

Determinants of Social Media Platforms on Impulsive Shopping Behavior in E-commerce among Generation Z in the Sultanate of Oman

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DOI Link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v15-i12/27088>

Published Date: 28 December 2025

Abstract

Social media platforms have become influential drivers of impulsive shopping behavior, particularly among Generation Z in the Sultanate of Oman. This study examines how platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube stimulate unplanned purchasing through influencer marketing, interactive features, and social engagement, all of which strengthen trust, emotional attachment, and fear of missing out (FOMO). Grounded in the Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) model and Social Influence Theory, the research explores the psychological and social mechanisms underlying these behaviors. A quantitative approach is employed using a structured questionnaire distributed to 383 participants following Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size guidelines, with the final sample increased to 421 to account for potential non-response. Data will be analyzed using SPSS for descriptive and inferential statistics and Smart-PLS for structural equation modeling (SEM) to assess the relationships between social media engagement, influencer interactions, and impulsive buying tendencies. By focusing on Oman's unique cultural context, this study fills a gap in the existing literature and provides meaningful implications for marketers, policymakers, and educators seeking to promote responsible digital consumption and develop sustainable e-commerce strategies for Generation Z.

Keywords: Social Media Platforms, Impulsive Shopping Behavior, Generation Z, Oman, E-Commerce, Influencers, Consumer Behavior

Introduction

Generation Z in Oman is increasingly engaging in impulsive buying on social media platforms, driven by a complex interplay of emotional, psychological, and technological influences. Platforms such as TikTok and Instagram combine personalized content, visually persuasive formats, and interactive features that trigger emotional arousal and reduce self-regulatory control, making young consumers particularly susceptible to unplanned purchases. Global evidence indicates that more than 20% of online retail sales stem from impulsive buying, a trend intensified by the rapid expansion of e-commerce and highly targeted digital advertising

strategies (Mian, 2023). As the first fully digital-native generation, Omani youth interact extensively with social media ecosystems where influencer-generated content, algorithm-driven recommendations, and immersive digital experiences significantly shape their consumption decisions. Limited digital literacy and underdeveloped self-regulation further heighten their vulnerability to persuasive cues, emotionally charged content, and stress-induced shopping tendencies, which may contribute to financial challenges and unsustainable consumption patterns.

Despite the growing global scholarship on impulsive buying behavior, empirical investigations examining the combined influence of social media influencers, social engagement factors, and platform-specific features on Generation Z consumers in Oman remain scarce. Given Oman's unique cultural characteristics and its accelerating digital transformation, understanding these drivers is both timely and essential. Accordingly, this study seeks to explore the key determinants of impulsive purchasing behavior among Generation Z social media users in Oman, aiming to provide evidence-based insights that support ethical marketing practices, enhance consumer awareness, and promote responsible digital consumption.

Impulsive Buying Behavior Theory

Impulsive buying behavior refers to sudden, unplanned purchasing decisions triggered by emotional arousal and limited cognitive deliberation, and it is especially prominent in online and mobile shopping environments. The Stimulus Organism–Response (SOR) model explains that external stimuli such as visual cues, social media content, and persuasive marketing activate internal emotional and cognitive states that lead to impulsive purchase responses (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Chan et al., 2017). Similarly, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) suggests that impulsive buying can emerge when attitudes, perceived social pressure, and reduced self-control interact within digital environments, weakening rational decision-making (Ajzen, 1991; Lim et al., 2018). Cognitive Emotion Theory further argues that emotional states such as excitement, pleasure, and FOMO (fear of missing out) override cognitive evaluation and increase the likelihood of impulsive decisions, particularly when consumers encounter engaging social media content or influencer recommendations (Parsad et al., 2021; Alhabash & Ma, 2017). Collectively, contemporary research shows that impulsive buying arises from the interplay between digital stimuli, emotional activation, and reduced cognitive regulation making young consumers, especially Generation Z, extremely sensitive to the persuasive affordances of social media platforms. Together, these four theories provide a comprehensive theoretical foundation for understanding how social media influencers and platform features influence impulsive buying behavior among Omani Generation Z consumers.

Theoretical Frameworks

The Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) Model is commonly employed to elucidate impulsive purchasing behavior. It asserts that external stimuli (e.g., aesthetic allure, price reductions) impact the organism (consumer's cognitive and emotional condition), subsequently affecting the response impulsive purchasing behavior. (Thamara et al., 2025; Cuong, 2023; Elida et al., 2024). Cognitive Emotion Theory posits that cognitive factors, including usability, informativeness, and perceived risk, affect emotional responses such as pleasure and arousal, thereby prompting impulsive purchasing behaviors (Habib & Qayyum, 2018). Affect Theory and the Health Belief Model: These frameworks have been utilized to analyze impulsive

purchasing behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizing the influence of emotional and cognitive factors on the acquisition of personal protection and healthcare supplies (Habib & Ashraf, 2023). Emotional and Cognitive Dimensions: Emotional reactions, including good feelings and arousal, are pivotal motivators of impulsive purchasing behavior. Cognitive elements, such as perceived utility and informativeness, significantly influence these emotional responses (Habib & Qayyum, 2018; Zuo & Xiao, 2021). Social Influence and Brand Awareness: Social media influencers and brand awareness can profoundly affect impulsive purchasing by amplifying positive feelings and mitigating perceived risks. (Chan et al., 2024; Mertaningrum et al., 2025). The online shopping context, characterized by visual allure and user-friendliness, can incite impulsive purchasing by augmenting perceived enjoyment and utility (Thamara et al., 2025; Cuong, 2023).

The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed consumer behavior, resulting in a surge of impulsive purchases of safety and healthcare products, influenced by intensified emotional and cognitive reactions to perceived risks (Habib & Ashraf, 2023). The emergence of live streaming commerce and social media platforms has introduced novel cues that affect impulsive purchasing, including the allure of streamers and the sense of social presence (Zuo & Xiao, 2021; Mertaningrum et al., 2025). Although impulsive buying is sometimes perceived unfavorably due to its link with unanticipated and regretted acquisitions, it is crucial to examine the wider context. The notion of decluttering, grounded on Islamic consumption philosophy, underscores intentional consumption and fiscal responsibility, which can mitigate impulsive purchasing behaviors by prioritizing necessities over wants (Noviyanti, 2024). This viewpoint emphasizes the possibility of incorporating cultural and ethical factors into efforts for addressing impulsive purchasing behavior.

Related Literature and Hypothesis Development

Social Media Influencers (SMI) and Impulsive Buying Behavior (IBB):

Social media influencers (SMIs) significantly affect consumer behavior, particularly impulsive buying behavior (IBB). Their impact involves emotional involvement, perceived genuineness, and strategic use of social media platforms. Key qualities such as credibility, authenticity, and trustworthiness enhance consumer trust and brand perception, leading to increased impulsive purchases. Micro-influencers are seen as more relatable and authentic, which boosts customer engagement and intent to buy. (ND, 2025; Kaur, 2025). Authenticity and influence are crucial in stimulating impulsive buying, as they enhance customers' emotional and functional value judgments, which are essential triggers for such purchases (Liu et al., 2023). Emotional involvement with influencer content stimulates impulsive purchasing, particularly in sectors such as fashion and cosmetics. The emotional bond cultivates a sense of urgency and desire, leading to impulsive purchases (Kaur, 2025). Engagement in social comparison with influencers may result in impulsive purchasing, mediated by social anxiety and social media addiction. Adverse comparisons can exacerbate anxiety, hence elevating the probability of impulsive acquisitions (Mundel et al., 2023).

Diverse social media platforms exert distinct influences on impulsive purchasing behavior. Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok are more linked to impulsive decision-making due to their visual and interactive characteristics, whereas YouTube is inclined to promote more informed purchasing choices (Kaur, 2025). The shoppertainment approach on TikTok, which integrates entertainment with shopping, has been particularly effective in stimulating

impulsive purchases among young users. This concept utilizes the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and the credibility of influencers to generate compelling buying experiences (Pham et al., 2025). Social Media Influencers build parasocial ties with their followers, which can be either instrumental or expressive. Relationships founded on heterophily or homophily profoundly affect impulsive purchasing behavior by addressing followers' requirements for knowledge or emotional engagement (Hu et al., 2023). Social media marketing, particularly through the smart employment of influencers, capitalizes on consumer vulnerabilities to enhance impulsive buying behavior. This is accomplished via customized marketing that utilizes social and e-commerce technologies as distinct catalysts for impulsive purchasing (Budree et al., 2021). The impact of SMLs on impulsive purchasing is apparent, although it prompts ethical considerations concerning transparency and acceptable marketing techniques. The risk of exploiting consumer weaknesses requires a balanced strategy in which both businesses and influencers emphasize authenticity and ethical principles. Furthermore, customers can gain from heightened knowledge of these impacts, allowing them to make better educated purchasing decisions and evade regrettable hasty purchases. This underscores the necessity for continuous investigation into the psychological and social dynamics of influencer-driven marketing, alongside the formulation of methods that encourage sustainable customer behavior.

Social Factors (SF) and Impulsive Buying Behavior (IBB):

Social factors play a crucial role in impulsive buying behavior (IBB) in digital commerce, driven by social media, online reviews, and social commerce platforms. These elements trigger impulsive purchases through social influence, emotional experiences, and herd behavior, with both direct and indirect effects mediated by psychological and environmental factors. Social media platforms significantly stimulate IBB by promoting urgency and desire through promotional content, peer recommendations, and influencer endorsements. (Du, 2025; Kurt et al., 2022). Online evaluations, whether favorable or unfavorable, profoundly influence consumer choices. Negative reviews exert a more major influence, potentially dissuading impulsive purchases, but favorable reviews can augment product appeal and stimulate impulsive buying (Du, 2025; Jois et al., 2024).

Social commerce platforms amalgamate social networking functionalities with e-commerce, augmenting the social impact on purchasing behavior. The impulse to purchase (UPI) is frequently influenced by social interactions and the necessity to sustain interpersonal connections, particularly in social commerce contexts (Abdelsalam et al., 2024). The amalgamation of social influence theories with uses and gratifications theory underscores how amusement and purposeful value obtained from social interactions can propel impulsive purchasing behavior (Abdelsalam et al., 2024).

Psychological elements, including diminished self-control, fear of missing out (FOMO), and materialism, are exacerbated by social networks, resulting in heightened impulsive purchasing behavior. These aspects are frequently influenced by favorable perceptions of targeted advertising and impulsiveness within social networks (Falajunah & Dewi, 2025; Lestari & Setyaning, 2025). Emotional triggers, such as hedonic incentives and cognitive overload, are intensified in digital environments, where social influence processes are more prominent. These emotional states may result in impulsive acquisitions, frequently accompanied by subsequent feelings of regret or delight (Kalpana & Krishnan, 2025).

Demographic variables, including gender and cultural background, influence impulsive purchasing behavior. Women and younger consumers, especially those involved in fandoms such as K-Pop, exhibit heightened susceptibility to social factors that provoke impulsive purchases (Kurt et al., 2022; Lestari & Setyaning, 2025). Cultural contexts, such as shopping mall culture and credit accessibility, enhance impulsive purchasing by creating an environment that promotes social interactions and spontaneous decisions (Kurt et al., 2022). Although social influences affect impulsive purchasing behavior, it is crucial to acknowledge the possible adverse outcomes, including consumer debt and psychological suffering. Social variables in impulsive buying are not exclusively beneficial; they might result in financial burden and emotional dissonance if not controlled judiciously. Consequently, comprehending the moderating influences of social aspects and fostering digital literacy and emotional regulation can alleviate the detrimental effects of impulsive purchasing (Shawcross, 2015; Nurcahyo et al., 2025).

Social Media Influencers (SMI) and Social Media Platforms (SMP):

Social media influencers (SMIs) and social media platforms (SMPs) are pivotal in digital marketing, significantly affecting consumer behavior, brand promotion, and health communication. SMIs leverage their platforms to influence public opinion and consumer choices across various sectors, notably health, fashion, and e-commerce. They play a crucial role in shaping opinions and purchasing behaviors, particularly among younger audiences such as Generation Z and millennials, with their credibility and authenticity enhancing consumer trust and brand loyalty. (ND, 2025). Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, social media influencers significantly impacted online purchasing intentions, serving as ambassadors for e-commerce platforms and affecting customer behavior through their social capital (Tao et al., 2020). The emergence of micro- and nano-influencers has redirected attention to genuine, specialized marketing, as these influencers foster greater customer engagement owing to their perceived relatability (Agrawal, 2025). Brand Promotion and Engagement Social Media Influencers (SMIs) function as brand narrators and representatives, augmenting brand reputation, and corporate image via direct customer interaction. Platforms such as Instagram are notably effective for brand marketing, facilitating interactive dialogues that foster brand loyalty (Ali et al., 2023). The efficacy of influencer marketing depends on the strategic alignment of brands with influencers who connect with their target demographic. This entails evaluating platform-specific dynamics to enhance engagement and impact (ND, 2025). Notwithstanding the advantages, quantifying the return on investment (ROI) of influencer marketing poses a challenge, as engagement measures like likes and comments do not consistently correlate with direct purchases (Agrawal, 2025).

Social Media Influencers possess the capacity to affect health-related attitudes and behaviors, with both beneficial and detrimental consequences. Their communication strategies can influence health-related attitudes and behavioral intentions among followers (Kaňková et al., 2024). Further investigation is required on the behavioral consequences of exposure to influencer content, especially for health-related misinformation (Kaňková et al., 2024). Transparency and authenticity are significant hurdles in influencer marketing. The requirement for influencers to reveal sponsored material can affect customer trust, demanding transparent collaborations (Agrawal, 2025). The parasocial link between influencers and followers across various platforms significantly influences consumer engagement, underscoring the necessity of comprehending these dynamics for efficient

marketing strategies (Pradhan et al., 2023). Although SMIs and SMPs provide substantial opportunities for impacting consumer behavior and brand engagement, they also pose obstacles that necessitate meticulous management. The necessity for honesty, authenticity, and precise evaluation of marketing results is essential. Future studies should concentrate on the enduring impacts of influencer marketing on brand loyalty and the creation of enhanced measures for evaluating campaign effectiveness. Moreover, tackling the spread of misinformation, especially in health-related contexts, is a vital subject for additional research.

Social Factors (SF) and Social Media Platforms (SMP):

Social variables and social media platforms (SMPs) are interconnected and influence consumer behavior, organizational efficiency, and society relationships. Societal norms and social networks affect the engagement of individuals and organizations with SMPs. These platforms establish a dynamic environment for information exchange and commerce, influencing decision-making across multiple domains. The correlation is apparent in domains including fashion brand engagement, organizational performance, social commerce, and health behavior. SMPs significantly augment consumer engagement with fashion brands by fostering excitement, inclination, warmth, and affinity essential for interactions with these firms. (Naeem & Ozuem, 2021). Social connections, trust, credibility, homophily, and discounts are recognized as determinants of purchasing decisions, underscoring the significance of social aspects in consumer behavior on social media platforms (Naeem & Ozuem, 2021). Strategic management practices (SMPs) are favorably correlated with organizational success, especially in small and medium-sized restaurants, where they improve financial, marketing, and operational results (Alalawneh et al., 2022). The degree of rivalry influences the correlation between SMP utilization and marketing efficacy, suggesting that social dynamics, such as competitive pressure, affect how firms exploit SMPs (Alalawneh et al., 2022).

Social variables, in conjunction with technology attributes, platform characteristics, and economic considerations, directly impact the adoption and utilization of social commerce platforms (Asanprakit & Kraiwanit, 2023). Motivation serves as a mediating factor, indicating that social influences can enhance user engagement and platform adoption within the realm of social commerce (Asanprakit & Kraiwanit, 2023). Social influences, such as norms and networks, profoundly affect health behaviors, with SMPs acting as a conduit for the dissemination of health-related information and the formation of public perceptions (Rangan, 2024). Socioeconomic determinants of health, as social factors, contribute to health disparities, and SMPs can be employed to mitigate these inequities by targeted interventions (Rangan, 2024). Social Media Platforms (SMPs) are not fixed entities; they are perpetually restructured in reaction to legislative modifications, technology innovations, and user behaviors, illustrating the fluid character of social influences in influencing public culture (Punathambekar & Mohan, 2021). The instance of Swami Ramdev exemplifies the impact of SMPs on public discourse and cultural identity, with social factors influencing content management and perception (Punathambekar & Mohan, 2021). The interaction between social elements and SMPs is primarily beneficial, enhancing engagement and performance, however it entails problems and complications. The dynamic characteristics of SMPs may result in regulatory hurdles and complications with content management and free speech (Punathambekar & Mohan, 2021).

Social Media Platforms (SMP) and Impulsive Buying Behavior (IBB):

Social media platforms have become key drivers of impulsive buying behavior, particularly among younger consumers like Generation Z. The integration of marketing strategies, influencer endorsements, and algorithmic recommendations creates an environment conducive to spontaneous purchases. Targeted advertising leverages consumer vulnerabilities, significantly impacting decision-making processes. (Saini, 2024; Budree et al., 2021). Businesses utilize social media to establish emotional bonds with consumers, frequently via captivating content and interactive experiences, resulting in impulsive purchases (Wang, 2024). Social media influencers significantly amplify this effect, since their endorsements can strengthen brand loyalty and trust, leading to impulsive purchasing decisions (Budree et al., 2021; Mardhiana, 2024). Psychological characteristics, including materialism and the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), serve as crucial mediators in the correlation between social media usage and impulsive purchasing (Christin et al., 2025). Emotional drivers, including the quest for social approval and identity expression, significantly influence impulsive purchases, as consumers frequently acquire things that reflect their aspirational selves (Rodrigue, 2024). Parasocial interactions with influencers and emotional involvement via social commerce platforms enhance impulsive purchasing by fostering a sense of familiarity and connection with the promoter (Mardhiana, 2024).

The algorithmic capabilities of social media platforms significantly influence impulsive purchasing by tailoring recommendations to match consumers' interests and identity goals (Rodrigue, 2024). Social commerce systems, including Instagram Shopping and TikTok Shopping, promote impulsive purchases by merging user engagement with commercial transactions, enabling effortless on-site acquisitions (Bernstein & Guo, 2025). Elements such as tags, likes, and comments on platforms like Facebook function as catalysts for impulsive purchasing by shaping consumer views and promoting spontaneous buying decisions (Nuseir, 2020). Generation Z demonstrates an increased propensity for impulsive purchasing on social media platforms, attributable to their adeptness in digital contexts and vulnerability to emotional and social stimuli (Mardhiana, 2024; Christin et al., 2025). Hedonic browsing and upward social comparison are critical precursors to impulsive buying in young people, as these behaviors enhance the probability of unplanned purchases (Kanthawongs & Jabutay, 2024). Although social media platforms affect impulsive purchasing behavior, it is crucial to acknowledge the possibility of more informed and reasonable consumer decision-making. Understanding the psychological and emotional stimuli that prompt impulsive purchases can enable customers to make more deliberate buying choices, hence diminishing the chances of remorseful acquisitions. Furthermore, enterprises can utilize this insight to design more ethical marketing strategies that emphasize consumer welfare in conjunction with commercial achievement.

Recent evidence shows that social media has become a significant driver of impulsive purchasing behavior due to three interconnected factors: social media influencers (SMIs), societal influences, and platform characteristics. SMIs establish trust through their perceived legitimacy and emotional engagement, with micro-influencers often enhancing this connection. Social factors such as peer influence and online reviews amplify emotional triggers like social anxiety and fear of missing out, further fostering impulsive buying. Additionally, social media platforms utilize algorithmic personalization and integrated shopping features, particularly on platforms like TikTok and Instagram, to create rapid

transitions from browsing to purchase. Collectively, these elements create a dynamic system that heightens impulsive consumer behavior, especially among younger demographics, while psychological issues like decreased self-control contribute to this trend.

These variables collectively constitute a complex mechanism wherein influencers and social factors produce emotional and social cues, which the platform subsequently converts into actual purchasing behavior. This connection underscores a distinct study deficit about the functioning of these interactions specifically within the Omani setting among Generation Z. This research situates itself within this conceptual and empirical framework, naturally leading to the following general and specific objectives aimed at thoroughly investigating these processes.

Based on the argument above, this manuscript's proposed hypothesis would state as follows:

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between SMI and IBB

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive relationship between SF and IBB

Hypothesis 3: There is a positive relationship between SMI and SMP

Hypothesis 4: There is a positive relationship between SF and SMP

Hypothesis 5: There is a positive relationship between SMP and IBB

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 below illustrates the suggested conceptual framework of the study, derived from the literature review presented in the corresponding chapter. The image illustrates that the direct influence of SMI, SF, and SMP on IBB pertains to the examination of impulsive buying behavior. Social media platforms (SMP) are regarded as a variable that mediates the interaction among social media influence (SMI), social factors (SF), and individual behavioral beliefs (IBB). The correlation between SMI and IBB is examined. Furthermore, a correlation exists between SF and IBB, as well as between SMP and IBB.

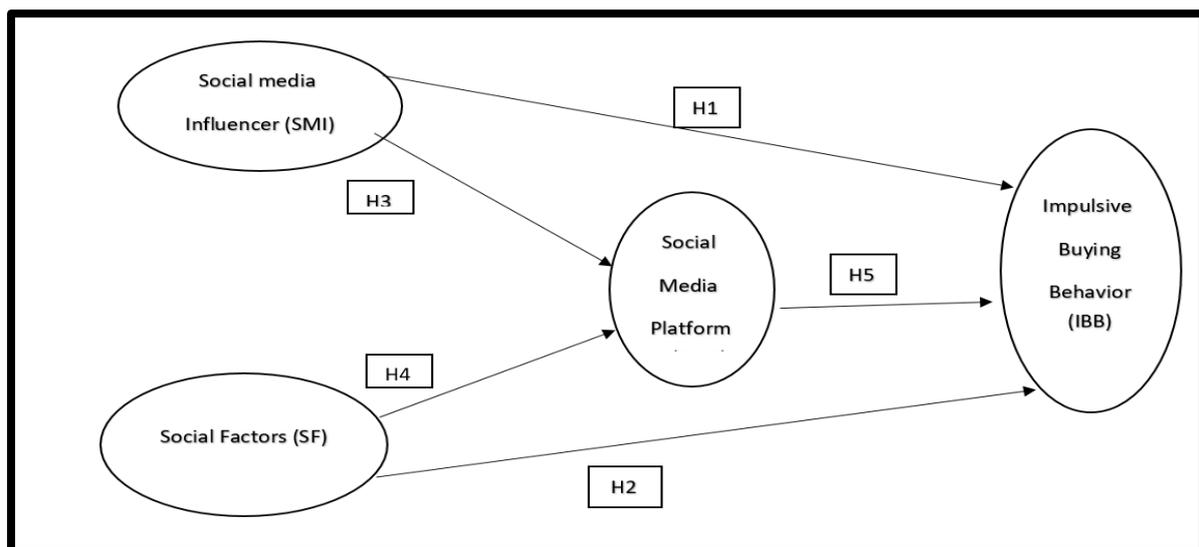


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Conclusions and Key Findings

This study's findings will illustrate that impulsive buying behavior among Generation Z within the Sultanate of Oman is influenced by a complex interaction of social media influencers, social factors, and the structural and technological attributes of social media platforms. The findings are anticipated to demonstrate that the influence of social media personalities will be evident through parasocial relationships, emotional involvement, and elevated perceived credibility elements that will propel young customers toward swift, impulsive purchasing choices. The study will emphasize that social factors such as social comparison, digital peer pressure, and online community affiliation are pivotal in activating the psychological mechanisms that result in impulsive purchasing, particularly in rapid digital contexts where social cues are intensified and users exhibit heightened sensitivity to social validation.

The study aims to validate that social media platforms function as a significant mediating force that converts emotional and social stimuli into tangible purchasing behavior, influenced by sophisticated algorithms, tailored content feeds, and “shoppertainment” elements that facilitate immediate shifts from content engagement to purchasing decisions. Furthermore, the findings will indicate that Generation Z, due to their significant digital adeptness and extensive interaction with short-form and interactive material, will be especially susceptible to these stimuli, positioning social media platforms as a primary arena for impulsive purchasing habits. The study will enhance comprehension of the psychological, social, and technological factors influencing impulsive buying, facilitating future recommendations to promote a more mindful and responsible consumption culture among young digital users.

Research Contributions

This study provides substantial theoretical and contextual advances to the current understanding of impulsive buying behavior in digital contexts. This research theoretically enhances the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) model by incorporating three interconnected determinants social media influencers (SMI), social factors (SF), and social media platforms (SMP) into a unified framework that elucidates the process by which external digital stimuli are converted into internal psychological responses, culminating in impulsive buying behavior among Generation Z consumers. By establishing SMP as a mediating mechanism, the study offers a nuanced comprehension of how algorithmic personalization, parasocial interactions, and shoppertainment features amplify emotional activation and diminish self-regulatory control, thereby expanding upon previous research that analyzes these predictors in isolation. This enhances the understanding of the interplay among psychological, social, and technological factors inside modern digital environments.

This research addresses a significant gap in the literature by investigating impulsive buying behavior within the distinct cultural and technological framework of the Sultanate of Oman, a background that has been insufficiently explored in consumer behavior studies. The results provide specific insights on the interpretations and reactions of Omani Generation Z consumers to influencer signals, peer influence, and interactive platform functionalities, mirroring cultural norms about trust, social validation, and digital identity. These contributions are significant for marketers and policymakers aiming to formulate ethical digital marketing strategies, enhance digital literacy initiatives, and encourage responsible consumption among young individuals. This study establishes a significant basis for future

regional and cross-cultural research on digital impulsive buying behavior by concentrating on Oman's swiftly changing social media landscape.

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