

Dr. Tarun PANWAR

Pearl Academy of Fashion, INDIA

## **Measuring Compulsive Fashion Shopping Behavior: Constructing and Validating Fascale**

### Abstract

Compulsive shopping deteriorates the well-being of individuals because of the financial, emotional and interpersonal consequences. In this research literature on compulsive shopping is examined. Though there are attempts to develop scales to measure compulsive buying however, there is woeful lack of specific scale measuring compulsive fashion shopping behavior. This research attempts to construct and validate 'Fascale', which is specially designed to measure compulsive shopping behavior with reference to Fashion products. The scale is validated by empirical research conducted through survey on 200 respondents. The cross tabulation of data is done to present the findings. The scale can be used as directional estimate of measuring compulsive buying behavior; however this needs to be validated with support of clinical data.

### Introduction

Compulsive consumption is in the domain of abnormal behavior considered as negative consumption. Compulsive shopping has been covered in movies and books extensively. Henry Jaglon in his comedy film 'Going Shopping' has captured phenomenon of women's addiction of shopping through generations. This film captures the impact of shopping phenomenon and the issues of addiction, passion and depression. Going shopping portrays complex aspect of addiction related to shopping.

Dr. Grant and Kim in their book aptly titled 'Stop me because I can't stop myself' compassionately captures the uncontrollable urge to shop of compulsive shopper and impact of compulsive shopping on their financial and social wellbeing.

In yet another book by Karen O Connor titled 'Addicted to shopping....' author is wittingly captures the women habit of spending money on shopping than wondering why they are doing this.

However kayleen Schaefer in his article 'compulsive shopping isn't just for girls' reports that for some guys, the go-to reward after a tough day isn't whiskey but its Gucci.

Measuring compulsive shopping behavior through compulsive scale is available (Valence et al 1988 and Faber et al 1992); however that is very generic in nature and not contextualized to fashion consumption. In this paper 'Fascale' (Fashion compulsive shopping measurement) is being developed based on DSM IV

(Diagnostic and Statistical manual of mental disorders), the manual is published by American Psychiatric Association and covers all mental health disorders.

### Literature Review

Compulsive buying is chronic, repetitive shopping that becomes a primary response to negative events or feelings ( O'Guinn and Faber 1989),. Compulsive buying is also defined as a "frequent preoccupation with buying or impulses to buy that is experienced as irresistible, intrusive, and/or senseless" (Muller et al., 2005, p. 3). Compulsive buyers tend to shop excessive number of objects they do not need and they sometimes cannot afford (Hoyer and MacInnis, 2001).However, Compulsive shopping is different from impulse shopping: impulse shopping centers on a specific merchandise at a particular time and it is temporary, while compulsive shopping is an enduring behavior that centers on the process of shopping, not the purchases themselves (Solomon, 2004).Compulsive shopping is inappropriate, typically excessive, and clearly destructive to the lives of individuals who appear through fantasizing about personal success and social acceptance while involving in the particular behavior (Jacobs, 1986). Compulsive shopping deteriorates the well-being of individuals because of the severe financial, emotional and interpersonal consequences. The other forms of compulsive consumption are addictive gambling, drug addiction, alcoholism, and overeating (Shiffman and Kanuk, 2000) Compulsive buying can

exist as a consumer's primary response for individuals to compensate for stress, frustration, disappointment, lack of self-esteem, structural deficit and distortion of autonomy in their lives through the act of buying (Neuner et al., 2005; O'Guinn and Faber, 1989; Koran et al., 2006). Dittmar et al. (2007) have identified three core features of compulsive buying namely; consumers experience an irresistible urge to buy, consumers' control over buying behavior is lost, and consumers continue to buy despite adverse consequences on their personal, social, or occupational lives, and financial debt.

Koran et al. (2006) added that once an individual is unable to control buying, they will frequently purchase unnecessary items or more than what they can afford, and shop for longer periods than was intended. From a scientific perspective, compulsive buying is frequently overlooked and has been classified as an impulsive control disorder not otherwise specified (Black et al., 1998; Mueller et al., 2007). Kasser and Kanner (2004) ascribe that the orientation of materialistic values is central to current consumer culture. Thus, not only materialistic values entail a strong focus on obtaining material goods, but it is also related to the beliefs that consumer goods can provide a psychological benefit. They also found that younger individuals who endorsed a materialistic value demonstrate a stronger compulsive buying tendency than the older individuals. Thus, it can be suggested that a materialistic value system direct individuals toward psychologically motivated buying behavior. Based on the preliminary findings by Mueller et al. (2007), it was suggested that compulsive buying is more common in women.

As noted earlier that there are attempt to develop scales to measure compulsive buying however there is need gap of having specific scale measuring compulsive fashion shopping behavior. This research attempts to construct and validate 'Fascale', which is specially designed to measure compulsive fashion shopping. The scale is being developed by adapting it to DSM IV criteria.

### Methodology

In the first stage literature review was done and a scale of 21 questions was developed. There are seven DSM IV criteria and for every criterion three questions are constructed. For validation respondents were asked questions to measure the compulsive Fashion buying behavior. The data of this study was collected from 200 respondents. All measures used seven point Likert type scale which ranged from strongly agree (+7) to strongly disagree (+1).

### Fascale and Findings:

Fascale to measure compulsive Fashion Shopping behavior was developed based on DSM IV. 21 questions were prepared on the seven criteria. Three questions each were created for 7 parameters of DSM IV. The seven issues addressed in this scale are as follows.

- Tolerance
- Withdrawal
- Impaired Control
- Time Spent
- Larger Amounts/Longer Time
- Neglect of Activities

- Continued Use:

Fascale: Self administered inventory to measure Compulsive fashion shopping

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Partially Agree	Neutral	Partially Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I often feel anxious or depressed when I don't buy some clothes, footwear or accessories that I really wanted.							
I feel happy and relaxed at the time of purchasing fashion goods.							
I often do feel compelled to buy fashion goods even when I don't need them.							
My wardrobe has many clothes that I haven't worn yet.							
My family / friends complain to me for unnecessarily buying clothes.							
I often spend a longer time in shopping fashion goods than what I intended.							
Buying fashion products is one of my favorite past time.							
I spend so much time in shopping fashion products that it irritates sales person.							
I often have an unexplainable urge, a sudden and spontaneous desire, to go and buy fashion goods.							
When I see fashion goods that catches my eye I tend to buy it without looking through the whole section.							
I often end up buying up fashion goods even when I haven't planned for it.							
There are some clothes I buy that I do not show to anybody for fear of being perceived as irrational in my buying behavior.							

I get into arguments with others about my spending and shopping habit on fashion goods.							
I feel guilt and upset because of my shopping desires, urges, fantasies, or behaviors.							
At times, I have felt somewhat guilty after buying some clothes, because it seemed unreasonable.							
I go shopping to buy a gift for other person but end up buying things for myself.							
I have lied to others about how much I have spent on fashion goods.							
If I see an interesting promotional offer in a fashion store (reduced price, Sales promotion, and etc.) on in-store signs, I tend to buy more.							
My habit of shopping fashion goods has lead to serious problems in my life such as financial or loss of a relationship.							
I feel others would be horrified if they will get to know my spending habits.							
I often buy things that I cannot afford.							

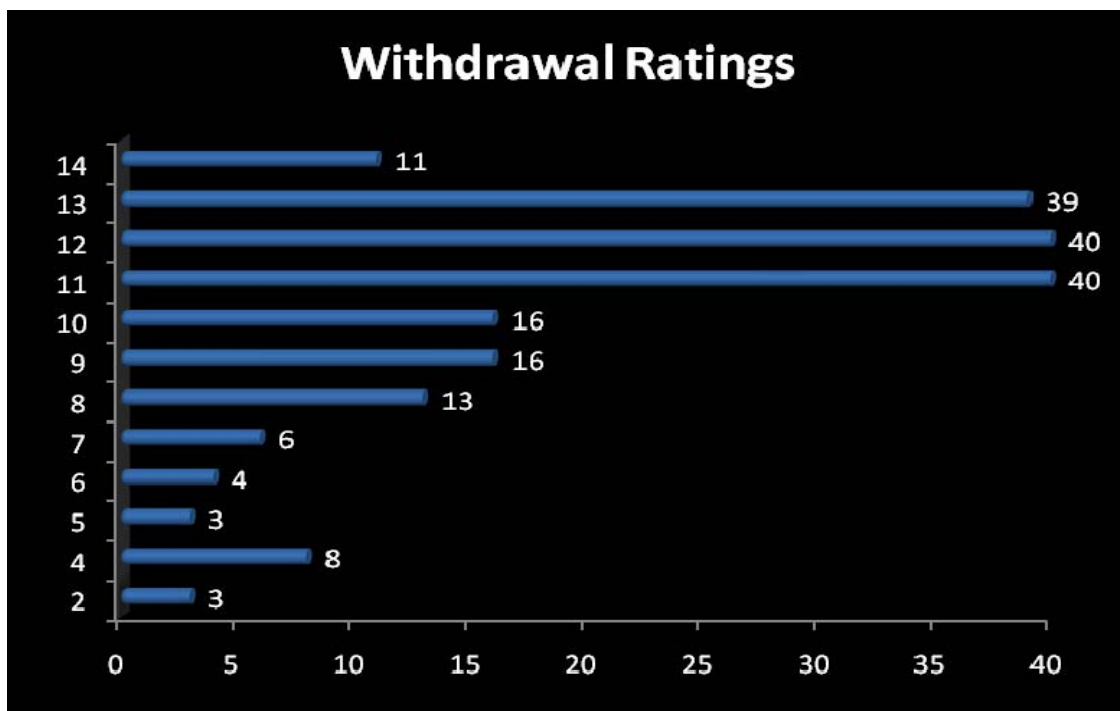
The results of each of these parameters were as follows:

Withdrawal:

It relates to buying pre-occupation, impulses, or behaviors that cause marked distress. Shoppers believe that if they shop they will feel better but compulsive buying and spending generally makes a person feel worse. In this case, a person feels anxious and depressed when they are not able to buy the latest clothes, footwear, bags and accessories. In addition, if there is some kind of a restriction put on their buying pattern, they feel intensely deprived, angry and upset. This generally leads to serious psychological and family problems

including depression. Compulsive buyer had certain preoccupations that excessive shopping causes marked distress.

(Ratings for aggregate of 3 Questions)



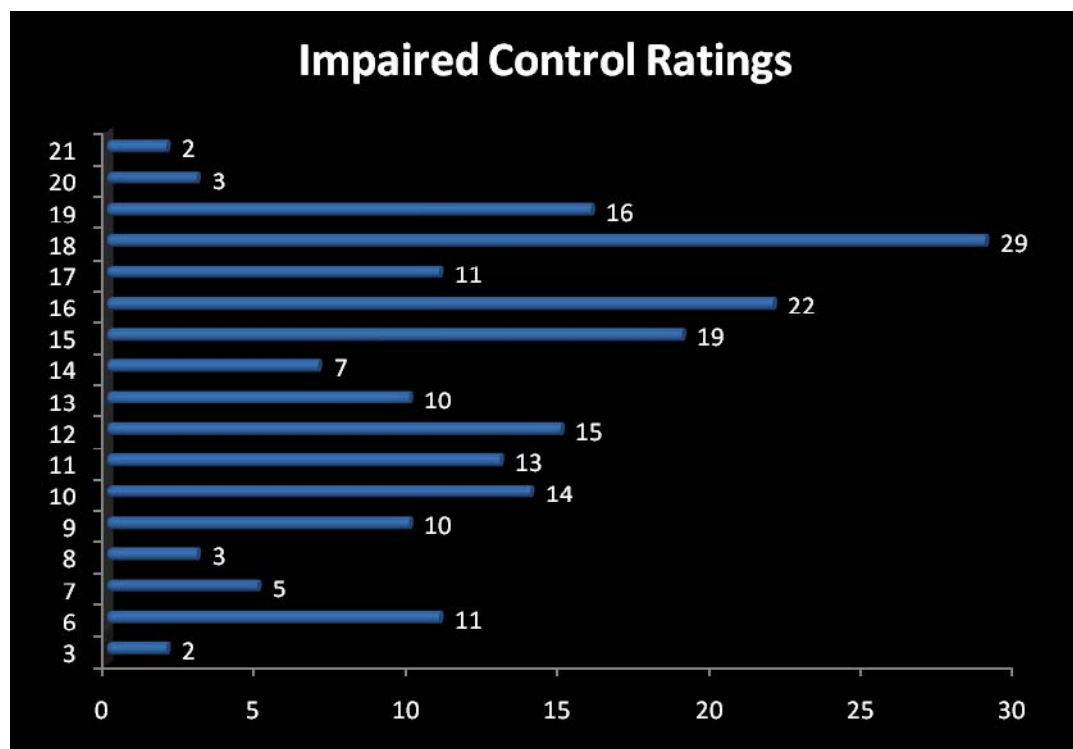
The above figure shows that majority of respondents gave high ratings on this parameter. 65 % of them accepted that they feel happy and relaxed and while purchasing fashion goods. These sorts of people feel depressed also when they are unable to do that.



### Impaired Control:

This relates to unsuccessful attempts to cut back on the amount of money and time they spent on shopping. It also frequent buying of fashion goods that are not necessarily needed by them. In this case people often try to control their urge to spend but fail each time. This leads to a vicious circle of buying more to get over their weakness and to get over the uncomfortable feeling of having failed miserably. Another finding that has surfaced is that people often hide the things they bought for the fear of being perceived as irrational and extravagant. Compulsive buyers frequently purchases fashion goods that are not required.

(Ratings for aggregate of 3 Questions)



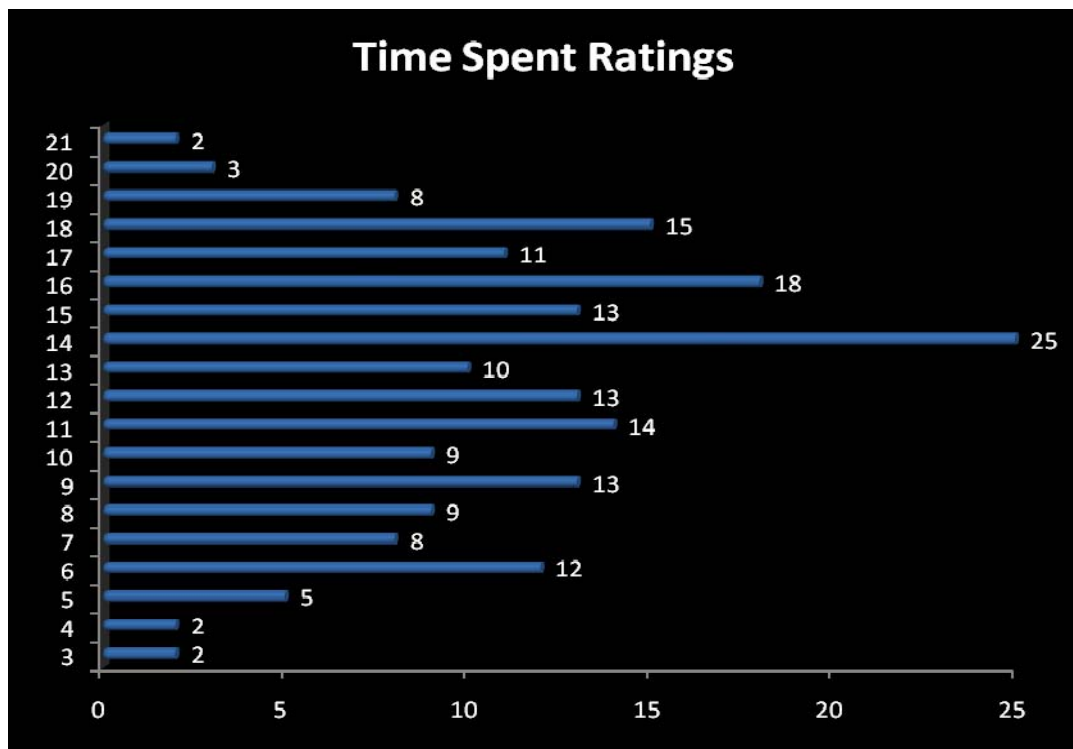
Majority of respondents accepted that they often buy fashion goods even when they are not required. They cannot control inner desire to

shop. Their wardrobe is filled with many new clothes they have not worn yet.

### Time Spent:

This relates to shopping for longer than intended. In this case, compulsive shoppers take a much longer time to shop than planned. They shop for longer time than intended.

**(Ratings of aggregate of 3 questions)**

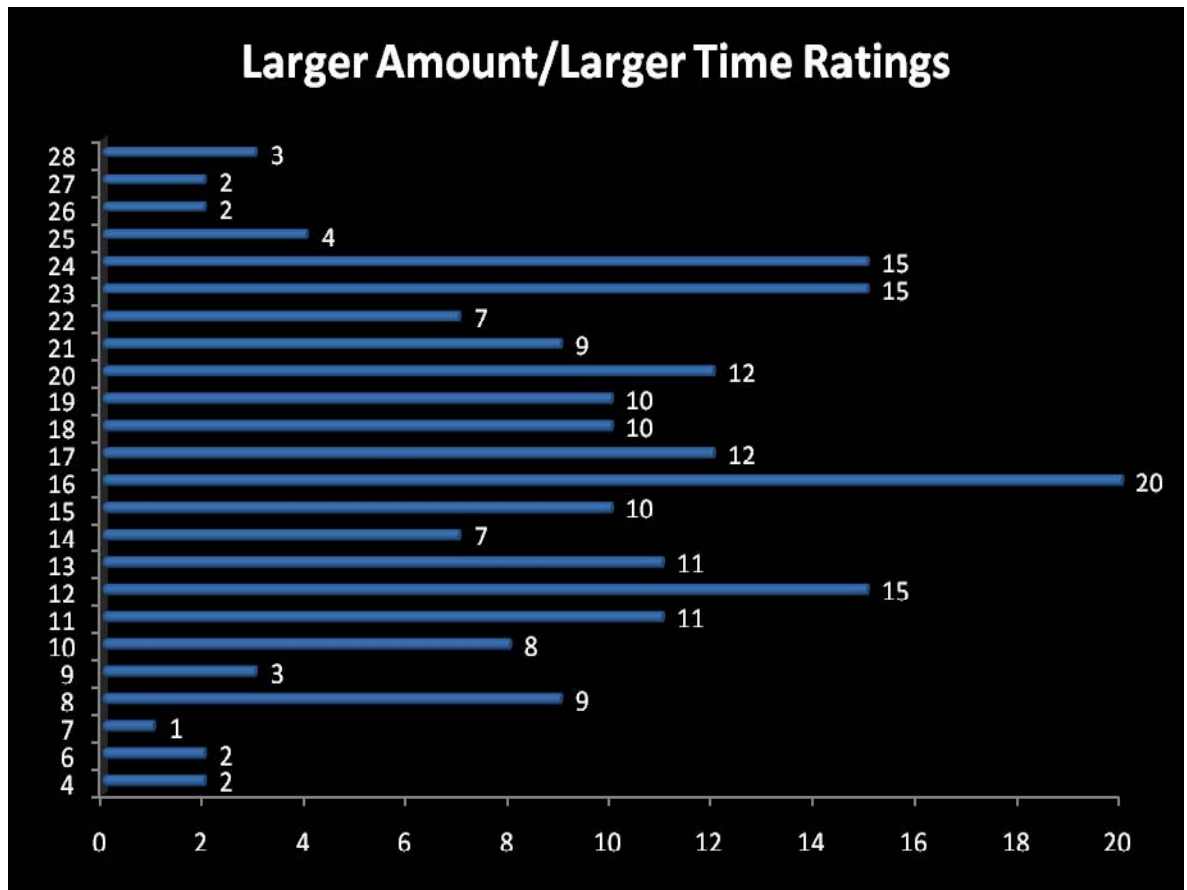


Around 40% of respondents accepted that they tend to spend a longer time in shopping fashion goods.

Larger Amounts/Longer Time:

This relates to frequent pre-occupation with buying or impulses that are experienced as irresistible, intrusive or senseless. It also includes binge shopping for longer periods than intended. In this case compulsive buying is characterized by persistent or poorly controlled pre-occupations, urges or behavior regarding shopping or spending, leading to adverse consequences like guilt, depression and other problems.

**(Ratings for aggregate of 3 Questions)**

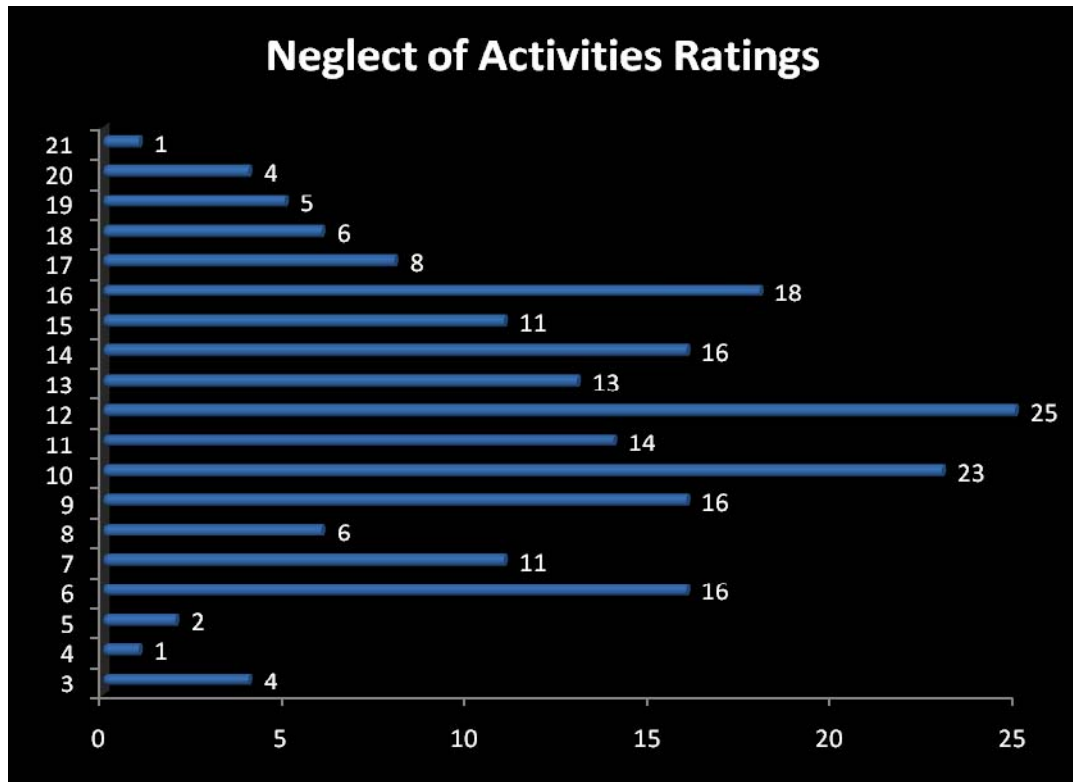


The above figure show that majority of respondents either spend longer time or buy excessive quantity of fashion goods then what they need.

Neglect of Activities:

This relates to buying pre occupation, impulses or behaviors that significantly interfere with social or occupational functions. Compulsive shoppers often avoid or neglect various social responsibilities and hamper their social and professional life. This can lead to serious and unpleasant consequences like loss of a career and marital and family problems. Compulsive buyers often face social or occupational problems in their life because of excessive shopping.

**(Ratings for aggregate of 3 Questions)**

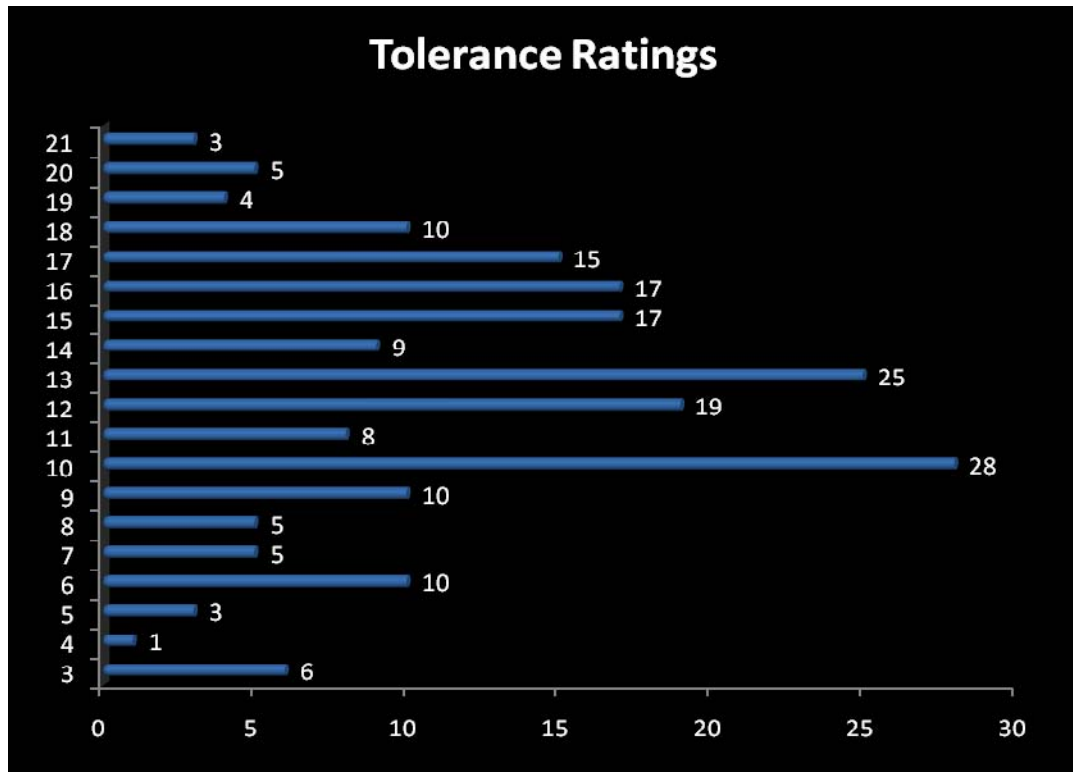


Relatively lesser number of people accepted that excessive shopping has caused social or occupational problems in their life.

*Tolerance:*

This particular parameter maps the “Id” part of a person’s personality which seeks immediate gratification. Therefore, we map how strong is the urge to give in to the temptation of buying a fashion product. Compulsive buyers often buy more goods than what they can afford.

**(Ratings for aggregate of 3 Questions)**



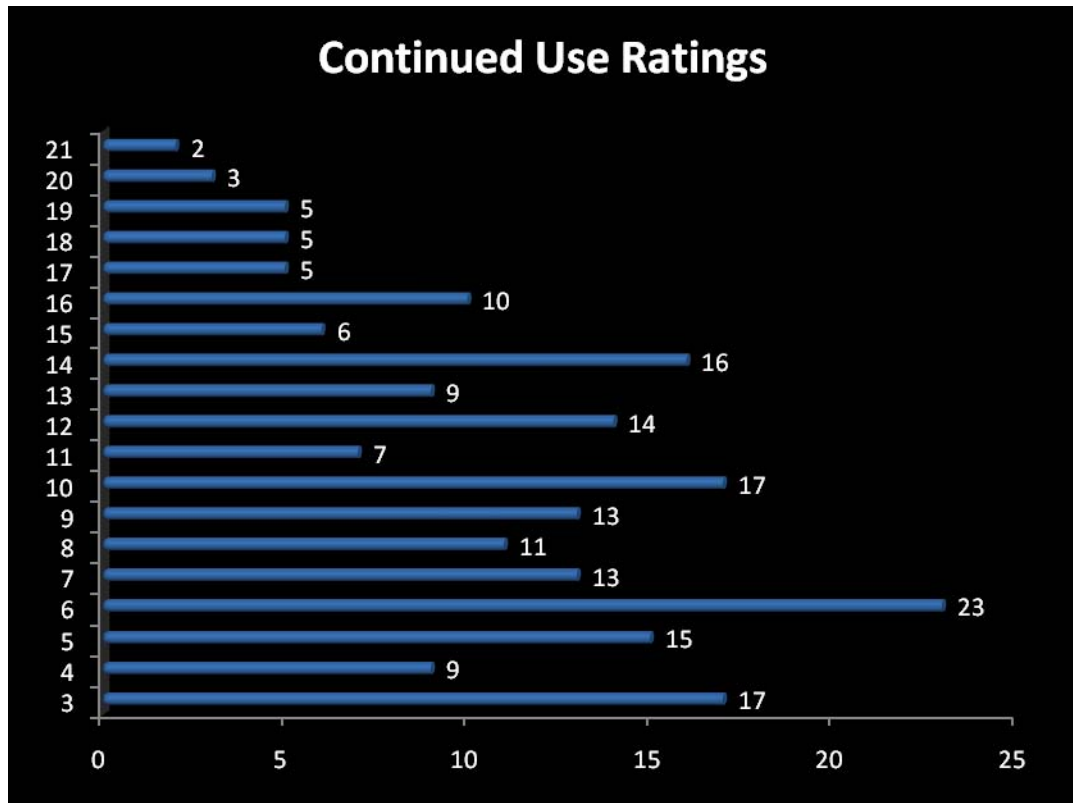
Very few of respondents accepted that they buy more than what they can afford. One of the reasons for this is credit cards, which has facilitated buyers to buy much more than what they can afford.

Continued Use:

This relates to buying preoccupations, impulses, or behavior that result in financial problem. In this case people generally have trouble saving money. If they do have some saving they will spend it on clothes, bags, shoes and accessories. This segment often lives on the edge-financially due to the large amounts they spend on shopping for fashion products. It again has dire consequences like significant debts and in extreme cases may even lead to

bankruptcy. Excessive shopping caused financial problems in the life of those consumer buyers who spend majority of their income on shopping.

**(Ratings for aggregate of 3 Questions)**



Majority of respondents accepted that excessive shopping has caused financial problems in their life at some point of time.

Demographics of Compulsive Buyers (Cross Tabulation)

Gender Vs Type of Buyer (Cross tabulation)			
Gender	Non Compulsive	Restrained	Compulsive
male	55	15	5
female	101	20	5

There is no significant difference between the percentage of male and females in compulsive buying, 6.67% of male respondents were compulsive buyers while 4% of females were identified as compulsive buyers.

Age Vs Type of Buyer (Cross tabulation)			
Age	Non Compulsive	Restrained	Compulsive
18-24	126	27	6
25-29	14	4	2
30-39	9	2	2
40 & above	7	1	0

The percentage of compulsive buyers is more in age group of 18-29. 12% of respondents in these age groups are compulsive buyers as compared to overall percentage of 5%.

#### Credit Card Purchase and Compulsive Buying

	Cash	Credit card	Both Cash & Credit card
Non Compulsive	98	14	42
Restrained	17	0	17
Compulsive	2	4	4



The increased use of credit cards has facilitated more of compulsive buying. The research showed that 80% of compulsive buyers use credit cards for shopping whereas only 35% of non compulsive buyers use credit card for shopping.

### Materialism Vs Compulsive Buying

An attempt was made through survey to understand the relationship between Materialism and Compulsive Buying; the result clearly showed that Compulsive buyers are highly materialistic.

Materialism Vs Type of Buyer (Cross tabulation)				
	Low	Moderate	High	Total
Non Compulsive	47	51	58	156
Restrained	6	15	13	34
Compulsive	0	1	9	10

Almost 30% of non compulsive buyers were low on materialism on the other hand only 10% of compulsive buyers were low on materialism. 90% of compulsive buyers were identified as highly materialistic.

### Fantasy Vs Compulsive Buyers

Compulsive buyers are considered to be highly fantasizing; we made an attempt to check this hypothesis. Following were the result of the research:

Fantasy Vs Type of Buyer (Cross tabulation)				
	Low	Moderate	High	Total

<b>Non Compulsive</b>	58	62	36	156
<b>Restrained</b>	27	6	1	34
<b>Compulsive</b>	9	1	0	10

Not even a single Compulsive Buyer had high Fantasy level. 90% of Compulsive Buyers had very low fantasies. Thus the hypothesis has been rejected through the survey.

### Income Spend of Fashion Products

As expected, compulsive buyers of fashion products spend far more proportion of their income on buying fashion products than non compulsive buyers.

	<b>Below 10%</b>	<b>10 - 25%</b>	<b>More than 25%</b>
<b>Non Compulsive</b>	46	70	31
<b>Restrained</b>	7	21	6
<b>Compulsive</b>	0	3	7

70% of Compulsive Buyers spend more than 25% of their income on fashion products, 30% of Compulsive Buyers spend 10-25% of their income on fashion products whereas mere 20% of non compulsive buyers spend more than 25% of their income on fashion products.

### Conclusion

The study showed that Compulsive Buying behavior is dependent on various factors both demographics and psychographics. Fascale is directional indicator of compulsive fashion shopping. However this scale needs to be validated on larger sample size and also needs to be clinically validated. There is evidence of

compulsive shopper being highly materialistic. There is also evidence that men have almost same compulsive shopper percentage as it comes to clothing.

The compulsive shopping phenomenon has far reaching social problems associated like, obsession may strain relationships specially marriage life and leave the family in debt resulting in very high level of stress for the whole family.

This may also result in acute depression and requires professional help. The potential solutions are from consumer and seller point of view. First of all consumer must accept and recognize the compulsive fashion shopping tendencies and accept that. It is recommended that compulsive shoppers seek professional counseling or a self-help group to deal with this addiction. Credit counseling, resolution of avoiding credit card purchases can help avoid shopping binge. In addition lifestyle changes can also help like always making and sticking to shopping lists; avoiding bargains (i.e. warehouses, etc.); not going window shopping; avoiding online, TV, or magazine shopping; walking or exercising when the shopping urge hits; From the seller point of view advertising has been criticized for encouraging purchases which are not necessary. Sustainable and socially responsible advertising is the only way forward. Retailers must not blindly encourage conspicuous consumption for commercial reasons, however must follow path of sustainable and socially responsible marketing.

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