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Influencer Credibility and FOMO as Drivers of Impulsive Buying: Mediating Role of Trust and Hedonic Motivation

Chrivana O. Timbuleng [1] Ronny H. Walean [2] Deske W. Mandagi [3*]

[1] Universitas Klabat, North Minahasa, Indonesia. Email: 52410039@student.unklab.ac.id
[2] Universitas Klabat, North Minahasa, Indonesia. Email: rwalean@unklab.ac.id
[3] Universitas Klabat, North Minahasa, Indonesia. Email: deskemandagi@unklab.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aims to examine the direct and indirect effects of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and influencer credibility on impulsive buying, with hedonic motivation and trust serving as mediating variables.

Research Method: A quantitative research design was employed using survey data collected from 200 active TikTok Shop users in North Sulawesi, Indonesia, and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0.

Results and Discussion: The findings indicate that FOMO has a significant direct effect on impulsive buying, while hedonic motivation partially mediates this relationship. In contrast, influencer credibility does not directly influence impulsive buying; instead, it exerts an indirect effect through trust, which fully mediates the relationship. These results reveal two distinct psychological pathways: an affective pathway in which FOMO enhances hedonic motivation, leading to impulsive buying, and a cognitive pathway in which influencer credibility builds trust that subsequently drives impulsive buying.

Implications: This study contributes to the social commerce literature by advancing a dual-mediation framework in explaining impulsive buying behavior and offers practical implications for marketers to design more effective short-video campaigns by leveraging emotional triggers such as FOMO and strengthening credibility through trust.

Keywords: influencer credibility; FOMO; impulsive buying; trust; hedonic motivation.

Introduction

TikTok has emerged as a dominant platform that not only attracts the attention of Generation Z but also transforms social media into a dynamic digital economic ecosystem (Harahap *et al.,* 2024). This transformation is evident in the emergence of TikTok Shop as a social commerce feature that integrates entertainment, social interaction, and commercial transactions within a single platform. Through features such as live streaming and embedded product links in video content, TikTok Shop creates an immersive, real-time shopping experience that enhances consumer engagement and drives purchase conversions. In this context, the boundary between content consumption and shopping behavior becomes increasingly blurred, positioning TikTok as a prominent example of modern social commerce. This phenomenon has contributed to the growing prevalence of impulse buying in digital environments. The platform's characteristics, including visually engaging content, rapid information flow, and social validation mechanisms, create conditions that strongly stimulate spontaneous purchasing decisions. However, such behavior often leads to negative consequences, including post-

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purchase regret. Empirical studies indicate that impulsive buying is influenced by factors such as sales promotions, positive emotions, shopping motivation, and price perception (Nuryani *et al.,* 2022). Within the TikTok context, two factors have become particularly salient, namely influencer credibility and FOMO. Influencer credibility, which encompasses expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, serves as an important persuasive cue in consumer decision-making (Kemeç & Yüksel, 2021). Meanwhile, FOMO is a psychological pressure that drives individuals to act quickly to avoid missing valuable social experiences (Kaloeti *et al.,* 2021). The urgency of this study lies in the growing influence of these factors on potentially irrational consumption behavior in social commerce environments.

Despite these developments, the existing literature remains limited in explaining the underlying psychological mechanisms linking influencer credibility, FOMO, and impulse buying. Prior studies have largely focused on direct effects, while more complex mediating mechanisms remain underexplored, particularly within the unique context of TikTok. Furthermore, empirical findings on influencer credibility show inconsistencies. For instance, influencer credibility does not always have a strong direct effect on purchase intention, as its influence may operate indirectly through mediating variables such as trust and perceived value (Lou & Yuan, 2019). In addition, discrepancies have been observed between consumer attitudes and actual behavioral outcomes in influencer endorsement contexts (Schouten *et al.,* 2020). In addition, Sokolova and Kefi (2019) demonstrated that affective mechanisms such as parasocial interaction are more influential than traditional cognitive evaluations. Based on these findings, this study identifies a clear research gap: the lack of understanding of how affective pathways (FOMO and hedonic motivation) and cognitive pathways (influencer credibility and trust) simultaneously influence impulsive buying behavior, particularly in the TikTok environment. Therefore, this study aims to examine both the direct and indirect effects of FOMO and influencer credibility on impulsive buying by incorporating hedonic motivation and trust as mediating variables.

This study offers significant theoretical and practical contributions. From a theoretical perspective, it extends the social commerce literature by integrating affective and cognitive pathways within a dual mediation framework, thereby providing a more comprehensive explanation of impulsive buying behavior in immersive digital environments. It also highlights a shift from traditional cognitive-based models toward the dominance of affective processes in short-video platforms such as TikTok. From a practical perspective, the findings provide strategic insights for marketers in designing more effective campaigns by leveraging emotional triggers such as FOMO while simultaneously building sustainable credibility through trust. Accordingly, this study not only addresses an important gap in the literature but also demonstrates strong relevance in supporting adaptive marketing strategies in the evolving digital landscape.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Impulsive Buying

From a scholarly perspective, impulse buying is a spontaneous, unplanned purchasing behavior that occurs rapidly and without careful consideration. This behavior is primarily triggered by exposure to external stimuli and by the emergence of sudden, strong purchase urges (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998; Zheng *et al.,* 2019). In contrast to planned and habitual purchasing, which are dominated by utilitarian considerations, impulsive buying is characterized by high emotional intensity and the dominance of hedonic motivation in the decision-making process (Chen *et al.,* 2020).

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Impulsive buying is an important phenomenon to study due to its significant economic impact. Research indicates that consumers may spend thousands of dollars annually on unplanned purchases, reflecting a substantial contribution to overall consumption activity. This behavior is not limited to specific product categories but arises from spontaneous psychological impulses. Iyer et al. (2020) identify that impulsive buying is influenced by internal factors such as impulsivity, sensation seeking, and hedonic motivation, as well as external factors such as marketing stimuli and product placement. When self-control weakens, particularly under conditions of reduced cognitive resources, impulsive urges become more dominant. Products associated with self-identity expression are also more likely to be purchased impulsively, especially when individuals experience identity incongruence or emotional pressure. Therefore, impulse buying remains a relevant topic for further investigation, particularly in the context of social media and digitally native generations, who are highly susceptible to external influences and psychological pressures (Marhareita *et al.,* 2022; Rayo *et al.,* 2024).

Redine et al. (2022) highlight that the measurement of impulsive buying in prior literature varies considerably depending on conceptual approaches and research contexts. Most studies adopt quantitative survey-based methods, using scales that assess individuals' tendency to engage in spontaneous, unplanned purchases driven by emotional impulses. One of the most widely used instruments is the scale developed by Rook and Fisher, which measures trait impulsiveness through attitudinal statements related to shopping behavior. Additionally, some studies operationalize impulsive buying through affective and cognitive dimensions, including feelings of pleasure during purchasing, lack of self-control, and post-purchase regret. Redine et al. also note that despite the dominance of quantitative approaches, there is a need to develop more context-specific measurement methods, particularly in digital and social media environments that give rise to new forms of impulsive behavior. Furthermore, Rodrigues *et al.,* (2021) describe impulse buying as a sudden, emotionally driven behavior characterized by minimal cognitive control and limited evaluation of consequences. They also distinguish impulsive buying from unplanned buying and emphasize that visual stimuli, promotions, and a pleasant shopping environment often trigger it.

Research on impulsive buying has spanned more than seven decades, beginning with early work by Clover in 1950. Redine *et al.,* (2022) note that studies on impulsive buying have been conducted across various disciplines, including marketing, information systems, management, and tourism, with diverse approaches and findings. Although the number of publications has increased significantly since 2010 due to the rise of e-commerce, mobile commerce, and social commerce, theoretical and methodological synthesis remains limited. Previous studies have applied theories such as the Stimulus-Organism-Response model, the Big Five Personality Traits, and Regulatory Focus Theory, yet a strong theoretical consensus has not emerged. Most studies rely on quantitative surveys and experimental designs. However, Redine et al. emphasize the need for cross-theoretical integration and contextualization within digital environments to better understand impulsive buying, particularly in dynamic social media contexts.

Rodrigues *et al.,* (2021) further emphasize that impulsive buying has attracted scholarly attention since the 1940s, as it accounts for approximately 40-80 percent of total consumer purchases. This behavior is driven by strong emotional impulses, limited ability to evaluate consequences, and a desire for instant gratification. Factors such as store atmosphere, life satisfaction, self-esteem, and emotional states during shopping also influence impulsive tendencies. These findings reinforce the view

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that impulsive buying is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by the interaction of psychological, social, and environmental factors.

Influencer Credibility

Influencer credibility in the context of social media extends beyond mere popularity and reflects followers' perceptions of influencers' honesty, competence, and personal attractiveness when delivering promotional messages. Belanche *et al.,* (2021) emphasize that the congruence between influencer characteristics and the promoted product plays a crucial role in shaping such perceptions. When promotional content appears relevant and not overly commercialized, followers are more likely to perceive the influencer as authentic and trustworthy (Ole *et al.,* 2025). Sesar et al. (2022) further identify three core dimensions of credibility, namely trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. Trustworthiness reflects the authenticity of expressed opinions, expertise indicates the influencer's ability to provide informed recommendations, and attractiveness relates to social closeness and shared values with followers. These dimensions interact to shape the effectiveness of marketing communication, ultimately influencing brand awareness and purchase intention.

Influencer credibility is a foundational factor in assessing the effectiveness of digital marketing communication, particularly on social media platforms such as Instagram. Janssen et al. (2022) highlight that credibility acts as a mediating variable linking product-influencer congruence with consumer attitudes toward advertisements and purchase intentions. When influencers are perceived as credible, followers are more likely to identify with them, resulting in more favorable brand evaluations. Similarly, Shamim and Islam (2022) emphasize that both message credibility and media credibility significantly influence consumer trust, which in turn drives impulsive purchasing behavior. These findings indicate that credibility is not merely a personal attribute but also a psychological and strategic mechanism that determines the overall success of digital marketing campaigns.

Influencer credibility is commonly measured through three main dimensions: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Sokolova and Kefi (2020) demonstrate that high credibility strengthens parasocial relationships between influencers and audiences, thereby increasing purchase intentions. Jang et al. (2020) further suggest that influencer credibility affects how individuals process information, with emotional engagement and heuristic processing serving as key pathways in shaping consumer responses to promotional messages.

Previous studies consistently indicate that influencer credibility is a central factor in shaping consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. Nafees et al. (2021) argue that dimensions such as expertise, benevolence, and honesty serve as mediating mechanisms between influencer social power and consumer attitudes toward brands, with higher credibility enhancing the effectiveness of marketing signals. Meanwhile, Weismueller et al. (2022) demonstrate that advertising disclosure does not necessarily reduce purchase intention, provided the influencer remains credible, with trust and expertise serving as key determinants of message acceptance. Despite varying empirical findings, influencer credibility remains a critical determinant in digital marketing. This complexity underscores the need for further investigation into the mediating mechanisms at play, particularly within platform-specific ecosystems such as TikTok.

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Fear of Missing Out

FOMO refers to a form of social anxiety characterized by a persistent desire to remain connected to others' activities due to concerns that others may be experiencing rewarding or meaningful events without one's participation. FOMO is rooted in the fundamental human need for social belonging and is amplified by social media exposure to idealized portrayals of others' lives (Gupta & Sharma, 2021; Carundeng *et al.,* 2024). Fioravanti et al. (2021) find that FOMO is strongly positively correlated with social media use and problematic digital behavior, as well as with depression, anxiety, and neuroticism, while showing a negative relationship with conscientiousness. These findings suggest that FOMO is not merely curiosity but a complex psychological mechanism with significant implications for mental well-being and digital behavior. FOMO also represents a psychological tendency that drives individuals to constantly monitor others' activities, particularly on social media, to compensate for perceived social disconnection. Tandon et al. (2021) demonstrate that FOMO contributes to excessive social media usage and negatively affects well-being, including stress and sleep disturbances. Barry and Wong (2020) further argue that FOMO is not solely a generational phenomenon but is influenced by individual psychological characteristics such as self-esteem and loneliness. Given its complexity and wide-ranging impact, FOMO has become an important topic in digital behavior and mental health research and is highly relevant in understanding modern communication and consumption patterns.

Trust

From a sociological perspective, trust is defined as a psychological state characterized by the willingness to be vulnerable based on positive expectations about others' intentions or behavior. At its core, trust entails risk acceptance, whereby one party, the trustor, believes that another party, the trustee, will act in their best interest despite the absence of direct control (Mayer *et al.,* 1995; Rousseau *et al.,* 1998). Trust plays a fundamental role in social systems by reducing the complexity of interactions (Luhmann, 1979) and facilitating reciprocity, collective action, and social cohesion (Paxton, 2007). Trust also functions as a critical prerequisite for the effectiveness of institutional and marketing communications. Evidence from governance contexts indicates that low levels of trust are associated with reduced public compliance, as observed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Global findings reported in The Lancet further confirm that higher levels of trust are associated with more effective crisis management. Similar logic applies in marketing contexts, where the absence of trust significantly undermines communicators' ability to influence consumer behavior (Hitlin & Shutava, 2022).

In digital marketing, trust is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing perceived credibility, reliability, and integrity. It is developed through consistent communication, transparency, and the delivery of promised value (Rachmad, 2023). Within social media environments, trust becomes even more critical, as interactions occur amid uncertainty and information asymmetry. Prior studies demonstrate that trust is a key determinant of consumer responses to digital marketing efforts. For instance, Walean et al. (2025a) show that social media marketing activities significantly enhance brand trust, which in turn influences purchase decisions in emerging markets. Similarly, Walean et al. (2025b) highlight that brand trust plays a central role in strengthening customer satisfaction and loyalty, reinforcing its importance in long-term relational outcomes. Furthermore, trust has been identified as a foundational element in building brand equity. Ole et al. (2025) demonstrate that brand trust, alongside perceived quality and brand image, serves as a key driver of brand equity in the fast-food industry. These findings suggest that trust not only influences immediate behavioral responses but

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also contributes to the long-term value of brands. Operationally, trust is commonly measured using adapted instruments based on scenario-based interactions and Likert-scale assessments (Gillath *et al.,* 2021). In this study, trust is defined as consumers' beliefs in the reliability and integrity of TikTok influencers. Prior research consistently demonstrates the mediating role of trust in linking marketing stimuli to consumer responses. Trust is not merely an ethical consideration but also a strategic asset that enables firms to reduce perceived risk and enhance the effectiveness of persuasion (Rachmad, 2023). Moreover, psychological factors such as attachment anxiety can weaken trust, indicating that trust is shaped by both cognitive evaluations and emotional processes (Gillath *et al.,* 2021). Collectively, these insights position trust as a crucial mediating variable in explaining how marketing stimuli translate into consumer behavior, including impulse buying.

Hedonic Motivation

Hedonic motivation is the psychological drive that encourages consumers to shop for pleasure and emotional gratification. This concept was originally introduced by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), who distinguished between utilitarian and hedonic consumption. While utilitarian motivation is goal-oriented and functional, hedonic motivation emphasizes enjoyment, fantasy, and sensory stimulation in the consumption experience (Babin *et al.,* 1994). More recent studies highlight that hedonic motivation not only predicts purchase intention but also plays a significant role in shaping customer satisfaction and loyalty (Vieira *et al.,* 2018). In the context of TikTok as an entertainment-driven and interactive platform, neglecting the hedonic dimension would result in an incomplete understanding of user behavior. Nikolopoulou et al. (2021) confirm that enjoyment and emotional satisfaction are key determinants of the link between external stimuli and consumer responses. Similarly, Al-Azawei and Alowayr (2020) argue that incorporating hedonic motivation allows researchers to capture emotional and experiential drivers that cannot be fully explained by traditional cognitive variables such as trust or credibility. Accordingly, hedonic motivation serves as a mediating mechanism that translates influencer-related stimuli and social pressures such as FOMO into impulsive purchasing behavior on TikTok. Hedonic motivation is commonly operationalized as a multidimensional construct. Arnold and Reynolds (2003) identify six key dimensions, including adventure shopping, social shopping, gratification shopping, idea shopping, role shopping, and value shopping. These dimensions capture diverse non-utilitarian psychological drivers underlying consumer behavior. Measurement is typically conducted באמצעות Likert-scale questionnaires that assess the intensity of each motivational dimension (Miller, 2021).

Empirical evidence suggests that hedonic motivation reflects consumers' tendency to seek emotional pleasure, mood enhancement, and sensory stimulation, thereby making purchasing decisions more driven by psychological satisfaction than by functional product benefits (Ha, 2020). In digital contexts, this motivation plays a central role in driving impulsive buying and spontaneous consumption responses, particularly when shopping is perceived as a form of escape, entertainment, or emotional regulation (Evangelin *et al.,* 2021; Tarka *et al.,* 2022). Recent studies further indicate that the pursuit of hedonic gratification may evolve into compulsive buying behavior and potentially lead to addictive consumption patterns when individuals rely on shopping as a coping mechanism for stress or emotional imbalance (O'Guinn & Faber, 1989; Verplanken & Sato, 2011; Febrilia *et al.,* 2024). These findings underscore that hedonic motivation has significant psychological and behavioral implications in contemporary consumption.

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Hypothesis Development

Credibility and impulsive buying

Influencer credibility, constructed through dimensions such as expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness (Sesar *et al.,* 2022), generates powerful marketing signals that shape consumer perceptions. In social media contexts, credible influencers are not only perceived as reliable sources of information but also as opinion leaders who can shape how audiences evaluate brands and products. Empirical evidence shows that influencers play a significant role in strengthening customer brand engagement and shaping brand perception, indicating that credibility extends beyond persuasion to influence deeper cognitive and affective responses (Sijabat *et al.,* 2022). Within the fast-paced and visually driven environment of TikTok, credible influencers present products not merely as functional items but as integral elements of desirable lifestyles. This aligns with findings from Wulyatiningsih et al. (2026), who demonstrate that influencer marketing can shape consumer attitudes and behaviors through affective mechanisms, particularly by fostering positive brand attitudes that encourage favorable behavioral outcomes. In such environments, the boundaries between entertainment, social interaction, and commerce become increasingly blurred, amplifying the persuasive power of influencers. Exposure to recommendations from trusted influencers can directly trigger impulsive buying behavior, as consumers often associate influencer credibility with product quality and reliability (Shamim & Islam, 2022). When consumers perceive influencers as credible, they may rely on heuristic processing rather than deliberate evaluation, leading to quicker and more spontaneous purchase decisions. Thus, influencer credibility is expected to be a significant driver of impulse buying, particularly on digital platforms characterized by high emotional engagement and rapid content consumption.

H1: TikTok influencer credibility has a positive effect on impulsive buying

The Mediating Role of Trust

The influence of credibility is often transmitted through deeper psychological mechanisms, particularly trust. Trust functions as a cognitive bridge that reduces perceived risk in purchasing decisions (Mayer *et al.,* 1995). When influencers are perceived as credible, followers develop confidence that their recommendations are honest and reliable (Belanche *et al.,* 2021). This trust subsequently lowers psychological barriers, facilitating impulsive purchasing behavior.

H2: Trust mediates the positive relationship between influencer credibility and impulsive buying.

FOMO and Impulsive Buying

FOMO operates through a distinct psychological pathway. It reflects the anxiety of missing out on valuable experiences, trends, or social moments presented on social media (Gupta & Sharma, 2021). On platforms such as TikTok, where trends emerge and fade rapidly, this pressure can drive individuals to engage in impulse buying to maintain social connections and relevance (Good and Hyman, 2020).
H3: FOMO has a positive effect on impulsive buying.

The Mediating Role of Hedonic Motivation

FOMO not only exerts a direct influence but also activates emotional drivers of consumption. It stimulates hedonic motivation, defined as the desire for pleasure, escape, and immediate emotional

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gratification (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). The anxiety associated with missing out is transformed into a desire to engage in pleasurable consumption, with impulsive buying serving as a mechanism for emotional relief (Tarka *et al.,* 2022).

H4: Hedonic motivation mediates the positive relationship between FOMO and impulsive buying.

Based on the proposed conceptual framework, Figure 1 illustrates the causal relationships among the variables examined in this study. The model captures the influence of TikTok influencer credibility and Fear of Missing Out on impulsive buying, while emphasizing the mediating roles of trust and hedonic motivation. This framework provides a comprehensive representation of both direct and indirect relationships and serves as an empirical guide grounded in the study's theoretical foundations.

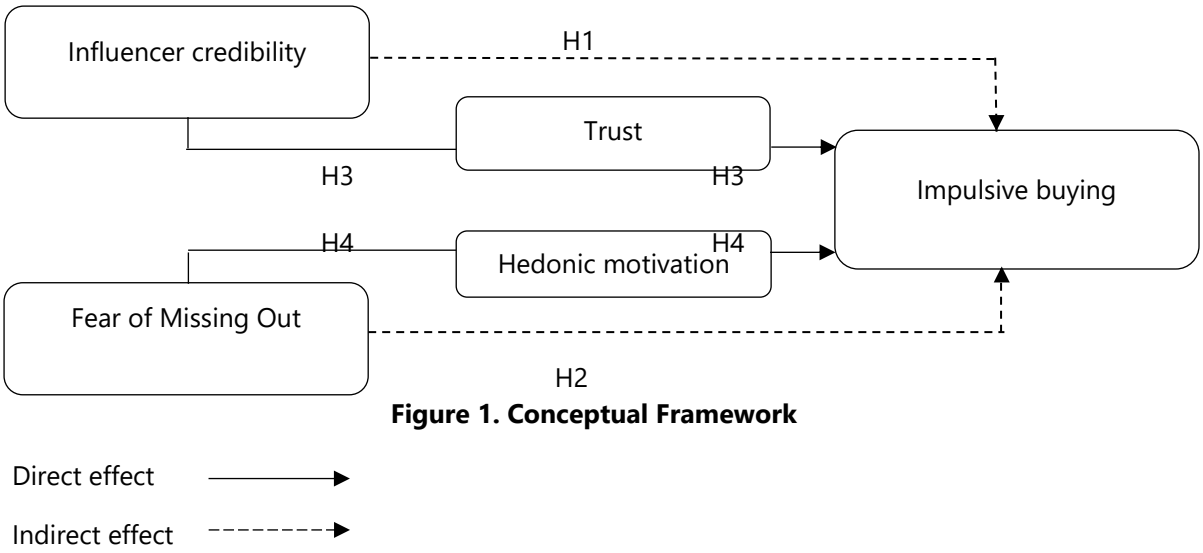

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Research Method

This study employs a quantitative research design integrating descriptive and correlational approaches to examine the effects of TikTok influencer credibility and FOMO on impulsive buying, with trust and hedonic motivation as mediating variables. Descriptive statistics are used to summarize data characteristics and provide an empirical overview of respondent profiles and variable distributions, thereby supporting the interpretation of consumer behavior within digital environments (Limanto *et al.,* 2020; Green *et al.,* 2023). The correlational approach enables the examination of interrelationships among key constructs within the TikTok social commerce context. Primary data were collected through an online survey administered to TikTok users in North Sulawesi, Indonesia. The population comprises individuals who have purchased from TikTok Shop after being exposed to influencer content. To ensure relevance, the inclusion criteria required respondents to be at least 17 years old, have an active TikTok account, and have prior purchasing experience on TikTok Shop, driven by influencer exposure.

The sample size was determined following SEM guidelines that recommend a minimum ratio of 5 observations per indicator (Hair *et al.,* 2019). With 35 measurement indicators, the minimum required sample was 175 respondents. A total of 245 valid responses were obtained, exceeding this threshold. A convenience sampling technique was employed due to its efficiency and practicality in accessing digitally active respondents (Stratton, 2021). While this approach may limit generalizability, it is appropriate for exploratory research in rapidly evolving digital contexts. Data were collected using a

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structured questionnaire comprising 35 items that measured five constructs. Influencer credibility was assessed using indicators adapted from Ohanian (1990), FOMO from Przybylski et al. (2013), trust from Gefen et al. (2003), hedonic motivation from Arnold and Reynolds (2003), and impulsive buying from Rook and Fisher (1995). All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to agree strongly. The instrument was developed based on an extensive literature review, followed by validation and reliability checks, and translated into clear Indonesian to ensure respondent comprehension. The questionnaire was distributed online using Google Forms, enabling efficient data collection across geographically dispersed respondents. Prior to analysis, data were screened for completeness and consistency. Only valid and fully completed responses were included. Descriptive analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25 to examine demographic characteristics and identify potential anomalies in the data. Hypothesis testing was performed using SEM PLS with SmartPLS version 4.0. SEM-PLS was selected for its suitability for complex models with multiple mediating variables and its robustness to non-normal data (Hair *et al.,* 2019). In addition, SEM allows for simultaneous estimation of measurement and structural models, facilitating a comprehensive assessment of relationships among latent constructs (Fornell, 1982; Kotsiantis, 2020; Rudin *et al.,* 2022).

The measurement model was evaluated through convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability assessments. Convergent validity was established when factor loadings exceeded 0.70. Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loadings, where the square root of the Average Variance Extracted for each construct exceeded its correlations with other constructs. Reliability was confirmed when Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values exceeded 0.70, and Average Variance Extracted values exceeded 0.50 (Hair *et al.,* 2019). The structural model was evaluated using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples to assess the significance of the path coefficients. This approach provides robust estimates of direct and indirect effects, enabling a comprehensive examination of the mediating roles of trust and hedonic motivation.

Results and Discussion

Analysis Result

As shown in Table 1, the final sample consisted of 245 respondents, predominantly female (79.59 percent) and aged between 18 and 24 years (83.67 percent). Most respondents had a high school education (82.86 percent), followed by an undergraduate degree (13.47 percent), a diploma (3.27 percent), and a postgraduate degree (0.41 percent). Regarding platform engagement, the majority reported using TikTok for more than 4 hours per day (33.47 percent). Notably, 81.63 percent of respondents reported making purchases after exposure to influencer content, indicating strong engagement with TikTok Shop and supporting the study's contextual relevance.

Measurement model

The next stage of this study involves evaluating the measurement model before testing the structural model or the research hypotheses. The purpose of this evaluation is to verify the validity and reliability of the relationships among the exogenous variables (TikTok influencer credibility and FOMO), the mediating variables (trust and hedonic motivation), and the endogenous variable (impulse buying). The analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0.

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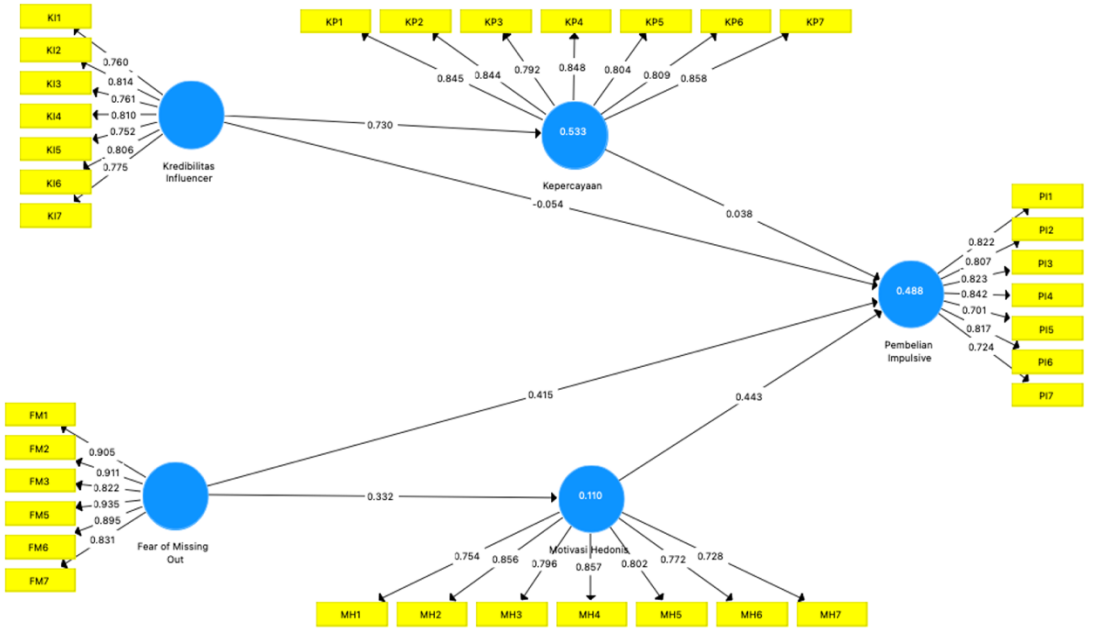
Convergent Validity

The results of the convergent validity evaluation indicate that all indicators used to measure the five variables (FOMO, Trust, Influencer Credibility, Hedonic Motivation, and Impulse Buying) meet the required minimum factor loading criteria. All factor loadings exceed the threshold of 0.70, confirming that convergent validity has been established for each construct. These findings are presented in detail in Figure 2 and Table 2.

Tabel 1. Respondents' demographic profile

Variable	Level	n	%
Gender	Male	50	20.41
	Female	195	79.59
Age	< 18 years	25	10.20
	18 – 24 years	205	83.67
	25 – 34 years	9	3.67
	35 – 44 years	5	2.04
	> 44 years	1	0.41
Last education	High school	203	82.86
	Diploma	8	3.27
	Undergaduates	33	13.47
	Postgraduates	1	0.41
TikTok usage frequency per day	< 1 hour	41	16.37
	1 – 2 hours	67	27.35
	3 – 4 hours	55	22.45
	> 4 hours	82	33.47

Source: *PLS Output (2026)*



Source: *PLS Output (2026)*

Figure 2. Measurement Model

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Table 2. Results of the Measurement Model Evaluation (Factor Loadings)

Variable	Indicator	Factor Loading
Fear of Missing Out	FM1	0.90
	FM2	0.91
	FM3	0.82
	FM5	0.93
	FM6	0.89
	FM7	0.83
Trust	KP1	0.84
	KP2	0.84
	KP3	0.72
	KP4	0.84
	KP5	0.80
	KP6	0.80
	KP7	0.85
Influencer Credibility	KI1	0.76
	KI2	0.81
	KI3	0.76
	KI4	0.81
	KI5	0.75
	KI6	0.80
	KI7	0.77
Hedonic Motivation	MH1	0.75
	MH2	0.85
	MH3	0.79
	MH4	0.85
	MH5	0.80
	MH6	0.77
	MH7	0.72
Impulsive Buying	PI1	0.82
	PI2	0.80
	PI3	0.82
	PI4	0.84
	PI5	0.70
	PI6	0.81
	PI7	0.72

Source: *PLS Output (2026)*

Discriminant Validity

Table 3. Fornell-Larcker Criteria

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Fear of Missing Out (1)	0.88				
Trust (2)	0.29	0.82			
Influencer credibility (3)	0.12	0.73	0.78		
Hedonic motivation (4)	0.33	0.64	0.59	0.79	
Impulsive buying (5)	0.65	0.40	0.28	0.57	0.79

Source: *PLS Output (2026)*

This study was further extended by testing discriminant validity using advanced statistical techniques, namely the Fornell–Larcker criterion, cross-loadings, and the heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT)

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ratio. Discriminant validity assessment using the Fornell–Larcker criterion was conducted by comparing the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct with the inter-construct correlation values in the model. Discriminant validity is considered established when the square root of the AVE exceeds the correlations between distinct constructs. The results of the Fornell–Larcker criterion are presented in Table 3, where each cell represents the correlations between constructs. At the same time, the diagonal values indicate the square root of the AVE for each construct.

The Fornell–Larcker analysis presented in Table 3 confirms that the research model's discriminant validity requirements have been satisfied. The results indicate that the square root of the AVE for each construct consistently exceeds the corresponding inter-construct correlations. Specifically, Fear of Missing Out records a value of 0.88, followed by Trust (0.82), Influencer Credibility (0.78), Hedonic Motivation (0.79), and Impulse Buying (0.79). In greater detail, Fear of Missing Out demonstrates strong internal consistency with a value of 0.88, while its lowest correlation is observed with Influencer Credibility (0.12). The Trust construct maintains measurement stability, with its diagonal value of 0.82 exceeding its highest correlation with Influencer Credibility (0.73). Influencer Credibility itself exhibits clear discriminant properties, as reflected by its foundational value of 0.78. Hedonic Motivation and Impulse Buying, despite having identical AVE values (0.79), retain distinct measurement characteristics. The correlation between these two constructs (0.57) remains within an acceptable range. Furthermore, the strongest relationship between Impulse Buying and Fear of Missing Out (0.65) remains below the square root of the AVE for the respective construct. These empirical findings affirm that each latent variable explains the variance of its respective indicators more effectively than other constructs in the model. The results also validate the conceptual independence among constructs. Therefore, it can be concluded that the research instrument is not only reliable but also demonstrates adequate specificity in accurately measuring each variable without overlap.

Construct Reliability

Subsequently, reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). A construct is considered reliable if it meets the following criteria: (1) Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability exceed 0.70, and (2) AVE exceeds 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The complete results of the reliability assessment are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Reliability Testing

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	CR	AVE
Fear of Missing Out	0.944	0.949	0.955	0.782
Trust	0.924	0.926	0.939	0.687
Influencer Credibility	0.895	0.899	0.917	0.613
Hedonic Motivation	0.904	0.909	0.924	0.634
Impulsive Buying	0.900	0.903	0.922	0.628

Source: *PLS Output (2026)*

Based on the reliability test results presented in Table 4, all constructs in this study meet the criteria for measurement reliability. The values of Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) for all variables exceed the minimum threshold of 0.70, while the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are above the required cutoff of 0.50. Specifically, the Fear of Missing Out variable demonstrates the highest level of reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.944, Composite Reliability of 0.955, and AVE of

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0.782. Meanwhile, although the Influencer Credibility variable records the lowest AVE value (0.613), it still exceeds the minimum acceptable threshold. Similarly, the Trust variable achieves an AVE of 0.687, while Hedonic Motivation and Impulse Buying have AVEs of 0.634 and 0.628, respectively. These findings confirm that all research instruments exhibit strong internal consistency and explain more than 50% of the variance in their respective indicators. Therefore, it can be concluded that all variables in this study are reliable and meet the requirements for further analysis.

Model Fit Assessment

The coefficient of determination (R^2) quantifies the proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables in the model. As presented in Table 5, the R^2 value for Brand Trust is 0.553, with an adjusted R^2 of 0.530. This indicates that 55.3% of the variance in Brand Trust is explained by the predictors included in the model. Meanwhile, the model explains 48.8% of the variance in Impulse Buying (R^2 = 0.488) and 11.0% of the variance in Hedonic Motivation (R^2 = 0.110). The close alignment between the R^2 and adjusted R^2 values reflects a well-calibrated model, suggesting that its explanatory power is driven by substantive factors rather than merely by model complexity.

Table 5. R- Square Values

Construct	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Trust	0.553	0.530
Hedonic Motivation	0.110	0.106
Impulsive Buying	0.488	0.478

Source: *PLS Output (2026)*

The magnitude of the effect of each independent variable was assessed using the f^2 statistic, with thresholds of 0.02 (small effect), 0.15 (medium effect), and 0.35 (large effect). The results presented in Table 6 indicate that Influencer Credibility exerts a very large effect (f^2 = 1.140) on Brand Trust. For the Impulse Buying construct, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) demonstrates a large effect (f^2 = 0.238), followed by Hedonic Motivation, which shows a moderate effect (f^2 = 0.200). Meanwhile, the direct effects of Brand Trust and Influencer Credibility on Impulse Buying are relatively minimal. These findings highlight that although most independent variables exhibit limited direct effects, FOMO and Hedonic Motivation play a critical role in driving impulse buying behavior.

Table 6. F- Square Values

Construct	Trust	Hedonic Motivation	Impulsive Buying
FOMO		0.124	0.238
Trust			0.001
Influencer credibility	1.140		0.002
Hedonic Motivation			0.200
Impulsive Buying			

Source: *PLS Output (2026)*

The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value for the saturated model is 0.085, which falls within the acceptable threshold for complex models (≤ 0.10). A high chi-square statistic is common with large sample sizes and does not necessarily undermine the model's validity. The Normed

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Fit Index (NFI) of 0.771 is below the ideal threshold of 0.90; however, it still reflects a moderate level of model fit.

Additionally, the discrepancy measures d_ULS and d_G further support the consistency between the observed and estimated model matrices. Overall, although not all fit criteria are perfectly satisfied, the acceptable SRMR and moderate NFI values indicate that the model is adequate and reasonably represents the data for hypothesis testing purposes.

Table 7. Goodness of Fit Model

Construct	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.085	0.199
d_ULS	4.252	23.493
d_G	1.259	1.451
Chi-Square	1333.743	1460.380
NFI	0.771	0.750

Source: *PLS Output (2026)*

Structural Model

The hypothesis testing results presented in Table 8 reveal an interesting pattern of relationships between exogenous and endogenous variables. The findings for H1 indicate that TikTok influencer credibility does not significantly affect impulse buying (β = -0.050, p = 0.526). This result contradicts the study by Shamim and Islam (2022), which found that message credibility significantly influences impulsive purchasing behavior. The lack of significance suggests that even when an influencer is perceived as credible, this does not automatically drive consumers to make spontaneous purchases on TikTok.

Table 8. Result of the hypothesis testing

Path Relation	Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics (β)	P Values	Significant
FOMO ➔ Hedonic Motivation	0.338	0.080	4.179	0.000	Yes
FOMO ➔ Impulsive Buying	0.417	0.063	6.529	0.000	Yes
Trust ➔ Impulsive Buying	0.031	0.089	0.429	0.668	No
Influencer Credibility ➔ Trust	0.733	0.042	17.311	0.000	Yes
Influencer Credibility ➔ Impulsive Buying	-0.050	0.085	0.635	0.526	No
Hedonic Motivation ➔ Impulsive Buying	0.449	0.074	5.955	0.000	Yes

Source: *PLS Output (2026)*

In contrast, H2, which examines the effect of FOMO on impulse buying, is statistically significant (β = 0.417, p < 0.001). This finding is consistent with Good and Hyman (2020), who demonstrated that the fear of missing out on products or experiences can directly trigger impulsive and emotionally driven purchasing decisions.

Furthermore, H3, which investigates the effect of influencer credibility on consumer trust, yields a significant result (β = 0.733, p < 0.001). This aligns with the study by Belanche *et al.* (2021), which emphasizes that when influencers are perceived as credible, followers are more likely to identify with them, thereby enhancing trust. Similarly, H4, which tests the effect of FOMO on hedonic motivation, also shows a significant result (β = 0.338, p < 0.001), supporting the findings of Tarka *et al.* (2022) that anxiety about missing trends can be transformed into a desire to shop driven by pleasurable sensations.

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Mediating Analysis

The mediation analysis presented in Table 9 provides deeper insight into the indirect mechanisms operating within the research model. The results for H5 indicate that trust is not a significant mediator of the relationship between influencer credibility and impulse buying (β = 0.028, p = 0.670). Although influencer credibility significantly enhances trust, as suggested by Mayer *et al.* (1995), who argue that trust functions as a cognitive bridge that reduces perceived risk, in the context of TikTok, this trust does not translate into increased impulse buying behavior.

In contrast, H6, which examines the mediating role of hedonic motivation in the relationship between FOMO and impulse buying, yields a significant result (β = 0.147, p < 0.001). This finding supports the work of Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) as well as Tarka *et al.* (2022), which suggests that FOMO triggers hedonic motivation (i.e., a desire for immediate pleasure), which in turn drives impulse buying. In other words, the anxiety associated with FOMO is transformed into a pursuit of pleasure through shopping activities, ultimately manifesting in spontaneous purchasing behavior.

These findings imply that, in the context of TikTok, affective mechanisms (hedonic motivation) are more effective in explaining impulsive behavior than cognitive mechanisms (trust). Therefore, marketers are advised to leverage content that evokes positive emotions and pleasurable sensations, alongside strategies to build trust through credible influencers.

Table 9. Results of the mediation analysis

Construct	T Statistics (β)	P Values	Remarks
Influencer credibility ➔ Trust ➔ Impulsive Buying	0.427	0.670	Not supported
FOMO ➔ Hedonic Motivation ➔ Impulsive Buying	3.510	0.000	Supported

Source: *PLS Output (2026)*

Discussion

This study successfully uncovers the complex psychological mechanisms underlying impulse buying behavior on TikTok Shop using a dual-mediation approach. The key findings confirm the initial proposition regarding the dominance of the affective pathway, in which FOMO leads to hedonic motivation, within the TikTok ecosystem. In contrast, the cognitive pathway, in which influencer credibility leads to trust, exhibits a more complex and indirect pattern.

The results reveal that FOMO has a strong and significant direct effect on impulse buying. This finding is empirically supported by Good and Hyman (2020, 2021), who conceptualized consumer-oriented FOMO and suggested that concerns about missing out on products, deals, or experiences directly trigger impulsive, emotionally driven purchasing decisions. In the TikTok context, characterized by rapidly evolving viral content and intense digital social pressure, the urge to follow trends and avoid being left behind (Argan *et al.,* 2023; Mandagi & Aseng, 2021) appears to be a primary driver compelling consumers to act spontaneously, often without careful product evaluation.

Hedonic motivation is found to serve as a significant partial mediator in the relationship between FOMO and impulse buying. This finding provides strong support for the proposed affective pathway. Consistent with the experiential consumption theory of Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), as well as more recent studies (Tarka *et al.,* 2022; Zielke *et al.,* 2023), FOMO-induced anxiety is transformed

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into a pursuit of immediate hedonic gratification, such as pleasure, emotional escape, and psychological satisfaction derived from the act of shopping itself. In this sense, impulse buying serves as an emotional regulation strategy to alleviate the psychological tension associated with FOMO by providing temporary pleasure. Moreover, TikTok's immersive, entertainment-driven platform design, which fosters a continuous-flow experience, further amplifies the transformation of social anxiety into hedonic consumption impulses.

The findings also reveal a paradoxical pattern that reinforces the argument of a shifting digital persuasion paradigm. TikTok influencer credibility does not have a significant direct effect on impulse buying. This result aligns with Chen, Lou, and Yuan (2019), who found that credibility often operates through indirect mechanisms, and with Schouten et al. (2020), who identified a disconnect between evaluative cognition, such as credibility assessments, and actual consumer behavior. In a TikTok environment dominated by continuous scrolling, high affective stimulation, and fragmented attention, traditional cognitive evaluation of source attributes, including expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, may be distorted or even bypassed.

Although influencer credibility significantly enhances trust, as explained by Mayer et al. (1995) and supported by Belanche et al. (2021), trust does not serve as an effective mediator between credibility and impulse buying. This failure of the cognitive mediation pathway represents a critical finding of the study. It suggests that in the contemporary social commerce context, characterized by a high prevalence of sponsored content, trust derived from perceived credibility is no longer sufficient to bridge the gap toward spontaneous purchasing behavior. Audiences may have developed skepticism toward the commercial motives behind influencer recommendations, rendering trust insufficient to reduce perceived risk and trigger impulsivity meaningfully (Chen *et al.,* 2019). Consequently, persuasion processes on platforms like TikTok appear to be driven more by emotional appeal, such as FOMO and hedonic motivation, than by cognitive evaluations, including credibility and trust.

The overall configuration of results reinforces the dominance of the affective pathway. It supports the findings of Sokolova and Kefi (2019) regarding a shift in digital persuasion paradigms, from traditional cognitive-based models toward more affective and socially driven mechanisms. On TikTok, where algorithms are designed to maximize emotional engagement through continuous scrolling and exposure to viral content, psychological pressures associated with FOMO and the pursuit of hedonic pleasure become powerful drivers that diminish the relevance of slower, more deliberative cognitive evaluation processes.

Conclusion

This study offers an original contribution to the social commerce and digital consumer behavior literature by examining and comparing the strength of two psychological pathways, affective versus cognitive, in explaining impulse buying within the specific ecosystem of TikTok Shop. From a theoretical perspective, the study confirms the dominance of the affective pathway, in which FOMO stimulates hedonic motivation and subsequently drives impulse buying, as the primary mechanism on a platform designed for high emotional stimulation. Furthermore, the findings reveal the limitations of the traditional cognitive pathway: influencer credibility does not exert a direct effect, and trust does not serve as an effective mediator. These results provide empirical support for the notion of a shifting digital persuasion paradigm. In addition, this study introduces and validates a dual mediation model that captures the complexity of psychological mechanisms within contemporary social media platforms.

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From a practical standpoint, the findings offer three key strategic implications for marketers and businesses on TikTok. First, marketing strategies should prioritize emotional drivers. Campaigns should be designed to actively leverage and manage FOMO, for example, through limited-time offers or live shopping formats that create a sense of urgency while delivering entertaining, hedonic shopping experiences. Second, there is a need to reconceptualize the role of influencers. Rather than relying solely on credibility as a static signal of quality, collaborations should focus on influencers' ability to evoke emotions, foster parasocial interaction, and create enjoyable consumption experiences. Third, trust should be built through experience rather than credentials. Given that trust derived from perceived credibility does not effectively drive impulsive behavior, it should instead be developed through transparent communication, consistent service quality, and exceptional post-purchase experiences to support long-term customer loyalty beyond impulsive transactions.

This study also acknowledges several limitations. The research is limited by its geographic focus on North Sulawesi and a sample largely dominated by Generation Z, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future research may extend this work in several directions. It is recommended to test the model's generalizability across different regions and more diverse demographic groups. Further studies may also explore additional moderating variables that could strengthen or weaken the identified affective pathway. In addition, experimental methods or eye-tracking techniques could provide more precise insights into real-time decision-making on TikTok. Finally, future research should investigate the potential negative impacts of FOMO-based marketing strategies on consumer well-being, an important yet underexplored issue. This study not only provides a clear theoretical mapping of impulse-buying dynamics on TikTok but also establishes a solid empirical foundation for developing marketing theory and practice that are more responsive to the evolving logic of persuasion in the short-form video platform era.

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Corresponding author

Deske W. Mandagi can be contacted at: deskemandagi@unklab.ac.id