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Understanding Digital Consumer Behavior: The Role of Social Media Marketing, Influencers, Flow State, and Trust in Online Impulsive Buying Behavior Toward SDG 12

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The rapid development of social commerce has transformed consumer purchasing behavior through digital platforms such as TikTok, where entertainment, interaction, and shopping activities are integrated into a single environment. This study aims to examine the influence of social media marketing, influencers, flow state, and trust on online impulsive buying behavior. This research contributes to understanding digital consumer behavior and supports Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12 by highlighting the importance of responsible consumption practices in digital marketplaces. **Method:** A quantitative approach using a cross-sectional survey design. Data were collected from 140 TikTok users who had participated in online shopping activities. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to examine the direct and indirect relationships between social media marketing, influencers, flow state, trust, and online impulsive buying behavior. **Results:** The results indicate that flow state significantly influences online impulsive buying, while social media marketing and influencers do not have a direct significant effect. Furthermore, trust fully mediates the relationship between social media marketing, influencers, flow state, and online impulsive buying. These findings demonstrate that consumer trust and psychological engagement are important factors influencing digital purchasing decisions. **Novelty:** To provide a novel perspective by integrating trust mediation into the relationship between digital marketing stimuli and impulsive purchasing behavior. The findings offer insights into developing more responsible digital consumption practices by encouraging consumers to make more conscious purchasing decisions in social commerce environments.

INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Communication and Information of the Republic of Indonesia confirmed that the number of internet users in Indonesia has continued to increase, with a significant proportion of users accessing the internet for social media activities. The number of active social media users in Indonesia reached millions of users, reflecting substantial growth compared to previous years. This development indicates that social media has become an important part of daily digital activities and consumer interactions in Indonesia (Hui, 2020). The increasing adoption of social media platforms demonstrates the growing role of digital communication channels in shaping online behavior and social engagement (G.M. Group, 2016). Access to the TikTok application has experienced significant growth, with users spending longer durations on the platform compared with other social media applications (G.M. Group, 2016).

The expansion of internet utilization into marketing activities represents a form of digital marketing practice known as Social Media Marketing (SMM). Social Media Marketing can be defined as a process of creating, distributing, and sharing brand-related information through social media platforms to establish relationships with stakeholders (Chan et al., 2023; Albanna et al., 2022). According to Chan et al. (2023), social media marketing strategies require effective management of visual and interactive elements to increase consumer engagement. Social media functions as an

effective communication channel that can reduce misinformation about brands while strengthening brand value through interaction, collaboration, and the exchange of consumer experiences (Ibrahim et al., 2020; Reveilhac & Blanchard, 2022). Furthermore, social media platforms have become preferred channels for consumers to share brand experiences compared with conventional media due to the widespread adoption of smartphones and digital connectivity (Chatterjee et al., 2022; Aw et al., 2023).

Collaborations between marketers and influencers aim to generate consumer interest in products and services and encourage consumers to access online shopping platforms. Influencers with large social media networks have the ability to influence followers' perceptions and purchasing decisions through digital interactions. According to Ki et al. (2020), influencer marketing involves relationships between influencers and consumers, influencers and brands, as well as brands and consumers, creating a network of value exchange within digital environments. Similarly, Kim and Kim (2021) explain that influencer effectiveness depends on trust, credibility, and the relationship established between influencers and their followers.

Flow conditions can be achieved through attractive website design and interactive online shopping environments that provide better electronic services. The concept of flow refers to a psychological state characterized by cognitive absorption, altered perception of time, and deep involvement in an activity (Paek et al., 2021). Consumers who experience flow tend to demonstrate positive emotional responses because they become fully engaged in the online shopping process. According to Rodríguez-Torrico et al. (2023), seamless digital experiences encourage consumers to achieve optimal experiences, which subsequently influence consumer responses and behavioral intentions.

Consumer trust remains a critical issue in online shopping because consumers face greater transaction risks and uncertainty compared with traditional shopping environments. Trust represents consumers' confidence that online sellers or platforms will not exploit their vulnerabilities within digital transaction environments (Wang et al., 2022). Impulse buying is characterized by a short and spontaneous decision-making process involving unplanned purchasing behavior influenced by emotional conditions (Olsen et al., 2022; Wu et al., 2020).

Impulsive behavior is also associated with financial decision-making concepts, including mental accounting. Kim (n.d.) examined consumer responses to unexpected discounts and found that promotional stimuli can encourage additional purchases and increase impulsive buying tendencies in online environments. Furthermore, financial-related factors, such as risk preferences, financial decision characteristics, and accumulated financial knowledge, influence consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions (Gathergood & Weber, 2017; Gutiérrez-Nieto et al., 2017). Therefore, understanding impulsive buying behavior requires consideration of both psychological and financial perspectives.

This study aims to analyze the influence of social media marketing, influencers, flow state, and the mediating role of trust on online impulsive buying behavior. The novelty of this study lies in integrating an accounting and financial perspective, particularly mental accounting, into the investigation of digital consumer purchasing behavior, which has received limited attention in previous studies.

Literature review

Social Media Marketing (SMM) can be explained as a series of processes to create, deliver, and promote value through various social media platforms. The main objective of SMM is to build and maintain relationships with stakeholders while increasing value through interaction, information sharing, purchasing recommendations, and electronic word-of-mouth regarding existing and trending products or services (Koay et al., 2020). SMM also aims to increase brand awareness and encourage user engagement by stimulating consumers to generate and share content on social media platforms (Singh, 2022). According to Hafez (2022), the increasing popularity of social media platforms such as WeChat, TikTok, and Weibo demonstrates that users perceive multiple layers of value that influence trust formation, either directly or indirectly.

Another study comparing online and offline marketing channels found that offline channels generate lower impulse buying tendencies than online channels, with social networking activities on social media becoming one of the main factors influencing online purchasing behavior (Aragoncillo & Orús, 2018). Furthermore, live-streaming activities have been found to positively influence online impulsive buying behavior by creating interactive and engaging shopping environments (Lin et al., 2023; Lo et al., 2022). Research also indicates that celebrity endorsements, promotional strategies, and online reviews significantly influence consumer online shopping behavior (Miah et al., 2022).

Influencers are defined as social media users who have the ability to create engagement, encourage conversations, and promote products or services to specific target audiences. Influencers may include celebrities, professional figures, or ordinary individuals who develop strong relationships with their followers. According to Kim and Kim (2021), influencer marketing effectiveness depends on trust, credibility, and the relationship between influencers and consumers. Previous research demonstrates that trust mediates the relationship between influencer expertise, authenticity, and homophily with marketing outcomes and consumer loyalty (Kim & Kim, 2021). Furthermore, Wang and Chan-Olmsted (2024) found that influencer characteristics and content attributes contribute to consumer trust development. The influence of social media celebrities' content and interactions has also been shown to affect consumers' impulsive buying intentions (Zafar et al., 2021). In addition, Yan et al. (2023) demonstrated that influencer live-streaming activities can create persuasive shopping environments that encourage impulse purchasing decisions.

Flow theory has become an important concept in studies examining continued usage intentions, online purchase intentions, and impulsive buying behavior. Flow experience is recognized as an indicator for evaluating online consumer experiences, consisting of dimensions such as concentration and enjoyment (Huang et al., 2023; Liang et al., 2024). In online shopping environments, enjoyment and deep involvement during browsing activities can influence consumer behavior and purchasing decisions (Huang et al., 2023). According to Jamshidi et al. (2018), positive flow experiences in digital services contribute to consumer trust development by strengthening emotional connections with brands. Furthermore, Luo et al. (2022) found that flow experience functions as an antecedent of trust formation in online platforms. Tuncer (2021) also demonstrated that trust and flow experience significantly contribute to social commerce intentions. Previous studies indicate that flow experience has both direct and indirect effects on online impulsive buying, where flow enhances cognitive and affective shopping experiences that subsequently increase impulsive purchasing tendencies (Shahpasandi et al., 2020).

Unlike traditional shopping environments, online transactions cannot provide direct physical interaction with products, creating uncertainty and perceived risks among consumers. These risks include receiving poor-quality products, mismatches between expectations and actual products, delivery problems, and differences between displayed and received products (Strzelecki & Rizun, 2020). According to Wang et al. (2022), uncertainty caused by limited physical interaction and lack of direct communication can reduce consumer purchasing intentions. However, stronger consumer trust can reduce perceived risks and increase consumers' willingness to complete online transactions. Consumer trust has been found to positively influence impulsive buying behavior and reduce psychological barriers during online purchasing decisions (Ming et al., 2021; Yi & Jai, 2020). Furthermore, Rodríguez-Priego et al. (2023) found that trust mediates the relationship between digital influencers, information quality, social electronic word-of-mouth, and consumer behavioral intentions.

Generally, impulse buying occurs when external stimuli generate emotional responses, pleasure, or desire that encourage consumers to make spontaneous purchasing decisions (Kumar & Srivastava, 2022). Research based on mental accounting principles indicates that unexpected discounts can stimulate impulsive purchasing decisions by increasing consumers' perceived transaction value (Kim, n.d.). However, consumers with stronger budgeting awareness and holistic thinking tendencies may reduce impulsive buying behavior. Previous studies also indicate that impulsive purchasing tendencies increase consumers' intentions to purchase additional products online (Olsen et al., 2022). Furthermore, impulsive behavior is associated with financial knowledge and consumer decision-making processes. Mette et al. (2019) found that individuals with higher materialism and impulsivity levels tend to have stronger tendencies toward credit-based purchases, whereas increased financial knowledge can reduce excessive purchasing behavior despite promotional incentives.

RESEARCH METHOD

The population in this study consisted of social media application users, particularly TikTok users. The research sample included social media users who had conducted online shopping activities through the TikTok platform. The sampling technique applied in this study was convenience sampling. The sample size was determined based on the rule of thumb for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), calculated as five times the number of measurement indicators. With 28 indicators used in this study, the minimum required sample size was 140 respondents.

This study utilized primary data collected through a survey method. Data collection was conducted by distributing structured questionnaires to respondents who met the research criteria. The questionnaire items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, to assess respondents' perceptions regarding social media marketing, influencers, flow state, trust, and online impulsive buying behavior.

The data analysis was performed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach. The analysis process consisted of several stages, including descriptive statistical analysis, measurement model evaluation, and structural model testing. Descriptive statistics were used to describe respondent characteristics, including age, gender, occupation, income, and online shopping behavior, as well as to summarize responses to each questionnaire item.

The measurement model evaluation was conducted to assess the validity and reliability of the research constructs. Convergent validity was evaluated using the

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value, where an AVE value of ≥ 0.50 indicates adequate validity. Reliability testing was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values. According to Hair et al. (2019), a construct is considered reliable when Cronbach's alpha exceeds 0.70 and composite reliability is within the acceptable range of 0.70 to 0.95.

Furthermore, collinearity testing was conducted to examine potential correlations among indicators using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). Hair et al. (2021) stated that VIF values below 5 indicate that multicollinearity problems do not exist in the structural model. Hypothesis testing was performed using bootstrapping procedures and path coefficient analysis to determine the significance and strength of relationships among constructs (Hair et al., 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The characteristics of the respondents in this study are based on gender, age, profession, income, number of transactions, and length of use of the TikTok application.

Table 1. Respondent characteristics

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Man	38	27%
Woman	102	73%
Age		
17-25 years old	96	68.6%
26-30 years old	40	28.6%
>30 years	4	2.8%
Profession		
Student	6	4.3%
Student	43	30.7%
Worker	64	45.7%
Housewife	27	19.3%
Income		
Rp. 400,000 - Rp. 1,000,000	48	33.8%
Rp. 1,000,000 - Rp. 3,000,000	77	33.8%
> Rp. 3,000,000	15	33.8%
Number of Transactions on Tiktok		
1 time	42	33.8%
2 times	30	33.8%
>2 times	68	33.8%
Long time using the Tiktok Application		
3 month	9	33.8%
6 month	12	33.8%
>6 month	118	33.8%

Measurement model testing is carried out to determine the results of validity and reliability tests. Convergent validity is measured using the outer loading parameter with a value of more than 0.7 with the construct you want to measure. Based on the test results, it shows that in 39 of the total variables, 13 items have a value greater than 0.7. Meanwhile, 15 items had a value below 0.7, so they had to be excluded. Based on the test results, the values of all variables in reliability testing use AVE with a value of more

than 0.5, or composite reliability with a value of more than 0.7. It can be concluded that the variables used are valid and reliable so that we can continue testing the structural model.

Table 2. Validity and reliability test results

Construct	Indicators	Factor Loading	Crobanch's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
SMM	X1.1	0.290	0.840	0.926	0.862
	X1.2	0.278			
	X1.3	0.309			
	X1.4	0.491			
	X1.5	0.834			
	X1.6	0.797			
	X1.7	0.242			
	X1.8	0.537			
	X1.9	0.686			
	X1.10	0.601			
Influencers	X1.11	0.326	1,000	1,000	1,000
	X2.1	0.493			
	X2.2	0.826			
	X2.3	0.488			
Flow states	X3.1	0.595	0.737	0.883	0.791
	X3.2	0.671			
	X3.3	0.763			
	X3.4	0.812			
Trust	Z.1	0.830	0.865	0.908	0.712
	Z.2	0.792			
	Z.3	0.455			
	Z.4	0.888			
	Z.5	0.852			
Online Impulsive Buying	Y.1	0.781	0.849	0.898	0.689
	Y.2	0.631			
	Y.3	0.821			
	Y.4	0.794			
	Y.5	0.788			
	Y.6	-0.338			
	Y.7	-0.220			
	Y.8	-0.270			

T-statistics/bootstrapping used to determine whether a hypothesis is accepted or rejected can be done by paying attention to the significance value between constructs, t-statistics, p-values , and path coefficient.

Table 3. Hypothesis test results

Hypothesis	Effect	Path Coefficients	T-Statistics	P-Values	Results
H1a	Direct	0.028	0.379	0.705	Not Supported
H1b	Direct	0.153	2.871	0.004	Supported
H2a	Direct	-0.006	0.092	0.927	Not Supported
H2b	Direct	0.143	2.153	0.032	Supported
H3a	Direct	0.211	2.147	0.032	Supported
H3b	Direct	0.640	10.380	0.000	Supported

Hypothesis	Effect	Path Coefficients	T-Statistics	P-Values	Results
H4	Direct	0.372	3.853	0.000	Supported
H5	Indirect	0.372	3.853	0.000	Supported

The findings of this study indicate that Social Media Marketing (SMM) does not directly influence online impulsive buying behavior among TikTok users. Although SMM is expected to increase consumer participation and stimulate purchasing interest through digital platforms, exposure to marketing content alone may not be sufficient to encourage spontaneous purchasing decisions. Singh (2022) explained that the effectiveness of SMM depends on the ability of brands to transform users into active participants who generate and share positive brand-related content through digital platforms. Furthermore, SMM provides several benefits, including supporting the consumer decision-making process, identifying customer segments, maintaining customer relationships, improving marketing communication efficiency, and strengthening loyalty through personalized interactions (Chen et al., 2021). However, the findings of this study indicate that these benefits do not necessarily translate into impulsive buying behavior. This result differs from previous studies that found SMM activities positively influence purchase intention through consumer engagement and brand value creation (Alalwan, 2018).

The insignificant influence of SMM on online impulsive buying also contrasts with previous research showing that online marketing channels tend to generate stronger impulse buying tendencies than offline channels due to social networking effects (Aragoncillo & Orús, 2018). The different findings in this study may be explained by the characteristics of TikTok users, who may not immediately respond to marketing stimuli without considering credibility and trust factors. Nevertheless, social media engagement remains an important factor in building consumer trust. According to Tseng et al. (2022), effective management of enterprise social media can strengthen consumer trust by improving communication quality and reducing uncertainty in online transactions. Therefore, although SMM does not directly encourage impulsive purchases, it may indirectly influence consumer behavior through trust formation.

The findings also reveal that influencer credibility and relevance do not directly influence online impulsive buying behavior. This result differs from previous studies indicating that influencer characteristics, personality, and content presentation can stimulate consumers' desire to purchase impulsively (Zafar et al., 2021). Influencers often influence consumer decisions through product demonstrations, personal charisma, and interactive communication with followers during live-streaming activities. Yan et al. (2023) demonstrated that influencer live-streaming advertisements create interactive shopping environments that can encourage consumer buying impulses. However, this study suggests that influencer influence may depend on the level of trust established between influencers and consumers rather than influencer popularity alone. Wang and Chan-Olmsted (2024) emphasized that influencer marketing effectiveness is strongly determined by trust-building mechanisms and the credibility of communication. Therefore, although influencers do not directly stimulate impulsive buying in this study, they contribute to shaping consumer trust, which subsequently affects purchasing behavior.

The results further demonstrate that flow state has a significant influence on online impulsive buying behavior. This finding supports previous research showing

that flow experience creates psychological engagement, enjoyment, and immersion, which encourage consumers to make spontaneous purchasing decisions (Shahpasandi et al., 2020). When consumers experience concentration, pleasure, and involvement during online shopping activities, they become more likely to explore products and respond emotionally to purchasing stimuli. Huang et al. (2023) explained that flow experience represents an optimal psychological condition that influences online consumer experiences and behavioral intentions. Furthermore, flow state strengthens consumer trust because positive online experiences can reduce uncertainty and increase confidence toward digital platforms. Jamshidi et al. (2018) found that flow experience contributes to trust formation through positive emotional responses toward digital services. Similarly, Luo et al. (2022) confirmed that flow experience functions as an antecedent of trust development in online platforms.

The role of trust as a mediator provides further insight into the mechanism underlying online impulsive buying behavior. Previous studies have shown that consumer trust reduces perceived risks and strengthens consumers' willingness to engage in online transactions (Wang et al., 2022). Trust has also been found to mediate relationships between social media marketing activities, consumer motivation, and purchasing intentions (Karunasingha & Abeysekera, 2022). Furthermore, Irshad et al. (2020) demonstrated that trust is a critical factor influencing consumer behavior in social media marketing environments. The findings of this study indicate that SMM and influencer activities have negative and insignificant direct effects on online impulsive buying, while their indirect effects through trust are positive and significant. This indicates that trust fully mediates the relationship between digital marketing stimuli and impulsive buying behavior. Therefore, consumers may not engage in impulsive purchases merely because of marketing exposure or influencer presence, but rather when these factors successfully create confidence, security, and positive perceptions toward online transactions.

Discussion

The findings indicate that social media marketing does not directly influence online impulsive buying behavior, suggesting that exposure to digital promotional content alone does not automatically encourage consumers to engage in unplanned purchases. In the context of responsible consumption, this finding highlights that consumers increasingly evaluate the credibility, relevance, and value of online information before making purchasing decisions. Social media marketing should therefore not only focus on increasing transaction volume but also encourage meaningful interactions and informed consumer choices. Ibrahim et al. (2020) explain that social media marketing activities strengthen consumer relationships through engagement and value creation. However, without sufficient trust, marketing stimuli may not effectively influence purchasing behavior. This finding supports SDG 12 by emphasizing the importance of creating digital consumption environments that encourage awareness, evaluation, and responsible purchasing decisions.

The role of influencers in this study also provides important implications for responsible digital consumption. Although influencer marketing is widely recognized as an effective promotional strategy, the results show that influencer presence alone does not significantly encourage impulsive buying behavior. This suggests that consumers may increasingly consider authenticity, credibility, and trustworthiness

rather than merely following popular figures. Ki et al. (2020) state that influencers can generate positive marketing outcomes when they successfully build meaningful relationships with followers. Similarly, Kim and Kim (2021) emphasize that trust is a critical factor determining the effectiveness of influencer communication. Therefore, responsible influencer marketing should prioritize transparency and authentic recommendations to minimize excessive consumption tendencies and support SDG 12.

Furthermore, the significant influence of flow state demonstrates that psychological experiences during online shopping play an important role in shaping impulsive purchasing behavior. When consumers experience enjoyment, concentration, and immersive engagement, they become more likely to make spontaneous purchasing decisions. Bao and Yang (2022) found that flow experience increases impulse buying tendencies through psychological engagement and trust formation. However, the presence of trust as a full mediator suggests that consumer confidence determines whether digital experiences translate into purchasing actions. From the SDG 12 perspective, understanding these psychological mechanisms is essential for developing digital platforms that balance engaging shopping experiences with responsible consumption awareness.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: This study demonstrates that online impulsive buying behavior in social commerce is strongly influenced by consumer psychological experience and trust mechanisms. The findings reveal that flow state significantly affects impulsive buying, while social media marketing and influencers require trust to influence consumer decisions indirectly. Therefore, digital consumption behavior is shaped not only by marketing exposure but also by consumers' ability to evaluate information and develop confidence toward online transactions. **Implication:** The findings provide implications for businesses, marketers, and digital platforms to develop responsible marketing strategies that promote transparency, credibility, and consumer awareness. Rather than encouraging excessive purchasing behavior, digital marketing practices should support informed decision-making and sustainable consumption patterns. These implications are aligned with SDG 12, which emphasizes responsible consumption and production. **Limitation:** This study has limitations related to sample size and research context. The respondents were limited to TikTok users, which may restrict the generalization of findings to other social commerce platforms. Additionally, this research focused on marketing and psychological factors but did not include other consumer-related variables such as self-control, environmental awareness, or financial literacy. **Future Research:** Future studies are encouraged to examine responsible digital consumption behavior across different social commerce platforms and demographic groups. Further research may integrate sustainability awareness, consumer ethics, and behavioral control variables to provide deeper insights into how digital environments influence purchasing decisions.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Dwi Novitasari contributed to the conceptual framework, research design, methodology development, data analysis, interpretation of results, and manuscript preparation. **Prafidhya Dwi Yulianto** contributed to the theoretical development, literature review, methodological validation, and critical revision of the manuscript. **Annisa Fitrianingrum** contributed to data collection, data management, reference sourcing, and manuscript drafting. **Desy Silvia Rachmawati** contributed to research

supervision, validation of findings, manuscript review, and improvement of the final manuscript. All authors have reviewed and approved the final version of this submission.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors confirm that there are no conflicts of interest, either financial or personal, that may have influenced the content or outcome of this study.

ETHICAL COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

This manuscript complies with research and publication ethics. The authors affirm that the work is original, conducted with academic integrity, and free from any unethical practices, including plagiarism.

STATEMENT ON THE USE OF AI OR DIGITAL TOOLS IN WRITING

The authors acknowledge the use of digital tools, including AI-based technologies, as support during the research and writing stages of this article. Specifically, ChatGPT (OpenAI) was employed for language refinement, improving manuscript readability, and assisting in the organization of academic writing. Grammarly was utilized for grammar checking and language enhancement to improve clarity and consistency throughout the manuscript. All outputs generated with digital assistance were critically evaluated, verified, and revised by the authors to ensure academic rigor, research integrity, and ethical standards were maintained. The use of these digital tools did not replace the authors' intellectual contributions in conceptualization, methodology development, data analysis, interpretation of findings, or scientific decision-making. The final responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the manuscript rests entirely with the authors.

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