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Impulse Buying Behaviour in Apparel Retail: Exploring the Role of Store Atmosphere and Situational Factors

Impulzivno potrošniško vedenje v prodaji oblačil: raziskovanje vloge vzdušja v trgovini in situacijskih dejavnikov

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of store atmosphere and situational factors on impulse buying behaviour among apparel consumers, with a particular focus on the mediating role of situational factors. A quantitative research approach was employed, utilising partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) to provide comprehensive insights. Data were collected through convenience sampling from 501 apparel consumers in India. The research examines the influence of store atmospheric elements, including store ambiance, design, social factors and clothing touch, together with situational factors such as promotional offers, time availability, money availability, mood and the presence of others. The findings reveal a complex interaction between store atmosphere, situational factors and impulse buying behaviour. Specifically, store ambiance, design and key situational factors emerge as significant drivers of impulsive purchases. By incorporating situational factors as mediators, this study offers a nuanced research framework tailored to the apparel retail sector. The insights gained provide valuable implications for retailers, who can strategically enhance store atmosphere and situational conditions to effectively stimulate impulse buying behaviour among apparel consumers.

Keywords: store atmosphere, situational factors, apparel consumers, impulse buying behaviour

Izvleček

Članek preučuje vpliv vzdušja v trgovini in situacijskih dejavnikov na impulzivno nakupovalno vedenje kupcev oblačil, s posebnim poudarkom na posredniški vlogi situacijskih dejavnikov. Pri raziskavi smo uporabili kvantitativni pristop, za celovito analizo pa metodo delnih najmanjših kvadratov PLS-SEM. Podatki so bili zbrani s priložnostnim vzorčenjem, in sicer med 501 kupcem oblačil v Indiji. Raziskava preučuje vpliv trgovinskega vzdušja, ki vključuje ambient, oblikovanje prostora, socialne dejavnike in možnost dotikanja oblačil, skupaj s situacijskimi dejavniki, kot so promocijske ponudbe, koliko časa in denarja je na voljo, razpoloženje ter prisotnost drugih oseb. Ugotovitve razkrivajo zapleteno medsebojno delovanje med trgovinskim vzdušjem, situacijskimi dejavniki in impulzivnim



nakupovalnim vedenjem. Zlasti ambient trgovine, oblikovanje in ključni situacijski dejavniki so se pokazali kot pomembni spodbujevalci impulzivnih nakupov. Z vključitvijo situacijskih dejavnikov kot posredniških spremenljivk ponuja raziskava izpopolnjen raziskovalni okvir, prilagojen maloprodajnemu sektorju oblačil. Ugotovitve imajo lahko pomembno praktično vrednost za prodajalce, ki lahko z načrtnim oblikovanjem trgovinskega vzdušja in situacijskih pogojev učinkoviteje spodbujajo impulzivno potrošniško vedenje.

Ključne besede: vzdušje v trgovini, situacijski dejavniki, kupci oblačil, impulzivno potrošniško vedenje

1 Introduction

In the fast-paced world of retail, where competition is fierce and consumer preferences evolve rapidly, understanding the drivers behind impulse buying behaviour is crucial for businesses to remain competitive and thrive. Among the multitude of factors that influence consumer decision-making, two key elements stand out: store atmosphere and situational factors [1]. These factors not only shape the overall shopping experience but also play a pivotal role in triggering impulsive purchases, especially within the apparel product category [2]. Impulse buying, characterized by spontaneous and unplanned purchases, holds considerable implications for retailers seeking to capitalize on consumers' in-the-moment decisions [3]. While extensive research has delved into various aspects of consumer behaviour, the interplay between store atmosphere, situational factors and impulse buying remains a nuanced and evolving area of study, especially within the apparel sector [4]. Impulse buying plays a significant role in apparel shopping and holds strategic importance. Impulse purchases can account for a large portion of retail sales, especially in fashion where emotional appeal and visual aesthetics heavily influence buying behaviour [4,5]. Retailers use visual merchandising, strategic product placement (near checkout or on home pages) and limited time offers to trigger impulsive decisions [6]. Impulse buying is linked to emotions, mood and self-expression. Understanding it helps brands tailor marketing strategies that tap into consumers' desires for instant gratification, novelty or even retail therapy [5, 7].

The concept of store atmosphere encompasses the tangible and intangible elements of the retail environment, including store ambiance, design, social factors and clothing touch. These atmospheric factors exert a profound influence on consumers' emotions, perceptions and behaviours, thereby shaping their shopping experiences and purchase decisions [5]. Moreover, situational factors, such as mood, time pressure, money constraints, promotional offers and the presence of others during shopping, play a pivotal role in triggering impulsive buying tendencies [6,7]. Consumers' psychological states and external stimuli interact dynamically with the store environment, prompting spur-of-the-moment purchases that may deviate from their planned shopping intentions [8].

The store atmosphere encompasses the sensory elements and overall ambiance of the retail environment. From the visual appeal of store displays to the aroma wafting through the air, every aspect of the store atmosphere contributes to the overall mood and atmosphere experienced by shoppers [9]. Research has shown that certain atmospheric cues, such as lighting, music, scent and spatial layout, can significantly influence consumers' emotions, perceptions and purchasing behavior [10]. Retailers often strategically design their stores to evoke specific emotions and enhance the overall shopping experience, to drive sales and foster customer satisfaction. In addition to store atmosphere, situational factors play a crucial role in shaping impulsive buying behaviour [11]. These situational cues include factors

such as mood, time pressure, money constraints, promotional offers and the social presence of others. For instance, a shopper may be more inclined to make impulsive purchases when feeling happy or excited, or when faced with time constraints and the fear of missing out on a deal. Similarly, the presence of friends or peers can exert social pressure and influence individuals' purchase decisions [12–14].

Against this backdrop, this research aims to delve deeper into the interplay between store atmosphere, situational factors and impulse buying behaviour in the context of apparel consumption. By examining how specific atmospheric cues and situational elements influence consumers' propensity to make impulsive purchases, this study seeks to provide valuable insights for retailers looking to optimize their strategies and create compelling shopping experiences. Through a comprehensive analysis utilizing quantitative surveys, this research aims to uncover the underlying mechanisms driving impulse buying behaviour and offer practical recommendations for retailers to enhance their competitive edge on the apparel market.

Through a quantitative method approach integrating quantitative surveys, this study seeks to capture the multifaceted dimensions of consumer behaviour and offer nuanced perspectives on the impact of store environment and situational factors on impulsive buying tendencies. By shedding light on these intricate dynamics, retailers can refine their approaches to create immersive retail experiences that resonate with the evolving needs and preferences of apparel consumers.

1.1 Store atmosphere and impulse buying behaviour

Impulse buying is a spontaneous, unplanned decision to purchase, driven more by affective reactions than cognitive deliberation. Conceptually, it involves a complex interplay of emotional arousal, diminished self-control and situational cues. Research suggests [11–13], that factors such as hedonic motivation, instant gratification and even self-identity reinforce-

ment contributes to impulse buying behaviour. Store atmosphere refers to the physical and sensory elements of a retail environment that influence customer perceptions and behaviours [14]. Store atmosphere plays a crucial role in shaping consumers' emotions, perceptions and behaviours, ultimately influencing their impulse buying behaviours, particularly in the apparel category [12, 15]. The ambiance, layout, music, lighting and overall sensory experience of a store collectively contribute to its atmosphere, creating a distinct environment that can either encourage or deter impulse purchases [16–18]. Firstly, the visual appeal of a store, including its layout, product displays and decor, sets the stage for consumers' shopping experiences [19]. A well-designed store layout can guide consumers through the space, drawing their attention to specific merchandise and enticing them to explore further [20]. Eye-catching displays of apparel items, arranged in aesthetically pleasing configurations, can evoke desire and stimulate impulse buying more [21]. For example, strategically placed mannequins showcasing trendy outfits or visually appealing product arrangements can trigger impulse purchases by creating a sense of urgency and desire to emulate the displayed styles. The colour scheme in a store can elicit various emotional responses and attract customers' attention [22, 23]. Consumers can be stimulated by colour and put in a buying frame of mind [5]. Utilizing warm colours such as yellow and red on the packaging, and cool and relaxing colours such as violet or blue on the background walls of the store can catch the customer's attention [24]. Warm colours in a retail outlet attract customers, whereas cool colours generate favourable responses among customers, affecting customer behaviour when purchasing [25]. Moreover, the use of lighting can significantly impact consumers' perceptions and behaviours within a store. Lighting influences mood and ambiance, with bright, well-lit spaces often associated with positivity and energy, while dimmer lighting can create a more intimate and relaxed atmosphere [26]. Retailers can leverage lighting techniques to enhance the visual appeal of apparel items,

highlight specific areas or promotions, and evoke desired emotions conducive to impulse buying [27]. For instance, soft, flattering lighting in fitting rooms can make shoppers feel more confident and inclined to make impulsive clothing purchases. Additionally, the auditory elements of the store atmosphere, such as background music, contribute to the overall sensory experience and can influence consumers' emotional states and purchasing behaviour [28]. Upbeat music with a fast tempo has been found to increase arousal and excitement levels, potentially leading to heightened impulse-buying tendencies. Conversely, slow-tempo music or calming melodies can create a more relaxed shopping environment, which may deter impulsive purchases [29, 30]. Retailers can strategically select music genres and playlists to align with their target demographic and desired shopping atmosphere, thereby influencing consumers' moods and propensity for impulse buying [31]. Furthermore, olfactory cues, such as ambient scents, can evoke powerful emotional responses and influence consumers' perceptions of a store's atmosphere [30, 32]. Pleasant fragrances, carefully chosen to complement the brand image and enhance the shopping experience, can evoke positive emotions and enhance consumers' moods, thereby increasing their receptivity to impulse purchases [33]. For example, the subtle scent of fresh linen or floral notes can evoke feelings of freshness and luxury, creating a sensory-rich environment conducive to impulse buying in the apparel sector [34].

The interaction between salespersons and shoppers can significantly influence impulse buying behaviour in apparel stores [35]. A friendly, knowledgeable and attentive salesperson can create a positive shopping experience, build rapport with customers and subtly encourage impulse purchases [36]. Salespersons who engage in suggestive selling techniques, such as recommending complementary items or highlighting limited time offers, can prompt shoppers to make spontaneous purchases they had not initially planned [37]. Moreover, salespersons who provide personalized assistance, offer styling advice

or express enthusiasm for clothing items can enhance shoppers' emotional engagement and increase the likelihood of impulse buying [38]. On the other hand, the presence of a crowd in an apparel store can also impact impulse buying behaviour. Research suggests that crowded environments can create a sense of urgency and excitement, prompting shoppers to feel a fear of missing out (FOMO) on desirable items or limited-time promotions [39]. As a result, shoppers may be more inclined to make impulsive purchases to avoid regret or competition from other customers. Additionally, the social influence of a crowd can lead to conformity behaviour, where shoppers are influenced by the purchasing decisions of others, further amplifying impulse buying tendencies [40–42].

The tactile experience of touching clothing items can play a significant role in triggering impulse buying behaviour. Research has shown that tactile sensations can evoke emotional responses and influence consumers' perceptions of product quality and desirability [43]. In apparel stores, allowing customers to physically interact with garments by touching fabrics, trying on clothing items or feeling textures can enhance their sensory experience and stimulate impulse purchases [44]. The pleasurable sensation of touching soft fabrics or admiring intricate details can create a sense of immediate gratification, prompting shoppers to make impulsive buying decisions [45, 46].

1.2 *Situational factors and impulse buying behaviour*

Situational factors play a crucial role in influencing impulse buying behaviour in the context of the apparel product category. Numerous situational factors, such as promotional offers, availability of time, money availability, consumer mood and the presence of others during shopping, can impact impulse buying behaviour. Promotional offers such as discounts, sales and limited-time promotions create a sense of urgency and scarcity, prompting shoppers to make impulsive purchases [47]. When consumers perceive a good deal or perceive potential savings, they may feel compelled to capitalize on the

Table 1: Theoretical backing summary: impulse buying behaviour in apparel shopping

Conceptual link	Supported by	Key insights
Store atmosphere: Emotional/Affective states	[30, 58, 59, 60, 61, 65]	Store ambiance, layout, scent, lighting and music trigger emotional responses (pleasure, arousal), influencing consumers' psychological readiness to buy.
Clothing touch: Impulse buying	[61, 62]	Tactile interaction with products, especially in apparel, heightens attachment and desire, leading to impulsive purchases.
Store atmosphere: Situational perception	[59, 64]	A well-designed atmosphere reframes the shopping context (e.g., urgency, hedonic value), modifying situational interpretations like mood, time pressure and social cues.
Situational factors: Impulse buying	[63, 64, 66, 73]	Time availability, presence of others, promotions and current mood have strong direct effects on unplanned purchasing behaviour.
Store atmosphere: Situational factors (Mediator)	[59, 60, 62, 65]	Store design and sensory elements shape how situational variables (e.g. perceived urgency, money availability) are experienced.
Mood as a mediator	[30, 64]	Positive emotional states induced by the store environment increase consumers' impulsivity and willingness to indulge.
Presence of promotions: Impulse buying	[63, 66, 73, 74]	Discounts and limited time offer create urgency and justify spontaneous purchases.
S-O-R model justification	[58, 65, 67]	The S-O-R model frames store atmosphere as stimulus (S), emotional/cognitive state as organism (O) and impulse buying as response (R).

opportunity, leading to spontaneous buying decisions, especially for apparel items they may not have initially planned to purchase [10]. Time constraints influence impulse buying behaviour in apparel stores [48]. When shoppers are pressed for time or have limited availability, they may be more inclined to make quick, impulsive purchases rather than engaging in extensive deliberation or comparison shopping [49–51]. In such situations, consumers may prioritize convenience and immediacy, opting for impulse buys rather than spending time searching for the perfect item [52, 53].

The perceived availability of money impacts impulse buying behaviour for apparel [53]. When consumers feel financially secure or have disposable income readily available, they may be more willing to indulge in spontaneous purchases, especially if they perceive the item as affordable or within their budget [11]. Conversely, financial constraints or concerns about overspending may curb impulse buying tendencies, as consumers prioritize financial prudence and budgetary constraints [54]. Consumer mood can significantly influence impulse buying behaviour in apparel stores. Positive emotions such as happiness and excitement can lower inhibitions

and increase impulsivity, leading consumers to make spontaneous purchases to enhance their mood or reward themselves [55]. Conversely, negative emotions such as stress, sadness or boredom may also trigger impulse buying as a coping mechanism or to alleviate negative feelings through retail therapy [37, 56]. The presence of friends, family members or peers during shopping can influence impulse buying behaviour in apparel stores. Social interactions and peer pressure can impact consumers' purchase decisions, as individuals may feel compelled to conform to group norms or seek approval from others [57, 58]. Additionally, shopping with companions can enhance the enjoyment of the shopping experience and increase the likelihood of impulse purchases through social influence and shared experiences.

1.3 Summary of theoretical backing (impulse buying behaviour for apparel)

Table 1 summarizes the theoretical contributions from key studies supporting the conceptual model linking store atmosphere, situational factors and impulse buying behaviour in apparel shopping. The framework draws from the S-O-R model and

emphasizes emotional and contextual mediators. Table 1 provides an in-depth understanding of the conceptual link between store atmosphere, situational factors and impulse buying behaviour for apparel.

1.4 Proposed research framework

The proposed research framework, as seen in Figure 1: Proposed research framework, was developed through a comprehensive literature review on store atmosphere and situational variables affecting impulse buying in apparel consumers. The study proposes that situational factors mediate the relationship between store atmosphere and impulse buying. Elements of store atmosphere and situational factors,

including promotional offers, time, money, mood and the presence of others, were identified and used to build the research framework. Hypotheses were then developed to assess impulse buying behaviour in apparel consumers.

H1: There is a positive relationship between store atmosphere and impulse buying behaviour for apparel.

H2: There is a positive relationship between store atmosphere and situational factors.

H3: There is a positive relationship between situational factors and impulse buying behaviour for apparel.

H4: There is a positive relationship between store atmosphere and impulse purchasing behaviour based on situational factors as a mediator.

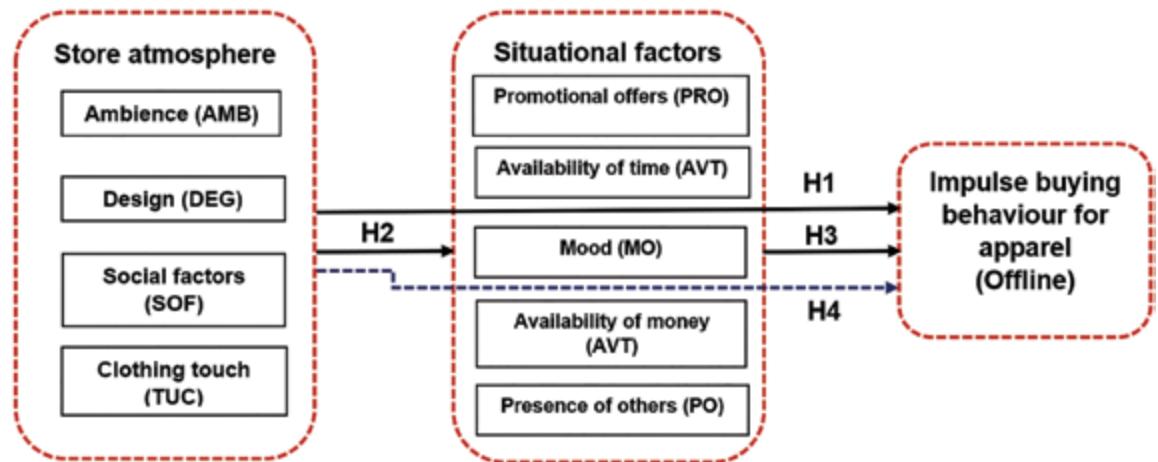


Figure 1: Proposed research framework

2 Methodology

This study used a quantitative method to assess the relationship between store atmosphere, situational factors and impulse buying behaviour in apparel consumers. A non-probability (convenience) sampling technique was employed for this study. The respondents were apparel shoppers in retail stores in India. India has heterogeneous consumers: urban/rural, income groups, cultures, etc. Convenience sampling was chosen due to its practical advantages in accessing a large and diverse pool of participants within a limited timeframe and resource constraints. India serves as an ideal context for examining im-

pulse buying behaviour in apparel shopping due to its dynamic retail environment, rapid urbanization and growing middle-class consumer base. The Indian apparel market is characterized by a blend of traditional and modern retail formats, increasing exposure to global fashion trends, and a strong influence of in-store environments and promotions on consumer behaviour. Given the large and diverse nature of the Indian consumer market, collecting 501 valid responses provides a robust dataset that captures variability across demographics such as age, gender, income levels and shopping habits. Structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was used to analyse the associations between the variables. A

total of 501 valid responses were gathered, which exceeds the minimum sample size requirements for structural equation modelling (SEM).

2.1 Sample size determination

Sample size determination is a significant challenge when SEM is preferred for data analysis [58]. The “10-times rule” approach is a popular minimum sample size estimation method in SEM. Researchers have advised that a study utilizing SEM requires a sample size of 200 or that five to 10 samples per element would be adequate [72, 75, 76]. However, SEM researchers have often employed sample sizes ranging from 300 to 400. Therefore, 490 responses were targeted for this study. A total of 650 questionnaires were distributed with the aim of receiving back 490 for further data analysis. A total of 550 responses were received. After data cleaning, 501 apparel consumer responses were deemed valid for further data analysis.

2.2 Questionnaire development

A structured questionnaire was utilized in this study to collect individual responses. The questionnaire in this study was carefully developed to improve the participants’ response rate. Thus, the study makes it as simple and visually appealing as possible. To assess the impact of apparel customers’ impulsive purchasing behaviour, the study’s questionnaire was split into two sections, as follows:

- Section 1: This section included multiple choice questions about impulse buying, store atmospheric cues and situational factors.
- Section 2: This section included a question related to the demographic profile of apparel consumers.

Section 1 was developed to determine if respondents’ recent purchases were impulsive. A five-point Likert (strongly agree-disagree) scale that contained and modified three items was used in this study to examine the urge to buy apparel products impulsively. Sixteen items in four dimensions of the apparel retail store were examined to evaluate the

store atmosphere. Each retail store aspect (including ambience factors, design variables, social factors and clothing touch) had four items used to measure the impulse purchasing behaviour of apparel consumers. A Likert scale with five points ranging from strongly disagreeing to strongly agreeing was utilized to assess four items evaluating ambience variables, and for design elements, social factors and clothing touch. Similarly, a total of 20 items in five dimensions of situational factors were assessed. Each measurement of situational factors (including mood, money availability, time availability, promotional offers and the presence of others) had four items that were utilized to evaluate impulse buying for apparel. In addition, four items were measured using a scale developed and modified by [61] to assess the impact of the mood of apparel consumers. In addition, questions about money and time availability were adopted from the study of [62]. Further, a scale was used to assess how much purchasers are influenced by others during apparel shopping. Similarly, four items related to promotional offers were considered in the study [63].

2.3 Reliability and validity analysis

Reliability and validity have been identified as crucial elements of any quantitative research in measuring research quality. In this study, reliability was first evaluated using Cronbach’s alpha, and then by composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE). The threshold values for alpha, CR and AVE are 0.70 (both alpha and CR) and above, and 0.50 and above for AVE [77–79]. Table 2 presents all variables of latent constructs that are highly reliable. Furthermore, convergent validity and discriminant validity were used to evaluate the validity of the quantitative data [71, 77] and to verify scale validity using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT). The preferred value of HTMT should be less than 1 [78]. Table 3 indicates the values of HTMT were between 0.50 to 0.82, which was acceptable for measuring discriminant validity.

Table 2: Factors of store atmosphere, situational factors and impulse buying behaviour

Constructs		Factor loadings	CR ^{a)}	AVE ^{b)}	Alpha
Ambiance (AMB)	AMB2	0.688	0.89	0.54	0.90
	AMB3	0.692			
	AMB4	0.663			
Design (DEG)	DEG1	0.665	0.92	0.51	0.94
	DEG2	0.701			
	DEG3	0.748			
	DEG4	0.669			
Social factors (SOF)	SOF1	0.688	0.85	0.53	0.85
	SOF2	0.687			
Clothing touch (TUC)	TUC1	0.672	0.93	0.52	0.95
	TUC2	0.683			
	TUC3	0.692			
Promotional offers (PO)	PO1	0.738	0.86	0.57	0.88
	PO2	0.687			
	PO3	0.737			
	PO4	0.689			
Availability of time (AVT)	AVT1	0.667	0.89	0.51	0.91
	AVT3	0.731			
	AVT4	0.686			
Availability of money (AVM)	AVM1	0.679	0.94	0.53	0.96
	AVM2	0.713			
	AVM3	0.639			
	AVM4	0.736			
Presence of others (PO)	PRO1	0.699	0.92	0.62	0.87
	PRO3	0.663			
	PRO4	0.67			
Mood (MO)	MO1	0.782	0.90	0.52	0.89
	MO3	0.668			
Impulse buying behaviour for apparel (IMPB)	IMPB1	0.692	0.79	0.50	0.75
	IMPB2	0.701			
	IMPB3	0.683			

^{a)} Composite reliability, ^{b)} Average variance extracted

Table 3: Discriminant validity analysis

Latent variables	IMPB ^{a)}	S.F. ^{b)}	S.A. ^{c)}
Impulse buying behaviour	--	--	--
Situational factors	0.53	--	--
Store atmosphere	0.50	0.75	--

^{a)} Impulse buying behaviour, ^{b)} Situational factors, ^{c)} Store atmosphere

2.4 Common method bias (CMB)

In this study, Harman's single factor score was employed to assess the common method bias. A single factor's total variation has been suggested to be less than 50%. If the number is less than 50%, it means that CMB has no effect on the responses and, thus, the study's findings. Table 4 shows that the value of total variance (16.736) is less than 50%, which indicates that CMB has no effect on the data. Thus, CMB was not a problem in this investigation. To further assess the potential impact of common method bias (CMB), the marker variable technique was applied. The correlations between the marker variable and the main study constructs (store atmosphere, situational factors, and impulse buying behaviour) were all non-significant ($p > 0.05$). This suggests that common method variance is unlikely to significantly bias the results. The marker variable showed weak correlations with all main constructs (ranging from $r = 0.04$ to $r = 0.06$), while none were statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). This indicates minimal risk of common method bias in this study.

Table 4: Common method bias

Component	Initial eigenvalues			Extraction sums of squared loadings		
	Total	Percentage of variance (%)	Cumulative (%)	Total	Percentage of variance (%)	Cumulative (%)
1	9.540	16.736	16.736	9.540	16.736	16.736
2	5.007	8.785	25.521			

2.5 Correlation analysis

To assess the correlation between latent constructs, the Pearson correlation test was used. The acceptable

range of coefficient correlation (r) lies between -1 to +1. The r values between 0.36 to 0.67 are considered a moderate association among constructs [80, 81]. The

values for coefficient correlation for situational factors ($r = 0.52$) and store atmosphere ($r = 0.50$) are given in Table 5. There is no multicollinearity problem in the data, as it is suitable for further SEM analysis.

Table 5: Correlation analysis

Latent constructs	IMPB ^{a)}	S.F. ^{b)}	S.A. ^{c)}
Impulse buying behaviour	1.00	0.52	0.50
Situational factors	0.52	1.00	0.75
Store atmosphere	0.50	0.75	1.00

^{a)} Impulse buying behaviour, ^{b)} Situational factors, ^{c)} Store atmosphere

3 Results and discussion

3.1 Demographic profile of the respondents

Table 6 presents the descriptive statistics of the respondents' demographic profile. Most respondents were female (56.08%) and male (43.92%). The majority (50.30%) were aged 18–25, with 30.73% aged 25–35, 14.17% aged 35–45 and 4.79% over 45. In terms of family income, 28.14% earned 487–974 EUR (50,000–100,000 INR) and 25.55% earned above 4,870 EUR (above 500,000 INR). About 76% had graduation (46.91%) or post-graduation (29.14%) education levels.

3.2 Structural model evaluation

To evaluate the links between latent constructs, the PLS-SEM method was used for this study. SEM is a combination of factor analysis and path analysis. SEM analysis has enabled route analytical modelling on latent variables using the SMART-PLS tool. CFA is a part of the measurement model of PLS-SEM, which assesses the outer loadings, composite reliability, convergent validity, discriminant validity and AVE. Outer loadings are the regression weights with

Table 6: Descriptive analysis (demographic profile of respondents)

Measure	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	220	43.92
	Female	281	56.08
Age	18–25 years	252	50.30
	26–35 years	154	30.73
	36–45 years	71	14.17
	> 45 years	24	4.79
Monthly family income (INR ^{a)}	< 50.000	78	15.57
	50.000–100.000	141	28.14
	100.000–200.000	84	16.77
	200.00–500.000	70	13.97
	> 500.000	128	25.55
Education level	Intermediate	70	13.97
	Graduation	234	46.91
	Post-graduation	146	29.14
	Above post-graduation	51	9.98

^{a)} 1 INR = 0.0098 EUR

recommended benchmarks of 0.6 and 0.7 [68–70]. The foremost factor structure revealed four constructs from store atmosphere (AMB1, SOF3, SOF4, TUC4), four factors from situational factors (AVT2, PRO2, MO2, MO4) and one factor (IMPB4) from impulse buying behaviour are eliminated from the model as its factor loading is lower than the expected value 0.6 (see Table 2).

The outer model, or structural model, assesses path coefficients to determine R^2 values and significance levels using t-statistics and p-values. R^2 is crucial for evaluating the model. In the model (see Figure 2: Structural model), store atmosphere is the independent variable, situational factors are mediators and impulse buying behaviour is the dependent variable. Thus, situational factors mediate the relationship between store atmosphere and impulse buying behaviour for apparel consumers.

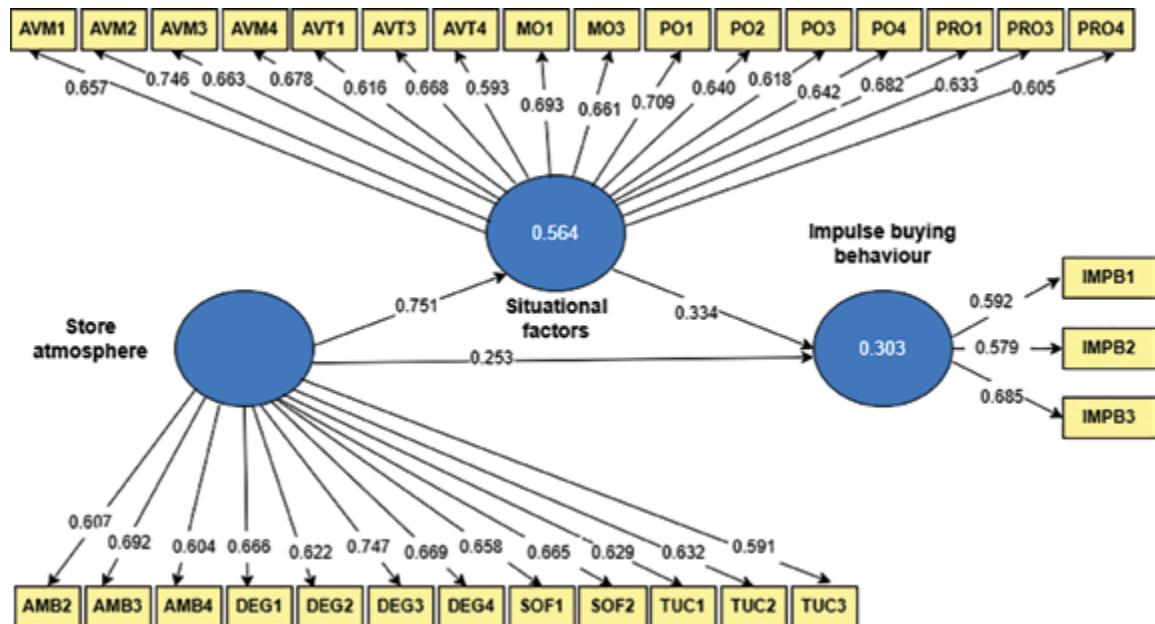


Figure 2: Structural model

It is predicted that the R^2 parameters will be met with a minimum of 10% accuracy [81]. Table 7 shows that 30.3% of the variance is explained by impulse buying behaviour, whereas 56.4% is explained by situational factors in the model. The standard was set to 0.02 for weak, 0.13 for moderate and 0.26 for the strong coefficient of determination [82]. It was found that impulse buying behaviour and situational factors have a strong effect. Predictive relevance (Q^2) was also examined along with the R^2 as a measure of accuracy determined through the blindfolding procedure. A Q^2 value above zero shows predictive relevance. However, in Table 7, Q^2 for impulse buying behaviour is 0.102, while it is 0.272 for situational factors, indicating a high degree of predictive relevance [83]. The model's goodness of fit was assessed through SRMR (standardized root mean square residual) and the normed fit index (NFI). The acceptable value of SRMR must be less than 0.10 (J. F. Hair, Henseler, et al., 2014), while the acceptable value of NFI must be close to 1 [84–86]. Table 8 shows the value of SRMR was 0.07 and NFI was 0.7, indicating the model is a good fit.

Table 7: Analysis of coefficient of determination

Latent Variables	R^2	R^2 adjusted	Q^2 b)
Impulse buying behaviour	0.303	0.313	0.102
Situational factors	0.564	0.568	0.272

a) Coefficient of determination, b) Predictive relevance

Table 8: Analysis of goodness of fit

Model fit	Estimated model
SRMR	0.07
NFI	0.70

3.3 Hypothesis testing

The PLS-SEM model assesses the relationships between latent constructs by analysing path coefficients and significance levels. Table 9 presents the results of path coefficients, t-statistics and p-values. The findings reveal that store atmosphere significantly influences impulse buying behaviour for apparel, contributing 25% to the direct effect on impulse buying (see Figure 3). Further, store atmosphere has a positive and significant relationship with impulse buying behaviour as its t-statistics is $5.18 > 1.96$,

while the p-value is 0.00, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that the retail atmosphere is a crucial determinant of impulsive buying for apparel.

Therefore, hypothesis H1 is accepted.

Table 9: Path coefficients, T-statistics, and P-values

Hypothesis	Path coeff., β	t-statistics	p-values	Remarks
H1: Store atmosphere \geq Impulse buying behaviour	0.253	5.18	0.00	Significant
H2: Store atmosphere \geq Situational factors	0.751	7.03	0.00	Significant
H3: Situational factors \geq Impulse buying behaviour	0.334	4.41	0.00	Significant

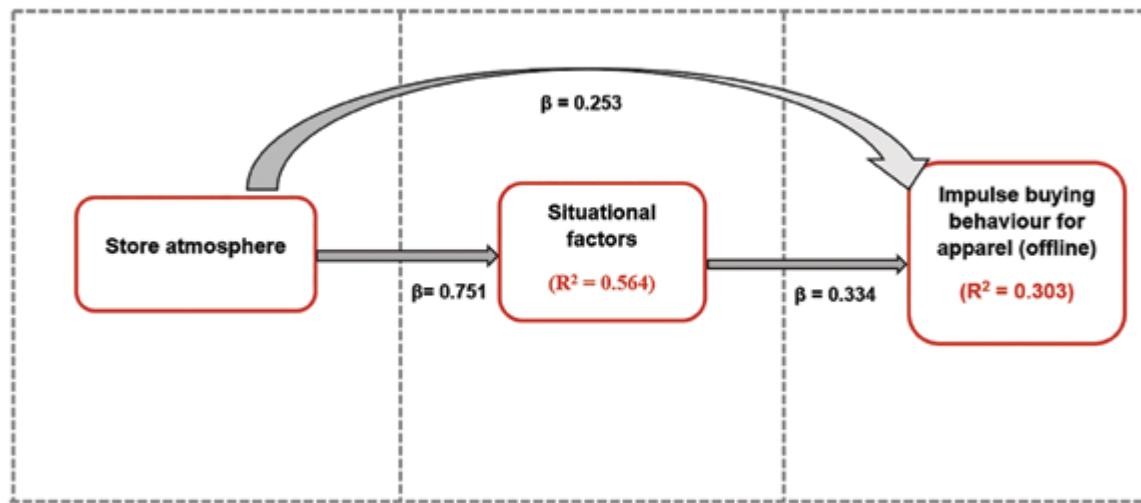


Figure 3: Final research framework of IMBB of apparel consumer

Similarly, store atmosphere contributes 75.1% to situational factors, while situational factors account for 33.4% of the direct influence on impulse buying behaviour (see Figure 3). With a t-statistic of $7.03 > 1.96$ and a p-value of $0.00 < 0.05$, store atmosphere positively and significantly impacts situational factors. Situational factors also significantly influence impulse buying, with a t-statistic of $4.41 > 1.96$ and a p-value of $0.00 < 0.05$. Thus, hypotheses H2 and H3 are accepted, confirming that both store atmosphere and situational factors positively affect impulse buying behaviour for apparel.

On the other hand, the results presented in Table 10 show an indirect effect relationship between the latent constructs. Thus, a partial mediation exists. The path analysis assessment (0.250) found a significant association between store atmosphere with impulse buying behaviour based on situational factors as mediators. In addition to the significant

indirect effect ($\beta = 0.250, p < 0.001$), the direct effect of store atmosphere on impulse buying behaviour remained significant after accounting for the mediator, although its strength was reduced, indicating partial mediation. To further establish the type of mediation, the direct effect of store atmosphere on impulse buying behaviour was examined both before and after the inclusion of situational factors as a mediator. Without considering the mediator, the direct path coefficient was $\beta = 0.430 (t = 7.860, p < 0.001)$, indicating a strong and significant relationship. After including situational factors, the direct effect decreased to $\beta = 0.280 (t = 5.120, p < 0.001)$, but remained statistically significant. This reduction in the direct effect, while maintaining significance, confirms the presence of partial mediation. The t-statistic is greater than 1.96, while the p-value is significant at a 5% level, less than 0.05. Hence, hypothesis H4 is accepted.

Table 10: Specific indirect effect of situational factors

Path analysis (Hypothesis 4)	Direct effect		Indirect effect	t-statistics	p-values	Remarks
	Before mediation	After mediation				
H4: Store atmosphere \geq Situational factors \geq Impulse buying behaviour	0.430	0.280	0.250	4.055	0.00	Significant

4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study delved into the intricate interplay between store atmosphere, situational factors and impulse buying behaviour among apparel consumers. Through a comprehensive analysis of the impact of atmospheric cues, such as store ambience, design, social factors and clothing touch, as well as situational factors, such as promotional offers, time availability, money availability, customer mood and the presence of others, this research provides valuable insights into the drivers of impulsive purchasing decisions in the apparel retail environment. The findings of this study underscore the significant influence of store atmosphere and situational factors on consumers' impulse buying behaviour. A captivating store ambiance, carefully crafted through visual, auditory and olfactory cues, can evoke positive emotions, enhance mood and stimulate impulsive purchases among apparel consumers [21]. Additionally, situational factors such as promotional offers and time constraints were identified as key determinants that shape impulse buying tendencies, with discounts and limited-time promotions creating a sense of urgency and scarcity, thereby driving impulsive purchases. Furthermore, this research highlights the interactive nature of store atmosphere and situational factors, emphasizing the need for retailers to consider both aspects in tandem to effectively stimulate IMBB for apparel consumers. By strategically designing store environments to evoke specific emotions, aligning promotional strategies with consumer preferences and needs, and creating a sense of excitement and urgency, retailers can optimize their efforts to drive impulse purchases among apparel consumers [49, 75].

4.1 Theoretical implications

This study contributes to theoretical implications by empirically testing developed relationships, thereby aiding theory verification. It addresses the growing interest in impulse purchases by developing a framework that includes factors of store atmosphere and situational factors affecting impulse buying behaviour in apparel. The study's findings can help researchers apply this conceptual framework to other areas of consumer purchasing behaviour [57, 58, 63, 64].

Second, this study shows that situational factors such as time availability, money, presence of others, promotional offers and mood mediate the relationship between store atmosphere and impulse buying in apparel consumers [61, 64]. This mediation effect, previously unexplored, suggests that individuals with more time and money are more responsive to atmospheric cues and more likely to make impulse purchases. Understanding these situational factors can help tailor marketing tactics to target consumers' financial situations. The study's findings enhance the understanding of how situational factors stimulate impulse buying behaviour in apparel consumers [56, 62].

This study advances consumer behaviour theory by providing new insights into how store atmosphere and situational factors interact to influence impulse buying behaviour. It refines existing theoretical frameworks such as S-O-R theory and decision-making models by considering how contextual influences shape consumer responses in complex retail environments.

4.2 Practical implications

The practical implications of these findings offer valuable insights for retailers. By understanding the

connection between store atmosphere, situational factors and impulse buying, retailers can optimize their marketing, merchandising and store layouts to encourage spontaneous purchases. Additionally, technology and data analytics can personalize the shopping experience with targeted promotions and recommendations [66, 87, 88].

Furthermore, the study's results can guide store managers in creating comfortable atmospheres that encourage impulse purchases. Managers should invest in improving store ambience, including enhancing salespeople's attitudes, creating appealing layouts and presenting products attractively. These strategies can boost impulse buying and help develop effective promotional programs targeting impulsive apparel buyers [48, 68, 69]. The findings also imply that managers should carefully design the atmosphere of apparel retail stores and websites for highly interested customers, as they are more likely to make impulse purchases [89, 90].

5 Limitation and future recommendation

This study's findings may lack generalizability beyond the specific context and sample used, as it focuses on a particular geographic region, type of retail environment or demographic group. Additionally, the study may not have accounted for all potential mediating and moderating variables that could influence the relationship between store atmosphere, situational factors and impulse buying behaviour.

Future research could explore other product categories such as FMCG, electronic items, beauty products and fashion accessories. It could also investigate how digital atmospherics (such as website design, visual aesthetics and online mood cues) influence consumer decision-making, emotional engagement and purchase intent. Research could also investigate the role of interactive design elements, such as virtual try-ons or augmented reality features,

in creating an immersive shopping environment that drives customer satisfaction and loyalty.

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Data availability statement: The dataset contains retailer and shopper information, including sensitive participant details that cannot be anonymized without compromising the integrity of the research. Therefore, the data cannot be publicly deposited. However, the dataset may be made available by the corresponding author upon justified request.

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