A STUDY ON IMPULSE BUYING BEHAVIOR AMONG GENERATION Z QUICK COMMERCE USERS IN MUMBAI

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the rise of impulse shopping among Gen Z users on Q-commerce platforms like Zepto, Blinkit, and Swiggy Instamart in Mumbai. Gen Z's preference for instant gratification and digital ease makes them highly responsive to features like flash sales, one-click buys, free shipping, and rapid delivery. Drawing on data from 110+ participants, the study examines the frequency of unplanned purchases, the psychological and contextual triggers behind them, and emotional outcomes ranging from satisfaction to regret.

Findings highlight convenience, speed, and app design as key drivers of impulsive behavior often outweighing actual need. Late-night deliveries and push notifications significantly shape buying habits. Despite awareness of ethical issues like delivery stress and packaging waste, these concerns rarely influence behavior.The study concludes with suggestions for creating more responsible user experiences and promoting financial literacy, while calling for future research into the balance between convenience and mindful consumption in a digital economy.

Keywords: *Gen Z, Q-Commerce, Impulse Buying, UX Design, Mumbai, Digital Consumption, Emotional Triggers*

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of Q-commerce (quick commerce) delivery services guaranteeing essentials within 10 to 15 minutes has revolutionized the relationship between retail and urban consumers. Entrants like Zepto, Blinkit, and Swiggy Instamart are not just providing convenience but are changing buying behaviors, from discovery to payment. The driver of all this is Generation Z, a generation of digitally native consumers who live on instant gratification and velocity. (Deloitte, 2022)

Born between 1997 and 2012, Gen Z has grown up in a digitally-native world and is extremely sensitive to quick, intuitive services (Seemiller, 2016). This is evident in their online shopping behaviors as well: short attention spans, multitasking, and impulse spending, particularly on small-value, feel-good items like snacks and drinks. Reports show that nearly 41% of Gen Z users also spend unplanned amounts online every two or three weeks (Index, 2023). In addition, they are much more reactive than other generations to emotionally-motivated shopping stimuli such as visual style, flash sales, and scarcity promotions (Federation, 2022).

Q-commerce apps have also optimized their platforms to take advantage of this activity. Push notifications, countdown timers, and digital rewards are established psychological levers that elicit snap choices.

Impulse buying is defined as a spontaneous purchase made with little pre-planning, often influenced by emotional or contextual stimuli (Rook, 1987). In digital commerce, this tendency has been amplified by mobile-first interfaces, personalized suggestions, and round-the-clock accessibility (Iyer, 2020) Unlike the physical store impulse zones (like checkout aisles), digital nudges are seamlessly embedded in app designs

- Flash sales create urgency

- "Only X left" communications trigger scarcity-based fear of missing out

- Thresholds for free delivery promote cart stuffing

- Effortless payment mechanisms such as UPI or Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) decrease hesitation.

These methods decrease mental effort and add spontaneous decision-making particularly among

Gen Z consumers who value convenience over deliberation. In metropolitan cities such as Mumbai, where the pace of life is quick and technology adoption is high, impulse buying through Q-commerce is turning into a habitual trend.

What starts out as innocuous convenience can become problematic consumption marked by remorse, excess spending, or emotional discontent. Though every single transaction might be insignificant, their collective effect on psychological well-being and economic security is worthy of critical examination.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Impulse buying has long been recognized as a spontaneous, emotionally driven consumer behaviour, first systematically defined by Rook (1987) as a sudden, powerful urge to purchase with little forethought. While this concept emerged in the context of physical retail spaces, it has found renewed relevance in digital ecosystems, particularly on platforms where gratification is instant and decision-making is accelerated.

Recent studies highlight that Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, is especially prone to impulsive purchasing patterns. The *Gen Z Shopping Behaviour Report* by Global Web Index (2023) reveals that 41% of Gen Z consumers globally engage in unplanned online purchases every two to three weeks. The report attributes this to emotional triggers such as boredom and the influence of real-time app notifications, flash sales, and algorithmic nudges. This trend aligns with the evolution of Q-commerce platforms like Zepto and Blinkit, which have designed their interfaces to capitalize on these tendencies.

Chawla et al. (2025) explored this phenomenon within the Indian context, specifically examining how Gen Z users engage with Q-commerce apps. Their findings suggest that factors such as late night cravings, emotional fatigue, and boredom often drive spontaneous purchases. Interestingly, the study concludes that while rapid delivery is a convenience, the primary enablers of overconsumption are seamless payment options like UPI and persuasive app designs.

Supporting this perspective, Joshi and Mehta (2023) analysed how digital interfaces in urban India leverage UX tools such as countdown timers, scarcity alerts, and flash offers to manipulate consumer behaviour. Their research underscores that Gen Z is highly reactive to these digital nudges, often making purchases driven more by perceived urgency than actual need. Over time, this behaviour can evolve from occasional indulgence to habitual consumption.

The formation of such habits is further explained by Verplanken and Sato (2011), who demonstrated how repeated exposure to app-based triggers and instant rewards reinforces purchasing patterns. In the Q-commerce context, where delivery speed is immediate and transaction friction is minimal, Gen Z users may unwittingly form spending habits that only become evident during later financial reflection.

Sharma et al. (2020) offer a broader meta-review of how mobile-first commerce ecosystems encourage impulsive purchases. Their analysis points to interface design, accessibility, and psychological reinforcement particularly through push notifications and reward incentives as factors that undermine rational decision-making, especially among Gen Z consumers.

Complementing this, Saraswat (2020) compiled various theoretical frameworks on impulsive buying behaviour, emphasizing the role of psychographic factors such as mood, self-reward, and emotional gratification in driving unplanned purchases. Saraswat highlights that mobile purchases, combined with personalized offers, provide a dopamine rush that reinforces impulsive tendencies within this demographic.

Research Gap

While many studies examine Gen Z's impulse buying and online shopping, few focus on their use of Q-commerce platforms like Zepto and Blinkit in Mumbai. Research rarely explores how emotional triggers, fast delivery, app design, flash sales, and notifications interact in real-life scenarios. Factors like impulse buy frequency, post-purchase emotions, and ethical concerns are also often overlooked. This study aims to address these gaps by focusing on Gen Z in Mumbai and the disconnect between their awareness and actions.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is based on primary research and follows a descriptive and exploratory design to understand the impulse buying behavior of Generation Z consumers on Q-commerce platforms in Mumbai. Data was collected using a structured online questionnaire shared through Google Forms, which helped reach the target audience easily as they are digitally active. The study focused on individuals born between 1997 and 2012 (Gen Z) living in Mumbai and using platforms like Zepto, Blinkit, or Swiggy Instamart. A total of 110 valid responses were received, and data was collected using random sampling.

Significance of the Study

This study adds to the nascent field of research on digital consumer behavior, particularly in high-flying markets such as India where Q-commerce is quickly picking up speed. Not only does it delve into the *what* of Gen Z's spontaneity purchases, but more significantly, the *why* of looking into the affective and situational stimuli behind such purchasing behavior.

The findings from this research can guide:

- Ethical UX design for online platforms

- Educational techniques of digital consumption among young people

- Wider studies into behavioral economics and digital marketing

Utilizing a tech-literate urban market in Mumbai as a focus, this research applies a lens to interpret national trends in digital commerce.

Objective of the Research Study

- To examine the frequency at which Gen Z users in Mumbai engage in spontaneous Q-commerce purchases

- To determine psychological, contextual, and app-related stimuli behind such purchasing decisions

- To assess emotional consequences such as satisfaction, regret, or indifference

- To offer recommendations for more mindful user design and responsible digital behavior

4 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Sample descriptive

The respondents for our survey were selected through random sampling to ensure unbiased representation. The age-wise distribution of participants is as follows: 15.6% were under 18 years, 67.9% were between 18 to 21 years, 6.4% were between 22 to 25 years, and 10.1% were 26 years and above. All respondents fall within the Generation Z cohort, which represents the target demographic for this study.

4.2 Hypotheses Formulation & Findings

Null

S. No.	App Feature / Question	Hypothesis (H_0)	Alternate Hypothesis (H_1)	p-value	Decision	Finding
1.	Free Delivery	H_0 The responses are equally distributed.	The responses are not equally distributed.	0.000	Reject	Significant preference observed.
2.	No Minimum Order Required	H_0 The responses are equally distributed.	The responses are equally distributed.	0.000	Reject	Users show strong opinions.
3.	10–15 Minute Delivery Time	H_0 The responses are equally distributed.	The responses are equally distributed.	0.000	Reject	Feature strongly influences impulse buying.
4.	UPI/PayLater/1-Click Checkout	H_0 The responses are equally distributed.	The responses are equally distributed.	0.001	Reject	Payment convenience significantly impacts behavior
5.	24x7 / Late-Night Delivery	H_0 The responses are equally distributed.	The responses are equally distributed.	0.000	Reject	Timing flexibility is highly valued.
6.	Dependence on Q-Commerce	H_0 The responses are equally distributed.	The responses are equally distributed.	0.081	Retain	No clear dependency trend identified.

4.3 Chi-Square Test Analysis of Demographics, Usage Patterns, and Ethical Awareness in Q-Commerce

Hypotheses:

For each variable tested:

- **Null Hypothesis (H_0):** The distribution of responses is uniform or independent (no association between categories).

- **Alternate Hypothesis (H_1):** The distribution is not uniform or there is a significant association (responses are dependent on category).

Findings Summary Table:

No.	Variable	χ^2 (Chi-Square)	df	p-value (Asymp. Sig.)	Decision	Interpretation
1	**Age Group**	108.798	3	0.000	Reject H_0	Age significantly affects responses.
2	**Occupation**	139.615	2	0.000	Reject H_0	Occupation influences Q-commerce behavior.
3	**Frequency of App Use**	11.991	3	0.007	Reject H_0	Frequency of usage is not evenly distributed.
4	**Ever Ordered Impulsively**	64.972	2	0.000	Reject H_0	Impulse buying varies across user segments.
5	**Frequency of Impulse Buying**	33.789	3	0.000	Reject H_0	Different users show distinct impulsive habits.
6	**Ever Regretted Impulse Purchase**	10.147	2	0.006	Reject H_0	Regret from impulsive buying varies.
7	**Spending Increased Since Q-commerce**	54.000	2	0.000	Reject H_0	Spending changes are significant among users.
8	**Set Monthly Budget for Q-commerce**	142.092	2	0.000	Reject H_0	Budgeting behavior differs significantly.
9	**Willing to Choose Slower Delivery for Better Pricing/Environment**	23.248	2	0.000	Reject H_0	Users differ in willingness to compromise speed for benefits.
10	**Aware of Delivery Partner Stress**	19.890	2	0.000	Reject H_0	Awareness is not uniform across respondents.
11	**Aware of Hygiene in Dark Stores**	65.248	2	0.000	Reject H_0	High variation in awareness levels.
12	**Aware of Plastic Packaging Waste**	47.908	2	0.000	Reject H_0	Environmental concerns are unequally recognized.
13	**Aware of High Energy Consumption**	16.807	2	0.000	Reject H_0	Perception of environmental cost differs.
14	**Do Concerns Affect Usage?**	4.532	2	0.104	**Retain H_0**	Concerns do not significantly influence Q-commerce usage.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Refine Features That Trigger Impulse Buying
Features like free delivery, no minimum order, fast delivery, and simple checkout encourage impulse buys. Q-commerce apps should keep these and highlight them clearly. Easy payment options like UPI, Pay Later, and 1-click checkout should be promoted through app banners, flash deals, and alerts.

Adding countdown timers or limited-period deals can create urgency and drive quicker decisions.

Tap Into Night-Time Shopping Habits
Many Gen Z users shop late at night. Platforms should strengthen their night delivery systems and offer special late-night deals. Phrases like "Delivered in 15 minutes" shown during late hours can push users to place quick orders.

Creating a special Night Owl section on the app could make it easier for users to find late-night deals.

Personalize Based on Demographics and Usage Behavior
Different types of users shop differently. Group users as students, professionals, or budget buyers, and send them customized suggestions. Reminders like "Want to re-order what you bought last Friday?" can help increase repeat purchases.

Personalized in-app sections like "Just for You" or "Recommended for Your Routine" can improve user experience.

Support Budget-Conscious Shoppers
Some users care about spending wisely. Platforms can add budget tools, monthly summaries, or offer value packs like weekly combos. These make it easier to save money while still enjoying convenience.

Highlighting price drops or best deals in a separate tab can help attract cost-conscious users.

Promote Ethical and Environmentally Responsible Use
Users care about the environment but often don't act on it. Platforms should give simple options like plastic-free packaging or slower grouped delivery. Showing small wins like You reduced waste by 80% can motivate users in a positive way.

Adding a Green Choice tag on products or delivery options can make it easier for users to choose sustainably.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to understand what drives consumer behavior on Q-commerce platforms, focusing on two main areas:

(1) how certain app features influence impulse buying,

(2) how user demographics, behavior, and ethical awareness affect overall usage.

The findings clearly show that Q-commerce platforms are very effective at encouraging impulse buys through well-designed features. Things like free delivery, no minimum order, fast delivery within 10–15 minutes, one-click checkout, and 24/7 availability all have a strong impact on buying behavior. These features make the buying process easier, offer instant satisfaction, and reduce mental barriers, encouraging users to make spontaneous purchases. This shows how important it is for Q-commerce platforms to optimize these features to grow.

However, looking closer at user demographics and behavior, it's clear that responses vary. Age and occupation play a big role in how people use Q-commerce apps. Younger users, especially students, tend to buy more often and impulsively, while working professionals are usually more careful. Spending and budgeting habits also differ, with many users not setting monthly budgets and some regretting impulse purchases. This suggests a chance for platforms to introduce simple budgeting tools or reminders after purchases to improve the experience.

Interestingly, the study also found that although users are aware of ethical and environmental issues linked to Q-commerce—like delivery worker stress, hygiene concerns in dark stores, plastic waste, and high energy use—this awareness doesn't much affect their usage. There's a gap between what users know and how they act; they recognize these problems but still choose convenience, speed, and comfort first. This gap is a challenge but also an opportunity: platforms could help close it by better communication, gentle nudges, and offering ethical choices when people shop.

In summary, Q-commerce platforms have successfully used technology to boost engagement and impulse buying. But as the market grows, long-term success will depend on balancing quick sales with building user trust, supporting financial well-being, and acting responsibly. Future growth won't just come from faster delivery or bigger discounts, but from understanding diverse users' needs, encouraging responsible shopping, and making ethical options a natural part of the customer journey.

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