

The Role of FoMO Marketing and Visual Appeal in Driving Impulse Buying Behavior: The Mediating Effect of Emotional Response in Digital Entrepreneurship

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Abstract: Digital communications give e-commerce platforms to encourage customers to buy on impulse. The purpose of this study is to evaluate FoMO marketing and visual appeal as components of impulse buying and use emotional response as an intercession factor. The study relied on a quantitative survey of 100 students in Bandung, Indonesia, using an online questionnaire, and the data was analyzed using Smart PLS with the PLS algorithm and the bootstrapping technique to verify the hypothesis. The study reveals that both FOMO marketing and visual appeal enhance the emotional response of consumers, which in turn increases unplanned buying behavior. The results show that although uncertainty-based marketing strategies have more direct pathways to impulse buying, visual appeal has less effect, and so emotional connection is crucial for unplanned buying behavior. The originality of this study is the integrated model of emotional response that identifies the implicit connection of external stimuli in digital marketing to “buying on impulse,” as an outcome. The results of the study suggest that digital marketers use both emotional stimulus and visual appeals to optimize sales in a competitive market, while focusing on the balance of both factors.

Keywords: FoMO Marketing; Visuality; Emotional Response; Impulsive Buying.

A. Introduction

The broad expansion of technology alters not only avenues of digital practices but also affects almost everyone's way of living given the ubiquity of technology. This also changes people's thoughts, behaviors, and decisions. In a business context, technology also can shape consumers' perspectives and shopping habits

(Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Companies are competing to implement technology in commercial settings, such as the widespread use of e-commerce and social media, which are embraced with great enthusiasm because they are considered practical, easily accessible, and more efficient—especially for shopping activities (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017) (Wedel & Pieters,

2008). The high level of technology adoption in business is driving companies to enhance their marketing strategies to capture consumer attention and encourage purchasing behavior (Wedel & Pieters, 2008).

One of the strategies employed is a approach based on the relevance of today's lifestyle, specifically the implementation of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) Marketing (Przybylski et al., 2013) (Zhang et al., 2020). This strategy uses an approach to create a sense of urgency that drives consumers to make immediate purchases through limited-time promotions, extensive user reviews, flash sales, and many other ways (Good & Hyman, 2020). This strategy certainly does not target everyone, but rather the younger generation specifically who are active on social media and up to date on the growth of trends. (Przybylski et al., 2013) (Zhang et al., 2020).

Visuality also play a significant role in influencing consumer purchasing behavior (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008). With the growth of digital media, consumers will continue to see and be exposed to various visual elements such as logos, images, colors, typography, and more, that are designed to capture the audience's attention and gain interest (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008) (Wedel & Pieters, 2008). Visuals also serve as a representation of the brand or the message being conveyed, therefore, it is crucial for brand that using visuality a lot to project a positive image and impression, as the visual aspect is one of the key factors in marketing success in this digital age (Elhai et al., 2016) (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008). In making any decision—especially one involving the senses—in this context, visuality and emotion—the Fear of Missing Out is often linked to an emotional response. The combination of these elements in marketing triggers a blend of curiosity, urgency, and excitement (Bagozzi et al., 1999) (Jaworska, 2025). When consumers experience this emotional response, they tend to act spontaneously, without deliberation or planning (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017) (Wedel & Pieters, 2008). These spontaneous, unplanned purchases are closely linked to impulsive buying behavior (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998). This impulsive behavior generally occurs due to easy access to products—particularly in the context of online shopping—high-intensity marketing strategies, and the

rapid flow of information across digital platforms (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998).

Although the research existed have examined the relationships between FoMO, visuality, emotional response, and impulsive buying, these variables are mostly studied separately and not correlating (Good & Hyman, 2020) (Lin & Chuan, 2013) (Kholis et al., 2023a). Furthermore, there is still a need for a deeper understanding of the role of emotional response as a psychological mechanism that connects marketing stimuli with consumers' impulsive purchasing behavior (Bagozzi et al., 1999) (Laros & Steenkamp, 2005). Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of FoMO marketing and visuality on impulsive buying through emotional response among university students in Bandung, Indonesia.

B. Literature Review

1. Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) Marketing

The widespread use of the internet, digital technologies, smartphones, and other connected devices has intensified problematic internet use (PUI), which has affected individuals' emotional and psychological well-being and increased anxiety about missing online trends, a phenomenon known as the fear of missing out (FoMO) (Przybylski et al., 2013). Individuals often experience anxiety about missing valuable opportunities, which fuels a persistent and intense need to remain connected to the activities and experiences of others (Zhang et al., 2020). The core concept suggests that when consumers feel socially disconnected or excluded, they experience psychological distress that drives them to imitate and align their behavior with others to reduce anxiety and gain social acceptance (Elhai et al., 2016).

Based on the above conceptualization, Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) is measured using four indicators; concern about missing rewarding experiences, the desire to stay continuously connected with other activities, anxiety when unable to access social updates, and the need to keep up with others' experiences (Przybylski et al., 2013).

2. Visuality

In the context of marketing, visual elements refer to a set of components including images, colors,

the harmonious interplay between these elements, and design structure, that are designed to capture consumers' attention, shape their perception of a brand's image, and evoke an emotional response to the message being conveyed (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008). Content with engaging visual elements can accelerate the understanding of information, enhance the clarity of the message, and more easily create a memorable and immediate impression, thereby enabling marketing communication to be conducted efficiently (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). In addition, the use of engaging visual elements makes it easier for the audience to understand the context of a piece of content, as eye-catching visuals generally elicit a stronger response from the audience than text alone, thereby potentially increasing its appeal (Wedel & Pieters, 2008). Visual appeal is measured using three indicators: the visual appeal of marketing content, the ability of visual elements to capture the audience's attention, and the aesthetic appeal of the images, colors, and designs used to convey the message (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008).

3. Emotional Response

This is a reaction that commonly arises in consumers as a result of exposure to marketing content, which can serve as one of the primary triggers, also this response plays a crucial role in influencing cognitive evaluation and behavioral intentions in the context of consumption (Bagozzi et al., 1999) This response can manifest through emotions driven by social factors such as fear of being left behind, exclusion, and loneliness, which can arise when individuals feel they can't make it to keep up a certain lifestyle or have lost social interaction, which this phenomenon is often amplified by social media content featuring striking visuals, which further intensifies these emotions (Jaworska, 2025). The hierarchical structure of consumer emotions and behavior can significantly influence the decision-making process, including impulsive actions in impulsive buying behavior (Laros & Steenkamp, 2005) Based on the above conceptualization, emotional response is measured using three indicators; feelings of excitement when exposed to marketing content, feelings of enjoyment triggered by marketing stimuli, and emotional stimulation that encourages consumers to

respond to the marketing message (Laros & Steenkamp, 2005).

4. Impulsive Buying

Impulse buying refers to immediate, unplanned purchases made without any prior intention to buy a specific product or fulfill a particular need, occurring when shoppers experience a sudden buying desire with minimal reflection, and excluding purchases of previously intended or out-of-stock items that are merely remembered upon encountering the product (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998). Impulsive buying and compulsive buying after a natural disaster refer to coping behaviors in which individuals make unplanned or excessive purchases driven by depression caused by stress, loss of control, and loss of possessions, manage emotional distress and restore a sense of normalcy (Sneath et al., 2009). In today's marketing context, which is characterized by growing levels of aspiration, willingness to spend on the part of consumers, influence of westernization and the availability of products, marketers and retailers have several opportunities to make use of impulse buying (Ramesh Kumar, 2007). Based on the above conceptualization, impulsive buying is measured using three indicators; Frequent spontaneous purchases, the occasional inability to resist buying urges, and post-purchase guilt [12].

5. Hypothesis Development

Accounts of FoMO suggest that it is characterized by ambivalent feelings regarding social media (Przybylski et al., 2013). To more clearly establish the construct validity of FoMO, we examined linkages among rejection sensitivity, need to belong, positive and negative emotions, celebrity worship, and FoMO (Browne et al., 2018). Indeed, the literature indicates that FoMO is linked to negative emotional states, rather than a mere absence of enjoyment from missing out on experiences perceived as rewarding (Milyavskaya et al., 2018). Generally, the feeling of FOMO leads to an emotional response that influences purchase decisions (Good & Hyman, 2020).

Hypothesis 1 (H1) FoMO marketing has a positive effect on emotional response.

These research shows that visually appealing presentations can elicit strong emotional

responses, such as pleasure and arousal, which are key drivers of impulsive buying behavior (Zhao et al., 2022). We hypothesized that if bodily responses contribute to generating emotions, this process would require detecting emotion regardless of the visual stimulus's valence, occurring at the early stages of affective visual processing before conscious awareness of the affect (D'Hondt et al., 2010). The emotional response humans have to visual information may be heavily influenced by aesthetics or the visually pleasant features of a design (Ho, 2023).

Hypothesis 2 (H2) Visuality has a positive effect on emotional response.

From a marketing perspective, FoMO is particularly relevant because it is closely linked to IBB and other psychological factors that shape the relationship between consumers and the products they encounter (Holte & Ferraro, 2020). As a result, impulse buying may be common among those who experience high levels of FOMO (Ngoc Nguyen & Nguyen, 2025). "Fear of Missing Out" (FOMO) can trigger impulsive purchasing behavior because, as an emotional response to uncertainty and anxiety about missing out, it creates emotional urges that drive individuals to act impulsively Click or tap here to enter text.[22].

Hypothesis 3 (H3) FoMO marketing has a positive effect on impulsive buying.

Studies indicate that visuals are critical in triggering impulsive purchases across various contexts (Kathuria & Bakshi, 2024). Prior works indicated that perceived visual appeal has an in direct influence on impulse purchase, that is mediated by the factors, such as user satisfaction and website quality (Lin & Chuan, 2013). Product visual appeal creates a feeling of excitement and satisfaction when making impulse purchases [25].

Hypothesis 4 (H4) Visuality has a positive effect on impulsive buying.

Positive emotional response directly influences impulsive buying and significantly mediates the effects of sales promotion and hedonic shopping motivation on impulse buying (Kholis et al., 2023b). Hypothesis testing shows that emotional response has a positive effect on impulse buying, which means the better the emotional response, the greater the impulse buying (Wibisono et al., 2021). Besides shopping environment and

individual difference in impulse buying tendency, emotional response has also been identified as a variable that strongly influences impulse purchase (Lin & Chuan, 2013).

Hypothesis 5 (H5) Emotional response has a positive effect on impulsive buying.

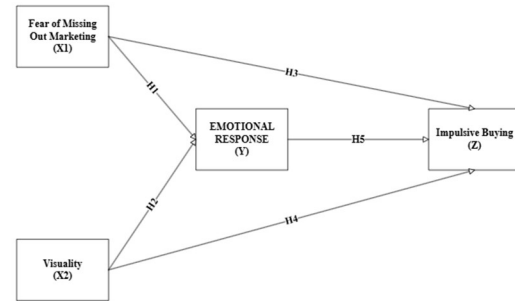


Figure 1. Hypothesis Model

C. Methods

This study uses a survey method to gather data from students in Bandung. Bandung was chosen as the research location because it is considered one of the most important educational centers in Indonesia with a large student population and significant use of digital technology, especially in social media and e-commerce. This digital environment is closely related to consumer behavior such as impulsive shopping habits among young people. Therefore the participants in this study are 100 students living in Bandung, West Java, who are active in online shopping and involved in other digital activities.

This study looked at four components: FoMO marketing, visuals, emotional responses, and impulsive buying. Each component was measured using a numeric survey with a Likert scale, where 1 means "strongly disagree" and 5 means "strongly agree." The measurement tools for each component were created after reviewing relevant scientific literature. Digital experience and learning focus were measured with seven indicators each, while digital self-efficacy and entrepreneurial aspirations were evaluated with five indicators each.

D. Result and Discussion

This study shows that most of the people who participated are women (66%) and the rest are men (34%). Looking at it by age, most participants are students: 53% are 18-20 years

old, 39% are 21–22 years old, and 8% are 23–25 years old. Furthermore in terms of social media platforms, Instagram is used the most (39%), followed by TikTok (30%), YouTube (20%), and the least is X/Twitter (11%). This demographic data depicts that the main users of digital platforms are busy female students with decent incomes who are active on social media, showing that there are many people to interact with digitally and they are the main target for companies.

The next step in this study is to examine the model shown in Figure 1. Using the PLS method the analysis of the collected data revealed that each variable studied has a positive and significant direct relationship with Impulsive Buying, as shown in Figure 2. The study instruments were thoroughly evaluated for construct accuracy and internal consistency to support this relationship. All calculated measurements, including Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A, composite reliability rho C, and AVE scores as listed in (Table 1), have met the relevant academic standards. Furthermore detailed statistical analysis using the bootstrapping method (Table 2) confirmed that each specific indicator has adequate outer loadings, supported by p-values far below the 0.050 significance threshold. Finally a structured understanding of the background of all these measurements is in line with the final structural conclusions from the hypothesis testing (Table 3).

Table 1. Validity and Reliability Evaluation Results

Variables	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Emotional Response	0.812	0.817	0.888	0.726
FOMO	0.852	0.856	0.9	0.693
Impulsive Buying	0.758	0.77	0.862	0.678
Visuality	0.827	0.831	0.897	0.743

Table 2. Bootstrapping For Loading Results

Instruments	Standard Deviation	T Statistic	P Values
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ER1 β Emotional Response (Y)	0.046	18.233	0.000
ER2 β Emotional Response (Y)	0.034	26.002	0.000
ER3 β Emotional Response (Y)	0.036	23.816	0.000
FOMO1 β Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) Marketing (X1)	0.038	21.978	0.000
FOMO2 β Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) Marketing (X1)	0.027	31.782	0.000
FOMO3 β Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) Marketing (X1)	0.040	20.863	0.000
FOMO4 β Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) Marketing (X1)	0.045	17.734	0.000
IB1 β Impulsive Buying (Z)	0.028	30.221	0.000
IB2 β Impulsive Buying (Z)	0.024	36.338	0.000
IB3 β Impulsive Buying (Z)	0.077	9.234	0.000
V1 β Visuality (X2)	0.034	25.710	0.000
V2 β Visuality (X2)	0.051	16.864	0.000
V3 β Visuality (X2)	0.051	16.631	0.000

Table 3. Bootstrapping for Hypothesis

Hypothesis	T Statistics	P Values	Result
Hypothesis 5 (H5) Emotional response has a positive effect on impulsive buying.	2.098	0.036	Support
Hypothesis 1 (H1) FoMO marketing has a positive effect on emotional response.	7.370	0.000	Support
Hypothesis 3 (H3) FoMO marketing has a positive effect on impulsive buying.	8.647	0.000	Support
Hypothesis 2 (H2) Visuality has a positive effect on emotional response.	4.120	0.000	Support
Hypothesis 4 (H4) Visuality has a positive effect on impulsive buying.	2.973	0.000	Support

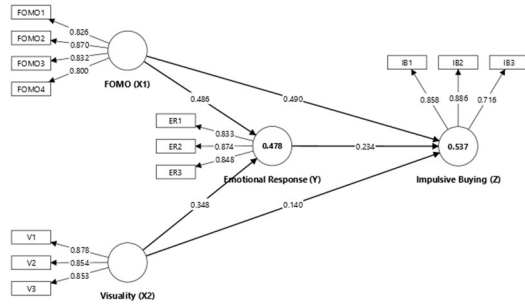


Figure 2. PLS Algorithm for Entrepreneurial Intention.

1. Triggering Affective States: The Critical Impact of FOMO Marketing and Visuality

Statistical evidence shows a significant positive relationship between external digital urges and consumer emotional responses (Y). In the completed structural model Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) marketing (X1) showed a path coefficient of 0.486 towards emotional response (Figure 2), supported by a p-value clearly below 0.050 (Table 3). This supports hypothesis H1 that marketing strategies based on social anxiety or artificially created scarcity do indeed influence the psychological and emotional state of young consumers. This group is highly responsive to marketing tactics that emphasize urgency which triggers immediate emotional reactions and increases their level of awareness. These findings are consistent with recent research on digital behavior that reinforces the framework of online anxiety as a basis for driving user engagement on social media platforms (Rozgonjuk et al., 2020). Besides that, there is a very meaningful connection between Visuality (X2) and Emotional Response (Y). According to the model used, visual aesthetics has a path coefficient of 0.348 in relation to the emotional states (Figure 2), and it satisfies every criterion to be considered significant (Table 3). This information endorses hypothesis H2, which proposes that a pleasing digital design or presentation would put users in a good mood and thus, increase engagement. Therefore, the visual impact in online shopping is crucial in improving customer engagement. This effect is due to the relation of good design to the retention of users. The findings also correlate with the abundance of customer-focused designs that persuasive customer engagements in digitally interactive media are based on well-

structured visual elements and cues (Wedel & Pieters, 2006).

In conclusion, design elements and consumer feelings affect the emotions of all people alike. Interestingly, the marketing practice that invokes the fear of missing out (X1), is more dependent on emotions than visual elements (X2). Online consumers reflecting social network attributes, and who are often the recipients of well-designed and innovative commercial offerings, express the most intense emotional reactions. In the fast-evolving online economy, the management of emotional response is paramount since it positively affects engagement with the online design and concurrently addresses other critical elements of competitive advantage such as purchase behavior and brand loyalty (Negm & Tantawi, 2015).

2. Fueling the Purchase Impulse: The Direct and Mediating Mechanics Behind Spontaneous Buying

The second section addresses both the direct and indirect pathways which bring effects on the outcome variable, Impulse Buying (Z). Based on the route coefficients, it shows that Visuality (X2) has a statistically significant effect on impulse buying (Figure 2, Table 3) and it has a positive direct effect with a coefficient of 0.140. It can be understood that although product displays and designs can first attract customers' attention and stimulate their interest, then, these customers' attention and interest are not sufficient for them to make a purchase spontaneously and without prior shopping planning. It can be said that comfort in the design and displays of products creates a positive environment for customers' browsing, and customers may not feel an urgent need to purchase, unless there are other stimuli and psychological factors that complement the cost-benefit assessment.

To achieve a positive correlation purchase, there needs to be an integration of design and display comfort together with positive psychological factors and emotional stimulation. In this context, FOMO Marketing (X1) serves as the main direct contributor which has a significant coefficient of 0.490 on Spontaneous Purchases (Z) (Figure 2, H3, $p < 0.050$). Establishing a fear of missing out utilizes a direct psychological route compelling customers to preserve their social status and take

advantage of digitally ephemeral innovations by making immediate purchases [30]. Additionally, Emotional Response (Y) demonstrates a high degree of psychological linkage, exerting a directly strong influence on Spontaneous Purchases (Z) with a coefficient of 0.234 (Figure 2). Since Emotional Response (Y) is integrated with state of excitement, such state of excitement could be converted from emotional (but not rational) excitement to transactional state very quickly (Laros & Steenkamp, 2005b). Finally, Emotional Response (Y) is found to be critical in transforming stimuli from the environment to effect unexpected actions. The model's descriptive power articulately explains the phenomena in question, in which the explained overall variance (R²) for Impulsive Buying (Z) is 0.537 (Figure 2). The model shows that visual stimuli and other elements in the environment that create and/or amplify consumer FOMO, can be powerful enough to provoke the consumer's latent emotional state that in turn drives the individual to make an impulsive purchase. This explains the emphasis online channels should have in their design on empathy as opposed to aesthetics, while the latter is necessary, especially in the current digital marketplace, to provoke customer engagement, the former is far more important.

E. Conclusion and Recommendation

Promotional offers and shopping sprees go together hand in-hand. Integrating visual elements and psychological factors into a mediation model is a phenomenal and thoughtful approach to this study. Other studies may discuss the link between digital marketing and consumer behavior, but this one does a remarkable job of describing the link using a mediation model. This study is a great reference for Indonesian online marketers. It presents a fresh idea: to attract the interest of potential consumers through urgent call-to action digital messages, online marketers should integrate emotional visual elements.

Some important limitations to this study are the sample size and geographic area. This study surveyed university students from one specific area of Indonesia, West Java. As a result, the findings may not be generalizable to the broader consumer population. Future studies should

sample a wider population that is not limited to students and to this geographic area. There are many potential variables that are missing from this study that could be included in a future study, such as consumers' financial situations, shopping habits, and the e-commerce websites themselves. The findings of this study are valuable to practitioners in digital marketing and e-commerce and may be especially useful for user interface design and emotionally driven campaigns created to increase consumer conversions.

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