

Analyzing The Influence Of Dopamine-Driven Marketing On Consumer Behavior Among Youth In The Digital Age

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the impact of dopamine-driven marketing on consumer behaviour in the present modern scenario, with a focus on young consumers aged between 16 and 22. With the quick growth of digital platforms such as social media, e-commerce websites, and mobile applications, marketing strategies have evolved into highly personalised and psychologically driven approaches. These platforms use features such as gamification elements (rewards, streaks, and badges, personalised advertisements, instant notifications, and limited-time offers) to stimulate the dopamine responses, which have a very strong impact on the user engagement and decision-making process.

This study is based on the primary data collected through a structured questionnaire using Google Forms from a sample of 60 respondents selected through convenience sampling. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics, where responses were converted into percentages to identify patterns and trends.

Findings show that many of the consumers have impulsive purchasing behaviour and thus many of them feel excited about offers and discounts and use the apps in an addictive way, such as checking them frequently and finding it very hard to stop using it. It also shows that features such as instant notifications and rewards increase the consumer's engagement and have a very strong impact on their buying decisions. One more critical finding of this research is that even though people know that these dopamine-driven marketing strategies affect them, they still continue to use these platforms in the same way.

In conclusion, dopamine-driven marketing has a strong impact on consumer behaviour in today's digital world. However, it also raises ethical concerns because it can make people overly dependent on digital platforms. Therefore, there is a need for responsible marketing and better awareness among consumers to protect their well-being.

Keywords:: Dopamine-driven marketing, Digital platforms, Consumer behaviour, Impulsive buying, Addictive usage patterns, Gamification.

INTRODUCTION:

In the present scenario, there has been a rapid evolution in marketing from traditional promotional methods to highly personalised and psychologically driven strategies. Businesses are increasingly focusing on retaining the consumers' attention through specialised and advanced engagement techniques by leveraging social media platforms, e-commerce websites, and mobile applications, as they are all growing very rapidly. These digital environments are very powerfully designed to influence

consumer behaviour in a subtle manner, yet in strong ways.

Dopamine-driven marketing is one of the key mechanisms behind this rapid transformation. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter that is associated with pleasure, motivation, and reward and which plays a vital role in shaping human behaviour. Digital platforms use this by incorporating characteristics such as reward-based systems, instant notifications, limited-time offers, and personalised advertisements to seek the attention of consumers. These elements create cycles of gratification

and anticipation and thus make the consumers repeatedly engage with the platforms and shape their purchasing behaviour, which is impulsive in nature.

Consumer behaviour, particularly among young individuals, is increasingly becoming impulsive and emotional rather than rational and logical. Although many consumers are aware of the persuasive tactics of digital marketing, they still continue to engage with these platforms, which clearly indicates a gap between actual behaviour and awareness. This shift raises important questions about how these strategies are influencing the decision-making process of consumers.

Furthermore, the fusion of marketing and neuroscience has led to significant ethical issues regarding the design of potentially addictive digital environments. Although these approaches increase consumer engagement and business performance, their long-term effects on consumers are still being unclear. However, there has been limited research on how dopamine-driven marketing shapes the purchasing behaviour of young consumers aged between 16 and 22, particularly in analysing the relationship between the actual consumption patterns and awareness. Hence, this study aims to analyse the impact of dopamine-driven marketing on consumer buying behaviour and to explore its role in fostering addictive consumption patterns within the digital environment.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Wise, R. A., & Jordan, C. J. (2021). Dopamine, behavior, and addiction. *Journal of Neuroscience Research*: This research shows that dopamine is beyond pleasure and plays an important role in driving motivation and reward-based learning. The dopamine in the brain helps to remember all the positive experiences experienced by a person, such as getting rewards, and thus encourages them to repeat those experiences every time. Gradually, these reinforcements strengthen habits as the brain starts to anticipate rewards from certain actions. This paper also shows that anything that is repeatedly exposed creates an addictive behaviour in an individual. In the modern scenario, notifications or content updates keep activating the dopamine in the brain. Hence, this makes people to use the platforms though they know that it's not useful to them, which plays an important role in understanding the influence of digital marketing.

2. Patel, M. (2025). Neuroscience of consumer gamification: The role of dopamine in customer loyalty. *International Journal of Marketing Research*: This study examined how gamification features such as points, rewards, and streaks affect the psychological mindset of the users. A sense of progress and achievement is being created by these elements, which leads to the activation of dopamine in the brain. As a result, a sense of satisfaction is being experienced by the users which encourages them to continue to interact with that particular platform and these features increase the short-term engagement of the users. Gradually, due to the long-term engagement, users build brand loyalty; they start to associate that particular brand with positive feelings, which makes them return frequently. Thus, this research shows how Gamification features shape the behaviour of consumers, which is one

of the marketing strategies to increase the sales and brand value of a particular brand.

3. Jain, I., & Shrivastava, A. (2024). Dopamine's influence on consumer dynamics: From reward to risk. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*: This research examines the importance of dopamine in taking risks and seeking rewards. Possible negative outcomes are being ignored by people when they expect a reward. This results in impulsive behaviour where rapid decisions are encouraged, such as online shopping. This study also shows that the decisions driven by dopamine are emotional rather than logical. Long-term benefits can be ignored by consumers, who instead focus on immediate satisfaction, and this research also explains consumers' unplanned purchasing behaviour when exposed to attractive offers or advertisements.

4. Franken, I. H. A., et al. (2005). The role of dopamine in human addiction: From reward to motivated attention. *European Journal of Pharmacology*: This research shows that dopamine not only controls the behaviour of an individual but also controls their action. Dopamine makes an individual get addicted and attracted to things related to rewards. Hence, this leads to repeatedly thinking about the notifications and advertisements with attractive offers. Over time, this pattern of repeated thinking results in cravings and dependency. Even though there are no results, the dopamine in the brain triggers a response to these notifications. Thus, this paper explains how long-term exposure to digital content can create long-term engagement and strong habits.

5. Panigrahi, A. K., & De, A. (2024). Dopamine manipulation and its role in effective advertising. *Journal of Advertising and Consumer Behavior*: This research examines how advertisements play a vital role in triggering the emotional responses of individuals that are related to the release of dopamine. Various techniques such as visuals, commerce, storytelling, and emotional appeal, are being used to seek attention and to create a positive impression about the product or the service. Thus, these strategies strongly influence consumer decisions. Advertisements mainly focus on targeting the emotions rather than logic, which makes their products or services more appealing to consumers. This brings up the concerns regarding the ethical uses of psychological techniques in marketing.

6. Lewis, M. D. (2011). Dopamine and the neural "now": Addiction as a choice. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*: This study analyzes that the behaviors which are driven by dopamine are primarily concentrated on short-term rewards rather than long-term outcomes and rewards. Long-term benefits are ignored by the people, and thus, they choose actions that give them quick satisfaction. This results in the repetitive engagement of activities, which gives them the rewards. This research also shows the importance of the digital environment in shaping these choices. When consumers are constantly surrounded by a rewarding environment, it becomes difficult for them to control their emotions, and this is very relevant in digital platforms, which provide constant access to engaging content.

7. Jain, T., & Mishra, V. K. (2023). The dopamine economy: How neuromarketing shapes impulse buying in digital spaces. *Journal of Business and Digital Marketing*: This research article explains the idea that the present modern businesses are being operated in a dopamine economy where consumer attention is being driven by continuous stimulation, and strategies such as limited-time offers or personal ads are being used to create urgency and excitement among consumers so that they can quickly purchase the product. It also shows that these techniques result in the impulsive behaviour of the consumers, which makes them think emotionally rather than think logically. This illustrates how digital platforms are designed to influence the behaviour and to maximise the engagement of consumers on social media platforms.

8. Benton, D., & Young, H. A. (2016). A meta-analysis of dopamine receptors and behavioral addiction. *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*: This research explores how repetitive stimulation of dopamine shapes the behaviour of consumers over time and delves into how individuals develop their addiction towards rewards, and thus, they require stronger or more frequent experiences to sense the same level of satisfaction. This study further explains that this pattern is not only limited to behavioural addictions such as overuse of digital platforms, and explains why people spend more time on online platforms and find it difficult to stop, as they are getting addicted to it.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To analyze the impact of dopamine-driven marketing on consumer buying behavior.
- To examine the role of digital platforms in developing addictive consumption patterns among youth.
- To assess the influence of notifications, gamification, and personalized ads on consumer engagement and decisions.
- To analyze the gap between consumer awareness and actual behavior.

RESEARCH GAP

Previous research studies have only studied the role of dopamine in consumer behaviour and addiction, which are mostly based on clinical perspectives or theoretical. There is a very limited research study in the field of dopamine-driven addictive behaviour among young consumers using primary data. The relationship between consumer awareness and actual behaviour associated with ethical concerns has not been completely explored. Therefore, this study aims to identify that relationship by analysing the real consumers' responses in the digital platforms.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is based on primary data collected through a structured questionnaire using Google Forms. A total of 60 respondents were used in this research, and mainly students aged from 16 to 22 participated in the survey through convenience sampling. Closed-ended questions related to buying behaviour, digital usage, and awareness

of marketing influence were included in the questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the collected data, where the responses were converted into percentages and were interpreted to identify patterns and trends. The study is descriptive in nature, and its major focus is on explaining the relationship between consumer behaviour and dopamine-driven marketing

FINDINGS

1. IMPACT ON BUYING BEHAVIOUR

- 52% of the respondents admitted to making purchases based on the sudden urges, which indicates the impulsive buying behaviour.
- A total of 87% of the respondents feel excited when they get to know about the discounts and offers, which indicates strong emotional stimulation.
- 62% of the respondents ignore risk, such as overspending during online purchases

This indicates that dopamine-driven marketing strategies, such as discounts and offers, have a very strong influence on the emotional responses and lead to impulsive behaviour among consumers.

2. ADDICTIVE CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

- Around 60% of the restaurants frequently receive notifications from apps.
- 82% of the respondents frequently open apps without a specific purpose.
- 52% of the respondents find it difficult to stop using the app, which indicates a very addictive behaviour.
- 42% of the respondents use the apps despite knowing that it is unproductive and waste their time.

This shows that digital platforms play a very crucial role in developing the habitual and potentially addictive usage patterns among the youth.

3. INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL FEATURES

- A total of 70% (inclusive of agree and disagree) respondents agree that the gamification features have motivated them to continue the usage of the apps.
- 69% (inclusive of agree and disagree) of the respondents feel that the notifications attract their attention even when they are busy.
- 45% (inclusive of agree and disagree) of the response feel that personalised advertisements influence their buying decisions, while a large portion of our sample remains neutral.
- 46% of our respondents have purchased the product due to repeated recommendations or trends.

This shows that features such as gamification personalized at and notifications moderately to strongly influence the consumer engagement and decision making.

4. AWARENESS VERSUS BEHAVIOUR GAP

- 61% of the respondents are aware that the digital platforms influence the consumers' behaviour psychologically.

- 55% of the respondents, though knowing that digital platforms influence their behaviour psychologically, engage in it.

This indicates that there exists a clear gap between the awareness and actual behaviour, proving that knowledge alone does not prevent document given engagement and impulsive consumption.

Thus, Dopamine-driven marketing strongly influences the behavioural patterns of consumers, leading to habitual engagement and impulsive consumption, even among users who are aware of its psychological impact.

DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study clearly indicate that dopamine -driven marketing plays a very significant role in shaping the modern consumer behaviour, particularly among young individuals aged between 16 and 22. The majority of our respondents have a high level of impulsive buying behaviour and a sense of excitement while seeing the discount and offers. This indicates that dopamine plays a very crucial role in making people expect instant pleasure and rewards.

The impulsive buying behaviour, curiosity, and excitement that consumers feel when they see discounts or offers clearly show that dopamine plays a vital role in making people seek instant pleasure and rewards. In the present modern era, marketing is not just about giving information; it has been very carefully designed to influence people's emotions based on how their minds respond.

The usage of features like notifications, games, and personalised ads by digital platforms makes consumers engage in their platforms for a longer duration of time. These features create a cycle of excitement and rewards to keep the users curious and interested.

The presence of addictive behavioural patterns such as purposeless usage, difficulty in stopping the usage, and frequent app checking suggests that digital environments are engineered to go beyond utility and function as habit-forming systems. Many of the respondents have shared their view that repeated exposure and algorithms have gradually shaped their choices and preferences, often leading to unplanned purchases.

The most critical and important insight emerging from this study is the awareness and the behaviour gap. Although the majority of the respondents are aware of the psychological influence of the digital platforms, they still continue to engage in habitual and impulsive behaviours. This clearly interprets that dopamine-driven mechanisms operate at a subconscious level, which often results in overriding rational thinking and self-control.

In conclusion, dopamine -driven marketing is highly effective as it captures attention and influences the decision-making process at a psychological level, which makes it difficult for consumers to have self-control even

when they are fully aware of its influence and consequences.

SUGGESTIONS

- **INCREASE THE DIGITAL AWARENESS PROGRAMS:** Youth must be educated about the psychological impact of digital marketing, and thus various programs related to it must be conducted in educational institutions, free workshops and seminars, and government programs must be conducted.

- **TO PROMOTE SELF-CONTROL MECHANISMS:** Youths must practice some habits, such as screen time limits, and must have mindful consumption. Thus, the consumers must be aware of the products they purchase.

- **ETHICAL MARKETING PRACTICES:** Responsible marketing strategies must be adopted by the companies so that it doesn't exploit the consumer's psychology excessively.

- **APP DESIGN IMPROVEMENTS:** Platforms can introduce features like break notifications or usage reminders.

- **Consumer education:** Consumers must be taught about financial discipline to reduce the impulsive buying behaviour.

LIMITATIONS

- A small sample size is being taken into consideration.

- It only focuses on individuals aged from 16 to 22, thus this study ignores other age groups.

- Since the responses are self-reported, they may include bias or inaccuracies.

- Only basic descriptive statistics, such as Percentage analysis and bar diagrams, are being taken into consideration while doing data analysis.

CONCLUSION:

This study highlights the significant impact of dopamine-driven marketing on consumer behaviour in the digital age. It demonstrates that digital platforms, through features such as notifications, gamification, and personalised advertisements, effectively influence users' emotions and decision-making processes.

The research confirms that many young consumers engage in impulsive buying and exhibit addictive usage patterns. More importantly, it identifies a critical gap between awareness and actual behaviour, showing that even informed users are not immune to these influences.

Overall, the study emphasises the need for a balance between technological advancement and ethical responsibility, ensuring that marketing strategies do not negatively affect consumer well-being.

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