

BRIDGING PERCEIVED QUALITY, INFLUENCERS AND IMPULSE PURCHASES: A CONCEPTUAL PAPER

CONECTANDO A QUALIDADE PERCEBIDA, OS INFLUENCIADORES E AS COMPRAS IMPULSIVAS: UM ARTIGO CONCEITUAL

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Abstract

Traditionally, perceived quality is often tied to brands, marketing, and financial assets. Nevertheless, with the advancement of technology, particularly influencers, the effects of perceived quality towards impulse purchases remain unknown. This conceptual paper examines the relationship between perceived quality and impulse buying, incorporating a mediator – influencers. By incorporating influencers into the impulse buying picture, this paper presents a novelty study that discusses the conceptual model, hypothesis development, and convergent mixed-methodologies to achieve this

Resumo

Tradicionalmente, a qualidade percebida costuma estar ligada a marcas, marketing e ativos financeiros. No entanto, com o avanço da tecnologia, especialmente no que diz respeito aos influenciadores, os efeitos da qualidade percebida sobre as compras por impulso permanecem desconhecidos. Este artigo conceitual examina a relação entre qualidade percebida e compras por impulso, incorporando um mediador: os influenciadores. Ao incluir os influenciadores no contexto das compras por impulso, este artigo apresenta um estudo inovador que discute o modelo conceitual, o



objective. The concurrent mixed method is a pragmatic paradigm blending the current reality without neglecting the scientific aspect of research. Impulse purchases are bad for the economy as they increase expenditure and lead to financial health. The results will assist researchers in identifying and emphasising any influences that influencers or celebrity endorsements may have on impulse purchasing habits. It enables the researchers to highlight any effects of influencer endorsement and suggest potential awareness campaigns that address the problem. From an academic standpoint, including influencers as mediators is novel and expands upon the corpus of study. Additionally, from the industry standpoint, it offers insights into how brands and influencers can work together to create sustainable and enduring brands through best practices.

Keywords: Consumer Behaviour. Human And Health. Impulse Purchase. Influencer. Perceived Quality.

desenvolvimento de hipóteses e metodologias mistas convergentes para atingir esse objetivo. O método misto simultâneo é um paradigma pragmático que combina a realidade atual sem negligenciar o aspecto científico da pesquisa. As compras por impulso são prejudiciais à economia, pois aumentam os gastos e prejudicam a saúde financeira. Os resultados ajudarão os pesquisadores a identificar e enfatizar quaisquer influências que os influenciadores ou o endosso de celebridades possam ter sobre os hábitos de compra por impulso. Isso permite que os pesquisadores destaquem quaisquer efeitos do endosso de influenciadores e sugiram possíveis campanhas de conscientização que abordem o problema. Do ponto de vista acadêmico, incluir influenciadores como mediadores é inovador e amplia o corpus de estudos. Além disso, do ponto de vista da indústria, oferece insights sobre como marcas e influenciadores podem trabalhar juntos para criar marcas sustentáveis e duradouras por meio de melhores práticas.

Palavras-chave: *Comportamento do Consumidor. Saúde e Bem-estar. Compra por Impulso. Influenciador. Qualidade Percebida.*

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Perceived quality and influencers defined

Traditionally, perceived quality is often associated with brand equity [1]. Brand equity, on the other hand, is tied to various brand components such as loyalty, awareness, associations, assets, and quality. While this association has stayed true through time, new phenomena, such as sustainability efforts [2] and technological advancement, particularly influencers, have added a new dimension to the perceived quality concept.

Aaker [1] defined perceived quality as different from quality. While the quality of the product is exceptionally excellent, it may not be the case in the eyes of consumers. Mitra and Golder [3] further explained that perceived quality could be viewed as an overall evaluation and quality judgment or advantage of the product or service offered to consumers. Li *et al.* [4] defined perceived quality as a collective representation of consumers' belief of the purchased good.

Nevertheless, the importance of quality should not be understated if sustainability efforts are to be focused. Between various variables of brand authenticity, environmental concern, value, craftsmanship, ethics, pricing, durability, and quality, consumers in the United States across multiple generations rank quality as the top reason for shopping for sustainable products [5,6]. Here, quality is viewed as the perception of quality in the eyes of consumers. However, the study needs to use a theory or model.

At the same time, before 2018, Social Media Influencers or Influencer (the term was used interchangeably) was more isolated research. Since then, the study on influencers has grown exponentially [7]. Other terms commonly used apart from Social Media Influencers or influencers are influencer communications, influencer marketing, influencer relations, blogger relations, social network influencer, micro-celebrity, online celebrity, YouTube celebrities and blogger recommendations [7,8,9].

Influencers are third-party actors who have developed many followers (quantity) and impacted organisational stakeholders through the creation, distribution, and exchange of content via social media (quality) [9].

The advancement in technology, mainly influencers, warrants a new perspective on how it affects impulse purchases. Hudders *et al.* [7] proposed that future research directions involving influencers as commercial intermediaries between brands' quality and consumers can be explored.

1.2 Impulse purchase and its financial harm

The hallmark of impulse buying behaviour is an unexpected, strong desire to make a purchase, frequently without giving it much thought or considering the repercussions [10,11]. An internal issue like boredom or tension, or an external factor like a deal or an effective advertisement, might cause impulse buying behaviour. Impulse purchasers could feel a burst of joy or excitement when they make a purchase, but they might also subsequently feel regret or disappointment.

Research has demonstrated that young people are likely to engage in impulse purchases. estimates indicate that up to 50% of impulse purchases occur regardless of age or gender [10].

The Malaysian Department of Statistics [12] reported recently that the average mean income is RM2,000. Assuming youth expenditure is RM943 on average each month, using a conservative estimate [13] multiplied by 12 months and the population size of 10 million working Millennials, the total yearly Malaysian youth consumer expenditure is significantly high. Impulse purchases are bad for the economy as increased expenditure leads to financial health. Malaysian Millennials born between 1981 and 1996 recorded the highest group of bankruptcy cases [14].

While impulse purchases are bad for the economy, they assist organisations in gaining revenue from the marketer's perspective. Considering this purchasing power, companies offering goods and services find the Millennials' market appealing. Businesses and brands frequently target young people whose livelihoods depend on this expenditure. It is therefore understandable why businesses and brands are prepared to invest money in youth marketing, events, and promotions to draw in the youth market and have their products chosen by the younger generation when they go shopping.

The propensity to make recurring impulse purchases is more worrisome. Recurrent impulse purchase was observed by developed nations including the UK, Spain, and Germany at 16, 13, and 7 percent, respectively, whilst developing nations like China recorded 29 percent [9]. Malaysia is not an exemption when it comes to impulse purchases.

1.3 Problem statement

Impulse purchases are becoming a worrying problem among Millennial consumers, harming their financial well-being and sustainable consumption. Using perceived quality as stimuli, influencers as organisms, and impulse purchases as responses, this conceptual paper investigates the relationship between perceived quality and impulse buying by adding a mediator –influencers. By adding influencers as mediators, a novelty study, when it comes to impulse purchases.

Redine *et al.* [15] and Zhao *et al.* [16] conducted a systematic literature review and meta-analysis of impulse purchases. No one has used influencers as a mediator in the study. At the same time, Hudders *et al.* [7] further opined that future research directions

should consider influencers as commercial intermediaries between brands and consumers can be explored.

Rosengren and Campbell [17] and Redine *et al.* [15] necessitate different research designs such as mixed methods. Redine *et al.* [15] highlighted the fact that impulse purchases need to explore a mixed method to meet the methodological gap. Thus, Denzin, as cited by Fusch *et al.* [18] proposed an in-between method to overcome the weakness of each. The concurrent mixed method is a pragmatic paradigm blending the current reality without neglecting the scientific aspect of research.

The main query of this paper is centred around the influence of perceived quality and influencers on impulse purchases. The specific objectives are:

1. To measure the relationship of perceived quality on impulse purchases
2. To investigate whether influencers/ celebrity endorsements affect impulse purchases
3. To examine whether the influence of perceived quality influences impulse purchases by adding a mediator: an influencer

1.3.1 Proposition

- 1) To address the aforementioned influencers', perceived role as commercial intermediaries of perceived quality towards impulse purchases by analysing both phases simultaneously using quantitative and qualitative data.

1.4 Significance of the study

The study's significance is threefold. Firstly, from the academic perspective, it contributes to the expanding body of research in meeting the knowledge gap. Redine *et al.* [15] and Zhao *et al.* [16] did a systematic literature review and meta-analysis involving impulse purchases, none have come close to using influencers as a mediator in research.

Secondly, from the methodological perspective, Redine *et al.* [15], Rosengren and Campbell [17] and Fusch *et al.* [18] propose to use other methods such as mixed methods. The mixed-in-between method is crucial to overcome the methodological gap and the weakness of each [18].

Thirdly, from the industry perspective, the study adds insight into how brands and influencers can work together to develop sustainable consumption skills. The study will promote best practices among managers, business professionals, influencers and consumers' welfare.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Perceived quality and impulse purchases

While investigating the relationship between perceived quality and impulse purchases, it becomes apparent that the existing literature is relatively sparse in this specific domain. A total of six pieces of literature were found to be directly related to the topic.

Zhang *et al.* [19] discovered that during the non-holiday season, consumers respond strongly to perceived website quality (IV) to form both hedonic (esthetics/luxury) and utilitarian (functional/usage) values towards the temptation to buy impulsively (DV). Here, the non-holiday season serves as a mediator between utilitarian and hedonic theories, acting as a moderator. Over the holidays, buyers place a greater emphasis on pricing when evaluating utilitarian value as opposed to hedonic worth. This demonstrates that, before the commencement of the holiday shopping season, people are concerned about pricing, particularly for utilitarian value. However, when it comes to costs, hedonic product buyers are less fussy around the holidays.

Value for money, the impression of product quality and scarcity, instant feedback on product information, and the perception of streamers' product knowledge, according to Gong and Jiang [20], can all drive cognitive and affective factors that ultimately lead to consumers making impulse purchases. Value for money, perceived product quality and scarcity, and product design are used by the researchers as independent factors in this case. Product scarcity is a successful tactic for getting customers to buy a product, according to Gao *et al.* [21]. Online platforms can display the quantity of inventory products that are still accessible [19].

The motivational elements of perceived product quality, store environment, and shelf display toward impulse purchases of over-the-counter medications in Pakistan were the focus of Asif and Billah's [22] study. The findings showed that every component significant for impulse buying is mediated by the desire to buy.

The motivation of female consumers to adopt augmented reality in mobile apps was investigated by Trivedi *et al.* [23]. It also investigates how perceived value and impulsive internet purchases are related. It was discovered that among millennial women, smartphone apps can result in impulsive purchases. In this instance, a mediating variable is the perceived value.

Ampadu *et al.* [24] also used product recommendations as the antecedent, mediated by product image, satisfaction, and online review stimuli' effect on online impulse buying. All were found to be significant. To examine the impact of online purchase intention on impulse buying behaviour in Iran, Golalizadeh *et al.* [25] employed exploratory mixed techniques to examine the emotions of their clients. Three codes remained after the original four hundred and fifty-four were identified. Lastly, it was divided into two categories: positive and negative emotions. Using a 5-point Likert scale, 36 components were found in the second stage.

2.2 Perceived quality and influencers

Most of the variables used in the research are used interchangeably as independent, dependent, moderating, or mediating variables when referring to the variables utilized between perceived quality and influencers. Depending on the goal of their study, the changes are evident.

Information overload served as an antecedent, information processing served as a mediator, and purchase intention served as the result of Zhang *et al.* [26] study. Perceived product quality and perceived product fit were the two variables employed under the antecedent, and streamer influence and expertise were the mediators. It was discovered that every variable had a favourable and significant impact on purchase intention. Perceived quality serves as an antecedent in this case.

Kim and Baek [27] discovered a positive correlation between influencers' humorous nature and their perceived quality choices as well as contentment. One of the four outcomes in this case is the perceived quality. Influencers' content proficiency significantly impacted social media engagement, perceived quality of alternatives, investment amount, and satisfaction. The results also showed that investment use, perceived quality of alternatives, and satisfaction all had a substantial impact on influencer commitment.

Celebrity endorsement helps consumers to believe that the products or brands are of high quality, depending on the influencer's likeability, attractiveness and trustworthiness. The mediators are perceived quality, perceived value and brand image while perceived risk is the moderator. Perceived quality, here, is a mediator.

Kanwar and Huang [29] used parasocial interaction, perceived value, and brand image as mediating factors to examine the influence of influencers on Taiwanese customers intending to purchase (DV). Influencer credibility was discovered to have a major impact on the development of parasocial interactions with its clientele. Perceived value served as a mediator in this case.

2.3 Influencers and impulse purchases

According to Parmar *et al.* [30], point-of-purchase advertising with a celebrity endorsement (predictor) increases impulse purchases by consumers. In addition, celebrity endorsements work better for high-involvement products like unisex T-shirts than for low-involvement products like chocolate. The Millennial generation was selected for the demographic survey because, compared to previous generations, they are 52% more likely to make impulse purchases. They employed a study that was exploratory and involved 218 Indian pupils.

The popularity of online celebrities, identification, admiration, social distance, and the perceived fit effect on trust and impulse behaviour in luxury clothing brands are the five elements that Mingliang *et al.* [31] utilize. Here, trust functions as both a mediator and a factor influencing impulsive purchasing. An impulse purchase is strongly increased by identification with the influencer and perceived fit, although the association between trust and impulse buying may be weakened by social distance.

According to Zhang and Shi [32], social presence is positively impacted by antecedents such as media richness, vividness, and interaction. However, impulse purchase behaviour is directly impacted by social presence. Antecedents like vividness, interaction, and media richness are similar to influencers.

Chiu *et al.* [33] used structural equation modelling to explain how the US's impulse purchasing of fitness products was caused by a positive influence of fear stemming from the pandemic notion.

Leong *et al.* [34] demonstrated that all predictor variables (scarcity, promotion, expertise, and attractiveness) were found to be significant toward impulse buying mediated by perceived enjoyment, arousal, and urge to buy. The study used a questionnaire involving 385 Malaysian respondents.

Perceived social media marketing activities were employed as stimuli, source credibility as an organism, and online impulse buying as responses in a different study by Koay *et al.* [35]. It was discovered that followers' impressions of Instagram influencers are positively influenced by their perceived social media marketing activity. In addition to their level of experience, Instagram influencers' beauty and reliability were discovered to be powerful mediating factors in the association between online impulse buying and perceived social media marketing activity.

2.4 Deficiencies in the literature and implications for current research

Reflecting on the above literature, the present researchers identify three major gaps. First, studies on impulse and online shopping are quite rare [16]. Zhao *et al.* [16] study concentrated on economic development as a moderator and not influencers as mediators. In addition, this work responds to the suggestion made by Hudders *et al.* [7]

regarding potential avenues for future study involving influencers acting as middlemen between businesses and consumers.

Second, the present study is novel. Many authors have used a mediator in their research [26] [27] [28] [29] [30] [31] [32] [33] [34] [35], but none has come close to using influencers as a mediator between perceived quality and impulse buying.

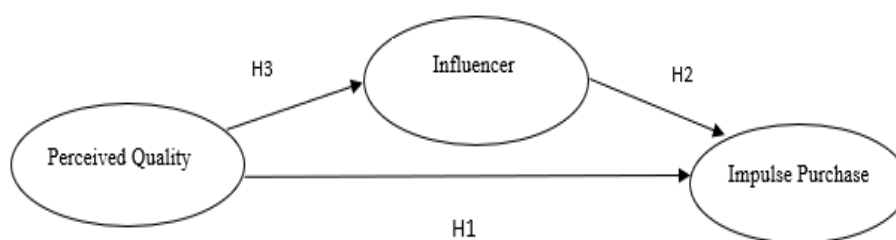
Third, regarding the methodological gap, very few studies use mixed techniques, as required by Rosengren and Campbell [17], and Redine *et al.* [15]. Nearly all studies have employed quantitative over qualitative approaches. Different study designs, such as mixed methods, are required by both researchers. Redline *et al.* [15] emphasized that to close the methodological gap, impulse buying requires investigation of a mixed method.

2.5 Hypothesis development

Figure 1 below illustrates the suggested conceptual framework relating to perceived quality, influencers, and impulse purchases.

Figure 1

Proposed Conceptual Framework.



In the first hypothesis, Qin *et al.* [36] discovered that TikTok addiction is impacted directly and indirectly by information and system quality. It was mediated by enjoyment, concentration, and time distortion. Here, Qin *et al.* [36] state that perceived quality is tied to TikTok information and system quality, which itself serves two purposes: TikTok

information for the audience and the platform for live streamers. TikTok addiction is another form of online addiction.

H1: Perceived quality directly affects impulse purchase behaviour.

H3: Perceived quality indirectly affects impulse purchase behaviour mediated Influencer.

Leong *et al.* [34] employed promotion, scarcity, attractiveness, and competence as antecedents of impulse buying in live streaming. The drive to purchase, arousal, and subjective enjoyment all acted as mediators. The results show that impulse buying in live streaming is highly correlated with perceived satisfaction, arousal, and urge to buy. In this case, the social media elements serve as mediators or antecedents.

H2: Influencers/ celebrity endorsement directly affects impulse purchase behaviour.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

This study will employ a typology mixed methods design with more emphasis on quantitative and some on qualitative. A typology-based approach to mixed methods designs refers to the careful use of designs and selections to meet the study's research objectives and questions [37]. The mixed method design was chosen in line with the general objective, three research objectives, and one proposition.

3.2 Research method

A concurrent mixed method is used in this study in line with Rosengren and Campbell [17] and Redine *et al.* [15] call to bridge the methodological gap. Many researchers have used quantitative over qualitative or vice-versa without integrating both methods. Thus, Fusch [18], states that mixed methods are essential for bridging the gap and overcoming weaknesses. The concurrent mixed method is a pragmatic paradigm that integrates quantitative and qualitative design without neglecting the scientific aspect of the study.

The quantitative sample offers breadth and generalizability, while the qualitative sample adds depth to the subject study. The study uses QUAN+qual.

4 VARIABLES OF THE STUDY

Navigability, aesthetic appeal, interaction, usability, store presentation, and customer contact are the studied variables for the perceived quality of a website. Meanwhile, argument quality, source credibility, attractiveness, cooperation, asynchronous interaction, and content creation are variables used for influencers. The study employs a 7-point Likert scale. The recently suggested para-social connection for influencers will be used and modified to gauge their roles. The study will use and modify Richmond's Compulsive Buying and Zhao *et al.* [16] to measure impulse buying. A shopping list was added to the Kurt *et al.* [38] demographic measurement to better represent the study population and determine whether the customer tends to make impulsive purchases.

5 THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE STUDY

Millennials, according to Dimock [39], are those who were born between 1981 and 1996. Accordingly, the Millennials of today would range in age from 28 to 43. The Millennial generation was selected because they made up the largest working population [40]. Studying them will enable the researchers to determine the perceptions that are important for companies, influencers, and consumers. Simultaneously, of the 37,020 insolvency cases in Malaysia, the largest group (56.98%) was made up of Millennials [14]. According to Adams [41], millennials are recognized for having a significant inclination towards online and digital purchases, and they are more inclined to make impulse purchases online. Therefore, researching this group's impulsive purchasing habits can reveal important information on how influencer and digital marketing affect consumer behaviour.

6 SAMPLING FOR MIXED METHOD

Stratified random sampling is used to address the issue of average value studies being true to the study population. With a population of 10,700.50 million Millennials aged between 27 to 43 years old, a total of 400 samples are needed [42].

Stratified random sampling is a probability sampling technique that can be used to divide a sample into numerous districts known as units or strata and it is best applied in a heterogenous population [43] such as Klang Valley. Based on Fenton and Furham [44] and Kurt [38] it was found that women are more impulse buyers than men. Thus, the study focuses on female buyers.

For the interview, purposeful sampling will be employed. Choosing people with specific characteristics or experiences relevant to the main study questions is known as purposeful sampling. In this situation, purposive sampling is frequently recommended since it enables the researcher to choose volunteers unbiasedly who can offer rich and detailed information about the topic being studied [43].

7 DATA COLLECTION

Consumers who have made in-store or online purchases during the last six months, aged 27 to 43, will be included in the questionnaire. The survey will be conducted online using a platform and it should take 15 to 20 minutes to complete. Questions addressing three research objectives namely perceived quality, influencers, and impulse purchases will be included in the questionnaire. Demographic data, like age, gender, income, and education will also be collected.

At the same time, interviews will be conducted using visual or audio recordings. A semi-structured format will be used during the interview to ensure that all pertinent subjects are covered [43]. The interviewer will start the process by asking a pre-planned series of questions intended to elicit data on perceived quality, influencers, and impulse purchases. The questions that follow will focus on influencers' roles as commercial in-betweens for companies and customers, as well as any possible effects they may have on impulse purchases. When necessary, the interviewer will continue to be adaptable and probe for more details and follow-up questions.

8 DATA ANALYSIS VIA METHODOLOGICAL TRIANGULATION

Upon data collection, the quantitative data and qualitative data will be triangulated in data analysis. The existing quantitative data will be turned into numbers while the qualitative data will be transcribed, highlighted, coded, related, and tabulated. Qualitative data analysis will be compared, contrasted and/or synthesised with the quantitative data in a discussion or table. It will then be summarised and interpreted as the separate results. This includes which and in what ways results from the two types of data converge, diverge, and relate to each other to produce a complete understanding.

9 CONCLUSION

In summary, there hasn't been any effort to incorporate perceived quality into the research on impulse purchases up until this point. New research is required due to the progress of technology, namely the impact of influencers. Examining the connection between perceived quality and impulse purchases is therefore vital. Impulse purchases can have beneficial effects on an organisation's finances. On the one hand, they might make consumers feel worse off financially. The purpose of this study is to guide researchers investigating the fundamentals of impulse buying and whether perceived quality affects these purchases.

Furthermore, it is worthwhile to investigate the influence of influencers on impulse purchase behaviour, as no research has yet employed them as mediators. A mixed-methods strategy is used in this study, with a focus on both quantitative and qualitative methodologies (QUAN+qual), which further advances the present methodologies. It is intended that by offering suggestions for best practices among influencers, companies, and impulse buys, this study will help to enhance these areas.

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Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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