



THE EFFECTS OF VISUAL MERCHANDISING AND PRICE SENSITIVITY ON IMPULSE PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR AMONG YOUNG APPAREL SHOPPERS IN BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

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The intense competition among apparel retail outlets in Bangladesh are on the rise. Due to the increasing number of these outlets, young consumers tend to differentiate the apparel products by visiting stores and compare prices with other outlets and end up with impulse purchase. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between visual merchandising, price sensitivity and impulse purchase behavior among young apparel shoppers. For this purpose, the sample of 305 young shoppers in Bangladesh completed the questionnaire. Stimulus Organism and Response (SOR) model was employed. The data were analyzed by deploying partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). By applying two-step approach for instance, measurement model for indicator loadings, convergent validity, reliability and structural model for path analysis, the result signifies that both visual merchandising and price sensitivity positively and significantly affects shoppers' shopping enjoyment and impulse purchase behavior, which shoppers' shopping enjoyment positively affects impulse purchase behavior. Results also found that shopping enjoyment mediates the relationship between visual merchandising, price sensitivity and impulse purchase behavior. The findings are useful for retailers to understand the essence of impulse purchasing behavior and factors, such as visual merchandising and price sensitivity, which can have great impact on impulse purchase behaviors among consumers.

Contribution/Originality: The study contributes in the existing literature by employing external stimulus and organism of S-O-R model. Variables of this study are widely being exercised but limited to apparel product purchasing behavior in Bangladesh context.

1. INTRODUCTION

The fierce competition among apparel stores in today's are mainly because of product presentation that visually differentiate themselves from competitors. Above all, apparel retailers put greater emphasis on visual merchandising in order to differentiate their products from others. Visual merchandising is the mechanism by which the presentation of goods by a retail store is made appealing, attractive and desirable to the consumer, not just as a stimulus to enter the store, but to create an impression in the mind of the customer (Dash & Akshaya, 2016). The positive atmosphere and design created by visual merchandising may tend to attract consumers to the shop and makes them feel relaxed, taking time in the store to browse and buy products. On the other hand, price is an indispensable factor that enables firm to compete with other firms by implementing low-cost strategy. Price-

sensitive consumers are rational and logical in thinking because they often compare price with other suppliers in terms of quality (Park, Kim, Funches, & Foxx, 2012). Consumers now-a-days would like to compare price with other retailers and purchase decisions are made based on the quality and quantity provided by retailers.

Visual merchandising can also influence impulse purchases. Impulse purchasing is a rapid, persuasive, hedonically complex action in which the pace of an impulsive decision-making process excludes consideration of alternative knowledge and selection (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998). Impulse purchase occurs when no prior purchase intentions are associated and it could either be defined as no specific products to be bought or no specific purchase task to be filled. On the other hand, price-sensitive consumers are prone to purchase impulse.

The young consumer group has gained tremendous attention from marketers as they have increased purchasing power; their attitude towards money has also changed with relatively easy access to credit cards. However, impulse purchase behavior among youngsters is particularly relevant to examine because they now comprise a sizeable segment of a target market that is rising in numbers as well as financial strength (Mangleburg, Doney, & Bristol, 2004). Therefore, young consumers are considered as an important cohort in consumer behavior which is worth to be studied.

The apparel stores in Bangladesh are on the rise. Significant numbers of local boutique houses and fashion houses launched their goods in Bangladesh by targeting young college and university customers and professionals. However, there is limited literature available which clearly identifies the purchasing behavior of this specific group.

Therefore, the main objective of this study is to investigate the factors that affect impulse purchase behavior among young apparel shoppers in Bangladesh. To meet the special objective of this study three variables such as visual merchandising (VM), price sensitivity (PS) and shopping enjoyment (SE) are employed to see the effects on impulse purchase behavior. The remaining paper exhibits five sections include literature review, research methodology, results and findings, limitation and future research directions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical Framework

The Stimulus organism and response model (SOR) was first introduced by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) in environmental psychology. The SOR model has been widely exercised in marketing studies and the literature of consumer behavior (Buckley, 1991; Donovan, Rossiter, Marcolyn, & Nesdale, 1994; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996). In the SOR model, stimuli are believed to have an effect on an individual's internal state (Eroglu, Machleit, & Davis, 2001). Organism is characterized as an internal process or state mediated between the stimulus and the individual's final response. Response is final outcome which determine consumers approach or avoidance behavior. Chang, Eckman, and Yan (2011) applied SOR model to investigate ambient design and social characteristics of retail stores on impulse purchase behavior through consumers' positive emotional responses. Sultan, Jan, Basit, and Rafiq (2018) studied impulse purchase behavior by applying SOR model where window display, promotional activities and store environment were the key stimuli to determine impulsive nature of a consumer through an individual's positive emotion. However, many researchers (Ahmad, Ali, Malik, Humayun, & Ahmad, 2019; Bharathi & Sudha, 2017; Graa & Dani, 2012; Hashmi, Attiq, & Rasheed, 2019) have studied consumers' stimuli, emotional responses and impulse purchase by adapting SOR model.

2.2. Impulse Purchase Behavior

Impulse purchase behavior described as sudden, unplanned and thoughtless purchase behavior which takes place due to the characteristics of products and services. It is a purchase behavior where consumers think emotionally rather than rationally (Rook, 1987; Rook & Fisher, 1995). However, Mowen and Minor (1998) signifies impulse purchase as an uncontrollable reaction, which increases the desire to obtain and possess, and encourages consumers to have impulse purchase behavior. The basic impulse buying paradigm started with Stern (1962)

research in which purchasing activity was categorized into planned, unplanned, and impulse. Planned buying takes longer time because it involves with information searching and rational thinking. In contrast, unplanned buying does not require advance planning. Impulse buying differs from unplanned buying in terms of rapid decision-making. The impulse buying behavior involves a sudden, intense, and irresistible purchasing urge (Stern, 1962).

According to Zeb (2016) impulse purchase decision are sudden and spontaneous where no prior purchase decisions made to purchase specific products. Consumers' impulsive purchase occurred without prior information search and evaluation of alternative. However, Muruganantham and Bhakat (2013) developed a framework for impulse purchase behavior where external stimuli described as the most challenging implication on impulse purchase.

According to Kang (2013) impulse purchasers are categorized into two types. The first type of impulse purchasers makes the decision with no information search. Their buying behavior desired to fulfill certain affective needs. The second type of impulse purchasers makes the decision right after information search. Their buying behavior are still impulse but through all the decision-making steps to enhance the purchase benefits. It is vital for retailers to understand consumers mind in order to sustain the competitive market as impulse purchase behavior has become an important issue (Badgaiyan & Verma, 2014).

2.3. Shopping Enjoyment

Shopping enjoyment is described as a buyer's characteristic in which they tend to find that shopping is enjoyable and allow them to experience greater shopping pleasure (Goyal & Mittal, 2007). Shopping enjoyment describes as the pleasure ones perceived in the shopping process (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998). Higher level of shopping enjoyment leads to greater impact on impulse purchase (Saad & Metawie, 2015). Shopping enjoyment is also considered to be an important intrinsic factor as enjoyment comes from the shopping process within shoppers themselves because of their shopping activity (Bong, 2016).

Extensive research was carried out to examine the relationship between mood and emotion towards impulse purchasing behavior. For example, Pradhan (2016) found mood to have significant relationship with consumers' impulse behavior. However, Maulana and Novalia (2019) describes emotion as a crucial factor in making decision by consumers. Emotion can be divided into two dimensions namely: positive and negative. Consumers' positive emotions can be expressed by positive feelings for instance pleasure, enjoyment and satisfaction and these have positively related to their impulse purchase behavior (Suhud & Herstanti, 2017). Because higher level of shopping enjoyment tendency give rise to higher levels of positive affect (Mohan, Sivakumaran, & Sharma, 2013). Consumers who enjoy shopping are more opted to purchase impulsively. With the above-mentioned literature, the following hypothesis is formed:

H₁: Shopping enjoyment has positive effect on impulse purchase behavior.

2.4. Visual Merchandising

Extensive research has been carried out to portray visual merchandising on impulse purchase behavior. Visual merchandising consists of few factors such as store layout, color, lighting, store design and cleanliness (Kouchekian & Gharibpoor, 2012). Bhatti and Latif (2014) found from the study that signifies strong influence of visual merchandising on impulse purchase behavior. Kaur (2013) found window display as one of the most important elements that increase the stimulus so that consumers can enter into the store. She also found that the 85% consumers try apparel that is found on display. Mehta and Chugan (2013) found to have significant relationship between visual merchandising (i.e. window display, floor merchandising and promotional signage) and impulse purchase behavior.

Setyawati, Sumarsono, and Praditya (2018) studied visual merchandising on impulse purchase behavior and found that visual merchandising had positive and significant relationship with positive emotion. Maulana and

Novalia (2019) define consumers' positive emotions as pleasure, enjoyment and satisfaction. However, in visual merchandising, design characteristics are considered as physical elements in the retail store environment, which impact on consumers' emotional states and buying decision (Crowley, 1993). Colors appeared found to be the most salient factor for pleasant feelings (Crowley, 1993). Saad and Metawie (2015) examined impulse buying behavior where shop enjoyment mediate the relationship between environmental factors and impulse purchase behavior. Therefore, following hypotheses are formed:

H2a: Visual merchandising has positive effect on impulse purchase behavior.

H2b: Visual merchandising has positive effect on shopping enjoyment.

2.5. Price Sensitivity

Price sensitivity can be defined as the degree to which consumers react to price changes and price levels (Goldsmith, Kim, Flynn, & Kim, 2005). Consumers purchase behavior are significantly and positively influenced by price and consequently sales and profit of the firm are affected by price too (Han, Gupta, & Lehmann, 2001). Mihić and Kursan (2017) examined consumers' personal factors on shopping enjoyment and result found price sensitivity to have significant and positive influence on enjoyment. Although some authors denoted that higher level of shopping enjoyment tendency among consumers are less price sensitive (Saad & Metawie, 2015) and typically less cost-conscious (Kang, & Park-Poaps, 2010). Previously, price-sensitive consumers were regarded to be rational and logical as they seek utilitarian values through purchasing activities (Schindler, 1989; Tauber, 1972) but researchers further identified that price sensitive consumers seek hedonic shopping value too (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003; Jin & Kim, 2003). Consumer's enjoyable shopping experiences are based on hedonic benefits acquired from bargaining because one of the possible shopping enjoyment factors is bargain hunting (Cox, Cox, & Anderson, 2005). Furthermore, price discounts and promotions are other factors that affect consumers' impulse purchase decision (Hultén & Vanyushyn, 2014; Nagadeepa, Selvi, & Pushpa, 2015; Xu & Huang, 2014). Based on the above-mentioned literature, the following hypotheses are formed:

H3a: Price sensitivity has positive effect on impulse purchase behavior.

H3b: Price sensitivity has positive effect on shopping enjoyment.

2.6. Proposed Model

Considering all above-mentioned discussion, the following hypothesised model was proposed for the study.

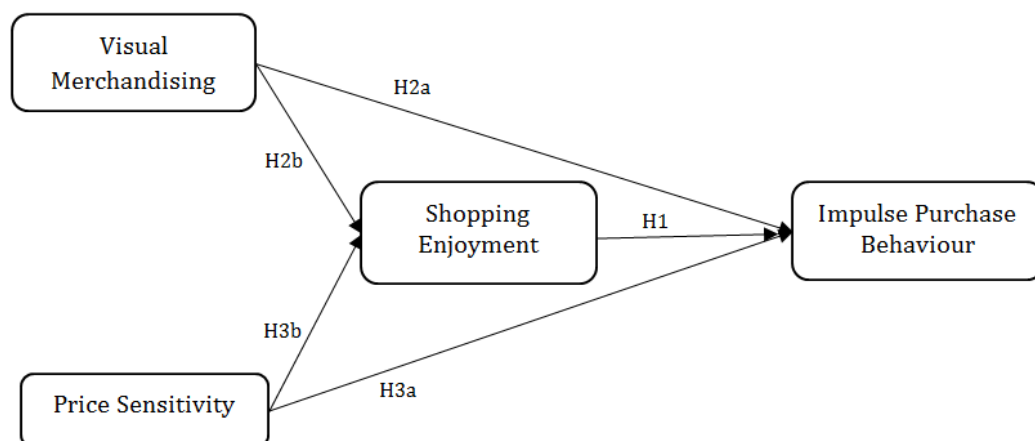


Figure-1. Proposed hypothesized model.

3. METHODOLOGY

Data was collected via online and face-to-face distribution. Survey questionnaire was developed in English language and adopted from several past studies (Dash & Akshaya, 2016; Irani & Hanzae, 2011; Mihić & Kursan,

2017) then modified to ensure the validity of those constructs. The questionnaire had two sections: First section was requested for demographic information. Second, survey questionnaire which was measured using five-point Likert scale from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. A pre-test test was conducted by distributing 20 sets of questionnaires to the university students with the aim of getting comments and feedback to improve the clarity.

These data were collected by utilizing throughout the month of March, 2020. The target respondents for this study were young adults. Thus, study was conducted using convenience sampling method where students from the university with minimum shopping experience were a part of this survey. A total of 305 replies were received from the respondents living at Dhaka city in Bangladesh. After the data screening and cleaning processes, 258 responses were found as completed for further analysis.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Descriptive Analysis

The profile of the respondents is shown in Table 1. Out of 258 responses, 56.2% and 43.8% were males and females, respectively. Most respondents were between 22 and 30 years old (68.6%), followed by the 31 to 40 age group (22.88%) and below 21 age group (8.52%). Majority are pursuing undergraduate degree (62.02%) followed by postgraduate degree (28.68%) and diploma (9.3%). Respondents then were asked about shopping experience and found that major respondents with three years of shopping experience (33.72%). Therefore, respondents were asked which apparel stores they visit mostly. Among top ten apparel stores in Bangladesh, Cats Eye was the most visited stores among respondents (16.28%) followed by Richman (12.79%), Yellow (12.02%) and others (10.85%).

Table-1. Demographic profile.

Characteristics	Frequency (N=258)	Percentage
Gender		
Male	145	56.2
Female	113	43.8
Age Group		
Below 21	22	8.52
Between 22-30	177	68.6
Between 31-40	59	22.88
Level of Study		
Diploma	24	9.3
Undergraduate	160	62.02
Postgraduate	74	28.68
Shopping Experience		
Less than 1 year	42	16.28
1-2 years	68	26.36
2-3 years	61	23.64
More than 3 years	87	33.72
Mostly visited apparel stores		
Cats Eye	42	16.28
Yellow	31	12.02
Richman	33	12.79
Aarong	22	8.53
Ecstasy	24	9.3
Rang	19	7.36
Kay Kraft	23	8.91
Dorjibari	21	8.14
Anjan's	9	3.49
Bibiana	6	2.33
Others	28	10.85

4.2. Data Analysis

While descriptive data was analyzed by using SPSS version 23.0, Smart PLS software version 3.0 in order to validate the measurement model and structural model. To evaluate the research model, two-step approach was followed (Chin, 2010). First, the assessment of the measurement model associated with the loading of the indicator. Second, it applies to the structural model which is related to the measurement of path coefficient.

4.2.1. Measurement Model Evaluation

Convergent and discriminant validity were conducted to assess the measurement model. To evaluate convergent validity, the value of both composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha are suggested to be higher than 0.7 (Chin., 1998). Additionally, average variance extracted (AVE) values should be greater than 0.5 as recommended by Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, and Tatham (2006). Table 2 shows the test results of this study that indicates all the items of the measurement model have good reliability and sufficient convergent validity. The study indicates the value ranging from 0.974 to 0.983 for CR and 0.968 to 0.980 for all Cronbach's alpha. The value ranging from 0.861 to 0.917 for average variance extracted (AVE) and outer loadings value for this model is ranging from 0.896 to 0.968. Thus, the test result from the current study can be concluded as the good reliability of all the items.

To illustrate discriminant validity, it refers the degree to which factors are uncorrelated and distinct (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2013). Measures of different constructs should not correlate highly with each other (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Table 2 shows the good discriminant validity as it illustrates the square AVE of each factor are larger than any of its' correlations with the other factors.

Table-2. Convergent validity and reliability.

Variables	AVE	CR	A	VM	PS	SE	IPB
VM	0.908	0.983	0.980	0.956			
PS	0.861	0.974	0.968	0.501	0.928		
SE	0.917	0.978	0.970	0.589	0.467	0.958	
IPB	0.915	0.977	0.969	0.570	0.448	0.623	0.953

4.2.2. Structural Model Evaluation

The structural model reflects the relationship between the constructs or the latent variables that were hypothesized in this study. Both path coefficients and R² score were determined by the structural model analysis. According to Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, and Gudergan (2017) R² values of 0.75, 0.50 and 0.25 which describes substantial, moderate and weak levels of predictive accuracy. The t-value > 1.96 is significant at p < 0.05 and t-value > 2.58 is significant at p < 0.01 (Hair et al., 2017). So, Figure 2 shows the R² value in this model is 0.432 (43.2%) for shopping enjoyment (SE) and 0.455 (45.5%) for impulse purchase behavior (IPB).

4.3. Hypotheses Testing

Figure 2 and Table 3 illustrates the path coefficient (β), t-statistics and p-value of each hypothesis. Based on the analysis all the hypotheses are found to be significant thus supported. H_1 ($\beta = 0.309$, $t = 3.300$) indicates the path between shopping enjoyment and impulse purchase behavior; describing the positive and significant relationship among SE and IPB of apparel goods. H_{2a} ($\beta = 0.272$, $t = 2.897$) shows the path between visual merchandising and impulse purchase behavior; representing positive relationship between VM and IPB among young apparel shoppers. H_{2b} ($\beta = 0.517$, $t = 6.782$) demonstrates the positive relationship between visual merchandising and shopping enjoyment of apparel. H_{3a} ($\beta = 0.235$, $t = 2.928$) explains that price sensitivity has positive and significant influence on impulse purchase behavior among young apparel shoppers in Bangladesh. Lastly, H_{3b} ($\beta = 0.236$, $t = 2.919$) demonstrates that, positive and significant relationship is associated between price sensitivity and shopping enjoyment.

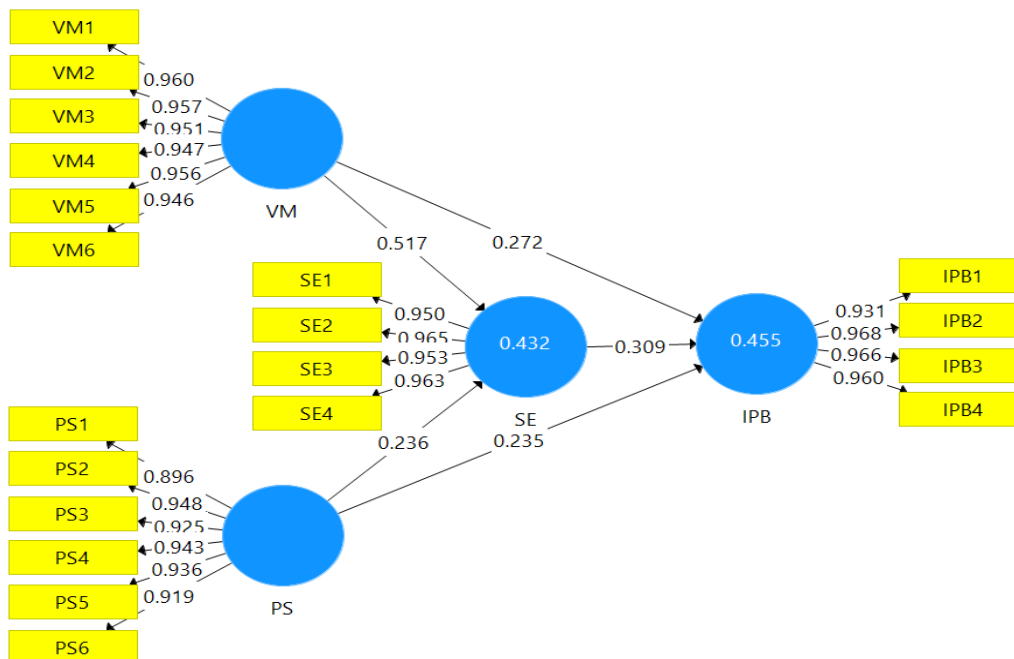


Figure-2. Path analysis, outer loadings and R Squared.

5. DISCUSSION

The objective of this study was to understand the effects of visual merchandising and price sensitivity on impulse purchase behavior among young apparel shoppers in Bangladesh. The study also examined the mediating role of shopping enjoyment. The findings of this study support SOR theory. In this study, shopping enjoyment were found to be significantly and positively affecting impulse purchase behavior. Thus, finding is consistent with the prior study of Saad and Metawie (2015). Visual merchandising found to have significant and positive influence on impulse purchase behavior. Young consumers perceive that store environment, mannequin display and wide variety of apparel selection influence them to attempt unplanned purchase. Thus, study is in line with the previous findings (i.e. (Bhatti & Latif, 2014; Dash & Akshaya, 2016)). Results found price sensitivity to have significant and positive relationship with impulse purchase behavior. Price sensitive consumers are bargain hunter and looking for discounts but they don't hesitate to pay more when it comes to new apparel. Thus, the study is consistent with previous studies (i.e. (Mihic & Kursan, 2017; Nagadeepa et al., 2015)). Rather than being a rational thinker, consumers seek hedonic gratification such as consumer feel enjoyed and pleased by shopping environment and price offered by apparel stores. This study also examined the mediating effects and found that shopping enjoyment mediate the relationship between visual merchandising, price sensitivity and impulse purchase behavior.

Table-3. Results of proposed model.

Hypotheses	Path	B	T-stats	P-value	Decision
H1	SE → IPB	0.309	3.300	0.001	Supported
H2a	VM → IPB	0.272	2.897	0.004	Supported
H2b	VM → SE	0.517	6.782	0.000	Supported
H3a	PS → IPB	0.235	2.928	0.004	Supported
H3b	PS → SE	0.236	2.919	0.004	Supported

5.1. Mediation Effect Analysis

Two mediating effects in this study were examined. Young apparel shoppers' shopping enjoyment has a mediating effect on impulse purchase behavior and the visual merchandising. Second, shopping enjoyment has a mediating effect on price sensitivity and impulse purchase behavior. In this analysis, the results show that the values of this Sobel test are all higher than 1.96 (Sobel, 1982) and with 95% confidence intervals, 5000 simulation were

bootstrapped and found no 0 straddle in between (Efron & Tibshirani, 1993). The study indicates that shopping enjoyment has significant impacts on visual merchandising, price sensitivity and impulse purchase behavior.

Table-4. Mediation effects of variables.

Path Analysis			Bootstrapping 95% confidence intervals	
Relationship	Coefficient	Sobel test	Lower	Upper
VM→SE→IPB	0.073	2.211	0.008	0.117
PS→SE→IPB	0.16	3.044	0.014	0.211

5.2. Contribution

Current study discusses the theoretical and managerial implications which arise from the present research. Firstly, the findings of this study imply the reliability and validity of the stimulus organism and response (SOR) model in measuring the young shoppers' impulse purchase behavior of appeals through perceived enjoyment. Additionally, this study contributes to the external stimuli of SOR model by supporting it in the Bangladeshi context. The study also supports the conceptual SOR framework and provides the evidence from several literatures for the relationships between visual merchandising, price sensitivity, perceived enjoyment and impulse purchase behavior among young appeal shoppers.

The findings of this study provide a few managerial implications for the Bangladeshi appeal outlets. Firstly, the result of this study would help the management team to better understand about the best policy to be undertaken in building strong relationships with consumer especially young adult groups. Furthermore, appeal outlets could provide suitable products with flexible price where consumers are allowed to have discount price upon request. In addition, visual merchandising is also an important factor that allows apparel outlets for gaining competitive advantages and customer retention. Visual merchandising and price sensitivity are two external stimuli found from this study that affects consumers' emotional states and impulse purchase behavior of apparel products.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1. Limitation and Recommendation for Further Research

This study holds few limitations. First, convenience sampling method was employed to collect the data which may not best representation of young apparel shoppers in Bangladesh context. Because of the time constraint, researcher particularly focused on students obtaining degrees at various institutions in Dhaka city. Second, there is a high possibility of receiving false or even undesirable answers from participants. Third, current study employed visual merchandising and price sensitivity to examine impulse purchase behavior through shopping enjoyment. Though visual merchandising had widely exercised in the impulsive purchase studies, price sensitivity comparatively less concentrated and few more factors are to be applied in order to study impulsive purchase of apparel products.

However, it is further recommended that, the study should be carried out whole Bangladesh including rural and urban area. Therefore, study should also focus on jobholders or salaried worker because the impulse purchase behavior among young students and employees may vary based on the situational factors such as time, money availability. However, further study could apply different factors such as service quality, reliability and trust to investigate impulsive behavior especially on apparel purchase.

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