

Digital Stimuli and Online Impulsive Buying Behaviour: An Extended Stimulus-Organism-Response Framework

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ABSTRACT

The quick development of digital commerce has changed the online buying landscape and gives consumers more opportunities to make impulsive, unexpected purchases. Even though online impulsive buying behaviour has been thoroughly studied in the past, the current study emphasises specific digital cues, actual impulsive purchases, and their repercussions. To close this gap, this study propositions an expanded conceptual framework based on the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) model to explain impulsive online purchasing behaviour in contemporary digital retail settings. According to the model, digital cues that influence customers' impulse purchasing include interface design, social commerce signals, temporal scarcity, and payment facilitation methods. The impulse-buying urge is located as the central organismic mechanism underlying post-purchase dissonance. The framework also incorporates trait impulsivity, self-control, financial literacy, and cultural orientation as moderating variables of urge and online impulsive buying behaviour. By integrating various digital stimuli, an underlying psychological mechanism, a post-purchase consequence, and individual-level boundary conditions, the projected framework extends existing research on online impulsive buying and broadens the application of the S–O–R perspective to contemporary digital retailing. The study contributes to the consumer behaviour literature by providing an all-encompassing framework for understanding the antecedents and psychological aspects of online impulse buying. The suggested model also has implications for developing more ethical and successful digital retail strategies and provides a basis for further empirical study.

Keywords: Online impulsive buying behaviour, Interface design, Digital stimuli, social commerce signals, Payment facilitation mechanisms, Temporal scarcity, Impulse buying urge, SOR theory, post-purchase dissonance.

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INTRODUCTION

The retail industry has changed dramatically as digital technologies have transformed how customers search for information, weigh their options, and decide what to buy. Highly interactive shopping environments that offer customers unparalleled convenience, customised experiences, and seamless purchasing processes have been made possible by the growth of e-

commerce platforms, mobile commerce applications, social commerce, and digital payment technologies (Eroglu et al., 2001; Verhagen & van Dolen, 2011). These developments have enhanced corporate effectiveness and customer engagement, but they have also shown consumers increasingly enticing digital stimuli, increasing the prevalence of impulse buying in online retail environments.

As online impulsive purchasing behaviour (OIBB) is a spontaneous, instantaneous, and unplanned purchase driven by a sudden buying impulse rather than considerate examination, it has become a significant field of study in consumer behaviour and marketing (Rook, 1987; Beatty & Ferrell, 1998). Online shopping platforms, in contrast to traditional retail settings, constantly offer customers aesthetically pleasing interfaces, personalised recommendations, social interactions, promotional messages, and simple payment means, all of which affect their purchase decision (Parboteeah et al., 2009; Wells et al., 2011). As a result, it has become more vital for scholars and experts to know how these digital shopping environments affect customers' psychological processes and buying behaviour.

Several environmental factors, such as website quality, promotional offer, online accumulation disturbances and social influence, have been identified as affecting impulsive online buying (Eroglu et al., 2001; Floh & Madlberger, 2013; Hajli, 2015). Further, new types of digital stimuli that enhance customers' purchasing experiences have emerged through the rise of social commerce, fintech-enabled payment systems and scarcity-based marketing tactics. While advanced scarcity approaches, such as flashy sales and countdown timers, form a sense of urgency that drives rapid purchases (Suri & Monroe, 2003), social commerce signals such as online reviews, ratings, and user-generated content reduce uncertainty and enhance trust (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Likewise, payment facilitation tools, such as digital wallets, Buy Now Pay Later services, make it easier to complete buying and reduce transaction effort, which may boost impulsive spending.

Research Objectives

1. To identify the major classes of digital stimuli prompting consumers' instinctive purchasing urge in online shopping environments.
2. To progress an extended S–O–R concrete framework explanation of online impulsive buying behaviour.
3. To examine the role of impulse buying as the organismic instrument linking digital stimuli through online impulsive buying behaviour.
4. To conceptualise post-purchase dissonance as a behavioural consequence of online impulsive buying behaviour.
5. To suggest the moderating characters of trait impulsivity, discipline, economic literacy, and cultural alignment in the relationship between impulse buying urge and online impulsive buying behaviour.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Online Impulsive Buying Behaviour

It has long been recognised that impulse buying is an unforeseen, unanticipated, and spontaneous acquisition behaviour that results from conscious decision-making but is driven by a sudden urge to buy (Rook, 1987). Beatty and Ferrell (1998) further argued that, unlike planned purchasing behaviour, impulsive buying arises from a tempting drive that precedes the buying. Because digital shopping environments offer customers frequent access to products, personalised recommendations, and seamless purchasing developments, impulsive buying has become more common as e-commerce has grown rapidly (Verhagen & van Dolen, 2011). Online shopping platforms increase exposure to appealing marketing cues and lessen time and geographic constraints compared to traditional retail environments, thereby encouraging impulsive buying pronouncements (Parboteeah et al., 2009).

Impulsive online buying behaviour (OIBB) has attracted extensive study; however, most researches focus on isolated antecedents, such as website quality, promotional activity and consumer personality factors. Therefore, the research lacks a comprehensive understanding of how several digital inputs simultaneously affect purchasers' psychological states and buying behaviour. Additionally, post-purchase outcomes have received very little consideration, underscoring the necessity for a more detailed theoretical framework.

2.2 Digital Stimuli

Several external stimuli in digital buying environments affect customers' cognitive as well as emotional reactions. The current study conceptualises interface design, temporary scarcity, social commerce signals and payment facilitation mechanisms as the primary digital stimuli that affect impulse purchase behaviour, drawing on the (S-O-R) Stimulus–Organism–Response theory (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974).

2.2.1 Interface Design

One of the most important factors influencing customers' online buying experiences is interface design. Customers' impressions of website usability and shopping delight are improved by attractive layouts, simple navigation, visual aesthetics, product presentation, and information quality. This increases purchase intentions and impulse buying tendencies (Eroglu et al., 2001; Wells et al., 2011). According to Parboteeah et al. (2009), website features that create favourable online shopping environments have a considerable impact on customers' inclination to make impulsive purchases. Similarly, Floh and Madlberger (2013) discovered that customers' emotional reactions and impulsive purchase behaviour are positively impacted by website atmospherics. Despite these results, most research has focused on conventional website features, paying little attention to the interface elements used in e-commerce platforms.

2.2.2 Social Commerce Signals

By incorporating social connections into digital buying platforms, social commerce has completely changed how consumers behave online. Online reviews, ratings, suggestions,

user-generated content, and influencer endorsements are examples of social commerce signals that provide customers with normative and informational cues, boosting purchase confidence and lessening uncertainty (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Positive peer recommendations and electronic word-of-mouth boost perceived product legitimacy, boost trust, and promote impulsive buying (Hajli, 2015). Studies frequently examine these factors separately rather than accounting for their combined effects with other digital buying cues, despite prior research confirming the significance of social influence.

2.2.3 Temporal Scarcity

Scarcity-based marketing techniques are often used to heighten consumers' sense of urgency and anxiety about missing out on important opportunities. Countdown timers, flash sales, limited-time discounts, and low-stock alerts are examples of promotional strategies that drive customers to make purchases more quickly while requiring less thought (Cialdini, 2009; Suri & Monroe, 2003). According to earlier research, scarcity appeals increase the perceived value of a product and encourage impulse buying by putting consumers under psychological pressure to act immediately. Nevertheless, the majority of current research focuses solely on scarcity, with little incorporation into broader theoretical outlines that explain impulsive online purchasing behaviour.

2.2.4 Payment Facilitation Mechanisms

Payment organisations are becoming essential elements of internet retailing due to the developments in financial technology. Digital wallets enable rapid purchase decisions, Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL) services, saved payment information, and streamlined checkout procedures that minimise perceived payment barriers and the time required to complete transactions. Compensation convenience has been shown to have a favourable impact on online purchasing behaviour by lowering transactional friction (Dahlberg et al., 2015). However, payment facilitation methods continue to fluctuate in online impulse-buying research, despite the global adoption of digital payment technology. Therefore, their incorporation into the S-O-R paradigm significantly influences current nonfiction.

2.3 Impulse Buying Urge

The robust predictor of impulsive obtaining behaviour is generally recognised as the impulse-buying urge, defined as the instantaneous psychological craving to acquire an item without prior planning (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998). According to Mehrabian and Russell (1974), the S–O–R framework views purchase urge as an organismic energy through which conserved cues influence behavioural responses. Previous research shows that customers' impulse consumption is significantly increased by favourable website layouts, the pleasure of supermarket runs, advertising stimuli, and social influence (Parboteeah et al., 2009; Verhagen & van Dolen, 2011).

Impulse buying urge is often viewed as a mediating concept rather than the primary psychological process that integrates various digital cues, despite its acknowledged significance. This indicates a significant theoretical opening that the existing paradigm fails

to fill.

2.4 Post-purchase Dissonance

Uniform though impulsive procurements frequently deliver instantaneous satisfaction, but they may later cause psychological distress once buyers reconsider their choices. Festinger's (1957) Cognitive Dissonance Theory explains that inconsistencies between behaviour and politics create psychological discomfort, motivating people to decrease them. Post-buy dissonance in consumer behaviour might take the form of regret, uncertainty, discontent, or worry after a purchase (Sweeney et al., 2000). Although conventional consumer behaviour research has given considerable attention to post-purchase dissonance, there remains little integration of this concept into online frameworks for impulsive purchasing. Therefore, analysing post-buy dissonance extends the scope of current models beyond the purchase event and provides a more thorough comprehension of customers' post-purchase experiences.

2.5 Moderating Variables

Both personal traits and outside factors influence customers' reactions to online purchasing environments. According to Verplanken and Herabadi (2001), trait impulsivity is a person's innate propensity to act without much thought. In contrast, self-control is the capacity to restrain impulses and forgo immediate rewards (Baumeister, 2002). While cultural orientation influences decision-making through shared social norms and values (Hofstede, 2001), financial literacy shapes customers' ability to assess financial repercussions before making purchases (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014). Although these factors have been examined separately in several consumer behaviour studies, little is known about how they interact to moderate the link between the impulse-buying urge and online impulsive buying behaviour. By taking these factors into account, the recommended conceptual framework can better enlighten the consumer heterogeneity.

Construct	Representative Studies	Key Findings	Research Gap
Online Impulsive Buying Behaviour	Rook (1987); Beatty & Ferrell (1998); Verhagen & van Dolen (2011)	Defines OIBB and identifies major antecedents	Limited integration of multiple digital stimuli
Interface Design	Eroglu et al. (2001); Parboteeah et al. (2009); Wells et al. (2011)	Website design influences buying urge	Contemporary interface features remain underexplored

Social Commerce Signals	Cheung & Thadani (2012); Hajli (2015)	Social proof encourages purchase decisions	Rarely integrated with other digital stimuli
Temporal Scarcity	Suri & Monroe (2003); Cialdini (2009)	Scarcity increases urgency and impulse buying	Mostly examined in isolation
Payment Facilitation	Dahlberg et al. (2015)	Convenient payment systems reduce purchase friction	Limited application in OIBB frameworks
Impulse Buying Urge	Beatty & Ferrell (1998); Parboteeah et al. (2009)	Psychological precursor to impulsive buying	Limited treatment as the central organismic construct
Post-purchase Dissonance	Festinger (1957). Sweeney et al. (2000)	Impulsive purchases may lead to regret and doubt	Underexplored in online retail settings
Moderating Variables	Verplanken & Herabadi (2001); Baumeister (2002); Lusardi & Mitchell (2014)	Individual differences shape buying behaviour.	Rarely examined together within a unified S-O-R framework.

Theoretical Foundation

3.1 Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) Theory

The Stimulus–Organism–Response theory, first developed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974), serves as the foundation for the recommended conceptual framework. The S–O–R framework, rooted in a traditional mindset, describes how outside stimuli encourage people's internal psychological settings, which in turn influence their behavioural responses. The S-O-R model recognises that outside signals can elicit cognitive and emotional reactions that lead to impulsive purchasing behaviour, in contrast to old-style decision-making models that believe consumers behave rationally. The S-O-R theory has become one of the most dominant theoretical frameworks in retailing, consumer behaviour, as well as in e-commerce research due to its ability to describe customer reactions to conservation stimuli (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982; Eroglu et al., 2001).

Researchers have increasingly used the S-O-R framework to understand customer behaviour

in light of online buying, given the speedy growth of digital commerce. By showing that website interferences shape customers' internal intentions and behavioural intentions, Eroglu et al. (2001) extended the idea to digital retail environments. Further research has shown that customers' leaning towards brand-impulsive purchases and their purchase behaviour are strongly influenced by website features, operational store beliefs, and previous shopping experiences (Parboteeah et al., 2009; Verhagen & van Dolen, 2011; Floh & Madlberger, 2013). These outcomes confirm that the S-O-R theory recommends a suitable theoretical framework for explaining impulsive online purchasing behaviour.

In the interior, S-O-R outline, digital stimuli represent the conservation stimuli (S) in this study. In precise, important aspects of modern digital shopping experiences that disrupt customers during the online buying process consist of edge design, social commerce signals, temporal scarcity, and payment facilitation mechanisms. Overall, aesthetically pleasing layouts, efficient product display, and a simple, intuitive interface design improve the clothes shopping experience for regulars. Online analyses, assessments, user-generated content, and influencer endorsements are examples of social commerce cyphers that provide social evidence, reducing uncertainty and driving purchases. Similar to how payment facilitation tools like digital wallets, Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL) services, and stored compensation information minimise transaction effort and streamline purchase completion, sequential scarcity tactics like flash sales, countdown timers, and limited-stock notifications generate a sense of urgency that encourages instant purchases. These numerical stimuli are especially pertinent within the S-O-R paradigm as they cooperatively influence customers' observations and purchasing involvement.

In the optional framework, the organism (O) is situated and conceptualised as an impulse-buying urge, representing a person's sudden, strong desire to buy something, lacking prior preparation. According to Beatty and Ferrell (1998), impulse buying is a psychological condition that precedes impulsive purchase behaviour and serves as the direct precursor to actual purchase decisions. Impulse buying urges capture the internal cognitive and emotional processes triggered by external signals, whereas purchase behaviour is an observable activity. Because the S-O-R paradigm describes how external digital inputs are converted into behavioural results, it is logically coherent to situate the impulsive purchase drive as the organism.

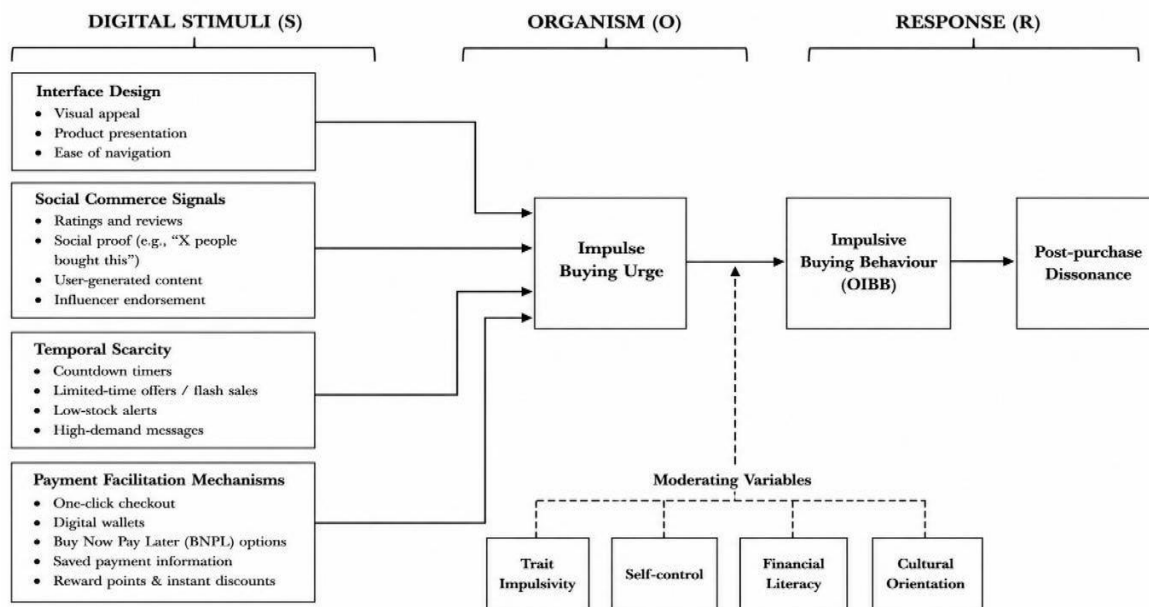
The reaction (R) consists of online impulsive buying behaviour followed by post-purchase dissonance. According to Rook (1987) and Verhagen & van Dolen (2011), online impulsive buying behaviour refers to impulsive, unexpected purchases made in digital shopping environments in response to sudden buying urges. However, buyers' behavioural responses frequently extend beyond the purchase itself. Festinger's (1957) Cognitive Dissonance Theory states that when customers make choices that conflict with their expectations or beliefs, they may experience psychological discomfort. Impulsive purchases in online commerce often require little thought or information processing, which raises the possibility

of the post-purchase dissonance, characterised by uncertainty, regret, or discontent (Sweeney et al., 2000). The traditional S-O-R paradigm is consequently extended to include post-purchase dissonance, which recognizes that customer behaviour persists after the transaction and subsequent assessments of the purchase decision.

The suggested approach also recognises that individual traits lead customers to respond differently in comparable buying settings. Therefore, it is proposed that the association between impulse buying urge and online impulsive purchase behaviour is moderated by financial literacy, trait impulsivity, self-control, and cultural orientation. Although consumers with higher financial literacy or stronger cultural norms favouring self-regulation may show better restraint, those with high impulsivity and low self-control are characteristically more likely to translate buying urges into actual purchases (Verplanken & Herabadi, 2001; Baumeister, 2002). The recommended approach, which acknowledges that the transition from the buying impulse to purchase behaviour depends on both specific differences and environmental cues, is supported by integrating these moderating variables into the studies.

All things considered, the proposed framework expands upon the orthodox S-O-R theory by recognising the moderating effect of individual traits, categorizing post-purchase dissonance as a consequential outcome, and integrating a range of contemporary digital inputs. This integrated viewpoint provides a more inclusive explanation of online impulsive purchasing behaviour. Moreover, it provides a robust theoretical basis for developing the model and investigating the propositions presented in this study.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Online Impulsive Buying Behaviour in the Digital Economy



Source: *Developed by the authors based on Mehrabian and Russell; Parboteeah, Valacich, and Wells; Wells, Parboteeah, and Valacich; Floh and Madlberger; Xiang et al.; Verplanken and Herabadi; and Festinger.*

Theoretical Propositions

P1 Interface design cues positively influence the impulse buying urge during shopping.

P2 Social commerce signals positively influence impulse buying urge during online shopping.

P3 Temporal & Scarcity pressure positively influence impulse buying urge during online shopping.

P4 Payment facilitation mechanisms positively influence the impulse buying urge during online shopping.

P5 Impulse buying urge positively influences customers' online impulsive buying behaviour.

P6 Online impulsive buying behaviour positively influences customers' post-purchase dissonance.

P7 Impulse buying urge mediates the relationship between interface design and online impulsive buying behaviour.

P8 Impulse buying urge mediates the relationship between social commerce signal and online impulsive buying behaviour.

P9 Impulse buying urge mediates the relationship between temporal scarcity and online impulsive buying behaviour.

P10 Impulse buying urge mediates the relationship between payment facilitation mechanisms and online impulsive buying behaviour.

P11 Trait impulsivity positively moderates the relationship between impulse buying urge and online impulsive buying behaviour.

P12 Self-control negatively moderates the relationship between impulse buying urge and online impulsive buying behaviour.

P13 Financial literacy negatively moderates the relationship between impulse buying urge and online impulsive buying behaviour.

P14 Cultural orientation moderates the relationship between impulse buying urge and online impulsive buying behaviour.

6. Discussion

To understand online impulsive purchase behaviour in modern digital retail contexts, the current study expands the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) paradigm. The outline explains how these external cues stimulate customers' impulse-buying urge, which, in turn, leads to online impulsive buying behaviour and post-purchase dissonance, by integrating interface design, social commerce signals, temporal insufficiency, and compensation facilitation mechanisms as digital stimuli. Additionally, the inclusion of self-control, educational orientation, financial literacy, and trait impulsivity as moderating variables recognises that customers vary in their tendency to make thoughtless purchases. By

integrating conservational, psychological, behavioural, and individual-level factors, the

suggested framework offers a more comprehensive explanation of online consumer behaviour.

6.1 Theoretical Contributions

This study makes a significant contribution to the literature in several ways. The Inducement–Organism–Response theory (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) is first prolonged by adding new digital retail stimuli that represent the realities of contemporary e-commerce. The non-compulsory approach incorporates several digital inputs into a single theoretical model, unlike earlier approaches that mostly focused on site atmospherics or isolated online signals (Eroglu et al., 2001; Parboteeah et al., 2009). Second, the schoolwork strengthens the S-O-R basis's explanatory power by positioning the urge to act on impulses as the foremost organismal mechanism linking online impulsive-gaining behaviour to numerical spending environments. Third, the paradigm joins findings from Reasoning Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1957) and expands current research beyond the purchase event by conceptualising post-buy dissonance as a behavioural consequence. Last of all, a more nuanced, sympathetic account of why clients respond differently to similar digital buying atmospheres may be found by including individual characteristics as moderators.

6.2 Managerial Contributions

Online wholesalers, digital dealers, stand designers, and payment facility workers may all benefit from the suggested framework's useful understandings. Organisations may build compelling yet responsible buying experiences by understanding the bearing of common commerce signals, interface design, scarcity techniques, and expense facilitation procedures. To reduce the post-purchase regret and grow long-term customer trust, the program also advises businesses to strike a balance between the conversion-oriented practices and ethical advertising practices. Moreover, identifying differences in customers' impulsivity, financial literacy, self-control, and cultural orientation can help develop more individualised and long-lasting digital marketing strategies.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research

This work is conceptual and needs empirical validation in spite of its contributions. Upcoming research should employ forward-thinking analytical methods, such as structural equation modelling, to test the proposed framework across different e-commerce periods, product categories, and cultural contexts. To better comprehend impulsive purchasing behaviour in growing alphanumeric retail settings, researchers may expand the framework to embrace emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, live-stream shopping, augmented reality, and conversational commerce.

6.4 Conclusion

By integrating modern digital stimuli, impulse-acquisition urge, post-purchase disagreement, and individual-difference variables, this study proposes an integrated S–O–R–

based conceptual framework that enhances understanding of online impulsive buying behaviour. The context contributes to the expanding body of knowledge on digital customer

behaviour by offering a thorough theoretical perspective. It also lays the foundation for further experimental studies and the development of more effective, customer-focused, and justifiable digital retail strategies.

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