

Relationship Between the Intensity of Social Media Usage and Impulsive Buying Behaviour Among Young Adults.

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Abstract

In today's digital era, social media has become an integral part of daily life, especially among young adults. With increasing exposure to advertisements, influencer content, and online trends, social media platforms are not only used for communication but also play a major role in shaping consumer behaviour. This study examines the relationship between the intensity of social media usage and impulsive buying behaviour among young adults.

The research is based on primary data collected through a structured questionnaire targeting young individuals aged between 18–30 years. The study analyses how factors such as time spent on social media, engagement levels, influencer impact, and online advertisements influence spontaneous purchasing decisions.

The findings suggest that higher social media usage intensity increases exposure to persuasive content, leading to emotional triggers such as excitement and fear of missing out (FOMO), which significantly contribute to impulsive buying behaviour. The study highlights the need for better consumer awareness and responsible digital usage to avoid unnecessary spending.

Keywords: Social Media Usage, Impulsive Buying, Young Adults, FOMO, Consumer Behaviour, Digital Marketing.

1. Introduction

In today's digital era, social media has become an integral part of everyday life, especially among young adults. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, and Facebook are no longer limited to communication and entertainment; they have evolved into powerful tools that influence opinions, lifestyles, and even purchasing decisions. With the increasing availability of smartphones and affordable internet access, individuals are constantly connected to social media, spending a significant portion of their time engaging with digital content.

One of the most noticeable changes brought about by social media is its impact on consumer behavior. Traditionally, consumers followed a structured decision-making process before making purchases, which included identifying needs, evaluating alternatives, and making rational choices. However, in the current

digital environment, this process has become more spontaneous and less structured. Social media platforms expose users to continuous streams of advertisements, influencer promotions, product reviews, and peer recommendations, which often lead to quick and unplanned purchasing decisions.

This type of behavior is commonly referred to as impulsive buying. Impulsive buying refers to the act of making purchases without prior planning or thoughtful consideration. These decisions are usually driven by emotions such as excitement, curiosity, or the desire for instant gratification. Social media plays a major role in encouraging such behavior by creating a highly engaging and visually appealing environment. Features such as reels, stories, targeted advertisements, and one-click purchasing options make it easier for users to transition from browsing to buying within seconds.

An important factor in this context is the intensity of social media usage. Social media usage intensity is not limited to simply having access to these platforms; it includes the amount of time spent, frequency of usage, level of interaction, and emotional attachment to social media. Individuals with high usage intensity are more exposed to digital content and are more likely to engage with advertisements and promotional material. This increased exposure can significantly influence their purchasing behavior, making them more prone to impulsive buying.

Young adults form a key focus group for this study as they are among the most active users of social media. They are highly influenced by digital trends, peer interactions, and influencer content. At this stage of life, individuals are also more likely to experiment with new products and experiences, which makes them more susceptible to impulsive buying behavior.

In addition, psychological factors such as Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), social comparison, and emotional responses further strengthen the relationship between social media usage and impulsive buying. For example, seeing peers or influencers using certain products can create a sense of urgency or desire to follow trends, leading to spontaneous purchases.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between the intensity of social media usage and impulsive buying behavior among young adults. By understanding this relationship, the research seeks to provide insights into how digital environments influence consumer decisions and highlight the need for more responsible and informed buying behavior in the modern era.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016): They explain that consumer behaviour is influenced by a combination of psychological, social, and cultural factors. In the context of digital platforms, social media acts as a strong external influence by increasing exposure to advertisements and trends. This continuous exposure shapes consumer preferences and increases the likelihood of unplanned purchasing decisions.

Engel, J. F., Blackwell, R. D., & Miniard, P. W. (1995): Their consumer decision-making model describes a structured process involving need recognition, evaluation, and final purchase. However, with the rise of social media, this process is often shortened. Instant access to product information and peer opinions leads to quicker decisions, often resulting in impulsive buying behaviour.

Rook, D. W. (1987): Rook defines impulsive buying as a sudden, strong, and often irresistible urge to purchase something immediately. He emphasizes that such decisions are mainly driven by emotions rather than logic. Social media platforms amplify these emotional triggers by presenting attractive content and limited-time offers.

Rook, D. W., & Hoch, S. J. (1985): This study highlights the internal conflict between desire and self-control during purchasing decisions. It suggests that exposure to appealing stimuli weakens self-control, making individuals more likely to act on impulse. Social media, with its engaging and persuasive content, plays a major role in intensifying this effect.

Ellison, N. B., Steinfeld, C., & Lampe, C. (2007): Their research shows that increased social media usage leads to stronger emotional connections and higher user engagement. This emotional involvement makes users more receptive to advertisements and promotional messages. As a result, users are more likely to make spontaneous purchasing decisions.

Andreassen, C. S., et al. (2016): This study focuses on the concept of social media addiction and its impact on user behaviour. It suggests that individuals with high usage intensity often develop compulsive habits. Such behaviour reduces self-regulation and increases the chances of impulsive buying due to constant exposure to digital content.

Kuss, D. J., & Griffiths, M. D. (2017): They discuss how excessive use of social media can lead to behavioural addiction. This addiction affects decision-making abilities and increases impulsivity among users. As a result, individuals may engage in quick and unplanned purchases without considering the consequences.

Mehrabian, A., & Russell, J. A. (1974): Their Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model explains how environmental stimuli influence human behaviour. In the context of social media, content such as ads and visuals act as stimuli, which trigger emotional responses in users. These emotional reactions often lead to impulsive buying actions.

Beatty, S. E., & Ferrell, M. E. (1998): They emphasize the importance of mood and emotional state in influencing impulsive buying behaviour. Positive or negative emotions can both lead to spontaneous purchases. Social media plays a key role in shaping these emotions through engaging content, thereby increasing impulsive buying tendencies.

Przybylski, A. K., et al. (2013): They introduced the concept of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), which refers to the anxiety of missing rewarding experiences. Social media increases FOMO by constantly showing updates about others' activities and trends. This creates urgency and pressure, leading individuals to make quick and impulsive purchase decisions.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

With the rapid growth of social media platforms, young adults are increasingly exposed to digital content such as advertisements, influencer promotions, and peer recommendations. This constant exposure has started influencing their purchasing decisions, often leading to unplanned or impulsive buying behaviour. At the same time, not all individuals use social media in the same way. Some users spend more time,

engage more actively, and are more emotionally connected to these platforms, which may increase their susceptibility to such influences.

Despite the growing relevance of this issue, there is limited understanding of how the intensity of social media usage directly affects impulsive buying behaviour among young adults. Therefore, this study aims to examine whether higher levels of social media usage led to increased impulsive buying and to understand the factors contributing to this relationship.

RESEARCH GAP

Although several studies have examined consumer behaviour and the influence of social media on purchasing decisions, there are still certain gaps that need further attention. Most existing research focuses on general social media usage and its impact on buying behaviour, but very few studies specifically analyse the intensity of social media usage as a key factor influencing impulsive buying. The depth of engagement, time spent, and emotional involvement are often overlooked.

In addition, many studies do not focus exclusively on young adults, who are among the most active users of social media and are more likely to be influenced by digital trends and peer interactions. There is also limited research that combines psychological factors such as Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) with social media usage to understand impulsive behaviour.

Furthermore, in the Indian context, there is a lack of recent and relevant studies that reflect current digital consumption patterns. This study attempts to address these gaps by providing a focused and updated analysis.

OBJECTIVES

- 1.To investigate the impact of the intensity of social media usage on the impulsive buying behaviour of young adults.**
- 2.To analyse the impact of various features of social media usage, such as advertisements, visual content, and reviews, on the impulsive buying behaviour of consumers.**
- 3.To evaluate the impact of social media influencers on the impulsive buying behaviour of young adult consumers.**

RESEARCH QUESTION

- 1.How does the intensity of social media use affect impulsive buying behaviour among young adults?**
- 2. What is the effect of social media's features, such as advertisement, images, and online reviews, on impulsive buying behaviour?**
- 3. What is the effect of social media influencers on impulsive buying behaviour among young adults?**

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

DATA COLLECTION:

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire using Google Forms, targeting young adults between the ages of 18–30 years. The questionnaire included both multiple-choice and Likert scale questions to understand social media usage patterns and impulsive buying behaviour. Secondary data was collected from research articles, journals, and online sources related to consumer behaviour and social media influence. The collected data was then organized and used for further analysis and interpretation.

SAMPLING FRAME:

The sampling frame for this study consists of young adults aged between 18 to 30 years who are active users of social media platforms. This group mainly includes college students and early working professionals, as they represent a significant portion of frequent social media users. The respondents were selected based on their accessibility and willingness to participate in the survey.

The data was collected using an online questionnaire distributed through platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and email. This method made it easier to reach individuals who regularly engage with digital platforms, ensuring that the sample was relevant to the study. The sampling frame primarily covers individuals from urban and semi-urban areas, where internet usage and smartphone penetration are relatively high.

A non-probability convenience sampling method was used, as the respondents were chosen based on ease of access and availability. While this approach may limit the generalization of the findings to a larger population, it is suitable for exploratory research studies like this. Overall, the sampling frame effectively represents the target group of young social media users relevant to the research objectives.

DATA ANALYSIS / STATISTICAL TOOL:

The data collected for this study was carefully organized, processed, and analysed to understand the relationship between social media usage intensity and impulsive buying behaviour among young adults. The responses obtained through the questionnaire were first arranged in a systematic manner using spreadsheets to ensure accuracy and clarity. The data was then classified based on different variables such as age group, time spent on social media, frequency of impulsive purchases, and influencing factors like advertisements and influencers.

Descriptive statistical tools were primarily used for the analysis of the data. These included percentages, frequency distributions, and averages (mean values) to summarize and present the responses in a meaningful way. Tables were prepared to represent the distribution of responses, making it easier to identify patterns and trends. In addition, simple charts and graphs, such as bar graphs and pie charts, were used to visually present the data and improve understanding.

For analysing the influence of different factors such as advertisements, influencers, and visual content, a Likert scale was used. The responses were measured on a scale ranging from low to high influence, and mean scores were calculated to interpret the level of impact of each factor. This helped in identifying which elements of social media have the strongest effect on impulsive buying behaviour. To examine the

relationship between social media usage intensity and impulsive buying behaviour, a comparative analysis was conducted. Patterns were observed by comparing levels of social media usage with the frequency of impulsive purchases. Although advanced statistical tools were not used, the analysis provided clear insights into the trends and relationships within the data.

Overall, the use of basic statistical tools helped in simplifying the data and presenting it in an understandable format. This approach was suitable for the study as it focused on identifying general patterns and drawing meaningful conclusions from the collected responses.

4. ANALYSIS

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Impulsive Buying Score	384	30.33	7.127
Social Media Score	384	20.76	4.692
Age	384	23.03	3.228
Occupation	384	2.92	0.764
Gender	384	1.55	0.562

Interpretation: The results indicate moderate levels of impulsive buying behaviour (M = 30.33, SD = 7.127) and social media usage (M = 20.76, SD = 4.692) among participants. The average age is 23.03 (SD = 3.228), confirming that the sample mainly consists of young adults. Occupation (M = 2.92, SD = 0.764) and gender (M = 1.55, SD = 0.562) show low variability, suggesting consistency in demographic characteristics. Overall, the moderate standard deviations indicate some variation in responses, but the data remains fairly consistent across participants.

Table 4.2: Correlation Analysis

Variables	IB Score	SM Score	Age	Occupation	Gender
IB Score	1				
SM Score	0.467**	1			

Age	0.144**	0.121**	1		
Occupation	0.000	-0.005	0.013	1	
Gender	-0.019	-0.041	-0.018	0.040	1

Interpretation: The correlation analysis shows a moderate positive relationship between social media use and impulsive buying behaviour ($r = 0.467$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher social media usage is associated with increased impulsive buying among young adults. Age has a weak positive correlation with impulsive buying ($r = 0.144$, $p < 0.01$) and social media use ($r = 0.121$, $p < 0.01$), but these relationships are very low in magnitude. Occupation and gender show negligible or no significant correlation with both impulsive buying behaviour and social media usage.

Table 4.3: Multiple Regression Analysis

1. MODEL SUMMARY TABLE

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
0.475	0.226	0.218	6.303

Interpretation: The model summary shows a moderate relationship between the independent variables and impulsive buying behaviour ($R = 0.475$). The R^2 value of 0.226 indicates that 22.6% of the variation in impulsive buying is explained by social media use, age, gender, and occupation, while the remaining 77.4% is influenced by other factors. The adjusted R^2 (0.218) slightly refines this estimate, confirming that the model provides a moderate level of explanation.

2. ANOVA TABLE

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	4397.735	4	1099.434	27.675	0.000
Residual	15056.575	379	39.727		
Total	19454.310	383			

Interpretation: The ANOVA results show that the regression model is statistically significant ($F = 27.675$, $p = 0.000$), as the p-value is below 0.05. This indicates that the independent variables collectively have a significant effect on impulsive buying behaviour. Therefore, the model is reliable, and the relationship observed is not due to chance, making it suitable for further interpretation.

3. COEFFICIENTS TABLE

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	11.334	3.007	-	3.769	0.000
SM Score	0.693	0.069	0.456	10.020	0.000**
Age	0.197	0.101	0.089	1.958	0.051
Occupation	0.012	0.422	0.001	0.028	0.977
Gender	0.020	0.574	0.002	0.034	0.973

Interpretation: The coefficients indicate that social media usage has a strong and statistically significant positive effect on impulsive buying behaviour ($p < 0.001$), making it the most influential predictor. Age shows a weak and non-significant effect ($p = 0.051$), while gender ($p = 0.973$) and occupation ($p = 0.977$) have no significant impact. Overall, social media usage is the key factor influencing impulsive buying, whereas demographic variables have minimal effect.

5. FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the key findings of the study along with relevant suggestions and a concluding overview based on the analysis of the data collected.

The study reveals that social media has a strong influence on the buying behaviour of young adults. Most of the respondents were found to spend a considerable amount of time on social media platforms, which increases their exposure to advertisements, influencer content, and online trends. This high level of engagement plays a significant role in shaping their purchasing decisions.

One of the major findings of the study is that impulsive buying behaviour is quite common among young adults. Many respondents admitted that they make unplanned purchases either frequently or occasionally. This indicates that social media does not just inform users but also encourages them to make quick decisions without much prior planning. Products related to fashion, beauty, and lifestyle were found to be the most purchased impulsively.

The study also highlights the importance of visual content in influencing buying behaviour. Attractive images, videos, and reels create interest and grab attention, which often leads to immediate purchase decisions. In addition, social media advertisements and influencer promotions were found to have a strong impact on users, as many individuals tend to trust recommendations and follow ongoing trends.

Another important finding is the role of psychological factors such as Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). Many respondents feel a sense of urgency when they see limited-time offers or trending products, which pushes them to make impulsive purchases. Emotions such as excitement, curiosity, and the desire to stay updated with trends also contribute to this behaviour.

Based on these findings, it is suggested that young consumers should become more aware of their spending habits and avoid making decisions based purely on emotions. They should try to differentiate between needs and wants before making a purchase and practice better financial planning. Reducing unnecessary time spent on social media can also help in controlling impulsive behaviour.

For businesses and marketers, it is important to maintain ethical practices while promoting products. Providing clear and honest information can help build trust among consumers. Educational institutions can also play a role by spreading awareness about financial literacy and responsible consumption among students.

In conclusion, the study establishes a clear relationship between social media usage intensity and impulsive buying behaviour among young adults. While social media offers convenience and exposure to new products, it also increases the chances of unplanned spending. Therefore, a balanced approach towards social media usage and informed decision-making is essential for better financial and consumer behaviour.

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