

IMPULSE BUYING BEHAVIOUR IN RETAIL STORES – TRIGGERING THE SENSES

SONALI BANERJEE*; SUNETRA SAHA**

*Assistant Professor,
Department of Marketing and Sales,
Amity Business School,
Amity University, Uttar Pradesh.

**Assistant Professor,
Department of Marketing and Sales,
Amity Business School,
Amity University, Uttar Pradesh.

ABSTRACT

In today's Post-modern Era shopping has become a social and leisure activity, reducing the number of cognitively planned purchases made by consumers. Some view impulse buying as an 'act of freedom' occurring within restricted situations. However in this type of behaviour cool, rational, information processing choices are uncommon and rare, and most of the decisions made are post-purchase rationalization or justification of irrational consumer behaviour. Hedonic and pleasure driven shopping endeavors have led to the rapid increase in impulse buying, making it common practice and socially acceptable. Even though, most impulse decisions are made when consumers are inside the store, the effect of in-store stimuli on such decisions has not been adequately explored. This has led to the purpose of this research which is to understand what triggers impulse buying and how does sensory marketing aid impulse buying behaviour.

- To evaluate the stimuli that trigger impulse buying
- To understand and analyse the consumer behaviour, attitudes and perceptions, that results in impulse buying.
- To examine the effect of sensory cues in impulse buying behaviour.

KEYWORDS: Impulse, Buying Behaviour, Retail, Stimuli, Organised, Consumers.

INTRODUCTION

Impulse buying is defined as an unplanned, on the spot purchase triggered by stimulus. Stimulus is given through sensory marketing and the possibility to touch the products, by clear and visible information about special offers and tie-ins to help the consumer remember what they need. The gap between 'the fantasy world of consumption', 'day-dreams of perfect pleasure' and 'disappointments of reality' results in limitless desire and a permanent state of aggravation (Elliot, 1997:292). Impulse buying behavior is an enigma in the marketing world, for here is a

behaviour which the literature and consumers both state is normatively wrong, yet which accounts for a substantial volume of the goods sold every year across a broad range of product categories.

As India changes and reinvents itself at a remarkably accelerated pace, the private consumption patterns of its population have been transformed. The fundamental shifts in consumer spending patterns have far-reaching implications not only for manufacturers, marketers and retailers of consumer products and services, but for India and Indian society as a whole. The key lies in understanding the nature of this change in consumer behaviour and consumption patterns and thereby the change in the wallet-share of Indian consumers. Today's reality consists of many new, unique and disparate factors that have come into play simultaneously.

INDIAN CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR

To the 'core' Indian consumer, though 'low price' is still of primary importance, it will in the coming years steadily shift to a 'price-plus' platform. Here, the consumer will seek a greater balance of price with quality, convenience, consistency, innovation and shopping experience. The recent economic slowdown has made the Indian consumer's mindset more conservative. Point of purchase (POP) will become more important, and will be the moment of truth for brands and retailers if they are to deliver their promise to the consumer.

Hence, smart brands and retailers will spend more effort in-store in terms of improving not only store interiors but also the overall shopping experience, even if they are high value-seeking ones. So far as shopping behaviour is concerned, there is a strong increase in the trend of going shopping as a 'family' which, in turn, is on account of the increasing time poverty for most Indians in this core consuming class. Shopping together saves time for the family while also providing some additional time together.

Modern retail which offers 'all under one roof' options, optimizes core consumers with many dimensions including saving of time, enhanced shopping experience, and combining shopping with leisure and recreation. Hence, given a choice between traditional shopping markets and a well-planned, well-tenanted shopping centre (mall), this consumer is more likely to opt for the latter.

When different brands compete under one roof in modern retail outlets (malls) sensory marketing plays a vital role. It changes brand perception positively when the stimulus is congruent with the other brand elements. It can thus be seen as a suitable tool for reinforcing the value of a brand. A congruent stimulus influences the consumer on an unconscious level and can affect preference positively hence triggering impulse buying behavior. Adding a sensory dimension to the marketing strategy can strengthen the brand equity implying a stronger bond between the brand and the consumer. However, the authors argue that a strong brand platform is required to benefit ultimately from an investment in sensory branding. The use of sensory branding is growing rapidly and it is predicted to be the future of strategic branding.

COMPULSIVE BUYING AND INDIAN CONSUMERS

In the post-modern consumerist economies, the Maslow's hierarchy of needs is circumvented at a faster pace. The product life cycle is shorter and buying urges are intensifying amongst consumers in India, due to personal, socio-cultural and the emerging trends in the market place and its offerings. As a result of the impact of globalization and the forces of post-modern consumerism, the hierarchy of needs of individual is moving unnaturally, not exactly in the same order as Maslow predicted in the continuum (natural). The marketers of the present steer in a lot of mesmerizing effect, particularly using the "persuasive advertisements". The availability of easy and plenty of credit product offerings to the consumers aggravates the situation. The compulsive buying which is rising in stature and is recognized as a 'behavioral anomaly'. The firm that spend (invest) a lot of money on socially non-viable projects create more of social costs or no social returns. This anomaly makes both the firm and individual spending model non-sustainable in the long run. For an individual, buying beyond one's need/ability is a leading indicator to a path of high personal debt. As per the Basel committee norms on banking, there is a growing importance for the non-financial credibility of the potential borrowers, over and above his/her financial credibility. This argument falls in line with sustainable borrowing and spending as the urges of consumerism are growing stronger, faster and getting deep rooted in our value and belief systems (Alex, Raveendran 2007)

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Impulse buying has been considered a pervasive and distinctive phenomenon in the American lifestyle and has been receiving increasing attention from consumer researchers and theorists (Rook 1987; Rook and Fisher 1995). Prior studies on impulse buying have frequently focused on the definitional elements distinguishing impulse from non-impulse buying (Cobb and Hoyer 1986; Piron 1991; Rook 1987), and providing a theoretical framework for examining impulse buying (Burroughs 1996; Hoch and Loewenstein 1991; Rook and Fisher 1995; Rook and Gardner 1993). Several studies have attempted to develop and validate scales to measure the impulse buying tendency (Rook and Fisher 1995; Weun, Jones, and Beatty 1997). However, while research interest has been growing, we are still just beginning to learn about the factors that affect impulse buying.

It can be said that the Indian organised retail industry is poised for growth. Apparel sector in particular has a great opportunity with alignment of Indian economy to globalised markets. With the widespread use of sales promotions- short term activities which provide material inducements to consumers and trade it becomes imperative for managers to understand such practices and understand challenges.

The thorough study of various previous researches related to impulse buying and consumer decision making, helps conclude that Impulse buying is an interesting phenomenon with many views, none of which is true or false. Impulsive buying occurs as part of wider psychological functioning, in particular in the form of self-regulatory behaviour.

The store image drives impulse buying through shopping enjoyment creating a positive affect, negative affect through self-regulation and urge to buy impulsively. As a result of the store image, driving impulse buying behaviour, retailers may focus on enhancing store image. Impulse buying can also be influenced by certain factors such as coupons and vouchers, store display, advertisements and promotions, behaviours of shop staff as well as price.

- In a highly competitive environment, only those retailers who exceed the expectations of their customers in terms of providing an enjoyable shopping experience can survive and become successful.
- Sales promotion activities has a direct impact on behaviour as it motivates a consumer to buy now rather than in future, enhances value of an offer temporarily till the promotion period, encourages switching, reinforce or reward loyalty etc.

Consumers are likely to associate some highly involving feelings or emotions such as joy, love, fear, hope, sexuality, fantasy and even some little magic with certain purchases or possessions.

RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To evaluate the stimuli that, trigger impulse buying.
- To examine the effect of sensory cues in impulse buying behaviour.

RESEARCH DESIGN

It is a descriptive Research since it is a one shot study at a given point of time and consists of a sample of 100 size selected random sampling technique from population of the study covered the region of Delhi/NCR in this case customers going to retail stores. It will be covering many variables and also will give a good overall picture of the position at a given time. This research is also conclusive since it seeks to draw conclusions about the sales and customer preference.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

To test whether there is any significant relationship between the frequency of shopping and the gender of the customers, the following hypothesis was formulated for this study:

H₀: There is likely to be no significant relationship between the frequency of shopping and the gender of the customers.

H₁: There is likely to be significant relationship between the frequency of shopping and the gender of the customers.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

TO EVALUATE THE STIMULI THAT, TRIGGER IMPULSE BUYING

FREQUENCY ANALYSIS

Here rating analysis has been used to evaluate which the stimuli influence impulse buying behaviour the most. The table summarizes the percentage of frequencies of individual stimuli according to their extent of influence on the purchase.

TABLE 1.1: FREQUENCIES OF INDIVIDUAL STIMULI INFLUENCING BUYING BEHAVIOUR

STIMULUS	Extremely influential	Influential	Neutral	Less Influential	Not at all Influential	TOTAL (%)
Window/In-store display	23.5	36.5	23.5	11.8	4.7	100
Newspaper Advertising	7.1	17.6	31.8	25.9	17.6	100
Magazine Advertising	2.4	14.1	25.9	36.5	21.2	100
Radio/TV Advertising	2.4	18.8	27.1	29.4	22.4	100
Salesperson	2.4	14.1	28.2	28.2	27.1	100
Price and discount	45.9	24.7	22.4	5.9	1.2	100
Quality	58.8	31.8	4.7	2.4	2.4	100
Emotional attachment	11.9	34.5	16.7	15.5	21.4	100

Company display	4.7	36.5	40	8.2	10.6	100
Disposable income	32.9	35.5	17.6	11.8	2.4	100
Festive season display	15.3	23.5	34.1	20	7.1	100

Inference: Thus we can conclude from the above table that as per the survey data about 46% and about 59% of respondents say that their impulse buying behavior is greatly influenced by price and discounts offered and quality respectively. While 27% of the respondents feel that salesperson in the retail stores have no influence on their buying behaviour.

RATING ANALYSIS – VISUAL MERCHANDISING

The rating analysis here is used for determining the most important factors of visual merchandising that influence the impulse buying behaviour of customers. This technique would help rank all the factors of visual merchandising in order decreasing importance.

TABLE 1.2: FREQUENCIES OF VISUAL MERCHANDISING FACTORS INFLUENCING BUYING BEHAVIOUR

Factors	Extremely Important	Very Important	Average	Less Important	Not at all Important	Standard Deviation	Variance	Rank	Total
Placement of the product	13	30	30	21	6	1.109	1.229	4	100
Quantity of product available	30	37	19	9	5	1.129	1.264	6	100
Packaging of the product	35	33	21	7	4	1.094	1.198	3	100

Company name and label	16	36	34	9	5	1.030	1.061	1	100
Variants of product offered	28	32	28	8	4	1.083	1.173	2	100
Substitutes of the product available	19	41	23	10	7	1.123	1.260	5	100

It has been determined that 'Company name and label' is the most important factor that contributes the purchase decision. This means that when customers make impulse purchases the company name and label plays an extremely important role. The second most important factor according to the respondents is 'Variants of the product' that are offered in the retail stores, followed by 'Packaging', 'Placement of product', while 'Substitutes of the product available' and 'Quantity of product available' are least important factors contributing to impulse buying behaviour.

To understand and analyse the consumer behaviour, attitudes and perceptions, that results in impulse buying.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

The table below represents a cross tabulation between the gender of the respondent and the frequency of their purchases. This would further help determine whether the frequency of shopping has any relationship with the gender of the respondent through a chi-square test.

TABLE 1.3 CROSSTABS FOR GENDER OF THE RESPONDENT * FREQUENCY OF SHOPPING

		How frequently do you shop?					Total
		Everyday	Weekly	Only on weekends	Monthly	Quarterly	
Gender of the respondent	Male	3	16	13	13	10	55
	Female	2	6	13	16	8	45
Total		5	22	26	29	18	100

With the help of crosstab it is evident that majority of customers, a total of 29% shop mostly monthly, of these 13 are males and 16 are females. Also 26% respondents shop only on weekends with equal number of male and female customers. While only 5% respondents shop daily. With this data a hypothesis, to identify whether or not the frequency of shopping has any significant relationship with the gender of the customer.

Assumption: significance level at 0.05

H₀: There is likely to be no significant relationship between the frequency of shopping and the gender of the customers.

H₁: There is likely to be significant relationship between the frequency of shopping and the gender of the customers.

TABLE 1.4: CHI-SQUARE TEST

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.321 ^a	4	.364
Likelihood Ratio	4.450	4	.349
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.548	1	.213
N of Valid Cases	100		

FINDINGS

The null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted. Subsequently the alternate hypothesis (H_1) is rejected.

INFERENCE

There is likely to be no significant relationship between the frequency of shopping and the gender of the customers. Hence, it can be inferred that whether the customer is male or female it does influence their frequency of shopping.

CATEGORIES OF PURCHASE

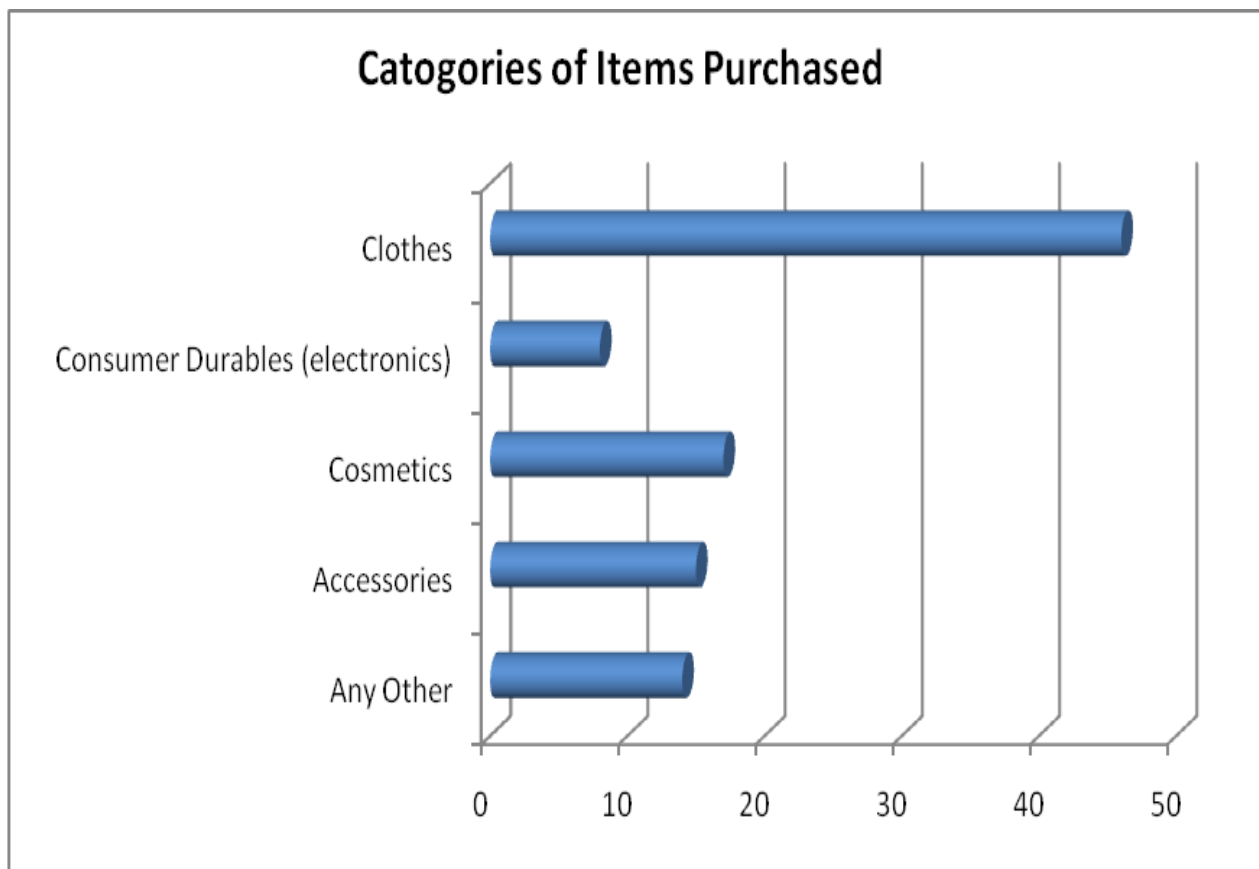


FIGURE 1.1: CATEGORIES OF ITEMS PURCHASED

ATTRIBUTE BASED PERCEPTUAL MAPPING USING DISCRIMINANT ANALYSIS

Attribute based perceptual maps helps determine how the customers perceive various different brands within the same category. In particular the customer perception towards a particular retail store is to be found.

TABLE 1.5: FUNCTIONS AT GROUP CENTROIDS

Name of retail stores	Function	
	1	2
Pantaloons	-.870	-.627
Shoppers Stop	1.518	-.048
Westside	-.691	.644

Unstandardized canonical discriminant functions evaluated at group means

TABLE 1.6: STANDARDIZED CANONICAL DISCRIMINANT FUNCTION COEFFICIENTS

	Function	
	1	2
rate your preference for buying shoes for each retail outlet	.321	.612
rate your preference for buying ethnic wear for each retail outlet	.096	.137
rate your preference for buying western wear for each retail outlet	.532	-.020
rate your preference for buying casual wear for each retail outlet	.178	-.061
rate your preference for buying accessories for each retail outlet	.200	-.663
rate your preference for buying cosmetics for each retail outlet	.439	-.536
rate your preference for buying other commodities for each retail outlet	.108	.727

The following figure represents the perceptual map of various Brands namely Pantaloons, Shoppers stop and Westside. The various commodities that people prefer to buy from these retail stores are shoes, ethnic wear, western wear, casual wear, accessories, cosmetics and others.

Those variables closer to a given axis (dimension represented by the discriminant function) are contributing more to the interpretation of that dimension. Looking at all variables that contribute to a given axis (dimension), we can label the dimension as a combination of those variables.

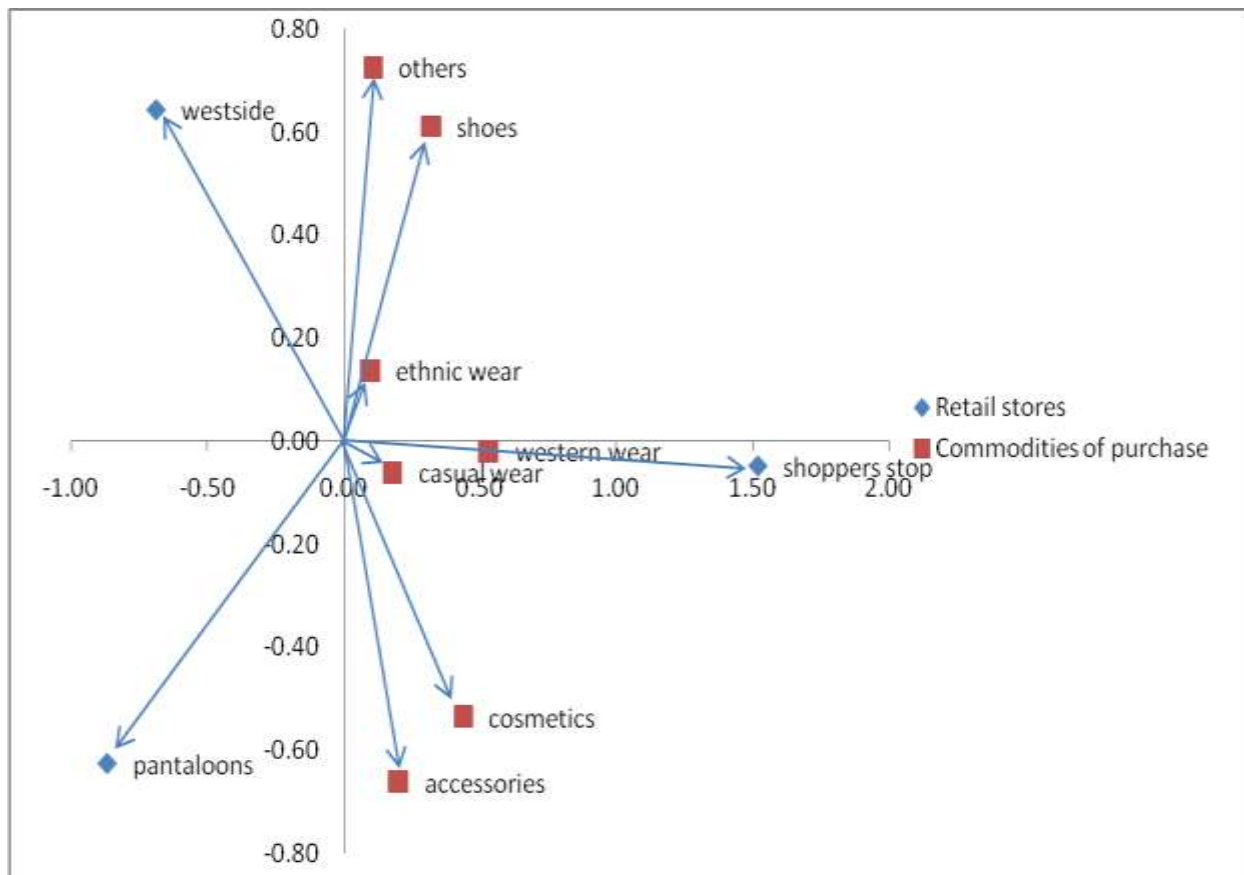


FIGURE 1.2: PERCEPTUAL MAP

FINDINGS

The length of the arrow represents its effect in discriminating on each dimension. Longer arrows pointing more closely towards a given group centroid (Retail store on the map) represents variables most strongly associated with the group (or retail store in this case). Vectors pointing in the opposite direction from a given group centroid represent lower association with a group.

As seen from the perceptual map the three retail brands have their position on the map. On the same map values of the commodities customers prefer to purchase on the same two dimensions have also been plotted. As it can be seen the Dimension 1 seems to comprise of clothes that is casual wear, ethnic wear and western wear (closer to X axis). While dimension 2 comprises of

accessories, cosmetics, shoes and others. This is also evident from the standardized discriminant coefficients of these attributes.

Inference: Customers prefer shoppers stop when it comes to purchasing clothes like western wear, casual wear and ethnic wear since it lies closer to these commodities in the perceptual map. While pantaloons and Westside are more preferred for purchase of accessories, shoes and cosmetics. Through this perception map we can conclude that shoppers stop is more preferred for purchase of clothing.

FACTOR ANALYSIS

In order to analyse the attitudes, perception and behaviour of customers towards impulse buying or unplanned purchases. After asking the customers to rate each of the following statements on a 5 point likert scales, the results are analysed as below.

TABLE 1.7: FREQUENCIES TABLE

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
I make a list when I go shopping and buy only what is on the list	14	27	29	24	6	100
I always take time to consider and weigh all aspects before making a purchase	4	8	34	38	16	100
If I see something that I think I need, I buy it even though I went shopping for other purposes	1	3	12	53	21	100
I go shopping to change my mood	14	25	23	25	13	100
I feel a sense of excitement when I make an impulse purchase	6	12	23	41	18	100

TABLE 1.7: FREQUENCIES TABLE

I have difficulty controlling my urge to buy when I see a good offer	6	18	25	35	16	100
When I see a good deal, I tend to buy more than that I intended to buy	1	11	25	44	19	100

The above table gives the frequency distribution for seven statements related to the attitudes and perception of customers.

INFERENCE: It can be concluded from the above table that about 53% of the customers said that they would make an unplanned purchase if they think that they need it. Similarly 44% customers agree that they buy more than intended if they see a good deal. Majority of customers 41% also said that they feel a sense of excitement when they make an impulse purchase.

Now these statements can be grouped under some common factors using the factor analysis technique. The output of factor analysis, given below, is obtained by requesting a component matrix and a rotation. The output comprises the communality of all 7 statements and the Eigen values of all variables having value of 1 or more than 1. Here the factors for Eigen values 1 or more are extracted.

TABLE 1.8: TOTAL VARIANCE EXPLAINED

Component	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.294	38.766	38.766	2.294	38.766	38.766
2	1.223	40.116	78.882	1.223	40.116	78.882
3	.992	7.113	85.995			
4	.828	6.225	92.220			
5	.639	3.320	95.540			
6	.574	2.238	97.779			
7	.451	2.222	100.000			

Findings :From the cumulative percentage column in the above table it can be concluded that the two factors extracted together account for 78.88% of the total variance (information contained in the original seven variables). The variables have been reduced from seven to two, while about 21.12% of information content will be lost.

From the table below we can interpret what these extracted factors represent.

TABLE 1.9: ROTATED COMPONENT MATRIX

	Component	
	1	2
I make a list when I go shopping and buy only what is on the list	.083	.757
I always take time to consider and weigh all aspects before making a purchase	-.061	.699
If I see something that I think I need, I buy it even though I went shopping for other purposes	.690	.180
I go shopping to change my mood	.352	-.464
I feel a sense of excitement when I make an impulse purchase	.638	-.447
I have difficulty controlling my urge to buy when I see a good offer	.576	-.345
When I see a good deal, I tend to buy more than that I intended to buy	.733	-.021

EXTRACTION METHOD: PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS.

ROTATION METHOD: VARIMAX WITH KAISER NORMALIZATION.

A. ROTATION CONVERGED IN 3 ITERATIONS

Finding: It is clear from the above table that variable 3, 5 and 7 have loadings of 0.690, 0.638 and 0.733, highest for factor 1. This suggests that factor 1 is a combination of these three original variables. Similarly factor 2 is a combination of variables 1 and 2 having loadings 0.757 and 0.699.

Inference: Factor 1 consists of variable statements that “If I see something that I think I need, I buy it even though I went shopping for other purposes”, “I feel a sense of excitement when I make an impulse purchase” and “When I see a good deal, I tend to buy more than that I intended to buy”. Thus factor 1 can be named as Positive Perception for impulse buying.

Factor 2 on the other hand consists of variable statements that “I make a list when I go shopping and buy only what is on the list” and “I always take time to consider and weigh all aspects before making a purchase”. Thus factor 2 can be named as Negative Perception for impulse buying.

TO EXAMINE THE EFFECT OF SENSORY CUES IN IMPULSE BUYING BEHAVIOUR

RATING ANALYSIS

The rating analysis here is used to determine the ranks, in order of decreasing importance, for the senses affected by stimuli that trigger impulse buying in customers.

TABLE 1.10: FREQUENCIES TABLE FOR SENSES AFFECTED

Senses	Most Important	Very Important	Average	Less Important	Least Important	Total
Sight	55	32	12	1	0	100
Sound	2	34	34	16	14	100
Smell	12	36	34	12	6	100
Taste	20	35	28	10	7	100
Touch	37	40	22	1	0	100

The above table gives the frequency for the rating given by the customers to various senses on the basis of their perception of the importance given to each of the sensory cues while making a purchase decision.

Findings: The frequency suggests that 55% customers feel that sight is the most important sensory organ for them while making a purchase decision while all the other factors are also very important. However majority of customers feel that touch is also an important factor after sight.

Inference: Since sight is the most important sensory organ, being highly influential on the purchase behaviour, it can be inferred that customers are more susceptible to sensory cues that appeal to their sight like displays, discounts, visual merchandising etc. Touch was second most important factor for making a purchase decision, so sensory cues of touch would work best for retail stores to attract customers

To rank these senses in order of their influence on the purchase decisions of customers, the standard deviation and variance needs to be calculated. The factor with lowest variance will get the highest rank and the one with the highest variance will get the lowest rank.

TABLE 1.11: STATISTICS- RATING ANALYSIS

		Rank the sense 'sight' in order of importance you give to them while making a purchase decision	Rank the sense 'sound' in order of importance you give to them while making a purchase decision	Rank the sense 'smell' in order of importance you give to them while making a purchase decision	Rank the sense 'taste' in order of importance you give to them while making a purchase decision	Rank the sense 'touch' in order of importance you give to them while making a purchase decision
N	Valid	100	100	100	100	100
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
	Std. Deviation	.740	1.071	1.040	1.133	.787
	Variance	.547	1.148	1.081	1.283	.619

TABLE 1.12: RATING ANALYSIS

Senses	Standard Deviation	Variance	Rank
Sight	0.740	0.547	1
Sound	1.071	1.148	4
Smell	1.040	1.081	3
Taste	1.133	1.283	5
Touch	0.787	0.619	2

Inference: In the tables above, the standard deviation and variance has been shown. According to the variance, ranks have been given to each of the senses. It has been determined that 'Sight' is the most important sensory organ which can be used by marketers and retail stores in order to attract more customers and promote impulse buying. The second most important factor according to the respondents is 'Touch', followed by 'Smell' and 'Sound'. However, since the respondents are customers of retail stores the data shows that 'Taste' is the least important of all sensory organs.

FREQUENCY ANALYSIS

Here rating analysis has been used to evaluate which the sensory cues influence impulse buying behaviour the most. The table summarizes the percentage of frequencies of individual stimuli according to their extent of influence on the purchase.

TABLE 1.13: FREQUENCIES OF VISUAL CUES INFLUENCING BUYING BEHAVIOUR

STIMULUS	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	TOTAL (%)
I tend to rely on store displays when I make a decision to purchase	11	49	32	6	2	100
If I see an interesting promotional offer (reduced price, sales promotion, and etc.) on in-store signs, I tend to buy	28	42	23	7	0	100
Sale/clearance signs entice me to look through the clothing	24	45	24	7	0	100
I am more likely to make an unintended purchase if the clothing has a sale or clearance sign	23	31	27	19	0	100
I have difficulty controlling my urge to buy when I see a good offer	22	27	35	12	4	100

When I see a good deal, I tend to buy more than that I intended to buy	16	41	26	15	2	100
Bright lighting in the retail store influences my purchase intention	8	29	40	17	6	100

Findings: Thus we can conclude from the above table that as per the survey data 49% and 42% of respondents say that their impulse buying behavior is greatly influenced by store displays and that if they see an interesting promotional offer they tend to buy respectively. While the customers opinion is varied when it comes to controlling the urge to buy when they see a good offer.

Although sale/clearance signs encourage people to look through clothing, it was seen from the results that it cannot guarantee impulse purchase.

TABLE 1.14: FREQUENCIES OF OLFACTORY CUES INFLUENCING BUYING BEHAVIOUR

STIMULUS	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	TOTAL (%)
The scent coming from the store entices me to go inside	9	29	40	17	5	100
If the store smells good I tend to stay longer and look at the merchandise	8	38	37	13	4	100
If a store scent is pleasant I intend to go back to the store in future	10	30	38	16	6	100
I tend to buy more than planned if the store aroma is nice	7	16	38	28	9	100
I am more likely to make an unintended purchase if the store smells good	6	21	32	30	11	100

FINDINGS: Thus we can conclude from the above table that as per the survey data 38% of the respondents feel that if the store smells good they tend to stay longer and look at the

merchandise, however the olfactory cues do not entice the customers to make unplanned, impulse purchases.

TABLE 1.15: FREQUENCIES OF SENSATION CUES INFLUENCING BUYING BEHAVIOUR

STIMULUS	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	TOTAL (%)
The music playing in the store affects my purchase intention	12	26	33	22	7	100
If I like the music inside the store my chances of buying become greater	4	28	31	28	9	100
I spend more time in the store looking around, if I like the ambience and the background sounds	15	42	26	14	3	100
The more time I spend touching the merchandise, greater are my chances of buying	14	32	35	15	4	100

FINDINGS: We can conclude from the above table that as per the survey data 42% of the respondents spend more time in the store looking around, if they like the ambience and the background sounds. Also the background music does influence the purchase decision of the customers to some extent. It was also found that more time the customers spend touching the merchandise, greater are their chances of making a purchase.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research presents an interesting and fascinating area for consumer research and this study will attempt to provide a deeper understanding of the interaction between consumers buying behaviour and in-store stimuli with respect to impulse purchase decisions. The major findings from the study can be summarized as follows:

- The study helped determine that majority of consumers either never or only sometimes plan their purchases, thereby rendering themselves more susceptible to stimuli that encourage impulse buying behaviour.
- Gender does not impact the frequency of shopping; also gender has no effect on the impulse buying behaviour of the consumers.
- The most effective stimuli that trigger impulse buying in consumers was found to be price and discounts offered along with any sale or clearance sign, which majorly influence the purchase intentions of the customer.
- Amongst the three retail stores that were compared as part of the survey Shoppers stop was the store that most respondents prefer to visit. While analysis from the perceptual mapping also showed that shoppers stop was preferred for shopping of clothes, ethnic as well as western wear.
- The survey also helped rank the sensory abilities in order of their importance to influence the purchase decisions. It was found that 'Sight' was the most important in influencing the buying behaviour of consumers.

From the understanding gained after the survey, it can be said with some understanding that sensory cues play a crucial role in predicting the impulse buying behaviour of the customers. They are successful in enticing the customers to make unplanned purchases which the customers don't even come to know of. It can be said with some degree of confidence that the visual merchandising as well as other sight cues prove to be fairly successful in determining the consumer buying behaviour.

- The attitude and perception of customers towards impulse buying is largely shaped by the factors of visual merchandising and sensory cues of 'sight'.
- While olfactory cues have only limited contribution to consumer buying behaviour.
- Sound and touch also play significant role in determining the amount of time a customer spends in a store and the result of increased time spent on the intention to purchase.

REFERENCES

Burroughs, J. E. (1996). "Product Symbolism, Self Meaning, and Holistic Matching: The Role of Information Processing in Impulsive Buying", *Advances in Consumer Research*, 23, 463-469.

Cobb, C.J., & Hoyer, W.D. (1986). Planned versus impulse purchases behavior. *Journal of Retailing*, 62 (4), 384-409.

Gardner, M. P. and Rook, D. W. (1988). "Effects of Impulse Purchases on Consumers' Affective States", *Advances in Consumer Research*, 15, 127-130.

Hoch, S. J., & Loewenstein, G. F. (1991). Time-inconsistent preferences and consumer self-control. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17, 492–507.

J. Stávková, L. Stejskal, Z. Toufarová (2008). Factors influencing consumer behaviour. *Agric. Econ. – Czech*, 54, 2008 (6): 276–284

Piron, F. (1991). Defining impulse purchasing. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 18, 509-514.

Puri, R. (1996). Measuring and modifying consumer impulsiveness: A cost–benefit accessibility framework. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 5, 87–113.

Rook, D. W. (1987). The buying impulse. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 14, 189–199.

Rook, D.W., & Fisher, R.J. (1995). Normative influences on impulsive buying behavior. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22 (3), 305-313.

Rook, D.W., & Gardner, M.P. (1993). In the mood: impulse buying's affective antecedents. *Research in Consumer Behavior*, 6, 1-28.

Spears (2006). Just Moseying Around and Happening Upon It versus a Master Plan: Minimizing Regret in Impulse versus Planned Sales Promotion Purchases. *Psychology & Marketing*, Vol. 23(1): 57–73 (January 2006)

Published online in Wiley InterScience (www.interscience.wiley.com)

Tendai, Crispin (2009). In-store shopping environment and impulsive buying. *African Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 1(4) pp. 102-108 July, 2009 Available online <http://www.academicjournals.org/ajmm>

Verplanken, B., Sato, A (2011). The Psychology of Impulse Buying: An Integrative Self Regulation Approach. *J Consum Policy* (2011) 34:197–210.

Vyas (2007). Sales Promotion Practices in Apparel Retail Sector and Challenges Ahead. W.P. No.2007-11-02. November 2007. IIM –A

Weun, S., Jones, M. A. and Beatty, S. E. (1997), "A Parsimonious Scale to Measure Impulse Buying Tendency," 1997 AMA Educators' Proceedings, 8, eds., William M. Pride and G. Tomas M. Hult, American Marketing Association, 306-307.

Youn, Faber (2000). Impulse buying: its relation to personality traits and cues. *Advances in Consumer Research*, Volume 27, Pages 179-185

Zhang, Y. and Wang, F. (2010). The Relationship Between Impulse Buying, Negative Evaluations and Customer Loyalty. **ORIENT ACADEMIC FORUM**