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The Impact of Sales Promotion on Impulse Buying Behaviour:
A Case Study of Zara Customers in the United Kingdom

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1. Introduction and Background

Fast-fashion is one of the most competitive industries in the entire retail scene in the world, where organisations continuously come up with different fashion packages and marketing tactics as a way of appealing to their clients and boosting their sales. Retailers like Zara are operating within a very dynamic context, whereby the attention of the consumer is minimal, and the buying action is mostly driven by the marketing conducted, seasonal discount as well as temporary promotions and offers. In this regard, sales promotion can be regarded as a significant promotional tool in the marketing process that is aimed at the creation of short-term demand and stimulating instant purchasing among the customers (Mishra, 2024). Price reductions, vouchers and offers are among the most popular marketing strategies in the apparel sector, which aim to generate more interest and affect the purchasing decision (Nigam et al., 2022).

The consumer buying behaviour of the fashion industry does not solely rely on functional needs, but is also influenced by emotional values and psychological factors. Impulse buying behaviour describes a fast and unthoughtful buying decision made without prior deliberation and is typically caused by marketing stimuli, product attractiveness, or situational opportunities (Cuong, 2023). With the rising trend of online advertising, visual merchandising and promotional programmes in the modern retail setting, the chances of impulse purchases have been on the rise, particularly among the young consumers who are highly sensitive to the marketing process (Li and Deng, 2026).

Zara is a major retail store of fast-fashion in the United Kingdom and resorts to promotional tactics regularly to retain customer awareness and keep on par with the competition. Knowledge about the effects that promotional events have on consumer purchasing behaviour can be valuable to retailers so that they can develop a sound marketing strategy and enhance the level of customer involvement in the fast-fashion market.

2. Problem Statement

The fast-fashion retail industry depends on sales promotion techniques like discounts, flash sales, and limited-time offers to lure customers and boost sales. Though these promotional activities are useful in creating short-term demand, they can also induce impulse buying behaviour among consumers. Past research has looked at the impulse buying behaviour and promotional efforts in a general retail and online shopping setting, but there has been little research on the fast-fashion sector in the United Kingdom. Specifically, no literature has been conducted to explain the effects of sales promotions on the buying impulse behaviour of Zara customers. Thus, additional study is needed to understand consumer decision-making behaviour by investigating the correlation between sales promotion and impulse buying behaviour within the context of the UK fast-fashion retail.

3. Research Aim

This research paper seeks to establish the connection between sales promotion and the impulse buying behaviour of customers in Zara stores within the United Kingdom, with an emphasis on how promotional activities affect the consumer decision processes in the fast-fashion retail market.

4. Research Objectives

- To analyse the sales promotion methods applied by Zara in the UK fast-fashion retail market and appreciate how these promotions impact consumer buying behaviour.
- To examine how sales promotions influence impulse buying behaviour and at what psychological level the customers of Zara in the UK are driven to make spontaneous purchases.

5. Research Questions

1. Which kinds of sales promotion strategies are usually employed by fast-fashion retailers like Zara in the United Kingdom?
2. What effect do sales promotional activities have on customers in fashion retail stores as they make purchase decisions?
3. What are the psychological forces that determine impulse buying behaviour among Zara customers?
4. What is the impact of promotional offers on the decision to make an unplanned purchase within the UK fast-fashion market?
5. What is the correlation between sales promotion tactics and the impulse buying behaviour of United Kingdom Zara customers?

6. Literature Review

6.1 Sales Promotion in Retail Marketing

Retailers can use sales promotion as a valuable method of marketing to boost sales and persuade people to buy a product. Discounts, coupons, limited-time deals and special offers are among the promotional tools that are widely used in retail markets to help institutions attract customers and make them purchase goods and services without delay. Studies indicate that sales promotion has the potential to enhance customer interest and develop a feeling of urgency, which most times results in impulse buying behaviour (Abdelkhair et al., 2023). Promotional strategies are also applied in the retail sector to enhance customer satisfaction and reinforce the connection between the brand and customers (Atokolo, 2024). Current retail marketing is more associated with digitalised coupons, discounts and product-specific advertising campaigns to enhance the efficiency of the marketing process and specifically affect the consumer reaction (Langen and Huber, 2022). Moreover, the visual display of advertising messages and price details contributes substantially to customer attention and purchase desire in retail settings (Zhang et al., 2022).

6.2 Impulse Buying Behaviour

Impulse buying behaviour is defined as an immediate and spontaneous buying decision that is not planned in advance. Such purchasing is mostly affected by emotional responses, the beauty of the product and advertising campaigns. Research shows that impulse purchase happens when consumers

encounter marketing stimuli that elicit excitement or urgency in the shopping process (Escobar-Farfán et al., 2025). Product displays and store settings, as well as promotional programmes, can generate interest among consumers and result in spontaneous purchasing behaviours (Huo et al., 2023). The emergence of online shopping platforms has also enhanced the increasing incidence of impulse buying as consumers are often bombarded with marketing content and tailored suggestions (Widodo and Yusiana, 2024). Social media and digital marketing are also a source of fear of missing out, which stimulates consumers to make spontaneous buying choices and not think about it (Ngo et al., 2025).

6.3. Consumer Behaviour and Psychological Factors

Psychology and emotional aspects influence the consumer decision-making processes and influence the response of individuals to marketing activities. Consumers tend to be persuaded that promotional deals are more valuable, which raises the chances of buying even when the product is not needed (Polman et al., 2021). Consumer perception is also shaped by product appearance, promotional design and marketing communication and might result in impulsive buying behaviour (Hong et al., 2024). In the contemporary retail markets, the online spaces enable customers to evaluate products rapidly and react to advertisements instantly, making accidental purchases more likely (Ologunbe et al., 2024).

6.4 Fast Fashion Retail Context and Research Gap

One of the most common promotional features of fast-fashion retailers is flash sales, seasonal discounts and offers that have a time limit to keep the attention of the customers and stay ahead of the competition. These tactics generate a sense of urgency and prompt consumers to rush to purchase (Agrawal et al., 2026). Generation Z and younger consumers are the target group that is most affected by promotional campaigns and online marketing, which raises the probability of impulse buying behaviour (Obiso et al., 2025). But, existing literature largely relates to the overall retailing or online marketing context and does little to investigate the effects of sales promotion on customers in the impulse buying behaviour of the fast-fashion industry in the United Kingdom. Specifically, limited studies have been done on the Zara clients and how they react to promotions. Thus, additional qualitative research is necessary to learn the influential impact of sales promotion on impulse buying behaviour in the UK fast fashion retail scenario.

7. Theoretical/ Conceptual Framework

The theories used to rationalise the study concerning consumer behaviour and impulse purchasing in retail marketing, especially Stimulus meant to amplify Organism triggered Response (SOR) model, consumer decision-making theory, and impulse buying theory, are used. The SOR model indicates the effects of external stimuli on internal emotions and behavioural responses. In retail marketing, external stimuli like discounts, special offers and limited-time offers and deals are types of sales promotion that capture consumer interest and will trigger emotional responses, potentially leading to impulse buying behaviour (Huo et al., 2023). The model is appropriate in the context of this study because advertising techniques that Zara applies can be regarded as stimuli that influence the attitudes of customers and their buying behaviour.

Consumer decision-making theory also demonstrates how consumers make judgements on products, weighing them perceptually, in terms of value and personal judgment. Customers tend to think that promotional prices are worse, and it can raise the chances of impulsive and rushed purchases (Polman et al., 2021). Besides, impulse buying theory implies that spontaneous buying behaviour may occur due to emotional excitement, product attractiveness, and situational factors without their thorough planning (Escobar-Farfana et al., 2025). Past studies also demonstrate that the intention to purchase can play a mediating role between the sales promotion and purchasing impulse, i.e. the promotional efforts have an impact on the intention, which subsequently translates into the decision to actually purchase (Abdelkhair et al., 2023).

According to these theories, this paper assumes that sales promotion is a stimulus, emotional response is the internal response, and impulse buying behaviour is the ultimate response, which constitutes the conceptual framework of breaking down Zara customers in the United Kingdom.

8. Research Methodology

8.1 Research Philosophy

The research uses the interpretivist research philosophy in this study since the research intends to develop an understanding of how consumers perceive and experience sales promotions and impulse buying behaviour. Interpretivism can be applied when the study is devoted to human behaviours and subjective views instead of numerical data. As our research investigates the Zara customers reacting to promotion activities, it is necessary to get personal perceptions and experiences that can be represented in a better way with the help of an interpretivist approach.

8.2 Research Approach

The research is conducted by an inductive approach since the researcher develops knowledge based on collected data as opposed to testing a pre-determined hypothesis. An inductive approach is applicable to qualitative research that involves discovering patterns and themes of response provided by the participants. The approach assists in exploring the effect of sales promotions on impulse buying behaviour and enables new insights to be drawn from the data.

8.3 Research Design

The study is a qualitative case study directed at Zara customers in the United Kingdom. The case study design is suitable since the study examines a particular brand in a particular market environment. Qualitative studies are appropriate in learning the opinion and behaviour of consumers in a comprehensive manner, particularly when marketing techniques and impulse buying are under consideration (Li and Deng, 2026).

8.4 Population and Sampling

The targeted population is the Zara customers in the United Kingdom. The participants will be selected based on purposive and convenience sampling and will have the experience of making purchases in Zara and learn about promotional offers. The study will use a sample size of 15 participants; this is suitable when conducting qualitative research, and it will enable in-depth answers to be observed.

8.5 Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions will be used to gather primary data. This approach enables the participants to define their views and experience concerning promotional operations and impulse buying behaviour. Interviews are flexible and assist in knowing how consumers make their decisions (Ngo et al., 2025).

8.6 Data Analysis

All the data will be interpreted with the help of thematic analysis. Interview responses are to be coded, and similar ideas will be grouped, and patterns will be identified in order to explain the relationship between sales promotion and impulse buying behaviour.

8.7 Ethical Considerations

Participants will be told the purpose of the study prior to the interview, and consent will be obtained. The engagement will be on a voluntary basis, and all information will be anonymous and confidential and will be used to conduct a study.

9. Expected Contribution

9.1 Theoretical Contribution

The study is anticipated to add to the current body of literature on the subject of consumer behaviour and sales promotion by offering a more in-depth look at the impact promotional strategies have on impulse buying behaviour within the fast-fashion retail environment. The relationship between sales promotion and impulse buying behaviour on apparel retail sector has not been researched as much, and past studies have considered how sales promotion affects consumer purchase decisions within a general retail setting (Mishra, 2024). Investigating how psychological reactions and promotional stimuli apply in determining unplanned purchase decisions will expand the present understanding. Besides that, the research will also contribute to the promotion study by looking into the ways the nature of various kinds of promotional offers influences the consumer responses in a competitive fashion market.

9.2 Practical Contribution

The results of the study will be applicable to the retail organisations and especially to the fast-fashion companies like Zara because they will have information on how sales promotions affect customer

behaviour. By knowing what drives impulse buying, retailers can create more efficient promotions and work on improving customer interaction. Flash sale and limited-time offers, in particular, are the two common practises in contemporary retail, and their effect can be analysed to help researchers create more efficient marketing methods (Agrawal et al., 2026).

9.3 Managerial / Industry Contribution

This research work will also have some practical significance among the managers and other marketing professionals, as it will inform them about the influences of promotional strategies on the consumer decision-making process. The findings have the ability to build up to a more profitable marketing plan, enhance promotional design and assist managers in making wise choices when creating sales promotion efforts within the fast-fashion retail sector.

10. Limitations

This research has a number of limitations that can influence the findings. Firstly, the study employs a small sample size of 15 respondents, which can make generalisation of the results hard to apply to all Zara clients in the United Kingdom. Second, since qualitative research is used, the findings are grounded in personal viewpoints and experiences, which can be subjective. Third, the report concentrates solely on the Zara clients in the UK and the conclusions might not reflect the customer behaviour of other countries or retail outlets. Moreover, time constraints can limit the volume of the data to be gathered and analysed. Irrespective of these shortcomings, the research is likely to give valuable information on the connection between sales promotion and impulse buying behaviour in the fast-fashion retail setting.

11. Proposed Timeframe and Budget

The research will be accomplished during the dissertation period after a number of steps, such as literature review, proposal approval, ethical approval, data collection, data analysis, writing, editing and final submission. The research activities are planned using a Gantt chart in order to make sure that the research will be performed in the allotted time. Travel, printing and internet costs needed in the course of the research process are also estimated on a small amount of budget.

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Data
Analysis

Chapter
Writing

Editing

Final
Checking

Submission

Figure 1: Gantt Chart

Source: Self-made

Budget Table

Item	Description	Cost (£)
Printing	Questionnaire/notes/draft	15
Travel	Meeting participants	40
Internet	Online research & communication	10
Stationery	Paper, pen, files	5
Miscellaneous	Unexpected cost	10
Total		£80

Table 1: Estimated Budget

Source: Self-made

12. Conclusion

The following proposal seeks to examine the effect of sales promotion on impulse buying behaviour among customers of Zara in the United Kingdom through a qualitative research method. The study will adopt a semi-structured interview method to understand the consumer experience as well as the response to promotional strategies. The research will contribute to the literature on consumer behaviour and provide implications of practical value to retail marketing. The methodology, proposed schedule and budget indicate that the research is feasible, attainable and possible within the dissertation period.

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