

A Review Paper on Paradoxical Dimensions of Impulsive Buying Behaviour

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Abstract

The paper is an endeavor attempt to review the existing literature and provide a broad overview of the mysterious concept of impulsive buying behaviour and its various antecedents. Beginning with a historical recapitulation, the review proceeds into an exploration of definitions of 'impulse buying with gradually advancing to investigate the internal and external instigators of impulsive buying. The paper throws light on various factors of impulse buying behaviour which are still not fully explored to their fullest capacity. Various journals, academic papers, references, books, and other electronic sources were used to identify contributions from different sources. The content analysis highlighted some contradictory findings and gaps in understanding the impulsive buying process which may serve as a foundation stone for future researchers. The study provides huge source of information related to the concept of impulsive buying and its various dimensions which is beneficial not only for marketers and academicians but also satiate the souls of and consumers by making them more aware of their impulsive buying behaviour.

Keywords

Impulsive buying, Marketing Stimuli, Internal factors, Demographic factors, In-store stimuli, Situational factors.

1. Introduction

Impulse means an impromptu, powerful and unreasonable urge. Impulse buying is an interesting phenomenon as it does not comply with the process of homo economicus (Verplanken and Sato, 2011). It makes the consumers to deviate from their normal decision-making process and persuades them to indulge in exorbitant buying, without giving much importance to the negative consequences (Dennis Rook, 1987). Freud and Brill, 1949 describes impulsive buying as a competition between the two states which are known as the pleasure principle and the reality principle. Also, the metamorphosis from one state to another can be extremely excruciating at times. Hence Impulse buying has gained a lot of attention due to its complex and inevitable nature. Its importance can be revealed as researchers and practitioners have been studying the topic extensively for the past 70 years (Clover, 1950) and have come up with contradictory opinions related to its definition, types, concept and its determinants (Kalla and Arora, 2010). With the passage of time, impulsive buying as a concept has developed to a large extent with various new antecedents added to its reservoir, resulting in gaining tremendous amount of

interests from both academicians and researchers. Impulsive buying though is a popular concept but still lacks in having a proper conceptual structure with poor compilation of impulsive buying antecedents. Thus, mall culture becoming the new face of modern retailing environment, changing lifestyles, dynamic trends in the market, increasing disposable income and demographic segmentation, impulsive buying has become a highly perceptible and tempting behaviour (Muruganatham and Bhakat, 2013).

2. Methodology

The study provides a detailed summary of literature regarding impulsive buying. Various research papers, books and other electronic sources have been carefully analyzed with the purpose to review the topic i.e. impulsive buying. In the initial stage, of extensive review, the keywords namely 'impulse', 'impulse buying', internal and external factors were used in electronic journal databases which helped to design a blueprint for the study. The article search conducted produced around 130 papers. In the second stage significant articles from numerous databases were collected. In the third stage, duplicate articles were removed. In the fourth stage abstract review was done and articles which emphasized on the topic of impulsive buying were extracted. As a result, 65 articles were carefully chosen for the complete review of paper.

3. Paradoxical Definitions of Impulsive Buying

There have been innumerable contrasting beliefs related to the definition of impulsive buying. Early studies focused on retailers' interests by completely neglecting consumer's satisfaction (Clover, 1950, du Pont studies, 1945- 51) but now consumer is considered to be the king of the market and given utmost importance. Initially researchers identified impulsive buying as unplanned buying (Stern, 1962) but these studies were critiqued and were considered erratic with later extensive studies which stated that not all unplanned purchases are impulsively decided (Rook, 1987). Further it has been specified that all impulse buying are at least unplanned but it is not indispensable for all unintended purchases to be decided on the spot (Iyer, 1989). Applebaum, 1951) stated that sales promotional devices created stimulus in the store and urged the consumers to make impulsive purchases giving minimum regard to other aspects of store environment thus proving it to be a narrower definition of impulsive buying. Later Stern, 1962 described four types of impulsive buying namely pure impulse buying which thoroughly disrupts the usual purchasing pattern of buying as stimuli is created on seeing the product and produces desires in the consumers and leads him to the path of purchasing. Another type of buying behaviour which incites consumers to purchase is known as reminder impulsive buying. It occurs when the consumer catches a glimpse of products in the store and flash backs into the memory of the product lying at home and recalls that merchandise at home is depleting and needs to be stocked again. Third type of buying is named as suggestion impulse buying. It happens when the consumer is exposed to the product for the first time and immediately a feeling of acquiring the product arises. Fourthly, a type of buying is explained which is highly affected by promotional activities. These are termed as planned impulse buying. In this type of behaviour consumers visit

the store with the intention to purchase some definite products but also accept various promotional offers provided by the stores. This creates the probability among the consumers to switch to new products while discarding their original shopping list. Impulse buying is not only confined to these four types rather it was examined that impulsive buying is a phenomenon which happens when a consumer is exposed to marketing cues which are highly influential, rapid and constant in nature. Impulse purchases are characterized by instant desires of pleasure which may arouse emotional struggles among consumers (Rook and Hoch, 1985; Rook, 1987; Rook and Fisher, 1995), thereby resulting in huge impulsive purchases and gives minimum consideration to negative consequences attached to such purchases.

4. Factors Affecting Impulsive Buying

Researchers stated that impulse buying behaviour is mainly affected by both internal and external stimuli (Wansink, 1994). External stimuli refer to product's characteristics and environmental characteristics. On the other hand internal stimuli is composed of innumerable factors such as factors impacting psychological ability of consumers, various situational factors and demographic factors (Muruganantham & Bhakat, 2013, Amos et al., 2014). The review throws light on how these factors trigger impulsive buying behaviour among consumers and produces inconsistent findings related to some variables of internal and external factors.

4.1.External factors:

Marketing impetuses that are positioned, administered and controlled by the marketer with a view to entice consumers into impulse purchasing are termed as external stimulators (Youn and Faber, 2000). These motivators are highly noticeable and are considered to be prerequisites of impulsive buying. With changing business environment and consumer buying behaviour becoming the pivotal area of research these factors need to be explained. Thus some important external motivators are mentioned below.

4.1.1. Visual merchandising and sales promotion initiatives

In today's world of tough competition, marketers have realized that in order to increase their sales they must adopt certain strategies which will help them to have an edge over their competitors. Hence in order to differentiate and to increase the eminence of their products, marketers often resort to attractive visual merchandising (Jiyeon, 2003). Proper arrangement of products captures the attention of buyers and is considered to be the principal whys and wherefores which made consumers to purchase impulsively. Another dimension which increases the sale of products immediately is the amount of shelf space provided to products. More shelf space means enhanced prominence which acts as a catalyst and lures the consumers to purchase products impulsively (Cox, 1970). Thus this is supported by the statement provided by Stern, 1962 who stated that greater amount of shelf space increases the visibility and provides better display of goods, encouraging consumers to purchase impulsively. Effective sales promotion initiatives such as easy pay back policies, POS materials, liberal return policies, gifts, POP posters and samples also stimulates the consumers to purchase impulsively (Abratt and Goodey,

1990).

4.1.2. Store browsing and store atmosphere

Another important stimulus of impulsive buying is in-store browsing. It has been examined that a consumer who browses endlessly in the store may end up in impulse buying. In-store browsing creates strenuous conditions for the consumers thereby making it difficult to restrain themselves from such stimuli (Jones et al, 2003). Further (Mc Goldrick, 2002) explained the significance of store atmosphere. Store atmosphere consists of four essential elements such as visual, aural, olfactory and tactile which creates excitement among the consumers to purchase impulsively. People can be easily swayed by such sensory stimulants present in their surroundings (Randhawa and Saluja, 2016). Music has the capability to activate the brain by elevating the mood of consumers. It has been examined that playing Latino or Jazz music activates the spirits of consumers, induces them to purchase impulsively thereby trapping them in vicious circle of impulse buying (Mattila & Wirtz, 2001). Music also helps in captivating the intention of the buyer and dissuades their evil desire to shoplift (Lindstrom, 2009). Colors have the power to alter consumers' behaviour both emotionally as well as practically. Bright colors such as red, orange and yellow produce jubilant vibes fueled with high arousals as mentioned in the studies by (Matilla and Wirtz, 2008). Another breath taking stimuli present in stores which augment consumer experiences and propels the spirit of purchasing are presence of warm scents. Further, touch is also considered to be an important motivator in consumers buying process. Individuals who have high desires for touch experiences close proximity with the products and have high impulsive desires as compared to the ones who are lacking this ability (Peck and Childers, 2006). Illuminance also has a powerful impact on consumers buying behaviour. It has been observed that stores with bright lights generate enthusiasm in the individuals which results in speeding up the pace at which the consumers make purchases (Areni, 1994). On the contrary Markin had different point of view and recommended that adopting soft lights rather than bright lights results in impulse purchases as it will increase the amount of time consumers devote for shopping in the stores (Areni, 1994). With such inconsistent findings and dearth of research in the area of lighting there is an urgent need to study this concept.

4.1.3. Sales employee

Another key dimension which instigates the eagerness of the consumers to purchase impulsively is the helpfulness of the sales employee (Baker et al., 1994). It has been found that employee friendliness directly influences impulse buying. Also the negative effect of crowding can be reduced by extra friendly trained store employees. (Mattila and Wirtz, 2008). Some researchers opposed the above thinking and stated that anonymity enriches and generates positive desires among consumers to purchase impulsively. Consumers enjoy free environment, and do not want people around them and judging them. Consumers love to move around like free spirits in the shopping stores and drape themselves in the fantasies of anonymity of a self-service atmosphere. This also fulfils their hidden craving for recreation by supplementing the notion of recreational shopper (Bellenger, 1980). Hence such contradictory view entails more exploration for better understanding the idea of impulse buying.

4.1.4. Crowding

Impulsive buying is a complex process with various dimensions which produced varied results. Crowding is one such dimension which is linked with both positive and negative reactions. According to (Machleit et al., 2000) 'perceived crowding' postulates that human density has an inverse relationship with human satisfaction. Researchers stated that crowded stores do not attract consumers and make them anxious forcing the consumers to leave the place. Thus crowded stores create negative impression in the minds of the consumers (Eroglu & Harrell, 1986). On the contrary buyers are at a comfortable position and feel relaxed when visualizes that products are not properly arranged in an orderly manner. Also insights of human crowding develop optimistic feelings among the consumers in relation to discount store image (Lee, S. Y., Kim, J., & Li, J. 2011).

4.2. Demographic factors:

Age, gender, income and education level are some of the chief elements of consumer impulsiveness. Age is considered to be an important barometer in forecasting impulse buying (Wood, 1998 Ghani et al., 2011)

4.2.1. Age

Age plays a very important role in determining the purchase behaviour of consumers. Studies proved that younger people aged 18 to 39 are risk lovers and are not scared of spending money (Bellenger et al., 1978). In contrast (Xuanxiaoqing et al., 2011) opposed the above mentioned opinion and stated that older females above 41 years of age, having stable remuneration are more motivated and spends lavishly on themselves thereby leading to impulsive shopping.

4.2.2. Gender

Impulsive buying to a great extent is also influenced by another important demographic variable termed as gender. It was stated that originally males and females are indifferent towards impulsive buying but later studies produced inconsistent results which draw the attention of the researchers from all around the world (Kollat and Willet, 1967). It has been discovered that men tend to purchase products which satisfy their instrumental and leisure needs whereas women are attracted towards symbolic and self-expressive products (Dittmar et al., 1995). Thus impulsive buying can be linked with social constructionist theory. Also it becomes essential to study gender behaviour in terms of impulsive buying as gender equality is becoming a new trend in India and needs further exploration in this context.

4.2.3. Income

Consumers having huge amounts of disposable income with high credit facilities are considered to be great impulsive buyers (Dittmar et al., 1996). Studies produced inconsistent results with reference to income also by various researchers. It has been concluded that, individuals with low levels of income tend to appreciate drives generated by market stimulators and are recipients of

impulsive buying (Wood, 1998).

4.2.4. Education

Another dimension of impulsive buying is low education which induced the consumers to purchase goods immediately without giving much regard to the consequences (Wood, 1998). In contrast some of the researchers were of different views stating that education did not make a significant difference in impulse buying intention (Xuanxiaoqing et al.,2011).

4.3.Situational factors:

Situational factors are those factors that emerge from a particular situation and are considered to be important motivators of impulsive buying such as time availability, money availability, presence of others (Dholakia, 2000).

4.3.1. Time

It has been concluded that individuals having ample of time, spends more time in browsing the store which ultimately results in impulse buying (Beatty and Ferrell, 1998; Foroughi et al, 2012). However a consumer shopping under time pressure becomes restless and grabs anything from the store without evaluating the item thus resulting in impulsive buying (Wu & Huan, 2010).

4.3.2. Money

Money is regarded as an influential factor in the phenomenon of impulse purchasing. Individuals with plenty of money are prime facilitators of impulsive buying (Beatty and Ferrell, 1998). Also with the introduction of credit cards, now consumers are provided with the facility of purchasing products on credit which acts as catalyst in impulse buying.

4.3.3. Companion

Various researchers examined the impact of shopping with others on impulsive buying. In the study it has been discovered that the existence of peers amplified the need of impulsive buying whereas family members creates hurdles in the path of consumers and discourages them to make purchases (Lou, 2005). Shopping is influenced with others and this thought is supported by belonging need of Maslow's hierarchy model.

5. Internal Factors

Changes in business environment have led to the shifting of interest of researchers from products to consumers. It is believed that it is the consumer who encounters drives to purchase instantly and not the products (Rook and Hoch, 1985). With regard to this internal factors have gained a lot of attention from researchers all around the world. Internal factors may be described as those factors which are affiliated to internal cues, mental processes and attributes of the individual. Internal factors are highly significant as marketers have no jurisdiction over them such as IBT, affect, self-esteem, self-control, values and self- identity etc. This sudden longingness to

purchase something originates from various thoughts and personality traits.

5.1.Impulsive buying tendency (IBT) and Personality

Beatty & Ferrell, 1998 stated one important internal motivator known as Impulsive buying tendency (IBT). This unique behaviour is deep rooted in the personality of individuals and people with more IBT are considered to be to great impulsive buyers as compared to the one with low IBT. Impulsive buying tendency and big five personality traits are in close association with each other (Verplanken and Herabadi, 2001). Impulsive buying tendency is associated positively with extraversion and negatively with conscientiousness. In various studies, IBT and big five personality traits have shown contradictory results and thus these have grasped the attention of various researchers and future research must be conducted in this regard. Also biopsychological theory of personality was proposed which was composed of two systems in the brain, i.e. the behavioural activation system and the behavioural inhibition system (BIS) (Gray, 1975). Both the above mentioned systems show discrepancy among individuals. Individuals with extreme levels of BIS are susceptible to restlessness. On the other hand People high on BAS are likely to be great impulsive buyers and are unable to repel inducements that incite consumers to purchase impulsively (Ramanathan and Menon, 2006)

5.1.2. Self-discrepancy, Autistic Thoughts and Materialism

Another important thought which has grabbed the attention of researchers in the past is self-discrepancy. When individual's starts matching their real self with their ideal self as depicted in Self-discrepancy Theory, inconsistencies with emotional discomforts are ought to be produced. Individuals with self-discrepancy issues often experience lack of confidence and negative feelings which induces consumers to purchase impulsively. Verplanken and Silvera, 2005 stated that people with wounded self-esteem are embedded with weak senses and they can be cured from their emotional anxieties on seeing new products, attractive sales employee, various promotional offers etc. Thus a psychological disequilibrium is created and consumers lose self-control, thereby becoming victims to impulsive desires (Rook and Hoch, 1985). Such individuals fall prey to autistic thoughts which are highly evocative and are drivers of chronic impulse buying (Hirschman, 1985; Piron, 1991). Impulse purchasers vary from standard consumers as the former has powerful materialistic belief presuming that procuring goods will lead him towards success, thereby boosting their image by creating a road towards happiness. Hence, individuals high on materialism trait are more prone to impulsive buying (Wu & Huan, 2010).

5.1.3. Variety seeking behavior

Also variety seeking behavior among individuals is regarded as a powerful drive for internal motivation and is considered to be the main reason for brand switching and impulse buying as identified by (Sharma et al., 2010).

5.1.4. Self-identity Issues

Another factor which needs consideration is the drive to sustain one's self-identity. Sometimes individuals struggle with their self-identity issues and try to overcome on them by adopting and confirming to the theory of symbolic self-completion in which consumers make purchases whereby purchases may be considered to be the signs of unique personality. Endorsing the above notion, (Hoch and Loewenstein, 1991) stated that impulsive buying may indicate more IB, having "fallen off the wagon". This proposes that a form of momentum is created in which additional urges are acted upon more hastily than foregoing urges due to lack of self-control. Aspirations, environmental impetuses and excitement destroy the determination of individuals, causing depletion of self-control which increases their probability of impulsive buying (Baumeister, 2002).

5.1.5. Affective states

Affective states comprise of psycho-physiological traits such as positive and negative moods, feelings and varied emotions. Kacen & Lee, 2002 was of the view that both positive and negative moods strongly influence impulsive buying. Positive mood combined with pleasure, excitement and carefree attitude created an urge among the consumers to purchase impulsively (Rook and Gardner, 1993). Verplanken and Sato, 2011 stated that individuals are fundamentally inspired to hunt for pleasure and these hedonistic drives can be fulfilled by impulsive buying. This belief is an indication related to operant conditioning theory. Most of the research examined positive dimension of impulse buying but Sneath, Lacey, & Kennett-Hensel, 2009 are of different view and stated that impulse buying is an endeavor to boot out depression. Verplanken et al.; 2005 identified negative affect to be the main cause of impulsive buying. Such buying behaviour aids individuals to relieve themselves from negative psychological states such as frustration, depression, boredom as stated in Escapism theory.

5.1.6. Utilitarian and hedonic behaviour

Utilitarian consumer behaviour is defined as a rational behaviour encompassing purchases that is inspired by necessity, without giving much regard to hedonic motives (Babin et al., 1995). On the other hand Miller (1998) recognized hedonic needs that are associated with the contentment of a person's longings and is considered to be one of the prime reasons for impulsive buying. From this perspective, prudence and extravagance traits lead to contradictory results.

5.1.7. Parasocial relationships

Another dimension which needs recognition in impulsive buying process is Parasocial relationships. These are one-sided relationships, where one individual outspreads ecstasy but other individual is uninformed and ignorant of the actions of the former. Less educated

consumers get trapped in the process of para social interactivity with celebs and television actors and are compelled to make impulsive purchases (Stephens et al.; 1996). It has been stated that older people spends most of their time watching shopping programs as compared to young people and in order to mitigate their loneliness they get involved in the act of impulsive buying.

5.1.8. Culture

Culture is the most imperious topic relating to the issue of impulse buying behavior (Kacen and Lee, 2002) concluded that with reference to cultural setting, the theory of individualism and collectivism theory provide us with some important facts. It has been examined that in collectivist countries, individuals are less exposed to freedom and their purchasing decisions are highly influenced by their family and friends whereas in individualism, one feels more independent and is self-directed and are more prone to impulse purchases.

Thus impulsive buying is considered to be a challenge for the marketing practitioners. Its intricate and inevitable nature makes it a hot topic of discussion among the academicians and researchers. Also impulsive buying is composed of numerous factors coupled with inconsistent findings makes it more popular. Hence a list of factors influencing impulsive buying have been explored during the review and are explained in the form of table below which can be put to use for future researches.

Table No. 1. List of Internal and External Motivators

External factors	Demographic factors	Situational factors	Internal factors
Visual merchandising	Age	Time	Impulsive Buying Tendency
Shelf space	Gender	Money	Personality
Promotions	Income	Companion	Self-discrepancy
Store browsing	Education		Self- control
Music,Color,Scent			Materialism
Touch			Variety seeking behavior
Illumination Effect			Positive and Negative mood states
Anonymity			Hedonic and utilitarian needs
Crowding			Para social relationships
			Culture

6. Conclusion:

From the literature, it is evident that impulse buying is universal in character and plays a crucial role in consumers purchasing process. The paper analyzes important discoveries made by researchers and helps in scrutinizing the impact of both internal and external factors. It can be concluded that significant aspects of impulsive buying are explored and are supported by various studies. However, there are still many areas which are yet to be explored and thus it results in paucity of research in achieving a complete and thorough understanding of the nature and process of impulsive buying. Efforts should be made to curb practices such as compulsive buying which is hazardous to self-control mechanisms. Time and money constraints in totality should also be assessed. Examining after effects of impulsive buying and issues such as cognitive dissonance, regret can be studied as these can provide new insights to the marketers and they can introduce new marketing strategies resulting in exorbitant profits. Nowadays internet is becoming popular and online shopping becoming the new trend; its importance cannot be ignored. Therefore both online and offline channels of shopping with reference to impulsive buying should be analyzed by future researchers. Also how sales employee can sell goods effectively to opposite gender and how they contribute in the act of impulsive buying is also interesting. Based on review it has been observed that there is a gap in this context and gender sell is one such area which needs to be studied. Also India is a religious country celebrating numerous festivals. Effect of such occasions on consumer behaviour and their impact on impulsive buying can also be looked upon by future researchers. Thus impulsive buying is a significant concept with contradictory findings with many unexplored areas catching the attention of researchers from all around the world.

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