SemeAd 2025
XXVIII Seminários em Administração

10, 11, 12, 13 e 14 de novembro de 2025
ISSN 2177-3866

Habitual behaviour of shopping on Facebook and WhatsApp groups: validation of a measurement model

HELENEZE LUES
NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY

RITA KLONARIDIS

HABITUAL BEHAVIOUR OF SHOPPING ON FACEBOOK AND WHATSAPP GROUPS: VALIDATION OF A MEASUREMENT MODEL

INTRODUCTION: RESEARCH PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVE

Online shopping has rapidly become a central component of modern consumer behaviour, driven by technological advancements, changing lifestyles, and increasing internet penetration (Nabila et al., 2023). Across the globe, consumers are embracing online shopping as it provides numerous advantages in terms of price and product information comparisons, greater variety of product and service offerings and convenience in terms of shopping anytime and accessing products and services from almost anywhere (Rasli et al., 2018). As a result, e-commerce sales continue to grow annually in both developed and emerging markets (Makhitha & Ngobeni, 2024). In the South African context, online shopping has also gained traction, particularly following the Covid-19 pandemic, which accelerated digital adoption among consumers and small businesses (BusinessTech, 2022). However, there have been noticeable changes to the online shopping landscape, whereby consumers are more frequently exploring social media shopping as an alternative to traditional e-commerce online shopping. Worldwide, there has been an increase in sales made through social media platforms, with predictions estimating sales to represent 20.8 percent of the retail industry in 2026 (Dopson & Keenan, 2025). Social commerce is an emerging form of e-commerce that integrates social media and online communication tools to support both personal interaction and commercial activity. Unlike traditional e-commerce, it enables the buying and selling of products through social engagement, user-generated content, and shared business information within social networks (Moses et al., 2021). According to Han et al. (2018), social commerce offers opportunities for buyers and sellers to trade on various social media platforms, which not only provides a platform for shopping activities, but also social interactions.

Social commerce offers multiple benefits for both businesses and consumers. It encourages customer engagement with the product or service, supports repeat visits to the business's platforms, and creates spaces where users can share opinions about the product or service. Additionally, it provides consumers with the tools to research, compare, and make informed purchasing decisions (Moses et al., 2021). Internationally, the top fifteen social commerce platforms include Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, Snapchat, TikTok, Twitch, Taggshop, WeChat, YouTube, WhatsApp, Amazon Live, Xiaohongshu, Linkpop, LINE and The Shop app (Dopson & Keenan, 2025). In South Africa, the most popular social media platform is WhatsApp, with 93.8 percent of internet users in the country making use of the platform, which is followed by Facebook, with 87 percent of internet users making use of the platform (Kochański, 2025). Hsu et al. (2015) emphasise that through social media platforms, such as Facebook and WhatsApp, online groups can be created with the principle of buying and selling products and services. Online groups can be of particular importance for businesses and independent sellers as these groups combine individuals who share similar interests, which allows sellers to tailor their promotional strategies and build relationships (Hsu & Lin, 2020). Furthermore, online groups allow sellers to promote their product or service offerings or directly sell new or second-hand products (Nieminen, 2016). According to Dasgupta & Chatterjee (2016), social media has transformed the traditional landscape of consumer behaviour and will continue to do so with the ongoing technological advancements taking place. Consumer behaviour is a broad concept that examines the reasons why individuals or groups select specific products or services to satisfy their needs and wants, as well as the processes they use to select, acquire, use, and dispose of these products (Vidya & Selvamani, 2019). According to Naz (2019), mental and social processes are utilised whilst making decisions to purchase products or services. It is noteworthy that the decision-making process can be explained in five stages, including problem recognition, information search, evaluation of

alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase behaviour. Throughout these stages, consumers display a variety of decision-making styles, including a desire for perfection, brand consciousness, fashion awareness, hedonic motivation, price consciousness, buying impulsiveness, confusion due to too many choices, and habitual brand loyalty (Eriksson et al., 2021). Chen et al. (2017) highlight that social commerce enables consumers to use social media platforms to gain knowledge and make informed decisions about the products or services needed, while it is also possible that the need, or desire, for a specific product or service was stimulated by browsing through the content on the social media platform. Moreover, consumers make use of comments, recommendations and opinions of friends, family, or even unknown members to support their purchase decision on social media platforms. As an important component of consumer behaviour, Sarker et al. (2023) found that consumers' habitual behaviours influence their decisions to purchase specific products and services. Handarkho (2024) explains that habitual behaviour is displayed when an individual automatically conducts a specific activity without providing much thought into it, as if it is part of the individual's routine behaviour. Furthermore, when an individual becomes accustomed to using a system platform, such as a social media platform, they intend to continue using it as it is part of their habitual behaviour. Various studies have explored habitual behaviour in relation to online shopping (Jayagowri & Rajesh, 2021; Khalifa & Liu, 2007). However, limited research has been conducted on habit formation within social commerce, with the majority of the studies focusing on habit and intention (Handarkho, 2024; Sarker et al., 2023) and trust (Farivar et al., 2017). Therefore, this study aims to validate a measurement model to understand consumers' habitual behaviour of shopping on Facebook and WhatsApp groups.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework is popularly being utilised to understand consumer behaviour (Kexin & Teo, 2023). The SOR framework, first introduced by Mehrabian and Russell (1974), offers a comprehensive framework for explaining how external environmental cues (stimuli) influence internal psychological processes (organism), which in turn lead to behavioural reactions (responses) (Vergura et al., 2019). The framework expanded on the earlier Stimulus-Response (SR) framework by acknowledging the role of internal cognitive and emotional states in mediating behaviour (Moses et al., 2021; Zhang & Benyoucef, 2016). Robert and John (1982) were among the first researchers to explore the SOR framework in a retail setting. In this study, the authors encapsulated stimuli through atmospheric cues, consumers' cognitive or emotional feelings as the internal influences, or organism, and response as approach or avoidance. Eroglu et al. (2001) originally adapted the SOR framework to the online shopping context. In this study, the authors explained that atmospheric cues in online stores can influence how consumers think and feel, which in turn affects their shopping behaviour. These cues can be task-relevant, such as product details, prices, and navigation tools that help with purchasing, or less directly relevant, such as design elements that create a pleasant mood or build trust with unfamiliar retailers. With the application of the SOR framework to social commerce, Kexin and Teo (2023) advise that, due to the limited research, researchers should explore the impact of the SOR framework in social commerce from different perspectives and contextual designs. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the availability and marketing of product or service offerings through Facebook and WhatsApp groups are considered to be the stimuli, whereas buying impulsiveness, price consciousness and hedonic motivation are considered as the internal psychological processes, namely the organism and lastly, habit represents the behavioural response.

In relation to the SOR framework, Farivar et al. (2017) explain that habitual behaviours are a direct response to environmental stimuli. In general, habitual behaviour occurs when a person engages in a particular action automatically, with little conscious thought, as it has become a

regular part of their routine (Handarkho, 2024). In an online shopping environment, individuals with established online shopping habits tend to automatically choose the online channel over physical stores when a shopping need arises, without giving it much thought (Khalifa & Liu, 2007). According to Farivar et al. (2017), social commerce is perceived to be enjoyable, yet repetitive in nature, which in turn, can lead to habitual behaviour, whereby it has become a habit for individuals to explore social commerce content. For the purpose of this study, habit is defined as individuals, or potential buyers, who, without much thought, frequently browse through Facebook and WhatsApp groups to analyse the product or service offerings posted by sellers.

Buying impulsiveness is viewed as an emotional preference within a shopping environment (Rani & Rex, 2023). Essentially, buying impulsiveness refers to the tendency of making quick, emotionally driven purchase decisions without carefully thinking through alternatives or considering future consequences (Gulfraz et al., 2022). According to Chinomona and Montso (2018), impulsive buying tendency is often associated with personality traits that predispose individuals to make spontaneous purchases, which, when repeated over time, may develop into habitual buying behaviour. In online shopping, buying impulsiveness refers to the tendency to spontaneously make unplanned purchases triggered by appealing visuals, promotions, or easy checkout processes, often without careful thought or consideration of alternatives (Rani & Rex, 2023). Moses et al. (2021) highlight that social commerce increases the likelihood of impulsive buying by giving consumers easier access to a wide range of products and more convenient purchasing options. However, this convenience can lead to unnecessary purchases and reckless spending. In the context of Facebook and WhatsApp groups, buying impulsiveness refers to the tendency of making quick, unplanned purchases driven by attractive posts or limited-time offers, without investing much thought or evaluation. These platforms often trigger spontaneous buying through emotional appeal and social influence.

Price consciousness, a prominent factor in consumer decision-making, refers to the degree to which consumers are concerned about paying low prices and obtaining the best value for money (Fatmawati et al., 2022). According to Eriksson et al. (2021), a price-conscious consumer is someone who actively seeks out lower prices and special offers, aiming to get the best value for money. This behaviour is motivated not only by financial savings but also by the emotional satisfaction gained from finding the best deals. Fatmawati et al. (2022) explain that in online settings, price-conscious consumers are often driven by comparisons, discounts, and perceived savings. In a study conducted by Eriksson et al. (2021), it was found that higher price consciousness among Thai young adults was linked to more frequent mobile shopping, particularly in habitual purchases like groceries, suggesting that price-conscious consumers may develop stronger shopping habits using mobile platforms. In social commerce, social media platforms will most likely be used by price-conscious consumers to compare prices in the endeavour to find the best price for a product or service (Eastman et al., 2020). Social media platforms, such as Facebook and WhatsApp groups, appeal to price-conscious consumers due to the availability of second-hand goods, negotiable pricing, and direct seller interactions that can reduce transaction costs.

Hedonic motivation refers to the pursuit of emotional gratification, enjoyment, and sensory pleasure in the consumption experience (Chakraborty & Soodan, 2019). Moreover, if a consumer prioritises hedonic factors while shopping, they gain meaningful enjoyment from the emotional and sensory experience of the activity (Anand et al., 2019). Maulida et al. (2022) highlight that the enjoyment associated with hedonic motivation can, through consistent reinforcement, transform into habitual buying behaviour as individuals increasingly seek out the pleasurable aspects of shopping. Online shopping often satisfies hedonic needs through visual stimulation, novelty, and entertainment (Evangelin et al., 2021). Hedonic motivation in social commerce involves the enjoyment and social connection consumers experience while

shopping. Through social media platforms, users can interact, share experiences, and stay updated on the latest trends, which enhances the fun and socially engaging aspects of online shopping. In addition, browsing through social media content can be leisurely and pleasurable (Chakraborty & Soodan, 2019). In the context of Facebook and WhatsApp groups, hedonic motivation is reflected in the enjoyment users derive from casually browsing posts, engaging in conversations, and discovering new or trending products and services in a relaxed and socially interactive environment.

Based on the literature review provided, this study applies the SOR framework to explain habitual behaviour in terms of shopping on Facebook and WhatsApp groups. Furthermore, this study proposes that consumers' habit of shopping from Facebook and WhatsApp groups fits within a four-factor model comprising habit, buying impulsiveness, price consciousness, and hedonic motivation.

METHODOLOGY

The study followed a quantitative, descriptive research design, by means of a single cross-sectional sample.

3.1 Target population and data collection

The target population of this study was South African consumers who have purchased an item from a Facebook or WhatsApp group in the past. An international market research company was employed to collect the data required for the study. This company distributed an online self-administered questionnaire to 500 panel members on its South African database, using the convenience sampling method. The sample size is in line with the requirements proposed by Hair et al. (2018) when conducting structural equation modelling.

3.2 Research instrument

In addition to the demographical an background information questions, the questionnaire included questionnaire items that measured consumers' buying impulsiveness (four items; Nasir et al., 2021), price consciousness (four items; Schneider & Zielke, 2020) and hedonic motivation (four items; Alalwan, 2018; Aydın, 2019) for purchasing from Facebook and WhatsApp groups as well as their habit (four items; Venkatesh et al., 2012) in making such purchases. The respondents indicated their level of agreement with each of the scaled items using a six-point Likert scale that ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6).

3.3 Data analysis

The statistical package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for the data analysis of this study. The analyses performed included exploratory principal component analysis, using the varimax rotation, correlation analysis, collinearity diagnostics, confirmatory factor analysis, internal consistency reliability and composite reliability, as well as nomological, convergent and discriminant validity analyses.

RESULTS ANALYSIS

From the 500 questionnaires, a total of 412 questionnaires were completed in full and met the sample requirements of having purchased an item from a Facebook or WhatsApp group before, resulting in an 82 percent response rate. The sample was well represented in terms of gender, with slightly more females than males. Concerning age, the sample included more respondents that fell within the 18 to 34 years age category. All 11 of South Africa's official languages were represented by the sample, with three respondents indicating mother tongue languages other than the listed 11 languages.

The initial step in the data analysis involved conducting an exploratory principal component analysis, using the varimax rotation. This was done to ensure that the scale items loaded on the intended factor and that no items cross-loaded on multiple factors. To ascertain that the data is suitable for factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test for sampling adequacy and

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were performed. The analysis returned a KMO value of 0.865, surpassing 0.6 and a significant Bartlett test result including a chi-square of 3016.218 and 120 degrees of freedom ($p=0.000<0.01$) (Pallant, 2020). Table 1 present that the rotated component matrix.

Table 1: Rotated component matrix

Items	F1	F2	F3	F4	Communalities
B1			.697		.592
B2			.811		.713
B3			.805		.691
B4			.785		.727
B5		.731			.615
B6		.800			.665
B7		.812			.706
B8		.794			.679
B9				.731	.602
B10				.813	.685
B11				.827	.691
B12				.764	.609
B13	.847				.787
B14	.802				.721
B15	.801				.753
B16	.809				.736
Percentage of variance	34.019	14.802	10.979	8.780	

As evident in Table 1, each of the scale items loaded onto the intended factor as derived from the literature, and the factor loadings of each exceeded the 0.50 threshold. This suggests that each item makes a significant contribution towards the underlying factor it loads on. In addition, the communalities of all the items surpassed 0.50, which suggests that the extracted factors explain a meaningful portion of the variance in each item (Hair et al., 2018). Combined, the four factors explain 68.6 percent of the total variance. Subsequent to the exploratory principal component analysis, correlation analysis was performed to determine the relationship between the factors and to establish nomological validity. Furthermore, collinearity diagnostics were performed to determine if any multi-collinearity issues exist. The matrix of Pearson's Product-Moment correlation coefficients along with the tolerance and VIF values are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlation matrix and collinearity diagnostic results

				Collinearity diagnostics	
	F1	**F2**	**F3**	**Tolerance values**	**VIF**
Habit (F1)				0.719	1.391
Buying impulsiveness (F2)	0.216**			0.940	1.064
Price consciousness (F3)	0.349**	0.116*		0.789	1.267
Hedonic motivation (F4)	0.496**	0.208**	0.432**	0.669	1.494

** $p \leq 0.01$

* $p \leq 0.05$

Pearson's Product-Moment correlation coefficients as presented in Table 2, shows statistically significant ($p \leq 0.05$) positive relationships between each pair of latent factors, which suggests nomological validity (Hair et al., 2018). The tolerance values fell within the range of 0.669 and

0.940, exceeding 0.1, while the VIF values ranged between 1.064 and 1.494, which is well below the threshold of 10 (Pallant, 2020). Consequently, no significant multi-collinearity concerns were identified, and a measurement model was specified. This model indicates that consumers' habitual behaviour of shopping on Facebook and WhatsApp groups is a four-factor structure that includes the latent variables of habit, buying impulsiveness, price consciousness and hedonic motivation. Confirmatory factor analysis was performed on the specified measurement model using AMOS. The results emanating from the confirmatory factor analysis is displayed in Table 3 and includes the standardised loading estimates, squared multiple correlation estimates (R^2), Cronbach's alpha (α), composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), the square root of AVE (√AVE) and the correlation coefficients.

Table 3: Estimates for measurement model

Latent factors	**Standardised loading estimates**	**R^2**	***a***	**CR**	**AVE**	**√AVE**
Habit (F1)	.685 .752 .736 .811	.469 .565 .541 .657	.832	0.834	0.558	0.747
Buying impulsiveness (F2)	.675 .724 .754 .689	.456 .525 .569 .475	.802	0.804	0.506	0.711
Price consciousness (F3)	.679 .715 .794 .773	.461 .511 .631 .598	.828	0.830	0.550	0.742
Hedonic motivation (F4)	.841 .791 .828 .798	.707 .626 .685 .636	.887	0.888	0.664	0.815
Correlations	F1↔F2: .244	F1↔F3: .410	F1↔F4: .579	F2↔F3: .125	F2↔F4: .234	F3↔F4: .498

The measurement model was scrutinised for problematic estimates such as negative error variances and standardised factor loadings outside of the -1.0 and 1.0 range. The standardised loading estimates and squared multiple correlation estimates displayed in Table 3 revealed no such problematic estimates, since all the loading estimates did not surpass -1 and 1.0, and none of the squared multiple correlation estimates were negative values. The Cronbach's alpha values and CR values of all the factors exceeds the recommended value of 0.7, thereby suggesting internal-consistency and composite reliability (Hair et al., 2018). In addition, since the standardised loadings estimates and AVE values of all four factors exceeded the 0.5 threshold, convergent validity is evident (Malhotra, 2020). Given that the √AVE value of each factor is greater than the correlations associated with the factors, discriminant validity is established (Malhotra, 2020).

In the confirmatory factor analysis of the measurement model, a four-factor structure was specified, with the initial loading on each of the factors fixed at 1.0. This specification resulted in an over-identified model encompassing 152 distinct sample moments, 54 parameters to be estimated and 98 degrees of freedom based on a significant chi-square value of 241.529 ($p \leq 0.001$). Given that the chi-square is sensitive to large sample sizes (Byrne, 2010), additional model fit indices were assessed. The analysis returned an incremental fit index (IFI) of 0.952,

a comparative fit index (CFI) of 0.951, a Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) of 0.940, RMSEA of 0.06 and a standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) of 0.057. These are indicative of good model fit as the IFI, CFI and TLI values exceeded 0.9 and the SRMS and RMSEA fell below 0.08 (Malhotra, 2020). Based on these results, this study confirms that consumers' habitual behaviour of shopping on Facebook and WhatsApp groups is a four-factor measurement model that exhibit assessment measures that reveal reliability, construct validity and satisfactory model fit.

CONCLUSION/CONTRIBUTION

This paper presented the findings of an investigation aimed at evaluating a model based on the SOR framework for determining consumers' habitual behaviour of shopping on Facebook and WhatsApp groups within South Africa. Based on the results, this study concludes that consumers' habit of shopping from Facebook and WhatsApp groups can be conceptualised as a four-factor model comprising habit, buying impulsiveness, price consciousness, and hedonic motivation. The confirmatory factor analysis supported the measurement model, demonstrating internal consistency reliability and composite reliability, as well as construct validity, evidenced through nomological, convergent, and discriminant validity, alongside an acceptable model fit. Accordingly, this model provides a foundation for understanding the development of consumers' habitual behaviour in the context of shopping on Facebook and WhatsApp groups. Further research is required to explore the relationships between buying impulsiveness, price consciousness, and hedonic motivation, and to examine whether and how these factors influence consumers' shopping habits on Facebook and WhatsApp groups.

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