

ABSTRACT

Post globalization India has seen many transformations at political, economic, social, psychological and environmental levels. There are two identifiable conflicting trends in the Indian urban middle class. On the one hand, our economic growth is significantly changing the cultural values towards materialism, whereas our traditional values pull us back to the spiritual and simplistic life values. In redefining their life, people in the Indian society are increasingly exercising their new found capacity to purchase material goods and services hitherto largely elusive. The study focused on the self-understanding and practice of self-regulation of purchase behavior. For the purpose, a quantitative-qualitative sequential mixed-methods research design was adopted. The study drew from the social constructivist approach of the impact of social development and social factors constructing the individual reality of lived experiences. In Phase I a survey was conducted with 300 participants with primary purchase capacity from urban middle class families in the age range of 21 years to 77 years. Phase II involved conducting in-depth interviews including hypothetical vignettes with 30 participants from Phase I, who scored either high or low scores on self-regulation. Linear regression analysis and multivariate analysis of variables was performed to analyze the data from Phase I, and thematic content analysis was done to analyze the data from Phase II. Materialistic values emerged as an important factor that contributes to self-regulation. Self-regulation of purchase behavior was determined by age, marital status, gender, number of children, education level and monthly income level of the participants. Compulsive buying was high in individuals with low self-regulation. Uncertain future emerged as an important determiner for savings, and climbing the unseen social ladder was the main reason for luxury purchases. The study provides frameworks for self-regulation and a process model of purchase behavior for need-based and luxury-based purchases from an Indian urban middle

class perspective. The understanding of self-regulation of purchase behavior has the potential to create strategies for exercising better self-regulation.

Keywords: Materialistic values, Self-regulation, Purchase behavior, Compulsive buying, Buying motives, Indian urban middle-class