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What is This?
A Perfect Storm for Consumer Misbehavior: Shopping on Black Friday

Sharron J. Lennon¹, Kim K. P. Johnson², and Jaeha Lee³

Abstract
Consumer misbehavior that harms other consumers and/or retailers has occurred recently during Black Friday (BF) sales. Using a combination of theoretical perspectives, the purpose of our research was to gather information about BF shopping to use in questionnaire development, to investigate potential relationships among the variables identified, and to suggest ideas for future research. From a survey of BF shoppers, we found shoppers who perceived they expended effort planning for and shopping on BF were likely to misbehave. We also found BF shoppers who expended effort planning and executing their BF shopping tended to score high on trait impulsivity. While this may seem contradictory, it can be explained by considering that people who expend effort in their BF planning may cognitively plan their BF activities and then take advantage of unplanned deals along the way. Our results support premises of the general aggression model to explain consumer misbehavior on BF.

Keywords
Black Friday, effort, impulsivity, misbehavior

Many consumer behavior theories model consumer behavior as rational and cognitive (e.g., Faber & O’Guinn, 1988), yet some types of consumer behavior are irrational and emotional (Dholakia, 2000; Park & Lennon, 2004). Included in these later instances are some forms of consumer misbehavior, acts that violate accepted norms of conduct in consumption contexts (Fullerton & Punj, 2004). Some types of consumer misbehavior can harm the consumer (e.g., compulsive buying), whereas other types can harm other consumers (e.g., fighting over merchandise) or retailers (e.g., vandalism). Consumer misbehavior that harms other consumers and/or retailers has occurred in recent years in the context of Black Friday (BF) sales in the United States (Barbaro, 2006a, 2006b; Ruth, 2006).

BF is the name given to the day after Thanksgiving, allegedly the first day of the year when many US retailers begin to make a profit (i.e., operate in the black). In recent years, retailers have begun to

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open early for this event (as early as 10 o’clock p.m. on Thanksgiving, at midnight, or sometime before sunrise) and offer deeply discounted merchandise to attract consumers. BF is heavily promoted in the media, including through the Internet. Researchers suggest that promotions such as advertising and marketing play a part in evoking aggressive behavior (Anderson & Bushman, 2002), especially in the marketplace (Fullerton & Punj, 2004). Thus, BF promotions may contribute to consumer misbehavior on BF.

Newspaper accounts of BF misbehavior often associate it with highly desired promoted items such as consumer electronics (Ruth, 2006) or toys (Barbaro, 2006a). However, apparel and accessories are also much sought after. Zewe (2007) reported that on BF 2007, clothing and accessories were bought by 46.8% of shoppers; books, CDs, DVDs, and video games were bought by 41.7% of shoppers; and consumer electronics were bought by 35.5% of shoppers. Clothing “doorbusters” have led to misbehavior, with consumers overturning piles of clothing in their search for promoted items (Barbaro, 2006a).

Consumers respond to sales promotions due to the positive experiences the promotion provides (Chandon, Wansink, & Laurent, 2000), such as saving money or feeling like smart shoppers. In anticipation of purchasing promoted items on BF, shoppers line up outside of stores, often waiting several hours for them to open. The untimely death of a Wal-Mart worker who was trampled by shoppers in their frenzied rush to enter the store and obtain promoted bargains (Carr, 2008) is an egregious example of the extent to which some consumers will go to locate and purchase “deals” on BF. Incidents like this one are evidence that research is needed to investigate consumer misbehavior on BF. The purpose of our research was to gather information about BF shopping (the nature of BF promotions, consumer misbehavior on BF, and the effort consumers put into BF shopping) to use in questionnaire development, to investigate potential relationships among the variables identified, and to suggest further research ideas.

**Literature Review**

In our literature review, we show how BF retail conditions may create a “perfect storm” environment for incidents of consumer misbehavior. We argue that promotions, long lines, crowding, rude salespeople, lack of service, stockouts, and other customers violating norms of behavior lead to negative emotions. Negative emotions may evoke consumer misbehavior on BF.

**Promotions**

A major strategy of retailers to attract customers is to offer items at promotional prices. Implementing this strategy has led to increased sales (Mulhern & Padgett, 1995). Mulhern and Padgett found that about 75% of shoppers who visited a store specifically to purchase promotional items also purchased regular priced items. Thus, promotional pricing pays off in increased sales of nonpromotional merchandise. Use of a promotional pricing strategy is much in evidence on BF, with stores routinely offering deeply discounted doorbusters to stoke consumer excitement. Consumers also benefit from retailers’ promotional activities. Chandon et al. (2000) defined the benefits of sales promotions as the value associated with the sales promotion experience or use. They isolated a framework of benefits representing both utilitarian and hedonic benefits which included monetary and nonmonetary savings.

Promotions change the economic usefulness of a purchase by lowering prices and evoking emotions, such as smart shopper feelings (Raghubir, Inman, & Grande, 2004). A promotion may offer monetary and/or nonmonetary gains and losses. For example, the purchase of a promoted item may result in a monetary gain, such as when a consumer saves money; however, the increased time and effort required to locate and purchase the item can be considered a nonmonetary loss (Fogel...
Furthermore, although a promoted item may result in a nonmonetary gain, such as evoking smart shopper feelings, it may also result in a nonmonetary loss, such as having to shop at an inconvenient time. Such “double-edged” aspects of promotions are evident on BF. It might be especially frustrating to make the effort to shop at an inconvenient time (e.g., 4 a.m.) and still be unable to purchase the promoted items due to stockouts.

Consumers expend effort prior to BF by reviewing and evaluating BF information online. BF ads are usually kept secret from consumers until retailer circulars arrive in the mail or in the Thanksgiving Day newspaper. For a few years, advance BF sales information has been posted on special BF ad websites (Associatedcontent.com, 2007). This practice is called leaking the ads (Kavilanz, 2007) and savvy consumers who want to make the effort can simply google “Black Friday ads” for sale information. Researchers (Xie, Kukar-Kinney, & Monroe, 2010) have found a link between the amount of consumer effort expended and perceptions of promotion fairness that helps explain why consumer misbehavior occurs in the context of BF shopping.

Xie et al. (2010) conducted four experiments and found that amount of effort expended to obtain a promoted item was negatively related to perceptions of the fairness of the promotion when consumers were thwarted from obtaining the promoted item. The amount of effort expended to obtain the promoted item was positively related to feelings of being deserving of and entitled to the promoted item. When unable to obtain the promoted item, the feeling of entitlement is challenged and this evokes perceptions of unfairness. To prepare for BF, consumers may expend significant effort to obtain promoted items by scoping out the BF ad sites, lining up outside stores, waiting several hours for stores to open, reading store flyers, or clipping coupons. Effort expended is an individual variable and differs by consumer. However, if we apply Xie et al.’s results to BF shopping, any effort expended to obtain a promoted item could lead to perceptions of unfairness if the promoted item is not obtained; the perceptions of unfairness may then generate negative emotions, and contribute to consumer misbehavior.

Theoretical accounts of aggression (Anderson & Bushman, 2002) and research on consumer misbehavior (Reynolds & Harris, 2009) implicate individual variables such as personality traits in consumer misbehavior. One trait that could be related to consumer misbehavior is impulsiveness (Fullerton & Punj, 1993). Hausman (2000) studied the trait of impulsivity and found that people high in impulsivity were more likely to buy impulsively than people low in the trait. Inherent impulsiveness may also be exacerbated by incentives (Dholakia, 2000; Rook & Fisher, 1995), such as those in BF ads. Popular press writers warn shoppers against impulse shopping on BF (Henning, 2010; Rockler-Gladen, 2009). Whether or not BF shoppers are high in impulsivity is an empirical question, and the extent of impulse purchasing on BF is unknown.

Yet, there is reason to believe that some BF shoppers are not impulsive and in fact are likely to expend effort strategically planning their BF shopping trips. Since doorbuster prices may be limited to the first few hours a store is open, anyone wanting an item at that price must make a special effort to be early. To avoid stockouts of advertised items, BF shoppers often must be present when the store first opens, which typically entails waiting in a long line. These activities require planning effort by BF shoppers, which in turn suggests their purchases on BF might not be impulsive. How impulsivity as a personal characteristic may play a role in BF misbehavior is unknown.

Consumer Misbehavior

Published research does not exist about BF consumer misbehavior. However, researchers have studied consumer misbehavior in other contexts, often in the hospitality field (Bonifield & Cole, 2007; Harris & Ogbonna, 2002; Harris & Reynolds, 2004; Reynolds & Harris, 2006, 2009) or in a general service context (Bougie, Pieters, & Zeelenberg, 2003; Rose & Neidermeyer, 1999; Rupp & Spencer, 2006). For example, Reynolds and Harris (2006) interviewed 64 hospitality employees
about consumer misbehavior. All informants recalled at least two occasions of consumer misbehavior within the previous 2 days. This finding suggests the pervasiveness of consumer misbehavior in service industries.

Even though consumer misbehavior can stem from many sources, dissatisfaction with a retailer is a probable stimulus for some misbehavior. Huefner and Hunt (2000) studied consumer misbehavior in malls and identified several ways consumers “get back at” businesses they were dissatisfied with, including vandalizing or damaging stores, dumping products on the floor or trashing, engaging in negative word of mouth (WOM), and engaging in verbal or physical abuse of employees or other customers. Although not empirically tied to dissatisfaction with a retailer, these behaviors have all been reported in the context of BF shopping (Complaints.com, 2005). For example, on BF in 2006 police responded to reports of nine skirmishes as a large crowd of Utah shoppers pushed and shoved into a mall (Barbaro, 2006a). After entering, shoppers ransacked stores and overturned displays of clothing. Barbaro also reported other incidents of BF misbehavior. For example, Ohio Wal-Mart employees were pinned against stacks of merchandise by customers rushing into the store. In a New York toy store, shoppers were reported pushing, shoving, and grabbing toys.

Other situations that lead to aggressive behavior in the marketplace were investigated by Rose and Neidermeyer (1999) who surveyed 69 adults. Waiting in a checkout line was identified as likely to lead to aggressive behavior by 24.7% of the respondents. Other situations identified included rude employees (23.5%), lack of service (14.6%), other customers violating norms of behavior (12.4%), large crowds (3.4%), and stockouts (2.2%). Rose and Neidermeyer explained the link between waiting in long lines and misbehavior. They cite research by Anderson, Benjamin, and Bartholow (1998) which found that guns are stimuli that prime aggressive thoughts or scripts. Based on that finding Rose and Neidermeyer suggest that, in a similar way, long lines may also prime aggressive thoughts or scripts. Although the accessibility of such scripts may predispose a person toward or away from aggressive behavior (Guerra, Nucci, & Huesmann, 1994), other stimuli omnipresent on BF that may prime aggressive scripts or may evoke negative emotions include large crowds, insufficient stock (Kim & Lennon, 2011), inattentive salespeople, doorbuster promotions (Anderson & Bushman, 2002), and other consumers violating norms of behavior.

Both spatial crowding (via large racks and stacks of merchandise) and human crowding are common on BF. In 2006 BF crowd estimates ranged from 15,000 to 20,000 to 50,000 people at various malls across the United States (Barbaro, 2006b). Crowding can lead to negative emotions (Hui & Bateson, 1991; Machleit, Eroglu, & Mantel, 2000). Researchers have also found that crowding in retail environments may lead to impulsive buying (Mattila & Wirtz, 2008), especially when salespeople are perceived to be friendly. However, salespeople on BF are operating with little sleep, may be stressed by crowds and extra demands, and may be afraid. For example, one news report told of a Wal-Mart worker heard screaming for shoppers to stop pushing (Barbaro, 2006a). Researchers have found that when treated poorly by customers, salespeople find it difficult to express friendliness and sympathy and to hide their irritation (Rupp & Spencer, 2006).

Researchers have related several types of stimuli to consumer misbehavior including: crowding, promotions, long lines, stockouts, aggressive behaviors by other consumers, and rude/unhelpful employees. News accounts of BF shopping demonstrate that all these stimuli are common on BF. Thus, it is unsurprising to find consumer misbehavior on BF. In the next section, we discuss theoretical perspectives that help explain BF consumer misbehavior.

**Theoretical Perspectives**

BF misbehaviors can be explained by the exchange paradigm (Bagozzi, 1975). According to Bagozzi, a two-party reciprocal relationship such as that between retailers and consumers is a restricted exchange with two properties: Something of value is given for something of value and
there is an attempt to maintain equity between the parties. Such reciprocity may be violated when consumers come to shop on BF at very early hours with the intention of purchasing a doorbuster deal but are unable to do so. As a result of this violation, they may perceive inequity.

Consumer misbehavior is an unintended consequence of marketing activities, the purpose of which is to promote consumption (Fullerton & Punj, 2004). When shoppers are exposed to media promotions for BF sales, it is likely that they expect to be able to purchase the promoted items. In other words, it is likely that shoppers go to the stores willing to pay the advertised price and expecting to get the product in return. In effect, consumers have kept their part of the exchange but the retailer has not if the product is not available. Consumers may feel taken advantage of and withdraw from the exchange (i.e., will exit; discontinue buying from those retailers). If consumers think retailers have taken advantage of them, emotional reactions may occur. These emotions can lead to riots, boycotts, or other types of misbehavior (Izard, 1972). Researchers have found that an inability to achieve a goal such as to buy a desired product often precipitates aggressive incidents (Izard, 1972; Rose & Neidermeyer, 1999).

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) from environmental psychology offers another perspective from which to view consumer misbehavior on BF. Mehrabian and Russell posit that stimuli (S) in the environment affect internal emotions (O), which in turn evoke behavioral responses (R). The emotions initially identified by the authors in the S-O-R Model were pleasure, arousal, and dominance. However, researchers have found other types of emotions such as anger, disgust, and contempt are influenced by environmental stimuli (Kim & Lennon, 2011; Machleit et al., 2000). In addition, the model has been extended to include cognition (Kim, Kim, & Lennon, 2009) along with emotion and has been successfully applied to the retail environment (Kim et al., 2009; Machleit et al., 2000).

Although the S-O-R Model explains how stimuli in the environment can lead to consumer misbehavior, it does not consider individual characteristics such as impulsivity as possible antecedents of consumer misbehavior. The General Aggression Model (GAM) from psychology (Anderson & Bushman, 2002) does not have this shortcoming and can be applied to consumer misbehavior if it is viewed as a form of aggression. Aggression is defined as any behavior carried out with intent to cause harm. Anderson and Bushman focused on acts directed toward others but aggression can also be directed toward objects (e.g., when consumers destroy product displays). Hostile aggression is unplanned, driven by emotions like anger and frustration, and provoked such as when consumers are thwarted from obtaining promotional items on BF.

Anderson and Bushman (2002) hold that the influence of situational variables on aggression is mediated by the internal states they create. People appraise the situation and engage in a decision-making process that can result in thoughtful or impulsive action. Applied to consumer misbehavior on BF, the focus is on individual (impulsivity, hostility) and situational variables including doorbuster deals, crowding, long lines, insufficient stock, inattentive salespeople, and other consumers violating norms of behavior. These variables evoke negative emotions and subsequently consumer misbehavior. Situational variables in the GAM are classified as stimuli under the S-O-R Model. In both models “input” variables (stimuli in the S-O-R Model, situational variables in GAM) influence behaviors via the internal states they create. Applied to BF shopping, both models depict input variables as antecedents to emotions and cognitions, which can evoke consumer misbehavior.

Because the S-O-R Model, the GAM, and extant research findings suggest that retail stimuli may lead to consumer misbehavior in consumption situations, we were interested in learning about BF misbehaviors. Although the media reports consumer misbehavior on BF, empirical research of consumer misbehavior on BF has not been conducted. Therefore, we began our research by conducting pilot studies. In Pilot Study 1, we conducted a content analysis of news reports to identify BF misbehaviors and BF planning efforts undertaken by BF shoppers that could be used in questionnaire development for a consumer survey. In Pilot Study 2, we conducted fieldwork on BF in three
different stores. From the pilot studies, we learned about consumer misbehavior and the effort expended by BF shoppers. This information was used to develop a questionnaire for our main study of BF shoppers.

**Pilot Study I**

To investigate BF shopping and associated misbehavior, we analyzed news reports. The research questions (RQs) guiding our analyses were: What do consumers do on BF in terms of (RQ1) efforts expended to shop and (RQ2) consumer misbehaviors? However, we were also interested in all aspects of BF. Online and academic search engines were used to locate news articles. All articles were downloaded in November 2006 after BF. We found 27 unique news articles; all focused on 2006 BF shopping. Often the same stories about BF 2006 were picked up by the wire services and carried in papers across the nation. Two coders developed an initial coding frame; initial coder reliabilities ranged from 70 to 100\% . The coding frame was revised and the coders negotiated categories until reaching 100\% agreement. The coding unit was a mention,4 a word or phrase that specified a type of information.

The articles analyzed did not simply report local news. For example, one article published in NYTimes.com reported incidents in Utah, New York, Ohio, and Illinois. Since some articles were from online publications such as Reuters and Bloomberg Businessweek, the city/state where reported incidents occurred was not always clear. In the 27 articles, 13 states were mentioned, including California, Utah, Illinois, Kansas, Florida, Delaware, Maine, and Georgia. Retailer/retailer-related topics included merchant deals, store opening times, and products that sold well. Consumer/consumer-related topics included BF misbehavior, number of shoppers, and efforts undertaken to shop on BF. The articles contained more than twice as many mentions about retailers/retailer-related topics as about consumers/consumer-related topics. Shopping format was discussed in all articles; slightly more articles focused only on online shopping \((f = 10)\), than on instore shopping \((f = 9)\), while some were focused on both \((f = 8)\). Specific retailers \((f = 24)\) were mentioned, such as Finish Line, CompUSA, Wal-Mart, Best Buy, JCPenney, Target, Macy, Toys “R” Us, Sears, Kohl’s, Kmart, Gap, Staples, and Game Spot. Sales increases or decreases \((f = 15)\) were reported, for example, the National Retail Federation predicted an in-store sales increase of 5\% but the actual increase was 6\%. About half the articles mentioned products that sold well \((f = 14)\): Bratz dolls, DVD players, flat screen TVs, Playstation 3, Wii, cashmere sweaters, satchel handbags, and Elmos. Store opening times \((f = 13)\) were mentioned fairly often and ranged from as early as 9 p.m. on Thanksgiving Day through 5 a.m. on BF. Merchant deals \((f = 13)\) such as laptops for $99, 1-carat diamond rings for $100, $70 DVD players, $600 flat screen TVs, Playstation3 for $600, Wiis for $250, and Elmos for $40 were mentioned. One article suggested using tickets on BF: either lottery tickets so everyone has a chance of buying the specials, or distributing tickets on a first come, first served basis.

Shopper information categories included the number of shoppers \((f = 16)\), specific BF activities \((f = 11)\), number of shoppers waiting to enter the stores \((f = 6)\), instances of consumer misbehavior \((f = 4)\), shopper strategies \((f = 2)\), and distances traveled to shop on BF \((f = 2)\). The content of the specific BF activities, shopper strategies, and distances traveled revealed that shoppers expended considerable effort in preparation for and shopping on BF: sleeping over at a friend’s, developing a shopping plan, getting up before dawn, shopping with others, riding a bus for over an hour to get to an outlet mall, scouring the ads, sometimes splitting up, camping outside stores, and flying in from a foreign country. For example, foreign shoppers traveled from France, Japan, Mexico, Brazil, and the Caribbean to shop on BF. Other efforts included going the day before and hiding desired items (in refrigerators), deciding what to buy ahead of time, using a detailed list and the ads, shopping with
partners and splitting up to acquire certain merchandise, reporting by cell phone, holding a friend’s place in line, searching online for coupons, joining loyalty programs, bringing cold snacks, and tracking receipts by taping them to boxes.

Merchant deals attracted shoppers, who became angry and frustrated to learn that few products were in stock at advertised prices like $70 portable DVD players or $600 flat screen TVs. Lack of reciprocity may have elicited the negative emotions, which in turn may have precipitated consumer misbehavior. In the four news stories that reported consumer misbehavior, the following frequencies of specific incidents of consumer misbehavior were noted: pushing or shoving ($f = 2$), overturning clothing and other displays ($f = 2$), skirmishing with police ($f = 1$), ransacking stores ($f = 1$), pinning employees against stacks of merchandise ($f = 1$), cutting in-line ($f = 1$), threatening employees ($f = 1$), shouting ($f = 1$), and aggressive grabbing of merchandise ($f = 1$).

Based on results, consumer efforts involved in BF shopping were identified and used to develop 12 questionnaire items. A total of 12 items were also generated to assess BF consumer misbehaviors. Respondents self-reported frequencies of BF misbehaviors and assessed the extent to which various

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Questionnaire Items Developed From Pilot Studies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BF Misbehavior Items*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushing and shoving to get in the store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skirmishing with mall guards or police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ransacking stores (tossing merchandise around, not replacing on racks/shelves)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overturning racks of merchandise such as clothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushing employees back against the store walls as they enter the store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grabbing merchandise out of other shoppers’ carts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grabbing merchandise out of other shoppers’ hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shouting at store employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shouting at other customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoving other customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically fighting with other customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standing in long lines to check out with their purchases$^a$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort Involved in BF Shopping Items$^{**}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I check the newspapers for BF sale advertisements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I stop in the stores earlier in the week to make sure BF items are in stock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use Internet sites to find out about deals before Thanksgiving day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I plan out my BF shopping day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I shop with others to cover more stores on BF than I could alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hide items in the store so there will be items available by the time I get to the store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On BF I go early and wait outside of the store until it opens so I can get the items before they are gone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I pack a lunch so I do not have to stop shopping on BF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I browse the stores with no real shopping agenda on BF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I buy most things on the Internet at midnight when the sale prices take effect on BF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like that the stores are opening at midnight instead of early in the morning on BF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If something I wanted is not available I buy something different on BF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Please indicate the frequency with which you have engaged in the behavior described using this system: 5 = frequently; 4 = somewhat frequently; 3 = neither frequently nor infrequently; 2 = somewhat infrequently; 1 = infrequently.

** For each of the following statements indicate to what extent the behavior is like you using the following system, where 1 = not at all like me; 2 = somewhat not like me; 3 = not certain if this is like me; 4 = somewhat like me; and 5 = very much like me.

$^a$ Although not technically a "mis" behavior, this item was included since long lines have been implicated in consumer misbehavior in previous research (Rose & Neidermeyer, 1999).
BF effortful planning behaviors were descriptive of them. See Table 1 for a complete list of items developed from the results of both pilot studies.

**Pilot Study 2**

While the analysis of the media provided interesting information regarding the way BF is reported, the next step was to conduct fieldwork on BF for a realistic assessment of consumer misbehavior and effort involved in BF shopping. Two researchers observed at three large stores (Best Buy, Wal-Mart, and Kohl’s) before and after they opened at 5 a.m. at a large midwestern shopping center on BF. The researchers observed outside and inside the stores and took field notes. The RQ was: What kinds of behaviors do consumers engage in on BF?

Many shoppers braved early morning (4:30 a.m.) cold (17°F) to be one of the first shoppers into the stores. We observed people running to get into the stores when the doors opened, consulting sales flyers, coordinating their shopping via cell phone, and relying on shopping lists. From these observations, we inferred that people had put effort into planning their BF shopping. In fact, some people went to great lengths to shop on BF, bringing small children in strollers, shopping on crutches, and shopping from a wheelchair. Shoppers also waited in long lines to check out with their merchandise. At one store there were two different lines of more than 80 people each waiting to check out. These observations were used to edit questionnaire items to assess effort involved in BF shopping such as “I plan out my BF shopping day.”

The kinds of behaviors observed on BF required consumers’ time and effort to plan and execute. No consumer misbehavior was observed, although it is possible that some occurred but was unobserved. One retailer used a sandwich board just inside the entrance of the store that listed sold-out items. Research shows that informing consumers about stockouts prior to purchase reduces negative emotion (Kim & Lennon, 2011) and in this case may have pre-empted consumer misbehavior. However, this is speculative since given the nature of fieldwork, it is impossible to determine cause and effect.

**Main Study**

To investigate relationships among BF misbehaviors, BF promotions, effort involved in BF shopping, and impulsivity, we surveyed BF shoppers. We reasoned that sales promotions provide benefits to shoppers (Chandon et al., 2000). The benefits could be utilitarian, such as convenience or value for the money (as hyped in BF ad sites and other retailer promotions), or hedonic such as the feeling of being a smart shopper. Consistent with the exchange paradigm, shoppers would expect to be able to purchase promoted items. If thwarted from buying promoted items consumers might engage in consumer misbehavior. Thus, if consumers perceive benefits to the BF sales promotions and encounter stockouts, they may engage in consumer misbehavior. This rationale led to the first of six RQs, RQ1: What is the relationship between consumer misbehavior and perceived benefits of the BF sales promotions?

Likewise, according to Xie et al. (2000), if consumers invest effort to shop on BF, they may feel entitled to receive the promotional prices; if they are unable to do so, they may perceive the promotion to be unfair, get angry, and engage in consumer misbehavior. This led to RQ2: What is the relationship between consumer misbehavior and effort involved in BF shopping? According to the GAM, personal characteristics are antecedents to aggressive behavior. This rationale led to RQ3: What is the relationship between consumer misbehavior and impulsivity? Research questions were developed to study possible relationships among perceived benefits of BF shopping, the shopper’s effort, and impulsivity: (RQ4) What is the relationship between the perceived benefits of BF sales promotions and effort involved in BF shopping? (RQ5) What is the relationship between perceived
benefits of BF sales promotions and impulsivity? (RQ6) What is the relationship between effort involved in BF shopping and impulsivity?

**Procedure**

A survey instrument was completed by a convenience sample of US adult BF shoppers in two metropolitan areas (Midwest and mid-Atlantic). Undergraduate surveyors administered the survey for class activity credit or as an extra credit opportunity and were directed to survey adults who had shopped on BF. Adults were approached in public places. If they reported shopping on BF they were invited to participate, and given a questionnaire and cover letter explaining the purpose of the research. Completed questionnaires were returned to surveyors.

**Instrumentation**

To assess effort involved in BF shopping, the 12 items developed from Pilot Studies 1 and 2 were used. The measure of BF misbehaviors was developed from results of Pilot Study 1. See Table 1 for a list of all BF consumer misbehavior items, all BF effortful planning items, and directions for completing each. A problem with self-reports of nonnormative behavior is that participants concerned with making socially desirable responses are likely to underreport BF misbehaviors. In other words, when asking people to self-report nonnormative behaviors, it is likely that such behaviors will be underreported. This phenomenon also occurs in shoplifting research that asks for self-reports of shoplifting. To assess the tendency to underreport BF misbehaviors, a measure of socially desirable responding was used. The 10-item Social Desirability scale (Strahan & Gerbasi, 1972) assessed whether people were likely to provide socially acceptable responses. This scale has a true–false format and is scored so that high scores indicate socially acceptable responses.

The Chandon et al. (2000) 18-item scale was adapted to measure benefits perceived from BF sale promotions. Hausman’s (2000) seven items assessing trait impulsivity were used. These scales were presented in Likert format with endpoints of agree (5) and disagree (1). For all scales, higher scores indicate more of a variable. Demographic information (age, education, sex, ethnicity) was collected using forced choice formats.

**Results and Discussion**

Of 200 returned surveys, only 189 ($F = 152, M = 34, 3 = missing information$) shoppers had shopped on BF. All analyses are based on the BF shopper data. Shoppers were mostly women (81.7%) and Euro-American (90.3%), although 3.2% were African American, 2.2% were Hispanic American, and 4.3% were Asian American. Their mean age was 34 years. Shoppers were well-educated; 54% held a Bachelor’s degree. Median income was between $35,000 and $49,999. Respondent sex, ethnicity, and education are not representative of the US population. Self-reports of consumer misbehaviors were low, mostly below the midpoint of the scale. This is not surprising because people are unlikely to self-report socially undesirable behaviors. It is also possible that respondents tended not to engage in BF misbehavior. See Table 1 for all consumer misbehavior and BF effortful planning item means.

Principal components analyses were performed on multi-item measures; items with loadings above .55 on a factor and cross-loadings of less than .20 were retained in the factor. Item ratings within a factor were summed and used to address the RQs. See Table 2 for specific items, eigenvalues, variance accounted for, and reliabilities of factors.

Two BF misbehavior factors were isolated. They were *misbehavior toward other people*, which contained six items, and *misbehavior toward objects*, which contained three items. One factor was
found for effort involved in BF shopping and it contained four items. See Table 2 for factors, all associated statistics, and specific items. Five factors in benefits perceived from BF sales promotions were isolated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Misbehavior Toward Others (Eigenvalue = 5.28, Variance Accounted for = 44%, Cronbach’s α = .92)</th>
<th>Items and factor loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customers pushing employees back against the store walls as they enter the store (.77)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers grabbing merchandise out of other shoppers’ carts (.89)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers grabbing merchandise out of other shoppers’ hands (.93)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers shouting at other customers (.74)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers shoving other customers (.72)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers physically fighting with other customers (.79)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Misbehavior Toward Objects (Eigenvalue = 2.89, Variance Accounted for = 24.1%, Cronbach’s α = .79)</th>
<th>Items and factor loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customers pushing and shoving to get in the store (.64)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers ransacking stores (tossing merchandise around, not replacing on racks) (.77)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers overturning racks of merchandise such as clothing (.70)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effort Involved in BF Planning (Eigenvalue = 2.41, Variance Accounted for = 20%, Cronbach’s α = .82)</th>
<th>Items and factor loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I stop in the stores earlier in the week to make sure BF items are in stock (.65)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use Internet sites to find out about deals before Thanksgiving day (.57)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I plan out my BF shopping day (.57)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I shop with others to cover more stores on BF than I could alone (.59)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Smart Shopper Convenience (Eigenvalue = 2.92, Variance Accounted for = 16.2%, Cronbach’s α = .82)</th>
<th>Items and factor loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>These BF promotions make my life easy (.64)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the BF promotions I can remember what I need (.56)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the BF promotions I feel good about myself (.73)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On BF I can be proud of my purchase(s) (.76)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On BF I feel like I am a smart shopper (.64)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entertainment (Eigenvalue = 2.70, Variance Accounted for = 15%, Cronbach’s α = .92)</th>
<th>Items and factor loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>These BF promotions are fun (.81)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These BF promotions are entertaining (.86)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These BF promotions are enjoyable (.85)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality (Eigenvalue = 2.70, Variance Accounted for = 15%, Cronbach’s α = .89)</th>
<th>Items and factor loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On BF I can have a higher quality product at the same price (.82)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On BF I can afford a better than usual product (.83)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On BF I can upgrade to a better brand (.82)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Savings (Eigenvalue = 2.53, Variance Accounted for = 14%, Cronbach’s α = .86)</th>
<th>Items and factor loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I really save money when I shop on BF (.84)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I am getting a good deal when I shop on BF (.86)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I really spend less on the items I want on BF (.79)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stimulation (Eigenvalue = 2.21, Variance Accounted for = 12.2%, Cronbach’s α = .76)</th>
<th>Items and factor loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On BF I feel like trying new brands (.66)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On BF I can avoid always buying the same brands (.84)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reliability analysis showed that Hausman’s (2000) impulsivity scale had adequate reliability (α = .92). The seven items were summed and used to address RQs.

Multiple and simple regressions were used to address RQs. Since consumer misbehavior on BF can be considered socially undesirable, it is likely that respondents might under-report such actions. Therefore, we used the measure of socially desirable responding as a covariate in analyses involving consumer misbehavior. To assess possible relationships between consumer misbehavior and perceived benefits of sales promotions (RQ1) and between consumer misbehavior and impulsivity (RQ3), two multiple regressions were calculated. The independent variables were the benefits of
sales promotion factors, impulsivity, and social desirability and the dependent variables were the two consumer misbehavior factors. Neither overall $F$ was significant, thus no support was found for RQ1 or RQ3. This may suggest that both consumers who misbehave on BF and those who do not misbehave perceive similar benefits to BF sales promotions. It also suggests that impulsivity does not predict consumer misbehavior on BF.

To assess possible relationships between consumer misbehavior and effort involved in BF shopping (RQ2), two multiple regressions were calculated. The effort involved in BF shopping factor and social desirability were the independent variables and the two consumer misbehavior factors were the dependent variables. Significant relationships were found, $F(2, 168) = 5.67, p < .0001$. Social desirability was negatively related to misbehavior toward other people, $t(168) = -2.04, p < .04, \beta = -.15$. Not surprisingly, people concerned with presenting themselves in a socially desirable way were less likely to report misbehavior toward other people on BF. Effort involved in BF shopping was positively related to misbehavior toward other people, $t(168) = 2.52, p < .0001, \beta = .19$, even when social desirability was accounted for. Expending effort on BF was associated with more misbehavior on BF even though the self-reported BF misbehavior means were low overall. Our research purpose was to investigate relationships, not to determine the extent of BF misbehavior. Hence, whether or not respondents were responding in a socially desirable manner or accurately reporting their own low level of consumer misbehavior, the important result is that effort expended on BF planning was positively related to BF misbehavior.

Study results are consistent with the GAM and research findings of Xie et al. (2010). The GAM as applied to BF shopping explains that individual (amount of effort expended by a consumer to obtain BF promotions) and situational variables (BF promotions) arouse internal states (negative emotion), which evoke aggression (consumer misbehavior). On BF, it is common for consumers not to obtain sought-after promoted items. Xie et al. found that for consumers who do not obtain a desired promotion, there is a negative relationship between amount of effort expended to obtain a promotion and perceptions of promotion fairness. Thus, BF shoppers who expended effort to obtain a promotion, but were unable to obtain it, may have developed negative emotions which led to consumer misbehavior. Misbehavior toward objects was not related to effort involved in BF shopping or to social desirability. Thus RQ2 received some support.

To assess possible relationships among the five perceived benefits of sales promotion factors and the effort involved in BF shopping (RQ4), multiple regression was used. The five factors of benefits perceived from BF sales promotions were the independent variables and the effort involved in BF shopping factor was the dependent variable. A significant relationship was found, $F(5, 181) = 6.41, p < .0001$. The smart shopper convenience benefit from BF sales promotions was positively related to effort involved in BF shopping, $t(181) = 2.74, p < .0001, \beta = .27$. Thus, consumers who shop on BF for the perceived benefit of smart shopper feelings and convenience were likely to put effort into planning and shopping on BF. The smart shopper convenience factor has both hedonic and utilitarian aspects. The significant relationship is reasonable given that smart shopper feelings may arise from carefully planning and executing a BF shopping trip. This group of shoppers may represent shoppers who were successful in obtaining advertised items. None of the other benefits of sales promotions was related to effort involved in BF shopping.

To assess possible relationships among the five perceived benefits of sales promotion factors and impulsivity (RQ5), multiple regression was used. The five perceived benefits of BF sales promotions factors were the independent variables and trait impulsivity was the dependent variable. A significant relationship was found, $F(5, 181) = 11.58, p < .0001$. Only the entertainment benefit was related to trait impulsivity, $t(181) = 3.77, p < .0001, \beta = .34$, and the relationship was positive. Thus, shoppers who are impulsive shop on BF for entertainment. This is consistent with Hausman (2000), who found that shoppers high in impulsivity shop for entertainment.
The possibility of a relationship between the effort involved in BF shopping factor and impulsivity (RQ6) was assessed using simple regression. The effort involved in BF shopping factor was used as the independent variable and trait impulsivity was the dependent variable. A positive relationship was found, \( t(187) = 3.70, p < .0001, \beta = .26 \). Paradoxically, BF shoppers who expend effort planning their BF shopping tended to be high in trait impulsivity. This result may seem contradictory (planning implies a rational process and impulsivity is typically nonrational), but can be explained by considering that people who expend effort to prepare for BF may first plan their BF activities, then take advantage of unplanned deals along the way.

**Practical Implications**

Effort expended planning for and shopping on BF was positively related to consumer misbehavior toward other people. Retailers interested in thwarting incidents of misbehavior that are stemming from this relationship can reduce the effort BF consumers engage in several ways. Redeeming coupons requires effort, hence retailers may want to use alternative promotional strategies. For example, tickets for promoted items could be given to shoppers waiting in line to enter the store; the tickets could be redeemed at the customer service desk. This would reduce the effort associated with coupons and eliminate rushing to enter the store. Retailers could also reduce shopper effort by posting a prominent sign listing items that are out of stock. This would reduce shoppers’ efforts to find out-of-stock items. Time spent shopping can easily be reduced by opening multiple checkout lanes to get shoppers in and out quickly. Finally, retailers could post the on-hand quantities of promoted items along with the price discount. Shoppers interested in those items would have some idea of their chances of actually getting the advertised promotion when they lined up for the store opening and could adjust their effort accordingly.

Retailers can also make it less possible for consumers to plan (i.e., reduce effort) by limiting the number of disclosed promotions until stores open on BF. To still attract customers and maintain excitement, retailers could advertise “secret” promotions (e.g., “prices so low on these items we do not dare put them in print”). Or a treasure hunt promotion could be advertised and instead of naming promoted items and prices, treasure hunt-type hints could be offered. These strategies could reduce effort because shoppers could not plan ahead of time.

If BF shoppers who plan their shopping also take advantage of unexpected deals on impulse, then retailers could reward them with unadvertised promotions. Impulsive BF shoppers who expend effort planning and executing their BF shopping also shop for entertainment on BF. Retailers could not only reward impulsive BF shoppers for their effort but also provide them with entertainment by offering unexpected deals on BF. A variety of discounts could be planned for various times to reward shoppers regardless of when they were shopping on BF. Making promotions intermittently available on BF is a type of partial reinforcement. An example of partial reinforcement is providing a reward like a special promotion only sometimes when a desired behavior (BF shopping) is observed. Rewarded behavior is resistant to extinction, so such unexpected rewards may have strong effects (Jenkins & Stanley, 1950).

**Limitations**

This study is limited by the convenience sample of BF shoppers. Although respondents were BF shoppers, they are not representative of the US population and only came from two general US locations. Future researchers may wish to obtain respondents from a wider geographic area. Since the consumer misbehavior items were generated primarily from popular press accounts, less extreme types of consumer misbehavior may not have been included.
Conclusions and Future Research

The findings are consistent with the GAM and extant research. The pilot studies’ results clearly demonstrate that at least some BF shoppers were expending considerable effort to shop on BF. The fact that the BF effort variable was identified using different research strategies (content analysis, fieldwork, survey) suggests its importance in explaining BF misbehavior.

Although we did not test such a link, we think that the effort taken to attain BF promotions leads to perceptions of entitlement with respect to promoted items. This interpretation is supported by Xie et al. (2010) who found that when promoted items are unavailable, perceptions of entitlement can lead to negative emotions. We expect that negative emotions evoked the BF misbehavior. The positive relationship found between effort expended obtaining BF promotions and misbehavior toward others together with findings by Xie et al. suggests a multistage process as proposed by the GAM. To support this proposition, research is needed to determine (a) if effort expended planning and executing BF shopping is positively related to entitlement and (b) if effort expended planning and executing BF shopping directly affects consumer misbehavior or is mediated by negative emotions.

Entitlement is one of the factors of narcissism, a personality trait that has been linked to aggression (Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Bobins, Moffitt, & Caspi, 2005; Locke, 2009). Narcissism is an extremely inflated view the self that is characterized by selfishness, dominance, hostility, arrogance (Back, Schmukle, & Egloff, 2010), and disregard for others. According to Locke, narcissism is associated with antisocial maladaptive behaviors. Entitlement and exploitativeness are the most maladaptive factors of narcissism (Raskin & Terry, 1988). Applied to BF shopping this suggests that narcissistic individuals may be prone to engage in consumer misbehavior because they feel they are entitled to the promoted items. Researchers may wish to investigate both these components of narcissism in future studies of BF shopping.

Taking a qualitative approach and interviewing both shoppers and retail workers about consumer misbehavior encountered on BF might be informative. The focus of this research was on consumers, but it would useful to investigate retail workers with experience working the BF sales for another perspective on consumer misbehavior on BF. In addition, there is reason to believe that men are more aggressive than women (Eagly & Steffen, 1986; Knight, Fabes, & Higgins, 1996), yet most of our survey respondents were women. Future researchers should attempt to obtain a better balance in terms of sex of respondent to get an accurate view of the extent of consumer misbehavior on BF. Finally, consumer misbehavior on BF could be affected by the presence of security cameras. Future researchers may wish to correlate the presence of security cameras with incidents of BF misbehavior.

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Notes

1. For example, in 2006 JCPenney advertised 35 pages of “doorbusters”; many stores offered 10% off coupons, and Gap offered 30% off everything if consumers spent $50 or more (Barbaro, 2006a, 2006b).
2. In fact, in tips to BF shoppers in 2009, police cautioned them not to cut into checkout lines because that behavior led to altercations in 2008 (Porter, 2009).
3. Reports of long lines on BF ranged from estimates of 200 shoppers (Ruth, 2006), “hundreds deep” (Barbaro, 2006a), and 2000 shoppers (Delzell, 2006).

4. Other researchers studying consumer behavior toward apparel have used a mention as the unit of analysis (Kim & Lennon, 2000, 2005).

5. See Porter and Donthu (2006) for another research project that used students as surveyors.

6. The authors would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.

References


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