

Full Length Research Paper

A study of the factors that affect the impulsive cosmetics buying of female consumers in Kaohsiung

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When marketing products, vendors tend to incite consumers' intention to buy impulsively through various methods of stimulation. This fact has led to the increasing complexity of the factors which determine impulsive buying. This research analyzed the factors which determine impulsive buying, and used questionnaires and a focus group survey in order to study the factors that determine female consumers' impulsive purchases of cosmetics.

Key words: Female consumers, impulsive trait, impulse buying tendency, cosmetics marketing, retailing marketing.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, with the advancement of women's economic status and self-conscience, impulsive buying has increased. Therefore, it is important to learn the factors which determine female consumers' impulsive cosmetics purchases.

It is vital to investigate factors affecting impulsive behavior for retailing or in-store marketing and promotion, as previous studies have been unable to reach a consensus. The purpose of this study is to investigate:

- i. the specific impulsive traits of Taiwanese women with regard to buying cosmetics;
- ii. The factors which determine this special trait;
- iii. The differences in impulsive buying according to demographic variables.

This study will also provide suggestions for the marketing and promotion of cosmetics and retailing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of impulsive buying

Rook and Fisher (1995) defined impulsive buying as a consumer's tendency to buy spontaneously, unreflectively, immediately and kinetically. Wood (1998) expressed impulse buying as akrasia or a "weakness of will." Specifically, this study defines impulse buying as buying behavior which is unplanned and unreflective. Impulsive buying is driven by external stimuli, such as retailer promotion strategies, which may make consumers ambivalent and trigger the need to make a purchase immediately.

Impulse buying tendency

Rook (1987) pointed out that the sudden urge to buy is likely to be triggered by a visual confrontation with a product. This study describes the impulse buying tendency:

- i. The feeling of an overwhelming force emanating from

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- the product and an intense feeling of needing to buy the product immediately;
- ii. Consumers' tendency to buy spontaneously and unreflectively;
 - iii. An emotional reaction which is ambiguous and out of control;
 - iv. A strong impulse to buy a product immediately, often without much deliberation.

Factors affecting impulse buying

Impulse buying is influenced by a variety of economic, personal, temporal, spatial and even cultural factors. These vary not only between different shoppers considering purchasing the same item, but also for the same shopper buying the same item in different situations (Stern, 1962), and so, it is frequently assumed that personal and situational factors are significant.

In accordance with Chen (2001), this article describes the factors which influence impulse buying, such as external stimuli (buying frequency, store displays, promotions and advertising, atmosphere in the store and retailers), internal perceptions (lifestyle, personality, emotion, money and time pressure), buying behavior (price, the time of purchasing, payment) and demographic variables (age, gender, income, occupation, marital status, education, household income and social status). It is important for marketers to be aware of these four factors so that they can make a complete and functional marketing plan.

Impulsive buying situations

Different buying situations lead to different impulse buying behaviors. The influence of three factors (marketing stimuli, trait impulsivity and situational factors) in initiating impulse buying may vary between individuals, as well as between different occasions for the same individual (Dholakia, 2000). There is a tendency for consumers to buy impulsively when they are hedonistic and enjoy shopping (Hoch and Loewenstein, 1991; Dittmar et al., 1995). Beatty and Ferrell (1998) suggested that the more time is available, the greater the likelihood that a consumer will make a purchase. A customer with a strong tendency toward impulse buying is more likely to make a purchase than one with a weak tendency (Chen, 2001). However, increasing one's self-control helps to avoid impulse buying.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

Framework and hypothesis

This study focuses on female consumers' impulsive cosmetics purchases with regard to impulsive factors, and discusses the relationship between demographic variables, impulsive buying

factors and users' intention to impulse buy, and adding the impulsive trait in order to explore how impulse buying factors intervene this intention.

The research questionnaire was modified from that of Chen (2001). A focus group was also included in the survey in order to learn whether or not impulse buying is influenced by other factors.

Relationship between demographic variables and intention to impulse buy

Lai (2010) collected 906 adolescent Taiwanese students and found that 8 variables (gender, age, having taken a course in personal finance, use of money as a reward, family of origin, affective credit attitude, cognitive credit attitude, behavioral credit attitude, and money attitude) significantly influence impulsive buying. Demographic variables affect impulse buying: for instance, women are more likely to impulse buy than men (Kollat, 1969; Wood, 1998; Chen, 2001).

This study focused on female consumers over 20 years of age, and therefore the following hypotheses were constructed:

H_{1a}: The demographic variables of female consumers significantly influence the intention to impulse buy.

H_{1b}: Demographic variables of female consumers significant affect the factors which have a significant influence on consumers' impulse buying.

Relationship between factors affecting impulse buying and intention to impulse buy

Tendai and Crispen (2009) found that coupons and vouchers, store display, advertisements and promotions, behaviors of shop staff and price were significant determinants of impulsive buying. This study assesses three factors which affect impulse buying, they are corporate promotions, individual budget and personnel sales promotions. Therefore, this study hypothesizes:

H₂: Factors affecting females' impulse buying will have a significant positive effect on impulse buying intention.

The relationship between impulse buying tendency and intention to impulse buy

Faced with the same corporate promotions, advertising and personnel promotions, highly impulsive buyers are more likely to impulse buy. Therefore, this study hypothesizes:

H₃: When faced with corporate promotions, advertising and personnel promotions, highly impulsive buyers will have a greater intention to impulse buy than less impulsive buyers.

Characteristic impulsivity

Characteristic impulsivity refers to a consumer's tendency to impulse buy. By adapting the work of Chen (2001), this research used six questions to measure consumers' impulsivity, and used the average dimension (mean = 3.12) to distinguish highly impulsive female buyers from less impulsive ones.

Impulse buying intention

Impulse buying intention is an intention to buy which is unreflective, unplanned and without deliberation; consumers feel a sudden, consuming, immediate and irresistible urge to buy. The study used

Table 1. ANOVA of impulse characteristic clusters.

Variable	Cluster	Number	Mean	S.D.	F-value	p-value
Impulse characteristic	Enough money	148	1.621	0.486	34.380	0.000
	The way of the world	131	1.580	0.495		
	Advertising promotions	71	1.098	0.300		

an approach which is similar to those of Weinberg and Gottwald (1982), Rook (1987) and Chen (2001) to design two questions in order to investigate whether or not a consumer has the impulse buying characteristic.

Questionnaire design

Based on Chen's (2001) scale and group interviews, this study used a Likert scale with its questionnaire, where 5 = "strongly agree", 4 = "agree", 3 = "neutral", 2 = "disagree" and 1 = "strongly disagree".

Demographic variables

This study measured marital status, age, education, occupation and income in order to test the factors influencing impulse buying.

Reliability and validity

Fifty questionnaires were used to pre-test the items, and the Cronbach's α values were all over 0.71. With regard to the formal questionnaire, 360 female consumers over 20 years old in Kaohsiung participated in the study. A total of 350 valid questionnaires were collected, with a response rate of 97.2%. The Cronbach's α values were all over 0.616. In practice, a Cronbach's α above 0.6 is acceptable, which means that the reliability of the questionnaire is within an acceptable range. Furthermore, factor analysis extracted three new factors which affect impulse buying: "corporate promotions"; "individual budget"; and "personnel promotions". The overall Cronbach α values of the new constructs were above 0.822. The questionnaire was based on scales used in previous studies, which had been modified by experts and scholars, leading to good level of expert validity.

DATA ANALYSIS

Cluster analysis

Ward's coefficients revealed an increasing tendency at the stage from 344 to 350; therefore, impulse buying behavior can be categorized into three groups. The K-mean shows that the three clusters are sufficient money, the way of the world and advertising promotions. Table 1 shows that participants in the clusters of sufficient money and the way of the world, have higher scores for the impulse buying characteristic.

The chi-square test of the demographic variables indicated that education ($\chi^2=29.683$, $p=0.000<0.001$) and occupation ($\chi^2=55.304$, $p=0.000<0.001$) were significantly

associated with characteristic impulsivity. The majority of participants in the "sufficient money" cluster were university graduates (N=70) and engaged in tertiary industries (N=54), as were those in "the way of the world" cluster (N=64, N=48). These two clusters differ, in that, the former is more easily affected by budget whereas the latter is affected by spokespeople. The majority of participants in advertising cluster are people working in high schools (N=42) or public officials (N=26).

Variation analysis

The t-test indicated that there were no significant differences in the factors affecting female impulse buying because of marital status or age. Impulse buying intention varied significantly between participants aged 31 and 40 years old and those aged 41 years old or above ($F=6.049$, $p=0.003$): females aged over 41 years old (mean=4.000) had higher impulse buying intentions than females aged between 31 and 40 years old (mean=3.400).

There were also no significant differences in impulse buying intention due to education. The influence of promotions on high school students and university students was significantly different ($F=14.297$, $p=0.000$), as university students (mean=4.111) were more likely to be affected by promotions than high school students (mean=3.779).

There was no significant difference between promotions and impulse buying intention. Promotions' influence on public officials is significantly different from its on tertiary industries ($F=2.973$, $p=0.001$). And promotions had an even stronger influence on tertiary industries (mean=4.100) than public officials (mean=3.672). With regard to budget, business managers (mean=4.133) and self-employed respondents (mean=3.375) achieved significantly different results ($F=2.656$, $p=0.033$).

The factors affecting female compulsive buying and impulse buying intention were not significantly different as a result of income. An income between NT\$ 20,001 to 30,000 and NT\$ 30,001 to 40,000 had a significant effect on promotions ($F=2.656$, $p=.033$), and consumers with an income of NT\$ 20,001 to 30,000 (mean=4.096) were more likely to be influenced by promotions than those with NT\$ 30,001 to 40,000 (mean=3.862). Therefore, it is assumed that parts of H_{1a} and H_{1b} are supported.

Table 2. Hierarchical regression summary table of characteristic impulsivity.

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	Beta	t	p	Beta	t	p	Beta	t	p
Corporate promotions (CP)	0.287	5.058	0.000	0.049	1.203	0.230	0.322	1.582	0.115
Budget (MB)	0.259	4.725	0.000	-0.049	-1.295	0.196	-0.503	-2.254	0.025
Personnel promotions (PP)	0.173	3.331	0.001	0.012	0.329	0.742	0.050	0.227	0.821
Characteristic impulsivity (CI)				0.760	16.52	0.000	0.766	16.64	0.000
CP*CI							-0.262	-1.303	0.193
MB*CI							0.445	2.029	0.043
PP*CI							-0.040	-0.184	0.854
F-value		65.778***			127.727***			74.102***	
R ²		0.363			0.599			0.605	
Adjusted R ²		0.358			0.594			0.597	
ΔR ²					0.320			0.006	

*: p<0.05, **: p<0.01, ***: p<0.001.

The factors affecting female impulse buying and impulse buying intention

Regression analysis

Regression analysis shows that corporate promotions, individual budget and personnel promotions are positively correlated with impulse buying intention (R²=0.363, F=65.778) (p<0.001), and that sales (β=0.287, p< 0.001), budget (β=0.259, p< 0.001) and promotions (β=0.173, p< 0.01) can effectively predict impulse buying intention, as (after adjustment) the predictive power is 35.8% (R²=0.358). Therefore, it is assumed that H₂ is supported. The regression equation is IBI=0.287CP***+0.259MB***+0.173PP** and the adjusted R² is 0.358 (F=65.778, p=0.000).

Test of the moderating effect of female consumers' characteristic impulsivity

According to the hierarchical regression in Table 2 analysis in model 1, manufacturer promotions (β=0.287, p<0.001), individual budget (β=0.259, p<0.001) and personnel promotions (β=0.173, p<0.01) had a significant predictive power with regard to impulse buying intention (R=36.39%, F=65.778, F=65.778).

When the moderating variable (characteristic impulsivity) was added, the predictive power of model 2 reached the significant value of 59.9% (F=127.727, p<0.001), which suggests that characteristic impulsivity can effectively improve the predictive power of the model. While the predictive power of the three independent variables in model 1 has a tendency to decline, which shows that the three cannot explain impulse buying intention, they still act as the independent variables in the model.

After adding a moderator, the predictive power of model 3 reached 60.5% (F=74.102, p<0.001). There was a 6% increase in its predictive power (p>0.05), which means that the moderator did not improve the predictive power of the model. However, as can be inferred from characteristic impulsivity, individual budget has a significantly positive effect on impulse buying intention (β=0.445, p<0.05). Therefore, when there is sufficient money, and stronger characteristic impulsivity, the greater the impulse buying intention. Therefore, H₃ is supported.

Focus group interview

In order to test whether or not the factors affecting impulse buying found in this research differ from those found in previous studies, a total of eight highly impulsive female consumers participated in a 50-60-min focus group interview. The topics were:

- i. What factors affect female consumers' intention to buy cosmetics?
- ii. Before purchasing cosmetic products, from experience, what factors affect female consumers' buying intention?
- iii. Advice on marketing strategies for cosmetics companies.

The data analysis revealed that, with the exception of environmental stimuli, attitudes towards personnel promotions, sales, corporate promotions and the way to pay, increasing Unique Sales Point, good spokespeople, nice service, add-value promotions and creative positive emotional arousal will improve impulse buying.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

An assumption made in the results of hypotheses testing

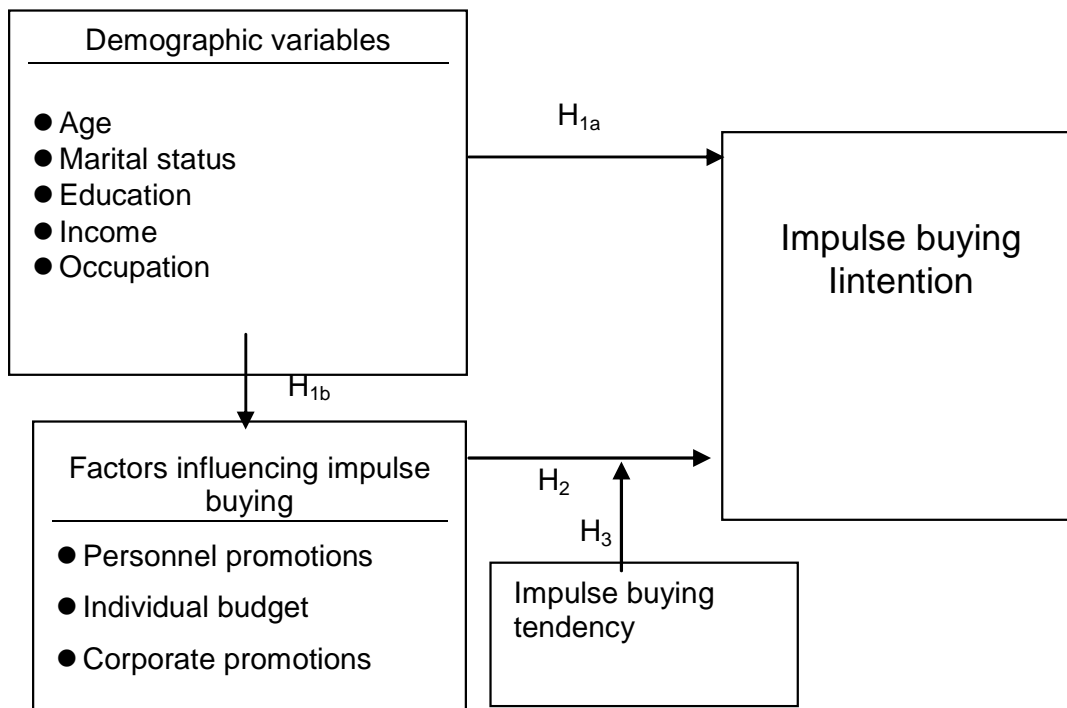


Figure 1. Research framework.

was that impulse buying intention will be significantly affected by female consumers' demographic characteristics, but cannot be significantly associated with impulse buying behavior. Factors affecting impulse buying have a significantly positive effect on buying intention.

Highly impulsive female consumers are more likely to have impulse buying intentions.

The influence of demographic variables on impulse buying intention

Females over 41 years old are more likely to intend to impulse buy, perhaps because they have a permanent salary and would like to spend money on themselves. Education, occupation and income do not make a difference to impulse buying intention. Promotions have an effect on female consumers. University students are more likely to be affected by this, female consumers in tertiary industries have a stronger tendency to be affected by manufacturers' promotions than public officials, and business managers are more likely to be affected by budget, because more money may lead to more impulse buying.

Impulse buying intention is significantly and positively influenced by factors affecting impulse buying

Female consumers' buying intention is easily affected by advertising, displays of goods, atmosphere, promotions and sales. In addition, female impulse buying intention can increase because of the performance of salespeople and recommendations from other customers. Therefore, factors affecting impulse buying have a significantly positive effect on impulse buying intention.

Impulse buying behavior is significantly and positively affected by characteristic impulsivity

When highly impulsive female consumers have more money, their impulse buying intention becomes stronger. Highly impulsive female consumers are not affected by promotions; they buy impulsively when they have enough money.

Implications

1. Create a buying atmosphere: This research shows in Figure 1 that with a sufficient budget, highly impulsive female consumers will have stronger impulse buying intentions. With the exception of credit cards and paying in installments, how can consumers be encouraged to buy more without increasing their salary? This study suggests that integrated marketing will increase consumers' impulse buying intention.

2. Provide comparative and immediate information about prices: Most of the female consumers with low levels of impulsivity had a tendency toward rational consumption, even when money was available. Therefore, marketers are faced with a problem: how can they kindle this type of consumer's purchase impulsion? Based on the concept of rational purchase behaviors, this study suggests providing them with immediate, comparative information about prices as part of sales promotions in order to increase their buying intention.

3. Different marketing models according to consumer demand: This research was conducted during the anniversary of the great shopping mall and shows that it is easy to increase the impulse buying intention of women over 41 years old.

Therefore, we suggested that if a consumer is over 41 years of age, promotion specialists should emphasize the functionality of the product, such as being shrink-proof and anti-aging. It is easy to encourage the impulse to buy in these consumers following sales promotions. Simultaneously, more expensive products are also suitable for this generation. Different forms of marketing are recommended, such as discounts in malls for pregnant or single women, which will greatly enhance their impulse buying intention.

Future research suggestions

We suggest that future researchers conduct in-depth studies or field research interviews. With the interaction between longitudinal interviews and observation, researchers can achieve multi-method research results from various perspectives. This interaction can also be conducive to the improvement of industrial marketing. In addition, various mutational aspects and other testing time (for example, specific festive) should be taken into consideration in order to help to expand this research in the future.

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