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**The Zero-Wait Economy:  
How Instant Payments  
Are Redefining Loyalty,  
Conversion, and Merchant  
Growth in Latin America**

# Executive Summary

For Latin American consumers, the path from decision to action has never been faster. Whether ordering food, streaming content, or placing a bet, the combined growth of instant payment rails and high-speed mobile penetration has turned spontaneity into a structural driver of digital spending.

This new report by **OKTO PAYMENTS** reveals how these new expectations are reshaping merchants' performance. It also shows how, with the right tools and understanding, merchants can turn payment processing from back-end infrastructure to an active loyalty driver - reducing churn, driving repeat interactions, and boosting growth.

Over **95%** of consumers in Brazil, Argentina, and Chile now engage in unplanned online consumption (igaming, e-commerce, or trading while doing another activity like traveling or watching TV).

For nearly four in ten (**37.5%**), these impulses account for more than **30%** of their total monthly digital activity.

From a "micro-moment" while commuting to a snap decision during a halftime break, the LatAm consumer is using less of their time planning how to spend, and more of their time spending in the "now." OKTO refers to this shift as the Impulse Economy — where decisions, payments, and experiences occur almost simultaneously.

However, this surge in impulse carries a heavy price for merchants: acceptable wait times for payment processing are collapsing toward zero.

This is especially clear among the growing demographics of Gen Z and Millennial spenders. For

them, the distinction between a slow payment and a failed payment is rapidly disappearing. **87.9%** of all users expect deposits and payments to be processed in under 60 seconds, with over half (**52.5%**) of Gen Z and Millennial consumers demanding wait times of under 30 seconds.

When this ever-shrinking window is missed, the consequences for acquisition and retention can be terminal. **29.0% of users now abandon their transaction entirely** after a single payment problem, and **48.0% put off what they are doing until later** - both outcomes translate into immediate revenue loss and reduced probability of customer return.

With major events such as the World Cup amplifying real-time engagement, merchants expect even higher pressure on performance. The most common predictions include rising UX expectations (**46.6%**); higher abandonment rates/lower tolerance for bad experiences (**45.1%**); and higher risks of fraud (**42.1%**).

This new report doesn't just identify the challenges, but also looks at the specific consumer pain points and outlines a strategic roadmap for navigating a payment environment where seconds determine conversion.

Drawing on **OKTO PAYMENTS'** expertise in **real-time liquidity, biometric integration, and local payment standards**, it moves beyond payment as infrastructure to explore how a different approach to payments can shape consumer behavior, strengthen loyalty, and promote sustainable growth.



## Key Findings

# The Anatomy of the Impulse Economy

## Part I: Understanding Why Consumers are Embracing Frictionless Spontaneity



**Impulse is now the default**

**95.1%**

of consumers in Brazil, Argentina, and Chile now engage in unplanned online consumption – i-gaming, e-commerce, or trading while doing other activities like travelling or watching TV.<sup>6</sup>

**50.2%**

of Gen Z and Millennial consumers are engaging in unplanned online consumption for 30% or more of their total monthly digital activity.<sup>7</sup>

The above finding opened the report, demonstrating the sheer ubiquity of a new kind of consumption behavior. But what is even more relevant is the power of this movement.

As impulse-driven consumption becomes normalized, activities previously associated with deliberate planning — such as sports betting — are increasingly entering this same spontaneous

behavioural category. A significant proportion (**43.8%**) of consumers now consider sports betting a real possibility during a major event like the World Cup.

**Why?** Because it fits into the same seamless economy as many of our other impulse behaviours - whether that's sending a message, making a payment, or streaming a favourite song.

### This shift is reinforced by a mobile-first culture:

**40%**

of Latin Americans access the internet solely via their phone as per a recent AMI report.

**up to 70%**

This goes up to 70% among Brazilians.

→ **Latin American consumption of digital content exceeds global averages.<sup>1</sup>**

Furthermore, another AMI report on LatAm Gen Z spending habits found that three out of five (57%) of the youngest consumer generation said they let themselves get carried away by impulse purchases.<sup>2</sup>

### Demand doesn't build - it spikes

**In the Impulse Economy, demand is event-driven.**

→ Over half (**55.6%**) of merchants see more than 30% of their total transaction volume occur in high-velocity "bursts" during the first five minutes of an event, such as a halftime break or a sudden social trigger.

→ **39.3%** of consumers state they would place a spontaneous bet during major events like the World Cup if they feel inspired in the specific moment.

→ **38.4%** of consumers also see their tolerance for wait-times drop during such high stakes moments of impulse and inspiration.

**The implication is clear: Merchants are no longer competing for market share, they are competing for moments.**

# Speed defines conversion

**When inspiration strikes and these bursts occur, merchants must be able to respond with previously unseen reaction speeds.**

**15.4%** of Gen Z consumers expect their funds to be deposited instantly (within 5 seconds).

**50.0%** of Millennial consumers expect this to happen in under 30 seconds.

Even **61.2%** of consumers aged 56+ expect things to be concluded within one minute.

**45.4%** of all consumers have abandoned up to 20% of their payments because they were too slow or complex.

**29.0%** of consumers will abandon their transaction entirely after one bad payment experience; 48.0% say they will try again later - but how many of these consumers will definitely stick around?

This question becomes even more pressing now that the highest proportion (**28.8%**) of respondents prioritise 'immediate access to funds' as the most important factor for continuing to use a platform.

## Maximising the mobile micro-moment

The shift is not just from physical to digital; it is from **place to pace**.

Consumers now operate across multiple screens and fragmented attention spans:

**83%** of Latin American households watch TV while using a second screen, according to Comscore.<sup>3</sup>

**Transactions happen in micro-moments — brief windows of attention triggered by context, emotion, or social interaction.**

In these moments:

**Users do not plan.**

**Users do not tolerate friction.**

**Users do not wait.**

If a payment requires effort, the impulse disappears.  
If the user has to think, the moment is lost.

## The Merchant Reality

**Merchants understand the problem:**

**39.8%** of merchants see client acquisition and retention as the key barrier to growth.

**75.9%** of merchants recognize that instant payments are critical for customer retention.

**47.4%** admit that payment friction is currently deteriorating their conversion and retention rates.

**Merchants know what the problem is. They just haven't solved it yet.**

While **75.9%** recognize that instant payments are critical for retention, nearly half admit that payment friction is actively deteriorating conversion and loyalty.

**This gap, between awareness and execution, is where revenue is being lost.**

# The Conversion Kill Zone

## 1. Identifying the Causes of Consumer Churn

We've recognised that there is a new type of impulse behaviour in Latin America, one that doesn't hang around after a bad payment experience. But what are consumers reporting as the biggest frustrations when it comes to payments?

### The Primary Conversion Killers

When asked what specific situations prevented them from completing a transaction, the top three frustrations were remarkably consistent across the region:



**Infrastructure Failure: 26.7%** - Slow-loading pages and timeouts.



**Lack of Choice: 24.5%** - Missing preferred local payment methods.



**Data Friction: 24.2%** - Excessive personal information requirements.

Each of these creates hesitation at the exact moment of intent.

## The Zero-Tolerance Threshold



### The new 30-Second Rule

→ **42.7%** of all consumers will abandon a deposit if it is not completed within 30 seconds.

### Age Sensitivity

→ Young adults (18-25 years old) are the most demanding; **15.4%** of them expect an instant result (0-5 seconds) or they will abandon the transaction.

→ In contrast, only **3.9%** of users over 25 have this "instant or nothing" requirement, yet.

### Regional Impatience

→ **41.4%** of consumers in Brazil abandon within 30 seconds.

→ **40.8%** of consumers in Argentina abandon within the first 30 seconds.

→ **23.4%** of consumers in Chile follow the same behavior.

Despite regional differences, the trend is clear: tolerance is shrinking everywhere. At the moment of intent, even minor friction becomes a conversion failure.

# The High Cost of Friction



A failed payment is not just a lost transaction. It is often a lost customer.

→ **29.0%** abandon immediately.

→ **8.9%** stop using the platform entirely.

That's over one-third of users who are willing to walk away after a single bad experience.

## Hidden Friction Points

### KYC Frustration

Over a quarter (**26.9%**) of users find current KYC (identity verification) procedures so frustrating that they have already left a platform to try a competitor.

### Age-based mistrust

→ Older generation users are more likely to abandon platforms permanently:

→ **57.1%** of the 56+ age group find KYC processes "very frustrating".

Over half (**51.0%**) of respondents aged 56+ would either abandon their activity completely or avoid using the platform in the future after a single bad payment experience, compared to a consumer average of 37.9%.

## Confidence Drivers: What Consumers Actually Want

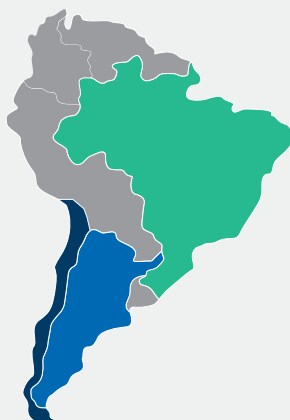
According to this new **OKTO PAYMENTS** report, to retain these impulsive users, merchants must prioritise immediacy and locality.

Liquidity is King: **28.8%** of consumers say "immediate access to funds" is the single most important factor for building trust in a platform. This is especially true in Chile, where this figure jumps to **38.0%**.

Local Relevance: **21.4%** of users prioritize the "availability of local payment methods" over brand reputation (**16.6%**) or even previous positive experiences (**15.8%**).

## Mapping the Frustration Index by Country

Frustration / Factor



● Brazil ● Argentina ● Chile

### Abandonment within 30s

**49.3%**

**49.7%**

**28.8%**

### Frustrated by excessive info

**22.7%**

**28.6%**

**21.0%**

### Value "Immediate Access to Funds" most

**22.7%**

**25.8%**

**38.0%**

### Frustrated by slow loading

**26.6%**

**25.8%**

**27.8%**

# Solving the Fraud-Speed Paradox

## Merchants face a critical mistake:

### Protecting transactions at the cost of losing them.

→ **87.9%** of users demand sub-minute processing,

→ **95.2%** of merchants report an increase in fraud risk during peak periods.

### This tension creates a significant perception gap.

**35.3%** of merchants believe the "fear of fraud" is the biggest impediment to consumers making more impulse purchases. However, the consumer data tells a different story.

Users are far more concerned with slow loads and timeouts (**26.7%**) – precisely the kinds of friction that legacy anti-fraud measures and manual reviews produce.

By over-securing the moment of impulse with sluggish tools, merchants might be inadvertently triggering the slowdowns that drive users away.

Furthermore, the stakes for solving this are rising; **21.1%** of merchants believe fraud risk is already the biggest obstacle to growth, and double (**42.1%**) the amount anticipate rising fraud risks in the coming year.

## The Path Forward



### Real-time Risk Intelligence

AI-driven systems are capable of millisecond-level decision making, especially to protect the **55.6%** of operators who experience massive "bursts" of more than **30%** of their total volume within a five-minute window.



### Biometric Authentication

**9.3%** of merchants identify second-device or second-screen authentication as a primary driver of abandonment, and consumers echo this, with **22.4%** citing pop-up password screens (like 3D Secure) as a reason for failing to complete a transaction.

The goal is not less security. It is invisible security.

# Designing for Zero Thinking

To succeed, merchants must reduce cognitive load to near zero.

## Core Principles

→ **One-Click Local Rails:** Merchants identify a lack of local payment methods as a top reason for abandonment (**39.8%**). They have rightly identified a critical gap, as **24.5%** of consumers have stopped a transaction specifically because their preferred local method was unavailable. Integrating local rails like Pix as invisible processes is essential.

→ **Pre-verified Onboarding:** Complex KYC processes are a major bottleneck, cited as a top abandonment factor by **30.8%** of merchants and **24.2%** of consumers. Implementing "pay-and-play" models addresses the **26.9%** of users who find current registration procedures "very frustrating" or a reason to switch to a competitor.

**Minimal Interaction: Reduce steps, inputs, and interruptions.**

| Metric                     | iGaming / Betting  | Retail / E-commerce   |
|----------------------------|--|---|
| Trigger                    | Live events / Social triggers                                      | Promotions / Discovery  |
| Expectation                | Immediate liquidity  | Seamless checkout   |
| Key Barrier                | Customer Acquisition ( <b>24.8%</b> ) & Retention ( <b>18.5%</b> ) | Customer Acquisition ( <b>28.6%</b> ); Risk of Fraud ( <b>22.4%</b> ) & Regulation ( <b>22.4%</b> ) |
| Customer Churn Rate        | <b>51.8%</b> - Moderate or Critical                                | <b>61.3%</b> - Moderate or Critical   |
| Biggest Abandonment Factor | <b>40.7%</b> - Uncertainty regarding the withdrawal process        | <b>40.8%</b> - Unclear/Hidden charges   |

Different verticals. **Same constraint: the payment moment cannot break the experience.**

# Conclusion: The Merchant Action Plan

## In the Zero-Wait Economy, Payments Are the Moment of Truth

To win in the Zero-Wait Economy, merchants must redesign payments around speed, simplicity, and liquidity.



### Speed Is the New Conversion Layer

Payment speed determines whether intent becomes action.

With **87.9% of consumers expecting payments to process in under one minute**, any delay introduces hesitation at the precise moment when users are ready to act.

Merchants must compress **time-to-value** — the gap between decision and completion.



### Frictionless UX Determines Survival

Impulse behaviour depends on immediacy, but also on simplicity.

Our research shows that **27.8% of consumers abandon payments due to slow-loading infrastructure**, while **24.2% walk away when excessive personal information is required**.

Every additional step introduces cognitive friction that weakens the original purchase intent.

Winning merchants therefore treat the payment experience **as a behavioural interface**, not simply a financial function.

This means:

**Eliminate unnecessary inputs**

**Remove authentication friction**

**Enable one-click flows**

The best payment experience is the one users don't notice.



### Liquidity Makes Speed Real

Speed is not just UX — it is infrastructure.

Many merchants fail to deliver real-time transactions because their payment models rely on fragmented prefunding structures, delayed settlement cycles, or treasury operations that cannot scale during peak demand.

This gap becomes particularly visible during **event-driven transaction bursts**, when transaction volumes spike within minutes.

In these moments, payment performance depends less on interface design and more on **liquidity availability and settlement architecture**.

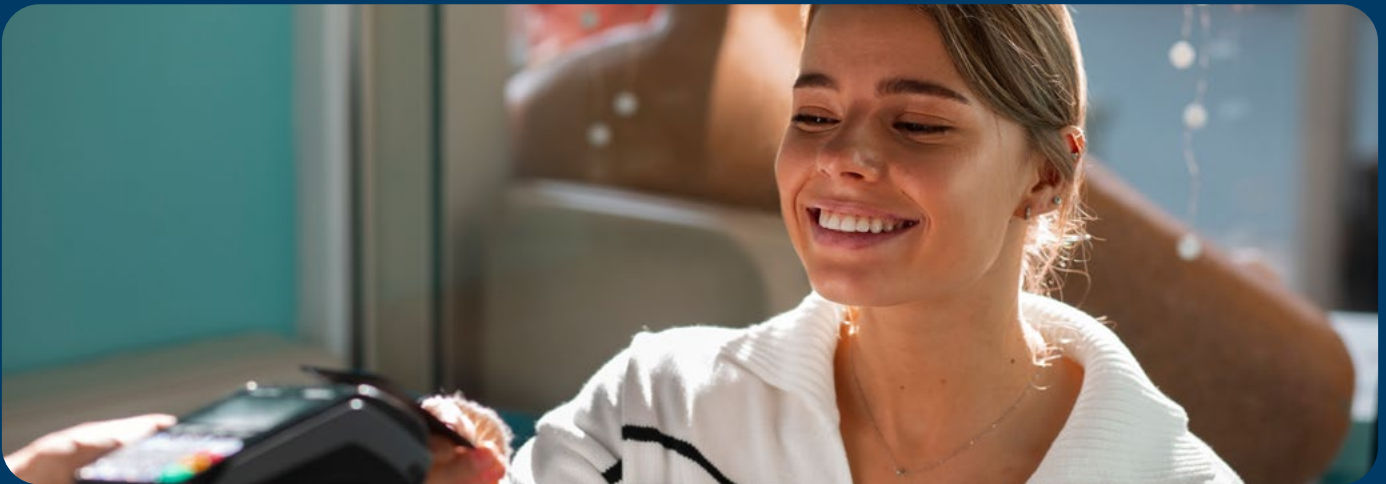
Merchants that centralize liquidity and align settlement with local real-time rails are structurally better positioned to:

**Deliver instant deposits and withdrawals at scale**

**Reduce failed payments during peak demand**

**Maintain security without slowing the user journey**

In the impulse economy, treasury and settlement are no longer back-office functions. They are the invisible infrastructure of consumer experience.



## OKTO PAYMENTS' Final Thought

The shift toward impulse-driven consumption is redefining how digital platforms compete.

Consumers are no longer interacting with payment systems as deliberate financial transactions. They are encountering them as part of spontaneous digital moments — during events, social interactions, or brief windows of attention.

Capturing those moments requires payment infrastructure designed for speed, certainty, and trust.

**OKTO PAYMENTS** is purpose-built for the Zero-Wait Economy, enabling:

- Instant local deposits and payouts
- Frictionless compliance, treasury, banking and liquidity
- Domestic and cross-border settlement across Latin American markets and beyond

**Impulse → Speed → Trust → Loyalty → Revenue**

**OKTO PAYMENTS** enables merchants to convert spontaneous engagement into long-term value.

Latin American consumers are not simply asking for faster payments.

They are expecting payment experiences that move at the same speed as their decisions.

The winners in 2026 will not be the fastest platforms.

They will be the platforms that never make users wait.

Learn how **OKTO PAYMENTS** helps operators design instant, compliant, and local-first payment experiences for the Impulse Economy.

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Let's talk strategy

