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The Influence of Scarcity Appeal and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) on Impulse Buying among Generation Z Shopee Users in Surabaya

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Abstract

The rapid development of information technology and the dominance of e-commerce platforms like Shopee have triggered a significant phenomenon of impulse buying among Generation Z in Surabaya, driven by digital marketing strategies and users' psychological dynamics. This quantitative study aims to analyze the influence of scarcity appeal and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) on impulse buying behavior involving 120 respondents through SmartPLS analysis. The results indicate that both scarcity appeal and FOMO contribute positively and significantly to increasing impulsive buying behavior. The combined contribution of these two variables simultaneously has a very strong influence on explaining the variation in consumers' spontaneous purchasing actions. The main findings confirm that FOMO is a far more dominant predictor than scarcity appeal, indicating that psychological anxiety over missing out on social trends is the primary driver of unplanned shopping actions among Generation Z in the current digital commerce ecosystem.

Keywords: Scarcity Appeal, Fear Of Missing Out, Impulse Buying, Generasi Z, Shopee.

INTRODUCTION

The exponential advancement of digital technology and the internet in the modern era has fundamentally transformed human civilization, particularly within economic systems and consumer behavior. Digitalization has established a novel interaction paradigm between producers and consumers, dismantling traditional spatial and temporal constraints. This shift has catalyzed the growth of e-commerce business models, enabling

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society to execute online purchasing transactions seamlessly via mobile devices. According to the 2024 We Are Social Indonesia report, internet users in Indonesia have surpassed 213 million, representing approximately 77% of the total population (Kemp, 2024). This escalating internet penetration aligns with the widespread adoption of electronic commerce platforms, indicating a massive transition toward a digital lifestyle among Indonesian society.

Generation Z (Gen Z), individuals born between 1997 and 2012, serves as the primary driver within this digital ecosystem. As digital natives, their upbringing synchronized with the evolution of social media and mobile technology. Research by Fahriansah et al., (2023) highlights that Gen Z exhibits an exceptionally high adoption rate of e-commerce as their primary shopping channel, motivated by convenience, speed, and accessibility. Their active engagement creates distinctive consumption patterns that are no longer merely governed by functional necessities, but are heavily driven by psychological factors and technology-mediated social pressures.

Amid the highly competitive marketplace landscape, Shopee has emerged as the dominant force in the Indonesian market. Based on data from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) in 2025, Shopee secured the top position with a user access rate of 53.22%, significantly outperforming rivals such as TikTok Shop (27.37%) and Tokopedia (9.57%) (Lestari, 2025). This market leadership is further corroborated by its Gross Merchandise Volume (GMV) performance. Data from the E-commerce Database (Curry, 2025) indicates steady GMV growth for Shopee, rising from US$ 21.5 billion in 2023 to US$ 26 billion in 2024, with projections reaching US$ 27.8 billion by 2025 (Momentum Works, 2025; Sellercraft, 2025).

Shopee's capability to sustain user loyalty amid the strategic shifts of competitors such as Tokopedia's GMV contraction following its business restructuring (CNBC Indonesia, 2024) or TikTok Shop's regulatory challenges underscores the efficacy of its marketing strategies. Shopee aggressively deploys shoppertainment features, gamification mechanisms via Shopee Coins, and deferred payment schemes like Shopee PayLater, which collectively amplify consumer purchasing power and heighten buying impulsivity (Katadata, 2024).

A core promotional strategy underpinning Shopee's high transaction volumes is the application of scarcity appeals. Psychologically, individuals inherently attribute higher value to items with limited availability. Nuraini (2025) notes that scarcity messages, particularly limited-time offers and restricted stock warnings, effectively heighten a

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consumer's sense of urgency. Shopee structurally implements this concept through flash sales, countdown timers, and "low stock" alerts.

The emotional response triggered by perceived scarcity often bypasses rational cognitive evaluation. Such time-induced pressure compels consumers to make instantaneous decisions to avoid missing promotional pricing. This phenomenon aligns with findings by Jiang and Turner (2022), which demonstrate that scarcity elements trigger impulse buying due to an underlying fear of loss. Within this framework, Shopee functions not merely as a retail platform, but as an environment designed to actively manipulate consumer psychology toward spontaneous purchasing behavior.

Beyond internal scarcity stimuli, external social influences exert substantial pressure through the phenomenon known as the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). FOMO is conceptualized as an individual's anxiety or apprehension regarding being left behind from engaging experiences or trends enjoyed by peers. Shopee capitalizes on this vulnerability by integrating real-time social features, such as Shopee Live, influencer testimonials, and live purchase notifications.

For Gen Z, who are highly sensitive to digital social stimuli, FOMO acts as a major catalyst for consumerist tendencies. The desire to maintain social parity within their peer groups or the urge to acquire viral products drives their impulsive purchasing tendencies. Studies by Juliandhani and Tjahjawati (2024) and Riadi and Septiani (2025) confirm a robust correlation between FOMO and impulse buying, indicating that consumers often utilize shopping as a mechanism to mitigate social anxiety and remain integrated within current cultural trends.

Despite extensive scholarly attention on scarcity appeals and FOMO, an empirical research gap persists due to inconsistent findings. While studies by Abbas et al., (2025) and Nuraini (2025) demonstrate a positive and significant impact of both variables, Rahmandani and Rahmidani (2025) observed that scarcity messaging and FOMO failed to significantly influence impulse buying among consumers in Padang. This discrepancy suggests that regional demographic variations and localized consumer cultures heavily dictate the success of digital marketing mechanisms.

Surabaya was chosen as the empirical locus of this study because it represents the second-largest metropolitan area in Indonesia and holds the highest minimum wage (UMK) in East Java. The consumer profile in Surabaya reflects a mature urban society that is technologically adept yet highly critical regarding value-for-money considerations. Investigating how Shopee’s psychological marketing triggers impulse buying among Gen

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Z in Surabaya is crucial to understanding whether advanced digital penetration can override economic rationality in a major tier-1 non-capital metropolitan area.

OBJECTIVES

Scarcity Appeal

A scarcity appeal is a marketing strategy that emphasizes product limitation to trigger purchase impulses (Shi et al., 2020). Grounded in Commodity Theory, this strategy postulates that the scarcity of an object automatically enhances its perceived value and exclusivity in the eyes of consumers (Wang et al., 2022). Operationally, Jiang and Turner (2022) as well as Hariyana et al., (2024) formulate five key indicators as follows:

1. Limited Quantity
2. Supply-framed Scarcity
3. Limited Time
4. Exclusive Offers
5. Demand-framed Scarcity

The psychological mechanisms of these five indicators function as stimuli that influence emotion and cognition to drive impulse buying (Jiang and Turner, 2022). However, this strategy carries psychological risks, such as anger and brand switching intentions, if consumers fail to obtain the product (Biraglia et al., 2021). Therefore, its management must be executed with precision to balance urgency and consumer satisfaction.

Fear Of Missing Out

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is a pervasive anxiety that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent (Aisafitri & Yusriyah, 2021). This phenomenon is understood as an individual difference rooted in the psychological need for relatedness (Barry and Wong, 2020). In the digital ecosystem, FOMO is exacerbated by real-time information that drives compulsive internet use to ensure that no social interactions or information are missed (Alutaybi et al., 2020; Roberts & David, 2020).Based on the instrument developed by Przybylski et al., (2013), the FOMO variable in this study is measured through the following indicators:

1. Anxiety Over Missing Valuable Experiences
2. Concern About Being Excluded from Social Activities
3. The Drive to Constantly Stay Connected with Others
4. The Need for Continuous Information Updates

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5. Discomfort When Disconnected
6. A Sense of Regret for Missing Opportunities

Overall, these indicators reflect how emotional dependence on digital connectivity influences consumer decision-making through the urge to remain relevant within one's social environment.

Impusle Buying

Impulse buying is defined as a specific episode in which a consumer experiences a sudden, powerful, and persistent urge to make an immediate purchase without prior planning (Iyer et al., 2020). This phenomenon is characterized as a spontaneous and unintentional act executed at high speed, without undergoing adequate reflection or cognitive evaluation (Redine et al., 2023). Theoretically, this behavior is frequently explained through the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework, wherein marketing stimuli trigger high-arousal emotions and hedonic motives, ultimately culminating in an instantaneous purchase decision (Iyer et al., 2020). In the digital era, the transition to online channels and social media has eliminated physical and temporal barriers, thereby facilitating a more massive occurrence of impulsive buying. The ease of 24/7 access, minimal checkout procedures, and unique stimuli—such as limited-time offers and website visual appeal—serve as primary drivers of online impulse buying (Zhao et al., 2022). There are five crucial factors influencing this tendency: shopping enjoyment, money availability, in-store browsing (platform browsing), a felt urge to buy, and the possession of credit payment instruments such as credit cards or *paylater* services. Based on the concept formulated by Rook (1987), the impulse buying variable in this study is identified through the following indicators:

1. Spontaneity
2. Strong Emotional Urge
3. Lack of Self-Control
4. Disregard for Consequences

Collectively, these indicators illustrate how emotional impulses can override a consumer's rational control during a transaction, which is frequently followed by the emergence of post-purchase regret.

The hypotheses in this study are:

H1 : Scarcity appeal has a positive effect on impulse buying among Generation Z on the Shopee marketplace in Surabaya.

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H2 : Fear Of Missing Out has a positive effect on impulse buying among Generation Z on the Shopee marketplace in Surabaya.

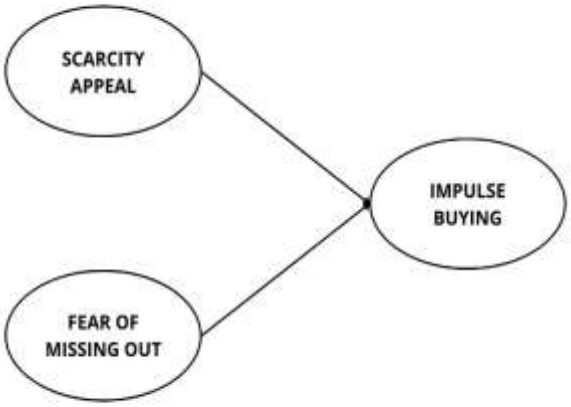


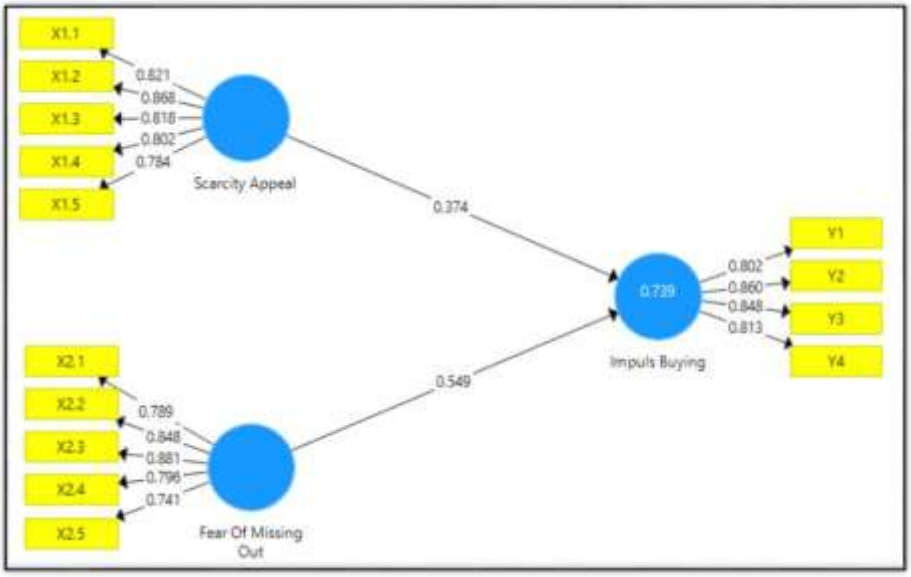
Figure 1. Conceptual

DISCUSSION

RESULT

Convergent Validity

The convergent validity test in this research is conducted to ensure that each indicator consistently reflects its latent variable. Referring to the criteria established by Hair et al., (2022), convergent validity is satisfied when the outer loading value of each



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indicator exceeds zero point Figut wa seven zero. The data in Figure 2 demonstrates that all variables in this study possess outer loading values above zero point seven zero, thereby confirming their validity.

Based on the data processing results in Figure 2, the convergent validity testing demonstrates results that meet methodological standards. The Scarcity Appeal variable (X1) is measured through five indicators with outer loading values above zero point seven zero and is supported by an Average Variance Extracted value of zero point six seven one. The Fear of Missing Out variable (X2) also demonstrates strong consistency, with the highest indicator loading value reaching zero point eight eight one on X2.3 and achieving an Average Variance Extracted value of zero point six six zero. Meanwhile, the Impulse Buying variable (Y) possesses the highest Average Variance Extracted value at zero point six nine one, with all of its indicators (Y1 to Y4) having loading values above zero point eight zero. Because the Average Variance Extracted values for all variables have exceeded the threshold of zero point five zero, it can be concluded that each latent variable in this study has excellent convergent validity in reflecting its indicators.

Tabel 1. AVE

	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Fear Of Missing Out (X2)	0.660
Impulse Buying (Y)	0.691
Scarcity Appeal (X1)	0.671

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity analysis was employed in this study to evaluate the distinctiveness between indicators. A high discriminant validity score indicates that each indicator possesses unique characteristics and is capable of specifically representing the phenomenon being measured. The assessment procedure was conducted by examining the cross-loading values of each indicator against its respective latent variable, as presented in Table 2.

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Tabel 2 *Cross Loading*

	Scarcity Appeal	Fear Of Missing Out	Impuls Buying
X1.1	0,821	0,539	0,550
X1.2	0,868	0,693	0,719
X1.3	0,818	0,604	0,678
X1.4	0,802	0,564	0,629
X1.5	0,784	0,560	0,561
X2.1	0,546	0,789	0,543
X2.2	0,626	0,848	0,682
X2.3	0,559	0,881	0,688
X2.4	0,501	0,796	0,639
X2.5	0,695	0,741	0,741
Y1	0,523	0,604	0,802
Y2	0,704	0,665	0,860
Y3	0,670	0,756	0,848
Y4	0,654	0,690	0,813

Based on the cross-loading analysis presented in Table 2, the discriminant validity test indicates that all research indicators have met the established criteria. This is evidenced by the fact that the correlation values of each indicator are substantially higher for their respective latent variables than for other latent variables in the model. The Scarcity Appeal variable (X1) is consistently reflected by indicators X1.1 through X1.5, with the highest loading value reaching 0.868 on indicator X1.2, confirming the construct's uniqueness in capturing the scarcity aspect. Similarly, the Fear of Missing Out variable (X2) demonstrates dominant correlation values within its own column, peaking at 0.881 for indicator X2.3; thus, this instrument is specifically validated for measuring user social anxiety. Meanwhile, the Impulse Buying variable (Y) exhibits strong correlations across all four indicators (Y1–Y4), ranging from 0.802 to 0.860, which are significantly higher than their correlations with the Scarcity Appeal or Fear of Missing Out columns. In conclusion, the results confirm that each variable possesses high discriminant validity, as every indicator is unique and accurately represents the measured phenomenon without overlapping with other variables.

Realibility Test

In accordance with the methodological standards established by Hair et al. (2022), the reliability assessment in this study focused on achieving Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding 0.70. Attaining these thresholds demonstrates that all indicators within each variable possess satisfactory internal consistency, confirming their reliability for subsequent analysis.

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Tabel 3 Hasil Pemeriksaan Uji *Realibilitas*

	Composite Reliability
Fear Of Missing Out (X2)	0.906
Impulse Buying (Y)	0.899
Scarcity Appeal (X1)	0.911

The reliability assessment in this study was conducted by analyzing the Composite Reliability values for each latent variable to ensure the internal consistency of the indicators employed. Based on the data analysis results presented in the table, the Fear of Missing Out (X2) variable yielded a Composite Reliability value of 0.906, while the Impulse Buying (Y) variable demonstrated a value of 0.899. The highest value was observed in the Scarcity Appeal (X1) variable, reaching 0.911. Referring to the criteria established by Hair et al. (2022), a variable is considered reliable and exhibits excellent internal consistency if its Composite Reliability value exceeds 0.70. Given that all variables in this study significantly surpass this threshold, it can be concluded that the research instruments employed possess a high level of reliability and are highly consistent in measuring their respective latent variables.

R-Square

The subsequent stage of analysis, following the evaluation of the outer model, involves testing the inner model. This structural model analysis is implemented through the examination of R-square and f-square values, as well as the bootstrapping procedure, to assess the relationships between variables in the research model.

Tabel 4 *R-Square*

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Impuls Buying	0,739	0,735

The structural model analysis, or inner model evaluation, begins by examining the coefficient of determination (R^2) to assess the extent to which the independent variables explain the dependent variable. Based on the test results presented in the table, the Impulse Buying variable has an R^2 value of 0.739 and an Adjusted R^2 value of 0.735.

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These figures indicate that the Scarcity Appeal and Fear of Missing Out variables collectively contribute to a 73.9% influence on the impulse buying behavior of Generation Z Shopee users in Surabaya. Meanwhile, the remaining 26.1% is attributed to factors outside the scope of this research model. An R^2 value exceeding 0.67 indicates that the research model falls into the 'substantial' category, suggesting that the variables under investigation possess high predictive accuracy in explaining the phenomenon of impulse buying.

F-Square

The f-square (f^2) analysis is implemented to evaluate the magnitude of the contribution of independent variables to the dependent variable within the SEM model. Based on the criteria established by Hair et al. (2022), the influence of a variable is classified into four levels: values below 0.02 are considered to have no significant effect, a range of 0.02 to 0.14 is categorized as a small effect, values from 0.15 to 0.34 indicate a moderate effect, and values above 0.35 signify a large effect. This measurement serves as a critical instrument for mapping the significance of the role of each independent variable in influencing the dependent variable, with the results summarized in Table 5.

Tabel 5 *F-Square*

	Fear Of Missing Out	Impulse Buying	Scarcity Appeal
Fear Of Missing Out		**0,544**	
Impulse Buying			
Scarcity Appeal		**0,252**	

The f-square (F^2) analysis was employed to evaluate the contribution of independent variables to the dependent variable, following the criteria by Hair et al. (2022). As shown in Table 6, *Fear of Missing Out* (F^2 = 0.544$) exerts a large effect on *Impulse Buying*, while *Scarcity Appeal* (F^2 = 0.252$) demonstrates a moderate effect. These results indicate that both variables contribute significantly to the model; however,

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Fear of Missing Out plays a more dominant role in driving impulse buying behavior among the respondents.

Hipotesis Test

The objective of hypothesis testing in this study is to validate the causal relationship between *Scarcity Appeal*, *Fear of Missing Out*, and *Impulse Buying* based on the established conceptual framework. In accordance with the criteria set by Hair et al. (2022), a relationship between variables is considered significant if the T-statistic exceeds 1.96 and the P-value is below 0.05. Furthermore, the original sample (O) value must indicate a direction of relationship that is consistent with the hypotheses proposed in this research.

Tabel 6 Uji Hipotesis

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Fear Of Missing Out -> Impuls Buying	0,549	0,548	0,071	7,728	**0,000**
Scarcity Appeal -> Impuls Buying	0,374	0,375	0,076	4,912	**0,000**

The hypothesis testing results, obtained through the bootstrapping procedure, indicate that all independent variables exert a positive and significant influence on the dependent variable. The relationship between *Fear of Missing Out* and *Impulse Buying* yielded an original sample (O) value of 0.549, with a T-statistic of 7.728 and a P-value of 0.000. These results confirm a significant influence, as the T-statistic exceeds the 1.96 threshold and the P-value is well below 0.05. Furthermore, *Scarcity Appeal* was also found to have a significant effect on *Impulse Buying*, with an original sample (O) of 0.374, a T-statistic of 4.912, and a P-value of 0.000. In accordance with the criteria established by Hair et al. (2022), these findings confirm that both the fear of missing out and scarcity appeal contribute significantly to triggering impulse buying behavior among the research subjects. Consequently, all hypotheses proposed in this study are statistically supported.

DISCUSSION

THE EFFECT OF SCARCITY APPEAL ON IMPULSE BUYING

The analysis results indicate that *scarcity appeal* has a positive and significant effect on *impulse buying* among Generation Z Shopee users in Surabaya. Scarcity

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strategies, whether in the form of time-limited offers (*flash sales*) or perceived inventory limitations (*limited stock*), are proven to create psychological pressure that triggers spontaneous transactions. Based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model, these tactics function as external stimuli that consumers process as missed-opportunity risks. These findings align with Jiang & Turner (2022), who state that scarcity enhances the subjective value of a product in the eyes of consumers. Furthermore, these results confirm the findings of Nuraini (2025) regarding the effectiveness of scarcity messaging while extending the findings of Rahmandani & Rahmidani (2025) by demonstrating that digital-centric Generation Z consumers in Surabaya are highly responsive to time pressure in online shopping.

The Effect of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) on Impulse Buying

This study finds that the *Fear of Missing Out* (FOMO) has a dominant positive and significant effect on *impulse buying*. Anxiety about missing out on trends or viral content (e.g., "Racun Shopee") serves as a primary internal driver for Generation Z to make spontaneous purchases to maintain social existence. Within the SOR framework, FOMO acts as an internal state (*organism*) triggered by social stimuli on digital platforms. These findings are consistent with the studies of Abbas et al. (2025) and Pradana et al. (2023), which emphasize that impulsive shopping urges are driven more by the emotional need to remain socially "connected" than by the functional requirements of products. Furthermore, these results reinforce the assertion by Tirta & Kurniawan (2024) that for the younger generation, engagement in shopping trends is a form of social participation, where the fear of digital alienation triggers impulsivity more intensely than other external factors.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and discussion, this study concludes that impulse buying behavior among Generation Z Shopee users in Surabaya is significantly influenced by psychological dynamics and digital marketing strategies. The results demonstrate that *scarcity appeal* has a positive and significant impact, confirming that tactics such as time-limited offers and stock limitations effectively create urgency, prompting consumers to make immediate transactions. Furthermore, *Fear of Missing Out* (FOMO) is identified as the most dominant internal factor driving unplanned purchases. The social anxiety to remain relevant with ongoing trends compels respondents to make instant purchases to maintain their social existence and connectivity within the digital space. Overall, this

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research model exhibits strong predictive accuracy, with the combination of *scarcity appeal* and FOMO explaining 73.9% of the variance in impulse buying behavior, while the remaining 26.1% is influenced by external factors beyond the scope of this study. The research instruments demonstrated excellent reliability and internal consistency, confirming the methodological rigor of the findings.

In light of these findings, it is recommended that Shopee management continue to optimize social interaction features and "shoppertainment" to maintain user emotional engagement; however, scarcity strategies should be managed with precision to avoid consumer frustration. For Generation Z consumers, it is advised to enhance self-control and shopping awareness to avoid falling into consumptive patterns driven solely by social anxiety. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to incorporate additional variables, such as *paylater* services or hedonistic lifestyles, to deepen the model's explanatory power and to expand the geographical scope of the research to verify the consistency of these findings across different local cultural contexts.

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