

DO CONSUMERS BUY CONSCIOUSLY? INVOLVEMENT AND LEVEL OF IMPULSIVITY IN THEIR BUYING BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract: The research investigates the concept of impulsivity widely spread in consumer psychology and covered dimensions from two disciplines i.e. economics and marketing. Moreover, it analyzed the consumers' propensity to make impulsive purchase decisions and the intensity of impulsivity across different product categories. It also focused on the relevance of disparities in consumer demographics (i.e., their gender, age, and income level) on their impulsive shopping behaviour in malls. The statistical procedures used in this research included "Frequency distribution, Percentage analysis, Mean score analysis, Cross-tabulation analysis, Independent Sample T-test, and One-way analysis of variance." Seventy-four percent of shoppers admit that they frequently buy things on the spot. Apparel, followed by consumables, footwear, grocery products, and personal care items, was found to be the most commonly purchased spontaneously and without prior planning in this survey. The study also observed that the differences in age and gender among consumers have a substantial impact on their propensity to make impulsive purchases, and buyers in the 18–25 years age range and female shoppers are most likely to encounter impulse purchases. Mall managers can leverage this finding to frame marketing strategies and economists may develop a new school of thought other than the "ideal consumer approach."

Keywords: Consumer Behaviour; Impulse Buying; Interdisciplinary; Rationality; Retail Store.

1. INTRODUCTION

Marketers are indeed interested in understanding the buying tendency of consumers, which encompasses questions, i.e., what motivates them to make purchases in stores and what they think before, amid, and even after making the purchase. An ideal buying process comprises five phases: Recognition of a problem or need, the search for information, the evaluation of different options, the decision to purchase, and the behaviour after the purchase (as mentioned in fig. no. 1).



Fig. 1: Classical consumer buying behavior model

- Problem identification: Recognizing a need/desire driven by extrinsic and intrinsic stimuli.

- Browsing of Information: Searching for information to explore product-related alternatives. Salespeople, advertisements, Promotion, Customer memory etc. may offer such insights.

- Alternative evaluation: Alternatives are reviewed and analysed using predetermined criteria.

- Purchase decision: Product selection, followed by the act of making a purchase. Both can be differentiated from one another since they take place at different times and in other places.

- Post-purchase: Behavior of consumers after the completion of a purchase encompassing product consumption, post-purchase support, quality of service, gratification, and repeat purchases [17].

Properties of four distinct forms of consumer purchasing behaviour [14]:

- Ideal purchase behaviour: This buying behaviour relies on the theory of decision-making and rationality derived from the field of microeconomics. It outlines the presumptions of the rational buyer, who will be fully well aware and will hunt for the maximum benefits with a minor expenditure. The ideal customers do not exist, but it represents one end of a continuum of consumer patterns.

- Normative purchase behaviour: This approach reflects reality and implies that customers would plan, rationalise, critically compare, and decide on the amount of risk that suits them.

- Impulsive consumer purchase behaviour: This is the dominant buying behaviour and can be considered prevalent among consumers. Consumers try to control their inherent impulsive tendencies because they characterise unplanned purchases as normatively inappropriate and do not want to be viewed as childish or struggling to achieve behavioural control [24]. The dilemma is not deviating from the "typical" pattern of purchasing behaviour; instead, the problem is how most buyers act while making purchase decisions.

- Impulse purchase behaviour: This behaviour is the fourth category of customer purchasing patterns. The modern practice of impulsive shopping exhibits a trait of extreme behaviour, which, from a medical standpoint, is getting very close to meeting the criteria for a diagnosis of impulsive regulation disorder.

The negative connotation of impulse purchase tendency from the 60s has been updated to the extremes of consumer behaviour in today's market. Making impulsive purchases is not inevitable, but it is observed frequently in retail stores, malls, and health clinics.

The traditional premise of the purchasing/decision-making process was grounded on the microeconomic approach of a fully conscious consumer making the best possible choices [9]. Microeconomic theory and decision science could only support the normative approach to buyer behaviour.

The shopper is often viewed as a "thinking machine" in decision science and microeconomics studies [16]. However, studies and reports from the marketing industry have shown that consumers often don't behave under the conventional framework. Perfect competition, in which all market participants act rationally, is a common pattern in theoretical economics. However, in practice, customers rarely have all they need (such as complete and accurate information, sufficient involvement, or sufficient drive) to make the "ideal" decision. Consumers can less objectively weigh the consequences of their choices when they are very engaged with a product which ultimately increases the likelihood of making an impulsive purchase. In reality, everyone makes impulsive purchases occasionally, while some do it more consistently than others. A concise antecedents model cannot explain this kind of consumer behaviour.

An impulse purchase is a psychological component of the complicated and dynamic functioning of the human mind. The term "self-regulation" describes the capacity to control one's emotional state and behaviour and to ensure that one conforms to the desired norm [28]. Consumers make irrational decisions because they lack the ability to self-regulate. When consumers consider purchasing on the spur of the moment, their impulsive urge functions as an influencer, while normative sanctions act as a restrainer. Consumers use several methods to justify their actions and to relieve any associated guilt or uncertainty [20].

We were propelled to investigate retail markets and explain customer behaviour by reporting these inconsistencies. A marketer must divide that base into narrower, more specific groups and provide each group with its own set of products and services to serve the needs of a broad customer base. So, the study proposed to investigate how customers' demographic disparities affect their propensity to make impulsive purchases and their shopping preferences towards various products.

Following a review of the relevant literature, the key variables were identified along with their operational definitions to build hypothetical applicability as follows:

Variable	Operational definition
Consumer purchase behaviour	Customer shopping patterns in malls and big retail stores [27].
Impulse Buying	A purchase made on the spur of the moment with no prior plan to purchase a specific product item or to complete a predefined purchasing task [2].
Demographic variables	The demographic variables examined for this research were age, gender, and income.

Table no. 1: Operational definitions of main variables

Consumers' propensity to make impulsive purchase decisions

There has never been any consistency between what they aim to buy and what they end up buying [11]. According to retailers, a certain amount of sales is attributed to "impulse buying," which is now seen as a subsection of typical buying patterns [5, 13]. Shoppers classify 30- 50% of their purchases as being made on the spur of the moment [3]. Impulsive shopping is a natural part of life and all shoppers have made nearly one impulsive purchase in their lifetime, and nine out of ten customers often make purchases based on impulse [29]. China, India, and Indonesia were the top three on the list of countries with the highest rates of impulsive purchasing and its early adoption. It is a component of lifestyles in western countries that cannot be avoided [25], expanding to the east without any particular border being defined [14].

Degree/Intensity of impulsivity across different product categories

The degree to which one is driven to purchase on the spur of the moment varies from product to product. Customers are more likely to make a quick purchase when the product includes certain features [13]. Earlier research reported that 27-62 % of consumers' chain store buying fell into the impulse buying category, yet some product lines remain unaffected by this behavior [3]. In spite of the fact that some things are more likely to be purchased on the spur than others, a specific collection of products is not a practical criterion for measuring impulsive consumer behaviour because of individual and cultural differences[28].

Relevance of Consumer demographic disparities (i.e., their gender, age, and level of income) on their propensity towards impulse purchase

Consumers' actions vary depending on their demographic profile, i.e., age, gender, income, level of education, etc. [7]. Over the past couple of

decades, marketers have noticed that the connection of impulsive buying with various demographic features has gained significant relevance. It is believed to be a major factor in customers' final purchase decisions.

"Gender is a demographic factor which has been widely employed in these research areas [4]". Females, according to a research [6], are more prone to making spontaneous purchases than males. As per a survey [12], customers' impulsive purchases of apparel are affected by gender disparity. Men are less likely to engage in impulse purchases than women [1,15].

Consumers' purchasing habits change as per their age [26]. Also, shoppers' impulsiveness varies significantly with age [8]. In addition, as consumers' age increases, their propensity to engage in impulsive purchases declines [3]. Young people are more likely to make impulsive purchases, and their level of impulsiveness during shopping is higher than that of people of older age [1]. Generation Y shoppers are more likely to make immediate purchases [15].

The purchasing power of customers is proportional to their income, and those with more disposable income tend to make more impulsive purchases. Income also has a favourable effect on customers' Impulse buying behaviour. Individuals with higher incomes tend to make unplanned purchases more frequently than those with lower incomes [26, 30].

2. HYPOTHESES

In this paper, research is based on six initial hypotheses used to be validated or not during a specialised analysis:

H₁: The buying behaviour of customers is characterised by impulsivity.

H₂: The degree of impulsivity varies according to the product category.

H₃: Consumers' demographics (i.e., their gender, age, and level of income) significantly influence their propensity towards impulse purchase decisions.

H₄: Female shoppers are more inclined to impulse purchases than their male counterparts.

H₅: Young shoppers are more inclined to impulse purchases than older shoppers.

H₆: Shoppers with higher incomes are more inclined to impulse purchases than shoppers with lower incomes.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study's research methodology was classified into research design, sample design, questionnaire design, and data design.

3.1 Research design

The research design for this study was cross-sectional descriptive. The data collection was carried out in the field via a structured questionnaire. The months of May, April, and June 2022 make up the time frame for the study.

3.2 Sample design

According to the past researches, purposive sampling is frequently used in shopping malls for studying buying behaviour of consumers. So, the sample was selected using "Purposive Sampling technique". The research was based on the one-stage mall intercept survey method, which has been employed extensively in previous research to obtain data [2, 21]. The mall merchants in Rohtak city permitted us to conduct our survey inside their stores. Out of the total of 140 responses, only 100 were used for the study, primarily due to removing those who could not fill up all their information in the survey.

3.3 Questionnaire design

The scale used to evaluate the impulsive behaviour of buyers was adopted from previously conducted research [19, 31]. The responses were analysed using a Likert scale of five points, where 1 indicated that the respondent strongly disagreed and 5 suggested that the respondent strongly agreed. We asked shoppers (who had just finished checking out) to respond to a standardised questionnaire. The first question we asked them was whether they shop without making plans beforehand. In one section of the questionnaire, questions regarding the respondent's demographic profile, and in another, questions designed to assess the respondent's level of impulsive shopping behaviour were included.

3.4 Data design

The statistical techniques applied for this study were the "frequency" count, Percentage Analysis, Cross Tabulation Analysis, Independent Sample T-test, and ANOVA Technique.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Catagories	Unplanned/ Impulsive buying		
	YES	NO	Total
Below two lakhs	26	13	39
Two lakhs-Five lakhs	32	4	36
Above five lakhs	16	9	25
18-25	30	6	36
25-35	24	10	34
35-45	20	10	30
Male	34	16	50
Female	40	10	50
Total	74	26	100

Table 2.1: Demographic profile and categorization of buyers based on impulsiveness

Impulse buying decision Indicators	Mean Score
When I go shopping, I purchase things I hadn't intended to buy.	3.28
I am one of those who make unplanned purchases.	3.01
When I find something interesting, I don't consider the consequences and buy it.	3.07
It is fun to buy spontaneously.	3.24
I avoid buying anything that is not in my shopping list.	2.76
I regret after buying that I didn't intend to purchase.	2.79

Table 2.2: Mean Scores of Customers' Perception of Impulse Buying

Fifty men and fifty women constituted the total sample of the survey. There are 36 people between the age of 18 and 25, 32 between the age of 25 and 35, and 32 between the age of 35 and 45. Among those who participated, 39 had annual earnings of less than two lakhs, 36 had annual income between 2 lakhs and five lakhs, and 25 had annual income of more than five lakhs. Most respondents (74%) act impulsively when it comes time to make their purchasing decision, whereas just 26% of shoppers make their decisions after giving it some thought. The findings reveal that most customers engage in impulse buying, which suggests they do not follow the rational or traditional buying process (Table 2.1).

Women (N=40) are more prone to exhibit impulsive behaviour than men (N=34). It was found that shoppers between the ages of 18 and 25 (N=30) are more likely

to make impulsive purchases than those of older generations (N=24 & 20, respectively). The data also reported that the consumers with the highest income bracket are the least likely to indulge in impulse shopping (Table 2.1). The shoppers admit that they frequently walk out of stores with items they did not intend to buy. As their responses to the first four questions are significantly higher than the average value (i.e., 2.5). Whenever buyers like something, they decide to purchase it and they are reckless about the repercussions of their actions. However, they disagreed with the assertions that "they avoid things that are not on their shopping list and that they regret after shopping without a plan" because these two statements are somewhat close to the average value (Table 2.2). The mean indicated that consumers act impulsively while

making purchase decisions and do not even consider the outcomes of their purchases after making them. They take pleasure in acting on impulses whenever they shop without a list, and they are not likely to have feelings of regret due to such purchase decisions.

Therefore, the hypothesis (H₁) "The buying behaviour of customers is characterised by impulsivity" was accepted. However, a subset of customers who shop thoughtfully can keep their minds away from wandering and resist being tempted to things that were not on their shopping list. It is widely acknowledged that impulsive purchasing is inherent in consumer lifestyles and is responsible for selling a significant percentage of goods in a diverse array of product categories [22].

Products	Ranks
Apparels	1
Footwear	2
Eatables	3
Cosmetics	4
Grocery	5

Table 3: Preferences for products purchased impulsively by buyers

There is no uniform level of impulsivity in customers' purchase behaviour among the different types of products. Out of the above products, apparel is the one that is purchased the most, followed by footwear, edibles, cosmetics, and groceries (Table 3). Therefore, the hypothesis (H₂) "The degree of impulsivity varies according to the product category" was accepted.

Customers explore apparel outlets to obtain some idea of the most recent trends in the industry rather than depending on their shopping list [19]. In that case, there is a high chance that they may make impulsive purchases. In addition, the desires of individual customers are likely to fluctuate more extensively than their essential requirements. This implies that clothing as a product class may serve as a stimulus that influences impulsive buying.

Gender	Male	Female
N	50	50
Mean	2.7700	3.2633
Std. Deviation	.74069	.73316
t-value	3.347	
Significance value	.001	

Table 4: Summary of Independent Sample T-Test

The respondents were given a scale ranging from 1 to 5 for evaluating their perception regarding impulse purchase behaviour; the possibly average attribute value is 2.5. Based on the findings, the values of all measures of impulsive buying for both male and female customers are much higher than

the mean. The significance of gender differences in impulsive purchases is further supported by the standard deviation, which describes the dispersion of the random value around the mean. When the coefficient is close to 1, the effect is strong. The standard deviation values are all relatively close to 1. There is a difference between the means of male consumers and female consumers (Table 4). Female consumers (mean 3.26, Std. deviation .73) exhibited higher impulsivity than male consumers (mean 2.77, Std. deviation .74).

Hence, the hypothesis (H₄) “Female shoppers are more inclined to impulse purchases than their male counterparts” was accepted. This finding is consistent with some studies [8, 23] that women tend to make more impulsive purchases than men because of their extreme sensitivity to advertising and natural inclination towards visually appealing products.

The t-test result reported that the impulsive purchases made by male customers differ considerably from those made by female customers (p-value < 0.05). The hypothesis "Consumers' gender influences their propensity towards impulse purchase decisions significantly." was supported. These results show consistency with a research [13] that consumers' propensity to make spontaneous purchases differs by gender. On the other hand, one research reported arguments of non-significant variations between men and women when it came to making impulsive purchases [4].

Age	18-25	25-35	35-45
N	36	32	32
Mean	3.2031	3.1615	2.7222
Std. Deviation	.73247	.80931	.70296
f-value		4.373	
Significance value		.015	

Table 5: Summary of One-way ANOVA

There is a difference in the average value of consumers between those aged 18 to 25 and those aged 25 and above (Table 5). According to the findings, younger shoppers were found to exhibit higher levels of impulsivity (mean 3.20, standard deviation .73) than older shoppers (mean 3.16, standard deviation .80 and mean 2.72, standard deviation .70 correspondingly). Therefore, the hypothesis (H₅) “Young shoppers are more inclined to impulse purchases than older shoppers significantly” was supported. This finding is similar to a couple of studies [1,8] that there was a negative correlation between customers' age and their propensity for making impulsive purchases. Hence, young buyers are more susceptible to impulsive purchases than older buyers.

Impulsive decisions made by younger customers are significantly different from those made by consumers of older ages (p-value less than 0.05).

Therefore, the hypothesis that "Consumers' age significantly influences their propensity towards impulse purchase decisions" was accepted. This study is in line with other surveys [4, 8, 13], implying that the Impulse purchase behaviour of customers differs significantly among age groups.

Income	Below two lakhs	Two lakhs- Five lakhs	Above five lakhs
N	39	36	25
Mean	2.9658	3.1204	2.9467
Std. Deviation	.87374	.66739	.76636
f-value		.504	
Significance value		.605	

Table 6: Summary of One-way ANOVA

Shoppers with incomes in the range of 2 lakh-5 lakh had a higher propensity (Table 6) to make impulsive purchases (mean 3.12, standard deviation .66) as compared to other groups of shoppers (mean 2.96, standard deviation .87 and mean 2.94, standard deviation .76 respectively). So, the hypothesis (H₆) “Shoppers with higher incomes are more inclined to impulse purchases than shoppers with lower incomes” was not accepted. In contrast, some argumentative studies [4, 26, 30] stated that those with higher incomes tend to be more prone to making impulsive purchases.

Since the p-value is higher than 0.05, the findings of the ANOVA do not indicate any significant relationship between one's income and their tendency to make impulsive purchases (Table 6). So, we can conclude that the hypothesis “Consumers' income influences their propensity towards impulse purchase decisions significantly” was not supported. This finding is consistent with a former study [15] that no relationship exists between a consumer's income and their propensity to make impulsive purchases. However, the study's results contradict other research findings [4] that household income has a considerable influence on people's tendency to make impulsive purchases. As shoppers' age and gender affect significantly impulse buying but income level doesn't have any significant effect on their impulsive decision, Hypothesis (H₃) was partially accepted in the study.

5. CONCLUSION

The normative approach of microeconomics is not entirely applicable to the market. The heartbeat of impulse purchases is alive and thriving. The research proposed a novel viewpoint, a reigniting typology of consumer purchasing patterns, and a shift in the socially accepted standards of being a shopper in the present day. Attracting shoppers and sustaining loyalty in today's increasingly

competitive retail market is a tough challenge. This study confirmed the significance of the impulsive decision in making a purchase. It revealed various demographic traits of people who tend to make purchases on the spur of the moment. This finding has provided a light for businesses focusing on specific age groups or gender categories while chasing customers. Promoting the "less-impulsive" classes is essential to strike a better balance. Companies must be aware of the behavioral differences among various demographic groups. Retailers must adopt a specific strategy for each category group to maximise productivity and sales in their stores. We feel that the summarised findings offer substantial implications that could promote the scientific understanding and retail applicability of this critical topic in consumer research. The study's implications could be helpful for practitioners, economists and academics in specifying criteria and designing a strategic framework to identify and categorize consumers based on their impulsivity trait.

6. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

This study provides marketers and mall owners with some significant insights. Many management initiatives might be taken to enhance the consumers' purchasing activity in retail stores. The relevant managerial implications emerged from the study findings are mentioned below:

(1) Sales managers need to be more engaged in offering promotional activities to shoppers, as most buyers would be motivated to purchase impulsively by these programs.

(2) Focusing upon the fact that gender strongly influences impulsive purchase behavior, retailers might build customized programs for distinct gender groups of shoppers.

(3) Concentrating on the observation that age greatly affects impulsive purchasing patterns, merchants must develop customized programs targeted to the diverse age group of buyers.

(4) Depending on the research outcomes that most of the shoppers who referred to the impulsive segment were females, merchants may build up-scale pictures of the store to persuade this group of shoppers.

(5) The survey's findings reveal that most impulse buyers are young people; stores could be decorated with trendy art and create special incentives to cater to this segment and encourage their sudden purchase decision.

(6) Since apparel was mostly purchased on impulse, stores need to develop their promotional strategies to induce apparel customers to buy on the spot.

7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The limitations of any study determine how far its results can be generalised. While this study has the potential to significantly contribute to our understanding of consumer behaviour and impulse purchases, it also has some significant drawbacks. Because of the small sample size, inductive generalisation is a problem for this study. The views of urban people may differ from those living in rural areas. Although the findings only include shoppers in malls, they can be extrapolated to consumers who shop at ordinary brick-and-mortar establishments. More research is required to determine if other factors affect Indian consumers' propensity to make unplanned purchases. Investigation is necessary to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that influence impulsive buying, including a diverse sample of respondents (from various geographic locations and cultural backgrounds).

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