



Digital And Psychological Drivers Of Online Impulse Buying Behaviour Among Consumers.

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KEYWORDS

Online Impulse Buying Behaviour, Electronic Word-of-Mouth, Online Reviews, Fear of Missing Out, Self-Control, Consumer Behaviour..

ABSTRACT

E-commerce and digital marketing have rapidly changed the shopping landscape. This shift has fueled a surge in online impulse buying. This study explores how Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM), online reviews, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), and self-control shape impulsive buying behaviour among consumers in Chandigarh, Mohali, and Panchkula. A quantitative approach was used. The research collected insights from 150 participants through a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. Advanced statistical tools, including SmartPLS, helped uncover the intricate connections between these drivers and online impulse purchases.

The findings reveal that E-WOM, online reviews, and FOMO each have a strong positive effect on online impulse buying. Consumers are more likely to make unplanned purchases due to social influence, peer recommendations, and the urgency these factors create. However, individuals with high self-control are much less likely to make impulsive online purchases. These results clearly show that E-WOM, peer feedback, and the fear of missing out can increase impulse buying, while strong self-control reduces it. E-commerce marketers and digital retailers can use these insights to design strategies that leverage social proof, persuasive reviews, and scarcity to encourage consumer purchases..

1. INTRODUCTION

The internet has become a significant platform for information sharing and commercial activities. It has substantially transformed consumer shopping behaviour (Fedushko & Ustyianovych, 2022). The widespread adoption of smartphones and high-speed internet has enabled consumers to access online shopping platforms anytime and anywhere. This has created a highly convenient, continuously connected shopping environment (Salameh et al., 2020).

India's e-commerce sector is growing quickly. Estimates show the market could rise from \$15 billion in 2016 to \$200 billion by 2026 (Morgan Stanley, 2017). This growth has led to increased online consumer activity and impulse buying. Digital and psychological factors are having a bigger impact on spontaneous buying decisions in online marketplaces (Balasundaram et al., 2025).

Among the major determinants, Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) and online reviews significantly influence consumer purchase intentions. They help reduce uncertainty and provide social validation (Babić-Rosario et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2018). Consumers often perceive peer-generated reviews as more credible than brand-generated content, which can encourage impulsive purchases (Tandon et al., 2024, pp. 1-12). Psychological factors such as Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) also contribute to impulsive buying, especially through social media (Kanjilal, 2026, pp. 1-10). In contrast, self-control is important for regulating impulsive purchasing tendencies (Pradipto et al., 2016, pp. 177-185). Individuals with lower self-control are more susceptible to online impulse buying because they struggle to resist immediate gratification and persuasive digital marketing strategies (Baumeister, 2002; Tangney et al., 2004). Considering this, the combined influence of technological and psychological factors is essential to understanding current consumer behaviour. This study attempts to address this gap by investigating the impact of these factors on online impulse buying among consumers in the Tri-city region.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

2.1 ONLINE IMPULSE BUYING

Online impulse buying behaviour is mainly driven by emotional and psychological responses. These encourage consumers to make spontaneous purchasing decisions without prior planning (Astari & Nugroho, 2017). Unlike planned purchasing, which involves evaluating needs, comparing alternatives, and considering financial limitations, impulse buying is about immediate gratification and emotional stimulation. Consumers often make impulsive purchases when exposed to attractive products, promotions, or emotionally appealing content that sparks an immediate desire to buy. Both intrinsic and extrinsic factors significantly influence online impulse buying behaviour (Verma & Singh, 2019). This makes it an important area in contemporary consumer behaviour research.

Previous studies have identified four major forms of impulse buying. Researchers have found four main types of impulse buying: planned, reminded, suggested, and pure impulse buying (Kathuria & Bakshi, 2024). Planned impulse buying occurs when shoppers are open to unplanned purchases while seeking discounts or deals that align with their general shopping goals. Reminded impulse (Gera et al., 2026, pp. 369-376), buying occurs when a product reminds someone of a past need or experience, leading to a quick purchase. Suggestion Impulse buying happens when people find new products and think they might need them after considering their usefulness or fit with their lifestyle. Pure impulse buying is when someone buys something without any prior intention or logical reason. Impulse buying behaviour is encouraged by exposure to continuous advertising, personalised recommendations, flash sales, and limited-time offers. (Marjerison et al., 2022).

Online shopping platforms make transactions quick and seamless. This reduces barriers to purchasing decisions and increases impulsive consumption (Gulfraz et al., 2022; Chan et al., 2017, pp. 204-217). The convenience of shopping at any time and place also nudges consumers toward immediate purchase decisions (Joshi et al., 2021). Despite growing scholarly interest, impulse buying is challenging to study. Consumers have limited ability to accurately recall impulsive purchases, adding complexity to measuring this behaviour (Madhavaram & Laverie, 2004, pp. 59-66).

2.2 ELECTRONIC WORD-OF-MOUTH

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) refers to online consumer-generated content, such as reviews, ratings, comments, and recommendations. This content is shared through digital platforms and significantly influences purchasing (Ismagilova et al., 2019). Compared to traditional word of mouth, eWOM has greater reach, accessibility, and permanence. It spreads information quickly to large audiences. Previous studies suggest that consumers increasingly rely on eWOM when making online purchase decisions because it reduces uncertainty and boosts product credibility (Cheung & Thadani, 2012).

Research shows that source credibility, review quality, review valence, and review volume are major factors in eWOM effectiveness. Consumers usually see peer-generated reviews as more trustworthy than marketer-generated ads. As a result, eWOM strongly predicts consumer buying behaviour (Lee & Youn, 2009). Positive eWOM boosts brand trust and purchase intentions. Negative reviews can discourage purchases, especially among risk-averse consumers (Mauri & Minazzi, 2013). Informative and recent reviews also affect how consumers evaluate products and services (Cheong et al., 2020). The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) explains that consumers process eWOM through two routes: the elaboration and the heuristic. The central route involves careful evaluation of information. The peripheral route is influenced by superficial cues like reviewer credibility, ratings, and visuals (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Consumers who rely on peripheral cues are more likely to buy impulsively (Roy et al., 2024). Visually appealing reviews, including images and videos, also increase consumer trust and purchase intentions.

Overall, existing literature shows that eWOM plays a crucial role in shaping online consumer behaviour. It also strongly influences impulse buying decisions in the digital shopping environment (Garima & Sheokand, 2024).

2.3 ONLINE REVIEWS

Online reviews are consumer-generated evaluations, opinions, ratings, and feedback about products or services. These are shared on digital platforms and help other consumers make purchasing decisions. Reviews are a key source of information in online shopping because they shape perceptions, trust, and purchase intentions (Chatterjee et al., 2021, pp. 1595-1623; Pooja & Upadhyaya, 2024). Most research on online impulse buying has focused on external stimuli such as website design, marketing, and situational factors. The social influence of online reviews has received less attention (Chan et al., 2017, pp. 204-217).

Online reviews help consumers reduce perceived risks about online shopping, such as financial and product risks (Zhang et al., 2018). People often browse reviews to gather information, lower uncertainty, and evaluate products before buying (Verhagen & Dolen, 2018). In offline settings, research suggests that social influence strongly affects impulsive purchasing. In online environments, reviews act as powerful interpersonal communication that shapes consumer decision-making (Cheung & Thadani, 2012, pp. 461-470).

Existing literature indicates that online browsing behaviour positively contributes to impulse buying because digital

platforms enable consumers to access product information quickly and conveniently (Madhavaram & Laverie, 2004; Park et al., 2012). In addition to marketer-generated content, consumers increasingly rely on peer-generated reviews, which are often perceived as more credible and trustworthy than traditional media sources (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Prior studies have demonstrated a strong relationship between online reviews and consumer buying behaviour, suggesting that reviews significantly influence brand attitudes and purchase intentions (Godes & Mayzlin, 2004). Furthermore, consumers devote considerable time to reading reviews before making online purchases, underscoring the growing importance of readily available, recent review information in shaping purchasing decisions (Hu et al., 2014).

2.4 FEAR OF MISSING OUT

Fear of Missing out (FOMO) is a psychological feeling in which individuals fear being excluded from rewarding experiences enjoyed by others (Przybylski et al., 2013). The widespread use of social media has intensified FOMO, as users are constantly exposed to updates about others' activities, purchases, and lifestyles (Elhai et al., 2018). In the context of online shopping, FOMO acts as a significant driver of impulsive buying behaviour, encouraging consumers to make immediate purchases to avoid missing limited-time offers, trending products, or socially endorsed items (Rifkin et al., 2025).

Previous studies indicate that individuals experiencing high levels of FOMO are more likely to engage in impulsive buying behaviour due to social comparison and peer influence (Neumann, 2020). Research by Karapınar Çelik et al. (2019) further revealed that FOMO strongly enhances impulse buying tendencies, particularly when consumers perceive opportunities as scarce or time-sensitive. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook intensify these feelings by promoting aspirational lifestyles, influencer marketing, limited-time offers, and social proof, all of which create a sense of urgency and encourage spontaneous purchases (Hodkinson, 2019). (Li et al., 2019, pp. 96-107)

Additionally, FOMO is closely associated with social anxiety and the desire for social acceptance. Consumers often engage in online shopping to feel connected and socially included. (Gera et al., 2026, pp. 369-376). A Meta-Analytic Structural Equation Model for Understanding Social Commerce Adoption, 2021). Continuous exposure to curated online content also increases social comparison, emotional pressure, and instant gratification, reducing self-control and increasing impulsive purchasing behaviour (Dempsey et al., 2019; Oberst et al., 2017). (Zhang, 2025) Furthermore, studies suggest that excessive FOMO-driven purchasing may lead to financial stress, regret, and psychological distress among consumers (Dinh & Lee, 2022). (Park et al., 2022, pp. 146-167)

2.5 SELF-CONTROL

Self-control refers to an individual's ability to regulate emotions, thoughts, and behaviour in order to resist short-term temptations and achieve long-term goals (Baumeister, 2002). In the context of online shopping, self-control plays a significant role in determining consumers' ability to resist impulsive purchasing behaviour. Individuals with low self-control are more vulnerable to persuasive online marketing strategies, as they often struggle to control urges, emotions, and spontaneous desires (Hedgcock et al., 2012). According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour, self-control is an important factor in behavioural regulation, and a lack of self-control increases susceptibility to impulsive actions such as online impulse buying (Ajzen, 2002).

The Dual-Process Theory explains that consumers with low self-control rely more on automatic and emotional thinking (System 1) rather than rational decision-making (System 2), making them more prone to impulse buying behaviour (Chaiken & Trope, 1999). Social media platforms and e-commerce websites further intensify impulsive buying tendencies by using behavioural targeting, influencer recommendations, and peer-generated content (Aragoncillo & Orús, 2018). Young consumers, in particular, are highly susceptible to these digital influences due to their frequent engagement with social media and online advertisements (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019). Additionally, factors such as Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), social comparison, and emotional triggers increase impulsive purchasing tendencies among individuals with lower self-control (Anindito & Handarkho, 2022).

Modern digital platforms also encourage instant gratification through features such as one-click purchasing, personalised recommendations, and Buy Now Pay Later services, reducing consumers' resistance to spontaneous buying decisions (Badgaiyan & Verma, 2014). (D & Meena, 2025) As a result, low self-control may lead to excessive spending, financial stress, post-purchase regret, and compulsive buying behaviour, particularly among young adults with limited financial awareness (Wang & Xiao, 2009). (Kumar et al., 2021) Overall, existing literature suggests that self-control plays a crucial role in regulating online impulse buying behaviour. Consumers with lower self-control are more likely to make impulsive purchases in response to emotional triggers, persuasive marketing strategies, and social media influences, underscoring the importance of self-regulation in online consumer decision-making. (Iyer et al., 2020).

2.6 HYPOTHESES

H1: Electronic Word-of-Mouth has a significant impact on online impulse buying behaviour.

H2: Online reviews have a significant impact on online impulse buying behaviour.

H3: Fear of Missing Out significantly impacts online impulse buying behaviour.

H4: Self-control has a significant impact on online impulse buying behaviour.

2.7 CONCEPTUAL MODEL

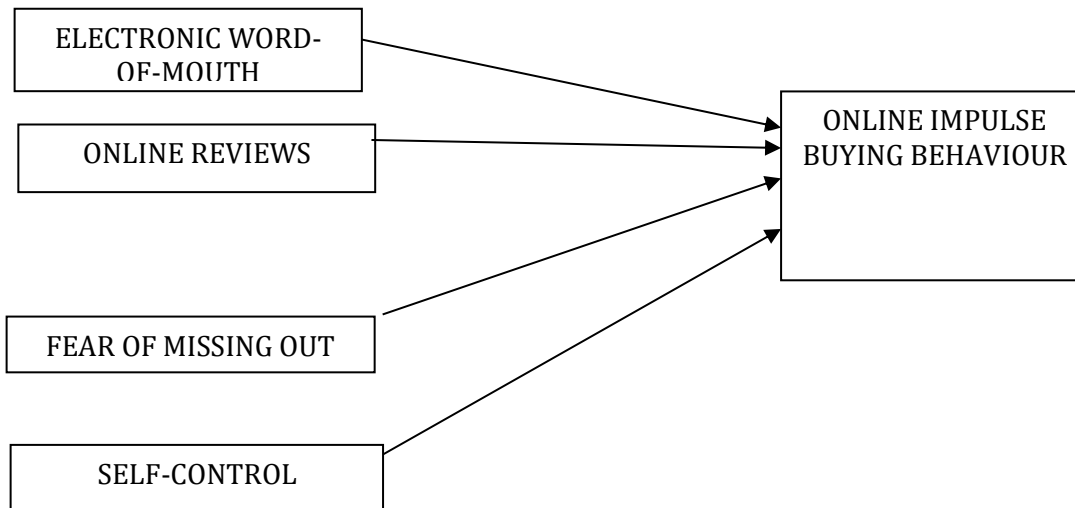


Figure 1: Conceptual model of the study

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employs a descriptive research design to investigate factors influencing online impulse buying. The primary objective is to identify and analyse the effects of eWOM, online reviews, FoMO, and self-control within digital shopping environments. Descriptive research helps in providing a systematic and accurate understanding of the variables under investigation without manipulating them.

3.2 SAMPLING METHOD

Convenience sampling was used, selecting respondents based on accessibility and willingness to participate, due to time constraints and the exploratory nature of the study. The sample focused on millennials aged 17-30, who are highly engaged with e-commerce (Harahap & Amanah, 2018). Participants had to have made online purchases in the past three months.

3.3 SAMPLE SIZE

For data analysis, this study uses Smart PLS. The main objective of calculating the sample size is to determine the number of respondents required to detect a clinically relevant behavioural effect (Noordzij et al., 2010). Primary data were collected from 150 respondents residing in the Tri-city region comprising Chandigarh, Mohali, and Panchkula.

The selected respondents included individuals who actively engage in online shopping and are familiar with digital purchasing platforms. Data collection was conducted through a structured questionnaire distributed online via Google Forms and social media platforms.

3.4 MEASUREMENT SCALE

The study used validated measurement scales from previous research to ensure the questionnaire's constructs were reliable and valid. The construct of Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM) was measured using six statements adapted from the scales developed by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004). Online Reviews were assessed through eight statements adopted from Wang (2010). Fear of Missing out (FoMO) was measured using ten items adapted from the scale developed by Przybylski et al. (2013).

The Self-Control construct consisted of four statements adopted from Tangney, Baumeister, and Boone (2004). Finally, Online Impulse Buying Behaviour was measured using nine statements adapted from the scale developed by Rook and Fisher (1995). All measurement items were evaluated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." The use of previously validated scales enhanced the study's consistency and credibility.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales. According to Hair et al. (2019), Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.70 indicate acceptable reliability and for AVE above 0.50.

Table 1: Construct Reliability and validity

CONSTRUCT	NUMBER OF ITEMS	CRONBACH'S ALPHA	AVERAGE VARIANCE EXTRACTED
Electronic Word-of-Mouth	6	0.716	0.532
Online reviews	8	0.777	0.511
Fear of missing out	10	0.823	0.612
Self-control	4	0.915	0.628
Online impulse buying	9	0.895	0.602

Source: Smart-PLS Output

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

The demographic analysis shows that female respondents constituted the majority of the sample (61%), while male respondents represented 39%. The largest proportion of respondents was in the 18–25 years age group (59%), followed by those aged 26–35 years (23%). These results suggest that younger consumers are more actively engaged in online shopping and digital purchasing activities.

Table 2: Gender- wise distribution of respondents

GENDER	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENTAGE
MALE	58	39
FEMALE	92	61
OTHERS	0	0
TOTAL	150	100

Table 3: Age-wise distribution of respondents

AGE	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENTAGE
18-25	88	59
26-35	35	23
36-45	16	11
46-55	6	4



55 AND ABOVE	5	3
TOTAL	150	100

4.3 HYPOTHESES TESTING

Hypothesis 1 (Supported): Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) significantly impacts Online Impulse Buying Behaviour. The findings indicate that eWOM has a statistically significant effect on impulse buying behaviour ($B = 0.245$, $p = 0.004$). The coefficient of 0.245 suggests a moderate positive effect, indicating that increased exposure to eWOM is associated with greater online impulse buying. In practical terms, this demonstrates that digital discussions, peer recommendations, and online reviews play a substantial role in encouraging consumers to make unplanned purchases. Marketers should therefore consider investing in strategies that amplify positive eWOM to effectively drive impulse buying behaviour.

Hypothesis 2 (Supported): Online Reviews significantly influence Online Impulse Buying Behaviour. With a strong positive effect ($B = 0.299$, $p < 0.001$), detailed and trustworthy reviews boost consumer confidence and fuel impulsive buying.

Hypothesis 3 (Supported): Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) exerts the strongest influence on Online Impulse Buying Behaviour ($B = 0.432$, $p < 0.001$). Consumers gripped by FoMO are especially prone to snap up limited-time deals, trending items, or exclusive offers.

Hypothesis 4 (Supported): Self-Control significantly impacts Online Impulse Buying Behaviour. The findings indicate that self-control has a statistically significant effect on impulse buying behaviour ($B = -0.214$, $p < 0.001$). Individuals with higher self-control are less likely to engage in impulsive purchases, as they are better able to regulate spending behaviour and resist purchasing temptations.

Table 4: Summary of hypotheses testing results

Hypotheses	Hypotheses Statement	Path Coefficient (β)	Std. deviation	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	Electronic Word-of-Mouth has a significant impact on online impulse buying behaviour.	0.245	0.014	22.917	0.004	Supported
H2	Online review has a significant impact on online impulse buying behaviour.	0.299	0.019	24.631	0.001	Supported
H3	Fear of Missing Out has a significant impact on online impulse buying behaviour.	0.483	0.017	22.769	0.001	Supported
H4	Self-control has a significant impact on online impulse buying behaviour.	0.214	0.034	13.340	0.001	Supported

Source: Smart-PLS Output

5. DISCUSSIONS

This study uncovers valuable insights into the drivers of online impulse buying among consumers in Chandigarh, Mohali, and Panchkula. The results confirm that eWOM, online reviews, FoMO, and self-control each play a significant role in shaping impulsive online shopping behaviours.

Among the variables examined, Fear of Missing Out was identified as the strongest predictor of online impulse buying behaviour, indicating that consumers experiencing anxiety about missed opportunities, trending products, or limited-time offers are more likely to make spontaneous purchases. Similarly, eWOM and online reviews significantly influence impulse buying behaviour, emphasising the increasing importance of digital recommendations, peer opinions, and social influence in shaping consumer purchasing decisions. In contrast, self-control showed a negative relationship with online impulse buying behaviour, suggesting that individuals with higher self-regulation are better able to resist impulsive purchasing and make rational buying decisions.

The findings highlight the importance of digital marketing strategies such as influencer marketing, scarcity-based



promotions, personalised recommendations, and social proof in driving online impulse purchases. (Pan et al., 2024) The study also identifies self-control as a key psychological factor that can reduce susceptibility to impulsive buying.

6. LIMITATION AND FUTURE WORK

There are a few important limitations to note. The study's modest sample of 150 respondents from Chandigarh, Mohali, and Panchkula may limit the extent to which the findings apply. Additionally, relying on self-reported answers opens the door to response bias, memory lapses, or socially desirable responses.

The study used a cross-sectional design, collecting data at a single point in time, which may not capture long-term behavioural changes. The analysis focused on selected variables, excluding factors such as emotions, financial conditions, advertising exposure, and personality traits. Additionally, using a five-point Likert scale may limit the ability to fully capture the complexity of consumer attitudes and behaviours.

Future research could broaden this study by including larger, more diverse samples from different regions and backgrounds to boost generalizability. Exploring additional factors such as emotions, financial literacy, influencer marketing, personalised ads, social media habits, and personality traits could yield richer insights into online impulse buying. Longitudinal studies might reveal how these behaviours evolve over time, while comparing different e-commerce and social media platforms could uncover unique influences. Experimental designs could also help pinpoint the true causes behind impulsive buying triggers...

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