



MASTER'S DISSERTATION

**UNDERSTANDING ONLINE  
IMPULSIVE BUYING BEHAVIOR**

IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY

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Dissertation presented to IPAM, to fulfill the requirements needed to obtain the Master's Degree in Marketing, developed under the scientific supervision of Professor Fernando Santos, Ph.D.



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## **ABSTRACT**

The study of impulsive buying has attracted the attention of researchers for over 70 years. However, there are few studies on the influential elements of impulsive online buying. Thus, this study seeks to fill this gap and explore the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on impulsive online buying, which marketing stimuli trigger impulsive online buying, and, finally, the impact of product characteristics on consumers' impulsive behavior.

A qualitative approach was used to reach the study objective, conducted through 16 individual interviews and four focus groups. The results obtained revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic, marketing stimuli, and product characteristics are determinant elements in prompt online impulsive purchases. That is, they all have a significant impact and make the consumer buy impulsively.

This study contributes to the existing literature on impulsive online buying, resulting in essential knowledge for marketing regarding developing more appropriate and effective stimuli that can influence online impulsive buying behavior.

**Keywords:** Impulsive buying; Consumer behavior; Online shopping; Fashion industry





## RESUMO

O estudo das compras por impulso tem atraído a atenção de investigadores há mais de 70 anos. A oportunidade de entender os elementos influenciadores da compra impulsiva online é essencial para as empresas. Assim, este estudo procura colmatar esta lacuna e investigar que influência a pandemia da COVID-19 tem nas compras por impulso, quais os estímulos de marketing que desencadeiam comportamentos impulsivos e, o impacto das características dos produtos no comportamento impulsivo.

Para alcançar o objetivo proposto foi utilizada uma abordagem qualitativa, realizada através de 16 entrevistas individuais e de 4 grupos focais. Os resultados obtidos revelaram que a pandemia COVID-19, os estímulos de marketing e as características dos produtos são elementos que têm um impacto significativo e fazem com que o consumidor compre impulsivamente.

Este estudo vem enriquecer a literatura existente sobre compras online por impulso, resultando em conhecimentos para o marketing no que diz respeito ao desenvolvimento de estímulos mais adequados e eficazes que podem influenciar o comportamento de compras impulsivas online.

**Palavras-Chave:** Compra impulsiva; Comportamento do consumidor; Compras online; Indústria da moda



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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

FG – Focus Group

I – Interviews

## INTRODUCTION

Online shopping has become an alternative way of purchasing a product or service (Gunawan & Iskandar, 2020). Online shopping, also known as e-commerce, symbolizes a fundamental transformation in how companies interact with their suppliers and customers (Jimenez, Valdes, & Salinas, 2019). There are several advantages of online shopping to companies: new distribution channels, access to global customers, enhanced competitiveness, new business opportunities, and expansion to new markets (Jimenez et al., 2019). On the other hand, for consumers, there are advantages too: it allows them to buy wherever they are (Jimenez et al., 2019). With just a few steps and clicks, they find everything they need. People are increasingly busy with their lifestyles, so they are looking for a quick and easy way to shop (Jimenez et al., 2019).

Over the years, with the continuous growth in Internet usage, online shopping has become an essential part of the worldwide retail structure (Statista Research Department, 2020a). The amount of digital users continues to grow year after year (Statista Research Department, 2020a). Statista Research Department (2020c) forecasted retail e-commerce sales worldwide from 2020 to 2023. In 2020, it was registered 4.20 trillion US dollars. Estimates suggest that revenues will remain to grow until 2023, getting to 6.54 trillion US dollars. Therefore, Portugal is no exception to this growth. Statista Research Department

(2020a) estimated, based on previous years, revenue in the e-commerce market from 2020 to 2023. This revenue, in 2021, Portugal, is projected to reach €3,806 million.

Consequently, the growing advance of digital technologies has produced relevant changes in consumers' purchasing habits (Bellini, Cardinali, & Grandi, 2017). Nowadays, customers can choose from various online platforms to browse, buy, and compare the products or services they want more easily and quickly (Statista Research Department, 2020a). Consumers are increasingly faced with a growing choice due to the enormous diversity of products, brands, distribution channels, and information about products, prices, and promotions (Mehta & Dixit, 2016).

This thesis addresses online impulsive buying behavior in the fashion industry and the influence that some elements have on this consumer behavior. Impulsive buying behavior occurs when consumers do not consciously think about obtaining a specific product or service before shopping (Gunawan & Iskandar, 2020). Consequently, impulsive consumer buying behavior is often considered in a company's marketing strategies (Lin, Shih, Huang, & Huang, 2009). Studies on impulsive buying have been trying to explain the reasons behind this behavior since responding to impulsive needs can be a way to increase the profit of organizations (Lin et al., 2009). Existing studies show that



almost 60% of online buyers are impulsive, and this behavior usually occurs in about 40% of all online purchases (Dolliver, 2009; Verhagen & Van Dolen, 2011).

The first studies about the elements of impulsive online buying considered only the product instead of also considering consumers' motivations (Hausman, 2000). However, in recent years several elements influencing impulsive buying have been discovered and considered, such as emotional states (Machleit & Eroglu, 2000; Rook, 1987), impulsiveness as a personality trait (Kacen, Hess, & Walker, 2012; Rook & Fisher, 1995), self-control (Baumeister, 2002; Vohs & Faber, 2007), hedonic needs (Hausman, 2000), store environment (Mohan, Sivakumaran, & Sharma, 2013; Stern, 1962; Tendai & Crispen, 2009), product price and price promotions (Hosseini, Zadeh, Shafiee, & Hajipour, 2020), as well as socio-demographic elements: age, gender, and income (Akram, Hui, Khan, Hashim, & Rasheed, 2016; Nadeem, Akmal, Omar, & Mumtaz, 2016).

Nevertheless, few studies have investigated these elements of impulsive buying in an online context, so several studies advise future research on this topic (Badgaiyan & Verma, 2014, 2015; Park, Kim, & Forney, 2006; Putra, Said, & Hasan, 2017). Badgaiyan and Verma (2014, 2015) recommend that future research could study the impact of intrinsic and situational elements, like sales promotion and store environment, on impulsive buying behavior in the online context. Putra, Said, and Hasan (2017) studied how consumer and product characteristics influenced consumers' impulsive behavior in a physical context,

and they recommend exploring those elements in the online shopping context. Furthermore, in a specific industry, the fashion industry, Park, Kim, and Forney (2006, p. 443) suggest future research to “investigate online shopping and emphasize impulse buying of specific brands.”

Therefore, this thesis focuses on three major elements: impulsive buying in emergency and crisis situations, such as COVID-19, marketing stimuli, and product characteristics. Harahap, Ferine, Irawati, Nurlaila, and Amaah (2021), Naeem (2020), and Xiao, Zhang, and Zhang (2020) analyze the impact that some psychological elements, like stress, anxiety, panic, and fear have on impulsive buying online behavior. Some researchers have already analyzed the two last elements in an offline context (Akram et al., 2016; Bhakat & Muruganantham, 2013; Kalla & Arora, 2011; Karbasivar & Yarahmadi, 2011). Furthermore, given the need for more research in an online context, this study will address marketing stimuli and product characteristics in an online context.

Impulsive buying has become a relevant research topic among researchers in consumer behavior due to its complexity and prevalence in the most diverse product categories – food, clothing, and household (Kacen et al., 2012; Rook, 1987; Vohs & Faber, 2007). Nowadays, the fashion industry is considered the largest industry in the online market, even when in early 2020, millions of people stayed home to stop the COVID-19 pandemic spread (Statista

Research Department, 2020a). Consequently, and although the sales of the fashion industry dropped in 2020, the online channel gained a considerable boost in this market (Bain, 2020). COVID-19 has positively impacted e-commerce, as it has experienced five to ten years of growth in just six months (Orendorff, 2020).

With trends constantly changing, the fashion industry has an eye for the future (Forbes, 2020). That is, this industry's future is taking place online (Forbes, 2020). This industry will see significant changes in innovation in the coming years, from the introduction of new technologies to the diverse demands of consumers (Forbes, 2020). The future of fashion is occurring online, and brands will have to modify how they produce, sell and advertise clothing to make it work in a digital world (Forbes, 2020). In Portugal, the apparel segment is the largest segment of the Fashion market. This segment includes Clothing, Shoes, Bags, and Accessories (Statista Market Forecast, 2020).

### **Research Purpose and Questions**

Given online sales growth, this study's research aims to understand the fashion industry's impulsive online buying behavior.

This research seeks to answer the following research questions in the context of the online fashion industry:

1. What influence the COVID-19 pandemic had on consumer online impulsive buying behavior?
2. What are the main marketing stimuli that drive consumers to impulsive buying behavior?
3. What characteristics of a product trigger impulsive buying behavior in consumers?

Given the research questions, it can be seen that this is an exploratory study, which aims to explore deeper and analyze new consumer behavior trends and understand new phenomena. Thus, a qualitative methodology is the most suitable methodology. To collect primary data, this study used individual interviews and focus groups with consumers who make impulsive online purchases in the world of fashion.

This dissertation is divided into six distinct chapters. The first chapter - literature review - gathers relevant information about the online impulsive buying phenomenon, emphasizing this practice's appropriate topics. The second chapter is where the selected research methodology is presented. The third presents the findings extracted from the interviews and focus groups conducted

online on Portuguese consumers. The fourth presents the discussion. The fifth shows the conclusion of this study, and the last chapter, the sixth, presents the limitations and suggestions for possible future research.



## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review is divided into sub-chapters starting with the definition of impulsive buying behavior and e-commerce. Moreover, are described the elements and the impact on online impulsive buying behavior.

### 1.1.IMPULSIVE BUYING BEHAVIOR

Before defining impulsive buying, it is essential to know what impulsivity is. According to Arce and Santisteban (2006), studied from different perspectives, this concept addresses three distinct perceptions: cognitive, behavioral, and characterological. Cognitive impulsivity is considered the incapacity to perceive the consequences of immediate and future actions (Bechara, Damasia, Damasio, & Anderson, 1994). From a behavioral perspective, impulsiveness concerns spontaneous actions and without a previous reflection on them. Sometimes they can be risky or unacceptable for the situation, leading to unwanted results (Evenden, 1999). Finally, characterological impulsivity is associated with risk-taking, the absence of planning, and quick decision-making (Eysenck, 1993).

Early definitions of impulsive buying described the phenomenon as commonly synonymous with unplanned buying: any purchase that the consumer

makes that has not been prepared in advance (Stern, 1962). Moreover, in some studies, the elements of impulsive buying focused only on the product, completely excluding the consumer and their characteristics as an influencing element (Rook, 1987). In this last decade, research on the impulsive buying phenomenon concludes that describing an impulsive purchase as unplanned is not sufficient (Kalla & Arora, 2011). Consequently, researchers started to target emotional impulsivity and investigating the various behavioral aspects of impulsive buying (Bhakat & Muruganantham, 2013).

Engel, Miniard, and Blackwell (1982) define impulsive buying as an action carried out without a formally recognized problem or a purchase intention established before entering the shop. Rook (1987) completed the definition, saying that this behavior can occur in any space (Lee & Kacen, 2018). It is when a customer has an unexpected and persistent desire that makes him/her buy something instantaneously (Lee & Kacen, 2018).

The classification of purchase as planned or impulsive started with Stern's (1962) study, where he categorized a purchase behavior as planned, unplanned, or impulsive buying. Planned purchases are rational decision buying that requires a search for information. Unplanned buying refers to all buying decisions made without any previous planning. Finally, Stern (1962) classifies impulsive buying as a quick, strong, tempting urge to buy, but this concept differs from unplanned buying in fast decision-making. In his study, he defines



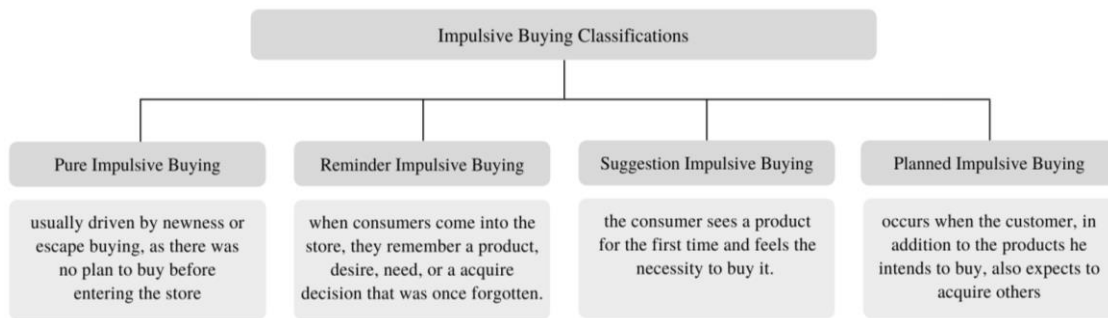
impulsive buying, classifying, and dividing the term into four classifications (Figure 1):

- Pure Impulse Buying: it is an impulsive purchase that breaks with normal buying behaviors. It is usually motivated by novelty or escape buying, as there was no intention to purchase before entering the store (Stern, 1962).

- Reminder Impulse Buying: when entering the store, the consumer remembers a product, desire, need, or a purchase decision that was once forgotten. The memory occurs, therefore, inside the store (Stern, 1962).

- Suggestion Impulse Buying: the consumer sees a product for the first time and feels the need to buy it. Unlike Reminder Impulse Buying, this type has no previous product knowledge (Stern, 1962).

- Planned Impulse Buying: occurs when the customer, in addition to the products he already intends to buy, also expects to acquire others that depend on elements such as prices, promotions, and offers (Stern, 1962).



*Figure 1: Impulsive buying classifications*

Source: Based on Stern (1962)

Vohs and Faber (2007) add that impulsive buying is an act that happens when people feel the need to purchase a product without a prior understanding of why they will buy and why they need it. However, they concluded that affective practices control impulsive buying rather than cognitive ones (Vohs & Faber, 2007). This behavior is justified because individuals feel an irresistible, and sometimes out of control, desire to purchase products (Vohs & Faber, 2007).

Years ago, consumers would see an attractive product advertised on television or even in a magazine (Vohs & Faber, 2007). However, if they were tempted to buy, they would have to wait until the next day to act on that desire (Vohs & Faber, 2007). With technological developments, it is possible to fulfill desires when we feel them, using online platforms, such as social media and a store's website (Vohs & Faber, 2007).

In the 1980s, impulsive buying studies focused on “who” engages in this behavior, which directed many researchers to categorize people as impulsive or non-impulsive (Vohs & Faber, 2007). More recently, researchers have begun to ask questions of “when” and “why” impulsive buying occurs (Vohs & Faber, 2007). Having that said, the impulsive buying behavior in the physical context has already been studied by several authors, leaving the online context a little aside (Husnain, Rehman, Syed, & Akhtar, 2019; Parsad, Prashar, Vijay, & Kumar, 2018). Moreover, with the increase of electronic commerce (Jimenez et al., 2019) and since coronavirus emerged, online sales increased (Bhatti et al., 2020).

## 1.2. ONLINE IMPULSIVE BUYING

### **E-commerce**

Firstly, it is important to know more about the definition of e-commerce and its evolution over the years. E-commerce is related to all the movements to acquire and sell a product or service through the Internet (Nurdiansyah, Wijayanto, & Firdaus, 2018). Moreover, there was an evolution from the concept of electronic commerce to electronic business. E-business, a broader term for e-commerce, refers to all categories of online business. It is not merely about purchasing and selling products but also about taking care of customer service and business collaborations (Nurdiansyah et al., 2018).

Moreover, since the coronavirus (COVID-19) disease emerged at the end of 2019 in the Chinese town of Wuhan, it has quickly spread globally (World Health Organization, 2020). Due to this pandemic, the trend of online shopping has been strengthened (Cramer-Flood, 2020; PwC, 2020). Specifically, COVID-19 greatly impacted e-commerce and consumer behavior online (Bhatti et al., 2020). During this period, digital channels became the most common alternative to imposed travel restrictions, closed or crowded stores, and personal purchases (Bhatti et al., 2020; Cramer-Flood, 2020; PwC, 2020).

Several developments are revolutionizing the behavior of how consumers shops (Jimenez et al., 2019). Firstly, the access to the Internet by a large amount of the world's population; secondly, mobile devices (smartphone, laptop, tablet, or any smart assistant) make technology easy to use (Jimenez et al., 2019; PwC, 2020). Finally, the third fact is related to the younger generations, in which technology is already part of their daily lives, and they can understand the Internet perfectly (Jimenez et al., 2019). They are “technology natives” (Jimenez et al., 2019, p. 11).

With the popularization of the Internet and digital devices, people nowadays can complete the shopping process in seconds and with just a few steps (Chen, Lin, Pan, & Chen, 2020). The variety of services, effectiveness, safety, and recognition has been developing (Chen et al., 2020). E-commerce makes it

more accessible for consumers to research, evaluate prices, and buy in a more leisurely, simpler, and faster way (Chen et al., 2020).

With the development of online shopping, numerous research studies were developed to understand how the behavior of offline consumers, those who make purchases in physical stores, is manifested in the online environment (Punyatoya, 2018; Wells, Parboteeah, & Valacich, 2011; Widagdo & Roz, 2021). Madhavaram and Laverie (2004, p. 60) present a definition of impulsive online buying that includes the stimuli of sensory information from online stores:

*“Impulse buying is a result of a purchaser’s immediate reaction to external stimuli that is often hedonically charged. An impulse buying episode signifies a change in purchaser’s intention to purchase that particular product before and after the exposure to stimuli. The stimuli is not limited to just the product and change in purchaser’s intention does not include a reminder item that is simply out of stock at home.”*

This definition considers non-consciously planned buying that arises instantly upon the appearance of a specific stimulus (Madhavaram & Laverie, 2004). Also, the concept expands the range of online impulsive buying stimuli elements by declaring that the stimuli need not be just the product (Madhavaram & Laverie, 2004). Finally, the definition integrates the hedonic features that usually are associated with an impulsive buying decision (Madhavaram & Laverie, 2004).

Consumer confidence in online shopping is getting stronger and will trigger more impulsive purchases than physical stores (Chen et al., 2020). Consumers are becoming used to shopping online via digital devices (Chen et al., 2020). In addition, consumers have different preferences when browsing websites, and these preferences depend on their feelings and necessity in the online buying process (Chen et al., 2020). These preferences include utilitarian browsing and hedonistic browsing (Chen et al., 2020). The first one concerns the usefulness that consumers get when purchasing products. The second one refers to the enjoyment that consumers take away while shopping (Chen et al., 2020). However, some online sellers use time pressure to get their clients to order, and this behavior will certainly lead to impulsive buying online (Chen et al., 2020).

Unlike physical stores, one of the disadvantages of online stores is that they cannot provide a touch-and-feel experience (Coley & Burgess, 2003; Steinmann, Kilian, & Brylla, 2014). Online shops depend on sensory information that influences customers' intentions to return to a website and purchase products (Coley & Burgess, 2003; Steinmann et al., 2014). Several studies have shown that this limitation could be diminished by allowing consumers to experience products virtually, through sensory information that can be applied in two different ways (Coley & Burgess, 2003; Steinmann et al., 2014):

- Vividness: it concerns the representative quality of the product demonstrations, through sensory channels, for example, seeing, hearing (Jiang &

Benbasat, 2007). In an online context, a vivid website should comprise effective sensory content that stimulates the consumer's feelings to positively impact the product experience (Steinmann et al., 2014)

- Interactivity: a two-way interaction that occurs when a customer interacts with a website and immediately gets the result of their behaviors (Mollen & Wilson, 2010).

Several researches provide more in-depth knowledge of what happens in shoppers' minds during shopping (Chan, Cheung, & Lee, 2017; Chen et al., 2020; Floh & Madlberger, 2013; Widagdo & Roz, 2021). Consumers make their decisions unexpectedly, and most of them end up buying more than they initially intended. This impulsiveness is essentially due to the stimuli they face, leading them to buy impulsively (Floh & Madlberger, 2013). 40% of all purchases that consumers make online are considered impulsive purchases. This percentage can be explained by customers having easy access to products, lack of social pressure, and lack of delivery efforts (Dolliver, 2009; Verhagen & Van Dolen, 2011).

More recent studies conclude that impulsive behavior has registered more significant results over the years; that is, the number of impulsive online purchases is growing (Iyer, Blut, Xiao, & Grewal, 2019; Yeboah & Owusu-Prempeh, 2017). This increase can be attributed to the advance of e-commerce and information technology activities (Chan et al., 2017). An analysis carried out

by SIBS Analytics (2020) in the first half of November 2020 showed a 32% growth in online shopping concerning the same period of the year before. Taking into account the European Ecommerce Report, in 2018, e-commerce statistics in Portugal showed that 50% of Portuguese internet users had made online purchases and that the European average was 69% (Lone, Favero, Quagliari, & Packiaraja, 2019). Therefore, further research has discussed the importance of internal and external stimuli that lead consumers to impulsive buying (Kalla & Arora, 2011).

### 1.2.1. Online Impulsive Buying Stimuli

Initially, it is crucial to know that various elements influence online impulsive buying. For example, an obstinate, powerful, and unexpected desire can lead consumers to impulsive online purchases (Akram et al., 2017). Online buying is also driven by low cognitive control and consumer emotions through appealing products, influencing them to purchase without considering other elements such as financial and social ones (Akram et al., 2017; Liu, Li, & Hu, 2013).

Exposure to stimuli can be considered an element that makes consumers buy impulsively (Liu et al., 2013). These stimuli, together with economic



elements, time, location, culture, personality, the mood of the consumer (Stern, 1962), the ease of accessing the credit card, the layout of the store, and demographic, psychological, and situational elements (Gupta & Taushif, 2013) can trigger an impulsive buying. Cahyorini and Rusfian (2011) add that excitement and disregard for the consequences can also influence impulsive buying, and finally, materialistic values. That is, consumers use shopping as a way to achieve temporary happiness and satisfaction (Clark, 2012).

Typically, online consumers are more impulsive than offline buyers (Verhagen & Van Dolen, 2011). This behavior is due to the ease of transactions and online marketing stimuli that make impulsive buying and allow online shoppers to be less risk-averse (Verhagen & Van Dolen, 2011). In addition, online impulsivity is influenced by motivational, emotional, and other elements such as website stimuli, sales promotion, ease of payment (Akram et al., 2017).

Based on a literature review by Kalla and Arora (2011), many elements influence impulsive buying. These elements are divided into two categories:

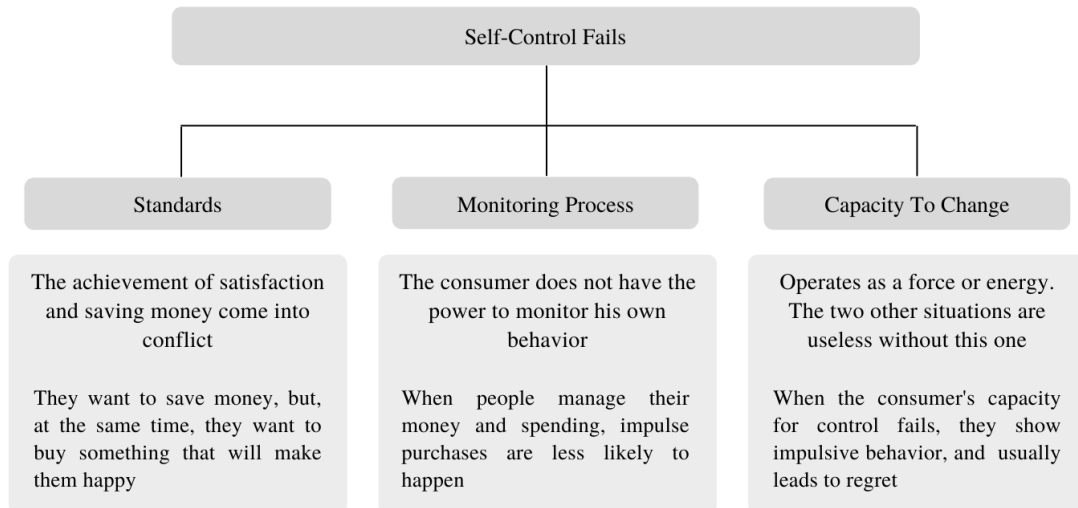
- Internal stimuli: specific stimuli associated with the consumer, examining their characteristics (Table 1) (Karbasivar & Yarahmadi, 2011). Hedonic needs, age, personality, mood states, gender, social position, shopping enjoyment, and consumer welfare (or lack thereof) are examples of internal

elements that can affect impulsive buying (Kalla & Arora, 2011; Karbasivar & Yarahmadi, 2011; Rook, 1987; Stern, 1962). Some consumers cannot control their shopping desires in online stores and turn them into spending motivations (Lo, Lin, & Hsu, 2016).

Based on a study developed by Baumeister (2002), consumers are divided between desires suggested by consumption stimuli and the ability to resist temptations, that is, self-control. This self-control can fail in three situations (Figure 1) (Baumeister, 2002). First, when the achievement of satisfaction and saving money come into conflict (Baumeister, 2002). Second, the consumer does not have the power to monitor his behavior. When people keep prudent track of their money and expenses, impulsive purchases are less likely to happen (Baumeister, 2002).

Finally, self-control depends on a resource that operates as a force or energy, and the two other situations are useless without this one. When the consumer's ability to control himself fails, they show impulsive behaviors, which generally lead to regret (Baumeister, 2002). Usually, the consumer's mood is linked to impulsive buying, whether positive or negative, the state of mind influences consumers to buy impulsively (Sun & Wu, 2011). When online impulsively buying a product or service, most customers seek to achieve feelings

of emotion, newness, style, status, break the routine, entertainment, and/or other hedonistic motivations (Wood, 2005).



*Figure 2: Three situations that self-control can fail*

Source: Adapted from Baumeister (2002)

- External stimuli: specific motivations associated with the purchasing environment, product characteristics, and marketing stimuli (Table 2) (Bhakat & Muruganatham, 2013; Karbasivar & Yarahmadi, 2011). Promotions, the store's design, social aspects, visual motivations, store atmosphere, ambient elements, and shopping layout are examples of external elements. Consumers can feel an urge to buy impulsively when visually confronting signals such as promotional incentives (Bhakat & Muruganatham, 2013; Dawson & Kim, 2009; Kalla & Arora, 2011). Online impulsive buying is also often associated with accelerating sales promotions used in online stores. Therefore, it is popular to see promotional strategies implemented to advertise, for example, up and cross-selling through featured products, price discounts, coupons, and other promotional deals (Dawson & Kim, 2009, 2010).

More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic is also an element that may influence impulsive online consumer purchases (Deng, Wang, Xie, Chao, & Zhu, 2020; Xiao et al., 2020; Xiong et al., 2020). Furthermore, a systematic review proved that COVID-19 is genuinely associated with worldwide psychological distress, such as anxiety and stress (Xiong et al., 2020), which can cause impulsive buying (Deng et al., 2020; Xiao et al., 2020).

Internal stimuli	Author
Obstinate, powerful, and unexpected desire	Akram et al. (2017)
Consumer's mood and emotions	Akram et al. (2017)
	Liu et al. (2013)
	Sun and Wu (2011)
	Wood (2005)
Lack of self-control	Akram et al. (2017)
	Baumeister (2002)
	Liu et al. (2013)
Excitement and disregard for the consequences	Cahyorini and Rusfian (2011)
Materialistic values	Cahyorini and Rusfian (2011)
	Clark (2012)
Economic elements	Stern (1962)
	Gupta and Taushif (2013)
	Kalla and Arora (2011)

Demographic, psychological, situational elements (age, location, culture, personality, gender, and social position)	Karbasivar and Yarahmadi (2011) Rook (1987) Stern (1962) Verhagen and Van Dolen (2011)
Hedonic needs (emotion, newness, style, status, break the routine, entertainment)	Wood (2005) Kalla and Arora (2011) Karbasivar and Yarahmadi (2011) Rook (1987) Stern (1962)
Temporary happiness or/and satisfaction	Clark (2012)

*Table 1: Internal online impulsive buying stimuli*

Source: Author

External stimuli	Author
Ease of accessing the credit card	Akram et al. (2017) Gupta and Taushif (2013) Verhagen and Van Dolen (2011)
Product characteristics	Bhakat and Muruganantham (2013) Karbasivar and Yarahmadi (2011)
Marketing stimuli	Bhakat and Muruganantham (2013) Karbasivar and Yarahmadi (2011) Verhagen and Van Dolen (2011) Gupta and Taushif (2013)

Atmosphere and layout of the store	<p>Bhakat and Muruganantham (2013)</p> <p>Verhagen and Van Dolen (2011)</p> <p>Karbasivar and Yarahmadi (2011)</p> <p>Kalla and Arora (2011)</p> <p>Dawson and Kim (2009)</p>
Sales promotions (price discounts, coupons)	<p>Akram et al. (2017)</p> <p>Bhakat and Muruganantham (2013)</p> <p>Dawson and Kim (2010)</p> <p>Dawson and Kim (2009)</p> <p>Kalla and Arora (2011)</p>
Website stimuli	<p>Akram et al. (2017)</p>
COVID-19	<p>Deng et al. (2020)</p> <p>Xiao et al. (2020)</p> <p>Xiong et al. (2020)</p>

*Table 2: External online impulsive buying stimuli*

Source: Author

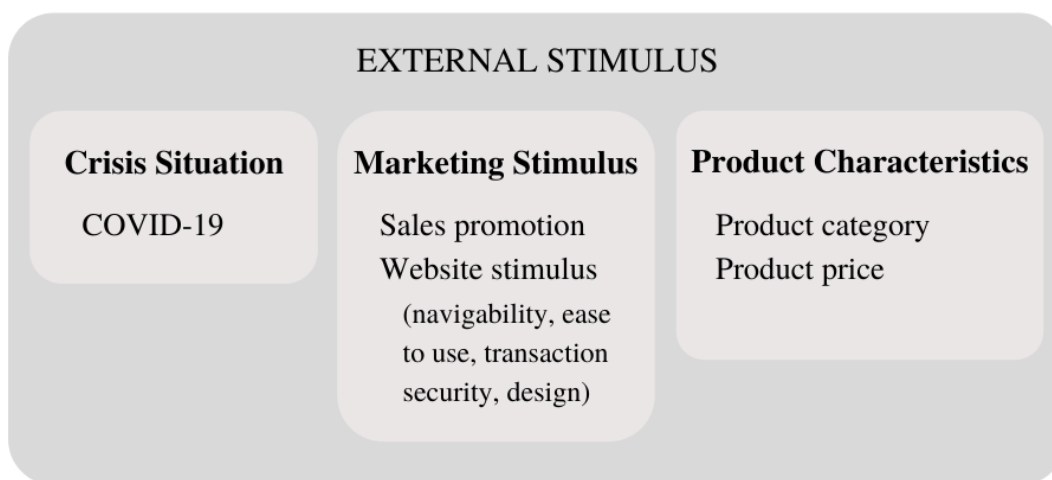
Next, this present study will address three external elements that influence impulsive buying online. These three elements were chosen because they have great relevance to impulsive consumer behavior (Bhakat & Muruganantham, 2013; Deng et al., 2020; Karbasivar & Yarahmadi, 2011; Xiao et al., 2020). First, studying the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic is essential because it is affecting the whole world, and there are not many studies

addressing this topic (Deng et al., 2020; Xiao et al., 2020). Next, as online shopping is constantly developing (Bhatti et al., 2020; Cramer-Flood, 2020; Jimenez et al., 2019), studying marketing stimuli and product characteristics online is important, not only for businesses but also for consumers (Bhakat & Muruganantham, 2013; Karbasivar & Yarahmadi, 2011). On the one hand, companies can create more effective strategies to trigger impulsive behavior. On the other hand, consumers become more aware of these strategies (Akram et al., 2018; Lo et al., 2016).

The first element is the COVID-19 pandemic. Secondly is the marketing stimuli, which includes sales promotions and website stimuli. Regarding the sales promotion stimuli, this strategy is a crucial antecedent of impulsive online buying (Lo et al., 2016). Sales promotion aims to stimulate consumer needs and prompt customers to buy a product immediately (Akram et al., 2018). Concerning the website stimuli, websites need to have clear and attractive pictures, detailed and informative descriptions, and ways to interact directly with the customer (interactive experiences) (Falcon, 2020). Finally, is product characteristics. This element is divided into two groups: product category and product price (Chavosh, Halimi, Namdar, Choshalyd, & Abbaspour, 2011; Ling & Yazdanifard, 2015; Tinne, 2010).

It is important to know that some researchers have already studied these elements (marketing stimuli and product characteristics) in an offline

context: Kacen et al. (2012). Moreover, Harahap et al. (2021), Naeem (2020), and Xiao et al. (2020) studied the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on consumers' impulsive behavior. Nonetheless, because these elements affect consumers' daily lives when buying online, it is essential to study them and understand their impact on online impulsive buying behavior (Figure 3).



*Figure 3: Online impulsive buying stimuli*

Source: Author

#### 1.2.1.1 Crisis Situation: COVID-19

In early 2020, a new pandemic - COVID-19 - emerged in Wuhan, China. It quickly spread worldwide, becoming a global public health emergency (Wang, Horby, Hayden, & Gao, 2020). COVID-19 is one of the most significant challenges



that governments and businesses have faced in the past century (Hall, Prayag, Fieger, & Dyason, 2020).

Since then, billions of people have stopped traveling to work or school to avoid spreading the virus (Hall et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020). As a result of the pandemic, social distancing and shutdown mandates have totally disrupted consumers' shopping and buying habits along with their everyday consumption (Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020). Feelings of loneliness, negativity, and depression have been, among other things, linked to poorer cognitive performance (Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020). However, it is possible to see an increase in other positive behaviors caused by social distancing: people have begun developing new skills and taking better care of the place where they live. People also carry up on essentials, panic buying, and escaping to rural areas (Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020). This indicates that what is happening to consumers and their behaviors is complex (Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020), and it would be interesting to study this phenomenon in the online context of impulsive buying.

The main consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic is to accelerate the development of digital platforms. COVID-19 strengthens this online step and operates as a catalyst for significant change (Harahap et al., 2021). Online shopping and digital consumption have increased considerably and will continue to grow at record levels from purchases by consumers who tend to be impulsive (Harahap et al., 2021).

COVID-19 can create impulsive purchases as they are linked to social interpretations of perceived risk and fear, such as stay home, wash your hands, save your loved ones, and save health professionals (Naeem, 2020). These social understandings of fear appeal to impulsive buying among customers, which was not the objective (Naeem, 2020). Therefore, one of the objectives of this study is to explore the development of impulsive online buying behavior among customers during the ambiguous and terrifying circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### 1.2.1.2 Marketing Stimuli

##### **Sales Promotion**

Sales promotion is a vital element in marketing campaigns (Kotler & Keller, 2016). As a collection of various motivational instruments, sales promotion is designed to encourage consumers to buy more and more often specific products or services by consumers within short periods (Kempa, Vebrian, & Bendjeroua, 2020; Kotler & Keller, 2016). Kotler and Keller (2016) add that while advertising gives a reason to purchase, sales promotion presents an incentive to buy.

Badgaiyan and Verma (2015) state that sales promotions are among the oldest techniques for companies to increase their sales and encourage

consumers to buy. Sales promotions bring benefits to consumers, which can be divided into two categories: utilitarian benefits (extrinsic) that provide customer value by being a means to an end, for example, saving money and convenience; and in hedonic benefits (intrinsic), they are valued for their own, without further respect to their practical purposes - entertainment, value, and exploration (Chandon, Wansink, & Laurent, 2000; Lo et al., 2016).

Therefore, impulsive buying should involve sales promotion stimuli that can generate maximum efficiency (Lo et al., 2016). In their study, Lo et al. (2016) gathered the main sales promotion stimuli that online stores commonly apply to motivate impulsive buying. Then, they grouped them by mentioning the benefit congruence framework (Figure 4).

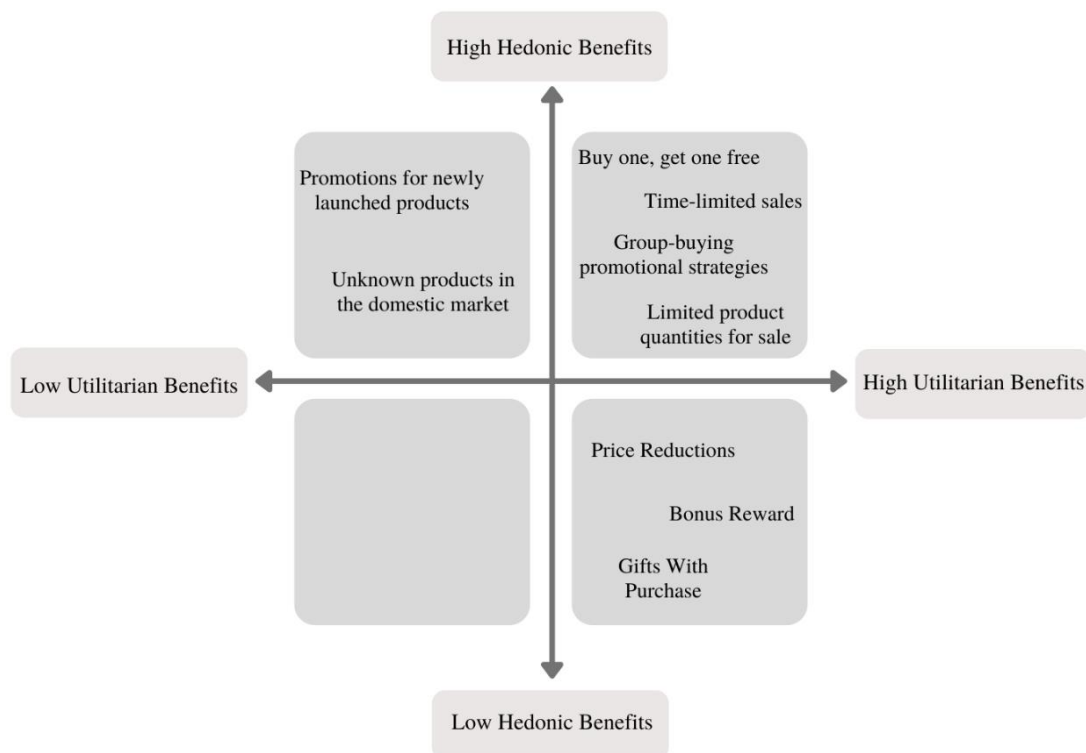


Figure 4: Benefit matrix of sales promotion strategies

Source: Adapted from Chandon et al. (2000); Lo et al. (2016)

Promotions for newly launched products: Consumer interest in new products can be motivated by product launches, even if companies hardly make price reductions. This sale promotion produces hedonic benefits for consumers, in this case, exploration. It is classified as high hedonic and low utilitarian benefits (Chandon et al., 2000; Lo et al., 2016; Verhagen & Van Dolen, 2011).

Unknown products in the domestic market: These products are usually accessible in the market for a short period and are restricted in quantity. The hedonic benefits before purchase somewhat easily attract consumers who are usually early adopters of these products. This type of sales promotion is considered high hedonic and low utilitarian benefits (Chandon et al., 2000; Dawson & Kim, 2010; Lo et al., 2016).

Buy one, get one free: These products and services are sold applying a buy one get one free promotion, or often when buying one product, the second one gets a 50% discount. This type of sales promotion creates utilitarianism by accumulating money and creates hedonic benefits in producing value for consumers. According to the benefit congruence framework, this type of promotion can trigger impulsive buying and has high utilitarian and hedonic benefits (Chandon et al., 2000; Lo et al., 2016).

Time-limited sales: Products or services are sold within a specific, short period. After the deadline is exceeded, the original prices are reestablished. Few

consumers are notified about these discounts, and therefore this type of sales promotion generates both utility (economic savings and quality) and hedonic benefits (value creation). This method has high utilitarian and hedonic benefits (Chandon et al., 2000; Lo et al., 2016).

Group-buying promotional strategies: These promotions are similar to time-limited sales; however, they are limited in the number of products. These products usually are recently introduced and do not have much visibility in the marketplace. They create practical benefits through financial savings and hedonic benefits through value creation and can generate impulsive buying behavior. It is considered a strategy of high hedonic and utilitarian benefits (Chandon et al., 2000; Lo et al., 2016).

Limited product quantities for sale: These products are sold at reduced prices because they exist in limited quantities. Like the other sales promotion strategies, this can lead the consumer to make impulsive purchases. This type of sales promotion creates utilitarian benefits through monetary savings and hedonic benefits through value expression. It is classified as having high hedonic and utilitarian benefits (Chandon et al., 2000; Lo et al., 2016).

Price reductions: This happens when a product is marketed at the usual or promoted price. It can create utilitarian benefits for consumers, such as conserving money. They are considered high utilitarian and low hedonic benefits (Chandon et al., 2000; Lo et al., 2016; Madhavaram & Laverie, 2004).

Bonus reward: Previously accumulated purchase quantities are converted into bonus points that can be used on a current buying. This type of sales promotion generates utilitarian benefits (saving cash) and is classified as high utilitarian and low hedonic benefits (Chandon et al., 2000; Lo et al., 2016).

Gifts with purchase: When the purchase achieves a specific value, consumers receive a gift. This sale promotion strategy creates utilitarian benefits - saving money. It has high utilitarian and low hedonic benefits (Chandon et al., 2000; Lo et al., 2016).

In conclusion of their study, Lo et al. (2016) stated that the nine sales promotion stimuli mentioned above are all considered motivating elements. This is because they produce utilitarian or hedonic benefits that significantly enhance consumers' online impulsive buying (Lo et al., 2016). Sales promotions with high utilitarian benefits were also more likely to induce impulsive buying online than strategies with high hedonic benefits (Lo et al., 2016).

Several researches have confirmed that consumers are more likely to be impulsive when they see promotions on products for sale; that is, this stimulus increases the probability that consumers will buy impulsively (Akram et al., 2018; Badgaiyan & Verma, 2015; Kempa et al., 2020; Liao, Shen, & Chu, 2009). Nevertheless, research analyzing the impact of sales promotion on impulsive online buying has been limited (Akram et al., 2018). Consequently, the current

study expands the literature by exploring the impact of sales promotion in online impulsive behavior in the fashion industry.

### **Website Stimuli**

Shopping behavior in a physical shop can be stimulated through the five human senses: vision, hearing, touch, smell, and taste (Lo et al., 2016). In contrast, only two senses can be stimulated in an online shopping context, vision and hearing (Lo et al., 2016). Website navigation, visual appeal, ease to use, and transaction security are all elements that can immediately influence the possibility that consumers will suffer impulsive buying (Akram et al., 2017; Lo et al., 2016). The online store's design must be appealing since only vision and hearing are captured among consumers' five senses (Lo et al., 2016). It is vital to have online stores with easy-to-use website features, clear and understandable navigation guides, attractive layouts, and spaces where consumers can share their opinions (Liang & Lai, 2002; Lo et al., 2016).

Over the years, fashion store websites started to implement innovations that bring a completely new experience to their customers (Falcon, 2020). Websites need to have explicit photos, helpful descriptions, close-up shots, and more recently, some stores have begun implementing 360-degree product visions (Falcon, 2020). In addition to many other advantages, the 360-degree product view improves customer satisfaction and presents a better product image, down to the details, and fewer product returns (Wasson, 2020).

These are decisive elements in evoking online shopping on impulse due to the preponderance and influence of the stimuli assumed (Liang & Lai, 2002). When users access a website to explore products or services, their experiences of the website's quality of service may promote or discourage online shopping (Wu & Hsu, 2014).

In an online context, Childers, Carr, Peck, and Carson (2001) proposed the term "webmospherics," which is described to aggregate a set of web page design attributes that contribute to generate impulsive online buying. Among these attributes can be mention frames, pop-up windows, text, the configuration of search menus, graphics, and dimensions of the site layout, such as organization and predefined grouping of products/services (Childers et al., 2001).

Regarding the characteristics of websites, several elements can influence impulsive buying behavior (Wells et al., 2011). Visual appeal, layout, transaction security, navigation, and personalized performance are decisive elements in evoking impulsive online shopping (Ling & Yazdanifard, 2015; Moez & Gharbi, 2013; Verhagen & Van Dolen, 2011; Wells et al., 2011). The online environment is divided into high task-relevant and low task-relevant, corresponding to distinct objectives (Ling & Yazdanifard, 2015). High task-relevant attributes focus on simplifying consumer's shopping goals which involve transaction security and navigability (Ling & Yazdanifard, 2015). On the other hand, low task-relevant characteristics concentrate on making consumers' shopping



experience enjoyable, consisting of visual appeal or website satisfaction, that is, the attractiveness of the online store (Ling & Yazdanifard, 2015).

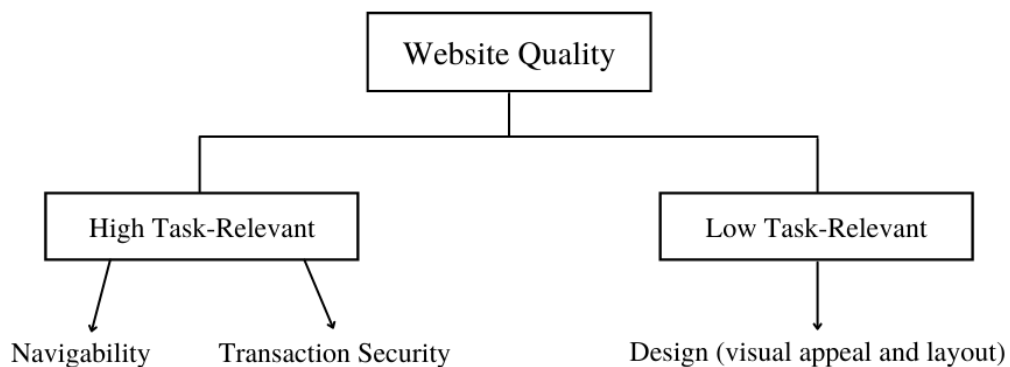
The elements mentioned above are essential to serving consumer satisfaction, trust, and loyalty (Hsu, Wang, & Chih, 2013; Moez & Gharbi, 2013). This way, it increasingly affects consumers' commitment to the website and, therefore, their impulsive purchasing (Hsu et al., 2013; Moez & Gharbi, 2013). In this research, navigability, ease to use, transaction security, and the website design are the main characteristics of the website stimuli study to understand the relation with online impulsive buying behavior (Figure 5).

The navigability of a website performs a significant role in online information processing (Wojdyski & Kalyanaraman, 2016). It impacts consumers' capacity to find and process content. Moreover, the concept of navigability is the simplicity with which the user finds the information needed on the website (Wojdyski & Kalyanaraman, 2016). This definition is often linked to other concepts, such as usability or ease of use, but navigability focuses mainly on locating information (Wojdyski & Kalyanaraman, 2016).

Concerning transaction security, once the product is decided, the customer must give ordering, payment, and shipping data (Liang & Lai, 2002; Lo et al., 2016). The tasks provided by online stores include the following: (1) Easy registration process: Many websites require customers to be members before ordering, so registration is required. Easy registration procedures can prevent

consumers' impulsive purchases (Liang & Lai, 2002); (2) Home delivery: It makes consumers much more comfortable because they can receive the product at home (Liang & Lai, 2002); (3) Free shipping: It makes the purchase more fluid, and consumers do not have the big worry of shipping costs (Dawson & Kim, 2010); (4) Payment methods: Nowadays, there is a wide variety of payment methods - credit cards, payment and delivery of products in stores or payment on delivery (Liang & Lai, 2002).

An effective website design engages and attracts consumers online (Cyr, 2013; Cyr & Bonanni, 2005). In short, the concept of website design is related to the consumer's perception of the website's overall appearance (layout) (Cyr, 2013; Cyr & Bonanni, 2005). Nowadays, the design of a website goes beyond aesthetics (Cyr, 2013; Cyr & Bonanni, 2005). It involves planning, conceptualizing, and organizing online content, from graphic design and structure to images, to colors, layout, fonts, and user experience design (Cyr, 2013; Cyr & Bonanni, 2005).



*Figure 5: Characteristics of website quality*

Source: Author

### 1.2.1.3 Product Characteristics

Certain products are purchased more impulsively than others (Ling & Yazdanifard, 2015). Impulsive purchases are responsible for numerous sales in the most varied product categories (Hausman, 2000). In a traditional and online context, consumer preferences generally differ in products' characteristics and importance (Levin, Levin, & Weller, 2005). Nevertheless, product characteristics can affect consumer enthusiasm to shop online (Dai, Forsythe, & Know, 2014; Mallapragada, Chandukala, & Liu, 2016).

The probability of a product being obtained on impulse also depends on its characteristics (Chavosh et al., 2011; Ling & Yazdanifard, 2015; Tinne, 2010). The product characteristics can be divided into two groups:

- Product Category: Several studies propose two categories of products: hedonic and functional (Chavosh et al., 2011; Ling & Yazdanifard, 2015; Tinne, 2010). Hedonic goods are mainly consumed for their hedonic benefits, that is obtained from the use and enjoyment of the product (Chavosh et al., 2011; Ling & Yazdanifard, 2015; Tinne, 2010). In contrast, functional products are consumed for practical benefits (Chavosh et al., 2011; Ling & Yazdanifard, 2015; Tinne, 2010). Impulsive buying has been discovered to occur more in hedonic products because of the figurative meaning they deliver. Consumers more impulsively purchase hedonic luxuries (for example, candy) than utilitarian essentials – rice (Ling & Yazdanifard, 2015). Consumers who

tend to be impulsive in their purchases and decide for hedonic products are more likely to pay a higher price compared to functional products (Angst & Kuruzovich, 2008; Ling & Yazdanifard, 2015).

- Product price: This is an essential element of impulsive buying (Karbasivar & Yarahmadi, 2011; Ling & Yazdanifard, 2015). The price of a product is considered one of the central functionalities that direct people to buy impulsively, either online or in physical stores (Karbasivar & Yarahmadi, 2011). Usually, products that are purchased on impulse are low-priced (Tinne, 2010).

Numerous studies determined that product characteristics (product categories and product price) have a strong and significant effect on consumers' impulsive buying behavior, both in an online and offline context (Chavosh et al., 2011; Ling & Yazdanifard, 2015; Tinne, 2010).

### 1.3. ONLINE FASHION INDUSTRY

In 2020, everything changed in the fashion industry (Brydges, Retamal, & Hanlon, 2020). With the coronavirus pandemic's appearance, this industry suffered its worst year since it experienced a significant impact as sales decreased (Brydges et al., 2020). While there has been growth in online sales, these have not been enough to cover the losses caused by the shutting of physical

stores (Brydges et al., 2020). The pandemic will and is changing not only the daily lives of both consumers and businesses but also consumption patterns (Brydges et al., 2020).

The significance of fashion in consumers' daily lives, especially in young consumers, is increasing and is gradually seen as a materialistic feeling (Wadera & Sharma, 2019). Online fashion apparel purchases are perceived as more impulsive than purchases made in a physical context (Wadera & Sharma, 2019), this is due to the fact that fashion is identified as a typical commodity under the influence of spontaneous emotions and desires (Dawson & Kim, 2009; Kim, Ferrin, & Rao, 2008; Phau & Lo, 2004). Nevertheless, researchers have studied this phenomenon to see how it applies to fashion clothing retailers online (Wadera & Sharma, 2019). This behavior also makes companies interested in how the impulsive buying customer acts (Dawson & Kim, 2009).

There are two classifications of shoppers in the fashion industry: slow and fast fashion consumers (Watson & Yan, 2013). Customers with rational and planned buying behavior are usually slow fashion consumers (Watson & Yan, 2013). Slow fashion is changing consumers' mindset as it promotes people to buy in less quantity and frequency, but products with more quality (Watson & Yan, 2013). On the other hand, fast fashion is considered for consumers with a tendency to buy on impulse, impatient and irrational (Watson & Yan, 2013). Fast fashion consumers feel satisfaction during and after the acquisition. However,

they feel unhappiness after consumption because the products have a short life cycle (Binet et al., 2018).

The fashion segment is a dynamic industry in constant change (Sarah, Goi, Chieng, & Taufique, 2020). One of the most considerable changes is the quickening adoption of e-commerce; that is, more people are shopping online and ordering goods online (Bhatti et al., 2020). Overall, the Fashion category appears to have the highest online shopping penetration (Sarah et al., 2020). Within the fashion market, apparel has become a dominant product category purchased online in many emerging markets, and it is considered the market's largest segment (Sarah, Goi, Chieng, and Taufique, 2020).

For the fashion industry, a great consumer spends much money on products, if possible, more products than they initially intended to buy when they entered the website (Kukar-Kinney, Scheinbaum, & Schaeffers, 2016; Lidholm, Radon, Sundström, & Balkow, 2017). This consumer is seen as an impulsive buyer and believed to be influenced by desires and uncontrolled emotions (Kukar-Kinney et al., 2016; Lidholm et al., 2017). In this industry, an impulsive customer is seen as someone who benefits the business. Therefore, many studies have been done to identify how the impulsive buying customer can be persuaded to buy (Kukar-Kinney et al., 2016).

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This chapter is divided into five sections: (1) research setting; (2) research objectives and research question; (3) presentation and justification of the research methodology used; (4) data collection techniques, and (5) data analysis.

### 2.1. RESEARCH SETTING

The literature review highlighted the constant prevalence and growth of impulsive online purchases and the relevance that certain external and internal aspects assume in realizing those purchases.

As previously mentioned, fashion is the largest segment of the B2C e-commerce market in Portugal (Statista Market Forecast, 2020). According to DataReportal (2020), fashion & beauty was the category that Portuguese consumers bought most online in 2019, registering \$976.0 million of the total amount spent. In 2019, compared with the previous year, the fashion & beauty category was the group with the highest growth of the total amount spent in consumer e-commerce categories (DataReportal, 2020).

This research proposes to study the Portuguese population, between 20 and 59 years, who made purchases of clothing (apparel, footwear, and bags & accessories) in the last year.

## 2.2.PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

### **Purpose**

This study's research purpose is to understand the impulsive online buying behavior in the fashion industry.

### **Research Questions**

This research seeks to answer the following research questions in the context of the online fashion industry:

1. What influence the COVID-19 pandemic had on consumer online impulsive buying behavior?
2. What are the main marketing stimuli that drive consumers to impulsive buying behavior?
3. What characteristics of a product trigger impulsive buying behavior in consumers?



### 2.3. RESEARCH APPROACH

A researcher defines his study methodology based on the objectives, considering what he wants to achieve when conducting the research (Schoonenboom, 2018). Considering the main objective and the research questions mentioned above, it is possible to see that this is an exploratory research that seeks to deepen and analyze unexplored online consumer behavior trends, know opinions, and interpret new phenomena. Thus, a qualitative methodology is the most appropriate and will be used in his research.

This approach allows for in-depth knowledge of the participants' perspectives (Gelo, Braakmann, & Benetka, 2008). It also allows for a better view and conception of the problem and obtaining answers concerning why certain phenomena occur as a way to understand the general (Gelo et al., 2008; Jason & Glenwick, 2016). This approach is used to understand how people see and experience their surroundings (Gelo et al., 2008; Jason & Glenwick, 2016). Jason and Glenwick (2016) believe that qualitative methodology can create socially relevant understandings.

This research methodology is a data-driven approach that starts from studying phenomena to build up concepts about the topic under the study (Gelo et al., 2008; Håkansson, 2013; Malhotra & Dash, 2016). It is subjective, inductive, and descriptive (Gelo et al., 2008; Håkansson, 2013; Malhotra & Dash, 2016). Thus, the use of qualitative methodology is justified. In order to answer the

objectives, methods were used to collect the data for the analysis from individual interviews and focus groups.

#### 2.4. DATA COLLECTION

This research was conducted through the application of interviews and focus groups in order to meet the objectives. The interviews conducted within this research were semi-structured, concentrating on the phenomena under study and following a script of logical and appropriately organized questions, which suited the phenomena under study. Semi-structured interviews are characterized by predefined questions and topics (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017; Peters & Halcomb, 2015). Although there is a set of guiding lines, the researcher has the flexibility to create more enhanced questions than the initially planned ones that provide insights into the participants' experiences, perceptions, or opinions (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017; Peters & Halcomb, 2015).

There are several advantages of using the interview as a data collection technique for this study (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). Among them: face-to-face interaction, even though it is through an online platform, there is a live interaction with the interviewee, making the communication more personal. The researcher can interfere when necessary; thus, it is possible to guarantee that

the interviewee understands the topic or the question under analysis (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017).

A focus group in this situation and considering the phenomenon under study is significant because ideas are more likely to arise when people are in a group than in an individual interview (Malhotra & Dash, 2016). This method makes it possible to promote new concepts, generate opinions and explore ideas of a particular phenomenon (Malhotra & Dash, 2016). The principal purpose of focus groups is to gain insights by listening to the target market group talk about issues of interest to the researcher (Gelo et al., 2008; Malhotra & Dash, 2016; Oliveira, Strassburg, & Piffer, 2017).

Like interviews, focus groups also have many advantages (Malhotra & Dash, 2016). Between others: bringing a group of people together will generate a broader range of information, insight, and ideas than individual responses (Malhotra & Dash, 2016). A comment from one person can cause a reaction from others (Malhotra & Dash, 2016). Participants are not required to answer specific questions, which creates greater spontaneity (Malhotra & Dash, 2016). In this way, interviewees provide personal opinions and allow flexibility in the topics addressed (Malhotra & Dash, 2016). Given the current situation of COVID-19, it was decided to conduct the interviews and focus groups using the Zoom platform, as this was considered the most viable alternative to ensure the safety of the interviewees and the interviewer. Figure 6 represents the objectives for each of the methods used in the study.



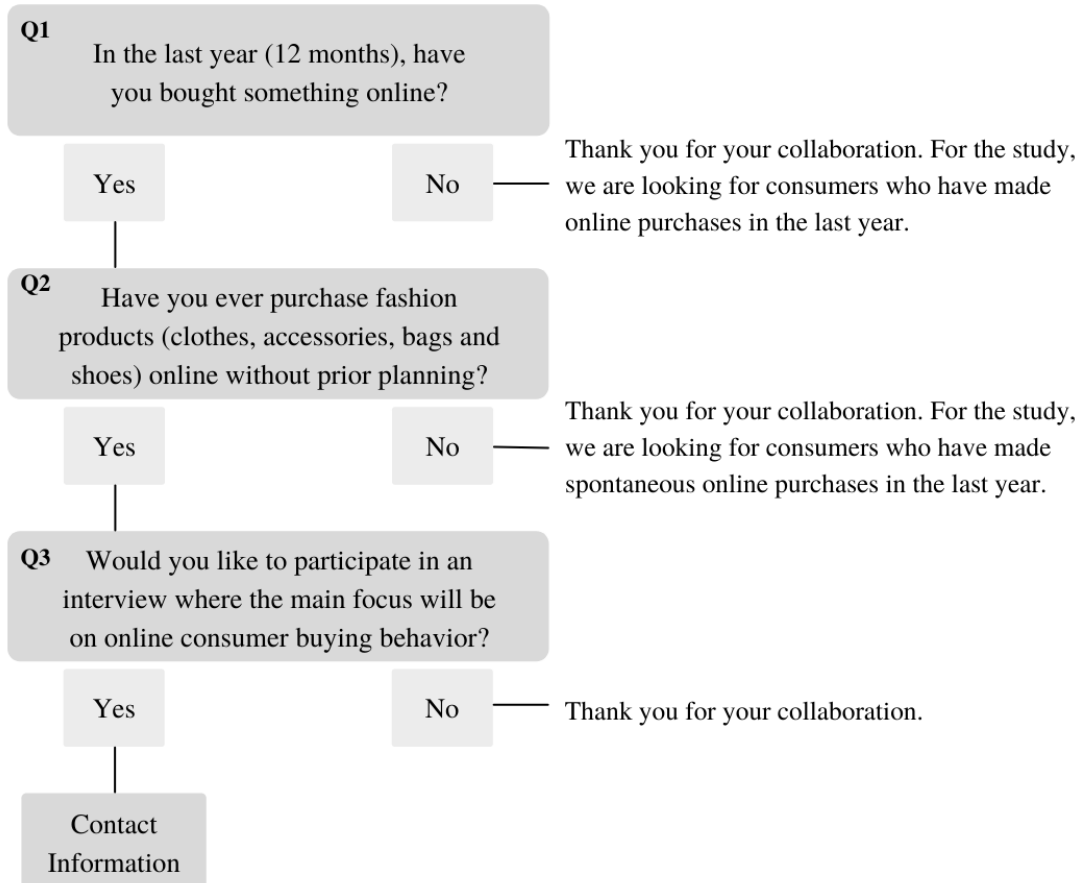
Figure 6: Systematization of data collection techniques

Source: Author

### 2.4.1. Questionnaire Characterization

To recruit people for interviews, the procedure can be carried out by telephone, in person, or on the Internet (Jason & Glenwick, 2016). In this case, the procedure used was the Internet. The objective was to find consumers who would have impulsive online buying experiences in the fashion industry in the past 12 months. In order to find these consumers, a short questionnaire consisting of three questions was developed (Figure 7 and Appendix A). This

questionnaire was spread through social networks (LinkedIn and Facebook) and word of mouth.



*Figure 7: Structure of questionnaire*

Source: Author

The short questionnaire was launched on 24 April. In the first place, there was a total of 367 responses. Of these, only 73 people met the requirement of making impulsive fashion purchases online and were willing to contribute in the interviews and focus groups.

#### 2.4.2. Interviews

The semi-structured interviews were prepared considering the literature review to conduct well-designed interviews. So, 16 (I 1 – I 16) individual interviews were conducted, via Zoom, with men and women who had made online purchases in the last year. All interviews were recorded in voice format.

The script, which was previously prepared, had 27 questions. It started with a brief introduction presenting the phenomenon under study, the purpose of the research, and providing essential information for the development of the interview. Then, in the initial phase of the interview, several questions focused on the following criteria were developed: gender, age, and income to segment and characterize consumers. In this section, the concept of impulsive buying was addressed: know if the respondents are aware of the phenomenon and whether they have ever made impulsive purchases and which frequency it buys. These questions allowed to draw a profile regarding impulsive buying behavior. In the next step, the key questions focus on respondents' perceptions of online shopping, how they react to website stimulus and what characteristic they value the most, and the importance of these elements.

Few studies addressing impulsive online buying behavior implement the qualitative method in the research. However, represented in table 3 are some

authors who were essential in developing the questions for the interviews and focus group.

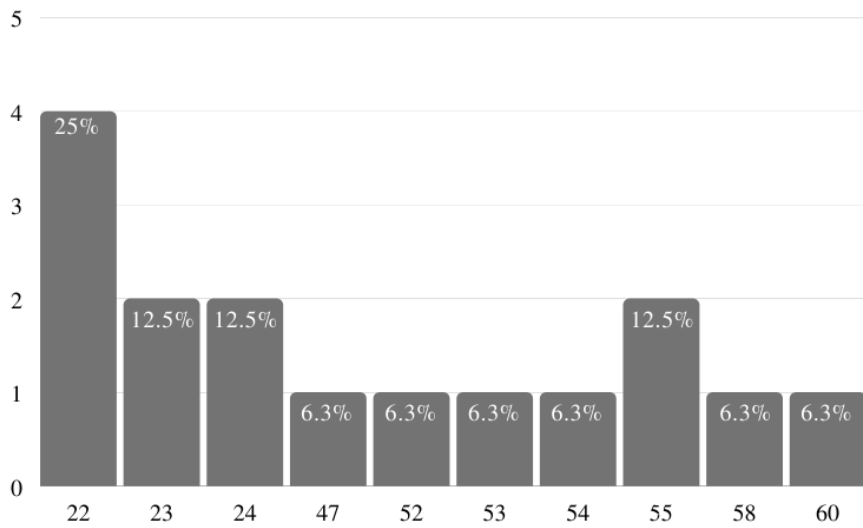
Theme	Author
Impulsive buying in the fashion industry	Watson and Yan (2013)
Website stimuli	Chan et al. (2017)
Sales promotions	Dawson and Kim (2010) Iyer et al. (2020)
Product category	Chavosh et al. (2011)
Product price	Chavosh et al. (2011) Iyer et al. (2020)

*Table 3: Main authors - Interviews and focus group questions*

Source: Author

### **Interviews Characterization**

The characterization of interviews conducted with Portuguese consumers who have made impulsive online purchases in 2020 consisted of 16 individuals. First, in Graph 1, the age range goes from 22 to 66, with an average age of 44. The highest response rate is among 22-year-olds (25%, which corresponds to 4 respondents), followed by 23, 24, and 55-year-olds (12,5%, which corresponds to 2 respondents).

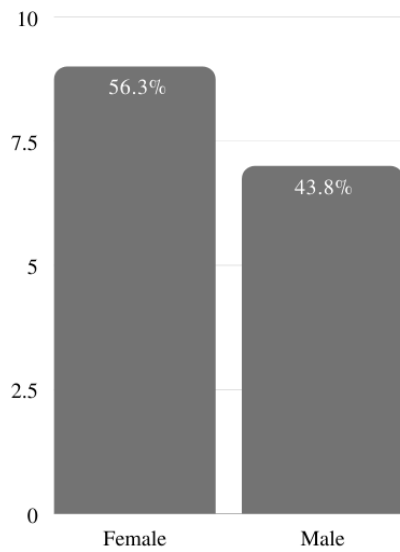


*Graph 1: Interviews Respondents Characterization - Age*

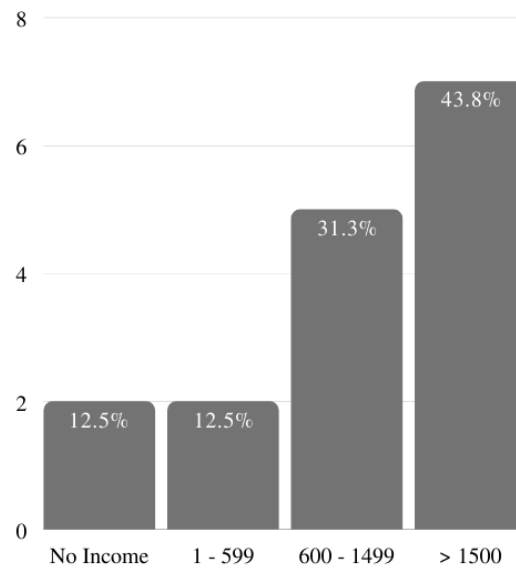
Source: Author

In Graph 2, the available income of the respondents can be seen. 12.5% (n= 2) of the consumers comprises persons with no disposable income and incomes lower than 600 euros. Moreover, the highest response rate (43,8%) is for incomes above 1500 euros, corresponding to 7 respondents. Finally, the range from 600 euros to 1500 euros has a response rate of 31,3%, corresponding to 5 respondents. Graph 2, represents the gender characterization, that comprises 56% females (n=9) and 44% males (n=7).





*Graph 3: Interviews Respondents  
Characterization – Gender*



*Graph 2: Interviews Respondents  
Characterization - Available Income*

Source: Author

### 2.4.3. Focus Group

The four focus groups' selection was based on consumers' ages, gender, and shopping behaviors to understand their distinct perspectives and interests in discussing impulsive online buying. None of the participants knew each other.

Like in the interviews, the focus group started with more general questions and specific questions about impulsive buying. In this way, a script with 29 questions was prepared for the focus groups. After introducing the concept of impulsive buying, the key questions focused on respondents' perceptions of online shopping. First, some website stimuli were addressed to

understand the characteristics that consumers value the most when purchasing a fashion product. Second, the questions focused on sales promotion. In this way, it will be possible to analyze how consumers react to those sales promotion strategies. Finally, the importance of product characteristics was discussed.

### Focus Group Characterization

In order to codify the participants, the letters FG followed by numbers were assigned (Figure 7). The group of women under 44 years of age, FG 1 to FG 7, the group of women over 45 years of age, FG 8 to FG 12. As for the male group under 44 years old, FG 13 to FG 20, and men over 45 years old, FG 21 to FG 24.

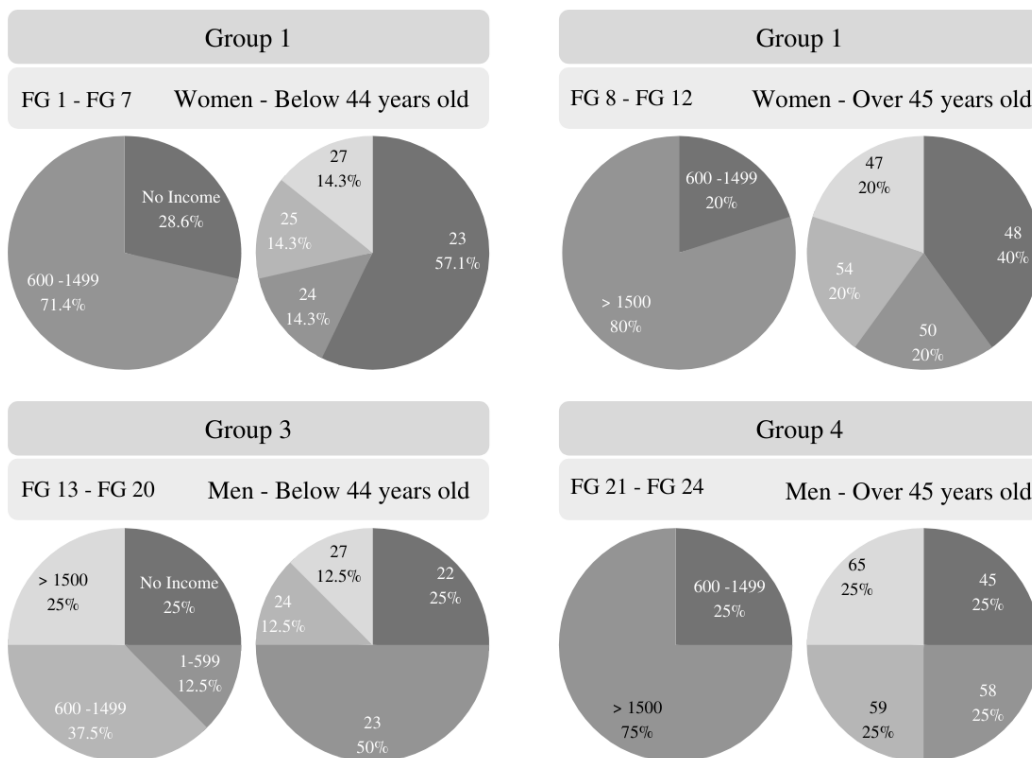


Figure 8: Focus Group Respondents Characterization

Source: Author

The focus group conducted with Portuguese consumers who have made impulsive online purchases last year consisted of 24 individuals, divided into four groups by age and gender. Initially, consumers were divided into groups according to age and gender because the aim was to study the influence of consumer characteristics (age, gender, and available income) on online impulse buying. However, as the data was insufficient given these elements, another element mentioned in the interviews and focus group - COVID-19 pandemic - was adopted.

## 2.5. DATA ANALYSIS

Throughout the data collection process, it was considered the pursuit of the objectives and the explanation of meticulous work planning to answer the research questions. After finishing the focus groups and individual semi-structured interviews conducted with 40 (16 interviews and 24 people in focus group) online shopping consumers, all the data collected was transcribed. Before the final analysis, there was a pre-analysis so that it was possible to understand if the data collected was sufficient for the research.

Then, the interviews and focus groups were analyzed in detail to gather pertinent information and draw conclusions. The processing of the data extracted from the interviews and focus groups led to the preparation of an analysis table. In this table, the data were divided into categories and

subcategories. In this way, it was possible to organize and synthesize all the data so that it was feasible to understand the interviewees' opinions and find possible meanings for their speeches.

After all stages of the data organization, a content analysis was prepared to explore the interviews and focus group data. Before moving forward, it is necessary to understand the concept of content analysis. According to Bardin (2011), content analysis is a research methodology used to explain and understand the content collected from qualitative methods, such as interviews, documents, observations, and focus groups.

### 3. FINDINGS

After collecting the data obtained from the individual interviews and focus groups, this chapter presents the findings.

#### 3.1 COVID-19 pandemic situation

The first research question focuses on the current situation that the world is facing, the COVID-19 pandemic. It is intended to understand the impact that COVID-19 had on impulsive online buying behavior in the fashion industry. Table 4, regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, describes the main themes mentioned in the interviews and focus group, supported with consumer transcripts.

The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on online impulsive buying behavior	
Themes	Empirical Excerpts
Consumers felt more stress	"In general, being isolated at home made me more anxious and stressed. My emotional state affected my purchases and decisions at this time of the pandemic. (...) When I feel more stressed, I buy more impulsively; it is a way to escape my responsibilities." (I 9)
Consumers have more available income	"The fact that with the beginning of the pandemic I did not have as much expense, the money dedicated to online shopping turns out to be greater." (I 14)

	<p>"The pandemic, on the one hand, also had good things (...) I saved some money because I did not spend it on secondary goods [meals out and fuel]. However, I ended up spending more money on other delights like online shopping" (FG 23)</p>
<p>The changing perception of consumers regarding quick delivery</p>	<p>"I can say that I have discovered a new world in the pandemic, the world of online shopping and how easy it is. What keeps me attached to the screen and wanting to do more and more shopping (...) is the fact that we do not have to wait days and days to receive the product we bought, and the exchanges are also easy." (I 16)</p> <p>"During the pandemic, I think the quality of online shopping has grown greatly. (...) The delivery time is shorter, and I believe this encourages consumers to buy more in a certain way. It is always a novelty to receive a box at home, even if you already know what is in it (...) and to receive it the next day is a plus." (FG 5)</p> <p>"In my opinion, the delivery time has become shorter. I think brands want consumers to have a better experience so they will buy again. When we receive a purchase in 2-3 working days, we are already thinking about the next purchase." (FG 13)</p>
<p>Consumers have more free time</p>	<p>"With the pandemic, I definitely started spending more money on online shopping. I use to spend my free time browsing fashion websites and always ended up making purchases that I had not previously intended." (I 15)</p>
<p>Consumer perceptions have changed</p>	<p>"It is getting easier and easier, and it is very convenient since you do not have to move to the store. (...) Now with the pandemic, everything has become faster and simpler. I think</p>

towards online shopping	<p>people, little by little, will start online shopping a lot more." (I 8)</p> <p>"During the pandemic, the physical stores were closed, so I had to adapt and only shop online. The convenience of not going to the store and not having to try everything (...) and exchanging the products I do not like; is the best thing about online shopping. Definitely, being confined has led me to shop more without thinking." (FG11)</p> <p>"Being confined is terrible. I think we do a lot more shopping online because firstly the stores are not open and secondly because I think it is already an accessible and easy process for all consumers." (FG 24)</p>
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*Table 4: Impact of COVID-19 on online impulsive buying behavior*

Source: Author

Stress and fear were mentioned many times in the interviews and focus groups regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. To mitigate these feelings, some people mentioned that online shopping was an escape from what they were experiencing with the pandemic. As can be seen in this statement from a consumer: "Buying fashion products online is always something that makes a person happy. There is always that feeling of novelty and wanting to try it out right when we receive the product"(FG 3).

During the difficult times of the pandemic, all the participants in this study did not lose their jobs, nor were they on lay-off. Consequently, this situation generated more disposable income because they did not have as many expenses,

such as eating out or fuel, and admitted that they dedicated more of their income to online fashion shopping as an escape from the quarantine.

Consumers' perception of online and the delivery times have also suffered some changes with the pandemic. Consumers in the study said that they are becoming much more comfortable with technologies and prefer online over physical, even after the stores open. Consumers admitted that it is more intuitive and that not leaving the house is one of the best advantages. One consumer said: "I now find online shopping much easier, of course, I had to adapt, but I am beginning to be surrendered to the ease of the online process" (I 13).

Consumers referred that they have noticed differences between before and during the pandemic regarding delivery times. As we can demonstrate through these statements from online consumers: "Just as we have had to adapt to online, companies have also adapted. In a way, they have to meet our needs, and they started to worry more about delivery times." (I 6); "I do not think it is just an illusion of reality. I think companies have somehow managed to reduce delivery times. (...) It is made me buy more products and more regularly" (FG 12).

The pandemic brought many changes, not only to Portuguese consumers but to consumers all over the world. The COVID-19 pandemic has increasingly affected the lives of consumers around the world. Online shopping is no



exception; in the interviews and focus groups developed, it was frequently mentioned that quarantine was a driver for making impulsive purchases online in the fashion industry.

### 3.2 Marketing Stimuli

The second research question aims to understand which marketing stimuli affect the consumer's impulsive behavior online. Throughout the literature, two stimuli were highlighted: sales promotion and website stimuli. It is possible, from this consumer statement, to conclude that sales promotion is one element that can trigger impulsive buying: “An impulsive purchase is a matter of minutes, so when we are faced with discounts and coupons, we think less about the purchase decision” (I 15).

There are several online sales promotion strategies used by companies online in the fashion industry. During the focus groups, nine sales promotion strategies were discussed. The consumers were asked to choose two of nine strategies that they considered to have the most influence on their spontaneous online fashion purchases. Graph 4 represents a synthesis of all the responses given by consumers, taking into account the nine sales promotion strategies presented.



Graph 4: Sales Promotions Strategies – Results from FG

Source: Author

It can be concluded from Graph 4 that the sale promotion that most influences consumers to make an impulse purchase online is the price reduction. As we can explain through this statement from online consumers: "Price reduction is definitely the one that gets me to make spontaneous purchases the most. I think we are already so used to these reductions that it goes unnoticed, and we end up going with the flow when we do not even measure all the aspects involved" (I 4).

As any consumer did not consider the strategy unknown products in the domestic market as relevant for their impulsive behavior, in Table 5, there are only eight strategies mentioned by consumers, supported by transcripts of the interviews and focus group.

The impact of sales promotion on online impulsive buying behavior	
Themes	Empirical Excerpts
Promotions for newly launched products	<p>“Usually when a new product is released everyone wants to buy it, and if it is on discount of course people will buy it without much thought. Many times it is because of the status of having that product, but it is a very appealing strategy.” (FG 14)</p>
Buy one, get one free	<p>“It is usually an illusion, we think we are saving money (...), but in the end, we turn out paying the same. But even so, I think it is a good opportunity, and I end up being taken in by the attractive price.” (FG 16)</p> <p>“It influences me to buy impulsively because it is a 50% discount. By thinking like that, I will obviously buy more pieces to get the second one free.” (FG 24)</p>
Time-limited sales	<p>“In this kind of strategy, our psychology speaks louder and gets the better of us. We are almost coerced to buy the product because in x amount of time it will no longer be available.” (I 11)</p> <p>“Time-limited sales have a big influence on my purchases (...), especially during sales when we enter a site and it says that it is only available for x more hours because I ended up buying.” (FG 20)</p> <p>“No doubt we buy products on impulse (...) we eventually give in to the "pressure" and buy because we do not want to miss that opportunity.” (FG 21)</p>
Group-buying promotional strategies	<p>“When the sales start, fashion brands usually use this strategy a lot, and they end up "winning" me over because I can not resist seeing that there are only five pieces left available and not buying.” (FG 8)</p> <p>“In a spontaneous purchase, when a person sees a product and likes it and then there are only two pieces available (...) they feel the pressure of having to buy at the moment because then they will not have the opportunity.” (FG 3)</p>

	<p>“For me, it is one of the strategies that make me buy more impulsively (...) I make the purchase almost unconsciously because I do not want to miss the opportunity.” (FG 13)</p>
Limited product quantities for sale	<p>“By being aware that there are few products and that the last ones are on discount, it will stimulate my interest, and I am going to purchase the product.” (FG 19)</p>
Price reductions	<p>“They are widely used in fashion and encourage a person to buy without needing it and without much thought.” (I 12)</p> <p>“We are confronted with price reductions daily, so of course in whatever context [fashion, food], it is going to encourage us to buy impulsively.” (FG 12)</p> <p>“I think it is the most common strategy used in the fashion world. The fact that it has a discount right away is already attractive in my eyes.” (FG 14)</p>
Bonus reward	<p>“When I get bonuses after my purchase, it makes me start thinking about what I am going to buy next, and obviously that will encourage my impulsive buying.” (FG 4)</p>
Gifts with purchase	<p>“There are websites where depending on the total amount of your purchase, they give you a gift (...) it is a clever strategy because it ends up making me buy more products to reach that amount, just to receive the gift.” (FG 1)</p>

*Table 5: Impact of sales promotion on online impulsive buying behavior*

Source: Author

Finally, when asked about discounts, promotions, and coupons in online stores, many people said that they are significantly influenced when it comes to these strategies and end up triggering impulsive behavior. As it becomes clear in these responses from consumers: “I think we all like promotions, even if sometimes the discount is not great, people like the illusion that they are saving

money." (I 3); "Sometimes we buy certain items without being interested, just because they are on sale" (FG23).

In the online context, only two of the five human senses are captured: vision and hearing. Therefore, websites must be appealing to influence consumers to buy on impulse. To better understand the impact that website stimuli have on Portuguese consumers, table 6 describes the main themes mentioned in the interviews and focus group, supported by consumers statements.

The impact of website stimuli on online impulsive buying behavior	
Themes	Empirical Excerpts
Simple navigability	"The more difficult it is to navigate, the sooner I give up buying. We live in a world where there are too many fashion website offers available for the processes to be complicated." (I 11) "When I enter a website, I expect everything to be explicit; it is much easier to make the purchase. The simpler, the better." (FG 15)
Quick purchase process	"As an online shopper, if I have to go around a lot, go through many pages and subsections, I give up. I might even have interest in the product, but it is not worth the time lost in navigation." (I 5) "When I enter a website, I like that it does not have many barriers. The faster, the better, and consequently it stimulates the impulsive consumer in me because as the process is fast, there is no time to think about decisions." (I 16) "If the purchase is not fast, and I have to enter a lot of data (...) that is, if they put many restrictions and the navigation is not good, I give up the purchase." (FG 23)
Free shipping	"When there are shipping costs, my purchases are more thought out so that I can manage not to pay the costs." (I 13)

	<p>"Since I do not want to pay the shipping, I buy some more product, even if I do not need it, to reach the free shipping value." (FG 7)</p>
<p>Accessible and detailed information</p>	<p>"When it comes to fashion, often the problems are "Will the size fit me?" or " How do I return it?". If a website is well structured to answer these questions, I am going to feel more comfortable buying products." (I 7)</p> <p>"Having the necessary information for the user to achieve a good experience is a plus in online shopping." (FG 11)</p> <p>"One aspect that I find important when shopping online is product descriptions. Since I cannot try on or touch the product, it is essential that the product has a complete and detailed description." (FG 23)</p>
<p>Intuitive online process</p>	<p>"Given the diversity of websites that exist today, being easy to use and intuitive is crucial. It will capture my attention, and in a way, I will make more purchases because I am already engaged in the website." (I 12)</p> <p>"Even how websites are organized, the more intuitive it is and the easier it is to navigate, I end up spending more time browsing and the more easily the purchase happens." (FG 7)</p> <p>"A website needs to be intuitive and simple. These two characteristics are connected so that the shopping experience is effective and good, and that leads us to spend more time on a website and consequently to make purchases that were not initially planned." (FG 13)</p>
<p>Secure payment method</p>	<p>"Now, in general, all payment methods are starting to be more secure and convey more confidence to the user to buy the products. So if I feel safe on that website, I will spend more time and end up buying more impulsively." (I 2)</p> <p>"There are few methods that I trust, so it is always quite important for me to feel secure when I am purchasing because it will give me the confidence to continue the process." (I 3)</p> <p>"There are few methods that I trust, so it is always quite important for me to feel safe when I am making a purchase. It will give me more</p>

	<p>confidence to continue the process and build loyalty with the website." (I 7)</p> <p>"I started late to shop online, precisely because of that (...) I always had some fear about my personal and bank details being accessed. I think that nowadays, transactions already have other securities that protect us and that did not exist before." (I 14)</p> <p>"Transaction security is, at least for me, a determining factor for buying online, or at least the perception of security that we have, which sometimes does not correspond to what is true." (FG 7)</p> <p>"I will not buy from a website where I do not feel safe. On the other hand, if I feel safe, I will shop much more comfortably, and possibly I will make other purchases that were not planned." (FG 19)</p>
Well organized	<p>"The first impact is significant for the user to have interest in continuing the purchase. For me, a website has to be simple and well-organized. From there, how I will feel more relaxed, and it will spark other interests in me." (I 1)</p> <p>"A website to grab me has to be engaging and well organized. I end up spending more time browsing and consequently end up making purchases that were not in my plans." (I 16)</p>
Coherence between the color palette and the website purpose	<p>"I think the choice of colors is important, (...) the colors that they choose for a website have to match the overall brand concept." (I 9)</p> <p>"I do not know if it is because I have already studied this topic, but for me, the colors greatly influence my experience on a website and consequently my purchasing decisions." (FG 2)</p> <p>"If the website is very 'poor' and not attractive, like with too many colors and not simple, I am not interested in continuing the purchase. (FG 14)</p>
Good pictures	<p>"Quality photos are a must when buying clothes online. This way we can see the product in detail and know what to count on." (I 2)</p> <p>"For me, it is quite important that the photos are good and that they capture the actual product. There are stores that have started to implement video products or 360° view, and I think that through these technologies, the brand gives confidence to consumers and makes them buy more." (I 6)</p>

	<p>"I like those websites that allow us to have closer contact with the piece I want to buy; I think this is the main thing and what all users, in general, are looking for. And consequently, I will stay longer on the website, and it will boost my purchases." (FG 16)</p>
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*Table 6: Impact of website stimuli on online impulsive buying behavior*

Source: Author

All themes mentioned in Table 6 will provide the consumer with a better online shopping experience and consequently trigger impulsive buying behavior. The security of online shopping transactions is an element that still promotes much fear and uncertainty in consumers. Although there are several payment methods nowadays, sometimes the lack of website security and trust makes consumers give up the purchase. Transaction security was the most mentioned element in the interviews and focus group, stating that security is a decisive element in making impulsive purchases. As stated by two consumers: "As much as I consider the other features very significant, without security, I would not even consider moving forward." (I 5); "In my opinion, are characteristics are equally important, (...) but transaction security, because it will decide if I buy or not from that website" (FG 5).

A good layout is an element that can influence the impulsive purchases of consumers. There are some elements related to the visual aspect of the website that are unanimous among consumers. A website to be well designed needs to be simple, not have too many ads, and the colors need to be consistent with the



brand, and product images need to be explicit, as well as and product descriptions. As we can demonstrate through this consumer statement: "The website's general appearance is the first impact we have that demonstrates the brand image. If I do not like it and it does not captivate me visually, it is logical that I will not continue my purchase on that website because it does not captivate me to buy anything" (I 4).

All the characteristics mentioned by consumers assume different importance taking into account their needs and consumption patterns. However, according to all the consumers, the most important in the purchase decision is the transaction security. Without this security, consumers assume that the purchase is at risk of being made.

### 3.3 Product Characteristics

The third and final research question aims to understand what characteristics of a fashion product leads consumers to impulsive buying, as well as to understand the influence that product price has on online shoppers' impulsive behaviors. Consumer preferences often change according to the characteristics of each product, both when buying online and when buying in a physical store. Most of the respondents in the interviews and focus groups mentioned that product categories and prices are decisive elements in their

purchase, significantly influencing their impulsive online behavior in the fashion industry.

For a better understanding of the influence that product category has on online impulse buying, in Table 7, are the most mentioned themes in the interviews and focus group, supported by consumer transcripts.

The impact of product category on online impulsive buying behavior	
Themes	Empirical Excerpts
Product Versatility	<p>“I value the versatility that the product can have. If I do not use it in one situation, I can always use it in another. I know that my purchase, although impulsive, was the best one.” (I 9)</p> <p>“It is always a plus to buy clothes that are versatile and that we will end up wearing in one way or another.” (I 15)</p>
Quality - price relation	<p>“Quality combined with price is quite important in my purchase. I may be buying impulsively, but I know I am getting a quality product that will last.” (I 10)</p> <p>“Quality-price is important. There has to be a balance between the two factors so that I can buy a product that is long-lasting, but at the same time with quality and at a price I can afford.” (I 13)</p>
Luxury fashion products	<p>“I will buy hedonic products more spontaneously than the everyday products I am used to seeing because I know that I will have other opportunities to buy it.” (I 1)</p> <p>“I think the tendency for men of my generation is to look for good brands with more quality. I think it is easier to make an impulsive purchase of a more expensive product with quality than a basic product that we are used to seeing all the time.” (FG 20)</p>

Brand loyalty	<p>“I usually go to the same brands to shop, so I already know the pieces that look good on me and the ones that are more risky to buy.” (I 1)</p>
Basic fashion products	<p>“They end up having a greater utility, and we always need basic products. (...) Even if it is not a necessity, when I see something with a low price, and I like it, I will end up buying it because I think 'it is only €5'.” (I 6)</p> <p>“Just because a more basic piece gives me the versatility I look for on a daily basis.” (I 9)</p> <p>“When I make impulsive purchases, I do not usually plan anything, but I end up paying more attention to the money I spend considering my income.” (FG 4)</p>
Fashion product category preferred by consumers	<p>“Clothing. It is the category I use the most, and I think that is general. We always need clothes in our daily lives, so we end up being more impulsive in buying these products.” (I 6)</p> <p>“I buy clothing more impulsively. These are the products I use the most, and the fact that fashion is always changing is a factor for buying more regularly.” (I 16)</p> <p>“I buy more spontaneously accessories (...) for the ease of use, and it is something that can never be too much.” (FG 7)</p> <p>“No doubts, bags. It is a category that is easy to choose by technical characteristics (...) product description is also fundamental.” (FG 3)</p> <p>“Accessories. You can always combine it with everything, and since I find cheap pieces, I am more impulsive in these purchases. And you cannot go wrong when choosing an accessory.” (FG 15)</p>

*Table 7: Impact of product category on online impulsive buying behavior*

Source: Author

In the present study, opinions were somewhat divided, but people admitted that they spontaneously buy more basic products, which they are used to seeing every day (n=24), than hedonic products (n=16). Some consumers claim that they buy hedonic products more impulsively: "A basic product I do not buy so spontaneously because I know I will always have good opportunities." (I 3). Basic products are the most chosen for several reasons: more affordable prices, the versatility of the product, and the quality-price relation. As one consumer stated, "These are products that are basic in our daily lives, and so we are more likely to buy them more impulsively." (FG 2)

When it comes to the type of product consumers buy most impulsively, clothing was the most mentioned. This is because it is a product that people use every day, so even if consumers do not need clothes, they buy them because they will use them eventually.

From all the fashion product categories (apparel, footwear, bags, and accessories), footwear was the least chosen category when it comes to online impulse purchases. As we can confirm through these two statements, consumers are still a bit reticent to buy footwear because they have to try them on: "I have never bought footwear online (...) I do not feel comfortable buying if I do not try them on first." (I 1); "Footwear I do not buy because I always like to try them on, to feel how the shoe fits my foot (...) it is always a risky thing and I prefer to play it safe" (I 14).

Price is also one of the elements that can influence consumers' impulsive purchases. Many consumers in the interviews and focus groups say that they have been impulsive just because the price was attractive. Taking into account product price, Table 8 represents the different perspectives of consumers, organized in themes, and how this element might influence impulse buying behaviour online.

The impact of product price on online impulsive buying behavior	
Themes	Empirical Excerpts
Products price range	<p>“When I buy impulsively, incredibly, I end up buying products with a higher price. I see them as a good opportunity, and I end up buying them.” (I 2)</p> <p>“The price has some weight here. I usually buy cheaper products, so I will not feel 'guilty' buying an unplanned product.” (I 9)</p> <p>“If I spend much money on a single product, I end up planning and researching more about the product, because I have to spend more money, and it is risky to buy something expensive on impulsive.” (I 13)</p> <p>“A lower price already makes me feel a perception of a need for that product, even if it does not correspond to the real need.” (FG 7)</p> <p>“In my case, the cheaper products are more appealing and attractive to me, mainly because afterward there is no regret if the purchase does not go well.” (FG 24)</p> <p>“I think it depends a lot on the fashion product. In my case, I think I am more impulsive in products with a higher price,</p>

	<p>(...) I see them as an opportunity at that moment, and since I know I will use the product, I end up investing a little more money.” (FG 14)</p>
Price discounts	<p>“I am very influenced by promotions, and I end up buying expensive products that get cheaper. Sometimes they are just illusions because they only have a discount of 20€, but on an expensive product, it is always good. I end up combining price and quality.” (I 13)</p> <p>“I do not care much about price in general. When I like the product, I buy it. But if I see that the product is on discount and I do not need it, I will fall into temptation and buy it.” (FG 11)</p>
Available Income	<p>“The income gives purchasing power and therefore influences my behavior concerning impulsive purchases.” (I 4)</p> <p>“Price is an important factor but coupled with my disposable income. When I am making an impulsive purchase, I am aware that it will impact my income, so I have to measure all the factors.” (I 7)</p> <p>“Since most people my age do not have their own income, in a way, they worry more about that when they make a purchase. Price matters, but I make the purchase based on my income.” (FG 17)</p>

*Table 8: Impact of product price on online impulsive buying behavior*

Source: Author

When buying fashion products impulsively, consumers choose to buy products at a lower price compared to high-priced products. There are some reasons why they tend to buy low-priced products: less risk of purchase and less regret after the purchase. As can be seen in these declarations from two consumers: “When the price is lower, the risk in the purchase is lower too, and I still get a product that I like, with no regrets.” (I 8); “The low price makes me feel that there is no great risk in the purchase and feeling of 'guilt' after the purchase is made” (FG 2).

As already mentioned, discounts are a significant driver of impulsive purchases. Consumers state that it creates an illusion that they need the product just because it is on promotion, as we can confirm with this consumer statement: “When a product is on promotion, I buy it and do not weigh other factors” (I 3).

Disposable income is also considered when we talk about the price of products. Although we are talking about impulsive purchases, consumers must weigh these two elements: price and disposable income.





## 4. DISCUSSION

Consumer purchasing behavior is a topic that has been gaining importance, particularly concerning impulsive purchases, and more recently, impulsive purchases in the online context. Understanding what influences impulsive buying can be an essential way to create strategies so that consumers purchase new and different products. However, it can also be important for protecting consumers from making impulsive purchases. Consumers having access to information about the practices that companies use to trigger them to impulsive purchases will be less vulnerable to such strategies, so the consumer will have sufficient skills to mitigate the adverse consequences of impulsive buying.

The impulsive buying literature has been widely explored, and there have been several studies investigating the different elements influencing this type of purchase. The present study aimed to analyze different elements influencing impulsive buying online, in the fashion industry, by addressing three research questions. It was intended to analyze how the COVID-19, the marketing stimuli, and the product characteristics have an influence on the impulsive online behavior of consumers.

In Floh & Madlberger's (2013) study, they found that there is an increasing trend toward more impulsive and unplanned purchases. Although this is not a new finding, from the interviews and focus groups, we were also able

to conclude that consumers in this study have an increasing tendency to buy products or services that before entering the website were not yet planned. Consumers state that they have made more than two impulsive purchases in the last year in the fashion industry. Notwithstanding, some consumers admitted that the number of impulsive purchases they have made during the past year had increased significantly, reaching more than 20 impulsive purchases a year.

The online shopping done by consumers in the past 12 months was also reported by most respondents as impulsive. Most decisions were made during the online shopping purchase and were therefore not previously planned. These types of impulsive purchases are classified by Stern (1962) as planned impulsive purchases. In other words, consumers mentioned that when they enter a website, they already have a general idea of what they want to buy. However, besides these products, they end up being influenced by other strategies, such as prices, promotions, and offers, and end up buying products that they had not previously planned.

Shopping does not always occur in a planned way. Sometimes the buying interest is triggered suddenly and mostly associated with a strong desire and feelings of pleasure and excitement. Furthermore, regarding consumers' impulse buying tendencies, many reported that they had no intention of shopping previously. Respondents find it exciting and fun to shop spontaneously and unplanned because they satisfy a desire they already had without thinking about

anything else. Attractive discounts can lead to impulsive buying behavior. Some researchers believe that promotional campaigns or sales product strategies that express materialistic or hedonic values are likely to generate impulsive purchases (Santini, Ladeira, Vieira, Araujo, & Sampaio, 2018). This study agrees with (Santini et al., 2018) research, the realization of the purchase brings hedonic benefits, that is, moments of entertainment and increased consumer self-esteem. In this way, consumers will buy more impulsively in order to achieve these satisfaction goals.

Trying to understand what influences people to make impulsive purchases is not easy. Therefore, in Table 9 are represented the general and specific motivations that influence the impulsive buying consumer. Found 11 specific motivations for impulsive buying behavior, it is possible to identify that some have greater relevance than others, taking into account the consumers' opinion.

General motivations		Specific motivations
1. Crisis Situation: COVID-19		Consumers' perception towards online shopping
		Consumers are more stressed
2. Marketing Stimuli	Sales Promotion	Role of emotions in sales promotion
		Most influential sales promotion strategies for consumers

	Website Characteristics	Functional aspects (navigability and transaction security)
		Visual aspects (website design)
3. Product Characteristics	Product Category	Fashion product categories
		Hedonic and functional products
	Product Price	Low and high price
		Available income

*Table 9: General and specific motivations that influence online impulsive buying*

Source: Author

### **1. Crisis Situation: COVID-19**

#### **- Consumers' perception towards online shopping**

The Portuguese respondents spend more time online, and their behaviors and habits have changed, as can be seen by the answers we got from interviews and focus groups. The pandemic has also brought some advantages, such as the growth of online shopping. Nowhere else has extraordinary and unexpected growth in the digital and e-commerce sectors, which have surged during the COVID-19 crisis, and this development was inevitable (Harahap et al., 2021). During the pandemic, most respondents now shop online more frequently and trust more on the Internet to buy services/goods, and consequently, they make more impulsive purchases.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a wake-up call for Portuguese companies to make the transition from the offline world to the online world (Harahap et al., 2021). Companies had to adapt and adjust their marketing strategies by going online to sell their products (Harahap et al., 2021). In the results obtained in this study, it can be seen that this shift to digital has triggered much impulsive behavior. Consumers' perception of online now is better than before the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Consumers admit that the online process is more straightforward, accessible, and more intuitive, and, as a result, they have a better online experience.

Consumers mentioned that the fact that we have access to the Internet through various digital devices (smartphone, tablet, computer, notebook) already makes the process faster and more intuitive because it allows us to purchase from anywhere globally at any time. The ease of purchase is also due to the diversity of fashion websites that consumers find with just one click, and it is much easier to shop for prices, products, and brands.

The convenience and practicality of buying and receiving the product at home is another element that respondents have found during the pandemic. Some consumers claim delivery times are faster nowadays. Respondents state that they receive their orders right away and are already thinking about making more purchases. According to Jeffrey and Hodge (2007), easy access to products, easy purchase process, and no effort in delivery may increase impulsive purchases during the online experience.

- **Consumers are more stressed because of the pandemic**

Consumers reported that another element that leads them to buy more impulsively with the beginning of COVID-19 was stress. Consumers refer that stress can be caused by various reasons derived from the current world pandemic situation. The first is because consumers were "obliged" to stay at home in order to stop the spread of the virus. There has never been a considerable quarantine of millions of people simultaneously, and this will relate to a negative side for the mental health strength of consumers (Afonso, 2020). The second reason is the constant warnings about the dangers at this stage, such as stay home, wash your hands, save your loved ones, and save health professionals (Naeem, 2020), which leads them to trigger unusual behaviors. Although this is not the goal of health organizations, respondents confess that they tend to buy more impulsively in order to forget other concerns.

These two reasons influence consumers' impulsive to buy. Some mentioned that to forget a little bit of the "prison" they are in (having to fulfill the isolation), they take refuge in online shopping to feel happy and satisfied. Many questions may be raised in this period, and it will definitely take many years to understand the actual effect of the pandemic on consumers' mental health (Afonso, 2020). These results found are in line with what many authors have concluded in their studies (Baumeister, 2002; Evanschitzky et al., 2014; Robbins & Judge, 2017). Stress influences consumers' impulsive purchases. Consumers have online shopping as a way to relieve stress and some negative moods, as a

way to forget about problems. With the results obtained, we find that online shopping as a form of stress relief will positively affect impulse buying.

## **2. Marketing Stimuli**

### **3.1 Sales promotion strategies**

#### **- Role of emotions in sales promotion**

Looking at the main results, we find a significant influence of sales promotions on the tendency to buy on impulse. The sales promotion presents an incentive to buy (Kotler & Keller, 2016). It is noteworthy that in this study, all consumers interviewed admitted that they had already purchased a product just because it was a good deal (promotion, sales, or coupons). This behavior occurs because respondents state that they do not want to miss an opportunity to buy something at a lower price.

Sales promotions are believed to give the consumer more freedom to make a purchase (Amara & Kchaou, 2014). This is because it conveys a greater sense of purchasing power that will bring more economic openness to purchase a product for a lower price, increasing cost-effectiveness (Amara & Kchaou, 2014). In this study, the discount plays a rational and emotional role in the purchase since it allows the consumer to rationalize the desire and minimize the financial and purchase risk, which will trigger impulsive behavior. The results go along with Amara and Kchaou (2014), that is, the sales promotion or the perception of a low price can induce an impulsive buying decision.

There is an important role of emotions, especially positive emotions, in impulsive buying. Consumers confessed that by making an impulsive purchase, they feel happy and fulfilled. So, impulsive buying is linked with consumers' emotions and turns out to be more emotional than rational. These results verify those found by Masouleh et al. (2012) and Mattila and Enz (2002), who stated that consumers' positive emotions influence impulsive buying of fashion products.

- **Most influential sales promotion strategies for consumers**

The sales promotion strategies were identified as motivational elements to generate impulsive buying online, creating utilitarian or hedonic benefits for consumers (Lo et al., 2016). Attractive discounts can also prompt impulsive buying processes. Considering this study and other studies already done (Chandon et al., 2000; Lo et al., 2016), we state that price reduction, buy one, get one free, time-limited sales, among other promotional strategies, are likely to generate impulsive purchases in consumers.

The most frequently mentioned strategy by consumers was price reductions. This is a sale promotion with low hedonic benefits but high utilitarian benefits. According to the respondents, this strategy influences consumers' online impulsive purchases only through monetary savings. Time-limited sales, group-buying promotional strategies, and buy one, get on free were the following most mentioned strategies. These strategies are considered



elements of motivation, and consumers are more influenced by them because they are saving money, and at the same time, the products will give some entertainment to the consumer. None of the consumers chose the unknown products in the domestic market strategy. Its effects on consumers' online impulsive buying were weaker than those of other sales promotion stimuli. This sale promotion strategy does not bring any monetary benefits. Respondents say that when they buy a product impulsively, it is because of the discount and the low price it has, so by buying a product with this strategy, they will do the opposite. Consumers are not saving money by buying these products, they are just paying for products' entertainment.

Although the impacts that sales promotion stimuli have on impulsive online buying depend on their benefits, they are still categorized as the primary motivators. From this, we can assume that strategies with high hedonic and utilitarian benefits can effectively stimulate consumers' online impulsive buying (Figure 9). In general, it can be concluded that sales promotions significantly influence the achievement of impulsive buying, which confirms the statements of several authors about the effect that this element has on increasing impulsive buying (Chandon et al., 2000; Dawson & Kim, 2010; Lo et al., 2016).

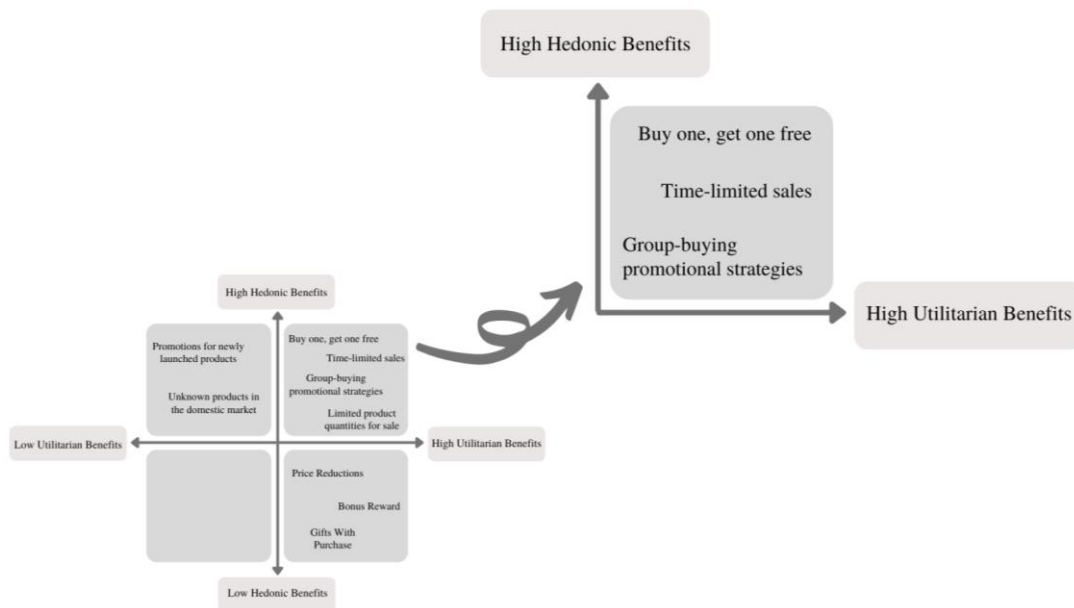


Figure 9: Benefit matrix of sales promotions strategies - Discussion

Source: Adapted from Chandon et al. (2000); Lo et al. (2016)

### 3.2 Website characteristics

#### - Functional website aspects

The three website elements (navigability, transaction security, and design) mentioned in this study are all considered necessary to have an excellent online experience. As for the website stimuli that consumers like the most, they seem to be more related to the functional aspects of the online store, highlighting the fact that websites allow being secure, reliable, easy to access information, and well organized. This study corroborates with Moez and Gharbi (2013) and Wu and Hsu (2014) since the online store design and its easy navigation impact consumer satisfaction and attitudes towards impulsive buying.

Consumers consider transaction security, a high task-relevant feature, as an important element for online stores. It facilitates and simplifies the consumer's experience with the website, and consequently, consumers are influenced to make impulsive decisions because they trust the website. This study is in agreement with Lo et al. (2016) study, the free shipping element is more likely to trigger impulsive behaviors online at the end of the purchase process, that is, the transaction stage. However, the element of multiple payment methods also carries significant weight for consumers when shopping online. Consumers admit that they are already familiar with specific payment methods and that if they do not have that option, they will consider not continuing their purchase.

Consumers also mentioned that buying a product online and paying online until a few years ago was a process that brought a lot of fear. This is because respondents are afraid that their personal and banking data will be hacked and misused. Nowadays, consumers admitted that the online process is easy and convenient for them. However, in this study, it is possible to confirm that as payment methods may vary from one place to another, it is still an element that raises some doubts and mistrust, especially in past generations. These consumers confessed that they have become loyal to one payment method (ATM reference was the most mentioned method).

- **Visual website aspects**

As for the visual aspects of the online store, the most appealing to consumers are quality photos, colors consistent with the brand, and a simple and attractive layout. Consumers also added that the failure of good visual design could lead them to dissatisfaction and damage the image of an online store.

The results obtained in this study are in line with those found in Liang and Lai's (2002) study. Consumers have a better experience with online shopping if the website is well designed and offers highly desirable features. Respondents said they feel more engaged if a website, overall, has a good design, such as quality photos that show the product in detail, videos, and color palette. By providing all these features, the website will captivate the consumer to spend more time browsing and consequently make more impulsive e purchases (Liang & Lai, 2002).

### **3. Product characteristics**

#### **3.1 Product category**

- Fashion product categories

Just as many elements can influence online impulsive consumer behavior, product characteristics are another important element that should be analyzed (Dai et al., 2014; Levin, Levin, & Weller, 2005; Mallapragada et al., 2016). Product characteristics and value influence consumers to make spontaneous purchases

(Levin et al., 2005). Product characteristics can be divided into product category and product prices (Chavosh et al., 2011; Ling & Yazdanifard, 2015).

When we talk about the fashion industry, we include apparel, footwear, and bags & accessories (Statista Research Department, 2020b). Many studies concluded that apparel was the most purchased fashion category online (Eurostat, 2019; Marketing Charts, 2018; Sarah et al., 2020). Based on the results from interviews and focus groups, this study can conclude that the fashion category that consumers tend to buy most impulsively is apparel. This is because consumers are more comfortable buying this category.

The respondents mentioned several reasons why clothing is the product category in the fashion world that consumers buy the most. The first is the necessity. After all, these are products that respondents use daily and can never have too much of one piece or another. Therefore, consumers state that they end up buying apparel even if they do not need it. The second one is the amount of choice that consumers find online. The third and last reason that consumers mentioned was the sizes of the products. Since online there is no possibility to touch and try on, there is always that fear of buying something that does not fit. However, consumers assumed that they have this concern when buying shoes, but this concern tends to disappear when buying apparel.

### - **Hedonic and functional products**

In the literature, there are two types of product categories: hedonic and functional products (Chavosh et al., 2011; Ling & Yazdanifard, 2015; Tinne, 2010). Ling and Yazdanifard's (2015) study concluded that consumers are more impulsive when purchasing hedonic luxuries because of the symbolic meaning they deliver.

However, this study found that consumers tend to be more impulsive when purchasing functional products. Functional products are mainly due to the price factor because, in general, functional products are cheaper. Consumers say that when they spontaneously buy a product, they opt for the functional ones because the purchase risk is lower than buying a hedonic product.

## **3.2 Product price**

### - **Low and high price products**

Product prices are considered one of the external elements that most influence the impulsive behavior of consumers, whether online or in a physical store (Karbasivar & Yarahmadi, 2011). Price, according to consumers, is an important and decisive factor in all fashion categories (clothing, footwear, bags, and accessories). Consumers state that price is one of the main elements they consider when making an online purchase. Ling and Yazdanifard (2015)

and Tinne (2010) found that consumers often prefer products with a lower price when buying impulsively. In this present study, the pattern remains the same.

- **Available income**

One element mentioned several times by respondents, which is linked to product price, is consumers' disposable income. It is evident that the availability of financial resources can affect consumers' impulsive online purchasing (Hu, Chen, & Davidson, 2019; Leela & Reddy, 2015; Sumetha & Vasanthi, 2016). In Sumetha and Vasanthi's (2016) study, they conclude that disposable income traces the consumption patterns of consumers. Considering the interviews and focus groups, consumers with a regular income give more value to promotions and new and innovative products. On the other hand, respondents with a higher disposable income are equally considerate to the price of products but say that they are not as influenced by these strategies.

The results found in this study corroborate those that Leela and Reddy (2015) found. There is a significant relationship between consumers' product price, disposable income, and impulsive buying. Consumers are more sensitive to price variables, such as low-cost products and discount offers.





## 5. CONCLUSION

Considering that impulsive buying is a frequently occurring phenomenon, the main objective outlined for this research was to analyze the influence of some elements on impulsive online buying. After analyzing the data, it is possible to conclude that online shopping is increasingly growing. It is also possible to conclude that respondents buy more impulsively fashion products. Several reasons lead consumers to buy impulsively. This study focuses on three external stimuli: COVID-19 pandemic, marketing stimuli, and product characteristics. Additionally, based on the data analyzed, the fact that the shopping process is easier and more intuitive for consumers and the fact that they do not have to leave their homes are elements that influence consumers to buy more impulsively.

The elements studied of impulsive online buying are influential and have substantial power in the consumers' moment of purchase. Given the results found, it can be concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic influences consumers' impulsive online behavior. The fact that the consumer has to be at home and is deprived of some essentials in daily life, like go to work, or going for a walk, triggers impulsive behavior. As a result, respondents end up having more free time and occupy it with online shopping. They also mentioned that it is a solution to forget a little about the global situation we all go through.

Thus, the existence of marketing stimuli such as promotions and attributes of online shops were considered by consumers as influential elements in making an impulsive purchase. Consumers can hardly resist a good sales promotion, and even if they do not need the product, they end up buying it because respondents do not want to miss the opportunity. As far as online shop attributes are concerned, consumers refer that they give more importance to functional aspects: navigability and transaction security, than visual aspects. The website element that most influences consumers when buying online is transaction security.

Finally, it can also be concluded that product characteristics influence consumers' impulsive behavior. As far as the product category is concerned, although there were several doubts and divergent opinions, respondents buy functional fashion products more impulsively due to their characteristics and functionalities. They also add that they buy more spontaneously hedonic products but in the technology industry and not in the fashion world.

Concerning product price, consumers claim that it is one of the main elements that most influence impulsive purchases. Before all the other elements, respondents pay attention to the price. When buying impulsively, they prefer products with a lower price because the risk of purchase is lower, and if something goes wrong with the purchase, the regret is not so significant. In

addition, consumers say that when they buy higher-priced products, they always previously plan, as expensive products require a greater investment.

The findings of this research have greater relevance for fashion retailers since it is one of the most impulsive-purchased product categories. Finally, it is expected that marketing professionals will find in the results and conclusions of this study a set of references that will allow them to define new commercials, advertisements, and strategies.

### **Research contributions**

The overall purpose of this dissertation was to better understand impulsive buying behavior to have practical contributions at the management level, namely at the marketing level. Understanding the elements of impulsive online buying is crucial for companies to achieve their goals.

This research deepens the knowledge about COVID-19, marketing stimuli, and product characteristics as preponderant online impulsive buying behavior elements. Regarding elements, it is now possible to analyze which specific ones have the most significant influence on impulsive online buying. As far as COVID-19 is concerned, there are strategies for an easy purchasing process and home delivery. Regarding marketing stimuli, sales promotions are one of the elements that most influence consumers to buy impulsively, so management should focus on these strategies. About website stimuli, functional features, such as transaction security and navigability, are the most influential, so companies

should address them together or with interspersed actions. Finally, regarding product characteristics, functional products are the most chosen by consumers when making an impulsive purchase, and these are usually of a lower price.

In the study, the influence of some stimuli on purchase was verified, and it was found that there is a general tendency to make impulse purchases online. This general trend is essential for companies, as it allows them to confirm the acceptance of their current strategies for purchase stimuli while also acting as an input for the development of new stimuli.

The development of different stimuli represents different investments, so it is important to ensure the most effective strategies and stimuli. In this sense, the study's findings will be helpful to companies seeking to develop more appropriate and effective stimuli and that, consequently, will generate higher levels of impulsive buying, particularly in the online context.

Through the results obtained, the present research brings contributions both at the academic level and at the business level, more precisely for marketing. As for the academic contribution, this research sought to broaden the spectrum of the impulsive buying discussion by including a recent influencing factor - COVID-19 in the online context. It was found that individuals who find stress relief a huge purchase motivation because of what it provides them are more likely to buy impulsively. At the business level, there are several

contributions that this research provides, particularly at the marketing level, since it allowed a better understanding of consumer behavior in the context in which we live.

Finally, another practical contribution of this research is related to the relationship between sales promotions and impulsive buying. Marketers' strategies that seek or have the main objective to induce consumers to incur impulsive purchases must motivate them. To this end, it can be done a bet on advertising campaigns that highlight new products and new trends.



## **6. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

This chapter sets out the limitations faced while conducting this study and suggestions for future research on the topic under study.

### **Study Limitations**

Conducting this research, like any other, there are some limitations to its development. Having said this, the following are the study's limitations in several areas, and they are likely to generate opportunities for further research.

This study's first and main limitation was due to public health reasons unrelated to the research. Consequently, the COVID-19 pandemic prohibited the interviews and focus group from being conducted in person and ended up being conducted through an online platform – Zoom.

This research aims to study online impulsive buying behavior in the fashion industry in depth. Moreover, for this, a qualitative methodology was chosen. Despite the potential of this approach and the fact that it is possible to obtain more exploratory information through it, there are some limitations, such as the generalization of the results of the characteristics of the potential consumer's profile. Nevertheless, in this research, it is favored depth over generalizability.

### **Future Research**

Since several dimensions have already been identified regarding impulsive consumer buying, future research suggests performing a quantitative approach from questionnaire surveys in order to obtain the correct data to describe the research population. Quantitative methods, in general, can provide more information, for example, about the existence of different types of impulsive online buying and the importance of different elements of impulsive online buying.

Some of the consumers interviewed did not have easy access to the Internet in their teenage years, and some started shopping online a few years ago. Although some of these consumers have a relatively extensive and long experience of online shopping, they cannot be compared to the following generations, who have been engaged in the online world since childhood. Consequently, it is suggested as future research to target younger generations of consumers.

It would also be interesting to analyze impulsive online buying, but from the company's perspective, analyzing the strategies that they use to generate impulsive buying behavior. Another future research would be to study online impulsive buying in other industries.



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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix List**

Appendix A: Questionnaire for consumers collection

Appendix B: Interview Script

Appendix C: Focus Group Script

### ***Appendix A: Questionnaire For Consumers Collection***

This questionnaire is part of an investigation within the scope of a Master's dissertation in Global Marketing carried out at the Instituto Politécnico de Administração e Marketing do Porto (IPAM).

The purpose of this short questionnaire, consisting of only three questions, is to find people eligible to participate in an interview on the subject of impulsive buying on the Internet.

There are no correct or incorrect answers. Answer truthfully. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact: [catarinapintoo1307@gmail.com](mailto:catarinapintoo1307@gmail.com).

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*Question 1:* In the last year (12 months), have you bought something online?

Yes

No - Thank you for your collaboration. For the study, we are looking for consumers who have made online purchases in the last year.

*Question 2:* Have you ever purchase fashion products (clothes, accessories, bags, and shoes) online without prior planning?

Yes

No - Thank you for your collaboration. We are looking for consumers who have made spontaneous online purchases in the last year for the study.

*Question 3:* Would you like to participate in an interview where the main focus will be on online consumer buying behavior?

Yes – Thank you for getting this far. Please fill in the information below to be able to take part in this study. The e-mail will only serve to contact you in order to schedule the interview.

Thank you very much for answering. Your collaboration will be very important for the success of this research.

No - Thank you for your collaboration.

## ***Appendix B: Interview Script***

In this interview, I will ask you continually to describe in detail different buying situations. Situations in which you have had experiences with buying fashion products online and buying fashion products online without prior planning.

### ***INTRODUCTION***

Tell me more about yourself, giving a brief description of your demographics - age, gender, and disposable income (no income; 1€-599€; 600€-1500€; more than 1500€; I prefer not to say ).

It has been argued that buying online is easy. What do you think? For you, is it easy?

In the last year (12 months), how many times have you bought fashion products online?

Do you often plan your shopping purchases before entering an online website?

Have you ever felt that you bought fashion products online just by impulse, without thinking too much?

During the past year (12 months), you bought any product from an online shopping website without any prior planning to shop? Could you please tell me about that situation?

- If yes, why do you think this happened?

- If not, you bought only what was on the list.

### ***AVAILABLE INCOME***

What percentage, on average, of your monthly disposable income is dedicated to online fashion shopping?

Now familiar with the concept of spontaneous buying, do you think disposable income influences this behavior? How?

### ***WEBSITE STIMULI***

Is the simplicity with which the user finds the information needed on the website influence your online purchase? How?

On how easy is a website for consumers to search influence your online purchase?

How does transaction security influence your online purchase?

- Which of the existing online payment methods do you consider to be the most secure? Why?

- If this payment method is not available, would you consider making further purchases from that website? Or even continue the purchase you were making?

How does the design website's overall appearance influence your online purchase?

- What do you think an online fashion website should have in order to be visually attractive?

- How do these characteristics lead you to buy spontaneously?

- What do you visually dislike when you visit an online fashion website? Why?

Which one of those characteristics do you think is more important to you when entering a fashion website (navigability, ease to use, transaction security, website design)? In what sense?

When you buy clothes or shoes online, you cannot touch them. How does this affect your decision when buying online?

*Show various websites and then give me their opinion (Mango, Zaful, Zalando, Light in the Box)*

In what kind of fashion store website could you imagine making purchases spontaneously? Why?

In what kind of fashion store website could you never imagine yourself making purchases without prior planning? Why?

### ***PRODUCT CHARACTERISTICS (product category and product price)***

#### ***Product Category***

What are the main characteristics of a fashion product that can lead you to make a spontaneous purchase? Why?

- How will these characteristics influence your spontaneous purchase?

In marketing, hedonic goods are obtained from the use and enjoyment of the product (for example, lace lingerie). In contrast, functional products are



consumed for their practical benefits (for example, basic underwear). Being that said, which product category do you purchase more impulsively (hedonic products or functional products)?

When you make an unplanned online purchase, which category of fashion products do you prefer (bags, accessories, apparel, shoes)? Why?

### *Product Price*

Price is an important element when I spontaneously purchase fashion products on the Internet. Do you agree with this sentence? Why?

When you make purchases without any prior planning, you usually buy high-priced products or low-priced products? Why?

## ***Appendix C: Focus Group Script***

### ***INTRODUCTION***

Tell me more about yourself, giving a brief description of your demographics - age, gender, and disposable income (no income; 1€-599€; 600€-1500€; more than 1500€; I prefer not to say ).

It has been argued that buying online is easy. What do you think? For you, is it easy?

In the last year (12 months), how many times have you bought fashion products online?

Do you often plan your shopping purchases before entering an online website?

Have you ever felt that you bought fashion products online just by impulse, without thinking too much?

During the past year (12 months), you bought any product from an online shopping website without any prior planning to shop? Could you please tell me about that situation?

- If yes, why do you think this happened?
- If not, you bought only what was on the list.

### ***WEBSITE STIMULI***

Is the simplicity with which the user finds the information needed on the website influence your online purchase? How?

On how easy is a website for consumers to search influence your online purchase?

How does transaction security influence your online purchase?

- Which of the existing online payment methods do you consider to be the most secure? Why?

- If this payment method is not available, would you consider making further purchases from that website? Or even continue the purchase you were making?

How does the design website's overall appearance influence your online purchase?

- What do you think an online fashion website should have in order to be visually attractive?

- How do these characteristics lead you to buy spontaneously?

- What do you visually dislike when you visit an online fashion website? Why?

Which one of those characteristics do you think is more important to you when entering a fashion website (navigability, ease to use, transaction security, website design)? In what sense?

When you buy clothes or shoes online, you cannot touch them. How does this affect your decision when buying online?

### ***SALES PROMOTION***

Do you think that sales promotions encourage consumers to buy more and more often specific products or services? For you, is it an incentive to buy?

Is it important for you that an online shop has discounts, sales, or coupons? Why?

Do sales promotions have an increasing effect on your online impulsive purchasing behavior at fashion stores?

If online shopping has discounts, sales, or coupons, does it change your intend to purchase?

Have you already purchased something that you did not need only because it was at a discount or a lower price?

Choose two of these nine sales promotion strategies that you consider that have more influence when you make an online fashion impulsive purchase. Why? In what sense? Give me an example if possible.

- Promotions for newly launched products;
- Unknown products in the domestic market;
- Buy one, get one free;
- Time-limited sales;
- Group-buying promotional strategies;
- Limited product quantities for sale;
- Price reductions;
- Bonus reward;
- Gifts with purchase.

## ***PRODUCT CHARACTERISTICS (product category and product price)***

### ***Product Category***

What are the main characteristics of a fashion product that can lead you to make a spontaneous purchase? Why?

- How will these characteristics influence your spontaneous purchase?

In marketing, hedonic goods are obtained from the use and enjoyment of the product (for example, lace lingerie). In contrast, functional products are consumed for their practical benefits (for example, basic underwear). Being that said, which product category do you purchase more impulsively (hedonic products or functional products)?

When you make an unplanned online purchase, which category of fashion products do you prefer (bags, accessories, apparel, shoes)? Why?

### ***Product Price***

Price is an important element when I spontaneously purchase fashion products on the Internet. Do you agree with this sentence? Why?

When you make purchases without any prior planning, you usually buy high-priced products or low-priced products? Why?