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Journal

Journal of Systems Science and Information, 4(4)

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Publication Date

2016-08-30

Data Availability

The data associated with this publication are available upon request.

Peer reviewed

The Effect of Visual Merchandising, Sensational Seeking and Collectivism on Impulsive Buying Behavior

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Abstract   The aim of this paper is to measure the effect of sensational seeking, visual merchandising and collectivism on impulsive buying behavior. Valid sample size for this study was 300 comprising of all age groups. Mall intercept method which is a kind of convenience sampling was used for collecting the data. The data was collected by preselected enumerators. Scale used for this study had established reliabilities. After ascertaining the normality of data a typical multiple steps, procedure was adopted for this study. The conceptual framework tested through Structural equation modeling and was found to be relevant in understanding the impact of predictor variables on impulsive buying behavior. A strong and positive relationship was found between sensational seeking, and no relationships were found between, collectivism and impulsive buying, and visual merchandising and impulsive buying. One of the contributions of this study is that it has explored the relationships of collectivism, and sensational seeking with impulsive buying which have not been explored that extensively.

Keywords   impulsive buying; sensational seeking; collectivism; visual merchandising

1   Introduction

Impulsive buying tendencies have increased quite significantly across the world. A significant portion of aggregate sales in most of the product categories accounts for impulsive buying[1,2]. Since it (impulsive buying) is a hedonically complex behavior, therefore impulsive consumers are least thoughtful when purchasing goods and are not concerned to utilized the bulk of the information available to them[1].

Impulsive buying refers to unplanned, spontaneous purchase behavior due to exposure to stimuli. These stimuli could be visibility and proximity to the products and information about

promotional schemes[3]. Thus retailers ensure that the internal and external décor of their retail-outlets are pleasant and attractive for their consumers[1].

The aim of this paper is to ascertain the relationships of visual merchandising, sensational seeking, and collectivism on impulsive buying behavior. The structure of this paper is as follows. It starts with an overview of the literature with specific attention to antecedents to impulse buying, followed by discussions on the components of the conceptual framework with special emphasis on the linkage of these constructs with the impulsive buying, followed by discussions on methodology, results and conclusion.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Antecedent to Impulsive Buying

Earlier literature suggests that impulsive buying was synonym to 'unplanned purchasing'[4]. In view of this conceptual relevance, earlier studies have not paid attention to the behavioral and attitudinal components of impulsive buying. However, the trend shifted in eighties and the researchers restarted examining the behavior and attitudinal aspects of impulsive buying[5,6].

In this era both unplanned and impulsive behaviors were used interchangeably, although they are conceptually different[7]. Impulsive behavior refers to buying spontaneously, unreflectively due to physical proximity and emotional attachment to the desired product which results in personal gratification[5,8]. Impulsive buying thus satisfies both, the hedonic and emotional desires[6,7]. Novelty, fun and surprises satisfy hedonic desires, whereas social interaction, which is an integral part of shopping experience cater to emotional needs[5].

Thus from the Rook and Fisher[7,8] definition, as discussed above, it could be inferred that physical proximity and positive emotions evoke impulsive buying. For example, consumer's proximity to a product increases his purchase intention significantly. In the same context consumer good mood and feeling induces purchase, as he intends to prolong this mood and feeling. In both the cases, consumer's behavior change because of physical proximity and positive emotions[5,9].

The literature also suggests that antecedents to impulsive buying in broad terms are products, individuals and situation factors[5]. Low priced, heavily promoted and prominently displayed items fall in product category[10]. Antecedents such as impulsiveness, roaming in a store, enjoying shopping, self concept and need to feel and touch fall in individual factor category[2,11]. Whereas, situational factors are inclusive of time and money availability[12,13].

2.2 Conceptual Framework

Based on the discussions on antecedent to impulsive buying, a conceptual framework have been developed which is presented in Figure 1.

In this section all, the components of the components of the conceptual framework are discussed along with their linkages with the impulsive buying.

2.3 Impulsive Buying

The impulsive buying as concept was initially introduced in the literature by West, who referred it as unplanned purchases[14,15]. Subsequently, impulsive buying was divided into four distinct categories which are pure, reminder and planned[4]. These distinct categories have been

used by researchers extensively[13,16,17]. By mid sixties researchers focus shifted to process and characteristic aspects of impulsive buyers, although still the bulk of the researchers remained focused in measuring the level of impulsive tendencies[18,19].
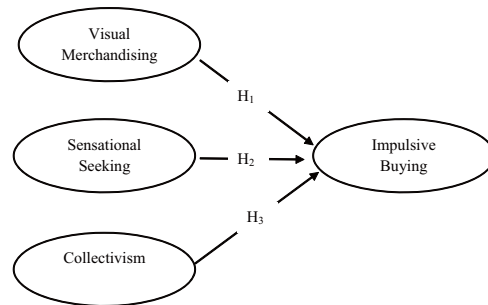

Figure 1 Conceptual framework

Recent phenomenon in this context is more towards measuring attitude and behavior of impulsive buyers, which is mainly based on the measures (Scale) developed by Rook and colleague Rook[8,20,21]. Subsequently, other researchers kept on, incorporating different aspects on the definition and scales of impulsive buying[14]. Some of the aspect which were incorporated in the conceptualization of impulsive buying are reaction to stimuli[22]; time spent on making purchase decision[23] and being irrational[24]. Some researchers observed that impulsive buying behavior is not generic, but is category specific. Thus scales for measuring impulsive behavior towards apparel[17], sports, merchandising and musical items[25] were developed and used in the literature of impulsive buying.

2.4   Visual Merchandising and Impulsive Buying

Visual merchandising is a popular for encouraging multiple sales. Through this strategy retailers communicates their value proposition to consumers but also use it for to attracting customers and enhance the image of their outlets[26,27]. Visual merchandising is not restricted to exterior of windows but is inclusive of all form of internal and external display of merchandise, décor and company's logo and promotional advertising. Visual merchandising is thus is a teamwork of merchandising, advertising department, and store departments[28].

Studies show that internal and external décors have a direct effect on impulsive buying. It has also been found that customers duration in the stores, result in exposure to different stimuli which promote impulsive urge[4,26,29]. The store stimuli such as displayed brands and merchandise affect unplanned shoppers[26]. Stores internal and external environment not only promotes differentiation and competitive advantage but also helps in attracting customers to their outlets. A pleasant and exciting outlet's environment also induces positive emotion due to which consumers spend more time in the outlets and are thus more vulnerable to impulsive purchase[11,30].

2.5   Sensational Seeking and Impulsive Buying

Sensational seeking refers to exciting and positive feelings for venturing into a new enjoyable and exciting and risk taking ventures[31]. Sensational seeking individuals have a higher

inclination towards excitement and comparatively lesser towards self-control. Most of the researchers agree that that sensational seeking and impulsiveness have a significant and positive relationship[31]. Sensational seeking is more related to extroversion, and has not been used extensively in assessing its relationship with impulsive buying. Some researchers have indirectly inferred the relationship of sensational seeking and impulsive buying. In this context, they argue that sensational seeking has a link with materialism and money conversation, which are thrilling and exciting experience. Since sensation seeking is also thrilling and exciting experience therefore it will also lead to impulsive buying[31,32].

2.6 Collectivism and Impulsive Buying

Collectivism refers to a social pattern in which individuals strongly associate themselves with the in-groups such as family and coworkers. These individuals in a collectivist society give lesser priority their personal goals as compared to the goals of the society. Individualist on the other hand consider themselves as autonomous and are not concerned about the goals of the in-groups and society[2,33].

The effect of individualist and collectivist society on impulsive buying is different. Individuals in a collective society have a weaker relationships of attitude-intentional, and intention-behavior, therefore they are less vulnerable to impulsive purchase[2,34−36]. Additionally, individuals in collectivist society are willing to sacrifice their personal goals over the goals of the in-group therefore; they are generally more matured than the individuals belonging to individualist society. In view of this maturity, individuals in collectivist is expected to be less susceptible to impulsive buying[2,37]. Moreover, in collectivist society individuals have more control over their emotions and hence they have stronger tendencies for controlling the impulsive urge of buying[38−41]. In another study in Vietnam, it was again revalidated that individualist culture has a stronger relationship with impulsive buying and no or weaker relationship between collectivist culture and impulsive behavior[41].

2.7 Derived Hypotheses

Based on the above discussions the following hypotheses have been formulated:

H_1: Visual merchandising has a positive effect on impulsive buying.

H_2: Sensational seeking has a positive effect on impulsive buying.

H_3: Collectivist culture and impulsive buying has no relationship.

3 Methodology

The conceptual framework developed and discussed in earlier section comprised of one independent variable and three dependent variables, which are visual merchandising, sensational seeking, and collectivism. The methodology adopted for testing the model is discussed in the following sections.

3.1 Scale and Measures

The scale used for this study is presented Table 1, showing the title of the construct, theirs sources and their reliabilities. All the measures for this study were converted to seven point Likert Scale. Seven in the questionnaire shows a very high agreement of the respondents and

one showing a very high disagreement.

Table 1 Summary of scale and measure

Measure	Source/Author	No. of Items	Reliability
Impulsive buying	[26, 42]	5	0.836 to 0.973
Visual Merchandising	[8, 43]	7	0.82 to 0.88
Collectivism	[44]	8	0.60 to 0.85
Sensational Seeking	Zuckerman 1979	7	0.77 to 0.89

3.2 Sample and Data Collection

The sample size for this study was 300 collected through mall intercept method. Pre appointed and pre-trained enumerators administered the questionnaire in the selected malls of Karachi city. The sample size of 300 is more than two hundred suggested by Byrne[2,33] for testing the hypothesized model through SEM. A summary of respondent's profile is depicted in Table 2.

Table 2 Responded profile

Variable		Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	171	57
	Female	120	43
Age	Up to 18 Years	66	22
	19 to 29 Years	87	29
	30 to 39 Years	72	24
	40 to 49 Years	45	15
	At least 50 Years	30	10
Income	Up to Rs.15K	66	22
	16K to Rs.24K	84	28
	25K to Rs.34K	81	27
	35K to Rs.44K	39	13
	Rs.45K or More	30	10
Marital Status	Single	132	44
	Married	168	56
Education	Primary	69	23
	Matric	93	21
	Inter	66	22
	Bachelors	30	10
	Masters	42	14
	Total	300	100

3.3 Data Analysis Technique

Two software SPSS-v19 and AMOS-v18 have been used in this study. The former has been used for reliability, descriptive and normality analyses and the later for testing the endogenous model and derived hypotheses[45,46]. The benefit of using Structural Equation Model (SEM) is that it has the capacity for assessing theories and testing derived hypotheses simultaneously[47].

A multistage procedure recommended for SEM was used in this study[47]. This is inclusive of exploratory factor analysis, outliers detecting, normality of data, reliability of data, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), validity of data, and testing overall SEM model[47−49]. A two stage analyses was carried out for SEM[50]. Initially, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was carried out for all the constructs, followed by CFA for the whole model. The following criteria at CFA stage were used for improving the fitness of the mode:

Standardized regression weight of latent variables ≥ 0.40[51],

Standardized Residual Covariance < 2.58[52]; and

Modification Index < 10[52].

The numbers fit indices are more than 20 with no consensus on which to report for assessing the hypothesized model[53]. Therefore, six commonly used measures were selected, from the absolute, relative, and parsimony categories[53−55]. A summary of the fit measure in the three categories that are depicted in Table 3.

Table 3 Classification of fit measures

Fit measures					
Absolute		Relative		Parsimonious	
Test	Criteria	Test	Criteria	Test	Criteria
χ^2	$P > .05$	CFI	$> .95$	PNFI	$> .50$
GFI	$> .90$	NFI	$> .90$	PCFI	$> .50$
RMSR	$< .05$	IF1	$> .90$		
CMIN/df	< 3.00	RFI	$> .90$		
RMSEA	$< .10$				

In this paper, the following fit indices are reported for assessing the fitness of each construct and endogenous model:

Absolute Fit Measures: (i) χ Square (χ^2), (ii) Relative Chi Square (CMIN/df) and (iii) The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)

Relative Fit Measures (i) The Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Normed Fixed Index (NFI),

Parsimonious Fit Measures (i) Parsimony Normed Fit Index (PNFI) and (ii) Parsimony Comparative Fit Index (PCFI).

4   Results

4.1   Descriptive and Reliability of Initial Constructs

The normality of the data was tested by converting all the 300 cases to standardized Z-score and all of them were within the prescribed limit of ± 3.5[56]. Subsequently, reliabilities and other descriptive analyses were carried out which are presented in Table 4.

Table 4   Descriptive and reliability of initial constructs

	Reliability	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis
Sensational Seeking	0.72	5.84	0.73	0.55	−0.83	1.34
Visual Merchandising	0.76	5.85	0.74	0.55	−0.83	1.34
Impulsive Buying	0.73	5.35	1.03	1.05	−0.53	0.05
Collectivism	0.72	5.16	0.90	0.80	−0.52	0.08

Table 4 shows that the reliably of visual merchandising was the highest ($\alpha = 0.72$, $M = 5.85$, SD= 0.74) followed by impulsive buying ($\alpha = 0.73$, $M = 5.35$, SD= 1.03), sensational seeking ($\alpha = 0.72$, $M = 5.84$, SD= 0.73) and collectivism ($\alpha = 0.72$, $M = 5.16$, SD= 0.90). All these values are within the acceptable range indicating reasonable internal consistency and reliability[48]. Skewness and Kurtosis for each construct is within the range of ± 1.5, which further reinforces data's normal tendency[47,57].

4.2   Exploratory Factor Analysis

Prior to applying principal factor analysis with Varimax Rotation, the data were tested to ascertain whether it meets the requirements such as independent sampling, linear relationships, and moderate correlation. Final results are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5   Summarized results of exploratory factor analysis

Construct	Original items	Kaiser-Meyer Olkin	Barley Test of Sphercity	Cumulative Factor loading	Items Retained
Impulsive Buying	5	0.70	583.027	55.255%	4
Sensational Seeking	7	0.70	188.10	41.20%	5
Visual Merch.	7	0.73	275.67	66.79%	5
Collectivism	7	0.69	219.87	54.82	5

Initial results did not fulfill all the requirement of EFA[48], therefore for each case, this exercise was carried out several times by dropping one item at a time till all EFA's requirement were met.

4.3   Convergent Validity

Since the goodness of fit indices were meeting the required criteria and factor loadings of all the indicator variables were greater than 0.40 (Refer to Figure 2), therefore the data has convergent validity[58,59].

4.4   Discriminant Validity

Uniqueness of the variables was tested through discriminant validity[47] by taking the correlations of all the constructs on one to one basis. Correlation of each pair should be less than $0.85^{[59,60]}$. The inter item correlation results suggests that the data fulfill Discriminant validity requirement, which are presented in Table 6.

Table 6   Discriminant validity

		SS_T	VM_T	IB_T	CL_T
Sensational	Pearson Correlation	1	1.000	.263	.146
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000	.000	.006
	N	300	300	300	300
Visual	Pearson Correlation	1.000	1	.263	.146
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000		.000	.006
	N	300	300	300	300
Impulsive	Pearson Correlation	.263	.263	1	.218
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	300	300	300	300
Collectivism	Pearson Correlation	.146	.146	.218	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.006	.006	.000	
	N	300	300	300	300

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)

4.5   Confirmatory Factor Analysis

In CFA, the factors and items (indicators) are tested based on theory therefore, it is also known as a test for measuring theories[61]. The summarized CFA results of the four constructs are presented in Table 7.

Factor loading for each observed variable is at least 0.40, and standardized residual are below ±2.58 hence meeting the minimum requirements[47]. All the Fit indices are also within/close to the prescribed limits (see Table 8). In view of the satisfactory results of CFA, the overall model was tested, which is discussed in subsequent section.

4.6   Overall Model

The overall SEM model comprises of three exogenous models including self-esteem, influence of others, materialism and one endogenous model compulsive buying behavior. The overall final model is depicted in Figure 2.

Table 7   Confirmatory factor analysis

Construct	Chi Square (A)	Deg. of Freedom	Probability	CMIN/df (A)	RMSEA (A)	CFI (Bb)	NFI (B)	PNFI (C)
Sensational Seeking	0.808	2	0.668	0.404	0.000	1.000	0.995	0.332
Visual Merchandising	10.444	5	0.064	2.089	0.060	0.978	0.960	0.480
Collectivisms	0.736	2	0.692	0.368	0.00	1.0	0.997	0.332
Impulsive	3.145	2	0.202	1.598	0.450	0.993	0.981	0.327
Criteria	Low	n/a	< 0.05	< 5.0	> 0.10	> 0.95	> 0.50	> 0.50

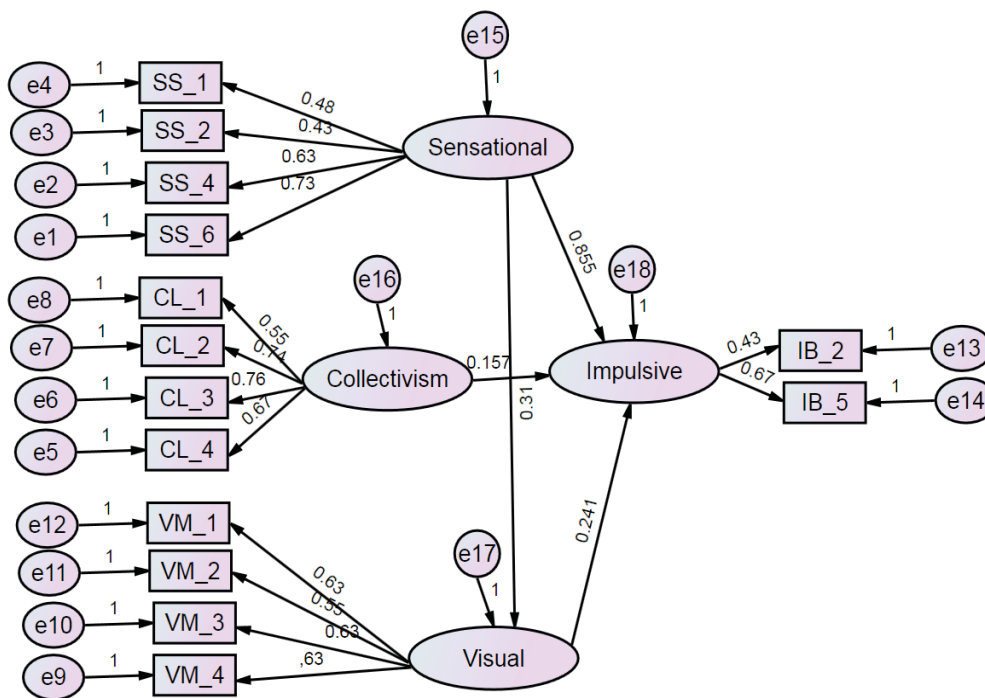Source: Meyers, et al.[53], A=absolute, B= Relative, C= Parsimonious

Figure 2   Confirmatory factor analysis

Figure 2 for the overall model shows that each observed variable is exceeding the minimum requirement of factor loading of 0.40. Moreover, standardized residual were below ±2.58[61]. All the Fit Measures are within the prescribed limits, which are discussed in the following paragraph.

The Chi Square value was significant ($\chi2$ = 110.549, DF= 73, p = 0.003 < .05). The CMIN/df (Relative $\chi2$/df) was 1.514 < 5. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.041 < 0.08 and Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) = 0.951 > 0.90 meet both the absolute of goodness-of-fit and badness-of-fit criteria. The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.945 > 0.900 and Normed Fixed Index (NFI) = 0.958 > 0.900 meet Relative Fit Measures. Whereas Parsimony Adjusted Normed Fit Index (PNFI) = 0.688 > 0.50 and Parsimony Comparative Fit Index (PCFI) = 0.758 > 0.50 meets Parsimonious Fit measure. Thus, the CFA results indicate that the overall hypothesized model is a good fit.

4.7 Hypothesized Results

The SEM model discussed above shows that of the three hypotheses two were accepted, and one was rejected. The summarized results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8 Summary of Hypothesized Relationships

	Relationship		Estimate	SE	CR	P
Impulsive	<—	Collectivism	.157	.135	.517	.605
Impulsive	<—	Sensational	.855	.147	2.633	.008
Impulsive	<—	Visual	.241	.161	.705	.481

*Standardized Regression Weight

5 Discussions and Conclusion

This model based on impulsive buying behavior empirically tested through SEM will help the in understanding attitude and behavior towards impulsive buying, which has become a problematic issue world over. This behavior is an early symptom to compulsive behavior and addiction, which is harmful for individual and society. Of the three hypotheses two were substantiated and one was rejected. The relevance of these hypotheses with literature is discussed in the following paragraphs.

The hypothesis 1 on the effect of visual merchandising (M = 5.850, SD=0.74) and impulsive buying behavior (M = 5.35, SD= 1.030) was rejected (SRW=0.241. CR=0.705, P = 0.481 > 0.01). Contrary to this finding, the literature suggests that internal and external décors have a direct effect on impulsive buying. One of the reasons for this inconsistent result is that retailing outlets in Pakistan is at the infant stage of developments and the visual merchandising strategies used in local stares is not adequate to make an impact on consumers.

Hypothesis 2 results shows that sensational seeking (M = 5.84, SD=0.73) has a positive and significant effect (SRW=0.855, CR=2.633, P = 0.008 > 0.01) on impulsive buying behavior (M = 5.35, SD=1.030, N = 300), which is consistent to earlier literature. Sensational seeking individuals have a higher inclination towards excitement and comparatively lesser towards self-control. Most of the researchers agree that that sensational seeking and impulsiveness have a significant and positive relationship[31].

Hypothesis 3 results shows that collectivism (M = 5.16, SD=0.90, N = 300) has no effect (SRW=0.161. CR=0.705, P = .481 > 0.01) on impulsive buying behavior (M = 5.35, SD=1.03,

$N = 300$) which is consistent to envisaged hypothesis that collective has no effect on impulsive buying. This result is consistent to earlier literature, which also suggests that Individuals in a collective society have a weaker relationships impulsive purchase because they are matured and emotionally stronger than the individuals in individuals in individualist society[2,34−36].

This study was limited to higher income group of Karachi city in Pakistan. Future studies could be based on whole population and all demographic groups within and across countries. Future studies could also be on measuring the effect impulsive buying on of different product categories. This study is also restricted to one cultural aspect individualism other studies could incorporate other cultural factors.

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