

Trust as the Trigger: How Seller Credibility Mediates Motives and Impulse Buying in Pakistani Social Commerce

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Abstract

In order to explain the Urge to Impulse Buy (UIB) in Pakistan's high-risk social-commerce environment, this study creates and empirically investigates a novel mediation framework. Brand Intimacy Motive (BIM), Shopping Planning Motive (SPM), and Entertainment Motive (ETM) are three main digital consumption motives. The research suggests that these motivations do not always result in impulsive behavior, which goes against conventional wisdom. Instead, the relationship is mediated by Trust in Online Sellers (TOS), which is crucial due to widespread concerns over fraud, counterfeit products, and inconsistent seller credibility in the Pakistani market. The framework hypothesizes that high TOS acts as a critical psychological filter, reducing perceived risk and enabling the energy from BIM, SPM, and ETM to convert into UIB (H4, H5, H6). Furthermore, it is anticipated that TOS will directly improve UIB (H7). Utilizing a quantitative, cross-sectional design and data from active Pakistani social-commerce users, this study employs the PROCESS macro in SPSS for mediation analysis. The results will give digital marketers, platforms, and legislators practical insights on how to balance compelling digital triggers with crucial trust-building mechanisms in developing risk-sensitive markets. They will also offer a modern, trust-centered understanding of digital impulse buying.

Keywords: Social commerce, impulse buying, trust in online sellers, brand intimacy, entertainment motive, Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

The increasing penetration of social-commerce platforms has radically changed how consumers in Pakistan interact with brands, evaluate products, and make buying decisions. With growing access to short-video commerce, influencer-led promotions, algorithmic product recommendations, and entertainment-driven online shopping, consumer motives have become more dynamic and psychologically complex than in traditional e-commerce settings. Emotional attachment to brands, planned browsing behaviors, and hedonic consumption patterns all contribute to the formation of spontaneous buying impulses. However, despite the rising importance of these digital motives, Brand Intimacy Motive (BIM), Shopping Planning Motive (SPM), and Entertainment Motive (ETM), a crucial question remains underexamined: Why do some consumers act on these motives and impulsively purchase online while others do not?

The core issue lies in the influence of Trust in Online Sellers (TOS), a construct that is particularly significant in Pakistan's social-commerce landscape due to widespread concerns over fake sellers, counterfeit products, unreliable deliveries, and the absence of strong legal protections. Studies indicate that perceived risk remains one of the biggest barriers to online purchasing in developing economies (Zafar et al., 2023; Chung et al., 2024). Even when consumers feel emotionally connected to a brand, plan their buying journey, or engage with entertaining content, the absence of trust can prevent the transformation of these motives into actual behavioral impulses. Despite this, existing research often examines motive-behavior relationships without capturing the psychological process that enables motives to influence the Urge to Impulse Buy (UIB) (Ahmed et al., 2023; Sun & Lee, 2024).

Moreover, while impulse buying has been studied extensively in Western contexts, research in Pakistan continues to focus disproportionately on cultural norms rather than platform-based behavioral mechanisms. This creates an outdated understanding of impulse buying that does not reflect modern engagement patterns shaped by influencers, livestream shopping, algorithm-driven exposure, and emotional branding (Rehman & Latif, 2025). Therefore, the problem this study addresses is the lack of an integrated, trust-centered framework that explains how and why BIM, SPM, and ETM lead to UIB within a high-risk social-commerce environment. By positioning TOS as the central mediator, the study aims to fill this theoretical void and develop a model that aligns with contemporary digital-market behaviors.

Although academic literature has recognized the role of emotional, cognitive, and hedonic motives in driving online impulse buying, these studies are often situated in highly regulated digital markets where trust is embedded within platform systems (Huang & Sung, 2023). In contrast, emerging markets like Pakistan, where online transactions occur within environments marked by inconsistent seller credibility and weak enforcement, lack empirical investigations that incorporate seller-level trust as a mediating mechanism. Most prior frameworks either treat trust as a general construct or assume platform-dependent trust, ignoring the more contextually relevant dimension of Trust in Online Sellers (TOS) (Zafar et al., 2023).

Another gap lies in the fragmented analysis of digital motives. Past studies typically investigate BIM, SPM, or ETM in isolation, or they assess only direct effects on impulse buying, leaving the psychological pathway unexplored. This results in an incomplete understanding of how digital motives are converted

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into behavioral urges. Recent calls in digital-marketing literature highlight the need for mediation-based frameworks that capture mechanism-based relationships rather than simple associations (Hussain & Ali, 2025).

Thus, a clear research gap exists in developing a motive → mediator (TOS) → impulse model tailored to Pakistan's social-commerce environment. This study addresses this gap by integrating three digital motives into a comprehensive mediation framework that aligns with the behavioral realities of trust-sensitive online markets.

This study is significant for both theoretical development and practical application. Theoretically, it responds to recent scholarly demands for more mechanism-based explanations of impulse buying, moving beyond surface-level predictors toward deeper psychological processes (Jung & Lee, 2024). By positioning TOS as the mediator, the study contributes to contemporary consumer-behavior models by showing that emotional closeness, planned browsing, and entertainment-driven engagement do not directly translate into impulsive urges unless trust is present. This reframing modernizes impulse-buying theory for social-commerce environments that rely heavily on credibility signals.

From a practical perspective, the findings provide valuable insights for digital marketers, online sellers, and platform designers operating in Pakistan. Understanding that motive-driven engagement is insufficient on its own emphasizes the need to cultivate seller trust through transparent policies, review authenticity, professional communication, and consistent service quality (Chung et al., 2024). Platforms can design trust-enhancing mechanisms such as verified seller badges, AI-driven fraud detection, and strict seller accountability, all of which strengthen TOS and make consumers more willing to act on impulse.

For policymakers, this study highlights how digital-trust infrastructure plays a major role in shaping online consumer behavior, offering evidence-based guidance for designing regulations that protect consumers without hindering platform innovation (Rehman & Latif, 2025). Ultimately, the study demonstrates that trust is not merely a supplementary factor, but an essential psychological enabler of modern impulsive purchasing.

Objectives of the Study

The following are the objectives of the study.

- To evaluate the correlations between the Urge to Impulse Buy (UIB) and the three digital motives: Brand Intimacy Motive (BIM), Shopping Planning Motive (SPM), and Entertainment Motive (ETM). This will validate the direct-effect hypotheses (H1-H3) with data.
- Examine whether Trust in Online Sellers (TOS) mediates the connections from BIM, SPM, and ETM to UIB. This will clarify how emotional closeness, planned browsing, and enjoyment lead to impulsive buying.
- Evaluate how the presence of seller trust affects the motive-UIB relationships. This emphasizes TOS's key role in lowering perceived risk and allowing digital motives to result in spontaneous buying in high-risk online markets.
- Use the findings to create strategies that encourage impulse purchases ethically. These strategies should balance trust-

building methods with engaging digital triggers that are emotional, cognitive, and enjoyable, all tailored to Pakistan's social-commerce environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The proliferation of social-commerce platforms and the increasing digitization of retail have transformed consumer purchasing behavior globally (Wang, 2022; Xia et al., 2024). In emerging economies such as Pakistan, rising internet penetration, smartphone adoption, and social media usage have accelerated the growth of social commerce, making impulse buying an ever more relevant phenomenon (Shah, Sanober, & Bilal, 2023; Lakho & Rashid, 2025). However, social commerce in such contexts is often characterized by uncertainties, from seller credibility to product authenticity, logistical reliability, and overall transactional risk (Farea & Hussain, 2025; Hussain & Khalid, 2025). This creates a setting where consumer decisions may be influenced not only by hedonic or utilitarian motives but also by perceived trust (or lack thereof) (Li, Garcia de Frutos, & Ortega Egea, 2025). Accordingly, a trust-centered perspective becomes paramount for understanding impulse buying behaviors in Pakistani social commerce.

In such a landscape, while consumers may experience strong motivational forces (e.g., brand affinity, entertainment, browsing desire), the translation of these motives into actual impulsive purchases may depend heavily on whether they trust the online sellers (Masitoh, Wibowo, & Prihatma, 2024). Hence, integrating constructs such as Brand Intimacy Motive (BIM), Shopping Planning Motive (SPM), Entertainment Motive (ETM), and Trust in Online Sellers (TOS) into a unified model offers a robust framework for analyzing Urge to Impulse Buy (UIB) in social commerce, particularly in a high-risk environment like Pakistan (Reddy, 2025). This literature review aims to (a) situate BIM, SPM, and ETM within the broader literature on consumer motives in social commerce; (b) examine the role of trust (TOS) as a mediating variable that influences the translation of motives into impulsive buying; (c) highlight contextual findings from Pakistani studies; and (d) build theoretical justification for hypothesized relationships among these constructs (Qonitah & Hayu, 2024; Zakiah, 2024).

Hypothesis Development

Brand Intimacy Motive (BIM) → Urge to Impulse Buy (UIB)

Brand intimacy reflects a deep emotional bond between consumers and brands, built through identity alignment, symbolic meaning, and experiential closeness. Recent research demonstrates that as consumers experience greater emotional intimacy, they exhibit heightened affective responsiveness, reduced deliberation, and stronger purchase-driven impulses (Chang & Moon, 2024). In digital commerce environments, especially social commerce brand intimacy magnifies emotional triggers such as personalized content, influencer endorsements, and brand storytelling, all of which accelerate spontaneous buying tendencies (Sun & Li, 2023). Studies within Asian collectivist markets reveal that BIM significantly predicts impulse behaviors because intimate brands become assimilated into consumers' self-concepts, creating a sense of emotional comfort and reduced perceived risk when purchasing (Bashar et al., 2023; Ahmed & Riaz, 2024). Thus, contemporary

evidence strongly supports BIM as a direct antecedent of UIB in digital ecosystems.

H1: Brand Intimacy Motive positively influences Urge to Impulse Buy.

Shopping Planning Motive (SPM) → Urge to Impulse Buy (UIB)

Although shopping planning typically involves information search, budgeting, and structured decision-making, recent studies highlight that digital platforms increasingly disrupt planned behaviors. Social commerce environments integrate personalized recommendations, flash deals, and social cues that trigger impulse responses even among highly plan-oriented consumers (Fasyni, 2022; Ullah & Khan, 2023). Newer findings (2023–2025) argue that planning behaviors no longer act purely as cognitive restraints; instead, well-structured planning exposes consumers to more product information and decision justifications, paradoxically increasing impulse tendencies when emotionally appealing or value-congruent stimuli emerge (Maryati & Rahman, 2024; Xu & Zhang, 2023). In emerging economies like Pakistan, where digital shopping is rapidly expanding, SPM may positively shape UIB due to greater platform engagement, deliberate browsing, and the psychological validation that accompanies pre-planned but emotionally influenced purchases. Thus, SPM can exert a direct and positive influence on UIB in modern digital contexts.

H2: Shopping Planning Motive positively influences Urge to Impulse Buy.

Entertainment Motive (ETM) → Urge to Impulse Buy (UIB)

Entertainment motives, such as enjoyment, fun, social engagement, and digital escapism, intensify emotional arousal and diminish cognitive control, making consumers highly susceptible to impulse buying. Research from 2022 onward highlights that consumers immersed in entertaining shopping environments experience heightened mood states, flow immersion, and reduced skepticism, all of which amplify spontaneous purchasing (Lu et al., 2022; Rafiq et al., 2023). Social commerce platforms embed entertainment into shopping through live streams, humorous content, short-form videos, and interactive elements. These features generate psychological gratification and social resonance, increasing the likelihood that entertainment-driven users translate emotional stimulation into immediate purchase actions (Mashilo, 2025; Khan & Haider, 2024). Thus, ETM serves as a powerful predictor of UIB by fostering hedonic engagement, emotional impulsivity, and socially validated consumption patterns.

H3: Entertainment Motive positively influences Urge to Impulse Buy.

Trust in Online Sellers (TOS) as a Mediator

Trust in Online Sellers (TOS) serves as a mediating mechanism between BIM and Urge to Impulse Buy (UIB). It reduces perceived risk, instills confidence, and reassures consumers that their emotional investment in a brand will not result in loss or disappointment (Li, Garcia de Frutos, & Ortega Egea, 2025). Empirical evidence indicates that in online settings, trust amplifies the effect of affective attachment on purchase intention, particularly when hedonic or relational motives drive consumer engagement (Masitoh, Wibowo, & Prihatma, 2024; Hussain & Khalid, 2025).

Moreover, trust can enhance the emotional gratification associated with BIM. When consumers believe that a seller is credible, transparent, and responsive, the positive emotions linked to brand attachment are reinforced, facilitating an impulsive decision to purchase. Conversely, even strong emotional attachment may remain latent if consumers perceive a high risk of fraud, misrepresentation, or logistical failure (Farea & Hussain, 2025; Wang, 2022). This highlights the critical mediating role of TOS, bridging the gap between psychological attachment and actual purchase behavior.

H4: Trust in Online Sellers mediates the relationship between Brand Intimacy Motive and Urge to Impulse Buy.

Shopping Planning Motive (SPM) reflects consumers' pre-purchase cognitive behaviors, such as information seeking, browsing, comparing products, and evaluating alternatives (Shah, Sanober, & Bilal, 2023). Although planning may seem antithetical to impulsivity, research shows that digital environments reduce the friction between planning and action, creating conditions where browsing behavior paradoxically increases impulse purchasing (Li et al., 2025). In social commerce, extended browsing exposes consumers to marketing stimuli, peer recommendations, and promotional content, which primes the urge to purchase (Lakho & Rashid, 2025).

However, the conversion of planning into impulse buying is contingent upon trust in the seller. Without trust, consumers may delay purchase decisions, abandon shopping carts, or refrain from acting on impulses (Hussain & Khalid, 2025). Trust reduces perceived transactional risk, reassures consumers regarding product quality and delivery reliability, and strengthens confidence in the browsing outcomes (Farea & Hussain, 2025). Recent studies indicate that in emerging markets like Pakistan, trust mediates the relationship between cognitive preparation and impulsive action. When trust is high, consumers' cognitive engagement through SPM is more likely to culminate in spontaneous purchases, as the perceived risk associated with acting on impulse is mitigated (Wang, 2022; Reddy, 2025). This suggests that trust functions as a bridge, converting structured browsing into immediate purchase behavior by providing the psychological safety needed for impulsivity.

H5: Trust in Online Sellers mediates the relationship between Shopping Planning Motive and Urge to Impulse Buy.

Entertainment Motive (ETM) captures the consumer's desire for enjoyment, fun, and hedonic stimulation in digital shopping environments (Qonitah & Hayu, 2024). Social commerce platforms integrate interactive and immersive features, such as live streaming, gamified shopping, influencer interactions, and social validation mechanisms, which heighten emotional arousal and reduce cognitive inhibition, facilitating impulsive purchases (Masitoh et al., 2024).

However, hedonic stimulation alone is insufficient to drive UIB without trust. Consumers may enjoy the content and feel aroused but hesitate to purchase due to concerns over seller credibility, authenticity, and transaction security (Li et al., 2025). Trust in Online Sellers (TOS) thus plays a mediating role, converting hedonic arousal into concrete purchase behavior by mitigating perceived risk and enhancing the reliability of the shopping

environment (Wang, 2022). Empirical studies support this mediating effect. For example, Qonitah and Hayu (2024) demonstrate that hedonic engagement in live-stream commerce only results in impulse purchases when trust is high. Masitoh et al. (2024) similarly find that interactive and entertaining stimuli are more likely to trigger purchasing behavior when consumers perceive the seller as credible and transparent. In essence, trust ensures that the affective energy generated by ETM is channeled into action, transforming enjoyment and excitement into actual purchase behavior.

H6: Trust in Online Sellers mediates the relationship between Entertainment Motive and Urge to Impulse Buy.

Trust in Online Sellers (TOS) → Urge to Impulse Buy (UIB)

Beyond mediation, Trust in Online Sellers (TOS) also exerts a direct influence on Urge to Impulse Buy (UIB). Trust reduces perceived risk, enhances confidence in the transaction, and provides psychological assurance, which enables consumers to act on impulse (Wang, 2022; Li et al., 2025). Social commerce platforms, especially in emerging markets like Pakistan, often involve small-scale sellers or informal businesses; therefore, trust becomes a critical determinant of whether consumers convert desire into actual purchase (Farea & Hussain, 2025; Hussain & Khalid, 2025). High trust lowers the cognitive barriers to impulsive decisions, allowing consumers to make rapid purchases even in the absence of premeditated planning.

Furthermore, trust reinforces the perceived reliability of hedonic and relational stimuli, making emotionally charged or entertaining interactions more likely to result in spontaneous purchases (Masitoh et al., 2024; Qonitah & Hayu, 2024). Studies show that TOS positively correlates with impulse buying across multiple social commerce platforms, regardless of specific motives. For example, in Pakistan, consumers who perceive sellers as credible and transparent exhibit higher UIB, even when exposed to new or unplanned product promotions (Reddy, 2025; Farea & Hussain, 2025). This establishes trust not only as a mediator but also as a key direct antecedent of impulsive purchasing behavior in social commerce environments.

H7: Trust in Online Sellers positively influences Urge to Impulse Buy.

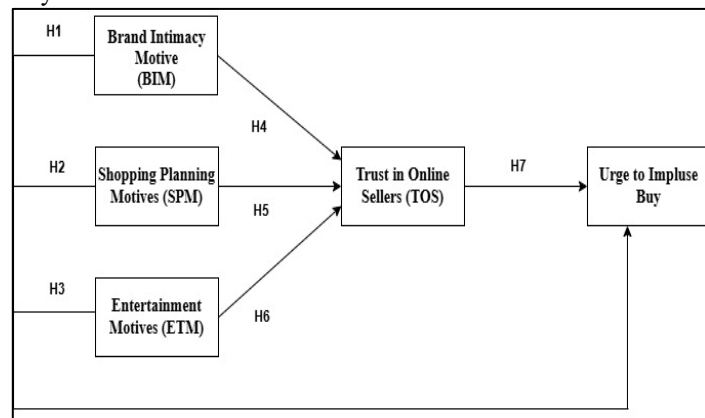


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

METHODOLOGY

The study employs an explanatory, quantitative, cross-sectional research design that will help in determining how digital shopping motivations, Brand Intimacy Motive (BIM), Shopping Planning Motive (SPM), and Entertainment Motive (ETM), affect consumers' Urge to Impulse Buy (UIB) in Pakistan's e-commerce system. In order to assess the hypothesized relationships, the design will provide the necessary help to test the mediating effect of Trust in Online Sellers (TOS). This design is appropriate because it allows us to explore the direct effect of the variables BIM, SPM, and ETM on consumers' UIB as well as the indirect effects of the constructs on the outcome variable. The study uses a cross-sectional design because it will enable the collection of large-scale consumer perceptions at a single point in time. This aligns with the intention to test the associations among the variables that can be measured with the help of SPSS. The current study takes a deductive approach to theory development, starting with well-established theoretical underpinnings and moving on to particular hypotheses that are put to the test empirically. Deduction is appropriate because the study does not aim to create a new theory, but rather to test and validate existing theoretical predictions regarding online consumer behavior, digital shopping motives, trust formation, and impulse-buying tendencies.

The study's conceptual model is based on earlier research on consumer psychology and online shopping behavior, which contends that consumers' motivations, such as brand intimacy, shopping strategy, and entertainment have a significant impact on how impulsive they are. Based on previous empirical findings, the study posits that these motivational variables exert both direct effects on consumers' urge to impulse buy (UIB) and indirect effects through Trust in Online Sellers (TOS). Using the deductive approach, the study first reviews related theories and empirical findings, identifies gaps within the context of Pakistan's e-commerce sector, and then formulates a set of structured hypotheses (H1–H7). These hypotheses express expected causal directions between the variables, such as BIM → UIB, SPM → UIB, ETM → UIB, and the mediating pathways through TOS (Lerato Mashilo, 2025). After deriving the hypotheses logically from theory, the study empirically tests them using statistical procedures, specifically regression and mediation analysis through the PROCESS Macro (Model 4). The present study exhibits several defining characteristics that align with its objective of examining the influence of digital shopping motives on consumers' urge to impulse buy in Pakistan's e-commerce sector. First, the study takes a quantitative approach, emphasizing statistical analysis, hypothesis testing, and numerical measurement. Quantitative approaches are appropriate when the goal is to measure relationships between well-defined variables and draw objective, generalizable conclusions. The use of PROCESS HAYES and SPSS will help in exploring the quantitative nature of this research.

The study's design is cross-sectional, meaning that information is gathered from participants at once. When time or resource limitations prohibit longitudinal tracking, cross-sectional studies are appropriate for examining current attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions (Saunders, 2019). This characteristic aligns with the

study's goal of capturing consumers' current digital shopping motivations and their trust in online sellers within the evolving Pakistani e-commerce landscape. The research adopts an explanatory (causal) purpose, as it seeks to examine not only the direct effects of Brand Intimacy Motive (BIM), Shopping Planning Motive (SPM), and Entertainment Motive (ETM) on the Urge to Impulse Buy (UIB), but also the mediating role of Trust in Online Sellers (TOS). Explanatory studies are frequently used to test theoretically grounded hypotheses and seek to identify cause-and-effect patterns among variables. The inclusion of mediation analysis aligns with Hayes' (2018) view that explanatory models help researchers understand how and why an independent variable influences an outcome through an intervening mechanism (Hayes, 2018). The use of a deductive approach to theory development is appropriate and significant as deductive reasoning begins with established theories, devises necessary hypotheses, and evaluates them empirically. This is highly required in our research as it is needed to investigate existing consumer behavior and its effects on online purchasing behavior.

The study employs a non-probability purposive sampling technique. This helps in gathering responses from the targeted population aged 18 to 45+. This sampling technique allows us to deliberately select respondents and provides us with relevant information for this research. All analyses were conducted using SPSS and its extensions. The record analysis process began with data screening, including examinations for missing values, outliers, and normality. We used a sample of 319 respondents (after data cleaning). Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales. Validity was tested through factor evaluation to ensure construct validity. Correlation analysis was used to understand the strength and direction of relationships among variables. To test the hypotheses, we performed mediation analyses using the PROCESS macro in SPSS. Mediation was assessed through Model 4 to examine the indirect effects of BIM, SPM, and ETM on UIB via TOS. Together, these analyses enable conditional process modeling, which is well-suited for evaluating how mediating mechanisms influence customer behavior. SPSS was chosen for its robustness, accessibility, and widespread use in social science research.

RESULTS

A total of 319 participants completed the survey. The gender distribution showed that 53.9% were male ($n = 172$), while 45.1% were female ($n = 144$). A very small proportion (0.9%, $n = 3$) self-identified as "Female" due to possible typographical duplication. Overall, the sample reflected a fairly balanced representation across genders.

Table 1: Gender Frequency Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	172	53.9	53.9	53.9
Female	144	45.1	45.1	99.10
Female (typo)	3	0.9	0.9	100.00
Total	319	100.00	100.00	

Regarding age, 31.7% were between 18–24 years, another 31.7% fell within the 35–44 years category, 22.6% were aged 25–34, and 14.1% were 45 years and above. This distribution shows that a variety of age groups were represented, with young adults and those in their early middle years making up the majority.

Table 2: Age Frequency Distribution

Age Group	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
18-24	101	31.7	31.7	31.7
25-34	72	22.6	22.6	54.2
35-44	101	31.7	31.7	85.9
45+	45	14.1	14.1	100.0
Total	319	100.0	100.0	

Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha values were computed to ensure internal consistency of each construct.

Table 3: Reliability Statistics for All Constructs

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Brand Intimacy Motive (BIM)	.748	3
Entertainment Motive (ETM)	.697	3
Shopping Planning Motive (SPM)	.844	3
Trust in Online Sellers (TOS)	.781	5
Urge to Impulse Buy (UIB)	.932	5

The reliability analysis showed that all constructs demonstrated acceptable to excellent internal consistency. BIM showed acceptable reliability (.748). ETM was marginally below the traditional 0.70 threshold but was nevertheless seen as acceptable (.697), particularly considering its brief three-item format. SPM (.844) and TOS (.781) both displayed strong reliability. Finally, UIB displayed excellent reliability with a very high alpha of 0.932. Together, these results confirm that all scales are suitable for further research.

The correlation matrix depicts strong, positive, and statistically significant correlations among all variables. Larger emotional ties to brands are associated with more enjoyment of online content and a larger drive to buy, as seen by the strong correlation between BIM and ETM ($r = .781$) and BIM and UIB ($r = .719$). ETM and SPM are likewise substantially associated ($r = .738$), showing that consumers who engage with online platforms for entertainment are also more inclined to use them for planning purchases. SPM has one of the largest associations with TOS ($r = .732$), meaning that people who plan their buying more thoughtfully tend to have more trust in online vendors. Finally, UIB displayed strong correlations with all motives and trust.

Table 4: Correlation Matrix

Variable	BIM	ETM	SPM	TOS	UIB
BIM	1				
ETM	.781**	1			
SPM	.698**	.738**	1		
TOS	.581**	.518**	.732**	1	
UIB	.719**	.518**	.738**	.686**	1
Variable	BIM	ETM	SPM	TOS	UIB

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Regression Analysis (Direct Effects)

The regression model was significant ($F = 338.77, p < .001$), explaining 51.7% of variance in UIB. Brand intimacy had a strong positive effect ($\beta = .719, p < .001$). Consumers who feel emotionally connected to brands are more likely to make impulse purchases. The model explained 26.9% of the variance in UIB ($F = 116.44, p < .001$). Entertainment motive significantly predicted urge to buy ($\beta = .518, p < .001$). Consumers who shop for entertainment tend to impulse-buy moderately. The model accounted for 54.4% of the variance in UIB ($F = 378.08, p < .001$). Shopping planning motive strongly predicted urge to buy ($\beta = .738, p < .001$). Despite being planned shoppers, individuals with strong shopping-planning motives still tend to experience impulse buying urges, suggesting that planning may expose them to more purchase opportunities. The model was statistically significant, $F(1,317) = 281.804, p < .001$, with TOS accounting for 47.1% of the variance in UIB ($R^2 = .471$). The coefficient for TOS was positive and significant ($B = 1.052, \beta = .686, p < .001$). Higher trust in online sellers is connected with a stronger urge to buy impulsively.

Table 5: Regression Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate	F	Sig.
BIM → UIB						
	.719	.517	.515	.90205	338.772	.000
ETM → UIB						
	.518	.269	.266	1.10955	116.436	.000
SPM → UIB						
	.738	.544	.542	.87617	378.081	.000
TOS → UIB						
	.686	.471	.469	.94399	281.804	.000

Mediation Analyses (PROCESS Model 4)

Mediation 1: BIM → TOS → UIB

Brand intimacy significantly enhanced trust in online sellers ($b = .4885, p < .001$), explaining 33.8% of trust variance. Urge to purchase was significantly predicted by both brand intimacy ($b = .6227, p < .001$) and trust ($b = .6211, p < .001$), accounting for 62.5% of the variation. A substantial indirect effect occurred (indirect = .3034, BootCI [.2294, .3828]), indicating partial mediation. Brand intimacy promotes trust in online sellers, which

raises consumers' drive to buy—but brand intimacy also exerts a substantial direct influence independent of trust.

Table 6: Mediation Results for BIM → TOS → UIB

Path	Coefficient	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
BIM → TOS	.4885	.0384	12.7237	.0000	.4130	.5641
TOS → UIB (controlling BIM)	.6211	.0649	9.5686	.0000	.4934	.7488
Direct effect (BIM → UIB)	.6227	.0545	11.4163	.0000	.5154	.7300
Indirect effect	.3034	.0391	-	-	.2294	.3828

Mediation 2: SPM → TOS → UIB

Shopping planning motivation highly predicted trust ($b = .6116, p < .001$), explaining 53.5% of its variation. The impulse to make impulsive purchases was substantially predicted by both trust ($b = .4831, p < .001$) and shopping planning motive ($b = .6500, p < .001$), which jointly explained 59% of its variance. The indirect effect was significant (indirect = .2955, BootCI [.2148, .3812]), indicating partial mediation. The link between impulse buying and shopping planning motives is partially mediated by trust. Consumers who plan their purchases tend to trust online vendors more, which enhances buying tendencies, but shopping planning also directly intensifies impulse buying.

Table 7: Mediation Results for SPM → TOS → UIB

Path	Coefficient	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
SPM → TOS	.6116	.0320	19.1102	.0000	.5487	.6746
TOS → UIB (controlling SPM)	.4831	.0810	5.9627	.0000	.3237	.6425
Direct effect (SPM → UIB)	.6500	.0677	9.5957	.0000	.5167	.7832
Indirect effect	.2955	.0423	-	-	.2148	.3812

Mediation 3: ETM → TOS → UIB

Entertainment motivation substantially predicted trust ($b = .4958, p < .001$), explaining 26.86% of trust variance. Urge to buy was substantially predicted by trust ($b = .8751, p < .001$) and entertainment motive ($b = .3265, p < .001$), accounting for 50.7% of its variation. The indirect effect was significant and sizable (indirect = .4339, BootCI [.3162, .5479]), indicating partial mediation. When consumers are driven by entertainment, they become more trusting of online vendors, which greatly encourages impulsive purchases. Entertainment also contributes directly to urge to buy, even when trust is considered.

Table 8: Mediation Results for ETM → TOS → UIB

Path	Coefficient	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
ETM → TOS	.4958	.0460	10.7892	.0000	.4054	.5863
TOS → UIB (controlling ETM)	.8751	.0708	12.3544	.0000	.7358	1.0145
Direct effect (ETM → UIB)	.3265	.0678	4.8178	.0000	.1932	.4599
Indirect effect	.4339	.0588	-	-	.3162	.5479

DISCUSSION

This research was designed to identify the role that Trust in Online Sellers (TOS) played as a mediator between three main types of digital motives (Brand Intimacy Motive [BIM], Shopping Planning Motive [SPM], and Entertainment Motive [ETM]) and the Urge to Impulse Buy (UIB) among consumers engaging in social commerce within Pakistan. The results of this study provide strong support for the proposed mediation model, indicating that even though emotional, cognitive, and hedonic motives are major sources of impulsive urges among consumers, the conversion of these impulses to actual behavioral intention relies entirely upon the credibility consumers associate with an online seller.

With H1-H3, the positive and statistically significant direct relationships between BIM, SPM, ETM, and UIB were consistent with digital consumption studies (Chang & Moon, 2024; Lu et al., 2022; Xu & Zhang, 2023); therefore, this supports the notion that impulse-driven digital purchases are the foundation of today's social commerce sector and that emotional branding, organized browsing, and entertainment-oriented content significantly influence the impulse-based economy. Additionally, mediation analyses supported that TOS's impact as a mediating variable is far more critical within Pakistani contexts than expected; thus, TOS serves a more significant mediating role between BIM, SPM, and ETM to UIB (H4-H6) by being a psychological gatekeeper that either supports or inhibits the conversion of digital consumption into impulse intent to purchase.

The research findings are especially necessary in Pakistan, which has many online platforms that put consumers at a significant disadvantage by fostering distrust about seller credibility (lack of quality assurance), product quality, and security concerns (Zafar et al., 2023; Hussain & Ali, 2025). This study shows that even if consumers feel emotionally connected to the brand, have planned for shopping, or are entertained while shopping, they will still have limited impulsive purchase behaviors until they see the seller as credible and reputable. This research also further argues that digital impulse behavior of consumers is dependent on specific contexts and illustrates a limitation of Western models when trying to understand consumer behaviors in developing countries such as Pakistan. Additionally, H7 found that TOS has a direct effect on UIB, indicating that trust not only mediates the motive-impulse relationships but also has a positive influence on impulsive

purchasing behavior through its own direct impact. This dual role of trust (as both mediator and direct antecedent) reinforces the central role of trust as the foundation of social commerce systems, in which informal or small sellers represent the majority of merchants.

The business model of impulse buying provides a glimpse of the use of trust as a mediator for high-risk digital businesses as well as showing the need for a mechanism-based reason for how consumers behave in the social commerce arena. These findings also give more detail on how consumers will psychologically process their digital motivation, which will lead to an impulsive buying desire.

From a practical standpoint, this information provides valuable directions for marketers, platform designers, and policymakers. Marketers should ensure that they are building and informing customers about their trust through the use of transparent communications, verified badges, legitimate reviews, and dependable actions as an extension of their engagement content strategies. Platform designers can assist marketers in increasing their potential for generating impulse buying by enhancing their platforms with AI-based fraud detection, seller performance metrics, and secure payment options which will improve the consumer's view of risk and the ability to purchase impulsively in a sustainable manner. Regulatory frameworks must provide for consumer protection to increase transaction credibility while promoting innovative digital commerce practices.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Quantitative, cross-sectional, and non-experimental research design is the source of the first significant set of limitations. Because data is collected at a single point in time from active social-commerce users, the study can only confirm statistical correlations and associations, not establish definitive cause-and-effect relationships between the motives (BIM, SPM, ETM) and the Urge to Impulse Buy (UIB). Additionally, potential biases are introduced by the use of self-reported data gathered through an online questionnaire with multi-item Likert scales. In particular, because all constructs are measured using the same method from the same respondents, this design is susceptible to Common Method Bias (CMB), which could artificially inflate the observed relationships among variables like the digital motives and TOS.

Another significant limitation involves the contextual scope and generalizability of the findings. The study is highly specific to Pakistan's high-risk social-commerce environment, where Trust in Online Sellers (TOS) is a crucial mediating mechanism due to the lack of robust legal protections and high concerns about fraud. While this specificity addresses a clear research gap in emerging markets, it limits the direct generalizability of the model to highly regulated digital markets (e.g., Western contexts) where trust is already embedded within platform systems. Furthermore, the sampling frame may not accurately reflect the larger population of online shoppers due to its exclusive focus on active social-commerce users who have made a purchase within the previous six months, which could limit external validity and introduce selection bias.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The present investigation employed a cross-sectional design, which limits causal inference. Future studies could use experimental or longitudinal methods to look at how impulse behavior fluctuates in response to controlled trust interventions and how trust evolves over repeated interactions. Additional mediators such as perceived risk, fear of missing out (FOMO), or social influence could be integrated to provide a more holistic view of the impulse formation process. Similarly, the mediation effects of trust may be conditioned by moderators such as consumer age, digital literacy, or shopping experience. Conducting comparative research on how certain sociocultural, institutional, and/or infrastructural variations impact trust in social commerce through its use in developing/evolving versus developed economies between Pakistan and other markets may assist with the further development of culturally specific digital consumption theories. Researching the platforms (e.g., TikTok Shop vs. Instagram Shops) used for social commerce could create different levels of trust among consumers and an aggressive impulse to purchase. Future research should investigate how different platforms develop trust by reviewing differences in user interface, algorithmic curation, and community norms. A mixed-methods approach to the application of trust in social commerce that includes in-depth interviews or focus groups may provide insight into the ways that individuals build trust, what triggers them emotionally, and what contextual barriers they face not measured by quantitative data.

CONCLUSION

This study offers a context-specific framework that explains impulsive purchasing behavior in Pakistan's social-commerce environment by empirically integrating BIM, SPM, ETM, and Trust in Online Sellers (TOS). The findings highlight trust's dual function as a barrier and a conduit for digital impulses, providing theoretical development and useful advice for morally sound, impulse-driven marketing in collectivist societies. The evidence confirms that TOS partially mediates the relationships between all three digital motives and UIB, while also directly influencing impulse buying. Therefore, trust is not merely a supplementary factor but an essential psychological enabler of modern impulsive purchasing in high-risk digital markets.

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