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(AIJBES)**www.aijb.es.com**IMPULSE BUYING BEHAVIOR IN HIGHER EDUCATION:
UNRAVELING THE INFLUENCE OF SITUATIONAL FACTORS**Sarah Sabir Ahmad^{1*}, Azfahane Zakaria², Tanty Husin³¹ Faculty of Business Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia

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DOI: 10.35631/AJBES.517006.**This work is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)****Abstract:**

In today's consumer-driven society, impulse buying behaviour has become a pervasive phenomenon, influencing purchasing decisions and economic patterns across the globe. This study examines how situational factors, including store environment, product attributes, social surroundings, and accessibility variables, impact the impulse buying behaviour of students at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Kedah. Data was collected from 100 students using self-administered questionnaires and analysed using SPSS statistical software. The results revealed that three variables significantly influence students' impulsive buying tendencies. The goal of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of these situational factors contributes to the development of strategies aimed at promoting responsible purchasing habits and mitigating the potential negative consequences of impulsive buying in the digital era for UiTM Kedah students. By recognizing the drivers behind impulsive buying behaviour, educators and marketers can devise targeted interventions that encourage informed decision-making and equip students with the necessary skills to navigate impulsive buying temptations effectively. This research provides valuable insights for UiTM Kedah in addressing the challenges associated with impulsive buying behaviour among students in an ever-changing consumer landscape.

Keywords:

Impulse Buying, Situational Factors, Store Environment, Product Attributes, Social Surroundings, Accessibility

Introduction

In the realm of consumer psychology and retail economics, the intriguing and often puzzling phenomenon of impulse buying behaviour has garnered substantial attention as it continues to shape the dynamics of modern commerce. This study specifically focuses on the education industry to explore the factors that influence students' impulsive purchasing decisions within this context. By examining the unique elements within the education setting, this research aims to identify the specific factors that contribute to impulsive buying behaviors among students. Impulse buying involves the spontaneous acquisition of goods or services without prior thought or planning (Aiolfi et al., 2022). Amos et al. (2014) identified three main antecedents for impulse buying: dispositional factors, sociodemographic factors, and situational factors. Impulsive purchasing behavior can be categorized into experiential buying motives and behavior, where the experience is the objective, or materialistic shopping motives and behavior, where obtaining the product is the goal (Moes, 2022). Teenagers, influenced by developmental stage, peer pressure, and marketing strategies, are particularly susceptible to impulse purchases (Cavazos-Arroyo & Máynez-Guaderrama, 2022). Some argue that impulse buying has favorable outcomes and socio-psychological benefits, while others highlight negative consequences, especially among students (Fenton-O'Creevy et al., 2018). Understanding the underlying reasons behind impulsive purchases is crucial, given the prevalence of this behavior among consumers (Aiolfi et al., 2022).

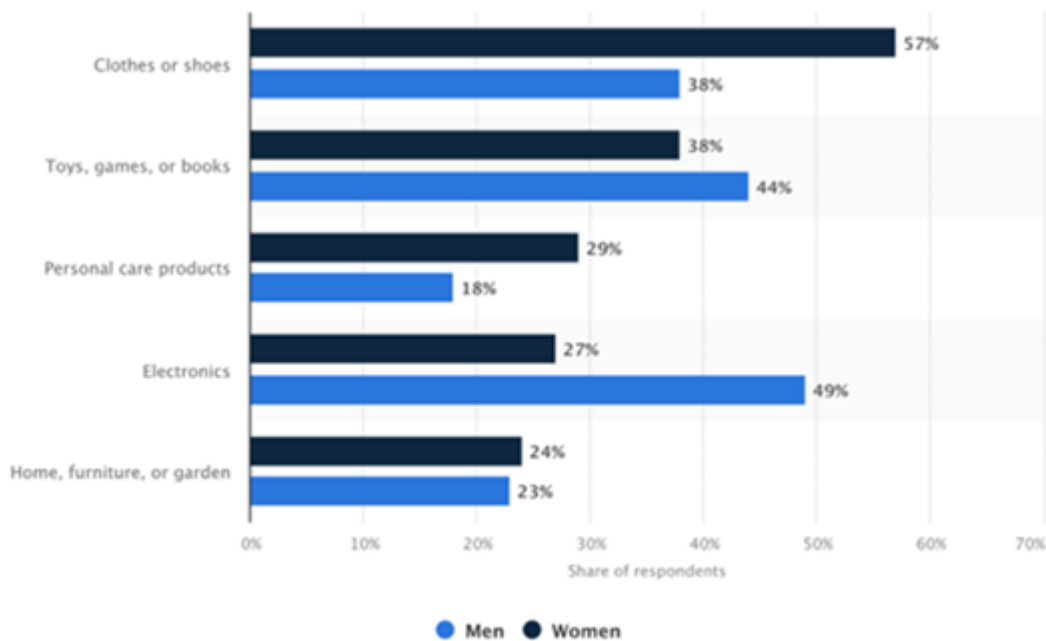


Figure 1: Main Online Impulse Purchases Worldwide 2022, by Gender

Source: (Marina Pasquali May 12, 2022). Main online impulse purchases worldwide 2022, by gender. Statista.

According to Figure 1 above, almost six in ten women surveyed in the selected countries around the world said they mainly made impulsive purchases of clothing or footwear online. Less than forty percent of male respondents engaged in online impulse purchases in this category. Men were most likely to make an online impulse purchase of electronics, with roughly half of respondents making such a purchase.

As consumers shop, they are exposed to stimuli that encourage and drive them to purchase products. Researchers examined the influence of store environment (SE) on impulsive

purchasing behavior by measuring the effects of lighting, music, layout, and retail staff on impulse purchases, as well as the browsing enjoyment and impulsive purchasing tendencies of individuals (Khawaja, 2018). The architecture of SE can have a significant effect on the customer's emotions, and it may induce the consumer to spend more time in a particular store purchasing products (Hashmi et al., 2020). Next, product attributes are the primary determinants of consumer satisfaction and a valuable resource allocation tool for marketers. There are four categories of product attributes: fundamental, performance, exciting, and unpredictable. A product's attributes influence consumers' preferences and, consequently, their purchasing decisions (Malekpour et al., 2022). In social surrounding, social experiences act as a stimulus that influences impulsive shopping. Subjective norms and interactions among peers, which come from social experience, have a significant indirect effect on the dependent variable (Anindito & Handarkho, 2022). Lastly, accessibility refers to purchasing environment variables (time and money are abundant) and individual differences, such as impulsivity and self-construction, which are considered external factors. Researchers noted that the online purchasing environment is more likely than the traditional shopping environment to induce consumers' impulse purchases. (Zhao et al., 2019). Overall, this background study highlights the need for more research on situational factors and student impulse purchasing behavior.

The problem that this study addresses is situational factors consisting of store environment, product attributes, social surrounding, and accessibility. According to Bou Saada et al. (2022), the Sale or Return (SOR) model has been used to examine the relationship between the retail environment and impulse purchase behavior. Based on the SOR model, customers' emotions are affected by the store surroundings as a stimulus, which then causes them to engage in approach-avoidance behaviors. In other words, it clarifies how the physical environment affects how people behave (Bou Saada et al., 2022).

Next, the stimulus, according to Lavuri et al. (2023), is the thing (environmental product or service) that the person comes into contact with at a specific time. Some stimuli are product-based (emanating from the product). Different characteristics of the stimuli (product) influence an individual's internal (psychological) condition and can cause them to respond impulsively. (Lavuri et al., 2023). Therefore, it's critical for one to recognize that a person's choices, goals, and environmental circumstances all play a part depending on the setting and target audience, different product qualities may have different effects on impulsive purchases.

Social environments and interactions might have a substantial impact on their impulsive purchasing behavior. Jalees et al. (2019) claims based on a study conducted, persons in a collective culture are more sensitive to purchasing behavior than individuals in an individualist society because they are influenced by their family members and peers (Jalees et al., 2019). Impulsive purchasers are more concerned with how they look and appear in public, particularly when it comes to clothing and other personal goods; hence, acquiring items that depict social standing is positively associated to the consumers' attitude (Lavuri et al., 2023).

In this technological age, accessibility variables such as urban proximity, time availability, and online retail play a critical role. According to Lavuri et al. (2023) utilitarian components, such as ease of use and usefulness, make it simple for consumers to compare products or prices when buying online. Students are tempted to make impulsive purchases with only a few clicks because they can buy whenever and wherever they choose. To address the impact of e-commerce on impulsive purchasing among students, it is vital to teach mindful online shopping, financial literacy, and critical thinking abilities. Students can make more informed

selections and avoid the potential negative implications of impulsive buying in the digital age if they are educated about responsible online shopping practices. Therefore, this study will determine whether the situational factors have a substantial impact on the student's impulsive purchasing behavior.

This research aims to delve into the factors that influence impulse buying behavior among students at UiTM Kedah, to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics at play in their purchasing decisions. The first research objective focuses on investigating the relationship between store environment and impulse buying. Store environments encompass various elements such as layout, design, music, and lighting, which can potentially trigger impulsive buying tendencies among students. By examining this relationship, the study seeks to uncover how different aspects of the store environment impact students' impulsive purchasing decisions.

The second research objective centers on the relationship between product attributes and impulse buying. Product attributes include characteristics such as price, quality, packaging, and branding, which can influence students' impulse buying tendencies. By exploring this relationship, the research aims to shed light on how specific product attributes contribute to impulsive purchasing behaviors among UiTM Kedah students.

The third research objective focuses on the relationship between social surroundings and impulse buying. Social surroundings encompass factors such as peer influence, social norms, and social media exposure, which can significantly impact students' impulsive buying behaviors. By examining this relationship, the study aims to understand the role of social factors in shaping impulsive purchasing decisions among UiTM Kedah students.

Lastly, the fourth research objective aims to investigate the relationship between accessibility and impulse buying. Accessibility refers to the ease of obtaining products or services, both in terms of physical availability and digital accessibility. The study seeks to explore how factors like convenience, proximity, and online shopping platforms influence students' impulse buying tendencies.

Impulse Buying

According to Burton et al. (2018), impulse purchases occur when there is a sudden and strong emotional desire, which arises from a reactive behavior that is characterized by low cognitive control. Ng (2019) defined impulse buying as an unplanned buying behavior in which it involves quick decision-making and the feeling of immediate possession of a product. Impulse buying behaviour refers to the act of making unplanned and spontaneous purchases, often driven by sudden urges or impulses rather than careful consideration or premeditated intention (Pradhan et al., 2018). In these situations, individuals buy items on a whim, sometimes without a clear need for the product, prompted by factors such as emotional triggers, attractive product displays, sales promotions, or peer influence. Impulse buying behavior can lead to purchases that are outside of one's budget or long-term financial goals and is a subject of interest in consumer psychology and retail marketing studies (Ng, 2019).

Store Environment, Product Attributes, Social Surrounding and Accessibility

According to Calvo-Porrall et al. (2021), the term store environment or store atmospherics refers to the planned design of a space that generates emotional responses from customers. The concept of an online store environment, often referred to as "e-commerce or digital

atmospherics," encompasses the digital elements and user experience features that influence a customer's perception and behavior while shopping online. While it lacks the physical aspects of a brick-and-mortar store, an online store's environment is just as critical in creating a positive shopping experience and encouraging customer engagement and conversion (Calvo-Porrall et al. 2021).

According to Kalro and Joshipura (2023), product attributes is defined as the objective factual features of a product that do not vary regardless of the consumer's subjective preferences. Product benefits, on the other hand, are the aspects of a product that consumers value the most and hence vary from customer to customer. Product attributes, in the context of marketing and product management, refer to the specific characteristics or features that describe a product. These attributes are the qualities and properties that define what a product is, how it functions, and what benefits it offers to consumers. Product attributes can encompass a wide range of elements, including physical features, functional characteristics, performance and quality of the product.

According to Law Insider (2023), social surrounding is defined as everything or environmental composition that is created by humans and has both positive and negative effects on human and natural existence, production, existence, and evolution. And finally, accessibility which consist of time, location and budget is one of the most significant factors on impulse buying behavior. The main source which the customers spend while shopping is time (Ng, 2019). Budget can be described as the consumers' capabilities in terms of financial resources. Credit card availability has a positive relationship with impulse buying behavior. To add on, Husnain et al. (2018) stated location is defined as the physical location of a particular point or object. Location is a crucial term in geography and is typically regarded as more precise than "place." A locality is a human settlement, such as a city, town, or even an archaeological site.

From the discussion above, the theoretical framework in Figure 2 below was established. The predictors that were chosen are store environment, product attributes, social surrounding and accessibility, while the response variable is impulse buying behaviour.

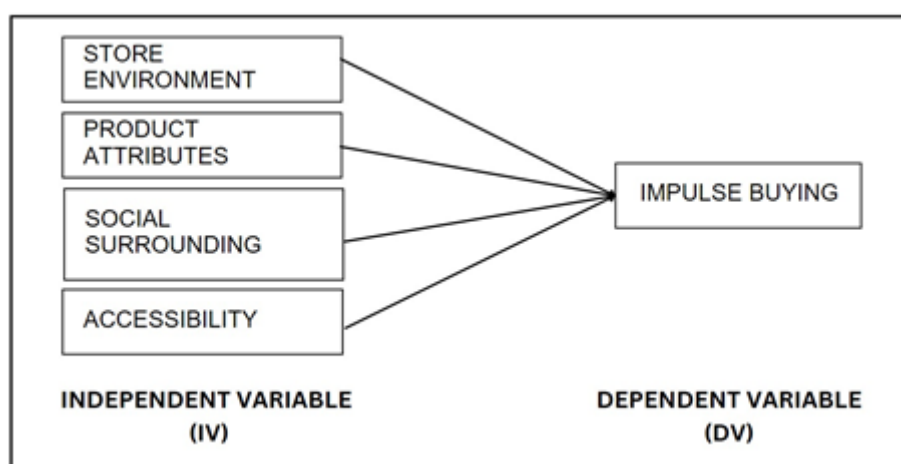


Figure 2: Research Framework

Methodology

This research was carried out with students from UiTM Kedah as participants, as time and budget constraints prevented a wider selection. Despite this, measures were taken to minimize

bias and ensure the generalizability of the findings. To achieve this, a proper sample size was chosen and a simple random sampling method was used to avoid biases. The study selected 100 students from a population of 7500 students using the G-Power tool.

A quantitative methodology was used in a descriptive study design. A descriptive study's goal is to give the researcher a thorough grasp of the phenomenon of interest by outlining its key characteristics from many angles, including that of the individual, organization, or business. Students from UiTM Kedah were the focus of this study's attention, particularly as they related to the causes of impulsive purchases. A cross-sectional study methodology was used to examine impulse buying at a certain moment, considering how it affects students' behavior.

This investigation focuses on UiTM Kedah residents and uses an online questionnaire that was developed by merging adaptations from other studies to collect the data. Each participant was given a set of questions as part of a questionnaire. Two advantages of employing an online questionnaire as a research approach are cost effectiveness and timeliness. Because there is no need for paper, printing, or phone calls, the online questionnaire is far more economical than traditional techniques. Data was collected using various platforms such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Instagram and Facebook. The questionnaire consisted of 34 questions about independent variables factors, 4 questions about dependent variables, and 11 questions about demographics in each of the three sections of the study questionnaire.

To analyze the data for this study, SPSS statistical software, version 26.0, was used. To assess the results of the data in this study, the researcher used reliability analysis, frequency analysis for the demographic data and multiple regression analysis to examine the relationship between the various factors as well as their effects on the dependent variable.

Findings and Discussions

Frequency Analysis

A total of 100 observations were used for data analysis, representing a 100% response rate. In terms of gender, the sample consisted of slightly more women (54%) than men (46%). The majority of respondents (45%) fell into the age category of 23. Differences in outcomes were observed across all semesters, with 39% of respondents being from semester 5. Based on the location factor, approximately 49.5% of respondents were non-residents. In relation to income, the majority of students (43.9%) relied on PTPTN loans, and 47% had a monthly allowance of RM500. Clothing was the most frequently impulsively purchased product category, chosen by 46% of respondents. Regarding spending, 29% of respondents spent RM300 or more monthly. In terms of education, the majority (70%) held a bachelor's degree, while 59% were unemployed based on the employment factor. Among the respondents, 16% were pursuing a degree in human resource, while only 1% were studying accountancy at the diploma level.

Reliability Analysis

The reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach Alpha to determine the internal consistency of the item evaluating the variables with subjective measures. The Cronbach Alpha was used to examine the reliability of the item variable of this study which are Store Environment, Product Attributes, Social Surrounding, and Accessibility.

Table 1 indicate reliability analysis results and all of the Cronbach Alpha values was greater than 0.7, indicating that the overall measure was acceptable except for one which is the

dependent variable (Impulse Buying) after deleted one question. Therefore, four items for this variable are preserved.

Table 1: Results of Reliability Analysis

Variable	Items	Items Deleted	Cronbach's Alpha
Store Environment	5	None	0.818
Product Attributes	5	None	0.804
Social Surrounding	5	None	0.765
Accessibility	5	None	0.738
Impulse Buying	5	1	0.616

Multiple Regression Analysis

As shown in the Table 2, the R^2 value is 35.7%. This means that the independent variables for four variables do not greatly impact the dependent variables (Impulse buying). It indicates that the independent variables which are store environment, product attributes, social surrounding and accessibility can explained the dependent variables as much as 35.7% only.

Based on the result, there are three independent variables that are significant because the value of the variables is less than 0.05 which are store environment, product attributes and social surrounding. Based on the standardized coefficients beta, the highest standardized coefficients beta value is product attributes which is 0.381 which is closer to 1 compared to the others variables. It is indicated that product attributes is the most influential factor towards impulse buying behaviour. However, for the accessibility, the significant value is 0.572 which means that there is no significant relationship because the value is more than 0.05. It indicates that this independent variable contribute no impact on dependent variable. Hence, this research highlighted that three out of four of the independent variables has a significant relationship with the impulse buying behaviour and these hypotheses were accepted as shown is Table 3.

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	Standardized Coefficients Beta	Sig.
Store Environment	0.341	0.028
Product Attributes	0.381	0.015
Social Surrounding	0.375	0.006
Accessibility	-0.086	0.572

Dependent Variable: Impulse Buying

R Square = 35.7%

Sig: 0.001

Table 3: Summary of Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Result
H ₁ : There is a significant relationship between store environment and impulse buying among UiTM Kedah students.	Accepted
H ₂ : There is a significant relationship between product attributes and impulse buying among UiTM Kedah students.	Accepted
H ₃ : There is a significant relationship between social surroundings and impulse buying among UiTM Kedah students.	Accepted

H₄: There is a significant relationship between accessibility and impulse buying among UiTM Kedah students. Rejected

Conclusion and Discussion

Based on the empirical evidence presented in this study, it was found that three out of the four situational factors examined namely, store environment, product attributes, and social surroundings significantly influenced impulse buying behavior among students at University Technology MARA (UiTM) Kedah. These findings align with the research conducted by Jalees et al. (2019), which also highlighted the significant impact of store environment on consumer behavior. The results suggest that elements such as lighting and music can play a crucial role in influencing consumers' emotional states and purchasing behavior.

The variables examined in this study shed light on the situational factors that are closely associated with impulse buying. This highlights the importance for students to be aware of and understand the factors that drive their impulsive buying behavior. Furthermore, the findings also indicate that further research and attention should be given to identifying and understanding other potential situational factors that may influence impulse buying among students.

The regression analysis revealed that the strongest factor influencing impulse buying is the social surrounding. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Bou Saada et al. (2022) and Pradhan (2018), who highlighted those peers and classmate, particularly those perceived as trendsetters or influential within their social circles, can significantly impact students' impulsive purchases. Hence, based on this study, it can be concluded that students at University Technology MARA (UiTM) Kedah are influenced by their social surroundings when it comes to impulse buying.

Product attributes were the second biggest influence on impulse buying among students. This finding aligns with the research carried out by Lavuri et al. (2023), product attributes is a product-based stimuli and different characteristics of the product influence an individual's internal psychological condition and can cause them to respond impulsively. Therefore, it can be concluded that understanding and manipulating product attributes can be an effective strategy for marketers aiming to capitalize on impulse buying tendencies among students.

Moreover, the regression analysis conducted indicates that the accessibility factor has no significant impact on impulse buying. This finding contradicts the research conducted by R. Lavuri et al. (2023), which suggests that utilitarian aspects like ease of use and usefulness facilitate consumers in comparing products or prices during online purchases. Thus, the findings from the research conducted at UiTM Kedah indicate that when it comes to impulse buying among students, product attributes are of utmost importance. However, the accessibility factor does not appear to significantly impact their impulsive purchasing behavior.

Nevertheless, a customer makes an impulsive purchase when he or she acquires something without prior consideration. It occurs when a product or message is effectively promoted or advertised. Unplanned purchases are made by impulse consumers because they rely on feelings that compel them to buy. A consumer desires to make hurried purchases of goods and services. When a consumer makes impulsive purchases, they are frequently motivated by sentiments and emotions. Occasionally, these random expenditures may be relatively harmless if they

fall within a person's budget. However, impulsive purchases may also result in costly purchasing binge that could ruin their finances. Therefore, this study will provide a general rule to ensure better spending habits among students in the future.

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