, and very weak. Table 5 summarises the results.

Table 5. R-square results

	R-square	Interpretation
ATT	0.258	Weak
CUI	0.348	Weak
RECIP	0.289	Weak
RECOG	0.389	Weak
RM	0.207	Very weak
WOM	0.160	Very weak

The model explains 25.8 % of the variance in Attitude through Remuneration Motive, Recognition, and Reciprocal Benefit. Continuance Usage Intention is accounted for by Attitude at 34.8 %, while Reciprocal Benefit and Recognition are explained by Network Exposure at 28.9 % and 38.9 %, respectively. Network Exposure also explains 20.7 % of the variance in Remuneration Motive, and Attitude accounts for 16.0 % of

Word-of-Mouth Intention. Although all R-square values are statistically acceptable, their relatively low magnitudes indicate that additional variables—beyond those incorporated in the current model—may further clarify the continuance of Facebook Reels usage.

3.3 Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing evaluates whether the structural paths in the research model are empirically supported by the sample data. Following [Mahmud et al. \(2024\)](#), each hypothesis was assessed through bootstrapping, which yields a t-statistic and a p-value for every path coefficient. Consistent with [Inan et al. \(2023\)](#), statistical significance was established at $\alpha = 0.05$; thus, a path is supported when $p \leq 0.05$ and the corresponding t-statistic ≥ 1.96 . Table 6 summarises the results.

Table 6. Hypothesis-testing results

Hypothesis	Variable	T Statistics	P Values	Description
H1	NE → RM	5.768	0.000	Accepted
H2	NE → RECOG	8.344	0.000	Accepted
H3	NE → RECIP	7.078	0.000	Accepted
H4	RM → ATT	1.585	0.057	Rejected
H5	RECOG → ATT	0.691	0.245	Rejected
H6	RECIP → ATT	2.413	0.008	Accepted
H7	ATT → CUI	7.492	0.000	Accepted
H8	ATT → WOM	4.955	0.000	Accepted

3.4 Discussion

The results of hypothesis testing confirm the significant role of network exposure in shaping users' economic and social motivations on Facebook Reels. Hypothesis H1 was supported ($t = 5.768$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that network exposure positively influences remuneration motive. This finding aligns with [Annamalai et al. \(2021\)](#), who suggest that individuals active in online communities are more likely to receive incentives, which in turn enhances their motivation to pursue rewards. In the context of Facebook Reels Stars, this implies that increased visibility and exposure to platform activities may stimulate users' willingness to engage more actively. Accordingly, Facebook should enhance content discoverability and provide clear guidance on the available financial benefits through targeted promotions or user education initiatives.

In terms of recognition, hypothesis H2 was also supported ($t = 8.344$, $p = 0.000$), revealing that network exposure significantly affects users' perceived recognition. This supports findings by [Azad Moghddam et al. \(2024\)](#), who argue that reward-oriented individuals tend to be more involved in decision-making and exhibit increased impulsivity in online environments. In practical terms, Facebook Reels could strengthen social recognition mechanisms by introducing features such as achievement badges, creator leaderboards, or personalized shout-outs to highlight active contributors.

Hypothesis H3 was accepted ($t = 7.078$, $p = 0.000$), demonstrating that network exposure significantly contributes to reciprocal benefits. This is consistent with [Kusumawardani et al. \(2023\)](#), who found that gamified network exposure enhances the perception of mutual benefits among users. Facebook Reels could leverage this by integrating features that promote mutual engagement—such as reciprocal interaction algorithms or reward systems that prioritize user contributions and collaboration—thereby reinforcing the sense of community.

Conversely, hypotheses H4 and H5 were not supported, indicating that remuneration motive and recognition do not significantly influence user attitude toward the platform. H4 was rejected ($t = 1.585$, $p = 0.057$), contradicting [Azad Moghddam et al. \(2024\)](#), who emphasize that economic incentives only shape attitudes when coupled with social value. This suggests that financial rewards alone may be perceived as insufficient or inconsistent, potentially leading users to question the long-term value of their participation.

Facebook should therefore complement monetary rewards with meaningful engagement strategies, including personalized content and community recognition to enhance user attachment.

Similarly, hypothesis H5 was rejected ($t = 0.691$, $p = 0.245$), showing that recognition alone does not significantly shape attitude. While this contrasts with prior findings (Azad Moghddam et al., 2024), one possible explanation is that surface-level recognition—such as likes or comments—may lack emotional or relational depth. Users may require more immersive community experiences to internalize recognition as meaningful. Facebook Reels should consider combining recognition with deeper social incentives, such as collaborative features, co-creation opportunities, or status systems based on peer validation.

In contrast, reciprocal benefits were found to significantly influence user attitude (H6 accepted; $t = 2.413$, $p = 0.008$), reinforcing the findings of Colvin et al. (2021). Their study emphasizes that users develop favorable attitudes when they perceive value and relevance in their contributions. Facebook Reels can build on this by reinforcing reciprocal interactions through algorithmic prioritization of engaged users or gamified systems that reward sustained interaction, thereby nurturing a deeper connection to the platform.

Attitude itself was confirmed as a critical determinant of user behavior, as supported by hypotheses H7 and H8. H7 was accepted ($t = 7.492$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that positive attitudes drive continuance usage intention. This aligns with Vu et al. (2023), who report that user satisfaction and perceived usefulness strengthen the intention to continue using digital services. Facebook should prioritize improving overall user experience through personalized content delivery, transparent monetization systems, and robust interaction tools to retain user engagement.

Likewise, H8 was supported ($t = 4.955$, $p = 0.000$), revealing that attitude significantly influences the intention to engage in word-of-mouth (WoM) communication. Consistent with Mobarak et al. (2022), this result affirms that users with positive experiences are more likely to recommend the platform to others. Facebook Reels can capitalize on this by promoting referral programs, experience-sharing features, and social challenges that incentivize users to invite and engage their networks organically.

Beyond individual-level implications, the findings also underscore the growing economic significance of social media platforms as enablers of digital entrepreneurship. The study highlights that network exposure is a key mechanism driving financial motivation, recognition, and mutual benefits, suggesting that Facebook Reels is not merely a channel for entertainment but also a vehicle for income generation. This insight is particularly relevant for emerging markets, where digital platforms provide accessible means for economic participation.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings contribute to the broader discourse on user engagement and monetization strategies in social media ecosystems. While economic rewards are often emphasized, the results demonstrate that sustainable engagement requires a more holistic approach—one that integrates financial incentives with social and psychological drivers. For policymakers, this highlights the importance of establishing transparent, fair, and supportive frameworks to protect and empower digital content creators. Practically, platform developers are encouraged to design monetization models that are equitable, experience-driven, and capable of sustaining long-term user loyalty.

4. CONCLUSION

This study applies the Technology Continuance Theory (TCT) to investigate how economic incentives—operationalised through the newly introduced remuneration-motive construct—shape user engagement with Facebook Reels and its Stars monetisation feature. By extending the TCT framework, the research captures both financial and social drivers of continuance usage intention and word-of-mouth (WoM) behaviour.

Empirical evidence reveals that network exposure functions as a pivotal antecedent, exerting significant positive effects on remuneration motive, recognition, and reciprocal benefits. Frequent exposure to Reels content increases users' opportunities to earn incentives and gain social acknowledgement. However, neither remuneration motive nor recognition alone is sufficient to cultivate a favourable attitude toward the platform. Instead, perceived reciprocal benefits emerge as the decisive factor in fostering

positive user attitudes, which, in turn, strongly predict continuance usage intention and WoM intention. These findings underscore the importance of balancing economic rewards with mutually beneficial interactions to sustain user engagement.

Despite statistically significant path coefficients, relatively low R-square values indicate that additional, unobserved factors also influence continuance behaviour on Facebook Reels. Future studies should therefore incorporate broader psychological, social, and platform-design variables—such as perceived trust, community identification, or algorithmic transparency—to obtain a more comprehensive explanation of user motivation and retention dynamics.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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