



Impulse buying behavior and post-purchase feelings
A study on Finnish consumers

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ABSTRACT	
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<p>What is impulse buying and which factors affect this type of behavior? The purpose of this Master's thesis is to create an understanding of the drivers of impulse buying and the means by which marketers can use them to their advantage. The thesis is written from both a consumer and marketer point of view in order to fully grasp what the buying behavior entails. After having bought something on impulse, some kind of sentiment usually follows. Consumers can either feel post-purchase regret or satisfaction and this is determined by different factors – mainly by how the purchased product performs compared to previous expectations.</p> <p>This thesis aims to complete some of the still existing gaps from previous impulse buying research in the sense that it includes another buying behavior trait, namely compulsive buying. This has been added in order to compare the two with each other, thus creating a wider understanding of what impulse buying truly entails. There is also a section covering word-of-mouth communication, which has a certain impact on impulse buying behavior. One final difference between this thesis and traditional research is the fact that post-purchase feelings have been taken into consideration – the phase, which occurs after the point of purchase.</p> <p>The conducted research concerns Finland and the results are based on the answers of 80 informants. They consist of both men and women divided into two separate age groups. The questionnaire has been created with Google Forms, which granted easy access for the participants. The chosen research method is a mixture of qualitative and quantitative but can be considered to be of a more qualitative nature, because of the small number of informants and the inclusion of open questions. However, the number of replies is still high enough to generate certain patterns, which is typical for quantitative research.</p> <p>The results from the research reveal that most Finns make impulse purchases on a monthly basis and that the impulse purchases they make still happen more frequently in brick-and-mortar stores than online stores. The three main product categories Finns buy on impulse are clothes, food and cosmetics – the first two of which concern both genders. According to the results, Finns typically make impulse purchases when in the grocery store or when there is a sale. The most important reasons behind Finns' frequent impulse purchases are store atmosphere and friendly store-personnel.</p> <p>In order to persuade consumers to buy certain products on impulse, marketers should, among other things, continuously aim to create an appealing store environment that stimulates consumers' various senses.</p>	
Keywords: impulse, impulsive, impulse buying, impulse purchase, compulsive buying, buying disorder, buying behavior, marketers' tricks, post-purchase feelings, regret, satisfaction	
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1. Introduction

We have all experienced that sudden and mysterious force that simply pushes us into buying something without us understanding why. Marketers know that consumers can be manipulated into buying their products by cleverly placing them near the cash register, for example, and this way the consumers do not really have time to think about whether they actually want to purchase the product or not – all they know is that the product seems appealing at that very moment and that, for some strange reason, they must have it.

What is impulse buying, and which different components affect this kind of behavior? I have chosen this particular topic because I find it intriguing since it has to do with both marketing and consumer behavior. That being said, this thesis will be written from both a marketing and possibly to an even greater extent, psychology-oriented perspective. I find it fascinating how the human mind works in all its complexity and how it can be manipulated. It is interesting how consumers can be persuaded into buying something on impulse by stimulating their different senses and by accessing their subconscious.

I am determined to learn as much as possible about impulse buying, which is quite a common phenomenon and, additionally, investigate what happens when we experience post-purchase regret after buying something we did not need or that we were not planning on buying. Regret, however, is not the only sentiment we may encounter after buying something on impulse. Sometimes we might also feel pleased about having made such a decision, and it will be interesting to learn which cases of impulse buying lead to these kinds of feelings – either regret or satisfaction.

I major in International Marketing, which is why I am looking forward to writing this thesis from a marketer's point of view as well. In other words, I want to study the role marketers play in impulse buying behavior and how they can steer people into the "right" direction – into buying their products or services. I have also been very interested in the field of advertising for a long time, and even that aspect is closely connected to impulse buying, as becomes apparent later on in the thesis.

1.1. Statement of the problem

The impulse buying phenomenon has been studied to quite a great extent already, but this thesis will fill some of the still existing gaps of previously conducted research. One significant aspect that might differ from “traditional” impulse buying research is that another buying behavior trait will be covered as well, namely compulsive buying. By providing this information, it will make a comparison possible between these two different behaviors which, in turn, will give a better understanding of what impulse buying entails. There are some similarities between the two, which is why they should not be confused with each other. Since this thesis is focused on impulse buying behavior, compulsive buying will not be discussed to such a great extent – just enough to provide the information needed for an adequate comparison. In addition, word-of-mouth communication will be discussed quite thoroughly, because as will be explained in section 3.3, this phenomenon affects impulse buying behavior to a certain extent.

In section 3.1.6, consumer relationships are discussed – both how to create and maintain them. After-sales services that retailers provide their customers with is another factor that affects impulse buying and helps determine post-purchase feelings.

There are negative consequences connected to post-purchase regret for consumers and marketers alike, which is why it is essential for the latter to understand what it is that causes this feeling and thereby attempt to alleviate the consumers’ psychological suffering. Marketers should also think about strengthening the competitive positioning of their brands by ensuring customer loyalty. If marketers are doing nothing in order to reduce post-purchase regret concerning their brands, consumers are likely to turn to competitors instead (Saleh 2012).

1.2. Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this Master’s Thesis is to create an understanding of the drivers of impulse buying and the means by which marketers can use them to their advantage. In other words, the thesis is written both from a consumer and marketer point of view. Both perspectives are included in order to provide an extensive overview of what the buying behavior entails.

By understanding how the human mind works, marketers know what they can do in order to push consumers to buy their products on impulse. It is interesting to understand which factors can trigger these impulses and how consumers feel after having made such purchases.

Below are the chosen research questions.

Research questions:

- 1. What is the process behind impulse buying?**
- 2. What kind of effect does word-of-mouth communication have on impulse buying?**
- 3. What kind of impulse purchases do Finns make?**
- 4. When do Finnish consumers feel post-purchase satisfaction/regret?**
- 5. What can marketers do in order to manipulate consumers into making impulse purchases and how do they prevent and/or treat post-purchase regret?**

1.3. Limitations

For the empirical part of the thesis, an online questionnaire was composed, facilitating the process of obtaining a sufficient number of replies. However, the answers of 80 people were analyzed, and the conclusions drawn on the basis of them may not be accurate enough due to the limited number of participants. In order to obtain a full understanding of impulse buying behavior, the study would need to be significantly more extensive.

Additionally, the questionnaire concerns only Finns, which means that the results are not necessarily applicable to other countries or cultures and therefore they are not accurate on a global scale. In other words, impulse buying behavior might differ quite drastically from country to country, so the information gathered from this questionnaire can only give us an idea about this buying behavior as far as Finland is concerned.

By involving an equal number of men and women representing the same two age categories, it is possible to make necessary comparisons – based on both gender and age. However, as mentioned, the small number of participants does not suffice to provide results applicable to a global scale – or even all of Finland, but it is enough to obtain some interesting findings.

Another limitation concerning the thesis is that in chapter 2, where impulse buying is defined, the actual physical process that happens in the human body when experiencing an impulse will not be discussed. A short definition is, however, provided in section 1.5.

Although impulse buying has existed for a long time and probably will exist in the future as well, all of the findings might not be accurate in a distant future, because of our constantly developing society. For example, the world is becoming more gender neutral each day and products bought on impulse may not be gender specific for long.

1.4. Method

The theoretical framework for this thesis consists of consumer psychology and consumer behavior in general. The theory was gathered from both books and articles from various sources – mainly from academic journals.

For the empirical part of the thesis, the data were collected by a questionnaire created with Google Forms, including both open and closed questions. The informants consist of men and women representing two different age categories (35 years old or younger and over 35 years old), which makes it possible to compare the results with each other and to analyze the data properly. The questionnaire was sent out via mass email to my colleagues at work in order to reach a large number of people representing the younger age category. In order to obtain replies from the older age category, I asked my parents to help by sending out the questionnaire to their friends. This was considered the most effective way of reaching individuals over 35 years of age.

1.5. Central terminology

In this section, a short definition of the most important terms is provided, and the most central one to the thesis is the following:

Impulse buying

Briefly, impulse buying is a condition where consumers feel a sudden urge to buy something they were not planning on buying (Rook 1987). This particular term is discussed to such a great extent later on, that this simple definition will suffice for the time being.

(Nerve) Impulse

The following quote explains the physical process that happens in the body when experiencing an impulse:

“A nerve impulse is an electrical signal that travels along an axon [nerve fiber]. There is an electrical difference between the inside of the axon and its surroundings, like a tiny battery. When the nerve is activated, there is a sudden change in the voltage across the wall of the axon, caused by the movement of ions in and out of the neuron. This triggers a wave of electrical activity that passes from the cell body along the length of the axon to the synapse”

(Science Museum 2017)

Compulsive buying

In simple terms, compulsive buying can be considered a more severe form of buying behavior than impulse buying. Compulsive buying can lead to a number of serious problems such as financial trouble. Compulsive buyers buy for the sake of buying. It is not the purchased product that brings a sense of satisfaction to the consumers, but rather the buying experience itself (Gupta 2013). Compulsive buyers do not necessarily buy items for themselves – they often buy products for friends or family members (Black 2001).

Post-purchase feelings

After having purchased a product, some sort of sentiment often follows. We either feel satisfaction or regret and the latter is a negative outcome for both consumers and sellers. Consumers obviously are not happy about the product they just purchased, and

this probably results in a reluctance to buy the same item or brand again which, in turn, is something sellers want to avoid at all costs (Saleh 2012).

Word-of-mouth communication (WOM)

Word-of-mouth communication is when people share their opinions and experiences about certain products or services to others, thereby making it an effective way of reaching numerous consumers. When people are either satisfied or dissatisfied with something, they tend to share their feelings with friends and family members (Evans, Jamal & Foxall 2006). Word-of-mouth today also exists in online form. In section 3.3, WOM is discussed as an extremely effective way of spreading consumers' opinions concerning something they have purchased (Dellarocas 2003). WOM is often more effective than traditional advertising, since people have a tendency to trust someone they know over a celebrity promoting a certain product, for example.

“If you could master what has been identified as the most valuable form of marketing—the one that consumers trust above all others and the one that is most likely to drive sales for your company — would you instead choose to ignore it or leave it to chance?”

(Whitler 2014).

1.6. Chapter summary

In this chapter, the problem has been stated, explaining what kinds of gaps there are in previously conducted research and how this thesis attempts to fill some of those gaps. In this case, the addition of compulsive buying behavior, word-of-mouth communication and post-purchase feelings will hopefully broaden the reader's understanding of impulse buying.

The purpose of the thesis is to create an understanding of the drivers of impulse buying and the means by which marketers can use them to their advantage. The research questions stated in section 1.2 are relevant to the study and the answers to them are revealed in the final chapter.

The limitations of the thesis have also been introduced, which mainly concern the number of people participating in the study and the fact that the study only focuses on

Finnish consumers. This limits the results to some extent, but the findings suffice to give a general idea of what impulse buying behavior looks like in Finland.

As mentioned, several different sources helped shape the theory chapters of the thesis and the empirical data were gathered through a questionnaire created with Google Forms.

Finally, the terms have been roughly explained, making it easier to follow the rest of the thesis.

In the following chapter, impulse buying is thoroughly explained, providing an extensive overview of the phenomenon. A definition of the behavior itself is provided, as well as an explanation of who is an impulse buyer and what the moment of purchase is like. There are also situations that can be mistaken for impulse buying behavior but that, in fact, cannot be considered as such.

2. Impulse buying

Impulse buying can be considered a common buying behavior and most of us are familiar with entering a store with the intention of buying something specific, but then our interest drifts and we end up buying something we do not need. Certain products simply happen to draw our attention for one reason or another, leading us to buy them even though we were not planning on doing so. This chapter discusses common characteristics of the impulse buying phenomenon and which factors affect our purchase decisions.

2.1. The decision-making process

The decision-making process is an essential step preceding buying something on impulse. Even though making impulse purchases indicates an unplanned action, we still have to make the decision to buy a product, whether it concerns an impulse purchase or something we meant to buy. Several factors affect the decision-making process, and in section 2.1.1, these factors are covered in detail.

The decision-making process is not always an easy one. There are several reasons for consumers to change their mind about a purchase. Changed motivations and circumstances, new information or the fact that there are no products available are examples of such reasons (Ravi 1997). When the final decision of a purchase comes closer, joint participation is more common among couples than deciding separately (Blackwell, Miniard & Engel 2001). In other words, making the decision to buy something is often a mutual responsibility in relationships and consulting each other helps make the process easier. However, although the final decision tends to be taken by both parties, the earlier stage of searching for information is usually more individual. For this reason, marketing plans need to be “tailor made” for specific persons in order to be as effective as possible. The use of different types of media should be appealing for both parties separately within a relationship, instead of for both of them together. However, when in the store, the atmosphere (product or store design) should be able to appeal to them as a couple, because at the point when the decision is to be made, consensus is required (Blackwell et al. 2001). This refers to purchase decisions in general and not purchases made on impulse. In the case of the

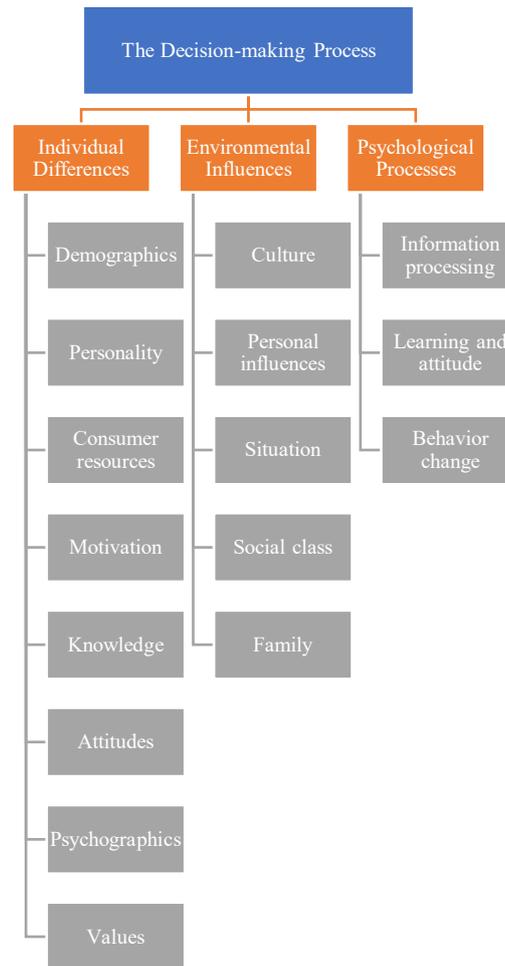
latter, the decision-making process is quite different. One typical trait for impulse buyers is that they do not make any in-depth evaluations about their purchases, but instead, buy things immediately, even if this action would result in negative post-purchase feelings. Impulse buyers are, in other words, more likely to experience this feeling of regret than the average consumers who take time to decide whether they want to buy something or not. Because of this fact, these consumers return their purchases to a greater extent than others (Kang & Johnson 2009; Rook 1987). Post-purchase feelings are thoroughly discussed in section 2.4.

Letting people touch, handle, play with or consume products, makes it considerably more likely for them to make impulse purchases (*idem.*). Additionally, if stores allow consumers to either exchange a purchased product for a new one (e.g. in case a piece of clothing is the wrong size or if something breaks) or if they allow refunds, the probability of buying on impulse is increased.

2.1.1. Factors that affect decision-making

When discussing consumer decision making (see Figure 1), there are three main categories that influence and shape it: individual differences, environmental influences and psychological processes. All three of these consist of further subcategories that affect the decision-making process (Blackwell et al. 2001). In the “individual differences” category, there are aspects such as demographics, psychographics, values and personality that influence consumers and their decision-making. Consumer resources, motivation, knowledge and attitudes are also part of the category. The “environmental influences” category, in turn, consists of culture, social class, family, personal influences and situation. Last but not least, “psychological processes” affect consumers and their decision-making abilities. Information processing, learning and attitude and behavior change are part of this category (*idem*). In other words, there are quite a few underlying factors affecting our attitudes, ultimately leading us to make purchase decisions.

Figure 1: The decision-making process



(Based on the theory of Blackwell et al. 2001)

As far as purchase decisions are concerned, it is often highly difficult for consumers to evaluate all accessible alternatives thoroughly. This leads them to engage in a two-stage process in order to make their decisions. First, consumers usually identify a high number of available products and single out the most promising ones. The second stage indicates the moment when they evaluate these best alternatives in depth and make comparisons in order to find the best possible product, after which they make their final decision to buy the product in question (Häubl & Trifts 2000).

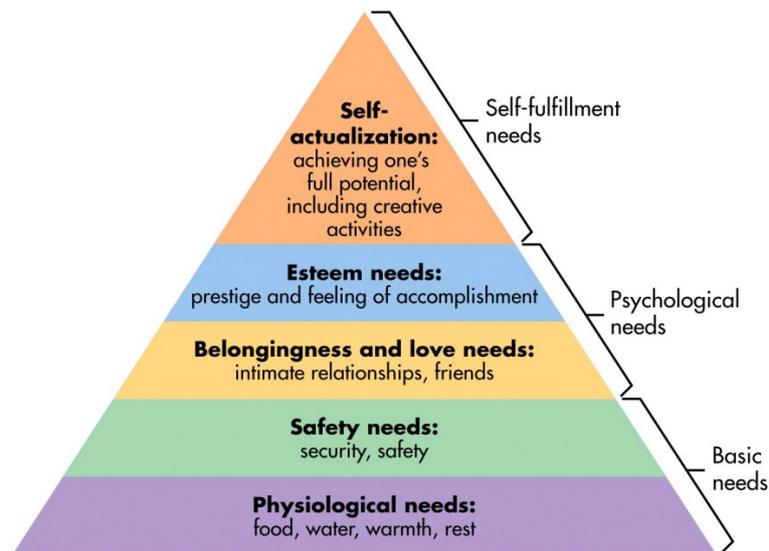
2.1.2. Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Maslow's hierarchy of needs (created by Abraham Maslow) is based on the fact that peoples' needs are categorized into different levels which together create a pyramid

(see Figure 2). The needs on the bottom of the pyramid are fundamental, basic needs – things we need to satisfy in order to live. Moving further up in the pyramid, the needs are categorized into psychological needs and self-fulfillment needs.

The needs on a certain level of the pyramid need to be satisfied (at least to some extent) before moving on to the next level. This also affects consumers when faced with a decision-making situation. Consumers want to satisfy their needs at all costs, and they base their decisions on which products fill these criteria (Evans et al. 2006). Marketers can also take advantage of consumers' needs on each level when creating advertisements. This is further discussed in section 3.1.2.

Figure 2: Maslow's hierarchy of needs



(McLeod 2018)

2.1.3. Searching for information

When a consumer problem is defined (regarding low involvement decisions), consumers make a choice by searching just for a little information internally (Zaichkowsky 1985; Bruner & Pomaza 1988). Low involvement refers to objects and issues that consumers are not concerned about (Kassarjian 1981) and such decisions often refer to purchases they were not planning on making, such as a postcard bought on vacation on impulse. Concerning higher involvement decisions, however, consumers actively search for more information from external sources. They might consult friends, read ads, visit stores etc. (Bruner & Pomaza 1988).

Culture was already discussed as a factor that affects our decision-making, but even how consumers are likely to search for information is influenced by culture. In some cultures, it is more important to receive advice and opinions from family members or via word-of-mouth communication about product or brand choices than from information received from advertising (word-of mouth is further discussed in section 3.3). Some cultures are also more likely to look for information on the Internet. However, regardless of the method, marketers need to understand what a specific culture finds important in order to formulate the best possible information strategy that is most effective with that particular culture in mind (Blackwell et al. 2001).

Regret (and the fear of it), it is an important factor in many of the decisions consumers make. Knowing that we might be exposed to this negative sentiment can help us make our decision about a purchase. The same applies to decision makers who are aware that they have a tendency to feel regret. Acknowledging this makes them think twice about their decisions, because they can already anticipate that they would come to regret their purchase (Kahneman 2011).

2.2. The concept of impulse buying

It is difficult to find one suitable definition for impulse buying, because there are so many underlying factors. However, one of the most central concepts that help defining the buying behavior is that an impulse purchase is unplanned (Piron 1991; Rook 1987). Several factors can persuade consumers to make such purchases. For example, there are certain tricks marketers can use to manipulate consumers, such as creating an inviting store environment (including in-store displays, shelf positioning, lighting and music) (Lewis 2013). Consumers might also remember the recommendations made by a friend, which can be considered another persuasive factor (Leonard-Barton 1985). Both of these will be further discussed in their own separate sections in chapter 3.

Some of the most central characteristics for impulsive buyers are the following: first of all, when buying something on impulse, a person experiences a lack of regard for consequences and can temporarily feel out of control. Another defining trait is that consumers feel a sudden and spontaneous desire to act – that they feel an inner conflict and struggle which leads them to act immediately (Blackwell et al. 2001). These are

examples of typical feelings consumers might have when in the store before buying something they did not plan to buy.

2.2.1. How impulse buying happens in practice

Figure 3: Impulse buying behaviour model

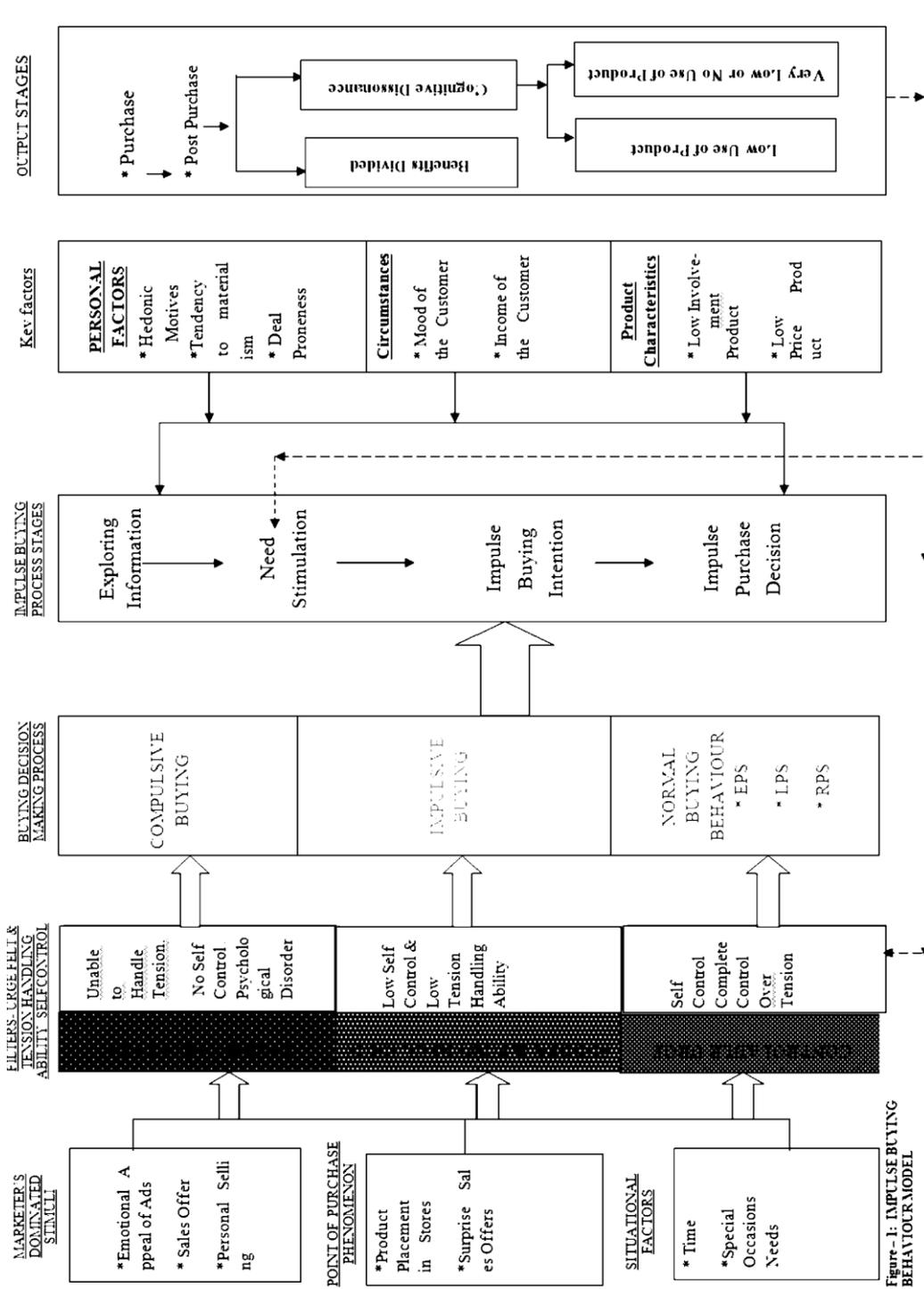


Figure - 1: IMPULSE BUYING BEHAVIOUR MODEL

(Iram & Chacharkar 2017)

Figure 3 provides an overview of the impulse buying process. As the figure illustrates, the process begins when being exposed to stimuli created by marketers. Another initial stage of the impulse buying phenomenon is what happens at the point of purchase. For example, product placement in stores and sales offers are attractive factors that lead consumers to buy something on impulse. Situational factors, such as special occasions needs, also trigger impulse buying behavior. After these triggers, personal behavioral traits present themselves (e.g. low self-control), which lead consumers to buy something they were not planning on buying (or buying something compulsively. Compulsive buying is discussed in section 2.3). This is then followed by post-purchase feelings, which are presented further on in the thesis.

2.2.2. The characteristics of an impulse buyer

As mentioned earlier, consumers experience a lack of control when buying something on impulse. It has been studied that shoppers do not usually consider it a mistake buying something on a whim (Lewis 2013). However, it is also common for consumers to experience post-purchase feelings – either negative or positive, both of which are further discussed in section 2.4.

Impulsive people usually learn from rewards instead of from punishments. This might be why impulse buyers find it hard to quit their habit even if they face consequences such as financial problems (Verplanken & Sato 2011). Blackwell et al. (2001) have listed up a few key characteristics when describing how impulse buyers behave, and even they mention that these people do not care about the consequences that follow when buying something on impulse.

According to previous research, nine out of ten consumers buy at least one thing on impulse on their shopping trips. More than half of these consumers, however, admit having bought at least six items. This means that each person spends during their lifetime approximately 50 000 pounds (, which equals to almost 57 000 euros,) on impulse purchases (Lewis 2013). As proven by this information, impulse buying is much more common than one might think. However, naturally, everyone is different. Some people seldom buy anything without thinking about the purchase thoroughly,

whereas others buy on impulse as often as an opportunity presents itself (Verplanken & Sato 2011).

Impulse buying highly depends on the context and the person in question. For example, if consumers are out shopping with friends, they may behave differently than if they were alone. Furthermore, children probably have completely different motivations for impulse buying than adults (Hausman 2000), which also indicates that consumers are highly influenced by the people around them when considering their impulse buying tendencies.

2.2.3. Do both genders buy on impulse?

The time or location of a purchase are not satisfying enough criteria to define impulse buying (Verplanken & Sato 2011), because, as mentioned, there are many different factors affecting the buying behavior. There are, for example, certain differences between men and women, and a survey conducted by Amanda Coley and Brigitte Burgess (2003) concerning gender differences in cognitive and affective impulse buying confirms this. According to the study, women are both affectively and cognitively more impulsive than men. Additionally, since women are naturally more easily affected by emotion and mood, they may feel tempted to make impulse purchases when subjected to appealing store signage and advertisements. Men might not be affected as much by this, as they have a tendency to buy more functional items (*idem*).

2.2.4. Limits of the definition

There are certain situations that might be mistaken for impulse buying behavior but that, for one reason or another, cannot be considered as such. In this section, some examples of such situations are introduced, and it is explained why they do not qualify as part of this behavior.

The first example of such a situation is when consumers see a commercial, immediately realizing that they want to buy the product in question. They would have to transport themselves to the location where the product is sold and, in this case, it would be considered a planned purchase and not something bought on impulse (Piron

1991). In other words, when the interest in the product has arisen, consumers already have the intention of buying it when entering the store, which is why it does not qualify as an impulse purchase.

Another example is connected to speed. Once an impulse is triggered, it makes consumers take immediate action. This urge that the consumers then experience might be powerful and persistent, and it can even seem irresistible. It is, however, good to acknowledge, that even though a behavior occurs fast, it does not necessarily make it impulsive. Habitual behavior is a good example of such a situation. People have certain habits, which make them act automatically without thinking about what they are doing. For example, consumers make purchases quickly when in the grocery store, since they are accustomed to a certain routine. People also tend to act immediately when an emergency occurs. In this case, the response is not impulsive, but rather instinctive (Rook 1987). Having said this, it can be rather difficult to draw the line when defining impulses.

Additionally, although impulse purchases are unplanned, it does not mean that all unplanned purchases are impulsive. Examples of such situations are habitual purchases, purchases that unexpectedly solve an existing problem, and purchases that one makes without planning or thinking about them, because they are just too unimportant (Verplanken & Sato 2011).

Impulse buying can, in some cases, be planned as well. An example of such a case is when consumers go out to buy someone a gift but do not yet know what it is they want to buy. This means that they exit the store having purchased a gift, which was their plan all along. Even though the item they bought was something they had not planned on buying, it is still a gift, which is what they went to the store to purchase. Another example of the same phenomenon would be when wanting to cook an exotic meal (e.g. Italian) and finding inspiration when in the grocery store. This is similar to the previous example. The person in question had a thought in mind when entering the store and having found inspiration or influences there, he/she has been able to make a purchase decision within the category he/she was looking for. In other words, the choice of item was based on an impulse, but the intention of buying something in the first place was a planned decision (*idem*).

2.2.5. Resisting the temptation

Impulses can be quite irresistible and when consumers experience one, it is common that the possible consequences from making an impulse purchase are not considered important enough not to buy the product in question. People try to be good, but when a seductive product catches their eye, it can be very difficult to resist buying it. Coping with impulses is an everyday struggle for some individuals and wanting to buy, to consume and to “have it all now” is a real temptation (Rook 1987: 195).

When consumers want to satisfy their needs, they tend to use whatever resources they might have in order to achieve as much satisfaction as possible (Saleh 2012). This is also linked to impulse buying, since some needs can be satisfied by buying certain products or services (see section 3.1.2). According to previous research, buying something on an impulse feels a bit like doing something naughty, but that ultimately is quite innocent (Rook 1987).

2.3. Compulsive buying (CB)

As discussed in section 1.1, impulse buying is not to be confused with compulsive buying (CB), which is something more severe. A compulsive buyer does not gain satisfaction from the product or service itself, but rather from the purchase process or the “psychological high” that it results in (Gupta 2013: 43). A buying experience for some consumers can be considered a form of entertainment, and for these people, buying something acts as an escape mechanism from their everyday life (Evans et al. 2006).

Although little empirical research has been conducted on the subject, there is some knowledge of possible triggers for consumers to engage in compulsive buying. A couple of examples of such triggers are tempting sales and attractive in-store displays (Kellett & Bolton 2009). These, of course, are not necessarily prerequisites for compulsive buying behavior and naturally everyone is different. These same factors can also trigger impulse buying, as becomes apparent in chapter 3. Sometimes friendly salespeople might also persuade compulsive buyers to purchase their products. Such consumers may not be accustomed to being treated so nicely by others, and this motivates them to buy something. However, as soon as they leave the store, this pleasant feeling fades away, which might be the reason why they do not feel satisfied

by the items they bought. It was the experience itself of feeling valued that made them feel good (Haugtvedt, Herr & Kardes 2008).

2.3.1. Characteristics of compulsive buyers

CB means buying chronically and repeatedly and the behavior is caused by consumers experiencing negative events and feelings. Symptoms of compulsive buying are similar to craving and withdrawal. One feature that sets compulsive buyers apart from average consumers, hoarders and collectors is that they, indeed, focus on the process of buying something, whereas the others focus on the actual purchased items. Compulsive buyers typically never use the products they have bought – instead they tend to hide them or throw them away. People who engage in CB often face psychological distress, such as depression and guilt (Lejoyeux & Weinstein 2010). It is also noteworthy that women represent approximately 80–92 percent of all compulsive buyers (O’Guinn & Faber 1989).

Another type of compulsive consumption is shopping addiction, and consumers representing this group are called shop-a-holics. Much like alcoholics or drug-addicts, these consumers find certain release when buying something, but the purchased products have no meaning for them (*idem*).

2.3.2. Negative outcomes caused by compulsive buying

Some compulsive buyers primarily buy presents for either family members or friends instead of for themselves (Black 2001). Others with CB begin hoarding what they have bought. This need to purchase comes with a number of consequences – some more severe than others. People who buy compulsively can be faced with financial trouble and build up large debts. They might also encounter personal distress and their marriage or relationships may begin to suffer. These are, however, just a few examples of the negative aspects of compulsive buying. Compulsive buyers are ashamed of the way they spend money, how they lie and the fact that their social relationships encounter conflicts because of their behavior. The feeling of remorse can be so strong that compulsive buyers might even find themselves unable to unwrap what they have bought, return them, or give them to someone else (Black 2001).

It has been studied that most compulsive buyers are aged 20–30, but it usually takes a long time for these individuals to realize that they have a problem. This happens when they start developing the previously mentioned issues, such as debt, legal problems, hoarding of the things they have bought and conflicts with their families (Achtziger, Hubert, Kenning, Raab & Reisch 2015). The article does not, however, explain if compulsive buying is something that goes away with age. The authors claim that most compulsive buyers are aged 20–30, but does this statement suggest that they are automatically cured as they grow older? According to Black (2001), compulsive buying disorder is chronic, which means that it is either something that continues throughout a person's life or that occurs again and again for a long time (Merriam-Webster 2019).

Compulsive consumption means that consumers find themselves in a situation where they cannot control their own actions. When a person has bought something compulsively, the positive feeling that follows usually only lasts for a little while. This feeling of gratification is often followed by profound guilt and a feeling of helplessness (Blackwell et al. 2001). These negative post-purchase feelings are something that impulse buyers encounter as well, and they are further discussed in section 2.4.

2.3.3. Impulse buying vs. compulsive buying

Now that impulse and compulsive buying have been introduced, it is important to acknowledge that these two should not be confused with each other, even though there are similarities between them. As Figure 3 illustrates (see section 2.2.1), compulsive buyers have no self-control in a shopping situation, whereas impulse buyers have low self-control. Another characteristic for compulsive buyers is that they are unable to handle tension. Impulse buyers, on the other hand, have low tension handling ability.

Compulsive buying is a more severe form of buying behavior than impulse buying, and it can even be called a disorder (Black 2001). Compulsive buying often means that the consumers' purchasing behavior is so far out of control that their economy and relationships end up suffering because of it, whereas impulse buying can happen only on occasion. "Some people are frequent impulse buyers and do this whenever an

opportunity arises, whereas others seldom buy anything without thorough deliberation” (Verplanken & Sato 2011: 200).

As mentioned earlier in the section, there are certain triggers that might affect consumers’ buying behavior and some of them may concern both impulse and compulsive buying. Sales and appealing in-store displays are examples of such triggers (Kellett & Bolton 2009).

2.4. Post-purchase feelings

Once an impulse purchase has taken place, it is usually followed by some sort of sentiment. Either consumers feel happy about buying something on a whim or, alternatively, they might experience a feeling of regret. In this section, there is an explanation provided of when these two emotions occur and what kind of products or situations cause either a positive or negative state of mind. In the case of the latter, there are a few suggestions introduced in sections 3.1.6 – 3.1.8 of what retailers can do in order to prevent their customers from feeling post-purchase regret after buying their products. They want to keep their customers as satisfied as possible, thus, promoting customer loyalty.

Post-purchase feelings represent one of the stages of consumer decision making and they are also known as post-consumption evaluation. When in this phase, consumers either feel satisfied or dissatisfied. When consumers’ expectations are met by a certain product’s perceived performance, a sense of satisfaction follows. By contrast, when these expectations are not met, consumers experience a sense of dissatisfaction. No matter the outcome, consumers remember their evaluations and these, in turn, influence their future decisions. Competitors tend to find it difficult to access satisfied customers’ minds and decision processes, because these people have a tendency to purchase the same brand from the same place. However, it is easy for the competitors to influence consumers that are not satisfied with either products or stores by creating a marketing strategy that promises the consumers something better (Blackwell et al 2001).

2.4.1. When do we feel regret?

There is one simple and straight-forward explanation for post-purchase dissatisfaction. When you can easily imagine yourself having taken another course of action than you did, you experience intense regret (Kahneman 2011).

Even though consumers try to explain their purchase decisions with logical reasons, they might still doubt themselves and wonder if they made the right choice (Saleh 2012). Most of us have probably found ourselves in a situation where we have bought something, tried to convince ourselves it was the right choice, but still end up regretting that we did not choose something else instead. When consumers compare what they bought with what they did not buy, the result is often a state of misery and psychological pain, which is also called post-purchase regret or cognitive dissonance (Saleh 2012). Cognitive dissonance happens when consumers experience that there is a contradiction between their beliefs and new evidence they stumble upon about the product in question. One example of such a situation is when consumers struggle with choosing between two items and after having made the decision question if they made the right one. As the consumers feel insecure about the choice they made, they might hear from someone else that it was, indeed, a bad decision. This causes the consumers to feel discomfort and regret their choice, which results in them searching for information in order to have some kind of confirmation that they did not make a mistake after all – to convince themselves they did the right thing (Evans et al. 2006).

If someone reminds consumers that they might feel regret after making certain choices, they come to prefer conventional options, meaning that they find brand names more important than generics (Kahneman 2011). In other words, consumers take the advice from others rather than risk regretting a purchase decision they would make on their own.

One characteristic for impulse buyers is that they do not give their purchases very much thought or evaluate them deeply. Even when impulsive people can expect to feel regret concerning their purchases, they still follow their urges and buy the product anyway. Because of the fact that consumers like this do not think about their purchases carefully, they are more likely to end up regretting them. As a result, they return their

impulse purchases more often than consumers who contemplate their purchases carefully (Kang & Johnson 2009). However, there is a situation where consumers do not return products even though they regret having bought them. Sometimes people who have bought something on impulse can either be too lazy to bother returning their purchases, or they simply forget. In the case of the latter, they often just place the items in question in a cupboard and forget about them. This is especially the case if the items are of low value and it seems pointless to go through the effort of returning them to the store (Lewis 2013).

2.4.2. When do we feel satisfaction?

As mentioned in section 2.1, the opinions of family and friends play an important role when discussing the decision-making process. This is also the case with post-purchase satisfaction – social patterns, such as individualism and collectivism, should be taken into consideration. Post-purchase feelings are based on how well products perform compared to pre-purchase expectations (Blackwell et al. 2001) and in order for consumers to feel satisfied, products would need to perform well. However, in the case of impulse purchases, where the customer only has limited information to base their pre-purchase expectations on, it helps to discuss the purchase with friends or family members who are present at the point of purchase. This can help reduce the level of uncertainty connected to the product performance (Lee & Kacen 2008).

As soon as consumers realize that products are more than just material possessions and that the reason behind their buying behavior is wanting to please both their hedonistic and physical desires, they will feel better about having bought something on impulse (Hausman 2000). Having said this, when there is an explanation for our behavior, it helps us dismiss any feelings of guilt.

2.4.3. Is it possible to experience both regret and satisfaction simultaneously?

The consumption experience is built up by positive and/or negative reinforcement. Positive reinforcement happens when consumers experience some kind of a positive outcome by using a certain product. Negative reinforcement, on the other hand, occurs when a product can help consumers avoid a negative outcome. One good example of a situation where both of these occur is when using an air freshener. It removes bad

smells (negative reinforcement) by replacing them with a fresh one (positive reinforcement) (Blackwell et al 2001). In other words, consumers can, indeed, experience both positive and negative outcomes when using certain products.

2.5. Chapter summary

Impulse buying is a behavioral trait that most of us possess in one form or another. One of the most central ways of defining the phenomenon is by simply describing it as unplanned (Piron 1991; Rook 1987). Consumers also experience a lack of control when faced with an impulse buying situation.

There are certain situations that could be mistaken for impulse buying behavior when they, in fact, should not be. For example, when a consumer sees a commercial, becomes interested in a product and drives to the store to buy it, one might consider it an impulse purchase when it actually is a planned purchase (Verplanken & Sato 2011).

For some people, coping with impulses is a daily struggle. For them, buying and consuming are temptations hard to resist (Rook 1987). Others, however, only engage in impulse buying occasionally.

The decision-making process is rather complex, and it is affected by three main categories, namely: individual differences, environmental influences and psychological processes and these categories are further divided into subcategories. For example, the environmental influences category consists of subcategories such as culture and family, which means that consumers value the opinions of others when faced with making a decision (Blackwell et al. 2001).

Compulsive buying is a severe form of buying disorder and it can have a negative impact on both our social life and economy. A compulsive buyer gains satisfaction from the purchase process itself, instead of the product they have bought. Another characteristic for compulsive buyers is that they often buy gifts for their loved ones instead of for themselves. However, some compulsive buyers do buy things for themselves and begin hoarding these items. Either way, the person in question will, at one point or another, begin struggling financially, and their personal relationships are likely to suffer (Black 2001).

The section covering CB was added in order to create a wider understanding of what impulse buying entails. The first-mentioned can be considered a more serious form of buying behavior than the latter, but there are certain similarities between the two, which is why they must not be confused with each other.

Purchases made on impulse are often followed by either regret or satisfaction. As Saleh (2012) states, when consumers start comparing their purchases with something they could have bought instead, they often end up feeling post-purchase regret, also known as cognitive dissonance. However, if the consumers' expectations are met by a certain product's or service's performance, satisfaction is also a possible outcome.

This chapter was written from a consumer's point-of-view, whereas the following is written from a marketer's. There are several factors that can affect consumers' impulse buying tendencies and quite a few of them are in the form of manipulative tricks provided by marketers. In the following chapter, these tricks are introduced and discussed in detail.

3. Marketing tricks

There are certain things marketers can do in order to manipulate consumers into buying their products both in general and on impulse. In this chapter, some tricks are discussed in detail as well as how they are executed in practice. In section 3.3, word-of-mouth communication is introduced, which technically should not be considered a trick provided by marketers. However, it is a phenomenon that promotes purchasing, which is a positive outcome for marketers and retailers alike.

3.1. Examples of such tricks

The following subchapters provide examples of how marketers can influence consumers, possibly affecting their purchase decisions.

3.1.1. The removal of certain barriers

By removing some of the “barriers” that could hinder impulse buying, the level of temptation is instantly increased. The removal of such barriers can create temptations (or strengthen them) and therefore make impulse buying more likely. These include the acceptance of credit cards, ATM’s, 24-hour retailing and guarantees to get your money back if you are left dissatisfied for one reason or another. If consumers know that there is a possibility to return a certain product after having made a purchase, it gives them more confidence to buy the product in question, since there is no risk involved (Coley & Burgess 2003). In today’s world, people seldom carry much cash in their wallets, which is why the removal of the first-mentioned barrier is an essential criterion for most people.

3.1.2. Promotion and knowing the target market

Research shows that some products are more frequently bought on impulse than others. Promoting such products carefully can further increase the frequency of impulse purchases, which is important to realize as a retailer. Identifying and profiling the target market on a regular basis is something retailers should do in order to create appropriate marketing tactics for promoting their products in a way that the target customers find attractive (Coley & Burgess 2003). This, of course, raises the question about ethics. Is it ethically correct to manipulate consumers this way in order to gain profit out of it?

Marketers can take advantage of the earlier mentioned Maslow's hierarchy of needs (see Figure 2) when creating advertisements. The fundamental needs that must be satisfied first, include the feeling of safety and security. Marketers can, for example, advertise life insurance, home security systems and car safety features in a way that makes them seem as safer choices than their competitors and therefore promise to satisfy the consumers' needs (Evans et al. 2006). This, of course, is the case with all of the needs included in the pyramid.

3.1.3. "The moment of truth"

Among retailers and brand managers, there is something called the "moment of truth", which refers to the moment when consumers are standing in the aisle, deciding what they want to buy and take it. If the consumers are presented with two items that are equally attractive, they might find it difficult to make a decision between the two, which may result in them choosing neither option. This is not a positive outcome from the retailers' and marketers' point-of-view. In order to avoid such a situation, some supermarkets add a third (decoy) option into the selection, which is deliberately more unattractive than the other two in one way or another. This results in the consumers immediately rejecting it, which, in turn, encourages them to buy one of the remaining two original products (Lewis 2013).

3.1.4. Triangular balance

Another method used for manipulating consumers is called the "triangular balance" (Lewis 2013; Derbyshire 2004). It is quite an effective technique which is frequently used. It is based on the fact that people immediately look at the center of a picture before anything else. In this case, the products that are the biggest, tallest and have the highest profit margin are placed in the middle of every shelf and the other products are placed around them in order for them to seem appealing. When looking at the triangle on the shelf, the consumer's eye immediately goes to the center – to the most expensive item. After having laid eyes on the most expensive product, which usually gives the best value for money, it is difficult to go for the cheaper, less attractive version (Karl McKeever in Derbyshire 2004).

3.1.5. In-store stimuli and the shopping environment

There are several aspects that contribute to the creation of the store environment. These consist of **ambient factors** such as lighting, scent and music, **design factors**, including layout and assortment and finally **social factors**. This part refers to the presence of salespeople and their efficiency. Layout indicates rather obvious aspects, such as product placement, but also minor details, such as the arrangement of shopping carts (Baker et al. 2002). This might not seem as something average consumers would care about, but subconsciously small things such as this may have an effect on them. Other examples of factors affecting consumers' shopping decisions are in-store promotions, level of service and how clean the store is. Salespersons also have clever ways of complimenting their customers, making them feel important, which might affect their decision-making (Blackwell et al. 2001).

Retailers should aim to create a pleasant shopping environment at all times. When wanting to attract consumers and keep them excited about the shopping experience, atmosphere plays a central role, and therefore, it is important to put some thought and effort into it. If the décor is appealing, the marketing is creative, the lighting, music and aromas are suitable for the context, the mood and emotion of consumers can be enhanced and, hence, impulsive behavior may be triggered.

If retailers want to increase impulse buying, they need to ensure that the environment helps consumers feel relieved of their negative attitudes toward impulses. When retailers want to advertise their products with the goal of promoting impulse buying, they can stress the relative rationality of making impulse purchases and also highlight the non-economic rewards of buying something on impulse (Hausman 2000).

Additionally, retailers can create a complex environment, which makes it harder for consumers to process information in the right way. They can achieve this by e.g. stocking more merchandise, and by doing so, they might be able to stimulate impulse buying behavior. Retailers can also make it more risk-free to buy something on impulse by introducing the possibility of returning products if the customers are left dissatisfied (Rook & Fisher 1995).

It is a known fact that today's consumers enjoy multisensory stimulation when shopping and due to this, there have been advances made in technologies which have

enabled pleasing many different senses. Consumers' senses can be stimulated by using lighting effects, plasma-screens, music and smells and this can, among other things, encourage the customers to do some browsing while in the store. Today, it is common even for moderately sized supermarkets to make room for a bakery within the store even if it may not be the most convenient solution. Managers are aware of the fact that the smell of freshly-baked bread encourages hungry customers to buy food – not only bread (Lewis 2013).

When wanting to create an environment that encourages impulse buying, artificial smells work as well as natural ones. One good example of a place where the use of artificial smells can be highly useful is in the laundry section of a supermarket (similarly as the previously mentioned example with freshly-baked bread). If consumers are exposed to the smell of freshly washed sheets, they are not only tempted to buy more detergents on impulse, but it may also awake their interest in other similar products. Examples of such are products that whiten whites and products that leave linen smelling wonderful (Lewis 2013). Even though e.g. images have been researched more than subliminal smells, it might still be the case that the latter is much more powerful when influencing impulsive behavior (*idem*). According to research, aromas can encourage impulse buying by evoking associations or memories. With the addition of aromas, the store feels more inviting, stimulating and friendly. Aromas can make people spend more time looking at the shelves and simultaneously evoke positive emotions in them (Lewis 2013).

Another sense that is strongly connected to impulse buying is hearing. Music is essential when creating an atmosphere that encourages this type of behavior (Lewis 2013). Music has several important qualities when influencing the consumers' mood state – it can either relax or energize them. It brings back memories from their past and has the power to transport them back to these memories. Music counts as an integral part of the store atmosphere and it influences the decision-making process (*idem*).

Last, but not least, thermoception (the ability to feel the difference between warm and cold), is an important sense connected to how we feel and behave impulsively (Lewis 2013). The temperature in the store might have an effect on consumers' subconscious without them even knowing about it.

In conclusion, one might say that all of our senses are integral when referring to impulses. They affect when, where, why and how we act in such a context (Lewis 2013). As discussed, the stimulation of our senses can persuade us to make purchases on impulse, which is why it is imperative for marketers to take advantage of this fact by creating a stimulating store environment.

3.1.6. Customer satisfaction and after-sales

How can marketers avoid post-purchase regret and promote customer loyalty? There are many ways for marketers to build relationships with their customers, thereby showing them that they are valuable. However, building these relationships is not enough – maintaining them is just as important. In other words, providing proper after-sales services is essential in order to keep the customers satisfied and, thus, avoiding post-purchase regret.

It is important for sellers to take time to learn about their customers' needs, desires and fears, which allows them to understand what their products should be like. They design the products according to these considerations and supply them accordingly. "Instead of trying to get buyers to want what the seller has, the seller tries to have what they want" (Levitt 1983). The product has now become more than just an item – it is filled with values that the customers appreciate (*idem*). Customer relationship management is essential when wanting to keep the customer as satisfied as possible and when building brand or product loyalty (Kulpa 2017). Although the following statement might seem obvious, it is still good to acknowledge that post-purchase regret is an unfortunate outcome for marketers whose brands have been bought by consumers left dissatisfied. Naturally, marketers want to ensure their customers' satisfaction (Saleh 2012).

According to Levitt (1983), other than simply having customers buy their products, sellers need to focus on ensuring that the customers are left with a feeling of satisfaction after doing so. This is achieved when sellers are able to maintain constructive interaction with the buyers. This involves e.g. listening to their complaints and anticipating their future needs. Consumers will continue buying the products of those who have successfully been able to take care of their relationship.

When wanting to manage customer relationships as well as possible, there are four aspects managers should take into consideration. The first is **awareness**, meaning that they need to understand problem areas as well as opportunity areas. The second aspect for managers to consider is **assessment**. They should be aware of the current situation of the company – especially when considering what needs to be done in order to achieve wanted results. **Accountability** is yet another important factor. Reporting of individual relationships and group relationships on a regular basis is essential to create a comparison with other measures of performance. The fourth and final requirement is **actions**. One should make decisions and allocations and come up with routines and communications based on their effect on the target relationships. Strengthening awareness and actions on a regular basis is crucial (Levitt 1983).

The seller-customer relationship usually continues after a purchase is made – in fact, it is often intensified after the customer has bought something. Buyers often base their choice of the next purchase on the relationship they have with the seller; if the relationship is good, they might stay true to the same product/brand, but if not, they might choose something else instead. The seller needs to nurture and maintain the relationships with the customers in order to keep them satisfied (*idem*).

What kinds of after-sales services customers expect from the seller depends on what type of product they have purchased. For example, if customers buy something inexpensive from a flea market, they make the purchase, take a chance and do not expect anything else from the seller, but if customers buy e.g. automated machinery, they expect installation services, application aids, parts, post-purchase repair and maintenance. This helps the product to stay effective and up to date for as long as possible, thus giving the company in question a competitive edge (Levitt 1983). Providing the customers with sufficient information on the packaging should also be included in order for the customers to be able to form their opinion about the product (Evans et al. 2006). This helps determine their post-purchase feelings.

Punishment is also something that can happen in connection with the consumption experience. This happens when consumption is followed by negative outcomes. It is an experience that consumers seldom are willing to feel again by giving a product or service another chance. This is especially the case if these negative outcomes are more powerful than any reinforcement the consumer might also have experienced during

consumption (Blackwell et al. 2001). This makes it especially important for marketers to make an effort when trying to give their customers the most positive experience as possible.

3.2. Brick-and-mortar vs. online shopping

Online shopping has become more and more common in today's society, which is why it is important to understand how it differs from the traditional form of shopping. As this trend is growing (today basically every industry has gone online), it is crucial to ensure that the online shopping experience is as effective as possible (Koo & Ju 2009). As the brick-and-mortar store environment already was discussed to such a great extent in section 3.1.5, this one focuses more on online stores.

When choosing a particular store, the three following components should match each other: consumer characteristics, purchase characteristics and store characteristics. The criteria might differ when evaluating which store best meets the consumers' needs depending on what kind of purchase is in question. Consumers compare different stores with each other and their ability to meet these specific criteria (Blackwell et al. 2001).

3.2.1. How the online shopping environment is made attractive

Koo & Ju (2009) conducted a survey in which they investigated if online atmospherics, e.g. human and computer factors, affect customers' emotions. Emotions such as these include pleasure and arousal, both of which supposedly have an effect on intention. According to the results from the survey, most human and computer factors (e.g. graphics, color, and links) affect pleasure and arousal positively. Additionally, both pleasure and arousal have a positive effect on intention.

The store atmosphere has already been discussed, but it is also relevant to the online shopping experience. Store atmospherics are representative of:

“the conscious designing of space to create certain affects in buyers. More specifically, atmospherics is the effort to design buying environments to produce specific emotional effects in the buyer that enhance his purchase probability”

(Kotler 1973-74:50).

According to previous research, atmospheric elements in both physical and online stores lead to pleasure and arousal responses. These elements affect the customers' attitudes towards stores in terms of approach and avoidance (Koo & Ju 2009). One important aspect to consider when creating an online shopping environment is that atmospheric cues are essential, and this should be taken from brick-and-mortar retailing. One of the most important outcomes that atmospheric cues result in is impulse purchases, which is why it is important to carefully consider what the shopping environment should be like in both physical and online stores (Lewis 2013).

3.2.2. Online shopping behavior

Whether consumers find themselves in an offline or online purchasing situation, the decision-making process is quite similar in both cases. The consumer purchase decision usually starts with need awareness, which is followed by information search, alternative evaluations, deciding to buy something, and finally post-purchase behavior (Katawetawaraks & Wang 2011). There are, however, also significant differences when comparing the Internet to traditional stores; namely the shopping environment and marketing communication.

When considering online communication, there are different factors that may attract customers' attention and awake their interest in particular products. Examples of such factors are banner ads and online promotion that appear on websites. Before making a purchase decision, however, consumers need to know more about the product in question. If they feel that they do not have enough information, they resort to searching through online channels, such as online catalogs, websites or search engines in order to fill the gaps (Laudon & Traver 2009). When the consumers feel as if they have sufficient information, they still need to compare the product with other choices in order to ensure making the right decision. When making these comparisons, customers might read reviews or other customers' comments about the product in question. This way, they are able to find out which brand or company meets their expectations in the best possible way. While customers are at this stage, it is essential from the marketers' perspective that their websites are as appealing as possible. The sites need to be well-organized and attractive in order to persuade the customers to choose their product instead of their competitors' (Koo, Kim & Lee 2008).

There are several factors encouraging consumers to shop online. When having this option, consumers have the possibility to buy anything at any time without having to enter a physical store. Sometimes it is also possible to find a certain product or service cheaper online than at a traditional brick-and-mortar store. Being able to compare different websites with each other is also a way of finding the same product or service at a lower price. Yet another positive aspect of shopping online is that consumers do not have to interact with salespeople face-to-face, which sometimes can feel uncomfortable. All of these positive attributes can be categorized into the following: convenience, information, available products and services, and cost and time efficiency (Katawetawaraks & Wang 2011).

3.2.3. Negative aspects of online shopping

As well as positive factors, there are also negative sides to online shopping. Examples of such are insecure payment, slow shipping, receiving an unwanted product, having to deal with spam or viruses, bothersome emails and technology problems. Companies need to be aware of these issues in order to avoid customer dissatisfaction after purchasing their products or services online (Katawetawaraks & Wang 2011).

Another negative feature of online shopping is that we cannot touch or experience products before buying them (Blackwell et al. 2001), which means that consumers cannot know for certain that the product they have ordered is going to meet their expectations. Additionally, only a few consumers out of thousands actually buy something on the website of an e-tailer (an online retailer) after visiting the site. Most of the consumers who have decided to buy a product, having entered both the product and personal information as well as their credit and shipping data, end up putting a stop to the process without going through with the final steps of the purchase, thus, terminating the transaction. The reasons for this remain unclear (Blackwell et al. 2001).

3.3. Word-of-mouth communication (WOM)

In this section, the effects that word-of-mouth (WOM) communication may have on impulse buying behavior are discussed – mainly the kind which takes place over the Internet. Previous studies have not truly focused on this, which is why it is important to fill some of the blanks within this field.

Satisfied customers are likely to tell others about their opinions and experiences, which results in what we call word-of-mouth communication. It is an effective way of spreading knowledge and opinions about a certain product or service, since people tend to enjoy sharing their own experiences and feelings with others. It is also a known fact that people often believe their friends and family over commercials. However, there is also negative word-of-mouth, which happens when for some reason a customer feels dissatisfied about a certain product or service. In this case, customers express their negative opinions to others, which is something retailers want to avoid at all costs. (Evans et al. 2006).

WOM is an important phenomenon that helps people learn. It can also play an essential role when discussing consumer decision-making (Leonard-Barton 1985; Feick and Price 1987). Sometimes the influence of others can be so powerful that individuals ignore their own signals and, instead, fully rely on the information they receive from others (Banerjee 1993; Ellison and Fudenberg 1995; McFadden and Train 1996). Before the existence of the Internet, word-of-mouth would only reach friends and family at first and, over time, it would come to include a large number of people. In other words, in order for WOM to have reached a large audience, people would have needed to be patient for the word to spread from their close vicinity to a wider range of people. With the introduction of electronic communication, however, it has become possible for information to travel to much larger audiences immediately, since one single message on an online consumer review site reaches all of the visitors of the site (Chen, Fay & Wang 2011). Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) is discussed in detail in the following section.

3.3.1. Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM)

The Internet provides one important capability that previous mass communication technologies have not been able to, namely bi-directionality. In other words, it is not only possible for organizations to reach audiences of a large scale inexpensively, but now individuals can do so as well. People are easily able to express themselves in front of Internet users all over the world by sharing their personal thoughts, reactions and opinions (Resnick, Zeckhauser, Friedman & Kuwabaram 2000).

WOM has, throughout history, been an excellent tool for people to make their thoughts known to others and the Internet has given this ancient phenomenon a completely new form. There is something called reputation systems (*idem*), which is also known as online feedback systems. These systems utilize the bi-directional communication possibility of the Internet to artificially create extensive word-of-mouth networks, where people can share their experiences and opinions about many different subjects, such as companies, products, services and events all over the world (Dellarocas 2003).

When studying word-of-mouth communication, social networks provide an excellent context for it. People using certain sites are easily able to invite others to join the networks as well. In other words, even though WOM is a difficult phenomenon to study, it is possible to track new member signups, which is a result of people recommending these sites to others and inviting them to join. The new members have heard of the sites via word-of-mouth. These people can also be considered customers of the sites, because as they visit them, they are exposed to advertising, which, in turn, produces revenue for the firm (Trusov, Bucklin & Pauwels 2008).

It is highly important for firms to fully grasp how online consumer posting behavior works. This way, they learn how to affect that behavior in a strategic manner in order to benefit from it. According to recent study, online consumer views influence product sales to a great extent (e.g., Chen, Wang and Xie 2011; Chevalier and Mayzlin 2006; Liu 2006).

Evidence shows that purchase behavior is highly affected by online word-of-mouth communication. According to a survey conducted by Spors (2006), 71% of adults from the United States who use the Internet take consumer reviews into consideration when facing a purchase decision, and 42% of these individuals consider them trustworthy sources.

There are, however, some challenges involved with online interaction as well. For example, people can use fake identities to give dishonest feedback in order to build themselves a good reputation whilst diminishing their competitors' reputations (Dellarocas 2000). The fact that this is possible, makes the trustworthiness of online feedback somewhat questionable. This being said, it is important to take measures to

prevent this sort of unreliable and dishonest feedback from happening (Dellarocas 2003).

Another negative aspect with online communities is that, usually, it is easy for the members of these communities to inexpensively (or even for free) re-register under a totally different identity. This phenomenon has been referred to as “cheap pseudonyms” by Friedman and Resnick (2001) and it makes feedback mechanisms less effective. (Trusov et al. 2008).

The fact that online feedback has become such a common part of our daily lives, is changing how people behave. According to anecdotal evidence, people have begun to rely on others’ feedback more and more in order to make a wide range of decisions, whether they concern small things, such as movies, or large-scale, important things, such as the stock market (Guernsey 2000). This change has happened quite rapidly, since only five years ago, the main source for peoples’ decision-making process was mostly based on advertisements or professional advice (Dellarocas 2003).

3.3.2. The connection between eWOM and impulse buying

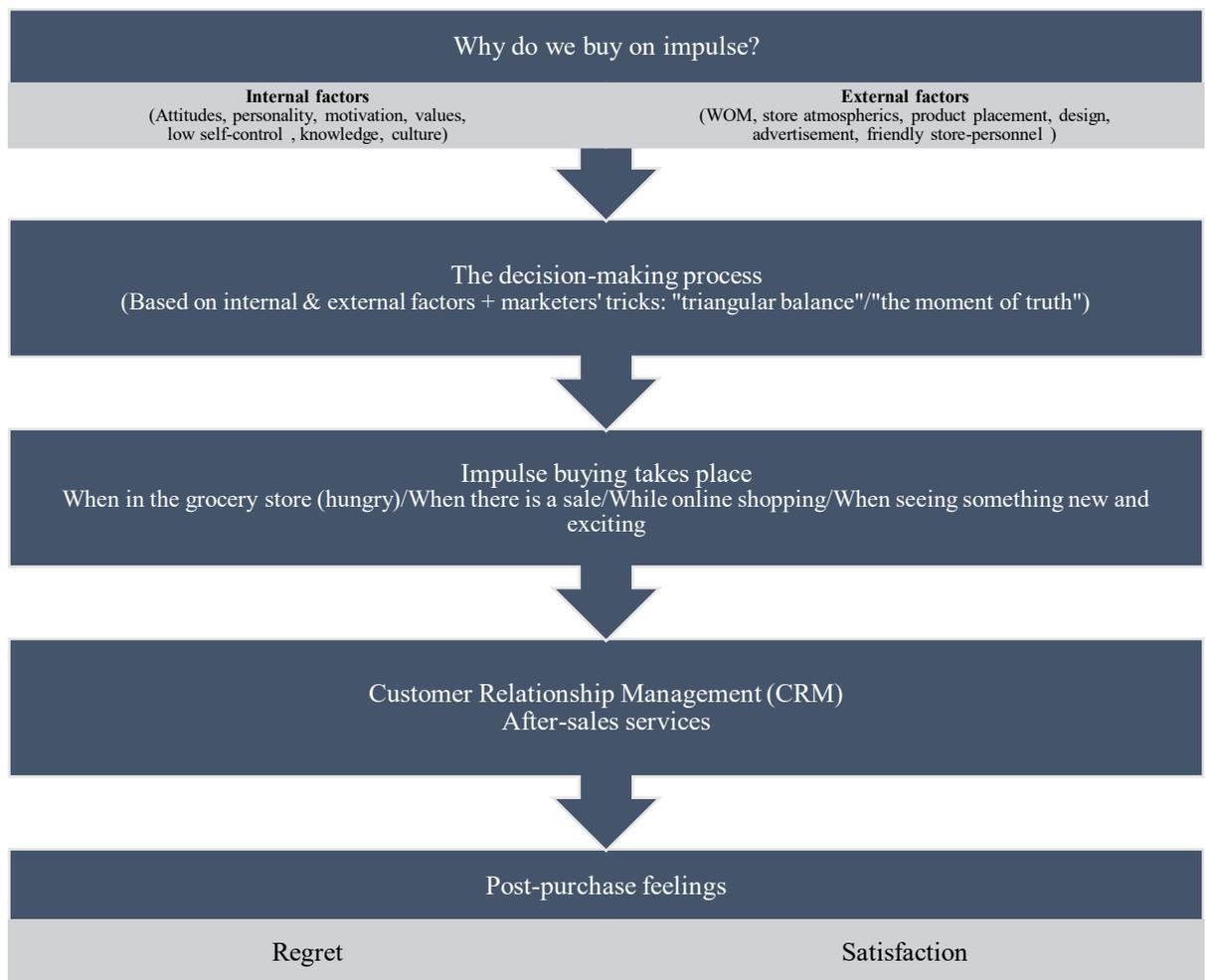
Husnain et al. (2016) hypothesize that personality traits control the relationship between eWOM and buying something on impulse. They believe that if a person is an extrovert, open and agreeable, the relationship between eWOM and impulse buying is strong, whereas if a person possesses the opposite qualities, the relationship between and eWOM and impulse buying is weak.

Husnain et al. (2016) discovered in their study that eWOM has a significant impact on impulse buying behavior. A large amount of this type of communication can increase consumer awareness about a certain product and simultaneously reduce the feeling of uncertainty. Arndt (1967) suggests that consumers take eWOM into consideration when in the decision-making process (i.e. concerning impulse buying). Based on this, we can conclude that people who occasionally indulge in social media activity might sometimes look for opinions and experiences of others who have purchased the same items they are interested in, in order to facilitate their buying decisions (Husnain et al 2016).

3.4. The theoretical framework in a nutshell

Figure 4 was created with the intention of summarizing and visualizing the most central findings from chapters 2 and 3. It is a simplified version of the impulse buying process, including post-purchase feelings. The model provides a framework for the empirical study and it is considered solely from a consumer point of view, since only consumers are included in the study.

Figure 4: The theoretical framework in a nutshell



The model is based on Figure 3, "Impulse buying behaviour model" (Chacharkar & Iram 2017) and it is practically a summary of what has been discussed in the theory chapters of the thesis. It illustrates step by step how impulse buying happens in practice according to the literature. First comes the reason behind the impulse purchase, which can either fall under the category internal factors or external factors. The next step is

the decision-making process, after which the purchase takes place. After the sale is made, it is important for sellers to ensure their customers' satisfaction by providing after-sales services, such as maintenance. Keeping the customers satisfied increases the probability of brand or product loyalty, which, in turn, makes future purchases more likely. Post-purchase feelings are then determined by the way the product or service performs compared to expectations and by the previously mentioned CRM (the relationship between seller and buyer).

3.5. Hypotheses

The discussed theory has led me to form quite a few hypotheses. The conclusion I have been able to draw based on the theoretical framework is that the main factors leading people to make impulse purchases are the following: WOM, advertisement and store atmospherics (Evans et al. 2006; Coley & Burgess 2003; Lewis 2013). In the questionnaire, the informants were asked to estimate how often these factors have led them to buy something on impulse by rating each of them on a scale from never – often. I believe the results will show that WOM is the biggest reason behind Finns' impulse buying tendencies.

Concerning the setting, I believe that most Finns make impulse purchases when in the grocery store. The theory suggests that this is an environment where impulse purchases are often made and where marketers can trick consumers into buying something with the use of the “triangular balance” method, by placing sweets next to the cash register and by adding pleasant smells, to mention a few examples (Lewis 2013). In the questionnaire, the informants were asked to describe in their own words a situation where they would typically buy something on impulse and based on the results, I will see if my hypothesis is plausible.

Another hypothesis I have regarding the results from my study is that a higher number of informants representing the older age category than the younger have made an expensive impulse purchase. I believe this to be the case because of the fact that these people have lived longer than the younger informants, which means that they have had more time and opportunities to make expensive impulse purchases. Another reason is

that they probably have a larger income than people representing the younger age group.

My final hypothesis concerning the results is that impulse buying happens in both settings (traditional and online), but that product placement and store environment still play such an important role that people buy products on impulse more frequently in brick-and-mortar stores. Lewis (2013) discusses the store environment to such a great extent that it has led me to believe that Finns also make more impulse purchases when in an environment that stimulates their senses.

3.6. Chapter summary

There are several things marketers can do in order to persuade customers into buying their products on impulse. By stimulating the consumers' various senses, the possibility for motivating them to make impulse purchases is increased. Additionally, knowing one's target market and promoting one's products in the most effective way possible are essential first steps for consumers to become aware of and interested in certain products (Coley & Burgess 2003).

There are ways for marketers to avoid unhappy customers, and probably the most important factor is creating and maintaining a strong relationship with the customers. This is achieved by listening to their wants and needs and offering after-sales services. By providing customers with the possibility of returning or exchanging products, for example, post-purchase regret can be avoided, leaving the customers feeling satisfied (Levitt 1983).

Although shopping in brick-and-mortar stores still happens frequently, online shopping has become increasingly popular over time. As was discussed in great detail in this chapter, store atmospherics affect several of consumers' senses and therefore may persuade them into making impulse purchases. One significant difference between traditional and online shopping is that when practicing the latter, consumers do not need to interact with anyone, since they can make the purchases from the comfort of their own home (Katawetawaraks & Wang 2011).

Word-of-mouth communication is a highly effective way of promoting products and services. As mentioned, it is more likely for people to listen to a relative or a friend and take their opinions and experiences into consideration than simply rely on advertisements. Electronic word-of-mouth communication (eWOM) has become a huge phenomenon with the expansion of the Internet. Today, it is incredibly easy to spread the word about certain products or services and equally easy to access those opinions and experiences (Resnick et al. 2000).

The last section of the chapter presented a model summarizing the theory discussed in chapters 2 and 3 as well as four hypotheses that are investigated in the empirical study.

4. Methodology

The main aim of this chapter is to present the methodology used for the conducted research. The next step after choosing a suitable research method is finding a way to collect the required data, after which the analysis of the data must be considered (Hirsijärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2009). In the following section, the chosen research method is indicated, providing an explanation of the criteria that will be filled.

4.1. Research method

The research method indicates a technique used for collecting data (Bryman & Bell 2011). The method used in this study is a mixture of quantitative and qualitative, since it does not fall under just one category. Mixed methods research has become an increasingly popular and accepted option for conducting research (*idem*), which further affected my choice. There is a very short, yet descriptive way of defining the two methods: quantitative data are represented by numbers, whereas qualitative mostly by words (Punch 2014). The first-mentioned focuses on larger groups of people, whereas the latter on the in-depth analysis of smaller groups. Another main definition for the quantitative method is that a larger amount of data is required in order to find strong correlations that can be generalized. In other words, the findings from a certain study could also apply to larger group of people and not only to the one studied (Bryman & Bell 2011). Some kind of conclusions can be drawn from my study and certain gender and age specific patterns are discussed in chapter 5.

Even though the chosen method is mixed, the research can be considered to represent a more qualitative than quantitative nature, since the questionnaire includes open questions, which makes it more personal. Additionally, the relatively small number of informants enables the analysis of individual answers.

4.2. Data collection

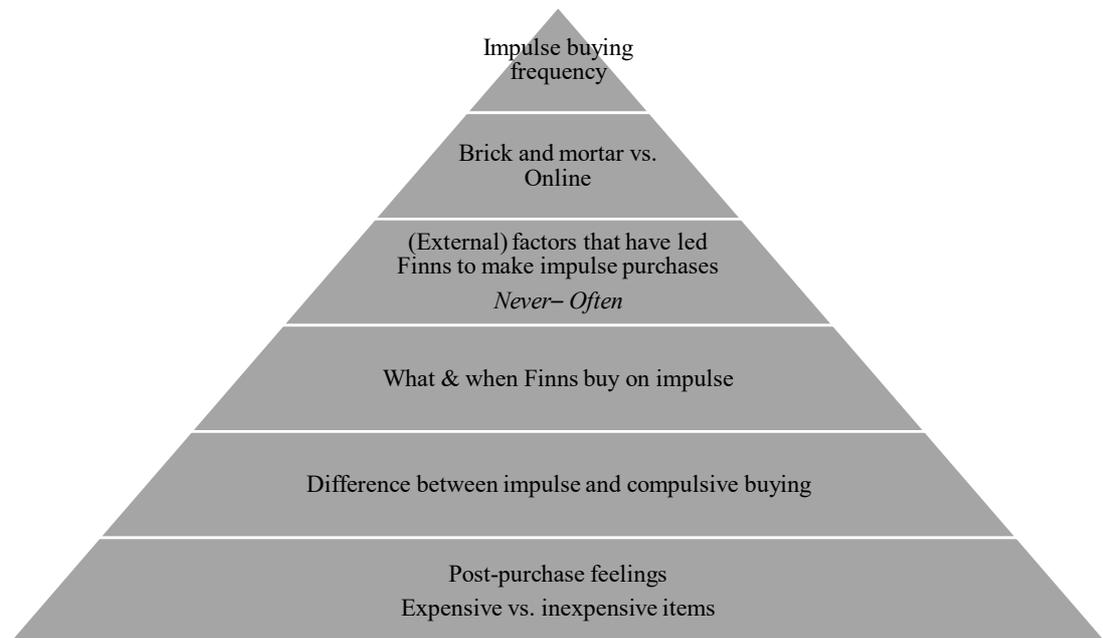
The platform used for collecting the data is Google Forms and the questionnaire consists of four main sections (see appendix 1). The first section comprises background questions about the informants and the second consists of questions regarding impulse buying in general. The theme of the third section is brick-and-mortar stores and it includes questions regarding store atmosphere, for example. The fourth and final section concerns online stores. The questionnaire is designed so as to find answers for the research questions stated in section 1.2.

All of the questions in the form were marked as obligatory, which means that the informants were not able to skip any of them. For the results to be comparable, everyone should answer all of the questions – otherwise the statistics are not reliable. The informants may answer some of the questions in their own words, which means that the results can be analyzed on an individual level. Even though Bryman & Bell (2011) stress the fact that qualitative research is typically connected to face-to-face interviews or focus groups, this is not necessarily the only criterion for a method to be considered qualitative.

As mentioned, the inclusion of open questions allows the informants to describe their impulse buying tendencies in their own words, which provides more valuable information than only closed questions would. Open questions also might lead the informants to write unusual responses, which could be valuable for the study (Bryman & Bell 2011).

Figure 4 was created in order to provide a summary of the theory discussed in chapters 2 and 3 and it was supposed to create the base for my study. Most of the factors listed in the model were included in the questionnaire, but in order to create a logical flow, Figure 4 was not the best possible model to follow. This is why Figure 5 was created. The questionnaire was actually based on the main themes illustrated in the pyramid.

Figure 5: Main topics of the questionnaire



4.3. Informants

Both men and women representing different age groups filled out my questionnaire, which enabled me to draw some kind of conclusions and to make comparisons between the results. Eighty people participated in the research. Table 1 shows the different categories the informants represent.

Table 1: Age and gender categories

Men aged 35 or younger	20
Women aged 35 or younger	20
Men over 35 years old	20
Women over 35 years old	20
Total	80

I chose to divide the informants into only two age groups: 35 years old or younger and over 35 years old. The reason behind this wide division is that there are probably no notable differences to be found between similar ages, such as between 20-year-olds and 30-year-olds. With the chosen categories, there are probably more extensive differences to be discovered. Twenty-year-old students are likely to have significantly

different impulse buying tendencies than 60-year-old people who have been working their entire life.

In order to reach informants representing the younger age category, I sent out the link for the questionnaire via mass email at my firm. This way I also managed to receive a few replies from people representing the older age group. In order to obtain 40 replies from this category, I asked my parents to share the link to their friends. This was the most convenient way of reaching people over 35 years of age and it helped me save valuable time. I received more than 80 replies, which led me to eliminate some of them in order to stay true to these four categories illustrated in Table 1. I deleted the excess replies at random.

With the relatively low number of informants studied, I was able to analyze the findings thoroughly and managed to obtain some proper results. Nevertheless, one cannot assume that these findings would apply to a larger group of people, which means that this only qualifies as quantitative research to a certain extent.

Only Finnish consumers are included in the study in order to gain a decent understanding of what impulse shopping tendencies might look like in Finland. After acquiring the results, they were compared to the theoretical framework presented in chapters 2 and 3. The theory is general and not connected to Finland, which makes it interesting to see if the Finnish population behaves accordingly. In chapter 5, the results from each question of the study are presented separately and discussed in detail.

4.4. Data analysis

As mentioned, the questionnaire is divided into four main themes, namely information about the informants, impulse buying in general, brick-and-mortar stores and online stores. All of these themes, except for the first one, are discussed in chapter 5 and a separate section covering post-purchase feelings has been added as well. For the majority of the questions, there is either a table or a figure provided in order to easily compare the results with each other. Some tables have taken either gender or age (or both) into account and, in addition, percentages are used with the intention of visualizing the findings clearly. In some cases, examples of the informants' replies are

presented in order to provide a general idea of what kinds of answers the open questions generated.

This particular method for analyzing the data was chosen, because it was considered the best option for both presenting and discussing the findings in the clearest possible manner.

4.5. Quality criteria

By using certain criteria to evaluate the trustworthiness of the conducted research, the reader is ensured that it is of high quality. The three criteria for the evaluation of business and management research that are considered most important are the following: reliability, replication and validity (Bryman & Bell 2011). The two criteria that are used to evaluate my research are validity and reliability. These two typically concern quantitative research, but they were chosen for this study since the method is, indeed, partially quantitative. Validity and reliability are further discussed in the following subchapters.

4.5.1. Validity

Validity can be considered to be the most important criterion for research. “Validity is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research” (Bryman & Bell 2011: 42). According to Guba and Lincoln (1982), validity is reached by ensuring that the researcher’s analysis, formulation and interpretation of the data collected can be considered both credible and believable. The informants’ answers were compared to the theory discussed in chapters 2 and 3, which makes the analysis of the collected data both credible and believable, since they are backed up by reliable sources – mainly academic journals.

4.5.2. Reliability

If the results of a study are repeatable, they can be considered to be reliable. Reliability is a term closely linked to quantitative research, since certain consistency within the replies is to be expected (Bryman & Bell 2011). Although this particular research can be considered more qualitative, the number of informants is still enough to see certain

patterns in their replies. As becomes apparent in chapter 5, the open questions generated some repetition. If a certain study could be repeatable in circumstances similar to the one in question but at a different place and time, it counts as reliable (Guba & Lincoln 1982). According to Yin (2009), when evaluating the reliability of a study, it is essential to minimize biasedness. This happens by considering if another person was to repeat the same research in the exact same way, using the same procedures that were used in the original study and would end up with the same findings.

Although the research method is of a more qualitative than quantitative nature, the replies from the informants generated certain notable patterns, which supports the definition of reliability (Bryman & Bell 2011).

4.6. Chapter summary

The aim of this methodology chapter was to explain the manner in which the empirical study was conducted – both how the data were collected and the way in which they have been analyzed. The research method used is a mixture of quantitative and qualitative, but the latter is more prominent.

A number of 80 Finnish consumers participated in the study, consisting of both men and women representing two different age categories. They were asked to answer both open and closed questions, all of which have been marked as obligatory. The four main themes the questionnaire is based on are the following: general information about the informants, impulse buying in general, brick-and-mortar stores and online stores. The findings from the questionnaire are presented in the form of tables, figures and percentages.

By evaluating the trustworthiness of a study, the reader knows that it is of high quality. In this case, validity and reliability are the chosen criteria used for evaluating the conducted research.

5. Presentation and analysis of the empirical data

When discussing the empirical part of the thesis, the aim for the questionnaire was to find out as much as possible about impulse buying tendencies in Finland. In this chapter, the data from the questionnaire are revealed and discussed in detail and, in chapter 6, the findings are applied to the theory.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, 80 informants took part in the study. Of these, 40 were women and 40 men, from two different age categories. I wanted to have an equal number of participants representing these different age and gender categories in order to make comparisons and, therefore, obtain as accurate results as possible.

The majority of informants answered the open questions in English, but some chose to write in either Finnish or Swedish – in their native tongue. When choosing examples from the replies, I will indicate if it is a direct quote or if I have translated the answer into English.

Table 2 shows the age and gender division of the informants. As mentioned, the informants are divided into two age groups; 35 years old or younger and over 35 years old. However, in order to display the full variety of ages, the informants are divided into decades in this table. The youngest informant who participated in the study is a 20-year old female, and the oldest is a 72-year old female.

Table 2: List of informants

Age group	Male	Female	Total
20-29	20	18	38
30-39	4	3	7
40-49	3	2	5
50-59	5	11	16
60-69	8	4	12
70-79	0	2	2
Total	40	40	80

5.1. Impulse buying tendencies among Finns

Questions covering this theme:

- *“Describe a typical situation where you would buy something on impulse (if you cannot come up with such a situation, please write ‘-’)”*
- *“How often do you buy something on impulse (estimation)?” – (Every day/Every week/Every month/More seldom)*
- *“What kind of products/services do you typically buy on impulse?”*
- *“Do you engage in impulse shopping more frequently in...?” – (Brick-and-mortar stores/Online stores)*

Having found out the gender, age and nationality of the informants, they were asked to describe a situation where they would usually make an impulse purchase. The following table includes all of the answers provided:

Table 3: Situations where Finns typically make impulse purchases

In the grocery store/hungry	24
See something I want or need/See something fascinating/interesting/unique/unexpected etc.	17
Sales/Discount/Good offer/Fares/Campaigns	15
Did not answer anything	8
Abroad/Airport	8
Clothes	7
Online shopping/browsing the Internet	7
Product placement	3
Electronics	3
Social media	2
Makeup	2
Holiday	2
Flea market (physical and online)	2
In Motonet/Biltema – interesting tools	2
Other (for fun, money situation – pay day, bored, waiting for wife, collecting etc.)	12

There are some popular situations where Finns typically make impulse purchases. However, several informants mentioned more than one situation where they would normally buy something on impulse, which means that they have been included in all of the categories they mentioned in the questionnaire.

Additionally, some informants answered “clothes”, “electronics” and “makeup”, which technically are not impulse buying situations – rather products one would buy on impulse, which is a bit misleading and affects the statistics to a certain extent. In the questionnaire, there was a separate question concerning products the informants would typically buy on impulse, and the answers are illustrated in Table 5.

Eight out of 80 informants (10%) could not pinpoint a situation where they would normally buy something on impulse, whereas the remaining 72 (90%) could. It was interesting to see that quite a few people usually make impulse purchases in the same situations.

Eight informants mentioned that they often buy something on impulse either abroad or when at the airport. One possible explanation for impulse buying at airports might be that passengers are either bored or have time to kill before their connecting flights. In such situations, people enter shops and might, thus, end up buying something on a whim. Another explanation could be that consumers making impulse purchases at the airport have forgotten to buy their friends and family souvenirs from abroad.

The informants were asked to estimate how often they make impulse purchases and the table below shows the results divided into age and gender categories:

Table 4: How often Finns make impulse purchases

Frequency	Age	Female	Male	Total	Total
Every Day	≤35	0	0	0	0
	>35	0	0	0	
Every Week	≤35	10	2	12	21
	>35	4	5	9	
Every Month	≤35	7	15	22	38
	>35	9	7	16	
More seldom	≤35	3	3	6	21
	>35	7	8	15	
Total		40	40	80	80

Most people included in the study estimated that they make impulse purchases once a month and an equal number of people buy on impulse every week and more seldom than every month. Not a single person out of 80 makes impulse purchases on a daily basis. The table reveals that women buy on impulse more often than men.

Figure 6: Informants that make impulse purchases every week

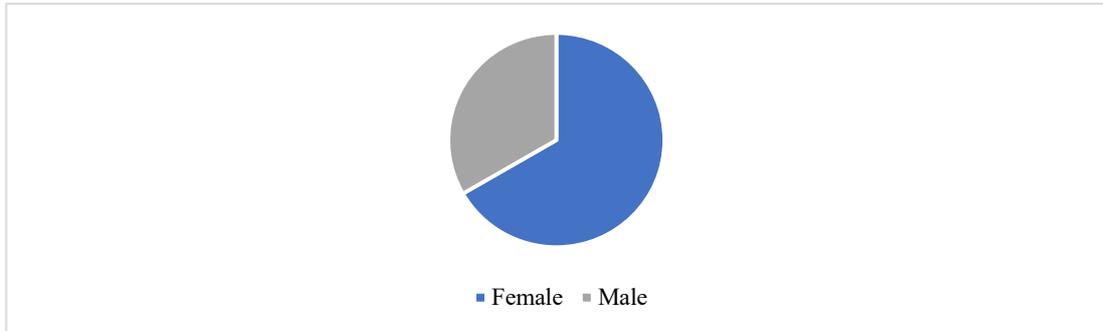
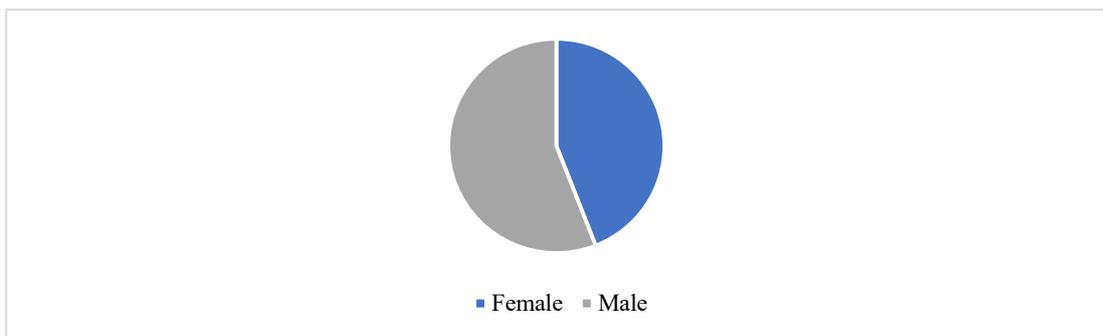


Figure 7: Informants that make impulse purchases every month/more seldom



As mentioned earlier, the informants were asked what kind of products or services they usually buy on impulse and the following table reveals the results:

Table 5: What Finns usually buy on impulse

Clothes	42
Food/Drinks	37
Makeup/Cosmetics/Skincare/Beauty products	15
Electronics/Technology/IT	11
Accessories/Jewelry (/pet accessories)	9
Books/Magazines	6
Home interior	4
Tools	4
LP's/Records	2
Answered nothing	1
Other (old glassware, gamble, concerts, drawing accessories, survival/medical gear, products marketed in an effective manner)	6

The three product categories Finns buy most often on impulse are clothes, food/drinks and makeup/cosmetics. It was pleasant to see that only one informant (M 24) could not think of an answer for this question.

Table 5 is similar to Table 3 in the sense that a number of informants listed up more than one product they would normally buy on impulse. They have been added into all of the product categories in the table that they mentioned in the questionnaire.

Table 6: Brick-and-mortar vs. online

Gender	Brick-and-mortar	Online	Total
Female	34	6	40
Male	31	9	40
Total	65	15	80

When the informants were asked whether they engage in impulse buying more often in brick-and-mortar stores or online, the results reveal that a clear majority of 65 people (81%) do so in “brick-and-mortar stores”, whereas only 15 people (19%) make such purchases more often online.

Since online shopping is probably more common among younger individuals, it is interesting to see that also a few informants representing the older age category claim to make impulse purchases more frequently online than in brick-and-mortar stores.

Table 7: Older informants' impulse buying settings

Age and gender	Brick-and-mortar	Online	Total
Female over 35	16	4	20
Male over 35	19	1	20
Total	35	5	40

As mentioned, 15 informants in total buy on impulse more often online than in brick-and-mortar stores and, as Table 7 reveals, five out of these 15 individuals (1/3) represent the older age category. This, in turn, shows that a higher number of younger individuals shop online than individuals over 35, which was to be expected. Out of these 15, nine informants are in their 20’s, two are in their 50’s, three in their 60’s and one female is 72 years old.

5.2. General impulse buying findings

Questions covering this theme:

- *“Do you feel better about a purchase if the product has a return and exchange possibility?” – (Yes/No)*
- *“Describe in your own words the difference between impulse buying and compulsive buying”*
- *“Which of the following have led you to buy something on impulse (estimation)?” – (Scale: Never-Often)*

When the informants were asked if they feel better about a purchase when they have the possibility to either return or exchange it, 47 people (59%) said that they do, and 33 people (41%) said that they do not. In other words, the majority of informants feel more comfortable when presented with such an option and the reason behind this might be that there is no risk involved with such purchases.

The informants were then asked to describe the difference between impulse buying and compulsive buying in their own words. This open-ended question generated a wide range of different answers. Some people answered similar things, whereas others gave completely different answers. The following table provides all of the replies summarized into different categories.

Table 8: Difference between impulse buying and compulsive buying

Compulsive buying more severe than impulse buying, need to buy, products not important, financial trouble etc. (The right answer)	30
Compulsive buying: something you need	10
Impulse buying: something you need	3
Compulsive buying planned, impulse buying unplanned	14
Do not know the difference	4
There is no (big) difference	3
Impulse buying is for fun	4
Compulsive buying frequent, impulse buying every now and then	5
Other	7
Total	80

Below are some examples of the informants' replies:

You can manage without impulse buying, but you have to buy compulsive things
(F 24)

Impulse buying (at least in my case) usually means the purchase of inexpensive things (i.e. candy bars, drinks) whereas compulsive buying is a real obsession that can have serious consequences on e.g. your financial situation and relationships.
(F 25)

Impulse: I choose to buy. Compulsive: I have to buy.
(M 56)

Impulse buying is unintended, spontan[e]ous event, and usually something extra you actually don't necessarily need. Compulsive buying is to fulfill basic needs (food, necessary clothes etc.) in everyday life.
(F 25)

An impulse purchase is made at the spur of the moment without any major planning. Compulsive buying happens after more careful consideration
(M 23)
(translation from Finnish)

“The fuck is compulsive buying?”
(M 27)

Impulse purchases are made every now and then but compulsive buying is done repeatedly
(F 54)

The informants were also asked to estimate which factors have led them to buy something on impulse. They were asked to rate different options on the scale *never – often*. The scale consists of four choices, but Google Forms only allowed me to name the two extremes, being “never” and “often”, and not the two choices in between. For the purpose of presenting the findings, they are here named “seldom” and “sometimes”, making the complete scale: *never – seldom – sometimes – often*.

Table 9: Factors that have led Finns to buy on impulse

Factors that have led Finns to buy on impulse	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Total
Recommendations by family/partner	11	38	26	5	80
Recommendations by friends	10	21	44	5	80
Reading reviews online	13	25	34	8	80
TV-Shop	73	6	1	0	80
Advertisement in newspapers/magazines	23	37	19	1	80
TV Commercials	30	33	17	0	80
Advertisement on social media platforms	17	33	23	7	80
In-store displays (product placement/layout/design)	7	16	39	18	80
Friendly store-personnel	14	22	32	12	80

Table 9 reveals that recommendations by friends or family have not often led Finns to make impulse purchases. Only one person has sometimes bought something on impulse inspired by TV-Shop, and not a single informant has often done so. Advertisement in newspapers/magazines and TV commercials are also not an important reason for Finns' impulse purchases – advertisement on social media has a slightly bigger effect.

Table 10 shows the gender and age division concerning the same information that Table 9 provides. It reveals that there are, indeed, noticeable differences between the factors having led the informants to buy something on impulse. For example, not a single man or woman representing the older age category has often bought something on impulse due to advertisement on social media, whereas younger individuals have. TV-Shop has influenced older informants' impulse buying tendencies slightly more than younger informants'. However, this factor has only seldom led Finns to make impulse purchases – including older individuals. Concerning reading reviews online, there is an age and gender correlation to be noted. The same number of men and women from both age groups have often bought something on impulse for this reason.

Table 10: Factors that have led Finns to buy on impulse – Gender & Age

Factors that have led Finns to buy on impulse	Age	Never		Seldom		Sometimes		Often		Total
		F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	
Recommendations by family/partner	≤35	3	2	6	9	8	9	3	0	40
	>35	1	5	13	10	5	4	1	1	40
Recommendations by friends	≤35	0	1	4	5	13	14	3	0	40
	>35	4	5	4	8	10	7	2	0	40
Reading reviews online	≤35	4	2	5	7	8	8	3	3	40
	>35	5	2	3	10	11	7	1	1	40
TV-Shop	≤35	20	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	40
	>35	18	15	2	4	0	1	0	0	40
Advertisement in newspapers/magazines	≤35	5	10	9	8	6	2	0	0	40
	>35	5	3	9	11	5	6	1	0	40
TV Commercials	≤35	7	12	6	5	7	3	0	0	40
	>35	6	5	10	12	4	3	0	0	40
Advertisement on social media platforms	≤35	2	4	6	11	7	3	5	2	40
	>35	2	9	7	9	11	2	0	0	40
In-store displays (product placement/layout/design)	≤35	0	3	5	4	9	8	5	5	40
	>35	1	2	4	3	11	11	4	4	40
Friendly store-personnel	≤35	2	5	8	6	6	7	4	2	40
	>35	4	3	5	3	8	11	3	3	40

5.3. Post-purchase feelings

Questions covering this theme:

- *“Have you ever bought an expensive item/service (over 100€) on impulse?” – (Yes/No)*
- *“After the purchase, did you experience...?” – (Regret/Satisfaction/Neither/I answered ‘no’ in the previous question”*
- *“After having bought inexpensive items on impulse (such as candy), do you typically feel...? – (Regret/Satisfaction/Neither)*

Out of 80 informants, 52 (65%) said that they have bought an expensive item or service for over 100€, and 28 (35%) have not. They were also asked whether or not they felt regret, satisfaction or neither after the purchase, and the results are illustrated in Table 11. A higher number of informants representing the older age category than the younger have made an expensive impulse purchase. As mentioned in section 3.5, I believe this to be the case because these people have lived longer than the younger informants, which means that they have had more time and opportunities to make expensive impulse purchases. Another reason is that they probably have a larger income than people aged 35 or younger. The program Stata was used in order to analyze the results regarding this question.

Figure 8: Variables (Stata)

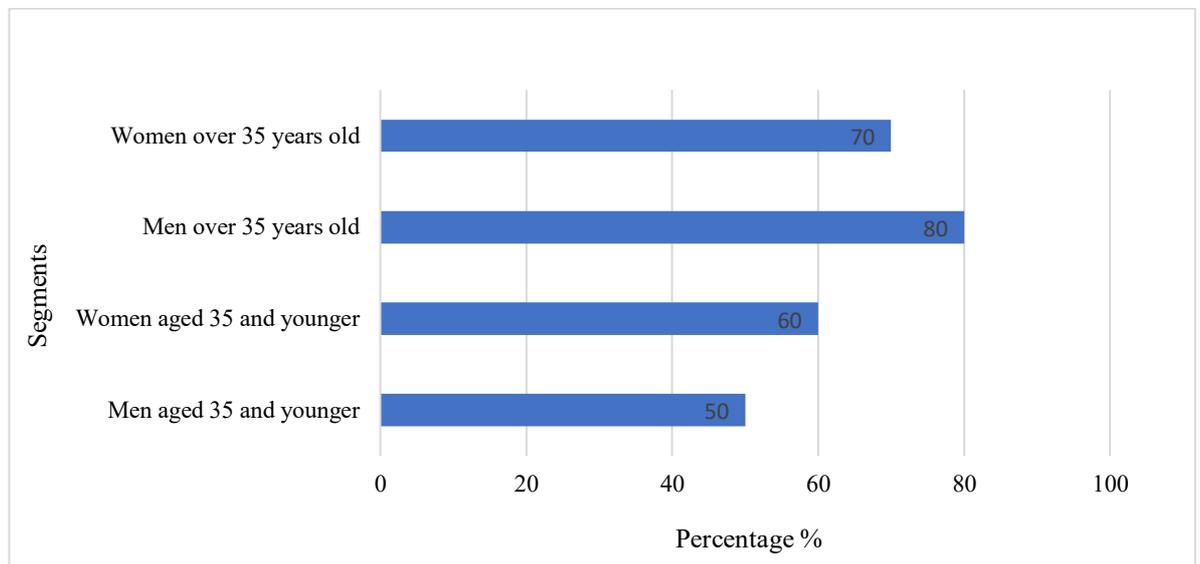
VARIABLES	
Women 35 and younger	0.100 (0.150)
Men over 35	0.300** (0.150)
Women over 35	0.200 (0.150)
Constant	0.500*** (0.106)
Observations	80
R-squared	0.055

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

The results from Stata reveal that 50% of the men representing the younger age category who participated in the study have at least once bought an expensive item on impulse. Since these younger men represent the constant of the model, the rest of the informants were compared to them. The results show that 10% more of the younger women have bought an expensive item on impulse than these younger men. In other words, when adding 10% to 50%, it means that 60% of all the younger women having participated in the study have at least once made an expensive impulse purchase. Thirty per cent more of the older men of the study have made such a purchase than the younger men, which means that 80% of the older men have bought something expensive on impulse. Finally, 20% more of the older women have bought something expensive on impulse than the younger men, which means that 70% of the older women who participated in the study have made such a purchase.

Figure 9 provides the same data by showing the percentage of informants in the form of a bar chart.

Figure 9: The percentage of informants that have ever bought an expensive item/service on impulse



The results show that my hypothesis was correct – that more informants over 35 years of age (both men and women) have bought something expensive on impulse than informants aged 35 or younger.

However, these data are not very significant due to the high variation and low number of informants. In other words, even though the results of the study show that a higher percentage of older people have made an expensive impulse purchase than younger people, this information says little about the entire Finnish population – let alone the entire world’s. The sample is so small that it is highly unlikely for these percentages to apply to a larger audience.

Additionally, there are several other explanations for why people have bought expensive items on impulse than only age and gender, which these statistics are based on. For example, income, education and mental health are other factors that may have an effect.

The two age categories are also quite wide, which can lead to inaccurate results. There might be big differences within these categories as well. For instance, a 20-year-old student is probably less likely to make an expensive impulse purchase than a 35-year-old person with a steady income and yet, these both represent the same age category in this study.

Table 11: Post-purchase feelings concerning expensive impulse purchases

Post-purchase feeling	35 and younger	Older than 35	Total
Regret	2	5	7
Satisfaction	16	17	33
Neither	9	12	21
I answered “no” in the previous question	13	6	19
Total	40	40	80

Table 11 reveals what kinds of post-purchase feelings the informants have had after buying something expensive on impulse. It was interesting to see that the number of informants who chose the option “I answered ‘no’ in the previous question” was 19, even though 28 informants actually did answer “no” in the previous question (“Have you ever bought an expensive item/service (over 100€) on impulse?”).

The informants were also asked how they usually feel after inexpensive impulse purchases and the results are portrayed in Table 12.

Table 12: Post-purchase feelings concerning inexpensive impulse purchases

Post-purchase feeling	35 and younger	Older than 35	Total
Regret	11	3	14
Satisfaction	11	17	28
Neither	18	20	38
Total	40	40	80

According to the results, 28 informants (35%) claim to typically feel satisfied after buying something cheap on impulse, whereas only half of that number regret such purchases. The majority of informants, however, usually feel neutral after a cheap impulse purchase.

5.4. Brick-and-mortar stores

Questions covering this theme:

- *“Have you noticed that the store environment affects you in any way?”*
- *“Do you pay attention to background music playing in stores?”*
- *“Do you find music...?” – (Pleasant/Annoying/Depends on the music)*
- *“Have you noticed buying more food than intended because of pleasant scents in grocery stores, such as the smell of freshly baked bread from a bakery in a supermarket?”*
- *“Does the lighting in stores affect your mood?” – (Yes/No)*
- *“What kind of lighting do you find most pleasant or flattering?” – (Cold light/Warm light/Dim light/Bright light)*
- *“Do you notice product placement in stores?” – (Yes/No)*
- *“Has product placement ever persuaded you into buying something?” – (Yes/No/I don’t know)*

Out of 80 informants, 68 (85%) said that they have noticed that the store environment has some kind of effect on them, whereas only 12 informants (15%) claim not to have noticed being affected by this. This question was, of course, rather vague, but I wanted the informants to be able to interpret it in their own way.

When the informants were asked whether or not they pay attention to background music playing in stores, 49 people (61%) answered “yes”, and 31 people (39%) answered “no”. They were also asked with a closed question what they think of such music. Out of 80 people, 11 (14%) find it pleasant, four (5%) find it annoying and the remaining majority of 65 informants (81%) say it depends on the music.

The informants were also asked if they have noticed buying more food than intended because of pleasant scents in grocery stores, such as the smell of freshly baked bread. A majority of 59 informants (74%) claim to have bought more food than they had planned because of such smells, and 21 informants (26%) have not noticed to have done this. Pleasant scents in this case can, of course, signify something else than just freshly baked bread. Another example would be adding the smell of freshly washed sheets in the detergent aisle in order to encourage consumers to buy detergent and other similar products.

Out of 80 informants, 56 (70%) claim that the lighting in stores affects their mood and the remaining 24 informants (30%) feel as if it does not. The follow-up (closed) question was “what kind of lighting do you find most pleasant or flattering?”.

Table 13: Lighting in stores

Warm light	51
Cold light	4
Bright light	16
Dim light	9
Total	80

Most of the informants (64%) prefer warm light in stores, whereas only 5 % find cold light most pleasant. Twenty per cent prefer bright light and the final 11 % dim light.

When the informants were asked if they notice product placement in stores, the clear majority of 70 people answered “yes”, whereas only 10 people chose the option “no”. As Table 14 reveals, there is no clear gender difference – both men and women pay attention to product placement.

Table 14: Notice product placement

Notice product placement	Female	Male	Total
Yes	36	34	70
No	4	6	10
Total	40	40	80

The follow-up question was “has product placement ever persuaded you into buying something?”.

Table 15: Product placement persuading consumers into buying something

Bought smth due to product placement	Female	Male	Total
Yes	27	20	47
No	5	7	12
I don't know	8	13	21
Total	40	40	80

Table 14 revealed that both men and women notice product placement in stores and Table 15 shows similar results – that the majority of both genders have bought something because of this reason. In other words, there are no gender specific patterns to be found concerning product placement.

5.5. Online stores

Questions covering this theme:

- “When shopping online, do you pay attention to the layout of the site?” – (Yes/No)
- “Does the layout affect your choice of site?” – (Yes/No/Sometimes)
- “Certain sites, such as Zalando, send out emails to their customers suggesting clothing (or other things) that you might like based on your previous purchases and having browsed the site. Do you find this type of contact...?” – (Annoying/Pleasant/Pleasant if it is a store that I like and frequently visit, otherwise no)
- “Have you ever bought anything on impulse because of the previously mentioned emails?” – (Yes/No)

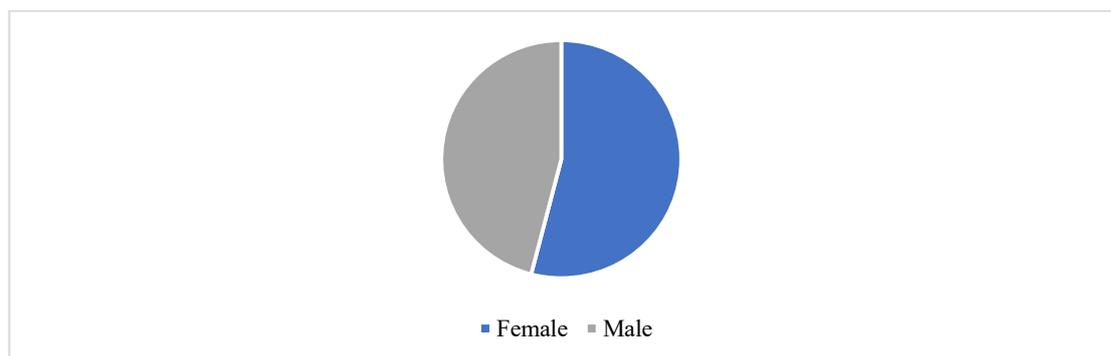
- “Do you find the exchange and return process harder when buying something online than when buying something from a brick-and-mortar store?” – (Yes/No)
- “When shopping online, do you find pop-up ads...?” – (Annoying/Pleasant)
- “Have you ever added items to your shopping cart but then, for one reason or another, changed your mind and decided not to go through with the purchase?” – (Yes/No)

The informants were asked if they pay attention to the layout of sites when shopping online. I chose to keep this question quite general, leaving it up to the informants’ own interpretation. Out of 80 informants, 63 (79%) claim that they do pay attention to the layout of sites, whereas the clear minority of 17 individuals (21%) say that they do not. They were also asked if the layout affects their choice of site. The following table shows what both genders answered:

Table 16: Does the layout affect consumers’ choice of site when shopping online?

Layout has an effect	Female	Male	Total
Yes	20	17	37
No	11	10	21
Sometimes	9	13	22
Total	40	40	80

Figure 10: Layout of site affects choice of site



A slightly higher number of women choose their shopping sites based on their appearance than men. However, based on the information from Table 16, eleven women and ten men claim that the layout does not affect their choice. In other words, there were significant differences to be noted among women but not between genders.

Certain sites, such as *Zalando*, send out emails to their customers suggesting clothing or other items they might like based on their previous purchases and having browsed the site in question. The informants were asked what they think of such contact (with a closed question).

Table 17: Suggestion emails

Annoying	46
Pleasant	1
Pleasant if it is a store that I like and frequently visit, otherwise no	33
Total	80

Only one person finds such contact pleasant regardless of the situation, whereas 33 people find it pleasant only if it comes from a store they like and frequently visit.

The informants were also asked whether or not they have ever bought anything on impulse because of these emails, and the results show that 16 people (20%) have and 64 people (80%) have not.

Earlier, the informants were asked if they feel better about a purchase when they are able to either return or exchange it and now, they were asked if they find the return and exchange process more difficult when buying something online than when buying something from a brick-and-mortar store. I chose to include this question, because I personally find the process more complicated and it might affect my impulse buying tendencies. I wanted to find out if others feel the same way and, as Table 18 reveals, most informants do. In the case of brick-and-mortar stores, consumers can simply walk into the store with the product they want to return or exchange, whereas online stores require more of an effort. In the case of *Zalando*, for example, consumers must first provide certain information online – the reason behind the exchange/return and their own credit information in order for *Zalando* to know which account the reimbursement should go to. Then, the products must be folded neatly into the right package, the return address sticker placed on top of the package and, finally, it needs to be taken to the same place it was sent to, such as the post office or the consumer’s local grocery store.

Table 18: Harder to return/exchange products online than in a brick-and-mortar store?

Yes	40
No	19
Depends on the store	21
Total	80

The informants were asked how they feel about pop-up ads when shopping online, and an astonishing majority of 78 people find them annoying, whereas the remaining two find them pleasant.

The final question of this theme and the entire questionnaire was: “Have you ever added items to your shopping cart but then, for one reason or another, changed your mind and decided not to go through with the purchase?”. This is also interesting to know, because it seems to be a rather common phenomenon (see section 3.2.3). A clear majority of 70 people have changed their minds after having added items to their shopping carts and the remaining 10 people have never done this. Perhaps these 70 individuals have realized in the middle of the process that they cannot afford spending money on items they do not need.

5.6. Chapter summary

Even though only 80 people participated in the study, I believe that the results provide a good outline for what Finnish impulse buying tendencies look like. The main findings are the following:

The informants were asked to describe the difference between impulse and compulsive buying and there were differences among the answers. Quite a few individuals knew that compulsive buyers do not find the products important, but the shopping experience itself, and that compulsive buying can lead to financial trouble etc. However, some said that compulsive buying concerns something one needs, and others said that impulse buying does. Some informants did not know the difference between the two (see Table 3). Finns do not seem to have such a wide comprehension of what these two buying behaviors entail, since the majority of informants did not know the difference between them. Only 30 out of 80 individuals knew the difference, which is less than half of the participants.

According to the results from the study, most informants have bought something on impulse often because of in-store displays, product placement, layout and design. Friendly store-personnel is the second biggest reason behind frequent impulse buying and reading reviews online the third biggest. Finns are not as affected by WOM as the theory suggests. Only five out of 80 informants have often bought something on impulse because of recommendations made by either family or friends. One single informant has sometimes bought something on impulse because of TV-Shop, and no one has often. In other words, this particular factor does not influence Finns' impulse buying tendencies to a great extent. Neither does advertisement in newspapers/magazines or TV commercials. Advertisement on social media platforms is a slightly bigger influencer.

Most Finns make impulse purchases when in the grocery store, when they see something they want or need or when there is a sale. Quite a few informants also claim to typically buy something on impulse when they are either abroad or at the airport.

Finns mainly buy clothes, food, cosmetics and electronics on impulse. The two first-mentioned are not gender specific, whereas the latter two are.

The clear majority of Finns make impulse purchases more frequently in brick-and-mortar stores (81%) than online (19%). A third of the informants who buy on impulse more often online represent the older age group. This suggests that the traditional way of shopping still is dominant, even though there are several positive aspects connected to online shopping as well. It remains to be seen whether or not these statistics will change in the future.

According to the results, women make impulse purchases more often than men, which was to be expected. Women also notice product placement to a slightly higher extent than men and when talking about online stores, a higher number of women than men also choose their sites based on the layout. Women tend to appreciate aesthetics, which might be the reason behind this.

As far as post-purchase feelings are concerned, the majority of Finns typically feel satisfaction after both inexpensive and expensive impulse purchases. However, in the

case of the first-mentioned, a higher number of younger than older informants felt regret, whereas the opposite applies for the latter (see Tables 11 and 12). In other words, individuals representing the older age category regret expensive impulse purchases more than inexpensive ones, whereas younger individuals regret inexpensive impulse purchases more. One might have expected the results to have revealed the opposite, since younger individuals tend to have a lower income, which leads one to believe that they would regret spending a larger amount of money.

6. Theory Meets Empiry

Having discussed the findings from the questionnaire in detail, the aim of this chapter is to connect the conclusions drawn from the results of the research with the previously presented theory from chapters 2 and 3. In other words, the empirical findings are linked to the theoretical framework in order to create a wider comprehension of the impulse buying phenomenon and to see how impulse buying tendencies in Finland compare to the theory.

6.1. Traditional vs. online impulse buying

As discussed in section 3.2, there are several positive aspects with online shopping. It enables consumers to make purchases from their own homes and it is also possible to find certain products or services to a more affordable price over the Internet than from a traditional store. Another positive feature of online shopping is the ability to compare websites, which sometimes can lead to finding the same product to a cheaper price. Additionally, some people might not enjoy interacting with store personnel, which consumers can avoid by staying at home (Katawetawaraks & Wang 2011). This probably applies to most Finns, since we are known to be a reserved people (Studarus 2018).

Despite these positive factors connected to online shopping, only 15 people (19%) who took part in the study claim to buy on impulse more frequently online than in brick-and-mortar stores. Table 6 reveals that nine out of these 15 informants are male and the remaining six are female. Out of these same 15, nine informants are in their 20's, two in their 50's, three in their 60's and the last informant in her 70's.

There is no significant discovery to be made concerning the connection between the informants' genders and online shopping, but it is noteworthy that the majority of informants engaging in impulse buying more often online than in physical stores are in their 20's. This was to be expected, but interestingly enough, the rest of the informants are significantly older. The informants in their 30's and 40's make impulse purchases more frequently in brick-and-mortar stores.

The clear majority of 65 informants (81%) claim to make impulse purchases more often in traditional brick-and-mortar stores, which proves one of my hypotheses mentioned in section 3.5 to be true. The following paragraph presents negative aspects with online shopping, which might provide an explanation to why so many Finns prefer physical stores.

Insecure payment is the first negative aspect of online shopping mentioned in section 3.2.3. Slow shipping, receiving the wrong product instead of what actually ordered, viruses and bothersome emails are also something that one might have to face when shopping online. Running into problems with technology is also a possibility (Katawetawaraks & Wang 2011).

Brick-and-mortar stores can also be considered superior because of the fact that consumers can actually touch and experience the products before making the decision to buy them (Blackwell et al. 2001). It is possible that this is something Finns appreciate, and which might be another reason why so many buy on impulse more frequently in brick-and-mortar stores.

6.2. Items bought on impulse

As mentioned in section 2.2.4, there are certain differences between men and women when talking about impulse buying. Coley and Burgess (2003) state that women are more impulsive than men both from a cognitive and an affective point of view. Women might also make impulse purchases more easily because of attractive store signage and ads. This has to do with the fact that emotion and mood have a bigger impact on women than on men. Men tend to buy items that are of a more functional nature, which is why they are not as affected when being subjected to advertisements and store signage.

Considering products bought on impulse, the results from the study reveal that there are differences between genders, as well as similarities. For example, quite a few Finnish women typically buy cosmetics and home décor on impulse, whereas a number of Finnish men buy electronics and tools. The three biggest product categories that Finns buy on impulse are clothes, food/drinks and makeup/cosmetics. The two first-mentioned are products both genders buy on impulse. One of my hypotheses was that

most Finns make impulse purchases when in the grocery store and as Table 3 reveals, this is, indeed, the case.

6.3. Impulse buying frequency

According to Lewis (2013), previous research shows that nine out of ten people buy at least one item on impulse during their shopping trips and that over half of them admit having bought at least six items on such trips. This does, of course, not apply to everyone. Some consumers rarely make any purchases without careful consideration, whereas others make impulse purchases as often as they have the chance (Verplanken & Sato 2011). The results from the questionnaire show that most Finns make impulse purchases on a monthly basis (38/80). 21 people claim to buy something on impulse every week and the same number of informants do so more seldom than every month. Not a single person participating in the study buys on impulse every day. This means that the theory may not be applicable to most Finns' impulse buying tendencies. The fact that Finns do not make impulse purchases as often as the theory suggests might be due to culture specific reasons.

6.4. Expensive and inexpensive impulse purchases

The results from the study reveal that seven out of 80 people (9%) felt regret after having bought an expensive item on impulse (over 100€) and 33 people (41%) claim to have felt satisfaction. One might have expected the number of people who have felt post-purchase regret after buying something expensive on impulse to be significantly higher. Out of 80 informants, 21 (26%) said that they felt neither after such a purchase, and the remaining 19 (24%) have never made an expensive impulse purchase and, therefore, could not choose between any of these three options. There was, however, a separate option provided for these people: "I answered 'no' in the previous question". My hypothesis was that more people representing the older age category have bought something expensive on impulse than younger individuals and Figures 7 and 8 illustrate that this, in fact, is the case.

When discussing inexpensive items, such as candy, 14 informants say that they typically feel regret after having made such purchases, 28 feel satisfaction and 38 feel

neither. In this case, the ratio of regret to satisfaction is more even than concerning expensive items, which one might have expected. However, it does surprise me that 14 out of 80 informants usually feel regret after having bought something inexpensive on impulse. I would have expected the number to be lower.

As mentioned in section 2.4.1, people have a tendency to doubt themselves after having purchased something, and they might try to explain their purchase decision with logical reasons (Saleh 2012). When consumers start comparing what they bought with something they probably should have bought instead, it often results in post-purchase regret or cognitive dissonance (*idem*). I would imagine this to be the case with the seven informants of my study, who felt post-purchase regret after buying something expensive on impulse.

Post-purchase satisfaction, in contrast, happens when the way the purchased product performs meets the customer's expectations (Blackwell et al. 2001). This is probably the case with the informants who claim to have felt satisfaction after an impulse purchase – the products may have simply lived up to their expectations.

6.5. The difference between impulse and compulsive buying according to Finns

The informants were asked to describe the difference between impulse and compulsive buying and, as mentioned, some of them knew the difference, whereas others did not. It was interesting to discover that so many informants are under the impression that compulsive buying indicates consumers purchasing items they truly need. Others thought that compulsive buying is carefully planned, whereas impulse buying is unplanned.

As Gupta (2013) writes, compulsive buyers find satisfaction in the purchase moment instead of in the items they buy. Evans et al. (2006), in turn, mention that some compulsive buyers find the shopping experience a form of entertainment and therefore it acts as an escape from everyday life. A few informants knew this and mentioned it in their answers.

According to Black (2001), it is often the case with compulsive buyers to buy presents for others instead of for themselves. However, if these consumers do buy for themselves, they tend to begin hoarding the purchased items. Some informants gave answers similar to this explanation. One person actually mentioned that hoarders are compulsive buyers (F 53).

6.6. Brick-and-mortar: store environment

As discussed, 65/80 informants engage in impulse buying more often in brick-and-mortar stores than in online stores. The clear majority of informants (85%) claim that the store environment affects them, whereas only 15% do not feel affected. This question was, of course, quite vague, which enabled the informants to interpret it in their own way. As the theory suggests, the store atmosphere is essential when attracting customers and keeping the shopping experience appealing. Additionally, customers' mood and emotion may be enhanced by an appealing atmosphere, which in turn, can trigger impulsive behavior (Hausman 2000).

Scents

The informants were asked if they have noticed buying more food than intended because of pleasant scents in grocery stores and they were provided with the example of freshly baked bread coming from a bakery located in a supermarket whilst grocery shopping. According to the results, the majority of informants (59/80) have noticed behaving this way. This same example of freshly baked bread was discussed in chapter 3 and Lewis (2013) mentions that this particular scent does not only tempt customers to buy bread, but other food as well. Smells do not, however, only have to be connected to buying food on impulse – this same behavior can be triggered by any other scents as well. Lewis provides another example – exposing customers to the smell of freshly washed sheets can encourage them to buy detergents and other products within the same category.

Product placement

As mentioned in section 3.1.5, product placement is an effective trick that marketers can use in order to catch consumers' attention. One example of clever product

placement is a technique called the “triangular balance” (Lewis 2013; Derbyshire 2004). People tend to look at the center of a picture and when using the triangular balance method, the biggest, tallest products with the highest profit margin, are positioned in the middle of each shelf. In order for these items to seem as attractive as possible, other smaller and “less important” items are placed around them. The reason behind this is that the consumer’s gaze goes straight to the center of the triangle on the shelf – in this case to the most expensive item (Karl McKeever in Derbyshire 2004). The clear majority of informants (87, 5%) claim to notice product placement in stores and 59% say that it has, at one point or another, persuaded them into buying something. In other words, the results reveal that some Finns do, indeed, pay attention to product placement and they admit that it has led them to make impulse purchases. Regarding product placement, there were no significant gender differences to be discovered. When asking the informants when they typically buy something on impulse, one person mentioned placement, with the example of sweets next to the checkout (M 24). Another informant also said that she makes impulse purchases when something is placed by the register and she mentioned reflectors (or other merchandise) for the benefit of breast cancer as an example (F 44). A third informant said that she typically pays attention to “[i]n-store makeup or food presentation” (F 55) when buying something on impulse. In this particular question, the informants were asked to explain in their own words when they typically buy something on impulse, which means that product placement was not even mentioned – they brought it up on their own. Further on in the questionnaire, product placement is specifically mentioned in a couple of questions, but the results from those particular questions are discussed in the following section.

6.7. Reasons to buy on impulse

When asking the informants to rate different factors that have led them to make impulse purchases on a scale from *never* – *often*, the option to receive the most “never” answers by far was TV-Shop (73/80). The two options that got the most “often” answers, on the other hand, were “In-store displays (product placement/layout/design)” and “friendly store-personnel” and these two are discussed in the following subchapters. As mentioned in section 3.5, one of my hypotheses was that WOM would be the biggest influencer of Finns’ impulse buying tendencies, but

as the results reveal, only a few people have either sometimes or often bought something on impulse because of recommendations made by others.

6.7.1. In-store displays (product placement/layout/design)

As chapter 3 focused on, there are several things retailers and marketers can do in order to manipulate customers into buying products. The “moment of truth” is the moment where consumers are standing in the aisle, deciding what they want to buy and then take it. When consumers are presented with two products that are equally appealing, they may not be able to make a decision between the two, which results in them buying neither. In order to avoid this type of situation, some supermarkets add a third option for the customers to choose from. This option is less attractive on purpose, which results in the customers discarding it. This, in turn, encourages them to buy one of the other two original options (Lewis 2013). The results from the study reveal that quite a few Finns have sometimes (39/80) or often (18/80) bought something on impulse because of product placement, layout and design in the store.

6.7.2. Friendly store-personnel

Baker et al. (2002) mention, that the store environment is created by **ambient factors**, such as lighting and scent, **design factors**, such as layout and assortment and **social factors** (see section 3.1.5). Social factors include the presence and efficiency of salespeople. According to the results from the study, quite a few informants have bought something on impulse because of the last-mentioned factor. Out of 80, twelve informants have often bought something on impulse because of friendly store-personnel and 32 informants have sometimes done so.

6.8. Online stores: layout of the site

In 2009, Koo & Ju investigated whether or not online atmospherics affect consumers’ emotions, such as arousal and pleasure, which, in turn, both affect intention. The results from their survey show that most human and computer factors, such as graphics, color and links, have a positive effect on pleasure and arousal. These two emotions affect intention positively. The informants were asked if they pay attention to the layout of sites when shopping online and the results reveal that the clear majority

of 63 informants do pay attention to it, whereas only 17 claim not to. They were also asked whether or not the layout of the site affects their choice of site. A number of 37 informants said that it does affect their choice, 22 said that it does not and the remaining 22 said that it sometimes does.

6.9. Going through with an online purchase

The informants were asked if they have ever added items to their shopping carts when visiting online stores and then, for one reason or another, changed their minds and decided not to go through with the purchase. A staggering majority of informants (70/80) claim to have done this at one point or another. When observing the theory from before, Blackwell et al. (2001) mention that only a few customers out of thousands actually buy something from websites, whereas most people engage in the previously mentioned phenomenon. Consumers make the decision to buy something online, add all of the required information and for one reason or another, end up ceasing the process without going through with the purchase. The reason behind this is unknown.

6.10. Chapter summary

As has been revealed in this chapter, a great deal of the discussed theory is applicable to Finns based on the informants' answers in the questionnaire, whereas some of it is not. For example:

Finns have bought more items on impulse because of in-store displays and friendly store-personnel than because of word-of-mouth marketing, which was discussed to a great extent in section 3.3. In fact, only five informants claim to have often bought something on impulse because of recommendations made by family, partner or friends, whereas 18 informants have often made impulse purchases because of the previously mentioned in-store-displays.

Based on the results from the study, Finns do not make impulse purchases as often as the theory suggests. Most Finns make impulse purchases every month and not a single informant does on a daily basis. According to previous research, nine out of ten people

buy at least one item on impulse during their shopping trips, and it has been estimated that each person spends approximately 57 000 € on impulse purchases during their lifetime (Lewis 2013).

7. Conclusions

The purpose of this Master's thesis was to create an understanding of the drivers of impulse buying and the means by which marketers can use them to their advantage. The drivers of impulse buying were explained and discussed in chapter 2 and the way marketers can take advantage of these drivers was presented in chapter 3.

It is good to acknowledge that only 80 people participated in the study, which means that the conclusions drawn cannot be applied to a larger group of people. Furthermore, this research only concerns Finland and impulse buying tendencies might be drastically different in other parts of the world. This being said, the results still gave a general idea of what impulse buying may look like in Finland and it was interesting to read the individual answers to the open questions. There were certain patterns to be detected, but some answers were completely unique.

7.1. Answers to the research questions

The research questions stated in chapter 1 are relevant to the study, and in this section, the answers are provided. The answers are based on both the theoretical framework and the findings from the questionnaire.

“What is the process behind impulse buying?”

The answer to my first research question is explained through my own model (see Figure 4). The process starts when consumers are exposed to **internal factors**, such as attitudes, values and low self-control, and **external factors**, such as WOM, store atmospherics and advertisement. When in the store, consumers are faced with the decision-making process, which is affected by these internal and external factors and marketing tricks. The purchase then takes place in a certain setting that the consumer finds appealing, such as when hungry in the grocery store or when there is a sale.

After the point of purchase, it is important for consumers to have access to after-sales services when necessary, in order for them to remain satisfied. This plays a significant role when shaping consumers' post-purchase feelings, but the most important factor

that determines if they end up feeling satisfaction or regret is the product itself and how it performs compared to expectations (Blackwell et al. 2001).

“What kind of effect does word-of-mouth communication have on impulse buying?”

The results from the study reveal that Finns are not quite as highly affected by word-of-mouth communication as the theory suggests. Only five out of 80 informants claim to have often bought something on impulse because of recommendations made by their family or partner and five informants because of recommendations made by friends. Reading reviews online is a slightly bigger influencer behind Finns' impulse purchases – eight out of 80 informants (10%) have often made an impulse purchase because of this reason.

As discussed in section 5.2, in-store displays (e.g. product placement and design within stores) and friendly store-personnel are the biggest reasons behind Finnish consumers frequent impulse purchases. The first-mentioned reason has led 18 Finns to buy something on impulse often and the latter 12.

“What kind of impulse purchases do Finns make?”

According to the results from the study, the three biggest product categories Finns buy on impulse are clothes (42/80), food/drinks (37/80) and makeup/cosmetics (15/80). The two first-mentioned are products that both genders buy, whereas the third product category only concerns females. Male informants, on the other hand, mentioned products such as tools and electronics. According to Coley and Burgess (2003), men tend to buy more functional items than women, which supports the results from the study.

The fact that so many Finns buy either food or drinks on impulse is directly connected to the setting where most informants claim to make impulse purchases. Out of 80 informants, 24 (30%) said that the situation where they would typically buy something on impulse is either when in the grocery store or when they are hungry.

“When do Finnish consumers feel post-purchase satisfaction/regret?”

The results from the study reveal that most Finns feel satisfaction (and not regret) after making both expensive and inexpensive impulse purchases (see Tables 11 and 12). According to the results, seven informants felt regret after having made an expensive impulse purchase (over 100€) and the clear majority of 33 informants felt satisfaction. When discussing inexpensive items, such as candy, 14 informants typically feel regret and 28 feel satisfaction. The majority of 38 informants, however, claim to feel neither.

It is interesting to see that a higher number of informants feel satisfaction after buying something on impulse, when there is so much more theory covering post-purchase regret than satisfaction.

“What can marketers do in order to manipulate consumers into making impulse purchases and how do they prevent and/or treat post-purchase regret?”

This question is discussed in the following subchapter.

7.2. Managerial implications

As discussed in chapter 3, there are several things marketers can do in order to manipulate customers into buying their products on impulse. They can place the products in a way that attracts consumers’ attention quite effectively. The biggest, tallest products with the highest profit margin, are placed in the middle of each shelf, because our gaze always goes to the center of a picture before looking elsewhere – in this case, to the center of the shelves. This trick is called the “triangular balance” (Lewis 2013; Karl mcKeever in Derbyshire 2004).

If consumers find the decision between two items too difficult, they might end up buying neither. Marketers can, in this case, add a decoy item, which is deliberately less attractive than the other products. This results in the consumers immediately discarding the decoy option, which encourages them to choose one of the other two – “the moment of truth” (Lewis 2013).

Marketers can also create the most effective marketing strategies by thoroughly knowing their target market – what the customers are interested in, what they find attractive, and what type of media they use. (Coley & Burgess 2003).

Additionally, the store environment can be made as attractive as possible with different atmospheric cues that stimulate consumers' various senses. Examples of such cues are lighting, music and smells that encourage consumers to buy products (Lewis 2013). The results from the study support this theory – that the store environment has a notable effect on consumers. In-store displays, layout and design and friendly store personnel are the biggest reasons behind Finns' frequent impulse purchases (see section 5.2).

The key to preventing post-purchase regret from happening in the first place is keeping the customers satisfied and wanting to come back. Providing after-sales services is one way of ensuring this. If the consumers are offered e.g. maintenance of products, they remain in good condition for a longer time, which consumers appreciate (Levitt 1983).

7.3. Critical review

As is the case with most research, also this thesis has its limitations that need to be addressed. If I had the chance to write my thesis from the beginning, I would reconsider the number of informants to participate in my study in order to gain a better understanding of impulse buying behavior in Finland.

The platform used for my study is Google Forms and, as easy as it was to use, it is a difficult tool for analyzing the data. If I were to conduct the research again, I would use an additional tool in order to facilitate this process. The program Stata was used to some extent, but it could have been used to analyze more answers. When the informants were asked open questions, Google Forms summarized all of the answers into a table, which was convenient, but it did not show all of the answers. In one of the questions, for example, 75/80 answers were revealed, and they were not in order, which meant that I had to go through the individual responses one by one in order to obtain all of the results.

As mentioned in section 6.4, the informants were asked whether or not they have ever bought an expensive item (over 100€) on impulse. They were then asked if they felt regret, satisfaction or neither after the purchase and they were given the additional option “I answered ‘no’ in the previous question”, in case they have never bought anything expensive on impulse. The number of informants who chose this option is not the same as the number of informants that actually did claim not to have made such a purchase. In other words, the numbers do not add up, having a small effect on the statistics. If I were to compose a new questionnaire, I would try to make it as clear as possible in order to avoid such misunderstandings. Of course, this might also have to do with the fact that the questionnaire is in English and the informants are all Finns. Perhaps there was a language barrier. Additionally, I believe that the informants who have bought something expensive on impulse and not regretted it, are older individuals due to the fact that they probably have a larger income than younger individuals, but because of this flaw in the statistics, I was not able to see if the results support this theory.

There are certain situations that should not be confused as impulse buying behavior and these were discussed in section 2.2.4. In the questionnaire, however, these are not taken into consideration. It might have been interesting to see whether or not the informants are aware of these limits of the definition.

7.4. Suggestions for further research

Concerning the research conducted for the study, I only interviewed 80 people and the conclusions drawn from these results are not applicable to the entire Finnish population. In other words, a larger number of people would need to be interviewed in order to form a more accurate picture of Finns’ impulse buying tendencies. However, this number of answers made it possible to conduct the research partially from a qualitative perspective.

Additionally, one of the informants is a close family friend who is blind and after having filled out the questionnaire, he gave me a call. He wanted to point out that impulse buying is different for him because of lacking a sense that can be considered essential for impulse buying. Throughout the thesis, store atmosphere and product

placement have been discussed to a great extent and by not being able to see, this person has to rely on his other senses, such as smell, when making impulse purchases. He gave me the following example: if he is in the store with a friend, who makes a comment about the pastries looking delicious, he would want to buy them on impulse because of this statement. When researching impulse buying in the future, it should be taken into consideration that the impulse buying experience is quite different when a person lacks a certain sense. For example, a deaf person does not react to background music in stores and a person who lacks the sense of smell does not react to the previously mentioned examples of freshly baked bread in a store or the smell of clean sheets in the detergent aisle.

8. Svensk sammanfattning

Impulsköpsbeteende och efterköpskänslor
En studie av finländska konsumenter

1. Inledning

Impulsköpande är vanligt bland konsumenter, men vilka olika faktorer påverkar detta beteende? I denna avhandling strävar jag efter att ingående studera fenomenet, samt undersöka efterköpskänslor – både negativa och positiva. Dessutom diskuterar jag trick som marknadsförare kan använda sig av för att uppmuntra kunderna att köpa deras produkter.

Impulsköpsbeteende är ett välstuderat ämne, men denna avhandling kompletterar i en viss mån tidigare ”traditionell” forskning inom impulsköp i och med att den innehåller ett kapitel som behandlar ett annat köpbeteende, nämligen köpberoende. Dessutom innefattar avhandlingen även ett kapitel som handlar om mun till mun-kommunikation, vilket har en viss påverkan på impulsköpsbeteende.

Syftet med avhandlingen är att skapa en förståelse av vad som orsakar impulsköpande och hur marknadsförare kan manipulera sina kunder till att göra sådana uppköp. Härnäst presenteras de forskningsfrågor som jag utgår från i min avhandling:

1. *Vilken är processen bakom impulsköpande?*
2. *Vilken effekt har mun till mun-kommunikation på impulsköpsbeteende?*
3. *Vilka impulsköp gör finländare?*
4. *När upplever finländska konsumenter negativa eller positiva efterköpskänslor?*
5. *Vad kan marknadsförare göra för att manipulera konsumenter att göra impulsköp och hur kan de undvika och/eller bearbeta negativa efterköpskänslor?*

Data för den empiriska delen av avhandlingen har samlats in genom ett onlinefrågeformulär. Analysen baserar sig på svaren av 80 individer, även om fler personer fyllde i formuläret. De överflödiga svaren gallrades bort på måfå. Man kan naturligtvis inte dra slutsatser med ett så begränsat antal svar. Dessutom begränsas svaren till endast finländare, vilket innebär att jag endast kan uttala mig om impulsköpsbeteende i Finland.

2. Impulsköpande

Impulsköpande är, som tidigare nämnts, ett vanligt köpbeteende. Fenomenet innebär att konsumenter plötsligt får lust att köpa något de inte hade planerat att köpa. I detta kapitel förklaras impulsköpsfenomenet i allmänhet, samt vad det är som leder konsumenter till att göra sådana uppköp över huvud taget.

Det är svårt att hitta en enda definition för impulsköpande, eftersom det byggs upp av så många olika faktorer, men en av de mest centrala beskrivningarna är att impulsköp är oplanerade (Piron 1991; Rook 1987). Figur 3 visar vad impulsköpsprocessen går ut på.

2.1. Köpberoende

En person som lider av köpberoende får ingen tillfredsställelse från den köpta produkten eller tjänsten, utan av själva köpprocessen (Gupta 2013). Personer med köpberoende kan stöta på ekonomiska problem och bli ordentligt skuldsatta, de kan börja lida av ångest och deras förhållanden kan påverkas negativt (Black 2001).

2.2. Efterköpskänslor

Impulsköp följs ofta av någon typ av känsla. Antingen känner man sig nöjd eller missnöjd med ett impulsköp. När en produkt uppfyller en konsuments förväntningar, följer en positiv efterköpskänsla. Om förväntningarna däremot inte uppfylls, följer en negativ efterköpskänsla. Hurdan känslan än är, kommer konsumenterna ihåg sina tankar om produkten och detta påverkar konsumenternas framtida beslut (Blackwell et al. 2001).

3. Marknadsföringstrick

Det finns en hel del marknadsförare som göra för att locka kunderna att göra impulsköp. Bland annat butiksatmosfären är viktig när det gäller att övertyga konsumenterna och stimulera deras sinnen. I följande kapitel diskuteras vissa trick i detalj och hur de utförs i praktiken.

Det är viktigt för marknadsförare att inse att rätt typ av marknadsföring kan främja impulsköpande. Att identifiera och profilera målgruppen med jämna mellanrum är något försäljare kan göra för att marknadsföra produkterna på ett sätt som är attraktivt för kunderna i fråga (Coley & Burgess 2003). Ifall kunden finner det svårt att välja mellan två produkter och det resulterar i att de inte väljer någondera på grund av det svåra beslutet, kan marknadsförare lägga till ett tredje, avsiktligt mindre attraktivt alternativ. Detta höjer sannolikheten för att kunden väljer ett av de ursprungliga alternativen eftersom de direkt struntar i det tredje, oattraktiva alternativet (Lewis 2013). Produkterna kan också placeras på ett sätt som kunden lägger märke till. Det är dessutom viktigt att skapa en trevlig butiksmiljö genom exempelvis belysning, dofter, musik och trevlig butikspersonal (Baker et al. 2002). Försäljare bör också erbjuda sina kunder ordentlig efterförsäljning, såsom efterköpstjänster, för att hålla kunderna nöjda och på så vis undvika negativa efterköps känslor (Levitt 1983).

3.1. Fysisk shopping kontra onlineshopping

Konsumenter handlar fortfarande regelbundet i fysiska affärer även om onlineshopping ständigt ökar i popularitet. Det finns många positiva sidor med att shoppa online. Exempelvis har konsumenterna möjligheten att handla när som helst hemma utan att behöva gå till en fysisk butik. Ibland är det också möjligt att hitta vissa produkter eller tjänster till ett billigare pris på nätet än i en fysisk butik. (Katawetawaraks & Wang 2011). Likväl som det finns positiva sidor med onlineshopping, finns det även negativa. Exempel på negativa faktorer är osäker betalning, långsam frakt och att vara tvungen att handskas med virus och tekniska problem (*idem*). Man kan inte heller röra vid eller uppleva produkterna före uppköpet, vilket man kan i fysiska butiker (Blackwell et al. 2001).

3.2. Mun till mun-marknadsföring

En nöjd kund berättar antagligen för andra om sina åsikter och upplevelser, vilket resulterar i det som kallas mun till mun-kommunikation. Det är också ett känt faktum att konsumenter ofta tror på vänner och familj framför reklam (Evans et al. 2006). Husnain et al. (2016) märkte i sin forskning att elektronisk mun till mun-kommunikation har en signifikant påverkan på impulsköpsbeteende.

3.3. Den teoretiska ramen i ett nötskal

Figur 4, som heter ”den teoretiska ramen i ett nötskal”, skapades genom att sammanfatta den presenterade teorin från kapitel 2 och 3 och den representerar en simplificerad modell av impulsköpsprocessen, inklusive efterköps känslor. Modellen baserar sig på figur 3 (skapad av Chacharkar & Iram 2017).

4. Metod

För denna avhandling har jag konstruerat ett onlinefrågeformulär med hjälp av Google Forms med både öppna och slutna frågor. Svaren från 80 personer (40 män och 40 kvinnor) av olika åldrar togs med i studien. Kön- och åldersfördelningen är jämnt fördelad för att kunna dra slutsatser och kunna jämföra resultaten med varandra. Kön- och ålderskategorierna är följande:

- *män 35 år eller yngre (20 st.)*
- *kvinnor 35 år eller yngre (20 st.)*
- *män över 35 år (20 st.)*
- *kvinnor över 35 år (20 st.)*

Forskningen består dels av kvantitativ metod och dels av kvalitativ metod, men den kan anses vara mer kvalitativ, eftersom de öppna frågorna gör det mer personligt och resultaten kan analyseras på individuell nivå.

5. Presentation och analys av avhandlingens empiriska data

Jag intervjuade endast finländska konsumenter för att få en bild av vilka impulsköpstendenser det finns i Finland. Teorin som presenterats i kapitlen 2 och 3 är generell och kopplas inte specifikt till Finland, så det är intressant att se huruvida resultaten stämmer överens med teorin. Frågeformuläret består av fyra skilda temaområden. Syftet med den första delen är att samla information om deltagarna, den andra delen handlar allmänt om impulsköpande, den tredje behandlar fysiska butiker och den fjärde onlinebutiker.

Deltagarna ombads att med egna ord beskriva skillnaden mellan impulsköpsbeteende och köpberoende. Av 80 deltagare svarade 30 rätt, det vill säga att köpberoende är mer allvarligt än impulsköpande, att man ”måste” köpa för köpandets skull, att produkterna inte är viktiga och att det kan leda till ekonomiska problem och så vidare. Deltagarna ombads också att uppskatta vilka faktorer som har lett till att de har köpt något på impuls på skalan *aldrig–ofta*. Rekommendationer av andra, det vill säga mun till mun-kommunikation, är inte en så stor orsak till finländares impulsköp – däremot påverkas finländare lättare av estetiska aspekter inom butiker, såsom layout och design samt vänlig butikspersonal.

Enligt resultaten köper majoriteten av finländska konsumenter livsmedel på impuls när de är hungriga eller när de befinner sig i matbutiken (24/80). Av deltagarna svarade 17 personer att de oftast köper på impuls när de ser något de behöver eller vill ha, eller ifall de ser något intressant eller oförväntat. Av deltagarna svarade 15 personer att de gör impulsköp när något är på rabatt eller när det finns specialerbjudanden eller kampanjer. Ingen av deltagarna gör impulsköp dagligen, 21 personer köper på impuls varje vecka, 38 personer varje månad och 21 personer mer sällan än varje månad. De tre vanligaste produktkategorierna som köps på impuls är kläder, mat och dryck samt kosmetik.

Av 80 deltagare svarade 52 personer att de någon gång har gjort ett dyrt impulsköp (över 100€) och de resterande 28 har inte. Majoriteten av dessa 52 individer representerar den äldre ålderskategorin och detta kan förklaras med faktumet att de har levt längre, vilket innebär flera chanser att göra dyra impulsköp och att de antagligen har en högre inkomst. Av deltagarna svarade 7 personer att de kände negativa efterköps känslor, medan 33 personer kände positiva. Efter att ha gjort billiga impulsköp (såsom godis), kände 14 personer negativa efterköps känslor och 28 personer positiva.

6. Teori möter empiri

En hel del av den presenterade teorin stämmer överens med finländares impulsköpsbeteende medan en del inte gör det. Exempelvis mun till mun-kommunikation diskuterades i hög grad i kapitel 3.2, och enligt resultaten från

frågeformuläret påverkas finländare inte starkt av detta fenomen. Endast fem deltagare påstår att de ofta köpt något på impuls på grund av rekommendationer av familj och vänner. De har, däremot, ofta gjort impulsköp tack vare estetiska aspekter inom butiker och vänlig butikspersonal. Enligt resultaten gör finländare inte impulsköp lika ofta som teorin påstår. Majoriteten av deltagarna köper något på impuls varje månad och inte en enda person gör det dagligen, medan teorin föreslår att impulsköp i allmänhet sker oftare.

7. Sammanfattande diskussion

Syftet med denna avhandling var alltså att skapa en förståelse av vad som orsakar impulsköpande och hur marknadsförare kan manipulera sina kunder till att göra sådana uppköp. Bakgrunden för och orsakerna bakom impulsköp förklarades i kapitel 2. Kapitel 3 spinner vidare på ämnet genom att förklara hur marknadsförare kan tillämpa sina trick för att manipulera konsumenten.

7.1. Svar på forskningsfrågorna

Vilken är processen bakom impulsköpande?

Svaret till den första forskningsfrågan förklaras genom min egen modell (se figur 4). Processen börjar med att konsumenterna utsätts för interna faktorer (till exempel kultur och personlighet) och externa faktorer (till exempel reklam och butiksatmosfär). Efter detta hamnar konsumenten ut för beslutfattningsprocessen, vilken påverkas av dessa precis nämnda faktorer samt marknadsförarnas trick. Uppköpet görs sedan i en viss miljö som kunden anser vara tilltalande, exempelvis i en mataffär när denne är hungrig. Efter uppköpet är det viktigt att kunden har tillgång till service vid behov för att hållas nöjd. Detta spelar alltså en viktig roll vid skapandet av efterköps känslor, men den största orsaken som avgör ifall kunden känner negativa eller positiva efterköps känslor är själva produkten och huruvida den uppfyller kundens förväntningar (Blackwell et al. 2001).

Vilken effekt har mun till mun-kommunikation på impulsköpsbeteende?

Teorin föreslår att mun till mun-kommunikation har en stor påverkan på impulsköpsbeteende, men resultaten från frågeformuläret avslöjar att finländare inte påverkas lika starkt av fenomenet som teorin föreslår. Endast fem deltagare sade att de ofta har köpt något på impuls på grund av rekommendationer av vänner och familj.

Vilka impulsköp gör finländare?

Enligt resultaten är de vanligaste impulsköpskategorierna livsmedel, kläder och kosmetik. De två förstnämnda är produkter som båda könen köper, medan den tredje endast gäller kvinnor. Män, å andra sidan, nämnde produkter såsom verktyg och elektronik.

När upplever finländska konsumenter negativa eller positiva efterköpskänslor?

Majoriteten av finländare känner positiva efterköpskänslor efter både dyra och billiga impulsköp. Det är intressant att se att flera deltagare känner positiva efterköpskänslor efter impulsköp, eftersom det finns så mycket teori om negativa efterköpskänslor.

Vad kan marknadsförare göra för att manipulera konsumenter att göra impulsköp och hur kan de undvika och/eller bearbeta negativa efterköpskänslor?

Denna fråga besvaras i följande underkapitel.

7.2. Implikationer för marknadsförare

I kapitel 3 diskuterades vad marknadsförare kan göra för att manipulera kunder att köpa deras produkter på impuls. Det är exempelvis viktigt för dem att känna till sin målgrupp ordentligt för att kunna skapa effektiva marknadsföringsstrategier. De bör veta vad målgruppen är intresserad av, vad de finner attraktivt och vilken typ av media de använder sig av (Coley & Burgess 2003).

Butiksmiljön kan också göras så attraktiv som möjligt genom att stimulera kundernas sinnen. Man kan exempelvis beakta belysning, musik och dofter, vilka kan uppmuntra kunderna att köpa produkter (Lewis 2013).

7.3. Kritisk granskning

Såsom nästintill all undersökning, har även denna avhandling sina begränsningar som bör behandlas. Ifall jag hade chansen att skriva avhandlingen från början, skulle jag ha tagit studiens deltagarantal i beaktande.

Även om Google Forms var lätt att använda, var det inte det bästa möjliga programmet för analysen av data. När det gäller öppna frågor presenterade programmet svaren i form av en lista. Även om detta var behändigt, visades alla svaren inte. Detta ledde till att jag var tvungen att gå igenom varje individuella svar för att få en fullständig analys.

Två av frågorna i formuläret förvrängde statistiken i en viss mån. Deltagarna ombads först att svara ifall de någonsin gjort ett dyrt impulsköp (över 100€) med alternativen ja/nej. Följdfrågan gällde efterköpskänslor för sådana uppköp och deltagarna gavs fyra alternativ: att de känt positiva eller negativa efterköpskänslor, ingendera eller ”jag svarade nej i den föregående frågan”. Antalet deltagare som valde detta sista alternativ stämde inte överens med hur många som verkligen hade svarat nej på den föregående frågan.

7.4. Förslag för vidare forskning

Undersökningen baserade sig på svaren av 80 deltagare, vilket inte är tillräckligt för att få en ordentlig bild av impulsköpstendenser i Finland. I fortsättningen borde en större grupp människor undersökas för att få pålitligare resultat.

En av deltagarna är en nära familjebekant som är blind. Han ringde mig efter att ha fyllt i frågeformuläret och påpekade, att impulsköpande är annorlunda då man inte har alla sina sinnen i bruk. Han berättade att han måste lita på sina andra sinnen, såsom lukt, när han köper något på impuls. Vid fortsatt forskning bör det tas i beaktande att impulsköpsupplevelsen är annorlunda när man saknar något sinne.

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Appendix

APPENDIX 1: Original questions

Part 1: Information about the participants

Thank you for sparing a few minutes of your time to participate in my research! The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out what kind of impulse buying tendencies there are in Finland and to pinpoint the factors that might lead consumers into making such purchases in the first place (among other things). Let's begin!

Gender

- Male
- Female

Age

Nationality

Part 2: Impulse Buying

Describe a typical situation where you would buy something on impulse (if you cannot come up with such a situation, please write "-")

How often do you buy something on impulse (estimation)?

- Every day
- Every week
- Every month
- More seldom

What kind of products/services do you typically buy on impulse?

Do you engage in impulse shopping more frequently in

- Brick-and-mortar stores
- Online stores

Have you ever bought an expensive item/service (over 100€) on impulse?

- Yes
- No

After the purchase, did you experience

- Regret
- Satisfaction
- Neither
- I answered "no" in the previous question

After having bought inexpensive items on impulse (such as candy), do you typically feel

- Regret
- Satisfaction
- Neither

Do you feel better about a purchase if the product has a return and exchange possibility?

- Yes
- No

Describe in your own words the difference between impulse buying and compulsive buying

Which of the following have led you to buy something on impulse (estimation)?

Scale: 1-4, Never-Often

Recommendations by family/partner

Recommendations by friends

Reading reviews online

TV-Shop

Advertisement in newspapers/magazines

TV commercials

Advertisement on social media platforms

In-store displays (product placement/layout/design)

Friendly store-personnel

Part 3: Brick-and-mortar stores

Have you noticed that the store environment affects you in any way?

- Yes
- No

Do you pay attention to background music playing in stores?

- Yes
- No

Do you find music

- Pleasant
- Annoying
- Depends on the music

Have you noticed buying more food than intended because of pleasant scents in grocery stores, such as the smell of freshly baked bread from a bakery in a supermarket?

- Yes
- No

Does the lighting in stores affect your mood?

- Yes
- No

What kind of lighting do you find most pleasant or flattering?

- Cold light
- Warm light
- Dim light
- Bright light

Do you notice product placement in stores?

- Yes
- No

Has product placement ever persuaded you into buying something?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Part 4: Online stores

When shopping online, do you pay attention to the layout of the site?

- Yes
- No

Does the layout affect your choice of site?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

Certain sites, such as Zalando, send out emails to their customers suggesting clothing (or other things) that you might like based on your previous purchases and having browsed the site. Do you find this type of contact

- Annoying
- Pleasant
- Pleasant if it is a store that I like and frequently visit, otherwise no

Have you ever bought anything on impulse because of the previously mentioned emails?

- Yes
- No

Do you find the exchange and return process harder when buying something online than when buying something from a brick-and-mortar store?

- Yes
- No
- Depends on the store

When shopping online, do you find pop-up ads

- Annoying
- Pleasant

Have you ever added items to your shopping cart but then, for one reason or another, changed your mind and decided not to go through with the purchase?

- Yes
- No

APPENDIX 2: Translated questions

Del 1: Information om deltagarna

Tack för att du offrar några minuter av din tid för att delta i min undersökning! Syftet med detta frågeformulär är att få reda på hurdana impulsköpstendenser det finns i Finland och att kunna sätta fingret på vilka faktorer som kan leda konsumenter till att över huvud taget göra sådana uppköp (bland annat). Låt oss börja!

Kön

- Man
- Kvinna

Ålder

Nationalitet

Del 2: Impulsköp

Beskriv en typisk situation där du skulle köpa något på impuls (ifall du inte kommer på en sådan situation, skriv "-")

Hur ofta köper du något på impuls (uppskattning)?

- Varje dag
- Varje vecka
- Varje månad
- Mer sällan

Hurdana produkter/tjänster köper du vanligtvis på impuls?

Köper du oftare på impuls i

- Fysiska butiker
- Onlinebutiker

Har du någonsin köpt en dyr produkt/tjänst (över 100€) på impuls?

- Ja
- Nej

Efter uppköpet, kände du

- Ånger
- Tillfredsställelse
- Ingentera
- Jag svarade "nej" i den förra frågan

Efter att ha gjort billiga impulsköp (såsom godis), känner du vanligtvis

- Ånger
- Tillfredsställelse
- Ingentera

Känner du dig bättre efter ett uppköp ifall det är möjligt att antingen returnera eller byta ut produkten?

- Ja
- Nej

Beskriv skillnaden mellan impulsköpande och köpberoende med dina egna ord

Vilka av följande har lett dig till att köpa något på impuls (uppskattning)?

Skala: 1–4, Aldrig-Ofta

Rekommendationer av familj/partner

Rekommendationer av vänner

Läsandet av online-recensioner

Tv-Shop

Reklam i tidningar

Tv-reklam

Reklam på sociala medier

Estetik inom butiken (produktplacering/layout/design)

Vänlig butikspersonal

Del 3: Fysiska butiker

Har du märkt att butiksmiljön påverkar dig på något sätt?

- Ja
- Nej

Lägger du uppmärksamhet till bakgrundsmusik i butiker?

- Ja
- Nej

Anser du musiken vara

- Behaglig
- Irriterande
- Beror på musiken

Har du märkt att du köper mer mat än planerat p.g.a. goda dofter i matbutiken, såsom doften av färskt bröd från ett bageri som befinner sig i matbutiken?

- Ja
- Nej

Påverkar belysningen i butiker ditt sinnestillstånd?

- Ja
- Nej

Hurdan belysning är mest tilltalande/behagligt?

- Kall belysning
- Varm belysning
- Mjuk belysning
- Stark belysning

Lägger du märke till produktplacering i butiker?

- Ja
- Nej

Har produktplacering någonsin lett dig till att köpa något?

- Ja
- Nej
- Jag vet inte

Del 4: Onlinebutiker

När du shoppar på nätet, lägger du märke till sidans layout?

- Ja
- Nej

Påverkar layouten ditt val av nätsida?

- Ja
- Nej
- Ibland

Vissa sidor, såsom Zalando, skickar ut epost åt sina kunder med kläd- (eller andra) rekommendationer de kunde tycka om baserat på deras tidigare uppköp och att de har vistats på sidan. Anser du sådan kontakt vara

- Irriterande
- Behagligt
- Trevligt ifall det är en butik jag tycker om och ofta besöker, annars nej

Har du någonsin köpt något på impuls p.g.a. denna precis nämnda kontakt?

- Ja
- Nej

Anser du processen att byta ut eller returnera produkter vara besvärligare när man köpt något på nätet än när man köpt något från en fysisk butik?

- Ja
- Nej
- Beror på butiken

Medan du shoppar på nätet, anser du popup-reklam vara

- Irriterande
- Behagligt

Har du någonsin lagt produkter i din shoppingvagn, men sedan, av en eller annan orsak, ändrat dig och beslutat dig för att inte slutföra transaktionen?

- Ja
- Nej