
THE INFLUENCE OF SCARCITY PERCEPTION AND FOMO ON GEN Z IMPULSE BUYING IN CIREBON CITY

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Abstract

Social media use and the quick expansion of e-commerce have altered Generation Z's spending habits, particularly by promoting impulsive purchases. The purpose of this research is to ascertain how Gen Z in Cirebon City impulsively purchases items in response to perceived scarcity and FOMO. The research methodology is survey-based and quantitative. Participants in this research were 231 respondents who are frequent Shopee e-commerce consumers in Cirebon City. The Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) approach was used to analyse the data using the SmartPLS 3 software. The findings demonstrated that impulsive purchase was positively and significantly impacted by both perceived scarcity and FOMO, partly and concurrently. With an R-squared value of 0.382, the two independent variables may account for 38.2% of the variable related to impulsive purchase. These findings support the Stimulus-Organism-Response and psychological reactance theories, which explain that external pressures, such as scarcity and social anxiety, can encourage unplanned buying behavior. This research provides implications for businesses to understand the importance of ethics in scarcity-based marketing strategies and the importance of digital financial literacy education among Gen Z to reduce irrational consumptive behavior.

Keywords: Perceived Scarcity, Fomo, Impulse Buying, Gen Z, E-Commerce

INTRODUCTION

The fast expansion of e-commerce and the advancement of digital technologies have altered consumer behaviour, particularly among Generation Z, defined as those born between 1997 and 2012. Generation Z, being digital natives, is very familiar with social media and e-commerce platforms, which makes it easy for them to access information and make purchases online (Purnama, 2023). This phenomenon also encourages the emergence of impulse buying, which is the act of buying without planning, and is generally triggered by emotional and situational impulses (Chan et al., 2016).

In this context, based on a survey of 231 Gen Z Shopee users in Cirebon City, 41% were found to frequently engage in impulse buying, often triggered by scarcity-driven promotions, and digital marketing strategies. Perceived scarcity - the perception of product scarcity - drives urgency in unplanned decision-making, especially when there are time constraints such as flash sales or limited discounts (Zhang et al., 2022). Studies by (Cengiz et al., 2024) also, suggest that perceived scarcity increases impulse buying intentions, especially in the context of fast fashion.

Moreover, Gen Z's impulsive tendencies are further reinforced by FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). FOMO is a feeling of anxiety for fear of being left behind in viral trends or other people's experiences, which triggers a desire to participate despite having no real need (Przybylski et al., 2013). (Ramadhani et al., 2024) found that FOMO is a dominant factor in triggering consumptive behavior, especially on platforms such as Shopee, which actively uses interactive features such as live shopping and flash sales

New research findings provide additional support for these conclusions. Studies confirm that FOMO and perceived scarcity contribute significantly to the promotion of Gen Z's impulsive purchasing behaviour. A person's propensity to make impulsive purchases to replicate their surroundings increases with their degree of FOMO, according to research by (Ramadhani et al., 2024). (Handayani et al., 2023) results support this, demonstrating that impulsive purchase habits are significantly impacted by the fear of not following a social trend.

Given these trends, the implications of this phenomenon are very important for businesses and digital marketers. The government and industry players have identified Gen Z as a key entity in supporting the growth of e-commerce and marketplaces. To better understand how FOMO, perceived scarcity, and impulsive purchase are related crucial for designing effective and responsible marketing strategies.

The goal of this study is to determine how perceived scarcity and FOMO affect impulsive purchases among Gen Z, especially in Cirebon City, which is experiencing rapid growth in e-commerce platforms. The results should help develop a more conscientious marketing approach, as well as a basis for financial literacy education, so that Generation Z can control their consumptive behavior amid the swift influence of digital and social media. Consequently, this research seeks to investigate how the perception of limited availability and fear of missing out affect impulsive purchasing habits of Generation Z in Cirebon City, a demographic that frequently interacts with online shopping. By integrating the S-O-R (Stimulus-Organism-Response) framework with current digital marketing phenomena, this research contributes theoretically by extending the application of S-O-R theory to online consumer behavior in emerging markets. Furthermore, it offers practical insights for

designing ethical marketing strategies and strengthening digital financial literacy among young consumers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Perceived Scarcity

Perceived scarcity is a psychological condition in which consumers feel that products or purchase opportunities are limited, both in terms of quantity and time. This perception increases the sensation of urgency to buy something immediately before the opportunity is lost. (Cengiz et al., 2024) state that perceived scarcity significantly increases impulse buying tendencies, especially in young consumers who are highly responsive to limited trends and promotions. (Zhang et al., 2022) added that scarcity serves as an outside cause for emotional responses like missed opportunity worry, thus encouraging impulse buying behavior. Research (Prawesti et al., 2025) also found that perceived scarcity not only influences impulsive purchases directly, but it also exacerbates FOMO, or the dread of losing something, which is a crucial process mediator. Research by (Dahmiri et al., 2023) confirms that marketing strategies that emphasize scarcity, such as the use of limited stock or time limits, can significantly increase impulse buying behavior, particularly concerning e-commerce and digital promotions targeting young consumers.

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

FOMO is a fear or anxiety-related emotion of being left behind from social experiences or ongoing trends, which is very dominant among Gen Z. (Ramadhani et al., 2024) state that FOMO is the main psychological factor that drives impulse buying in Gen Z, where people who experience FOMO are more likely to make impulse purchases to maintain their social existence. (Rana Deliana et al., 2024) added that FOMO acts as a significant mediator between external stimuli, such as perceived scarcity, and impulse buying behavior. (Rinonce et al., 2025) found that exposure to social media and flash sale features increased the level of FOMO, which then encouraged impulse buying behavior in Gen Z. (Bambang Mudjiyanto et al., 2025) also revealed that FOMO was the main cause of Gen Z making unplanned purchases in response to social and digital pressures.

Impulsive Buying

The term "impulse buying" refers to a quick, unplanned purchase, usually driven by strong emotional impulses and attractive external stimuli (Chan et al., 2016). In the online context, impulse buying is more common due to the digital environment designed to increase urgency and spontaneous buying desire. One commonly used theoretical framework to explain this behaviour is S-O-R (stimulus-organization-reaction), which was originally introduced by Mehrabian and Russell, and has been widely used in contemporary consumer behavior studies. This theory explains that external stimuli, such as scarcity and FOMO, trigger internal emotional responses (organism), which then result in impulsive actions (response)(Kim et al., 2017). This behavior is often triggered by internal stimuli such as emotions and psychological needs, as well as external stimuli such as promotions and digital features (Novian et al., 2023), explaining that social media and marketplace features such as flash sales and product reviews have greatly contributed to the increase in impulse buying among Gen Z.

Perceived Scarcity on Impulsive Buying

Perceived scarcity is a marketing strategy that aims to create a perception of product or service limitations to increase attractiveness and purchase urgency. Based on the Commodity theory (Brock, 1968), as explained (Zhang et al., 2022) when consumers perceive scarcity, the subjective value of the product increases drastically. The perception of scarcity has been shown in several studies to significantly and favourably influence impulsive purchases. (Nilam Fathia et al., 2023) discovered limited time scarcity and limited quantity shortage significantly raise impulse buying in Gen Z consumers, especially about flash discounts on online shopping sites. (Ghifari, 2023) also confirmed that the perception of scarcity triggers emotional arousal, which encourages impulse buying behavior. This is reinforced by (Sela et al., 2024) which shows that scarcity messages increase product urgency and exclusivity, thus encouraging impulse buying. Other research confirms that scarcity messages are more effective in increasing impulse purchase intentions than regular discounts, because they create higher perceptions of value and urgency (Andriyani, 2024). In addition, (Walid et al., n.d.) identified that perceptions of product scarcity can amplify consumers' psychological distress and lead to unplanned purchase behavior that tends to be irrational, especially in situations involving social pressure or crisis. Overall, this literature indicates that perceived scarcity plays an important role as a key trigger for impulse buying, with mechanisms involving increased emotional distress and perceived urgency in the process of customer decision-making.

H₁ Among Gen Z consumers, perceived scarcity has an impact on impulsive purchasing.

FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) on Impulsive Buying

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is a psychological phenomenon characterized by anxiety about missing out on valuable experiences experienced by others, thus encouraging individuals to stay connected and follow social trends. In the context of consumer behavior, FOMO has been shown to contribute significantly to impulse buying behavior. (Suhardi et al., 2023) found that FOMO has a positive relationship with impulse buying, where individuals who experience FOMO tend to ignore price sensitivity and make purchases without planning. Research by (Maharani et al., 2024) further demonstrates how FOMO has a major impact on impulsive purchasing, especially when combined with product uniqueness factors. Another study by (Defi Kurniawati et al., 2024) confirmed that FOMO influences Generation Z's impulsive purchases in a big way, although financial literacy does not show the same effect. These findings are in line with the findings of research by (Dahmiri et al., 2023) who identified the relationship between scarcity signals and impulsive purchasing in the context of Muslim fashion goods, is mediated by FOMO, with Islamic religiosity as a moderating factor that can reduce this tendency. Overall, this literature confirms that FOMO is an important determinant of impulse buying behavior, especially in a digital environment saturated by scarcity-based promotions and social pressure.

H₂ Gen Z Impulsive Buying is Affected by FOMO (Fear of Missing Out).

The Relationship of Perceived Scarcity and FOMO to Impulsive Buying

The sense of product scarcity in the context of contemporary consumer behaviour may also lead to FOMO, or the fear of missing out on important possibilities, in addition to the desire to purchase right away. According to psychological reactance theory, people believe that shortage situations endanger their freedom of choice, there will be a psychological urge to restore this freedom through immediate action, namely the urge to make decisions immediately (Kim et al., 2017). This is in line with the findings of (Zhang et

al., 2022) which show that visually displayed scarcity can increase the intensity of FOMO, because consumers feel they must buy immediately to avoid loss. (Ngo et al., 2025) also found that scarcity elements in e-commerce promotions increase emotional engagement and encourage digital consumers to immediately participate in purchases. Additionally, a systematic study by (Alfina et al., 2024) showed that marketing messages that emphasize scarcity are effective in triggering FOMO, especially among young consumers. The relationship between perceived scarcity and FOMO also shows an important impact on impulsive purchases. When consumers experience FOMO due to exposure to product scarcity, they are more likely to spend money on impulsive purchases to take advantage of possibilities. (Zhang et al., 2022) state that FOMO becomes an emotional mechanism that bridges the scarcity stimulus with a quick buying decision. (Ngo et al., 2025) assert that emotional distress due to scarcity and FOMO reinforce tendency towards impulsive purchases, particularly while shopping online. The connection between FOMO and perceived scarcity, then directly contributes to increased impulse buying in Gen Z consumers.

H₃ There is a simultaneous effect of Perceived Scarcity and FOMO (fear of missing out) on Gen Z consumers' impulsive purchases.

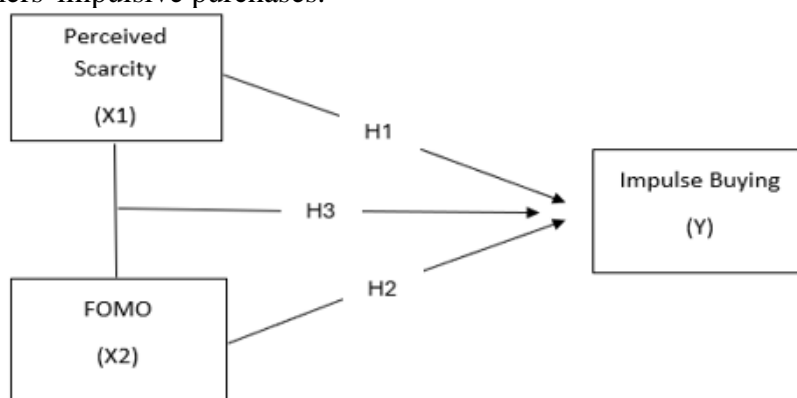


Figure 1.
Theoretical Framework

RESEARCH METHOD

To show the existence of a causal connection involving two or more variables, this research uses quantitative methodology and causal research design. The aim of this study is to explore how Shopee e-commerce serves as a medium that encourages spontaneous purchasing. The subject of the research is Generation Z in Cirebon City who actively uses Shopee. This study employed purposive sampling, a type of non-probability sampling, to specifically target Generation Z individuals who actively shop on Shopee in Cirebon City. This approach was chosen to ensure that the sample comprised respondents with relevant e-commerce shopping experience. For this investigation, information was gathered using the distribution of online surveys via Google Forms. Internet-based surveys allow researchers to target populations whose identity and privacy of respondents remain protected (Gunawan, 2021). There were 231 valid responders in all gathered for this research.

The Likert scale is a common technique used to measure individual or group attitudes toward social phenomena. In this study, a 5-point Likert scale was employed, where 1 indicates strong disagreement and 5 indicates strong agreement.

Data analysis in this study was conducted using the SmartPLS software, which implements Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The primary purpose of using PLS-SEM is to validate the construct model and assess the relationships between variables. The model in this research was evaluated using Partial Least Square (PLS) in conjunction with suitable Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). The PLS-SEM analysis includes two main stages: evaluation of the outer model, which examines the validity and reliability of the measurement constructs, and evaluation of the inner model, which evaluates the connections among hidden variables within the framework of the structural model. PLS-SEM was chosen due to its ability to provide both causal and predictive insights, which allows for a balanced approach between theoretical explanation and empirical prediction (Alwreikat et al., 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Demographic Data

As can be seen from the table, the study's participants are members of generation Z, which is split into three age groups: 10–15, 16–20, and 21–24. Based on domicile, respondents are residents of Cirebon City. Respondents who can fill out the questionnaire are those who use shoppe ecommerce.

Table 1.
Demographic Information Respondent

Demographic Information	Amount	Percent%
Gender	Male	41,3%
	Female	58,7%
Age	10-15	19%
	16-20	35,5%
	21-24	45,5%
Domicile	Cirebon City	100%

Source: Primary data, analyzed by the researcher (2025)

Reliability Validity Test

To ensure that all variable constructions in the questionnaire are valid and can measure what they are intended to measure, a validity test is conducted in the study. The first analysis performed is an assessment of convergent validity, which is indicated through the value of external loadings or loading factors. In general, the guideline for assessing convergent validity is to ensure that the outer loading exceeds 0.7 in confirmatory research. While this is going on, loading factor values that fall between 0.6 and 0.7 are still deemed acceptable as typical norms for exploratory research. Additionally, in order to fulfil the validity requirements, the total Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value must be larger than 0.5. Despite this, a sufficient loading factor value in the range of 0.5-0.6 is still deemed adequate and in conformity with the standard, while measuring instruments are still in the early phases of development (Imam Ghozali et al., 2015).

Table 2.
Validity and Reliability Table

Variables	Items	Loading Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	Interpretation
Perceived Scarcity	X1.1	0.895	0.906	0.924	0.605	Valid and Reliable
	X1.2	0.848				Valid and Reliable
	X1.3	0.807				Valid and Reliable
	X1.4	0.762				Valid and Reliable
	X1.5	0.762				Valid and Reliable
	X1.6	0.672				Valid and Reliable
	X1.7	0.711				Valid and Reliable
	X1.8	0.740				Valid and Reliable
FOMO	X2.1	0.796	0.920	0.933	0.582	Valid and Reliable
	X2.2	0.842				Valid and Reliable
	X2.3	0.839				Valid and Reliable
	X2.4	0.685				Valid and Reliable
	X2.5	0.710				Valid and Reliable
	X2.6	0.657				Valid and Reliable
	X2.7	0.704				Valid and Reliable
	X2.8	0.794				Valid and Reliable
	X2.9	0.781				Valid and Reliable
	X2.10	0.796				Valid and Reliable
Impulsive buying	Y.1	0.855	0.861	0.892	0.512	Valid and Reliable
	Y.2	0.813				Valid and Reliable
	Y.3	0.767				Valid and Reliable

Variables	Items	Loading Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	Interpretation
	Y.4	0.645				Valid and Reliable
	Y.5	0.664				Valid and Reliable
	Y.6	0.630				Valid and Reliable
	Y.7	0.632				Valid and Reliable
	Y.8	0.679				Valid and Reliable

Source: Data processed 2025

Please see below a table that contains the results of the validity and reliability tests that have been processed using the SmartPls3 application. Indicator validity is tested using the outer loading factor in the SEM-PLS method with SmartPLS3 software. According to (Imam Ghozali et al., 2015) The usual norm still considers the loading factor value to be acceptable if it falls between 0.6 and 0.7. When the loading factor value falls within the range of 0.6 to 0.7, as shown in the table above, it is possible to assert that every item is considered to be legitimate. To fulfil the validity requirements, the total Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value must be more than 0.5. This is a requirement.

Examining the AVE value, which must be more than 0.5, is one way to analyse the discriminant validity of a test. According to (Imam Ghozali et al., 2015), you may say that discriminant validity has been achieved if the square root value of AVE is greater than the correlation between the constructs. The AVE value for each variable has been found to be more than 0.5, as shown in the table that is located above. As a result, it is possible to assert that each variable has a level of discriminant validity that is satisfactory.

As a consequence of employing the SmartPLS3 programme, the following are the outcomes of the composite reliability test. This study's composite reliability value on all variables has a value that is more than 0.7, as shown in the table above; hence, it is possible to draw the conclusion that all of the variables are reliable variables have high composite reliability. Apart from the composite reliability test, to strengthen the reliability If we look at the Cronbach alpha value, we can see that it is a construct. Using the SmartPls3 programme, the results of testing cronbach alpha are shown in the table above. The table reveals that the cronbach alpha value on the variables of perceived scarcity, fear of missing out (FOMO), and impulse buying is more than 0.7. According to (Imam Ghozali et al., 2015) a good Cronbach's Alpha value is above 0.7. However, in exploratory research, values between 0.6 to 0.7 are still acceptable.

Hypothesis Test

Evaluating the inner model or evaluating the structural model comes next, after verifying the validity and dependability of the previous model. To ascertain the precision of the entire research model, which is constructed from a number of variables and indicators, this is carried out.

Taking a glance at the R-square value is how evaluation is complete. As a structural research model, this study is presented in the following manner. To determine the extent of

the influence that the dependent variable has on the independent variable, the R-square statistic is used. For example, an R-square value of 0.67 is considered to be strong, while a value of 0.33 is considered to be moderate, and a value of 0.19 is considered to be weak (Imam Ghozali et al., 2015). R-square also conveys the degree to which a research model is strong or weak. For your perusal, the table below contains the assessment findings that were obtained from this research.

Table 3.
Table of Inner Structural Model Evaluation Results

Hypothesis	Influence	R-Square	Interpretation
H3	Perceived Scarcity & Fomo → Impulsive Buying	0.382	Accepted

Source: SmartPLS output 2025

It is clear from the table that the variable representing impulsive purchasing has an R-Square value of 0.382, which is considered to be of a moderate level of significance. The fact that this model has an R-Square value of 0.382 indicates that the variables of perceived scarcity and fear of missing out (FOMO) would be able to explain 38.2% of the Impulsive Buying variable concurrently. Conversely, the remaining 61.8% may be accounted for by additional variables that are not included in this study model. Therefore, it is possible to draw the conclusion that this model is capable of adequately explaining the combined effect of fears of missing out (FOMO) and perceived scarcity on impulsive purchasing.

Table so, which is the path coefficient test results table, contains the outcomes of the tests that were performed. That table serves as the basis for the following explanation of each hypothesis.

Table 4.
Decomposition of Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis	Influence	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Value	Interpretation
H1	Perceived Scarcity → Impulsive Buying	0,294	5,074	0,000	Accepted
H2	Fomo → Impulsive Buying	0,480	8,421	0,000	Accepted

Source: SmartPLS output 2025

This investigation used a significance threshold of 5% (0.05) in order to assess the hypothesis that was being investigated. At the point when the significance value is less than 0.05 and the t-count value is more than the t-table value of 1.97, it is possible to conclude that the independent variable has a significant influence on the dependent variable, which means that the hypothesis is accepted. If, on the other hand, the significance value is more than 0.05 and the t-count value is less than 1.97, then the independent variable does not have a significant influence on the dependent variable, and for this reason, the hypothesis is rejected.

Perceived Scarcity is proven to have a significant effect on Impulsive Buying. This is evidenced by the results of the value of the original sample of 0.294, t count of 45.074, and P value of 0.000. In addition, Fomo also has a significant influence on Impulsive Buying.

This is evidenced by the results of the value of the original sample of 0.480, t count of 8.421, and P value of 0.000.

Discussion

Based on the results of data analysis, the **perceived scarcity** variable has a significant effect on **impulse buying**, so the first hypothesis (H1) is accepted. These results are in line with previous research by (Aggarwal, 2011) which states that the perception of scarcity of products can increase urgency in making purchasing decisions. Consumers feel that limited products will run out soon if not purchased immediately, so they are encouraged to make impulse purchases without considering actual needs.

This shows that Generation Z tends to be more reactive to scarcity-based marketing tactics, especially on platforms like Shopee that often feature flash sales, countdown timers, and limited editions. These strategies create psychological pressure and a sense of fear of loss, which ultimately drives spontaneous purchase decisions. Thus, perceived scarcity is a significant driver of impulse purchases, as also explained by (Cengiz et al., 2024) who state that time scarcity in product offerings can increase urgency in impulse purchase decisions.

The FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) variable also has a significant effect on **impulse buying**, so the second hypothesis (H2) is accepted. These results are consistent with previous research by (Przybylski et al., 2013), which states that FOMO is a form of social anxiety for fear of being left behind by trends or opportunities. In the context of e-commerce, consumers who experience FOMO tend to want to buy products immediately because they are worried that the product will run out or no longer be available, even though they don't really need it.

This research is also supported by a study from (Balakrishnan et al., 2017) which states that FOMO encourages unplanned consumptive behavior, especially in digital native generations such as Generation Z. Social influence from digital media, other user testimonials, and promotions from influencers increase the intensity of FOMO so that consumers are encouraged to make transactions immediately. In this case, FOMO acts as a strong psychological trigger in creating false needs, which leads to impulse purchases.

Thus, the two independent variables in this study, namely **perceived scarcity** and **FOMO**, are proven to partially and simultaneously have a significant influence on **impulsive buying**, so the third hypothesis (H3) is accepted. The results of this study contribute to the development of consumer behavior theory in the digital era, and strengthen previous findings that psychological pressures such as scarcity and social anxiety have a major impact on spontaneous purchase decisions.

CONCLUSION

The perception of scarcity drives consumers to make immediate purchases due to a sense of urgency and psychological pressure. FOMO also plays an important role, making individuals want to follow trends, especially in quick online purchases. Marketing strategies such as flash sales, limited stock, and countdown timers are effective in creating an atmosphere of urgency that triggers impulsive behavior. Research supports scarcity marketing and social influence theories, suggesting that scarcity and social pressure accelerate consumer decisions. The importance of understanding consumer emotions is also emphasized, where the combination of perceived scarcity and fear of being left behind drives unplanned purchases.

In general, it can be concluded that Generation Z, aged between 18 to 25 years old, has a high tendency to make impulse purchases through e-commerce platforms. Their online shopping habits, coupled with high exposure to digital marketing strategies, make them more susceptible to psychological influences such as perceived scarcity and FOMO. Limited-time discount promotions and exclusive-looking products create a fear of missing out on opportunities, so consumers often make purchases without rational consideration. This research provides important implications for e-commerce businesses and brands in developing effective marketing strategies for the younger generation. Strategies such as flash sales and exclusive campaigns are proven to increase sales, but need to be balanced with marketing ethics so as not to cause post-purchase consumer regret. The limitations in this study lie in the scope of the population which only includes generation Z and uses a quantitative approach through an online questionnaire. Future research is recommended to expand the sample by involving other generations such as generation Y or Alpha, as well as adding qualitative methods to gain a deeper understanding of the psychological factors in impulse buying behavior.

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