

## **A PROBE INTO IMPULSIVE BUYING BEHAVIOUR AND RELATED PERSONALITY VARIABLES NAMELY SELF ESTEEM, SELF CONTROL AND NEED FOR EMOTION OF FEMALE AND MALE EMPLOYEES WORKING IN DIFFERENT ORGANIZATIONS**

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**Abstract:** Impulsive Buying is a thriving and profitable phenomenon for the marketers of the globalised economy. Very few studies in the past have elaborated upon internal aspects of impulsive buying and hence, the need for a holistic view exists. This paper has probed into the concept of impulsive buying behaviour and the internal psychological factors that may act as its antecedents. Additionally, the purpose of this paper was also to compare two groups i.e. male and female impulsive buyers on the internal psychological variables namely Self Esteem, Self Control and Need for Emotion. The study was carried out among fifty female and fifty male impulsive buyers ( $N=100$ ) working across different private and public sector organisations in Kolkata, West Bengal. Using t-test, female and male impulsive buyers were found to be significantly different in their Need for Emotion. No significant differences were found in relation to Self esteem and Self Control among the two groups. Pearson product moment correlation was used to find relationship between impulsive buying behaviour and the three internal psychological variables among the females and males. Impulsive buying behaviour was found to be negatively related to both Self esteem and Self Control in both females and males. Need for Emotion was found to be positively related to impulsive buying in females and no relationship was established among these two variables in case of males. This study holds significance as impulsive buying as a prevalent pattern of consumer behaviour has not been widely explored in the Indian context.

**Keywords:** Impulsive Buying Behaviour, Internal Psychological Factors, Need for Emotion, Self Control, Self Esteem.

**Introduction:** Consumer behaviour refers to the selection, purchase and consumption of goods and services by a consumer for the satisfaction of his or her wants. Consumer buying behaviour has also been explained as the buying behaviour of consumers, both individuals and households, who buy goods and services for personal consumption (Kumar, 2010, p.218). Impulse buying is one such behaviour pattern that is widely manifested among the individuals of the changing consumer society.

Impulsive buyers fail to regulate themselves against misleading marketing practices and experience an urge to possess the products and services which are at their reach or even beyond. This behaviour can have serious negative consequences like financial hardships and can even lead to emotional trauma (Rook 1987).

Impulsive buying behaviour has not received the required exploration in the Indian context which is at its phase of economic transformation. Antecedents of economic growth like demographics, urbanization, and rising education levels have led to growth in Indian incomes and also to an increase in ability of the Indian consumer to spend. This trend, according to a report by Mc Kinsey Global Institute (2007), is expected to flourish in the coming years. The report states that over the next two decades, with its current high growth path, India will climb from its position as the twelfth-largest consumer market today to become the world's fifth-largest consumer market by 2025.

Furthermore, by then the Indian consumer market will be dominated by the urban consumers with 62 percent of consumption in urban areas contrary to 42 percent today. The pattern of consumer behaviour is also expected to be affected with more money at hand or 'in cards' for disposal leading to a rise in impulse purchases. This change has major indications for the salaried consumers as well as the retailers both at the national and international level aspiring to gain a foothold in the Indian market.

According to Rook & Hoch 1985, impulsive buying is a behaviour which involves a sudden and spontaneous desire to act and represents a clear departure from the previous ongoing behaviour stream followed by psychological disequilibrium and psychological conflict and struggle. Impulsive buying is a pervasive phenomenon and the way it manifests itself in different individuals is dependent on various factors. The factors have mainly been categorised as external (situational) and internal (personal) factors. External factors include social environment, purchase occasion, retail shelf location, culture, merchandising stimuli to mention a few (Patterson 1963, Kollat & Willet 1967, Kacen & Lee 2002). Whereas the internal factors would include self regulation, negative emotional states (Verplanken & Herabadi 2001), personality traits and stress (Youn & Faber 2000, Weinberg & Gottwald 1982), cognitive processes like decision making (Coley 2002). Interestingly, Gender differences can also impact the impulsive tendencies

of a consumer as we assume that men's and women's intentions, values, and decision-making processes as related to purchases are different (Coley, 2002).

*Du Point Consumer Buying Habit Studies (1948-1965)* is considered a classic in this context. It showed that an increasing percentage of shopper purchases are made on impulse and defined impulse buying as an 'unplanned' purchase. This study became a theoretical base for most of the later studies which analyzed this 'unplanned' buying behaviour across numerous product categories (Clover 1950; West 1951).

In this study, three important psychological aspects of personality have been distinctively explored in relation to impulse buying behaviour namely; Self Esteem, Self Control and Need for Emotion among urban working males and females across different organisations. The study has considered the urban population mainly because of its characteristic features like ease of accessibility and increasing retail market that provide a larger outlet for shopping to the consumers. Higher income level, presence of shopping malls, supermarkets, ATM's, credit cards and regular internet access are some of the highlights of an urban area that can trigger impulsive buying behaviour. Also, the study has been conducted among the working population as financial independence can largely influence the extent to which one succumbs to his or her impulsive urges to buy and consequently, engages in impulsive buying behaviour. If you have the power to purchase, you are less likely to fight the impulses.

Self Esteem can be explained as a favourable or unfavourable attitude toward the self. It is the 'totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings with reference to himself as an object' (Rosenberg 1965). Self control helps an individual to inhibit impulses, emotions, thoughts, or behaviours which may distract them from their personal goals or social norms. Resisting an impulse depends on the person's capacity for self-control.

Need for Emotion (NFE) is defined as the tendency or propensity for individuals to seek out emotional situations, enjoy emotional stimuli, and exhibit a

#### **General Hypotheses:**

Considering the objectives of the study stated above and review of literature, the following null hypotheses have been precisely formulated:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant mean difference in **self esteem** between female impulsive buyers and male impulsive buyers who are employees working in different organizations.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant mean difference in **self control** between female impulsive buyers and male impulsive buyers who are employees working in different organizations.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant mean difference in **need for emotion** between female impulsive buyers and male impulsive buyers who are employees working in different organizations.

**H<sub>04</sub>:** There is no relationship between **impulsive buying behaviour** and **self esteem** of female employees working in different organizations.

**H<sub>05</sub>:** There is no relationship between **impulsive buying behaviour** and **self control** of female employees

preference to use emotion in interacting with the world. NFE taps mainly into short term emotion, rather than longer emotional states and helps to explain stable patterns of individual behaviour. Many situations of interest in the field of consumer behaviour may possibly be influenced by an individual's need for emotion, giving rise to a variety of important questions (Raman, Chattopadhyay & Hoyer 1995).

More importantly, the study takes a step ahead and tries to examine whether there exists differences or any similarities between male and female impulsive buyers concerning these internal psychological factors under consideration. This is significant as there is limited literature in this area and most of the previous studies focusing on Gender and impulse buying have differed from each other in terms of their findings and demand additional probe.

#### **Objectives**

#### **The present study attempts to understand:**

- Whether there exists any difference in the internal psychological aspects namely self esteem, need for emotion and self control between male and female impulsive buyers employed in different organizations that prompt them to purchase at impulse.
- Whether there are any similarities or differences between males and females in seeking out emotional arousal through purchase of products at impulse.
- If there are any similarities or differences between male and female impulsive buyers with respect to their self esteem
- Whether there are any similarities or differences between male and female impulsive buyers in their self control as reflected through purchase of products.
- Also, it aims to study the relationship between each of the three variables viz. self esteem, self control, need for emotion with impulsivity in buying behaviour for each of the two groups- males and females working in different organizations.

working in different organizations.

**Ho6:** There is no relationship between **impulsive buying behaviour** and **need for emotion** of female employees working in different organizations.

**Ho7:** There is no relationship between impulsive buying behaviour and **self esteem** of male employees working in different organizations.

**Ho8:** There is no relationship between impulsive buying behaviour and **self control** of male employees working in different organizations.

**Ho9:** There is no relationship between impulsive buying behaviour and **need for emotion** of male employees working in different organizations.

#### **Methodology:**

##### **Sample:**

**Sample Size:** The sample comprised of 50 female employees and 50 male employees who were impulsive in their buying behaviour and representative of the urban population. The total sample size for the present study was 100.

##### **Inclusion Criteria:**

- The selected sample belonged to urban area of Kolkata, West Bengal
- The sample consisted of males and females employed in different private and public sector organizations of Kolkata, married for a minimum of 2 years and a maximum of 10 years
- The age range considered was 25-40 years with a minimum educational qualification of graduation and above
- Another important criteria was number of financial dependents in the family, with a minimum of one and maximum of two children
- The monthly income of the sample ranged from Rs.20,000- 45,000
- Both the groups i.e. male and female impulsive buyers were matched in terms of age, educational qualification, socio economic status, marital status, years of marriage, number of financial dependents, no. of children and commodity preferences.

##### **Description of Tools:**

**General Information Schedule:** This information schedule developed by the researcher was administered to the respondents, both males and females working in different public and private sector organizations in Kolkata, West Bengal. The purpose was to avail information regarding their age, educational qualification, monthly salary, marital status, number of financial dependents, number of children, years of marriage, preference for types of commodity.

**Buying Impulsiveness Scale (Rook & Fisher 1995):** The Buying Impulsiveness Scale (BIS) has been widely used as a descriptive measure in consumer studies. The scale was reported to have Cronbach alpha of 0.88.

##### **Rosenberg's Self Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965):**

Fleming and Courtney (1984) have reported a Cronbach Alpha of 1.88 and test re-test correlations of .82 with a one week interval. It is the most widely used self esteem measure in psychology and other social science research and can be completed in a very short duration.

**General Self Control Scale (Tangney, Boone, & Baumeister 2004):** Exploratory factor analysis suggested the potential for various factors, but since these factors were correlated, the scale is treated as unidimensional throughout. Coefficient alphas in Study 1 (Study 2) were 0.89 (0.89) for the General Self Control Scale.

**Need For Emotion Scale (Raman, Chattopadhyay & Hoyer 1995):** This scale was developed for assessing whether consumers seek emotional situations. The coefficient alpha estimates of internal consistency were .87 and .84 for the developmental and the 'hold-out' samples respectively.

**Procedure for collection of data:** Initially a large number of respondents were assessed on the basis of a 'General Information Schedule'. They were further administered with the Buying Impulsiveness Scale (BIS) by Rook & Fisher (1995). On the basis of their scores on BIS only impulsive buyers were selected as the final sample for the present study. The non impulsive buyers were not considered.

The participants were then administered with the likert type scales namely; Rosenberg's Self Esteem Scale, General Self Control Scale and Need for Emotion Scale following standard procedures.

##### **Results:**

**Statistical Methods for Data Analysis:** At first, means and standard deviations for the different groups with respect to each of the variables were calculated. Then, t statistic for independent samples of equal size was used to test the significance of the difference between the means. Finally, an attempt was made to find out association, if any, between each of these variables and impulsive buying behaviour for both the groups-females and males under study by computing Pearson Product Moment correlation.

The results obtained from the analysis of data are presented in the following tables.

Table 1 Means and Standard Deviations (SD) of Females and Males with respect to Impulsive Buying		
Groups	Mean	SD
Females	29.02	3.43
Males	28.32	3.93

Table 2 Mean (M), Standard Deviation (SD) and t ratios of Female and Male Impulsive Buyers with respect to the variables under consideration. (Significance level at p<0.01 level with df= 98)					
Variables	Females		Males		T
	M	SD	M	SD	
Self Esteem	21.14	3.6	20.84	3.7	0.250
Self Control	123.22	15.4	122.78	13.4	0.153
Need for Emotion	38.88	5.5	35.42	5.6	3.101*

\*\* p < 0.01.

It is revealed from the 't' values of table 2 that there exists a significant difference at 0.01 level between female and male impulsive buyers with respect to Need for Emotion.

Table 3 Product Moment Correlation (r) scores between the considered variables namely Self Esteem, Self Control, Need for Emotion, and Impulsive buying among Females	
Variables	Impulsive Buying
Self Esteem	-0.27
Self Control	-0.24
Need For Emotion	0.309

Table 3 indicates that there exists a moderate positive correlation between Need for Emotion and Impulsive buying among females. A negative correlation between Self Esteem and Impulsive Buying has been

found in females. Furthermore, Self Control and Impulsive buying have also been found to be negatively correlated among both females.

Table 4 Product Moment Correlation (r) scores between the considered variables namely Self Esteem, Self Control, Need for Emotion, and Impulsive buying among Males	
Variables	Impulsive Buying
Self Esteem	-0.23
Self Control	-0.26
Need For Emotion	0.036

Table 4 indicates that no correlation has been found between Need for Emotion and Impulsive Buying in males. A negative correlation does exist between Self Esteem and Impulsive Buying in this group. Additionally, Self Control and Impulsive buying have been found to be negatively correlated among the males.

**Findings:** The tables above include the detail findings of the statistical analyses. **Table 1** includes the Mean and standard Deviation of the two groups; Female and Male Impulsive Buyers. Females have a

mean of 29.02 as compared to 28.32 for the Males. This clearly indicates that in the present population, **Females are relatively more impulsive in their consumer behaviour than Males of the same population. However, the difference is minimal.** **Table 2** consists of t- scores for testing the significance of difference between the means of the two groups. Analyzing the table, it can be seen that there exists no significant difference between the mean of Female and Male impulsive buyers with respect to Self Esteem ( $p < 0.01$ ).

Thus, the null hypothesis  $H_01$  is accepted. Null Hypothesis  $H_02$  is also accepted as the respective t-score shows no significant difference between the means of the two samples in relation to Self Control ( $p < 0.01$ ).

The next null hypothesis  $H_03$  is rejected as there exists a significant difference between Female and Male impulsive buyers with respect to Need for Emotion ( $p > 0.01$ ).

**Table 3 and 4** show the results of correlation analysis carried out to determine the relation between the variables used in the study with respect to female and male impulsive buyers, respectively.

In case of Females, the results indicate a negative correlation between Self Esteem and Impulse Buying ( $r = -0.27$ ), leading to rejection of  $H_04$ . The findings also indicate that there is a negative correlation between Self Esteem and Impulsive Buying behaviour of Males ( $r = -0.23$ ) thus, rejecting  $H_07$  of the study.

As table 3 and 4 highlight, product moment correlation between Self control and Impulse buying equals ( $r = -0.24$ ) for females and ( $r = -0.26$ ) for males. Hence, there is a low negative correlation between the two variables in case of both the samples. This leads to the rejection of the null hypotheses  $H_05$  and  $H_08$  respectively.

With regard to Need for Emotion and Impulsive Buying, the r score for females shows a moderate positive correlation between impulse buying and Need for Emotion ( $r = 0.309$ ). This leads to rejection of  $H_06$ . In case of Males, the score shows no correlation between the two variables ( $r = 0.036$ ). Hence, the hypothesis  $H_09$  is accepted.

Thus, on the basis of the results it can be put forward that-

- In the selected sample, females have been found to have a higher mean value in impulse buying behaviour as compared to males. However, the difference is minimal.
- In addition, as table 2 indicates, female impulsive buyers have a higher score average (mean score) in Self esteem, Self Control and Need for Emotion as compared to males.
- A significant difference has been found between the two groups i.e., female and male impulsive buyers with respect to Need for Emotion.
- No significant difference has been found between the groups with respect to Self Esteem and Self Control.
- Notably, there exists a negative correlation between Self Esteem and impulsive buying behaviour in females as well as males.
- With respect to Need for Emotion, it correlates positively with impulsive buying in case of females. However, in males, there is no correlation

between the two variables.

- There is a negative correlation between Self Control and Impulse buying behaviour in both female and male samples.
- Females show a greater negative correlation between self esteem and impulse buying compared to males reflected through a higher 'r' score.

Therefore, it can be stated that  $H_01$ ,  $H_02$ ,  $H_09$  have been retained at 0.01 significance level. However,  $H_03$  has been rejected through the analysis of t-test. Additionally,  $H_04$ ,  $H_05$ ,  $H_06$ ,  $H_07$ ,  $H_08$  have all been rejected as verified by product moment correlation.

**Discussion:** The findings indicate a difference between the two groups under consideration in the present study, with respect to their mean value on impulse buying behaviour. It proposes that females are likely to be more impulsive in their purchases. However, given that the difference is not considerably large, it can be stated that both males and females may equally engage in impulsive buying behaviour. This finding provides evidence for previous suggestion by Kollat and Willet (1964) that if the number of purchases is held constant, men and women have the same degree of susceptibility to unplanned purchases. Herabadi (2003) has pointed that in most of the studies where females have scored higher on impulsivity than males, the differences have not always proved to be statistically significant. Results of the present study demonstrate that Need for emotion is positively related to impulsive buying in the case of females to a moderate level. This finding corroborates the essential result of study by Weinberg and Gottwald (1982) that impulse buyers assess themselves as being more emotionally oriented than non buyers. In fact, impulsive purchase could also be described as an emotional consumption experience (Herabadi 2003).

However, in case of Males, it has to be noted that no correlation has been found between need for emotion and impulsive buying. This finding confirms the previous research findings that females have a higher tendency to shop in emotional manner (Verplanken & Herabadi 2001, Dittmar, Beattie, 1998).

It has been socially established that males and females differ in the way they deal with their emotions. Females, on one hand, are expected to be overt in expressing and seeking emotions. The males, on the other hand, are expected to contain their emotions within themselves and be emotionally distant. This is reinforced by the 'men don't cry' stereotype prevalent across different cultures. Coley (2002) too had suggested that females are more likely to display a greater tendency to shop under the influence of emotional mood or related influences of

an affective process (mean 2.9569) compared to males (2.6716) (p 71).

If not for emotional stimulation, men may engage in impulse shopping to experience the thrill from the experience of paying (Underhill 1999). However, there is no significant difference between the two groups in relation to Self Esteem and Self Control. A seemingly surprising finding, it can be assumed that male and female impulsive buyers may be equally affected by their internal psychological aspects of self esteem and self control contradictory to the popular gender stereotype.

Both Males and females show a negative correlation between impulsive buying and Self Esteem i.e., the level of self esteem is likely to impact impulse buying behaviour in both Males and Females though this negative correlation is seen to be marginally higher in females. Lower Self Esteem may act as a trigger for higher cases of impulse buying behaviour in both the groups. Tremblay (2005) in her research has found that there is a reverse relation between the level of self-esteem and the amount of impulse purchases (Youn *et al.* 2000)

Furthermore, it has also been seen that those with lack of self esteem make use of material possessions to compensate for perceived inadequacies of one's self-concept. Females, in this case, may be more affected by low self esteem perception and thus, have a tendency to engage more in impulse buying to build their personal image. Males on the other hand, may engage in impulse purchases to fulfil or compensate for a strong masculine identity or self-concept (Dittmar 1995).

Finally, the present study takes a step further by correlating self control with impulsive buying behaviour of males and females. This finding is important as emotional arousal may not in itself result in impulsive purchase behaviour and other aspects of personality may act as essential contributing factors (Herabadi 2003).

The result reveals a negative correlation between self control and Impulse buying in both males and females. It is evident that males with low self control have a higher tendency to engage in impulsive purchases as compared to females. Low self control does affect female impulsive behaviour but the relationship is not of a higher degree.

Lending support to this finding Vohs and Faber (2007) found that when self-control resources are low, people feel stronger urges to buy impulsively, willingly spend more money for a product, and spend more money than when self-control resources are intact. The current finding also supports research by Youn (2000) which demonstrates that when an individual lacks sufficient self-control over his buying desire, impulse buying takes place.

Traditionally, purchasing has been considered to be a women's job. As pointed by Underhill (1999), women accept this role willingly, tend to be dependable, and take pride in their ability to shop prudently and well. However, the present findings lend support to the fact that in the modern urban society where both males and females are sharing their roles and responsibilities, even males are likely to be equally impulsive in their buying behaviour though the reasons for being so may vary in certain cases.

**Implications of the study:** The findings of the study have various implications for industry, marketers as well as consumers themselves.

Keeping in mind that impulsive buying is influenced to a large extent by internal psychological factors; marketers should focus on creating in-store stimuli through displays that can lead to emotional stimulation and attract the interest of the buyers.

The study has unravelled that women impulsive buyers seek more emotional stimulation as compared to men impulsive buyers. Thus, products can be designed and target based marketing can be done from the point of view of both male and female impulsive buyers. Accordingly, it can be advantageous if it is taken into consideration that different items can have different psychological appeal to male and female impulsive buyers.

Growth in online shopping is another area that explores impulse buying tendencies of consumers. From the point of view of present findings, online advertising strategies should be designed with an aim of satisfying and inducing positive emotions in the consumers, especially in the context of products that target the female buyers.

From the point of view of consumers the findings hold significance, as impulsive buying can have several negative consequences for the buyer, especially for those who have financial dependents to look after. If one has knowledge about the internal psychological factors that can trigger impulse buying, one can opt to engage in planned purchases and emotion regulation exercises rather than spending on impulse.

Consequently, concept like retail therapy has become popular which thrives on impulse buying tendencies. This can be temporarily satisfying but one can experience regret later on. It can also lead to financial problems in the long run.

#### Suggestions for future research:

**The following suggestions can be taken into account for expanding the present study in the future:**

- Considering a wider population and a larger sample for the purpose of generalization.
- Future research can also examine other

- personality variables related to impulse buying behaviour
- Need for Emotion and its relation to impulse buying in males and females can receive further in depth investigation.
  - In future, gender, emotions and impulse buying can also be an interesting area of research
- Summary and Conclusion:** The findings of this study suggest that female impulsive buyers show a higher need for emotion. Material possessions through impulse purchases may also be used to create an ideal self concept in both male and female impulsive buyers. However, among the males lack of self control may be a larger determinant of impulse buying as compared to low self esteem. Nonetheless, low self esteem may trigger impulsive buying in both males and females with both the groups indicating an inverse relationship between impulse buying and self esteem.
- Very importantly, it can be noted that an individual may try to mould one's concept of self according to the social context to which he/she belongs. This is especially true for Indian context which encourages collectivism as opposed to individualism. Thus, one may resort to impulse purchases in order to fit one's self in the wider social milieu. Thus, it may be concluded that impulse buying behaviour as a variable is largely influenced by internal psychological aspects and more specifically by related personality variables like Self Esteem, Need for Emotion and Self Control and it has several implications for both consumers and marketers. This particular finding applies to both males and females working across different organisations in Kolkata. In depth understanding the strength of these internal psychological processes will facilitate the understanding of how they relate to impulse buying and how differently, if at all, men and women interpret internal and external stimuli.

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