

# Are young university millennials compulsive in their purchase?

¿Los jóvenes millenials universitarios son compulsivos en su compra?

Serão os jovens universitários compulsivos nas suas compras?

Les jeunes milléniaux universitaires sont-ils des acheteurs compulsifs?

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## Abstract

**Objective:** To analyze the purchasing behaviors in university students of the Mexican Republic and determine if there are differences between sexes that show the behavior provided is considered compulsive, following the model of Valence, d'Astous and Fortier.

**Materials and methods:** We carried out a quantitative, descriptive, correlational and explanatory study, because it confirms the structure of the Valence d'Astous and Fortier compulsive buying scale, in the following factors: tendency to spend, reactive aspect and post-purchase guilt. The study involved 1,687 students of the *millennials generation* of 27 states of the Mexican Republic, composed of a 60 per cent of women and 40% men; the data collection was made via online with the software SurveyMonkey using a questionnaire of 16 items, in Likert scale. The statistical treatment used was the Pearson's Chi-square test, by the SPSS version 24.

**Results:** The findings show that the purchasing behavior of the sample under study cannot be considered as compulsive disorder under the model of Valence, d'Astous And Fortier, although women in relation to men, had a tendency toward compulsive buying, this got on the results shown in the construct "tendency to spend".

**Conclusions:** The results obtained by this research must be of great importance for companies; it is important to note that the subject of the compulsive buying should be a concern and the subject of further research for universities, authorities and practitioners of marketing. Today, thanks to studies on the subject, responsables for developing the marketing strategies are becoming more aware of how they affect the decisions of consumers, we must not lose sight of the fact that the members of the *millennial generation* are the future of the country and the world, and they should have the opportunity to make more responsible consumption, of benefit to the current world and future generations.

**Keywords:** Compulsive shopping; tendency to spend; urgency of purchase; feelings of guilt for purchase.

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## Resumen

**Objetivo:** Analizar los comportamientos de compra de los estudiantes universitarios de la República Mexicana y determinar si existen diferencias por sexo que muestren que el comportamiento presentado se considera compulsivo, siguiendo el modelo de Valence, d'Astous y Fortier.

**Materiales y métodos:** Se realizó un estudio de tipo cuantitativo, descriptivo, correlacional y explicativa, porque confirma la estructura de la escala de las compras compulsivas de Valence, d'Astous y Fortier en los factores: tendencia a gastar, urgencia de comprar y sentimientos de culpabilidad. El estudio involucró a 1.687 estudiantes de la generación *millennials* de 27 estados de la República Mexicana, compuesta por un 60% de mujeres y 40% varones; el levantamiento de la información fue online con el software *survey monkey* mediante cuestionario de 16 ítems, en escala de Likert. El tratamiento estadístico utilizado fue la Prueba Chi cuadrada Pearson, usando el paquete SPSS versión 24.

**Resultados:** Los hallazgos muestran que el comportamiento de compra de la muestra bajo estudio no puede ser considerado como compulsivo bajo el modelo de Valence, d'Astous y Fortier, aunque las mujeres, en relación con los hombres, presentan tendencia hacia la compra compulsiva por los resultados mostrados en el constructo "tendencia a gastar".

**Conclusiones:** Los resultados obtenidos por la investigación deben ser de gran importancia para las empresas; es importante destacar que el tema de la compra compulsiva no debe dejar de ser una preocupación y tema de investigación permanente para universidades, autoridades y practicantes de la mercadotecnia. Hoy en día, gracias a los estudios realizados sobre el tema, los encargados de elaborar las estrategias mercadológicas están tomando más conciencia de la forma como afectan en las decisiones de los consumidores, no hay que perder de vista que los integrantes de la generación *millennial* son el futuro del país y del mundo, y ellos deben tener la oportunidad de realizar consumos más responsables, de beneficio para el mundo actual y las generaciones futuras.

**Palabras clave:** Compras compulsivas; tendencia a gastar; urgencia de compra; sentimiento de culpa por compra excesiva.

## Resumo

**Objetivo:** Analisar os comportamentos de compras dos estudantes universitários da República Mexicana e determinar se há diferenças por sexo que mostram que o comportamento seja considerado compulsivo, seguindo o modelo de Valence, d'Astous e Fortier.

**Materiais e métodos:** Realizou-se um estudo quantitativo, descritivo, correlacional e explicativo, confirmando a estrutura da escala de compras compulsivas de Valence, d'Astous e Fortier nos fatores: tendência para gastar, o desejo de comprar e os sentimentos de culpa. O estudo envolveu 1.687 estudantes da "geração do milênio" dos 27 estados da República Mexicana, composto por 60% de mulheres e 40% de homens; o levantamento das informações foi efetuado via on-line através do software *survey monkey*, com aplicação de um questionário com 16 itens, sob forma de escala Likert. O tratamento estatístico baseou-se na análise do Qui-quadrado, utilizando-se o programa SPSS versão 24.

**Resultados:** Os dados mostram que o comportamento da amostra em estudo não pode ser considerada como tendo comportamentos compulsivos de compra com base no modelo de Valence, d'Astous e Fortier. Porém, as mulheres comparadas com os homens tem uma tendência para as compras compulsivas porque os resultados demonstram uma "tendência para o gasto".

**Conclusões:** Os resultados obtidos são de importância capital para as empresas; é importante destacar que o tema das compras compulsivas deve continuar a ser uma preocupação e objecto de estudo para as universidades, as autoridades e os profissionais de marketing. Hoje, graças aos estudos realizados sobre o tema, os decisores de políticas de marketing estão mais conscientes de como afetam as decisões dos consumidores, e não se pode de ter em atenção o fato de que os membros da "Geração do milênio" são o futuro do país e do mundo, devendo ter a oportunidade de realizar um consumo mais responsável, com benefícios para o mundo atual e futuras gerações.

**Palavras-chave:** Compras compulsivas; tendência para o gasto; urgência de compras; sentimentos de culpa por compras excessivas.

## Résumé

**Objectif:** Analyser les comportements d'achat des étudiants universitaires mexicains selon le sexe et déterminer s'il existe un comportement considéré compulsif, d'après le modèle de Valence, d'Astous et Fortier.

**Matériaux et méthode:** L'étude réalisée est quantitative, descriptive, corrélacionnelle et explicative, car elle confirme la structure de l'Échelle de mesure de l'achat compulsif de Valence, d'Astous et Fortier pour les facteurs suivants: tendance à dépenser, envie d'acheter et sentiment de culpabilité. L'échantillon a inclus 1.687 étudiants de la génération millénaire, de 27 États du Mexique, 60% de sexe féminin et 40% de sexe masculin. L'information a été recueillie en ligne avec le logiciel Survey Monkey grâce à un questionnaire de 16 items, de type échelle de Likert. Le traitement statistique a été réalisé au moyen du test du Chi-carré, avec le logiciel SPSS version 24.

**Resultados:** Les résultats montrent que le comportement d'achat de l'échantillon étudié ne peut être considéré compulsif d'après le modèle de Valence, d'Astous et Fortier; cependant, selon la section "tendance à dépenser", les femmes ont tendance à acheter plus compulsivement que les hommes.

**Conclusions:** Les résultats obtenus dans cette recherche sont d'une grande importance pour les entreprises; il est important de souligner que la question de l'achat compulsif ne devrait pas cesser d'être une préoccupation et un thème de recherche permanent pour les universités, les autorités et les praticiens du marketing Aujourd'hui, grâce aux études sur ce sujet, les responsables du développement de stratégies de marketing sont de plus en plus conscients de leur impact sur les décisions des consommateurs. Nous ne devons pas perdre de vue que les membres de la génération millénaire sont l'avenir du pays et du monde; ils doivent avoir l'opportunité de consommer de façon plus responsable, pour bénéficier au monde actuel et aux générations futures..

**Mots-clés:** Achats compulsifs; tendance à dépenser; urgence d'achat; sentiment de culpabilité pour achat excessif.

## Introduction

Young consumer's behavior, is a constant rate of interest by marketers in order to provide them products and services that meet their needs and desires<sup>2,3,4,5</sup>; this group is part of the *millennials generation* which term is used to define at those born between 1977 and 1994<sup>6</sup>. They are a profitable segment of potential consumers that are consistent in their consumption experiences and can be caught with the same marketing offers<sup>7,8</sup>. It is a generation that has grown within a society driven by consumption, have more access to credit, buying channels, digital television, mobile devices and the Internet<sup>9</sup>; it has been found that the members of this generation are big spenders and impulsive due to social pressure<sup>10</sup>, many times considering their way of buying as compulsive.

Compulsive shopping is an apparently intentional and repetitive behavior that is carried out in accordance with rules or in a stereotypical manner<sup>11</sup>. Acquire significant amount of product that are not needed often cannot afford is a characteristic of shopping addiction<sup>12</sup>. This anxiety is manifested through an impulse followed by emotional excitement that causes spontaneity and encourages to reduce tension through compulsive buying<sup>13</sup>; therefore, it is said that the main motivation of a buyer, to show a compulsive buying behavior, is to escape anxiety, relieve stress and finally feel happy<sup>14</sup>; it has also been suggested that the anxiety experienced by the person can be both a cause and effect of compulsive buying<sup>15</sup> Valence, d'Astous & Fortier suggest two main groups of factors that can cause

in the person a compulsive buying for anxiety: a) the social factors: culture, commercial environment, communication and publicity that stress on materialistic ideals; and b) the individual factors: strong emotional activation ((increase in psychological tension), a high cognitive control (an acknowledgement that buying will reduce the tension) and a high reactivity (looking for tension reduction, rather than ownership)<sup>16</sup>.

From this perspective, these authors<sup>16</sup> constructed several scales to diagnose and analyze compulsive buying behavior; the first scale proposed has its bases in the conceptual perspective<sup>17</sup>, the scale considered four dimensions: the first dimension was identified as "tendency to spend" and implies that a compulsive buyer should exhibit a higher propensity to spend than a non-compulsive buyer; the second dimension, "reactive aspect", dealt with the individual's response to strong urges to purchase. So, an individual exhibiting compulsive buying behavior might feel that the motivations or urges to purchase are irresistible or beyond their control, while non-compulsive buyers would not view such motivations to purchase as uncontrollable; the third dimension is associated with the post-purchase guilt; finally, a fourth dimension refers the family environment. However, in the final version of the scale, this dimension was dropped because of poor internal consistency. The Valence et al. scale has been used in several studies which exhibited a Cronbach's alpha between .78 and .92, these levels suggest that the scale strongly taps into a motivational construct related to compulsive buying.

The scale of compulsive shopping of Valence, d'Astous & Fortier<sup>16</sup> uses 16 items and has been widely used in the literature for the measurement of this tendency, we have as an example the studies where the scales were used to measure the compulsive buying tendency in the population of Vizcaya<sup>18</sup>, the research relating compulsive shopping with personal values<sup>19</sup>; the study of factors influencing compulsive buying behavior in young people<sup>20</sup>, research on buying behavior by impulse in the marketing activities of sport products<sup>21</sup>; the analysis of the relationships of personality traits with impulse and compulsive purchase<sup>22</sup> and the Analysis of the purchase behavior of the maximizer versus the satisfactory<sup>23</sup>.

Reviewing the literature in Mexico, studies on compulsive shopping among inhabitants of Mexico City stand out<sup>24</sup>; buying behavior to identify compulsive buyers in Saltillo, Coahuila<sup>25</sup>, in both studies a difference between genders was found, being women who show a greater tendency toward compulsive buying; at the same, it emphasizes the study of compulsive buying behavior in which it was found that between 1.1% and 5.9% of the Mexican population have compulsive buying problems, this behavior being more common in female<sup>26</sup>.

Therefore, the objective of this study was to analyze the purchasing behavior of university students in Mexico and determine if there are differences by sex that show the behavior presented is considered compulsive, following the model of Valence, d'Astous and Fortier.

## Materials and methods

A descriptive and exploratory study was carried out with transversal measurement, not experimental and explanatory because it confirms the structure of the compulsive purchasing scale of Valence, d'Astous and Fortier in their factors: tendency to spend (5 items), urgency to buy (6 items), and post-purchase guilt<sup>13</sup> (5 items), it was applied a sample universe of 1,687 young people from 17 to 24 years old, from public universities in 27 states in the Mexican Republic; 60% women and 40% men, the data collection was carried out online with the <sup>1</sup>SurveyMonkey software using a 16-item questionnaire, on a 1-5 Likert scale, the SPSS v.24 package was also used for the statistical analysis of the Pearson's Chi-square test. In relation to the findings on the investigations already carried out in Mexico, in which women are susceptible to compulsive buying, we want to prove if at the national level the young female university students who belong to the Millennials generation they also show a higher tendency towards compulsive buying compared to the male; hence the following hypotheses emerge:

H<sub>1</sub> Mexican female university students who belong to the Millennial generation show a greater "tendency to spend" than male students.

H<sub>2</sub> Mexican female university students who belong to the millennial generation show a greater "urgency to buy" than male students.

H<sub>3</sub> Mexican female university students who belong to the millennial generation show a greater "sense of guilt" that male students with respect to the economic impact suffered by excessive buying.

The table 1 shows the definition and implementation of all the variables considered in each of the three constructs that represent the measuring instrument; also, the objective of each construct is defined, and its associated items.

## Results

To check the validity and reliability of the instrument applied in this research, we estimated the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient<sup>28</sup>; obtaining a result of 0,775 for each scale of each factor and it was verified that they were greater than 0.7. The results obtained are presented by construct to identify the existence of compulsive buyers.

The systematization of the information was carried out in the SPSS program version 24 @; the first stage of the univariate analysis of the categorical variables and the magnitude of them was carried out by means of the distribution of absolute and relative frequencies; to determine the statistical significance of the bivariate analysis  $p = <0.05$ , the Pearson's Chi-square test was applied, established from the characteristics of the categorical variables (ordinal and nominal).

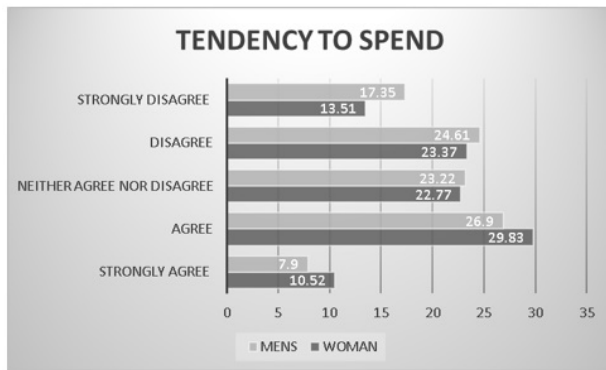
To accept or reject the first hypothesis: *H1 Mexican female university students who belong to the Millennial generation show a greater "tendency to spend" than male students*, the results are showed in Figure 1.

According to the results shown in figure 1, the 40.35% of women are "agree" and "totally agree" in considering themselves with "tendency to spend", in the case of men, the result is 34.8% in this category; to do in this construct the Pearson's Chi-square test, it was obtained as a result 7 squares (16.7%) with a lower count than 5, the expected minimum count was 1.62; therefore, the hypothesis is accepted because significant differences are found, being women who frequently identify themselves with the "tendency to spend".

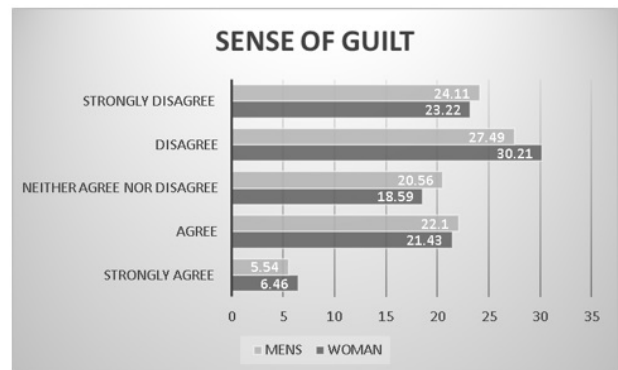
Table 1. Operationalization of variables.

Construct	Variable	Definition	Item
<b>Tendency to spend</b>	When I have money, I cannot help but spend part or the whole of it.	Determine an uncontrollable tendency to spend	1,2,3,4 and 5
	Shopping is a way of facing the stress of my daily life and relaxing		
	I buy things that I had planned to buy		
	I've always told myself what I should do with my money and that bothers me.		
	in case of having money problems there is always someone who helps me to solve them		
<b>Urge to buy</b>	I often have an unexplainable urge, a sudden and spontaneous desire, to go and buy something.	To assess if the person purchases useless things irrationally	6,7,8,9,10 and 11
	Sometimes I feel that something inside me to go shopping		
	When I see something that they have my friends, I have a great need to have it		
	In how much income in a shopping center, I feel an irresistible need to enter any store to buy something		
	I am one of those people who often respond to direct offers.		
	If I have money left at the end of the period, I feel that I have to spend it.		
<b>Sense of guilt</b>	Sometimes I feel somewhat guilty after buying a product	Determine the feeling of guilt with regard to the economic impact suffered by overbought.	12,13,14,15 and 16
	I have often bought a product that I did not need, while knowing that I have very little money left.		
	There are some things I buy that I do not show to anybody for fear of being perceived as irrational in my buying behavior		
	I consider myself a spendthrift		
	I bought things that were out of my economic possibilities		

Source: Own elaboration.

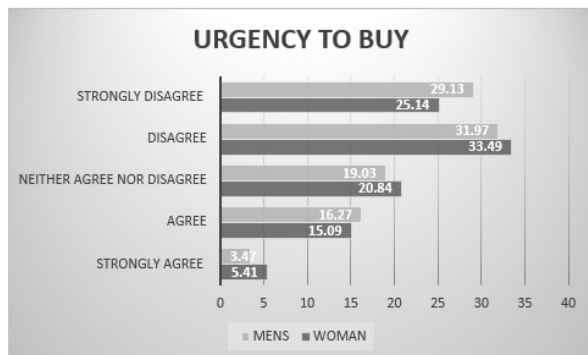


**Figura 1.** Tendency to spend  
Source: Own elaboration



**Figura 3.** Sense of guilt  
Source: Own elaboration

To accept or reject the second hypothesis: *Mexican female university students who belong to the millennial generation show a greater "urgency to buy" than male students*, the results are presented in Figure 2.



**Figura 2.** Urgency to buy  
Source: Own elaboration

According to the results shown in figure 2, the 20.49% of women are "agree" and "strongly agree" in considering themselves with "urgency of buying", in the case of men the result was 19.74%, it is observed that there is a little significant difference between both genders. When submitting this construct to the Pearson's Chi-square test, it was observed that 103 squares (39.9%) obtained a count less than 5, the minimum expected count was .41; therefore, the second hypothesis is rejected since the difference is not significant between men and women in terms of the "Urgency of buying".

In order to accept or reject the third hypothesis: *Mexican female university students who belong to the millennial generation show a greater "sense of guilt" than male students with respect to the economic impact suffered by excessive buying.*, the results are presented in Figure 3.

According to the results shown in Figure 3, the 27.89% of women are "agree" and "strongly agree" to express a "feel of guilt" after making an over-purchase; while the 27.64% of men manifest a similar feeling, no significant differences were found in this construct between both sexes. The following results were obtained by submitting this construct to the Pearson's Chi-square test, 6 squares (14.3%) report less than 5 counts, the minimum expected count was .81; as a result, the third hypothesis is rejected because the difference between men and women is not significant in terms of feeling of guilt after making an over-purchase.

### Discussion

Women in the "tendency to spend" construct present superior results in comparison with men, with regard to the constructs "urgency to buy" and "feeling of guilt" the result obtained from women is very similar to men; consequently not consistent behavior that would determine a compulsory purchase for any segment was found.

This research shows similar results with those presented by the author 25,26,27, who concluded that there is a small compulsive buying in the inhabitants of Mexico City, specially in women; also, the this study shows a significant difference in compulsive behavior between women and men similar to the study carried out in Saltillo, Coahuila, Mexico, being the women with the greatest tendency to compulsivity; finally, it was also found that between 1.1% and 5.9% of the Mexican population have features of compulsive buying, which is more frequent in the female.

## Conclusions

The aim of this study was to analyze the purchasing behavior of university students in Mexico and determine if there are differences between sexes that show, according to model of Valence, d'Astous and Fortier, that the reported behavior is considered compulsive; it is concluded that the university students surveyed have a purchasing behavior that can be considered moderately responsible, although women have a higher tendency to compulsive shopping than men in regard to "tendency to spend" and "urgency of buying"; however, on the subject of "feelings of guilt" men are the ones who showed in their responses a higher features of compulsive buyers.

As a final reflection we can point out that the results shown in the research must be very important for companies; it is important to note that the issue of compulsive buying should be considered a health problem and should be a concern, in addition to permanent research topic for universities, authorities and marketing practitioners. Nowadays, thanks to the studies carried out on the subject, those responsible for developing marketing strategies are becoming more aware of how they affect consumer decisions, we should not forget that the members of the millennial generation are the future of the country and the world, and they should have the opportunity to make more responsible consumption, benefit to the current world and future generations.

Finally, it should be noted that the study results cannot be generalized to all university students in Mexico, but the segment of young students of Mexican public universities.

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