

# Online Product Review Engagement and Platform Trust Concerns: Their Influence in the Impulsive Buying Behavior of College Students

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the influence of Online Product Review Engagement and Platform Trust Concerns on the Impulsive Buying Behavior of College Students in a selected Faith-based University located in Silang Cavite, Philippines. The study included 353 college students. As their methodological technique, the researchers used a quantitative descriptive research design. Data analysis was conducted using JAMOVI, a statistical software, which processed various measures, including mean, standard deviation, correlation, one-way ANOVA, post hoc tests, and t-tests. The study's findings showed that a high degree of familiarity with online shopping platforms plays a significant role in influencing college students' Impulsive Buying Behavior. Additionally, the data showed that respondents from the chosen faith-based university exhibited a moderate level of impulsive purchasing. The age, gender, and amount of time spent browsing on online shopping platforms are demographic factors that significantly influence college students' Impulsive Buying Behavior.

**Keywords:** online product review, platform trust, impulsive buying behavior

## INTRODUCTION

The rise of e-commerce has led to a significant shift from offline to online shopping, with global online shoppers increasing from 1.7 billion in 2018 to 1.92 billion in 2019. This trend accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in Southeast Asia, where online platform usage surged. Online shopping platform use grew by 108% in the Philippines in 2022. The internet has also contributed to more impulsive buying, where emotions drive unplanned purchases (Bhardwaj & Manchiraju, 2017).

Product reviews play a key role in shaping purchasing decisions, with nearly 88% of consumers relying on them. While reviews provide valuable insights, the sheer volume can overwhelm buyers and impact decision-making. Positive reviews often encourage purchases, while negative ones deter them. The availability of information online has also led to an increase in impulsive buying behavior (Olsen et al., 2015).

Trust is critical in online transactions, with concerns about security, privacy, and fraud affecting consumer confidence. These issues create anxiety, making consumers hesitant to buy online. A global survey showed that a lack of trust in online privacy is a significant barrier to online shopping. This study aims to explore how Online Product Review Engagement and Platform Trust Concerns influence Impulsive Buying Behavior, a topic with limited local research.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Online product reviews, defined as electronic word-of-mouth shared by consumers, provide valuable insights into products based on others' experiences (Wang et al., 2020; Alzate et al., 2021). These peer-generated evaluations on company or third-party websites help buyers make informed decisions.

Consumers' willingness to invest time in reading reviews influences their impulsive buying tendencies. Some seek reviews to reduce stress, while others do so for pleasure. Reviews can satisfy both utilitarian and hedonic needs, influencing impulse purchases (Yusak et al., 2021). Research shows that online reviews significantly impact Impulsive Buying Behavior, guiding consumers in ensuring product quality (Yusak et al., 2021; Hong et al., 2021).

Trust in online platforms plays a crucial role in purchasing decisions. Buyers' trust in an online platform, which is more complex than traditional transactions, helps reduce uncertainty and risk (Geyskens et al., 1996; Abyad, 2017). Positive first experiences on a platform can strengthen this trust, essential for impulsive buying behavior (Nawaz et al., 2021).

In the virtual world, trust is crucial due to the lack of physical context in online transactions (PhamThi, 2022). Trust refers to consumers' positive perceptions of others' honesty, and it is vital for long-term relationships, both online and offline. In high-risk e-commerce, low trust leads to transaction failure. The trust transfer theory suggests that trust in an unfamiliar subject is built by transferring trust from familiar sources. Consumers' trust in platform vendors depends heavily on platform credibility. Recent research shows that offline interactions with retailers can enhance consumer trust in online platforms (Wu et al., 2022).

Hawkins Stern detailed the theory of impulse purchasing in his 1962 article, which challenged the idea that consumers always make rational decisions (Pelev, 2016). Stern argued that external factors often lead to spontaneous purchases and that marketers can influence consumers to buy more than intended. He categorized impulse buying into four types: pure impulse (unplanned purchases), reminder impulse (buying familiar products without prior intent), suggested impulse (triggered by encountering a product for the first time), and planned impulse (where buyers intend to purchase but are uncertain about specifics) (Agarwal et al., 2022).

This study utilized the S-O-R (Stimulus-Organism-Response) framework to explore the relationships between online product reviews, platform trust, and online impulse buying behavior. The S-O-R model consists of three parts: (1) stimulus, which motivates the consumer; (2) organism, representing the consumer's internal evaluation; and (3) response, the consumer's behavior in response to stimuli (Lina et al., 2022). The theory suggests that consumers process and respond to external stimuli uniquely. In this study, online reviews and platform trust (stimuli) influence consumer attitudes (organism), leading to impulsive buying behavior (response). Individuals' responses vary based on their level of impulsiveness, with high-impulse individuals being more responsive to stimuli, while low-impulse individuals tend to ignore them (Chen et al., 2015).

## METHODS

The researchers used a quantitative, descriptive-correlational research design to explore the relationships between variables and validate the hypothesis with relevant literature. This design helped analyze the impulsive purchasing behaviors of college students at a faith-based institution in Silang, Cavite.

The research focused on college students from the first semester of the 2023-2024 academic year who frequently shop online on platforms like Shopee, TikTok, Lazada, Shein, and Zalora. Stratified sampling was used to distribute participants across various colleges, ensuring diverse perspectives. Random selection was applied within each college, and survey questionnaires were distributed proportionally to maximize participation.

The modified questionnaire, adapted from Kang (2016), assessed three dimensions of online product review engagement: Product Ratings, Informativeness, and Helpfulness. A 5-point Likert Scale was used, ranging from 5 ("Always") to 1 ("Never").

**Table 1**

*Score, Scale, and Verbal Interpretation of Online Product Review Engagement*

<b>Score</b>	<b>Scale</b>	<b>Verbal Interpretation</b>
4.50-5.00	Always	Very High
3.50-4.49	Often	High
2.50-3.49	Sometimes	Moderately
1.50-2.49	Rarely	Low
1.00-1.49	Never	Very Low

The questions employed to assess the Platform Trust Concern of college students were derived from a study titled "An Empirical Study on Factors Influencing Consumers' Trust in E-Commerce" by Jha Manish et al. (2014). The purpose of this was to assess the respondent's level of concern regarding platform trust. Security Concern, Privacy Concern, and Familiarities Concern were the three dimensions of Platform Trust that were adapted for

this questionnaire. The 5-point Likert Scale was employed, with a range of 1 (Never) to 5 (Always).

**Table 2**

*Score, Scale, and Verbal Interpretation of Platform Trust Concerns*

<b>Score</b>	<b>Scale</b>	<b>Verbal Interpretation</b>
4.50-5.00	Always	Very High
3.50-4.49	Often	High
2.50-3.49	Sometimes	Moderately
1.50-2.49	Rarely	Low
1.00-1.49	Never	Very Low

The respondent's level of impulsiveness in purchasing a product online was determined using the questionnaire from the study conducted by Gulfranz M. et al. (2022) titled "Understanding the Impact of Online Customers' Shopping Experience on Online Impulsive Buying: A Study on Two Leading E-Commerce Platforms." In this investigation, the 5-point Likert Scale was implemented, with 5 representing "always" and 1 representing "never." The researchers of this study adapted all seven queries to measure Impulsive Buying Behavior ( $\alpha=.90$ ). Table 3 displays the verbal interpretation, scale, and score of the Impulsive Buying Behavior.

**Table 3**

*Score, Scale, and Verbal Interpretation of Impulsive Buying Behavior*

<b>Score</b>	<b>Scale</b>	<b>Verbal Interpretation</b>
4.50-5.00	Always	Strongly Agree
3.50-4.49	Often	Agree
2.50-3.49	Sometimes	Neutral
1.50-2.49	Rarely	Disagree
1.00-1.49	Never	Strongly Disagree

A pilot study was conducted to assess the feasibility of the research methods and the reliability of the research instrument. This preliminary study, scaled down from the main study, aimed to improve the quality and effectiveness of the primary research (In, J., 2017).

Stratified sampling was used, with participants divided equally among their colleges. Five students from each of the eight colleges were randomly selected, totaling 40 participants who frequently shop online on platforms such as Shopee, Tiktok, Lazada, Shein, and Zalora. The pilot study's findings were used to identify issues and refine the study's methodology and framework.

Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were used to measure online product review engagement, platform trust concerns, and impulse buying behavior. These statistics help describe the behavior of the sample data (Sharma, 2019). The Pearson

correlation coefficient (PCC) was applied to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between Impulsive Buying Behavior and Online Product Review Engagement, as well as between Platform Trust Concerns and Impulsive Buying Behavior (Haomiao et al., 2016).

One-way ANOVA and independent t-tests were used to examine differences in Impulsive Buying Behavior based on participant profiles. ANOVA tested the significance of differences in behavior by age, allowance, and time spent (Smalheiser, 2017), while independent t-tests were used to compare behavior by gender (Kim, 2015). Multiple regression analysis was employed to identify which independent variables significantly predicted impulse buying behavior (Uyanık & Güler, 2013; Huang, 2010).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The high engagement with online product reviews, with an average rating score of 4.56 (SD = 0.564), indicates that students pay close attention to product ratings before purchasing. They carefully evaluate both high and low scores, showing caution in their decision-making. High ratings act as strong purchase signals, and students actively seek out positive reviews.

These results align with Fan et al. (2017) and Raja et al. (2017), highlighting the critical role of online ratings in consumer decision-making. Positive ratings boost product appeal, while negative ratings can deter buyers, making online reviews a modern counterpart to traditional word-of-mouth recommendations.

The extent of online product review engagement in terms of helpful reviews shows an overall mean score of 4.39, which signifies the overall assessment of the helpfulness of online product reviews. College students highly value the helpfulness of online product reviews, with an overall mean score of 4.39 considered high. They seek reviews offering advice, personal experiences, photos or videos, and addressing specific concerns and needs.

Research shows from the study of Choi et al. (2020), review characteristics, information quality, and source trustworthiness are crucial for review helpfulness. Furthermore, it helps in reducing consumer uncertainty, and adding value to their decision-making.

**Table 4**  
*Overall Level of Platform Trust Concerns*

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Verbal Interpretation</b>
Security Concern	353	4.30	4.40	0.911	High
Privacy Concern	353	4.16	4.20	0.778	High
Familiarities Concern	352	4.30	4.40	0.896	High

<b>Overall Score</b>	<b>352</b>	<b>4.25</b>	<b>4.33</b>	<b>0.635</b>	<b>High</b>
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Legend: 1.00 -1.49 Very Low; 1.50 – 2.49 Low; 2.50 – 3.49 Moderate; 3.50 – 4.49 High; 4.50 – 5.00 Very High

The table shows high overall Platform Trust Concerns, with a grand mean of 4.25 (SD = 0.635). The mean score for Security Concern is 4.30, indicating a significant level of worry about security. Privacy Concern has a mean score of 4.16, showing a slightly lower but still notable level of concern. Familiarities Concern also scores 4.30, reflecting a substantial concern in this area.

Higher mean scores indicate greater average concern levels, highlighting the importance of security, privacy, and familiarity for users interacting with the platform.

**Table 5**  
*Level of Impulsive Buying Behavior*

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Verbal Interpretation</b>
I struggle to leave when seeing nice products online.	3.47	1.175	Moderate
I cannot suppress the feeling of purchasing the product online.	3.1	1.121	Moderate
Seeing something new makes me want to purchase the product.	3.14	1.107	Moderate
I am reckless on buying a product online.	2.59	1.171	Moderate
I buy products online because it makes me satisfied.	3.25	1.158	Moderate
I have difficulty passing up a bargain online.	2.92	1.123	Moderate
I feel guilty after purchasing a product online.	2.75	1.156	Moderate
<b>Overall Score</b>	<b>3.03</b>	<b>0.881</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

Legend: 1.00 -1.49 Very Low; 1.50 – 2.49 Low; 2.50 – 3.49 Moderate; 3.50 – 4.49 High; 4.50 – 5.00 Very High

Impulsive Buying Behavior refers to the spontaneous urge to purchase a product without thorough consideration (Habib et al., 2018; Lina et al., 2022). Table 5 shows college students' impulsive buying behavior across seven statements. Statement four, "I am reckless when buying products online," has the lowest mean of 2.59 (SD = 1.171), indicating that respondents generally do not consider themselves reckless buyers. In contrast, statement one, "I struggle to leave when seeing attractive products online," has the highest mean of 3.47 (SD = 1.175), suggesting that respondents find it challenging to leave online platforms when encountering appealing items.

The overall mean of 3.03 (SD = 0.881) indicates a moderate level of impulsive buying behavior among college students. This suggests a balance between impulsive and rational

purchasing decisions. Yusak et al. (2021) noted that highly impulsive consumers are more engaged in impulsive buying, while those with low impulsiveness exercise more self-control. The findings indicate that college students exhibit a mix of both impulsive and controlled buying tendencies.

**Table 6**  
*Correlation between Online Product Review Engagement and Impulsive Buying Behavior*

		Product Rating	Informativeness	Helpfulness	Impulsive Buying Behavior
Product Rating	Pearson's r	-			
	df	-			
	p-value	-			
Informativeness	Pearson's r	0.657***	-		
	df	351	-		
	p-value	<.001	-		
Helpfulness	Pearson's r	0.619***	0.690***	-	
	df	351	351	-	
	p-value	<.001	<.001	-	
Impulsive Buying Behavior	Pearson's r	0.026	0.036	0.101	
	df	351	351	351	
	p-value	0.63	0.494	0.057	

Note. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Correlation is considered significant if the p-value is less than 0.05. Here, Product Rating (p-value = 0.63), Informativeness (p-value = 0.494), and Helpfulness (p-value = 0.057) are not significantly correlated with Impulsive Buying Behavior. Thus, the null hypothesis—stating that "There is no significant relationship between Online Product Review Engagement and Impulsive Buying Behavior"—is not rejected.

The analysis suggests that Product Rating, Informativeness, and Helpfulness do not significantly influence or predict impulsive buying tendencies among the surveyed individuals. This finding contrasts with Hu et al. (2019), which indicated that online reviews significantly affect consumer impulsiveness.

**Table 7**  
*Difference in Impulsive Buying Behavior Considering Age*

		17-19	20-22	23-above
17-19	Mean difference	-	0.38	0.0943
	p-value	-	<.00	0.739

			1
20-22	Mean difference	-	-0.2854
	p-value	-	0.064
23-above	Mean difference		-
	p-value		-

*Tukey Post-Hoc Test – Difference is significant if p-value is < 0.05*

Table 7 presents a post-hoc analysis of Impulsive Buying Behavior by age group. The p-value of 0.001 between the 17-19 and 20-22 age groups indicates a significant difference in impulsive buying behavior. Other age group differences were not significant. Hence, the null hypothesis that "there is no significant difference in Impulsive Buying Behavior based on age" is rejected.

This finding aligns with Lin and Lin (2005), which suggests that younger consumers tend to exhibit higher impulsive buying behaviors due to their greater internet access and exploratory nature. Variations in impulsive buying tendencies across age groups may be influenced by factors such as technological access and lifestyle characteristics.

**Table 8**  
*Difference in Impulsive Buying Behavior Considering Allowance per Month*

	Allowance per month	N	Mean	SD	SE	F	df1	df2	p
Impulsive Buying Behavior	1,000 below	82	2.99	0.724	0.0800	0.626	5	347	0.680
	1,001 – 2,000	66	3.03	0.988	0.1217				
	2,001 – 3,000	66	2.92	0.935	0.1151				
	3,001 – 4,000	79	3.14	0.900	0.1012				
	4,001 – 5,000	34	3.01	0.866	0.1485				
5,001 above	26	3.18	0.889	0.1744					

*Group Descriptives and One-Way ANOVA – Difference is significant if p-value is < 0.05*

The table 8 indicates that students with allowances of PHP 5,000 or more have a higher mean impulsive buying behavior (M = 3.18) compared to those with allowances of PHP 2,000 to PHP 3,000 (M = 2.92). However, the p-value of 0.680, which is above 0.05, shows that these differences are not statistically significant (F(5,347) = 0.626, p = 0.680). This means the amount of allowance does not significantly impact impulsive buying behavior among college students. Consequently, the null hypothesis that "there is no significant difference in Impulsive Buying Behavior based on monthly allowance" is upheld.

This result contradicts Barakat's (2019) study, which suggested a significant positive relationship between financial capacity and impulsive buying behavior, indicating that higher financial resources lead to greater impulsive purchases.

**Table 9**



*Difference in Impulsive Buying Behavior Considering Time Spent*

	Spent time	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE	S	df	p
Impulsive Buying Behavior	1-2 hours	306	2.99	3	0.889	0.0508			
	3-more hours	47	3.33	3.29	0.77	0.112	-2.74	66.4	0.01

*Group Descriptives and T-Test – Difference is significant if p-value is < 0.05.*

The p-value of 0.008 indicates a significant difference in Impulsive Buying Behavior based on online time. Students who spend three or more hours browsing online shopping platforms have the highest mean impulsive buying behavior (M = 3.33), suggesting that longer browsing times are associated with more impulsive purchases. Therefore, the null hypothesis that "there is no significant difference in Impulsive Buying Behavior considering time spent online" is rejected.

This finding aligns with Husnain et al. (2019), who observed that increased time spent on shopping activities leads to higher impulsive purchasing tendencies. It also supports Adnan et al. (2022), which noted that more time spent browsing positively impacts impulsive buying and online payment behavior. Thus, extended browsing on online platforms significantly influences impulsive buying behavior.

Tables 10 and 11 present the result of regression analysis to determine if Online Product Review Engagement and Platform Trust Concerns predict Impulsive Buying Behavior of college students of a chosen faith-based university.

**Table 4**  
*Model Fit Measures*

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Overall Model Test			
			F	df1	df2	p
1	0.072	0.00518	0.908	2	349	0.404

The table provides summary statistics for an overall regression model test. In this case, the R is 0.072, indicating a very weak positive correlation and R<sup>2</sup> is 0.00518, suggesting that only a very small proportion of the variability in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables. In this case, the p-value is 0.404, which is higher than the conventional significance level of 0.05. This suggests that the p-value doesn't appear to provide strong evidence to reject the null hypothesis, “Online Product Review Engagement and Platform Trust Concerns do not significantly influence Impulsive Buying Behavior”. The model, as indicated by the low R<sup>2</sup> and non-significant p-value, may not be a good fit for explaining the variability in the dependent variable based on the independent variables.

**Table 11**

*Model Coefficients – Online Product Review Engagement and Platform Trust Concerns- Impulsive Buying Behavior*

<b>Predictor</b>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>
Intercept	2.5277	0.4348	5.813	<.001
Online Product Review	0.1303	0.1014	1.285	0.200
Platform Trust Concerns	-0.0177	0.0827	-0.214	0.831

The Intercept (*Estimate* = 2.5277) is statistically significant, implying that even when both Online Product Review Engagement and Platform Trust Concerns are zero, there is still a significant expected Impulsive Buying Behavior among college students.

However, neither Online Product Review Engagement ( $p = 0.200$ ) nor Platform Trust Concerns ( $p = 0.831$ ) appear to have a statistically significant influence on Impulsive Buying Behavior, as their p-values are greater than the commonly used significance threshold of 0.05. Therefore, there is insufficient evidence to conclude that variations in "Online Product Review Engagement" and "Platform Trust Concerns" are associated with significant changes in "Impulsive Buying Behavior" among college students.

## CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION, SUGGESTION, AND LIMITATIONS

This study investigates three aspects of Online Product Review Engagement: Product Ratings, Informativeness, and Helpfulness. Results show college students have Very High engagement with Product Ratings and Informativeness and High engagement with Helpfulness, reflecting a strong commitment to informed purchasing. For Platform Trust Concerns, including Security, Privacy, and Familiarity, students exhibit a high level of trust, indicating comfort with online shopping platforms.

The study also assesses impulse buying behavior, finding that college students in Silang, Cavite demonstrate moderate impulse control and balance rational and impulsive decisions. No significant correlation was observed between Online Product Review Engagement, Platform Trust Concerns (Security and Privacy), and Impulsive Buying Behavior, though Familiarity Concerns were notably linked to impulsive purchases. Factors such as age, gender, and time spent online influenced impulsive buying, with younger students, females, and those spending more time browsing being more prone to impulsive purchases. Allowance and college affiliation had no significant impact.

Recommendations include encouraging consumers to leave detailed reviews by offering discounts or incentives, which could enhance authenticity and attract buyers. Educators can use these insights to explore further factors influencing Impulsive Buying Behavior. For businesses, leveraging familiar platforms can boost impulsive buying, and app developers should focus on security, privacy assurances, and user-friendly tutorials. Future

research should examine other factors, like emotions, and consider longitudinal studies with a broader respondent base.

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