

Why Do Consumers Buy What They Cannot See? A Conceptual Framework of Impulsive Buying in Blind Box Consumption

Martino Maldini, Andhy Setyawan*

Faculty of Business and Economics, Universitas Surabaya, Indonesia

**Corresponding author. Email: andhy@staff.ubaya.ac.id*

ABSTRACT

Blind box products have gained popularity among young consumers because they offer uncertainty and excitement during the purchasing process. Previous studies have identified various factors that influence consumer behavior in blind box consumption. However, these factors have mostly been examined separately, making it difficult to fully understand impulsive buying behavior in the blind box context. Therefore, this study develops a conceptual framework based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) perspective by integrating environmental and psychological factors. By using a conceptual research approach, this study reviews and analyzes relevant literature on blind box consumption. The proposed framework suggests that store atmosphere, fashion involvement, perceived novelty, surprise, and perceived uncertainty influence consumer curiosity. In turn, curiosity influences impulsive buying behavior. In addition, perceived luck is proposed to directly influence impulsive buying behavior, while price consciousness moderates the relationship between curiosity and impulsive buying behavior. This study provides a more comprehensive understanding of impulsive buying behavior in blind box consumption and offers directions for future empirical research.

Keywords: *Blind Box, Perceived Uncertainty, Curiosity, Perceived Luck, Impulsive Buying Behavior.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, blind box products have emerged as a popular form of consumption among young consumers. Blind boxes are opaque packages containing collectible products whose contents remain unknown until after purchase. This unique marketing mechanism provides consumers with an uncertain and highly random reward experience, which has contributed to the growing popularity of blind box consumption (Zhang et al., 2022). The rapid growth of the blind box industry is reflected in its market performance, with the Chinese blind box market projected to exceed RMB 58 billion by 2025 and account for approximately 65% of the global market (Tang & Zhang, 2026). Along with this market expansion, scholarly interest in blind box consumption has increased, with studies examining uncertainty, curiosity, and impulsive buying behavior (Savira et al., 2026). The success of blind box products is further illustrated by Pop Mart, which recorded revenue of RMB 13.04 billion in 2024, representing a year-on-year increase of 106.9%, while expanding its international presence into several countries, including Indonesia (Pop Mart, 2024).

The expansion of Pop Mart into Indonesia reflects the growing acceptance of blind box products among Indonesian consumers. The popularity of blind box products has become increasingly visible, with reports indicating that some consumers were willing to queue for up to 17 hours to obtain limited-edition blind box products (Kompas, 2024). Recent studies further suggest that blind box products are particularly attractive to Generation Z consumers due to their preference for novelty, experiential consumption, and symbolic self-expression (Sandra Dewi et al., 2026). These developments indicate that blind box consumption has become an emerging consumer phenomenon in Indonesia and warrants further academic investigation.

Previous studies have examined blind box consumption from different perspectives. Gong et al. (2024) investigated the roles of fashion involvement, perceived novelty, surprise, and store atmosphere in shaping consumer curiosity and impulsive buying behavior within the blind box context. Meanwhile, Zhang et al. (2022) examined the roles of perceived uncertainty and perceived luck in explaining consumer responses toward blind box products. Although previous studies have provided valuable insights into blind box consumption, they generally examined environmental and psychological factors separately. Limited research has integrated these factors within a single framework to explain impulsive buying

behavior among blind box consumers. Therefore, this study aims to develop a conceptual framework integrating environmental and psychological factors to explain impulsive buying behavior. Specifically, this study examines the roles of store atmosphere, fashion involvement, perceived novelty, surprise, perceived uncertainty, perceived luck, curiosity, and price consciousness in shaping impulsive buying behavior among blind box consumers.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a conceptual approach to explain impulsive buying behavior in blind box consumption. Conceptual research seeks to develop new theoretical insights by integrating and synthesizing existing concepts, theories, and research findings (Jaakkola, 2020). Based on this approach, the proposed framework integrates environmental and psychological factors that have been identified in previous blind box studies, including fashion involvement, perceived novelty, surprise, perceived uncertainty, perceived luck, curiosity, and price consciousness.

Relevant literature was collected from various academic databases and scholarly sources. Previous studies were reviewed to identify relationships among the proposed variables and to support the development of the conceptual framework. In addition, industry reports and market publications were utilized to provide contextual insights into the development of the blind box industry.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1. Proposed Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature reviewed, this study proposes a conceptual framework to explain impulsive buying behavior in blind box consumption. Drawing on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) perspective (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), the framework integrates several environmental and psychological stimuli that are expected to influence consumer curiosity and impulsive buying behavior.

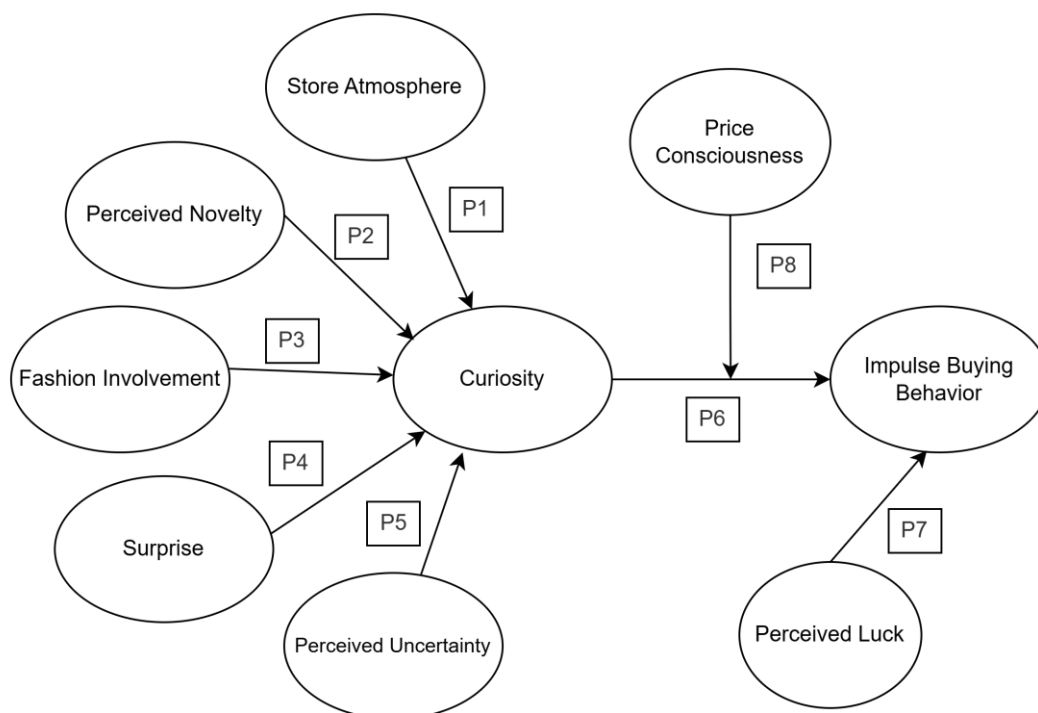


Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Framework

The framework suggests that store atmosphere, perceived novelty, fashion involvement, surprise, and perceived uncertainty stimulate consumer curiosity toward blind box products. Curiosity is positioned as a mediating variable that links environmental and psychological stimuli to impulsive buying behavior. In addition, perceived luck is proposed to directly influence impulsive buying behavior, while price consciousness moderates the relationship between curiosity

and impulsive buying behavior. By integrating these relationships into a single framework, this study offers a more comprehensive explanation of impulsive buying behavior in blind box consumption.

3.2. Proposition Development

Based on the proposed conceptual framework and the literature reviewed, this study develops eight propositions regarding the relationships among the proposed variables. Each proposition is derived from relevant theories and findings from previous studies on blind box consumption and consumer behavior.

P1 : Store atmosphere positively influences curiosity.

Store atmosphere represents the overall shopping environment perceived by consumers. Previous studies indicate that an attractive store atmosphere can attract consumers' attention and encourage product exploration. Gong et al. (2024) further found that store atmosphere positively influences consumer curiosity in blind box consumption.

P2 : Perceived novelty positively influences curiosity.

Perceived novelty reflects consumers' perception that a product offers new and unique experiences. Novel products tend to attract consumers' attention and encourage further exploration, which may increase consumers' curiosity toward blind box products (Gong et al., 2024).

P3 : Fashion involvement positively influences curiosity.

Fashion involvement reflects consumers' interest and engagement in fashion-related products and trends. Previous studies suggest that consumers who are highly involved in fashion shopping tend to exhibit hedonic tendencies, including curiosity, when exploring new products and experiences (Gong et al., 2024). Consumers with higher fashion involvement may develop greater curiosity toward blind box products.

P4 : Surprise positively influences curiosity.

Surprise occurs when consumers encounter outcomes that differ from their expectations. Previous studies suggest that surprise can attract consumers' attention and encourage them to seek additional information, which may increase curiosity toward blind box products (Gong et al., 2024).

P5 : Perceived uncertainty positively influences curiosity.

Perceived uncertainty is a defining characteristic of blind box products because consumers cannot determine product contents before purchase (Zhang et al., 2022). According to Information Gap Theory, uncertainty creates an information gap that stimulates consumers' curiosity to seek additional information (Loewenstein, 1994).

P6 : Curiosity positively influences impulsive buying behavior.

Curiosity is a psychological urge to explore novelty and the unknown (Berlyne, 1978). Previous studies indicate that curiosity can stimulate purchasing motivation and encourage impulsive buying behavior, particularly in blind box consumption contexts (Gong et al., 2024).

P7 : Perceived luck positively influences impulsive buying behavior.

Perceived luck reflects an individual's belief that luck is a stable characteristic that consistently favors oneself (Darke & Freedman, 1997). Prior studies indicate that individuals with higher perceived luck are more willing to take risks, such as participating in lotteries and choosing riskier financial options (Jiang et al., 2009). Therefore, consumers with higher perceived luck may be more likely to engage in impulsive buying behavior.

P8 : Price consciousness moderates the relationship between curiosity and impulsive buying behavior.

Price consciousness reflects consumers' sensitivity to price when making purchasing decisions. Previous studies indicate that consumers with high price consciousness tend to control spending and avoid unnecessary purchases. In the blind box context, Gong et al. (2024) found that price consciousness negatively moderates the relationship between curiosity and impulsive buying behavior.

4. CONCLUSION

This study proposes a conceptual framework to explain impulsive buying behavior in blind box consumption by integrating environmental and psychological factors within the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) perspective. The framework suggests that store atmosphere, fashion involvement, perceived novelty, surprise, and perceived uncertainty influence consumer curiosity, which subsequently affects impulsive buying behavior. In addition, perceived luck is proposed to directly influence impulsive buying behavior, while price consciousness is expected to moderate the relationship between curiosity and impulsive buying behavior.

By integrating variables from previous studies into a single framework, this study provides a more comprehensive understanding of impulsive buying behavior especially in blind box consumption. The proposed framework may also help consumers and practitioners better understand the factors that influence purchasing decisions in the blind box market. Future research may empirically test the proposed relationships, particularly in the Indonesian context.

REFERENCES

- Berlyne, D. E. (1978). Curiosity and learning. *Motivation and Emotion*, 2(2), 97–175. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00993037>
- Darke, P. R., & Freedman, J. L. (1997). The belief in good luck scale. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 31(4), 486–511. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jrpe.1997.2204>
- Gong, X., Yee, C. L., Lee, S. Y., Saif, A. N. M., Liu, M., & Anonhi, F. (2024). Unveiling the enigma of blind box impulse buying curiosity: The moderating role of price consciousness. *Heliyon*, 10(24). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e40564>
- Jaakkola, E. (2020). Designing conceptual articles: four approaches. *AMS Review*, 10(1–2), 18–26. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13162-020-00161-0>
- Jiang, Y., Cho, A., & Adaval, R. (2009). The unique consequences of feeling lucky: Implications for consumer behavior. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 19(2), 171–184. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2009.02.010>
- Kompas.com. (2024). Pengalaman warganet antre beli Labubu, ada yang hingga 17 jam. Kompas.com. <https://lifestyle.kompas.com/read/2024/09/17/190100720/pengalaman-warganet-antre-beli-labubu-ada-yang-hingga-17-jam>
- Loewenstein, G. (1994). The psychology of curiosity: A review and reinterpretation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 116(1), 75–98. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.116.1.75>
- Mehrabian, A., & Russell, J. A. (1974). *An approach to environmental psychology*. MIT Press.
- Melvina Lystiani Sandra Dewi, M., Budoyo, V. D., & Mustikasari, F. (2026). Understanding Impulse Buying Behavior: The Case of Blind Box Purchases in Indonesia. *Jurnal LOCUS: Penelitian & Pengabdian*, 5.
- Pop Mart International Group Limited. (2024). Annual report 2024. <https://www.popmart.com>
- Savira, U., Akhmad, M., & Astuti, B. (2026). Consumer behavior and marketing strategies in blind box commerce: A systematic literature review. *Equivalent: Journal of Economics, Accounting, and Management*, 4(2), 431–446. <http://jurnal.dokicti.org/index.php/equivalent/index>
- Tang, X., & Zhang, Y. (2026). The scarcer, the more eager to buy? How does the scarcity of blind box products affect impulse purchase intention. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 89. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2025.104567>
- Zhang, Y., Zhou, H., & Qin, J. (2022). Research on the effect of uncertain rewards on impulsive purchase intention of blind box products. *Frontiers in Behavioral Neuroscience*, 16. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnbeh.2022.946337>