

Affective Pathways of Digitally Mediated Social Influence: Interactivity and Impulse-driven Behavior

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Abstract

Digital platforms increasingly rely on interactive features and socially embedded cues to shape user engagement, yet limited research explains the affective mechanisms through which digitally mediated social influence translates into immediate behavioral responses. Drawing on the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework, this study examines how platform interactivity and digitally mediated social influence function as distinct stimuli that evoke users' emotional responses, specifically arousal and pleasure, and how these affective states subsequently shape impulse-driven behavior. Survey data from 250 Generation Z users of interactive digital platforms were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that interactivity and social influence activate differentiated affective pathways. Interactivity exhibits a stronger association with pleasure, reflecting enhanced enjoyment and immersive engagement with digital systems, whereas digitally mediated social influence demonstrates a stronger association with arousal, capturing heightened emotional activation triggered by social cues. Both affective responses significantly predict impulse-driven behavior, with pleasure emerging as the stronger driver. Mediation analyses further confirm that arousal and pleasure serve as key mechanisms linking digital stimuli to behavioral outcomes. This study contributes to digital technology management by foregrounding affective processes as central mechanisms in digitally mediated interaction and by distinguishing the emotional pathways through which technological and social features shape behavior.

Keywords

Digitally Mediated Interaction, Platform Interactivity, Social Influence in Information Systems, Affective Responses, Human–technology Interaction, Impulse-driven Behavior