Impulse Buying In The Post-Covid Era: The Role Of Task-Based And Hedonic Social E-Commerce Cues

Liu Renming¹,*, Mooi Wah Kian², Pang Kim Kwong³

¹,² Faculty of Business, Information & Human Sciences, Infrastructure University Kuala Lumpur, 43000 Kajang, Selangor, Malaysia.

² Faculty of Business and Finance, University Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR), 31900 Kampar, Perak, Malaysia.

³ Faculty of Business, Finance, Information Technology & Hospitality, MAHSA University, Selangor, Malaysia.

Abstract
Leveraging social media, social e-commerce (electronic commerce) has created a two-way reciprocal bridge between consumers and merchants, and it is becoming a new normalised purchasing platform in the post-COVID-19 era. Against this backdrop, consumers are highly susceptible to external stimulus cues that can lead to impulsive and irrational purchasing behaviour. Numerous works have identified various extrinsic cues that stimulate impulsive buying, but to date, there have been limited achievements on the impact of task-based and hedonic provocative cues on impulsive purchasing behaviour. To narrow the gap, this research, based on the S-O-R perspective, endeavours to examine the impact of three cues on the emotional response and impulse buying in social e-commerce in the post-COVID-19. We used a survey instrument to collect 264 empirical data from one demographic unit, the Chinese social e-commerce consumer, through a non-probability sampling strategy. After evaluation by AMOS-SEM, we confirmed that both ease of use and usefulness, two task-based social e-commerce cues, and hedonic cue-based entertainment all positively influence positive emotions, thereby promoting impulse buying. Our research not only adds theoretical value to impulse buying but also has positive implications for practitioners and policymakers developing social e-commerce marketing strategies in the post-COVID pandemic age.

Key words: S-O-R model; Social e-commerce; Impulse buying; post-COVID-19.
1. Introduction
COVID-19, a global public health crisis, has dealt a fatal blow to the consumer market everywhere. Governments imposed enforced segregation and social restrictions on people, a practice that directly led to a dramatic change in consumer shopping scenarios and purchasing behaviour (Chauhan, Banerjee and Dagar, 2021; Lahath et al., 2021; Zhang, Leng and Liu, 2020; Hossain et al., 2020). According to the World Trade Organization (2020), the epidemic has somewhat eroded one's reliance on offline brick-and-mortar shops and digital shopping platforms are morphed into the channel of choice. Social e-commerce, as a representative of digital shopping, uses social scenarios in social media to assist consumers complete cross-border purchases of goods and services. In this business context, a new phenomenon in consumer behaviour has emerged, whereby consumers tend to make impulsive decisions stimulated by the external environment and increasingly enjoy such irrational, reckless purchases. Prior researchers (Abdelsalam et al., 2020; Verhagen and Dolen, 2011) have referred to this shopping behaviour as impulse buying, where purchases are made immediately without deliberation thoughtful. Marketers (Chauhan, Banerjee and Dagar, 2021; Khaled et al., 2019) believe that impulse buying accounts for at least 40% of actual purchasing power. This shopping behaviour has, to some extent, activated the online market and eased the economic and financial pressure on governments (Zhang, Leng and Liu, 2020). Several works, such as Chauhan, Banerjee and Dagar (2021), Gupta, Nair and Radhakrishnan (2021) and Wang and Chapa (2021), reveal that impulsive purchasing behaviour is particularly evident during the epidemic, with increasing numbers of people making impulse shopping decisions.

Social e-commerce is derived from electronic commerce and relies on Web 2.0 social media platforms based on social networks (Abdelsalam et al., 2020). Social e-commerce aims to enable users to complete online purchasing tasks through interactive sharing, information exchange and user-generated content with the assistance of social media and online communities (Chung, Song and Lee, 2017). As the social e-commerce shopping scene is decentralised, the dominant way this business currently works is to add business elements directly to social networking sites (e.g., Pinterest and Xiaohongshu). The advantage of this operation is that it leverages the user's social network to achieve social fission in a cost-effective manner, and more importantly, it helps to place stimulus cues in an attempt to trigger emotional feedback from the consumer to trigger an eventual impulse purchase (Abdelsalam et al., 2020). Task-based and hedonic cues are the main external drivers of impulse buying (Parboteeah, Valacich and Wells, 2009). These two types of external cues could help people avoid the risks of fraud and service failure, while businesses could use them to stimulate consumers to engage in shopping activities to increase conversion and repurchase of services and goods. Much recent research has analysed the impact of stimuli on impulse purchases from the perspective of website design (Wang and Chapa, 2021; Zhang, Leng and Liu, 2020), media interventions (Lahath et al., 2021) and fashion and sales (Chauhan, Banerjee and Dagar, 2021), but ignoring the impact of task-based and hedonic stimulus cues on affective responses and impulse purchases in the post-COVID context of social e-commerce. To this end, using S-O-R as a theoretical lens, the authors bridge the research gap by accomplishing the following three
research objectives:

**RO1:** To investigate the impact of two task-based stimulus social e-commerce cues, ease of use and usefulness, on consumers' positive emotional responses in social e-commerce in the post-epidemic era.

**RO2:** To investigate the impact of entertainment, a hedonic-based stimulus social e-commerce cue, on consumers' positive emotional responses in social e-commerce in the post-epidemic era.

**RO3:** To investigate the impact of positive consumer emotions on impulse buying in social e-commerce in the post-epidemic era.

2. Literature review and hypothesis development

2.1 Impulse buying

Impulse buying is interpreted as a very sudden and unplanned purchase behaviour (Stern, 1962), but some marketers (Chung, Song and Lee, 2017; Lahath et al., 2021) argued that not all unplanned purchases are equivalent to impulse purchases. In recent years, experts have come to believe that the occurrence of impulse buying is inextricably linked to external stimuli. Verhagen and Dolen (2011) state that when consumers are confronted with external stimuli, they are prone to develop a strong internal emotional perception that motivates them to make further impulse purchases. In most cases, impulse buying is a reckless, immediate, on-the-spot purchase, but more often than not, it is guided by external stimuli (Abdelsalam et al., 2020). This behaviour is particularly strong when exposed to task-based and hedonic provocative stimuli cues such as website design (Lin and Lo, 2016), hedonic and pragmatism (Chung, Song and Lee, 2017; Chauhan, Banerjee and Dagar, 2021), tasks and emotions (Parboteeah, Valacich and Wells, 2009), personalised recommendation messages and system design (Zhang, Leng and Liu, 2020), appearance features and product involvement (Wang and Chapa, 2021) and social media (Lahath et al., 2021). Even in the COVID-19 era, consumers' impulse purchases are still influenced by cue stimuli, particularly when individuals are in a pleasant emotional state (Chauhan, Banerjee and Dagar, 2021).

2.2 The Stimulus-Organism-Response theoretical framework

Past researches (Chang, Yan and Eckman, 2014; Verhagen and Dolen, 2011) have interpreted the external environment as the main stimulus for consumers to make purchases. Both product-based and non-product-based environmental stimuli have the potential to trigger intrinsic perceptions and impulsive behaviours (Parboteeah, Valacich and Wells, 2009). Such an interpretation stems from the S-O-R framework proposed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974). They point out that people are susceptible to environmental and physical stimuli (S) during social activities, which in turn affects an intervening state of emotional perception (O) within themselves and ultimately triggers either avoidance (e.g.,
refusing to shop or leaving the site) or approach (e.g., generating purchase intentions and behaviour) (R) behaviour.

Previous marketers have applied the S-O-R structure to different scenarios to explore the effects of stimulus cues on consumers' impulsive behaviour. Chang, Yan and Eckman (2014), for example, found that the environmental features of clothing shops could stimulate emotional responses and lead to impulse purchases. Lin and Lo (2016) investigated the impact of online shops on impulse purchases and confirmed that some features such as layout and presentation are leading factors in stimulating consumers' internal perceptions and that they largely influence the urge to buy impulsively. Zhang, Leng and Liu (2020) reveal that three stimuli (personalised recommendations, visualisation, and system usability) of e-commerce all stimulate consumers' perceptions of pleasure and arousal, which contribute to consumers' propensity to make impulse purchases. Given the generalisability of the S-O-R framework, we sought to extend the theoretical framework to the social e-commerce context, but unlike prior, we focused on exploring the impact of task-based and hedonic social e-commerce cues on impulse purchases.

2.3 Task-based and hedonic cues
Stimulus cues are an inherent quality of social e-commerce itself that is released to consumers. The cues not only induce and stimulate an intrinsic emotional response from the consumer (Verhagen and Dolen, 2011) but may also trigger a final purchase decision (Loiacono, Watson and Goodhue, 2007). Of the known cues, task-based and hedonic cues are considered to be important stimulus cues that determine whether an individual experiences an impulse purchase event (Parboteeah, Valacich and Wells, 2009). However, scholars do not agree on the specific tasks and hedonic cues (Parboteeah, Valacich and Wells, 2009; Verhagen and Dolen, 2011). Loiacono, Watson and Goodhue (2007) suggested twelve cues that might stimulate consumers' perceived value and purchase intent, but then Longstreet (2010) argues that ease of use, usefulness and entertainment are the three most typical stimulus cues that influence behavioural consequences, as they cover most of a website's performance. However, the impact of these three task-related and hedonic-related stimulus cues on impulse buying behaviour in a post-epidemic social e-commerce context has been grossly underestimated.

Ease of use refers to the extent to which a website is easy to communicate to consumers (Verhagen and Dolen, 2011), and it directly affects an individual's willingness to perform shopping tasks on a web page (Loiacono, Watson and Goodhue, 2007). Longstreet (2010) think that websites should deliver ease of use cues to users in two ways, by providing easy to understand cues and by keeping the website itself simple and intuitive. Consumers prefer to search for information on an easy-to-control website rather than spend extra time navigating a complex web page. Verhagen and Dolen (2011) asserted that impulse buyers tend to purchase items in a relaxed and enjoyable website environment. If they perceive the simplicity of the website, this stimulates a positive emotional disposition that may subsequently lead to an impulse purchase. Conversely, a complex website can directly drive negative emotions in impulse buyers, which could limit or even cancel their shopping tasks on the site. Similarly, Lin and Lo (2016)
have concluded that consumers who perceive ease of use cues on a website immediately have a positive emotional state within them including feelings of pleasure and arousal, which greatly increases the likelihood of impulse purchases. Another task-based cue is the usefulness (Loiacono, Watson and Goodhue, 2007). Usefulness mainly reflects the extent to which the tasks the individual is performing are matched to the technology provided by the website (Loiacono, Watson and Goodhue, 2007). As the primary task of every website is to provide consumers with useful information to meet their search needs, usefulness cues become an important cue for consumers in the shopping process. Usefulness stimulus cues include information adaptation, customised information, transaction support, interaction and price advantages (Longstreet, 2010). They not only influence consumers' attitudes towards the website but also their behavioural responses (Bhattacharjee et al., 2019; Loureiro and Correia, 2015). Consumers who make impulse purchases are often stimulated by the usefulness and ease of use of a website. Both of these task-based cues are antecedents to stimulating positive emotions. Thus, based on the previous literature, we have posited the first two hypotheses:

**H1. The ease of use of social e-commerce can positively influence consumers’ positive emotions in the post-COVID-19 era.**

**H2. The usefulness of social e-commerce can positively influence consumers’ positive emotions in the post-COVID-19 era.**

In the digital business context, impulse buying behaviour can be stimulated entirely by hedonic cues (Parboteeah, Valacich and Wells, 2009). A hedonic cue is essentially an entertaining cue that a website provides to consumers (Chauhan, Banerjee and Dagar, 2021). Longstreet (2010) states that the entertaining cues that websites communicate to consumers include emotional appeal, visual appeal, consistency of image and innovative elements. Previous research (Loureiro and Correia, 2015) has confirmed that an interactive and entertaining atmosphere stimulates positive emotional perceptions among consumers and drives the final behavioural outcome. Even when entertaining hedonic cues are mixed into the product, Kim, Kim and Park (2010) show that they could change an individual's attitude towards a website and could even significantly increase the likelihood of a user making a purchase. Parboteeah, Valacich and Wells (2009) imply that cues with fun and emotion stimulate consumers' affective perceptions and give them the urge to buy impulsively. Chauhan, Banerjee and Dagar (2021) also demonstrated that stimulus cues related to hedonic and entertainment can positively influence consumers to develop positive emotions. Based on the past literature, thus, we have made the hypotheses:

**H3. The entertainment of social e-commerce can positively influence consumers’ positive emotions in the post-COVID-19 era.**

### 2.4 Positive emotion
Positive emotions are uncontrollable internal feelings that can influence the outcome of behaviour and are usually triggered by stimuli in the environment (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). Whether shopping offline (Chang, Yan and Eckman, 2014), online (Verhagen and Dolen, 2011) and social e-commerce (Abdelsalam et al., 2020), when consumers are exposed to the provocative stimulus provided by marketers, they develop an internal positive emotional response that is critical to the shopping decision. Numerous studies have demonstrated that positive emotions significantly boost consumer impulse purchases. For instance, Chang, Yan and Eckman (2014) surveyed 118 US consumers and ascertain that the retail environment stimulated positive emotions that subsequently led directly to impulse purchasing behaviour. Zhang, Leng and Liu (2020) discovered that positive affective states such as perceived pleasure and perceived arousal motivate impulse purchases. Similarly, Chauhan, Banerjee and Dagar (2021) also revealed that positive emotions can positively influence consumers' impulse buying behaviour. Based on previous works, thus, we have arrived at a final hypothesis as shown below:

**H4. Positive consumer emotions can have a positive impact on impulse purchases in social e-commerce in the post-COVID-19 era.**

Based on the S-O-R framework and the above discussion, we propose a conceptualized model (shown in Figure 1) that matches the research variables of entertainment, usefulness, ease of use, positive emotion, and impulse purchase. Next, we describe what methods and strategies we used to test the research model and research hypotheses.

![Conceptual model](image)

**Figure 1.** Conceptual model.

3. Research design and methodology

3.1 Population and sampling

A seven-point Likert survey instrument was employed to collect empirical data from Chinese social e-commerce consumers through a purposive sampling strategy. Although non-probability sampling was used, respondents were required to meet our sample criteria. We included a screening question in the questionnaire that would stop to answer if the respondent had never had any experience with purchasing
in social e-commerce in the post-epidemic era. As we are dedicated to investigating impulse buying behaviour in social e-commerce, we have posted links to questionnaires on three well-known Chinese social e-commerce sites, Xiaohongshu, Sina Weibo and WeChat. To avoid sampling bias, we set up eight different periods, i.e., we sampled from each social e-commerce at three-hour intervals each day. To motivate participants, an incentive was set up. Thirty participants were randomly selected from the eligible sample and given a bonus of $5 each. Finally, a total of 310 questionnaires were received, but after excluding those questionnaires that were blank, had multiple answers to one question or had any omissions, the number of valid feedbacks was 264, giving an effective response rate of 85.2%.

3.2 Items and measures
All research items were referenced to the questionnaire that had been created previously. More precisely, the measurement items for ease of use, usefulness and entertainment were taken from Loiacono, Watson and Goodhue (2007), and the items for positive affect and impulse purchase were taken from Verhagen and Dolen (2011).

4. Data results

4.1 Descriptive statistics
All participants were Chinese with experience in social e-commerce shopping in the post-COVID period, of whom 51.5% were female and 48.5% were male, and 82.2% had a university degree. 56.4% of the respondents were married. The largest number of participants was in the 18 - 30 age group, with 79.2%. The majority of participants were multinational employees, who accounted for 30.7% of the whole participants.

4.2 Reliability and validity evaluation
For reliability and convergent validity, three academic indicators, average variance extracted, composite reliability and Cronbach's $\alpha$, were employed to assess the effective sample (n=264). In most cases, the first indicator must be above 0.5 and the last two above 0.7 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988; Fornell and Larcker, 1981). After the assessment, the results (see Table 1) showed that the Cronbach alpha and composite reliability were above 0.8 for all constructs and that the calculated values of the average variance extracted were also above the minimum baseline. Accordingly, both reliability and convergent validity values meet the benchmarks (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988; Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Cronbach $\alpha$</th>
<th>Composite reliability</th>
<th>Average variance extracted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ease of use</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Discriminant validity results of valid samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Ease of use</th>
<th>Usefulness</th>
<th>Entertainment</th>
<th>Positive emotion</th>
<th>Impulse buying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ease of use</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive emotion</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impulse buying</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3 Model evaluation

Prior to the hypothesis testing, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted using the maximum likelihood estimation method to check whether the research model met the previously set-theoretical relationships and was statistically significant. The subsequent indicators of fitness obtained were (see Table 3), unsurprisingly, within reasonable and acceptable limits (Parry, 2017).

Table 3. Results of model fit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fit indicators</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Threshold</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CMIN/DF</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>&lt;3</td>
<td>Up to standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRMR</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>&lt;0.08</td>
<td>Up to standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMSEA</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>&lt;0.08</td>
<td>Up to standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GFI</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>≥0.95</td>
<td>Up to standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFI</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>≥0.95</td>
<td>Up to standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFI</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>≥0.90</td>
<td>Up to standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLI</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>≥0.95</td>
<td>Up to standard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, the four hypotheses were tested using the AMOS-SEM procedure and the results are labelled in
Table 4. We ascertain that task-based cues, i.e., ease of use (P<0.001**, β=0.46) and usefulness (P<0.001***, β=0.20), and hedonic cues, i.e., entertainment (P<0.001***, β=0.18), can positively influence consumers to develop positive emotions, which in turn (P<0.001***, β=0.61) positively drive consumers to make impulsive purchases. In addition, we examined how much explanatory power the conceptualised model has through R². A higher R² value indicates higher predictive accuracy, but its normal range does not exceed 1 (Hair et al., 2016; Lahath et al., 2021). The results show that the R² for positive affect is 0.43, which explains 43% of the variables. Impulse buying had an R² value of 0.38, which explained 38% of the variables. Based on the results, hence, we conclude that the H1, H2, H3 and H4 are all accepted.

Table 4. Results of the causal analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Structural relationships</th>
<th>Standardized β</th>
<th>T-statistic</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>P-values</th>
<th>Significance level</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1 Ease of use → Positive emotion</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>9.04</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>&lt;0.00</td>
<td>***</td>
<td><strong>Supported</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2 Usefulness → Positive emotion</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>&lt;0.00</td>
<td>***</td>
<td><strong>Supported</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3 Entertainment → Positive emotion</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>&lt;0.00</td>
<td>***</td>
<td><strong>Supported</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4 Positive emotion → Impulse buying</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>12.57</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>&lt;0.00</td>
<td>***</td>
<td><strong>Supported</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ***p < 0.001.

5. Findings and discussion

5.1 Research findings

This research validates the effects of ease of use, usefulness (task-based social e-commerce cues) and entertainment (hedonic social e-commerce cue) on purchase behaviour as proposed by Loiacono, Watson and Goodhue (2007) and Longstreet (2010). Unlike previous, however, we measured the impact of three external stimuli on impulse buying and found that they all significantly and positively stimulated
positive internal emotions and further triggered impulse buying behaviour. Based on the empirical results, we identify that an easy-to-use and navigate website interface, informative and precise shopping content and entertaining elements are key precursors to stimulating affective reaction and impulse purchases by social e-commerce in the post-epidemic era. Based on the standardised β-value, we found that task-based stimulus cues were the largest driver of internal emotion perception, followed by hedonic cues. We were also surprised to find that positive internal emotions can largely drive impulse purchases. Prior experts (Kim, Kim and Park, 2010; Lin and Lo, 2016; Verhagen and Dolen, 2011 and Parboteeah, Valacich and Wells, 2009) have reached similar conclusions, but differ from them in that we extend the S-O-R theory to the social e-commerce environment in the post-epidemic era, revealing that three stimulus cues - ease of use, entertainment and usefulness - have a significant impact on consumer sentiment and impulse buying.

5.2 Discussion
Due to the ebb and flow of the epidemic, consumers are becoming increasingly impulsive when shopping online, a purchase behaviour that was particularly pronounced in the post-epidemic. Like Gupta, Nair and Radhakrishnan (2021) and Wang and Chapa (2021) and Chauhan, Banerjee and Dagar (2021), this work again highlights that impulse buying behaviour cannot be ignored in the era of the epidemic. However, unlike earlier, we think that such irrational unplanned purchases are to be taken seriously enough in social e-commerce. In the context of social e-commerce, consumers are easily stimulated by cues related to the task of buying and the element of entertainment. These two external stimuli create an overwhelmingly positive emotion that, to a certain extent, drives them to make irrational impulse purchase decisions. Specifically, we have found that when consumers are exposed to social e-commerce sites that are easy to use and navigate, they have a positive emotional response, which drives them to want to stay and shop on that site. Furthermore, today's consumers gravitate towards informative and interactive social e-commerce sites, and if they perceive some useful cues, they subsequently develop a sense of excitement and pleasure, a positive state that also triggers impulse purchases. Further, entertaining features can also stimulate consumers' desire to buy, possibly due to the fact that global consumers have been subject to epidemic pressure and social constraints for some time, which leads people to want more entertainment stimulation when shopping online.

5.3 Implications for marketers
Based on findings, we strategically suggest that social e-commerce marketers should be looking to leverage external factors to stimulate impulse buying among their targets. In the context of the new normal of the post-COVID, marketers should not only strive to provide them with an easy-to-use and user-friendly website but also focus on providing them with customised information and transactional support in an interactive shopping environment to meet their buying needs. Besides, marketers should give due consideration to embedding entertainment elements, such as visual appeal and emotional appeal, on their websites to stimulate a sense of pleasure and relaxation among consumers. Once the
internal positive emotional state is stimulated, the closer the consumer will be to an impulse purchase.

6. Limitations and future avenues
Although we have made some ground-breaking discoveries in the post-COVID era, three shortcomings that need to be raised. First, due to time constraints, this study only validated the effect of task and hedonic-related cues on impulse purchase from an S-O-R perspective. Given this, we suggest that subsequent studies could try to examine the effects of other stimulus cues on consumer sentiment and impulse buying from a different theoretical angle. Second, due to resource constraints, only one sampling strategy was used to collect a sample of Chinese social e-commerce consumers. Perhaps the findings of our study cannot be generalised to other regions and cannot be fully adapted to other cultural contexts. Given this, we vigorously advise that future studies consider other cultural contexts to further validate impulse buying behaviour. Third, due to time constraints, this research only used one quantitative method, a questionnaire survey, to measure consumers’ impulse buying behaviour. For future researchers, we suggest considering using qualitative or mixed methods to further explore impulsive purchasing, which has the potential to produce different findings.

7. Conclusions
This work is dedicated to examining the impact of external stimulus cues on emotional responses and impulse purchases in the context of social e-commerce in the post-epidemic era. Based on the S-O-R model, the authors proposed a conceptualised framework to capture the effects of three stimulus variables, including task-based and hedonic cues, on consumers’ positive affective and impulse purchases. This research confirmed that ease of use, usefulness and entertainment of social e-commerce all have the ability to stimulate intrinsically positive emotions in consumers, which in turn trigger impulsive purchasing behaviour. In terms of theoretical contributions, we extend the S-O-R framework to the social e-commerce scenario in the post-epidemic era and simultaneously add theoretical value to the impulse buying literature. In terms of practical insights, we provide marketing scholars with a theoretical reference that can help social e-commerce marketers understand the importance of external stimulus cues to impulse buying behaviour in the context of the post-COVID era.

References


