

A Study on Consumer Psychology Behind Impulse Buying

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the psychological factors influencing impulse buying behaviour among consumers in today's rapidly evolving retail and digital marketplace. The research aims to analyse how emotional states, hedonic motivation, self-control, promotional offers, store atmosphere, visual merchandising, and digital marketing strategies affect consumers' unplanned purchasing decisions. It also investigates the relationship between demographic factors such as age, gender, and income and impulse buying tendencies. The study is based on primary data collected through a structured questionnaire and supported by relevant literature on consumer psychology and impulse buying. The findings indicate that emotions, attractive product displays, promotional activities, and online shopping environments significantly encourage impulse purchases, with younger consumers showing a higher tendency toward impulsive buying. The study provides valuable insights for marketers and retailers to design effective marketing strategies while also promoting responsible consumer behaviour.

KEY WORDS: Consumer Psychology, Impulse Buying, Consumer Behaviour, Emotional Buying, Unplanned Purchases, Hedonic Motivation, Self-Control, Store Atmosphere, Digital Marketing, Online Shopping.

Introduction

The retail world today moves at an unprecedented pace, and within this dynamic environment, impulse buying has grown into one of the most studied and commercially relevant aspects of consumer behaviour. Unlike planned purchases that follow a deliberate evaluation of need and alternatives, impulse buying occurs when a consumer makes a sudden, unplanned buying decision is largely steered by emotional impulse rather than conscious reasoning. This form of buying behaviour contributes significantly to overall retail revenue, cutting across both brick-and-mortar stores and rapidly growing online marketplaces. Consumers in the modern age are continuously surrounded by a carefully designed ecosystem of triggers ranging from product placement strategies and time-sensitive discount offers to targeted digital ads and seamless checkout experiences. Retailers, both offline and online, have become increasingly adept at engineering environments that convert casual browsing into actual transactions. Studying why and how consumers arrive at these unplanned decisions, therefore, goes beyond academic curiosity serves as a foundational tool for business strategy and market intelligence. The psychology driving impulse purchases operates through a dual layer of influences. On one side lie internal forces a consumer's desire for pleasure-seeking experiences, their current emotional condition, their capacity for self-regulation, and inherent personality characteristics. On the other side are external forces the ambience of a store, perceived value through pricing signals, influence from social circles, and subtle digital prompts. Consumer psychology research consistently demonstrates that impulse purchases follow recognisable emotional and cognitive patterns, often rooted in a temporary weakening of self-control combined with feelings of urgency or desire. The rapid expansion of e-commerce and social commerce has further broadened the scope of impulse buying beyond physical retail spaces. Algorithm-driven product suggestions, limited-period sales events, endorsements by social media influencers, and frictionless digital payment options have introduced a new generation of psychological stimuli that operate in the online

environment. These developments call for a more current and comprehensive understanding of what drives impulsive consumer decisions in a digitally connected world. The present study is aimed at investigating the psychological foundations of impulse buying behaviour, with a specific focus on the motivational, emotional, and contextual factors that lead consumers toward unplanned purchases. The findings are intended to offer practical value to marketers, retail professionals, and those concerned with promoting responsible consumer behaviour.

Literature Review

Naeem (2020) found that fear, uncertainty, and emotional responses during the COVID-19 pandemic significantly influenced consumers' impulsive purchasing behavior. **Iyer et al. (2020)** concluded that psychological traits and marketing stimuli jointly affect impulse buying and emphasized the role of emotions in purchase decisions. **Rodrigues et al. (2021)** reported that store environment, life satisfaction, and self-esteem positively influence impulsive shopping behavior among consumers. **Mandolfo and Lamberti (2021)** highlighted that consumer emotions and situational factors are major determinants of impulse buying and suggested the need for further research on digital platforms. **Redine et al. (2022)** conducted a systematic review and found that impulse buying research should focus on different contexts, theories, and consumer characteristics. **Kaur and Sharma (2024)** observed that website quality, online promotions, and digital interactions strongly influence online impulse buying behavior. **Sen (2024)** revealed that cognitive and emotional responses of consumers have a direct impact on impulsive purchase intentions. **Du (2024)** stated that social media influence, limited-time offers, and online reviews play a significant role in encouraging impulse purchases. **Chaudhary (2025)** explained that cognitive-emotional interactions and digital marketing strategies significantly shape consumers' impulse buying behavior in e-commerce. **Dang (2025)** found that social commerce, live streaming, and community interactions increase impulsive and compulsive buying tendencies among consumers.

Statement of the Problem

Impulse buying has become increasingly common among consumers due to the influence of emotions, marketing activities, and digital shopping platforms. Many consumers make unplanned purchases without fully evaluating their needs or the consequences of their decisions. However, the psychological factors that drive such behavior are not clearly understood. Therefore, this study aims to examine the role of consumer psychology in influencing impulse buying behavior and to identify the factors that contribute to spontaneous purchasing decisions.

Need for the study

The study is needed to understand the psychological factors that influence consumers to make unplanned purchases. With the growing impact of advertising, social media, and promotional activities, impulse buying has become a significant aspect of consumer behavior. This study helps identify the emotions and motivations behind such purchases and provides useful insights for marketers and businesses to develop effective marketing strategies and enhance customer satisfaction.

Objectives of the Study

- To analyse the key psychological factors including emotional states, hedonic motivation, and self-control influence impulse buying behaviour among consumers.
- To examine the role of external environmental stimuli such as store atmospherics, promotional offers, visual merchandising, and digital nudges in triggering unplanned purchase decisions.
- To evaluate the relationship between demographic variables such as age, gender, and income level and the degree of impulse buying tendency among consumers.

Hypothesis

H_0 (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant relationship between consumer psychology and impulse buying behaviour.

H_1 (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant relationship between consumer psychology and impulse buying behaviour.

Research Methodology

This study follows a quantitative research methodology to examine the psychological factors influencing impulse buying behaviour. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire from consumers and analysed using percentage analysis and descriptive statistics to draw meaningful conclusions.

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive research design to describe and analyse the relationship between consumer psychology and impulse buying behaviour. It helps in understanding consumer emotions, motivations, and external influences that affect purchasing decisions.

Source of Data

Primary Data: Data were collected from 57 respondents through a structured questionnaire.

Secondary Data: Data were collected from research journals, books, articles, websites, and other Sampling Technique.

Sample Size: The sample size for the study consists of 57 respondents selected for analysing consumer psychology behind impulse buying behaviour.

Sampling Technique: The study uses the Convenience Sampling Technique, where respondents were selected based on their accessibility and willingness to participate.

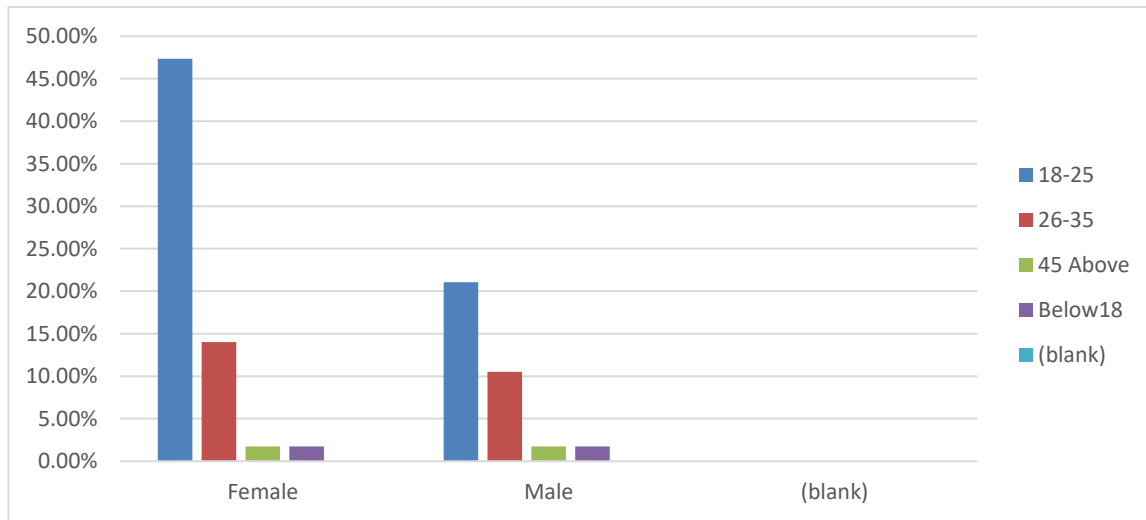
Limitations of the Study

- The study is limited to 57 respondents only.
- The findings are based on respondents' self-reported opinions and may involve personal bias.
- The study focuses on a specific geographical area, limiting the generalisation of the findings.
- Time and resource constraints restricted the scope of the research.

DATA ANALYSIS

Demography and Age group					
Age	18-25	26-35	45 Above	Below18	Grand Total
Female	47.37%	14.04%	1.75%	1.75%	64.91%
Male	21.05%	10.53%	1.75%	1.75%	35.09%
(blank)	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Grand Total	68.42%	24.56%	3.51%	3.51%	100.00%

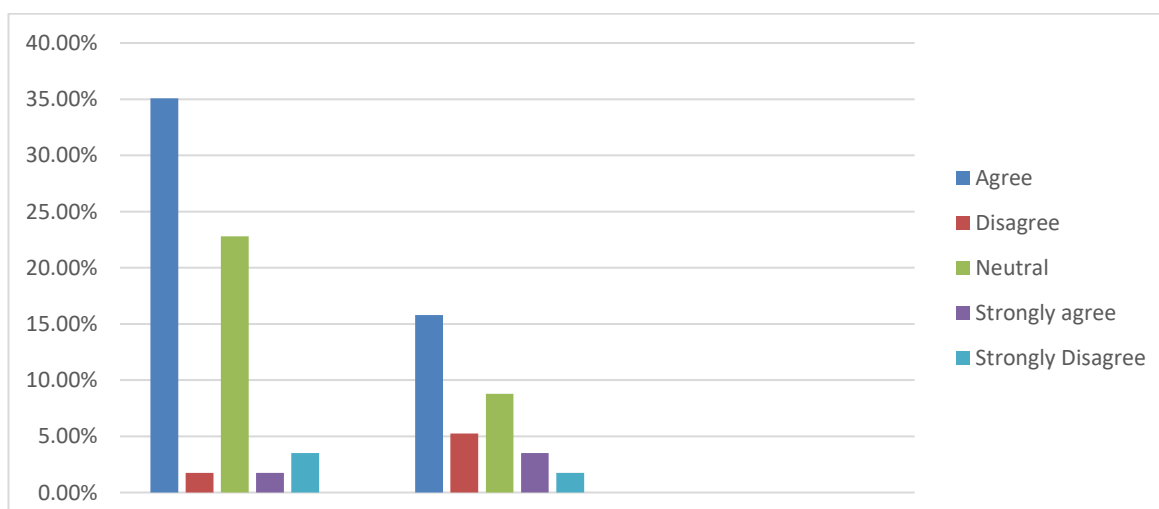
Analysis: The data shows that 68.42% of the respondents belong to the 18–25 years age group, followed by 24.56% in the 26–35 years category. Female respondents make up 64.91% of the sample, while male respondents account for 35.09%. Only a small percentage of respondents are below 18 or above 45 years of age.



Interpretation: The findings indicate that the study is mainly represented by young adults, especially females. Since the majority of respondents are aged 18–25 years, the results primarily reflect the opinions and buying behaviour of young consumers. This demographic is generally more active in shopping and may be more influenced by impulse buying factors.

Attractive product displays and store/website visuals influence me to buy products I had not planned to purchase.						
Row Labels	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly agree	Strongly Disagree	Grand Total
Female	35.09%	1.75%	22.81%	1.75%	3.51%	64.91%
Male	15.79%	5.26%	8.77%	3.51%	1.75%	35.09%
Grand Total	50.88%	7.02%	31.58%	5.26%	5.26%	100.00%

Analysis: The findings show that 50.88% of respondents agree that attractive product displays and store/website visuals influence them to buy products they had not planned to purchase. 31.58% of respondents remain neutral, while 7.02% disagree. Only 5.26% each strongly agree and strongly disagree with the statement.



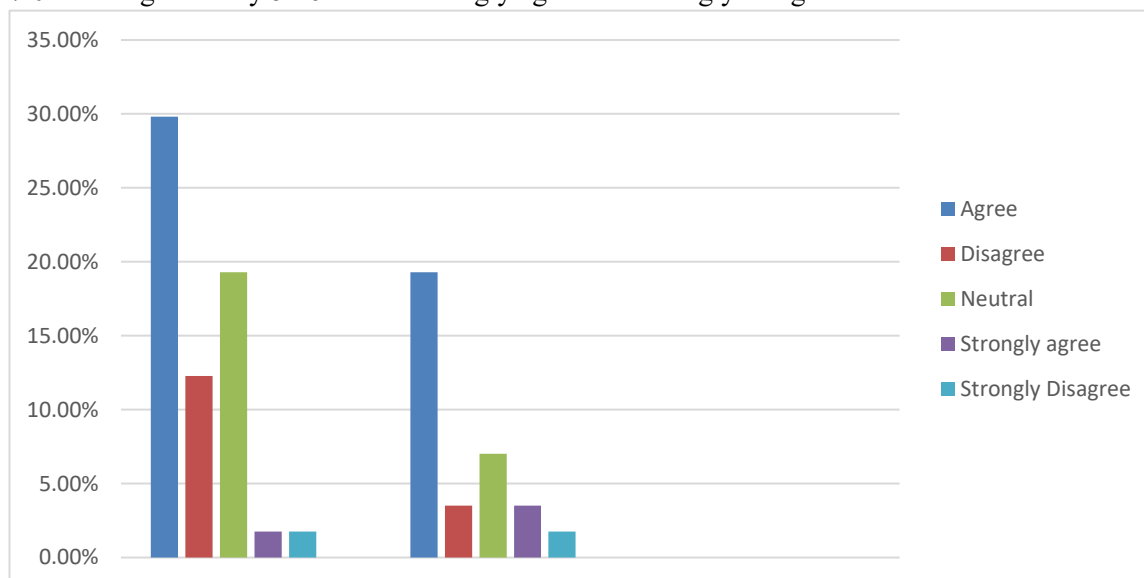
Interpretation: The results indicate that attractive product displays and visual merchandising have a positive influence on consumers' impulse buying behaviour. Since more than half of the respondents agree with the statement, it suggests that appealing visuals play an important role in encouraging unplanned purchases. This highlights the effectiveness of attractive displays in influencing consumer buying decisions.

Count of 8. My emotional state (happiness, stress, boredom) significantly affects my likelihood of making unplanned purchases.

Column Labels

Row Labels	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly agree	Strongly Disagree	Grand Total
Female	29.82%	12.28%	19.30%	1.75%	1.75%	64.91%
Male	19.30%	3.51%	7.02%	3.51%	1.75%	35.09%
Grand Total	49.12%	15.79%	26.32%	5.26%	3.51%	100.00%

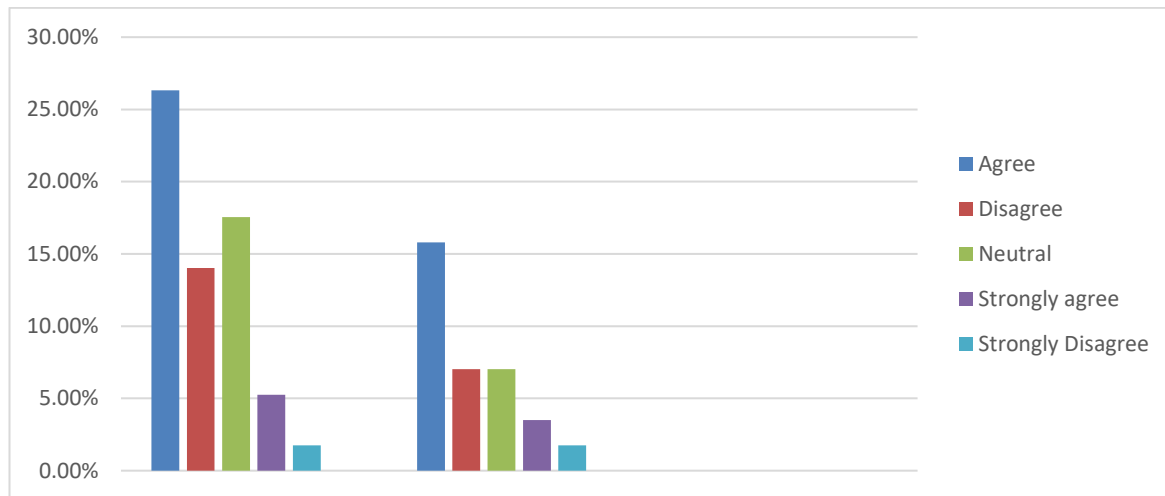
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I often buy products on the spot without any prior planning or intention						
Row Labels	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly agree	Strongly Disagree	Grand Total
Female	26.32%	14.04%	17.54%	5.26%	1.75%	64.91%
Male	15.79%	7.02%	7.02%	3.51%	1.75%	35.09%
Grand Total	42.11%	21.05%	24.56%	8.77%	3.51%	100.00%

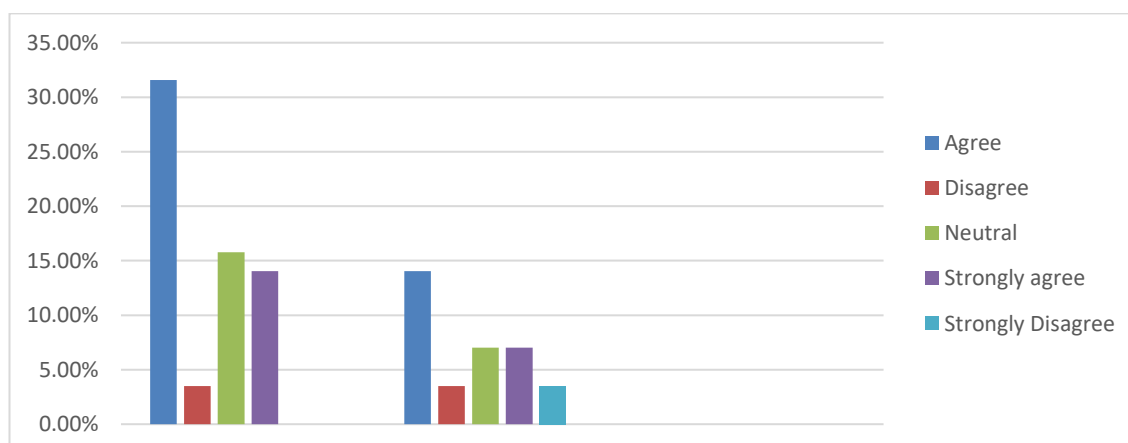
Analysis: The data shows that 42.11% of respondents agree that they often buy products on the spot without any prior planning or intention. 24.56% of respondents are neutral, while 21.05% disagree. In addition, 8.77% strongly agree and 3.51% strongly disagree with the statement.



Interpretation: The findings indicate that many consumers tend to make spontaneous purchases without prior planning. Since the highest percentage of respondents agree with the statement, it suggests that impulse buying is a common shopping behaviour. This highlights that unplanned purchasing is a significant aspect of consumer buying decisions.

After making an unplanned purchase, I frequently feel excited and satisfied with my decision.						
Row Labels	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly agree	Strongly Disagree	Grand Total
Female	31.58%	3.51%	15.79%	14.04%	0.00%	64.91%
Male	14.04%	3.51%	7.02%	7.02%	3.51%	35.09%
Grand Total	45.61%	7.02%	22.81%	21.05%	3.51%	100.00%

Analysis: The data shows that 42.11% of respondents agree that they often buy products on the spot without any prior planning or intention. 24.56% of respondents are neutral, while 21.05% disagree. In addition, 8.77% strongly agree and 3.51% strongly disagree with the statement.



Interpretation: The findings indicate that many consumers tend to make spontaneous purchases without prior planning. Since the highest percentage of respondents agree with the statement, it suggests that impulse buying is a common shopping behaviour. This highlights that unplanned purchasing is a significant aspect of consumer buying decisions.

Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The categories of 1.What is your age group? occur with equal probabilities.	One-Sample Chi-Square Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
2	The categories defined by 2.What is your gender? = Female and Male occur with probabilities 0.5 and 0.5.	One-Sample Binomial Test	.034	Reject the null hypothesis.
3	The categories of 3.What is your monthly income/pocket money? occur with equal probabilities.	One-Sample Chi-Square Test	.002	Reject the null hypothesis.
4	The categories of 4.What is your highest level of education? occur with equal probabilities.	One-Sample Chi-Square Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
5	The categories of 5.How frequently do you shop (online or offline)? occur with equal probabilities.	One-Sample Chi-Square Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	7.950	1	7.950	8.394	.005 ^b
	Residual	52.085	55	.947		
	Total	60.035	56			

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.085	.484		4.304	.000

8.My emotional state (happiness, stress, boredom) significantly affects my likelihood of making unplanned purchases.	.402	.139	.364	2.897	.005

Chi-Square Test

8.My emotional state (happiness, stress, boredom) significantly affects my likelihood of making unplanned purchases.			
	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
1	2	11.4	-9.4
2	9	11.4	-2.4
3	15	11.4	3.6
4	28	11.4	16.6
5	3	11.4	-8.4
Total	57		

12.After making an unplanned purchase, I frequently feel excited and satisfied with my decision.			
	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
1	2	11.4	-9.4
2	4	11.4	-7.4
3	13	11.4	1.6
4	26	11.4	14.6
5	12	11.4	.6
Total	57		

Test Statistics		
	8.My emotional state (happiness, stress, boredom) significantly affects my likelihood of making unplanned purchases.	12.After making an unplanned purchase, I frequently feel excited and satisfied with my decision.
Chi-Square	39.754 ^a	31.509 ^a

df	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000

SPSS TEST

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	55	96.5
	Excluded ^a	2	3.5
	Total	57	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.785	4

FINIDING

- ☐ **Visual & Environmental Triggers:** Over **56%** of respondents (agree/strongly agree) confirmed that attractive product displays and visual merchandising directly cause them to make unplanned purchases.
- ☐ **Emotional Influence:** Over **54%** agreed that their emotional state (boredom, happiness, stress) drives impulse buying. Regression analysis proved this to be a statistically significant predictor ($p = .005$) for difficulty in resisting unplanned purchases.
- ☐ **Spontaneity Level:** A total of **50.88%** of consumers frequently buy products on the spot without prior intention.
- ☐ **Post-Purchase Reinforcement:** **66.66%** of respondents experience positive emotions (excitement and satisfaction) after an impulse purchase, which reinforces repeat buying behavior.
- ☐ **Demographic Variance:** Chi-Square and Binomial tests showed statistically significant differences across age, gender, income, and education regarding impulse buying behavior ($p < .05$).

Suggestions

- ☐ **Optimize Visual Merchandising:** Invest in high-quality visual aesthetics, interactive displays, and intuitive online website navigation, as visual appeal is a major trigger.
- ☐ **Leverage Emotional Marketing:** Craft campaigns and promotional messaging that resonate with mood-boosting experiences (e.g., "retail therapy") to connect with consumers in emotional states.
- ☐ **Target Young Demographics:** Tailor limited-time offers and flash sale promotions toward young adults (18–25), who show the highest tendency for spontaneous buying.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that impulse buying is driven by a strong interaction between internal psychological states and external marketing triggers. The findings reveal that emotional conditions such as happiness, stress, and boredom serve as significant psychological predictors that lower self-regulation and make consumers more susceptible to spontaneous purchasing. Additionally, external stimuli like attractive product displays, visual merchandising, and limited-time promotional offers play a crucial role in converting casual browsing into immediate sales.

Because a vast majority of impulsive shoppers experience post-purchase excitement and satisfaction rather than immediate regret, this behavior is continually reinforced. Ultimately, the study highlights that impulse buying is particularly prominent among younger demographics (18–25 years), emphasizing the need for marketers to design engaging, emotionally resonant shopping environments while also highlighting the importance of consumer awareness regarding self-control and personal financial budgeting.

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