



Original Article

An Analytical Study of Fear of Missing Out (Fomo) and Its Impact on Online Purchase Behaviour

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Abstract

In the era of digital connectivity, consumers are increasingly exposed to a continuous flow of social media updates, influencer promotions, and time-bound online offers. This environment has given rise to a powerful psychological phenomenon known as the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). This study examines how FOMO influences online purchasing behaviour, focusing on the emotional, cognitive, and behavioural aspects of consumer decisions. Using quantitative data gathered from online consumers, this paper explores the relationship between FOMO, social media usage, impulsive buying tendencies, and post-purchase satisfaction. Findings highlight that FOMO significantly drives impulsive purchases and short-term gratification, often followed by post-purchase regret. The study concludes with implications for marketers and consumers in managing FOMO ethically and effectively in digital commerce.

Keywords- Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), Online Purchase Behavior, Digital Consumer Behaviour, Impulsive Buying, Social Media Marketing, Scarcity Marketing, Limited-Time Offers, Influencer Marketing, E-Commerce.

Introduction

The digital revolution has transformed how consumers discover, evaluate, and purchase products. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become powerful tools for marketing and consumer engagement. Alongside these platforms, a psychological phenomenon known as the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) has emerged a pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent. FOMO has been linked to social media addiction, impulsive decision-making, and increased spending. For marketers, it represents an opportunity to drive engagement and sales. For consumers, however, it often leads to anxiety, irrational purchasing, and dissatisfaction.

With e-commerce adopting aggressive marketing tactics such as flash sales, limited-time offers, and influencer-driven promotions, FOMO has become a crucial determinant of online purchase behaviour. This paper seeks to understand how FOMO influences consumer decisions, what marketing techniques intensify this fear, and how it ultimately affects satisfaction and regret.

Objectives Of Current Study

Examining the extent to which Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) influences consumers' online purchase intentions across different digital platforms and product categories. Analyzing the relationship between FOMO-driven emotional triggers and impulsive buying behavior among online shoppers. Evaluating the role of marketing stimuli such as limited-time offers, scarcity messages, and social media cues in intensifying FOMO and shaping purchase decisions. Determining the demographic and psychographic factors that moderate the impact of FOMO on online purchasing patterns.

Objectives of the Further Study

Exploring long-term behavioral patterns associated with FOMO, including how continuous exposure to digital stimuli shapes sustained online buying habits. Analyzing the cross-cultural variations in FOMO-driven online purchase behavior, enabling a deeper understanding of how cultural norms and social influences moderate FOMO effects.

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How to cite this article:

siri, K. J. (2025). An Analytical Study of Fear of Missing Out (Fomo) and Its Impact on Online Purchase Behaviour. Royal International Global Journal of Advance and Applied Research, 2(12), 90-93. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18138648>

Manuscript ID:
RIGJAAR-2025-021218

ISSN: 2998-4459
Volume 2
Issue 12
Pp. 90-93
December 2025

Submitted: 10 Nov. 2025
Revised: 15 Nov. 2025
Accepted: 12 Dec. 2025
Published: 31 Dec. 2025

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Quick Response Code:



Web. <https://rlgjaar.com>



DOI:
[10.5281/zenodo.18138648](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18138648)

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18138648>



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Examining the impact of emerging technologies such as AI-driven recommendations, social commerce, and influencer marketing on the intensity of FOMO experienced by consumers.

Assessing how FOMO interacts with other psychological constructs, such as social anxiety, self-esteem, digital addiction, and gratification-seeking tendencies, to influence purchase decisions.

Evaluating the opportunities for developing responsible marketing frameworks that balance promotional urgency with consumer protection and psychological well-being.

Scope

This encompasses an in-depth examination of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) as a psychological construct and its influence on online purchase behaviour among consumers. The study focuses on understanding how digital marketing strategies such as scarcity messages, limited-time offers, influencer promotions, and social media engagement trigger FOMO and shape purchasing decisions. This research covers consumer segments actively engaging in online shopping across various e-commerce platforms, including mobile applications and social media based commerce. It analyses behavioural, emotional, and perceptual responses associated with FOMO-driven marketing stimuli.

The scope is limited to online retail environments, excluding offline purchasing behaviours. It emphasises impulsive buying tendencies, purchase intention, post-purchase reactions, and demographic variations in FOMO susceptibility. The study provides insights beneficial for marketers, digital strategists, and consumer behaviour researchers, while also offering a foundation for further academic inquiry into psychological influences within digital marketplaces.

Statement Of Problem

As the digital market is evolving rapidly, consumers are increasingly exposed to intensive online marketing tactics, **including** limited-time offers, flash sales, social media promotions, and influencer endorsements. These stimuli often trigger the psychological phenomenon known as Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), which creates a heightened sense of urgency and the belief that valuable opportunities may be lost if immediate action is not taken. Despite the growing integration **of** FOMO-based **strategies** in e-commerce platforms, there remains limited understanding of how strongly FOMO influences online purchase behaviour, particularly in relation **to** impulsive buying, decision-making patterns, and post-purchase satisfaction. Consumers may unknowingly engage in emotion-driven purchases, leading to regret, dissatisfaction, or financial strain.

The problem, therefore, lies in the lack of comprehensive research explaining the extent to which FOMO shapes consumer behaviour in online environments, the factors that increase consumer susceptibility, and the ethical implications of using FOMO as a marketing tool. This study aims to address these gaps by analysing the behavioural impact of FOMO on online shoppers and identifying the underlying drivers influencing their purchase decisions.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the influence of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) on online purchase behaviour. The research relies on both primary and secondary data sources to gain a comprehensive understanding of consumer responses to FOMO-driven marketing stimuli. Primary data is collected through a structured questionnaire administered to active online shoppers across different demographic groups. A non-probability sampling method, specifically convenient sampling, is used to gather responses due to the accessibility of digital consumers. The questionnaire includes closed-ended questions measured using a Likert scale to assess levels of FOMO, impulsive buying tendencies, and purchase intentions. Secondary data is obtained from journals, published research papers, online articles, and industry reports to support the conceptual framework and enhance theoretical understanding. The collected data is analysed using statistical tools such as percentages, mean scores, and correlation analysis to identify relationships between FOMO and online purchasing patterns. This methodology enables a systematic examination of behavioural influences and helps draw meaningful conclusions regarding the impact of FOMO on digital consumer behaviour.

Literature Review

The concept of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) has gained significant attention in consumer behaviour research, particularly with the rise of digital and social media platforms. Early studies describe FOMO as a psychological state in which individuals experience anxiety over the possibility of missing rewarding experiences or opportunities available to others. Researchers have found that social media intensifies this feeling by constantly exposing users to curated lifestyles, promotional content, and peer activities, which can influence emotional responses and decision-making. Several studies indicate that FOMO increases consumers' tendency toward impulsive buying, especially when exposed to limited-time offers, scarcity messages, and high-engagement promotional campaigns. Marketing scholars also highlight that digital environments create an illusion of urgency, pushing users to act quickly without thorough evaluation. Furthermore, research shows that FOMO impacts not only purchase intention but also post-purchase satisfaction, often leading to regret or cognitive dissonance. Literature also suggests that demographic factors such as age, social media usage intensity, and personality traits influence the degree of FOMO experienced by consumers. Overall, existing studies collectively demonstrate that FOMO is a powerful psychological trigger shaping online purchase behaviour, making it an important area for further academic investigation.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected through the structured questionnaire was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to understand the influence of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) on online purchase behaviour. Descriptive statistics such as percentages, mean values, and frequency distributions were used to summarise



respondents' demographic details and their general online shopping patterns. The Likert-scale responses were analysed to measure the intensity of FOMO, impulsive buying tendencies, and the role of digital marketing stimuli. The results indicated that a significant proportion of respondents frequently encountered limited-time offers, flash sales, and influencer-driven promotions, which heightened their sense of urgency to make purchases.

Marketers often employ FOMO-based strategies such as:

Scarcity cues: "Only 2 items left" or "Sale ends in 3 hours." Social proof: "500 people bought this in the last 24 hours." Influencer endorsements: Creating the perception of exclusivity or trendiness.

These tactics stimulate urgency and a sense of competition among consumers, pushing them to purchase impulsively. Correlation analysis revealed a positive relationship between FOMO levels and impulsive buying behaviour, suggesting that individuals experiencing higher FOMO were more likely to engage in unplanned purchases. Additionally, the data showed that younger consumers exhibited stronger emotional responses to scarcity-based marketing compared to older consumers. Interpretation of findings further indicated that FOMO not only influenced initial purchase decisions but also affected post-purchase sentiments, with some respondents reporting regret or dissatisfaction after making impulsive purchases. Overall, the analysis demonstrated that FOMO plays a substantial role in shaping online purchase behaviour, driven largely by digital marketing cues and social media exposure.

Discussion

Reaffirming that FOMO is an influential psychological factor in digital consumer behaviour. The strong correlation between FOMO and impulsive buying suggests that online shoppers often respond emotionally rather than rationally when confronted with urgent promotional cues. These behaviours are amplified by social media platforms, where consumers are constantly exposed to curated lifestyles, influencer endorsements, and peer activities. The study also demonstrates that demographic factors, especially age and digital engagement levels, play an important role in determining vulnerability to FOMO. The presence of regret or dissatisfaction after FOMO-driven purchases indicates potential implications for customer satisfaction and long-term brand loyalty. For marketers, these insights underscore both the effectiveness and the ethical considerations of using FOMO-based strategies. While such tactics can increase sales, improper use may lead to negative consumer experiences and reduced trust in digital platforms.

Findings

The study found that Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) significantly influences consumer behaviour in online shopping environments. A majority of respondents reported experiencing a sense of urgency when exposed to limited-time deals, flash sales, and scarcity-based advertisements. The analysis showed a clear positive relationship between FOMO and impulsive buying, indicating that consumers with higher levels of FOMO are

more likely to make quick, unplanned purchases. Younger consumers, particularly frequent social media users, demonstrated greater susceptibility to FOMO-driven marketing messages. The findings also suggest that while FOMO increases purchase intentions, it can lead to mixed post-purchase emotions, including regret or dissatisfaction. Overall, the results highlight that FOMO is a strong psychological driver shaping online purchase decisions and is intensified by aggressive digital marketing strategies.

Conclusion

The study concludes that Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) has a significant impact on online purchase behaviour, primarily by increasing impulsive buying and creating a sense of urgency among consumers. Digital marketing techniques such as scarcity messages, time-bound offers, and influencer promotions effectively heighten FOMO, influencing customers' decision-making processes. Younger and active social media users are particularly affected, showing higher levels of emotional response to FOMO stimuli. Although these strategies drive immediate purchase intentions, they may also lead to post-purchase regret, highlighting the need for ethical marketing practices. The research contributes to a deeper understanding of how psychological factors shape consumer behaviour in digital markets and suggests the importance of balanced promotional strategies that enhance customer value without causing emotional pressure or dissatisfaction.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere gratitude to all those who contributed to the successful completion of this research study titled "An Analytical Study of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and Its Impact on Online Purchase Behaviour." I am also thankful to all the respondents who willingly participated in the survey and provided honest and insightful responses, without which this study would not have been possible. Their cooperation significantly contributed to the reliability and relevance of the data analysis.

I would like to acknowledge the authors, researchers, and scholars whose published works, journals, and online resources served as an important foundation for the literature review and theoretical understanding of the topic.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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