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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Impulsively intended buying behavior: A new horizon of shopping behavior in the online era

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Abstract

The development of electronic commerce and availability of social media platforms has turbocharged the impulse buying behavior among the consumers. The online retail world is pioneering strategies to enhance the consumer shopping experience during online shopping and paving the way for impulse buying behavior. This research aims to explore the factors affecting the customer shopping experience and impulse buying behavior in fashion apparel. Based on previous literature, there are two different components: functional components and psychological components that enhance the consumer's online shopping experience, inducing shoppers to buy products impulsively. A survey was conducted with a structured questionnaire among 403 online shoppers selected through purposive sampling. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to test the proposed model, and the results indicate that both functional and psychological components are found to significantly influence the impulse buying behavior of consumers. The implications for marketers are provided based on the study's results.

Keywords: Functionality components, Impulse buying behavior, Online shopping experience, Psychological components, Social commerce, Visual engagement.

Introduction

In recent years, India has witnessed a significant surge in the e-commerce industry, driven by increased internet penetration and widespread smartphone adoption. With its rapidly growing online user base, India has emerged as the world's second-largest internet market. The e-commerce sector is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 11.45%, reaching an estimated value of ₹7,591.94 billion by 2029 (Ghosh, 2024).

Without a doubt, these e-retail platforms are helping companies in India launch their online stores effectively. However, the lion's share of the growing Indian e-commerce market is acquired by Alibaba Group Holdings Limited, eBay Inc., Amazon.com, Inc., Flipkart Private Limited, and FSN E-Commerce Ventures Limited, which is the owner of Nykaa. E-commerce enables customers to choose from a variety of categories and ship items swiftly. All categories of cities in India adopt E-commerce platforms, but the major utilisation of these platforms is from Tier 2 and smaller towns, accounting for nearly 60% of the transactions and orders.

It is also to be noted that most of the orders (nearly 3 orders out of every 5 transactions) are placed from tier-2 and tier-3 cities on the top e-retail platforms (Pradhan, 2024). This indicates the significance of the e-commerce boom in these cities. According to the India Digital Commerce Index report by Kearney consulting firm and e-commerce marketplace Meesho, India ranks second in e-commerce sales. It is also stated that shoppers from different cities exhibit different shopping behaviors based on product categories. Food, grocery, and electronics outperformed and topped the list of products preferred by shoppers from Mumbai, while apparel and accessories surpassed expectations in cities like Chennai and Hyderabad.

Due to the changing needs of consumers and increased internet utilization for online shopping, a vast number of products have become available. According to a recent e-commerce report, 70% of e-commerce orders account for apparel and electronics. According to survey results conducted by Statista among Indian consumers, Clothes

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and shoes are the top product categories purchased online. When developing their long-term growth, e-commerce marketers and brands should pay close attention to several key elements, including technology and shifting consumer preferences. It's interesting to note that although social media is the primary platform via which customers begin their online searches, the majority of them (65%) still end up making purchases through e-commerce marketplaces, with individual merchant websites or apps coming in second (52%).

Creating a distinctive shopping experience is essential to selling goods and services online. Developing an online shopping experience that enables individuals to buy and sell goods directly from the comfort of their homes is the best method to accomplish this. Consequently, for brands to increase sales online, they must provide an ideal digital client experience. Furthermore, for brands and marketers with online stores, this is even more crucial.

Additionally, customers are more likely to spend a longer time on a website, online platform, or e-commerce site when they have a great online shopping experience. A unique shopping experience in social commerce and other mobile commerce applications during online shopping not only increases the time customers spend on these sites but also acts as an antecedent in inducing impulse shopping. With the advent of technology, the shopping preferences and choices of consumers are rapidly changing. This substantial shift among consumers regarding online shopping preferences and experiences has become a challenge for marketers to adapt to and address the shifting preferences among their target group of consumers. This trend among consumers has also prompted researchers to study the distinctive shopping experiences that result in impulse purchases. Impulse purchases through shopping experiences have also gained the limelight among marketers and social commerce developments.

Literature Review

According to Aprilyra & Abror, (2024), providing engaging and informative online shopping experiences is critical for increasing consumer loyalty and facilitating impulsive purchases in e-commerce situations. Ahmed & Nasir, (2024) indicated that influencer marketing significantly impacts online impulsive buying behavior through mediating factors such as E-WOM, fanaticism, and hedonic value. Gender, Age, Education, and occupation are negatively correlated with impulse buying, while income has a positive correlation with regard to apparel shoppers (Trivedi *et al*., 2023). Customer experience is considered an ever-changing concept due to changes in consumer preferences, the interaction between brands and consumers, and purchasing power (Barbu *et al*., 2021). The customer shopping experience in online depends on all the touchpoints at that brands interact with consumers (Urdea & Constantin, 2021a). Consumers will have a positive attitude if the e-commerce platform provides all the relevant and necessary information for making purchasing decisions (Liu & Shrum, 2009). This positive attitude will help brands maintain long-term relationships with customers through e-commerce and social commerce platforms. Cachero-Martínez & Vázquez-Casielles (2021) emphasized the importance of maintaining visual engagement on platforms, which can be enhanced through design, graphic content, and the website's appearance. This visual appearance of the platform will help induce a positive attitude among shoppers. Customers are not pleased with complex e-commerce platforms. They could experience emotional exhaustion if they have to spend more time searching for the information they need. This might affect the overall impression about the brands in a particular platform in the future. Creating platforms on e-commerce sites with easy navigation and search options during online shopping may help alleviate this exhaustion (Pandey & Chawla, 2018).

Chan *et al*. (2017) argued that e-commerce sites are fast, easy, and cheap to use, and consumers believe that these sites will help them utilize their time effectively when compared to traditional shopping modes. Convenience in shopping through e-commerce sites, such as searching for products, comparing product features, and prices, will have a positive impact on the consumer's attitude (Pandey & Chawla, 2018). Shopping online helps consumers avoid the physical and emotional hurdles associated with it (Srinivasan, 2015).

Considering the empirical studies conducted in the domain of impulse buying, a major part of the research was conducted in the United States, China, and Taiwan, which lack the generalizability of the results. Most research has investigated impulsive buying in both traditional retail and e-commerce settings (Rani & Rex, 2023; Wang *et al*., 2022). Still, a lack of research exists in emerging areas like social commerce and mobile commerce. The emergence of social commerce and social influence has a notable influence on shaping consumer decision-making. Future research in these areas can provide insightful results that help practitioners formulate strategies for online and social commerce, potentially influencing impulse buying.

Proposed Conceptual Model

Figure 1 illustrates the proposed model for the present study, which investigates the influence of the online customer shopping experience on impulsive buying behavior. The customer shopping experience is a dynamic and multifaceted construct shaped by several factors. In the online context, it includes not only the brand's functional performance but also sensory interactions across various touchpoints, capturing how customers engage with the brand throughout their shopping journey (Urdea & Constantin, 2021b). Effective consumer experiences may be a part of this in addition to their behavior, sensory, and intellectual aspects (Bhattacharya & Srivastava, 2020).

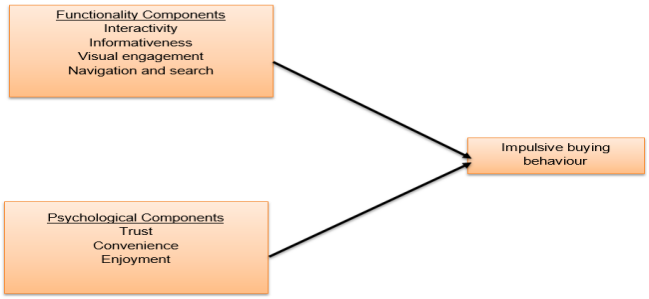

Figure 1: Proposed conceptual model-customer shopping experience components and impulsive buying behavior

The customer shopping experience can be improved by Functionality components and psychological components. The functional dimension of the online shopping experience is influenced by factors such as interactivity, informativeness, visual appeal, ease of navigation, and effective search capabilities. Interactivity refers to the virtual interaction on online platforms that allows users to share information. Informativeness is considered as the display of relevant and necessary information related to products/services, features, prices, and policies. Visual engagement refers to the visually appealing design of an online shopping platform that creates a unique shopping experience for customers. Navigation and search are defined as the ease of search of information related to the products/services in an online platform.

The psychological aspects of online shopping are shaped by factors such as trust, convenience, and enjoyment. Trust plays a major role during online shopping, where shoppers feel that the sense of risk and uncertainty is reduced. Convenience is considered the ability of shoppers to access online shopping platforms without any hassle. Enjoyment refers to the positive experience that shoppers may feel during the entire online purchase journey.

Impulsive buying behavior is considered the purchase behavior of shoppers that occurs without prior intention and planning, resulting in the actual purchase of products or services.

Materials and Methods

The current research employed a descriptive research design to explore the factors affecting customer shopping experiences during online shopping, leading to impulse buying, with a special reference to fashion apparel. The research primarily employs primary data collected through a structured questionnaire using Google Forms. All measurement variables were identified and adopted from a study conducted by Aprilyra and Abror in 2024. This study was conducted among shoppers using the Tokopedia e-commerce platform in Padang, West Sumatra. Minor adjustments were made to the questionnaire to align with the specific objectives of the current research, focusing on customer experience and impulsive buying behavior across e-commerce platforms, with a particular emphasis on fashion apparel (Susiang *et al*., 2023). The questionnaire comprises demographic profile and Functionality components (interactivity, informativeness, visual engagement, navigation, and search), Psychological components (trust, convenience, enjoyment), and impulsive buying behavior, measured using a 5-point Likert scale. The reliability and validity tests are performed and the results are discussed below. The target population of the research is Gen Z online shoppers who have prior experience shopping for fashion apparel online. A non-probability sampling method, purposive sampling, was employed to select respondents who met the predefined criteria. Based on sample size calculations, a total of 403 participants was deemed sufficient to represent the Gen Z online shopper population in Coimbatore city. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

Validity Test

The validity test is conducted to determine whether all the variables in the research are distinct from one another. A measurement instrument is considered as valid only if all the values of AVE fall within the threshold limits of 0.5 or >0.5 (Hair *et al*.,2017)

From Table 1, it is evident that all the variables have AVE values >0.50. Hence, the research instrument is considered valid, and it is further proceeded with a reliability test.

Reliability Test

Reliability is considered a sign of consistency and helps the researcher understand the certainty of the research instrument. Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess the reliability of the research instrument, with values above 0.6 considered acceptable. A pilot test was conducted with a randomly selected sample of 50 respondents to evaluate the instrument's reliability. The results of the reliability analysis are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 1: Average variance extracted (AVE)

Components of Customer Shopping Experience	*AVE values*
Interactivity	0.867
Informativeness	0.578
Visual engagement	0.672
Navigation and search	0.708
Trust	0.712
Convenience	0.597
Enjoyment	0.732
Impulsive buying behavior	0.694

From Table 2, considering the values of Cronbach alpha which is >0.6 for all the variables and hence it is considered that the instrument is reliable for use in the research.

Results

Figure 2 shows the online shopping experience effect on impulsive buying behavior using a structural equation model.

From Table 3, it is evident that all the model fit values fall within the threshold limits recommended by Bagozzi *et al*. (1991) and Hair *et al*. (2012). The current model is therefore considered to have a good fit.

H_1

Functionality components and psychological components significantly influence impulsive buying behavior.

Table 2: Reliability test

Components of Customer Shopping Experience	*Cronbach Alpha value*
Interactivity	0.782
Informativeness	0.854
Visual engagement	0.765
Navigation and search	0.698
Trust	0.721
Convenience	0.690
Enjoyment	0.821
Impulsive buying behavior	0.716

Table 3: Summary of model fitness

Particulars	*Fit indices of Calculated Model*	*Recommended Value*
CMIN/DF	2.317	< 3 indicates an acceptable fit between the hypothetical models
GFI	0.981	GFI ≥ 0.9 is a good fit or value of 1 indicates a perfect fit.
CFI	0.993	CFI ≥ 0.9 is a good fit or values close to 1 indicate a very good fit.
TLI	0.989	TLI ≥ 0.9 is a good fit or values close to 1 indicate a very good fit.
AGFI	0.959	AGFI values > 0.90 indicate an acceptable fit, while values > 0.95 indicate a good fit
RMSEA	0.052	RMSEA value below 0.05 indicates good fit, a RMSEA value between 0.05 and 0.08 indicates acceptable fit,
HOELTER 0.05	341	HOELTER 0,05 ≥ 200
HOELTER 0.01	413	HOELTER 0,01 ≥ 200

(CMIN/DF- Chi-square/degree of freedom, GFI-Goodness of Fit index, CFI- Comparative fit index, TLI- Tucker-Lewis's index, AGFI-Adjusted Goodness of fit Index, RMSEA- Root Mean Square Error of Approximation)

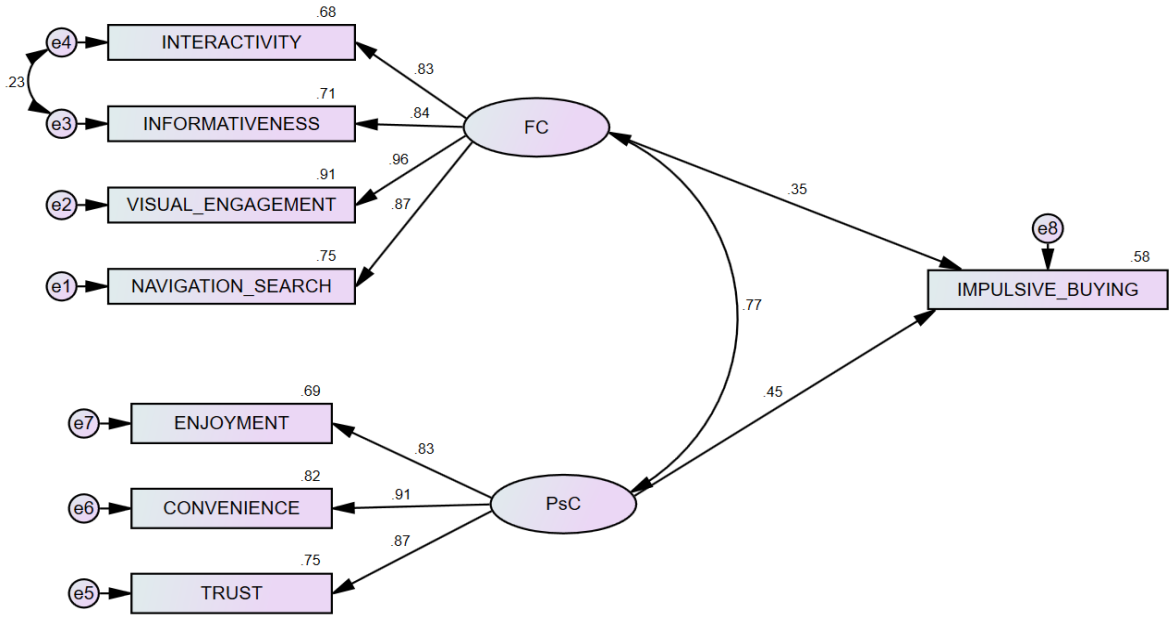

Figure 2: Structural equation model-online shopping experience effect on impulsive buying behavior

Table 4: Estimates of regression

Particulars			*Estimates value*	*Standard Error*	*Critical Ratio*	*Significant value*
INTERACTIVITY	<-	FC	1.000	-	-	-
INFORMATIVENESS	<-	FC	2.836	.091	31.15	<0.01
VISUAL ENGAGEMENT	<-	FC	1.057	.043	24.65	<0.01
NAVIGATION SEARCH	<-	FC	.858	.036	23.76	<0.01
TRUST	<-	PsC	1.000	-	-	<0.01
CONVENIENCE	<-	PsC	1.360	.051	26.82	<0.01
ENJOYMENT	<-	PsC	1.254	.054	23.19	<0.01
IMPULSIVE BUYING	<-	FC	1.412	.221	6.38	<0.01
IMPULSIVE BUYING	<-	PsC	1.890	.235	8.03	<0.01

(FC-Functionality Components, PsC-Psychological Components)

Considering the regression estimates in Table 4, it is observed that all paths are found to be statistically significant. The *p-values* in Table 4, which are less than 0.01 (i.e., less than the significant value of 0.05), imply that the alternate hypothesis (H_1) is accepted. This suggests that both psychological and functional components significantly influence impulsive buying behavior in the context of online shopping. The estimates of the regression value from Table 4 show that if informativeness is improved by one unit, the Functionality component of the customer experience increases by 2.836 units. Furthermore, if the visual engagement and navigation and search factors are improved by 1 unit, it will help the online shopper's customer experience improve by 1.057 and 0.858, respectively. Additionally, the convenience and enjoyment, which are predictors of the psychological component in elevating the customer experience in online shopping, if improved by 1 unit, will enable marketers to raise the psychological components by 1.360 and 1.254. Finally, from the regression weights it is evident that the functionality components and psychological components in customer experience during online shopping will lead to 1.412 and 1.890 units of increase in chances of shoppers ending in impulsive buying.

From Table 5, considering the correlation values it is inferred that Functionality components and Impulsive buying is significantly and positively related to 35.3% (0.353). Further, the psychological components have a significant positive relationship to impulsive buying behavior with 45.4% (0.454). The Figure 2 shows the output of SEM analysis indicating the proposed conceptual model.

Table 5: Standardized regression weights for the model

Particulars			*Estimates*
Impulsive Buying	<-	FC	.353
Impulsive Buying	<-	PsC	.454

(FC-Functionality Components, PsC-Psychological Components)

Table 6: Regression values

Particulars	*Estimates*
Impulsive Buying	.578

As shown in Table 6, the squared multiple correlation value of 0.578 indicates that the independent variables—functionality components (primarily interactivity, informativeness, visual engagement, navigation, and search) and psychological components (trust, convenience, and enjoyment)—jointly contribute to enhancing the online customer experience. These insights can help marketers and brands refine their strategies to more effectively engage online shoppers. Furthermore, this customer experience, which combines functionality and psychological components, will collectively increase the chances of shoppers/visitors impulsively buying fashion apparel products by 57%.

Discussion

Due to the growth of e-commerce technologies and tech-savvy consumers, creating a seamless customer shopping experience is an indispensable realm for the success of online brands. This study critically examined the role of psychological and functional components that act as stimuli for improving customer experience during online shopping, leading to impulse purchases.

The present findings are consistent with previous research. Both the functional components—informativeness, visual engagement, interactivity, navigation, and search—and the psychological components—trust, convenience, and enjoyment—of the Online Customer Shopping Experience (OCSE) significantly influence customers' impulsive buying behavior on e-commerce platforms (Gulfraz *et al*., 2022). OCSE emerges as a strong predictor of impulsive buying behavior in the online shopping context (Anshu *et al*., 2022).

Many scholars have claimed that individual psychological traits, such as trust, convenience, and enjoyment, during

online shopping affect consumer behavior, leading to impulse purchases. The current results indicate that psychological components are positively related to impulse buying. Among other sub-factors, the convenience of online shoppers plays a major role in stimulating impulse purchases. Establishing strong trust in the credibility and reliability of an e-commerce platform is likely to foster a more positive attitude toward the platform (Klaus & Maklan, 2013). Furthermore, customers often perceive online shopping as convenient, time-saving, and cost-effective (Chan *et al*., 2017). If shopping platforms provide immediate pleasure and enjoyment through the shopping experience, it helps in improving the positive attitude and eliminates the psychological barriers of consumers (De Keyser *et al*., 2020).

In addition to the psychological components based on individual traits, the functional traits of online e-commerce platforms play a substantial role in inducing consumer impulse purchases. From the results of the current study, it is noted that the informativeness of online platforms has a higher impact on impulse purchase among the functionality traits. Several studies have demonstrated the role of website/e-commerce platform quality in improving the likelihood of shoppers making impulse purchases during an online visit. The current results are directly proportional to the earlier findings. A greater level of interactivity in e-commerce platforms affects the interactive experiences (Mollen & Wilson, 2010). Similarly, informativeness will help enhance customer confidence, ensuring that necessary information is available for making decisions during online shopping (Verhoef *et al*., 2015). According to earlier research (Kuppelwieser & Klaus, 2020), visual engagement impacts the affective component of the OCSE, while ease of navigation and search influence the cognitive component of customers' traits during online shopping.

This research demonstrates a strong link between the e-commerce shopping platform's attributes, namely functionality components and psychological components, that persuade the likelihood of shoppers' impulse buying. The customer shopping experience can increase online impulsive buying. From the findings of the current research, the functional and psychological components help in creating a customer shopping experience. Considering the statistical results, psychological components increase the chances of impulsive buying rather than functional components. Marketers and brands should focus on enhancing factors such as trust, convenience, and enjoyment, in addition to the informativeness factor, in their online presence. These dimensions will help improve the shopping experience of the target audience during online shopping, which significantly increases the likelihood of shoppers making impulse purchases. Additionally, when designing e-commerce platforms, the type of product category also needs to be considered, as this may have a significant impact on shoppers' preferences.

The current research has taken into account only Gen Z population. The findings may not be generalizable to other age groups. Further study can be extended to other population cohorts, and a comparative analysis can be conducted regarding the e-commerce platform attributes that lead to impulse buying during online shopping. Gender and age have a significant, inverse influence on impulse buying behavior. Future research should investigate demographic factors, such as age, gender, and income, as potential moderators of the relationship between online shopping preferences and impulsive buying behavior. This study was limited to online shoppers in Coimbatore, India, and therefore, the findings may not be generalizable to other regions. Additionally, the use of purposive sampling limits the broader applicability of the results. Future studies are encouraged to adopt probability sampling methods to better represent the target population. Despite the current findings, many scholars have demonstrated attitudinal loyalty towards specific e-commerce/online platforms, and consumers' degree of self-control directly or indirectly affects impulse shopping behavior. The effects of psychological and functionality components on impulse buying behavior are mediated by attitudinal loyalty of the consumers (Gulfraz *et al*., 2022; Srivastava & Kaul, 2016; Aprilyra & Abror, 2024). Consumers who have higher degree of self-control towards their emotions are less likely to involve in impulse purchases (Gulfraz *et al*., 2022). Individuals who lack self-regulatory resources are more likely to have an impulse to buy and end up spending more money on an unexpected impulsive purchase (Baumeister, 2002). On the contrary, individuals who have higher degree of self-control are less likely to involve in impulse purchases (Kuhn, 2013).

Conclusion

The current research contributes to the development of a comprehensive understanding of creating OCSE through its psychological and functional components. However, the study has not considered attitudinal loyalty, specific e-commerce platforms, and the degree of self-control affecting impulse purchase decisions. Finally, the study has employed only 2 components namely psychological and functionality components, where other antecedents such as consumer-related factors, marketing mix factors (promotional offers, product related features), Socio demographic factors, Online peer influence (online reviews, social media influence) can also have adverse effects on impulse buying behavior.

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