

The Impact of Social Media on Hedonic and Impulsive Purchases in the Romanian Clothing Industry

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Abstract. *The purpose of this research is to measure the level of social media platform's impact on hedonic and impulsive purchases when it comes to the Romanian clothing industry. The study analyzes different purchasing factors, in the context where social media platforms have a major impact on consumers. Price reduction seems to be as important as using credit cards when it comes to hedonic targeted purchases, while the impact of social media increases alongside the desire to buy. The sources of information (such as comments, reviews, influencers, or even shares) amplify the impact on consumers' future purchases. The paper researches purchasing factors, such as hedonic and impulsive buying, and social media platforms' impact on them. The two approached perspectives are: hedonic motivation, which means the desire to increase the positive experiences; and decrease the negative ones, and impulsive behavior which is characterized as the tendency to act without thinking. The results show that social media's impact on hedonic and impulsive purchases is accelerated as long as personalized recommendations and discount campaigns exist. This study provides insights for Romanian brand to optimize their digital marketing strategies and reveals the psychological triggers behind hedonic and impulsive behavior.*

Keywords: social media, impact, hedonic, impulsive, price reduction, discount campaigns

Introduction

„The internet has changed the human life by its convenience and extra benefits, through the internet we have been connected with each other like a family” (Bhatti, 2018, p. 50) especially regarding social media. Yogesh (2014, p. 45) manages to define social media as being a means of digital interaction whose main purpose is building online communities in which the users can share personal or informational content. In the past years, social media has known an undeniable and remarkable growth, with the number of users and posts (such as videos and photos) continuously rising.

„In essence, the social media world is slowly taking the place of product reviews and panels found in outlets such as ‚Consumer Diges’ in previous generations” (P. Forbes, 2013, p. 107). Therefore the purpose of this research, is to investigate if social media platforms really have an impact on the hedonic and impulsive purchases of consumers in the Romanian clothing industry.

Literature Review

The role of social media in the purchasing decision

As Yogesh (2014, p. 46) the social media world is slowly replacing product reviews and panels found in outlets such as 'Consumer Digest' in previous generations. Where consumers once prioritized trusted retail outlets and relied on experts in each department, today's consumers might rely on the recommendations and expert opinions from a friend or acquaintance within their social media network. „Social media has also influenced consumer behavior from information acquisition to post-purchase behavior such as dissatisfaction statements or behaviors” (Yogesh, 2014, p. 46)

More and more people use social media every day. „This is done for many purposes, including their role as consumers, as they seek information about products, buy and consume them, and communicate with others about their experiences” (Ziyadin, et al., 2019, p. 2)

Ziyadin, et al., (2019, p.2) approaches social media marketing as a digital way of promoting a brand and its actions, but does so through the lens of users' interaction. Taking into consideration the fact that the created content is meant to attract the users' attention, it is significant to mention that social media marketing also encourages users to share the specific content with followers or people on their friend list.

Hedonic and impulsive purchases in the clothing industry

„Hedonic consumption includes those behavioral aspects related to multi-sensory and fantasy which are driven by benefits such as fun in actually buying the product or fun in using the product, shopping for adventure and for socialization” (Dhurup, 2014, p. 170). Same Dhurup (2014, p. 170) states that impulsive purchase behavior is driven by pleasure hedonism, causing the consumer to experience a desire for products.

According to Merima (2011, p. 6) hedonism, is concerned with the fun and play of shopping arising from the experience, and not for the achievement of any specified goal. Typical dimensions of hedonism are increased arousal, high involvement, perceived freedom, fantasy fulfillment, and escapism, as well as festivity, treatment, and self-indulgence. As a result, people buy so they can shop, and not shop so they can buy. Hedonic shopping motives are different from utilitarian shopping ones. Despite the fact that both are task-oriented, in the case of hedonic shopping, the task revolves around hedonic fulfillment, sensory experiences, pleasure, entertainment, fantasy.

There are five distinctive elements as Merima (2011, p. 5) claims, that draw the difference between impulsive and planned purchases: feeling a sudden and spontaneous desire to act; temporary loss of self-control; psycho-logical conflict and struggle; reduced cognitive assessment and spending regardless of the consequences. Summarizing the five dimensions, impulse buying can be defined as buying where a consumer experiences a sudden, often very strong and permanent urge to immediately buy something.

Influencing factors

According to Alalwan (2018, p. 68), the habit could be articulated as the degree to which individuals are willing to act automatically because of learning. Based on their daily interaction with social media platforms, people are more likely to have habitual behavior toward such platforms as well as most of the marketing activities posted on them. This, in turn, enriches the level of customers' skills and knowledge related to these activities. Customers seem to be more engaged with new systems and applications if they habitually use such systems and applications.

Therefore, it could be argued that customers who habitually see social media ads are more likely to be influenced by such ads and have a positive reaction toward them.

Also, sales promotion is a key component and a valuable tool for marketers, and it has been widely used to get a „competitive edge and increase the sales and attract the consumers’ intention” (Bhatti, 2018, p. 51). Promotions influence the consumers’ purchase quantity and reduce the time for decision-making. Sales promotion is a short-term encouraging strategy to increase sales or purchase of brands. Moreover, it is a strategy that demands a short time to increase profits. This strategy can attract and keep customers and build a strong link with the sellers.

Additionally, sales promotion includes three main strategies: push, pull, and the combination of pull and push. Push means the product is gone from distributors to the consumer through different promotions like discounts, personal selling, or buy-back guarantees; and pull means the consumer pulls the product from the distributors through different ways like samples, games, coupons, and cash refunds. Sales promotion plays a significant role in the consumers’ purchase intention and their decision to purchase a specific product.

It turns out that an important factor in persuading consumers on social media is represented by influencers, and businesses have been increasingly using influencer endorsements to amplify brand content. „According to the data provided by an influencer marketing platform, 92% of consumers trust an influencer rather than a commercial or a conventional celebrity endorsement” (Ooi, et al., 2023, p. 1).

Impact on Romanian Brands and consumers

„Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, TikTok, and other social media sites have reached an unprecedented scale and are on a permanent rise” (Vasiliu, et al., 2023, p. 1431). According to the same authors, Vasiliu, et al., (2023, pp. 1431-1432), the use of social media platforms is one of the most important options for companies to capture relevant and valuable information about consumers and their shopping experiences. Consumers can obtain information about the company, brands, and products that can be leveraged during the purchase decision process.

Based on Pütter (2017, p. 8), social media platforms are usually used by companies to support marketing and branding (such as YouTube, Twitter or Facebook). In this sense, Facebook is viewed as the “holy grail of marketers” (Pütter, 2017, p. 8), because of the way it manages to integrate advertising into users’ social content. For example, in the Facebook format, advertisers provide users information regarding brands or products, and, depending on their response and overall interaction, more similar content will appear on their social media feed.

The more consumers interact with product advertisements or share their opinions about specific products, the more related content featuring similar products or brands will be provided to them in return. „Social media, then, has a significant impact on how marketers design their strategic approach, how they deliver brand information, and how they scale advertising to enhance consumer engagement” (Pütter, 2017).

Consumers are now influenced to interact with brands, share information with other consumers, and create content that reflects their preferences. More and more consumers are engaged in the process of sharing content, increasing other people’s interest in specific brands as Pütter (2017, p. 8) claims. In order to understand the impact that social media has on branding, „it is important to recognize the views of businesses about the branding and marketing processes, their desire to create consumer engagement, and the impacts of social networks on influencing consumer purchasing decision-making” (Pütter, 2017, p. 8).

Methodology

Using the snowball technique, a questionnaire was applied to a number of 385 respondents, and used as an information-gathering tool to collect the data. The survey took place between October 5 and December 20, 2024.

Results and Discussions

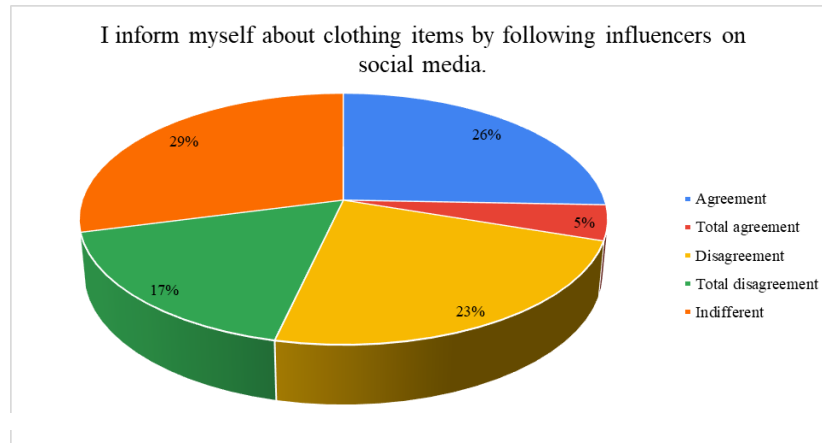


Figure 1. Influencers' impact

Source: Authors' own research.

26% of respondents agree that following influencers on social media represents a resource of information for clothing items, and only a percentage of 9 totally agree. 29% of them are indifferent with this statement, while the rest of 40% are divided in two categories: 23% that disagree, and 17% that totally disagree. This results show that a little over a quarter percent of the respondents see influencers as a reliable source of information.

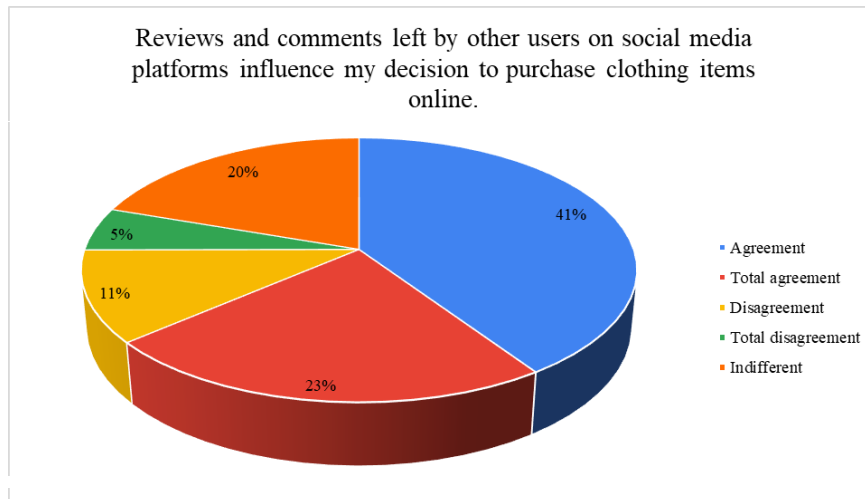


Figure 2. Influence of reviews and comments

Source: Authors' own research.

Nearly half of the respondents (41%) agree that comments and reviews left by users on social media platforms have a major impact on influencing their decision to purchase clothing items, and a significantly percentage of 23 totally agree with this. The indifferent respondents

represent 20%, and the people who disagree constitute a percentage of 11. Only 5% of them totally disagree with this statement. This results show a clear preference of respondents when it comes to comments and reviews, making them a trustful source.

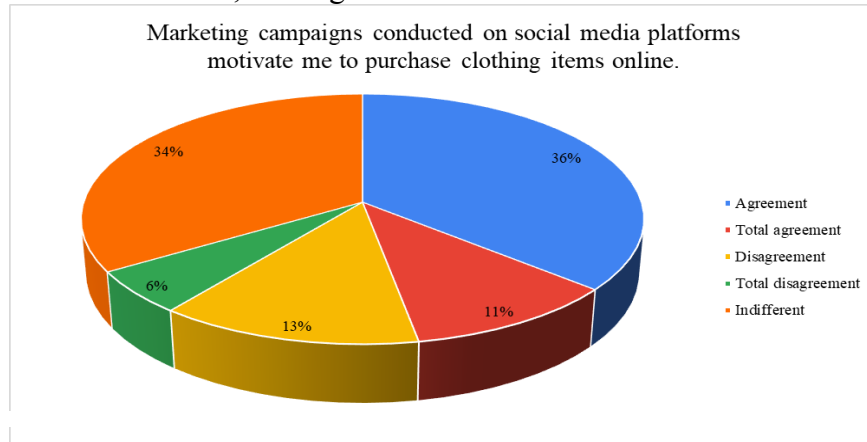


Figure 3. Importance of marketing campaigns

Source: Authors' own research.

Marketing campaigns on social media platforms represent a major motivation to purchase clothing items. 36% of respondents agree that marketing campaigns have an impact on purchase decisions, while 11% of them totally agree. A considerable amount (34%) are indifferent, while the ones that disagree and totally disagree, represents 13% respective 6% of respondents. These results indicate that marketing campaigns for most of the respondents have a major importance, whilst for other, they don't influence their purchase decisions.

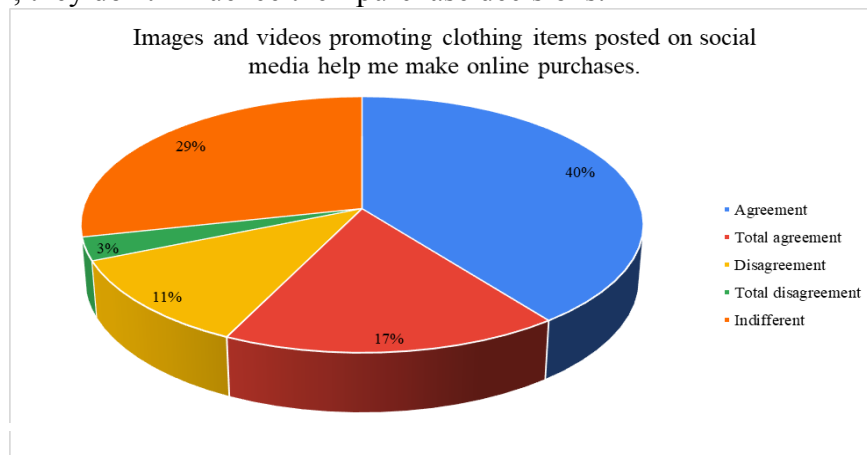


Figure 4. Importance of visual representation

Source: Authors' own research.

Almost half of the respondents (40%) agree that images and videos promoting clothing items help them to make online purchases, and 17% of them totally agree with this. 29% are indifferent, while the rest of them, 11% and 3%, disagree, respectively totally disagree. These results show the importance of visual representation.

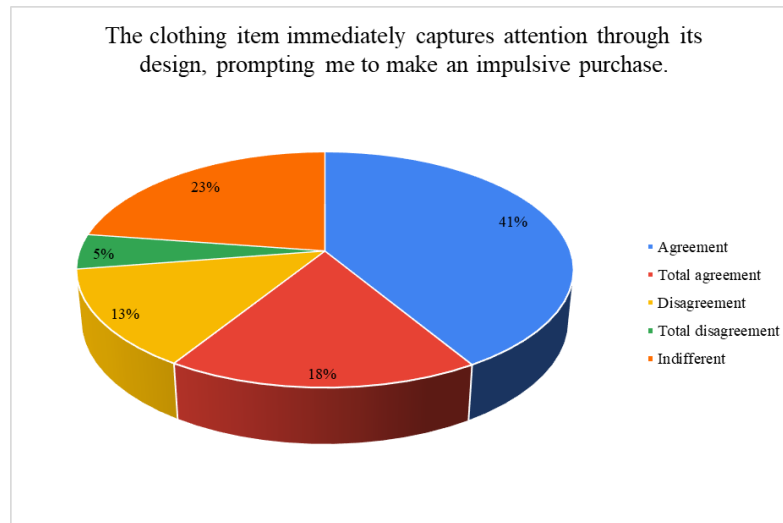


Figure 5. Influence of the clothing design

Source: Authors' own research.

Over half of them, 41% and 18%, agree and respectively, totally agree that with its design, the clothing item immediately captures the attention, making them purchase impulsive. Only 23% of them have an indifferent attitude, while 13% disagree, and 5% totally agree. The results reveal that consumers tend to be more attracted and make an impulsive purchase, if the clothing item has a design they like.

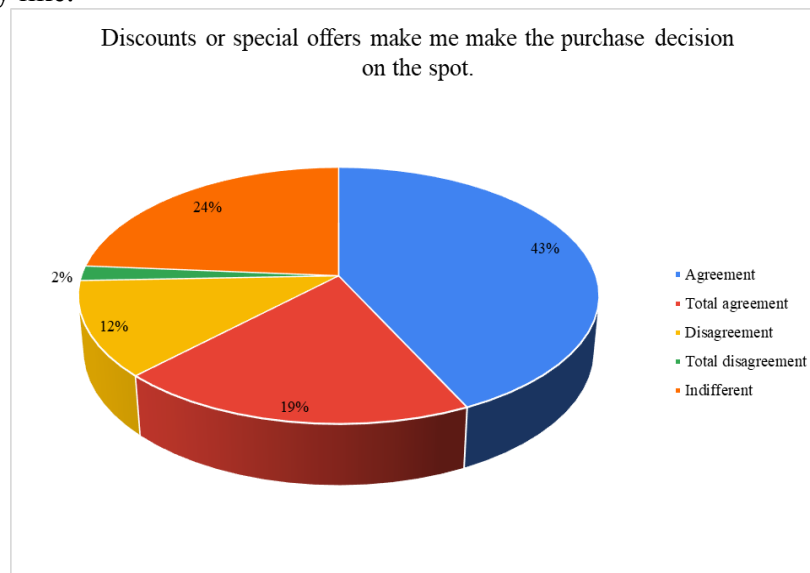


Figure 6. Discounts or special offers

Source: Authors' own research.

Discounts or special offers make consumers purchase on the spot. 43% of the respondents agree with this, and 19% totally agree. A percentage of 24 are indifferent to the statement, 12% of them disagree, and only 2% totally disagree. These percentages show the impact of discounts or special offers on purchase decisions.

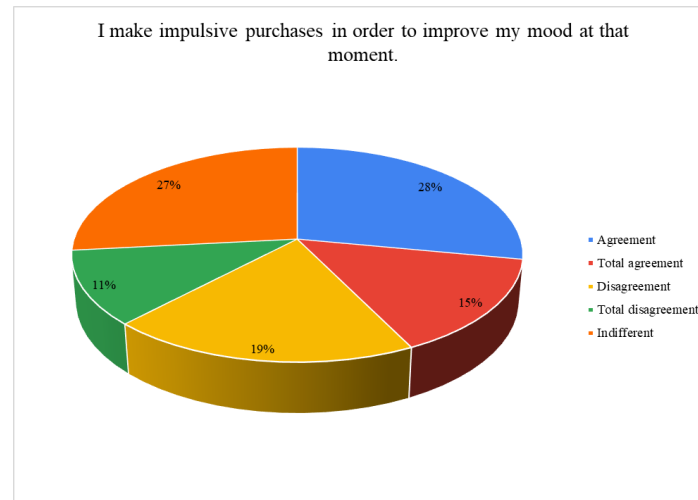


Figure 7. Mood improvement by making impulsive purchases

Source: Authors' own research.

When it comes to impulsive purchases in order to improve the mood, 28% of the respondents agree that it is true, 15% totally agree, and 27% are indifferent. The percentage of the respondents that disagree is 19%, and the one of those who totally disagree is 11%. The results indicate that for some of the respondents, their mood depends on impulsive purchases.

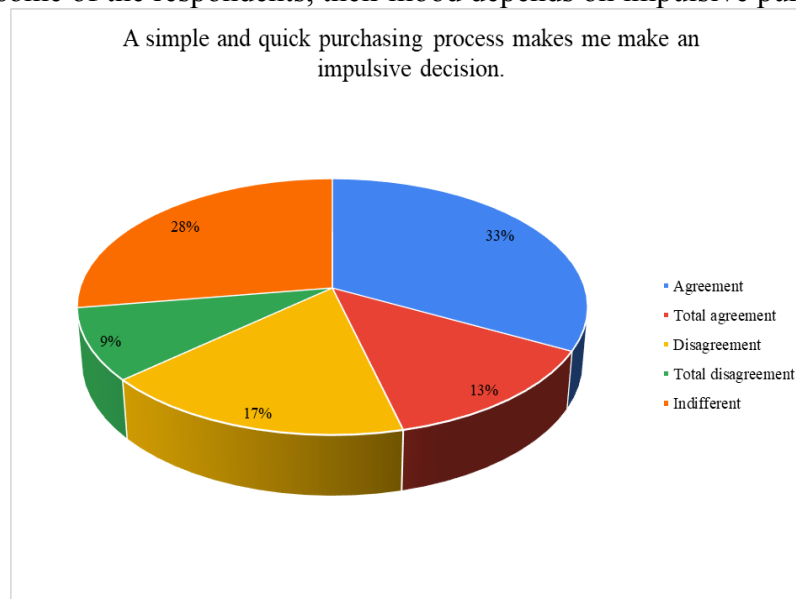


Figure 8. Simplicity of purchasing process

Source: Authors' own research.

33% of respondents agree that a simple and quick purchasing process persuades them into making an impulsive decision, and 13% of them agree with this statement. 28% are indifferent when it comes to this, 17% disagree, and only 9% totally disagree. The outcome shows that the simplicity of a purchase can be an important factor of the impulsive decision.

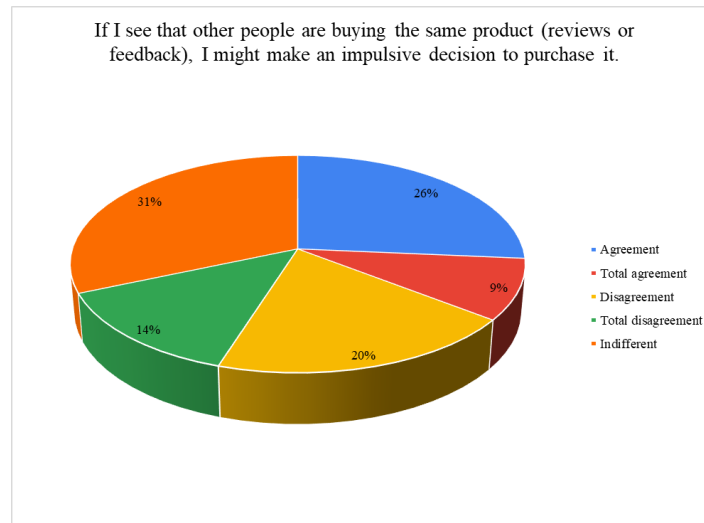


Figure 9. Other people's opinions (reviews or feedback)

Source: Authors' own research.

If the respondents see other people buying the product (reviews or feedback), they might make an impulsive decision to purchase it. 26% of them agree with this, and 9% totally agree with the influence of reviews and feedback. The highest percentage of the respondents (31%) are indifferent, 20% disagree, and 14% totally disagree. The results show that the opinion of others can influence, resulting in an impulsive purchase decision.

Conclusion

Trough its benefits, social media managed to become an every day activitiy for people around the globe, having numerous purposes, such as finding new products, socializing with other users, and connecting with people and brands.

When it comes to hedonism, and fantasy which is driven by shopping for adventure, looking for socialization, and increasing the positive experience and emotions. However, impulsive behavior it is different from hedonic behavior, having clear characteristics such as temporar loss of self control, spontaneous actions and spending regardless of the outcomes.

The impact of social media platforms on purchase decision, increased over the last few years, influencers having an important role in this, according to 35% of the respondents. Also, reviews and comments, play a major role in the impact of social media, influencing over half of the respondents.

Marketing campaigns, where brands aim to follow the latest viral trends, help over 47% of the respondents, making it a reliable source of information and entertainment. Also, the people who participated in the questionnaire, consider visual representation to be one of the most important factor, increasing the impact of social media platforms has on purchase decision.

Capturing the attention of people becomes easier when they find its design to be appealing, and according to 59% of the respondents this helps in the purchase decision process. Another important aspect that increases the impact, is the presence of discounts or special offers, helping the respondents to make the purchase decision on the spot without thinking too much, making this a characteristic of impulsive behavior.

Results show that for most of the respondents, when it comes to mood improvement, impulsive buying is the solution needed. Also if a simple and quick purchasing process exists, it

makes the decision of buying easier, even if it is no need of the product. The statistics prove that most people tend to be influenced by what other people think, say about the products they buy, determinating them to make an impulsive purchase decision.

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