

Compulsive Buying among Late Adolescents as an Identity-related Compensatory Behaviour: Big Five Personality, Identity Motives and Self-construal as Predictors

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ABSTRACT

Compulsive buying is dysfunctional consumer behaviour with harmful personal, social, psychological, and financial problems. Social psychological perspectives define compulsive buying as an extreme form of ordinary buying motivated by mood regulation and identity seeking (Dittmar, 2004). The present research aims to predict compulsive buying tendency by identity-related factors: big five personality, identity motives, and self-construal through a questionnaire study, which sampled 460 undergraduate students. In terms of big five personality, results show that neuroticism emerged as the strongest positive predictor of compulsive buying tendency, followed by extraversion, whereas agreeableness was a negative predictor. In terms of identity motives, need for self-esteem which is relevant to identity-related affect positively predicted compulsive buying, followed by need for distinctiveness which is relevant to identity enactment, whereas need for efficacy which is relevant to identity enactment was negative predictor. In terms of self-construal, consistency and self-reliance negatively predicted compulsive buying tendency, whereas inclusion of others in the self was positive predictor. Furthermore, inclusion of others in the self was a partial mediator between two personality traits: extraversion and agreeableness, and compulsive buying.

Keywords: compulsive buying; big five personality; identity motives; self-construal; consumer behaviour; identity

Introduction

Compulsive buying is considered to be a problematic consumer behaviour which consists of the following core features: the impulse to buy is experienced as irresistible, individuals lose control over their buying behaviour, and they continue with excessive buying despite adverse consequences in forms of personal, social, occupational, and financial problems (Dittmar, 2004). According to clinical diagnostic DSM-IV-TR (American Psychiatric Association, 2000), compulsive buying is a kind of psychiatric disorder categorized in “Disorders of Impulse Control Not Otherwise Specified”. However, it is not yet resolved whether compulsive buying behaviour is in the category of compulsive-obsessive, impulse control or mood disorders. On the other hand, social psychological perspectives suggest that compulsive buying is an extreme form of ordinary purchasing behaviour dealing with mood and identity problems (Dittmar, 2004).

Social psychological model of compulsive buying as identity seeking

In modern consumer culture, people's buying behaviour is motivated by psychological fulfillment, whereas people in traditional culture concern about utility maximization and rational belief. Dittmar (2005a) found that among compulsive buyers, psychological buying motives played a bigger role than economic-rational motives. Apart from emotional buying motive, ideal-self buying motive is dominant the other identity-related buying motives.

Dittmar (2005a) proposed a two-factor model of compulsive buying mainly focusing on identity-related perspectives. Symbolic self-completion theory by Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1982) was the starting point of this model, which states that when people perceive that they lack important indicators of accomplishment in their self-concept, people will produce a motivation to compensate. This can refer to acquiring and using material goods as symbolic of fulfilling the self. For example, a skirt is symbolic to feminine clothes. A young girl who feels that she lacks femininity, will wear a skirt instead of jean trousers to compensate her feeling.

The first factor is self-discrepancies which concerns of self-concept dynamics which alter people's motivation to strive for an ideal self. Buying as compensatory behaviour may increase as a function of discrepancies between how people perceive themselves (actual self) and how they would like to be (ideal self). This factor starts from self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987) highlighting negative affective outcomes of discrepancies in the form of dejection and depression. However, “possible selves” representing individuals' idea of who they would like to be, can function as incentives for future behaviour (Markus & Nurius, 1986). As a result, people buying consumer goods allows people to reduce the perceived gaps between ideal self and actual self, according to buying consumer goods as an identity-repair strategy (Dittmar, 2005a).

The second factor is materialism which is defined as “a set of centrally held beliefs about the importance of (material) possessions in one's life” (Richins & Dawson, 1992, p.308). People who have high materialistic values believe that acquiring material goods is a central life goal, a prime indicator of success, and the key to happiness and self-definition (Richins, 2004). From this factor, people will construct

their identities through buying consumer goods as an identity-seeking strategy (Dittmar, 2005a).

In addition, materialistic values predict compulsive buying behaviour in both gender and different age groups (Dittmar, 2005b; Dittmar, 2005a). Moreover, materialistic values predicts ideal-self buying motive, except in middle-aged men. On the contrary, self-discrepancies predicts ideal-self buying motive and compulsive buying behaviour in women only. Therefore, ideal-self buying motive predicts compulsive buying behaviour (Dittmar, 2005a). Identity-seeking buying motives were also a mediating variable between materialistic values and compulsive buying online (Dittmar, Long, & Bond, 2007).

Big Five Personality

Costa & McCrae (1989) proposed that individual differences in traits called the “*Big Five*” factors or *Five Factor Model* of personality were five broad dimensions of personality which are *Neuroticism*, *Extraversion*, *Openness to Experience*, *Agreeableness*, and *Conscientiousness*.

Neuroticism – (sensitive/ nervous vs. secure/ confident) refers to individual differences in emotion in response to any stimuli in the forms of anxiety, angry hostility, depression, self-consciousness, impulsiveness and vulnerability.

Extraversion – (outgoing/ energetic vs. shy/ reserved) refers to individual differences in interpersonal relations in the forms of warmth, gregariousness, assertiveness, activity, excitement seeking and positive emotions.

Openness to Experience – (inventive/ curious vs. consistent/ cautious) refers to individual differences in response to any stimuli around oneself interest for new experience in forms of fantasy, aesthetics, feelings, actions, ideas, and values.

Agreeableness – (friendly/ compassionate vs. competitive/ outspoken) refers to individual differences in norm and model determination to live in one’s life in the forms of trust, straightforwardness, altruism, compliance, modesty, and tender-mindedness.

Conscientiousness – (efficient/ organized vs. easy-going/ careless) refers to individual differences in goal achievement in the forms of competence, order, dutifulness, achievement striving, self-discipline, and deliberation.

Personality and buying tendency

There are many previous researches addressing compulsive buying in America, Europe and some Asian countries such as South Korea (Lyi, Lee, & Kwak, 1997). However, there are a few studies focusing on compulsive buying in Thailand. Various prior studies examined the effects of big five personality on buying (e.g. Balabanis, 2006; Chobthamkit, 2010, 2012; Mikołajczak-Degrauwe, Brengman, Wauters, & Rossi, 2012; Mowen & Spears, 1999; Mueller, Claes, Mitchell, Wonderlich, Crosby, & de Zwann, 2010; N & Raveendran, 2007; Shahjehan, Qureshi, Zeb, & Saifullah,

2012; Sun, Wu, and Youn, 2004; Wang & Yang, 2008), but there is no consistent pattern of personality that can predict compulsive buying.

Identity Motives

Identity motives are defined as pressure toward certain identity states and away from others, guiding the processes of identity construction. Not only do identity motives play an important role to form one's self-concept, but they also affect a variety of aspects in life including consumerism (e.g. Lynn & Snyder, 2002).

Vignoles, Regalia, Manzi, Golledge, & Scabini (2006) reviewed some literature about the individual self-concept, social identity, and identity threat to identify six conceptually distinct motivational goals affecting identity construction characterized by feeling of *self-esteem*, *continuity*, *distinctiveness*, *belonging*, *efficacy* and *meaning*.

The *self-esteem motive* refers to “the motivation to maintain and enhance a positive conception of oneself” (Gecas, 1982, p.20).

The *continuity motive* refers to the motivation to maintain a sense of “continuity across time and situation” within identity (Breakwell, 1986, p. 24).

The *distinctiveness motive* pushes toward the establishment and maintenance of a sense of differentiation from others (Vignoles, Chrysoschoou, & Breakwell, 2000).

The *belonging motive* refers to the need to maintain or enhance feelings of closeness to, or acceptance by, other people, whether in dyadic relationships or within in-groups (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

The *efficacy motive* is oriented toward maintaining and enhancing feelings of “competence and control” (Breakwell, 1993, p. 205).

The *meaning motive* refers to the need to find significance or purpose in one's own existence (Baumeister, 1991).

Identity motives and buying tendency

The author's previous study on Thai samples with a full-time job found that need for belongingness positively predicted compulsive buying (Chobthamkit, 2010, 2012). There are indications which support the proposal that relevant factors play a role in buying, although there is no previous research addressing multiple identity motives and buying tendency. O'Guinn and Faber (1989) found that compulsive buyers had significantly lower self-esteem than general consumers. Furthermore, Baumeister (2002) proposed that self-control failure affected impulsive purchasing behaviour. Additionally, Asamoah, Chovancová, De Alwis, Kumara, & Guo (2012) conducted research in Czech Republic, China, Ghana, and Sri Lanka and found that risk reduction and social demonstration were the motives affected consumers' brandname buying behaviour. In addition, Mowen and Spears (1999) found that need for arousal was the mediator between some traits of big five personality and materialism linking to compulsive buying.

Self-construal

Markus and Kitayama (1991) focused on variation in which people in different cultures could come to believe about themselves concerning the relationship between the self and others. The theory assumes that people tend to construct the self in two different construals of the self; the *independent view of self*, which involves being autonomous, self-contained, unique, individualist, egocentric, idiocentric and separate from others is more common in Western cultures while in non-Western cultures, where an *interdependent view of self* is promoted, people tend to see themselves to a greater extent as sociocentric, holistic, collective, allocentric, ensemble, constitutive, contextualist, relational, and closely interconnected with others.

Self-construal and buying tendency

The author's previous study with Thai samples with a full-time job found that self-reliance negatively predicted compulsive buying tendency (Chobthamkit, 2010, 2012). There are indications which support the idea that culture differences play a role in buying tendency, although there has not been previous research addressing multiple dimensions of self-construal and buying behaviour. Due to trait buying impulsiveness, Caucasians engage in more impulse buying behavior compared to Asians. In addition, independence did not impact Asians' impulsive buying, although it affected impulsive buying among Caucasians. For Caucasians, the more independent their self-concept, the more impulsive buying they are likely to engage in (Kacen & Lee, 2002). On the contrary, most impulsive buyers were from collectivist cultures (Sun, Horn, & Merritt, 2004). Moreover, Mandel (2003) found that consumers were more risk-seeking in their financial choices and less risk-seeking in their social choices when their interdependent selves were activated, compared to independent selves activated consumers.

There are not many previous studies addressing the effect of identity-related factors on compulsive buying in Thailand. Moreover, the present research was conducted due to future direction of the author's previous study. Therefore, the purpose of the present research is to examine the role of identity related factors: big five personality, identity motives, and self-construal predicting compulsive buying in late adolescents who are at a risky ages for adopting this problematic consumer behaviour. Moreover, this study will test that identity motives and self-construal may mediate the effects of big five personality dimensions on compulsive buying.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 460 undergraduate students.

Procedure

The paper-based questionnaires were distributed to collect data from undergraduate students. The sampling was based on convenience. Respondents were informed that the study was about beliefs, thoughts and feelings about themselves and other people. Demographic details are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Demographic details

	Overall
<i>N</i>	460
Mean Age	20.11
<i>SD</i>	1.3
Range	18-24
Percentage Female	71.3

Materials

Big Five Personality Scale

Thai version of NEO Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) which was a shortened version of Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R) (Costa and McCrae, 1992), was translated by Sabaiying (1992). Big five personality consists of five main traits: *neuroticism* (e.g. “I often feel inferior to others”), *extraversion* (e.g. “I prefer to be with people all around”), *openness to experience* (e.g. “I often like to try new styles of international food”), *agreeableness* (e.g. “I usually care about what other people feel”), and *conscientiousness* (e.g. “I can determine how my work progresses and whether it has been done punctually”) using a five point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) which had a clear middle point (3 = *cannot make a decision*). According to the author’s undergraduate research projects in Thailand, most participants were likely to rate on the middle point on average (Chobthamkit, 2008; Chobthamkit et al, 2007). Therefore, the new version of NEO-FFI was revised to use a six point Likert-type scale which had no clear middle point to indirectly force participants to rate in one way or another (3 = *disagree a little* and 4 = *agree a little*). Some items were excluded to improve the alpha. The alpha values of big five personality in actual study after improvement were .82 for *neuroticism*, .73 for *extraversion*, .68 for *openness to experience*, .69 for *agreeableness*, and .76 for *conscientiousness*.

Identity Motives Scale

Identity motives were measured using an adapted version of the method described by Vignoles and Moncaster (2007). Participants were asked to freely specify eight elements of identity content using an adapted version of the classic Twenty Statement Test or ‘Who am I?’ test (Kuhn & McPartland, 1954). Next, participants rated each of their identity elements on eight dimensions. Each dimension was presented as a question with a block of eight 11 point Likert-type scales, ranging from 0 to 10. Three questions measured associations of each element with *identity structure*: *perceived centrality* (“How important is each of these things in defining who you are?” scales: 0 = *not at all important*; 5 = *intermediate*; 10 = *extremely important*), *identity-related affect* (“How happy or unhappy do you feel about each of these things?” scales: 0 = *extremely unhappy*; 5 = *neutral*; 10 = *extremely happy*), and *identity enactment* (“How much do you show people that you are each of these things in your everyday actions?” scales: 0 = *don’t show this at all*; 5 = *show this to some extent*; 10 = *very definitely show this*). The other six questions measured associations of each element

with *motive satisfaction* (scales: 0 = *not at all*; 5 = *moderately*; 10 = *extremely*): feelings of *self-esteem* (“How much does each of these things make you see yourself positively?”), *continuity* (“To what extent does each of these things make you feel that your past, present, and future are connected?”), *distinctiveness* (“How much do you feel that each of these things distinguishes you—in any sense—from other people?”), *belonging* (“How much does each of these things make you feel you “belong”—that you are included among or accepted by people who matter to you?”), *efficacy* (“How much does each of these things make you feel competent and capable?”), and *meaning* (“How much does each of these things give you a sense that your life is “meaningful?”).

Following the rationale described above, motives for self-esteem, continuity, distinctiveness, belonging, efficacy and meaning were measured as the correlation of each individual’s ratings of their identity elements on each of these respective dimensions with the mean of their ratings for identity structure, adjusted for normality using Fishers *r* to *z*’ transformation (see Vignoles & Moncaster. 2007; Vignoles et al., 2002).

Self-construal Scale

A fifty-eight item scale was based on existing self-construal scale (Owe, 2012). The items were rated on a nine-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 9 (*exactly*). Owe’s self-construal consists of seven dimensions: *self-direction* (e.g. “You make decisions about your life on your own”), *self-reliance* (e.g. “You try to avoid being reliant on others”), *uniqueness* (e.g. “You like being different from other people”), *consistency* (e.g. “You behave in the same way even when you are with different groups of people”), *inclusion of others in the self* (e.g. “If someone in your family is sad, you feel the sadness as if it were your own”), *harmony* (e.g. “You try to adapt to people around you, even if it means hiding your inner feelings”), and *commitment to others* (e.g. “You value good relations with the people close you to more than your personal achievements”). Some items were excluded to improve the alpha. The alpha values of self-construal in actual study after improvement were .72 for *self-direction*, .85 for *self-reliance*, .81 for *uniqueness*, .74 for *consistency*, .76 for *inclusion of others in the self*, .72 for *harmony* and .71 for *commitment to others*.

Compulsive Buying Scale

Compulsive buying were measured by the revised CBS scale (D’Astous, Maltais, & Roberge, 1990). It consists of eleven items referring to core features of compulsive buying: “*the impulse to buy is experienced as irresistible*” (e.g. “As soon as I enter a shopping centre, I want to go in a shop and buy something”), “*individuals lose control over their buying behaviour*” (e.g. “I sometimes feel that something inside pushes me to go shopping”), and “*they continue with excessive buying despite adverse consequences*” (e.g. “I have often bought a product that I did not need even when I knew I had very little money left”) (Dittmar, 2004). Participants were asked to rate on a six-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). The alpha value of compulsive buying in actual study was .89.

These scales were translated from English into Thai language. They were then independently back-translated, as described by Brislin (1970). The two English

versions were compared for any inaccuracies, which were resolved through discussion with scales designers, translators and Psychology lecturer.

Results

Predictors of Compulsive Buying Tendency

There was some overlap between identity-related variables. Thus, compulsive buying scores were examined in a hierarchical multiple regression analysis, where three groups of predictors: five dimensions of big five personality, six dimensions of identity motives, and seven dimensions of self-construal were separately entered.

Big Five Personality as Predictors of Compulsive Buying Tendency

Compulsive buying scores were examined in a multiple regression analysis, where all dimensions of Big Five personality were entered.

The regression coefficients and statistics after all dimensions of Big Five personality were added, explaining 18% of the variance in compulsive buying; $\Delta F(5, 452) = 21.56$; $p < .01$. Neuroticism significantly predicted compulsive buying tendency and was also the strongest predictors ($\beta = .37$; $p < .01$), followed by extraversion and agreeableness ($\beta = .32$; $p < .01$, $\beta = -.13$; $p < .01$, respectively).

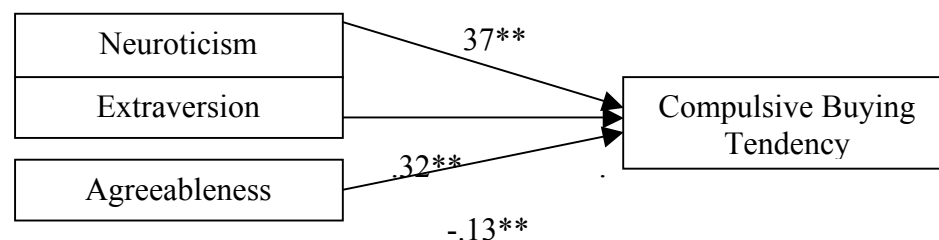


Figure 1. Neuroticism, extraversion, and agreeableness as predictors of compulsive buying tendency

Note. $R^2 = .18$ ($p < .01$), $**p < .01$

Identity Motives as Predictors of Compulsive Buying Tendency

According to the result, any identity motives which are relevant to identity structure could not predict compulsive buying tendency significantly. Therefore, identity structure was split into three aspects which are *perceived centrality*: importance of identity elements in self-definition (cognitive component), *identity-related affect*: feeling happy or unhappy toward identity elements (affective component), and *identity enactment*: to show the identity in daily actions (behavioural component). After that, the scores were recalculated based on new identity aspects.

The regression coefficients and statistics after all dimensions of identity motives which are relevant to identity-related affect were added, explaining 1% of the variance in compulsive buying; $\Delta F(6, 378) = 3.71$; ns . Need for self-esteem predicted compulsive buying tendency ($\beta = .12$; $p < .05$).

The results from ΔF and regression model were contrast to each other which indicated that there was *multicollinearity* which refers to strong correlation between predictors in a regression model (Field, 2009). Therefore, stepwise multiple regression analysis was used for solution. The results explained 1% of the variance in compulsive buying; $\Delta F(1, 384) = 5.39; p < .05$. Need for self-esteem still predicted compulsive buying tendency ($\beta = .12; p < .05$).

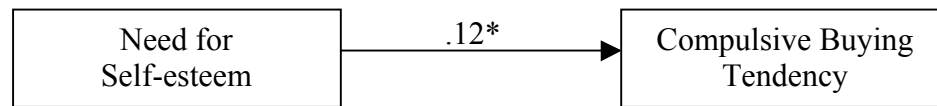


Figure 2. Need for self-esteem which is relevant to identity-related affect as predictor of compulsive buying tendency

Note. $R^2 = .01$ (*ns*), $*p < .05$

The regression coefficients and statistics after all dimensions of identity motives which are relevant to identity enactment were added, explaining 2% of the variance in compulsive buying; $\Delta F(6, 378) = 2.42; p < .05$. Need for distinctiveness and need for efficacy predicted compulsive buying tendency ($\beta = .14; p < .05$, $\beta = -.18; p < .05$, respectively). When accounted for all dimensions of big five personality to test the possible mediation effect, adding 19% to the explained variance in the prediction of compulsive buying; $\Delta F(11, 373) = 10.17; p < .01$. Neuroticism, extraversion, and agreeableness were still significant predictor of compulsive buying ($\beta = .36; p < .01$, $\beta = .33; p < .01$, $\beta = -.13; p < .01$, respectively), whereas need for distinctiveness and need for efficacy became non-significant ($\beta = .09; ns$, $\beta = .12; ns$, respectively).

The regression coefficients and statistics after all dimensions of big five personality were added, explaining 3% of the variance in need for distinctiveness; $\Delta F(5, 383) = 3.23; p < .01$. Extraversion significantly predicted need for distinctiveness which is relevant to identity enactment ($\beta = .20; p < .01$).

The reduction in strength of need for distinctiveness from $\beta = .14$ to $\beta = .09$ and the significant value change indicate full mediation. The Sobel test provides a standard, conservative test of mediation (MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002) and the result shows that the effect of extraversion on compulsive buying tendency is not significantly mediated by need for distinctiveness ($z = 1.92; ns$).

The regression coefficients and statistics after all dimensions of big five personality were added, explaining 3% of the variance in need for efficacy; $\Delta F(5, 383) = 2.59; p < .05$. No dimension of big five personality significantly predicted need for efficacy which is relevant to identity enactment.

The results from ΔF and regression model were contrast to each other which indicated that there was *multicollinearity* which refers to strong correlation between predictors in a regression model (Field, 2009). Therefore, stepwise multiple regression analysis was used for solution. The results explained 2% of the variance in need for efficacy which is relevant to identity enactment; $\Delta F(1, 387) = 6.24; p < .05$. Neuroticism predicted need for efficacy which is relevant to identity enactment ($\beta = -.13; p < .05$).

The reduction in strength of need for efficacy from $\beta = -.18$ to $\beta = -.12$ and the significant value change indicate full mediation. The Sobel test provides a standard, conservative test of mediation (MacKinnon et al, 2002) and the result shows that the effect of neuroticism on compulsive buying tendency is not significantly mediated by need for efficacy ($z = 1.52$; *ns*).

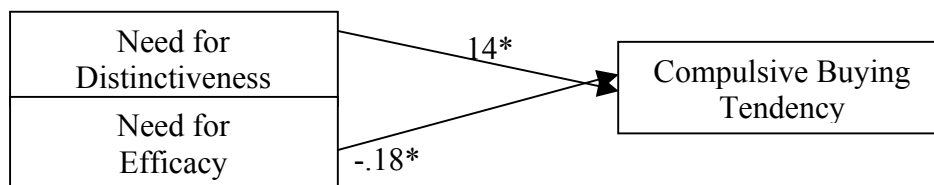


Figure 3. Need for distinctiveness and need for efficacy which are relevant to identity enactment as predictors of compulsive buying tendency

Note. $R^2 = .02$ ($p < .05$), $*p < .05$

Self-construal as Predictors of Compulsive Buying Tendency

Compulsive buying scores were examined in a hierarchical multiple regression analysis, where all dimensions of self-construal were entered first (Step 1), followed by all dimensions of big five personality to test the possible mediation effect (Step 2).

The regression coefficients and statistics after all dimensions of self-construal were added in Step 1, explaining 4% of the variance in compulsive buying; $\Delta F(7, 449) = 3.71$; $p < .01$. Self-reliance, consistency and inclusion of others in self predicted compulsive buying tendency ($\beta = -.11$; $p < .05$, $\beta = -.14$; $p < .01$, $\beta = .12$; $p < .05$, respectively). When accounted for all dimensions of big five personality to test the possible mediation effect, adding 16% to the explained variance in the prediction of compulsive buying; $\Delta F(12, 444) = 10.46$; $p < .01$. Neuroticism, extraversion, and agreeableness were still significant predictor of compulsive buying ($\beta = .38$; $p < .01$, $\beta = .28$; $p < .01$, $\beta = -.14$; $p < .01$, respectively), whereas self-reliance became non-significant ($\beta = -.02$; *ns*). The strength of consistency and inclusion of others in the self reduced ($\beta = -.11$; $p < .05$, $\beta = .12$; $p < .05$, respectively), although they were still significant predictor of compulsive buying tendency.

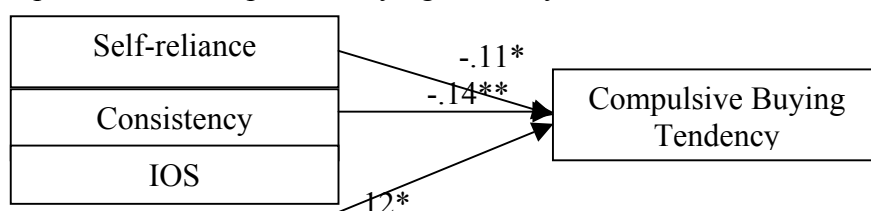


Figure 4. Self-reliance, consistency, and inclusion of others in the self as predictors of compulsive buying tendency

Note. $R^2 = .04$ ($p < .01$), $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$

The regression coefficients and statistics after all dimensions of big five personality were added, explaining 16% of the variance in self-reliance; $\Delta F(5, 455) = 18.17$; $p < .01$. Neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness significantly predicted self-reliance ($\beta = -.30$; $p < .01$, $\beta = -.18$; $p < .01$, $\beta = .17$; $p < .01$, $\beta = -.13$; $p < .01$, $\beta = .18$; $p < .01$, respectively).

The reduction in strength of self-reliance from $\beta = -.11$ to $\beta = -.02$ and the significant value change indicate full mediation. The Sobel test provides a standard, conservative test of mediation (MacKinnon et al, 2002) and the result shows that the effects of neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness on compulsive buying were not significantly mediated by self-reliance ($z = .50$; *ns*, $z = .50$; *ns*, $z = -.50$; *ns*, $z = .49$; *ns*, $z = -.50$; *ns*, respectively).

The regression coefficients and statistics after all dimensions of big five personality were added, explaining 2% of the variance in consistency; $\Delta F(5, 455) = 2.56$; $p < .05$. Conscientiousness significantly predicted consistency ($\beta = .13$; $p < .05$).

The reduction in strength of consistency indicates partial mediation. The Sobel test provides a standard, conservative test of mediation (MacKinnon et al, 2002) and the result shows that the effect of conscientiousness on compulsive buying was not significantly mediated by consistency ($z = -1.81$; *ns*).

The regression coefficients and statistics after all dimensions of big five personality were added, explaining 15% of the variance in inclusion of others in the self; $\Delta F(5, 455) = 17.71$; $p < .05$. Neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness significantly predicted inclusion of others in the self ($\beta = .12$; $p < .05$, $\beta = .22$; $p < .01$, $\beta = .26$; $p < .01$, $\beta = .13$; $p < .01$, respectively).

The reduction in strength of consistency indicates partial mediation. The Sobel test provides a standard, conservative test of mediation (MacKinnon et al, 2002) and the result shows that the effects of extraversion and agreeableness on compulsive buying were significantly mediated by inclusion of others in the self ($z = 1.97$; $p < .05$, $z = 2.07$; $p < .05$, respectively).

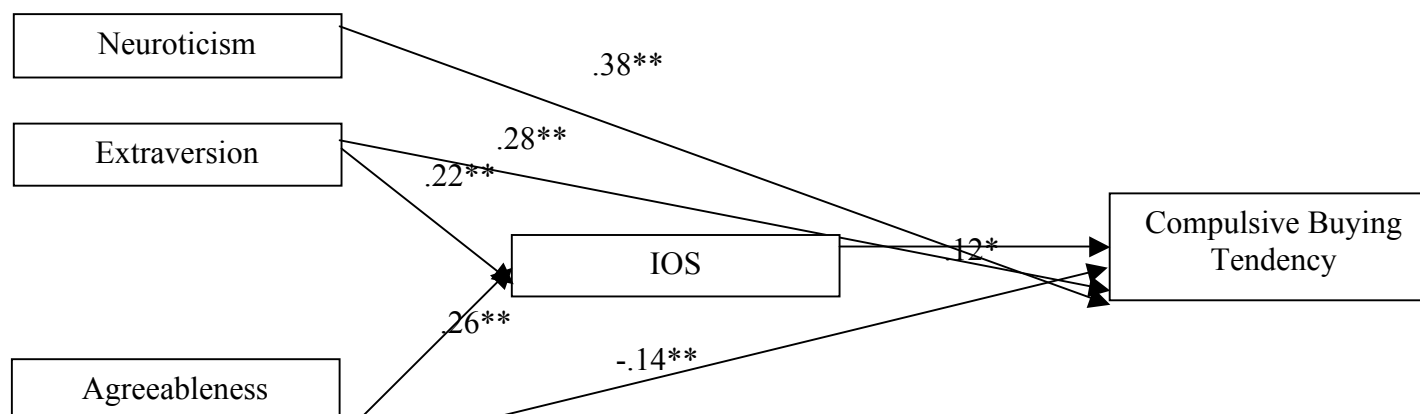


Figure 5. Inclusion of others in the self as a mediator of the effects of extraversion and agreeableness on compulsive buying tendency (with neuroticism, extraversion, and agreeableness as direct predictors of compulsive buying tendency)

Note. $\Delta R^2 = .16$ ($p < .01$),
 $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$

Discussion

The present research focused on social psychological perspectives of compulsive buying behaviour proposing that it is an extreme form of buying behaviour motivated by psychological factors especially mood regulation and identity seeking (Dittmar, 2004). Identity motives, big five personality traits, and self-construal were examined as predictors of this kind of dysfunctional consumer behaviour. The previous researches found inconsistent pattern of personality predict compulsive buying. However, the results supported many prior studies including the author's previous research that neuroticism positively played a powerful role on compulsive buying behaviour (e.g. Chobthamkit, 2010, 2012; Mikołajczak-Degrauwe et al, 2012; Mowen, 2000; Mowen & Spears, 1999; Mueller et al, 2010; N & Raveendran, 2007; Shahjehan et al, 2012; Wang & Yang, 2008). This could be due to the fact that because neuroticism refers to individual differences in emotional stability (Costa & McCrae, 1989), linked to social psychological perspective of compulsive buying as emotional compensatory behaviour (Dittmar, 2005a).

Moreover, the results illustrate extraversion positively predicted compulsive buying tendency which were consistent with many previous researches (e.g. Balabanis, 2006; Mikołajczak-Degrauwe et al, 2012; N & Raveendran, 2007; Shahjehan et al, 2012; Verplanken & Herabadi, 2001). Extraversion refers to individual differences in interpersonal relations (Costa & McCrae, 1989), which may enable consumers to believe that buying for acquiring material goods which are popular among peers or fashion trends, will influence people to gain acceptance from others. Additionally, going shopping and buying consumer goods as a leisure activity spending time and having social interaction with friends or acquaintances allows people to develop and maintain relationship with others. In addition, there is evidence which indicates that peer influence was associated with compulsive buying behaviour (Guo & Cai, 2011).

Furthermore, the results illustrate that agreeableness negatively predicted compulsive buying tendency which supported some prior studies (e.g. Balabanis, 2006; Bonsjak, 2007; N & Raveendran, 2007). Agreeableness refers to individual differences in norm and model determination to live in one's life in the forms of trust, straightforwardness, altruism, compliance, modesty, and tender-mindedness (Costa & McCrae, 1989). People who have low level of agreeableness, may prefer personal needs and norms to the others' needs. This kind of trait may lead to compulsive buying as compensatory behaviour which aims to achieve identity-related benefits by using identity-repair and identity-seeking strategies as social psychological model of compulsive buying as identity seeking (Dittmar, 2005a).

Moreover, need for self-esteem which is relevant to identity-related affect positively predicted compulsive buying. There is the evidence indicating that compulsive buyers had lower self-esteem than normal consumers (O'Guinn & Faber, 1989). The self-esteem motive refers to "the motivation to maintain and enhance a positive conception of oneself" (Gecas, 1982, p.20), which may lead to happiness. This result is consistent with social psychological perspective of compulsive buying motivated by emotional and identity-related motives.

In addition, need for distinctiveness which is relevant to identity enactment refers to the establishment and maintenance of a sense of differentiation from others (Vignoles

et al, 2002), which is relevant to “*unique*”. Unique is an identity-related buying motive among compulsive buyers, following emotional and ideal-self buying motives, respectively, (Dittmar, 2005a). Additionally, unique is also a buying motive among impulse buyers spending on clothes being also a type of goods whose compulsive buyers frequently acquire (D’Astous et al, 1990). Therefore, consumers tend to use goods as symbols to express themselves as distinct, different, and unique to other people in their daily lives.

Additionally, need for efficacy which is relevant to identity enactment which refers to maintaining and enhancing the feelings of competence and control (Breakwell, 1993, p. 205), negatively predicted compulsive buying. The previous study indicates that self-control failure leads to impulse buying (Baumeister, 2002). Thus, people who want to show that they can control their lives, tend to control and monitor their behaviour including buying behaviour. Therefore, these consumers may rarely buy compulsively.

Furthermore, self-reliance, which refers to reliance on one’s own capabilities, judgment or resources; independence (Answer.com), negatively predicted compulsive buying tendency. The results were consistent with the present author’s prior study (Chobthamkit, 2010, 2012). People who are independent and rely on themselves, may not need symbolic meanings from material goods to reflect or portray their identities. In other word, extrinsic factors may not influence people who possess high self-reliance. These people have less tendencies to acquire identity seeking and identity repair strategies motivating buying behaviour. In addition, they may enable people to have good management skills, including expense. People will themselves plan what to buy, how much to pay, and also how much to save. Therefore, economic-rational motive, which refers to rationality and utility maximization, plays an important role for this group of buyers.

Moreover, consistency also negatively predicted compulsive buying tendency. Consistency, referring to similar pattern of behaviour or actions in a variety of situations, environments, or contexts, is the important dimension of Owe’s self-construal concept, although it cannot be classified into independent or interdependent (Owe, 2012; Owe, 2009; Owe et al, 2012). A prior study indicated that cognitive inconsistency occurred when consumers made a rushed decision without elaborative information search (Awa & Nwuche, 2010). This is consistent with the core features of compulsive buying: the impulse to buy is experienced as irresistible, individuals lose control over their buying behaviour, and they continue with excessive buying despite adverse consequences in forms of personal, social, occupational, and financial problems (Dittmar, 2004), considered to be irrational consumer behaviour, which may lead to cognitive inconsistency. In addition, most consistency theories explain in common that inconsistency of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour leads to discomfort and therefore motivates people to restore consistency (e.g. Festinger, 1957; Heider, 1946). As a result, compulsive buying may be the way to cope with inconsistency and also to regulate unfavourable feelings.

In addition, inclusion of others in the self directly predicted compulsive buying and was also a mediator of the effects of extraversion and agreeableness on compulsive buying. Previous research indicated that most impulse buyers were from collectivistic cultural groups (Sun, Horn, & Meritt, 2004). Inclusion of others in self which refers to

being dependent on other people's feelings toward other people's stories as if it was your own, is classified into the interdependent view of self. Moreover, extraversion refers to interpersonal relations and agreeableness refers to individual differences in norm and model determination to live in one's life (Costa & McCrae, 1989). People with these type of characteristics may focus on interaction with other people, other people's feelings and needs including fashion trends and popularity about consumer goods among acquaintances. Therefore, compulsive buying may stem from conformity and normative influence.

Implications

This study enhances the knowledge on compulsive buying among undergraduate students as late adolescents. Additionally, this study deepens the understanding about the effect of identity-related factors on compulsive buying tendency. Moreover, this study expands the knowledge on social psychological perspective of compulsive buying in Thailand.

Practically, the present research may be fruitful to clinical psychologists and therapists. According to the results, 50.1% of the samples scored above the cut-off point in compulsive buying scale. This indicates that there are many compulsive buyers among non-patients in Thailand which may not be diagnosed yet due to non-extreme symptoms. Furthermore, the results can be applied for compulsive buying screening and surveillance, and contribute to therapeutic techniques or programmes aiming to reduce compulsive buying based on some identity-related behaviour modification.

Limitations and Future Directions

A limitation of the present research is the reliability values of NEO-FFI (big five personality scale). Many items in some traits need to be removed due to alpha improvement. Alpha values in some dimensions were .6 which proved to be the best improvement.

A further direction for future research is to add more relevant factors. Future studies could develop new models and also provide new perspectives of compulsive buying, which include sampling different ages of populations from this present research, for example, high school students considered as early adolescents. Moreover, sampling of future populations can be based on environmental contexts, for instance, undergraduate students from other universities located in both urban areas and suburb areas. New population groups are likely to provide more intriguing findings on compulsive buying.

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