



NINA MESIRANTA

Consumer Online Impulsive Buying

Elements and Typology



ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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To Mom

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At home in Tampere by lake Pyhäjärvi, August 4th, 2009

Nina Mesiranta

Abstract

The phenomenon of impulsive buying – making purchases on spur of the moment – has interested consumer researchers as well as retailers for over 50 years. Today, impulsive purchasing is an integral part of consumer society, as more time is spent in shopping environments. At the same time, Internet as a shopping environment is becoming more important in the daily lives of consumers, as consumers make an increasing ratio of their purchases online.

The purpose of this research is to analyze and understand consumer experiences of impulsive buying in the online shopping environment. Consequently, two research questions are addressed: to analyze what are the elements of online impulsive buying experience, and to understand the phenomenon by examining what types of online impulsive buying experiences can be identified. The research strategy is based on interpretive consumer research, with influences from phenomenology. The main research data was generated by interviewing face-to-face 17 Finnish consumers about their experiences of purchases made ‘on spur of the moment’ on the Internet.

To answer the first research question, this research presents an analytical framework that identifies eleven themes divided into four elements of online impulsive buying experience, i.e. shopping environment, webstore, product, and consumer. All in all, these four elements represent the different levels of the consumer online buying experience. The element of shopping environment includes the themes of convenience, delayed gratification, and product variety. The second main element, webstore, contains the themes of product presentation, return policies, and trustworthiness. The element of product consists of themes of price and risk, and the main element of consumer takes in the themes of interests, loyalty, and mood.

A typology of online impulsive buying experiences identifies three types of online impulsive buying: order increase, webstore browsing, and out-of-context purchasing. Each of these types consists of subtypes that further describe variation within the main type. Order increase includes sub-types of multiple, complementary, and additional purchasing, whereas webstore browsing refers to sub-types of pastime and promotional purchasing. Finally, out-of-context purchasing consists of trial and social purchasing.

These types together with their sub-types portray the multifaceted ways that consumers experience impulsive buying on the Internet.

This research contributes theoretically by increasing understanding of consumer impulsive behavior in general and especially of consumer buying experiences in the online shopping environment. As retailing environment evolves and new shopping environments are developed, it is important to examine impulsive buying behavior in other than brick-and-mortar contexts. In addition, this research enables consumers to tell about their online impulsive buying experiences in their own words and, as a result, it gives an interpretation of the phenomenon without imposing any predefined theoretical models on it. This research also gives many managerial implications for e-tailers to develop their webstores.

KEYWORDS: Impulsive buying, online buying, Internet, consumer behavior, phenomenology, interpretive consumer research

Tiivistelmä

Impulssiostot – ostopäätösten tekeminen hetken mielijohdeesta – ovat olleet niin kulutustutkijoiden kuin vähittäiskauppioiden mielenkiinnon kohteena yli 50 vuoden ajan. Nykyään impulssiostojen tekeminen on olennainen osa kulutusyhteiskuntaa, vietämmehän yhä enemmän vapaa-ajastamme erilaisissa ostoympäristöissä. Kuluttajien arjessa myös Internetin rooli ostoympäristönä on kasvussa, kun kuluttajat tekevät yhä suuremman osan ostoksistaan verkossa.

Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on analysoida ja ymmärtää kuluttajien kokemuksia impulssiostamisesta Internetissä. Tutkimuskysymyksiä on kaksi: ensimmäinen tutkimuskysymys pyrkii analysoimaan verkossa tapahtuvan impulssiostokokemuksen elementtejä, kun taas toinen tutkimuskysymys pyrkii ymmärtämään ilmiötä tarkastelemalla millaisia erilaisia impulssiostokokemuksen tyypejä voidaan tunnistaa. Tutkimusstrategiana tutkimuksessani on tulkitseva kulutustutkimus fenomenologisella otteella. Päättökäytännönä haastattelin yhteensä 17 suomalaista kuluttajaa heidän kokemuksistaan hetken mielijohdeesta tehdyistä Internet-ostoista.

Ensimmäisen tutkimuskysymyksen vastaan esittämällä analyttisen viitekehyksen perustuen kuluttajien kokemuksiin Internet-impulssiostoista. Viitekehyksessä identifioin yhteensä 11 teemaa, jotka jakautuvat edelleen neljän pääelementin – ostoympäristön, verkkokaupan, tuotteen ja kuluttajan alle. Nämä neljä pääelementtiä havainnollistavat eri tasoja kuluttajan Internet-impulssioston kokemuksessa. Ostoympäristön elementti liittyy vaivattomuuden, lykätyn mielihyvän sekä tuotevalikoiman teemoihin. Verkkokaupan elementissä teemat liittyvät tuotteiden esittämisen tapaan, palautusehtoihin ja verkkokaupan luotettavuuteen. Tuotteen elementissä taas keskiössä ovat tuotteen hinnan ja tuotteeseen liittyvien riskien teemat, ja kuluttajan elementissä kuluttajan mielenkiinnon kohteet, uskollisuus sekä mieliala.

Toisena päätutkimustuloksena tutkimuksessani on kuluttajien Internetissä tekemien impulssiostokokemusten typologia. Typologiassa identifioin kolme eri pääasiallista tapaa, joilla impulssiostot ilmenivät kuluttajien kokemuksissa: tilauksen kasvattaminen, verkkokaupan selailu sekä ostaminen erillään verkkokauppakontekstista. Lisäksi typologiassa jokainen näistä kolmesta eri tavasta on jaettu alatyyppeihin, jotka havainnol-

listavat erityyppisiä kuluttajien kokemuksia kyseisen laajemman kokemustyyppin sisällä. Tilauksen kasvattaminen voi liittyä yhden tuotteen tai tuotetyypin monilukaiseen ostamiseen, täydentävien ostosten tekemiseen tai tilauksen kasvattamiseen lisäostojen kautta. Verkkokaupan selailua havainnollistavat ajanvietteeksi ostaminen sekä myyninedistämisviestintään liittyvä ostaminen. Verkkokauppakontekstista erillään ostaminen taas viittaa aineistossa esiintyviin kokemuksiin kokeilevasta ja sosiaalisesta ostamisesta. Kokonaisuutena typologia kuvaa niitä moninaisia ja monimuotoisia tapoja, joilla kuluttajat kokevat tehneensä impulssiostoja Internetissä.

Tutkimus luo teoreettista kontribuutiota lisäämällä ymmärrystä kuluttajien impulsiivisesta käyttäytymisestä, ja erityisesti siitä, millaisia erilaisia kokemuksia kuluttajilla on ostamisesta Internet-ostoympäristössä. Vähittäiskaupan toimintaympäristön jatkuvasti kehittyessä, ja uusien, innovatiivisten ostoympäristöjen myötä on tärkeää, että kuluttajien impulsiivisia ostokokemuksia tarkastellaan myös muissa kuin perinteisissä ostoympäristöissä. Tässä tutkimuksessa olen antanut kuluttajille äänen, ts. mahdollisuuden kertoa omin sanoin kokemuksistaan impulssiostoista verkossa. Siten tutkimukseni tarkastelee ko. ilmiötä kuluttajista käsin, pakottamatta ilmiötä mihinkään aiempaan teoreettiseen malliin. Tutkimuksen tulokset tarjoavat lisäksi useita käytännön sovelluksia erityisesti verkkokauppojen kehittämiseen.

AVAINSANAT: Impulssiostaminen, heräteostaminen, verkkokauppa, Internet, kulutus-käyttäytyminen, fenomenologia, tulkitseva kulutustutkimus

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1. INTRODUCTION

A true history of human events would show that a far larger proportion of our acts are the results of sudden impulses and accident than of that reason of which we so much boast.

Peter Cooper (1791–1883), an American industrialist, inventor, and philanthropist

1.1 Impulsive buying in evolving retail environment

Acting on an impulse – on sudden urge – is a fundamental part of human nature. Impulsive decisions can be part of many types of behaviors in our everyday lives, while disorders in impulse control can even lead to negative outcomes such as addictions. The focus of this research is on impulsive buying – making purchases on spur of the moment. The phenomenon of impulsive buying has interested researchers in consumer research as well as other related disciplines since the 1950s (see e.g. Clover, 1950; Stern, 1962). Since then, the importance of impulsive buying behavior has increased continually as consumer society has evolved. Consumer research has acknowledged that shopping can be pleasurable in itself; an activity that does not necessarily involve making purchases at all, but consumers act on an impulse if they encounter something interesting (see e.g. Lehtonen & Mäenpää, 1997, 142–144). This contrasts the traditional view that shopping is a necessity – a rational, task-oriented activity which is directed towards filling a functional need, i.e. making planned purchases. Today, shopping and shopping related activities are regarded as leisure, and spending time e.g. in a shopping mall to enjoy oneself can take many forms, in which purchasing products is not necessarily the main focus (e.g. Lehtonen & Mäenpää, 1997; Mäenpää, 2005, 209–231). Consequently, as consumers spend more time in shopping environments, they are also more likely to make more impulsive purchases. It has even been argued that ‘discretionary unplanned buying’, a form of impulsive buying behavior, has become part of the core meaning of consumer society today, as consumers buy goods

and services with discretionary income intentionally, but without prior planning (Wood, 2005).

As Paco Underhill (1999, 31) puts it: “If we went into stores only when we needed to buy something, and if once there we bought only what we needed, the economy would collapse, boom.” Impulsive purchasing is, indeed, also an important source of revenue for retailing – it has been estimated that as much as 50 per cent of all purchases in brick-and-mortar retailing are bought on an impulse (Hausman, 2000), and as much as 75 per cent of buying decisions are made in-store (Iris, 2002). As retailers in traditional brick-and-mortar stores have realized the importance of the phenomenon, they have developed strategies to encourage their customers to make more impulsive purchases, for example through in-store promotions, store packaging, and store layouts (Dholakia, 2000). For instance, as most sweets are bought on an impulse, it has become a popular strategy for retailers to place sweets at or near checkouts where customers are queuing. This has even resulted in protests by consumers, as for example the Food Commission in the UK both in the early 1990’s and in 2003 campaigned against supermarkets and grocery stores to stop displaying sweets at the checkouts (Benady, 2003).

Over the years, innovations in consumer retailing, such as credit cards, telemarketing, 24-hour retailing, and home shopping networks, have increased the level of temptation to make impulsive purchases (Rook, 1987; Rook & Fisher, 1995; Rook, 1999). However, in the last decade, the most striking development changing the landscape of retailing has been the growth of the Internet and, as a result, the expansion of Internet commerce. According to Nielsen’s survey conducted in October–November 2007, more than 85 per cent of the world’s online population, that is, over 875 million people, had made a purchase using the Internet – an increase by 40 per cent in two years. In addition, more than a half of global Internet users had made at least one purchase online in the preceding month (Nielsen Media Research, 2008). In the US, online sales figures have grown during the past few years by over 20 per cent annually (eMarketer, 2008). Also in Finland, the role of the Internet and online commerce is important. In Finland, 83 per cent of the population had used the Internet during spring 2008, and 78 per cent had used it at least once a week (Statistics Finland, 2008). Internet use in Finland is most common among younger generations, as 99 per cent of 16–29-year-olds, and 97 per cent of 30–39-year-olds had used the Internet during spring 2008 (*ibid.*). Also ordering or purchasing online is a reality for many Finns, as in spring 2008

already one third of the Finnish population of 16–74-year-olds had made a purchase online in the preceding three months (*ibid.*). As a result of this development, many consumers can now ‘go shopping’ in the comfort of their own homes, browsing and ordering from the offerings of the Internet webstores, where purchases are only a few mouse clicks away, 24 hours a day. This convenience of online shopping has been also suggested to further increase consumers’ possibilities to act and buy impulsively (Burton, 2002; Dittmar, Long, & Bond, 2007; Koufaris, 2002; Moe & Fader, 2004; Rook & Fisher, 1995).

Traditionally, online shopping has been seen as a rational behavior, where efficiency, price comparisons, and information search play a significant role in consumers’ buying decisions (see e.g. Jeffrey & Hodge, 2007; Koufaris, 2002; LaRose & Eastin, 2002; Mathwick & Rigdon, 2004; Parsons, 2002; Wolfenbarger & Gilly, 2001). However, today also a more experiential side to online behavior and online buying is acknowledged (see e.g. Mathwick & Rigdon, 2004; Novak, Hoffman, & Duhachek, 2003; Shang, Chen, & Shen, 2005). Impulsive buying behavior has been seen as one manifestation of this more experiential or recreational online behavior (Kim & LaRose, 2004; Novak, Hoffman, & Duhachek, 2003). However, significant part of research on impulsive buying has concentrated on brick-and-mortar retailing, whereas research on online impulsive buying has remained few (Adelaar et al., 2003; Costa & Laran, 2003; Kacen, 2003; LaRose, 2001; LaRose & Eastin, 2002; Madhavaram & Laverie, 2004; Zhang, Prybutok, & Koh, 2006; Zhang, Prybutok, & Strutton, 2007). Most of the previous research on online impulsive buying has focused on modeling the behavior, thus for example utilizing surveys or experimental designs in laboratory settings or in artificial or modified webstores. As a result, little attention has been paid to how consumer online impulsive buying unfolds in authentic online shopping environment, and how consumers experience online impulsive buying.

In this research, I examine consumer online impulsive buying, i.e. consumer experiences of buying ‘on spur of the moment’ on the Internet. My focus is on enabling consumers to tell about their experiences in their own words and, as a result, on giving an interpretation of the phenomenon without imposing any predefined theoretical models on it.

1.2 Research purpose and questions

The purpose of this research is *to analyze and understand consumer experiences of impulsive buying in the online shopping environment*. In order to achieve the purpose of this research, the following research questions are addressed:

1. What are the elements of online impulsive buying experience?
2. What types of online impulsive buying experiences can be identified?

The first research question *analyzes* the phenomenon, breaking the phenomenon into smaller parts. To answer the first research question, this study describes the elements that consumer online impulsive buying experiences consist of. The focus of the first question is on the issues or themes that are part of consumers impulsive buying experiences online, and thus, can facilitate impulsive buying in the online shopping environment. As a result of the first research question, an analytical framework on the elements of consumer online impulsive buying experiences is constructed.

The second research question, on the other hand, aims at *understanding* the phenomenon by giving insight into the different forms online impulsive purchasing can take, i.e. diverse ways in which impulsive buying occurs in consumer experiences. As a result, a typology of different types of online impulsive buying is developed.

In this research, the focus is on *experiences* described from a first-person view. Instead of uncovering structures of consumer decision making, this research seeks to identify recurring experiential patterns (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989, 137) in consumers' online impulsive buying experiences. Understanding of online impulsive buying is created by giving an interpretive explanation that shows the patterns to action, making sense within the context of the person's situation and perceptions (O'Shaughnessy, 1992, 140). The idea is not to seek causal relationships, but, following the principles of interpretive research, the primary aim is to portray a *holistic picture* of the phenomenon of online impulsive buying behavior while aiming to understand the fundamental nature of activities related to the phenomenon embedded *in a specific context* (see Gummesson, 2005; O'Shaughnessy, 1992, 141; Patton, 2002, 480). Also, according to the principles of existential-phenomenological consumer research, understanding of the phenomenon is at the level of actual, lived consumer experiences (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989, 139).

All in all, by addressing these research questions, my research seeks to develop theory about consumer *online* impulsive buying, not to test any previous theory of impulsive buying. Some of the most cited studies on impulsive buying have been made at least a few decades ago (e.g. Rook, 1987), some of them being as far as from the 1960's (Stern, 1962). However, the modern consumer is faced with a different shopping experience or environments from their parents or even grandparents. Not only has the offline shopping environment changed during the decades, but contemporary consumers have also incorporated the Internet as part of their daily lives as buyers and consumers. Therefore, it should no longer be taken for granted that research on impulsive buying made in offline environment would automatically apply to modern or new buying environments such as the Internet.

Most of the previous studies on impulsive buying have been made in the brick-and-mortar shopping environment. However, in my view, examining consumer impulsive buying also in the online shopping environment is important, as the Internet is not only a context for buying (such as grocery stores vs. department stores would be), but, as argued also by Garza (2002), the Internet shifts the structure of (buying) experience. For instance, on the Internet, physical goods cannot be directly examined with all five senses, as the product experience is restricted to a computer screen. However, previous research on impulsive buying made in the brick-and-mortar shopping environment has assumed that physical and sensory proximity of the product creates strong impulses to buy (e.g. Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991). In addition, on the Internet only electronically downloadable products are available to the consumer immediately after their purchase, whereas physical products are delivered later. However, impulsive buying has been related previously to getting immediate gratification after the purchase. Therefore, the online and offline contexts in impulsive buying differ in theoretically interesting ways (for discussion about the role of contexts, see Arnould, Price, & Moisio, 2006), and thus, my research seeks to fill this gap in the literature by focusing on developing theory about online impulsive buying.

1.3 Related research streams

Positioning of this research is based on three research streams that also determine the areas this research makes contribution in. These are depicted in Figure 1. Firstly, this research draws from *interpretive consumer research*. This refers to two interrelated issues. Methodologically, my research is influenced by the assumptions of interpretive consumer research paradigm, as the empirical part of the study is based on phenomenological research methodology and on consumer interviews. I will discuss these methodological assumptions in detail in the third chapter, which focuses on research strategy. In addition, I have utilized interpretive consumer research studies, especially those related to impulsive consumer behavior, to relate the results of my research to previous research.

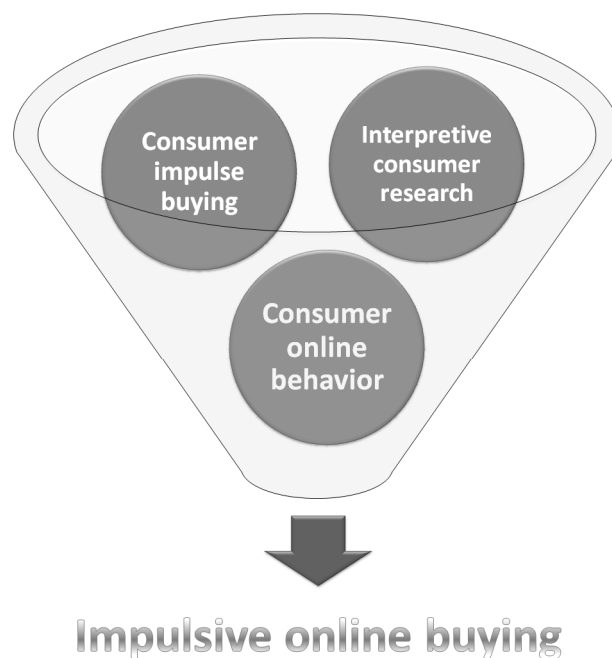


Figure 1. *Relevant research streams of the study*

Secondly, my research builds on the research stream of *consumer impulse buying*. Impulse or impulsive buying has been studied from various conceptual, theoretical, as well as methodological approaches. I will discuss the different approaches and how my research relates to them in the second chapter of this report. However, regardless of their approach, these previous studies have helped me to understand the phenomenon of

impulse buying itself, the concepts related to it, the various points of view and methods the phenomenon can be addressed from, as well as the scientific discourses around it.

Thirdly, due to the context, i.e. the Internet, the research on *online consumer behavior* is relevant for my research. I have considered valuable especially those few studies that take an interpretative approach to online consumer behavior, and especially to buying online. In addition, other studies regarding especially consumer online buying have been reviewed to increase my understanding. Obviously, the most important area in this has been research on online impulsive buying and the concepts related to it, such as online compulsive buying.

1.4 Structure of the report

The structure of the research report is first and foremost designed so as to logically present and convey the study to the reader. However, it must be noted that the actual research process has differed from the structure of this report. For example, the research process was inductive in nature. Although the theoretical foundations are discussed in the second chapter, and the empirical findings in the fourth and fifth chapters, the results of the study emerged from the data, not from the theoretical foundations presented in the second chapter. Figure 2 depicts the structure of the report.

The research report is divided into six main chapters. The second chapter focuses on theory related to the phenomenon under study, i.e. impulsive buying. In it, I will discuss previous research as well as different approaches taken previously to examine impulsive buying. In addition, I will present earlier studies on impulsive online buying. The second chapter also positions this research in relation to other studies in the area.

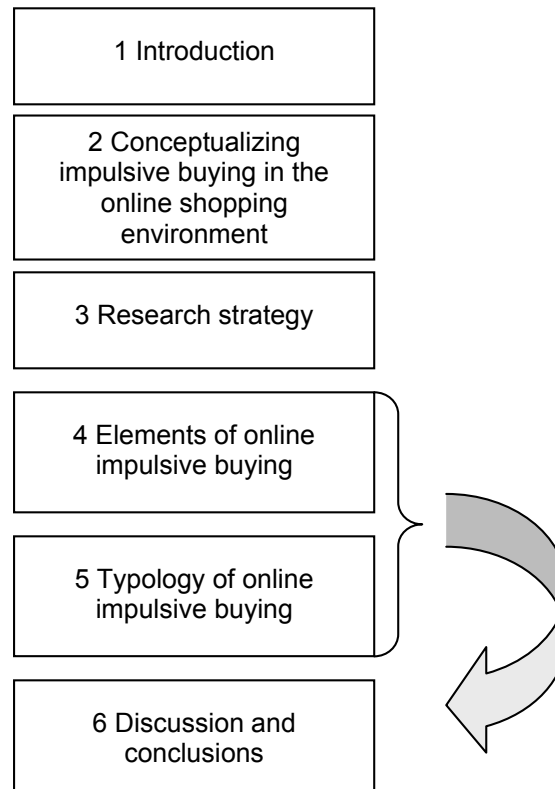


Figure 2. *Structure of the report*

The third chapter concentrates on research strategy and methods. The chapter is organized around the basic choices of the research strategy taken in my research, i.e. epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods. Also, the aim of the third chapter is to describe the research process as detailed and as transparently as possible.

In the fourth and the fifth chapters I will report the results of the study. Firstly, in chapter four I will present and discuss the results related to the first research question, i.e. the elements of the online impulsive buying. The fifth chapter, on the other hand, focuses on the results concerning the second research question, i.e. on the different types of online impulsive buying.

The last, sixth chapter begins by a short summary of the study, followed by discussion about the results of the study. In addition, theoretical contribution and managerial implications are discussed. The chapter ends by evaluating trustworthiness of the research and by presenting directions for future research.

2. CONCEPTUALIZING IMPULSIVE BUYING IN THE ONLINE SHOPPING ENVIRONMENT

This chapter focuses on giving theoretical foundations for studying the phenomenon of online impulsive buying. First, I will discuss the concept of impulsive buying – how it has been previously defined in the literature, and the view I have adopted in my study, i.e. conceptualizing impulsive buying as part of a continuum. Secondly, I will present my views on how previous impulsive buying research can be classified into different approaches, and discuss how my research can be positioned in relation to this previous research stream on impulsive buying. Thirdly, I will discuss the previous research into impulsive online buying. Finally, this chapter concludes with discussion about how my research is positioned in relation to previous research.

2.1 The concept of impulsive buying

Over the decades, consumer decision making has received extensive amount of interest from researchers in marketing and consumer research. However, the basic assumption has usually been that decision making, as well as other individual level consumer action, is rational, i.e. conscious, foresightful, goal-directed, and intentional (see e.g. Arndt, 1986). However, impulsive buying presents one of many examples which challenges this assumption about consumer goal-directedness in decision making. Indeed, marketing researchers have presented an enduring interest in impulsive buying behavior, as the first research on the phenomenon dates back to DuPont's 'Consumer Buying Habit Studies' of 1945 (see Rook, 1999).

Despite the long research tradition into studying consumer impulsive buying, there still seems to be some controversy over how impulsive buying should be conceptualized. One indication of this is the diversity of terms that have been used over

the years to conceptualize impulsive buying, for example ‘unplanned buying’ (Abratt & Goodey, 1990; Wood, 2005), ‘impulsive buying’ (Kacen & Lee, 2002; Rook & Fisher, 1995; Verplanken et al., 2005; Weinberg & Gottwald, 1982) or ‘impulsive purchasing’ (Baumeister, 2002; Luo, 2005), and ‘impulse buying’ (Baun & Groeppel-Klein, 2003; Beatty & Ferrell, 1998; Bellenger, Robertson, & Hirschman, 1978; Hausman, 2000; Jones et al., 2003; Kacen & Lee, 2002; Silvera, Lavack, & Kropp, 2008; Vohs & Faber, 2007; Wood, 1998; Youn & Faber, 2000) or ‘impulse purchasing’ (Bayley & Nancarrow, 1998; Gardner & Rook, 1988; Kollat & Willett, 1967; Peck & Childers, 2006; Piron, 1991). In my research, I will use both terms ‘impulsive buying’ and ‘impulsive purchasing’, which I consider synonyms.

Impulsive buying and related concepts

In order to understand the concept of impulsive buying, it is also necessary to clarify how it differs from, or resembles, other related concepts. First, it must be distinguished from the concept of *consumption impulses*. As clarified by Dholakia (2000), a consumption impulse can be related to product purchase (e.g., buying a candy bar at the supermarket checkout counter), product use (e.g., eating a piece of cheesecake when watching late-night television) or product disposal (e.g., trading in a serviceable car for a new model). In my research, the focus is on impulsive buying, i.e. consumption impulses related to product purchase.

A second distinction should be made between *impulses and actual behavior*. Experiencing an impulse, i.e. a temptation to buy, does not necessarily result in behavior, i.e. in an actual impulsive purchase. Consumers can and often do resist these types of impulses, so that the actual impulse does not lead into purchasing the product (Dholakia, 2000). In this research I concentrate on the experiences of impulsive buying, therefore taking into account only those experiences of impulses that have ended up in an actual purchase.

Thirdly, impulsive buying must be distinguished from *compulsive buying*, as these types of behaviors are related. Compulsive buying refers to a chronic state in which a consumer has an inability to control impulses to buy (O'Guinn & Faber, 1989). Compulsive buying behavior is repetitive, and is usually considered abnormal. Impulsive buying, on the other hand, refers to an acute behavior, to a desire to purchase

a specific product. In addition, compulsive buying has much more severe consequences than impulsive purchasing, such as debt, depression and domestic discord. In my research, I have concentrated on individual experiences of impulsive buying. However, I cannot rule out the possibility that some of the interviewees in my research could have compulsive buying tendencies, but this has not consciously been the focus of my research or data analysis.

2.1.1 Central characteristics of impulsive buying

In previous research, almost every researcher has developed his or her own interpretation of the definition for impulsive or impulse buying. However, as I familiarized myself with the previous research on impulsive buying, I noticed that some common grounds to the definitions can be identified. As a result of analyzing previous research, I identified five characteristics that, in my view, can be considered central to the concept of impulsive buying. I am not suggesting that in order to be labeled as an impulsive purchase, it should encompass all five of these characteristics, but the characteristics represent more or less the ideal type of an impulsive purchase discussed in the previous literature.

For a long time in consumer research, impulsive purchases were conceptualized as those purchases that were unplanned, and they were operationalized as any purchase made which was not on consumer's shopping list when entering the store (Rook, 1999). In fact, this *unplanned nature* of an impulse purchase has been identified as central to almost all definitions of impulse buying (Piron, 1991). However, nowadays most researchers agree that impulsive buying is more than that – a purchase that is unintended and unplanned is a necessary, but not a sufficient way to categorize a purchase as an impulsive purchase (see e.g. Weun, Jones, & Beatty, 1998). Therefore, it can be concluded that all impulsive purchases can be categorized as unplanned purchases, but not all unplanned purchases can be labeled as impulsive purchases.

Another central element in defining impulsive buying has been that a consumer does not reflect on the purchase decision, i.e. the purchase is *unreflective*. In psychology, the general trait of impulsiveness has been characterized by unreflective actions (see Weun, Jones, & Beatty, 1998). Equally, when buying on an impulse, the consumer does not engage in a great deal of evaluation, and is also less likely to consider the consequences

of buying the product (Jones et al., 2003; Rook, 1987; Weun, Jones, & Beatty, 1998). The attention is focused on getting immediate gratification from responding to the urge to buy rather than on a pre-existing problem or on finding an item to fill a predetermined need (Jones et al., 2003; Weun, Jones, & Beatty, 1998).

Thirdly, impulsive buying has been conceptualized as being *immediate*. Also this is consistent with the notion of general impulsiveness (see Jones et al., 2003; Rook, 1987). The decision to buy the product is made immediately or in a very short time after seeing the product. The consumer experiences a sudden urge to buy the product immediately (Rook, 1987). As explained by Jones et al. (2003, 506) and Weun et al. (1998, 1124): “An individual making an impulse purchase responds quickly to the urge and makes a spontaneous decision to purchase the item without delay. Furthermore, the individual is not likely to postpone the purchase in order to gather more information, comparison shop, seek advice, or simply ‘cool off.’”

Fourthly, *hedonic components* of this behavior have also received a lot of attention. For example, Rook (1987) has suggested that the impulse to buy is hedonically complex; impulsive buying can be exciting, can be accompanied by intense feeling states and a state of psychological disequilibrium that can result in psychological struggle and conflict (e.g., gaining pleasure when buying the product, but feeling guilt or regret afterwards). However, these hedonic elements can be also part of planned purchases, and as proposed by Piron (1991), they do not, as such, distinguish impulsive purchases from other types of purchases. In fact, Piron (1991) distinguishes between experiential and non-experiential impulse purchasing depending on whether the impulse purchase is accompanied with emotional and/or cognitive reactions.

Finally, it has been suggested that an *exposure to a stimulus* is a central element in impulsive buying (see Madhavaram & Laverie, 2004). This view is based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response paradigm, proposing that a stimulus (product) creates some response (an impulse to buy resulting in a purchase) in an organism (consumer). The stimulus to buy on an impulse need not be the actual product, but can for example be the result of marketer’s environmental manipulations through atmospherics, merchandising stimuli, or an image of the product (Madhavaram & Laverie, 2004).

2.1.2 Impulsive buying as a continuum

Instead of seeing impulsive buying as a collection or a list of different characteristics, in this research, I conceive the concept of impulsive buying as part of a continuum of consumer buying decisions ranging from planned purchases to ‘pure’ impulse purchases. On that continuum, those purchases that have the characteristics of an impulse purchase described just earlier represent the other end of the continuum, i.e. the purest type of an impulse purchase.

As can be seen from the list of central characteristics of the phenomenon, and as discussed also by Wood (2005), the contemporary consumer behavior literature presents impulsive buying as something very extraordinary, non-rational, and saturated with emotion. In addition, impulse buying has often a negative tone in the scientific literature, as it is often associated with a failure of self-control. Similarly, the popular press often handles impulse buying as something that should be avoided and regretted. However, the reality of consumer behavior today is different from these views taken in the literature. Much of unplanned buying in the contemporary consumer culture is something that is not regretted or characterized with negative emotion, nor extraordinary (Wood, 2005). On the contrary, unplanned buying, or ‘discretionary unplanned buying’ as Wood (2005) has termed it, is characteristic of modern shopping and retail environments, and instead of regretting it, consumers consider it satisfying, pleasurable, and fun. To clarify, Wood (2005, 275) describes his choice for the term:

The author suggests the, admittedly awkward, term ‘discretionary unplanned buying’ to differentiate this type of unplanned buying from ‘impulse’ buying. The addition of ‘discretionary’ to ‘unplanned buying’ serves to emphasise that this mode of consumer purchase is not compelled, non-rational or inevitably associated with consumer regret. A key difference here is that it is not being asserted that the kind of buying actions described are instances of compelled or ‘akratic’ action, i.e. action that is contrary to a buyer’s better judgment. Use of ‘discretionary’ furthermore highlights the fact that consumers need to have income available to fund this kind of purchase.

Therefore, instead of conceptualizing impulsive buying behavior as something extraordinary, I perceive impulsive buying as a phenomenon which can be conceptualized as a continuum ranging from planned purchase behavior to pure, extraordinary impulse buying.

Similar ideas about the range of impulsive buying have been presented also earlier. Already in 1962 Hawkins Stern suggested that there are different types of impulse buying. In his classification, Stern (1962, 59–60) identifies four types of impulse buying, i.e. pure, reminder, suggestion, and planned impulsive buying. Also later, Cobb and Hoyer (1986) classified shoppers to three categories: planners, partial planners, and impulse purchasers. The classification was based on whether the consumer had planned to purchase a specific brand or a product in some specific product category. Planners had planned both the brand and product category, partial planners had planned the product category, but not the specific brand, and impulse purchasers had planned neither before entering the store. However, although this classification also takes into account the continuum of planned-impulse purchases, it is based solely on the level of planning, therefore omitting other aspects of impulsive purchasing, such as emotional aspects. More recently, Rook (1999, 330–331) has proposed a more holistic view of impulsive buying by placing the phenomenon on a continuum that has rational choice on the other end, and impulse disorder behavior at other (see Figure 3). Impulsive buying differs from rational buying behavior by having “an increasing presence of emotional factors, an urgency to consume, and a psychophysical proclivity to make an immediate purchase” (Rook, 1999, 330).

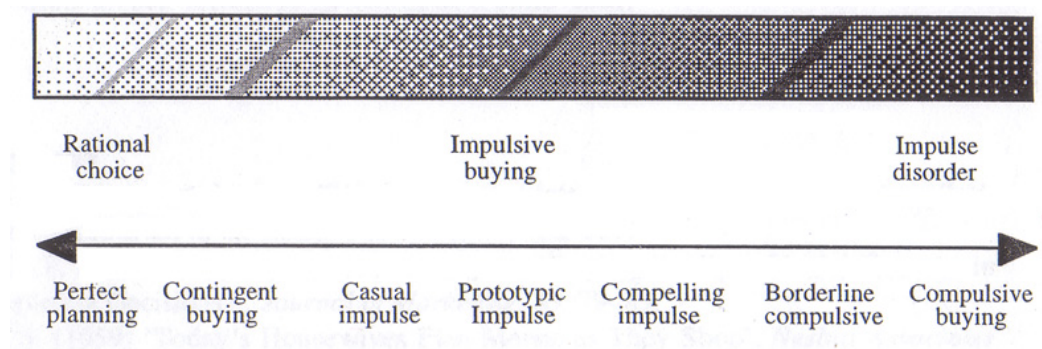


Figure 3. *A fuzzy set impulse buying continuum* (Rook, 1999, 330)

According to this continuum by Rook (1999, 330), impulsive buying should be categorized into three distinctive behavioral manifestations: *casual*, *prototypic*, and *compelling*. Casual impulse buying is the least intense one, being manifested in situations when consumer spots something interesting, new, different, pretty, sexy or tasty and becomes suddenly motivated to buy it. In addition, casual impulse purchases

are relatively low-priced items that make consumers feel good. Prototypic impulse buying, on the other hand, are episodes that represent the behavior's prototypic expression, being more arousing and urgent than casual impulse buying, and having more stakes, involving more money, more purchases and more personal meaning. According to Rook (1999, 331), “[s]uch an episode might begin with a spontaneous encounter with a jacket, followed by subsequent impulsive purchases to create a new ‘outfit’”. Lastly, in compelling impulse buying a consumer experiences a sense of diminishing self-control, strong feelings of having to have, and a growing disregard of consequences. Also Rook (1999, 331) points out that the previous literature has had a tendency to exaggerate these more compelling episodes of impulse buying.

In this research, I take the assumption that impulsive buying can be conceptualized being part of a continuum ranging from planned purchases to pure impulsive purchases. Some of the previous literature has considered that only those purchases that fulfill a list of characteristics can be labeled as impulse purchases. However, it presents only the most extreme part of the phenomenon of impulsive buying, and therefore, as discussed, might not be the best way to capture the reality of consumer behavior. I have depicted some of the previous studies with their terms and definitions on a continuum in Figure 4.

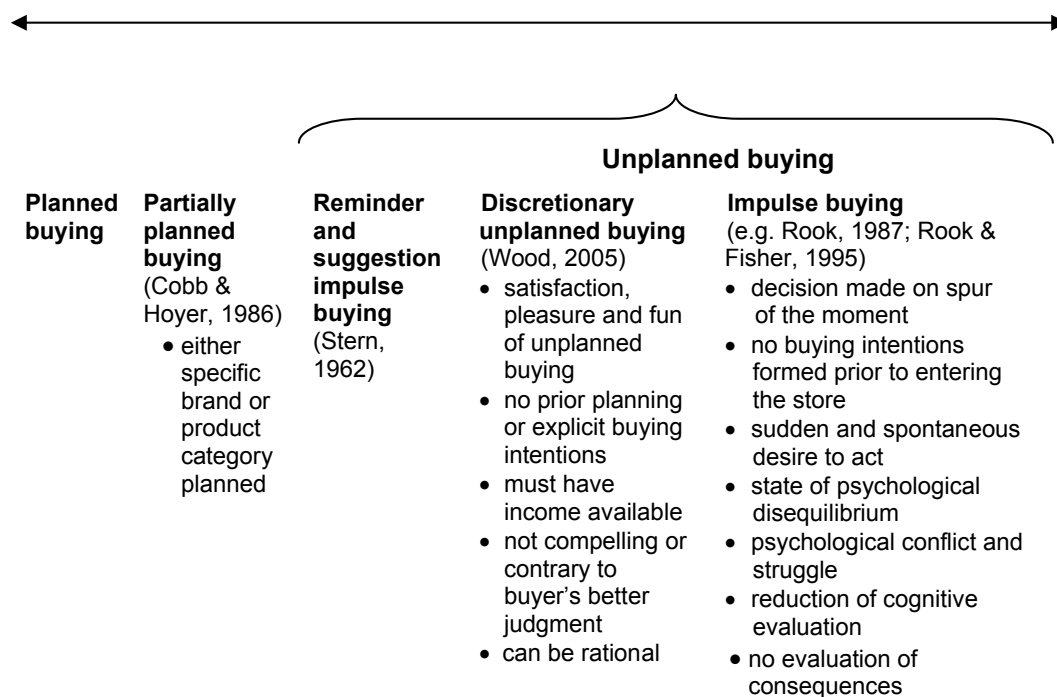


Figure 4. *Planned – impulsive buying continuum*

In this research, I have decided not to impose any objectively defined list of characteristics to the buying situations to be labeled as 'impulsive'. Rather, *the definition of impulsive buying taken in this research is based on consumers' own conceptions of the buying decisions they have made 'on spur of the moment'* ('hetken mielijohteesta' in Finnish). In my view, making a purchase on spur of the moment represents the most crucial aspect of impulsive buying. Accordingly, in the empirical part of this research, instead of using the term impulsive buying, I have interviewed consumers about their experiences of purchase decisions made on spur of the moment.

2.2 Approaches to impulsive buying research

As also the abundance of different definitions presented earlier indicate, the research on the area of impulsive buying is still unorganized and incoherent. However, some research traditions or approaches can be identified. I have categorized previous research on the subject into six different approaches or orientations: *affective, cognitive, economic, social psychological, trait theoretical, and marketing* (cf. Dittmar & Beattie, 1998). The perspectives, their assumptions as well as examples of research areas, methodology, and previous research are shown in Table 1.

In Table 1, the approaches are presented in alphabetical order according to their name. However, marketing approach is presented and discussed last, as it relates most to my research, and as it is also the most incoherent and varied of the approaches. Some research approaches, such as cognitive and social psychological, were easier to identify due to more distinctive assumptions in them. Because identifying research approaches has required some simplifications to be made, some previous studies could be placed in more than one category. In addition, it should be noted that every study listed as an example of previous research does not necessarily involve impulsive buying as such, but some of them are related more to general impulsive consumer behavior.

2.2.1 Affective approach

In affective approach, a basic assumption is that there exists a relationship between consumer affective states, such as moods, and impulse buying. The relationship can be

studied either way, i.e. the effect of affective states on impulse buying or the effect of impulse buying on affective states. Both positive, such as excitement and pleasure, and negative affective states, such as anxiety and guilt, have been studied (see Gardner & Rook, 1988; Piron, 1993). In addition to these studies that concentrate only on affective states and impulse purchases, affective elements are present in many other studies on impulse purchasing. For example, a study by Beatty and Ferrell (1998), modeling the precursors of impulse buying, suggests that positive affect while shopping increases the felt urge to buy impulsively, while negative affect while shopping does not seem to influence impulse buying urges. In affective approach to impulsive buying, the main methodological choice has been quantitative, although a few studies have used qualitative methods, as well.

2.2.2 Cognitive approach

In cognitive approach, the focus is on mental processing and psychological processes. Impulsive purchasing is seen in the general framework of impulse and self-control. Humans are tempted to yield to several types of impulses and impulse purchasing is one type of these impulses. Research in this area is especially interested in formation, control, and resistance of those impulses. This approach considers impulsive purchasing to be a result of self-control failure, i.e. the consumer is not able to resist or control the impulse of buying. For example, self-control failure, resulting in an impulse purchase, is suggested to be a consequence of three causes: 1) conflicting goals and standards undermine control, such as when the goal of feeling better immediately conflicts with the goal of saving money; 2) failure to keep track of one's own behavior, such as monitoring your spending, makes control difficult; and 3) self-control depends on a resource that operates like strength or energy, and depletion of this resource makes self-control less effective (Baumeister, 2002). Methodologically, this approach has used quantitative methods, mostly experiments.

Table 1. *Different approaches to impulsive buying research*

Approach	Assumptions	Impulse buying explained (in a simplified manner)	Research areas, e.g.	Methodology	Examples of previous research
Affective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is a relationship between internal affective states and impulse buying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • impulse buying is likely to be facilitated by affective states • impulse buying is likely to be followed by affective states 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relationship between affective states and impulse buying • consumer affective states before, during and after an impulse purchase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quantitative • qualitative 	Baun & Groeppel-Klein (2003); Gardner & Rook (1988); MacInnis & Patrick (2006); Piron (1993); Rook (1987); Tice et al. (2001); Weinberg & Gottwald (1982)
Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focuses on internal mental processing, i.e. psychological processes • based on a general framework of impulse control and self-control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • impulse purchase occurs as a result of failure in self-regulation i.e. self-control and willpower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • impulse enactment process, impulse formation, control and resistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quantitative (experiments) • theoretical modeling 	Baumeister (2002); Dholakia (2000; 2005); Hoch & Loewenstein (1991); Karlsson (2003); Puri (1996); Strack et al. (2006); Vohs (2006; 2007)
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how to fit impulse buying to rational choice models • modifications to traditional, rational choice models within utility framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • impulse buyers discount the future at too rapid a rate and have shifting preferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discounting and preference models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • theoretical modeling 	Hoch & Loewenstein (1991); O'Donoghue & Rabin (2000)
Social psychological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • takes into account the cultural context of shopping • goods are linked to consumers' self-concept (symbolic self-completion theory) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • impulse purchases are especially likely to be goods that project a person's self-image 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • impulse buying in relation to self-concept and identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • qualitative (personal interviews) • quantitative (surveys) 	Dittmar & Beattie (1998); Dittmar & Drury (2000); Dittmar et al. (1995; 1996)
Trait theoretical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consumers vary in their general impulsiveness (tendency to act on an impulse) • impulsiveness is seen as a personality trait 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the more impulsive consumer, the more likely also an impulse purchase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development of scales to measure impulse buying tendency • relationship between buying impulsiveness and other personal constructs (e.g. age, culture) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quantitative 	Jones et al. (2003); Kacen & Lee (2002); Rook & Fisher (1995); Weun et al. (1998); Wood (1998); Youn & Faber (2000; 2002)

Approach	Assumptions	Impulse buying explained (in a simplified manner)	Research areas, e.g.	Methodology	Examples of previous research
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •?? •behavioral definitions of an impulse purchase •managerial implications provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •some products are more susceptible to impulse buying than others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •products bought on an impulse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •quantitative 	Bellenger et al. (1978); Jones et al. (2003)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •impulse purchases conceptualized mainly by the level of pre-purchase planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •the extent of pre-purchase planning •shopper or impulse purchase typologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •conceptual analysis •quantitative 	Cobb & Hoyer (1986); Kollat & Willett (1967); Stern (1962)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •impulse buying is a process that can be modeled •environmental influences on impulse buying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •impulse buying process: antecedents, motivations, and/or consequences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •quantitative with some qualitative exploratory research 	Abratt & Goodey (1990); Beatty & Ferrell (1998); Hausman (2000); Peck & Childers (2006)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •impulse buying as respondents experience it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •consumer's subjective experience of impulse buying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •qualitative 	Bayley & Nancarrow (1998); Rook (1987); Thompson et al. (1990)

2.2.3 Economic approach

Microeconomic theory assumes consumers to be rational decision-makers. The existence of impulse purchases is, however, a challenge to the standard microeconomic theory. Economic approach to impulsive buying, therefore, has modified those rational choice models to better suit the phenomenon of impulse buying. The basic assumption behind these models is that impulse buyers discount the future at a too rapid rate. Thus, the benefits of the desired object at the point of purchase outweigh the future problem of paying the bill (see Dittmar & Beattie, 1998, 127). The main models in this approach are known as discounting and preference models. Methodologically, research in this approach has been mainly theoretical, attempting to build theoretical models of impulsive behavior.

2.2.4 Social psychological approach

The basic assumption in social psychological approach is that impulse purchases fulfill social psychological functions; that goods are linked to consumers' self-concept – an idea behind symbolic self-completion theory. Much of the research relies on the social psychological model of impulse buying proposed by Dittmar et al. (1996, 192). In the model, social and environmental factors, such as individual factors and social category membership (for example gender), create self-discrepancies between the actual and ideal self, which, on the other hand, can lead to compensation mechanisms such as impulsive and compulsive buying. Therefore, a conjunction of high self-discrepancies and materialism will lead to impulse buying. According to social psychological approach, impulse buys are mostly directed to those products that project the consumer's self-image or that have potential for self-presentation, self-expression, mood adjustment or diversion, such as music, clothing, make-up, magazines, and jewelry, rather than to simple utility items. Research in this approach has used both qualitative as well as quantitative methods.

2.2.5 Trait theoretical approach

In trait theoretical approach, the main area of interest is in the consumer's tendency to act impulsively, i.e. the degree to which the consumer is likely to make impulse purchases. The basic assumption behind these studies is that individuals vary in their general impulsivity, which has an effect also on proclivity to buy on an impulse. In addition, research in this approach assumes that impulsivity is a more or less permanent and constant part of our personality; one of our traits. These studies have developed quantitative scales that measure consumer's impulse buying tendency. Originally, scales were used in psychology to measure the general trait of impulsiveness, but this research approach has adapted those scales to consumer behavior purposes to measure consumer impulsiveness and impulse buying tendency. Studies in this approach are often connected to cognitive approach, as cognitive models of impulse buying often include scales of consumer impulse buying tendency (see e.g. Dholakia, 2000; Puri, 1996). Also other scales of psychological constructs, such as stress reaction, have been linked to impulse purchase behavior (see e.g. Youn & Faber, 2000; 2002). It has also been suggested that impulse buying tendency is product-specific (Jones et al., 2003). As the trait theoretical approach has concentrated on developing quantifiable scales, also methodologically the main focus has been on utilizing quantitative methods.

2.2.6 Marketing approach

Marketing approach to impulsive buying research can be regarded as the most incoherent of the approaches, because it includes research that does not have as easily identifiable basic assumptions as the other approaches have. Impulsive buying research in the marketing approach has, however, a more managerial approach, providing also managerial implications as how to encourage impulsive buying with especially marketing stimuli. Therefore, due to these practical implications, this approach is based more than the other approaches on the interest of knowledge, i.e. for whom the research information is directed. In addition, often research in this approach, especially in the early years, has had the assumption that impulse purchases can be measured with purely behavioral measures, such as whether or not the purchase was on the consumer's shopping list when entering the store (see Dittmar & Beattie, 1998, 128). These

behavioral definitions of impulse purchases have produced also some shopper or purchase typologies based for example on the level of pre-purchase planning (e.g. Cobb & Hoyer, 1986). Also, the products bought on an impulse have been focal in research, suggesting that some products are more susceptible to impulse buying than others (e.g. Bellenger, Robertson, & Hirschman, 1978). In addition, the research in marketing approach has concentrated on modeling or describing the whole impulse purchase process; on consumer motivations to impulse buying (Hausman, 2000), and on the antecedents and consequences of impulse buying (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998). Another, distinctive direction in marketing approach has been to examine subjective viewpoint of consumers, i.e. how they experience impulsive buying (Rook, 1987; Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1990). Only in this subjective view into impulse buying, the research methodology has been mainly qualitative. Otherwise, the research in the marketing approach, as in other approaches, has used mainly quantitative methods.

My research can be considered to be part of the marketing approach to impulsive buying, as I provide and also take into account managerial implications. Within the marketing approach, my research can be placed especially in the research area labeled as ‘consumer subjective experiences of impulse buying’. Like previous research in that area, also my research utilizes qualitative methodology and concentrates on consumers’ subjective experiences of (online) impulse buying. However, the results of previous research in other approaches are utilized in especially discussing the findings of my research.

2.3 Previous research on online impulsive buying

Traditionally, online shopping has been seen as a rational behavior, where efficiency, price comparisons, and information search play a significant role (see e.g. Jayawardhena, Wright, & Masterson, 2003; Koufaris, 2002; LaRose & Eastin, 2002; Parsons, 2002; Wolfenbarger & Gilly, 2001). Consequently, previous research has usually assumed that online buying is a goal-oriented task, where consumers know what they are looking for (see e.g. Shang, Chen, & Shen, 2005). However, currently it is acknowledged that consumer online behavior is much more versatile than the rational approach assumes, and, as a consequence, several studies have identified two broad

categories of consumer behavior on the Internet: goal-directed vs. experiential behavior (e.g. Childers et al., 2001; Hoffman & Novak, 1996; Novak, Hoffman, & Duhachek, 2003; Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2001). The main differences between experiential and goal-directed online behavior are depicted in Table 2.

Table 2. *Distinctions between goal-directed and experiential online behavior* (Novak, Hoffman, & Duhachek, 2003, 4)

Goal-directed	Experiential
Extrinsic motivation	Intrinsic motivation
Instrumental motivation	Ritualized orientation
Situational involvement	Enduring involvement
Utilitarian benefits / value	Hedonic benefits / value
Directed (prepurchase) search	Nondirected (ongoing) search; browsing
Goal-directed choice	Navigational choice
Cognitive	Affective
Work	Fun
Planned purchases; repurchasing	Compulsive shopping; impulse buys

As can be seen in Table 2, impulse buying has been perceived as one manifestation of experiential consumer online behavior (Novak, Hoffman, & Duhachek, 2003). In goal-directed behavior the involvement is situational, as the consumer is motivated by completing some specific task or deliberating on some specific purchase, thus resulting in planned purchases. However, in experiential behavior, there is not any specific task at hand and the process of browsing can be motivating and offering hedonic value. Therefore, this type of behavior can lead to impulse buys and even to compulsive shopping. In their study on Internet shoppers dating back a few years, Mathwick et al. (2002) found that a majority (64 %) of Internet shoppers were more goal-directed, with an intention to purchase a general category of product or a specific brand, whereas 36 per cent of shoppers were categorized as more experiential – they were browsing either without an intent to purchase, or with a general intent to purchase but without any specific product in mind.

After analyzing consumer in-store online behavior and especially shopping strategies using navigational clickstream data, Moe (2003) proposed that online impulsive buying may occur as part of a shopping strategy labeled as hedonic browsing. The different shopping strategies suggested by Moe (2003) are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. *Typology of online shopping strategies* (Moe, 2003, 30)

Search behavior		
Purchasing horizon	Directed	Exploratory
Immediate	DIRECTED BUYING	HEDONIC BROWSING
Future	SEARCH/DELIBERATION	KNOWLEDGE BUILDING

According to Moe (2003), hedonic browsing consists of exploratory search behavior and of an immediate purchasing horizon. In exploratory search behavior, consumer is less deliberate and focused than in directed search, in which the consumer has a specific purchase in mind. Also, in exploratory search, the search process is more stimulus-driven than goal-driven. Therefore, if confronted with a right type of stimuli, the consumer might end up purchasing on an impulse. As opposed to knowledge building strategy, in which the purchase is postponed to the future, in hedonic browsing the purchase is made immediately. Therefore, all in all, online impulsive buying behavior has in previous research been related to experiential behavior, and specifically to hedonic browsing.

The discussion above has concentrated on presenting online impulsive buying as part of a wider stream of research on online consumer behavior. However, there are a few previous studies that have more or less directly dealt with online impulsive buying. In general, at least during the early days of online commerce, online shoppers were found to be more impulsive than non-shoppers (Donthu & Garcia, 1999). Also, previous research on unregulated buying on the Internet has identified features in webstores, such as product recommendations and suggestions, point programs, sale notices, and repeat purchase reminders that can encourage unregulated buying (LaRose, 2001). In addition, those studies that have more specifically examined impulsive buying behavior or intentions are presented in more detail in chronological order in Table 4.

Table 4. Previous research on online impulsive buying

Author (year)	Title	Aim	Methodology	Main results concerning online impulsive buying
Adelaar et al. (2003)	Effects of media formats on emotions and impulse buying intent	To understand the effects of different media formats (text, still images and video) on purchasing intent of participants	Quantitative: experimental design on university undergraduates; exposed to three different experimental stimuli of a music CD in an laboratory setting	Displaying the text of the lyrics had a greater effect on the impulse buying intent than showing still images of the music video
Costa & Laran (2003)	Impulse buying on the Internet: Antecedents and consequences	To evaluate the antecedents and consequences of impulse buying in virtual stores on the Internet	Quantitative: online survey to Brazilian consumers who had bought online in the past six months; confirmatory factor analysis/ structural modeling	Found support for positive influences between: a) <i>impulsivity</i> and 1) intensity of in-store browsing and 2) tendency to impulse buying b) <i>environmental elements of the web site</i> and 1) impulsivity, 2) intensity of in-store browsing, and 3) incidence of impulse purchases c) <i>incidence of impulse purchases</i> and positive emotions
Kacen (2003)	Bricks & clicks & the buying impulse: An investigation of consumer impulse buying behavior in an online and a traditional retail environment	To compare impulsive consumer buying behavior in an online grocery store with that in a traditional bricks-and-mortar grocery store	Quantitative, grocery reports about buying trips from 34 MBA students	1) Consumers made fewer impulse purchases from an online grocery store than from traditional grocery store, and 2) when items are on sale, consumers made more impulsive purchases online than offline
Kim et al. (2004)	Interactive E-commerce: Promoting consumer efficiency or impulsivity?	To propose and test a model of the Internet shopping experience, integrating an understanding of the phenomenon of unregulated buying and the differing shopping orientations	Quantitative: online survey on student sample; structural equation modeling	Usage of recreational shopping features (e.g. e-mail alerts and lists of new or best selling items) increases deficient self-regulation, which in turn increases online buying activity

Author (year)	Title	Aim	Methodology	Main results concerning online impulsive buying
Madhavaram & Laverie (2004)	Exploring impulse purchasing on the Internet	To explore the concept of impulse purchasing behavior online	Qualitative: in-depth questionnaire with open-ended questions; convenience sample of consumers who had made online purchases; content analysis	In addition to product, there are other <i>stimuli</i> that may influence impulse purchasing; <i>atmospheric cues</i> are likely to influence impulse purchases; <i>mood, affect, and hedonic experiences</i> are related to impulse purchases online
Zhang et al. (2006)	The role of impulsiveness in a TAM-based online purchasing behavior model	To identify the factors that affect online transactions as well as to evaluate how consumer impulsiveness affects online intention to purchase	Quantitative: web or paper survey on student sample; LISREL confirmatory analysis	There is a relationship between impulsiveness and intention to shop online
Jeffrey & Hodge (2007)	Factors influencing impulse buying during an online purchase	To examine how 1) mental accounting and 2) providing a reason to purchase increase the likelihood of an impulse purchase	Quantitative: experimental design; offering an opportunity to purchase an impulse item during checkout process in a real online purchasing transaction (high-school reunion website)	Purchase of the impulse item increases 1) with the total amount spent on other items 2) by providing a reason to purchase (\$1 donation)
Zhang et al. (2007)	Modeling influences on impulse purchasing behaviors during online marketing transactions	To identify and test various factors that may influence impulse purchasing during online transactions (research model based on TAM)	Quantitative: web-based survey on a college student sample; LISREL confirmatory analysis	Impulsivity is positively associated with 1) purchase intention and 2) consumers' subjective norms; male consumers exhibit greater impulsivity than female consumers

From Table 4 it can be concluded that most of the previous research on impulse buying on the Internet has involved attempts to explain the behavior by modeling the phenomenon, often concentrating on only a few factors or variables at a time. Consequently, methodologically the focus has been on quantitative methods, such as on collecting surveys on mostly student samples and on analyzing the data using structural

modeling. Also, many studies have relied on measures of impulsive buying intentions¹ instead of focusing on actual, realized impulse buying episodes. Furthermore, the general trait of impulsiveness or impulsivity of consumers has been in an extensive role in previous studies.

Compared to this previous research on online impulsive buying, my research can be positioned firstly by its aim to understand the phenomenon instead of modeling it. By that, I aspire to give a fresh look at the phenomenon without imposing previous theories on it. Also, I provide a holistic view of online impulsive buying that, unlike most previous research that has focused only on a few factors, attempts to look at the phenomenon in its totality. Moreover, in this research, I do not take into account the general impulsiveness trait of the consumer, but rather assume that anyone, regardless of their general impulsiveness level can make impulsive buying decisions once in a while. In addition, instead of using students as sample, my research generates its data purposefully from those consumers that have personal experience of impulsive buying on the Internet.

2.4 Positioning the study

The aim for the discussion earlier in this chapter has been on laying the ground for positioning my research in relation to previous research. Therefore, I have not dealt in detail with that many individual previous studies, but preferred to stay on a more meta-analytical level. As a summary, the positioning of my research is depicted in Figure 5.

In Figure 5, I have positioned the mainstream research streams of consumer online behavior and impulsive buying on two dimensions. Firstly, I have depicted the previous research on the continuum of planned – impulse purchases, based on my reasoning of where the research has concentrated on the continuum. Secondly, the main research methodology or research approach of these research streams, i.e. quantitative or positivistic and qualitative or interpretive is depicted in the figure, the qualitative research being below the line, whereas quantitative is above the line.

¹ *As many consumers abandon their shopping carts online during the checkout process, it has been suggested that intentions of buying might not be that good a measure of actual behavior in the online context (see e.g. Lim et al., 2006).*

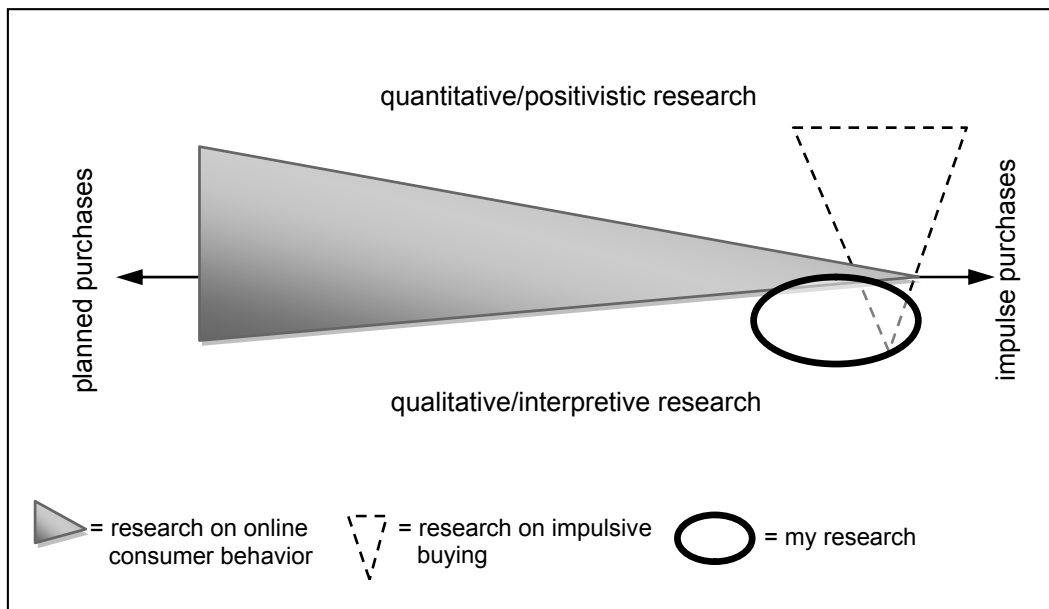


Figure 5. *Positioning of the research*

It can be concluded from Figure 5 that, first of all, previous mainstream research on online consumer behavior has been mostly concentrating more on the planned purchases, whereas research on online impulsive purchasing has remained few. Also, the research on online consumer behavior and on impulsive online buying behavior has been mainly quantitative or positivistic in nature. Secondly, impulsive buying has been studied from different conceptual, theoretical, as well as methodological approaches. However, the mainstream research on impulsive buying has previously been studied using mainly quantitative methods. Quantitative methodologies, such as experiments or surveys, have been employed to develop scales to measure impulse buying tendency, or to model different variables' relation to each other. In addition, as discussed earlier in this chapter, previous research on impulsive buying has concentrated mostly on the extreme end of the continuum, i.e. focusing on the theoretically 'purest' type of impulsive buying. Also, the previous research on impulsive buying has been conducted mainly elsewhere than in an online shopping context, i.e. in offline shopping context.

Finally, the positioning of my research is depicted in Figure 5 as interpretive and qualitative, but also as encompassing a larger area in the impulsive side of the continuum. As discussed earlier, this research takes the view that also other types of impulsive buying should be examined than only the ones that have the list of theoretical

characteristics suggested by the previous research. In addition, in my view, questionnaires with short answers and Likert scales are insufficient to capture the full essence and richness of human experience (see also Polkinghorne, 2005), and therefore, in order to address the research questions of this study, a more interpretive approach is needed.

3. RESEARCH STRATEGY

3.1 Basic choices of research strategy

According to Crotty (1998, 2–3), there are four elements that any research strategy should encompass: *epistemology*, *theoretical perspective*, *methodology*, and *methods*. These elements, along with the choices I have made for my study, are depicted in Figure 6.

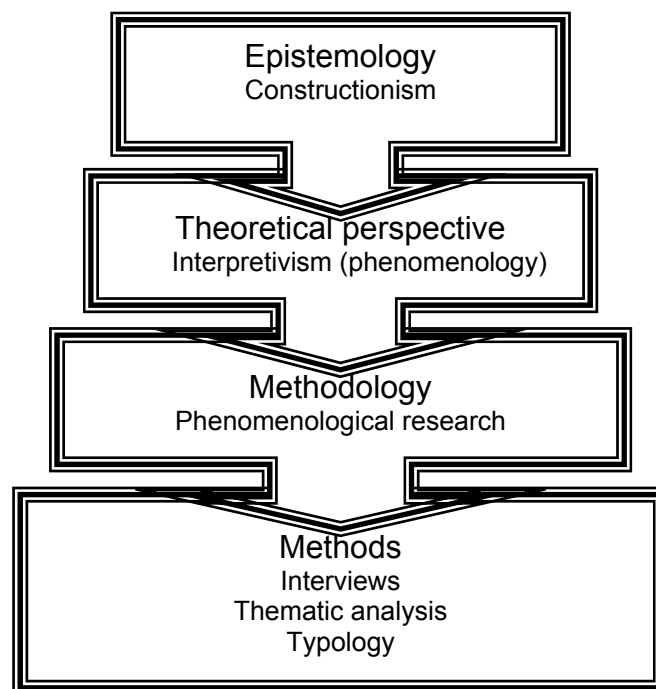


Figure 6. *Elements of research strategy* (modified from Crotty, 1998, 4)²

² Crotty (1998, 4) calls these the elements of the research process, but I do not see these elements necessarily as a dynamic process, but more as choices made as part of the research strategy. Therefore, I call this figure “Elements of research strategy”.

Epistemology refers to how we know what we know (Crotty, 1998, 8). Epistemologically, my research is based on *constructionism*. In constructionism, truth cannot be described as objective³, but “truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world” (Crotty, 1998, 8). This means that a real world with objects exists out there, but the world and the objects do not have any meaning until we construct meaning for them. Therefore, experience cannot be described in isolation from its object, and, as a result, experiences cannot constitute a totally subjective reality separate from the objective external world. In my research area, impulsive buying, this epistemological view means that consumers I have interviewed construct the meaning of impulsive buying as they engage with the external world they are interpreting. This interpretation process is further discussed in the following chapters.

The theoretical perspective in this study is *interpretivism* with influences from phenomenology. Theoretical perspective refers to “the philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria” (Crotty, 1998, 3). Therefore, theoretical perspective provides the basic assumptions embedded in the methodology. In general, interpretivism can be summarized as trying to *understand* (*Verstehen*) the social life-world instead of trying to offer explanations (see e.g. Crotty, 1998, 67; Tadajewski, 2006). In consumer research, interpretive consumer research has, depending on the view⁴, complemented or competed with the positivist consumer research during the last about 20 years (for a discussion of the history and current position of qualitative and interpretive consumer research in marketing, see e.g. Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Levy, 2005; Szmigin & Foxall, 2000; Tadajewski, 2006). During that period, multiple interpretive approaches have been developed in consumer research. These approaches differ for example in their basic assumption about whether to study consumers as individuals or consumer culture and cultural consumption practices (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006, 5–6, 203–204; Østergaard & Jantzen, 2002). For example, ethnographic consumer research, also

³ *Objectivism, which is the epistemological view in e.g. positivism, on the other hand, sees that things exist as meaningful entities independently of consciousness and experience, and that objective truth and meaning is attainable by research (Crotty, 1998).*

⁴ *See discussion on whether interpretivism is opposite or complementary to positivism in Cova and Elliott (2008).*

referred to as “naturalistic inquiry” (e.g. Belk, Sherry, & Wallendorf, 1988; Belk, Wallendorf, & Sherry, 1989) rests on symbolic interactionism, that emphasizes “putting oneself in the place of the other and seeing things from the perspective of others” (Crotty, 1998, 76), and accordingly, perceives marketing and consumption as cultural phenomena with shared cultural meanings (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006, 5). On the other hand, in my research I look at the phenomenon of online impulsive buying from the viewpoint of an individual consumer, seeking to describe lived experiences from the life-world of the individual (see e.g. Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989).

In this study, methodological and philosophical foundations for studying consumer experiences are further influenced by assumptions of *existential phenomenology* (see Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989, 135–137). Existential phenomenology subscribes to a contextualist world view, meaning that it seeks to describe human experience as it is lived, always emerging from some context. Ontologically, experience and physical world are viewed as “co-constituting” (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989, 137). Therefore, this is consistent with the epistemological assumptions of constructionism discussed above. In addition, the focus is to describe the experience from a first-person view, and to give a thematic description of the experience by having a holistic strategy that relates descriptions of experiences both to each other and to the context.

In the following sections of this chapter, the other elements of the research strategy are discussed. First, phenomenological research methodology is examined, followed by chapters about the methods taken in this study that provide detailed description about research process, data generation through consumer interviews, as well as about data analysis, i.e. thematic analysis and typology development.

3.2 Phenomenological perspective on consumer experiences

The research strategy chosen for this study has phenomenology both as a theoretical perspective as well as a choice of methodology. A central element in this research is indeed consumer experience, i.e. how consumers experience the phenomenon of impulsive online buying. In this section, I will first shortly examine the history of research on experiences in consumer research, followed by a detailed description of the

reflection and interpretation process of consumer experiences as part of my research process. This discussion will further shed light on the assumptions I have taken in this study.

Consumer experiences were brought to consumer researchers' attention in the early 1980's by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) by their seminal article "The experiential aspects of consumption: Consumer fantasies, feelings, and fun" (see also Carù & Cova, 2007, 3). Since then, consumer experiences have received increasing interest among consumer researchers in different disciplines, including marketing, and resulting in such popular concepts in marketing management literature as 'experience economy' (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) and 'experiential marketing' (Schmitt, 1999; Schmitt, 2003). Actually, it has been suggested that the dominance of selling products for concrete use has changed into selling experiences, lifestyles, and identities, and therefore, gaining knowledge about consumers' experiences through qualitative interviews has become essential for modern marketing (e.g. Kvale, 2006).

In consumer research, phenomenological research concentrating on the first-person view of lived experiences has received attention in various areas of consumption. Examples include research on meanings of self-gifts (Mick & Demoss, 1990), everyday consumption experiences of married women (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1990) and professional working mothers (Thompson, 1996), consumers' relationship with brands (Fournier, 1998), Internet use among older consumers (Trocchia & Janda, 2000), perceived Internet retail service quality (Trocchia & Janda, 2003), adolescent girls' mall experiences (Haytko & Baker, 2004), and meanings of consumer normalcy in shopping (Baker, 2006). As also this array of examples demonstrates, consumer experiences can be and have been studied from different approaches, such as marketplace experience, extraordinary experience, and experiential experience (Ahola, 2005; Ahola, 2007, 24–33). These approaches also define the concept of experience differently. The marketplace experience approach emphasizes the consumers' daily, ordinary experiences and the everyday negotiation on cultural meanings that are circulating in the marketplace (Ahola, 2007, 30–33). On the other hand, extraordinary experience approach studies experiences that are activated by unusual events and are characterized by high levels of emotional intensity and experience (Ahola, 2007, 28–30). Creating these types of extraordinary and unforgettable experiences for consumers has been the main aim in experiential marketing view (Carù & Cova, 2007, 9–10). Thirdly, the

experiential experience approach defines experiences as subjective, inner episodes, that are personally unique and that are associated with significant emotions (Ahola, 2007, 24–27; Carù & Cova, 2007, 11). This study is concerned with the latter approach, as I *examine experiences that are subjective, but not necessarily that extraordinary*. This aspect of studying casual, i.e. not so extraordinary experiences, is related also to the study of impulsive buying. Some criticism has been presented that earlier research on impulsive buying has regarded impulse buying as an out of the ordinary consumer buying behavior, and therefore, more research attention should be paid to more casual impulse buying experiences (Rook, 1999; Wood, 2005).

The process of experience reflection and interpretation

My research process has involved several stages of both reflection as well as interpretation of the consumer experiences. Although it has not been a totally chronologically linear process all the way, I have depicted the order of the main phases in the process on a timeline in Figure 7. This process exemplifies also some basic assumptions about consumer experiences taken in my research. Later, in the last chapter of this report, I will discuss the challenges that might occur during this process.

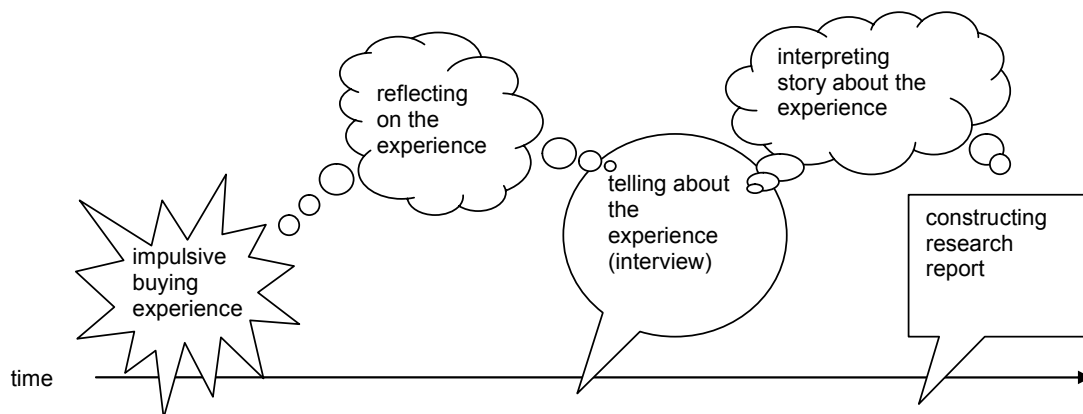


Figure 7. *Process of experience reflection and interpretation*

As can be seen from Figure 7, the end result of the reflection and interpretation process, i.e. this research report, is both chronologically as well as on an interpretative level quite far away from the actual impulsive buying experience of the consumer.

Chronologically, in the first instance the impulsive buying experience occurs. At that point, the consumer might not be reflecting on the details of the experience as such. However, later, when in the interview situation, the interviewee reflects on the experience he or she has previously encountered. Actually, in the interview situation the interviewee's reflection of a specific lived event can allow emergence of aspects of the shopping experience that have previously been unreflected, for example realizing patterns in the experience that the consumer has not seen prior to the interview (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989).

As a result of reflecting on the experience, the interviewee tells his or her description of the experience in the interview. These respondent descriptions form the empirical evidence in phenomenological research (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989). Telling narratives is considered to be an interpretative tool by which we look at the world around us, give it a purpose, and help to make sense of our experiences (Shkedi, 2005, 11).

In the next phase of the interpretation process, I as a researcher interpret the description of the experience produced by the interviewee. Every interpretation made must be supported by the evidence, i.e. the founded by the interviewees' descriptions of their experiences (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989).

Finally, the last stage of interpretation occurs when writing this research report. Writing is a process of "creating and re-creating coherent research narratives" (Shkedi, 2005, 159). Although chronologically this final stage follows the data analysis phase, it does not mean that analysis of the data would be over when writing stage begins. Quite the contrary, according to van Manen (1997, 124–129), writing is not just reporting the results of the study, but an essential stage in phenomenological reflection: writing, for instance, involves a textual reflection and fixes our thought on paper. It is "not until we had written this down did we quite know what we knew" (van Manen, 1997, 127). Also in my research process, writing of the research report allowed for a review of the data analysis that resulted in some modifications to the analysis.

3.3 Research process

In this section, before going into details of data generation and analysis, I will describe my journey into this research area, i.e. my research process as a whole.

My initial interest in both consumer research as well as in consumer online behavior can be traced back to my master's thesis, which was related to consumer perceived benefits of Internet banking. When starting my PhD studies, I decided that I want to continue to examine consumers. However, the selection process of the topic for my doctoral dissertation was more or less an adventure into the world of consumer research. I was open to all kinds of topics related to consumer research, and read journal articles quite widely in the area. At first, I became interested in and read consumer research articles especially with an interpretive approach.

Somehow I ended up reading more and more on the subject of impulse buying. I remember being first of all impressed and enchanted by Dennis W. Rook's seminal article "The Buying Impulse", published in the Journal of Consumer Research in 1987. I widened the journal article pool to be read on impulse buying from that article onwards. The reason I ended up choosing *online* impulsive buying as the topic of my doctoral dissertation can be traced back to both previous research on impulse buying as well as to my personal experiences on the area. While reading articles on impulse buying, I noticed that several articles discussed online impulse buying in their directions for future research, while, at the same time, research on the area of online impulsive buying was just starting. In addition, at that time I as a consumer became more and more involved in buying from the Internet. By that time, I considered myself quite an experienced consumer with online buying, having made several orders from webstores. I also had made some purchases online that I considered impulsive purchase decisions⁵. After I talked to some of my friends about this issue, I realized that this phenomenon of online impulsive buying is part of consumers' activities online. As a result of all of this, and after presenting my research proposal at both our PhD seminar and at the national

⁵ Van Manen (1997, 54–58) actually sees that personal experiences can be a good starting point for phenomenological researcher for directing oneself to the phenomenon. One's own experiences are also the possible experiences of others.

tutorial of marketing, I decided to strive forward with the research theme of online impulsive buying.

Shortly after deciding on the research area, I became interested in comparing impulsive buying in the online and offline shopping environments. For that purpose, in October 2003, I collected my first research data: 100 stories from university students attending a marketing course. Data collection was based a method known as empathy-based stories, which involved students to use their imagination and to write a story of an impulse buying episode in either online or offline shopping environment. This pre-pilot data collection stage is not reported in more detail in this report, as I later decided that it is crucial to include only those data sets that are based on actual consumer experiences. However, this data set gave me pre-understanding about student conceptions about both online and offline impulsive buying, and helped me to focus my research further. In addition, during the data analysis of this data set, I already began to draft the ‘main factors influencing impulse buying in online shopping environment’, which later became called the ‘elements’ of online impulsive buying. At this point, I divided the factors into four main classes: process, product, consumer, marketing stimuli, and situational factors. These initial thoughts about organizing the data must have influenced my thinking also during the data analysis stage of the actual research data, i.e. the interviews.

During April–September 2005, I generated pilot data by interviewing consumers by e-mail about their online and offline impulsive buying experiences (data generation is discussed in detail in the next section). At this point, I wanted to examine which factors encourage and/or discourage impulsive buying in the online shopping environment compared to the offline shopping environment. Also, I wanted to include mixed methods, i.e. also quantitative data about the research area. However, towards the end of year 2005 I had realized the problems with this research design. Firstly, I had become confident that I wanted to adhere to interpretive research, and consequently, due to the contextualist world view of phenomenology, it seemed no longer logical to aim to compare experiences that had taken place in different contexts. Therefore, I decided to focus my research on consumer experiences of online impulsive buying. This decision simplified my research setting further, and helped to focus my attention.

During years 2006 and 2007 the main focus was on data generation and data analysis. First, during March–June 2006 I conducted face-to-face personal interviews,

which were followed by data transcription in April–September 2006. Data analysis has been long and an ongoing process, but the main working phase took place in September 2007–May 2008.

As is evident from this summary, my research journey towards a PhD degree has most certainly not been linear, but has included many bypaths. Traditionally, research process and research logic are described as either deductive or inductive, or as their systematic combining, i.e. abductive logic (e.g. Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Qualitative research is primarily characterized by the inductive logic of inquiry (Patton, 2002, 454). As Patton (2002, 56) explains:

The strategy of inductive designs is to allow the important analysis dimensions to emerge from patterns found in the cases under study without presupposing in advance what the important dimensions will be. The qualitative analyst seeks to understand the multiple interrelationships among dimensions that emerge from the data without making prior hypotheses about the linear or correlative relationships among narrowly defined, operationalized variables.

In this study, the research process has been *inductive* in nature, as prior to generating the research data, no hypotheses or theoretical frameworks about the phenomenon were made. In addition, the different phases of my research process have been intertwined, reflecting the circularity of research process which is characteristic to qualitative research (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Thus, the research process has been suggestive of a *hermeneutic helix*, in which “we move from pre-understanding to understanding on a higher level; we move from parts to the whole and to parts again, but now with greater understanding” (Gummesson, 2005, 314–315). In my research process, this movement from phase to phase with a greater understanding has involved many areas of research, all the way from the focus of this research to creating understanding about what kind of research approach or methodology I should employ to the various stages of the data analysis.

3.4 Generating data

In this section, I will go into the details of how I have generated⁶ my research data. This is part of the ‘methods’ section of the research strategy outlined previously in Figure 6. As evident from the previous section, the data generation included two phases. At first, I will discuss the principles of sampling that relate to both of these phases. Then, I will outline the specifics of both data generation phases in their own sections.

According to the principles of qualitative research, sampling was done according to the logics of *purposeful sampling* (Patton, 2002, 230) or *purposive selection* (Polkinghorne, 2005). This strategy involves selecting cases that are information-rich about the issues related to the focus of the study. According to Polkinghorne (2005), as the unit of analysis in qualitative research is experience, individuals who have had the experience under study, and are willing to describe it to the researcher, are primarily sought. Also, usually multiple participants are interviewed to provide accounts of different perspectives about an experience, which serves as a form of triangulation on the experience. As a result, by comparing and contrasting these different experiences of the phenomenon, the researcher can examine the essential aspects of the experience as well as recognize variations in how the experience appears (Polkinghorne, 2005).

For the rationale of my research, purposeful sampling meant selecting those consumers who had personal experience with the phenomenon, i.e. those consumers who had experienced online impulsive buying. The data generation involved two steps. Firstly, I wanted to gain pre-understanding about the focus of the research by interviewing consumers by e-mail. Therefore, this data generated in the first phase is considered pilot data. The second phase, which forms the actual research data for my research, consists of personal face-to-face interviews with consumers. In both of the phases, it was of fundamental importance for me that the interviewees had faced a real-life impulsive purchasing situation in the online shopping environment, i.e. on the Internet.

⁶ According to Gummesson (2005, 312), data generation as a term is more preferable than data collection, because “data in a social environment do not consist of objects, which can be readily collected”, but which are “the construction of the researcher”. Also I agree that I have not only collected interview data from the participants, but generated the data together in interaction with the interviewees.

3.4.1 Personal e-mail interviews

In the first phase of data generation in April–September 2005, I interviewed altogether six consumers by e-mail. The purpose of this phase was to create an initial understanding about consumers' actual experiences on the phenomenon under study by letting them describe their experiences freely. Therefore, all the interviewees had experience with online impulsive buying. I recruited these respondents for the e-mail interviews from two popular Finnish online discussion forums. I registered on the forums, and sent a message first explaining the purpose of the research (a dissertation on impulsive buying) and then requesting consumers that have made an “impulse purchase” on the Internet during the past 12 months to report to me by e-mail.

A total of ten consumers reported that they would be willing to participate in the interview. In the first e-mail, I explained the purpose of the interview and the practicalities of participating. The interview process was started with all of the volunteered consumers, but the interview process was finished with only six of them, as at some point during the interview process some participants no longer replied to my e-mails with the interview questions. All six finished interviews were made with women, aged 22 to 29 years. In addition, one woman aged 25 living in the same city reported her willingness to participate in the research. I decided to interview her face-to-face, as her home was within a few kilometers from mine. Therefore, altogether seven full interviews were conducted in this phase, six of which by e-mail and one face-to-face. All interviewees finishing the interview were sent a small reward worth about 10 euros for participating in the research.

I used an interview guide to help present the questions to the respondents in about in about the same way and order. The questions encouraged the interviewee to describe actual impulse buying episodes in both online and offline settings. Besides questions listed in the interview guide, in almost every e-mail I also introduced follow-up questions about the previous answer, for example if the answers required clarification or more description from the respondents. In most e-mails during the interview, I first asked a follow-up question about the previous e-mail, and only after that raised a new question. In order to finish the interviews, several e-mails were sent between the researcher and the interviewee. I included a maximum of two open-ended questions in

each e-mail, thus aiming to encourage the respondents to write in length and in detail. However, despite that, some interviewees' responses were quite short.

At that point (during spring 2005), the focus of my research was in comparing consumer experiences of online and offline impulse buying, and especially in discouraging and encouraging factors in both environments. Therefore, also the interviews focused getting descriptions about consumers' both online and offline experiences. After these interviews, I understood the challenges of comparing these two shopping environments, and ended up focusing only on impulsive buying on the Internet. Therefore, and due to the weaknesses of the data (unfinished interviews and not getting as rich written descriptions of experiences as I had hoped), I decided to leave this data generation phase to a pilot role. Therefore, interview data from this phase is not reported here in detail, and I have not included any extracts from these interviews in the results sections of this report.

However, these e-mail interviews were useful in my research process in multiple ways. Firstly, as the purpose initially was, this material offered me some valuable material in examining online impulsive behavior, which increased my understanding on the area. Secondly, the pre-understanding I gained was useful in the next phase of the data generation. For example, it gave me insight about the possible themes and questions to be included in the interview guide in the second phase. Also, conducting the e-mail interviews convinced me of how to proceed in data generation. I became aware of that in order to generate rich data about these types of consumer experiences, I need to conduct interviews face-to-face. The one interview I had already made face-to-face also helped me to understand this further, as with her, I was able to interact more and generate richer data about her experiences. It seemed that at least for some people, talking about their online experiences in person was much more natural than writing about them in e-mails. This could be also related to asynchronicity of e-mail interviews, i.e. to the delay in interaction between interviewer and interviewee. As a result, spontaneity in answers could be lost in e-mail interviews, when the interviewees can see the questions in e-mail and reflect on their answers for a while before responding (Bampton & Cowton, 2002). I see this especially problematic when examining issues related to spontaneous human behavior, such as impulse buying. Face-to-face interviewing, on the other hand, requires that consumers respond to questions more spontaneously.

3.4.2 Personal face-to-face interviews

In the second phase, to gain insight about the phenomenon of impulsive buying online, I interviewed consumers with an experience of buying from the Internet on spur of the moment. The interviews were open-ended and personal, and were conducted face-to-face. A total of 17 Finnish consumers participated in the interviews in March–June 2006. I recruited the interviewees through an Internet panel maintained by a Finnish market research company called Taloustutkimus Oy. Their Internet panel is the longest running Internet panel in Finland, having at that time about 13 000 panelists throughout Finland. Taloustutkimus Oy recruits new members to the panel from participants in some other of their research channels, such as from consumer omnibus surveys (face-to-face, telephone, or postal). Thus, consumers cannot volunteer to enroll in the panel.

The role of the Internet panel was to find consumers that would have experiences of online impulsive buying and that would live in the same region so that they could be interviewed face-to-face. In practice, this meant that I wanted to utilize the large pool of Internet panel members to get contact with those panelists living in the Tampere region that had made an impulsive purchase on the Internet in the past 12 months, and who would be willing to meet me for a face-to-face interview. Impulsive purchase was operationalized as ‘spur of the moment decision’ (in Finnish ‘hetken mielijohteesta’). In order to find these consumers, a short survey containing three questions was sent to a sample of panelists living in the Tampere region. The process of presenting the three questions is depicted in Figure 8, whereas the full questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

In the first phase at the beginning of March 2006, the short questionnaire was sent to 187 panelists, of which 110 replied to the questionnaire. Thus, the sample represented a response rate of 59 per cent. From the first phase, a total of 15 panel members met the criteria of the research by having had an online impulsive buying experience during the past 12 months, and by willing to participate in a personal face-to-face interview. Of these, one interviewee refused to participate in the study after all, and during one interview it became apparent that the interviewee had not had any online impulsive experiences. As a result, this phase yielded a sample of 13 usable interviews.

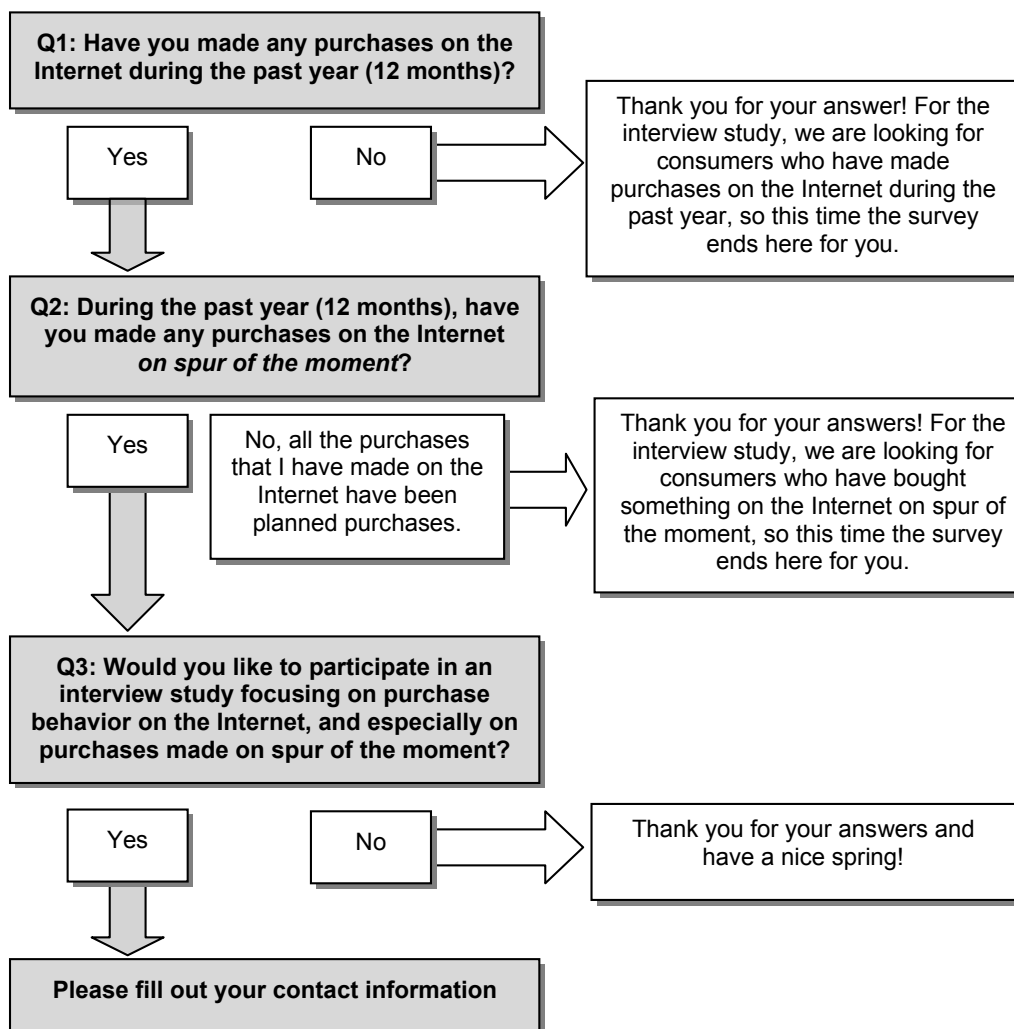


Figure 8. *The order of questionnaire questions for the Internet panel members*

Initially, my purpose was to recruit all interviewees from the same sample. However, as two interviewees were not available for my study, I decided to send another similar short survey to the panelists to recruit a few additional interviewees. As a result, the short questionnaire was sent again to 47 Internet panel members in May 2006. Of these, 22 replied to the questionnaire (a response rate of 47 %), and four met the criteria and were willing to participate in the personal interviews. All four consumers were interviewed. Further information about both samples can be found in Table 5.

Table 5. *Characteristics of Internet panel samples*

	Sample (March 2006)		Additional sample (May 2006)		Total	
Invitations sent out	187		47		234	
Replies received	110 (59 %)		22 (47 %)		132 (56 %)	
Questions:	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no
Q 1: Any Internet purchases made during the past 12 months? (n=110/22)	90 (82 %)	20 (18 %)	19 (86 %)	3 (14 %)	109 (83 %)	23 (17 %)
Q2: Any Internet purchases made on spur of the moment during the past 12 months? (n=90/19)	38 (42 %)	52 (58 %)	7 (37 %)	12 (63 %)	45 (41 %)	64 (59 %)
Q3: Would you like to participate in an interview study? (n=38/7)	15 (39 %)	23 (61 %)	4 (57 %)	3 (43 %)	19 (42 %)	26 (58 %)
Number of usable interviews	13		4		17	

As Table 5 indicates, the questionnaire was sent in the two phases to 234 consumers, of which over a half replied to the questionnaire. Over four fifths of consumers in the two samples had made an Internet purchase in the past 12 months. Over 40 per cent of these had also made a spur-of-the-moment purchase decision on the Internet. As a result, the two samples yielded altogether 17 usable personal, face-to-face interviews, of which 11 were conducted with women and six with men. Ages of the interviewees ranged from 25 to 44. In order to protect the privacy of the interviewees, I changed their names. New names, i.e. the pseudonyms for the participants, were selected from the statistics of the 50 most popular first names for babies born in Finland in 2006. Interviewees got a pseudonym that had the same initial letter (or next in alphabet that was listed) as their real name. Detailed information about interviewees is listed in Table 6.

Table 6. *Profiles of interviewees*

Pseudo-nym	Gender & age	Occupation	Length of Internet use	First Internet purchase since	Date	Interview location	Length
Emma	F42	physio-therapist	5 yrs	3–4 yrs	14.3.06	home	56 min.
Aino	F30	researcher	11 yrs	6–7 yrs	15.3.06	home	58 min.
Venla	F41	secretary	10 yrs	8 yrs	30.3.06	university	56 min.
Anni	F32	private entrepreneur	6–7 yrs	6–7 yrs	3.4.06	home	54 min.
Aleksi	M32	cnc machinist	12 yrs	7 yrs	4.4.06	work-place	59 min.
Julia	F44	telemarketer	1 yr	1 yr	6.4.06	university	44 min.
Tuomas	M28	storeman	5 yrs	2 yrs	12.4.06	home	49 min.
Lotta	F25	kindergarten teacher/ on maternity leave	8 yrs	2 yrs	18.4.06	home	43 min.
Santeri	M30	software tester	16 yrs	10 yrs	24.4.06	university	66 min.
Rasmus	M36	student	16 yrs	3–4 yrs	2.5.06	home	46 min.
Aada	F28	teacher	9 yrs	9 yrs	3.5.06	university	67 min.
Joona	M32	post handler	9 yrs	2 yrs	4.5.06	university	43 min.
Pinja	F44	service advisor	5 yrs	5 yrs	17.5.06	university	60 min.
Helmi	F29	housewife / graduate engineer	10 yrs	3–5 yrs	1.6.06	home	50 min.
Juho	M30	R&D manager	11 yrs	7 yrs	6.6.06	university	57 min.
Alisa	F42	production secretary / private entrepreneur	14 yrs	10 yrs	8.6.06	university	66 min.
Iida	F31	researcher	13 yrs	6 yrs	13.6.06	university	45 min.

All interviews were conducted either at home of the respondent, at my office at the University of Tampere, or, in one case, at the workplace of the respondent – whichever option suited interviewee the best. The interviews lasted from 43 minutes to one hour 7 minutes. All but one interview were tape-recorded on digital voice recorder. During the last interview, batteries of the voice recorder ran out. Therefore, I could not tape the whole interview with Iida, but I made notes during the interview and wrote up the description of the interview immediately afterwards. However, because of the lack of verbatim transcription, I could not use Iida’s interview citations as examples in this

report. Nevertheless, Iida's interview was used to increase my understanding of the research phenomenon.

The structure of the interview had influences from the principles of *episodic interviewing*⁷ which is based on narrative theoretical assumptions about the human experience. The episodic interview was developed in order to gain access to both episodic and semantic knowledge (Flick, 2000). According to Flick (2000, 77), in this type of interview, informants are invited both to recount concrete events which are relevant to the issue under study and to consider answers to more general questions of topical relevance, such as definitions. The interview should be open enough to allow the interviewee to select the episodes or situations to recount and also to decide which form of presentation to provide (a narrative or a description).

In my study, I wanted interviewees to tell narratives or descriptions especially about their experiences of concrete events of online impulsive buying. However, according to the principles of episodic interviewing, I wanted to examine those experiences in a larger context. Therefore, the interviews covered also more general issues, such as the interviewees' online buying behavior in general and their experiences of online buying, conceptions about spur-of-the-moment purchase decisions in general and their experiences of them, their shopping style in general, as well as their interests and hobbies.

My objective was to keep the interview as conversational as possible, to create a confidential atmosphere that would resemble more of an informal conversation between friends or acquaintances than an examination or questioning. I used an interview guide, mostly in order to check if I had covered all the areas that I wanted. For some informants that were less talkative, the interview guide helped to keep the conversation flowing. The interview guide is presented in Appendix B.

I transcribed the interviews verbatim in April–September 2006. The seventeen interviews produced altogether about 200 pages of transcribed text (typed single spaced with Times New Roman 12 pts).

⁷ Often in phenomenological consumer research, phenomenological interviews are used when generating the interview data. However, I decided to conduct the interviews more in line with episodic interviewing instead. The reasons behind this decision and its potential consequences are discussed further in the last chapter of this report.

3.5 Data analysis and interpretation

Data analysis and interpretation in qualitative analysis is often a highly intuitive process, in which different phases of the process do not necessarily follow each other logically and systematically, but in more like a cyclical process (see e.g. Gummesson, 2003; Lindseth & Norberg, 2004). This was the case also in my data analysis. However, I have identified four main phases in my data analysis and interpretation.

In the first phase, I printed out the transcribed interviews and read all the interviews twice in order to become acquainted with the data. In phenomenological hermeneutical terms, this can be called *naïve reading* (see Lindseth & Norberg, 2004), and its purpose is to grasp the meaning of the interview text as a whole. While reading through the interviews for the first two times, I underlined those phrases or sections of the interviews that seemed especially interesting to the phenomenon of online impulsive buying. In addition, I wrote some short remarks depicting the essence of that section on the margins.

In the second phase of the data analysis, I wrote case descriptions or summaries of each of the interviews. The summaries, each about 1.5 to 2 pages in length, included my interpretation of the interview and the interviewee, especially in regard to the interviewee's experiences of buying on the Internet, of impulsive buying, and of online impulsive buying. The purpose of writing these summaries was to understand the interview in its totality, taking into account the background information of the interviewee, and to summarize my initial thoughts about which themes seemed important for further analysis. An example of a case description is presented in Appendix C. As a result of these first two phases, I had interpreted each interview in its own context, thus creating a pre-understanding about the essential issues in each interviewee's online buying behavior and impulsive buying experiences.

In the third phase of the data analysis, I started to examine the elements related to the online impulsive buying experiences through coding, categorizing, and thematizing the data. Therefore, I moved away from the holistic interpretation mode that I had been in the previous phases to a more analytical mode. However, also in this phase I tried to take into account the context of the interview when categorizing the data. I used NVivo software to help me to organize and manage coding of the data. First, I used a coding technique called initial coding (see Charmaz, 2006, 47–57). In this type of coding,

coding is made quickly and spontaneously. It should remain open to categories of the data, stay close to the data, i.e. fit the data, and keep the codes simple and precise. This open coding produced over 450 coding categories. It was obvious that this included categories that were overlapping or even were of the same contents but named somewhat differently. In addition, I noticed that some of the categories I had coded were not necessarily related to online impulsive buying, but more to online buying or to impulsive buying in general. Therefore, after a few rounds of reviewing, combining and deleting, I ended up in less than 20 categories. After all this analysis of individual categories, at this point I felt that I had become somewhat disconnected from the actual interview data. Therefore, at this point I read through the interviews once more also in order to check the relevancy of my categorization of the data. When I wrote the results sections of this research report, these categories were further reviewed. Also at the writing stage I ended up combining some of the categories and even abandoning some that were not after all related to online impulsive buying as such. As a result of this phase, I ended up in categories that form the themes of the analytical framework that constitute the first results chapter of this report.

During the analysis of both pilot and actual research data I realized that the themes of online impulsive buying experiences could be conceptualized by four larger entities, referred to as elements, i.e. shopping environment, webstore, product, and consumer. These became the main elements in my analytical framework. When conceptualizing themes into these four main elements, in addition to NVivo, I utilized a free mind-mapping software called FreeMind. With FreeMind, I could draw and see mind maps of different possibilities for conceptualizing the themes into the main elements. Although the program itself did not perform any part of the analysis, by presenting and visualizing the sub themes and elements as mind maps helped me to organize my thoughts around the themes that until then seemed to lack any common denominators. In addition, drawing mind maps of the elements and themes helped me to see some connections between different themes and elements.

The fourth and the final phase of the data analysis and interpretation involved forming the typology of online impulsive buying. I became interested in constructing a typology during the earlier phases of the data analysis. As I read through the interview texts several times during the initial phases of the data analysis, I noticed that although each impulsive buying experience told by the interviewee was unique on some level,

some experiences shared similarities either with some other consumer's experience in another interview or with some other experience encountered by the same interviewee. Constructing the typology involved *constant comparison* (see Glaser & Strauss, 1967, 101–116) between different online impulsive buying experiences. In practice, constant comparison meant that online impulsive buying experiences documented in the transcribed interviews were compared to each other, aiming to search for similarities and differences between them (see Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 159). The comparison was made at the level of an individual experience. As most interviewees told about more than one experience of online impulsive buying, I made comparisons not only between experiences between different people, but also between different experiences by the same consumer. Especially when comparing experiences between different interviewees I took into account the whole interview text of that particular interviewee, thus interpreting the experience in a larger context.

When forming the typology, I asked the data: What is essential in this experience and in how it occurs? How is this experience different from or similar to some other experience? In practice, I utilized MS Excel to help me with the analysis. I collected notes about each online impulsive buying experience into an Excel sheet. Based on these notes, as well as on the case summaries I had written earlier in the data analysis process, I formed the typology. Finally, I read the interviews once more to see whether I had taken everything into account in the typology. As with the elements, writing out the typology in this research report required me to make another interpretation of it, and as a result, I ended up making some minor adjustments to the typology.

In summary, the data analysis was *inductive* in nature. I did not want to impose a priori categories on the data, but let the categories and the typology to 'emerge'⁸ from the data. Secondly, the analysis and interpretation was employed on two levels: analysis focusing on an individual interviewee and analysis between interviewees. As Thompson (1989, 141) suggests, in the second phase of the data analysis as I wrote case descriptions of each interview, I viewed each interview as a whole, relating separate passages to its overall content. As a result, I produced an idiographic understanding of each interview. However, later in the interpretation, I related separate interviews to each

⁸ However, it must be taken into account that in qualitative research, data analysis and interpretation are the results of researcher's choices – categories do not emerge from the data by themselves, but only those categories that the researcher chooses to emerge from the data.

other to identify common patterns. Both of these levels of analysis are characteristic to existential-phenomenological research, where this process is referred to as part-to-whole mode of interpretation or *hermeneutic circle* (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989; Thompson, 1997).

In the next two chapters, I will discuss the results of the data analysis and interpretation, thus providing answers to the two research questions of this study. First, the results of the thematic analysis are presented and discussed. I call these the elements of online impulsive buying. This gives an answer to the first research question. After that, in the second results chapter, the typology of online impulsive buying is discussed, thus giving answer to the second research question.

4. ELEMENTS OF ONLINE IMPULSIVE BUYING

The focus of this chapter is on presenting the results of the thematic analysis, i.e. answering the first research question of this study. The elements of online impulsive buying refer to themes that were present in the descriptions of consumers' online impulsive buying experiences. In the interviews, online impulsive buying was discussed in relation to both actual experiences and more on a general level, for example how suitable the interviewee saw the online shopping environment for impulsive buying. Also discussion about their online buying experiences as well as impulsive buying experiences in general gave me further insight into how they conceptualized online impulsive buying.

This chapter is organized as follows. First, I will introduce the four main elements of the analytic framework. Next, each of the main elements is discussed by presenting the themes related to it. The chapter concludes with a summary, which presents the analytical framework with both main elements as well as their themes.

4.1 Main elements of the analytical framework

In the process of data analysis when categorizing data into themes, I identified patterns in the categorization, i.e. that the themes have some common denominators, and realized that the vast amount of themes could be better conceptualized as larger entities. While revising the themes, I ended up categorizing them under four main elements. However, it should be noted that this categorization into the main elements was not made *a priori* to the data analysis, but emerged as the data analysis proceeded. Therefore, the analytic framework containing the main elements can be also regarded as part of the results of the data analysis.

In the analytical framework, online impulsive buying experiences are divided into four main elements: *shopping environment*, *webstore*, *product*, and *consumer*. The four main elements are depicted in Figure 9.



Figure 9. *Analytical framework – main elements*

The main elements presented in the analytical framework are interrelated. Firstly, as the figure depicts, shopping environment, webstore, and product are closely related to each other. Shopping environment is the widest element of those three, encompassing the elements of webstore and product. This implies that shopping environment, i.e. the Internet, consists of both individual webstores as well as all the products sold in those webstores. In the analytical framework, the element of ‘shopping environment’ refers to those themes of online impulsive buying that are related to general characteristics of buying on the Internet, but are not directly related to individual webstores or to products sold in those webstores. Webstore, on the other hand, refers to those themes that the consumer can experience when visiting a webstore. Therefore, the themes under the element of webstore are also more under the control of an individual e-tailer. Then again, a webstore consists of several products for sale. The element of ‘product’ relates

to those themes of the impulsive purchase that are characteristic to the product bought on an impulse. Finally, the element of ‘consumer’ concerns those themes of online impulsive buying that are characteristic to the buyer. Although the elements of webstore and product operate inside a virtual shopping environment on the Internet, the consumer, however, visits the shopping environment from the physical world. Therefore, all the elements of the online shopping environment including webstores and products, are reduced to a consumer’s computer screen through which the consumer experiences the shopping environment. Therefore, in Figure 9, consumer is illustrated as separate from shopping environment, webstore, and the product.

Next, each element is discussed separately. First, I will discuss the themes related to the shopping environment, followed by the themes related to the webstore and the product bought on an impulse. Therefore, the first three elements are presented, as Figure 9 depicts, from the most extensive to the most specific. Lastly, I will present the themes concerning the consumer. At the end of discussing each theme, I will relate each of them to previous research.

Each main element consists of several themes that are the result of the thematic data analysis, i.e. the themes identified during data analysis. The placing of themes within the main elements is not mutually exclusive, i.e. some theme could be considered to be part of some other element as well. However, for the sake of clarity, each theme is presented only once, and belonging to that category that it best suits in.

4.2 Shopping environment

The element of shopping environment refers to those themes that are related to the general characteristics of the Internet. These characteristics were conceptualized especially in comparison with the characteristics of traditional brick-and-mortar shopping environment. The role of this element was quite evident in the interviews, as for many consumers it was natural to reflect and compare their online impulsive buying experiences to those experiences of impulsive buying in the offline shopping environment. Therefore, also some interview extracts presented as part of this element are related more to what brick-and-mortar environment cannot offer or offers compared to the Internet. Also, the interview guide contained some general questions about the

shopping environment, which could have further increased the role of this element in the interviews.

The element of shopping environment is presented through three themes – convenience, delayed gratification, and product variety. Each of these themes is discussed next in more detail.

4.2.1 Convenience

Convenience of buying in the electronic shopping environment was strongly present in many of the interviews. Shopping online was in general perceived as convenient, but convenience was also strongly related to online impulsive buying. Online impulse buying was considered convenient, as it requires little physical effort from the consumer:

It's more like what gets done by accident with one hand [laughter] that it's too easy, making impulse purchases there [on the Internet]

Aino, 30

You somehow make more impulse purchases [...] that is, you don't need to go to the stores to look, but you can just sit in one place and move your hand to look to see what you want

Tuomas, 28

As these citations describe, impulsive purchases can be considered to be too easy to make online – they can even be done almost ‘by accident’ as Aino’s somewhat humorous utterance above suggests. Almost all of the interviewees used Internet at home. As a result, consumers can make impulsive purchases online when the urge to buy comes – in their own home, without a need to leave anywhere. The only physical effort required to make a purchase is to sit and move the hand operating the mouse.

As the above extract from the interview with Tuomas suggests, due to this convenience of buying, many consumers considered the Internet in general to be either increasing the total amount of their impulsive purchases or that their impulsive buying behavior has more or less transferred from the traditional brick-and-mortar stores to the Internet. This comes apparent particularly when interviewees describe how the Internet has changed their daily lives and shopping habits:

N⁹: Now if we think, now that you're saying that nowadays the net is so important. What about before it, can you remember the time before the net [V laughs], so how was it then, has it been like something new or was there something else in its place

V: No there wasn't, it was like to go to the store and look if you can find anything, so maybe I did less impulse buying then when you had to really go out shopping...

Venla, 41

Well I haven't been doing a great deal of that sort of shopping around so that it's been more with the web, or that I look at the stuff on the web and then I go to the regular stores when I really have to buy something

Lotta, 25

The previous extracts illustrate that as the importance of online shopping environment is growing, the role of visiting the traditional brick-and-mortar stores has changed. As the traditional store requires the physical effort of leaving the house, travelling to the store etc., consumers described visiting them usually only when there exists a specific need for a product. Instead, shopping and making impulsive purchases can occur now more easily online, as consumers can browse offerings of the webstores whenever they want without leaving their homes. As Lotta explains, as her shopping on the Internet has increased, shopping in the traditional shopping environment has lost some of its appeal for her.

As the previous citations also show, many consumers depicted the traditional stores as something they 'must do' their shopping at. However, the Internet offers a contrast to this. Similar views were expressed by Aada and Lotta:

Well it's a bit of a bother to go to the store, and sitting at the computer, or maybe you don't think about it so much [on the net], in the store you look and you try and you wonder if it's really a good thing

Aada, 28

Maybe even easier than [at a regular store], or you make maybe smaller impulse buys at a regular store, that with the net you buy bigger things when you can get them ordered fast [laughter], so you don't have a lot of time to think that... now in the store you can browse, and then you have to walk - - [on the Internet] you click before you really have time to think, and it's ordered and on its way, but of course it takes longer to get it

Lotta, 25

⁹ In all interview citations, 'N:' refers to my (Nina's) comments or questions. These are also presented in italics in order to differentiate them from interviewees' speech.

As the extracts show, shopping in the traditional stores is considered to be more reflective, as it, first of all, requires more physical effort. For example, the consumer must walk with the impulse purchase through the store to the checkout, and consequently has all that time to reflect whether or not the purchase is worth buying. Secondly, as Aada describes, the physical presence of the products in traditional stores encourages her to deliberate whether or not the product should be bought. However, on the Internet, purchase decisions are not necessarily as well thought out. The products can be quickly and easily ordered online without physical and psychological effort or deliberation. The purchase is only a few mouse clicks away, although receiving the actual product can take several days or even weeks. In addition, as the extract from Lotta's interview illustrates, online impulsive purchases can be more expensive than impulsive purchases made in traditional retail settings.

Sometimes the easiness of online ordering can encourage consumers to make purchases that can be later regretted:

I should have read a bit more before I was so keen to order, to give it more thought... and that's just what it is the easiness of ordering on the net, that I can't be bothered to think any more, I just click

Aada, 28

The extract from Aada's interview demonstrates that sometimes the final purchase decision can be made too easily and eagerly online. Instead of finding more information about the purchase either on the Internet or from some other source of information, pushing the order button can offer a quick relief from the task. However, as Aada describes, these types of hastily made decisions are not always perceived as good decisions by the consumer.

To summarize, consumers see that convenience of Internet shopping can encourage them in impulsive buying online. Some interviewees even evaluated that this easiness of buying online have increased their total amount of impulsive purchases, i.e. they now make such impulsive purchases that they would not make without the convenience of online shopping. Convenience is conceptualized especially by comparing it to the effort required to visit brick-and-mortar stores. Now, impulsive purchases are easier to make, as there is no need to leave home, but purchases can be made as the urge comes, only by a few mouse clicks. Sometimes some of these purchases can be later regretted as they

are made too easily and hastily. On the other hand, some consumers see that in the offline shopping environment, they are required to think more over their purchase, for example while they walk with their purchase to the checkout. For many, brick-and-mortar stores have, therefore, become venues which are visited when a need for some purchase arises.

Already in the 1960's Hawkins Stern (1962) suggested that impulsive buying is encouraged by ease of buying. At that time, however, convenience was strongly related to the discussion about self-service compared to behind-the-counter shopping. Convenience and online impulsive buying has been addressed in some previous research, also. However, the views about the role of convenience have been somewhat contradictory. Firstly, as opposed to shopping in the offline environment which is constrained by time (opening hours) and geographical location, consumers are able to make purchases at any time on the Internet. As a result, the consumer can buy when the shopping urge comes. Previously, this has been seen as increasing opportunities for impulsive purchases (Burton, 2002; Dittmar, Long, & Bond, 2007; Koufaris, 2002). Secondly, convenience has been related to the relative costs of visiting a store. In the physical shopping environment, visiting a store requires the costs of getting to the store, including costs for using a car or other type of transport, costs of parking etc. However, it is usually costless or nearly costless for the consumer to visit an online store site. Therefore, it may be more likely that consumers visit an online store without any intention of buying (Moe & Fader, 2004). However, convenience has previously been regarded also as an element discouraging impulsive buying. The cost of visiting an online store is low, and therefore also returning to the store is easy. This can encourage consumers to delay their purchase decisions or to make multiple visits to the same store for a single purchasing decision (Moe & Fader, 2004). In other words, it is easy for consumers to come back to the webstore and to complete the transaction after they have had time to think about it (Wolfenbarger & Gilly, 2001).

4.2.2 Delayed gratification

The theme of delayed gratification was present in many online impulsive buying experiences. Most of the online impulsive purchase experiences consumers described in the interviews involved physical products that require delivery later offline. Therefore,

the consumer receives the impulsively bought product on a delay, only a few days or weeks after making the purchase online. Interviewees saw both negative and positive sides to this.

Negative sides of delayed gratification were associated mostly with the general features of the Internet as a shopping environment:

The only bad thing about it is that you have to wait days for them [impulse purchases made on the Internet], so that you can't enjoy what you've bought right away

Joona, 32

N: ...what do you think, how well does the net suit those, those types of things you buy [impulse buys]

R: Now I don't know, it's... I think it's not so good for when you still have to wait for it to come in the mail

Rasmus, 36

Something that I would normally buy at the store, for example candy, I would never buy on the net... If I buy candy, it's the impulse of the moment and I don't think about it for days beforehand that it would be nice to have some candy the day after tomorrow

Juho, 30

All previous interview extracts illustrate that some consumers perceive the waiting for the delivery of physical products as a feature of online environment that can discourage them to make impulsive purchases online. If a product is bought on an impulse online, the consumer must wait for the product to arrive. In other words, consumers would be eager to enjoy their purchases right after making the purchase rather than wait for it to arrive. In addition, as Juho's citation shows, ordering certain types of products, such as candy, on an impulse is impossible online, as desire for them would need to be anticipated in advance. Therefore, for Juho, it is important that he has the products available at the moment he desires them.

Another negative point in delayed gratification involves the length of the delivery period. Some consumers had experiences of the delivery process taking longer than usual:

I think that there has been something I've bought that it has taken a very long time and then at last it came and I didn't even want it anymore because it had taken so long

Venla, 41

In the extract above, Venla describes how a too long delivery of an impulsive purchase can lead to non-gratification. Because the delivery process had taken a long time, she no longer wanted the product when it arrived.

Third negative aspect of delayed gratification is related to instant gratification experienced when consumers buy offline. This became apparent when some consumers conceptualized the theme of delayed gratification by reflecting their online experiences to those of buying impulsively offline. This negative aspect of delayed gratification of online impulsive purchases is illustrated in the following extract, in which Anni describes why she considers impulsive buying to be more difficult for her online than offline:

In that way it's maybe more difficult to make impulse buys on the web than in a store because in the store you're in a way concretely holding the product and in a way it's more difficult to let it go if you think, here, I've just gotta have this, I absolutely need it... in that way in the store that here it is, that if I put it back somebody might take it, but in the web you never know if they've still got that product or not, that you only see a picture of it

Anni, 32

The extract shows that for physical products, holding the product in hand in a brick-and-mortar shop can create a much stronger impulse to buy than seeing only a picture of the product online. The issue in Anni's case is whether or not she is willing to give up the product after holding it in her hands in the store. For her, holding the product in hand offers instant gratification that could further become materialized by buying the item. Therefore, for Anni, in the traditional store, there is a higher threshold for abandoning the purchase, as the product must be concretely left behind – perhaps to be purchased by some other consumer.

The previous discussion about the theme of delayed gratification has concerned only the purchase of physical products that require delivery after the purchase has been made online. However, also digitally deliverable products can be purchased online on an impulse, as Juho explains:

J: ...yes usually when I buy over the net I buy it in loadable form

N: *so what, that you'd rather...*

J: because I can get to listen to it straight away, that I can't wait for it for 2 days or weeks, which is what I'd have to do, I might not necessarily even like the song any

more, that I have to have it straight away... that's by far the strongest point about the web, that you can get it right away

Juho, 30

According to Juho, digital products are the most suitable to be purchased on an impulse on the Internet. Those products that he wants to buy should be immediately available to him. Otherwise, due to delivery time, he might not want the product at all when it arrives.

However, interviewees saw also positive sides to the theme of delayed gratification. Firstly, this theme was illustrated positively in the interviews when the consumers were asked to describe their feelings both when making the impulse purchase and when receiving the product. For many, the moment of making the order online is exciting in itself, but also a starting point for something to wait for:

Well, by when you, by the time that you bought the thing, there it is right away, that I found it and that it's great and how long will it take before it comes, that's maybe the best thing, that in a way the feeling that well, something is on its way, something is expected, that positive, excitement that what is it going to be like

Emma, 42

As the above extract from Emma's interview shows, when making impulsive purchases for physical products on the Internet, it does not necessarily matter that the product is delivered later. At the moment of the purchase, there exists both excitement about making the purchase as well as anticipation about receiving the product. Emma considers that she has something to wait for, that she has something nice on the way. These feelings of anticipation can sometimes strengthen when consumer finds out about the progress of the delivery of the order:

I'm not an impatient person, so I wait, that's great [...] when they [the webstore] tell you [...] your product has now been [sent], now we've got it, we have been waiting for it to come in, a summer bikini for me and nice shoes for my daughter, well part of it already arrived but we didn't get all of it then, that now they came, there it came, it just came today the message that it's coming... and I thought, great... that I'm waiting for them like a little girl, for me to get a bikini, oh yeah [laughter]

Pinja, 44

In the extract, Pinja describes her feelings of waiting for an order containing purchases for herself and her daughter. Part of the order was already delivered earlier, and now she

was pleased to receive an SMS message from the webstore informing that the rest of the order has now been sent. Especially, she is enthusiastic to finally receive the bikinis she had ordered for herself for the summer. Therefore, delayed gratification has now turned into excitement for her as she knows that she should receive the products shortly.

Secondly, another positive point about the theme of delayed gratification is illustrated by the thoughts provoked as the consumer receives the product bought on an impulse on the Internet. One positive aspect of receiving the product on a delay is that the attitude towards making the purchase can change:

Let's say that when you buy something on the net on an impulse, well it's really easier than if you go to the store to get it, because it takes a few days for you to get it, you can digest the idea, and it's somehow easier to digest it when you go to fetch it from the post office, by then you're well like OK, great, when you come home from the store with the thing you've bought on an impulse, it's much easier to get a moral hangover, that... that's something really welcome, when it arrives home, you've had time to wrestle with it [laughter]...that's why you don't return them that easily

Alisa, 42

Alisa's interview extract shows that waiting for the product to arrive can be a good thing. Alisa compares her feelings to those of buying impulsively from a brick-and-mortar store where you can more easily develop regret for purchasing the product on an impulse. However, when she buys on an impulse online, although at first there might be some feelings of regret, she can 'digest' her purchase decision during the waiting period, thus creating anticipation towards using the product. When the order finally arrives, the impulsively bought products are already welcome. In addition, according to Alisa, this waiting period can also be partly contributing to why she does not necessarily return her online impulsive purchases that easily.

Secondly, some interviewees reported that sometimes when receiving the order, they had forgotten some of the products ordered:

Sometimes you might lose your sense of the situation just for a minute, so that you order more than you intended, that can happen, when you go to fetch that package, you think as you go. What the hell did I go and order from there, that you recall certain products but then you looked at something else, well that's so cheap that I could have it and then you might forget something like that that it is, then when you open the package, oh yes, there are these [laughter]

Anni, 32

As the extract demonstrates, consumers can be in doubt about what exactly the order contains, especially concerning those larger orders that contain impulsive purchases. However, forgetting about some of the products in the order is not necessarily perceived as negative, as many interviewees reported feelings of excitement when opening these types of parcels. Some consumers described their feelings as almost the same as during Christmas time when opening packages of which contents are mysterious.

To summarize, the theme of delayed gratification can evoke both positive and negative reactions in consumers. Some consumers considered that the necessary delivery time of physical products can discourage their impulsive buying online. However, these interview extracts have illustrated also that although the delivery of physical products takes time, making an online impulsive purchase can offer instant gratification for the consumer at the moment when the purchase is made online. Also the waiting process can be perceived as positive. Therefore, instead of 'delayed gratification', these feelings experienced by consumers could be regarded more as 'extended gratification' or 'double gratification', as gratification does not occur only at the moment of receiving the product or making the order, but can occur at both occasions or can be extended throughout the waiting period before the order arrives.

Also previous research has discussed how delayed versus instant gratification relates to impulsive purchasing. In general, impulsive behavior has been related to temporal proximity – the more immediately available the reward, the more desire consumers have for it (see Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991). In these studies, it has been assumed that the reward, i.e. gratification, is related to possession of product. However, as discussed, on the Internet, there exists a necessary waiting period for physical products between the purchase and the product delivery. Therefore, it has been previously suggested that this time lapse between buying and receiving the product, i.e. delayed gratification, may discourage impulse buying in shopping channels such as the Internet (Bayley & Nancarrow, 1998; Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991; Wolfenbarger & Gilly, 2001). However, my research data gives a much more versatile picture of the phenomenon of getting gratification from impulse purchases online. Although some consumers perceive delayed gratification as negative, many consumers find it just as an inevitable part of online buying or even see positive sides to it. Therefore, the reward is not only the possession of the product, but consumers can experience also for instance the anticipation of receiving the product as rewarding.

4.2.3 Product variety

The Internet can offer a much more varied product assortment than any brick-and-mortar store in some specific geographic area¹⁰. For consumers, this means that a global assortment of products is available through the Internet, and the products can be ordered at home, only by clicking the mouse. This increased product variety available on the Internet was regarded by many interviewees as encouraging the possibilities for impulsive online purchasing:

N: How, if we think of the web as a channel for buying things or as a place for buying, how well does the web in your opinion suit those momentary impulses to buy, or how badly

S: Yes it suits them

N: What things make it like that?

S: Selection, the absolutely incomparable selection that is available right there... there is no end of places all ready at hand, that if you go round the stores it takes time and there is a limited number of stores in one town, and there's a limited number of goods in them, of course the store has to think so that it gets those meters of shelves to show a profit, so they can't afford to hold stocks... it's the incomparable selection that does it...

Santeri, 30

The extract above describes Santeri's perception of the Internet as a shopping environment that offers product variety beyond that of brick-and-mortar stores. This is a natural feature of the Internet, as a global variety of webstores and their product varieties are as close as or even closer to consumer than the local stores – on the consumers' computer screen. As Santeri points out, seeing the product selections of traditional stores requires a lot of time, whereas on the Internet the whole selection is readily available. In addition, the shelf space of traditional retailing has its limits to how large and varied product assortment a store can stock.

Another aspect related to this theme is how product variety appears to the consumer:

¹⁰ *This theme could have been included under the element of webstore as well. Although some of the interviewee extracts belonging to this theme concern individual webstores, in my opinion this theme is primarily concerned with the possibilities that the Internet as a shopping environment can offer. Each e-tailer can control the product variety in their own webstore, but the Internet in general, can offer a more varied selection of products than any individual webstore.*

The selections on the web, that's like behind the links, that coats, click, shirts, click, click, no need to walk from one end to the other, and in principle the whole selection is there on that one site [...], in the stores you have to go round and round and...

Tuomas, 28

N: Now how well do you think the web as a place for buying suits purchases made on an impulse

H: Fine, because everything is there on display, just a click and then it's a different structure from a regular store, everything is on display and on show, to be seen at once...

Helmi, 29

As these excerpts show, on the Internet, the product variety of the webstore is almost instantly shown to the consumer, and it can be conveniently seen by a few mouse clicks. Both Tuomas and Helmi contrast this characteristic to that of traditional retail settings, where the consumer would not so easily and quickly grasp what is available for sale in the store. This feature also emphasizes the role of convenience. It would take time and effort for the consumer to see such a varied product assortment in traditional retail settings, whereas on the Internet, the global product variety is available immediately when the consumer wants to take a look at it.

The theme of product variety applies also to individual webstores. This appeared as the interviewees were asked what kind of a webstore would encourage them to purchase more on an impulse. They considered a varied product assortment of a webstore to encourage them to browse the webstore, which could eventually lead to impulsive purchases:

Giving the image that the selection is wide, that you can find absolutely anything you want here [laughter], and I think that a store like that could be a bit dangerous

Aino, 30

V: But then it's also that I like going there, on the web it's very easy to see what there is abroad, and then you see a bit more than what there's here, that's new with the Internet, the net that... It doesn't matter where it is, even in California, you can go and get a look

N: there it's just as far as if

V: that's what's great about the web but what ought to be there for it to be a dream place... well maybe a bit like a department store so that you can get to many products from the same site, not just clothes or...

Venla, 41

Both extracts above demonstrate that consumers consider a varied product assortment to increase their propensity to make impulsive purchases in an individual webstore. As Aino describes, the most important aspect is to create at least the impression that almost anything the consumer would want is available on the website. This most probably would encourage consumers to further browse the offerings of the webstore. Also the extract from Venla's interview shows that she sees that those webstores that are not restricted to any particular product category are the ones that would most probably encourage her to buy more on an impulse. Online auctions sites are a concrete example of a product assortment that seems endless:

Surely the easiest site for impulse buying is some Huuto.net [a Finnish online auction site] type thing with all sorts of stuff, that in a proper webstore there's products in a certain category, home appliances or something quite different

[...]

Now I often search [from Huuto.net] for something specific and then I get caught up looking at something else... and it's often that through all sorts of places I end up on some site, for example on Huuto.net, when there are so many categories that I often come to look at all sorts of things and then you see, with the same seller, that there are also other products to bid for so it might be something quite different and it might arouse my interest

Aleksi, 32

Aleksi talks above about a Finnish web auction service called Huuto.net. He sees that a webstore resembling an online auction site would encourage him to make more impulsive purchases. This is a webstore where product categories would not be restricted to any specific, and as there could be almost anything for sale, it would leave room for a surprise. When visiting an online auction site, Aleksi can never know what he can find – also products that he had not considered buying.

The large product variety available on the Internet serves also the purposes of niche markets and specialty products. Some interviewees talked about buying impulsively online especially those types of products that are somehow special or niche:

For us, for example, as we go in for fantasy and sci-fi, well there's not that much in the stores, so it's really quite true that you don't find them there... And that's a good thing about ordering on the web, in that way there's a bigger selection, so that if you went to a store to buy a DVD, well it's really rare that there's no Finnish subtitles when there are these sci-fi series which were not made with Finnish subtitles, well the stores can't be

bothered to stock them of course because they only appeal to such a small number of people, it's a risky product for them

Aino, 30

The boys are really allergic, that is we really must, we have to watch what we give them to eat, that maybe these, because then you could read in the web there in peace what the product contains, all that sort of thing, well that's where there might be a great deal of impulse buying because it's so limited what products you can get for boys like that

Anni, 32

Both of the preceding interview citations relate to niche or specialty products. For Aino, the niche products are related to her and her husband's interests, i.e. fantasy and sci-fi DVDs that have not been subtitled in Finnish and, therefore, are not widely available in brick-and-mortar stores. For Anni, on the other hand, the specialty products are related to her sons' allergies. Also those types of products are not readily available offline. Anni considers that it is most of all the possibility to examine product features on the Internet at leisure that can encourage her to buy these specialty products impulsively online.

To summarize, consumers consider the almost boundless product variety available on the Internet as encouraging them to make impulsive purchases online. This appears both on the level of Internet in general and on the level of individual webstores. In general, the online shopping environment creates an impression for consumers that only the sky's the limit to what can be found in the global product variety. And all this is available conveniently, as it can be easily seen with just a few mouse clicks. Also on the webstore level, it seems that consumers consider those webstores that are not restricted to any specific product category to have more possibilities for impulsive buying. Stores specializing in specialty or niche products, however, are an exception to this, as those webstores can have a more restricted product variety. However, the appeal of these specialty stores on the Internet is based more on the relative availability of the products compared to that of brick-and-mortar stores.

The role of product variety of webstores has been acknowledged also in previous research on consumer online behavior, for example suggesting that product selection is one of the reasons why consumers shop online (Wolfenbarger & Gilly, 2001) and that perceived larger product variety of a webstore can increase loyalty (Koo, 2006). However, my research data suggests that not only the product variety offered by an

individual webstore, but the perceived product variety available on the Internet is experienced by consumers as positively impacting their online impulsive buying.

4.3 Webstore

The element of webstore refers to those themes of online impulsive buying that are related more to the characteristics of an individual webstore than either to the general characteristics of the Internet as a shopping environment or to individual products bought on an impulse. The interviewees conceptualized the themes of this element mostly by referring to their own experiences of different types of webstores.

The element of webstore consists of three themes – product presentation, return policies, and trustworthiness. These will be discussed next.

4.3.1 Product presentation

The theme of product presentation refers to how the products available in a webstore are portrayed on the website. Many interviewees considered this theme to be important in impulsive purchases, especially because they base their evaluation and possible impulsive purchase decision of especially physical products on the information provided for them on the website. As physical products cannot be directly experienced on the Internet, product presentation conveys the features of the product to the consumer.

This theme was demonstrated in the interviews in many ways. Firstly, webstores should provide *adequate product information* about the products they have on their site:

R: ...often in the web you have to say no to something so that you don't buy things when there's not enough information on a thing, when you don't know of a film the aspect ratio and subtitles and which region code it is and what sort of a version it is and then just, well no and let's have a look at something else

N: that you might otherwise have bought it if had been...

R: Many times I just haven't bought something because I didn't know exactly what that product was like... although it was returnable, well that's still difficult

Rasmus, 36

As the interview extract shows, inadequate product information can cause consumers even to discard product purchases that would have been otherwise made. For Rasmus, providing information about the basic technical features of DVD films is a prerequisite for purchasing them. Therefore, from the e-tailer's point of view, it is crucial to provide at least the information that the consumer needs in order to use the product. Otherwise, there might occur situations in which the consumer already has a desire to buy the product, but inadequate information turns the situation against the specific webstore. In these instances, the consumer might end up buying the product from another webstore that provides the information the consumer needs.

Secondly, giving not only adequate but *extensive and diverse product information* in the product presentations can encourage impulsive purchases, as Venla describes below:

N: what then if we think about those books for example, what kind of website could be such that people wouldn't make these impulse buys

V: It's really good to compare, for example that New Books Book Club web site, there's very little information there on the book itself while with Amazon you can [read] things written by other readers or product reviews or... and then you can see other books by the same author right away, the most popular books, how many copies have been sold, all that makes a difference and you can see right away that they have this in stock, delivery time 2–3 days or wait for a month there's a new edition coming or ... so maybe it's that

Venla, 41

Venla often buys books on an impulse on the Internet. In her interview excerpt, she compares two webstores that she visits regularly. The first one is a webstore of a book club, whereas the other is a generally known global webstore. The book club's webstore does not, according to Venla, encourage her to make impulsive purchases as the product presentations on the site do not offer that much information about the book. However, earlier in the interview Venla has told about her experiences of buying books impulsively on Amazon.com. Compared to the website of the book club, Amazon.com offers much more versatile product presentations and information on books, which further encourage her to buy on an impulse.

Thirdly, the use of *product illustrations* was mentioned by many interviewees as important in encouraging impulsive purchases:

N: What would the ideal Internet store be like in the sense that you could imagine making even more impulse buys there than you do at present

A: [...] of course the appearance should be tempting and must be right from the start, but also one where there would be as much information as possible about the products and good pictures of them. In my opinion at least you want from these impulse buys, well not DVDs of course, but from many others that you could imagine that if there were more than one picture of it, that you can see it from more than one side, well it might help that it felt more like your own the product, that... and then in general providing more information on it

Aino, 30

As Aino explains, by providing product images in addition to extensive product information can encourage impulsive purchasing online. As the product is not directly available for inspection, product images should provide consumers with enough information to evaluate the purchase. These images should portray the product from different angles. As Aino describes, the more images of the product the webstore provides, the more accurately the consumer can imagine the actual features of the product and can identify herself using the product.

In addition to having multiple product images in product presentations, *how the products are presented in product illustrations* can be important for consumers in their impulsive buying decisions:

Oh yes, I've bought a lot of things so that when I see them on the model I think that's just my sort of outfit, and I know myself quite well so that I order the whole outfit, even the scarf, everything there is, well I don't see the underwear, but I might well order the shoes, the trousers, the blouse everything... that's how I am, and then I have to enlarge the picture that is it really, is it really my sort of thing, yes, I'm ordering that, that's what I'm like... but it's annoying if the blouse, for example, is just a picture, it needs to have somebody wearing it so I can see a bit how it works, so that if it's very close-fitting, well that's not for me, but then, that's roomy, yes, that's good I'll have it, that sort of thing makes a difference, and time goes by for that when you start looking and thinking, ooh, how wonderful...

Pinja, 44

N: Now what sort of a webstore would it be that would not tempt you to any of those [impulse buys]

E: One where there would only be a list of this, this and this and pictures... good pictures, you get such a visual that what it looks like and of course just some garment just somewhere with a picture of it does not display it well, lets' say that if somebody was wearing it, that in a way you would see it as naturally as possible, then it's something that... well it should be that it's stylishly made and trouble has been taken that it's not just listed

Emma, 42

As Pinja and Emma explain, it is important for them that the product image portrays the product in use. In their case, this applies especially to clothing. According to Pinja, when she can see the clothes worn by someone in the product images, she is better capable of evaluating whether or not they are suitable for her style and body. In case they seem to fit her style, she can end up ordering every piece of clothing in the picture. It is preferable also for Emma that clothes are worn by someone in the product pictures. Emma thinks that product information listed only as text would not be encouraging her to make impulsive buying decisions. In addition, Pinja values the feature that enables her to zoom in on the product images so that she can see the details of the clothing better.

However, although product illustrations were perceived as important, they were also criticized for creating unrealistic expectations:

V: ... they [the clothes] look very good in the picture, but when you get them the product does not correspond to the idea I had of them

N: the idea is based on those pictures

V: Yes, that if I were to see it here, I wouldn't even think of buying it, then you always regret that it came home

Venla, 41

As Venla explains, product illustrations of clothing can sometimes create a false mental impression for the consumer. The clothes can be made to appear more attractive in the pictures than they really are. The purchase decision of for example clothes is based on the online product images, but if the product could be examined offline, 'in the flesh', a similar purchase decision would not be necessarily made. Therefore, for example Venla seldom orders clothing items online.

To summarize, consumers regard versatile and adequate product information as important for them to make an impulsive purchase decision. Product presentation has to provide at least the adequate information the consumer needs. Product presentation that lists just the basic features of the product is not, however, seen as attractive, and therefore many consumers consider product images necessary. This is related to the characteristics of the Internet; as the consumers cannot experience products with all their senses online, they have to rely on the product presentations available in webstores. It seems that product images are particularly important with clothing items.

However, in order to avoid consumer disappointments, the product images should provide a realistic view about the product.

The theme of product presentation relates also to previous discussion about impulsive buying. Physical and sensory proximity of the product is considered to increase consumer impulsivity (Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991). However, in the online shopping environment this physical and sensory proximity can be gained for physical products only through product presentation. As also my research data indicates, providing product images that portray the product in use can increase physical proximity and thus encourage impulsive buying (see also Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991). In addition, those product images that portray the product in use can also help consumers to identify themselves as the users of the product, and thus create social comparison (ibid.).

Also, previous research on consumer online buying has addressed the issue of product presentation (e.g. Kim & Forsythe, 2007; Park, Lennon, & Stoel, 2005). For example, visual presentation of product movement, i.e. presenting the product from different angles, can increase purchase intentions online (Park, Lennon, & Stoel, 2005). Also, it has been suggested that successful application of product virtualization technologies that for instance provide consumers with an opportunity to create a virtual model and to try clothing on it, can result in visitors spending longer times on the website, in higher conversion rates, and in an increase in online order size (Kim & Forsythe, 2007).

4.3.2 Return policies

The theme of return policies refers to the possibility given by the webstore for their customers to return their purchases. In Finland, the legislation under the Consumer Protection Act binds Finnish webstores to offer for consumers the right to return their online purchases within 14 days. Some of the interviewees perceived the existence of return policies as a feature encouraging their online impulsive buying:

Yes there's been the feeling that oh my god that I went and bought that, but on the other hand I've never bought anything terribly expensive on impulse and then again I think, there is the option of sending them back when they've been bought on the web so that if I become totally depressed afterwards about what I went and did, I can always send it

back, but really I've never once had that... it's always useful in some way or other what you've bought, even if it was one of those impulse buys.

Anni, 32

As Anni describes, the right to return her online purchases is self-evident for her when she buys from a Finnish webstore. As a result, Anni can make impulsive purchases that she is not certain of, as long as she can rely on the right to return them in case she ends up regretting some of the purchases. As Anni explains, she regrets and consequently returns her impulsive online purchases quite seldom, as almost all her impulsive purchases are perceived by her as somewhat necessary. However, it is the mere existence of the possibility to return that makes her confident enough to make impulsive purchases online.

The following extract shows that some consumers can utilize the return policies to experiment with some purchases:

Yes it's sometimes happened that I've taken something to try, just that way that I knew when I was ordering it that I'm sure to be returning something...

Venla, 41

Earlier in the interview Venla explains how sometimes when opening post packages of her online orders, she is surprised to find products that she had added to her order on an impulse. Those purchases, mainly clothing items, were made only to be experimented with whether or not they suit her. These experimental purchases are made possible by the return right offered by the webstore. As Venla describes in the extract, she knew already when finalizing the order online that she would most likely use her right to return some of the products.

Although the existence of return right can encourage consumers to make purchases online, when the products arrive, some consumers seem to be reluctant to actually return the items they regret buying:

N: would you have examples of products which you have particularly regretted buying, especially those impulse buys

L: well at least I ordered two pairs of trousers from Josefsson's [a Scandinavian webstore] and they were both the wrong size, and then I changed them and they were still no good and so, and after all they never got returned, and then [laughter] I've been a bit annoyed

N: what is it then that they never got returned except that maybe you don't remember to

L: probably too lazy to take it to the post office

N: what do you usually, how difficult do you find it to send stuff back

L: Well it's a bit that then it just doesn't get returned, it might stay even though it's not quite what I wanted

N: so what is it that things don't get returned except that maybe you don't remember or is it too difficult or what

L: Yeah, maybe that's what it is, that you should take something somewhere, go to the post office for that to take them, that's why it might not get done

Lotta, 25

Lotta first describes an actual buying situation in which she bought two trousers impulsively online. However, she first had to return them as their size was wrong, i.e. they did not fit Lotta. After the first return and getting the trousers in another size, Lotta was not after all satisfied with the trousers, but ended up not using the return right, and kept the trousers. As she explains, sometimes returning the items requires too much effort, and thus sometimes she ends up keeping purchases that she is not totally satisfied with. The effort in returning the items in her case is related to leaving home and taking the returnable items to the post office. Many other interviewees also reported that they consider returning the purchases inconvenient, and therefore even avoid buying products such as clothes that would have the risk of returning. Returning the items can mean also balancing the value of the items to the effort of returning them:

If it [the product to be returned] is something small, maybe I just can't be bothered to take the trouble, you have to weigh up how much money you've put into it and how much are you prepared to sacrifice if it's a load of extra trouble you just don't get round to reacting at all, let it be

Aleksi, 32

The excerpt from Aleksi's interview shows that those items that are not that valuable are not so eagerly returned, as the sacrifices for returning the items can outweigh the benefits of returning them.

To summarize, the return right offered by webstores can encourage consumers to make impulsive purchases. The return right decreases the risk in making an impulse purchase, as at the moment of purchase, the consumer can justify even uncertain purchase decisions by the fact that badly made purchases can be returned. This is consistent with some previous research suggesting that in remote shopping environments, such as the Internet, better return policies can increase the probability of

ordering (Wood, 2001). However, my research data suggests also that although return right seems to be important for the consumer at the moment the impulsive purchase is made, not all consumers necessarily use their right, and they end up keeping purchases they regret buying or that are unsatisfactory.

4.3.3 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness of the webstore was seen as crucial in the interviewees' descriptions of their online impulsive purchase experiences. Trustworthiness became apparent either through negative experiences that the consumer had of untrustworthy webstores from which they would not consider buying impulsively or through general questions about the constraints of impulsive buying online. If the consumer does not trust the webstore, no impulsive purchases will be made either:

N: what about then the sort of webstore where you could never imagine yourself making impulse buys [...]

V: if it's a really doubtful looking website, first of all, so that you can't see who is really selling and things like the right to return goods and... if there's something not quite kosher about the site then I wouldn't buy, that we really thought for a long time about that radar toy, and I was pretty sure that nothing would ever come, that our money would go and that was the end of the radar toy, but...

Venla, 41

The citation from Venla's interview first of all pinpoints the importance of the first impression given by the webstore. Especially, if the consumer is visiting a particular webstore for the first time, the appearance of the webstore is crucial in creating trust. As Venla lists, it must be made evident who is selling, what are the terms of the purchase etc. before the consumer has the courage to buy on an impulse. Venla has earlier in the interview described how she and some of her relatives ordered together a bat radar from the US as a Christmas present for her godson. However, as the webstore selling the bat detector was considered quite dubious, the purchase required more consideration. She ended up e-mailing the webstore, and received a solid reply, which eventually convinced her that the webstore was trustworthy enough to place an order. Venla's example of buying the bat radar shows that if the appearance of the webstore is not

trustworthy, consumers more easily deliberate on their purchases instead of buying impulsively.

Another example of the theme of trustworthiness is illustrated in the interview with Aada. She has earlier in the interview told about situations in which she was tempted to buy computer games on an impulse on the Internet. However, she did not end up buying them, and, according to Aada, one reason behind this was lack of trust towards the US webstores selling the games. In the interview, she contrasted her thoughts about those game sites with another webstores, from which she had ordered washable diapers:

A: One big reason for not daring to buy those games was that they're American websites, and you can't find out all the conditions and you can't be bothered to so that I didn't dare get into it, but I still dared to order those diapers from America, maybe it was more reliable

N: now how, had you for example heard of that particular firm from somewhere else

A: I've ordered from two places and really I've never heard anything about them from anybody, but somehow the website were the sort they showed mothers working at home, and you could never think anything bad about mothers at home [laughter], so of course it's likely a lot more reliable than what a games firm might be with all sorts of malicious programs, or at least that's how it seemed, that...

Aada, 28

The interview extract demonstrates that the image of the two types of webstores are created by different products. The washable cloth diaper webstores were more trustworthy to Aada than games webstores, because they contained information about the owners – mothers working at home. Aada, who is a mother of a small child herself, trusted these webstores to make an impulsive order although she had not heard about them before. Therefore, providing information about the mothers made her confident that also the webstore would be trustworthy. However, she had a much more negative impression of webstores selling game software. The terms were difficult to understand, and she thought that she might get some viruses on her computer if she bought and downloaded these games. Later on in her interview, Aada talks more about her thoughts on trustworthy webstores:

But on the net you look quite a bit at reliability, it has to be somehow that you understand something about where you're ordering from, you don't dare order from just anywhere, and of course you listen to your friends a lot and ask, I have some friends who have ordered more so at least you ask if anybody has been ordering, does anybody know about this store so that you dare... [...] oh yes the large size of the store and how

well known it is makes maybe a bigger difference in my opinion in web shopping, because then if you go to some small store in a side street you can just about see for yourself whether they look reliable in it, but on the web you have no way of knowing who is behind it, what is behind it...

Aada, 28

Aada points out how trustworthiness of webstores can be created. Firstly, her friends are one important source for evaluating the trustworthiness of the webstore. If she finds a new webstore that is unfamiliar to her and that has some interesting products for sale, she first finds out whether or not her friends have experiences with the webstore and, consequently, forms her opinion about the webstore based on that. Secondly, webstore's trustworthiness is, according to Aada, directly related to how widely well-known the webstore is. She can trust those webstores that are generally known to the public, whereas those webstores that are unfamiliar to her cannot be trusted about who is operating them. Aada considers this to be also a general characteristic of the Internet. According to her, on the Internet, as you cannot personally meet the storekeeper, it is not that easy to evaluate the trustworthiness of the store, either.

For some interviewees, trustworthiness was related to the location of the webstore:

I don't buy anything from foreign webstores, with a credit card number [...] I don't buy from them, I buy Finnish... I am that suspicious of them that whether they will send the products that... sometimes I have thought that there might be all kinds of nice, nice things, but I still didn't

Emma, 42

For Emma, webstores that operate in foreign countries, i.e. outside Finland, are not trustworthy enough for her to make an order. These webstores would require instant payment with credit cards, and she is skeptical whether or not the products will be delivered at all. Elsewhere in the interview, Emma has told that she likes to browse many webstores just for fun, but as this extract also shows, although she has seen some interesting, potential purchases, so far she has not had the courage to buy from abroad.

Also other interviewees talked about trust that is related to methods of payment, and especially to paying with credit card:

At the start I was a bit scared of the web, about how it works and in the same way if you have to pay by credit card, well it's been for quite a long time, and now really only a year ago maybe for the first time I bought something that you had to pay for at once so

that... but when you've used it, somehow you have more faith that the stuff will come [laughter] after all

Lotta, 25

As Lotta explains, she has only recently started to pay her online purchases with her credit card. Before that, she avoided ordering from those webstores that required instant payment with credit card. However, now that she has used her credit card for online purchases for about a year, she has developed trust towards these webstores, and credit card payment is no longer an issue for her.

To sum up, the theme of trustworthiness, or actually the lack of trust towards a webstore, can become a crucial prohibitive feature for impulsive purchases online. If the consumer visits a webstore for the first time, the webstore must win trust of the consumer in order for any purchases, including impulsive purchases, to occur. If the consumer hesitates whether or not the webstore is trustworthy enough to make a purchase, the purchase cannot be made on spur of the moment.

Previous extensive research on trust and trustworthiness in electronic commerce research has acknowledged the importance of this theme in consumer online purchasing (see e.g. Constantinides, 2004; Lim et al., 2006; Shankar, Urban, & Sultan, 2002; Wang & Emurian, 2005). My research data supports this, and suggests that trustworthiness is important also in online impulsive purchasing.

4.4 Product

The element of product refers to those themes in the data that are more related to the characteristics of products purchased on an impulse than to the characteristics of the webstore selling the product or to the general shopping environment. These product-related characteristics became evident especially when the interviewees described their online impulsive buying experiences.

The product types that interviewees had bought on an impulse on the Internet were mainly physical products, such as books, DVDs, clothes, and shoes. Only a few interviewees described experiences of buying electronically deliverable products, such as downloadable music or games.

The element of product is divided into two themes, price and risk. Each of them will be discussed next.

4.4.1 Price

In most of the interviews, price of the product bought on an impulse was discussed. When talking about their online impulsive buying in general, some consumers reported that online impulsive purchases can cost more than impulsive purchases in the traditional retail settings, as, in the offline shopping environment, impulsive buying occurs mostly with low-prices items such as candy, cosmetics, or magazines. However, these are not usually the items that are either available online or that are bought online on an impulse.

In actual consumer experiences of online impulsive buying, price was usually related to the product being offered on discount. Many consumers told that impulsive online purchases occurred most often in the sales or bargain section of the webstore. However, the role of visiting the bargain section differed somewhat. Firstly, some consumers described making impulsive purchases in the bargain sections of webstore especially when visiting the webstore for some specific reason, for example to buy some product. As the following extract shows, for many consumers, it has become more or less a routine to visit the sales section of the store to see if there is anything interesting to buy:

A: When you go in [into the webstore] for a certain reason and then they always have those special offer pages, you come to read them if there is anything you could make use of

N: *so you go there every time*

A: yes, just about, I take a look if there's anything

N: *and those [impulse buys] latch on to you there*

A: that's the worst place of all for impulse buys [laughter]

N: *is it the price or does there have to be something else than the reduced price*

A: yes there has, that is it has to be something for which there really is some use, and then there is, if we think about some children's games and so on that get bought many times just because the price has been reduced, yes, it's definitely the price that I would not necessarily buy the product if it was at its normal price

Alisa, 42

As Alisa explains, she is most likely to see the bargain section each time she visits a familiar webstore. Even though she would have plans to buy some specific product when entering the webstore, she likes to visit also the bargain section to see if there is anything else she could buy. These additional purchases are bought usually on an impulse, and the products are sold on discount. As Alisa describes, the sales price of these impulsive purchases is important for her, as she admits that she would not necessarily buy most of these purchases if they were listed at the webstore's regular price. A similar type of behavior, i.e. visiting the bargain section of a webstore, is described also in Aino's interview:

When I have decided that I'm going to order something [from the webstore] I always look through the discount baskets, there are so many products on discount that at some point you always get bored, but still, I try to look if there is anything interesting

Aino, 30

Also for Aino, it has become a customary course of action to check the bargain section of the webstore each time she visits a familiar webstore to buy something. However, she feels that in some webstores there are perhaps too many products on discount, as sometimes she gets tired of browsing the product listings. Despite that, later on in the interview, she acknowledges that most of the impulsive purchases of DVDs and CDs she has made online have been from the bargain sections, and thus their price has been discounted. She also contrasts these experiences with those of buying DVDs on an impulse in brick-and-mortar stores. When she buys DVDs on an impulse in the traditional retail setting the price can sometimes be unimportant to her, especially in cases when the DVD is especially interesting. However, Aino does not admit that this would have happened to her when buying DVDs on the Internet. Therefore, when making impulsive purchases offline, she makes the purchase *despite the price*, while online it is sometimes made *because of the price*. This is further exemplified in the following interview citation by Aino:

N: [...] if we think about some specific impulse buy, what did you feel like when you bought it at the moment of buying, what is it like, the feeling?

A: well now, of course you feel happy when you make such a great find [laughter]... on the other hand, the last time I ordered something, for example, from Cdon.com there was this double DVD at a reduction where there are two films, I had some mixed feelings about if it was a good buy because I simply had to have it [laughter], I couldn't not buy it, but they were not very good combinations, there were some rather stupid

films in them and there was a bit that, I thought afterwards whether this was at all sensible or not [laughter]

Aino, 30

Above, Aino explains her feelings about buying a set of two DVD films on an impulse on the Internet. The set was offered on discount, and Aino felt that the offer was too good to pass. She became obsessed about buying the item, although choices for the DVD sets were not that attractive to her. Actually, later on the interview she admits that this purchase was an example of an impulsive purchase which she had some regrets about, as the films on the set were 'rather stupid' after all. In this occasion, however, Aino clearly sees that the offer was so unbeatable that she had to buy the set, even though she had some doubts about the purchase already when making the order.

The following excerpt exhibits another type of behavior related to impulsive buying of sales items:

I generally go through what's there on the special offer pages at least taking a look [...] generally it is something that I could imagine, that I maybe want some kind of new clothes [...] and that's why I go there and then first I would usually check what is on offer, and then I look at the others on the proper pages if there's anything there

Lotta, 25

As in the previous cases, also Lotta tells that she browses the bargain sections of familiar webstores with almost every visit. However, she enters the site usually without any specific plans, but perhaps with a general buying intention for something new. In these instances, Lotta usually first visits the bargain section to browse for suitable purchases, and if this strategy ends up fruitless, she only then browses the other, regular-price products. Later on in the interview Lotta further specifies that most of the clothing items that she buys online are made on an impulse from the webstore's bargain section. Also when I asked her about in what kind of a webstore she would imagine herself making more impulsive purchases, Lotta replied:

Now maybe in a place where you would have a lot of such impulses, in a way there would be last season's goods on offer and something else so that you would easily find these discount pages

Lotta, 25

Lotta describes that those webstores that have products on discount, for example clothing items from the previous season, encourage her to impulsive purchases. In addition, she thinks that bargain sections of the webstore should be easily found on their website. Actually, some consumers mentioned it to be an advantage of the Internet that bargain products can be found more easily online than offline:

I wouldn't necessarily find it in the store [laughter] so that I wouldn't necessarily end up going to that department where it is but there [on the Internet] again all the departments are many times collected onto the same discount pages so you can find things that you would not have gone looking for in the store

Alisa, 42

As Alisa describes, the benefit of webstores is that often all products on discount are listed in the same bargain section. In brick-and-mortar stores, on the contrary, the discount items are more or less scattered around the store at different departments. As Alisa explains, on the Internet, she can even find such bargain items to buy on an impulse that she would not necessarily have found in traditional brick-and-mortar store.

Also other consumers considered that the amount of bargain products online is important for impulsive purchases:

It's so Finnish that you have to get the best deal from somewhere, but of course with these impulse buys it's that there should be such a wide selection of products on offer

Santeri, 30

Earlier in the interview, Santeri has explained that the first thing that comes to his mind about purchases made on spur of the moment is that they are most likely products that are sold on discount. In addition, the examples that Santeri provides about his online impulsive buying experiences concern mainly bargain products. Not surprisingly, then, Santeri believes that there should be a large assortment of bargain products available in webstores to encourage his impulsive purchasing behavior online.

The previous discussion about price has concentrated on bargain items bought impulsively online. However, in some online impulsive experiences told by the interviewees, the role of price was different. The price of the product was not discounted from the regular price, but the consumer perceived the price to be relatively low:

P: [...] underwear that gets ordered from Anttila's [webstore] sometimes, well, I don't think about it at all then, that they might be a bit you know, when it's 7.95 then I think that it doesn't matter whether it fits or not, but when it looks great on the model, then that's what it'll be on me [laughter], even if it's absolutely awful, but sometimes for things like that I've...

N: how, in those spur-of-the-moment buys is it the price then that is it

P: Maybe the, let's say with bras, for example, I like to change my bras, I have a lot of bras, so I think that I should have a lot, and I can't always bear to buy Patricia [brand name] for forty, fifty or seventy [euros] so it's great when there are those, when we still had the mark [former Finnish national currency] I always bought expensive bras, but then there came this H&M [retailer] and my girl says, now for goodness sake don't go buying those expensive bras but go with her and have a look, you can get perfectly good ones on the web... And we both order bras on the web, all sorts of bras, now that's pretty important for women

Pinja, 44

This extract demonstrates that Pinja considers that impulsive purchases occur especially when buying relatively low-priced underwear online. Just before this excerpt, Pinja has told about her online buying behavior in general. She usually considers herself buying products on the Internet only as the need arises. However, she continues by contrasting that behavior with this one – when she buys underwear online on spur of the moment. For her, the price of the underwear she has bought online is relatively low, although it is not discounted, as she was used to buying very expensive branded bras previously offline. Now, she has given herself a permission to buy more bras impulsively online as the price per item is 'only' 7.95. Related to this, some consumers might have a cut-off point when it comes to pricing of some product categories:

R: ...it doesn't necessarily have to be a sale as long as... There comes a certain limit, that in DVD films they start to be under a tenner, that's enough

N: that brings the threshold down a bit

R: yes, it's become this mental threshold that you shouldn't pay more than a tenner for a film [laughter]

Rasmus, 36

In the above extract, Rasmus tells about how important price is for him when he buys DVD movies on an impulse on the Internet. Just prior to this extract, Rasmus has told that it is mostly the price of the product that triggers impulsive buying of DVDs for him online. It does not matter whether or not the product is sold on discount or not, as long as the price of the DVD does not exceed 10 euros.

In summary, price of the product can become important incentive for consumers when making impulsive purchases online. It seems that for some consumers, impulsive purchases are mainly made from the bargain sections of webstores. These bargain sections of familiar webstores can be visited regularly, with almost every visit to the webstore. The Internet makes also browsing and finding these bargain products more convenient, as often the products on discount from different product categories are presented as a separate list. In addition to discounted prices, for many consumers the relative price of the product is central when making impulsive purchases online. Even though the price would not be discounted, if the consumer perceives the price to be low enough, this might also act as a stimulus to impulsive buying.

Previously, bargain shopping, or finding discounts online, has been considered an experiential online shopping, i.e. as an activity that results in online browsing (Wolfenbarger & Gilly, 2001). My research data indicates that this browsing for bargain items can lead to impulsive buying. On the other hand, previous research on impulsive buying in brick-and-mortar retailing has obtained some contradicting results about the role of price in impulsive purchases. It has been suggested that low price of the product encourages impulsive purchasing (Stern, 1962), and that some impulsive purchases are experienced by consumers as a too good a bargain to pass (Dittmar & Drury, 2000). Also, in a study by Youn and Faber (2000), items on sale were one of the most frequently endorsed cues for making an impulse purchase. In addition, in a previous study that compared online with offline grocery buying, it was suggested that when items are on sale, consumers make more impulsive purchases online than offline (Kacen, 2003). My research findings support these, as it seems that in the online shopping environment the price of the product can trigger impulsive buying. However, also conflicting results about the role of price have been obtained previously. For example, it has been suggested that price is a less important motivator for products bought often on an impulse (Dittmar & Beattie, 1998), and that most unplanned purchases are of regular-price items (Kelly, Smith, & Hunt, 2000).

4.4.2 Risk

In my research data, some consumers discussed the risks that are involved with buying certain types of products on an impulse on the Internet. This appeared as interviewees

shared their experiences of buying impulsively those products that they perceived as being low in risk, and, on the other hand, avoiding buying impulsively those items that were considered high in risk.

Firstly, for some consumers, avoiding risk meant buying impulsively only from such product categories that consumers would be certain what kind of a product they would receive. For example, books, DVDs, and CDs were considered by many consumers to be safe impulse purchases, whereas some regarded products such as clothes and home decorative items to be too risky to buy online. For most of the cases, this applied not only to impulsive online purchases, but also in general to online buying behavior. In the following extract, Aino compares her online buying of clothes with buying of DVDs:

If you can rely on it that the product is what they promise, then it doesn't matter if you can't have a feel of it, but with clothes for example, it doesn't, it doesn't even if you find your own size, your own size, it never guarantees anything so it's not much fun buying that way, however I still don't like it, that you have to just about send the whole load back, although I have had dealings with mail order in my time, that that is one reason why I never buy any clothes, for example, and when you never know what you're going to get when you order [...] DVD, you can rely on it being round [laughter] and it will go in the DVD player, you can get a picture out of it [laughter] so then it doesn't matter...

Aino, 30

For Aino, the risks of buying clothes online are too high. As she explains, she has previously made some catalogue orders for clothes, but had been disappointed with how many clothes she had to return. With clothing items, Aino is always somewhat uncertain of what she receives, and whether or not the clothes fit her. If, however, Aino can trust that the product is what is promised, such as in the case of DVDs, she can make the purchase online. Similar thoughts about ordering clothes online were discussed also by a few other interviewees who had either some previous negative experiences of ordering clothes that had to be returned, or who considered that clothing items should be tried on before making a purchase decision. However, many consumers thought that product categories such as books, DVDs, and CDs carry lower risks as they are standardized products in a way that the consumer would know what the product should be like when they receive it.

Secondly, risk could be carried by those products which the consumer is totally unfamiliar with. This was discussed by Santeri:

Well with DVDs especially it's that you never end up buying something that is an entirely unknown product, that it's some series where you've seen some excerpts, like when you're traveling abroad you've seen some parts in the hotels and you think that's interesting, but you don't see it in Finland, that then you can buy it... or then something that you saw a long time ago, some film, so you buy it, so that generally it's something familiar in some way. Or then, that the reference frame is familiar, so that even if you haven't seen all the Bond films, you have an idea what a Bond film is like...

Santeri, 30

In the previous extract, Santeri discusses his impulsive purchases of DVDs. DVDs are one of the product categories that Santeri buys online. However, he thinks that the products must be familiar to him on some level in order for him to risk making an impulsive purchase. For example if he has seen an interesting episode of a TV series abroad, he might be willing to buy the whole series online on DVD. Later on in his interview, Santeri cites this as one of the reasons why he has not been disappointed in his online impulsive purchases:

N: ...so it's always been what you imagined

S: Yes, that when you buy that sort it's something that's more familiar, not such a complete impulse buy as it would be if it were something completely unknown, not that sort...

Santeri, 30

From this example it can be seen that for Santeri, unfamiliarity of the product is part of the meaning of an impulse purchase. He considers a 'complete impulse buy' to be a purchase which is totally unfamiliar to him. As a result, he does not regard himself as buying these types of impulse purchases, as the products he has bought are familiar to him on some level.

Thirdly, in some consumer's experiences, risk carried by the product was related to how easily the product could be resold. Some consumers saw that especially those products that cannot be easily resold carry too much risk to be bought online, and vice versa. Examples of this thinking can be found in the following two extracts:

What matters in those [washable diapers] makes the difference is when you know that the selling on price is that high, that if they don't suit us, we can sell them on, so that then you dare to buy without trying them out, and when we know so many families with little kids who also use them, then it might be that well how would this do for you...

Aada, 28

With DVDs and so on, weapon accessories, board games that you can buy, well if it is easy to sell it on, then it matters less how suitable it is for you yourself, but somehow selling on clothes is such a strange idea for me for some reason that I don't, then I just don't buy them [...] with clothes it's somehow a matter of getting used to it, so then it doesn't occur to me to, to buy something like that [on the Internet], where there would be the risk of it not fitting

Santeri, 30

Both of these excerpts are related to the types of products that both interviewees report buying online also impulsively. For Aada, in case the washable cloth diapers ordered online would be unsuitable for her child, they can be either resold with a relatively high price, or given forward to her friends with children. It does not matter for her even though the product cannot be tried on before the purchase decision. Therefore, she has the courage to buy the diapers online. Santeri, on the other hand, discusses his thoughts about reselling items bought online. In Santeri's opinion, products that he has bought online, such as DVDs or board games, can be easily resold, and therefore, the risk of buying them online is lower. However, in the case of clothes, he does not see himself reselling or recycling them. This creates a risk when buying clothes online, as the clothes might not fit him.

As a summary, those products that are perceived as low in risk are more likely to be considered suitable for impulsive purchasing. In my research data, risk had multiple meanings. For some, risk was related to consumer's personal conceptions about which product categories are safe enough to buy. This was related for instance to how standardized the consumers perceived the products to be. Another meaning was related to how familiar the product was for the consumer. Thirdly, risk was related to how easily the product is perceived to be resold.

The theme of perceived risk in products has received a lot of attention in research on consumer online behavior. For example, difficulty in judging the quality of the product, i.e. product performance risk, has been cited by consumers as one of the reasons for not making purchases online (Forsythe & Shi, 2003). As apparent also in my research, perceived product risks are related to the fact that the Internet cannot appeal to all senses. Therefore, consumers do not feel comfortable with buying certain types of products, as they cannot experience them fully online. For example, it has been suggested that remote shopping environments, such as the Internet, are less suitable for products with material properties (such as clothing) that require physical inspection by

the consumer (McCabe & Nowlis, 2003). This theme can be related also to the characteristics of the consumer, as according to Citrin et al. (2003) and Peck and Childers (2003; 2006), consumers differ in their need for tactile input, i.e. need for touch. Touch has been related to impulsive buying (Peck & Childers, 2006).

4.5 Consumer

The three previously discussed elements, i.e. shopping environment, webstore, and the product, all relate more or less to an individual purchase situation made on the Internet. The element of consumer, on the other hand, refers to the characteristics of the consumer, i.e. the buyer. The elements or characteristics presented here, however, are such that are related to actual impulsive online buying experiences discussed in the interviews. Besides these characteristics, interviewees discussed also other of their characteristics, such as their impulsivity in shopping in general, but as these were not directly related to actual impulsive buying incidents, there were left out from this report. However, they were taken into account when interpreting the interview holistically.

The element of consumer emerged in impulsive buying experiences as three themes: interests, loyalty, and mood. I will discuss each of these in the following sections.

4.5.1 Interests

Many interviewees reported online impulsive buying experiences that were somehow related to their interests. For example, these interests could range from hobbies to some specific products related to a band the consumer is a fan of, to some specific product categories the consumer is especially interested in. However, common to all these is that these interests directed consumers' attention in online buying, as some of online impulsive buying experiences involved products that were related to consumer interests.

In the following extract, Aino discusses her impulsive buying experience of buying a product that is related to her hobbies:

I bought books from that suomalaisen.com [online bookstore], and then I noticed I don't remember why I even went to the site, [...] then I found this Tai Chi book, I do Tai Chi, well there was this really interesting-looking one, it was written by a Chinese, and I

thought I bet that would be really good and interesting, especially as I had, I had earlier bought, that, too, was an impulse buy, yes, this Tai Chi video that was really bad, so then I thought what if this still were to be useful, although in book form it's a bit worse, that a beginner can't learn it from there, but if you just want reminders about how it was, well it's OK for that... It was a perfectly good buy in my opinion, that it was just what and really better than I thought, that although I only noticed there that they have this sort, too

Aino, 30

In this extract Aino describes her experiences of buying a book impulsively online. The book is related to her hobby, Chinese Tai Chi. She went to the online book store to buy something else, but ended up buying also this book on Tai Chi that she noticed while in the webstore. In this excerpt, Aino talks also about another impulsive online purchase related to her Tai Chi hobby. She compares the book with a DVD she had bought on an impulse earlier. Aino thinks that the DVD was not that good a purchase, whereas the book seemed to be more professional, as it for example had a Chinese author. Later in the interview, Aino talks more about how the book got her attention. The cover of the book featured a Chinese person in an interesting Tai Chi position, which convinced Aino that the book would be a good purchase.

Pinja's interests, on the other hand, are related to decorating her home. On many occasions throughout her interview, she refers to this interest as a passion of hers. For example, she regularly takes shopping tours to Helsinki area to visit both small stores selling home decorating and large stores such as Ikea. Also many of the online purchase experiences she discusses in the interview are related somehow to home décor, such as in the following extract where she describes her impulsive online purchase of a carpet:

Sometimes I just look if there's something, that I don't order it just for the sake of spending money, but sometimes it's nice just to look, that maybe that carpet is like that when I looked, that oh wouldn't it be nice to buy a carpet for the living room, let's have a look what Hobby Hall [webstore] have got and there we found a nice carpet, OK, we'll order it, a summer carpet... that they're a bit like that, well they're a bit like fancies, I like interior decorating really, well as I say, well, it's important to me to change the furnishings after Christmas and then again when spring comes it changes and its own furnishings for summer [laughter]... it might sound silly, but I think it's great...

Pinja, 44

As Pinja explains, it is important to her that home decorating items change with seasons. The impulsive purchase of the carpet is also related to this, as the living room

carpet is what Pinja calls ‘a summer carpet’. The impulsive purchase occurred as she came up with a desire for a new carpet. As a result, she started to browse a webstore that sells home decorating items, and consequently ended up ordering a new carpet for their living room. Elsewhere in her interview she talks about another impulsive purchase of a home decorating item that further demonstrates her desire for these types of products:

I collect, so I have any amount of *Mariskoolis* [glass bowls], with them I’m like I order them, and what a nice color, so that it’s oh that’s only 24 euros, and then I go and order [from the Internet] as I said, that I’m really sweet on for those bowls, so it might be something like that, that for example now I ordered one in yellow, I’ve already got three different shades of yellow, I wouldn’t have needed any more, but I ordered it, somehow I need it...

Pinja, 44

Pinja admits that she has a special weakness for different kinds of bowls. In this extract, she discusses her interest in collecting Mariskooli bowls. As a result of her interest in these bowls, she might end up buying them ‘just like that’, on an impulse online. For example, she recently ordered a yellow Mariskooli impulsively online, although she already had three different shades of yellow Mariskoolis. This is also related to her interest in specific brands and product lines in dishes. Later in the interview Pinja admits that with some brands and product lines, she sometimes gets a feeling that she ‘has to buy’ the item, although she has no actual need for it. Mariskooli product line is one of those, and therefore it was easier for her to buy the bowl impulsively online.

Some interviewees had special interests towards some specific product categories. For Julia, her interests at least in online buying are directed mainly towards shoes and bags. In the following extract, Julia describes her experiences of buying shoes impulsively online:

For example for me those shoes and bags... for me it’s such a [laughter]... for me it’s that, I still compare the price, but on the web there might be one and I want it, and I must have it... like that’s what happened with a pair of shoes, surprise, surprise... I went to the Anttila website and there [...] there were these star offers [...] and so there were these ankle boots I wanted and they were just the sort that order them and right now

Julia, 44

As Julia explains, she is quite obsessed about buying shoes and bags. As also this extract illustrates, this occurs especially in the online shopping environment. For Julia, shoes and bags available online can create a feeling of being out of control, as the items

often become ‘must haves’ for her. However, as also in this extract, she can justify buying the items based on for example low or discounted price. In her example she talks about buying shoes that demanded her to order them. As a result, she bought them impulsively. Later in the interview Julia further describes her experience of buying these shoes on an impulse:

I was just looking for something, and I thought that if I were to find it, I’ll have it, and of course I found it there, but *then* I thought, that as I’m in these pages anyway that... first of all it’s shoes and bags then I start looking at something else [laughter]

Julia, 44

Julia has a habit of seeing the product listings for shoes and bags first when visiting a webstore. Also in this case, she visited the webstore in the first place to find some other product, but once again, she ended up browsing the shoes and bags section, where she found the shoes on offer that she could not skip buying.

As it has become evident also from previous extracts, some consumers were very conscious of their weaknesses for specific product categories when it comes to impulsive online buying:

N: How does this impulsivity in buying show up in your net shopping?

T: well at least in those books, that’s something where I have to control myself... [sigh] it’s so good when you can see your history there with Amazon, I always decide that now for at least three months I’m not even going to take a look, but when I look, I’ve still gone there every month [laughter], books are such things that I could buy any amount...

Venla, 41

In the above extract, it is apparent that Venla is aware of her tendency towards buying books on an impulse on the Internet. For her, it is also an issue of self-control, as she acknowledges that she should control and restrict her online buying of books more, but admits that so far she has not been that successful in that task. Her desire for books is insatiable, which also results in her impulsive buying being directed especially towards books.

To summarize, in the online shopping environment, such products or product categories that are related to consumers’ interests easily attract consumers’ attention, and consequently are also often bought on an impulse. Some consumers are able to acknowledge this, and consequently, can admit that they direct their online browsing

and buying towards these products. Although many consumers try to consciously control their impulsive purchasing of these items, it seems that they are nevertheless so attracted to some products that they feel compelled to buy them.

My findings are consistent with some previous research on online consumer behavior as well as on impulsive buying in the offline shopping environment. Firstly, ‘ongoing hobby-type searches’ have been cited by consumers as one reason for browsing the Internet for experiential purposes (Wolfenbarger & Gilly, 2001). Earlier, this ‘ongoing search’ for high-involvement products and product categories has been suggested to be related to increased impulsive buying (Bloch, Sherrell, & Ridgway, 1986). Also recently, studies have related involvement with some specific product category to offline impulsive buying (Jones et al., 2003; Park, Kim, & Forney, 2006).

4.5.2 Loyalty

Most online impulsive purchase experiences told by the interviewees occurred in a webstore they had previous experience of – either by visiting the webstore or buying from the webstore. And vice versa, only a minority of the impulsive purchase experiences discussed in the interviews had taken place in a webstore that the consumer had not visited before or heard of before. Therefore, customer’s loyalty towards a webstore is a theme in online impulsive buying. My research data indicates that impulsive purchases are likely to occur especially in those familiar webstores the consumer has at least visited earlier. As confidence in ordering from the webstore increases, also impulsive purchases are more likely to occur. Helmi explains this further:

If you don’t know the direct address you don’t often happen upon those pages, so you really need to know where you’re going, and indeed the same ones become regular, where you’ve ordered something, and then at least you know that the thing works, so then you can order another time

Helmi, 29

As Helmi describes, after she has ordered once from a webstore, she can trust that webstore also in the future. Although the previous extract is about online buying behavior in general, Helmi’s view reflects also many other consumers view on impulsive online buying. When I asked interviewees about their online impulsive

buying experiences, many reported experiences of impulsive buying in those webstores that they had previously in the interview described visiting regularly. Therefore, this theme was strongly present in many of the interviews, although not necessarily conveyed in detail when the interviewees described their specific impulsive online buying experiences.

In addition to increased trust in the webstore, loyalty increases trust in the type of products offered by the webstore. If consumers have previous experiences with the webstore, they can trust that products ordered from the webstore have the same quality as the previously ordered products had. This appears for example in the interview with Julia:

I've never had to return anything [that's been bought] over the net [...] as I've otherwise been shopping at Anttila's store, I've been there and bought clothes and so on, then you know what it is, and I've ordered through Anttila's mail order, what's come has been, that I've never needed to send anything back

Julia, 44

In this extract, Julia explains her online buying experiences with one particular webstore. She has previously ordered clothes from the same company's mail catalogues and also visited the company's brick-and-mortar stores. Therefore, as she has a long customer history with the firm operating the webstore, she can also be confident of the quality and style of clothes ordered from the webstore. As she points out, this has resulted in that she has not returned any of the products ordered from that particular webstore. Earlier in the interview Julia has described one of her online impulsive buying experiences that took place in the same webstore as she describes here. Therefore, also her online impulsive buying is directed towards this familiar webstore.

Also, some interviewees talked about loyalty in relation to how visiting the same webstores makes buying more convenient:

A: ...It's just that there are these certain sites I've [ordered] from... it's so easy, because they've got all the contact information and everything ready, all you need to do is to type in your own number there and that's that [laughter] maybe it's that why I get stuck on certain websites

N: there's then such a high threshold to those new ones

A: and just that when you don't always know what else will come... that those you know what they are

Alisa, 42

Earlier in the interview, Alisa has described her online behavior and told that she does not search for products or new webstores online using search engines, but she makes her online purchases only in webstores that are familiar to her. As Alisa explains, this is also convenient, as the webstore already has her customer information, and there is no need for her to enter it again when placing a new order. This makes also impulsive buying easier, as the purchase process requires less input from the customer. In addition, as discussed previously, also Alisa sees that when buying from these familiar webstores, she can trust also in products to be as described on the website.

As a summary, consumers' reports of their online impulsive buying experiences are situated mostly in webstores that are familiar to them, i.e. that they have at least visited before. Therefore, consumer loyalty towards a specific webstore can encourage a consumer to buy on an impulse. For example, loyalty creates trust in both the webstore and the products sold in the webstore, and makes buying process more convenient, as there is no need to enter the same customer information for every order.

In previous research, the importance of online loyalty in consumer online behavior has been recognized (e.g. Harris & Goode, 2004; Koo, 2006; Ribbink et al., 2004). My research data indicates this importance further by suggesting that loyalty is one theme in online impulsive buying. Recently, also research on impulsive buying in the physical shopping environment has indicated that familiarity with a store can have a positive impact on impulse buying, suggesting that "frequent buyers might be more prone to unplanned purchases" (Mattila & Wirtz, 2008).

4.5.3 Mood

Many consumers discussed in the interviews the role of moods in their general impulsive buying behavior. For example, interviewees described how impulsive purchases in general cheered them up, and some even considered this impact on mood to be an essential feature of impulsive purchasing. Despite discussing the role of mood mostly on a general level, mood was apparent also in some online impulsive buying experiences.

For Santeri, impulsive purchases do not create that strong 'buying euphoria', as he puts it, but however, online impulsive purchases can occur when having a specific mood:

Sometimes if it's a really, really bad day at work, then it certainly helps a bit, it's a sort of getting my own back, that well, I did seven hours of overtime, but now I can reward myself by buying something like this [...] sometimes you notice that especially when you know that there's money come again, that on that day you've earned that much money, that now I can afford to make it fly, a long day at work feeds you up, well, the decision to buy is generally easier to make when you're in a bit of a bad mood...

Santeri, 30

Santeri works as a software tester, and quite often he has to work overtime. He admits that making the buying decision is easier when working overtime. Therefore, also online impulsive purchases occur sometimes during these long workdays when he feels irritated and he is on a bad mood. Then he can also justify making the purchase by the fact that he has earned some extra money by working late, and therefore can afford to make the purchase. As Santeri describes, making the purchase relieves his bad mood, and he considers the purchase to be a reward for himself. Also Aada discusses self-rewards in her online impulsive buying:

Your mood certainly makes a difference if you're really, how shall I put it, satisfied with something, that you want to reward yourself with something, or then that for some reason you are brooding on something, these definitely have quite an effect on such [impulsive online buying], certainly on other impulse buying, like I comfort myself by buying

Aada, 28

Aada has just earlier described what types of webstores would encourage her to make impulsive purchases, and here she continues on the subject by bringing up the theme of mood. She talks about the role of both positive and negative moods. Aada sees that she can be more susceptible to make impulsive purchases if she feels satisfied with herself, and consequently can reward herself with the purchase. On the other hand, also negative mood can result in impulsive purchase, which comforts her.

To summarize, my research data had examples of both negative and positive moods in relation to buying impulsively online. When on a negative mood, impulsive online buying can cheer the consumer up, while on a positive mood, impulsive buying can offer a way to reward oneself.

As discussed earlier in the second chapter of this report, mood and other affective states have received extensive attention in previous research on impulsive buying. For example, previous research has also acknowledged that in consumer descriptions of

impulsive buying, buying on an impulse concerns getting a boost, treat, or a lift in mood, therefore repairing consumer's negative affect (Dittmar & Drury, 2000). It has been suggested that this can also provide the consumer with a rationalization for the impulsive purchase – a feeling of being entitled to make the purchase (Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991). Bayley and Nancarrow (1998) name these types of impulse purchases as compensatory impulses, that for instance can lift ones emotional down or can be used to reward oneself for completing a task. Recently, emotional enhancement and mood regulation have been linked to online compulsive buying (Dittmar, Long, & Bond, 2007).

4.6 Summary of elements of online impulsive buying

As a summary, consumer experiences of online impulsive buying comprise of elements on several levels. As the consumer makes an impulsive buying decision on the Internet, the consumer not only buys a product with its characteristics, but, during the buying process, has been experiencing also the characteristics of an individual webstore. The webstore operates and the product is presented through another, larger context, that is, the online shopping environment. This shopping environment encompasses all webstores on the Internet, and its characteristics are restricted or enabled by the general features of Internet, for example by the inability to appeal to consumers' sense of touch or smell.

Figure 10 illustrates the analytical framework that was presented at the beginning of this chapter, now with all the themes of online impulsive buying divided into the main elements of shopping environment, webstore, product, and consumer.



Figure 10. *Analytical framework – elements and themes*

As the discussion about the themes in previous sections indicates, there are strong relations between some of the themes in the analytical framework. An example of this would be the themes of trustworthiness and loyalty. As consumers visit the same webstores, they also develop trust towards those webstores. This has been also previously acknowledged (see e.g. Harris & Goode, 2004; Ribbink et al., 2004). Therefore, it is important to e-tailers to understand how the features of their webstore can create or enhance trustworthiness especially with first-time visitors. Another example is the relation between product variety and consumer interests. Those consumers who have special interests, can more easily find products related to their interests from the vast, global product assortment available online. In addition, the theme of risk can be considered to counterbalance the theme of return policies. Although the webstore would offer return rights for purchases, many consumers still avoid buying certain products or product categories that carry a risk of for example being unsuitable one way or the other. Many of these consumers see also returning the

products as too inconvenient, and they can even have a principle of not to order some categories of products, such as clothes, online.

All in all, the analytical framework presented in this chapter illustrates that there are multiple themes related to consumer online impulsive buying. In the framework, the themes are positioned under four elements, depending on the viewpoint which the theme relates the most to. Therefore, although the themes are based on consumer interview data, the text in this chapter has not entirely been written from consumers' viewpoint, but at times for example emphasizing the role of the e-tailer¹¹. However, I consider the analytical framework important as it most of all describes the context – shopping environment, webstore, product, consumer – in which different types of online impulsive buying experiences take place. In the next chapter, I will discuss the typology, concentrating on the various ways online impulsive buying occurs.

¹¹ *This can be related also to the pre-understanding that I as a researcher had about the phenomenon when interpreting the data. This issue is discussed in more detail in the last chapter when post-reflecting the interpretation process.*

5. TYPOLOGY OF ONLINE IMPULSIVE BUYING

This second results chapter focuses on providing an answer to the second research question, thus presenting a typology of different forms of online impulsive buying. I wanted to examine *how* consumers end up buying impulsively in their online buying experiences, because, in my view, it is essential in order to both portray the multifaceted nature of impulsive buying and to gain a holistic understanding of the phenomenon.

5.1 Constructing the typology

As I have already described in the chapter on research strategy, I became interested in constructing a typology when analyzing the data. During data analysis, I noticed that although each impulsive buying experience told by the interviewee was unique on some level, some experiences had similarities either with some other consumers' experience in other interviews, or with some other experience encountered by the same interviewee. In addition to the interest created by the data, I was further motivated to construct a typology as, in my view, previous research on online consumer purchase behavior has created a somewhat limited view on how impulsive buying occurs online. It has been suggested, on the basis of click-stream data, that impulsive purchases would occur online most likely as a result of a hedonic browsing strategy, in which the consumer is not looking for anything specific when visiting the store (Moe & Fader, 2001; Moe, 2003; Moe & Fader, 2004). However, my interview data created a much more versatile picture of the range online buying experiences than that. In addition, the previous typologies related to impulsive buying in the brick-and-mortar stores seemed to be fairly dated (e.g. Stern, 1962), or narrow in scope (e.g. Cobb & Hoyer, 1986).

While the previous chapter on the elements of online impulsive buying concentrates on different features that were present in the impulsive buying situations, i.e. more on

the *static* elements of the experience, this chapter focuses more on the *dynamic* aspect of the experiences. As discussed earlier in the chapter on research strategy, the consumer interviews concentrated on getting as detailed descriptions of online impulsive buying experiences as possible. Among other things, consumers told, in their own words and as they remembered, the process of how the impulsive purchase took place. I constructed the typology on the basis of these stories of actual consumer experiences. I identified altogether three major types of online impulsive buying experiences – *order increase*, *webstore browsing*, and *out-of-context purchasing*. During data analysis, these three types appeared as the most distinct types of buying experiences. Therefore, they constitute the main categories of the typology.

In addition, each main type consists of subtypes that further define the main type by describing variation within it. The main types are more abstract, i.e. umbrella types pulling together the subtypes, whereas the sub-types illustrate more how each of the main type shows in the consumers’ actual experiences. Together these types with their subtypes portray the multifaceted ways that interviewed consumers have experienced impulsive buying on the Internet. The three main types with their seven subtypes are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. *Main types and subtypes of impulsive online buying*

Main type	Subtype
Order increase	Multiple purchasing Complementary purchasing Additional purchasing
Webstore browsing	Pastime browsing Promotional browsing
Out-of-context purchasing	Trial purchasing Social purchasing

In the following subchapters, I will present each main type, followed by its subtypes. The different types of online impulsive buying are conveyed by providing detailed descriptions of actual impulse buying experiences discussed in the interviews. In addition, I also provide some background information about the interviewee, as I consider it necessary to illustrate the individual buying experiences in a larger context. Where apparent, I will discuss possible connections between the types and the elements

or themes presented in the previous chapter. In addition, I will discuss any identified connections to previous research in the summary of each of the main type.

5.2 Order increase

If I need something and I have decided that I'll buy it over the web, I check out in advance what I'm buying, then I buy the thing I need and then more often than not [laughter] I buy other things at the same time [...] in practice if you think of the situation, well I think that there's a little bit that well, what else shall I buy, there's no way I'm leaving here with so little [laughter]

Aino, 30

In this type of impulsive online buying experience, the consumer intends to buy some specific product or products when entering the webstore. As the previous extract shows, consumer's visit to the online store can be carefully planned in advance, and the decision to enter the store as such is not based on impulsive decision making. However, the final order made as a result of the buying process contains products that are bought on an impulse. Impulsive buying occurs as consumers buy impulsive purchases in addition to the original product(s) that they had planned buying. As also the name of this type suggests, as a result of these impulsive purchases, the size of the order increases, and the final order made is larger than the consumer originally had intended.

Order increase is further divided into three subtypes: *multiple purchasing*, *complementary purchasing*, and *additional purchasing*. Names of these subtypes refer to the role of impulsive purchase(s) in relation to the original product that the consumer had intended to buy when entering the store. As a result of visiting the webstore the consumer ends up buying impulsively either more of the specific, planned product than intended (multiple purchasing), products that complement the product (complementary purchasing), or products in addition to the planned product (additional purchasing).

5.2.1 Multiple purchasing

In multiple purchasing, the consumer buys more of the same product or product category than he or she had intended to buy when entering the webstore. Therefore, the purchase as such is planned. However, impulsive buying occurs in this type of behavior

as the consumer gets excited about buying the products in the specific product class, which results in buying impulsively more than is planned.

The most distinctive example of a multiple purchasing experience is presented in Aada's interview. Aada is a 28-year-old teacher and a mother of a 1½-year-old girl. She has used the Internet for over 10 years, and nowadays Aada perceives herself as almost addicted to using the Internet on a daily basis. She has made her first online purchase also about 10 years ago. Especially after her daughter was born, Aada's online purchases have consisted mainly of products for her daughter, but she has also bought some CDs for herself as well as made travel bookings (flights, hotels) online. She does not consider herself a shopper-type, as for example she describes visiting offline shops mostly only when she has a need to buy something. In addition, she uses the Internet frequently to find product and price information on purchases she plans to make offline, so that she does not need to shop around that much offline with her daughter. Likewise, she thinks that buying on the Internet is convenient, as she can make purchases without leaving home, for example while her daughter is playing.

Also Aada's example of multiple purchasing is associated with buying products for her daughter. She relates her experiences of online impulsive buying mainly to one type of product, washable cloth diapers. Aada is an enthusiastic advocate of washable cloth diapers. She likes to buy them online, and she frequently reads Internet discussion forums on the subject. She considers that buying washable diapers on the Internet is convenient, as they are not so easily available in Finland in offline stores. In addition, the selection of washable cloth diapers is wider online, especially in webstores abroad.

Aada describes her experiences of buying washable cloth diapers as an example of impulsive online purchases, and specifically, of multiple purchasing:

If you're a bit dissatisfied, not very satisfied with the way things are going, how they're doing at the time, or what diapers they use, so that you want something different and then you find something that you'd like to try, then you easily go too far, whether you need it or not

Aada, 28

The multiple purchasing of washable cloth diapers is related in Aada's example to a specific situation. For Aada, the unsatisfactory situation with the diapers in use at that moment is driving her appetite to try something different, and consequently, to order different types of washable diapers to try out. This can end up in ordering more diapers

than she had planned. She sees these types of impulsive purchases as typical of her online impulsive buying:

Yes well there [in online impulsive buying] the idea is surely just the same, that you didn't intend buying anything, or you planned to buy something and then you buy something else, or something more, when you get enthusiastic about them especially as strange as it must sound in a person's ears who doesn't know about this, those washable diapers which really gets you going... there have been times when my husband has raised hell over it, those diapers again, we don't need them... but they're so nice... that is they're the sort of thing that sometimes you buy a few too many, or really, there's a use for them all, and hopefully they'll do for more than one child, so that maybe they're a good impulse buy

Aada, 28

In the previous extract, Aada first lists different types of online impulsive purchases, and continues with her experiences of them. She admits that her enthusiasm for washable cloth diapers can sometimes lead her to buy them in excess, i.e. more than she has planned. As in this extract, the theme of economic rationality is relevant throughout her interview. Her husband is still studying, and thus their family income is fairly low. Although they have a tough economic situation, she can rationalize (for herself and for others, such as for her husband) impulse purchases of washable cloth diapers by regarding these purchases as 'good' impulsive purchases, as they are in everyday use and can last in future use as well. This reflects her view that some impulsive purchases she has made were not based on need, and can be considered unnecessary and dispensable.

Aada explains one specific example of buying cloth diapers as a multiple purchase. Her friend was visiting the United States for a longer period, and she decided to buy washable cloth diapers so that they could be delivered first to her friend in the US. Therefore, the decision to buy diapers was planned in advance, but the amount of diapers that she ended up buying was more than she had intended. However, Aada had to wait for her friend to return from the USA to Finland to receive the diapers she had ordered. This took more than a month from placing the order. This long waiting time aroused many feelings in Aada. She describes her feelings during the process:

A: Especially when I ordered from America and not for a very small sum, when ordered a lot at one time, the waiting time and when they arrive, first, that you hear from there [...] that they have arrived [with your friends] and then of course there was no great rush any more, when hearing that they were there... but of course when you still have to wait

[...] well, it was like what have I gone and ordered, this fascination with something new that comes when you buy something all at once at the store, you lose that feeling a bit, that... except that on the other hand when you get them after a long time, and that you have paid for them a long time ago, then you feel a bit as if, that I'm getting something for nothing...

N: [...] what did it feel like when you saw them after waiting for a long time?

A: well, that was just it, because the money for them didn't go just at that moment, well it was really great, but if you think specifically of those diapers well it was a bit like... That I'd ordered so much that I couldn't get so excited about them all, there were so many of them, but they were really things that worked and purchases that worked

Aada, 28

At first, she was relieved to know that the products she ordered were delivered to her friend in the USA. However, as time passed, the charm of novelty and initial excitement of ordering the products diminished. On the other hand, as the products were paid with a credit card when placing the order, receiving the products after a while made her forget about the payment and created a feeling that the products might have been free of charge. All these feelings are also related in this specific experience to the theme of delayed gratification, i.e. how the excitement can wear down during an extended waiting period. In addition, as she bought so many different types of diapers, she was not that enthusiastic about individual products. Also, due to her large order, at one point during the process, she did not even fully remember what the order contained all in all.

Often quantity discounts offered by the webstore encourage Aada to make these multiple purchases of diapers:

Many times as especially buying diapers from those webstores there is a discount for bulk buying, so that if you buy six you get that price or if you buy four then it's cheaper well if you think that well I need a couple, now I could buy a little bit more, and then what makes a difference with diapers is that with those better known diaper brands the selling on price is so good that I know that even if I buy more of them and if we don't find a use for them, I can always get rid of them and at almost the same price [...] it doesn't matter if a bit more money goes now because it can be got back really that ultimately not many of them did get sold on and I've kept them quite a while for myself... of course because the girl is still small and uses them, they're there waiting that if one day we have more children we'll use the same ones... what it is, it's that why I've dared to buy like that is that when you think of the benefit then when there's the next one, then maybe there's be no need... unless if there's all sorts that's new and wonderful [laughter]

Aada, 28

Aada considers especially volume discounts to make her change her mind about the quantity of diapers in her order. This is related to the theme of price, as the more she ends up buying, the cheaper the price per individual product. Again, the economic rationality behind multiple purchasing of diapers is conveyed in this extract. Aada considers that buying more diapers and spending more money than planned is rational, because, in addition to the volume discounts, the resale value of the diapers is high. This is related also to the theme of risk, as the high resale value of the diapers makes them a low risk item for impulsive purchases. In addition, the impulsive purchase of the diapers can be justified on their long-lasting life. However, although the diapers might be of use later on with future children, she admits that rational reasoning does not always work in her case, as enchanting new products and quantity discounts might tempt her to try new diapers although the old ones might still be usable. Therefore, although Aada can justify buying more than she has planned based on rational and economic reasons, her excitement and interest in trying new products in this specific product category is a strong motivator for impulsive buying.

As a summary, multiple purchasing refers to those types of online purchases which are bought in more quantities than initially planned. The purchase of some specific product as well as the visit to the webstore can be carefully planned as such, but based on impulsive decision making, the consumer ends up buying more of the same product than originally intended. Consumer can often justify this impulsive multiple purchasing of the product with rational reasoning, such as with getting volume discounts that lower the price per individual product.

5.2.2 Complementary purchasing

Complementary purchasing refers to those impulsive purchases that the consumer considers complementary to the product that the consumer had planned buying when entering the webstore. The initial reason to visit the webstore is to buy some predetermined, planned product. However, as a result of the buying process, the consumer ends up buying complementary product(s) in addition to the planned product.

An example of a complementary purchasing experience appears in the interview with Helmi. Helmi is 29-year-old housewife, an engineer with a university degree and a mother of two children. She has used the Internet for over 10 years, and has made

purchases on the Internet for about four years. Also for Helmi, Internet plays an important role in every aspect of life, and she thinks that it would be difficult to live without it. She has made very diverse purchases on the Internet, ranging from clothing to furniture. She prefers to buy from webstores that are familiar to her in some way.

In Helmi's complementary purchasing experience, she had planned to buy a baby cot from a furniture retailer's webstore. Retailer was familiar to her, but she had not ordered products from their webstore before this. In general, Helmi perceives furniture as more planned than impulsive type of a purchase. Also in this case, the purchase was very well planned in advance. The decision about where and what to buy was made after careful consideration, as Helmi and her husband needed a cot for their new baby that would fit the specific measurements of the old baby mattress they already had. Therefore, buying the cot was not an impulsive decision. As a result of the buying process, she ended up buying the cot as planned. However, in addition to the cot she bought a new baby mattress. Thus, purchasing the mattress that complements the cot is an example of complementary purchasing:

H: Now the last thing I bought was a cot and then I bought the mattress for it, I wasn't supposed to buy that because we already had the...

[...]

N: So what decided you to buy just that particular cot?

H: It was the right size [laughter] because I had the mattress and I wanted to have a matching bed

[...]

N: Well, how did it come about that you ordered the mattress [laughter], although it was originally the reason

H: I guess it was one of those victim of advertising type of situations, that is well, look in those webstores they always first have the product and then the things related to it, and then you click on this and that, and then there was this fine bit of advertising talk about how this particular mattress is just great, you can really wash it, in the machine that is [laughter] and all that, so then I ordered the mattress as well... that is there they said these tempting things about that mattress and then I went and bought it

Helmi, 29

Helmi explains that it was the product presentation in the webstore that got her to buy the mattress impulsively. A somewhat sarcastic attitude towards webstore advertising emanates from her account. She sees that she became a 'victim' of the strategy of webstores to advertise on the same webpage products that are related to the product at

hand. In this case, it was ordering the cot that made her click and see also the presentation of the complementary product, the mattress. In addition, the product description of the mattress – ‘advertising talk’ as she calls it – claimed the product to have excellent attributes unique only to this exact type of mattress offered by this particular webstore.

N: Well what sort of, what sort of a mood were you in when you made the purchase, just regarding the mattress when you put it into your shopping basket

H: well, the situation was that when I ordered it for the new baby I thought that it’s got to have its own mattress that it doesn’t need to sleep on its brother’s mattress and maybe it was like a burst of tenderness [laughter]... in that particular situation

Helmi, 29

In addition, the impulsive buying experience was interpreted by Helmi as related to having a new baby, i.e. to feelings of motherhood, and to being a good mother by buying a new mattress for the new baby. For Helmi, motherhood is a central theme in other online impulsive buying experiences, and especially of complementary purchasing. For example, she mentions buying a t-shirt on an impulse for her son to complement the purchase of shorts:

N: Well regarding babyclothes, have you made any impulse buys?

H: just about every time really, I guess... that you buy something where you know, that you need shorts and then in the end you also buy the t-shirt if there happens to be a suitable one

Helmi, 29

Another example of complementary purchasing is given by Aino. Aino is a 30-year-old researcher, who has also used the Internet for over 10 years. She has made purchases on the Internet for about 6–7 years, and she feels comfortable buying from webstores she is familiar with, and buying products that she can be certain what they are. For example, she avoids buying clothing items online, as she cannot be sure whether they fit her, and as returning clothes takes a lot of effort. Instead, she mostly buys products such as books, CDs or DVDs online. She has made also some special purchases online, such as when she ordered a specific type of English lemon tea that she had previously bought in England.

In general, Aino visits webstores usually when she has some specific product in mind that she would like to buy. In this example of complementary purchasing situation, she had planned to buy some specific English grammar book, and this was the reason to enter the webstore. As explained earlier, books are the types of products she usually buys online and feels comfortable buying online. She had also previous experience of ordering from that specific webstore. In this example, she buys the book as planned, but in addition buys another, complementing book on an impulse.

With Amazon it once went like that when I was buying some book, well they recommended that those who have bought this book have also bought, and clickety clicked it and then I ended up buying another product, too [...] well, it really complemented the other one, so that when I was buying the English grammar book [laughter], they recommended some other grammar book which took another perspective on the matter and I thought that was just fine that it came that I would never have thought of it myself that it would also be worth ordering that one, but I was very glad that it helped a bit that way

Aino, 30

As also in Helmi's case, Aino got the initial impulse to buy the complementary product from the webstore. As Aino describes, when she was ordering another book on English grammar, the webstore presented products that other customers who ordered the same book had also bought. She perceived the other English grammar book as complementary, as the book had a different view on the subject than the one she had already decided to buy. Overall, Aino was satisfied as the webstore gave her an idea for a purchase that she had not thought of before entering the store.

To summarize, also in complementary purchasing the consumer enters the webstore with some predetermined purchase in mind. However, the consumer ends up buying some other, additional product or products that are perceived as complementary to the predetermined purchase. This type of online impulsive buying is related especially to the theme of product presentation. Ideas for buying complementary purchases are usually received from the same webpage as the one that presents the product consumer had planned buying. For example, the product presentation webpage might suggest products that complement the product at issue or list products that other consumers have bought.

5.2.3 Additional purchasing

Also in additional purchasing, the consumer enters the webstore with some particular product(s) in mind. However, if we look at the virtual shopping cart at the final phase, the final order includes products that were not originally planned buying, but were added to the shopping cart on an impulse. In contrast to the previous subtypes, however, the impulsive items are not of the same product nor bought as a complementary to the original product.

This type of online impulsive buying is illustrated by Anni. She is a 32-year-old entrepreneur and a mother of four children, the youngest of which is only a few weeks old. As Anni is very busy, she has always regarded herself as a ‘shopper on the couch’, i.e. as a person who likes to do most of her shopping at home. Besides the fact that she does not have time to go shopping offline with her four children, her work is related to retailing, and consequently, she thinks that she spends enough time in stores while working. Therefore, she does not want spend also her free time visiting brick-and-mortar stores. Previously, she used to be an active mail catalogue shopper, but now she has used the Internet for shopping (and for other activities) for over six years. Anni describes that she has bought ‘almost anything’ on the Internet except for pharmaceuticals, groceries and alcohol. She frequently visits especially those familiar webstores that are also listed in her web browser’s bookmarks.

Anni describes her experiences of additional buying:

Yes you get hooked on them [web purchases], if you set out to buy something there, well generally then I always go and look at the sale pages at least and many times you get hooked on something else that you hadn’t set out to buy

Anni, 32

The extract illustrates that for Anni, browsing for additional products has become almost a habit. She has a routine to browse also other products’ pages than the one she had planned buying. This behavior is mainly directed towards those pages which list products that are on discount. For Anni, the additional, impulsive purchases are most frequently made from this bargain section of the webstore. This is related to the theme of price discussed in the previous chapter.

Many times I think that if I go to buy something specific there [the webstore] at the same time I'll take a look if there's anything that might come in later that I should buy all the same, I mean you know with children's clothes that in spring you'll need to buy certain items for spring so then I've many times looked at them at the same time whether there are any I could buy at the same time on the same delivery costs

Anni, 32

As Anni describes, the products that she buys as additional purchases, are those that would be needed sooner or later. Therefore, visiting the store in order to buy some other product makes it tempting for her to buy the additional items a little bit sooner than planned. This also gives Anni a reason to justify her impulsive buying. This reflects also her general view that online impulsive purchases are necessary at some level:

It's always somehow necessary what I've bought [online on impulse] even if it has been one of those impulse buys

Anni, 32

Another justification Anni gives for the additional purchasing is postage and packing charges. This was mentioned already in the extract before last, as she mentioned that she browses for potential purchases so that they can be included in the same postage and packing charges. Anni explains further:

On the web of course the delivery costs always raise the price so you should think about that. That you don't want to just buy a 20-euro blouse if the postage is 7 euros and then you'd rather buy impulse buys with it [laughter] if you really must have the blouse

Anni, 32

As the extract illustrates, Anni can rationalize her additional impulsive purchases online by the high postage and packing charges of ordering only one product. Accordingly, buying additional products on an impulse is a way of reducing the cost of postage per product. Her way of thinking can be considered an 'all-or-nothing' arrangement, where buying the original, planned product is conditional whether or not she finds any additional, usually impulsive purchases, to be included in the same order.

A similar type of view, in which the consumer has a principle that it is the better the more he or she can buy with the same postage and packing charges, was evident in many other interviews as well, as the following examples demonstrate:

Especially if it's [the delivery charge] a fixed sum like for example with cdon.com [webstore], in a way it's cheaper the more stuff you buy [laughter]

Aino, 30

When it's one postage charge I try to see whether I need something else... so that I don't go and order just one product over the web as the postage is high

Pinja, 44

More often than not you end up looking at other alternatives if you should take anything else on the same postage charge that's the point that you want to save there

Tuomas, 28

V: ...but I never order from there so that there's only be one book coming [laughter] so that then I always... think that with the same trouble a couple more

N: [...] what would it like feel like if there were only that one book in the basket?

V: well, maybe I'd just feel that, especially if I were to get only one book that why didn't I order a couple more at the same time....

Venla, 41

The extracts show that, mainly due to shipping costs, some consumers are reluctant to order only one product per order. This is related to the theme of price of the product: when only one product per order is purchased, the shipping costs are perceived to be part of the price of that individual product. Therefore, consumers are willing to add more products to those orders, despite an increase in the total amount of money spent. This is the case especially with fixed shipping costs, which are the same no matter how large the order is. Extracts also demonstrate that for these consumers, having more than one product per order is self-evident and normal, whereas ordering only one product can seem irrational.

All the previous examples of additional purchasing refer to buying physical products that require shipping and that usually have postage and packaging fee(s) added to the order. However, additional purchasing can occur also with electronic products that are downloadable and thus delivered to the customer online. This is illustrated in the interview with Juho. He is a 30-year-old research and development manager with a technical education. Juho has used the Internet for over 10 years, and the Internet plays a focal role in his life. He spends several hours a day online, and even when travelling he uses the Internet on his laptop. Also online buying has been part of Juho's Internet

behavior for long, about 7 years. He considers that online buying has become an ordinary activity for him. Usually, Juho has some specific product in mind when visiting webstores, i.e. he is not that interested in browsing webstores just for the fun of it. However, the only exception to this is browsing through music in webstores. Juho describes an impulsive buying experience of additional purchasing:

Well with music, well I suppose quite often, you could say, that certainly at least 50% of what I buy is something more than what I originally intended to buy [...] I have this particular record which always gets me to think, hey, could I buy some music and I have that one particular record in mind, but I'm in no way limited to that particular record, at the same time I can look if there might be something else here... it's still, they're such small, cheap things that they easily get bought, especially when you can buy those tracks separately, too, so that one euro more feels like nothing at all

Juho, 30

For Juho, it has become almost a habit to browse the webstore to find some additional pieces of music in addition to the one(s) he has planned buying. He thinks that with the same effort, while visiting the webstore, he should browse to see whether or not he can find also something else, and most of the time he does buy something additional. Again, this is related to the theme of product price: Juho perceives the price per product as low, which further encourages him to add products to the shopping cart.

Forgetting the original purchase. In a few impulse buying experiences the interviewees reported that instead of buying products in addition to the product they had planned buying, they forgot about the initial product altogether, and bought something else instead. This can be seen as an exception to the type of additional buying. Although the consumer does not end up buying the same product he or she has planned buying, the original reason to visit the webstore is the same as in other cases of additional buying – to buy some specific product. However, for some reason, the purchase is substituted with another product, as the following two examples illustrate:

Yes I think that the net is more on the impulse side than on the planned side nevertheless... I might plan to buy something and then on the net there I change my mind and buy something quite different [...] I might even in two hours, I don't remember why I originally went there, now what was it I was supposed to be buying [laughter]

Venla, 41

The last time I was in cdon.com I started buying this CD and then I noticed that when I had made the order that oh yes, what's missing here now [laughter] [...] I rather got carried away buying those DVDs so the CD got somehow forgotten, I forgot it then, because I didn't put it there right away [laughter]

Aino, 30

In the extracts above, both Venla and Aino said that during their visit to the webstore, they forgot to buy the product that was originally the reason to enter the webstore. Venla explains that after a while in the webstore, she can wake up to realize that she has forgotten what she was supposed to buy. Aino, on the other hand, describes that she was too excited to buy other, impulsively bought products (DVDs) that she forgot to add the originally planned product (CD) to the shopping cart. Both of these examples suggest that although consumers start their visit to the webstore with carefully planned product purchases in mind, they can become so excited about buying impulsively other items that they forget the reason for their visit.

As a summary, also in additional purchasing, the consumer has some specific product in mind when entering the webstore, and ends up buying impulsively also other products in addition to the predetermined purchase, thus increasing the order. However, in contrast to previously presented types, the products added on an impulse are something else than of the same product (multiple purchasing) or complementary to the planned product (complementary purchasing). Some consumers consider it rational to add impulsive purchases to the order with the purpose of reducing shipping costs per product. In addition, it seems that even though shipping costs would not be an issue (for example in the case of electronically downloadable products), some consumers think that with the same visit they should always at least see some other products than the one they came to buy. This browsing for additional products to buy can lead to making additional, impulsive purchases.

5.2.4 Summary of order increase

In all three subtypes of 'order increase', the reason for the visit to the webstore is the same. Before entering the webstore, the consumer has made specific plans about what to buy at the store, i.e. some specific product they need or would like to buy. However, during the visit, these plans change, as the consumer impulsively adds other products to

the order, thus deviating from the original plan. The result is an increase in the size of the order and the money spent. The subtypes differ from each other based on what is the role of the impulsive purchase(s) as compared to the planned purchase. In multiple purchasing, impulsive purchases are the same products as were intended to buy, in complementary purchasing the product bought on an impulse is perceived to complement the original purchase, while in additional purchasing, the products increasing the order size can be anything else but the types specified in multiple and complementary purchasing.

It seems that many consumers justify these impulsive, order increase type of purchases with rational reasons. For example, if the shipping costs are fixed per order, why not order more in order to save in shipping costs per product? Or, if the webstore offers volume discounts, why not order more, as the price per product decreases, and the products are needed after all at some point in the future?

There are some connections between order increase type of online impulsive buying and some previous research both on impulsive buying and consumer online behavior. Order increase type of online impulsive buying can be related to what Bayley and Nancarrow (1998, 111) call “accelerator” impulsive purchases, which are “motivated by a sudden desire to stock up for a future need”, and which reinforce consumer image of a “good economic manager”. In my research, this is especially connected to buying more of the same item than planned, i.e. multiple purchasing based on volume discounts, or to buying additional products that can be rationalized based on savings in shipping costs. In addition, in their experimental study of cognitive decision making in sequential purchases, Dhar, Huber, and Khan (2007) proposed that a shopping momentum effect can occur when “an initial purchase provides a psychological impulse that enhances the purchase of a second, unrelated product”. As the second item is an unrelated product, in my research data, this is related especially to additional purchasing. Furthermore, previous research into factors influencing online impulsive buying suggests that as the amount spent on other purchases increases, consumers are more likely to purchase an additional item on an impulse (Jeffrey & Hodge, 2007).

5.3 Webstore browsing

I really like going into the web to look at the firms' websites, but I don't necessarily buy anything... but then if there really happens to be something suitable at the right price, well why not

Alisa, 42

Webstore browsing, as the name suggests, refers to those types of online impulsive purchases that result from browsing a particular webstore. The term 'browsing' can be seen as analogous to window shopping in traditional retailing. However, instead of taking a glimpse into the offerings of the store through a store window, on the Internet the offerings of the webstore are explored on the website.

In this type of online impulsive buying, and in contrast to order increase type of buying, the consumer does not have any particular, predetermined purchase in mind when entering the store. Webstore browsing is further divided into two subtypes: *pastime browsing* and *promotional browsing*. These two types differ in relation to how webstore browsing is initiated. In pastime browsing, browsing the webstore is essentially an activity to spend time, whereas in promotional browsing, the browsing activity is initiated by promotional material the consumer receives from a familiar webstore.

5.3.1 Pastime browsing

In pastime browsing, the consumer browses the webstore or webstores as a pastime activity. This browsing occurs as the consumer wants to spend time on webstore sites, for example to see what is on offer or if new products have become available. Impulsive buying occurs as a result of this browsing.

Pastime browsing is illustrated in the interview with Lotta. Lotta is a 28-year-old kindergarten teacher who is now on maternity leave nursing her two-month-old baby. Lotta has about eight years of experience with the Internet, and she has made her first purchases online a couple of years ago. Her online purchases consist mostly of clothing items and books. Now that she is at home with her baby, she has time to browse the Internet, and especially to browse webstores that are familiar to her. In fact, Lotta

considers her online buying behavior in general to be mostly related to those situations in which she browses the webstores' sites:

If you otherwise have the time to spend on these shopping sites, then it's very likely that you will be ordering something so that in a way it's quite an easy tool [...] sometimes you intend to buy something, but sometimes it's just a way of passing the time if you have nothing particular to do, so you go and look to see what they've got

Lotta, 25

Lotta describes her online buying behavior as resembling shopping. Sometimes, when she has nothing special to do, she ends up spending time by browsing webstores to see what they have. When she starts to browse, she might have a general intention to buy 'something' that is unspecified in advance. These browsing sessions can end up in buying products on an impulse:

Generally it [buying online] is maybe that when you see something that looks good, well right away then really [...] that you don't stop to think much about it

Lotta, 25

Lotta considers this mode of buying on an impulse, i.e. pastime browsing, to be the most usual way for her to make purchases online. She does not plan or think about her purchases for long, but instead, can almost instantly make a decision to buy any product that pleases her eye and interests her. Lotta explains further a specific online impulsive buying experience of buying towels on an impulse:

N: Now what, how does that happen, tell me a bit more exactly

L: ...I thought that I might buy something and then I browsed through [...] they [towels bought on an impulse] now they looked really good, and then like I just suddenly decided that I'll order them, although they weren't really all that great after all

Lotta, 25

Also in this example, Lotta has a general intention to buy if something interesting appears when browsing the webstore. Therefore, she had no plans about buying any specific product, but she had given herself a permission to buy, which is conditional on finding something interesting enough. Previously in the interview, Lotta has told that this impulsive buying of towels occurred as she was browsing the website of a familiar webstore she often visits. During this visit, she noticed the towels that started to interest her and, consequently, she ends up buying on an impulse. For Lotta, it is especially the

appearance of the towels that attracted her attention. When making the order, the towels seemed lovely, but when she received them, she was disappointed about their quality:

N: [...] what was it about them that you still then...

L: I imagined something different or something a bit thicker, that they'd be rather thicker towels, and then they were pretty thin

N: and I suppose you got that idea according to what there...

L: well from the picture and that you see

Lotta, 25

Lotta had anticipated, based on the product images in the product presentation, that the towels would be of much thicker quality than they actually were. Therefore, she was disappointed when she received them. This is related to the theme of product presentation discussed in the earlier chapter. All in all, it seems that for Lotta, impulsive purchases made as a result of pastime browsing are quite heavily based on the visual appeal of the products. If some product pleases her eye, she can make a decision to buy on spur of the moment. And this visual appeal of the products is created mainly by the product presentation images. However, the reality does not always meet the expectations created by the product presentation, as the example above demonstrates.

Pastime browsing can be related to some specific situations in consumers' lives. In these situations, it can become more or less a habit for the consumer to start browsing webstores' offerings. An example of this is illustrated in the interview with Santeri. Santeri is a single 30-year-old software tester. He has long experience of using the Internet, as he had a modem already at the beginning of the 1990s. He has also over 10 years of experience of making purchases online, and he has bought online almost everything else except daily groceries and clothing items.

At the time of the interview, Santeri is using the Internet only at work. He has recently bought his own apartment, and he has agreed to himself that he does not order an Internet connection to his home until he has finished renovating the apartment. Previously, when he had Internet available also at home, he had the connection open almost all the time, and he browsed the Internet for example while watching television. Now, when the Internet is available only at work, he uses the Internet significantly less for these entertainment purposes. Personal use of the Internet, including making

purchases online, is in his current situation restricted to being at work. Santeri describes his browsing behavior related to webstores:

My work is that sort that there are always these few minutes of waiting when you can't do anything, you can't read an article or anything like that but in that time I've some webstores that I sometimes browse, and that play.com [webstore] bargain section, some huuto.net those [...] whatever it occurs to me to browse

Santeri, 30

For Santeri, webstore browsing is closely related to his schedules at work. Although he is at work, at times his work includes moments he is unable to perform work-related tasks. Instead, during those moments he has a habit of browsing what webstores have to offer. These webstores are typically those that are familiar to him, those that he visits often in these situations. Although Santeri has a very restricted time frame available, he can use that time to browse webstores as a pastime activity. Santeri further depicts his browsing:

N: (...) now do you have some product that you deliberately set out to look for there?

S: mainly it's generally the page for offers, [...] they've got them grouped well by subject [...] because there's now such a big volume of trade, so they also have a lot of special offers, usually it's just, like this browsing for fun... compared with how much I browse those offer sites, it's not very often that I really look for something

Santeri, 30

The excerpt above illustrates that, for the most of the time when webstore browsing 'for fun', Santeri does not have any particular product in mind when entering the webstore. Instead, his browsing is directed towards the bargain sections of these familiar webstores. As was discussed previously with relation to the theme of product price, for some consumers, browsing the bargain sections of webstores can be a source of impulsive purchases.

As a summary, in pastime browsing, the consumer can have a general buying intention, but he or she has not planned buying any specific product prior to entering the webstore. However, the browsing activity can result in making impulsive purchases. Usually, this type of behavior occurs in webstores that are already familiar to the consumer. In addition, pastime browsing can be quite a regular activity, directed towards some specific sections of the webstore, such as the bargain section, and can be related to some specific situations in consumer's daily life.

5.3.2 Promotional browsing

Promotional browsing refers to those impulsive online buying experiences, in which the consumer starts to browse a webstore as a result of receiving promotional material related to that particular webstore. As a result of this browsing process, impulsive purchases can occur.

An example of promotional browsing is illustrated in the interview with Alisa. Alisa is a 42-year-old secretary, who has recently moved with her youngest child from a smaller municipality to a larger town. She has used the Internet for over 10 years, and she has made online purchases for almost as long. She does not want to buy products by searching them using search engines such as Google, but prefers to order only from companies she can trust and that are familiar to her. Alisa has previously ordered products from mail catalogues, and receives catalogues home also nowadays. Many of these catalogue firms have also a webstore, and as they are familiar to Alisa, she visits mostly them when she is shopping online. She prefers browsing these companies' webstores and ordering products online to ordering from their mail catalogues. Alisa also receives promotional messages from these familiar companies by e-mail. Usually, her webstore browsing is initiated by these promotional e-mails:

When I get e-mail, I'm on their [webstores'] mailing lists and it's enough, if I find something cute there then I can keep on looking from there

Alisa, 42

As Alisa explains, the role of promotional material is to encourage her to start browsing the webstore. If she finds something interesting in the e-mail, this is a sufficient reason for her to start browsing the company's website. As Alisa explains further, these promotional e-mails can contain for example information about products on special offer:

A: ...when there's an approach by e-mail, for example, where there's some certain offer, well you go and look at that offer and then you get stuck there [laughter]

N: just looking, aha

A: ...that necessarily the offer that was there, that you went to look at, you don't stick with it, but something else might stick, so that quite often the time goes on that

Alisa, 42

The product on special offer which is advertised in the e-mail does not necessarily end up in her virtual shopping cart. Instead, after seeing the product on offer, she can ‘get stuck’ on the webstore’s site, and consequently, start to browse the site in order to see what else is available in the webstore. As a result of this browsing, Alisa might buy these other products on an impulse. Thus, receiving promotional material acts as a reminder for her that a particular webstore can contain something interesting to be discovered. In addition, these promotional e-mails can encourage her to browse other webstores as well:

I get e-mail messages from different firms about this, that and the other, from there you can easily stray somewhere then and go and look at them... and then many times that when you go onto some site, then it comes to you that, hey, I wonder what there might be there and ...then it’s window shopping, so that you end up going round many other sites and seeing what sort of finds there might be and so on that they have all sorts of offers there and I browse them pretty often

Alisa, 42

As the above extract illustrates, for Alisa, receiving a promotional e-mail from one webstore can start a chain of actions that leads not only to browsing the webstore that sent the promotional message, but also to browsing other familiar webstores. As Alisa explains, this leads to her type of Internet ‘window shopping’, i.e. visiting and browsing for example the bargain sections of different webstores that are familiar to her.

This type of promotional browsing behavior can also become a routine or a habit for the consumer. This becomes apparent for example in the interview with Julia. Julia is a 44-year-old telemarketer, living with her husband and two cats. She has used the Internet only for about a year, and she has made her first purchases online also about a year ago. As Alisa, she usually visits and makes purchases only in those webstores she is already familiar with. She also receives promotional material by email from a few of the webstores she visits regularly. In the following extract, Julia discusses her online impulsive buying:

Now maybe everything has come with the net, that it became a bit easier, that I might have that buying thing, that I might buy things more easily. That it’s not as if... like before, before there even *was* the net, well it might be that I thought about it and thought so I didn’t do it on a moment’s impulse, so that in that situation it might be that it comes in a moment’s impulse, that...

N: now can you say, describe a bit more exactly, what it is that it gets done a bit more easily?

J: I don't know, that maybe it's that... I haven't really like, that...

N: now what if, do you have certain days of the week or situations when you visit?

J: not really... it just somehow happens that, like for example I get e-mail from Hairstore [webstore] all the time, it makes me laugh that whenever an e-mail has come, well I always go and take a look what cute things there might be again [laughter]...

Julia, 44

As the interview extract illustrates, visiting the webstore after receiving a promotional e-mail from them has become a habit for her. She describes that prior to buying products online, she thought out her purchase decisions more than now when ordering online. One situation she mentions as typical for this impulsive, spur-of-the-moment buying is when she receives promotional material by e-mail. As a habit, after seeing the e-mail, she must visit the webstore to see what interesting they have in their product assortment this time.

In addition to receiving promotional material by e-mail, promotional browsing can be initiated by other promotional materials. Some interviewees reported that when they receive catalogues by mail, instead of reading the catalogue, they prefer to browse the webstore of the same company:

I can't be bothered any more even to browse those catalogues [...] when it's Christmas it's just about spring clothes, and then when when the new catalogue came out I went right away to look at the website and I could see oh yes, there are neat things that I'll order them and them and them...

Pinja, 44

Pinja has previously ordered a lot through catalogues. However, after making her first online orders she realized how convenient it is to order online instead of by mail order. Therefore, nowadays she prefers online ordering. She still, however, receives printed catalogues by mail, but their role has changed. Now the arrival of the new catalogue marks the opening of a new clothing season. Instead of browsing the catalogue, the arrival of the catalogue reminds her of browsing the same company's webstore to see the newly-available clothes. As a result, as she describes in the extract, she can end up buying clothes on spur of the moment from the webstore.

To summarize, in promotional browsing, the consumer becomes interested in browsing a webstore as a result of receiving promotional material. Before seeing the promotional material, the consumer has neither prior intentions to buy any specific

product nor even intentions to visit any webstore. This promotional material can be received by e-mail or, if the consumer is a customer of a mail catalogue firm, by receiving a new catalogue by mail. No matter how the material is received, it is important that the consumer is familiar with that particular webstore, i.e. has purchased or visited it earlier, and that the consumer has given consent about receiving this material. Promotional messages usually contain information or offers on individual products, and although the consumer might not be interested in that particular product as such, he or she might end up browsing the webstore's site, and consequently buy something else on an impulse. In essence, the role of the promotional material is, therefore, to remind the consumer that this webstore exists. For some consumers, browsing the webstore after receiving this promotional material can become a habit, and sometimes this can encourage them to browse also other webstores than the one who sent the material. Consumers can end up making impulsive purchases during this browsing initiated by the promotional material.

5.3.3 Summary of webstore browsing

In webstore browsing type of online impulsive purchases, an impulsive purchase decision occurs when the consumer is browsing a webstore. However, in contrast to order increase type of impulsive purchases, in webstore browsing the initial reason to enter the webstore is not to buy any predetermined purchase. Instead, consumers enter the webstore to browse it just for fun, without any specific plans. They are, however, prepared to make a purchase in case something interesting appears.

Webstore browsing and possible impulsive purchases resulting from it can be initiated by either a need to spend time by browsing the webstore or by an interest created when receiving promotional material from a webstore. In both of these cases, the webstore visited is most likely a familiar webstore that the consumer has visited or even ordered from earlier. Therefore, this type of online impulsive buying is related to the theme of loyalty. It seems that for some consumers, webstore browsing can become a habit in the course of time – familiar webstores are browsed regularly for instance when a convenient situation occurs in everyday life or when they receive a promotional message from a webstore.

As discussed also in the second chapter of this report, online impulsive buying has been related in previous research mostly to hedonic browsing (Moe & Fader, 2001; Moe, 2003). During those hedonic browsing visits, the consumer does not necessarily have any intentions to buy, and the process itself can be enjoyable for the consumer. Therefore, previous studies on online impulsive buying are related especially to these webstore browsing types of impulsive buying experiences, and particularly to pastime browsing, in which the browsing activity is initially motivated by the enjoyment from the browsing process. In addition, in previous research on impulsive buying in the brick-and-mortar stores, it has been acknowledged that in-store browsing, i.e. the amount of time spent just looking around, is positively related to impulse buying urges felt by the consumer, and as a consequence, to impulse purchases (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998). Similarly, in my research, the webstore browsing type of online impulsive buying involves this just-looking-around type of behavior. However, some contradicting results have also been obtained, as in their structural modeling of impulse buying on the Internet, Costa and Laran (2003) found an inverse direction between in-store browsing and impulse buying, i.e. that in-store browsing has a negative influence on the incidence of impulse purchases.

5.4 Out-of-context purchasing

N: ...what do you understand by this impulse buying on the net, what is it in actual fact?

A: I suppose it's much the same, or well, maybe it doesn't work quite like an regular impulse buy, because generally you go into a shop with some intention... in the net you might be there just looking for some information and something interesting might jump out which distracts you

Aada, 28

In out-of-context purchasing, consumer does not have any intentions to buy a product when he or she starts an Internet session. As a matter of fact, the consumer might not even have planned visiting any webstore. Accordingly, as the name of this type suggests, 'out-of-context purchasing' refers to those buying situations in which the initial impulse to buy the product comes in some other context than inside a webstore, for example when searching for information on some topic or when encountered online

with an interesting banner ad. As Aada explains, when starting an Internet session, you can never know where the session ends up:

You only have to write something just a bit wrong and on almost every site there are links somewhere or the adverts almost jump out at you so you don't necessarily have to be looking for something interesting and... sure thing [the Internet] has changed life, that otherwise nobody would ever think that more of those impulse buys are made than before...

Aada, 28

In my research data, out-of-context purchasing appeared in two forms, *trial purchasing* and *social purchasing*. Trial purchasing refers to those situations in which the impulse to visit a webstore or to buy the product is initiated by some material outside any webstore, and that raises curiosity towards trying out the product. In social purchasing, on the other hand, the impulse comes from dealings with other people online, but in other than a webstore context.

5.4.1 Trial purchasing

In trial purchasing, the consumer makes an impulsive purchase for experimental purposes, i.e. out of curiosity. Consumer has not planned buying the product before starting to browse the Internet, but, for some reason, during the Internet session, curiosity either towards buying process, the webstore, or some specific product emerges and the consumer ends up buying on an impulse.

One illustrative example of trial purchasing appears in the interview with Anni. On many occasions during the interview, Anni talks about an impulsive purchase she considers one of the most memorable:

Really the most interesting and entertaining was buying eyeglasses online, I just tried... if I remember right it was, I don't remember if it was from Sweden or where the firm was, but they sell eyeglasses there [on the Internet] [...] I just looked out of interest, the price was so cheap, that I decided to try what would come of this... I ordered from there, you could have three pairs home on trial and then you were supposed to choose what you wanted and then in front of the mirror you were to mark where your pupils were on those lenses [laughter]... [...] it made me laugh, so it was such an interesting experience, that I simply had to try it just for fun, to see what would come of it... and

from there I ordered sunglasses with my strength of lenses and they were so cheap that I thought whatever comes of it I'm trying this, just out of interest...

Anni, 32

As Anni describes, this impulsive trial purchasing concerned buying eyeglasses, or actually sunglasses, on the Internet. This purchase was made impulsively, as she had not considered buying eyeglasses before seeing an ad promoting the store. The process of buying eyeglasses on an impulse online was initiated by her curiosity towards the buying process. She had never before thought that it would be possible to buy eyeglasses on the Internet. Therefore, the whole process, from ordering several different frames to trying them on to marking your pupils on the lenses, appeared so exciting to Anni that she wanted to see how it ends up. As Anni explains, also the price of the eyeglasses was low, which further encouraged her to experiment with the buying process. Therefore, this is related to the theme of price, which was discussed in the previous chapter.

I can't even remember how I got onto that website, just by chance there was a link on some other page or something like that, and just for fun I went to see if they really were selling eyeglasses there

Anni, 32

Anni ended up in the webstore after noticing a link on another website. The thought of ordering eyeglasses on the Internet seemed so bizarre to Anni that she clicked on the link out of curiosity, and consequently ended up on the webstore's site. However, when starting the Internet session, she had planned neither visiting any webstore nor ordering anything.

Those eyeglasses were a total impulse buy, that I have to admit, but it was this crazy thing, this curiosity that I simply had to go through with the whole process

Anni, 32

The impulse buying example by Anni illustrates most of all her curiosity towards trying the online buying process of a product that was not typical to be bought on the Internet. Once she got involved in the multistage buying process, there was no turning back, as she felt she had to finish the process by buying the product.

Another example of trial purchasing appeared in the interview with Alisa. She describes buying a warming heart pillow:

Thinking of the very first things I bought on the web, there was this heartwarmer, well it was something, yeah, that I simply had to have, and afterwards I bought more of them, but the first one, when you tried it, so it was perfectly good and still is, it's just great [laughter]

[...]

N: can you remember where you ordered it from, how you ended up in general, you found something suddenly so that you had to order it?

A: [laughter] as a matter of fact I ended up there from the bank's website, through a very strange route [laughter] it was out of pure curiosity that I went to see, there must have been some link where there were these different stores and so on and there, it must have been around Valentine's Day, there was this link that buy your friend a heartwarmer or something... and there they were, that's maybe something that I clearly know that it was as much an impulse buy as an impulse buy can be it was just that I just came across something suitable

Alisa, 42

Alisa's example of buying a warming heart pillow illustrates an impulse purchase that was also one of the first purchases she ever made online. The purchase was made out-of-context, as she ended up in the webstore through a link when visiting her Internet bank. When starting the Internet banking session, Alisa had no intention to visit any webstore or to buy any products. However, webstore links provided in an unusual place, in the Internet banking context, seemed interesting to her, and she ended up visiting them on an impulse and out of curiosity. In addition to the interesting links in a surprising context, the product bought on an impulse – a warming heart pillow – was very topical at the time of the purchase, as Valentine's Day was approaching.

The trial purchasing experience by Alisa demonstrates how impulse purchases can be initiated by creating curiosity towards webstores in some unexpected web context, such as, in this case, in the Internet banking context. As this purchase was among the first purchases she made on the Internet, she most probably wanted to experiment with the purchase process as well. However, most of all, it was the curiosity towards the product that was offered at a right time that finalized the purchase decision.

The two examples of trial purchasing presented earlier are both related to buying physical products. However, as the following extract shows, the Internet offers possibilities for trial purchasing of electronic products as well:

I have sometimes tried some new things and techniques on an impulse just like that net TV, I missed some episode of some TV show and I saw some advert that you can see it on net TV, and so I just happened to try it out of curiosity, so I've sometimes tried these things so that a few euros have gone on them from time to time, but they have not become something permanent for me

Juho, 30

For Juho, trial purchasing on an impulse is related to new services or techniques available online. In the example provided by him, he experimented with Internet pay TV. He had missed an episode of a TV series, and after seeing an advertisement about the possibility to watch the episode on the Internet pay TV, he decided to give it a try. However, according to Juho, these types of trial purchases are typically occasional, and do not usually end up as a regular online behavior.

As a summary, in trial purchasing the impulsive purchase is made as a result of high level of curiosity that requires the purchase to be made on spur of the moment. In addition, the initial curiosity towards buying appears in some other than webstore context. In other words, the consumers might notice an advertisement for the product or the webstore while browsing the Internet for some other purpose than making purchases. In these instances, the webstore where the purchase is made might not be familiar to the consumer. However, these experiences do not necessarily create loyalty or habits, i.e. purchases made by trial purchasing can remain occasional and isolated.

5.4.2 Social purchasing

Social purchasing refers to those online impulsive purchases in which the initial impulse to buy a product is based on peer-to-peer recommendations or communication made in other than webstore context. In contrast, product recommendations or product evaluations made by other consumers on a web retailer's site is not regarded as this type of social purchasing. This is because if the recommendation to buy is made inside a webstore, its content can be ultimately controlled by the e-tailer. Social purchasing occurs for example when the recommendation about an interesting product is sent by a friend by e-mail, as the extract from Aleksí's interview illustrates:

In my opinion there's more of that sort of thing on the web, that an impulse buy might be that some friend sends you a link for some product by e-mail and then you have to buy it

Aleksi, 32

Aleksi is a 32-year-old single man, who works as a CNC machinist. He has long experience of using the Internet, and he has been active in making online purchases since the end of 1990's. Most of Aleksi's online purchases are planned carefully in advance, and the most common, but also the most expensive purchases he has made online have been computer parts. Also, he considers himself in general a considerate rather than an impulsive buyer. However, he admits that nowadays most of the impulsive purchases he makes occur online. In the previous extract, Aleksi conceptualizes impulsive purchase on the web to occur for example when a friend sends him an e-mail about a product, and consequently, he has to buy it. In that case, the impulsive buying process initiates by the e-mail, outside webstore context. Although Aleksi is not here talking about any specific online impulsive buying experience of his, social purchasing was evident also elsewhere in his interview. As an example of an online impulsive purchase he mentions buying two small radio-controlled toy cars together with his friend:

...some radio things, toy cars, it's not many years since we bought some of them with a buddy, we had to get some, we got to compete and then they were really good quality, they lasted a day or maybe two days [laughter] [...] I read somewhere that someone had bought one, in some discussion forum, and I thought that that would be real cool and then with my buddy we decided that we'd buy those and then we just clicked

Aleksi, 32

This extract demonstrates another way social purchasing can occur online. As was the case with Aleksi and his friend's toy cars, ideas for impulsive purchases can be gained from recommendations made on discussion forums all over the web. These recommendations, even if made by some stranger on some online discussion forum, can encourage consumers to make the same purchase, or at least initiate interest in visiting the webstore at issue. Therefore, in this case it does not matter whether or not the person making the recommendation is a friend or not. Similar thoughts are presented by Helmi:

So that if I buy something all of a sudden, it would be a typical situation, that somebody has advertised some new webstore or some neat webstore where they have liked some

product, then I go and look oh yeah, they're really great, then I buy something and maybe that would be the most typical

Helmi, 29

In the previous extract, Helmi describes what in her view would be a typical situation in which she makes purchases online on spur of the moment. In those situations, someone has recommended a webstore or some specific product, and this encourages also Helmi to see them. This can result in also Helmi making an impulsive purchase from the webstore. Later in the interview, this issue about product recommendations is discussed further:

N: So you're keen on following some discussion forums?

H: Uhuh, yes...

N: Does it have to do with some specific subject or with anything at all?

H: Yeah, hobbies and children... the baby forum you must have heard of a hundred times over, I go there just for fun but then I have another forum where there are mothers from round here, but then it's about children because there you end up... [they have] the same interests so of course you come to hear what they recommend

Helmi, 29

From this excerpt it becomes apparent that the product recommendations Helmi talks about are made usually on Internet discussion forums. Helmi follows especially those forums that are related to babies and motherhood. As she is a housewife and a mother herself, the people on these forums share the same interests as she does, and therefore, she perceives that these product recommendations can be especially relevant. This is related to the theme of consumer interests, as in her case, recommendations made on those discussion forums that are related to her interests can give her ideas for impulsive online purchases.

To summarize, social purchasing occurs as a consumer sees a product or a webstore recommended in some other than webstore context, i.e. out-of-context. Social purchasing can occur for example if a friend sends by e-mail a recommendation for an interesting product, or informs about a purchase he or she has made online. This can create excitement also in the recipient of the e-mail, resulting in an impulsive purchase of the same product in the same webstore. Secondly, ideas for impulsive purchases can be gained from online discussion forums. As opposed to the previous example, the recommendations or discussion about products or webstores on these forums can be

made by a total stranger to the consumer. Therefore, it does not seem to matter whether or not the person making the recommendation is a friend or not. In addition, these forums can be related to the interests of the consumer, and hence this type of online impulsive purchasing is related to the theme of interests. All in all, these social recommendations made outside webstore context can end up in impulsive purchasing, as consumers can feel urged to make the same purchase as the one recommended, or to visit the same webstore.

5.4.3 Summary of out-of-context purchasing

To summarize, in out-of-context type of online impulsive purchasing, the consumer sees something interesting outside a webstore context that attracts his or her attention. This can occur for instance when searching for information online or when reading discussion on an online forum. This something interesting creates an impulse to buy some product or visit a webstore which could be totally unknown to the consumer before this occasion. As a result, the impulse becomes materialized in a purchase. However, before the Internet session started, the consumer could not have anticipated that as the session is over, he or she has made an impulsive purchase online. However, out-of-context purchasing does not necessarily create loyalty to the webstore, as these purchases can remain isolated instances of buying.

In my research data, these types of impulsive purchases occurred in two forms. Trial purchasing refers to those situations in which an impulse to visit a webstore or to buy a product is initiated by some material outside any webstore that raises curiosity towards trying out the product or the buying process. In social purchasing, on the other hand, the impulse comes from dealings with other people online, but in other than webstore context.

Out-of-context type of online impulsive buying, and especially trial purchasing, is related to previous research on online advertising. Previously, there has been quite an extensive discussion about the effectiveness of online advertising (see e.g. Hollis, 2005; Moe, 2006; Yoo, 2008). Often the direct effects of online advertisements are measured based on whether the consumer clicks on the advertisements, i.e. the click-through rate. However, my research findings suggest that online advertising can sometimes also

result in a purchase made on an impulse, especially in cases when consumer is motivated by experimenting with the purchase.

In addition, social purchasing type of online impulsive buying can be related to discussion about online word-of-mouth or consumption-related online communities. The importance of these has been acknowledged also previously (see e.g. Brown, Broderick, & Lee, 2007; Kozinets, 1999), but my findings indicate their role as also encouraging online impulsive buying. In addition, this social aspect has also been addressed in some previous research on impulsive buying. Hoch and Loewenstein (1991) suggested that when consumers compare themselves to other consumers, their willingness to delay consumption is reduced, and they can use this to rationalize their impulsive purchases, as 'everybody else is doing it'. More recently, Luo (2005) examined how the presence of others affects impulsive purchasing in an imaginary brick-and-mortar impulsive buying situation, and concluded that the presence of peers increases the urge to purchase, whereas the presence of family members decreases it. Both of these previous studies are supported by my research findings, as other peer consumers' recommendations made online can result in online impulsive buying.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this final chapter, I will first provide a summary and discussion of the research. Then, I will discuss the theoretical contribution, followed by managerial implications of my research. Fourthly, I will discuss how I perceive trustworthiness in my research, and critically reflect whether the criteria for trustworthiness have been met. Finally, I will conclude by providing suggestions for future research paths in this research area.

6.1 Summary and discussion of research

The purpose of this research was to *analyze and understand consumer experiences of impulsive buying in the online shopping environment*. To achieve this purpose, two research questions were addressed:

1. What are the elements of online impulsive buying experience?
2. What types of online impulsive buying experiences can be identified?

The research strategy in my research has been based on interpretive consumer research, drawing its main assumptions from constructionism and phenomenology. Accordingly, the focus has been on examining actual consumer experiences about the phenomenon, i.e. purchase decisions made on spur of the moment on the Internet. For the main research data, I interviewed altogether 17 Finnish consumers face-to-face about their experiences of online impulsive buying as well as about their experiences of online buying and impulsive buying in general. Data analysis and interpretation process involved naive reading of the data, writing case descriptions about each of the interviews, coding, categorizing, and thematizing the data along with constant comparison.

The first research question was answered by providing an *analytical framework* of the consumer online impulsive experience, aiming at analyzing the experience. The

analytical framework was based mainly on the coding, categorizing, and thematizing of the research data. In the analytical framework, the online impulsive buying experience was conceptualized as consisting of altogether eleven themes. These themes were further divided in the analytical framework under four main elements, *shopping environment*, *webstore*, *product*, and *consumer*. These elements represent the different levels of the consumer online buying experience. When having a buying experience online, consumers are immersed in another, virtual world that is distinct from the physical world in which consumers exist. This virtual world is conceptualized in my research as how the general characteristics of the Internet are related to consumers' experiences of impulsive online buying. It is the most extensive of the four elements, encompassing all webstores and products sold in webstores. Accordingly, the 'webstore' element and the themes illustrating it relate to the characteristics of an individual webstore that are also more controllable by the e-tailer, whereas the 'product' element refers to the characteristics of an individual product bought on an impulse on the Internet. Distinct from these is the element of consumer, referring to the characteristics of the buyer. The elements the themes are summarized in Table 8.

A few notions should be made about the elements of online impulsive buying experience presented in Table 8. Firstly, there are interrelations between some of the themes, and therefore, they cannot be considered totally independent of each other. For example, the themes of trustworthiness and loyalty are related, as trustworthiness seems to be especially important when the consumer visits a webstore for a first time. In addition, depending on the point of view, some of the themes could be considered also from the point of view of some other main element than the one they have been assigned to. For example, product variety can be considered to be also a theme under the element of webstore, and risk can also be considered to be part of consumer's characteristics. Thirdly, the themes should not be regarded as an exhaustive list that every online impulsive buying experience contains. Instead, any online impulsive buying experience can be any combination of these themes, some experiences containing only some of them.

Table 8. Summary of the elements of online impulsive buying

Main element	Theme	Summarized
Shopping environment	Convenience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> buying is too easy online – it requires little physical effort especially compared to offline buying, and purchases can be made at home when the urge comes
	Delayed gratification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consumer must wait for the delivery of physical products bought on an impulse evoked both positive and negative feelings
	Product variety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internet offers a global variety of products available, serving also specialty or niche interests
Webstore	Product presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> impulsive buying decisions, especially of physical products, are often based on product presentation providing e.g. adequate, extensive, and diverse product information as well as product illustrations
	Return policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> impulsive buying decisions can be justified by the fact that purchases can be returned if regretted
	Trustworthiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> if the consumer does not have trust towards the webstore, no impulsive purchases are made especially important in first-time visits to a webstore
Product	Price	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> impulsive buying of products on discount or if the price is perceived as relatively low
	Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> buying on an impulse from those product categories that the consumer is certain what to receive
Consumer	Interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> impulsive buying of those products or product categories that are related to consumer's interests or hobbies
	Loyalty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> impulsive buying that occurs in those webstores that consumer is familiar with, i.e. has at least visited earlier
	Mood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> both positive and negative moods can encourage impulsive buying online


The second research question was answered by providing a *typology* of online impulsive buying experiences, focusing on gaining an understanding of the phenomenon as a whole. The typology was based on constant comparison of different types of online impulsive buying experiences by the interviewees. The typology consists of three main types, i.e. *order increase*, *webstore browsing*, and *out-of-context purchasing*. Each of these is further defined by their seven sub-types, i.e. multiple purchasing, complementary purchasing, additional purchasing, pastime purchasing, promotional purchasing, trial purchasing, and social purchasing. Summary of the typology is presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Summary of the typology of online impulsive buying

Type of online impulsive buying	Subtype	Impulsive buying occurs as...
Order increase	Multiple purchasing	consumer buys more of the product than had planned to buy
	Complementary purchasing	consumer buys products that complement the planned purchase
	Additional purchasing	consumer buys other products in addition to the planned purchase
Webstore browsing	Pastime purchasing	consumer browses the webstore as pastime
	Promotional purchasing	consumer browses the webstore(s) as a result of receiving promotional material
Out-of-context purchasing	Trial purchasing	consumer wants to try the purchasing process or the product
	Social purchasing	consumer visits the webstore/buys the product on the basis of peer-to-peer recommendations or communication in other than webstore context

To further summarize, the three main types can be conceptualized in terms of differing from each other on three dimensions or characteristics: consumer's *orientation*, i.e. directed or browsing orientation, *level of planning* made before entering the webstore, and whether the consumer had prior experience of the webstore or not, i.e. whether the consumer was *familiar* with the webstore. These characteristics have been discussed to some extent also earlier when presenting each type. These three characteristics are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10. Main characteristics of online impulsive buying types

Type of impulsive online buying	Orientation	Level of purchase planning	Familiar with the webstore	Impulsiveness
ORDER INCREASE	Directed	Product	Yes	Lower  Higher
WEBSTORE BROWSING	Browsing	General buying intention	Yes	
OUT-OF-CONTEXT PURCHASING	Browsing	None	No	

If we consider the buying experience as a whole, starting from the moment the consumer logs online, then ends up visiting a webstore, and finally, exits the webstore after making an order containing one or many impulsive purchases, we can place the three main types on a continuum from less impulsive buying experiences to more impulsive ones based on the differences in orientation, level of planning, and familiarity. On this continuum, order increase is the least impulsive type of a purchase, whereas out-of-context purchasing is the most impulsive one. In order increase, the consumer has plans to buy a specific product before entering the store, which is also the reason to enter the store. Therefore, the orientation in this type of an impulsive purchase is directed, and the level of planning is on a product level. Also, when making order increase types of impulsive purchases, the consumer usually has prior experience of the webstore, either the consumer is a returning customer of the webstore, has previously visited the website, or is otherwise familiar with the store (for example, the consumer has experience of the same company's offline store).

However, with webstore browsing the orientation is browsing, because as the consumer enters the webstore, contrary to order increase, he or she does not have any specific shopping task to complete. In addition, the consumer does not have any specific idea of what to buy. Instead, the consumer can have a general buying intention, i.e. the option of buying something unspecified. In other words, the consumer is prepared to make some purchases, in case he or she finds something interesting enough to buy. However, webstore browsing does not mean that the consumer would browse any Internet site available online, as browsing activity is directed especially to those webstores that the consumer is already familiar with.

Finally, in out-of-context purchasing, the orientation is also browsing, but contrary to webstore browsing, the consumer is browsing the Internet for some other than shopping purposes. Prior to starting the Internet session, the consumer have plans neither to buy anything nor even to visit any webstore, therefore the level of purchase planning is 'none'. In addition, the impulsive purchase can occur in a webstore which the consumer has never heard of or visited before. Therefore, this type of online impulsive buying is, in my view, the most impulsive of the three types.

In conclusion, consumer impulsive buying can take many forms online. Both the typology and the analytical framework, i.e. the elements of online impulsive buying, presented in my research take into account the multifaceted nature of impulsive buying

by giving consumers an opportunity to describe their actual experiences of the phenomenon.

6.2 Theoretical contribution

Theoretically, this research contributes in several ways. In general, my research gives the scientific community of consumer researchers further insight into consumer impulsive behavior, and especially into consumer buying experiences in the online shopping environment. To be more specific, I argue that this research contributes theoretically in the following four ways.

Firstly, in this research I have taken *a holistic view into understanding the phenomenon of online impulsive buying based on consumer experiences*. Previously, the main focus in the research on consumer impulsive buying both in the traditional and in the online shopping context has been on explaining the behavior by examining the effect of individual factors, thus modeling the phenomenon quantitatively. In the previous research on online impulsive buying, the focus has been on experimental designs that enable to examine only a limited amount of factors. Also, often in those previous studies on online impulsive buying, researchers have utilized measurements of consumer impulsive tendencies or impulsive buying intentions, thus arriving at research settings that for example examine the relationship between the impulsiveness trait of consumers and some other factor, such as online purchase intentions. Also, many of the previous studies on online impulsive buying have relied on models such as TAM (Technology Acceptance Model). However, in my research I have taken the view that insight into impulsive buying is to be gained by examining the phenomenon holistically. Holistic understanding, in my view, is achieved not by examining individual factors in a model, but taking a look at how the whole phenomenon unfolds. Methodologically, this has required taking an interpretive approach to the research area. Further, I have attempted to take into account the larger context in the interpretation of the phenomenon, thus examining impulsive buying experiences in the light of the interviewee's history and behavior in general. For example, if we consider the typology presented in my research, holistic view to the phenomenon has allowed even those types of experiences to emerge that have not been acknowledged or found in previous

research. Further, by taking into account that the consumer operates in a larger context than in online shopping environment has enabled me to situate some of the themes of online impulsive buying in relation to consumers' experiences in other shopping environments. As an example, the theme of convenience seems to be conceptualized by consumers through their experiences of shopping in brick-and-mortar context.

In addition, I have studied online impulsive buying by examining actual, lived consumer experiences of the phenomenon. Earlier studies on online impulsive buying, and also on impulsive buying in general, have mostly examined university undergraduate students or consumers who have made purchases online, but have not necessarily had any experience of online impulsive buying. Therefore, my research contributes by concentrating only on those consumers who, also in their view, have experienced buying on spur of the moment on the Internet.

I am not arguing that my choice of a research perspective should be regarded as an alternative to the mainstream view, i.e. that this research would somehow compete with the mainstream view. I believe that by taking these different views, the whole research community learns more about the phenomenon than by taking a one-sided view, and therefore I contribute by giving an additional and complementary view to the phenomenon of online impulsive buying. However, it is important that the research perspective is taken into account when interpreting the results of study.

Secondly, this research contributes theoretically by giving insight into *how impulsive buying occurs in the online shopping environment, i.e. in the context of the Internet*. The issue of context has not received that much discussion in previous research on impulsive buying. Although the previous research on impulsive buying has mainly concerned the offline or brick-and-mortar shopping environment, the role of that specific buying context has not been taken notice of, but rather it has been assumed that the results of those studies would be generalizable to any context. However, as the retailing environment is continually evolving and innovations in the retailing environment can create new types of shopping and buying experiences for consumers, the role of the context should be taken more under discussion in impulsive buying research. In my research, I have taken the assumption that online buying experiences are so fundamentally different from buying experiences in the traditional brick-and-mortar shopping environment that impulsive buying experiences should be studied in the online shopping environment.

In this research, I have provided several examples on the importance of context in consumers' impulsive buying experiences. These are apparent especially in the elements of online impulsive buying. The major difference between offline and online buying is that the shopping environment, i.e. the Internet, acts as a medium that comes between the product and the consumer, or the webstore and the consumer. In other words, the consumer cannot directly experience the product, but it is experienced through the interface of the webstore, which, again, is restricted by the characteristics of the Internet as a medium. In impulsive buying, this creates theoretically interesting contribution. For example, the theme of delayed versus immediate gratification can produce interesting meanings especially in online impulsive buying. In my research findings, receiving physical products after making the order evoked both positive and negative feelings. Previous research has assumed that as the online context does not enable the same kind of instant possession of physical products as in the offline shopping environment, consumers would not be inclined towards buying products impulsively online. However, my research findings challenge this view, as it seems that consumers experience extended or double gratification, and can perceive the waiting period as exciting and enjoyable. As another example, my research findings indicate that the inability of the Internet as a medium to appeal to all five senses creates special demands for product presentation online, as products must be presented to the consumer through the webstore's user interface. As products cannot be directly experienced, most likely it is more than only the actual, physical product that initially invokes the impulse to buy. These can be related to the shopping environment, webstore, product qualities, or consumer characteristics. Further, results related to typology demonstrate that the online context can enable different types of impulsive buying from those identified in the offline shopping environment. For example, pastime browsing, which can be considered analogous to window shopping in the offline environment, can occur conveniently at home or at work when a suitable situation arises, and out-of-context purchasing can occur effortlessly online, as webstores and other websites are only a few mouse clicks away from each other.

Thirdly, concerning research on consumer online buying behavior, my research contributes by *giving a multifaceted view of online impulsive buying*. The mainstream view of consumer online purchasing has assumed rational, well planned buying decisions. It has been expected that when consumers buy something online, they go

through several stages in the decision making process, and make price comparisons and information searches before making a purchase decision. However, the existence of impulsive online purchases challenges this view, and, therefore, my research findings about online impulsive buying contribute to the total view of how consumers buy online.

In addition, as discussed earlier, previous research on online buying and specifically on online impulsive buying has mainly suggested that when impulsive buying occurs online, it occurs as a result of hedonic browsing, i.e. when a consumer browses the Internet without any specific task and without any intentions to buy. However, on the basis of my research results, especially the typology of online impulsive buying, I argue that consumer online impulsive buying is a much more versatile and multifaceted phenomenon than previous research has acknowledged. For example, in the order increase type of online impulsive buying, the consumer has some previous plans for what to buy and where to visit, whereas in the out-of-context purchasing type the consumer has no intentions of buying anything when starting to browse the Internet. Impulsive buying can, however, also result from both of these types. Therefore, online impulsive buying should no longer be perceived as only one type of behavior, and as opposing the directed or task-specific online behavior, but it should be taken into account that impulsive buying occurs online in many forms.

Fourthly, and also relating to the previous point, my research contributes by *conceptualizing impulsive buying as a continuum*. Although some previous research has also suggested that impulsive buying should be seen more as a continuum than as an extraordinary experience (see e.g. Rook, 1999), my research further supports this view. In my research, the concept of impulsive buying was presented to the interviewees as purchases made on spur of the moment, which I consider to be the most essential characteristic of impulsive buying. Therefore, no objective or pre-defined definitions were used, but the consumers told about experiences they themselves considered to be on-spur-of-the-moment purchasing. However, as discussed also in the summary of the research, the actual consumer experiences of these online impulsive purchases can be considered a continuum, as some buying experiences (such as in out-of-context purchasing) involve more impulsive behavior than others (such as in order increase). In addition, earlier literature on consumer decision making has evolved around the assumption that consumer either has plans for a purchase or, as in the case of impulsive

purchases, does not have any plans for purchases. However, my research results indicate that in addition to this categorization, consumers can also *change* their plans for purchases. This is apparent especially in order increase types of online impulsive purchases. As a result, I argue that impulsive buying in the theoretical domain should no longer be perceived only as a black-and-white concept entailing a list of characteristic requirements, or as an extraordinary experience, but more as part of consumers' everyday life, and as a phenomenon that can appear in varying degrees.

6.3 Managerial implications

For an increasing amount of modern consumers today, browsing webstores, buying, and shopping on the Internet is an ordinary, mundane activity. Consequently, the value and importance of business-to-consumer Internet commerce for companies has grown enormously during the past few years. This has led practical discussion to concentrate for example on conversion rates, i.e. the percentage of visitors making a sale in the webstore. However, instead of looking at sales figures and conversion rates only, I argue that e-tailers should strive to understand their online customers – how consumer behavior behind the sales figures comes about – and especially, *to increase their insight about different types of buying situations their customers face in their webstore*. Impulsive buying is one of those types of buying situations which, as my research data also indicates, is part of consumer buying behavior online. My research findings give several managerial suggestions for e-tailers of how to inspire consumers' impulsive urges that can lead to online impulsive purchasing. These relate both to the elements presented in the analytical framework and to the typology of online impulsive buying¹². The managerial implications of the analytical framework, i.e. of the elements, are presented in Table 11.

¹² However, it should be noted that the suggestions for e-tailers presented here require some generalizations to be made about the data, i.e. the suggestions go beyond the data. As such, the findings presented in this research do not necessarily apply to any other group of consumers than the ones interviewed.

Table 11. *Managerial implications for the elements of online impulsive buying*

Main element	Theme	Managerial implications, e.g.
Shopping environment	Convenience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> making purchasing process as easy and short as possible, e.g. by 1-click purchasing
	Delayed gratification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> delivery process should be as fast as possible keep customer informed about the progress of the delivery process for the order offer express shipping as an option can some of the physical products in the webstore be delivered digitally for instant download?
	Product variety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> offering either a large variety of products or specializing in niche products
Webstore	Product presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> especially with physical products, extensive product information is crucial take into account what types of product illustrations are used (e.g. clothing items worn by someone) if possible, utilize the newest product virtualization techniques
	Return policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> give customers a right to return unwanted items make returning as convenient as possible for the customer
	Trustworthiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide information on e-tailer, terms of purchase, previous customer comments about the webstore etc. offer a variety of payment options
Product	Price	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide an easily distinguishable section of bargain products that has a frequently varying assortment of products
	Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> if possible, provide consumer the possibility to sample the product before buying (music or movie clips, excerpts or table of contents for books etc.)
Consumer	Interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> organize products in webstore according to customer interests advertise or communicate in situations that are related to the interests served by the products in the webstore
	Loyalty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> offer benefits for existing customers, e.g. make purchasing process shorter and more convenient communicate regularly with existing customers
	Mood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A?

Although in the analytical framework the elements of webstore and product would seem to offer the most direct suggestions for e-tailers of how to design a webstore, also other elements can be considered from the e-tailers' viewpoint. For example, the effect of themes under the element of shopping environment can be, depending on the theme, enhanced or diminished by the retailer. Although in general the consumer can make purchases more conveniently online than offline, also individual e-tailers can improve the convenience of the purchasing process in their webstore. Examples of this in action

are one-click ordering offered by for instance Amazon.com, and 'Buy it now' option available on some online auction sites such as eBay. The fewer the mouse clicks or the less stages in the purchase process, the more convenient the process can be for the consumer and thus also for impulsive buying. The theme of delayed gratification, on the other hand, can sometimes be a discouraging element in online impulsive buying, and therefore, e-tailers can strive to diminish its effect. This can be done for example by informing the customer about the different phases of the delivery process, by offering as fast delivery as possible, and by offering express delivery for those who want to pay extra for it.

The themes related to the element of consumer are the least directly controllable by the e-tailer in relation to online impulsive buying. However, some measures can be taken in order to take this element also into account. In relation to interests, for example, if the webstore is offering products related to specific consumer interests or hobbies, products available in the webstore can be organized also according to those interests. In addition, participating in interest-related forums or sites can increase possibilities for the specific interest groups to find the webstore and to make purchases in it. Impulsive purchases by loyal customers, on the other hand, can be encouraged by offering benefits for loyal customers, such as a shorter purchasing process or discounts on products or shipping costs, and by regularly sending promotional messages to loyal customers. Lastly, the theme of mood should be acknowledged by the e-tailers as an aspect in online impulsive buying. However, direct action by e-tailers in order to evoke those consumer moods that lead to impulsive purchasing can be difficult, as the mood states differ from consumer to consumer and from situation to situation.

Further, this research offers managerial implications for e-tailers concerning the different online impulsive buying types. The implications of each main type of the typology are presented in Table 12. Some of the implications relate especially to some sub-type in the typology, and these are indicated in the table and in the following discussion.

Table 12. *Managerial implications for the typology of online impulsive buying*

Type of online impulsive buying	Managerial implications, e.g.
Order increase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shipping cost policies: offering a free delivery with larger orders or a flat fee regardless of order size • provide buying recommendations based on 'other customers who bought this product bought also this' • offer volume discounts, especially in stores with a small variety of products (specialty stores) (esp. multiple purchasing) • provide product recommendations of complementing products (of the same use situations, colors etc.) on product presentation web page (esp. complementary purchasing)
Webstore browsing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • importance of the browsing experience: create an enjoyable visit that encourages to browse for longer • remind existing customers of visiting the webstore by sending newsletters by e-mail (esp. promotional purchasing) • give customers the possibility to order (or cancel their order for) promotional messages (esp. promotional purchasing)
Out-of-context purchasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presence of the webstore in some other context than the webstore, e.g. banner advertising on other sites; even in surprising contexts • partnerships: offering benefits for some other companies' customers or community members when making the first purchase (esp. trial purchasing) • utilizing social aspects of the Internet, e.g. focusing on communities outside webstore (esp. social purchasing)

Firstly, order increase types of online impulsive purchases can be encouraged by shipping cost policies of the webstore. For example, offering free shipping for orders over a certain value, or charging fixed shipping costs, can motivate consumers to add more products to their order. In addition, product recommendations can provide incentives for order increase types of impulsive purchases. For example, in complementary purchasing, the webstore can provide ideas for complementary products on the product presentation page. Innovative thinking about for instance situations in which consumers use the product should be employed when deciding which products are introduced as complementary to each other. Product recommendations based on what other customers have bought can also encourage browsing the webstore, and can inspire impulsive purchasing in especially complementary and additional purchasing types of order increase. Lastly, especially in multiple purchasing, the encouraging role of volume discounts should be acknowledged.

Secondly, in webstore browsing type of online impulsive buying, the most fundamental aspect is to encourage consumers to stay longer in the webstore, i.e. browse the site widely. In promotional purchasing, communication with existing customers is crucial. The existing customers can be reminded about the webstore for instance by e-mail newsletters which might contain special discounts or information on new products. Nevertheless, the main function of this communication is to regularly remind the customer that the webstore is worth visiting, which can encourage browsing behavior. However, it is important that customers have given their permission to receive these messages and they are given the possibility to cancel their subscription at any time.

Finally, in out-of-context purchasing type of online impulsive buying, the role of the webstore is less significant, as the initial impulse to buy occurs in some other than webstore context. Therefore, e-tailers need to have presence also outside the actual webstore in order to initiate these types of online impulsive purchases. For example, this presence can be attained by advertising on other websites. Especially in trial purchasing, giving benefits of making their first purchase for visitors at some other website can encourage consumer to visit the webstore and perhaps to make impulsive purchases. In social purchasing, on the other hand, the social venues available on the Internet, such as communities or forums can present possibilities for social purchasing type of impulsive buying.

All in all, the implications presented here give ideas for e-tailers not only how they can take into account the online impulsive buying behavior of their customers by developing the characteristics of their webstore, but also how to develop their marketing and marketing communications both on a strategic and on an operational level.

6.4 Evaluating trustworthiness of research

Traditionally, research is evaluated in relation to three criteria: validity, reliability, and generalization (see e.g. Kvale, 1996, 229; Moisander & Valtonen, 2006, 23). However, there is no objective consensus as to how these criteria should be used, as evaluation should always relate to the research approach chosen for the study (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Gummesson, 2000, 160–162, 165; Moisander & Valtonen, 2006,

21). Especially, evaluation criteria for trustworthiness of qualitative research have been discussed extensively, and multiple views exist on how qualitative or interpretive research should be evaluated. Therefore, it is necessary to explain which criteria are used and how they are used when evaluating trustworthiness. However, it should be noted that although the criteria of trustworthiness are discussed here at the end of the research report, the issue of trustworthiness has been continuously evaluated throughout the research process (see Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 290; Moisander & Valtonen, 2006, 21). Next, I will discuss how the three criteria, i.e. validity, reliability, and generalization, are related to the evaluation of trustworthiness in my research. Then, I will post-reflect on the consumer experiences reflection and interpretation process in my research, concentrating especially on issues that I consider as challenges to trustworthiness.

6.4.1 Validity, reliability, and generalization

Validity of research refers generally to how true the claims made in the study are, how accurately the study represents the features of the phenomenon, and whether or not objectivity is maintained. However, as the epistemological assumption behind research is based on constructionism in which meanings come into existence through interpreting the external world, pursuit of an objective truth is problematic. Instead of evaluating how close to an objective truth, or how accurately research results represent the objective features of the phenomenon, I consider validity to concern two aspects in my study. Firstly, *claims made in the research should be in line with the research data* (e.g. Moisander & Valtonen, 2006, 26; Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989) *and in accord with each other*¹³ (Gummesson, 2000, 186). As I have discussed earlier in the chapter on research strategy, in phenomenological research, consumer descriptions of the experience form the research evidence on which research claims are based. In my research, I have attempted to ensure this aspect of validity by providing a description of the results that includes context information as well as direct quotations from interviews. In addition, I have aspired to document the chain of evidence from the

¹³ Gummesson (2000, 186) considers this internal logical consistency to be part of 'credibility' of the research.

research data to the findings by providing a detailed depiction of my research process, interpretation process, as well as data analysis process earlier in the chapter on research strategy. This should allow the reader to examine the persuasiveness of the arguments I have made in this research (Shkedi, 2005, 185).

This also results in the second validity aspect that I consider relevant: *the validity of interpretive research is ultimately evaluated by the research community* (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006, 26; Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989). Therefore, by aiming to give as transparent description of the interpretation and results as possible, I have provided a possibility for my audience to evaluate the viability, usability, and meaningfulness of the findings. In addition, I have presented my research findings in several seminars and conferences during the research process, thus giving the scientific community an opportunity to evaluate the soundness of my results.

Reliability of research concerns traditionally in quantitative research the replicability of the results – whether or not another study with the same methods and measures would yield the same results. However, as discussed in the third chapter of this report, one of the basic assumptions of my research is a contextualist world view. This results also in that the knowledge and findings of this research are embedded in its context, and therefore, it would be illogical to attempt to verify the results by aiming to repeat the study and to gain the exactly same results, as the context (time, place, and people) would always be different. Nonetheless, in interpretive research “if we cannot expect others to replicate our findings, the best we can do is to explain how we arrived at our results” (Shkedi, 2005, 187). As discussed also earlier in relation to validity, this refers first of all to providing a transparent description of data generation process, analytical procedures, and interpretation process. This gives the readers the opportunity to evaluate the quality of the whole research process (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006, 27).

Secondly, reliability of the research can be enhanced in interpretive research by preserving the analysis documents (Shkedi, 2005, 187). In this way, if necessary, the analysis process can be checked for reliability later on. I have preserved analysis documents from all stages of the data and interpretation analysis, thus providing a possibility to review them later if needed. Thirdly, reliability is enhanced by conducting research in a generally rigorous and systematic manner (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006, 28). In my research I have, for example, aimed at carefully recording and transcribing

the interviews, as well as at organizing and coding the data systematically and coherently.

In quantitative research, **generalization of research** refers to whether or not the findings from the sample can be extended to the population as a whole. This type of generalization from statistical samples, however, is only one form of generalization, and in qualitative research, generalization should be approached from a different view (Gummesson, 2000, 89). As a result, I cannot claim that my research findings about online impulsive buying would be generalizable to the general population of Finnish consumers. Instead, in qualitative research, it is more relevant to ask *whether or not the results of the study can be transferred and applied to other contexts and situations by the readers of the research report*, often referred to as ‘transferability’ (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006, 29; Shkedi, 2005, 189). According to this view, although it is not my choice as a researcher to decide what aspects of the findings to apply in new contexts, it is equally important that I support the reader by providing a rich and detailed, also known as a ‘thick’ description of the findings in the research report. Giving enough information enables the reader to evaluate the match between the research findings and those situations they are familiar with, i.e. their own situations. As van Manen (1997, 27) puts it, “a good phenomenological description is something that we can nod to, recognizing it as an experience that we have had or could have had”.

6.4.2 Post-reflection on experience reflection and interpretation process

In addition to the three criteria discussed above, when evaluating trustworthiness of this research I consider essential to discuss – or to post-reflect – the challenges apparent the process involving consumer experience reflection and interpretation in my research (see Figure 11). The process of experience reflection and interpretation has been described earlier in the third chapter of this research report. However, Figure 11 depicts also the challenges I perceive as important to keep in mind when discussing trustworthiness.

The first challenges, i.e. reconstruction, memory, and language, are related to the phases between the impulsive buying experience, its reflection by the consumer, and telling about the experience in the interview situation. Firstly, the narrative told in the interview about the experience is always a reconstruction of the original experience.

When the consumer encounters the experience, in this case impulsive online experience, he or she already at that point constructs the reality by choosing to notice some things and leave some areas of the primary experience as unreflected (see Riessman, 1993, 9). Then, in the interview situation, when telling a narrative about the original experience, another reconstruction is made through reflection. It is evident that people are not able to have complete access to their experiences, and therefore, self-reported evidence told in the interview about a previous experience is not a full-mirrored reflection of the actual experience (Polkinghorne, 2005), but more a reconstruction (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989) or transformation (van Manen, 1997, 54) of that experience. Also, it should be noticed that when the interviewees tell about their experiences in the interview, it is also a process of interaction (Riessman, 1993, 11) – the story is always told to some audience, in this case to me as a researcher, and in an interview situation. Consequently, the narrative about the experience might be different if told to some other audience.

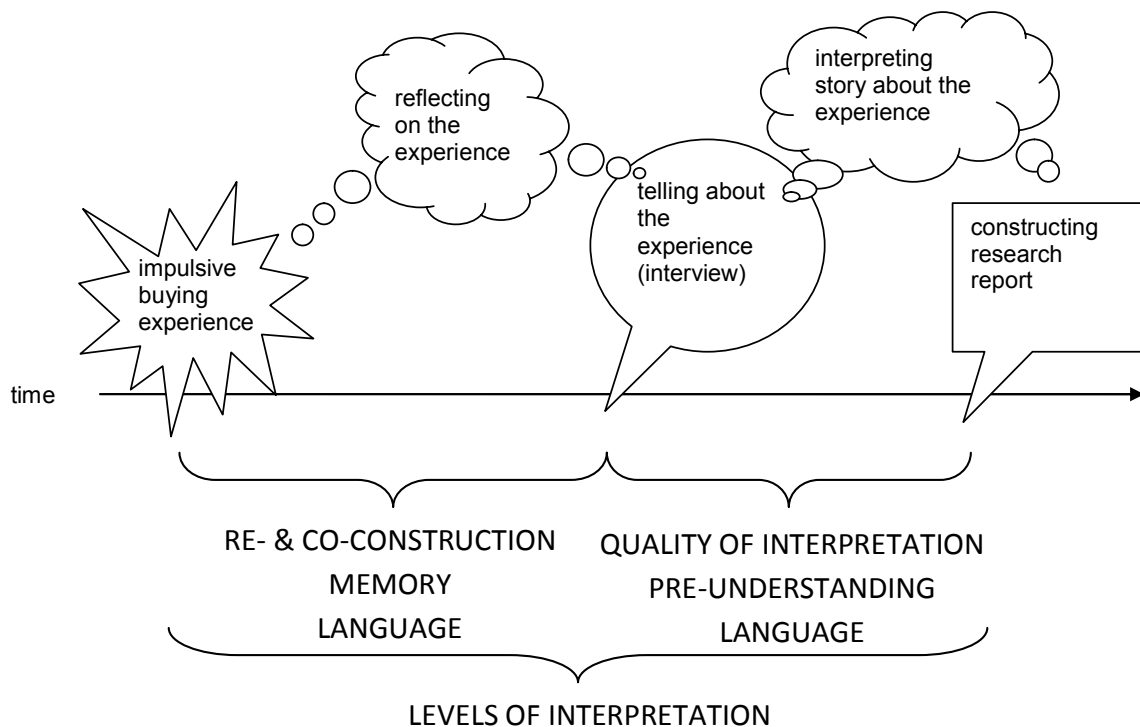


Figure 11. *Challenges to trustworthiness in the process of experience reflection and interpretation*

In addition to the interviewees reconstructing their experiences in the interview, I as a researcher take part in the interview, and thus, experiences become also co-constructed narratives in the interview. I take part in co-constructing the narrative as I interact with the consumer by listening and talking. However, the questions posed by me during the interview play the most important role in co-construction of the narrative. Many of the phenomenological studies in consumer research have conducted phenomenological in-depth interviews outlined by Thompson et al. (1989). In phenomenological interview, the interviewer has no a priori questions except an opening question, and the questions posed by the interviewer arise from the dialogue, aiming to get as detailed description of consumer experiences as possible. However, in this research, I decided to utilize an interview guide that is based on the principles of episodic interviewing developed by Flick (2000). Reasoning behind this decision was based partly on the fact that I considered myself to be a fairly inexperienced interviewer, as prior to generating my primary research data I had experience of interviewing only a few consumers face-to-face. Therefore, I perceived the phenomenological interview – going to the interview with only one opening question – as too challenging for a novice researcher. In addition, although theoretically based more on narrative psychology than phenomenology, I regarded episodic interviewing as suitable for my research purposes, as episodic interview aims at contextualizing experience and events from the interviewee's point of view (see Flick, 2000). I wanted to place consumer's experiences of online impulsive buying events into a larger context in their life-world as shoppers in general, and in particular as online shoppers, and therefore, episodic interviewing seemed to be appropriate.

However, my decision to use an interview guide based on episodic interviewing might have resulted in interview data that does not contain phenomenological description in every aspect. In addition to describing their own specific experiences, interviewees also talked for example about their behavior in general (e.g. what they think they usually do on the Internet), their imagined or hypothetical behavior (e.g. what type of an imagined webstore would encourage them to make more impulsive purchases online), or their conceptions about how people generally behave. As pointed out also in previous research, each of these different types of consumer talk can be considered to represent different phenomena, as for example generalizations about own or other consumers' behavior are an indication of cultural meanings and consumer beliefs (see

e.g. Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994; Wallendorf & Brucks, 1993). However, these phenomena were not essentially in the main focus of my research.

The second challenge is related to memory. According to van Manen (1997, 10), a person cannot reflect on lived experience at the same time as living through the experience; then the original experience would change as a result of the reflection. Therefore, phenomenological reflection of an experience is always retrospective (Petitmengin, 2006; van Manen, 1997, 10, 36). This implies that interviewees need to rely on their memory to produce the description of the experience, which can result for instance in memory failures, mixing experiences with each other, or selecting memories that are more extreme or salient (for discussion about the challenges with retrospective verbal data, see e.g. Kuusela & Paul, 2000; Wallendorf & Brucks, 1993). However, from the viewpoint of interpretive research, the past is seen as a selective reconstruction, and therefore verification of what really happened, of the historical truth, is not the primary issue (Riessman, 1993, 64).

Thirdly, language imposes constraints on how to put the experience into words, as our vocabulary to describe the various dimensions of our subjective experiences is poorer than a description of the actual experience would require (Petitmengin, 2006; van Manen, 1997, xvii–xviii). However, thanks to language, we are able to recall and reflect experiences: the things we are trying to describe or interpret are not really things at all until we use language to create insight into the actual experience (van Manen, 1997, xviii, 38).

Another set of challenges, quality of interpretation and language, are related to the phase of the process when I as a researcher interpret the narratives the interviewees have told, and construct a research report based on my interpretation. Quality of interpretation refers here to what Riessman (1993, 65) calls “criterion of persuasiveness”. Is my interpretation of the interview material reasonable and convincing, and can the reader of the research report agree with my interpretation? To accomplish this, I have attempted to support my theoretical claims by interviewees’ accounts, and to consider alternative interpretations of the data during data analysis.

However, further challenges emerge as the interpretation process has been conducted by a single researcher. It should be noted that researcher’s pre-understanding always shapes the interpretation. Researchers should acknowledge their pre-understandings – their “orienting frame of reference”, that can be related for instance to personal

information about the research area and to previous studies or theories in consumer research (e.g. Moisander & Valtonen, 2006, 109). However, as Moisander and Valtonen (2006) note, researcher's pre-understanding can change during the interpretation process. I can recognize this also in my interpretation process – my understanding about the phenomenon has changed as the interpretation process proceeded. My initial pre-understanding can be identified for example in some of the questions in my interview guide, which concern for example the easiness of online buying. Especially, the first stages of the data analysis that resulted in the elements of online impulsive buying, i.e. the fourth chapter in this report, and especially the naming of the themes, such as price and loyalty, can be seen to reflect a somewhat traditional marketing literature view. However, as interpretation progressed, my increased understanding that also challenged some of the premises of the previous research especially about the way online impulsive buying occurs, encouraged me to stay closer to the consumer experiences and pose questions to the data which eventually led to the construction of the typology.

In addition, the perspective of a single researcher can become sedimented – being too focused on some aspects while failing to see others (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989, 141). Because of this, Thompson et al. (1989) suggest to use what they call “an interpretive group” in order to share the burden of interpretation, and to give immediate feedback on the interpretation. In my research, I have not utilized interpretive group, but I have actively sought feedback for my interpretations by presenting my findings during different phases of the interpretation process in seminars and conferences. Also triangulation, especially using multiple researchers to cross-check for interpretations, has been commonly related to increasing the validity and quality of interpretation. However, triangulation assumes that there exists one objective reality which can be approached from different angles (e.g. Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 293), and therefore, in my view, in interpretive research the contextual nature of reality assumes that it is foremost the researcher who makes the interpretations from the data. Further, it has been suggested that the quality of interpretation should be tested by member checks, in which the interviewees would check whether they consider interpretations to be adequate representations of reality (e.g. Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 314). However, due to

some epistemological problems with member checks¹⁴ as well as due to research economical reasons, I decided not to present the interpretations to my interviewees.

Also in this phase language can create challenges, as the research report is written English, but the data was generated from Finnish consumers in Finnish. To minimize the effect of different languages I have interpreted the data in Finnish. The interview citations included in this research report were translated in collaboration with official Finnish–English translator, and only after the data analysis was completed. Despite these measures, it should be kept in mind that some alterations in meaning might have occurred in the interview citations. In addition, language might have put some constraints as I have written this research report in English, which is not my native language. As discussed earlier, the writing process is, however, one phase in the interpretation process.

Lastly, if we consider the whole experience reflection and interpretation process depicted in Figure 11, there are several stages which Riessman (1993, 9) calls “levels of representation” and, as in their citation below, Arnold and Fischer (1994, 60) refer to as “levels of interpretation”:

There is a first level of interpretation that occurs in the consumer’s original experience. There is a second level of interpretation when the consumer recalls the experience for the researcher and creates the protocol. There is a third level of interpretation when the researcher interprets the protocol. Rather than claiming to have penetrated these dense layers of interpretations to describe consumer self-understanding, it seems easier to describe what I (the researcher) or we (the research team) believe *we* (the dialogic or human community) have learned about the nature of consumer behavior.

Therefore, instead of interpreting how the consumer interprets the experience, I have regarded the transcribed interview text as autonomous (see Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989, 140). This means that I have made no attempt to verify the description of the experience by some external criteria, but the most relevant issue has been how the experience is seen by the interviewee at the time of the interview. Autonomy of the text

¹⁴ *Riessman (1993, 66) thinks that validity of interpretations cannot be affirmed by member checks, as e.g. researcher’s theorizing across a number of narratives cannot be evaluated by individual narrators, and as meanings of experiences shift as consciousness changes. In addition, Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, 293) consider member checks as problematic from an epistemological point of view due to e.g. questions about similar notions of meanings or establishing the possible ‘truth’.*

has implied also that my interpretation should not have exceeded the evidence provided by the interview transcripts.

6.5 Directions for future research

In this research, I have taken a holistic approach to online impulsive buying, and examined the phenomenon from the consumers' viewpoint. As such, this research can be considered an exploratory opening into the research area, and therefore it provides many interesting paths for future research.

Due to the holistic nature of this research, I have not been able to examine the individual elements or types of online impulsive buying profoundly in this research. Therefore, this research can serve as a starting point to examine the elements and types further. I consider the following research areas that are related to the findings of this research to be especially interesting, and, as a result, worthy of studying.

Firstly, loyalty when visiting webstores appeared important in this research and its role in relation to online impulsive buying calls for further examination. Familiarity or loyalty also was also present in both order increase and webstore browsing types of impulsive buying. Therefore, it would be interesting to investigate consumers' impulsive buying behavior in relation to their evolving customer relationship with the webstore, and in case of those companies that have also offline or catalogue presence, also customer relationship with the company in general.

Secondly, in my view, the fact that online buying cannot appeal to all of our senses needs more research regarding online impulsive buying. Especially interesting is lack of touch when experiencing products online. This is related to many themes in my research findings as well; for instance, product risks are higher especially for those products that, from consumer's point of view, need touching, which consequently sets demands for how products should be presented by the webstores, and thus, how the products are experienced by consumers. The role of senses in online impulsive research grants future attention also because the technology behind online shopping environment is developing fast, and future technology may enable consumers to experience products online more fully than today. Further, it should be examined what is the role of senses in not only how the product is experienced on the Internet, but also in how the consumer

experiences browsing the Internet. By this I mean what kind of a keyboard, mouse or other device the consumer uses for accessing the Internet, and how they relate to senses, and thus, eventually to the online buying experience.

Thirdly, online impulsive shopping seems to be related for some consumers to some specific situations in their daily life. For example, pastime browsing can be almost routinely started when consumer is in some specific situation. These situations should be further examined. Consequently, this raises questions whether online shopping and the possible impulsive purchases can be regarded more as lifestyle facilitators for some consumers. Also, in addition to specific situations in daily life, the role of locations in these situations warrants more research. Previously, most research on online shopping has assumed that online shopping equals home shopping, i.e. the Internet is used at home. However, for example, my research data indicates that some consumers can start pastime browsing when in a specific situation at work. Nowadays, many consumers at least in Finland have mobile Internet connections and subnotebooks or netbooks that are light and thus can be carried conveniently in a bag. Therefore, webstore browsing might occur also for example in a train when travelling to work, in a bus, or in an airport lounge.

Fourthly, social purchasing as one type of impulsive online buying is interesting especially in relation to the discussion during the past few years about the changing trend of the Internet as enhancing social activities, i.e. the Web 2.0. In my research findings, the role of social activities in online impulsive buying remained somewhat minor, which could be partly explained by the fact that my research data was generated back in 2006. However, the current expansion and high popularity of social features of the Internet, such as blogs, social networking sites (e.g. Facebook), and video sharing sites (e.g. Youtube), would indicate that social impulsive purchasing needs further research in the future. For example, running into an interesting product review video when browsing Youtube for fun, or when reading about an interesting new product on a web blog can give consumers further out-of-context incentives for online impulsive buying that were not present in my research.

Furthermore, due to the holistic and explorative nature of this research, I did not want to restrict the research to concern any specific groups of people, webstores, or types of products. However, in the future, focusing on some aspect of the research area or on some specific consumer group can give further insight into the phenomenon. For

example, in my research data most consumer experiences of online impulsive buying concerned buying physical products. However, digitally downloadable products as well as services are also increasingly present on the Internet. They can be, contrary to physical products, delivered instantly, which also challenges the theme of delayed gratification. Therefore, it is necessary to give more attention to online impulsive buying of services and digitally downloadable products. Also, concerning different types of webstores, my research findings propose that online impulsive buying behavior could be different in highly specialized webstores as opposed to general, one-stop shopping webstores having a large variety of products. All in all, in order to understand the complex phenomenon of impulsive buying in its totality, new and innovative buying environments and situations must be taken under examination.

Moreover, the consumers interviewed in my study have been using the Internet not earlier than from their late teenage years, while some of them have started using the Internet and shopping online only a few years ago. Although some of these consumers have a relatively extensive and long experience of online shopping, they cannot be compared to those generations to follow that are immersed in the online world early on from their childhood. As a consequence, future research should be also directed to the youngest consumer generations, shedding light on impulsive buying as Internet browsing and online shopping becomes even more an everyday and mundane activity for consumers. In addition, gender differences between men and women in online impulsive buying would be an interesting further research path.

Except for the theme of moods, consumer emotional states have not been in the focus in this research. However, from my interview data it became evident that consumers can have both positive emotional states, such as excitement, and negative emotional states, such as regret, as a result of an online impulsive purchase. These emotional states should be further examined, and especially in relation to other impulsive purchases. As one interviewee indicated, there can be morality issues involved with impulse purchases made offline, but, due to the delivery process, not necessarily with online impulsive purchases. Further, as can be noticed also from the interview extracts in this report, many of my interviewees laughed during the interview. Analyzing laughter, for example when interviewees laugh in these interview situations, could also reveal emotional states towards making impulsive purchases.

In this research, the emphasis has been on studying elements that are part of online impulsive purchasing experiences. However, from the consumer's point of view, acquiring the product is only a starting point for the consumption of the product. Therefore, it would be fascinating to examine the meanings that these impulsive online purchases create for the consumers when the products are in use. For example, feelings of regret related to some online impulsive purchases or regret of not returning unwanted impulsive purchases may create special meanings in further use or even lead to non-use of the product.

Finally, methodologically I consider the phenomenon of impulsive buying in general to be a challenging area to study. As the phenomenon happens on spur of the moment, studying the phenomenon *in situ*, as it happens, is difficult, especially with impulsive purchases made on the Internet, when the consumer makes the purchase usually in the privacy of home or a workplace. For example, it would be impossible to observe this type of behavior without having an influence on the phenomenon itself. Therefore, real experiences of this phenomenon can only be studied in retrospect. However, if studying actual experiences, the Internet could provide means to develop further data generation methods. For example, utilizing online shopping diaries, netnography, or consumer online panels could be a starting point for innovative new methods to study the phenomenon. Of course, from a different research strategy, experimental research designs in a laboratory or artificial settings can be used for example to examine the effect of individual themes, such as price, on impulsive online buying. Finally, quantitative methods in general can provide further information for instance about the occurrence of different types of online impulsive buying and about importance of different elements and themes of online impulsive buying.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Survey for Internet panel members (translated from Finnish)

This survey is part of a doctoral thesis research that examines consumer purchase behavior on the Internet. The survey is carried out among the participants of Taloustutkimus Oy Internet panel members in the Tampere region. The purpose of the survey is to find interviewees for personal interviews. Research results are utilized in a doctoral thesis research that is conducted at the Department of Management Studies at the University of Tampere.

Answering the survey will take only a few minutes. Each respondent's each answer is necessary for the success of the research. Therefore, it is important that you read carefully each question, the more detailed instructions, and the choices for answers. All answers will be treated confidential in the research.

In case you would like to know more about the research project, please contact researcher, M.Sc. Nina Koski at the University of Tampere (nina.koski@uta.fi, tel. 050 5325 295).

Thank you for your answers already in advance!

Q1: Have you made any purchases on the Internet during the past year (12 months)?

Internet purchases refer to ordering a good or a service *through the Internet* irrespective of whether it will be paid in the Internet store or in cash in due course or by using conventional bank transfers. Internet purchases include, in addition to products bought on the Internet and later delivered to home or elsewhere (such as clothes, books, etc.), also products bought on the Internet that are immediately downloadable (such as software products to computers, mp3-files, etc.).

Yes

No

=> Thank you for your answer! For the interview study, we are looking for consumers who have made purchases on the Internet during the past year, so this time the survey ends here for you.

Q2: During the past year (12 months), have you made any purchases on the Internet *on spur of the moment*?

Yes

No, all the purchases that I have made on the Internet have been planned purchases.

=> Thank you for your answers! For the interview study, we are looking for consumers who have bought something on the Internet on spur of the moment, so this time the survey ends here for you.

Q3: Would you like to participate in an interview study focusing on purchase behavior on the Internet, and especially on purchases made on spur of the moment?

The interview will be conducted during the spring 2006 either at your home or at the University of Tampere. You should reserve about two hours for the interview. Interview participants will be given a small reward (worth about 10 euros). Researcher, M.Sc. Nina Koski from the University of Tampere will contact those that have volunteered to participate and will arrange the exact interview location and date. Interview data will be treated fully confidential and so that individual interviewees cannot be identified.

Yes

=> Please fill out your contact information.

No

=> Thank you for your answers and have a nice spring!

Appendix B. The interview guide (translated from Finnish)

In this interview, I will ask you repeatedly to recount in detail different buying situations, usually situations in which you have had experiences with buying online or buying on spur of the moment.

Please describe what kind of a shopper or buyer you are on the Internet.

What is this for you, buying on the Internet?

When you look back and recall, what was your first experience with buying on the Internet? Could you please tell me about that situation?

What has been your most significant experience of buying on the Internet? Could you please tell me about that situation?

If you think about your daily life as a consumer and shopper, what kind of a role does Internet play in it?

Has buying on the Internet changed you as a consumer or shopper? If so, how? Could you please tell me about a situation which is typical for that?

What do you understand by buying 'on spur of the moment'? What is related to those purchases for you?

What do you consider an *opposite* to buying on spur of the moment?

What do you understand by buying on spur of the moment *on the Internet*?

What has been your most memorable experience of a purchase that you have made on the Internet on spur of the moment? Could you please tell me about that situation?

Have you been satisfied with the purchases you have made on spur of the moment on the Internet? Could you please tell me an example about that situation?

Have you ever regretted any purchases you have made on spur of the moment on the Internet? Could you please tell me an example about that situation?

If you think about yourself as a buyer, what is the meaning of those on-spur-of-the-moment purchases made on the Internet for you? Could you please tell me about a situation which is typical for that?

How carefully do you plan your purchases on the Internet? Please tell me about some situation.

How does impulsiveness, or acting on spur of the moment, show up in your Internet purchases? Please tell me about some situation.

How carefully do you plan your purchases in general (meaning also elsewhere than on the Internet)? Please tell me about some situation.

How does impulsiveness, or acting on spur of the moment, show up in general in your purchasing (meaning also elsewhere than on the Internet)? Please tell me about some situation.

In your opinion, how suitable is the Internet for those purchases made on spur of the moment? Please tell me more.

In your opinion, how suitable is the Internet for those purchases that are planned? Please tell me more.

In what kind of a webstore could you imagine making *more purchases* on spur of the moment than you make at present?

In what kind of a webstore could you *never* imagine yourself making purchases on spur of the moment?

When buying certain products such as clothes or books online, you cannot touch them. How important is that for you? What is the meaning of that for you in your online buying?

It has been argued that buying on the Internet is easy. What do you think? What is the meaning of that for you in your online buying? What is this easiness for you?

Was there anything missing in the interview that you would have wanted to talk about?

Was there anything bothering you during the interview?

Do you want to add anything?

Appendix C. Example of a case summary (translated from Finnish)

Aino is a 30-year-old researcher who is pregnant. She has used the Internet for over ten years, and made purchases on the Internet for 6–7 years. Due to her pregnancy, her net surfing has lately started to focus more on issues related to motherhood. She has also been active in discussing motherhood/pregnancy related issues on online forums. She sees them as good supporting communities, as she doesn't have that many friends near Tampere, and also her relatives live quite far away. She uses the Internet a lot, for example at home with a laptop while watching TV. She would be willing to use the Internet more for planning all her purchases, but, unfortunately for example many service firms such as hairdressers seldom have their own websites.

Aino has ordered mainly books, CDs, and DVDs online, but also more special products such as tea. She hasn't ordered any clothes online except for humorous clothes related to parenthood. She feels that returning the items is inconvenient, especially as you become so excited when the clothes arrive home, but you end up noticing that none of them fits you. She has learned this from the times she made orders through mail catalogues. Instead, she dares to order online products that she knows what they are, such as CDs and DVDs. She uses mainly those webstores that she has ordered previously from, or, if the webstore is new to her, she prefers those that she has heard positive things from her friends or e.g. read about the webstore on some online discussion forum. She might visit these webstores e.g. to escape some boring moments while at work. Her online buying is also seasonal in a way that visiting some webstore reminds her of visiting and ordering from other webstores, as well.

The reason why she likes online buying is that it is convenient (e.g. you don't need to be at regular stores during book sales rush), but also because you can find more special or niche products there that are not necessarily available in regular stores (e.g. some sci-fi TV series). In addition, DVDs are (despite the delivery costs) usually cheaper there than when bought from a regular store.

Aino visits webstores usually only when she has some specific product in mind. So she quite seldom visits these webstores just to browse them. However, almost every time she visits a webstore, she makes also impulsive purchases, as she buys something else in addition to the one she visited the webstore for. At least she browses the bargain

section of the webstore with almost every visit. For example, she thinks that if the postage fee is fixed, then the more she orders, the relatively cheaper the postage fee becomes. Also, if she has only one product in the shopping cart, then she feels that she should order more than that, as you cannot get off with so little. So, it seems that for her, the amount of products or the size of the order could be even more important than the individual products in the order. Sometimes she has even forgotten her original purchase from the order altogether, and as a result, bought anything but the product she had planned to buy.

As an example of her online impulsive buying, she talks about buying a book on Tai Chi. She was visiting a webstore to see some other product, as she noticed also an interesting Tai Chi book. Tai Chi is her hobby, and earlier she had purchased, also impulsively online, a video about Tai Chi which was a disappointment. Now, however, the cover of the Tai Chi book convinced her that it would be a good purchase. This is an example of a successful impulsive purchase. In addition, she talks about a more unsuccessful online impulsive purchase. Aino bought, apparently due to its cheap price, a double DVD. Already when making the order, she had some concerns about what kind of films there were on those double DVDs. However, as the offer was so unbeatable, she had to buy the DVD, she just couldn't pass it.

She thinks that her online impulsive buying would be increased if the product assortment felt as wide as possible, if there were also smaller things available (those that you usually buy on an impulse in regular stores), and if there were diverse pictures and as much information about the product as possible. On the other hand, she wouldn't consider buying on an impulse from those webstores that list product information only as text. According to her, online impulsive buying has been made too easy, you end up doing it "with your left hand by mistake".