

# Impulse Buying Behaviour and Demographic Analysis among University of Calabar Students, Nigeria

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#### Abstract

Impulse buying is a phenomenon that is understood and treated extremely differently by marketer and psychologist. The study focused on the impulse buying behaviour and demographic analysis among University of Calabar students. Through the methodology of a self-administered survey, the study answered research questions on the relationship between sex, age and mood and impulse buying. Ordinary least square was used in the hypotheses tests and it was discovered that demographic variables have a significant influence on impulse buying behaviour of the University of Calabar students. It was however recommended that retailers should increase usage of visual merchandizing techniques and emphasize on building visually appealing products/display and focusing on the shelf position of the products in order to entice customer's to make unplanned purchases.

**Keywords:** Impulse buying, demographic variables, mood, university of calabar

#### 1. Introduction

The classification of a purchase as planned or impulse began with the Stern (1962) study where he provided the basic framework of impulse buying by categorizing a buying behaviour as planned, unplanned, or impulse. Planned purchases involve time-consuming information-searching with rational decision making, whereas unplanned buying refers to all shopping decisions made without any advance planning. Impulse buying is distinguished from the unplanned buying in terms of quick decision making. In addition to being unplanned, an impulse purchase also involves experiencing a sudden, strong, and irresistible urge to buy (Muruganantham & Bhakat, 2013). According to Engel and Blackwell (1982), impulse buying is defined as an action undertaken without previously having been consciously recognised or a buying intention formed prior to entering the store. This implies that impulse buying involves hedonic purchase decisions which are made inside a store and excludes the reminder purchasing activities.

Impulsivity is personality trait defined as a tendency urge or drive towards acting or reacting without forethought, making quick cognitive decisions, and failing to appreciate the circumstances beyond the here and now. Impulse buying had been defined as the spontaneous or sudden desire to buy something and when compared to more comparative approaches to decision making, is considered emotional, reactive, and prone to own with diminishing regard for the consequences (Rock, 1987).

Researchers in recent times are focusing attention on impulse buying behaviour and to investigate the behavioural motivation of impulse buying (Hausman, 2000; Rock & Fisher, 1995). However, the nature of impulse buying is unreflective in that, the purchase is made without engaging in a great deal of evaluation (Youn & Faber, 2000). Impulse buying implies that the individual is less likely to consider the consequences or think carefully before making a purchase (Piron, 1991). The person's attention is focused on immediate gratification of responding to the urge to buy rather than on solving preexisting problem or on finding an item to fill a predetermined need. The purchase may not have existed in pre-existing needs before now.

Given the link to negative emotions and potential harmful consequences, impulse buying may be viewed as problematic consumer behaviour among university students. The general problem with researching on impulse buying by university students is the very few amount of detailed research work done by past researchers as they normally concentrate on the general consumer. Individuals muddle through, trying to be good but are frequently tempted by seductive products which triggers impulse purchases. Everyday consumer experience often involves coping with impulses to buy, to consume and to have it all now. Besides that, there are various students with different behaviour and character, so does their spending pattern differ as they possessed different tastes.

The risk that impulse buying can lead to customer remorse as it is associated with lack of planning in relation to purchase decision which is negatively associated with the subjective well-being of the students. This behaviour includes the tendency of acting without thinking. Thus, the propensity of impulse buying among students is associated with an over powering urge to buy without a careful consideration of the available alternatives as well as insufficient information about the product of interest or without prior intent of purchase.

It is in view of this that the researcher investigated into the impulse buying behavior and demographic analysis among University of Calabar Students, Nigeria. To this end the big question is: How significant do sex, age and mood influence impulse buying among University of Calabar students?



## 2 Theoretical framework and literature review

The term "impulse buying" has had different meanings in different theoretical perspective. It is important to disentangle these before attempting to model a series of behaviours which may have quite different underlying motivation. Impulse buying behaviour is a phenomenon that has attracted research attention because the outcome appears to be a contradiction between what people plan to do or buy and what they finally do or buy (Gulterrez, 2004:654). Impulse buying accounts up to 80 percent of all purchases and that the purchases of new products are characteristics of impulse buying than from planned expenditure (Kacen & Lee, 2002:320). They also maintained that impulse buying is an unplanned purchase characterized by relatively rapid decision making and a subjective bias in favour of immediate possessing.

Impulsivity is a personality trait defined as a tendency towards acting without forethought, making quick cognitive decisions, and failing to appreciate the circumstances beyond the here and now (Barratt, 1993). It is one of those dimensions of individual differences that are frequently associated with the biological bases of personality; a state involving non specific physiological activation and the non-directional component of alertness (Rook & Fisher, 1995).

Impulse buying has been defined as the spontaneous or sudden desire to buy something, and when compared to more contemplative approaches to decision-making, is considered emotional, reactive, and "prone to occur with diminished regard" for the consequences (Rook, 1987). While impulse buying is often emotion-related, there is evidence of a cognitive component in impulse buying behaviour (Hoch & Lowenstein, 1991; Rook & Fisher, 1995). In the same vein, Hoch and Lowenstein (1991) explained impulse buying as a struggle between the psychological forces of desires and willpower. Ghani and Ali Jan (2010) described impulse buying as the sudden and immediate purchase decision inside a store with no prior intention to buy the specific product or products.

Individuals are shown to consider impulsive act a prior then engage in the behaviour because it is believed to be appropriate. In this case, short term benefits may be chosen despite their potential for "serious long-term consequences", depending on the situation or a person's "chronic values" (Puri, 1996). Although some individuals are more likely than others to satisfy hedonic goals by acting on impulse, "not all reward seekers are impulsive" (Ramanathan & Menon, 2006). Impulse buying was redefined as occurring "when a consumer experiences a sudden, often powerful and persistent urge to buying something immediately. The impulse to buy is hedonically complex and may stimulate emotional conflict; also impulse buying is prone to occur with diminish regard for its consequences" (Rook, 1987:191).

Purchasing an item that the consumer does not need gives a "feeling of power" to the consumer, making the impulse purchase (Colman, 2003). When impulse behaviour is considered in the realm of consumption of products, it turns to be characterized as a conflict between the desire to consume and the will power to resist it (Zhou & Wong, 2004). Rook and Hoch (1985) argued that this may explain why proximity elevates impulse buying. Impulsive buying is relatively extraordinary and exciting; contemplative buying is more ordinary and tranquil. Rook and Hoch (1985) described impulse buying as more arousing, less deliberate and more irresistible buying behaviour compared to planned purchasing behaviour. Impulse purchase is considered to be something fast, forceful, emotional and spontaneous when compared to contemplative buying. When the impulse purchasing behaviour occurs, these consumers often pay little attention to potential negative consequences that may result from their actions (Hoch & Lowenstein, 1991). A complete definition of impulse buying must recognize that emotional and cognitive reactions may accompany, but not a sine qua non condition to an impulse purchase.

## 2.1 Mood and impulse buying behaviour

Mood can be regarded as somebody's state of mind. It is an aspect a personality factor. According to Ebitu (2015) each individual/consumer has unique and charismatic personality which distinguishes his pattern of behaviour and adaptation to the environment from those of others. To understand personality, one must understand the whole man. Personality is a broad concept that can be thought of as a way of organizing and grouping how an individual typically reacts to situations. Different mood breeds different reactions, depending on the situation an individual find himself or is capacity to manage both bad and good occurrences. The possible variables that could be responsible for any form of response from an individual mood in triggering impulse purchase include: lack of control, stress reaction, absorption and self-concept.

Self-control is an important determinant of impulsiveness. Youn and Faber (2000) argue that self-control depletes along the way when more and more situations are encountered in which a person needs to control its urges; this is called ego-depletion. This implies that people should become more impulsive towards the end of the day since they are running out of self-control. Level of self-control differs per person. Consumers' with low level of self-control are very impulsive in all they do. They are characterized as spontaneous, reckless and careless (Youn & Faber, 2000). These peoples are more open to influences from outside and thus easier to influence. Impulsive buyers are therefore more likely to buy products on impulse because their shopping lists are



more open (Piron, 1991).

Stress reaction represents systematic individual differences in the frequency and intensity of responding to situational cues with negative emotional state (anxiety, anger, distress and guilt). This negative emotionality is experienced under daily hassles or everyday life conditions (Colman, 2003). They acknowledge responding "catastrophically" to the minor mishaps and set backs that have been referred to as daily hassles. They feel vulnerable and miserable without reason. They are nervous, sensitive, easily upset, irritable, and troubled by feelings of guilt (Colman, 2003). Rock and Gardner (1993) confirmed that highly stress -reactive people may be more likely to engage in impulsive buying in order to escape from the negative emotional states they are frequently (or more intently) experiencing.

Absorption is the tendency to become immersed in self-involving experiences triggered by engaging in external and internal stimuli (Hansen & Olsen, 2006). This mood related variable is an interesting construct for consumer research because it can play a role in how people respond to environment and impulse buying including those that influence the purchase and the consumption of products. Marketer -created environment and product factors including colours, smells, sounds, textures, and locations can increase the likelihood of engaging in impulse buying (Mattilia & Wirtz, 2008). Work in absorption indicates that people may differ on the degree to which they are sensitive to stimuli. Thus, people with high absorption levels will easily be caught up in external sensory stimulation, and more likely engage in impulse buying.

Kollat and Willett (1967) state that self-concept is yet another mood related variable which is on how consumers perceive themselves. Self concept includes attitudes, perception, beliefs and self evaluations. Although self concept may change, the change is often gradual. Through self concept, people define their identity which in turn provides for consistent and coherent behaviour. A central theme underlying most recent research on impulse buying is that impulse purchasing boost self esteem and personal ego which results to consumer feeling happier after the purchase. The consumers focus on buying impulsively to satisfy their physical needs of self esteem. Goods are consumed not only for their functional benefits, but also as symbolic consumption signifying ego, life style and identity (Ebitu, 2012). Thus, consumers' buy and relate to sets of products in a way that fits their preferred self image. Shopping as a major leisure and life style activity suggests the increasing importance and frequency of unplanned, non-necessity purchases. Purchasing consumer goods is thus a significant element in the construction and maintenance of consumers' self identities, in the attainment of social status and in an attempt to make one self-feel better (Raj & Jacob, 2013).

#### 2.2 Gender and impulse buying

Several studies have been undertaken since 1950 till date to determine the factors influencing impulse buying. Among the studies highlighted were those of Kollat and Willett (1967) who argued that consumer's characteristics and demographics influence the impulse purchases. These demographic influences include age, gender, religion and occupation. Another study by Dittmar et.al. (1995) found that gender influences the impulse buying and purchase of a product impulsively could be motivated by the self-concept. Men tend to involve in impulse buying of instrumental and leisure items which projects their independence and activity. Women tend to buy the symbolic and self-expressive goods which are associated with their appearance and emotional aspects of self (Muruganantham & Bhakat, 2013).

Furthermore, a study by Raj & Jacob (2013) on the influence of gender on the factors influencing impulse buying behaviour reveals that gender impulse buying behaviour differs with respect to availability of low cost products, discounts offered, new and unusual products, advertisements and changing trends in the society. Female consumers indicated a preference for low cost products and discount offers. Whereas males showed an interest to try unusual products, advertisements related to new offerings and a need to follow the changing trends. This is indicative of the fact that male consumers tend to try new and innovative products whereas female consumers can be moved to make impulsive purchases only by offering cost benefits.

It is believed that women are more prone to make impulse purchases than men. A study by Tifferet & Herstein (2012) showed that in comparison to men, women had higher levels of brand commitment, hedonic consumption, and impulse buying. They further stated that there are at least four reasons why women may be more inclined to impulse buying. First, since impulse buying is related to hedonic consumption, and women score higher in hedonic consumption than men, it is expected that they will show higher levels of impulse buying as well. Second, women suffer from anxiety and depression, more than men do, and as such women may use impulse buying as a means to improve their mental state (Silvera, Lavack & Kropp, 2008). Third, consumers with a high need to touch are more susceptible to impulse buying (Peck and Childers, 2006). And women have a greater need to experience things tactilely than men (Workman, 2010). This may as a result of maternal parenting which is a possible trigger of the natural selection process in regard to touch (Tifferet & Herstein, 2012). Finally, it may be that natural selection selected against behaviors that might lead to impulse buying in



# 2.3 Age and impulse buying behaviour

Studies have emphasized that variety of factors affect impulse buying, including age and proximity to shop. The age of a consumer can have a significant impact on impulse buying. How old a consumer is generally indicates what products he or she may be interested in purchasing. Bellenger, Robertson and Hirschman (1978) found a non-linear relationship between age and impulsive buying. The research suggested that impulsive buying should increase slightly from the age of 18 to 39 and decline thereafter. This is some what consistent with the findings of Hoch and Lowenstein (1991) who noted that shoppers under the age of 35 were more prone to impulsive buying than those who are older. Also, studies on impulsiveness indicated that young persons score higher on measures of impulsiveness than the older people.

For adolescent, impulsive behaviour has generally been viewed as counter productive and individual difference in impulsiveness were found to be related to a number of severally relevant behaviour, including aggression. Adolescent are being more heavily targeted because of their increased spending potential. Furthermore, they are considered to be consumers who are not likely to be well informed to shop comparison or seek advice about their purchases. Adolescent variation in impulsiveness by age may be larger than adults since adolescent development stage is noted for impulsivity (Kacen & Lee, 2002).

Another factor that can influence impulse buying is physical proximity to shop. Physical proximity can stimulate sensory inputs that affect desire. Touching products in a store, enticing aromas can enhance desire to purchase a good (Faber & Vohs, 2004). Proximity is a factor that facilitates impulse actions (Hoch & Lowenstein, 1991). Consumers have indicated that by just looking at the items in a store or categories can stimulate desire for the purchase of goods (Rook, 1987; Rook & Hoch, 1985). Thus, physical proximity such as touching goods in store, tasting free samples of foods which also affect desire may stimulate sensory inputs.

# 3 Research methodology

The survey research design was adopted for the study and the research questionnaire used to elicit information from the students of University of Calabar. The estimated student population of the University was 28, 885. The Yamane sample size determination was then applied on the population to arrive at a sample size of 395 which guided the distribution of the questionnaire. The research instrument was adequately validated, while the analytical tool used to test hypotheses was the Ordinary Least Square. Data collection revealed that out of the 395 questionnaires that were distributed to students selected from different faculties of the University of Calabar, 377 were correctly completed and returned, signifying a response rate of 95.4 percent.

The abridged data of the demographic variables and the impulse buying of the University of Calabar students are as shown in table 3.1. Item one revealed that over 204 of the distribution were not in support that impulse buying is carried out regardless of its consequences. However, about 173 respondents confirmed that it is carried out without regard to any form of consequences. Item two showed that 48.2 percent of the distribution either strongly disagreed or disagreed on the influence of age on purchase intentions while the remaining 51.2 percent either agreed or strongly agreed to the assertion.

Item three showed that 38 percent of the distribution disaffirmed the dependency of Impulse buying on gender (sex) differences, while the remaining 62 percent were in support of the assertion. Item 4 shows that 174 of the 377 respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed on the impulse buying dependency of an individual's mood. The other 203 respondents agreed and strongly agreed on the assertion.

Table 3.1 Demographic influence on impulse buying behaviour

Variables	Strongly Disagreed	Disagreed	Agreed	Strongly Agreed	total
1.Impulse buying is carried out regardless of its consequences.	84(22.3%)	120(31.8%)	143(37.9%)	30(8.0%)	377(100.0%)
2. The influence of Age on purchase intentions	65(17.2%)	119(31.6%)	147(39.0%)	46(12.2%)	377(100.0%)
3.Impulse buying dependency on gender(sex) differences	47(12.5%)	96(25.5%)	130(34.4%)	104(27.6%)	377(100.0%)
4.Impulse buying dependency on the mood of an individual	52(13.8%)	122(32.4%)	136(36.1%)	67(17.8%)	377(100.0%)

Source: Field survey, 2015



Table 4.2 Coefficients<sup>d</sup>

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients				
	В	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	F	R Square
1 (Constant)	.740	.102		7.225	.000	269.351	.418a
AGE	.640	.039	.647	16.412	.000		
2 (Constant)	1.065	.121		8.788	.000	119.829	.242
SEX	.451	.041	.492	10.947	.000		
3 (Constant)	1.587	.131		12.100	.000	34.862	.085
MOOD	.282	.048	.292	5.904	.000		

a. Predictors: (Constant), AGEb. Predictors: (Constant), SEXc. Predictors: (Constant), MOOD

b. Dependent Variable: IMPULSE BUYING

Sources: SPSS Output, 2015

Information on table 3.2 shows the results on hypotheses tests. The t-statistics for hypothesis one revealed that there is a significant relationship between age and impulse buying among University of Calabar students [ $t_{cal} = 16.412 > t_{0.05} = 1.97$ ]. Same can be said of hypothesis two that there is a significant relationship between sex and impulse buying among University of Calabar students [ $t_{cal} = 10.947 > t_{0.05} = 1.97$ ]. Hypothesis three shows that mood influences impulse buying among [ $t_{cal} = 5.904 > t_{0.05} = 1.97$ ] University of Calabar students. The F statistics for the individual hypothesis test also showed that they were all greater than the tabulated F-statistics value of 2.60.

#### 4 Summary of findings

The study was on impulse buying behavior and demographic analysis among University of Calabar students in Nigeria. To this end, the result from the empirical evaluation showed that: there is a positive relationship between gender and impulse buying among University of Calabar students. This finding was in agreement with the work of Whallendorf and Arnould (1998) which specified that there is a significant relationship between gender differences and impulse buying. They further analyze the categories of goods that influence women which include jewelries and cosmetics.

The study also revealed that mood influences impulse buying behaviour among University of Calabar students. The results was corroborated by the study of Rook and Gardener (1993) where they found that impulsive buying when in a negative mood may be actively attempting to alleviate the unpleasant mood. Parboteeah (2005) also stated that a person's emotional state and mood are important factors of impulsive purchasing.

Furthermore, the result shows that there is a positive relationship between age and impulse buying. This finding was supported by Bellenger, Robertson and Elizabeth (1978) in Parboteeah (2005) stating that consumer's age is an important factor having influence to impulsive purchasing because the result of empiric research showed that young people feel less risk spending

## 5 Conclusion and recommendations

Impulse purchase does not match with rational decision making model of a consumer. When need emerges a consumer buy impulsively and does not search for alternatives. Therefore, impulse buying is a sudden and immediate purchase with no pre-shopping either to buy a specific product or to fulfill a specific buying task.

Consumers face the temptation to purchase items that are not on their shopping list every where they go. This temptation to make unnecessary purchases eventually lead to consumer's making impulse purchases. Most consumers have engaged in impulse purchases at some point in their lives. With our society continuing to become more materialistic, marketers have to devise new strategies to convince the consumer that their products or services are worth purchasing even if it is not being sought after at the time of purchase. Impulse buying in perspective of marketers brings revenue rather than blame. In perspective of consumers, it should not be that much of a negative aspect because whoever has the purchasing power can spend his or her money according ones will. It was therefore recommended that:

 Retailers should attempt to create desire for their products, entice in-store browsing that lead to unplanned and impulse purchases through stimuli sent by visual merchandizing. Implementation of promotional techniques is an important strategic decision retailers/marketers have to consider in order to reach their goals. Providing efficient visual communication through interior and exterior presentation is a major concern in the success of



- retail stores. Retailers should increase usage of visual merchandizing techniques and emphasize on building visually appealing product display and focusing on the shelf position of the products in order to entice customer's to make unplanned purchases.
- 2) Store environment should be made as pleasant as possible. People will display approach behaviour, stay longer and will encounter more stimuli, since their mood will also improve, they will be more open to impulsive purchase.
- 3) The use of many eye-catching displays is another easy way for store-managers to increase impulse purchases since these are known to be visually oriented. Appropriate lighting, music and aromas enhance mood and emotion, which may trigger consumer's buying impulse intent.
- 4) Social groups play an important role in impulse buying therefore marketers should get to know their norms and habits to be able to promote products in a way that will make the group more likely to accept the product.

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