

# Determinants of Post Purchase Regret: A Study on Compulsive Buying & Buyer's Remorse

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## ABSTRACT

Two major ideas have become the focus of research in the field of post-purchase regret: consumers' regret and impulsive buying habits. Customers can choose from a wide variety of products, whether they are shopping online or at the local supermarket. Individuals who have just buying impulses frequently experience intense cravings to go shopping and purchase items that could satisfy unfulfilled psychological needs and emotions or replace the usage of unhealthy coping strategies. Despite the fact that this behavior may lead to debt, strained relationships, decreased well-being, or ongoing, compulsive buying, it seems that people are motivated to engage in compulsive shopping by perceived benefits including increased self-esteem, emotional relief, or imposed standards of success.

**Keywords:** buyer, post purchase, investigation

## I. INTRODUCTION

The problem of post-purchase regret is a universal and complex phenomenon which has become a sort of buzzword in consumerism research and practice. The concept of buyer's remorse symbolizes the negative emotions of boredom, unhappiness or regret that buyers encounter after completion of an acquisition. Emotions may be caused by multiple factors like the output of a product, customer fairness, or unmet expectations as well as cognitive dissonance that may result from the reality that is contrary to what had been anticipated. Analysing the pointers of post-purchase regret is essential for deciphering the complicated nature of customer-decision making strategies and the pros and cons it can bring on the individual as well the corresponding market.

Within the realm of post-purchase regret, two key concepts have emerged as focal points of investigation: impulsive shopping tendencies and remorse of buyers. Be it online shopping or grocery shopping in the supermarket next door, consumers have a vast plethora of products to choose from. People with solely buying impulses very often get very strong urges to go shopping and to acquire things that may serve as the fulfilment of emotions and unmet psychological needs or may fill in for the use of dysfunctional coping mechanisms. It appears that apparent benefits like enhanced self-esteem, emotional relief, or imposed standards of success drive people to compulsive shopping, despite the fact that this behaviour could result in debts, strained relationships, diminished well-being, or continuous, compulsive buying.

Compulsive buying, a term sometimes referred to as compulsive or pathological shopping, is an experience which centres on an uncontrollable urge to shop and acquire possessions, generally ending in increased, unchecked purchases. In case of India, the compulsive buying behaviour that we witness displays similarity with the rest of the world. The extent of compulsive buying behaviour can depend on various factors like age, gender, annual income, education level, economic situation, psychological factors and more.

Buyer's remorse represents a comprehensive psychological reaction stemming from a purchase and bears the signs of regret, anxiousness, or dissatisfaction. People often experience such kind of situations at different times throughout their lives, ranging from small ticket items, like fashion or electronics, to big agent ones, for example, a house or car. If we look deep into the heart of a buyer's remorse, it is a misbalance between our expectation and actual reality. In most cases, we transfer our respective desires for particular item or service, even before purchasing such item or service. We imagine in different possibilities how it can improve our living standards, eventually fulfilling our needs or future happiness. Nevertheless, after the merchants play their parts and we start connecting with the product as well as the service, we come across that they're not living up to our anticipation. Several factors affect the likelihood of customer's remorse during shopping like price, quality, urgency, and the possibility of other options.

## II. RESEARCH GAP

Today, with the stark increase in choices provided to consumers for various products and services, their buying behaviour has changed. For every product that a consumer intends to buy, there exist myriad choices, that too, at the click

of a button. With this increase in competition, marketers too are compelled to make use of various effective marketing strategies to draw attention towards their products.

It is the aim of this investigation to elucidate different facets of internal factors that are responsible for triggering the experience of buyer's remorse, revealing the complex interconnection between impulsiveness, emotional regulation, and decision-making. Under the guidance of scientific methodology and analysis, this research hopes to provide beneficial data, which can inform marketing practice, educational programming, as well as therapy, related to the compulsive buying and the buyer's remorse.

### III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Mahmoud Abdel, Hamid Saleh (2012) in their study brought to light a direct connection between impulsive shopping spree and subsequent guilty feelings. Particularly, it points to the fact that those with less income and the male buyers are disposed to getting lured to engage in impulsively buying the things that they did not plan to buy earlier. Bushra, Aliya; Bilal, Ahmed (2014) in their study provided a revolutionary outlook on the concept of mindless buyer behaviour. The paper highlights the factor of consumer awareness and self-understanding as well where consumers accept that advertisement and the status building among others are the elements that drive them to decide either to shop for quality and commemorative items or to repent after unwise purchasing of mostly quantity-oriented products.

Thomas C. O'Guinn and Ronald J. Faber (1989) in their study indicated that the motivation of attachment with objects come second to the notion that a person acquires a product for no other cause than ownership compulsiveness. On the contrary, feelings have a strong directional impact, when the thrill, realization and image of the available products increase the shopping experiences and then a person gets empowered and approval from others which he/she does not have otherwise.

Swati Sudan (2018) in her study found that the youth population, against all odds, exhibited consistent impulse buying habits. Bui, M., Krishen, A., & Bates, K. (2011) in their study revealed that there was a strong interrelation between experiencing regret and the low satisfaction levels of the consumers, together with a possible greater tendency of jumping to other brands.

### IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To identify the factors that trigger compulsive buying behaviour in customers.
- To find out which factors lead to post-purchase regret.
- To examine whether remorse after making a disappointing purchase breaks customer loyalty.

### V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research aimed at targeting people from all age-groups, genders, income brackets and occupations in order to come up with an all-encompassing view into the topic. This research paper made use of the *Probability Sampling* method which facilitates a wide representation of the population. The data for this research paper was collected from 508 respondents belonging to different age groups, income brackets and various states across India. The data was collected through both primary and secondary resources. A well-structured questionnaire was rolled out in the form of a Google form which was circulated using social media platforms, Email and cold calls. The responses were collected from 8<sup>th</sup> February, 2024 to 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2024. Various journals, articles and research papers were reviewed to gain an insight into existing conclusions drawn on compulsive buying and buyer's remorse. The data was analyzed on Microsoft Excel using descriptive analysis metrics like mean, standard deviation and frequency distribution tables. A reliability test was performed on the questionnaire using the Cronbach's Alpha test. The data was analyzed using the chi-square test and correlation analysis.

### VI. ANALYSIS

#### Consumer Demographics

##### 1. On the basis of gender

Particulars	Number	Percentage
Male	233	45.87%
Female	275	54.13%
Other	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>508</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 1:** Table showing the segregation of percentage and number of respondents based on gender

**2. On the basis of annual income**

Particulars	Number	Percentage
≤₹60,000	250	49.2%
₹60,000 - ₹120,000	48	9.4%
₹120,000 - ₹240,000	33	6.5%
₹240,000 - ₹480,000	32	6.3%
₹480,000 - ₹900,000	26	5.1%
≥₹900,000	119	23.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>508</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 2:** Table showing the segregation of percentage and number of respondents based on annual income

**3. On the basis of age**

Particulars	Number	Percentage
Below 18	15	3%
18-30	368	72.4%
31-40	18	3.5%
41-50	21	4.1%
50+	86	16.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>508</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 3:** Table showing the segregation of percentage and number of respondents based on age

**4. On the basis of occupation**

Particulars	Number	Percentage
Student	302	59.4%
Employed	84	16.5%
Self-Employed/Business Owner	82	16.1%
Unemployed	3	0.6%
Retired	7	1.4%
Homemaker	30	5.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>508</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 4:** Table showing the segregation of percentage and number of respondents based on occupation

**5. On the basis of residence setting**

Particulars	Number	Percentage
Rural	14	2.8%
Semi-Urban	29	5.7%
Urban	465	91.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>508</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 5:** Table showing the segregation of percentage and number of respondents based on residence setting

**Respondents' Buying Behaviour**

The respondents' buying behaviour has been analyzed using mean and standard deviation.

1. Analysis of the respondents' agreement with the statement that their impulse buying habits have come under control with age

Particulars	Legend	Frequency
Strongly agree	1	102
Agree	2	111
Neutral	3	124
Disagree	4	6
Strongly disagree	5	238

**Table 6:** Table showing the legend and frequency distribution of the responses

<b>Mean</b>	2.340551181
<b>Standard deviation</b>	0.986208685

**Table 7:** Table showing the mean and standard deviation of the responses

- From the above analysis, we can conclude that on an average, the respondents agree with the statement.
- The standard deviation of the data set is almost equal to 1, which implies that the data points in the set are relatively close to the mean

2. Analysis of the factors that affect respondents' buying behaviour

	<b>Necessity</b>	<b>To socialize</b>	<b>As a therapy</b>	<b>Out of moodiness</b>	<b>To flaunt it</b>
<b>Mean</b>	1.543307	3.00787402	3.25984252	3.141732283	3.507874
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	0.739822	0.97404153	1.122164657	1.116972916	1.0601668

**Table 8:** Table showing the mean and standard deviation of the responses

- On an average, the respondents strongly agreed to purchasing for
- On an average, the respondents agreed to purchasing for necessity. The standard deviation is less than 1, which means that there is a low degree of variability in the responses.
- On an average, the respondents were neutral about purchasing to socialize. The standard deviation is almost equal to 1, which implies that the data points in the set are relatively close to the mean.
- On an average, the respondents were neutral about purchasing as a therapy. The standard deviation is almost equal to 1, which implies that the data points in the set are relatively close to the mean.
- On an average, the respondents were neutral about purchasing out of moodiness. The standard deviation is almost equal to 1, which implies that the data points in the set are relatively close to the mean.
- On an average, the respondents were neutral about purchasing to flaunt it. The standard deviation is almost equal to 1, which implies that the data points in the set are relatively close to the mean.

3. Analysis of the respondents' agreement with the statement that they often shop without thinking

<b>Particulars</b>	<b>Legend</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Strongly agree	1	32
Agree	2	94
Neutral	3	147
Disagree	4	168
Strongly disagree	5	67

<b>Mean</b>	3.283465
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	1.102236

**Table 10:** Table showing the mean and standard deviation of the responses

**Table 9:** Table showing the legend and frequency distribution of the responses

- On an average, the respondents were neutral about this statement.
- The standard deviation of this data set is almost equal to 1, which implies that the data points in the set are relatively close to the mean.

4. Analysis of the factors that affect the respondents' impulse buying decisions

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
<b>Sales and discounts</b>	2.076771654	1.000005812
<b>Emotional state</b>	3.177165354	1.172230459
<b>Peer influence</b>	3.350393701	1.022993447
<b>Advertising</b>	3.03740157	1.01784218
<b>Social media</b>	3.265748031	1.140800258
<b>Product display</b>	2.820866142	1.052461325

**Table 11:** Table showing the mean and standard deviation of the responses

- The respondents, on an average, agreed that sales and discounts trigger impulse buying. The standard deviation is equal to 1, which implies that the data points in the set are relatively closer to the mean.
- The respondents, on an average, were neutral about emotional state affecting their impulse buying decisions. The standard deviation is more than 1, which implies that the degree of variability in the data set is high.

- The respondents, on an average, were neutral about peer influence affecting their impulse buying decisions. The standard deviation is equal to 1, which implies that the data points in the set are relatively closer to the mean.
- The respondents, on an average, were neutral about advertising affecting their impulse buying decisions. The standard deviation is equal to 1, which implies that the data points in the set are relatively closer to the mean.
- The respondents, on an average, were neutral about social media affecting their impulse buying decisions. The standard deviation is more than 1, which implies that the degree of variability in the data set is high.
- The respondents, on an average, agreed about product display affecting their impulse buying decisions. The standard deviation is equal to 1, which implies that the data points in the set are relatively closer to the mean.

5. Analysis of how respondents feel after engaging in impulsive buying

Particulars	Legend	Frequency
Satisfied	1	93
Guilty	2	123
Excited	3	103
Regretful	4	80
Unaffected	5	109

<b>Mean</b>	2.978346
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	1.410563

**Table 13:** Table showing the mean and standard deviation of the responses

**Table 12:** Table showing the legend and frequency distribution of the responses

- The respondents, on an average, feel excited after making an impulsive purchase.
- The standard deviation of the data set is more than 1, which implies that the degree of variability in the data set is high.

6. Analysis of the respondents' agreement with being wise spenders of money

Particulars	Legend	Frequency
Strongly agree	1	89
Agree	2	222
Neutral	3	150
Disagree	4	37
Strongly disagree	5	10

<b>Mean</b>	2.32480315
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	0.912950871

**Table 15:** Table showing the mean and standard deviation of the responses

**Table 14:** Table showing the legend and frequency distribution of the responses

- On an average, the respondents agreed to the fact that they spend their money wisely.
- The standard deviation of the data set is less than 1, which means that there is a low degree of variability in the responses.

**Analysis of Post-Purchase Regret**

7. Analysis of the respondents' agreement with feeling regret after making a purchase

Particulars	Legend	Frequency
Strongly agree	1	21
Agree	2	129
Neutral	3	177
Disagree	4	158
Strongly disagree	5	23

<b>Mean</b>	3.064961
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	0.952469

**Table 17:** Table showing the mean and standard deviation of the responses

**Table 16:** Table showing the legend and frequency distribution of the responses

- On an average, the respondents were neutral about the statement.
- The standard deviation of the data set is less than 1, which means that there is a low degree of variability in the responses.

8. Analysis of the respondents' agreement with the statement that higher price of a purchase leads to higher disappointment

Particulars	Legend	Frequency
Strongly agree	1	82
Agree	2	213
Neutral	3	122
Disagree	4	62
Strongly disagree	5	29

<b>Mean</b>	2.494094
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	1.076761

**Table 19:** Table showing the mean and standard deviation of the responses

**Table 18:** Table showing the legend and frequency distribution of the responses

- On an average, the respondents agree with the statement.
- The standard deviation is equal to 1, which implies that the data points in the set are relatively closer to the mean.

9. Analysis of the various factors that increase the disappointment after a purchase

	High price	Bad quality	Low utility	Better alternative	Obsolescence
<b>Mean</b>	1.91929134	1.51377953	1.94488189	1.887795276	2.811023622
<b>Standard deviation</b>	0.92397096	0.81436844	0.90542622	0.912084584	1.20191634

**Table 20:** Table showing the mean and standard deviation of the responses

- On an average, respondents agreed that high price intensifies their disappointment. The standard deviation of the data set is less than 1, which means that there is a low degree of variability in the responses.
- On an average, the respondents strongly agreed that bad quality intensifies their disappointment. The standard deviation of the data set is less than 1, which means that there is a low degree of variability in the responses.
- On an average, respondents agreed that low utility intensifies their disappointment. The standard deviation of the data set is less than 1, which means that there is a low degree of variability in the responses.
- On an average, respondents agreed that the availability of a better alternative intensifies their disappointment. The standard deviation of the data set is less than 1, which means that there is a low degree of variability in the responses.
- On an average, the respondents were neutral about the product falling out of fashion in increasing their disappointment. The standard deviation of the data set is more than 1, which implies that the degree of variability in the data set is high.

10. Analysis of various factors that help in mitigating remorse after a purchase

	Easy returns	Good after-sales services	Discounts
<b>Mean</b>	1.55314961	2.118110236	2.6122047
<b>Standard deviation</b>	0.82715355	0.966886172	1.1052882

**Table 21:** Table showing the mean and standard deviation of the responses

- On an average, the respondents strongly agreed that easy returns help in mitigating their disappointment. The standard deviation of the data set is less than 1, which means that there is a low degree of variability in the responses.
- On an average, the respondents agreed that good after-sales services help in mitigating their disappointment. The standard deviation of the data set is less than 1, which means that there is a low degree of variability in the responses.
- On an average, the respondents agreed that discounts on further purchases help in mitigating their disappointment. The standard deviation of the data set is more than 1, which implies that the degree of variability in the data set is high.

11. Analysis of whether after a disappointing purchase, the respondents are likely to purchase from the same seller

Particulars	Legend	Frequency
Very likely	1	13
Likely	2	49
Neutral	3	74
Unlikely	4	223
Very unlikely	5	149

**Table 22:** Table showing the legend and frequency distribution of the responses

<b>Mean</b>	3.877953
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	1.019913

**Table 23:** Table showing the mean and standard deviation of the responses

- On an average, the respondents were unlikely to purchase from the same seller after a disappointing experience earlier.
- The standard deviation is equal to 1, which implies that the data points in the set are relatively closer to the mean.

### Inferential Analysis Cronbach's Alpha Test

Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency reliability, commonly used in questionnaire analysis. It indicates the extent to which all the items in a questionnaire are interrelated. Cronbach's alpha values above 0.7 are considered acceptable for research purposes.

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.761	.754	40

**Table 24:** Table showing the value of Cronbach's Alpha

Since the alpha value is  $>0.7$ , it can be concluded that the questionnaire is reliable and consistent.

### Chi-Square Tests Test Criteria

At 90% level of significance, i.e.,  $\alpha = 0.1$

If the p value is  $> 0.1$ , we accept the null hypothesis and reject the alternative hypothesis. If the p value is  $\leq 0.1$ , then we accept the alternative hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis.

1. Relationship between gender and impulse buying behaviour

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no relationship between gender and impulsive buying behaviour.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): There is a relationship between gender and impulsive buying behaviour.

$\chi^2$ Tests			
	Value	df	p
$\chi^2$	4.387	1	0.036
N	508		

**Table 25:** Table showing p value

Since the p value  $0.036 < 0.1$ , we accept the alternative hypothesis and conclude that there is a relationship between gender and impulsive buying behaviour.

2. Relationship between age and impulse buying behaviour

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no relationship between age and impulsive buying behaviour.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): There is a relationship between age and impulsive buying behaviour.

$\chi^2$ Tests			
	Value	df	p
$\chi^2$	0.076	1	0.783
N	508		

**Table 26:** Table showing p value

Since the p value  $0.783 > 0.1$ , we accept the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no relationship between age and impulsive buying behaviour.

### 3. Relationship between income and post-purchase regret

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no relationship between income and post-purchase regret.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): There is a relationship between income and post-purchase regret.

$\chi^2$ Tests			
	Value	df	p
$\chi^2$	5.743	1	0.017
N	508		

**Table 27:** Table showing p value

Since the p value  $0.036 < 0.1$ , we accept the alternative hypothesis and conclude that there is a relationship between income and post-purchase regret.

## VII. FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

These findings and observations have been derived from both statistical and inferential analysis.

- Most respondents agreed that **sales, discounts and product displays** are most effective in triggering them to make impulsive purchases.

**Sales and Discounts:** Customers are usually pulled by discount pricing or special and fall into a sense of hurry, consequently making an impulsive purchase because of the perceived bargain.

**Product Displays:** The well-organized stores offer a wide array of products which can attract consumers' attention and create a need for purchasing. Attractive presentation of products that are desirable and tempting consumers, placed in highly frequented areas like point of sale or points where traffic is increased can trigger impromptu buying.

- **Bad quality** of a product increases post purchase regrets the most, followed by low utility, high price and availability of better alternatives.

This could be due to the following reasons:

**Expectation-Reality Discrepancy:** Customers normally have some assumptions they make about a product when the purchase it: it should be of high quality, effective and lasting more than its useful life. In case the actual quantity of the product is considerably less than the consumer's expectations, it may result in discontentment and remorse.

**Long-Term Consequences:** Initially, consumers might be just annoyed and might not do anything else but later on might experience long term feelings of regret. This can hugely affect customer loyalty and tarnish the brand image of the seller.

**Perceived Value:** The relationship between quality and value of a product is an undeniable fact. Only if a product is considered of superior quality, consumers tend to believe that the money they have spent was worth it.

- Respondents are unlikely to purchase from the same seller after a disappointing experience.
- An **easy return policy** is most effective in mitigating the disappointment after a purchase, followed by discounts on further purchases and good after-sales services.
- It was found that people belonging to lower income groups face a higher degree of buyer's remorse.
- It was found that women were more likely to engage in impulsive buying than men.
- There is no relationship between age and impulsive buying behaviour.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

Impulse purchases appear to be particularly influenced by these triggers such as the idea of being offered a bargain or by the visual appeal of a product. It can be seen that negative product quality is the biggest cause of the consumer's discontent with the product he purchased after buying, which emphasizes the major role of the consumer expectation for durable and suitable product to meet his expectations. Furthermore, consumers exhibited poor retention for the same merchant in the case of a bad experience, which will definitely bring about a sine qua non stage for the seller to work on in maintaining customer satisfaction while building a positive brand reputation. One of the highly efficient ways of managing return of goods was making returns with ease.

Furthermore, the study gave a view of the social and economic difference in post-purchase regret; where individuals from low economic backgrounds have the highest regret. Women were more into impulsive shopping as compared to men.

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