

WORK EXPERIENCE EFFECT ON IDOLATRY AND THE IMPULSIVE BUYING TENDENCIES OF ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

The interrelationships of three issues relevant to adolescents are the focus of this study, namely, work experience, idolatry, and impulsive buying. Many young people work at some time during their years at high school, which is part of the process of socialization in terms of both thinking and behavior. Idolatry is a common phenomenon among adolescents, and is the way adolescents develop their own values and ideals. Marketers have long recognized the significance of impulse buying, but most studies focus on adult consumers. The purpose of this study was to examine the part-time job effect on idolatry and impulsive buying tendencies of 13- to 20-year-old Taiwanese adolescents. A survey of 337 high school and college students was conducted and results indicate that it has a moderating effect.

Erikson's developmental theory (1963) depicts adolescence as a period of identity consolidation, and environmental demands, and opportunities associated with work could well continue formative experiences (Shanahan, Finch, Mortimer, & Ryu, 1991). Steinberg et al. (1981) state that having a part-time job may help adolescents acquire attitudes, values, habits, and knowledge, and develop a social context. In addition, employment makes adolescents more financially independent. Work constitutes a new context of development which may have substantial implications for adolescent identity and behavior.

Many psychologists believe that in adolescents' transition to adulthood, they form strong attachments to others in their search for self-identity. In the process of growing up, adolescents must learn to form their own values and ideals through their own experience or from role models. Most adolescents establish what they call their own self, based

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***ADOLESCENCE*, Vol. 44, No. 173, Spring 2009**

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on popular idols, the most common mental phenomenon in the development process. Idolatry, the excessive admiration of or devotion to something or someone is commonly found among adolescents. In fact, it is also one of the unique characteristics of adolescents (Raviv, Bar-Tal, Raviv, & Ben-Horin, 1996). On the other hand, getting a job is the first important step for adolescents in the process of becoming adults. Since many adolescents are apprehensive about how successful they will be as adults (Shanahan, Finch, Mortimer, & Ryu, 1991). They judge how successfully they assume adult roles by comparing themselves to peers experiencing the same transition or to those who have already experienced it. In fact, adolescents with a part-time job use their working peers as a reference group which non-working adolescents do not have close contact with employed peers. (Mortimer & Lorence, 1979).

About 85 to 90% of young people in the U.S. work at some time during their years at high school (Marsh, 1991; National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, 2005: <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2005-134/>). In general, both males and females between the ages of 12 and 20 are at a critical stage of establishing self-awareness during the socialization process. Thus the work environment is likely to affect adolescents' emerging sense of self-determination (Finch, Shanahan, Mortimer, & Ryu, 1991). In fact, work experience can help develop self-control.

Generally, impulse buying identifies a psychologically distinctive type of behavior that differs dramatically from contemplative modes of consumer choice (Rook, 1987), and sociologists have studied the patterns of "impulse renunciation" which are learned and developed in childhood (Davis & Havinghurst, 1946). During the last decade, the amount of research on impulsive buying behavior has increased (Rook & Fisher, 1995; Rook & Gardner, 1993), and marketers have long recognized its significance (Jones, Reynolds, Weun, & Beatty, 2003). Retailers can increase the number of impulsive purchases through product displays, store and packaging designs, and contemporary marketing innovations (e.g., 24-hour convenience stores, television shopping channels, and internet shopping) (Hoyer & MacInnis, 1997; Jones et al., 2003). Bellenger, Roertson, and Hirschman (1978) have reported that 38.7% of department store purchases are bought on impulse. That behavior is motivated by a powerful urge (Verplanken & Herabadi, 2001) and feelings of pleasure and excitement (Hausman, 2000; Rook, 1987; Rook & Fisher, 1995; Ramanathan & Menon, 2002; cited in Peck & Childers, 2006). Impulse buying is unreflective purchasing behavior which occurs without the buyer engaging in a great deal of evaluation (Jones et al., 2003). Thus, impulse buying is more emotional

than rational, which is why it is often accompanied by states of intense feeling. An impulse arises immediately upon confrontation with a certain stimulus (Wolman, 1973). Kroeber-Riel (1980) which indicates that impulse buying is a reactive behavior, and often involves an immediate response to a stimulus (cited in Rook, 1987).

Consistent with research on impulsiveness in the literature, recent studies in marketing assert that the impulsive buying tendency is a distinctive personal trait (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998; Puri, 1996; Rook & Fisher, 1995). Rook and Gardner (1993) suggest that certain mood states (e.g., the combination of pleasure, excitement, and power) might elicit impulsive purchasing behavior. Rook (1987) states that recreational shopping is correlated positively with impulsive buying frequency. In general, the impulsive buying tendency is more strongly related to recreational consumption impulsive buying than with generalized impulsive buying.

Idolatry is a common trait in adolescence. However, research into idolatry behavior is lacking; not a single empirical study on the psychological correlates of this behavior was found in a search of the literature (Cheng, 1997). Similarly, impulsive behavior has also been acknowledged in the consumer behavior literature, but relatively little research has involved adolescents. Finally, most adolescents have a part-time job which involves socioeconomic and socialization issues. This study investigated the link between idolatrous behavior and impulsive purchasing in order to determine whether having a part-time job strengthens or reduces the relationship of idolatry and impulsive buying.

The following hypotheses have been advanced and tested:

1. Idolatrous behavior is positively related to impulsive buying tendencies.
2. Idolatrous behavior will explain impulsive buying tendencies.
3. A part-time job will be a moderator between idolatrous behavior and impulsive buying tendencies.

METHOD

Participants

Participants in this study were 337 high school and college students in Taiwan. Convenience sampling was utilized and 350 questionnaires were distributed; participation was voluntary and questionnaires were anonymous. A total of 337 questionnaires were returned, a response rate of 96.3%

The sample consisted of 164 males and 173 females. Ages ranged from 14 to 20. Regarding pocket money available per week (in U.S. dollars), most of the participants had less than \$13, 128 had a part-time job, while 258 were identified as exhibiting idolatry. The profile of the sample is shown in Table 1.

Mean and standard deviations of the impulsive buying tendency scores are presented in Table 2. The item "I buy things according to how I feel at the moment" had the highest mean score ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.69$), while the item with the lowest score was "Sometimes I am a bit reckless about what I buy" ($M = 2.54$, $SD = 1.46$).

Measures

The buying-impulsiveness trait was measured by the nine-item buying-impulsiveness scale ($\alpha = 0.74$) developed by Rook and Fisher (1995). As previously noted, the general impulse buying tendency refers to the degree to which consumers are likely to make impulsive purchases (Rook, 1987; Rook & Gardner, 1993). Nine items were used to assess the extent to which adolescents exhibit their impulsive buying tendency, as shown in Table 2. Participants rated each item, using a six-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Higher scores reflect higher levels of impulsive buying. The Alpha coefficient of the scale was 0.82 (Table 3).

RESULTS

Table 4 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations for the variables investigated. As expected, idolatrous behavior correlated positively with impulsive buying tendencies. Because the positive correlation is not particularly high, we did not consider the problem of multicollinearity. Hypothesis 1, namely, that idolatrous behavior positively relates to impulsive buying tendencies was supported.

Idolatrous Behavior and Impulsive Buying Tendencies

According to correlation analyses, idolatrous behavior significantly and positively affects impulsive buying. ANOVA tested the difference between the means of two or more groups; this analysis allowed for determination of whether there is a significant difference between groups. This research further investigated the effect of different degrees of idolatrous behavior on impulsive buying tendencies. Idolatrous behavior was divided into two degrees: (1) idolatrous (answer yes), (2) non-idolatrous (answer no), as shown in Table 5.

Table 1 Profile of Sample (n=337)

Demographic characteristics	Number	Percentages	Demographic characteristics	Number	Percentages
Gender			Pocket Money		
Male	164	48.7%	< \$13	97	28.8%
Female	173	51.3%	\$13-26	95	28.2%
Age			\$27-39	72	21.4%
14 years old	33	9.8%	> \$39	73	21.6%
15 years old	16	4.7%	Part-Time Job		
16 years old	29	8.6%	Yes	128	38.0%
17 years old	90	26.8%	No	209	62.0%
18 years old	60	17.8%	Idolatry		
19 years old	56	16.6%	Yes	258	76.6%
20 years old	53	15.7%	No	79	23.4%

Table 2 Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Impulsive Buying Tendencies

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
I often buy things spontaneously.	3.19	1.56
"Just do it" describes the way I buy things.	2.75	1.52
I often buy things without thinking.	2.99	1.60
"I see it, I buy it" describes me.	2.82	1.62
"Buy now, think about it later" describes me.	2.66	1.58
Sometimes I feel like buying things on the spur of the moment.	3.46	1.63
I buy things according to how I feel at the moment.	3.82	1.69
I carefully plan most of my purchases. (reverse coded)	3.35	1.57
Sometimes I am a bit reckless about what I buy.	2.54	1.46

Table 3 Univariate Statistics and Cronbach's α of the variables (n=337)

	Mean	SD	Alpha
Impulse Buying Tendency	3.07	1.02	0.82

Table 4 Mean, SD and Pearson Correlation of Demographic Characteristics (n=337)

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
Gender	1.51	0.50	1					
Age	6.50	1.79	0.00**	1				
Pocket Money	2.36	1.11	0.29	0.00**	1			
Part-Time Job	1.62	0.49	0.87	0.09	0.03*	1		
Idolatrous behavior	2.86	1.47	0.05	0.71	0.45	0.79	1	
Impulsive buying tendency	3.07	1.02	0.16	0.07	0.00**	0.04*	0.03*	1

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 Description of Idolatrous & Non-Idolatrous Behavior

Degrees	Number	Sum	Average	Variation
Idolatrous	258	826	3.202	0.910
Non-idolatrous	79	232.556	2.944	0.812

Table 6 ANOVA

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	P-value
Between groups	4.019	1	4.019	4.532	0.03*
Within groups	297.121	335	0.886		
Total	301.141	336			

*p<0.05

Impulsive buying tendencies were significantly affected by idolatrous behavior ($p < 0.05$), as shown in Table 6. Hypothesis 2, according to which idolatrous behavior explains impulsive buying tendencies more than non-idolatrous behavior, was supported.

The Effect of a Part-Time Job

ANCOVA was used to test the effects of categorical variables on a continuous dependent variable, controlling for the effects of other selected continuous variables that may covary with the dependent. ANCOVA employs built-in regression using the covariates to predict the dependent, then performs an ANOVA on the residuals (the predicted minus the actual dependent variables) to see if the factors are still significantly related to the dependent variable after the variation due to the covariates are removed.

A part-time job as a moderator variable in this model could indicate the extent to which idolatry was related to impulsive buying tendencies. Table 7 shows the results from analysis of the moderator model. The overall model is significant ($p < 0.05$). Hypothesis 3, that a moderator effect as a result of a part-time job exists between idolatrous behavior and impulsive buying tendencies, was supported (Figure 1).

DISCUSSION

Results of the present study indicate that idolatrous behavior has a statistically significant positive effect on adolescents' impulsive buying tendencies. Idolatrous behavior is very common among adolescents and is a major stimulator of buying impulses. In addition, Lin and

Table 7 ANCOVA

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	P-value
Between groups	7.171	1	7.171	5.159	0.02*
Within groups	465.635	335	1.390		
Total	472.806	336			

* $p \leq 0.05$

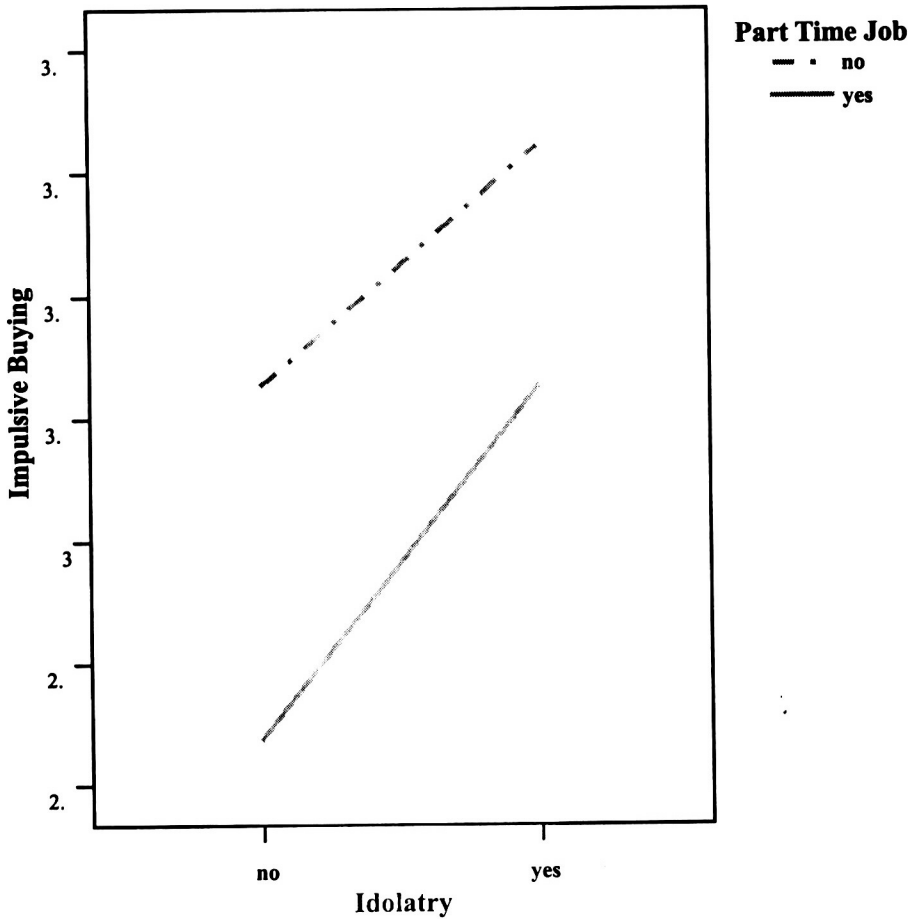


Figure 1 Part-time Job Effect

Lin (2005) indicate that adolescents' impulsive buying is particularly important since they are increasingly exposed to innovative marketing strategies. In particular, marketers pay a great deal of attention to branding. Adolescents' idolatrous behavior can be considered a trigger of branding strategy. From a consumer-behavior perspective, products and brands individuals select can be influenced by their reference groups (Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Childers & Rao, 1992). Adolescence is a stage in which we are greatly influenced by reference groups. In fact, building adolescents' consumption patterns (e.g., brand preferences

and loyalties, information search and examination patterns, media, reliance, price sensitivity, and adherence to price-quality beliefs) will be easier than for adults (Childers & Rao, 1992). Using idol influence is a strategic attempt by marketers to strengthen adolescents' brand image.

Having a part-time job significantly inhibits idolatrous behavior and impulsive buying in that it weakens adolescents' idolatry and buying impulses; selection and socialization processes account for intrinsic, people-oriented, and extrinsic reward values among those who work (Mortimer & Lorence, 1979). Multiple reference groups provide rich experience or role models on which adolescents can build their own values and ideals in the transition process; the workplace is a context for socialization of youth. Extensive experience can help youth develop a healthier and more mature personality.

Clearly, impulsive buying may take many forms, and may be manifested in a large variety of consumer environments. Thus, there are several limitations to our study. First, the sample is unrepresentative of the general population. Due to time and financial constraints, the research selected a convenient sample of students from certain schools. Second, this study is based on cross-sectional data; thus, no causal relationship should be inferred. More longitudinal studies are needed.

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