



SCHOOL OF  
ECONOMICS AND  
MANAGEMENT

# **The Identity Cart: Unpacking the Factors Behind Impulsive Buying**

*Understanding the drivers of impulse purchases in grocery shopping*

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## Abstract

**Title:** The Identity Cart: Unpacking the factors of Impulsive Purchase

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**Keywords:** Impulse buying, Internal factors, External factors, Situational factors

**Research question:** How do internal, external and situational factors interact to influence impulse buying?

**Purpose:** This thesis aims to explore how internal, external, and situational factors affect impulsive buying in physical grocery stores, uncovering new perspectives to provide marketers with valuable insights into the motivators behind impulse purchases.

**Theoretical perspective:** Drawing inspiration from previous studies, a theoretical framework has been developed, focusing particularly on structuring internal, external, and situational factors.

**Methodology:** By adopting a constructionist epistemological perspective, this thesis utilizes qualitative inductive methods with triangulation, combining semi-structured interviews with the collection of receipts, shopping lists, and notes obtained from eight students.

**Empirical results:** The empirical findings highlight how internal, external, and situational factors interact uniquely based on individual characteristics and preferences. Key interactions involve the internal factors of well-being, the external factors of marketing and social environment and the situational factors of time of day/month and time pressure.

**Conclusion:** Impulsive buying results from an interplay among internal, external, and situational factors, with identity creation holding a significant influence. This dynamic is significantly influenced by well-being, social environment and time pressure where no single factor dominates the others. The study underscores that impulsive buying is not solely dictated by individual elements but rather by the interaction among multiple factors.

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## Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1 Background.....	5
1.2 Problematization.....	6
1.3 Research purpose.....	7
<b>2. Theoretical background.....</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 Internal factors.....	8
2.2 External factors.....	10
2.3 Situational factors.....	12
2.4 Preliminary theoretical framework.....	13
2.5 Clarifying the Theoretical Framework Perspective.....	15
<b>3. Methodology.....</b>	<b>16</b>
3.1 Research Approach.....	16
3.2 Research Design.....	17
3.2.4 Selection of cases.....	17
3.2.1 Data collection method.....	19
3.2.2 Empirical gathering of personal documents.....	20
3.2.3. Semi-structured interviews.....	20
3.2.6 Structure of analysis.....	21
3.3 Methodological reflection.....	23
3.3.1 Ensuring credibility.....	23
3.3.3 Ethical considerations.....	23
<b>4. Empirical findings and analysis.....</b>	<b>25</b>
4.1 Exploring internal influences.....	25
4.1.1 Shopping lists balanced by structure or spontaneity.....	25
4.1.2 The influence of trend behaviors on individual image.....	28
4.1.3 Self expression through product characteristics.....	30
4.2 Exploring external influences.....	32
4.2.1 Product selection under social pressure.....	32
4.2.2 Family’s influence on cultivating interests.....	34
4.3 Exploring situational influences.....	37
4.3.1 Balancing time management and thoughtful purchases.....	37
4.3.2 Impact of CSN payment on student spending.....	39
4.4 The correlations among factors identified in interviews.....	41
<b>5. Discussion.....</b>	<b>43</b>
5.1 Theoretical contributions.....	43
5.2 Practical implication.....	46
5.3 Limitations.....	47
5.4 Conclusion.....	49
5.5 Further research.....	49
<b>6. Reference list.....</b>	<b>51</b>

## List of Tables & Figures

<i>Table 1, Theoretical framework, Internal factors</i> .....	15
<i>Table 2, Theoretical framework, External factors</i> .....	16
<i>Table 3, Theoretical framework, Situational factors</i> .....	17
<i>Table 4: Respondents background information</i> .....	21
<i>Table 5, The correlations among factors identified in interviews</i> .....	44
<i>Figure 1: Factors correlation within Impulsive Buying</i> .....	48

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

In recent decades, impulse buying has been a subject of significant interest in marketing research (David, 2023). This behavior, defined as unplanned acquisitions outside the shopping list made due to urgent, desired, and affective responses (David, 2023; Hultén & Vanyushyn, 2011; Rook & Fisher, 1995), has garnered attention due to its widespread occurrence across various industries and its impact on consumer behavior and retail sales. One of the earliest and most influential theories on impulse buying was introduced as early as 1962 by Hawkins Stern, laying the groundwork within consumer psychology for an understanding of how factors such as price and store display for the product influence consumers' impulsive buying (Stern, 1962). More recent studies have further expanded upon this foundational research, integrating additional factors such as social influence and emotional triggers. Among others, David (2023) and Kalla and Arora (2011) categorize the factors into external, internal, and situational dimensions, offering an understanding of how consumer decision-making processes are structured, leading to impulsive buying. Internal factors refers to attributes or processes that are distinct to every individual, influencing their decisions and behavior, commonly shaped by the individual's own feelings, and experiences (Respati et al. 2005). External factors lies outside a person's direct control influencing one's behavior and decisions (Kalla & Arora, 2011). Situational factors are the specific and changing circumstances surrounding an event or context, shaping individuals' responses and behaviors due to their temporary and adaptable nature (Kivetz & Simonson, 2002). The diversification of components not only provides insights into consumer behaviors but also into impulse buying across industries, notably in grocery retail. This is influenced by the common use of shopping lists, guiding consumers' purchasing decisions (Block & Morwitz, 1999). Consumers are further motivated by the necessity of purchasing food items, leading to increased spontaneous buying behavior and longer shopping durations. In this industry, impulse buying is primarily driven by the store's marketing strategies, including advertisements, discounts, and eye-catching displays (Hultén & Vanyushyn, 2011). Therefore, this phenomenon creates significant economic implications for both consumers and retail companies, highlighting the importance of understanding the drivers behind these spontaneous purchases. In order to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in this field, previous research has been reviewed to identify potential gaps.

## 1.2 Problematization

Previous studies have explored various external factors using quantitative methodology, revealing that the social environment, including family and friends, exerts a significant influence on impulse buying behavior among young individuals. Specifically, it becomes apparent that an individual's sensitivity to pricing is affected by the social context, as purchases may be made for products at a price that would not have been accepted if the person had been alone at the time of purchase. Previous studies further illustrate how social factors and norms play a significant role in people's impulsive purchasing behavior and perception of prices (David, 2023; Wakefield & Inman, 2003). Additional perspectives on price sensitivity indicate that consumers exhibit a lower degree of price sensitivity when making purchases driven by enjoyment compared to functional necessity. This means that when a product is bought for pleasure, consumers are less price-sensitive compared to when they purchase something to fulfill a basic need (Wakefield & Inman, 2003).

Researchers have shown that an individual's economic situation is closely linked to their perception of the price, quality, and promotional offers of products in grocery stores. It is evident that low-income earners prioritize the price of products over their value, highlighting the importance of affordability in purchasing decisions. This underscores the role of shopping lists as a crucial tool for keeping the costs down (Block & Morwitz; 1999, Galie & Hanson, 2021; Kalla & Arora, 2011; Pallikkara et al. 2020). Despite the individual's endeavor to adhere to the shopping list, the store's marketing tactics can prompt deviations from the intended purchase. For instance, the ambiance and physical layout of the store may significantly impact buying behavior. Additionally, it is revealed that variations in the frequency of impulse buying across different countries are noted due to disparities in store layout, offerings, and design (Hultén & Vanyushyn, 2011; Pallikkara et al. 2020).

This phenomenon has also been studied by examining individual differences within internal factors (Cintamür, 2023; Duarte et al. 2013; Kivetz & Simonson, 2002). Among these, it is revealed that factors such as mood, emotions, and sudden desires are strongly correlated with impulse behavior, showcasing clear distinctions depending on whether individuals are in a negative or positive emotional state. Furthermore, when consumers feel more confident, their inclination towards making impulse buying decreases (Cintamür, 2023; Kalla & Arora, 2011). However, it is imperative to acknowledge that these factors are subject to situational influence. Previous studies have demonstrated a notable interest in examining the impact of

time pressure on impulse buying, particularly in moments of increased stress. In such contexts, individuals often demonstrate faster decision-making processes, consequently increasing their inclination towards impulsive purchases. When considering situational factors, researchers also investigate variables such as time of day or month. For example, this exploration highlights how fluctuations in energy levels throughout different temporal periods can affect mood and, consequently, lead to impulse buying (Kalla & Arora, 2011; Pallikkara et al. 2020).

Previous research has investigated a broad range of factors that have been shown to influence impulsive buying behavior. However, what becomes apparent is the absence of comparative analysis of these factors, which could offer a deeper understanding of their interactions and their impact on impulsive purchasing behavior in a physical store. Additionally, a deficiency in qualitative insights has been noted in previous research, which limits understanding of the deeper motivations and thought patterns behind impulse purchases. By employing qualitative methods, one can gain a more nuanced understanding of individuals' experiences, attitudes, and emotions related to impulsive buying. Finally, a notable absence of studies conducted on this subject in Sweden is identified. Drawing from previous research, a distinct knowledge gap emerges: from a qualitative perspective, understanding the correlation between external, internal, and situational factors within the context of physical grocery stores to better comprehend the nature and drivers of impulsive purchases in Sweden.

### 1.3 Research purpose

The aim of this thesis is to enhance the comprehension of the interaction between external, internal, and situational factors influencing impulsive buying in physical grocery stores. Through the application of qualitative methodology, this thesis seeks to explore the connections between internal, external and situational factors and how it relates to impulsive purchases. By offering novel interactive perspectives and managerial implications, we aspire to provide valuable insights for companies and marketers seeking to influence impulse behavior.

Consequently, the following research question has been formulated:

*How do internal, external and situational factors interact to influence impulse buying?*



## 2. Theoretical background

This section offers an overview of the existing literature on impulsive buying behavior, forming the foundation of the thesis's theoretical framework. The literature review is structured into three separate categories: external factors, internal factors, and situational factors. Following this, a preliminary theoretical framework is introduced, providing an overview of all main factors and their subfactors. This organization clarifies each factor individually, setting the stage for a detailed analysis of their interactions, thereby enriching the exploration of their collective impact on the research question.

### 2.1 Internal factors

An internal factor refers to attributes or processes that are distinct to every individual, influencing their decisions and behavior. These factors are commonly shaped by the individual's own feelings, and experiences and can have a significant impact on how they respond to different situations or stimuli (Respati et al. 2022). Previous research suggests that internal factors influence an individual's inclination for making impulse buying, with the individual's *lifestyles* (e.g. Parboteeah, 2005), *personality traits* (e.g. Hultén & Vanyushyn, 2011) and *well-being* (e.g. Kalla & Arora, 2011) proving to be significant in this context.

When considering impulsive purchasing behavior, it is essential to acknowledge that *lifestyles* have a great impact (Parboteeah, 2005). In prior research, a limited number of lifestyles have been identified. However, the concept of health consciousness is achieving recognition which is increasingly acknowledged as an influential factor in impulse buying behavior among young consumers within the grocery context (Duarte et al. 2013; Verplanken et al. 2005). An influential determinant of consumer impulsive purchasing is the awareness and increase for health-conscious alternatives across various consumption domains, including food, beverages, exercise equipment, and health products. Parboteeah (2005) argues that it may prompt individuals to abstain from impulsively buying less healthy options in favor of products aligning better with their health-oriented lifestyle.

Another internal factor that emerges is an individual's *personality traits*, including elements of materialism, need for arousal, introversion and self-esteem. Block and Morwitz (1999), as cited in Hultén and Vanyushyn (2011), suggest that women are often described as being responsible for household shopping and having greater familiarity with stores and products.

This results in women being more likely to avoid impulsive buying by planning their purchases and buying items listed on their shopping lists compared to men (Hultén & Vanyushyn, 2011). Furthermore, tendencies of higher levels of materialism typically involve a strong desire to possess and consume material goods and status symbols, often resulting in engaging in more impulsive purchases with the pursuit of social status and recognition through consumption (Kalla & Arora, 2011). Also, consumers engage in identity projects continually making impulsive purchases to refine and enhance their self-image, highlighting differences between their self-perception and their desired image (Rokka & Ulver, 2023). Similar to the role of products in shaping identity, it is evident that the shopping list can gradually influence consumers' self-perception and reinforce their identity, thereby both increasing and decreasing individuals' impulsive buying tendencies, depending on the desired image (Dittmar, 1992; Kalla & Arora, 2011). By carefully selecting which products to include on their shopping list, consumers can actively express their preferences, values, and identity. This indicates that there is a connection between impulsive buying and the need to strengthen self-image (Kalla & Arora, 2011). Moreover, there are individuals distinguished by a need for arousal, signifying a necessity for excitement, stimulation, and activity. These individuals do not always buy the same items but instead seek ways to manage feelings of boredom by making new and exciting purchases. By possessing a high degree of these needs, individuals may find it more challenging to control their impulses and resist temptations (Baumeister et al. 1998; Kalla & Arora, 2011). Additionally, the behavior of introversion, characterized by a tendency towards inward focus and reserve, places the individual in fewer social interactions, thus not being as influenced by external pressures that lead to impulsive purchases. Consequently, as introverted individuals typically participate less in social gatherings and interactions, they are correspondingly exposed to fewer occasions for being swayed by impulsive purchasing stimuli, which may occur within social contexts or during interpersonal engagements (Kalla & Arora, 2011). Research on the relationship between self-esteem and impulse buying, revealed a negative correlation with impulsive buying (O'Guinn & Faber, 1989). In addition, low self-esteem has a tendency to negatively impact an individual's psychological well-being, leading to the use of impulsive purchases as a psychological relief strategy (Cintamür, 2023; Verplanken et al. 2005).

Furthermore, the internal factor of *well-being* was revealed, referring to the individual's immediate thoughts and emotions, including sudden desires or feelings of depression (Kalla

& Arora, 2011, Rook & Fisher, 1995; Zhang & Shi, 2022). It emerges that there is a close correlation between impulsive buying and different moods. Individuals shop more impulsively when there is a desire to transition from a negative emotional state to a positive emotional state, aiming to uplift themselves and experience happiness for a brief moment (Cintamür, 2023; Rook & Gardner, 1993). Individuals who are more emotionally unstable and experience intense shifts in their emotions, exhibit an increased tendency to purchase impulsively (Kalla & Arora, 2011).

## 2.2 External factors

An external factor is a variable that lies outside a person's direct control influencing one's behavior and decisions. These factors can be related to the individuals surrounding, such as social, economic or physical circumstances (Kalla & Arora, 2011). Previous studies identify the factors *socioeconomic status* (e.g. Duarte et al. 2013), *product features* (e.g. David, 2023), *marketing* (e.g. Arsel & Bean, 2023) and *social environment* as relevant variables to investigate in relation to impulse buying.

*Socioeconomic status* indicates an individual's position within a society based on attributes such as income, education and occupation (David, 2023; Duarte et al. 2013; Stern, 1962). This is often determined by external circumstances and influences, such as economic opportunities and societal structures. It indicates where someone stands in terms of economic stability and social status compared to others in their community or society. This factor encompasses how affordability plays a significant role in influencing impulsive purchasing decisions on food items. Regarding impulse buying of food items, individuals may be more sensitive to promotional offers and discounts due to a desire to save money and maximize the purchasing value. The individual's socioeconomic status can elevate the significance of price as a crucial factor in impulse buying (David, 2023; Duarte et al. 2013; Stern, 1962).

Furthermore, *product features* highlight how a package's design effectively serves as a stimulus for impulse buying. (David, 2023) For example, eye-catching designs and bright colors are often strategically employed by marketers to attract consumers' attention and encourage spontaneous purchases. Within grocery shopping, purchasing decisions are not solely influenced by visual appearance and actual value, but rather by price (Duarte et al. 2013; Galie & Hanson, 2021; Webber et al. 2010). In impulsive buying, this results in

expensive products often being disregarded in favor of cheaper alternatives. Furthermore, there is a clear connection between lower price sensitivity and hedonic characteristics and stress that consumers express the lowest price sensitivity for snacks, a class of products that includes items consumers often purchase impulsively (Jones et al. 1994; Pallikkara et al. 2020; Verplanken, et al. 2005;). Similarly, individuals are likely to be more price-sensitive when it comes to functional purchases (Kivetz & Simonson 2002; Wakefield & Inman, 2003). A reason for this could be individuals seeking more variety in hedonic consumption situations, but less so in functional consumption contexts (Jones et al. 1994; Kivetz & Simonson 2002; Wakefield & Inman, 2003;).

The variable, *marketing*, is highlighted as an important factor influencing impulse buying. It becomes evident that advertising communication, including social media, product placement, pricing strategies and promotional flyers are examples of marketing tactics that effectively impact consumer impulsive purchasing behavior. Social media platforms play a significant role in triggering impulsive purchases by guiding behavior and influencing consumption decisions through aesthetic marketing (Arsel & Bean, 2023; Duarte et al. 2013). Product placement refers to how stores strategically position products to maximize their visibility to increase consumer impulsive purchasing behavior. Products placed at the checkout have been particularly effective in enticing impulse buying (Duarte et al. 2013). One pricing strategy identified as effective in stimulating impulse purchases is the implementation of quantity discounts, exemplified by the ‘buy 3, pay for 2’ offer, encouraging impulse buying. Promotional flyers are also emphasized as an important communication method, serving as a direct and visible form of marketing, reaching consumers with appealing offers and discounts in their everyday environments (Hultén & Vanyushyn, 2011; Pallikkara et al. 2020). Furthermore, in the shopping environment, several factors including in-store browsing and store layout, are emphasized to lead to temporary loss of self-control and thereby trigger impulse purchases (David, 2023; Kalla & Arora, 2011; Wirtz et al. 2007). Another visible aspect within external factors is the *social environment*, suggesting that consumer behavior varies depending on whether the individual purchases food for personal consumption or for sharing with others. Additionally, the presence of friends and family during the purchasing moment reveals a shift in individuals’ buying behavior. What emerges is that products for enjoyment are often chosen in social contexts, whereas individuals tend to opt for less

expensive options out of practical necessity when buying groceries for themselves (David, 2023; Dittmar, 2005; Pallikkara et al. 2020; Wakefield & Inman 2003).

### 2.3 Situational factors

Despite theories and frameworks focusing on internal and external factors, there is a notable scarcity of authors who analyze the phenomenon of impulse buying in relation to situational factors. Situational factors relate to the unique and evolving circumstances surrounding a specific shopping occasion, influencing consumer decisions. Unlike external factors, which are more stable over time, situational factors are temporary, changeable and can directly influence how an individual responds or behaves in a given situation (Kivetz & Simonson, 2002). The following illustrates how the two situational factors, *time pressure* (e.g. Alm & Olsen, 2016) and *the time of day/month* (e.g. Kalla & Arora, 2011) influence impulsive behavior.

There is considerable emphasis on Belk's (1988) situational variables and argues that impulses vary among individuals in different situations (Pallikkara, 2020; Wakefield, 2003; Rook, 1987). Several authors draw particular attention to how *time pressure* influences an individual's standard purchasing patterns (Alm & Olsen, 2016; Dhar & Nowlis, 1999). Individuals often find themselves in situations where time is limited, and grocery shopping is not prioritized, leading to unwanted impulse buying (Alm & Olsen, 2016). It emerges that grocery shopping is often not prioritized, as it typically occurs between tasks or activities. This results in individuals minimizing the duration spent deliberating their purchases leading to spontaneously purchasing a larger amount of items than originally intended, exceeding beyond the shopping list (Dhar & Nowlis, 1999; Hultén & Vanyushyn, 2011). Furthermore, in a time-constrained situation, individuals are more inclined to yield to price promotions, as unexpected savings lead the individual to believe that they are spending less than intended. However, it is observed that the decision to deviate from the shopping list often results in overspending, rather than savings (Hultén & Vanyushyn, 2011; Stern, 1962).

The additional situation variable, time of the *day/month* involves how daily events or special occasions play a role in shaping consumer behavior (Kalla & Arora, 2011). During certain times of the day, individuals may experience fluctuations in their energy levels or mood, which can affect their decision-making processes and increase impulsive purchase

temptations. Similarly, seasonal changes can prompt consumers to adjust their purchasing habits based on their perceived availability of funds, availability of promotions, or desire to buy seasonal items. As individuals navigate through their day, their ability to resist temptations gradually decreases as their reserves of self-control are used up. This decline in self-control can be caused by various factors such as time constraints and stress (Baumeister, 2002; Kalla & Arora, 2011). As their self-control weakens, individuals become more vulnerable to giving in to impulsive urges, including making unplanned or unnecessary purchases. Consequently, purchasing decisions cannot be regarded as entirely rational, as they frequently yield to the influence of emotions or social pressures, rather than being solely guided by logical reasoning or calculated analysis, resulting in an increased impulsive purchasing behavior (Bettman et al. 1998; Zhang et al. 2023).

## 2.4 Preliminary theoretical framework

The above section presented previous research, highlighting various factors important to consider when examining impulse buying. In order to gain an overview of all factors and facilitate the investigation of the research question of this study, the following theoretical framework has been developed. The framework is presented in three separate tables, outlining main factors, sub-factors, and their influence on impulse buying. This structure aims to enhance clarity and comprehension of the factors in the analysis.

<b>INTERNAL</b>			
<b>Main factors</b>	<b>Subfactor</b>	<b>Effect on impulse buying</b>	<b>Sources</b>
Lifestyle	- Health consciousness	- Encourages healthier choices, reducing impulse purchases of unhealthy items	(Duarte et al. 2013), (Verplanken et al. 2005), (Parboteeah, 2005),
Personality traits	- Materialism	- Higher levels of materialism results in more impulsive purchases with the pursuit of social status and recognition through consumption	(Cintamür, 2023), (Rokka & Ulver, 2023), (Hultén & Vanyushyn, 2011), (Kalla & Arora, 2011), (Verplanken et al. 2005), (Block & Mouwitz, 1999), (Baumeister et al. 1998), (Dittmar, 1992), (O'Guinn & Faber, 1989)
	- Introversion	- Fewer social interactions leading to less impulsive buying.	
	- Self-esteem	- As self-esteem decreases, impulse buying tends to increase.	
	- Need for arousal	- High level of need for arousal leading to more impulsive purchases.	
Well-being	- Emotional instability	- Emotional instability leads to an increased tendency to purchase impulsively.	(Cintamür, 2023), (Zhang & Shi, 2022), (Kalla & Arora, 2011; Verplanken et al. 2005) (Rook & Fisher, 1995), (Rook & Gardner, 1993)

*Table 1, Theoretical framework, Internal factors*

Table 1 presents the internal factors and includes the main factors *lifestyle*, *personality traits* and *well-being*. Lifestyles particularly emphasize health consciousness, which has emerged as a significant factor shaping impulsive buying behaviors among young consumers. Additionally, personality traits delve into the internal aspects of an individual, aiming to address materialism, introversion, self esteem and need for arousal. Despite the dynamic nature of one's well-being, the subfactor emotional instability is categorized as internal rather than situational. This decision aligns with how previous research has categorized the concepts.

EXTERNAL			
Main factors	Subfactor	Effect on impulse buying	Sources
Socioeconomic status	- Affordability	- Low affordability leads to increased impulsive purchases of promotional items.	(David, 2023), (Duarte et al. 2013), (Stern, 1972)
Product features	- Product design & price	- Serves as stimulus for increased impulsive buying.	(David, 2023), (Galie & Hanson, 2021), (Duarte, 2013), (Webber et al. 2010), (Pallikka et al. 2020), (Verplanken, et al. 2005), (Wakefield & Eiman, 2003) (Kivitz & Simonson 2002), (Jones et al. 1994)
	- Hedonic VS Functional	- Hedonic impulsive purchases increase when having high price sensitivity. - Functional impulsive purchases increase when having low price sensitivity.	
Marketing	- Advertising communication	- Advertising communication triggers impulsive purchases.	(Arsel & Bean, 2023), (Pallikkara et al., 2020), (David, 2023), (Duarte et al., 2013), (Hultén & Vanyushyn, 2011), (Kalla & Arora, 2011), (Wirtz et al. 2008).
	- Store layout	- When the store layout prompts in-store browsing it leads to a higher tendency for impulsive buying.	
Social environment	- Friends and family	- Social pressure increase impulsive purchases	(David, 2023), (Pallikkara et al. 2020), (Dittmar, 2005), (Wakefield & Inman, 2003)

Table 2, Theoretical framework, External factors

Table 2 presents external factors which refer to environmental or societal influences. The table presents the main headings, *socioeconomic status*, *product features*, *marketing* and *social environment*. Socioeconomic status encompassing aspects such as affordability and price sensitivity. Product features focus on the motivation driving a purchase, addressing the product design and pricing together with hedonic and functional characteristics. Additionally, marketing encompasses a variety of elements, including advertising communication such as social media, product placement, pricing strategies and promotional flyers as well as the overall store layout. The individual's social environment further takes into consideration the influence of friends and family.

SITUATIONAL FACTORS			
Main factors	Subfactor	Effect on impuls buying	Sources
Time pressure	-	- When in time pressure, impulsive buying of “unnecessary” products increases.	(Zhang et al., 2023), (Pallikkara, 2020), (Alm & Olsen, 2016), (Hultén & Vanyushyn, 2011), (Wakefield, 2003), (Dhar & Nowlis, 1999), (Bettman, 1998), (Belk, 1988), (Rook, 1987), (Stern, 1962)
Time of the day/month	-	- Decreased self-control towards the end of the day leads to more impulse purchases. - Decreased self-control at the end of the month reduces impulse purchases.	(Zhang et al., 2023), (Kalla & Arora, 2011) (Baumeister, 2002) (Bettman,1998)

*Table 3, Theoretical framework, Situational factors*

*Table 3* presents situational factors which refers to the constantly changing circumstances or environment in which an individual finds themselves, resulting in the main headings *time pressure* and *time of the day/month*. Time pressure refers to the sense of urgency or constraints individuals experience when making purchasing decisions, due to limited time available for shopping. While the time of the day/month acknowledges both how daily events play a role in shaping consumer behavior and the individuals economic situation, specifically referring to whether individuals are awaiting or have just received their monthly payment. In both main factors, it becomes evident that an individual’s rationality is influenced by situational circumstances, often resulting in an increased impulsive buying behavior.

## 2.5 Clarifying the Theoretical Framework Perspective

In the framework, only the explanations provided by previous studies for each individual factor are presented. It is important to note that previous studies have not explored the interaction between the various factors. In our study, we aim to surpass this separation and actively investigate how the internal, external, and situational factors interact to influence impulse buying. This integrated analysis aims to enhance our ability to predict and explain impulse purchases, as well as guide the development of effective strategies to manage or reduce impulse buying among consumers. By clearly elucidating how each individual factor in our theoretical framework impacts impulse buying, we lay the groundwork for examining how different factors may reinforce or counteract each other in shaping impulse buying behavior.



### 3. Methodology

The following sections provide a thorough examination of the research approach and methodology, delving into the complexities of the research process. A comprehensive description of the research design, data collection methods, case studies, and analytical approach is presented. Additionally, a methodological reflection addresses issues of credibility and ethical considerations, ensuring a thorough understanding of the research's thoroughness and ethical foundations.

#### 3.1 Research Approach

The research employed in this paper is qualitative, aiming to understand and explore the phenomenon by delving deeply into participants' experiences, opinions, and perspectives. This methodology facilitates a thorough data collection process, enabling insights into the underlying motivations and cognitive processes that shape participants' behaviors and perceptions (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021; Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). Given that this paper incorporates different perspectives and examines how various interpretations of truth and reality are shaped within everyday contexts, a constructionist epistemological perspective has been applied. This approach aligns with the chosen research topic because it acknowledges the impossibility of validating or confirming a singular truth. Instead, it emphasizes the nuanced construction of truths within individual contexts and perspectives.

In line with the constructionist epistemological perspective, this paper collects the views and experiences of diverse individuals by adopting a methodology that integrates different types of methods, referred to as triangulation. (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021) By collecting data through both semi-structured interviews and collection of receipts, comments, and shopping lists, an understanding of the studied phenomenon can be achieved. This approach strengthens the reliability and validity of the research findings by supporting and enhancing each other's credibility. Furthermore, triangulation can validate or reinforce previous findings, increasing confidence in the study's conclusions (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). Triangulation has facilitated a broader data collection, influencing the outcome of the interviews.

Furthermore, throughout the thesis, an inductive approach has been employed, focusing on the examination and analysis of empirical data to produce insights and ideas on the investigated subject. Inductive reasoning involves observing patterns and trends in gathered

material to guide theory development, emphasizing the importance of empirical evidence in shaping an understanding of the researched phenomenon (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This methodology facilitated a thorough examination of respondents' experiences, opinions, and perspectives, acknowledging the dynamic nature of human behavior and societal phenomena while identifying themes and insights. This approach contributes to a richer understanding of the underlying motivations and cognitive processes shaping their behaviors and perceptions (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

## 3.2 Research Design

By employing a case study including eight cases, the aim is to thoroughly examine and understand the intricate dynamics at play within this context (Easterby-Smith et.al, 2021; Yin, 2009). Specifically, this method allows for a deep exploration of various factors that influence students' impulse buying behaviors. An inductive approach was employed with the aim of formulating theories based on emerging observations and patterns. Through the gathering of empirical material and conducting semi-structured interviews, this case study seeks to capture individual perspectives while offering an understanding of student buyer behavior (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021; Yin, 2009). Through a qualitative analysis, the study seeks to uncover insights into why and when individuals deviate from their initial shopping plans and lists.

### 3.2.4 Selection of cases

The sampling methodology employed in this qualitative thesis is purposive sampling. The choice was based on its suitability for targeting specific individuals that were most relevant to the research questions. Unlike random sampling methods, purposive sampling allows a strategic selection of participants, which possess key characteristics or behaviors essential for addressing the research objectives. By employing this method, one can ensure a diverse representation within the sample, enhancing the richness and depth of the data collected (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Therefore, by focusing on specific criteria for participant selection, the relevance and validity of the study findings increases. The following criteria were applied: *(1), Swedish, (2) Single, (3) Typically shopping list writers*. The mentioned criteria establish delimitations intentionally meant to restrict the study by defining its scope, relating to the aim and purpose of this thesis while aiming to facilitate comparative and analytical examination of the respondents. In order to limit the data collection, a specific target group of eight

individuals were examined. Firstly, the requirement, *Swedish*, was selected to bridge the gap identified in previous research. By implementing this requirement, the research aims to provide insights that are tailored to the unique context of Swedish society, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Secondly, the requirement *Single* was chosen to isolate and analyze the purchasing decisions made solely by the individual, without the potential confounding effects of a partner's preferences or habits. Thirdly, the requirement of individuals who *Typically write shopping lists* was chosen, to facilitate an examination of impulse buying in reference to the definition presented in the introduction section. Also, it enables an opportunity to observe differences between receipts and shopping lists, thereby identifying impulse purchases.

In addition to the aforementioned sampling method, snowball sampling was utilized to ensure the diversity and inclusivity of the participants involved in the research process (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The initial participants, known to the authors, were asked to refer to other individuals who were knowledgeable in the subject and met all requirements. Due to the fact that the authors themselves are students, fellow students were approached, and the individuals recommended as suitable respondents for the thesis were also students. By adopting this approach, it ensured that the respondents were not necessarily within the immediate circle of the researchers but could still be assured to possess relevant insights or experiences related to the research topic. By leveraging a snowball sampling, a broader range of perspectives and experiences could then be captured, contributing to the richness and depth of the research findings. This sampling method helps minimize potential bias that may arise from selecting participants solely based on the researcher's preconceived notions or expectations. Moreover, snowball sampling allows for the inclusion of individuals from various backgrounds and viewpoints, enhancing the validity and credibility of the study's findings (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

The table below presents a concise summary of the responders who were ultimately selected, providing a full overview of all participants. Also, it includes a clarification that all respondents meet the three criteria of being *Swedish*, *Single*, and *Typically shopping list writers*, in addition to providing information on respondents' age, gender, occupation, and interview duration. It also quantifies the percentage of impulse buying made by each respondent during the data collection period. In accordance with the request, all participants

were anonymized and are represented with fictitious names in the table. These names were selected from a list of prevalent names in Sweden (SCB, 2022). Moreover, the respondents' names were matched with their original genders to enable a direct comparison between males and females. Before the alignment process, respondents were asked to provide their consent regarding their gender identification.

Respondent	Fiction name	Age	Gender	Single	Occupation	Interview	Shopping List writers	Average impulsive purchases %
1	Alice	24	Female	Yes	Student	60 min	Yes	3.9%
2	Maja	24	Female	Yes	Student	52 min	Yes	26.1%
3	Vera	25	Female	Yes	Student	45 min	Yes	4.8%
4	Selma	23	Female	Yes	Student	63 min	Yes	5%
5	Noah	23	Male	Yes	Student	45 min	Yes	50.7%
6	Willian	24	Male	Yes	Student	40 min	Yes	59.2%
7	Liam	22	Male	Yes	Student	47 min	Yes	48.2%
8	Hugo	25	Male	Yes	Student	50 min	Yes	11.7%

*Table 4: Respondents background information*

### 3.2.1 Data collection method

Previous studies indicate that examination of shopping lists has proven to be an effective method for data gathering. However, many authors continue to utilize quantitative methods. To bridge the gap and provide a deeper analysis of the phenomenon, the empirical material for this study consisted of data collection complemented by semi-structured interviews, which took place from February 5th to April 31st 2024. During the initial phase of the eight-week data collection process, receipts and shopping lists were gathered in order to obtain a fundamental understanding of the purchasing patterns of the consumers. With the objective of revealing genuine feelings and direct insights, the data gathering was enhanced with relevant annotations and comments associated with each purchase. Following the initial eight weeks, questions arose regarding respondents' purchasing habits which were addressed in the next phase of the data collection, semi-structured interviews (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). The decision to conduct pre-purchase (shopping list) and post-purchase (receipts) empirical gathering provides insight into the factors that can influence purchases throughout the entire shopping journey, rather than solely relying on what respondents mention during the interview. Drawing upon previously collected material and existing research, the interview questions were formulated to gain a deeper understanding of individuals' thoughts on their impulsive purchasing behavior. Despite all interviews following the same interview guide, the previous data collection served as the basis for personal additional questions as it provided an

understanding of the respondents' past purchasing habits. Moreover, the decision to utilize semi-structured interviews stems from the aim to foster an open dialogue, facilitating respondents to expand upon their answers, while also providing interviewers with the opportunity to ask follow-up questions (Bryman & Bell, 2015). By combining diverse methods, the study seeks to increase the potential for uncovering contradictions between individuals' stated intentions and their actual behaviors (Duarte et al. 2013).

### **3.2.2 Empirical gathering of personal documents**

As this thesis delves into students' impulsive grocery purchasing behavior in physical stores, the first part of the data collection consisted of receipts, shopping lists, and notes from grocery shopping trips. Consequently, the respondents were not asked to report receipts of other forms of impulse purchases related to food consumption, for example restaurant visits. A personal template was created for all respondents, serving as a place where they could collect images of shopping lists and receipts. By allowing participants to write daily notes, a deeper understanding of their in-the-moment thoughts and mindsets can be achieved. Among other things, the students were asked to note occasional events and school-related tasks. The document functioned as a personal diary used as the primary source of data within this thesis (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Images of receipts and shopping lists have been excluded from this thesis to protect personal information. To offer a thorough overview of the empirical data gathered from respondents, a table has been created (see Appendix 2). The table presents information with the headings; number of items on shopping list, number of items outside shopping list, total amount of purchased items, the proportion of impulse buying, presented as a percentage of the total and weekly notes. An average for each category is also presented for each student. This table provides valuable insights into respondents' tendencies toward impulse buying. Note that, if multiple purchases were made each week, the presented numbers represent a consolidation of all purchases. Meaning, if a student made four purchases in a week with four shopping lists, the numbers for items on and off the list are a sum of all those purchases.

### **3.2.3. Semi-structured interviews**

There are several methods within qualitative research offering deep insights, and it is important to choose an appropriate method related to the subject area (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Qualitative research is generally open-ended, allowing for deep and broad discussions

between respondents and interviewers. Bryman and Bell (2015) suggest that focus groups can be advantageous as they can lead to discussions where participants build upon each other's ideas, providing a richer understanding of the subject. However, this approach exposes individuals to a scenario where they risk being judged by other participants, often perceived as stressful. Therefore, the choice of semi-structured interviews is based upon the aspiration to create a safe environment for the individual, since topics regarding consumption behavior in relation to one's economic situation can feel somewhat private (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Furthermore, eight semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain deeper insights from the consumers perspective. Each interview had a duration of 45 to 60 minutes and was performed in person to facilitate the observation of body language. Semi-structured interviews involve an interview guide (see Appendix 1) to direct the conversation, while still providing freedom in the questioning process. Respondents are given the opportunity to express their personal feelings and thoughts regarding their purchasing patterns through the implementation of open-ended questions (Adams, 2015; Bryman & Bell, 2015). This methodology guarantees examination of every topic while enabling spontaneous dialogue and the exploration of unexpected points of view (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). Given that all the respondents were native Swedish speakers, the interviews were carried out in Swedish to reduce any misunderstandings and to ensure that no distinctions were lost in translation (Bryman & Bell, 2015). After transcription and translation into English, the respondents were given the opportunity to review the material to ensure that the translation did not result in incorrect interpretations of their expressions.

### **3.2.6 Structure of analysis**

Considering the data being collected from eight respondents, a cross-analysis was conducted in order to understand and analyze the material (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The material has been processed in three stages; *sorting*, *reducing* and *arguing* (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2015). In order to achieve a comprehensive sorting of the gathered material, it is essential to dedicate a sufficient amount of time, as qualitative material should be studied carefully and deliberately. The first phase, *sorting*, was initiated by coding the material to gain insight into the participants' perspectives and cognitive processes (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Throughout the coding process, a thorough examination of each respondent was undertaken to identify patterns and to stress relevant variables aligned with the theoretical framework. Within this

phase, the fundamental factors of internal, external, and situational guided the sorting and synthesis of the material.

The following step, *reduction*, involves selectively choosing the parts that are suitable for further study according to the purpose of the research (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2015). Following emerging uncertainties regarding the collected receipts, shopping lists, and notes, semi-structured interviews were undertaken in order to determine the relevance of the information to be emphasized in the thesis. To further refine the material, data that corresponds to the study's theoretical framework has been presented. Considering the impossibility of reproducing all of the gathered material, the results have been presented to illustrate the main findings or conclusions within the study. The result is divided per respondent to clearly illustrate each respondent's individual perspective and insights (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2015).

During the final stage of the process, *arguing*, the substantial reasoning behind the chosen content is carefully examined. It is in this phase that the purpose and message are communicated more clearly to the reader. The analysis is structured based on the results to clarify the correlation of themes and findings that have emerged during the data collection process. The analysis is structured into the main headings; 5.1 Exploring internal influences, 5.2 Exploring external influences, and 5.3 Exploring situational influences. Within section of 5.1, internal factors are primarily addressed to gain deeper insights into the respondents' inner state. Additionally, section 5.2 predominantly focuses on external factors to understand elements beyond the respondents control, while 5.3 primarily demonstrates how varied situations impact impulsive purchases. This structure is based on the theory's factors and designed to illustrate their mutual influence rather than treating them as entirely independent entities. They are interconnected and integrated to demonstrate how they affect each other. Consistently, the expressions and opinions of the respondents have been emphasized to underscore and link similar viewpoints and perspectives (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2015). A deeper comprehension of their interpretations and involvement with the subject was ultimately achieved through attentive listening to the respondents' individual expressions (Ryan & Bernard, 2003).

### 3.3 Methodological reflection

#### 3.3.1 Ensuring credibility

When composing a thesis, it is important to enhance both the validity and reliability of the text. While validity refers to whether a study truly captures what it claims to measure, reliability refers to the consistency of results across repeated studies (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021). To clarify and confirm the validity of this study, the methodology has been carefully formulated to ensure that the thesis accurately measures what it intends to investigate. Through a thorough review of previous studies employing similar approaches, the quality of the interview questions was ensured. This facilitated a deeper understanding of how the interview questions relate to the phenomenon of impulse buying and the theoretical framework (Taylor, 2013). The reliability of the study was strengthened through systematic employment of an interview guide, which served as a structured framework to ensure consistent treatment across all interview situations. Furthermore, the systematic documentation and description of the data collection procedure contributed to the study's increased reliability by enabling the replication of its approach by other researchers. To further enhance the reliability of the results, repeated measurements were conducted over an extended period of time (Yin, 2009).

#### 3.3.3 Ethical considerations

In the ethical framework of this study, protecting participants' confidentiality and identity protection is of importance. All participants were anonymized in the presentation of findings due to a few respondents expressing a desire for anonymity. Furthermore, the respondents were allowed to freely answer all questions or skip those they might prefer not to respond to. Each participant had the option to end the process and/or interview at any chosen time. To make sure that the respondents approved the gathered material, they were given the opportunity to review the collected data alongside the transcribed interviews. Also, to prevent interpretation bias, all interviews were recorded and transcribed.

When justifying the ethical considerations and potential biases of the thesis, it is important to discuss aspects such as ensuring transparency with participants regarding the usage of ChatGPT. This primarily concerns potential biases in various Artificial Intelligence programs, and the protection of the participant's privacy and confidentiality. Therefore, it is of great



importance to emphasize that no AI program was utilized during the analysis of this thesis. However, the program ChatGPT has been used to guide the authors through grammatical obstacles and as a translation support. To ensure the respondents' privacy, all interviews were anonymised, and no personal information was shared in the program. By utilizing ChatGPT for translation, the risk of human interpretation might be reduced. The transcriptions were corrected afterwards to ensure that the meaning was retained. To conclude, although ChatGPT has functioned as a supportive tool, it has not been used in the interpretation or analysis of the gathered data.

## 4. Empirical findings and analysis

In the forthcoming section, the empirical data will be carefully examined through the lens of the theoretical framework. The analysis is divided into separate segments and the topics covered in this section are, 6.1 Internal Influences, 6.2 External Influences, and 6.3 Situational Influences. Each part, supported by essential subheadings, aspires to establish a cohesive structure. This approach examines multiple factors and their interactions, to address the research question while providing an understanding of the research subject. This chapter concludes with Table 5, *'The Correlations Among Factors Identified in Interviews,'* which aims to visually summarize and complement the analysis for a better understanding of the correlation between the mentioned factors affecting impulsive buying.

### 4.1 Exploring internal influences

#### 4.1.1 Shopping lists balanced by structure or spontaneity

While all participants in this study wrote shopping lists, the findings disclose substantial disparities in the application and interpretation among students. In accordance with previous research (Block & Morwitz, 1999; Galie and Hanson, 2021; Kalla & Arora, 2011; Pallikkara et al. 2020), it becomes apparent that the shopping list functions as an effective instrument for steering consumers from making impulsive purchases in the realm of grocery retail. In our study, it is evident that the shopping list is closely linked to an individual's lifestyle, serving as a means to maintain the lifestyle the respondents have. What emerges is that the more carefully considered the shopping list is, the fewer deviations and impulse purchases occur. For example, Noah expresses *"The times when I forget to make a shopping list, I clearly notice that I end up buying more unhealthy food than what I had planned"*. This shows that, if impulsive purchases occur, it may lead students to buy products that do not align with their desired lifestyle and health consciousness. Maja, William and Hugo, exhibit a buying behavior indicating that when the shopping list was absent, it is harder for the student to make healthier choices and avoid making impulsive purchases. Parboteeah (2005) suggests that individuals with a health-conscious lifestyle tend to avoid impulsively purchasing less healthy options. However, this study reveals that impulse buying of unhealthy items, which are not aligned with the individual's healthy lifestyle, still occurs. This behavior is typically observed to arise in cases where a shopping list is absent.

*“Even though I’d consider myself very health-conscious, I often find myself buying unhealthy items that I absolutely later regret. This usually happens when I haven’t made a proper shopping list before I go shopping.” - William*

*“If I’m going to eat healthy and perform better in the Gym, it’s important that I plan accordingly or I feel disappointed in my decision. So structure and shopping list is an important way for me to minimize spontaneous purchases of unhealthy products.” - Alice*

Above indicates that there may be an explanation that students with an interest in sports and health more frequently use and compose more specified shopping lists, resulting in a limited occurrence of impulsive buying (see Appendix 2). During these instances, connections to the factor *Well-being* are evident as the individual’s well-being is negatively affected when they deviate from their lifestyle. Cintamür (2023) suggests that individuals shop more impulsively when they are in a negative state of mind to reach a positive state of mind, but this study highlights the opposite, that the individual goes from feeling good to a worse state of mind when making impulse buying. This demonstrates a close correlation between lifestyle, well-being, and product features.

Furthermore, a connection between well-being and personality traits is also observed. Several of the respondents who characterize themselves as more spontaneous or impulsive were men and *“I don’t like to restrict my purchases to a specific list, it feels better to go to the store and get what I want at the moment,”* Liam expresses. Hultén and Vanyushyn (2011) describes that men tend to make more impulsive purchases compared to women because women’s personality traits often involve more planning. In line with this, it becomes apparent that individuals exhibiting a high level of order and structure are more inclined to utilize shopping lists for the organization of their purchases and the avoidance of impulsive buying, with women forming the majority.

*“I have always loved planning my daily life because I feel better when my life is under control. Since I make note of everything I need to do during the day, it just feels natural to also list everything I need to purchase.” - Alice*

*“It might sound foolish, but I view my routine of creating the shopping list as a ritual. I take the time to browse through the weekly deals and then craft my list accordingly, knowing that I’ve optimized my purchases to the best of my ability. It’s something that I strictly do every Sunday to feel prepared for the upcoming week, and it brings me a sense of satisfaction.” - Vera*

The above quotation suggests that for some individuals, creating a shopping list serves as a calming and preparatory activity before the shopping occasion leading them to consume less impulsively. The students state that by planning their purchases in advance, they achieve an increased sense of control and reduce the risk of emotional instability and overwhelming emotions during the actual shopping experience. In this manner, the shopping list functions not only as a practical tool but, according to Vera, also as a “*ritual*” that enhances her well-being. This aligns with Rook and Gardner (1993) who highlight how consumers strategically arrange their purchases in order to enhance their mood. This result indicates that these purchases are planned with the aim of avoiding impulse buying, leading to a sense of well-being by optimizing the purchase. Selma further showcases a correlation between one’s well-being and acceptance of marketing. She explains that she creates her shopping list to actively take advantage of promotions to optimize her purchases, *“This makes me feel satisfied with my well-informed purchases because I have maximized the value of my actions.”* While Pallikkara et al. (2020) demonstrate that promotional flyers aim to increase impulse buying, our results indicate that they instead function as a tool to minimize impulse buying and structure the purchase.

However, what emerges is an increased tendency among the student’s socioeconomic status to feel like they are missing out on an opportunity to save money if they do not take advantage of an offer. Even though the offer is not included on their planned shopping list, it may still lead respondents to purchase the product. This behavior is clarified by David (2023), who argues that in impulse buying, the individual’s socioeconomic status can increase the importance of product price. While promotional offers are described as a tool for managing financial constraints, the results also suggest a tendency to yield to store promotions and layout. Consistent with Kalla and Arora’s (2011) description of how shopping environments are designed to promote impulse purchases, Maja expresses a fear of losing self-control related to the advertising communication in the store and deviating from the shopping list.

Moreover, Maja elaborates that as some discounts are exclusive to the physical store, it is challenging to create a shopping list beforehand that covers all the promotional offers. “... *discounted items are always positioned at eye-catching spots. Despite my efforts to plan and stick to my list, the temptation often leads me to make additional purchases.*” Maja. In line with Pallikkara et al. (2020) emphasis on the importance of product placement and store layout, these results indicate how a store’s effective implementation of product placement and its emphasis on promotional offers prompts the respondents to engage in spontaneous purchases. In this way, there is a close connection between the internal factors; lifestyle (Parboteeah, 2005), well-being (Cintamür, 2023), personality traits (Hultén & Vanyushyn, 2011) and external factors; socioeconomic status (David, 2023), advertising communication and store layout (Pallikkara et al. 2020).

#### **4.1.2 The influence of trend behaviors on individual image**

Several of the female respondents expressed thoughts regarding how a detailed shopping list not only becomes a practical measure but also a form of self-expression and a source of satisfaction. Selma expresses, “*It feels rewarding when my friends perceive me as an organized individual, commenting on my shopping list and purchases for the week*”. This observation contrasts prior research by Kalla and Arora (2011) and Dittmar (1992), highlighting that individuals increase making impulsive purchases striving to fulfill an idealized self-image, termed materialism. In this case, the respondent elucidates that the decision to write a shopping list stems from a desire to be perceived by her friends as an organized person, which can be interpreted as reinforcing the construction of her identity, referred to as materialism. From the interviews, it further emerges that the majority of the female respondents draw inspiration from various social media platforms such as TikTok, functioning as advertising communication. In contrast to Arsel and Bean (2023), who emphasize how the use of social media triggers impulse purchases through aesthetic marketing, TikTok demonstrates ways to be structured, offering inspiration to reduce impulse buying. A close connection between the internal factor of materialism and the external factors of social environment and marketing. To illustrate, one of the students shares a video showcasing a young woman’s trip to the grocery store, followed by her organization of the refrigerator.

*“Me and my friends often joke about wanting to be a ‘clean girl’..., so I believe that, combined with everything available about meal prep on social media, has made me try to think about it more and I really want to become one of those structured girls.” - Selma*

*“You know, they always say “you are what you eat,” and I really believe in that. That's why I prefer to make a shopping list filled with quality ingredients. It demonstrates that I take the time to plan my meals and care about what I put into my body. So, when I see someone grabbing unhealthy ready-made meals, it feels like they're not prioritizing their health.” - Maja*

The clean girl trend proves to be a significant factor influencing the purchasing behavior of female students, while in contrast, during interviews with the male respondents, the need for self-expression through one's impulse buying is not emphasized. Following the interviews with female students, where trends were discussed extensively, the male participants were questioned about their association with trends. All respondents clarified that similar trends do not emerge for men and imply that list-writing is not regarded as a characteristic aligned with traditional norms or expectations of masculine behavior. This can be related to one's socioeconomic status where Hultén and Vanyushyn (2011) suggests being part of older traditions in today's society may be reinforced by trends on social media. Liam states, *“I haven't noticed any of those trends on my social media. None of my guy friends place as much importance on their shopping lists as my female friends do.”* This indicates that the correlation between materialism, marketing and the social environment does not have the same impact on men. For the male respondents, list-writing is perceived solely as a way to get an overview of what needs to be purchased and therefore is not followed carefully. The findings additionally suggest that, compared to women's lists, the majority of men's lists are shorter, often leading to an increase in impulsive purchases (see Appendix 2). This was attributed to his intention to prepare lasagna, for which only the main ingredients were listed.

*“I see no point in writing down béchamel and onion because I know what to include in a lasagna. Therefore, it's quite common for me to add extra items to the cart. Also, it's not really that manly to plan meals too much....sometimes it's just better to go with the flow.” - William*

This was motivated by the fact that the final outcome, in this specific case a lasagna, was the primary focus rather than how structuring the purchase affected the individual's image. When the shopping list lacks detail, individuals may find themselves more susceptible to making impulsive purchases influenced by advertising, rather than adhering strictly to their shopping goals. Similarly, Noah expresses that he tends to shop more impulsively because he wishes to appear more masculine while avoiding seeming overly methodical, stating, *"it's a more feminine behavior."* This underscores a correlation to earlier research by Kalla and Arora (2011), which emphasizes an increased tendency to buy impulsively due to identity formation through materialism. In essence, the observed differences in shopping behavior among male and female respondents may reflect broader societal constructs and power dynamics.

#### **4.1.3 Self expression through product characteristics**

Besides expressing oneself by strictly adhering to the list, there is a strong connection between the phenomenon of crafting an idealized identity and expression through products. In line with the insights offered by Kalla and Arora (2011), regarding the role of products as status symbols increasing impulse purchases, the respondents articulate their selection of exclusive or trendy food items to convey and form a desired identity and lifestyle. *"It's important to me that my food choices reflect who I want to be. If I invest in quality food, I feel more aligned with my best self"*, Alice elaborates. It emerges that the respondent strives to cultivate an image of herself by impulsive purchases, aiming to be perceived as someone who invests in exclusive and high-quality products to convey a specific identity or lifestyle.

Even though the impact of socioeconomic status on impulse buying behavior is, according to Duarte et al. (2013), influenced by factors such as affordability and price, the results indicate that Alice's impulsive purchasing decisions are more influenced by the characteristics of the product rather than its price. This demonstrates the close correlation between the internal factor of lifestyle and the external factors of a product's price and an individual's affordability. Similarly, Selma explains that the products she impulsively purchases are from more expensive brands, yet she is aware that this contradicts how she "should" be spending money as a student. *"I should actually shop very frugally, but it's difficult to stick to that because I want to be both a financially smart student and also impress my friends with appealing products."* The observation that students impulsively buy expensive products influenced by their social environment suggests that Galie and Hanson's (2021) findings, highlighting the

significance of price in relation to the individual's budget and impulsive purchasing, do not align with this assumption. What emerges as a driving factor for impulse purchases, however, is the appearance and characteristics of the product, aligning with the findings of David (2023). Our findings suggest a correlation between internal factors materialism and lifestyle, coupled with external factors such as socioeconomic status, product features, and social environment.

Additionally, the attraction towards product choices is shown not only to enhance one's self-expression but also to fulfill a need for arousal. Our findings are in line with Kalla and Arora (2011), indicating that individuals are drawn to certain products not just to express themselves but also to satisfy a desire for excitement or stimulation. The female students express that when they feel confident in their ability to explore and experiment in the kitchen, their desire to try new products is strengthened. This suggests that confidence in culinary skills encourages them to be more adventurous with their product choices. Maja expresses that *“Now that I have confidence in cooking Asian cuisine, I feel a completely different urge to try new products.”* Research conducted by O'Guinn and Faber (1989) underscores the negative correlation between self-esteem and impulse buying behavior. However, our studies do not suggest a decrease in impulse buying with higher self-esteem; rather, they indicate an increase in impulse purchases. Furthermore, she explains that this makes her more inclined to deviate from what she has written on her shopping list to experiment with her already planned recipes. Vera further suggests that she often feels a need to try new products but adds, *“It is not as okay to impulsively buy chocolate because I can't really do anything with it.”* In this context, the characteristics of the products are particularly significant, as the majority of the female respondents only allow themselves to yield to their need for arousal and make impulsive purchases if the products are functional in nature. Despite having a low price sensitivity towards hedonic products (Jones et al. 1994), the female respondents do not necessarily act in accordance with this, as impulsive purchases are rather made for functional products (Wakefield & Inman, 2003; Kivetz & Simonson, 2002).

In contrast to the female respondents, when the male respondents give in to their need for arousal, they often end up purchasing products that are hedonistic in nature rather than functional. Hugo explains how his curiosity and desire leads him and his friends to try new flavors, but exclusively within certain product categories, such as protein bars or energy



drinks. This aligns with the conclusions of Wakefield & Inman (2003), who suggest that individuals seek more variety in hedonic consumption situations. Furthermore, Liam states:

*"I easily get bored and find it boring to always buy the same products at the store. Being a spontaneous person, I aim to reflect that in my purchases. Therefore, I often feel a desire to explore products with new designs and flavors when I shop. It brings an excitement and variety to my daily routine which I truly like."* - Liam

Consistent with the findings of David (2023), the visual aesthetics of the packaging design increases impulsive purchases, as Liam acknowledges the importance of the product's design. Our result demonstrates how the internal factors, self-esteem (O'Guinn & Faber, 1989), need for arousal (Kalla & Arora, 2011), is closely linked with the external factors hedonic versus functional characteristics (Jones et al. 1994; Kivetz & Simonson, 2002; Wakefield & Inman, 2003) and product design (David, 2023).

## 4.2 Exploring external influences

### 4.2.1 Product selection under social pressure

It emerges that there is a close correlation between impulsive purchasing and social environment where the degree of socializing with others is significant. It is apparent that **introverted** respondents are less influenced by social pressure, which leads to the maintenance of regular routines and no additional impulsive purchases. This is consistent with the findings of Kalla and Arora (2011), who show that this results in fewer impulsive purchases. Alice explains, *"I'm simply not someone who gains energy from socializing with others, so I actually prefer eating alone as it makes me stick to my usual shopping routines."* This contrasts with students who describe themselves as extroverted and frequently share meals with others. To illustrate, Selma states *"In contrast to when I eat alone, if I have friends over, I prefer to choose better and tastier ingredients"*. Since respondents who are more extroverted are exposed to influences from others more frequently, they experience greater difficulty in resisting impulsive purchases, social pressures from friends and adhering to their usual routines. Similar to findings presented by Dittmar (2005) this behavior stems from a desire to impress friends and to be perceived as more generous, as demonstrated in this study. Furthermore, variations in impulse buying, both in terms of quantity and product features,

emerge when consuming with and for others. This supports the findings of David (2023) and Pallikkara et al. (2020) who highlights that students are more prone to making impulsive purchases of hedonistic products as a consequence of sharing the social experience.

*“I want my friends to see me as someone who values quality when it comes to food. When we go to Willys together or when I’m shopping for my friends, I tend to choose slightly higher-end brands to avoid seeming frugal. However, what they don’t know is that when I shop alone, I am fine with Eldorado.” - Liam*

In line with Liam, the majority of the students wish to be perceived in a certain way by their friends, where it is noted that they also use their cooking skills to maintain a social status. This observation indicates that individuals with a strong interest in cooking often develop a sense of pride and satisfaction from creating and sharing meals with friends. In accordance with Parboteeah (2005), the results indicate the importance of acknowledging that lifestyles influence impulse buying, particularly in our case, relating to cooking interests. Several students express enthusiasm for cooking, showcasing a high confidence while demonstrating a sense of pride in their proficiency. Their self-assurance reduces their vulnerability to social influence leading them to make less impulsive purchases compared to individuals with lower levels of interest in cooking. For instance, Vera explains, *“When I eat together with my friends, I am often the one who plans the dinner. I don’t care much about what they would say because I know I am a skilled chef.”* Similarly, Hugo, who has an interest in food, prefers to make decisions on his own, relying solely on his knowledge and taste preferences.

*“I feel confident enough in my cooking that I don’t need others’ opinions or help. However, my friends often ask me for recipe tips because they know I’m skilled at cooking, but it’s because they’re not as confident in things like flavor combinations.” - Hugo*

A distinction emerges between genders, with male respondents demonstrating less interest in cooking compared to their female friends. Among the respondents, it is noted that Hugo is the only male who shows a greater interest in cooking. When asked about his interest, Hugo explains, *“It’s frustrating that none of my guy friends are as interested as I am. We never discuss food in the same way as the girls in my class do.”* Furthermore, Hugo highlights that his friends do not provide him with the inspiration he had hoped for. Instead he turns to social

media for culinary inspiration and new cooking ideas, expressing that this could be what motivates him to add more items to his cart. This way, the results demonstrate that social media, as highlighted by Arsel & Bean (2023) and Duarte et al. (2013), serve as platforms that trigger impulsive purchases by influencing consumption decisions through aesthetic marketing. Selma also believes that social media inspires her to cook more and try out new recipes.

*“I find a lot of my cooking inspiration online where I follow lots of accounts on who share several recipes every week. I also use grocery store apps to easily see their current offers, where I often come across products that I would never have bought otherwise” - Selma*

Furthermore, Selma argues that social media is a particularly effective source of inspiration during holidays and events. Special occasions that involve social gatherings are particularly noted, with Vera highlighting her Sunday-traditions as a specific occasion that affects her shopping routines. During special occasions, Kalla and Arora (2011), as well as Baumeister (2002), demonstrate that individuals adjust their consumption patterns in line with their daily happenings. Vera explains that her friends share a monthly tradition of having Sunday breakfast together, during which certain products are a staple, such as pastries, juices, and seasonal fruits. However, she acknowledges that *“at the last minute, I always come up with new things to cook for breakfast that I get inspired by on social media and can't resist.”* Similarly, Liam indicates that special occasions typically result in suddenly spending significantly more money on food and drinks than planned, explaining *“thinking about having enough for my friends makes me add extra items to the cart.”* The mindset reflects a desire to create a welcoming and pleasant atmosphere for his social circle, which, in addition to findings regarding one's social environment by Wakefield and Inman (2003), ensures that the guests have a satisfying experience. There is a clear correlation between the internal factors, Social environment (Dittmar), Lifestyle (Parboteeah, 2005) and the external factors of Hedonistic versus Functional products (David, 2023; Pallikkara et al. 2020) and Advertising communication (Arsel & Bean, 2023; Duarte et al. 2013)

#### **4.2.2 Family's influence on cultivating interests**

It appears that the respondents' attitude towards impulse buying and interest in cooking is closely linked to the routines their family had during their childhood. Several respondents

share stories about a food-interest in their family, where they collectively write shopping lists and then cook together. For example, Vera mentions that it was never an option to add something to the cart unless it had been included on the list beforehand, as they *“knew what was to be included in the prepared dish”*. This is a behavior that she still adheres to, illustrating her thorough approach to shopping and meal planning. This behavior differs from the argument presented by David (2023) and Pallikkara et al. (2020), who suggest an increase in impulse purchases when influenced by the family.

*“It was a way for my Mom and Dad to keep costs down once we were in the store. It’s probably their mindset that has prompted me to try writing a well-thought-out shopping list to avoid impulse purchases.” - Vera*

The practice of writing a shopping list is acknowledged to be something that has been carried over from the time when the respondents lived with their parents, and is not considered a new behavior. Similar to the reasoning proposed by Hultén and Vanyushyn (2011), who argued that women are less inclined than men to engage in impulse buying, Selma expresses that females are often expected to be involved in cooking and meal preparation, unlike men who are not expected to participate in cooking to the same extent. Noah confirms Selma’s thoughts, stating, *“When I lived with my ex-girlfriend, she always cooked the meals, and now I’m still trying to adjust to being a single man.”* He indicates that he has never been interested in cooking and has not prioritized this activity. This transition has left him feeling somewhat uncertain about his culinary skills and how to navigate meal preparation on his own. Hugo, who has an interest in cooking, believes that his interest may stem from being given more space in the kitchen as a child, resulting in a strong passion for cooking.

*“My mum and sister are very interested in cooking and my sister has always helped with the food at home with my parents house, while I did other things. I think many of my guy friends have had similar experiences growing up, which makes it easy to not develop an interest in cooking.” - William*

*“When my brother and I were young, we used to have ‘Lina’s Matkasse’, and we always had the responsibility to cook because our parents worked late. Now, both my brother and I are very interested in cooking, so I guess we have our parents to thank for that.” - Hugo*

Evidently, the respondents' parents' values and behaviors concerning cooking have been transmitted to their children, resulting in either a strong interest in cooking or the absence of such an interest. Social stereotypes and gender norms are reinforced by parents who actively choose not to involve their sons in cooking (Hultén & Vanyushyn, 2011). It is noted that the majority of respondents who accompanied their parents to the grocery store were females. Vera explains that her mother has influenced both her interest in cooking and her approach to grocery shopping, leading her to make less impulsive purchases. She mentions that *“I always joined my mum when shopping when I was younger. She always wrote a shopping list and it is probably from her that I have inherited the habit of writing lists.”* Furthermore, Alice explains how she strives to emulate her mother's lifestyle, hoping to gain the same routines within structuring her purchases. As outlined by Parboteeah (2005), lifestyle emerges as a significant determinant in impulsive buying tendencies. This is evidenced by Alice's mother's lifestyle, which has shaped her shopping behavior, thereby increasing her desire to adhere to the list and avoid impulse purchases.

Similarly, Maja has come to understand the purpose behind her parents' use of the shopping list, now using it as a tool to resist the sway of marketing tactics in the store. By doing so, female respondents decrease their impulse purchases. Maja explains, *“When I was younger, I was probably mostly tempted by all the tasty items in the store, but now it's more about not being fooled by the quantity discounts.”* The respondent also suggests that it is only during her student life, which equals a tighter budget, that she has come to understand why her parents emphasized the importance of the shopping list. In accordance with David (2023) this indicates that the respondent's socioeconomic status, particularly the transition to managing their own financial resources as a student, has highlighted the practicality of using a shopping list with the aim of being more affordable. William elaborates, *“I didn't even realize how expensive food was before, and now I've really learned that I have to avoid impulsive purchases and look for deals to manage my budget”*, suggesting that the price of groceries has taken on an entirely different significance for him since he moved away from home. Although the primary objective of searching for promotional offers is to reduce expenses, many respondents explain that it often leads to purchasing more things than intended due to the temptation of discounts. The behavior of buying more than intended is highlighted in studies by Hultén and Vanyushyn (2011) and Pallikkara et al. (2020), which suggest that

promotional offers are one way to prompt customers to make impulsive purchases. Overall, the correlation between the internal factor lifestyle (Parboteeah, 2005) and the external factors of social environment (David, 2023; Pallikkara et al. 2020), socioeconomic status (David, 2023), and advertising communication (Hultén & Vanyushyn, 2011; Pallikkara et al. 2020) is evident.

### 4.3 Exploring situational influences

#### 4.3.1 Balancing time management and thoughtful purchases

Our findings highlight a correlation between the amount of time students allocate for grocery shopping and their stress levels. Previous studies conducted by Hultén and Vanyushyn (2011) and Dhar and Nowlis (1999) suggest that under time pressure, individuals tend to minimize the duration spent deliberating their purchases, leading them to consume more impulsively. In contrast to previous studies, this study demonstrates that the female respondents' preference for a well-organized daily routine persists even during periods of time pressure, resulting in fewer impulse purchases being made. For instance, Vera explains that during the periods when she has less time due to an increased workload from school, she tends to prefer an even more carefully planned daily routine for her purchases. She states, *“By planning my purchases in advance, I experience a sense of control while avoiding impulse purchases that potentially could intensify the feeling of stress that I am already experiencing”*. Likewise, Selma expresses similar thoughts,

*“The stress of school actually makes me want to stick to routines more. If I have control over my food purchases, I have control over everything. Also it feels like it’s a more ‘girly’ thing to have things under control despite the stress of school. ”* - Selma

*“When it’s stressful, I usually try to buy lots of good groceries that will last for many meals. I make sure to plan my shopping based on recipes and prioritize ingredients like rice, protein, and milk.”* - Alice

Having previously experienced a desire to shop impulsively when feeling stressed, Selma describes how she fears to feel unwell due to academic stress, as she does not want to deviate from her routines. Therefore, adhering to routines becomes particularly important for her in

an attempt to minimize impulsive behavior. This aligns with Cintamür (2023) and Rook and Gardner (1993), who argue that impulse purchases occur when individuals are in a negative state of mind and shop impulsively in hopes of feeling better momentarily. According to Maja, one particular impulsive purchase deviates significantly from her usual routines. *“I don’t regularly use snus, I actually find it quite embarrassing. But when I’m feeling down, it feels like it brings me some sort of calmness and helps me manage my emotions.”* Several respondents reason similarly, indicating that their snus purchases are not linked to preferences or habits, but rather to the need to find strategies for coping with negative emotions and stress.

*“When I am stressed because I’m in the middle of my exam periods, I always feel the need to use snus to feel better. Even if I normally wouldn’t want to spend money on it, it feels more acceptable to do so when I’m stressed.” - Liam*

This quote is just one of several examples that illustrate how both men and women tend to make impulse purchases of hedonistic products, even tobacco, when experiencing negative emotional states. According to Pallikkara et al. (2020) and Verplanken et al. (2005), individuals exhibit less sensitivity to prices when it comes to hedonic products, which in our study is a trend especially visible among students during periods of time pressure. Additionally, Maja states, *“When I’m studying for an exam, it’s normal for me to buy more snacks... so I don’t get completely depressed... it’s not something that’s written on the list because I wait to see what I want at the moment.”* These quotes suggest that under such circumstances, people are more prone to seek short-term satisfaction or comfort through their purchases, (Cintamür, 2023; Rook & Gardner, 1993).

*“I usually shop on my way home from school, focusing on getting in and out of the store as quickly as possible. So I throw some delicious things into the cart without really thinking.” - Liam*

The individual is seeking comfort or relief by rewarding themselves with certain actions or items. It appears that when time is limited, the respondents prioritize making quick shopping decisions on their way home from school to maximize efficiency in a stressful situation. Kalla och Arora (2011) presents how fluctuations in energy levels or mood can heighten the likelihood of impulsive purchase temptations, which may explain the respondents’ tendency

to shop impulsively after a long school day. William further expresses, *“When I’m in a rush, shopping in the evening after a long school-day, I tend to impulsively buy more discounted items since I pick the things I immediately see in the store.”* This can be linked to Duarte et al. (2013), who argues that stores strategically position products to maximize their visibility and increase consumer impulsive purchasing behavior. Consistent with Hultén and Vanyushyn, 2011, it is evident that when in a time-pressured situation, the respondents seem more vulnerable to the effects of advertising communication, leading them to impulsively add more items to their carts than usual without careful consideration. In line with Cintamür (2023), who emphasizes impulse purchases as a relief strategy, our results highlight how the decision to add unnecessary items is made to quickly satisfy an immediate need, serving as a relief from the mental burden of time pressure and fulfilling the desire for something enjoyable. Noah elaborates, *“It’s like I need to do it quickly to get some relief from everything else I have going on.”* This illustrates a connection between the situational factors of Time pressure (Dhar & Nowlis, 1999; Hultén & Vanyushyn, 2011), Time of the day/month (Kalla & Arora, 2011), the internal factor of Well being (Cintamür 2023; Rook & Gardner, 1993) and the external factors of hedonic versus functional versus characteristics (Pallikkara et al. 2020; Verplanken et al. 2005) and marketing (Duarte et al. 2013).

#### **4.3.2 Impact of CSN payment on student spending**

With few resources left by the end of the month, Hugo expresses financial limitations, *“Luckily for my bank account, I don’t get stressed or feel down too often.”* Consistent with David’s (2023) findings on impulsive purchasing behavior in relation to socioeconomic status, Alice and Hugo make fewer impulse purchases when they feel economic constraints (see Appendix 2). Hugo describes how he tries to write more meticulous shopping lists and carefully plans his weekly meals, based on discounted and inexpensive options. Also, Vera illustrates that fewer impulse purchases are made, and if they are, they are of an essential nature (see Appendix 2). This goes against Wakefield and Inman’s (2003) findings that individuals are more price-sensitive regarding functional items and do not buy them impulsively. Further, it emerged that despite the focus on discounted prices, bulk discount campaigns such as 3 for 2 deals are avoided, contradicting Pallikkaras’ (2020) findings. Maja implies that her resistance to promotions requiring purchases of a larger quantity of the same item stems from the fact that *“even if the discounted price makes both items cheaper, the receipt becomes more expensive when buying two.”* The results indicate that students perceive



themselves as not having the financial means to think long-term or invest in larger quantities, even though it may be more cost-effective in the long run. Consistent with the research on self-control during variable periods by Kalla and Arora (2011), towards the end of the month when students are awaiting student financial aid (CSN), the respondents tend to adhere more strictly to their grocery shopping lists thereby reducing the number of impulse purchases. Except for bulk promotions, this study's findings align with David (2023) and Duarte et al. (2013), as respondents are more inclined to purchase discounted products during financial constraints. With the aim of saving money, several of the respondents mention that they attempt to create their shopping lists based on the items they already have at home, combined with discounted items available in stores. Among others, Alice mentions, *"To save money, I usually do 'freezer clearings', where I take the time to use up what I already have in the freezer instead of buying new items."*

In contrast, Maja explains that she finds it *"more enjoyable to write shopping lists when CSN has just arrived"* and suggests that she often feels the urge to try new recipes and is more open to new items in the store. This newfound financial flexibility appears to encourage the respondents to explore additional purchases or splurge on items they previously considered unaffordable. Consequently, following the immediate receiving of CSN can be characterized by increased consumption activity and a greater tendency for impulse buying. *"It's just as if I have more room for creativity and spontaneity during these periods of increased financial stability"*, Hugo adds. Furthermore, it is revealed that upon the arrival of a new CSN payment, it is perceived as a good opportunity to try out new recipes. Maja expresses, *"I gather recipes to cook when I've just received my CSN, as many creative recipes which often require more and expensive ingredients."* Similar to what Kalla and Arora (2011) present in their study, our study highlights that the need for arousal is a contributing factor to impulse purchases. Additionally, Selma explains that she looks forward to the time when she receives a proper salary and is not limited to a student budget. In line with this, William mentions that when he has just received his student loan, it is as if he forgets he is a student. During these temporarily improved financial conditions, he prefers to try new restaurants and does not take the time to write specific shopping lists, if he writes one at all.

*“I probably won’t stick to my list strictly once I have more than the bare minimum budget. It feels like I’m forced to cook boring meals when I’d rather try new ingredients.” - Selma*

Furthermore, when the male respondents experience an increased availability of funds after receiving CSN payment may lead to purchasing more luxury items and indulgent goods, with less emphasis on planning and meal preparation. Upon analyzing men’s receipts, it can be observed that during periods of favorable financial circumstances, the number of items on the shopping list decreases while the impulsive purchases increase (see Appendix 2). This aspect is also explored during interviews, as Liam explained that he “allows himself” to dine out at restaurants due to their hedonistic appeal, acknowledging their higher cost, and feeling that he can afford it. This aligns with the findings of Wakefield and Inman (2003), who suggest that individuals are less price-sensitive regarding hedonic choices.

*“I hardly bought anything at ICA that week. Instead, I took the opportunity to meet my friends in Copenhagen, and that resulted in eating out quite a bit. If you’ve managed to get by on lasagna for a whole week, I think it’s okay to treat yourself to some restaurant food.” - Liam*

This highlights a correlation between the internal factors of need for arousal (Kalla & Arora, 2011), the situational factors of time of the day/month (Kalla & Arora, 2011) and the external factors of Advertising communication (David 2023; Duarte et al. 2013; Kalla & Arora, 2011; Pallikkara, 2020) hedonic versus functional characteristics (Wakefield & Inman, 2003).

#### 4.4 The correlations among factors identified in interviews

The table which is presented down below, Table 5: *Correlations among factors identified in interviews*, illustrates an overview of the factors and correlations mentioned in the analysis. The columns are categorized according to the framework’s internal, external, and situational factors. A notation, represented by a positive or negative symbol, connects to each main and sub-factor to indicate whether there has been an increase or decrease in instances of impulse purchasing. Despite covering all factors outlined in the theoretical framework, students demonstrate different effects across various factors. Meaning, factors that did not impact the respondent’s impulse buying behavior were omitted from the table. Furthermore, each respondent is accompanied by a short explanatory text aimed at elucidating the relationship between the factors.

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Internal</b>	<b>External</b>	<b>Situational</b>	<b>Theory factors and Correlation</b>
<b>Alice</b>	Lifestyle (-), Materialism (-), Introversion (-), Lifestyle (-), Introvert (-), Emotional instability (-)	Affordability (-), Functional (+)	Time pressure (-)	Alice's lifestyle and her introversion is closely correlated with her well-being. She explains that she feels better when structured and avoids impulsive shopping, which is further evident during time-pressured situations. Her choice of healthy products, makes her stick to her shopping list more which leads to less impulsive purchases.
<b>Maja</b>	Lifestyle (+), Need for arousal (+), Emotional instability (+), Materialism (-)	Advertising communication (+), Friends and family (+), Hedonic (+), Store layout (+)	Time pressure (+), Received CSN (+), Awaiting CSN (-)	Maja's social lifestyle and desire to impress her friends often prompt impulse purchases, influenced by materialism and social media. Stressful times exacerbate her tendency to spend impulsively, especially when swayed by her social circle's opinions. She keeps up with trends from TikTok and store promotions. With student aid, she explores new recipes, leading to less specific shopping lists and more impulsive buying. Conversely, when finances are tight, she prioritizes using what's already at home.
<b>Vera</b>	Lifestyle (-), Materialism (-), Well-being (-),	Affordability (-), Friends (+) & family (-), Socioeconomic status (-)	Awaiting CSN (-), Time pressure (-) Time of the day/month (+)	Vera generally exhibits few tendencies of impulsiveness, driven by her desire to maintain a certain well-being. During periods of time pressure, she tends to make fewer impulse purchases as a way of preserving her sense of well-being. Her family and socioeconomic status have diminished her tendencies toward impulse purchases. While awaiting CSN, she is particularly meticulous with her list and refrains from impulse purchases. If Vera makes impulse purchases, they typically serve a functional purpose rather than being indulgent, or during social gatherings.
<b>Selma</b>	Materialism(-), Lifestyle (-), Emotional instability (-), Well-being (-)	Friends (+), & family (-), Advertising communication (-), Functional (+), Socioeconomic status (-)	Time pressure (-), Received CSN (+)	Selma is aware of how impulse purchases impact her self-image and intends to maintain a lifestyle consistent with her friends' through the upkeep of social media. During periods of time pressure, Selma does not exhibit an increase in impulse buying; instead, it serves as a means for her to reinforce her self-image and enhance her well-being. If impulse purchases are made, they are of a functional nature or occur on specific occasions and/or when just receiving CSN.
<b>Noah</b>	Need for arousal (+), Well-being (+), Materialism (+)	Friends & family (+), Hedonic (+)	Receiving CSN (+), Time pressure (+),	He impulsively purchases due to his personality traits and need for arousal. Materialism is evident, as this tendency is further reinforced in the company of friends, especially with products of a hedonic nature. When Noah recently received his student aid, he enjoys dining out with friends, leading to more impulse purchases at the grocery store. During time pressure, impulse buying increases, and well-being is explained as one of the reasons.
<b>William</b>	Introverted (-), Lifestyle (+), Need for arousal (+), Introversion (-), Well-being (+)	Socioeconomic status (-), Advertising communication (+), Store layout (+)	Awaiting CSN (+), Time pressure (+)	William lives by the lifestyle of not adhering to a strict list and fulfilling his need for arousal, which increases impulse purchases. However, his socioeconomic status leads to the utilization of discounted prices, further increasing his impulse buys as he is influenced by the store's layout. During times of pressure, impulse purchases is as a way to increase well-being and reduce stress. When awaiting CSN, his impulsive purchases increase as his shopping lists become less specific, and buys more promotional offers.
<b>Liam</b>	Need for arousal (+), Well-being (+), Materialism (+)	Product design & price (+) Hedonic (+) Friends & family (+) Advertising communication (+)	Time pressure (+), Awaiting CSN (+)	Liam is described as having a strong need for arousal, which reinforces his impulse purchases of hedonistic products. This tendency is amplified when consuming with his friends. During periods of time pressure, his impulse buying increases, explained by his immediate need to enhance his well-being. When awaiting CSN, he increases his impulse purchases as a result of seeking discounted items, affected by advertising communication.
<b>Hugo</b>	Lifestyle (-), Need for arousal (+), Well-being (+), Materialism (+)	Product features (+), Advertising communicating (+), Friends & family (+)	Time pressure (+), Awaiting CSN (-), Received CSN (+)	Hugo's interest in cooking, appears to be less inclined to make impulsive purchases by his friends' opinions when shopping. However, his need for arousal result in increased impulse buying. The impulse purchases he makes are primarily of functional characteristics and high quality, but he takes advantage of special offers and the store's layout. However, in situations where he is under time pressure, impulse purchases of hedonistic products increase. When awaiting CSN, his impulse purchases decrease.

Table 5, The correlations among factors identified in interviews

## 5. Discussion

In the upcoming section, the study's theoretical contributions are presented, highlighting how its findings contribute to current research in the field. The practical implications will be presented, illustrating how the findings of the study is advantageous for marketers and businesses. Suggestions for future research are then presented, identifying areas for further exploration. Furthermore, limitations are outlined in order to evaluate the study's credibility and provide insight into its scope and possible deficiencies. Finally, the study's conclusions are presented, illustrating how this study has contributed to an understanding of the correlation between internal, external, and situational factors influencing impulse purchases.

### 5.1 Theoretical contributions

Drawing from the research question and findings, this study illustrates that impulsive buying tendencies among students represent a complex phenomenon shaped by a combination of internal, external, and situational factors. It is noteworthy that emphasis has been placed on the most prevalent correlations, yet all factors have been shown to interact with each other.

The analysis illustrates how purchases can serve as a tool for creating and confirming a specific identity and social status. By analyzing and interconnecting these two aspects, it becomes evident that personality traits and social environment play a crucial role in how students shape their identity through their purchasing decisions. The act of making impulsive purchases is not merely a functional act to fulfill needs but also a means for individuals to express their personality and aspire to the social position they desire to uphold. Additionally, individuals personality traits of being structured versus unstructured should be regarded as factors influencing impulse buying. Considering that the shopping list acts as a tool to both reduce impulsive buying and influence one's sense of self, this aspect should be taken into account while analyzing impulse purchases and its correlation to personality traits. The integrated analysis demonstrates how the internal factor of materialism (through the act of writing a shopping list and what types of products are added) and the external factor of friends and family should converge into an additional integrated factor termed identity creation. Identity creation would encompass a process wherein individuals actively shape their identity and enhance their image through consumption choices. This factor involves how individuals choose to present themselves and how they wish to be perceived by others. When individuals are unable to achieve their desired identity, a correlation between the external factor of social

environment and the internal factors of personality traits and well-being emerges, since it potentially leads to an intensified negative mood. In this thesis, it is demonstrated that the majority of female respondents make fewer impulse purchases to reinforce their desired structured identity, aiming to enhance their well-being. Conversely, the majority of male respondents compensate for the negative mood by making more impulse purchases and writing less shopping lists which adheres to their more unstructured lifestyle. Additionally, it becomes evident that the internal factor of well-being is closely connected with the situational factor of time pressure. The study reveals that stress often accompanies time pressure, wherein women have developed a sophisticated strategy to manage the emotions that may arise in such purchasing situations. Through thorough planning and control of their purchases, they can not only effectively handle stress but also resist the social pressure to make impulsive purchases. This structured approach serves not only as a method of stress management but also as a defense mechanism against deviating from their desired identity. In contrast, men often adopt a more flexible strategy in the same situation, displaying a greater propensity to improvise and make quick decisions without considering the consequences.

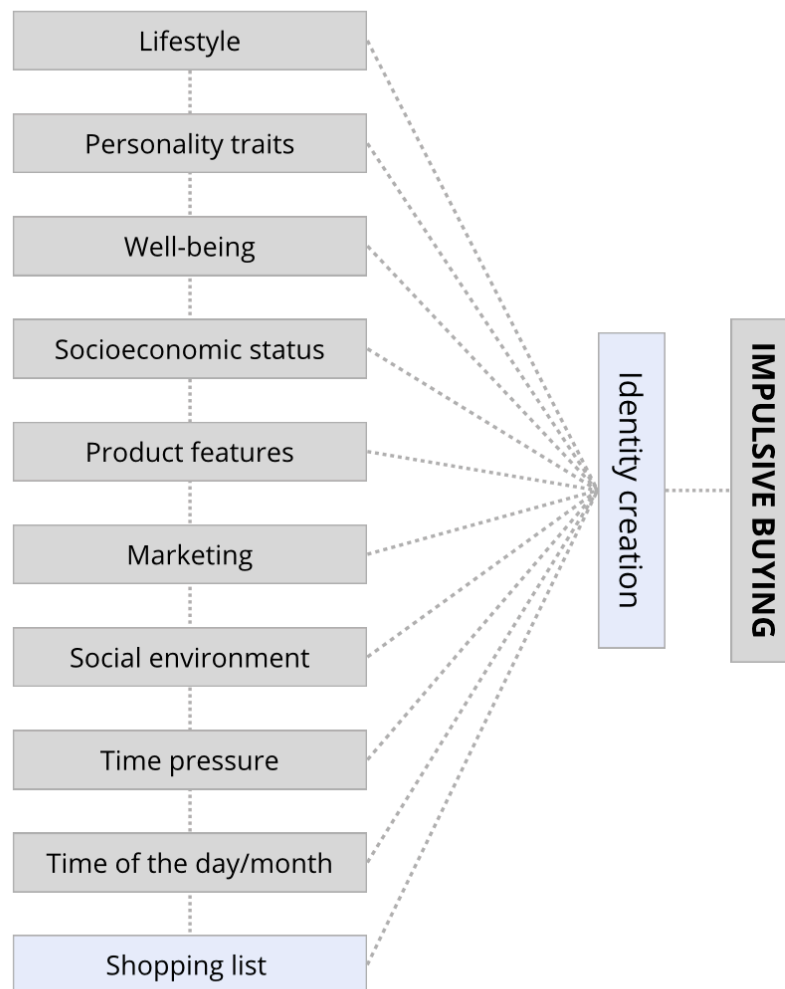
Furthermore, the degree of willingness to achieve the desired identity is influenced by the individual's level of introversion affecting the extent to which social influence plays a role. The level of social influence can potentially result in either an increase or decrease in impulsive purchasing behavior, depending on the individual's introversion. The findings show how these actions are pursued with the aim of bolstering one's constructed identity and avoiding divergence from it in the perception of others. The external factor of social environment is also integrated here, highlighting how the perceptions of friends and family continually influence impulsive purchases, regardless of time availability and well-being. Furthermore, socioeconomic status consistently intertwines with identity creation, as it becomes apparent that this factor limits individuals' ability to achieve their desired identity. Consequently, the relationship between socioeconomic status, the act of writing shopping lists and the external factor of advertising communication becomes crucial in minimizing one's impulsive buying behavior, as the utilization of promotional offers assists individuals in getting as close to their desired identity as possible. The practice of creating shopping lists and its association with decreased impulse buying has been found to stem from family influences. Hence, it is suggested to separate the subfactor friends & family, as it typically indicates that friends tend to increase impulsive buying, whereas family tends to decrease it.

However, there are instances where connections with friends suggest a desire to uphold a certain image, potentially reducing impulse purchases, yet still resulting in the spontaneous purchase of more hedonic products. Impulse buying is also linked to the external factor of product features, as the choice of products is influenced by the characteristics of the individual's desired identity. This is evidenced in the study's findings, where hedonistic products dominate as the major characteristic of impulse purchases.

Furthermore, products are often purchased based on the individual's specific interests, which in turn can be linked to their social environment. This becomes particularly evident in relation to the situational factor of time of day/month, as individuals show a significantly greater influence from their external factor socioeconomic status and become increasingly attracted to store layout and product placement of promotional offers towards the end of the month. An evident direct influence from the social environment on individuals' consumption patterns and product choices can be observed. The situational factor, whether it pertains to the time of day or month, is closely associated with situations where respondents find themselves in social settings where friends can influence their impulsive behavior. In this way, the relationship between the factors of time of day/month, products features, lifestyle, and friends and family is essential. The study revealed that having an interest in food significantly influences the types of products people choose when making impulse purchases. As a result, this finding sparks curiosity within the lifestyle factor to investigate other interests beyond just health consciousness.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that impulsive buying among students results from a complex interplay of internal, external, and situational factors. To clarify the answer to the research question, *How do internal, external, and situational factors interact to influence impulsive buying?* Figure 1 has been created. The figure refrains from categorizing them strictly as internal, external, or situational. The figure presents the factors that visibly influence impulse buying with the factor shopping list added. These overarching factors are closely intertwined and interact in a complex manner, making it challenging to distinctly delineate them. It is more insightful to view these factors as intricately interlinked, each influencing the others in a dynamic process. Additionally, identity creation has been incorporated into the model to highlight its significance in relation to each factor and impulsive buying. Overall, the study underscores the interconnected nature of these factors,

demonstrating that impulsive buying is not driven by isolated elements but by their dynamic interactions, which can increase or decrease depending on how these factors interplay for each respondent.



*Figure 1: Factors correlation within Impulsive Buying*

## 5.2 Practical implication

The aim of this thesis was to enhance the comprehension of the interaction between external, internal, and situational factors influencing impulsive buying behavior in physical grocery stores. Through the application of qualitative methodology, this thesis seeks to explore the connections between internal, external and situational factors and how it relates to impulsive buying. In this section, it is elucidated how marketers and businesses can leverage the insights to effectively tailor their strategies and campaigns.

Marketers can utilize the findings of this thesis to create targeted marketing campaigns that resonate with their target demographic. Understanding the underlying motivations behind impulsive buying behavior allows marketers to create compelling narratives that appeal to consumers' desires for self-expression. Through strategic placement of products and messaging across various marketing channels, marketers can effectively influence consumer behavior and drive impulsive purchasing decisions. By incorporating these insights into marketing strategies, businesses can capitalize on the interplay between identity creation and impulsive buying tendencies to optimize their marketing efforts and foster increased consumer engagement and loyalty.

Furthermore, these uncovered interactions underscore the importance of developing retail strategies that align with consumers' personal tastes and social identities, ultimately enhancing the overall shopping experience. Developing personalized recommendations may capture consumers' attention and stimulate impulse buying behavior by highlighting products that appeal to their desires and interests at the moment. This approach not only increases the likelihood of immediate purchases but also fosters long-term customer loyalty by demonstrating an understanding of and responsiveness to individual needs. Overall, by leveraging consumer data to provide personalized product recommendations, businesses can create more engaging and compelling shopping experiences that drive sales and cultivate strong customer relationships.

Although this study is primarily aimed at businesses, the conclusions drawn may also be relevant for consumers. It is important for individuals to recognize the impact of their social circles on their impulsive purchasing behavior and to critically assess the motivations behind their impulse buying. By reflecting on their values, preferences, and aspirations, individuals can make conscious choices that align with their authentic selves, rather than yielding to external pressures.

### 5.3 Limitations

Considering the brief duration of the course, data collection was constrained by time limitations. This affects the dependability of the thesis since it concerns how consistent and reliable the results are over time and under different circumstances. There are constraints associated with the time frame available for conducting the study, which may have affected



the extent and or depth of the analysis. Furthermore, the time constraints also impacted the sample size and the quantity of interviewed respondents. In order to enhance the study's validity, the sample size could be increased. The constrained sample size subsequently impacts the study's generalizability, thereby affecting its applicability to alternative populations or scenarios (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

In the selection of respondents, several criteria were employed to ensure validity, ensuring optimal circumstances for categorization and analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Despite efforts to employ a snowball sampling technique to diversify the selection of cases it is important to acknowledge a limitation of this study. Due to the fact that the researchers are students and part of a student community, the individuals included in this thesis were students. Consequently, the findings may not fully capture the perspectives and experiences of individuals from different demographic backgrounds or professions.

Even though several criterias have been established, the reliability could be questionable due to the human factor involved when respondents collect data themselves. When individuals find themselves being observed, whether consciously or unconsciously, they often become more attuned to their own actions. This sense of self-awareness can lead to a reconsideration of their behavior. Also, there is no guarantee that the respondents will include all their purchases and required data in the personal documents and interviews. For example, it is possible that supplementary receipts are excluded, leading to data exclusion. In this thesis, it emerges that some individuals often choose to eat out at restaurants during weekends, which could result in misleading collection of grocery shopping data. This indicates that there may be a certain weakness in the study's validity.

In conclusion, it is important to consider that qualitative studies can be influenced by subjectivity in several ways, negatively affecting validity and reliability. Subjectivity affects interpretation as the researcher's own values, experiences, and perspectives can influence how the results are interpreted. If the researcher is not aware of or does not consider their own subjectivity, it might result in a biased interpretation of the findings, deviating from an accurate representation of the actual circumstances (Easterby-Smith et al. 2021).

## 5.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study illustrates that impulsive buying among students stems from a complex interplay of internal, external, and situational factors. These factors interact dynamically, challenging attempts at distinct categorization.

The results highlight the following recurring correlations: Compelling marketing campaigns influence impulse buying during periods of unstable well-being and time pressure, social pressures drive impulsive behavior to maintain status, and end-of-month financial availability reduces impulsive buying tendencies. Gender differences further underscore the influence of factors such as socioeconomic status and materialism on impulse buying. It is evident that these factors affect individuals differently, with no single factor compensating for another; rather, they collectively contribute to an increased tendency to make impulsive purchases.

The importance of identity creation is further highlighted, influencing all factors relating to impulsive purchases. Impulse buying serves as a means for individuals to shape and affirm their identities, with both personality traits and the social environment playing crucial roles. Identity creation emerges as a significant factor in this interaction, emphasizing that impulsive buying is driven by the interrelated nature of these factors, whose impact can vary depending on the individual's circumstances. By serving as a means for individuals to shape and affirm their identities, impulsive buying highlights the interconnected nature of internal, external, and situational factors, directly addressing the question of how the factors interact to influence impulse buying.

## 5.5 Further research

Further studies should delve even deeper into the factors that interact to influence impulsive buying behavior. Conducting studies over an extended period to track changes in impulsive buying tendencies and investigate how various life events or environmental changes may affect these tendencies. Expanding the study to include populations beyond students, for instance working professionals or older individuals, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of impulsive buying behavior and its underlying factors. Moreover, research could explore cultural differences in impulsive buying behavior to determine how cultural norms and values shape individuals' tendency for impulsive purchases. By comparing impulsive buying behavior across diverse populations and different cultural contexts,

researchers could identify culturally specific factors that contribute to impulsive buying tendencies and tailor interventions accordingly. Therefore, it may be interesting to employ theories such as Consumer Buyer Behavior and Consumer Culture Theory, with an emphasis on identity formation, to attain an extensive understanding of impulsive purchasing and to highlight unexplored findings. Furthermore, given the increasing prevalence of online shopping, future studies could examine if the correlation of factors influencing impulsive buying behavior differs in the digital environment. This could involve investigating how features such as personalized recommendations and social media influence impulsive buying tendencies in online settings compared to traditional physical grocery stores. This area of study exhibits considerable potential for clarifying the complex interplay among consumers' self-perception, their purchasing behaviors, and the impulsive tendencies that motivate them. By delving deeper into the complexities of impulsive buying behavior, we can uncover keys to consumer psychology and decision-making. Addressing the outlined research avenues and its theoretical contributions can provide the development with more effective strategies for consumer satisfaction and market regulation. This study marks the beginning of this endeavor, urging further exploration of impulse buying in today's society.

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## Appendix 1:

### Interview guide

#### About the respondent (Lifestyle)

- How would you describe your lifestyle?
- Are you someone who enjoys trying new things or prefers sticking to familiar routines?
- Do you feel that your lifestyle influences your shopping habits?
- Are you interested in cooking? Is it just a necessity or enjoyable?
- Do you usually shop weekly or make several smaller trips during the week?
- How do you plan for a weekly shopping trip? (e.g., planning tailored to the week's events and specials)
- In what ways does your daily food consumption differ from weekends? (e.g., eating with friends)
- Do you have any allergies or food preferences that affect your food consumption? Are you a vegetarian?
- Would you say you are organized when it comes to grocery shopping?

#### Introversion:

- Would you consider yourself more introverted or extroverted?
- Do you find that social interactions affect your shopping decisions?

#### Self-esteem:

- How would you rate your self-esteem?
- Do you ever make impulse purchases as a way to boost your self-confidence or mood?

#### Need for arousal:

- Do you seek out excitement and stimulation in your daily life?
- Have you ever made impulsive purchases to satisfy a need for excitement or novelty?

#### Materialism:

- How important are material possessions to you?
- Do you find yourself drawn to products based on their brand name or perceived status?

#### Product features

- Are you more drawn to products with attractive designs or lower prices?
- How much importance do you place on product features when making a purchase?

- Do you tend to prioritize pleasure and enjoyment when choosing products, or do you focus more on practicality and functionality?
- Have you ever bought something on impulse simply because it seemed enjoyable at the moment?

#### Product selection

- What motivates you to try new products in the grocery store? (store, product appearance, price, taste, brand)
- Would you say that the product's placement in the store affects your purchases?
- Do you often buy items on sale?
- If yes, what type of items?
- Are there any items you would never buy on sale?
- Do you ever choose a product solely because of the price?
- Are there times when you intentionally choose a product based on brand/taste, even if it's at regular price?

#### Before and during purchase:

- Why do you shop at the store you shop at?
- What are the pros and cons?
- When do you usually shop?
- Are you a member of any store?
  - If yes, why?
- Do you usually write a shopping list before you go grocery shopping?
- What do you base your shopping list on? (e.g., specials, cravings, recipes)
- What does your preparation look like before you go shopping?
- Do you ever go to the store unprepared?
- How do you think it affects your purchases?

#### Social environment:

- Related to your family/close ones, do your shopping habits differ from theirs?
- Do you feel that you are more concerned about prices and planned purchases than your friends?
- Do you feel that your behavior differs depending on the time of the month? Like end vs beginning?
- Have you ever made impulsive purchases based on recommendations from friends or family?

Emotional instability (stress):

- How do you typically cope with stress?
- Have you noticed any changes in your shopping behavior during periods of high stress?

Socioeconomic stress (affordability):

- How do financial considerations influence your shopping decisions?
- Have you ever made impulsive purchases despite financial concerns?

Time pressure:

- How do time constraints impact your shopping behavior?
- Have you ever made impulsive purchases because you were in a hurry?

Time of the month (awaiting CSN):

- Do you notice any differences in your spending habits at different times of the month?
- How does the timing of financial resources, such as CSN, affect your shopping behavior?

## Appendix 2:

The total amount of impulsive purchases per respondent.

Respondent	Nr. items on shopping list	Nr. items outside shopping list	Total amount purchased items	% impulsive purchased items	Weekly notes
<b>Alice</b>					
Week 1	25	0	25	0,0%	Exam-week
Week 2	20	1	21	4,8%	Regular training week, nothing spec.
Week 3	16	0	16	0,0%	Had a cold, waiting for CSN
Week 4	26	2	28	7,1%	Received CSN last week
Week 5	23	1	24	4,2%	Feeling good
Week 6	23	2	25	8,0%	
Week 7	24	0	24	0,0%	Exam-week
Week 8	26	2	28	7,1%	Received CSN
<b>Total average</b>	<b>22,9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>23,9</b>	<b>3,9%</b>	
<b>Maja</b>					
Week 1	23	4	27	15%	I had friends over for dinner
Week 2	20	3	23	13%	Promo on zucchini so decided to do zucchini pasta
Week 3	21	0	21	0%	Nothing special happening
Week 4	20	3	23	13%	Received CSN last week
Week 5	0	15	15	100%	Did not write a list
Week 6	10	3	13	23%	Sick, feeling down
Week 7	18	6	24	25%	Deadline in school
Week 8	20	5	25	20%	Received CSN
<b>Total average</b>	<b>16,5</b>	<b>4,9</b>	<b>21,4</b>	<b>26,1%</b>	
<b>Vera</b>					
Week 1	20	0	20	0,0%	I have 3 exams this week
Week 2	16	2	18	11,1%	My friends over for dinner
Week 3	15	0	15	0,0%	It's a poor time
Week 4	20	1	21	4,8%	Received CSN last week
Week 5	22	1	23	4,3%	
Week 6	23	5	28	17,9%	Sunday brunch
Week 7	19	0	19	0,0%	
Week 8	19	0	19	0,0%	Received CSN
<b>Total average</b>	<b>19,3</b>	<b>1,1</b>	<b>20,4</b>	<b>4,8%</b>	
<b>Selma</b>					
Week 1	20	1	21	4,8%	
Week 2	17	0	17	0,0%	
Week 3	16	0	16	0,0%	
Week 4	20	2	22	9,1%	Received CSN last week
Week 5	18	0	18	0,0%	Deadline in school
Week 6	27	6	33	18,2%	Brunch, bought extra food
Week 7	25	0	25	0,0%	
Week 8	24	2	26	7,7%	Received CSN
<b>Total average</b>	<b>20,9</b>	<b>1,4</b>	<b>22,3</b>	<b>5,0%</b>	

<b>Noah</b>					
Week 1	9	3	12	25,0%	Copenhagen with friends
Week 2	7	5	12	41,7%	Dinner with the boys
Week 3	7	3	10	30,0%	
Week 4	4	5	9	55,6%	Received CSN last week
Week 5	6	8	14	57,1%	I study for exam
Week 6	4	6	10	60,0%	Exam
Week 7	7	4	11	36,4%	
Week 8	0	4	4	100,0%	Received CSN
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>50,7%</b>	
<b>William</b>					
Week 1	5	8	13	61,5%	Exam week
Week 2	5	6	11	54,5%	
Week 3	4	5	9	55,6%	Financially tuff
Week 4	0	5	5	100,0%	Received CSN last week
Week 5	6	8	14	57,1%	
Week 6	-	-	-	-	I lost my receipt
Week 7	5	10	15	66,7%	School deadline
Week 8	2	7	9	77,8%	Received CSN
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,4</b>	<b>6,1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>59,2%</b>	
<b>Liam</b>					
Week 1	5	7	12	58,3%	Copenhagen with friends
Week 2	-	-	-	-	I lost my receipt
Week 3	7	3	10	30,0%	
Week 4	0	6	6	100,0%	Received CSN last week, no shopping list
Week 5	8	9	17	52,9%	Exam
Week 6	4	5	9	55,6%	
Week 7	13	3	16	18,8%	
Week 8	3	7	10	70,0%	Received CSN
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,0</b>	<b>5,0</b>	<b>10,0</b>	<b>48,2%</b>	
<b>Hugo</b>					
Week 1	17	3	20	15,0%	Dinner with friends
Week 2	18	2	20	10,0%	
Week 3	17	0	17	0,0%	
Week 4	22	5	27	18,5%	Received CSN last week
Week 5	20	4	24	16,7%	School deadline
Week 6	19	3	22	13,6%	
Week 7	20	0	20	0,0%	
Week 8	20	5	25	20,0%	Received CSN
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,1</b>	<b>2,8</b>	<b>21,9</b>	<b>11,7%</b>	