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Intrinsic factors affecting impulsive buying behaviour—Evidence from India

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this research is to examine the effect of five intrinsic factors, namely, personality, culture, materialism, shopping enjoyment tendency, and impulsive buying tendency on impulsive buying behaviour. Using structural equation modeling, responses from 508 consumers in the different parts of India's National Capital Region were analysed and results showed that while the three constructs of materialism, shopping enjoyment tendency, and impulsive buying tendency had significant positive relationship with impulsive buying behaviour, the cultural construct of collectivism and two personality constructs of extraversion and conscientiousness too showed significant relationship.

The study assumes immense significance because it not only presents useful insight regarding the behaviour of Indian consumers in an ever developing retail sector in India, but also considering the fact that this is the first time an attempt has been made to assess the simultaneous impact of these five intrinsic factors on impulsive buying behaviour. Importantly, the findings also revealed that the influence of intrinsic variables on impulsive buying behaviour did not vary across gender.

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1. Introduction and background

After the sustained love affair of researchers in defining and redefining impulsive buying behaviour (Bellenger et al., 1978; Kollat and Willet, 1967; Stern, 1962), the focus gradually shifted from the 'what' of impulsive buying to the 'why' and then to the 'how' of it. From taxonomical to cognitive (Hoch and Loewenstein, 1991; Rook and Fisher, 1995) and finally somewhat to trait oriented approach (Bratko et al., 2013), the impulsive buying literature has been witnessing both horizontal as well as vertical surge. Needless to point out, that on one hand, there have been a plethora of studies across the globe trying to assess the impact of situational (Belk, 1975; Chavosh et al., 2011; Foroughi et al., 2012) and marketing driven factors (Stern, 1962; Karbasivar and Yarahmadi, 2011; Lifu, 2012; Mehta and Chugan, 2013); while on the other hand, new theoretical models and frameworks have continuously been developed. However, still huge gaps exist with respect to developing understanding related to psychological aspects of the phenomenon, and one such literature gap is the overlooking of simultaneous impact of intrinsic factors on impulsive buying behaviour.

Though one may argue that internal factors such as consumer characteristics related to impulsive buying have been a subject of many studies (e.g. Chavosh et al., 2011), however, in almost none of those studies the cumulative impact of intrinsic factors like materialism and shopping enjoyment tendency has been considered and studied in the same tune as personality traits, culture or even impulsive buying tendency. Thus, though there have been few studies that tried to study the relationship between impulsive buying behaviour and personality (Verplanken and Herabadi, 2001; Herabadi et al., 2009), or for that matter with culture (Jalees, 2009), but in totality, these studies are extremely few in number and did not assess the holistic impact of all other enduring and inherent factors. This is partly because of the fact that apart from personality (Verplanken and Herabadi, 2001; Herabadi et al., 2009) and cultural constructs (Kacen and Lee, 2002; Jalees, 2009) and even the impulsive buying tendency construct (Chavosh et al., 2011; Foroughi et al., 2013; Rook and Gardner, 1993), not many researchers have looked at the inherent side of either shopping enjoyment tendency or materialism. Thus, though many would accept that materialistic beliefs (Pieters, 2013) and the tendency to find joy in shopping can be considered as built-in traits (Beatty and Ferrell, 1998) that aren't expected to change on daily basis, still no attempt has been made to include these as intrinsic factors like personality or cultural traits. This study considers these important constructs as built-in part of individual's persona and tries to explore their impact on impulsive buying behaviour in the same

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tune as that of other established traits like personality, culture, or impulsive buying tendency. Thus, effort has been made to not only study the combined effect of personality traits, culture and impulsive buying tendency on impulsive buying behaviour, but also of the other enduring intrinsic factors such as culture, shopping enjoyment tendency, and materialism.

Notwithstanding the addition to the knowledge base, the study is extremely significant in view of the important retail context of India. With an ever growing relevance of Indian market in liberalised global scenario coupled with predicted rosy future of an expanding retail sector², it is important to develop improved understanding about the application of intriguing and important phenomenon such as impulsive buying. With an obvious dearth of literature on impulsive buying behaviour in Indian context, the findings from the study could kick-start other related efforts in other geographical areas of this huge country. Thus, with the above background, the study aims to explore the nature and extent of relationship between impulsive buying behaviour and personality traits, culture, shopping enjoyment tendency, materialism and impulsive tendency.

The entire paper has been divided into 7 sections. As the introductory and background note forms Sections 1, 2 deals with theoretical framework and hypotheses formation. In subsequent Sections 3–6, methodology associated with the study, analysis of data, results and discussion; and conclusions, are discussed in respective order. Lastly, Section 7 points out limitations of the study and discusses scope for related future research.

2. Theoretical framework and hypotheses

Based on the aforesaid background and relevance, this section provides conceptual framework along with brief discussion about the relevance of the intrinsic traits in current context. Also, in this section, related hypotheses are framed one by one and the literature premise of the significant relationship between the relevant construct and impulsive buying behaviour is being discussed (Diagram 1).

2.1. Personality and impulsive buying behaviour

According to Schiffman (2008), personality is unique and dynamic organization of characteristics of a particular person – physical and psychological – which influences behaviour and responses to the social and physical environment. In other words, it is a set of psychological traits and mechanisms within the individual that are organised and relatively enduring (Larsen and Buss, 2010). The fact that personality reflects individual differences (Larsen and Buss, 2010), it enables us to categorise consumers into different groups on the basis of one or several traits. Also, the fact that personality is consistent and enduring (Larsen and Buss, 2010) means although marketers cannot change consumer personalities to conform to their products, if they know which personality characteristics influence specific consumer responses, they could attempt to appeal to the relevant traits inherent in their target group of customers.

Although the initial attempts to understand and predict consumer behaviour through the use of personality variables yielded disappointing results (Kassarjian, 1971), there has recently been a growing interest in personality influences in consumer research (e.g., Egan and Taylor, 2010; Lin, 2010a, 2010b; Ranjbarian and Kia, 2010). A look through the literature suggests that attempt to investigate the relationship between personality traits and impulsive buying behaviour began

in sixties itself by Kollat and Willet (1967), and later on by Cobb and Hoyer (1986), however, nothing significant was revealed until Youn and Faber (2000) reported that impulsive buying behaviour was found significantly related to the personality variable 'lack of control'. However, the seminal work by Verplanken and Herabadi (2001), wherein, it was reported that a general impulsive buying tendency is strongly rooted in personality, showed considerable scope of studying the personality facets in relation to impulsive buying behaviour. Also, Herabadi (2003) demonstrated that whilst conscientiousness and agreeableness correlated negatively with the impulsive buying tendency, the cognitive dimension, neuroticism was positively associated with the impulsive buying affective factor. In the same vein, Shahjehan et al. (2011) reported that impulsive buying positively correlated with neuroticism (emotional instability) which meant that individuals that experience emotional instability, anxiety, moodiness, irritability, and sadness were more likely to display impulsive buying behaviours. Likewise, study by Bratko et al. (2013) showed that phenotypic correlations with impulsivity, neuroticism, and extraversion were driven mainly by the overlapping genetic influences on the impulsive buying tendency and those personality traits. They also reported that females as well as people higher on neuroticism, extraversion, and impulsivity tended to engage more in impulsive buying.

While understanding the relationship between personality and impulsive buying tendency construct, it becomes important to understand the personality construct. Notably, the traits based approach has been in ascendency on account of the focus on the quantitative measurement of personality (Solomon, 2007) and the most influential trait approach happens to be the five broad trait factors called the Big Five (Feldman, 2010) approach. With many studies confirming that quite consistently the big-five factors emerged in different populations of individuals (Liao and Chuang, 2004), thus, it would not be an exaggeration to state that the big-five model has achieved the greatest degree of consensus among all trait taxonomies (Larsen and Buss, 2010; Feldman, 2010; Doost et al., 2013), and the emergence of five-factor model has enabled researchers to focuses on a core set of behavioural traits-extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. Some researchers (Doost et al., 2013) believe that almost all dimensions of personality should be categorised through big five, and even indicated that the big five model dimensions have genetic themes that probably are congenital (Esfahani Nasr et al., 2012). Needless to say, given the wide acceptance, the five constructs of personality as per the big-five model have been examined in relation to the plausible relationship with impulsive buying behaviour.

The brief understanding about the five personality constructs along with their hypothesised relationship with impulsive buying behaviour has been discussed hereunder.

2.1.1. Personality trait 'emotional stability' and impulsive buying behaviour

The first personality trait called neuroticism refers to the tendency to experience negative effects such as sadness and vulnerability (Schiffman, 2008). It is sometimes called emotional instability, or is reversed and referred to as emotional stability. As per literature, individuals scoring highly on neuroticism trait are prone to insecurity and emotional distress, while individuals scoring lowly on this personality trait of emotional instability tend to be more relaxed and less prone to distress (McCrae and Costa, 2008). As per Shahjehan et al. (2011) impulsive buying positively correlated with neuroticism (emotional instability) which meant that individuals that experienced emotional instability, anxiety, moodiness, irritability, and sadness were more likely to display impulsive buying behaviours. Considering the emotional nature of impulsive buying (Silvera et al., 2008), it is believed that impulsive buying behaviour is expected to be positively related to the trait

² According to a study by FICCI, India's retail market is expected to grow at 7% over the next 10 years, reaching a size of US\$ 850 billion by 2020. Traditional retail is expected to grow at 5% and reach a size of US\$ 650 billion (76%), while organized retail is expected to grow at 25% and reach a size of US\$ 200 billion by 2020. The study report is available at: http://www.ficci.com/sector/33/Project_docs/Sector-prof.pdf.

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