



## Conceptual Framework of Impulse Self-Gifting Behavior

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**Introduction:** Currently, as consumers' purchase behavior has become more self-oriented, the phenomenon of self-gifting is regarded more important than ever in consumer behavior. According to the National Retail Federation in 2012, about 60% of consumers spend US\$140 on self-gifts and this is a 27% increase over 5 years (Mortimer, Bougoure, & Fazal-e-hasan, 2015). The top fashion brands use self-gift promoting words in their advertisement such as "love yourself" or "you are worth it" to attract consumers (Heath, Tynan, & Ennew, 2011).

The early seminal work highlights that self-gifting differs from other consumption due to its premeditated and controlled attributes (Mick & Demoss, 1990), implying that self-gifting involves with a rational purchase process; however, many studies contend that consumers' emotional state and irrational desire greatly affect self-gifting behavior (Luomala & Laaksonen, 1997; Shapiro, 1993). Moreover, consumers' emotion is also known as a strong trigger for impulse buying (Youn & Faber, 2000; Chen & Wang, 2016). Given that the emotion is a determinant predictor of both self-gifting and impulse buying, it is highly plausible that emotion leads to impulse self-gifting (Luomala & Laaksonen, 1997).

Despite of the increasing self-gifting consumption and a growing market interest, limited number of self-gifting studies has been conducted. In addition, majority of the past self-gifting studies focus on motivations and contexts from the exploratory perspectives (Mick & Demoss, 1990; Clarke & Mortimer, 2013), and impulse aspects of self-gifting behavior hasn't been discussed and explored yet. The purpose of this study is to construct conceptual framework for studying antecedents and consequences of impulse self-gifting in the light of empirical approach.

**Literature Review and Development of Conceptual Framework:** Based on Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model and self-gifting and impulse buying literature, the conceptual framework is developed. The S-O-R model postulates consumer responses to stimuli are intervened by the organism (Chang, Eckmanb, & Yan, 2011). The stimuli refer to external elements such as marketing variables and environmental factors, and they affect individuals' internal state (Chang et al, 2011). In this study, internal (i.e., hedonic motive and impulsivity) and external factors (i.e., retail environment and marketing promotions) are identified as stimuli. Organism is internal process and comprised of varied mental state such as feelings and psychological activities (Chang et al, 2011), thus emotional responses appropriately serve organism. Response refers to outcome of behavior and consumers' final decision (Chang et al, 2011). Impulse self-gifting represent response in this study. Based on the SOR model, the internal (i.e., hedonic motive and impulsivity) and external stimuli (i.e., retail environment and

marketing promotions) are expected to lead to consumers' emotional responses (Organism), which in turn result in impulse self-gifting behavior (Response) as shown in Figure 1.

In terms of an internal factor, the hedonic motive pursues entertainment and pleasure and stimulates consumers' positive emotional responses that engender both self-gifting (Clarke & Mortimer, 2013; Heath et al., 2011) and impulse buying (Ozer & Gultekin, 2015; Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991; Kemp & Kopp, 2011). As an individual lifestyle trait, impulsivity is also found to be an internal factor that triggers for the emotional responses which greatly correlate to spontaneous behavior (Rook 1987; Youn & Faber 2000) such as impulse self-gifting. Identified external factors include retail environment and marketing promotions. Retail store environment characterized by ambient (e.g., music and lightening), design (e.g., color and orderliness), and social factors (e.g., crowding) induce consumers' purchase motives and emotional responses such as positive moods and enthusiasm, further resulting in impulse buying (Verplanken & Herabadi, 2001; Clarke & Mortimer, 2013). Marketing promotions (e.g., clearance sales and price discount) are also positively associated with consumers' emotional responses, playing a mediating role between price perception and shopping behavior (Zielke, 2014).

As serving organism, consumer emotional responses positively elicit impulse buying. Many studies consistently indicate that strong emotional responses, either positive or negative, may lead to urge to buy, generating frivolous consumption (Chen & Wang, 2016; Kemp & Kopp, 2011; Ozer & Gultekin, 2015).

Self-control refers to "a psychological conflict between desire (the initiating hedonic force as previously discussed) and willpower (strategies used to overcome desire)" (Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991, p.498). Since the high self-control consumers tend to engage with a planned consumption, pursuing long-run plans for future with rational process (Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991), they might be more resistant to immediate satisfaction or urgent emotional desires, which are largely fulfilled by impulse buying, than low self-control consumers. That is, the effect of emotional responses on impulse self-gifting behavior is moderated by self-control.

As the final outcome at the response level, impulse self-gifting in this study refers to gifting for oneself in a spontaneous manner. The emotion driven self-gifting consumers tend to shop more on impulse than their counterparts (Luomala & Laaksonen, 1997). George and Yaoyuneyong (2010) assert that impulse buying then generates a higher level of cognitive dissonance due to consumers' lack of involvement (e.g., cognitive thinking) in purchase process. Cognitive dissonance is immediate comparison in the post-purchase stage and is frequently observed when there is perceived disparity between "what was purchased and the other alternatives that were available" (Powers & Jack, 2013, p. 725). Therefore, impulse self-gifting behavior may engender cognitive dissonance at the post-purchase level.

**Discussion:** The proposed conceptual framework indicates that internal and external antecedents affect consumers emotional responses, which in turn influence impulse self-gifting behavior. Furthermore, moderating effects of self-control may attenuate the effects of emotional responses on impulse self-gifting behavior. The findings of the study will offer beneficial insights for marketers to understand consumers internal motivations and external marketing and retail

features that may ultimately influence impulse self-gifting behavior. The understanding may provide guidance for constructing marketing plans or promotion designs.

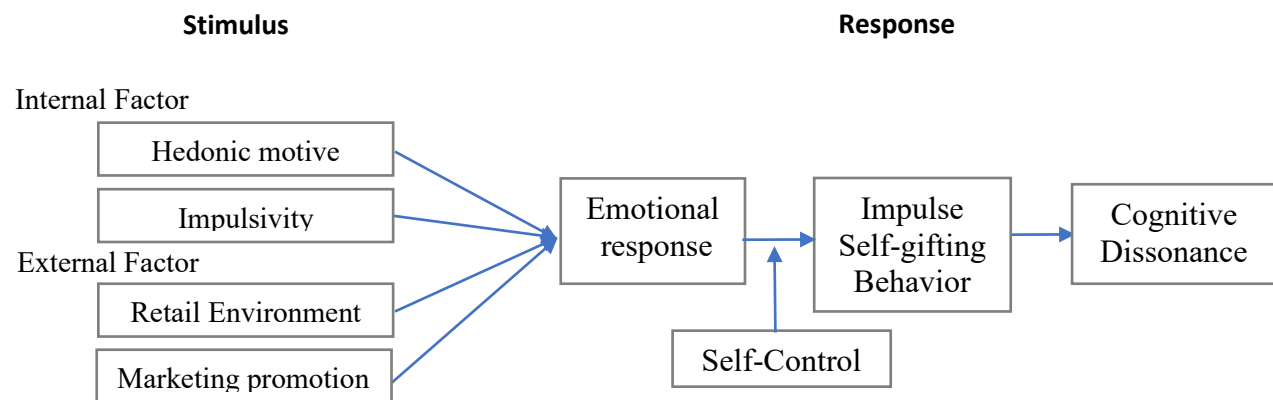


Figure1. Proposed Conceptual Model

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