

The Psychology of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) Marketing and Its Impact on Generation Z Purchase Decisions

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Abstract—Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) has emerged as one of the most influential psychological drivers in digital marketing, particularly among Generation Z consumers who spend considerable time on social media and online shopping platforms. This study investigates the impact of FOMO-based marketing strategies—including scarcity messages, limited-time offers, flash sales, influencer promotions, and social proof—on the purchasing decisions of Generation Z. A descriptive research design was adopted, and primary data were collected from 110 respondents through a structured questionnaire. Percentage analysis and Chi-square tests were employed to examine consumer responses toward scarcity marketing techniques. The findings reveal that although FOMO marketing increases consumer attention and encourages faster purchase decisions, most scarcity cues alone do not significantly alter purchasing behaviour. Consumers increasingly evaluate product quality, reviews, pricing, and authenticity before making purchase decisions. However, missing limited-time offers generates significantly different emotional reactions, suggesting that regret and opportunity loss remain powerful psychological motivators. The study concludes that FOMO marketing should be integrated with value-oriented and transparent marketing strategies rather than relying solely on urgency-based promotions. The findings contribute to consumer behaviour literature by providing insights into the psychological mechanisms influencing Generation Z purchasing behaviour in digital marketplaces.

Index Terms—Fear of Missing Out, FOMO Marketing, Generation Z, Consumer Behaviour, Digital Marketing, Purchase Decision, Social Media

I. INTRODUCTION

Digital marketing has transformed consumer decision-making by incorporating psychological triggers into promotional strategies. Among these, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) has become one of the most effective approaches used by marketers to stimulate immediate purchasing behaviour. FOMO refers to the anxiety that consumers experience when they perceive that others are benefiting from opportunities unavailable to them. Marketing strategies exploit this psychological tendency through limited-time discounts, countdown timers, exclusive product launches, influencer endorsements, and scarcity messages.

Generation Z represents the first generation raised entirely in the digital environment. Their extensive use of smart phones, social networking platforms, and e-commerce applications exposes them continuously to FOMO-based marketing communications. Consequently, marketers increasingly rely on urgency, exclusivity, and social proof to influence this demographic.

Although previous studies suggest that FOMO significantly affects impulsive buying behaviour, recent research also indicates that modern consumers have become more aware of manipulative marketing tactics. This study therefore examines whether FOMO marketing genuinely influences Generation Z purchase decisions.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research has extensively examined the relationship between FOMO and consumer behaviour. Charles and Immanuel (2025) found that

FOMO significantly increases online impulse buying among Generation Z consumers, ultimately leading to post-purchase dissonance. Papadopoulou (2025) reported that FOMO advertisements substantially increase anticipated regret and purchase intention. Similarly, Septiana et al. (2024) demonstrated that social media marketing enhances FOMO, which subsequently influences purchase intention.

Conversely, Efendi et al. (2025) observed that artificial intelligence had a stronger influence on purchase decisions than FOMO among Shopee users. Royani and Dewanti (2025) also reported that price perception exerted a greater influence than FOMO in determining purchasing decisions.

These contrasting findings indicate that although FOMO contributes to consumer behaviour, other variables such as perceived value, trust, product quality, and pricing remain equally important determinants of purchasing decisions.

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study aims to:

- Examine the concept of FOMO marketing.
- Analyze its influence on Generation Z purchase decisions.
- Investigate the role of social media in creating FOMO.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of scarcity and urgency strategies.
- Determine whether FOMO contributes to impulsive buying behaviour.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research employed a descriptive analytical design. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to Generation Z consumers. A total of 110 valid responses were analyzed using percentage analysis and Chi-square tests.

The questionnaire measured respondents' perceptions regarding scarcity marketing, urgency messages, influencer recommendations, purchase regret, and consumer reactions to FOMO-based promotional techniques. Secondary data were collected from scholarly journals, books, and previous research studies.

Analysis of major criteria

1. Regretted a purchase because you didn't want to miss out of the respondent

S.no	Particulars	No of Respondent	Frequency
1	Never	12	11
2	Rarely	18	16
3	Sometimes	58	53
4	Very often	22	20
5	Total	110	110

The table showing whether respondents regretted a purchase because they did not want to miss out (FOMO) indicates that the majority of respondents sometimes regretted their purchase, accounting for 58 respondents (53%), and it is ranked 1st. This shows that more than half of the respondents have experienced purchase regret due to fear of missing out. The Very often category includes 22 respondents (20%), securing the 2nd rank, indicating that a considerable number of respondents frequently experience regret after such purchases. The Rarely category consists of 18 respondents (16%), ranked 3rd, showing limited regret among some respondents. The least number of respondents fall under the Never category, with 12 respondents (11%), ranked 4th, indicating that only a small proportion have never regretted such purchases. Overall, it can be concluded that FOMO plays a significant role in influencing purchase decisions and often leads to post-purchase regret among respondents

2. The "price dropped-grab it now" of the respondent

S.no	Particulars	No of Respondent	Frequency
1	Checkatrade	46	42
2	Ignore notification	18	16
3	Open app immediately	35	32
4	Turnoff notifications	11	10
5	Total	110	110

The table showing respondents' reaction to the "Price Dropped – Grab It Now" notification indicates that the majority of respondents check it later, accounting for 46 respondents (42%), and it is ranked 1st. This shows that most respondents are interested in the notification but do

Not respond immediately. The Open the app

immediately category includes 35 respondents (32%), securing the 2nd rank, indicating that a considerable number of respondents take instant action when they receive such notifications. Overall, it can be concluded that price-drop notifications attract attention and influence respondents, though most prefer to review the offer later rather than act immediately

3. The “make you purchase faster” of the respondent

S.no	Particulars	No of Respondent	Frequency
1	Friend/Influencer recommendation	25	23
2	Limited stock available	36	33
3	Limited time discount	17	15
4	Product review	32	29
5	Total	110	110

The table showing the factors that make respondents purchase faster indicates that limited stock availability is the most influential factor, accounting for 36 respondents (33%). This shows that car city plays a major role in accelerating purchase decisions. The next significant factor is product reviews, with 32 respondents (29%), indicating that customer feedback strongly influences buying speed. Overall, it can be concluded that scarcity and social proof factors (limited stock and reviews) play a stronger role than discounts in encouraging faster purchase decisions among respondents.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic analysis indicates that the majority of respondents belonged to the 18–20 age group and were undergraduate students. Female respondents slightly outnumbered males. Most participants reported shopping online occasionally or rarely, suggesting that online purchasing behaviour varies considerably among Generation Z consumers.

The behavioural findings demonstrate that:

- More than half of respondents had experienced post-purchase regret because of FOMO-driven buying.
- Price-drop notifications successfully attracted consumer attention.

- Limited stock availability emerged as the strongest factor encouraging faster purchasing decisions.
- Product reviews also significantly influenced buying behaviour.
- Consumers frequently delayed purchasing despite urgency messages, indicating rational evaluation before decision-making.

Chi-square analysis revealed that urgency messages such as "Offer Ends Today" and scarcity notifications such as "Only Three Items Left" did not produce statistically significant differences in consumer behaviour. Similarly, no significant differences were observed regarding the factors encouraging faster purchases. However, respondents exhibited significantly different reactions after missing limited-time promotional offers, suggesting that regret and opportunity loss continue to influence future purchasing intentions.

These findings indicate that while FOMO captures consumer attention, it rarely functions as the sole determinant of purchasing decisions. Generation Z consumers increasingly consider product value, customer reviews, brand credibility, and pricing before making purchase decisions.

VI. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings provide several practical implications for marketers:

- Scarcity marketing should be combined with value-based promotional strategies.
- Artificial scarcity should be avoided because consumers increasingly recognise manipulative marketing practices.
- Product quality, customer reviews, and influencer credibility should complement urgency-based campaigns.
- Reminder notifications may effectively encourage purchase completion without creating excessive psychological pressure.
- Transparent communication strengthens long-term customer trust and brand loyalty.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of FOMO marketing on Generation Z purchase decisions in

digital environments. The results suggest that FOMO-based promotional strategies increase consumer engagement and encourage faster purchasing behaviour, but they are insufficient as standalone marketing tools. Contemporary consumers exhibit greater awareness of marketing tactics and rely on multiple decision criteria before making purchases.

Although scarcity messages increase attention, missing promotional opportunities creates stronger psychological effects than exposure to scarcity itself. Therefore, marketers should balance urgency-based promotions with transparency, product value, and customer trust to achieve sustainable consumer engagement.

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