Exploring of types and occurrence frequency of Impulse Buying behavior and product types using Content Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The impulse buying behavior has been a well-researched concept. The classification of impulse buying behavior was initially established by Stern, 1962. Most of the research studies use this concept. During the literature review it was found that these classifications have not been verified in further studies. The objective of the research is to understand the meaning and explore the types of Impulse Buying prevalent in the current context and their relative frequency with respect to the demographics of the respondents.   To identify the main product categories purchased on impulse and the negative feelings associated with the impulse buying. Content Analysis technique was used for data analysis of the open ended questionnaires. By using mall intercept method three shopping malls were randomly selected from Delhi-NCR and 130 respondents participated in the survey. The unique contribution of the research in the existing literature is by identification of a new category of impulse purchase namely 'Reflective impulse purchase'. It occurs when shopper's buying decision is influenced by recommendations of a salesperson, friends, relatives or other shoppers. Many new insights have been discussed which shows the influence of demographics like age, gender and occupation on the impulsive buying behavior.

Keywords: *Content Analysis, Impulse Buying.*

INTRODUCTION

The impulse buying behavior has been defined by many scholars as unintended, non-reflective reaction, which occurs soon after being exposed to stimuli inside the store (Rook, 1987) and as an unplanned behavior involving quick decision-making and tendency for immediate acquisition of the product (Rook and Gardner, 1993). Impulse buying refers to immediate purchases which are without any pre-shopping objective either to purchase the specific product category or to fulfill a specific need (Beatty and Ferrell, 1998).

The need to understand impulse buying in retail stores was first identified in the marketing literature by Clover, 1950. Baum (1951) addressed that consumer was stimulated to impulse buying after they came into the store. Stern (1962) was the first scholar to suggest four distinct types of impulse purchases namely - pure, reminder, suggestion, and planned impulse buying. Rook (1987) argued successfully that impulse buying should be depicted it as extraordinary, exciting, hedonically complex and compelled buyer action. Over the years, impulse buying has also been made easier by innovations, such as credit cards, telemarketing, and home shopping networks (Rook, 1987). Thomas (1997) pointed to two emotional shifts that affect the buying habits - an increase in stress levels because consumers are out of their daily routine and an increase in levels of anticipation and excitement. Beatty and Ferrell (1998) argued that situational variables - time available and money available and individual difference variables were found to influence a set of endogenous variables, including positive and negative affect and so on.

A lot of factors have been identified for the impulse buying over the years related to the shopping

environment, shopper's personal traits, product itself and the diverse demographic and socio-cultural aspects.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The classification of a purchase as planned or impulse began with the Stern (1962) study where he provided the basic framework of impulse buying by categorizing a buying behavior as planned, unplanned, or impulse.

Planned purchases involve time-consuming information-searching with rational decision making, whereas unplanned buying refers to all shopping decisions made without any advance planning. Impulse buying is distinguished from the unplanned buying in terms of quick decision making. In addition to being unplanned, an impulse purchase also involves experiencing a sudden, strong, and irresistible urge to buy.

Iyer (1989) further distinguished that all impulse purchases are unplanned, but unplanned purchases are not always impulsively decided. Han et al. (1991) modified the Stern (1962) classification of impulse mix in context of fashion products and developed as four types of impulse buying:

i) Planned impulse buying
ii) Reminded impulse buying
iii) Suggestion or fashion-oriented impulse buying
iv) Pure impulse buying

Planned impulse buying is partially planned but specific product or categories are not decided by the shopper. They are further determined on the basis of the different sales promotions inside the shop. Reminder impulse buying occurs when the buyer is reminded of the need of the product noticing it in the shop. Pure impulse buying is a novelty or escape purchase which a shopper breaks the trend of usual shopping.

Stern (1962) introduced the concept of suggestion impulse purchase as the purchase of new product on the basis of self suggestion but without any prior experience. Han et.al, (1991) described fashion oriented impulse as a type of suggestion impulse where the purchase is motivated by self-suggestion to buy the new fashion product. In case of fashion oriented impulse buying, shopper has no previous experience with the new and fashionable product. Mattila and Enz (2002) later argued that fashion-oriented impulse buying can be influenced by shopper's own positive emotions when shopping.

During the literature review it was found that these classifications have not been verified in further studies. The research paper build on this gap identified and aims to identify the various types of impulse buying in current context.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the meaning of impulse buying in current context

2. To identify the main product categories for impulse purchases

3. To identify the types of Impulse Buying in current context and relative frequency

4. To determine the association between the various demographic determinants and the types of impulse buying.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is both exploratory and descriptive. It is based on obtaining detailed opinions of the consumers about their recent experiences of impulse buying, the product categories for which impulse buying is done and their feelings about the impulse buying by recalling and describing their recent impulse buying situation.

Primary data was collected through use of a self-constructed open ended questionnaire. The open ended questionnaire is an effective means for gaining insights into the consumer's understanding of the impulse buying concept without confining or moderating their thoughts.

The first part established the demographic details of the consumers like age, gender and occupation. In the second part, the term Impulse Buying was explained as "It occurs when a consumer experiences a sudden, often powerful and persistent urge to buy something immediately" (Rook, 1987). Consumers were asked to recall and provide details of the situation (where, when, who, how, what and why etc.) that led to indulging in impulse buying and any thoughts, opinions, or feelings about impulse buying in about 250-300 words.

SAMPLE

The usable data was collected from shoppers by using mall intercept method. Three shopping malls were randomly selected from Delhi-NCR. 150 questionnaires were filled by respondents, 50 from each shopping mall out of which only 130 questionnaires were complete in all respect. The shoppers were intercepted and requested to participate in the survey by self-completion of the questionnaire on the spot.

DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE

CONTENT ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

The goal of the research is to identify and categorize all instances of a particular type of impulse buying, to read the responses and highlight all text that on first impression appears to represent one or another type of impulse buying. The next step in analysis was to code all highlighted passages using the predetermined codes. Any text that could not be categorized with the initial coding scheme was given a new code.

Data analysis starts with reading all data repeatedly to achieve immersion and obtain a sense of the whole (Tesch, 1990) Then, data are read word by word to derive codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Morgan, 1993; Morse & Field, 1995) by first highlighting the exact words from the text that appear to capture key thoughts or concepts. Next, the researcher approaches the text by making notes of his or her first impressions, thoughts, and initial analysis. As this process continues, labels for codes emerge that are reflective of more than one key thought. These often come directly from the text and are then become the initial coding scheme. Codes then are sorted into categories based on how different codes are related and linked. These emergent categories are used to organize and group codes into meaningful clusters (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Patton, 2002).

CATEGORIES

The categories denote the conceptual scheme of the research design (Kassarjian, 1977).

Definitions for each category, subcategory, and code are developed. To prepare for reporting the findings, exemplars for each code and category are identified from the data

Four types of impulse buying identified previously (Stern, 1962) have been used as the initial categories.

1. Pure impulse purchase: is a purchase that does not fit with an individual's normal buying pattern. This might mean buying an obscure item that a consumer would never normally consider.

2. Reminder impulse purchase: occurs when an individual is reminded that he or she needs a product once it is presented in front of him or her. This might mean that the individual is already at a store and sees an item he or she is running out of at home.

3. Suggestive impulse purchase: happens when an individual sees a product and creates or imagines a need for it.

4. Planned impulse purchase: occurs when a shopper does not plan exactly what will be purchased, but actively looks for and takes advantage of promotions.

Issues of Reliability & Validity

The reliability of a content analysis study refers to its stability, or the tendency for coders to consistently re-code the same data in the same way over a period of time; reproducibility, or the tendency for a group of coders to classify categories membership in the same way; and accuracy, or the extent to which the classification of a text corresponds to a standard or norm statistically.

Validity of a content analysis study refers to the correspondence of the categories to the conclusions, and the generalizability of results to a theory. The validity of categories in implicit concept analysis, in particular, is achieved by utilizing multiple classifiers to arrive at an agreed upon definition of the category.

The generalizability of one's conclusions, then, is very dependent on how one determines concept categories, as well as on how reliable those categories are. It is imperative that one defines categories that accurately measure the idea and/or items one is seeking to measure.

Developing rules that allow one, and others, to categorize and code the same data in the same way over a period of time, referred to as stability, is essential to the success of a conceptual analysis. Reproducibility, not only of specific categories, but of general methods applied to establishing all sets of categories, makes a study, and its subsequent conclusions and results, more sound. A study which does this, i.e. in which the classification of a text corresponds to a standard or norm, is said to have accuracy.

RESULTS & FINDINGS

DEMOGRAPHICS:

It was found that out of the 130 respondents, 11(8%) did not purchase on impulse. Out of these, 7 were males and 4 were female respondents across all the age groups.

Out of the remaining 119 impulse buyers, 57(48%) were in the age group18-29 years, 30(25%) were in 30-40 years group and 32(27%) were above 41 years. In terms of gender, the sample was evenly distributed with 59(50%) males and 60(50%) females. Also in terms of Occupation,

53(45%) respondents were students, 38(32%) were service-class and remaining 28(24%) belonged to the business class.

The major characteristics of impulse buyers emerged as………..

These are consistent with the features of impulse buying established in previous studies…………..

CATEGORIES OF IMPULSE BUYING:

Category	Definition	Examples
Pure impulse purchase	a purchase that does not fit with an individual's normal buying pattern. This might mean buying an obscure item that a consumer would never normally consider.	
Reminder impulse purchase	Occurs when an individual is reminded that he or she needs a product once it is presented in front of him or her. This might mean that the individual is already at a store and sees an item he or she is running out of at home	
Suggestive impulse purchase	Happens when an individual sees a product and creates or imagines a need for it.	
Planned impulse purchase	Occurs when a shopper does not plan exactly what will be purchased, but actively looks for and takes advantage of promotions.	
Reflective impulse purchase	When shopper's buying decision is influenced by the recommendations of the salesperson, friends, relatives or other shoppers.	

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A new category has been identified during the analysis

5. Reflective impulse purchase: when shopper's buying decision is influenced by recommendations of the salesperson, friends, relatives or other shoppers.

The frequency of occurrence of these categories are as follows:

TYPE	Total	
pure	46	39%
planned	31	26%
recommend	18	15%
suggestive	15	13%
reminder	9	8%

The findings reveal that 'pure' impulse buying is most prevalent among the respondents. It is opted by 37% male and 40% female respondents. It is most opted across all age groups, for 18-29 years and 30-40 years age group it is 37% while for above 41 years it is opted by 44% of the respondents. In terms of occupation, the situation is same wherein it is opted by 36% students, 42% service class, and 39% business class.

PRODUCT GROUP	pure
accessories	4
car	4
clothes	14
Electronics	7
generic	13
shoes	4
Grand Total	46

PRODUCT TYPES PURCHASED ON IMPULSE:
The product categories most purchased in impulse buying are clothes (29%), generic (28%), Electronics (17%), accessories (11%), car (9%) and shoes (6%).
Gender: It was found that males purchase mostly Electronics (27%) and generic (27%) on impulse followed by clothes (20%), car (15%), shoes (7%) and accessories (3%). Females purchase mostly clothes (38%) on impulse followed by generic (28%), accessories (18%), Electronics (7%), shoes (5%) and car (3%).
Age: In the age group of 18-29 years, clothes (33%) were purchased on impulse. In the age group of 30-40 years mostly generic items (60%) and in above 41 years age group clothes (31%) and car (28%) were purchased.
Occupation: Students mainly purchased clothes (36%), accessories (19%) and generic (19%). Service-class bought generic (50%) and clothes (24%) while business- class bought car (29%),

electronics (25%) and clothes (25%) on impulse.

MOTIVATIONS FOR IMPULSE BUYING:

The responses were studied using the content analysis technique to find out the reasons or motivation stimuli for indulging in impulse buying. Overall the major motivators for 119 respondents were Being Useful (18%), Need Present for product(13%), Feel Happy when shopping (13%), purchase a New or Exclusive Product (8%), Sale in the store (8%), Saw product Inside Store (8%),   based on Friends' Recommendation (8%), product available on Discount or Low Price (7%), shopper Have Money (4%), based on Salesman's Recommendation (3%), to remain Up To Date In Trend (3%), to avail Vendor Services (3%), purchase product as a Gift (2%) and Saw Other shoppers in the store trying the product (1%).

Several unique findings are associated with the changing demographics of the shoppers. These are detailed as follows:

Gender: Males purchase on impulse when it will be useful for them (14%) and a need is present (14%). These two reasons are also same for females i.e useful for them (22%) and a need is present (13%). But other major reasons are as they feel happy after shopping (15%) and based on items they saw in the store (10%).

Age: In the age group of 18-29 years, 21% respondent buy anything on impulse if they feel that it will be useful for them and 14% likes to buy a New/exclusive product while 12% feel happy. In the age group of 30-40 years, most respondents purchase any product if they feel it will be useful for them (27%) or a need is present (27%). They also look out for discount/ low price (17%). In above 41 years age group, respondents purchase on impulse as they feel happy (16%) or a need is present (16%).

Occupation: It was found that for business-class, the major motivation for impulse buying is that they feel happy (21%). Service class decision is influenced by discounts and low prices (13%). Students are also attracted towards New or exclusive products (15%).

POST PURCHASE FEELINGS:

The respondents described the feelings associated with their impulse purchase experience. 10% of the respondents had no regrets after impulse purchases. Remaining 90% respondents described their feeling to be negative. The major issues reported was Overspending (47%), the product bought was not required (39%) and quality of the product purchased was not upto the mark (14%). The results have been found across all the age groups, both genders and all the occupation types included in the study.

CONCLUSION

Content analysis does not proceed in a linear fashion and is more complex and difficult than quantitative analysis because it is less standardized and formulaic (Polit & Beck 2004). There are no simple guidelines for data analysis: each inquiry is distinctive, and the results depend on the skills, insights, analytic abilities and style of the investigator (Hoskins & Mariano 2004). One challenge of content analysis is the fact that it is very flexible and there is no simple, 'right' way of doing it. Researchers must judge what variations are most appropriate for their particular problems (Weber 1990), and this makes the analysis process most challenging and interesting. An enormous amount of work is required during the process (Polit & Beck 2004).

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