

CONSUMER'S SOCIAL INFLUENCES TOWARDS COMPULSIVE BUYING BEHAVIOR: A STRUCTURAL APPROACH

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ABSTRACT: *The objective of this study is to investigate how various social factors affect consumer behavior, which varies from top to bottom and high to low at the continuum of compulsive buying. The data for this research was collected by distributing questionnaires to 500 consumers personally. A total of 425 responses were obtained from the survey. The questionnaires were circulated to consumers in institutions, community and shopping malls of the Lahore. Sample was selected through convenient sampling technique. The sampling unit for this study was individuals (teenager or above). Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach was used for the analysis of data and to test the hypotheses using AMOS. This study used five variables in order to evaluate compulsive buying behavior. In this study, dependent variable is compulsive buying behavior and independent variables are Social comparison orientation, Susceptibility to normative influence, Susceptibility to informative influence, Social shopping motivation and Social risk towards fashion. The study found that all these factors are the key causes of consumers' compulsive buying behavior. Nature of the research is cross-sectional that may limit the scope of results. Additionally, it can be taken into account that compulsive buying can create cognitive or sensitive reactions that increase the senses of guiltiness and ignorance. The results of this analysis gave some implications for policy makers and scholars. After realization that variable of Social shopping motivation may trigger compulsive buying, policy maker can take better decisions on this basis to guide the consumers in the society.*

Keywords: compulsive buying behavior, Social comparison orientation, Susceptibility to informative influence, Susceptibility to normative influence, Social shopping motivation, Social risk toward fashions, Structural equation modeling (SEM)

1. INTRODUCTION

A behavioral disorder is known as “compulsive buying” because an individual makes buying frequent despite financial, psychological or social consequences [1]. Dysfunction in all or any one of the processes; society, psychological issues, heredity and family of origin may result in such behavioral disorder of compulsive buying [2]. Following characteristics can express the differences between compulsive buying and functional buying: basic value of items is not considered while shopping, there is no botheration of the negative results of compulsive buying, it is troublemaking to a person's life, frequent failures in controlling the behavior and inner push to buy [2]. Compulsive buying is illustrated by un-controllable, recurring, time consuming and excessive buying as a result of negative circumstances and mood's status [3]. In a society where people give importance to materialism, compulsive buying is often neglected as a problem rather considered fun. Compulsive buying can be harmful financially, mentally, socially as well as emotionally. Marketing and consumer behavior researchers investigated the consumer's unusual consumption behavior, i.e. compulsive behavior [3]. Compulsive buyer shows the propensities to be anxious about buying in such a manner that compulsive buying could result in many destructive consequences to distressed consumers, i.e. financial difficulties, emotional destruction (feeling of guilty and depression) and communal and affiliation problems [3].

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to investigate how various social factors affect consumer behavior, which varies from top to bottom or high to low at the continuum of compulsive buying.

There are three core objectives of this study:

1. to determine the social factors affecting the compulsive buying behaviors.

2. to examine the consumer's social influences i.e. Social comparison orientation, Susceptibility to Informative influence, Susceptibility to Normative influence.
3. to analyse Social Shopping motivation and Social Risk towards fashion, which strengthens the consumer's susceptibility to be compulsive.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Degrees of compulsive buying behavior studied on a continuum

General literature review has exposed that compulsive buying behavior contains the factor of addiction in its nature. Literature also explains that addiction to consuming may increase steadily [4]. Compulsive buying behavior is considered as a dichotomous variable; compulsive buying behavior and non-compulsive buying behavior [1]. After some progress in next phase, it was encouraged that compulsive buying fluctuates according to the degrees of behavior and a continuum was introduced. Additionally the continuum was explained through various aspects, i.e. degrees of impulse control [5], motives [5], characteristics of personality [6], degrees of compulsiveness low to high or behavior's range from non-compulsive to compulsive. Natarajan and Goff indicated that there may be many other reasons for shopping in addition to motivation for buying [5]. At one time they distinguished the compulsive buying from impulsive buying then they discriminated compulsive buyers from compulsive shoppers. Various people may have trouble to find difference between compulsive buying behavior and impulsive buying behavior. The scholars expressed that compulsive buying behavior is a propensity of addiction or compulsive characteristic, persistently occurring quickly, recurring motives for shopping which could or could not be uncontrollable, relieving or rewarding but certainly it is effectively troubling to normal performance.

2.2 Relationships with other concepts or study variables

This section of literature review gives a detailed review of the constructs, definitions relating to constructs, essential theories for those constructs and association of such constructs with other linked concepts. Furthermore, key characteristics relating to various aspects of the constructs are also expressed.

Social influences

Bearden and Rose claimed that individuals who are reflective to the signals of social comparison relating to their product buying have high probability to bear the pressure of the group [7]. In psychology relating to consumer and society, such adaptation of group pressure is called as “interpersonal influence” or “social influence”, interchangeably [8]. Many scholars in marketing have made an effort to understand the effect of social influences regarding consumer’s behavior and attitude. Social influence is believed as an important aspect of buyers, decision making [9] and individual’s buying behavior [10]. On the whole, many social factors trigger the shopping motivation of consumers which ultimately leads to compulsive buying behavior.

2.2.1.1 Social Shopping Motivation (SSM)

According to Tauber, a person may go to a retailer in quest of leisure time or social connection in his or her boredom, depression or loneliness [11]. For many years, researchers and merchants have been informed that shopping is not only a subject of getting tangible goods, but it is also concerned with enjoyment, entertainment and experience [11]. Babin categorized consumers into “hedonic” who shop as emotional diversion and “utilitarian” who shop cognitively to attain shopping objectives [12]. SSM can be expressed as pleasure and satisfaction of buying items through socializing and connecting with family and friends [13].

Social Comparison Orientation (SCO)

According to Davis, individuals wish to experience a feeling of belonging to other people in the society (conformity) and so far they want to distinguish themselves from other people (individuality) by means of dressing and looks [14]. Due to the human desire to settle such types of uncertainty, individuals frequently interact and discuss with themselves and with others too [15]. The earlier literature indicates that social comparison takes place in the buying context particularly fashion shopping. With the assumption of social comparison, the findings of previous studies show that social buying interests may be motivated by the consumer’s tendency to compare themselves with community standards so as to assess the self. This type of SCO is recognized in the perspective of buyer’s behavior like selection of fashion style and possession of goods. Hence, this research hypothesizes that one’s buying behavior may be influenced by his/her SCO. On the other hand, this SCO is anticipated to be an inspirational antecedent for social shopping and consumer may buy compulsively.

2.2.1.2 Consumer Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence: Susceptibility to normative influence (SNI) and Susceptibility to informative influence (SII)

Buyer susceptibility to interpersonal influence is a personal construct comprising two aspects: informational influence and normative influence [8]. “Informative influence” is the propensity to believe the information attained from other people and to do it internally as an exact representation of realism [16]. “When a generally impulsive consumer experiences an impulse buying stimulus, and subsequently evaluates the prospective purchase as appropriate, both trait and normative influences are harmonious, thereby making an impulsive purchase likely” [17]. Previous studies show that individuals are specifically responsive to thoughts and tendencies which are accepted among their friends and family during their teenage years [18]. Latest study by Liu and Laird [19] recommends that influence of friends and family is the most significant contributor towards teenager’s compulsive buying tendency, as family and friends can affect adolescent’s concerned individuality by means of influenced adolescent’s spending [20]. General facts show that teenagers have tended to buy such products that their family or friends desire.

2.2.1.3 Social risk towards fashion (SRF)

Social risk is considered as the individual’s perception about a product that can result in condemnation by others [21]. Fashion indicates the extent that people get to buy closer to new styles, fashions and tastes. Tauber specified that being well informed with recent styles, trends and modernization is a drive for shopping [11]. Parsons described that digging up the latest information about trends is an important element for buyers to shop [22]. Researchers have recognized the reality that style and fashion are a visible and significant mode of nonverbal communication in communal settings [15], and buyers may socialize while purchasing fashion products [23]. It is acknowledged that higher the representative values and communal perception of a product, consumers may perceive higher social risk [24]. Hence, it is not astonishing that social risk toward fashion is more with trendy products [25]. Social risk towards fashion perceived by consumers comprises some anxieties like anxious about what their companions may imagine about his/her dresses and concerning that whether the dresses bought by a person might not be trendy or not in fashion [25].

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

Figure 1 shows the research structure of the current study. This study used five independent variables IVs in order to investigate “compulsive buying behavior”. In this research, dependent variable DV is “compulsive buying behavior” and independent variables IVs are Social comparison orientation, Susceptibility to informative influence, Susceptibility to normative influence, Social shopping motivation, and Social risk towards fashion

3.2 Research Hypotheses

H₁: There exists a significant relationship between susceptibility to informative influence and social shopping motivation.

H₂: There exists a significant relationship between susceptibility to normative influence and social shopping motivation.

H₃: There exists a significant relationship between social comparison orientation and social shopping motivation.

H₄: There exists a significant relationship between social risk towards fashion and social shopping motivation.

H₅: There exists a significant relationship between social shopping motivation and compulsive buying.

Major source of spending	Parents/ Job	221	52%	2.35	0.94
	Personal	64	15.1%		
	Husband	117	27.5%		
No of market Visits (in a month)	1-5	302	71.1%	1.62	1.27
	5-10	67	15.8%		
	11-15	15	3.5%		
	16-20	16	3.8%		
	More than 20	25	5.8%		
Time spent (in hours)	1-3	310	72.9%	1.33	0.65
	4-6	101	23.8%		
	7-9	4	0.9%		
	More than 9	10	2.4%		

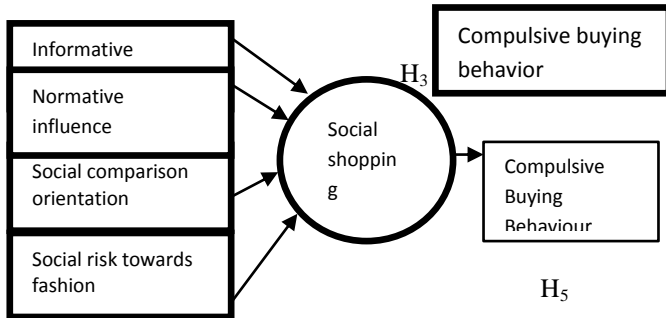


Figure 1: Research Structure

3.3 Sampling and Data Collection

The measurement constructs include SCO, SII, SNI, SSM, and SRF and CBB with a Likert five-point scale from 5 to 1 to present strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. The convenience sampling technique was used to collect data from shopping malls, universities and different communities of Lahore. The sampling unit for this study was individual (teenager or above). The data for this research was accumulated by distributing questionnaires to 500 consumers personally and a total of 425 responses were obtained from the survey and the response rate was 85%.

4. FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

Table-1 shows the general characteristics and personal information of the respondents.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Demographic variables		f	% Total Sample	Mean	S.D
Gender	Male	193	41%	1.55	0.50
	Female	232	59%		
Age (in years)	Less than 20	159	37.4 %	2.32	1.56
	21-25	130	30.6%		
	26-30	59	13.9%		
	31-35	36	8.6%		
	36-40	21	4.9%		
	Above 40	20	4.6%		
Occupation	Student	270	63.5%	1.46	0.71
	Employee	126	29.6%		
	Housewife	19	4.5%		
	Business	8	1.9%		
	Others	2	0.5		

4.1 Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha of SSM is 0.881, the scale SSM is evaluated by three items. Cronbach's alpha 0.793 for SII and 0.814 for SNI and the scale is measured by three items in each dimension. Cronbach's alpha 0.821 for SRF and the scale of this dimension is measured by three items. Cronbach's alpha is 0.782 for SCO and the scale is measured by six items. Cronbach's alpha value of 0.76 for CBB and the scale CBB is measured by 13 items. Guiford suggested that when Cronbach's alpha greater than .90 or equal to 1.0 is excellent, greater than .80 or Less than .90 or is good, in the value is 0.70 range is satisfactory, in the value in the range 0.60 is dubious, value is in the 0.50 range is poor, and value those in the .40 range is un-acceptable .

Table 2 Summary of instruments and authors regarding variables

Sr. no.	Variable name	Codes	Questions adopted	No. of Items	Measurement Scale
1	Social shopping motivation	SSM	Arnold & Reynolds (2003)	03	5 =SD, 1=SA
2	Susceptibility to informative influence	SII	Bearden et al. (1989)	03	5 = SD, 1 = SA
3	Susceptibility to normative influence	SNI	Bearden et al.(1989)	03	5 = SD, 1 = SA
4	Social risk towards fashion	SRF	Halepete et al.(2009)	03	5 = SD, 1 = SA
5	Social comparison orientation	SCO	Gibbons & Buunk (1999)	06	5= SD, 1 = SA
6	Compulsive buying behavior	CBB	Edwards (1992)	13	5 = SD, 1 = SA

4.2 Path analysis

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach is used for the analysis of data and to test the hypotheses by using AMOS. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) with five independent and one dependent variable was completed to prove the research model. In order to obtain the correlation among variables and to generalize the independent variables, the Path Factor between the measurement data and the relevant variables was decided as “1” [26].

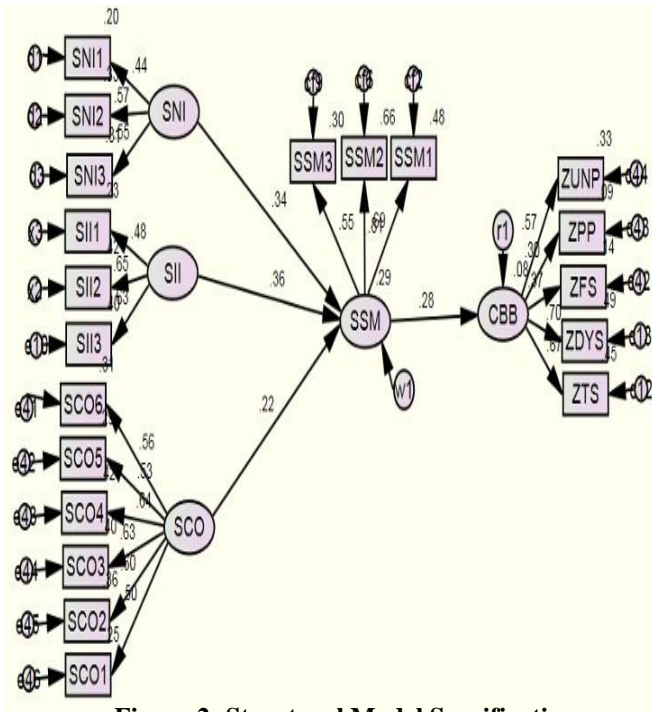


Figure 2: Structural Model Specification

4.2.1 Analysis of Fit Statistic for Measurement Model

Model fit test illustrated that all six fit indices were remained in or close to the standard range. The calculated value of Relative Chi-square CMIN/DF was 2.74 (1.00-5.00), calculated the value of GFI was 0.90 (0.90 and above), Adjusted GFI was 0.85 (0.80-1.00), CFI was obtained as 0.84 (0.90 or above) and RMSEA value was 0.064 (0.01-0.08). As all the indices are within or near to the tolerance ranges thus all indices were acceptable. The Compulsive buying behavior of consumer is the specific single endogenous variable in structural model along with five observed variables. According to Kline, while making analysis by means of SEM, there are three factors or parameters which specify three paths; such as path making connection between indicator with variable, path showing associations of DVs with independent variables and path which inter-relates all dependent variables [26]. These paths are represented by Greek letters, i.e. Lambda (λ), Gamma (γ) and beta (β) correspondingly, during analysis by using structural model testing. Significance value must be less than 0.05 ($P < 0.05$). Analysis shows that an exogenous variable named social risk towards fashion (SRF) is

excluded from the specification of structural model as its significant value was not in the acceptable range. Susceptibility to normative influence (SNI) is the first exogenous variable (independent variable) in the structural model which contained three observed variables. Susceptibility to informative influence (SII) is the second exogenous variable in structural model and it comprised three observed variables. Social risk towards fashion (SRF) is the third variable in structural model and it had also three observed variables. Social comparison orientation (SCO) is the fourth exogenous variable of the structural model and it had six pragmatic variables. Social shopping motivation (SSM) is the fifth and last exogenous variable in the structural model with three observed variables.

4.2.2 Examination of Fit Statistics for Structural Model

Structural model expressed acceptable fitness and on the whole model fit was rational. The value of Relative Chi-square CMIN/DF was 4.22 (1.00-5.00), Goodness of fit index GFI was 0.85 (0.90 or above), AGFI was 0.81 (above 0.80), CFI was 0.72 (0.90 or above) and Root mean square error of approximation RMSEA was 0.08 (0.01-0.08). There was no significant difficulty of misfit and did not recommend any addition or elimination of paths. As a result the hypothesized model was presented good fit in Figure 2.

4.2.3 Hypotheses Testing

a) Hypotheses 1:

H₁: It was hypothesized that there exists a significant relationships between susceptibility to informative influence and social shopping motivation. It is clear from the research findings that value of Standard Regression weight **0.36 or ($\gamma = 0.36$) with $p < 0.05$** , that is showing the significant relationship between SII and SSM.

b) Hypotheses 2

H₂: There is a significant relationship between susceptibility to normative influence and social shopping motivation. It is verified from the results that value of Standard Regression weight **0.34 or ($\gamma = 0.34$) with $p < 0.05$** , is presenting the significant relationship between SNI and SSM.

c) Hypotheses 3:

H₃: There exists a significant relationship between social comparison orientation and social shopping motivation. It is clear from the results that value of Standard Regression weight **0.22 or ($\gamma = 0.22$) with $p < 0.05$** , is showing the significant relationship between SCO and SSM.

d) Hypotheses 4:

H₄: It was hypothesized that there exists a significant relationship between social risk towards fashion and social shopping motivation. Results show that value **$p > 0.05$** , is exhibiting that there is no significant relationship between SRF and SSM.

e) Hypotheses 5:

H₅: There exists a significant relationship between social shopping motivation and compulsive buying. Findings of the study reveal that value of Standard Regression weight **0.28 or ($\gamma = 0.28$) with $p < 0.05$** , is showing the significant relationship between SSM and CBB.

Table 3 Results of all Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses	Description	Results
H ₁	There exists a significant relationship between SII and SSM.	Accepted
H ₂	There exists a significant relationship between SNI and SSM.	Accepted
H ₃	There exists a significant relationship between SCO and SSM.	Accepted
H ₄	There exists a significant relationship between SRF and SSM.	Not supported
H ₅	There exists a significant relationship between SSM and CBB.	Accepted

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Nature of the research of this study was cross-sectional that may delimit the scope of results. Additionally, it can be taken into account that compulsive buying can create cognitive or sensitive reactions that increase the senses of guiltiness and ignorance. Such consequences of behavior, like cognitive differences of opinion were not included which limited the scope of the study. The basic concentration of this study was on social factors influence on consumer’s compulsive buying behavior. Such motivational sources, which are associated to buying behaviours, are of great worth for analysis.

An Association of social browsing with social comparison orientation describes that sensitivity for appropriateness may affect social browsing and other possible shopping behaviors. Future works can investigate social risks toward fashions [25] or fashion opinion leadership [27] to find their relationships with social shopping and consumer buying behavior. In future studies, these motives or person’s socio-psychosocial aspects may help further awareness about the causes behind buying behaviors

6. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Generally, buyers shop as a routine matter. As prior studies hypothesized these normal consumers do not feel any specific excitement during shopping and do not spoil themselves by glancing at advertisements and overall, they do not keep compulsive disorders in family history. On the other hand, purchasing and shopping is an exciting experience of life. Such buyers have an uncontrollable desire for shopping. Pakistan has a collectivist or socialist culture. Due to such type of cultural and social factors (e.g. Social standards, their compliance to the norms of reference group) social environment stimulates the consumer to comply with specific social needs. When strong desires create anxiety and depression, an individual inclines making more shopping to get rid of those things. But, that is a momentary relief and stress reappears in other types like emotional, financial and interpersonal outcomes after such shopping. The instantaneous relief taken from compulsive buying may increase inner psychological

pressure, which results in pathological buying [28]. It is noticed that if a person is trapped in such ferocious circle of compulsive buying, then he/she cannot run off it. Consumers, who were more oriented with social comparison, were generally considered to be more motivated for shopping. This social shopping motivation enhances consumer satisfaction. CBB of the consumer is also found to be related to other factors of behavioral effects of shopping i.e. number of market visits and time used for one market visit. Simply, it is said that individuals who are inclined to buy things with friends and family and enjoy the social communications spend more time on one shopping trip as they enjoy such extra time in the market. Such individuals have a greater propensity to buy products based on their liking rather than their need. In simple words, social factors and consumer’s consistency with reference group are anticipated to be the intense motivational factors that lead to social shopping motivation that increases psychological influences. These impacts ultimately give the pattern of CBB. Because of these social influences (i.e. SCO and SII), people give more attention to their social needs. Social comparison, typically affects the psychological status of a consumer, which is of vital importance in decision making. Edward stated that, social comparison is a major antecedent for dissatisfaction of individuals involved in such comparisons [4]. It is considered that social attributes of buyers have the greatest effect on the development of consumer’s compulsive buying behavior. The variables for this study were obtained through social comparison and socio-cultural theories. Previous studies expressed significant relationship of social values with buyer’s attitudes, inclinations, shopping stimulations and fascinations [29]. Hence, social factors have significant influence on buying behavior of a consumer and these factors also provide reasons for stimulating consumer’s interests or creating aspirations that may result in buying products. Along with the conclusions of previous studies the theory of social comparison speculates that people realize themselves by social comparisons or by their desire about themselves while doing comparison with other people. It is considered a worldwide human phenomenon. In the same way, buyers create social comparison as they focus on and are anxious about the responses and remarks by the members of their reference group. Thus, in the process of purchase decision or in the development of purchasing behavior, such reference groups perform the function of an information source [30]. The results of this analysis give some implications for policy makers and scholars. After the realization that variable of Social Shopping Motivation may trigger compulsive buying, policy maker can make better decisions on this basis, to provide guidance to the new consumers from the society.

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