AUTHOR(S): BREMNER, P.A.M., HAMILTON, M. and MCLENNAN, K.

TITLE: Impulse shopping in convenience stores does gender make a difference?

YEAR: 2006

Publisher citation: BREMNER, P.A.M., HAMILTON, M. and MCLENNAN, K. 2006. Impulse shopping in convenience stores does gender make a difference? In the Proceedings of the 12th European Institute of Retailing and Service Studies (EIRASS): recent advances in retailing and services sciences, 9-12 July 2006, Budapest, Hungary.

OpenAIR citation: BREMNER, P.A.M., HAMILTON, M. and MCLENNAN, K. 2006. Impulse shopping in convenience stores does gender make a difference? In the Proceedings of the 12th European Institute of Retailing and Service Studies (EIRASS): recent advances in retailing and services sciences, 9-12 July 2006, Budapest, Hungary. Held on OpenAIR [online]. Available from: https://openair.rgu.ac.uk

Impulse shopping in convenience stores does gender make a difference?

* Pauline A M Bremner, The Robert Gordon University (will participate)
^ Morag Hamilton, The Robert Gordon University
> Kirsty McLennan, c/o The Robert Gordon University

*The Robert Gordon University,
Department of Hotel, Tourism & Retail Management
Aberdeen Business School, The Robert Gordon University
Aberdeen, Scotland
AB10 7QG
Tel: +44 1224 263012
Fax: +44 1224 263333
e-mail: p.bremner@rgu.ac.uk

^ The Robert Gordon University,
Department of Hotel, Tourism & Retail Management
Aberdeen Business School, The Robert Gordon University
Aberdeen, Scotland
AB10 7QG
Tel: +44 1224 263027
Fax: +44 1224 263333
e-mail: m.hamilton@rgu.ac.uk

> C/O The Robert Gordon University,
Department of Hotel, Tourism & Retail Management
Aberdeen Business School, The Robert Gordon University
Aberdeen, Scotland
AB10 7QG

Impulse shopping in convenience stores does gender make a difference?

Keywords:

Impulse purchasing; Buyer behaviour; Gender: Comparison; Convenience Store:

Abstract:
The paper explores the phenomenon of impulse purchasing, which accounts for a growing proportion of total retail spend. The study investigates whether males and females act differently in respect of impulse purchasing.

Impulse purchasing has been previously investigated in a range of settings and across a range of product types. The retail setting selected here is the convenience store (c-store) sector because c-stores depend traditionally on top-up, distress and impulse purchases. The types of purchases made at convenience stores are generally smaller items. An objective of c-stores is to get customers to increase their spending on higher value items.

C-stores have a core user group of 26% of adults. Differences in purchasing behaviour between genders are explored in the paper. Literature on comparisons between male and female shopping behaviour is reviewed and related to findings on variations in shopping behaviour previously identified in the c-store sector.

Within the above context, quantitative primary research was undertaken. 300 postal questionnaires (150 each to males and females) were carried out with consumers from a Scottish locality. Attitudes towards their local convenience store and their purchasing habits when shopping there were investigated.

The majority of respondents were female (59.8%) aged 36-50 (26.2%). Males and females had similar rank orders for choice of c-store attributes, with satisfaction of impulse needs being ranked equally unimportant by both groups. Their expectations of c-stores were similar; however there were some differences in purchasing habits. Results indicated gender differences concerning purchasing behaviour within convenience stores, both for planned and unplanned purchases. The most significant variances were females having a higher level of agreement that impulse purchasing is related to trying new products and having a higher level of satisfaction with the majority of impulse purchases.

Recommendations for c-store retailers are that the merchandising techniques used to stimulate impulse purchases may have to be reconsidered in relation to gender.

Introduction

Impulse buying behaviour has been studied for over 40 years, during which time, retailing has evolved from being a required activity for acquiring essential goods, to much more of a social and leisure activity (Dittmar *et al.,* 1996). During this time period, impulse purchases have accounted for a significant proportion of sales in many product groups (Bellenger *et al.,* 1978; Dittmar *et al.;* 1996; Zhou and Wong, 2003). Millner (2002), reported findings from research where 68% of major shopping trip purchases and 54% of smaller shopping trip purchases were unplanned, and noted that 'in a recent UK POPAI study, over 70% of all purchase decisions were in store' (p.38). The traditional types of retail outlets where impulse purchasing has always been prevalent are petrol stations, convenience stores (c-store) and newsagents. These types of outlet have so far not been included in published studies on impulse purchasing behaviour.

Demographic and lifestyle changes such as the ageing population, growth in single person households, shifts in the gender making grocery purchases and the pressures on time, are predicted to continue to benefit the convenience sector. Traditionally women have been the principal grocery shoppers, but this is changing. It has been suggested that men and women shop differently, although Otnes and McGrath (2000) concluded that the stereotypes for male shopping behaviour are changing. Understanding these changes in shopping behaviour is important for convenience retailers since men are growing users in this sector.

The aim of this paper is to compare and contrast the behaviours of males and females when impulse purchasing in convenience stores. The objectives of the paper are to briefly review literature on impulse shopping, male/female shopping behaviours and the convenience store market. The findings from a piece of exploratory research using a questionnaire survey will be discussed, followed by a set of conclusions for the convenience sector.

Impulse buying

Arnould *et al.,* (2004, p.678) defines impulse shopping as "purchases that occur when consumers experience a sudden, often powerful, and persistent emotional urge to buy immediately." Bayley *et al*., (1998), and Piron (1991), discuss further definitions, distinguishing between unplanned and impulse purchasing and discuss various explanations of the phenomena. Impulse purchasing has increased over the last four decades, and according to Rook, "marketing innovations such as credit cards, cash machines, and instant credit, 24 hour retailing, and home shopping networks, now make it easier than ever for consumers to purchase on impulse" (1987, p.189). In addition, various advertising and promotion techniques used in stores also have an influence on the spontaneity of consumers' purchases or ideas.

Research into how consumers react to these stimuli and what makes customers react in the first place is important in order for the retailer and marketer to gain the best advantage to target impulsive shoppers.

Stern (1962) suggests there are four categories of impulse shopping that consumers can undertake, the first of these being 'pure impulse'. This involves consumers buying a product which is completely out of context and a break from their normal shopping routine. The second category is a ‘reminder’ impulse buy, noticing a product in a store and being reminded that it is needed. The third category is ‘suggestion’ impulse whereby a customer sees a product and feels the need for it. This type of purchase is slightly different to pure impulse buying as it involves the consumer trying to think that they are satisfying a functional need as opposed to an emotional need. The final category is ‘planned’ purchase, where consumers enter a store knowing that they are going to buy a product, but also have the intention to purchase additional items when there.

Taking into account Maslow’s (1943) ‘hierarchy of needs’ (cited in Chisnall 1995, p. 43), it can be seen that impulsive desires are not actually a need of the consumer but are ultimately just a want. Needs comprise five main categories including: physiological needs; safety needs; belongingness and love needs; esteem needs and the need for self actualisation (Chisnall 1995, p.43). These needs are vital for survival, however wants are purely a preference by consumers.

These impulsive desires come upon consumers so fast, and without any thought, that the consumer has the urge that they ‘want’ to buy a specific product. Very rarely do these consumers think about the consequences of their purchase and it is not always satisfaction that they gain. Some consumers, as suggested by Rook (1987) and Rook and Gardner (1993) reported feeling better after an impulsive purchase, whilst on the other hand some had feelings of guilt and regret from their purchase. Numerous customers wish to reap immediate benefits from their purchases instead of waiting slightly longer to gain more worthwhile long term rewards. This view was originally suggested by Strotz (1956) and Stigler and Becker (1977) who believed that “impulsive purchases as behavioural choices would not have been made had they been considered in terms of their long-term consequences rather than their immediate gratifying benefits.” Navarick (1987) supported this analysis as he believed that impulsive behaviours are a result of ratifying choices between immediate and future options in relation to its value which would be higher in the present than in the future. Bayley and Nancarrow (1998) propose that any feelings of guilt resulting from impulse purchasing can be rationalised by the following behavioural strategies: overbuying (returning some or all to the store); hidden owning (hiding in the wardrobe – subjectively not bought); comparative expenditure (competing with the purchases of a partner/peer; self-gift (self indulgence / reward) (Bayley and Nancarrow, 1998, p.108).

Recent findings (Haussman 2000; Arnould *et al.*, 2004; Bayley and Nancarrow, 1998) suggest that impulse buying, instead of being a negative behaviour, ‘represents a rational alternative to more time-consuming search behaviours’, which ‘can be viewed as a valued pastime rather than just a means of acquiring goods’ (Hausman, 2000, pp.413-414). This explanation supports the continuing increase in impulse purchasing. It is recommended that ‘marketers need to focus as much on entertainment, interest and excitement as they do on getting the mix of merchandise right and the pricing spot on’ (Hausman, 2000, p.419).

Recent more hectic lifestyles of consumers result in less time to plan grocery shopping. Dickson and Sawyer (1990) indicated that a majority of product purchase decisions were made in under 15 seconds. Many consumers as suggested by Stern (1962, p.60), "utilise the store itself as a giant catalogue from which they make their selections, supported by the considerable product information available in the store." In addition to this, as Williams and Dardis (1972) discuss, there is growth in unrestricted purchasing and less planning of spending.

The factors which encourage these consumers to impulse buy include, "prices, product characteristics and packaging, point of purchase advertising and sales personnel" (McGoldrick, 2002, p.485). However, according to Shapiro (2001, p.40) the key factor to impulse buying which McGoldrick (2002) has omitted, is location. It is important that the products within the store are located where they will tempt the consumer to buy them as they walk past. This should encourage the consumer to have an impulsive urge to have something as they browse around the store. N.A. (2001, p.1) recommends that all basic items should be at the back of a store in order for the consumer to walk through all the goods which might tempt them, before they get to the products which they actually came in for.

Consumer behaviour – differences between genders

The escalating number of single person households has contributed to the shift in the gender dominance when it comes to grocery shopping. Females were traditionally responsible for the household (Dholakia, 2004), but due to changes in society, including growth in the number of women working and more single men living alone or in single parent families, more males are having to undertake a larger part of the shopping (Keynote, 2004).

There are a number of models which identify buying processes, such as that of Engel-Kollat-Blackwell, 1978 and of Howard-Ostlund, 1973 (cited in Chisnall 1995, p.203). These models do not explain impulse purchasing behaviour. Engel and Blackwell (1982) believe that "a buying action undertaken without a problem previously having been consciously recognised or a buying intention formed prior to entering the store", (cited in McGoldrick 2002, p.486) is impulse buying.

According to authors such as Ezell and Motes (1985) and Otnes and McGrath (2000) further research into male shopping behaviour is needed. This rationale for further research is also strengthened by the fact that different authors writing on the subject have conflicting views on how males shop.

Ezell and Motes (1985, p.33) state that "males find grocery shopping more of an undesirable activity than females", whereas McGoldrick (2002, p.92) claims that among primary shoppers within households, men are more likely to "enjoy supermarket shopping." This differing view may be due to changes in male behaviour over the 20 year period separating the two papers. However lack of research in this area indicates that further study is required.

One of the main differences between shopping behaviours of men and women is that women find shopping a pleasurable experience as a social activity, whereas men do not (Otnes and McGrath, 2000). Men tend to want to get their shopping completed in as little time as possible, and do not wish to prolong the process any longer than they have to. Campbell (1997, p.166) explains that "men who shop see themselves as fulfilling an instrumental need, rather than engaging in shopping for shopping's sake." Women on the other hand, find shopping an enjoyable activity and are prone to browsing around the various displays or aisles. As a result of this it might be expected that men would be more regular shoppers at convenience stores rather than women, as they would want to spend as little time as possible in the store. This premise is borne out in Table 1.

Take in table 1

The Convenience Store Market

"A convenience store is defined as a small grocer, confectioner, tobacconist and newsagent (CTN), off licence or petrol forecourt shop, trading for 7 days a week, open from 8am to 11pm or for 24 hours a day; located within a local community, for whom it offers a source for regular daily purchases, top-up and emergency items, and a range of services" (McGoldrick 2002, p.60).

The convenience retailing sector, whilst once a declining market when large supermarket multiples became more dominant, in recent years has regained position as operators have modernised their stores and adapted product ranges to suit consumer needs. The convenience market is a growing area valued at £23 billion in 2004, which was a 7% increase on the previous year, and is predicted to rise to £29 billion by 2009 (The Local Shop, 2004). More details are identified in Table 2.

Take in Table 2

C-stores provide traditional distress or impulse product categories such as: milk; bread; cakes; newspapers; confectionery; cigarettes; tobacco; soft drinks and lottery tickets; products which consumers may need at any time of the day. By stocking these in a 'convenient' location they are readily accessible and consumers will frequent these stores to make top up purchases which are supplementary to their weekly or monthly shopping. The key for growth for the c-store retailer is to extend the top up buy with additional larger impulse purchases (McGoldrick, 2002). Population trends are very favourable for the convenience sector. The average age of the UK population has risen with an increased proportion of older people. The proportion of males to females is approximately the same in each age range with the exception of 65+ where females exceed males. Smaller households make up the bulk of total households in the UK (Mintel, 2002).

A growing consumer type is the single person household category who are mainly in their twenties. "They tend to go out (and eat out) in the evening more frequently, eat at more irregular mealtimes and make fewer planned grocery purchases" (Research and Markets, 2003, p.1). Gordon (2004) states that "food and grocery is the third biggest element of household expenditure, accounting for 13% in 2003 and for 49p in every £1 of retail spending" (p.27). In addition, almost two thirds of adults are known to visit a convenience store at least once a week (Mintel, 2003).

Consumers are believed to lead increasingly hectic lifestyles (Partos, 2002) and taking "time out" to do a "supermarket shop" is not always convenient. As a result of this, many retailers are diversifying their outlets into a combination of formats in an attempt to capture market share by selling ‘top-up’ products to consumers who have limited time to shop.

A further lifestyle change is that many consumers spend a large part of their day commuting to work. As Partos (2002) highlighted “the average person spent an extra thirty six and a half hours travelling in 2001, than they did in 1995”. Many consumers do not wish to commute to do extra ‘supermarket shops’ on days off, thus extending the need for c-stores to offer appropriate product ranges from stores close to home and on route whilst commuting. This is seen by the increasing proliferation of such outlets at commuter transport hubs.

Men, and women, use convenience stores for different reasons. As shown in Table 3, women tend to use the stores for basic grocery items such as milk and bread. The Convenience Retailing Mintel report (2003), states that “women appear to use convenience stores on a less frequent basis and may only do so for top-up purchasing of items between regular shopping trips to grocery stores” (Mintel, 2003). On the other hand men (especially those who are younger and less affluent), are more frequent users than women and use the stores for non essential grocery items such as newspapers, confectionery, cigarettes, snacks and soft drinks.

Take in table 3

As mentioned previously, male shoppers generally prefer to shop as quickly as possible and will not spend time browsing like a female. It follows that they should be less susceptible to impulse purchasing. Nonetheless, opposing this view, a Mintel report conducted on the sophisticated shopper, claims that “nearly one in four adults (23%) say that they are prone to buying something that they really like without considering the price; males are more likely than females to do this” (Mintel, 2002). There is a need for further research into gender differences in shopping behaviour in the modern retail environment.

There have been various individual research projects undertaken into convenience stores, genders differences in consumer behaviour and impulse shopping. However, a research gap exists when all three areas are examined together. The hypothesis being tested in this exploratory study is that:

H1 = There is no difference between genders in respect of impulse buying behaviour in c-stores.

Methodology

Comparisons between the two genders were made by means of a postal questionnaire distributed to an equal number of male (n=150) and female (n=150) c- store shoppers from Aberdeen and surrounding areas. A questionnaire was utilised as it is a useful tool for collecting information on consumer preferences (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 1991). The postal element was included to capture consumers from a wide range of convenience stores, to give consumers more time for completion and to reduce interviewer bias (Kent, 1999). Owen and Jones

(1994) suggest a postal questionnaire can yield a response rate of approximately 30% of the targeted sample.

A non-probability convenience sampling procedure, (Saunders *et al*., 2003), selecting the respondents from an employer database was used. A screening question was used in the accompanying cover letter, to ascertain, whether or not the potential respondent purchased from their local convenience store.

The questionnaire was designed taking into account findings from the literature review and consisted of twenty six questions, including a mixture of 3 open, 13 closed, 1 ten point ranking question, and 9 five-point Likert scale questions. Questions were devised to obtain respondents opinions; on convenience stores; their usage and awareness of them; their attitudes to impulse purchases and respondent demographic information. Closed questions were used for quantitative data collection (Easterby-Smith *et al*., 1991), with open questions being used in order to gauge attitudes and allow respondents to reply in depth in any way they wish (Sekaran, 2000).

Prior to posting out the 300 final questionnaires, a pilot questionnaire was completed by a group of 30 (10% of targeted sample) consumers to assess whether any modifications were required. Bell's (1987) approach was utilised for the procedure. Seven changes were made to produce a final questionnaire, which was posted to the sample with a stamped addressed envelope and a covering letter stipulating a closing date for replies.

SPSS x version 13 was used to produce respondent profiles, identify consumer purchasing patterns and compare gender behaviour on impulse purchasing. Means tests were undertaken to compare and contrast sample groups. The Freidman test was conducted on the ranking question to analyse the differences in means among the ten ranked attributes and to test for significance. A 2-tailed Mann Whitney test was conducted on the mean ratings from the Likert scale questions to determine any significant differences between males and females. The Null hypothesis was that there would be no difference between the responses of males and females. A significance level of 5% ($p<0.05$) was set.

Results discussion

For ease of discussion this section is split into three themes; respondent profile; respondent shopping behaviour and male and female comparisons of impulse shopping behaviour in their local c- store.

Respondent profile

The respondents targeted with the postal questionnaire yielded a response rate of 40% (n=122). The majority of the respondents questioned were female (59.8%) and were of the age range of 36 - 50 (26.2%). The main age range for the male respondents was the same (17.2%). Ideally a 50:50 split of genders would have been preferred but due to time limitations for this study this number could not be achieved (Figure 1).

Take in figure 1

In terms of other demographic attributes, 71.4% of the males and 42.5 % of the female respondents were married and 16.3 % of the males and 35.5 % of the females were single, with the remainder of the respondents being divorced or separated. The majority of the respondents lived in a two or four bedroom household for both genders.

Consumer shopping patterns
The c-store frequented by most of the respondents was the Scottish Co-op, followed closely by a mixture of local independents, and the Spar. Somerfield, ASDA and Tesco were also included within the replies even although ASDA does not have any c- store formats within this locality. This is indicative that some consumers are not fully aware of what a c-store is.

In terms of store patronage and the length of time respondents spent in a store, the majority of both males (46.9%) and females (49.3%) shop within their local c-store once or twice a week, with males (36.7%) spending between £3.00 - £5.00 a visit and women spending £1.00 - £3.00 (32.9%) and £5.00 - £10.00 (32.9%) respectively. The majority of total respondents (82.0%) stated they would not use their local c-store for their main grocery shop but only for top up shopping, which is supported by the length of time spent in store. Males prefer to spend a shorter length of time in their c- store than females, with the female respondents questioned stating that they shopped for around 6-10 minutes (Figure 2).

Take in figure 2

These findings in relation to top up shopping reinforce the view of McGoldrick (2002) that c-stores are used solely for top up purchases. The timing pattern identified supports the findings of Campbell (1997) and Otnes and McGrath (2000) who suggested that men undertake shopping purely for the functional need and not for pleasure. They further suggested this as being the reason why men frequent c-stores more regularly and spend little time in the shop. This theory is strengthened by these new findings as even though men and women both visited the store once or twice a week; most men spent less than 5 minutes in the store whilst women spent 6–10 minutes there. This again reiterates the point of men's purposeful need to shop unlike women who prefer to browse.

Respondent shopping behaviour

From the total number of respondents consumers making purchases, females purchased more of each of the items than their male counterparts. The information is identified in table 4. The most commonly purchased items for the total respondents, was as expected milk, bread and newspapers/magazines (Table 4). Newspapers and magazines (48.2%) came first for women, prior to other traditional top up shopping products of milk (45.9%) and bread (40.2%). For the male consumers, milk (33.6%) came first followed by newspapers/magazines (31.1%) and bread (24.6%). The next most popular purchases for females were grouped as: groceries (27.9%); confectionary (26.2%); soft drinks (24.6%); lottery tickets (23.0%) and alcohol (20.5%). The same grouping appeared for the males but in the slightly different order of groceries (20.5%); confectionary (13.1%); alcohol (13.1%); soft drinks (9.80%) and lottery tickets (9.00%). The remaining items of tobacco and ‘other’ were similar for both genders, albeit in a slightly different order.

Take in table 4

This is a slightly different purchase pattern to that reported by Mintel in 2003, where females purchased more than their male counterparts except for the confectionary and newspaper categories. However the most popular items purchased mirror that of the Mintel findings i.e. milk; bread and newspapers which are the main stay of the c- store. In this case these findings may be as a result of females visiting supermarkets to purchase basic items and use c-stores solely for forgotten products or emergency items.

Respondents were asked to rank the importance of certain factors for using their local c-store. The Freidman test was used to calculate the mean rankings and to compare the rank orders. This is shown in Table 5 (where 1 equals the most important and 10 the least important).

Take in table 5

In general the findings for both genders proved to be similar, with Males (M) ranking six of the attributes more importantly than the females (F), suggesting they place more importance on c-store attributes than the females. Whilst there were slight differences in the mean rankings between genders the rank order of attributes was identical with only three exceptions. The most important c-store attributes were convenience (F/M = 1); distance from your home (F/M = 2); product availability (F/M =3) and product choice (F/M = 4). These attributes are important for the c-store retailer in relation to the reasons why consumers shop there. The three rank order exceptions existed for product price; customer service and small and friendly store. Here the females ranked price of products (F = 5, M = 6) and customer service (F = 6, M = 7) higher than the males and ranked small and friendly store lower (F = 7, M = 5). This is perhaps not surprising as females tend to place more importance on price and customer service attributes in general.

The remaining three attributes were ranked in the following order: satisfies impulse needs (F/M = 8); auto teller availability (F/M = 9); and lottery access (F/M = 10). Noticeably consumers do not place much importance on the satisfaction of impulse needs as they view the c-store as a convenient place to shop.

This has to a certain extent supported some of the points made by McGoldrick (2002) and Shapiro (2001), whereby the factors they noted as being encouragers of impulse buying have also been ranked as important here. These include the price, product characteristics, sales personnel (customer service) and location. However one of the main findings is that respondents don’t place a high importance on the satisfaction of impulsive needs in relation to the other factors. This adds to the research by N. A (2001) about product placement where basic products should be placed at the back of the store in order to tempt people to browse. Here in the c-store context it may be that consumers are not interested in browsing and want to find these basic items quickly with no real need to satisfy impulse needs.

Gender comparisons of the convenience store impulse purchases

In terms of impulse purchasing, 68% of the respondents admitted to impulse purchasing at their local convenience store. Of this figure, 65.1 % were female and only 34.9 % males. The results of the nine Likert scale questions in relation to the convenience of stores and impulse purchase practices are shown in table 6. The means, ranks and significances are identified. For the first eight questions, the closer the mean is to six the stronger in agreement the respondents feeling is toward the statement and conversely the closer the mean is to one the stronger the disagreement with the statement. The final question rates the respondents satisfaction, the closer the mean is to six the more satisfied the respondents are with their impulse purchase, and the closer to one they are, the more dissatisfied they are.

Take in table 6

For the three statements relating to convenience and locality of the c-store, both sets of respondents were generally similar in response i.e. being strongly agree, with the female respondents rating the statements slightly higher. Females ranked ‘the local store providing you with everything you need’ top equal with ‘the store providing you with a good availability of products’, whereas males ranked those attributes 1st and 2nd respectively. Both ranked location of c-store last.

Of the six questions asked in relation to the impulse buying of consumers the female respondents were in stronger agreement or more satisfied with the statements than the male respondents, although the strength of agreement was lower than the first three questions noted above. The rank order identified agreement between the two genders with the exception of the ‘impulse purchases are made due to consumers wanting to try new products’ (F = 4, M = 5) and ‘advertisements stimulating you to buy products on impulse’ (F =5, M = 4), where the respondents ranked them vice versa.

Two statements were significantly different between genders, these being “impulse purchases being made due to consumers wanting to try new products”, p = 0.02 and for the “satisfaction levels of impulse purchases” p = 0.02. This means that females are more likely to be influenced to buy new products on impulse than males and they are more likely to be satisfied with a majority of their impulse purchases within a c-store than men. Males were less satisfied once returning home with their products. When probing the reason for this issue through an open question, their reasons for disappointment were poor quality of products, products did not match the hype advertised or they felt that they had been overcharged.

These findings, coupled with the fact that 68% of the respondents admitted to purchasing on impulse, add to Zhou and Wong (2003); Bellenger *et al*; (1978) and Ditmar *et al’s* (1996); findings that retailers have to capitalise on the c-store market, as such a high percentage of consumers are susceptible to it. With more females than males making impulse purchases in this case, the extra five minutes females spend in c-stores may prove to be critical when targeting consumers with promotional displays aimed at encouraging impulsive purchases. Buying new products on impulse is more favoured by female respondents; it confirms the research conducted by McGoldrick (2002) and Shapiro (2001). It suggests that with the convenience sector becoming more competitive and with the growth in male shoppers becoming evident (Keynote, 2004) the level of dissatisfaction of males making impulse purchases found here could be of concern. It may also add to the work of Haussman (2000), Arnould (2004) and Bayley and Nancarrow (1998) where c-store consumers are adopting a quick method of shopping. Here males in particular are making decisions with speed such as that noted by Dickson and Sawyer (1990) suggesting that the merchandising techniques for females may not be so necessary for men.

Conclusions

This paper has indicated there are minor differences between males and females when impulse purchasing from c-stores. The main conclusions to be drawn are:

- Both genders articulated that they frequent their local c-store on a regular basis, confirming the demand for the local shop, supporting the Mintel research (2004);
- Similar traits were identified by both genders in relation to product purchases from their c-store reinforcing research conducted by Mintel (2004);
- The respondents indicated they have high expectations of the features of their local c-store. Overall good quality service which is fast and efficient appears to be a key aspect combined with location and availability of products. Interestingly enough, this research identified that satisfaction of impulse needs did not rank highly as a key aspect by either gender;
- Statistical differences between genders and impulse purchasing behaviour were found. Females are more likely to be influenced to buy new products on impulse and are more likely to be satisfied with impulse purchases than males. The fundamental rationale why these impulsive desires are acted upon is due to promotional activities from retailers combined with uncontrolled consumer behaviour traits.

Since this is an exploratory study a discussion of the full impact of these conclusions for retailers is beyond the scope of this paper. It is not unreasonable to state that with the growth in single households, the increase in males shopping and the time pressure on society, that in order for c-stores to compete on the basis of impulsive product purchasing more innovation is required in store.

The above conclusions must be considered with the limitations of the research, these being time, money and sample population. The respondents targeted were only a small percentage of the population and came from one locality thus the conclusions can not be fully representative of the UK population. However, this exploratory research would benefit from further investigation, of a qualitative nature to gain a more in-depth understanding of impulsive shopping behaviour. It would be worthwhile carrying out a similar study using a larger sample group in a wider area, or carry out a comparison study in a different geographical region, to access a broader sample.

TABLE 1 SHOPPING FREQUENCIES OF GENDERS WITHIN CONVENIENCE STORES (MINTEL 2003)

	Daily	4-6 times a week	2-3 times a week	Once a week	Once every 2-3 weeks	Once a month	Less than once a month	Never
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
All	18	8	23	16	6	6	7	17
Men	21	9	23	16	5	6	8	12
Women	16	7	24	17	6	5	5	20

TABLE 2 THE TOP FIFTEEN CONVENIENCE STORES BY NUMBER OF OUTLETS AND % SHARE 2002 (KEYNOTE 2004)

Convenience Store	Number of Outlets	% of Total
Spar UK	2538	4.6
Londis	2136	3.9
Lifestyle (Landmark)	1100	2.0
Costcutter	1086	2.0
One Stop (T&S Stores)	868	1.6
Esso	837	1.5
Texaco	787	1.4
TotalFinalElf	774	1.4
BP	724	1.3
Day Today (Nisa Today’s)	700	1.3
Premier (Booker)	700	1.3
Shell	663	1.2
Alldays	608	1.1
Best In (Bestway)	550	1.0
Co-operative Group	543	1.0

Table 3 GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF COMMONLY PURCHASED ITEMS (MINTEL 2003)

	Milk	Bread and Cakes	Newspapers and Magazines	Confectionery	Cigarettes and Tobacco	Soft Drinks
	%	%	%	%	%	%
All	63	46	46	25	21	21
Men	59	41	47	26	23	22
Women	66	51	44	24	19	19

FIGURE 1 GENDER AND AGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS

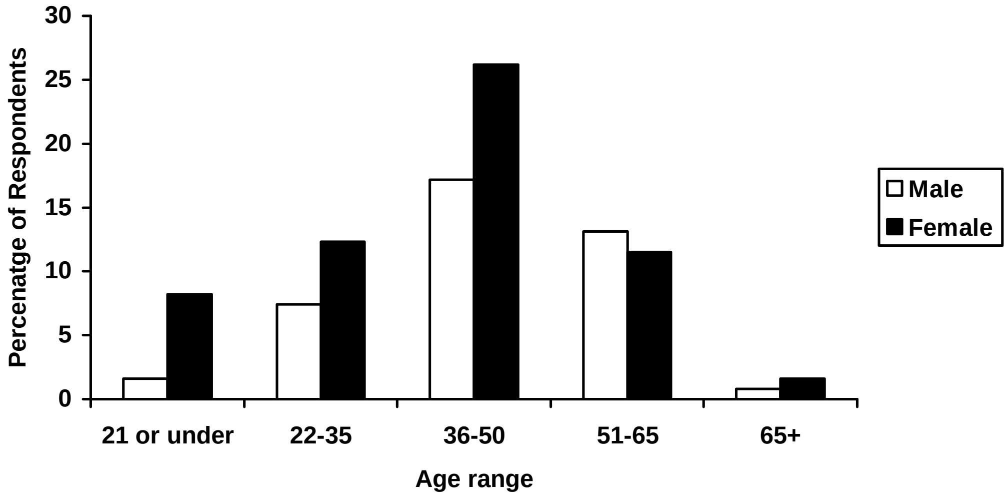

FIGURE 2 GENDER COMPARISONS OF TIME SPENT SHOPPING IN THE CONVENIENCE STORE

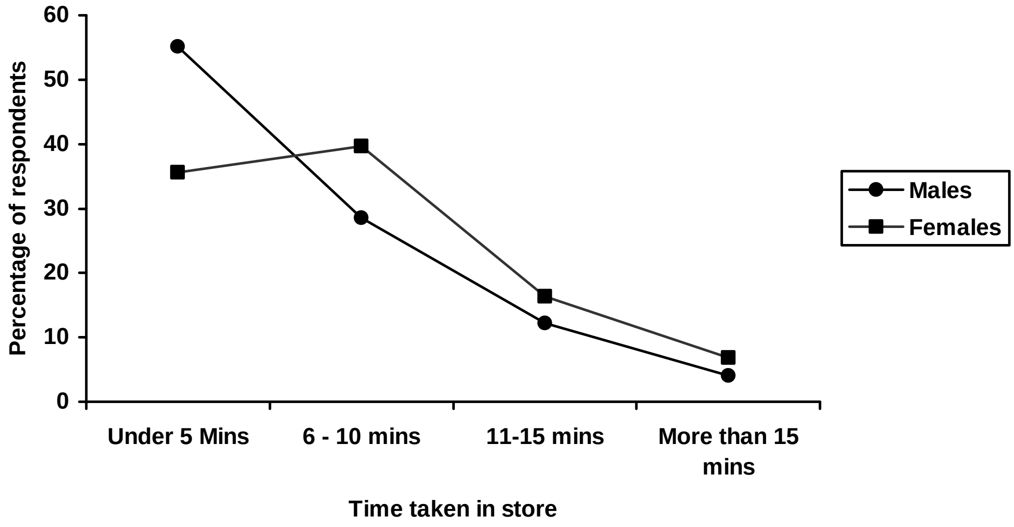

TABLE 4 GENDER COMPARISONS OF POPULAR PRODUCT PURCHASES IN C-STORES

Product	Male %	Female %	Total % Male and Female of n =122
Alcohol	13.1	20.5	33.6
Bread	24.6	40.2	**64.8**
Confectionery	13.1	26.2	39.3
Lottery Ticket	9.00	23.0	**32.0**
Milk	33.6	45.9	**79.5**
Newspapers/magazines	31.1	48.2	**79.5**
Soft Drinks	9.80	24.6	34.4
Tobacco	3.30	10.7	**13.9**
Groceries	20.5	27.9	48.4
Other	2.50	9.80	**12.3**

TABLE 5 GENDER COMPARISON RANKINGS OF MOST PERTINENT ATTRIBUTE FACTORS FOR CHOICE OF A C-STORE

Attribute	Male Mean Ranking	Male Rank Order	Female Mean Ranking	Female Rank Order
Convenience	2.99	1	3.65	1
Product Availability	4.13	3	4.25	3
Distance from your home	3.81	2	3.92	2
Access to Auto teller	6.83	9	6.84	9
Price of products	5.97	6	5.38	5
Lottery Machine availability	7.92	10	7.66	10
Small and friendly store	5.50	5	6.02	7
Customer Service	6.11	7	5.72	6
Satisfies impulse needs	6.92	8	6.50	8
Choice of Products	4.83	4	5.06	4

Level of importance where 1 = most important and 10 = least important

TABLE 6 GENDER COMPARISONS OF ATTRIBUTES OF THE C-STORE AND IMPULSE PURCHASING QUESTIONS

Attribute	Male Mean	Rank	Female Mean	Rank	2-Tail significance (p<0.05)
CONVENIENCE STORE QUESTIONS					
Does your store provide you with a good availability of convenience products	4.90	2	4.95	1 =	0.830
Do you feel your convenience store is close enough to your home	5.14	3	5.34	3	0.129
Does your local store provide you with everything you need on a convenient basis	4.73	1	4.95	1 =	0.130
IMPULSE QUESTIONS					
Do you think the price of products affect your behaviour to purchase on impulse +	3.41	1	4.07	1	0.056
If your normal brand is unavailable would you purchase an alternative product on impulse +	3.06	3	3.67	3	0.072
Impulse purchases are made due to consumers wanting to try new products +	2.82	5	3.55	4	0.024 *
Advertisements stimulate you to buy products on impulse +	3.00	4	3.52	5	0.166
Special offers (e.g. 3 for 2 , buy one get one free) tempt you to buy on impulse +	3.35	2	4.00	2	0.066
What has been the satisfaction level of the majority of your impulse purchases ^	3.12		3.85		0.022 *

+ Likert Scale 1 - 6 where 1 equals strongly disagree and 6 equals strongly agree
^ Likert Scale 1 - 6 where 1 equals extremely dissatisfied and 6 equals extremely satisfied
Mann Whitney Test
* Significant difference at 5% (p= <0.05)

REFERENCES

Arnould, E., Price, L. and Zinkhan, G. (2004) *Consumers*. 2nd ed. Boston: Mcgraw Hill.

Bayley, G. and Nancarrow, N. (1998) Impulse purchasing: a qualitative exploration of the phenomenon. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 1 (2) pp.99-114.

Bell, J. (1987) *Doing Your Research Project*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Bellenger, D.N., Roberson, D.N. and Hirshman, E.C. (1978) Impulse buying varies with product, *Journal of Advertising Research*, 18 (6) pp.15-18.

Campbell, C. (1997) *Shopping Pleasure And The Sex War*. *The Shopping Experience.* Pasi Faulk and Colin Campbell Edn, pp.166-175.

Chisnall, P. (1995) *Consumer Behaviour*. 3rd ed. Europe: McGraw Hill.

Dholakia, R. (2004) *Married Males And Shopping: Are They Sleeping Partners?* [Online] Kingston: Research Institute For Telecommunications And Information Marketing. Available From: <Http://Ritim.Cba.Uri.Edu/Wp/Wp94-05.Html>[Accessed 21 March 2005].

Dickson, P. and Sawyer, A. (1990) Price Knowledge and Search of Supermarket Shoppers. *Journal of Marketing*, 54 (3) pp.42-53.

Dittmar, H., Beattie, J. and Friese, S. (1996) Objects, decision considerations and self-image in men's and women's impulse purchases. *Acta Psychologica*, 93 pp.187-206.

Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R. and Lowe, A. (1991) *Management Research*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Ezell, H. F. And Motes, W.H. (1985) Differentiating Between the Sexes: A Focus on Male-Female Grocery Shopping Attitudes and Behaviour. *The Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 2 (2).

Hausman, A. (2000) A multi-method investigation of consumer motivations in impulse buying behaviour. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 17 (5) pp.403-419.

Kent, R. (1999) *Marketing Research: Measurement, Method and Application*. London: International Thomson Business Press.

Keynote. (2004) *Convenience Retailing*. London: Keynote.

Keynote. (2004) *Men and Women's Buying Habits*. London: Keynote.

McGoldrick, P. (2002) *Retail Marketing*. 2nd ed. London: McGraw Hill.

Millner, I. (2002) Burying the myth of impulse buying, *Brand Strategy*, September, p.38.

Mintel International Group Limited. (2002) *Selling To, And Profiting From, The Knowledgeable Sophisticated Consumer – UK*. London: Mintel Group.

Mintel International Group Limited. (2003) *Food Retailing – UK*. London: Mintel Group.

Mintel International Group Limited. (2004) *Convenience Retailing – UK*. London: Mintel Group.

N, A. (2001) The Art of Surviving Shopping. *Investor Digest (Malaysia).* [Online] Sept 16. Available From: < Http://Search.Epnep.Com >.[Accessed 9th November 2004].

Navarick, D. J. (1987) Reinforcement Probability and Delay as Determinants of Human Impulsiveness. *The Psychological Record*, 37, pp.219-226.

Otnes, C. and McGrath, M. A. (2001) Perceptions and Realities of Male Shopping Behaviour. *Journal of Retailing*, 77 (1) pp.111-137.

Partos, L. (2002) *Changing Face of Convenience Shopping*. [Online] France: Datamonitor. Available From: < Http://www.Foodnavigator.Com/ >[Accessed 4th November 2004].
Piron, F. (1991) Defining Impulse Purchasing, *Advances in Consumer Research,* 18 (1) pp.509-514.
Research And Markets. (2003) *Convenience Store Shopping*. [Online] Ireland: Datamonitor. Available From: <Http://www.Researchandmarkets.Com/ > [Accessed 4th November 2004]
Rook, D.W. and Gardner, M.P. (1993) In The Mood: Impulse Buying Affective Antecedents. *Journal of Research Consumer Behaviour,* 6, pp. 1-28.
Rook, D.W. (1987) The Buying Impulse. *Journal of Consumer Research,* 1 (2) pp.189-200.
Saunders, M., Lewis, P. And Thornhill, A. (2003) *Research Methods for Business Students*. 3rd ed. Essex: Pitman Publishing.
Sekaran, U. (2000) *Research Methods for Business*. 3rd ed. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
Shapiro, M.F. (2001) Impulse Purchases. *National Petroleum News,* 93 (7) pp.40-42.
Stern, H. (1962) The Significance of Impulse Buying Today. *Journal of Marketing,* 26 (2) pp.59-63.
Stigler, G. J. And Becker, G. S. (1977) De Gustibus Non Est Disputandum. *American Economic Review*, 67 (March) pp.76-90.
Strotz, R.H. (1956) Myopia and Inconsistency in Dynamic Utility Maximization. *Review of Economic Studies*, 23(2), pp.166-180.
The Local Shop. (2004) *UK Convenience Retailing Market Overview*. [Online] Hampshire: Association of Convenience Stores Ltd.
Williams, J. and Dardis, R. (1972) Shopping Behaviour for Soft Goods and Marketing Strategies. *Journal of Retailing*, 48 (3) pp.32-41.
Zhou, L. And Wong, A. (2003) Consumer Impulse Buying and In-Store Stimuli in Chinese Supermarkets. *Journal of International Consumer Marketing,* 16 (2) pp.37-54.