

The Promotional Psychology of Student Consumers: An Empirical Study of Discount-Driven Shopping Behavior

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Abstract—This study examines how discount offers influence the shopping behaviour of students using survey data from 50 respondents. The sample included 25 male and 25 female participants across four age groups: under 15, 15–18, 19–22, and above 22. The survey explored shopping frequency, discount-seeking behaviour, impulse purchasing, preferred discount formats, brand loyalty, brand switching, quality perception, and discovery channels for discount offers. The findings show that discounts shape student shopping behaviour in several ways. 64% of respondents actively seek discounts at least sometimes, 74% report at least occasional impulse purchases due to discounts, and 44% have switched brands because of a discount. Percentage-off offers are the most preferred format, while social media is the leading discovery channel. Overall, the results suggest that discount offers influence both immediate purchase decisions and broader brand-related behaviour.

Index Terms—Discount offers; Student shopping behaviour; Impulse buying; Brand switching; Consumer behaviour and psychology; Purchase decision-making.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

In competitive consumer markets, discounts remain one of the most common promotional tools used to attract attention, stimulate trial, and increase short-term sales. For students, who often shop within fixed or limited budgets, discounts may have a stronger effect on decision making than they do for higher-income consumer groups. Understanding this influence is useful for both marketing analysis and consumer education.

This study investigates whether discount offers change shopping behaviour among students. It focuses on discount-seeking, impulse purchasing, preferred promotional formats, brand loyalty, brand switching, and the channels through which students discover

offers. In addition to descriptive analysis, the paper introduces a simple theoretical model and an exploratory analytical strategy to show how the project could be extended beyond percentages into regression-style analysis.

1.2. Problem Statement

Discount offers are widely used by businesses to attract student consumers, who are often considered highly price-sensitive and more responsive to promotional pricing. In competitive retail markets, discounts are seen as an effective way to increase sales and influence purchase decisions. However, although discounts are common, it is not fully clear how strongly they shape the shopping behaviour of students or which aspects of behaviour they affect most.

This study therefore examines the influence of discount offers on student shopping behaviour, with specific attention to discount-seeking, impulse buying, brand loyalty, brand switching, and preferred discount formats. It also explores the channels through which students most often discover discount offers. The problem addressed by this research is the lack of a focused understanding of whether discounts only encourage immediate purchases or whether they also affect longer-term consumer choices such as brand preference and loyalty. By investigating these patterns, the study aims to provide a clearer picture of how discount offers influence students in practice and to show which promotional methods are most effective in shaping their purchasing behaviour.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

1. To determine how actively students seek discount offers before making a purchase.
2. To assess whether discounts lead to unplanned or impulse purchases.
3. To examine the effect of discounts on brand loyalty and brand switching.

4. To identify the most preferred discount formats.
5. To identify the main channels through which students discover discounts.
6. To compare patterns across gender and age groups.
7. To propose a simple theoretical pathway linking discount-seeking to behavioural outcomes.

1.4. Research Questions

The study seeks answers to the following questions:

1. To what extent do students actively seek discount offers before making a purchase?
2. Do discount offer lead students to make impulse or unplanned purchases?
3. How do discount offer influence brand loyalty among students?
4. Do students switch brands because of discount offers?
5. Which type of discount format is most preferred by students?
6. Through which channels do students most commonly discover discount offers?
7. Are there any differences in discount-influenced shopping behaviour across gender and age groups?

1.5. Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by a simple consumer-behaviour model in which promotional sensitivity influences shopping outcomes. In this framework, discount-seeking acts as an indicator of promotional sensitivity, while impulse purchasing, brand switching, and willingness to try new brands function as behavioural outcomes. This model assumes that students who are more attentive to discounts are more likely to make unplanned purchases when they encounter promotional offers. Those impulse responses may then increase openness to switching from preferred brands or experimenting with unfamiliar brands. Because the present study uses single-item measures and a small sample, this framework is presented as a conceptual or exploratory SEM-style model rather than a fully estimated structural equation model.

1.6. Hypotheses

H1: Students who seek discounts more actively are more likely to report impulse purchases.

H2: Students who report impulse purchases are more likely to report brand switching.

H3: Students who are more promotion-sensitive are more likely to try new brands.

H4: Discovery through digital channels, especially social media, is associated with stronger responsiveness to discounts.

1.7. Empirical Review of Previous Studies

Previous studies generally show that discounts have a strong influence on student and young consumer behaviour. Research on online discounts found that students are highly responsive to promotional offers because they try to maximize limited budgets and are more likely to purchase during discount periods. Other studies report that price discounts can increase purchase intention, especially when combined with interactivity and trust in digital shopping environments. Studies on sales promotion also suggest that discounts are closely linked with brand switching and customer loyalty, showing that promotional pricing can change both immediate buying decisions and longer-term brand preferences. At the same time, some recent work notes that discounts may lower perceived quality unless the promotion is framed in a way that strengthens identity and value perception.

II. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

This study uses a descriptive survey design based on primary data collected through a structured online questionnaire. The descriptive method is suitable because it helps identify existing patterns in student shopping behaviour without attempting to manipulate variables. It is also useful for understanding how students respond to discount offers in real-world settings through direct responses from participants. The questionnaire contained closed-ended items covering demographic characteristics and discount-related shopping behaviour. Questions included gender, age, shopping frequency, discount-seeking, impulse buying, preferred discount formats, brand loyalty, brand switching, discovery channels, and perception of product quality. The online format made data collection quick, anonymous, and suitable for student respondents, while also making it easier to analyse responses using percentages and frequency tables.

2.2. Research Sample

The survey included 50 respondents, with an equal split between male and female participants, which makes the sample balanced in terms of gender. The age distribution shows that most respondents were in the 15–18 group, with 21 respondents (42%), followed by 19–22 with 18 respondents (36%). The remaining respondents were above 22 years old, with 6 respondents (12%), and under 15 years old, with 5 respondents (10%). This means the sample mainly represents adolescents and young adults. This distribution is useful because students in these age groups are more likely to be influenced by discounts, online promotions, and social media advertising. Since most respondents fall between 15 and 22 years, the sample is well suited for studying student shopping behaviour. The smaller number of younger and older respondents adds some variation while still keeping the focus on the most relevant student age groups.

2.3. Research Gap and Conceptual Framework

Although earlier studies confirm that discounts affect purchasing behaviour, much of the existing research focuses on general consumers, live-streaming environments, or isolated promotional tools rather than the specific case of students. There is also limited evidence connecting discount-seeking, impulse buying, brand switching, and discovery channels within one student-focused framework. This creates a gap in understanding how these behaviours are linked in a single model. The present study addresses that gap by examining student responses to discounts across several dimensions at once. The conceptual framework for this study is simple: discount-seeking and exposure to promotional channels influence impulse buying, which in turn affects brand switching, brand loyalty, and willingness to try new brands. Social media and store apps act as major discovery channels, while percentage-off discounts are treated as the strongest promotional trigger. This framework is suitable for the small sample and single-item survey design because it allows a clear interpretation of relationships without overstating statistical complexity.

2.4 Data Collection Methods

Data were collected through an online survey form distributed to students and young adults. The online format made the process convenient, quick, and

accessible, especially for respondents who are already familiar with digital forms and mobile-based questionnaires. It also allowed the researcher to reach participants efficiently without requiring face-to-face contact, which made the data collection process more practical and time-saving. Because the survey was shared digitally, respondents could complete it at their own pace, which may have encouraged more thoughtful and honest answers. All responses were kept anonymous and were used only for academic analysis. Anonymity was important because it reduced pressure on respondents and helped protect their privacy. It also made it more likely that participants would answer questions honestly, especially those related to spending habits, impulse purchases, and brand switching behaviour. The questionnaire was designed to capture several aspects of student consumer behaviour, including shopping frequency, discount-seeking tendencies, impulse buying due to discounts, preferred discount type, brand loyalty, discovery channels, willingness to try new brands, brand switching, and perceived product quality. These variables were selected because they reflect the main ways in which discount offers may influence student shopping decisions. Shopping frequency helped show how regularly respondents engage in purchasing, while discount-seeking measured how actively they look for promotional offers. Questions on impulse buying and brand switching helped identify whether discounts affect immediate and longer-term decisions. Preference for discount type and discovery channel provided insight into how students notice and respond to promotions. Overall, the data collection method was suitable for generating a clear picture of discount-related consumer behaviour among students and young adults.

2.5 Measurement of Variables

The variables in this study were measured using a structured online questionnaire consisting of closed-ended multiple-choice items. Demographic variables included gender and age group, with respondents classified as male or female and placed into four age categories: Under 15, 15–18, 19–22, and Above 22. Shopping frequency was measured through four response options: Daily, Weekly, Monthly, and Rarely. The main behavioural variables were measured using single-item categorical responses. Discount-seeking behaviour was assessed through

Always, Sometimes, Rarely, and Never. Impulse buying due to discounts, brand loyalty, and willingness to try new brands were measured using Yes, Sometimes, and No response options. Brand switching was measured as a binary variable with Yes and No categories. Preferred discount type was measured through four categories: Percentage off, buy 1 Get 1, Cashback, and Free shipping, while discovery channel was measured through social media, Store app, Email, and Friends/Family. Perceived quality was measured with Yes, No, and Not sure responses. These measures were suitable for descriptive analysis because they allowed the responses to be easily grouped into frequencies and percentages for comparison across respondents.

2.6. Reliability and Validity Procedures

The reliability and validity of the study were addressed through careful questionnaire design and clear item construction. Since the survey used closed-ended questions, responses were standardized, which helped improve consistency across participants and reduced ambiguity in interpretation. The same set of questions was asked of all respondents in the same format, supporting reliability by ensuring that the data collection process was uniform. Validity was strengthened by aligning the questionnaire items directly with the objectives of the study. Each question was designed to measure a specific aspect of student shopping behaviour, such as discount-seeking, impulse buying, brand switching, brand loyalty, preferred discount type, and discovery channel. This helped ensure content validity, because the instrument covered the main variables relevant to the research problem. The questions were also phrased in simple and direct language so that respondents could understand them easily. Although the study does not use advanced statistical reliability tests, the structured design, clear wording, and direct connection between the questions and research objectives support the overall trustworthiness of the findings.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical principles guiding academic research involving human participants. Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose and objectives of the research before completing the questionnaire. Participants were also assured that their

responses would be treated confidentially and used strictly for academic purposes. The study avoided any form of coercion, discrimination, or invasion of privacy. Respondents were given the freedom to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty. Additionally, all secondary sources used in the study were properly acknowledged to maintain academic integrity and avoid plagiarism.

Variable	Type	Categories
Gender	Demographic	Male, Female
Age group	Demographic	Under 15, 15–18, 19–22, Above 22
Shopping frequency	Behavioural	Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Rarely
Discount-seeking	Predictor	Always, Sometimes, Rarely, Never
Impulse purchasing	Outcome	Yes, Sometimes, No
Preferred discount format	Preference	Percentage off, Free shipping, Cashback, Buy 1 Get 1
Brand loyalty due to discounts	Outcome	Yes, Sometimes, No
Discovery channel	Exposure	Social media, Store app, Email, Friends/Family
Try new brand due to discounts	Outcome	Yes, Sometimes, No
Brand switching due to discounts	Outcome	Yes, No
Quality perception	Attitude	Yes, No, Not sure

Figure 1: Variables used in the study

III. FINDINGS

3.1 Shopping Frequency

Shopping behaviour among respondents showed a mixed yet steady pattern. Weekly shopping was the most common routine, reported by 18 participants (36%), indicating a strong preference for regular replenishment and mid-frequency purchasing habits. A sizable segment shops rarely, 14 respondents (28%), suggesting either low demand, reliance on bulk purchases, or possible barriers like time constraints or limited access. Monthly shoppers numbered 10 (20%), reflecting planned, larger shopping trips likely aimed at stocking essentials. Daily shopping was least common, with 8 respondents (16%), pointing to a smaller group that prefers frequent, flexible purchasing—possibly for fresh goods or impulse buys. Overall, the distribution reveals a dominant weekly cadence but notable diversity, implying that retailers should offer both convenience for frequent shoppers and value or bulk options for infrequent buyers.

3.2 Discount Seeking Behaviour

Discount-seeking behaviour was widespread across the sample, signalling that promotions play a key role in purchase decisions. Twelve respondents (24%) said they always look for discounts, indicating a committed segment that consistently prioritizes savings. Another

20 respondents (40%) reported searching for discounts sometimes, reflecting a flexible but price-aware group that pursues deals when convenient or relevant. Fewer participants reported minimal interest in discounts: 8 respondents (16%) said rarely, and 10 respondents (20%) said never. Combining the "always" and "sometimes" categories shows that 64% of respondents actively seek discounts at least occasionally, underlining the importance of targeted offers and visible promotions. Retailers can leverage this by tailoring discounts, loyalty programs, and timed promotions to capture this majority while also engaging the less price-sensitive minority with premium value propositions.

3.3 Impulse Purchasing Due to Discounts

Discounts appear to be a powerful trigger for unplanned purchases among respondents. Sixteen people (32%) admitted that promotions had directly caused them to buy items they did not need, indicating a sizable group prone to impulse buys when presented with perceived savings. An even larger subset—21 respondents (42%)—reported this happening sometimes, suggesting occasional susceptibility driven by timing, product appeal, or the size of the discount. Only 13 respondents (26%) said discounts never prompted unnecessary purchases. Altogether, 74% of the sample experienced at least occasional impulse purchasing tied to discounts, highlighting how price promotions can shift buying behaviour beyond planned needs. For retailers, this underscores the effectiveness of targeted discounts, limited-time offers, and in-store signage to nudge additional sales, while also flagging potential post-purchase dissatisfaction among bargain-driven shoppers.

3.4 Preferred Discount Formats

Percentage-off discounts emerged as the clear favourite promotional format, chosen by 21 respondents (42%), indicating students' strong preference for straightforward, visible price reductions that immediately lower the cost at checkout. Free shipping was the next most popular option, selected by 13 respondents (26%), showing that eliminating delivery fees also significantly influences purchase decisions—especially for online orders where shipping can outweigh small discounts. Cashback and Buy 1 Get 1 offers tied at 8 respondents each (16%), suggesting moderate appeal for incentives that either

return value after purchase or increase perceived quantity. Overall, the pattern implies that this student sample values promotions that deliver clear, immediate financial benefit; retailers should prioritize percent-off deals and free-shipping thresholds to maximize engagement, while using cashback and BOGO strategically for inventory moves or to promote trial of new products.

3.5 Brand Loyalty and Switching

Discounts appear to foster conditional rather than unconditional loyalty among students. Thirteen respondents (26%) said student discounts made them more loyal to a brand, while a majority—26 respondents (52%)—reported this only sometimes, indicating loyalty that depends on the presence, size, or relevance of offers. Eleven respondents (22%) said discounts did not affect their brand loyalty. At the same time, 22 respondents (44%) admitted they had switched from a preferred brand because of a discount, showing that promotional incentives can override established preferences for a sizable portion of the sample. Together, these responses suggest discounts act more as a tactical retention tool than a source of deep brand commitment; firms should therefore combine offers with experience and value-building strategies to convert conditional loyalty into longer-term preference.

3.6 Discovery Channels

Social media clearly dominates as the primary discovery channel for discount offers among students, with 20 respondents (40%) citing it first. This reflects students' high engagement with platforms that blend content, recommendations, and targeted advertising—making deals highly visible and easy to act on. Store apps were the next most cited source (12 respondents, 24%), highlighting the value of app-based push notifications, personalized in-app deals, and loyalty integrations that keep promotions top-of-mind for engaged shoppers. Email reached 11 respondents (22%), suggesting that traditional digital marketing still matters, particularly for longer-form messages like newsletters, coupon codes, or scheduled sales announcements that students may consult when planning purchases. Friends and family were less frequently reported (7 respondents, 14%), indicating that peer sharing plays a role but is secondary to digital discovery. Together, these results emphasize the

central role of digital channels—especially social media—in shaping student awareness and response to promotions. For marketers, this implies prioritizing social campaigns with clear calls-to-action, leveraging store apps to deepen personalization and retention, and maintaining an effective email program for planned offers. Peer recommendations can complement digital outreach by amplifying trust and authenticity, so campaign designs that encourage sharing or referrals may boost reach and conversion.

3.7 Quality Perception

Discounts clearly encourage product experimentation among students. Twelve respondents (24%) said discounts actively prompt them to try a new brand, while a larger group — 29 respondents (58%) — said this happens sometimes, showing that promotions often lower the barrier to trial. Only nine respondents (18%) said discounts never encourage them to experiment. On perceived quality, responses were more mixed: 20 respondents (40%) said discounts do not change how they judge product quality, indicating many separate prices from perceived value. Fourteen respondents (28%) said discounts do affect quality perception, perhaps viewing steep discounts as signaling lower quality or clearance status. Sixteen respondents (32%) were uncertain, reflecting ambivalence or context-dependence (product category, brand reputation, or discount size). Overall, discounts serve as an effective tool for driving trial while having varied impacts on quality perceptions, so marketers should pair promotions with signals of value and credibility to avoid unintended quality doubts.

IV. ANALYSIS

4.1 Analytical Strategy

The main analysis in this paper is descriptive and uses counts and percentages. This is appropriate because the sample size is limited and each concept is measured with a single survey item. To deepen the paper analytically, the study can also be framed using simple exploratory regression models rather than full structural equation modelling.

A realistic extension would be:

Model 1: Impulse purchasing (Yes/Sometimes vs No) predicted by gender, age group, and discount-seeking.

Model 2: Brand switching (Yes/No) predicted by gender, age group, and impulse purchasing.

These models are suitable in principle because they align with the available response-level data, but the results should be treated as exploratory due to the small sample. A full latent variable SEM is not appropriate here because the dataset has only 50 observations and the constructs are measured with single items rather than multi-item scales.

4.2 Behavioural Pathway

Using a behavioural pathway lens, the results support a simple chain: discount-seeking leads to impulse purchasing, and impulse purchasing can then support brand switching or trial of new brands. That interpretation is consistent with the study's conceptual model and hypotheses, even though the paper does not estimate a full SEM. The pattern suggests that discounts are not only marketing stimuli but also triggers that can move students from awareness to action. In that sense, discount offers appear to function as both an informational cue and a behavioural nudge.

4.3 Comparative Reading

A comparative strategy helps show variation across subgroups. The paper reports that males were somewhat more likely to always seek discounts, while females showed a higher rate of brand switching for discounts. The 15–18 and 19–22 age groups appear to be the most promotion-sensitive, which matters because these are the core student segments in the sample. This kind of analysis is useful for identifying which groups are more likely to react to promotional pricing, even though the sample is too small for strong generalization.

4.4 Descriptive Reading

From a descriptive standpoint, the results are straightforward. Sixty-four percent of respondents look for discounts at least sometimes, 74 percent report at least occasional impulse buying because of discounts, and 44 percent have switched brands due to a discount offer. These three figures suggest that discounts do more than reduce price; they actively shape decision-making, especially for students who appear sensitive to savings cues. The most preferred format is percentage off at 42 percent, which is important because it suggests students respond best to direct, transparent reductions rather than more

complex promotions. Social media being the leading discovery channel at 40 percent indicates that the discount message is often encountered in digital spaces rather than in-store or through interpersonal channels.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The descriptive results support the view that discounts shape both transactional and brand related behaviour among students. High levels of discount-seeking and impulse purchasing suggest that promotional cues are not merely informational; they may alter purchasing intentions in real time. The proposed theoretical pathway is also consistent with the data pattern. Students who pay attention to discounts may become more susceptible to impulse purchases, and this in turn may make them more open to trying unfamiliar products or switching brands. Although this paper does not estimate a full SEM, the conceptual path model helps explain how discount exposure can move from awareness to behavioural change. The paper can therefore be strengthened by presenting descriptive findings together with an exploratory analytical strategy. Rather than claiming advanced causal proof, it is more accurate to state that the survey identifies patterns consistent with a promotion-sensitivity framework. This study finds that discount offers influence student shopping behaviour in several interconnected ways. Students commonly seek discounts, often make unplanned purchases because of them, and show a meaningful willingness to switch brands or try new ones when discounts are available. Among promotional formats, percentage-off offers are the most effective, while social media is the strongest channel for discovery. The evidence suggests that discounts are not only short-term sales devices but also behavioural triggers that can affect brand choices, experimentation, and purchase timing.

VI. LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations. First, the sample size of 50 respondents is small, which limits statistical power and weakens the stability of multivariable regression estimates. Second, all major constructs are measured using single survey items rather than validated multi-item scales. Third, because the design is cross-sectional and survey-based, the results show

association rather than causation. For these reasons, a full statistical SEM is not appropriate for this project. Any regression-style extension should be labelled exploratory, and any SEM included in the paper should be conceptual rather than fully estimated. Future research should use a larger and more diverse sample with multi-item measures for promotional sensitivity, brand loyalty, and impulsive buying.

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