IMPACT OF ADVERTISING APPEALS ON IMPULSIVE PURCHASING FOR CONSUMER DURABLES IN WESTERN PROVINCE IN SRI LANKA

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Abstract

Effective advertising influences attitudes toward brands and ultimately leads to purchase intentions (Goldsmith & Lafferty, 2002). Additionally, TV advertising not only changes emotions but also delivers significant messages exerting a far-reaching influence on people's daily lives (Kotwal et al., 2008). Furthermore, consumers may experience an urge to buy impulsively when visually encountering cues such as promotional incentives (Dholakia, 2000). Xu (2007) stated that store environments influence consumers' emotional states, which may further lead to impulse buying inside the store. Research goal is to examine the impact of advertising appeals on consumer impulsive buying behaviour towards consumer durable products in the Western Province of Sri Lanka, to provide recommendations on the application of advertising appeals. A quantitative study was conducted under this research using a survey method, and convenient sampling methods was employed. To test the hypothesis, the researcher used regression analysis techniques, identifying the impact of advertising appeals on impulsive purchasing for consumer durables in the Western Province of Sri Lanka, addressing the significance of each independent variable. Main findings of this research are advertising appeals exert a significantly positive influence on impulsive buying behaviour for consumer durables. Moral appeal demonstrates greater significance compared to rational and emotional appeals.

Keywords: Advertising appeals, impulsive buying, consumer durables, buying behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

Consumer buying patterns have evolved significantly in recent decades, notably with the surge of online shopping following the industrial revolution and the COVID-19 pandemic. This shift is particularly pronounced in the consumer durables sector, encompassing items such as refrigerators, TVs, and mobile phones, reflecting substantial changes in spending behaviour and disposable income utilization.

The topicality of research is justified by the situation in Western Province in Sri Lanka, where the consumer durables market is expanding rapidly due to heightened demand and a burgeoning population. With both local and multinational competitors vying for market share, consumers face a plethora of choices. Statista Market Insights reports that consumer spending on durables in Sri Lanka has been on the rise, increasing from USD 1,044 million in 2018 to USD 1,306 million in 2023 (Statista, 2023). Similarly, advertising expenditures surged from EUR 94 million in 2018 to EUR 196 million in 2023 (Statista, 2023). Additionally, data from the Central Bank of Sri Lanka reveals a significant increase in expenditures on furnishings and household maintenance, climbing from LKR 154,932 million in 2018 to LKR 228,692 million in 2022 (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2022).

The research problem is how different types of advertising appeals (rational, emotional and moral) affect impulsive buying behavior for consumer durables in Western Province of Sri Lanka. While advertising is well recognized for its role in shaping consumer decisions, there is limited empirical research on its impact on impulsive buying in Sri Lankan context, particularly in consumer durables market. This is critical as there is a growing demand for durable products like TVs and refrigerators which are high investment items that require planned decisions. But aggressive advertising is shifting these purchases to impulsive behavior. Moreover, global research has shown that advertising has a strong impact on impulsive buying, but little is known about how cultural and socio-economic factors in Sri Lanka affect this phenomenon. Addressing this problem is important for marketers and policymakers to design ethical, culturally relevant and effective advertising strategies for the local market.

The aim of this research is to fill the gap by examining the impact of different types of advertising appeals (rational, emotional and moral) on impulsive buying behavior for consumer durables in the Western Province of Sri Lanka. By doing so this study will provide marketers and policy makers with valuable information to develop effective and culturally relevant advertising strategies. Understanding how advertising influences impulsive purchases will help to ensure ethical consumer persuasion and targeted marketing. This objective is based on the gap identified in the literature and the need to consider the socio economic context of the Western Province in Sri Lanka.

Research methodology is combination of primary and secondary data collection methods. Primary data was gathered through surveys involving 146 respondents from the Western Province in Sri Lanka, focusing on their reactions to different advertising appeals in consumer durables commercials. Secondary data analysis involved reviewing existing literature and market studies to contextualize consumer behavior within the region. The data collected were processed using statistical tools such as SPSS and Microsoft Excel, employing techniques like frequency analysis, mean rating, and weighted mean rating to derive conclusive insights.

Results of the research reveals that different advertising appeals have varying levels of impact on impulsive buying behavior among consumers in Western Province, Sri Lanka. Initial findings suggest that moral appeals tend to have a stronger influence on impulsive purchases compared to emotional and rational appeals. These insights are critical for companies operating in the competitive market of consumer durables, as understanding these dynamics can significantly enhance the effectiveness of their advertising campaigns.

Originality/Value of the article of this research fills the gap in the academic and practical knowledge on how advertising appeals affect impulsive buying behavior in a developing country context in Sri Lanka. Unlike other studies that look at consumer behavior globally, this research is specific to the Western Province in Sri Lanka and its socio-economic and cultural nuances. It looks at consumer durables which are high involvement products but increasingly being impulsive bought due to aggressive advertising. The uniqueness lies in the comparison of rational, emotional and moral advertising appeals and which appeal triggers impulsive buying. This focus is different from general studies that look at advertising impact without looking at specific appeal types or their effectiveness. The research also builds upon traditional advertising models like AIDA and DAGMAR and adapts them to the contemporary cultural and economic context of Sri Lanka which is a largely unexplored market in consumer behavior research. For marketers and advertisers it offers practical value by providing culturally relevant advertising strategies so they can design campaigns that sell and are ethical. For businesses in Sri Lanka's consumer durables sector it provides actionable insights to optimize their advertising spend by using the right appeals.

In addition, the study adds to theoretical understanding regarding impulsive buying as closely associated with advertising appeals linked to consumer behavior in developing market contexts, which has limited empirical exploration. More importantly, it reveals how local culture and environmental factors mediate consumer responses to advertising, thus contributing to global academic debate on advertising effectiveness. This research also makes an input to policymakers by pointing to the need for ethical advertising practices that take into consideration both consumers' rights and interests of businesses so that markets can exchange sustainably.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study aims to investigate the relationship between advertising appeal and impulse buying focusing on rational, emotional and moral appeal. The approach followed stringent criteria needed to ensure the reliability, validity and relevance of the research objectives. This study adopts a positivist quantitative approach to investigate the relationship between advertising appeals and impulsive buying behaviour. The positivist approach emphasizes objectivity and empirical evidence aligning with the goal of testing hypotheses through measurable data (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The study is cross-sectional as data were collected at a single point in time to examine relationships among variables.

Primary data collection: An online structured survey was selected as the primary data collection method. The survey method works well for collecting large amounts of data in a short period of time (Dillman, Smyth & Christian, 2014). The survey consists of closed questions measured on a 5-point Likert scale to quantify subjective responses.

Collection of secondary data: Secondary data was collected from peer reviewed journals, books and popular online sources. This provided a theoretical foundation and ensured that the hypothesis was grounded in the established literature.

The survey instrument was a structured questionnaire designed to measure three dimensions of advertising appeals (Rational, emotional and moral) and impulsive buying behaviour Items were developed from scales validated in various studies in the past:

- Rational appeal variables include indicators such as product features and cost-benefit arguments (Wimbush, 2003; Patidar, 2019).
- Emotional appeal variables include elements such as music, humour, and emotional vocabulary (Kotler, 1991; Weber, 2018).
- Moral appeal variable considered various aspects such as social responsibility and citizenship (Darley & Smith, 2003).
- Impulsive buying behaviour was assessed using items related to spontaneity and immediacy (Rook, 1987; Verplanken et al., 2005).

The questionnaire was pretested with a small sample to clarify, eliminate technical jargon, and improve the reliability of the responses.

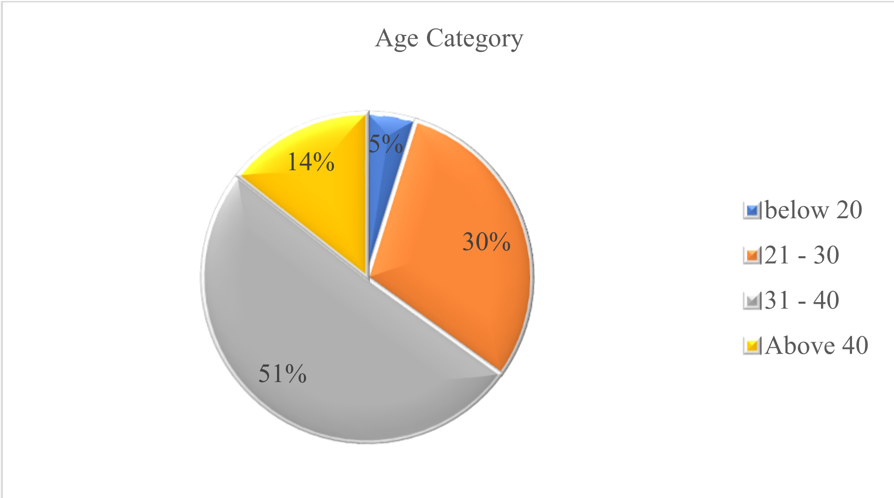
The target population consists of individuals living in the Western Province of Sri Lanka with a population of approximately 6.16 million (Department of Census and Statistics, 2023). The sampling frame includes individuals accessible through online platforms. Due to time and resource constraints non-probability convenience sampling method was used. The questionnaire was distributed via email and social media platforms (eg. WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger) to more than 200 individuals. 146 completed responses were received yielding a response rate of approximately 73%.

The research process consisted of several key stages to ensure a structured and systematic investigation. Initially, the conceptual framework was developed outlining the hypothesized relationships between advertising appeals and impulsive buying behaviour. Following this, the instrument development stage involved creating and refining questionnaire items based on insights from existing literature. The data collection phase was carried out online using Google Forms spanning from January to April 2024. Subsequently, during the data cleaning and preparation stage responses were screened for completeness and accuracy and then coded for analysis. Finally, in the data analysis phase statistical methods were applied using SPSS and Microsoft Excel employing descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, standard deviations) and inferential statistics (Pearson's correlation) to test the research hypotheses.

The study complied with ethical standards including informed consent confidentiality and voluntary participation. Participants were informed of the purpose of the survey, and their responses were anonymized to ensure confidentiality. Ethical guidelines defined by the University research ethics committee were followed. Finally, this methodological approach provides a robust foundation for examining the relationship between advertising appeals and impulsive buying behaviour ensuring the research findings are credible and relevant to the field.

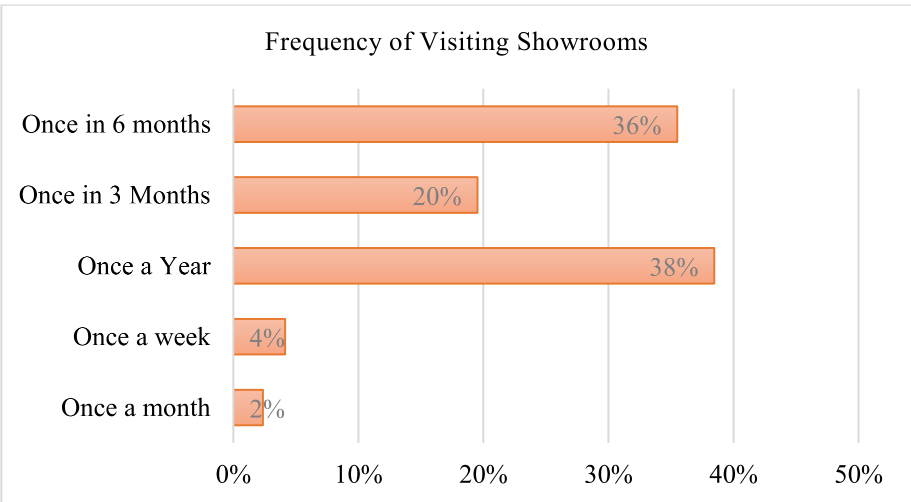
RESEARCH RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis indicates high internal consistency of the questionnaire with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.768 for rational appeal, 0.853 for emotional appeal, 0.765 for moral appeal and 0.717 for impulsive buying. Firstly, considering the demographic analysis, the sample composition analysis reveals a slight female dominance, with 51% females and 49% males indicating near gender balance.



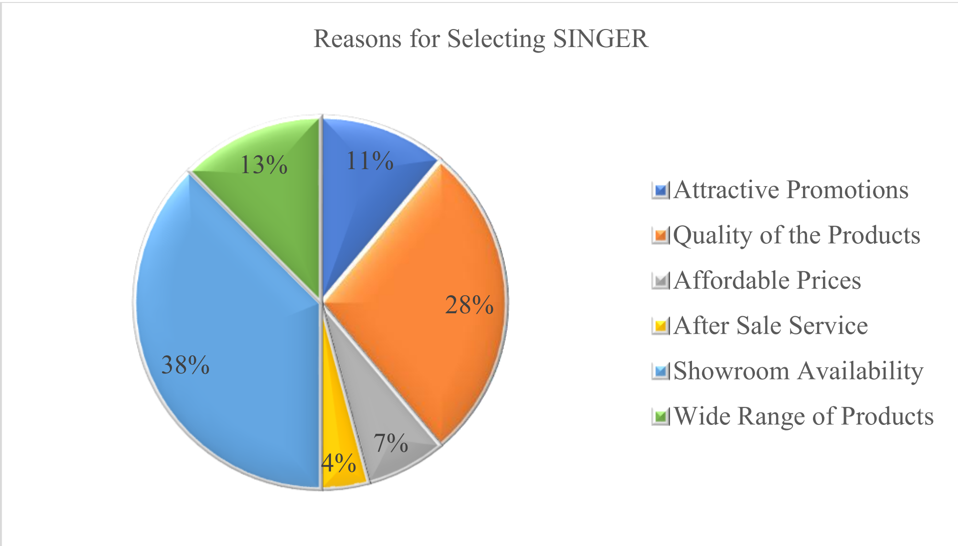
1 fig. Age category
Source: Developed by the authors

Among 146 respondents, 51% are aged 31 to 40 and 30% are aged 21 to 30 demonstrating a higher propensity for consumer durable purchases within these age brackets. Those above 40 represent 14% of shoppers while those below 20 are negligible due to lower purchasing power. Education-wise, 33% are Bachelor level, 32% have passed GCE A/L, and 16% are professionally qualified, suggesting a preference for shopping at consumer durable retail outlets across education levels. Income distribution shows 36% earning between Rs.50,001 and 100,000, with 27% in the Rs.100,001 to 200,000 and 16% earning less than Rs.50,000. Only 5% earn above Rs.300,000, and 5% preferred not to disclose. Regarding employment, 64% are in the private sector, while government occupations account for 19%. Students comprise 8%, self-employed individuals 6%, unemployed 2%, and retirees 1%. This data provides insights for consumer durable retail outlets, especially given the dominance of middle-income private sector employees among respondents.



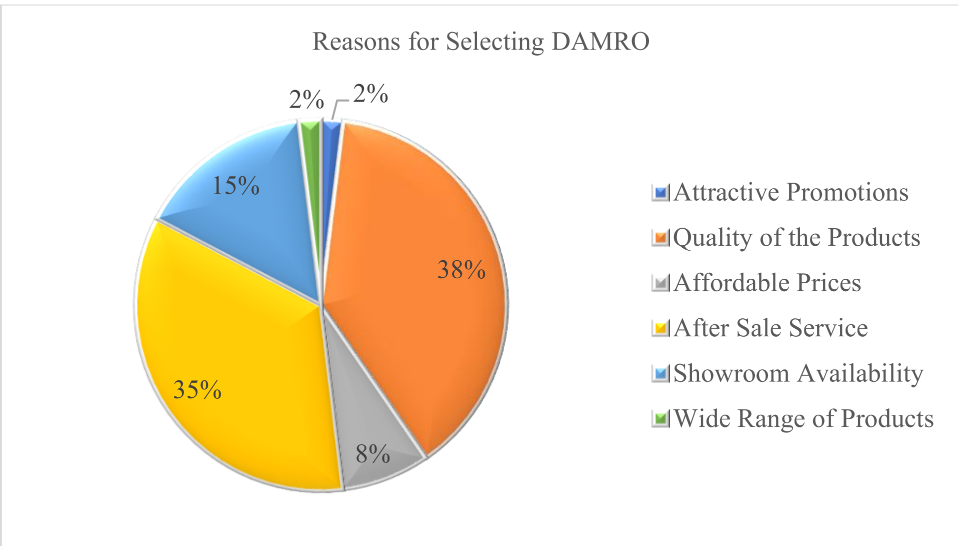
2 fig. Frequency of visiting showrooms
Source: Developed by the authors

Among the 146 of respondents only 38% of respondents shop once a year, suggesting infrequent visits to consumer durable showrooms. Singer emerges as the most preferred retail channel with 43% of the votes likely due to its widespread showroom network across Sri Lanka. Damro follows with 31% of the answers while Sinhagiri is the least preferred. Among Singer customers 38% prioritize showroom availability and 28% prioritize product quality.



3 fig. Reasons for selecting singer
Source: Developed by the authors

Among the 146 of respondents 38% of Damro customers value product quality and 35% prioritize after-sales service. Interestingly, 57% of instant buyers of consumer durables are women, indicating a tendency for spontaneous purchases, while 50% of respondents aged 31-40 constitute most instant buyers, likely due to higher disposable income. These findings offer valuable insights for marketers into consumer showroom visit frequency, brand preferences, and purchasing behaviour across different demographics.



4 fig. Reasons for selecting DAMRO
Source: Developed by the authors

The Descriptive Statistics reveal a mean value of 4.44 for Rational Appeal, indicating high agreement among respondents. Emotional Appeal scores a mean of 3.21, suggesting respondents were mostly neutral. Moral Appeal records a mean of 3.97, indicating agreement among respondents. Impulsive Buying averages 2.899, suggesting respondents were mostly neutral. These findings provide insights into the levels of agreement among respondents regarding different independent variables.

The correlation analysis reveals a significant relationship between Rational Appeal and Impulsive Buying, with a coefficient of 0.200, indicating a weak positive linear relationship. Emotional Appeal also shows a significant relationship with Impulsive Buying, with a coefficient of 0.322, indicating a moderate positive linear relationship. Similarly, Moral Appeal demonstrates a significant relationship with Impulsive Buying, with a coefficient of 0.379, representing a moderate positive correlation. These findings provide insights into the relationships between different advertising appeals and impulsive buying behaviour in consumer durables.

The regression analysis indicates that Rational Advertising Appeal explains 4% (R square = 0.040) of the variation in impulsive buying behaviour, while Emotional Advertising Appeal explains 10% (R square = 0.109), and Moral Advertising Appeal explains 14% (R square = 0.140). The higher R square value for Moral Appeal suggests it has a stronger influence on impulsive buying behaviour compared to Rational and Emotional Appeals. However, the majority of the variation in impulsive buying behaviour is attributed to other factors not accounted for in the analysis.

1 table. Regression between independent variables and dependent variable

Variable	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Rational Appeal	.200[a]	.040	.035	.713
Emotional Appeal	.322[a]	.109	.105	.687
Moral Appeal	.379[a]	.144	.139	.673

Source: developed by authors based on the survey data, 2024

The summary of hypothesis testing indicates acceptance of all three hypotheses. H1 confirms a weak positive relationship (R = 0.2) between Rational Appeal and Impulsive Buying. H2 supports a moderate positive relationship (R = 0.32) between Emotional Advertising Appeal and Impulsive Buying. H3 confirms a moderate positive relationship (R = 0.2) between Moral Appeal and Impulsive Buying. The significance level ($P < 0.005$) validates these relationships, providing insights into the impact of different advertising appeals on impulsive buying behavior.

CONCLUSIONS

1. This research explored the impact of advertising appeals (rational, emotional and moral) on impulsive buying behaviour for consumer durables within the Western Province of Sri Lanka. It highlights how advertising plays a crucial role in shaping customer behaviour in a competitive market. By inspecting how specific advertising techniques influence

impulsive buying, the study offers valuable insights for companies seeking to refine their marketing approaches. Findings emphasize the importance of tailoring advertising appeal to consumer emotions, rational decision-making processes and moral considerations. This is in line with broader marketing practices that aim to develop appealing ads attract the attention of consumers and align buying decisions. However, research also finds that impulse buying decisions are influenced by complex psychological, social and economic factors that extend beyond more advertising.

2. While the study provides important insights, there are some research limitations as well. A sample size of the study was limited to 146 respondents using non-probability sampling method and data collection was limited to the three largest districts in the Western Province (Colombo, Gampaha and Kalutara). These geographical and methodological limitations of this study limit the findings to other communities or populations within Sri Lanka. Furthermore, time constraints and distance may have affected the depth of data collection and analysis. The literature review is mainly drawn from international surveys which may not fully reflect local consumer behaviour or market dynamics.
3. Future research can address these limitations by expanding the geographic scope to include other provinces with a larger and more diverse sample. By exploring additional advertising appeals beyond the three examined here, such as humour, fear or celebrity endorsements to understand the impact more comprehensively to consumer behaviour Long-term effects can be examined, providing insights into ongoing trends in consumer behaviour. This study has opened avenues that should encourage scholars to delve deeper into the interplay between advertising and consumer decision-making specially in developing markets like Sri Lanka.

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