

ISSN 2319-2593

The IIS University
Journal
of
Social Sciences

Volume 9

Issue 1

2020

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Analysis of Impulsive Fashion Consumption in Fashion Adopters

Roopa Mathur, Himangini R Hooja & Harshita Agarwal

Abstract

The ability of fashion adopters to impart relevant information through their buying behaviour ignites interest in academicians as well as practitioners (marketers/advertisers). Collecting data from 60 fashion conscious adopters, using ANOVA (SPSS), revealed that the three fashion adoption groups (innovators, opinion leaders and innovative communicators) differ significantly on impulsive buying behaviour and the difference was significant ($F= 99.81, p=0.01$) among the three groups. The study further reiterates the importance of identifying adopters who are the pioneers of change adoption in the market today. This classification of leaders will be of substantial use to advertisers as well as marketers in order to initiate buying.

Keywords: Impulsive buying, Fashion adopters, Fashion conscious, innovators, opinion leaders, innovative communicators

Introduction

Impulsive buying occurs when a consumer experiences an urgent, powerful and persistent desire to buy something immediately (Verplanken & Sato, 2011). This type of buying can also be called 'an unintentional purchase' that is subject to rapid decision-making and a subjective bias in favour of immediate possession (Gardner & Rook, 1988). It is a less deliberate action and can be described as a more irresistible kind of buying behaviour, and further initiated when an individual enjoys shopping consisting of at least two core elements - the emotional response and the lack of planning in the purchase. The impulse to buy is hedonically complex as it satisfies a number of hedonic desires of the consumer. The majority of purchases made in supermarkets are unplanned due to the visual store layout which acts as a virtual list for the consumers instead of a shop-

ping list prepared in advance (Kollat & Willett, 1967). An impulsive purchase can generate emotional responses before, after or simultaneously. The emotion which is most prominent, and usually elicits simultaneously with unplanned purchase, have been identified as pleasure and excitement (Weinberg & Gottwald, 1982). The emotion which is generated before the purchase may be an immediate and sudden buying urge, which might be considered as a mild form of craving (Sundstrom, Balkow, Florehed, Tjernstrom & Wadenfors, 2013) and may result in consumers feeling uplifted and energized after a shopping trip (Cobb & Hoyer, 1986). According to Kollat and Reed (2007) impulsive buying behaviour, when associated with emotional preferences in shopping is considered accidental behaviour. Internal and external factors both affect the consumers to buy impulsively (Wansink, 1994). As impulsive buying is driven by stimulus, therefore, increased exposure to certain external stimuli can increase the probability of impulsive buying (Iyer, 1989). There can be an impact of certain factors (situational factors, marketing stimuli and trait impulsivity) in instigating buying impulsively which may vary among different individuals, and also among different situations for the same individual (Dholakia, 2000). Economic, personal, temporal, cultural and spatial factors can influence impulse buying. The consumers in the contemporary times go on a shopping trip with the mind-set of occasionally buying commodities on an unplanned urge, showing that impulse might not always result in the emotion of regret, and the experience of compulsion in order to buy does not always result in a financial loss (Wood, 1998).

Researchers discovered that impulsive buyers are guided by internal as well as external factors which stimulated their purchases (Unsalan, 2016; Sangalang, Siochi, & Plaza, 2017).

Review of literature

The recent studies of impulsive buying behaviour showed the growing research field in understanding behaviour of consumer. The studies have helped in identifying the various influences (positive and negative) on impulsive buying behaviour, within the external shopping environment as well as personal (internal) factors. However, the review helped in ascertaining the research gap catering to fashion adoption groups and impulsive buying. The literature review demonstrates that impulsive buying behaviour usually begins in late adolescence or early adulthood, the age at which individuals are typically enrolled in college (Bakewell, Mitchell, & Rothwell, 2006) and it most frequently occurs in the apparel items (Kim, 2003). Keeping the above trend in mind, the present study will exclusively

try to identify fashion adopters among college going students and identify their impulsive buying behaviour. Females are more aware and conscious of fashion and upcoming trends. It has been observed that the college going females have rapidly evolving choices as they are well informed and concerned about their appearances. Understanding the dynamic nature of fashion choices of the sample mentioned above, it will be of benefit to the retailers and marketers to use the knowledge and reach out to desired audiences and increase the chances of adoption of the products that are offered in the market. With the increase in competition among the brands, companies need all the information about their consumers. Building upon the influence of (fashion) adopters in exerting their influence in buying behaviour of their followers, the study may help marketers to understand frequency of impulsive buying behaviour. The research work may assist in gaining insight in characteristics of fashion leaders and the situations which influence them to buy on impulse. As impulsive buying is positive for companies, the study may add to the growing knowledge regarding consumer research in the fashion industry. It may further provide assistance to marketing/ advertising agencies to successfully strategize their brands and ensure visibility of products across fashion leaders and their followers. As said by Michael LeBoeuf "A Satisfied Customer is the Best Business Strategy of All".

The study hypothesizes that impulsive buying behavior will not differ significantly among the three fashion adoption groups.

Methods

The sample was drawn from colleges of Jaipur city. The cumulative sample for the study was 60 Individuals, divided into 3 groups consisting of 20 individuals each, using purposive sampling technique. Inclusion criteria consisted of college going female students between the age group of 18 to 25 years with average or high socio-economic background (annual income of parents above 15 lakhs). The following were excluded from the purview of the study: any female above the age of 25 years or below 18 years not enrolled in college or enrolled in distance learning courses or working/married.

The study used the Innovativeness and Opinion Leadership scale (Hirschman & Adcock, 1978) to identify the groups of fashion adopters namely, Fashion Innovators, Innovative communicators, and Fashion Opinion Leaders. The study uses the most recent validated version by Anic and Mihic (2015) on croatian population. The inter-item reliability

(Cronbach's alpha) of all the 6 items in the scale gave the result as $\alpha = .79$. Reliability of Fashion Innovativeness items was $\alpha = .76$, and that of Fashion Opinion Leadership was $\alpha = .73$. In order to measure Impulsive Buying Tendency Scale, the instrument developed by Thomas, Louise & Kumar (2018) was used. Responses were collected on a 5-point likert scale. The reliability of scale was found to be $\alpha = .71$. The study also used interview technique to identify themes in impulsive behaviour.

Results

| VARIABLES | INNOVATORS | | OPINION LEADERS | | INNOVATIVE COMMUNICATORS | | F | Sig. |
|----------------------------|------------|------|-----------------|------|--------------------------|------|-------|------|
| | M | S.D | M | S.D | M | S.D | | |
| IMPULSIVE BUYING BEHVAIOUR | 22.9 | 1.94 | 10 | 3.16 | 17.4 | 3.37 | 99.81 | 0.01 |

Impulsive buying behaviour differs significantly ($F = 99.81, p = 0.01$) among the three fashion groups

Discussion

Impulse buying has been of theoretical and practical significance to economics, consumer research and psychology (Dittmar & Drury, 2000), which has interested researchers and practitioners in this field for the past sixty years (Peck & Childers, 2006; Chang, Eckman, & Yan, 2011). The psychological, social and cultural significance of buying consumer goods has led to the change of the traditional model of rational & thoughtful buying towards an important shift which focuses on immediate purchases without any pre-shopping objective either to fulfil a specific need or purchase the specific product category. More recently, it has been noted that an impulse purchase is becoming a predominant phenomenon in all retail formats and also becoming an important part of consumer's lifestyle (Sangalang *et.al*, 2017). Therefore, the examination of impulsive buying behaviour and its intensity among the three fashion adopters groups can be of much interest to the manufacturers worldwide and may be of great importance to fashion retailers as it provides significant additional revenue (Kacen & Lee, 2002). More recently, in the Indian context, Murungantham & Bhakat (2013) noted that the growth in the retail industry has been dynamic and is still growing rapidly driven by favorable demographics, increasing disposable income and changing lifestyles segments resulting

in noticeable impulse buying behaviour. The results of the present study indicate that the three fashion adopters groups namely, innovators, opinion leaders and innovative communicators were significantly different in their characteristics of impulsive buying behaviour. Fashion innovators have scored highest on impulsive buying behaviour owing to previous research which concludes that such category of fashion adopters tend to adopt a new fashion more eagerly (Rahman, Saleem, Akhtar, Ali, & Khan 2014) and shop constantly for new fashionable products. This behaviour of fashion innovators can be explained through the integrated model of Consumption Impulse Formation and Enactment (Dholakia, 2000). Since fashion innovativeness enables a consumer to get pleasure from buying a particular product as compared to other consumers who do not buy (Workman, 2010) and can be identified with increasing expenditure on new fashion, therefore the impulsivity trait which can be described as moment purchase with the little thought (Mohan, Sivakumaran, & Sharma, 2013) complements the needs of fashion conscious individuals (Pentecost & Andrews, 2010). Impulsive buying is due to marketing stimuli, impulsivity traits and situational factors (Dholakia, 2000) which can explain the behavior of fashion innovators who shop more frequently and spend more in clothing per month. Innovators buy clothes with considerable frequency (Cardoso, Costa, & Novais, 2010) and are seen to be heavily influenced by fashion magazines, celebrity magazines, newspapers and TV programs (Birtwistle & Moore, 2007) which provides the exposure to the marketing stimulus leading to increase in their impulsive buying (Rogers, 2003). The situational factors play an important role in fashion adoption by innovators. The situational factors are the ones which may increase or decrease the rate at which consumers will experience the consumption impulse (Dholakia, 2000). These factors are the deciding point to adopt a new fashion by fashion innovators (Sproles, 1979) where, social influence acts as an important predictor of fashion consumption (Tshabalala, 2014) and indicates positive influence on the fashion purchase intention (Hung, Chen, Peng, Hackley, & Tiwsakul, 2011). The results of statistical analysis which indicate a significant difference between the three groups of fashion adopters and with fashion innovators scoring the highest mean score on the variable of impulsive buying also collaborated with the qualitative analysis using thematic technique. The following themes of their impulsive buying behaviour were reported: curiosity of new trends, freedom to purchase, unplanned purchase, store environment and display of product, influence of the company an individual goes shopping with, variety seeking behaviour, availability of new products. Similar impulsive buying behaviour of fashion innovators has been reported in previous research (Harmancioglu *et al.*, 2009; Kacen & Lee 2002; Luo, 2005; Mattila

& Wirtz 2008).

Fashion goods have become modern means of regulating emotions (e.g., Elliott, 1994) acquiring and expressing a sense of self-identity and gaining social status. Fashion opinion leaders use the knowledge of goods to express themselves and exercise influence on the buying behaviours of others. Opinion leaders have the lowest mean score in impulsive buying behaviour ($M=10.00$). The impulsivity in their buying behaviour can be interpreted as being low. The impulsive behaviour of opinion leaders can be explained through the model proposed by Dittmar et. al (1995). The purchases made by opinion leaders can be explained through benefits which are functional as well as symbolic. Opinion leaders were also found to gather a lot of information about the products because they are exposed and motivated to consume more channels of advertising than non-leaders (Verette, 2004). Owing to the high income levels of such fashion adopters (Crask & Reynolds, 1978), and their tendency to use clothes as a reflection of their tastes, lifestyles, and their self image has led to higher prestige sensitivity (Casidy, 2012). Thereby making them recognised as important change agents to spread the new clothing fashions for a long time (Rogers, 2003). As fashion opinion leaders have all the information needed about the new fashion product, they are more likely to purchase the recent fashion products than fashion followers. The results of the study have been supported by thematic analysis which identified and verified the characteristics of opinion leaders' impulsive buying behaviour. The major themes that appeared were planned shopping, shopping according to requirement, gathering a lot of information before buying the product, updated on latest fashion, symbolic meaning of product. The impulsive buying behaviour of opinion leaders as mentioned above is in line with the results of previous research work (Zhou & Wong 2003; Verette, 2004).

Innovative communicators are the most active of the fashion leaders as they exert influence through non-verbal means, by using the product so that it can be seen by others and hence get adopted early. Innovative communicators have an average mean score on impulsive buying behaviour ($M=17.4$). The impulsivity in their buying behaviour can be interpreted as being average. As innovative communicators help in early diffusion of fashion products (Rogers, 2003), and are among the first to purchase any product category (Hazeldine & Miles, 2010), they can be said to have the propensity of being impulsive in nature. The impulsive behaviour of innovative communicators can be explained through the model proposed by the Impulsive purchase model given by Mattila and Wirtz (2008), which explains that the social aspects encourage the consumer's impul-

sive buying behaviour. When making choices during their buying behaviour, they consider not buying a product, as a loss and therefore, end up purchasing the product in order to reduce the feeling of loss. They like to have a collection of fashionable products and are constantly renewing their wardrobes as their market visiting frequency is quite high. Innovative communicators are highly social and are known to be trendsetters as they are instrumental in diffusing product-related information and opinions to other potential consumers (Hazeldine & Miles, 2010). The adoption of new trends in fashion will increase the shopping of new products, as the high arousal of buying results in decreasing the consumer's self-regulation (Baumeister, 2002) and also significantly decreases the thinking ability of person (Tice *et al.*, 2001) it leads the consumer to buy impulsively. Therefore, the impulsive buying of innovative communicators will depend on their environment and social groups they belong to. The qualitative analysis through thematic technique revealed similar findings and identified the following themes: trend setters, highly social, collection of fashion products and buying products to reduce the feeling of loss. The qualitative analysis has been able to provide support to the model proposed by Mattila and Wirtz (2008) to explain and identify the characteristics of innovative communicators.

The above discussion concludes that impulsive buying is dependent on the type of fashion adopters group an individual falls under, where innovators are highest on impulsive buying while opinion leaders are found to be lowest together with innovative communicators having an average impulsive buying tendency. The current research work has been able to successfully identify distinct characteristics of the three fashion adopters groups. Such information may be of importance to the marketers in order to form strategies for targeting a particular fashion adopters group and therefore have a concentrated strategy instead of a large outreach marketing plan. The research work has been able to direct the attention towards the adopters groups as important factors in predicting shopping behaviour in comparison to previous research which focused upon distinguishing between fashion adopters and followers. The behaviour of impulsive buying has been interpreted through affect (Bandyopadhyay, 2016; Mohan *et al.* 2013), motivation & hedonic rewards (Chung, Song, & Lee, 2017; Dey & Srivastava, 2017; Hausman, 2000;), self judgements (Omar & Kent, 2001), cognitive & affective processes (Coley & Burgess, 2003), and decision making (Sofi & Nika, 2017). The role of personal characteristics was highlighted by Mohan *et al.* (2013) in their research work which indicated the influence on impulsive buying. Keeping this trend in mind, it will be useful to categorize such personal/individual characteris-

tics into fashion adopters groups rather than individual elements.

Conclusion

The study proposes the following practical implications-

For marketers/advertisers

1. Assistance in designing strategies to reach the desired population.
2. Additional insight into impulsive buying behaviour of fashion leaders.
3. Supportive data towards using buying behaviour cues to reach target population.
4. Direct attention towards innovative communicators considering their higher purchase intentions.
5. Identification of personality characteristics of fashion groups in exhibiting impulsive buying behaviour.

Suggestions

1. Use and implications of social media as a measure of influence of fashion leaders may be explored further.
2. The tendency of the consumers to shop online or offline can be explored in context of impulsive buying behaviour.
3. Impulsive buying characteristics of fashion leaders can be explored on the online dimensions.

Limitations of the study

1. Issues regarding generalisation of findings.
2. Inclusion of only one gender in sample population.
3. The process of screening through the different phases of the study may have impacted the results.
4. The study may have regional bias.

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