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Ai, Allure, and The Art of the Deal: Decoding Impulse Buying in Social Commerce

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Abstract:

Purpose

This study explores the impact of AI-driven personalized advertisements on impulse buying in India's social commerce landscape. It examines psychological triggers influencing consumer decisions and assesses ethical concerns related to AI-powered marketing.

Objectives

- *Analyse how AI-driven ads influence impulse buying.*
- *Differentiate between high and low impulsive buyers.*
- *Evaluate ethical concerns such as data privacy and consumer manipulation.*

Findings

AI-powered recommendations significantly drive impulse buying, especially among high impulsive buyers who respond strongly to limited-time offers and influencer promotions. However, concerns over AI manipulation and data privacy negatively impact consumer trust, highlighting the need for ethical marketing practices.

Limitations

The study relies on self-reported data, which may introduce bias. Additionally, the evolving nature of AI and digital marketing requires further research on long-term trends.

Practical Implications

Businesses must balance AI-driven engagement with transparency and responsible data use. Policymakers should develop regulations that ensure consumer protection while fostering innovation in social commerce.

Originality/Value

This research provides empirical insights into AI's influence on impulse buying, contributing to discussions on AI ethics, consumer psychology, and digital marketing strategies.

Key Words: *AI-driven marketing, impulse buying, social commerce, personalized advertisements, consumer behaviour, data privacy, ethical AI.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Social commerce, a subset of e-commerce, has revolutionized the way Indian consumers interact with products and brands online. Unlike traditional e-commerce platforms, social commerce leverages social media networks to facilitate buying and selling, integrating peer recommendations, influencer endorsements, and interactive features to enhance user engagement (Zhang & Benyoucef, 2016). The rapid adoption of platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Telegram has transformed online shopping into a highly immersive experience, where users are exposed to personalized deals, limited-time offers, and influencer-driven promotions (Hajli, 2015). With the growing dominance of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered recommendations, social commerce in India is creating a new era of digital consumerism, where impulse buying is becoming a driving force behind online sales.

India's e-commerce sector has experienced explosive growth, driven by digital transformation, increased smartphone penetration, and affordable internet access through initiatives like Digital India and Jio's telecom revolution (Kumar & Kumar, 2021). Sales events such as Flipkart's Big Billion Days, Amazon's Great Indian Festival, Myntra's End of Reason Sale, and Ajio's Super Weekend Sale have further accelerated online shopping habits, capitalizing on psychological triggers like urgency, scarcity, and social proof (IBEF, 2022). Within this rapidly evolving ecosystem, impulse buying—an unplanned and spontaneous purchase decision—has become a crucial factor influencing consumer behaviour. Social commerce platforms, fuelled by AI-driven marketing strategies, actively nudge consumers toward

impulsive purchases by leveraging influencer endorsements, personalized discount alerts, and exclusive Telegram channel deals (Verhagen & van Dolen, 2011).

Artificial Intelligence has reshaped digital marketing in India by enabling hyper-personalized advertising strategies that enhance consumer engagement and sales conversion rates. AI-powered recommendation engines on platforms like Flipkart, Amazon, and Meesho analyse vast amounts of user data, including browsing history, purchase behaviour, and social interactions, to predict and influence consumer purchasing decisions (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019). By personalizing deals based on shopping preferences, AI ensures that consumers are presented with irresistible discounts, time-sensitive offers, and influencer-endorsed products that encourage unplanned purchases (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Telegram channels and WhatsApp groups dedicated to deal-sharing further amplify this trend, as users are constantly updated about flash sales, limited stock availability, and hidden discounts.

Furthermore, AI-driven chatbots, dynamic pricing algorithms, and virtual shopping assistants play a pivotal role in enhancing the consumer journey by offering personalized product recommendations and exclusive deals in real-time (Xiao & Benbasat, 2007). Behavioural economics principles, such as fear of missing out (FOMO), urgency, and social validation, are heavily employed by Indian e-commerce giants to drive impulse purchases (Dholakia, 2000). However, as AI becomes more sophisticated in shaping consumer behaviour, concerns regarding data privacy, algorithmic manipulation, and ethical considerations have also emerged, particularly in a market where digital literacy levels vary significantly (Acquisti, Taylor, & Wagman, 2016). Indian regulatory bodies and consumer protection laws are still catching up with the rapid advancements in AI-driven digital marketing, raising important questions about consumer autonomy and informed decision-making.

Impulse buying behaviour varies among Indian consumers, influenced by psychological, situational, and demographic factors. High impulsive buyers are particularly susceptible to visually appealing advertisements, influencer endorsements, and time-limited deals, making them prime targets for AI-driven marketing strategies (Rook & Fisher, 1995). Social media influencers play a crucial role in this ecosystem, with YouTube, Instagram, and Telegram influencers frequently promoting fashion, gadgets, and beauty products through exclusive discount codes and personalized product recommendations (Park & Lennon, 2006). The rise of vernacular content and regional influencers has further expanded the reach of social commerce, bringing even rural and semi-urban consumers into the fold of digital impulse buying.

In contrast, low impulsive buyers rely on rational decision-making, prioritizing value and necessity over emotional triggers. These consumers are less influenced by persuasive marketing tactics and tend to compare prices, read reviews, and seek detailed product specifications before making a purchase (Piron, 1991). Understanding these consumer distinctions is crucial for Indian businesses looking to optimize their AI-driven marketing strategies while maintaining ethical standards and consumer trust (Sharma, Sivakumaran, & Marshall, 2010). By balancing AI-powered engagement techniques with responsible marketing practices, Indian brands can ensure sustainable growth while fostering a trustworthy digital shopping environment.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES & SIGNIFICANCE

This study aims to investigate the impact of AI-driven marketing on impulse buying behaviour in India's social commerce landscape. The key objectives include:

1. Examining the role of personalized advertisements in triggering impulse purchases among Indian consumers.
2. Analysing the psychological and behavioural differences between high and low impulsive buyers in India.
3. Assessing the ethical implications of AI-driven persuasion techniques in Indian social commerce.

The findings of this research will contribute to the academic discourse on digital marketing, consumer psychology, and artificial intelligence ethics in the Indian context. Additionally, insights gained will aid businesses in developing responsible marketing strategies that balance profitability with consumer well-being.

2.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS & HYPOTHESES

To achieve the outlined objectives, this study will address the following research questions:

1. How do AI-driven personalized ads influence impulse buying behaviour in Indian social commerce?
2. What are the distinguishing characteristics of high versus low impulsive buyers in India?
3. What ethical concerns arise from the use of AI in personalized marketing strategies in India?

Based on existing literature, the study proposes the following hypotheses:

- **H1:** AI-driven personalized advertisements significantly increase impulse buying behaviour in Indian social commerce.
- **H2:** High impulsive buyers in India are more susceptible to AI-driven marketing tactics than low impulsive buyers.

- **H3:** Ethical concerns surrounding AI-driven marketing negatively affect consumer trust and brand perception in India.

By addressing these questions and hypotheses, this research aims to bridge the gap between technological advancements in AI-driven marketing and consumer decision-making processes in the Indian social commerce sector.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS: CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING AND IMPULSE BUYING THEORIES

Consumer decision-making has long been studied through various theoretical lenses, including the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) and the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). These theories suggest that external stimuli, such as AI-driven advertisements, influence consumer emotions and cognitive processes, ultimately leading to purchasing decisions. Impulse buying theories, such as Stern's (1962) classification of impulse purchases, further emphasize the spontaneous and emotional nature of unplanned purchases. In the context of social commerce, where AI-driven recommendations dominate consumer interactions, these frameworks provide a foundation for understanding the psychological mechanisms at play.

3.1 AI AND ITS ROLE IN CONSUMER PERSUASION

Artificial intelligence has revolutionized marketing by leveraging machine learning and big data analytics to enhance consumer engagement. AI-driven advertisements use predictive analytics to customize marketing messages based on browsing history, purchase behaviour, and social interactions (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019). Research has shown that AI personalization enhances perceived relevance and increases the likelihood of impulse buying (Duan et al., 2021). This aligns with H1, which postulates that AI-driven personalized advertisements significantly increase impulse buying behaviour in Indian social commerce.

3.2 PSYCHOLOGICAL TRIGGERS BEHIND IMPULSE BUYING

Impulse buying is largely influenced by psychological triggers such as scarcity, fear of missing out (FOMO), discounts, and personalization. Scarcity, as explained by Cialdini's (1984) principle of persuasion, creates urgency, making consumers more likely to make impulsive decisions. FOMO, a phenomenon intensified by social media, further amplifies this effect (Przybylski et al., 2013). Discounts and personalized promotions add another layer of persuasion by creating a sense of exclusivity and tailored engagement, thus reinforcing impulsive purchasing tendencies (Chae & Kim, 2020). These psychological mechanisms underpin the susceptibility of high impulsive buyers to AI-driven marketing tactics, supporting H2.

3.3 THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND PEER RECOMMENDATIONS

Social commerce platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok integrate AI to provide hyper-personalized shopping experiences. User-generated content, peer recommendations, and influencer endorsements act as powerful catalysts in impulse buying behaviour (Liang et al., 2011). Studies suggest that social validation increases consumer trust and reduces hesitation, making AI-powered recommendations even more compelling (Erkan & Evans, 2016). This phenomenon is particularly relevant in the Indian market, where social media usage is rapidly growing, and peer influence plays a crucial role in shaping purchasing decisions.

3.4 HIGH VS. LOW IMPULSIVITY IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Consumers exhibit varying levels of impulsivity, influencing their susceptibility to AI-driven marketing. High impulsive buyers tend to exhibit lower self-control, making them more reactive to personalized promotions and real-time offers (Rook & Fisher, 1995). In contrast, low impulsive buyers engage in more deliberative decision-making, requiring stronger persuasive cues to act impulsively. Research by Verhagen & van Dolen (2011) suggests that high impulsive buyers respond more intensely to AI-powered advertisements, aligning with H2.

3.5 ETHICAL CONCERNS AND CONSUMER TRUST

Despite AI's effectiveness in influencing purchasing behaviour, ethical concerns related to data privacy, algorithmic biases, and manipulation have emerged (Shankar et al., 2020). Consumers are increasingly wary of how their data is collected and used, affecting their trust in AI-driven brands. Research indicates that transparency and ethical AI practices are crucial in maintaining consumer trust (Binns et al., 2018). H3 suggests that ethical concerns surrounding AI-driven marketing negatively affect consumer trust and brand perception in India. Studies confirm that when consumers perceive AI-driven marketing as intrusive or unethical, their trust and brand loyalty diminish (Martin & Murphy, 2017).

4. RESULT AND ANALYSIS:

The study sought to determine whether AI-driven personalized advertisements significantly influence impulse buying behaviour. The results from the chi-square test for independence indicate a strong association between the frequency of AI-generated advertisements and the level of impulse buying. The statistical significance ($p = 0.002$) suggests that personalized advertisements effectively trigger impulsive purchasing behaviours among consumers.

From the dataset, it is evident that consumers exposed to frequent AI advertisements are more inclined to make spontaneous purchases. Specifically, among consumers with high exposure to AI-driven advertisements, 53% reported frequent impulse buying tendencies, compared to only 20% in the low-exposure group. This suggests that AI algorithms, which tailor recommendations based on browsing history, preferences, and previous purchases, play a crucial role in nudging consumers towards unplanned transactions.

H1: AI-driven personalized advertisements significantly increase impulse buying behaviour

4.1. CHI-SQUARE TEST FOR INDEPENDENCE

Table-1: Crosstabulation Table

AI Ad Frequency	Low Impulse Buying	Medium Impulse Buying	High Impulse Buying	Total
Low	42	38	20	100
Medium	30	52	38	120
High	18	35	53	106
Total	**90**	**125**	**111**	**326**

(Source: Author's self-generated questionnaire/own work)

Table-2: Chi-Square Test Results

Test	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	**23.45**	4	**.002**
Likelihood Ratio	21.87	4	.003
Linear-by-Linear Association	16.30	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	326		

(Source: Author's self-generated questionnaire/own work)

Interpretation:

Since $p = 0.002 < 0.05$, we reject the null hypothesis. This confirms that AI-driven personalized ads significantly influence impulse buying behaviour (H1 is Accepted).

4.2. ORDINAL LOGISTIC REGRESSION FOR H1

Additionally, the ordinal logistic regression analysis further substantiates this claim. The regression coefficient ($B = 0.67$, $p < 0.05$) indicates that an increase in the frequency of AI-generated ads significantly raises the likelihood of impulsive purchases. The odds ratio of 1.95 suggests that with every increment in AI advertisement exposure, a consumer becomes nearly twice as likely to engage in impulse buying. These findings align with Hypothesis 1 (H1), confirming that AI-driven personalized advertisements have a substantial impact on consumer purchasing behaviour.

Table-3: Parameter Estimates

Predictor	Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
AI Ad Frequency	**0.67**	0.18	**14.23**	1	**.000**	**1.95**
Threshold (Low Impulse)	-1.23	0.31	15.32	1	.000	
Threshold (Medium Impulse)	0.32	0.28	1.31	1	.252	

(Source: Author's self-generated questionnaire/own work)

Interpretation:

The positive coefficient ($B = 0.67$, $p < 0.05$) suggests that as AI Ad Frequency increases, impulse buying behaviour also increases. The odds ratio Exp(B) = 1.95 means that with each increase in AI Ad Frequency, a consumer is 1.95 times more likely to make an impulse purchase (H1 is Accepted).

H2: High impulsive buyers are more susceptible to AI-driven marketing tactics than low impulsive buyers

To examine the differences between high and low impulsive buyers, an independent samples t-test was conducted. The findings reveal that high impulsive buyers exhibit significantly greater susceptibility to AI-driven marketing tactics

(mean score = 4.21) compared to their low impulsive counterparts (mean score = 3.45), with a p-value of 0.0003. This statistical significance highlights the distinct behavioural tendencies of highly impulsive buyers, who are more likely to be influenced by real-time offers, influencer endorsements, and algorithmically curated promotions.

4.3. INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST

Table-4: Independent Sample T-Test

Group	N	Mean AI Influence	Std. Deviation	t-statistic	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
High Impulse Buyers	163	**4.21**	0.92	**4.21**	312	**.0003**
Low Impulse Buyers	163	**3.45**	1.12			

(Source: Author's self-generated questionnaire/own work)

Interpretation:

The p-value (0.0003 < 0.05) indicates a statistically significant difference between high and low impulsive buyers in terms of their susceptibility to AI-driven marketing. High impulsive buyers show a higher mean AI influence score (4.21 vs. 3.45), meaning they are more influenced by AI marketing tactics (H2 is Accepted).

4.4. ANOVA TEST FOR H2

Furthermore, an ANOVA test reinforced these observations by demonstrating statistically significant differences in AI marketing influence across varying levels of consumer impulsivity (F = 12.73, p < 0.05). High impulsive buyers are particularly prone to making purchasing decisions based on emotions, social proof, and limited-time discounts, which are key elements of AI-driven marketing strategies. Post-hoc analyses indicate that the disparity between high and low impulsive buyers is most pronounced in the domains of urgency-based deals and influencer-driven endorsements.

These results affirm Hypothesis 2 (H2), establishing that high impulsive buyers are significantly more receptive to AI-powered marketing compared to low impulsive buyers. The implications of this finding suggest that businesses leveraging AI in social commerce should consider tailoring their marketing strategies to target high impulsive buyers while maintaining ethical considerations to prevent excessive consumer manipulation.

Table-5: Anova Test

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	**34.52**	2	**17.26**	**12.73**	**.0001**
Within Groups	437.21	323	1.35		
Total	471.73	325			

(Source: Author's self-generated questionnaire/own work)

Interpretation:

The ANOVA F-statistic (12.73, p < 0.05) confirms that there are significant differences in AI marketing influence across low, medium, and high impulsive buyers. Post-hoc tests (not shown) indicate that high impulsive buyers experience significantly stronger AI influence than other groups (H2 is Accepted).

H3: Ethical concerns surrounding AI-driven marketing negatively affect consumer trust and brand perception

Beyond the effectiveness of AI-driven marketing, the study also examined its ethical implications, particularly concerning consumer trust. The Spearman's rank correlation analysis highlights a negative association between AI manipulation concerns and trust in AI advertisements (rho = -0.52, p = 0.001). Similarly, concerns regarding data privacy were negatively correlated with trust in AI-powered advertisements (rho = -0.47, p = 0.002).

These findings suggest that as consumer apprehensions about AI manipulation and data privacy increase, their trust in AI-driven marketing diminishes. Many consumers express discomfort over the extent of personal data utilized to tailor advertisements, fearing a loss of autonomy in decision-making. The sentiment is further exacerbated by reports of algorithmic biases and deceptive marketing practices, which reduce brand credibility and consumer loyalty.

4.5. SPEARMAN'S RANK CORRELATION

Table-6: Spearman's Rank Correlation

Variables	Spearman's rho	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
AI Manipulation Concern & Trust in AI Ads	**-0.52**	**.001**	326
Data Privacy Concern & Trust in AI Ads	**-0.47**	**.002**	326

(Source: Author's self-generated questionnaire/own work)

Interpretation:

The negative Spearman correlation coefficients (-0.52, -0.47) indicate that as concern over AI manipulation and data privacy increases, trust in AI ads decreases. This correlation is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), confirming that ethical concerns negatively impact consumer trust (H3 is Accepted).

4.6. Multiple Regression for H3

A multiple regression analysis further substantiates these concerns. The model explains 37% of the variance in trust towards AI advertisements ($R^2 = 0.37$). Notably, AI manipulation concern ($B = -0.41$, $p < 0.05$) and data privacy concern ($B = -0.27$, $p < 0.05$) both exhibit significant negative effects on consumer trust. This indicates that ethical concerns are not merely theoretical issues but have tangible impacts on consumer perception and brand reputation.

These findings validate Hypothesis 3 (H3), confirming that ethical concerns surrounding AI-driven marketing negatively affect consumer trust and brand perception. Given the increasing scrutiny over data privacy and digital consumer rights, businesses must proactively address these concerns by promoting transparency, ethical AI use, and consumer autonomy to sustain long-term trust and engagement.

Table-7: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
1	**.61**	**.37**	**.36**	.92

(Source: Author's self-generated questionnaire/own work)

Table-8: Coefficients

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	5.12	0.43		11.91	.000
AI Manipulation Concern	**-0.41**	0.12	**-0.38**	**-6.23**	**.000**
Data Privacy Concern	**-0.27**	0.10	**-0.30**	**-5.02**	**.000**

(Source: Author's self-generated questionnaire/own work)

Interpretation:

- $R^2 = 0.37$: This model explains 37% of the variance in Trust in AI Ads.
- AI Manipulation Concern ($B = -0.41$, $p < 0.05$): A one-unit increase in AI Manipulation Concern decreases trust in AI ads by 0.41 units.
- Data Privacy Concern ($B = -0.27$, $p < 0.05$): A one-unit increase in Data Privacy Concern decreases trust in AI ads by 0.27 units.

These findings confirm that ethical concerns negatively impact consumer trust in AI-driven marketing (H3 is Accepted). The results of this study reinforce the transformative role of AI in social commerce while highlighting its ethical complexities. AI-powered personalized advertisements significantly influence impulse buying, with high impulsive buyers demonstrating greater susceptibility to these strategies. However, ethical concerns regarding AI-driven marketing negatively impact consumer trust, suggesting that businesses must strike a balance between leveraging AI for profit and ensuring ethical responsibility.

By incorporating responsible AI practices, transparent data policies, and consumer-centric marketing strategies, businesses can optimize their engagement with impulsive buyers while mitigating ethical risks. Future research should explore long-term consumer behaviour trends in response to evolving AI regulations and ethical AI adoption strategies.

5. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant role of AI-driven personalized marketing in shaping consumer behaviour within the social commerce landscape. The findings confirm that AI-powered advertisements, particularly those employing psychological triggers such as urgency, scarcity, and social proof, substantially influence impulse buying tendencies. High impulsive buyers are especially vulnerable to AI-driven marketing tactics, as they are more responsive to real-time deals, influencer endorsements, and hyper-personalized recommendations. The statistical analyses reinforce this conclusion, demonstrating a strong correlation between AI ad exposure and impulse buying frequency, with a nearly twofold increase in impulsive purchases among consumers exposed to frequent AI-driven advertisements.

However, alongside these benefits, the study reveals growing ethical concerns regarding AI's influence on consumer decision-making. Data privacy issues, algorithmic biases, and concerns over consumer autonomy present critical challenges. The results indicate that as consumer apprehensions about AI manipulation and data privacy increase, trust in AI-driven marketing diminishes. This highlights the need for brands to adopt responsible AI practices that

prioritize transparency, fairness, and consumer empowerment. Businesses that fail to address these ethical concerns risk eroding consumer trust, which could lead to decreased engagement and negative brand perception in the long run.

To strike a balance between leveraging AI for commercial gains and ensuring ethical responsibility, businesses should focus on implementing transparent AI policies, adhering to ethical data usage standards, and educating consumers about digital marketing tactics. Regulators must also play a proactive role in developing policies that protect consumers from deceptive AI marketing while fostering innovation in the e-commerce space. Future research should explore the long-term implications of AI-driven social commerce, particularly in light of evolving regulations, advancements in AI technology, and changing consumer expectations.

By fostering responsible AI adoption, businesses can enhance consumer trust and ensure the sustainability of AI-driven marketing strategies. The key to success in this rapidly evolving digital ecosystem lies in creating a fair, engaging, and ethical shopping environment that aligns with both business goals and consumer interests.

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