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**Article**

## Impulsive buying behavior depending on gender

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## Impulsive buying behavior depending on gender

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### Abstract

One of the biggest challenges of companies is to determine the behavior of its consumers, because only by this it can influence determine them to buy their products. It is not enough just to know the behavior of the consumer at one moment of time, but also its dynamic. On one hand there are changes at the level of each individual when passing from one stage of his life to another, and on the other hand, there are also changes determined by the society such as changes in values and norms, trends, technological developments. For this reason in consumer behavior it is important to analyze this dynamic and try to find the reasons for these changes, because only by this a company can adjust its products and strategies. This article presents several aspects of the Romanian consumer behavior, depending on age and gender. There are analyzed for different segments of population patterns of consumer behavior, the social and emotional behavior, the impulsive buying behavior and the attitude of the consumer towards this type of behavior.

**Keywords:** consumer behavior, consumer segments, consumer typologies

### 1. Introduction

Consumer analysis is one of the most important issues for the success of companies, because the biggest challenge nowadays is to determine the consumers to buy the own products and not those of the competitors. It is not enough just to know the behavior at a certain moment of time, but also to understand it and to be able to determine the dynamic of this behavior. Solomon et.al points out the importance of understanding the way the consumer feel and think, in order for a company to be able to offer the products the consumer wants and in the way he wants (Solomon, et.al. 2010). The challenge of companies has become even bigger because in recent years the bought products don't represent anymore just some things which cover the consumers's needs, but they also describe the way the he is. Consequently the consumer buys the products not only to have them, but also to define his image, express his personality and consolidate his image in the society (Solomon, et.al. 2010). Moreover going shopping has become in the recent years a social activity. Consumers don't go to stores only to shop,

but also to meet their friends and families (Pop & Pelau, 2007, pg. 1063-1066). This type of behavior also increases the role of the social groups in the buying decision.

The first theories of consumption are based on the importance of the utilitarian product characteristics for the buying decision. Despite of these, the researches of the last to decades has emphasized the importance of emotions in the buying process (Laros & Steenkamp, 2005). Because of its significance, the research about the impulsive buying behavior has increased in the past years and retailers try to adapt their strategies according to this tendency (Jones et. al., 2003). One issue for the analysis of the impulse buying was to determine the factors which influence the impulsive behavior. Different studies have shown that the trait for impulsive behavior depends on the category of the product and also on the category of products (Jones, et. al., 2003). Rook defines impulse buying “when an individual makes an unintended, unreflective, and immediate purchase” (Jones et. al., 2003, pg. 505-511; Rook, 1987, pg. 189–199.). According to Jones et al. (2003) the impulsive buying decision occurs from a certain urge of the consumer to buy a certain product and is consequently made during shopping, without a predefined plan or intention (Jones et. al., 2003). According to Rook a impulsive decision is a purchase made without a great deal of evaluation of the need of the product and of the consequences of buying it (Rook, 1987). Besides this Rook and Fisher associate the impulsive behavior with the lifestyle of the consumer (Rook, Fisher, 1995)

The emotions have a great role in almost all phases of the buying process from the perception of the stimuli from the advertising, the shopping experience such as the context, service quality and even in the post-shopping period by the satisfaction with the product attributes (Laros & Steenkamp, 2005). Machleit and Eroglu point out the fact that impulsive behavior can be evoked by different shopping environments. The consumers come to the store with a certain objective and while shopping different affective reactions occur. Different design elements are created in order to develop a “satisfying shopping experience and to project a favorable store image”, which favor the creation of impulses during the shopping experience (Machleit & Eroglu, 2000, pg. 101–111).

## **2. Gender influence on the consumer behavior**

The objective of the research was to determine the cognitive and emotional reactions of the consumer behavior and its rationality. The research was done in the period November 2011-December 2011 in the main stores of Bucharest. There were received 711 answers, with an homogenous distribution among gender and age groups. In this article there are presented the results of the research regarding the objective of shopping, general behavior and the emotional reactions during buying process.

The behavior of the consumers differs depending on their lifestyles, interests, experiences and preoccupations. These differences are important for companies because the marketing and promotion strategies depend on them. In figure 1 there are presented the reason for going for several analyzed segment. As it can be observed, the middle age population (30-60 years) rather go shopping for a whole

week, while the youngest (younger than 30 years) and the oldest (older than 60 years) go to the shop when they need something. So 52.2% of the men between 31-50 years go to make the shopping for a week, while 51.3% of the women between 31-40 years and 54.2% of the women between 41-50 years do so. This can be explained by the different family responsibilities of these segments (Istudor & Pelau, 2012). People who have the responsibility for the whole family, go shopping on a regular bases to acquire the necessary products. This percentage decreases for the elder people and younger people who are more likely to live in single households than the rest. It is interesting to observe that for the elder segments of population the men rather do the shopping for one week, while the women go shopping when they need something. This can be also explained by the fact that women have rather a social behavior during shopping, so they go more frequent shopping in order also to meet other people. So in the age group 51-60 years, 54.2% of the men go shopping for one week, while only 40% of the women do so. In the age group older than 60 years, 38.4% of the men go shopping for one week, while only 27.7% of the women do so. In these age segments the people go rather shopping when they need something or even to see what is new in the store. The social behavior of elder women during the buying process can be also explained by the fact that 27.7% of the women older than 60 years go to the store in order to see what is new in the store. As mentioned before, people over 50 years might be retired so that they have more spare time which they spend doing shopping. By not having a tense program, they don't have to plan all the home activities so precise, so the pressure is not so high anymore to make the shopping at once. Another reason might be the fact that these are the generation which did not grow up with supermarkets and other retail formats with high number of products. For this reason they did not adopt the shopping behavior of buying all at once. Also interesting to observe in the study is the fact that young people go rather shopping when they need something, which is probably also related with the responsibility of having a family (Istudor & Pelau, 2012)

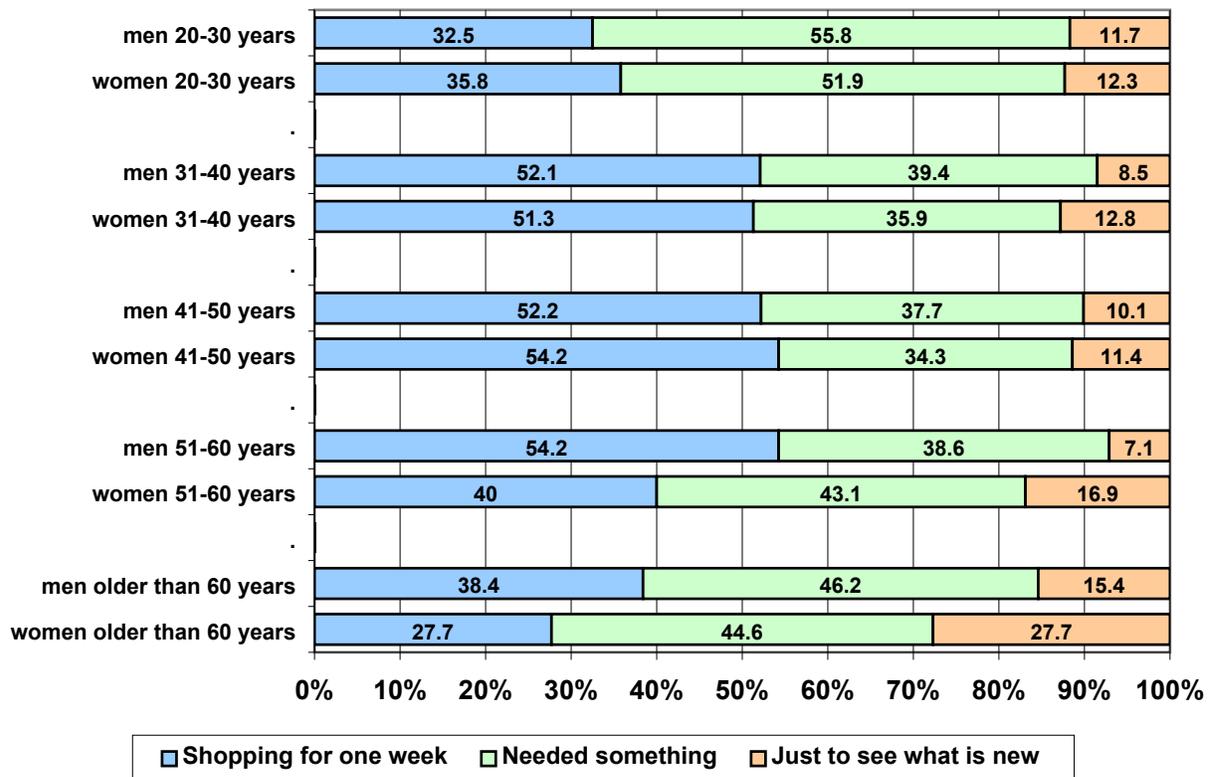


Fig. 1. Objective of shopping depending on gender  
(Source: Istudor, Pelau, 2012, pg. 249-253)

According to the research for the people older than 50 years the differences in the behavior between women and men are higher. An explanation for this can be the historical development as in the past the differences in the roles between men and women were higher. The different roles of men and women in the society determined the different behaviors. At younger generations the tasks between men and women became more homogenous and consequently the differences in the consumer behavior are not that obvious.

As it can be seen in fig. 2, the social behavior at shopping differs from one group to another. According to the research younger people have more the tendency to go shopping with their friends in comparison to other age groups. So 15.6% of the men between 20-30 years and 15.5% of the men between 31-40 years go shopping with their friends. The highest percentage of people who go shopping with their friends are women between 20-30 years (19.8%). This percentage decreases with the age while only 12.8% of the women between 31-40 years go shopping with their friends (Istudor & Pelau, 2012). The development in the society increased the importance of friends as a social group for younger people. As people grew older, the role of the family increases.

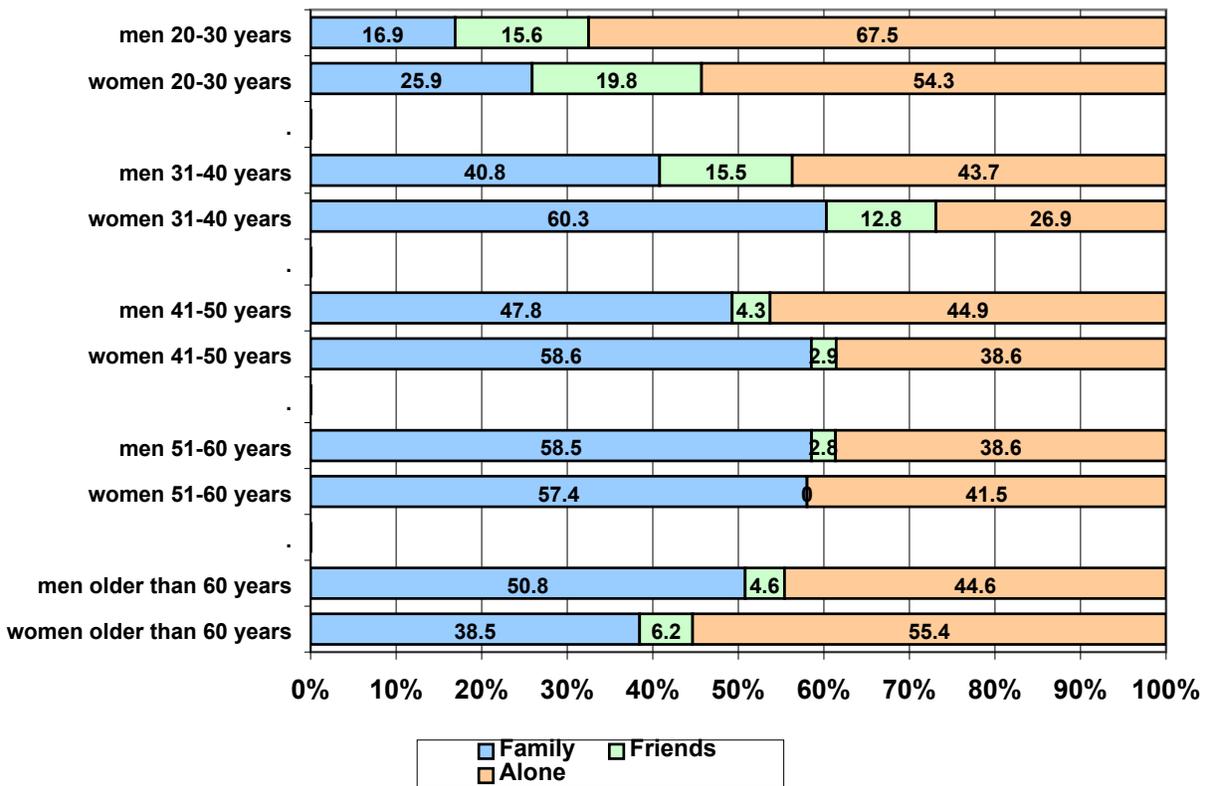


Fig. 2. Social shopping behavior depending on age and gender  
(Source: Istudor, Pelau, 2012, pg. 249-253)

The older people have rather the tendency of going shopping with their families or alone. So 58.5% of the women and 57.4% of the men between 51-60 years go shopping with their families, while 47.8% of the men and 58.6% of the women between 41-50 years do so. As mentioned before, for elder people friends have smaller role in the buying behavior. This is also confirmed by the fact that most of the people older than 60 years go alone shopping. There can be observed a similarity between the old

people and the young people (20-30 years) as these segments go mostly alone shopping. An explanation for this is the fact that in these categories, there are the most single households. There is still one difference between the two groups as the age group younger than 30 years are accompanied at shopping by friends and family, while for the age group older than 60 years are rather accompanied at shopping by their families.

### **3. Emotional-impulsive consumer behavior depending on gender**

The biggest challenge of any retailer is to convince the consumers to buy as much as possible. For this reason they develop different strategies for the product portfolio, store layout, plan of promotions and others in order to convince or determine the consumer to buy as much as possible. In fig. 3, there is presented the behavior of the consumer and in how far the retailers manage to convince the consumer to buy more products than they initially plan. Depending on the characteristics and personality of the consumer this emotional behavior is different for several segments of the population. The results of the research, as presented in figure 3, show that the most rational segment of people are the ones older than 60 years. So 38.5% of the women older than 60 years and 35.5% of the men buy fewer products than they have initially planned. One explanation for this is the fact that this group of population has lower incomes and for this reason they don't manage to buy everything. In this category most of the people buy more products than initially planned, but with 47.7% for women and 43.1% for men this is the lowest percentage for this type of behavior (Istudor & Pelau, 2012).

The research also points out the differences of behavior between men and women. So it can be observed that men have rather extreme behavior, while more women have an average emotional behavior buy buying just more extra products. For the age group 51-60 years, 24.3% of the men buy less products than initially planned, in comparison to women, where only 13.8% of the women do so. A similar situation exists in the case of people with ages between 31-40 years, where 23.9% of the men buy less products than planned, in comparison to the women, where only 11.5 buy less. In opposition to this expected result, both in the category people older than 60 years and 41-50 years, more men buy many extra products in comparison to women. So 31.9% of the men between 41-50 years buy many extra products, in comparison to only 21.4% of the women (Istudor & Pelau, 2012).

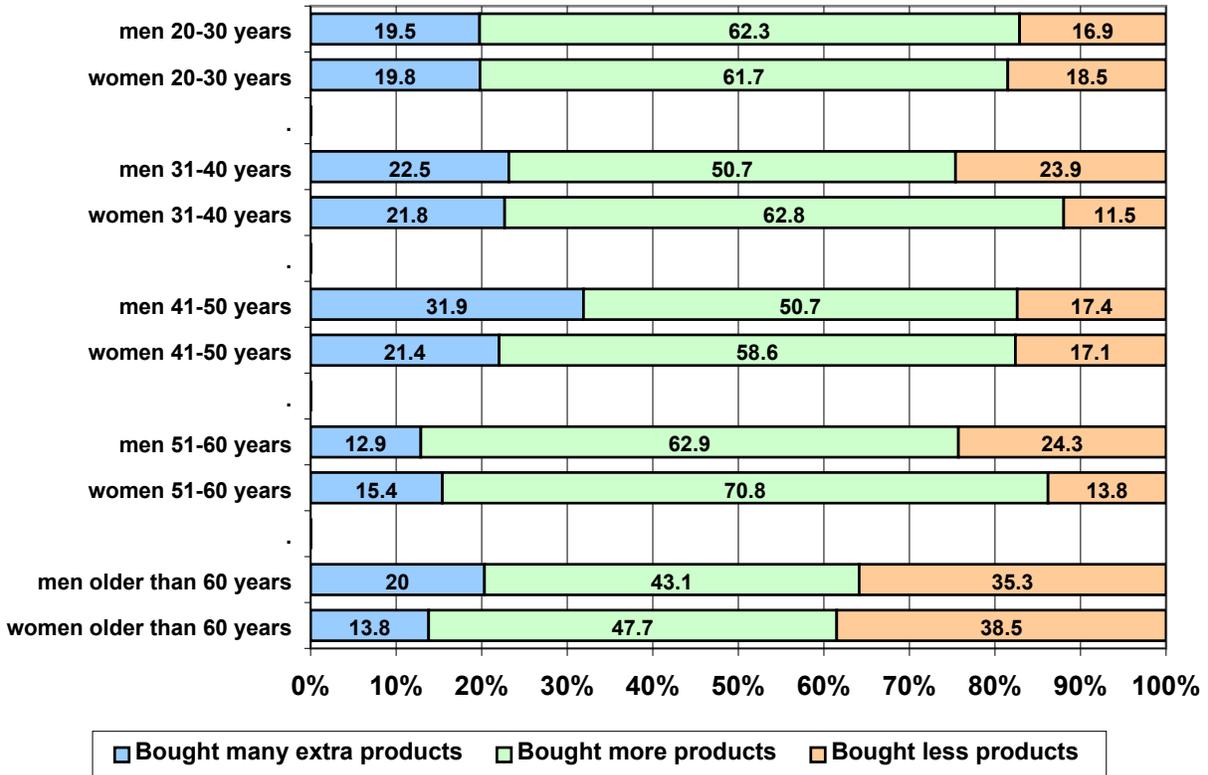


Fig. 3. Emotional shopping behavior depending on age and gender  
(Source: Istudor, Pelau, 2012, pg. 249-253)

The result of the research shows that there is an emotional-impulsive behavior as almost all segments bought more products than initially planned. This percentage is the highest for the age segments 51-60 years (70.8% of the women and 62.9% of the men) and for the people younger than 30 years (61.7% of the women and 62.3% of the men). For both segments 41-50 years and 31-40 years the women buy more products than men do.

Besides the amount of extra bought products, it is also interesting to see if the consumers have spent more than they have initially planned or not. As it can be observed in figure 4 older people planned better than younger people as fewer older people state that spent more than initially planned. Actually people older than 60 years are the only category where a high percentage of people spent less than initially planned. 18.5% of the women and 16.6% of the men older than 60 years spend less than initially planned, while for all the other segments the amount of this type of behavior doesn't exceed 7.1%. The values of the people younger than 60 years, who spend less than initially planned varies between 1.4% and 7.1%.

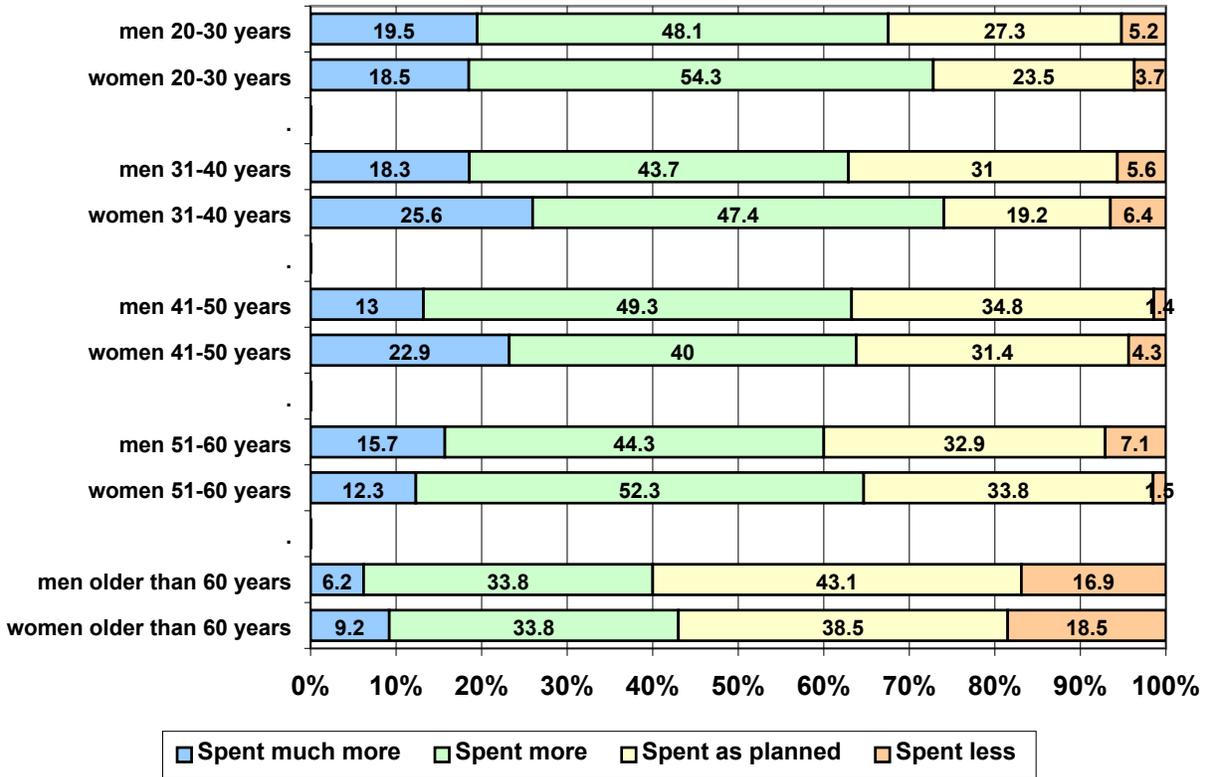


Fig. 4. Extra spending depending on gender  
(Source: Own research results)

Regarding the behavior in which the consumer spend approximately as planned, it can be observed that again the older people are better represented in this category. It can be also observed that for almost all categories the men have higher values for this type of behavior. The highest values for this type of behavior are for the people older than 60 years. So 43.1% of the men and 38.5% of the women have this type of behavior. There average values for this type of behavior for the people with ages between 41-60 years. 32.9% of the men with ages between 51-60 years and 34.8% of the men with ages between 41-50 years have this type of behavior, while 33.8% of the women with ages between 51-60 years and 31.4% of the men with ages between 41-50 years have this type of behavior. These values decrease for the people younger than 40 years. So 31% of the men with ages between 31-40 years, 27.3% of the men with ages between 20-30 years, 19.2% of the women with ages between 31-40 years and 23.5% of the women with ages between 20-30 years have this type of behavior.

As mentioned before younger people spend more than initially planned. If the percentage of people older than 60 years who spend more than planned has values of 33.8%, these values are higher than 40% for all other categories. The two categories who mention most that they spend more than planned are the women with ages between 20-30 years (54.3%) and the women with ages between 51-60 years (52.3%). Both categories are in the lifecycle in which they don't have a high responsibility of a family as for the women with ages between 20-30 years they are in the life period when they build a family, while the women with ages between 51-60 years are in the life-cycle where they have already grown-up children who take the responsibility for their lives.

Regarding the people who spend much more than planned, again the older people are less represented for this type of behavior. Only 6.2% of the men and 9.2% of the women older than 60 years have this type of behavior. For all the other categories the amount of this type of behavior exceeds 12%. So for people with ages between 41-60 years, there are average values for this type of behavior, while these values increase for the people younger than 40 years. The highest values for this type of behavior are for the women with ages between 31-40 years (25.6%) and for the women with ages between 41-50 years (22.9%). With the exception of these two categories the percentages of this type of behavior for the people with ages between 41-60 years varies between 12.3% and 15.7%, while for the people with ages between 20-40 years, this type of behavior varies between 18.3% and 19.5%.

If we analyze the cumulated values of the behavior in which the consumer spend more or much more than planned, it can be observed that the women with ages between 31-40 years and the women with ages between 20-30 years have this type of behavior. The cumulated values decrease with the age, so that older people don't have that frequent this type of behavior. It can be also observed that for the people younger than 40 years, these types of behavior is more frequent at women, while for the people older than 40 years there is not much difference among genders.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The results of the research confirm the differences in the consumer behavior depending on gender and age. It also confirms the fact that consumer have an impulsive behavior, buying more products than initially planned and even spending more. Despite of these, it must be mentioned that the results of the research show the subjective opinion of the consumer about the fact that they buy unplanned products. So the consumers spend more also because of the fact that they forget to plan some of the products they need or because they evaluate incorrectly the amount of products or the value of the future spendings. In spite of these potential errors, the high and repeated values of the research showing the extra buying confirms the fact that they exist and that they influence the behavior of the consumer and therefore the success of many companies .

Despite the fact that in the past there have been made many studies about the behavior of the consumer, the preoccupation for this topic will always be of a great interest because of several reasons. On one hand there is the challenge of humans to find out and to understand better the behavior of other and of themselves and also the impact these studies have on the marketing strategies of companies and on the development of the society. On the other hand, the consumer behavior is very dynamic because of the changes we have in the society, such as the changing values or the technological developments which influence our everyday life.

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