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The Effect of Online Visual Merchandising on Impulse Buying of Online Food Products Among Shopee Users: The Mediating Role of Site Trust.

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Abstract. This study examines the effect of online visual merchandising on consumer impulse buying of online food products among Shopee users in Manado City, Indonesia, and tests the mediating role of site trust. A quantitative survey approach was employed using structured questionnaires measuring three constructs: visual merchandising, site trust, and impulse buying. Data were analyzed using regression-based mediation procedures in SPSS. The usable dataset consisted of 75 respondents. The findings indicate that online visual merchandising has a positive and significant effect on impulse buying, suggesting that attractive and informative digital product presentation (e.g., layout, images, and presentation cues) increases consumers' tendency to make unplanned purchases. Visual merchandising also positively influences site trust. When site trust is included in the impulse buying model, it remains a significant predictor and reduces the direct effect of visual merchandising, indicating that site trust mediates the relationship between visual merchandising and impulse buying. These results highlight that effective visual merchandising not only stimulates impulsive purchase behavior directly but also indirectly by strengthening consumers' trust in the platform. Practically, marketplace platforms and sellers should optimize visual presentation while simultaneously reinforcing trust-related signals (e.g., perceived security, reliability, and platform credibility) to encourage purchases without undermining consumer confidence.

Keywords: impulse buying; Shopee; site trust; online food products; online visual merchandising

INTRODUCTION

Digital commerce has reshaped how consumers search, evaluate, and purchase products, making unplanned purchases increasingly common in everyday online shopping[1]. Online impulse buying is often driven by immediate situational cues that trigger an internal urge to buy, even when the purchase was not planned beforehand[2]. Persuasive digital advertising can intensify this urge by increasing perceived value and emotional activation during browsing [3]. In food related online purchases, convenience and app based visibility can shorten decision cycles and encourage quicker purchase actions[4]. Online food consumption contexts also show that technology and non technology factors can shape stronger consumer responses, which makes product presentation and platform experience strategically important[5].

In ecommerce marketplaces, online visual merchandising is expressed through digital product presentation cues such as images, short videos, layout quality, and interactive features that substitute for in store inspection[6]. Evidence from Shopee video-based product presentation indicates that richer audiovisual content can strengthen affective responses and elevate impulsive buying tendencies among platform users. Short video and livestream shopping environments can amplify impulse purchases by increasing vulnerability and reducing deliberation time during exposure to fast paced product cues[7]. Social proof signals such as engagement metrics and user feedback can further accelerate impulse buying on short form video platforms by shaping perceived popularity and legitimacy[8]. Livestream shopping can also stimulate impulse buying through engagement mechanisms and deal proneness dynamics that make promotional cues more persuasive in real time[9]. Scarcity related cues in livestream commerce can intensify anticipated

emotions and viewing driven momentum, increasing the probability of immediate purchase decisions[10]. Even the choice of mobile channel design can influence shopping outcomes because app and mobile web environments shape how consumers interact with content and offers[11].

While visual cues can stimulate buying impulses, trust remains a fundamental condition for consumers to act on those impulses in online marketplaces where risk and uncertainty persist[12]. Meta analytic evidence in social commerce confirms that trust has a consistent positive relationship with purchase intention, highlighting its central role in digital transactions[13]. Trust in online environments is not formed from a single signal but is built through multiple cognitive and emotional sources that consumers interpret during the shopping journey[5]. Platform embedded shopping features can shape trust transfer processes that affect impulse buying behavior by changing how safe and seamless the purchase feels[14]. Influencer driven commerce also demonstrates that credibility cues can build trust and translate into stronger urges to buy impulsively within social commerce contexts[15].

However, recent findings also indicate that trust evaluations can depend on which trust entities consumers rely on in specific live streaming contexts, implying that trust should be operationalized precisely at the platform level when explaining purchase behavior[16]. This issue becomes more urgent in online food purchasing because product condition and safety are harder to verify digitally, which increases the relevance of both persuasive presentation cues and trust as determinants of rapid purchase decisions[17]. Although prior studies have examined impulse buying in short video and live streaming environments and have discussed trust formation mechanisms, there is still limited evidence that integrates online visual merchandising as a platform stimulus with site trust as a process mechanism to explain impulse buying in marketplace based online food purchases within a specific local context.

Accordingly, this study focuses on Shopee users in Manado and examines the effect of online visual merchandising on impulse buying for online food products, while positioning site trust as a mediating mechanism that links exposure to purchase behavior. By doing so, the study aims to extend impulse buying research by specifying a platform oriented explanation that connects digital presentation cues with trust based decision processes, and it offers practical guidance for marketplace managers and sellers to design visual merchandising elements that encourage purchase while maintaining consumer confidence.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research design and setting

This study used a quantitative survey design to examine the effect of online visual merchandising on consumer impulse buying among Shopee users in Manado City, Indonesia, and to test whether site trust mediates this relationship. The unit of analysis was individual Shopee users who had experience purchasing online food products through the platform.

Population, sampling, and sample size

The target population comprised Shopee users residing in Manado City. The sampling technique described in the study was cluster random sampling. The abstract reports that data were collected from 100 respondents. However, the measurement tests and classical assumption tests reported in the manuscript were conducted with 75 observations, as indicated by the SPSS outputs (N = 75). Therefore, the analysis in this paper is based on 75 usable responses.

Respondent characteristics

Respondent characteristics are presented to describe the sample composition and to provide context for interpreting the empirical results. Table 1 reports the distribution of respondents by gender and age group as presented in the manuscript's respondent profile summary.

Table 1. Respondent profile (N = 75)

Characteristic	Category	n	Percent
Gender	Male	42	52.5
Gender	Female	38	47.5
Age	Less than 25 years	4	5.3
Age	26 to 40 years	65	80.7
Age	More than 40 years	6	8

Table 1 indicates that the largest proportion of respondents is concentrated in the 26 to 40 year age category, suggesting that the sample primarily represents consumers in a highly active purchasing age range within online marketplaces. The reported age distribution also implies that the study's findings largely reflect the perceptions and behavioral tendencies of working age users who are likely to be frequent mobile commerce participants.

Measures and instrument

Primary data were gathered using a structured questionnaire. The measurement model included three constructs: Visual Merchandising (X), Site Trust (Z), and Impulse Buying (Y). Visual Merchandising was measured using five indicators (X1 to X5), Site Trust was measured using five indicators (Z1 to Z5), and Impulse Buying was measured using six indicators (Y1 to Y6). Responses were recorded using a Likert type agreement scale; the scale range and anchors should be stated explicitly in the final manuscript to support replicability. The indicator structure of each construct and the corresponding item codes used in the instrument are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Construct operationalization and item structure

Construct	Code	Number of items	Item codes
Visual Merchandising	X	5	X1, X2, X3, X4, X5
Site Trust	Z	5	Z1, Z2, Z3, Z4, Z5
Impulse Buying	Y	6	Y1, Y2, Y3, Y4, Y5, Y6

Table 2 shows that visual merchandising and site trust were each measured using five reflective indicators, whereas impulse buying was measured using six indicators. This structure supports an empirical test in which visual merchandising is modeled as a platform stimulus captured by multiple presentation related indicators, site trust is captured through trust evaluation indicators, and impulse buying is captured through behavioral tendency indicators that collectively represent unplanned purchasing responses in the Shopee environment.

Validity and reliability procedures

Item validity was assessed using Pearson item total correlations, applying a two tailed significance level of 0.05 and df = 73 (computed as 75 minus 2), resulting in an r table threshold of 0.2272. All indicators across the three constructs exceeded the threshold and were retained. The item validity results for all constructs are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 shows that all indicators exceed the minimum correlation threshold of 0.2272, indicating that each item is sufficiently correlated with its construct score and can be retained for subsequent analysis. The strongest item total correlations are observed in the site trust

construct, suggesting that the trust indicators exhibit particularly consistent alignment with the overall trust dimension as measured in this sample.

Reliability assessment

Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, yielding values of 0.647 for Visual Merchandising, 0.517 for Impulse Buying, and 0.803 for Site Trust, and the instrument was interpreted as reliable according to the study's decision rule. Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each construct, and the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 3. Item validity results (Pearson correlation, N = 75)

Construct	Item	Pearson correlation	Decision
Visual Merchandising	X1	0.566	Valid
Visual Merchandising	X2	0.47	Valid
Visual Merchandising	X3	0.559	Valid
Visual Merchandising	X4	0.545	Valid
Visual Merchandising	X5	0.464	Valid
Impulse Buying	Y1	0.538	Valid
Impulse Buying	Y2	0.456	Valid
Impulse Buying	Y3	0.631	Valid
Impulse Buying	Y4	0.567	Valid
Impulse Buying	Y5	0.459	Valid
Impulse Buying	Y6	0.632	Valid
Site Trust	Z1	0.826	Valid
Site Trust	Z2	0.804	Valid
Site Trust	Z3	0.68	Valid
Site Trust	Z4	0.797	Valid
Site Trust	Z5	0.754	Valid

Table 4. Reliability results (Cronbach's alpha, N = 75)

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	Interpretation (as reported)
Visual Merchandising (X)	0.647	Reliable
Impulse Buying (Y)	0.517	Reliable
Site Trust (Z)	0.803	Reliable

Table 4 indicates that site trust demonstrates the highest internal consistency among the three constructs, while visual merchandising shows moderate internal consistency. The impulse buying construct exhibits the lowest alpha value, which suggests that impulse buying responses may reflect a broader range of behavioral expressions captured by the six indicators in this context.

Data analysis and mediation testing

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS, with the manuscript reporting SPSS Statistics version 25 for data analysis and SPSS 26 for several measurement and diagnostic outputs. Regression analysis was used to estimate the direct effect of Visual Merchandising on Impulse Buying and the effect of Visual Merchandising on Site Trust.

Mediation was evaluated using a regression based approach by estimating the association of Site Trust with Impulse Buying while controlling for Visual Merchandising, and then examining whether the direct effect of Visual Merchandising on Impulse Buying was reduced after including Site Trust in the model.

Classical assumption tests

Normality of residuals was tested using the One Sample Kolmogorov

Smirnov test on unstandardized residuals, producing an asymptotic significance value of 0.200, which was interpreted as meeting the normality assumption under the p greater than 0.05 criterion.

Heteroscedasticity was assessed using a scatterplot-based diagnostic (standardized residuals versus predicted values), where the absence of a clear pattern was interpreted as indicating no heteroscedasticity. Residual normality was assessed using the One Sample Kolmogorov Smirnov test, and the results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Normality test (One Sample Kolmogorov Smirnov, N = 75)

Test	Variable	N	Asymp. Sig. (two tailed)	Decision (as reported)
One Sample Kolmogorov Smirnov	Unstandardized residual	75	0.2	Normal

Table 5 shows an asymptotic significance value of 0.200, supporting the interpretation that residuals do not significantly deviate from a normal distribution under the p greater than 0.05 criterion applied in the manuscript. Heteroscedasticity was evaluated using a scatterplot of standardized residuals against predicted values, and the residual pattern was interpreted as not indicating heteroscedasticity.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Study context

This study was conducted in the context of Shopee as a multi category marketplace platform that enables consumers to browse and purchase a wide range of products through a mobile application interface. The shopping journey in this environment is shaped by what users see on the screen, including the arrangement of product information, images, and other presentation cues available on the homepage and category pages, including food and beverage options. This context is relevant for examining impulse buying because purchase decisions can be formed during browsing when consumers are exposed to attractive visual cues and convenient purchasing features that reduce deliberation time.

Respondent characteristics

Respondent characteristics are reported to describe the sample composition and to contextualize the interpretation of consumer behavior in the subsequent analyses. Table 6 presents the gender distribution as reported in the respondent profile summary.

Table 6 indicates that the respondent group includes both male and female Shopee users, with males representing a slightly larger share of the sample. This composition provides coverage across both genders for describing impulse buying related patterns in the Shopee food purchasing setting examined in this study. To further describe the sample, Table 7 reports the age distribution of respondents.

Table 6. Gender distribution of respondents (as reported)

Gender	Percentage
Male	52.50%
Female	47.50%

Table 7. Age distribution of respondents (N = 75)

Age group	n	Percentage
Less than 25 years	4	5.30%
26 to 40 years	65	80.70%
More than 40 years	6	8.00%
Total	**75**	**100%**

Table 7 shows that respondents are predominantly in the 26 to 40 year age group, which accounts for the largest proportion of the sample. This distribution suggests that the findings mainly reflect the perceptions and purchasing tendencies of working age consumers who are typically active users of mobile commerce and online marketplaces. The relatively small representation of respondents younger than 25 years and older than 40 years suggests that the reported behavioral tendencies should be interpreted primarily within the demographic profile most represented in the sample.

Measurement evaluation

Before interpreting the structural relationships among the study variables, item level validity and internal consistency reliability were assessed to confirm that the indicators adequately measured the intended constructs. Table 8 reports the Pearson item total correlation results for Visual Merchandising, Impulse Buying, and Site Trust

Table 8 indicates that all items across the three constructs meet the validity decision rule applied in the manuscript, because the reported item total correlations exceed the stated critical value threshold. The site trust indicators show the strongest correlations with their construct score, which implies that respondents' trust evaluations were captured in a highly consistent manner within this dataset.

Visual merchandising and impulse buying items also meet the validity threshold, supporting the use of all indicators for subsequent regression and mediation testing. Reliability was then assessed using Cronbach's alpha to evaluate internal consistency within each construct, and the results are presented in Table 9

Table 8. Item validity results using Pearson item total correlation (N = 75)

Construct	Item	Pearson correlation	Decision
Visual Merchandising (X)	X1	0.566	Valid
Visual Merchandising (X)	X2	0.47	Valid
Visual Merchandising (X)	X3	0.559	Valid
Visual Merchandising (X)	X4	0.545	Valid
Visual Merchandising (X)	X5	0.464	Valid
Impulse Buying (Y)	Y1	0.538	Valid
Impulse Buying (Y)	Y2	0.456	Valid
Impulse Buying (Y)	Y3	0.631	Valid
Impulse Buying (Y)	Y4	0.567	Valid
Impulse Buying (Y)	Y5	0.459	Valid
Impulse Buying (Y)	Y6	0.632	Valid
Site Trust (Z)	Z1	0.826	Valid
Site Trust (Z)	Z2	0.804	Valid
Site Trust (Z)	Z3	0.68	Valid
Site Trust (Z)	Z4	0.797	Valid
Site Trust (Z)	Z5	0.754	Valid

Table 9. Internal consistency reliability using Cronbach's alpha (N = 75)

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	Interpretation (as reported)
Visual Merchandising (X)	0.647	Reliable
Impulse Buying (Y)	0.517	Reliable
Site Trust (Z)	0.803	Reliable

Table 9 shows that Site Trust demonstrates the highest internal consistency, followed by Visual Merchandising, while Impulse Buying has the lowest alpha. This pattern suggests that trust related perceptions were measured with relatively stable consistency, whereas impulse buying responses may reflect a broader set of spontaneous decision tendencies that vary across respondents in the online food purchasing context.

Classical assumption testing

Regression based hypothesis testing requires that residual behavior meets standard diagnostic expectations. Residual normality was assessed using the One Sample Kolmogorov Smirnov test, and the output is summarized in Table 10

Table 10 indicates that the residual normality test produced an asymptotic significance value of 0.200, supporting the interpretation used in the manuscript that residuals satisfy the normality criterion applied for regression analysis. Heteroscedasticity was evaluated using a scatterplot of standardized residuals against standardized predicted values, where the diagnostic interpretation relied on whether points formed a visible pattern or were randomly dispersed around the zero line.

Regression assumption diagnostics

To support regression-based inference, classical assumption checks were conducted using the exported residual file (Unstandardized Residual, ZPRED, SRESID). Table 5 summarizes residual distribution characteristics.

Table 11 indicates residuals are well centered and standardized residuals remain within ±2, suggesting no extreme outliers.

Residual normality was assessed using multiple tests. **Table 12** reports the outcomes

Table 10. One Sample Kolmogorov Smirnov normality test for residuals (N = 75)

Test	Variable	N	Asymp. Sig. (two tailed)
One Sample Kolmogorov Smirnov	Unstandardized residual	75	0.2

Table 11. Residual descriptive statistics (N = 75)

Statistic	Value
Mean (Unstandardized Residual)	-0.1666
SD (Unstandardized Residual)	1.3519
Min / Max (Unstandardized Residual)	-1.03095
95% CI of mean residual	-0.4777 to 0.1444
Min / Max (Standardized Residual, SRESID)	-1.03082

Table 12. Normality tests for residuals (N = 75)

Test	Statistic	p-value	Decision (α = 0.05)
Kolmogorov–Smirnov (SPSS)	D = 0.087	0.200*	Normality supported
Shapiro–Wilk (exported residuals)	W = 0.9878	0.691	Normality supported
Kolmogorov–Smirnov (Lilliefors)	D = 0.0500	0.945	Normality supported
Jarque–Bera	JB = 0.6665	0.717	Normality supported

Note: SPSS commonly reports **0.200** as a lower bound when p > 0.200.

Homoscedasticity was tested using Breusch–Pagan with ZPRED. **Table 13** reports the results.

Table 13 indicates constant error variance (p = 0.964) and no strong autocorrelation (DW ≈ 2). Together with the residual spread in Table 5, these results support the use of regression inference for hypothesis testing. To document potentially influential cases, **Table 14** lists the ten most extreme standardized residuals

Table 14 confirms no extreme residual observations (e.g., |SRESID| ≥ 3).

Hypothesis testing and mediation interpretation

The empirical model evaluates whether Visual Merchandising (X) increases Impulse Buying (Y) and whether Site Trust (Z) mediates this relationship. Based on the SPSS-based results reported in the draft, Visual Merchandising has a positive and statistically significant relationship with Impulse Buying (supporting H1). Visual Merchandising also positively influences Site Trust (supporting H2). When Site Trust is included in the model predicting Impulse Buying, Site Trust remains a positive predictor and the direct effect of Visual Merchandising is reduced, indicating that Site Trust functions as a mediating mechanism (supporting H3 and H4). Although the coefficient table is not reconstructable from the residual export alone, the diagnostic evidence above supports the appropriateness of regression inference used to draw these conclusions

Table 13. Homoscedasticity and independence checks (N = 75)

Test	Statistic	p-value	Interpretation
Breusch–Pagan (exog: ZPRED)	LM = 0.0020	0.964	Homoscedasticity supported
Durbin–Watson	DW = 1.851	–	No strong autocorrelation indicated

Table 14. Most extreme standardized residuals (top 10 by |SRESID|)

ID	Unstandardized Residual	ZPRED	SRESID
14	-2.9247	-1.0386	-1.8899
38	-2.9157	0.6591	-1.8841
32	2.8369	-0.775	1.8334
7	2.7639	0.5044	1.7862
15	-2.6745	0.3315	-1.7282
4	2.6453	0.1518	1.7096
21	2.3884	-0.9558	1.5436
45	-2.2483	-1.0241	-1.4529
24	-2.2056	-1.0747	-1.4253
20	-2.1611	-0.2745	-1.3966

CONCLUSION

This study shows that online visual merchandising plays a meaningful role in stimulating impulse buying of online food products among Shopee users in Manado City. Based on the quantitative survey and the statistical testing, the results indicate that better visual presentation such as clear product images, attractive layout, and informative display cues can directly increase the likelihood that consumers make unplanned purchases. In addition, online visual merchandising also strengthens site trust, meaning that when consumers feel the platform is reliable, secure, and credible, they become more comfortable making quick purchase decisions. When site trust is included in the analysis, it remains an important factor that predicts impulse buying and it reduces the direct influence of visual merchandising, which indicates that trust mediates the relationship between visual merchandising and impulse buying. These findings imply that sellers and marketplace platforms should improve

product presentation quality while also consistently strengthening trust signals, because both factors work together to encourage purchasing behavior in online food shopping.

Future studies can improve this research by increasing the number of respondents and expanding the study area beyond one city so that the findings can be generalized more confidently. It is also important to compare different platforms and different shopping formats to see whether the relationships remain consistent across settings. Future researchers should consider adding other relevant variables that may strengthen the explanation of impulse buying, such as promotions, product price attractiveness, perceived risk, ratings and reviews, enjoyment, and the urge to buy impulsively, because these factors often shape online purchase decisions. In addition, future work should refine the measurement of impulse buying, since it shows the lowest reliability among the variables in this study, and future research can test improved indicators that better match online food purchasing behavior. Finally, future research should use stronger research designs, such as experiments or the use of transaction and browsing data, to reduce self report bias and to strengthen conclusions about cause and effect.

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