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WEBSITE QUALITY AND EXTERNAL CUES INFLUENCE FIRST CLICK IMPULSE BUYING THROUGH COGNITIVE APPRAISAL THEORY

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ABSTRACT

The study is grounded in Cognitive Appraisal Theory which aims to investigate the response of customers to external cues including scarcity, sales promotion, and product attributes on online impulse buying behavior. It further examines the moderating role of website quality. The proposed model explains the interactions between the external variables and website quality which can be helpful for online retailers to form various marketing strategies. Data was gathered through a survey of 260 online customers. The relationships between scarcity, sales promotion, product attributes, website quality, and online impulse buying were investigated using Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results align with the assumption of cognitive appraisal theory which suggest that consumers cognitively appraise cues like external cues i.e., sales promotion and product attributes and emotionally react through online impulse buying behavior which is enhanced by high website quality. Conversely, the result shows that customers engage in online impulse buying after receiving scarcity cues regardless of the quality of the website. The study aims to enrich the literature by proposing a novel moderation model in which the website quality is a moderator that strengthens or diminishes the influence of external cues on online impulse buying. This study contributes to the literature by integrating cognitive appraisal theory to explain how psychological processing of external cues can drive impulse buying in digital environment. The results can be helpful for online retailers to form various marketing strategies.

KEYWORDS: Online Impulse Buying, Cognitive Appraisal Theory, Scarcity, Sales Promotion, Product Attributes, Website Quality.

1. INTRODUCTION

The economy across the world has witnessed several innovative changes due to advancements in information technology, particularly in the sale and purchase of products both offline and online (Widagdo, 2021). These activities were previously carried out at physical outlets or stores, but now these are predominantly conducted online. The Internet is rapidly establishing itself as a crucial sales channel for businesses. Online merchants, also known as e-retail businesses, are growing at a faster pace (Giri, 2016; Yu et al., 2019) and are recognized in the literature as the novel norm (He and Liang, 2021).

Online shopping platforms are the preferred shopping destination for consumers. With the widespread use of internet enabled smart mobile devices, consumers may complete their shopping in just a couple of seconds. Due to the accessibility and affordability of internet connectivity, consumers have the convenience and freedom to shop online at any time and from anyplace (Göttel et al., 2021). Consumers can browse web stores, compare various options by considering reviews (Graupner et al., 2021), and make purchases with just one click (Lorenzo et al., 2007; Bourlakis et al., 2008; Saravanan and Devi, 2015). As a result, the integration of technology into shopping patterns has drastically transformed consumer shopping habits. Also, it has opened up numerous economic opportunities, compelling businesses to focus on the growing significance of the e-commerce model. These advantages of online shopping can stimulate impulse purchase behaviour (Chang E et al., 2004; Kim E.Y, 2008; Park E.J, 2008).

Madhavaram and Laverie (2004) argue that online shopping promotes impulse purchases by providing customers with greater convenience and the ability to respond more quickly to their changing moods. Online impulse buying is the sudden, unanticipated drive to purchase a particular good or service for immediate gratification that customers display while shopping in an online environment (Lai, 2017; Lin and Chuan, 2013). Understanding consumer behavior is pertinent for marketers because it permits them to develop distinctive selling propositions that effectively attract customers to make impulsive purchases online (Hultén and Vanyushyn, 2014; Gopu, 2019). This critical role of online impulse purchase behavior has drawn a lot of attention and discussion from research scholars and industry experts. It has been found that various external factors influence

online impulse purchase (Verma and Singh, 2019). These external factors often function as important drivers of impulsive purchasing. The current study explored sales promotion, scarcity and product attributes as the external cues of online impulse buying. These variables have been consistently identified in existing literature as potent triggers of impulse buying behavior. This provides a solid foundation for the study, ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings. The moderating role of website quality has been included in the study as a novel concept. Considering the emotional and impulsive character of impulse buying, the Cognitive Appraisal Theory (Lazarus, 1991) offers a useful theoretical framework since it describes how consumers evaluate marketing signals, which leads to emotional arousal and behavioral reactions like impulsive purchases.

1.1. Cognitive Appraisal Theory

A psychological framework known as cognitive appraisal theory illustrates how people assess and interpret the experiences and the resulting cognitive, emotional, and behavioral impacts (Nguyen et al., 2025). From the consumer behaviour perspective, this theory explains consumers' engagement in cognitive evaluations of marketing stimuli that affect their emotional and behavioral actions (Le et al., 2020). According to the theory, consumers perform a variety of cognitive appraisals when confronted with marketing stimuli. Since consumers act on perception and motivation and thus positive appraisals improve the likelihood of impulse buying (Redine et al., 2023). Hence, we see the cognitive appraisal as a relevant theoretical framework for our study. In case of online shopping, cues such as sales promotion, scarcity, and product attributes trigger psychological appraisals that may result in impulse purchases. Website quality can influence the depth and positivity of these appraisals and hence moderate their effect on consumer behavior.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Online Impulse Buying Behavior

Impulse buying is characterized as a sudden, careless, and irresponsible action or reaction (Tobon and Abril, 2024). This suggests that when consumers are suddenly stimulated, they have an urge for inner satisfaction and enjoyment which results in subsequent impulse and reckless buying behavior (Wells et al. 2011). Leong et al. (2018) stated that customers' impulsive buying is not a conscious decision made in advance but rather an immediate

purchase of a particular good without carefully considering the risks after being excited. E-impulse buying is the term used to describe the hedonistically complex purchasing behavior of online shoppers who have an intense desire to buy something without having any prior intention of doing so (Verhagen and van Dolen, 2011; Madhavaram and Laverie, 2004; Parboteeah et al., 2009).

The complexity and universality of impulsive buying across a variety of product categories has made it a prominent subject for study in the field of consumer behaviour (Sharma et al. 2010). The impulsive shopping process is an interesting aspect of consumer behavior because it is not like the traditional purchase procedure. According to Satyavani and Chalam (2018), the latter entails five steps: Identify need, information search, alternative assessment, purchase selection, and post-purchase evaluation. Depending on a customer's attitude and perspective, the length of time it takes to complete each of the steps and the overall purchase process can vary. In contrast, the process of impulsive buying does not proceed in a predictable or rational manner, and the purchase choice is made in a relatively short period of time (Satyavani and Chalam, 2018).

2.2. External cues

Impulsive purchase is influenced by both external and internal triggers for buyers (Anoop and Rahman, 2025). Since impulse buying behavior is motivated by stimuli (Rook and Fisher, 1995), frequent exposure to certain stimuli boosts the occurrence of impulsive buying (Dawson and kim, 2017). Wanink (1994) identified external trigger cues linked to shopping or purchasing as one of the external elements contributing to impulse buying. These triggers, also known as marketing stimuli, are "environmental and sensory factors that are controlled by the marketer" and are used to persuade customers to make a purchase (Youn and Faber, 2000). For this reason, external cues are the key element in a consumer's decision-making process. Therefore, the study tries to investigate the external cues to explore customers' cognitive decision-making with respect of online impulse buying. According to Cognitive Appraisal Theory, exposure to these external cues initiates a primary appraisal process where consumers assess the relevance and potential benefits of the stimuli. If the cues are seen as favorable or urgent (such a promotion or scarcity), this leads to emotional arousal and a secondary appraisal where consumers

evaluate their ability to act. This process helps to explain impulsive buying behavior of consumers after exposure to such cues. The three external cues taken for the study are sales promotion, scarcity and product attributes.

2.3. Sales promotions

Sales promotion is described as "activities intended to persuade particular targeted market segments to purchase the products" (Brassington and Peattie, 2006). These activities are usually divided and categorized into financial and non-financial (Kowok and Uncles, 2005). Shelf-price discounts and coupons discounts are examples of financial actions that are directly associated to price reductions. In contrast, non-financial activities such as buy-one-get-one-free (BOGOF) and free gifts deals are indirectly tied to price reductions. Sales promotion, which uses a range of incentive techniques, seeks to persuade consumers to make large purchases of goods and services in a short amount of time (Kotler, 2012). The goal is to directly and quickly influence consumers' purchase decisions. The internet has increased the culture of online sales promotion which is now one of the most potential cues for online impulse purchases.

2.4. Scarcity

A consumer's awareness of a product's limited availability as well as its limited timing is referred to as scarcity (Akram et al., 2018). It refers to limitations in supply, quantity, and time. Presently, online sellers and salespeople apply psychological pressure to customers (Kathuria and Bakshi, 2024) by using buzzwords like "limited release" or "two minutes left." Customers are drawn to the online shopping environment by the message of scarcity to buy goods and services that will not last for very long. In shopping websites, time and quantity are the two types of limits (Rice, 2009). Limited time restricts the amount of time that may be spent purchasing specific goods and services, while limited quantity restricts the amount of services and products that are offered. The consumers are more likely to click or touch the products when there is an indication of scarcity on a website or a shopping app.

2.5. Product attributes

The key to promoting impulsive purchasing behaviour is a product's characteristics such as pricing and variety (E.J. Park et al., 2012). The big attraction for online customers is pricing. Products

with greater prices will discourage them from making an impulsive purchase. Conversely, product with the lower price often attracts spontaneous purchases from customers. Although impulsive purchasing occurs for both expensive and inexpensive goods (Dittmar et al., 1995). But Consumers focus on pricing and optimal combination of quality, quantities and price (Badgaiyan and Verma, 2014).

Online shoppers are typically variety seekers, thus customers are more likely to browse the websites with a broad range of options (Lim and Dubinsky, 2004). According to Moe (2003), coming across a wide selection of items allows for prolonged internet browsing, enabling better product decisions through access to more comparable products (Roehm and Roehm, 2005; Marshall et al., 2006). Variety of choice offers a variation in routine and a way to beat boredom when it comes to purchasing experiences (Baumeister, 2002; Blakeney et al., 2010).

2.6. Website quality

The essential element of the fast expanding e-Commerce phenomenon is the website. Marketers are forced to keep enhancing their website quality because of the rise of online commerce in society. Offering virtual services and marketing is necessary

for all online retailers to keep a competitive edge.

Informational content, graphic design, navigation, and safety are the foundations of a high-quality website. First and foremost, a website's visual appeal is what attracts visitors and determines its excellence (Kassim, and Abdullah, 2010). There is no question that a visually appealing website may attract more visitors. Furthermore, web pages with pictures, videos, or textures can encourage users to make purchases (Rowley, J. 2004; Vrechopoulos, A., and Atherinos, E. 2009; Harris, L. C., and Goode, M. 2010). Secondly, Website owners must carefully consider security issues as more and more customers complete their transactions online. Consumers would be concerned if a website had poor security and transparency. As a result, it would have an impact on the transaction, and customers try to avoid making purchases online (Kesharwani, and Bisht, 2012). Third, Websites must give clear information, increase usability and reduce complexity so that users may navigate them effortlessly (Lin and Sun, 2009).

3. RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

The research model and hypotheses of the study are depicted in Figure 1. The hypotheses derived from this model serve as the foundation for the empirical analysis and discussion.

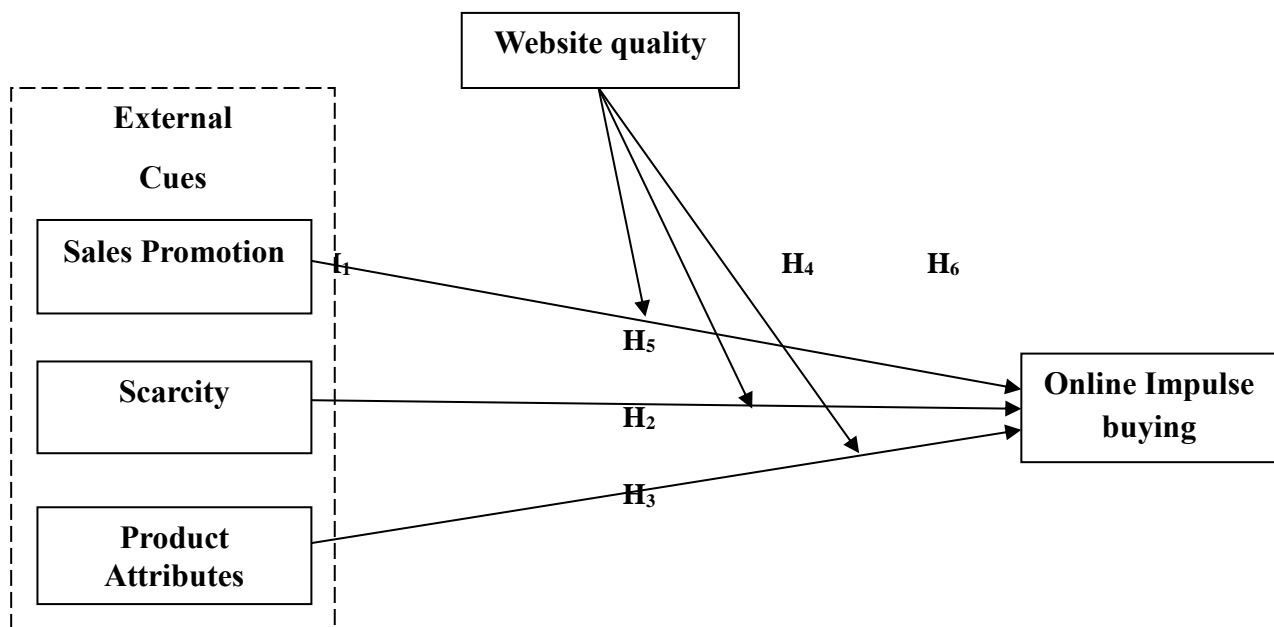


Figure1: Proposed Relationship Model of the study.

3.1. Relation between External cues and Online Impulse Buying

The study undertook sales promotion, scarcity

and product attributes as external factors for investigation. The proposed research model will be helpful to advertisers and marketers in

understanding how external cues affect customers' online impulse purchase behavior.

Sales promotion is one of the significant antecedents of online impulse buying. Sales promotion stimuli include markdowns, clearances, cash rebates, buy-one-get-one-free offers, gift certificates, and purchase ideas like buying newly arrived products and one-stop shopping (Dawson and Kim, 2010). Additionally, Dawson and Kim (2010) proposed a relation between the sales promotions and consumers' online impulse purchases. Thus, sales promotion can favourably affect consumers' online impulse buying (Badgaiyan et al., 2015; Amara and Kchaou 2014). This indicates that consumers' impulsive purchases are increased by the sales promotion program's attractiveness and quality. Thus the study proposed the following hypothesis:

H1: Sales promotion has a positive influence on online impulse buying.

Consumers who recognize the restricted availability of a good or service are said to be experiencing scarcity. Prior research support buying restrictions act as a guiding force to the consumer (Cengiz and Senel, 2024; Aggrawal et al., 2011). Scarcity is already employed by a lot of websites as a conditional tool to enhance impulsive purchasing behavior. The two main types of scarcity messages that are employed are limited time and limited number. Customers would desire a product even more if it is unique and limited (Sun et al., 2024; Akram et al., 2018). The product gains positive value in the minds of consumers when it is limited in availability. Since scarcity has a favorable impact on online impulse buying in a competitive marketplace with limited resources, the following hypothesis is put forth:

H2: Scarcity has a positive influence on online impulse buying.

Exposure to external stimuli, such as variety of products and pricing, not only attracts new customers but also encourages impulse buying (Dawson and Kim, 2010). According to Koschate-Fischer et al., (2012), an unexpectedly low price may contribute to impulse buying by deceiving consumers into believing they are making cheaper purchases than they had budgeted for. The study conducted by Park et al., (2012); Sundtrom et al., (2013); Lim and Yazdabifard, (2015) also considers the price of a product as an antecedent of online impulse buying. Speaking of variety, it can provide consumers with more options as well as enjoyment. As a result, product variety has the potential to motivate impulsive online purchases (Chan et al.,

2017; Satyavani and Chalam, 2018). Thus, the hypothesis is put forth:

H3: Product attributes has a positive influence on online impulse buying.

Moderating effect of Website Quality

Websites are principal store houses of information that can help consumers to gather information. B2C websites are sites that enable consumers to make shopping through the World Wide Web (Ranganathan and Ganapathy, 2002). Consumers' online buying decision may affected by the design characteristics of a web page (Shergill and Chen, 2005). Previous studies demonstrate that consumers' OIBB is significantly influenced by characteristics associated with a website's quality. Although the existing literature supports the impact of website quality and external cues on online impulse buying. But role of website quality as a moderating variable is still unexplored. Thus the study proposes additional three hypotheses to close this gap:

H4: Website quality moderates the relationship between sales promotion and online impulse buying.

H5: Website quality moderates the relationship between scarcity and online impulse buying.

H6: Website quality moderates the relationship between product attribute and online impulse buying.

4. RESEARCH METHOD AND ANALYSIS

4.1. Data collection

A sampling technique was employed to gather data from consumers who had engaged in online impulse buying behavior. The purpose behind adopting this strategy was to specifically include only those consumers who met predefined criteria and provide meaningful insights aligned with the objective of current study (Etikan et al., 2016). Figure 2 presents the overview of comprehensive methodology employed to conduct the study

Data were collected using a mixed approach, involving both online and offline surveys. The online questionnaire were disseminated through email invitations, social media platforms and online consumer groups, while offline data was collected by personally distributing printed questionnaire to various consumer groups. This approach ensured a wide reach and also helped to reduce potential sampling biases. The data collection process was carried out from July 2024 to July 2025. Respondents were informed about the academic purpose of the survey and are requested to participate voluntarily. Preliminary screening questions were used to

confirm that respondents had indulged in online impulse buying behaviour in past. After careful Validation and screening of responses, a total of 260 valid questionnaires were retained for further analysis.

The survey primarily included adult online consumer aged 18 or above, representing a diverse mix of students, working professionals, self employed etc. No vulnerable population was

involved, and the study did not include any physical psychological or medical intervention. The demographic composition is very relevant as online shopping platforms attract a wide range of age group, family structure and income level, each exhibiting varied degree of impulsive behavior in terms of shopping. The demographic results of qualified samples are displayed in Table 1.

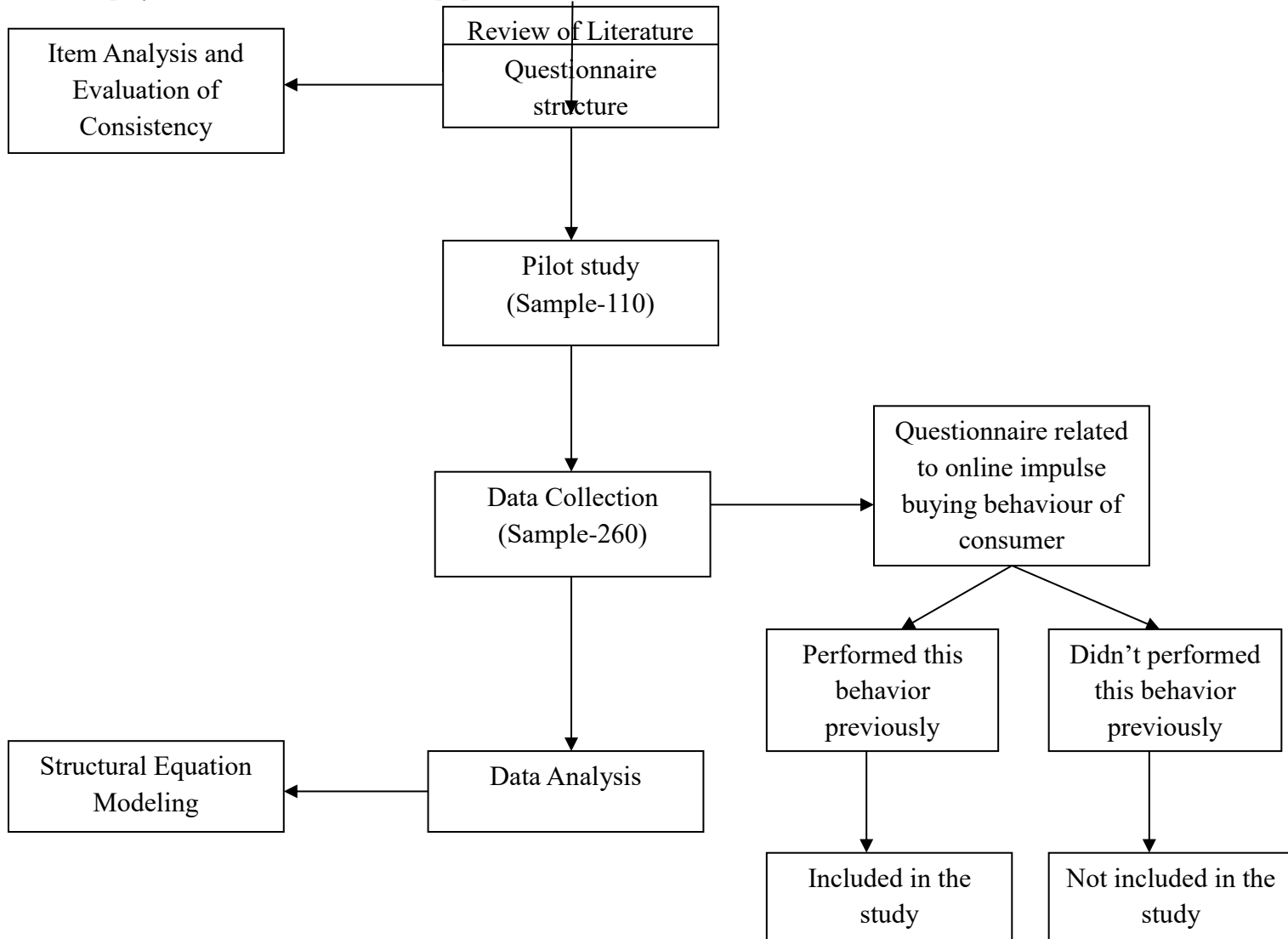


Figure2. Research methodology approach

Source: Authors' work.

Table1: Demographic Profile of Respondents.

Measure	Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	104	40
	Female	156	60
Age	18-28	187	71.9
	29-39	61	23.5
	Above 40	12	4.6
Education	Under Graduate	39	15
	Graduation	88	33.8
	Post Graduation Professional	86	33.1
		32	12.3
	Others	15	5.8
Occupation	Student	52	20
	Self Employed	23	8.8
	Govt. Employee	31	11.9
	Private Employee	136	52.3
	Retired	12	4.6
	Others	6	2.3
Marital Status	Unmarried	157	60.4
	Married	77	29.6
	Married with Children	26	10
Annual Family Income	Below Rs.5 lakhs	135	51.9
	Rs.5 lakhs-10 lakhs	98	37.7
	Above Rs.10 lakhs	27	10.4

4.2. Instrument development

The survey questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section focuses on collection of demographic profile of respondents such as age, income, and gender. The second section contains statements aimed at measuring the constructs related to online impulse buying behaviour. Every questionnaire item had to be answered by the participants on a five-point Likert scale. A common method for letting respondents indicate how much they agree or disagree with a questionnaire item is the Likert scale (1 being strongly disagreed; 5 being strongly agreed). The items used to measure the constructs which are incorporated in the study

were derived from established studies in the field of consumer behaviour and online shopping. Minor modifications were made to ensure alignment with the objective of the study in the context of online impulse buying. Specifically, online impulse buying behaviour was adopted from Verhagen and van Dolen (2011), sales promotion was adopted by lazim et al., (2020), scarcity was adopted from Akram et al., (2018), product attributes was adopted by park et al., (2012) and website quality was adopted by Well, Parboteeah, V., & Valacich, (2011).

4.3. Measurement items

The study employed Partial Least Squares (PLS)

analysis with Smart PLS software to test its hypotheses. The PLS approach, as outlined by Chin (1998), allows for the simultaneous evaluation of both measurement model parameters and structural path coefficients, making it a suitable method for analyzing and testing the research model. A two-step approach was utilized for data analysis. Firstly, to evaluate the discriminant and convergent validity of each construct in the measurement model, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was carried out. This step helps ensure that the constructs in the model are distinct from each other yet related, as expected. Secondly, to test the research hypotheses and empirically verify the significance of the path coefficients, structural model analysis was carried out. This analysis helps to determine the strength and direction of the relationships between variables in the model, providing insights into the underlying mechanisms driving the phenomena under study.

4.4. Analysis of measurement model

It is crucial to identify whether the model is formative or reflective before conducting a confirmatory composite analysis. The relationship between the variable and its measuring items is one of the notable distinctions between reflective and formative assessments (Hanafiah, 2020). As opposed to the formative model, which follows the path of causality from measurement item to construct, the reflective model follows the path of causality from construct to measurement item. Furthermore, by sharing a common theme, elements in the reflective model are also similar; therefore removing an indication does not alter the conceptual scope of the construct. However, in formative assessment, a consistent pattern does not always need to be shared by all elements, and the conceptual scope of a construct may alter if an indicator is removed (Theodosiou et al., 2019).

The measurement model is evaluated for validity and reliability. Examining factor loadings is the first step in assessing a measurement model. According to Henseler et al., (2015) and Hair et al., (2016), loadings should be greater than 0.70 or between 0.60 and 0.70, as these imply that the latent factor accounts for over 50% of the variation in the indicator. Table 2 present the factor loading results demonstrating that every construct item loads satisfactorily on a given factor and that all standardized loadings, having values between 0.685 and 0.876, are higher than the suggested limit. Measuring the internal consistency comes next. One criterion for confirming the internal consistency of variables is composite reliability; Cronbach's alpha

is an additional criterion. According to Hair et al., (2019), 0.70 is the recommended minimal threshold for assessing consistency. Table 2 illustrates that all reliability measures produce acceptable outcomes, surpassing the requirement of 0.7. After that, validity is evaluated using convergent and discriminant validity. The goal of convergent validity is to ascertain how well different construct items represent similar concepts. The average variance extracted (AVE) is used to assess convergent validity; a standard of 0.50 or greater is deemed appropriate (Hair et al., 2019). According to Table 2, the value of AVE is acceptable since all values are greater than standard limit of 0.50.

Table 2: Reliability and Validity.

Constructs	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Composition Reliability
Sales promotion	0.685~0.810	0.865	0.598	0.869
Scarcity	0.814~0.876	0.871	0.721	0.872
Product attributes	0.799~0.850	0.921	0.679	0.923
Online impulse buying	0.774~0.845	0.923	0.652	0.925
Website Quality	0.828~0.876	0.864	0.710	0.870

Source: Author's research

The next step is to evaluate discriminant validity to show the degree of distinction between a construct and other constructs. Fornell and Larcker's criterion was used that includes comparing the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct with the correlations between that construct and all other constructs in the model. The square root values of the Extracted Average Variance (AVE) are shown by the diagonal elements (bold). When each construct's square root of the AVE is higher than its correlations with every other construct in the model, discriminant validity is established. Table 3 indicates all values are fulfilling the mentioned criteria.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity.

	OIB	PA	S	SP	W
OIB	0.807				
PA	0.597	0.824			
S	0.665	0.632	0.849		
SP	0.578	0.637	0.564	0.773	
W	0.532	0.581	0.534	0.561	0.843

(OIB:online impulse buying), (PA:product attributes), (S: scarcity), (SP:sales promotion), (W:websitequality)

Source: Author's research

4.5. Analysis of structural model

The software Smart PLS 4.1.0.0 was employed in the study to verify the structural model's goodness of fit. Table 4 and Figure 3 present the findings of structural path analysis. When determining the overall predictive power of a model, one can look at its R2 value, which is the proportion by which the exogenous variables explain the variation in the endogenous variables. According to Falk and Miller (1992), in order for exogenous variables to be considered statistically significant, their R2 value needs to be more than 0.10. Along with the R2 and path coefficients, Figure 3 displays the path

coefficients for the model between the exogenous and endogenous variables. Figure 3 illustrates the explained variance for online impulse buying at 55.2%. R2 value was higher than the required minimum of 0.10. Meanwhile,online impulse buying is directly impacted by sales promotion ($\beta = 0.217$; $t = 3.290$) (H1 is supported), online impulse buying directly influenced by scarcity ($\beta=0.364$; $t=4.418$) (H2 is supported). Online impulse buying is significantly positively impacted by product attributes ($\beta=0.167$; $t=2.436$) (H3 is supported).

Table4: Results of proposed model.

Relationships	P value	Path Coefficient	t-value	Decision
SP->OIB	0.001	0.217	3.290	H1(supported)
S->OIB	0.000	0.364	4.418	H2(supported)
PA->OIB	0.015	0.167	2.436	H3(supported)

Source: Author's research.

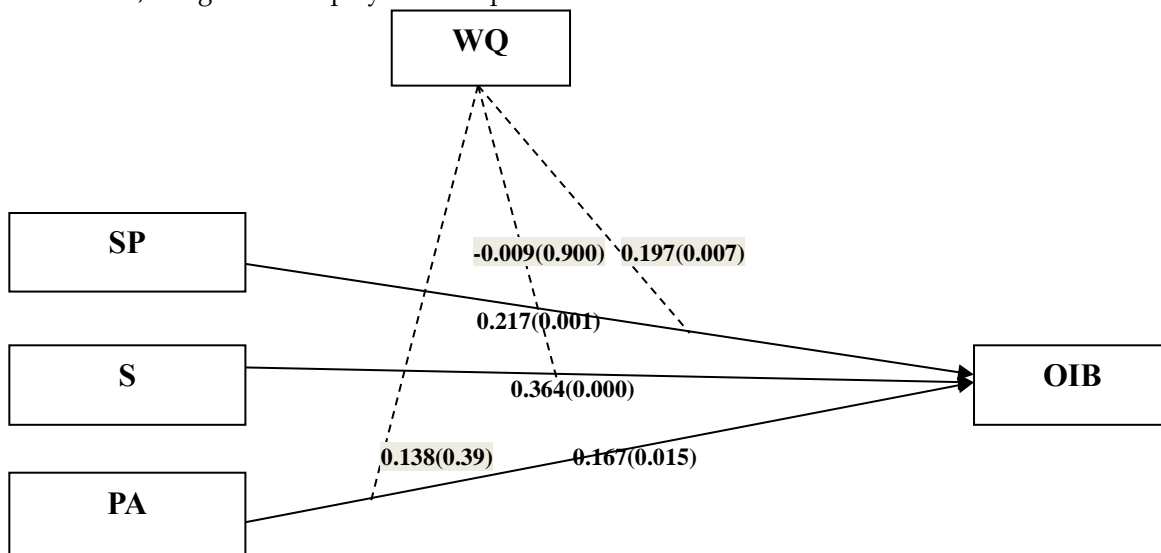


Figure3: Structural model. Source: Authors' work.

4.6. Moderation Results

After determining the R2 values, the moderating impact needs to be calculated. The study undertook the moderating influence of website quality for a comprehensive understanding of the concept. This study examined three moderating effects but two of them are significant. A moderating influence exists between the independent and dependent variables if the p-value is less than 0.05 and t-value is more than 1.96. According to Bryan and Haryadi (2018), a value is deemed significant if it is less than 0.05, and not significant if it is greater than 0.05. The threshold of both H4 and H6 is less than 0.05. On the other hand, the values of H5 are not fulfilling the

required condition. Hence, H5 was not supported. The results are shown in table 5 and figure 4.

Table5: The Moderation Analysis of Website Quality.

Relationships	P value	Path coefficient	t-value	Decision
W x SP -> OIB	0.007	0.197	2.709	H4(supported)
W x S -> OIB	0.900	-0.009	0.126	H5(not supported)
W x PA -> OIB	0.039	0.138	2.064	H6(supported)

Source: Author's research.

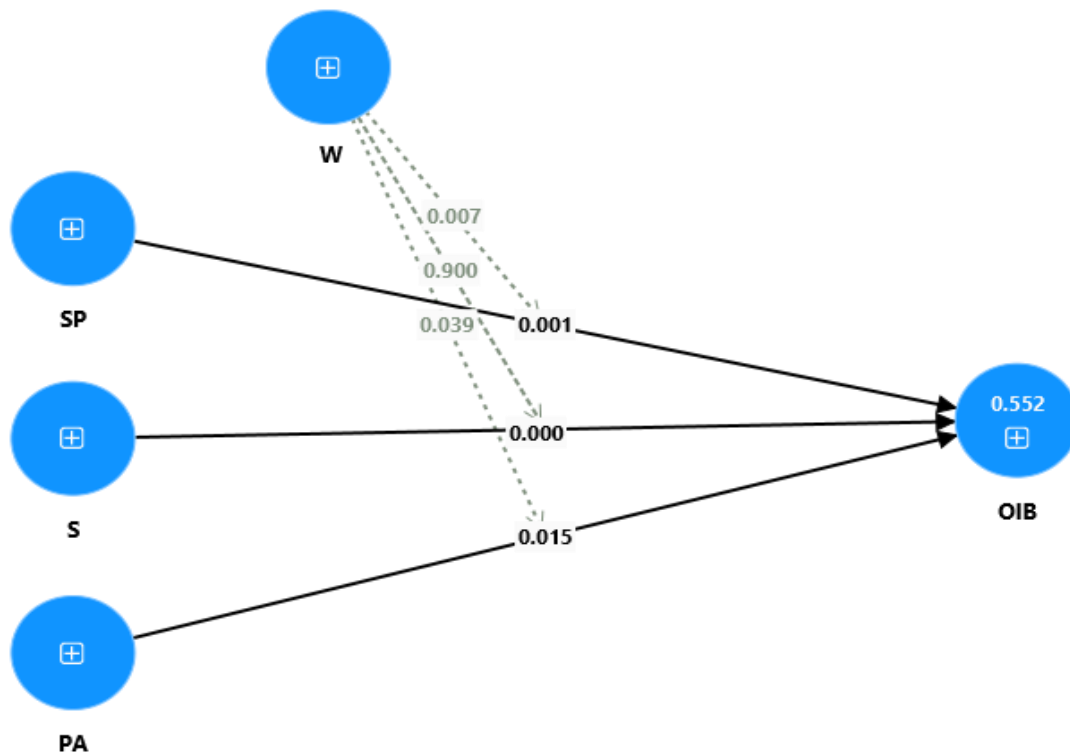


Figure4: Moderation model.

4.7. Discussion

The study aims to ascertain how online impulse buying is influenced by external cues, such as sales promotion, scarcity and product attributes. The moderating influence of website quality was also taken into account for a comprehensive understanding of the concept. Study indicates that sales promotion positively impacts impulsive online purchases (H1). The results are consistent with studies conducted by Mutanafisa and Retnaningsih (2021), Akram et al., (2018), and Firdausy (2021). According to the study, providing discounts and gifts as part of a sales promotion has a favourable and significant impact on impulsive purchase behaviour. Usually, impulsive purchases are not made with planning. Attractive discounts available will entice customers. According to the findings, offering short-term incentives like price discounts, cash back, flash deals, and shipping cost reductions can encourage customers to make impulsive purchases.

It has been found that website quality moderates the relationship between sales promotion and online impulse buying (H4). Credibility and trust are strengthened by an attractive and professionally built website. Consumers are more likely to enjoy the benefits of sales promotion from reliable and secure websites. Well designed graphics and

creative product placement can help high quality websites effectively display sales promotions. Advanced technologies that allow for personalized marketing are frequently seen on high quality websites. Personalized sales promotions that match individual consumer preferences can effectively enhance the rates of impulse buying.

Online impulse purchase behaviour of consumers was found to be positively influenced by scarcity (H2). The result are in line with the earlier similar study of Chung et.al,(2017). Customers are prompted to make an impulse purchase on receiving a message about scarcity of product. Customers experience a sense of urgency and FOMO (fear of missing out) when there is a shortage of anything (Kathuria and Bakshi, 2024). This is a strong psychological trigger. This natural reaction might be powerful enough to encourage impulsive purchase despite of low quality website. Customers may put their fear of missing out on a good deal against website quality when presented with a limited time offer or low stock alert. The emphasis on the message of scarcity reduces the impact of the overall quality of the website on the decision making process. Therefore website quality does not moderate the relationship between scarcity and online impulse buying (H5). This result is consistent with Cognitive Appraisal Theory which focuses on the role of urgent and emotionally charged

appraisals. In contrast to more logical secondary appraisal processes that may otherwise be regulated by website design or quality, scarcity cues can cause instantaneous emotional reactions like FOMO (Fear of Missing Out).

The results of the study indicate that product attributes including both price and variety has a direct impact on online impulse buying behavior (H3). Price serves as an external cue to consumers which are a significant marketing stimulus that may trigger an impulsive desire to purchase the goods (Brabo et al., 2021; Sihombing et al., 2020). It has been discovered that lower costs make it easier for customers to rationalize an impulsive purchase since they minimise the perceived financial risk. A key driver of impulse buying is attractive pricing which can provoke a desire for immediate satisfaction. Variety of selection found to be positively related to online impulse buying (Sihombing et al., 2020; Park et al., 2012). A broad range of option allows consumers to browse and may lead them to find things they had not planned to purchase.

Products can appear tempting on a visually pleasing website. Smartly priced wide range of products attracts customers more when presented in an aesthetically pleasant manner on a website. The visual appeal of a website has the potential to increase the perceived worth of the products and promote impulsive purchase. Customers may quickly explore multiple products with the use of features like search functions, filters, and well organized categories. Easy access to a wide variety of products increases the likelihood of impulsive purchases. Thus, it has been proposed that the relationship between product attributes and online impulse buying is moderated by the quality of the website (H6).

4.8. Practical Implications

The results of the study have several practical implications and suggestions for marketers operating through online platforms. Considering the fierce competition in the market, it is important for marketers to develop competitive advantages to remain relevant to the customers. The study underlines the need of employing online sales promotions which includes discounts, free gifts and other deals in order to successfully encourage online impulse purchases. These promotion programs should be strategically implemented by managers. These promotions should be clearly presented and tailored to the target consumers to receive the maximum benefits. When it comes to scarcity,

display text and image on online shopping platforms or websites can better notify users about the quantity and time constraints of buying goods and services. Online sellers should therefore create their messages and visuals to convey the message of scarcity quickly and effectively. Online stores should also use scarcity messaging techniques like emailing and setting alarms to draw attention of customers. These urgent messages and real time stock updates may induce a sense of urgency that encourages impulse purchasing. The findings imply that impulse purchases are successfully motivated by the sense of urgency induced by scarcity cues, irrespective of the quality of the website. Therefore, the marketer can prioritize applying scarcity strategies despite of having an inadequate website quality. This is especially useful for small or new businesses that may not have enough resources to invest heavily in website design and functionality. They can use scarcity as an effective tool to increase impulsive purchases. The findings also recommend improving product attractiveness by offering variety of products at a fair price to encourage impulsive purchases.

The study emphasizes the moderating role of website quality that shows security, user experience, and website design are critical investment areas. The external cues taken in study can impact customer satisfaction more when combined with an excellent, user friendly and secure website. Marketer should concentrate on improvement of website in order to optimize the results of their marketing strategies. By using insights from Cognitive Appraisal Theory, marketers can create stimuli that are more engaging both cognitively and emotionally. Marketer can tailor content to trigger favorable appraisals by understanding tendency of consumer to appraise online cues which enhances the likelihood of impulse buying.

The study also enhances scholarly research in the field of digital consumer behavior by examining the interaction between technical advancements and marketing strategies. The results of the study can be used by academicians to investigate impulse purchase dynamics in an online setting. Academicians can use the recommendations for future research to develop new theoretical frameworks that expand the comprehension of consumer behaviour in the online marketplace.

5. CONCLUSION

The study adds interesting insights to the field of online impulse buying but it is vital to acknowledge its constraints that may affect the applicability and

effectiveness of the findings. Some directions for further research are also presented. Customers who have experienced impulsive buying are the subject of the research. However, the study does not focus on any one product or category of items in particular. Future studies should therefore focus on product categories such as health, beauty, hobbies, foods and fashion items, etc. that may encourage customers to make impulsive purchases. The study opted cross-section research to confirm the relationship in the proposed model. The future studies can employ an experimental approach or longitudinal studies, which could have yielded other valuable insights (Dillon and Goldstein, 1984). This study focused on three external cues which were sales promotion, scarcity and product

attributes. Several variables remained worthy of consideration and study e.g., customer reviews, product ratings, social media influence and brand reputation. These variables could be taken into account in future studies to investigate the online impulse buying behavior of customers. The current research can be expanded by incorporating behavior based factors such as personality traits, cultural dimensions, and motivational drivers to comprehend online impulse buying behaviour. The current study used website quality as the moderator. Incorporating additional moderating and mediating variables as well as integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches could further expand the research.

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