

A Study on Factors Influencing Impulse Buying Behavior of Generation Z in TikTok Mega Live Sessions

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ABSTRACT

The S-O-R model explains how environmental stimuli (S - Stimulus) influence an individual's emotional and cognitive responses (O - Organism), which subsequently lead to behavioral responses (R - Response). Using this framework, the study examines factors affecting the impulse buying behavior of Vietnamese Generation Z in TikTok Mega Live sessions. The findings indicate that the "Environment" factor (S) has an impact level of 0.803 on the "Organism" factor (O), while the "Organism" factor (O) influences impulse buying behavior (R - Response) with an impact level of 0.597. Based on these results, the study provides recommendations for businesses, KOLs, e-commerce platforms such as TikTok Shop, and Generation Z.

Keywords: Factors, behavior, impulse buying, Generation Z, TikTok Mega Live

1. Introduction

The rapid development of e-commerce and the growing trend of online shopping have enabled social media platforms, particularly TikTok, to become crucial sales channels. In 2024, TikTok was the most downloaded mobile application worldwide, with 825.5 million downloads that year (Statista, 2023). Currently, TikTok has billions of users globally, with millions of videos shared daily, covering a wide range of topics. Since 2022, TikTok has experienced explosive user growth, with an average of more than 650,000 new users per day – equivalent to nearly eight new users every second (Simon Kemp, 2022). According to Simon Kemp (2022), TikTok's audience skews younger, with users aged 18-24 accounting for nearly 43% of the platform's total adult users, and 57% of users being female. A typical global TikTok user now spends an average of 19.6 hours per month on the platform. This has positioned TikTok as a powerful marketing tool and an effective sales channel, particularly for Generation Z.

As one of the world's most popular social media platforms, TikTok Mega Live – large-scale live shopping events – has attracted significant participation from consumers, especially Generation Z. Selling through TikTok Mega Live sessions has become increasingly popular among global consumers, offering them an engaging, informative, and immersive shopping experience. Beyond connecting sellers and consumers worldwide, Mega Live shopping can also reshape purchasing habits and serve as a key channel for leveraging consumers' "see now, buy now" impulse (Lo, P. S., et al., 2022). Given Gen Z's preference for digital experiences, attraction to visually engaging and interactive content, and susceptibility to trends, this generation has emerged as a key driver behind the rise of impulse buying behavior on TikTok (Vi, N.H., et al., 2024).

Based on this research context, the objectives of this study are as follows:

- (i) Identify the factors influencing impulse buying behavior of Gen Z during TikTok Mega Live sessions;
- (ii) Assess the impact level of each factor on impulse buying behavior;
- (iii) Propose solutions for sellers and e-commerce platforms to optimize their strategies for engaging Gen Z customers and enhancing business performance.

Through this study, the authors aim to clarify the mechanisms underlying impulse buying behavior among Gen Z in Vietnam on TikTok while contributing to the theoretical framework of consumer behavior in the digital era.

2. Theoretical basis and research overview

2.1. Definition and characteristics of impulse buying behavior in generation Z

Generation Z: Psychological and behavioral traits

According to the Pew Research Center (2019), Generation Z (Gen Z), also known as Zoomers, consists of individuals born between 1997 and 2012, accounting for nearly 25% of the global population. The year 1997 marks the starting point of this generation due to significant social, economic, and technological shifts that shaped their experiences.

Merriam-Webster defines Gen Z as "the generation of people born in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, generally identified as beginning around 1996 or 1997 and extending to approximately 2010." While specific birth years may vary slightly across sources, this report classifies Gen Z as those born between 1997 and 2010.

In Vietnam, data from the General Statistics Office indicates that as of 2025, the number of Gen Z individuals in the working-age group (15–29 years old) is approximately 20.46 million, accounting for 20.1% of the total population (PopulationPyramid.net, 2025). By 2025, Gen Z will be between 15 and 30 years old, becoming a dominant and influential consumer group in household purchasing decisions (PwC, 2021). This statistic highlights the pivotal role of Vietnamese Gen Z in economic activities, both as producers and primary consumers.

Due to globalization, urbanization, and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Gen Z has had limited exposure to the physical world and has been highly dependent on technology from an early age. Social media platforms and mobile applications profoundly influence this generation. Born into a period of economic prosperity, Gen Z generally experiences fewer financial hardships. Platforms like TikTok have become essential tools for Gen Z to connect, share, and express their personalities. TikTok's unique and diverse content appeals to Gen Z's preference for novelty and creativity, catering to their short attention spans and constant desire for change (An, Ngo, T. T., et al., 2023).

The popularity of TikTok and Gen Z's engagement with it present opportunities for businesses to reach this demographic. Live streaming, a technology that allows users to broadcast and interact in real time, has emerged as a key medium. Unlike traditional online shopping, where consumers rely on static images or pre-recorded videos, live streaming provides a more detailed and immersive shopping experience, delivering comprehensive product information and fostering direct interaction between sellers and buyers (Vi, N.H., et al.).

Impulse buying behavior

Impulse buying, also referred to as emotional or spontaneous purchasing, occurs when consumers make unplanned purchases driven by emotions rather than rational decision-making (Ahmad, S. H., et al., 2022; Lin, C. T., et al., 2018).

Stern (1962) defines impulse buying as “any purchase made by a consumer that was not pre-planned.” This behavior is characterized by a sudden urge to buy a product without prior intention or consideration of long-term consequences. The convenience and automation of online and mobile shopping have further facilitated impulse buying, making it easier for consumers to make spontaneous purchases.

According to Rook (1987), “Impulse buying occurs when consumers experience a sudden, often strong and persistent urge to purchase something immediately. This urge creates a complex state of emotional excitement, which may also lead to conflicting feelings. Additionally, impulse buying tends to occur when consumers pay little attention to its consequences.” This perspective

emphasizes the intense desire for acquisition, the pleasure associated with the purchase, and the disregard for potential post-purchase consequences.

Similarly, Piron (1991) describes impulse buying as an unplanned purchasing behavior, triggered by an external stimulus and decided on the spot. Following an impulse purchase, consumers may experience both emotional and cognitive reactions.

Key Characteristics of Impulse Buying Behavior (Ly, T. H., et al., 2023):

- Unplanned purchases – The consumer does not initially intend to buy the product.
- Trigger-based behavior – It occurs when the consumer encounters an external stimulus that induces a sudden urge to buy.
- Emotion-driven decision-making – The purchase is influenced more by emotions than rational considerations.

Understanding these characteristics is essential for businesses and marketers aiming to leverage impulse buying tendencies, particularly among Gen Z consumers in live shopping environments like TikTok Mega Live.

2.2. Research overview

S-O-R Model

Current research identifies the S-O-R model (Stimulus-Organism-Response), developed by Mehrabian & Russell (1974), as a theoretical framework for comprehensively understanding factors influencing impulse buying behavior. The model consists of three key components:

- Stimulus (S): External environmental factors that trigger a consumer's emotional and cognitive experiences.
- Organism (O): The consumer's internal evaluation and processing of the stimulus.
- Response (R): The consumer's behavioral reaction, which in this context refers to impulse buying.

The S-O-R model explains how external stimuli (S) influence an individual's emotional and cognitive responses (O), which subsequently lead to behavioral outcomes (R). This model has proven useful in consumer behavior analysis, originally developed for studying behavior in physical retail environments. Today, the S-O-R framework is one of the most widely used theoretical foundations in online impulse buying research (Chan, T. K., et al., 2017). However,

when applied to the impulse buying behavior of Gen Z in TikTok Mega Live sessions, modifications are required to account for platform-specific factors, such as algorithmic influence and the real-time nature of live streaming.

Key factors influencing impulse buying behavior

Previous studies have explored various factors influencing impulse buying behavior, including works by Abdelsalam, S., et al. (2020); Parsad, C., et al. (2021); Iyer, G., et al. (2020); Amos, C., et al. (2014); Mohan, G., Sivakumaran, B., & Sharma, P. (2013). While these studies approach the subject from different perspectives, they consistently identify two main categories of influencing factors:

a. Extrinsic factors (External stimuli - S)

These are environmental and contextual elements that trigger impulse buying:

- Livestream atmosphere: The sensory and interactive experience of a live shopping event.
- Crowd effects: Social proof and peer influence that create a sense of urgency.
- Instant promotions (scarcity messaging): Time-limited discounts or “only a few left” alerts that drive impulse decisions.
- Seller’s personal image and presence: The appearance, behavior, and credibility of the live streamer, which strongly influence consumers’ emotions and impulsive buying tendencies (Li Li et al., 2024).

b. Intrinsic factors (Consumer characteristics - O)

These are internal psychological and demographic factors shaping a consumer’s impulse buying tendencies:

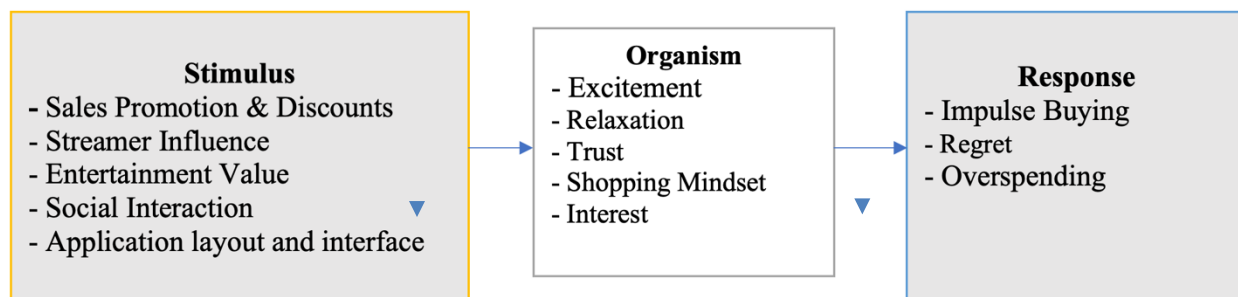
- Personal traits and motivations
- Emotional states
- Gender and age
- Desire for new experiences
- Brand perceptions and loyalty

By analyzing both extrinsic (S) and intrinsic (O) factors, the study aims to measure their impact on Gen Z’s impulse buying behavior (R) in TikTok Mega Live sessions. The insights gained will provide valuable recommendations for businesses, influencers, and e-commerce platforms seeking to optimize marketing strategies for this digitally native generation.

2.3. Proposed research model

Based on the literature review, the authors propose a research model to analyze the factors influencing Gen Z’s impulse buying behavior in TikTok Mega Live sessions, using the S-O-R (Stimulus-Organism-Response) model as the theoretical foundation. The model is structured as follows:

Figure 1. Proposed research model



Source: Proposed by the author group

Research hypotheses

H1: Environmental stimuli have a positive influence on the purchasing subject.

H2: Subject-related factors positively affect impulsive purchase intentions during Megalive TikTok sessions.

The specific measurement scales for each variable are as follows:

Table 1. Variables and measurement scales

Factor name	Code	Scale/Questions
(S) Environmental Stimulus		
Sales Promotion &	S1	I often decide to purchase promotional products on impulse, especially those available in limited

Discounts		quantities or for a short period of time.
Streamer Influence	S2	The livestreamer has an influence on my purchasing decisions.
Entertainment Value	S3	I enjoy watching livestream sales because the content is engaging.
Social Interaction	S4	I make purchases during livestreams because I see many other people buying as well.
Application layout and interface	S5	The interface of TikTok Shop makes me feel excited to watch and shop during Mega Live sessions.
(O) Organism – The emotions, habits, and purchasing psychology of young consumers.		
Excitement	O1	The direct interaction during livestreams makes me feel excited.
Relaxation	O2	I feel relaxed when shopping through livestreams.
Trust	O3	I enjoy watching live product reviews during livestreams.
Shopping Mindset	O4	I trust the quality of products sold during Mega Live sessions.
Interest	O5	I feel interested in the products introduced in livestreams.
(R) Response – Impulsive buying behavior		

Impulse Buying	R1	I often make unplanned purchases when watching Mega Live.
Regret	R2	After making a purchase, I sometimes regret buying on impulse.
Overspending	R3	I tend to spend more than intended when participating in Mega Live sessions.

Source: Proposed by the Author Group

3. Research methodology

This study employs a survey-based approach to collect data from members of Generation Z. The survey questions are designed based on the factors proposed in the conceptual model and corresponding measurement scales. The research adopts the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) as the foundational model for scale construction, with extensions and modifications derived from prior literature (Abdelsalam et al., 2020; Parsad et al., 2021; Iyer et al., 2020; Amos et al., 2014; Mohan, Sivakumaran, & Sharma, 2013).

The questionnaire comprises two main sections:

- Questions aimed at collecting general demographic and background information about the respondents.
- Questions designed to measure respondents' perceptions regarding each construct corresponding to the three factor groups in the proposed research model.

The content of the questionnaire was reviewed and discussed with subject matter experts, and a pilot study involving 10 respondents was conducted to refine the instrument. The final questionnaire was distributed online via Google Forms (<https://forms.gle/egovuLfNWaFuicft6>) to potential Gen Z consumers in Vietnam. Due to constraints in time and resources, the study employed a convenience sampling method.

A total of 107 responses were collected. Among these, 83 respondents who had previously made impulse purchases during TikTok megalive sessions proceeded to answer questions concerning influencing factors. The remaining 24 participants, who had not engaged in impulse purchasing on TikTok megalive, responded to questions regarding their reasons for not doing so. All items

in the study were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). The data were analyzed using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) technique.

A quantitative research methodology was adopted to analyze the collected survey data. The PLS-SEM software was utilized to test hypotheses and assess the impact levels of the various influencing factors.

Step 1: Assessment of measurement model

The measurement model was evaluated based on the quality of observed variables (outer loadings), scale reliability (Cronbach’s Alpha), convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

Step 2: Assessment of structural model

Following satisfactory evaluation of the measurement model, the structural model was assessed by examining the relationships between constructs, path coefficients, the coefficient of determination (R²), and effect sizes (f²).

4. Research results

4.1. Demographic characteristics of survey respondents

A total of 107 valid responses were collected via the online survey link. The respondents’ demographic information—including gender, occupation, age, and monthly income—is summarized below.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of survey respondents

Occupation of respondents			Age range		
Income	Number of Responses	Percentage (%)	Age Range	Number of Responses	Tỷ lệ
Under 5 million VND	86	80,4%	From 12 to under 18	15	14%
From 5 to under 10 million VND	15	14%	From 18 to under 23	87	81,3%
From 10 to under 50 million VND	4	3,7%	From 23 to 26	5	4,7%

More than 50 million VND	2	1,9%			
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Source: Survey Data

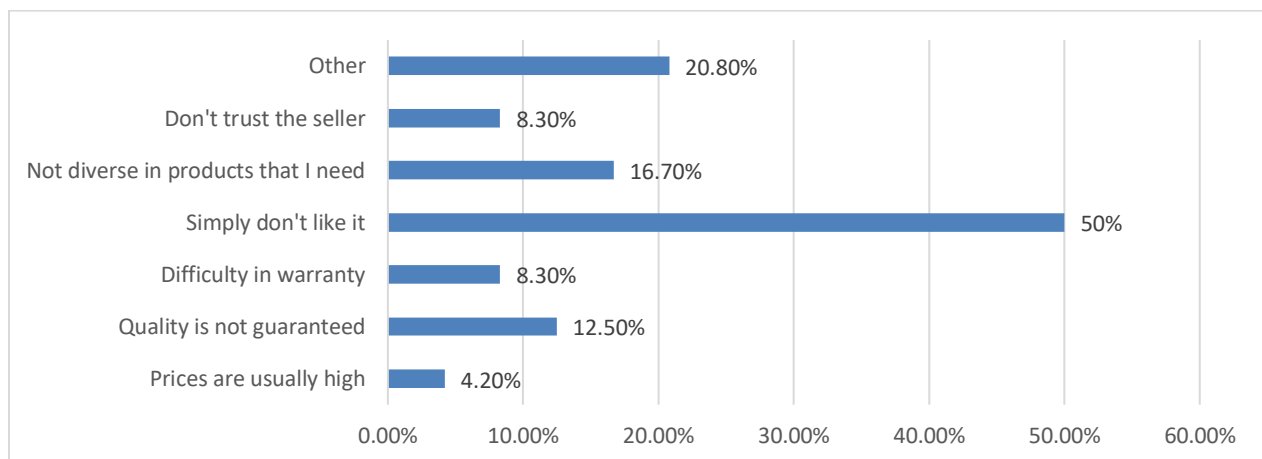
The majority of the survey respondents were female, with 93 individuals accounting for 86.9% of the total, followed by 8 males (7.5%) and 6 respondents (5.6%) who preferred not to disclose their gender.

As the target group of this study is Generation Z, most respondents were between the ages of 18 and under 23, with 87 individuals (81.3%). Additionally, 15 respondents (14%) were between 12 and under 18 years old, and 5 respondents (4.7%) were aged 23 to 26.

In terms of monthly income, the majority of respondents (80.4%) reported earning under 5 million VND. Meanwhile, 15 respondents (14%) reported an income between 5 and under 10 million VND; 4 respondents (3.7%) reported earning between 10 and under 50 million VND; and the smallest group reported an income exceeding 50 million VND (1.9%).

Online shopping has become increasingly familiar to today’s youth. Among the 107 respondents, 83 individuals (77.6%) reported having previously made purchases during TikTok mega live sessions, while 24 respondents (22.4%) had not. The reasons for not making impulse purchases during TikTok mega live sessions among the latter group are illustrated in figure 2.

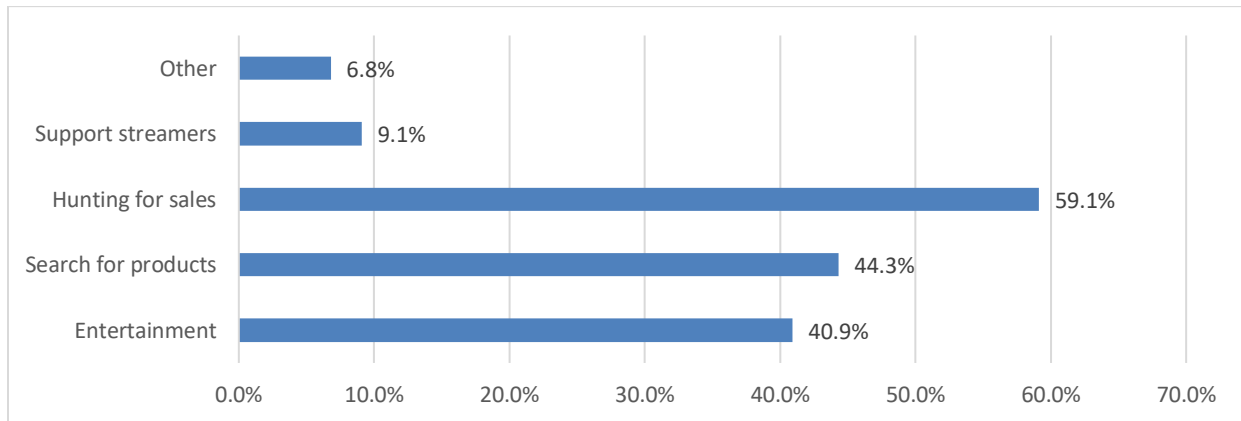
Figure 2. Reasons for not making impulse purchases during TikTok Megalive sessions



Source: Survey Data

Regarding the purposes of Generation Z when watching TikTok Mega Live sessions, 59.1% stated that they watched to hunt for sales, 44.3% aimed to discover products, and 40.9% watched solely for entertainment purposes.

Figure 3. Purposes of generation Z for watching TikTok Mega live sessions



Source: Survey Data

4.2. Results of the research model testing

4.2.1. Assessment of the measurement model

The quality of observed variables was evaluated using outer loadings. The reliability of the observed variables related to influencing factors is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Outer loadings of factors influencing impulse buying behavior among Generation Z

	O	R	S
O1	0,817		
O2	0,805		
O3	0,832		
O4	0,867		
O5	0,901		
R1		0,785	

R2		0,744	
R3		0,858	
S2			0,779
S3			0,800
S4			0,783
S5			0,751
S1			0,723

Source: Model Testing Results from the Research Team

The results in Table 3 indicate that the outer loadings of all observed variables related to factors influencing impulse buying behavior among Generation Z are greater than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2016), suggesting that the observed variables are statistically significant and reliable.

Reliability testing of the measurement scale

The reliability of the measurement scales for factors affecting impulse buying behavior among Generation Z was assessed using the PLS-SEM method, based on two key indicators: Cronbach’s Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR).

Table 4. Cronbach’s Alpha and Composite reliability of factors influencing impulse buying behavior among Generation Z

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
O	0,900	0,910	0,926	0,714
R	0,712	0,712	0,839	0,635
S	0,825	0,826	0,878	0,589

Source: Model testing results from the research team

According to Table 4, after conducting a reliability analysis using Cronbach’s Alpha, the results for each factor are as follows: Organism (O) = 0.900; Stimulus (S) = 0.825; Response (R) =

0.712. All scales meet the threshold of > 0.7 (DeVellis, 2012), and none violate any elimination rules. Therefore, no items were removed, and all factors are considered reliable.

The Composite Reliability (CR) of all observed variables is also greater than 0.7 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988) (see Table 4). As a result, the scales are considered reliable, analytically meaningful, and suitable for further factor analysis.

Convergent Validity

According to the data in Table 4, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each factor is: Organism (O) = 0.714; Stimulus (S) = 0.589; Response (R) = 0.635. All AVE values exceed the minimum threshold of 0.5 (Hock & Ringle, 2010), indicating that the model meets the conditions for convergent validity.

Discriminant Validity

The results in Table 5 present the Fornell–Larcker criterion for the research model examining factors influencing impulse buying behavior among Generation Z. The square roots of the AVE values (on the diagonal) for the factors- Organism (O) and Stimulus (S) are higher than the correlations with other constructs (off-diagonal values), satisfying the requirement for discriminant validity. Thus, the model meets the conditions of both cross-loading and the Fornell–Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 5. Fornell–Larcker Criterion for the Research Model on Factors Influencing Impulse Buying Behavior Among Generation Z

	O	R	S
O	0,845		
R	0,597	0,797	
S	0,803	0,623	0,768

Source: Model Testing Results from the Research Team

f² effect size values

The **f²** effect size indicates the magnitude of the impact of a construct when it is removed from the model. According to Cohen (1988), **f²** values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 correspond to small, medium, and large effects of the exogenous variables, respectively. If the effect size is less than 0.02, it is considered negligible.

Table 6. Summary of f² effect size values

	O	R	S
O		0,554	
R			
S	1,817		

Source: Model testing results from the research team

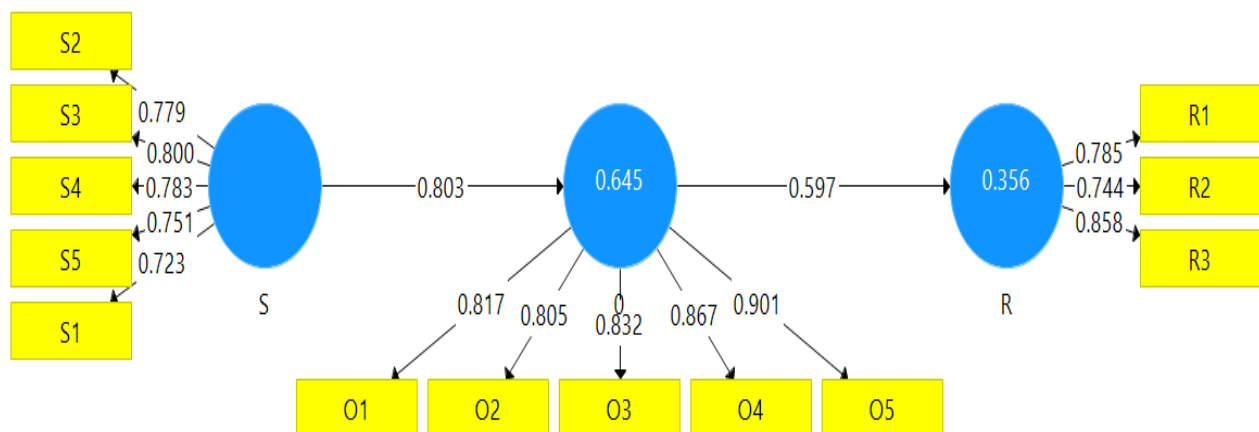
In this model, as shown in Table 6, the Organism (O) factor has an effect size of 0.544, and the Stimulus (S) factor reaches 1.817, indicating a strong influence on Gen Z’s impulse buying behavior (Response – R).

Results of structural model impact assessment

Assessment of influence relationships

The relationships and levels of influence between the factors affecting Gen Z’s impulse buying behavior, as analyzed through the SMARTPLS software, are illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Factors influencing Gen Z’s impulse buying behavior



Source: Model Testing Results from the Research Team using SMARTPLS

The results of the Bootstrap analysis evaluating the influence relationships are presented in Table 7. Accordingly, the variables “Organism” (O) and “Environment” (S) have an influence on the

“Impulse Buying Behavior of Gen Z (R).” These factors have P-values < 0.05, indicating statistical significance. Thus, hypotheses H1 and H2 are accepted at the 5% significance level.

Table 7. Path coefficients in the structural model

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
O -> R	0,597	0,600	0,082	7,276	0,000
S -> O	0,803	0,804	0,049	16,258	0,000

Source: Model Testing Results from the Research Team using SMARTPLS

The testing results in Table 7 show that, at a 95% confidence level, the “Environment” factor (S) has a significant impact of 0.803 on the “Organism” factor (O); and the “Organism” factor (O) exerts an impact of 0.597 on the “Response” factor (R), which represents impulse buying behavior. Accordingly, the regression equations are as follows:

$$O = 0.803 * S$$

$$R = 0.597 * O$$

Both coefficients (0.803 for S → O and 0.597 for O → R) are positive, which supports Hypotheses H1 and H2 regarding the positive influence.

Evaluation of the overall determination coefficient (R²)

The results of the PLS analysis provide R² values, which reflect the explanatory power of the independent variables on the dependent variables. The R² index (R-square value) measures the model’s overall fit to the data (i.e., how well the model explains the dependent variables). According to Hair et al. (2010), R² values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 are considered substantial, moderate, and weak, respectively.

Table 8. R Square – Degree of explanation of independent variables on dependent variables

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
O	0,645	0,641
R	0,356	0,349

Source: Model Testing Results from the Research Team

According to Table 8, the R^2 value for the Organism (O) factor is 0.645, and for the Response (R) factor is 0.356. The adjusted R^2 values are 0.641 and 0.349, respectively, which are considered appropriate for this study. This means that the Stimulus (S) factor explains 64.5% of the variance in the Organism (O), and 35.6% of the variance in the Response (R).

5. Discussion and recommendations

Discussion of findings

(i) Impact of stimulus on organism ($S \rightarrow O$, path coefficient = 0.803)

The path coefficient of 0.803 indicates that environmental stimuli (S) have a very strong influence on the organism (O). The component scales all exhibit strong effects on the organism, with no major differences among the individual indicators. In descending order of influence:

- S3 (0.800): Engaging content is a major driver of attention and interest.
- S4 (0.783): The effect of social proof plays a strong role, especially during livestream shopping sessions.
- S1 (0.779): Gen Z is drawn to limited-time offers or limited quantities, reflecting FOMO (Fear of Missing Out).
- S2 (0.779): The influence of streamers (KOLs) is significant in shaping purchasing decisions.
- S5 (0.751): The user-friendly interface of TikTok Shop contributes positively, though with slightly less influence than other factors.

(ii) Impact of organism on Gen Z's impulse buying behavior ($O \rightarrow R$, path coefficient = 0.597)

The coefficient of 0.597 reveals a significant influence of the Organism on impulse purchasing behavior, confirming its mediating role within the S-O-R model. The component scales for the Organism factor primarily measure various emotional and psychological dimensions, including:

- O5 (0.901): Product interest
- O4 (0.876): Trust in the product
- O3 (0.832): Information and reviews
- O1 (0.817): Excitement from direct interaction

- O2 (0.805): Relaxation during shopping

The study adopts three key indicators of impulse buying behavior:

- R1 (0.785): Unplanned purchases, indicating the prevalence of impulse buying among Gen Z during TikTok Megalive sessions.
- R2 (0.744): Post-purchase regret, likely due to lack of pre-planning.
- R3 (0.858): Overspending, the most prominent behavior, showing livestreaming's capacity to trigger unplanned financial decisions.

Recommendations

Based on the findings on the relationship between Stimulus (S), Organism (O), and Response (R) among Gen Z, environmental triggers—particularly within the TikTok Megalive context—play a crucial role in shaping psychology and purchasing behavior. The following are suggested strategies to enhance Gen Z's shopping experience while minimizing negative outcomes such as overspending and post-purchase regret:

- For businesses, KOLs, and e-commerce platforms like TikTok Shop: Leverage the most impactful environmental factors. Since engaging content (S3: 0.800) is the strongest driver, live-streams should focus on developing creative, appealing content that blends entertainment with product information to sustain attention. To enhance the effect of social proof, platforms can highlight the number of viewers, real-time purchases, and pin positive comments. Collaborations with influential KOLs in the Gen Z community should ensure authentic, relatable messaging to increase trust.
- For Gen Z consumers—the mediators in the S-O-R model: Personal awareness should be raised to promote more intentional purchasing behavior. Interest in the product (O5: 0.901) and trust (O4: 0.876) are the most influential factors. Thus, users are encouraged to question their actual needs before being swept away by emotional triggers like direct interaction (O1: 0.817) or immersive content. Setting a spending budget before engaging in shopping activities can help prevent overspending.

6. Conclusion

This study adheres closely to the theoretical framework of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model, clearly illustrating the influence of environmental stimuli (S) on consumer behavior (Response - R) through the mediating role of the organism (O). The research findings, including high path coefficients (0.803, 0.597, 0.356) and strong outer loadings (ranging from 0.723 to

0.901), indicate that the model effectively explains the relationships among the variables. Currently, the model assumes that factors in the Stimulus (S) group only influence the Organism (O) group, which in turn affects the Response (R) group. However, in reality, cross-group interactions may exist. Additionally, the model assumes uniform behavioral responses among individuals when exposed to environmental stimuli. In consumer behavior studies, individual differences such as self-control or price sensitivity are important considerations. Future research could refine the model by differentiating “social influence” into two levels (exogenous and endogenous) and incorporating moderating variables such as “self-control” and “price sensitivity” within the Organism (O) group.

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