

## **Shopping Is A Serious Affair: Alleviating Negative Emotions Through Retail Therapy**

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**Abstract:** *“When the going gets tough, the tough go shopping.”*

*This expression utilized as a part of an article, (Cotton Incorporated's Lifestyle Monitor™, 2002) look into the group that depicts a part of numerous contemporary consumers' ways of life, that is, shopping to ease a negative state of mind. This type of shopping is alluded to as retail therapy or retail therapy. "Retail therapy" or "compensatory consumption" is frequently connected in the observation to brighten oneself up through the buy of self-treats and additionally lacking self. Retail therapy is for the most part driven by the negative dispositions.*

*The concept of retail therapy is in the nascent stage, hence inferring the past research studies and generalising their application is difficult. Very few studies consider the cultural nuances of the target samples; therefore, the reflection of the behavioural underpinning goes unnoticed. The present study makes naive attempt to address the few gaps with reference to the diverse Indian population. The research question broadly focuses on the two major aspects of the study that is the importance of self-discrepancy in understanding behavioural response in consumer behaviour. Another aspect is to investigate in detail the various moods and emotions related to retail therapy among women.*

*The study uses the sequential transformative strategy of mixed method research. In the present study, the qualitative data is collected is followed by quantitative data collection. The qualitative approach includes in-depth interviews, focus group discussion and quantitative data collection was through the self-administered questionnaires. The present study uses inferential analysis and structural equation modelling for the data analysis.*

*The present work holds critical ramifications for consumers' well-being and prosperity. The findings propose is that consumer's uncovered passionate turbulence may be more inclined to overspending and sinking overwhelmingly into obligation because of their expanded eagerness to pay for status-related items. As every research suffers from a set of limitations, the present study also enumerates few of the limitations. As the present study is self-funded and both qualitative and quantitative analyses were independently carried out, hence the opportunity to exploit the detailed analysis is missed. Nonetheless, the study certainly laid the foundation for further research in this area as the topic is less explored in an Indian context.*

**Keywords:** *Compensatory consumption, consumers, negative moods, retail therapy*

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### **I. Introduction**

In recent years the enthusiasm for compensatory consumption has expanded (Lewis, Haviland-Jones and Barrett, 2008) as the impediments of depending just on subjective factors rose close by the potential cognitive drive of effect. For quite a while, researchers have been giving careful consideration to the impact of full of feeling viewpoint on consumption and have indicated at a conceivable connection between the two. The significance of the present study rises up that there exists a negative side inside the utilitarian consumption which really has a clean impact in appearance.

The term retail therapy has been used to allude to various consumer practices (e.g., state of mind alleviative consumption, compensatory consumption). Likewise, components of therapy shopping are noted in investigations of other buyer practices despite the fact that retail therapy is not some portion of the conceptualization of these practices. This is considered to be essential for examining consumer behavior since a more profound jump into negative angles may enable marketers to investigate many concealed points of view for the exploration of positive consumption and negative consumption practices.

### **II. Review of Literature**

Despite the fact that the subject of "Retail Therapy" is ignored in the scholarly writing, buyers do seem to comprehend and identify with the point as prove by measure of scope it gets in the media. Clearly

researchers believe people are defenseless to retail therapy as an approach to heave negative state of mind. The inquiry that emerges is whether "remedial" buys are a key shopper habit that gives long haul benefits. That is, do these buys result in a fleeting increment in mind-set however a descending effect in the long haul as negative feelings, for example, sentiments of blame and tension raise with the progression of time, or, then again, are they embraced by buyers as a key push to repair their poor temperaments with few negative downstream outcomes. The present research concentrates on shopper as an individual and forerunner to compensatory purchasing or therapeutic consumption, coordinated as well as non- coordinated reactions of buyer as a way of dealing with stress and compensatory consumption conduct in ladies in Mumbai.

The present study identifies the literature gap of consumption concepts emphasising underdeveloped and undeveloped countries in terms of behavioural differences. The theories developed are predominantly from the area of psychology and has a complex implicit implications vis-s-vis their direct application in the area of consumer behaviour. The concept of retail therapy is in the nascent stage, hence inferring the past research studies and generalising their application is difficult. Very few studies consider the cultural nuances of the target samples therefore the reflection of the behavioural underpinning goes unnoticed.

Most of the research in this area heavily depends on either experiments or qualitative analysis. The present study makes naive attempt to address a few gaps with reference to diverse Indian population. The significance of the study is to identify the factors influencing the consumption behaviour among women with reference to retail therapy. The literature search suggests that the origin of therapeutic buying is more intrinsic. Most of the research in this area belongs to socio- psychology, psycho-sociology and clinical psychology. The concrete and crystallised conceptual framework in the field of consumer research is very few. The complex theoretical background which lacks unified conceptual framework. Thus, the present research aims to understand the influence of self-concept theories on consumption behaviour.

### **III. Body Of Paper**

The present research makes an attempt to examine the implication of self-discrepancy and its association with consumption behaviour. Both concepts are vast and complex in nature. To discuss retail therapy as also known as compensatory consumption as a linear observation is challenging. The theory of self-discrepancy is in itself is complex and extensive. As the nature of the research lies in the multi-disciplinary framework articulating the research objective with appropriate terms to justify the result may appear as a weak link. However, the area of study is interesting and ambiguous to draw boundaries between the theoretical construct. With this notion the research objectives are stated,

- a. To assess the symbolic-self completion through retail therapy
- b. To analyse the concept of an inadequate-self w.r.t retail therapy

#### **Research Methods**

The present study uses ex post facto (Kothari, C. R., 2004) for qualitative analysis as identifying the unstated independent variable in the participants have an impact on the dependent variable. The present study employs both as it attempts to extend the theories of self-discrepancy and self- efficacy. Study investigates occurrence of dependent variable with the help of quantitative technique.

Research Approach used in the present study is a mixed method research. The study uses sequential transformative strategy of mixed method research. There are two distinct data collection phases and either type can be collected first. In this study, I started with expert interview, followed by focus group discussion and data collection. Priority is given to both data types. The data are integrated during interpretation. In the present study, the literature review observes the multi-disciplinary boundaries in terms of theory and concept development. This makes the research investigation complex and complicated. Research Design constitutes the plan for the gathering, estimation, and investigation of information. Components of Research Design are,

- i. Dependent variable is „Retail Therapy“
- ii. Independent variables are- Gender, Shopping scales (27 items) and Self-discrepancy scales (37 items)
- iii. Extraneous variables- Income, age and occupation
- iv. Control variable- Product categories- study involves the purchase of apparel, shoes, bags and books, music (CD's) and cosmetics.

**Sample Size-** Test measure assurance is the demonstration of picking the quantity of perceptions or reproduces to incorporate into a factual example. The example estimate is a vital element of any observational examination in which the objective is generalise a populace from a specimen. Practically speaking, the example estimate utilized as a part of an examination is resolved in view of the cost of information gathering, and the need adequate measurable power or statistical power. At confidence level Ninety-five Percent at confidence interval .5, the expected sample size is 38259 for the population of Mumbai Suburban of 93,32,481 (census report, 2011). However, it is practically non-feasible for a researcher to independently carry-out the data collection for such huge number.

Therefore, a valid and viable sample size of thousand was predetermined based on the confidence interval at 3.1 with ninety five Percent confidence level. Two thousand hard copies of questionnaire were circulated along with the soft copy of the questionnaire. One thousand thirty-eight hard copies were filled both including online and offline. A total of eight hundred and forty four questionnaires were used for the data analysis.

**Sampling Technique-**The sampling technique used under sample design was non-probabilistic sample method and convenience sampling was used as sample unit for the study possessed the desired trait of buying.

**Sample Unit-**The sample unit for the study were women in general of age 18 years to 46 years and above. The larger section of the sample were students of postgraduate programme (age between 24-29 years).

#### **Data Collection**

**Secondary Data Collection-** The secondary data is collected using the databases such as Ebsco, ProQuest, Emerald, and Harvard Business Review. Majorly peer-reviewed journals are considered for the study. Published thesis from Research Gate, Academia.edu, and Ethos.com are retrieved from the authors on request. Relevant newspaper articles from Mumbai Mirror, The Times of India and the Hindu are also referred.

**Primary Data Collection-** The goal of this research is to substantiate ideas derived from the conceptual analysis of retail therapy as well as to deepen understanding of the nature of therapeutic shopping behaviours.

#### **Qualitative Research Approach**

a) **In-depth Interview** - The study involves two personal interviews of clinical psychologist and psychiatrist from Holy Spirit and Hiranandani Hospital, Mumbai. Both were structured and in-depth in nature.

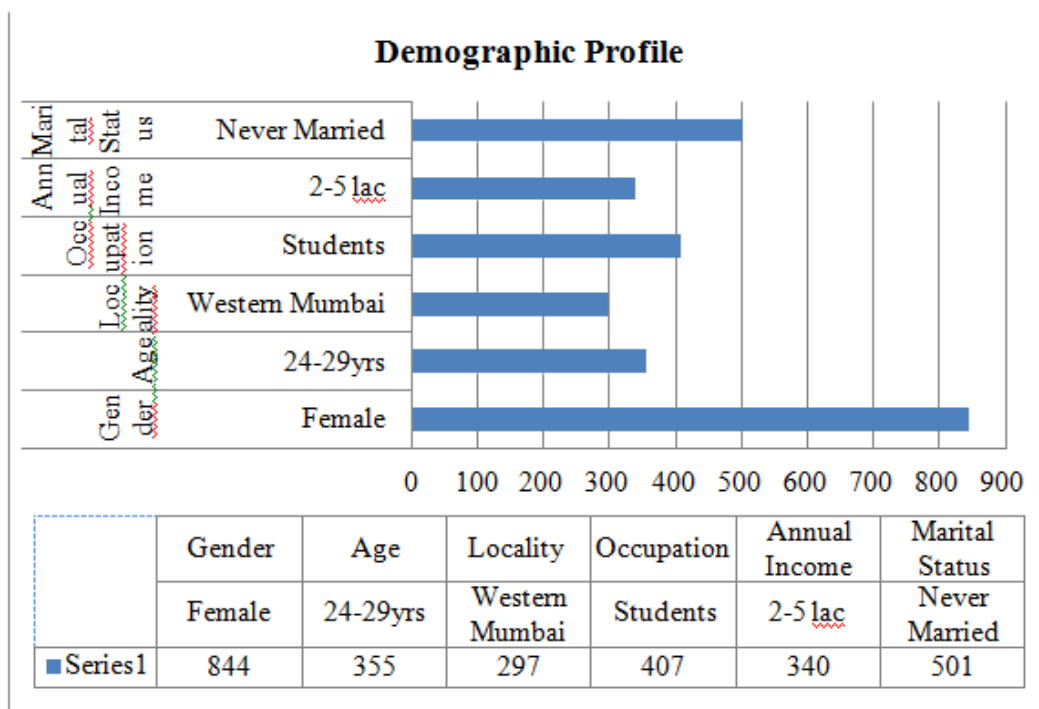
b) **Focus Group Discussion-** Participants were aged between 21 years-30 years old, students and working professionals. The affinity towards shopping of any kind was an important personality trait to select them.

#### **Quantitative Research Approach**

Survey Instrument-A questionnaire was developed in three parts, first part consisting of Socio-economic classification, age, locality, Annual household income, and Occupation and Marital status. Second section in the first part was frequency of shopping and *I usually buy* with options like apparel, footwear, Books/Music, Bags, Accessories (cosmetics, Jewellery etc) and electronic gadgets. The second part included 27 items of consumption behavior w.r.t moods and self-discrepancy scales with 37 items. The questionnaire was in English and was of four pages in length. Statistical tools used are, For demographics- Frequencies; Retail therapy scale- Univariate, Multivariate analysis and Structural Equation Modeling. Structural Equation Modeling- This is used to demonstrate the causal relation between the observed and latent variables.

##### **Respondent Profile**

Table 1 Demographic Profile of the sample (only the highest number is shown in the chart)



#### IV. Results

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.917	27

Factor analysis is a technique that is used to reduce a large number of variables into fewer numbers of factors. This technique extracts maximum common variance from all variables and puts them into a common score. It is a statistical method used to describe variability among observed, correlated variables in terms of a potentially lower number of unobserved variables called factors.

KMO and Bartlett's Test	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.887
Approx. Chi-Square	10362.032
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df
Sig.	.000

From the above table the KMO statistics is greater than .50. Therefore, the factor analysis is significant. From Bartlett's test of Sphericity it is observed that  $p=.00$  ( $\alpha<.05$ ). Therefore, we will not reject the null hypothesis. Hence the correlation for the factor analysis is statistically significant. For the communalities the acceptable limit is .4. From principal component method, 26 parameters are greater than .4. *I usually shop to ease my stress* found to be less than 40% but it is more than .35. Therefore, this parameter is included in the further analysis. From the extraction of some of squared loading, there are five factors and the cumulative percentage is greater than 60%. So, the factor analysis is significant. From the rotated sum square loading from percentage variance column the first factor accounts for 18.56% in the data. The second factor accounts for 18.05 %, followed by the third factor accounts for 10.94% and fourth and the fifth factors accounts for 8.56% and 6.08% respectively. From the rotation sum squared loadings the cumulative percentage cut-off is 60%, in the present study it is 62.20%. Therefore all the five factors are significant.

The present examination assessed the twelve elements applying auxiliary condition demonstrating utilizing AMOS 20. The outcomes demonstrate  $\chi^2$  estimation of 4334.9 with 1001 degrees of flexibility at the  $p < .01$  level for 4.3  $\chi^2$ /degrees of opportunity proportion. A proportion of 2 to 3 can be considered as a worthy fit, as per Schreiber, J. B., Nora, A., Stage, F. K., Barlow, E. A., & King, J. (2006). In the present investigation the estimation show isn't worthy. Be that as it may, the model does not include any controls. The CFI for the model was .80, as far as possible is .9 (Byrne 1994), which is a restriction of the examination and should be tended to in future research thinks about. PCLOSE measure gives an uneven trial of the invalid theory which is that the root mean square error of estimation rises to .05, what is known as an acceptable model. Such a model has factor error, however 'not in particular' determination error. The option, uneven speculation is that the RMSEA is more noteworthy than .06. So if the p is more prominent than .05 (i.e. not measurably noteworthy). To draw an acceptable model it is appropriate to apply manipulations.

Table 4 Measurement Model Manipulations

	No. of Manipulations	$\chi^2 / df$	CFI	PRATIO	RMSEA	PCLOSE
Original Model	None	4.33	0.80	0.92	0.06	0.00
Final (Nested)	Eight	2.90	0.89	0.88	0.05	0.04

The quantitative outcome involves the results (refer table 4) of structural equation modeling.

The quantitative inference reveals that dejection, disappointment (absence of positive emotions) lead to proactive retail therapy. And Self-threat, symbolic-self completion, inadequate-self leads to reactive retail therapy. The proposal for the idea of self-threat is to comprehend the numerous features of risk event. A characteristic and natural articulation of risk will be a fascinating territory to explore further to examine its reality with consumption conduct. Observing phenomenon through cultural lenses, especially in country like India exhibits the paradoxical imprint about material possession.

The recommendation shall be from the perspectives of window shopping, time spent browsing through online. Comparing this notion with debt creation w.r.t compulsive buying- if we consider 'time' as resource, spending an uncounted hours for window shopping (online/offline) perhaps will be an interesting study to explore consumer time consumption behaviour with an implicit, intangible and undefined state of retail therapy. The present work also holds important implications for consumers' welfare and well-being. The findings suggest that consumers exposed emotional turbulence might be more prone to overspending and sinking deeply into debt due to their increased willingness to pay for status-related products.

### General discussion & Future Research

It is observed that, the compensatory consumption or retail therapy is frequently seen in women. The practitioners corroborated the fact that with time this behaviour is increasing among both men and women in Mumbai. An implicit observation is that consumer lacked the realization of his/her consumption intentions. However, practitioners believe, a little 'high' is harmless but the cumulative effect of compensatory consumption may be damaging to one's emotional state of mind. This cases more towards to compulsive consumption behaviour. The learning was that consumer lacks the rational insight or him/her buying motive.

However, the lack of rational insight among target respondents set the path ahead for detailed research. Another thought will be the changing mind-set of millennial. It is prescribed that the future research can be done to detail out the occasion event, recurrence of event and their subsequent conduct. From the present research, a deficient self is related with discouraged feelings. It is recommended that the future research can be carried out to elaborate internal and external emotional disequilibrium and their resulting behaviour. Globally it is acceptable that women love shopping but the point is to what extent. During the discussion it was clear that shopping is a serious affair for a women and it goes far beyond identifying her need, want and desire ladder.

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