

Moderating Role of Cultural Values on the Relationship Among Hedonism, Materialism, and Impulse Buying : A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract

This paper aimed to situate the hedonism–materialism–impulse buying relationship within the theoretical frameworks of the theory of regulatory focus and the theory of social influence. Drawing from these two theories, this paper adopted the theory-building process to build a moderated mediational model that explained the mediated effect of materialism in the hedonism – impulse buying relationship. This paper also explored theoretically the moderating roles of individualism/collectivism among the constructs of hedonism, materialism, and impulse buying. This paper has contributed to the research discourse on impulse buying by showing the explanatory mechanism of a mediated moderated model.

Keywords : hedonism, materialism, impulse buying, regulatory focus, social influence

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Individuals' focus on the promotion of their materialistic and hedonic values and the desire to avoid loss of social status and identity are known to influence them to engage in impulse buying (Kacen & Lee, 2002 ; Lee & Kacen, 2008 ; Richins & Rudmin, 1994 ; Rook, 1987 ; Rook & Fisher, 1995 ; Verplanken & Sato, 2011 ; Xiao & Nicholson, 2011 ; Yu & Bastin, 2010). In this connection, attempts to explain the phenomenon of impulse buying have arisen primarily due to the upside potential in revenues of marketers and the downside potential for consumers (Herabadi, Verplanken, & Van Knippenberg, 2009 ; Kacen & Lee, 2002 ; Vohs & Faber, 2007 ; Xiao & Nicholson, 2011). Scholars defined impulse buying as, “an unplanned purchase behavior characterized by the sudden, powerful, and often persistent urge to purchase that is initiated spontaneously upon confrontation with a particular item, and accompanied by feelings of pleasure and excitement” (Herabadi et al. 2009, p. 20). Accordingly, prior research has employed several theoretical perspectives to explain and situate impulse buying as a psychological phenomenon (Baumeister, 2002 ; Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991 ; Rook, 1987 ; Rook & Fisher, 1995 ; Verplanken & Herabadi, 2001 ; Verplanken & Sato, 2011). Scholars have shown that the explanatory mechanisms of these psychological perspectives appear to be contradictory. For example, scholars argued that impulse buying has its association with both positive and negative emotions (Alex & Menon, 2018 ; Verplanken & Sato, 2011). Therefore, prior research has attempted to synthesize the contradicting factors that influence the

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psychological perspective of the theory of regulatory focus (Higgins, 2012 ; Verplanken & Sato, 2011). Against this background, the objective of this paper is to theoretically inquire how the cultural influences of individualism/collectivism moderate the effects of hedonic and materialistic values on impulse buying.

In this context, there are several theoretical perspectives in the literature, which have explained impulse buying (Valaei & Nikhashemi, 2017 ; Verplanken & Sato, 2011). Consumption impulsivity (Hausman, 2000 ; Verplanken & Herabadi, 2001), socio-cultural factors (Kacen & Lee, 2002), and individual approaches (Dholakia, 2000) are the three theoretical perspectives that have explained impulse buying (Xiao & Nicholson, 2011). Socio-cognitive theories are predominant among these approaches. For example, prior research deployed the theory of planned behavior to explain the behavioral intentions embedded in impulse buying (Valaei & Nikhashemi, 2017). However, scholars have also argued that the constructs of this theory do not fully capture the intricacies of impulse buying (Hagger, Chatzisarantis, & Harris, 2006). In this connection, they argued that the construct of subjective norms may not address the domain of peer influence in understanding impulse buying (Armitage & Conner, 2001). Therefore, research conversation on the theoretical perspectives of impulse buying also advocated the inclusion of the self-identity construct in the model of the theory of planned behavior (Rise, Sheeran, & Hukkelberg, 2010). The inclusion of the constructs of social identity and individual identity is intended to explain better the phenomenon of impulse buying (Bagozzi & Lee, 2002). Scholars, however, problematized the use of the theory of planned behavior in particular and the socio-cognitive models in general in explaining impulse buying (Verplanken & Sato, 2011). The primary reason for this criticism is due to the presence of reflection in the behavioral intentions, as conceptualized in the socio-cognitive models of the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Prior study has not conceptualized impulse buying as being the result of reflection (Baumeister, 2002). Therefore, the theory of planned behavior is not held to be an appropriate theory for explaining impulse buying (Bagozzi & Lee, 2002). However, this is not to deny the relative usefulness of the socio-cognitive models in understanding impulse buying (Verplanken & Sato, 2011). In this connection, it becomes important to address the conflict and propose a resolution for future research.

Uniqueness of the Review and the Research Gaps

This paper is unique because it identifies the conflict as a research gap and attempts to propose a resolution to address the gap. Hence, this paper argues that it is possible to explain the phenomenon of impulse buying by situating the same within the integrated framework of two theories, that is, regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 2012) and the theory of social influence (Bagozzi & Lee, 2002). The integration of these two theories helps us understand how individualism/collectivism moderates the relationship between the values of materialism – hedonism – impulse buying.

We begin our discussion by showing how we can situate the antecedents of impulse buying within the framework of conceptual postulates of the theory of regulatory focus, that is, 'promotion focus' and 'prevention focus' (Higgins, 1998). Promotion focus refers to human beings' attempts that aim at the advancement of their goals, which looks at the motive of their actions as a function of attainment of their goals and securing rewards (Vohs & Faber, 2007). 'Prevention focus' refers to human beings' attempt to avoid punishment and loss (Higgins, 1998). There exists a sound theoretical rationale that necessitates the use of the theory of regulatory focus to understand the phenomenon of impulse buying. First, scholars found that impulse buying is associated with a wide variety of factors such as hedonistic values (Herabadi et al., 2009), materialistic values (Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012 ; Saptono, Soetjipto, Wahjoedi, & Wahyono, 2019 ; Sen & Nayak, 2019), etc. However, researchers have also shown that reducing the severity of negative emotions is also an important factor that prompts impulse buying (Higgins, 1998). Thus, research discourse also attempted to reconcile these conflicting and contradictory antecedents (Verplanken & Sato, 2011) and accordingly positioned impulse buying within the

theoretical framework of self-regulation theory. According to the perspective of regulatory focus theory, human beings demonstrate both motives of promotion focus and prevention focus. Promotion focus refers to those human motives which make individuals achieve what they hold to be good things to be achieved (Keller, 2008). The prevention focus refers to those human motives which make individuals avoid what they consider to be bad things to be avoided (Keller, 2007). Accordingly, we can situate the seemingly self-contradictory and conflicting antecedents within the broader spectrum of promotion and prevention strategies that individuals adopt while they resort to impulse buying (Verplanken & Sato, 2011). It is essential to address this research gap because of several reasons.

First, prior research has empirically demonstrated the influence of social patterns of individualism and collectivism in the type of brand association that the consumers demonstrate (Aaker & Schmitt, 2001). Second, the impact of normative social influences is expected to be higher in collectivist societies than in individualistic societies while individuals make their purchase decisions (Lee & Kacen, 2008). Finally, scholars have argued that social determinants also influence impulse buying alongside the internal stimulus factors of individuals (Bagozzi & Lee, 2002).

Literature Review

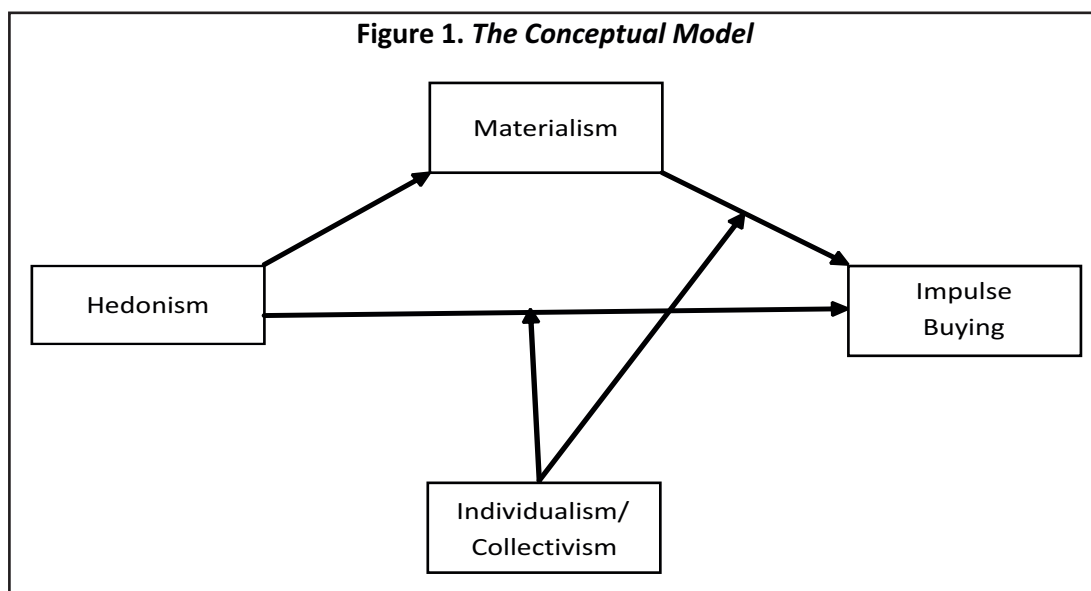
This paper follows the theory-building process to present its conceptual model of impulse buying. Hedonism, materialism, and impulse buying are the units of interest in this study. This paper draws the laws of the relationship between these constructs from two theoretical perspectives, that is, the theory of regulatory focus (Higgins, 2012) and the theory of social influence (Kelman, 1961). The assumptions of these two theories as also the theory of individualism and collectivism (Hofstede, 1991) constitute the assumptions within which the proposed relationships between constructs are expected to work. The constructs of individualism and collectivism demonstrate the contingency effects or the moderating effects in the hedonism – materialism – impulse buying relationship. We develop the propositions that explain the processes of the relationship between the constructs of the conceptual model. In this regard, we critique the existing theoretical perspectives of impulse buying, drawing primarily from the theory of regulatory focus.

Research discourse on impulse buying has investigated its antecedents that belong to the category of promotion focus (Bianco, Higgins, & Klem, 2003). Hedonic consumption tendency (Hausman, 2000), positive emotions (Mattila & Enz, 2002), product involvement (Jones, Reynolds, Weun, & Beatty, 2003), hedonistic shopping value (Yu & Bastin, 2010), resources that regulate self (Baumeister & Vohs, 2004), and subjective well-being (Youn & Faber, 2000) are the factors that belong to the domain of promotion-focused antecedents of impulse buying. Scholars have used the theory of time-inconsistent preferences (Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991), theories of personality such as big-five model of personality types (Verplanken & Herabadi, 2001), and the theories of individual and social identity (Stets & Burke, 2000) to explain their relationship with impulse buying. However, none of these theories can integrate all the antecedents mentioned above, within a single coherent theoretical framework. These antecedents are those motives that inspire individual buyers to achieve something which is perceived as good by them. However, the theory of self-regulation captures all these antecedents within a single theoretical postulate of promotion strategies.

Scholars have also discussed the antecedents of impulse buying, which we can classify within the broader category of prevention strategies. The materialism that symbolizes envy and possessiveness (Belk, 1985), utilitarian value (Sullivan & Heitmeyer, 2008), and low self-esteem (Gollwitzer, Wicklund, & Hilton, 1982) are a few of antecedents of impulse buying that can be positioned within the theoretical framework of prevention strategies of the theory of regulatory focus (Verplanken & Sato, 2011). Though these antecedents can be explained individually by invoking the theories such as the theory of big-five model of personality traits (Verplanken &

Herabadi, 2001), the theory of individual differences as conceptualized within the theoretical framework of behavioural inhibition system (Kasser, Cohn, Kanner, & Ryan, 2007), and the theory of symbolic self-completion (Gollwitzer et al., 1982), none of these theories explain the underlying mechanisms through which all the antecedents that are mentioned above relate themselves with impulse buying. However, the notion of prevention strategies conceptualized in the theory of regulatory focus explains the relationship between the antecedents mentioned above and impulse buying. Although the theory of regulatory focus views the antecedents of impulse buying within its encompassing categories of promotion strategies and prevention strategies (Higgins, 2012 ; Verplanken & Sato, 2011), it cannot position the antecedents within the broader context of cultural differences (Lee & Kacen, 2008), broadly categorized as individualism and collectivism. Both individualism and collectivism are social patterns of individuals' behavior and preferences. Individualism refers to the social pattern in which individuals consider themselves to be self-governed, independent of the collectivities (Lee & Kacen, 2008).

Accordingly, individuals give more preferences to their choices than the importance that they accord to the choices of the collectivity in an individualistic society (Kacen & Lee, 2002). Therefore, the internal stimulus factors that act as antecedents of impulse buying should be contextualized against the influence of cultural differences of individualism and collectivism. Further, prior research had not shown theoretically what type of social influence processes (Bagozzi & Lee, 2002) influenced the interaction between cultural influences and impulse buying (Lee & Kacen, 2008). This paper addresses this research gap. Accordingly, this paper posits the internal stimulus factors such as hedonism and materialism as the antecedents of impulse buying by conceptualizing a mediation model. Further, this paper posits individualism and collectivism, the cultural constructs, as the moderators of hedonism – materialism – impulse buying relationships. Exploratory studies have unambiguously shown that hedonic elements of feeling good and bad, fun and excitement are part of the experience of impulse buying (Rook, 1987). Therefore, prior research has shown that there is an association between individuals' hedonism and impulse buying. Hedonism is a value, which is closely associated with materialism. While materialism is about the possession of objects, hedonism is concerned with the pleasure that a buyer gets in acquiring the objects. Considering materialism as an antecedent of impulse buying provides only half the picture of the phenomenon. Discussion on materialism may become incomplete, in the context of impulse



buying, without the discussion on hedonism. Therefore, this paper posits hedonism as an antecedent of materialism. Based on this background, this paper presents the following conceptual model (Figure 1) to present the relationships among the constructs of this study.

Impulse Buying

Earlier, conceptualization defined impulse buying as follows : “Impulse buying occurs when a consumer experiences a sudden, often powerful and persistent urge to buy something immediately” (Rook, 1987, p.191). Also, impulse buying is hedonically complex and is prone to stimulate conflict of emotions. Also, the phenomenon of impulse buying occurs with diminished regard for future consequences. Hence, it can be characterized as a phenomenon that displays a spontaneous urge to buy (Chen & Yao, 2018), excitement in the purchase process (Saad & Metawie, 2015), hedonic shopping gratification (Jain, Gautam, & Pasricha, 2018), and hedonic propensities of feeling good or bad (Vohs & Faber, 2007). Accordingly, scholars defined impulse buying as, “a consumer's tendency to buy spontaneously, unreflectively, immediately, and kinetically” (Rook & Fisher, 1995, p.306).

Hedonism

Hedonism refers to innate pleasure orientation among human beings. Desire to seek pleasure and avoid pain is the essence of hedonism. Hedonism manifests itself, in the impulse buying context, in the form of hedonic shopping value. Scholars defined hedonic shopping value as, “the value found in the shopping experience itself, independent of task-related activities” (Yu & Bastin, 2010, p.107). Hedonic value provides fun and pleasure, which is likely to influence individuals to engage in consumption through impulse buying. Hedonic consumption is, accordingly, defined as the, “consummatory affective gratification from the sensory attributes” (Batra & Ahtola, 1991, p.159).

Materialism

Prior studies have shown that materialism excites consumer researchers in understanding consumers' buying behaviour (Padival, Michael, & Hebbar, 2019 ; Pasricha, Jain, & Singh, 2020). Scholars conceptualized materialism as a centrally held belief regarding the importance that one attaches to possessions in one's life. Centrality towards the acquisition, in pursuit of happiness through acquisition, and success as defined by possession of materials are the three dimensions of materialism as a personality value (Richins & Dawson, 1992). According to this perspective of materialism, all three dimensions, that is, success, centrality, and happiness revolve around individuals' possessions (Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012). The perspective of Richins and Dawson (1992) measures the cognitive beliefs of individuals. Cognitive beliefs zero in on, “what is enduringly held as important” (Ahuvia & Wong, 2002, p. 390) and, therefore, they represent values. Therefore, conceptualizing materialism in terms of value helps build linkages with societal values such as those of individualism and collectivism. This paper, therefore, adopts this conceptualization of materialism, which considers materialism as a value. Following this conceptualization, this paper has conceptualized materialism at the individual level of analysis.

Theoretical Perspective

There are two reasons to articulate the importance of two types of self-regulatory focus, that is, promotion focus

and prevention focus, through which it is possible to conceptualize the conceptual model that explains the phenomenon of impulse buying. First, they explain the psychological/internal source of motivation for impulse buying. Second, the principle of approaching pleasure and avoiding pain explains why individuals hold materialism as a value. In this paper, we attempt to explain the hedonism – materialism – impulse buying relationship by drawing from the theory of regulatory focus. Further, we explain the contextual influences of individualism/collectivism in this relationship by positing the cultural influences as moderators between these constructs. The level of constructs of the model is individual-level. Therefore, we draw from the theory of regulatory focus, which is a theory of goal pursuits at the individual level. Interestingly, scholars have long attempted to understand the motivating sources of impulse buying from the standpoint of the theory of self-discrepancies. The theory of self-discrepancies proposes that individuals would make two types of comparisons. First, they compare their ideal selves with their actual selves. Second, they compare their actual selves with their ought-to-be state of self. The kind of emotions, the pleasure and pain, that the individuals experience in these two situations are likely to be different. The difference in actual and ideal self-guided, or the difference between actual and ought self-guide, is called self-discrepancy. The type of pleasure-related emotions or the pain-related emotions that an individual experiences is dependent upon the type of self-guide that he/she emphasizes.

Though the theory of self-discrepancy explains the discrepancies in the personality of individuals, it assumes that these discrepancies are stable dispositions of individuals and, therefore, they are relevant for long term decision making too. However, Higgins (2012, p.488) noted that, “the distinction between ideal and ought self - regulation be being unnecessarily restricted by self-discrepancy theory”. Accordingly, scholars have proposed an alternative view that individuals could remain in a state of self-regulation relating to their hopes or duties without actually possessing chronic discrepancies regarding their ideal and ought self-guides. Thus, the assumption of the presence of chronic discrepancies is overcome by the theory of regulatory focus. Accordingly, the theory of regulatory focus considers even the momentary successes and failures and the corresponding emotions for individuals who are in either what the theory terms to be promotion state or prevention state. Conceptualization of promotion and prevention states of emotions as not chronic is, therefore, applicable to the impulse buying context also because of the short-term emotions involved in this process.

Scholar argued that, “it is not enough to know that people approach pleasure and avoid pain. It is critical to know how they do so” (Higgins, 2012, p.489). Therefore, the regulatory focus theory advocates the cognitive states of promotion focus and prevention focus among individuals, which serve the function of self-regulation of human decision making relating to goal pursuit. If individuals are in a promotion state, they nourish hopes and wishes, while individuals try to avoid loss if they are in a prevention state. The happiness/dejection and quiescent/anxiety emotions are conceptualized to be the results of attaining or not attaining one's goals if individuals are in promotion and prevention states, respectively. Though we understand the underlying psychological processes in the hedonism – materialism – impulse buying relationship through the propositions of the regulatory focus theory, the level of the theory helps us understand the relationship between variables at the individual level of analysis. Scholars have shown that the normative influences of culture exercise their influence on the impulse buying of individuals even while their hedonic and materialistic values are at work. Therefore, the social determinants of individual action would explain better the contextual influences of individual actions of impulse buying. In this connection, prior research on cultural influences of impulse buying has shown that the cultural dimensions of individualism/collectivism exercise their influence on the impulse buying propensities of individuals and the expression of hedonic and materialistic values in particular. Therefore, it is necessary to invoke the macro or/and meso level theories that explain the influence of individualism and collectivism on the hedonism – materialism – impulse buying relationship.

Kelman's (1961) theory of social influence and the multiple routes of social influence advocated by Bagozzi and Lee (2002) provided us with insights that help us understand the moderating role of

individualism/collectivism in the hedonism – materialism – impulse buying relationship. According to the propositions of the theories of social influence and social identity, there are three social-psychological processes such as compliance, identification, and internalization which help us understand the moderating role of individualism/collectivism in the proposed relationship. These three socio-psychological processes are related to “three levels of decision making, as applied to intentions” (Bagozzi & Lee, 2002, p. 226).

Proposition Development

Hedonism and Impulse Buying

Impulse buying occurs because of its strong association with the hedonistic propensity of seeking pleasure and fun (Herabadi et. al., 2009 ; Prashar, Parsad, & Vijay, 2015). The issue to be debated in this context is as follows : Why is it that individuals indulge in impulse buying due to hedonistic propensities ? Scholars have identified two reasons for this phenomenon. First, positive emotions are the most potential antecedents of impulse buying (Verplanken & Herabadi, 2001). Second, it is equally associated with low self-esteem and negative emotions (Silvera, Lavack, & Kropp, 2008). This implies that individuals indulge in impulse buying not only when they feel good, but also in the wake of negative moods (Holbrook & Gardner, 2000). The role of affect or emotions is well-documented in the research discourse on impulse buying (Trope & Fishbach, 2000). For example, the theory of time – inconsistent preferences argues that the joy, which the impulse buying produces, represents the importance of the role of short-term emotions as against the long-term rational assessment of costs and benefits (Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991). In this connection, the theory of psychological distance articulates the influence of proximal objects in the process of construal (Laran, 2010). The theory argues that excitement occurs when an individual comes across an object ; whereas, regret is a function of high-level construal, which requires a distant view of objects and events (Verplanken & Sato, 2011). Impulse buying is the result of viewing the proximal objects alone. Therefore, we build the following proposition:

✎ **Proposition 1 :** There exists a positive association between hedonism and impulse buying.

The Mediating Role of Materialism in the Hedonism – Impulse Buying Relationship

Hedonism can manifest in individuals with either promotion focus or prevention focus (Higgins, 2012). Furthermore, hedonism may manifest itself in terms of materialism (Herabadi et al., 2009). This is because the pleasure orientation in individuals induces them to satisfy their need for pleasure through the acquisition of material possessions (Kasser, 2016). Interestingly, those individuals who have predominant promotion focus (Verplanken & Sato, 2011) express their pleasure orientation through their cognitively held belief that materialism or the desire for possessions would give them the happiness that they seek (Karabati & Cemalcilar, 2010). Their hedonic value will make them seek pleasure through the demonstration of the centrality of acquisition of goods, the perusal of acquisition as a proof of success, and thus find happiness in the possession of these goods (Richins & Rudmin, 1994), that is, seeking pleasure through the demonstration of their materialistic value through the impulse buying. Those individuals who have prevention focus attempt to demonstrate their hedonic propensity to avoid pain by holding high their materialistic values through the impulse buying (Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012). Impulsive buyers, who are in promotion state, experience cheerfulness/dejection if their hedonic impulse meets its satisfaction through the possession of goods, though those emotions are momentary. For this, the presence of chronic discrepancy is not necessary as it is implied in the theory of symbolic self-completion or in the theory of behavioral activation system, which considers impulse buying as the result of a personality trait that

requires the chronic presence of a particular disposition (Higgins, 2012). Later, impulsive buyers, who are in prevention state, experience quiescence/anxiety if their hedonic impulse meets its satisfaction through the materialistic acquisition through impulse buying. Therefore, we build the following proposition :

✦ **Proposition 2 :** Materialism mediates the hedonism – impulse buying relationship.

The Moderating Role of Individualism in the Hedonism – Impulse Buying Relationship

In this connection, there are three models of social influence that prior research discusses (Bagozzi & Lee, 2002). First, the individual-based models proposed that attitude and perceived behavioral control of individuals, and the interpersonal pressure or subjective norms influence individuals to perform a personal act as in the case of the theories of reasoned action and planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Social psychologists term this kind of social influence process as compliance, which happens for the reasons of gaining social approval. However, prior research has debated the relative roles of attitude and subjective norms in determining individual intentions (Bagozzi & Lee, 2002). For example, scholars have argued that the attitude – intention relationship is strong while the subjective norms – intention relationship is weak. Therefore, personal reasons are stronger determinants than the social determinants of action. Prior research has argued that it is only in individualistic cultures that individuals go through the experience of compliance, which manifests itself in terms of engaging in individual choices for social approval (Bagozzi & Lee, 2002). Therefore, the hedonism – materialism – impulse buying relationship is moderated by the compliance process more in individualist cultures than in collectivist cultures. Therefore, we build the following proposition:

✦ **Proposition 3 :** The impact of hedonism on impulse buying is greater in individualistic cultures than in collectivistic cultures.

The Moderating Role of Individualism in the Materialism – Impulse Buying Relationship

This relationship between materialism and impulse buying is likely to be moderated by the nature of social influence that the individuals experience in individualist and collectivist cultures (Bagozzi & Lee, 2002). The models of social influence help us understand the moderating role of individualism/collectivism in the materialism – impulse buying relationship. The key debatable issue is as follows : How do individuals experience the social influence processes in individualist and collectivist cultures ? How does this experience of the social influence process moderate the materialism – impulse buying relationship ?

The impact of materialism on impulse buying is likely to be stronger when there is an increasing trend in the degree of individualism (Lee & Kacen, 2008). Promotion-focused individuals would approach materialistic goals through impulse buying to behave following the in-group expectations (Verplanken & Sato, 2011). Prevention-focused individuals would attempt to attain materialistic goals to avoid the pain of being considered as the out-group members by their 'significant others' who are their reference point (Higgins, 2012). However, the materialism of the other individuals may not influence individuals in a predominantly individualistic culture to resort to buying impulsively. Therefore, the degree of buying impulsivity is likely lower in individualistic societies if materialism is not the collective societal value. Impulse buying emerges in individualistic cultures only if materialism is held as an individual value too. It is their individual materialism that dictates their individual impulse buying behavior. Individuals in individualistic cultures are expected to be susceptible to the internalization mode of the influence process (Kacen & Lee, 2002). That is, individuals do get influenced by others, but they modify the opinions of others to adapt them to their needs. This is because individuals in individualistic cultures are likely to possess their self-concepts that are quite distinct from those of others. This

implies that they are likely to accept the suggestions of their family and friends in so far as those suggestions match their values of materialism. Accordingly, the extent of value congruence regarding the materialistic values of individuals and those of in-group members would exercise its influence on the buying decisions of individuals (Bagozzi & Lee, 2002). Therefore, individuals in individualistic cultures are expected to take their independent decisions by exploring the congruence between their materialistic values and the dominant values of their in-group members. Therefore, we build the following proposition:

✦ **Proposition 4 :** Impact of materialism on impulse buying is greater in individualistic cultures than in collectivistic cultures.

Discussion

The impetus of this paper is to explore the moderating effect of individualism/collectivism, at the cultural level of analysis, on the hedonism – materialism – impulse buying relationship. The importance of this study resides within the fact that it resolves prior theoretical conflicts as mentioned in the previous sections, and goes on to propose a research framework that can be validated by future researchers. Hence, this study attempts to posit a unique theoretical perspective by analyzing the prior ideas, identifying the conflicts, and resolving the contradictions. This study, therefore, expects to expedite future research.

Theoretical Implications

First, the theory of informal social communication (Festinger, 1950) argues that human beings tend to favor the uniformity of opinion because it gives them confidence regarding their decisions. Accordingly, it is quite probable that individuals, particularly in the collectivistic Eastern societies, would behave in accordance with their in-group expectations when they make purchases. Second, the social comparison theory argues that there is an innate need for similarity in human beings (Festinger, 1954). For this, individuals in collectivistic Eastern societies are ready to change themselves to be similar like others or they try to influence others to be like them. Applying this notion of the need for similarity to understand impulse buying, it is quite probable that individuals engage in impulse buying to become like their role models, especially within their in-group. Third, it is not just because of the pursuit of similarity in emotions that an individual engages in the acquisition, albeit through impulse buying, but also to know for himself/herself what he/she can do or he/she cannot do. This implies that impulse buying not only results because of individuals' need to compare where they are, but also due to their perception of what they need to do at the level at which their in-group members stand in terms of perceptions relating to their ability (Agarwal & Raychaudhuri, 2019), social status, and prestige.

Research Implications

The moderating roles played by individualism/collectivism in the hedonism – materialism – impulse buying relationship points towards new avenues of research. For example, the theoretical insights of the self-determination theory provide some interesting implications for future research. The self-determination theory has argued that, psychologically, human beings have three universal needs, that is, need for competence, need for autonomy, and need for relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2012). It is possible to explain the phenomenon of impulse buying from the standpoint of the need for autonomy and the need for relatedness. Prior research on the applications of the theory of self-determination has shown that the relationship between the satisfaction of these three basic human needs and intrinsic motivation has cross-cultural implications also. However, the need for

autonomy emerges to be more relevant in Western individualistic cultures than in Eastern collectivistic cultures (Markus, Mullally, & Kitayama, 1997) ; whereas, the need for relatedness is found to be more relevant in Eastern collectivist cultures than in Western individualistic cultures.

Managerial Implications

Research discourse on impulse buying has argued that the demonstration of concern for consumer predispositions is a definite advantage for marketers (Nan & Heo, 2007). In this connection, scholars argue that those firms whose strategic marketing communication is relatively less rooted in materialism would enjoy greater marketing advantage than their rivals who employ marketing communication strategies rooted in materialism (Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012). The reason for this is the increasing consumer awareness regarding firms' social responsibility (Devinney, Auger, & Eckhardt, 2010). Second, this paper's theoretical underpinnings indicate that there should be diverse marketing strategies in individualistic and collectivistic cultures. While firms emphasize autonomy in their marketing communications in individualistic Western societies, they should lay their emphasis on relatedness in their marketing communications in collectivistic Eastern societies. Lastly, the marketing communication strategy of firms can center around the satisfaction of the need for similarity.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the possible moderating roles of individualism/collectivism in the relationships among these constructs. Accordingly, this exploratory research has proposed the moderating roles of individualism/collectivism in the hedonism–impulse buying and materialism–impulse buying relationships. Lastly, this paper has explained the processes of these relationships by drawing from the theories of regulatory focus and social influence.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research

This study is limited to and focussed on the possible moderating roles of individualism/collectivism in the relationships among these constructs. Since, this study is conducted to resolve certain theoretical conflicts and eventually develop a conceptual framework, therefore, conducting an empirical analysis was out of the scope or purview of this paper. However, the proposed conceptual framework can be adopted by future researchers and empirically validate the same. The findings are expected to provide deeper insights into the research continuum and also provide practical implications that will benefit businesses and the marketplace.

Authors' Contribution

Shaon Sen conceived the idea in collaboration with Dr. Smitha Nayak of an extensive literature review to resolve the existing theoretical conflicts and develop a conceptual model which would provide impetus to future research in the field of impulse buying. Henceforth, Shaon Sen extracted research papers with high repute, filtered these based on keywords, and generated concepts. These research papers were further refined and sorted according to relevance in collaboration with Dr. Smitha Nayak, who supervised the study. The manuscript was then written by Mr. Shaon Sen in consultation with Dr. Smitha Nayak.

Conflict of Interest

The authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest, or non-financial interest in the subject matter, or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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