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## The Impact of Social Commerce on Impulse Buying Behavior: A Study Among Young Consumers

**Mrs. Kavitha Prabhu**

Assistant Professor, SDM College of Business Management, Mangalore- P.no:9449728283

Email: [Kavitha\\_Prabhu@sdmcbm.ac.in](mailto:Kavitha_Prabhu@sdmcbm.ac.in)

### Abstract

Social commerce—buying and selling through social media platforms—is increasingly influencing young consumers’ buying patterns. With features like shoppable posts, influencer endorsements, and real-time product reviews, the boundary between content consumption and purchase decision-making is becoming blurred. This paper uses secondary data from academic journals, market reports, and digital marketing surveys to explore how social commerce affects impulse buying behavior among young consumers (aged 18–35). The findings indicate that social media aesthetics, influencer credibility, and platform convenience drive unplanned purchases, especially in fashion, beauty, and electronics categories.

**Keywords** : Social commerce , Impulse buying ,Youngconsumers , Consumer behavior, Digital marketing,Social media platforms, Unplanned purchases

### Introduction

The evolution of e-commerce into social commerce has transformed consumer shopping behavior. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and Pinterest now enable brands to engage directly with consumers through interactive content, live shopping events, and in-app purchases. Young consumers, often digital natives, spend significant time on these platforms and are particularly susceptible to impulse buying, a behavior characterized by unplanned, spontaneous purchases triggered by emotional or situational stimuli. This paper explores how features of social commerce contribute to such behavior using secondary data sources.

### Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the role of social media features in facilitating impulse buying.
2. To identify the psychological and emotional factors influencing young consumers in social commerce environments.
3. To analyze product categories where impulse buying is most prevalent.

### Methodology

The research paper is descriptive in nature. The data is collected from secondary sources collected through published sources such as reports, journals, research articles, and websites

### Review of Literature

According to **Liang & Turban (2011)**, social commerce enables users to receive shopping suggestions based on reviews, likes, and shares, reducing the need for extensive decision-making.

**Statista (2023)** reports that 68% of Indian millennials and Gen Z users have made at least one purchase directly through a social platform.

**Verhagen & van Dolen (2011)** state that visual appeal, emotional connection, and peer recommendations are key motivators for impulse buying in online environments.

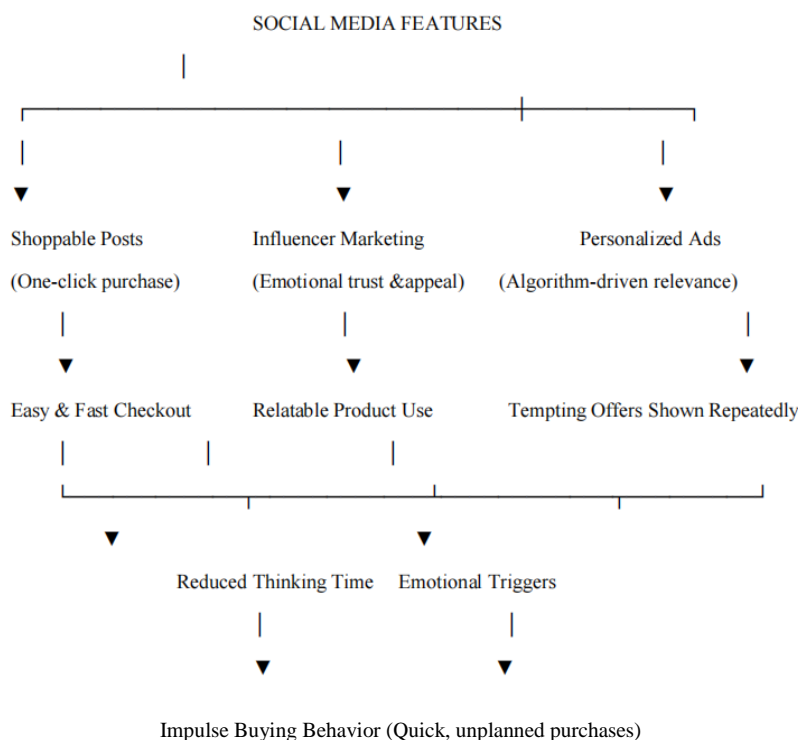
**Kolsaker (2021)** highlights that “fear of missing out” (FOMO), limited-time offers, and influencer urgency cues (e.g., “Only 3 left!”) often lead to unplanned purchases.

According to **Influencer Marketing Hub (2024)**, 49% of consumers say they trust recommendations from influencers more than brand advertisements.

## Social Media and Impulse Buying Behaviour

Social media has become a powerful tool not just for communication and entertainment, but also for influencing consumer behavior—especially impulse buying. Impulse buying refers to sudden, unplanned purchases made without prior intention. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and Pinterest have introduced various features that make the buying process so easy and attractive that consumers often end up purchasing items instantly, driven by emotion rather than need.

One of the key features that facilitates impulse buying is the shoppable post or story. These allow users to click on a product tag while browsing and be directed straight to a purchase page without leaving the app. This reduces the time between product discovery and decision-making, encouraging users to buy products immediately. By minimizing the steps involved, platforms eliminate the pause that might lead a consumer to reconsider the purchase.



Another significant feature is influencer marketing. Social media influencers share product recommendations in their content, such as reels, videos, or live sessions. Their followers often develop trust and emotional connections with them, which makes their product suggestions feel more personal and convincing. This emotional influence can trigger spontaneous purchases, as users may feel compelled to try what their favorite influencer is using.

Additionally, live shopping sessions and limited-time offers are powerful triggers. During live product demonstrations, sellers or influencers often offer exclusive discounts for a short period, creating a sense of urgency. This urgency taps into the buyer's fear of missing out (FOMO), leading them to make a quick, unplanned purchase without considering alternatives or necessity.

Personalized product suggestions driven by algorithms are another feature that contributes to impulse buying. Social media platforms track user behavior and show products that match their interests or browsing history. When a user sees a product that perfectly aligns with their preferences, they are more likely to buy it on the spot, even if they didn't intend to shop. Finally, user-generated content—such as reviews, testimonials, and real-life photos of people using a product—also influences buying decisions. When users see others enjoying a product, it creates social proof and builds trust, prompting them to purchase impulsively in order to share that experience or lifestyle. In conclusion, social media platforms have integrated features that seamlessly blend content with commerce. By making products visually appealing, instantly available, and socially validated, these features significantly enhance impulse buying behavior, especially among young and tech-savvy consumers. While this benefits businesses and marketers, it also highlights the need for digital literacy and mindful consumption among users.

## Social Commerce and the Emotional Psychology Behind Youth Impulse Buying

In social commerce environments, psychological and emotional factors strongly influence the buying behavior of young consumers. One of the most common triggers is the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). This occurs when users feel anxious about missing an opportunity, trend, or offer that others are enjoying. Social media platforms often create urgency through flash sales, countdown timers, and limited-stock alerts, prompting users to make instant purchases without much thought. For example, a message like "Only 1 hour left!" or "Selling out fast!" can make a young buyer act impulsively to avoid feeling left out.

- Another key factor is, are accustomed to instant responses—be it likes, shares, or entertainment. Social commerce platforms cater to this need by allowing users to purchase a product immediately after seeing it in a post or video. This quick and easy process satisfies the emotional need for pleasure or excitement, often leading to impulse purchases made for enjoyment rather than necessity.

- Social influence also plays a major role. Young people are highly influenced by their peers and the content shared by social media influencers. Seeing someone they trust or admire using a product increases the likelihood that they will buy it too. This is known as social proof—the idea that if others are doing something, it must be right. Influencers often build emotional connections with their followers, creating a sense of trust. When they promote a product, their followers are more likely to buy it impulsively, viewing the recommendation as genuine.
- In addition, the visual appeal of content on platforms like Instagram and TikTok enhances impulse buying. Products are often presented in aesthetically pleasing ways, with vibrant colors, music, and filters, making them emotionally attractive. This visual stimulation can overpower rational decision-making, pushing young users to purchase items based on how appealing they look rather than their actual need or value.
- Moreover, scarcity cues such as “Only a few left in stock” or “Offer ends tonight” increase the urgency to act. These cues create psychological pressure and stimulate a fear of loss, which can lead to impulsive decisions. The idea that an opportunity may not be available later encourages users to act immediately, often without comparing prices or reading reviews.
- Finally, a consumer’s mood and emotional state can greatly affect their shopping behavior. Social media browsing often happens during downtime or emotional moments—when users are feeling bored, stressed, or lonely. In such moments, purchasing something can provide temporary satisfaction or emotional relief, making young consumers more vulnerable to impulse buying.
- Social commerce platforms are designed in a way that taps into the emotional and psychological tendencies of young consumers. Features like influencer marketing, aesthetic content, urgency cues, and personalized ads all work together to influence unplanned buying decisions. While these strategies are effective for businesses, they also highlight the need for greater awareness and mindful consumption among young shoppers.

### Product Categories vs Impulse Buying Intensity

Impulse buying intensity varies across product categories, with certain types of products more likely to trigger spontaneous purchases due to their emotional appeal, affordability, and ease of access. Categories like fashion, beauty, and food items often show the highest impulse buying intensity because they offer instant gratification, are visually attractive, and are frequently promoted through social media and influencer marketing. Products like home décor, small gadgets, and lifestyle accessories also see significant impulse purchases due to their aesthetic value and perceived usefulness. In contrast, high-value items such as electronics or appliances generally involve more deliberation, resulting in lower impulse buying intensity. Ultimately, the more a product taps into emotions, trends, and limited-time offers, the higher the likelihood of an impulsive purchase.



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**Explanation of the diagram:**

- The Y-axis shows impulse buying intensity (from low to high).
- The X-axis shows the emotional appeal of the product category.
- Product categories higher and to the right are most likely to be bought impulsively.

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**Findings**

The study reveals that social commerce platforms significantly influence impulse buying behavior among young consumers, especially those aged 18–35. Features like shoppable posts, influencer endorsements, and real-time product recommendations reduce the time between product discovery and purchase, leading to more spontaneous buying decisions. Emotional triggers such as FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), urgency cues like countdown timers and limited-stock alerts, and the visually appealing nature of content on platforms like Instagram and TikTok all contribute to this behavior. Additionally, personalized advertisements and peer influence enhance emotional engagement, making consumers more likely to purchase without prior intention. Product categories such as fashion, beauty, and personal care showed the highest impulse buying intensity due to their emotional appeal, affordability, and high visibility on social platforms. In contrast, higher-value items like electronics involved more rational decision-making and showed relatively lower impulse buying.

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**Suggestions**

To promote healthier buying habits, there is a need for greater awareness and digital literacy among young consumers. Educational initiatives on mindful consumption, budgeting, and the psychological impact of social media marketing should be encouraged in schools and colleges. Social commerce platforms should also consider introducing ethical marketing practices by including prompts for review before final checkout, clearer return policies, and spending limit reminders. Brands and influencers should maintain transparency in their promotions to ensure trust and reduce manipulative tactics. Lastly, parents, educators, and mental health professionals can work together to build emotional resilience in youth to help them resist emotionally-driven spending.

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**Conclusion**

Social commerce is reshaping consumer behavior by merging entertainment with instant shopping experiences. Social commerce has emerged as a powerful force in shaping impulse buying behavior, particularly among India's youth. While it offers convenience, personalization, and connectivity, it also heightens the tendency toward unplanned and emotionally-driven purchases among young consumers. The study concludes that the combination of visual appeal, influencer credibility, emotional triggers, and urgency tactics effectively drives impulse buying behavior in social commerce environments. While these strategies benefit businesses, they also raise concerns about consumer awareness and financial discipline. Therefore, balancing technological innovation with responsible consumer behavior is essential to ensure that social commerce remains a beneficial and ethical marketplace.

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