



THE PHENOMENON OF FEAR OF MISSING OUT (FOMO) IN E-COMMERCE FLASH SALE STRATEGIES: A LITERATURE REVIEW OF CONSUMER PSYCHOLOGY

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Article info	ABSTRACT
<p>Corresponding Author:</p> <p>Haura Rizqi Dzakiyyah Chandra, 22042010160@student.upn-jatim.ac.id Universitas Pembangunan Nasional "Veteran" Jawa Timur</p>	<p>Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is becoming increasingly prominent in the digital marketing, particularly in promotional strategies through flash sales implemented on e-commerce platforms. This article aims to review the literature related to the role of FOMO in influencing impulsive buying behavior among consumers on e-commerce platforms such as Shopee, Tokopedia, and TikTok Shop. The method used is a literature review by analyzing 20 selected journal articles published in the period 2021-2025. The results of the study show that FOMO consistently plays a major role as a trigger for impulsive behavior, especially when combined with urgency-based marketing strategies such as flash sales, scarcity, and promotions on twin dates. Other supporting factors such as hedonistic motivation, influencer content, and social media exposure further reinforce consumers' tendency to make spontaneous purchases. This study confirms that FOMO is not merely an emotional phenomenon but a strategic psychological mechanism utilized in digital marketing.</p> <p>Keywords: <i>Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), Flash Sale, E-Commerce, Impulsive Buying, Digital Marketing</i></p>
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INTRODUCTION

The development of information technology has drastically changed the marketing landscape, creating a phenomenon where interactions between consumers and brands are no longer limited by space and time. In Indonesia, the growth of e-commerce platforms such as Shopee, Tokopedia, and TikTok Shop has given rise to a new shopping culture that is heavily influenced by digital stimuli. One of the most dominant marketing strategies in this ecosystem is Flash Sale or "Twin Date Promotions" (such as 9.9, 11.11, 12.12). This strategy offers huge discounts for a very short period of time and in limited quantities, which is theoretically designed to create a perception of scarcity.

The phenomenon observed in the field shows that this strategy not only influences consumers' rational decisions, but also manipulates their psychological state. The emergence of the term "TikTok Poison" and the live shopping trend indicate that consumers often buy not because of functional (utilitarian) needs, but because of emotional impulses and social fears. This psychological condition is known as Fear of Missing Out (FOMO).

FOMO is a psychological phenomenon that describes the fear of missing out on an experience, which often drives individuals to make impulsive purchases. In the context of digital marketing, FOMO is used to create urgency: consumers fear missing out on trends or losing the opportunity to get a bargain, which ultimately drives impulsive buying behavior (Awaliyah & Chrismardani, 2025).

Although many studies have discussed impulsive buying, there is still a gap in findings regarding the effectiveness of FOMO in various contexts. Some studies have found a very strong influence on fashion and lifestyle products, while other studies on basic necessities have shown different results. Therefore, this article will focus on analyzing how FOMO works in the Flash Sale mechanism and its impact on consumer purchasing decisions, as well as identifying the conditions under which this strategy is most effective.

According to research, Shopee's twin date promotion has been proven to increase impulsive buying among Generation Z, with FOMO acting as a mediator that strengthens this relationship (Wijaningsih et al., 2024). However, research results regarding the influence of FOMO are not always consistent. Some studies report that FOMO has a significant effect, while other studies find a weak effect on certain product categories. This inconsistency indicates that there is still room for further research, particularly regarding the mechanism of how FOMO works in the context of flash sales, which are very limited in time and competitive. Therefore, this article aims to review the relevant literature on the relationship between FOMO and flash sale strategies in e-commerce, as well as to identify research gaps that can be further developed from a consumer psychology perspective.

METHOD

This study uses the Literature Review method to identify, review, and synthesize findings from various relevant empirical studies in order to answer the research questions. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to comprehensively map trends, challenges, and knowledge gaps from existing literature. The data collection process was carried out through a literature search in academic databases using specific keywords such as "FOMO", "Flash Sale", "Impulsive Buying", "E-commerce", and "Consumer Behavior".

Inclusion criteria were established to ensure data relevance, whereby the selected documents were scientific journal articles published within the most recent time frame, namely between 2021 and 2025. From this search process, 20 journals were selected that met the criteria and discussed the relationship between FOMO variables, digital marketing strategies, and purchasing behavior. The documents analyzed included case studies on various leading marketplace platforms such as Shopee, Tokopedia, and TikTok Shop with diverse respondent demographics, ranging from students to the general public. Data analysis was conducted using content analysis techniques by grouping findings based on

antecedent and consequence variable themes, which were then synthesized narratively to draw conclusions about the relationship patterns between variables.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Based on the analysis of 20 relevant journal articles, the author found similarities in the research results. To facilitate analysis and conclusion drawing, the findings were then grouped into several categories. A summary of the findings in each category is presented in the following table:

Table 1. Summary of Literature Review Results

Category	Findings	Implication
FOMO → Impulsive buying	FOMO has been shown to increase impulsive buying in most studies, driven by urgency, social pressure, and fear of missing out on promotions/trends. A small number of studies have found that FOMO only has a moderate effect.	Brands can use FOMO strategies ethically to increase engagement, but they need to ensure that consumers do not experience excessive emotional pressure.
Flash Sale & Big Promo	Flash sales, twin date promotions (11.11/12.12), and discounts have proven to be the strongest triggers for impulsive buying, especially among Gen Z. Flash sales also often serve as a mediator between FOMO and impulsive buying.	E-commerce can increase the effectiveness of promotional programs by optimizing time urgency and limited stock to encourage transactions.
Scarcity & Urgency	Limited stock and time limits increase emotional pressure and reinforce FOMO, thereby encouraging spontaneous purchasing decisions. Scarcity reinforces the effect of FOMO on impulsive buying.	Retailers can use scarcity strategies transparently to increase conversions without reducing consumer trust.
Hedonic Shopping Motivation	Shopping as entertainment, enjoyment, and a mood booster has been shown to significantly increase impulsive buying in e-commerce. Consumers tend to make spontaneous purchases when seeking a “fun shopping experience.”	Businesses can create a more engaging shopping experience (UI/UX, product recommendations, gamification) to increase purchase interest.
Influencer & Digital Content	TikTok content (product/service reviews, promotions, endorsements), algorithms, and influencer marketing have been proven to trigger impulsive buying by increasing consumer exposure and trust.	Brands can focus on collaborating with relevant influencers and creating engaging content to increase conversion rates.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the review of all articles, it can be concluded that the phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) has a significant influence on consumer purchasing behavior, especially in the context of digital marketing and e-commerce. All journals analyzed provide complementary perspectives, making the discussion related to FOMO broader, deeper, and more relevant to current consumer conditions.

The study entitled “FOMO's Impact on Impulsivity: The Mediating Role of Flash Sales and Promotional Strategies” (Karunia et al., 2025) shows that FOMO has a significant influence on consumer impulsive behavior. When individuals are faced with situations such as flash sales, countdown timers, and limited promotions, the fear of missing out triggers a strong emotional urge to buy immediately. Consumers feel the need to make quick decisions because they worry that the opportunity will not come again. These findings strongly reflect consumer behavior patterns on modern e-commerce platforms, where strategies such as “low stock” or “currently viewed by many people” notifications are often used to encourage spontaneous purchasing decisions.

The results of this study are reinforced by the journal “The Influence of Fear of Missing Out, Hedonic Shopping Motivation, and Flash Sales on Impulsive Buying during Shopee's Twin Date Promo Event (A Study on Students of Muhammadiyah University Purwokerto)” (Aziz et al., 2025). This study confirms that FOMO is a psychological factor that has a stronger influence on consumer behavior than other factors such as hedonistic motivation and intensity of social media use. Consumers, especially the younger generation, often feel the need to follow trends and activities that are popular on social media so they don't appear to be left behind. They are driven to buy products that are viral or widely discussed, even though these products are not actually essential needs. This phenomenon illustrates how digitalization reinforces social pressure and influences consumers' decision-making emotionally.

A different perspective is offered by the journal “Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and Scarcity Strategies: A Qualitative Exploration of Consumer Communication with Flash Sales on E-Commerce Platforms” (Mayasari et al., 2025) which emphasizes that scarcity strategies also play a major role in creating FOMO. This study explains that when consumers know that a product is sold in limited quantities, they experience an increased urgency to make a purchase decision. The fear of running out or missing out on a product makes them more likely to make a purchase quickly. Scarcity-based marketing strategies such as limited editions, small stock quantities, and limited pre-orders are very effective in increasing sales because they activate the emotional side of consumers who want to “get it before it's gone.”

Another study titled “The Effect of Flash Sale, Online Fear of Missing Out (ON-FOMO) and Hedonism Shopping Motivation on Online Impulse Buying Behavior in Kahf Products” (Pratama et al., 2025) provides a more specific description of the direct relationship between flash sales and purchasing decisions. This study reveals that flash sales, which often appear on online shopping platforms, directly trigger FOMO. Time constraints, very low prices, and the large number of other users participating in flash sales make consumers feel the need to make decisions as quickly as possible. FOMO in this context is not only the fear of missing out on goods, but also the fear of missing out on experiences and opportunities that are considered very valuable.

Not only quantitative research, the literature review journal entitled “Eksplorasi Peran FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) sebagai Pemicu Utama dalam Dinamika Perilaku Konsumen terhadap Strategi Penawaran Flash Sale di Era Digital” (Muhamad et al., 2025)

provides a broader theoretical basis. This article explains that FOMO has become part of modern consumer behavior dynamics due to the increasing use of social media. Consumers now find it easier to see the activities of others, trends, and purchases of certain products made by friends and influencers. This condition creates psychological pressure to participate so as not to feel left behind. In other words, FOMO not only influences purchasing decisions but also shapes consumer perceptions of social identity, trends, and lifestyles.

In conclusion, all of these journals point to the same understanding that FOMO is a psychological phenomenon that is very influential in digital marketing today. Companies use various strategies such as flash sales, scarcity marketing, limited promotions, and viral campaigns to trigger FOMO in order to boost sales. From the consumer's perspective, FOMO often causes them to make decisions without much consideration, resulting in an increase in impulsive purchasing behavior. This shows that purchasing decisions in the digital age are no longer entirely rational, but are greatly influenced by emotional impulses and social pressure.

Overall, this discussion shows that FOMO is not just a passing phenomenon, but has become an ingrained pattern of behavior in the lives of modern consumers. A deep understanding of FOMO is crucial, both for businesses seeking to develop effective marketing strategies and for academics and students researching consumer behavior phenomena. With the availability of diverse literature, the picture of FOMO becomes increasingly clear, showing that this phenomenon has a significant and tangible impact on the purchasing decision-making process in the digital age.

CONCLUSION

Based on a literature review of 20 articles analyzed, it can be concluded that Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is a psychological determinant that has a strong and consistent influence on impulsive buying behavior in the context of digital marketing. FOMO arises as a response to emotional pressure stemming from perceptions of urgency, time constraints, and stock scarcity presented through marketing strategies such as flash sales, twin date promotions, and real-time notifications. This mechanism creates a psychological urge for consumers to make immediate purchases to avoid missing out on opportunities that are considered valuable. Intensive exposure to digital content and social media also plays a role in reinforcing the FOMO effect through lifestyle representations, product reviews, and recommendations from influencers. This strategy shapes new social norms that encourage consumers, especially the younger generation, to follow consumption trends in order to remain socially relevant. Literature findings also indicate that hedonistic motivation can increase consumer sensitivity to marketing stimuli, thereby increasing the tendency to make impulsive purchases. The FOMO phenomenon is not only a trigger for momentary emotions, but has become an integral part of consumer behavior dynamics in the digital age. This study confirms that the effectiveness of FOMO-based marketing strategies is highly dependent on a company's ability to strategically create perceptions of scarcity and urgency, while remaining ethical and transparent.

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