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Beyond Trends: Exploring the Complexities of Impulsive Buying through S-O-R Framework

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ABSTRACT

This abstract explores the multifaceted aspects of impulsive buying behavior, emphasizing the interconnected roles of various individual characteristics. Grounded in the "stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R)" framework developed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974), the study delves into the discrete mental and emotional features of customers, showcasing the influence of these elements on impulsive purchasing. Fashion involvement emerges as a pivotal factor, with individuals displaying higher impulsivity when engaged with trendy clothing and stylish items. The SOR model identifies the emotional state of mind as a significant mediator, particularly when individuals experience a sudden and intense attraction toward a product. Furthermore, the research underscores the link between positive affect, hedonic fulfillment, and impulsive buying, noting that customers in pleasing moods tend to engage in careless and spontaneous purchasing. This aligns with past findings highlighting the substantial role of positive emotions in enhancing impulsive buying tendencies. In summary, the theoretical framework presented in the study establishes that individual differences among consumers contribute to distinct positive affective reactions, thereby influencing impulsive purchasing behavior.

Keywords: Impulsive buying, Fashion involvement, S-O-R framework, Emotional state, Positive affect

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of impulsive buying has become a puzzle for marketers. Six decades ago, Clover identified and formulated this concept to facilitate promotional activities in the market. This type of behavior is evident when customers engage in immediate, emotionally-driven, and swift purchasing (Abbasi, 2017). When consumers with a spontaneous buying attitude desire something, they tend not to scrutinize alternative options or delve into details. Research indicates that such behaviors are often triggered by situational factors that can amplify individuals' inclination to shop. Spontaneous buying is characterized as a discrete behavior that exerts its influence when individuals find themselves in various circumstances (Beatty and Ferrell, 1998). Unplanned purchases are influenced by an individual's background and past experiences (Abbasi, 2017).

Recent studies have extensively examined the antecedents influencing spontaneous buying. Factors such as culture, economic heterogeneity, individuality, timing, and location play pivotal roles in shaping unplanned purchasing attitudes (Abbasi, 2017). When acquiring a product, both internal and external background factors contribute to altering the customer's attitude. Internal factors stem from an individual's traits and characteristics, significantly impacting impulsive buying attitudes. Purchasing is viewed as a pleasure-seeking activity intertwined with sentiments and psychosocial motivations (Chang et al, 2011).

Willingness and temptations associated with such behavior can elicit emotional responses, occurring even without anticipation of outcomes. Hedonic intentions drive consumers toward seeking amusement, entertainment, and fun. Consumers driven by hedonism intentions may not engage in thoughtful and rational shopping; instead, they prioritize luxury, pleasure, and internal satisfaction. Gültekin and Özer (2012) emphasized the significance of pleasure and amusement in shaping customer buying decisions. Goyal and Mittal (2007) assert that the excitement experienced during spending is an internal characteristic motivating individual to fulfill their desires and wishes.

Individuals with a keen interest in shopping often exhibit a higher level of attraction and excitement, leading them to wander more in shopping malls and markets (Badgaiyan and Verma, 2014).

Isen et al., (1982) asserted that individuals who maintain a positive and optimistic temperament tend to exhibit swiftness in decision-making. Positive emotional states and the ability for instant purchasing strongly influence spontaneous buying behavior (Mohan et al.,(2013); Beatty and Ferrell, 1998). Beatty and Ferrell (1998) deduced that diverse purchasing behaviors emerge, with a higher likelihood of impromptu shopping when consumers possess a pronounced inclination for impulse buying. Cha (2001), and Han et al., (1991) highlighted that the spontaneous acquisition of trendy items underscores the diversity in stimuli that drive fashionable and emotionally driven buying behavior.

Engaging with fashionable items and clothing prompts the impulsive purchase of trendy products, contributing to an individual's self-esteem and, consequently, their societal image. Previous studies have illuminated a positive correlation between unplanned purchasing and self-esteem. Individuals with elevated self-esteem tend to exercise caution in their purchasing decisions, reflecting confidence in their choices and personality. Their desire to project a mature and rational image motivates them to refrain from impulsive buying behaviors.

2. Theoretical framework

The framework for instant buying also incorporates individual characteristics, based on the "stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R)" framework developed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) (Chang et al., 2011). The SOR framework generally encompasses distinct mental and emotional attributes of customers, which vary from one individual to another. Mehrabian and Russell (1974) highlighted that, in the SOR model, the most significant mediator is the emotional state of mind. Instant buying occurs when an individual experiences a sudden, spontaneous, and intense attraction to purchase a product. This urge is influenced by the internal, distinct characteristics of customers, and those with a greater interest in fashion tend to exhibit higher impulsivity. Fashion, typically involving trendy clothing and stylish items, significantly influences a customer's buying behavior (Joo Park et al., 2006).

Ramanathan and Menon (2006) argued that the fundamental reason behind instant purchasing is positive affect and hedonic fulfillment. Therefore, when customers are in a pleasant mood, they tend to act carelessly and engage in impulse buying (Tinne, 2011). Previous research has also indicated that positive emotions play a substantial role in enhancing instant purchasing (Park and Lennon, 2006) and (Beatty and Ferrell, 1998). Thus, based on the aforementioned theoretical framework, it can be deduced that individual differences among consumers influence their positive affective reactions, consequently resulting in impulsive purchasing behavior.

3. Review of Literature and Hypothesis Development:

According to Bellenger et al. (1978), there is a gradual shift in the emphasis of instant purchasing behavior, moving from the consideration of 'what' prompts unplanned buying to the exploration of 'why,' and ultimately delving into the 'how' of it. Existing literature and research worldwide have extensively explored elements influenced by consequences, promotions, and ecological factors, neglecting, however, the simultaneous impact of individual factors on impulsive buying behavior.

3.1. *Self Esteem*

Coopersmith (1967) defines self-esteem as a comprehensive sense of personal worth or sufficiency, encompassing feelings of self-acceptance, goodness, and self-respect. In commercial research, the desire to uphold and enhance self-esteem is linked with materialism (Arndt et al., 2004). Positive self-esteem, characterized by confidence in one's capabilities and recognition of ethical values and morality (Kohn, 1989), leads individuals with higher self-esteem to feel more confident and valued among their peers, acknowledging their flaws and imperfections.

Rook and Fisher (1995) argue that some consumers refrain from impulsive behaviors to project maturity and rational decision-making. Unplanned shopping can also invite negative normative assessments. Nayeb zadeh and Jalaly (2014) discovered a negative relationship between impulse buying and self-esteem, where higher self-esteem reduces customers' intentions for impulse purchases. Epstein (1973) suggests considering three perspectives of self—physical, societal, and spiritual—for contentment and positivity. Nearly a century ago, concluded that an individual's perspective on self-awareness is a measure of positive well-being (Taylor and Brown, 1988).

Self-esteem is significantly linked to optimism, positivity, and the absence of pessimism (Scheier et al., 1994). Individuals with higher self-esteem demonstrate elevated motivation levels and the ability to resist negativity through a positive self-image.

Hence we can hypothesize that,

H1: Self-Esteem has a significant positive impact on impulsive buying behavior

H1a: Self-Esteem has a significant positive impact on positive mood

H1b: Self-Esteem has a significant positive impact on impulsive buying behavior with the mediating role of a positive mood.

3.2. Shopping Enjoyment

"Shopping enjoyment is an individual characteristic of buyers that reflects a tendency to find shopping more enjoyable and experience greater amusement than others." (Goyal and Mittal 2007), Shopping enjoyment serves as a variable contributing to individual differences, where customers view the act of purchasing as a source of fun, often deviating from shopping lists and engaging in spontaneous buying (Sharma and Sivakumaran, 2004).

Individuals with a heightened inclination to enjoy shopping tend to frequent stores and feel drawn to unplanned purchases (Badgaiyan and Verma, 2014). Beatty and Ferrell (1998) identified the pleasure derived from shopping as a determining factor in the adoption of impulsive purchasing attitudes. Westbrook and Black (1985) note that shopping enthusiasts derive higher levels of amusement and satisfaction from spontaneous buying compared to adhering strictly to a shopping list.

Retailers and shopkeepers can influence consumers to spend more on shopping by offering promotional activities and discounts, thereby encouraging unplanned buying (Bellenger and Korgaonkar, 1980). This illustrates how consumers find pleasure in shopping and is inclined towards spontaneous purchases.

Hence, we can hypothesize that,

H2: Shopping enjoyment has a significant positive impact on impulsive buying behavior

H2a: Shopping enjoyment has a significant positive impact on positive mood

H2b: Shopping enjoyment has a significant positive impact on impulsive buying behavior with the mediating role of a positive mood.

3.3. Fashion Involvement

Fashion involvement pertains to elegant and stylish clothing, emphasizing the significance of fashion items and their impact on impulsive purchasing behavior (Park and Lennon, 2006). O'Casey (2004) observed that consumer decisions often become straightforward when fashion is a factor in the product. The presence of trendy clothing reinforces their decisions, as their awareness of the latest fashion contributes to their satisfaction. Displaying their fashion involvement prowess makes them feel delighted and superior in the eyes of the public.

H3: Fashion involvement has a significant positive impact on impulsive buying behavior

H3a: Fashion involvement has a significant positive impact on positive mood

H3b: Fashion involvement has a significant positive impact on impulsive buying behavior with the mediating role of a positive mood.

The proposed research model is shown in the fig.1

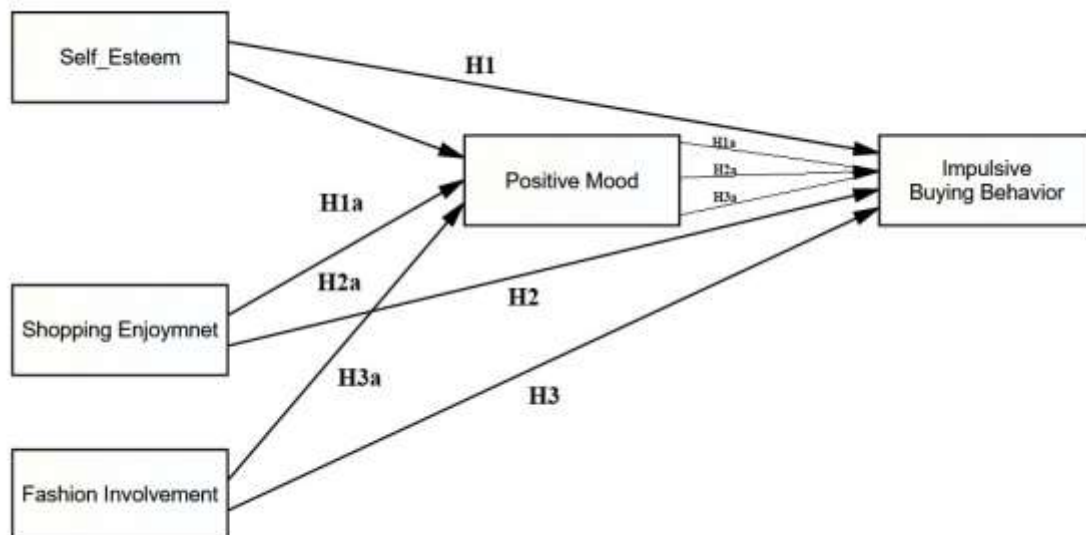


Figure.1: Proposed Research Model

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The discussion delves into the intricate dimensions of impulsive buying behavior, emphasizing the interplay between individual characteristics, fashion involvement, and emotional states within the S-O-R framework. The foundation of this study lies in Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) framework, a theoretical construct that unravels the distinct mental and emotional features influencing consumers.

Fashion involvement emerges as a central theme, shedding light on its profound impact on impulsive purchasing decisions. The allure of trendy clothing and stylish items significantly influences consumers, instigating a heightened sense of impulsivity. This resonates with the findings of O'Cass (2004), who noted that decisions become more straightforward when fashion becomes a decisive factor in the product. The inclination towards spontaneous buying is particularly pronounced among individuals with a greater interest in fashion, highlighting the role of personal preferences and tastes.

Central to the S-O-R framework is the emotional state of mind, identified by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) as a pivotal mediator. Instant buying unfolds when individuals experience an abrupt, spontaneous, and intense attraction to a product. This emotional trigger is deeply rooted in customers' internal characteristics, showcasing the intricate nature of impulsive purchasing behavior. The study aligns with Ramanathan and Menon's (2006) assertion that positive affect and hedonic fulfillment serve as the fundamental drivers behind instant purchases. Individuals in pleasing moods exhibit a carefree attitude, contributing to their engagement in impulsive buying behaviors. This finding reinforces the impact of positive emotions on impulsive tendencies, as previously noted by Park and Lennon (2006) and Beatty and Ferrell (1998).

Moreover, the discussion underscores the broader societal implications of fashion involvement and impulsive buying. Individuals who engage with fashion not only satisfy personal desires but also contribute to a public narrative, projecting an image of happiness and superiority. The act of spontaneous buying becomes a means of self-expression, aligning with the observations of Joo Park et al. (2006). This societal dimension adds depth to our understanding of impulsive buying as a phenomenon influenced by both personal preferences and broader cultural dynamics.

In conclusion, this discussion navigates the intricate landscape of impulsive buying, unraveling the roles of individual characteristics, fashion involvement, and emotional states within the S-O-R framework. The study not only contributes to academic literature but also provides valuable insights for marketers and retailers aiming to understand and leverage these factors to influence consumer behavior.

5. Future Research Directions

Future research in the realm of impulsive buying, fashion involvement, and emotional states can take a multifaceted approach to deepen our understanding of consumer behavior. Investigating temporal dynamics will unveil how these factors evolve over time, providing insights into the endurance of consumer behaviors. The influence of digital platforms on impulsive buying patterns, particularly in online environments, requires scrutiny to comprehend the unique characteristics of digital consumption. A generational lens can illuminate trends and shifts in impulsive buying tendencies across different age groups, while cross-cultural studies will uncover how cultural backgrounds shape perceptions of fashion involvement and impulsive behavior. Delving into the consequences of impulsive purchases on consumer well-being, including financial health and stress levels, can guide interventions and support mechanisms. Integrating biometric measures and virtual reality experiments can offer objective insights into the emotional underpinnings of impulsive buying, while social media's role in influencing these behaviors necessitates in-depth exploration. Lastly, the development and testing of psycho-social interventions will be crucial in modifying impulsive buying behaviors, addressing the broader implications for both academia and industry.

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