

THE IMPACT OF ONLINE PROMOTIONS ON IMPULSIVE BUYING AMONG PRESIDENT UNIVERSITY STUDENT

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Abstract – In today's digital era, online shopping has become very common, especially among students. Promotions offered, such as discount offers, cash back, and free shipping, tend to drive consumers to make impulsive buying because these promotions do not require consumers to prepare purchases beforehand. This study aims to explore the impact of online promotions on impulsive buying behavior conducted among students at President University, specifically by using a qualitative approach through semi-structured interviews toward students who conduct shopping through e-commerce. The data obtained then analyzed using thematic analysis by categorizing the respondent into several themes to gain insights of their behaviors. The analysis shows that online promotions have a strong influence to increase purchase interests and cause unplanned purchases, which is also supported by emotional aspects, such as fear of missing out (FOMO), and curiosity. Overall, online promotions have proven to significantly increase impulsive buying behavior, but this behavior is also driven by internal factors, including emotions and self-control.

Keywords: Online Promotion, Impulsive Buying, E-Commerce, Students, FOMO, Self-Control.

INTRODUCTION

In this era, we live in a world where everything is digital. For daily life use, online shopping has become an important part, especially among university students. Through the fast development of e-commerce platforms, customers are provided with various special promotions such as discounts, flash sales, cashback, free shipping, and several seasonal events, such as twin date, Eid Al-Fitr, Christmas, and New Year Eve (Rachmawati, 2022). The purpose of these online promotions are to attract consumers and increase sales in a short time. However, these sales promotions in e-commerce platforms can increase consumers' urgency to make impulsive purchases (Yastuti & Irawati, 2023).

Impulsive buying means a purchase that happens suddenly without calculation and based only on desire (unplanned). This often happens suddenly, where customers will see the promotion and feel attracted, urgency, and do not want to miss out the promotion.

Right now, students are considered one of the most active online buyers because they are familiar with digital technology and social media (Puspita, 2025). They often receive notifications about promotions from e-commerce applications or just scrolling around and finding the promotion. As a result, many students bought these items not because they really needed them, but because they had been swayed by the promotion and were afraid of missing out.

The reason for choosing this topic is because it is very relatable to us as university students. Students tend to buy things for the sake of promotions, not for the need or plan to buy it. Online promotions trigger impulses and create urgency to buy (Rafsanjani et al., 2025). This is something that often happens in our lives and is very much a part of us. This also provides reasons why the topic is realistic, needs further research, and understandable.

This study is important to help provide further insight into impulsive buying behavior and its effect on students' financial condition, especially for those with limited budgets. The study will analyze the impact of online promotions on students' buying behavior and help provide useful information on responsible buying behavior. It will also help further analyze student behavior during the digital era.

Previous research has shown that online promotions, emotional triggers, and the fear of missing out (FOMO) are main factors that cause impulsive buying (Rafsanjani et al., 2025). Many have conducted research on this topic, but the research only focused on the general consumer population, and not aimed specifically at the students of President University. Therefore, this research aims to analyze the direct impact of online promotions on impulsive buying among President University students.

This research focuses on President University students as the main population because they represent young consumers who actively use online shopping platforms and are highly exposed to digital marketing strategies. The study is limited to online promotional activities such as discount campaigns and special e-commerce events within a certain period (Puspita, 2025). The data will be collected through interviews to measure students' perceptions of online promotions and their impulsive buying behavior.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study investigates how online promotions influence impulsive buying behavior among President University students in the digital shopping environment. Impulsive buying includes emotions, perceptions, and personal experiences, so we used a qualitative research method. This approach helps us know about students' thoughts, feelings, and decisions when they see online promotions instead of using numbers to measure relationships (Aspers & Corte, 2021).

Qualitative research lets us deeper into participants' experiences and views on online promotions. As mentioned in the introduction, students often only see promotional notifications, flash sales, and special e-commerce deals that can lead to impulsive buys. To understand the psychological and situational factors behind this, we need detailed stories and personal insights which qualitative methods capture well.

This research uses consumer behavior theory, especially impulsive buying behavior, which highlights the emotional responses and situations that can affect purchasing decisions. Online promotion triggers can create urgency, excitement, and fear of missing out (FOMO), encouraging spontaneous buys (Rafsanjani et al., 2025). Instead of testing causal relationships statistically, this study focuses about understanding how students indicate promotional messages, how they feel when encountering promotions, and why they make choices to buy products impulsively. The theoretical framework helps interpret participants' experiences within the context of digital marketing and consumer psychology.

The participants of this study consist of active President University students who have experience using e-commerce platforms. Students are selected because they represent digitally connected consumers who frequently interact with online shopping applications and promotional campaigns. The research applies purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique that is often used in qualitative studies, where participants are selected according to specific criteria relevant to the research objectives.

The participants criteria include:

- (1) Being an active President University student,
- (2) Actively using e-commerce platforms, and
- (3) Having experienced purchasing products due to online promotions.

This selection makes sure that participants have personal experience that is related to impulsive buying behavior, allowing them to provide meaningful and detailed perception. The number of participants is set on data saturation, meaning data collection continues until no new significant information comes up (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022).

Data collection uses semi-structured interviews as the main research technique (McGrath et

al., 2021). The research team used interviews because they let participants freely share their experiences while staying focused on the topic. This technique allows the researcher to ask additional questions while investigating new topics that come up during the discussions.

The interview process follows several steps. First, the interview questions are developed based on research objectives and theoretical concepts related to online promotions and impulsive buying. The questions focus on participants' online shopping habits, reactions toward promotional offers, emotional responses when they see discounts, flash sales or free shipping promotion, and reasons behind unplanned purchases. Second, Participants will be selected to ensure their relevance to the research purpose, after that they will be contacted and informed about the research purpose. Participants will be ensured to participate in this interview voluntarily and their privacy will be guaranteed. Third, interviews are conducted either via chat or through online meetings, depending on participant availability.

During the interviews, participants will be required to share their personal experiences about how online promotion has affected their buying habits, also how they after making impulsive purchases. Additional notes are also taken to record additional material outside the question that can support data collection for the research.

After data collection, the interviews are transcribed into written form for analysis. This study applies thematic analysis to analyze qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The analysis process involves several stages. First, the researcher reads the data transcripts repeatedly to ensure a deep understanding of the data. Second, important statements and recurring ideas will be marked. Third, similar marks are grouped into broader themes related to the research theme. Finally, themes are interpreted and connected to existing theories of impulsive buying and digital consumer behavior.

To ensure the research is valid, several steps are taken. First, the researcher writes down the interviews and reviews them repeatedly to make sure the data are correct. Second, the researcher also rechecks the data that has been transcribed with the participants to make sure there is no data error. Finally, documenting the process of this research is very important to make it transparent.

Through this qualitative research methodology, the study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the impact of online promotions on the impulsive buying behavior of President University students. Instead of measuring the results, this research methodology provides an understanding of the personal experiences and perceptions of the students towards digital marketing strategies. The results of this research would provide significant insights into the buying behavior of the students in the digital age and would also provide an understanding of the right way to shop.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Overview of Findings

Based on interviews with 6 students from President University, it was found that most respondents actively use e-commerce platforms and are often exposed to various promotions such as discounts, cashback, and free shipping. Their purchase decisions are mainly influenced by these promotions. Most respondents stated that promotions increase their interest in online shopping and can even encourage unplanned purchases (impulsive buying). However, there are differences in the level of self-control among respondents, where some are still able to control themselves and avoid impulsive buying.

2. Table of Themes

NO	Theme	Description	Example Codes
1.	Online Promotion Influence	The influence of promotions on purchase decisions	Discount, cashback, free shipping
2.	Impulsive Buying	Unplanned purchases	Flash sale, 11.11, sudden buying
3.	Emotional Factors & FOMO	Feelings that encourage purchasing	Fear of missing out, curiosity
4.	Shopping Interest	Interest in online shopping	Cheaper, more practical
5.	Self-Control	Ability to control oneself	Cancel purchase, reconsider

3. Online Promotion Influence

Most respondents stated that promotions such as discounts, cashback, and free shipping strongly influence their decisions when shopping online. For example, respondents said that a combination of promotions makes them feel they are getting more benefits and makes it hard to ignore the offer. This shows that promotions are a main factor in attracting attention and encouraging purchase decisions.

“If there is no promotion, I usually don’t buy, so promotions are very important for me.”

“Free shipping has the biggest impact because it makes it more affordable.”

“When there is cashback, it feels like getting extra benefits.”

4. Impulsive Buying

Most respondents admitted that they have made unplanned purchases, especially during big events such as 11.11 or flash sales.

“I originally just looked around, but because the discount was big, I immediately checked out.”

“I didn’t plan to buy it, but because it was cheap, I just took it.”

“Sometimes I buy just because there is a promotion, not because I need it.”

However, there are also respondents who said they are not easily influenced and still buy according to their plan. This shows that there are differences in behavior among individuals.

“I usually already have a list, so I don’t get easily tempted.”

5. Emotional Factors and FOMO

Emotional factors are one of the main causes of impulsive buying. Many respondents feel afraid of missing promotions (FOMO), so they buy items without thinking too much. In addition, feelings of happiness, curiosity, and the sense of getting a good deal also encourage purchase decisions.

“I’m afraid it will be out of stock, so I just buy it even though I don’t really need it.”

“It feels like a waste if I miss it, I’m afraid it won’t come again.”

“When there is a big discount, it makes me want to buy it immediately.”

6. Increased Interest in Online Shopping

Most respondents stated that promotions make them more interested in shopping online compared to offline shopping. This is due to lower prices, easier access, and the large number of ads and promotions on applications.

“Promotions make me more interested in online shopping because it is cheaper.”

“I often open the app just to see the promotions.”

“Sometimes I end up wanting to buy even though I didn’t need it at first.”

7. Self-Control

Even though many respondents are encouraged to make impulsive purchases, some of them show self-control. For example, some respondents still choose not to buy unplanned items even when there are promotions. This shows that self-control is an important factor in deciding whether a person will engage in impulsive buying or not.

“If I don’t really need it, I usually hold myself back.”

“I think first before checking out.”

“I usually set a budget so I don’t buy randomly.”

Discussion

This study aims to analyze how online promotions influence impulsive buying behavior among students of President University. Based on interview results, it was found that e-commerce promotions have a significant influence on purchasing decisions, especially in encouraging unplanned purchases. These findings are consistent with previous research which states that e-commerce activities and online discounts can increase consumers’ tendency toward impulsive buying (Rachmawati, 2022).

1. Influence of Promotion on Purchase Decisions

The results of the study show that promotions such as discounts, cashback, and free shipping are the main factors that influence students’ shopping decisions. Respondents feel that promotions provide extra benefits, which increase their desire to buy products, even when the products are not actually needed. These findings are in line with the study of Rafsanjani et al. (2025), which states that promotions, especially in the form of large discounts, can increase perceived value and encourage consumers to make immediate purchases. In addition, features such as flash sales and limited-time offers also create a sense of urgency that speeds up decision-making. Therefore, promotion can be categorized as a strong external stimulus that influences consumer behavior, in accordance with the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) concept in consumer behavior.

2. Impulsive Buying Behavior

Most respondents admitted that they have made impulsive purchases, especially during big promotional events such as 11.11 or seasonal sales. This shows that promotions not only increase buying interest but also encourage spontaneous purchasing decisions without prior planning. These findings support the study by Putri et al. (2024), which states that major promotional events can increase impulsive buying among students. Large discounts and limited-time offers make consumers feel they must buy immediately before the opportunity disappears. However, not all respondents experience the same behavior. Some respondents show the ability to control themselves and still shop according to their needs. This indicates that impulsive buying is also influenced by individual factors, not only external factors.

3. The Role of Emotion and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

Emotional factors such as happiness, curiosity, and fear of missing out (FOMO) are proven to be the main drivers of impulsive buying. Many respondents feel that missing promotions is a loss, so they make quick decisions without considering actual needs. These findings are in line with Puspita (2025), which states that impulsive buying behavior is

influenced by emotional and social factors. In addition, Rafsanjani et al. (2025) also explain that FOMO is one of the main factors that increases urgency in purchasing during discount events. However, this study also found that not all respondents experience strong FOMO. This is supported by Syandana & Dhania (2024), which states that FOMO does not always have a significant effect on impulsive buying in all individuals.

4. Interest in Online Shopping

The results show that promotions make students more interested in online shopping compared to offline shopping. This is due to lower prices, easier access, and a wide variety of products on e-commerce platforms. These findings are consistent with Rachmawati (2022), which states that the development of e-commerce and digital promotions increases online shopping activity. In addition, a digital environment filled with ads and promotional notifications also increases consumer interaction with e-commerce platforms, which ultimately raises the chance of impulsive buying.

5. The Role of Self-Control in Impulsive Buying

This study also found that self-control is an important factor in determining whether a person engages in impulsive buying or not. Respondents with good self-control tend to be more rational and are able to resist the urge to buy unnecessary items. This finding is supported by Putri et al. (2024), which states that a high level of self-control can reduce the tendency of impulsive buying. In contrast, individuals with low self-control are more easily influenced by promotions and emotions during shopping. This shows that although promotions have a strong influence, the final decision is still affected by an individual's ability to control themselves.

6. Relationship Between Internal and External Factors

Overall, the results show that impulsive buying is the result of interaction between external and internal factors. Promotions as external factors act as the main trigger, while internal factors such as emotions and self-control determine how individuals respond to these stimuli. These findings strengthen consumer behavior theory, which states that purchasing decisions are influenced not only by the environment but also by individual psychological conditions. In other words, impulsive buying occurs due to a combination of external stimulation and internal response.

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that e-commerce promotions have a significant influence on impulsive buying among students. This influence is strengthened by emotional factors such as FOMO and feelings of happiness, as well as being affected by each individual's level of self-control.

This study also shows that although promotions are very effective in attracting consumer attention, not all individuals respond in the same way. Therefore, it is important for students to improve financial awareness and self-control skills in order to make more rational purchasing decisions.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research conducted, this study aims to analyze the influence of online promotions on impulsive buying behavior among students of President University. The interview results show that promotions such as discounts, cashback, and free shipping have a significant influence in encouraging students to make purchases, including unplanned purchases.

Most respondents feel that promotions provide extra benefits, which increases their desire to buy. This is supported by statements such as “when there is a discount and free shipping, it feels like a waste not to buy” and “I didn’t plan to buy at first, but because the price was cheap, I bought it immediately.” These findings are in line with previous studies which state that promotions can increase impulsive buying by increasing perceived value (Rachmawati, 2022; Rafsanjani et al., 2025).

In addition, emotional factors such as fear of missing out (FOMO) also play an important role in encouraging impulsive buying. Some respondents feel afraid of losing the opportunity, as shown in statements like “I’m afraid the promotion will disappear, so I immediately check out,” which supports the findings of Puspita (2025). However, not all respondents are easily influenced because of self-control. Some students still consider their needs before buying, such as “if I don’t need it, I won’t buy it even if it’s discounted,” which shows that self-control can reduce impulsive buying (Putri et al., 2024).

Overall, online promotions are proven to be effective in increasing impulsive buying, but their impact still depends on internal factors such as emotions and self-control. Therefore, students need to be more careful in responding to promotions so that their purchase decisions remain rational and aligned with their needs.

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