

Research Paper

An Empirical Study of Impulsive Buying Behaviour of Gen Z in Selected Shopping Malls of Prayagraj

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the primary factors influencing the impulsive buying behaviour of Gen Z consumers in selected shopping malls in the Prayagraj Region of the UP State of India. Using a qualitative and descriptive research design in which 286 responses were collected using a structured questionnaire comprised of four prominent factors: social media influence, internal feelings, promotional schemes, and store environment. IBM SPSS 27.0 was used to analyse the data. The statistical tools like regression, correlation, and ANOVA were used in the present study. The findings demonstrate that all four factors together account for almost 60% of the behavioural variances and have a significant and positive impact on impulsive purchasing behaviour ($p < 0.05$). The study concludes that store environment and promotional strategies, followed by social media interactions and internal emotional states, are the prominent factors in promoting impulsive purchase intentions. The findings further demonstrate how environmental cues and emotional arousal work together to influence Gen Z consumers' propensity for impulsive buying.

Keywords: *Impulsive Buying, Generation Z, Shopping Malls, FOMO*

India is the fourth largest economy on the basis of nominal GDP in the world and third largest by purchasing power parity with an employment of around 46 million people in retail sector. The retail sector has undergone a remarkable transformation, driven by increasing income levels, robust GDP growth, evolving lifestyles, and growing disposable income. These factors are leading to reshape the purchasing pattern and preferences of Indian consumer and resulting into the delivery of satisfaction with innovative approach of marketers in the field of retail sector in India. The online retail business is evolving day by day but at the same time offline retailers, especially big shopping malls are trying to incorporate the evolving choices of the consumers too.

Considering the present retail scenario, shopping malls are attracting people away from traditional ways of buying things in a tier-2 city like Prayagraj in India. Local vendors and retail shops also try to get insight for benchmarking their retail practices like product assortment, product choice, and going trend to meet the upcoming challenges of the market and shopping practices. Mall solutions lure shoppers by providing a variety of stores under

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one roof, making it convenient for people to shop for different merchandise without any inconvenience. Moreover, the Malls have been more than just shopping venues, serving as social gathering spots where people meet with friends and family too. Similarly, services like personal shopping assistance, gift wrapping, and an easy return or exchange policy add to the overall experience of shopping for customers. Security guards, cameras, and well-maintained toilets, along with seating areas, provide additional convenience and safety for customers.

Since impulsive buying is the unplanned, spontaneous purchase of goods or services, driven primarily by emotions rather than rational decision-making, it requires understanding the very thought process of irrational decision-making. Consumers are usually attracted by one-off sale days, in-store-only discounts, and impressive displays, leading to spending on items they never intended to buy. This is now a standard practice in the retail scene in India.

Impulsive buying

The consumer shopping experience has been significantly simplified by innovations such as self-service kiosks, product exchange offers, and flexible payment schemes (Dekimpe et al., 2020; Sheth, 2021). As a result, impulsive and recreational purchasing has become both enjoyable and effortless, garnering considerable interest from academics and practitioners alike. Academically, impulse buying is characterized as an unplanned, immediate purchase. It is preceded by a stimulus, involves a sudden and powerful urge to buy, and occurs with minimal reflection (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998; Zheng et al., 2019). This behaviour is distinct from planned purchasing. It is shaped by hedonic motives and high-arousal emotions rather than utilitarian considerations (Chen et al., 2020; Chen, Ku, & Yeh, 2019). Impulse buying refers to spontaneous and unplanned buying decisions. It is a key aspect of consumer psychology. Impulsive buying is often treated as equivalent to unplanned buying (Stern, 1962). For this reason, both terms will be used in the same sense throughout this article. As Rook mentioned in 1987, impulsive buying is one where a strong impulse is sensed that is not only strong but lasting in nature. These impulses are usually more emotional than rational and could result in the purchase of products by the buyer without considering the negative consequences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Impulsive buying is distinguished by its rapid, emotionally motivated nature, susceptibility to situational influences, and the consumer's pursuit of instant gratification (Akram et al., 2018). It represents spontaneous purchasing behaviour where consumers make unplanned decisions to acquire products or services without prior deliberation (Khuong & Tran, 2015). These purchases typically occur at the moment of encounter with the product, driven primarily by emotional responses, immediate desires, or environmental triggers rather than logical evaluation or planned intent (Liao et al., 2016). Agrawal & Singh (2024) conducted a survey-based investigation involving 109 consumers to examine the determinants of impulse buying behaviour in the apparel industry. The results demonstrated that store atmosphere, promotional activities, and personal circumstances had statistically significant positive effects on consumers' tendency to make unplanned purchases. In contrast, the study found that product quality perceptions and individuals' propensity for shopping enjoyment were negatively associated with impulse buying, indicating these factors tend to discourage spontaneous purchasing decisions. Rani and Catherine (2023) discovered a significant relationship between income levels and impulsive purchasing behaviour. The findings revealed that discounts and promotional offers were the primary drivers influencing

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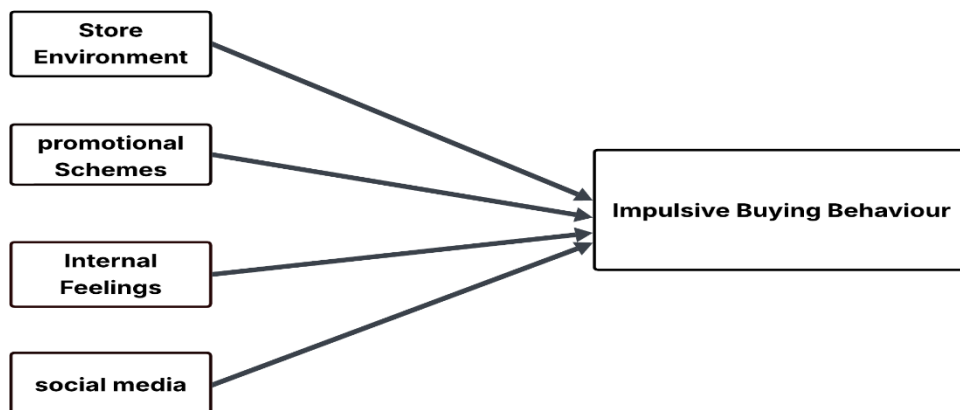
consumers' impulsive buying decisions. A study by Deivanai (2019) examined impulse buying behaviour in Coimbatore city shopping malls and found that sales promotion is a key driver of impulse purchasing behaviour in mall environments. A significant finding emerged regarding salesperson influence, with 82.5% of participants reporting that their purchasing decisions were influenced by salespeople's perceptions and interactions within the shopping mall setting. The study contributes to understanding the relationship between promotional strategies, salesperson engagement, and consumer impulse buying patterns in retail mall environments.

Ling and Yazdanifard (2015) found that external factors, including situational influences, product characteristics, and website features, also play a significant role in driving impulsive purchasing behaviour in online markets. Vishnu and Raheem (2013) discovered that shoppers exhibited higher rates of impulse purchasing behaviour when exposed to complementary products and promotional price reductions offered by retailers. The research highlighted that storefront window displays and strategic visual merchandising serve as crucial factors in driving consumers' spontaneous buying decisions.

If a customer makes a purchase the moment he sees it, it is considered an impulse purchase. Emotional arousal, lack of self-control, and impulsive action, when exposed to a desired object or service, are characteristics of this phenomenon. The rise of online retail further emphasizes the impulse buying phenomenon. Customers can easily make impulsive decisions when shopping online due to low barriers to entry, convenient procedures, and no social influence (Ek Styvén et al., 2017).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Impulse buying is a specific type of unplanned purchase. According to Beatty and Ferrell (1998), it is unplanned and occurs when there is no prior intent to purchase a product, and when a sudden urge arises (e.g., buying a chocolate bar at checkout). This differs from unplanned "reminder" buying, where a shopper forgets to add an item to their shopping list and buys it when they see it. For example, buying sugar after realizing it is missing from the home stock. But if we are going to use this definition, we should focus on the real impulse. This section introduces an inclusive model of impulse buying, including four antecedent store environment elements and two individual characteristics: shoppers' inherent urge to buy on impulse and shoppers' shopping enjoyment. The current framework identifies four key antecedents of impulsive buying behaviour within the Gen Z segment: promotional schemes, internal feelings, store environment, and social media marketing.



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Objective of the study

1. To identify the factors that trigger impulsive buying behaviour among consumers in the Prayagraj among Gen Z.
2. To examine the relationship between key demographic variables (age and gender) and the propensity for impulsive purchasing behaviour.
3. To assess the effect of strategic purchase elements, such as visual merchandising/ store environment, promotional activities, social media influence, and internal feeling, on triggering impulsive buying.

Hypotheses of the study

- **H₁:** There is a significant impact of store environment on impulsive buying among Gen Z consumers.
- **H₂:** There is a significant impact of Promotional schemes on impulsive buying among Gen Z consumers.
- **H₃:** There is a significant impact of Internal feelings on impulsive buying among Gen Z consumers.
- **H₄:** There is a significant impact of social media on impulsive buying among Gen Z consumers.

Store Environment

The store environment encompasses ambient factors such as lighting, scent, and music; design factors including layout and product assortment; and social factors like the presence and performance of sales personnel (Baker et al., 2002). The layout pertains to how products, aisles, and shopping carts are arranged, as well as their size, shape, and spatial relationships. Product assortment refers to the complete range of items available from a retailer. Social factors involve the interaction with people, including both sales staff and other shoppers (Baker et al., 2002). However, this study excluded other shoppers as a variable, since their behaviour lies beyond the retailer's direct control, unlike the other factors considered. Ward et al. (1992) emphasized that consumers perceive a store holistically rather than as a collection of separate elements. It is the overall configuration of cues—the Gestalt of consumers' perceptions—that shapes their responses (Mattila & Wirtz, 2001). However, most previous studies have not treated the store environment as a unified construct. Instead, they have focused on the effects of individual elements such as store layout and signage (Ang et al., 1997), product assortment (Simonson, 1999), ambience and salesperson availability (Sharma & Stafford, 2000), music (Dubé & Morin, 2001; Beverland et al., 2006), lighting (Summers & Hebert, 2001), and scent (Mattila & Wirtz, 2001; Chebat & Michon, 2003). Although Baker et al. (2002) examined multiple cues, like employee behaviour, design, and music in a single study, they still analysed the individual effects of these variables rather than their combined influence. Therefore, this study defines the store environment as consumers' overall perception of the integration of its key elements, music, lighting, layout, and employees and examines its collective impact on customer perceptions and behaviour.

Internal feelings

The Mehrabian and Russell Semantic Differential Scale (1974) is a foundational tool in environmental psychology, built on the premise that our emotional responses to environments are a powerful driver of behaviour. This idea is formalized in their Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model, which proposes that an external stimulus (like a store's

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atmosphere) affects an individual's internal state (the organism's feelings), which in turn triggers a specific behavioural response (such as a purchase).

To measure this internal emotional state, Mehrabian and Russell devised a scale of 18 bipolar adjective pairs, capturing three core dimensions: Pleasure (e.g., happy/unhappy, satisfied/unsatisfied), Arousal (e.g., excited/calm, stimulated/relaxed), and Dominance (e.g., controlled/controlling, influenced/influential).

This model was directly applied by researcher Wendy L. Billings in her 1990 study on the "Effect of Store Atmosphere on Shopping Behaviour." In her work, the 18 adjective pairs were used to quantify the emotional responses of shoppers. The logic was that the store environment (stimulus) would evoke specific feelings of pleasure, arousal, and dominance (organism), which would ultimately influence the likelihood of impulsive buying behaviour (response). To ensure accurate measurements, the order and polarity of the adjective pairs were randomized, with each one measured on a standard 7-point scale between its two opposing adjectives.

Social media

According to Khokhar et al. (2019), advancements in communication technology, particularly the emergence of social networking sites, have transformed the way individuals share opinions and experiences regarding products and services. This evolution has influenced how people affect each other's behaviours, emotions, and beliefs. Moreover, the internet has expanded consumer purchasing opportunities by increasing product accessibility and making online shopping more convenient (Khokhar et al., 2019).

Social media serves as an effective communication tool, providing marketers with opportunities to easily reach consumers and engage with them through various interactive features (Appel et al., 2020). The strategic use of social media to promote a company and its offerings is known as social media marketing, which encompasses a range of online strategies such as emails, newsletters, and other web-based methods (Nadaraja & Yazdanifard, 2013). Compared to traditional marketing channels, social media enables businesses to connect with end consumers more directly, efficiently, and cost-effectively (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Furthermore, social media has significantly influenced both interpersonal communication and consumer purchasing behaviour. The concept of "marketing convenience" introduced by Jacobson et al. (2011) highlights that consumers now assess products based on user feedback and can place orders effortlessly across various social platforms. Businesses, in turn, can reach their target audience more easily and utilize multiple digital channels to shape consumer decisions (Çopuroğlu, 2021). Members of online social communities are often influenced by others' opinions, experiences, and preferences regarding a product or service. Such shared information can stimulate impulsive buying tendencies (Sudha & Bharathi, 2018). Moreover, social media may trigger impulsive purchases both directly and indirectly through hedonic consumption, which can act as a mediating factor in the relationship between social media usage and impulsive buying behaviour (Kurt, 2019).

Promotion schemes

Promotional schemes such as discounts, clearance or seasonal sales, special offers like "buy one get one free," limited-time or limited-stock deals, and reward options such as coupons or

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points earned on purchases of a certain value or quantity are commonly used. These promotional activities may or may not be known to consumers before they visit the shopping mall. The duration of promotional offers plays a crucial role in shaping consumers' purchasing intentions (Gabler & Reynolds, 2013). When faced with time-restricted deals, consumers often experience a fear of missing out (FOMO) on a valuable opportunity, which heightens emotional arousal and diminishes rational decision-making (Khetarpal & Singh, 2024). Impulse buying tendency, conceptualized as an inherent consumer trait, drives spontaneous, unplanned, and immediate purchases (Parsad et al., 2021). The urgency created by limited-time offers triggers a desire for instant gratification—a core element of impulsive buying behaviour (Badgaiyan et al., 2016). Therefore, countdown or time-limited promotions evoke a sense of urgency among consumers, enhancing impulsive tendencies and ultimately resulting in impulsive purchase decisions.

The use of promotional strategies directly influences consumer interest and purchasing behaviour, compelling producers to continuously innovate their marketing efforts. As competition increases, consumers are presented with more choices, fostering a market of savvy customers who carefully evaluate products against their expectations. Consequently, effective marketing requires a consumer-centric approach. Success is achieved when an organization thoroughly understands consumer needs, designs products that incorporate the latest technology to meet market benchmarks, and executes targeted promotional campaigns (Florido-Benítez, 2022; Pan et al., 2022; Quach et al., 2022)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study employs a descriptive and quantitative research design to investigate the impulsive buying behaviour of Generation Z consumers in selected shopping malls of the Prayagraj region of the UP State of India. This design facilitates the systematic collection and statistical analysis of data concerning consumer attitudes, motivations, and purchasing patterns. The primary objective of the study is to explore and identify the major psychological, situational, and demographic factors that influence impulsive buying decisions.

Population and Sampling

The target population of the study comprises Generation Z consumers aged between 16 to 28 years visiting shopping malls within the Prayagraj region. A non-probability convenience sampling technique was employed, as it allowed easy access to respondents present at the mall premises. A total of 286 respondents were selected.

Data Collection Methods

- Self-administered questionnaires consisting of both closed-ended questions and statements using a Likert-type scale were used to collect the data, which served as the primary source for this study.
- The secondary data was collected through academic journals, research publications, retail industry reports, and online consumer surveys to justify the theoretical framework of the study.

Research Instruments

The structured questionnaire was based on established and validated measurement scales that had been previously used in landmark studies of impulsive buying behaviour (e.g.,

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Rook & Fisher, 1995; Verplanken & Herabadi, 2001). A 5-point Likert-type scale was used, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

RESULT & DISCUSSION

Table 1. Reliability Statistics

Constructs	Number of items	Cronbach Alpha (α)
IB	5	.846
PS	3	.854
SE	2	.881
IF	5	.854
SM	3	.853

Construct reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. The results revealed that the Impulsive buying scale with five items ($\alpha = .846$), the promotional schemes scale with three items ($\alpha = .854$), and the Store environment scale with two items were also found reliable ($\alpha = .881$). And the Internal feeling scale with five items ($\alpha = .854$) was found to be reliable. Similarly, the social media scale with three items ($\alpha = .853$), reliability results are summarized in Table 1.

Table 2: Correlation and descriptive statistics

	PS	SE	IF	SM	IBB	Mean	SD
PS	1					3.476	0.817
SE	0.542	1				3.234	0.916
IF	0.636	0.535	1			3.194	0.735
SM	0.637	0.498	0.731	1		3.312	0.985
IBB	0.673	0.592	0.616	0.676	1	3.183	0.859

(PS: Promotional schemes, SE: Store environment, IF: Internal feelings, SM: Social media IBB: Impulsive buying behaviour) Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). $N = 286$, $SD = \text{Standard Deviation}$.

Correlation analysis revealed that all the dimensions have a strong association with impulse buying behaviour (since the p-value is less than 0.05). Social media has the highest correlation with impulse buying behaviour ($r = 0.676$, $p < 0.05$), followed by Promotional Scheme ($r = 0.673$, $p < 0.05$). Descriptive analysis revealed above-midpoint mean scores for each construct: PS = 3.476, SE = 3.234, IF = 3.194, SM = 3.312, IBB = 3.183.

Table 3: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	125.740	4	31.435	104.421	.000
Residual	84.592	281	.301		
Total	210.332	285			

a. Dependent Variable: IB b. Predictors: (Constant), SM, SE, PS, IF

An Analysis was processed at a 5% level of significance. The table shows a significant value of the F statistic that is less than 0.05, which means that the model is well-fit and statistically significant.

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Table 4: Regression Coefficients

Hypothesis	Regression weight	β	t	P -Value	Results
H1	PS → IBB	.220	4.941	< .001	Supported
H2	SE → IBB	.316	5.583	< .001	Supported
H3	IF → IBB	.160	2.093	< .001	Supported
H4	SM → IBB	.262	5.434	< .001	Supported

R .595

F 104.421

PS: Promotional schemes, SE: Store environment, IF: Internal feelings, SM: Social media

IBB: Impulsive buying behaviour

Hypothesis testing

The dependent variable (impulsive buying behaviour) was regressed on the predicting variables of store environment, promotional activities, social media influence, and internal feelings. The independent variables significantly predict impulsive buying behaviour, $F = 104.421$, $p < 0.001$, which indicates that the four factors under study have a significant impact on impulsive buying behaviour. Moreover, the R-squared value of .598 indicates that the model explains 59.8% of the variance in impulse buying behaviour.

Additionally, coefficients were further assessed to ascertain the influence of each factor on the criterion variable (impulsive buying behaviour). H_1 evaluates whether the Store environment significantly and positively affects the impulsive buying behaviour of consumers among Gen Z.

The results revealed that the Store environment has a significant impact on impulsive buying behaviour among Gen Z ($B = .220$, $t = 4.941$, $P < 0.001$), hence H_1 was supported.

H_2 evaluates whether Promotional schemes have a significantly positive impact on impulsive buying behaviour. The results show that Promotional schemes have a significantly positive impact on impulsive buying behaviour among Gen Z ($B = .316$, $t = 5.583$, $P < 0.0001$). H_2 was supported. H_3 evaluates whether Internal feelings have a significantly positive impact on impulsive buying behaviour among Gen Z. The results show that Internal feelings have a significantly positive impact on impulsive buying behaviour among Gen Z ($B = .176$, $t = 2.093$, $P < 0.001$). H_3 was supported. H_4 evaluates whether social media influence has a significantly positive impact on impulsive buying behaviour among Gen Z. The results show that social media influence has a significantly positive impact on impulsive buying behaviour among Gen Z ($B = .262$, $t = 5.434$, $P < 0.0001$). Hence, H_4 was supported.

CONCLUSION

The current research examined the main factors impacting the impulsive buying behaviour of Generation Z consumers in selected shopping malls of the Prayagraj region of the UP State of India. All the factors taken under study, promotional schemes, store atmosphere, internal feelings, and social media, have a significant effect on impulsive buying tendencies. Special deals and good promotions are the most influential factors of impulsive buying. In short, sale inducements and emotional inducements are some major factors that influence consumer impulsive buying behaviour. Gender and impulsive buying behaviour do not significantly correlate in this study. According to findings, gender does not seem to have a significant impact on impulsive buying behaviour.

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Besides, the store environment, such as ambience, layout, and employee behaviour, is an important factor that influences consumers' impulse buying behaviour. Research demonstrates that social media is an effective tool to stimulate impulse buying through emotional engagement, peer influence, and immediate purchasing opportunities. Lastly, an internal feeling of pleasure, excitement, and arousal mediates external stimulus and actual buying behaviour as given in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model. In general terms, this means that Gen Z's impulsive buying is influenced by many factors and not a single cause. Retailers and marketers can use this information to create shopping experiences and online strategies that encourage consumers to spend more.

Limitations of the Study

- Since this study was limited to Prayagraj region shopping malls, the findings cannot be applied to other cities or areas with distinct socioeconomic and cultural contexts. Moreover, the respondents were chosen for accessibility rather than random representation, non-probability convenience sampling may introduce bias. The cross-sectional design of the study restricts the capacity to deduce long-term behavioural trends or causal relationships because it only recorded consumer behaviour at one particular moment in time. This study has undertaken only four factors and the factors like personality traits, cultural factors, and peer group effects were excluded as potential influencers.

Future scope and recommendations

The study suggests that Gen Z shoppers' impulsive buying is boosted by appealing store environments, promotional offers, and social media engagement. AR/VR-enabled emotional and sensory marketing can improve shopping experiences. Future research should span regions and generations, examine more psychological and cultural factors, and use longitudinal or mixed methods to track trends. Comparing online and offline behaviours and using qualitative insights will help us understand modern retail consumer impulsivity.

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Conflict of Interest

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