

Impact of Big-Five Personality on Impulsive Buying Behaviour

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ABSTRACT

While there is lot of research on the impact of cognitive aspects of individuals on their buying behaviour, research on the impact of affective aspects on impulsive buying behaviour is still evolving. The impact of Big-five personality traits on impulsive buying behaviour of 178 (89% response rate) was examined on a random sample in Mumbai and Pune area in India. While Agreeableness and Neuroticism were found to be significantly correlated with impulsive buying behaviour, Extraversion, Openness and Conscientiousness practically did not have correlations with Impulsive buying behaviour. These findings are consistent with earlier findings. The possible areas of further research are suggested.

1. Introduction

'Personality' from the psychological perspective is a set of stable characteristics or traits. The importance of understanding the influence of different personality traits on the buying tendency of the prospective consumers had been realized as early as in 1940s. Since then, the impact of personality on consumer behaviour has been a subject of research. With changing times resulting into changing the state of competition on one side and the changing tastes of consumers on the other, it has become more important for the industries to analyze and understand the factors likely to affect the consumer buying behaviour to design appropriate marketing and advertising strategies. As cited in Foxell and Goldsmith(988), around 1950, a considerable gap between the excess supply and the actual demand of goods and services was witnessed. It increased the unwanted competition and the managers got baffled as to how to deal with this situation. Organizations started thinking indifferent directions and it was realized that the behavioural science had an important role to play in understanding why and how people buy. The idea that personality may play an important role in consumer buying behaviour captured the attention of the marketers. Earnest Dichter(1949), a clinical psychologist, argued that the psychological aspects of advertising had more potential to affect the buying attitudes of the prospective customers rather than the commercial aspects of it. Sydney Levy(1959), in her classical HBR article "Symbols for Sale", argued that consumers bought the products for many reasons than only satisfying the functional needs. Early sixties witnessed volumes of research about personality and consumer buying behaviour but it was almost rejected in 70s due to inherent lacunaesuch as the tests had low predictive power, were inappropriate, and lacked consideration of existing conditions. Furthermore, the tests were used indiscretely without establishing proper theoretical rationale, and generalisability / specificity of the tests was questionable. Researchers then started considering the recent developments in personality theories. A clearer relation between specific aspects of personality and economic behaviour of the prospective customers was attempted. More stress was being given on reliability and validity of the tests being used. Foxell and

Goldsmith(1988), using Kirton Adaptation Innovation(KAI) inventory, concluded that a careful investigation of choice of consumers by using appropriate psychometric tests, can contribute a lot to the field of marketing research. Verplanken and Herabadi (2001) too found that impulsive buying behaviour has a strong base in personality. There are several examples establishing the correlation between personality and consumer behaviour based on studies conducted in 70s and 80s.

The subject of consumer buying behaviour continues to be significant for the marketers to understand the consumers' preferences, intentions, motivations, and buying decisions to design their marketing strategies. The factors affecting the buying behaviour of consumers can be broadly put into two categories namely; product factors, and buyer factors. The two types of factors are not exclusive of each other though. *Personality* characterized by certain traits, being an important buyer factor, may play an important role in the buying behaviour of consumers. Big-Five personality being one of the important personality theories, and its impact on the different types of buying behaviours is considered for this article. The present article deals with the impact of Big-Five personality on Impulsive Buying Behaviour.

2. Conceptual Framework

The present research conceptualizes the relation between the buying attitude of consumers and personality factors influencing it as depicted in figure 1.

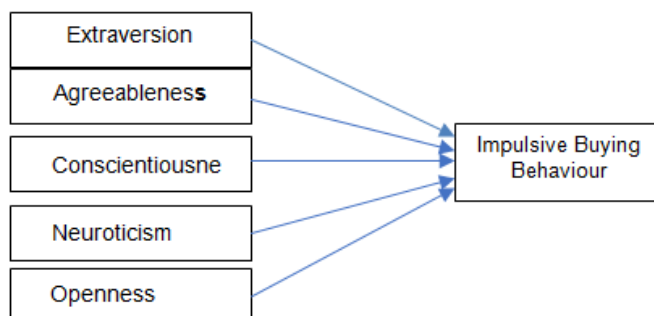


Figure 1: Hypothesized Relationship between Big Five Personality Traits and Impulsive Buying Behaviour

3. Literature Review

Personality: is the projection of one's appearance, looks; interaction and behaviour. While the appearance and looks are external aspects of personality, the interaction and behaviour are the internal aspects of personality which depend upon the set of comparatively stable characteristics. Trait theories are widely used to typify the personalities by breaking down the behaviour patterns into observable traits. Galton in 1884 first attempted to categorize the personality related words based on standard English dictionary. It was followed by Thurstone who conducted factor analysis on data generated by asking hundreds of questions to thousands of people. Five broad dimensions of personality emerged from this analysis which were later labelled as Big-Five personality traits. Cattell (1950) derived 16 personality factors (16PF) model of personality. Later research has proved the reliability and validity of these five factors of personality. Each of the five dimensions is a set of correlated traits represented as bipolar traits. While individuals may exhibit all five dimensions, they may score varyingly on one or several dimensions (McCrae and Costa, 1990). The proposition that individual personality differences may lead to variation in buying behaviour was extensively researched in 60s but it had some flaws in terms of the assumptions on which most of this research was based (Foxall and Goldsmith, 1988). They further state that a careful investigation of consumers' choice using appropriate psychometric tests may have a lot to offer marketing management and research. Kassarian and Sheffet (1991) stated that personality can help understand the root of consumer behaviour. They further opined that the relationship between personality and consumer behaviour is one of the most challenging topics for marketing researchers. Sofi and Nika (2016) found that "Personality" as an intrinsic catalyst has significant bearing on both positive and negative indicators of an impulsive buying while earlier Muruganatham and Bhakat (2013) concluded that impulse buying is a result of the interaction of various internal and external stimuli. They further reiterated that there are aspects such as personality traits and socio-cultural traits that could be studied further in detail to better understand the impulsiveness of the consumers.

Extrovert persons are optimistic about life and they experience less anxiety due to negative response. Neurotic persons are emotionally unstable and more sensitive. Agreeableness indicates caring, compassionate, obliging, and sincere attitude. Conscientiousness is defined as the sense of doing the duty in an organized manner while openness indicates inventiveness and ingeniousness.

Consumer buying behaviour: Understanding how the consumers are likely to behave when it comes to buying an item made available in the market, is one of the most crucial challenges that the marketers face. The marketers can craft their strategies if they can understand the likely consumer behaviour. The buying can be impulsive buying, compulsive buying, utilitarian buying or hedonic buying.

Impulsive buying:

Consumer researchers have tried to precisely define impulsive buying behaviour over last seven decades or so with clover (1950) laying the foundation of research on impulsive buying. Early attempts focused on managerial and retailers' interests to emphasize on classifying the products into impulse and non-impulse items. It helped in designing the point of purchase

advertising, merchandising, or in-store promotion etc. However, this approach lacked clarity about definition equating impulsive buying to unplanned purchasing.

Impulsivity is a personality trait defined as a tendency towards acting without forethought, making quick cognitive decisions, and failing to appreciate the circumstances beyond the here and now (Barratt, 1993). It is mostly associated with biological aspect of personality; a state with non-specific physiological activation taking place with a non-directional alertness (Anderson and Revelle, 1994; Rook and Fisher, 1995). Impulse buying is a decision taken within the store it thus requires investigation into issues relevant to customer, product, store, and internal and external stimuli in general (Kollat and Willett, 1969) in a very short time (Stern, 1962).

Rook and Fisher (1995) defined buying impulsiveness as a consumer's tendency to buy spontaneously, unreflectively, immediately, and kinetically. Historically impulsive buying behaviour is characterized by immaturity, primitivism, foolishness, defects of the will, lower intelligence, and even social deviance and criminality but recently impulsive behaviour has been characterized as specious thinking (Ainslie, 1975 in Rook and Fisher, 1995). Beatty and Ferrel (1998) defined impulsive buying as a sudden and immediate purchase with no pre-shopping intention to either buy a product or fulfil any other need. It is unplanned purchase, decided on the spot, occurs in response to a stimulus and entails a cognitive reaction, an emotional reaction, or both (Hodge, 2004). Bashir et al (2013) defined impulsive buying behaviour as an unexpected wish of the buyer for unintended purchase by seeing any product at retail store. Such behaviour is quite baseless and without any logic. Impulsive buying is influenced by variety of external and internal factors including economic, temporal, spatial, cultural and personal (Stern, 1962). Impulsive buying is unpredictable and cannot be predicted before the consumer glances it and gets attracted towards it due to variety of reasons. There are varying observations and findings about the influence of the Big-five personality characteristics on impulsive buying.

Compulsive buying:

Compulsive buying is defined as consistent buying without feeling the pleasure or the desired reward. The word 'compulsive' means the feeling of the concerned person that drives him to repeatedly buy. It is considered as a psychological disorder (Shezadi et al, 2016). Sharma et al (2009) defined compulsive buying as frequent preoccupation with buying or impulse to buy that is experienced as irresistible, intrusive, and/or senseless or frequent buying of items that are not needed, or shopping for longer periods of time than intended. Compulsivity is a personality trait demonstrated by the people who buy compulsively (O'Guinn and Faber, 1989). Such people have low self-esteem, and they are more prone to fantasy than the normal consumers. The primary motivation of such people seems to be the psychological benefit that they derive from buying rather than that from possessing the purchased items.

Utilitarian buying & Hedonic value buying:

Utilitarian buying refers to the buying based on whether the concerned product / service satisfies the utility needs of the consumer while hedonic buying refers to purchase carried out to show off.

Influence of personality on consumer buying behaviour:

Review of literature reveal that more focus has been on studying the impact of personality on impulsive buying rather than compulsive buying. There are studies involving both impulsive as well as compulsive buying. Here is the review of relevant studies without segregating them based on type of buying behaviour namely impulsive or compulsive.

There are direct and indirect references to personality and its impact on consumer buying behaviour. Consumer's characteristics and demographics influence their impulse purchasing, argued Kollat and Willett (1967) while Hoch & Loewenstein (1991) framed consumer self-control as a struggle between two psychological forces of desire and willpower which relate to emotional stability or instability or neuroticism. Rook and Fisher (1995) introduced impulsiveness as a personality trait. Tsai (2003) found a significant relation between personality attributes and online consumer behaviour. She found that while demographic and geographic variables were not good predictors of online consumer behaviour, the personality variables offered effective segmentation and ability to differentiate online consumer behaviour and the marketers could easily identify the marketing niches for products and services for online consumers. Matzler et al (2005) found that there is direct relation between extraversion and positive consumption emotions, while neuroticism predicted negative consumption-based emotions. They also found in accordance with other studies (Larsen and Katelaar, 1991; Mooradian and Olver, 1997) that the neuroticism – negative emotions relationship was slightly stronger than the extraversion – positive emotions connection. Shahzehan et al (2012) found that both impulsive and compulsive buying were positively correlated with neuroticism (emotional instability) implying that individuals who experience emotional instability, anxiety, moodiness, irritability, and sadness are more likely to display impulsive and compulsive buying behaviours. Impulsive and compulsive buying behaviours are also positively affected by the other four personality traits. They also found that openness characterized by imagination, culture, broad mindedness, intelligence, and artistic sensitivity is significantly correlated with Impulsive-buying behaviours. On the other hand, agreeableness is found to have insignificant impact on impulsive buying. Openness was found to be responsible for maximum impact on impulsive buying. Gohary and Hanzae (2014), while studying the relationship between the big five personality traits and shopping behaviour, found that conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness were predictors of compulsive buying, impulsive buying and utilitarian shopping. The results also showed that there are significant differences between female and male shoppers on conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness, compulsive buying and hedonic shopping value. Besides, they also examined sex as moderator between Big Five personality traits and shopping variables, but didn't find enough evidence to prove it, using hierarchical regression analysis. Mathai and Haridas (2014) found a significant influence of extroversion on impulsive buying under *shopping experience* while under situation *inside the store, and promotional factors*, neuroticism was found to have a significant impact on impulsive buying. Gangai and Agrawal (2016) found a strong correlation between personality

and impulsive buying behaviour of consumers. While personality traits such as *Psychoticism* was found to have significant relationship with the impulsive buying behaviour, *Neuroticism* influenced impulsive buying behaviour especially when the individuals tried to overcome their low self-esteem and negative self-esteem. *Extraversion* was not found to have any correlation with buying behaviour of male consumers and negative correlation with buying behaviour of female consumers. It was concluded that gender and personality traits play a significant role in consumer impulsive buying behaviour. Shehzadi et al (2016) too found a correlation between *agreeableness, neuroticism* and *openness to experience* with compulsive buying with mediating role of impulsive buying.

Thus, different researchers have found a correlation between one or more of the big-five personality traits and impulsive buying behaviour under varying circumstances. By-and-large most of the findings are in alignment but it certainly needs to be studied further to understand the phenomena especially in Indian context. Hence this study.

4. Method**Sampling design:**

The data for the present study were collected from 178 respondents at a response rate of 89%. Random sampling was chosen as the technique to gather the data since the impulsive buying behaviour is not specific to any class of people. Moreover, the demographic variation was also to be studied.

Data collection design:

The big-five inventory of 44 items (John and Shrivastav, 1999) was used to understand the big-five personality traits of the respondents while to measure the impulsive buying behaviour, 20 items scale designed by Verplanken and Herabadi (2001) was used which includes both cognitive as well as affective aspects of impulsive buying. The questionnaire thus had two sections; one, big-five personality inventory, and two, impulsive buying behaviour. The data was collected on a five-point Likert scale asking the level of agreement of respondents with the given statements (items).

5. Result and Discussion

Table 1 provides the correlations of the big-five personality traits with the impulsive buying behaviour. It is noted that *agreeableness* and *neuroticism* have significant correlations with impulsive buying behaviour while *extraversion*, *conscientiousness*, and *openness* to experience practically do not have correlation with impulsive buying behaviour. These findings are in line with Shahzehan et al (2012), Mathai and Haridas (2014), Gangai and Agrawal (2016), and Shehzadi et al (2016). The correlation between agreeableness and impulsive buying ($r = 0.229$) is not as strong as the correlation between neuroticism and impulsive buying ($r = 0.274$). Further, the table shows *extraversion* has a positive relationship with *openness* and negative relationship with *neuroticism*. That is extrovert person is agreeable and open and far away from being neurotic. This goes as per the facets of the big-five which is not a part of this study. The neuroticism has negative association with extrovert and conscientiousness while neuroticism makes impulsive buying. The scatter plots of both the positive correlations are also shown in fig 2.

Table 1: Correlations of Big-Five Personality and Impulsive Buying Behaviour

Correlations		Extrovert	Agreeable	Conscientious	Neuroticism	Open	Impulsive_Buying
Extrovert	Pearson Correlation	1	.432**	0.118	-.411**	.324**	-0.001
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.118	0.000	0.000	0.991
	N	178	178	178	178	178	178
Agreeable	Pearson Correlation	.432**	1	0.095	-.151*	0.102	.229**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.209	0.044	0.175	0.002
	N	178	178	178	178	178	178
Conscientious	Pearson Correlation	0.118	0.095	1	-.534**	.310**	-0.047
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.118	0.209		0.000	0.000	0.536
	N	178	178	178	178	178	178
Neuroticism	Pearson Correlation	-.411**	-.151*	-.534**	1	-0.131	.274**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.044	0.000		0.080	0.000
	N	178	178	178	178	178	178
Open	Pearson Correlation	.324**	0.102	.310**	-0.131	1	0.090
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.175	0.000	0.080		0.231
	N	178	178	178	178	178	178
Impulsive_Buying	Pearson Correlation	-0.001	.229**	-0.047	.274**	0.090	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.991	0.002	0.536	0.000	0.231	
	N	178	178	178	178	178	178

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

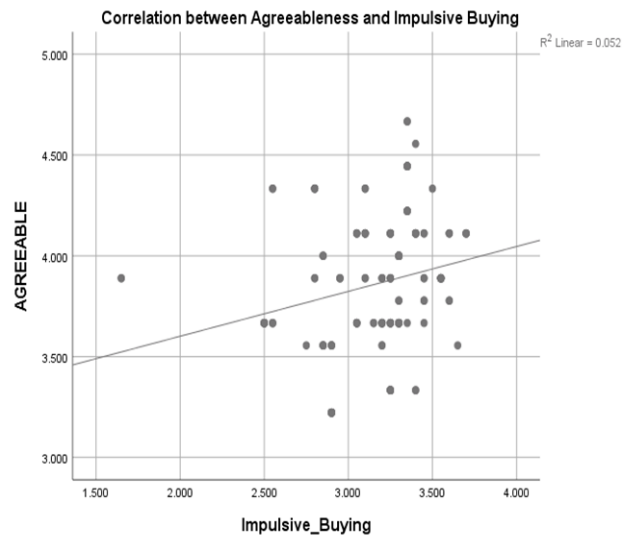
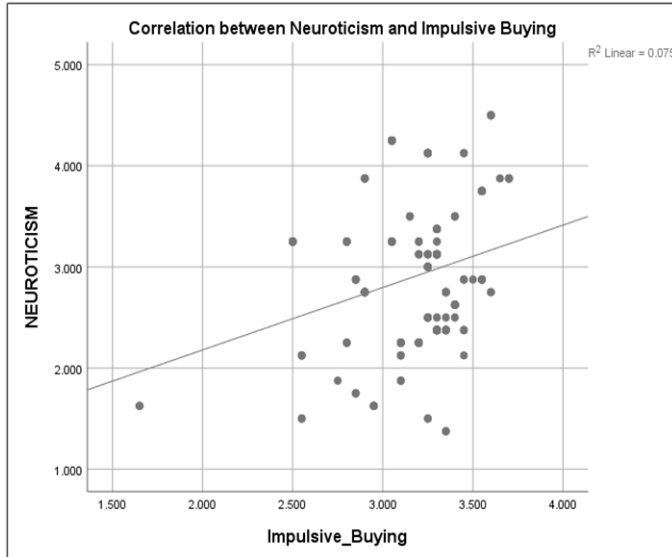


Figure 2: Scatter plots of Correlations between Big-Five and Impulsive Buying Behaviour

Table 2: Gender Group Statistics

Group Statistics					
	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Impulsive_Buying	Male	102	3.08137	.347475	.034405
	Female	76	3.28224	.251754	.028878

Table 3: Independent Sample t test output

Independent Samples Test		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
ImpulsiveBuying	Equal variances assumed	8.903	.003	-4.272	176	.000	-.200864	.047023	-.293665	-.108063
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.472	175.882	.000	-.200864	.044918	-.289513	-.112216

The demographic data was found to be such that it did not have much variation in occupation, income level, and age. Hence an independent sample 't' test was applied to see the differences in impulsive buying behaviour of males and females. Table 2 presents the relevant group statistics and table 3 presents the output of 't' test.

The t-test results show significant differences in impulsive buying behaviour between male and a female, as the p-value is 0.03. The group statistics shows a higher mean value for females in calculated average impulsive buying factor with a lower standard deviation as compared to the male statistics. This indicates that females have a higher intensities of impulsive buying behaviour than males. This finding is again consistent with earlier findings (Gohary and Hanzae, 2014; Gangai and Agrawal, 2016).

6. Conclusions and Scope for Further Research

The pre 1950 studies on personality and consumer behaviour had clinical orientation. It was followed by a flood of studies on personality traits and its impact on consumer buying behaviour but most of them had faulty assumptions and lacked solid theoretical base, hence rejected. Then came the era of the modern-day studies which judiciously used personality theories

and the results were quite valid within the given contexts. The present study furthered the knowledge in the area of personality and impulsive buying behaviour. Most of the findings of this study are consistent with previous findings.

The author has not come across any research that has examined its normative aspects which means whether the impulsive traits of personality directly lead to actual purchase or the normative evaluation has a filtering role to play in between. This needs a further study to empirically examine the role of normative evaluation both positive and negative, before the actual purchase (Rook and Fisher, 1995). Tsai (2003) found that personality traits have a significant impact on impulsive buying behaviour of consumers in digital environment. She found a significant correlation between individual personality traits and the marketing strategies suitable for them. The same hypothesis can be tested in off-line environment. It can further be tested with different types of products and different cultures. Out of the five personality traits, *neuroticism* strongly correlates with negative affect and *extraversion* correlate strongly with positive affect (Costa and McCrae (1980). Further research can be conducted to investigate to what extent these two traits can influence positive or negative buying behaviour.

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