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Impulsive Buying Behavior: An Empirical Study in Brazil

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ABSTRACT

Background: The impulsive buying behavior is an act of sudden, irresistible and hedonically complex which is opposed to the rational aspect. Impulse buying is a reactive behavior and often involves immediate actions responses to stimuli. This reactive behavior is not necessarily connected with the functional requirement (utilitarian) of the product, but also with the pleasures and symbolic aspects (hedonic value) provided by the experience of buying and using the product. Impulsive purchases, for example, are the result of a need to purchase more than one product need. Often, product enthusiasts acquire items due to hedonic responses associated to self-concept provided by product, and not by any benefit (utility). **Objective:** This article had as its main objective to validate a conceptual model of impulsive buying. Verifying the causal relationship among impulsive buying tendency, normative influence, materialism and self-control strategies on the urge to buy. In addition, testing whether the impulsive buying tendency of consumers explains the urge to buy. **Methodology:** This study relates a survey conducted in Brazil, among 938 consumers (male and female) who bought clothing and accessories for their own use. The scale was based on the revised theory and validated through statistical analyses, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), analyzed with Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) estimated by Partial Least Squares (PLS) using Smart PLS software. **Results and Conclusion:** The results suggest that Impulsive Buying Tendency explains 42.3% of urge to buy. Materialism had positive influence on the urge to buy. Normative influence and Financial impact had no influence on the urge to buy. The financial impact strategy negatively affects the Impulsive Buying Tendency. These results clarify the importance of understanding, increasingly, the factors involved in consumer personality traits and how those variables consequently affect the urge to buy. Besides that, the results reinforce the findings of other authors (Baumeister, 2002; Beatty and Ferrel, 1998; Laran, 2010).

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INTRODUCTION

The impulsive buying behavior, when analyzed under a perspective of continuum, suggests that every individual possesses different levels of impulsivity, which vary according to its particular time and psychological state. The impulsive buying behavior is an act of sudden, irresistible and hedonically complex which is opposed to the rational aspect (Kacen and Lee, 2002). Thus, it is understood that impulse buying is psychologically complex and often associated with the consumer's emotional state (Rook, 1987), who seek excitement in the purchase of a good or service novelty, fashion, status, entertainment or a way to escape from the routine (Wood, 2005). If someone is depressed, frustrated or bored, the urge to buy, associated to the hedonic motivations of consumption, seems to be an effective tactic for getting out of an undesirable mood.

Literature Review:

The contextualization of this work is based on the discussion of fundamental points for understanding impulse buying behavior. Therefore, some conceptions of the urge to buy will be presented.

Urge to buy:

Impulsive buying behavior is an act of sudden, irresistible and hedonically complex which is opposed to the rational aspect (Kacen and Lee, 2002; Rook and Fisher, 1995). Purchase impulses are often energetic

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and urgent (Rook, 1987), characterized by a sudden and unexpected urge to buy something (Peck and Childers, 2006; Taute and McQuitty, 2004; Weinberg and Gottwalld, 1982). So it may be hard to resist the impulses, because often these involve memories of enjoyable past experiences that motivate consumers to perform them again (Rook, 1987). During this type of purchase the consumer tends to act less thoughtfully and it is common “to borrow” a product instead of choosing a product (Rook, 1987). For Peck and Childers (2006) buying on impulse is more an emotional than a rational action.

In this study the concept of the urge to buy involves four distinct dimensions: normative influences, materialism, self-control strategies and impulsive buying tendency.

a) The normative influence on the consumer behavior:

The social context can influence consumption, because the presence of others in a purchase situation may influence the decision. In this sense, the individual behavior is a multiplicative function of expectations of what others consider to be socially desirable and the motivation to comply with these expectations (Bearden et al., 1989; Luo, 2005). When consumers believe that impulsive buying is socially acceptable, they act on their impulsive tendencies (Kacen and Lee, 2002).

b) The Effects of Materialism:

Materialism can be defined as a system of personal values based on the acquisition and possession of goods which is perceived as fundamental to the human being, and also necessary for a successful life and the conquest of happiness (Richins and Dawson, 1992; Richins, 2004). According to Belk (1985), in general, materialists are unhappy because they are trapped in an endless cycle in which the pleasure of new acquisitions is quickly replaced by a desire to get more and more. The materialistic consumer has a goods acquisition-driven profile as a means to reach happiness and success – they are more likely to engage in buying activity, such as chronic response to events or negative feelings.

c) Self-control strategies as an action to control impulsive buying behavior:

Self-control is an aspect of self-regulation. This aspect refers to the way in which people run and control their actions and their behavior in general (Karlsson, 2003). In the field of consumer behavior, self-control represents the ability to resist temptation, especially those relevant to impulsive buying leading the consumer to eventually regret it later (Baumeister, 2002; Flight et al., 2012).

d) The Impulsive Buying Tendency (IBT):

Impulse buying is a reactive behavior and often involves immediate actions responses to stimuli. This reactive behavior is not necessarily connected with the functional requirement (utilitarian) of the product, but also with the pleasures and symbolic aspects (hedonic value) provided by the experience of buying and using the product. In the study of Babin et al. (1994), the authors consider the value from an experience perspective purchase, recognizing that this is linked closely with hedonic answers and tangible consequences. People consume to experience the benefit of a purchase and not simply from the benefit of the purchase that consume (Babin et al., 1994; Weun et al., 1997).

Research framework:

Based on some theoretical foundations and research hypotheses, Figure 1 presents proposed research framework of impulsive buying.

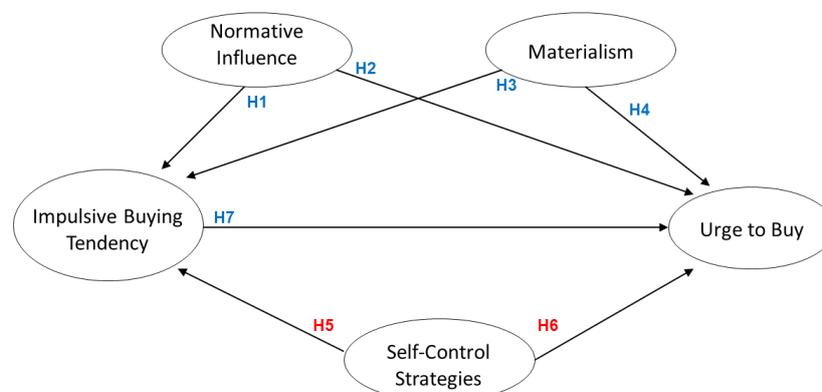


Fig. 1: Proposed research framework

Research objectives:

This research seeks to understand how the variables of impulsive buying tendency, normative influence, materialism and self-control strategies explain the urge to buy of customers with clothing and accessories. The present study proposes to validate a model of impulsive buying. The objectives of this study are:

- a) Verifying the causal relationship among impulsive buying tendency, normative influence, materialism and self-control strategies on the urge to buy.
- b) Testing whether the impulsive buying tendency of consumers explains the urge to buy according to the proposed model.

Methodology:

Consumers who represented the sampling unit for this survey were selected by convenience in a group of 9.000 emails from virtual consumers. The questionnaires were presented to consumers (male and female) who bought clothing and accessories for their own use over the past three months. With the objective of obtaining a representative sample of clothing and accessories consumer population, the questionnaires were applied online, however, simulating a physical store purchase condition (non-virtual via e-commerce).

In order to reduce the potential data collection biases the questionnaire was divided into two distinct stages. After answering the first online form the consumer was oriented three days later via email with a new link to answer the second part of the survey. The data-gathering method was similar to the "snowball" model, allowing it to obtain data from a heterogeneous group reducing potential biases of the research. From the complete filling out of the first stage of the survey, consumers were asked to indicate other potential participants of their relationship networks.

In total, 1.454 valid cases were considered, however only 938 were used in this study (excluding outliers, missing values and those who did not meet the pre-defined profile for this study).

Findings:

In this section the results obtained will be presented with the application of the model. In order to check the normality of the data the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied. The results of this test identified that all variables of this study reject the hypothesis that a distribution is normal. Such rejection can be explained by the negative asymmetry. These results undermine the implementation of other multivariate techniques, such as structural equation modeling (SEM). However, according to Tenenhaus et al. (2005) the PLS-PM does not require the assumption of normality of variables - which reinforces its application in the present study.

The convergent and discriminant validity of the variables were proven by Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of more than 0.5, Composite Reliability (CR) greater than 0.7, R² greater than 0.3 and Cronbach's alpha greater than 0.6 (Hair et al., 2009).

Respondent's profile:

The final sample of this study were based with 938 consumers, 36% were male and 64% were female. The consumers' age vary from 17 to 68 years old, with the average age around 19 to 35 years old, corresponding 61% of the sample. Out of the investigated consumers, 49% were single and 51% were married.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA):

The Self-control Strategies variable had 3 second order factors. Other variables (Impulsive buying tendency, normative influence, materialism) were factors of first order. Statistical analysis of the model revealed a proper fit by elimination of variables: N-05 (0.346 load), E-08 (0.398 load), E-10 (0.045 load) and T-06 (0.498 load). These items were removed from the model, due to low a load factor presented.

The Postpone and Consequences factors presented, respectively, an AVE and Cronbach's alpha below 0.5 and 0.6. After this diagnosis and in discussions with a group of experts these factors were removed from the model. Table 3 shows that the convergent validity of the model is well-adjusted according to criteria defined by Hair et al. (2009).

Table 3: Convergent validity of the conceptual model

Factors	AVE	Composite Reliability (CR)	R ²	Cronbach's alpha
Normative Influence	0,530	0,817	-	0,728
Materialism	0,599	0,817	-	0,666
Financial impact	0,631	0,836	-	0,704
Impulsive Buying Tendency	0,528	0,845	0,394	0,769
Urge to Buy	0,624	0,867	0,422	0,794
Referential values	>0.500	>0.700	>0.300	>0.600

A PLS algorithm with the Path Weighting Scheme configuration was generated and the loads factorials shown in Figure 3.

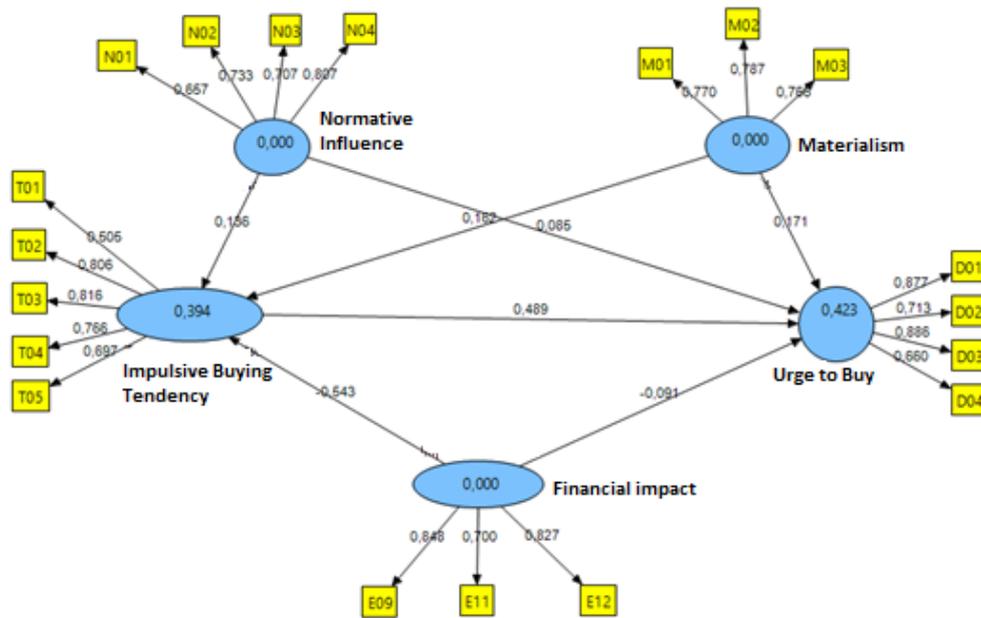


Fig. 3: PLS analysis of the conceptual model

Table 4: Summary of hypotheses testing

Hypotheses	T Statistics	Supported?
H1 Normative influence positively affects Impulsive Buying Tendency.	1,530 (ns)	No
H2 Normative influence positively affects the urge to buy.	0,896 (ns)	No
H3 Materialism positively affects Impulsive Buying Tendency.	1,701**	Yes
H4 Materialism positively affects the urge to buy.	1,952**	Yes
H5 Self-control strategies negatively affect Impulsive Buying Tendency.	7,351*	Yes
H6 Self-control strategies negatively affect urge to buy.	0,825 (ns)	No
H7 Impulsive Buying Tendency positively affects the urge to buy.	4,664*	Yes

Note:

* Student t greater than 1.96 reveal that the loads are significant (p < 0.05).

** Student t greater than 1.645 reveal that the loads are significant (p < 0.10).

(ns) - not significant.

According to table 4, all values were greater than 1.96 when correlated factors items. However, not all charges were significant by correlating the factors. The H1, H2 and H6 were rejected. And the other hypotheses (H3, H4, H5 and H7 subtypes) have been accepted.

Final Consideration:

The results of the study indicated that, in the proposed measurement model, a relationship exists between Impulsive Buying Tendency and the urge to buy (coefficient equal to 0.489). Thus, the trend of Impulsive Buying Tendency explains 42.3% of the urge to buy. Out of the feeling of the urge to buy (urge of purchase), a the consumer feels urgency, pressure to consume something. That sentiment is not necessarily related to the product functionality, but also with the satisfaction of the simple act of buying (hedonic behavior). The results indicate that this trend of impulse buying leads to an urgent need of purchasing, similar to the causal model of Beatty and Ferrel (1998).

The instrument for measuring the variable Self-control Strategies also followed methodological rigor and validity of content, convergent and discriminant was accepted. However, only the Financial Impact of this variablefactor, had the values of Cronbach's alpha and R² accepted. The final instrument considered that the Financial Impact factor was statistically significant for measuring the relation with the variable Impulsive Buying Tendency. The results reinforce the findings of other authors (Baumeister, 2002; Laran, 2010). The Self-control strategy (financial impact) negatively affects the Impulsive Buying Tendency.

It is suggested that future research should not treat only the variables involved in this study, but also others, such as, aspects of the environment standards (triggers that stimulate the urge to buy), flow state (risk perception, time distortion, focused attention), emotions (positive and negative) and level of product knowledge. In addition, it is suggested to use other methodological designs, such as experiments, in which the manipulation of variables can verify reaction in constructs with greater internal validity.

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