

# Impulsive Buying Behavior in Retailing and Consumer Behavior: A Review

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of impulsive buying behavior by synthesizing diverse research and literature in the field of Retailing and Consumer Behavior.

**Methods:** The study employs a content analysis approach, reviewing a wide range of journal databases and books to gather a diverse collection of research works on impulsive buying behavior. The literature is categorized into various aspects influencing impulsive buying, contributing to the development of a research framework.

**Findings:** The content analysis revealed several key aspects influencing impulsive buying behavior, including psychological triggers, situational factors, and individual characteristics. These findings contribute to a better understanding of the impulsive buying construct and its behavioral elements.

**Value:** This study provides valuable insights for marketing practitioners and scholars, aiding in the development of strategies to address customer impulsiveness effectively. The structured categorization of literature also lays a foundation for future research activities in the domain of impulse buying.

**Keywords:** Impulsive buying, Consumer behavior, Retailing, Impulsiveness.

## Introduction

Impulse buying, characterized by unplanned and spontaneous purchases, is a phenomenon deeply ingrained in consumer behavior. It occurs when consumers encounter new, well-established, or discounted products that trigger an immediate desire to purchase. Scholars such as Parboteeah (2005) and Piron (1991) define impulsive buying as the result of exposure to stimuli that prompt unplanned purchases, often leading to on-the-spot decisions by buyers.

For impulse shoppers, the journey begins with a casual exploration of stores, devoid of specific purchase intentions. During this foraging process, they are exposed to various cues that stimulate the urge to buy. Unlike deliberate purchases that involve information gathering and comparison of alternatives, impulse buying is characterized by a swift decision-making process driven by strong desires.

However, the aftermath of impulse buying can vary significantly. Post-purchase evaluations may result in either favorable or negative

perceptions depending on the consumer's experience. Numerous factors play a role in influencing consumer behavior towards impulsive buying, shaping their decision-making processes at different stages.

As Yang, Huang, and Feng (2011) describe it, impulsive buying is a consumer's inclination to buy spontaneously, without much reflection, immediately acting upon their desire. Marketing strategies play a crucial role in facilitating unplanned purchases. Mass distribution in supermarkets, hypermarkets, and self-service outlets, coupled with sales promotions, point-of-sale materials, attractive displays, and strategic store locations, all contribute to triggering impulse buying behavior among consumers (Rahman, 2015).

## **Rational of the Study**

This research delves into the complexities of impulsive buying behavior, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing consumer impulsiveness in the retail environment. Through a detailed analysis of existing literature and empirical data, this study seeks to contribute valuable insights to the field of Retailing and Consumer Behavior. The research on impulsive buying behavior is essential for both academia and industry to enhance our understanding of consumer psychology, improve marketing strategies, and create a more informed and consumer-friendly retail environment.

## **Objective of the Study**

This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of impulsive buying behavior by synthesizing diverse research and literature in the field of Retailing and Consumer Behavior.

## **Methodology**

This research employs a comprehensive literature review methodology to investigate impulsive buying behavior in the context of consumer psychology and retailing. The methodology encompasses the following key steps:

## **Identification of Relevant Literature**

Extensive searches were conducted using academic databases, scholarly journals, books, and reputable sources to identify relevant literature related to impulsive buying behavior. Keywords such as "impulse buying," "consumer behavior," "retailing," and "impulsiveness" were utilized to ensure comprehensive coverage of the topic.

## **Selection Criteria**

The selection criteria included studies published in peer-reviewed journals, books, and reputable sources from the last seven decades (since 1950) though it focuses more on recent literature after 2000. Only studies directly related to impulsive buying behavior, consumer psychology, and retailing were considered for inclusion in the review.

## **Data Extraction and Synthesis**

Data extraction involved systematically reviewing each selected study to extract key findings, methodologies, theoretical frameworks, and empirical evidence related to impulsive buying behavior. The extracted data were synthesized to identify common themes, trends, and patterns across the literature.

## **Analysis and Interpretation**

The synthesized data were analyzed and interpreted to gain insights into the factors influencing impulsive buying behavior, including internal and external stimuli, consumer traits, retail environments, and marketing strategies. The analysis also explored the impact of impulsive buying on consumer satisfaction, post-purchase behavior, and business outcomes.

## **Literature Review**

Impulse buying behavior has been a subject of extensive research and interest among scholars and marketers for decades. From the pioneering works of Clover (1950) to the more recent studies by Choirul and Artanti (2019) and Chauhan, Banerjee, and Dagar (2021), a wealth of knowledge has been amassed regarding the

factors influencing impulse purchasing. This section presents a comprehensive overview and discussion of the key findings from various studies on impulse buying behavior.

### **Historical Perspective and Definition**

The concept of impulse buying was first introduced by Clover (1950), highlighting its significance in the retail sector. Stern (1962) later defined impulse buying as a spontaneous purchase made without prior planning, setting the foundation for subsequent research in this area. Betty and Ferrell (1998) further elaborated on this definition, emphasizing that impulse purchases are immediate and unplanned, driven by a sudden desire or impulse.

### **Behavioral Elements and Triggers**

Over time, researchers shifted their focus to explore the behavioral elements and triggers of impulse buying. Cobb and Hoyer (1986) highlighted the role of hedonic or affective elements in impulse purchases, indicating that consumers experience immediate, intense, and persistent desires to buy impulsively. Rook (1987) emphasized that such purchases often occur without adequate consideration of consequences, contributing to emotional stress and psychological conflicts among consumers.

### **Types of Impulse Buying**

Louden and Bitta (1993) categorized impulse buying into four types: pure impulse, suggestion impulse, reminder impulse, and planned impulse. These categories reflect the diverse motivations and contexts that lead to impulse purchases, ranging from novelty or escape purchases to planned purchases based on pricing and discounts.

### ***Factors Influencing Impulse Purchasing***

External factors, such as marketing cues and retail environments, play a significant role in triggering impulse buying. External stimuli, including promotional incentives and visual merchandising, can entice consumers to make impulsive purchases (Youn & Faber, 2000; Eroglu

& Machleit, 1993). Store atmospherics, product presentation, pricing strategies, and availability of cash also influence consumers' propensity for impulse buying (Applebaum, 1951; Wong, 2003; Mai & Willett, 2003).

### ***Internal Factors and Consumer Traits***

Internal factors, including emotional states, personality traits, and product involvement, contribute to consumers' propensity for impulse buying. Consumers with higher levels of impulsivity, seeking variety, and experiencing positive emotions are more likely to engage in impulse purchases (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998; Rook & Fisher, 1995; Crawford & Melewer, 2003). Additionally, factors like mood, product pricing, and situational influences also affect impulsive buying behavior (Weerathunga & Pathmini, 2015; Pradhan, 2016; Juharsah, 2020).

### ***Impact of Retail Environment and Marketing Strategies***

Retail environment cues, such as store layout, product display, and sensory stimuli, significantly impact impulse buying behavior. Positive emotional responses to the retail environment, combined with hedonic shopping motivations, can lead to increased impulse purchases (Chang, Eckman, & Yan, 2011; Foroughi et al., 2013). Marketing strategies, including sales promotions, loyalty programs, and pricing discounts, also influence consumers' impulse buying decisions (Prof. Balakumar & Mishra, 2017; Chauhan, Banerjee, & Dagar, 2021).

### ***Consumer Satisfaction and Post-Purchase Behavior***

Impulse purchases often result in immediate satisfaction for consumers, alleviating negative moods and providing a sense of gratification (Dholakia, 2000). However, post-purchase evaluations can vary, with some consumers experiencing regret or dissatisfaction after impulsive buying episodes (Rook, 1987). Understanding these dynamics is crucial for marketers to enhance consumer satisfaction and loyalty.

The study's findings are consistent with previous research on the influence of packaging design on consumer behavior. For instance, a study by Kacen and Lee (2012) found that packaging design influences impulsive buying behavior, particularly in collectivist cultures. The study by Mishra and associates builds on this research by focusing on the context of Eastern Nepal, which is predominantly collectivist. The study's findings suggest that factors such as age, gender, income, and occupation do not impact the affection between product information, shape, and impulsive buying behavior, which is consistent with previous research on the influence of packaging design on consumer behavior (Mishra, Rai & Aithal, 2023).

The research findings suggest that color, package material, and image are the packaging elements that influence impulsive buying behavior, while product information and shape do not have a similar impact. This research provides insights into the importance of packaging design in influencing consumer behavior, particularly in the context of Eastern Nepal. This research opens the demands of further study in laptop, cement and many more specifying different landscape focused to impulsive behavior (Mishra and Aithal, 2021 a&b; Mishra and Sharestha, 2019; Mishra, 2019). The research on impulse buying behavior underscores the complex interplay between internal and external factors, consumer traits, retail environments, and marketing strategies. By comprehensively understanding these influences, businesses can tailor their strategies to effectively capitalize on impulse buying tendencies while ensuring a positive consumer experience.

## Conclusion

Over the past seven decades, impulsive buying behavior has remained a focal point of interest for researchers and marketers alike, as evidenced by seminal works dating back to Clover (1950) and Stern (1962) to more recent studies by Muruganantham & Bhakat (2013) and Ayub & Zafar (2018). The complexity of consumer

behavior, particularly regarding impulsive buying patterns in offline retail settings, has spurred increased research efforts to unravel the intricacies of this phenomenon.

Recent research has refined the definition of impulsive behavior, characterizing it as an unexpected, hedonistic combination of purchasing behavior driven by swift decision-making that bypasses deliberative consideration of alternatives or additional recommendations (Sharma et al., 2010). Despite its complexities, impulse buying plays a significant role in the retail landscape, accounting for a substantial portion of annual product sales (Hausman, 2000).

Consumer researchers have predominantly focused on identifying the myriad factors that trigger impulse purchases in industrialized countries, recognizing the diverse nature of impulse buying across different cultural and economic contexts (Bayley & Nancarrow, 1998). However, with the rapid advancements in retailing and significant shifts in consumer behavior, particularly in emerging economies, there is a growing need to delve deeper into impulsive buying behaviors in these regions (Kacen and Lee, 2002).

The rise of personal discretionary income, changing lifestyles, and increased availability of credit have contributed to the ubiquity of impulse shopping across various retail formats. Retailers, recognizing the universality of impulse buying, can strategically leverage this behavior to drive sales and enhance customer engagement. By understanding the interplay of internal and external stimuli that influence impulsive buying, businesses can tailor their strategies to capitalize on consumer impulses effectively.

The content analysis of existing literature has provided valuable insights into the concept of impulse buying, its multidimensional nature, and its impact on consumer behavior. This analysis has also laid the groundwork for proposing new research directions and hypotheses to advance knowledge in the field of consumer research.

Looking ahead, as market trends continue to evolve, especially in developing economies, impulsive buying is likely to remain a focal point of research and exploration across various forms of commerce. The synergy between different elements driving impulse buying presents opportunities for marketers and merchants to optimize their strategies and drive business growth while enhancing the overall customer experience.

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