



Pleasure-Seeking Or Fear-Driven? A Conceptual Examination Of Hedonic Motivation And FOMO As Catalysts Of Impulsive Buying In E-Commerce

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Abstract

Although impulsive buying in e-commerce has received considerable scholarly attention, the psychological mechanisms through which digitally engineered platform environments systematically erode consumer self-regulation remain undertheorized. This paper advances the Affective Urgency Model, a conceptual framework grounded in the Stimulus-Organism-Response paradigm, dual-process theory, prospect theory, approach-avoidance motivation theory, and self-determination theory. Through a critical narrative synthesis of Scopus and Web of Science literature, three theoretical contributions are made. First, hedonic motivation is reframed as an affective override mechanism that activates System 1 processing and suppresses deliberative evaluation, rendering consumers structurally vulnerable to spontaneous purchases. Second, commercially induced FOMO is reconceptualized as a threat response driven by loss aversion, wherein platform-deployed scarcity stimuli frame purchase inaction as loss and compress the decision window. Third, the construct of affective urgency is introduced to capture the compounded state arising from the co-activation of approach motivation and avoidance motivation, amplifying impulsive buying beyond the additive effects of either variable independently. The framework also incorporates the post-purchase paradox, wherein affective urgency-driven purchases produce cognitive dissonance, regret, and financial well-being deterioration despite their immediate hedonic appeal. Three formal propositions and a research agenda for empirical validation are advanced.

Introduction

Impulse buying has long fascinated consumer researchers, yet its theoretical architecture has struggled to keep pace with the structural transformation of retail. Contemporary e-commerce platforms are not passive marketplaces; they are psychologically engineered

environments, calibrated by machine learning algorithms to exploit known vulnerabilities in human decision-making (Abdelsalam et al., 2020; Xu et al., 2024). The proliferation of flash sales, countdown timers, social proof indicators, and live-streaming commerce has fundamentally altered the stimulus landscape within which consumers make purchase decisions, systematically closing the gap between impulse and action (Feng et al., 2024; Anoop & Rahman, 2025). Yet the dominant theoretical framing of impulse buying — rooted in individual-level trait models and stimulus-response dyads — has not adequately accounted for the interactional psychological complexity of these environments (Iyer et al., 2020).

Two psychological constructs have emerged as particularly salient in this context: hedonic motivation and fear of missing out (FOMO). Hedonic motivation — the intrinsic drive to seek pleasure, entertainment, and emotional gratification through consumption — has been consistently identified as a robust predictor of impulsive purchasing across retail settings (Babin et al., 1994; Aruldoss et al., 2023; Coelho et al., 2023). Yet existing accounts treat it primarily as an enabling condition, rarely interrogating the precise cognitive mechanism through which positive affect undermines deliberative control. From the perspective of dual-process theory (Kahneman, 2011), hedonic engagement selectively activates System 1 processing — fast, automatic, and affect-laden — while suppressing the System 2 deliberation that ordinarily functions as a behavioral governor. This affective override mechanism is, we argue, the proximal cause of impulsive purchasing under hedonic conditions, yet it has received insufficient theoretical attention in the impulse buying literature.

FOMO, originally theorized by Przybylski et al. (2013) as a social anxiety construct rooted in unmet relatedness needs within self-determination theory, has been repurposed by e-commerce platforms into a powerful commercial instrument. The strategic deployment of scarcity cues, urgency messaging, and real-time purchase activity feeds deliberately activates loss aversion (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Qu et al., 2023), transforming what was once a diffuse social anxiety into a temporally acute purchase trigger. The result is not merely increased purchase motivation but a qualitative compression of the decision window that systematically bypasses evaluative processing (Good & Hyman, 2020; Kleitsch & Drămnescu, 2025).

More critically, existing studies examine hedonic motivation and FOMO in isolation, overlooking the theoretically significant possibility that their co-activation generates qualitatively distinct psychological outcomes not reducible to the sum of their individual effects. Drawing on Elliot's (2006) hierarchical model of approach-avoidance motivation and the negativity bias principle established by Baumeister et al. (2001), we propose that when pleasure-seeking (approach) and loss-aversion (avoidance) are simultaneously active, the motivational forces do not merely add but multiply, generating what we term affective urgency — a compounded state that represents the paper's central theoretical contribution.

A further and critical gap concerns the neglect of downstream consequences. The preponderance of impulse buying research focuses on purchase antecedents and conversion outcomes, reflecting the commercial interests of platform operators (Chetioui & El Bouzidi, 2023; Roostika & Aji, 2025). Post-purchase regret, cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957), obsessive consumption patterns (Japutra et al., 2025), and cumulative financial harm receive comparatively scant theoretical attention, even as evidence of their prevalence among digital consumers continues to mount. Any theoretically complete account of digitally mediated impulse buying must integrate both the antecedent dynamics and the welfare consequences of the behavior it seeks to explain.

This paper addresses these gaps by advancing the Affective Urgency Model — a conceptual framework that (a) theorizes the distinct psychological mechanisms through which hedonic motivation and FOMO independently catalyze impulsive buying, (b) proposes affective urgency to account for their interactive amplification, and (c) integrates the post-purchase paradox into the theoretical model.

Literature review

Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Framework

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework provides the foundational architectural logic for the Affective Urgency Model. Originally developed in environmental psychology and subsequently applied extensively in consumer behavior research (Xu et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2021), the S-O-R paradigm posits those external environmental stimuli (S) act upon the internal psychological states of the organism (O), producing behavioral responses (R). In the present framework, e-commerce platform features — including aesthetic design, scarcity cues, social proof signals, gamification, and personalization algorithms — constitute the stimulus environment; hedonic motivation and FOMO represent the organism's internal psychological responses to these stimuli; and impulsive buying is the behavioral output. The significance of this framing is that it positions hedonic motivation and FOMO not as static individual traits but as dynamically activated psychological states, systematically engineered by platform design (Feng et al., 2024; Ngo et al., 2024).

Dual-Process Theory

Dual-process theory, comprehensively synthesized by Kahneman (2011), posits that human cognition operates through two qualitatively distinct systems: System 1, which is fast, automatic, effortless, and emotionally driven; and System 2, which is slow, deliberate, effortful, and analytically oriented. Under normal conditions, System 2 functions as an evaluative governor that moderates System 1's spontaneous impulses (Kahneman, 2011). However, when System 1 is strongly activated by affective stimuli, it can override System 2 processing, producing behavior driven by immediate emotional responses rather than deliberative evaluation. This override dynamic is theoretically central to understanding how hedonic motivation — by generating strong positive affect — systematically suppresses the deliberative evaluation that would otherwise prevent impulsive purchasing.

Critically, Schwarz and Clore's (1983) affect-as-information hypothesis provides a complementary micro-level account of this mechanism. They demonstrate that when individuals are in positive affective states, they use that affect as information — treating good feelings as a signal that the current object or situation is desirable and worthy of approach — without necessarily engaging in systematic evaluation. In the e-commerce context, hedonically induced positive affect signals 'this is good, acquire it,' providing System 1 with a direct route to purchase behavior that bypasses System 2 scrutiny (Schwarz & Clore, 1983; Kahneman, 2011).

Prospect Theory and Loss Aversion

Kahneman and Tversky's (1979) prospect theory provides the motivational architecture for understanding FOMO's influence on impulsive buying. Prospect theory demonstrates that individuals evaluate outcomes not in absolute terms but relative to a reference point, and — critically — that losses are psychologically weighted more heavily than equivalent gains (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). This asymmetry, termed loss aversion, means that the subjective cost of missing an opportunity is experienced more intensely than the equivalent gain from obtaining it. Baumeister et al.'s (2001) extensive review further confirms that this negativity bias is pervasive across psychological domains: bad events, including perceived losses and missed opportunities, consistently exert stronger motivational force than equivalent positive events.

In the e-commerce context, FOMO-triggering stimuli — countdown timers, low-stock alerts, 'only today' messaging — deliberately invoke the loss aversion mechanism by framing inaction as loss rather than non-gain (Good & Hyman, 2020; Bai et al., 2022; Ngo et al., 2024). The result is a subjective sense of urgency whose motivational force significantly exceeds what a positive framing of equivalent magnitude would produce, precisely because, as Kahneman and Tversky (1979) demonstrate, losses loom larger than gains.

Approach-Avoidance Motivation Theory

Elliot's (2006) hierarchical model of approach-avoidance motivation provides the theoretical architecture for conceptualizing the interaction between hedonic motivation and FOMO. Elliot (2006) defines approach motivation as the energization of behavior toward positive stimuli — pleasure, reward, desired outcomes — and avoidance motivation as the energization of behavior away from negative stimuli — loss, threat, aversive outcomes. Critically, these two motivational systems can be co-activated by environmental configurations that simultaneously offer reward and threaten loss (Elliot, 2006).

The e-commerce environment, particularly in live-streaming and flash sale contexts, is paradigmatically such a configuration. The hedonic qualities of the shopping experience activate approach motivation (consumers are drawn toward pleasure and desire), while FOMO-triggering stimuli simultaneously activate avoidance motivation (consumers are pushed away from the aversive experience of missing out). When both systems are active, the motivational energy directed toward immediate purchase behavior is compounded rather than merely additive — the organism is simultaneously pulled toward the target and pushed away from the cost of inaction, generating a convergent motivational pressure that overwhelms self-regulatory capacity (Elliot, 2006; Hussain et al., 2023; Luo et al., 2024).

Self-Determination Theory

Self-determination theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan (2000), provides a complementary account of the basic psychological need structure underlying both constructs. SDT posits that human motivation is organized around three basic psychological needs: competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Hedonic motivation is theoretically linked to the fulfillment of these needs through pleasurable consumption experiences, while FOMO originates in the perception that these needs are being frustrated through social exclusion (Przybylski et al., 2013). This asymmetry — need fulfillment through hedonic approach versus need frustration through social exclusion — maps directly onto the approach-avoidance distinction and provides the motivational substrate upon which affective urgency operates.

Conceptual Review Of Key Constructs

Impulsive Buying in Digital Contexts

Impulse buying, classically defined as a sudden, powerful, and often irresistible urge to purchase immediately (Rook, 1987), is multiply determined by trait factors, affective states, consumer resources, and external stimuli (Iyer et al., 2020; Kaur & Sharma, 2024). However, the digital retail context introduces three structural conditions that render prior theorizations partially incomplete.

First, the elimination of transaction friction — one-click purchasing, saved payment credentials, instant digital delivery — removes the temporal buffers that historically attenuated impulse urges between their onset and behavioral expression (Kaur & Sharma, 2024; Zhang et al., 2021). From a dual-process perspective (Kahneman, 2011), these buffers previously gave System 2 time to reassert evaluative control after System 1 generated a purchase impulse; their elimination structurally privileges System 1 outcomes. Second, algorithmic personalization ensures that stimuli encountered by consumers are systematically tailored to individual psychological profiles, maximizing emotional resonance and impulsive response — in effect, engineering individualized System 1 triggers at scale (Abdelsalam et al., 2020; Xu et al., 2024). Third, the social embeddedness of contemporary platforms — through influencer endorsements, real-time popularity signals, and live-streaming — introduces a social comparison dynamic that simultaneously activates hedonic engagement and FOMO (Shahpasandi et al., 2020; Chetioui & El Bouzidi, 2023). Anoop and Rahman's (2025) meta-regression synthesis of 75 empirical studies and 139,545 consumers confirms that situational stimuli, marketing stimuli,

and platform features are among the most robust predictors of online impulsive purchasing, consistent with the dual-process and affect-as-information mechanisms theorized above (Schwarz & Clore, 1983; Kahneman, 2011).

Hedonic Motivation as Affective Override

Hedonic motivation — the intrinsic drive to derive pleasure, entertainment, and emotional satisfaction from the shopping experience itself (Babin et al., 1994) — activates a rich constellation of positive affective states in the e-commerce context: excitement, curiosity, delight, aesthetic pleasure, and the anticipatory savoring of acquisition (Koch et al., 2020; Coelho et al., 2023). These states, in turn, operate via the affect-as-information mechanism theorized by Schwarz and Clore (1983): positive affect serves as a cognitive shortcut that signals the current object or context is good and worthy of approach, reducing the perceived necessity of systematic evaluation.

Critically, Kahneman's (2011) dual-process framework reveals that this is not merely a matter of consumers 'feeling good' — it is a structural shift in information processing mode from System 2 (deliberative, evaluative, resistant to impulse) to System 1 (automatic, affective, approach-oriented). Under conditions of strong hedonic engagement, the normative cognitive architecture for resisting impulsive purchases — which requires System 2 deliberation about value, necessity, and financial consequences — is systematically suppressed. The result is a structurally elevated susceptibility to impulsive purchasing that operates independently of any specific product or promotion (Vohs & Faber, 2007; Iyer et al., 2020).

Empirical support for this affective override mechanism is convergent and robust: Babin et al.'s (1994) foundational demonstration that hedonic shopping value predicts enjoyment-driven unplanned purchasing; Coelho et al.'s (2023) demonstration of hedonic shopping motivations as systematic drivers of spontaneous purchase; Iyer et al.'s (2020) meta-analytic confirmation across 231 samples and 75,000-plus consumers; and recent demonstrations in live-streaming commerce (Feng et al., 2024), social media shopping (Shahpasandi et al., 2020), and post-pandemic digital retail (Aruldoss et al., 2023; Mashilo et al., 2025).

FOMO as Commercially Induced Threat Response

FOMO, theorized by Przybylski et al. (2013) as arising from unmet needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness within SDT, manifests as pervasive anxiety about missing rewarding experiences that others are having. Hussain et al. (2023) further demonstrate that FOMO is associated with deficits in self-regulatory capacity, establishing the mechanistic link between FOMO and behavioral impulsivity: those experiencing elevated FOMO exhibit reduced capacity to resist immediate action urges.

The critical theoretical move in the present paper is the reconceptualization of FOMO's mechanism in commercial contexts from social anxiety to loss aversion. When e-commerce platforms deploy countdown timers, low-stock notifications, and 'only X people viewing this' alerts, they are not merely creating urgency — they are recasting inaction as loss relative to an implicit reference point (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). The consumer who does not purchase during a flash sale is not merely forgoing a gain; they are, from the perspective of prospect theory, experiencing a loss relative to the reference point of having seen and considered the product. Because losses loom larger than equivalent gains (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Baumeister et al., 2001), this loss-framing of inaction generates motivational force that substantially exceeds what an equivalent positive framing would produce.

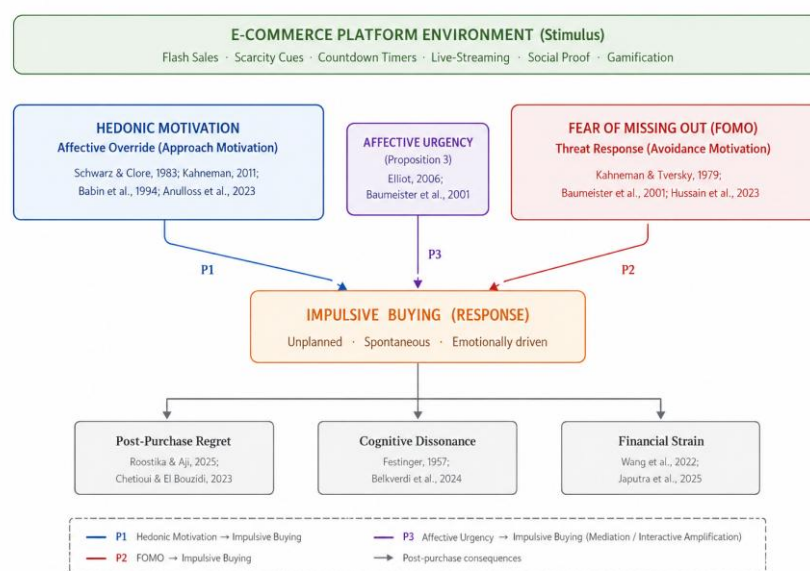
The temporal dimension is equally important. FOMO-triggering stimuli operate specifically by compressing the subjectively available decision time — the countdown timer makes visible the shrinking window within which action is possible, escalating urgency and further crowding out System 2 deliberation (Kahneman, 2011; Feng et al., 2024). Good and Hyman's (2020, 2021) experimental work confirms that FOMO-laden appeals increase purchase

intentions specifically through emotional antecedents including anticipated loss and anticipated regret — consistent with the prospect theory mechanism theorized here.

Conceptual Framework And Theoretical Propositions

Drawing on the five theoretical pillars outlined above, Figure 1 presents the Affective Urgency Model of Digitally Mediated Impulsive Buying. The model posits that e-commerce platform stimuli activate two distinct psychological pathways — hedonic motivation (affective override, approach) and FOMO (threat response, avoidance) — that independently catalyze impulsive buying and, when co-activated, generate a compounded state of affective urgency that amplifies impulsive purchasing beyond their additive effects. The model further incorporates the post-purchase paradox, recognizing that impulsive purchases driven by affective urgency systematically produce post-purchase cognitive dissonance, regret, and financial harm.

Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Framework



Hedonic Motivation as Affective Override

Drawing on dual-process theory (Kahneman, 2011) and the affect-as-information hypothesis (Schwarz & Clore, 1983), we propose that hedonic motivation activates System 1 affective processing, generates positive affect that functions as a proxy for product evaluation, and suppresses System 2 deliberative gatekeeping. This affective override reduces the psychological cost threshold for spontaneous purchase commitment, generating impulsive buying as a structurally predictable outcome rather than an anomalous deviation from rational behavior.

This proposition is grounded in a convergent evidence base spanning foundational conceptual work (Babin et al., 1994), theory-driven empirical demonstrations (Coelho et al., 2023; Hussain et al., 2023), meta-analytic confirmation (Iyer et al., 2020; Redine et al., 2023), and recent digital-context evidence (Feng et al., 2024; Mashilo et al., 2025; Aruldoss et al., 2023). The mechanism is not merely that hedonically motivated consumers enjoy shopping more, but that hedonic engagement structurally reconfigures the decision architecture in ways that privilege immediate, affect-driven action over deliberative evaluation (Kahneman, 2011).

Proposition 1: Hedonic motivation positively and significantly catalyzes impulsive buying in e-commerce environments, operating through an affective override mechanism — grounded in dual-process theory and the affect-as-information hypothesis — that

suppresses System 2 deliberative processing and amplifies System 1 approach-motivated purchase behavior.

FOMO as Commercially Induced Threat Response

Drawing on prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979) and negativity bias theory (Baumeister et al., 2001), we propose that commercially induced FOMO — activated by e-commerce scarcity and urgency stimuli — frames purchase inaction as loss relative to an implicit reference point, activating loss aversion and generating motivational urgency that compresses the decision window and circumvents System 2 evaluative processing.

The theoretical mechanism distinguishes the present account from prevailing social-anxiety framings of FOMO (Przybylski et al., 2013): while trait FOMO may reflect chronic social anxiety, commercially induced state FOMO operates specifically through the loss-aversion pathway of prospect theory, exploiting the well-documented asymmetry between the motivational weight of losses versus equivalent gains (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Baumeister et al., 2001). This distinction has direct implications for regulatory and platform design interventions. Empirical support is provided by Good and Hyman (2020, 2021), Kleitsch and Drămnescu (2025), Roostika and Aji (2025), and Ngo et al. (2024).

Proposition 2: Commercially induced FOMO positively and significantly catalyzes impulsive buying in e-commerce environments, operating through a loss-aversion mechanism — grounded in prospect theory and negativity bias theory — that frames purchase inaction as loss, compresses the decision window, and suppresses deliberative resistance to immediate purchase.

Affective Urgency and Interactive Amplification

The third and most theoretically novel proposition introduces the construct of affective urgency. Drawing on Elliot's (2006) hierarchical model of approach-avoidance motivation, we propose that when hedonic motivation (approach activation) and FOMO (avoidance activation) are simultaneously triggered, the two motivational systems do not merely add their individual effects but generate a compounded state in which the organism is simultaneously pulled toward the target (approach) and pushed away from the cost of inaction (avoidance).

The theoretical logic draws on three pillars. First, Elliot (2006) demonstrates that approach and avoidance motivational systems can be co-activated by environmental configurations that offer both reward and threat, producing heightened behavioral arousal and decisional acceleration. Second, Baumeister et al.'s (2001) negativity bias evidence confirms that the avoidance component (loss aversion activated by FOMO) will exert disproportionate motivational weight, further intensifying the compounded urgency beyond what approach motivation alone would produce. Third, Hussain et al. (2023) demonstrate that FOMO-induced anxiety depletes self-regulatory resources — precisely the conditions produced by high affective arousal and cognitive urgency — reliably increasing impulsive purchase behavior.

Emerging empirical evidence is consistent with this interactive dynamic: Roostika and Aji (2025) demonstrate that FOMO and hedonic motives jointly influence impulse buying in live-streaming contexts in patterns consistent with amplification; Feng et al. (2024) show that scarcity persuasion moderates the relationship between hedonic engagement and impulsive purchasing; and Ngo et al. (2024) document arousal and urgency as co-mediators of impulsive behavior, consistent with the simultaneous approach-avoidance activation theorized here.

Proposition 3: The co-activation of hedonic motivation (approach) and FOMO (avoidance) in e-commerce environments generates a compounded psychological state of affective urgency — grounded in approach-avoidance motivation theory and negativity bias theory — that amplifies impulsive buying beyond the additive effects of either variable

independently, through the simultaneous engagement of desire-based and loss-aversion-based motivational systems.

The Post-Purchase Paradox

Any theoretically complete model of digitally mediated impulse buying must address its downstream consequences. The Affective Urgency Model incorporates the post-purchase paradox: the systematic divergence between the immediate positive affect generated by impulsive purchases and the post-purchase negative outcomes these purchases frequently produce. Cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957) predicts that purchases made under psychological pressure — when deliberative processing has been suppressed by affective urgency — create conditions for post-decision dissonance, as consumers subsequently confront purchases they cannot justify to themselves or others.

Roostika and Aji's (2025) empirical documentation of this paradox in live-streaming commerce — wherein impulse buying simultaneously elevates hedonic well-being and consumer regret — provides direct support for its integration into the framework. Chetioui and El Bouzidi (2023) further demonstrate that among Generation Z consumers, impulsive purchasing is associated with post-purchase cognitive dissonance. Beikverdi et al. (2024) extend this line of reasoning by documenting that post-purchase emotional responses are systematically moderated by the degree of deliberation preceding the purchase, with impulse-driven acquisitions consistently producing more intense negative post-purchase affect than planned purchases. The temporal disaggregation of consumer well-being — immediate hedonic utility versus deferred psychological and financial costs — must therefore be incorporated into any theoretical model that aspires to capture the full behavioral cycle of digitally mediated impulse buying.

DISCUSSION

Theoretical Contributions

The Affective Urgency Model makes three distinct theoretical contributions to the consumer behavior literature. First, by theorizing hedonic motivation as an affective override mechanism — drawing on dual-process theory (Kahneman, 2011) and the affect-as-information hypothesis (Schwarz & Clore, 1983) — we provide a more mechanistically precise account of the causal pathway through which positive affect undermines consumer self-regulation. This reframing moves beyond descriptive accounts of hedonic motivation as a 'driver' of impulse buying to specify the cognitive architecture through which this driving occurs, opening productive avenues for intervention research.

Second, by reconceptualizing commercially induced FOMO as a prospect theory-based threat response (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979) rather than a social anxiety derivative (Przybylski et al., 2013), we identify a theoretically distinct behavioral pathway through which e-commerce platforms exploit loss aversion at scale. This distinction implies that commercially induced FOMO is, in principle, regulable through platform design constraints and disclosure requirements in ways that trait FOMO is not, with significant implications for consumer protection policy.

Third, the construct of affective urgency — grounded in Elliot's (2006) approach-avoidance framework and Baumeister et al.'s (2001) negativity bias theory — provides the first theoretically grounded account of why the co-activation of hedonic motivation and FOMO produces behavioral outcomes that exceed their additive effects. This construct is potentially generalizable beyond the hedonic motivation-FOMO dyad to other approach-avoidance pairings in digital consumer psychology, suggesting a generative theoretical contribution.

Managerial and Policy Implications

For e-commerce practitioners, the Affective Urgency Model identifies the specific design elements through which conversion-maximizing environments operate: the co-deployment of hedonic stimulation and scarcity-based FOMO triggers creates the conditions for affective urgency that maximize impulsive purchase conversion. However, given mounting evidence that these same strategies produce post-purchase regret, cognitive dissonance, and consumer financial harm (Chetoui & El Bouzidi, 2023; Roostika & Aji, 2025), practitioners face both ethical and commercial incentives to moderate FOMO trigger intensity. Platforms optimizing for short-term conversion at the expense of consumer welfare risk reputational damage, regulatory intervention, and reduced customer lifetime value.

From a policy perspective, the reconceptualization of commercially induced FOMO as deliberate loss-aversion exploitation (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979) provides a theoretical basis for regulatory scrutiny of scarcity messaging practices. If countdown timers and artificial scarcity indicators constitute systematic exploitation of cognitive vulnerabilities, regulatory frameworks may need updating to address the specific mechanics of affective urgency manufacture at scale.

CONCLUSION

This paper has advanced the Affective Urgency Model of Digitally Mediated Impulsive Buying, systematically theorizing the mechanisms through which hedonic motivation and FOMO independently and interactively catalyze impulsive buying in e-commerce. By grounding the analysis in a theoretically integrated foundation — combining the S-O-R paradigm, Kahneman's (2011) dual-process theory, Schwarz and Clore's (1983) affect-as-information hypothesis, Kahneman and Tversky's (1979) prospect theory, Elliot's (2006) approach-avoidance motivation model, Baumeister et al.'s (2001) negativity bias theory, and Deci and Ryan's (2000) SDT — the framework provides a theoretically defensible and mechanistically precise account of a phenomenon that has been described but not adequately explained.

The three propositions advanced are conceptually distinct, theoretically grounded, and empirically falsifiable. The incorporation of the post-purchase paradox positions the model as a welfare-oriented contribution, addressing a significant gap in the predominantly conversion-focused impulse buying literature.

Future empirical research should prioritize four directions: (1) direct operationalization and measurement of the affective urgency construct through experience sampling and physiological arousal measurement; (2) experimental testing of the interactive amplification proposition using factorial designs that manipulate hedonic engagement and FOMO intensity independently and in combination; (3) longitudinal investigation of the temporal dynamics of the post-purchase paradox across consumer cohorts, platform types, and product categories; and (4) examination of self-control, financial literacy, and mindfulness as boundary conditions that moderate the hedonic motivation-FOMO-affective urgency chain. Collectively, these directions promise a theoretically rigorous, empirically grounded, and welfare-conscious understanding of impulsive buying in the digital era.

LIMITATION

Although this study makes substantive theoretical contributions, several limitations must be acknowledged to appropriately bound its scope and guide future scholarship.

First, as a conceptual paper grounded in narrative literature review, the Affective Urgency Model remains without direct empirical validation. The three propositions advanced are theoretically derived rather than empirically tested, and their explanatory power is contingent on future quantitative and experimental verification. The construct of affective urgency, in particular, requires psychometric operationalization before its measurement properties and discriminant validity relative to existing constructs can be established.

Second, the present framework was developed primarily from literature situated in Western and East Asian digital retail contexts — most notably studies drawing on consumers in China, South Korea, the United States, and Indonesia. The generalizability of the Affective Urgency Model to other cultural and economic settings — including markets with lower digital infrastructure penetration, distinct consumer self-regulation norms, or differing regulatory environments around scarcity marketing — cannot be assumed without further cross-cultural empirical investigation.

Third, the model focuses on hedonic motivation and FOMO as the two primary psychological catalysts of affective urgency, necessarily excluding other potentially relevant antecedents. Variables such as utilitarian motivation, social influence, price consciousness, product involvement, and individual differences in trait impulsivity may independently or interactively shape the pathways theorized here. Future empirical models should consider these as potential covariates, moderators, or additional predictors within an expanded framework.

Fourth, the post-purchase paradox as conceptualized in this paper treats cognitive dissonance, regret, and financial strain as undifferentiated negative outcomes. In practice, these constructs are theoretically and empirically distinct, with potentially different antecedents, moderators, and consequences for consumer behavior over time. Future research should disaggregate these outcomes and examine their individual relationships with the affective urgency pathway in greater theoretical and empirical detail.

Fifth, this paper does not address the potential role of platform-specific affordances — such as differences between live-streaming platforms, social commerce applications, and traditional e-commerce websites — in moderating the intensity of hedonic and FOMO stimuli. The degree to which the Affective Urgency Model's mechanisms operate differentially across platform types represents a theoretically important boundary condition that warrants dedicated empirical attention.

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