

Marketing Strategies and Social Influence on Impulse Buying

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Abstract: This study employs a literature review methodology to examine the influence of marketing strategies and social factors on impulse buying behavior. The research focuses on the effects of various marketing strategies, including promotional discounts, controlled marketing, and live-streaming marketing, as well as social factors such as social media and online reviews. Through the analysis of multiple empirical studies, it is found that these factors influence impulse buying through various mechanisms, including time-limited discounts, scarcity marketing, emotional experiences, and herd behavior. However, the research also indicates that frequent promotions may reduce effectiveness, and negative reviews have a more significant impact than positive ones. Additionally, this paper analyzes the measurement methods used in the studies, compares various research conclusions and methodologies, and summarizes the limitations and shortcomings of existing research while proposing suggestions for future studies. This research provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the complex influencing factors of impulse buying behavior and has significant practical implications.

Keywords: Impulse buying, marketing strategies, social influence.

1. Introduction

The digital era has replaced the mechanized one in global technology. Consumer behavior is influenced by the macroeconomic environment, and new technologies like the Internet, computers, cell phones, and social media are having a significant impact on consumer psychology and behavior. With the rise of e-commerce and social media, factors like limited-time discounts, live promotions, and blogger seeding can make consumers more likely to make impulsive purchases. Impulse buying has become a common phenomenon that affects not only individual shoppers' decisions but also the marketing strategies of retailers and the economy as a whole. Consequently, comprehending the mechanism of impulse buying can help consumers better manage their personal finances and businesses create strategies that work. Scholarly research on impulse spending has been more comprehensive in recent years, particularly in the digital age when its forms and influencing factors have grown more diverse and complete [1]. Of these, research on the antecedents of impulse buying falls into five main categories: consumer-related factors, socio-demographic factors, marketing strategies, store-related factors, and social factors; researchers primarily focus on marketing strategies and social factors. As the digital age has come about, the popularity of social media and the innovation of marketing strategies have introduced new angles and challenges to the study of impulse buying

(both new marketing tactics and complex social factors have significantly altered consumer buying behavior patterns).

This essay will first examine the definition and characteristics of impulse buying as well as the early theories of the field. This is the rationale behind the study's recent focus on the effects of social and marketing factors on impulsive purchasing. For instance, how modern marketing techniques like controlled marketing, live streaming, and discount and promotion strategies impact impulsive purchasing. In addition, this research will explore how social media and internet reviews influence impulsive purchasing at the same time. In addition to offering useful insights for businesses, this thorough investigation will help people comprehend impulse purchase behavior in the modern consumer environment.

2. Theoretical Foundations of Impulse Buying

2.1. Definition and Characteristics of Impulse Buying

In the early days, scholars equated impulse buying with unplanned purchases. Stern defined impulse buying as consumers purchasing goods that they had not planned before entering the shop [2]. This definition lacks sufficient precision. From a psychological standpoint, Rook et al. redefined impulse buying. They viewed impulse buying as a behavior in which the consumer experiences a sudden, forceful, strong, and determined desire to make an immediate purchase [3]. This definition highlights psychological motivation and includes more specific qualifiers. With the deepening of research, scholars have supplemented and improved the definition of impulse buying from multiple perspectives, for example, Beatty & Ferrell defined impulse buying as a sudden, immediate buying behavior with no prior purchase intention and little or no careful consideration of the consequences of the purchase [4]. Integrating scholars' definitions of impulse buying, impulse buying refers to the behavior of consumers who are influenced by internal or external stimuli during the shopping process and suddenly develop a strong and persistent desire to buy a certain commodity immediately. This behavior is typically unplanned, strongly psychologically motivated, lacking in rational thinking, and accompanied by a strong emotional response.

The following are the main characteristics of impulse buying: First, impulsive buying is characterized by a sudden, unplanned willingness to purchase anything while out shopping [5]. The second is emotionally motivated, impulse buying is usually accompanied by a strong emotional response, especially positive emotions such as happiness and excitement [1]. The third is immediacy, where consumers want to obtain the desired goods immediately and lack rational thinking [5]. The fourth is unplanned, where impulse buying is usually not part of the consumer's original shopping plan [2,4]. The fifth is influenced, where both external factor stimuli (e.g., promotions, shop environment) and internal factor stimuli (e.g., emotional state) may induce impulse buying [1,4].

3. The Influence of Marketing Strategies on Impulse Buying

3.1. Marketing Strategies

3.1.1. Promotional and Discounting Strategies

Promotional discounting is an important tactic in marketing strategy and has received extensive attention in the field of research on influencing impulse spending. Empirical studies have extensively analyzed the relationship between promotional discounting strategies and consumer impulse buying behavior.

Firstly, scholars concluded that price discounts and time-limited promotions have a significant positive effect on consumers' impulse buying behavior through the research methods of questionnaire

surveys and structural equation modeling analyses and that the larger the discounts and the more time-limited the promotions are, the more likely they are to induce impulse buying [6]. This study focuses on goods in the online retail environment and covers general online shopping scenarios. The research population for this study is online shoppers in China, and the sample consists of 585 valid respondents, aged between 18-35 years old, mostly college students or young white-collar workers. The questionnaire for this study collected self-reported data from consumers rather than observing actual purchasing behavior. Secondly, with the support of an online survey and an experimental method, Liu et al. showed how the bundled sales strategy can dramatically increase consumers' propensity to make impulsive buying [7]. Various types of goods were used in this study, including electronics (e.g., cell phones and accessories), apparel, food, and daily necessities. The study was conducted on online consumers in China, and the sample consisted of 404 participants of a wide range of ages, from 18 to over 60 years old. The researchers of this study created a simulated online shopping environment in which participants made virtual purchases rather than actual purchases. A variety of bundled sales combinations were offered in the study, notably (1) complementary product combinations: e.g., cell phones and cases, sneakers, and athletic socks. (2) Similar product combinations: e.g., snacks of different flavors, and T-shirts of different colors. (3) Mixed combinations: containing products that are both complementary and similar. The results of the study show that bundled products are more likely to trigger impulse buying behavior when they are highly complementary to each other. Complementarity refers to the ability of two or more products to enhance each other's utility when used. Consumers perceive higher overall value when they see highly complementary product combinations, which increases the desire to buy. According to Kim & Lee, consumers' propensity to make impulse buying increases significantly when the promotional message aligns well with their needs and interests, i.e., when personalized promotions are offered [8]. It is worth mentioning that this study was conducted using eye-tracking technology. The researcher used a Tobii Pro X3-120 eye-tracker with a sampling frequency of 120 Hz to analyze participant interactions with a simulated online shopping website that displayed different products and promotional content. The length of time participants spent staring at particular places (such as product photos or promotional material), the frequency with which participants returned to a particular area, and the direction of their eye movements were all measured. In order to examine how customized promotions impact visual attention and purchasing behavior, the eye-tracking data were finally integrated with the responses from the participants' questionnaires regarding purchase decisions. With the development of research, scholars have used multidimensional research methods, including focus group interviews and large-scale questionnaires, to point out that different types of promotional strategies (e.g., price discounts, giveaways, point rewards, etc.) affect impulse buying differently across different product categories. For example, fast-moving consumer goods (e.g., snacks), which have lower prices and less risk of purchasing, are more susceptible to the influence of promotions on impulse buying, while durable consumer goods, such as electrical appliances, have higher prices, and consumers typically need to consider time, as well as other variables other than promotional strategies [9].

However, researchers have discovered that frequent promotions may cause consumers to become less sensitive to promotions because they may develop the psychological expectation of the "next promotion," which in turn reduces impulse buying behaviors [10]. This research has been done through big data analysis and longitudinal tracking surveys. This study focuses on Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG), which mainly includes food, beverages, personal care, and household cleaning products. The duration of the study was 12 months, with monthly data collection and a total of 12 measurements, tracking the purchasing behavior of a total of 2,000 Chinese consumers. To preserve the efficacy of promotions, it is advised that businesses implement sporadic promotion tactics.

3.1.2. Controlled Marketing

Researchers' focus has shifted to control marketing, which creates scarcity of goods to awaken the consumer's desire to buy and then promotes impulse buying. This approach appears to be in opposition to promotional strategies, but it is equally effective in stimulating consumption in light of the intensifying market competition, the growth of e-commerce, and the complexity of consumer behavior.

In recent years, scholars have utilized the questionnaire survey method to empirically investigate the relationship between controlled marketing and impulse buying tendencies of online shopping consumers. Controlled marketing has been categorized into three types: time control, quantity control, and identity control. These categories were analyzed using structural equation modeling, revealing that all three types of controlled marketing strategies significantly promote consumers' impulse buying tendencies. It was also found that perceived value has played a crucial role as a mediator [11]. Furthermore, previous studies have examined specific marketing techniques. For instance, experimental design has shown that time-restricted promotions (a form of time-controlled marketing) expedite consumers' purchase decisions and that time pressure notably increases the likelihood of their purchases [12].

In addition, in the study of quantity control marketing (limited edition products), the researcher designed an experiment to create a virtual sneaker purchase scenario, showing participants different limited quantity information, such as "limited to 100 pairs", "limited to 1,000 pairs", or unlimited information. A 7-point Likert scale was used to measure the participants' willingness to buy, and whether or not the participants made a purchase was recorded as an indicator of actual purchasing behavior. The study's results indicated that quantity control marketing, or limited-edition products, significantly increases consumers' actual purchase behavior and purchase intentions. This effect is particularly noticeable in consumers who exhibit high levels of self-monitoring [13]. This provides crucial insights into the various applications of controlled marketing.

3.1.3. Live Streaming with Goods

In contrast to the conventional merchandise display demonstration and sales model, live streaming is an emerging and highly influential marketing technique that has a significant impact on consumer purchasing psychology and behavior. This is due to the rapid development of Internet technology and the widespread use of mobile devices.

Researchers have discovered that consumers' inclination to make impulsive buying is significantly influenced by their authenticity, interactive, and real-time experience in live e-commerce. Among them, the influence of authentic experience is the most significant. The regression coefficient of authenticity experience on impulse buying is the largest, with a specific value of 0.321, corresponding to a significance of $p < 0.001$, which is significantly higher than the regression coefficients of interactive experience and real-time experience [14]. These findings were made using questionnaire survey methods and structural equation modeling. The social presence, such as real-time interactions through pop-ups and comments, along with coexisting in a virtual space, emotional connectivity, and social influences like herd mentality, in live streaming bandwagons, could enhance consumers' experience and product intake [15]. This, in turn, could lead to impulse buying behaviors, according to a study by Wang and Liu, which utilized questionnaire surveys and multivariate analysis. Specifically, the limited-time offer and scarcity marketing tactics that are frequently employed in live streaming encourage viewers to create a herd mentality and make impulse buying [16].

3.2. Methods Techniques

Studies employed a range of measurement instruments to evaluate the impact factor for impulsive purchasing. Among these, the Rook & Fisher Impulsive Buying Propensity Scale is a commonly used measurement tool in research; the original version has nine items on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, and 7= strongly agree), and some studies have used a shortened version (four to five items). Furthermore, scales created specifically for marketing strategies offer a more individualized assessment of the particular study scenario and usually consist of three to four-question choices on a five- or seven-point Likert scale; some of the self-created measures need additional verification. Several studies have employed different techniques to measure and quantify behavioral variables in addition to scales. For instance, by combining scale data with actual purchasing behavior data from e-commerce platforms (e.g., objective indicators such as frequency of purchases, purchase amount, and time of purchase), longitudinal research methods are used to analyze the temporal relationship between purchasing behavior and promotional activities [10]. The duration of the study was 12 months, with monthly data collection and a total of 12 measurements. Additionally, there is the experimental approach, which sets up a fictitious retail setting and logs participants' decisions and responses there [7,12].

3.3. Comparison of Findings, Research Methodology with Other Studies

A comparative analysis of the aforementioned studies reveals that the majority of the studies support the effectiveness of promotional and discounting strategies, controlled marketing, and live marketing in promoting impulse buying behavior. First, all three strategies utilize different stimuli to trigger positive emotions or a sense of urgency in consumers, thus promoting impulse buying. Specifically, promotions and discounting strategies stimulate consumer excitement through price concessions, controlled marketing stimulates consumer emotions by creating a sense of urgency or scarcity, and live-streaming marketing stimulates consumers' desire to buy through real-time interaction and presence. Second, to varying degrees, these strategies utilize social influence and group psychology. For example, the live streaming marketing strategy allows people to form emotional connections and activate the herd mentality in the virtual space through real-time interactions in the live broadcast room, which in turn leads to impulse buying behavior. Third, all three strategies emphasize the scarcity or timeliness of buying opportunities, prompting consumers to make quick decisions.

Furthermore, a variety of study approaches exist. Traditional questionnaires and structural equation modeling analyses are frequently used in studies, but several cutting-edge techniques can be used, like experiment design, big data analyses, and longitudinal tracking surveys [7,10,13]. New technologies like eye-tracking and others are also being introduced, offering insights from various angles and validating the results [8].

Second, different research concentrated on different elements, such as customized advertising, packaged sales, exclusive merchandise, and live broadcasts on social media. These studies are complementary to one another and offer fresh insights into the impact of marketing strategies on impulsive purchases. For instance, Wang & Xu discovered that frequent promotions may result in a decrease in marketing effectiveness [10]. Because most of the research in the direction of promotion and discount strategy research focuses on how a particular strategy influences impulse buying, Wang & Xu's study presents the viewpoint from a new perspective that no matter what the marketing strategy is, it is better to adopt intermittent promotional strategies in order to maintain the promotional effect.

3.4. Discussion

Although there are many excellent ideas in the aforementioned studies, there are unavoidably some drawbacks. First off, the majority of the studies used questionnaire data as their primary source of data in terms of research methods. This approach to data gathering is practical, but it may be biased toward social desirability, meaning that respondents may provide answers based more on what they believe "should be the case" than on the facts. This could result in inaccurate measurements of impulsive purchasing behavior, and actual consumer data analysis and experimental designs should be more frequently used in future studies. Second, a lot of studies might not have included all relevant moderating or mediating variables and might not have been sufficiently thorough. Subsequent research endeavors may contemplate integrating more pertinent factors and developing intricate theoretical frameworks. Furthermore, the majority of studies are transient and static, failing to fully account for changes in consumer behavior over time. One such study, conducted by Wang & Xu, fully accounts for the impact of time as a variable by using a longitudinal tracking survey method and designing multiple points in time for data collection [10]. Future research can replicate this kind of longitudinal. Lastly, with technology developing so quickly, there is a dearth of studies on some new marketing strategies that could influence impulsive purchasing behavior. For instance, how gamified marketing, AI, VR, and AR immersive shopping experiences, intelligent voice assistants, and other tools alter consumer psychology and impact impulse buying behavior.

4. The Influence of Social Influence on Impulse Buying

4.1. Social Influence

4.1.1. Social Media

Impulsive purchasing behavior is positively correlated with the amount of time spent on social media [17]. There are several ways in which social media affects impulsive purchases. Liu et al. focus on the Chinese market and examine users of social commerce platforms in China, with impulse buying of ordinary consumer products. It discovered that social media participation among consumers, particularly when it comes to sharing consuming experiences, notably elevated the likelihood of impulsive purchases [18]. Herd mentality is a second crucial element. Chen et al. created a virtual Facebook store where participants may peruse and complete surveys with an emphasis on Chinese Facebook users [19]. The findings suggest that social influences on Facebook, such as herd mentality, promote impulse buying by enhancing positive emotions and impulses. A study analyzing the motivational factors of Chinese consumers' online cosmetic purchases found that social media had a significant positive influence on impulse buying, while hedonism played a positive moderating role in the relationship between social media and impulse buying [20].

At the marketing level, the celebrity effect or influencer marketing strategy is often used on social media. Zafar et al.'s study showed that social media celebrity posts and interactions had a significant effect on impulse buying, which is moderated by product type and consumer characteristics [21]. The purpose of this study was to mimic a social media environment where young consumers would be the target audience, and participants would watch posts from celebrities and complete questionnaires. According to Chung and Cho, there is evidence that the suggested social interaction with celebrities on social media amplifies the impact of celebrity endorsement and subtly encourages impulsive purchases [22]. Furthermore, an online panel of American social media users was used to gather data for the study to examine the impact of influencer characteristics on purchase intention. The results indicated that consumers' trust in brand content is influenced by the informational value and credibility of social media influencer content, and this trust in turn influences purchase intention [23]. A multi-item scale was used in the study to measure the message value and credibility of influencer-

generated content. For example, the 7-point scale used included items such as “The information provided by the influencer was useful,” “The information provided by the influencer was valuable,” and “I found the influencer to be credible.”. Furthermore, social media use influences impulsive purchases more when done online than when done offline, particularly when it comes to fashion products. Additionally, there are differences in the impact of different social media platforms on impulse buying. For instance, Twitter had the least influence on impulsive purchases, whereas Facebook and Instagram have the biggest [24]. In this study, only one product type—fashion—was examined.

4.1.2. Online reviews

In their investigation on the impact of third-party reviews on customers' impulse purchase intention, Chang, Zhu, and Li discovered that the degree of favorable remarks and the number of positive comments positively influenced consumers' intention to make an impulse purchase [25]. Related research indicates that customers may feel pressured by the group to alter their initial opinions to conform to the group's viewpoint when presented with consistent evaluations or a high overall average score for the item (i.e., online review consensus). This is because when consumers are confronted with a large amount of consistent information, they tend to assume that this consistency reflects the true quality of the product. In addition, when consumers are unfamiliar with a product, they rely more on the opinions of others. Highly consistent positive reviews provide consumers with social proof, which reduces purchase risk. Yang's study used a questionnaire method and a planned experiment to validate these hypotheses [26]. After gathering online reviews for the same product (a facial cleanser) from two distinct online shopping platforms, the researcher divided the evaluations into two categories: positive and negative. Specifically, word-of-mouth influence was used as the dependent variable in this study rather than impulse spending intention. The study confirms that consumers' trust in online reviews and their willingness to make impulsive purchases are positively impacted by consensus among reviews and that the word-of-mouth impact of negative reviews is significantly greater than that of good reviews.

Unfamiliar word-of-mouth (IWOM) is word-of-mouth information spread by individuals with weak social links to consumers using social applications (Xiaohongshu, Dianping, etc.). According to Lei's research, consumers' impulse consumption behaviors are significantly and favorably influenced by unfamiliar IWOM [27]. Simultaneously, perceived value plays a significant and partially mediating role in the relationship between the influence of unfamiliar IWOM and impulse consumption. Meanwhile, perceived value acts as a mediating variable and perceived uncertainty does not significantly moderate the effect of unfamiliar IWOM on perceived value. This means that perceived value plays a significant partial mediating role in the relationship between unfamiliar IWOM and impulsive consumption. The amount of perceived uncertainty regarding goods or services was found to have no significant impact on perceived value or impulse buying, according to the researchers' deduction that reading untested word-of-mouth can generally lower customers' perceived uncertainty about them.

Through questionnaire surveys, Chen & Yang collected 517 valid questionnaires and concluded that opinion leaders' professionalism and attractiveness had a significant positive effect on consumers' intention to make impulse purchases. They also found that social media platforms' interactivity and wealth of information strengthened opinion leaders' influence over consumers' impulse buys [28].

4.2. Methods Techniques

Research on how social variables affect impulse spending uses many of the same measurement instruments as studies on how marketing strategies affect impulse purchasing. The majority of the

research measured customers' tendency for impulse purchases using validated propensity scales, such as Rook & Fisher's scale. Furthermore, Liu et al. measured the activity and frequency of consumer interactions on social media using the Social Media Engagement Scale [18]. Lei used the Perceived Value Scale to measure consumers' subjective assessment of the value of a product or service [27]. In addition to using scales, Yang's study created two groups—positive and negative—in addition to employing scales to assess the impact of various emotional inclinations on customer behavior [26]. In order to assess behavioral metrics, including actual purchase behaviors in a simulated retail environment, Zafar et al. built a simulated social media ecosystem, while Chen et al. designed a virtual Facebook store [19,21]. This approach allows for a more objective quantification of impulse buying.

4.3. Comparison of Findings, Research Methodology with Other Studies

The examination of the research reveals that while there are some variations in the precise methods and influencing factors, the majority of them consistently come to the conclusion that social media and online reviews have a major impact on impulsive buying. For instance, Lei focused on the mediating function of perceived value, a cognitive element, in impulse spending, whereas Chen et al. underlined that social influence promotes impulse spending by strengthening good emotions and impulses, emphasizing emotional factors [19,27]. Lou & Yuan's study, which emphasizes the mediating impact and implies that social media influencer content enhances brand trust to indirectly influence buy intention, Liu et al. discovered that social media involvement directly affects impulse purchase propensity [18,23]. Yang's study expressly notes that the word-of-mouth effect of negative reviews is substantially larger than that of favorable reviews [26]. This discovery offers a different angle on study than previous studies that have mostly concentrated on benefits.

4.4. Discussion

After combining the results of various investigations, it is discovered that social media and online reviews are closely related. One study by Liu et al., for instance, examined user engagement on social commerce platforms and shared consumption experiences, which is essentially the process of creating and sharing online reviews on social media platforms [18]. This suggests that social media is a significant channel for the creation and distribution of online reviews. According to Lou and Yuan, social media influencers and celebrities share their postings on various platforms, and the content they produce has the potential to be a potent kind of online review [23]. The impact of opinion leaders on impulse buying is examined in Chen & Yang's study, which also takes into account the interaction between user and social platform characteristics [28]. The findings indicate that social media platform characteristics affect how much online reviews—particularly those from opinion leaders—influence consumer behavior. Overall, social media provides a platform for the dissemination of online reviews while shaping the form and influence of reviews. Online reviews enrich the content of social media and enhance its influence on consumer decision-making, and the two are closely linked. Subsequent investigations may focus more on the interplay between social media and online reviews and develop a more comprehensive model of how these two factors influence impulse buying. This model ought to encompass direct impacts, mediating effects (like perceived value), moderating factors (like product type, and consumer attributes), and dual pathways of emotion and cognition. The study by Aragoncillo & Orus shows that various social media platforms might have various mechanisms of influence [24]. Future research could compare and analyze cross-platform differences and more methodically explore how the features such as the form of content presentation, user interaction, and platform functionality features of different platforms affect impulse buying behavior. Furthermore, the majority of studies concentrate on the immediate effects of social media and online reviews; yet,

prolonged exposure to this data may alter customers' purchasing patterns and methods of making decisions; so, longer-term effects may be the subject of future investigations.

5. Conclusion

This study focuses on how social and marketing methods affect consumers' impulsive purchasing behavior. This paper aims to shed light on these factors and how they affect consumers' purchasing decisions by analyzing various marketing strategies, including controlled marketing, live streaming marketing, and promotional and discounting strategies, as well as social factors, like social media and online reviews.

The study summarizes earlier studies on these factors and impulse purchases from a variety of angles. Discounts and promotions, particularly those that are time-limited and combined with sales methods, can greatly boost consumers' readiness to make impulsive purchases. However, frequent promotions have the opposite effect of strengthening impulse buying behavior. Second, control marketing, which includes identity, quantity, and time control, creates scarcity to pique consumers' desire to buy. Third, live marketing is a new marketing technique that uses social connections and emotional experiences to encourage impulsive purchases. Online reviews and social media use are significant impact factors of social media. In addition to serving as a venue for the spread of information, social media also feeds the propensity for impulsive buying due to herd mentality, the impact of celebrities and influencers, unfamiliar word-of-mouth, and the power of opinion leaders. It is important to note that positive online reviews are effective in increasing consumers' willingness to buy, while the impact of negative reviews is more significant.

Suggestions for study constraints include the fact that a lot of studies mostly rely on questionnaires, which might introduce social desirability bias, and that genuine consumer data and experimental designs should be used in future studies. Future studies should also take into account dynamic and long-term studies, as well as significant moderating and mediating variables. Future research directions should concentrate on the relationships between social media and online reviews, compare studies on cross-platform variability and cross-cultural variability, and investigate emerging marketing technologies like AI, VR, and gamification.

With significant practical ramifications, this paper offers a theoretical framework and a multi-perspective research analysis for comprehending the intricate relationships between social aspects marketing methods, and impulse purchase behavior.

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