DOES ENGAGEMENT IN SELF-PRESENTATION AFFECT THE ABILITY TO MAKE RATIONAL PURCHASE DECISIONS?

by

Katharina C. Oesch

An Abstract
of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science
in the Department of Psychological Science
University of Central Missouri

December, 2015
ABSTRACT
By:
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Previous research has indicated that self-presentation can deplete self-regulatory resources. The depletion of these resources has been shown to affect impulsive buying tendencies; however no research has directly examined whether self-presentation leads to impulsive buying behavior. The purpose of this study is to examine whether self-presentation directly leads to impulsive buying behavior. A total of 114 participants from the University of Central Missouri participated in this study. Participants were randomly assigned to either the self-presentation condition or non-self-presentation condition. Participants completed a video-recorded interview, an online shopping scenario, a short questionnaire, and a demographics form. Two, two-way ANOVAs were conducted to see the effect of self-presentation and gender on impulsive buying tendencies and amount spent on selected impulse buying items. However, the results did not support either of hypotheses. Future research concerning self-presentation and impulse being is encouraged. Also, different methodologies regarding self-presentation manipulation and shopping scenarios is warranted to understand the relationship between self-presentation and impulse buying.
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CHAPTER 1

NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Rationale

Impulse buying is a phenomenon that has been studied extensively by business professionals and academics alike. Most applied studies have examined impulse buying in an in-store environment where researchers examine how consumers behave while shopping. Psychological research has studied the motivators, consequences, and antecedents of impulse buying.

Although much research has been done on impulse buying and self-presentation, no studies have examined self-presentation and impulse buying together. The purpose of the current study is to examine if impulsive buying tendencies are related to the need to impress others (self-presentation). It is proposed that those who engage in effortful forms of self-presentation will be more likely to engage in impulse buying behavior because of depleted self-regulatory resources due to self-presentation. This research will help fill a gap in the field of consumer behavior research by connecting self-presentation and impulse buying tendencies. In addition, exploration of how self-presentation is related to impulse buying may also provide an alternative explanation for why there is a growing amount of apparel returns in retail stores. Previous research on self-presentation has been robust; however the focus has mostly been directed toward social influences and individuals’ interactions with others in general. Previous research on impulse buying has not yielded consistent findings in terms of social influences and impulse buying. Results from the current study will hopefully provide more concrete evidence for the direct relationship between impulse buying and self-presentation.
Different researchers have defined impulse buying in a variety of ways (Kollatt & Willet, 1967; Rook, 1987; Beatty & Ferrell, 1998; Xiao & Nicholson, 2013). Impulse buying was further categorized as having affective and cognitive components (Verplanken & Herabadi, 2001). Impulse buying has been found to be related to shopping with others (Luo, 2005; Niu, 2013), self-control (Baumeister, 2002), normative influences (Rook & Fisher, 1995), and depletion of self-regulatory resources (Vohs & Faber, 2007).

Some negative consequences of excessively engaging in impulsive buying include monetary issues and the possibility of developing compulsive buying. Compulsive buying has been identified as having more long-term, negative implications compared to impulse buying (Sohn & Choi, 2012; Roberts, Manolis, & Pullig, 2014). Compulsive buying is chronic and repetitive buying episodes that consumers engage in to alleviate negative emotions. Compulsive buying is often talked about in a pathological sense. This is not the case for impulse buying. Xiao and Nicholson (2013) offer a comprehensive definition for impulse buying; “an unplanned and sudden buying act, in response to subjective or external stimuli, accompanied by a powerful and persistent urge; after the purchase, the customer experiences emotional, cognitive and/or behavior reactions, which may become the new trigger of repeated impulse buying; a reflection of impulsivity traits, sociocultural values and buying beliefs; both a process and an outcome” (p.335). This definition encompasses a number of different facets of impulse buying including social, behavioral, and affective components.

Research has also indicated that consumers who are more inclined to purchase products impulsively are also more likely to return merchandise on a regular basis (Kang & Johnson, 2009). This indicates that an impulsive purchase occurs with no deliberation concerning the consequences of that purchase.
Self-presentation means that one is focused on constructing his or her image in a way that is congruent with how one thinks others view him or her (Leary, 1990). Previous research has shown that increased focus on construction of self-presentation (effortful self-presentation) depletes self-regulatory resources (Vohs, Ciarocco, & Baumeister, 2005; Carmichael & Tyler, 2012).

The depletion of self-regulatory resources can serve to explain why consumers continue to purchase impulsively and, why, when surrounded by other factors such as self-presentation motives, instances of irrational behavior occur on a regular basis. A depletion of self-regulatory resources has been found to be related to increased risk-taking behaviors (Kastenmuller & Asal, 2012), decreased self-control (Freeman and Muraven, 2010), decreased task performance (Uziel & Baumeister, 2012), and social anxiety and fear of negative evaluation (Kocovski & Endler, 2000). The depletion of self-regulatory resources has been found to be related to self-presentation concerns (Vohs, Ciarocco, & Baumeister, 2005; Carmichael & Tyler, 2012), choice behavior (Vohs, Schmeichel, Baumeister, Twenge, Nelson, & Tice, 2008), and social anxiety and fear of negative evaluation (Leary and Schlenker, 1982).

Previous research on impulse buying is still limited. Although shopping is a large part of people’s lives in modern society, problematic consumer behaviors are also common. The findings from this study will be useful in illustrating how self-presentation can be the motive for the tendency to impulse buy and for exploration in new directions for consumer behavior research. In addition, further study of impulse buying should be of utmost importance to researchers in the field of consumer behavior. Impulse buying has negative implications for the consumer such as financial and emotional hardships. Greater understanding of impulse buying may provide potential solutions to these issues.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The aim of the present research is to examine if effortful forms of self-presentation affect individuals’ ability to make rational purchase decisions. First a brief discussion will be provided regarding general consumer behavior and irrationality. Next a definition for impulse buying will be provided, along with a review of previous research that has provided evidence to support these constructs. Self-presentation will be defined and a discussion of previous research examining variables related to this construct with a focus on self-regulatory resources will be provided. Finally, previous research that has examined self-presentation and depletion of self-regulatory resources will be reviewed.

Irrational Buying Behavior/Impulse Buying

While there is no clear definition for “irrational buying” or “irrational consumer behavior,” research has examined similar concepts such as hedonic consumption and consumer impulsiveness. Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) define hedonic consumption as “facets of consumer behavior that relate to the multisensory, fantasy, and emotive aspects of one’s experience with products” (p. 92). Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) identified three mental constructs related to hedonic consumption. First, emotional desires can dictate choice of products. For example, pleasure, anger, or hate may outweigh consumers’ rational thoughts regarding a purchase situation. These are related to emotions that consumers may experience before, during, or after an impulsive purchase. Second, consumers may attach subjective meaning in conjunction with a concrete meaning to a product. Advertising content of aesthetically pleasing products, such as expensive clothing items, perfume/cologne, etc. relies heavily on the subjective meaning of products. Some popular, expensive cologne may advertise
that it will make women view men who wear it as more attractive. This is more subjective than concrete because it refers to the intangible appeal of a product. In many cases the subjective meaning can be the deciding factor between choosing the less expensive product or the more expensive one. Third, hedonic consumption can be related to construction of a reality with fantasy like aspects. In essence, hedonic consumption is based on whatever consumers construct their reality as, even if it is not congruent with what is occurring in external reality. A relevant example is consumers who imagine themselves as “chick magnets” while drinking Budweiser. These consumers may be adopting the fantasy that is being advertised by Budweiser, that is, if men drink this beer, women will want to be with them. The research by Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) provides support for the appeal of products that may not always be reasonable to buy, but still offer pleasure which is one of the driving forces behind irrational purchase behavior such as impulse buying.

An example of how people behave irrationally was illustrated through the work of Denes-Raj and Epstein (1994). In their study they instructed participants to draw a red jelly bean out of one of two different bowls. The researchers were interested in seeing if participants would make irrational choices despite knowing the probabilities of drawing a red jelly bean from either of the two bowls. What they found was that participants made irrational choices (i.e. drawing from a bowl with a low probability of drawing a red jelly bean) even when they explicitly knew the probabilities of drawing a red jelly bean out of the two bowls. While this study illustrated general irrationality, the results of this study can be extended to the realm of consumer behavior. Despite knowing they are making irrational choices, people may still choose to make irrational purchase decisions.
One research study (Bushman, 1993) examined the correlation between public self-consciousness and branding (national brands and bargain brands). In this study public self-consciousness was operationalized as the way in which people focus attention on themselves based on how others see and evaluate them. Through the utilization of consumer product testing and completion of the Public Self-Consciousness Scale, the researcher concluded that there was a positive correlation between level of public self-consciousness and ratings of national brands and a negative correlation between ratings of bargain branded products and level of public self-consciousness. These findings suggest that depending on level of public self-consciousness, brand type is an important factor used in consumer purchasing decisions. Overall this study suggests that consumers are aware of how others view them while making purchase decisions and their preferences for products and brands are impacted. Although this study defined public self-consciousness as the way in which people focus attention on themselves based on how others see and evaluate them, this definition is closely related to the self-presentation construct which will be discussed in greater detail in this literature review.

Recent research (Strack, Werth, & Deutsch, 2006; Vohs, 2006) has viewed consumer impulsiveness from a reflexive system perspective in which consumers purchase products with little regard for consequences of the purchases. Vohs’ research extended similar research done by Strack et al. (2006). Vohs’ research specifically examined eating habits of dieters, spending habits, and decision making. Vohs explained that the draining of self-regulatory resources negatively affects the reflexive system, thus hindering people’s self-control. This helps to explain why when people become exhausted they have a difficult time resisting temptation for certain foods and making good decisions.
Dittmar and Drury (2000) examined ordinary and excessive consumers. In this study, the researchers interviewed 32 participants asking them about their shopping habits. Dittmar and Drury (2000) were able to classify excessive consumers based on participants’ involvement in a shopping addicts’ therapy group. A “snowball” sampling method was used to recruit ordinary consumers from residential households. Snowball sampling refers to the selection of participants, of who further recruit other participants for a research study. Results from the survey indicated that many of the constructs related to impulse buying, such as regret, are difficult to explain using a standard definition. The way these constructs are experienced can be unique to each individual.

Sussman and Alter (2012) took a different approach and looked at overspending and underestimating on exceptional purchases. Specifically they wanted to understand how people budget and track expenses (exceptional v. ordinary). They explained that exceptional purchases were ones that were unusual or infrequent while others were ordinary (frequent and common). Examples of exceptional purchases are cars, wedding dresses, and houses. Examples of ordinary purchases are clothes and hygiene items. Sussman and Alter (2012) argued that one of the reasons people underestimate their budgets is because when they account for exceptional purchases, they fail to include those exceptional items in future budgets. People are under the impression that exceptional purchases occur sparingly and therefore, are unlikely to show up as future expenses. This provides further evidence that people are poor decision makers when it comes to purchases and finances. The results from this study show that people are unable to accurately frame purchase decisions when potential purchase decisions arise. When tracking expenses initially, consumers may include exceptional purchases in their current budget, but not in future budgets. A rational consumer may set aside a specific sum of money in his or her
budget, anticipating that some sort of exceptional purchase may arise in the future. However, irrational consumers would not consider doing this.

Early research concerning impulse buying was conceptualized differently than it is today. Cobb and Hoyer (1984) attempted to differentiate planned purchasing from impulse purchasing. Early research on impulse buying focused on motivational factors (Rook, 1987) and potential precursors (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998). In addition, early research attempted to provide a working definition for impulse buying as well as differentiate it from closely related concepts such as compulsive buying. There is no definitive definition of impulse buying (Verplanken & Herabadi, 2001). Rook (1987) defines impulse buying as occurring “when a consumer experiences a sudden, often powerful and persistent urge to buy something immediately” (p. 191). Rook and Fisher (1995) provide specific characteristics of impulsive buyers. According to them, impulsive buyers often do not think before they purchase an item. Impulsive buyers also feel the need for instant gratification (Rook & Fisher, 1995).

Based on a field study, Beatty and Ferrell (1998) proposed a model that illustrated possible precursors to impulse buying. The model mapped factors related to the shopping experience, such as time available to shop and money available to shop. The model also included motivational factors such as impulse buying tendency and the enjoyment of shopping. Additional factors related to the motivational factors included negative affect, in-store browsing, and positive affect. Time available to shop was proposed to be related to in-store browsing and negative affect, while money available was proposed to be related to negative and positive affect. Shopping enjoyment was proposed to be related to in-store browsing and positive affect, while impulse buying tendency was thought to be related to in-store browsing. The outcome end of the model included the urge to buy impulsively and the impulse purchase itself. Essentially, this
model indicated situations where an impulsive purchase could occur, such as shopping enjoyment leading to in-store browsing, leading to the urge to buy impulsively, ultimately leading up to the physical act of impulse buying. This model illustrated that impulsive purchasing is more complex than originally thought by previous researchers (Rook, 1987; Rook & Fisher, 1995). This study provided valuable information because it showed what factors could lead to impulse buying in a real life situation.

The different perspectives on impulse buying shows how the definition has evolved over the past three decades. This also indicates that different researchers conceptualize the phenomena in different ways, and, that there may be differences in how the phenomena is measured. For the purpose of the current study, the definition from Xiao (2013) was used.

Most research on impulsive buying has been from a qualitative perspective. Consumer behavior research has utilized a variety of field studies to examine factors related to impulse buying including in store observations and interviews with consumers. These methods have the advantage of exploring factors that could be closely related to instances of impulsive buying. Hausman (2000) conducted 60 interviews to gather information regarding impulse buying behaviors. During the interviews the researcher concealed the true nature of the interviews by telling interviewees that they would be answering questions regarding shopping behaviors. The initial interviews yielded several pieces of information. First, results from the study indicated that participants who were style conscious reported purchasing impulsively. The researchers operationalized the need to achieve higher self-esteem and self-actualization as style consciousness. Second, those who shopped impulsively also reported shopping for hedonic (pleasurable) reasons as compared to more utilitarian reasons. These findings support the idea
that consumers shop on impulse; driven by the desire to fulfill pleasurable needs as opposed to rational needs such as functionality of products.

Recent research on impulsive buying has examined behavioral components (Verplanken & Herabadi, 2001), social influences (Luo, 2005; Niu, 2013), self-regulatory resource depletion (Vohs & Faber, 2007), and consequences of repeated engagement in impulsive/irrational buying behavior (Sohn & Choi, 2012; Roberts, Manolis, and Pullig, 2014).

Recently researchers have suspected that social influences could play a role in consumer behavior, more specifically impulse buying. Some research has examined the role peers play in consumer buying behavior. Niu (2013) conducted an online survey administered to young people aged 16-30. Questions on the survey measured purchasing behavior, decision-making styles, and peer influence. The study showed that peer influence, brand, price, brand loyalty, impulsiveness, and quality of product were all positively related to adolescent buying behavior (Niu, 2013). This study was limited, due to the fact it was survey based. The author did not thoroughly discuss how variables were related to one another. However, this study showed that peer influence is a possible factor related to buying behavior.

Another study (Luo, 2005) focused on differences between peer and familial influences on impulsive buying behavior. In this study the focus was on group cohesiveness’ role in impulse buying. Luo (2005) used how attractive a group is to its respective members as the operational definition of cohesiveness for the study. In the first study participants were assigned to either a friends or family condition with either high cohesiveness or low cohesiveness. There was also a control condition. Participants were exposed to hypothetical shopping situations with varying degrees of group cohesiveness. They included scenarios including family members and friends to represent the different groups. To measure participants’ impulsive urges, participants were asked
a series of questions regarding impulsive urges. To measure purchasing behavior, participants were asked to choose, from a list of outcomes, which purchase decision a hypothetical shopper would make. The results from the first study showed that the presence of peers while shopping increased the urge to buy and increased the likelihood of engaging in impulsive buying behavior, while the presence of family decreased the urge to buy, as well as the act of impulsive buying. In addition, the difference in impulsive buying was greater for cohesive groups compared to non-cohesive groups.

In the second study, the same shopping scenario was used, however the gender of the hypothetical shopper was changed, the impulse item was changed, and the solo shopping scenario was eliminated. In addition to the impulsive urges and purchasing decision questions, participants were asked to answer questions regarding susceptibility to influence. The results from the second study showed that participants’ impulsive purchasing urges were greater for the high peer cohesiveness group, as well as when they were more susceptible to influence. This indicated that the closer the peer group was and the more susceptible an individual was to influence, the more likely it was that participants would purchase impulsively in the imaginary scenario. Across both studies, it was found that peer influence increased impulsive buying behavior in a hypothetical scenario. In addition, family influence was found to decrease impulsive buying behavior. These studies were important for impulsive buying research because they showed that people who are a part of a close knit peer group are more likely to have impulsive buying tendencies. This would suggest that perhaps the need to present oneself in a certain way to a peer group could be an important factor in impulsive buying behavior.

Rook and Fisher (1995) conducted a study in which they examined the relationship between normative influences and impulsive buying behavior. They defined normative influence
as “judgments about the appropriateness of engaging in impulse buying behavior” (p. 305). They used the Buying Impulsiveness Scale to measure impulsive buying behaviors. They also used a scenario to assess the level of impulsive buying behavior. The participants had to decide what purchase decision the person in the scenario would make. To assess the normative evaluation, the participants had to choose from pairs of either “smart-stupid,” or “good-bad” to describe the person in the scenario’s purchase decision. These two word pairs were bipolar pairs, in that they reflected extremes of a purchase decision. If a participant felt the person in the scenario made a poor, or negative purchase decision, they could choose either the word “stupid” or “bad” to describe the purchase decision. Results showed that people low in impulsiveness, and who rated a purchase negatively, were less likely to act upon buying impulses than those people who were higher in impulsiveness and rated a purchase negatively (Rook & Fisher, 1995). This study showed that there is a connection between impulse buying and normative influence (i.e. self-presentation). In addition, it showed that people would not purchase products if others would view their purchase as “stupid” or “bad”. This result demonstrated that self-presentational concerns are related to impulsive buying behavior. Even if consumers are high in impulsiveness, the concern of how others view their purchases is still a deciding factor in the purchase decision. The urge to buy impulsively may override the normative influences and thus consumers may attempt to rationalize their behavior. On the other hand, self-presentational concerns may work against impulsive buying urges. If consumers realize others view their purchase as stupid, the fear of judgment may combat the urge to buy. The Rook and Fisher study was limited by not taking into account participants’ current level of self-regulation capability. It is possible that participants were depleted from previous activities they engaged in throughout the day. This could have affected consumers’ impulsive purchasing behavior.
Verplanken and Herabadi (2001) identified two key features of an impulsive purchase: lack of deliberation or planning of a purchase, and an emotional response. Purchases may seem unplanned for different reasons. Unplanned purchases are described as the intention to purchase previously and habitual purchases. Intention to purchase previously and habitual purchases may seem unplanned, but tend to be characterized by early planning or deliberation. For example, someone may consistently purchase expensive coffee. To a passerby it may seem that the person walks by, picks up the coffee, and heads to the checkout. In reality, the consumer always buys that coffee and just happens to find it quickly in the store. Emotions which occur before, during, or after the purchase also characterize impulsive purchases. Basic emotions that may occur with purchasing behavior are pleasure, excitement, or regret (Verplanken & Herabadi, 2001). These emotions have been identified as most commonly occurring (Rook, 1987). During a purchase situation many consumers experience pleasure and excitement, however after an impulsive purchase, regret may occur. A good example of impulsive purchases are purchases made at the checkout line in a store. Usually stores have a variety of items displayed such as candy, chips, and magazines. Some consumers may walk up, see a candy bar and buy it. They likely had no intention to buy the candy, but bought it because of the pleasant emotion associated upon seeing the candy.

Impulse buying is driven by an uncontrollable urge to purchase a product. A question would be why one cannot control that urge. Baumeister (2002) provided several key points supporting the importance of self-control and impulse buying. He contended that attaining goals, self-monitoring, and capacity to change the self were important factors for the successful execution of self-control. In terms of attaining goals, he states that when people have a clear understanding of what they want to purchase, they are less likely to engage in impulse buying.
This explains why it is easier to solicit customers who did not come to a store to shop for anything in particular. Those who are unsure of what they want can be more susceptible to trying new products and buying more items. This is because they have no specific item(s) they are shopping for. Another consideration is goal confliction. Goal confliction is when one goal is in conflict with another goal. In many cases people have more than one goal in their mind. For example, some people may be out shopping for jeans. They may want to buy the least expensive, yet most fashionable kind of jeans possible. If they encounter jeans that are fashionable, but out of their price range, they will have to decide which matters more. In this case they would have to evaluate all possible factors including their happiness and the longevity of the jeans. With all the considerations needed to make a decision, it is apparent that conflict will arise. This conflict could explain self-control failure in consumers who impulse buy. If consumers are presented with a variety of different attributes of a product, such as color and style, the time it takes to evaluate these attributes may be frustrating and mentally exhausting to a consumer. In this case consumers may ignore self-control in favor of letting impulse guide their purchase decision.

With respect to self-monitoring, if people are able to effectively monitor their behavior, their self-control will be stronger than those who cannot monitor themselves. Self-monitoring refers to the monitoring of one’s own behavior. Baumeister (2002) provides the example of dieters. When dieters become distracted from keeping track of what they eat, they are more likely to binge than if they had been able to monitor their eating behavior closely. In other words, when a dieter has broken her diet for the day she has already lost track of how many calories she has eaten that day and figures she may as well eat whatever she wants. The last factor needed for successful execution of self-control is the capacity to change the self. This requires the ability to employ the necessary energy to resist temptation. This is closely related to the argument of
Muraven and Baumeister (2000) arguing that self-control is similar to a muscle. If the “muscle” is fatigued and depleted, it will become difficult to use that energy to resist temptation. Related again to the dieter example, if she has resisted the temptation to indulge throughout the day and is faced with the decision to either eat vegetables or potato chips later that day, she will likely choose the potato chips. The expended effort to resist temptation throughout the day has dwindled her self-control to the point where she gives in to the temptation.

One of the hallmarks needed to resist impulsive buying is self-control. Past research has indicated that self-control is a limited resource that can be depleted over time if not exercised regularly (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000). Imagine an actual purchase situation. A consumer is shopping at a popular clothing store after spending many hours at work. She sees a fairly high priced pair of jeans and without much consideration, picks them up and buys them. During the purchase and selection of the jeans she feels excited and happy, however after the purchase she feels regret. It is possible that because this consumer felt exhausted, her self-control was depleted after the long day. This could explain why she purchased the jeans without deliberation.

Another study (Sohn & Choi, 2012) investigated possible implications of compulsive buying. Compulsive buying refers to repetitive and chronic buying episodes that are used to alleviate negative feelings that are associated with some event (Sohn & Choi, 2012). Compulsive buying should be distinguished from impulsive buying. Compulsive buying is more closely related with pathology rather than being a phenomenon that does not impair functioning. Impulse buying is related to uncontrollable urges to purchase products, but does not impair every day functioning in the way compulsive buying does. In other words, compulsive buying can be considered a more extreme form of impulsive buying. Roberts, Manolis, and Pullig (2014) found that compulsive buying was correlated with self-esteem and fear of negative evaluation. From
two survey studies with 402 participants, they found that those who reported higher levels of
anxiety were more likely to buy compulsively. In addition, higher fear of negative evaluation and
social identity were more likely to increase the propensity to buy compulsively. Here social
identity refers to how congruent peoples’ public identity is with how they view themselves. This
suggests that the need to buy repetitively may be related to the need to alleviate negative
emotions related to self-presentational concerns. Because one of the main aims of self-
presentation is the construction of how one presents oneself to an audience, it can be inferred that
self-presentation is related to social identity. The construction of one’s public image may
influence the person’s social identity.

Few studies have examined how depletion of regulatory resources affects impulse buying
behavior. Vohs and Faber (2007) were interested in whether depletion of self-regulatory
resources would lead to people paying more for products. They conducted an experiment to test
whether or not depletion of self-regulatory resources would impact actual buying behavior. In the
first experiment, it was suggested that in order to resist the urge to buy impulsively people will
engage in the devaluation of a product and contemplating the costs of purchasing the product.
Vohs and Faber (2007) hypothesized that due to the already diminished self-regulatory resources
(by experimental manipulation), people would be less likely to engage in contemplation of costs
or devaluation of a product to resist impulse buying. In the first experiment participants were to
watch a short video and make personality judgments about the person in the video. While the
video was playing, a word was flashed at the bottom of the screen. Participants in the resource
demand condition were instructed to not look at the bottom of the screen. Participants in the
control condition were given no instructions about where to direct their attention. Because it is
difficult to ignore the flashing of words across a computer screen, Vohs and Faber argued that
this task would require one to practice self-regulation, thus expending self-regulatory resources. Participants were then asked the price they thought college students would pay for certain products. Results showed when participants’ resources were depleted, they reported being inclined to spend more money on items compared to their non-resource taxed counterparts (Vohs & Faber, 2007). For the second experiment, to deplete self-regulatory resources, participants were assigned to either a thought suppression condition or a non-thought suppression condition. Participants were instructed that at the end of the study they would be given $10 that they could use to purchase any of the products they had seen in the study. Results showed that participants in the thought suppression condition tended to spend more on products compared to those in the no suppression condition. This study illustrated that the more depleted one is, the more likely he or she will spend more money for a product. In other words, when people are cognitively depleted, they will be more likely to engage in irrational consumer behavior such as spending more money.

**Self-Presentation**

Self-presentation is comprised of two different motives: either striving to please others or working to devise one’s own public self-image (Baumeister, 1982). Early research on self-presentation was mostly conducted in conditions where participants were placed in public and private venues. This made it easier to measure differences in self-presentation because researchers would be able to manipulate the conditions where self-presentation motives are employed. For example, participants in one group may be informed that their performance or responses will be relayed to others, while the second group will be told they will be responding or performing alone. Baumeister (1982) identified two reasons for engagement in self-presentation: need for rewards and self-fulfillment. People may try to present themselves
favorably to please their target audience. This could be considered rewarding if the person’s main goal is to gain favor with others. Individuals who seek to make their projected public image congruent with their self-image would be an example of the self-fulfillment reward. It is important to distinguish the term self-presentation from impression management. Baumeister (1982) distinguished impression management as one’s “attempt to please a particular audience” (p. 3). Leary and Kowalski (1990) described impression management as one’s attempt to manage others’ impressions of them. This is different from self-presentation in that impression management requires people to present a desired image to a target audience, whereas self-presentation is concerned with whether the projected image is congruent with how people view themselves. More recent literature has used the terms interchangeably (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Leary & Allen, 2011). Leary and Kowalski (1990) also stated that self-presentation is a less broad term than impression management. For the purpose of the current study, the term self-presentation will be used based on the definition provided by Baumeister (1982): the construction of a self-image to gain favor with and please others.

Self-presentation relies on motivational factors for the construction of one’s public image. One possible motivational factor is appearance. Schneider (1974) examined the role dress and appearance play in self-presentation. In their experiment participants were separated into two groups. In the first group participants were told to wear a tie and jacket because the interviews would be videotaped. In the other group participants were given no instructions on how to dress. Participants in the second group came to the study in casual clothes. All participants were informed that there were two parts to the study; one involving a structured interview and one involving an unstructured interview. They were also informed that both sessions would be videotaped. Participants were given the first self-presentation measure that consisted of socially
desirable and socially undesirable items. Participants were asked to rate how descriptive the items were of themselves. Participants then answered questions similar to the ones they completed on the self-presentation measure. This would be done via audiotape by the interviewer in the next room. Results showed that participants who were well dressed reported more positive aspects about themselves compared to those who were casually dressed. Schneider (1974) concluded that participants may have tried to present themselves more favorably because they were instructed to come to the interview well-dressed. The participants may have equated being well-dressed with a favorable self-presentation to others. This study was one of the first to indicate the importance of how much emphasis people place on self-presentation.

A more recent study by Peluchette, Karl, and Rust (2006) examined attitudes and beliefs toward dress in the workplace. In their study, participants were asked about their self-monitoring behavior and their opinions on attire. Peluchette et al. (2006) utilized the “Self-Monitoring Behavior Scale” and the “Personal Beliefs and Attitudes about Attire Scale” which measured six different constructs: “(1) general clothing interest; (2) value of workplace attire; (3) use of attire to manage impressions; (4) appearance labor; (5) beliefs regarding workplace outcomes; and (6) self-perceptions.” Results showed that people who placed a high emphasis on dress and appearance used these factors to manage impressions of themselves in the workplace. In addition, individuals believe that if they manage impressions of themselves, they can influence how others view them as well as garner more power and prestige within the company (Peluchette et al., 2006). This, again, illustrated the importance of appearance on perceived acceptance by others. This also indicates that dress is considered a relatively important factor when it comes to how people present themselves to others. Research has only recently begun to examine the effects of self-presentation on other constructs that are related to impulse buying.
Another factor closely related to appearance concerns is body image concerns. Hewitt, Flett, and Ediger (1995) examined whether body image attitudes were related to perfectionism traits and perfectionistic self-presentation. The researchers described perfectionistic self-presentation as being a specific type of self-presentation where the trait of perfectionism is merged with self-presentational concerns. They described perfectionism as being a multidimensional construct comprised of intrapersonal and interpersonal components. Utilizing several measures assessing perfectionism and various measures assessing body image beliefs and symptoms of eating disorders, the researchers determined that perfectionism was related to negative body image and self-esteem as well as the symptoms of eating disorders. The self-oriented perfectionism component was found to be related to symptoms of anorexia while the social aspects of perfectionism were related to self-esteem and negative body image. Overall, the findings indicate that perfectionistic aspects of self-presentation can negatively relate to one’s body image. This also may indicate that people may try to alleviate negative feelings regarding their body image by presenting an image that they believe reflects the expectations others place upon them.

**Self-Presentation and Depletion of Self-Regulatory Resources**

Self-control is thought to be a limited resource. In other words, depending on the level of exertion, self-control energy can be depleted. Self-control is connected to a number of constructs including risk-taking behaviors (Fischer, Kastenmuller & Asal, 2012), risky financial decision making (Perry & Lee, 2012), self-presentation (Vohs et al., 2005), and compulsive buying (Sohn & Choi, 2012; Roberts et al., 2014). Lack of self-control has been found to be related to self-presentational concerns. The more concerned people were with their performance in front of
others, the worse their performance was on a task, as well as subsequent efforts for self-control (Uziel & Baumeister, 2012).

One study (Vohs et al., 2008) has highlighted that by making a repetitive series of choices, ability to initiate future self-control would be hindered. Vohs and colleagues (2008) found from one of their experiments that participants who were faced with a series of choices about products and then asked to drink as much of a vinegar drink mix as they could drank less than participants in the no-choice condition. This experiment showed that the more choices people are faced with, the less likely they will be able to control themselves because of the depleted self-regulatory resources.

Uziel and Baumeister (2012) found that self-control was impaired after performing tasks in the presence of others. In their first study participants performed a letter crossing task alone or in front of others. Participants completed the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire-Revised (EPQ-RS). This measure was used to assess neuroticism and impression management. Participants then completed a letter crossing task either alone or in front of a camcorder. To measure participants’ self-control, all participants completed an unsolvable puzzle task alone. All participants completed the Brief Mood Introspection Scale (BMIS) to measure emotional responses during the task. Results from the first study revealed that participants who scored higher on neuroticism and completed the task in a public venue were more depleted than participants who scored lower on neuroticism and completed the letter crossing task in a public venue. In addition, participants who scored low on impression management persisted longer on the task in a private setting compared to participants who scored low on impression management and performed the task in a public setting. These findings suggested that people who are performing a non-demanding task in
front of others are more motivated to impress others and will work harder to complete a task compared to people who perform a task alone.

In the second study participants completed the EPQ-RS and the Trait Self-Control scale. Participants were instructed to record all their thoughts on a sheet of paper for six minutes. Half of the participants recorded their thoughts in private while the other half were videotaped while recording their thoughts. To measure participants’ level of self-control, they completed an anagrams task. Participants could either work until they solved all of the anagrams or until they wished to quit the task. Results from the second study showed that participants who scored higher in neuroticism persisted longer on the anagram task in a private setting compared to a public setting. Participants who scored lower in neuroticism persisted longer on the anagram task in a public versus private setting. Participants who performed the anagram task in a public setting, regardless of their score on impression management, persisted longest on the anagram task.

In the third study similar results were found. Individuals high in impression management performed a word scramble task best in a public setting compared to individuals high in impression management who completed a word scramble task in a non-depleted private venue or depleted private venue. Individuals low in neuroticism performed best on a word scramble task when in a depleted public venue compared to individuals low in neuroticism who completed a word scramble task in the depleted private or non-depleted private venues.

Results from these three studies suggests that individuals high in impression management perform better on a series of tasks measuring self-control compared to participants lower in impression management, however individuals who score higher on neuroticism tend to have more difficulties persisting on self-control tasks than individuals who score lower on
neuroticism. This suggests that although impression management may be a positive motivator on performance, when individuals are higher in neuroticism, their performance may be impeded. If individuals suffer from anxious feelings and are asked to perform a task in front of others, the fear associated with this is enough to negatively affect performance. These studies show that performing tasks in public can impair performance as well as subsequent self-control ability.

In addition, social anxiety and fear of negative evaluation can play a role in the depletion of self-regulatory resources. Leary and Schlenker (1982) developed a model of self-presentation that related to social anxiety. This model illustrated that people feel pressured to create a specific impression of themselves to others. Different social situations call for different kinds of interaction. Often times the anticipation of an interaction can be anxiety provoking. When individuals feel they cannot create the impression they want, they will begin to experience anxiety. When individuals feel they have to behave a certain way in a social situation, they will engage in self-presentation. The engagement in self-presentation may create anxiety due to the extreme focus on one’s self-presentation.

Kocovski and Endler (2000) explored the relationship between social anxiety, self-regulation, and fear of negative evaluation. Their study defined self-regulation as the efforts of individuals to monitor behavior and goal setting abilities which is consistent with Baumeister’s (1982) definition of self-control. Participants completed seven measures on social anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and self-regulation. Correlational analyses revealed that negative correlations existed between expectancy for success and social anxiety, self-esteem and social anxiety, and self-reinforcement and social anxiety. A positive correlation was found between fear of negative evaluation and social anxiety. This study suggested that aspects of self-regulation (self-esteem, self-reinforcement, and goal setting) were all related to social anxiety. Higher
levels of fear of negative evaluation were also related to social anxiety. The inability to regulate one’s feeling and emotions appropriately can be related to one’s interactions with others.

As described previously, specific cognitive and social processes tend to tax self-regulatory resources. Research has found that depletion of self-regulatory resources can also affect risk-taking behaviors. In their two experiments, Freeman and Muraven (2010) found people who are more depleted of self-control chose more attractive, but less likely outcomes and betted on riskier options to earn money. In other words, depleted people took more risks than those who were less depleted.

Fischer, Kastenmuller, and Asal (2012) also found that people who were depleted reported greater levels of risk-taking behaviors. In their first experiment they had participants engage in either a high or low depletion task, then complete a sensation seeking measure. Results from the first experiment indicated that participants’ reduction in self-regulatory resources caused participants to report having increased levels of sensation seeking behaviors. In the second experiment the researchers attempted to replicate their findings using emotion regulation. Results from the second experiment indicated that participants were more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviors when they were depleted of self-regulatory resources.

In the third experiment the researchers used cognitive load and emotional control to manipulate self-regulatory resource depletion. They found that cognitive load and feelings of anger, however, did not affect risk-taking. Then, cognitive exhaustion from performing the task was measured. Results showed that participants depleted of self-regulatory resources who were more cognitively exhausted were more likely to take risks than non-depleted participants. These four experiments effectively showed that participants who were depleted of self-regulatory resources were more likely to report intent to engage in risk-taking behavior compared to
participants who were not depleted. This study illustrated that people who engage in activities that consume regulatory resources become exhausted and, in turn, are more likely to engage in risky behaviors that they may normally not engage in.

As discussed above, depletion of self-regulatory resources can influence several variables such as risk-taking behaviors (Fischer et al., 2012), risky financial decision making (Perry & Lee, 2012), and compulsive buying (Sohn & Choi, 2012; Roberts et al., 2014). Most importantly, depletion of self-regulatory resources is directly related to self-presentation.

Vohs et al. (2005) provided compelling evidence that connected self-presentation and depletion of self-regulatory resources. Across four of their eight studies they found that participants who were presenting themselves in an incongruent manner were more depleted than those who felt no pressure to present themselves in a specific way. When people present themselves in an incongruent manner, they will use more self-control which consequently depletes self-regulatory ability. In the first study participants were to present themselves either favorably or modestly to friends or strangers. Participants were asked to bring a same-sex friend to the experiment. Participants were randomly assigned to either complete an interview situation with their friend or with a confederate (i.e., a stranger). In addition, participants were given instructions to present themselves either favorably or modestly during the interview. To measure self-regulatory resource depletion, participants were measured on their persistence on a complex, mathematical task. After 30 minutes, or after participants chose to quit solving math problems, participants filled out the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS). Results showed that participants who had to present themselves modestly to a group of strangers and favorably to friends did not persist as long on completion of mathematical problems.
The second study was focused on incompatible gender presentations. It was expected that male participants who were to present their interpersonal qualities and females who were to present their competencies would be more depleted because they had to present non-congruent self-presentations to a neutral audience. Results supported the hypothesis that women who presented their outstanding competencies and men who presented their interpersonal qualities persisted less on squeezing the handgrip compared to men who presented outstanding competencies and women who presented interpersonal qualities.

In their third study participants talked about themselves while trying to be likable and competent or as just being themselves in two different conditions: skeptical and accepting audience condition. In the skeptical audience condition participants were told that their audio recording would be listened to by graduate students who believed that people are not always truthful about what they say. In the accepting audience condition participants were told that their audio recording would be listened to by graduate students who believed that people are mostly truthful about what they say. Results showed that participants who were asked to present themselves as competent and likeable to a skeptical audience had more problems masking their facial expressions during the video viewing than participants in any of the other conditions.

In their fourth study, participants were under the assumption that they were token members of a group. In the token condition participants believed they were the only member of their racial group speaking about the topic. In the non-token condition participants believed they were a part of a group of individuals who would be providing their opinion on a topic. It was expected that participants in the token condition would feel more pressure to present themselves in a specific way which would require more self-regulatory resources. Results showed that participants who were speaking about a racial or environmental topic and believed they were the
token member were more depleted of self-regulatory resources than participants who believed they were not the token member. Across all four studies, Vohs et al. (2005) found that when participants were engaging in self-presentation in an incongruent manner, self-regulatory resources were more taxed and participants became more depleted. These studies provide evidence that the process of self-presentation resembles a process of depletion of self-regulatory resources. In other words, the more actively engaged people are in self-presentation, the more depleted their self-regulatory resources will be. This will negatively impact future self-control attempts for many different cognitive functions and related behaviors.

**The Current Study**

As evidenced by previous research, self-presentation has the capacity to deplete self-regulatory resources (Vohs et al., 2005). Prior research has also indicated that depletion of self-regulatory resources impacts the propensity to engage in impulse buying (Vohs & Faber, 2007), and risk-taking behavior (Freeman & Muraven, 2010; Fischer et al., 2012). If self-presentation depletes self-regulatory resources, which are needed for impulse control, then a greater focus on self-presentation will lead to impulsive buying behavior.

Given past research, it was the purpose of the current research to demonstrate that individuals, who are more actively engaged in self-presentation, would be depleted of self-regulatory resources and would show higher levels of impulsive buying tendencies. In addition, due to the depleted regulatory resources, the individual would have limited cognitive ability to think rationally; and therefore would choose the more expensive (luxury) product based on the limited ability to rationally consider all the information (price, functionality, quality, etc.) regarding the purchasing situation. A limited amount of research has been dedicated to the relationship between self-presentation and depletion (Vohs et al., 2005) and impulsive buying
and depletion (Vohs & Faber, 2007). Currently, there are no specific studies that have investigated the relationship between self-presentation and irrational consumer behavior. The current study will add a new perspective to this area of research. This research is the first study to explore the effect of self-presentation on impulsive buying. The primary goal of this research was to illustrate that self-presentation is a prime, motivating factor in impulse buying due to the underlying function of depletion in self-control regulation. The hypotheses for this study were as follows:

1) A self-presentation group will report higher impulsive buying tendencies compared to a non-self-presentation group.

2) A self-presentation group will select a greater total dollar amount of items compared to a non-self-presentation group.
Participants

Participants for this study were University of Central Missouri students enrolled in psychology classes. All participants were 18 years of age and older. Participants signed up through the online research participation site known as SONA. The planned sample size was 128 participants based on the power analysis using the statistical tool G*Power (Bruin, 2006). The power analysis was based off of an effect size of .50 at a power of .80. The actual total number of participants was 114. Of the 114 participants, there were 64 freshman, 23 sophomores, 12 juniors, and 13 seniors. There were a total of 93 females and 19 males with a mean age of 19.88 (SD=3.76). Two participants chose not to disclose their age, gender, and class status.

Materials

Materials included a digital camera and tripod, five interview questions (see Appendix A), five shopping items (see Appendix B), the Impulse Buying Tendency Scale (Verplanken & Herabadi, 2001; Appendix C), and a short demographics form (see Appendix D). Participants filled out an informed consent prior to the beginning of the experiment (see Appendix F).

The Impulse Buying Tendency Scale, developed by Verplanken and Herabadi (2001), consists of 20 items. The scale consists of two components: affective and cognitive. Items that reflected a tendency to not think or plan were considered to be cognitive items and items that reflected feelings of excitement and tendency to feel regret after a purchase were considered affective items. Examples of cognitive items include “I usually think carefully before I buy something” and “I often buy new things without thinking”. Examples of affective items include “I am a bit reckless in buying things” and “I sometimes feel guilty after having bought
something”. The items are measured on an agree-disagree Likert scale ranging from 1-7 with 7 being strongly agree and 1 being strongly disagree. Scores are determined by averaging the responses for the 20 items. Higher scores on the Impulse Buying Tendency Scale reflect higher impulse buying tendency, while lower scores indicate lower impulse buying tendency. The Cronbach alpha for the 20-item scale was 0.86. The Cronbach alphas for the cognitive and affective items were 0.91 and 0.83 respectively. These values were from the study done by Veraplanken and Herabadi (2001).

Selection of online website and items used for the current study, were developed from a pilot study done by the researcher. Participants completed an online survey that consisted of nine items, including demographics (see Appendix E). Responses from the survey indicated that the most common and most frequently used online shopping site among college students was Amazon.com. The most common items from the pilot study were selected for use in the current study. The five items were jacket, bag, jeans, shoes, and watch.

Procedure

Participants were asked to read and sign an informed consent. The first part of the study was adapted from previous research on self-presentation (Vohs et al., 2005). Participants were randomly assigned to either the self-presentation or no self-presentation condition. In both conditions participants were under the impression that they were recording a tape of themselves that graduate students in the Business department were using to learn about how to evaluate interviews. In the self-presentation condition participants were told to “answer these questions as if you are trying to stand out of the crowd of applicants”. In the no self-presentation condition participants were told to “please be yourself as you answer these questions”. Participants were given the list of five interview questions (see Appendix B). They were given five minutes to read
the questions and prepare what they wanted to say on the video recording. Participants were not allowed to write on the list of interview questions. This was done to control the preparation period for all participants. Before filming began, participants were instructed to look at the camera and not the researcher. This was done to control for any factors that could have influenced the participants’ responses. Participants were given the respective instructions for their condition and then were recorded. Participants were given 10 minutes to discuss their responses to the interview questions via video recording. After, participants were directed to the Amazon.com website. They were given a list of five items they were to shop for: jacket, bag, jeans, shoes, and watch. The participants were told that there were no price or brand restrictions on the items they were shopping for. They were instructed to place each item into the shopping cart on the website. The researcher informed them that the interview was a part of marketing research to investigate college students’ favorite shopping items. They were given five minutes to search for and select the items they wished to purchase. After they had completed the selection of items, they were given the Impulse Buying Tendency Scale (see Appendix C) and the Demographics Form (see Appendix D). They were given 10 minutes to complete both forms. After, participants were debriefed and thanked for their participation and were provided the opportunity to ask questions.

Analysis

The analysis for the current research involved a two-way ANOVA for each of the hypotheses. The first two-way ANOVA was run testing the effect of the independent variables gender and condition on total amount spent. The second ANOVA was run testing the effect of the independent variables gender and condition type on impulse buying tendency.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

In order to address the first hypothesis of the current study, a two-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if there were main effects of gender and condition, and an interaction between these two on total amount spent or on overall impulse buying tendency. Although gender was not original variable to be tested, it was shown that gender is related to this study while conducting preliminary data analysis. Thus, it was decided to use gender as a part of analysis. The total amount of dollars spent was subjected to a two-way analysis of variance having two levels of gender (male, female) and two levels of self-presentation condition (self-presentation, non-self-presentation). The mean score for the dependent variable was the average of 20 questions. The mean was determined after reverse scoring items 1, 2, 4-8, and 14 from the measure. All assumptions for the ANOVA were met including interval/ratio data, independent observations, normally distributed data, and homogeneity of variance. There was a significant main effect of condition on total amount spent, $F(1, 108)=3.99, p =0.05, \eta^2=.025$, with the non-self-presentation group spending slightly more than the self-presentation group. There was a non-significant main effect of gender on overall amount spent, $F(1, 108)=3.39, p =0.07, \eta^2=.021$. There was a marginally significant interaction between gender and condition on total amount spent, $F(1, 108)=3.63, p =0.06, \eta^2=.023$, with men in the non-self-presentation group spending slightly more money compared to the other three conditions. The condition did not make a difference in how much females spent; they spent nearly the same amount in both conditions. The mean amount spent for men in the non-self-presentation group was larger than the amount for men in the non-self-presentation group. There was one male participant in the non-self-
presentation group who spent a large amount of money on one item, however, the removal of this case did not affect the results differently.

Overall impulse buying tendency was also subjected to a two-way analysis of variance having two levels of gender (male, female) and two levels of self-presentation condition (self-presentation, non-self-presentation). There was a significant main effect of gender on overall impulse buying tendency, $F(1,108)=9.72, p<.001, \eta^2 =0.005$, with women having slightly higher impulse buying tendency compared to men. There was a non-significant main effect of condition on overall impulse buying tendency, $F(1,108)=0.03, p=0.87, \eta^2 =0.000$. There was a non-significant interaction between gender and condition on overall impulse buying tendency, $F(1,108)=0.005, p=0.94, \eta^2 =0.000$.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ConditionxGender</th>
<th>Total money spent</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$N$</td>
<td>$M$ ($SD$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP Male</td>
<td>9</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP Female</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>426.42(336.83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-SP Male</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1243.73(2778.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-SP Female</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>446.35(201.42)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The current research tested two hypotheses: 1) The self-presentation group would report higher impulsive buying tendencies compared to the non-self-presentation group; 2) The self-presentation group would select a greater total dollar amount of items compared to the non-self-presentation group. The results did not support the hypotheses. There were no significant differences between the two groups on their overall impulsive buying tendency and overall dollar amount of items; however, results did show that women were slightly more impulsive buyers than men and men spent slightly more than women regardless of the self-presentation condition. The results also showed an almost significant interaction between gender and condition on total amount spent. These results were opposite of the current hypotheses.

One possible explanation for the results is the small amount of men that participated in the study. As mentioned previously, there was one outlier in the male non-self-presentation group. While this data did not skew the data, it is possible that if more men participated in the study the results may have indicated a different main effect of gender on total amount spent as well as an interaction between gender and condition. The fact that there were was a small number of men participating in the study also suggests that their data is not representative of the general population. Future research should focus on including more men in online shopping studies. The inclusion of more males could more accurately reflect males shopping behavior.

Another possible explanation for the results is the effectiveness of the self-presentation manipulation. It is possible the self-presentation manipulation was not strong enough to deplete participants of their self-regulatory resources. The self-presentation instructions given to participants was done in a similar fashion to Vohs et al. (2005) research. However, the results of
the current study suggest that this method of depletion was not strong enough to influence impulse buying tendency. There are several reasons that could explain these results.

First, it is possible that some participants may have felt that the interview was not an actual interview. The researcher stated at the beginning of the experiment that the interview portion of the study would be used by graduate business students who were learning how to conduct interviews. This guise may have made participants feel less pressure to take the interview seriously. Participants knew that there were no serious consequences that could have resulted from their participation in the interview, whether or not they performed well, and they were not compelled to do their best during the interview. In addition, most participants were freshmen and sophomores (76%). It is also possible that these students were not familiar with a formal interview situation and had a difficult time taking the interview seriously because of their lack of experiences with a formal interview. This also alerted participants to the fact that the interview was not real, and may not have been part of the experiment.

Furthermore, the number of questions included in the interview might have been too low. While the interview procedure was adapted from Vohs et al. (2005), the current study utilized five questions compared to 10 for time constraint concerns as well as participant engagement concerns. Concerns about whether participants would remain engaged and focused during the interview prompted the researcher to use five questions compared to 10 as in the Vohs et al. (2005) study. It was decided that five questions would provide participants enough time to respond to questions without extending the interview for an unnecessary period of time; which could have increased the possibility of depleting participants of self-regulatory resources. However the results indicate that the number of the interview questions was not long enough to induce a desired depletion across participants. In most participants, the interview was completed
within five minutes. Along with the participants’ perception of the interview being artificial and an unimportant task, the small number of the interview questions was the most critical weakness of this study.

Along with the weak priming effect, the self-presentation manipulation was brief in nature. In real life engagement in self-presentation occurs on a daily basis (Leary, Allen, & Terry, 2011). In addition, many people manage multiple self-presentation goals simultaneously (Leary, & Allen, 2011). The current study did not take into consideration that people manage multiple self-presentations and different situations and internal variables can influence the self-presentation during the engagement process. For example, research has found that self-esteem is related to self-presentation. Baumeister (1982) found that participants with low self-esteem engaged more in self-presentation than their higher self-esteem counterparts. In addition, low self-esteem participants cared more about what others thought about them because they tried to conform to others expectations of them. Those with high self-esteem did not seem to care what others thought about them. If others viewed them unfavorably, they accepted that viewpoint and tried to highlight their other good attributes. If others viewed them favorably, participants tried to remain modest about the assessment. The current study did not take into account participants’ self-esteem. An interaction between self-esteem and self-presentation could have occurred, although self-esteem was not measured or used as a main focus of the current study. For this study we operated under the assumption that people would be managing one self-presentation motive: the presentation of the self during the interview. While the results of the current study did not yield results consistent with the hypotheses, the idea that people manage multiple self-presentations should be of concern with future research.
The current study found that women scored slightly higher on impulse buying. This could be due to sampling characteristics. There were 19 males and 95 females. Although previous research (Ditmar & Drury, 2000) has suggested that females tend to engage in more impulse buying compared to males, the current research could be skewed based on the large amount of females that participated in the current study.

Results showed that some men spent significantly more money compared to women. This could have been because men preferred more expensive items compared to women. For example, men may have preferred expensive watches, while women preferred less expensive watches. Future research could either address this issue in two different ways. First, a future study could be conducted eliminating the list of items participants are asked to shop for. By providing more freedom to shop for items, participants’ impulsive buying could be more effectively measured. In addition, future research should provide more diversity in online shopping environments. In the current study, Amazon.com was the one shopping website participants shopped on. Although this website offers different shopping items, it lacks diverse items with different price points. To capture a more realistic shopping experience, different shopping websites should be provided in a future study. Additionally, participants were not spending their own money on items. In Vohs and Faber’s (2007) study participants were given money to use to shop in a simulated shopping environment. That study found that participants who were depleted of self-regulatory resources were more likely to engage in impulse buying. If participants were spending their own money in the current study, they may have been more inclined to place themselves in the shopping task. This would eliminate the possibility that they would select items on a list simply to fulfill list requirements. The utilization of the shopping task therefore may not have been a sensitive enough measure of actual impulse buying tendency. Also, in an actual shopping situation, there
are countless factors that impact a shopping experience. The current study was conducted outside of a store without any stimulating, tempting, environment, and therefore does not capture true shopping behaviors. Lastly, more time to shop should be provided. The average time Americans spend for shopping per a day is 74 minutes (BLS, 2015). However, participants in this study were given 10 minutes to shop for five items. Providing more time and freedom to choose items to shop for would give participants more life-like shopping experience which can lead to impulsive shopping.

Another major limitation to the current study is concerned with participants’ characteristics. While the results of the study yielded some interesting results, the results may not be representative of the general population. College students represent a small part of the population and may vary in important ways from non-students. Sears (1986) points out that college students’ lives are different from the simulated environment that researchers create. In addition, college students may be different from other consumers in adult groups. In general, college students earn a lot less money, and many of their shopping items are focused on necessary items for their college life. Because of their lack of money and financial experience, this study may not have measured real impulse buying issues effectively.

Despite several weaknesses, in the current study we attempted to expand the literature on impulsive buying. This was the first study to examine whether self-presentation is a potential factor that could impact impulse buying. Although the results did not support the hypotheses, the results provided several implications and directions that future research should consider. First, the current research illustrated that females, compared to males, reported being more impulsive buyers. For future studies, gender differences in impulsive buying should be incorporated in the overall research design.
With regards to an ineffective self-presentation manipulation, future research should examine if other methods of self-presentation manipulation could be more effective. For example, previous research has suggested that self-presentation can be primed. Tyler (2012) found that priming self-presentation using a word unscrambling task yielded similar findings to that of active engagement in self-presentation. This priming of self-presentation may prove more useful in experimental situations. In Tyler’s research half of participants were primed with positive words related to appearance while the other half were primed with neutral words that had nothing to do with appearance. In both conditions, participants were to create a grammatically correct sentence using five-word strings. In total there were 30 neutral primed words and 30 impression-formed words. Participants then orally answered self-descriptive questions from a questionnaire. Results showed that participants in the impression prime condition answered questions in a more favorable light than participants in the neutral prime condition. In the current study, participants were aware that the interview was a guise. If participants were unaware their self-presentation was being activated, the manipulation might have been more effective. Future research could employ self-presentation priming to determine if that is a more effective way to manipulate or activate self-presentation in a laboratory setting.

Research should focus on whether in-store impulse buying can be translated to an online shopping medium. Consumers easily engage in impulsive buying as a result of the advertisements and marketing cues they are directly exposed to such as bonus packs or special sales (i.e., buy one, get one free). This type of presentation of bonus packs or special sales can impact impulsive buying online, too. A recent study reported that bonus packs elicited impulse buying when the products were expensive (Xu, 2014). Future research should incorporate this aspect of shopping environment and stimuli into on-line shopping to study impulsive buying in
an on-line setting. While most research has focused on in-store shopping concerning impulse buying, the shift toward online consumerism should be of greater focus for research. Many of generation Y’s consumers are in the 18-25 age group. This group uses technology for many essential day to day activities, including shopping. In addition, more consumers use on-line shopping for its convenience. In the U.S., marketing for Thanksgiving shopping is focused not only on Black Friday shopping, but also on Cyber Monday shopping. With the generational shift in use of online resources, more research should be devoted to online consumer behavior, its characteristics, and comparison to in-store consumer behavior.

In the current study we attempted to find an effect of self-presentation on impulsive buying. Although the results did not support the hypotheses, the results certainly provided several directions to pursue for further studies. Currently in society, impulsive buying is a real problem which can hurt people in a negative way. Additional studies devoted to exploring the issue of impulse buying are important and should be continued. With the limited amount of research devoted to impulse buying and self-presentation, many different directions for research are available. Researchers should devote their efforts to exploring these directions in order to better understand the constructs of self-presentation and impulse buying, as well as the interplay between the two constructs. Understanding the relationship between self-presentational concerns and impulse buying should be of utmost importance to researchers due to the vast number of young consumers who are engaging in impulse buying and who are more concerned about the image they are portraying to the rest of the world.
References


Appendix A

Interview Questions

You will be answering some interview questions. Your answers will be video recorded and used by graduate Business students who are learning how to conduct interviews. Your answers will only be used for training purposes and you will not provide any identifying information (i.e. name or 700#). You will be given 5 minutes to brainstorm your responses to the questions. You will have 10 minutes to provide your responses.

1. What are your strengths?

2. After graduation, what do you expect your salary to be and why?

3. What do you like to do?

4. Why did you choose your major?

5. What is your ideal job?
Appendix B

Amazon.com Shopping List

Below is a list of items we would like you to shop for. There are no price or brand restrictions. When you see a product you like, simply click add to cart. Please select only one item for each category. For example, select only one pair of jeans for the jean category. Once you have finished selecting your items, go to your shopping cart. Let the researcher know when you are at the shopping cart screen on the computer.

1. Jeans
2. Shoes
3. Bag
4. Watch
5. Jacket
Appendix C

Impulse Buying Tendency Scale (Verplanken & Herabadi, 2001)
Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following items by circling a place on the scale. Your responses will be confidential. PLEASE DO NOT INCLUDE YOUR NAME OR 700# ON THIS SURVEY!

1. I usually think carefully before I buy something.

1----------------2----------------3----------------4-----------------5-----------------6------------------7

Disagree 

Agree

2. I usually only buy things that I intended to buy.

1----------------2----------------3----------------4-----------------5-----------------6------------------7

Disagree 

Agree

3. If I buy something, I usually do that spontaneously.

1----------------2----------------3----------------4-----------------5-----------------6------------------7

Disagree 

Agree

4. Most of my purchases are planned in advance.

1----------------2----------------3----------------4-----------------5-----------------6------------------7

Disagree 

Agree

5. I only buy things that I really need.

1----------------2----------------3----------------4-----------------5-----------------6------------------7

Disagree 

Agree

6. It is not my style to just buy things.

1----------------2----------------3----------------4-----------------5-----------------6------------------7

Disagree 

Agree
7. I like to compare different brands before I buy one.

   1----------2---------3---------4---------5---------6---------7
   Disagree                      Agree

8. Before I buy something I always carefully consider whether I need it.

   1----------2---------3---------4---------5---------6---------7
   Disagree                      Agree

9. I am used to buying things 'on the spot'.

   1----------2---------3---------4---------5---------6---------7
   Disagree                      Agree

10. I often buy things without thinking.

    1----------2---------3---------4---------5---------6---------7
    Disagree                      Agree

11. It is a struggle to leave nice things I see in a shop.

    1----------2---------3---------4---------5---------6---------7
    Disagree                      Agree

12. I sometimes cannot suppress the feeling of wanting to buy something.

    1----------2---------3---------4---------5---------6---------7
    Disagree                      Agree

13. I sometimes feel guilty after having bought something.

    1----------2---------3---------4---------5---------6---------7
    Disagree                      Agree

14. I'm not the kind of person who 'falls in love at first sight' with things I see in shops.
15. I can become very excited if I see something I would like to buy.

16. I always see something nice whenever I pass by shops.

17. I find it difficult to pass up a bargain.

18. If I see something new, I want to buy it.

19. I am a bit reckless in buying things.

20. I sometimes buy things because I like buying things, rather than because I need them.
Appendix D

Demographics Form
Please answer the following questions. If you do not wish to respond, leave the corresponding question blank. PLEASE DO NOT INCLUDE YOUR NAME OR 700# ON THIS SHEET!

1. What is your age?

2. What is your gender?

3. School Status: Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior Graduate
Appendix E
Pilot Survey

1. What are items that you buy on a regular basis?

2. What are items that you buy periodically?

3. What are items that you want to buy, but are too expensive to purchase right now?

4. How often do you shop online?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Very often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1------</td>
<td>2---------</td>
<td>3----------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Have you ever shopped on Amazon.com? If so, what items did you shops for?

6. Have you ever shopped on Walmart.com? If so, what items did you shop for?

7. What websites do you shop regularly?

8. What is your age?

9. What is your gender?
Appendix F
Consent Form

Identification of Researchers: This research is being conducted by Katharina Oesch, a graduate student, under the supervision of Dr. Hyeyeon Hwang, a professor. We are with the Department of Psychological Science at the University of Central Missouri.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to explore if interpersonal processes affect choice behavior.

Request for Participation: We are inviting you to participate in a study examining interpersonal processes and choice behavior. It is up to you whether you would like to participate. If you decide not to participate, you will not be penalized in any way. You can also decide to stop at any time without penalty. You have the option to withdraw your data at the end of the study. If you wish to do this, please tell us before you turn in your materials. Once you turn in the materials, we will not know which survey or test is yours.

Exclusions: You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study.

Description of Research Method: This study involves answering interview questions, participating in a choice selection activity, and filling out two short questionnaires. This study will approximately take 35 minutes to finish. After you finish, I will explain the purpose of the study in more detail. You will also have the chance to ask questions. Please note that we cannot give you your individual results because the data are confidential.

Privacy: All of the information we collect will be anonymous. We will not record your name, student number, or any information that could be used to identify you.

Explanation of Risks: The risks associated with participating in this study are similar to the risks of everyday life. In the event you experience distress because of participating in this study, you can contact the Counseling Center at the University of Central Missouri at 131 Humphreys Building or by phone 660-543-4060.

Explanation of Benefits: You will benefit by participating in this study by getting firsthand research experience in psychological research. We will also award you with credit for research participation. You may be able to use this credit for current psychology courses you are enrolled in.

Questions: If you have any questions about this study, please contact me at kcd70390@ucmo.edu or my advisor Dr. Hwang. She can be reached at hhwang@ucmo.edu or at 660-543-8911. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Human Subjects Protection Program at 660-543-4185.

If you would like to participate, please sign a copy of this letter and return it to me. The other copy is for you to keep.

I have read this letter and agree to participate.
Signature: ____________________________ Date: ________________________