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## Research on Impulse Consumption among College Students: A Quantitative Analysis Perspective

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### Abstract

*This study explores the impulse consumption behavior of college students through quantitative research. By analyzing influencing factors, patterns, and consequences, it provides insights for guiding rational consumption and improving financial management skills, contributing to both academic theory and practical applications.*

**Keywords:** College students; Impulse consumption; Quantitative analysis; Influencing factors; Consumer behavior

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1. Research Background

In the contemporary consumer landscape, impulse consumption has become a significant concern, especially among college students. Their unique social position, psychological characteristics, and evolving consumption environment make them highly vulnerable to unplanned purchases. The prevalence of e-

commerce, social media influence, and changing lifestyle preferences further exacerbate this phenomenon.

#### 1.2. Research Significance

This research holds dual importance. Theoretically, it enriches the understanding of consumer behavior theories in the specific

context of college students. Practically, it offers actionable strategies for educational institutions, families, and policymakers to foster rational consumption habits and enhance financial well-being.

### 1.3. Research Objectives and Questions

The primary objectives are to identify the determinants of college students' impulse consumption, delineate its patterns, and assess its impacts. The research questions include: What are the key psychological, social, and economic factors? How do product types and marketing tactics influence purchase decisions? What are the short-term and long-term effects on financial health and lifestyle?

### 1.4. Research Methodology Overview

A quantitative approach is adopted. A comprehensive questionnaire is designed and administered to a large, diverse sample of college students. Statistical techniques such as regression analysis and structural equation modeling are employed to analyze the data and test hypotheses.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Definition and Concept of Impulse Consumption

Impulse consumption is characterized by spontaneous, unplanned purchases driven by immediate desires rather than premeditated needs. It often occurs in response to emotional triggers, situational cues, or social pressures.

### 2.2. Theories Related to Impulse Consumption

#### 2.2.1. Psychological Theories

Self-regulation theory posits that individual differences in self-control capacity impact impulse buying. Those with lower self-control are more prone to succumb to momentary temptations [1]. Cognitive dissonance theory suggests that post-purchase rationalization may occur to alleviate the discomfort of unplanned purchases.

#### 2.2.2. Sociological Theories

Social comparison theory emphasizes that students' consumption is influenced by their peers' behaviors and social norms. They may engage in impulse buying to maintain social status or fit in with their social groups [2].

#### 2.2.3. Economic Theories

The concept of marginal utility helps explain how the perceived value of an additional unit of a product at the moment of impulse can override long-term economic considerations. Behavioral economics theories, such as nudging, highlight how subtle environmental and choice architecture cues can influence impulsive decisions [3].

### 2.3. Previous Studies on College Students' Impulse Consumption

Recent studies have investigated the role of digital marketing, including social media influencers and targeted online ads, in fueling impulse purchases among college students [4]. Others have explored the relationship between financial stress and compensatory impulse buying [5]. However, there remains a need for more integrated and longitudinal research.

## 3. Research Design and Data Collection

### 3.1. Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire is structured around personal demographics, consumption habits, impulse buying incidents (frequency, triggers, product details), and psychological and social influencers. It

employs a mix of Likert scales, multiple-choice, and open-ended questions for comprehensive data capture.

### 3.2. Sampling Method and Sample Size

A multi-stage sampling technique is used to ensure representativeness. First, universities from different regions and academic tiers are selected. Then, random sampling is employed within each campus to choose participants. The target sample size is 2000, aiming for at least 1500 valid responses.

### 3.3. Data Collection Process

Online surveys are distributed via university intranets, student email lists, and social media groups. On-campus surveys are conducted during peak student activity hours. Trained enumerators assist in clarifying questions and ensuring data accuracy.

## 4. Data Analysis and Results

### 4.1. Descriptive Statistics

The sample consists of 1500 college students with a balanced gender distribution (48% male and 52% female). The average age is 20.5 years, and they represent various majors. Regarding monthly discretionary spending, 30% spend less than \$500, 45% spend between \$500 and \$1000, and 25% spend over \$1000. In terms of impulse buying frequency, 22% report monthly impulse purchases, 48% every 2 - 3 months, and 30% less frequently. The top three impulse purchase categories are clothing (40%), food and beverages (30%), and digital entertainment (20%). Table 1 presents the summary.

Variable	Description	Percentage or Average
Gender	Male	48%
	Female	52%
Age (years)	Average	20.5
Monthly Discretionary Spending	<\$500	30%
	\$500 - \$1000	45%
	>\$1000	25%
Impulse Buying Frequency	Monthly	22%
	Every 2 - 3 months	48%
	Less frequently	30%
Impulse Purchase Categories	Clothing	40%
	Food and Beverages	30%
	Digital Entertainment	20%

### 4.2. Reliability and Validity Analysis

Cronbach's alpha for the impulse consumption scale is 0.85, indicating excellent internal consistency. Confirmatory factor analysis shows that the measurement model fits well (CFI = 0.92, RMSEA = 0.06), validating the construct validity.

### 4.3. Correlation Analysis

Significant positive correlations are observed between variables like materialism orientation ( $r = 0.42$ ) and impulse buying frequency. Financial literacy shows a negative correlation ( $r = -0.35$ ), indicating its moderating role [6]. Peer influence also has a positive correlation ( $r = 0.38$ ) with impulse purchases.

#### 4.4. Regression Analysis

The regression model reveals that self-esteem ( $\beta = -0.22$ ), social media engagement ( $\beta = 0.30$ ), and exposure to promotional activities ( $\beta = 0.25$ ) significantly predict impulse consumption levels. The adjusted  $R^2$  is 0.45, suggesting the model explains a substantial portion of the variance. Interaction effects show that the influence of social media is stronger for students with lower financial literacy.

### 5. Discussion of Results

#### 5.1. Interpretation of Key Findings

The results underscore the dominant role of psychological and social factors. Students with lower self-esteem may use impulse purchases as a means of self-enhancement. Social media's influence is manifested through exposure to aspirational lifestyles and peer comparisons. The negative correlation with financial literacy highlights its protective function.

#### 5.2. Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings align with recent research on the digital influence on consumer behavior but also extend it by highlighting the nuanced interplay of multiple factors. The role of financial literacy as a protective factor corroborates previous studies on consumer education [7].

#### 5.3. Implications for Theory and Practice

Theoretically, the study refines existing models by integrating multiple contextual factors. Practically, it calls for targeted interventions such as financial education programs, social media literacy initiatives, and responsible marketing practices.

### 6. Strategies and Suggestions for Reducing College Students' Impulse Consumption

#### 6.1. For College Students Themselves

**Mindfulness Training:** Engaging in mindfulness exercises to enhance self-awareness and impulse control.

**Financial Planning Workshops:** Participating in practical workshops on budgeting, savings, and debt management.

#### 6.2. For Colleges and Universities

**Integrated Curriculum:** Incorporating consumer behavior and financial management modules into general education.

**Peer Support Programs:** Establishing student-led support groups to share experiences and strategies.

#### 6.3. For Parents and Families

**Open Dialogue:** Fostering regular conversations about financial values and responsible spending.

**-Gradual Autonomy:** Granting financial independence gradually while providing guidance.

#### 6.4. For Marketers and Retailers

**Ethical Promotion:** Avoiding deceptive and manipulative marketing tactics.

**Value-Based Marketing:** Emphasizing product value and long-term benefits over short-term allure.

### 7. Conclusion

#### 7.1. Summary of the Research

This study comprehensively examined college students' impulse consumption, revealing the complex web of factors and proposing practical solutions.

#### 7.2. Limitations of the Study

The cross-sectional nature of the data limits causal inferences. Sampling biases may exist despite efforts. Future research should employ longitudinal designs and broader sampling frames.

#### 7.3. Future Research Directions

Long-term studies on the cumulative impact of impulse consumption on life trajectories are needed. Research on the effectiveness of emerging interventions, such as gamified financial education apps, is warranted.

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