

Synopsis

Multiple and dynamic factors have been catalysts in inducing impulse buying behaviour amongst consumers in emerging market such as India. Improved economic well-being, growing modern trade and rising consumerism have led to the recognition of Indian consumers as the most optimistic across the world with a growing penchant to spend 'Now'. However, despite such robust developments, impulse buying phenomenon remains a conundrum and not an actively researched area in the region. Limited scope and orientation of the previous studies and lack of contextually relevant psychometric scales for the key constructs have led to a fragmented perspective and an inadequate understanding of the behaviour.

To overcome these gaps, the current study aims to achieve the following research objectives. First is to identify the behavioural and experiential manifestations of impulse buying behaviour and impulse buying tendency among Indian consumers. Second is to develop contextual and appropriate measures for these constructs, and to select the situations significant in influencing impulse buying in the Indian market. Third is to segment and profile Indian consumers based on their impulse buying tendency. Fourth is to determine the individual, collective and interactive influences of the identified key antecedents on impulse buying behaviour. On the basis of the overall empirical findings thus obtained, the study aims to develop a comprehensive conceptual framework for the buying behaviour.

The research process followed is sequential in nature and comprises of two phases. Phase one is qualitative and exploratory in nature. It includes expert interviews, observations of shoppers at modern retail points and in-depth interviews of consumers. Content analysis of the findings underscores the significance of individual differences and their relationship with underlying latent variables. It also highlights the importance of viewing the situational factors as being consumer, market or marketer driven. Further, it presents a structure to the impulse buying process from the origin of a buying urge to its culmination. These insights are used to identify the key study variables, develop hypotheses and conceptualize the proposed framework of impulse buying behaviour.

Next, multiple items for the scales for impulse buying tendency and impulse buying behaviour derived basis the qualitative analysis are subjected to experts' review for content validity. Scale purification, refinement and validation are done across two samples of 225 and 421 respondents. A comprehensive battery of statistical techniques ranging from item analysis, exploratory factor analysis, reliability testing followed by confirmatory factor analysis are used, and validity measures including construct validity, nomological validity and predictive validity are established. Single item scales for the eleven identified situations are also developed. The standardized scales for normative evaluations regarding impulse buying and general impulsiveness are adapted from existing body of work. These are further authenticated using internal consistency measures, reliability analysis and exploratory factor analysis, and modified as required. Given the nature of enquiry, the study instrument begins with two screening questions. Separate questionnaires for males and females are developed that include the scales of the five constructs under study, as well as relevant demographic information of the respondents.

Phase two of the study is quantitative in nature and includes final data collection and analysis. Hierarchical and non-hierarchical cluster analysis reveals the existence of three consumer segments based on their impulse buying tendency. These are: *Proactive-impulsive shoppers* who are both affectively and cognitively oriented towards impulse buying; *Hesitant-hedonist shoppers* who seek impulse buying actively though are cognitively disposed against it; and *Pragmatic-rationalist shoppers* who are not at all given to buying on impulse. These clusters are profiled basis their

demographics, their impulse buying behaviour as well as normative evaluations regarding impulse buying.

Multiple linear-regression analysis determines the role of key antecedents of impulse buying behaviour and establishes an order of significance amongst them with impulse buying tendency as the foremost antecedent. However, Chow test and Fisher-z-transformation indicate moderating impact of certain key variables on the predictive abilities of these key antecedents. These variables are: normative evaluations regarding impulse buying, age, gender, and four situational factors. Mediation analysis using structural equation modelling establishes that impulse buying tendency and general impulsiveness are unique and distinct constructs. Further it also establishes that impulse buying tendency is a mediating variable between general impulsiveness and impulse buying behaviour. Finally, based on the overall findings of the study and validation of the study hypotheses, the research develops a composite framework of the phenomenon of impulse buying that includes predictors, mediators and moderators across psychological, cultural, contextual and demographic dimensions.

This study has strong academic and managerial implications. Foremost, it widens the scope of research by developing a consumer centric orientation for a construct largely perceived as driven by demographics or product related factors in the Indian market. It equips future research with contextually relevant and theoretically sound psychometric scales. The study exemplifies the role of qualitative research in the impulse buying domain and propagates the use of non-intrusive techniques. Further, it ratifies impulse buying tendency to be the most important factor and establishes it as unique and distinctive trait from general impulsiveness. It demonstrates Indian consumers' proclivity towards complying with their normative opinions and also highlights the primary role played by consumer led situations. The study undertakes a unique trait driven consumer segmentation approach providing both psychological and demographic profiles of the obtained segments. Furthermore, it establishes impulse buying to be a multifaceted phenomenon with simultaneous, direct and interactive influences adding to its complexity.

The study is action-oriented as it also adds to the practitioner's understanding of the impulse buying behaviour. The more comprehensive the understanding of the phenomenon, the more structured and focussed can be the marketing mix of organisations that seek a larger share of the impulse buying revenue. The results of the study can be used by marketers and retailers in conceptualizing effective go-to-market strategies in line with the needs and preferences of the target market.

The study has some limitations that future research can address. Firstly, the study provides only an urban perspective; hence its extension to smaller towns and rural markets is worth exploring. Secondly, it is generic to medium and high involvement products and not specific to a product category. Therefore, subsequent research can be carried out to assess the applicability of the study findings across different products. Further, the situational factors considered are a small subset of the overall gamut of situations that may influence impulse buying. Ensuing research can improve upon this by broadening the range of situations considered. There is also merit in exploring the qualitative insights- such as the emotions experienced- further for their relationship with personality types or demographic factors. Prospective studies can also be conducted to establish cross-regional validation of the developed scales and the conceptual framework in other Asian emerging markets. Lastly, the study is limited to augmenting the academic understanding and facilitating the practitioners' perspective of impulse buying. Successive research should also explore the impact of impulse buying on society and its' wellbeing at large.

