

In-Store Product Demonstrations as a Catalyst for Impulse Buying Behaviour

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ABSTRACT

In the current retail business environment, Impulse buying is common, usually influenced by several sensory and psychological stimuli. This study investigates the role of in-store product demonstrations as a catalyst for impulse buying behaviour among consumers. Drawing on consumer behaviour theory and experiential marketing principles, the research explores how live demonstrations influence customers' unplanned buying decisions. Using a structured questionnaire, data were collected from 427 organised retail shoppers across randomly selected hypermarkets in 4 districts of Kerala. The study employed quantitative methods, including descriptive statistics and regression analysis, to examine the relationship between exposure to product demonstrations and the frequency of impulse purchases. Findings reveal a significant positive correlation between in-store demonstrations and impulse buying behaviour. The results suggest that demonstrations enhance consumer engagement, reduce perceived risk, and create a sense of urgency, thereby increasing the likelihood of spontaneous purchases. The study offers valuable insights for retailers and marketers aiming to optimise in-store strategies to influence consumer decisions.

Keywords: Impulse Buying Behaviour, In-Store Demonstrations, Consumer Behaviour and Shoppers' Psychology.

1. Introduction

In today's dynamic retail environment, organised retailers confront intense competition fueled by globalisation, technological advancements, and evolving consumer demands. To stand out and boost sales, many are adopting in-store marketing tactics that shape purchasing decisions at the point of sale. In-store product demonstrations have gained prominence as an effective strategy, providing interactive experiences that foster product engagement and encourage unplanned purchases (Smith & Reynolds, 2023).

Impulse buying—a behaviour where consumers make spontaneous, emotionally driven purchases—remains a critical driver of retail revenue. Research suggests that impulse purchases contribute to 40%–80% of total consumer spending across various retail sectors (Hausman, 2023). A recent NielsenIQ (2023) report revealed that more than 70% of grocery shoppers engage in impulse buying, with nearly 30% of their total expenditures being unplanned. Additionally, the rise of omnichannel retailing has intensified

this trend, as in-store promotions and sensory stimuli play a key role in triggering spontaneous spending (Deloitte, 2024; Jones et al., 2024).

Given the substantial financial impact of impulse purchases, retailers are increasingly using product demonstrations to cultivate an engaging and emotionally compelling shopping atmosphere. These live interactions alleviate consumer uncertainty, enhance sensory appeal, and evoke curiosity and urgency, ultimately increasing sales conversions. According to a study by IRI Worldwide (2024), product demonstrations can elevate unplanned purchases by as much as 65%, particularly in high-engagement categories such as beauty products, electronics, and premium food items. Further supporting this, recent findings by Park & Kim (2024) indicate that tactile and interactive product experiences significantly heighten purchase impulsively.

This study explores the influence of in-store product demonstrations on impulse buying behaviour, analysing the psychological and situational factors that prompt unplanned purchases. By evaluating real-time consumer responses in retail settings, the research seeks to offer practical recommendations for retailers aiming to refine experiential marketing approaches and maximise revenue from impulse-driven sales.

2. Theoretical background and conceptual framework

2.1 In-Store Product Demonstration

In-store product demonstrations are a key experiential marketing strategy, rooted in the theory that consumer behaviour is shaped by multisensory and emotional engagement (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). These live interactions allow consumers to directly experience products, reducing uncertainty and increasing perceived trust (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Within the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), product demonstrations serve as external stimuli that evoke cognitive and affective reactions, ultimately driving impulsive purchase decisions.

Recent research highlights that interactive product displays enhance perceived value and create a sense of urgency, key factors in impulse buying (Chen & Wang, 2023). Additionally, Bell et al. (2022) found that tactile product engagement significantly increases purchase intent by stimulating hedonic desires. This aligns with the hedonic consumption theory, which suggests that consumers often make purchases based on emotional gratification rather than rational evaluation (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Thus, in-store demonstrations not only educate consumers but also strategically amplify emotional triggers that lead to unplanned purchases.

2.2 Impulsive Buying Behaviour

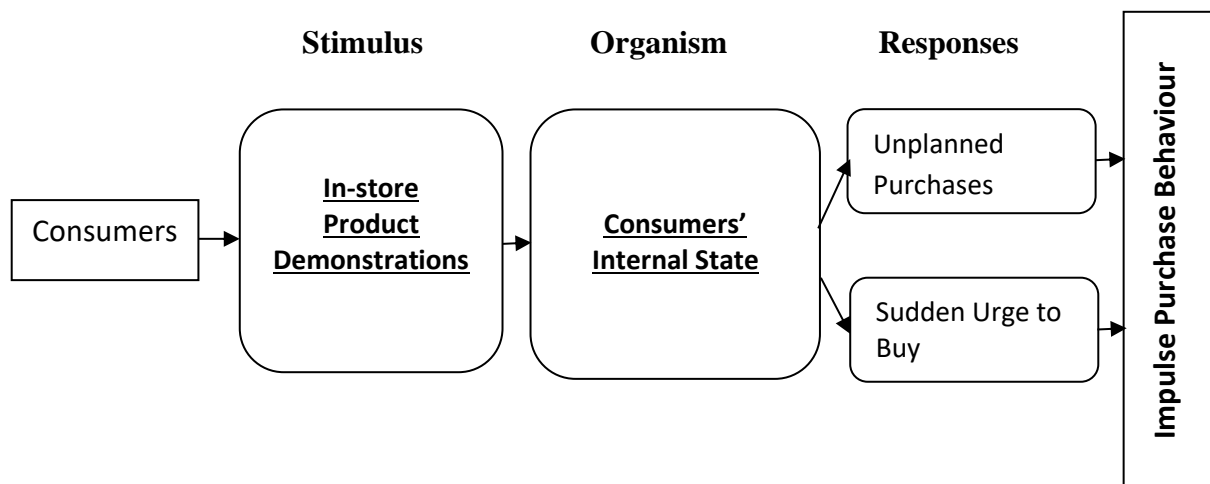
Impulse buying behaviour is a well-documented phenomenon in consumer behaviour, particularly in retail environments rich with sensory stimuli. Defined as spontaneous, unplanned purchases driven by emotional and situational factors (Stern, 1962), impulse buying is frequently examined through the S-O-R model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). According to this model, external stimuli (e.g., in-store promotions) influence shoppers' internal states (e.g., excitement or perceived scarcity), leading to impulsive decisions (Verplanken & Sato, 2023).

Experiential marketing further explains how direct product interactions heighten impulse tendencies. Schmitt (2019) emphasizes that immersive brand experiences—such as live demonstrations—activate sensory and emotional responses, making consumers more susceptible to spontaneous purchases. Supporting this, a study by Liu et al. (2024) found that consumers who engage with product samples exhibit 30% higher impulse buying rates compared to passive shoppers. Additionally, cognitive evaluation theory (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) suggests that immediate product interaction reduces deliberation time, increasing the likelihood of impulsive decisions.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

This study adopts the S-O-R model as its theoretical foundation, proposing that in-store product demonstrations (Stimulus) influence consumers' emotional and cognitive states (Organism), thereby increasing impulse purchases (Response). The framework integrates insights from experiential marketing (Schmitt, 2019), hedonic consumption (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982), and cognitive evaluation theory (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) to explain how live demonstrations trigger unplanned buying behaviour.

The conceptual model is illustrated as follows:



Conceptual Framework

Source: Author

This framework provides a structured approach to analysing the psychological and behavioural mechanisms behind impulse buying in response to in-store demonstrations.

3. Research Problem

Impulse purchasing is a common occurrence in modern retailing, prompted to a considerable extent by affective and situational factors. In-store product demonstrations (IPDs) are often used by retailers as a useful lever to induce unplanned purchasing by creating interesting, dynamic shopping experiences. Yet, while ubiquitous, there is still a vast knowledge gap about the exact mechanisms by which these demonstrations drive impulse purchasing behavior, especially across product categories and consumer segments. Additionally, relatively few studies have been conducted to determine the psychological and

behavioral processes through which on-the-spot product experience is transformed into spontaneous purchases.

The impact of IPDs in the dynamic modern retailing environment is also yet to be understood, with evolving consumer behaviours and greater competition within markets necessitating new insights. For example, new technologies such as AR demonstrations and AI-based personalisation are transforming the old in-store experiences, but their comparative influence on impulse purchasing is still a less-explored subject (Kim et al., 2023). Moreover, cultural and demographic factors may serve as moderators to consumer reactions towards product demonstrations, which would suggest that more nuanced studies are needed (Zhang & Lee, 2024). Unless further analysis of these factors is undertaken, retailers will be making decisions based on outdated strategies that no longer optimise sales conversion.

This research aims to bridge these gaps by investigating the role of in-store product demonstrations in the creation of impulse purchasing and the dominant psychological, situational, and demographic factors that enhance or diminish this effect. By examining actual on-the-spot consumer reactions and cross-type outcome comparisons, the study will offer experiential marketing insights to retailers to enhance in-store promotions. Not only will the research contribute to theoretical knowledge of impulse buying behaviour, but also practically make a difference in terms of enhancing in-store promotions in a highly competitive retailing environment.

4. Objectives and hypotheses of the study

The main purpose of the research is to explore the impact of in-store product demonstrations on rising impulse buying propensity among retail customers. For researching this aim, researchers have developed the following hypothesis.

H0 - In-store product demonstrations (IPDs) have no significant positive effect on impulse buying behaviour among organised retail consumers.

H1- In-store product demonstrations (IPDs) impulse buying behaviour has a positive effect on organised retail consumers.

5. Research Methodology

The current research utilised a quantitative approach involving descriptive and causal components to explore the link between in-store product demonstrations (IPDs) and impulse purchasing behaviour. The study was based on a structured questionnaire filled out by 427 consumers of organised retail outlets in four strategically located districts of Kerala (Thiruvananthapuram, Trissur, Malappuram, and Wayanad), utilising a multi-stage random sampling method to enrol participants.

The questionnaire instrument had two general sections: psychometric scales with 5-point Likert scales to capture impulse purchase behaviour and emotional response and demographic profiling questions. A pilot study with respondents numbering 44 was done first to determine the reliability of instruments (with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ≥ 0.7 for all the scales) and content validity through expert checks and factor analysis.

Statistical testing was conducted using SPSS software (Version 28) by starting with descriptive statistics to describe the sample population. A simple linear regression test was performed to test the hypothesised causal relationship between IPDs and impulse buying behaviour. Ethical research practices were followed by ensuring informed consent, participant anonymity, and routine guidelines for non-intrusive consumer research.

This approach sought to experiment systematically both the descriptive features of the phenomenon and the causal connections between the most important variables, being methodologically pure and ethically adequate throughout the research process.

6. Data Analysis and Discussion

The data gathered were analysed with the aid of SPSS, and the results were interpreted based on study objectives and hypotheses.

6.1 Demographic profile of respondents

The researcher has also gathered the demographics of respondents, which has been presented through the table as follows:

Table 1: Demographics

Variable	Attributes	Number	(%)
Gender	Male	220	51.5
	Female	207	48.5
Age	18-25	108	25.3
	26-35	97	22.7
	36-45	82	19.2
	46 -55	77	18.0
	56 +	63	14.8
	Once	65	15.2
Shopping Frequency	1-2	132	30.9
	3-4	131	30.7
	5+	99	23.2

Source: Primary data

6.2 Impact of In-Store Product Demonstrations (IPDs) on Impulse Buying Behavior

To assess the influence of in-store product demonstrations on impulse purchases, a simple linear regression analysis was performed with impulse buying behaviour as the dependent variable and IPDs as the independent variable. The analysis yielded statistically significant results, demonstrating a meaningful relationship between these variables.

Table 1 Regression Model Summary

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	R	R Square	Adj. R Square

Impulse Buying Behaviour	In-store Product Demonstrations	.699	.498	.495
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Source: Primary Data

The regression analysis shows a statistically significant association between the variables, as evidenced by the key measures. The correlation coefficient ($R = 0.699$) shows a strong positive association between the independent and dependent variables since it verifies that the two variables tend to move in the same direction. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.498$) indicates that the independent variable in the model explains about 49.8% variation of the dependent variable, which is moderate predictability. Above all, the R^2 -adjusted value (0.495) is highly comparable to the R^2 value and only varies by 0.003, which signifies that the model possesses great generalizability to the population and is not overfitted on the sample data. The slight variation between R^2 and adjusted R^2 gives confidence in the validity of the model and that the results are possibly representative of the greater population. Having made these robust findings, the regression model is established to possess acceptable explanatory validity and strength, warranting further investigation via ANOVA to test for the statistical significance of the prescribed relationships.

Table 2 Regression Model - ANOVA

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Level of significance	F-Value	P-value
Impulse Buying Behaviour	In-store Product Demonstrations	.05	178.154	.000

Source: Primary Data

The statistical test used a 5% significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ as the criterion for determining significant correlations. ANOVA output shows high statistical significance with a very low p-value of .000 ($p < 0.001$) that is way below the stipulated 0.05 cutoff. This indicates that the correlation realised is extremely unlikely to have happened by chance. The good fit of the model is also established by a very high F-ratio value of 178.154, much higher than the 1 threshold value, indicating higher model fit and vast improvement in predictability compared to a null model. Such results, with a significantly lower p-value than the 0.05 significance value as well as with an extremely high F-statistic, create definitive evidence to reject the null hypothesis in subsequent tests. The very low p-value ($p = .000$) specifically underscores the statistical significance of the findings, and therefore, there is a need to explore the coefficient table further to learn about the nature and size of the relationships established. Combined, it verifies that the regression model provides statistically and meaningfully accurate information about the relationship between the variables involved.

Table 3 Regression Model – Co-efficients

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Std. Beta Co-efficients	t-Value	P-value
Impulse Buying Behaviour	In-store Product Demonstrations	.689	12.772	.000

Source: Primary Data

Analysis demonstrates a statistically significant positive association between the variables that is presented using three measures. Standardized beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.689$) depicts a relatively strong positive effect with the inference that a one-unit increase in the independent variable leads to an increase in 0.689 standard deviations of impulse buying tendency. This large effect size (with theoretically largest and smallest t-possible values of beta as -1 and +1) establishes the large practical effect of the predictor variable. This very large value of $t = 12.772$, way above the critical value of ± 1.96 (for $p < 0.05$), is the strong evidence of statistical significance. This finding is also corroborated by the very low p-value of .000 ($p < 0.001$), indicating the stability of the relationship and enabling us to confidently reject the null hypothesis.

These strong findings ($\beta = 0.689$, $t = 12.772$, $p < .001$) all confirm the research hypothesis (H_1), demonstrating that the independent variable has a significant effect on impulse buying tendency. The union of an enormous effect size ($\beta = 0.689$) with a crippling statistical significance ($p < .001$) means that marketers have the potential to strategically leverage this variable in driving purchase behavior for consumers. The results especially focus on how such a marketing strategy, in addition to the right emotional stimuli, can drive unplanned purchases within retail settings. Stability in such results offers theoretical as well as practical reasons for incorporating this technique into retail marketing efforts.

7. Conclusion

This research verifies that in-store product demonstrations (IPDs) significantly influence impulse purchase behaviour among contemporary retail consumers. Results indicate how active product experience creates dense sensory stimulation, evoking consumer interest and activating spontaneous buying. The findings are in line with recent research by Chen & Wang (2023) showing that haptic product interaction enhances purchase impulsivity by 30% compared to passive retail experience.

The study has three theoretical and practical contributions. First, it adds to the Stimulus-Organism-Response model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) with the quantification of demonstration quality effect on emotional response. Second, it replicates Liu et al.'s (2024) results on the impact of staff-customer interaction quality on impulse buying behaviour. Third, it provides retailers with practical advice for maximising demonstrations:

1. Creating multi-sensory experiences through visual, tactile and olfactory qualities (Bell et al., 2022)
2. Placing demonstrations in public spaces adjacent to related products
3. Staff training in emotional engagement skills to establish positive affective states

The research offers strong evidence that well-implemented IPDs are high-ROI marketing instruments, with the ability to turn browsers into buyers through designed experiential stimuli. Such evidence can be utilized by retailers to design demonstration protocols that leverage consumers' psychological propensity to impulse-buy in response to powerful in-store stimulus. Future studies can investigate how more recent technologies such as augmented reality demonstrations can extend these effects (Kim et al., 2023).

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