

# The impulse buying behaviour marketing essay

[Business](#), [Marketing](#)



## **1. 0 Introduction**

This chapter seeks to provide an in-depth critical review of the existing literature on consumer impulse buying behaviour. First the theoretical fundamentals around the impulse buying circumstances that consumers experience during shopping trips are investigated. It also attempts to determine the impulsive products and the gender differences when making impulse buying decisions. The role of in-store environment and personal traits in encouraging impulse buying is also explored. Finally, it highlights post purchase feelings of customers. The chapter ends with a summary of the investigated theories.

### **1. 1 Impulse buying behaviour**

Impulse buying behaviour is becoming usual among consumers today (Zimmerman, 2012). Kraken and Lee (2002) stated that impulse buying has been recently described as a persuading, greedily complicated buying behavior in which careful examination of information and alternatives is left out due to the quickness of the decision making process (Brici et al., 2010). The urge to consume can arouse emotional responses and is bound to happen without consideration of the consequences (Wittmann and Paulus, 2008). New researcher, Sharma (2010) has re-conceptualise the notion of impulse buying and has identified that it occurs when individual do not plan, anticipate, hesitate when making purchasing decisions, that is, when consumers make unintentional, unthoughtful and prompt purchases (Franken et al., 2008). The impulse buying behaviour is unintentional, since the consumers are not specifically searching for some products and made no

plans to purchase the item. Yet, not all unintentional and unplanned purchases inevitably means an impulse buy, as explained by Jones et al (2003) and Lee (2008). Impulse buying behaviour is unthoughtful because customers do not focus on the outcomes of their purchase; what actually matters to them is to satisfy their instant desire (Sharma, 2010). It is a very short lap of time between seeing and purchasing the items and buying decision is taken in a whim. Moreover, customers consume impulsively as they realize that they have only one opportunity to buy a specific item, so they are likely to buy right away without any other consideration (Kacen and Lee, 2002).

## **2. 0 Impulse buying circumstances**

McGoldrick (2002) and Liao et al (2009) came up with the idea of " impulse mix" to depict various buying circumstances. It has been classified into four different types of impulse buying as follows: Pure impulse buying is the real impulse purchases which differ from the consumer's usual buying behaviour. It brings the consumer out of his accustomed shopping pattern. Reminder impulse buying depends on previous knowledge of consumers about a product. And also when buyers see a particular product and it reminds them that they need to restock it at home or sees an advertisement (Madhavaram et al, 2004). Suggestion impulse buying occurs when a shopper notice an item for the first time, attractive and innovative enough, which arouse a yearning to purchase it. In this case, the consumers do not have earlier information about the product and evaluation is made during shopping trip. (Rao, 2010). Planned impulse buying refers to the situation when the consumer has made pre-shopping plans, before entering a store, to make

some purchases but without knowledge of precise items (Casey, 2002 and Urcalender, 2011). Thompson et al. (1990) and Evans et al., (2008) suggested the four types illustrated above and identified one supplementary which is impulse buying as an act of freedom, that is, the consumer decides to buy simply because they can. Further categories of impulse buying have been discovered by Nordfält (2008). The accelerator impulse refers to purchases made sooner than intended. The compensation impulse is when a consumer buys an item to make up for any failures. The breakthrough impulse is a purchase that appears to be confusing and weird; however it is the start of a series of repeated purchases which the consumer will be making for a long period to resolve an emotional conflict. And finally the blind impulse which occurs simply because the consumer just wanted to be the owner of that product at that particular time.

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### **3. 0 Impulsive products**

Various goods in the marketplace may be categorised as impulsive products. According to Anderson and Palma (2002), impulse products are those that are bought in a whim without prior planning. The consumer does not actually look for the products but instead comes across it on shopping trips with other purposes. Kotler (2005) and Salkovitch (2011) address the view of impulse products as being low-priced and repeatedly purchased (Dholakia, 2000). Verplanken et al. (2005) found that this habit of impulsivity is greatly associated to the tendency of eating snack foods. New Edge Company Ltd (2012) cited that food items amount to 14% of impulse purchases. US consumers spend US\$7. 5 billion on impulse buying of chocolate

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confectionary. They further discussed in saying that as sustainability is gaining magnitude, consumers are aiming to be 'greener'; more than 60% of all "green" products are bought impulsively, generally for simple curiosity. Girard (2008) classified impulse products which, according to her, are gaining greater focus: home cleaning and paper products; health and safety goods like hand sanitizers, dust masks, batteries, hand warmers, padlocks and hooks. Staple products such as water, soft drinks, confectionery and ice cream are most of the time not on the shopping list and therefore are impulsively bought by consumers. Elton (2008) further adds to the list with flip notes, purse accessories, stationery, watches, jewelries, soap, aromatic products, cosmetics, decorative items, body care items and clothing. Das (2008) argued that impulse products can be anything, a new item, samples or deep-rooted products.

#### **4.0 Peculiarities of Store environment on impulse buying**

According to various authors namely, Parboteeah (2005), Singh (2006) and Dovaliene & Virvilaite (2008), there are several aspects of a store environment which motivate impulse buying; the layout, the ambiance and social factors.

#### **4.1 Store layout influence on impulse purchase intentions**

As reported by Banyte and Salickaite (2008), proper layout of the outlets acts as a competitive advantage in triggering consumers to impulse shopping. Store layout represents the general appearance of the inner aspect of a retail store, including the displays of products (Kokemuller, 2012). The key point in enticing consumers in impulse buying is to make the

products noticeable. Consumers don't search for products; they have to bump into them (Girard, 2008). McGodrick (2002) suggest that the products could be exposed in alleys. Researchers have put forward various types of strategic displays; the product is displayed somewhere unusual, like in an open area, in pyramids or piles with divers shapes and colours to make products more appealing (Nordfält, 2007). Also, the endcap technique is used whereby the product is placed on a gable, hence, can be noticed by everybody walking down the aisle (Ekberg and Lohmander, 2004). The products are also situated near counters, entrance or the primary aisles in the store (Curtis, 2012). In this way consumers are more likely to remark the items and increase the impulse buying tendency (Stern 1962). Peter and Olson (2005) mentioned free-form layout principally encourage impulse buying. Free-form is when the items are arranged so that each display is noticeable from every part of the store. Thurow and Nilsson (2008) proposed the idea of placing linked products close to one another depending of their usage. This might trigger the consumers to buy both the product and its compliment which represents an impulse event.

## **4. 2 Social factor triggering impulse buying**

Social cues refer to circumstance associated with the density, type, and behavior of customers and employees, and corresponding characteristics (Nordfält, 2008 and Han-lee et al, 2010).

### **4. 2. 1 Role of salespersons in encouraging impulse buying**

Several authors have asserted that communication between customer and salesperson is considered to be an important element in augmenting impulse

buying. Consumers can take pleasure in their shopping trip with helpful and friendly salesperson (Crawford and Melewar, 2003; O’Cass & Grace, 2008; Throw and Nilsson, 2008). Sachteleben (2009) discussed that salespersons 'close the deal' quickly, so as not to give customers time to think over it and change their mind. Babin et al., (1995) further added that consumers are more likely to engage in impulse buying when the store assistant demonstrates how the items will benefit them in terms of quality, function and utility of the product. Techniques used by staff to influence consumers buying decision have been identified by Laurelli (2003); the salesperson mentioned satisfaction of earlier consumers with the product or even specified that there are insufficient amount of items available. While Ekberg and Lohmander (2004) found that staff proposed solutions to consumers who believe they might experience problem with the products in the future. Altogether, it makes the consumers more confident about their purchasing decision and compels consumers to buy the product on spur of the moment. Lee (2011) stated that stores with high quality customer service generally encourage a person's impulsive buying.

#### **4. 2. 2 Impact of crowding on impulse buying**

A crowded setting causes mental pressure and build up provocation in consumers who feel a lack of intimate space (Machleit et al., 2005). Due to eminent shop densities, consumers tend to moderate their perceived shopping time and concentrate more on their shopping list. In this manner, reducing the opportunity for an impulse buying (Lam, 2001 based on Michon et al., 2005). Contradictory views by Tendai and Crispen (2009) posting that crowding do not impact on impulse buying.

### **4. 2. 3 Social influences affecting impulse purchase intentions**

Solomon (2002) and Luo (2005) claims that influences may come from people with whom consumers have some sort of social interface with, like friends, family, and relatives. While Demerica (2010) quoted that the friends can help a consumer avoid unnecessary spending, on the other hand, Darwell (2012) found that sometimes family and friends can unconsciously motivates a consumer to buy impulsively. Several reasons have been identified as to why people engage in an impulse buy when accompanied during a shopping trip. Firstly, presence of others facilitated their decision because they are considered as incredible source of information (Harmancioglu et al., 2009). Secondly, consumers will make unplanned purchases considering people they idolize buying behavior as a rational explanation. Finally, they want to enhance their image others have of them, competition is the primary motivator of impulse buying since they will not miss an opportunity of having an item that others are buying (Solomon, 2002).

### **4. 3 Ambient cues enticing consumers to impulse buy**

Mihic & Mirela (2010) concluded in their research that atmospheric stimuli include coloring, lighting, scent and music which can strengthen impulse buying behaviour. They influence the amount of time consumers spend browsing a store and also the quantity of products they buy (Mattila and Wirtz, 2001; Katelijn et al., 2008). Engel et al., (1996) mentioned that when noisy music is played in a store, consumers tend to spend less time on shopping. However, Zybert (2012) argued that when unfamiliar and up



tempo music appears to encourage longer shopping. This perspective is supported by Mattila and Wirtz (2008) and they also added that warm colours such as orange, yellow and red, and ambient aroma such as citrus scents, increases the perceived time consumers spent in a store. The more time people spend in a store, the more likely they will buy on impulse (Anic and Radas, 2006; Foroughu, 2012).

#### **4. 4 Impact of sales promotions on impulse buying**

Bayley and Nancarrow (1998) proposed that price and in-store sales promotions are not always related to impulsive purchasing. On the contrary, Parboteeah (2005), stated that price of goods is an essential determinant of impulsive buying. More precisely, consumers tend to be impulsive buyer during periods of sale or discounts according to several authors, Laroche et al., (2003), Janakiraman et al., (2006), Virvilaite et al., (2009), Tirmizi et al., (2009) and Byrne (2012). 88% of all impulse purchases are made because a product are on discount (NewEdge consulting Ltd, 2012) . Dawson and Kim (2009) mentioned that, lured by cheap prices or spotting a bargain like " three at the price of two" might encourage an impulsive response. Other promotions identified by the authors are " buy one get one free" deal, coupons, membership discount and free gift with purchase(Manshu, 2010). Therefore, since price is an agent influencing impulse purchases, an item having a surprisingly low price can make customers have the feeling that they are spending less than they had planned (Vanyushyn and Hulten, 2011). With this unexpected savings, the consumers do not put any thoughts in to the buying and just buy spontaneously thus heightening the number of unintentional purchases while wandering in shopping malls (Heilman et al.,

2002). The consumer will assess his impulse buy as a benefit on the whole and believe that the item is too good to miss (Pilley, 2008) But, by the various definitions of impulse buying mentioned, the impulse buyer can't resist the urge to purchase an item and will therefore do so without taking into account whether it's too expensive (Zimmerman, 2012). For example, researchers from Shoppercentric (2012), argued impulse buy also comes from high cost products (28% in 2011).

## **5.0 Personality traits and impulse buying**

Displaying impulsive acts as a personality trait is an important element to consider as it enable researchers to recognize when impulse buying becomes a common consumer behaviour while all other things being equal (Dawson & Kim, 2009; Zimmerman, 2011).

### **5.1 Lack of control**

It is characterized the tendency of a person to adopt a behaviour without careful consideration of the future consequences and acting immediately. Consumers having no self-control are said to be instantaneous, unconcerned and imprudent. They make up their mind quickly and are emotionally unstable (Youn & Faber, 2000). Several authors have claimed that such personality trait is a proof of impulse buying. Therefore, a lack of control seems to be a possible stimulant to an unplanned purchase (Karp, 2007; Erskine, 2007; Marsden, 2011). However, Genova (2010); Pryanikova (2010) stated that self-control enhance the impact of emotional situation on impulse shopping, that is, a consumer being able to control his emotions means

sustaining his present positive emotional state which may result in an impulsive buy.

## **5. 2 Stress reaction**

It is characterised by prominent themes such as anxiety, agitation, and prone to being worried. Consumers feel weak and fed up without any grounds (Motkar, 2011; Mahajan, 2011). Stress has a negative impact on mood, according to Zeindler (2010). Considering how moods affect consumer behaviour is essential since consumers display diverse moods when making decision. When people feel low and depressed they shop intensely to get over these problems. So, highly stress-reactive people tend to be more apt to impulse buying as it alleviates their unpleasant mood (Jalees, 2009; King, 2009; Trull, 2012). Contradicting this, Moustafa (2009), Bharwada (2010) , Kongakaradecha and Khemarangsana (2012) theories proposed that the more positive mood a person is in, the greater the likelihood of making an unthoughtful buys. This is because they have the wish to compensate themselves and elevated energy levels (Gardner, 1993).

## **5. 3 Absorption**

Highly absorptive persons are more expected to have odd but exceptional behaviours. They are expressively immersed in their shopping experience triggered by external and tend to think in images (Youn and faber, 2000). This kind of individual quickly respond and do not have skills of monitoring relevant behavior and have less control over self (Baumeister, 2002). Therefore, consumers with high absorption levels have a bigger chance of

being influence by outer sensory stimulus and may generate an impulsive response (Jalan, 2006).

## **5. 4 Impulse buying tendency**

Akturan(2009) stated that people naturally has a tendency buy impulsively. Impulse buying tendency is an internal trait in a customer's mind and differs between individuals. It is classified into behavioural, affective and cognitive. Behavioural aspects are promptness and responsiveness. Affective feature entail the tempting desire to purchase, optimistic buying emotions and frame of mind management. The enticing urge to buy means a powerful and unbearable wish towards inner impulsiveness. Moreover, cognitive elements are low psychological consideration; pay no attention to future and unintended buying (Youn and Faber , 2002). Conversely, the study made by Sharma and Nanda (2012) shows a negative relationship between impulse buying tendency and impulse buying, that is, it is not essential that impulsive people will make an impulse buy.

## **5. 5 Hedonic needs**

Consumers become impulse buyers when they are motivated by hedonic desire or by non-economic motives, such as excitement, fantasy, fun, zest and social or emotional satisfaction as indicated by Kervenoael et al; (2009); Liao et al,. (2009); Gültekin and Özer (2012). Given that the aim of the shopping activity is to please hedonic requirements, the item bought during this shopping trip seems to be done without earlier plans and thus symbolize an impulse buying experience (Kim and Eastin, 2011).

## **5. 6 Other traits**

According to Luo (2005), Shahjehan et al (2011), Hoffman et al (2010), creativity, curiosity, innovativeness, broad minded counts for openness in an individual; this personality trait positively affect impulsive buying behaviours. Furthermore, their studies show that a greater part of the discrepancy in impulse buying can be justified by extraversion. Thus, consumers that are excitable, sociable, assertive, highly emotional and confident are more likely to exhibit impulse buying.

## **6. 0 Gender differences and impulse buying**

Earlier researches have paid attention to the role gender plays in determining impulse buying behavior. According to Coley and Burgess (2003), men's and women's buying behavior is different on several grounds; they process information differently, purchase different items for diverse reasons and perform shopping activity differently (Berni, and Chimer, 2001). Various researchers have discovered that women are more likely to engage in impulse consumption as compared to men (Muller et al., 2007; Norum, 2008; Lai, 2010) The discussion is further explained by Dittmar et al (1996) who state that since women constitute the larger part of customers and shopping is perceived be a womanly activity, they make more impulse purchase decisions. This theory coincides with the study made by Banking Giant First Direct (2010), which reveals that 74 % of women accepted they do not always have a shopping list compared to 68% of men. On the other side, Hausman (2000) did not find significant correlation between gender and impulse buying behavior. Recent studies made by Npower (2011), Driscoll (2011), Collier (2011) contradicts these theories by posting

that its men who are mainly impulse shoppers. Men spend an average of 25 pounds a week on products they bought in an urge, while women spend around 19 pounds per week. The study, however, found that men are little better than women in controlling their temptation to shop: 60% of women said they are frequently tempted to buy impulsively if there is a sale on, while only 40 % of men said alike. Women opt for items with more emotional value, while men prefer functional product. Gender differences and impulse buying suggest that men tend to impulsively purchase functional and leisure items representing independence and activity, while women are impulsive buyers of emblematic and self-expressive products related to appearance and sentimental facet of self (Coley and Burgess, 2012 and Dittmar, 2006;). While Leggatt (2011) suggested that some 77% of women and 71% of men said they bought groceries on impulse.

## **7. 0 Post purchase feelings associated with impulse buying**

According to Strydom et al. (2000), post purchase behaviour is expressed in satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Past investigations show that impulse buying can be evaluated both positively and negatively (Yang, 2006). Strack et al. (2006), Babu and Manoj (2009), Billieux et al (2008), Martin & Potts (2009) highlighted the fact that impulsive buy leads to remorse and disappointment. This view is substantiated by Das and Kerr (2010) who further adds that this is because the decision-making process then is frequently altered and accelerated than usual. These negative opinions of impulsive behaviour come from psychological studies of impulsiveness which indicate that it is an evidence of immaturity; having as consequences little behavioral control (Solnick et al., 1980). Kang and Johnson (2009) stated that consumers may

return the product they bought on an impulse. Post-purchase regret is go along with low-consumer satisfaction which leads to no repurchase intention, consumers tend to switch to substitute brands (Bui, 2011; Garcia & Perez, 2011), and negative word-of-mouth about the product (Bui et al., 2011). However, Kacen and Lee (2008) argued that in spite of the level of dissatisfaction, many consumers still engage in impulsive behaviour over and over again. Post-purchase regret is more positively related to impulse buying for males than for females. Women tend to repeat their visits to the stores many times a week, thus; the likelihood of their impulse purchase is increased. Slowly, with the passage of time, they become used to buying impulsively and therefore feeling less regret about it (George and Yaoyuneyong, 2010). Consumers can also experience satisfaction after an impulse buying decision, often accompanied by delight and enthusiasm according to Dittmar and Drury(2000) and Chen (2002). Liang's (2007) research demonstrated that 62. 2 % of consumers were dissatisfied after impulse purchase, no matter what extent of impulse buying tendency they had. On the other hand, a recent study made by Brecht (2012) stated that there is 75 % level of satisfaction among customers. Leggatt (2011) concluded with his study that consumers see their impulse purchase as being opportunistic and an intelligent buy instead of an abrupt urge. According to him, impulse buying should no more be considered as a silly act but rather as a savvy occasion

## **8. 0 Summary**

A review of prior literatures has thrown light on the different categories of impulse items and how impulse buying tendency is different between

genders. Moreover it can be confirmed that impulse buying is an emotional and cognitive result of a consumer to stimulus in store environment when personal factors are acting. As a final point, some details about post-purchase and customer satisfaction gave a better understanding of how consumers might feel after an impulse purchase. The next chapter deals with research methodology used in conducting the research.