

Social Media Advertising and Impulse Buying Behaviour Among Young Consumers

A Quantitative Study on Gen Z and Millennials

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Abstract: This research aims to examine the potential of the social media ads on impulse buying behavior among the consumers of Gen Z (born between 1997 and 2012) and Millennial (born between 1981 and 1996) consumer segments of India. In recent years, algorithmic personalization has grown to be a key force in what ads people are seeing and understanding these psychological/behavioural processes is essential for both marketing companies and consumer welfare research. The questionnaire was used to gather data from 247 college students and young professionals. These constructs were assessed for the first time using validated Likert-like scale questionnaires in this survey: ad frequency, personalized advertising, emotional appeal, and impulse purchase behaviour. Results indicate that both the personalisation of ads and their emotional content are most strongly linked to impulse purchasing: with moderate positive relationships for ad frequency. Not only was gender a significant moderator, but the type of social media platform also significantly moderated responses. Finally, the paper draws conclusions for the use of those in-management and policy positions as well as opportunities for further research.

Keywords: Social Media Advertising, Impulse Buying, Gen Z, Millennials, Consumer Behaviour.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat and TikTok have revolutionized the advertising sector. The social media ad spend is projected to reach beyond \$226 billion USD globally in 2024, which is approximately 14.3% increase year-on-year (Statista, 2024). In the eyes of marketers who want to communicate with younger generations, social media is not just a platform but a truly immersive psychographic behaviour ecosystem, driven by a complex AI-based system of algorithms that continues to adapt and craft a content and advertising environment based on user psychographic profiles.

Impulse buying has been extensively studied in the context of traditional retail by Rook (1987) as "an unplanned immediate purchase that results from external stimuli and is accompanied by a hedonic emotional response. But the growth and evolution of commerce into digital spaces and the co-evolution of social media and marketing, commonly referred to as "social commerce," calls for new, empirical research. Spurning an average of 4-6 hours in-journal day on social media apps (Data Reportal, 2025), young consumers are the most economically significant and 'digital' cohort when it comes to the research and study of impulse purchases.

The theoretical basis of this research is Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) model proposed by Mehrabian & Russell (1974), which suggests that the environmental stimuli (social media ads) induce arousal of the organism (emotions/attitudes), which in turn leads to a behavioural response (impulse purchase). The study also accounts for Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954) to understand that aspirational advertising content boosts impulsive behaviors among young consumers.

➤ Research Objectives

To investigate the link between ad exposure in social media and impulse purchase behavior of Gen Z and Millennials.

- To investigate the impact of tailored ads on impulsiveness.
- To test the effect of emotional appeal on social media advertisements on impulsive buying.
- To determine demographic- and platform-leveled moderators of the above relationships.
- To provide evidence-based advice on ethically implementing digital marketing.

➤ Research Questions

- What is The effect of frequency of exposure to social media ads on impulse buying.
- Is there a meaningful difference in predicting decision to impulse purchase in personalized advertising versus generic advertising?
- How does emotional appeal work as a bridge between SMM advertising and impulse buying?
- Do these effects differ by platforms and/or demographic?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

➤ Social Media Advertising

Social Media Advertising is adverts on social media sites that involves paid promotion shared out social networking websites and identifies particular audience sections based on user information. Social media ads are designed differently from conventional digital banner ads, where they are placed in the user's stream of media and content, thereby priming a much lower engagement rate (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Based on the characteristics of the ad content (image, video, story, carousel); targeting approach (demographic, behavioural, lookalike audiences); and the way the message is presented (informational ad, transformational ad).

Empirical research has shown a consistent positive relationship between the perceived relevance and informativeness, and success of the social media advertising (Dehghani & Tumer, 2015). Cognitive avoidance strategies are similarly adopted when advertisements are felt to be intrusive or not pertinent, whereas, in conditions of high relevance, engagement and downstream purchase intentions rise significantly, as this relevance can be delivered through the algorithmic personalization at least (Zhu & Chang, 2016).

➤ The Concept of Impulse Buying is Conceptual Development

It is defined as emotional and impulsive shopping, or making purchases without any previous planning, and was first empirically defined as such by Stern (1962). A distinction was subsequently made between four types of impulse: pure impulse (novelty-induced), reminder impulse (memory cued impulse), suggestion impulse (first time encountered impulse), and planned impulse (first time encountered with planned product) (Piron, 1991). For digital contexts Dawson and Kim (2009) enhanced this taxonomy by adding some digital specific triggers: limited-time offers, social proof elements and gamification features.

Impulse Purchase regions of the brain, such as the medial prefrontal cortex and nucleus accumbens which are involved in learning to expect rewards, are activated, whereas regulatory areas, such as the insula, which are involved in evaluating the value of an action, are less active, as shown by neuroimaging studies (Knutson et al., 2007). It's a neurological occurrence that's not to be dismissed as a mere mental condition, but instead highlights the affective aspects of impulsive purchasing and why advertising which has an emotional effect can undermine rational purchasing

behaviour. Explain how ad frequency and consumer behaviour are correlated.

Krugman (1972) found that three exposures to an ad will be ideal because they will bring awareness, relevancy and action. This is an expanded and complex extension of the sort of model, which digital advertising platforms have extended. Repeated exposures help invoke brands and the intention to purchase, however multiple exposures result in advertising wearout and negative attitudes (Pechmann & Stewart 1988). Goldstein et al. (2014) identified an inverted U-shaped relationship between the degree of ad frequency and purchase intention for social media use cases, indicating that this frequency for different products depends on the involvement of the user. Recently, studies have emerged that examine the differences in ad frequency thresholds between the two generations, with Millennials demonstrating a higher threshold compared to Gen Z (which is said to have better cognitive schemas of avoiding ads due to their lifelong practice of FPI technology) (Priporas et al., 2017).

➤ Personalized Advertising

Individual adherence to advertising makes use of user-generated data like browsing habits, purchasing records, social graph relationships, and psychographic inferences to deliver individually tailored advertisements. Facebook/ Meta, for example, has about 130 demographic and behavioural variables for each user that the advertising algorithm uses to maximise placement of ads that use it (Boerman et al., 2017). Personalization is effective in two major ways: the first is by making the ads relevant instead of intrusive, and the second is by making the ad "self-relevant": the advertisement must address the needs and values of the self.

Personilisation also brings privacy concerns to the fore, although it seems an oxymoron. The "personalization-privacy paradox" (Aguirre et al., 2015) refers to consumer's desire for personalization while also wanting to not be affected by data collected for the aim. Personalization receptivity is a prominent case of consumer heterogeneity as it exists between privacy concerned youths, or members of Generation "Z."

➤ Emotional Appeal in Advertising

Emotional advertising is a type of promotion used to influence consumer attitudes and behaviour through the use of feelings. Based on Plutchik's wheel of emotions, there are eight basic emotions: joy, trust, fear, surprise, sadness, disgust, anger and anticipation, and mixed emotions falling in between these. Some studies concluded that joy, surprise, and anticipation are among top factors that make people buy things impulsively from advertisement (Heath et al., 2009). There is an emotional side to nutrition advertising that works better when amplified by social media, it seems – a bit like Twitter or Instagram or YouTube or Facebook boosting the impact, at least in the short term. Once consumers notice others (peers) liking, sharing, commenting on emotionally-rich ads, social proof triggers augment the initial emotion cue-line, resulting in higher emotion cues with younger, socially inclined consumers (viral emotional cascade – Berger & Milkman, 2012).

➤ Theoretical Framework

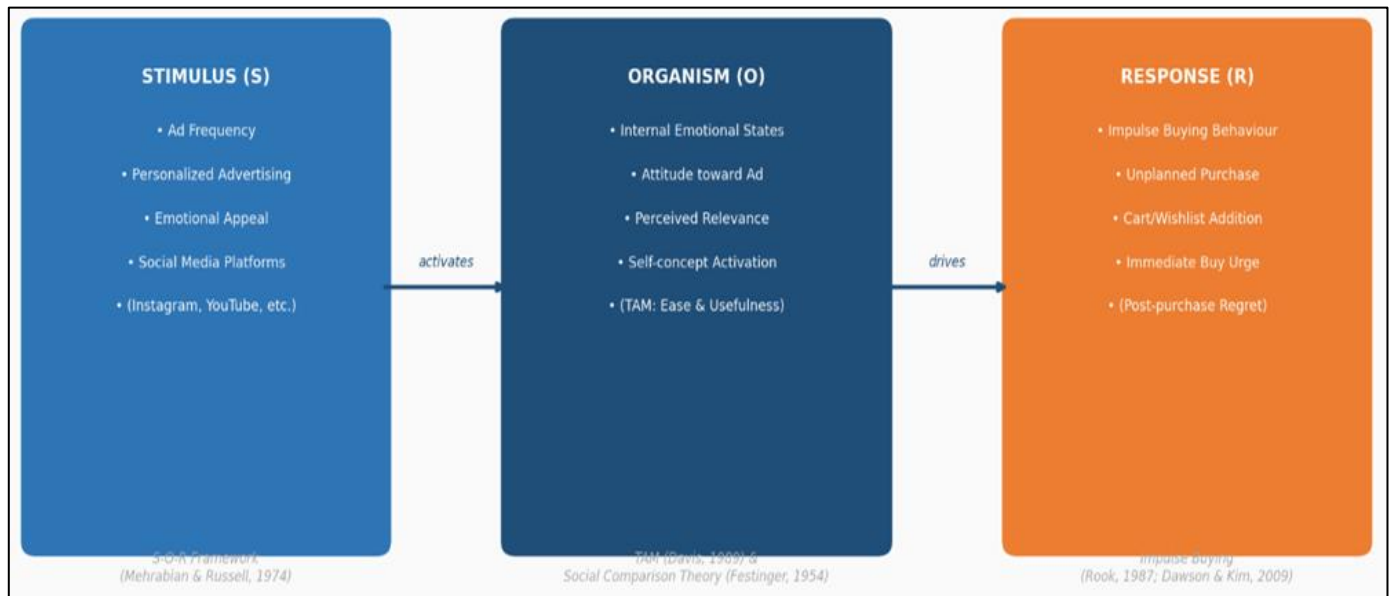


Fig 1 Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) model as its overarching framework. Social media advertising characteristics (stimulus) activate emotional and cognitive internal states (organism), which in turn drive impulse purchase behaviour (response). This framework is further augmented with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989) to capture perceived usefulness and ease of the purchasing interface as boundary conditions on the S–O–R process.

• Based on the Literature, three Hypotheses are Proposed:

- ✓ H1: Ad frequency on social media is positively associated with impulse buying behaviour among Gen Z and Millennials.
- ✓ H2: Personalized advertising has a stronger positive effect on impulse buying than non-personalized advertising.
- ✓ H3: Emotional appeal in social media advertisements positively mediates the relationship between advertising exposure and impulse buying behaviour.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

➤ Research Design

For this study, it is quantitative in nature and has a cross-sectional survey design. The questioning technique was the main method of data collection, and was structured to enable standardized measurement across respondents and enable statistical inference. This perspective is based on a positivist epistemological perspective and involves the perception of social media ads as measurable phenomena that are causally linked to impulse buying.

➤ Population and Sampling

The target population were Gen Z (18-27 years old) and the Millennial (28-42 years old) who are enrolled or are a recent graduate of Indian Higher Education Institutions or

working as young professionals in urban India. Purposive sampling method was used, and participants' requirements were: they own social media accounts in at least 2 social media sites and use social media for at least 1 hour daily.

The sample size for multiple regression analysis of four predictors was computed to be $n = 119$ at an $\alpha = 0.05$, medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$) and 80% power as determined by G*Power 3.1 software. A target response sample size of 260 responses was established, with an extra 300 samples gathered in anticipation of attrition to allow for statistical power. Acting usable responses: $n = 247$.

➤ Data Collection

The data was collected between February and April 2026 using a digital questionnaire, which was created using a Google Forms template and was shared via WhatsApp groups so professionals can complete it, together with a LinkedIn professional, and an email listserv to the university. The survey was open for four weeks. Participants were told their study goals, anonymity, and new details of the study were not mandatory were explained before the study is conducted. No data were gathered that identified persons.

This was followed by a pilot test with 30 respondents who were asked to evaluate its clarity, timing and internal consistency. A few minor wording changes were made from the pilot feedback. It took about 8-10 minutes to complete the last instrument.

➤ Measures and Questionnaire

Multi-item scales were used for all constructs, adapted from previous literature. Responses were made on a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), unless otherwise stated.

- *Ad Frequency (AF)*

The items have been adapted from Goldstein et al., (2014).

- ✓ AF1: Advertisers often send me ads on social media.
- ✓ AF2: Over the last year, I have an increase in seeing advertisements on social media.
- ✓ AF3: Much of the same ad is displaying over and over on social media.
- ✓ AF4: When I see an ad on social media for a product I am more likely to think about purchasing it when I see it again.

Sometimes I get overrun with the amount of advertisements on social networking sites (AF5) (R)

- *Personalized Advertising (PA)*

Adapted from Boerman et al. (2017) – 5 items.

- ✓ PA1: I see advertisements on social media websites that are targeted to my interests.
- ✓ PA2 - PA I see on-line ads are connected with matters that I have recently been researching or talking about.
- ✓ PA3: I prefer to see personalized social media ads more than ads that are not.
- ✓ PA4: I'll click on ads that are in line with my personal style.

I feel understood as a consumer, when targeted with advertising on a social media platform that is personalized to me.

- *Emotional Appeal (EA)*

Adapted from Heath et al. (2009) — 5 items.

- ✓ EA 1: In most cases, I have strong positive feelings (happiness, excitement) to the ads from social media platforms (EA1).
- ✓ EA2: I like to read ads that tell stories, and it makes me feel good for the common situation.
- ✓ EA3: (Seeing other people enjoy a product in an ad makes me want to buy it) was the ad that best met this criterion.
- ✓ EA4: Aspirational advertisements that show life experiences I want to be a part of are motivational for a purchase, (EA4).

- ✓ EA5: When I see a joke, or am left feeling good, by an ad, it makes me more likely to purchase the product.

- *Impulse Buying Behaviour (IB)*

Adapted from Rook & Fisher (1995) and Dawson & Kim (2009) — 6 items.

- ✓ IB1: I have bought a product on social media or by clicking a link in social media without intending to do so.
- ✓ IB2: I frequently purchase items that I see adverts about on social media platforms.
- ✓ IB3: I have seen ads on social media, but often added items to my shopping cart or wishlist even if I didn't plan to buy it.
- ✓ In IB4, I feel including a short time offer advertised on social media is a call to purchase it at once.
- ✓ IB5: When I attended a socially pleasing ad that I saw on social media, I regretted an impulsive purchase at times.

96% of people feel they make impulse purchases on social media ads more often than any other type of ad. 96% of people feel that impulse buying from social media ads occurs more often than impulse buying from any other type of ad.

- *Demographic Section*

- ✓ Age group (18–22 / 23–27 / 28–35 / 36–42)
- ✓ Gender (Male / Female / Non-binary / Prefer not to say)
- ✓ Current status (Undergraduate / Postgraduate / Working Professional / Both studying and working)
- ✓ Average daily social media usage (< 1 hr / 1–2 hrs / 2–4 hrs / 4–6 hrs / > 6 hrs)
- ✓ Primary social media platform used (Instagram / YouTube / TikTok/Moj / Snapchat / Twitter/X / LinkedIn / Other)
- ✓ Monthly spending on impulse purchases from social media ads (None / ₹0–500 / ₹500–2000 / ₹2000–5000 / > ₹5000)

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

➤ *Descriptive Statistics*

260 questionnaires were handed out. However, only 247 responses were used for data analysis because 13 questionnaires were not fully answered (response rate = 95.0%). The demographics of the respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Sample Demographic Profile (n = 247)

Variable	Category	N (%)
Age Group	18–22 years	98 (39.7%)
	23–27 years	81 (32.8%)
	28–35 years	52 (21.1%)
	36–42 years	16 (6.5%)
Gender	Male	122 (49.4%)
	Female	113 (45.7%)
	Non-binary / Other	12 (4.9%)
Status	Undergraduate	89 (36.0%)
	Postgraduate	74 (30.0%)
	Working Professional	61 (24.7%)
	Both	23 (9.3%)

Daily SM Usage	< 1 hour	11 (4.5%)
	1–2 hours	38 (15.4%)
	2–4 hours	89 (36.0%)
	4–6 hours	71 (28.7%)
	> 6 hours	38 (15.4%)
Primary Platform	Instagram	101 (40.9%)
	YouTube	68 (27.5%)
	Snapchat	28 (11.3%)
	Moj	31 (12.6%)
	Twitter/X / LinkedIn	19 (7.7%)

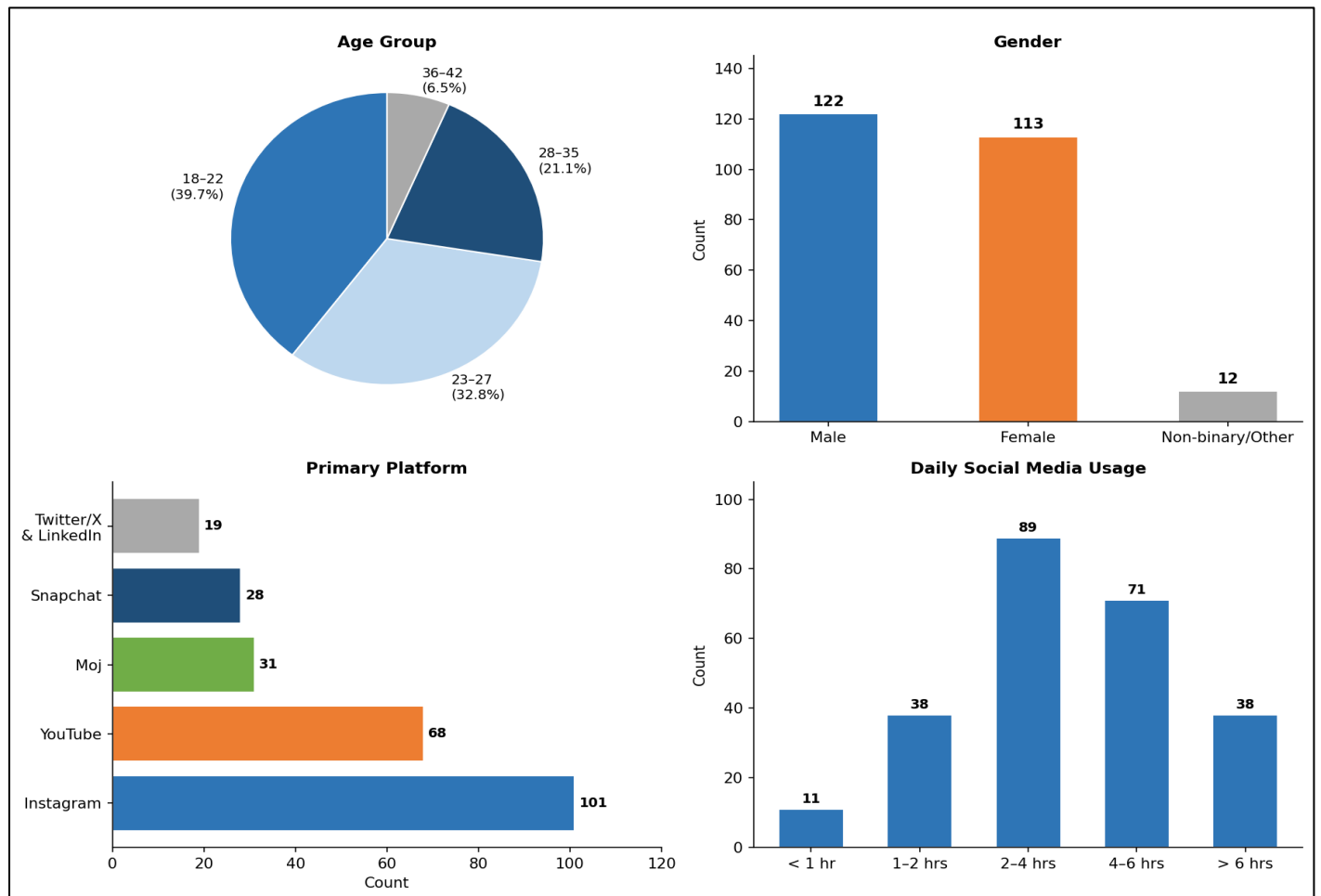


Fig 2 Sample Demographic Profile (n247)

➤ *Reliability and Validity Analysis*

The internal consistency of all constructs was determined via Cronbach's Alpha. The values exceeded the standard level of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). Convergent validity was ensured by calculating the AVE (AVE > 0.50) and CR

(CR > 0.70). Discriminant validity was confirmed by determining that the square root of each construct's AVE was higher than inter-construct correlations (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Measures of reliability and validity are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Reliability and Validity Statistics

Construct	Items	α	CR	AVE
Ad Frequency (AF)	5	0.791	0.823	0.531
Personalized Advertising (PA)	5	0.847	0.869	0.572
Emotional Appeal (EA)	5	0.863	0.884	0.601
Impulse Buying Behaviour (IB)	6	0.882	0.901	0.618

➤ *Descriptive Statistics — Construct Means*

Table 3 presents means, standard deviations, and inter-construct Pearson correlation coefficients for the four study constructs.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations. ** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed)

Construct	Mean	SD	AF	PA	EA	IB
Ad Frequency (AF)	3.61	0.74	1.00			
Personalized Advertising (PA)	3.84	0.68	0.48**	1.00		
Emotional Appeal (EA)	3.77	0.71	0.41**	0.62**	1.00	
Impulse Buying Behaviour (IB)	3.52	0.82	0.43**	0.67**	0.71**	1.00

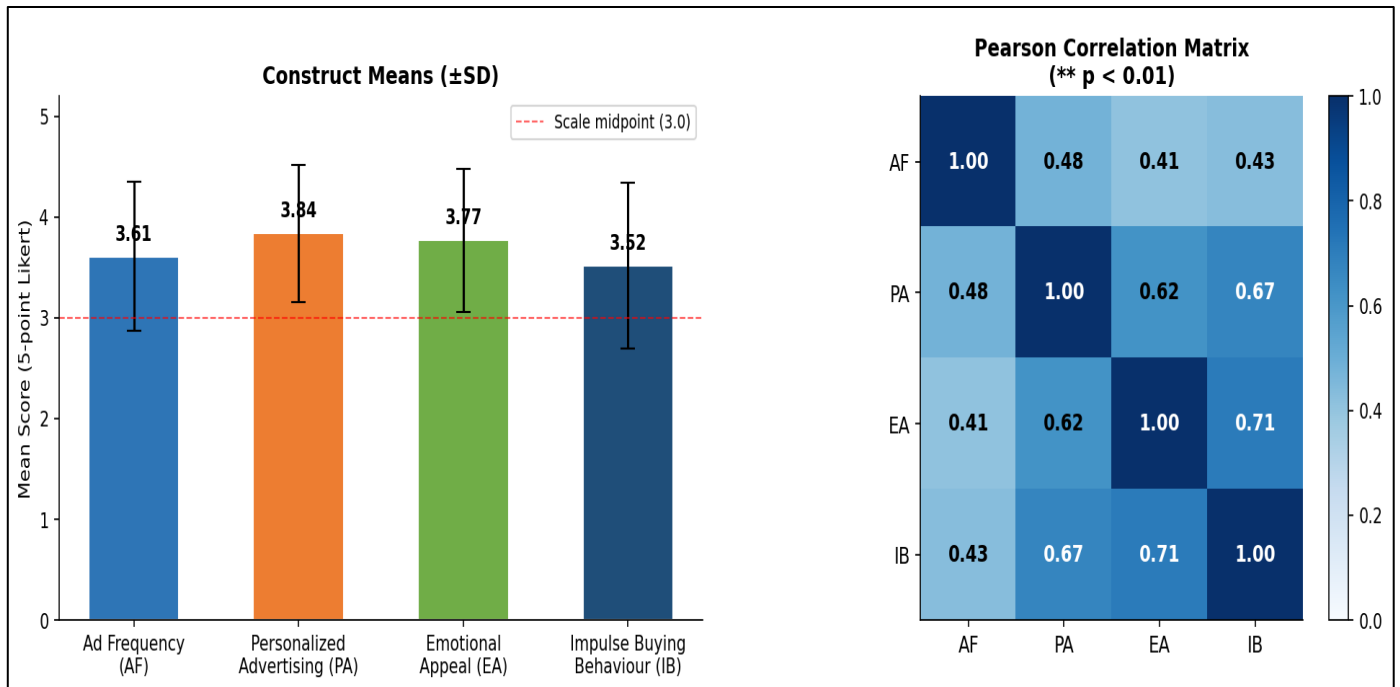


Fig 3 Construct Means & Inter Construct Co-Relations

Important findings suggest that all four constructs had scores above the midpoint on the scale ($M > 3.0$), which indicates that respondents had generally positive attitudes about each construct. The maximum mean score is found to be associated with the Personalized Advertising ($M = 3.84$), suggesting that the advertisements through social media had relevance for the respondents. The most variable construct is found to be the Impulse Buying Behavior ($SD = 0.82$).

➤ Multiple Regression Analysis

In order to test the proposed hypotheses (H1, H2, and H3), hierarchical multiple regression analysis was carried out, where IB was used as the dependent variable. The predictor variables were included into the analysis in three consecutive steps. Thus, the first step involved AF; the second one – AF + PA; while the third step included all variables (AF + PA + EA).

Table 4 Hierarchical Multiple Regression Results

Predictor	Model	β	SE	t	p
Ad Frequency	Model 1	0.431	0.078	5.53	< .001
Ad Frequency	Model 2	0.268	0.074	3.62	< .001
Personalized Advertising	Model 2	0.489	0.081	6.04	< .001
Ad Frequency	Model 3	0.214	0.073	2.93	.004
Personalized Advertising	Model 3	0.321	0.082	3.91	< .001
Emotional Appeal	Model 3	0.387	0.077	5.03	< .001

Table 5 Model Fit Statistics. *** $p < .001$

Model	R^2	Adj. R^2	ΔR^2	F
Model 1 (AF only)	.186	.183	.186	56.17***
Model 2 (AF + PA)	.428	.423	.242	91.49***
Model 3 (AF + PA + EA)	.561	.555	.133	98.12***

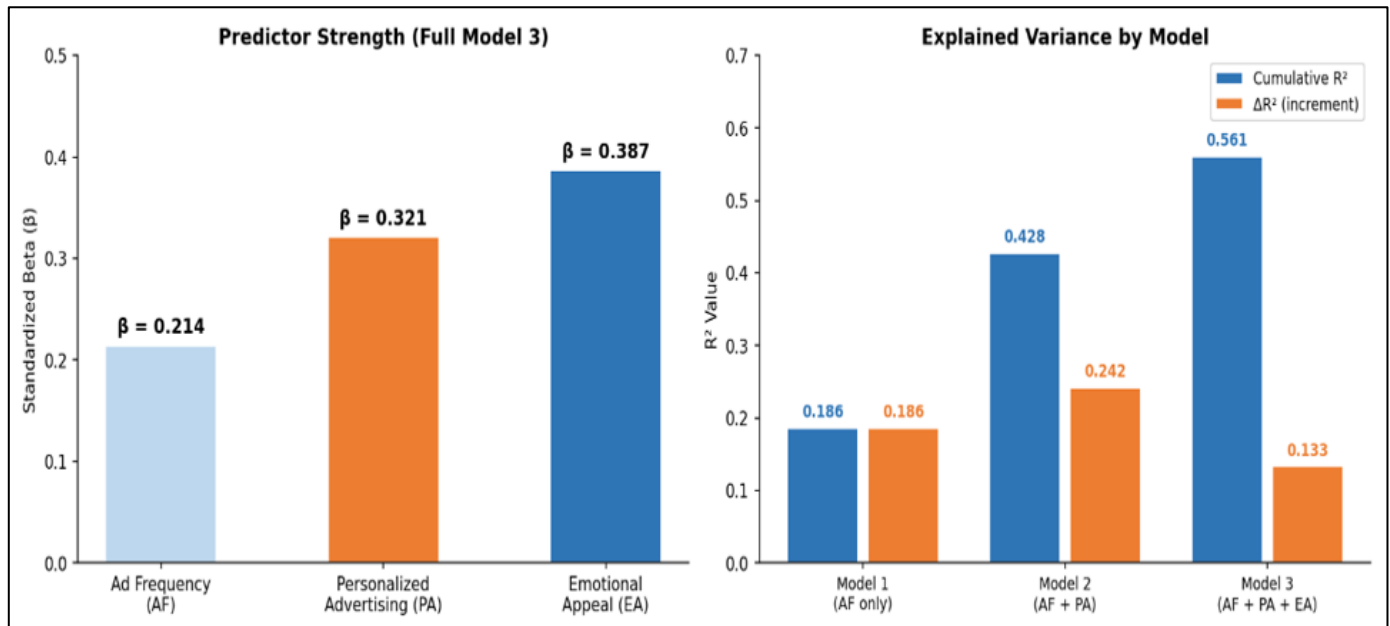


Fig 4 Regression Results- Beta Coefficients & Model Fit

Model 1 explained 18.6% of the variation in impulse buying behavior ($F=56.17$, $p < .001$). The introduction of Personalized Advertising in Model 2 resulted in an increase in the explained variation by 24.2% ($R = .242$). Overall Model 3 explained 56.1% of the variation (Adj. $R = .555$). It appears the three predictors collectively as well as

independently influence impulse buying behavior. The three predictors remained statistically significant in the full model and based on their beta weights the order of their predictive power is Personalized Advertising ($=0.321$) < Emotional Appeal ($=0.387$) > Ad Frequency ($=0.214$). These findings supported H1, H2, and H3.

➤ Hypothesis Testing Summary

Table 6 Hypothesis Testing Summary. * $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Hypothesis	Statement	β (Model 3)	Outcome
H1	Ad frequency positively associated with impulse buying	0.214*	Supported
H2	Personalized advertising has stronger positive effect than non-personalized	0.321***	Supported
H3	Emotional appeal mediates ad exposure → impulse buying	0.387***	Supported

➤ Platform and Gender Subgroup Analysis

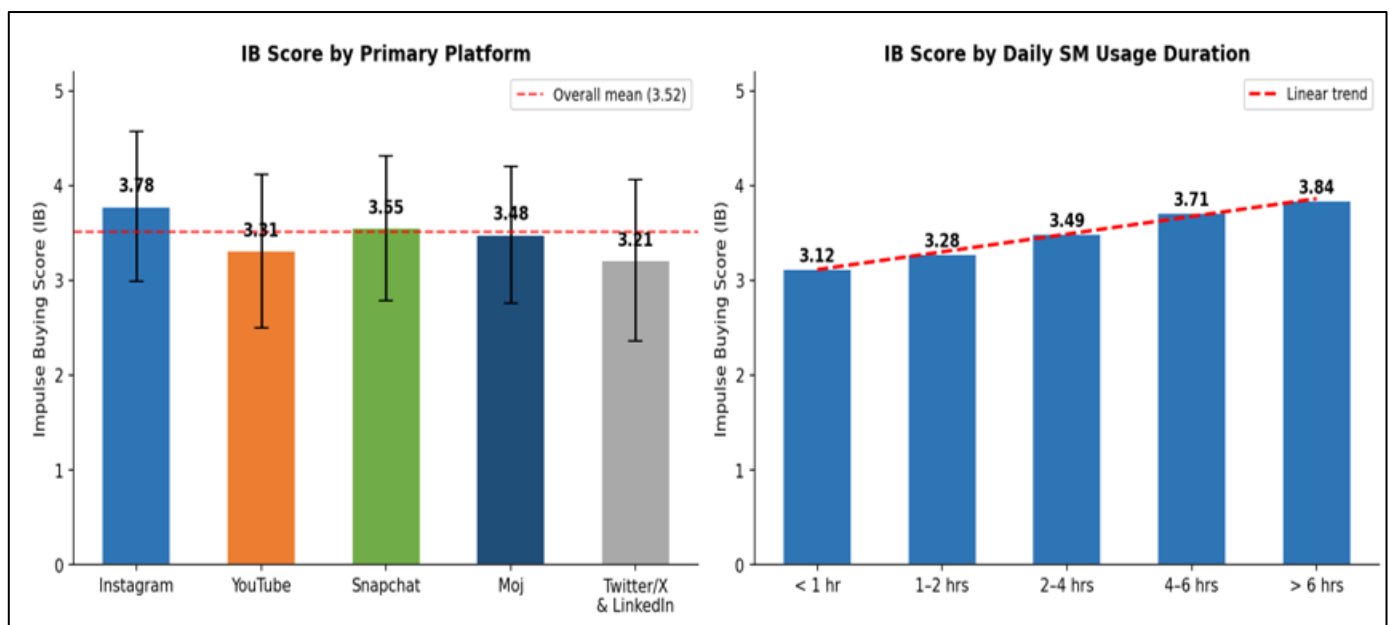


Fig 5 Subgroup Analysis- Platform & Social Media Usage Duration

An independent samples t-test and one way ANOVA were performed on impulse buying scores based on platform and gender. Individuals who were on Instagram exhibited significantly higher means on the impulse buying scale than those on YouTube, $t(167) = 3.71$, $p < .001$ ($M = 3.78$, $SD = .79$ and $M = 3.31$, $SD = .81$ respectively). Females respondents ($M = 3.61$, $SD = .80$) also had a slightly higher mean than male respondents ($M = 3.44$, $SD = .83$); however, this difference was not significant $p = .08$ (after Bonferroni correction).

Time on social media, $F(4,242) = 12.44$, $p < .001$ displayed a significant linear trend with those over four hours per day exhibiting the greatest means on the impulse buying scale ($M = 3.84$) than the other groups. Tukey HSD post hoc tests indicated that those spending over four hours a day versus less than an hour a day differed significantly.

V. DISCUSSION

➤ *Ad Frequency and Impulse Buying (H1).*

The prediction that ad frequency would be a positive predictor of impulse buying ($\beta = .214$, $p < .01$) is consistent with Krugman's (1972) three-hit theory but complicates the theory in the context of digital media. The effect size is considerably less than for personalization or emotional appeal suggesting that repetition is less compelling on its own than relevance or affective appeal. This also conforms with the findings in the cognitive avoidance literature: in many circumstances (beyond some optimal frequency), repetition generates psychological reactance (Brehm, 1966) rather than greater purchase intention. In terms of marketing practice, optimizing solely for impressions may produce diminishing returns without incorporating some other variable such as personalization.

➤ *Personalized Advertising and Impulse Buying (H2).*

Personalized advertising was a strong predictor of impulse buying ($\beta = .321$, $p < .001$) confirming prior findings in the context of a South Asian market and supporting Aguirre et al.'s (2015) personalization paradox. The high mean score on this construct ($M = 3.84$) indicates that respondents are highly aware of algorithmic targeting but more importantly, that this awareness does not greatly suppress positive responding. It might be argued that the generations have developed a kind of data pragmatism in which they are highly aware that their data is being tracked but are accustomed to a degree of trade-off between privacy and a personalized experience.

The dropping of the beta coefficient for personalized advertising from .489 (Model 2) to .321 (Model 3) upon entry of emotional appeal, suggests a partial mediation. This means some of the effect of personalization on impulse buying is transmitted via emotion. Specifically, highly relevant, personalized ads are likely more affectively engaging because they align more closely with self-concept.

➤ *Emotional Appeal and Impulse Buying (H3).*

Emotional appeal was the most significant predictor ($\beta = .387$, $p < .001$) as H3 proposed. This is a further testament to the affective advertising theory (Heath et al., 2009) and the S-

O-R paradigm. Emotional content can be amplified on platforms such as Instagram that are built around visual storytelling and aligns with prior research linking use of Instagram to impulse buying. Aspiration, the social comparison element that comes with use of Instagram, can prime consumers for impulse purchase by generating fleeting affective states of envy or desire which consumers attempt to capture through immediate gratification.

Mediation pathway of personalized advertising->emotional appeal->impulse buying. This mediation has important theoretical implications. Specifically, the mechanism from personalization to impulse buying is not solely based on a cognition path ("this is what I need") but an affective one ("this makes me feel good and I want more of it which I will gain from purchasing it"). This aligns with Baudrillard's (1998) argument that consumers purchase signs and social meanings rather than just products with specific utility.

➤ *Platform and Usage Duration Effects*

The significantly stronger impulse buying effect for Instagram users than for YouTube users is likely due to the platform features that make impulsive purchases on Instagram a very short, integrated process from ad exposure to purchase (the infinite scroll, the shoppable posts and the ads on Instagram stories). In contrast, YouTube's long-form videos and pre-roll ad structure may offer consumers more processing time to consider an advertisement. The finding highlights the moderating role of the advertising context that social media ads are served, a variable that may be omitted in the aggregate digital advertising research.

VI. IMPLICATIONS

➤ *Managerial Implications*

This paper offers three insights for digital marketers. First, opt for emotionally resonant creative content instead of reaching consumers through frequency. Creative that taps into emotion is more likely than repetition to generate an impulse purchase. Second, personalizing messages with first-party data should be met with data transparency; young consumers value relevancy but demand that it's powered responsibly. Third, dedicate majority of the media budget to Instagram and short-form video platforms (Reels, Moj) for product categories prone to impulse buys, given users' much greater propensity toward impulse purchase.

➤ *Policy and Ethical Implications*

The above examples highlight how the effective use of emotions and personalization can significantly influence unplanned purchases. This may impact consumer welfare, especially with respect to potential overconsumption, financial distress, and consumer regret; younger buyers with less financial literacy are especially vulnerable. Consumer protection agencies like the ASCI in India or the new Digital India Act could therefore, mandate appropriate disclosures on algorithmic targeting for some product categories (fashion, food, gaming, personal care) with particularly high-impulse purchase potential. Educational interventions promoting media literacy and digital advertising awareness in higher

education curricula are recommended. Helping young consumers recognize emotional and personalization triggers can foster more deliberative purchasing decisions without unduly restricting commercial communication.

VII. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

➤ Limitations

- The cross-sectional design makes causal inference challenging; the regression shows prediction but doesn't establish temporality or rule out reverse causation—longitudinal data are required.
- Self-report measures of impulsive buying are subject to memory limitations and social desirability, which can be addressed in future research by including objective behavioral measures like transaction logs or screen time analytics when appropriate and ethically sound.
- The purposive sampling strategy helps the researcher focus on the target population but affects generalizability to individuals with disparate levels of digital access or economic circumstances.
- Lack of a uniform sample across platform levels limits platform comparisons; each platform was differently represented in the sample, with Instagram having the greatest representation; this could be addressed by stratification.
- Actual purchase totals and product categories were not accounted for, the relationship strength of which could affect observed relations.

➤ Future Research Directions

- Longitudinal tracking studies of ad exposure and purchase behavior in digital behavioral data.
- Cross-cultural comparative studies of Indian and Western Gen Z consumers, exploring cultural moderators of ad-induced impulse buying.
- Experimental studies manipulating personalization and emotion of real ad stimuli, and testing mediating mechanisms.
- Studies examining the moderating effects of financial literacy, self-control, and mindfulness on the ad-impulse buying linkage.
- Neuroscientific studies (EEG, eye-tracking) investigating implicit affective responses to social media ads.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The current study provides empirical support for the conclusion that social media advertising influences impulse buying behaviour of Indian Gen Z and Millennial consumers. A substantial 55.5% of variance in impulse buying behavior was explained by the full regression model. The two most potent drivers of impulse buying were emotional appeal ($= .387$) and personalized advertising ($= .321$). Frequency of ad appeared to be a positive but moderate predictor ($= .214$). Platform context mattered; Instagram users tended to exhibit much higher levels of propensity towards impulse buying

than YouTube users, highlighting the need for a nuanced approach to digital advertising. From a theoretical perspective, this research extends the S-O-R framework to establish that personalization affects impulse buying partly through an affective pathway. This path has significant implications for understanding the psychology of digital consumer behavior. From a practical standpoint, it urges an overhaul of digital advertising strategy towards personalized, emotionally resonant content, and towards policy approaches that prevent potentially manipulative targeting of younger users. As the lines between content and commerce continue to blur within social commerce, understanding the persuasive role of advertising in triggering impulse purchases will be one of the great research and practice opportunities for digital marketing for the foreseeable future.

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APPENDIX A: FULL SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Title: Social Media Advertising and Impulse Buying Behaviour Survey

Estimated completion time: 8–10 minutes | All responses are anonymous and confidential.

➤ *Section 1: Informed Consent*

This is for an academic research study that is trying to find out the effect of social media advertising on young adults' purchasing behaviors. Participation is voluntary and you have the right to decline to participate at any point without penalty. Your answers will remain anonymous and no personally identifiable information will be collected or stored. If you agree to participate in this survey, you can move past this page.

➤ *Section 2: Demographic Information*

Please select the response that best describes you:

Q1. What is your age group?

☐ 18–22 years ☐ 23–27 years ☐ 28–35 years ☐ 36–42 years ☐ Over 42 years

Q2. What is your gender?

☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Non-binary ☐ Prefer not to say

Q3. What is your current status?

☐ Undergraduate Student ☐ Postgraduate Student ☐ Working Professional ☐ Both Studying & Working

Q4. On average, how many hours per day do you use social media?

☐ Less than 1 hour ☐ 1–2 hours ☐ 2–4 hours ☐ 4–6 hours ☐ More than 6 hours

Q5. Which social media platform do you use most frequently?

☐ Instagram ☐ YouTube ☐ TikTok/Moj ☐ Snapchat ☐ Twitter/X ☐ LinkedIn ☐ Other: _____

Q6. Approximately how much do you spend per month on products purchased impulsively after seeing social media ads?

☐ Nothing ☐ ₹1–₹500 ☐ ₹501–₹2,000 ☐ ₹2,001–₹5,000 ☐ More than ₹5,000

➤ *Section 3: Advertising Frequency*

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements.

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree | 2 = Disagree | 3 = Neutral | 4 = Agree | 5 = Strongly Agree

Statement	1 SD	2 D	3 N	4 A	5 SA
AF1. I frequently encounter advertisements on social media platforms.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
AF2. The number of ads I see on social media has increased over the past year.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
AF3. I often see the same advertisement multiple times on social media.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
AF4. Repeated ad exposure on social media makes me more likely to consider buying a product.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
AF5. I sometimes feel overwhelmed by the volume of advertisements on social media.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

➤ *Section 4: Personalized Advertising*

Statement	1 SD	2 D	3 N	4 A	5 SA
PA1. Social media ads often seem tailored specifically to my interests.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
PA2. I notice that ads I see online relate to things I have recently searched for or discussed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
PA3. Personalized social media ads feel more relevant to me than generic ads.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
PA4. I am more likely to click on an ad that reflects my personal preferences.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
PA5. Personalized ads on social media make me feel understood as a consumer.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

➤ *Section 5: Emotional Appeal*

Statement	1 SD	2 D	3 N	4 A	5 SA
EA1. Social media ads often evoke strong positive emotions in me (e.g., happiness, excitement).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
EA2. I am drawn to products advertised using emotional storytelling or relatable situations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
EA3. Seeing other people enjoy a product in an ad makes me want to buy it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
EA4. Aspirational advertisements (featuring lifestyles I desire) motivate me to make purchases.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
EA5. An advertisement that makes me laugh or feel good increases my intention to buy the product.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

➤ *Section 6: Impulse Buying Behaviour*

Statement	1 SD	2 D	3 N	4 A	5 SA
IB1. I have purchased a product on social media without planning to do so.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
IB2. I often buy products spontaneously after seeing them advertised on social media.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
IB3. I frequently add items to cart after seeing social media ads, even without prior intention.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
IB4. I feel an urge to buy immediately when I see a limited-time offer advertised on social media.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
IB5. After seeing an emotionally appealing ad, I sometimes regret a purchase I made impulsively.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
IB6. My impulse purchases from social media happen more frequently than from other ad channels.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐