Impulse Buying Behavior in Adolescents

Anisha Parakh, Seema Bindal & Alistair Saldanha
Christ University, Bengaluru, India

Abstract: This study focuses on impulse buying characteristics in Adolescents. It is said that 40% of sales are impulsive in nature and a large and impressionable market are adolescents. Marketing today has moved from targeting adults to young minds. There are a wide range of reasons discussed in this paper that cause impulsive buying behavior. Apart from this, corporations have realized the importance of positioning so much so that they now know exactly where to place a product to increase its sales. Since we cannot see the side effects of manipulating adolescents in making impulse purchases at this point, this paper aims at analyzing the reasons behind it.

Keywords: adolescents, product placement, impulse buying, impulse buying behavior

1. Introduction

Today, nearly 80% of purchases in certain product categories like candies, magazines come from an impulsive behavior. Impulsive buying is a prevalent phenomenon in our consumer society especially in a developed country.

Earlier, this phenomenon was thought to be a product-level act i.e. it was thought that certain products evoked emotions in an individual and were responsible for the display of impulsive buying behavior. However, by 1970s researchers became suspicious and wondered whether products could actually be classified as impulse items. They believed that virtually all products can be bought impulsively (Bellenger et al., 1978). [1]

By 1980s, the nature of impulse buying was understood laying the foundation/ base of today’s research. Rook and Hoch (1985, p.23) aptly noted, “It is the individuals, not the products, who experience the impulse to consume.” [1]

The present day scenario is such that marketing strategies are focusing on increasing impulse buying especially in adolescents as (1) they have more disposable income, (2) are less likely to seek information, postpone purchases or do a comparison while buying, (3) make them a loyal customer of that brand for a lifetime as adolescence is that stage of human development where the habits acquired remain with the person for a lifetime and (4) foster and encourage materialism. [2, 4]

This is being done primarily through contemporary marketing innovations like 24-hours convenience stores, online shopping, home-delivery services etc.

For example, Frys.com, a popular electronics online site, appeals to materialism by featuring weekly specials. Another example being Amazon.com, that relies on recommendation agents to showcase its customers more items that are similar or related to the items that have already been purchased. It also implemented a patented “1-Click” shopping function that saves online shoppers time and effort in entering their credit card information prior to their purchases. As a result, the consumers do not get a chance to review his/her order and make necessary changes. [3]

According to a theory, consumers will be reluctant to engage in impulsive buying when it is socially visible (Rook & Fisher, 1995). When consumers buy online with relatively social anonymity, impulse buying is greater. But, there are a few researchers who disagree to this theory. [3]

Because adolescents experience strong emotions during puberty and have weak inhibitions, they are more likely than adults to pursue reckless and risky activities (Wulfert, Block, Santa Ana, Rodriguez, & Colsman, 2002) and are a heavily targeted segment. They are likely to report a greater use of cigarettes, alcohol and drugs like marijuana. [2]

This is why, the impulsive buying of adolescents is generally viewed as counterproductive. So, it is the duty and responsibility of the parents, educators and policy makers to pay attention to this issue and create guidelines that will help the adolescents. They should try and decrease online buying impulsiveness by reducing Internet Addiction which is a result of emotional instability and onset of materialism.

It has become an indispensable part of our lives, almost carried out unconsciously. During the last 10 years extensive research has been done on impulse buying behavior and its importance has been understood by the marketers and manipulated. Therefore, investigation of impulse buying among adolescents with diverse personality traits is valuable and will add to the literature present in this field.

Impulsive Buying Behavior

Impulsive Buying is a spontaneous act carried out without any prior thoughtful consideration of essential information and seeks immediate gratification. It is essentially a weakness of will on
the part of the buyer, in this case the adolescents. The buyers of such products are generally emotionally attached to it and never seek alternatives.

It is “an unplanned purchase” characterized by (1) relatively rapid decision making, and (2) a subjective bias in favor of immediate possession” (Rook & Gardner, 1993, p.3). [4]

Impulsive Buying is more of an emotional act rather than a rational one. This is why it is associated with the state of intense feeling of temporary satisfaction. It is like a reactive behavior and, often involves an immediate response to a confronted stimulus.

In general, the tendency of impulsive buying is related to recreational compulsive buying which is making unplanned purchases to improve one’s mood rather than general compulsive buying which is buying frequently and feeling guilty about it later.

Impulsive Buying slightly increases between the ages of 18-39 and then subsequently declines. This finding is consistent with that of Bellenger et al. (1978) who found out that shoppers under 35 are more prone to impulse buying than those above 35 years of age. [4]

It eventually leads to Impulsive consumption which has been characterized as a conflict between the desire to consume and the willpower to resist it (Hoch and Loewenstein, 1991).

Consistent with research on impulsiveness in the psychological literature, studies have revealed that impulse buying behavior is a distinctive personality/individual trait. In adolescents, individual difference in impulsiveness was found to be related to several socially relevant issues like aggression, drug-use, pregnancy and HIV risk-related sexual behavior. [5]

Impulse Buyer Personality

Rooted in personality perspectives and assessments, the Big 5 personality traits are related to an impulse buyer. It was found that impulse buying was positively correlated with extraversion, agreeableness, and openness to experience and negatively with emotional stability and conscientiousness. [3]

Many psychologists believe that in the adolescents’ transition into adulthood, they form strong connections with others in their search for self-identity. Their self-identity i.e. perception of self, their values and morals are formed from (1) the experiences they have undergone and, (2) based on popular idols. Idolatry, the excessive admiration of or devotion to somebody is found most commonly in adolescents. Buying the apparels worn by their idols is one of the many things adolescents do.

Further, research has revealed that when events occur in an individual’s life ranging from (1) specific crisis like divorce, death in a family or (2) collective tragedies like terrorists’ attacks, natural calamities, the individual shows distinctive impulse buying behavior in order to recoup with the losses, dramatic disruption and instability in the person’s life. [6]

According to a professor of a university in Taiwan, girls make more frequent impulse purchases than boys and that this behavior generally increases with age. Subsequently, girls experience greater post-purchase cognitive dissonance i.e. girls experience anger and regret a few hours after purchase as they never wanted to purchase the product in the first place.

This is generally felt by girls when they were provided with incentives to engage in this behavior which is desired by the marketer. These incentives are not that clearly visible and are very subtle in nature. [7]

In other words, since girls are emotional, they fall for the traps set by the marketers as compared to their male counterparts.

According to Gasiorowska (2003), boys prefer minimum level of engagement in the buying process and hence, finish it faster unlike girls who take double time to buy the same product. [7]

Adolescents with low impulse buying behavior are likely to have undergone a financial planning course on how to create a budget for the pocket money given to them.

At the same time, it is important to remember that adolescents with more pocket money are going to exhibit more impulsive buying behavior than those with comparatively lesser pocket money.

Adolescents who know about the consequences of using credit cards are less likely to engage in impulsive buying.

According to Hari Mishra et al. (2014), impulse buying behavior will be exhibited only when the perceived risk is low. This means that the impulse buying of a known brand is likely to be greater than the impulse purchase of a less known brand. [8]

There are many factors influencing impulsive buying like time, location, personality, and economics and culture. Some of them are: the emotional intelligence of a person, availability of time, availability of money, visual merchandising, the environment of the store and the personality of the individual. These will be explained later in the article.

2. Factors and reasons effecting Impulsive Buying Behavior

The three attributes which recognizes impulsive buying from other purchasing patterns are
(1) Being unintended or undesirable;
(2) Being unreflective; and
(3) Unconstrained or sudden.

The unintended buy refers to a circumstance in which the buyer will not effectively search for the item but rather purchases it.
Unreflective buy is known as the absence of assessing the item by the customer and his hesitant to consider its long term results. The third trademark identifies with the instantaneousness in buy in which the time period between seeing the item and purchasing the item is short. [9].

Thus we can say that Impulse buying is a quick activity, that is, the client tends to purchase the item quickly in the wake of seeing it with no scrutiny.

To the core of an Indian teens, however low cost is still of essential significance, it will in the coming years consistently move to a cost in addition to stage. Here, the adolescents will look for a more prominent equalization of cost with quality, accommodation, consistency, development and shopping experience.

The recent economic slowdown has made the Indian teen’s mentality more traditionalist and conservative.

Point of purchase (POP) will turn out to be more critical, and will be the snippet of truth for brands and retailers in the event that they are to convey their guarantee to the purchaser.

Henceforth, brilliant brands and retailers will spend more exertion in-store as far as enhancing not just store insides but also additionally the general shopping experience, regardless of the possibility that they are high value seeking ones. So far as shopping conduct is worried, there is a solid increment in the pattern of going shopping as a "family" which, thus, is because of the expanding time destitution for most Indians in this core consuming class. Shopping together spares time for the family while likewise giving some extra time together. [10]

Cutting edge and modern retail which offers all under one rooftop choices, upgrades center purchasers with numerous measurements including sparing of time, improved shopping experience, and combining shopping with relaxation and amusement. Subsequently, given a decision between conventional or traditional shopping markets, very much arranged, well planned and well tenanted shopping center this adolescent will probably pick the latter.

At the point when diverse brands contend under one rooftop in present day retail outlets (shopping centers) sensory marketing assumes a key part. It changes brand recognition and perception absolutely in a positive way when the jolt is consistent with the other brand components. It can therefore be seen as a suitable apparatus for fortifying the value of a brand. A harmonious boost impacts the shopper on an unconscious level also, can influence preference subsequently activating the impulsive buying behavior.

Including a tactile measurement to the advertising methodology can fortify the brand value suggesting a more grounded bond between the brand and the purchasers. Be that as it may, the creators contend that a solid brand stage is required to advantage at last from an interest in tactile marking. The utilization of sensory marking is growing rapidly and it is anticipated to be the eventual fate of viral marking.

The factors effecting this spontaneous purchase can be identified as the environment of the store, in store display, environment visual merchandising, promotions and advertisements, situations (availability of money, availability of time etc.)

**In store display:** The significance of window presentation in connection to a boy or a girl’s purchasing behavior has received insignificant consideration in the literature. However, subsequent to a teen’s decision of a store is impacted by the physical attractiveness of a store and the first impression of the store picture is regularly made at the façade level, it can be proposed that window showcase might impact, in any event to some degree, customers' decision of a store when they don't set out with a particular reason for going by a specific store and buying a specific thing. [11]

**In store shopping environment:** The in-store shopping environment is a vital determinant of impulsive buying. It is constituted by small scale variables which are particular to specific shopping circumstances and bound to a particular geographic space. Factors, for example, store background music, shop display, aroma, in-store advancements, costs, shop cleanliness, shop density or congestion and store employees all make up the in-store shopping environment, among others.

**Visual Marketing:** Visual marketing is characterized as "the presentation of a store/brand and its stock to the client through the teamwork of the store's advertising, show, unique occasions, style coordination, and merchandising departments keeping in mind the end goal to sell the goods and services offered by the store/organization". Visual marketing, or visual presentation, is the way to convey a store/organization's design esteem, fashion value and quality picture to prospective customers.

"The purpose for visual marketing is to educate the customers to improve the store/organization's picture and to support numerous deals offered by them" [12]
In this manner, each store tries to enhance the pictures of the store and to do as such, it appeals to the things intriguing for the customers and make them faithful to that brand and also trigger the impulsive buying behavior.

**Characteristics of the goods:** [13] states that a few merchandise are purchased indiscreetly more regularly than the others. [14] Confirms the likelihood that whether the good will be purchased impulsively relies on upon classification, cost and typical significance of the products. [15] Recommendations that the likelihood of drive purchasing is higher for the items which are less costly or have a shorter production cycle. Likewise trust that the impulsive buying technique varies among the diverse items. Following cost of merchandise is a vital variable of impulsive purchasing too. In particular, teens tend to be impulsive amid the season of sale or discount.

**Situational Factors:** [16] states that circumstance or the situation factors are environmental and individual elements that have impact on impulsive buying. It is also said that time pressure lessened spontaneous purchases in an investigation while time accessibility has been positively connected to look for more products and services in the store. Subsequently, every single other thing being equivalent, teens with more accessible time will browse longer. [17] A second situational variable that is liable to positively impact impulsive buying is the measure of the budget or additional cash the customer perceives she or he needs to spend on that day (that is, cash accessible).

Thus we found a peripheral relationship between the perceived additional cash and impulsive purchasing.

**Internal Factors:** Internal variables of impulsive purchasing concentrate specifically on the individual characteristics of teens, examining the inner signals and attributes of the person that make them take part in impulsive purchasing behavior. Such components include an adolescent’s personality traits which decide the level of their impulsive buying tendency (IBT), inward prompts, for example, emotional states, the buyer's normative assessment of impulsive purchasing engagement and demographic factors [18].

An adolescent’s emotional state, inclination and self-sentiments can be perceived as an affective state. Interior stimuli are handled by them affectively and/or subjectively bringing about impulsive or non-impulsive conduct.

In result, feelings may incorporate an "overwhelming desire to purchase, positive purchasing feelings and state of mind management" [19].

At the point when a teen encounters an "overpowering desire to purchase", he/she feels constrained to make an impulsive buy. A few researchers have recommended that the customer personality trait can epitomize impulsive behavior more than the other different characteristics [20]. Research contends that these personality characteristics can decide the level of a customer's IBT (Impulsive Buying Tendency)

**Sexual Orientation:** [21] observed that gender, as a social class, influences impulsive purchasing. Boys have a tendency to include in impulsive purchasing of instrumental and relaxation things which extends their freedom and movement. Girls tend to purchase the alluring (attractive) and self-expressive products which are connected with their appearance and enthusiastic aspects of self.

**Credit cards:** Since impulsive purchasing conduct might be accelerated by the credit card use [22]. Credit cards are seen as an advantageous and generally easy approach to spend.

In addition, the utilization of credit cards brings down the perceived expense and future use. Boundless credit card use reflects their inclinations in regards to rearranged credit extensions while innovative improvements in technology make it much simpler for lenders to offer revolving credit.

Simple access to credit cards dispose of the immediate requirement for cash to purchase something, cause teens to overspending and likely trigger the development of impulsive purchasing at an early age.

3. The Role of Marketing in Impulse Buying

Impulse Buying for long has been seen as an uncontrollable occurrence generally unplanned. Impulse buying constitutes about 40% of the sales and therefore is a huge market to marketers.

Marketing today focusses on 2 types of markets - impulse and rational buyers [23]. Rational buyers tend to analyze their buying decisions while impulse buying is at the spur of moment. Based on this understanding advertisers tend to try increasing the aesthetic appeal.

Impulse buying can be broadly classified into the following types [24]:

1. Pure Impulse Buying: This type of buying deals with the commonly understood break from general pattern
2. Reminder Impulse Buying: This is when a customer realizes that they forgot an item once they see it. This generally sparks a purchase.

3. Suggestion Impulse Buying: This occurs when a shopper sees and visualizes the need for the first time. This is widely created by an emotional appeal.

4. Planned Impulse Buying: Though it may sound paradoxical, it occurs frequently. For e.g. A purchase due to a bundle offer

**Internal and External Factors- Marketing:**

Impulsive buying can also depend on a wide range of factors. Internal factors are mainly with respect to the psychological make of a consumer. This can be understood in detail with studies like consumer behavior. Marketing involves the strategic analysis of S-T-P i.e., Segmentation-Targeting-Positioning. Every brand looks into itself with purpose to identify with a type of consumer; therefore, it becomes necessary for it to understand the mindset of its consumers to various analysis’.

External factors on the other hand are entirely controllable by a marketer. These are price promotions, product placements, customer service, ambience etc. (LaCour, 2013) This is a field where companies have invested large amounts to make the customer feel at home or even better.

Most companies have come to realize the importance of branding so much so that they invest to create their own stores to ensure same quality and uniqueness in the market.

Impulse buying can easily be created by crafting the right mix of atmosphere and ease of access to products. Fast food chains have found it very easy to manipulate people into buying or supersizing their products for a “little extra”.

**Market Place: Online Impulse Buying**

Termed by many to be the world’s next big thing. The online market place is taking the world into a storm of easy delivery, fast access and a wide range of options.

Gone are the days that one had to wait in a line, be limited by a store’s choice and experience a strong will against impulse buying.

With apps like Amazon, Flipkart and specialty fashion apps like Myntra in India, shopping literally occurs on one’s fingertips. For today’s connected consumers, it is quite common to fall prey to the marketing gimmicks centered at the youth who are generally at a stage when they are not concerned with their saving components in their disposable income.

Some of the factors that lead to impulse buying while online are:

1. Easy access to a wide array of items
2. Flashy advertisements highlighting various wants and portraying them to be needs
3. Focus on bundles, sales, offers etc.
4. Easy access to a database
5. Ratings, Popularity scales and price indexes that make shopping easier

Though physical stores haven’t become a thing of the past yet. Companies have understood the decrease in footfall and this means that consumers are now more aware of their choices and options.

In general, impulse buying is related to ease of buying. (Stern, 1962) Marketers understand that:

- The purchase of an item involves the expenditure of a number of resources: money
- For the item itself and for any costs incurred in going to and coming from the store: time
- In going to or from the place of purchase: physical effort
- Such as walking or driving to or from the place of purchase;
- And finally, mental effort, of scheduling the trip to the store and budgeting for the purchase.

The overall aim of companies who understand this is that a mélange of steps is necessary for one to find and retain the impulse buyer as he or she is necessary for the futuristic growth of a company.

**Analysis of common Marketing Components and Strategies on Impulse Buying:**

1. **Product**
   Impulse buying entirely depends on the product.
   If the product is of absolutely no need to a consumer say, a hammer, nothing would drive a consumer to have an impulse for it.

2. **Price**
   Pricing is key when it comes to impulse. If at a store, a chocolate bar costs Rs. 10 but if you buy 10, you have to pay only Rs. 90. That would lead to an instant reaction from an impulsive buyer.

3. **Channel Used**
   An item at a hypermarket and an item displayed at a supermarket receive different types of impulsive buyers. The ambience of a place sometimes influences the consumer to purchase.
4. Mass Distribution
The more number of outlets at which an item is available, the more opportunities the consumer has to find and buy it.

5. Promotions
Today’s consumers are looking a branded product that is widely promoted in many spheres. Trends have helped in the increase in sales as they stimulate an instant response.

6. Shelf Space
The positioning of a product in a store can stimulate a purchase. A common observation in big stores is that near the cash counter there would be a row of gum, chocolates, cigars etc. which more often generate a response.

7. Mass Advertising
Reminders and cues along with strong branding creates an atmosphere of a pre-planned purchase. Apart from conventional advertising, the 21st century calls for a social media presence which today has become more important than ever.

8. Product Life Cycle
Every product has 4 stages – release, growth, maturity and decline. Today’s companies don’t wish to stagnate at the maturity stage and look for every possible way to increase its cycle. Therefore, companies try to create a need or a regular need by consumers to want a product.

9. Packaging
Packaging requires a product to look aesthetically pleasant, be relatively light weight, store well in its packaging, at the same time seem easily accessible. Packaging has become so important that organizations higher specialist to do the same.

These along with many others influence an impulse purchase.

Adolescents and Marketing:

Adolescence is a transitional stage of physical and psychological human development that generally occurs during the period from puberty to legal adulthood (age of majority). The period of adolescence is most closely associated with the teenage years, though its physical, psychological and cultural expressions may begin earlier and end later. Companies understand that adolescents are the future buyers and without tapping into this market, they can’t go any further.

For adolescents, impulsive behavior has always been looked at negatively. An impulsive teen is one who is counterproductive and would be related to a number of socially relevant behaviors, like aggression (Stanford et al., 1983). Despite this, adolescents’ impulsive behavior is a relatively unexplored field even though they are heavily targeted.

Children right from when they can read and write tend to nag their parents for toys, games, consoles etc. and this is exactly what corporates want. According the documentary, “The Corporation, 2003” nagging is a key driving factor in the increase of sales. Companies want their kids to nag their parents into buying things and its working.

Like impulse buying, adolescence too occurs at the spur of the moment. Generally, teens are faced with various dilemmas and are either confused with their perspective on life or are still figuring it out. At this point of time peer pressure can get adolescents into making decisions they didn’t even know they had to. Take for example the aerated drinks industry. Drinking say, Pepsi would seem far more socially accepted than say a coconut in New York.

Today’s teens like to live in a materialistic world with continuous desires which only seem to grow. Unlike any generation before, they seem to have mastered technology and are ready to revolutionize themselves every day. Based on multiple studies, the use of smartphones is only increasing and connectivity is only getting better. This has resulted in a global competition between different countries in how much material wealth their counterparts have. Although this globalization is seen to have brought more good than bad, the further effects of a materialistic world can only be understood in the future.

4. Conclusion

Impulsive purchasing is an interesting marvel; it grossly damages the presumptions spoken to by the notion of homo economics. As we have condensed in this article, there are numerous perspectives on impulsive purchasing, none of which is genuine or false; every point of view represents an alternate cut of reality and highlights distinctive mental components. Taken together, these alternate points of view can prompt apparently conflicting or incomprehensible discoveries.

The fundamental objective of this paper is to introduce a model for adolescence’ drive purchasing on the premise of environment stimuli and situational elements. In such manner, the ideas also, hypothetical establishments of the research were looked into first and afterward the research models were perused.

Regarding the researches about in the later past years, at last a composite model was introduced to clarify the impulsive purchasing conduct in teens.

Then, a detailed market analysis was done to identify the possible marketing techniques used by
various brands and companies to trigger impulsive buying behavior. The market interpretation also gave us a clear picture about the impact of marketing on an adolescent’s mind and how it develops the Impulsive Buying Behavior in an early stage.

5. References