

# IMPULSIVE E-SHOPPING: THE TRIGGERS AND THE CONSEQUENCES

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## **Abstract:**

Instant gratification is one of the most appealing aspect of buying something. The feeling of euphoria on shopping a product is intensified by the advent of e-shopping, as whenever a customer feels an inclination or compulsion to buy can be capitalized by making use of the technology such as smartphones, tables and personal computers, through which the e-tail stores can be accessed anytime and anywhere, the resulting products will reach the customer without any physical exertion and the pain of visiting the retail store which also incurs auxiliary expenses like fuel, parking etc., Apart from satisfying the basic needs, it is suggested by various researches that, feelings and emotions of a customer plays a major role in buying decision. An e-tailer monetizes on these impulsive urges of a customer greatly by applying some clever promotional techniques to garner profits and business retention in the market. This paper attempts to study the triggering factors that induce a customer to indulge in impulsive e-shopping and analyze the consequences faced by them post their compulsive purchase. 100 samples have been collected from the compulsive e-shoppers in the Coimbatore city, in which appropriate statistical tools are used and an attempt is made to communicate the findings of the research to current and prospective e-shoppers and the suggestions will help the e-tailers to understand the plight of the customers and to apply their ethical business sense more than just profit orientation towards e-tailing.

**Index Terms:** Impulsive buying, e-shopping, compulsive e-shopping, e-tailing, e-tail store impulse.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

E-shopping, the contemporary netizen's companion is deemed not just as a trend but as a way of living. Growing rapidly as a permanent fixture in the minds of the customers who have no time to spare for trivial purposes of day-to-day activities like going to a retail outlet to buy their basic, comfort and luxury needs. The platform that brings various categories of products directly to the fist of customers are the e-tail stores also called as e-retail stores, whose major goal is to make the fast-paced life of the people easier. However, with the increasing expectations and competitions, the one of the main source an e-tail taps onto to reach their customer is to trigger their impulses in e-shopping. An impulsive e-shopping habit of the customer is when, the he/she gets induced by certain factors, that lead them to e-shop without thinking about the consequences. An impulsive purchase behavior of a customer is commercialized and put on a high pedestal by the e-tailers as they can directly influence the mentality of a customer to stay loyal to the act of e-shopping and thereby the e-tail stores.

Every person should give into their buying urges at some point of time, and that is where an e-tailer focuses on triggering a customer to finally loose a battle against his/her self-control and indulge in their compulsive buying behavior. Sometimes, without the push of the e-tailers, some customers have their own psychological pressure that they think can be only relieved by spending money or

by buying a product, thereby giving those customers immense satisfaction, a sense of achievement of acquiring something, self-surprising attitude and can also boost the customers confidence escalating it to euphoria. Though it should be noted that, continuous urge to e-shop can lead to many bad consequences. One of the major after math that the customers of present scenario face is Online Shopaholism or E-shopping addiction which is considered as a serious psychological condition that can hamper a customer economically as well as emotionally. It should be noted that, though on one side, the e-tailing industry is striving hard by applying all possible strategies to satisfy a customer, retaining their market and improving Indian economy, the flip side portrayal of the impulsive e-shopping indicates is not so black and white as it is presented especially to the customers. Therefore, it is still not conclusive whether impulsive e-shopping is a ploy to prey on the customers or a harmless selling strategy employed by the e-tailers make their venture profitable.

### 1.1 Statement of the problem

The primary objective of an e-retailer is to make the process of procuring products and services uncomplicated, accessible and hassle free. Understanding a customer's insufficiency of time in the contemporary scenario, where a normal person has a lot to catch up with the fast-paced society to increasing his/her standard of living. E-tailing has become a boon to these kinds of customers by which they can not only meet their basic necessities but also give into their emotional gratification and impulsive urges once in a while. While an e-tailer is constantly coming up with more and more of strategies to keep their customers satisfied and also to stay afloat in the market, their persistent push has slowly taken another form of manipulation, where the customers are almost forced to buy a product just because it is in their vicinity. The normal decision-making process of a customer when buying a product is disrupted when a customer is exposed to various passive to aggressive influencers inducing them to accommodate not only their natural urges but the societal and peer pressure, thereby leading to a sort of addiction to the act of e-shopping rather than involving in a simple act of shopping a product just because the customer has use for that purchase, not for just an irrational moment of self-gratification. These triggers that a customer has is more or less not self-induced but a fancy created by the corporates to monetize the psychological slip in a customer's attitude and convert it to profit. Therefore, the study tries to explore the influencers and triggers that makes the customer involve in their impulsive e-shopping habit, and highlights the aftermath of their irrational decision.

### 1.2 Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

1. To study the factors that triggers the customer's impulsive e-shopping behavior
2. To analyze the consequences the customers face, post their impulse e-shopping
3. To offer suitable suggestions based on the results obtained.

### 1.3 Research Methodology

The methodology through which the research is designed is postulated below.

#### 1.3.1 Area of the Study

The area of the study is selected as Coimbatore city, popularly called as the Manchester of South India. It is a fast-developing city which boasts of numerous educational institutions, cotton cultivation and developing IT parks.

#### 1.3.2 Sources of Data

The sources of Data are both Primary and Secondary data. Primary data is collected from 100 respondents who frequency E-Shop on an impulse and the Secondary data is collected from Journals, Magazines, Periodicals etc.,

### 1.3.3 Sampling Design

The sampling design of the study constitutes of Sampling technique and Sample size. Snowball sampling technique is used to collect the primary data, which is gathered using Interview schedule method and Sample size is taken as 100 respondents.

### 1.3.4 Tools Used

The statistical tools used for the research are as follows

- Percentage Analysis
- Average Score Analysis
- Graphical Representation

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

*Turkyilmaz, C.A., Erdem, S. & Uslu, A. (2014)<sup>1</sup>* explored the effects of website quality and personality traits on the impulsive buying behavior of online shoppers. The authors implored that, there are many studies that researched on the impulsive buying behavior in traditional retail setting and thus this study examines the internal and external factors effecting the online shopping of a consumer. The data were collected using a survey instrument and the questionnaire is designed using validated scales with 612 respondents taken for sample population, who were online shoppers of a Turkey based website in Turkey. The findings of the study threw the light on how the web site quality is very important for inducing the online shopping impulsiveness of the consumers and among various features of website quality, ease of understanding, intuitive operations, trust of the consumers on the website, entertainment quality and emotional aspect of the website were considered as the predictors of impulsive online shopping behavior of the respondents. The study concludes on a note that, both quality of the website and personality traits are important in considering on Online impulsive buying of a consumer.

*Ozen, H. & Engizek, N. (2014)<sup>2</sup>* analyzed whether online shopping without thinking is a rational or an emotional decision on the part of a consumer. The objective of the study is to explore the hedonic motivations of the consumers of Turkey and whether they have any impact on their impulsive buying behavior and to determine which hedonic shopping motivation has the strongest effect on the impulsive online shopping. For the purpose of this study, an online survey was conducted with 430 online shoppers of a Turking website and the tools used for analysis were Confirmatory Factor analysis and Structural Equation Modelling. The final implications of the study indicate that, the three hedonic dimensions such as relaxation, adventure and value has direct effect on the impulsive online buying of a customer in a positive manner, while social shopping has a negative effect on the customers impulsive buying online. Therefore, the study summates that the customers who are in par with the trends tend to impulse buy more while it is subjective whether it has positive or negative aftermath.

*Verhagen, T. & Dolen W.V. (2011)<sup>3</sup>* aim to determine the influence of online shopping store's beliefs on the impulsive buying of the consumers. The empirical study tries to explore the relationship between online store beliefs of a consumer and their impulsive purchase behavior. This paper employs a cognitive theory on emotion model with a survey method using 532 customers of a Dutch online store to scrutinize the influence of representational delight of an online store such as enjoyment and communication style, along with functional convenience like merchandise attractiveness and ease of use influences the impulsive purchase on online store of a consumer. The findings of the study postulated that, emotions of the consumer have a significant effect on the impulsive online shopping which serves as a mediator between the functional convenience and representational delight factors. In a conclusive statement, the authors note

that, making the online shopping experience enthusiastic, inspiring and exciting induces positive emotions in the impulsive online behavior of the customers.

### III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Impulsive shopping in general is a psychological urge that is influenced by so many factors to shop a product. Though a customer is usually fulfilled by the act at that moment, it is cleverly cashed by the retailers and the e-tailers to increase their sales and to retain their share in the commercial market. There are so many factors that influence the impulsive shopping especially in an e-store. They are:

#### 3.1 Characteristics of a customer

Impulsive e-shopping is greatly induced by the basic characteristic of a customer who is always little impatient in taking his/her decisions without thinking of the aftermath.

#### 3.2 Customer Emotional connection

Many customers usually feel the emotional connection towards shopping as they tend to feel good and fulfilled once they shop some products online.

#### 3.3 The visual appeal

Some customers who are not ruled by their emotions are characteristics can involve in impulsive e-shopping due to the visual appeal of an e-tail store when they simply visit to browse. The attractive pictures on the front of the site, tends to invoke their impulsivity.

#### 3.4 Availability of Time and Money

Sometimes boredom and free time of a customer can lead to impulsive e-shopping as the customer may wish to simply entice their monotony. While other factor is availability of excess money which doesn't have any important use in the near future is a factor the customer may think to spend it online by e-shopping for the products even if they are not needed.

#### 3.5 Discounts and offers

This is a major push, the option of discounts and offers, which e-tail stores are specialized is often the one factor that induces customer to e-shop. There is no customer who hates a good price reduction and it leads to impulse buying in a fear that the discount or offered may get over soon.

#### 3.6 Other influences

Even though there are numerous influences externally, the influence of the friends, relatives, peers and their impact on the e-shopping decision of a customer should be duly noted. When a customer is encouraged by his/her friends and family to purchase something, they plant a seed of curiosity in the minds of the customers leading the customer to try out one time which ultimately results in impulsive e-shopping.

### IV. DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis of the study is tabulated and displayed below.

#### 4.1 Percentage Analysis

**Table: 1**  
**Personal Profile of the Respondents**

S.No	Factors	Group	Percentage (%)
1	Residential Status	Rural	30.0
		Urban	58.0
		Semi-Urban	12.0
		Total	100.0
2	Sex	Male	44.0
		Female	56.0
		Total	100.0
3	Age group	Below 20 Years	12.0
		21-30 Years	64.0
		31-40 Years	10.0
		41-50 Years	6.0
		51-60 Years	8.0
		Above 60 Yrs	0.0
		Total	100.0
4	Marital Status	Married	42.0
		Single	58.0
		Total	100.0
5	Type of family	Joint	34.0
		Nuclear	66.0
		Total	100.0
6	Family Size	2	6.0
		3	24.0
		More than 3	70.0
		Total	100.0
7	Educational Qualification	School level (10th std & below)	6.0
		Diploma/12th std	4.0
		Under Graduate	44.0
		Post Graduate	28.0
		Professional	18.0
Total	100.0		
8	Occupational Status	Unemployed (Students/Housewives)	48.0
		Employed	20.0
		Self-employed	16.0
		Professional	16.0
		Retired	0.0
Total	100.0		
9	Monthly Income	Less than Rs.15,000	32.0
		Rs.15,001 to Rs.30,000	22.0
		Rs.30,001 to 45,000	18.0
		Rs.45,000 to 60,000	4.0
		Above Rs. 60,000	24.0
		Total	100.0

Source: Primary Data

**Table: 2**  
**Years of E-shopping Experience of a Customer**

Years of Experience	Percentage (%)
Less than a Year	22.0
1 – 2 Years	54.0
3 – 5 Years	16.0
Above 5 Years	8.0

Total	100.0
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Source: Primary Data

**Table: 3**  
**Money spent on E-shopping by the Customers in a month**

Money Spent on E-Shopping	Percentage (%)
Less than Rs. 5,000	21.0
Rs. 5,001 – Rs. 10,000	35.0
Rs. 10,001 – Rs. 15,000	40.0
Rs. 15,001 – Rs. 20,000	2.0
Rs. 20,001 – Rs. 25,000	1.0
Above Rs. 25,000	1.0
Total	100.00

Source: Primary Data

**4.2 Graphical Representation**

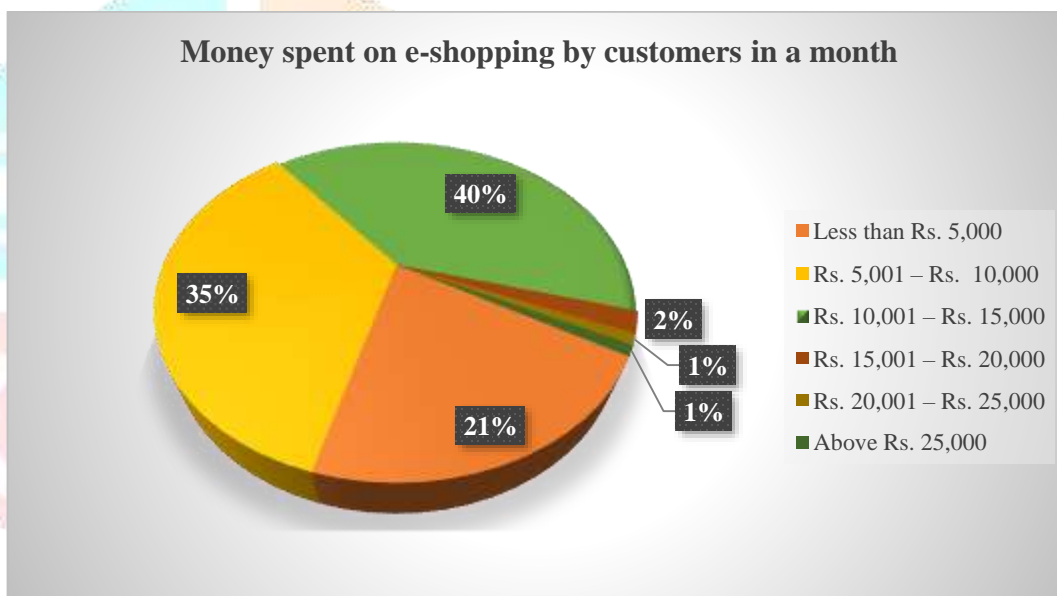


Exhibit showing the money spent on e-shopping by customers in a month.

**4.3 Average Score Analysis**

**Table: 4**  
**Customers Agreeability on Factors Triggering Impulsive E-shopping**

FACTORS	SA	A	N	D	SD	TOTAL	SCORE
Affordable Price of the product in buying range	300	80	42	0	6	428	4.28
The product had higher discount	200	144	60	8	0	412	4.12
Special promotional sales created urge to buy	100	136	138	0	0	374	3.74
Purchased on impulse for satisfaction & happiness	60	120	96	16	18	310	3.1
Purchased on impulse due to shopaholic tendency	80	112	96	28	10	326	3.26

Tempted by recommendations on additional products bought together option	70	128	66	64	0	328	3.28
Had extra money to spare	10	96	114	60	6	286	2.86
Thought of stocking on products	110	88	60	68	2	328	3.28
Always wanted the product, decided to buy suddenly	150	120	54	40	2	366	3.66
Product was in price range, decided to buy even when unnecessary	160	112	54	24	10	360	3.6
Alluring promotions given by e-tail stores	90	56	84	64	8	302	3.02
Products bought on impulse are considered as gift to oneself	30	88	54	92	8	272	2.72
Product was in trend and was endorsed by favourite celebrity	40	24	24	60	48	196	1.96

Source: Primary Data

\*SA – Strongly Agree; A – Agree; N – Neutral; D – Disagree; SD – Strongly Disagree.

**Table: 5**  
**Customers Agreeability on Problems faced post their Impulsive E-shopping**

CONSEQUENCES FACED POST IMPULSIVE E-SHOPPING	SA	A	N	D	SD	TOTAL	SCORE
Over shopping of products that were not needed in the first place	140	88	6	52	22	308	3.08
Products brought on impulse were not up to satisfaction	150	32	138	24	4	348	3.48
Resulted in over-spending of money and increasing of debt	120	96	36	56	12	320	3.2
Felt cheated after finding the product at lower price in other e-tail stores	20	80	66	56	26	248	2.48
Induced shopaholic impulses	80	32	114	32	22	280	2.8
Started an unhealthy addiction towards e-shopping	10	72	96	36	30	244	2.44

Source: Primary Data

\*SA – Strongly Agree; A – Agree; N – Neutral; D – Disagree; SD – Strongly Disagree.

#### IV. FINDINGS

The results of the study are enumerated as follows.

##### 5.1 Percentage Analysis

###### Personal Profile of the respondents

- Majority (58%) of the respondents' hail from Urban area of the city
- Majority (56%) of the respondents are Female
- Majority (64%) of the respondents are of the age group between 21 and 30
- Majority (58%) of the respondents are Unmarried (single)
- Majority (66%) of the respondents live in Nuclear family set up
- Majority (70%) of the respondents have More than 3 members in their family
- Most (44%) of the respondents are Under Graduates
- Most (48%) of the respondents are Unemployed i.e., they are either Students or Housewives
- Most (32%) of the respondents have Monthly income less than Rs. 15,000.

### Study Variables

- Majority (54%) of the respondents have 1 – 2 years of experience in e-shopping
- Most (40%) of the respondents spend between Rs. 10,001 and Rs. 15,000 on e-shopping in a month.

### 5.2 Average Score Analysis

The average mean score regarding the factors that trigger the customers impulsive e-shopping are

- ✓ Affordable product price that falls in the spending range of the respondents has the highest mean score of 4.28 in triggering the respondents to e-shop.
- ✓ Higher discount or offer on the particular product has the second highest mean score of 4.12
- ✓ Attractive sale festivals and promotions by the e-tail stores created an obligation for the customers to buy scores the third highest mean score of 3.74

The average mean score relating to the consequences faced by the customers post impulsive e-shopping are as follows

- ✓ The respondents felt that, the products purchased on an impulse were not up to their satisfaction and expectation with the highest mean score of 3.48
- ✓ Increase of over-spending resulted in increase of debt of the respondents earned the second highest mean score of 3.20
- ✓ The respondents also felt that they over-shopped products that were not needed in the first place with the third highest mean score of 3.08

## VI. SUGGESTIONS FOR THE STUDY

### 6.1 Vigilance of the customer

The study attempts to communicate to the customers to be vigilant when they are faced with triggers that an e-tailer may pose to entice them. Rational thinking regarding the need of the product and an evaluation of their current financial situation will benefit the customer during e-shopping

### 6.2 Ethical E-tailing

The e-tailers are in a constant urge to maximize their profits, earn revenue and to weather the competitions posed, but they should also consider the benefit of a customer who chooses to trust them implicitly by giving a try on their e-tail stores. It is least feasible solution, yet an e-tailer can use numerous methods of promotion to lure a customer than to play with the customers emotion and making them to give into their compulsive buying just to increase their sales.

### 6.3 Governmental action

It is very difficult to curb the temptations posed by the e-tailers nowadays in the form of extreme promotions to induce a customer into impulsive e-shopping. Their enormous discounts and offers not only dissipates the customer psychological equilibrium making them to be irrational when e-shopping, while also it affects the survival of the retail stores as they find it difficult to withstand this aggressive approach, resulting in some of them going out of business completely. This causes imbalance in not only in the market but also economy, resulting in various side-effects especially loss of employment as well as over-spending on the customers side creating an adverse effect on the on the Indian economy. Therefore, the Government should intervene time to time and take action when an e-tailer goes beyond line and involve in aggressive promotion to capitalize the customers weakness and traditional retailer's helplessness.



## VII. CONCLUSION

India, being a developing country with vast number of people with differentiated economic status, Indians are easily baited by the e-tail stores by offering huge discounts and price reductions and making it easier for an average monthly earning customer to buy high end products as the extreme offers considerably reduce half of the actual price of the products. While this may be beneficial for a customer, the constant exposure to these extreme promotions offered by the e-tail stores induce a unhealthy affinity towards e-shopping in the mind of the customers escalating it to a shopaholic tendency which dents their financial conditions, thereby affecting their emotional status and standard of living. Impulsive e-shopping has potential to lead customer to extreme debt, psychologically irrational and disrupts their normal decision making capacity and cognitive thinking. It is not practically possible to request an e-tailer to stop their promotions, as they will cease to exist as a resultant. Though by the effort of the Government an e-tailer can tone down their aggressive approach to induce impulsion, it is in the hands of the customers to not to give into their impulses and urges, think rationally before deciding on buying and do a little research of comparison of prices among various e-tail store before settling on whether to buy a product or not according to their current need which is a healthy process and also a little light on their pockets.

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