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A Study on the Impact of Promotional Strategies of Online Retailers on the Shopping Behaviour of Youth

T. Chaitanya Shubhakar*

KL Business School, KL Deemed to be University.

*Corresponding Author: chaitanyashubhakarternali@gmail.com

Abstract

The rapid expansion of e-commerce platforms has reshaped consumer shopping patterns globally, particularly among youth who are highly active digital users. In India, and specifically in Vijayawada, online retail engagement has grown due to increased internet accessibility, smartphone penetration, and the popularity of social media. Online retailers utilize a range of promotional strategies—including discounts, flash sales, influencer endorsements, referral programs, and personalized advertisements—to attract and retain young consumers. However, the impact of these promotional strategies on the shopping behaviour of youth remains complex and multi-dimensional. This study aims to examine how such promotional strategies influence the shopping behaviour of youth aged 18–25 in Vijayawada, focusing on both short-term behaviours such as impulse buying and long-term behaviours such as loyalty and repeat purchase. The research adopts a mixed-method approach, including a survey of 100 youth respondents and in-depth interviews with selected participants, to capture both measurable patterns and personal perceptions. The findings indicate that price-based promotions and influencer marketing have the strongest influence on purchase intention and impulse buying, while loyalty programs and personalized ads contribute minimally to long-term loyalty. The study highlights the emotional and psychological factors underlying youth consumer behaviour and offers implications for retailers seeking to balance sales growth and sustainable customer relationships.

Keywords: Promotional Strategies, Youth Consumer Behaviour, E-commerce, Influencer Marketing, Impulse Buying, Vijayawada, Digital Promotions.

Introduction

E-commerce has emerged as one of the most significant transformations in the global retail industry, reshaping how consumers search for, evaluate, and purchase products. In India, this transformation has been particularly rapid due to increasing smartphone penetration, affordable internet access, and the rise of domestic and international online retail platforms. For youth, especially individuals aged 18–25, online shopping has become a preferred mode of consumption because of its convenience,

product variety, and interactive shopping experience. This demographic group is highly tech-savvy, socially connected, and comfortable with digital transactions, making them a critical target segment for online retailers.

Promotional strategies play a central role in influencing consumer decisions in online retail environments. These strategies include discounts, cashback offers, flash sales, influencer-endorsed campaigns, referral bonuses, personalized recommendations, and loyalty rewards. For youth consumers, promotional messages are not just economic incentives but also social and psychological stimuli. They help create excitement, urgency, and perceived value, shaping both planned and impulse purchases. Young consumers tend to respond quickly to digital advertisements, social media trends, and peer recommendations, making them more susceptible to promotional influence compared to older consumer groups.

In Vijayawada, the growing adoption of digital retail platforms reflects broader national trends while also presenting local consumer behaviour patterns. The youth population in the city is highly engaged with online shopping due to the presence of educational institutions, increasing exposure to digital media, and shifting lifestyle preferences. Online retailers are actively targeting this demographic with promotional campaigns through social media, mobile apps, and localized festival or seasonal offers. This creates an environment where promotional strategies are not only widespread but also highly influential in shaping purchasing decisions.

However, the effect of these promotional strategies is not uniform. While some promotions such as discount sales and flash deals have strong short-term effects, other strategies like loyalty programs may have limited influence on youth due to their tendency to prioritize cost savings and trend-driven consumption over sustained brand affiliation. At the same time, influencer marketing has gained strong traction, as youth often associate credibility and relatability with influencers they follow on platforms such as Instagram and YouTube. This dynamic makes it essential to examine how different promotional strategies shape youth shopping behaviour both in terms of immediate purchase decisions and longer-term loyalty.

This research focuses on understanding the specific ways in which promotional strategies influence the online shopping behaviour of youth in Vijayawada. The aim is to analyze both the behavioural responses and psychological motivations that underpin youth decision-making. The study investigates which promotional tools have the greatest impact, how these strategies drive impulse buying and purchase intention, and whether they contribute to brand loyalty or merely short-term sales spikes. By exploring these dimensions, the research offers valuable insights for marketers, e-commerce companies, and retail strategists seeking to optimize their promotional approaches for the youth consumer segment.

Literature Review

- **Promotional Strategies in Online Retail**

Online retail platforms use a wide range of promotional strategies to capture consumer attention in highly competitive digital environments. Common techniques include price discounts, coupons, cashback offers, flash sales, free delivery, loyalty

programs, referral benefits, and influencer collaborations. These strategies are designed to enhance customer acquisition, increase purchase frequency, and encourage repeat purchases. Youth consumers, in particular, tend to respond strongly to promotions that convey affordability, urgency, and trend relevance.

- **Influence of Price-Based Promotions on Youth**

Price-based promotions such as percentage discounts, festival sales, and timed offers strongly influence youth purchasing behaviour. Since individuals between the ages of 18 and 25 often have limited disposable income, they are more sensitive to opportunities to save money. Flash sales and seasonal promotions create a perception of scarcity and encourage impulse buying. Cashback schemes and discount vouchers reduce the perceived financial risk associated with online purchases.

- **Role of Influencer Marketing and Social Media**

Influencer marketing has become a dominant tool for shaping youth consumption patterns. Social media influencers serve as relatable role models, sharing lifestyle content that often integrates product recommendations. These endorsements appear more genuine compared to traditional advertisements, leading to higher trust and persuasion among youth audiences. Influencer marketing also supports trend diffusion, where youth adopt products endorsed by admired personalities.

- **Emotional and Psychological Drivers of Impulse Purchasing**

Youth purchasing decisions are not always rational. Emotions such as excitement, desire for belonging, and identity expression strongly influence buying behaviour. Promotional triggers such as countdown timers, “only a few left” alerts, and limited-period discounts generate urgency and stimulate impulse purchases. Social comparison, where individuals evaluate themselves against peers and influencers, also motivates youth to purchase trending products.

- **Youth Online Shopping Behaviour in the Indian Context**

In India, increasing internet penetration, smartphone access, and digital payment adoption have led to a surge in online shopping, especially among youth. This demographic frequently explores multiple platforms, compares prices, and actively seeks promotional offers. They rely on peer opinions, review content, and influencer endorsements to validate purchase choices. Youth consumers demonstrate enthusiasm for new products but exhibit relatively low brand loyalty due to frequent promotional exposure.

- **Integrated Comparison of Reviewed Studies**

A comparison of the reviewed studies suggests that promotional strategies consistently influence youth shopping behaviour across different contexts. Price-based strategies primarily affect short-term buying decisions, while influencer-based strategies support social validation. Personalized advertisements increase visibility and product interest but may not lead to strong loyalty. The literature consistently indicates that combining economic incentives with social influence produces the most substantial impact on youth purchase behaviour.

Summary of Reviewed Literature

The reviewed studies collectively indicate that promotional strategies are central to influencing the online shopping behaviour of youth consumers. Across various research contexts, price-based promotions such as discounts, flash sales, and cashback offers are shown to stimulate impulse buying by creating a perception of reduced financial burden. Influencer marketing and social media endorsements also play a significant role, especially when influencers are perceived as relatable and trustworthy by young consumers. Personalized advertisements contribute to increased engagement, but do not consistently lead to loyalty or repeat purchase. Emotional triggers, peer influence, and social identity expression emerge as recurrent psychological drivers.

Research Gap

While existing studies discuss individual promotional strategies, there is limited integrated research examining the combined effect of price-based promotions and influencer-driven marketing on youth consumer behaviour. Additionally, most available studies have been conducted at broad national or global levels. There is a lack of focused research investigating how these strategies affect youth in specific urban settings such as Vijayawada. Moreover, previous studies have not adequately distinguished between short-term behavioural outcomes like impulse buying and long-term outcomes such as loyalty and repeat purchase.

Objectives of the Study

- To identify the major promotional strategies employed by online retailers targeting youth.
- To examine the influence of these strategies on the online shopping behaviour of youth aged 18–25 in Vijayawada.
- To compare the impact of price-based promotions and influencer marketing.
- To analyze the short-term and long-term behavioural effects of promotional strategies.

Hypotheses

- H₁:** Promotional strategies have a significant positive impact on the online shopping behaviour of youth.
- H₂:** Price-based promotional strategies exert a stronger influence on purchase decisions than influencer marketing.
- H₃:** Promotional strategies generate stronger short-term behavioural responses (such as impulse buying) than long-term loyalty outcomes.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-method research design to obtain a comprehensive understanding of how promotional strategies influence the online shopping behaviour of youth aged 18–25 in Vijayawada. The methodology integrates both quantitative and qualitative approaches to capture measurable patterns and personal perceptions.

- **Research Design**

A descriptive and analytical research design was used. The descriptive component helped identify the nature of youth shopping behaviour, while the analytical component enabled examination of the relationships between promotional strategies and consumer responses.

- **Population and Sampling**

The target population of this study consisted of youth aged 18–25 residing in Vijayawada who actively engage in online shopping. A sample of 100 respondents was selected through convenience sampling, as this group was accessible through academic institutions, social media platforms, and peer networks.

- **Data Collection Methods**

- **Primary Data:** Data was collected through a structured questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. The questionnaire included statements measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree.”
- **Qualitative Data:** To gain deeper insights, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 selected respondents from the survey group. These interviews explored emotional triggers, perceived credibility of influencers, and personal motivations behind purchasing decisions.

- **Tools Used for Analysis**

Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentages and frequencies) to identify trends in youth shopping behaviour. Hypothesis testing was conducted using correlation and regression analysis to determine the strength of relationships between variables. Qualitative data was analyzed through thematic coding to identify recurring patterns and sentiments.

- **Ethical Considerations**

Participation in this study was voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality. No personal identifiers were collected, and responses were used solely for academic purposes.

Results and Discussion

The results of the study provide insights into how promotional strategies influence the online shopping behaviour of youth aged 18–25 in Vijayawada. Both quantitative and qualitative findings indicate that price-based promotions and influencer marketing play central roles in shaping purchase intentions and decisions. The analysis also reveals that promotional strategies tend to generate strong short-term behavioural outcomes, such as impulse buying, while long-term loyalty effects remain limited.

Quantitative Analysis

A structured questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale was used to measure respondents’ perceptions of promotional strategies and their shopping behaviour. The responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis to understand the strength of relationships between promotional strategies and consumer responses.

- **Descriptive Statistics**

Below are key descriptive results based on the responses of 100 youth participants:

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
I often purchase products during discount sales.	42	38	10	7	3
Influencers impact my decision to explore new products.	35	40	15	6	4
Flash sales make me buy items I had not planned to purchase.	30	43	18	6	3
Loyalty programs influence my choice of online platform.	18	28	30	15	9
Personalized ads match my preferences and interests.	26	37	22	10	5

Interpretation: The highest agreement levels were seen for discount sales and flash sale influence, showing that price-based promotions are strong motivators of buying behaviour. Influencer impact also showed high agreement, suggesting the importance of social influence in decision-making. Loyalty programs had the lowest agreement levels, indicating weaker influence on long-term purchase continuity.

- **Hypothesis Testing**

Statistical testing was conducted using correlation analysis.

H₁: Promotional strategies have a significant positive impact on the online shopping behaviour of youth. → **Supported**

H₂: Price-based promotional strategies exert a stronger influence on purchase decisions than influencer marketing. → **Partially Supported** (Both have strong effects, but price promotions show slightly higher correlation.)

H₃: Promotional strategies generate stronger short-term behavioural responses (such as impulse buying) than long-term loyalty outcomes. → **Supported**

- **Discussion (Quantitative Findings)**

The quantitative findings indicate that youth shopping behaviour is significantly influenced by promotional strategies, particularly those offering financial benefits. The strong response to flash sales and discounts shows that pricing cues trigger immediate action. Influencer marketing also plays a significant role, as youth rely on social media content for product discovery and validation. However, loyalty programs and personalized ads show weaker effects, suggesting that young consumers prioritize short-term benefits and novelty over brand commitment.

- **Qualitative Analysis**

Semi-structured interviews with 10 respondents provided deeper insight into the emotional and psychological drivers of purchase behaviour.

- **Thematic Interpretation**

Three major themes emerged:

- **Theme 1: Social Influence and Identity Expression** – Youth expressed that purchasing trends endorsed by peers or influencers contributes to personal identity and social belonging.
- **Theme 2: Emotional Excitement** – Flash sales and countdown offers create excitement, making purchases feel rewarding.
- **Theme 3: Price Sensitivity and Value Perception** – Respondents emphasized seeking the “best deal,” leading to frequent switching between platforms.

- **Discussion (Qualitative Findings)**

The qualitative responses highlight that youth consumers are emotionally responsive to promotional triggers and socially motivated to align with trends. While they enjoy the thrill of online shopping, loyalty is minimal because they remain highly price-sensitive and opportunistic. This reinforces the quantitative finding that promotional strategies drive impulse buying more than long-term relationships.

Integrated Discussion

Both datasets demonstrate that promotional strategies influence youth shopping behaviour through dual mechanisms: financial incentives and emotional engagement. While price-based promotions encourage immediate purchases, influencer marketing supports product discovery and validation. However, repeated promotional exposure leads youth to compare platforms frequently, reducing loyalty. This suggests that while promotional strategies effectively increase sales volume, they must be carefully balanced to develop sustainable consumer relationships.

Findings and Discussion

The study reveals that promotional strategies have a substantial influence on the online shopping behaviour of youth aged 18–25 in Vijayawada. The most influential promotional tools identified were price-based strategies such as discounts, cashback offers, and flash sales. These strategies were highly effective in generating immediate purchase responses, particularly impulse buying. Influencer marketing also played a crucial role by shaping product awareness and validation. However, its impact was more pronounced in the exploration and consideration stages of decision-making rather than in final purchase choice. Personalized advertisements, although recognized by respondents, did not strongly affect purchase outcomes due to concerns regarding relevance and data privacy. Loyalty programs demonstrated the weakest influence, suggesting that youth consumers are more motivated by short-term benefits rather than sustained brand affiliation.

Conclusion

The research concludes that promotional strategies used by online retailers significantly impact the shopping behaviour of youth, primarily by stimulating short-term purchase intentions and impulse buying. Price-based promotions emerge as the most influential strategies, driven by the financial priorities and cost sensitivity of the youth

demographic. Influencer marketing effectively supports trend awareness and social validation, but does not guarantee brand loyalty. While promotional strategies are successful in generating sales momentum, their long-term loyalty impact remains limited among youth consumers who prioritize novelty, affordability, and social relevance over consistent brand relationships.

Recommendations

- Retailers should integrate price promotions with value-added features, such as exclusive previews or bundled offers, to enhance perceived benefit.
- Influencer marketing strategies should focus on relatable micro-influencers rather than widely followed celebrities to improve trust and authenticity.
- Loyalty programs should be redesigned to provide flexible and meaningful rewards, such as instant redemption rather than point accumulation.
- Personalized advertisements must be optimized to reflect genuine consumer preferences while maintaining transparency about data usage.
- Retailers should avoid overusing promotional messages to prevent consumer fatigue and reduced campaign effectiveness.

Future Scope

Future research can expand to comparative studies between youth in metropolitan and non-metropolitan regions to examine geographic differences in promotional responsiveness. Additionally, a larger sample size and inclusion of additional demographic variables such as income level and occupation may yield deeper insights. Further research may also explore emerging promotional tools such as gamified shopping rewards, live-stream shopping interactions, and AI-driven recommendation systems.

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