

The influence of gender based emotional intelligence on impulsive buying

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Abstract

This research is focused on determining the effect of gender among the relationship of emotional intelligence and impulsive buying behavior, for this purpose gender moderation is used on the main effect relationship, The variables were tested through linear regression for finding the causal and moderated effect among the research variables. The sample was taken on the basis of convenience from the major cities of Pakistan it was probable that all the respondents were consumers. The findings suggest that gender has strong moderation on the main effect relationship, this highlights the importance of gender as a key variable of interest for marketers who are concerned about emotionally intelligent customers, who can and are controlling their emotions regarding purchases after recession period, in which the customers are more and more careful about their spending patterns. The findings have a value for marketing managers that despite recession, the gender dimensions can be utilized for enhancing sales based on impulses and gaining market share, through those impulses which are result of gender-based stimulus. In addition to this, females were found to go for impulsive purchases despite their emotional intelligence in comparison to males.

Keywords: Consumer Behavior, Emotional Intelligence, Impulsive Buying, Consumer Psychology.

Introduction

Changing market dynamics, competition and struggle for achievement of maximum market share is the driving force for marketers during the modern day. Consumers are facing now problems on their purchase decisions due to recession in the international market (McGregor, 2011). This has been a fact that marketing people are using psychologists to facilitate them in their market offerings, by understanding aspects of human personality which are vulnerable to marketing stimulus. Consumers have now established a set of emotional controls identified as “Emotional Intelligence” (Kidwell, Hardesty, & Childers, 2008), for overcoming unwanted marketing stimulus which can lead them to purchases which are unplanned depicting a behavior known as “Impulsive buying behavior”(Rook & Fisher, 1995). But still this is observant that despite being emotionally intelligent consumers are depicting impulsive buying behavior, due to their gender attribution of decision making styles (Weinberg & Gottwald, 1982; Mitchell & Walsh, 2004). This has highlighted the importance of this study that moderating effect of gender is needed to be addressed for contribution in the literature of marketing, so that it can benefit the marketing personal and academicians who are interested in finding out the impulsive buying behavior dimensions. In addition to this emotional intelligence has been discussed in the literature of management sciences more towards organizational

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behaviors and leadership contexts (Goleman & Welch, 2012). But there is a need to utilize emotional intelligence construct in marketing, so that consumers can be understood in better way and efforts by Kidwell *et al.* (2008) have lead to customization of emotional intelligence construct as marketing domain specific construct of “Consumer Emotional Intelligence”. Their contribution is pointing towards the need of addressing emotional intelligence in the research studies with reference to consumer behavior. All these important gaps have been tried to cover in this research, but still there are many dimensions which are to be explored. This research study is more focused on finding out how gender characteristics are affecting consumer decision making resulting in impulsive buying behaviors, even in the presence of emotional intelligence. Research model of this study is having two directional hypothesis of emotional intelligence towards impulsive buying behavior and moderating role of gender for this relationship where as an un-directional hypothesis of Gender and impulsive buying behavior is also tested. Gender and impulsive buying have variance in their relationship with respect to aspects of male and female decision making patterns (Tsao & Chang, 2010). There are many unanswered questions and gaps with respect to proposed relationship of the research, which have been tried to addressed in this research. The theory of emotional intelligence by Goleman *et al.*(2012) and the theory of Feeling state theory of Impulse control disorder Miller, (2010) explain the phenomenon of research area which is to be examined.

Literature Review

Impulsive Buying Behavior

Impulsive buying has been defined as “*Consumer's tendency to buy spontaneously, unreflectively, immediately, and kinetically. Highly impulsive buyers are more likely to experience spontaneous buying stimuli; their shopping lists are more "open" and receptive to sudden, unexpected buying ideas.*”(Rook, & Fisher, 1995, p. 306)

As discussed in the literature of management sciences, there are many antecedents of impulsive buying, including culture, emotions , fashion, buying power and many more(Kacen & Lee, 2002). Basically, impulsive buying is a behavior which can be caused by many situations which force a person to go for things which were not included in the shopping plan.

Due to strong influence of impulses, Marketers are focused on how to create stimulus which can force a customer to purchase their offerings or the other way round they are looking for those factors which have an impact on impulsive buying, so those factors can be clearly understood by them and they can target those customer dimensions with full power and authority to increase their market share and sales. Impulsive buying is a very strong concern in the modern marketing literature(Rook, 1987). As marketers are in search of consumer characteristics which push them towards purchase intention(Holm & Bengtsson, 2007). The impulsive buying behavior after recession was limited to only those customers which have been identified as Live for today customers (McGregor, 2011), As rest of the customers have limited their purchases after recession. But there is an improvement in consumer buying decision making as far as marketers are concerned as post-recession period is now fading out.

As the market dynamics are changing and the shopping outlets preference of customer is shifting from small retail outlets towards super stores or mega markets, where there is a large variety offering available in such a presentation that it attracts the customers arriving there for their regular purchases. This phenomenon of Impulsive buying has been observed at its peak in super stores and mega markets(Chen-Yu & Seock, 2002). So, this is self-explanatory that marketers know how to present their products resulting in impulsive purchasing. Family grocery purchases are usually done in the super stores, and both of the family members are usually part of that purchase decision. There are different psychologies of both genders involved in purchasing and both genders have been observed through research to depict different impulsive buying behaviors. Females have been found to exhibit more impulsive buying behavior in comparison to male. But in the society where purchase decisions and financials all lie with the female gender regarding purchases, gender should be depicting a different behavior contrary to previous research based on economic theory.

Consumer Emotional Intelligence and Impulsive Buying Behavior

Emotional Intelligence was initially described by Goleman *et al.*(2012) as “*The capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships*” He described Emotional Intelligence to be consisting of five attributes namely: Motivation, Empathy, Self-Awareness, Self-Regulation, Social Skill. But classical dimension of emotional intelligence is limited to the organizational side and leadership. Building on to this definition scholars elaborated a new phenomenon of consumer emotional Intelligence to be as “*A higher-order factor structure with four reflective first-order dimensions perceiving, facilitating, understanding, and managing*” (Kidwell, Hardesty, & Childers 2008). This definition is more valuable in the contextual studies where consumer emotional intelligence is to be utilized as a construct. Their construct is now covering entire dimensions of emotional intelligence which stand relative to consumers and marketing domain.

Emotional Intelligence consist of different categories of abilities that enables people to perceive, understand, use, and manage their emotions to get desirable productive outcome(Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008).

Marketing literature has highlighted the significance of cognitive ability of consumers (Ariely & Daniel, 2000), while buying (McCarthy & Mothersbaugh, 2002), in relation to his basic actions capacity of acquisition (Capon & Davis, 1984). Ramanathan, Suresh, & Menon (2006) argued that highly emotional intelligent consumers make conscious efforts then less emotional intelligent consumers in purchasing decision.

Kidwell, Hardesty, & Childers(2008) have developed the Consumer Emotional Intelligence Scale (CEIS) based on the classic measure of emotional intelligence, the Mayer, Salovey, Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT; Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso, 2002). The CEIS differs from MSCEIT, in that it is shorter (18 items) and domain specific (marketing), whereas the MSCEIT is longer (141 items) and domain-generic.

Kidwell, Hardesty and Childers (2008) empirically showed that the CEIS is a better predictor of consumer decision making and research relevant to marketing or consumer psychology, so we will be using their scale for measuring consumer emotional intelligence.

The consumer emotional intelligence is cognitive decision process of an individual, depicting his or her personality trait of emotional intelligence. Logically looking at the relationship between emotional intelligence and impulsive buying behavior, the higher is the emotional intelligence the lower will be the impulsive buying behavior or vice versa. This is what a rational behavior is, but things can change if other variables have an existence among this main effect relationship. This tool by Kidwell, Hardesty and Childers (2008) is endorsed by Cartwright and Pappas (2008) that emotional intelligence constructs are domain specific and appropriate construct should be used for respective scenario. Kidwell, Hardesty, and Childers (2007) argued that emotional intelligence will serve as a scientific way to get the desired purchase outcome. So, the construct has a lot of significance for the marketing professionals and scholars. Edwardson, M. (1998) had an observation that consumer emotions are of critical nature for any business, there is a lot more to explore than sticking to customer satisfaction.

The unplanned and often uncontrolled urge to buy products could be described as impulse buying. Recently, Verplanken *et al.* (2005) argued that people involve in quick buying due to affective reasons. Therefore, it is important to understand the of a consumer's ability to: (a) differentiate between emotions; (b) use emotions to guide thoughts and actions.

The capacity of perceiving emotions helps people to precisely recognize the different emotions that could be provoked as a result of a buying decision. On the other hand, cognitive facilitation assist individuals to arrange, think, and act in sensibly manner.

Because impulsive purchases are made quickly and often driven by hedonic or emotional considerations, we hypothesize that each of these branches and the overall EI will negatively influence impulsive buying.

H1: Consumer Emotional Intelligence has a adverse relationship with impulsive buying.

Gender and Impulsive Buying Behavior

Gender is not only a dimension of sexual segregation, gender has a lot to explain as it is multifactor instead of uni-dimensional on the basis of Male or Female (Spence, 1993). Gender is a psychological trait which predicts how different and similar genders interact with each other and what are the differences between their psychological decision-making processes (Unger, 1989).

Gender being a trait of personality has been found to effect impulsive buying significantly (Tsao & Chang, 2010), it has been observed specific to shopping Females are more active (Fischer, & Arnold, 2013). It is part of their personality and marketers are focused on this dimension of gender psychology. Females as are more oriented towards shopping they are more likely to become victim of impulsive buying as empirically proven by (Holm & Bengtsson, 2007). Her findings suggest that females are more impulsive buyers, due to their thinking and psychological patterns of purchase decision

making. Another study conducted by Cheng, Chuang, Wang, & Kuo (2013) found that females have more deviation in their decision making process and they are mostly found to depict impulsive buying behavior. Females have more concerns about them to be recognized and look admirable or applauded for their purchases, so for this concern fulfillment they are more open to impulsive buying (Chen-Yu & Seock, 2002). Females have been observed to fall for impulsive buying for fashion products (Pentecost & Andrews, 2010). This fact has been endorsed by Xuanxiaoling, Yang, & Huang (2012) in their research. Males have been found to go for impulsive buying when they are concerned about their Impressions on opposite gender or socially (Brackett, Mayer, & Warner, 2004). Both genders are influenced by the culture, in which they live for their decision making patterns, and this has a lot to contribute to impulsive buying behaviors (Kacen & Lee, 2002). An example to the previous argument is a research study conducted by Katyal & Awasthi (2005) in which they found that in south-asian culture the propensity of both genders to go for impulsive buying is dependent on their cultural influence in their decision making process. The fact that gender differences effect impulsive buying behavior has been endorsed by study of Mitchell and Walsh (2004) in Germany. Males have been found to depict impulsive buying in presence of their female partners (Zhang & Shrum, 2009).

Thus, it is clear that gender differences variably impact Impulsive buying behavior.

H2: *There is a difference in Impulsive buying behaviors across gender such that females are more likely to have more impulsive buying in comparison to males*

Moderating Role of Gender

To the best of my knowledge gender has not been used as moderator in the previous literature of consumer behavior and marketing. But a clear logic can be understood by observing shopping patterns of males and females and the modern day marketing techniques which have highlighted this aspect that market offerings are getting profitable and high sales are evident for these market offerings Fischer & Arnold (1990) that gender difference vary in terms of impulsive buying behavior.

Gender differences have been found in terms of Emotional intelligence as many studies have found that males (Pentecost & Andrews, 2010 ; Chen-Yu & Seock, 2002) are emotionally intelligent and on the contrary literature is available having this phenomenon applicable for females (Katyal & Awasthi, 2005; Brackett *et al.*, 2004), in the body of knowledge this phenomenon still remains unclear, the direction of influence still remains a question and it varies from culture to culture, this highlights the evaluation of gender as a moderator on the main effect relationship. Emotional intelligence has been found to be cause of impulsive buying behavior (Verplanken *et al.*, 2005), despite this and in addition to the previous argument gender has been found to have variance on impulsive buying behavior (Cheng *et al.*, 2013). This argument endorses that gender has to be evaluated among relationship of impulsive buying behavior and emotional intelligence, so combined effect of gender and emotional intelligence will depict difference in the strength of main effect relationship of Emotional Intelligence and Impulsive buying behavior.

H3: *Gender Moderates the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Impulsive Buying Behavior.*

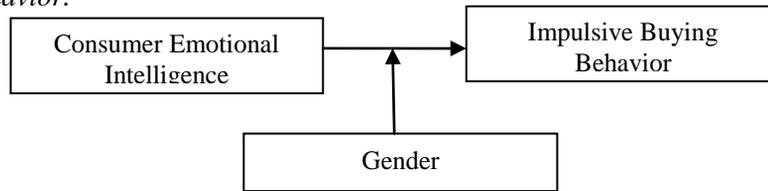


Figure 1: *Research Model*

Methodology

SPSS software is used to analyze the data. Respondents' demographics and Gender were calculated with correlation and regression analysis. Correlation is performed to identify the direction that exists between the Consumer Emotional Intelligence and Impulsive buying behavior and the regression analysis is performed to study the strength/intensity of the Consumer Emotional Intelligence over the Impulsive Buying Behavior. Moderating regression analysis is performed in order to find the Moderation effect of Gender on the main effect relationship of Consumer Emotional Intelligence and Impulsive Buying Behavior.

Sample and Procedure

The sampling technique used is probability sampling procedure, where females and males as unit of analysis were surveyed, and these respondents are the ones who shop for their home and their personal needs. Out of 400 distributed questionnaires 286 responses were accurate and complete, so the valid response rate was 71.5%. It has been tried that equal amount of male and female respondents, should be included in the valid sample data. The data from respondents has been taken through self-administered questionnaires, respondents were handed over the questionnaires and in the presence of the researcher the response was collected.

Measures

27-item questionnaire were distributed via self-administered survey, and response was tapped on 5-point Likert's scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree with a neutral as a midpoint.

Consumer Emotional Intelligence

Kidwell, Hardesty, and Childers (2008) scale of CEIS was used to take response with relevance to Consumer Emotional Intelligence, the scale was 18 item questionnaire with the Likert's scale of 5 points. A sample item includes "How useful might it be to feel joy when consuming unhealthy food when maintaining a healthy diet?"

Impulsive Buying Behavior

Rook, & Fisher (1995) scale of Impulsive Buying Behavior was used to take response with relevance to Impulsive Buying Behavior, the scale was 9 item questionnaire with the likert scale of 5 points. A sample item includes "Sometimes I feel like buying things on the spur-of-the-moment."

Pilot testing of measures was conducted in order to find the reliability and validity of questionnaires through factor loading and Cronbach's alpha of measures and

the measures were found to be reliable and valid with individual Cronbach’s alpha values of more than .70 in all questions.

Results

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics*

Construct	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Age	286	1	7	2.24	1.142
Gender	286	1	2	1.32	.468
CEI	286	1.78	4.72	2.775	.496
IBB	286	1.11	5.00	2.943	.705

Table 1 is showing the mean and standard deviation values of demographics and study variable. The mean value of Age is 2.24 and standard deviation value is 1.142, mean value of Gender is 1.32 and standard deviation is .468, mean value of Consumer Emotional Intelligence (CEI) is 2.775 and standard deviation is .496, mean value of Impulsive Buying Behavior (IBB) is 2.943 and Standard Deviation is .705.

Table 2: *Correlation Analysis*

	1	2	3
1.Gender	1		
2.CEI	-.196(**)	1	
3.IBB	.080	.359(**)	1

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 is depicting the correlation analysis between variables. The value of correlation between Gender and Consumer Emotional Intelligence (CEI) is -.196** which is significant at .01 level. This value is showing that Gender and Consumer Emotional Intelligence (CEI) have a significant relationship between them. The value of correlation between Consumer Emotional Intelligence (CEI) and Impulsive Buying Behavior (IBB) is .359** which is significant at .01 level. This value is showing that Consumer Emotional Intelligence (CEI) and Impulsive Buying Behavior (IBB) have a significant relationship between them.

Table 2: *Moderated Regression Analysis*

CEI & Gender on Impulsive Buying Behavior				
Variable	Constant	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1		.389		
CEI				
Gender	1.096	-.156**	.152	.152**
Step 2				
CEI \times Gender	0.863	.164**	.176**	.024**

** $P < .005$

Table 3 reports some important values. The R^2 value of Consumer Emotional Intelligence (CEI) and Gender variable is .152, The R^2 value of Consumer Emotional Intelligence (CEI), Gender and interaction term is .176. The ΔR^2 change for Consumer Emotional Intelligence (CEI) and Gender variable is 0.152, the ΔR^2 change for Consumer Emotional Intelligence (CEI), Gender and Interaction term is .024.

Moderated regression analysis, as shown in table 2, reveal that the interaction term (CEI \times Gender) in the second step was significant (β .164**, $p < .005$) which shows that Gender significantly moderates the relationship between Consumer Emotional Intelligence (CEI) and Impulsive Buying Behavior (IBB).

This proves the moderation of Gender among the relationship between Consumer Emotional Intelligence (CEI) and Impulsive Buying Behavior (IBB).

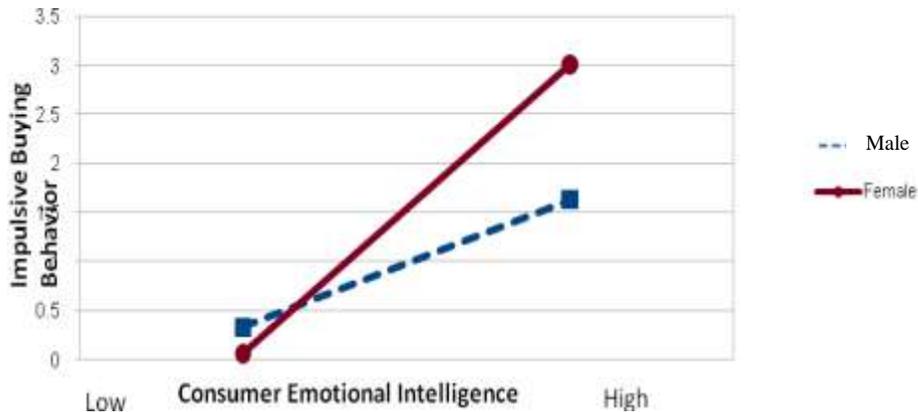


Figure 2: Moderation Graph

The graph above clearly explains the moderating effect of gender on the main effect relationship of Consumer Emotional Intelligence and Impulsive Buying Behavior. As per the graph plot, the female gender despite having high consumer emotional intelligence are more prone to impulsive buying and as their emotional intelligence is low they are less likely to exhibit impulsive buying. Where as in case of males they are less prone to impulsive buying in comparison to females at higher emotional intelligence.

Discussion

The results of the study are in line with the hypothesis made on the basis of literature. Consumer Emotional Intelligence has been found to have negative relationship with the Impulsive buying behavior. The more a person is emotionally intelligent, the less likely are the chances of him or her to go for impulsive buying. Verplanken *et al.* (2005) described this phenomenon, as in his study the emotional intelligence was found to have negative impact on impulsive buying as emotional intelligence helps to control emotions which are not rationale, and impulsive buying is a non-rationale phenomenon.

Gender has a significant variation across genders as stated by Katyal & Awasthi (2005). Our research has the same findings that females are more impulsive buyers in comparison to males, endorsing findings and suggestions by Holm and Bengtsson (2007). Females depict more impulsive buying behavior while shopping due to their psychological patterns of decision making. Females tend to have more desire for being admired and they often go for impulsive buying of products which are related to fashion and beauty (Chen-Yu & Seock, 2002). The results of our study show that as females are more tilted towards impulsive buying, marketers can target their products according to

female psychology as they are easily convertible into a customer by shopping impulsively. This phenomenon is also high in the area of South Asia, as males are the money earners and have more concerns about their spending patterns, whereas females are only the money spenders and they are less concerned relative to their buying decisions.

Gender has a strong role as moderator among the main effect relationship of Consumer Emotional Intelligence (CEI) and Impulsive buying behavior. Despite being emotionally intelligent, the gender differences impact buying decisions. Male gender is depicting impulsive buying but to a little extent in comparison to female gender, this phenomenon can be clearly understood by having a look at figure 2 graph of moderation. Despite being emotionally intelligent female gender overcomes the negative relationship of consumer emotional intelligence with impulsive buying behavior, thus females go for impulsive buying. This finding contributes to that body of knowledge which shows that females are more involved in impulsive buying behavior (Pentecost & Andrews, 2010 ; Chen-Yu & Seock, 2002). Contrary to findings of other side of body of knowledge (Katyal & Awasthi, 2005; Brackett *et al.*, 2004). The cultural aspects and shopping trends of females are needed to be understood by marketers in order to enhance sales. Their target is now clear towards female gender; they can enhance sales by making products available in that environment which is in accordance to female gender. The variance across gender is significantly high in case of both genders despite being emotionally intelligent.

Another major finding of this study is contradictory to the study by Kidwell, Hardesty and Childers(2013) who found that high emotional intelligence result in quality purchase decisions and controlled impulses which lead to impulsive buying behavior. This has lead to confirm the moderation of gender among the main effect relationship.

The direction of influence is now clear for the gender variable according to this study. Females are more impulsive buyers despite being emotionally intelligent in comparison to males.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study has been done in the region of Pakistan, this phenomenon is needed to be replicated across cultures and countries to understand and clarify the cultural influences of different cultures on genders and emotional intelligence. Other major factors which can influence impulsive buying like income and age should also be tested as moderator among relationship of Consumer Emotional Intelligence and Impulsive Buying Behaviors. There is a need to understand the psychological patterns of decision making relative to purchasing by marketers and so these patterns are needed to be addressed in future research by the research scholars to fulfill demand of marketers to sustain and enhance market share through sales.

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