

Influencer Marketing and Impulse Purchase Intention in E-Commerce: A Systematic Review and Future Research Agenda

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Abstrak

Influencer media sosial kini menjadi aktor penting dalam e-commerce dan social commerce, tetapi bukti tentang cara mereka memicu pembelian impulsif tersebar di berbagai platform, konstruk, dan teori. Tinjauan sistematis terbaru membahas pembelian impulsif pada e-commerce live streaming, sehingga pembelian impulsif akibat influencer di luar live streaming, serta studi yang terbit setelah pertengahan 2024, belum terangkum. Penelitian ini bertujuan memetakan kajian tentang influencer media sosial serta perilaku dan niat pembelian impulsif dalam e-commerce dan social commerce, sekaligus merumuskan agenda penelitian mendatang. Mengikuti pedoman PRISMA 2020, pencarian dilakukan pada ScienceDirect, Scopus, ProQuest, dan EBSCOhost untuk artikel jurnal berbahasa Inggris yang telah ditelaah sejawat dan terbit daring pertama kali pada 2020–2025. Kualitas metodologis dinilai dengan Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool. Sebanyak 28 studi dalam korpus kerja dikodekan secara deskriptif. Publikasi mencapai puncak pada 2025. Live streaming menjadi konteks yang paling sering diteliti (11 studi), sedangkan 15 studi meneliti konteks lain; Instagram, YouTube, TikTok Shop, dan Facebook commerce masing-masing hanya diwakili satu studi. Kerangka stimulus–organisme–respons merupakan lensa teori yang paling umum (sedikitnya tujuh studi). Pembacaan tematik awal menunjukkan bahwa penelitian berfokus pada atribut dan kredibilitas influencer atau streamer, mekanisme relasional dan emosional seperti kepercayaan, interaksi parasosial, dan penularan emosi, serta fitur konten atau konteks. Bidang ini terpusat pada live streaming dan satu teori dominan. Penelitian mendatang perlu menelaah platform non-live, definisi luaran, integrasi teori, dan dampak lanjutan pembelian impulsif. Temuan masih bersifat sementara sampai pengodean teks lengkap selesai.

Kata Kunci: Influencer Media Sosial; Pembelian Impulsif; Social Commerce; E-Commerce; Tinjauan Pustaka Sistematis

Abstract

Social media influencers have become prominent agents in e-commerce and social commerce, yet evidence on how they trigger impulse buying is dispersed across platforms, constructs, and theories. A recent review addressed impulse buying in live streaming e-

commerce, leaving influencer-driven impulse buying beyond live streaming, and studies published after mid-2024, largely unsynthesised. This systematic literature review therefore maps research on social media influencers and impulse buying behaviour and intention in e-commerce and social commerce, and proposes a future research agenda. Following PRISMA 2020, ScienceDirect, Scopus, ProQuest, and EBSCOhost were searched for peer-reviewed, English-language journal articles first published online between 2020 and 2025, and quality was appraised with the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool. A working corpus of 28 studies was coded descriptively. Output peaked in 2025. Live streaming was the most frequent context (11 studies), whereas 15 studies examined other settings; Instagram, YouTube, TikTok Shop, and Facebook commerce were each represented by a single study. The stimulus–organism–response framework was the most common theoretical lens (at least seven studies). A preliminary thematic reading suggests that research centres on influencer or streamer attributes and credibility, relational and emotional mechanisms such as trust, parasocial interaction, and emotional contagion, and content or context features. The field is concentrated on live streaming and one dominant theory. Future research should address non-live platforms, outcome definitions, theoretical integration, and the downstream consequences of impulse buying. Findings remain provisional pending full-text coding.

Keywords: E-Commerce; Impulse Buying; Social Commerce; Social Media Influencer; Systematic Literature Review

LATAR BELAKANG

Social commerce brings together the interactive, community-oriented features of social media and the transactional capabilities of e-commerce, embedding user-generated content, peer recommendations, and real-time engagement into the purchasing process (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Jadir et al., 2023). Such socially enriched interactions foster consumer trust and, in turn, the intention to buy (Hajli, 2015), while e-commerce more broadly allows firms to communicate, promote, and transact with consumers online (Išoraitė & Miniutienė, 2018). Within this environment, social media influencers have become prominent marketing agents. They are individuals who use social media to shape how communities engage with products, ideas, and behaviours, and they may be sponsored by firms or self-identified (Hahn, 2024) [to be verified: definition against the full text of Hahn (2024)]. Influencer marketing is a rapidly growing industry, even though the literature still lacks consensus on how influencers should be conceptualised (Malik et al., 2023; Sim et al., 2023) (Malik et al., 2023; Sim et al., 2023).

This development matters because influencer content and live interaction expose consumers to stimuli that can prompt unplanned purchases. Impulse buying is a sudden purchase made without prior planning or careful consideration (Karbasivar & Yarahmadi, 2011; Stern, 1962); it is typically triggered by exposure to stimuli and is regarded as a predominantly hedonic behaviour that departs from the normal shopping process (Parboteeah et al., 2009). When the stimulus comes from a trusted and engaging influencer, the path from exposure to purchase can be short, which raises commercial as well as consumer-welfare questions, including overconsumption (D. Lee & Wan, 2023). The central academic problem is therefore

to explain how, and under what conditions, the influencer as a person, rather than the shopping channel alone, converts exposure into unplanned buying.

Research on this problem has grown rapidly but along fragmented lines. Studies have examined influencer or streamer characteristics and persuasiveness (Nguyen et al., 2025; Tran et al., 2025), message and media credibility and trust (Shamim et al., 2024; Shamim & Islam, 2022), and relational and emotional mechanisms such as parasocial interaction (Vazquez et al., 2020) and emotional contagion (L. Li et al., 2024). Many studies adopt the stimulus–organism–response (S-O-R) framework (Ahmad & Lilani, 2025; Lin et al., 2023), while others draw on signalling theory (Shamim & Islam, 2022), the heuristic–systematic model (Xin et al., 2024), and match-up perspectives (Zhang & Zhang, 2024). The influencer is labelled as an influencer, streamer, e-commerce anchor, key opinion leader, or internet celebrity, and the outcome is framed variously as impulse buying behaviour, intention, or urge to buy, which makes findings difficult to accumulate.

Prior synthesis has not resolved this fragmentation. The most recent systematic review, by (Y. Li et al., 2025), synthesised 40 empirical, quantitative studies of impulse buying in live streaming e-commerce published in journals indexed in Web of Science or Scopus, using the S-O-R model as its organising framework. Studies set in other e-commerce or social commerce contexts fell outside its scope, and its corpus extends only to studies published in the first seven months of 2024. Within that corpus, two-thirds of the studies adopted S-O-R and 31 of the 40 focused on China (Y. Li et al., 2025). Influencer-driven impulse buying outside live streaming, as well as the most recent work, therefore remains unsynthesised. In the working corpus of the present review, 15 of the 28 studies do not identify live streaming as their research context (Table 2), 12 are cited as 2025 or 2026 journal issues, and only five (C.-H. Lee & Chen, 2021; L. Li et al., 2024; Lin et al., 2023; Shao, 2024; Yan et al., 2023) are also cited in the synthesis by Li et al. (2025).

A systematic literature review is therefore warranted to consolidate this dispersed evidence from the perspective of the influencer rather than the channel. The novelty of the present review lies in taking the social media influencer or streamer as its focal construct across live and non-live e-commerce and social commerce settings, regardless of research design, in covering studies first published online up to 31 December 2025, and in drawing on ScienceDirect, Scopus, ProQuest, and EBSCOhost. Its objective is to map research on social media influencers and impulse buying behaviour and intention and to propose a future research agenda. It is guided by three research questions. RQ1: What is the profile of research on influencer-driven impulse buying in e-commerce and social commerce in terms of publication trend, commerce context, and theoretical lens? RQ2: Which determinants and mechanisms of impulse buying does this literature examine? RQ3: What gaps and directions for future research emerge? The review contributes in three ways: it extends the evidence base beyond live streaming and beyond mid-2024, it maps how influencers, outcomes, contexts, and theories are conceptualised across studies, and it proposes a research agenda that responds to the gaps identified.

METODE

This study adopted a systematic literature review (SLR) approach guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 statement. PRISMA 2020 was selected for its clear, systematic, and transparent framework for identifying, screening, and synthesising relevant literature, thereby ensuring methodological rigour and reproducibility (Sohrabi et al., 2021). It was guided by the three research questions (RQ1–RQ3) set out in the Introduction.

Information Sources and Search Strategy

ScienceDirect was used as the primary database owing to its extensive coverage of peer-reviewed research. To reduce the likelihood of omitting pertinent studies, secondary searches were conducted in Scopus, ProQuest, and EBSCOhost. All searches were performed on.

The following search string was applied to titles, abstracts, and keywords: ("influencer" OR "social media influencer" OR "streamer") AND ("social commerce" OR "e-commerce") AND ("impulse buying" OR "impulse purchase" OR "impulse buying intention"). To broaden coverage, supplementary searches combined additional terms representing each core construct. For the influencer construct, these terms were key opinion leader (KOL), digital celebrities, streamer characteristics, livestreamer, and social media influencer. For the commerce construct, they were live commerce, livestreaming commerce, TikTok Shop, social media, digital commerce, digital marketing, and social media e-commerce platforms. For the impulse buying construct, they were impulsive behaviour, impulsive purchase behaviour, buy impulsively, and impulse buying behaviour. Records retrieved through these supplementary searches were.

Eligibility Criteria

Studies were assessed against predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria covering document type, language, timeframe, influencer construct, outcome construct, commerce context, and determinant scope (Table 1). Eligibility with respect to timeframe was determined by the date of first online publication, whereas studies are cited by their journal issue year in accordance with APA style. Articles first published online in 2025 and subsequently assigned to a 2026 journal issue were therefore eligible, whereas articles first published online after 31 December 2025 were excluded.

Table 1
Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Assessment Criteria	Eligibility Conditions	Ineligibility Conditions
Document type	Peer-reviewed journal articles	Conference proceedings, book chapters, grey literature, and non-peer-reviewed sources
Language	English	Other than English

Assessment Criteria	Eligibility Conditions	Ineligibility Conditions
Timeframe	First published online between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2025	First published online before 2020 or after 31 December 2025
Influencer construct	Studies examining social media influencers, streamers, or equivalent constructs (e.g., key opinion leaders, digital celebrities, livestreamers)	Studies not addressing the role of influencers or streamers
Outcome construct	Studies examining impulse buying behaviour, impulse purchase, or impulse buying intention	Studies examining general purchase intention without an impulse buying dimension
Commerce context	Studies conducted in social commerce, e-commerce, or live streaming commerce settings	Studies conducted in offline retail or non-commercial settings
Determinant scope	Studies examining consumer-behavioural determinants of impulse buying	Studies focusing primarily on content algorithms, algorithm performance, artificial intelligence, or content creativity

Selection Process

The selection process followed the PRISMA 2020 flow structure of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion (Figure 1). Searches in ScienceDirect, Scopus, ProQuest, and EBSCOhost yielded records, from which duplicates were removed. A total of records were screened by title and abstract, reports were assessed in full text, and 28 studies were included in the final analysis. The numbers of records excluded and the reasons for exclusion at each stage are reported in Figure 1.

All stages of the review, including screening, eligibility assessment, data extraction, and quality appraisal, were conducted by a single reviewer. The use of a single reviewer increases the risk of selection and extraction error and is acknowledged as a limitation of this review.

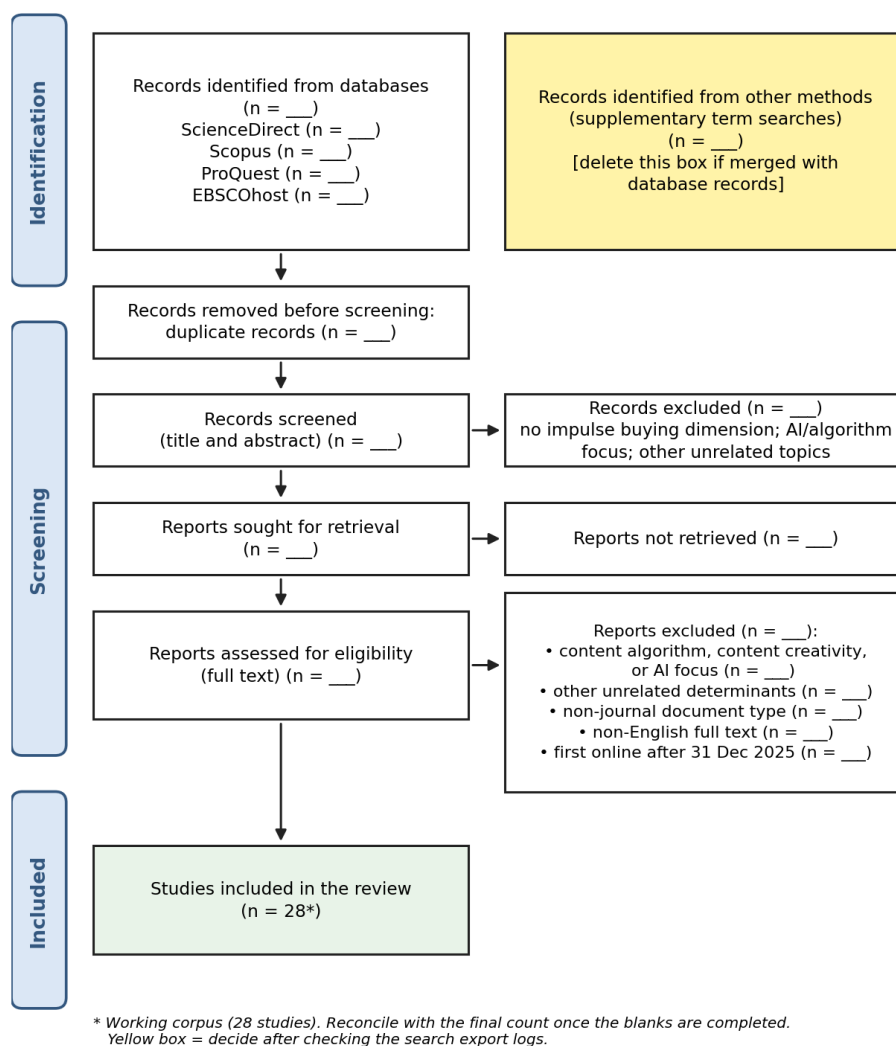


Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 flow diagram of the study selection process

Quality Appraisal

The methodological quality of the included studies was appraised using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) version 2018 (Hong et al., 2018), which provides core quality criteria for qualitative, randomised controlled, non-randomised, quantitative descriptive, and mixed methods designs. Appraisal results were reported descriptively and were not used as a basis for excluding studies.

Data Extraction and Synthesis

For each included study, data were extracted on publication year, research method, geographic context, platform context, and underlying theoretical framework. These data were

used to produce a descriptive overview of the literature (Table 2) and to inform a subsequent thematic synthesis of the determinants of impulse buying in influencer-driven commerce.

HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

Study Selection

The outcome of the selection process is presented in Figure 1. The descriptive synthesis below is based on a working corpus of 28 studies retained after application of the criteria in Table 1.

The included studies were first published online between 2020 and 2025. Two studies (C. Chen et al., 2026; Zheng et al., 2026) were first published online in 2025 and subsequently assigned to 2026 journal issues; (Zheng et al., 2026), for example, was first published online on 24 December 2025. Both are cited by issue year in accordance with APA style. Studies first published online after 31 December 2025 were excluded under the predefined timeframe criterion (Table 1).

Descriptive Synthesis

Table 2
Descriptive coding of the included studies (preliminary)

#	Study	Year	Method	Geographic context	Platform / context	Theory
1	Ahmad & Lilani	2025	TBV	TBV	Social media; beauty influencers (T)	S-O-R (T)
2	Azad et al.	2025	Multi-study (T); design TBV	TBV	Livestream; tourism (T)	TBV
3	C.-P. Chen	2025	Qualitative (A)	Korean beauty context (A)	YouTube (T)	S-O-R; source credibility; parasocial interaction (A)
4	C. Chen et al.	2026 (online 2025)	Survey, n = 463; PLS-SEM + NCA (A)	TBV	Social media; food micro-influencers (A)	S-O-R; dual-system theory (A)
5	M. Chen et al.	2021	TBV	TBV	Internet celebrities; platform TBV	TBV
6	Hongsuchon et al.	2025	TBV	TBV	Social commerce websites (T)	S-O-R (T)

#	Study	Year	Method	Geographic context	Platform / context	Theory
7	Koay et al.	2021	TBV	TBV	Instagram (T)	TBV
8	C.-H. Lee & Chen	2021	TBV	TBV	Live streaming commerce (T)	S-O-R (T)
9	D. Lee & Wan	2023	TBV	TBV	Mukbang live streaming commerce (T)	TBV
10	Li et al.	2024	TBV	TBV	E-commerce anchors (T); live streaming TBV	Emotional contagion (T)
11	Lin et al.	2023	TBV	TBV	Live streaming shopping (T)	S-O-R (T)
12	Ngo et al.	2025	TBV	Vietnam (T)	TikTok Shop (T)	TBV
13	Nguyen et al.	2025	TBV	TBV	Streamers (T); live streaming TBV	S-O-R (T)
14	Rehman et al.	2025	TBV	TBV	Live streaming commerce (T)	TBV
15	Shamim & Azam	2025	TBV	TBV	Influencer content; platform TBV	TBV
16	Shamim & Islam	2022	Data from SNS users (A); design TBV	TBV	Social networking sites (A)	Signalling theory (A)
17	Shamim et al.	2024	TBV	TBV	Social commerce (T)	TBV
18	Shao	2024	TBV	TBV	Live streaming commerce (T)	TBV
19	Toku & Kalkan Yilmaz ^a	2025	TBV	TBV	Social media influencers (T)	TBV

#	Study	Year	Method	Geographic context	Platform / context	Theory
20	Tran et al.	2025	TBV	TBV	Live streaming commerce; KOLs (T)	TBV
21	Ullah et al.	2023	TBV	TBV	Macro-influencer posts; platform TBV	TBV
22	Vazquez et al.	2020	TBV	TBV	Second-screen social commerce (T)	TBV
23	Xin et al.	2024	TBV	TBV	Live streaming (T)	Heuristic–systematic model (T)
24	Yan et al.	2023	TBV	TBV	Influencer live-streaming ads on e-commerce platforms (T)	TBV
25	Yang et al.	2024	TBV	TBV	Social media (T)	TBV
26	Zafar et al.	2020	TBV	TBV	Facebook commerce (T)	TBV
27	Zhang & Zhang	2024	TBV	TBV	Live streaming e-commerce (T)	Match-up perspective (T)
28	Zheng et al.	2026 (online 2025)	Experimental; three experiments (A)	TBV	Fashion livestreaming (T)	TBV

Note. T = coded from the article title; A = coded from the published abstract; TBV = to be verified from the full text. Studies may apply more than one theory. ^a Retained provisionally: Crossref metadata lists this article as Turkish-language, which conflicts with the English-language criterion (Table 1).

The 28 studies in the working corpus were first published online between 2020 and 2025. Counted by journal issue year as cited, output was highest in 2025 (n = 10), followed by 2024 (n = 6) and 2023 (n = 4); a further two studies are cited as 2026 issues but were first published online in 2025. Live streaming constitutes the most frequently examined commerce context, explicitly featured in 11 studies, whereas platform-specific investigations of TikTok Shop, Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook commerce each appear only once. Fifteen studies

do not identify live streaming as their research context, and two ((L. Li et al., 2024; Nguyen et al., 2025) remain to be verified. The S-O-R framework is the most frequently identified theoretical lens, adopted in at least seven studies (C. Chen et al., 2026; Hongsuchon et al., 2025; Lin et al., 2023), while other studies draw on emotional contagion (Li et al., 2024), the heuristic–systematic model (Xin et al., 2024), signalling theory (Shamim & Islam, 2022), and the match-up perspective (Zhang & Zhang, 2024). Research method, geographic context, and theoretical grounding could not be determined for the majority of studies from the titles and abstracts available; these dimensions are therefore reported as preliminary pending full-text coding.

Thematic Overview (Preliminary)

A preliminary reading of titles and abstracts suggests three clusters. The first concerns influencer or streamer attributes and credibility, including streamer characteristics (Nguyen et al., 2025), the persuasiveness of key opinion leaders (Tran et al., 2025), e-commerce anchors' characteristics (Lin et al., 2023), and message and media credibility (Shamim & Islam, 2022). The second concerns the relational and psychological mechanisms through which exposure becomes buying, such as trust (Shamim & Azam, 2025) parasocial interaction and narrative involvement (Vazquez et al., 2020), attachment and congruence (Shao, 2024), flow state and perceived informativeness (Ullah et al., 2023), customer inspiration (Yang et al., 2024), and emotional versus rational pathways (C. Chen et al., 2026)). The third concerns content and context features, including live product display versus social interaction (Xin et al., 2024), influencer–product match-ups (Zhang & Zhang, 2024), and negative bullet comments (Zheng et al., 2026). This grouping rests on titles and abstracts only and must be confirmed through full-text coding.

QUALITY APPRAISAL RESULTS

DISCUSSION

Interpretation of Findings and Answers to the Research Questions

Regarding RQ1, the corpus is concentrated in live streaming and in a single theoretical lens: live streaming is explicit in 11 studies and S-O-R in at least seven, whereas Instagram, YouTube, TikTok Shop, and Facebook commerce are represented by one study each. Knowledge about influencer-driven impulse buying is therefore shaped largely by the live streaming context. Regarding RQ2, the preliminary thematic reading indicates that research explains impulse buying through who the influencer is (attributes and credibility), how consumers relate to the influencer (trust, parasocial interaction, attachment, emotional contagion), and what the shopping environment offers (product display, interaction, comments, and fit). RQ3 is addressed in the final subsection. Because method, geography, and theory remain to be verified from full texts, these answers are provisional.

Comparison with Previous Literature

The prominence of S-O-R in the present corpus mirrors the findings of (Y. Li et al., 2025), in whose live streaming corpus two-thirds of the studies adopted that framework, suggesting that S-O-R has become a default lens in this area. The two reviews nevertheless differ in scope and evidence base. (Y. Li et al., 2025) restricted their synthesis to quantitative studies of live streaming e-commerce indexed in Web of Science or Scopus and published up

to mid-2024, whereas the present review treats the influencer as the focal agent, does not restrict research design, and extends to studies first published online in 2025. Only five studies are common to both reviews, so the present corpus adds evidence from Instagram (Koay et al., 2021), Facebook commerce (Zafar et al., 2020), TikTok Shop (Ngo et al., 2025), and YouTube (C.-P. Chen, 2025), as well as recent live streaming studies (Rehman et al., 2025; Zheng et al., 2026).

Why Findings May Differ Across Studies

Several features of the corpus may explain why studies are difficult to compare. Contexts range from live streaming to Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook commerce, and product categories from beauty and food to luxury fashion and tourism. The influencer is variously a streamer, anchor, key opinion leader, micro- or macro-influencer, or internet celebrity, roles that differ in reach and in the relationship they build with followers. Outcomes also differ, from impulse buying behaviour to intention and urge to buy, and studies rely on different theories and, probably, on different designs and national settings. Until these dimensions are coded from full texts, apparent inconsistencies cannot be attributed to any single source.

Theoretical Implications

First, the dominance of S-O-R suggests that the field relies largely on a stimulus-and-response logic. Combining it with dual-process or other complementary theories, as some studies already do (C. Chen et al., 2026; Xin et al., 2024), could clarify when influencer stimuli lead to affective rather than deliberative routes to purchase. Second, the many labels for the influencer and for the outcome point to a need for clearer construct definitions, in line with the observation that the conceptualisation of influencers lacks consensus (Malik et al., 2023). Third, treating impulse buying as an outcome of the influencer rather than of the channel invites theories that locate the source of the stimulus in the person.

Practical Implications

For brands, the corpus suggests that selecting an influencer involves more than reach, since credibility, perceived fit with the product, and the quality of interaction recur as themes (Shamim & Islam, 2022; Xin et al., 2024; Zhang & Zhang, 2024). Brands working outside live streaming should not assume that findings from live commerce transfer directly to Instagram, YouTube, or Facebook commerce. For platforms and policymakers, evidence of overconsumption in some contexts (D. Lee & Wan, 2023) may support transparent commercial disclosure and design choices that help consumers pause before buying. These implications are tentative given the title- and abstract-based coding.

Contribution, Limitations, and Future Research Agenda

This review contributes a broader, influencer-centred map of the literature than live-streaming-specific syntheses, together with a structured set of directions for further work. Future research could compare influencer-driven impulse buying across live and non-live platforms; harmonise how the influencer and the impulse buying outcome are defined and measured; combine S-O-R with other theories to test boundary conditions; examine downstream consequences such as overconsumption, which only one title in the corpus addresses (D. Lee & Wan, 2023); and report research design and geographic context more explicitly so that studies can be compared. The review has limitations. Screening, extraction,

and appraisal were carried out by a single reviewer, which increases the risk of selection and extraction error. The synthesis currently relies on titles and abstracts pending full-text coding, only English-language journal articles first published online in 2020–2025 were included, and the four databases may not capture all relevant work.

SIMPULAN

Research on social media influencers and impulse buying is growing but concentrated in live streaming and the stimulus–organism–response framework, with influencer attributes, trust-related mechanisms, and content features as the main explanations. Non-live platforms, inconsistent construct definitions, and downstream consequences remain under-studied. Brands should therefore choose influencers for credibility and product fit rather than reach alone, and should not assume that live-commerce findings transfer to other platforms. Future studies should compare platforms, harmonise measures, integrate complementary theories, and examine overconsumption. Findings remain provisional until full-text coding is complete.

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