



## THE MEDIATING ROLE OF HEDONIC MOTIVATION IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WEBSITE ATTRIBUTES AND ONLINE IMPULSIVE BUYING BEHAVIOUR

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### ABSTRACT

In the contemporary era, online activities have emerged as a platform that offers customers the chance to fulfil their specific requirements. This study uses the Stimulus-Response Model (S-O-R) to examine website attributes' direct and indirect effects on impulsive buying behaviour in the Sri Lankan context. Additionally, the study seeks to explore the mediating role of hedonic motivation in this relationship. A survey was administered online to gather data for the proposed conceptual model among individuals belonging to the Millennial generation. The model was subsequently evaluated using Partial Least Squares (PLS) modelling technique, with the analysis conducted using Smart PLS 4 software. Confirmatory analysis was employed to assess the reliability and validity of the reflective constructs. The findings suggest that the website experience has a greater influence on consumers' hedonic factors than other website attributes. Harmonic motivation mediates the attributes of online purchasing websites, including web experience, website quality, and website content. The results have implications for marketers and fashion retailers in optimising their website attributes based on social pressure and hedonic factors.

**Keywords:** website attributes, Website experience, website content, website quality, Hedonic motivation, impulsive buying behaviour, and Millennials.

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### 1. Introduction

For over a decade, online shopping has been the fastest-growing shopping channel, with sales increasing by 25% annually. One analysis linked the site's features to buying decisions. Online shopping's rapid expansion and the features that encourage impulse buys (for example, being open at all hours of the day and night) suggest that impulse purchases will become increasingly common. In the last decade, the e-Commerce market has evolved from a simple brick-and-mortar retail concept to a shopping ecosystem involving multiple devices and store concepts. The development of information technology has led to the emergence of novel applications across all sectors of the economy, most notably in the purchasing and selling of things, both offline and online. In the past, these actions were conducted in outlets or stores; today, they are conducted online. The number of internet users has increased due to the convenience of purchasing online for these goods and services.

Brown et al. (2003) stated that digital technology might help firms engage with customers, mainly through communication tools such as websites. Websites are becoming increasingly significant in online business. Internet channels are one tool for increasing product sales through websites. The websites are popular because they allow customers to order things anytime and request additional information from the source immediately (Cyr, 2008). There are numerous vital components to a website; among them, design quality is one of the most important factors. Wu et al. (2008) also stated that a quality of a website design could entice clients to return to online retailers and favourably impact their moods while shopping online.

Furthermore, the experience in a website is consumers' total perception of a product and a firm via the services online. Online sales are likely among customers with a positive web experience (Brashear et al., 2009). As a result, the website experience can be considered a key component of the website's attributes. Moreover, due to the creation of website content, which includes an unlimited number of graphic components and constantly updated information, The website has evolved into a brand resource and a communication platform for online commerce (Baack & Singh, 2007). Therefore, web content is critical for generating interest in and impressions of a website. Likewise, Bridges & Florsheim (2008) also identified the above three essential elements of website attributes: web experience, design quality, and content. Based on that, this study mainly focuses on website experience, design quality, and content as website attributes.

Motivation is a driving force that propels a person to take action to achieve specified goals (Maslow, 1943). There is numerous research that is based on hedonic motivation. Szymanski & Hise (2000) described hedonics as the desire to enjoy oneself while shopping online, significantly impacting customers' happiness. The immersive quality and experience of the internet are important to online consumers. Song & Qu (2017) state that hedonic motivation relates to consumer behaviour and pleasure. However, only a few studies on hedonic motivation are available online. As a result, this study aims to investigate hedonic motivation in the website context.

Many consumers in Sri Lanka have begun to purchase on digital platforms in recent months, contributing to the tremendous expansion of the country's e-commerce sector during the previous year. The shift in perspective toward e-commerce has been accompanied by a rise in confidence about both the products that are accessible and the online payment methods (Sri Lanka's e-Commerce, 2022). In January 2022, 11.34 million people in Sri Lanka were using the internet, and the country's internet penetration rate was 52.6% (Information and Communication Technology Agency, 2023). Also, the data shows a 528 thousand (+4.9%) rise in internet users in Sri Lanka between 2021 and 2022. Electronics, fashion apparel, and personal care products are the most frequently purchased online. This research mainly concentrated on online fashion apparel purchases in the Sri Lankan context.

The COVID-19 crisis has resulted in an increase in impulse purchases in recent years. According to recent polls, Since the pandemic, monthly impulse spending among consumers has increased by 18% (Keenan, 2021; Li Cain, 2020). According to experts, 20% of retail sales are attributed to impulse purchases (Repko, 2020), despite the fact that COVID-19 has negatively impacted the global economy. As a result, the impulse buying phenomenon got the attention of researchers, who have approached it from various views and used a variety of conceptualisations and methods.

Currently, impulse behaviour on the internet is comparatively significant compared to in-store purchases; it is estimated that online impulse buying accounts for approximately 40% of all internet expenditures (Liu et al., 2013). When a customer has an unanticipated, powerful, and persistent urge to buy something, the impulse to purchase occurs. The urge to buy is genuinely perplexing and may lead to an enthusiastic battle (Rook, 1987). Salimon et al. (2017)'s empirical study showed that hedonic incentive modulates the link between the adoption of e-banking and perceived security. Also, this is related to the research by Chung et al. (2017) that

showed how the association between impulse buying while shopping online is highly mediated by hedonic value. Thus, the objectives of this study are to (1) investigate the effects of website attribute elements, including web experience, web design quality, and web content, on impulse buying behaviour, (2) examine the effects of web attributes (web experience, web design quality, and web content) on hedonic motivation; and (3) investigate the effects of hedonic motivations on online impulse buying behaviour. Electronics, fashion apparel, and personal care products are the most frequently purchased online. This research mainly concentrated on online fashion apparel purchases in the Sri Lankan context.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **Website attributes**

Several studies indicate the significance of website attributes in affecting consumers' purchasing decisions while shopping online. A particular website attribute can stimulate purchasing demands and sales transactions online (Rowley & Okelberry, 2000). This research concentrates on the three key factors of website attributes: web experience, web design quality, and web content.

### **Web Experience**

The experience in a website involves perusing, looking, finding, choosing, assessing, and comparing the data execution of the internet-based company. The environment, events, plan, and other variables encountered while interacting with a specific webpage all impact the virtual client's overall impression and activities. The experience of a website combines online signals, usefulness, feeling, boosts, and other items (Efthymios, 2004). Websites that provide unique experiences on the web are planned in a way that caters to the customer's product needs and expectations and assists the customer throughout the purchasing process. Consequently, websites should be regarded as essential tools of customer support and persuasion to persuade online customers that a positive experience using the website could have a psychological effect and lead to a more straightforward purchase.

### **Website Design Quality**

One of the essential elements is the quality of the web design. It will help push transactions and attract customers' attention as buyer behaviour changes and more people purchase things online. Web-based shopping researchers examined how different web design elements, like colour, affect buyer happiness and excitement (Menon & Kahn, 2002). Online shoppers' emotions or moods can greatly influence website prompts such as colourful images, simple colour schemes, text tones, and interactive performance (Park et al. 2008; Fiore et al. 2005). Similarly, Eroglu et al. (2001) pointed out that an internet-based store's transparent image is improved when customers have positive feelings about the quality (Sherman & Smith, 1987). As such, the quality of website design is crucial to pique the interest of new customers to explore a website and encourage online purchases.

### **Website Content**

According to Poddar (2009), Web content is a type of communication containing data and the message the messenger intends to send to the receiver. It may appear in written or non-written text. Instead of written language, voice communication or other symbols could be modified to the communication network. So that the receiver comprehends and achieves the messenger's objective (Rohm & Swaminathan, 2004). Thus, the website's content can stimulate purchases online (Poddar, 2009). Consequently, potential online users impressed by the website's design and content may rank the website higher. As a result, web content is an essential component of the website attribute.

Based on the literature, website attributes are related to online impulse buying and motivational factors. Madhavaram & Laverie (2004) claim that the hedonic value of the internet leads customers to look at products online. In the same way, Lin & Chen (2013) also argued that online consumers' impulsive buying behaviour is caused by unplanned impulse buying behaviour associated with emotion and happiness. This aligns with Sharma et al. (2010), who identified that customers' motivation factors, or emotions, play a significant role in their online shopping behaviour. Jeon et al. (2018) claim that website content and online shopper motivations impact active browsing behaviour.

Additionally, according to Smith & Sivakumar (2004), research indicates that hedonic factors are essential for impulse buying and that most web shopping literature frequently considers. This is related to the findings of Rezaei et al. (2015) that hedonic browsing positively impacted online impulse purchases. Consequently, this research suggests that.

H<sub>1</sub> **a, b, c:** Website attributes influence hedonic motivation positively.

H<sub>2</sub> **a, b, c:** Website attributes influence impulsive buying behaviour positively.

### **Hedonic motivation**

Motivation is the reason that causes or encourages a particular behavior or action. Sri (2018) stated that it could also be defined as a desire to attain or satisfy emotional desires. There are two distinct types of shopping motivation, hedonic and utilitarian (Ha, 2020). Hedonic motivation refers to the desire to shop to satisfy psychological needs such as satisfaction, emotion, prestige, and other subjective feelings. So, it appears to satisfy excessive aesthetic, social, and lifestyle requirements. It is also influenced by the individual's sensory pleasure, emotional response, and dreams (Merima, et al., 2011).

Further, Lee & Kim (2018) reported that hedonic motivation is the satisfaction of consumers' nonfunctional aspects. Arnold & Reynolds (2003) also identified the six dimensions: social shopping, idea shopping, gratification shopping, role shopping, value shopping, and adventure shopping. Park et al. (2012) confirmed that hedonic factors could influence online clothing purchases; according to research by Novak et al. (2003), impulse purchases on the website are influenced by hedonic motives. For this reason, this study contends that:

H<sub>3</sub>: Hedonic motivation is positively related to impulsive online buying.

### **The website attributes motivation factors and online impulse buying.**

This research focuses on three elements of web attributes: user experience, the quality of web design, and a website's content. Each of these has an impact on motivational factors. Indeed, using a website's feelings of delight and pleasure affect valuation, enabling impulsive buying. Customers are influenced to make unplanned purchases due to a phenomenon known as "impulse buying," which is described as "convincing, sudden, decadently certain buying conduct without consultation of all suitable data and decision options" (Shen & Khalifa, 2012). Consequently, customers spend more time perusing websites. They will be enticed to make motivating purchases when they discover intriguing offers and magnificent web design that meets their needs. Customers' happiness levels while shopping affects their satisfaction (Szymanski & Hise, 2000).

Furthermore, the trait of web attributes recognisable evidence is an additional tool for analysing online impulsive buying behaviour, precisely the emotional reaction in which all site qualities influence a buyer's rash purchasing feeling that urges and spurs customers to make impulsive purchases (George & Yaoyuneyong, 2010). This is consistent with the findings of Liu et al. (2013), who highlighted website attributes as a stimulus and found that site usability, visual appeal, and product accessibility are crucial precursors to impulsive online

purchases. Moreover, because a passionate inclination emerges from the experience of web collaboration and exchange, personality is a significant predictor of impulse buying, as stated by Shen and Khalifa (2012). Moreover, online buyers value the internet's vivid and experiential aspects. In this way, Hedonic values positively affect website attributions, and motivational factors affect impulsive purchases made over the internet (Turkyilmaz et al., 2015; Liu et al., 2013; Babin & Attaway, 2000). Therefore, this study claims that;

H4: Hedonic motivation mediates the relationship between website attributions (website experience, website quality, and website content) and impulse buying behaviour.

### 3. Research Methodology

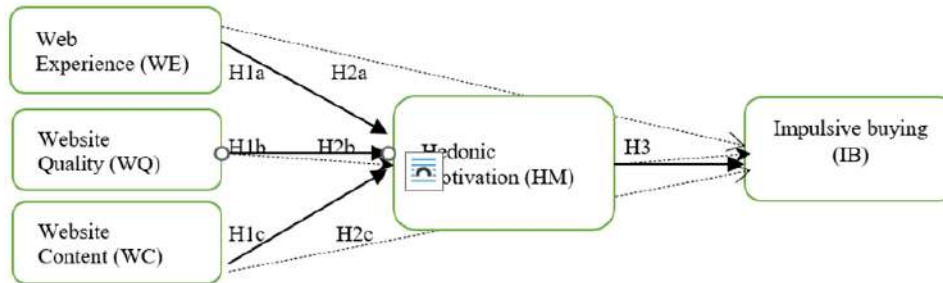


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

#### Research design and sample

The present study uses the S-O-R model to investigate how different attributes of a website affect consumers' hedonic motivation and their tendency to purchase on impulse (Fig. 1). Those born between 1980 and 1994, known as Millennials, are targeted in this research as of their familiarity with online shopping. These age groups are the most likely to use social media and purchase fashion items (Pew Research Center, 2021; Vogue Business, 2020). Following the data purifying, 319 responses were collected in total. For the structural equation model, a sample of more than 200 respondents is required (Hoelter, 1983). Based on that, 319 valid questionnaires were selected for this study. Table 1 shows that 36.4% of respondents were female, while 63.6% were male.

Table 1. The demographic characteristics of the sample population

Demographical factors (n=319)		Total frequency	Relative frequency (in percentage)
Generation	Millennials	319	100%
Gender	Female	116	36.4
	Male	203	63.6
Level of education	Primary/secondary education	53	16.7
	Bachelor's Degree	186	58.3
	Master's Degree and others	80	25.1
Employment	Student	64	20.1
	Employee	243	76.2
	Entrepreneur	10	3.1
	Non-workers	2	0.6

A questionnaire administered through an online survey platform served as the research instrument for this study, and it was developed based on previous research. This study measures users' website experience,

quality of web design, and content using a validated 5-point Likert scale suggested by Muda (2020) and Hiranrithikorn & Banjongprasert (2022). Hedonic motivation uses a validated 5-point Likert scale proposed by Ryu et al. (2010), and impulse buying behaviour uses a validated 5-point Likert scale proposed by Akram et al. (2018).

This study used partial least squares (PLS) for structural equation modelling and factor analysis. This method is more appropriate than other statistical techniques because it suits non-normally distributed data, complex structural equation models, and small samples (Hair et al., 2016). In order to process the data and conduct the statistical analysis, SPSS 25 was used, while SmartPLS 4 was used for path analysis and hypothesis testing.

#### 4. Data Analysis and Discussion

Convergent validity and reliability findings are presented in Table 2. This table's results show that the confidence values of all latent variables were high. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value range from 0.853% to 0.720% for website attributes, and impulse buying behaviour is 0.873. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for this motivational factor is 0.841, above the accepted threshold of 0.70. Since both the composite reliability (CR) and the average variance extracted (AVE) are greater than 0.7 and 0.5, respectively, this indicates that the measurement is consistent and the convergence straightness of this measuring model is good (Steven, 2009).

**Table 2. Cronbach's  $\alpha$ , CR, and AVE values**

Construct	Cronbach's $\alpha$	CR	AVE
Web experience	0.853	0.911	0.774
Website quality	0.821	0.892	0.734
Website content	0.720	0.843	0.642
Hedonic motivation	0.841	0.893	0.677
Impulsive buying behavior	0.873	0.908	0.664

**Table 3. Discriminant validity analysis**

	HM	IB	WC	WE	WQ
HM	0.823				
IB	0.606	0.815			
WC	0.538	0.473	0.801		
WE	0.582	0.499	0.494	0.880	
WQ	0.368	0.417	0.235	0.336	0.857

Further, Table 3 demonstrates that the standard loading of the observed variables is greater than 0.7, indicating that the observed variables provide a good explanation of the latent variables (Hulland, 1999). The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value indicates that the overall reliability of the questionnaire is high for the entire questionnaire (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). At the same time, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) indicates factor analysis.

When evaluating the model's goodness of fit, a value of 0.067 for the square root mean residual (SRMR) is below the 0.08 threshold (Hu & Bentler, 1999). A relative Harmony Index (CFI) of 1.000, a Model Acceptance Index (TLI) of 0.981, and a Relative Compliance Index (NFI) of 0.918, all passed criteria (Henseler et al.,

2016). The overall users' website experience, quality of the web design, and website content are explained by 44.8% of the hedonic motivation, and 36.8% of the impulsive buying behaviour is explained by Hedonic motivation. This indicates a moderate predicting power of the model (Hair et al., 2018).

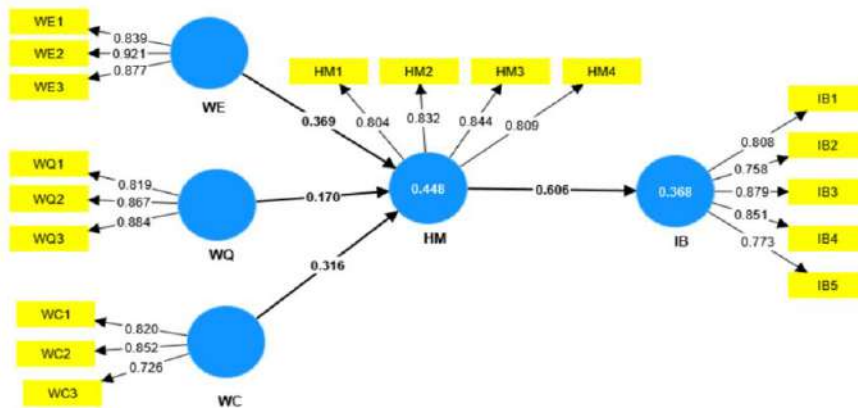


Figure 2: The structural model

Table 4. Results of the hypotheses testing

Paths	Path coefficients	Standard deviation	T- Value	P-Value	Hypotheses
WE -> HM	0.369	0.056	6.536	0.000**	H1: Supported
WQ -> HM	0.170	0.060	2.864	0.004*	H2: Supported
WC -> HM	0.316	0.065	4.889	0.000**	H3: Supported
HM -> IB	0.606	0.046	13.063	0.000**	H4: Supported

Note: WE = website experience; WQ = website quality; WC = website content; HM = hedonic motivation; IB=Impulsive behavior. \*p < 0.05. \*\*p < 0.001

Table 5. Results of mediation analysis

Paths	Direct effect	95% confidence interval of the direct effect	T- Value	P-Value	Indirect effect	95% confidence interval of the indirect effect	T- value	P-Value	Type of mediation
WE -> HM->IB	0.138	0.088-0.152	5.827	0.034*	0.192	0.055-0.194	5.827	0.001**	Partially mediation
WQ -> HM->IB	0.197	0.116-0.321	2.771	0.000	0.103	0.032-0.179	2.771	0.006*	Partially mediation
WC ->HM-> IB	0.173	0.112-0.265	4.323	0.020*	0.224	0.151-0.302	4.323	0.000**	Partially mediation

Note: WE = website experience; WQ = website quality; WC = website content; HM = hedonic motivation; IB=Impulsive behavior. \*p < 0.05. \*\*p < 0.001

## Mediation analysis

This study used Hair et al. (2017)'s bootstrapping of indirect effects to analyse the mediating role of hedonic motivation. Therefore, the mediation analysis shows that three of the proposed indirect relations are significant, namely WE → IB ( $\beta = 0.192$ ; T-value = 5.827;  $p < 0.001$ ), WQ → IB ( $\beta = 0.103$ ; T-value = 2.771;  $p < 0.05$ ), WC → IB ( $\beta = 0.224$ ; T-value = 4.323;  $p < 0.000$ ).

Moreover, the relationship from WE to IB is significant ( $\beta = 0.138$ ; T-value = 5.827;  $p < 0.05$ ); WQ to IB is significant ( $\beta = 0.197$ ; T-value = 2.771;  $p < 0.001$ ), and WC to IB is also significant ( $\beta = 0.173$ ; T-value = 4.323;  $p < 0.05$ ) thus, hedonic motivation partially mediates these relationships. Moreover, the direct and indirect effects are both positive, indicating that hedonic motivation complementarily mediates these relationships. According to the results, H4 was confirmed, in line with Turkyilmaz et al., 2015; Liu et al., 2013; Babin & Attaway, 2000, who underlined that hedonic motivation mediates the relationship between website attributes and impulsive online buying.

## 5. Conclusion

According to the hypothesis test result, hedonic motivation is positively affected by the attributes of the website. In addition, the findings point to the influence of website attributes on impulsive online purchases. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate a positive connection between hedonic motivation and impulsive purchases online. Moreover, the result demonstrates that the relation between website attribution and impulsive online purchases is mediated by hedonic motivation. The research reveals that impulse buying behaviour correlates with web experience, content, and design quality, consistent with Poddar's (2009) study findings. According to Gohary & Hanzaae (2014) hedonic motivation influences impulsive online purchases, which also supports the impact of hedonic motivation on impulsive purchases (Verhagen & Van Dolen, 2011; Kim & Eastin, 2011). In addition, an association between impulsive hedonic and online clothing shopping was also confirmed by Park et al. (2012).

The present study reveals an intriguing finding that suggests the qualities of a website can have a positive impact on an individual's hedonic motivation. This finding is of notable importance to website designers, as it underscores the significance of creating an optimal user experience that is conducive to a user's satisfaction with the website. It is imperative to bear in mind that the design and functionality of a website can greatly influence the user's motivation to engage with the site and its content. As such, website designers should prioritize the incorporation of key features that enhance the site's qualities and promote a positive user experience.

## Managerial implication and future direction

From a managerial viewpoint, this study's findings suggest that customers are willing to make impulsive purchases on the attributes of websites, including web experience, design quality, and web content. Furthermore, most customers develop their attitudes and behaviors on impulse buying through hedonic values, such emotional triggers like hedonic motivations while browsing the website drive online consumers to impulse purchases. An essential factor that drives the enhancement, and in this case, the website attributes displayed, is the company's website development (Tsao & Chang, 2010). As a result, to encourage consumers to make impulsive purchases while shopping online, consumers must generate hedonic value-based attributes for the website as they browse, which will assist companies in developing more effective online communication tools. From a theoretical perspective, this research has filled a theoretical gap in existing research on motivational factors, web attribution factors, and online impulse buying. From the organizational point of view, It's interesting to note that the qualities of a website can have a positive impact



on one's hedonic motivation. It's important for website designers to keep this in mind when creating a website, as it can greatly influence a user's experience and overall satisfaction with the site.

In future studies, it would be interesting to see if the impulsive buying behavior model yields different results when applied to specific types of mobile app businesses (such as e-hailing services, food delivery services, mobile banking and online-based retailers mobile apps). Additional research could look into different generations, such as Generation Z and Generation X, or compare their similarities and differences. Future research could use a probability sampling method to generalise the results of this study. Qualitative methods could be used in future studies to learn more about the factors contributing to impulsive buying behaviour. Researchers could observe the development of their variables of interest with a longitudinal design. Future research could compare the new customer model with Millennials in different countries, or cross-country research (comparing developed and developing countries) could be conducted.

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