IMPULSIVE BUYING BEHAVIOR AMONG PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS IN REFERENCE TO GENDER

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ABSTRACT

Impulse buying is a spontaneous purchase where the consumer has no prior plans to purchase. In addition to it, impulse buying may be described as an intense, exciting urge to buy without regard to the consequence of the purchase decision. It has been suggested that more purchases result from impulse than from planning .Most College students are inclined to be more impulsive than older adults in that they are less likely to postpone the purchase in order to gather more information. Our research falls within this direction as it explores the phenomenon of impulse buying among professional students in Indian setting. The purpose of this paper is to explore gender differences in impulsive buying behavior among professional students and to compare gender differences of affective and cognitive processes to impulsive buying. Sample consisted of 140 (60 female and 80 male) students and data was collected from B.Tech. & Management students by using questionnaire of impulsive buying behavior based on Verplanken and Herabadi scale. Sample was selected from different Engineering and Management Colleges of Agra city. After scoring, t-test was applied. The findings indicate that there are significant differences in impulsive buying tendencies between male and female students.

KEY WORDS: Gender, Affective Processes and Cognitive Processes, Impulsive Buying behavior

INTRODUCTION

Impulsive buying is a consumer’s unplanned purchase which is an important part of buyer behavior. Most of the purchases result from impulse than from planning (Sfiligoi, 1996). According to Freud the impulse behavior is the manifestations of two opposing forces: the pleasure and reality principle. Impulsive buying is defined as “an unplanned purchase” that is characterized by relatively rapid decision making and subjective bias in favor of immediate possession (Rook and Gardner, 1993). Such type of behavior is more arousing, unintended, less deliberate and more irresistible than planned buying behavior. Impulse buying behavior is opposite to a planned purchase, impulse buying is an unstructured and instant purchase, in which the consumer is not looking for a product and has no plan to purchase (Piron, 1991). There are various factors, which can lead to impulsive buying behavior such as high anxiety level and lack of self control (Dittmar, Beattie and Friese, 1995).
A number of studies indicate that impulsive buying behavior takes place when an individual makes an unintended, unreflective and immediate purchase (Rook & Fisher, 1995). Rook and Hoch (1985) conducted the study of impulsive buying by identifying internal psychological states that influence impulsive buying. The degree to which impulsiveness occur depends on affective and cognitive component. Affect and cognition are different types of psychological responses. Affect refers to feeling responses, whereas cognition consists of mental (thinking) responses. The affective component reflects irresistible desire to buy, positive buying emotions and mood management. The cognitive component refers to mental structures and processes involved in thinking, understanding and interpreting. Emotional desire (affective component) and cognitive will power act against each other. In impulsive buying behavior affective processes rather than cognitive processes dominate. Youn (2000) found that an impulsive buying behavior result as a consumer’s emotional desire increases and cognitive willpower decreases. Attiq (2006) studied impulsive buying behavior as function of affective and cognitive components. The impulse to buy is hedonically complex and may stimulate emotional conflict. Impulsive buying behavior is prone to occur with diminished regard for its consequences (Rook, 1985). Hoch and Lowenstein (1991) found that impulse buying behavior is the struggle between affective and cognitive processes. The affective process produces forces of desire resulting in impulsivity and the cognitive process enables self-control. From various researches it has been found that impulsive buying involves a hedonic and affective component. With regard to age, older adults are more apt to control their emotional expression than are younger adults (McConatha et. al., 1994). Most college students are inclined to be more impulsive than older adults in that they are less likely to postpone the purchase in order to gather more information (Jones et. al., 2003).

Another important variable which need to be considered is gender. As men and women process the information differently, buy different items for different reasons, and have different influences on purchase decisions (Dittmar et. al., 1995). Literature reveals that intentions, values and decision making processes as related to buying behavior are different in men and women. There is no dearth of research work regarding gender and impulsive buying behavior. Few research has been conducted which finds no differences between male and female impulsive buying behavior (Blilenger et. al., 1978). Whereas Dittmar et. al. (1995) and Woods (1998) found that impulsive buying behavior is gender specific. Due to controversy, gender difference has been selected as the variable in this research and the researcher exploring this variable into impulsive buying behavior among professional students. The present study considers the following objectives:

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To explore gender differences in impulsive buying behavior among professional students.
2. To compare gender differences of affective and cognitive processes to impulsive buying.
METHOD

Research Methodology: The primary data was collected through a questionnaire of impulsive buying behavior based on Verplanken and Herabadi Scale (Likert’s five point scale).

Sample: The survey methodology was used to explore the gender differences in impulsive buying behavior. 140 students (80 boys and 60 Girls) from Engineering and Management Colleges of Agra were selected for the study.

Tool: For the purpose of survey, a questionnaire of impulsive buying behavior was prepared. A 10-item questionnaire was developed consisting of two separate sections (cognitive and affective components). Five items are related to cognitive aspects and five items are related to affective aspects. Cronbach alpha coefficient of impulsive buying scale is 0.81, which depicts the high reliability of scale.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first objective of the study was to explore gender differences in impulsive buying behavior among professional students. Data was analyzed by using t-test. The results are presented in following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>29.85</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>8.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>23.03</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The obtained results indicate that there was significant gender difference (t= 8.63, p<0.01) found in impulsive buying behavior among professional students. The mean scores indicate that male students (29.85) have higher impulsive buying behavior than that of female students (23.03). The mean score of male students is more than that of their female counterparts. Males are more likely to be impulsive buyers (Cobb and Hoyer, 1986). The findings are consistent with the research conducted by Davies and Bell (1991) and Sharma (2011), which reveals that male spends less time in store and shopping trip. Males move faster than females through store passages, spend less time and get a thrill from the experience of paying. This is one of the reason which inclined male students towards impulsive buying behavior. Impulsive buying behaviors are more likely to occur when the consumer is under time constraints. Thus time pressure is one of the factors which are related to impulsive buying behavior.

Another objective of this study is to compare gender differences of affective and cognitive processes to impulsive buying. Data was analyzed by using t-test. The results are presented in following table:
Table-2: Affective component of impulsive buying among professional students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>16.68</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>8.21</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>12.33</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table-3: Cognitive component of impulsive buying among professional students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>13.18</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>5.39</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From above table it has been clear that significant difference existed between male students and female students in terms of affective and cognitive components. The mean scores indicate that male students (M=16.68) have higher affective components of impulsive buying behavior than that of female students (12.33). With a mean of 13.18 for male students and 10.7 for female students, it has been observed that male students are more impulsive buyers in cognitive components than female students. The findings are consistent with the findings obtained by Amanda Coley et.al. in 2003 that male students and female students were found significantly different with respect to affective process components and cognitive process components. The affective component reflects irresistible urge to buy, positive buying emotions and mood management. Due to irresistible urge, hedonic behavior leads to impulsive buying behavior. Within an affective processing point of view, impulsive buyers fulfill a desire and obtain a pleasure in life. Impulsive buyers were considered as a form of hedonic consumption tendency (i.e. shopping for fun, novelty, surprise) (Ramanathan and Menon, 2002). Males are more likely than females to satisfy hedonic goals by acting on impulse. The cognitive component reflects cognitive deliberation, unplanned buying and disregard for the future. Emotions influence cognitive factors (e.g. motivating a rationalization of the negative consequences of a purchase). When a person lacks sufficient self control over his buying desire, impulsive buying takes place (Youn, 2000).

The findings related to gender differences in the present study were different from other research which shows that females have a higher impulsive buying tendency than males (Wu and Huan,
Dittmer, et.al. (1995) investigated impulse buying behavior in terms of self-identity and their experiment demonstrated that men were more likely than women to buy on impulse to express their uniqueness. However, the findings indicate that male students have higher impulsive buying tendencies than female students. It might be explained as India remained a male-dominated society over a longer period and Indian women did not enjoy freedom in terms of purchasing behavior. In Indian society woman has been observed in a family as a daughter, wife or mother and denied the role as an individual identity.

**CONCLUSIONS**

To conclude, Impulsive buying is an unplanned, hedonic purchase that follows a sudden urge, or in other words impulsive buying behavior is a sudden, compelling, hedonically complex purchasing behavior in which the rapidity of the impulse purchase excludes thoughtful, deliberate consideration of all information and choice alternatives.

**LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

This study was conducted in single city. Further research can overcome this limitation by taking into account other cities. Another limitation of this study is that it is limited to only professional students, so further research can be conducted by considering all types of college students.

**REFERENCES**


