

Consumer characteristics and the moderating roles of product presentation in online apparel impulse buying behavior

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Consumers' motivations for apparel shopping are not only to buy a product as a utilitarian shopping experience (i.e., task-oriented and rational shopping behavior) but also to gain an enjoyable experience to fulfill their psychological needs. This experiential shopping experience is often accompanied by impulse buying because impulse buying satisfies many hedonic desires. Cain (2020) reported that during the COVID-19 pandemic, U.S. consumers increased impulse spending in online shopping by 18%. In previous research, Yarrow (2014) noted that online shoppers are more likely to make impulse purchases than offline shoppers are, and Statista (2018) reported that young consumers ages 18 to 24 made more impulse purchases (49%) than the consumers in other age groups. With young consumers' online apparel impulse buying behavior increasing, more research is needed to help companies better cater to these young online consumers.

Background on impulse buying theory and framework. According to Herabadi et al. (2009), impulse buying is the outcome of interactions between internal personal factors and external environmental factors. In the study of internal personal factors in impulse behavior, researchers (e.g., Kim & Estin, 2011) found that consumers' shopping impulsiveness closely relates to their desire to satisfy hedonic needs (e.g., need for enjoyment, recreation, novelty, surprise). In addition to hedonic needs and impulse behavior, symbolic-completion theory can be applied to impulse buying behavior to infer that consumers are more likely to purchase a product on impulse if they believe the product symbolizes their ideal self, which can reduce the discrepancy between the ideal and the actual self (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982). Finally when examining internal personal factors, Crafts (2012) found that shopping impulsive tendency and actual impulse buying behavior are strongly related.

For external factors, researchers (e.g., Vishnu, P. & Raheem, 2013; Tendai & Crispen, 2009) found that marketing stimuli such as visual merchandising (e.g., product presentation) in physical stores has a significant impact on offline impulse purchases. In contrast when studying online impulse behavior, Suhud and Herstanti (2017) found no direct relationship between visual merchandising and online impulse buying. Although some research has shown that online product presentation may not directly influence online impulse buying behavior, no previous research was found that examined the moderating effect of product presentation on the relationship between consumers' impulsive tendency and their actual online impulsive buying. Using previous research and associated theories, we developed a conceptual framework to guide our study. The first purpose of the study was to examine if perceived hedonic value of apparel (i.e., hedonic value; H1) and perceived symbolic value of apparel (i.e., symbolic value; H2) are antecedences of apparel shopping impulsive tendency (i.e., impulsive tendency). Second, if

impulsive tendency is a predictor of online apparel impulsive buying behavior (i.e., impulsive buying; H3). Third, if online product presentations (i.e., an external marketing factor) have significant moderating effects on the relationship between impulse tendency and online apparel impulsive buying behavior; H4). In H4, we tested the moderating effects of 10 presentation types (see *Findings*). According to these purposes, we proposed the four hypotheses to be tested.

Research Method. We developed and pilot tested a questionnaire based on previous studies (e.g., Chen-Yu & Seock, 2002) to measure the variables in the study. We first measured respondents' hedonic value, symbolic value and impulsive apparel shopping tendency. Following those assessments, we asked respondents to evaluate the product presentation of the website where they made their last online apparel purchase. Following the product presentation assessments, we measured respondents' impulsiveness when they made their last online apparel purchase. Because younger consumers make more impulse purchases than the average shopper does (, 2018), we surveyed consumers ages 18 to 22. To ensure respondents could recall their last online apparel purchase, we limited the respondents to those who had purchased apparel online within the past six months. We collected data using an online survey and received 262 useable responses. Using Confirmatory Factor Analysis, we tested the construct validity of the measures, resulting in an acceptable measurement model fit (CFI=.96, IFI=.96, and RMSEA=.062). All factor loadings were between .57 and .93, and the composite reliability of each construct ranged from .71 to .89. Results in these ranges show that the validity and reliability of the measures are acceptable.

Findings. To test whether hedonic value and symbolic value are antecedences of impulsive tendency (H1-H2) and whether impulsive tendency is a predictor of impulsive buying (H3), we developed a model using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Goodness-of-fit statistics indicated that the proposed model fit the data well (CFI = .96, IFI = .96, and RMSEA = .055). The results show that consumers who perceive apparel as having high hedonic value and high symbolic value have a high impulsive tendency in apparel shopping ($z = 4.52, p < .001$; $z = 1.98, p < .05$). Consumers who have a higher score in impulsive apparel shopping tendency are more likely to make online apparel impulsive purchase ($z = 10.31, p < .001$). According to these results, H1 to H3 are supported. We also used SEM to test the moderating effects of 10 types of online product presentation. The results show that H4 is partially supported. Seven product presentation methods have significant moderating effects on the relationship between impulsive tendency and impulse buying. These seven methods are: products pictured from various angles ($z = 2.56, p < .05$), a visual model ($z = 3.04, p < .01$), images that coordinate various items ($z = 1.91, p < .05$), organized product displays ($z = 2.01, p < .05$), large images ($z = 2.18, p < .05$), products pictured in all available colours ($z = 3.21, p < .001$) and a helpful size chart to select product size ($z = 3.94, p < .001$). The remaining three presentation methods (i.e., detailed written descriptions of products, attractive product displays, and good quality product photos) have no moderating effects. These findings show that to understand online apparel impulsive buying behavior, future researchers and marketers must also investigate the moderating effects (i.e., the interactions) between consumers' internal personal factors and external marketing factors.

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