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Fomo As A Marketing Strategy: Why Is It Hard For Gen Z To Resist Trends?

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze how Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is utilized as a marketing strategy to influence Generation Z's consumption behavior and to identify the factors that make it difficult for this group to resist emerging trends in digital media. Previous studies have shown that FOMO influences purchasing decisions and consumer engagement on social media; however, there is a limited body of research that specifically links this phenomenon to the characteristics of Generation Z as a group that has grown up with digital technology. This study employs a literature review method by examining various scientific articles, research reports, and relevant academic sources regarding FOMO, consumer behavior, digital marketing, and the characteristics of Generation Z. The results of this study indicate that FOMO-based marketing strategies effectively increase purchase intent by creating perceptions of scarcity, time urgency, and social validation, as well as by amplifying the influence of trends disseminated through social media and influencers. Generation Z tends to be more susceptible to such strategies due to their high intensity of digital media use and the need to stay connected with their social environment. The contribution of this study lies in presenting an analysis that integrates the psychological aspects of FOMO with contemporary digital marketing strategies within the context of Generation Z's consumption behavior, thereby enriching consumer behavior-based marketing research in the digital era.

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INTRODUCTION

Advances in digital technology have transformed the way companies market their products and services to consumers. The emergence of social media as an interactive communication tool allows information about a product to spread rapidly and reach various segments of society, particularly Generation Z. This generation is known as a group that was born and raised amid the development of the internet, resulting in a high level of engagement with the digital world. This situation has prompted businesses to develop various marketing strategies capable of effectively capturing consumers' attention. One strategy widely used today is Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), a psychological condition where a person feels anxious about missing out on information, experiences, or trends emerging within their social environment. Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) arises from Generation Z's need to stay socially connected, compare themselves to others, and follow trends circulating on social media. This condition drives consumptive behavior and impulsive buying as a form of social validation in the digital environment (Khairunnisa et al., 2026)

The FOMO phenomenon is increasingly being leveraged in digital marketing through various approaches, such as limited-time promotions, exclusive product launches, flash sales, and the use of influencers to create the perception that a product is trending. These strategies aim to encourage consumers to make purchasing decisions immediately without much deliberation. For Generation Z, who are active on social media, exposure to trends and recommendations from their digital environment can influence their consumption behavior. As a result, purchasing decisions are not always based on need, but also on the desire to remain relevant within the social groups they belong to. Previous studies have explored the link between FOMO and consumer behavior. Research findings indicate that high levels of FOMO among Generation Z significantly contribute to a tendency toward impulsive purchasing. The greater the fear of missing out on trends, the stronger the urge to buy products without prior planning (Bartok, 2025) Other research also explains that social media plays a crucial role in reinforcing the emergence of FOMO through the dissemination of content showcasing specific lifestyles, trends, and experiences. Nevertheless, most studies still focus on the influence of FOMO on purchasing decisions in general and

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have not extensively examined how marketing strategies intentionally leverage this phenomenon within the context of Generation Z's characteristics.

Based on this literature review, there is a research gap that requires further investigation. Previous studies have tended to view FOMO as an individual psychological factor, whereas discussions regarding FOMO as a marketing strategy designed to influence Generation Z's consumption behavior remain relatively limited. Furthermore, the increasingly dynamic development of social media has created new patterns of interaction between consumers, influencers, and businesses that have not been fully explained in prior research. Therefore, research is needed to elucidate the relationship between FOMO-based marketing strategies and the characteristics of Generation Z as the dominant consumer group in the digital era.

This study aims to analyze how FOMO is used as a marketing strategy and to explain why Generation Z tends to find it difficult to resist trends emerging on digital media. This study also seeks to identify the factors that enhance the effectiveness of such strategies in influencing consumption behavior. The contribution of this study lies in the integration of consumer psychology and digital marketing perspectives to explain the FOMO phenomenon more comprehensively. Thus, this study is expected to enrich the study of Generation Z consumer behavior and provide a deeper understanding of marketing strategies evolving in the digital era.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the past decade, the concept of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) has become a widely discussed topic in the fields of psychology, communication, and digital marketing. FOMO refers to the feeling of worry or anxiety that arises when someone feels they are missing out on information, experiences, or activities that others are currently enjoying. The rise of social media has amplified this phenomenon, as individuals can continuously monitor others' activities and achievements in real-time—especially those with a strong need to stay connected to their social circles. Various studies indicate that high levels of social media usage are linked to increased FOMO, particularly among younger demographics. In a marketing context, this creates opportunities for companies to develop strategies that can drive rapid consumer responses.

Research on FOMO in digital marketing shows that strategies based on scarcity and time-sensitive urgency are effective in boosting consumer purchasing interest. Various studies have found that consumers are more likely to make a

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purchase when a product is promoted as exclusive or available in limited quantities. Additionally, the use of influencers and viral content on social media has also been shown to create the perception that a product is popular and in high demand. However, some studies still focus on the impact of these strategies on sales growth without providing a deep explanation of the psychological mechanisms that make consumers susceptible to the influence of FOMO.

Another study specifically examines the characteristics of Generation Z as the group most closely associated with digital technology. Generation Z is known for its high level of engagement with social media, easy access to information, and active interest in emerging trends in the digital space. A number of studies indicate that Generation Z's consumption decisions are influenced not only by a product's functional needs but also by social factors such as recognition, self-identity, and the desire to be part of a specific community. Nevertheless, there is an ongoing academic debate regarding whether Generation Z's consumer behavior is more influenced by generational characteristics or by increasingly sophisticated digital marketing strategies that leverage consumer psychology.

Based on these various studies, it can be concluded that research on the relationship between FOMO, digital marketing, and Generation Z still has room for development. Most previous studies have addressed these three aspects separately; consequently, there are few studies that integrate FOMO as a marketing strategy with the characteristics of Generation Z as the primary target of the digital market. Therefore, the objective of this study is to fill this gap by analyzing how companies utilize FOMO as a marketing strategy and identifying the factors that make Generation Z prone to succumbing to trends emerging on social media. This approach is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior in the digital age while enriching the literature on consumer behavior-based marketing.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach in the form of a literature review. This approach was chosen because the study focuses on analyzing the concept of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) as a marketing strategy and its influence on Generation Z's consumption behavior based on various relevant scientific sources. Through a qualitative approach, the researcher can gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study by reviewing and interpreting various findings from previous research.

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The type of data used in this study is secondary data derived from various scientific publications. Research data sources include national and international journal articles, conference proceedings, scientific books, research reports, and other academic sources published within the last ten years and related to FOMO, digital marketing, consumer behavior, and Generation Z. Since this is a literature review, there are no direct informants or respondents. Therefore, the data source selection technique was conducted through purposive sampling, namely selecting literature that is highly relevant to the research topic and meets the criteria of academic credibility.

The research instruments used were the researcher themselves, aided by data recording sheets, a literature review matrix, and digital tools for managing references. Data collection was conducted through documentation techniques by searching for, identifying, collecting, and reviewing various relevant literature sources. Furthermore, this study employs a theoretical framework that integrates the concept of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), consumer behavior theory, and digital marketing theory to explain the relationship between FOMO-based marketing strategies and Generation Z's tendency to follow trends.

Data analysis was conducted using content analysis, which involves grouping, comparing, interpreting, and synthesizing various findings from the collected literature. The analysis was carried out in stages, ranging from data reduction and data presentation to drawing conclusions. To ensure data credibility, the study applied source triangulation by comparing information from various scientific references and selecting sources from reputable academic publications. Additionally, the researcher evaluated the consistency of findings across the literature to ensure the research results possess a higher level of reliability and validity.

RESULT

The results of the literature review indicate that Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) has become a significant factor influencing consumer behavior in the digital age. The rise of social media enables individuals to quickly access information about various trends, products, and popular activities. This situation fuels a desire to stay abreast of developments to avoid feeling left behind by their social circles. This study reveals that the FOMO phenomenon in online shopping creates opportunities for digital SMEs to boost consumer purchasing interest by leveraging social media trends and digital interactions, although it also presents various business challenges (Bais et al, 2026)

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Based on the various sources analyzed, Generation Z is a consumer group that is highly responsive to trends developing on social media. High exposure to product recommendations and viral content makes them more interested in trying products that are currently popular rather than considering their needs rationally (Bartok, n.d.) Various digital platforms serve as the primary means for Generation Z to seek references, obtain entertainment, and interact with their social environment.

The results of the study indicate that flash sale strategies and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) influence doom spending behavior among college students, with FOMO being the most dominant factor. Additionally, impulsivity strengthens the relationship between digital promotions and the tendency toward unplanned spending (Sahabuddin & Syafitri, 2025) These strategies are designed because Generation Z's tendency to experience FOMO makes it difficult for them to ignore popular trends. This condition is leveraged in digital marketing as consumers are driven to follow viral trends to avoid being seen as left behind (Ika & Riduwan, 2024)

Other findings indicate that the use of influencers plays a crucial role in enhancing the effectiveness of FOMO-based marketing strategies. Influencers can shape perceptions regarding a product's popularity through the content they post. When a product is used or recommended by a figure with a large following, consumers tend to view that product as part of a trend worth following.

In addition to influencers, social media algorithms also contribute to increasing exposure to FOMO-based marketing content. TikTok reinforces the FOMO phenomenon by featuring content that goes viral quickly and creating pressure for Generation Z to follow trends. The influence of influencers and digital marketing strategies then drive the emergence of impulsive consumer behavior (Oktaviya, 2025) The recommendation system on the TikTok Shop platform has been shown to increase Generation Z's consumer behavior through limited-time promotions, exclusive discounts, and viral trends that create a sense of urgency to make a purchase immediately (Istiqomah & Rizal, 2026) Digital platforms continuously display content aligned with users' interests. As a result, individuals are more frequently exposed to information about specific products or trends, which fosters curiosity and a desire to participate.

Research found that content marketing and electronic word of mouth (E-WoM) positively contribute to Generation Z's decision to purchase Skin1004 products. This influence is further reinforced by FOMO, which acts as a mediating variable in driving purchase decisions (Fitrianingsih, Syamsul Bachri, Muzakir, 1830)

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The study's findings indicate that the perception of scarcity is one of the key factors influencing Generation Z's purchasing decisions. Products promoted as exclusive or limited-edition tend to be perceived as more valuable than those widely available. This perception drives consumers to make purchases more quickly without thoroughly considering their actual needs.

The study also found that social validation has a significant influence on Generation Z's consumption behavior. Many individuals feel compelled to buy or use certain products because those products are being used by friends, celebrities, or the communities they follow. The desire to gain social acceptance is one reason why Generation Z finds it difficult to ignore trends emerging in digital media.

Based on the results of a meta-analysis, FOMO has a positive relationship with consumer behavior, particularly in impulsive purchases of products that are currently viral. This influence becomes even stronger when supported by a hedonistic lifestyle, social norms, and digital marketing strategies (Ananta et al., 2025) Consumers often make purchases without careful planning because they fear missing out on opportunities or falling behind on popular trends.

Overall, the research findings indicate that the success of FOMO-based marketing strategies is influenced by a combination of Generation Z characteristics, social media usage, the role of influencers, perceptions of scarcity, and the need for social validation. These factors interact with one another to shape consumption decisions in the digital age, making FOMO an effective marketing strategy for capturing attention and driving consumer action.

According to the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2024, the share of middle-class spending on food and beverages decreased from 45.53% to 41.67% over a ten-year period. Spending on housing also fell from 32% to 28.5%. Conversely, categories such as entertainment, taxes or fees, vehicles, durable goods, clothing, other goods or services, and party supplies increased; spending on parties rose by 0.75 percentage points to 3.18%, and entertainment increased slightly by 0.38 points to 0.22%.

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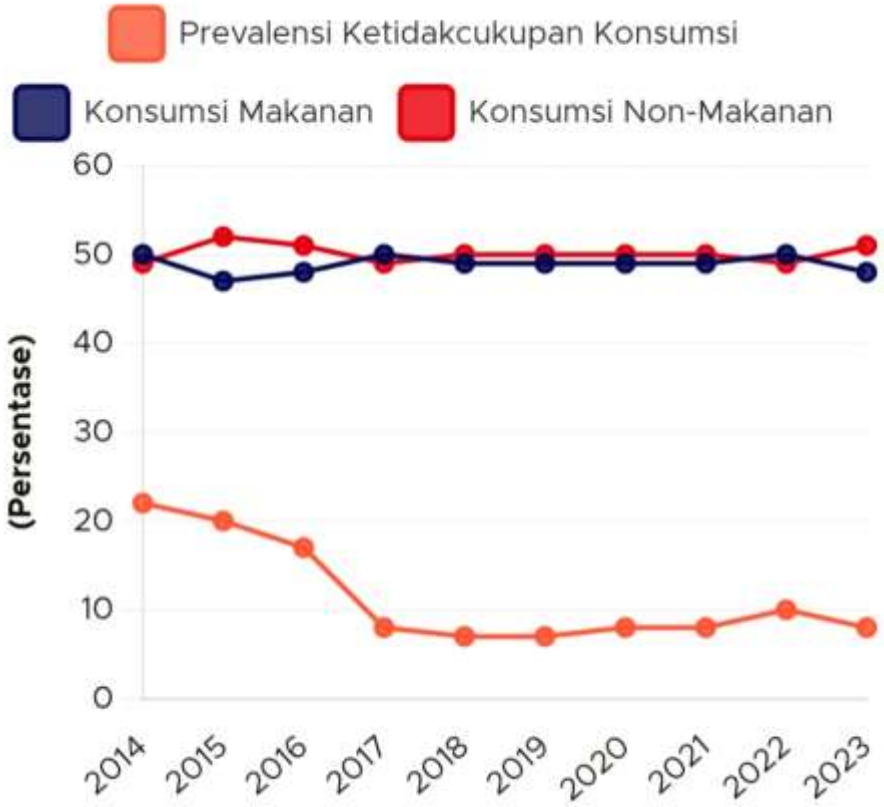


Figure 1, graph of the proportion of Indonesian people's per capita expenditure on food and non-food 2014-2023 (Statistics Indonesia)

The graph shows that from 2014 to 2023, the proportion of Indonesians' per capita spending on food and non-food items remained relatively balanced at around 48–52%, while the prevalence of inadequate food consumption dropped significantly from approximately 22% in 2014 to about 8% in 2023. This phenomenon can be linked to the article "FOMO as a Marketing Strategy: Why Is It Hard for Generation Z to Resist Trends?" The graph shows that between 2014 and 2023, the proportion of per capita spending by Indonesians on food and non-food items remained relatively balanced at around 48–52%, while the prevalence of inadequate food consumption dropped significantly from approximately 22% in 2014 to around 8% in 2023. This phenomenon can be linked to the article "FOMO as a Marketing Strategy: Why Is It Hard for Gen Z to Resist Trends?"

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This is because, even though people's food needs are increasingly being met, the share of non-food spending remains high and tends to be stable. This indicates that a portion of consumer spending, particularly among Generation Z, is no longer focused solely on basic needs but also on social and symbolic needs such as following fashion trends, gadgets, entertainment, and lifestyles influenced by FOMO (Fear of Missing Out)-based marketing strategies. By capitalizing on the fear of missing out on trends, marketers drive non-essential consumption, ensuring that non-food expenditures remain substantial even as food security conditions improve. These findings reveal a shift in consumption behavior from merely meeting needs toward seeking social recognition and identity through trend-driven consumption.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research findings indicate that Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) plays a significant role in shaping Generation Z's consumption behavior in the digital age. These findings align with various previous studies that explain FOMO as a psychological response that arises when individuals worry about missing out on experiences, information, or trends that others are currently enjoying. From a consumer behavior theory perspective, this condition can influence the decision-making process because consumers consider not only practical needs but also emotional and social factors. Therefore, marketing strategies that leverage FOMO can encourage consumers to act more impulsively compared to purchases made through rational decision-making.

This study also found that social media serves as the primary medium reinforcing FOMO's influence on Generation Z. These findings support digital marketing theory, which posits that social media functions not only as a promotional tool but also as a space for shaping perceptions and trends. The presence of influencers, viral content, and digital platform algorithms allows information about a product to spread widely in a short time. Consequently, Generation Z, which is highly connected to digital media, becomes more susceptible to marketing messages that emphasize exclusivity, popularity, and the urgency of purchasing.

Furthermore, the research findings indicate that the need for social validation is one of the factors that enhances the effectiveness of FOMO-based marketing strategies. This finding aligns with social identity theory, which explains that individuals tend to align their behavior with groups they consider important to themselves. In the context of Generation Z, the decision to follow trends is often influenced by the desire to gain recognition and maintain a sense of connection with their social environment.

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Thus, the success of FOMO-based marketing strategies depends not only on product characteristics but also on a company's ability to build social perceptions relevant to its target consumers.

The main contribution of this study lies in its effort to integrate the concepts of FOMO, digital marketing, and Generation Z characteristics into a single comprehensive analytical framework. Unlike previous studies, which generally discuss FOMO as a psychological factor or a marketing strategy in isolation, this study demonstrates that the two are interrelated and reinforced by an increasingly dynamic digital environment. These findings offer a new perspective that the effectiveness of modern marketing is determined not only by product quality or promotional intensity but also by a company's ability to leverage consumer psychological factors. Thus, this study contributes to the development of literature on consumer behavior and digital marketing strategies in the era of technological transformation.

CONCLUSION

The development of digital technology and social media has made Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) one of the most effective marketing strategies for influencing Generation Z's consumption behavior. Research findings indicate that Generation Z is highly susceptible to FOMO-based marketing strategies due to their heavy use of social media, the need to stay connected with their social circles, and the desire to keep up with emerging trends. Various strategies such as limited-time promotions, exclusive products, viral content, and the use of influencers have proven capable of creating a perception of urgency and scarcity that drives faster purchasing decisions.

The development of digital technology and social media has made Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) one of the most effective marketing strategies for influencing Generation Z's consumption behavior. Research findings indicate that Generation Z is highly susceptible to FOMO-based marketing strategies due to their heavy use of social media, the need to stay connected with their social circles, and the desire to keep up with emerging trends. Various strategies such as limited-time promotions, exclusive products, viral content, and the use of influencers have proven capable of creating a perception of urgency and scarcity that drives faster purchasing decisions.

This study also found that the effectiveness of FOMO-based marketing strategies is influenced not only by the characteristics of the marketed product but also by the psychological and social factors possessed by consumers. The contribution of this research lies in the integration of the concepts of FOMO, digital marketing, and

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Generation Z characteristics into a comprehensive analytical framework. These findings enrich the study of consumer behavior in the digital age and provide an understanding that the success of modern marketing increasingly depends on a company's ability to understand and leverage the psychological dynamics of consumers. Therefore, future research can build upon this study through an empirical approach to measure the influence of FOMO on Generation Z's purchasing behavior in greater depth.

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