


Chapter 16

Gender Differences in Factors Affecting Impulsive Buying Behavior

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ABSTRACT

Studies focusing on the factors affecting impulsive buying behavior considering gender are scarce. To fill this gap, this study examines whether impulsive purchases are influenced by age, education level, income, and being accompanied by friends and whether these effects differ according to gender. Data were obtained from an online questionnaire. Findings reveal that women are more impulsive when shopping alone than accompanied by a friend. For men, no effect of the presence of friends on impulsivity was found. No significant differences were found between the impulsiveness of men and women. However, while for males there is no evidence that age, education, or income are determinants of impulsivity, for females, a higher impulsivity was associated with younger ages, lower education levels, and higher salaries. With these results, marketers can design more effective marketing strategies to encourage impulsive purchases.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-8574-3.ch016

INTRODUCTION

Impulsive buying behavior has been a topic of interest for researchers and brands for several decades. These types of purchases happen in areas as diverse as, for example, restaurants (Su & Lu, 2018), airport stores (Sohn & Lee, 2017) and retail stores (Thomas, 2018). Moreover, impulse purchases happen in physical stores and also online (Xiang et al., 2016).

The frequency in which impulsive buying occurs and the amount of money spent on this type of purchase demonstrate the importance of impulsive purchases. It is estimated that consumers in the United States of America spent, on average, \$314 per month in 2022 on impulse buys, mostly with food and clothing (Tighe, 2023). A recent study revealed that in 2022 Americans spent more on impulse purchases than in the past two years, with 73% of respondents saying most of their purchases were impulsive (Tronier, 2022). Another study with other nationalities, revealed that 99% of British and Spanish respondents claimed to have purchased impulsively in the week before the survey, with 26% acknowledging making between six and ten impulse purchases (Geoblink, 2020). These studies demonstrate how vital impulse buying is for brands and retail stores.

Extensive research regarding impulsive buying behavior started in the early 1950s, motivated by The Dupont *Consumer Buying Habits Studies*, one of the first studies conducted regarding impulse buying (Rook, 1987). Early studies focused more on the products, for example, by examining which ones were more likely to be purchased by impulse (West, 1951). Research did not take long to advance, encompassing factors that could influence impulse buying. Applebaum (1951), for instance, suggested that impulse buying resulted from a stimulus created in the store. Over the years, many other factors have been found to influence impulse buying. Pandey (2019) lists several, such as store characteristics, product characteristics, available time and income, involvement with the product, age and gender, among others.

While studies of factors influencing impulsive purchases are widespread in the literature, studies of gender differences regarding those factors are scarce. Indeed, studies focusing on impulsive buying analyze the influence of these factors without considering the consumer's gender. For instance, a study may find that age influences impulsive purchases but does not consider this analysis for genders separately. The studies that do consider gender, only examine if one gender is more impulsive than the other, and even here, reported findings have been inconsistent. For instance, Tifferet and Herstein (2012) found that women were more likely to purchase impulsively than men, while other studies could not establish that gender exerted an influence (e.g. Akram et al., 2016; Lee & Workman, 2018). Other sociodemographic variables, such as age, education, and income, have been found to influence impulse purchases, with mixed results also (e.g. Akram et al., 2016; Lee & Workman, 2018).

Among the many factors that influence impulse purchases, studies examining friends' influence are scarce (Wang et al., 2020). Furthermore, none of these studies examines if this influence changes with the consumer's gender, the gender of the friend (when shopping only with one friend) and the number of friends.

Given the importance of impulse buying and addressing the research gaps in the existing knowledge of impulse buying behavior, this study aims to examine gender differences regarding determinants of impulsive buying behavior. More specifically, it examines whether age, education level, income and being accompanied by one or more friends affect impulsive purchases and if they differ according to gender. The results provide valuable insights for marketers to create effective strategies to stimulate impulse purchases. This is relevant, considering that impulse purchases can account for over 16% of a store's total sales (Geoblink, 2020).

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