

# Solitude to Spending: Conceptualizing the Link between Loneliness, Impulse Buying and Consumer Well-being

**Stefania Masè**

Ipag Business School

**Priya Bhardwaj**

Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, India and Curtin University, Australia

**Arti D. Kalro**

Indian Institute of Technology Bombay

**Piyush Sharma**

Curtin University

**Marcela Moraes**

Curtin University

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## **Abstract**

The feeling of loneliness is increasing worldwide, and many individuals turn to consumption to cope with or escape from it. Loneliness depletes self-regulatory resources leading to an increase in impulsivity and impulse buying. Impulse buying can be seen as a compensatory consumption helping a lonely consumer fulfil their unmet social needs through consumption. Such compensatory consumption decisions are made impulsively but they may have major implications on consumer well-being. Given the importance of consumer loneliness in the current era, it becomes essential to understand the intrinsic drivers that play a role in inducing impulse buying during times of loneliness. Considering the lack of research in the consumer loneliness domain, the current research employs theoretical underpinnings of self-regulatory failure and compensatory consumption to present a conceptual framework that explains the interplay between loneliness, impulse buying, and consumer well-being. A qualitative study using laddering interviews (n=25) further explores this conceptual model. Data was analyzed using a three-phase process including coding followed by developing a Summary Intersection Matrix and creating the Hierarchical Value Map. Current research contributes to the literature on consumer loneliness, self-regulation, and impulse buying by establishing a conceptual understanding causing consumer well-being-related consequences. Findings align with the presented conceptual understanding, and all five propositions are supported indicating that state loneliness influences an individual to make impulse buying to the underlying theory of self-regulatory failure. Overall, the present research provides new insights into the scarce literature on consumer loneliness and provides managerial and policy implications for mindful marketing that safeguards vulnerable consumers.

**Keywords:** *Impulse buying, Self-regulation, Loneliness*

**Track:** *Consumer Behavior*