

Impact of Social Media Usage, Emotional Triggers and Social Media Advertising on Impulsive Buying Behaviour among Students of Higher Educational Institutions

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Abstract

Consumer behaviour is shaped by the digital experience and the adaptation of online platforms across various scenarios. This research investigates the impact of social media usage, emotional triggers, and impact of social media advertisement on impulsive buying behaviour among higher educational institution's students in the four districts of Himachal Pradesh i.e. Kangra, Shimla, Mandi, and Solan. A well-structured questionnaire was prepared for this purpose. It used a five-point Likert scale to measure responses. A total of 480 students took part in the study and provided their responses. Data were analyzed using SPSS program to conduct descriptive statistics, reliability analysis and multiple regression analysis. The results showed that all three factors had a positive and statistically significant impact on the impulsive buying behaviour of the respondents. Emotional triggers emerged as the most important predictor, followed by social media usage and advertisement trigger. The insights from the study can assist marketers in formulating tailored and ethically responsible social media strategies, while also enhancing understanding of the psychological and social media-related antecedents of impulsive buying behaviour among students.

Keywords: Social Media Usage, Emotional Triggers, Advertisement Impact, Impulsive Buying Behaviour, Students, Himachal Pradesh

Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital technologies and social media platforms has greatly impacted consumer behaviour in online environments. Use of social media platforms leads to repetitive interaction with marketing content which helps in framing the purchase decision. Impulsive buying behaviour is the spontaneous and unplanned purchase that takes place without careful consideration of its consequences **Arghashi (2025)**.

Social media usage fosters impulsive buying behaviour by enhancing users' engagement with online content and marketing stimuli. Studies have shown that compulsive social media users may be prone to impulsive purchasing as they are impacted by ads and promotions **Arghashi (2025)**.

The impact of emotion on impulsive buying behaviour is also prominent. The fear of missing out (FOMO), as identified by **Barbu Kleitsch & Drămnescu (2025)**, is one of the key psychological drivers among young adults that influence purchase motivation and encourages buying impulsively. This is relevant to the students of higher educational institutions who are actively engaged on social networking sites.

Advertising and digital promotional initiatives further enhance impulsive buying behaviour tendencies in the online settings. According to studies, fear of missing out and social commerce features affect consumers' impulsive buying behaviour by serving as psychological and environmental stimuli **Ayyasy et al. (2025)**

Despite a growing number of studies, it remains important to examine the combined effect of social media usage, emotional triggers and advertisement on impulsive buying behaviour of students in higher educational institutions. Limited research has incorporated these variables into one framework, while most of the studies focus on individual factors. Therefore, this study aims to analyse the collective influence of these factors in the context of students.

Literature Review

1. **Pal et al. (2021)** explored “Factors Affecting Impulse Buying on Online Shopping amongst Youth: A Structural Equation Modeling Approach” to identify key factors that drive youngsters to make impulse purchases while shopping online. The study collected 301 responses from youngsters with a multi-faceted methodology. To group the variables into different components, it started with literature survey followed by exploratory factor analysis. Afterward, structural equation modelling (SEM) was employed using AMOS 22.0 to validate the results. According to the study, scarcity, serendipity, e-commerce, social shopping, value shopping and relaxation shopping are significant determinants of the affective impulse buying tendency.
2. **Agarwal et al. (2021)** in their study “Online Impulse Buying Behaviour of Indian Small-Town Consumers: Scale Development and Validation” examines the factors affecting online impulse buying behaviour (IBB) among consumers living in small towns of North India, which differ from those in metro cities. Using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on a sample of 304 online buyers, five determinants namely- hedonic online shopping motivation, marketing stimulus, impulse buy, impulse buying tendency and situation stimulus were identified and validated for IBB. The findings can assist e-tailors in understanding this complicated behaviour which, in turn, helps them craft marketing strategies more effectively and gain a competitive edge in the e-marketplace.
3. **Tomar et al. (2023)** examined “Impulsive Buying Among Youth: A Dominating Component of Compulsive Buying Behavior”, to determine primary component of compulsive buying behaviour (CBB) among young consumers. The Richmond scale was applied to 469 college students, and 169 were found to exhibit compulsive buying behaviour. According to the data, the strongest predictor of CBB among young people is the spontaneity of buying unwanted and unplanned products. The findings also showed no effect of age or sex on the CBB score. To reduce compulsive buying behaviour (CBB), policymakers should avoid promoting potentially harmful products at the point of purchase.
4. **Chauhan et al. (2023)** conducted a study titled “Analysis of Impulse Buying Behaviour of Consumer During COVID-19: An Empirical Study”, to see how consumer buying behaviour changed for online fashion products during the pandemic of COVID-19 with special emphasis on impulse buying (IB). Using the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory, study examined fashion involvement,

hedonic shopping value, and sales promotion as independent variables on one hand while positive emotion as a mediator, and impulsive buying as a dependent variable. Positive emotion and impulsive buying are two important constructs in fashion industry. The analysis of information obtained from 569 respondents of Central India was performed through PLS-SEM 3 software. Key findings show that hedonic shopping value and positive emotion have a significant positive impact on impulsive buying, and that positive emotion serves as a significant mediator in the relationships between them. On the other hand, fashion involvement and sales promotion did not appear to have an impact on IB. The findings provide the fashion sector with valuable recommendations to adapt to consumer behaviour changes brought by the pandemic.

5. **Lavuri (2023)** examined “Intrinsic factors affecting online impulsive shopping during the COVID-19 in emerging markets” to analyze how perceived utilitarian and hedonic value, materialism, interest in fashion, and enjoyment as intrinsic factors affect online impulsive shopping in the Indian emerging market during COVID-19. Structural equation modeling was performed by analysing data from 443 Indian respondents. The findings indicate that perceived trust and online shopping attitude were significantly influenced by utilitarian value, hedonic value, materialism and enjoyment, which in turn positively impacted the impulsive online shopping behaviour. Fashion interest, however, showed no significant effect. The implications of the findings can be used by e-retailers to enhance their sales and strengthen relationship with customer.
6. **Khai et al. (2024)** in their study “Online Product Review Engagement and Platform Trust Concerns: Their Influence in the Impulsive Buying Behavior of College Students”, validated how engagement with online product review and concerns about platform trust affect the impulsive buying behavior of college students in the Philippines. A descriptive quantitative study was conducted on 353 students, which found that respondents exhibited a moderate level of impulsive purchase. The impact of product review engagement and platform trust concerns on impulsive buying was found to be insignificant. However, impulsive buying was significantly influenced by demographic factors such as age, gender and duration of spending time online.
7. **Jhinkwan et al. (2024)** in their study “Impact of Digital Advertising by the Influencers on Consumers’ Online Buying Behaviour (Special Reference to Instagram)” investigates the effect of influencer-led digital advertising on consumers’ buying behaviour via Instagram. The research employs a mixed-methods strategy that examines quantitative consumer data from surveys and influencer content strategies qualitatively. The study explores how influencers shape consumer preferences and purchases, including the ethical issues and psychological aspects. According to the results, many Instagram users follow an influencer, see sponsored content, and consider or purchase a product because of it, but there is variance in trust towards these influencers. The research implies that influencers have a large impact on the online shopping behaviour and authenticity must be precise.
8. **Liu et al. (2025)** conducted a study titled “A study on how social media influences on impulsive buying” to examine the effect of social media influencers on customers’ impulsive buying behaviour with the help of an elaboration likelihood model (ELM). The study helps in understanding the factors contributing to impulsive buying behaviour. According to the study, functional product values, emotional product values, influencer authenticity, and influencer influence play a vital role in impacting impulsive buying whereas perceived social value and influencer expertise do not impact impulsive buying. The study suggests that businesses can partner with genuine and credible influencers to generate consumer trust, thereby leading to impulse buying.

9. **Suyanto et al. (2025)** in their research “Young urban people’s impulsive online shopping behavior and its financial literacy”, examines what drives urban youngsters towards online shopping, how it makes them impulsive and their level of financial literacy in Indonesia. Using quantitative methods, a sample of 500 young digital platform users, the study found that shopping online has become a lifestyle, where purchases are often made impulsively without considering the financial impact. Financial literacy was shown to curb overspending behaviours. However, many people usually cannot distinguish between needs and wants, resulting in the consumeristic lifestyle.
10. **Yee & Zainal (2025)** studies “Factors Influencing Impulse Buying Behaviour during Online Shopping among Youngsters Consumers, Klang Valley, Malaysia”, using the theory of planned behaviour as the framework, addressing psychological, social, marketing and situational factors affecting impulsive buying. The finding suggests that psychological factors contribute the most to impulse buying behavior, followed by social factors. Marketing and situational factors were not significant predictors. The insights from the findings can help businesses shape their marketing strategies and assist consumers to make informed decision before buying.

Objective of the Study

To investigate the impact of social media usage, emotional triggers, and social media advertising on the impulsive buying behaviour of students in higher educational institutions.

Research Methodology

This study examines the impact of social media usage, emotional triggers and social media advertising on the impulsive buying behaviour of students, employing a quantitative research approach. Students enrolled in higher educational institutions located in the Kangra, Shimla, Mandi and Solan districts of Himachal Pradesh were included in the study, with a total of 480 respondents selected using convenience sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire measured on a five-point Likert scale, covering the independent and dependent variables. The data were analyzed using SPSS, including descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis to test the hypotheses. To ensure the absence of multicollinearity, collinearity diagnostics were conducted, while ethical considerations such as voluntary participation, confidentiality, and informed consent were maintained.

Hypothesis of the study

1. **H1:** Social media usage has a significant effect on impulsive buying behaviour among students of higher educational institutions.
2. **H2:** Emotional triggers have a significant effect on impulsive buying behaviour among students of higher educational institutions.
3. **H3:** Social media advertising impact has a significant effect on impulsive buying behaviour among students of higher educational institutions.

Analysis and Interpretation

Reliability Analysis

Table 1 – Reliability Analysis of Constructs

Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach’s Alpha	Interpretation
Social Media Usage	4	0.808	Good
Emotional Triggers	4	0.906	Excellent
Social Media Advertising Impact	3	0.819	Good
Impulsive Buying Behaviour	6	0.914	Excellent

Table 1 presents Cronbach’s Alpha values, indicating good to excellent reliability across the study constructs: Social Media Usage (0.808) and Social Media Advertising Impact (0.819) – good, Emotional Triggers (0.906) and Impulsive Buying Behaviour (0.914) – excellent. The scales are reliable for further analysis.

Descriptive Statistics of Constructs

Table 2 – Descriptive Statistics of Constructs

Constructs	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Media Usage	.34562	.82127
Emotional Triggers	3.1458	1.00017
Social Media Advertising Impact	3.3674	.90771
Impulsive Buying Behaviour	3.1347	.94393

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics, revealing that social media usage (M = 0.35, SD = 0.82), emotional triggers (M = 3.15, SD = 1.00), social media advertising impact (M = 3.37, SD = 0.91), and impulsive buying behaviour (M = 3.13, SD = 0.94) show varying levels of influence. Among these, social media advertising impact (M = 3.37, SD = 0.91) has the highest mean, indicating a relatively stronger effect compared to other constructs. The standard deviation values suggest moderate variability in responses, reflecting differences in students’ perceptions and buying behaviour.

Correlation Analysis

Table 3 – Correlation Analysis of Constructs

Variables	Impulsive buying behaviour
Social Media Usage (SMU)	0.723**
Emotional Triggers (ET)	0.831**
Social Media Advertising Impact (SMI)	0.725**

Table 3 shows that social media usage (r = 0.723), emotional triggers (r = 0.831), and social media advertising impact (r = 0.725) have strong positive and significant relationships with impulsive buying behaviour (p < 0.01). This indicates that an increase in these factors leads to higher impulsive buying, with emotional triggers showing the strongest association.

Combined Regression Table

Table 4 – Multiple Regression Analysis of Predictors on Impulsive Buying

Variables	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig.	R ²	F-value	Model Sig.
Social Media Usage (SMU)	0.263	7.929	0.000	0.755	490.259	0.000
Emotional Triggers (ET)	0.562	16.433	0.000			
Social Media Advertisement Impact (SMI)	0.136	3.716	0.000			

Table 4 presents the results of the multiple regression analysis, showing that social media usage ($\beta = 0.263$, $t = 7.929$, $p = 0.000$), emotional triggers ($\beta = 0.562$, $t = 16.433$, $p = 0.000$), and social media advertisement impact ($\beta = 0.136$, $t = 3.716$, $p = 0.000$) all have a positive and statistically significant effect on impulsive buying behaviour. Among these, emotional triggers have the strongest influence, followed by social media usage, while advertisement impact shows a relatively weaker effect. The model explains 75.5% of the variance in impulsive buying behaviour ($R^2 = 0.755$) and is statistically significant ($F = 490.259$, $p = 0.000$), indicating a good fit of the model.

Multicollinearity Diagnostics

Table 5 – Multicollinearity Diagnostics of Constructs

Variables	Tolerance	VIF
SMU	0.466	2.144
ET	0.439	2.278
SMI	0.386	2.590

Table 5 presents the collinearity statistics, indicating that social media usage (tolerance = 0.466, VIF = 2.144), emotional triggers (tolerance = 0.439, VIF = 2.278), and social media advertisement impact (tolerance = 0.386, VIF = 2.590) all have tolerance values above 0.1 and VIF values below 5, suggesting no multicollinearity issues. This confirms that the independent variables are sufficiently independent to be included in the regression model.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 6 - Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta	p-value	Decision
H1	Social Media Usage → Impulsive Buying Behaviour	0.263	0.000	Accepted
H2	Emotional Triggers → Impulsive Buying Behaviour	0.562	0.000	Accepted
H3	Social Media Advertising Impact → Impulsive Buying Behaviour	0.136	0.000	Accepted

Table 6 presents the regression results, indicating that all three hypotheses are supported. Social media usage ($\beta = 0.263$, $p = 0.000$), emotional triggers ($\beta = 0.562$, $p = 0.000$), and social media advertisement impact ($\beta = 0.136$, $p = 0.000$) have a positive and significant effect on impulsive buying behaviour, with emotional triggers showing the strongest influence.

Discussion

The results of regression analysis indicate that impulsive buying behaviour is strongly impacted by social

media usage, emotional triggers, and social media advertisement impact on the students. Emotional triggers had the most considerable effect on impulsive purchase behaviour at ($\beta = 0.562, p = 0.000$). This suggests that the psychological factors like stress relief, mood enhancement, aesthetic appeal, and pursuit of instant gratification exert a substantial impact on online impulsive purchasing decisions. The use of social media ($\beta=0.263, p=0.000$) positively contributes to impulsive buying which means using the social media often exposes a user to stimuli that encourage spontaneous purchases. The impact of social media advertisement ($\beta = 0.136, p = 0.000$), though relatively weak, is still significant. As such, this type of advertisement has the potential to shape consumer behaviour. Overall, the findings highlight the need to consider a combination of influencing factors while analysing impulsive buying behaviour among students in the digital context.

Conclusion

The study concludes that social media engagement and emotional triggers have been found to be significant determinants of impulsive buying behaviour among students. Emotional triggers are the most effective factor, followed by social media usage and advertisement impact, collectively explaining a substantial portion of the variance in impulsive purchase behaviour. These findings provide useful information to marketers who are looking to design an effective digital marketing strategy. Additionally, it also highlights the importance of emotional and social media-related factors when evaluating consumer behaviour online.

Implications of the Study

The study demonstrates that impulsive buying behaviour of students are influenced positively by emotional triggers, social media usage and advertisement impact. It contributes to the understanding of consumer decision-making by illustrating how psychological factors and social media engagement interplay to shape spontaneous purchase behaviour. Essentially, the results offer critical guidelines for marketers to target social media networks with campaigns that evoke emotions toward their products, hence inducing purchase intention. Also, the results stress ethical digital marketing practices to ensure that marketing strategies do not take advantage of consumers' emotional vulnerabilities. These results provide useful insights for educators and policy makers to promote awareness among students regarding responsible consumption online as well as social media influence on impulse buying.

Limitations and Future Scope

The study is limited to students of higher educational institutions, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other populations. It also focuses on only three factors—social media usage, emotional triggers, and advertisement impact—while other variables influencing impulsive buying, such as personality traits, social influence, or cultural context, were not examined. Future research can expand the scope by including a more diverse sample, incorporating additional determinants of impulsive buying, and exploring the impact of emerging social media platforms and AI-driven marketing strategies. Such studies would provide a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of impulsive buying behaviour in digital environments.

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