

I Can't Stop Spending: The Impact of Buyer's Compulsiveness on Price Consciousness and Brand Consciousness

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Price and brand consciousness are two essential factors behind consumers' purchase decisions. However, little empirical research is available to conclusively understand the impact of compulsiveness on price consciousness and brand consciousness. The current study aims to find the impact of buyers' compulsiveness on price consciousness and brand consciousness. Furthermore, it investigates the moderating impact of consumers' age on price creation and brand consciousness from compulsiveness. The data collection entailed a mall intercept survey and comprised 150 consumers as a sample. The results exhibited that compulsiveness significantly relates to price and brand consciousness but in the opposite direction. Moreover, the role of consumers' age as a moderator is only supported in the compulsiveness-price consciousness relationship. These results are discussed in relation to their contribution and implications for academia and practitioners. The study also outlines certain limitations and future directions.

Keywords: *Compulsiveness, price consciousness, brand consciousness, clothing brands, Pakistan.*

The consumer purchase decision is important for researchers and marketers, and it serves as a focal point for the entire marketing activity. Many individual and situational factors influence the purchase decision. Consumer consciousness towards price and brands are among some important detrimental forces that shape purchase decisions. Price determines the financial or non-financial sacrifices associated with the purchase decision. Price consciousness refers to paying the lowest possible price and searching for such locations, which enable one to do so (Kukar-Kinney et al., 2009). Due to the recent economic recession, buyers have become more price-conscious, and during tough times, people re-examine old habits and brand loyalties (Grewal et al., 2012). Similarly, in the world of marketing, no one can deny the importance of

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brands in the eyes of consumers. Brand consciousness is a state of mind in which consumer prefers well-known brands (Liao & Wang, 2009). Dittmar (2005) believes that, nowadays, branding is used to create value by emphasizing the symbolic meanings of the brand. Materialistic people buy branded goods to attain their ideal selves.

Price and brand consciousness are widely researched across different countries and cultures with a purchase decision, covering various personal, socio-demographic characteristics and consumers' attitudes (Konuk, 2015). However, most of the researchers focused on understanding the two forces via normal consumers' mental states and attitudes (Sinha & Batra, 1999). Thereby ignoring other consumers' unstable attitudes and psychological problems that may result in abnormal buying behaviors. Among psychologically abnormal behaviors, compulsive buying behavior is now being considered a disorder for inclusion in the diagnostic manual for psychiatric disorders of the American Psychiatric Association (Faber & O'Guinn, 2008).

A large number of researchers have worked on compulsive buying, its concept, causes, measurement, and dysfunctional outcomes (financial and non-financial), which have remained the center of discussion for years (d'Astous, 1990; Edwards, 1993; Faber & O'Guinn, 1988; Roberts & Jones, 2001). However, very little work has been done to understand whether compulsiveness can influence an individual's level of price and brand consciousness and thus change their purchase decision.

Kukar-Kinney et al. (2009) explored how compulsive buyers process price and brand information and respond to it while making a purchase decision. So, from all this, we have learned that the compulsiveness of a buyer may influence his price consciousness and make him more or less conscious and more or less interested in buying branded products. Kukar-Kinney et al. (2009) prove compulsive buyers to be more price-conscious and brand-conscious than ordinary consumers. The earlier literature on compulsive buying does not support the finding that compulsive buyers show more price consciousness. For example, Black (2007) suggests that compulsive buyers usually buy products at everyday prices and do not wait until the promotion period. Similarly, Lo and Harvey (2012) believe that compulsive buyers are less concerned about their budgets and overspending.

The inconsistency in the prior studies' findings of compulsive buying behavior calls for further clarification and empirical investigations. This is one of the justifications for the current study, which is being done to confirm further the direction of the relationship between compulsiveness and price consciousness in a Pakistani scenario. Secondly, the direction of the relationship between compulsiveness and brand consciousness also needs academic attention.

Thirdly, it would be interesting to understand whether the impact of compulsiveness on price consciousness and brand consciousness is similar in terms of direction and strength. Lastly, because compulsiveness is regarded as an age-specific phenomenon, much evidence suggests that compulsiveness decreases with age. Faber and O'Guinn (1989) and Dittmar (2005) have strongly supported the view that most compulsive buyers belong to younger age groups. To the best of our knowledge, no literature is available on the moderating impact of age on this relationship. This also calls for further research to investigate whether age plays any significant role in price consciousness and brand consciousness, mainly when the consumer is under the influence of compulsiveness, the final justification.

The current study specifically aims to investigate:

- i) the impact of compulsiveness on a) price consciousness and b) brand consciousness simultaneously and
- ii) the moderating role of age on the relationship between compulsiveness and a) price consciousness and b) brand consciousness.

Literature Review

Compulsive Buying Behavior

It has been more than 25 years since compulsive buying has been a topic of discussion in one way or another. Looking back further, it can be seen that the essence of the term “compulsive buying” or something resembling it remained under research even before that. In the early twentieth century, it was believed that kleptomania, pyromania, and extreme collection were some of the ways of exhibiting compulsive buying (Faber & O’Guinn, 2008). Researchers also try to investigate there are some causes of control shopping, and it has negative consequences in the form of debts and family problems (Faber & O’Guinn, 1988). However, for years, no clear-cut use of the term “compulsive buying” remained until the mid-1980s. Later, most of the researchers began to think that compulsive buying has characteristics of two psychological disorders: obsessive-compulsive disorder and other is impulse control disorder (Schlosser et al., 1994).

Among researchers in the 1990s, the compulsive buying behavior debate discussed an abnormal behavior or an extreme behavior that lies within the realm of normal behavior (Faber & O’Guinn, 2008). Researchers or psychologists do not strictly outline the differences between extreme shopping and compulsive buying because they are temporary. Black (2010) is of the view that shopping that is out of control and has severe harmful outcomes indicates compulsive buying behavior. Although sometimes people shop like compulsive buyers, especially on occasions like birthdays, etc., such spending is not termed compulsive buying because it is not repeated or deleterious.

Several variables have been identified as antecedents of compulsive buying behavior, which are psychological factors such as low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and perfectionism (Faber, 2006). On the other hand, three theories are used by different researchers to explain the causes of compulsive buying behavior. Firstly, the general theory of addiction explains that those people who develop addictive behaviors, including compulsive buying, who had some deficiencies in their childhood or adolescence, which lower their self-esteem (Jacobs, 1986). Secondly, the mood theory states that the mood state predicts compulsive buying. People engage in buying to improve their moods, i.e., to avoid negative moods and prolong positive ones (Elliott, 1994). Thirdly, escape theory explains that when people are afraid of their existing situations, they try to run away from self-awareness, and they do so by using cognitive narrowing, which is shifting of attention from actual self, goals, etc., to activities like eating, sex, drug abuse, and others (Baumeister, 1991; Faber & Vohs, 2004). Additionally, consumers’ genetic structure (McElroy et al., 1994) parents' unequal sibling treatment (Faber & O’Guinn, 1988), authoritarian parenting style (Friese, 1992), societal boundaries (Faber & O’Guinn, 2008), ease of shopping due to new technology (Dittmar & Drury, 2000), promotional activities (Shoham et al., 2003) are also considered predictors of compulsive buying behavior.

Marketing initiatives that encourage compulsive buying are under criticism from public policymakers. Because they believe that the marketer uses such tactics to make money at the expense of innocent consumers. The people responsible for making social welfare policies should protect the consumer from such aggressive marketing tactics that promote compulsive buying (Gupta, 2013). However, there is limited research on this negative side of marketing tactics, which contributes to increasing consumer compulsiveness. Consumption patterns are different in different cultures. The degree of social acceptance for such buying also differs across cultures (Kwak et al., 2006). This also lays the foundation for studying compulsive buyer behavior in an underdeveloped economy like Pakistan, which now has a rapidly growing upper middle class that is also highly exposed to consumer goods.

Price Consciousness

The underlying assumption behind the demand for everything is that if other things remain the same, price is the only factor that decides the purchase by a consumer (Gabor & Granger, 1961). Price is the effort one pays for a product or a service. It can be in both monetary and non-monetary terms. Price has both negative and positive meanings for consumers. According to Kukar-Kinney et al. (2009) Price serves as an indicator of what buyers must give up when acquiring a product. Consequently, the higher the product price, the less likely a consumer would purchase the product. In this sense, a negative relationship exists between price and willingness to buy. Thus, consumers who do not want to pay higher prices become price sensitive, and this is also termed price consciousness, or, in other words, it is the extent to which consumers prefer to buy at a low price. Thus, in its negative sense, it is the indicator of disinclination towards spending, which means paying the lowest possible prices, and in its positive sense, it leads to a willingness to spend because of the expectation of getting higher quality in return for it (Lichtenstein et al., 1988; Lichtenstein et al., 1993) Some other researchers describe price as a monetary scarifies, as one does when he buys a product (Monroe, 1990).

By price consciousness, we mean consumer's tendency to buy at or at least look for the minimum possible price. So, price-conscious consumers are always on the hunt for a value deal because this gives them extra pleasure. Price consciousness is the degree to which a consumer finds and purchases a product at the lowest possible price (Lichtenstein et al., 1988). If a consumer buys something at the lowest price, he will be happy about it and will consider himself an intelligent shopper (Holbrook et al., 1984). A research study on consumer decision-making styles using the study of Sprotles and Kendall (1986) discovered that psychological variables also affect decision-making styles. The findings of this study showed no significant differences in the price consciousness of a consumer. So, attracting a price-conscious consumer continues to be a daunting task for consumers. That can be done either by sales promotions or by allocating part of a shop for goods at a discount (Lysonski & Durvasula, 2013).

Brand Consciousness

Brand-conscious consumers are those consumers who give importance to brand names, and they buy famous brands (Yasin, 2009), so brand consciousness is an approach to buying brand-name products that everyone knows and is advertised widely (Sprotles & Kendall, 1986). Consumers who are highly brand consciousness are of the view that the brand stands for position and respect, so they like to buy costly and famous brand-name products (Liao & Wang, 2009). The brand is also a symbol of quality among brand-conscious customers (Eastman & Eastman, 2011).

However, the most noteworthy point that creates consumer interest in branded products is the inherent assurance in a brand. Although brand consciousness is exhibited through preferring certain brands over other products, it should still be clear that this attitude and behavior originates from the trust and advantages the brand ensures for the customer (Akin, 2012). This belief may or may not be accurate or realistic; however, it reflects a specific decision-making outcome for the consumers who purchase these items. This outcome partially consists of the positive perceptions of others about the consumer of branded items; therefore, brand consciousness plays an essential role in society (Hafstrom et al., 1992). Brand consciousness is second among the eight factors in consumer decision-making styles (Sproles & Kendall, 1986). So, brand influences are an essential element of consumer purchasing processes. Faber and O'Guinn (1989) consumers mostly want to use products that make their lives comfortable and stress-free. Since consumers trust brand names, they look towards them for purchasing direction. Consumers believe that brands empower them to feel good about their shopping decisions.

Consuming attractive things and gaining acceptance in society by acquiring status symbols are consumer behaviors in every culture. It can also be termed as excessive consumption of

goods done only to be part of a superior social class. This also explains the use of luxury brands as a symbol of prestige. Because of liberal trade policies across the globe, consumers now have more access to brands than they had in the past. This availability of a large number of brands has made them more brand-conscious than they were ever before. So retailers should market high-status brands to such brand-conscious consumers (Lysonski & Durvasula, 2013).

Compulsiveness and Price Consciousness

Compulsiveness causes an individual to make continuous purchases regardless of financial, social, or psychological consequences (Faber & O'Guinn, 1992; Valence et al., 1988). They usually buy products at normal prices and do not wait until the promotion period. They have little ability to control or delay their urges to make inappropriate purchases (Black, 2007). Research has also found that consumers with high self-esteem are more prone to careful budgeting (Tang & Gilbert, 1995), so from this, it can be concluded that compulsive buyers cannot be good at budgeting because compulsive buyers are found to be low in self-esteem (Roberts & Sepulveda M, 1999). Non-compulsive shoppers are more concerned with their budgets than compulsive shoppers (Lo & Harvey, 2012). According to Schlosser et al. (1994) compulsive buyer's shopping may occur in just about any venue, ranging from high-end department stores and boutiques to consignment shops or garage sales. Another research conducted on consumer characteristics and shopping value found a positive relationship between compulsive buying and seeking hedonic shopping values, while there was no relation between compulsive buying and utilitarian shopping (Lee et al., 2009). The compulsive buyer does not even bother where they shop or how much the product costs if they can fulfill their desire.

However, few researchers have a contradictory view. As Smith (2002) proposed that consumers readily utilize shopbots to search the internet for the best price and value. While this suggests that online shoppers are more likely to be price-conscious. Research has also shown that the majority of online shoppers are compulsive buyers (Wang & Yang, 2008). Similarly, Kukar-Kinney et al. (2009) also propose a positive linear relationship between a tendency to buy compulsively and internet shopping and buying motivations. Donthu and Garcia (1999) It is also believed that online shoppers are more likely to be compulsive buyers. So, we can sum up that the majority of compulsive buyers are online shoppers, and a large number of them are price-conscious. According to Shafiii and Idayu (2008), if the price of a particular product is considered cheap for the customer, the compulsive buying tendency is higher. Cobb and Hoyer (1986) argue that low-priced products are more likely to be bought on impulse. If the price has an impact on impulsive buying, it may have an impact on compulsive buying as well. Compulsive buyers are more interested in low-price purchases (Hassay & Smith, 1996). Therefore, we expect that:

Hypothesis 1: Compulsiveness has a significant impact on price consciousness.

Moderation of Age on the Relationship between Compulsiveness and Price Consciousness

There are multiple reasons why young consumers are more inclined to shop compulsively. They can be immature, financially dependent on their elders, subject to severe peer pressure, or have too much time. Koran et al. (2006) believe that young people have less developed relations with family and work and are more concerned with filling the gap between their actual and ideal self-image. These things force them to buy excessively. Wood (1998) also suggests a negative relationship between age and compulsive buying. Previous research addressing the relationship between age and compulsive buying indicates that younger consumers are more strongly affected as compared to other age groups (Saleem & Salaria, 2010). Compulsive buyers are comparatively younger (Faber & O'Guinn, 1989).

d'Astous (1990) believes that compulsive buying has a negative relationship with age. There is evidence in favor of the view that younger people are more strongly affected by compulsive buying (Dittmar, 2005). Many studies on compulsive buyers' age have confirmed that their age is low compared to that of non-compulsive buyers. Such as 8-11 years in France (Lejoyeux et al., 1997), Germany (Scherhorn et al., 1990), and the US (Faber & O'Guinn, 1989; Hanley & Wilhelm, 1992). The moderating effect of age is also found in the compulsive buying behavior of people from collectivist cultures, showing a negative relationship between age and compulsive buying behavior (Kacen & Lee, 2002). Another research conducted by Deon (2011) finds that with age, buying behavior changes, and consumers become high-risk perceivers. This is the reason why they avoid buying compulsively. However, there exist few studies that believe that both compulsive buying and age are not related (Billieux et al., 2008). Hence, we propose that

Hypothesis 2: Age will moderate the relationship between compulsiveness and price consciousness.

Compulsiveness and Brand Consciousness

As discussed earlier, research confirms that low self-esteem is one of the main causes of compulsive buying behavior. Thus, this supports the idea that such buyers should be more interested in prestigious brands to boost their self-esteem. Lejoyeux et al., (2007) believes that compulsive buyers purchase items mostly to make an impact on others, and that is why they are more inclined to buy designer brands. Compulsive buyers consider buying as an expression of high social status (d'Astous, 1990). The main reason for compulsive buying is to increase the consumer's ability to attain his or her personal perception of socially sought-after appearance (Elliott, 1994). However, "status consumption" requires consumers to increase their attractive signals of money and power continually. Wang and Yang (2008) also found that hedonic buyers are more brand-conscious and look for the symbolic value of the product. For fashionable products, compulsive buyers are likely to select luxury brands (Lo & Harvey, 2012).

Moreover, materialistic consumers have a craving to make possessions as extensions of their self, so some compulsive buyers acquire possessions for self-enhancement (Belk, 2000). Research also shows that compulsive buyers are more likely to think that consumer products or services are an essential way to success, identity, and happiness than general consumers and compulsive buyers show great interest in invisible status products such as designer clothes and jewelry (Dittmar & Drury, 2000). Some researchers also link buying with social status (d'Astous & Tremblay, 1989). Hanley and Wilhelm (1992) reported that compulsive buyers shop primarily for items that reflect their status to others. Another research on Indian consumers finds that people buy foreign brands as a status symbol (Batra et al., 2000). Similarly, another research conducted by Zeb et al., (2011) reported that status branding, brand attitude, paying a premium for branded clothing, self-concept, and reference groups were found to affect female consumer buying behavior positively. Hence, we propose that:

Hypothesis 3: Compulsiveness has a significant impact on brand consciousness.

Moderation of Age on Relationship between Compulsiveness and Brand Consciousness

Research shows that younger consumers are more likely to be motivated to consume for status (Eastman & Eastman, 2011). This is consistent with both (O'Cass & McEwen, 2004) and Truong et al. (2008), who utilized younger adult samples in examining status consumption. (Wang et al., 2004) confirm that brand-conscious consumer tends to be younger. A research

study by Homburg and Giering (2001) shows that the relationship between customer satisfaction (attitude) and loyalty (behavior) is greatly influenced by personal characteristics such as age and income. There is strong evidence in research that information processing declines with age (Gilly & Zeithaml, 1985). Old people have limited information processing ability, so their reactions toward brand choices may change as they grow older. This may be because young customer’s mental abilities enable them to find and try a new alternative, although they are pretty satisfied with a current provider. Therefore, the relationship between customer satisfaction and resulting loyalty is lower for younger people than for older people (Han & Ryu, 2007).

Therefore, we can hypothesize that

Hypothesis 4: Age will moderate the relationship between compulsiveness and brand consciousness.

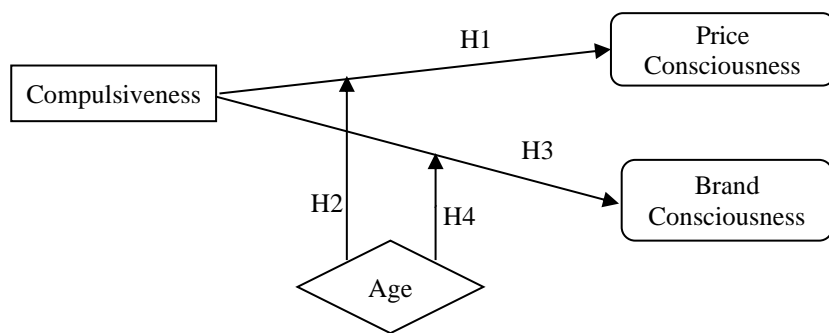


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Methodology

The study aimed to understand and describe the known variables and their influences on each other better. This may be considered analytical and predictive in nature. The unit of analysis for this study is individual consumers buying clothing, particularly from one of the leading clothing retailers in the metropolitan city of Lahore. The study's respondents are consumers surveyed while shopping at that store; the study settings are kept natural without any experimental manipulation. Therefore, the settings are non-contrived. The researcher has minimal interference. This study is cross-sectional as data is collected once from the participating consumer.

The study utilized a mall intercept survey to collect data from consumers in the shopping mall. The choice of this mode of data collection is made because of the low-cost factor associated with it. The cost incurred in the mall intercept survey is low because a large number of customers come to the mall, and the researcher does not go to their place individually (Zikmund et al., 2013). A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed, and after accounting for incomplete, partially filled, and non-useable questionnaires, the final useable questionnaires remained 150. Initially, the questionnaire was designed in English, but later on, keeping in mind the consumers in the local market of Lahore, the questionnaire was translated into Urdu. The design of a questionnaire and maintaining its quality during translation are critical in any research (Behr & Scholz, 2011). So, the questionnaire is translated according to the method explained by (Brislin, 1976).

A pilot study was conducted by getting the survey instrument filled out by 6 consumers to test the clarity and understanding of the Urdu questionnaire. The entire questionnaire was then reviewed item by item according to minor points raised by the sample. The consumers are from all professions, both genders and varying age groups. They suggested specific changes in the translation of “bipolar extremes” of the scale in the second section. Based on this pilot study, the revised Urdu questionnaire was finally used for data collection.

Compulsiveness is measured using the 7 items in all; 6 of these items are adopted (Ridgway, Kukar-Kinney, & Monroe, 2008) and one item is added by the researcher. These items capture two dimensions of compulsiveness. 3-items (measured on a 6-point scale of “not at all” and “to a great extent”) are for capturing the dimension of obsessive-compulsive disorder. For measuring impulse control disorder, the study uses 4-items in all; 3-items adopted from (Ridgway et al., 2008) (ranging from 1 = never, 2 = almost never, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = very often, 6 = always). While translating items for impulse control disorder into Urdu language and based on the pilot study, one extra item is added to clarify and understand the consumer. A 5-item scale measures price consciousness (Kopalle & Lindsey-mullikin, 2003) on a six points scale (ranging from 1= never, to 6 = always). Brand consciousness is measured through a 3-item scale (Donthu & Gilliland, 1996), all measured on a 6-point numeric scale (1= never, 2= almost never, 3= sometimes, 4= often, 5= very often, 6= always). It can be observed in Table 1 that all the measured yielded coefficient Alpha reliability higher than the threshold (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

Data Analysis and Results

Among the respondents, the majority are females (72%) and middle-aged (60%) between 20 and 40. The percentage of employment is very high among males compared to females (76% for males and 36% for females). As the data is collected from a clothing retailer and more females than males are the respondents, 32% are housewives. Of the 150 respondents, about 39% have a monthly income of Rs. 60,000 to 119,000; 34% have a monthly income of Rs. 120,000 to 179,000.

Table 1
Correlation Matrix and Reliability

Variables	CA	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Gender	-	1					
2. Age	-	-.09	1				
3. Income	-	-.01	.13	1			
4. Education	-	-.02	-.07	-.19*	1		
5. Compulsiveness	.85	.07	-.17*	.17*	-.15	1	
6. Price Consciousness	.70	-.14	-.08	.01	-.17*	-.19*	1
7. Brand Consciousness	.85	.02	.04	.11	.01	.45**	-.20*

* P < 0.05; ** P < 0.01: CA = Coefficient Alpha

The Correlation matrix in Table 1 indicates that all the three variables are correlated. A significant negative correlation exists between compulsiveness and price consciousness (coefficient= -.19, p< .05). This finding provides initial support for H1. Similarly, there is a significant positive correlation between compulsiveness and brand consciousness (coefficient=0.45, p<.01). This finding provides initial support for H3 of the study. This may also be noted in Table 1 that age is also significantly negatively correlated (coefficient= -0.17, p< .05) to compulsive buying behavior.

Table 2
Hierarchical Liner Regression for Price Consciousness

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Control				
Gender	-.14*	-.13	-.14*	-.12
Income	-.03	.01	.03	.03
Education	-.17	-.20**	-.21**	-.20**
Independent				
Compulsiveness		-.21***	-.24***	-.67***
Moderator				
Age			-.15**	-.58***
Age x Compulsiveness				.58**
R-Sqaure	.05	.09	.11	.14

*p < .01; **p < .05; *** p < .01

Linear regression modeling has been used to determine the impact of control and the independent variables on the dependent variable, i.e., price consciousness. Table 2 shows four regression models, which are discussed below. In Model 1, the control variables, i.e., gender, income, and education, are regressed over price consciousness. In Model 2, the control variables as well as the independent variable, i.e., compulsiveness is regressed over price consciousness, which gives a significant relationship (beta = -.21, p < .05). In other words, with every unit increase in compulsiveness, there is a decrease of 0.21 in the value of price consciousness. It may be noted here that R2 for Model 2 is 9%, which seems relatively low. Please recall that this study focuses on the disorderly consumer behaviors of compulsiveness. Therefore, a low explanatory power is not surprising. There are many typical consumer attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics that are not part of this study but can impact his/her price consciousness. Overall, we conclude that compulsiveness significantly impacts (at a level of 95%) price consciousness; this supports H1.

It can be observed in Model 3 of Table 2 that age also regresses over price consciousness, control variables, and compulsiveness. The results show that age has a significant negative impact (beta = -.19, p < .05) on the dependent variable. In Model 4, the interaction term (i.e., age X and compulsiveness) is added. The results show that the interaction term is also significant (p < .05); the R-square for Model 4 is 14%. In other words, age moderates the relationship between compulsiveness and price consciousness at a 95% significance level. This moderating effect of age is graphically shown in the discussion section (Figure 2). The *results supported H2*.

Similarly, linear regression modeling has been used to determine the impact of control and the independent variables on the dependent variable, i.e., brand consciousness. Table 3 shows four regression models, which are discussed below. In Model 1, the control variables, i.e., gender, income, and education, are regressed over brand consciousness. These control variables only account for a 1.2% variation in brand consciousness. In Model 2, the control variables, as well as compulsiveness, regressed over brand consciousness, which gives a significant relationship (beta = .46, p < .01). In other words, with every unit increase in compulsiveness, there is an increase of .46 in the value of the brand. Overall, we can conclude that compulsiveness significantly (at a level of 99%) impacts brand consciousness, which strongly supports H3.

In Table 3, Model 3, age is also regressed over price consciousness along with the control variables and compulsiveness. The results show that age has a significant negative impact (beta = .13, p < .10) on the dependent variable. In Model 4, the interaction term (i.e., age X and compulsiveness) is added. The results show that the interaction term is not significant. In

other words, age does not moderate the relationship between compulsiveness and price consciousness. Therefore, our data *does not support H4*.

Table 3
Hierarchical Liner Regression for Price Consciousness

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Control				
Gender	.21	-.01	-.01	-.01
Income	.11	.04	.02	.02
Education	.02	.08	.09	.09
Independent				
Compulsiveness		.46**	.49**	.67**
Moderator				
Age			-.13*	-.31*
Age x Compulsiveness				-.25
R-square	.01	.21	.23	.23

*p < .01; **p < .05

Discussion

The first result of this study provides pragmatic support that a negative relationship exists between compulsiveness and price consciousness. One can say that a compulsive buyer is less price conscious than a non-compulsive buyer, i.e., the compulsiveness of a buyer decreases his price consciousness. This may be because that compulsive consumer enjoys shopping so much that monetary sacrifice, i.e., the price associated with shopping, becomes secondary in importance for him. The results are consistent with the research results of Lo and Harvey (2012) who find that non-compulsive shoppers are more concerned with their budgets than compulsive shoppers. Compulsive shoppers remain in a good mood after buying too many expensive products. Their emotional state is not affected by overspending. Although, (Kukar-Kinney et al., 2009) are of the view that compulsive buyers are more price-conscious than non-compulsive buyers. Our findings are opposite to theirs. There may be several reasons, such as our typical context, the dominance of middle to higher-income groups among our participants, etc. Further research may clarify this ambiguity.

The second result of the research provides empirical support for moderating the impact of age on the relationship between compulsiveness and price consciousness, such that the relationship is more robust for younger consumers, i.e., consumers below the age group of 30. This moderation effect is shown in Figure 2, which is given below. The simple slope line of compulsiveness and price consciousness for consumers below 30 is the dotted one, and this line is very steeper than the hard line for consumers above 30. Thus, the compulsiveness-price consciousness relationship is much stronger for younger consumers than those above 30. It may be interesting to note that at lower levels of compulsiveness, the price consciousness of the age group below 30 is even higher than the price consciousness of the age group above 30. For middle-level compulsiveness, both age groups exhibit similar levels of price consciousness. However, at higher levels of compulsiveness, consumers in the below-30 age group exhibit a much lower level of price consciousness than the consumers in the above 30 age group, and this gap widens with an increase in compulsiveness. Earlier literature (Deon, 2011; Dittmar, 2005) The current study also finds that age has a relation with compulsiveness, such that younger consumers are more compulsive than older ones. It also observes that younger consumers are strongly affected by compulsive buying.

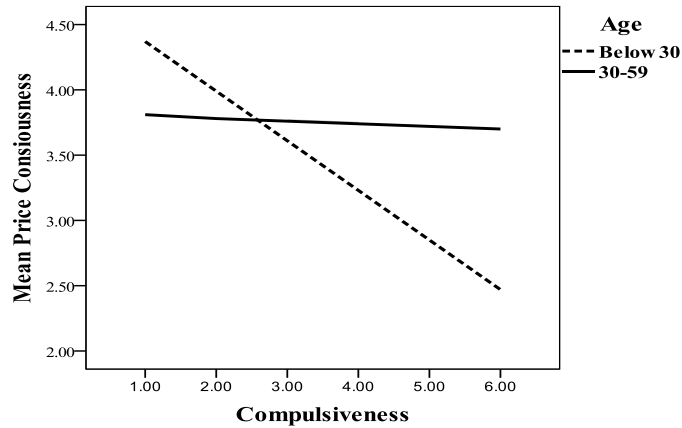


Figure 2: Moderating Effect of Age

The third result of this research is that compulsiveness and brand consciousness are related positively, i.e., compulsiveness increases the brand consciousness of a buyer. Not much research is available on this issue; anyhow, our result is very much consistent with a recent study of (Kukar-Kinney et al., 2009) This result could be explained by the fact that a person who is low in self-esteem and who is materialistic is always brand-conscious because materialistic consumers see their possessions as extensions of themselves. Faber and O’Guinn (1989) have found that compulsiveness lowers self-esteem and makes consumers prone to fantasies. These two causes of compulsive buying, i.e., materialism and low self-esteem, founded by Faber and O’Guinn (2008) are the motivators for brand consciousness.

The fourth result of the study demonstrates that age does not moderate the relationship between compulsiveness and brand consciousness. Researchers have identified demographic and political factors as moderators in attitude-behavior relationships (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Research has also confirmed that younger consumers are more likely to be motivated to consume for status (Eastman & Eastman, 2011). Thus, it is expected that age might have a role in the relationship between compulsiveness and brand consciousness. However, these assumptions are not supported by our data, and the present research shows that the change in age does not change the impact of compulsiveness on brand consciousness. This may be because of the reason that branding is a phenomenon popular only among the elite of our society, irrespective of age group. Certain other variables may instead moderate it. Another reason is that the strength of the relationship between compulsiveness and brand consciousness makes the impact of the moderator irrelevant. Further investigation may clarify these points.

Contributions and Implications

The present study has multiple contributions. Its first and foremost contribution is that it is the pioneer study of its kind, conducted on a compulsiveness-consciousness path, which researchers have rarely addressed. Secondly, no similar study has been done in the Pakistani scenario. Here, compulsiveness has only been investigated in terms of its determinants, causes, and outcomes. Western researchers have explored that compulsiveness has an impact on consumer’s brand consciousness and price consciousness, but such studies are conducted on Western respondents, and the findings may not be generalized to ours. This study has tried to empirically test the compulsive buyer’s price consciousness and brand consciousness in Pakistani market. Thirdly, the study explores the impact of age on the compulsiveness-consciousness path, which has never been examined by any other researcher. Finally, the study

fulfills one of the future directions of research conducted by (Kukar-Kinney et al., 2009) by investigating the impact of compulsiveness on price consciousness and brand consciousness of consumers of brick-and-mortar stores (physical clothing stores).

The present study has many implications for academia and managers. The study exposes compulsiveness as a new underlying reason for low price consciousness. Therefore, making consumers more shopaholics can decrease their price sensitivity. This research has many repercussions for managers and marketers today. This study would enable them to better understand the consumer, particularly compulsive consumers, and his price consciousness and brand consciousness affecting purchase decisions. The inclusion of different age groups of respondents confirmed the moderating impact of age on compulsive buyers' price consciousness, which has opened new ways of earning profits for marketers targeting the segment below 30. They can charge higher prices as the study shows the least price consciousness for consumers below 30 compulsive. The compulsive buyer's brand consciousness is not affected by age, which shows that Pakistani youth are still not as brand-conscious as the youth of Western societies are. Perhaps because branding is a phenomenon just a couple of decades old in our society and is a matter of discussion only in the elite class rather than the masses. Therefore, it calls for the marketer to work harder to create brand consciousness among the age group below 30 of compulsive buyers because they are more compulsive and least price-conscious.

Limitations and Future Directions

The study has certain limitations. The first limitation is that the data is collected through a mall intercept survey, in which consumers are usually in a hurry and do not reveal their feelings openly. Furthermore, most consumers were even reluctant to share the information, which resulted in the sample being biased. Secondly, the questionnaire was translated into Urdu, raising the reliability question. Although the translated scales were tested for reliability as the sample is not very diverse demographically, further study is needed to ensure their reliability. Thirdly, the study is conducted on respondents whose majority are female and belong to relatively middle to higher-income groups. Fourthly, the study is conducted on the compulsive consumers of a clothing retailer and may not be generalized for other product categories. Age may moderate the relationship between compulsiveness and brand consciousness if it would have been a youth-oriented product such as a mobile, laptop, etc.

The limitations of this research call for further research. Firstly, similar research should be done on respondents whose majority is a comparatively lower income group, which would turn out to be price-conscious and compulsive ones. Secondly, a similar study should be conducted across other product lines. This may perhaps result in a different relationship between compulsiveness and brand consciousness and similarly between compulsiveness and price consciousness. Finally, the model incorporates only age as a moderator. The study calls for future studies of a similar nature using other demographic factors such as occupation and marital status as a moderator.

Conclusion

This is one of the most critical areas in marketing, where, on one extreme, we are looking for ways to increase our sales while on the other extreme lies the concern for society to which we all belong. As we know, compulsive buying has many negative consequences, such as family conflicts, financial pressures in the form of credit card debts, wastage of time, etc., so in this era of consumerism, a marketer should draw a line between his social obligations and his pursuit of unprecedent profits which may in specific case violate the norms of society welfare. Marketers should be really careful while constantly advertising products and repeating them again and

again because this may provoke some compulsive consumers to buy uselessly, which may create severe problems in their lives as an individual and society as a whole.

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