

*Full Length Research Paper*

# The prevalence of impulsive, compulsive and innovative shopping behaviour in the economic retail hub of South Africa: A marketing segmentation approach

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To date, research on impulsive, compulsive and innovative retail shopping behaviour motivated by the desire to obtain emotional, social and identity-related benefits, has largely been limited to Europe (Germany), Canada and western developed economies (the UK and USA). This article provides an initial analysis of the prevalence of impulsive, compulsive and innovative shopping traits of consumers in the economic retail hub of South Africa. More precisely, the article explores the demographic diversity in the purchase and innovative traits of Gauteng consumers. Overall, the article reveals clear disparity in impulsive, compulsive and innovative shopping behaviour across selected demographic and socioeconomic consumer segments. From a practical perspective, the marketing segmentation approach applied in this study is ideally suited for retail segmentation and marketing strategy development and serves to identify key marketplace buying behaviours. For retail, insight into buying and innovative shopping behaviour is essential for building long-term relationships with consumers and to serve their specific needs within an extremely complex and competitive retail landscape.

**Key words:** Impulsive shopping, Compulsive shopping, Mavenism, Oniomania, Shopping addiction, Retail therapy, Recreational shopping, Innovative shopping, behaviour.

## INTRODUCTION

The Gauteng province comprises the largest source of skills and gross domestic product (GDP) in South Africa. According to Udjo (2010) almost a quarter of South Africa's labour force in 2010 resides in Gauteng. Also, more than a third of South Africa's GDP is generated in Gauteng (SAIRR, 2010) with six municipalities contributing to the province's regional gross domestic product. Moreover, Gauteng is home to 9.5 million people (or 3 million households), constituting respectively approximately a third of South Africa's income earners (34.4%) and national household consumption expenditure (34.5%) (Udjo, 2009; Masemola et al., 2010). These demographic indicators reflect Gauteng's wealthy economy where more than a third (38 %) of South Africa's top income earners reside (Van Aardt and Harris, 2008). Against this background, and not surprisingly, Gauteng is dominated by the service and retail sector that contributes

approximately 70 % to the province's economy (SAIRR, 2010). In recent years the growth of the retail industry in particular has been advanced by the continued expansion of shopping mall complexes across Gauteng as well as the surfacing and exponential growth of the Black middle class (Udjo, 2008).

Despite the positive demographic climate outlined for Gauteng, the retail sector in particular remains most susceptible to external economic forces such as the recent economic recession and increased availability of credit.

Collectively, the dynamic retail and economic landscape continuously impacts on the retail shopping behaviour of consumers across diverse demographic and socioeconomic segments. Consequently, regular consumer shopping behaviour studies are essential to distil how consumers' respond within a vibrant and extremely

competitive retail landscape.

## Aim

In general, a study on consumer behaviour examines the process involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires (Solomon, 2004). Retailers will only be able to effectively evaluate whether or not they are offering everything their consumers need by examining how consumers behave throughout the buying process (Nunes and Cespedes, 2003). According to Reed et al. (2000)

*“it is imperative that contemporary retailers have a comprehensive understanding of consumer trends, needs, wants and the decision-making processes, all of which will have a direct impact on the success of their business.”*

In support of this business philosophy, this article reflects on consumer buying behaviour in the retail shopping market of Gauteng. In order to meet consumers' needs, retailers must be aware of their buying behaviour and factors that impact on behaviour and shape their decisions. Against this background, this article investigates the prevalence of contemporary impulsive, compulsive and innovative shopping traits in the economic hub of South Africa. The study rationale has a sound theoretical basis built on the logical argument that increased buying opportunities emerge as average income increases (as in the case of Gauteng). Increased buying opportunities, due to improved income levels, are also most likely to be complemented by increased impulsive and compulsive shopping. Consequently, the study serves as an ideal platform to study the extent of overspending and shopping addiction in the well developed, extremely complex and competitive retail market of Gauteng.

Complementary to the above goals, the article aims to explore demographic shopping diversity by using a marketing segmentation approach. According to Imber and Toffler (2000) marketing segmentation is a process of dividing the market according to similarities that exist among various subgroups within the market. Also, Moroko and Uncles (2009) view marketing segmentation as a key marketing concept that relates to final consumers who differ according to their geography, purchase and usage behavior, decision-making processes, demographics, lifestyle, psycho-graphics, personality and motivation. Against this background the research uses a marketing segmentation approach that aims to establish whether impulsive, compulsive and innovative buying of Gauteng consumers differs significantly by selected demographic and socioeconomic variable. Formulated differently, the article explores the extent to which Gauteng shoppers are motivated by the desire to obtain

emotional, social and identity-related benefits.

Demographic and socioeconomic cohorts included in the analysis are gender, qualification level, population designation, lifestyle (marital status), age, economic dependence, household income and size, household occupation density as well as shopping expenditure, regularity of shopping and proximity to retail outlets. The article investigates the above selection of demographic variables along with their impact on impulsive, compulsive and innovative retail shopping behaviour. This focus originates from the inference that consumers across different demographics will have different needs and wants which may translate into different buying behaviour patterns.

## Value of research

In today's increasingly complex retail environment, an understanding of consumers' buying behaviour and their knowledge of products and services is essential for high-quality business decisions and will enable retailers to segment their client base and target specific customer groups with strategies designed to meet their retail needs. Using consumer behaviour as a segmentation strategy to identify, meet and satisfy needs is an advantage to both consumers and retailers. According to Hollywood et al. (2007), a mass marketing approach is no longer viable and a segmentation strategy is considered crucial in gaining competitive advantage.

A study on impulsive, compulsive and innovative shopping also bears relevance to the ethics of marketing activities and especially sales promotions aimed at encouraging impulse buying. Knowledge of consumers' buying behaviour and self-developed knowledge can aid mall management and retail marketers in particular to develop shopping environments that better meet the needs of targeted consumers, thereby promoting their satisfaction, repeat visits and positive word of mouth. Finally, the article has value in the sense that it presents initial insights into impulsive, compulsive and innovative buying traits within the economic retail hub of South Africa.

## Construct definitions

As aforementioned, this article explores dissimilarities in retail shopping traits by selected demographic and socioeconomic variable. The primary research construct and measures investigated in the study are explored in more detail:

### *Impulsive buying*

Depending on the extent of advance shopping planning,

consumers in general can be categorised as planned, partially planned or impulse shoppers (Cobb and Hoyer, 1986; Iyer and Ahlawat, 1987; Hoyer and Macinnis, 2006). According to Halpern (1989), Johnson-Laird (1988) and Lee and Kacen (2008) a *planned purchase* is characterised by deliberate, thoughtful search and evaluation that normally results in rational, accurate and better decisions. In contrast, an *unplanned purchase* is initiated on the spot and associated with a strong urge and feeling of pleasure and excitement. This is generally known as *impulsive buying* or shopping (Rook, 1987; Billieux et al., 2008). According to Rook and Fisher (1995) and Beatty (1998) impulse buying is a spontaneous and immediate purchase where the consumer is not actively looking for a product and has no prior plans to purchase. Tendai and Crispen (2009) also state that impulsive buying can largely be an unconscious buying behaviour driven by an affective force beyond the control of an individual. Beyond spontaneity and affection, Rook (1987) and Kacen and Lee (2002) describes impulse buying as an intense, exciting urge to buy without considering the consequences of the purchase decision. On the other hand, LaRose and Eastin (2002) classify impulsive buying as one of the unregulated consumer behaviour shopping tendencies, which is milder compared to compulsive or addictive shopping. In other words, the more people make unplanned (impulsive) purchases, the closer they get to compulsive behaviour. Thus, more organised shoppers are less likely to drift into compulsive buying behaviour.

For this article the *impulsivity antecedents* include consumers' tendency to carefully manage and plan purchases, compile shopping lists and experience shopping fulfilment. These variables were included in the research instrument in the form of six statements devised to predict impulsive shopping behaviour and tendencies across demographic and socioeconomic segments.

### **Compulsive buying**

Oniomania is the term used for the compulsive desire to shop. This concept is also commonly referred to as shopping addiction or shopaholism. Dittmar (2005) describes the core features of this phenomenon as follow:

1. The impulse to buy is experienced as irresistible
2. Individuals lose control over their buying behaviour
3. Individuals continue with excessive buying despite adverse consequences in their personal, social and occupational life and resulting in financial debt.

One of the earlier descriptions used by Faber and O'Guinn (1992) for compulsive buying is as follows:

*"a response to an uncontrollable drive or desire to obtain,*

*use or experience a feeling, substance or activity that leads an individual to repetitively engage in a behavior that will ultimately cause harm to the individual and/or to others."*

Similar to this explanation, the most recent and comprehensive definitions on compulsive buying were cited by Koran, Faber, Aboujaoude, Large and Serpe (2006). According to these researchers compulsive buying includes (i) the act of being frequently preoccupied with buying or subject to irresistible, intrusive and/or senseless impulses to buy; (ii) frequently buying unneeded items or more than can be afforded; (iii) shopping for periods longer than intended. Due to uncontrolled buying behaviour compulsive buyers are most likely to experience adverse consequences, such as marked distress, impaired social or occupational functioning, and/or financial problems. These findings build on various earlier studies by consumer researchers and psychologist especially since the 1980s. The most common view shared by these studies is that compulsive buying causes an individual to continuously make purchases regardless of financial, social or psychological consequences. The act of shopping in compulsive buying is experienced as an irresistible, uncontrollable urge, resulting in excessive, expensive and time consuming retail activity and is typically prompted by negative affectivity and results in gross social, personal and/or financial difficulties (Dittmar et al., 2007; Faber et al., 2006; Faber and O'Guinn 1989, 1992; Kyrios et al., 2004). Similar observations are shared by Damon (1988), Valence et al., (1988), Krueger (1988), Faber (1992), Faber and O'Guinn (1992), Scherhorn (1990) and Magee (1994).

In short, according to past researches, compulsive buying constitutes repeated and excessive purchases of consumer goods that may lead to behavioural disorder (eg emotional distress, depression, anxiety, boredom and anger) and impact negatively on people's lives (eg debt). Miltenberger, Redlin, Crosby, Stickney, Mitchell, Wonderlich, Faber and Smyth (2003) also refers to various previous studies that suggest that compulsive buying occurs in response to negative emotions and results in a decrease in the intensity of the negative emotions. In addition, it is important to learn from previous studies that compulsive buying does not necessarily relate to the amount of shopping or spending but rather to the consequences of shopping.

As mentioned earlier, a total of 12 measures were included in this study to explore the tendency of compulsive retail shopping in Gauteng. Among the measures, the role of credit card use in compulsive buying is explored. The rationale for including this measure is based on the pervasive view that attitudes of Gauteng consumers about debt have changed dramatically from a general abhorrence of debt to acceptance of credit as part of a modern consumer society. This rationale is

shared by Lea et al. (1995), Zuckerman (2000) and Erasmus and Lebani (2007). This suggests that overspending and excess buying has largely become acceptable. A likely negative outcome of such a culture of indebtedness (or consumption culture) is compulsive buying. According to Lo and Harvey (2011), Veludo-de-Oliveira, Ikeda and Santos (2005) and d'Astous (1990), credit cards eliminate the immediate need for money to buy something and are likely to accelerate compulsive buying.

In addition, the 'compulsive' construct also incorporates the prevalence of retail therapy and recreational shopping as a social shopping dimension. These concepts were described briefly as follows:

**Retail therapy:** This term refers to shopping with the primary purpose of improving a buyer's mood or disposition. Items purchased during periods of retail therapy are often referred to as 'comfort buys'.

**Recreational shopping:** This term refers to shopping with the primary purpose of shopping contentment. Solomon (2004) defines a recreational shopper as a person who views shopping as a fun, social activity and a preferred way to spend leisure time. Kim and Kim (2008), Odekerken-Schröder et al. (2003), Bellenger and Korgaonkar (1980) and Reynolds and Beatty (1999) further defines shopping enjoyment as a consumer's personality trait that finds shopping more enjoyable and experiences greater shopping pleasure than other consumers. This is opposed to consumers who view shopping strictly from an economic perspective, seeing it as nothing more than a means to product acquisition. According to Ahmed, Ghingold and Dahari (2007) and Chetthamrongchai and Davies (2000), recreational shoppers are more likely to engage in non-planned (or impulse) shopping.

### Mavenism

A further construct used by the study to describe shopping behaviour is the market maven. Clark and Goldsmith (2005) and Bearden and Netemeyer (1999) define market mavens as:

*"individuals who have information about many kinds of products, places to shop and other facets of markets and who initiate discussions with consumers and respond to requests from consumers for market information."*

Mavens are especially knowledgeable about shopping and buying and obtain information because they think it will be useful to others or because it will provide a basis for conversation. Market mavens are very involved in the marketplace and are eager to share their expertise/

opinions with other consumers. Clearly, market mavens are important to retail success (of especially new products) and consequently were included in the study as an additional research construct. What makes the inclusion of this construct even more pertinent is that there is currently no consensus regarding any demographic variables that distinguish market mavens from other consumers.

In this article, the propensity to provide shopping information (mavenism construct) was derived by asking shoppers whether they (i) like telling people about new products/brands, (ii) provide information on product variety and (iii) often are requested to recommend shops, sales or best buys. For this study the mavenism construct is used interchangeably with innovative buying behaviour.

### Demographic and socioeconomic variables

In order to meet consumers' needs, retailers must be aware of their buying behaviour and factors that impact on behaviour and shape their decisions. Demographic and socioeconomic factors in particular are very important in determining consumers' buying behaviour traits and will present retailers with an ideal opportunity to fulfil consumer demands and succeed in a competitive retail environment. Accordingly, this article aims to inform retailers of their customers' behaviour by examining impulsive, compulsive and innovative buying behaviour in Gauteng by selected demographic segments, including statistics such gender, qualification level, population designation, lifestyle (marital status), age, economic dependence, household income and size, occupation density as well as shopping expenditure, regularity and proximity to retail outlets. Collectively or individually, all these factors have the potential to impact on how individuals behave as consumers.

### Measurement instrument

Partially adopting previously established scales, the study developed a questionnaire with three major sections. The first section contained questions designed to measure impulsive buying. The development of buying impulsiveness scales relied on the work of Fisher and Rook (1995), Weun et al. (1997), Verplanken and Herabadi (2001) and Faber and O'Guinn (1989; 1992). Based on previous research, six statements reflecting on cognitive (lack of planning) and affective/hedonic/ emotional (that is, feeling of excitement) dimensions were formulated.

It should be noted that three of the items produced reverse scores. A 7-point Likert scale was used to measure impulsive buying. To support analysis, all item scores were summed to constitute an overall composite score for impulsive buying. The scores ranged from 6 to 42 where scores closer to 42 represent greater

**Table 1.** Sample size by demarcated survey area.

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality	170	18.3
City of Tshwane Metropolitan	171	18.4
Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality	300	32.3
Sedibeng District Municipality	111	11.8
West Rand District Municipality	89	9.6
Metsweding District Municipality	89	9.6
Total	930	100.0

impulsiveness.

As part of measuring peoples buying habits, the section on impulsive buying also included three items to measure the propensity to provide shopping information (mavenism or the innovative buying construct). As with impulsive shopping, all these item scores were simply summed to arrive at a composite score for mavenism inclination. The scores ranged from 3 to 21 where scores closer to 21 represent greater innovativeness (mavenism).

The second section contained questions designed to measure a person's level of compulsive buying. Participants were instructed to respond to a series of statements regarding their consumption tendencies and rate on a 7-point Likert scale how strongly they personally agree or disagree with these statements, where 7 = completely agree and 1 = completely disagree. The 12 statements included were taken from the initial and refined compulsive consumption scale designed by Faber and O'Guinn (1989, 1992) and Valence et al. (1988).

These internationally renowned instruments focus on both financial and psychological aspects of compulsive buying and address the three core features of compulsive shopping as defined by Dittmar (2005) earlier.

Finally, all items scores were summed to constitute an overall composite score of compulsive buying.

The scores ranged from 12 to 84 where scores closer to 84 represent greater compulsiveness.

The third section was designed to capture participants' demographic and socioeconomic status.

In summary, the number of items for each dimension is given in Table 5.

The reliability of the instrument was also checked by means of SPSS.

The value of Cronbach's alpha for the impulsive, compulsive and innovative buying scales was 0.640, 0.835 and 0.960 respectively, which confirmed the reliability of the instrument. The Alpha for the compulsive buying scale in particular was even slightly higher than the reliability of previous studies conducted by Faber and O'Guinn (1989; 1992).

## METHODOLOGY

A quantitative research approach was used to conduct landline

telephone interviews with 920 households in Gauteng. The geographic spread of the survey population, high security measures inhibiting entrance to most residents located in the crime infested Gauteng province as well as high landline telephone ownership in Gauteng, all contributed to the final decision of favouring landline telephone interviews as the most appropriate data collection method.

To support the selection of the sample units (households), a multi-purpose sampling approach was used. Sample units were selected from local telephone directories (sample frames) applicable to the Gauteng province. The boundary demarcation of the Municipal Demarcation Board of South Africa (2006) was used for sample zoning purposes (Figure 1). This supported the use of systematic sampling of a predetermined quota of household sample units within each of the municipal areas targeted by the study. Thus any households located within the demarcated municipal boundaries of the Gauteng province were classified as eligible sample units. Ultimately, the household member mostly responsible for grocery shopping qualified as final sample element (respondent).

Furthermore, since culture was identified as a potential differentiating factor in measuring service quality in the grocery retail industry of Gauteng, the sampling approach used quota selection based on 'family name' identification. For this purpose a list of family names, which typify certain cultural group in South Africa, was constructed and provided to interviewers to ensure quota control of cultural groups to be included in the final sample.

The final sample size by each of the demarcated municipal areas is summarised in Table 1.

The table reflects the outcome of the stratified sampling approach used to ensure proportional distribution of the sample by municipal area.

The demographic and socioeconomic profile of the Gauteng survey population who participated in the study is reflected in Table 2. The apparent gender bias towards female participation in the study as displayed in Table 2 is due to the fact that most females still take responsibility for household shopping. In fact, for this study 84% of the households indicated that females are mostly responsible for shopping while only approximately 13% of males take primary responsibility for shopping.

## RESULTS AND ANALYSES

Once the data were collected and verified, responses were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for data mining and analysis purposes. An ANOVA analysis was used to test for significant differences within and between the buying traits and each of the demographic and socioeconomic variables. The outcomes of the ANOVA test to reflect on statistical significance within and between impulsive,

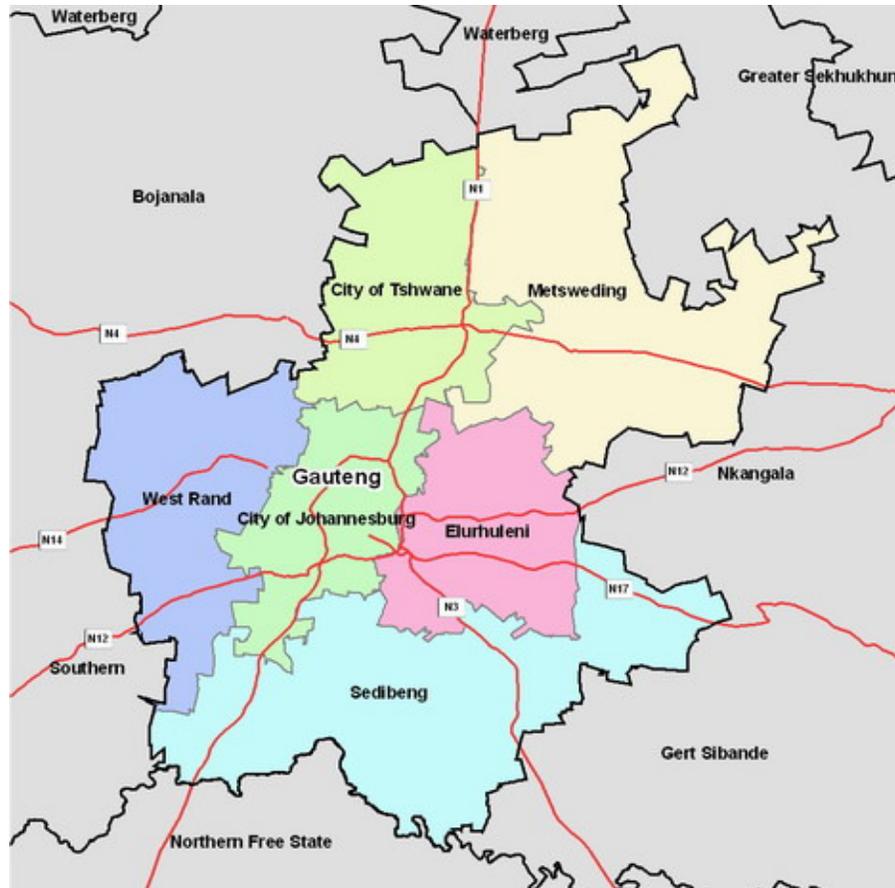


Figure 1. Gauteng municipal boundaries.

compulsive and innovative buying and each of the selected demographic and socioeconomic groups are displayed in Table 3.

For each construct measured in the study, the following can be deduced from the significance analysis presented in Table 3.

### Impulse buying

Higher qualified households, designated culture groups, own income and salary earners, relatively higher income and lower occupancy households as well as households spending relatively more, who shop daily and reside relatively closer to shopping destinations, plan their shopping less carefully. These individuals/households are also more susceptible to impulse shopping. These findings are confirmed at a 95% level of confidence.

### Compulsive buying

Designated, unmarried and younger consumers, households with higher occupancy rates, who spend relatively

less on shopping and visit shopping complexes less often, are more likely to be predisposed to compulsive shopping. These findings are confirmed at a 95 % level of confidence.

### Innovative buying (Mavenism)

Lower qualified people and designated households are more inclined to provide shopping information to others (that is, family, friends and colleagues). Also, younger consumers who are not married but dependent on friends, family or the government for an income regard themselves as more knowledgeable about shopping and buying and are eager to share their expertise/opinions with other consumers. Lower income consumers who reside in households with relative more residents seem more eager to tell other people about new products/brands. Households with relatively fewer rooms, who spend relatively less on shopping on a monthly basis are more likely to provide information on product variety. Those who are more often requested to recommend shops, sales or best buys are those who travel further to shop.

**Table 2.** Demographic and socioeconomic profile of survey population.

Variable	Descriptive statistics
Gender	Male (19.5 %); female (82.5 %)
Qualification	Primary education (7.7 %); Secondary education (66.2 %); Tertiary education (26.0 %)
Culture group	Designated group <sup>1</sup> (51.9 %); Non-designated group <sup>2</sup> (48.1 %), <sup>1</sup> African, Coloured, Asian; <sup>2</sup> White
Lifestyle	Married (62.8 %); Unmarried (37.2 %)
Age	Younger consumers <sup>1</sup> (36.1 %); Middle-aged consumers <sup>2</sup> (42.8 %); Older consumers <sup>3</sup> (21.1 %) <sup>1</sup> <40 years; <sup>2</sup> 40-60years; <sup>3</sup> 60+ years
Economic dependence	Independent <sup>1</sup> (54.1 %); Dependent <sup>2</sup> (45.9 %) <sup>1</sup> Own business or salary earner; <sup>2</sup> Dependent on family, friends, government
Household income	Lower <sup>1</sup> (20.5 %); Low middle <sup>2</sup> (40.9 %); High middle <sup>3</sup> (24.4 %); Higher <sup>4</sup> (14.2 %) <sup>1</sup> <R3500 pm; <sup>2</sup> R3500-R20000 pm; <sup>3</sup> R20000-R40000; <sup>4</sup> R40000+
Household size	Small <sup>1</sup> (30.1 %); Medium <sup>2</sup> (41.5 %); Large (28.4 %), <sup>1</sup> 1-2 residents; <sup>2</sup> 3-4 residents; <sup>3</sup> 5+ residents
Occupation density	Small <sup>1</sup> (31.1 %); Big <sup>2</sup> (69.0 %), <sup>1</sup> 1-2 bedrooms; <sup>2</sup> 3+bedrooms
Shopping expenditure	Lower <sup>1</sup> (74.2 %); Higher <sup>2</sup> (25.8 %), <sup>1</sup> <R3000 pm; <sup>2</sup> +R3000 pm
Shopping regularity	Daily (12.6 %); Weekly (38.0 %); Monthly (49.5 %)
Proximity to retail outlets	Closer <sup>1</sup> (85.2 %); Further <sup>2</sup> (14.8 %) <sup>1</sup> Within 10km from closest shopping complex; <sup>2</sup> Further than 10km from closest shopping complex

### Study comparisons

It is interesting to note from the analysis that gender does not have a significant effect on compulsive buying tendencies. This finding differs from the work by Dittmar et al. (2007), which shows that women are more prone than men to compulsive buying behaviour. However, similar studies by Koran et al. (2006) show that this is not the case. Also, the study by Billieux et al. (2008) confirms that the prevalence of compulsive buying in males and females is very similar. The findings of this study also differ from that of Cobb and Hoyer (1986) who found that women are more likely to plan their purchases than men. Block and Morwitz (1999) contend that females are more inclined to plan their shopping since they are traditionally in charge of the shopping and correspondingly know more about stores and products and have better ideas about inventory levels than males. Their research also reflects a higher probability of women preparing a

shopping list and consequently exhibiting lower levels of compulsive purchase behaviour than males. These findings should also be contextualised against the background that the traditional housewife is a 'disappearing' phenomenon in South Africa and Gauteng in particular. Nowadays, household chores are split more evenly with expertise equally divided between husbands and wives.

The results of this study also show and confirm that as a consumer becomes older their retail buying behaviour changes. As people grow older they become more risk-averse and, hence, less inclined to buy compulsively. The findings of the study reflecting on age as differentiator for buying traits, largely correspond with those of Dittmar et al. (2007), showing some indication that younger persons may be more susceptible than older ones to compulsive buying tendencies. Despite the age similarities notable from both these studies, several others found no effect/influence of age on problematic buying/compulsive buying tendencies (Billieux et al., 2008). Also in this

**Table 3.** Significance of survey results.

Variable	Construct		
	Impulsive buying	Compulsive buying	Mavenism
	Leading variable	Leading variable	Leading variable
Gender	Male	Male	Male
Significance (p; F)	0.583; 0.301	0.691; 0.159	0.193; 1.699
Qualification	Tertiary	Primary	Primary
Significance (p; F)	0.003; 5.974*	0.336; 1.093	0.000; 21.717*
Culture group	Designated group	Designated group	Designated group
Significance (p; F)	0.002; 9.729*	0.000; 190.539*	0.000; 941.982*
Lifestyle	Not married	Not married	Not married
Significance (p; F)	0.683; 0.167	0.002; 9.390*	0.000; 70.773*
Age	Younger consumers	Younger consumers	Younger consumers
Significance (p; F)	0.088; 2.436	0.000; 32.961*	0.000; 37.050*
Economic dependence	Independent	Independent	Dependent
Significance (p; F)	0.000; 13.436*	0.059; 3.587	0.013; 6.238*
Household income	Higher income	Middle income	Lower income
Significance (p; F)	0.000; 21.688*	0.119; 1.958	0.000; 60.396*
Household size	Small household	Medium household	Large household
Significance (p; F)	0.000; 7.763*	0.000; 16.367*	0.000; 40.067*
Occupation density	Big household	Big household	Small household
Significance (p; F)	0.533; 0.389	0.339; 0.914	0.002; 9.977*
Shopping expenditure	Higher spenders	Lower spenders	Lower spenders
Significance (p; F)	0.000; 16.128*	0.000; 42.597*	0.000; 143.981*
Shopping regularity	Daily	Monthly	Monthly
Significance (p; F)	0.002; 6.525*	0.000; 44.257*	0.000; 171.624*
Proximity to retail outlets	Closer	Further	Further
Significance (p; F)	0.021; 5.366*	0.085; 2.972	0.000; 28.346*

\*Significant at a 95% level of confidence

study, gender, educational qualification levels, economic dependence, household income and occupation density and shopping facility proximity have no significant effect on problematic (compulsive) buying. With specific reference to compulsive shopping across income group, this study could not provide any significant results, as is the case in the USA where empirical studies by Kuzma and Black (2006) revealed that the most extreme compulsive buyers have the lowest income. This suggests that a lack of money does not prevent compulsive shopping.

Finally, the study outcomes partially correspond with

the research by Kollat and Willet (1967) who found that the increase in size of the grocery bill and the number of purchases made, correlated with an increase in unplanned impulse purchases. For the Gauteng study, higher spending households seemed less inclined to plan shopping.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aimed to unveil significant statistical differences in buying traits of consumers by selected demographic and socioeconomic variable and to uncover

**Table 4.** Minimum and maximum scores.

Construct	Minimum	Average	Maximum	Intensity index (%)
Impulsive buying	6	21	42	42
Compulsive buying	12	46	84	47
Innovative buying	3	15	21	67

**Table 5.** Number of items for each dimension.

Construct	Measure/item
Impulse buying	6 items
Compulsive buying	12 items
Mavenism	3 items

any signs of shopping addiction occurring in Gauteng. This study conclusively revealed no significant or severe form of impulsive or compulsive shopping behaviour among Gauteng shoppers. This view is supported by the following minimum, average and maximum impulsive, compulsive and innovative buying scores emerging from the study.

Table 4 show the minimum and maximum scores returned by the study for each of the measurement constructs. The intensity index has been computed by judging the location of the average score within each score range. For example, the average score for impulsive shopping is closer to the minimum and located further from the maximum impulsive score, reflecting lower-order impulsive buying behaviour. Using location variance, an intensity index for each construct has been computed with values closer to 'zero' reflecting a less severe form of buying behaviour while index scores closer to '100' reflects more severe forms of buying behaviour.

It is clear from this analysis that Gauteng shoppers can be classified rather as modest planners (impulsive intensity index = 42). This finding suggests that Gauteng shoppers plan their shopping reasonably well and make use of an informal or formal shopping list in planning shopping.

This also suggests that Gauteng consumers buy familiar products and mostly plan their purchases. The rushed lifestyles of Gauteng residents and bad-debt aversion, probably best explain this consumer trait. However, Gauteng shoppers generally enjoy shopping, which in many cases could be viewed as a strategy to relieve work stress or monotony (especially among unemployed and low income groups). Also, an increase in the number of shopping centres in Gauteng and people's urge to visit and experience these centres have further contributed to shopping enjoyment (intensity index = 67). Shopping excitement, as noted from the survey

findings, show that Gauteng consumers seem most willing to share their shopping experience with others and regard themselves as good product/brand informants (shopping innovators) who are well positioned to recommend products and where to shop to others.

The hedonic aspect of compulsive buying, namely shopping enjoyment (anticipatory pleasure related to buying) also featured prominently in the measurement of compulsive buying. However, although Gauteng shoppers seem to enjoy shopping and often engage in retail therapy to make them feel better (an additional hedonic aspect of compulsive buying), they seldom experience depression when returning from shopping. The study revealed that the recent economic recession in South Africa has largely prevented Gauteng shoppers from purchasing items that they cannot afford. This largely clarifies people's abstinence from binge buying or simply spending all their money at month end. In fact, the study reflected debt aversion among consumers, most likely a consequence of the new credit regulations introduced in South Africa in 2008. This may also explain the research finding that consumers like buying goods on sale. The fact that Gauteng shoppers claim to have no major post-purchase guilt further confirms low compulsive buying tendencies.

In view of the relatively low number of Gauteng consumers reporting compulsive buying behaviour in this study, it is clear that dysfunctional shopping behaviour has not yet reached the same levels in South Africa when compared to abroad (Europe, Canada, UK and USA). The compulsive intensity index score (47) clearly reflects relatively low occurrence levels of overspending or compulsive buying tendencies in Gauteng. Thus, compulsive buying behaviour is not currently viewed as problematic. As reflected in this article, there are currently no significant signs of serious shopping addiction in Gauteng, although certain demographic and socioeconomic groups seem more susceptible to some form of impulsive and compulsive buying. In a dynamic retail market, and with research on compulsive and impulsive buying still in its infancy stage in South Africa, the propensity towards compulsive buying may intensify or wane, depending on the extent of advertising, marketing and the increased availability of online shopping.

Besides a need for continued monitoring of buying traits of Gauteng shoppers, similar research is suggested for other regions in South Africa to estimate the prevalence of impulsive and compulsive buying. Such an

approach will ideally support comparative analysis of prevalence estimates for compulsive buying, which currently range from 1 to 10% of adults in western developed economies such as the UK and US (Dittmar, 2005). Research for establishing differential roles of geographic and socioeconomic factors across product category and retail type would also be valuable and contribute to the knowledge pool of consumer behaviour. In the interim, the study presents useful findings on buying traits in Gauteng for the retail industry to improve their segmentation and marketing strategies, built on moral principles that would benefit both retailers and the consumer alike.

Finally, the study builds on and contributes to the knowledge pool on consumer behaviour in South Africa and reflects on the prevalence of buying traits and propensity of consumers to provide market information.

The findings are also important methodologically as they reinforce and support the reliability and validity of previous buying behaviour measurement scales used in similar studies abroad. Ultimately, it is anticipated that the research will not only apply and be useful to the retail industry, but is also likely to also impact on the field of social psychology.

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