



EXPLORING THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING ON IMPULSE BUYING BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of social media advertising on impulse buying behavior, focusing on how targeted ads influence consumers' purchasing decisions in real-time. With the rise of digital platforms, particularly social media, brands have increasingly leveraged targeted advertising to reach consumers with personalized content. The research aims to understand the psychological and behavioral mechanisms that drive impulse purchases when exposed to social media ads, considering factors such as ad frequency, emotional appeal, and product relevance. A survey-based methodology was employed, gathering responses from 500 social media users across different age groups, genders, and purchasing habits. The survey assessed participants' reactions to various ad formats (e.g., sponsored posts, influencer endorsements, and product recommendations) and their subsequent buying behaviors. The results indicate that emotional engagement and perceived product relevance significantly increase the likelihood of impulse purchases, with younger consumers (ages 18-34) showing a stronger propensity for impulsive buying in response to visually appealing and emotionally charged ads. Furthermore, the frequency of exposure to ads was found to enhance impulse buying tendencies, particularly when the ads were perceived as relevant to the consumer's interests. This study provides valuable insights for marketers seeking to optimize social media advertising strategies to trigger impulsive purchases and boost consumer engagement in the digital space.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the rapid growth of social media platforms has caused a fundamental shift in brands' way to engage consumers, and the digital advertising is now becoming an integral part of the modern marketing plan. The advertising of social media has become a very powerful tool to affect in consumer's behavior related to impulse buying. Buying on impulse means you are buying without really planning your purchases. Instead, you tend to buy in a spontaneous and unplanned way and it's most likely influenced by emotions, external cues



and environmental triggers. Due to the graphic and constantly engaged nature of social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, advertisers have found themselves a great place to intend consumers to citizens to with customized, palliating advertisements. Quite engaging spaces, these have the ability to expose thousands of consumers to product advertisements at a rate they will consider while buying, and more times than not, these consumers end up making purchases they hadn't intended on making.

The effects of social media advertisement on impulse buying behavior by taking a deep look at how various elements of a digital ad, including emotional appeal, product relevance, and ad frequency, matter in the consumers' decision making path. It was previously found that emotional stimuli and perceived product relevance heavily increase the chances of impulse purchase by consumers. Yet, the contribution of social media advertising within this context remains unstudied, particularly relative to demographics and ad format. To better understand psychological and behavioral drivers in consumers who impulse buy due to online advertising, this study surveys a group of diverse social media users. Having a better knowledge of how families respond to targeted ads can assist brands in adjusting their marketing strategies and developing social media advertising that will lead to an increase in sales and consumer interaction.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is important because it may improve how the understanding of social media advertising affects consumer's behavior regarding impulse buying. With social media leading the pack of digital marketing tools, understanding how to optimize your advertising strategy in terms of spontaneous purchasing decisions is important for brands. Buying from impulse, associated with emotions, immediate desires and external cues, has been an important field of the consumer behavior research for a long time. But social media is rapidly becoming the first place people discover products and purchase via advertising, creating both new chances and difficulties for marketers. This study explores the relationship between impulse buying behavior and emotional attraction, frequency of ad and relevance of products, and attempts to shed light on psychological triggers causing consumers to buy impulsively. By



understanding these dynamics brands can create more effective, targeted campaigns that address consumers emotionally, which increases the engagement and sales. In addition, the outcomes of this research can provide guidance to marketers delivering content and ad formats considering demographic factors to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of social media advertising.

Concept of Impulse Buying Behavior

Spontaneous unplanned purchases generated by emotion or immediate desire instead of rational decision making and intention are referred as impulse buying behavior. It's when consumers buy things they hadn't originally intended to buy – that's what it really means – the purchase is a result of an external trigger, like an ad, a product display, or even how they're feeling at that moment. Typically what we use to describe impulse buying is that there's no premeditation and an emotional response is present, whether excitement, or pleasure, or you want it now. Through the process of impulse buying, several factors influence the behavior, namely; perceived urgency of need, presence of promotional offers or discounts and environmental stimuli like visual cues and recommendations. Impulse buying has been more and more triggered through social media, such as targeted ads and endorsement of influencers that function as strong external cues to make consumers buy right away. The idea is frequently associated with 'want' as opposed to 'need,' in which consumers are moved by the charm of the product, typically without total understanding of its real worth or requirement over time. Consumer desires do not only lead us to impulse buying, it is also due to specific psychological mechanisms, such as the desire for novelty, status or self reward. To marketers, it's important to understand impulse buying behavior as it can often lead to large traffic of sales and consumer purchasing behavior, especially in the digital world where the line between the need and desire are being blurred.

Social media marketing and impulse buying

Social media marketing has emerged as a powerful tool influencing consumer behavior, particularly in driving impulse buying. Impulse buying refers to spontaneous, unplanned purchases often made due to emotional triggers, immediate desires, or external stimuli, rather than rational decision-making. Social media platforms, with their visually appealing content, personalized ads, and constant engagement, create an environment that



encourages such behavior. Brands utilize social media to target specific consumer segments with tailored ads, often leveraging influencers, product recommendations, and limited-time offers to trigger impulsive purchases.

Key factors driving impulse buying through social media include the emotional appeal of ads, the frequency of exposure, and the relevance of the product being promoted. Emotional ads, which evoke feelings of excitement, happiness, or urgency, are particularly effective at prompting immediate purchase decisions. Additionally, frequent exposure to ads reinforces brand awareness and builds consumer desire, leading to increased likelihood of spontaneous buying. The relevance of products also plays a crucial role—targeted ads based on user preferences and past behaviors are more likely to result in impulse purchases. Furthermore, influencer marketing on platforms like Instagram has become a significant driver of impulse buying, as consumers often feel a connection to influencers and trust their product recommendations.

In this digital age, where attention spans are short and immediate gratification is highly valued, social media marketing capitalizes on these psychological triggers to influence impulsive buying behavior, making it a vital component of modern retail strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Xiang, L., et al (2016). Parasocial interaction, being the one way sort of connection, between consumers and influencers or content creators on social commerce platforms largely influences consumers' impulse buying behavior. By consuming influencer posts, stories and interacting with influencers regularly, people can actually create a sense of familiarity and connection with them, despite a one sided relationship. This brings about trust, and can allow products to feel more authentic, even as recommendations, which can cause the user to impulsively buy it. If influencers exhibit their products in their daily life routine, show their real experience, or create the special offer, their followers tend to act on the endorsement without forcing themselves to think about it. The urgency and the emotional attachment to it that parasocial bond creates makes the consumer feel as if they are missing something important.

Lina, L. F., et al (2021). Personalized targeting advertising proves to be key to creating a flow experience that massively impacts customers' impulse buy in the social commerce



ecosystem. State of flow means deep engagement when consumers get totally under the spell of the online experience, with time passing completely unnoticed and being highly responsive to stimuli. Personalized ads have the potential to craft a seamless and immersive retail experience that will entice the impulse buy. An advertisement triggers a positive emotional response from the consumer; when advertisements are in tandem with an individual's needs or desires then this response is likely to be greater and an immediate action on the part of the consumer is more likely. Not only does personalized content grab attention, but it also helps to establish a connection — and it feels relevant — which can help to overcome hesitation and make the need for purchase more urgent. Consumers tend to make impulsive purchases on social commerce platforms when they are experiencing a smooth, uninterrupted flow along the social flow experience because of emotional and cognitive engagement.

Abdelsalam, S., et al (2020). Online impulse buying behavior in social commerce are determined by key factors that motivate impulsive purchasing decisions, according to a systematic literature review. Research indicates that social influence – especially from influencers and from peer recommendations, heavily influences consumers' inclinations to make unplanned purchases. Social proof, like user ratings, user reviews, and likes, increases perceived product value and pulls user towards impulse buying. Limited time offers, exclusive discounts, or product scarcity are emotional triggers that create a sense of urgency, so you act now. With personalized advertising that delivers content to users' personal preferences, it increases engagement and removes the hesitation for purchase. Shopping features on social media allow them to be seamlessly integrated as we only have to check product details and make purchase decisions without leaving social media at the spur of moment.

Aragoncillo, L., & Orus, C. (2018). Impulse buying behavior differs between online and offline environments with social media enhancing online impulsivity. In the offline world impulsive purchase is influenced by in store promotions, product placement and physical interactions with sales person. Spontaneous buying decisions may be generated by consumers' attraction to immediate, palpable experiences or sensory stimuli. Impulse buying, online, is more powerful in the sense of social media, and recommendations and



advertisements, as well as peer influence, act as driving force in such buying. Social media spaces become virtual lands of ongoing product suggestion, influencer endorsement, and peer reflection; and these create a tendency toward consumers impulsive purchases.

Huang, L. T. (2016). Flow and social capital theory both play crucial roles in understanding online impulse buying behavior. Flow theory suggests that consumers experience a heightened state of engagement when they are deeply immersed in an online shopping experience. This sense of enjoyment and absorption, often triggered by personalized content, seamless navigation, and interactive features, reduces cognitive barriers and encourages spontaneous purchases. When consumers are in a flow state, they are more likely to make impulse buys due to the emotional and cognitive satisfaction derived from the experience. Social capital theory, on the other hand, focuses on the value derived from social connections, trust, and shared networks. In online environments, social capital is built through community engagement, influencer interactions, and peer recommendations. When consumers feel connected to a brand or community, they are more likely to act on impulse, influenced by the social validation and sense of belonging. Together, flow and social capital enhance the likelihood of impulse buying by fostering deep engagement and trust.

Kim, A. J., et al (2016). On popular social media platforms like Facebook, consumers have plenty of power, especially when it comes to brand related user generated content (UGC) which can have an enormous impact on what a customer decides to purchase. With UGC, including reviews, posts, images and videos customers share, brand perceptions and consumer behavior are being shaped. Users can create and share content about the brand and improve credibility and trust because potential customers see that traditional advertising is more authentic. UGC that is positive gives others a feeling of community, and others can then join in with the brand, and through this join in too with purchase intentions. Interacting and recognizing content made by consumers, brands are able to strengthen relationships and increase loyalty. When social connections, shared experiences, and social proof are important, like on Facebook, UGC validates a brand's value and acts as a powerful persuasion tool on potential buyers. In recent years, this form of consumer power has



changed the face of marketing, and brands are cashing in on UGC to boost engagement and help them sell products.

METHODOLOGY

The study methodology attempted to understand the influence of social media advertising on consumer's behavior i.e. impulse buying, purchase intentions and emotional responses. Participants were recruited through online platforms and randomly assigned to two groups based on ad exposure frequency: low ad frequency (ads are seen once a week) and high ad frequency (ads are seen many times a week). For two weeks, the subject of targeted social media ads we each participant.

Before and after the exposure period, participants completed surveys measuring several variables: The six dependent variables are emotional response to ads, purchase likelihood, impulse buying frequency, purchase likelihood, spontaneous purchase decisions, and brand recall. To assess the frequency of impulse buying, participants were asked about how often they buy things they have not bought earlier, after seeing ads. Likert-scale questions and binary response options were used to measure spontaneous purchase decisions and purchase intentions. The reaction study involves assessing brand recall through asking participants 'What was the brand exhibited on the ads?' and also emotional response through a 5 point scale.

Paired t-tests were performed to compare pre- and post-exposure scores for each group and Cohen's was calculated for the effect size of these changes. Statistical significance was set to a p-value significance level of 0.05.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 Impact of Social Media Ad Frequency on Consumer Behavior and Purchase Intentions

Variable	Pre-Ad Exposure Mean (SD)	Post-Ad Exposure Mean (SD)	T-Value	P-Value	Effect Size (Cohen's d)
Impulse Buying Frequency	2.3 (1.1)	3.7 (1.3)	5.43	0.001	1.26



Spontaneous Purchase Decision (%)	22.5%	45.8%	4.12	0.002	0.95
Brand Recall (%)	60%	85%	6.58	0.0001	1.45
Purchase Likelihood	3.1 (1.0)	4.5 (1.2)	5.76	0.0003	1.18
Emotional Response to Ad	3.4 (1.2)	4.6 (1.1)	5.23	0.0002	1.05

The results of an analysis of the impact of social media advertisement on impulse buying behavior are presented in Table 1. Across metrics we compare pre vs post ad exposure. After exposure, participants reported a significantly increased Impulse Buying Frequency (from a mean of 2.3 [SD = 1.1] before the ad to 3.7 [SD = 1.3] with a large effect size, Cohen's $d = 1.26$). Spontaneous Purchase Decisions also nearly doubled, climbing from 22.5% to 45.8%, suggesting that ads have a strong effect on spontaneous buying behaviors (T-value = 4.12, $p = 0.002$). Brand Recall reached out of the roof from 60% to 85% and proved to be significantly successful for increasing brand recognition (T-value = 6.58; $p < 0.0001$). In addition, the mean of Purchase Likelihood increased from 3.1 (SD = 1.0) to 4.5 (SD = 1.2), with a strong effect (Cohen's $d = 1.18$), indicating that ads increase the likelihood of consumers purchasing the advertised product. The Emotional Response to the Ad increased from 3.4 (SD = 1.2) to 4.6 (SD = 1.1) which also shows that participants were emotionally engaged positively with the ad. At a glance, the results show that social media ads are hugely influential on consumer behavior, inspiring emotional responses and pushing people to buy.



Table 2 Influence of Social Media Ad Frequency and Trustworthiness on Impulse Buying Behavior

Variable	Low Ad Frequency Mean (SD)	High Ad Frequency Mean (SD)	T-Value	P-Value	Effect Size (Cohen's d)
Perceived Trustworthiness of Ad	3.1 (1.0)	4.2 (1.1)	4.75	0.0001	1.12
Impulse Buying Frequency	2.5 (1.3)	4.2 (1.4)	6.01	0.0002	1.33
Purchase Intentions	3.0 (1.2)	4.6 (1.0)	5.89	0.0004	1.23
Ad Recall (%)	55%	79%	4.30	0.0003	1.10
Purchase Decision Made	30%	60%	5.15	0.0001	1.26

Table 2 presents the effects of ad frequency on various aspects of consumer behavior. The data compares low ad frequency with high ad frequency, showing significant changes across several variables. Perceived Trustworthiness of the Ad increased from a mean of 3.1 (SD = 1.0) to 4.2 (SD = 1.1), indicating that more frequent ads were perceived as more trustworthy (T-value = 4.75, $p < 0.0001$). The Impulse Buying Frequency also rose significantly, from 2.5 (SD = 1.3) to 4.2 (SD = 1.4), suggesting that high ad frequency drives more unplanned purchases (T-value = 6.01, $p = 0.0002$). Purchase Intentions increased from a mean of 3.0 (SD = 1.2) to 4.6 (SD = 1.0), reflecting a stronger intent to buy with higher ad frequency (T-value = 5.89, $p = 0.0004$). Ad Recall improved from 55% to 79%, indicating that ads are more memorable with higher frequency (T-value = 4.30, $p = 0.0003$). Lastly, the Purchase Decision Made doubled, from 30% to 60%, showing a strong effect of ad frequency on actual



purchase decisions (T-value = 5.15, $p < 0.0001$). The results highlight the effectiveness of frequent advertising in increasing consumer engagement and purchase behavior.

Research problem

The research problem addressed in this study is to examine the impact of social media advertising on impulse buying behavior among consumers. With the rise of social media platforms as key marketing tools, advertisers increasingly rely on targeted ads to influence consumer decisions. However, there is limited understanding of how the frequency and emotional appeal of these ads specifically contribute to unplanned or impulse purchases. Impulse buying, characterized by spontaneous, unplanned purchases driven by emotional responses, has been a well-established phenomenon in consumer behavior studies, but its relationship with social media ads remains underexplored. This research seeks to fill this gap by investigating whether social media ads, particularly those with high exposure frequency, increase the likelihood of consumers making impulse purchases. Additionally, the study aims to explore how factors like brand recall, emotional engagement, and perceived trustworthiness of the ads contribute to the decision-making process. Understanding the factors that drive impulse buying behavior in the context of social media is crucial for marketers to create more effective advertising strategies and for consumers to be more aware of the psychological influences that ads exert on their purchasing decisions. This research problem is timely and relevant, given the growing influence of digital advertising on consumer behavior in an increasingly connected world.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that social media advertising works toward easy impulse buying behavior at large. Results show that targeted ads, particularly with higher frequency, can significantly enhance a variety of consumer behaviors such as impulse buying, purchase intentions, etc., and even emotional engagement with the ads. Participants exposed to high frequency ads displayed tremendous increases in impulse buying frequency, purchase likelihood, and spontaneous purchase decisions – all of these were significantly higher compared to participants exposed to low frequency ads. Repetitiveness and visibility of ads on social media platforms contribute a lot towards unplanned buying behaviors according to this. Moreover, the study discovered that brand recall and emotional responses to the



television adverts were significantly better when they were exposed to the adverts more, emphasizing the significance of film adverts that connect to audience's emotions and, therefore, support increasing brand loyalty or awareness. They also found that perceived trustworthiness of the ad grew with higher ad frequency, suggesting that consumers may become more confident in the credibility of the advertised brand as the frequency of ads expands. The results are generally consistent with the body of literature documenting that social media ads can shift consumer decisions, especially prompting people to make impulse purchases. Strategic increases in ad frequency and emotional relevance to consumers will improve engagement with brands via social media which is a powerful medium to effectively promote the brand as well as sales. These results offer valuable implications for marketers aiming to use social media to influence consumers' purchasing decisions and optimize advertising campaign return on investments.

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