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ARTICLE

Generation Z's Perceptions of the "Fear of Missing Out" (FOMO) Phenomenon in Online Shopping and Its Impact on Purchase Decisions

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ABSTRACT

This study adopts a qualitative perspective to deepen understanding of Generation Z's subjective experiences regarding the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) phenomenon in online shopping. Grounded in behavioral economics concepts such as loss aversion, scarcity effect, and bounded rationality, the study complements predominantly quantitative approaches in the existing literature. This study aims to analyze how Generation Z interprets the FOMO phenomenon, identify the factors that trigger FOMO, and examine its influence on purchasing decisions in the context of e-commerce. The study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive-exploratory design. Data were collected through an online survey using an open-ended questionnaire involving 103 respondents from diverse backgrounds. The sampling technique employed convenience sampling, while data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis to identify patterns and key themes from the respondents' answers. The results indicate that FOMO is influenced by social factors such as social media, influencers, and peer pressure, as well as marketing factors like discounts, flash sales, and limited-time promotions that create a sense of urgency. This phenomenon drives impulsive purchasing behavior, which is often not based on rational needs, and impacts emotional states, resulting in temporary satisfaction followed by regret. Additionally, FOMO affects individual financial management, as respondents tend to struggle with controlling their spending. These findings have important implications for the development of digital consumer behavior theory and more responsible marketing practices.

Keywords: Fear of Missing Out; Generation Z; Online Shopping; Impulsive Purchasing Behavior; Social Media

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1. Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital technology has significantly transformed consumer behavior, particularly in the context of online shopping. Internet accessibility, smartphone penetration, and the widespread use of social media platforms have created a consumption environment in which purchasing decisions are increasingly shaped by digital interactions rather than solely by functional needs [1,2]. For Generation Z, a cohort that grew up surrounded by digital devices and permanent connectivity, online shopping has become an ordinary part of daily life. This generation is widely recognized as technologically adaptive, highly connected, and responsive to digital trends, making them one of the most influential consumer groups in contemporary markets [3,4]. Unlike previous generations, Generation Z tends to combine consumption with identity expression, lifestyle signaling, and social participation through digital platforms [5,6].

The increasing relevance of social media in everyday life has also changed how consumers discover, evaluate, and purchase products. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and marketplace-based live commerce systems are no longer used merely for communication or entertainment, but also function as persuasive commercial ecosystems where advertisements, peer reviews, influencer endorsements, and user-generated content interact simultaneously [7,8]. These environments continuously expose users to new trends, product launches, limited offers, and curated lifestyles that can intensify comparison with others. As a result, consumer decisions are often driven by emotional reactions and perceived urgency rather than rational evaluation alone [9].

One psychological phenomenon that has become increasingly relevant in this environment is Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). FOMO refers to an apprehension that others may be experiencing rewarding opportunities while one is absent or excluded. Initially discussed in psychological and social media contexts, FOMO has now become an important concept in marketing and consumer behavior studies because it helps explain why individuals feel compelled to remain updated, connected, and responsive to trends [10,11]. In online shopping settings, FOMO may emerge when consumers encounter flash sales, limited stock notifications, viral products, influencer recommendations, or peer purchasing activities. Such stimuli can create a sense of urgency that motivates immediate buying behavior, even when the purchase is not based on genuine necessity [12,13].

Previous studies indicate that FOMO has a positive relationship with impulsive buying, compulsive consumption tendencies, and increased brand engagement. Consumers who experience higher levels of FOMO are more likely to make spontaneous purchases in order to avoid feelings of exclusion or regret from missing opportunities [14,15]. Among Generation Z, this tendency may be stronger because of their intensive social media usage and stronger involvement in digital communities where relevance, participation, and trend awareness are highly valued [16,17]. In this sense, FOMO should not be viewed merely as an individual emotion, but also as a social response shaped by platform design, marketing communication, and peer interaction.

Despite the growing body of research on FOMO and consumer behavior, two critical gaps remain in the literature. First, existing studies have predominantly employed quantitative approaches such as Structural Equation Modeling, which, while effective for hypothesis testing, are limited in capturing the nuanced subjective experiences that drive FOMO-related behavior. Second, the theoretical integration of FOMO with core behavioral economics constructs such as loss aversion, scarcity effect, bounded rationality, and impulsive decision-making remains underdeveloped in the context of Generation Z online shopping. These gaps limit the explanatory depth of current models and leave important questions about the lived experience of FOMO unaddressed. Therefore, this study aims to analyze how Generation Z perceives the FOMO phenomenon, identify factors that trigger FOMO in online shopping environments, and examine how FOMO influences purchasing decisions through a qualitative lens grounded in behavioral economics theory. By doing so, this study uniquely contributes a richer contextual understanding that complements and extends prior empirical findings.

2. Materials and Methods

This study employed a qualitative research approach with a descriptive exploratory design to obtain an in-depth understanding of Generation Z perceptions regarding the Fear of Missing Out phenomenon in online shopping contexts. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the objective of this study was not merely to measure statistical relationships among variables, but to explore subjective meanings, motives, emotional reactions, and behavioral interpretations expressed directly by participants. Previous studies on FOMO and online purchasing behavior have predominantly used quantitative models such as Structural Equation Modeling and Partial Least Squares, which are effective for testing hypotheses but are often limited in capturing nuanced personal experiences [1,2]. Therefore, this study adopts a qualitative perspective to complement existing empirical findings and provide richer contextual insights.

The research participants consisted of 103 respondents categorized as members of Generation Z, defined in this study as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, consistent with the widely adopted demarcation used in consumer behavior research. Respondents ranged in age from 18 to 27 years old at the time of data collection. The sample comprised 61 female respondents (59.2%) and 42 male respondents (40.8%). In terms of educational background, the majority were university students (78.6%), with the remainder including recent graduates and young working professionals. All respondents actively engaged with internet technology, social media platforms (primarily TikTok, Instagram, and marketplace applications), and online shopping [3,4]. Respondents were selected using a convenience sampling technique based on accessibility and willingness to participate. This sampling method was chosen because it enables efficient access to individuals who meet the criteria of active social media users and consumers with prior online shopping experience. Similar non-probability sampling approaches have frequently been applied in consumer behavior studies involving young digital users and exploratory online shopping research [16,17].

Data were collected through an online survey using an open-ended questionnaire. The online format was selected due to its suitability for digitally active respondents, broad geographic reach, time efficiency, and convenience for participants. Since Generation Z consumers are highly accustomed to mobile communication and web-based interaction, online questionnaires are considered an effective medium for gathering authentic responses from this demographic [5,6]. Open-ended questions were designed to encourage participants to express their own perceptions freely rather than choosing predefined responses. This format also reduced the restriction of closed-scale measurement and allowed respondents to explain emotions, motivations, and personal experiences related to FOMO more naturally.

The questionnaire consisted of several thematic areas. First, respondents were asked how they personally interpret FOMO in the context of online shopping. Second, participants were asked to identify situations, digital content, or promotional strategies that trigger feelings of urgency or fear of being left behind. Third, respondents were invited to explain whether such feelings influence their purchasing decisions, including unplanned purchases, emotional reactions, or post-purchase reflections. Additional questions explored the role of influencers, peer activity, discounts, flash sales, and trending products in shaping purchase motivation. These themes were developed based on findings from prior literature indicating that social influence, urgency cues, and digital engagement are important antecedents of FOMO.

The collected responses were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. This method was chosen because it enables systematic identification of recurring patterns, meanings, and categories across qualitative responses. The analysis proceeded through the following stages: (1) data familiarization, in which all responses were read and re-read multiple times to achieve immersion in the data; (2) initial coding, in which meaningful statements and recurring ideas were assigned descriptive codes; (3) theme generation, in which related codes were clustered into broader candidate themes such as digital social pressure, promotional urgency, impulsive buying tendencies, emotional outcomes, and financial consequences; (4) theme review, in which themes were refined and tested against the dataset to ensure coherence and distinctiveness; (5) theme definition and naming, in which each theme was clearly defined and named; and (6) production of the final analytical narrative. To strengthen coding credibility, a peer-checking procedure was conducted in which a second researcher independently coded a 20% subset of the responses. Intercoder reliability was assessed using Cohen's kappa, yielding a coefficient of 0.81, which indicates strong agreement. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion until consensus was reached. An audit trail was maintained throughout the process to document coding decisions and theme development, supporting the transparency and trustworthiness of the analysis [18].

To improve trustworthiness, this study involved respondents from diverse backgrounds and different consumption experiences, enabling broader variation in viewpoints. The coding and interpretation process was conducted iteratively to reduce inconsistency and premature conclusions. By combining open-ended data collection with thematic interpretation, this study aims to produce findings that are both analytically grounded and closely connected to the lived experiences of Generation Z consumers in the digital marketplace.

To ensure data validity, this study employed source triangulation by involving respondents from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, the analysis process was conducted iteratively to ensure the consistency and accuracy of interpretations. This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of research involving human participants. Prior to data collection, all respondents were informed of the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before they completed the questionnaire. No personally identifiable information was collected or stored. This study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Universitas Negeri Jakarta (Ethical Approval Reference: UNJ-REC/2024).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Respondents' Understanding of FOMO in Online Shopping

The findings indicate that most respondents were already familiar with the Fear of Missing Out phenomenon, although not all participants recognized the formal academic term itself. Even when they had never explicitly encountered the phrase FOMO, respondents were able to describe experiences that strongly reflected its meaning. They commonly associated the phenomenon with feelings of anxiety, urgency, curiosity, discomfort, or pressure when seeing other people obtain products, enjoy promotional benefits, or participate in popular trends that they had not yet joined. This shows that FOMO has become a lived social reality in digital commerce, regardless of whether consumers know the terminology used in academic discussions [19].

In the specific context of online shopping, respondents often interpreted FOMO as fear of losing access to limited opportunities. They mentioned situations such as missing flash sales, failing to use discount vouchers before expiration, seeing products become sold out, or noticing prices rise after a promotion ends. These situations generated emotional discomfort because respondents believed hesitation could lead to regret later. In this sense, respondents were not only reacting to products themselves, but to the possibility of lost opportunity. This distinction is important because it clarifies why consumers sometimes feel strong pressure even toward products they had never previously considered purchasing [20].

Many respondents also connected FOMO with the desire to stay updated. They explained that social media continuously introduces new trends, styles, products, and recommendations. As a result, some participants felt that not knowing current trends or not owning certain items could make them appear outdated among peers. For younger consumers who are highly engaged in digital communities, relevance can function as a valuable social asset. This suggests that FOMO is partly rooted in symbolic relevance rather than material need alone [10,11].

Another recurring interpretation was that FOMO reflects the pressure to belong. Respondents noted that some products become popular conversation topics among friends or online communities. Owning those products may help participation in group discussions, while not owning them may create feelings of exclusion. This means purchasing decisions may carry interpersonal meaning beyond economic value.

Several respondents also recognized that FOMO often begins subtly. It may start as simple curiosity, then become repeated checking behavior, and later develop into a stronger desire to purchase. This gradual process shows that FOMO is not always an immediate emotional reaction. Sometimes it develops through cumulative exposure and repeated comparison.

Interestingly, a smaller group of respondents demonstrated awareness of the persuasive tactics behind FOMO. They recognized that many campaigns intentionally use scarcity claims, countdown timers, and viral promotion strategies. However, even these respondents admitted that awareness did not always eliminate temptation. Thus, knowing a tactic exists does not automatically prevent emotional influence.

Overall, Generation Z tends to interpret FOMO as a multidimensional experience involving fear of missing opportunities, desire for relevance, need for belonging, and reaction to social comparison. Therefore, FOMO should be understood as a socialized emotional response shaped by digital consumption environments.

3.2. Main Triggers of FOMO in Digital Commerce

The data reveal several dominant triggers of FOMO among respondents. The most frequently mentioned trigger was flash sale promotions. Limited-time offers created pressure to act quickly because participants believed that hesitation would lead to loss of opportunity. Respondents often described countdown timers, sudden discounts, midnight promotions, and notifications such as only today or few items left as persuasive elements that encouraged immediate purchases. This finding aligns with prior research showing that scarcity and urgency cues strongly stimulate impulsive buying behavior [21,22].

Another important trigger was repeated exposure through social media platforms. Respondents stated that seeing the same product many times on TikTok, Instagram, YouTube shorts, and marketplace homepages gradually increased curiosity and desire. Even when they were not initially interested, repeated visibility made products seem more relevant and more necessary than before. This reflects the psychological effect of familiarity, where repeated exposure increases acceptance.

Influencers played a notable role as well. Participants admitted that recommendations from content creators often felt more convincing than traditional advertisements. Influencers were seen as relatable people who had direct experience using products. Their product demonstrations, honest reviews, and lifestyle presentation reduced uncertainty and encouraged faster decisions [16,17].

Peer activity was another strong trigger. Some respondents explained that when friends shared shopping links, discussed discounts in group chats, or showed new purchases, they felt pressure to participate. In this case, FOMO was created through interpersonal networks rather than direct advertising. Social circles acted as informal marketers.

Respondents also mentioned exclusive product launches and limited-edition items. Products described as rare, seasonal, or available only in certain quantities created stronger urgency than ordinary items. Consumers often assumed that rare items had higher status or would be difficult to obtain later.

In addition, emotional conditions such as boredom, stress, loneliness, or desire for self-reward made respondents more susceptible to FOMO triggers. During stressful periods, promotions felt more attractive because shopping was associated with emotional relief. This means internal mood states can intensify external marketing effects.

Another trigger involved free shipping thresholds, cashback bonuses, and voucher stacking systems. Respondents explained that they often purchased more items than intended in order to qualify for perceived savings. This indicates that FOMO can be linked not only to products, but also to fear of wasting available benefits.

Overall, the findings show that FOMO in digital commerce emerges through the interaction of promotional urgency, repeated visibility, social influence, perceived exclusivity, and emotional vulnerability.

3.3. Influence of FOMO on Purchasing Decisions

The findings demonstrate that FOMO significantly affects purchasing decisions by shortening the normal evaluation process. Many respondents admitted buying items without comparing alternatives, checking product durability, or considering budget priorities. Instead, their attention focused on avoiding regret or losing access to a perceived opportunity [23].

Participants frequently described unplanned purchases involving fashion products, beauty items, gadgets, accessories, snacks, and trending household goods. Some respondents initially opened applications only to browse casually, but ended up purchasing after seeing promotions or highly positive reviews. This reflects impulsive buying behavior driven by emotional stimulation rather than careful planning [24].

Several respondents explained that FOMO changed how they judged value. Under urgency, they focused on discount percentages rather than whether the item was truly needed. A product that seemed unnecessary before could suddenly appear worthwhile because of a temporary price reduction. This shows that FOMO can distort consumer evaluation by shifting focus from utility to opportunity [25].

Some participants also admitted to purchasing multiple products simultaneously. They added extra items to maximize vouchers, secure free shipping, or avoid missing bundled offers. Consequently, a small initial intention often expanded into a larger transaction than planned.

Another pattern involved postponement failure. Respondents sometimes intended to think first and purchase later, but repeated reminders or fear of stock depletion pushed them back into immediate checkout. This indicates that FOMO can override delayed decision strategies.

However, not all participants reacted equally. Some respondents reported stronger discipline through waiting periods, price comparison, reading negative reviews, or consulting friends before buying. These strategies helped reduce impulsive responses [11].

A few respondents also stated that prior negative experiences made them more resistant. After wasting money on unnecessary purchases, they became more skeptical of urgent promotions. Thus, experience may strengthen rational control over time.

Overall, FOMO influences purchasing decisions by replacing reflective consumption with reactive consumption. Consumers do not merely purchase products based on functional needs; rather, they seek to reduce uncertainty and alleviate concerns about missing valuable opportunities, trends, or social experiences.

3.4. Emotional Outcomes after Purchase

One of the most important findings concerns emotional reactions after FOMO-driven purchases. Several respondents reported immediate feelings of excitement, relief, happiness, or satisfaction after completing a transaction. Buying the item reduced psychological tension because they no longer feared missing the opportunity. In this early stage, purchasing functioned as emotional closure.

However, these positive emotions were often temporary. Many respondents later experienced regret, disappointment, guilt, or indifference. Some realized the product was rarely used, lower quality than expected, or unnecessary from the beginning. Others regretted spending money impulsively when more important needs existed.

This pattern is consistent with literature showing that impulse purchases often provide instant emotional reward but weaker lasting satisfaction than deliberate purchases [26,27]. The present findings indicate that FOMO purchases may solve short-term anxiety while creating later dissatisfaction.

Several respondents described regret not only financially but psychologically. They felt annoyed with themselves for being easily influenced. Some questioned why they purchased something they did not genuinely need. This self-criticism suggests that FOMO can affect self-perception and confidence in decision-making.

Some participants also mentioned emotional numbness. After repeated impulsive purchases, the excitement became weaker. Promotions that once felt thrilling gradually became ordinary. This may encourage repeated shopping behavior in search of stronger emotional stimulation.

Mental fatigue was another theme. Continuous exposure to promotions, notifications, and trend pressure created exhaustion. Respondents felt there was always another sale, another voucher, or another product to consider. Instead of enjoyment, shopping sometimes became stressful. This supports arguments that FOMO environments may contribute to digital fatigue [10,11].

Interestingly, regret sometimes became a learning mechanism. After repeated disappointment, some respondents muted notifications, unsubscribed from promotional channels, or created stricter spending rules. Therefore, negative outcomes may also encourage healthier habits.

Overall, the emotional consequences of FOMO are mixed. Immediate pleasure is common, but longer-term reflection often reveals regret, fatigue, or dissatisfaction.

3.5. Role of Generation Z Characteristics

The results suggest that certain characteristics commonly associated with Generation Z make this group particularly responsive to FOMO dynamics. First, respondents are highly integrated with smartphones, social media, and real-time communication. Because they receive continuous updates, they are exposed to more promotions, trends, and peer consumption displays than previous generations.

Second, many respondents place strong value on relevance and participation in digital communities. Being aware of current trends, viral products, and online conversations can function as social capital. Consequently, not knowing or not owning trending products may feel like social disengagement [1,2].

Third, Generation Z consumers generally appreciate convenience and speed. Easy navigation, instant payment systems, stored addresses, and one-click checkout make online shopping highly efficient. While these features improve user experience, they also reduce the pause that might encourage reconsideration before purchase. Prior studies show convenience strongly predicts impulsive online buying among younger users[25].

Fourth, this generation tends to trust peer reviews, user-generated content, and influencer opinions when evaluating products. Rather than depending solely on official advertisements, they often seek social proof. This creates a marketplace where visible approval strongly shapes consumer judgment.

Fifth, Generation Z is accustomed to multitasking across several platforms simultaneously. While studying, relaxing, or commuting, respondents may browse shopping apps, watch product reviews, and communicate with peers at the same time. Such overlapping activities increase spontaneous exposure to commercial stimuli.

Nevertheless, it would be inaccurate to assume that all Generation Z consumers are equally impulsive. The findings show clear variation in self-control, digital literacy, income management, and critical awareness. Some respondents were highly vulnerable to FOMO, while others actively resisted through budgeting and delayed purchasing strategies.

Some participants also demonstrated growing maturity over time. As they gained more financial responsibility, they became less motivated by temporary trends and more concerned with product quality or necessity. This suggests that age and life stage within Generation Z may influence vulnerability levels.

Overall, Generation Z is not inherently impulsive. Rather, their habits of connectivity, speed, and social engagement align closely with digital environments designed to trigger urgency and comparison. This interaction explains why FOMO is especially visible within this consumer group.

3.6. Implications for Businesses and Consumers

For businesses, the findings confirm that urgency-based marketing remains effective. Flash sales, limited stock cues, social proof, influencer partnerships, and real-time campaigns can increase conversions by stimulating immediate consumer responses. In highly competitive digital marketplaces, such strategies are often attractive because they can generate short-term sales spikes, stronger engagement metrics, and faster product turnover. However, effectiveness should be balanced with ethical responsibility. Excessive pressure tactics may damage trust if consumers repeatedly regret purchases, perceive misleading scarcity claims, or feel emotionally manipulated after transactions are completed.

Sustainable marketing strategies may therefore focus on transparent promotions, realistic scarcity claims, and informative communication rather than artificial panic. Brands that combine excitement with honesty may build stronger long-term loyalty than those relying solely on emotional pressure[12,13]. For example, clearly explaining product benefits, actual stock limitations, campaign duration, and fair pricing policies can help maintain credibility while still creating market interest. In contrast, repeatedly using false urgency or exaggerated discount narratives may increase short-term conversions but weaken brand reputation over time.

The findings also imply that businesses should reconsider performance indicators that focus only on immediate sales volume. High conversion rates do not always reflect healthy customer relationships if followed by high cancellation rates, negative reviews, or declining repeat purchases. A more balanced strategy may include post-purchase satisfaction, retention, and trust as indicators of sustainable success. This is especially relevant when targeting Generation Z consumers, who are often highly vocal online and responsive to perceived authenticity.

For consumers, especially students and young adults, the findings highlight the importance of financial awareness and emotional self-regulation. Practical strategies include delaying purchases for several hours, creating spending limits, distinguishing wants from needs, comparing alternatives, and recognizing common urgency tactics. Consumers may also benefit from disabling excessive notifications, unfollowing overly persuasive accounts, or reviewing monthly spending patterns to identify impulsive habits.

Another important implication concerns digital literacy. Consumers who understand how algorithms, influencer marketing, and scarcity messaging operate are more capable of making intentional decisions rather than reactive purchases. Awareness transforms shopping behavior from emotionally driven consumption into more conscious evaluation.

Educational institutions and families may also contribute by strengthening financial planning habits among young adults. Since many Generation Z consumers are still developing income stability, repeated impulsive purchases can create avoidable financial stress.

Overall, the study demonstrates that FOMO is not a minor trend but a meaningful mechanism shaping Generation Z online shopping behavior. It connects technology, psychology, and commerce in ways that influence both market outcomes and personal well-being. Therefore, managing FOMO responsibly is beneficial not only for businesses seeking sustainable growth, but also for consumers seeking healthier relationships with digital consumption.

3.7. Theoretical Contribution

This study makes a theoretical contribution by enriching the literature on digital consumer behavior through a qualitative lens grounded in behavioral economics theory. First, the study advances the conceptualization of FOMO as a behavioral economics phenomenon by explicitly connecting it to three core constructs: (1) loss aversion, which explains why consumers feel stronger urgency to avoid missing an offer than the equivalent positive motivation to obtain it; (2) scarcity effect and bounded rationality, which explain how cognitive shortcuts under time pressure lead to suboptimal purchasing decisions; and (3) impulsive decision-making, which manifests when emotional arousal from promotional stimuli overrides deliberate evaluation. Second, unlike previous studies that tended to quantify FOMO's effects through structural models, this study uniquely reveals the subjective and processual nature of FOMO showing that it develops gradually through cumulative exposure, social comparison, and perceived exclusion rather than as a single discrete emotional event. Third, the study provides empirical evidence that FOMO functions as a mechanism bridging digital marketing tactics (urgency cues, influencer endorsements, flash sales) and impulsive purchasing outcomes among Generation Z, thereby filling a conceptual gap identified in prior systematic reviews. These contributions collectively support the development of a more holistic and behaviorally grounded model of digital consumer behavior.

3.8. Managerial Contribution

Practically, this study offers managerial implications for businesses, particularly in the e-commerce and digital marketing sectors. The findings indicate that marketing strategies leveraging FOMO, such as limited-time promotions, significant discounts, and influencer endorsements, have proven effective in driving consumer purchasing decisions. Consequently, companies can optimize these strategies to boost sales and consumer engagement. However, businesses must also consider ethical aspects when implementing these strategies, given the potential negative impacts such as impulsive buying and consumer regret. Additionally, companies can develop more sustainable marketing approaches by building consumer trust through information transparency and product education. For policymakers and educational institutions, these research findings can also serve as a foundation for designing digital and financial literacy programs to help Generation Z become wiser consumers.

3.9. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

This study has several limitations that should be noted. First, the use of convenience sampling limits the generalizability of the research findings, meaning the results cannot represent the entire Generation Z population. Second, data collected via an online survey may contain subjective bias, as it relies on the honesty and individual perceptions of respondents. Third, the qualitative approach used was unable to quantitatively measure the strength of the relationships between the variables studied. Therefore, future research is recommended to use mixed methods to obtain more comprehensive results. Additionally, future research could expand the geographical scope of the study and involve a more diverse group of respondents. Further research could also examine the role of other variables, such as financial literacy, self-control, and cultural factors, in moderating the influence of FOMO on consumption behavior, thereby providing a deeper and broader understanding.

4. Conclusions

This study was conducted to understand how Generation Z perceives the Fear of Missing Out phenomenon in the context of online shopping and to examine how such perceptions influence purchasing decisions in the digital marketplace. The findings demonstrate that FOMO should not be understood merely as an individual psychological reaction, but as a broader social phenomenon that develops through continuous interaction within online environments. Social media platforms, live commerce systems, influencer content, peer activities, and algorithm-driven recommendations collectively create a setting in which users are constantly exposed to opportunities, trends, and comparisons with others. Within this environment, Generation Z consumers experience stronger pressure to remain updated, connected, and socially relevant.

The results further indicate that Generation Z often interprets FOMO as the fear of being left behind in current trends, missing attractive opportunities, or losing symbolic participation in digital communities. For many respondents, purchasing behavior is not solely motivated by functional product needs, but also by the desire to maintain relevance, social belonging, and participation in fast-moving online culture. This finding confirms that consumption among younger digital users increasingly contains expressive and relational meanings beyond traditional economic considerations [6,28].

Another important conclusion concerns the strong role of marketing stimuli in amplifying FOMO. Promotional mechanisms such as discounts, flash sales, countdown timers, exclusive access, and limited-time campaigns significantly intensify urgency perceptions. When combined with social proof from influencers or peers, these strategies can shorten consumer decision-making processes and encourage immediate action. In this regard, FOMO becomes a bridge between digital marketing tactics and impulsive buying behavior, particularly among consumers who are highly connected to online platforms.

The study also reveals that the effects of FOMO are not limited to purchasing frequency. On the emotional level, many consumers experience temporary excitement, relief, or satisfaction immediately after completing a purchase. However, these positive feelings are often followed by regret, disappointment, financial concern, or recognition that the purchased product was unnecessary. This suggests that FOMO-driven purchases frequently prioritize short-term emotional comfort over long-term utility and satisfaction [24].

From a broader perspective, the findings show that FOMO has become a central factor in shaping the consumption dynamics of Generation Z. It connects psychological motives, social comparison, platform design, and commercial persuasion into one integrated behavioral process. Therefore, understanding FOMO is essential not only for academics studying digital consumer behavior, but also for businesses designing ethical marketing strategies and for consumers seeking healthier purchasing habits.

Finally, this study implies that future digital commerce should move toward a more balanced model. Businesses are encouraged to use persuasive strategies responsibly, while consumers need stronger financial literacy and self-regulation skills to navigate high-pressure online environments. By recognizing how FOMO operates, both marketers and consumers can contribute to a healthier, more sustainable, and more conscious digital marketplace.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, Q.H.S., U.S. and A.W.; methodology, Q.H.S.; formal analysis, Q.H.S.; investigation, Q.H.S.; resources, Q.H.S.; data curation, Q.H.S.; writing—original draft preparation, Q.H.S.; writing—review and editing, Q.H.S., U.S. and A.W.; supervision, U.S. and A.W. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Universitas Negeri Jakarta (protocol code UNJ-REC/2024 and date of approval: 2024).

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement

The data used in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AI Use Statement

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the preparation of this manuscript.

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