



# Phenomenon of compensative and compulsive buying in Poland. A socio-economic study

**Grzegorz ADAMCZYK**

**The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland**

**Abstract:** This article examines the phenomenon of compensative and compulsive buying in a consumer society such as Poland. The prevalence of compensative and compulsive buying in Poland is discussed in comparison with other countries. Sociodemographic conditions of compensative and compulsive buying such as age, gender, income, debts of households or class of locality size are analysed. An important goal of the theoretical part of the article is a presentation of different methods of measuring compensative and compulsive buying (e.g. Canadian Compulsive Buying Measurement Scale, German Addictive Buying Indicator, Compulsive Buying Scale, Edwards Compulsive Buying Scale). The empirical findings presented in the article come from two waves of surveys conducted in 2010 and 2016 based on a nation-wide statistically representative sample of 1,000 Poles. The presented results of these surveys based on the German Compulsive Buying Indicator. Currently 4.4% of Poles aged 15 years and older show susceptibility to compulsive buying. The share of the compensative buyers in the total population amounts to 16.1%.

**Keywords:** consumer behaviour, compensative buying, compulsive buying, behavioural addiction

**JEL codes:** D12, E21, I12, M31

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.25167/ees.2018.48.1>

## 1. Introduction

Benjamin Faessler (1997: 280) remarks that the development of consumer society goes with the development of addiction society. This statement can be justified with the simple observation that consumer society is characterised by a search for experiences which should be more and more sophisticated, intense, prevalent and embracing new fields of social life. The change of the

advertisement strategy is one of the best examples of the development. Initially, a commercial was focused on a transmission of information about utility values of advertised goods. Nowadays a commercial consists more in a presentation of experienced values connected with the advertised goods. “Design and image of a product become the most important issue, usefulness and functionalism are accessories” (Schulze, 2000: 13). But in what way does the development have to reckon with the development of addiction society? The connection becomes more visible if we understand an addiction as “an irresistible desire of a specific state of experience” (Wanke, 1985: 20). From the sociological point of view, the reason for an addiction is not a substance but the interaction between the addiction subject and its object and the context of the addiction (Shaffer, 1996: 461-469). In this aspect each specific state of experience can be an object of an addiction and consumer society underlining how important the experience of consumption is indeed can lead to the development of addictions including its behavioural types. Compensative and compulsive buying belongs to this kind of addictions whose development goes with the progress of consumer society especially.

Kraepelin (1909: 408-409) was the first who noticed the phenomenon of distortions connected with buying. He named it as “oniomania”. The term of “buying maniacs” as an equivalent of “oniomaniacs” was introduced by Bleuler 25 years later (1934: 540). But the studies referring to oniomaniacs or buying maniacs were not continued until the end of 1980. Only the text by Faber, O’Guinn and Krych from 1987 titled “Compulsive Consumption” was ground-breaking and began a broader discussion about the nature of the phenomenon. From that moment on the studies about compensative and compulsive buying have been conducted by clinical psychologists and psychiatrists on the one hand, and by consumer researchers on the other hand. Psychologists and psychiatrists treat this kind of distortion either as a behavioural addiction or as a disorder of impulse control. Consumer researchers find compensative and compulsive buying rather as an irrational way of purchasing (Mueller et al., 2015: 135), assuming that these consumer behaviours can be acknowledged as rational which lead to the choice of the goods satisfying the economic needs optimally using maximal limited financial means (Lange et al., 2005: 97).

O’Guinn and Faber (1989: 149) define compulsive buying as „chronic, repetitive purchasing that occurs as a response to negative events or feelings”. In this way compensative or compulsive buying serves as an escape from the reality of everyday life. The purchasing act of

this kind is experienced positively by a buyer in the beginning as a peculiar compensation for the problems in other life areas. Unfortunately, the consequences of compulsive buying are negative in a long-term perspective in the psychological (guilty feelings, weak self-esteem), social (disordered interpersonal relationships, conflicts), as well as economic sense (debts) (O'Guinn and Faber, 1989: 150). Like in case of substance abuse the consciousness of these negative consequences are not sufficient protection against compulsive buying.

In the context of the above initial remarks the present article aims to answer the following questions:

- 1) To what extent do the phenomena of compulsive and compensative buying occur in Poland?
- 2) To what extent do the findings differ from the results coming from the studies conducted in other countries?
- 3) To what degree is susceptibility to compulsive and compensative buying differentiated by demographic, social and economic variables such as gender, age, class of locality, income and debts of households?

In reference to the results obtained in other countries it is assumed that the probability of compulsive and compensative buying is higher by women than by men, by younger consumers than by older ones, and by people with lower earnings than by people with a higher income level. In addition, susceptibility to compulsive and compensative buying growing along with an increasing class of the locality is to be expected. Probably, troubles with repaying the debts of household is a further factor strengthening the tendency to compulsive and compensative buying.

## **2. Terminological background of compensative and compulsive buying**

Muller et al (2015: 132) described compulsive buying as an over average focus on purchasing manifesting itself in a desire to buy, which is difficult to hold back. The act of compulsive buying is accompanied by the feeling of pleasure and relief. Relatively quickly the state is replaced by the feeling of guilt and remorse due to the consciousness of irrationality of the displayed purchasing behaviour and its consequences. Consumer behaviours of compulsive buyers are limited to the purchasing acts, while the use of purchased goods recedes into the background. They remain hidden and unpacked at home quite often. Compulsive buyers may do the shopping

to improve their self-esteem systematically or the shopping can be a spontaneous reaction to the experienced worse mood.

Compulsive buying is connected with compensative buying strictly. On the one hand, compensative buying can be a symptom of compulsive buying. Assuming compulsive buying is an addiction to buying, the experience of compensation delivered by a purchasing act constitutes the object of the addiction. On the other hand, compensative buying can be an autonomous buying style which may precede the stage of compulsive buying (Faber and O'Guinn, 1992: 462). Compensative buying does not aim to make use of the utility advantages of a given good but compensation for problems occurring in quite different life areas, e.g. problems in professional life, failures in the private sphere, frustrations of everyday life. A purchasing act of this kind strengthens the self-esteem of the buyer delivering a specific dose of social prestige (Schernhorn et al., 1992: 4).

Some authors underline the inadequacy of the term „compulsive buying” with regard to the described phenomenon and propose other terminological solutions. Mueller et al. (2015: 135-136) propose to introduce a broader term of „pathological buying”, because the symptoms of compulsive buying such as a strong desire to purchase, a repeated loss of control over expenses, experienced discomfort if purchasing cannot be realized, resemble substance addiction. Schernhorn et al. (1990: 355-382) prefer the term “addictive buying” because it is possible to differentiate the object of the addiction clearly like in case of substance abuse. The addicting factor is compensation connected with a purchase act. The compensative dimension of addictive buying allows to understand better the social mechanisms of spreading compulsive buying as a means of improving self-esteem. Relatively often the term of “shopoholism” is used in the literature to describe the disorders connected with buying. Hans-Juergen Rumpf (2012: 82) defines it as a disorder of impulse control, whose symptoms are e.g. growth of tension before displaying a behaviour and then feelings of satisfaction or at least relief of the tension, feelings of guilt after the realized action or compulsion to display impulsive behaviours. Shopoholism shows a significant similarity to other addictions due to such features as a strong desire for purchase, loss of control over purchase behaviours and continuation of the behaviour independently of negative consequences.

Specific socialisation conditions and authoritarian or overprotective upbringing styles, which lead to distortion of an individual's autonomy and healthy feeling of one's own value, are

mentioned as the main social reasons for susceptibility to compulsive buying (Lange, 1997: 147). Autonomy and self-esteem are related to emotional independence and social competence. They are destroyed by emotional negligence or indifference of parents, but also by overprotectiveness and the use of material goods as a way of upbringing basing on rewarding and punishing. In this way consumer goods gain the symbolic value which can be used as a compensation means (Gross, 2003: 199).

Compulsive buying is connected with other disorders and addictions relatively often. For example, Mueller et al. (2010: 351-352) found out at least one diagnosis of clinical disorder in the past among 90% of 171 patients suffering from compulsive buying. The most often diagnosed disorders were mood (74%) and anxiety (57%) disorders. Every 5th patient had ever suffered from a disorder of impulse control, substance abuse or eating disorders. Among the disorders the most experienced by the patients in the past are the following: major depressive disorder (63%), social phobia (28%), panic disorder (25%), specific phobia (19%), obsessive-compulsive disorder (19%), post-traumatic stress disorder (14%), binge eating disorder (14%), alcoholism (14%) or intermittent explosive disorder (11%). About a half of patients suffered from at least one clinical disorder when the study was conducted. The most frequently found disorders included anxiety (44%) and mood disorder (33%), more seldom impulse control disorder (17%) and eating disorder (12%). Compulsive buying was accompanied by social phobia (23%), dysthymia (19%), specific phobia (17%), generalized anxiety disorder (15%), obsessive-compulsive disorder (15%), major depressive disorder (15%), panic disorder (13%), and intermittent explosive disorder (10%). In addition, the researchers observed post-traumatic stress disorder, binge eating disorder, bulimia nervosa, kleptomania, pathological gambling, trichotillomania and somatoform disorders like pain disorder, somatization disorder and hypochondriasis, too.

Grant and Kim (2003: 203), who investigated 96 pathological gamblers, observed 23% of cases when compulsive buying accompanied other disorders of impulse control, first of all compulsive buying with sexoholism. Black et al. (2015: 275) confirmed the connections between compulsive buying and pathological gambling, too. They observed 17% of compulsive buyers among 95 surveyed persons and that was the most prevalent disorder in comparison to others taken into consideration in the study (compulsive sexual behaviour, intermittent explosive disorder, Internet addiction, kleptomania, pyromania, trichotillomania). Brook et al. (2015: 314) proved correlations between the use of drugs, depression and ADHD syndrome in previous life

stages and subsequent symptoms of compulsive buying (based on a longitudinal study). Raab and Neuner (2006: 39) confirmed the hypothesis in reference to the positive correlation between compulsive buying and addiction to the Internet. On the basis of studies conducted among youth and young adults aged 13-20 years old in one of the cities in south Italy, Villeda et al. (2011: 9) found out a positive correlation between compulsive buying and an addiction to the Internet, workaholism and an addiction to sport activities.

### **3. Empirical measurement**

Although there is an agreement about the pathological character of compulsive buying, the formal diagnostic criteria have not been worked out, either in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders of the American Psychiatric Association or in the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems of the World Health Organization. Nonetheless, a number of useful tools have been prepared. Valence et al. (1988) proposed the Canadian Compulsive Buying Measurement Scale which was one of the first empirical tools. In the beginning, it consisted of 16 items which displayed four dimensions of compulsive buying – Tendency to Spend, Reactive Aspect, Postpurchasing Guilt and Family Environment. Finally, the latter one was not taken into consideration because of a weak internal cohesion and the scale composed of 13 items found acknowledgement. Sometimes researchers use the scale consisting of 11 items, too (d'Astous et al., 1990). Schernhorn et al. (1990: 359-360) proposed the German version of the scale, so-called the German Addictive Buying Indicator. The tool is composed of 16 items. Respondents express their opinion about each statement using the four-points scale from 1 („I don't agree") to 4 („I totally agree").

Faber and O'Guinn (1992: 462) proposed the Compulsive Buying Scale comprising 7 items. The scale refers to the typical symptoms of compulsive buying, e.g. loss of impulse control, concealing problems, tension when shopping is not possible, reduced tension owing to the realized purchasing actions. The scale of Faber and O'Guinn (1992: 468) focuses on measuring the frequency of displayed behaviours or feelings (6 from 7 items), whereas the Canadian Compulsive Buying Measurement Scale and the German Addictive Buying Indicator measure susceptibility to compulsive buying in a greater extent.

Quite a different way in reference to the measurement approach of compulsive buying was proposed by Edwards (1993: 72; 75-76, 82). In her opinion the nominal division of consumers into compulsive and non-compulsive buyers brings too much redundancy. In this context Edwards developed the empirical instrument measuring different degrees of compulsive buying: non-compulsive buyers (purchase is planned and related to real needs), recreational buyers (occasional purchase is aimed to relieve tension/ to improve mood), borderline buyers (purchase between compulsiveness and non-compulsiveness), compulsive buyers (purchase is aimed to relieve tension or anxiety frequently, guilty feelings after shopping), addicted buyers (compulsive buying that causes dysfunctions in other areas of everyday life). The scale includes 13 items which measure five dimensions of compulsive buying, namely susceptibility to spending, compulsion to spending, emotions connected with purchase, dysfunctional purchase and feeling of guilt after purchase (Edwards, 1993: 79-80).

The literature mentions other scales which measure compulsive buying, including Questionnaire About Buying Behavior (Lejoyeux et al., 1997), Richmond Compulsive Buying Scale (Ridgway et al., 2008), The Compulsive Acquisition Scale (Frost et al., 2002), The Pathological Buying Screener (Mueller et al., 2015), or Yale-Brown Obsessive Compulsive Scale – Shopping Version (Monahan et al., 1996).

#### **4. Prevalence**

European empirical studies about compulsive buying started in 1989 in Germany on the basis of two samples: persons declaring compulsive buying and inhabitants of Stuttgart. The first target group was examined using the method of direct interviews, the other filled in a postal questionnaire. The prevalence of compulsive buying was measured by the German Addictive Buying Indicator. The authors of the study observed the connections between compulsive buying and its factors like gender, age, income, social class, causal orientation, self-esteem (Schernhorn et al., 1990: 357-358, 367, 373-381). A nationwide study was conducted in West Germany 2 years later. Interviews among 1,527 respondents aged 14 years and older showed the share of compulsive buyers on the level of 4%. The repeated study in 2001 on the sample of 1,017 respondents evidenced a double increase of the share of compulsive buyers (8%) (Neuner et al., 2005: 516).

The same German Compulsive Buying Indicator was introduced in a comparative study conducted in 2010 in Denmark and Austria. In both cases the samples embraced about 1,000 respondents aged 15-84 years, although different techniques of data collection were used. The online survey conducted in Denmark showed the ratio of compulsive buyers on the level of 6%. The segment of compulsive buyers consisted of 10% respondents (Reisch et al., 2010: 4). In Austria the shares of compulsive and compulsive buyers were observed on the levels of 8% and 19% (Kollmann and Unger, 2010: 4-5).

The German Compulsive Buying Indicator was introduced in a survey conducted in the years 2012-2013 with the inhabitants of Galicia in Spain aged 15-65 years old. In this case a postal survey was realized basing on the sample of 2,159 respondents. In total, 7% of them showed a clear susceptibility to compulsive buying (Otero-López and Villardefrancos, 2015: 167).

As a general rule, younger consumers show a stronger susceptibility to compulsive and compulsive buying. This fact was confirmed by a comparative study conducted in Germany, South Korea and Poland in 2002 based on the total sample of 2,300 persons aged 15-25 years old. In Poland the study was limited to the biggest cities with at least 500 thousand inhabitants. The prevalence of compulsive and compulsive buying was measured by the German Compulsive Buying Indicator, too. The Korean youth and young adults showed the strongest susceptibility to compulsive and compulsive buying (16%/ 27%), whereas the ratio of compulsive and compulsive buyers was found out in Germany on the levels of 6% and 8%, respectively. In Poland, the prevalence of both types amounted to 14% of each (Lange et al., 2005: 41, 118).

Using the Compulsive Buying Scale, the researchers from the USA conducted in 2004 a large-scale study on the basis of telephone interviews with 2,513 adult respondents. In total, 6% of them displayed susceptibility to compulsive buying (Koran et al., 2006: 1807). Similar prevalence of compulsive buying was observed in Eastland where an online survey conducted among 310 respondents displayed the share of compulsive buyers on the level of 8% (Raudsepp and Parts, 2014: 415). A large-scaled study referring to behavioural addiction of youth aged 13-20 years old was carried out in the city of Barletta in Italy. A survey conducted among 2,853 students of high schools proved that 11.3% of respondents belonged to the segment of compulsive buyers (Villella et al., 2011: 7).

## 5. Results

The surveys about compulsive buying were conducted in Poland in 2010 and 2016 on the statistically representative sample of 1,000 Poles aged 15 years old and over using the technique of the Computer Assisted Personal Interview at the respondent's home. Both waves of the study were carried out based on the address random sample of households using the PESEL (Personal Identity Number). Susceptibility to compulsive buying was measured by the German Compulsive Buying Indicator. The Institute of Market and Public Opinion Research of GfK Polonia was responsible for the fieldwork.

In 2016 the GCBI scale appeared as one-dimensional (KMO above 0.5; Significance of Barlett's Test of Sphericity below 0.05; Eigenvalue of the first Component = 9.652; % of Variance = 60.322). In the factor analysis only one component was extracted and the solution could not be rotated. The scale achieved a satisfying degree of reliability at the same time (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.956). The coefficients of skewness and kurtosis indicated that the distribution of the GCBI scale is approximately normal (Skewness = -0.116; Kurtosis = -0.813).

Following Faber and O'Guinn (1989, 1992), the results on the CBS scale equal to at least two standard deviations above the means indicate susceptibility to compulsive buying, whereas the result between one and two standard deviations indicates a tendency to compensative buying. In the survey conducted in 2010 the mean value on the GCBI scale achieved 31.23 while the standard deviation 9.58. For this reason, the result on the GCBI scale on the level of at least 50 was the criterion of qualifying the respondents in the segment of compulsive buyers. Totally, 2.6% of such cases in the general population were observed. The result of 41-49 justified qualifying the respondents in the segment of compensative buyers. Generally, 15.7% of these cases were found out. It means in 2010 18.3% of Poles aged 15 years old and more showed susceptibility to compulsive or compensative buying. In 2016 the segment of compulsive buyers embraced 4.4% of respondents. At the same time 16.1% of respondents showed susceptibility to compensative buying. The difference between the ratios of compulsive/ compensative buyers between both waves of the study in 2010 and 2016 achieved the level of 2.2%, which relates to the margin of statistical error. The thesis about an increasing tendency to compulsive and compensative buying in Poland cannot be confirmed without doubts. Still, every fifth Pole aged 15 and over shows susceptibility to compulsive and compensative buying.

The analysis of the data from the wave conducted in 2016 indicates that Poles are slightly differentiated by gender in terms of compulsive and compensative buying. On the one hand, the shares of compulsive buyers in the population of women and men are almost the same (women – 4.1%, men – 4.8%). On the other hand, the ratios of compensative buyers are clearly different (women – 19.1%, men – 12.7%). Taking into consideration both segments together, 23.1% of women show susceptibility to compulsive or compensative buying, whereas only 17.5% of men are characterised by a similar tendency. The average value on the GCBI scale equalled to 32.64 in the case of women and 31.06 for men. The result of the t-student test for two independent samples confirms that the differences between mean values are statistically significant, which allows to reject the hypothesis zero that the mean values for both genders are equal ( $t(998) = -2.353$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). A stronger susceptibility to compulsive buying in women than men can be acknowledged as a feature characterising the Polish society.

A further tendency is clear that a weaker susceptibility to compulsive buying correlates with an increasing age. The ratio of compulsive buyers and first of all the ratio of compensative buyers decreases in the higher age groups.

**Table 1. Compulsive and compensative buyers by age groups**

Age groups	( <i>n</i> )	Compulsive buyers	Compensative buyers	Other buying styles	Total
General population	(1,000)	4.4%	16.1%	79.5%	100.0%
15-24 years old	(139)	3.6%	13.7%	82.7%	100.0%
25-34 years old	(190)	6.9%	26.5%	66.6%	100.0%
35-44 years old	(174)	8.0%	19.5%	72.5%	100.0%
45-54 years old	(147)	2.7%	18.4%	78.9%	100.0%
55-64 years old	(170)	1.8%	11.8%	86.4%	100.0%
65 years old and more	(180)	2.8%	5.6%	91.6%	100.0%

Source: author's own research

On the one hand, the age group of 25-44 shows the strongest susceptibility to compulsive buying, while on the other hand, the age group of 45 years old and over exhibits compulsive buying to the lowest extent. The highest percentage of compensative buyers was found out among the

representatives of the age group of 25-54, whereas the lowest percentage was pointed out among persons aged 65 years and over. Generally, over 1/4 of Poles aged 35-44 years old buy compensatively or compulsively and the rate decreases along with older age groups systematically.

The analysis of mean values on the GCBI scale leads to the same conclusions. The mean values clearly decrease in the age groups above 34 years old (15-24: 34.28; 25-34: 35.67; 35-44: 33.91; 45-54: 33.04; 55-64: 29.11; 65+: 25.71). Using the t-student test, the differences of mean values between particular age groups were checked in reference to whether they are statistically significant. The results of the t-student test clearly show that persons aged 65 years old and over display a statistically significant weaker susceptibility to compulsive buying than persons from all younger age groups: 65+ vs 55-64:  $t(341)=3.188$ ; vs 45-54:  $t(324)=6.867$ ; vs 35-44:  $t(352)=7.562$ ; vs 25-34:  $t(366)=9.751$ ; vs 15-24:  $t(317)=8.110$  ( $p \leq 0.05$  in all cases). A similar correlation occurs between the age group 55-64 years old and all younger age groups: 55-64 vs 45-54:  $t(316)=3.455$ ; vs 35-44:  $t(343)=4.184$ ; vs 25-34:  $t(358)=6.062$ ; vs 15-24:  $t(307)=4.637$  ( $p \leq 0.05$  in all cases). In addition, persons aged 25-34 years old show a stronger susceptibility to compulsive buying than persons aged 45-54 years old (25-34 vs 45-54:  $t(334)=2.411$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ). The analyses of the percentage distribution as well as of the differences between the mean values allow to assume that the younger age groups to a greater extent than older age groups show a stronger susceptibility to compulsive and compensative buying.

The data indicate that a growing susceptibility to compulsive/ compensative buying goes with an increasing level of the monthly household net income, too.

**Table 2. Compulsive and compensative buyers by income groups**

<b>Income groups</b>	<b>(n)</b>	<b>Compulsive buyers</b>	<b>Compensative buyers</b>	<b>Other buying styles</b>	<b>Total</b>
General population	(1,000)	4.4%	16.1%	81.7%	100.0%
Below USD 700	(218)	3.7%	12.4%	83.9%	100.0%
USD 700-974	(198)	2.0%	16.2%	81.8%	100.0%
USD 975-1,529	(398)	3.5%	19.6%	76.9%	100.0%
USD 1,530 and	(186)	9.7%	12.4%	77.9%	100.0%

over					
------	--	--	--	--	--

Source: author's own research; 1 USD  $\approx$  3.6 PLN

The income group of USD 1,530 and over is characterised by the highest percentage of compulsive buyers, whereas the lowest ratio of compulsive buyers was found out in the income group of USD 700-974. It turns out that the middle income group of USD 975-1,529 is characterised by the highest percentage of compensative buyers, while the lowest rate of this type of buyers was observed among persons whose households have the highest and lowest level of income at their disposal. Generally, nearly 1/4 of Poles coming from the richest households buy compulsively or compensatively, whereas the ratio clearly decreases along with the lower income groups.

The analyses of mean values achieved on the GCBI scale confirm the above presented results. Firstly, the mean values clearly grow in the increasing income groups (below USD 700: 28.98; USD 700-974: 30.82; USD 975-1,529: 33.15; USD 1,530 and over: 33.67). Secondly, the differences between the mean values of particular income groups turn out to be statistically significant. Persons from the households with an average level of income (above USD 974) show a statistically significantly stronger susceptibility to compulsive buying than persons from the households belonging to the lower income groups (USD 975-1,529 vs USD 700-974:  $t(387)=-2.632$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ; USD 975-1,529 vs below USD 700:  $t(613)=-4.784$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ; USD 1,530 and over vs USD 700-974:  $t(376)=-2.621$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ; USD 1,530 and over vs below USD 700:  $t(393)=-4.291$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ).

The next analysed independent variable was the locality size. The data partly indicate a growing tendency to compulsive and compensative buying along with an increasing class of the locality size.

**Table 3. Compulsive and compensative buyers by class of the locality size**

Income groups	(n)	Compulsive buyers	Compensative buyers	Other buying styles	Total
General population	(1,000)	4.4%	16.1%	81.7%	100.0%
Village	(408)	4.7%	11.8%	16.5%	100.0%
Town up to 20 thou.	(131)	0.8%	22.1%	22.9%	100.0%

inhabitants					
Town of 20-50 thou. inhabitants	(107)	3.7%	17.8%	21.5%	100.0%
Town of 50-200 thou. inhabitants	(158)	3.8%	24.1%	27.9%	100.0%
Town over 200 thou. inhabitants	(196)	7.1%	13.8%	20.9%	100.0%

Source: author's own research

The rate of compulsive buyers grows along with the increasing class of the locality size only in case of towns. For villages, the percentage of compulsive buyers is approximated to the result for towns inhabited by 50-200 thou. people. On the other hand, the highest percentage of compensative buyers is characteristic of towns inhabited by 50-200 thou. people and the lowest rate is found out for villages. In total, over 1/4 of persons inhabiting towns populated by 50-200 thou. buy compulsively or compensatively, whereas villages are on the other extreme because only 1/6 of inhabitants have a tendency to compulsive or compensative buying.

Analysing the mean values achieved on the GCBI scale, the picture is more clear. Apart from the smallest cities the increase of mean values is noticeable (village: 30.07; town up to 20 thou. inhabitants: 32.06; town of 20-50 thou. inhabitants: 31.91; town of 50-200 thou. inhabitants: 33.77; town above 200 thou. inhabitants: 33.96). Furthermore, the results of the t-student test show that mean values between some pairs of the locality size classes are statistically significant. It concerns cities of 50-200 thou. inhabitants and above 200 thou. inhabitants in comparison with the inhabitants of villages (villages – towns of 50-200 thou. inhabitants: t(564)=-3.649, p<0.05; villages – towns above 200 thou. inhabitants: t(419)=-4.314, p<0.05).

The further variable which differentiates susceptibility to compulsive/ compensative buying are household debts. The analysis of the data confirms without doubts that persons from the households having troubles with repayment of instalments/ loans show a stronger susceptibility to compulsive/ compensative buying in comparison with persons inhabiting other types of households.

**Table 4. Compulsive and compensative buyers by household debts**

<b>Debts of households</b>	<b>(n)</b>	<b>Compulsive buyers</b>	<b>Compensative buyers</b>	<b>Other buying styles</b>	<b>Total</b>
General population	(980)	4.4%	16.1%	79.5%	100.0%
No debts	(625)	4.6%	14.2%	81.2%	100.0%
Debts repaid regularly	(320)	2.2%	20.0%	77.8%	100.0%
Troubles with repayment of debts	(35)	11.8%	20.6%	67.6%	100.0%

Source: author's own research

More than 1/10 of persons from the households having troubles with repayment of debts display susceptibility to compulsive buying, whereas 1/5 of persons from this type of household buy compensatively. In total, nearly 1/3 of persons inhabiting households of this kind buy compulsively or compensatively. The share of these persons is significantly lower among inhabitants of households without debts or households having debts but repaying them regularly. The analysis of mean values confirms this diagnosis. Those achieve the highest mean value on the GCBI scale who come from households having troubles with repayment of instalments, loans or other regular bills (household has no instalments/ loans: 31.30; household has instalments/ loans repaid regularly: 32.58; household has troubles with repayment of instalments/ loans: 35.87). The t-student test proves that persons from the households which have troubles with repayment of debts exhibit a statistically significant stronger susceptibility to compulsive buying ( $t(658)=2.398, p\leq 0.05$ ).

## 6. Final conclusions

The article aimed to answer the following research questions:

- 1) To what extent do the phenomena of compulsive and compensative buying occur in Poland?
- 2) To what extent do the findings differ from the results coming from the studies conducted in other countries?
- 3) To what degree is susceptibility to compulsive and compensative buying differentiated by

demographic, social and economic variables such as gender, age, class of locality, income and debts of households?

The obtained data allow to answer the questions at least in part. Firstly, the results show clearly that the phenomenon of compulsive and compensative buying does occur in the Polish society, although a visible increase of the segments of the compulsive or compensative buyers during the last 6 years has not been observed. The share of compulsive buyers in the Polish society in 2010 equalled to 2.6%, and in 2016 to 4.4%. The difference does not exceed the statistical margin. The rate of compulsive buyers in 2010 and 2016 remains on a very similar level at the same time (15.7% vs 16.1%).

Secondly, the range of compulsive buying is about twice lower in comparison with the analysed countries (Poland – 4% vs Germany – 8%, Austria – 8%, Eastland – 8%, Spain – 7%, Denmark – 6%, USA – 6%), whereas the prevalence of compensative buying in Poland remains on an average level. The share of compensative buyers about 16% is clearly higher than the result for Denmark (10%) but lower in comparison with Austria (19%). Generally, the reason for the lower ratio of compulsive buyers in the Polish society can be explained e.g. in reference to weaker development of consumer society in Poland in comparison with the countries from West Europe or with the USA. The socialist period of Poland between 1945 and 1989, when economic needs of citizens were satisfied to an insufficient extent, limited the development of consumerism among the Poles. Certainly, the possibility to compare the results coming from different countries is limited because of different sampling methods, varied techniques of data collection or different periods of carrying out the studies.

Thirdly, the study conducted in Poland displays the correlations between compulsive buying and some socio-demographical variables. In the literature, gender is one of the most often discussed variables. Most studies pointed to a stronger susceptibility of women to compulsive buying than of men. The pattern was confirmed by surveys carried out e.g. in Germany (Neuner et al., 2005: 517), Denmark (Reisch et al., 2010: 5), Austria (Kollmann and Unger, 2010: 7), Spanish Galicia (Otero-López and Villardefrancos, 2015: 168), Hungary (Maraz et al., 2015: 333) or in Canada (d'Astous et al., 1990: 5). But the correlation is denied by some results. For example, the study conducted in 2004 in the USA did not show any discrepancy between women and men (Koran et al., 2006: 1807). Italian researchers who interviewed youth and young adults aged 13-20 years old drew similar conclusions (Villella et al., 2011: 8). The results of the study

conducted in Poland relate to the same conclusion. Women to a greater extent than men exhibit susceptibility to compulsive buying, although the differences between the rate of compulsive buyers among women and men are very limited.

Researchers observe a declining susceptibility to compulsive buying along with growing age. For example, the study conducted in the USA in 2004 proved that compulsive buyers are younger in comparison with other types of buyers by 9 years on average (Koran et al., 2006: 1808). This tendency was reflected in the results of studies conducted in Spain on the sample of Galicia's inhabitants aged 15-65 (Otero-López and Villardefrancos, 2015: 168), as well as in Germany (Neuner et al., 2005: 517), Austria (Kollmann and Unger, 2010: 7) or in Italy (Villegla et al., 2011: 8). The results coming from the survey conducted in Poland suit the above presented pattern very well. The following rule: the younger age, the higher probability of compulsive buying could be observed without doubts. For example, the rate of compulsive/ compensative buyers among young adults aged 25-34 years old achieved the level of 27%, while the ratio in the age group of 65 years and over equalled to 7%.

The direction of the dependency between compulsive buying and income is not clear. The American studies proved a stronger susceptibility to compulsive buying among consumers having at their disposal below USD 50,000 annually than among more wealthy individuals (Koran et al., 2006: 1808). Austrian researchers drew similar conclusions. They pointed out the monthly net income of household up to USD 2,000 as a borderline between a stronger and weaker susceptibility to compulsive buying (Kollmann and Unger, 2010: 16). The study conducted in Poland exhibits quite a different pattern. In this case a higher monthly net income of household clearly goes with a higher probability of compulsive buying. For example, the ratio of compulsive buyers with the lowest income does not exceed 1%, while the ratio of compulsive buyers coming from the wealthiest households amounts to 7.5%. In case of Poland, the household net income of USD 1,400 is a borderline sum dividing consumers into 2 groups characterised by a stronger or weaker susceptibility to compulsive buying.

In addition, the connections between susceptibility to compulsive buying and repayment of debts by the household as well the class of locality size were found out. The general conclusion is that on the one hand, troubles with repayment of debts strengthen the tendency for compulsive buying. On the other hand, inhabitants of greater cities show a stronger susceptibility to compulsive buying than people inhabiting smaller towns.

In reference to the results obtained in other countries it was assumed that the probability of compulsive and compensative buying is higher by women than by men, by younger consumers than by older ones, and by people with lower earnings than by people with a higher income level. In addition, susceptibility to compulsive and compensative buying growing along with an increasing class of the locality is to be expected. Probably, troubles with repaying the debts of household is a further factor strengthening the tendency to compulsive and compensative buying. Almost all hypotheses have been confirmed in terms of the direction of the correlations. There exists only one exception. A stronger susceptibility to compulsive and compensative buying goes with an increasing income.

In the long-term, a further increase of the segments embracing compulsive and compensative buyers can be expected in Poland as a kind of reaction to the development of consumerism and consumer society. Consumer society promotes the choice of the consumer life style and life strategies treating consumption as a main value. Furthermore, consumer society not only encourages individuals to such life strategies but forces them to acknowledge the latter as the only legitimated and reasonable way of life (Bauman, 2009: 62). The members of consumer society believe that “meaning and satisfaction in life are to be found through the purchase and use of consumer goods” (Goodwin et al., 2008: 4). Actually, a successful realization of the strategy is not possible in practice. It gives rise to frustration, stress, and personal crises. Compensative buying can be a reaction to the states allowing a short-term escape from the negative aspects of life in a consumer society. As a result, compensative buying can turn into compulsive buying. An empirical observation of the processes should belong to the important tasks of sociologists and consumer researchers.

## **Literature**

Bauman, Z. (2007). *Consuming Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Black, D. et al. (2015). The relationship of DSM-IV pathological gambling to compulsive buying and other possible spectrum disorders: Results from the Iowa PG family study. *Psychiatry Research* 226: 273-276.

Breuler, E. (1934). *Textbook of Psychiatry*. New York: The Macmillan Company.

Brook, J. S.; Zhang, Ch.; Brook, D. W.; Leukefeld, C. G. (2015). Compulsive buying. Earlier illicit drug use, impulse buying, depression and adult ADHD symptoms. *Psychiatry Research* 228: 312-317.

D’Astous, A.; Maltais, J.; Roberge, C. (1990). Compulsive Buying Tendencies of Adolescent Consumers. *Advances in Consumer Research* 17: 306-312.

- Edwards, E. A. (1993). Development of a New Scale for Measuring Compulsive Buying Behavior. *Financial Counseling and Planning* 4: 67-85.
- Faber, J. R.; O'Guinn, C. T.; Krych, R. (1987). Compulsive Consumption. *Advances in Consumer Research* 14: 132-135.
- Faber, J. R.; O'Guinn, C. T. (1992). A clinical screener for compulsive buying. *Journal of Consumer Research* 19: 459-469.
- Faessler, B. (1997). *Drogen zwischen Herrschaft und Herrlichkeit. Der Umgang mit Drogen als Spiegel der Gesellschaft.* Solothurn: Nachtschatten Verlag.
- Frost, R. O.; Steketee, G.; Williams, L. (2002). Compulsive buying, compulsive hoarding, and obsessive-compulsive disorder. *Behavior Therapy* 33: 201-214.
- Goodwin, N.; Nelson, J. E.; Ackerman, F.; Weisskopf, T. (2008). *Consumption and the Consumer Society: Medford: GDAE Teaching Module on Social and Environmental Issues in Economics.*
- Grant, J. E.; Kim, S. W. (2003). Comorbidity of impulse control disorders in pathological gamblers. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica* 108(3): 203-207.
- Gross, W. (2003). *Sucht ohne Drogen. Arbeiten, Spielen, Essen, Lieben ...* . Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag.
- Kollmann, K.; Unger, A. (2010). *Kaufsucht in Österreich 2010.* Wien: Kammer für Arbeiter und Angestellte für Wien.
- Koran, M. L. et al. (2006). Estimated Prevalence of Compulsive Buying Behavior in the United States. *Am J Psychiatry* 163: 1806-1812.
- Kraepelin, E. (1909). *Psychiatrie. Ein Lehrbuch für Studierende und Ärzte.* Leipzig: Verlag von Johann Ambrosius Barth.
- Lange, E. (1997). *Jugendkonsum im Wandel. Konsummuster, Freizeitverhalten, soziale Milieus und Kaufsucht 1990 und 1996.* Opladen: Leske + Budrich.
- Lange, E.; Choi, S.; Yoo, D.; Adamczyk, G. (2005). *Jugendkonsum im internationalen Vergleich. Eine Untersuchung der Einkommens-, Konsum- und Verschuldungsmuster der Jugendlichen in Deutschland, Korea und Polen.* Opladen: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Lejoyeux, M.; Tássain, V.; Solomon, J.; Adès, J. (1997). Study of Compulsive Buying in Depressed Patients. *The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* 58 (4): 169-173.
- Maraz, A. et al. (2015). Measuring compulsive buying behaviour: Psychometric validity of three different scales and prevalence in the general population and in shopping centres. *Psychiatry Research* 225: 326-334.
- Maslow, H. A. (1954). *Motivation and Personality.* New York: Harper & Row, Publishers.
- Monahan, P.; Black, D. W.; Gabel, J. (1996). Reliability and validity of a scale to measure change in persons with compulsive buying. *Psychiatry Research* 64: 59-67.
- Mueller, A. et al. (2010). Latent profile analysis and comorbidity in a sample of individuals with compulsive buying disorder. *Psychiatry Research* 178(2): 348-353.
- Mueller, A.; Mitchell, E. J.; de Zwaan, M. (2015). Compulsive Buying. *The American Journal on Addiction* 24: 132-137.

- Neuner, M.; Raab, G.; Reisch, L. A. (2005). Compulsive buying in maturing consumer societies: An empirical re-inquiry. *Journal of Economic Psychology* 26: 509-522.
- O'Guinn, C. T.; Faber, J. R. (1989). Compulsive buying: A Phenomenological Exploration. *Journal of Consumer Research* 16(2): 147-157.
- Otero-López, J. M.; Villardefrancos, E. (2015). Compulsive buying and life aspirations: An analysis of intrinsic and extrinsic goals. *Personality and Individual Differences* 76: 166-170.
- Raab, G.; Neuner, M. (2006). Kaufsucht im Internet – eine Studie am Beispiel des Kauf- und Auktionsverhaltens auf Ebay. Available at: [www.wiso-net.de](http://www.wiso-net.de). Accessed 24 November 2015.
- Raudsepp, M.; Parts, O. (2014). Compulsive buying in Estonia. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences* 156: 414-417.
- Reisch, L. A.; Gwozdz, W.; Raab, G. (2010). Compulsive buying in Denmark. The first study on Danish consumers' tendency to compulsive buying. Copenhagen.
- Ridgway, N. M.; Kukar-Kinney, M.; Monroe, K. B. (2008). An Expanded Conceptualization and a New Measure of Compulsive Buying. *Journal of Consumer Research* 35(4): 622-639.
- Rumpf, H. J. (2012). Die Grenzen des Suchtbegriffs. *Sucht* 58(2): 81-83.
- Schernhorn, G.; Reisch, L. A.; Raab, G. (1990). Addictive Buying in West Germany: An Empirical Study. *Journal of Consumer Policy* 13: 355-387.
- Schernhorn, G.; Reisch, L. A.; Raab, G. (1992). Kaufsucht. Bericht über eine empirische Untersuchung. Stuttgart: Lehrstuhl für Konsumtheorie und Verbraucherpolitik der Universität Hohenheim.
- Schulze, G. (2000). Die Erlebnisgesellschaft. Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart, Frankfurt – New York: Campus.
- Shaffer, H. J. (1996). Understanding the means and objects of addiction: technology, the Internet. *The American Journal of Gambling Studies* 12: 461-469.
- Valence, G.; d'Astous, A.; Fortier, L. (1988). Compulsive buying: Concept and Measurement. *Journal of Consumer Policy* 11: 419-433.
- Villella, C. et al. (2011). Behavioural Addictions in Adolescents and Young Adults: Results from a Prevalence Study. *Journal of Gambling Behavior*, DOI: 10.1007/s10899-010-9206-0
- Wanke, K. (1985), Sucht, In: Deutsche Hauptstelle für Suchtfragen (eds.). Süchtiges Verhalten. Hamm: Deutsche Hauptstelle für Suchtfragen.

*Zjawisko kompensacyjnego i kompulsywnego kupowania w Polsce. Studium socjologiczne*

*Streszczenie*

Artykuł poświęcony jest zjawisku kupowania kompensacyjnego i kompulsywnego w społeczeństwie konsumpcyjnym na przykładzie Polski. Analiza rozpowszechnienia tego rodzaju zachowań nabywczych w Polsce uwzględnia porównania z danymi z badań prowadzonych w innych krajach. Analizowane są uwarunkowania socjodemograficzne i ekonomiczne kupowania kompensacyjnego i kompulsywnego takie jak: wiek, płeć, dochód, zadłużenie gospodarstwa domowego, czy wielkość miejscowości zamieszkania. Ważnym celem części teoretycznej artykułu jest zaprezentowanie różnych metod pomiaru kompensacyjnego i kompulsywnego kupowania (np. Canadian Compulsive Buying Measurement Scale, German Addictive Buying Indicator, Compulsive Buying Scale, Edwards Compulsive Buying Scale). Dane empiryczne prezentowane w artykule pochodzą z dwóch fal badań przeprowadzonych w 2010 i 2016 roku na ogólnokrajowej reprezentatywnej statystycznie próbie 1000 Polaków. Prezentowane wyniki badań bazują na German Compulsive Buying Indicator. Obecnie 4,4% Polaków w wieku 15 lat i więcej wykazuje skłonności do kupowania kompulsywnego. Udział kupujących kompensacyjnie w populacji generalnej wynosi 16,1%.

**Słowa kluczowe:** zachowania konsumenckie, kupowanie kompensacyjne, kupowanie kompulsywne, uzależnienie behawioralne