Influence of Social Media Reels on Impulse Buying Behavior: A Study Among Young Adults

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Abstract

Social media has evolved beyond communication into a powerful marketing platform, with short-form videos (reels) becoming increasingly influential. This study investigates the impact of social media reels on impulse buying behavior among young adults. Using a structured questionnaire, responses were collected from 100 active social media users aged 18–25. The research identifies visual appeal, influencer promotion, emotional engagement, and limited-time offers as key triggers for spontaneous purchases. Findings reveal that 68% of respondents admitted to making at least one unplanned purchase after watching reels. Statistical analysis indicates a significant positive correlation between reel engagement and impulse buying tendency. The study provides actionable insights for marketers to design effective digital campaigns while highlighting the importance of consumer awareness to mitigate impulsive purchasing.

Keywords: Social Media Reels, Impulse Buying, Young Adults, Influencer Marketing, Visual Appeal, Emotional Engagement, Digital Marketing, Consumer Behavior

1. Introduction

Social media has rapidly transformed marketing strategies globally. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube have introduced short-form videos or reels as an engaging marketing tool. Reels are visually appealing, short, and emotionally engaging, making them highly effective in capturing consumer attention. Impulse buying, the act of making unplanned purchases, is increasingly triggered by these reels. Young adults, especially aged 18–25, spend significant time on social media, making them highly susceptible to impulsive buying. Despite the widespread use of reels in marketing, research examining their direct influence on impulse buying remains limited. This study aims to explore the relationship between reel features and impulsive purchase behavior among young adults.

2. Objectives of the Study

- To examine the influence of social media reels on impulse buying among young adults.
- To identify key triggers in reels that lead to unplanned purchases.
- To analyze the correlation between reel engagement and impulsive buying behavior.
- To provide practical recommendations for marketers and consumers.

3. Problem Statement

Social media reels are widely used to promote products and increase sales. However, the psychological mechanisms driving impulse purchases are not well understood. Young adults form the largest segment of reel viewers, yet their behavioral responses to reel features such as visual appeal, influencer promotion, and limited-time offers remain under-researched. This study aims to analyze these triggers and provide insights into responsible digital marketing strategies.

4. Literature Review

Impulse buying has long been studied in consumer behavior, but the rise of social media reels introduces new triggers. Visual appeal, influencer endorsement, emotional engagement, and scarcity tactics are modern mechanisms influencing spontaneous purchases. Short-form videos in developing countries, particularly among youth, are still underexplored in academic literature. This research builds on behavioral marketing theories while focusing specifically on the impact of reels on impulsive consumer decisions.

5. Hypotheses

H_0 (Null Hypothesis): Social media reels have no significant influence on impulse buying behavior.

H_1 (Alternative Hypothesis): Social media reels have a significant influence on impulse buying behavior.

6. Research Methodology

This research adopts a descriptive and analytical design to explore how social media reels shape impulse buying behavior among young adults. An online questionnaire was developed and distributed to a purposive sample of 100 participants aged 18 to 25. This age range was chosen because young adults are among the most active social media users and are more likely to respond to digital marketing stimuli. The questionnaire included items on the frequency of reel viewing, engagement levels, emotional reactions, and the factors that trigger spontaneous purchases. Convenience sampling allowed efficient access to a digitally active population. Data collection was conducted online to ensure flexibility and reach. Responses were coded and analyzed through descriptive statistics and correlation tests to identify patterns between reel engagement and impulsive buying tendencies. Statistical outputs were complemented with visual charts and tables to enhance interpretability and draw meaningful conclusions from the data. This methodological approach ensures reliability and provides a structured framework for understanding how short-form video content influences consumer behavior.

This study employs a descriptive and analytical research design aimed at understanding the influence of social media reels on impulse buying behavior among young adults. A structured questionnaire was distributed online to a sample of 100 participants aged between 18 and 25 years. The convenience sampling technique was chosen for its practicality and efficiency in accessing active social media users within the target demographic. The questionnaire was designed to gather comprehensive insights into several dimensions, including the frequency of social media usage, engagement levels with reels, emotional and cognitive triggers influencing impulsive purchases, and demographic information. Respondents were asked to share their experiences regarding how visual appeal, influencer promotion, and limited-time offers affected their likelihood of making spontaneous purchases. Data collection was conducted digitally to ensure wide reach and minimal response bias. The collected data were systematically analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and graphical representation. Percentage analysis was employed to summarize the demographic and behavioral data, while correlation analysis was used to explore the strength and direction of the relationship between reel engagement and impulse buying tendencies. Charts and tables were generated to visually represent the findings, facilitating clear interpretation of the relationships among variables.

6.1 Sample Demographics

The demographic composition of the participants was classified into three distinct age groups: 18–20, 21–23, and 24–25 years. As shown in Table 1 below, the majority of respondents (40%) were between 21 and 23 years old, followed by 35% in the 18–20 category and 25% in the 24–25 range. This pattern indicates that the study successfully captured data from the most digitally engaged age segments. The predominance of respondents aged 21–23 years suggests that early

adulthood represents a critical period of receptivity to social media marketing and online consumer influence. The following figure visually represents this distribution.
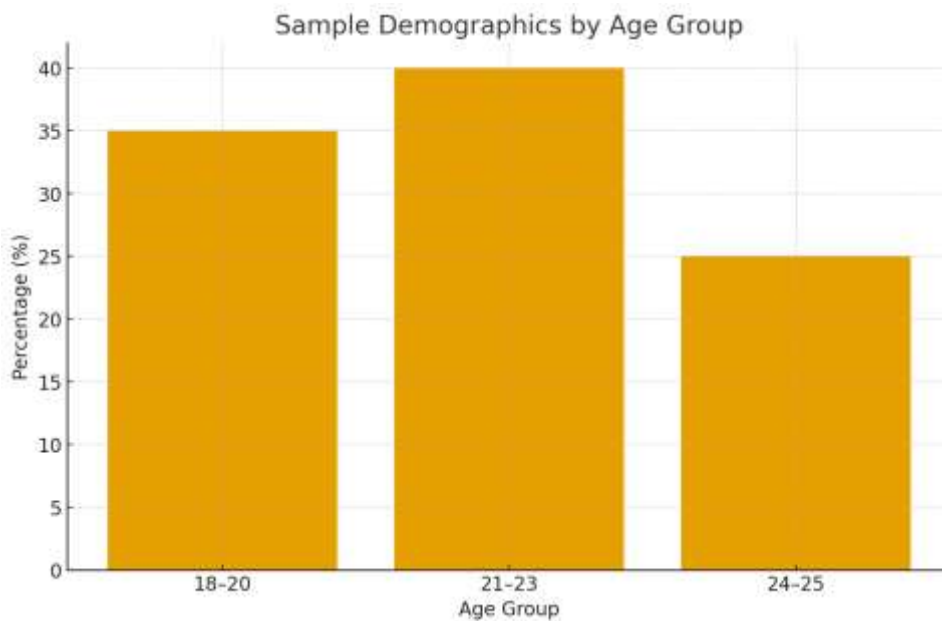

Figure 1: Sample Demographics by Age Group

Figure 1 clearly illustrates that individuals aged 21–23 form the largest proportion of respondents. This reflects their high level of engagement with online media platforms, making them a key demographic for digital marketing strategies. The relatively lower representation of those aged 24–25 may indicate a gradual shift in online engagement habits as individuals mature and develop more selective purchasing behavior.

The demographic composition of the participants was categorized into three age groups: 18–20, 21–23, and 24–25 years. As presented in the following table, the majority of the respondents (40%) belonged to the 21–23 age group, followed by 35% in the 18–20 group, and 25% in the 24–25 group. This distribution indicates that the study sample effectively represents young adults who are most active on social media platforms. The dominance of respondents aged 21–23 suggests that individuals in early adulthood are particularly engaged with social media reels, possibly due to their higher digital literacy and exposure to online marketing trends. The table and figure below illustrate the age distribution in greater detail.

Figure 1 provides a visual breakdown of the sample demographics by age group. The data clearly show a concentration of younger participants who are most likely to engage with short-form video content such as reels. This pattern underscores the relevance of focusing on this demographic segment, as their media consumption habits and impulsive buying tendencies are closely intertwined. The prevalence of users aged 21–23 reflects their active engagement with digital content, which is often influenced by visual aesthetics, influencer marketing, and emotional cues present in social media reels.

7. Results

The findings of the study reveal that social media reels exert a strong influence on impulse buying among young adults. The majority of participants reported making unplanned purchases after viewing promotional or engaging reels. Visual appeal, influencer marketing, and limited-time offers emerged as the most powerful psychological triggers. Table 2 and Figure 2 summarize the relative impact of each trigger on impulsive purchasing behavior.
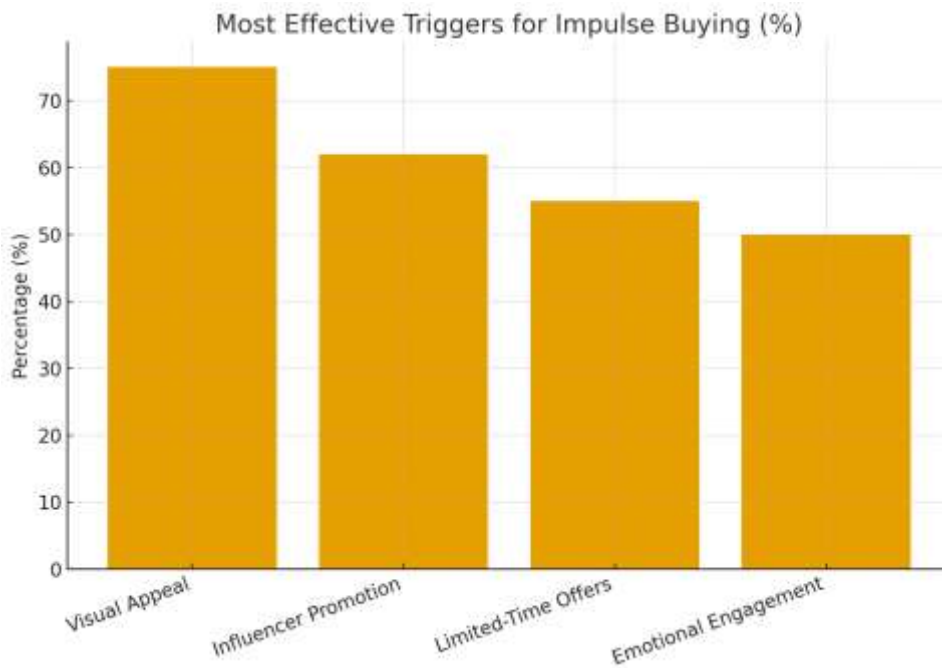
Figure 2: Most Effective Triggers for Impulse Buying (%)

As illustrated in Figure 2, visual appeal (75%) was identified as the most influential factor, demonstrating how aesthetically designed content attracts consumer attention and encourages spontaneous purchases. Influencer promotions (62%) also play a major role by creating trust and perceived authenticity. Limited-time offers (55%) generate urgency, while emotional engagement (50%) evokes affective responses that reinforce buying impulses.

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between reel engagement and impulse buying behavior. The results showed a positive correlation coefficient ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.05$), indicating a statistically significant association. This means that as users spend more time engaging with reels, their likelihood of making unplanned purchases increases correspondingly. Figure 3 visualizes this relationship across different engagement levels.
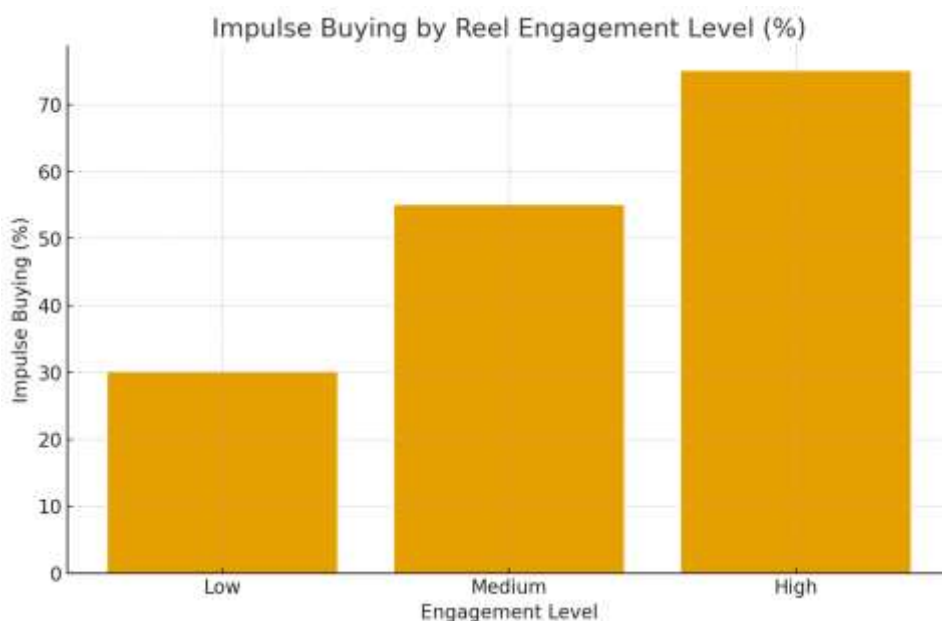
Figure 3: Impulse Buying by Reel Engagement Level (%)

Figure 3 highlights a clear upward trend, showing that individuals with high engagement levels are significantly more prone to impulse buying than those with lower engagement. This trend supports the hypothesis that interactive and immersive reel experiences amplify the emotional and psychological cues that lead to spontaneous purchasing decisions.

The findings indicate that social media reels have a significant impact on impulse buying behavior. Respondents reported that visual appeal, influencer promotions, and limited-time offers were major triggers.

8. Conclusion

Social media reels significantly influence impulse buying among young adults. Visual appeal, influencer endorsements, emotional storytelling, and limited-time offers are key drivers. Marketers can leverage these insights to design effective campaigns, while consumers should be educated to make mindful purchasing decisions. This study provides a foundation for further research on short-form content and consumer behavior.

9. Suggestions

- Design reels that are engaging yet ethically responsible, avoiding manipulative tactics.
- Educate consumers on impulse buying triggers in digital marketing.
- Businesses can monitor performance metrics to optimize content that encourages responsible engagement.
- Future research can expand on different demographics, product categories, and regional differences.

10. References

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