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# FBM

## *Insights*

FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT  
UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA, CAWANGAN KEDAH

# 2025

## VOLUME 12

UiTM *di hatiku*

eISSN 2716-599X



772716 599000  
e-ISSN 2716-599X

**FBM INSIGHTS**

**Faculty of Business and Management**

**Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kedah**

**e-ISSN 2716-599X**

The editorial board would like to express their heartfelt appreciation for the contributions made by the authors, co-authors and all who were involved in the publication of this bulletin.

Published by : Faculty of Business and Management,  
Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kedah

Published date : 9 October 2025

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# FACTORS THAT TRIGGER IMPULSE BUYING IN SOCIAL MEDIA COMMERCE

Fatihah Norazami Abdullah

Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kedah

[fatih876@uitm.edu.my](mailto:fatih876@uitm.edu.my)

## INTRODUCTION

Social media has transformed not only communication and content consumption but also online consumer shopping behavior. Social commerce combines social interaction and real-time purchasing and stands as a key driver of online shopping behavior (Zhang et al., 2022). Social media platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram offer in-app shopping services such as shoppable posts and checkouts, thus encouraging quick and easy purchases. This environment favors impulse buying—spontaneous purchases driven by situational and emotional stimuli (Rook et al., 1987; Verhagen & van Dolen, 2011). Although once common in offline stores, impulse buying is now a common phenomenon in social media due to targeted advertisements, limited-time offers, celebrity influences, and engaging visuals (Lim et al., 2020). These conditions minimize cognitive reasoning and enhance emotional responses, resulting in unplanned consumption (Xiao et al., 2019). Psychological factors like FOMO, enjoyment, and social proof also enhance this effect (Casaló et al., 2020; Pradhan et al., 2018). Impulse buying on social media is driven by a mix of psychological, social, and platform-level stimuli.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

### Hedonic motivation and emotional arousal

Hedonic motivation refers to shopping that is driven by enjoyment, excitement, or pleasure rather than necessity (Babin et al., 1994). Social media consumers will most likely be motivated by active imagery, active video, and fun influencer content. These motivate emotional arousal—an enthusiastic, pressing sensation—that pushes consumers to buy impulsively without much thought (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998). Social media sites like Instagram and TikTok enhance this effect through features like infinite scrolling, personalized feeds, and countdown timers, which sustain emotional activation and lead to spontaneous buying (Lim et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2022).

### Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is the feeling that others are enjoying valuable experiences without you, creating a desire to join in (Przybylski et al., 2013). In shopping, FOMO pushes people to make quick purchases when products are scarce, trending, or time-limited (Hodkinson, 2019). Social media platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram reinforce this feeling by constantly showing users reminders of new merchandise, promotions, and social purchasing, thus creating pressure and social immediacy (Balakrishnan & Griffiths, 2017). The sellers use techniques such as countdown timers and "just a few left" notifications to trigger emotional responses and reduce decision time, leading to impulse buying (Zhang et al., 2022).

## **SOCIAL FACTORS**

### **Social proof (likes, shares, comments)**

Social proof is the inclination to follow other individuals' actions, especially in times of uncertainty (Cialdini, 2009). In online shopping, this takes the form of likes, comments, shares, and reviews showing a product's popularity and credibility. On social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, highly rated products or those liked most are regarded as more attractive and credible (Cheung et al., 2014). This social endorsement boosts affective involvement and reduces critical thinking, often leading to impulse buying (Zhao et al., 2021). Consumer-generated content like product reviews, influencer postings, or customer photos also increases appeal to the product by making it appear more authentic and attractive (Casaló et al., 2020).

### **Influencer marketing and parasocial relationships**

Influencer marketing is a practice where brands collaborate with social media influencers, such as content creators or celebrities, to obtain product endorsements. Followers often perceive influencers as authentic and are likely to embrace their endorsements toward a certain brand or product (Freberg et al., 2011). The parasocial relationships or one-way emotional affiliations developed through repeated exposure between influencers and their followers serve as the primary catalyst that enables them to exert influence (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Platforms like Instagram and TikTok amplify these relationships by allowing influencers to post emotional content on a personal scale. Therefore, the followers become attached and are more likely to trust and listen to their advice (Chung & Cho, 2017).

## **PLATFORM-DRIVEN FACTORS**

### **Seamless user interface (UI) and one-click purchasing**

A smooth UI is an aesthetically attractive and easy-to-use design. In social commerce, features like smooth scrolling, rapid-image loading, and product links within the site are responsible for intuitive shopping (Chopra & Rajan, 2020). One-click purchasing further simplifies this task by offering a quick transaction. This convenience reduces decision-making time and increases the likelihood of impulse buying, especially when consumers are emotionally engaged (Wang et al., 2021).

## **CONCLUSION**

Social media impulse purchases are fueled by several key factors. Emotional drivers like hedonic motivation and FOMO create enthusiasm and time pressure that compel impulse buying. Social drivers like influencer marketing and social proof create trust and feelings of belonging, thus enhancing the product appeal. Finally, an easy-to-use interface with single-click purchasing allows one to effortlessly and speedily shop, reducing uncertainty and facilitating spontaneous decision-making. Altogether, these attributes construct an engaging and emotional shopping environment that solidly encourages impulse buying behavior throughout social media platforms.

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