

Social media and consumer impulse buying: A Systematic Review of Literature

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Abstract:

With the growth of Web 2.0 and the use of Internet communications, social media has become a major influencer of consumer behavior. These platforms have changed significantly how consumers make purchase decisions.

Social media and Web 2.0 technologies have gained immense popularity worldwide, attracting users of all ages. Companies are now exploring these technologies as useful tools for enhancing customer interaction. To achieve this, businesses have been utilizing social media in various scenarios to connect with customers in ways including easing information search, promoting engagement, and optimizing customer purchasing behavior.

Unsurprisingly, the related challenges of social media marketing have drawn the attention of academics and researchers to further the understanding of these phenomena.

The purpose of this article is to investigate the relationship between social media usage and consumer impulse buying. Through a systematic review, we aim to present the current state of literature in this field and analyze the extent to which social media platforms can stimulate unplanned purchases.

Using systematic searches of articles published in Scopus, Web of Science, and Springer Link, 64 journal articles were selected for the review. Our findings indicate six research themes: (1) antecedents of impulsive buying on social media, (2) the role of personality traits in impulsive Buying on social media (3) the impact of COVID-19 on impulsive buying and social media use, (4) role of Social Media Influencers, (5) impulsive buying on social commerce platforms and (6) consumer cultural and generational differences. Different research gaps have been identified and future research directions are provided in terms of theory, context, and methodology.

Keywords: Impulsive buying, social media, systematic literature review, consumer behavior.

JEL Classification: M31

Paper type: Theoretical Research

1. Introduction

The buying experience has been revolutionized with the widespread use of social media worldwide (Gupta & Vohra, 2019a). Targeted, and time-limited promotional advertisements create a sense of urgency to make unplanned and sudden purchases (Xiang et al., 2016). The interaction process is also carried out differently on social media. Thus, the extra exposure to digital branded content, product information, and social surroundings made buying behavior on social media platforms a compelling topic.

Impulsive buying has had a growing interest from researchers over the years. The analysis of the literature reveals the plurality of definitions reflecting the evolution of consumer behaviors, commercial platforms, and practices (Applebaum, 1951; Stern, 1962; Beatty & Elizabeth Ferrell, 1998; Kacen & Lee, 2002; Kim & Johnson, 2016). To fully comprehend impulsive buying through all its aspects, we had to delve into definitions, underlying characteristics, and all motivations leading to this behavior.

Impulsivity is defined as a personality trait that includes inclinations to take part in unplanned acts or to act right away without considering the potential consequence. (Beatty & Elizabeth Ferrell, 1998). Associating the act of “buying” with “Impulsivity” is nothing new. Stern (1962) identified four types of impulsive buying behaviors: (i) Pure impulsive buying which describes unplanned and spontaneous purchases without any prior intention, (ii) reminder impulsive buying occurs when the purchase is induced by a reminder of an advertisement, promotion, time-limited offer, or a display in the store. (iii) Suggestive impulsive buying refers to an act of buying triggered by a suggestion from surroundings, (ii) planned impulsive buying means that the consumer while making a planned purchase in the store may end up buying other products due to a promotion or special offer that he discovers on the store. This typology has been subsequently adopted by a wide range of studies such as (Y. K. Han et al., 1991; Iyer, 1989).

A myriad of previous studies focused on understanding impulsive buying antecedents. Youn and Faber (Han et al., 1991) distinguished between the internal stimuli of impulsive buying related to the consumer's cognitive and psychological motivation processes, and external stimuli due to environmental and situational cues.

The literature has identified some of these antecedents such as conforming the behavior of peers and social influencers (Rook & Fisher, 1995), the shopping environment (music background (Verplanken & Herabadi, 2001) and store attractiveness (Mattila & Wirtz, 2008), the suggestions of social surroundings such as salespersons or shopping companion (Luo, 2005), gender (Dittmar et al., 1996; Islam et al., 2021), the product's aesthetics (Park et al., 2012; Phau & Lo, 2004) and the consumer's mood (Rook & Gardner, 1993) with positive or negative emotions.

Psychological factors drive impulsive buying behavior, extrovert personalities who are more likely to buy impulsively, and also low self-esteem individuals who are easy prey to impulsive buying decisions (Dhandra, 2020; Verplanken et al., 2005). Also, consumers with higher Emotional Intelligence are better at controlling their impulsive buying tendencies (Jie et al., 2022a). Furthermore, various researchers spotted that online purchases scientifically influence consumer buying behavior, due to many cues like ease of use and website attributes (Verhagen & van Dolen, 2011).

Consumer behavior, especially impulsive buying in physical stores has been widely explored by scientific research. These studies were very useful in understanding the factors that impact purchasing choices, and the needs and preferences of the customers to help the sellers redirect their marketing strategies, build a stronger relationship with their target audience, and their response to promotional strategies (Applebaum, 1951). the progression of e-commerce has intensified and reshaped impulse buying behavior (Li et al., 1999). The availability and

accessibility of e-shopping platforms in the digital marketplace around the clock made consumers more impulsive (DONTHU & GARCIA, 1999).

The arrival of social networks was seen as a new business opportunity for companies. They can interact instantly and directly with their customers and prospective customers which allows them to provide more targeted and personalized offers (Yadav & Rahman, 2017). Through social media, companies are more likely to use innovative strategies of brand content, promotional advertisements, and marketing influence (Xiang et al., 2016; Zhu et al., 2020a). These actions influence drastically consumer decision-making.

Numerous research studies have shed light on impulsive buying in the social media context in recent years (Elisa et al., 2022a, 2022b; Khokhar et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2020a). These studies, each with a different focus, have provided insights into this particular behavior of social media users and the causes that drive consumers to shop impulsively. Yet, impulsive buying behavior is still increasingly attracting the attention of researchers and marketers (Szymkowiak et al., 2021a).

As a result of this observation, our research question is “How does social media influence impulsive buying behavior?”. To answer this question, we used a systematic search of articles published in Scopus, Web of Science, and Springer Link, 64 journal articles responded to our inclusion criteria, namely the language of the paper (English), the type of source (journal), with no limitation on publication time.

Hence, our study has the following four main objectives:

- provide a rigorous synthesis of the available studies;
- investigate to what scale the use of social media can provoke the impulsive buying decisions of consumers;
- identify gaps and limitations;
- and offer a foundation for future research.

Moreover, this paper also provides valuable insights and crucial guidelines that would be extremely beneficial for marketers to optimize their marketing strategies and upgrade their businesses.

The structure of this article is outlined as follows: The first section provides the relevant theoretical background, presenting the main definitions and various insights into impulsive buying behavior and social media. Next, the paper explains the research methodology that conducted this review and data collection; the following section reveals the results of the systematic review literature; and then each of the six crucial research questions that guide this process is carefully studied and answered in detail. And finally, the discussion and the conclusion.

The social media and impulse buying field is still growing, and further research in these areas will undeniably bring more clarity to consumer behavior in online platforms. By integrating diverse theoretical frameworks and exploring new dimensions of social media content, scholars and marketers can unlock novel insights and develop more personalized approaches, ultimately contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior in the digital era.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Impulsive buying definition

Early definitions simplistically outlined Impulsive buying as an unplanned purchase (Applebaum, 1951; Kollat & Willett, 1969; Rook, 1987; Stern, 1962) of an item on sale. Afterward, other authors have argued that given that not all unplanned purchases are always impulsive (Koski, 2004), constraining impulsive buying to unplanned does not provide a complete and exhaustive comprehension of this behavior.

Also, impulse buying differs from continuous buying which is a persistent and long-lasting purchase behavior, while it is considered impulsive when the decision is taken spontaneously and in a very short amount of time (A. J. Kim & Johnson, 2016), due to non-consideration of the consequences (Y. Chen & Wang, 2016; Park et al., 2012), information or other alternatives (Rook, 1987), which explains why some authors describe the behavior as irreflective (Kacen & Lee, 2002).

Cognitive psychological motivations behind the consumer's behavior were underlined. New key aspects were integrated into the definition of impulsive buying, such as the seeking of immediate pleasure and gratification, the fulfillment of an emotional and urge need or irresistible desire (M.-Y. Lee et al., 2009; Verhagen & van Dolen, 2011) creating positive emotions of satisfaction and excitement (Peck & Childers, 2006; Rook, 1987). It can also be a sort of escape from negative thoughts, low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and bad mood (Silvera et al., 2008).

2.2. Social media and impulsive buying

A social media website is defined as a participative web 2.0 application, website, or software where users can connect, interact, communicate, and share information, knowledge, and ideas (A. J. Kim & Johnson, 2016; Tuten, 2008). Connected people on social media can produce and publish their content, created on their own or using other technologies facilitating the generation of multimedia content, effortlessly and rapidly.

Social media has dramatically transformed consumer behavior, reshaping the way individuals interact with brands, make purchasing decisions, and seek out information. It has been argued that social media platforms impact users' information sharing, buying behavior, either impulsive or planned, knowledge, and opinions (Gong et al., 2020; Lim, 2016).

Many researchers have tried to understand and measure the impact of social media use on impulsive buying, especially while shopping online (Y. Chen et al., 2019a; Khokhar et al., 2019; Nuseir, 2020; Szymkowiak et al., 2021b). Chen (2019a) has argued that the extended use of social media and exposure to social interactions and information affects impulse buying decisions more strongly. In addition to that, planned and impulse buying behavior can be influenced by direct product recommendations on social media (Y. Chen et al., 2020). The impulsive buying decision is also triggered by digital marketing (Alzyoud, 2018) and sharing personal consumption experiences on social networks (Ho et al., 2019). Online shopping provides access to a wide range of products that can be very appealing while browsing, fulfilling consumers' emotional needs. (Madhavaram & Laverie, 2004).

Yet, while some researchers pointed out that e-commerce enhances impulsive buying tendencies (Sun et al., 2012), others have shown that the absence of a shopping companion or salesperson while shopping online makes the consumer independent from any suggestion influence leading to rational purchases unlike the offline store environment (Madhavaram & Laverie, 2004). Thus, the social interactions in social commerce may counterbalance this decrease in sales opportunities (Shen & Eder, 2009).

It has been argued that companies should be aware of the high impact of social media on increasing impulsive buying tendencies (Husnain et al., 2016; Khokhar et al., 2019; Shafique et al., 2015; Wahab et al., 2018). Facebook, considered also as a social commerce platform, induces impulsive buying behavior (J. V. Chen et al., 2016a). The following arguments are of interest: Intuitive features, the social dimension of interacting with family and friends, and personalized advertisements help to buy products and services easily. For Instagram, a variety of stimuli leading to impulsive buying behavior was detected, such as ads and promotions (Handayani et al., 2018; Triwidisari et al., 2017), branded audiovisual content (Handayani et al., 2018), and lastly, suggestions and recommendations of opinion leaders and social surroundings (Xiang et al., 2016; Zhu et al., 2020a).

3. Research methodology:

We followed a Systematic Literature Review method to find and analyze articles investigating social media and impulsive buying. A systematic review is a useful method for evaluating hypotheses, summarizing the findings of prior studies, and determining whether those studies are consistent with one another (Denyer & Tranfield, 2009). In this paper, we adopted the principles outlined by the same authors, Denyer and Tranfield who prescribed a five steps process to conduct literature reviews of this kind:

(1) formulate a question(s) for the systematic review; (2) locate and create an extensive list of prospective relevant research papers; (3) choose and analyze relevant research papers using predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria; (4) analyze and synthesize the relevant literature; (5) report the results.

3.1. Research question:

Our research question is “How does social media influence impulsive buying behavior?”. We aim to provide a comprehensive overview of the currently available literature related to our research question, identify research gaps, and propose future research areas.

3.2. locate and create an extensive list of prospect-relevant research papers:

We searched for relevant literature in three major electronic databases: Scopus, Web of Science, and Springer Link. The authors selected these databases, as they were considered to be the most relevant, with the highest impact factor.

The keyword formula was made up of two sets of keywords representing social media and impulsive buying.

Table 1: Key-words used for the search

Concepts	Social media	impulsive buying
Key-words related	Social Media Networks Social Networking Sites Facebook Twitter Snapchat Instagram Tiktok Influencer Celebrity YouTube Blogs Web 2.0	impulsive purchase impulsive purchasing behavior unplanned buying

Source: Authors

These keywords were combined using logical operators (AND /OR). Specially, the expression (Social Media OR "Social Networking Sites" OR "Facebook" OR "Twitter" OR "Snapchat" OR "Instagram" OR "Tiktok" OR "YouTube" OR "Blog" OR "Web 2.0») AND ("impulsive buying" OR "impulsive purchase" OR "unplanned buying") was used as a search string.

The initial search resulted in 357 articles (81 in Scopus, 100 in Web of Science, and 176 in Springer Link).

3.3. Choose and analyze relevant research papers using predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria

To focus our search, we excluded novels, book chapters, review articles, conference proceedings, editorials, and other nonrefereed publications. Only peer-reviewed journal articles written in English were selected.

Table 2: Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Language: only articles published in English are included. Source type: journal Publication year: all of the years covered in the searched databases.	Case reports, commentaries, editorials, conference papers, book chapters and review articles.

Source: Authors

As a first step, we selected relevant articles by examining the title and the abstract. Two criteria have been adopted: (1) focusing on impulsive buying and (2) examining the context of social media.

After removing duplicates with an Excel spreadsheet, 287 articles were selected. Then, the title and abstract were scanned, and the number was reduced to 86 articles.

On June 19, 2023, we conducted new searches on the three databases to update our results. 7 out of 15 articles found were added to our final sample.

3.4. analyze and synthesize the relevant literature

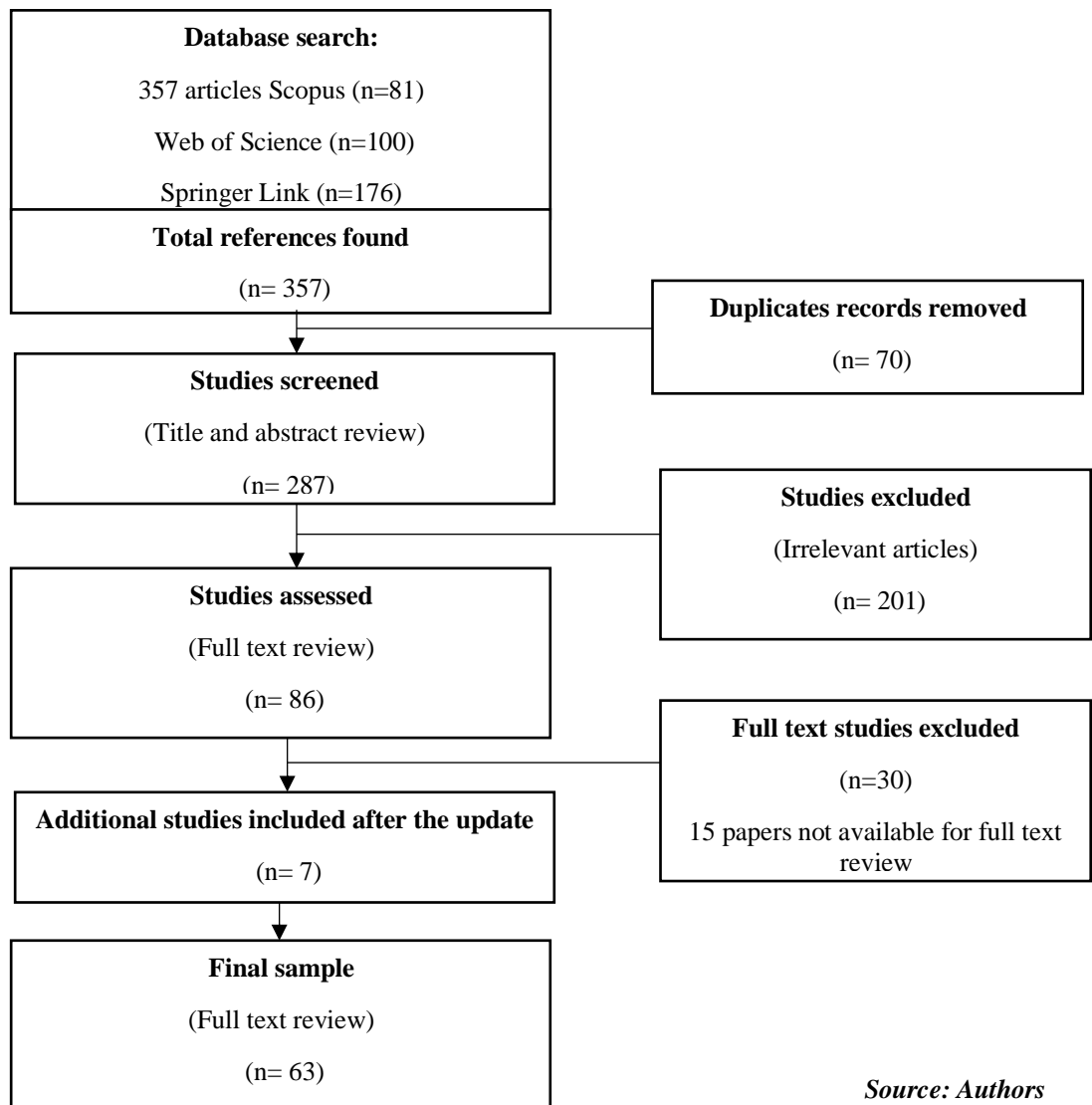
To guide our review of the studies, we will consider six major questions:

1. What theories were adopted?
2. What research methods were used?
3. What social media platform was studied?
4. In which country was the study conducted?
5. What are the main constructs that were studied to understand impulsive buying?
6. What are the key findings of the study?

We used an Excel spreadsheet to collect and organize key information such as the article's objective, methodology, social media platform, key findings, and themes addressed.

Then, we used Nvivo software to code the articles, organize data, and conduct thematic analysis. A narrative synthesis approach was used to present the review's themes and to discuss the findings. The review's themes and findings were presented and discussed using a narrative synthesis approach.

Figure 1: Research strategy



Source: Authors

4. Results

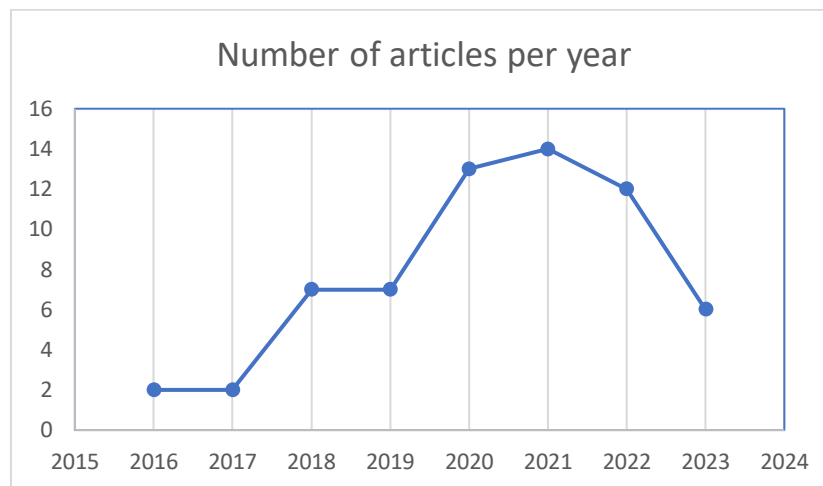
4.1. A descriptive overview of results:

The following descriptive findings are based on the final 63 articles selected for an in-depth analysis. Our goal in presenting descriptive findings is to map the development of the research area in terms of publication frequency, theories, methods used, geographic dispersion, and platforms studied.

- **Year of publication**

As can be seen in the graph, the publications of impulsive buying in social media studies have gradually increased from 2015 to 2021. The highest number of publications was recorded in 2021 with 14 studies. We expect the studies to continue growing as social networks are constantly changing and integrating new functionalities.

Figure 2: Temporal view of primary studies



Source: Authors

• **Research methods used**

In terms of the studies' methodological perspectives, scholars mostly used quantitative methods. In particular, we found that the most popular approach for examining the hypotheses was structural equation modeling (SEM). Moreover, scholars used mostly online surveys to collect data, which provided a convenient and accessible way to collect data from a large and diverse sample of participants. Only four studies used qualitative methods, and six studies were conducted using experimental methods.

So far, researchers have adopted many psychological and social-related theories to explain consumers' online impulse buying behavior in social media from different angles. As depicted in tab30, the Stimuli-Organism-Response framework continues to be the most widely used theoretical approach to online impulsive purchasing in social media (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021; Y. Y. Lee & Gan, 2020; Zafar et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2020b).

Some researchers have explained impulse-buying behavior with other theoretical perspectives, such as flow theory (Hoang & Khoa, 2022; Shahpasandi et al., 2020), Latent State-Trait theory (J. V. Chen et al., 2016b, 2021), and Trust transfer theory (M. C. Han, 2023).

• **Theoretical foundations**

Table 3: Key theoretical foundations

Theories	Number of publications
Stimuli-Organism-Response	21
Flow theory	3
Latent State-Trait theory	3
Para-social interaction	3
Signaling theory	2
Theory of fear	2
Theory of planned behavior	2
Trust transfer theory	2

Source: Authors

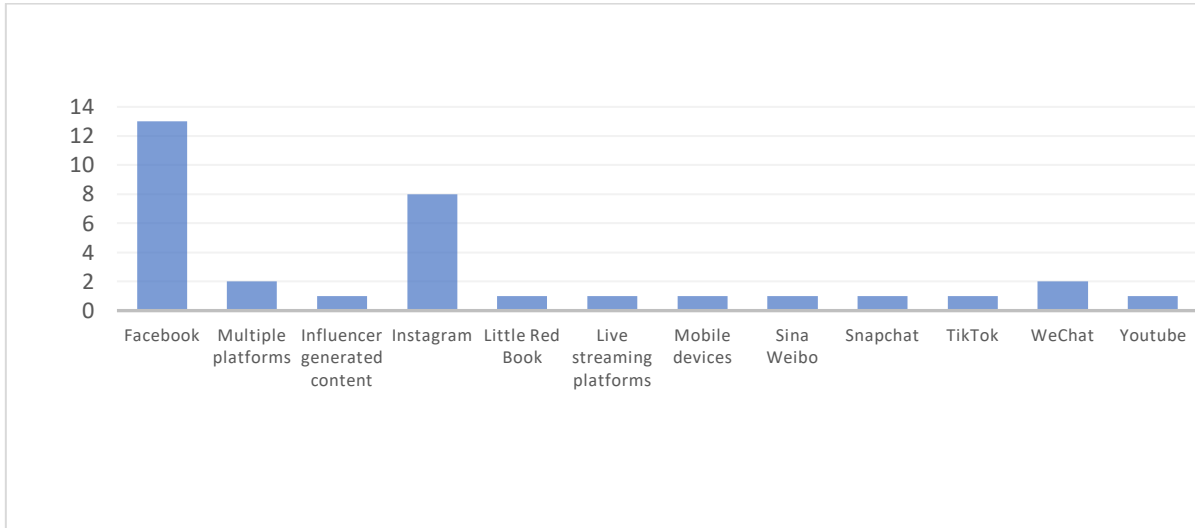
• **Social media platforms studied**

The results of our systematic review indicate that Facebook has been the most examined social media platform. As shown in Figure 6, the second most studied platform was Instagram, with

a total of eight publications, followed by multiple platform studies. The remaining articles explored multiple platforms, WeChat, Little Red Book, Sina Weibo, YouTube, Twitter, and WeChat, which have attracted less attention.

Even though Facebook and Instagram are the most important social media platforms for marketers, further research is required to study other social media platforms because user behavior may differ depending on each platform's characteristics.

Figure 3: Social media platforms studied



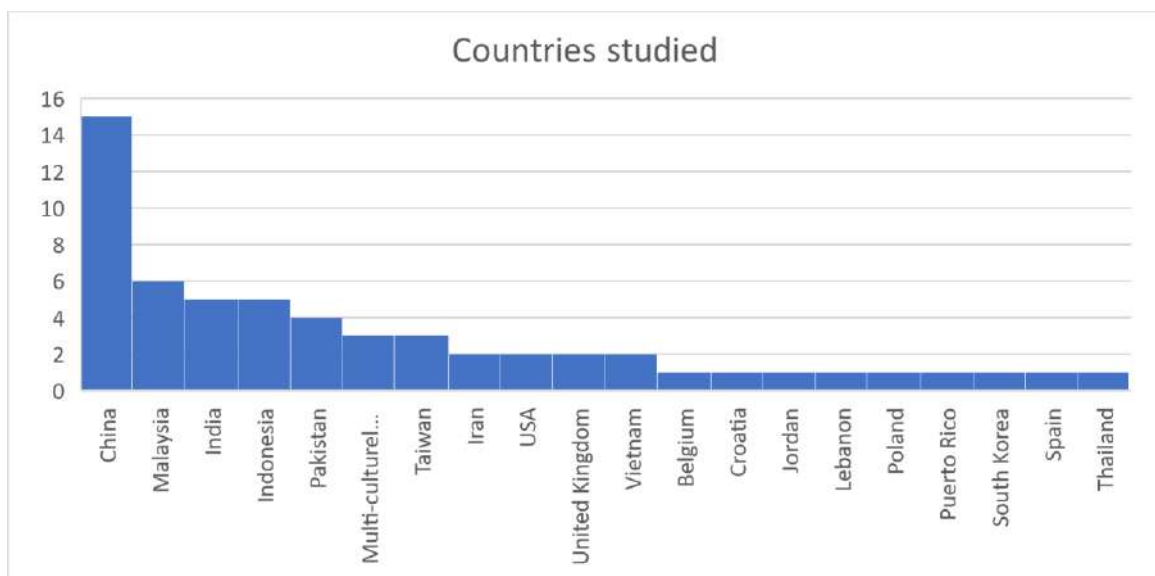
Source: Authors

- **Countries studied**

The majority of the identified studies were conducted in China, followed by Malaysia, India, and Indonesia. The results show an increase in the geographic dispersion of output as interest in the subject has attracted new researchers in different areas over the world.

To give more accurate data and in-depth analysis, future researchers should conduct cross-cultural studies and extend their geographic scope. There is a need to investigate how consumers from various cultures interact with social media content differently.

Figure 4: Country studied



Source: Authors

4.2. Thematic analysis:

- **Stimulating Impulsive Purchases: The Role of Social Media Platforms**

As using social media has become a daily activity, marketers and brands have chosen this new channel to spread commercial content. Unsurprisingly, these platforms are getting more attention from researchers.

Previous studies have found that frequent usage of social media serves as an internal stimulus for consumers to make impulsive purchases (Aragoncillo & Orús, 2018; Gupta & Vohra, 2019b, 2019b). Most notably, Thoumrungroje (2018) provided evidence that regular exposure to content that demonstrates wealth and success leads to the desire to consume impulsively.

To offer a better understanding of how social media platforms drive impulsive buying, scholars explored various types of stimuli, including internal and external factors. For example, Hedonic value, visual cues, videos, and price attributes were found to drive unplanned buying in the social media context (Chauhan et al., 2021; Y. Chen et al., 2019b; Helmi et al., 2023; Kimiagari & Asadi Malafe, 2021; Rajput et al., 2022).

In addition to the aforementioned, studies have shown that trust has a major effect on the urge to buy. In a study conducted in China, Chen et al (2019b) found that affective trust positively influences the urge to buy. The study shows that when followers gain affective trust in an official account, they may be more likely to be influenced by the recommendation posts and feel the urge to buy the suggested item (Y. Chen et al., 2019b).

Given the growing potential of social networks to boost sales and increase customer loyalty, marketers are increasingly using marketing stimuli to capitalize on these platforms. The academic community has paid growing attention to these stimuli and found that variety-seeking, personalized advertisement context, earned media, and online advertisements strongly influence impulsive social media (Al-Zyoud, 2018; Setyani et al., 2019; Tiwari et al., 2021; Zafar, Shen, et al., 2021; Zhou et al., 2023)

Moreover, scholars studied internal stimuli that trigger the urge to buy. In a recent study, Chauhan et al (2021) demonstrated that consumers frequently make impulsive purchases when they feel enthusiastic, and insecure emotionally.

A study conducted on Facebook has demonstrated that impulsive buying behavior can be caused by both positive and negative emotions, however, negative emotions are stronger and more likely to drive unplanned behavior (Ortiz Alvarado et al., 2020). Similarly, it was found that on social networking sites (SNSs), upward social comparison can enhance bad mood, which in turn increases impulsive purchases (Liu et al., 2019).

Flow experience generated a great deal of academic interest. "Flow" is a term developed by psychologist Csikszentmihalyi (1990) to characterize the state of total absorption in what one is doing. Growing evidence asserts that flow experience influences impulse purchasing behavior positively: When a user is in a flow state while visiting a brand's social media account, he is more likely to buy items impulsively (Hoang & Khoa, 2022; Shahpasandi et al., 2020).

The growing body of literature on this theme contributes valuable insights into the mechanisms underlying impulsive buying on social networking sites, offering marketers opportunities to improve their strategies and engage more successfully with consumers.

- **Exploring the Role of Personality Traits in Impulsive Buying on social media**

Personality trait is a key topic that intrigued a considerable number of scholars. It is a critical factor to take into consideration for a better understanding of how impulsive buying can occur in the social media environment.

Evidence from academic literature shows that the degree of urge to purchase and eventually impulse purchase behavior can be determined by personality traits (Leong et al., 2017, 2018).

A study that explored how Internet use affects consumers' impulsive purchasing of agricultural products in China's organic market has demonstrated that personality traits and emotional intelligence positively and significantly moderate the relationship between Internet usage and consumer impulsive buying behavior (Jie et al., 2022b). Along the same lines, it has been shown that consumers with higher emotional intelligence can better control their impulsive buying tendencies (Ortiz Alvarado et al. 2020).

It has been suggested that hedonic and utilitarian shopping as well as the urge to buy impulsively are strongly predicted by impulsivity (Chung et al., 2017). Additionally, the degree of impulsivity may be more related to personal characteristics than to channel factors (Aragoncillo & Orús, 2018).

The exploration of how personality traits can influence impulsive buying on social media has been a significant focus for scholars in the consumer behavior field. Understanding how personality traits influence impulsive buying behavior is crucial for gaining deeper insights into consumer decision-making journey in the social media environment.

- **The Impact of COVID-19 on Consumer Behavior: Impulse Buying and Social Media Use**

The COVID-19 crisis has impacted consumer behavior worldwide. Customers buying and shopping habits, as well as their consumption patterns, have been fundamentally impacted by lockdown and social distancing (J. Kim, 2020).

As a result, several studies have attempted to examine impulse buying during this global crisis. The first findings have revealed that excessive social media use during this period enhanced impulsive buying (Ahmed et al., 2020). It is worth noting that fear appeal and social media fake news have a significant favorable impact on the urge to buy (Ahmed et al., 2020).

Naeem (2021) noted that during the COVID-19 outbreak, Health experts' communication and advice to stay at home caused social interpretations of perceived risk and fear which made UK customers buy impulsively without any marketing efforts. The author claimed that social media use has increased risk perception, fear of fear, and conformist tendency has resulted in impulsive buying.

In a study that aimed to investigate the relationship between food waste, social media usage, and impulse buying during COVID-19, Lahath et al (2021) revealed that food waste was positively correlated with impulse shopping, social media use, and neuroticism. Furthermore, impulse buying mediates the relationship between social media usage and food waste, as well as between neuroticism and food waste.

Other studies explored impulsive buying on social media during the COVID-19 era in a specific industry. For example, in the fashion industry, a qualitative study conducted in Lebanon revealed that during COVID-19, consumers have decreased their impulsivity and frequency of purchases and they also confirmed that the promotional codes and discounts that influencers provide to their followers lead to an increase in impulsive behavior (Elhajjar, 2023).

Another study carried out in Indonesia noted that scarcity impacts positively impulse buying, while the impact of scarcity on the purchase of impulsive health supplement products is moderated by excessive social media use (Elisa et al., 2022b).

Aside from these sectorial studies, a cultural study was identified in the literature. A multi-country examination claimed that excessive social media use enhances the relationship between scarcity messages and perceived arousal and that the moderating effects of the urge to buy impulsively differ from one country to another: People demonstrated a high degree of impulsive buying urges in the U.S., China, and Pakistan, compared to India (Islam et al., 2021).

- **Influencing Impulse Buying Behavior: The Role of Social Media Influencers**

The fourth research theme assesses the effect of social media influencers on impulsive buying.

Several studies have found that the attractiveness and trustworthiness of endorsers have a significant impact on consumers' attitudes toward the brand they endorse. Consumers tend to develop positive brand attitudes when they perceive the endorser as an expert and trustworthy. Additionally, positive brand attitudes have been linked to an increased impulse to purchase (Hsu, 2020; Zafar, Qiu, et al., 2021; Zhu et al., 2020b).

There is strong evidence that the informational value of social media influencers' content plays a crucial role in gaining followers' trust and influencing their purchase behavior. By building trust with their followers, influencers can trigger impulsive purchasing through their posts on social networking sites (Shamim & Islam, 2022).

Content shared by influencers on social media is considered a powerful tool to instigate impulse buying. Existing studies posited that visual appeal, perceived enjoyment, perceived usefulness, and emotional stimulation are among the key factors that lead to impulsive buying (Siew Chein Teo et al., 2023; Szymkowiak et al., 2021c; Zafar et al., 2023).

Related research has examined the effect of parasocial interactions (PSI) through social media influencers and unveiled that PSI between media celebrities and their fans/followers leads to impulse buying behavior (Hsu, 2020; Vazquez et al., 2020; Zafar et al., 2020).

Virtual gifting, a new practice emerging on social networking sites, has also intrigued researchers. In a study conducted on live video streaming platforms, Hsieh et al (2022) revealed that the impacts of an influencer's image, consumer competitive arousal, and gift design aesthetics on impulsive purchasing are moderated by Chinese impression management (Mianzi), which means the desire to make a good impression in social situations. The research has also revealed that gift design aesthetics and consumer competitive arousal are key determinants of impulse buying.

- **What drives impulse purchases in social commerce platforms?**

Technological advances and the growing popularity of social media present an avenue for social commerce to create original market phenomena. The broadest definition of social commerce identifies it as the adoption of social media or social networks to promote user participation in the buying, selling, and sharing of information in online marketplaces (Dong & Wang, 2018). Academics have studied several s-commerce platforms such as Facebook commerce, Instagram, and Sina Weibo (Chen et al., 2021; Hu et al., 2019; Leong, Jaafar, & Ainin, 2018; Leong, Jaafar, & Sulaiman, 2018; Sihombing et al., 2020) and different constructs were used to identify what leads to the urge to buy.

Most of the studies on this theme investigate factors that stimulate impulsive buying. Academics have revealed that hedonic shopping value, textual information quality dimensions, and perceived enjoyment positively influence consumer urge to buy (Chen et al., 2016, 2021; Chung et al., 2017; Sihombing et al., 2020).

A study conducted in China noted that perceived transaction value, perceived acquisition value of a bundle offer, and top review information have a positive relationship with impulsive buying tendencies (Zafar, Qiu, Shahzad, et al., 2021).

Visual content is one of the main reasons why consumers use social media daily. It has been demonstrated that visual design enhances the impulsive buying of organic food (Tariq, Wang, Tanveer, Akram, & Akram, 2019). Moreover, data from a study conducted in the f-commerce context demonstrated that the urge to purchase is positively influenced by f-commerce browsing: For every unit of change in f-commerce browsing, there will be an increase of 0.144 unit change in the urge to purchase (Leong, Jaafar, & Ainin, 2018).

Two studies have explored the relationship between personality traits and impulsive buying in s-commerce. The degree of urgency, the urge to purchase, and eventually impulse purchase behavior can all be determined by personality traits (Leong et al., 2017; Leong, Jaafar, & Sulaiman, 2018).

Consumers also can be influenced by peers and digital communities. It has been shown that impulsive purchase behavior is influenced by both informational and normative social influence from peers and that social communities and forums tend to impact consumer attitudes to both cognitive and affective extents (Hu et al., 2019; Tariq, Wang, Tanveer, Akram, & Bilal, 2019).

In the same vein, provided evidence that observational learning (number of likes, number of shares, number of comments) positively impacts the urge to buy impulsively (Zafar, Qiu, Li, et al., 2021).

S-commerce functionalities were also studied by scholars. It has been argued that Instagram's checkout button doesn't trigger users to buy impulsively in social commerce settings. To buy a product, consumers did not find using Instagram's checkout button more trustworthy than an external website (Han, 2023).

- **Understanding Impulse Buying Through Cultural and Generational Lenses**

As consumer preferences and purchase habits continue to evolve, researchers have recognized the need to understand the influence of culture and generational differences on impulsive buying behavior in social media settings. Understanding how culture shapes consumer attitudes and behaviors and how generational cohorts approach purchasing decisions is crucial for businesses and marketers seeking to adapt their strategies effectively.

Academics shed light on how cultural and generational lenses offer valuable insights into consumer tendencies across diverse societies and age groups. Researchers have conducted generational studies to compare how Millennials and Generation Z react to social media content. It has been suggested that gratification through the use of Snapchat by Millennials (Generation Y) positively impacts impulsive purchase motivation. Snapchat allows Millennials to find responses to their needs by interacting, managing relationships, and learning about brands, this creates a great receptivity to impulsive buying behavior (Dones et al., 2018).

A study conducted to explore different tendencies of impulse buying behavior of Generation Y consumers in Croatia born between 1980 and 2000 found that there are two types of impulsivity: extreme and pure (Vojvodic et al., 2018). The authors explain that extremely impulsive Generation Y consumers are not influenced by online environmental cues, especially the website design and the website quality, whereas the purchase choices and decisions of pure extremely impulsive consumers depend entirely on the quality and design of the website as determinant elements.

Another study on Generation Y has shown that impulsive buying tendency, normative effect, and para-social interaction positively influence Generation Y's urge to buy impulsively during the purchase interaction with the sellers via mobile instant messaging (Y. Y. Lee & Gan, 2020). Impulsive online consumer behavior among Generation Z, or digital natives, is more closely correlated with emotional than cognitive judgments (Lina et al., 2022). Moreover, they appear to be influenced by flow experience when shopping from social websites: concentration, perceived risk, website/app quality, informativeness, enjoyment, and online advertising value have a positive effect on the flow experience and impulsive buying (Hoang & Khoa, 2022).

Cultural differences are evident in impulsive buying tendencies, with South Koreans displaying better self-control compared to Americans, while both cultures are influenced by social media usage on materialism and impulse buying (Thoumrunroje, 2018). Similarly, consumers demonstrated a high degree of impulsive buying urges in the U.S., China, and Pakistan, compared to India (Islam et al., 2021).

5. Future research areas:

To present future research avenues, we followed the approach of previous systematic reviews (Busalim & Hussin, 2016; Vrontis et al., 2021). Future research areas can be classified into

three areas namely theory, context, and methodology. These topics need to be explored to better understand impulsive behavior on social media platforms.

Table 4: Future research areas

Future research directions	
Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use other than the “Stimuli-Organism-Response” theory to give a deeper understanding of the topic. - Incorporate other psychological theories such as the Elaboration Likelihood Model, Attribution Theory, Cognitive Dissonance Theory, or the Halo Effect to understand how personality traits may influence impulsive buying in SNSs. - Investigate attributes of successful social media content that drive impulsive buying.
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Conduct cross-cultural studies to show how cultural differences can influence impulse buying. -Expand geographical coverage of studies to Arab and African countries. -Study different product categories. -Conduct comparative studies to explore how social media type can influence impulsive buying. -Study situational characteristics (e.g., degree of involvement) when analyzing impulse buying. - Focus on TikTok and Snapchat as they continue to attract more users.
Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use qualitative and experimental research methodologies. - Conduct a longitudinal study to explore how time can impact impulse buying behavior. - Explore factors that influence male impulsive buying on social media. - Study different age groups (seniors for example). - Explore the factors that lead to impulsive buying behaviors among different generations.

Source: Authors

5.1. Theory:

The majority of the studies selected adopted the Stimulus-Organism-Response framework to analyze impulsive buying in social media. Whereas researchers in social media have been interested in online impulse buying, the field's theoretical background needs to be broadened to give a deeper understanding of the topic. We suggest incorporating psychological theories such as the Elaboration Likelihood Model, Attribution Theory, Cognitive Dissonance Theory, or the Halo Effect to understand how personality traits may influence impulsive buying in SNSs. Moreover, most of the existing articles have analyzed the antecedents of impulse buying to understand the factors that impact this behavior. Less focus has been given to studying the attributes of successful social media content and strategies that drive impulsive buying. By delving into this topic, businesses and marketers may refine their strategies to effectively engage consumers and trigger impulsive purchasing.

5.2. Context:

Most of the studies have been carried out in a single country. Researchers should consider conducting cross-cultural studies to show how cultural differences can influence impulse buying. Moreover, few studies have been realized in the context of emerging countries. An opportunity researchers should engage with in the future is the expansion of the geographic

coverage to explore impulsive buying in social media in emerging countries such as Arab and African countries. Scholars may also study situational characteristics (e.g., degree of involvement) when analyzing impulse buying.

Another area of focus for future research would be to investigate different product categories. Scholars have explored fashion, food, healthcare, and hospitality industries (Chauhan et al., 2021; Djafarova & Bowes, 2021; Elisa et al., 2022b; Szymkowiak et al., 2021c; Tariq et al., 2019; Zafar, Qiu, et al., 2021), other sectors can be studied to gain a more in-depth comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior.

One promising avenue would be the technology sector, where new products and services are constantly brought to the market. Understanding how consumers impulsively buy these products can offer valuable insights for Tech companies seeking to develop successful strategies in this fast-paced market. Additionally, the study of consumer behavior in the entertainment and leisure sectors is another future research avenue.

More research is, therefore, necessary to explore other social media platforms. Scholars have mainly studied Facebook and Instagram; however, little has been established on how TikTok and Snapchat can trigger impulsive buying. Yet, comparative studies are also needed to explore how social media type can influence impulsive buying.

5.3. Methodology:

Based on our data analysis, it appears that most academics used quantitative research methods in their studies. While the future of social media studies is changing, more qualitative and experimental research is required to gain a deeper comprehension of the intricacies of social media usage, user motivations, and the potential effects of various platform features.

Moreover, no longitudinal research has been conducted. This type of research will help scholars to understand how time can impact impulse buying behavior. It would be advantageous for the field to conduct studies that investigate various sample types, including males and individuals from different age groups such as seniors for example.

6. Conclusion

This paper proposes that social media usage significantly affects buying intentions and, consequently, buying behaviors. However, claiming that the use of social media leads exclusively to impulsive buying behavior would be very simplistic and reductive, considering the impact of internal and external factors contributing to the increase of the impulse buying tendency. The present paper provides a holistic view of the state of literature about the influence of social media usage on impulse buying.

Systematic reviews about the relationship between social media usage and consumer impulse buying remain scarce, and the understanding of this relationship is still limited and scattered. The key findings of our research indicate that the research approaches of the identified articles were mostly quantitative and shed light on China as the world's largest social media market, according to "statista.com", the Statistics Portal for Market Data. In addition to that, spotlights are on Facebook more than the other social media platforms, followed by Instagram. With an impressive number of 1.8 billion users, Facebook continues to draw users owing to the creative strategies it deploys to foster their commitment and loyalty.

This article presents the relationship between social media and impulse buying from various perspectives (IB antecedents in a social media context, influencers, consumer personalities, social commerce platforms, COVID-19, UGC, and cultural and generational studies). To address the limitations and gaps, greater efforts are needed from future researchers to tackle the three dimensions of our research subject: theory, context, and methodology. We suggest more detailed future research areas in this review.

In fine, by investigating how social media influences impulsive buying behavior through a systematic literature review based on the available studies, our research aims to open new research perspectives that can help better understand this topic and examine the impact of the new trends of social media on consumer behavior regarding other cues and insights.

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