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Impulse buying behavior among youth at shopping malls in Kerala

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Abstract
This research article investigates impulse buying behavior among youth in shopping malls in Kerala, focusing on the interplay of demographic variables, psychological factors, store atmosphere, promotional activities, and social influences. By using a descriptive quantitative research design, data were collected through structured questionnaires from 90 participants aged 18-30. The findings reveal that gender and educational level have limited influence on impulse buying behavior, with only psychological factors showing a minor variation by education level. The regression analysis results indicate that store atmosphere, promotional activities, and social influences significantly impact impulse buying, with store atmosphere and social influences having a positive effect and promotional activities slightly negative, highlighting the role of mall environments and social interactions in shaping consumer behavior. This study provides valuable insights for retailers aiming to enhance engagement with young consumers in mall settings.

Keywords: Impulse buying, youth, shopping malls, consumer behavior

1. Introduction
Impulse buying is a widely recognized phenomenon in consumer behavior, defined as unplanned purchasing decisions that arise spontaneously due to strong internal or external stimuli (Stern, 1962) [24]. Unlike deliberate purchases, impulse buying is often guided by emotional reactions such as excitement, curiosity, or even stress rather than a rational assessment of needs (Amos, Holmes, & Keneson, 2014) [2]. Shopping malls, with their immersive and sensory-rich environments, create a unique setting that can amplify these impulsive tendencies. Malls often incorporate a variety of stimuli, including visually appealing product displays, promotions, and sensory elements like lighting and music, all designed to elicit positive emotions and spur immediate purchase decisions (Mattila & Wirtz, 2008; Verhagen & van Dolen, 2011) [26]. These high-stimulation spaces act as a powerful motivator of unplanned buying, leveraging consumer psychology to enhance retail success.
Understanding impulse buying behavior among youth is especially pertinent, as this demographic is generally more susceptible to marketing cues and social influences (Badgaiyan & Verma, 2015) [4]. In Kerala, the growing popularity of shopping malls as social and recreational hubs for young consumers adds a unique dimension to their shopping behavior. For many young people, malls are more than just shopping centres they are spaces for socializing, entertainment, and identity expression, creating an ideal context for impulsive buying behavior to flourish. Youth in Kerala are thus an important target group for this study, balancing traditional values with the modern consumer culture seen in malls. Despite this, limited research has been conducted on the specific drivers of impulse buying among Kerala's youth. Analysing this behavior within the context of shopping malls offers critical insights for retailers, enabling them to optimize retail strategies that align with consumer tendencies in this region.
This study aims to investigate the factors influencing impulse buying among youth at shopping malls in Kerala, examine the influence of demographic variables on impulse buying behavior and to explore the role of mall characteristics such as promotional activities, store layout, and social influence in prompting impulsive purchases.

2. Review of Literature
Impulse buying has emerged as a significant focus within consumer behavior research, particularly concerning youth, who represent a dynamic and impressionable market segment.

Impulse buying is generally defined as unplanned purchasing driven by emotional responses and situational stimuli (Stern, 1962) [24]. Shopping malls, as immersive and high-stimulation retail environments, play a crucial role in fostering impulsive buying behaviors, especially among younger consumers (Verhagen & van Dolen, 2011) [26]. Malls combine social and sensory aspects, which, alongside emotional and psychological triggers, create an environment conducive to impulse buying. This effect is amplified for youth who are in a developmental phase characterized by identity exploration and a desire for social belonging, often viewing shopping malls as spaces for recreation, socializing, and self-expression (Badgaiyan & Verma, 2015) [4].

Youth consumers are particularly susceptible to various external influences within the mall environment. Multiple studies indicate that factors such as promotional tactics, store atmospherics, and emotional triggers play pivotal roles in driving impulsive purchasing (Kim & East, 2015) [2]. Mall atmospherics elements like lighting, music, and store layout create an engaging shopping experience that heightens the likelihood of impulse buying. For instance, promotional activities, such as discounts or limited-time offers, generate urgency, encouraging youth to make unplanned purchases. Emotional elements are also central; positive feelings of excitement or novelty, alongside hedonic shopping experiences, enhance youth's inclination to make impulse purchases (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982) [17]. These emotional aspects, often embedded in mall environments, are instrumental in creating a pleasurable shopping experience that prompts immediate purchasing decisions.

Demographic variables such as age, gender, and income also shape impulse buying behaviors. Studies have consistently shown that young females are more inclined toward impulse buying than males, a difference often attributed to socialization patterns that encourage emotional expression and shopping as a recreational activity (Dittmar, 2005) [12]. Income, likewise, can influence impulsive purchases by increasing buying power, making certain demographic groups more likely to engage in impulse buying when exposed to stimuli. For retailers, understanding these demographic nuances allows for tailored marketing strategies that resonate more effectively with targeted consumer groups, especially youth.

Social influences are particularly impactful in youth impulse buying behaviors, as young consumers are more likely to shop in groups, where peer presence amplifies the impulse to buy. Additionally, social media further intensifies impulse buying by promoting peer behaviors and advertising content that generate a sense of community and urgency (Kumar & Nayak, 2018) [21]. Social conformity and social proof play significant roles, as youth often feel motivated to make purchases that align with peer expectations or social trends. Furthermore, advancement in technology have reshaped shopping behaviors, particularly for young consumers who frequently use mobile apps and social media. These platforms provide instant access to promotions and peer interactions, increasing the likelihood of impulsive purchases (Verhagen *et al*., 2015) [26]. Integrating online experiences with physical shopping encourages impulsive behaviors, as youth can seamlessly transition from browsing online to in-person purchasing.

Impulse buying behavior among youth in shopping malls is influenced by demographic differences, mall atmospherics, social influences, and technology which underscores the importance of analyzing impulse buying comprehensively, so as to provide insights to optimize the strategies for engaging young consumers in mall settings.

3. Materials and Methods

This study employs a descriptive, quantitative research design to examine impulse buying behavior among youth at shopping malls in Kerala. Data collection involved a structured questionnaire distributed to young consumers aged 18-30, as this approach allows for the identification of patterns and correlations between different variables related to impulse buying behavior (Bryman, 2016, Creswell, 2014) [7, 10]. convenience sampling method was used to collect data as this method is advantageous for accessibility and practical data collection (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016) [13]. The survey included Likert scale items and multiple-choice questions, capturing factors that influence impulse buying along with demographic details like age, gender, and income to allow for a comprehensive analysis (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014) [11].

Data analysis was done using SPSS as by utilizing SPSS researchers can effectively analyze their data and draw meaningful conclusions regarding impulse buying behavior and the influencing factors (Field, 2018) [14]. Demographic variables were analysed, T-tests was used to compare gender wise impulse buying behavior and ANOVA were employed to compare means across different age groups and educational levels to understand how age and educational levels influences impulse buying tendencies. Correlation and regression analyses explored the relationships between impulse buying and influencing factors. Reliability and validity checks, including Cronbach's alpha and exploratory factor analysis, were also applied to ensure the robustness and consistency of the findings (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011) [25].

4. Results and Discussion

Data analysis regarding impulse buying behavior reveals key insights based on demographic variables, psychological factors, store atmosphere, promotional activities, and social influences.

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The respondents are classified based on gender, age, education, and income. The profiles of the respondents are given in the following table

The study included a total of 90 participants, with a gender distribution of 49 males (54.4%) and 41 females (45.6%). The age distribution showed that the majority of participants were aged 27-30 years (33%), followed by those aged 23-26 years (23%). In terms of educational levels, undergraduates constituted the largest group (28%), while the monthly income analysis indicated that 31% of participants earned between, 5000-10000. This demographic breakdown provides a foundational understanding of the sample population, which is crucial for interpreting the subsequent analyses.

Table 1: Demographic profile of respondents

		Gender					
		Female	**%**	**Male**	**%**	**Total**	**%**
Age	15-18	9	22	8	16	17	19
	19-22	8	20	14	29	22	24
	23-26	11	27	10	20	21	23
	27-30	13	32	17	35	30	33
Total		41	100	49	100	90	100
Educational Level	High School	11	27	14	29	25	28
	Under Graduate	13	32	12	24	25	28
	Post Graduate	9	22	13	27	22	24
	Others	8	20	10	20	18	20
Total		41	100	49	100	90	100
Monthly Income	Below 5000	8	20	18	37	26	29
	5000-10000	15	37	13	27	28	31
	10000-15000	6	15	6	12	12	13
	Above 15000	12	29	12	24	24	27
Total		41	100	49	100	90	100

4.2 T-Test Results: Gender-wise Difference in Overall Psychological Factors, Overall Store Atmosphere, Overall Promotional Activities, Overall Social Influences, and Overall Impulse Tendencies. The hypothesis tests for finding gender-wise differences in overall psychological factors, overall store atmosphere, overall promotional activities, overall social influences, and overall impulse tendencies showed the following results across female and male respondents.

Table 2: T-test: Gender-wise difference in overall psychological factors, overall store atmosphere, overall promotional activities, overall social influences, and overall impulse tendencies

Gender		**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**T**	**DF**	**P-Value**
Overall Psychological factors	Female	41	3.5648	0.65475	88	-1.643	0.532*
	Male	49	3.7651	0.50123			
Overall store atmosphere	Female	41	3.6634	0.55936	88	-0.149	0.460*
	Male	49	3.6803	0.51225			
Overall Promotional activities	Female	41	2.9122	0.67089	88	-1.021	0.680*
	Male	49	3.0612	0.70499			
Overall social influences	Female	41	3.2146	0.59563	88	-0.513	0.920*
	Male	49	3.2776	0.56541			
Overall Impulse tendencies	Female	41	3.5648	0.65475	88	1.54	0.344*
	Male	49	3.7651	0.50123			

Source: Field Survey, *Significant at five percent level

The T-test results indicated no significant gender differences in overall psychological factors, store atmosphere, promotional activities, social influences, or impulse tendencies.

T test results reveal that the difference in mean score between males and females in psychological factors (P=0.523), store atmosphere (P=0.460), promotional activities (P=0.680), social influences (P=0.920), or impulse tendencies (P=0.344) are not statistically significant suggesting that gender does not significantly influence these variables, reinforcing the conclusion that gender does not play a significant role in impulse buying behavior.

4.3 Anova Results: Educational level wise difference in overall psychological factors, overall store atmosphere, overall promotional activities, overall social influences, and overall impulse tendencies.

The hypothesis tests for finding education level-wise differences in overall psychological factors, overall store atmosphere, overall promotional activities, overall social influences and overall impulse tendencies showed the following results across educational levels of respondents.

Table 3: Educational level-wise difference in overall psychological factors, overall store atmosphere, overall promotional factors, overall social influences, and overall impulse tendencies

		Sum of Squares	**DF**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**P-Value**
Overall Psychological factors	Between Groups	2.751	3	0.917	2.883	0.040*
	Within Groups	27.352	86	0.318		
	Total	30.103	89			
Overall store atmosphere	Between Groups	0.624	3	0.208	0.731	0.536*
	Within Groups	24.492	86	0.285		
	Total	25.117	89			
Overall Promotional activities	Between Groups	1.278	3	0.426	0.892	0.449*
	Within Groups	41.078	86	0.478		
	Total	42.356	89			
Overall social influences	Between Groups	0.682	3	0.227	0.676	0.569*
	Within Groups	28.943	86	0.337		
	Total	29.625	89			
Overall Impulse tendencies	Between Groups	0.874	3	0.291	0.841	0.475*
	Within Groups	29.783	86	0.346		
	Total	30.657	89			

Source: Field Survey, *Significant at five percent level

The ANOVA results show no significant differences across educational levels regarding psychological factors, store atmosphere, promotional activities, social influences, and impulse tendencies. The results reveal that the difference in mean score between educational levels of respondents regarding store atmosphere (P=0.536), promotional activities (P=0.449), social influences (P=0.569), or impulse tendencies (P=0.475) are not statistically significant suggesting that educational level does not significantly influence these variables, whereas psychological factors (p-value=0.040) shows that there is educational level wise difference in psychological factors influencing impulse buying behavior.

4.4 Multiple Regression Results: Effect of overall psychological factors, overall store atmosphere, overall promotional activities and overall social influences and overall impulse tendencies.

Regression analysis was performed to examine the effect of overall psychological factors, overall store atmosphere, overall promotional activities and overall social influences and overall impulse tendencies.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.600[a]	0.360	0.329	0.48063
a. Predictors: (Constant), Overall social influences, Overall Promotional activities, Overall Psychological factors, Overall store atmosphere				
b. Dependent Variable: Overall Impulse tendencies				

Multiple R denotes the multiple regression coefficient. The value of R is found to be 0.6, which indicates a very high-quality prediction of the dependent variable (impulse buying). The R square is the coefficient of determination, showing the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that is explained by the set of predictors (psychological factors, store atmosphere, promotional activities and overall social influences). The R square is 0.360, which shows that 36 percent of the variability of the dependent variable is explained by the predictors.

Table 5: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	11.022	4	2.755	11.928	.000[b]
	Residual	19.635	85	0.231		
	Total	30.657	89			
a. Dependent Variable: Overall Impulse tendencies						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Overall social influences, Overall Promotional activities, Overall Psychological factors, Overall store atmosphere						

Table 5 gives the ANOVA results to explain the goodness of fit of the regression model. The result show that the independent variables statistically significantly predict the dependent variable, F (4, 85) = 11.928, p<0.001). Thus it can be concluded that the regression model is a good fit of the data.

Table 6: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.608	0.463		3.469	0.001
	Overall Psychological factors	0.032	0.109	0.032	0.296	0.768
	Overall store atmosphere	0.444	0.113	0.402	3.928	0.000
	Overall Promotional activities	-0.353	0.107	-0.415	-3.290	0.001
	Overall social influences	0.429	0.132	0.422	3.264	0.002
a. Dependent Variable: Overall Impulse tendencies						

Table 6 gives the coefficient of the regression model. The coefficients indicate how much the dependent variable varies with an independent variable when all other independent variable held constant. The general form of the regression equation to predict impulse purchase behavior from psychological factors, store atmosphere, promotional activities and social influences is:

Impulse buying = 1.068 + (0.032×psychological factors) + (0.042×store atmosphere) + (-0.415×promotional activities) + (0.422× social influences)

The table also gives the statistical significance of the independent variables. It tests if the coefficients are zero in the population. From the table (T statistics, p-value), it is seen that store atmosphere (T=3.928; p-value < 0.000), promotional activities (T=0.3.290; p-value < 0.001), and social influences (T=3.264, p-value 1.002) are statistically significant predictors of impulse buying. Hence the hypothesis H6: 'psychological factors, store atmosphere, promotional activities and social influences are significant predictors of impulse buying' is partially rejected.

The regression analysis aimed to explore the relationship between various predictors (psychological factors, store atmosphere, promotional activities, and social influences) and the dependent variable (overall impulse tendencies). The model summary indicated a low r-square value of 0.013, suggesting that only 1.3% of the variance in impulse tendencies could be explained by the predictors. The ANOVA for the regression model showed an f-value of 0.278 with a p-value of 0.891, indicating that the model was not statistically significant. The coefficients for the predictors were also not significant, with p-values exceeding 0.05 for all factors, further emphasizing the lack of a strong

relationship between these variables and impulse-buying tendencies.

5. Conclusion

The study underscores that gender and educational level have limited influence on impulse buying behavior, with only psychological factors showing a minor variation by education level. However, regression analysis indicates that store atmosphere, promotional activities, and social influences significantly impact impulse buying, with store atmosphere and social influences having a positive effect and promotional activities a slight negative one. Together, these factors explain 36% of impulse buying behavior, suggesting that environmental and social cues are stronger drivers than individual psychological factors, highlighting the importance for retailers to emphasize these elements to encourage impulse purchases among youth in malls. The findings indicate that young consumers are particularly susceptible to the sensory-rich atmospheres of malls, which are designed to evoke positive emotions and encourage spontaneous purchases. Additionally, social influences, such as peer presence and social media interactions, play a crucial role in amplifying impulse buying tendencies among this demographic. Retailers can leverage these insights to develop targeted marketing strategies that resonate with youth, enhancing their shopping experiences and driving sales. By creating engaging and emotionally appealing environments, along with effective promotional tactics, retailers can optimize their offerings to meet the unique preferences of young consumers.

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