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Spontaneous Purchase Patterns in E-Commerce: Determinants of Instant Buying Decisions in Virtual Retail Spaces

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ABSTRACT -

This study investigates the determinants of spontaneous purchase patterns in e-commerce, focusing on the psychological, emotional, social, technological, and visual factors that influence instant buying decisions. As online shopping environments evolve, understanding what drives unplanned purchases has become crucial for digital marketers and platform developers. The research adopts a quantitative approach using a structured questionnaire administered to 150 respondents, with data analyzed through SPSS employing reliability analysis, correlation, ANOVA, and multiple regression techniques. The findings reveal that emotional engagement, social influences such as peer reviews and influencer endorsements, personalized technological features, and visually appealing product presentations significantly contribute to impulse buying behaviour. The study demonstrates high internal reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.949) and strong statistical relationships ($R^2 > 0.86$) across key variables. The results support established behavioral theories, including the Theory of Planned Behaviour and Social Proof Theory. Practical implications emphasize the importance of strategic visual content, emotional branding, and urgency cues. This research provides actionable insights for optimizing marketing strategies and enhancing consumer engagement in digital retail platforms.

INDEX TERMS –

- Impulse Buying
- E-Commerce
- Emotional Influence
- Visual Merchandising
- Consumer Behavior

INTRODUCTION :

Impulse buying in e-commerce refers to unplanned and spontaneous purchasing decisions influenced by a combination of psychological and situational factors. The theoretical basis of this Behaviour involves situational triggers such as promotional offers and time-limited deals, as well as psychological frameworks like the affective-associative model, which highlights the role of emotions and associative learning in shaping buying decisions. Factors like social proof, personalized recommendations, and exclusivity-driven marketing strategies further fuel this Behaviour. Emotional triggers, cognitive distortions, and the interplay between hedonic motives (seeking pleasure) and utilitarian motives (fulfilling practical needs) are critical contributors to impulsive online purchases. The growing influence of technology, such as AI-powered recommendation engines, personalized marketing techniques, and the integration of social media, has significantly amplified impulse buying by tailoring shopping experiences to individual preferences. Moreover, mobile devices enhance impulsivity by enabling on-the-go shopping through user-friendly interfaces, location-specific promotions, and constant connectivity. Cultural differences also play a pivotal role, as societal norms, values, and attitudes toward online shopping vary globally, shaping impulsive buying tendencies in diverse ways.

The advent of e-commerce platforms has revolutionized the shopping experience by offering unparalleled convenience, accessibility, and product variety. However, this digital transformation poses unique challenges for both consumers and retailers. Understanding the drivers behind impulsive purchasing is essential for improving customer satisfaction and refining marketing strategies. Key influencers include demographic factors, psychological attributes, website functionality, product presentation, promotional tactics, social signals, and the level of customer trust. Investigating these aspects provides valuable insights into managing and leveraging impulsive buying for the benefit of both online retailers and consumers, fostering a more balanced and optimized shopping ecosystem.

LITERATURE SURVEY:

The study of consumer behaviour has increasingly focused on the factors influencing purchase decisions, particularly in the realm of electronic commerce. A significant area of interest is the phenomenon of impulse buying, which is characterized by unplanned purchases often triggered by persuasive cues or environmental factors. Research has explored various triggers of impulse purchases, including the role of persuasive cues, which can be heuristic (simple rules for information processing) or systematic (detailed processing of message content).

Gwee and Chang (2014) examined how user expertise and product type moderate the influence of these cues. In the context of Facebook commerce (f-commerce), Leong, Jaafar, and Sulaiman (2018) investigated the effects of utilitarian, hedonic, and trust motivations on participation and the subsequent urge to purchase, also considering the role of urgency as a personality trait. Their model explained a significant variance in impulse purchase, participation, urge to purchase, and trust. Alvi and Mudassar (2025) explored environmental and personal factors, identifying financial availability, temporal availability, familial influence, store environment, promotional initiatives, and product characteristics as significant determinants of impulse buying behaviour.

Dawson and Kim (2009) examined cues on apparel websites that trigger impulse purchases, noting the increasing prevalence of online impulse buying. Factors such as convenience and website design can significantly influence impulsive behaviour. Zwass (1996) discussed the evolution of e-commerce from traditional EDI to the internet-driven marketplace, highlighting key issues like market governance. E-commerce, in a broader context, has transformed business by changing competition and consumer markets. Kacen and Lee (2002) found that cultural dimensions influence impulsive purchasing decisions across Western and Eastern cultures. Cultural factors also play a role in shaping impulsive buying tendencies. Kool (1994) explored consumer buying Behaviour in specific contexts, such as Dutch farmers, whose buying Behaviour shares characteristics with both industrial and consumer buying Behaviour. The study of consumer Behaviour encompasses a range of factors that influence purchasing decisions, particularly in the context of impulse buying and the broader landscape of e-commerce. Impulse buying, characterized by unplanned purchases, is a key area of focus. Researchers have examined the influence of both personality and situational factors on impulse buying.

Saad and Metawie (2015) explored these relationships in Egypt, finding that personality factors (impulsivity, excitement, and esteem) and store environment factors (music and layout) significantly correlate with impulse buying Behaviour. Additionally, the study revealed that impulse buying tendency mediates the relationship between personality factors, shop enjoyment factors, and impulse buying Behaviour, while shop enjoyment tendency mediates the relationship between store environment factors and impulse buying behaviour. Contextual elements, such as those found in online shopping, also play a role. Leong, Jaafar, and Sulaiman (2018) studied impulse purchases in Facebook commerce (f-commerce), identifying utilitarian, hedonic, and trust motivations as influential factors.

Gwee and Chang (2014) explored how persuasive cues, either heuristic (simple processing rules) or systematic (detailed message content), affect impulse purchase Behaviour, moderated by user expertise and product type. Dawson and Kim (2009) specifically investigated cues on apparel websites that trigger impulse purchases. Beyond impulse buying, broader factors influence consumer Behaviour. Wang and Xiao (2008) examined factors affecting college students' credit card debt, revealing that buying patterns and social networks play a significant role. Carrington, Neville, and Whitwell (2010) explored ethical consumerism, addressing the gap between ethical intentions and actual purchasing Behaviour, and proposing a model to bridge this intention-Behaviour gap. Tendai and Crispen (2009) The in-store environment's impact on impulsive buying has also been examined. found that while in-store environments can influence impulsive buying, economic factors like price and coupons have a greater influence than atmospheric elements. (Rook & Fisher, 1995). Moreover, normative evaluations, or consumers' judgments about the appropriateness of impulse buying, can moderate the relationship between impulsive buying traits and actual buying Behaviours Gonçalves et al. (2016) Finally, consumer values also play a role in purchasing decisions. explored how consumption values predict green buying behaviour, identifying combinations of values that are sufficient for predicting green buying.

Wang, J., & Xiao, J. J. (2009). Consumer Behaviour is a complex field influenced by a multitude of factors, with impulse buying and the dynamics of e-commerce being central areas of investigation. Research has explored the various drivers of consumer decisions, ranging from individual psychology to situational and technological contexts. Impulse buying, an area of particular interest, has been examined from several perspectives. Saad and Metawie (2015) explored the interplay of store environment and personality factors on impulse buying Behaviour in Egypt, highlighting the mediating roles of shop enjoyment and impulse buying tendencies. Darmawan and Gatheru (2021) focused on online marketplaces, revealing the significant positive effect of security, ease of use, and trust on impulsive buying Behaviour on platforms like Shopee. These studies underscore the importance of both individual traits and external stimuli in triggering unplanned purchases. The online environment introduces unique dimensions to consumer Behaviour. Childers et al. (2001) found that online retail shopping Behaviour is driven by both utilitarian and hedonic motivations, emphasizing the importance of factors like navigation and convenience. Verhoef et al. (2015) examined online store choice in multi-channel grocery retailers, observing that while initial choices are often based on offline preferences, online experience leads consumers to prioritize factors like online assortment attractiveness and loyalty. Beyond the specific context of impulse buying, broader consumer behaviour research provides valuable insights.

Muntiu (2009) detailed the consumer buying decision process, outlining stages from problem recognition to post-purchase Behaviour and emphasizing the role of psychological processes. Wang and Xiao (2008) explored factors affecting college students' credit card debt, highlighting the influence of buying patterns and social networks. Kacen and Lee (2002) demonstrated that culture shapes consumer behaviour, showing the influence of cultural dimensions, such as individualism-collectivism, on impulsive buying behaviour across Western and Eastern cultures. Carrington, Neville, and Whitwell (2010) addressed the role of ethical considerations, exploring the intention-behaviour gap in ethical consumerism, and providing a framework for understanding why ethical intentions don't always translate into ethical buying behaviour. Additional factors influencing consumer decisions include

normative evaluations (Rook & Fisher, 1995), which are judgments about the appropriateness of impulse buying, and consumption values, which Gonçalves et al. (2016) explored in the context of green buying behaviour. Trust and risk perception are also crucial in online transactions. Chakraborty et al. (2016) examined how data breaches affect online shopping intention, highlighting the importance of trust and risk mitigation strategies, particularly for different age groups.

METHODOLOGY :

The use of SPSS and a quantitative research methodology is justified for this study as it involves the systematic collection and statistical analysis of numerical data to examine patterns and relationships among variables influencing impulse buying behaviour. Quantitative methods enable the researcher to test hypotheses, measure consumer attitudes, and identify significant predictors through tools like correlation, ANOVA, and regression analysis (Creswell, 2014). SPSS is widely recognized for its reliability in handling large datasets and performing complex statistical procedures, making it suitable for behavioural research in e-commerce contexts (Field, 2018). This approach ensures objectivity, replicability, and empirical rigor in the findings.

RESEARCH GAP:

E-commerce platforms find it difficult to understand the different factors that affect impulse buying, such as psychological and technological aspects. Without a combined approach to study these factors, it is hard to create effective marketing strategies and understand how impulse buying works, which affects customer satisfaction and long-term business growth.

Objectives

To explore and analyse the various psychological factors that influence impulse buying Behaviour in the e-commerce sector.

To explore and analyse the various technological factors that influence impulse buying Behaviour in the e-commerce sector.

To evaluate the impact of emotional influences on impulsive buying decisions.

To evaluate the impact of social influences on impulsive buying decisions.

To explore the relationship between visual product presentation and consumer impulse buying tendencies.

To provide actionable insights for developing optimized marketing strategies that enhance consumer satisfaction and drive business growth.

HYPOTHESES:

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between psychological factors and impulse buying behaviour in e-commerce.

H2: Technological cues significantly affect impulse buying behaviour in e-commerce.

H3: Emotional influences have a significant positive effect on impulse buying behaviour.

H4: Social influences significantly affect impulse buying behaviour in online retail.

H5: Visual product presentation positively influences consumer impulse buying tendencies.

H6: Psychological, emotional, technological, visual, and social factors collectively explain a significant proportion of the variance in impulse buying behaviour.

SAMPLE SIZE:

Convenience sampling is appropriate for this study as it allows the researcher to efficiently gather data from readily available and willing participants, particularly in a digital context where spontaneous purchase Behaviour is being examined. Given the exploration nature of the research and the focus on consumer tendencies in online environments, a sample size of 150 respondents provides a sufficient base to observe patterns and run meaningful statistical analyses (Etika, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). This method is especially useful when time and resources are limited, and the goal is to gain initial insights rather than generalize to the entire population.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

Reliability test-Cronbach's Alpha

The below mentioned table exhibits the value of reliability analysis.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.949	11

The reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.949 for the 11 items measuring impulse buying behaviour, indicating excellent internal consistency among the variables. This high alpha value suggests that the items are closely related and reliably measure the underlying construct. With no missing cases (N = 150), the data set is complete and robust, enhancing the reliability of the analysis. The consistency of responses supports the validity of the questionnaire in capturing various dimensions influencing impulse buying in the e-commerce context.

Objective 1

To explore and analyse the various psychological factors that influence impulse buying Behaviour in the e-commerce sector.

- **H1**: There is a significant positive relationship between psychological factors and impulse buying behaviour in e-commerce.

Correlations Matrix

The table highlights strong correlations between impulsive buying tendencies and emotional and situational factors.

Question	**Q1**	**Q10**	**Q11**
I buy things without planning when I feel a strong connection to a brand.	1	.738**	.897**
I often find it hard to resist buying something online even if I didn't initially plan to.	.738**	1	.733**
I shop online more when I feel stressed or bored.	.897**	.733**	1
Impulse Buying Score	.864**	.831**	.873**

Note: Correlations marked with ** are significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The table highlights strong correlations between impulsive buying tendencies and emotional and situational factors. Specifically, a strong emotional connection to a brand (Q1) correlates significantly with difficulty resisting unplanned purchases (Q10) and increased online shopping when stressed or bored (Q11), with correlation coefficients of **.738** and **.897**, respectively.

Additionally, the Impulse Buying Score shows robust positive correlations with these factors (**.864** with Q1, **.831** with Q10, and **.873** with Q11), suggesting that individuals who score higher in impulsivity are more likely to engage in unplanned purchases, particularly during emotional states like stress or boredom. These findings underscore the interconnectedness of emotional engagement with brands, susceptibility to impulse buying, and situational triggers, offering valuable insights for marketers looking to influence consumer behaviour.

Descriptive statistics

Statistics	**1. I buy things without planning when I feel a strong connection to a brand.**	**10. I often find it hard to resist buying something online even if I didn't initially plan to.**	**11. I shop online more when I feel stressed or bored.**
N (Valid)	150	150	150
Missing	0	0	0
Mean	4.03	3.96	4.02
Std. Error of Mean	0.082	0.089	0.084
Median	4.00	4.00	4.00
Mode	4	4	4
Std. Deviation	1.003	1.092	1.033
Variance	1.006	1.193	1.067

Statistics	**1. I buy things without planning when I feel a strong connection to a brand.**	**10. I often find it hard to resist buying something online even if I didn't initially plan to.**	**11. I shop online more when I feel stressed or bored.**
Skewness	-1.106	-1.110	-1.189
Kurtosis	1.073	0.700	1.176
25th Percentile	4.00	3.75	4.00
50th Percentile	4.00	4.00	4.00
75th Percentile	5.00	5.00	5.00

The table presents descriptive statistics for three statements related to impulsive buying behaviour: emotional connection to a brand (Q1), difficulty resisting unplanned online purchases (Q10), and increased online shopping when stressed or bored (Q11), based on responses from 150 participants. The mean values for all three variables are close to 4, with **Q1** at 4.03, **Q10** at 3.96, and **Q11** at 4.02, indicating that participants generally agreed with the statements, suggesting moderate impulsivity in online shopping Behaviour. The standard deviations range from 1.003 to 1.092, reflecting some variability in responses, but the data is not overly dispersed. The skewness values for all three variables are negative, with values ranging from **-1.106** to **-1.189**, indicating a slight leftward skew, meaning that most respondents tended to agree more with the statements than disagree. The kurtosis values are positive, suggesting that the distribution of responses is moderately peaked around the mean, indicating that most participants' responses are clustered near the middle of the scale. Additionally, the mode and median for all three variables are 4, suggesting that the majority of respondents selected options near the higher end of the scale, reinforcing the overall tendency toward impulsive online shopping behaviour.

Objective 2

To explore and analyze the various technological factors that influence impulse buying Behaviour in the e-commerce sector.

H2: Technological cues significantly affect impulse buying Behaviour in e-commerce

ANOVA

7. I am more likely to make an impulse purchase when I see a limited time offer or countdown timer.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	25.376	3	8.459	6.872	.000
Within Groups	179.717	146	1.231		
Total	205.093	149			

The ANOVA results for the statement *"I am more likely to make an impulse purchase when I see a limited time offer or countdown timer"* indicate a statistically significant difference in responses among different groups ($F = 6.872$, $p = .000$). The between-group sum of squares is 25.376 with 3 degrees of freedom, while the within-group sum of squares is 179.717 with 146 degrees of freedom. The significance value ($p < .001$) suggests that the perception of limited-time offers influencing impulse purchases varies meaningfully across the groups analyzed—possibly based on demographic or behavioural factors—highlighting the importance of time-sensitive marketing tactics.

Objective 3

To evaluate the impact of emotional influences on impulsive buying decisions.

H3: Emotional influences have a significant positive effect on impulse buying behaviour

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.949[a]	.900	.899	.3124243

a. Predictors: (Constant), 2. I am likely to buy a product instantly if it is endorsed by an influencer I follow., 1. I buy things without planning when I feel a strong connection to a brand.

The model summary reveals a strong positive relationship (R = 0.949) between the predictors—brand connection and influencer endorsement—and impulse buying. The R Square value of 0.900 indicates that 90% of the variance in impulse buying Behaviour is explained by these variables, signifying an excellent model fit with minimal error (0.312).

Objective 4

To explore the relationship between visual product presentation and consumer impulse buying tendencies.

H4: Social influences significantly affect impulse buying behaviour in online retail.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.932[a]	.869	.866	.3587233

a. Predictors: (Constant), 9. When I see that many others have purchased a product, I am more likely to buy it immediately., 3. Good reviews from other buyers make me want to buy something right away., 2. I am likely to buy a product instantly if it is endorsed by an influencer I follow.

The model summary table indicates a strong relationship between the predictors and impulse buying behaviour. The **R value** of **0.932** suggests a very high correlation between the independent variables (Q9, Q3, and Q2) and the impulse buying behaviour. The **R Square** value of **0.869** means that approximately 87% of the variance in impulse buying behaviour is explained by these predictors. The **Adjusted R Square** value of **0.866** slightly adjusts for the number of predictors, confirming the model's reliability. The **Std. Error of the Estimate** is **0.3587**, indicating the model's relatively small prediction error.

Objective 5

Visual product presentation positively influences consumer impulse buying tendencies.

H5: Visual product presentation positively influences consumer impulse buying tendencies.

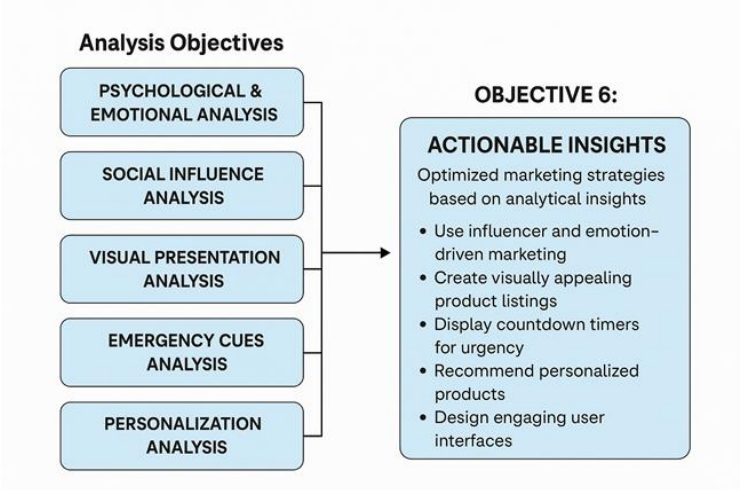
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.942[a]	.888	.886	.3318760

a. Predictors: (Constant), 6. Seeing a product in use (e.g., model wearing clothes or video demonstration) makes me more likely to buy it immediately., 5. Attractive website design increases my likelihood of making an unplanned purchase., 4. I am likely to buy a product instantly if it is presented with high-quality images and videos.

The model summary table reveals a strong predictive relationship between the independent variables and impulse buying Behaviour. The **R value** of **0.942** indicates a very high correlation between the predictors (Q6, Q5, and Q4) and impulse buying tendencies. The **R Square** value of **0.888** suggests that about 89% of the variance in impulse buying Behaviour is explained by these factors. The **Adjusted R Square** value of **0.886** further validates the model's effectiveness while accounting for the number of predictors. The **Std. Error of the Estimate** of **0.3319** indicates relatively minimal prediction error.

Objective 6



To provide actionable insights for developing optimized marketing strategies that enhance consumer satisfaction and drive business growth.

H6: Psychological, emotional, technological, visual, and social factors collectively explain a significant proportion of the variance in impulse buying behavior.

The analysis shows that urgency cues like limited time offers, and countdown timers have a strong effect on impulse buying. The ANOVA test found a significant difference between groups ($F = 6.872$, $p < .001$), meaning these urgency triggers really do impact how quickly people decide to buy. These tactics create pressure and make people feel like they might miss out, which pushes them to buy without much thought. This means online sellers can use urgency tools effectively to encourage quick purchases and boost sales, making it a smart and practical strategy in e-commerce.

DISCUSSION

The study reveals that impulse buying in e-commerce is significantly influenced by psychological, emotional, social, technological, and visual factors. High internal reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.949) confirms the consistency of the 11-item scale. Descriptive statistics show strong agreement among respondents with statements related to emotional connection, stress-induced shopping, and difficulty resisting unplanned purchases, with mean scores around 4.0 and negatively skewed distributions. Correlation analysis shows strong, significant relationships between these factors and overall impulsivity ($r > .86$). Regression analysis highlights that emotional and social influences, such as brand connection, influencer endorsements, and peer reviews, account for a substantial proportion of impulse buying variance ($R^2 = .900$ and $R^2 = .869$, respectively). Visual elements like product images, website design, and demo presentations also explain 88.8% of the variance ($R^2 = .888$), emphasizing their role in driving immediate buying decisions. Additionally, ANOVA results confirm significant differences in responses to urgency-based triggers like countdown timers across groups ($F = 6.872$, $p < .001$). Overall, the findings suggest that impulse buying is a predictable behaviour shaped by interactive digital stimuli, and e-commerce marketers can strategically leverage these insights to design emotionally engaging, visually appealing, and socially influenced shopping environments to enhance consumer engagement and drive conversions.

FINDINGS

This study contributes significantly to the theoretical understanding of impulse buying in digital environments by confirming that such behaviour is influenced by multiple interrelated constructs, including psychological, emotional, social, technological, and visual factors. The strong statistical associations support the applicability of established behavioural theories such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour and Affective Response Theory in the e-commerce context. The influence of emotional states like stress and brand attachment reinforces the role of emotional regulation and gratification in impulsive decision-making. Additionally, the results validate the Social Proof Theory by showing that consumer decisions are strongly affected by reviews, influencer endorsements, and social validation cues. These findings extend the theoretical framework of impulse buying beyond traditional retail settings, illustrating how digital stimuli and online consumer psychology interact to drive spontaneous purchase behaviour. The study provides a solid empirical foundation for future research exploring impulse buying across digital platforms and diverse consumer demographics

RECOMMENDATION

The practical implications of this research are highly relevant for e-commerce businesses, marketers, and digital platform developers. The findings suggest that marketers should focus on creating emotionally engaging content and user experiences that enhance brand attachment and evoke positive feelings, which can trigger impulse purchases. Visual merchandising elements such as high-quality images, product demos, and attractive website layouts should be prioritized to influence quick decision-making. Additionally, incorporating time-sensitive triggers like limited-time offers and countdown timers can effectively increase urgency and drive conversions. Personalized recommendations and customer reviews play a crucial role in influencing buyer Behaviour and should be integrated strategically into product pages. Marketers can also leverage influencer collaborations to tap into social influence, especially among younger and highly engaged digital consumers. Overall, aligning marketing strategies with the psychological and emotional drivers identified in this study can improve customer engagement, increase sales, and build stronger brand-consumer relationships in the digital shopping landscape.

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