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RECONCEPTUALIZING IMPULSE BUYING: AN INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK OF DISPOSITIONAL, AFFECTIVE, COGNITIVE, AND DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM DRIVERS

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ABSTRACT

This conceptual paper reconceptualizes impulse buying through an integrated framework that synthesizes dispositional, affective, cognitive, and digital drivers. Drawing on Stimulus–Organism–Response theory, dual-process theory, and self-regulation theory, the study positions impulse buying as a state of regulatory imbalance in which emotional arousal and environmental stimuli override cognitive control. The framework highlights the combined influence of individual traits, emotional states, and digital ecosystem factors such as social commerce, algorithmic personalization, influencer marketing, and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). By integrating fragmented literature across psychology and digital marketing, the paper offers a comprehensive model of impulse buying behavior in contemporary consumption environments and outlines directions for future research.

Keywords: Impulse buying behavior, affective drivers, cognitive control, self-regulation theory, social commerce, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO).

INTRODUCTION

Impulse buying behavior refers to a sudden, immediate, and often emotionally driven purchase decision made without pre-planning or extensive cognitive evaluation of alternatives. It is typically characterized by a spontaneous urge to buy, accompanied by reduced deliberation and heightened affective response to product stimuli. Unlike planned purchasing, impulse buying is triggered by internal psychological states (such as mood or arousal) or external environmental cues (such as promotions, store atmosphere, or digital advertising), often resulting in post-purchase emotional reactions ranging from satisfaction to regret (Rook, 1987).

The significance of studying impulse buying behavior has increased substantially in contemporary retail and digital commerce environments. With the proliferation of e-commerce platforms, social commerce applications, influencer marketing, livestream shopping, and algorithmically personalized recommendations, consumers are continuously exposed to stimuli designed to trigger spontaneous purchase decisions. These environments reduce friction in the buying process through one-click purchasing, personalized product suggestions, limited-time offers, and seamless payment systems, thereby amplifying impulsive consumption tendencies.

Despite extensive scholarly attention, the antecedents of impulse buying behavior remain fragmented across disciplinary boundaries. Marketing research predominantly emphasizes external stimuli such as store atmospherics, promotional tactics, scarcity cues, and merchandising strategies. Psychological research focuses on internal drivers including self-control, emotional states, personality traits, and hedonic motivations. Emerging studies in cognitive and behavioral sciences examine executive control, reward sensitivity, and

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decision-making biases, while digital marketing research increasingly highlights the role of platform design and consumer engagement mechanisms.

Additionally, the evolution of digital consumption ecosystems has introduced novel antecedents that are not fully captured in traditional impulse buying frameworks. Social media engagement, influencer marketing, fear of missing out (FOMO), livestream shopping, personalized recommendations, and interactive social commerce features have emerged as powerful triggers of unplanned purchases. Recent studies indicate that social commerce motivations, boredom-driven browsing, technological cues, scarcity persuasion, and price perceptions can significantly influence consumers' impulse buying decisions in digital settings. These contemporary drivers interact with consumers' psychological vulnerabilities and cognitive biases, creating an environment in which impulsive purchasing becomes increasingly likely.

Accordingly, the purpose of this conceptual paper is to synthesize and integrate the antecedents of impulse buying behavior across psychological, cognitive, social, environmental, and digital domains. By consolidating fragmented theoretical perspectives, the paper seeks to develop a comprehensive conceptual framework explaining how individual dispositions and external stimuli jointly influence impulse buying tendencies. Such an integrative perspective is particularly relevant given the growing complexity of contemporary consumption environments and the increasing prominence of digitally mediated purchasing decisions.

The paper proceeds as follows. First, it reviews the major theoretical foundations of impulse buying behavior. Second, it identifies and categorizes key antecedents across multiple domains. Third, it develops an integrated conceptual framework explaining the relationships among these antecedents and impulse buying behavior. Finally, it discusses theoretical implications, limitations, and directions for future research.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Impulse buying behavior (IBB) has long been conceptualized as a spontaneous, affect-laden consumption phenomenon that deviates from rational decision-making models. Rook (1987) defined impulse buying as a sudden and compelling urge to purchase, characterized by diminished cognitive deliberation and heightened emotional activation. This early framing positioned impulse buying within hedonic consumption logic, where emotional gratification overrides utilitarian evaluation.

However, subsequent scholarship has consistently challenged the simplicity of this characterization. Stern (1962) was among the first to argue that impulse buying is not a uniform construct but exists along a continuum ranging from pure impulse purchases to reminder and suggestion-based buying. This typology was significant because it implicitly acknowledged that impulse buying is not purely affect-driven but can also be cognitively cued and situationally embedded.

Building on this, research shifted toward individual difference explanations. Rook and Fisher (1995) introduced the notion of buying impulsiveness as a stable trait, suggesting that consumers differ systematically in their susceptibility to spontaneous purchase urges even under identical environmental conditions. This trait-based view was further refined by Verplanken and Herabadi (2001), who conceptualized impulse buying tendency as comprising both cognitive deficits (lack of planning) and affective reactivity (emotional arousal during purchase episodes). This dual structure remains influential because it

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highlights that impulse buying cannot be explained solely through emotion or cognition, but through their interaction.

Parallel to trait-based explanations, self-regulation and dual-process theories have provided a strong theoretical backbone for understanding impulse buying. Hoch and Loewenstein (1991) proposed that impulse buying arises from a conflict between visceral "hot" affective systems and controlled "cold" cognitive systems. When affective arousal intensifies, consumers are more likely to prioritize immediate gratification over long-term consequences. Dholakia (2000) extended this perspective by demonstrating that situational cues can weaken self-regulatory capacity, suggesting that impulse buying is often triggered when cognitive control resources are temporarily compromised. In a similar vein, Vohs and Faber (2007) empirically established that depletion of self-regulatory resources significantly increases spending behavior, reinforcing the role of executive control failure in impulsive consumption.

From a contextual perspective, the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework has been extensively used to explain impulse buying in retail environments. Beatty and Ferrell (1998) demonstrated that situational variables such as time availability, shopping enjoyment, and browsing behavior significantly influence impulse purchase tendencies. The underlying logic of S-O-R suggests that environmental stimuli activate internal organismic states (affect and cognition), which subsequently determine behavioral outcomes. This framework has been particularly influential in explaining how retail atmospherics and promotional cues translate into unplanned purchases.

Alongside cognitive and environmental explanations, affective consumption theories have emphasized the emotional nature of impulse buying. Consumption is frequently driven by hedonic motivation, where shopping itself becomes a source of pleasure, excitement, and mood regulation rather than merely a utilitarian task. In this view, impulse buying is often a form of emotional regulation, where consumers seek immediate affective relief or enhancement through purchasing decisions. This emotional pathway has been consistently supported in contemporary research, which shows that both positive arousal (excitement, pleasure) and negative affective states (stress, boredom) can independently trigger impulsive consumption tendencies depending on situational context.

More recent scholarship has extended these classical explanations into digitally mediated consumption environments. The rise of e-commerce platforms, mobile shopping applications, and social commerce ecosystems has fundamentally altered the structure of consumption stimuli. Contemporary studies indicate that impulse buying is increasingly shaped by algorithmic personalization, frictionless checkout systems, and continuous exposure to persuasive digital cues. These structural features reduce cognitive effort and increase immediacy, thereby amplifying impulsive tendencies in online environments.

Recent empirical work further shows that social commerce features—such as peer reviews, influencer endorsements, and real-time engagement—significantly strengthen impulsive purchase behavior by increasing perceived social proof and emotional arousal. Similarly, livestream shopping environments create heightened urgency through real-time interaction, scarcity framing, and parasocial engagement with influencers, all of which compress deliberation time and increase impulsive responses.

Another important development in recent literature is the emergence of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) as a central psychological mechanism in digital impulse buying. Studies consistently show that FOMO intensifies impulsive purchasing by creating perceived urgency and social anxiety regarding missed opportunities, particularly in mobile-first and Gen Z

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consumer segments. This reflects a shift in the literature from static trait explanations toward dynamic, situationally activated psychological states.

Despite these advances, the literature remains theoretically fragmented. Existing research can be broadly categorized into four overlapping but insufficiently integrated streams: (i) trait-based predispositions, (ii) cognitive self-regulation failure, (iii) environmental and stimulus-based triggers, and (iv) digitally mediated consumption architectures. While each stream offers valuable insights, they tend to operate in isolation, resulting in limited theoretical convergence.

ANTECEDENTS OF IMPULSE BUYING BEHAVIOR

Impulse buying behavior emerges from a multi-layered system of dispositional tendencies, regulatory constraints, affective states, and contextual and digitally mediated stimuli. Rather than operating independently, these antecedents interact dynamically to reduce cognitive deliberation while amplifying motivational and emotional activation, thereby increasing the likelihood of unplanned purchase decisions.

Dispositional and Self-Regulatory Foundations

A primary antecedent of impulse buying behavior lies in relatively stable individual differences in impulsivity and self-regulation capacity. Early work by Rook and Fisher (1995) conceptualized buying impulsiveness as a trait-like tendency reflecting the degree to which individuals are prone to make spontaneous, unplanned purchases when exposed to relevant stimuli. This dispositional orientation has been consistently linked to heightened sensitivity toward consumption cues and reduced resistance to purchasing temptations.

Verplanken and Herabadi (2001) further refined this construct by demonstrating that impulse buying tendency is multidimensional, comprising both cognitive inefficiency (lack of planning and deliberation) and affective reactivity (emotional arousal during purchasing episodes). This dual structure remains foundational in contemporary impulse buying research, as it explains why some consumers are consistently more vulnerable to impulsive consumption across contexts.

From a regulatory perspective, impulse buying is strongly influenced by self-control depletion mechanisms. Hoch and Loewenstein (1991) proposed that impulse behavior results from the interaction between “hot” affective systems and “cold” cognitive control systems, where immediate desire often overrides long-term reasoning. Supporting this, Vohs and Faber (2007) empirically demonstrated that reduced self-regulatory resources significantly increase spending behavior, suggesting that impulse buying is partially a function of temporary cognitive capacity limitations rather than stable preference structures alone.

More recent behavioral research continues to reinforce the importance of executive control in consumption decisions. For example, Baumeister et al. (2007) highlight that self-regulation operates as a limited resource, and its depletion increases susceptibility to hedonic temptations, including impulsive purchasing behavior.

Affective and Motivational Drivers

Affective states represent a critical proximal antecedent of impulse buying behavior. Emotional arousal—whether positive or negative—plays a central role in triggering unplanned consumption. Hedonic consumption theory suggests that individuals often engage in shopping not for utility maximization but for emotional gratification, sensory pleasure, and mood regulation.

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Rook (1987) originally emphasized that impulse buying is inherently affect-driven, characterized by sudden urges that are emotionally charged and difficult to resist. Subsequent research has expanded this understanding by demonstrating that emotions function as both triggers and mediators of impulse buying behavior.

Positive emotional states such as excitement and pleasure increase approach motivation, making consumers more receptive to hedonic cues. Conversely, negative emotional states such as stress, anxiety, or boredom often lead to compensatory consumption, where purchasing is used as a coping mechanism to restore emotional balance. This dual pathway has been widely supported in consumer psychology literature, including work by Verhagen and van Dolen (2011), which links affective responses to online impulse purchasing tendencies.

Importantly, recent consumer behavior research emphasizes that emotional activation is increasingly amplified in digitally immersive environments, where visual stimulation, personalization, and instant gratification mechanisms intensify affective engagement and reduce deliberative control (Ding & Lu, 2017; Xiang et al., 2020).

CONTEXTUAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVATION

Situational and environmental factors play a decisive role in activating impulse buying behavior by shaping both cognitive load and affective arousal. The Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework provides a foundational explanation, positing that environmental stimuli influence internal psychological states, which subsequently drive behavioral responses.

Beatty and Ferrell (1998) demonstrated that situational variables such as time availability, shopping enjoyment, and browsing behavior significantly increase impulse buying tendencies. Similarly, store atmospherics, promotional cues, and product visibility function as external stimuli that increase purchase likelihood by enhancing emotional engagement and reducing cognitive resistance.

In addition, scarcity cues and promotional urgency have been consistently identified as strong situational triggers. Cialdini (2009) explains scarcity as a persuasive principle that increases perceived value and urgency, thereby accelerating decision-making under limited cognitive deliberation. This mechanism is particularly relevant in retail environments where time-bound discounts and limited-stock messages are frequently used.

Recent extensions of this literature suggest that environmental activation is not limited to physical spaces but extends into digitally simulated retail environments, where constant exposure to promotional stimuli increases susceptibility to impulse buying behavior (Xu et al., 2020).

DIGITAL AND SOCIAL COMMERCE TRIGGERS

The most significant evolution in impulse buying antecedents in recent literature is the emergence of digitally mediated consumption architectures. Unlike traditional retail environments, digital platforms are structurally designed to maximize engagement, minimize friction, and continuously expose consumers to persuasive stimuli.

Algorithmic recommendation systems, personalized advertising, and frictionless checkout processes reduce cognitive effort and increase spontaneous purchase likelihood. Dwivedi et al. (2021) argue that digital ecosystems fundamentally reshape consumer decision-making by embedding behavioral nudges into platform design, thereby increasing impulsive consumption tendencies.

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Social influence mechanisms have also become more pronounced in digital environments. Social proof indicators such as likes, ratings, and influencer endorsements reduce uncertainty and increase perceived desirability. In particular, influencer marketing has been shown to significantly increase impulse buying tendencies by enhancing parasocial relationships and perceived trust (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

A particularly important contemporary antecedent is Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), defined as a pervasive apprehension that others may be experiencing rewarding opportunities from which one is absent. Przybylski et al. (2013) originally conceptualized FOMO as a motivational state driven by social anxiety and perceived exclusion. More recent studies have consistently demonstrated that FOMO significantly predicts impulse buying behavior, particularly in mobile commerce and social media environments where scarcity cues, real-time updates, and peer visibility are prominent (Elhai et al., 2021; Buglass et al., 2022).

Additionally, livestream shopping environments represent a new structural antecedent of impulse buying. These platforms combine real-time interaction, scarcity framing, and social engagement, thereby compressing decision time and intensifying emotional arousal. Recent studies indicate that livestream commerce significantly increases impulse purchase behavior due to heightened urgency and social presence effects (Huang & Benyoucef, 2022).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Impulse buying behavior is best understood not as a discrete outcome of identifiable antecedents, but as an emergent consequence of interacting psychological, situational, and digitally embedded forces that jointly disrupt deliberative control. Across the literature, a consistent underlying assumption is visible even when not explicitly stated: impulse buying occurs when the consumer's cognitive restraint system is temporarily or structurally overwhelmed by affective and contextual pressures.

Building on this premise, the present conceptualization argues that impulse buying is fundamentally a state of regulatory imbalance, rather than a trait- or context-driven event alone. While early research positioned impulsive purchasing as an expression of stable buying impulsiveness (Rook & Fisher, 1995), subsequent theoretical developments suggest that dispositional tendencies only become behaviorally meaningful when activated under conditions of heightened affective arousal and reduced cognitive control capacity (Verplanken & Herabadi, 2001; Vohs & Faber, 2007).

From a theoretical standpoint, this implies that traits do not directly "cause" impulse buying; instead, they establish a baseline sensitivity threshold**.** Whether this threshold translates into actual behavior depends on the intensity of situational activation and the availability of self-regulatory resources at a given moment. In this sense, impulse buying should be conceptualized as conditional enactment of predispositions rather than their direct expression**.**

However, the literature also converges on the idea that the immediate driver of impulse buying is not cognition but affect. Emotional arousal functions as the critical translation mechanism between external stimulation and behavioral execution. Once affective intensity crosses a certain threshold, cognitive evaluation becomes progressively secondary. This aligns with dual-process reasoning, where "hot" experiential states override "cold" deliberation under conditions of heightened motivational salience (Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991).

Importantly, affect does not emerge in isolation. It is continuously shaped and intensified by environmental and structural conditions. Traditional retail research already demonstrated that situational cues such as time pressure, browsing exposure, and promotional intensity increase

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the likelihood of unplanned purchases by elevating arousal and reducing deliberation (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998). Yet, contemporary consumption environments extend far beyond episodic stimuli. Digital platforms now sustain a continuous stimulation field**,** where exposure is not occasional but persistent, algorithmically curated, and personalized.

This shift is theoretically important because it transforms impulse buying from a response to discrete triggers into a response to systemic exposure architectures. In such environments, consumers are not merely "stimulated"; they are continuously engaged in cycles of attention capture, emotional activation, and frictionless conversion. The distinction between browsing and purchasing becomes increasingly blurred, weakening the cognitive boundary that traditionally separated intention from action.

Within this architecture, social and psychological amplification mechanisms further intensify behavioral probability. Social validation cues and visibility of peer engagement reduce uncertainty and strengthen perceived desirability, but more critically, they embed consumption decisions within socially comparative frames. In this context, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) operates not as an isolated antecedent but as a contextually triggered motivational state that arises when social visibility and temporal scarcity are simultaneously present (Przybylski et al., 2013; Elhai et al., 2021).

What emerges from this synthesis is not a set of parallel predictors, but a cascading process. Dispositional impulsivity increases attentional sensitivity to cues. Environmental and digital stimuli activate affective escalation. Social comparison and FOMO introduce urgency pressure. Self-regulatory resources determine whether cognitive resistance can be sustained long enough to interrupt behavioral execution. When this regulatory chain weakens, impulse buying occurs as the most immediate behavioral resolution of competing psychological forces.

DISCUSSION

The conceptual framework developed in this study repositions impulse buying behavior as an emergent phenomenon arising from the interaction of dispositional, cognitive, affective, environmental, and digital forces rather than as a linear outcome of isolated antecedents. Prior research has typically explained impulse buying through fragmented theoretical perspectives such as trait impulsivity, environmental stimulation, and self-regulatory failure. While these perspectives have advanced understanding of the construct, they remain limited in explaining how multiple forces interact dynamically in contemporary consumption environments.

The present synthesis advances the argument that impulse buying is best understood as a state of regulatory imbalance, occurring when affective activation and contextual stimulation exceed the consumer's cognitive control capacity. This interpretation aligns with dual-process perspectives, which suggest that impulsive behavior results from the dominance of automatic, affect-driven processes over controlled reasoning systems (Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991). It also resonates with self-regulation theory, which emphasizes that behavioral control is constrained by limited cognitive resources (Vohs & Faber, 2007).

From a theoretical standpoint, this framework extends the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) model by emphasizing that stimuli in contemporary consumption environments are no longer episodic but continuous, personalized, and algorithmically structured. While the original S-O-R framework explains behavior as a sequential response to environmental stimuli (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Beatty & Ferrell, 1998), the present model suggests that organismic states such as affect and cognition are dynamically shaped by both dispositional

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traits and digitally embedded environmental systems, challenging the assumption of linear mediation.

The integration of dual-process theory further strengthens this conceptualization by explaining the cognitive conflict underlying impulse buying behavior. Impulse purchases occur when fast, affect-driven processing dominates over slower, deliberative reasoning. However, recent research suggests that digital environments intensify this imbalance by increasing emotional arousal and reducing deliberation time through frictionless design and continuous exposure mechanisms (Dwivedi et al., 2021). As a result, cognitive control is not only internally constrained but also externally influenced by platform architecture.

A key theoretical contribution of this framework is the reconceptualization of self-regulation as a context-sensitive capacity rather than a stable trait. While earlier work on ego depletion demonstrates that reduced cognitive resources increase susceptibility to temptation (Vohs & Faber, 2007), it does not fully account for why such depletion is increasingly frequent in digital consumption environments. The present framework addresses this limitation by suggesting that algorithmic personalization, information overload, and continuous engagement loops systematically erode cognitive control capacity, thereby increasing impulsive purchasing likelihood in structurally predictable ways.

In addition, the framework highlights the central role of emotional arousal as the immediate mechanism through which environmental and digital stimuli are translated into behavioral responses. Emotional states function as proximal drivers of impulse buying, consistent with hedonic consumption theory, which positions consumption as an experiential and affect-driven process (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). In digital environments, emotional activation is not episodic but continuously reinforced through personalized content, social interaction, and algorithmic recommendation systems.

The role of digital ecosystems is therefore reconceptualized as structurally embedded rather than externally influencing. Contemporary platforms actively shape consumer behavior through algorithmic targeting, scarcity cues, social validation signals, and frictionless purchasing pathways. These mechanisms reduce cognitive effort while increasing motivational urgency, thereby structurally biasing consumers toward impulsive decisions (Dwivedi et al., 2021). In this sense, impulse buying is increasingly shaped by system architecture rather than solely by individual psychological vulnerability.

Social influence mechanisms further intensify this process by embedding consumption decisions within socially comparative frameworks. Prior research has shown that social proof and influencer credibility significantly affect consumer trust and purchase intentions in digital environments (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). When combined with Fear of Missing Out, these mechanisms generate heightened urgency and perceived scarcity, which accelerate decision-making and reduce deliberation (Przybylski et al., 2013; Elhai et al., 2021).

Overall, the discussion suggests that impulse buying behavior should be understood as an emergent outcome of interacting psychological and technological systems rather than as a direct consequence of isolated antecedents. The interplay between dispositional tendencies, affective activation, cognitive control limitations, environmental stimulation, and digital architecture creates conditions under which impulsive consumption becomes structurally more likely. This integrative perspective moves beyond fragmented explanations and provides a more comprehensive understanding of impulse buying in contemporary consumption environments.

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THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

This study makes several important theoretical contributions to the impulse buying literature by moving beyond fragmented explanations and developing a more integrated, systems-oriented understanding of the phenomenon. Existing research has largely examined impulse buying through isolated lenses such as personality traits, environmental stimuli, or self-regulatory failure. While valuable, these approaches have limited explanatory power in capturing how impulse buying emerges in contemporary, digitally mediated consumption environments. The present framework addresses this limitation by synthesizing these perspectives into a unified interactional model.

First, the study advances impulse buying theory by repositioning the construct from a predominantly trait- or situation-driven outcome to an emergent behavioral state arising from the interaction between dispositional tendencies, affective activation, cognitive control capacity, and environmental structure. Prior research has typically treated these elements as independent predictors. However, drawing on dual-process theory (Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991) and self-regulation theory (Vohs & Faber, 2007), this study demonstrates that impulse buying is better understood as a regulatory imbalance condition where affective impulses override deliberative control under specific contextual configurations. This shift contributes to a more dynamic and process-oriented understanding of consumer decision-making.

Second, the study extends the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Beatty & Ferrell, 1998) by incorporating digital consumption architectures as structurally embedded stimuli rather than merely external environmental cues. Traditional S-O-R applications assume discrete and episodic stimulus exposure; however, contemporary digital ecosystems operate through continuous algorithmic personalization, frictionless interfaces, and persistent engagement loops. By integrating these structural features, the study reconceptualizes the stimulus environment as an ongoing system of behavioral activation rather than isolated triggers, thereby extending the explanatory boundaries of S-O-R theory in modern consumption contexts.

Third, the study contributes to theory by reconceptualizing self-regulation not as a stable individual-level trait but as a contextually contingent and dynamically depleted capacity. While prior ego depletion research has established the importance of limited cognitive resources in impulse control (Vohs & Faber, 2007), this study advances the argument that digital environments systematically shape the availability and depletion of these resources. Continuous exposure to information, personalization algorithms, and simplified transaction pathways structurally reduce cognitive effort and thereby increase susceptibility to impulsive consumption. This introduces a more environment-sensitive interpretation of self-regulation in consumer behavior theory.

Fourth, the study enriches affect-based consumption theories by positioning emotional arousal as a central translation mechanism rather than a secondary mediating variable. Building on hedonic consumption theory (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982), the framework demonstrates that affective states function as the immediate pathway through which external stimuli and internal predispositions are converted into behavioral action. Importantly, in digitally mediated environments, emotional activation becomes continuous rather than episodic, suggesting that affect is not merely triggered but is persistently reinforced through platform design, social interaction, and algorithmic recommendation systems.

Fifth, the study contributes to emerging digital consumption literature by explicitly theorizing the role of platform architecture in shaping consumer behavior. Prior research has primarily treated digital platforms as contextual backdrops for consumer decision-making. In contrast,

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this study positions platform design elements—such as scarcity cues, personalization algorithms, social validation signals, and frictionless checkout mechanisms—as active behavioral structuring forces. This perspective aligns with recent research emphasizing the behavioral influence of digital environments (Dwivedi et al., 2021) and extends it by integrating these mechanisms into a broader psychological framework of impulse buying.

Finally, the study integrates social influence and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) into a unified theoretical explanation of impulsive consumption. While prior studies have examined these constructs independently, this framework positions them as interconnected amplification mechanisms that intensify affective urgency and reduce cognitive deliberation. Social validation cues increase perceived desirability, while FOMO introduces temporal and social pressure, jointly accelerating impulsive decision-making (Przybylski et al., 2013; Elhai et al., 2021). This integrated view enhances understanding of how social and psychological forces interact in digitally networked consumption environments.

Overall, the study contributes a comprehensive theoretical shift from fragmented, linear explanations of impulse buying toward an integrated, interaction-based framework. By synthesizing dispositional, cognitive, affective, environmental, and digital dimensions, it provides a more complete and contemporary explanation of impulse buying behavior. This integrated perspective not only strengthens theoretical coherence but also expands the applicability of existing consumer behavior theories to modern digital marketplaces.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The integrated framework developed in this study has several important implications for marketers, digital platforms, and retail strategists seeking to understand and influence impulse buying behavior in contemporary consumption environments. By highlighting impulse buying as an interactional outcome of dispositional, affective, cognitive, and digital-system forces, the findings move beyond traditional marketing assumptions that focus primarily on either consumer traits or promotional tactics in isolation.

First, the findings suggest that impulse buying is not merely a response to promotional intensity but is strongly shaped by the design of the entire consumption environment**.** This implies that marketers must move beyond isolated tactics such as discounts or in-store displays and instead consider how multiple stimuli collectively shape consumer arousal and cognitive load. In digital contexts, interface design, navigation simplicity, recommendation timing, and checkout friction play a decisive role in converting browsing behavior into impulsive purchase decisions. Reducing cognitive effort and shortening decision pathways increases the likelihood of unplanned purchases, particularly when consumers are already in a heightened emotional state.

Second, the framework indicates that emotional activation is a central mechanism in driving impulse purchases. This has direct implications for marketing communication strategies. Content that stimulates excitement, urgency, or pleasure is more likely to translate into immediate purchasing behavior than purely informational messaging. In digital advertising environments, visually rich, interactive, and personalized content is particularly effective in triggering affective responses. However, this also implies that overexposure to emotionally charged stimuli may lead to consumer fatigue or post-purchase regret, which firms must balance carefully to maintain long-term customer trust.

Third, the role of self-regulation capacity suggests that impulse buying is more likely in situations where consumers are cognitively overloaded or time-constrained. For practitioners, this highlights the importance of identifying high-probability contexts of reduced self-control,

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such as late-night browsing, mobile shopping, or multitasking environments. Marketing strategies that align with these contexts—such as time-sensitive offers or limited-duration promotions—are more likely to result in impulsive conversions. However, ethical considerations must be acknowledged, as exploiting cognitive depletion may raise concerns regarding responsible marketing practices.

Fourth, the findings emphasize the increasing importance of digital platform architecture as a behavioral design tool**.** Features such as one-click purchasing, personalized recommendations, and real-time notifications significantly reduce friction in the decision process and increase impulsive buying likelihood. For platform designers and e-commerce firms, this suggests that optimization of user experience is not only a usability concern but also a behavioral influence mechanism. At the same time, firms must consider the reputational risks associated with overly aggressive nudging strategies, particularly in markets where consumer protection regulations are strengthening.

Fifth, the study highlights the strategic role of social influence mechanisms in shaping purchase behavior. Influencer marketing, user-generated content, and social proof indicators such as ratings and reviews significantly enhance perceived product desirability. In particular, influencer credibility and parasocial interaction can create strong emotional attachment, increasing the likelihood of spontaneous purchases. Marketers should therefore focus not only on reach but also on the perceived authenticity and relational quality of influencer partnerships.

Finally, the incorporation of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) suggests that urgency-based marketing strategies remain highly effective, especially in digitally connected consumer segments. Limited-time offers, scarcity cues, and real-time availability indicators can significantly accelerate purchase decisions. However, repeated use of such tactics may reduce consumer trust over time if perceived as manipulative. Therefore, organizations must balance urgency creation with transparency to sustain long-term brand equity.

Overall, the managerial implications indicate that impulse buying is best influenced not through single-point interventions but through the coordinated design of emotional, cognitive, and digital environmental factors. Firms that strategically integrate these dimensions are more likely to shape consumer behavior effectively in increasingly competitive and digitally saturated marketplaces.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Although the present study develops an integrated conceptual framework for impulse buying behavior by synthesizing dispositional, affective, environmental, and digital antecedents, certain limitations must be acknowledged. These limitations are not deficiencies per se but rather inherent boundaries of conceptual work, which also provide meaningful directions for future scholarly inquiry.

The study is conceptual in nature and does not involve empirical validation of the proposed relationships. While the framework is grounded in well-established theoretical foundations such as the Stimulus–Organism–Response paradigm (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Beatty & Ferrell, 1998), dual-process theory (Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991), and self-regulation theory (Vohs & Faber, 2007), the interrelationships among constructs remain theoretically derived rather than statistically tested. Future research should empirically validate the model using robust quantitative approaches such as structural equation modeling, partial least squares modeling, or experimental designs. Longitudinal studies would also be particularly valuable

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in establishing temporal causality and understanding how impulse buying tendencies evolve over time under varying environmental and digital conditions.

Another limitation relates to the relative weighting and interaction strength of the antecedents included in the framework. Although the model integrates multiple domains, it does not empirically determine which factors exert stronger or weaker influence on impulse buying behavior across contexts. In real-world consumption settings, the salience of dispositional traits, emotional states, environmental cues, and digital architecture may differ significantly depending on product category, consumer involvement level, and purchase urgency. Future research should therefore examine boundary conditions and moderating effects that influence the strength of these relationships, including demographic variables, cultural orientation, and situational involvement.

The framework also incorporates digital consumption environments as a structural antecedent but does not differentiate between various types of digital platforms. Contemporary digital ecosystems are highly heterogeneous, ranging from traditional e-commerce websites to social commerce platforms, livestream shopping environments, and algorithm-driven short-video applications. Each of these platforms may exert distinct psychological effects on consumers due to differences in interactivity, social presence, and content delivery mechanisms. Future studies should disaggregate digital environments and examine how specific platform characteristics differentially influence emotional arousal, cognitive load, and impulse buying tendencies.

In addition, the study primarily focuses on psychological and behavioral mechanisms at the individual level and does not explicitly incorporate broader socio-cultural, institutional, or economic influences. Cultural norms regarding consumption, materialism, and self-control may significantly shape impulse buying tendencies across different societies. Similarly, macroeconomic conditions such as inflation, income uncertainty, and financial stress may alter consumers' sensitivity to promotional cues and emotional triggers. Future research should adopt multi-level theoretical perspectives to integrate individual, social, and macro-environmental determinants of impulse buying behavior.

Finally, the rapidly evolving nature of digital commerce environments presents a temporal limitation for the current framework. Technological advancements such as artificial intelligence-driven personalization, augmented reality shopping experiences, voice-assisted commerce, and immersive virtual environments are continuously reshaping consumer decision-making processes. As a result, the relationships proposed in this study may evolve as digital platforms become more sophisticated. Future research should continuously update and extend the framework to account for emerging technologies and their psychological impact on consumer impulsivity.

Overall, while these limitations highlight certain boundaries of the present conceptualization, they simultaneously offer rich opportunities for future research. Addressing these gaps will not only strengthen empirical validation but also contribute to a more nuanced and context-sensitive understanding of impulse buying behavior in increasingly complex and digitally mediated consumption environments.

CONCLUSION

This study developed an integrated conceptual framework to explain impulse buying behavior by synthesizing dispositional, affective, cognitive, environmental, and digital antecedents. Moving beyond fragmented explanations in existing literature, the paper conceptualizes impulse buying as an emergent outcome of interacting psychological

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processes and structurally embedded consumption environments rather than a simple reaction to isolated stimuli.

The framework highlights that impulse buying is best understood as a state of regulatory imbalance in which affective activation, situational cues, and digital architecture collectively weaken cognitive control and accelerate unplanned purchase decisions. In doing so, the study extends established theoretical perspectives such as the Stimulus–Organism–Response framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Beatty & Ferrell, 1998), dual-process theory (Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991), and self-regulation theory (Vohs & Faber, 2007) by integrating them within a contemporary digitally mediated consumption context.

A key contribution of the paper lies in repositioning impulse buying from an individually driven behavioral tendency to a system-level outcome shaped by continuous environmental exposure, algorithmic personalization, and social influence mechanisms. This shift provides a more comprehensive explanation of why impulse buying behavior has intensified in modern digital commerce environments and why traditional linear models are increasingly insufficient.

Overall, the study offers a consolidated theoretical foundation for understanding impulse buying behavior and sets the stage for future empirical research to test and refine the proposed relationships. By integrating multiple streams of literature into a single coherent framework, the paper contributes to a more holistic and contemporary understanding of impulsive consumption behavior in both physical and digital marketplaces.

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