EXPLORING THE OCCURRENCE OF IMPULSIVE BEHAVIOR OF KIDS WHILE BUYING CONFECTIONARY

Fawad Khan
DHA Suffa University

Abstract

Impulsive behavior of kids for confectionary is an under-studied topic. We believe this research would be a starting point for the future investigation on the topic. The child’s smaller attention span makes him forget TV commercials and the color psychology comes into play when the child is in front of a candy aisle. We further investigate what factors influence relatively the impulsive behavior of children in confectionary.

Literature Review

Impulse buying is generally defined as unplanned purchase. However, impulse buying is much more than that and involves five elements that are included in the definition of impulse buying. These, include: “1) a sudden and spontaneous desire to act; 2) a state of psychological disequilibrium; 3) the onset of psychological conflict and struggle; 4) a reduction in cognitive evaluation; 5) lack of regard for the consequences of impulse buying.” (Rook & Hoch, 1985)

This article is relevant to our study of impulse buying behavior in confectioneries as it depicts the various reason for shoppers’ trying out what actually goes into the minds of the consumer when they enter a shop and make a purchase, the triggers and motivations for such behavior. We aim, through our research, to find out what factors tend to convert a routine shopping trip into an impulse buying experience. (Reed, 2006)

A study confirms that chocolate has a 44% chance of being impulsively bought. While the study has been conducted in the West, it has results that are skewed according to that particular culture. (Confectioner Magazine, 2004)

A local paper suggested that lifestyles translated into impulse buying habits and some even chose to say that impulsively bought goods are often cheap. (Tirmizi, Kashif-Ur-Rehman, & Saif, 2009) Another local paper, (Jalees, 2009) states the cultural impact that affects impulse buying behavior in Pakistan. According to it, positive moods encourage impulse buying behavior for locals as does proximity of the product to the consumer. One surprising find of this study was that men, more than women are impulse buyers. The study also concludes that impulse buying is more frequent in younger people versus older people.
Methodology

The impulse buying research targeted the Parents, Older Siblings and Grandparents of the children between the age bracket of 04-12 years in order to gauge the dynamics of their Impulse Buying Behavior. Our research had been limited to the geographic domain of Karachi. In order to reach the segment of Parents, we primarily targeted the Kindergarten & Primary schools to reach the parent of kids studying in these schools. The sampling technique employed for this research is Cluster Sampling, where the cluster of parents of 04-12 year olds were targeted. Cluster Sampling was used as we targeted "natural" groupings evident in our statistical population. Through this technique, the total population was divided into three groups (or clusters) i.e. Parents, Siblings & Grandparents and a sample of the groups was selected. Then the required information is collected through a number of techniques. Firstly, we went to schools and asked teachers to ask the children to get the questionnaire filled out from their parents/siblings/mentors and bring it back the next day. To ensure success, this was mentioned in their homework diaries which were regularly checked by the parents/mentors/guardians. This was done for every element in these groups or a subsample of elements may be selected within each of these groups. A common motivation for cluster sampling was to reduce the average cost per interview. Given the budgetary constraints, this allowed an increased sample size. Assuming a fixed sample size, the technique was expected to give accurate results as most of the variation in the population was expected to be within the groups, not between them. Obviously as you would expect with children, the process of getting data through this indirect technique was not a smooth ride. Our success rate was approximately 40%, which infers that only 40% of the targeted children ended up bringing filled questionnaires. In the SEC B segment, the process was even more tedious & the response rate was slightly lower. In order to access these schools in the first place, we traced out a contact in one of leading school chains of Karachi, and subsequently used the snowballing technique to get references in other branches/schools. We planned to target 250 respondents in total, out of which a breakup of 1/3rd respondents from each segment (i.e. Parents, Siblings, Grandparents). This breakup was a touch distorted at the end, given the aforementioned accessibility issues. The expected confidence level was 95% with an error interval of + or – 6.2%.

Analysis

Confectionary shopping is the most common purchase children make, where they are not only the consumers but also the decision makers. Almost 40% of the parents surveyed mentioned that their kids purchase confectionary once or more than once a day. Whereas 34% of the parents mentioned that their unplanned purchases happen sometimes.

When it comes to children and confectionary, the phenomena of impulsive purchases can not be separated. No parent denies the unplanned purchases their child makes in front of a candy aisle. Almost 43% of parents surveyed mentioned that their child either always buy more confectionary items than intended or mostly. However 39% said that their unplanned purchases happen sometimes.

In support of the above argument, another question that revealed the same insights was that whether the child makes up his mind about what to buy, in front of candy aisle or the item is decided before
hand. 72% parents mentioned that the child decides in front of the candy aisle, about the items he/she wants to purchase.

Measuring the span of time a child takes to make the decision in front of candy aisles, it was revealed that 36% of the parents approximate that the child takes less than a minute to decide. Whereas 41% parents think that it takes couple of minutes for the decision to happen. A small 26% thinks that the child makes a careful analysis of all the items available. The phenomena of impulsive behavior being so pervasive, requires the exploration of the factors that perpetuate it. Preceding the influential factors, it was necessary to analyze which types of stores or shops the confectionary purchases are made more often.

The two shop types from which confectionary is bought most of the time are Grocery Stores, one can interpret them as Kiryana Stores; closely followed by Super Markets; and then Confectionary Stores i.e. small shops opened around the corners of streets. The least frequent was the Bakery Shops. According to parents, a child when in front of a candy aisle lays his hand mostly on an attractive pack, evidenced by the response of 63% of parents. After that, comes in play the recall of a TV commercial, evidenced by the responses of 49% of parents. 24% of parents also mentioned ‘a name kid had heard of’ as the influence factor when he/she is in front of candy aisle.

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of factors such as child’s mood, store layout, store ambiance, attractive packaging, and presence of another child in accordance with their impact on a staple scale, ranging from -5 to +5. The mean values were calculated for all the factors with all of them showing a positive impact on impulse purchase. The most impact was perceived to be that of store layout at 3.45, followed by peer influence at 3.18. A child’s mood was rated at 2.54, with ambiance and attractive packaging being considered the least important of the factors at 2.16 and 2.15. Parents were then inquired about their opinion whether the impulsive behavior of their child is learned or genetic, 57% mentioned its learned where as 43% mentioned it is genetic.

In the end it was measured whether the impulsive behavior in children is confectionary specific or whether is it a trait associated with the soft age of the child and is reflective in all product purchases. A whopping 43% of parents associated it with the age, and mentioned that the child displays impulsive behavior for all sorts of products. Whereas 34% mentioned that the impulsive purchase happens only for confectionary.

**Discussions & Conclusions**

The analysis presented above leads us to an interesting discussion. Theoretically we say that the super markets augment the unplanned purchases, because of the layout. All the products are in front of the consumer and the aisles can be walked into. However our research finding s suggests that in Karachi the most frequent purchase of confectionary happens from Grocery/Kiryana stores because the super market format is not yet popular. Moreover, kids normally accompany parents when they visit grocery shops and the unplanned purchases of confectionary happen. For the very same reason most confectionary purchase and thus impulse purchase does not happen that much at confectionary stores. For the marketers it is extremely essential to grab the child’s attention at the grocery stores, which are smaller in size and shelf spacing is difficult to grab.
The child’s smaller attention span makes him forget TV commercials and the color psychology comes into play when the child is in front of a candy aisle. The colorful the package the more likely it is that the child will impulsively pick the pack over other non attractive ones. There is a lot more to investigate in terms of impulsive behavior. A child’s psychology also makes him vulnerable to the actions of his/her peers. If a friend is accompanying him, he would never miss out on what the other kid is purchasing, and this would trigger his impulse behavior. Parents believe its an interplay of media and pressure that the child learns to behave impulsively. The genes are not to blame.

Children’s impulsive behavior also depends on how affluent his parents are. He learns to behave more impulsively when with parents. Impulsive behavior of kids for confectionary is and understudied topic. We believe this research would be a starting point for the future investigation on the topic.

**Technical appendices**

**Where does the child buy the confectionary from?**

- Grocery Stores: 76%
- Super Markets: 69%
- Confectionary Stores: 66%
- Bakers: 43%
- Others: 40%

**What does the child get attracted to infront of candy aisle?**

- Some Attractive Pack: 62.5%
- A Name Kid Had Heard Of: 48.5%
- Recall of TV Commercial: 23.5%

**Child's impulsive behavior is:**

- Natural (genetic): 57%
- Nurture (learned): 43%

**Impulsive Behavior w.r.t. Product**

- The child does not have any impulsive behavior for any product: 43%
- The child does not have any impulsive behavior for any product: 23%

**How many times does the child buy more items than he/she intended to buy?**

- Always: 14%
- Mostly: 25%
- Sometimes: 39%
- Seldom: 4%
- Never: 18%
Where does the child make up his/her mind when buying confectionary?

- 72% in front of candy aisle
- 28% elsewhere

Approximately how much time does the child take

- 36% couple of minutes
- 41% after careful survey of all items available
- 23% less than a minute

Importance of factors affecting impulse purchase

- Child's mood: 2.54
- Store layout: 3.45
- Store ambiance: 2.16
- Attractive packaging: 2.15
- Presence of another kid: 3.18
References


