



# Body image, impulse buying, and the mediating role of negative affect



Margery Lucas\*, Elissa Koff

Department of Psychology, Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA 02481, USA

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 25 March 2016

Received in revised form 20 September 2016

Accepted 7 October 2016

Available online xxxx

### Keywords:

Impulse buying

Body image

Negative affect

Self-regulation

Mediation

## ABSTRACT

The framework of self-regulation theory was used to examine the relationship between appearance-related concerns, negative affect, and impulse buying. College-aged women ( $n = 224$ ) completed measures of impulse buying tendencies (affective and cognitive), body image (appearance orientation, appearance evaluation, weighted self-ideal discrepancy, upward physical appearance comparison), and negative affect. Regression analyses using bootstrapping procedures indicated that negative affect mediated the relationship between three of the body image measures, appearance orientation, weighted discrepancy, and upward appearance comparison and affective, but not cognitive, impulse buying. Negative affect was also a mediator between appearance evaluation (body dissatisfaction), and impulse buying, but there was no evidence that appearance dissatisfaction influenced impulse buying tendencies independent of its effect on negative affect. The mediating relationship between body image, negative affect, and the affective component of impulse buying supports the idea that the need to manage or repair negative affect associated with appearance concerns can motivate impulse buying.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

Impulse buying occurs when a consumer experiences a spontaneous, unplanned urge to buy something and then acts on that impulse quickly, with little or no evaluation of the purchase or its consequences (Rook, 1987). This consumer style is prevalent in many cultures (Kacen & Lee, 2002), and in the U.S., 75% of respondents to a survey reported having made an impulse purchase (Merzer, 2014). Impulse buying has been associated with a variety of psychological factors, including trait impulsivity (Bratko, Butkovic, & Bosnjak, 2013; Lucas & Koff, 2014), mood, or emotional state (Rook & Gardner, 1993), self-identity and self-image (Dittmar, Beattie, & Friese, 1995, 1996), self-control failure (Baumeister, 2002; Vohs & Faber, 2007), and aspects of the five-factor personality model (Bratko et al., 2013; Thompson & Prendergast, 2015; Verplanken & Herabadi, 2001), as well as with demographic characteristics such as gender. A number of studies have reported that women, compared to men, are more likely to impulse buy, more likely to purchase appearance-related products on impulse, and more likely to report self-image and mood-related reasons for impulse purchases (e.g., Coley & Burgess, 2003; Dittmar et al., 1995, 1996).

Given the association between impulse buying and women's concerns with their appearance and self-image, it is surprising that the role of body image in impulse buying has received relatively little attention. Yet appearance-related concerns are an important influence on women's spending. Women allocate significant economic resources to

appearance-enhancing products (Bloch & Richins, 1992; Durante, Griskevicius, Hill, Perilloux, & Li, 2011), spending about \$750 billion annually on clothing alone (Lutz, 2013). The proportion of this money spent on impulse purchases is unknown, but clothing, fashion accessories, jewelry, and body care products are among the goods that women report buying on impulse (Dittmar et al., 1995). Thus, women's perceptions, feelings, and attitudes about their bodies and their appearance could be important influences on impulse buying.

As already noted, mood, or emotional state, has long been associated with impulse buying. As described by Rook (1987), the impulse to buy is hedonically complex. For example, Beatty and Ferrell (1998) reported that positive mood facilitated impulse buying, while Rook and Gardner (1993) reported that both pleasurable mood states, such as excitement, and negative mood states, such as sadness, were associated with impulse buying. Silvera, Lavack, and Kropp (2008) and Verplanken, Herabadi, Perry, and Silvera (2005) reported an association between impulse buying and negative mood, and some researchers have posited that impulse buying may serve a self-regulatory function to manage or elevate negative mood (Dittmar et al., 1995, 1996; Rook & Gardner, 1993; Silvera et al., 2008; Verplanken et al., 2005).

Support for this perspective comes from Mick and DeMoss (1990), who found that people purchase self-gifts when they are disappointed or upset in order to elevate their mood, and from Rick, Pereira, and Burson (2014), who found that shopping reduced sadness, a form of negative affect. Anecdotal evidence collected by Rook and Gardner (1993) also supports this proposition, with respondents indicating that they would be likely to buy something impulsively when in a negative mood, in the hope that it would make them feel better. Further, Baumeister (2002) found that people who experienced emotional

\* Corresponding author at: 106 Central St., Department of Psychology, Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA 02481, USA.

E-mail address: [mlucas@wellesley.edu](mailto:mlucas@wellesley.edu) (M. Lucas).

distress were willing to relinquish self-control to make an impulse purchase if they thought it might alter their negative mood. While both women and men make impulse purchases, the role of negative affect may be especially salient for women because they are more likely than men to identify emotional reasons, such as mood adjustment or repair, as significant factors in their impulse purchases (Coley & Burgess, 2003; Dittmar et al., 1995). The evidence, therefore, suggests an important role for negative affect in impulse buying, particularly for women.

In the current study, we will draw on self-regulation theory to examine the relationship between body image, impulse buying, and negative affect. Self-regulation is the ability to change behaviors, thoughts, and emotions to bring oneself in line with an internal standard, whether that standard be a goal, an ideal, or a set of norms or values, much as a thermostat regulates heating and cooling to bring air temperature in line with a desired temperature setting. Self-regulation strategies are guided by two different types of motives. A promotion motive is based on the desire to attain positive outcomes and a prevention motive on the desire to avoid negative outcomes (Higgins, 2002). Building on this framework, Verplanken and Sato (2011) proposed that impulse buying may serve a variety of self-regulatory functions, such as providing a buyer with desired symbols of identity (a promotion-focused strategy) and boosting low self-esteem (a prevention-focused strategy).

We propose that some of the self-regulatory functions of impulse buying for women are motivated by goals arising from appearance-related concerns. Impulse buying is considered to be the result of irrational decision-making (Verplanken & Sato, 2011), since, when we impulse buy, we tend to buy things we don't need, spend more than we should, and, afterwards, can experience guilt and regret. But in the context of appearance-related concerns, impulse buying may be an effective, if only temporary, prevention-focused strategy to alleviate the distress that can arise from negative body image perceptions, beliefs and attitudes. Although impulse buying can also serve as a promotion-focused strategy to generate more positive feelings about one's appearance or to fulfill aspirations for a more attractive physical self, our interest in this study is on the prevention-focused strategy of shopping as a way to diminish the negative mood that is associated with concerns about physical appearance.

Impulse buying was assessed with the Impulse Buying Tendency Scale (Verplanken & Herabadi, 2001), which distinguishes two aspects of impulse buying tendency, an affective aspect reflecting an urge to buy and a desire for immediate gratification, and a cognitive aspect reflecting a lack of planning regarding buying decisions. Body image was assessed with four variables representing different dimensions of the body image construct. Appearance evaluation measures one's satisfaction/dissatisfaction with her appearance and her overall feelings of attractiveness (Cash, 2000). Appearance orientation measures how personally important appearance is to the individual, how much attention is focused on it, and how behaviorally active she is in maintaining or enhancing it (Cash, 2000). Weighted self-ideal discrepancy measures the discrepancy between an individual's perceptions of her physical characteristics and her internalized ideals for these characteristics, weighted by the psychological importance of these internalized ideals to the individual (Cash & Szymanski, 1995). Upward physical appearance comparison measures the tendency to compare one's appearance to the appearance of more attractive others (O'Brien et al., 2009).

To the extent that appearance evaluation, appearance orientation, weighted self-ideal discrepancy, and upward physical appearance comparison tendency embody attitudes and behaviors have been associated with negatively valenced emotions, we expected that there would be a relationship between affective impulse buying and the four body image variables and that it would be mediated by negative affect. As a self-regulatory strategy to mitigate or elevate negative mood states arising from the appearance concerns reflected in the four body image variables, impulse buying would be effective because it enables women to acquire products to manage or enhance physical appearance, compensate for perceived inadequacies in physical appearance, narrow the gap

between self and ideal body image, and approximate the greater attractiveness of a comparison target. Due to the importance of the emotional component of body image, we did not expect that these appearance-related concerns would have a significant relationship to cognitive impulse buying, i.e., the tendency to act without deliberating about one's purchases.

In summary, we predict that: 1) body image concerns will be related to impulse buying, positively for appearance orientation, weighted discrepancy, and upward physical appearance comparison, and negatively for appearance evaluation; 2) negative affect will be positively related to impulse buying; 3) negative affect will mediate the relationship between body image concerns and impulse buying; and 4) the relationship of body image concerns to impulse buying will be reflected in affective, but not cognitive, impulse buying.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants and procedure

Participants were 224 college women (mean age = 19.94, SD = 1.86) recruited through online campus advertisements, as part of a larger study. Participants were offered the opportunity to win a \$25.00 Amazon gift card in a lottery. Respondents received a link to a secure survey site, were assured of anonymity and asked to sign a digital consent form. The study was approved by the institutional ethics committee. Ethnic makeup of the sample was 53.2% Caucasian, 32.6% Asian/Asian-American/Pacific Islander, 3.6% Hispanic or Latina, 2.7% Black/African-American, 0.9% Native American, and 7% other. Mean BMI of the sample was 22.81 (SD = 3.29), after removal of three extreme outliers.

### 2.2. Measures

#### 2.2.1. Impulse buying tendency

Impulse buying tendencies were assessed with the Impulse Buying Tendency Scale (IBT; Verplanken & Herabadi, 2001), a 20-item measure of two facets of impulse buying tendency. The 10-item affective subscale (IBT-Aff) reflects an inability to suppress the urge to buy and a loss of self-control (e.g., *I sometimes cannot suppress the feeling of wanting to buy something*); the 10-item cognitive subscale (IBT-Cog) reflects failure to plan or deliberate, or consider the consequences of one's purchases (e.g., *I usually (don't) think carefully before I buy something*); items are rated on 7-point scales from strongly agree to strongly disagree, and recoded so that higher scores indicate higher impulse buying tendency.

#### 2.2.2. Appearance evaluation and appearance orientation

Appearance evaluation and orientation were assessed with two subscales of the Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire–Appearance Scales (MBSRQ-AS; Cash, 2000). The 7-item appearance evaluation subscale (AE) measures whether or not an individual feels physically attractive, and is satisfied/dissatisfied with her appearance (e.g., *I like my looks just the way they are*). The 12-item appearance orientation subscale (AO) measures the extent of preoccupation with appearance, and engagement in appearance-management and grooming behaviors (e.g., *It is important that I always look good*). Items are rated on 5-point scales from definitely disagree to definitely agree. Higher scores on the AE subscale are interpreted as higher body satisfaction, and lower scores as body dissatisfaction.

#### 2.2.3. Weighted self-ideal discrepancy

Weighted self-ideal discrepancy was assessed with the Body-Image Ideals Questionnaire (BIQ; Cash & Szymanski, 1995), which asks participants to indicate how discrepant their actual selves are from their personal ideals for 11 physical characteristics/attributes, and then rate the importance they place on each of these ideals. Personal ideals are rated on 4-point scales from (−1) exactly as I am to (+3) very unlike me, and importance of these ideals is rated on 4-point scales from (0)

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5036068>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5036068>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)