



ISSN 2278 – 0211 (Online)

Impulse Buying: A Literature Overview

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Abstract:

Impulse buying is an emerging phenomenon, which has been the focus of the retailers to attract the customers. Impulse behaviour is the outcome of emotional reactions that generate unpredicted urge to buy. An extensive review of literature on impulse buying has been done in this paper. Several researches on impulse buying have been conducted in many countries. The study's contribution to the literature is to identify the potential role of impulse buying in consumers purchase decision.

Keywords: *Impulse Buying, Purchase behaviour, visual merchandising, store image*

1. Introduction

Impulse buying has been defined as a spontaneous, immediate purchase (Rook & Fisher, 1995) Engel and Blackwell (1982) define an impulse purchase as “a buying action undertaken without a problem previously having been consciously recognized or a buying intention formed prior to entering the store”. Impulse buying has been considered a pervasive and distinctive phenomenon in the American lifestyle and has been receiving increasing attention from consumer researchers and theories (Youn & Faber). Rook & Fisher (1995) defined impulsive behaviour as an irrational behaviour resulting from a lack of behavioral control. A study found that impulse purchases represented between 27% and 67% of all department store purchases.(Bellenger et al., 1978). Other research findings support this assertion revealing almost 90% of respondents have made grocery purchases impulsively. (Welles, 1986).

The need to understand impulse buying in stores was first identified in the marketing literature over sixty years ago (Clover, 1950). Impulse buying is generally considered synonymous with “unplanned buying”. At present when market competition is high and all types of companies apply promotion in their activities, stimulation of impulse purchasing in the market of consumer goods may become a strong competitive advantage. The following are the reviews related to impulse buying.

C.S. Dalvi (2014) studied the buying behaviour of the consumers to measure the level of satisfaction derived by the shoppers. The study was based on primary data using questionnaire. The findings of the study reveals that majority of the shoppers prefer to spend time for one to two hours and also the study concluded that impulsive buyers can be converted into compulsive buyers if they are satisfied with the product and services offered by the stores and they tend to recommend the store to the potential customers and prefer repurchasing.

Grace Yuna Lee (2008), in his study, proved that arousal and perceived risk correlated strongly with impulsive buying behaviour, whereas consumers' experienced pleasure and arousal significantly predicted their impulsive buying intention. The result suggested that arousal, which is the degree to which one feels stimulated, excited and frenzied is most strongly related to impulsive buying.

Sonali Banerjee (2012) examined the effect of sensory cues in impulse buying behaviour. The study found out that the attitude and perception of customers towards impulse buying is largely shaped by the factors of visual merchandising and sensory cues of sight. Sound and touch plays significant role in determining the amount of time a customer spends in a store and the result of increased time spent on the intention to purchase.

Sujatha Khandai (2012), examined the relationship between respondents' impulse buying behaviour and common external factors that trigger impulse buying. The factors were identified as window display, mannequin, floor merchandising and promotional signage. Correlation test was conducted to see the correlation between the target audience's impulse buying tendency and each of the four types of visual merchandising practices. The results showed that all the four factors were significantly correlated with the impulse buying behaviour of the respondents. Multiple regression analysis was conducted which denotes that there was a strong relationship between respondents' impulse buying behaviour and two factors of visual merchandising practices: window display and mannequin display. The study suggested that the retailers can effectively utilize visual merchandising to help customers become aware of the products as well as to create favourable attitudes.

Tauseet Ahmad (2011), conducted a study on factors that effects customer impulse buying behaviour. The study revealed that since income of individual is increasing more and more people are moving towards western culture in dressing sense where the purchasing

power of the people has really gone up. The results showed that consumers purchasing products in the area of jodhpur plan their purchases, having shopping lifestyle related to planned purchases and their post-decisions are also not guilty.

Muhammad Ali Tirmizi et al (2009), investigated the relationship between independent variables: shopping lifestyle of consumers, fashion involvement of consumers, pre-decision stage and post decision stage of consumer purchase behaviour with the attitudinal and behavioural aspects of impulse buying behaviour. The data was collected from 165 respondents of higher income group in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The in-depth analysis found that pre-decision stage of consumer purchase behaviour was the only variable that resulted into strong association with the impulse buying behaviour.

Chien – Ju Hung (2008) examined the factors that influence female online impulse buying behaviour. The author identified impulse buying as dependent variable and environmental stimuli, promotions and advertising, product related factor, situational factors and impulse buying tendency were identified as independent variables. The results showed that ease of navigation or searching for products positively impacts female online impulse buying behaviour.

Yingjiao Xu (2007) studied the impact of store environments on the impulse buying behaviours using Mehrabian and Russell (1974) S-O-R model. The author applied SPSS 14.0 and LISREL 8.7 to conduct confirmatory factor analysis and SEM to test the hypotheses. It was concluded that store environments have a significant influence on the consumer's emotional states, including pleasure and arousal which in turn influence consumers' impulse buying behaviours in the store.

Tao sun examined the hierarchical relationship among personality traits, impulsive and compulsive buying tendencies, that exist in the same sample of subjects. The study developed a structural equation model that investigates the hierarchical relationships among personality traits, impulsive buying and compulsive buying. The study replicated previous findings on the characteristics of impulsive buying and compulsive buying. It also provided partial evidence for previous suggestions that impulsive buying behaviour tends to be motivated by immediate gratification and are more likely to be prompted by the physical proximity of a desired product and less likely by inner personality traits. The study also proved that when occasional lack of impulse control accumulates to a certain point where a chronic loss of impulse control occurs, impulsive buying might develop into compulsive buying.

Abu Bashar and Irshad Ahmad, examined the relationship between consumer impulse buying and visual merchandising. Descriptive statistics and frequency tables were generated with the help of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The Pearson correlation test was conducted to see the correlations between consumer impulse buying tendency and visual merchandising practices. The study found that the factors of visual merchandising viz, window display, mannequin, floor merchandising and promotional signage are significantly interrelated. The result proved that there is a relationship between visual merchandising and impulse buying.

2. Conclusion

The above literature review explained the role of impulse buying on consumers purchase decision. Impulse buying occurs when a consumer experiences a sudden, powerful and persistent urge to purchase something immediately. The impulse to buy something is hedonically complex (Rook 1987). While browsing, consumers necessarily are exposed to stimuli such as retail settings. Positive impulse buying experiences contribute to establish store image and influence future buying decisions. Therefore retail settings have the impact of influencing consumers' impulse buying behaviour by providing positive feelings. In future, quantitative research of impulse buying can be conducted by the researchers.

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