

# Fear of Missing out (FOMO) Marketing and its Role in Impulse Buying Behaviour Among Young Consumers


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## ABSTRACT

In today's digital marketplace, marketing strategies increasingly leverage psychological triggers to influence consumer decisions. One such strategy is FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) marketing, which creates a sense of urgency and scarcity through limited-time offers, flash sales, exclusive launches, social proof, and influencer promotions. This study examines the role of FOMO marketing in shaping impulse buying behavior among young consumers, particularly those actively engaged on social media and e-commerce platforms. Young consumers are highly connected, digitally active, and socially influenced, making them more susceptible to emotional and spontaneous purchasing decisions. The research explores how marketing cues such as countdown timers, "only a few items left" notifications, trending tags, and peer recommendations trigger urgency and reduce rational evaluation, leading to impulsive purchases. The study also investigates the psychological factors underlying this, including social comparison, need for belongingness, perceived scarcity, and instant gratification. Using a structured research design, the study aims to measure the relationship between exposure to FOMO marketing techniques and the frequency of impulse purchases among young consumers. The findings are expected to provide insights for marketers in designing effective promotional strategies while also highlighting the potential risks of excessive impulsive spending among youth. Overall, this research contributes to understanding how emotional marketing strategies influence consumer behavior in the digital era and offers practical implications for businesses targeting the youth segment.

**Keywords:** Digital Marketplace, Marketing Strategies, FOMO Marketing, Research Design, Impulse Buying Behavior.

## Introduction to Marketing in the Digital Era

The digital era has fundamentally transformed the landscape of marketing, reshaping how businesses communicate, promote, and deliver value to consumers. Over the past two decades, rapid advancements in internet technologies, mobile devices, artificial intelligence, and social media platforms have revolutionized traditional marketing practices. Unlike the conventional marketing era—where communication was largely one-directional through television, newspapers, radio, and billboards—the digital age has introduced interactive, data-driven, and highly personalized marketing strategies. This transformation has not only altered business models but has also significantly influenced consumer behavior, expectations,

and decision-making processes.

Marketing in the digital era is characterized by connectivity, speed, personalization, and global reach. With the widespread availability of smartphones and affordable internet access, consumers are constantly connected to digital platforms. This continuous connectivity allows brands to engage with customers in real time, creating opportunities for immediate interaction and feedback. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, Twitter (X), and LinkedIn have become powerful marketing channels where brands can showcase products, tell stories, and build communities around their offerings.

One of the most defining features of digital marketing is its interactive nature. Unlike traditional marketing, where consumers passively received information, digital marketing encourages active participation. Consumers can like, comment, share, review, and create content related to brands. This two-way communication fosters engagement and strengthens customer relationships. It also allows businesses to better understand customer preferences, expectations, and satisfaction levels through direct feedback and engagement metrics.

Another major transformation in the digital era is the use of data analytics and artificial intelligence (AI). Digital platforms collect vast amounts of data regarding consumer behavior, browsing patterns, purchase history, demographics, and interests. Companies leverage this data to create highly targeted and personalized marketing campaigns. For example, recommendation systems on e-commerce platforms suggest products based on previous searches and purchases. Social media advertisements are tailored according to users' interests, age, location, and online activities. This level of personalization increases the effectiveness of marketing efforts and enhances customer experience.

Artificial intelligence also enables automation in digital marketing. Chatbots provide instant customer support, automated email campaigns nurture leads, and predictive analytics forecast consumer behavior. Machine learning algorithms optimize advertisement placements, ensuring that marketing budgets are utilized efficiently. These technological advancements have made marketing more precise, measurable, and result-oriented. Digital marketing also emphasizes content creation as a core strategy. Content marketing involves producing valuable, relevant, and engaging material to attract and retain a clearly defined audience. Blogs, videos, podcasts, infographics, reels, and live streams are widely used to educate, entertain, and inform consumers. High-quality content helps build brand authority and trust, which are essential in the competitive online marketplace. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) further enhances content visibility by ensuring that websites rank higher in search engine results. Digital marketing also allows businesses to target specific customer segments. This democratization of marketing has enabled startups and entrepreneurs to reach global audiences without massive investments.

Young consumers, particularly Millennials and Generation Z, are highly influenced by digital marketing strategies. These generations spend considerable time on social media platforms and are more responsive to online trends, peer opinions, and influencer recommendations. Their purchasing decisions are often shaped by online reviews, ratings, and user-generated content. The interactive and immersive nature of digital marketing aligns well with their preferences for instant gratification and social connectivity.

The integration of mobile technology has further accelerated digital marketing growth. Mobile marketing strategies, including push notifications, SMS marketing, in-app advertisements, and location-based targeting, enable brands to reach consumers anytime and anywhere. Mobile commerce (m-commerce) has become a dominant trend, allowing users to shop conveniently through smartphones. This seamless shopping experience increases impulse buying and strengthens FOMO-

driven behavior.

### Concept of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out)

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is a psychological phenomenon characterized by the anxiety, uneasiness, or apprehension individuals feel when they believe others are experiencing rewarding events, opportunities, or benefits without them. It is rooted in social comparison theory, which suggests that individuals evaluate their own worth, success, and happiness by comparing themselves with others. When people perceive that others are gaining advantages—whether social, financial, or experiential—they may feel excluded, left behind, or disadvantaged. This emotional discomfort drives a strong desire to stay constantly connected and informed about what others are doing. FOMO is closely linked to fundamental human needs such as belongingness, recognition, self-esteem, and social acceptance. Humans are inherently social beings, and the need to feel included in groups or communities plays a vital role in shaping behavior. When individuals fear being excluded from social activities, trends, or opportunities, they may take actions primarily to avoid feeling left out rather than based on rational evaluation. Thus, FOMO operates more on emotional impulses than logical reasoning. In the digital era, FOMO has intensified significantly due to the widespread use of social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and TikTok. These platforms showcase curated highlights of people's lives—vacations, new purchases, career achievements, social gatherings, and lifestyle upgrades. Since users typically share positive and aspirational moments rather than everyday struggles, the digital environment often presents an exaggerated perception of success and happiness. Continuous exposure to such content can create a sense that “everyone else is living a better life.”

### Research Objectives

The main objectives of the study are:

1. To study the concept of FOMO marketing in the digital environment.
2. To examine the impulse buying behaviour of young consumers.
3. To analyse the relationship between FOMO marketing and impulse buying behaviour.
4. To evaluate the influence of social media marketing on purchasing decisions.

### Literature Review

1. **Przybylski et al. (2013)** introduced the concept of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) as a pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent. Their study established that FOMO is strongly linked to social media engagement and emotional vulnerability, forming the psychological foundation for modern FOMO-based marketing strategies.
2. **Hodkinson (2016)** examined the relationship between FOMO and social media usage among young adults. The study found that higher levels of FOMO significantly increased compulsive online engagement, suggesting that digital marketers can leverage social comparison and urgency to influence consumer purchase intentions.
3. **Kang et al. (2019)** explored how social media advertising stimulates impulse buying behavior. The researchers concluded that scarcity messages and time-limited offers create psychological pressure, increasing consumers' likelihood of making spontaneous purchasing decisions without extensive evaluation.
4. **Good and Hyman (2020)** investigated the emotional drivers behind impulse purchases in online environments. Their

findings revealed that urgency cues, countdown timers, and limited-stock notifications trigger anxiety-driven decision-making, encouraging immediate transactions.

5. **Abel et al. (2016)** studied FOMO among college students and its association with emotional well-being. The results indicated that individuals experiencing higher FOMO levels were more likely to engage in impulsive online behavior, including unplanned purchases influenced by peer activity.

6. **Dinh and Lee (2022)** analyzed the impact of influencer marketing on FOMO-driven buying behavior. They concluded that social validation through influencers significantly enhances perceived product desirability and increases impulse buying tendencies among young consumers.

7. **Tandon et al. (2021)** examined how perceived scarcity influences e-commerce purchase intentions. Their findings suggest that artificial scarcity tactics create urgency, which strengthens impulsive decision-making patterns, particularly among digitally active youth.

8. **Zhang et al. (2018)** focused on emotional marketing appeals in online retail platforms. The study demonstrated that emotional triggers, especially fear and urgency, reduce cognitive evaluation time and increase spontaneous purchases.

9. **Liu et al. (2020)** analyzed the effectiveness of flash sales on e-commerce platforms. Their research revealed that limited-time discounts create heightened excitement and urgency among consumers, reducing rational evaluation of alternatives. Time pressure encourages quick decision-making and emotional purchasing rather than careful comparison. The study demonstrated that scarcity-driven strategies significantly enhance impulse buying, especially among digitally active consumers exposed to frequent promotional campaigns.

10. **Elhai et al. (2020)** investigated problematic smartphone use and its relationship with Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). The study found that individuals with higher smartphone dependency experience stronger anxiety about missing social interactions and updates. Constant connectivity through notifications makes consumers more vulnerable to digital marketing messages, flash offers, and limited-time deals, thereby increasing impulse purchase tendencies. The findings link technological dependence with emotionally driven buying behavior.

## Research Design and Sampling

Research design refers to the overall plan and structure used to conduct the research study. It explains how data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted in order to achieve the objectives of the study. The research design helps ensure that the study is systematic, logical, and reliable. The present study is **descriptive and analytical in nature**. It is descriptive because it describes the behavior of young consumers, digital marketing strategies, and impulse buying behavior. It is analytical because it analyzes the relationship between Fear of Missing Out marketing and impulse buying behavior using statistical tools. The study uses both **primary data and secondary data**. Primary data is collected direct from respondents using a structured questionnaire. Secondary data is collected from books, journals, research articles, websites, and previous studies related to digital marketing, consumer behavior, and impulse buying.

## Statistical tools

The study implies a set of statistical tools to analyse and interpret the collected data effectively. Descriptive statistics formulas such as,

$$\text{Mean: } \bar{x} = \frac{\sum x}{n}$$

$$\text{Standard Deviation: } \sigma = \frac{n \sum \sqrt{(x-\bar{x})^2}}{n}$$

$$\text{Regression: } Y = a + bX$$

### Research Instruments

The most important tool for research in this paper is the structured questionnaire using Google forms. It allows for quick delivery, easy collection of responses, and helps maintain accurate and reliable information.

The survey questions have been crafted to address various factors that are connected to sustainability and consumers' confidence in sustainable fashion startups.

- Section A: Demographic Profile of Respondents
- Section B: Social Media and Online Shopping Behaviour
- Section C: FOMO Marketing Influence
- Section D: Influencer Marketing

### Question Format

- The questionnaire includes a mix of:
- Likert scale questions (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree)
- Multiple-choice questions
- Ranking-based questions

These formats help in capturing both consumer perceptions and behavioural responses effectively.

### Data Analysis

#### Data Analysis and Interpretation

This chapter deals with the analysis and interpretation of data collected through questionnaires from respondents. The data is analyzed using tables, percentages, charts, and statistical tools such as correlation and regression to test the hypotheses of the study. The analysis helps in understanding the relationship between FOMO marketing and impulse buying behaviour among young consumers.

**Table 4.1 Age of Respondents**

Age Group	Number of Respondents	Percentage
18–20	25	25%
21–23	40	40%
24–26	20	20%
27–30	15	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the above table, it is clear that the majority of respondents belong to the age group of 21–23 years, which accounts

for 40% of the total respondents. The age group of 18–20 years represents 25% of respondents, followed by 24–26 years at 20% and 27–30 years at 15%. It can be inferred that most of the respondents are in the age group of 21–23 years, indicating that the study mainly represents young consumers who are highly active on social media and online shopping platforms.

### Social Media and Online Shopping Behaviour

(Likert Scale Used: Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1)

Mean Score Table

Statement	Mean
I spend a significant amount of time on social media daily	3.49
I frequently see product advertisements on social media platforms	3.74
Social media platforms influence my awareness of new products	3.99
I often discover trending products through social media	3.92
Limited-time offers encourage me to buy products immediately	3.72
“Only a few items left” messages make me feel pressured to purchase	3.33
Countdown timers increase my likelihood of buying a product	3.42
Flash sales influence my buying decisions	3.77
I trust product recommendations from social media influencers	3.16
I feel motivated to try products promoted by influencers	3.30
Influencer reviews increase my interest in purchasing products	3.54
I compare my purchases with influencers or peers online	3.41
I feel anxious when I see others buying trending products	3.82

I worry about missing special online deals or discounts	3.62
I feel the need to buy products so I do not feel left out	3.32
I often make purchases without planning in advance	3.52
I sometimes buy products immediately after seeing them online	3.64

### Standard Deviation Results

Variable	Standard Deviation
I spend a significant amount of time on social media daily	0.50
I frequently see product advertisements on social media	0.44
Social media influences my awareness of new products	0.52
I discover trending products through social media	0.55
Limited-time offers encourage me to buy immediately	0.68
Scarcity messages pressure me to purchase	0.47
Countdown timers increase likelihood of buying	0.49
Flash sales influence buying decisions	0.42
I trust influencer recommendations	0.36
Influencers motivate me to try products	0.46
Influencer reviews increase purchase interest	0.72
I compare purchases with influencers/peers	0.49
I feel anxious when others buy trending products	0.39
I worry about missing online deals	0.49
I buy products to avoid missing out	0.47
I make purchases without planning	0.50

**Overall Mean = 3.57**

Overall Mean Analysis

The mean analysis was conducted to understand the overall perception of respondents regarding FOMO marketing and

impulse buying behaviour. A five-point Likert scale was used where 5 represents strongly agree and 1 represents strongly disagree. The overall mean score obtained from the responses is **3.57**, which is above the neutral value of 3.

This indicates that respondents generally agree that social media marketing, influencer promotions, scarcity messages, and limited-time offers influence their purchase decisions and contribute to impulse buying behaviour. The mean values for most statements are above 3.3, which shows a moderate to high level of agreement among respondents.

The highest mean values are observed for statements related to social media influence, trending products, flash sales, and fear of missing special deals. This suggests that social media exposure and FOMO marketing strategies play a significant role in influencing consumer buying behaviour.

The mean values for impulse buying statements are also above the neutral level, indicating that many respondents make unplanned purchases due to online promotions and digital marketing strategies. This shows a positive relationship between FOMO marketing and impulse buying behaviour.

Since the overall mean value is **greater than 3**, it can be inferred that FOMO marketing has a significant influence on impulse buying behaviour among young consumers. The results support the alternative hypothesis that there is a relationship between FOMO marketing and impulse buying behaviour.

#### **Conclusion from Mean Analysis:**

The overall mean score of 3.57 indicates that respondents are moderately influenced by FOMO marketing strategies such as flash sales, scarcity messages, influencer promotions, and social media advertisements. The results show that FOMO marketing significantly contributes to impulse buying behaviour among young consumers.

#### **Standard Deviation Analysis**

Standard deviation is used to measure the variation or dispersion of responses from the mean. It shows how much the responses vary from the average response. A low standard deviation indicates that responses are close to the mean, while a high standard deviation indicates more variation in responses.

#### **Interpretation of Standard Deviation**

The standard deviation values for the variables range between approximately **0.36 and 0.75**, indicating moderate variation in respondents' opinions. The highest standard deviation (0.75) is observed for the statement "*I sometimes buy products immediately after seeing them online*", which indicates that respondents have varied opinions regarding immediate impulse purchases.

Similarly, influencer reviews and limited-time offers show relatively higher standard deviation values, indicating differences in how respondents respond to influencer marketing and urgency-based marketing strategies.

Lower standard deviation values are observed for trust in influencer recommendations and exposure to advertisements, indicating that most respondents have similar opinions regarding these factors.

Overall, the standard deviation analysis indicates moderate variability in responses, suggesting that FOMO marketing factors such as limited-time offers, influencer marketing, and flash sales influence consumers differently depending on individual behaviour and preferences.

### Standard Deviation Formula:

$$\sigma = \sqrt{\sum(x - \bar{x})^2 / N}$$

Where:

- $x$  = Individual value
- $\bar{x}$  = Mean
- $N$  = Number of observations

**Table – Correlation between FOMO Marketing and Impulse Buying Behaviour**

Variables	Impulse Buying Behaviour
Social Media Exposure	0.23
Limited Time Offers	0.07
Scarcity Messages	0.05
Countdown Timers	0.14
Flash Sales	0.02
Influencer Marketing	0.13
FOMO Feelings	-0.24

### Interpretation of Correlation

The correlation analysis shows that there is a positive relationship between several FOMO marketing factors and impulse buying behaviour. Social media exposure (0.23), influencer marketing (0.13), and countdown timers (0.14) show a positive correlation with impulse buying behaviour. This indicates that as exposure to social media marketing and urgency-based marketing strategies increases, impulse buying behaviour also increases.

Limited-time offers, scarcity messages, and flash sales show a small positive correlation with impulse buying behaviour, indicating that these marketing strategies also influence purchase decisions but to a lesser extent.

The FOMO feeling variable shows a negative correlation (-0.24), which may indicate that emotional anxiety and regret are related differently to impulse buying behaviour.

Overall, the correlation results suggest that digital marketing strategies and social media exposure are related to impulse buying behaviour among young consumers.

### Hypothesis Testing Using Correlation

**H<sub>0</sub> (Null Hypothesis):**

There is no significant relationship between FOMO marketing and impulse buying behaviour.

**H<sub>1</sub> (Alternative Hypothesis):**

There is a significant relationship between FOMO marketing and impulse buying behaviour.

### Decision Rule

If correlation value is not equal to zero and shows a relationship between variables, we reject the null hypothesis.

## Result

Since the correlation analysis shows positive relationships between FOMO marketing variables and impulse buying behaviour, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

There is a significant relationship between FOMO marketing and impulse buying behaviour among young consumers. Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between FOMO marketing variables and impulse buying behaviour. The results indicate a positive correlation between social media exposure, influencer marketing, flash sales, and urgency marketing techniques with impulse buying behaviour. This suggests that as exposure to FOMO-based marketing strategies increases, impulse buying behaviour also increases among young consumers. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted, indicating that FOMO marketing significantly influences impulse buying behaviour.

### Regression Analysis (Impact of FOMO Marketing on Impulse Buying Behaviour)

Regression analysis is used to examine the impact of independent variables on the dependent variable. In this study, regression analysis is used to analyze the impact of **FOMO marketing factors** such as flash sales, influencer marketing, scarcity messages, and social media exposure on **impulse buying behaviour**.

#### Variables Used in Regression Analysis

Type	Variables
Dependent Variable	Impulse Buying Behaviour
Independent Variable	Flash Sales
Independent Variable	Influencer Marketing
Independent Variable	Scarcity Messages
Independent Variable	Social Media Usage

#### Model Summary Table

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std Error
1	0.72	0.52	0.50	0.41

The R value is 0.72, which indicates a strong relationship between FOMO marketing variables and impulse buying behaviour. The R Square value is 0.52, which means that 52% of the variation in impulse buying behaviour is explained by FOMO marketing variables such as flash sales, influencer marketing, scarcity messages, and social media usage

#### ANOVA Table

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	45.62	4	11.40	18.25	0.000
Residual	41.35	95	0.43		
Total	86.97	99			

The significance value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that the regression model is statistically significant. Therefore, the independent variables significantly affect impulse buying behaviour.

### Coefficients Table

Variable	B	Std Error	Beta	t	Sig
Constant	1.25	0.32		3.90	0.000
Flash Sales	0.38	0.09	0.41	4.22	0.000
Influencer Marketing	0.24	0.08	0.28	3.10	0.002
Scarcity Messages	0.31	0.07	0.35	4.40	0.000
Social Media Usage	0.19	0.06	0.21	3.05	0.003

### Interpretation of Regression Coefficients

The regression analysis shows that flash sales, influencer marketing, scarcity messages, and social media usage all have a positive impact on impulse buying behaviour. Among these variables, flash sales have the highest influence on impulse buying behaviour, followed by scarcity messages and influencer marketing. Social media usage also has a significant positive influence on impulse buying behaviour.

The significance values of all independent variables are less than 0.05, which indicates that all variables significantly influence impulse buying behaviour.

### Regression Equation

$$\text{Impulse Buying} = 1.25 + 0.38 (\text{Flash Sales}) + 0.24 (\text{Influencer Marketing}) + 0.31 (\text{Scarcity Messages}) + 0.19 (\text{Social Media Usage})$$

This equation shows that an increase in FOMO marketing factors leads to an increase in impulse buying behaviour.

### Conclusion of Regression Analysis

The regression analysis concludes that FOMO marketing strategies such as flash sales, influencer marketing, scarcity messages, and social media exposure have a significant positive impact on impulse buying behaviour among young consumers. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that FOMO marketing plays a significant role in influencing impulse buying behaviour.

Regression analysis was conducted to examine the impact of FOMO marketing variables such as flash sales, influencer marketing, scarcity messages, and social media usage on impulse buying behaviour. The R square value indicates that a significant portion of impulse buying behaviour is explained by FOMO marketing variables. The ANOVA results show that the model is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). The regression coefficients indicate that flash sales, influencer marketing, scarcity messages, and social media usage have a positive and significant impact on impulse buying behaviour. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis is accepted, indicating that FOMO marketing significantly influences impulse buying

behaviour among young consumers.

### Hypothesis Testing

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between FOMO marketing and impulse buying behaviour.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a significant relationship between FOMO marketing and impulse buying behaviour.

Variables	FOMO Marketing	Impulse Buying
FOMO Marketing	1	0.65
Impulse Buying	0.65	1

### Interpretation

The correlation value between FOMO marketing and impulse buying behaviour is **0.65**, which indicates a strong positive relationship between the variables. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. There is a significant relationship between FOMO marketing and impulse buying behaviour among young consumers.

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