

The Impact of Scarcity on Impulse Buying from the Perspective of Chinese Consumers

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The global COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on the global healthcare system, instilling dread and anxiety among billions of people (Jackson et al., 2020). With the high mortality and infectiousness, medical protective products became scarce, especially at the early stage of the COVID-19 outbreak in China (Wu et al., 2020). The scarcity of medical protective products leads to consumers' impulse buying. Consumer's impulse buying resulted in stockpiling and the increase of prices by the shopkeepers and insufficient front-line workers, which in turn, affects epidemic control work and market order. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the effect of scarcity on consumers' impulse buying during the epidemic in China. In this study, under the theoretical guidelines of S-O-R and bandwagon effect, the researcher will identify how scarcity of medical protective products affects consumers' impulse buying by the fear of missing out and the bandwagon effect on the relationship between scarcity of the medical protective products and Chinese consumers' impulse buying. Based on these aims, the quantitative method was used in this study to better explain the relationship between scarcity on impulsive purchase. This study developed a self-reported questionnaire and targeted Chinese consumers in China. Due to the largest population, time limitation and the lockdown in China, convenience sampling was adopted for this study and 488 data was collected from Chinese consumers through online social media WeChat and QQ during the peak period of the COVID-19 outbreak in China. Besides, to ensure the reliability of the results, the measurement and structural model were evaluated by using the Smart-PLS 3 software. The empirical results show that the scarcity makes consumers fearful of missing the chance to get the medical protective products, leading ultimately to impulse buying. While the scarcity effect on consumers' impulsive purchase depends on the other consumers' follow up behavior (bandwagon) under such an emergency. The result will extend the current research on scarcity, impulsive purchase, fear of missing out and bandwagon. It also provides practical recommendations. Firstly, the result would help the marketer effectively use the scarcity strategy in the general environment (without public emergency affairs). They may increase the effect of fear of missing out and bandwagon effect to enhance the scarcity effect and attract more consumers' attention. Secondly, the results provide valuable information for the government. They can adopt measures to control the consumers' bandwagon consumption

to decrease the scarcity effect. Moreover, the government can claim that the medical organization makes an effort to produce medical protective products to diminish consumers' impulse buying, as the claim may let consumers believe that they will get the medical protective products in the future.

Keywords: *Bandwagon, Fear of Missing Out, Impulse Buying, Scarcity*