

## A Systematic Review of Impulse Buying Behavior in Generation Z: Drivers, Channels, and Psychological Triggers

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### ABSTRACT

*To synthesize evidence on internal and external drivers, digital channels, and psychological triggers that shape online impulse buying among Generation Z across social media and e-commerce ecosystems, integrating the Stimulus–Organism–Response perspective with self-control. A systematic literature review of Scopus-indexed records was conducted using a predefined Boolean query aligned with PRISMA guidelines. Fifty five studies published between 2018 and 2025 were included after multi stage screening and full-text appraisal. Data were coded through descriptive and thematic analysis to capture internal external drivers, channels, and psychological mechanisms. The review highlights three regularities. First, internal drivers include hedonic motives, affective states, novelty seeking, and lapses in self-control, with boredom, stress, and anxiety operating as situational triggers. Second, external drivers encompass discounts, scarcity, interactivity, gamification, service quality, and payment design, with buy-now-pay-later and e-wallets reducing the pain of paying while cash-on-delivery enhances control. Third, digital channels most conducive to impulsivity are TikTok and TikTok Shop, Shopee, live commerce formats, sponsored ads, and personalized mobile apps. Psychological triggers cluster into social comparison and FOMO, affective instability, and reward seeking, showing that Gen Z's impulsivity is largely affect-driven, socially amplified, and reward-oriented. By consolidating 55 studies, this review provides the most comprehensive framework to date linking drivers, channels, and triggers for Gen Z impulse buying, addressing prior fragmentation. The findings call for responsible promotions, transparent scarcity signals, ethical personalization, and stronger financial literacy initiatives to balance commercial innovation with consumer protection.*

**Keywords:** E-commerce; Generation Z; Impulse buying; Live commerce; Social media

### ABSTRAK

Untuk mensintesis bukti tentang pendorong internal dan eksternal, saluran digital, dan pemicu psikologis yang membentuk pembelian impulsif *online* di antara Generasi Z di seluruh media sosial dan ekosistem *e-commerce*, mengintegrasikan perspektif Stimulus–Organisme–Respons dengan pengendalian diri. Tinjauan literatur sistematis dari catatan terindeks Scopus dilakukan menggunakan *query* Boolean yang telah ditentukan sebelumnya yang selaras dengan pedoman PRISMA. Lima puluh lima studi yang diterbitkan antara 2018 dan 2025 dimasukkan setelah skrining multi tahap dan penilaian teks lengkap. Data dikodekan melalui analisis deskriptif dan tematik untuk menangkap pendorong eksternal internal, saluran, dan mekanisme psikologis. Tinjauan ini menyoroti tiga keteraturan. Pertama, pendorong internal termasuk motif hedonik, keadaan afektif, pencarian kebaruan,

dan penyimpangan dalam pengendalian diri, dengan kebosanan, stres, dan kecemasan beroperasi sebagai pemicu situasional. Kedua, pendorong eksternal mencakup diskon, kelangkaan, interaktivitas, gamifikasi, kualitas layanan, dan desain pembayaran, dengan beli sekarang bayar nanti dan dompet elektronik mengurangi rasa sakit membayar sementara *cash-on-delivery* meningkatkan kontrol. Ketiga, saluran digital yang paling kondusif untuk impulsif adalah TikTok dan TikTok Shop, Shopee, format *live commerce*, iklan bersponsor, dan aplikasi seluler yang dipersonalisasi. Pemicu psikologis berkelompok menjadi perbandingan sosial dan FOMO, ketidakstabilan afektif, dan pencarian hadiah, menunjukkan bahwa impulsivitas Gen Z sebagian besar didorong oleh pengaruh, diperkuat secara sosial, dan berorientasi pada penghargaan. Dengan mengkonsolidasikan 55 penelitian, tinjauan ini memberikan kerangka kerja paling komprehensif hingga saat ini yang menghubungkan pendorong, saluran, dan pemicu untuk pembelian impulsif Gen Z, mengatasi fragmentasi sebelumnya. Temuan ini menyerukan promosi yang bertanggung jawab, sinyal kelangkaan yang transparan, personalisasi etis, dan inisiatif literasi keuangan yang lebih kuat untuk menyeimbangkan inovasi komersial dengan perlindungan konsumen.

**Kata kunci:** *E-commerce*; Generasi Z; Pembelian impulsif; Perdagangan langsung; Media sosial

## INTRODUCTION

Impulse buying has re-emerged as a prominent phenomenon in today's fast-paced digital commerce era. Short-form videos, live shopping, and one-click checkout features compress the gap between exposure and purchase, accelerating decision-making. Impulse buying is generally defined as a sudden, strong, and difficult-to-control urge to purchase without prior planning (Rook, 1987). This definition remains relevant today; however, the triggers have become more diverse, ranging from visual stimuli and social pressures to time-related factors that accelerate the transition from "want" to "buy."

Large-scale studies indicate that impulse buying emerges from a combination of internal and external factors. Meta-analyses have found that impulsive traits, hedonic and utilitarian motives, resource availability (time and money), self-control, and mood interact with marketing stimuli to trigger spontaneous purchases (Iyer et al., 2020). In the online context, visual appeal, platform usability, promotions, product scarcity, and positive emotions have been shown to influence impulse buying, with varying degrees of impact depending on the level of economic development (Zhao et al., 2022). This reinforces the view that impulsivity is not merely a personality trait but the result of psychological interactions with platform design and marketing strategies.

Generation Z represents a key demographic for understanding this phenomenon. As digital natives, they consume content and shop within social commerce ecosystems where the boundaries between entertainment and transactions are increasingly blurred. Data from the Forbes Agency Council (2021) show that in Asia, particularly Southeast Asia, social media penetration reaches as high as 91.7%, making platforms such as TikTok and Instagram not only sources of entertainment but also highly effective shopping channels. This demonstrates that

Gen Z is deeply embedded in an ecosystem where product discovery and purchase can occur seamlessly within a single digital flow. On Instagram, research has found that influencer endorsements, visual features, and affordances stimulate pleasure and arousal, driving impulse buying among Gen Z (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021), while ad credibility, perceived ad value, ad intrusiveness, and flow experience are directly associated with impulsive buying behavior (Obadă & Țugulea, 2024). Social media platforms are thus no longer merely channels of communication, but experiential spaces that shape emotional and cognitive reactions leading to spontaneous decision-making. These findings align with classical literature emphasizing the role of social norms/context (Rook & Fisher, 1995) and hedonic drives (Beatty & Elizabeth Ferrell, 1998).

The most rapid developments are occurring in live-streaming commerce. Studies in Asia confirm that host interaction, time pressure, and scarcity cues can induce flow and arousal states that accelerate the purchasing process (Qu et al., 2023). Similarly, research in Southeast Asia on Shopee Video/Live indicates that time and quantity pressure, economic benefits, social influence, and audiovisual elements can evoke pleasure and arousal, ultimately driving impulse purchases among Gen Z (Ngo et al., 2024).

From a psychological perspective, fear of missing out (FoMO) is a key concept for understanding the sense of urgency and cognitive shortcuts in social media and digital commerce channels. Psychometric research on the FoMO scale shows that FoMO is associated with the need to stay connected and respond quickly to social signals (Przybylski et al., 2013). At the same time, studies on self-control have found that when self-regulatory resources are depleted, the urge to buy and spontaneous spending increase (Vohs & Faber, 2007). These findings complement the evidence that hedonic emotions particularly pleasure and arousal consistently predict online impulse buying behavior (Zhao et al., 2022).

The urgency of this topic is clear, both academically and practically. From a managerial perspective, the growing share of sales through video/live formats necessitates mapping what triggers work where for example, whether flash sales and limited-quantity offers are more effective in short-video feeds or live rooms, and how social proof and parasocial interaction accelerate decision making (Qu et al., 2023). Academically, comprehensive reviews on impulse buying exist (Iyer et al., 2020; Zhao et al., 2022), as well as studies focusing on specific channels such as Instagram, TikTok, or live commerce. However, a systematic synthesis that explicitly examines Gen Z across major platforms (Instagram, TikTok/TikTok Shop, Shopee/Live) while linking internal external factors to psychological triggers remains scarce and tends to be fragmented by context or metric (purchase intention vs. actual behavior). This gap is what the present article seeks to address.

Based on these issues, the research questions formulated for this article are as follows:

1. What are the main internal and external factors that trigger impulse buying among Generation Z?

2. Which digital channels or platforms are most frequently used by Generation Z for impulse buying?
3. What psychological triggers are identified as influencing impulse buying behavior in this demographic?

## METHOD

The research employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to identify, select, and synthesize scientific evidence in a transparent and replicable manner on the topic of Generation Z impulse buying in the digital context. SLR was selected as it enables a systematic mapping of findings across studies while minimizing selection bias through a clearly defined search and screening protocol (Tranfield et al., 2003). The reporting of the selection process followed the PRISMA 2020 guidelines to ensure that the flow of study identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion can be audited (Page et al., 2021).

**3.1 Data Sources and Search Strategy**

The literature search was conducted in Scopus, given its broad coverage and ability to filter by subject area, document type, publication stage, language, and access status. The search was executed in the TITLE-ABS-KEY fields using the following Boolean query: TITLE-ABS-KEY ( "impulse buying" OR "impulsive buying" OR "impulsive purchase" OR "unplanned buying" OR "unplanned purchase" OR "compulsive buying" OR "spontaneous buying" ) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ( "online shopping" OR "digital marketing" OR "e-commerce" OR "social media" OR "internet shopping" OR "mobile shopping" OR "online consumer behavior" ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( SRCTYPE , "j" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( OA , "all" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( PUBSTAGE , "final" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "ar" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "re" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( SUBJAREA , "BUSI" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( SUBJAREA , "PSYC" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( SUBJAREA , "SOCI" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( LANGUAGE , "English" ) ) The initial search identified 1.012 records. After preliminary screening based on subject area, document type, publication stage, source, language, keywords, and access status, 55 articles were included for full-text assessment in accordance with the PRISMA flow diagram of this study.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1. Selected Articles**

References	Purpose	Type of Paper/Method	Findings	Research Context (Drivers/Channels/Psychological Triggers)
<b>Cuong (2023)</b>	Tests the SOR model in which visual appeal	Quantitative online survey of e-commerce	Visual appeal and price attributes raise	Drivers – external: visual appeal and price attributes. Internal: none. Channels: e-commerce.

	and price attributes shape perceived enjoyment and perceived usefulness that, in turn, foster online impulsive buying behavior.	consumers (≈313), with reliability and validity checks, and PLS-SEM to estimate stimulus-organism-response paths.	perceived enjoyment and perceived usefulness, and these organism states together with the stimuli are positively associated with online impulsive buying behavior.	Psychological Triggers: perceived enjoyment and perceived usefulness.
<b>Sundström et al. (2019)</b>	Explores how boredom precipitates online fashion impulse buying.	Qualitative case study in Swedish online fashion retail that uses narrative analysis of shopping experiences and boredom cues.	Boredom stimulates impulsive clicks. Price, easy access, and free delivery act as situational facilitators during browsing.	Drivers – external: price cues, free delivery, and easy access. Internal: boredom. Channels: online fashion retail. Psychological Triggers: boredom-induced browsing and spontaneous choice.
<b>De Vries et al. (2018)</b>	Assesses when friendship reminders hinder or enhance self-	Series of controlled experiments that combine	Friendship reminders enhance self-control for	Drivers – external: friendship reminders as social cues. Internal: compulsive buying tendency. Channels: general online contexts. Psychological

	control in consumption temptations, especially among compulsive buyers.	behavioral tasks and fMRI, with moderated-mediation analysis grounded in goal-conflict theory.	compulsive buyers with high goal conflict, but may reduce self-control for non-compulsive buyers by activating relational goals.	Triggers: self-control dynamics through goal conflict.
<b>Bashar et al. (2023)</b>	Maps cultural factors related to impulse buying across online and offline contexts.	Systematic literature review of 112 studies with theoretical clustering and identification of cross-cultural gaps.	Cultural dimensions shape impulsive behavior. Prior work is Western-centric and focuses on individualism-collectivism, which indicates the need to broaden digital contexts.	Drivers – external: cultural dimensions and norms. Internal: culturally shaped motives. Channels: online and offline. Psychological Triggers: culture-contingent affective and normative cues.
<b>Cachón-Rodríguez et al. (2025)</b>	Examines the effect of anxiety on compulsive	Online survey of supermarket shoppers (~726)	Anxiety increases both compulsive and impulsive	Drivers – internal: anxiety. External: none. Channels: retail or general e-commerce. Psychological Triggers:

	and impulsive buying and its links to emotion regulation.	with PLS-SEM for the paths from anxiety to behaviors and to regulation.	buying, and both behaviors correlate with higher emotion regulation, which suggests purchase as affect regulation.	coping and emotion regulation.
<b>Dong &amp; Tarofder (2024)</b>	Explains how livestreaming platform qualities build pleasure and arousal that drive impulsive buying.	Structural equation model with ≈318 respondents. Measures include promotional intensity, streamer features, and live-room activity.	Pleasure and arousal increase impulsive buying. Streamer features, promotional intensity, and live interactions amplify affective responses that channel into purchases.	Drivers – external: promotions, streamer features, and live interaction. Internal: audience involvement. Channels: live commerce. Psychological Triggers: pleasure and arousal.
<b>Rani &amp; S (2023)</b>	Identifies online impulse triggers and develops a prediction model.	Area-sampled survey in Bengaluru with ≈171 respondents and regression	Discounts and offers are the strongest predictors, followed by mood uplift	Drivers – external: discounts and offers. Internal: none. Channels: e-commerce. Psychological Triggers: mood upliftment and instant gratification.

		using demographic and psychographic predictors and triggers.	and instant gratification. The prediction model is statistically robust with adjusted R <sup>2</sup> around 0.67.	
<b>Yolcu &amp; Meyer (2023)</b>	Describes online impulsive patterns and drivers among young consumers.	Survey with ≈132 respondents aged 18–37 that assesses impulsivity, social influence, and marketing stimuli.	Online impulsivity is shaped by trait impulsivity, social influence, and marketing or retail stimuli, which yields demographic and category-specific insights.	Drivers – external: social influence and marketing stimuli. Internal: trait impulsivity. Channels: e-commerce. Psychological Triggers: impulsivity.
<b>Bakar et al. (2025)</b>	Tests the effects of payment methods and product type on impulsive buying and pain of payment.	Survey-experiment with a 3×2 design and ≈162 respondents that contrasts payment later, e-wallet,	Payment method is not universally significant. Payment later in fashion yields the highest impulsivity and regret. Cash-on-	Drivers – external: payment design and checkout modality. Internal: self-regulation capacity. Channels: e-commerce. Psychological Triggers: pain of payment, self-control, and regret.

		and cash-on-delivery increases delivery across fashion and groceries.	delivery self-control and dampens negative affect. E-wallet reduces total spending.	
<b>Evangeline et al. (2021)</b>	Tests the role of hedonic shopping motivation in online impulsive buying with age as a moderator.	Survey with ≈421 respondents and moderation assessed via Hayes PROCESS.	Hedonic shopping motivation strongly predicts online impulsive buying, and the effect varies by age, which informs pleasure-based segmentation.	Drivers – internal: hedonic shopping motivation. External: none. Channels: e-commerce. Psychological Triggers: hedonic affect.
<b>Suyanto &amp; Femi (2023)</b>	Assesses how impulse buying and service quality affect satisfaction and loyalty in beauty e-commerce.	Quantitative online survey with ≈300 respondents and SEM using SmartPLS to estimate direct effects.	Service quality raises satisfaction and satisfaction raises loyalty, whereas impulse buying reduces satisfaction, which	Drivers – external: service quality attributes. Internal: none. Channels: beauty e-commerce. Psychological Triggers: post-purchase dissatisfaction risk.

			indicates post-purchase risk.	
<b>Kathiravan et al. (2019)</b>	Identifies digital marketing components that trigger online impulsive buying in India.	Cross-sectional online questionnaire with ≈90 respondents and descriptive-inferential mapping of triggers.	Promotional stimuli such as price cues, free delivery, and campaign bursts, along with easy web and mobile access, prompt spontaneous purchasing.	Drivers – external: digital marketing stimuli and easy access. Internal: none. Channels: web and mobile e-commerce. Psychological Triggers: cue-driven spontaneity.

Table 2 synthesizes 55 Scopus-indexed studies on impulse buying among Generation Z in digital ecosystems. The publications span 2018 to 2025, with the highest concentration in 2023 and 2024. More than two-thirds of the studies were published during these two years, with additional contributions extending into 2025. This pattern reflects a surge of scholarly attention aligned with the acceleration of social commerce, the rise of short-form video platforms, and the normalization of live commerce in the post-pandemic digital landscape. During this period, the integration of entertainment content and seamless checkout flows further shortened the path from product exposure to purchase for digital natives.

The evidence base is predominantly quantitative, particularly surveys analyzed using PLS-SEM, CB-SEM, regression, and structural modeling to test relationships among internal and external drivers, channel characteristics, and behavioral outcomes. A smaller subset of studies employed experimental designs manipulating scarcity, urgency, or message framing, while others used qualitative methods to uncover contextual insights. This methodological mix provides a robust foundation for cross-platform thematic synthesis.

Most studies distinguish between hedonic and utilitarian values, emphasizing that impulsive purchases among Gen Z are more strongly linked to hedonic drivers such as enjoyment, novelty, and reward-seeking than to utilitarian motives. Self-control and dual-systems perspectives help explain how impulsivity dominates when reflective regulation is weakened, while social influence frameworks highlight the

role of peer norms, social comparison, and presence in driving unplanned purchases. Across S-O-R designs, positive affect and arousal consistently function as organismic states that mediate the influence of platform stimuli on impulsive behavior. Several contributions also adopt TPB or UTAUT frameworks, integrating attitudes, norms, and technology expectations in explaining spontaneous choices.

The strongest evidence in the expanded sample comes from platforms such as TikTok and TikTok Shop, Shopee with video and live features, live commerce formats across multiple countries, and sponsored social media ads. The geographical focus remains concentrated in Asia, particularly Southeast and East Asia, but the inclusion of newer studies also broadens the scope with contributions from Europe, Africa, and North America, pointing to an emerging opportunity for cross-cultural comparison. The remainder of this section addresses the three research questions in sequence, followed by an integrative cross-analysis.

### **Internal and External Drivers of Impulse Buying**

Across the 55 studies, internal drivers most consistently identified include affective states, hedonic motives, self-control lapses, and reward-seeking tendencies. Positive emotions, excitement, and arousal mediate the influence of marketing stimuli and are repeatedly associated with unplanned purchases in e-commerce, social media, and live commerce contexts (Cuong, 2023; Dong & Tarofder, 2024; Kang & Namkung, 2024; Mutambik et al., 2024; Xu et al., 2023). Hedonic shopping values—pleasure, adventure, and gratification—emerge as central predictors of impulsivity, with evidence showing stronger effects than utilitarian values, particularly in fashion, beauty, and lifestyle categories favored by young consumers (Evangelina et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2024; Ramadania et al., 2022; Mashilo et al., 2025).

Conversely, affective deficits such as boredom, anxiety, and stress also act as situational triggers that push Gen Z consumers toward impulsive purchases as coping strategies (Sundström et al., 2019; Cachón-Rodríguez et al., 2025). Weak self-regulation exacerbates problematic online shopping and indebtedness, with smartphone overuse amplifying these effects (Nyrhinen et al., 2023). Interestingly, social primes can either inhibit or amplify self-control: reminders of friendships or social goals sometimes curb impulsive buying when goal conflict is salient but may reduce control in other contexts (De Vries et al., 2018).

External drivers are equally prominent. Price salience, urgency, and scarcity cues remain robust predictors. Flash sales, discounts, and limited-time promotions reliably heighten arousal and positive affect, which in turn increase impulsivity in both Asian and Western samples (Martaleni et al., 2022; Yolcu & Meyer, 2023; Luong et al., 2023). Real-time interactivity, visual appeal, and platform aesthetics enhance enjoyment and usefulness, thus elevating spontaneous choices (Cuong, 2023; Rani & S, 2023). Service quality also plays a role: attributes such as ease of use, problem resolution, and trendiness cultivate hedonic value and indirectly boost impulse buying intentions (Kang & Namkung, 2024; Suyanto & Femi, 2023).

Payment methods emerge as a newer external driver. Buy-now-pay-later and

e-wallet options reduce the psychological “pain of paying” and encourage impulsivity, while cash-on-delivery heightens payment salience and dampens impulsivity, with differences across categories such as fashion versus groceries (Bakar et al., 2025). Social influence further amplifies impulsivity, with upward comparison, peer norms, and cultural expectations fostering hedonic browsing and weakening evaluative restraint (Kanthawongs & Jabutay, 2024; Luong et al., 2023).

### **Digital Channels Used by Generation Z**

The studies converge on platforms and formats that are heavily frequented by Gen Z and structurally conducive to impulsive acts:

1. TikTok and TikTok Shop.

Short-form videos, algorithm-driven feeds, and embedded brand reviews strongly predict impulsive purchases. User satisfaction and religiosity sometimes moderate these effects, but the dominant finding is that TikTok’s visual and social proof affordances create fertile ground for impulsivity (Rizqi Febriandika et al., 2023; Obadă & Țugulea, 2024).

2. Shopee and other marketplaces.

Flash sales, push notifications, and gamification (coins, vouchers, countdowns) heighten consumer emotions and accelerate purchases. Studies from Indonesia and Vietnam confirm that event-based urgency and reward mechanics align with Gen Z’s browsing patterns (Martaleni et al., 2022; Ngo et al., 2024).

3. Live commerce.

Interactivity, host charisma, and real-time promotions amplify pleasure and arousal, making live-stream shopping a central channel for impulse buying. Evidence from Southeast Asia, China, and cross-border contexts demonstrates that social presence and scarcity cues in live rooms push viewers toward rapid, emotionally charged decisions (Dong & Tarofder, 2024; Indriastuti et al., 2024; Qu et al., 2023).

4. Sponsored social media ads.

Paid advertisements on Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook influence impulsive purchases through informativeness, hedonic appeal, and perceived relevance, with limited moderating effects of gender or demographics (Pandey et al., 2024).

5. Mobile commerce and personalization.

Mobile apps with AI-driven personalization and push notifications are emerging as critical environments where Gen Z responds rapidly to tailored offers. Personalized targeting and algorithmic recommendations intensify impulsivity by increasing message salience (Bunea et al., 2024; Chandra et al., 2022).

Across these channels, a common mechanism emerges: vivid, interactive, and socially embedded content elevates arousal and reduces deliberation time, thus converting exposure into impulse purchases in the platforms most frequented by Gen

Z.

### **Psychological Triggers in Gen Z Impulse Buying**

Three trigger families dominate the evidence base.

1. Social and comparative triggers.

Upward social comparison, social interaction motives, and parasocial closeness with influencers or streamers amplify hedonic browsing and impulsivity (Kanthawongs & Jabutay, 2024; Handranata & Kalila, 2025). FOMO underlies these mechanisms, though often indirectly measured via constructs such as scarcity, peer norms, and social presence (Xu et al., 2023; Luong et al., 2023).

2. Affective instability and mood repair.

Boredom, stress, and negative emotions frequently appear as antecedents of impulsivity, with shopping functioning as mood repair or coping (Sundström et al., 2019; Cachón-Rodríguez et al., 2025). Across S-O-R studies, arousal and positive affect consistently mediate the impact of promotional intensity, interactivity, and scarcity on impulsive behavior (Cuong, 2023; Indriastuti et al., 2024; Dong & Tarofder, 2024).

3. Reward seeking and gratification.

Hedonic motivations adventure, novelty, role play, and instant gratification are strong predictors of impulsive tendencies. Impulsiveness itself often mediates the link between hedonic values and actual buying (Nguyet et al., 2024; Evangeline et al., 2021; Mashilo et al., 2025). Service experiences that combine functional and emotional value also create attitudinal loyalty while simultaneously encouraging impulse-driven responses (Mutambik et al., 2024). Low self-control and digital payment convenience further amplify reward-seeking tendencies (Bakar et al., 2025).

### **Cross-analysis and Discussion**

Three regularities cut across contexts and platforms with high confidence:

1. S-O-R mechanisms dominate.

External stimuli such as visual appeal, time-limited promotions, interactivity, and scarcity consistently elevate pleasure, arousal, and enjoyment, which then drive impulse buying across e-commerce, social media, and live commerce (Cuong, 2023; Xu et al., 2023; Dong & Tarofder, 2024; Indriastuti et al., 2024; Ngo et al., 2024).

2. Hedonic orientation is a consistent internal driver.

Across fashion, beauty, and lifestyle categories, hedonic values and novelty-seeking consistently predict impulsivity more strongly than utilitarian considerations (Evangeline et al., 2021; Nguyet et al., 2024; Ramadania et al., 2022; Mashilo et al., 2025).

3. Social mechanisms are reliable amplifiers.

Peer norms, social comparison, influencer endorsements, and parasocial closeness with content creators intensify impulsive tendencies in

digital contexts (Kanthawongs & Jabutay, 2024; Rizqi Febriandika et al., 2023; Handranata & Kalila, 2025).

Several nuances refine these patterns. Utilitarian value predicts impulsive intentions weakly, except in fresh-food contexts (Kang & Namkung, 2024). Payment methods modulate impulsivity by altering the pain of paying BNPL schemes heighten impulsivity, while cash-on-delivery enhances control (Bakar et al., 2025). Advertisement belief components such as relevance sometimes prove insignificant, suggesting that design elements matter more than demographics (Pandey et al., 2024). Cross-cultural differences are emerging, with cultural dimensions shaping impulsivity and indicating a need for broader evidence outside Asia (Bashar et al., 2023). Finally, impulses and compulsions, though related, diverge emotionally anxiety is more prominent in compulsive buying, while pleasure and arousal dominate impulsive pathways (Cachón-Rodríguez et al., 2025).

Gaps for future Gen Z-focused work.

1. Explicit FOMO measurement is largely absent. Most studies only treat scarcity and social comparison as proxies. Integrating validated FOMO scales would sharpen causal claims and clarify its mediating role (Kanthawongs & Jabutay, 2024; Xu et al., 2023; Luong et al., 2023; Sundström et al., 2019).
2. Gamification and personalization remain under-represented. While interactivity, flash sales, and sponsored ads are well-studied, reward mechanics and algorithmic targeting deserve more systematic testing in Gen Z contexts (Indriastuti et al., 2024; Pandey et al., 2024; Ngo et al., 2024; Chandra et al., 2022).
3. Cross-cultural generalizability requires stronger evidence. The corpus remains regionally concentrated in Asia. Broader comparative studies across cultural contexts are needed to test whether impulse buying drivers and triggers generalize beyond collectivist societies (Bashar et al., 2023).
4. Longitudinal and behavioral data are limited. Most studies rely on cross-sectional surveys. Future research should employ longitudinal tracking, experimental designs, or digital trace data (e.g., clickstream, checkout timestamps) to capture dynamic impulsivity and establish causal mechanisms.
5. Compulsive vs. impulsive distinctions need clarity. While some studies include compulsive buying, conceptual overlap remains. More nuanced designs should isolate emotional antecedents such as anxiety versus pleasure to differentiate pathways (Cachón-Rodríguez et al., 2025).

## CONCLUSION

This study systematically reviewed 55 Scopus-indexed articles to synthesize evidence on impulse buying behavior among Generation Z in digital ecosystems. Guided by the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework and a self-control perspective, the findings indicate that Gen Z’s impulsive purchasing decisions emerge

from the interplay of internal motives, external marketing stimuli, and platform-specific mechanisms. For RQ1, internal drivers most consistently include hedonic shopping values, positive emotions, novelty-seeking, and situational deficits such as boredom or stress. These affective states operate alongside weakened self-control to create fertile ground for spontaneous decisions. External drivers such as discounts, flash sales, scarcity cues, visual appeal, service quality, and payment systems (e-wallets and buy-now-pay-later) amplify these impulses, while cash-on-delivery can strengthen payment salience and reduce impulsivity. Social influence, upward comparison, and peer norms further consolidate the role of external cues in shaping impulsive behavior.

For RQ2, the platforms most conducive to impulsivity among Gen Z are those that combine entertainment, interactivity, and frictionless purchasing. TikTok and TikTok Shop emerge as dominant venues where algorithmic feeds, brand reviews, and embedded shopping features shorten the path from exposure to purchase. Shopee and other marketplaces employ flash sales, gamification, and push notifications to heighten urgency and reward-seeking. Live commerce formats, particularly in Southeast Asia and China, leverage real-time interactivity, parasocial closeness with streamers, and scarcity cues to elicit heightened arousal and immediate decisions. Sponsored social media advertisements and mobile commerce apps with AI-driven personalization further increase impulsivity by enhancing message salience and emotional resonance, highlighting that impulse buying is distributed across a multi-platform ecosystem.

For RQ3, three families of psychological triggers dominate. Social and comparative triggers, including peer norms, influencer credibility, and upward comparison, reflect the underlying force of fear of missing out (FOMO) even when not explicitly measured. Affective instability and mood repair explain why negative emotions such as boredom, stress, or anxiety often push Gen Z toward shopping as a coping mechanism, with pleasure and arousal mediating these effects. Reward-seeking and instant gratification reinforce hedonic motives and novelty orientation, while weakened self-control amplifies the influence of these triggers. Collectively, these mechanisms demonstrate that impulse buying among Gen Z is affect-driven, socially amplified, and reward-oriented, embedded in digital environments designed to compress cognitive processing and shorten deliberation. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first review to integrate internal-external drivers, digital channels, and psychological triggers into a unified framework for Generation Z impulse buying, addressing the fragmented nature of prior studies. Practically, the findings suggest that marketers and platform designers should balance promotional intensity with ethical responsibility by embedding constructive frictions (e.g., cart reminders, pre-checkout pauses), ensuring transparent scarcity signals, and aligning payment innovations with financial literacy for young consumers. Policymakers are encouraged to strengthen disclosure standards for sponsored content and regulate youth-targeted promotions while supporting digital financial education.

Despite its contributions, the review has limitations. The corpus is dominated

by cross-sectional survey designs, which constrain causal inference. The geographical focus remains concentrated in Asia, limiting cross-cultural generalizability. Constructs such as FOMO, gamification, and algorithmic personalization are inconsistently measured. Future research should employ validated FOMO scales, isolate gamification and personalization effects through experiments or field studies, adopt longitudinal and multi-group designs, and integrate behavioral data such as clickstream and checkout timestamps with surveys. Such efforts will provide stronger causal evidence and broaden cultural perspectives. Overall, this review demonstrates that Gen Z impulse buying is the product of co-activation between platform stimuli and psychological processes, and a more precise mapping of these mechanisms will support effective yet responsible managerial and policy interventions.

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