



Influence of Impulse Buying Behaviour on Post Purchase Dissonance: A Study of Apparel

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Abstract

Impulse buying behaviour has become a prominent aspect of consumer decision-making, particularly in the apparel sector, where purchases are often influenced by emotions and situational factors. While such purchases may provide immediate satisfaction, they may also lead to post-purchase dissonance, reflecting consumers' feelings of doubt, regret, or discomfort after the purchase. The present study examines the influence of impulse buying behaviour on post-purchase dissonance among apparel consumers.

The study is based on primary data collected from 400 respondents across selected districts of Telangana using a structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis were employed to analyse the data. The findings indicate that impulse buying behaviour is moderately prevalent among consumers and has a positive and statistically significant influence on post-purchase dissonance, although the strength of the relationship is relatively low. Further analysis of post-purchase dissonance dimensions reveals that the perception of better alternatives is the most prominent factor influencing consumers' post-purchase feelings.

The study highlights the need for retailers to manage impulse buying triggers responsibly and to reduce post-purchase dissonance through improved product information, ethical selling practices, and customer support. The findings contribute to a better understanding of consumer behaviour in the apparel sector and provide useful insights for both researchers and practitioners.

Keywords:

Impulse Buying Behaviour, Post-Purchase Dissonance, Apparel Consumers, Consumer, Behaviour, Retail Marketing, Purchase Decision

1. Introduction

In recent years, consumer buying behaviour has undergone notable changes due to evolving lifestyles, rising disposable income, and the expansion of modern retail formats. Among various forms of purchasing behaviour, impulse buying has attracted considerable attention, particularly in the apparel sector. Impulse buying refers to an unplanned purchase made spontaneously, often influenced by emotional urges and immediate attraction rather than careful evaluation. In apparel retailing, factors such as visual merchandising, promotional offers, and the appeal of fashion trends frequently encourage such behaviour.

Although impulse purchases may provide immediate satisfaction, they are often followed by a sense of uncertainty regarding the decision made. This psychological discomfort, commonly referred to as post-purchase dissonance, arises when consumers begin to question the appropriateness of their purchase. In the case of apparel products, this may be related to concerns about fit, quality, price, or changing preferences.

Understanding the link between impulse buying behaviour and post-purchase dissonance is important for analysing consumer decision-making processes. While impulse buying reflects a quick and emotionally driven decision, post-purchase dissonance represents the subsequent evaluation of that decision. Therefore, this study examines the influence of impulse buying behaviour on post-purchase dissonance in the apparel sector, with a focus on how immediate purchase decisions may lead to later cognitive and emotional responses.

2. Review of Literature

Impulse buying behaviour has been extensively studied in consumer research, with early contributions focusing on its nature and determinants. Clover Vernon Stern (1962) provided one of the earliest classifications of impulse buying and emphasized the role of in-store stimuli such as product display and promotional cues in triggering unplanned purchases. Building on this, Ronald J. Rook (1987) conceptualized impulse buying as a sudden and compelling urge driven by emotional responses, highlighting its experiential and affective nature. Further, Sharon E. Beatty and M. Elizabeth Ferrell (1998) identified situational factors such as time availability, financial resources, and shopping enjoyment as key antecedents influencing impulsive purchases. These perspectives collectively suggest that impulse buying is shaped by a combination of environmental stimuli, emotional responses, and situational conditions, which are particularly relevant in apparel retailing.

The concept of post-purchase dissonance is grounded in the theory proposed by Leon Festinger (1957), which explains the discomfort arising from inconsistencies between beliefs and actions. In consumer behaviour, this discomfort emerges after a purchase when individuals reassess their decision. Extending this theoretical foundation, Jill C. Sweeney, Geoffrey J. Hausknecht, and Geoffrey N. Soutar (2000) developed a multidimensional approach to measure post-purchase dissonance, identifying emotional discomfort, decision concern, and doubt as its key components. Additionally, Richard L. Oliver (1999) emphasized the role of post-purchase evaluation in shaping satisfaction and future behavioural intentions, indicating that negative experiences may influence subsequent purchase decisions.

The relationship between impulse buying behaviour and post-purchase dissonance has also been explored in prior studies. Ronald J. Rook and Robert J. Hoch (1995) observed that although impulse purchases provide immediate gratification, they may later result in feelings of regret or doubt due to lack of prior evaluation. Similarly, Utpal M. Dholakia (2000) highlighted that impulsive decisions are often followed by cognitive reassessment, which may lead to dissonance when consumers perceive a mismatch between expectations and outcomes.

Overall, the literature indicates that impulse buying behaviour, while driven by emotional and situational influences, may lead to post-purchase dissonance due to subsequent cognitive evaluation. However, limited empirical attention has been given specifically to the apparel sector, thereby justifying the need for the present study.

3. Conceptual Framework

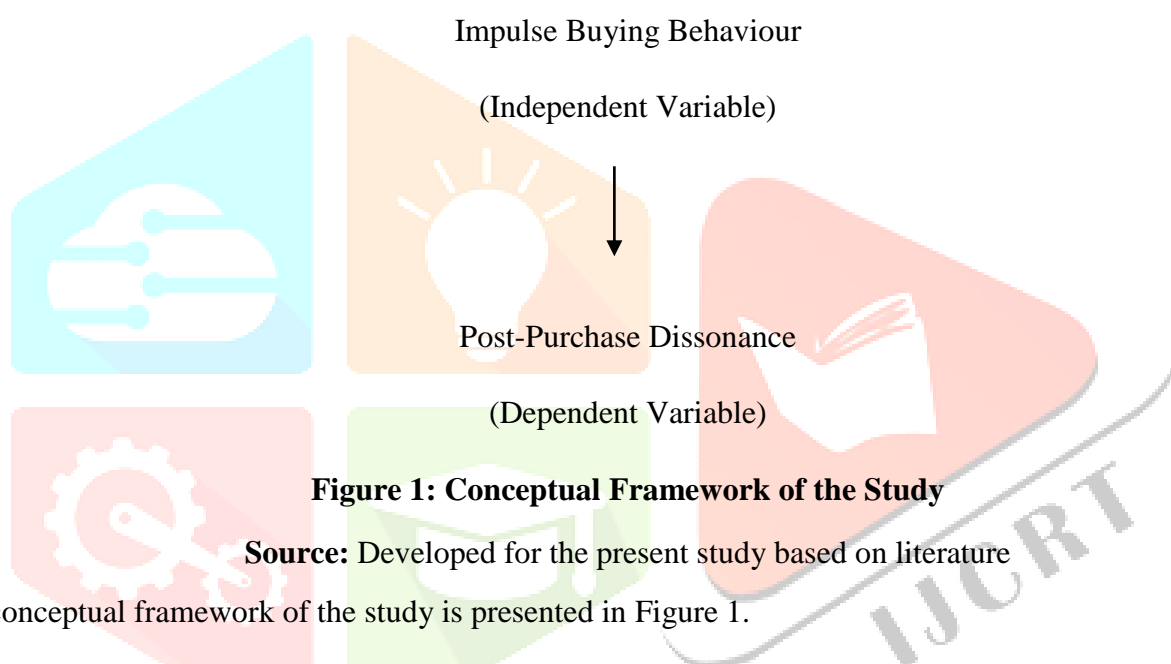


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

Source: Developed for the present study based on literature

The conceptual framework of the study is presented in Figure 1.

The present study examines the influence of impulse buying behaviour on post-purchase dissonance in the apparel sector. In this framework, impulse buying behaviour is considered as the independent variable, while post-purchase dissonance is treated as the dependent variable.

Impulse buying behaviour reflects consumers' tendency to make immediate purchase decisions under the influence of emotional and situational factors. Post-purchase dissonance represents the psychological response that occurs after such decisions, particularly when consumers reassess their choices.

The framework proposes that impulsive purchase decisions, made without extensive evaluation, are more likely to result in post-purchase dissonance. This relationship highlights the transition from an emotionally driven action to a cognitively evaluated outcome. Accordingly, the study focuses on examining the extent to which impulse buying behaviour influences post-purchase dissonance in the context of apparel purchases.

4. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows

- To examine the level of impulse buying behaviour among consumers in the apparel sector.
- To assess the extent of post-purchase dissonance experienced by consumers after purchasing apparel products.
- To analyse the influence of impulse buying behaviour on post-purchase dissonance.

5. Hypotheses of the Study

Based on the objectives and conceptual framework of the study, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H₀: There is no significant influence of impulse buying behaviour on post-purchase dissonance in the apparel sector.

H₁: There is a significant influence of impulse buying behaviour on post-purchase dissonance in the apparel sector.

6. Research Methodology

Research Design: This study follows a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the influence of impulse buying behaviour on post purchase dissonance.

Study Area: The research was conducted in six districts of Telangana—Hanamkonda, Warangal, Jangaon, Mahabubabad, Jayashankar Bhupalpally, and Mulugu—representing diverse urban and rural consumer backgrounds.

Population and Sampling: The target population includes retail shoppers in the selected districts. Using convenience sampling, 400 responses were collected from consumers visiting malls, supermarkets, local retail outlets, and brand stores.

Data Collection Method: Primary data was obtained through a structured questionnaire covering impulse buying behaviour and post purchase dissonance, measured using a 5-point Likert scale. Secondary data was sourced from relevant literature, journals, books, and reports.

Tools for Data Analysis: Percentage distribution, cross-tabulation and weighted averages, were used to analyse impulse buying behaviour and post purchase dissonance. Correlation and regression analysis were carried out to examine the relationship between demographic variables and impulse buying behaviour.

7. Scope of the Study

The scope is limited to retail shoppers in the six selected districts in Telangana mentioned earlier, and the findings reflect consumer behaviour within this geographic region only. The study specifically focuses on the influence of impulse buying behaviour on post purchase dissonance.

8. Data Analysis

8.1 Impulse Buying Behaviour

The frequency and percentage distribution of impulse buying behaviour among apparel consumers is presented in Table 1.

Table 2: Distribution of Impulse Buying Behaviour among Apparel Consumers

Frequency	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Always	67	17%
Frequently	93	23%
Sometimes	157	39%
Rarely	51	13%
Never	32	8%

Source: Compiled from questionnaire

Interpretation

Table 2 presents the distribution of impulse buying behaviour among apparel consumers. A larger proportion of respondents (39%) indicated that they sometimes engage in impulse purchases, suggesting that such behaviour occurs on an occasional basis. A notable segment of respondents reported frequent (23%) and consistent (17%) impulse buying tendencies, indicating the presence of a considerable group with higher impulsive orientation. In contrast, 13% of respondents rarely engage in such purchases, while only 8% reported no involvement in impulse buying.

These findings indicate that impulse buying behaviour is prevalent among apparel consumers, though it is generally expressed at a moderate level. This pattern provides a relevant basis for examining how varying levels of impulsiveness may influence post-purchase dissonance.

8.2 Post Purchase Dissonance

The frequency and percentage distribution of dimensions of post-purchase dissonance among apparel consumers is presented in Table 2.

Table 3: Dimensions of Post-Purchase Dissonance among Apparel Consumers: Frequency and Percentage Distribution

Dimensions	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Regret	35 (9%)	54 (14%)	205 (51%)	78 (19%)	28 (07%)
Better alternatives	50 (13%)	77 (19%)	196 (49%)	64 (16%)	13 (3%)
Unnecessary purchase	36 (9%)	58 (15%)	163 (40%)	85 (21%)	58 (15%)
Inferiority	19 (5%)	65 (16%)	145 (36%)	99 (25%)	72 (18%)
Emotional discomfort	26 (7%)	52 (13%)	120 (30%)	116 (29%)	86 (22%)
Anger	18 (5%)	57 (14%)	121 (30%)	85 (21%)	119 (30%)
Perceived undue influence	34 (9%)	52 (13%)	116 (29%)	96 (24%)	102 (25%)
Feeling of being fooled	18 (5%)	60 (15%)	120 (30%)	100 (25%)	102 (25%)
Perceived misleading salesman	20 (5%)	56 (14%)	142 (35%)	96 (24%)	86 (22%)
Negative comments	20 (5%)	62 (16%)	127 (32%)	89 (22%)	102 (25%)
Criticism	22 (6%)	54 (14%)	118 (29%)	102 (25%)	104 (26%)

Source: Compiled from Primary Data

Interpretation

The table presents the distribution of various dimensions of post-purchase dissonance among apparel consumers. Regarding regret about the product purchased, 51% of the respondents experience this sometimes, followed by 19% rarely, 14% frequently, 9% always, and 7% never. With respect to the perception that better alternatives were available, 49% of the respondents report this sometimes, 19% frequently, 16% rarely, 13% always, and only 3% never experience such thoughts. In relation to the opinion that the purchase was unnecessary, 40% of the respondents feel this sometimes, 21% rarely, 15% frequently, 15% never, and 9% always. Similarly, 36% of the respondents experience a sense of inferiority sometimes, followed by 25% rarely, 18% never, 16% frequently, and 5% always. Regarding emotional discomfort, 30% of the respondents experience it sometimes, 29% rarely, 22% never, 13% frequently, and 7% always. In the case of anger after purchase, 30% report sometimes, 30% never, 21% rarely, 14% frequently, and 5% always. With regard to influence from sales staff against personal beliefs, 29% of the respondents experience this sometimes, 25% never, 24% rarely, 13% frequently, and 9% always. Similarly, 30% of the respondents feel that they were fooled sometimes, 25% never, 25% rarely, 15% frequently, and 5% always. Regarding the perception that the salesman was misleading, 35% of the respondents report this sometimes,

24% rarely, 22% never, 14% frequently, and 5% always. Likewise, 32% of the respondents encounter negative comments sometimes, 25% never, 22% rarely, 16% frequently, and 5% always. In the case of criticism, 29% of the respondents experience it sometimes, 26% never, 25% rarely, 14% frequently, and 6% always. Overall, the results indicate that most respondents experience post-purchase dissonance at a moderate level, with the majority reporting such feelings occasionally rather than frequently or consistently.

The weighted average scores and rankings for dimensions of post-purchase dissonance among apparel consumers is presented in table 3.

Table 4: Dimensions of Post-Purchase Dissonance among Apparel Consumers: Weighted Averages and Rankings

Dimensions	WA Score	Rank
Regret	79.00	2
Better alternatives	88.70	1
Unnecessary purchase	72.90	3
Inferiority	66.00	4
Emotional discomfort	61.60	7
Anger	57.00	11
Perceived undue influence	62.00	6
Feeling of being fooled	59.20	9
Perceived misleading salesman	62.80	5
Negative comments	60.90	8
Criticism	58.00	10

Note: WA – Weighted Average

Source: Author's Computation from Primary Data

Interpretation

The table presents the feelings and experiences of consumers after purchase of apparel. These scores help in comparing the relative intensity of different post-purchase feelings and experiences among respondents. Based on these scores and the corresponding rankings, the major patterns observed are discussed in the following interpretation.

The feeling that there might be better alternatives available ranks first with the highest weighted average score (WA score: 88.70). This indicates that many consumers tend to reconsider their purchase and believe that a better product option might have been available. Regret ranks second (WA score: 79.00), showing that some consumers experience dissatisfaction after purchasing apparel. Unnecessary purchase occupies the

third position (WA score: 72.90), suggesting that a section of consumers feel that the purchase may not have been essential. Feelings such as inferiority (WA score: 66.00), misleading salesman (WA score: 62.80), and undue or manipulative influence (WA score: 62.00) occupy the middle ranks, indicating moderate levels of concern regarding sales influence and social perception. Emotional discomfort (WA score: 61.60) and negative comments from others (WA score: 60.90) also appear as noticeable experiences after purchase. Comparatively lower scores are observed for fooled purchase (WA score: 59.20), criticism (WA score: 58.00), and anger (WA score: 57.00), indicating that strong negative emotional reactions are relatively less common in apparel purchases.

8.3. Relationship between Impulse Buying Behaviour and Post Purchase Dissonance

a) Correlation analysis

The results of correlation analysis are presented in table 4.

Table 5: Correlation Analysis

Correlations		
Variables	Impulse Buying	Post-Purchase Dissonance
Impulse Buying Behaviour	1	0.211**
Post-Purchase Dissonance	0.211**	1
N = 400 **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).		

Note: $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed)

Source: Computed using IBM SPSS Statistics

Interpretation

The correlation analysis indicates a positive and statistically significant relationship between impulse buying behaviour and post-purchase dissonance ($r = 0.211$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that an increase in impulse buying behaviour is associated with a corresponding increase in post-purchase dissonance among apparel consumers. However, the strength of the relationship is relatively low, indicating that other factors may also influence post-purchase dissonance.

b) Regression Analysis

The results of regression analysis with respect to the influence of influence of impulse buying behaviour on post-purchase dissonance are presented in table 5

Table 6: Regression Results – Influence of Impulse Buying Behaviour on Post-Purchase Dissonance

Predictor	B	Std. Error	β	t	Sig.
Constant	2.094	0.138	—	15.160	< 0.001
Impulse Buying Behaviour	0.172	0.040	0.211	4.309	< 0.001

Model Summary: $R = 0.211$, $R^2 = 0.045$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.042$

$F = 18.569$, $p < 0.001$

Dependent Variable: Post-Purchase Dissonance (Apparel)

Source: Computed using IBM SPSS Statistics

Interpretation

The regression analysis shows that impulse buying behaviour has a positive and statistically significant influence on post-purchase dissonance ($\beta = 0.211$, $p < 0.001$). The model explains 4.5% of the variance in post-purchase dissonance ($R^2 = 0.045$), indicating a modest level of explanatory power.

The positive coefficient ($B = 0.172$) suggests that higher levels of impulse buying behaviour lead to an increase in post-purchase dissonance among consumers. The F-value (18.569) confirms that the model is statistically significant.

8.5 Hypothesis Testing: Influence of Impulse Buying Behaviour on Post-Purchase Dissonance (Apparel)

H₀: There is no significant influence of impulse buying behaviour on post-purchase dissonance in the case of apparel.

H₁: There is a significant influence of impulse buying behaviour on post-purchase dissonance in the case of apparel.

Result:

The results of correlation and regression analysis indicate that impulse buying behaviour has a positive and statistically significant influence on post-purchase dissonance ($p < 0.001$). This suggests that an increase in impulse buying behaviour leads to a corresponding increase in post-purchase dissonance among apparel consumers. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

10. Discussion

The findings of the study indicate that impulse buying behaviour has a positive and statistically significant influence on post-purchase dissonance in the apparel sector, although the strength of the relationship is relatively low. This suggests that while impulsive purchases may lead to post-purchase discomfort, other factors may also contribute to such feelings.

A notable finding of the study is that the perception regarding the availability of better alternatives emerged as a major dimension of post-purchase dissonance. This indicates that consumers tend to reassess their purchase decisions and believe that a more suitable option could have been selected. This observation is consistent with the theory of Leon Festinger (1957), which explains that individuals experience psychological discomfort when they recognize inconsistencies between their decisions and alternative choices. Similar evidence is provided by Jill C. Sweeney et al. (2000), who identified decision concern and comparison with alternatives as important dimensions of post-purchase dissonance.

The results are also consistent with the work of Ronald J. Rook (1987), who highlighted that impulse buying is driven by emotional urges, often followed by cognitive evaluation. Similarly, Richard L. Oliver (1999) emphasized that post-purchase evaluation plays a crucial role in shaping consumer satisfaction and subsequent behaviour.

Thus, the present study aligns with earlier research by demonstrating that impulsive buying behaviour can lead to post-purchase dissonance, particularly in the apparel context. However, the relatively low strength of the relationship indicates the need to consider additional factors influencing post-purchase dissonance.

11. Conclusion

The study concludes that impulse buying behaviour has a significant but limited influence on post-purchase dissonance among apparel consumers. While impulsive purchases may generate immediate satisfaction, they can also lead to subsequent feelings of doubt or discomfort.

However, the relatively low explanatory power of the model suggests that post-purchase dissonance is influenced by multiple factors beyond impulse buying behaviour. Therefore, future research may explore additional variables to better understand consumer post-purchase experiences.

12. Managerial Implications

The findings of the study provide several practical implications for retailers, marketers, and apparel brands. Since impulse buying behaviour has a significant influence on post-purchase dissonance, it is important for firms to manage both the purchase experience and post-purchase outcomes effectively.

- Retailers should ensure accurate and complete product information (size, fit, fabric, price, and usage) at the point of purchase. Clear information can reduce uncertainty and help consumers make more confident decisions.
- While promotional strategies and visual merchandising may encourage impulse purchases, marketers should avoid misleading or exaggerated claims, as these may increase post-purchase dissonance and negatively affect customer satisfaction.
- Apparel retailers should implement easy return and exchange policies, which can help reduce consumers' feelings of regret and dissatisfaction after impulsive purchases.
- Providing trial options, fitting assistance, and size guidance can minimize concerns related to product suitability, which is a major source of dissonance in apparel purchases.
- Firms should focus on post-purchase communication, such as follow-up messages, care instructions, or styling suggestions, to reassure customers about their purchase decisions.
- Retailers can train sales personnel to adopt ethical selling practices, ensuring that customers are not pressured into purchases, thereby reducing feelings of being influenced or misled.
- Since the influence of impulse buying behaviour on dissonance is relatively low, managers should also consider other factors such as product quality, brand trust, and customer experience, which may play a significant role in shaping post-purchase perceptions.

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