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Relationship between Consumer Characteristics and Impulse Buying Behavior: The Mediating Role of Buying Intention of New Clothing Buyers

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between consumer characteristics and impulse buying behavior focusing on buying intention. This survey used a descriptive applied methodology and causal correlation. Participants included new clothing buyers in malls of Rasht during autumn and winter. Data was collected by questionnaire. Results of factor analysis indicated high reliability of the constructs. Results showed that self-esteem, followed by new product knowledge and excitement, respectively, had the greatest effect on impulse buying behavior. The results provided a basis for implementing strategies to take advantage of consumer characteristics for more sales and optimal productivity.

Keywords: Impulse Buying Behavior, Buying Intention, Product Knowledge, Self-esteem, Excitement
JEL Classifications: M3, M31

1. INTRODUCTION

Impulse buying behavior is prevalent in the market. This is why impulse buying behavior has become a phenomenon worthy of attention in marketing activities. This behavior was first recognized and used for marketing in retail stores by clover over 60 years ago. Impulse buying behavior occurs when consumers are influenced by sudden, often fleeting, and sometimes conflicting emotions (Bensaid, 2014; Afjeh and Bakhshi-Zadeh, 2010).

Rook and Fisher (1995) defined impulse buying as a consumer tendency which spontaneously and unexpectedly leads to buying behavior in different situations. Factors influencing impulse buying have been the subject of many discussions in recent years. Impulse buying is influenced by various economic, personal, time, place and even cultural factors (Abedi, et al., 2014). Both internal and external factors are effective on this sudden tendency of consumers to buy a product. External factors are those used by retailers and suppliers of products and services to stimulate consumers to buy more (Mathai and Haridas, 2014; Jalali, et al., 2014; Abbasi and Jafari, 2011). Internal factors also have a significant effect on impulse buying tendency. These factors are based on consumer personality. Therefore, the focus is on the consumer, not the environment (Byrd et al., 2006; Mirabi and Tehrani, 2013). Current studies have emphasized consumer personality; therefore, consumer personality and his knowledge are critical for impulse buying behavior. Impulse buying behavior is a stimulus-driven behavior influenced by personal factors and depends on circumstances in which the consumer is (Javanmard and Hosseini, 2003). In general, three important factors, dynamics incentives, impulsiveness of consumer and situational factors such as different occasions and tendency to enjoy shopping and not the product itself can be effective in shaping impulse buying behavior (Mathai and Haridas, 2014). Impulse buying behavior is composed of sudden and unplanned purchases (Srivastava and Joshi, 2014). It is essential to identify factors influencing impulse buying behavior, recognize informed customers who purchase certain products and loyal customers, which are the most important source of competitive advantage in current competitive market, from customers who buy unplanned and do not follow a regular pattern in their selection to develop more effective marketing plans (Saeednia and Goudarzi, 2014; Jalali, et al., 2014).

In the Iranian market, planning for buying patterns is focused on the external dimension of purchase. Despite the focus of behavioral

theories on individual and his internal interests in buying behaviors, such as impulse buying which can potentially grow the market, this is not considered sufficiently. In fact, the buyer is not considered as an entity under certain personality traits in impulse buying process. Considering this, the problem of this study is to examine the relationship between consumer characteristics and impulse buying behavior focusing on buying intention.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The emergence of impulse buying behavior in business is an important source of income for retailers. Almost 30-40% of retail purchases can be attributed to impulse buying (Sadighi, 2010). In business literature, impulse buying is synonymous with unplanned purchase. However, existing theories reject the presumption that impulse buying is definitely an illogical buying behavior. At first glance, impulse buying seems a simple concept, while it is a complex and multifaceted psychological concept (Dhaundiyal and Coughlan, 2009). Jalali et al. (2014) examined the relationship between self-esteem, social influence and life satisfaction and impulse buying tendency. Their results showed no significant relationship between life satisfaction and emotional aspect of impulse buying tendency; moreover, they found no direct relationship between normative aspect of social influence and emotional aspect of impulse buying tendency. However, they found an inverse relationship between information aspect of social influence and cognitive aspect of impulse buying tendency. The inverse relationship between self-love aspect of self-esteem and emotional aspect of impulse buying tendency was not confirmed, while it was confirmed that there is no relationship between aspects of self-esteem and cognitive aspect of impulse buying tendency (Jalali, et al., 2014). Ashtiani and Akbari (2103) evaluated the factors influencing impulse buying behavior for cosmetics and showed that store environment, shopping pleasure and product involvement have a positive effect on impulse buying behavior. Moreover, going to market indirectly through shopping pleasure improves impulse buying. Harmancioglu et al. (2014) studied cognitive processes and incentives related to impulse buying of new products. The results showed that new product knowledge and consumer characteristics (emotions and self-esteem) improve impulse buying behavior and buying intention (Harmancioglu et al., 2014). Moreover, existing hypotheses showed that impulse buying intention, new product knowledge and excitement influence impulse buying behavior and new product knowledge, excitement and self-esteem influence impulse buying intention (Kapoor and Kulshrestha, 2009). Compliance with social norms and word of mouth are effective on new product knowledge. Verhagen and van Dolen (2011) studied the effect of online shopping beliefs on impulse buying behavior of online consumers based on the theory of cognitive emotions. They showed that beliefs about ease of application (attractive and easy to use online store) and representation pleasure (pleasure and interaction with a website) are related to online impulse buying. The results showed that product attractiveness, pleasure, and interaction with online stores influence consumer emotions. Therefore, better products can be manufactured and provided by recognizing consumer behavior and predicting purchase-associated behaviors; this will eventually lead to increased sales and customer satisfaction. Moreover, knowledge of consumer behavior influences quality and quantity of marketing practices. Hence, it is critical to study buyer behavior for mixed marketing design, market segmentation, product positioning and differentiation, improved environmental analysis, market research and development (Heidarzadeh and Hasaani-Parsa, 2012). In this study, the dependent variable is impulse buying behavior. Impulse buying behavior refers to immediate, purposeless, strong and sustainable tendency for purchase. In general, impulse buying is unplanned. Although the conducted studies have focused on effective factors such as decision-making ability, social effects, personal satisfaction and environmental factors, the factors such as product characteristics, including price and appearance of the store, personality traits of consumers are of great importance in this area. The reason for this approach is that the focus of studies has gradually shifted from product to consumer. In the model developed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1999), the construct buying intention is based on the fact that behavior is under control of intention. This model emphasizes the kind of behavior which is voluntary. Ajzen and Fishbein (1999) suggest that the theory of rational behavior underlies the psychological process by attitude which may appear as behavior. The underlying assumption of this theory is that the intention of a person to perform a certain behavior should be measured to predict that behavior (like buying a certain product). According to this theory, the cause of a behavior is one's intention directed by attitude (attitude belief structure) and fixed subjective norms (normative belief structure). Accordingly, impulsive consumers are pushed from buying intentions into buying behavior. Consumer characteristics (excitement, self-esteem and product knowledge) are independent variables. Most consumer characteristics are addressed in studies on consumer evaluation of new products. Excitement as a consumer characteristic provides a thorough understanding of buying intentions and may be the main driver of consumer behavior (Sarmad-Saeedi and Mamaghani, 2009). James (1980) considers self-esteem as a function of success associated with expectations. Self-esteem will be higher if successes are more than expectations; otherwise, self-esteem will be lower. Product knowledge expresses the nature of product tendency and predicts buying feasibility. Eastman et al. (1999) argue that three main types of consumer knowledge about product include subjective knowledge, objective knowledge and experience. Subjective knowledge refers to the information that a consumer believes he has about a company or product. Objective knowledge refers to the information that a consumer actually has about a company or product. Experience is formed of a knowledge that the consumer acquires through actual interactions with a company or product (Ahmad, 2011). Based on theories expressed in this study, a relationship is assumed between consumer characteristics and impulse buying behavior focusing the mediating role of buying intention and its variables, including self-esteem, excitement and new product knowledge. Figure 1 shows the considered model.

3. HYPOTHESES

In the model developed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1999), the construct buying intention is based on the fact that behavior is under control of intention. The model only implies those behaviors which are voluntary and controllable:

First hypothesis: Buying intention influences impulse buying behavior.

3.1. Consumer Characteristic: Excitement

Excitement is a physiological reaction or reflection which is directly related to the targeted behavior.

Second hypothesis: Excitement significantly and positively influences buying intention.

Third hypothesis: Excitement significantly and positively influences impulse buying behavior.

3.2. Consumer Characteristic: Self-esteem

Self-esteem indicates the level of approval, adoption and value that one feels about himself.

Fourth hypothesis: Self-esteem significantly and positively influences buying intention.

Fifth hypothesis: Self-esteem significantly and positively influences impulse buying behavior.

3.3. Consumer Characteristic: New Product Knowledge

Three main types of consumer knowledge include subjective knowledge, objective knowledge and experience. Subjective knowledge refers to the information that a consumer believes he has about a company or product.

Sixth hypothesis: New product knowledge significantly and positively influences buying intention.

Seventh hypothesis: New product knowledge significantly and positively influences impulse buying behavior.

4. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The studied population included people who buy new clothes from malls. As the entire population could not be evaluated, samples were selected and data was collected from the selected samples. As the population was large, non-probability convenient sampling was used to select the samples. To conduct a pilot study, 30 questionnaires were distributed among buyers in the considered malls to calculate the variance of the sample. By substituting variance in the infinite population formula, the sample size was calculated; finally, 416 questionnaires were distributed in the considered malls.

The collected data was divided into two categories. First category included data derived from relevant literature by reviewing archival resources including textbooks, publications, academic theses and dissertations. The second category included data related to assumptions and variables. The used questionnaire was developed by Mirabi and Tehrani (2013). The questions measuring demographics and variables were scored on a 5-point Likert scale.

4.1. Validity

It is essential to use factor analysis in fields in which tests and questionnaires are used. Factor analysis helps to determine whether the questionnaire measures the considered variables. In this study, the questionnaire consisted of 24 questions measuring 5 variables including impulse buying behavior, impulse buying intention, excitement, self-esteem and new product knowledge.

4.2. Factor Analysis

In order to evaluate validity of the questionnaire, standard coefficients and significance level of latent variables were evaluated by relevant indexes. For this purpose, construct validity was used. An index will accurately measure the construct if t-value > 1.96 for factor loading of the index with its construct. Obviously, IBB 3 and IBB 4 have the highest and lowest contribution, respectively, in measuring impulse buying behavior. Findings are showed in Table 1.

IBI 3 and IBI 2 have the highest and lowest contribution, respectively, in measuring buying intention. Findings are showed in Table 2.

NPK 4 and NPK 2 have the highest and lowest contribution, respectively, in measuring new product knowledge. Table 3 shows the considered findings.

Figure 1: Conceptuel model

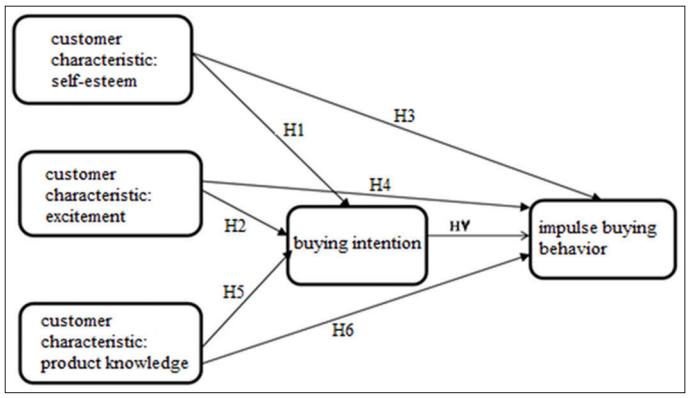


Table 1: Factor analysis of impulse buying behavior

IBI	Factor loading	T-value
IBB 1	0.76	15.58
IBB 2	0.81	16.97
IBB 3	0.84	18.10
IBB 4	0.62	11.83
IBB 5	0.81	16.96

IBI: Impulse buying intention

Table 2: Factor analysis of impulse buying intention

IBI	Factor loading	T-value
IBI 1	0.78	26.16
IBI 2	0.77	83.15
IBI 3	0.88	34.19
IBI 4	0.83	85.17

IBI: Impulse buying intention

C.C.ES 4 and both C.C.ES 1 and C.C.ES 7 have the highest and lowest contribution, respectively, in measuring self-esteem. Results are showed in Table 4.

C.C.EX 3 and C.C.EX 2 have the highest and lowest contribution, respectively, in measuring excitement. According to results of factor analysis, all exogenous variables can accurately measure their construct and hidden trait. Table 5 shows the findings.

To evaluate reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha can be considered as a good indicator for reliability and internal consistency. In this way, reliability is weak if $\alpha<0.60$, reasonable if $\alpha = 0.70$ and good if $\alpha>0.80$ (Sekaran, 2010). In this study, Cronbach's alpha was calculated using SPSS software. The initial questionnaire consisted of 24 questions. Table 6 reports the Cronbach's alpha calculated for variables of the final questionnaire.

The calculated Cronbach's alpha shows good reliability of the questionnaire.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

Data collected in this study was analyzed in the form of descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS19 software and LISREL 8.54. Descriptive statistics showed how samples were distributed in terms of demographic variables (gender, age, education, and employment history) as well as independent and dependent variables by mean, standard deviation, variance and frequency in the form of tables, bar charts and histograms. Inferential statistics tested the hypotheses using structural equations modeling with an emphasis on path analysis.

6. RESULTS

6.1. Hypothesis Testing

Data analysis showed that:

1. The highest mutual effect of new product knowledge and impulse buying behavior (0.53) was positive and significant directly and indirectly.
2. The lowest mutual effect of excitement and impulse buying behavior (0.23) was positive and significant directly and indirectly.
3. 6 out of 7 hypotheses were accepted and 1 hypothesis was rejected.

Results are summarized in Table 7.

First hypothesis suggests that self-esteem has a positive significant effect on buying intention. According to the results listed in Table 7, t-value = 3.67 (which is >1.96). Thus, H_1 is confirmed; therefore, self-esteem influences impulse buying intention (extent of relationship = 0.53).

Second hypothesis suggests that excitement has a positive significant effect on buying intention. According to the results listed in Table 7, t-value = 2.21 (which is >1.96). Thus, H_1 is confirmed; therefore, excitement influences impulse buying intention (extent of relationship = 0.16).

Table 3: Factor analysis of new product knowledge

NPK	Factor loading	T-value
NPK 1	0.78	16.18
NPK 2	0.75	15.34
NPK 3	0.87	19.16
NPK 4	0.88	19.35

NPK: New product knowledge

Table 4: Factor analysis of self-esteem

Self-esteem (C.C.ES)	Factor loading	T-value
C.C.ES 1	0.70	14.15
C.C.ES 2	0.84	18.38
C.C.ES 3	0.85	18.56
C.C.ES 4	0.89	20.21
C.C.ES 5	0.78	16.45
C.C.ES 6	0.84	18.28
C.C.ES 7	0.70	13.99

Table 5: Factor analysis of excitement

Excitement (C.C.EX)	Factor loading	T-value
C.C.EX 1	0.81	16.64
C.C.EX 2	0.72	14.18
C.C.EX 3	0.82	17.20
C.C.EX 4	0.73	14.48

Table 6: Cronbach's alpha

Variable	Questions	Alpha
Excitement	1-4	77.7
Self-esteem	5-11	81.4
New product knowledge	12-15	81.2
Impulse buying intention	16-19	83.3
Impulse buying behavior	20-24	80.7

Table 7: Path coefficients and significance of mutual effect of variables (tested hypotheses)

Hypothesis	Effect of construct	On construct	T-value
H_1	Self-esteem	Impulse buying intention	3.67
H_2	Excitement	Impulse buying intention	2.21
H_3	New product knowledge	Impulse buying intention	2.71
H_4	Self-esteem	Impulse buying behavior	-0.69
H_5	Excitement	Impulse buying behavior	2.31
H_6	New product knowledge	Impulse buying behavior	3.51
H_7	Impulse buying intention	Impulse buying behavior	5.41

Third hypothesis suggests that new product knowledge has a positive significant effect on buying intention. According to the results listed in Table 7, t-value = 2.71 (which is >1.96). Thus, H_1 is confirmed; therefore, new product knowledge influences impulse buying intention (extent of relationship = 0.21).

Fourth hypothesis suggests that self-esteem has a positive significant effect on impulse buying behavior. According to the results listed in Table 7, t-value = −0.69 (which is <1.96). Thus, H_1 is rejected and H_0 (that self-esteem has no effect on impulse buying behavior) is confirmed. This finding suggests

that the increased self-esteem reduces impulse buying behavior. Based on this finding, it can be concluded that buying behavior is an accepted business phenomenon which needs revision in behavioral psychology.

Fifth hypothesis suggests that excitement has a positive significant effect on impulse buying behavior. According to the results listed in Table 7, t-value = 2.31 (which is >1.96). Thus, H_1 is confirmed; therefore, excitement influences impulse buying behavior (extent of relationship = 0.15).

Sixth hypothesis suggests that new product knowledge has a positive significant effect on impulse buying behavior. According to the results listed in Table 7, t-value = 3.51 (which is >1.96). Thus, H_1 is confirmed; therefore, new product knowledge influences impulse buying behavior (extent of relationship = 0.43).

Seventh hypothesis suggests that buying intention has a positive significant effect on impulse buying behavior. According to the results listed in Table 7, t-value = 5.41 (which is >1.96). Thus, H_1 is confirmed; therefore, buying intention influences impulse buying behavior (extent of relationship = 0.50). Summary of the tested hypothesis are showed in Table 8.

6.2. Significance of Model

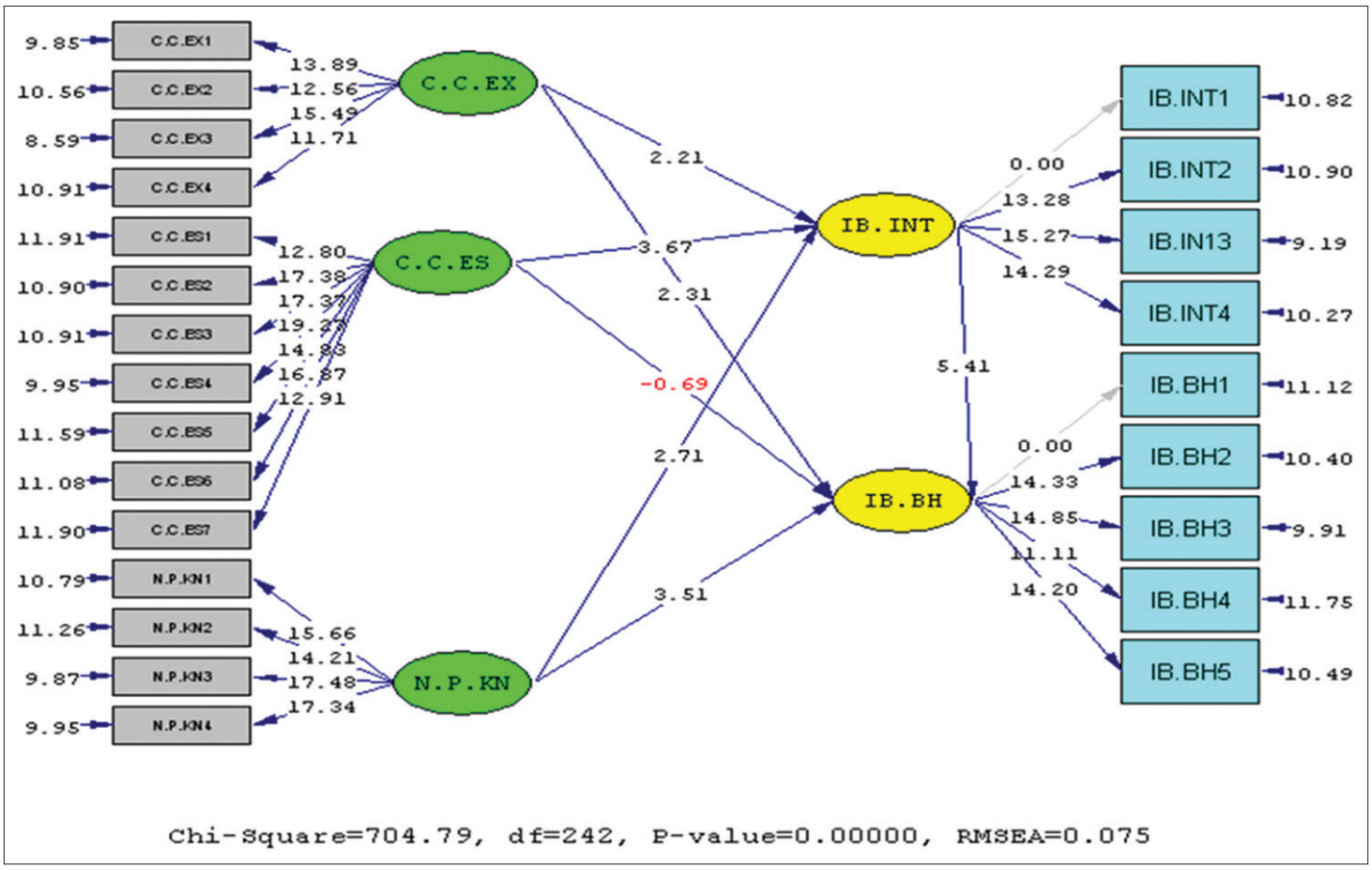
The structural equation modeling determines the size and sign of parameters. Once a model is described and its determination is evaluated, free parameters are estimated on a set of data. The results are shown in Figures 2 and 3, respectively.

Figure 2 shows values of significance for latent variables (structural model) and observable variables (measurement model). In this case, insignificant values lie within −1.96 to 1.96. That is, t-value will be insignificant if −1.96< t-value <1.96; thus, there is a significant relationship between observable variable and the underlying latent variable and the observable variable can theoretically measure its underlying variable. Except for the path between impulse buying behavior and self-esteem, as shown here, the rest of the paths have reasonable values, indicating that the effect is confirmed.

Table 8: Summary of the tested hypotheses

Hypothesis	Result	Value
Self-esteem influences buying intention	Confirmed	0.53
Self-esteem influences impulse buying behavior	Rejected	-
Excitement influences buying intention	Confirmed	0.16
Excitement influences impulse buying behavior	Confirmed	0.15
New product knowledge influences buying intention	Confirmed	0.21
New product knowledge influences impulse buying behavior	Confirmed	0.43
Buying intention influences impulse buying behavior	Confirmed	0.50

Figure 2: Significance of the model



6.3. Standardized Model

Correlation and the extent of relationship between variables can be determined by considering regression coefficients. Except for the path of self-esteem, as shown here, the rest of the paths have reasonable standardized coefficients.

6.4. Fitness Indexes of Model

Once parameters of a certain developed model are estimated, it is determined how the theoretical model is supported by the (experimental) data. Table 9 presents various indexes of fitness and interpretation of the model.

The results support the significance and fitness of the model.

6.5. Operational Model Derived from Conceptual Model

In this study, some statistical analyses were performed by confirmatory factor analysis, path analysis using LISREL software. Results showed that the conceptual model is well fitted to data. Moreover, results of confirmatory factor analysis of the measured equations related to constructs and the calculated indexes showed good fitness of the measurement model.

t-value was used to show significance of parameters. Based on LISREL output, the absolute t-value >1.96 for all variables. Thus, all the estimates are statistically significant, except one estimate. In other words, factor loadings of six constructs are significant

Figure 3: Standardized model

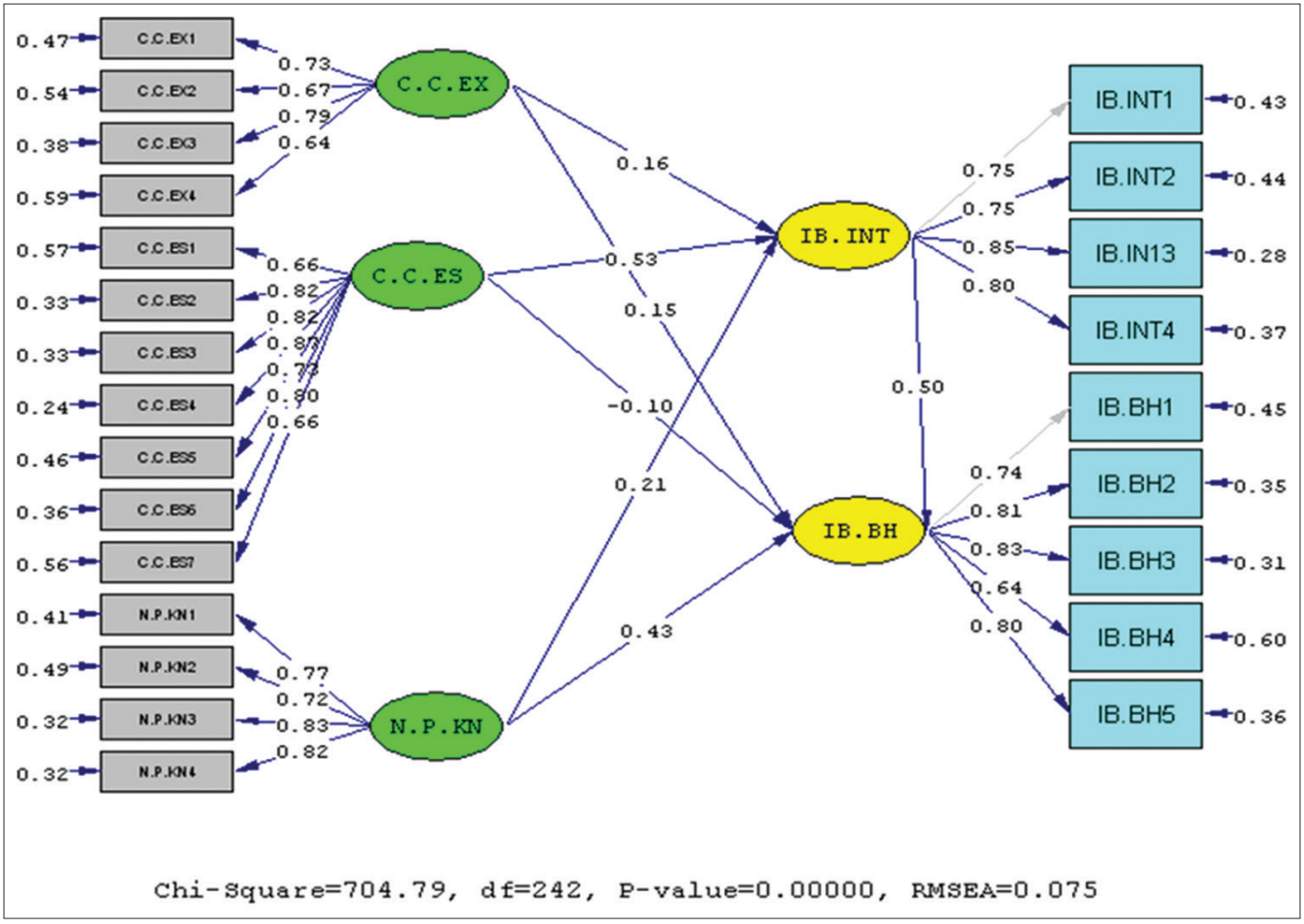


Table 9: Significance and fitness indexes of the model

Model	Index	Abbreviation	It is fitted if	Value in the model
Significance	Root mean square error of estimate	RMSEA	<0.1	0.075
	Chi-square to degrees of freedom	x^2/d_f	≤5	2.91
Fitness	Goodness of fit index	GFI	>0.8	0.83
	Non-normed fit index	NNFI	>0.8	0.97
	Normalized fit index	NFI	>0.8	0.96
	Comparative fit index	CFI	>0.8	0.97
	Incremental fit index	IFI	>0.8	0.97

at 95% confidence, while factor loading of one construct is not significant (Figure 4).

7. CONCLUSION

Considering the effect of excitement on impulse buying behavior and buying intention, marketers and retailers are recommended to design their stores attractively to impose positive excitements in consumers. Exciting environmental variables may include proper lighting, beautiful showcase and view at the entrance and gentle music playing in the shopping center.

Based on findings of this study, there is a significant relationship between self-esteem and impulse buying behavior. However, self-esteem does not influence buying intention. Therefore, managers are recommended to invest in goods based on cultural context and location of their stores, because people of different cultures can have different self-esteem. This may increase their buying intention, but it does not influence their buying behavior.

As one of the triggers of attitude towards a given product or commodity, knowledge influences impulse buying behavior. Retailers and marketers are recommended to use words of mouth to increase consumer knowledge about new products. Emphasis is also recommended on measurement and continuous promotion of customer satisfaction.

Considering the effect of self-esteem on buying intention, advertisers are recommended to stimulate positive feelings about themselves to change attitudes of people towards products. One strategy is to show one's self-esteem as problematic and provide its solution in buying and using the considered product.

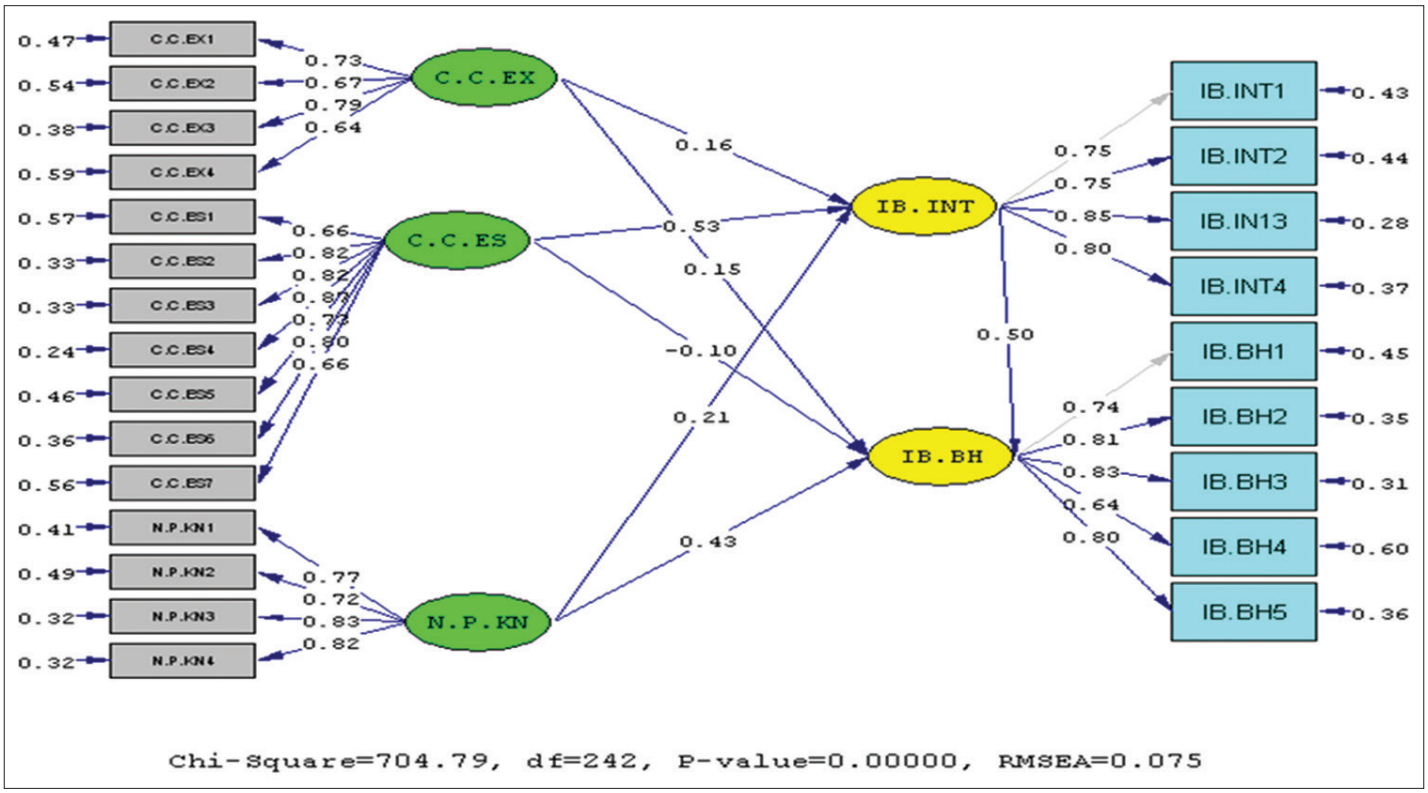
New product knowledge is an important factor in consumer information processing and decision-making and influences buying intention. Retailers and marketers are recommended to use advertisements; because one puts himself in a social comparison and tries to evaluate himself by comparing with people who are seen in these artificial advertisements. This is a fundamental desire of human beings and many marketers use this intrinsic need as a measure of self-evaluation.

It is recommended to develop sales bylaw based on information provided for consumers and business bylaw based on knowledge-based customer satisfaction. It is also recommended to consider advertising media which are based on stronger knowledge and information to promote impulse buying behavior.

Future works are recommended to consider following remarks. It is recommended to conduct a similar study in other parts of Iran, because results may change in different cultures. It is also recommended to conduct similar studies for other items such as new household appliances and electronics. It is recommended to evaluate the effect of impulse buying on buying satisfaction to explain its behavioral effects on people. It is recommended to ensure privacy of respondents to minimize social bias effects.

There are considerable limitations in the studies conducted on the topic. Social bias effects may lead respondents to represent objectivism and rationality. One respondent may not recall all

Figure 4: Operational model



the goods intended to purchase and may only consider significant commodity or commodities with particular trademarks.

The study was conducted in malls existing in Shahrdari, Alam Al-Hoda and Motahari Streets of Rasht. This study also considered impulse buying behavior of clothing buyers, not other goods. In this study, impulse buying behavior was considered as an approach favorable for the market and a positive element in business process. Accordingly, some psychological explanations which consider this behavior as irrational were avoided in this study.

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