

A TEST OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BUYING IMPULSIVENESS AND IMPULSE PURCHASES: ADAPTING ROOK AND FISHER'S SCALE TO THE ALGERIAN CULTURAL CONTEXT

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Abstract

This research work aims to show the contribution of individual factors, specifically the buying impulsiveness, to making an impulse purchase. For this purpose, Rook and Fisher's scale (1995) is proposed to measure the level of impulsive purchase in Algerian buyers. Following an empirical study done on 385 impulse purchasers, it was possible to see that consumers are more impulsive when they experience high levels of impulsivity. These results would help managers attract customers and lower their guards, as a result of several stimuli, to push them make emotional and functional impulse purchases.

Keywords: *impulse buying, Algerian buyers, age, gender, purchase impulsiveness.*

1. Introduction

Impulse buying has often been recognized as a response to a stimulus of the store. This approach has focused on the situational factors that trigger impulse buying while neglecting the individual characteristics. The majority of studies centered on the influence of the store environmental elements on impulse purchases. However, this is not a systematic influence; these stimuli do not cause all impulse purchases. Therefore, some internal mechanisms, which are responsible of impulsive behavior, are neglected (Rook, 1987). Moreover, the significant number of antecedents considered in the literature reflects the complexity of impulse buying. This is a behavior that is contingent on the situation and the person as well (D'Antoni and Shenson, 1973). For a long time, only the factors related to the product and marketing tools have been considered as triggering conditions for this type of purchase (Cobb and Hoyer, 1986). Focusing on the product and the environmental variables of sales seems to be insufficient for a full explanation of impulse buying. By considering the disciplines that have investigated impulsive behavior in humans, it appears that impulsivity is inherent to the individual. Based on this fact, impulse buying is the result of the interaction between internal and external variables, under the buying condition and the variables related to the person. Similarly, impulse buying can be, for some people, gratifying experiences, as they are exciting and enjoyable. For others, impulse purchases are followed by remorse and discontent. For this reason, we seek to understand the impulse purchase process; we try not to eradicate the phenomenon, but to the contrary to develop it. Recent studies (Rook and Gardner, 1993; Rook and Fisher, 1995; Piron, 1993; Wood, 1998; Youn and Faber, 2000) have shown that the consumer's internal psychological mechanisms must be taken into account. Therefore, the major problem of this research

can then be treated by answering the following question: *Can impulsive purchase explain the consumer's impulsive buying behavior, especially his attitudes towards products and purchase intent?*

Some other individual variables, such as age and gender, were also integrated in this research. Thus, it becomes possible to base this study on the following hypotheses:

H1: Buying impulsiveness is positively related to making an impulse purchase

H2: Women buy more impulsively than men

H3: Age is negatively correlated with impulsive buying.

The main interest of this research lies in understanding the relationship between buying impulsiveness and impulse buying. The methodological approach we intend to adopt in this research work is as follows: the review of the literature comes first, and then an empirical study will follow. It seemed interesting to apply Rook and Fisher's scale (1995) to the Algerian context; the Province of Tlemcen was chosen as the field of our study. This is a field survey aimed at obtaining empirical data in order to address the previous research question.

2. Literature Review On Impulsiveness

The impulsive buyer has long been considered as an irrational consumer who responds, in an uncontrolled and thoughtless manner, to shopping temptations he finds in the store. Furthermore, the decision-making process on impulse buying is largely marked by emotion; it is a fast holistic treatment, giving rise to emotional reactions and action tendency, all based on a very rapid assessment of the stimulus (Puri, 1996). Impulsiveness is a concept that refers to behavioral, motivational and emotional manifestations, extremely varied. Moreover, the aspects of impulsive traits correspond to the "*tendency to buy spontaneously, unreflectively, immediately, and kinetically*" (Rook and Fisher, 1995, p.306). These impulsiveness traits fit the buyers who are characterized by a strong impulse and are more receptive to environmental stimuli. As part of an impulse buying, the purchase decision is not the result of an analytical and methodical choice, but a sudden and spontaneous act. Impulsive acts are quick responses to external stimuli. Therefore, the buying impulsive trait reflects a tendency to respond rapidly and without thinking. An impulsive shopper is characterized by a short reaction time, a lack of foresight and an ability to act without careful planning. So people, who are characterized by high impulsivity, let themselves driven by their own desires. Nevertheless, it is easy to note that attitudes can moderate the relationship between impulsiveness and impulsive buying behavior. Impulsive purchase, as proposed by Rook and Fisher (1995), is a one-dimensional parameter that measures the tendency for a person to think and act in a recognizable and distinctive way. Youn (2000) developed a compulsive consumption scale with two dimensions: emotional and cognitive. Similarly, Giraud (2002) developed a functional impulsivity scale and studied its relationship with certain personality traits. A direct link between an impulsive purchase and the implementation of an impulse buy was reported in a number of studies (Rook and Fisher, 1995; Jones *et al.*, 2003; Dittmar and Bond, 2010).

2.1. The consumer's gender and buying impulsiveness

Gender is an indicator of personality traits that permanently indicates how to solve problems. This variable allows us to provide certain information about its impact on making an impulse buying. It is possible to say that there is some ambivalence about the consequences of this variable. Women are, in everyday life, often associated with attributes such as compassion and gentleness. They are seen to be more "*emotional*" and "*irrational*" than men. Research by Dittmar and Beattie (1995) showed that men are more likely to make impulse purchases, especially for high technology products, electronics and sports equipment, while women are more susceptible to make an affective impulse buying. Haussman (2000) established that there is no significant difference. Giraud (2001) pointed out that men and women do not buy impulsively the same products; cosmetics attract women, and sporting goods attract men.

Similarly, Gupta, Xu and Sahu (India, 2009), showed that most impulsive purchases are made by women, while men are more willing to buy impulsively cosmetics, fruits and vegetables. This phenomenon, which may be associated with women, can be explained by the fact that women "have a better sense of smell than men, and smell evokes more memories for women than it does for men" (Virginia, 2003); this explains their tendency to be more impulsive than men. Once all these research works have been examined, it becomes interesting to consider the importance of gender (sex) in the context of impulse buying. In this case, we aim to know whether men are more affected than women by impulse purchases, or the reverse.

2.2. Age and purchase impulsiveness

Age is an indicator of personality traits ("the ardor of youth", "the wisdom of ancestors"). According to Rook and Hoch (1985), age is negatively correlated with purchase impulsiveness. For Wood (1998), the level of impulsivity would slightly increase between the ages 19 and 39, and then starts declining. Herve and Mullet (2009) showed that purchase decision making varies with the consumer's age. These authors showed that the average age, from 35 to 50, gives more importance to the product relevance, while those between 65 and 90 put more emphasis on sustainability. As for Eysenck et al. (1977), they confirmed that impulsivity decreases with age.

3. The Empirical Study

3.1. Sample, Data collection and Procedures

Data collection was conducted on a sample of shoppers at stores of clothing, cosmetics, shoes and toys. The sample consisted of 385 impulse buyers. Our questionnaire was administered in the center of the city of Tlemcen, which has quite popular neighborhoods with stores very much frequented by different social classes. The buyers were interviewed face to face at the exit of the stores.

3.1.1. Operationalization of Rook and Fisher's scale (1995) to measure the level of buying impulsiveness in Algerian shoppers.

Among the variables related to personality, "*buying impulsiveness*" was chosen because it corresponds to a spontaneous and thoughtless act. To measure this variable, two questions were raised; the first one is a question closed to a unique choice, corresponding to the fact that the purchase must be unplanned, i.e. the buyer had no prior intention to buy the product. If the answer is yes, we turn to the second question which can be addressed by considering the American scale, proposed by American authors Rook & Fisher (1995), to measure impulsiveness in Algerian buyers.

* *This scale has 9 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale (from do not agree at all to strongly agree).*

In general, the following suggestions describe you well? (Circle the number corresponding to your opinion.)

		<i>Do not agree at all</i>	<i>Rather disagree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Rather agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>
Q81.	I often buy things spontaneously	1	2	3	4	5

Q82.	“Just do it” describes the way I buy things	1	2	3	4	5
Q83.	I often buy things without thinking	1	2	3	4	5
Q84.	« I see it, I buy it » describes me	1	2	3	4	5
Q85.	« Buy now, think about it later » describes me	1	2	3	4	5
Q86.	Sometimes I feel like buying things on the spur of the moment	1	2	3	4	5
Q87.	I buy things according to how I feel at the moment	1	2	3	4	5
Q88.	I carefully plan most of my purchases	1	2	3	4	5
Q89.	Sometimes I am a bit reckless about what I buy	1	2	3	4	5

3.2. Results and discussion

In this section, the statistics on gender and age of Algerian buyers are presented. This enables to describe the main characteristics of our sample.

3.2.1. The relationship between gender and purchase impulsiveness

According to this distribution, nearly 57% of surveyed people having made impulsive purchases are women. From these results, it can be said that the majority of impulse purchases are made mainly by women; this confirms our second hypothesis.

**H2: Women are more impulsive than men* *confirmed* \Rightarrow

Table 1. The gender of impulsive buyer

	Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	168	43.64
	Female	217	56.36

3.2.2. The relationship between age and purchase impulsiveness

Concerning age, the Algerian impulse buyers are usually aged 25 to 34; they represent the lion's share (28.83%). Next is the age group 35 - 44 years (23.64%), and then those under 25 (22.86%). The conclusion that emerges from this research is that people in the age groups 25-34 and 35-45 as well as those under 25 are able to buy more impulsively than others. However, the study by Wood (1998) confirms our results. Again, our third hypothesis is confirmed.

*H3: Age is negatively correlated with purchase impulsiveness confirmed.

From these results, the managerial implications are seen to be very interesting. In a store, it is better to attract different age groups with an assortment adapted to each category.

Table 2. Age of impulsive buyer

	Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Under 25	88	22.86
	25 - 34	111	28.83
	35 - 44	91	23.64
	45 - 54	65	16.88
	55 - 64	18	4.67
	65 - 74	10	2.6
	Over 74	02	0.52

3.2.3. Measuring buying impulsiveness in Algerian buyers

To test the psychometric properties of Rook and Fisher's scale (1995), we used data processing which is based on the factorial method of the principal component analysis (PCA). It shows that the nine items on the scale are on a single axis; this explains the ratio of 47.88% of the total variance. Regarding the results of the perceptual map, only four items are used to measure the tendency to buying impulsiveness (item Q82 / Q84 / Q87 / Q89). These four items highlight the "experiential" profile of our impulse buyers. From the scale, it is easy to show that purchase impulsiveness results from a hedonic visit to the store. The buyer feels emotions. He listens to his emotions and mobilizes his senses. The item Q82 "Just do it" describes the way I shop and confirms this observation. In addition, item Q84 "I see it, I buy it" describes me; it confirms the character of an action that is fast, spontaneous, thoughtless, and done under the influence of pulses. Thus, mood plays a key role in impulse

purchases (Item Q87 - *I buy things according to how I feel at the moment*). Finally, our impulse buyers confirm the existence of a tendency to buy and spend (Item Q89 - *Sometimes I am a bit reckless about what I buy.*)

This study on impulse purchase shows that buying impulsiveness mostly stems from unexpected, often "surprising", encounters. The consumer comes across a product that appears to him suddenly, and he buys it. This confirms that impulse buying is associated with recreational motives. This profile which is predominantly associated with women, who are attracted by the offer and the buying mode, exhibits impulsive tendencies that "falling under the charm of" expresses. As for the consequences of consumers' impulse purchasing, item Q86 (*Sometimes I feel like buying things on the spur of the moment*) shows that buyers walk away from dysfunctional impulsive purchases. For this item, most interviewed people exhibited negative judgments (Buyers avoid dysfunctional impulsive purchases). In conclusion, Rook & Fisher's scale (1995) enabled to measure hedonism linked to temptation and desire. This scale shows that Algerian impulse buyers are hedonistic consumers who usually make decisions based on their emotions. They often make purchases, especially impulse ones, from which they derive great pleasure. Therefore, the assumption that there is a direct positive relationship between buying impulsiveness and making an impulse purchase is validated.

Thus, the empirical validation of the relationship between buying impulsiveness and making an impulse purchase is another confirmation of what has previously been supported by several studies.

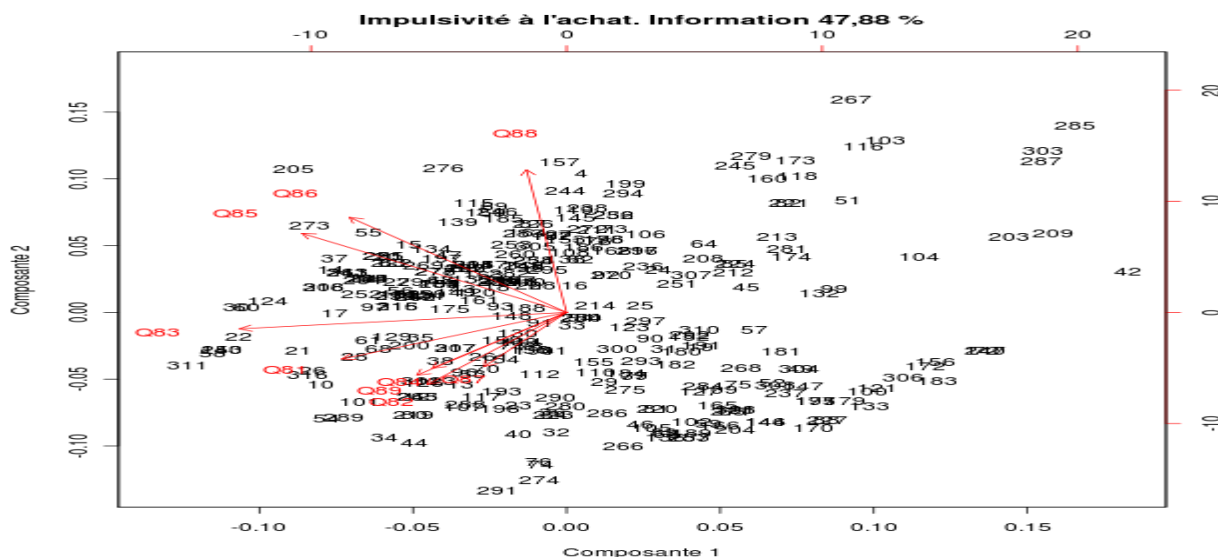


Figure -1- Graphical representation of PCA on buying impulsiveness

Moreover, since the impulsive buying tendency is a reactive and emotional component, it seemed interesting to check the correlation between buying impulsiveness and the shopper's emotional state as he is making the purchase, using PCA. This analysis showed that the relationship between impulsiveness and the emotional state is more important when the two dimensions, i.e. Pleasure (Plaisir) and Stimulation (Stimu), are introduced as mediating variables. From these results, it is worth noting that the two dimensions, i.e. Pleasure and Stimulation, contribute significantly to the explanation of impulse buying. The pleasure felt when shopping influences the buyer's behavior, particularly on his chance to engage in unplanned buying. Therefore, it may be concluded that there is a direct link between impulsiveness, which refers to the consumer's tendency to buy spontaneously, immediately and without thinking, and the emotional state that triggers that reaction.

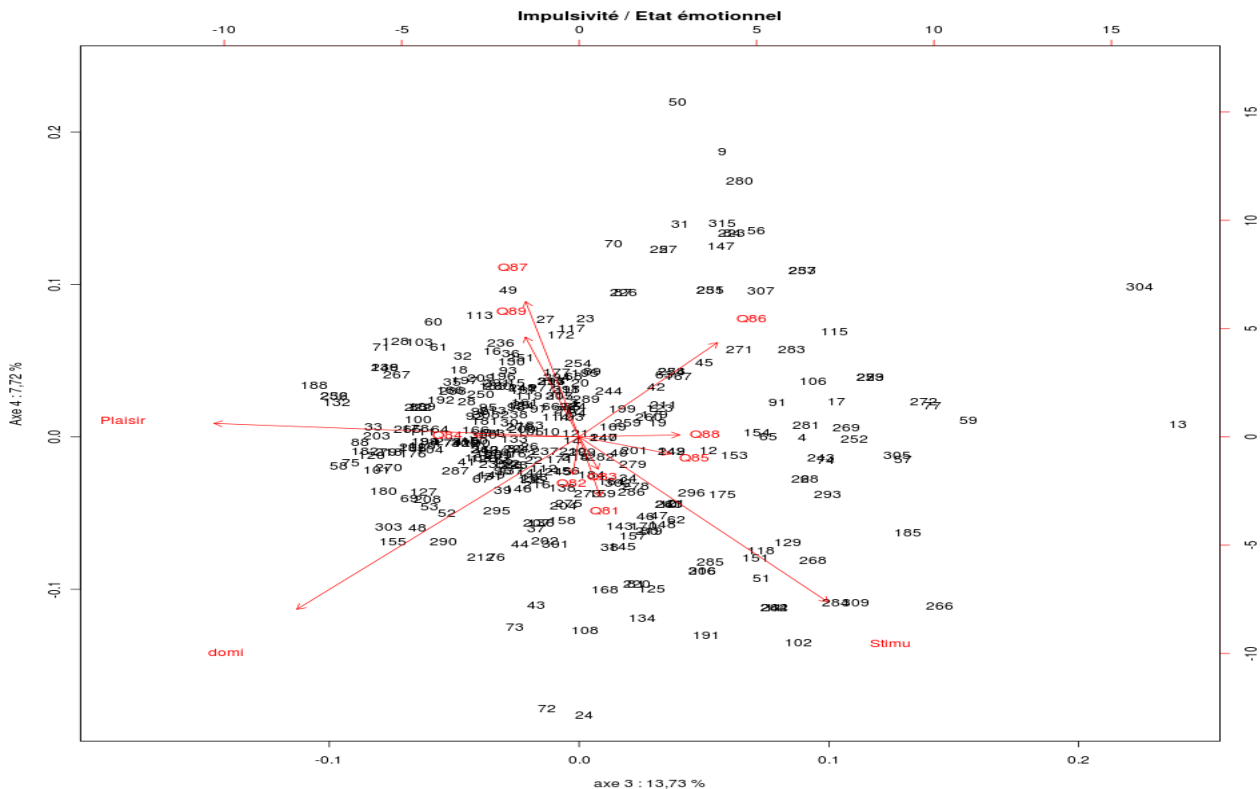


Figure -2- Graphical representation of PCA on the relationship between impulsiveness and the impulsive buyer's emotional state

4. Conclusion And Future Research

The emerging idea in this research is that impulse purchase depends heavily on personal variables. This gives distributors and retailers great possibilities for action. Adapting Rook and Fisher's measurement scale to the Algerian context could help managers select the elements to be considered in their marketing strategies. At this level, the results obtained enable to highlight the effect of gender (sex), age and buying impulsiveness on making an impulse buying. It is highly recommended to pay special attention to these factors. In addition, the Algerian market may have cultural specificities, when compared to other markets; this depends on the individualistic/collectivistic culture.

Impulse buying is more than an unplanned purchase; it is an intense emotional experience (impulse buying seems to be the result of an evaluation process that is largely tinged of emotion). This confirms that impulse purchases are extremely hedonic purchases. Distributors must think of renovating their stores more frequently, in order to offer an even more original consuming experience to customers always eager for entertainment and fun. This study is an attempt to shed new light on the impulsive buying concept, by introducing individual elements. The marketing manager ought to identify the nature of the main factors affecting the consumer's behavior, as well as the degree of this influence. The relevance of this identification will allow establishing effective marketing actions for a purchase impulse. Similarly, this research should impel advertisers to use individual features as a central element in their advertisements.

This study, like many other research studies, opens up a number of avenues to research. It seems interesting to:

- Develop a measurement tool to assess purchase impulsiveness that is specific to the Algerian context.
- Validate the results on other product categories (appliances, hi-fi, food, common consumer products).
- Make a comparison between urban and rural Algerian population, in terms of the influence and perception of products and the shopping environment.

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