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The Relationship Between Information Encountering and Impulsive Purchase of Mobile Social Media Users: A Case Study of Douyin

Haonan Sun
Ph.D. Candidate, Faculty of Arts and Social Science, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 50603.
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0004-6962-5356
Email: s2138353@siswa.um.edu.my

Hamedi Mohd Adnan*
Professor, Faculty of Arts and Social Science, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 50603.
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7096-5225
Email: hamedi@um.edu.my

*Corresponding Author Email: hamedi@um.edu.my

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Abstract
This research explores the relationship between information encountering and impulsive purchase behaviour on Douyin, a leading short-video platform in China. By integrating the information encountering framework with the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model, this research aims to examine how exposure to merchandise-focused short-video content affects users' impulsive purchase decisions. More specifically, it identifies the key factors that guide users from initially noticing product information to engaging with it, ultimately culminating in impulsive purchases. Data were gathered via a survey of 468 eligible participants using convenience sampling, and the responses were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), a statistical technique suitable for complex models involving latent variables. The results indicate that the quality, credibility, usefulness, and visual appeal of merchandise short-video content significantly influence the initial noticing phase of information encountering, which, in turn, affects impulsive purchasing behaviour. The study confirms the relevance of the information encountering framework within the context of Douyin, demonstrating that users are more likely to make impulsive

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purchases during the noticing, stopping, and examining stages of information encountering. These findings highlight the critical role of video content characteristics in capturing and maintaining consumer attention, thereby enhancing the likelihood of purchases. The research concludes that the integration of the information encountering framework with the S-O-R model provides a firm theoretical basis for understanding consumer behaviour on social media platforms like Douyin. It advances consumer behaviour theory by extending it into the digital era and enriching the information encountering framework. From a practical perspective, the study suggests that improving video content attributes can optimise marketing strategies and encourage consumer purchases. These insights offer valuable guidance for both academics and marketing professionals, assisting in the development of more effective digital marketing campaigns that align with consumers' impulsive buying tendencies.

Keywords: Information Encountering, Impulsive Purchase, S-O-R, PLS-SEM, Social Media

Introduction

Research Background

As the world's largest industrial nation, China faces a growing issue of overcapacity in industrial products, with many traditional manufacturing sectors encountering a significant mismatch between inventory levels and insufficient market demand (Ge et al., 2024). To address this challenge, e-commerce and social media platforms, particularly short-video platforms like Douyin, have emerged as pivotal solutions. These platforms transcend the limitations of traditional media in disseminating information, enriching consumers' access to both information and entertainment while significantly boosting product sales. On Douyin, numerous product sales short videos are interspersed with user-shared content, all aiming to encourage users to complete purchasing actions through various strategies (Wang, 2024). However, while Douyin and similar platforms enhance sales through algorithmic product recommendations embedded within short videos, they also give rise to impulsive consumption, leading users to purchase items they do not necessarily need.

Impulsive purchasing is typically an unplanned decision prompted by an external stimulus (Hussain et al., 2024). Douyin's short videos, known for their high attractiveness and infectious nature, can rapidly trigger users' desire to buy, thereby increasing impulsive purchasing behaviours (Hoang et al., 2024). This tendency is particularly pronounced among younger users, who are not only more accustomed to obtaining information via social media but are also more engaged with online shopping. Many of these young users lack the ability to critically assess their own needs, making them more susceptible to encountering and purchasing the product which was recommended by social media and often leads to impulsive purchases (Nyrhinen et al., 2024).

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Social media platforms such as Douyin use an algorithmic recommendation system to push content tailored to users' interests. This method of information acquisition, common among mobile internet users, aligns with Erdelez (2000) concept of information encountering, in which users unexpectedly encounter information during browsing, rather than actively seeking it. In other words, in today's digital age, the manner in which users obtain information via social media platforms has shifted from traditional active information-gathering behaviours to becoming the dominant form of information acquisition. Platforms like Douyin, which rely on information encountering, have not only altered the way consumers access information but have also redefined their purchasing decision-making processes.

Despite the central role of social media platforms like Douyin in providing information through information encountering, research examining impulsive consumption on such platforms, framed by the concept of information encountering, remains relatively scarce. This study aims to investigate the relationship between information encountering and impulsive consumption among young users on Douyin integrating the S-O-R model, which focuses on the interaction among Stimulus, Organism, and Response, provides a psychological framework for understanding consumer behaviour (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). This research will examine the informational factors that capture users' attention to the content they encounter on Douyin, specifically product-oriented short videos. It will also assess whether the traditional information encountering framework is still applicable to Douyin and explore how individual reactions cause impulsive purchasing. Through this investigation, the study aims to offer new insights into consumer behaviour in the short-video era, deepening the understanding of the relationship between information encountering and impulsive consumption. Additionally, it seeks to provide theoretical support for platform optimisation, product recommendations, and consumer guidance.

Research Questions

By integrating the S-O-R model with the framework of information encountering, this study identifies five key informational factors—namely, information quality, credibility, interestingness, usefulness, and visual appeal—as stimuli. The objective is to examine whether these factors prompt users to encounter information serendipitously during mobile social media consumption. Although these factors have been identified as influential in information encountering on short-video platforms, their role in impulsive purchasing remains underexplored. Information encountering framework consists of five stages: noticing, stopping, checking, capturing, and returning (Erdelez, 2004). Within this framework, the user organism undergoes a series of evolutionary processes, ultimately resulting in a response behaviour. According to the information encountering model, the progression of a user encountering product video content on Douyin and completing a purchase can be

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categorised as either rational or impulsive. Rational purchasing involves the user completing all five stages, whereas impulsive purchasing occurs when these stages are not fully engaged.

In the context of Douyin, users may initiate information encountering by noticing product video content during idle time. Following this, the user may stop to engage with the video, show interest in the product, and proceed to examine additional details such as price and quality. During the examining stage, the user evaluates whether the product aligns with their needs, and thus decides whether to proceed with a purchase. After completing the purchase, the user may return to the platform, potentially triggering another round of information encountering. Hence, in line with Erdelez's framework, the capturing stage plays a pivotal role in rational consumption behaviours on Douyin. In this stage, users match the product's characteristics to their own needs, leading to a rational purchase decision. This study aims to assess the applicability of the information encountering framework to impulsive consumption on Douyin, with a specific focus on the feasibility of the noticing, stopping, and capturing stages in influencing impulsive purchase.

In conclusion, the research objectives are as follows:

a. To analyse the extent to which information quality, credibility, interestingness, usefulness, and visual appeal influence users' likelihood of triggering information encountering on Douyin.
b. To assess whether the information encountering framework proposed by Erdelez remains applicable within the Douyin environment.
c. To investigate whether the three stages of noticing, stopping, and checking in the information encountering framework serve as triggers for users' impulsive consumption behaviour.

Based on these research objectives, the research questions are following:

RQ1: What information factors influence users to trigger information encountering in Douyin?
RQ2: Is the information encountering framework still valid in Douyin?
RQ3: Does Noticing, Stopping and Examining stage in the information encountering framework trigger impulse consumption?

Research Hypothesis and Model

The research investigates how information factors on Douyin, a prominent Chinese short-video platform, trigger impulsive purchase. The focus is on five key factors—information quality, credibility, usefulness, interestingness, and visual appeal—and their influence on the early stages of information encountering. It is hypothesised that these factors significantly impact the likelihood of users encountering and engaging

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with product-related short-video content, which may ultimately lead to impulsive purchase decisions. The study builds upon Erdelez's framework of information encountering, which includes the stages of noticing, stopping, examining, capturing, and returning. As outlined in the research questions, this study specifically considers the full information encountering process associated with rational purchasing. Therefore, in the noticing, stopping, and examining stages, users have yet to complete the capturing stage, where product information is matched with their needs—an action that leads to impulsive purchases. By analysing how these factors influence progression through these stages, the research aims to explain the dynamics of impulsive purchasing behaviour on mobile social media platforms.

Based on above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1a Information quality triggers the noticing phase of information encountering when a user encounters a short-video information of a commodity on Douyin.
H1b Information credibility triggers the noticing phase of information encountering when users encounter short-video information about goods on Douyin.
H1c Information usefulness triggers the noticing phase of information encountering when users encounter short-video information about goods on Douyin.
H1d Information interesting triggers the noticing stage of information encountering when users stumble upon short-video information about goods on Douyin.
H1e Information visual effect triggers the noticing stage of information encountering when users stumble upon short-video information of goods on Douyin.
H2a The noticing phase triggers the stopping phase when users stumble upon product information on Douyin.
H2b The stopping phase triggers the examining phase when users stumble upon product information on Douyin.
H3a Users still in the noticing stage will trigger impulsive purchase.
H3b Users still in the stopping stage will trigger impulsive purchase.
H3c Users still in the examining stage will trigger impulsive purchase.

Literature Review

Mobile Social Media and Douyin

The evolution of mobile internet social media has significantly transformed both people's access to information and their consumption habits. In particular, the rapid rise of short-video platforms like Douyin—known for being fast, intuitive, and entertaining—has quickly become popular among a broad spectrum of users. Douyin, a short-video app launched by ByteDance in 2016, primarily caters to Chinese users and boasts exceeded 1 billion active users (TechWeb, 2025). According to the 2024 Social & KOL Marketing Trend Report, social media content not only captures users' attention but also fosters a new consumption landscape. Douyin has emerged as a

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pivotal bridge between products and young consumers, stimulating demand through its "interest-based content" and guiding users towards "discovery", thus shortening the consumer decision-making process.

As users increasingly turn to social media for consumption decisions, platforms like Douyin have become crucial in shortening the communication gap between brands and consumers. Data from AiMedia Consulting reveals that 74.2% of consumers prefer Douyin/Jittery Extreme as their short-video platform of choice, underscoring Douyin's high user preference. Furthermore, QuestMobile data indicates that Douyin's average per-user daily usage has risen to 115.2 minutes, reflecting the strong user engagement and platform "stickiness." This engagement not only signifies users' preference for the content but also Douyin's growing influence in shaping consumption behaviours. The behavioural patterns of Douyin users—shaped by factors such as time, location, interaction mode, and content creation—demonstrate fragmentation throughout the day with peak activity at night. The platform supports three key modes of interaction: recommendation, searching, and passive viewing. These patterns impacts directly on consumers' purchase perception toward products, positioning Douyin as a critical channel for brand marketing and product promotion.

Impulsive Purchase

Impulsive purchases, unlike rational ones, are spontaneous, unplanned buying decisions driven by emotional and situational factors (Hussain et al., 2024). They are mainly influenced by emotions, personality traits, and context such as credit availability and shopping environment (Hamza & Elsantil, 2024). Piron (1991) notes that impulsive buyers browse without specific intentions, encountering stimuli that trigger desire to purchase without seeking information or alternatives. This process is shaped by internal and external factors. With the rise of social media and mobile devices, merchants have shifted sales from physical stores to online platforms, encouraging impulsive buying through product information dissemination (Susmitha et al., 2024). Social media is more likely to prompt impulsive purchases than offline channels. Prior studies classify impulsive purchase factors as internal or external (Gantulga & Dashrentsen, 2023; Hussain et al., 2024).

Users on social media engage with interesting, easy-to-use content to maintain a pleasant mood (Ramírez-Correa et al., 2019; Turel & Serenko, 2012). Mood significantly influences impulsive buying, with positive emotions motivating spontaneous purchases (Hussain et al., 2024). High-quality information and visual appeal increase content attractiveness, promoting impulsive purchase, while clear descriptions and easy navigation also support buying behaviour (Susmitha et al., 2024). Source credibility, including influencer expertise and appeal, inspires consumers to buy impulsively (Yang et al., 2024). Trust in authentic recommendations is crucial (Liu et al., 2023), as are celebrity endorsements, observational learning,

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interaction, and authentic content (Zhu et al., 2022). Additionally, timely information exchange enhances curiosity and attention, further encouraging impulsive purchase (Zhang et al., 2023). In sum, although many studies explore information factors and impulsive purchase, few apply the information encountering framework. This study addresses this gap by analysing how information factors on Douyin influence impulsive buying in the context of information encountering, offering fresh insight into impulsive purchase behaviour on social media.

Information Encountering

Information encountering, also referred to as passive information acquisition, contrasts with the traditional focus on active information seeking, which dominated information studies until the close of the twentieth century. Active information seeking pertains to individuals deliberately obtaining information from sources such as books (Oswald, 2019). In contrast, passive information acquisition involves the incidental and unintentional acquisition of information, with minimal expectations and involvement. In 1995, the definition of "information encountering" was coined by Erdelez, marking the formal recognition of passive information acquisition in academic discourse. Erdelez defined it as "the unforgettable experience of discovering useful or interesting information by accident." Foster and Ford (2003) used the phrase "accidental discovery of information" and proposed two approaches: (1) accidental discovery where the existence and location of the information are incidental, but not its value, and (2) accidental discovery where both the existence and value of the information are serendipitous.

Despite the absence of a single and unified definition of information encountering, the above-mentioned concepts and definitions share a common emphasis on the user's "low involvement" and "low expectations" during the process of encountering information. Erdelez and Makri (2020) suggested that "information encountering" be adopted as the preferred term for accidental discovery in the context of information access, and they expanded its scope. A range of studies has built upon this concept, investigating various factors influencing information encountering. These studies have categorised these factors into three main groups: information, environmental, and personal factors (Su & Zheng, 2021). This study specifically examines the role of short videos on Douyin as information factors that trigger information encountering and contribute to impulsive consumption. It also reviews previous research related to information factors, particularly their role in facilitating accidental information discovery.

Theoretical Frameworks of Information Encountering

Erdelez (2004) identifies five components of the process by which information encountering occurs: noticing, stopping, examining, extracting, and returning. However, each instance of information encountering does not necessarily include all

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five components. Noticing refers to the perception and cognition of the information, marking the user's initial awareness of it. Stopping involves interrupting the current task to focus on the encountered information, effectively pausing the user's ongoing activity. Examining is the value assessment of the encountered information, where the user evaluates its relevance and value. Extracting involves problem-solving, where the user selects or saves the encountered information for further use. Finally, returning occurs when the user resumes their initial task after interacting with the information, either choosing to abandon or integrate it into their ongoing work. This theoretical framework captures the various stages through which users interact with incidental information. The Figure 1 illustrates these stages of information encountering.

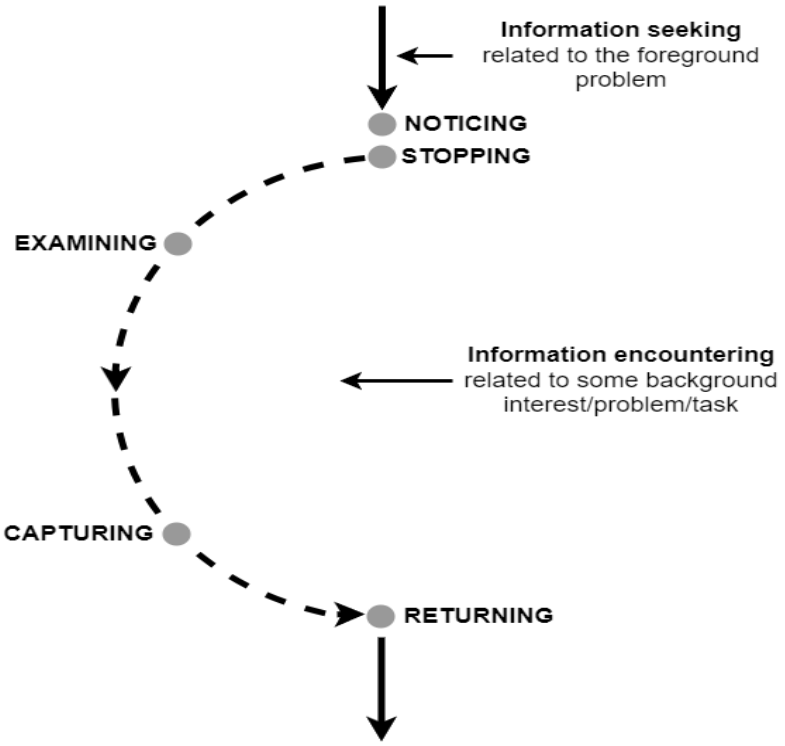

Figure 1: Information Encountering Model
Source: Adapted from Erdelez (2004)

Most of the subsequent frameworks for information encountering (e.g., (Chen, 2021; Jiang et al., 2021; Tian et al., 2018)) have expanded on Erdelez (2004) model, offering deeper perspective into the relationship between information encountering and various aspects of information acquisition. However, many of these studies have remained within the information domain and have not extended their exploration into consumer behaviour, particularly in impulsive consumption. This target of this research is to address this gap by adopting the term 'information encountering' and combining it with Erdelez's model to explore its application on Douyin, focusing on its influence on impulsive purchase behaviours. By doing so, this research attempts to provide a theoretical foundation for explanation how information encountering on mobile social media platforms like Douyin can affect consumer behaviour, specifically impulsive consumption.

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Methodology

S-O-R Model

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model provides a psychological framework for exploring how external stimuli affect an individual's internal processes and, ultimately, their behaviour. This model is especially relevant for understanding consumer behaviour, where external stimuli, such as marketing cues, influence cognitive and emotional states, leading to specific responses in shopping behaviour (Choudhary & Sharma, 2022). Originally introduced by Woodworth in 1928, the S-O-R model has been widely used in business and consumer decision-making studies (Chebat & Michon, 2003). It categorises stimuli as factors that influence internal states, organisms as the cognitive and emotional processes that mediate these stimuli, and responses as the resulting behaviours.

The S-O-R model has been utilized in various research domains, such as retail settings, to elucidate consumer decision-making processes Research has examined how marketing strategies can be tailored to evoke specific emotional and cognitive responses that influence attitudes and ultimately drive purchase decisions (Williams, 2024). This search adapts the S-O-R model to investigate the factors influencing product video information on Douyin. It aims to determine whether specific phases of information encountering—namely noticing, stopping, and examining—can trigger impulsive purchases by users. A survey-based quantitative correlational study was designed to explore the relationships between multiple variables. A large sample size will be used to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings (Curtis, 2016). The research model and hypotheses are depicted in Figure 2.

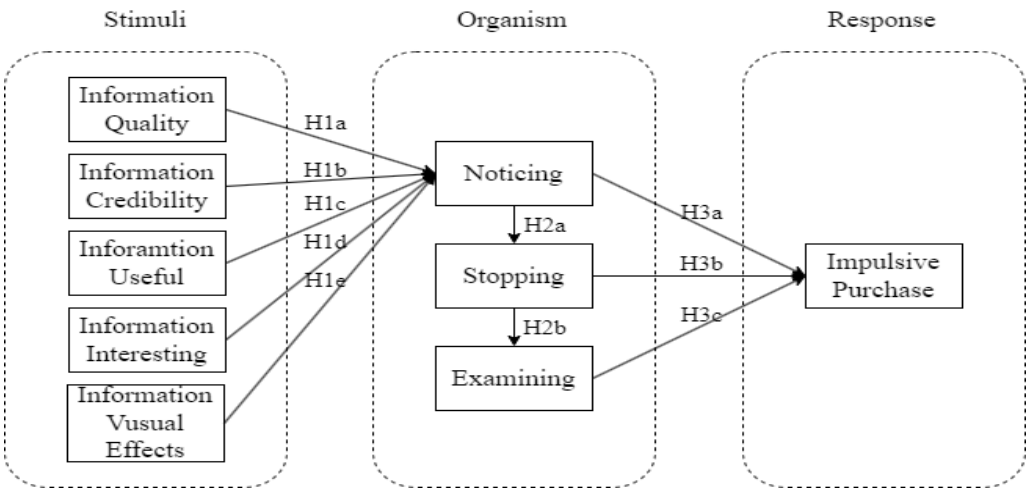

Figure 2: Research Model and Hypothesis

Participant and Sample Size

This study focuses on Douyin, a Chinese social media app, as its research platform. The target participants are Douyin users from China, aged between 18 and 29, who

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have experienced impulse spending. According to Arnett (2010), individuals within this age range are classified as youth, or emerging adults. This demographic group is characterised by distinct socio-economic, health, and cultural traits, setting them apart as a specific segment of the population. Given the large user base of Douyin, the number of predictors determines the minimum sample size which is a practical approach (Hair et al., 2020; Kline, 2015; Ringle et al., 2020). For this study, G power analysis was employed to estimate the minimum sample size, which was calculated to be 153 samples. The number based on a medium effect size, a 95% confidence level, a 0.5% estimation error, and seven predictors, as illustrated in Figure 3 (Cheah et al., 2020).

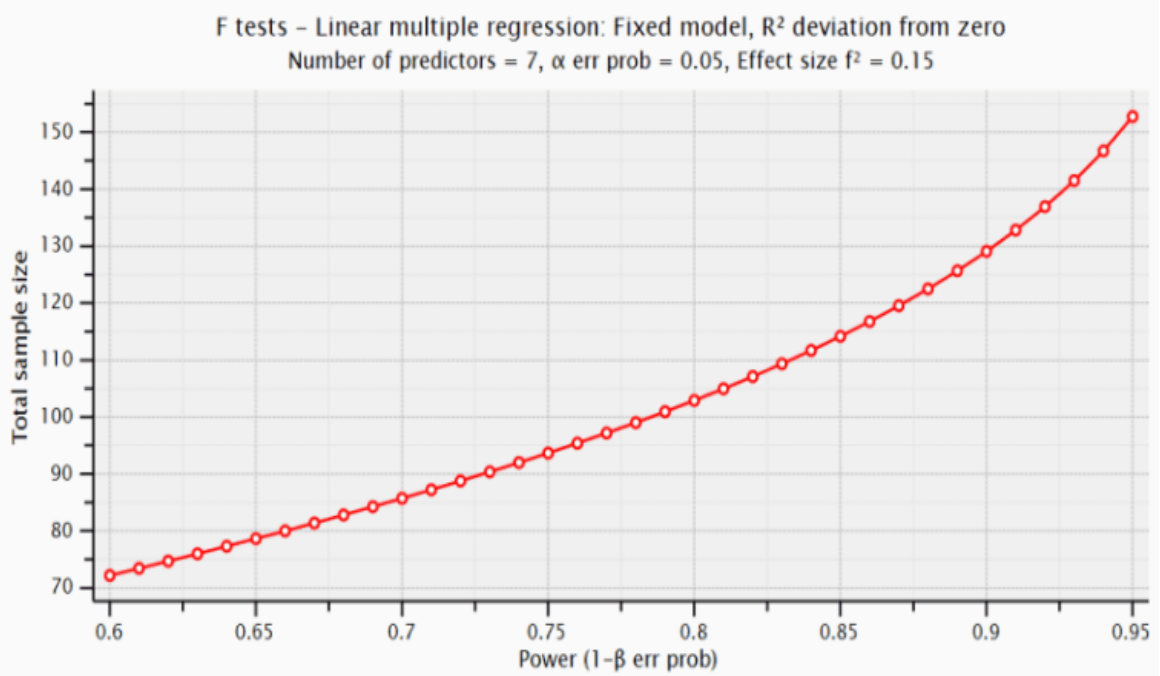

Figure 3: Estimated Minimum Sample Size (G Power Output).

Data Collection

Data collection employed a professional questionnaire platform to distribute the survey directly to users' mobile phones. Following Biernacki and Waldorf (1981), respondents' eligibility was verified by asking if they had purchase experience on Douyin; only those who answered yes were allowed to proceed. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: the first gathered participants' basic information, and the second included 27 questions across nine variables, each rated from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree) on a 7-point Likert scale. The variables were grouped into three categories: six information factors—information quality, credibility, usefulness, interestingness, and visualisation; impulse purchase; and the three stages of the information encountering framework—noticing, stopping, and examining—designed based on this framework and prior studies. References for the variables are provided in the Table 1, with specific questions detailed in Appendix I.

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Table 1: References for Variables Design

Variable	Definition	Reference
Information Quality	Information that is accurate, clear, and relevant.	Jiang et al. (2021)
Information Credibility	Information that is distributed through trusted intermediaries, such as individuals and institutions.	Hosseini and Moeini (2022)
Information Usefulness	Information that meets user needs and is practical.	Ngo et al. (2024)
Information Interesting	Information that is happy and enjoyable.	Yang and Rim (2014)
Information Visual Effect	Information that enhance cognitive processing ability and reduce users' cognitive load.	Xu and Fang (2011)
Impulsive Purchase	Unplanned purchase decisions made by consumers.	Li and Jongbin (2024)
Noticing	The users notice a piece of information because of certain characteristics	Erdelez (2004)
Stopping	The users spend a certain amount of time viewing the information.	
Examining	Users examine the value of the information.	

Data Analysis Tools and Techniques

The analysis for this study was carried out using three distinct software tools. Microsoft Excel 2016 facilitated the data coding process and addressed issues related to missing responses. SPSS 24.0 was employed to analyse the demographic characteristics of participants, evaluate data distribution normality, and perform correlation analyses. Additionally, Smart PLS 4.0 was utilized to verify the reliability and validity of measurement items, conduct structural equation modelling (SEM), and test research hypotheses. Smart PLS was specifically chosen for SEM due to its ability to manage intricate research models and constructs that include both single and multiple measurement items (Hair et al., 2020).

Data Analysis

Respondents' Demographic

Initially, 511 participants were recruited for the study. After screening out responses that were incomplete or did not meet the study's criteria, 468 valid responses were obtained, resulting in a 91.6% response rate, which satisfies the minimum sample size requirement established through G power analysis. In terms of gender distribution, 261 participants were male (55.8%), while 207 were female (44.2%). Regarding age, the majority of participants, totalling 352 individuals (75.2%), were between 18 and 23 years old, while 116 participants (24.8%) were aged 24 to 29. This indicates that Douyin users in the sample predominantly fall within the younger age range of 18 to 24 years.

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Reliability and Validity

Construct reliability in this study was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha (C.A.) and Composite Reliability (C.R.), while discriminant validity was assessed through Average Variance Extracted (AVE), as presented in Table 2. Cronbach's alpha is regarded as a conservative metric that may underestimate internal consistency, whereas composite reliability often provides an inflated estimate. Therefore, including both measures offers a more comprehensive reliability evaluation. Gliem and Gliem (2003) classify C.A. values as excellent above 0.9, good between 0.8–0.9, acceptable from 0.7–0.8, questionable between 0.6–0.7, poor above 0.5, and unacceptable below 0.5. This study reported C.A. values above 0.8, indicating good reliability. According to Hair et al. (2020), C.R. values should exceed 0.7, and all values in this study surpassed 0.8. For AVE, Hair et al. (2020) recommend values above 0.5, and the AVE values in this research were all above 0.7, confirming validity. Additionally, all outer loading values exceeded 0.7.

Table 2: Construct Reliability and Validity

Variable	Items	Loadings	CA	CR	AVE
Information Quality	IQ1	0.899	0.859	0.869	0.780
	IQ2	0.873			
	IQ3	0.877			
Information Credibility	IC1	0.900	0.851	0.855	0.771
	IC2	0.878			
	IC3	0.855			
Information Usefulness	IU1	0.864	0.841	0.841	0.759
	IU2	0.875			
	IU3	0.873			
Information Interesting	II1	0.854	0.831	0.840	0.746
	II2	0.863			
	II3	0.874			
Information Visual Effect	IVE1	0.893	0.848	0.848	0.767
	IVE2	0.885			
	IVE3	0.849			
Noticing	NO1	0.883	0.840	0.841	0.758
	NO2	0.865			
	NO3	0.864			
Stopping	ST1	0.853	0.819	0.830	0.733
	ST2	0.877			
	ST3	0.838			
Examining	EX1	0.865	0.844	0.846	0.762
	EX2	0.873			
	EX3	0.881			
Impulsive Purchase	IP1	0.875	0.860	0.861	0.781
	IP2	0.879			
	IP3	0.897			

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Discriminant validity assesses the extent to which different latent variables are distinct from one another. In this study, the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio was used to evaluate discriminant validity. Following the guidelines of Henseler et al. (2015), acceptable HTMT values should be below 0.85 or 0.9; this study adopted the stricter threshold of 0.85. As shown in Table 3, all HTMT values fall below this threshold, confirming that the latent variables are adequately differentiated from one another.

Table 3: HTMT

	IQ	IC	IU	II	IVE	NO	ST	EX	IP
IQ									
IC	0.519								
IU	0.427	0.513							
II	0.483	0.522	0.503						
IVE	0.494	0.522	0.444	0.459					
NO	0.504	0.528	0.521	0.543	0.495				
ST	0.492	0.539	0.537	0.512	0.517	0.484			
EX	0.391	0.422	0.405	0.384	0.348	0.361	0.412		
IP	0.520	0.550	0.497	0.486	0.544	0.545	0.522	0.372	

Note: IQ = Information Quality; IC = Information Credibility; IU = Information Usability; II = Information Interesting; Information Visual Effects; NO = Noticing; ST = Stopping; EX = Examining; IP = Impulsive Purchase

Examination of Common Method Bias

This study utilized data from a single source, which introduced the potential risk of common method bias (CMB). To address this, two approaches were applied to evaluate common method variance (CMV) within the partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) framework: the full collinearity assessment using variance inflation factors (VIFs) and the correlation matrix procedure. As outlined by Kock and Lynn (2012) and Kock (2015), all variables were regressed against a standard variable, with VIF values less than or equal to 3.3 indicating that single-source data does not introduce significant bias. In this study, VIF values ranged from 1.763 to 2.430, confirming the absence of notable bias. Additionally, the correlation matrix procedure demonstrated that construct correlations remained below the threshold of 0.9, with all coefficients under 0.5. This further verified that common method bias was not a substantial concern for the data-set. Hence, the study concludes that CMB did not exist of the data.

Assessment of the Structural Model

The structural model was evaluated based on the coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). As shown in Table 4, the R^2 values

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were 0.121, 0.307, 0.362, and 0.164. Following Cohen (2013) guidelines, R^2 values below 0.02 are considered weak, those between 0.02 and 0.13 are also weak, values between 0.13 and 0.26 are moderate, and values above 0.26 are substantial. Overall, the model's results are deemed acceptable (Cohen & Levin, 1989), as the lowest R^2 value (0.121) approaches the moderate range, while the remaining values exceed 0.13, demonstrating satisfactory explanatory power.

Table 4: R-Square

	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
Noticing	0.362	0.356
Stopping	0.164	0.162
Examining	0.121	0.119
Impulsive Purchase	0.307	0.302

Table 5 presents the f^2 values used to assess the effect size of predictor variables. According to Cohen (2013), an f^2 indicates a large effect by greater than 0.34, 0.14 to 0.34 is medium effect, and 0.01 to 0.14 is small effect. The results show that all five information factors have a small effect on the noticing stage of information encountering. Both paths within the information encountering framework exhibit medium effects. Regarding impulsive purchase, noticing and stopping have medium effects, while examining has only a small effect.

Table 5: F-Square

Loading	F-Square
IQ -> NO	0.027
IC -> NO	0.023
IU -> NO	0.036
II -> NO	0.041
IVE -> NO	0.022
NO -> ST	0.196
ST -> EX	0.138
NO -> IP	0.116
ST -> IP	0.082
EX -> IP	0.020

Note: IQ = Information Quality; IC = Information Credibility; IU = Information Usability; II = Information Interesting; IVE = Information Visual Effects; NO = Noticing; ST = Stopping; EX=Examining; IP = Impulsive Purchase

Table 6 provides the Q2 values for this study, which serve as indicators of the path model's predictive relevance. As noted by Chin (1998), a Q2 value above zero (0) confirms that the model exhibits predictive relevance. In this research, the Q2 values ranged from 0.115 to 0.265, demonstrating the model's predictive capability.

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This confirms that the model is effective in predicting the endogenous constructs.

Table 6: Q-Square

	SSO	SSE	Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)
STOPPING	1404	1242.666	0.115
NOTICING	1404	1032.12	0.265
EXAMINING	1404	1279.698	0.089
IMPULSIVE PURCHASE	1404	1075.568	0.234

Results

Table 7 outlines the findings from the hypotheses testing conducted in this study. A total of ten hypotheses were examined, with statistical results revealing that all t-values exceeded 4.537 and p-values were equal to 0, as displayed in Table 7 and Figure 3. Based on Greenland et al. (2016), hypotheses are considered valid if the t-value surpasses 1.96 and the p-value is below 0.05. Since all hypotheses in this study meet these requirements, they are deemed accepted.

Table 7: Hypotheses Test Result

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Values	P Values	Results
IQ -> NO	0.158	0.159	0.043	3.675	0.000	Accepted
IC -> NO	0.149	0.150	0.043	3.471	0.001	Accepted
IU -> NO	0.180	0.179	0.043	4.165	0.000	Accepted
II -> NO	0.195	0.194	0.044	4.422	0.000	Accepted
IVE -> NO	0.142	0.142	0.044	3.247	0.001	Accepted
NO -> ST	0.405	0.406	0.050	8.166	0.000	Accepted
ST -> EX	0.348	0.348	0.048	7.209	0.000	Accepted
NO -> IP	0.316	0.316	0.044	7.150	0.000	Accepted
ST -> IP	0.270	0.271	0.046	5.834	0.000	Accepted
EX -> IP	0.129	0.128	0.040	3.234	0.001	Accepted

Discussion

Combining the S-O-R theory with information encountering, this research selects five information factors—information quality, credibility, interestingness, usefulness, and visual effect—as stimuli to explore whether they trigger users' chance encounters with information during mobile social media use. While these factors have been linked to information encountering on short video platforms, their role in impulsive purchases remains underexplored. Erdelez (2004) information encountering framework includes five elements: noticing, stopping,

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examining, capturing, and returning. Here, the user (organism) undergoes a sequence of cognitive processes leading to a behavioural response. In this context, encountering product videos on Douyin distinguishes rational from impulsive purchases: rational purchases involve completing all five steps, whereas impulsive purchases occur when some steps are skipped.

In Douyin's consumption behaviour, users may trigger information encountering by noticing product videos while passing time. They then stop to watch, show interest, and examine details such as price and quality. At the examining stage, users assess whether the product meets their needs and decide on purchase. After buying, users continue browsing, potentially leading to further purchases. Within Erdelez's framework, the capturing stage is crucial for rational purchases, as users align product features with their needs. This study investigates the framework's relevance to impulsive consumption on Douyin, focusing on the feasibility of the noticing, stopping, and capturing stages. Individuals' willingness to consume has been a significant focus in economics, attracting extensive attention from researchers across various disciplines. Numerous scholars have integrated different domains with the concept of willingness to consume (e.g., (Greenland et al., 2016; Magdalena, 2015)).

Impulse buying, a crucial phenomenon in consumer behaviour, has garnered particular interest. With the rapid advancement of mobile devices and social media, these platforms have become key channels for marketing. On streaming media platforms like Douyin, merchandising video content and user-generated videos work together to stimulate users' purchasing intentions. Unlike text and image-based content, video information has a stronger visual impact, creating a more immersive experience for the viewer. Moreover, the goods presented in the videos are showcased more comprehensively, and content creators often incorporate various creative elements to entice users to make purchases. Additionally, the platform's algorithms and recommendation feature continuously arouse users' curiosity, prompting them to keep browsing and engaging with new videos (Poleac & Gherguț-Babii, 2024).

This scenario exemplifies a typical information encountering situation, where users unintentionally acquire useful or interesting information with low expectations and minimal engagement, ultimately stimulating their desire to make a purchase. In the field of information science, researchers have examined the relationship between social media and impulse buying (Erdelez & Makri, 2020). The rapid growth of social media has further amplified impulse buying, revealing that a combination of informational, emotional, environmental, and social factors significantly influences consumers' spontaneous decisions (Rukmana et al., 2024). Although some studies have investigated the factors contributing to impulsive purchases on mobile internet social media, there is a lack of research linking impulse buying to information encountering.

Specifically, few studies have examined whether informational factors on social media

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platforms trigger information encounters, whether the process of information encountering is still relevant in these contexts, and whether the information encountering framework can explain the relationship between the information encountering process and impulse buying. This study aimed to explore the informational factors that trigger information encountering on Douyin, assess the applicability of the information encountering framework—particularly in the noticing, stopping, and examining stages - and investigate whether impulse purchases can be triggered during any of these phases.

The results reveal that five information factors - information quality, credibility, usefulness, interestingness, and visual effect - are positively correlated with the noticing stage of information encountering ($t = 3.675$, $p = 0.000$; $t = 3.471$, $p = 0.001$; $t = 4.165$, $p = 0.000$; $t = 4.422$, $p = 0.000$; $t = 3.247$, $p = 0.001$). On Douyin, the three stages of information encountering - notice, stop, and examine - are triggered sequentially. Users, initially attracted by one or more of these information factors, will notice the encountered information and pause to form a general understanding of the product ($t = 8.166$, $p = 0.000$). After pausing and observing the information, they proceed to examine more detailed aspects to assess the product's value ($t = 7.209$, $p = 0.000$). This finding confirms that Erdelez's information encountering framework retains explanatory power within the context of mobile internet social media, particularly Douyin.

Furthermore, the relationships between users' noticing, stopping, and examining stages and impulsive buying are all positive and statistically significant ($t = 7.150$, $p = 0.000$; $t = 5.834$, $p = 0.000$; $t = 3.234$, $p = 0.001$). To summarise, Douyin's algorithm recommends video content featuring information factors that attract user attention. These factors prompt users to notice the information, which, in turn, encourages them to stop and engage more deeply with the content. The convenience of mobile payment further facilitates impulse buying by allowing users to complete purchases before fully evaluating whether the product's value aligns with their needs. If users are not sufficiently impressed during the noticing stage to complete the purchase, they proceed to the stopping stage, where the product's various features attract further attention, ultimately leading to a completed purchase.

In the stopping stage, users learn more about the product than in the noticing stage but may still purchase without fully considering its value. If they do not purchase here, they enter the reviewing stage, where they scrutinise the video's appealing factors and product details before deciding. Although users begin assessing product value at this stage, completing a purchase based solely on high perceived value without matching personal needs still classifies as impulsive buying. When users recognise the product's value relative to their needs, it is deemed a rational purchase, which falls outside the scope of impulsive purchase and this study. This distinction suggests the need for a tailored model and offers a direction for future research.

This study makes several theoretical contributions. Firstly, it extends the theory of consumer behaviour, particularly in the context of the increasing prevalence of digital

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and social media. By analytically integrating information encountering with impulsive purchasing, this study investigates how information encountering is triggered by product video information on streaming media platforms such as Douyin. It sheds light on how information factors influence consumers' noticing and purchasing decisions, offering a new perspective for understanding impulsive purchase in the digital media environment. Secondly, the study enriches the theory of information encountering through empirical research and validates the applicability of the information encountering process within the Douyin context. It confirms the importance of information quality and credibility in triggering information encountering and explores how different stages of the process influence impulsive purchasing. These findings provide empirical support for the further development of information encountering theory in social media contexts.

This study also offers several practical contributions. First, it demonstrates that the quality, credibility, usefulness, interest, and visual appeal of product video information on social media apps can trigger the noticing stage of information encountering. This insight suggests that companies can enhance these aspects of video content on Douyin to attract users' attention, thereby optimising marketing strategies, improving the effectiveness of advertisements, and further stimulating users' purchasing desires. Second, based on the information encountering framework, the study uncovers how the psychological mechanisms behind impulsive purchasing in the social media environment shape consumers' immediate decision-making. From a consumer perspective, the findings provide empirical guidance on how to improve self-control and guard against the spread of inaccurate information, contributing to better decision-making processes.

Conclusions

Key Finds

This study using the S-O-R model investigates the influences between information encountering on impulsive purchase within the context of Douyin. The research identifies five key factors - information quality, credibility, usefulness, interestingness, and visual effect - that significantly influence the initial stages of information encountering: noticing, stopping, and examining. The findings demonstrate that high-quality, credible, and visually engaging video content effectively captures users' attention, thereby increasing the possibilities of impulsive purchase. Specifically, the study reveals that users prefer to make impulsive purchases when they encounter product information through short videos, as these factors trigger the noticing stage of the information encountering process. Moreover, the study underscores the sequential relationship between the stages, where noticing leads to stopping, which in turn encourages examining, thereby illustrating the dynamic progression by which users engage with product information.

Furthermore, the study confirms the relevance of Erdelez's information encountering framework in the context of Douyin, highlighting its significance in understanding

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consumer behaviour within social media platforms. The integration of the S-O-R model with information encountering provides a robust theoretical basis for examining how external stimuli impact internal cognitive processes, ultimately influencing purchasing behaviour. These results contribute to the academic discussion on consumer behaviour in digital marketing and offer valuable practical insights for marketers aiming to refine video content strategies, enhance consumer engagement, and drive impulsive buying decisions.

Limitations

First, the sample was drawn from Douyin users in China, limiting the generalisability to other social media platforms or consumer groups. Second, the study focused on the noticing, stopping, and checking phases, excluding the capturing and returning stages, which might offer a fuller understanding of consumer behaviour. Finally, it examined information quality, credibility, usefulness, interest, and visual effects but omitted factors like users' psychological states and individual differences. Future research should address these limitations by using more diverse samples across countries and incorporating additional variables influencing impulsive purchase decisions.

The Scope for Further Research

This study opens new avenues for future research. Firstly, it establishes the link between information encountering and impulsive purchasing, offering fresh topics for academics and guidance for marketers to optimise social media merchandising strategies. Secondly, by focusing on the noticing, stopping, and examining stages on Douyin, it clarifies the boundary between impulsive and rational purchases within the information encountering framework. Future research could explore other stages and use experiments or field studies to better understand the dynamic process and its impact on consumer behaviour. Additionally, investigating how individual differences such as age, gender, and personality influence this relationship could help develop targeted marketing strategies. These efforts will deepen understanding of information encountering's role in decision-making and enhance theoretical and practical insights for social media marketing.

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