

Factors Triggering Online Impulse Purchases in Different e-Commerce Platforms

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ABSTRACT

This research investigated the factors that triggered online impulse purchases among different e-commerce platforms. Data were collected from 300 respondents in Sarawak using a structured questionnaire. The study examined the psychological, technological, and promotional elements to understand the drivers behind unplanned purchases. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok significantly influence these behaviors through targeted advertisements and engaging content. The research identified demographic groups most susceptible to impulse buying and compared the effectiveness of different social media platforms in driving such purchases. The findings provided valuable insights for e-commerce businesses to refine marketing strategies, enhance user experience, and increase sales by catering the customer needs and preferences.

Keywords: *Online impulse purchases; e-commerce platforms*

INTRODUCTION

Impulse buying, or making an unplanned purchase, often happens due to strong urges triggered by products or persuasive ads. With the rise of smartphone usage and online shopping, impulse buying on social media has increased (Zhang et al., 2020). Companies have capitalized on this by displaying more advertisements and exclusive offers. During the pandemic, there was a notable surge in impulse purchases on social media, reflecting changes in consumer behavior. TikTok is the leader (i.e., leads with 55% of its users making impulse purchases), followed by Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter (Tee et al., 2023). Social media has become a popular shopping destination.

This study aimed to explore the factors that lead to impulsive buying on different e-commerce websites, focusing on psychological, technological, and promotional triggers. The findings can most probably provide valuable insights for e-commerce businesses to improve strategies, enhance customer experience, and boost sales.

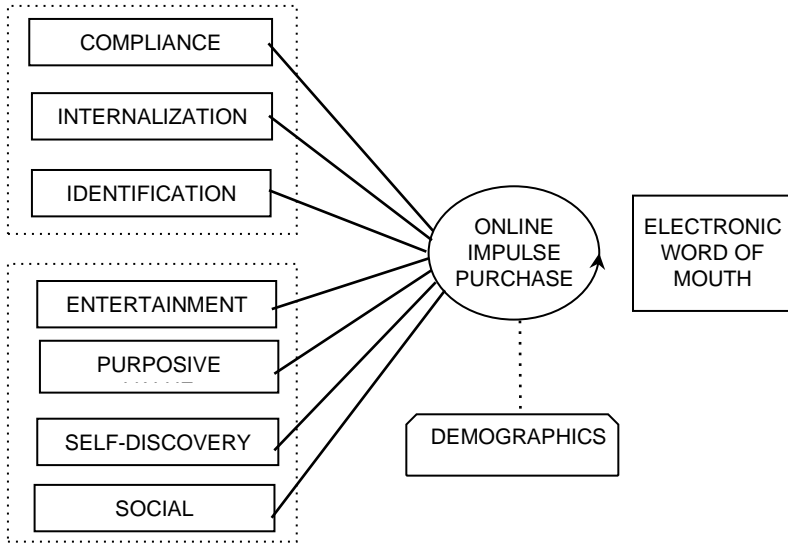
LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research has extensively examined the significant impact of social media platforms and various e-commerce environments on online impulse buying behavior. Studies have discussed how platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram have integrated e-commerce functionalities that exploit psychological triggers to drive impulsive purchases (Abdelsalam et al., 2024). Key strategies include visually appealing content, influencer endorsements, and gamification elements that create engaging and persuasive shopping experiences.

Social proof, urgency created by flash sales, and the seamless integration of shopping features into social media platforms are identified as critical factors influencing impulsive buying (Lavuri, 2021). This research also explored various theoretical frameworks such as Social Influence Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory, to understand the underlying mechanisms driving this behavior (Abdelsalam et al., 2024). Figure 1 shows the research model.

Figure 1

Theoretical Framework Model of Factors Triggering the Online Impulse Purchases



Compliance

Compliance plays a pivotal role in triggering Online Impulse Purchases (OIP) across various e-commerce platforms, especially when considering its relationship with Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM). E-commerce platforms that prioritize compliance with consumer protection regulations, data privacy laws, and secure payment systems establish trust among users, which in turn influences positive eWOM (Wang & Herrando, 2019). When customers perceive a platform as trustworthy and reliable due to its compliance efforts, they are more likely to engage in impulse purchases driven by recommendations or reviews shared online. Thus, compliance serves as a foundation for fostering positive eWOM, ultimately contributing to the prevalence of OIP in the digital marketplace (Hussain et al., 2020). Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H1: Compliance positively influences OIP in e-commerce.

Internalization

Internalization reflects the process by which individuals accept the influence due to the similarity of their values, preferences, and tastes with others such as, friends, family or group members. Personality traits like instant gratification, normative evaluation, and impulsiveness influence impulse purchases online. eWOM significantly increases impulse buying behavior, with extroversion, openness, and a desire for social approval playing a moderating role in this relationship (Husnain et al., 2016). Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H2: Internalization positively influences OIP in e-commerce.

Identification

Identification plays a crucial role in understanding the factors that trigger OIP and eWOM across various e-commerce platforms. When consumers identify with a product or brand through relatable imagery, messaging, or endorsements, they are more likely to experience a sense of connection and resonance, thereby increasing the likelihood of impulsive buying (Vazquez et al., 2020). Effective identification approaches tailored to target audiences are crucial in driving both OIP and eWOM dynamics, ultimately affecting consumer behavior in the digital marketplace (Shankar et al., 2022). Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H3: Identification positively influences OIP in e-commerce.

Entertainment

Entertainment in e-commerce refers to the pleasure and relaxation individuals experience when interacting with others, such as friends, family, or group members, through online platforms. This entertainment factor motivates online shoppers, as they seek benefits like uniqueness, fun, and the experience of entertainment itself. By engaging with exciting content shared by others, sharing their own experiences, and participating in e-WOM, individuals can escape from problems and find entertainment (Luo & Zhong, 2015). This engagement with others' recommendations and product reviews contributes to emotional involvement and increased interest in the recommended products. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H4: Entertainment positively influences OIP in e-commerce.

Purposive Value

Purposive value in e-commerce refers to the benefits people gain from achieving specific goals through online social interactions. These goals usually involve obtaining useful information or achieving practical objectives. This value can be divided into two parts, namely, informational value which involves requiring relevant information, and instrumental value, which helps in achieving goals (Dholakia et al., 2004). Previous studies have shown that when people find value in what they are doing online, it influences their behavior, like their intention to buy and how much they are willing to spend. For instance, when shoppers visit e-commerce sites to learn about new products, they are exposed to a lot of information, which could lead to impulse purchases they had not planned for (Cabezudo et al., 2013). Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H5: Purposive value positively influences OIP in e-commerce.

Self-Discovery

Self-discovery processes are associated with positive consumer purchase intentions in the collaborative shopping group, and individuals involved in these processes may engage in impulsive purchasing. Thus, it is reasonable to hypothesize that online impulse buying is positively influenced by self-discovery behavior in the context of e-commerce. According to the understanding that self-discovery behavior, defined as a process of understanding and deepening the salient aspects of oneself through social interactions, increases consumer impulse purchase intention in collaborative shopping groups (Leong et al., 2017). The hypothesis is:

H6: Self-discovery positively influences OIP in e-commerce.

Social Enhancement

Social enhancement has a substantial impact on impulse purchase behavior in the context of social commerce. Social influences, social interactions, and social networking can all have significant effects on consumers' impulsive purchases. Additionally, the impacts of social enhancement on impulsive purchasing behavior can be amplified through the use of social media and social networking sites in social commerce. The

opinions, assessments, and suggestions that people in their social networks communicate may pressure them into making impulsive purchases (Luo, 2005). Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H7: Social enhancement positively influences OIP in e-commerce.

METHODOLOGY

The research investigated the factors influencing OIP among different e-commerce platforms in Sarawak, Malaysia. By employing a quantitative approach, data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed to a diverse demographic of respondents, including variables such as gender, age, religion, race, household income, education level, and occupation. The survey assessed respondents' satisfaction with their online shopping and impulse purchase experiences, perceived value for money, ease of online shopping compared to physical stores, and suggestions for improving e-commerce platforms. The gathered numerical data allowed for a comprehensive analysis of patterns and correlations, and provided insights into how various factors contribute to impulsive buying behaviors. The findings aim to enhance e-commerce strategies, improve customer satisfaction, and optimize the online shopping experience for consumers in Sarawak.

Research Design

In this study, it was discovered that various demographic groups have different factors influencing their OIP on e-commerce platforms. Therefore, this research was conducted to determine the specific factors triggering these behaviors among consumers in Sarawak, Malaysia. Due to the diverse population and the rising trend of online shopping, several psychological, technological, and promotional elements will be observed. Thus, hypothesis testing will be the main method used in this research. Hypothesis testing is a statistical technique for forming opinions about a population based on a sample of data. Furthermore, hypothesis testing assists researchers in determining if the results produced are likely attributable to unforeseen circumstances or if they reflect actual population relationships or effects.

In order to conduct hypothesis testing in this case, information will be collected by distributing a survey questionnaire to a diverse demographic sample in Sarawak. The questionnaire will inquire about respondents' motivations, beliefs, and experiences with OIP. It will include closed-ended questions with Likert scales and multiple-choice answers. The measurement scales (with literature source) are shown in Table 1. This is the most appropriate and convenient strategy for our research since we will be able to investigate the factors influencing OIP by analyzing the responses. The demographic factors such as age, gender, race, household income, and education level will also be collected through the survey.

Sampling

We have selected a sample size of 300 respondents for our analysis due to its statistical significance. This size provides sufficient power to detect relationships between variables, ensuring the reliability and validity of our findings. Given Sarawak's diverse population, a sample of 300 respondents allows for an accurate representation of variations in online shopping behaviors and preferences across different demographic backgrounds, such as age, gender, income level, and educational attainment. Distributing the questionnaire online is an effective method for reaching a wide audience throughout Sarawak, facilitating quick data collection from individuals in both urban and rural areas. By targeting 300 respondents, we strike a balance between logistical feasibility and the need for a robust dataset, thereby enhancing our understanding of the factors influencing OIP.

Data Collection

We collected data for the study using designed questionnaires delivered throughout Sarawak and online platforms such as Google Forms. From May to June of 2024, we collected data from individuals, giving us a good picture of their thoughts and feelings about this topic of research.

In order to guarantee the reliability and statistical significance of our findings, we selected a sample size of 300 respondents. This option enables us to effectively find links between factors, providing a thorough insight into online buying behaviors and preferences across Sarawak's culturally diverse population. Our sample size also allows for more detailed research across a variety of demographics, such as age, gender, income level, and educational achievement.

Table 1
The multi-item measures

Dimension and Items	Sources
Compliance	Abdelsalam et al., (2024)
1. Important people liking purchases matters to me.	
2. I like buying products that impress others.	
3. I buy products that others approve.	
4. I buy what important people expect.	
5. Opinions of important people influence my buying decision.	
Identification	Abdelsalam et al., (2024)
1. I feel a sense of belonging buying similar products in E-commerce.	
2. I buy products to emulate admired individuals in E-commerce.	
3. I buy the same products to connect with others.	
4. I buy products to improve my image.	
Internalization	Abdelsalam et al., (2024)
1. I seek advice on E-commerce sites to choose the best products.	
2. I observe recommendations on E-commerce sites to buy the right product.	
3. I ask for advice on products when I have little knowledge.	
Entertainment	Abdelsalam et al., (2024)
1. Shopping online is entertaining.	
2. I feel relaxed browsing E-commerce sites.	
3. I browse E-commerce sites to kill time.	
4. I have fun shopping on E-commerce sites.	
Purposive Value	Abdelsalam et al., (2024)
1. I browse E-commerce sites for product information.	
2. I refer to E-commerce sites to inform others.	
3. E-commerce helps me make better purchase decisions.	
4. E-commerce lets me discuss products with others.	
5. I browse E-commerce to learn about the latest products.	
Self-Discovery	Abdelsalam et al., (2024)
1. E-commerce helps me learn about tastes and preferences.	
2. E-commerce provides insights into myself.	
3. E-commerce helps me understand the tastes of myself and others.	
Social Enhancement	Abdelsalam et al., (2024)
1. I buy recommended products to impress others.	
2. I feel important when others buy my recommendations.	
3. I share product information to improve my social life.	

Online questionnaires proved to be quite effective in quickly reaching a varied audience in Sarawak's urban and rural areas. This method not only made data collection easier, but it also produced a comprehensive dataset that was vital for investigating what factors influence OIP. The answers we got from these surveys were the most important part of our study. They gave our findings more depth and relevance.

Analysis Strategies

We evaluate the distinct roles played by different social media platforms in influencing consumer behavior towards impulse purchases. This analysis includes comparing the effectiveness of platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Shopee, Lazada, Twitter, and TikTok in driving specific types of purchases, considering factors such as visual content, user engagement, and advertising strategies.

One of the research objectives was to investigate the preferred online platforms for impulse purchases influenced by social media. We examined which online platforms consumers prefer to use for impulse purchases influenced by social media. This includes identifying the platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Shopee, Lazada, Twitter, and TikTok that consumers find most convenient, engaging, or trustworthy for making unplanned purchases. We analyzed consumer behaviors and preferences related to specific online platforms promoted through social media channels.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on Table 2, 300 respondents are categorized as follows, 52% male, 48% female: 53.7% Christian, 35.3% Muslim, and 10.7% Buddhist. Racial distribution includes 29.3% Iban, 24.3% Malay, 22% Chinese, and 13.7% Bidayuh. The age group 20-29 years old makes up 59.3% of respondents. Geographically, 35.7% reside in Kuching, and 16.3% in Kota Samarahan. Household income varies, with 46.3% earning RM 2,500 or below, and 24.3% earning RM 5,501 or above. Educationally, 45.7% have a Bachelor's Degree, 29.7% have STPM/Diploma. Marital status shows 73.3% single, 26.3% married. Occupation-wise, 49.3% are students, 24.3% public sector employees.

Table 2
Respondent Profile

Variables	Sample (n=300)	Percentage %
Gender		
Male	156	52
Female	144	48
Religion		
Christianity	161	53.7
Islam	107	35.6
Buddhism	32	10.7
Age		
16-19	41	13.7
20-29	178	59.3
30-39	38	12.7
Others	43	14.3
Marital Status		
Single	220	73.3
Married	79	26.3
Others	1	0.3
Race		
Iban	87	29
Malay	73	24.3
Chinese	67	22.3
Bidayuh	41	13.7
Orang Ulu	10	3.3
Melanau	12	4
Others	10	3.4
Education Level		
SPM or lower	45	15
STPM / Diploma	89	29.7
Bachelor's Degree	137	45.7
Others	29	9.6
Occupation		
Student	148	49.3
Public Sector	73	24.3
Private Sector	47	15.7
Self Employed	20	6.7
Unemployed	12	4
Online Platform		
Shopee	207	69
TikTok Shop	81	27
Lazada	3	1
Shein	3	1
Facebook	1	0.3
Instagram	1	0.3
Others	4	1.4

Online shopping preferences highlight Shopee (69%) and TikTok Shop (27%). This demographic data aids in understanding the triggers of OIP, with a significant preference for Shopee and TikTok Shop.

Table 3
Reliability Analysis on Impulse Purchases in E-commerce

Variable	Dimensions/Items	Alpha Coeff.	ITC
Compliance	Important people liking purchases do matter to me.	.495	.962
	I like buying products that impress others.	.509	
	I buy products that others approve.	.462	
	I buy what important people expect.	.517	
	Opinions of important people influence my buying decisions.	.512	
Identification	I feel a sense of belonging buying similar products in E-commerce.	.622	.961
	I buy products to emulate admired individuals in E-commerce.	.713	
	I buy the same products to connect with others.	.651	
	I buy products to improve my image.	.595	
Internalization	I seek advice on E-commerce sites to choose the best products.	.632	.961
	I observe recommendations on E-commerce sites to buy the right product.	.688	
	I ask for advice on products when I have little knowledge.	.651	
Entertainment	Shopping online is entertaining.	.594	.961
	I feel relaxed browsing E-commerce sites.	.626	
	I browse E-commerce sites to kill time.	.496	
	I have fun shopping on E-commerce sites.	.623	
Purposive Value	I browse E-commerce sites for product information.	.568	.961
	I refer to E-commerce sites to inform others.	.658	
	E-commerce helps me make better purchase decisions.	.697	
	E-commerce lets me discuss products with others.	.672	
	I browse E-commerce to learn about the latest products.	.568	
Self-Discovery	E-commerce helps me learn about tastes and preferences.	.711	.961
	E-commerce provides insights into me.	.696	
	E-commerce helps me understand the tastes of myself and others.	.722	
Social Enhancement	I buy recommended products to impress others.	.779	.960
	I feel important when others buy my recommendations.	.719	
	I share product information to improve my social life.	.781	

The reliability analysis of impulse purchases (see Table 3) in e-commerce demonstrates a high level of robustness. Each dimension measured, which are Compliance, Identification, Internalization, Entertainment, Purposive Value, Self-Discovery, and Social Enhancement exhibits excellent internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha values all exceeding 0.96. This suggests that the items within each dimension reliably measure the same underlying construct.

For Compliance, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.962, the items reflect how much an individual's purchasing decisions are influenced by important people in their lives, with ITC values ranging from 0.462 to 0.517. Identification, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.961, assesses the sense of belonging and connection individuals feel when buying products like those of admired individuals or groups, with ITC values between 0.595 and 0.713. Internalization, also scoring 0.961 in Cronbach's Alpha, reflects the extent to which individuals seek advice and recommendations on e-commerce sites to make informed purchase decisions, with ITC values from 0.632 to 0.688.

Moreover, the Entertainment dimension, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.961, captures the enjoyment and relaxation from online shopping, with ITC values from 0.496 to 0.626. The Purposive Value dimension, also at 0.961, measures how individuals use e-commerce sites to gather product information and make informed decisions, with ITC values ranging from 0.568 to 0.697. Self-Discovery, another dimension with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.961, helps individuals learn about their preferences and tastes, with ITC values between 0.696 and 0.722.

Lastly, the Social Enhancement dimension, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.960, measures how individuals use e-commerce to enhance their social image, with ITC values from 0.719 to 0.781. These high Cronbach's Alpha values and strong ITC correlations indicate that the scale is reliable and effectively captures various aspects of impulse purchases in e-commerce.

Based on Table 4, the validity analysis reveals Compliance (mean = 3.65, SD = 0.737) is moderately linked with Identification (0.648) and Social Enhancement (0.634), indicating that the desire to impress others affects feelings of belonging and social status. In addition, Identification (mean = 3.47, SD = 0.883) is strongly related to Internalization (0.797),

showing that feeling connected through e-commerce leads to seeking advice and recommendations. Moreover, Internalization (mean = 3.64, SD = 0.835) is also well-correlated with Social Enhancement (0.739), suggesting that seeking advice is tied to the motivation to improve one's social image.

Table 4

Validity Analysis for Factors Triggering the OIP Among the People in Different e-Commerce Platforms.

Variables	Mean	SD	Correlations						
			COM	IDE	INT	ENT	PUV	SED	SOE
Compliance	3.65	.737	1						
Identification	3.47	.883	.648	1					
Internalization	3.64	.835	.462	.797	1				
Entertainment	3.76	.711	.417	.495	.639	1			
Purposive Value	3.86	.650	.473	.461	.530	.688	1		
Self-Discovery	3.86	.744	.540	.593	.605	.615	.779	1	
Social Enhancement	3.65	.828	.634	.699	.739	.697	.629	.702	1

a. Dependent variable: Online Impulse Purchase

b. Predictors (Constant), Compliance, Identification, Internalization, Entertainment, Purposive Value, Self-Discovery, Social Enhancement

Furthermore, Entertainment (mean = 3.76, SD = 0.711) is positively associated with both Social Enhancement (0.697) and Self-Discovery (0.615), indicating that enjoyment from online shopping can boost social status and personal insights. Additionally, Purposive Value (mean = 3.86, SD = 0.650) has strong links with Self-Discovery (0.779) and Internalization (0.530), showing that practical use of e-commerce for information supports personal growth and decision-making. Finally, Self-Discovery (mean = 3.86, SD = 0.744) is closely tied to Social Enhancement (0.779), demonstrating that discovering personal preferences through e-commerce can also enhance social interactions. Overall, the analysis shows that factors such as the desire to impress others, personal growth, and enjoyment are interconnected and collectively influence OIP.

Table 5 compares the mean analysis of Online Impulse Purchase triggers across different demographic groups which are gender, religion, age, race, and education level. The analysis finds no significant differences among these groups. Specifically, gender ($F = 1.180$, $p = 0.279$), religion ($F = 0.879$, $p = 0.621$), age ($F = 0.728$, $p = 0.803$), race ($F = 0.868$, $p = 0.636$),

and education level ($F = 1.017$, $p = 0.450$) all show no significant differences in impulse purchase triggers. This indicates that demographic factors do not significantly affect online impulse buying behavior.

Table 5
Compare Mean Analysis of Online Impulse Purchase Triggers by Demographic Groups

Demographic	Means	F	Sig	Remark
Gender				
Male	3.79	1.18	.279	No significant difference by gender groups.
Female	3.94			
Religion			.621	
Christianity	3.92	.87		No significant difference among religion groups.
Islam	3.85			
Buddhism	3.82			
Age				
16-19	3.62	.73	.803	No significant difference among age groups.
20-29	3.88			
30-39	3.97			
Others	3.86			
Race				
Iban	4.08	.87	.636	No significant difference among race groups.
Malay	3.85			
Chinese	3.79			
Bidayuh	3.76			
Orang Ulu	3.52			
Melanau	4.08			
Others	4.44			
Education Level				
SPM or lower	3.65	1.02	.450	No significant difference among education level groups.
STPM / Diploma	3.86			
Bachelor Degree	3.92			
Others	3.87			

Table 6 shows the relationship between factors triggering OIP and eWOM, with the goal of identifying significant predictors of eWOM. The analysis shows that Purposive Value is the only significant predictor of eWOM (Unstandardized Coefficient = 0.436, $p = 0.001$), indicating that individuals who find practical benefits from e-commerce are more likely to engage in eWOM. In contrast, Compliance, Internalization, Identification, Entertainment, Self-Discovery, and Social Enhancement are not significant predictors, with p-values greater than 0.05, meaning that these factors do not significantly influence eWOM. Overall, the results highlight that the

practical value of e-commerce is crucial for generating positive word of mouth, while other factors have little impact on eWOM.

Table 6

Relationship between Factors Triggering the OIP and eWOM

Variable	Unstandardized	Standardize	t-Value	Sig
(Constant)	1.114	0.260	4.291	0.001
Compliance	0.082	0.100	1.095	0.275
Internalization	-0.104	-0.152	-1.165	0.246
Identification	0.083	0.115	0.930	0.354
Entertainment	0.071	0.084	0.834	0.406
Purposive Value	0.436	0.469	3.956	0.001
Self-discovery	0.021	0.026	0.217	0.829
Social Enhancement	-0.057	-0.079	-0.574	0.567

a. Dependent variable: eWOM

b. Predictors (Constant), Compliance, Identification, Internalization, Entertainment, Purposive Value, Self-Discovery, Social Enhancement

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary, a comprehensive strategy is necessary to address the factors that trigger Online Impulse Purchases (OIP) on various e-commerce platforms. The study finds that important determinants such as compliance, internalization, identification, entertainment, purposeful value, self-discovery, and social enhancement have an important influence on Sarawak consumer behavior. Age, gender, income level, education, and occupation all have an impact on impulse purchases. The study focuses on the influence of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Shopee, Lazada, Twitter, and TikTok on shopping decisions, emphasizing the importance of targeted marketing strategies.

CONTRIBUTION OF AUTHORS

All the authors planned and performed the empirical research. Rachel Cernan Wan and Daphne Cornelia anak Dewis assisted in writing the introduction and literature review. Nur Syazlin Husna conceptualised the central idea, and developed the theoretical framework. Hanna Mae David

and Hasfizuddin Haikal supported the revision process. All authors worked together to finalize the manuscript.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

All authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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