Influence Of Pharmacist Recommendations, Retailer Push Strategies, And Sales Incentives on Impulse Buying and Brand Switching of Analgesic Ointments: Evidence from Erode City

Renjusha P[1], Dr. S. Ponmalar[2]
[1]*Research Scholar, Tirupur Kumaran College, Tirupur.*
[2]*Associate Professor, Tirupur Kumaran College, Tirupur*

Abstract— **Pharmacy retailing environments experience impulse purchasing and brand-switching, especially when it comes to over the counter products like analgesic ointments where they need little effort to make a decision. This paper will discuss the effects of marketing drivers of pharmacy retail on impulse buying and brand switching behaviour of consumers in Erode City, Tamil Nadu in analgesic ointments. The proposed study will take a mixed research design methodology whereby a structured questionnaire will be used to gather primary data that will be sampled by 384 respondents who have previously purchased and used analgesic ointments in the last six months. A stratified purposive sample was used to have a representative of the various administrative areas of the city. The results show that pharmacist recommendation, retailer push tactic and sale incentives have a considerable effect on consumer behaviour at the point of purchase. Pharmacist-recommendation demonstrates a high positive association with impulse purchase and retailer push strategies and incentives of sales are also identified to have a significant impact in brand switching. Pharmacy retail marketing drivers have a high degree of explanatory power and a significant percentage of variation in impulse buying and brand switching can be attributed to structural model. The reliability and validity of the proposed framework are measured and evaluated through the assessment of measurement and model fit. On the whole, the research finds out that the drivers of pharmacy retail marketing have a decisive influence on the unplanned buying of products and the brand preference toward analgesic ointments. The results provide valuable lesson to pharmacy retailers and pharmaceutical marketers to develop balanced and responsible at point-of-sale campaigns that enhance performance of the business and promote the consumer choice.**

Index Terms— **Impulse buying, Brand switching, Pharmacy retail marketing, Analgesic ointments, Pharmacist recommendations, Sales incentives**

I. INTRODUCTION

Over-the-counter topical analgesic gels are purchased to treat minor aches, joint pain, and muscle strain. In most urban areas, they will be bought at their local drugstores and healthcare facilities where shopping is a quick and perfunctory process dependent on what is in stock and what the assistant recommends. This forms a very good environment where marketing results occur on the spot, as well as impulse purchasing and brand switching. Modern research into over-the-counter drug marketing observes that consumer preferences in this category are influenced by promotion, in-store communication and store environment, and the competition between brands at the point of purchase (Anis and Hassali, 2022).

Impulse buying is a major concept in consumer behaviour since it is used to explain a purchase whereby an individual makes a purchase without careful planning after he or she is exposed to some stimulus and consequently gets an urge to buy. Retail studies refer to impulsive purchasing as impulsive and hasty and may occur without a comprehensive analysis of options (Chen et al., 2021). The environment of the store, visual stimulations, promotion drives, and mood have also been found to stimulate impulse buying and decrease the time and cognitive effort needed to make a decision (Rodrigues et al., 2021). The patterns apply to analgesic ointments since the merchandise are typically low involvement, ubiquitous, and easy to

replace, that is, small/minimal stimuli at the point of sale can change intent into an immediate purchase (Chen et al., 2021; Rodrigues et al., 2021).

The other key marketing implication is brand switching, particularly in the categories where multiple brands have the same functional benefits. Switching is when a customer swaps to an alternative brand compared to one previously used or whose brand a person prefers as a result of stimulus that alters the perception of value, quality, or convenience at time of purchase. Retail promotion studies point out that promotional exposure should serve to reallocate the demand between competing products, that is, one part of sales lift may be achieved through switching and not through increased consumption alone. The relevance of the example is that the modelling of work on the exposure of store flyers shows that there is brand switching among products with similar features when they are presented as the subject of promotional communication (Boto García and Alvarez, 2020). Price promotion research goes further to declare that discounts have the potential to raise sales in part due to the promotion influences sparking brand swapping as well as the decline in the time amid repurchases, though the impact may diminish over time (Li et al., 2021).

Shelf cues and price are not the only drivers of influence in terms of the pharmacy retail. It is also associated with interpersonal persuasion particularly the pharmacist recommendations and counter staff suggestions. Recommendations can serve as a quality signal, compelling consumers to reevaluate an initial brand decision and a recommended alternative, especially in the case of low loyalty and the perceived risk of switching is low (Volles et al., 2023). Also, selling exchanges regularly embrace influence tactics that influence trust and obedience in business to customer choices, which can render a suggestion more effective amid limited time and information among the consumers (Hartmann et al., 2020). In the case with the analgesic ointment, this implies that the perceived pharmacist competence and credibility of the retailer can serve as very strong marketing leverages that not only encourage impulse purchase but also transitioning between rival brands (Volles et al., 2023; Hartmann et al., 2020).

The retailer push tactics and sales promotions provide an additional dimension to this behaviour. The push strategies may involve shelf positioning, counter top displays, package deals, momentary price savings and direct selling of the preferred brands. The aim of such actions is to shift shoppers to the purchase decision, which is almost an instant event, as it is correlated with the impulse buying mechanism in consumer research (Rodrigues et al., 2021). Meanwhile, push strategies can switch the brand choice as they can enhance various ointments and position them as an easier decision or higher quality, which facilitates the switch at the point of purchase (Boto García and Alvarez, 2020; Li et al., 2021). By incentivizing on sales goals, it is possible that there will be more motivation to push certain brands and that may boost the impact of the recommendation when purchasing the product, particularly when the pharmacy is crowded.

The context of this study, which is situated in Erode City, looks at these correlated marketing drivers within a real retail health scenario. It is emphasized how the pharmacist recommendations, push strategies by retailers and sales incentives affect two outcomes, which have a direct impact on brand performance: impulse buying and brand switching of analgesic ointments. The current body of promotion literature reveals that retailers can make sales by use of switching and other related processes, whereas it cautions that the effects of promotion can be multifaceted and cause unintended consequences toward brand loyalty and long run profitability (Li et al., 2021; Pratt et al., 2023). The proposed study will help provide a context specific evidence, which can facilitate the enhanced execution of retail and brand strategy with respect to the over-the-counter pain reliever products and also contribute to the understanding why customers switch brands despite purchasing familiar and repeatedly bought products.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Analgesic ointments that are not prescription are commonly purchased in the community pharmacies and medical outlets when urgent pain relievers are required. The buying situation decisions are often made quickly and with little comparison, and the likelihood of impulse buying provoked by persuasive factors like advertising, in store stimuli, and emotional desires in this buying situation are high (Rodrigues et al., 2021). Meanwhile, the competition in the lines of the brand is high in this category of products with a significant number of alternatives that have the same

functional advantage. This creates the possibility of switching brands upon the occurrence of a cue that alters the perceived value or quality at the point of purchase. Marketing research indicates that retailer promotions are capable of moving the demand between related products and may also result in brand shift (Boto Garccia and Alvarez, 2020). Recommendations are also a good signal of quality and may directly become triggers to switch, particularly among low brand loyalty consumers (Kobuszewski Volles et al., 2023). Promotional advertising and retail influence represents a significant type of marketing leverage in the over-the-counter medicines market since consumers represent a key target market and many of the purchase decisions are unprescribed (Anis and Hassali, 2022; Marathe et al., 2020). Nevertheless, not much location specific data exists on the extent to which pharmacist recommendation, retailer push strategies and sales incentives influence the joint effect of influencing impulse buying and brand switching in analgesic ointments across the Indian city markets like Erode. Such a loophole renders brands and retailers unable to strategize responsible and effective marketing and it also restricts knowledge about why loyalty declines and switching rises in daily purchases of pain relief products.

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The research is important in that impulse buying and switching brands are the key performance drivers in the marketing process, especially in low involvement product categories where the process of making decisions are speedy and less information intensive. An example of such category is the analgesic ointments, where people usually want the immediate response and use the cues available at the moment of purchasing instead of planning it beforehand. As marketing research indicates, impulse buying is a direct cause of both unplanned sales and the increase in short-term revenue as well as a brand switching is a determinant of the change in market share among competing brands (Rodrigues et al., 2021; Pratt et al., 2023). Through these two behaviours, the study deals with outcomes that are strictly dependent on the brand managers and retailers in competitive over the counter medicine markets.

It is also noteworthy of the study to determine the effects of interpersonal and in store marketing cues on consumer behaviour within a health-related retail environment. The purchasing of pharmacy goods is not like the usual fast-moving consumer, thus making the purchase a combination of commercial promotion and a perceived professional advice. Previous studies suggest that recommendations and retail cues are able to decrease perceived risk and speed up the process of making a decision, therefore, leading to more impulse purchases and brand switching among products with comparable advantages (Hartmann et al., 2020; Volles et al., 2023). These processes, when considered in relation to analgesic ointments, can aid in understanding how the marketing influence affects the markets in terms of trust and expertise being involved in the selling environment and applying consumer behaviour theory across to pharmacy-based retailing.

As a managerial issue, the results will assist in a more effective and responsible push approach being designed by pharmaceutical marketers and retailers. Price promotion and sales incentive research indicates that the growth in sales frequently occurs at the expense of a brand switch (as opposed to an actual increase in the category) and can erode brand loyalty when not properly addressed (Li et al., 2021; Pratt et al., 2023). This study can provide evidence to guide improved decisions on how to place the shelves, incentive plans, and recommendation at the point of sale because it will demonstrate which variables have the most significant effect on impulsive choice and switching. This is particularly applicable to the urban markets like Erode where different brands are competing in a restricted retail area.

Lastly, the research is useful in academic literature as it offers context specific evidence in an Indian urban market which has few studies regarding marketing induced impulse buying and brand switching of over-the-counter medicines. Most of the literature on impulse buying is grounded on generic retail or web-based contexts with pharmacy-based research usually centering on clinical or ethical performance, but not marketing behaviour (Anis and Hassali, 2022). Combining findings with pharmacist recommendation, retailer push and sales incentive, this study empirically connects marketing action with consumer choice in impulse self-care purchasing by emphasizing relationships and linking the marketing action variables to consumer choice.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine how pharmacist recommendations, retailer push strategies, and sales incentives influence impulse buying and brand switching of analgesic ointments in Erode City.
2. To suggest practical actions for pharmacies and brands to reduce unplanned buying and unnecessary brand switching, and to improve responsible product promotion at the point of sale.

V. LITERATURE REVIEW

Impulse buying is an established concept in marketing literature and is defined as a sudden purchasing decision that is caused by spontaneous desires that are prompted by stimuli in the environment or other human beings and are not the result of a prior intention. Impulse buying in the OTC retail field and pharmacy in particular is quite typical where the consumer typically gets into the store with a vague feeling of need relief, but not a definite brand choice. The studies on community-based pharmacy indicate that impulse buying behaviour is greatly influenced positively by merchandising, product displays and sales promotions, as the mentioned factors contribute to the decrease in deliberation time and encouragement of an immediate buying decision (Moe Moe Thant, 2023). Pharmacy settings thus follow the same pattern as any other retail format where one is able to perceive the visual connections and advertising indicators that are highly influential in influencing spontaneous consumer behaviors.

OTC drugs, such as analgesic ointments, are susceptible to impulse purchases given that they are low-involvement, have a general perception of being safe and readily available over-the-counter. A systematic review of OTC and brand drug advertisement underlines consumers often rely on the point-of-sale and retail communication instead of that of a detailed review of the product when they buy OTC drugs (Wake et al., 2025). The review stresses the importance of pharmacists and chemists in the middle of the purchase behaviour at the counter and OTC products were more prone to the spontaneous buying decision than prescription medicines.

The other important marketing outcome in OTC categories is brand switching which occurs in particular situations where several brands have the same functional benefit. Brand switching involves a consumer abandoning one brand that he used previously to another one in the decision to purchase. Topical analgesic product research shows that the consumer buying choice is highly informed by psychological, social, and situational factors instead of having a strong brand loyalty (Wahyudi and Wiedyaningsih, 2024). Since the analgesic ointments can be found in most pharmacies where multiple brands are located side by side, there is always a chance that a consumer will be faced with alternatives, and more likely to switch at the point of sale.

Marketing research also indicates that perceived value, availability and retail influence are other factors that frequently influence brand switching in OTC markets as opposed to product differentiation. The literature on OTC drug marketing indicates that brands rival each other intensely based on shelf presence, retailer profit, and promotional focus that is able to change preference between brands without raising the total consumption in the category (Wake et al., 2025). This shows that the process of switching behaviour when it comes to analgesic ointments is more attached to the retail strategies and in store persuasion than long term attachment to a brand.

Strong interpersonal marketing cues in pharmacy include pharmacist recommendations. Pharmacists are usually considered by the consumers as knowledgeable and trustworthy hence their recommendations have high persuasiveness. The studies on the pharmacy retail behaviour prove that the interactions with the staff and recommendations can directly lead to the impulse buying behavior when the consumer does not have a definite pre-purchase intention (Moe Moe Thant, 2023). In these circumstances, a recommendation does not only influence a direct purchase but also can make the buyer leave his/her previous brand and change it to the one proposed.

This opinion is also supported by the literature on the OTC purchasing behaviour, which demonstrates that recommendations can be considered one of the most impactful elements influencing consumer choices in traditional pharmacy stores (Anis, 2022). These results indicate that pharmacist recommendation can override the prior preferences and perceived risk in trying a new brand and make it easier to switch brands at point of sale.

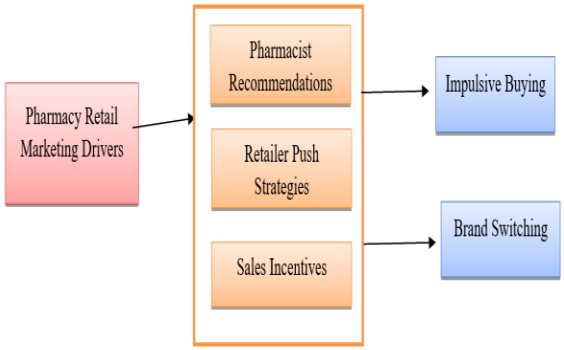
Impulse buying and brand switching are further enhanced by the retailer push strategies and sales incentives. Push strategies like counter displays, promotional offers and selective promotion of brand make the product more visible and salient, prompting rapid decisions. Retail studies carried out in pharmacy demonstrate that displays of products, as well as sales promotion, are directly and significantly influential in impulsive buying behaviour (Moe Moe Thant, 2023). Retailers can also encourage particular brands when these strategies are backed by sales incentives and this encourages selling different brands leading to the growth of switching behaviour among consumers who would sign up to purchase other brands other than buying the one he or she is used to.

Altogether, the literature proves the fact that impulse buying and brand switching is the usual phenomenon in the pharmacy and OTC medicine markets. Previous research repeatedly proves that the factors in the stores, the recommendations of pharmacists, and promotions are important contributors to unplanned purchases and switching behaviour (Wake et al., 2025; Anis, 2022; Moe Moe Thant, 2023). The studies of the topical analgesics also demonstrate that the consumer behavior in this segment is highly sensitive to the psychological and social factors instead of consistent brand loyalty (Wahyudi and Widenings, 2024). Nevertheless, the body of evidence focused on marketing that investigates such behaviours simultaneously in the case of analgesics ointments in the markets of Indian cities, including Erode one, lacks sufficient evidence, which is why the current study is required.

VI. RESEARCH GAP

The available literature indicates that the factors that may contribute to impulse buying under pharmacy retails are the condition of pharmacy retail, promotions, and the interaction between the staff, yet the bulk of available evidence is based on general retail or a single case of pharmacy either applying to topical analgesic ointments as a specific product category (Moe Moe Thant, 2023). Studies on the OTC marketing are primarily talking at the general level of strategy and the place of pharmacists and chemists but seldom quantify how these processes translate into the actual outcomes on impulse buying and brand switching at the level of product categories (Wake et al., 2025). OTC purchasing decision studies can also tend to focus on digital purchasing marketing activities, perceptions, and overall influences on decision-making instead of incorporating the joint influence of pharmacist recommendation, retailer push, and sales incentive on impulse buying and switching in physical pharmacies (Anis, 2022). Besides that, the topical analgesic research is apt to explain the purchasing decision by psychological, social, cultural, and personal factors but fails to test such marketing drivers as retailer push tactics or incentive based selling, and it does not focus on brand switching and impulse buying as the primary consequences (Wahyudi and Wiedyaningsih, 2024). Consequently, little integrated and situation-specific evidence exists, which can describe the net effect of pharmacist advice, retailer push pressure, and sales incentives to modify impulse buying and brand switching of analgesic ointments in an Indian city market like Erode, where a lack of brand similarity and high interactions with retailers may render switching and unplanned purchase more probable (Wake et al., 2025; Wahyudi and Wiedyaningsih, 2024).

VII. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



VIII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current research paper follows the mixed-method research design because quantitative and qualitative research methods are investigated to study the impulse buying and brand switching behaviour of analgesic ointments comprehensively. The quantitative approach is used in order to determine the effect of the pharmacy retail marketing drivers on consumer behaviour, and the qualitative part is used to gain further insights into the in-store experiences and

triggers of the decision-making at the point of purchase.

The stratified purposive sample method was used to sample adult consumers who lived in the Erode City in Tamil Nadu, aged 18 to 65 years. Only respondents that had recently purchased and applied an analgesic ointment (Volini, Moov, Iodex, or Fast Relief) within the past six months were recruited into the study to ensure the relevance and correct recall. This requirement was important in the sense that the data recorded was of current buying behaviour and impulse purchases.

The population data were used to develop the sampling frame as the Erode Municipal Corporation (2025) and the Census of India (2011) contained the entire data on the population residing in four administrative zones: Surampatti, Periyar Nagar, B.P. Agraharam, and Kollampalayam, so the total population is 315,202. These areas were taken as levels, so as to have geographical representation. The sample was proportionately split in four zones first, and then the qualified respondents were selected in each stratum purposely according to the inclusion criteria.

The sample size was determined by the formula of a finite population as suggested by Israel (1992) under the 95% level of confidence and 5% margin of error leaving the final sample size at 384 respondents that were proportionally distributed among the four zones. This methodology was useful to take care of the differences in socio-economic layers and shopping access patterns in the city.

On the whole, this approach enabled the research to concentrate on consumers who had real and recent experience of impulse buying analgesic ointments, which helped in increasing the representativeness, decreasing sampling bias, and obtaining context-specific information on impulse buying behaviour and brand switching behaviour in the pharmacy retail setting of Erode City.

IX. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis, it can be noted that most of the respondents (58.9) fall under the age of 25 years, then there are those who fall within the age group of 25-35 years who represent 21.4. The percentage of respondents who are in the 35-45 years age group is 10.2 and the respondents in 45-55 years old group are 9.5. This shows that the younger consumers constitute the major segment who buy the analgesic ointments on impulse. On the gender distribution, the number of females is more at 60.8 percent and males constitute 39.2 percent. On the question of marital status, majority of the respondents are married (71.6%), and 28.4% are not married. According to the education qualification data, 14.1% of the respondents have high school education, 26.8% have undergraduate degree, 18.9% have postgraduate degree, 22.7% have professional qualification and 17.5% are others, which means that, the respondents have a diverse educational background.

The analysis also gives the perception of the respondents with regard to the pharmacy retail marketing drivers that affect impulse buying and switching of brand of analgesic ointment. In regards to pharmacist recommendations 34.6% of the respondents are strongly convinced that pharmacist advice has impact in terms of influencing the choice of analgesic ointment, 29.8% respondents agree that they place trust on the recommendation of the pharmacist when purchasing. Also, 31.2% of them strongly agree that pharmacists tend to recommend brands that were not on their original list to purchase. This brings out the high rate of interpersonal influence among pharmacists at point of sale.

On retailer strategies, 33.9% of the respondents strongly believe that the display and placement of products within the pharmacy grabs their attention, and 30.7% respondents believe that the promotional boards and in store visibility is what makes them buy the product. Further, 28.5% highly agree with the fact that the promotions within the pharmacy facilitates fast purchasing decision and this depicts the importance of store-level cues to prompt impulse purchases.

When it comes to sales incentives, 36.4 percent of the respondents strongly support that price discount does play a role in their buying behavior, whereas 27.6 per cent strongly agree that free gifts or increment in quantity persuades them to choose a given brand. Moreover, 32.1% also say that the variability of price among the brands prompts them to change the brand they use regularly, which proves the significance of incentive-based marketing in brand switching behaviour.

In regards to impulse buying, 35.8 percent of the respondents have a strong affirmative that they bought

the analgesic ointment on the spur of the moment without planning and 29.4 percent have a positive affirmative that they made the purchase decision in the pharmacy on the spot. Moreover, 31.7% of the respondents give a resounding yes to their purchase being impulsive, which, again, proves the trend of impulse buying behaviour in this product category.

Lastly, when brand switching behaviour is analysed, 33.6% of the respondents remain vigorous that they changed their customary brand in the purchase, whereas 28.9% are in assent that encouragement or marketing operations persuaded them to switch brand. The brand loyalty in the category is also not very high as the proportion of those who agree that they can also use other brands of analgesic ointments is about 30.4%.

All in all, the results indicate that consumers of Erode City portray significant rates of impulse purchase and switching brands when purchasing analgesic ointments. All these factors of pharmacist recommendation, retailer push strategy, and sales incentives have a robust influence in modifying these behaviours. The findings emphasize the increasing power of the pharmacy retail marketing drivers to stimulate impulse buying and to change the brand preference at the point of purchase.

9.1. Relationship between Pharmacist Recommendations and Impulse Buying

Null hypothesis ($H0_1$): There is no positive relationship between pharmacist recommendations and impulse buying of analgesic ointments.

Alternate hypothesis ($H1_1$): There is a positive relationship between pharmacist recommendations and impulse buying of analgesic ointments.

Table 1: Relationship between Pharmacist Recommendations and Impulse Buying

	Impulse buying
Pharmacist recommendations	
Pearson Correlation	.642**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.004
N	384

Table 1 findings show that there is a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between pharmacist recommendation and impulse purchase of analgesic ointments (r =.642, p=.004). The null hypothesis is rejected because the value of significance is less than 0.01. The result of this finding supports that pharmacist recommendations are significant factors that cause unplanned and spontaneous buying of analgesic ointments at the pharmacy counter.

9.2. Relationship between Retailer Push Strategies and Brand Switching

Null hypothesis ($H0_2$): There is no positive relationship between retailer push strategies and brand switching of analgesic ointments.

Alternate hypothesis ($H1_2$): There is a positive relationship between retailer push strategies and brand switching of analgesic ointments.

Table 2: Relationship between Retailer Push Strategies and Brand Switching

	Brand switching
Retailer push strategies	
Pearson Correlation	.517**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.009
N	384

Table 2 shows that the retailer push strategies have a medium positive relationship with brand switching behaviour (r =.517, p =.009). The null hypothesis is rejected as the resulting test value is statistically significant. This implies that in store promotions, product placement and visibility are powerful factors that can make consumers replace their favorite brand with another analgesic ointment when they make a purchase.

9.3. Relationship between Sales Incentives and Brand Switching

Null hypothesis ($H0_3$): Sales incentives do not have a positive relationship with brand switching of analgesic ointments.

Alternate hypothesis ($H1_3$): Sales incentives have a positive relationship with brand switching of analgesic ointments.

Table 3: Relationship between Sales Incentives and Brand Switching

	Brand switching
Sales incentives	
Pearson Correlation	.389**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.021
N	384

The results of Table 3 indicate a moderate and significant positive relationship between the sale incentives and switching the brand of analgesic ointments (r =.389, p=.021). Since the value of the significance is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is denied. This implies that discounts, price deals and promotional plans are more likely to make consumers change brands at the point of sale.

The correlation analysis proves that consumer behaviour is greatly affected by pharmacy retail marketing drivers. The pharmacist advice is a powerful motivator to impulse purchase, whereas the retailer push tactics and sales promotion are important in influencing brand switching. The outcomes are empirical evidence of the structure of the study and are a clear answer to the initial goal of the research.

9.4. Impact Assessment and Model Fit Evaluation of Pharmacy Retail Marketing Drivers on Consumer Behaviour

The suggested model focuses on the effects of pharmacy retail marketing factors, which are pharmacist recommendations, retailer push strategies, and sales incentives, on the impulse buying and brand switching behaviour of consumers of analgesic ointments in Erode City. The model presupposes that all of these marketing drivers positively influence the impulse buying behaviour, which, in its turn, leads to brand switching at the point of purchase. The framework represents consumer decision making within a pharmacy context, where time pressure and perceived trust along with promotional signals all influence unplanned buying and shift in brand decision.

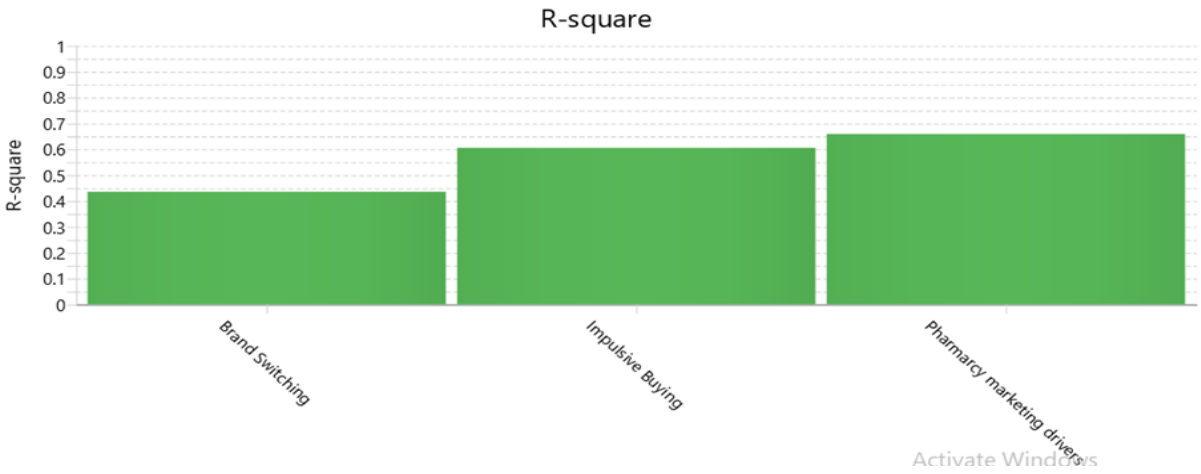
Outer Model Assessment (Measurement Model)
Construct reliability and Composite reliability

Constructs	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Pharmacist Recommendations	0.818	0.847	0.858	0.837
Retailer Push Strategies	0.864	0.883	0.885	0.735
Sales Incentives	0.896	0.910	0.912	0.826
Impulse Buying	0.780	0.733	0.714	0.674
Brand Switching	0.795	0.794	0.807	0.502

The findings show that the constructs employed in the research exhibit an acceptable to strong levels of internal consistency as Cronbachs Alpha values are higher than the recommended level of 0.70. This establishes that the measures that are employed in the determination of pharmacist recommendations, retailer push strategies, sales incentives, impulse buying and brand switching are sound. All constructs also have a composite reliability of greater than the minimum acceptable of 0.70 which also tests stability and consistency of the measurement scales. The greatest composite reliability is realized with sales incentives and retailer push strategies, which means that these marketing drivers are well represented. The values of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of all constructs are greater than their recommended value of 0.50 which validates that there is sufficient convergent validity. This means that both the constructs explain more than fifty percent of their indicators, which proves that making the measurement using the model is good. In general, the measurement model meets the necessary reliability and validity standards and can thus be used in structural model analysis in order to analyze the effects of pharmacy retail marketing drivers on impulse buying and brand switching of analgesic ointments.

R-square

	R^2	Adjusted R^2
Impulse Buying	0.606	0.602
Brand Switching	0.636	0.630
Marketing Drivers	0.660	0.649



The R-Square of the Impulse Buying factor is 0.606, which means that 60.6 percent of the change of impulse buying behaviour of analgesic ointments is accounted by the marketing drivers of pharmacy retail outlets, i.e. pharmacist, retailer, and sales promotions. The value of adjusted R-square (0.602) proves the stability and strength of the model.

In the same way, the value of R-square of Brand Switching stands at 0.636 with the adjusted R-square standing at 0.630, which means that 63.6 percent of the variation in brand switching behaviour is accounted by the same marketing drivers. It indicates high explanatory power and indicates that pharmacy retail marketing strategies are quite important in the determination of the brand switching decisions at the point of purchase.

By and large, the results of the R-squared imply that the intended model exhibits moderate to high predictive validity, which justifies the appropriateness of the framework to elucidate the impulse purchasing and brand switching behaviour of analgesic ointments within the pharmacy retail setting.

Discriminant Validity: Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT)

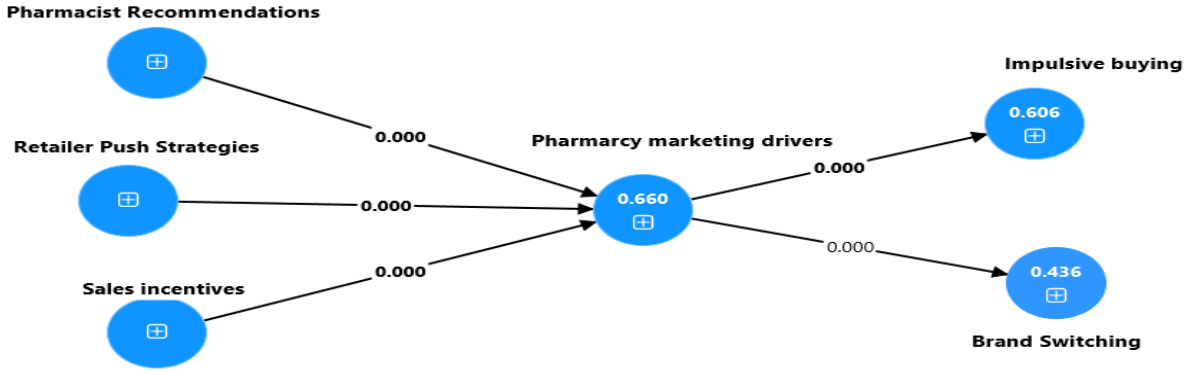
	Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)
Impulsive Buying <-> Brand Switching	1.067
Pharmacist Recommendations <-> Brand Switching	0.731
Pharmacist Recommendations <-> Impulsive Buying	0.843
Pharmacy marketing drivers <-> Brand Switching	0.512
Pharmacy marketing drivers <-> Impulsive Buying	0.875
Pharmacy marketing drivers <-> Pharmacist Recommendations	0.705
Retailer Push strategies <-> Brand Switching	0.648
Retailer Push strategies <-> Impulsive Buying	0.790
Retailer Push strategies <-> Pharmacist Recommendations	0.700
Retailer Push strategies <-> Pharmacy marketing drivers	0.705
Sales incentives <-> Brand Switching	0.897
Sales incentives <-> Impulsive Buying	0.373
Sales incentives <-> Pharmacist Recommendations	0.664
Sales incentives <-> Pharmacy marketing drivers	0.728

The heterotrait monotrait ratio was used to measure discriminant validity. The majority of the HTMT scores did not exceed the suggested value of 0.85, which means that there was a sufficient level of discriminant validity between the constructs in the study. The results of the relationship between pharmacist recommendations and brand switching (0.731), pharmacist recommendations and impulse buying (0.843), sales incentives and brand switching (0.648), sales incentives and impulse buying (0.790) and pharmacy marketing drivers with either impulse buying (0.875) or brand switching (0.512) are within

acceptable levels of the relationship confirming that indeed the constructs are different. Nonetheless, the value of HTMT between impulsive buying and brand switching (1.067) is higher than the threshold, which means that the overlap between the two behaviours is high. This finding can be attributed to its theoretical reasoning, as impulsive purchase has a tendency to switch brands at the point of purchase, especially in low involvement products like analgesic ointments. In general, the findings of the HTMT indicate good discriminant validity in the model, and the identified overlap is due to behavioural connectedness and not to a weak measure.

Inner Model Assessment (Structural Model)
Path Coefficients: Mean, STDEV, T values, p values

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
Pharmacist Recommendations -> Pharmacy marketing drivers	0.407	0.405	0.070	5.789	0.000
Pharmacy marketing drivers -> Brand Switching	0.660	0.675	0.080	8.283	0.000
Pharmacy marketing drivers -> Impulsive Buying	0.778	0.795	0.035	22.018	0.000
Retailer Push strategies -> Pharmacy marketing drivers	0.229	0.216	0.053	4.327	0.000
Sales incentives -> Pharmacy marketing drivers	0.439	0.448	0.072	6.058	0.000



The results of structural model show that each of the hypothesised paths is positive, and statistically insignificant. Professional advice significantly increases overall marketing impact at the point of sale ($\beta = 0.407$, $t = 5.789$, $p < 0.001$). The role of retailer push strategies in the pharmacy marketing drivers is also important ($\beta = 0.229$, $t = 4.327$, $p < 0.001$), but the sales incentives have even a more significant effect ($\beta = 0.439$, $t = 6.058$, $p < 0.001$), which demonstrates the strong impact that incentive-based promotion has on the retail marketing pressure. Pharmacy marketing drivers, in turn, have a very high and significant effect on impulsive buying ($p = 0.001$) and a considerable positive effect on brand switching ($t = 8.283$, $p = 0.001$). On balance, these results prove that the combination of pharmacist recommendation, retailer push strategy and sales incentive reinforces all pharmacy marketing drivers, which, respectively, decisively influence the stimulation of impulsive purchase and switching brands of analgesics ointments at the point of sale.

Goodness of Fit (GoF)

	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.176	0.177
d_ULS	33.642	33.737
d_G	11.440	11.374
Chi-square	348.657	326.723
NFI	0.961	0.961

The model fit indices show that the proposed structural model reveals a general acceptability of the fit. The Standardized root means square residual (SRMR) numbers of the saturated model (0.176) and the estimated model (0.177) are more or less above the ideal number of 0 which means a certain level of complexity of the model, but the fact that both the numbers are similar implies that the models are stable. The value of dULS and dG of the saturated and estimated models are similar with a small difference between the theoretical and estimated covariance matrices. Chi-square value of the saturated model is 348.657 but in the estimated model; it has reduced to 326.723 which shows that after the estimation of the models there has been an increase in the parsimony of the model. Above all, Normed Fit Index (NFI) of both models is 0.961, which exceeds 0.90 which is the recommended cut-off degree of fit to confirm a strong comparative fit. On the whole, although the SRMR is slightly high, the high NFI and good congruence between the distances allow to consider the appropriateness and strength of the model in terms of the discussed relationships among pharmacy marketing drivers, impulsive buying, and brand switching.

X. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This research investigated analgesic ointment impulse buying behaviour and brand switching behaviour of the Erode City with emphasis on the drivers of pharmacy retail marketing. The descriptive analysis reveals that younger consumers under 25 years are the biggest segment of buyers with women being a bigger proportion of respondents. The sample also indicates different educational backgrounds which means that the impulse buying and switching brands take place among different demographics.

The findings indicate that the pharmacist recommendation has a strong interpersonal impact at the point of sale where a high percentage of the respondents decided that pharmacists influence the brand choice and also tend to recommend alternatives that were not intended to be so. Push tactics of retailers like displaying products, placing them, and having them in-store are a great way of catching consumers eye and making fast purchases. Sales incentives such as discount, price discrepancy and promotion offer are important in influencing brand switching; hence incentive promotion is very important in this category. The relationship between impulse buying and pharmacist recommendations are highly positive as the correlation analysis indicates and so are the relationships between retailer push strategies and sales incentives and brand switching. These results are empirical evidence of the framework of the study and prove that the drivers of pharmacy retail marketing have a great effect on consumer behaviour.

The assessment in the measurement model shows that all constructs have strong internal consistency and convergent validity, which proves the strength of the measurement scales. The outcomes of the structural model further indicate that pharmacist recommendation, retailer push strategy and sales incentives are important in enhancing overall pharmacy marketing driver, which in turn has a very strong positive effect in impulse buying and a significant effect on brand switching. The R-square values suggest that the model accounts a significant amount of variance in impulse buying as well as brand switching and therefore has a moderate to strong predictive power.

The assessment of discriminant validity based on HTMT helps to verify that the majority of constructs are different, and the noted overlapping of impulse buying and brand switching is theoretically applicable since more often than not, impulsive purchases often result in brand switching within low-involvement product groups. Lastly, it is possible to note that the model fit indices reveal an acceptable and sufficient model fit, and a high NFI value confirms the sufficiency of the proposed framework.

In general, the results find that the marketing drivers of pharmacy retail are decisive in the development of impulse buying behaviour and brand switching behaviour of analgesic ointments. The combination of pharmacist recommendation, retailer push strategy, and sales incentive in promoting unplanned purchase and switching the brand preference point of sale point serves to clarify the increasing application of the pharmacy-based marketing practices as a consumer decision-making factor.

XI. SUGGESTIONS

- Responsible use of pharmacist recommendations: As pharmacist advice strongly influences impulse

buying, recommendations should be based on product suitability and consumer needs rather than only on promotional pressure. Clear and brief explanations about usage, price, and alternatives can help maintain consumer trust.

- Structured and informative retail displays: Retailer push strategies such as product placement and in-store visibility should be organised and informative. Clear displays highlighting key benefits and prices can attract attention without encouraging unnecessary impulse purchases.
- Balanced sales incentive strategies: Discounts and promotional offers should be used in moderation. Excessive incentive-driven promotions may increase brand switching and reduce long-term brand loyalty. Time-limited or value-based incentives can be more effective.
- Training for pharmacy staff: Pharmacy staff should be trained to balance sales objectives with ethical communication. This can help reduce unnecessary impulse buying while supporting responsible product promotion.
- Consumer education at the point of sale: Simple educational materials such as product information cards or digital displays can help consumers understand differences between brands and make informed decisions during purchase.
- Guidelines for pharmacy marketing practices: Clear guidelines on in-store promotion and incentive use can support responsible marketing of analgesic ointments and protect consumer interests while maintaining retail performance.

These suggestions aim to improve retail marketing effectiveness while encouraging informed and responsible purchasing behaviour in pharmacy settings.

XI. CONCLUSION

This paper has explored impulse buying and brand switching behaviour of analgesic ointments within Erode City, with special emphasis on the role played by the pharmacy retail marketing drivers. The results are clear that consumers often make hasty decisions when buying at the pharmacy checkout and willing to change brands especially in low-involvement products like topical analgesics. It was discovered that younger consumers and female buyers were more actively engaged in such purchase behaviour, which means that demographic factors are significant when interpreting retail buying behaviour.

The findings affirm that consumer behaviour is greatly affected by pharmacist recommendations, push strategies by retailers and sales incentives. Pharmacist recommendations turned out to be a powerful interpersonal stimulus to impulse purchase, retailer push-strategies and sales promotions turned out to be key force in stimulating brand switch. All these forces combine to increase the effect of pharmacy marketing drivers that consequently have a significant effect on impulse purchases as well as brand switching at the point of sale.

The proposed framework is supported by the measurement and structural model tests which measure the reliability and validity of the proposed framework. The model is highly explanatory with a significant percentage of the variance in impulse buying and brand switching being attributed to the marketing drivers that are identified. The satisfactory model fit statistics also affirm the strength of the framework in the consumer behaviour in a pharmacy retail setting.

In general, the research concludes that the drivers of pharmacy retail marketing have a critical influence in determining consumer decision making towards analgesic ointments. On the one hand, these drivers are useful in terms of boosting the sales as well as brand preference; on the other hand, they raise significant issues concerning responsible promotion in health-based retail settings. The results can be useful to pharmacies and pharmaceutical marketers to develop balanced marketing strategies that would facilitate business goals and promote informed and adequate consumer decisions.

XIII. IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The research results of this study carry significant implications to pharmacy retailers, pharmaceutical companies, consumers and researchers. The findings point to the conclusion that the effects of pharmacy retail marketing drivers are high vis-a-vis influencing the impulse buying and brand switching behaviour, which implies that point-of-sale practices are determinant in influencing consumer behaviour in regard to analgesic ointments choice. In the case of the pharmacy retailers, it means that they have to

compromise between the sales-driven approaches and the accountable product recommendations to be able to retain consumer trust. In the case of pharmaceutical companies, the study recommends that even though sales incentives and retail push strategies are effective in determining the brand of choice, over-reliance on the strategies can undermine brand loyalty in the long-term, and promotion strategies should aim at promotion on a sustainable brand development. Consumer wise the results highlight the significance of awareness on retail pressure within the pharmacy where health related products are mostly sold. In scholarly domain, the research presents empirical data to the deficient body of literature on pharmacy-based impulse purchase and brand switching in Indian urban setting, and offers a verified framework that can be used to justify ethical principles and informed retail policies development.

The future direction of the research would be to expand the study scope to cover other categories of OTC products and other geographical areas as this would enhance the generalizability. It is also possible that future researches can include other behavioural variables including brand loyalty, perceived risk, health consciousness and price sensitivity to increase the explanatory power of the model. It would be possible to monitor how consumer behaviour would change over time or conduct a test to measure the effect of particular retail interventions through the use of longitudinal or experimental research designs. In-depth methods, which involve interviewing pharmacists and consumers, can also be used to add more insights into the point-of-sale decision processes. All these guidelines provide the chance to learn more about pharmacy retail marketing and facilitate the adoption of less irresponsible and more efficient marketing strategies.

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