



Internal Triggers of Impulse Buying Behaviour in Customers – An Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT

Many studies on impulse buying more or less directly concern antecedents of an impulse purchase. The Consumption Impulse Formation Enactment (CIFE) model developed by Dholakia (2000) states that there are three antecedents that form a "consumption impulse" and defined it as the "irresistible urge to consume". Literature indicates that stimuli for impulse buying may be formed by the interaction between both external factors and internal factors. Research highlights various factors that trigger impulsiveness in consumers namely, Age, Gender, Level of Income, Shopping partner, Mood, Occasion, Impulse Buying Tendency, Compliance to social norms, Compulsive Buying Behaviour and Personality. Mostly, all consumers would have made an impulse purchase at least once in their life. Impulse buying is a fun, puzzle and a research question in today's marketing world. While marketers are eager to seek a solution to falling sales, consumers are also hoping to balance their shopping behaviour and their budget.

KEYWORDS

Impulse, Stimuli, Buying, behaviour

Many studies on impulse buying more or less directly concern causes or antecedents of an impulse purchase. Based on previous research, variables that cause an impulse purchase can be categorised to Person-Related, Product-Related, Shopping-Environment Related and Situational (Dholakia, 2000; Verplanken and Herabadi, 2001). The Consumption Impulse Formation Enactment (CIFE) model developed by Dholakia (2000) states that there are three antecedents that form a "consumption impulse" and defined it as the "irresistible urge to consume". These three antecedents include marketing stimuli, a person's impulsivity trait and situational factors. Moreover, the literature indicates that stimuli for impulse buying may be formed by the interaction between both external factors and internal factors and that impulse buying is the result of an interactive effect of both personality traits and environmental cues. A thorough review gave an overview about the internal triggers of impulse buying in shoppers.

INTERNAL TRIGGERS INFLUENCING IMPULSE BUYING BEHAVIOUR

In the recent past, several researchers have highlighted various factors that can trigger the impulsive buying behaviour of a consumer. When the consumer and the customer are the same, the customer is internally motivated by his personal needs and wants to purchase the product and there are a number of other factors that internally influence the customers' impulsive decisions and in order to study the buying behaviour of an individual it is necessary to examine the factors internal to the individual.

The internal triggers that induce impulse buying behaviour in customers are: Age, Gender, Level of Income, Peer group / shopping partner, Mood, Occasion, Impulse Buying Tendency, Compliance to social norms, Compulsive Buying Behaviour and Personality. The following section is dedicated for the discussion of the above mentioned factors.

a) Age: Some researchers emphasise the adolescent phase as being an influential part of life in which friends play an important role in an adolescent's consumption purchases. The adolescents were extremely generous with their friends and in fact enjoyed buying gifts for their friends for no particular reason but to please them or make them happy. (D'Astous, 1990).

b) Gender: Gender is a demographic trait that divides consumers into two groups, male or female. It is of great importance to marketers because it influences the consumer's values

and preferences. According to Otnes and McGrath (2001), male and female consumers differ in their shopping behaviours. Relationship analysis between gender identity and impulse buying showed that men tend to impulsively buy instrumental and leisure items projecting independence and activity, while women tend to buy symbolic and self-expressive goods concerned with appearance and emotional aspects of self to cope with stress Dittmar, Beattie and Frieze (1996). Dittmar et al. (1996) showed that high impulse products (e.g. music, clothes, magazines) were associated with self expressive buying considerations, which appeared to be gender-specific.

c) Level of income: Money has a powerful influence on the behaviour of our society but there has not been any research quantifying its effects (Hanley, Wilhehn, 1990). Scherhorn (1990) argued that income plays an important role in how long the compulsive buyer could hide their problem. Davies and Bell (1991) reported that family income is a constraint to purchase-search behaviour. Households with less income are more likely to spend less time on shopping. Dramatic increases in personal disposable incomes and credit availability have made impulse buying in retail environments, a prevalent consumer behaviour.

d) Peer Group / Shopping Partner: Consumer buying process is influenced by social, marketing and situational factors. Social influences reflect geographic and sociological factors. Those can be culture, subculture, social class and family that influence person's behaviour by providing direct and indirect messages and feedback. Consumers are also influenced by their reference groups, the groups that influence the consumers' thoughts, feelings and actions. However it should be noted that the nature of these normative influences on impulse buying behaviour may depend on the norms and values of the reference group such as parents versus peers, variety seeking with optimum stimulation levels (Luo, 2005; Sharma, et al 2010). In addition, research into the influence of shopping with others on impulsive purchasing (Luo, 2005) revealed that the presence of peers increases the urge to purchase and that the presence of family members decreases it. Contrary to this, William Applebaum (1951) states that couples shopping in super markets buy more per transaction than does a woman or man shopping alone.

e) Mood: Impulsive behaviour generally arises from the same circumstances, when people are generally upset, they eat unhealthy or experience less self-control, it may lead to impul-

sive behaviour (Baumeister, 2002). Anxiety seems to play an important role in symptoms of impulsive behaviour. Valence D'Astous and Fortier (1988) argued that anxiety provokes a spontaneous internal action, leading the consumer to seek a solution to help calm the anxiety. Anxiety could thus be a leading contributor to impulsive consumption. Affect or mood has been identified as a variable that influences impulse purchasing (Gardner and Rook, 1988). They also found that 85% of their survey respondents indicated a positive mood would yield more to impulse buying than a negative mood. Respondents stated that, in a positive mood, they had an unconstrained feeling, the desire to reward themselves and higher energy levels. The moods and condition as well as the time, task and monetary condition of a consumer at the time of purchase influence their buying decision.

f) Occasion: The holiday, festival and other celebrative seasons also contribute to impulse buying. Many consumers at one point or another make purchases on the spur of the moment without plan or thought, but for some reason, impulsive buying increases dramatically during the holiday season. Waddell (2005) states that a consumer requires a shopping list, be it a mental one or a written one, in order to minimise impulse buying during the holiday season.

g) Impulse Buying Tendency: Impulse buying tendencies can be understood as the likelihood of a particular consumer buying a product immediately, unintentionally and without any thought applied (Jones et al. 2003). It is the degree to which an individual is likely to make unintended, immediate and unreflective purchases (Weun et al. 1998). The Impulse Buying Tendency Scale (IBTS) developed by Verplanken and Herabadi (2001) and adopted by many researchers, has two sub scales, each with ten items that measure cognitive and affective impulsivity of consumers. Cognitive facet refers to the lack of evaluation and planning on part of the consumer. The higher the consumer's impulse buying tendency, the more likely an impulse purchase will be.

h) Compliance to Social Norms: One's social self-esteem seems to also play an important role in impulsive buying (Elliot, 1994). A qualitative study by Elliot (1994) indicates that individuals want to perceive themselves differently than they are in reality. Other studies also suggest that impulsive consumers hide their impulsive tendencies in order to maintain a non-deviant image within society (Valence, D'Astous and Fortier, 1988). At the same time, Rook and Fisher (1995) indicated that consumers tend to have a greater impulsive urge to buy and a greater likelihood of doing so, when acting on impulse is socially appropriate and rational.

i) Compulsive Buying Behaviour: Impulsive shopping is relatively innocent consumer behaviour. However, impulsive shopping is less innocent if it takes the form of compulsive shopping. Compulsive buying, a behaviour distinct from compulsive shopping (Natarajan and Goff 1992), is medically defined as an impulse control disorder, a mental disorder characterised by irresistible impulses to engage in harmful or senseless behaviours (Black 2007; McElroy, Phillips and Keck 1994) in order to counteract negative emotional situations such as depression and loneliness (Krueger, 1988). Consistent with the medical definition, early conceptualisations of compulsive buying within the field of marketing defined it as "chronic, repetitive purchasing that becomes a primary response to negative events or feelings" (O'Guinn and Faber, 1989). Compulsive buying is linked to factors that also drive impulsive purchases, such as materialistic values and identity concerns (DeSarbo and Edwards, 1996; Dittmar 2005; Dittmar et al. 2007; Hanley and Wilhelm 1992; Mowen and Spears, 1999; Yurchisin and Johnson, 2004).

j) Impulsive Buyer Personality: Personality traits can help determine the degree of a person's Impulse Buying Tendency (Beatty and Ferrell, 1998; Rook and Fisher, 1995). More recent literature has shown that impulsivity has strong roots in people's personality (Hermann Brandstatter and Werner Guth,

2000, Verplanken and Herabadi, 2001). Thus a significant volume of research, particularly in the last decade or so, have focused on psychological constructs that may affect impulsivity (Russo et al. 2008, Stille et al. 2010, Wittmann and Paulus, 2008).

Impulse buying is a fact of life. Mostly, all consumers would have made an impulse purchase at least once in their life. Impulse buying is a fun, puzzle and a research question in today's marketing world. While marketers are eager to seek a solution to falling sales, consumers are also hoping to balance their shopping behaviour and their budget. The same is under the study of psychologists, consumer behaviour researchers, economist, fashion designers, outlet decorators and advertisers. Knowledge of individual differences will help to understand as to why shoppers behave in a particular fashion. This insight will further the process of understanding the buying behaviour of shoppers and strategising accordingly.

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