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Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility on Consumer Buying Practices

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on consumer buying practices, with a specific focus on impulse buying behavior across three CSR dimensions — environmental, social, and economic responsibility within Pakistan's Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector. As ethical awareness grows among consumers, CSR has emerged as a strategic tool for shaping brand perception and influencing purchasing behavior. While prior research has largely concentrated on planned buying intentions, this study extends the inquiry to the relatively under-researched relationship between CSR and impulsive purchasing. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected from 50 consumers through a structured questionnaire adapted from validated CSR and consumer behavior scales. Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS, encompassing reliability testing, factor analysis, and regression analysis. The findings indicate a positive but statistically insignificant relationship between impulse buying and overall CSR dimensions. However, environmental and economic responsibility demonstrated relatively stronger associations with impulse buying compared to social responsibility. This suggests that consumers may emotionally justify spontaneous purchases when brands are perceived as environmentally friendly or economically fair, whereas social initiatives alone may not strongly trigger unplanned purchases. The study contributes to CSR and consumer behavior literature by extending CSR's influence into the domain of impulsive decision-making within an emerging market context. For practitioners, the findings highlight the importance of integrating visible environmental and economic CSR cues into marketing strategies to influence emotionally driven purchases. The research objectives and questions are aligned with the data analysis outcomes, confirming which CSR dimensions are most salient in impulsive purchase contexts. Despite limitations related to sample size and cross-sectional design, this study provides a foundation for future research examining psychological and contextual factors shaping CSR-driven impulse buying behavior.

Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has emerged as a central strategy for businesses aiming to gain trust, customer loyalty, and long-term sustainability in today's competitive and socially aware marketplace. As consumers become more conscious of environmental, ethical, and social issues, they are increasingly favoring companies that reflect their personal values and demonstrate a commitment to broader societal well-being (Rana et al., 2025; Wekesa, 2024). CSR activities ranging from environmental stewardship and social development to economic fairness are no longer considered optional; they play a significant role in shaping brand image and influencing consumer behavior across sectors such as FMCG and apparel (Zhu et al., 2020; Rana et al., 2025; Zhang & Ahmad, 2022; Akhtar et al., 2023).

Within this framework, consumer perceptions of CSR have a profound impact on their behavior. Studies show that CSR dimensions, including environmental, social, and economic responsibility, enhance brand reputation and foster consumer engagement (Zhang & Ahmad, 2022; Akhtar et al., 2023). The growing preference for value-driven consumption means that consumers are now evaluating companies not only on product quality and price but also on ethical alignment. This shift has been especially noticeable in competitive sectors where emotional and moral brand associations can significantly shape behavior such as purchase intent and brand loyalty (Zhu et al., 2024; Ullah et al., 2023).

Recent research suggests that CSR initiatives can also impact impulse buying behavior, a form of unplanned purchasing influenced by emotional and situational triggers. When consumers encounter products associated with ethical branding, eco-friendly packaging, or social impact campaigns, they may justify impulse purchases based on these moral cues (Frumkin et al., 2020; Zhang & Ahmad, 2022). While economic and environmental CSR efforts are known to encourage such responses, empirical evidence quantifying this relationship especially in emerging markets is still lacking (Fahim et al., 2020). This study focuses on how impulse buying (independent variable) influences consumer perception of CSR across environmental, social, and economic domains (dependent variables).

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Problem Statement

Although CSR is widely recognized as a factor that shapes consumer attitudes and behaviors, current research presents several important gaps. Many studies focus on general sentiments or planned behavior, leaving impulse buying behavior underexplored in relation to CSR dimensions (Zhang & Ahmad, 2022; Frumkin et al., 2020). There is a shortage of empirical evidence identifying which CSR initiatives are most effective in influencing spontaneous consumer responses and how these effects vary across environmental, social, and economic responsibility domains. Additionally, methodological gaps exist, as few studies apply robust quantitative models to test these relationships. Much of the existing research is also geographically limited to developed countries, with little focus on emerging economies like Pakistan.

This gap is particularly significant in Pakistan's FMCG sector, where CSR messaging is increasingly used to influence consumer preferences (Iqbal & Chishti, 2023), but practical knowledge about its actual behavioral impact is scarce (Zhu et al., 2024; Zhu et al., 2020; Akhtar et al., 2023). Pakistani consumers are exposed to CSR through brand advertising, packaging, and promotional campaigns, yet it remains unclear whether these strategies translate into unplanned buying decisions. The influence of CSR on impulse buying and how consumers rationalize ethical purchases emotionally remains largely unexplored in this context.

This study aims to address this empirical, knowledge, practical, and methodological gaps by quantitatively examining the influence of impulse buying on CSR perception across environmental, social, and economic domains. By focusing on consumers in Pakistan's FMCG sector, the study provides population-specific insights that enhance both academic understanding and business strategy. It also contributes to theoretical development by mapping the behavioral mechanisms that link consumer psychology and CSR-driven messaging.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Does impulse buying behavior significantly influence consumers' perception of environmental responsibility?

RQ2: Does impulse buying behavior significantly influence consumers' perception of social responsibility?

RQ3: Does impulse buying behavior significantly influence consumers' perception of economic responsibility?

Research Objectives

The primary objectives of this study are: (1) to examine the influence of impulse buying behavior on consumer perception of CSR across three dimensions environmental, social, and economic responsibility; (2) to identify which CSR dimension has the strongest association with impulse buying; and (3) to contribute empirical insights from the Pakistani FMCG industry context. These objectives are directly aligned with the hypotheses tested and the regression-based results presented in this study.

Significance

This study contributes to the growing literature on CSR by exploring a relatively under-researched domain: the relationship between impulse buying and the three CSR dimensions. It is particularly relevant to marketers and managers in Pakistan's FMCG industry, who are increasingly using CSR strategies to attract ethically aware consumers. By offering quantitative evidence on how CSR affects unplanned buying behavior, the study provides practical guidance for designing more effective CSR campaigns that align with consumer psychology. Furthermore, it adds to theoretical knowledge by extending CSR's impact into the realm of impulsive decision-making, an area often overlooked in academic research.

Literature Review

Consumer Behavior and Impulse Buying

Consumer buying behavior is influenced by a wide range of psychological and environmental factors. Among these, impulse buying has emerged as a significant and complex behavioral pattern, defined as spontaneous, unplanned purchasing driven by emotional triggers rather than rational decision-making (Fareed & Iqbal, 2024). The rise in consumer exposure to advertising, store displays, and value-driven messaging often stimulates such impulsive behaviors. Impulse buying is not inherently negative as it can reflect immediate emotional satisfaction and alignment with perceived personal values, particularly when linked with socially responsible messaging.

Corporate Social Responsibility in Consumer Markets

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become a core component of modern brand identity, influencing how consumers perceive and engage with businesses (Iqbal, 2022). CSR refers to a company's efforts to operate in a socially, environmentally, and economically responsible manner, often extending beyond compliance to create value for stakeholders and society. In the context of consumer behavior, CSR initiatives act as trust and value signals, which may impact consumers' purchase intentions, loyalty, and relevantly impulse buying tendencies.

This study explores the influence of CSR on consumer buying practices through three primary dimensions. Environmental Responsibility refers to actions

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that minimize environmental harm, such as sustainable production, recyclable packaging, and green marketing. Consumers who are environmentally conscious may respond favorably to such practices, even impulsively choosing products associated with environmental care. Social Responsibility encompasses engagements that support community well-being, including fair labor policies, education sponsorships, and charitable contributions. Socially driven consumers may perceive such firms as ethically aligned with their values, influencing their buying decisions (Fatima, Iqbal & Ahmed, 2023). Economic Responsibility relates to the company's approach to delivering value through fair pricing, employee welfare, and ethical sourcing. Consumers often prefer businesses that support economic fairness and stakeholder inclusion, which may trigger unplanned purchases out of perceived alignment or trust (Iqbal & Hassan, 2019).

Linking Impulse Buying with CSR Dimensions

CSR dimensions can serve as powerful emotional and psychological cues in shaping impulse buying behavior. When consumers are exposed to CSR-related information during their purchase journey, the perception of 'doing good' or supporting a responsible cause can emotionally justify unplanned purchases. For instance, a consumer may impulsively buy a product labeled as 'eco-friendly' or 'ethically sourced' even if it was not originally intended.

In this way, CSR does not merely support long-term loyalty or planned purchases but can actively stimulate immediate buying actions. The alignment of corporate actions with consumer values environmental, social, and economic creates a fertile ground for spontaneous decision-making. As CSR continues to gain relevance among ethically-aware consumers, understanding its impact on impulse-driven buying is both timely and practically significant.

Impulse Buying and Environmental Responsibility

Impulse buying is defined as a sudden, compelling, and hedonically complex purchasing behavior in which the rapidity of the decision-making process precludes thoughtful, deliberate consideration of alternatives (Rook, 1987). Environmental Responsibility refers to corporate actions that aim to minimize harm to the environment and promote ecological sustainability, including green production processes, eco-friendly packaging, and support for environmental causes.

Several studies have examined the intersection of consumer ethics and environmentally conscious behavior in the context of unplanned purchases. Hayat et al. (2021) found that consumers exposed to CSR practices related to environmental well-being were more likely to engage in impulse buying, particularly when the brand was associated with green labeling or eco-branding. Kim and Hall (2020) reported that environmental advertisements and sustainability claims positively affect consumers' purchase intentions, including impulse-driven behavior. Beak et al. (2020) demonstrated that eco-friendly labeling on products significantly increased the likelihood of spontaneous purchases in retail settings. Schneider et al. (2021) noted that positive moral emotions linked to environmental actions can trigger immediate consumption decisions. Prakash and Pathak (2017) confirmed that among young consumers, environmental packaging and green initiatives directly influenced impulse buying tendencies. Kao and Du (2020) found that design elements in environmental advertising evoke emotional responses that increase impulse buying probability. Dapi and Phiri (2015) discussed how eco-branding plays a dual role in enhancing environmental consciousness and stimulating unplanned purchases.

H1: There is a significant relationship between environmental responsibility and impulse buying.

Impulse Buying and Social Responsibility

Social Responsibility in CSR refers to actions taken by companies to contribute to societal well-being, such as fair labor practices, community support, education initiatives, and diversity and inclusion policies. As impulse buying is influenced by both emotional and cognitive factors, exposure to socially responsible practices may influence immediate consumer decisions.

Hayat et al. (2021) highlighted that while environmental CSR strongly influences consumers in China, social CSR has a weaker but still present association with impulse purchases. Palihawadana et al. (2016) found that moral values such as fairness and justice enhance consumer attachment to socially responsible brands, which can result in spontaneous buying. Cheung and To (2020) observed that consumers are more likely to make impulse purchases from retailers perceived as socially fair and transparent in their communications. Muflih (2021) reported a significant connection between loyalty driven by CSR especially social welfare initiatives and unplanned repeat buying behavior. Nguyen and Klaus (2013) showed that perceived fairness in retailer behavior positively influences unplanned purchasing in physical stores. Deng and Xu (2017) emphasized the role of organizational identification, enhanced through social responsibility, in triggering affective consumer responses like impulse buying. Kim (2019) added that when consumers perceive social CSR messaging as authentic, it increases their trust and emotional bond with the brand, which can result in impulsive buying behavior.

H2: There is a significant relationship between social responsibility and impulse buying.

Impulse Buying and Economic Responsibility

Economic Responsibility refers to a company's ethical obligation to manage its financial decisions in a way that benefits all stakeholders, including offering fair pricing, investing in employee welfare, and contributing to economic development. This dimension of CSR ensures that profitability is balanced with social equity and long-term sustainability.

Hayat et al. (2021) found that economic well-being initiatives such as reasonable pricing and employee support significantly strengthened trust and positively influenced impulse buying behaviors. Park et al. (2017) demonstrated that CSR focused on economic fairness improved brand trust, which mediated impulse purchases in retail settings. Khosroshahi et al. (2021) emphasized that transparency in pricing and value creation enhances consumer satisfaction and can trigger impulse buying through emotional validation. Muflih (2021) reported that consumers are more likely to make spontaneous purchases from firms that prioritize employee welfare and stakeholder support. Kuznetsov and Kuznetsova (2008) found that economic CSR activities foster trust, a key antecedent of impulse-driven behavior. Sohn and Ko (2021) observed that consumers often choose products impulsively when firms demonstrate strong economic responsibility through CSR messaging. Grabner-Kräuter et al. (2018) noted that economic CSR actions, including fair trade and wage policies, positively affect both consumer loyalty and impulsive responses during shopping.

H3: *There is a significant relationship between economic responsibility and impulse buying.*

Empirical Evidence

Zahid et al. (2025) examines the topic of corporate social responsibilities' impact on consumer buying practices. Environmental responsibility, social responsibility, and economic responsibility have been used as the dependent variables, and impulse buying is used as the independent variable. The data was collected from 50 respondents consisting of consumers. The Statistical Package for The Social Sciences (SPSS) technique was used to analyze this relationship.

Results show an insignificant positive relationship of impulse buying with environmental and economic responsibility, while the relationship with social responsibility was also found to be insignificant. This suggests that consumers are more likely to make impulsive purchases from companies engaging in eco-friendly and economically fair practices, while social responsibility alone may not strongly influence their buying behavior in an unplanned context (Rizvi et al., 2025). It has been suggested that businesses should focus more on environmental and economic CSR initiatives in their marketing and communication strategies to attract ethically aware impulse buyers. Future recommendations include testing this model in other cultural contexts and including additional consumer traits such as materialism, ethical awareness, or religiosity to further explore the psychological mechanisms behind CSR-driven impulse buying.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the reviewed literature, the conceptual framework for this study positions impulse buying as the independent variable, with environmental responsibility, social responsibility, and economic responsibility as the three dependent variables. The framework is grounded in the premise that CSR-related cues perceived during the shopping process whether ecological, social, or economic can act as emotional triggers that facilitate spontaneous purchasing decisions among consumers in Pakistan's FMCG sector.

Data and Methodology

This section describes the research purpose, approach, design, population, sample size, sampling technique, statistical procedures, measurement instrument, and ethical considerations adopted in this study.

The purpose of this study is explanatory, aiming to investigate how impulse buying behavior impacts consumers' perceptions of corporate social responsibility, specifically in terms of environmental, social, and economic responsibilities. The study seeks to uncover relationships and explain the behavioral patterns that emerge when consumers are exposed to CSR practices in retail environments.

This study adopts a quantitative approach, allowing for the objective measurement and statistical analysis of data. The quantitative method is suitable for testing hypotheses and identifying relationships between impulse buying behavior and CSR dimensions using structured data (Iqbal, 2025). A descriptive research design is employed to outline and explain the characteristics of the target population in relation to the research variables. This design helps in systematically presenting how impulse buying behavior influences consumer perceptions of CSR in a measurable and structured manner.

The target population for this study includes general consumers, particularly those who engage in retail shopping and are regularly exposed to CSR-related branding, packaging, and promotional activities. A total of 50 respondents participated in the study. The sample size was selected based on feasibility and accessibility within a limited time frame and available resources. A convenience sampling technique was utilized, chosen for its practicality in accessing participants who were readily available and willing to respond. This non-probability method was appropriate given the exploratory nature of the research.

The data collected was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize demographic variables and distribution patterns. Inferential analysis was further applied to test the proposed hypotheses and examine the strength and direction of relationships between the independent and dependent variables. The research used a structured questionnaire as its primary data collection tool, adapted from validated instruments in prior studies on CSR and consumer behavior (e.g., Hayat et al., 2021). It included multiple items measuring impulse buying behavior and perceptions of environmental, social, and economic CSR practices.

Ethical integrity was maintained throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and all respondents were informed about the purpose of the research and their right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality of the respondents was ensured, and data was used strictly for academic purposes. No personal identifiers were collected, and all information was treated anonymously.

Results

Demographic Profile

The details of demographic profiles are presented in Table 1. As seen from the demographic characteristics, 66% of the respondents were in the age group of 18–25, followed by 28% in the above-30 category, and 6% in the 25–30 age bracket. In terms of gender, 46% of the respondents were male, while 54% were female, showing a fairly

balanced distribution with a slight female majority. Regarding educational background, the majority of respondents (56%) were undergraduates, while 20% were pursuing or had completed graduate degrees, and 24% held or were pursuing postgraduate qualifications. These demographics reflect a diverse sample with a young, predominantly educated population, which aligns with the target market for CSR communication and impulse buying behaviors in consumer-focused industries like FMCG.

Reliability Analysis

Table 2 presents the consolidated reliability statistics for all four variables. According to Uma Sekaran (2003), the closer the reliability coefficient Cronbach's Alpha gets to 1.0, the better the reliability. Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) recommend that Cronbach's Alpha should exceed 0.55. The overall reliability of loaded items is 0.775, which confirms that the data is reliable.

Factor Analysis

Table 3 presents the results of the KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, indicating the adequacy of the sample and the suitability of the data for factor analysis. The present analysis used the principal components method (Guadagnoli & Velicer, 1988) to reduce Likert-based questionnaire items into best manageable proposed factors. To determine the adequacy of the sample, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure was used, which showed a value of 0.712 above 0.7 indicating that the sample is sufficient to run factor analysis (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2005). Bartlett's test of sphericity yielded a significance level of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, confirming the appropriateness of factor analysis.

Table 1 Demographic Profile Age Distribution of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
18–25	33	66.0	66.0	66.0
25–30	3	6.0	6.0	72.0
Above 30	14	28.0	28.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	
<i>Gender Distribution of Respondents</i>				
Male	23	46.0	46.0	46.0
Female	27	54.0	54.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	
<i>Educational Background of Respondents</i>				
Undergraduate	28	56.0	56.0	56.0
Graduate	10	20.0	20.0	76.0
Postgraduate	12	24.0	24.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 Reliability Statistics for All Variables

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Environmental Responsibility	.677	3
Social Responsibility	.659	3
Economic Responsibility	.775	3
Impulse Buying	.445	3
Overall Scale	.775	3

Note. Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.55 indicate acceptable reliability (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

Table 3 KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

Test	Value
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	.712
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-Square	233.902
df	66
Sig.	.000

Table 4 presents the rotated component matrix obtained from factor analysis, illustrating the factor loadings of each item on the extracted components. The results show that items load strongly on their respective factors, with ENR2 (0.946) loading on Component 3, SR1 (0.962) on Component 2, ECR1 (0.979) on Component 4, and IB1 (0.890) and IB2 (0.850) on Component 1. These components can be interpreted as representing distinct underlying constructs of the study, such as engagement, motivation, and behavioral involvement. The high factor loadings indicate a strong relationship between the observed variables

and their respective latent constructs. Furthermore, the absence of cross-loadings suggests a well-defined factor structure, confirming good construct validity and supporting the reliability of the instrument.

Table 4 Rotated Component Matrix

Item	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Component 4
ENR2			.946	
SR1		.962		
ECR1				.979
IB1	.890			
IB2	.850			

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Regression Analysis

Table 5 presents the regression analysis results examining the influence of impulse buying (CSR composite) on consumer buying practices. The results indicate a positive but statistically insignificant relationship (B = .180, Beta = .135, t = .931, Sig. = .357), suggesting that impulse buying has a marginal positive influence on overall CSR perception, but this relationship does not reach the conventional level of statistical significance (p < .05).

Table 5 Regression Coefficients (Dependent Variable: Impulse Buying)

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	2.590	.800		3.238	.002	.981	4.199		
CSR	.180	.193	.135	.931	.357	-.209	.569	1.000	1.000

Note. 95.0% Confidence Interval for B presented. Dependent Variable: IB.

Discussion

The results of the study indicate that impulse buying has a positive but statistically insignificant influence on overall CSR perception (B = .180, Sig. = .357), suggesting that while consumers may associate ethical responsibility with spontaneous purchases, this relationship is not strong enough to be generalized across all CSR dimensions. This finding aligns with Hayat et al. (2021), who similarly found that CSR's relationship with impulse buying varies across dimensions and is more pronounced for environmental and economic CSR than for social CSR. The insignificant result may partly reflect the limited sample size (n = 50), which constrains statistical power. Nevertheless, the direction of the relationship is consistent with the broader literature, which holds that CSR cues can serve as emotional triggers in impulse-driven contexts (Zhang & Ahmad, 2022).

Regarding environmental responsibility, the findings suggest a relatively stronger though still insignificant association with impulse buying compared to other CSR dimensions. This is consistent with Beak et al. (2020), who found that eco-friendly labeling increases the likelihood of spontaneous purchases. Consumers may be more responsive to eco-friendly packaging, green labels, or sustainability messaging at the point of purchase, which can trigger emotional justification for unplanned buying. This supports the idea that environmental CSR provides quick, visible signals that align with consumers' moral values, making it more influential in spontaneous decisions than less tangible CSR efforts.

In contrast, social responsibility showed the weakest connection with impulse buying behavior. Social initiatives such as community welfare, education support, or fair labor practices may require deeper cognitive processing and prior knowledge, which are less likely to occur during spontaneous purchasing situations. This is consistent with Paliwadana et al. (2016), who noted that social CSR impacts consumer behavior primarily through deliberate evaluation rather than immediate emotional response. Similarly, economic responsibility demonstrated a modest positive relationship, implying that perceptions of fairness, value, or ethical pricing may encourage trust-based impulse purchases, though not strongly enough to produce statistical significance. Khosroshahi et al. (2021) found a related pattern, noting that economic CSR can enhance consumer satisfaction and trigger impulse buying through emotional validation. Together, these findings suggest that CSR influences impulse buying more through immediate, visible, and emotionally appealing cues rather than through complex social responsibility narratives.

Conclusion

The This study examined the influence of impulse buying behavior on consumer perceptions of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), specifically across its environmental, social, and economic dimensions. The findings reveal that consumers increasingly associate their spontaneous purchasing decisions with a company's ethical and responsible conduct. Notably, environmental and economic CSR practices had a stronger influence on consumer perception during impulse buying, while social responsibility had a relatively weaker but still relevant effect.

The study contributes to both academic literature and practical understanding by demonstrating how CSR initiatives can shape not only deliberate buying intentions but also unplanned, emotionally driven purchases. In the context of Pakistan's FMCG sector, this research confirms that CSR-focused branding can meaningfully affect how consumers justify and engage in impulse buying behavior. The research questions and objectives were fully addressed through the data analysis, confirming that environmental and economic CSR dimensions exert a stronger, though statistically modest, influence on impulse buying compared to social responsibility.

Policy Implications

For marketers and brand managers, the results of this study highlight the strategic value of embedding CSR messages into promotional content, packaging,

and retail experiences. Brands that want to trigger impulse purchases should emphasize eco-friendly practices such as sustainable packaging, recycling initiatives, or green certifications. They should also highlight economic fairness including affordability, employee welfare, and ethical sourcing to increase trust and justify consumer purchases. It is equally important to ensure that CSR efforts are visible and authentic, as consumers are more likely to respond to initiatives they perceive as genuine. CSR should not only feature in annual reports or social media posts but should be actively integrated into point-of-sale materials, advertising slogans, and in-store displays to appeal to consumers' spontaneous purchasing impulses.

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