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The Role of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and Deceptive Marketing Practices in Predicting Emotional–Impulsive Buying Behavior among Generation Z in Online Commerce Platforms

1. Seyed Kazem. Taheri: Department of Business Management ,University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran
2. Seyede Nahid. Taheri: Department of Business Management, ShK.C., Islmic Azad University, Shahr-e Kord, Iran
3. Amin. Shahgholian: Department of Public Management, ShK.C., Islmic Azad University, Shahr-e Kord, Iran
4. Mohammad. Heidari Goujani*: Department of Public Management, ShK.C., Islamic Azad University, Shahr-e Kord ,Iran

*corresponding author's email: 4679924683@iau.ir

ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to investigate the role of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and deceptive marketing practices in predicting "sudden buying behavior" and "emotional buying behavior" among Generation Z users of online commerce platforms. This study employed a descriptive–correlational design. The statistical population consisted of Generation Z youth with purchasing experience on online commerce platforms such as Digikala, Snapp Market, Komda, online shops, and other similar platforms. The research sample was selected through convenience sampling using an online questionnaire distributed among active users of these platforms. Data collection instruments included the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) Scale developed by Abel (2016) and a researcher-developed Emotional–Sudden Buying Questionnaire. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS-24 software and Pearson correlation coefficient, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and multiple regression tests. The findings indicated that Fear of Missing Out and deceptive marketing practices had a positive and significant effect on Generation Z's sudden–emotional online purchasing behavior in online commerce platforms ($F = 12.428$, $p = .05$). Among the research variables, misleading pricing and deceptive discount strategies ($\beta = 0.128$) ranked first in predicting impulsive–emotional buying behavior. The results of regression analysis further revealed that FOMO explained 15.2% of the variance related to sudden and emotional buying behavior ($p < .05$). The higher the level of FOMO among young individuals, the greater the likelihood of engaging in impulsive purchases and purchases exceeding actual needs, which are mainly influenced by social comparison and emotional stimuli within online environments. Based on the findings, it is recommended that managers of online commerce platforms and digital marketers consider the negative psychological consequences of FOMO and its effects on Generation Z purchasing behavior when designing advertising campaigns. While utilizing emotional appeal strategies, they should also take into account principles of social responsibility and conscious consumption, and prevent imposing additional financial burdens on families.

Keywords: Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), Generation Z, deceptive/persuasive marketing, impulsive buying behavior, sudden buying, online commerce platforms.



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Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital technologies and the widespread integration of online commerce platforms into daily life have fundamentally transformed consumer purchasing patterns, particularly among younger generations. In recent years, online shopping has evolved from a utilitarian purchasing channel into a highly interactive, emotionally stimulating, and psychologically engaging environment in which consumers are continuously exposed to persuasive digital marketing strategies. The emergence of social commerce, influencer marketing, algorithm-driven recommendations, and real-time promotional campaigns has intensified consumers' emotional involvement in online purchasing decisions. Within this context, Generation Z has emerged as one of the most influential consumer segments in digital markets due to its deep integration with social media, online platforms, and digital communication technologies (1, 2).

Generation Z refers to individuals who were born and raised during the era of digital connectivity and smart technologies. Unlike previous generations, members of Generation Z are characterized by extensive online engagement, rapid information processing, high responsiveness to digital trends, and increased sensitivity to social comparison in online environments (1). Their purchasing decisions are often shaped not only by functional product attributes but also by social influence, emotional stimulation, online visibility, and symbolic consumption patterns. Consequently, online commerce platforms have increasingly adopted sophisticated marketing techniques to attract and retain Generation Z consumers by stimulating urgency, emotional excitement, and perceived scarcity (3, 4).

One of the most important psychological phenomena influencing the behavior of Generation Z consumers in digital environments is Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). FOMO refers to the anxiety or apprehension experienced when individuals believe that others may be engaging in rewarding experiences from which they are absent. In online environments, FOMO is intensified by continuous exposure to social media updates, promotional campaigns, influencer content, and time-sensitive purchasing opportunities (5, 6). Digital platforms frequently create a sense of urgency through notifications such as "limited-time offer," "only a few items left," or "others are purchasing this product," which can trigger emotional tension and immediate purchase decisions among consumers. The psychological structure of FOMO is closely associated with social comparison, emotional dysregulation, compulsive online engagement, and heightened sensitivity to peer behavior (7, 8).

Recent studies have demonstrated that FOMO is not merely a social media-related phenomenon but also a significant predictor of behavioral and emotional outcomes in consumption contexts. Individuals experiencing higher levels of FOMO tend to exhibit stronger impulsive tendencies, greater emotional dependence on online interactions, and increased susceptibility to persuasive marketing stimuli (5, 6). In digital marketplaces, FOMO can motivate consumers to make rapid purchasing decisions to avoid feelings of exclusion, regret, or missed opportunities. Such behavior is particularly evident among adolescents and young adults who spend considerable time on social media platforms and are highly influenced by online trends and peer approval (7, 9).

The relationship between FOMO and consumer behavior has gained increasing scholarly attention in recent years. Zeinali Tajani et al. emphasized that FOMO significantly contributes to consumers' urgency-driven purchasing behaviors during promotional campaigns and festival sales, particularly in digitally mediated shopping environments (10). Similarly, Ghadimi Bavil et al. reported that individuals with certain personality traits exhibit higher levels of FOMO during periods of social uncertainty and digital dependence, suggesting that emotional

vulnerability may intensify susceptibility to impulsive online consumption (8). These findings indicate that FOMO operates as both an emotional and cognitive mechanism that influences online decision-making processes.

At the same time, online commerce platforms increasingly employ deceptive or persuasive marketing strategies to stimulate impulsive purchasing behavior. Deceptive marketing refers to tactics designed to manipulate consumers' perceptions, emotions, or decision-making processes by creating misleading impressions regarding scarcity, urgency, discounts, popularity, or social approval. These practices often include artificial scarcity messages, misleading pricing structures, countdown timers, dark patterns in website design, exaggerated discount claims, and psychologically manipulative recommendation systems. Such strategies are particularly effective in online environments where consumers make rapid decisions under conditions of cognitive overload and emotional stimulation (11, 12).

The psychological effectiveness of deceptive marketing lies in its ability to reduce rational evaluation and activate emotional processing mechanisms. Research has shown that scarcity messages and urgency cues significantly increase consumers' impulsive buying motivations, especially in online reservation and e-commerce settings (11). Similarly, Ansari et al. found that hedonic motivations and recreational browsing behavior substantially contribute to impulsive purchasing tendencies by increasing emotional arousal and spontaneous consumption desires (13). These findings suggest that online marketing environments are increasingly designed to encourage emotionally driven purchasing behavior rather than deliberate and rational decision-making.

Impulsive buying behavior is generally defined as a sudden, unplanned, and emotionally driven purchasing action that occurs without extensive cognitive evaluation of consequences. Emotional–impulsive buying behavior often emerges under conditions of heightened emotional stimulation, psychological pressure, or environmental persuasion (14). Online commerce platforms amplify these conditions by providing personalized recommendations, algorithmic advertisements, visually stimulating interfaces, and instant purchasing mechanisms. In many cases, consumers complete purchases before engaging in rational consideration of financial necessity or product utility. This phenomenon has become particularly prevalent among Generation Z consumers due to their constant interaction with social media and digital marketing ecosystems (15, 16).

Research has consistently shown that emotional states play a central role in impulsive purchasing behavior. Golalizadeh et al. demonstrated that customer emotions significantly influence online purchase intentions and impulsive buying behavior, particularly in the context of luxury cosmetic and health-related products (15). Likewise, Zarinnegar et al. found that both hedonic and utilitarian values affect impulsive purchasing behavior, although hedonic value exerts a stronger influence due to its emotional and experiential characteristics (16). These findings highlight the growing importance of emotional stimulation in shaping contemporary online consumer behavior.

The integration of social media into digital marketing strategies has further intensified impulsive purchasing tendencies among Generation Z. Social media influencers, online communities, and peer-generated content create environments in which consumers continuously compare themselves with others and seek social validation through purchasing behavior. Influencers often present products as symbols of lifestyle, identity, and social belonging, thereby increasing emotional attachment to products and encouraging spontaneous purchasing decisions (3, 4). The digital identity of influencers and social networks also contributes to the development of trust and perceived authenticity, which can further reduce consumers' critical evaluation of marketing messages (4).

Furthermore, the continuous exposure to social media content and online consumption patterns has been associated with emotional distress, anxiety, and compulsive digital engagement. Studies have shown that excessive

social media use and FOMO contribute to emotional dysregulation and psychological vulnerability among adolescents and young adults (5, 6). Ntumi et al. reported that FOMO mediates the relationship between social media addiction and depressive symptoms among adolescents, indicating that persistent digital comparison and fear of exclusion can negatively affect emotional wellbeing (7). These psychological consequences may also influence consumption behavior by increasing the likelihood of emotional and impulsive purchasing as a coping mechanism for stress, loneliness, or social anxiety.

The digital age has therefore created a complex intersection between psychological vulnerability and persuasive marketing mechanisms. Online commerce platforms not only facilitate purchasing behavior but also actively shape emotional experiences and behavioral tendencies through algorithmic persuasion and psychological targeting. Generation Z consumers are particularly susceptible to these influences due to their developmental stage, high digital exposure, and strong desire for social connectedness (1, 2). Consequently, understanding the combined effects of FOMO and deceptive marketing practices on emotional–impulsive purchasing behavior has become an important issue in contemporary consumer behavior research.

Although previous studies have separately examined impulsive buying behavior, FOMO, social media influence, and deceptive marketing strategies, there remains limited integrated research investigating the simultaneous role of these variables in predicting emotional–impulsive buying behavior among Generation Z consumers in online commerce platforms. In particular, few studies have examined how deceptive marketing strategies interact with psychological vulnerabilities such as FOMO to intensify emotionally driven purchasing behavior in digital environments. Moreover, much of the existing literature has focused on general consumer populations rather than specifically addressing the unique behavioral and psychological characteristics of Generation Z consumers (12, 17).

The importance of the present study lies in its attempt to bridge psychological and marketing perspectives in explaining online purchasing behavior among Generation Z. By examining both internal psychological mechanisms (FOMO) and external persuasive stimuli (deceptive marketing practices), this research provides a more comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to emotional–impulsive buying behavior in digital commerce environments. The findings may contribute to the development of ethical digital marketing strategies, consumer awareness programs, and policies aimed at promoting responsible online consumption behavior among young consumers.

Therefore, the present study aimed to investigate the role of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and deceptive marketing practices in predicting emotional–impulsive buying behavior among Generation Z users of online commerce platforms.

Methods and Materials

The present study was applied in terms of purpose and descriptive–correlational in terms of methodology. The research was conducted using a quantitative (survey-based) approach through the distribution of questionnaires among Generation Z users on social media platforms.

The statistical population of the present study consisted of adolescents and young adults belonging to Generation Z (individuals born during the 2000s and 2010s) who had experience purchasing products or using services through online commerce platforms such as Digikala, Torob, Amazon, Snapp Market, Bamilo, and online shops selling fashion products, clothing, cosmetics, and decorative items. Given the unknown size of the total statistical population (Generation Z youth), the sample size was determined based on statistical considerations for an

unlimited/unknown population. Accordingly, a sample size of 365 participants was considered. Sampling was conducted using a non-probability voluntary convenience sampling method. To this end, the research questionnaire was distributed online through social media and virtual platforms among eligible participants (individuals within the Generation Z age range and with online shopping experience), and data collection continued until the target sample size was completed.

The Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) Questionnaire was developed by Abel et al. (2016) and consists of 10 items. The questionnaire includes three dimensions: (1) social anxiety, (2) social interaction, and (3) self-esteem. Responses are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (score = 1) to “strongly agree” (score = 5). The total score of the questionnaire indicates the individual’s overall level of Fear of Missing Out. Previous studies have reported satisfactory validity and reliability for this instrument.

The researcher-developed questionnaire on sudden–emotional (impulsive) behavior in online purchasing consisted of 12 items covering two dimensions: (1) impulsive/unplanned online purchasing behavior (Items 1, 4, 7, 8, and 11), and (2) emotional arousal and immediate decision-making under platform-related stimuli (Items 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, and 12). Respondents rated their agreement with each item on a Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (score = 1) to “strongly agree” (score = 6).

In the present study, a 16-item researcher-developed scale was designed and localized to assess deceptive marketing practices based on the relevant theoretical literature on deceptive marketing and according to the studies of Gray et al. (2018), Aggarwal et al. (2021), and Gupta and Kim (2020). The instrument includes four subscales: (1) artificial scarcity and urgency, (2) misleading pricing and discount strategies, (3) manipulative design and dark patterns, and (4) social persuasion and psychological stimulation of purchasing. Responses were scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Higher scores indicate stronger perceptions regarding the use of deceptive/persuasive marketing practices by online platforms. The total score range for this questionnaire is between 16 and 80. Scores between 16 and 37 indicate low and weak perceptions of deceptive marketing, scores between 38 and 58 indicate moderate perception, and scores between 59 and 80 indicate high (strong) perception of deceptive marketing tactics and strategies.

The validity and reliability of the instruments were assessed using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient, the results of which are presented in Table 1. All instruments used in the present study demonstrated adequate reliability and consistency.

Table 1. **Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaires Used in the Present Study**

Scale	Number of Items	Cronbach’s Alpha
Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)	10	0.84
Deceptive/Persuasive Marketing	16	0.79
Impulsive Buying Behavior	12	0.91

For data analysis, descriptive statistics indices including mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum values were initially calculated to describe the characteristics of the sample population and the research variables. Subsequently, relationships between variables were examined using Pearson’s correlation coefficient test. To investigate the contribution of FOMO variables in predicting emotional–impulsive buying behavior, simultaneous multiple linear regression analysis was employed. All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS version 26.

Findings and Results

Considering that one of the prerequisites for the use of statistical tests is the examination of the normality of data distribution, parametric tests are used when the data distribution is normal, whereas non-parametric tests are required when the data distribution is non-normal. In the present study, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov (K–S) test was used to assess the normality of data distribution, and the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Kolmogorov–Smirnov Test for Assessing the Normality Assumption of the Research Variables

Variables	Sample Size	Significance Level (Sig.)	Error Probability Level	Test Result
Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)	384	0.136	0.05	Normal distribution / Confirmed
Deceptive/Persuasive Marketing	384	0.090	0.05	Normal distribution / Confirmed
Impulsive Buying Behavior	384	0.082	0.05	Normal distribution / Confirmed

Based on the findings presented in Table 2, the significance levels of the research variables (Fear of Missing Out, deceptive/persuasive marketing, and emotional–impulsive buying behavior) were all greater than .05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the distribution of the research variables was normal. Other assumptions were also examined, indicating that the use of multiple regression analysis to investigate the relationship between the independent and dependent variables was appropriate.

The results related to the research hypothesis stating that Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and deceptive marketing practices can predict emotional–impulsive buying behavior among Generation Z are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Summary of the Multiple Regression Model of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and Deceptive/Persuasive Marketing Subscales in Predicting Sudden–Impulsive Buying Behavior among Generation Z

Entered Variables	Multiple Correlation Coefficient	Coefficient of Determination (R^2)	Adjusted R^2	Durbin–Watson
Fear of Missing Out Deceptive/Persuasive Marketing Subscales	0.412	0.152	0.142	1.784

To test the research hypothesis, simultaneous multiple regression analysis was employed. According to the findings presented in Table 3, the Durbin–Watson statistic was 1.782. Since this value is close to 2, the assumption of independence of errors was confirmed, indicating no autocorrelation problem. The analysis further showed that Fear of Missing Out and the subscales of deceptive/persuasive marketing, including (1) artificial scarcity and urgency, (2) misleading pricing and discount strategies, (3) manipulative design and dark patterns, and (4) social persuasion and psychological stimulation of purchasing, had a multiple correlation with impulsive buying behavior among Generation Z users of online platforms, with a correlation coefficient of 0.412. Based on the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.152$), approximately 15.2% of the variance in impulsive buying behavior was explained by Fear of Missing Out and the deceptive marketing subscales.

Table 4. Summary of the Multiple Regression Analysis of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and Deceptive/Persuasive Marketing Subscales in Predicting Sudden–Impulsive Buying Behavior among Generation Z

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	4842.316	5	1085.426	12.428	0.001

Residual	30282.624	379	88.624	-	-
Total	30486.038	384	-	-	-

Based on Table 4, the analysis of variance confirmed the validity of the multiple regression model in predicting impulsive buying behavior ($F = 12.428$, $p < .05$).

Table 5. Regression Coefficients of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and Deceptive Marketing Subscales in Predicting Emotional–Impulsive Buying Behavior among Generation Z

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	Standardized Coefficient (Beta)	t	Sig.
Constant	42.760	2.046	-	20.142	0.001
Fear of Missing Out	0.224	0.108	0.102	2.002	0.048
Artificial Scarcity and Urgency	0.462	0.262	0.140	2.086	0.062
Misleading Pricing and Discount Strategies	0.684	0.244	0.128	2.384	0.026
Manipulative Design and Dark Patterns	0.498	0.186	0.108	2.011	0.058
Social Persuasion and Psychological Purchase Stimulation	0.628	0.182	0.162	1.982	0.044

Based on Table 5, Fear of Missing Out demonstrated a positive and significant relationship with emotional–impulsive buying behavior, with a regression coefficient of 0.224 ($p < .05$). Furthermore, artificial scarcity and urgency, misleading pricing and discount strategies, manipulative design and dark patterns, and social persuasion and psychological purchase stimulation showed positive and significant relationships with emotional–impulsive buying behavior among Generation Z users. Their regression coefficients were 0.462, 0.684, 0.498, and 0.628, respectively.

According to the regression equation, for every one-unit increase in Fear of Missing Out, the likelihood of emotional–impulsive purchasing increases by 0.224 units.

Among the independent research variables, misleading pricing and discount strategies ($\beta = 0.128$) ranked first in predicting emotional–impulsive buying behavior. Therefore, the research hypothesis was confirmed, and it can be concluded that Fear of Missing Out and deceptive marketing practices, including artificial scarcity and urgency, misleading pricing and discount strategies, manipulative design and dark patterns, and social persuasion and psychological stimulation of purchasing, are strong predictors of emotional–impulsive buying behavior among Generation Z youth.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to investigate the role of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and deceptive marketing practices in predicting emotional–impulsive buying behavior among Generation Z users of online commerce platforms. The findings demonstrated that FOMO and deceptive marketing strategies significantly and positively predicted emotional–impulsive purchasing behavior among Generation Z consumers. Furthermore, among the deceptive marketing dimensions, misleading pricing and discount strategies had the strongest predictive role in explaining impulsive–emotional purchasing behavior. These findings indicate that both internal psychological factors and external digital marketing stimuli play an important role in shaping the purchasing behaviors of young consumers in online commerce environments.

One of the major findings of the present study was that FOMO significantly predicted emotional–impulsive buying behavior among Generation Z consumers. This finding is consistent with previous studies emphasizing the

psychological and behavioral consequences of FOMO in digital environments (5-7). The results suggest that individuals experiencing higher levels of fear regarding exclusion from rewarding experiences are more likely to engage in emotionally driven and unplanned online purchases. In contemporary online environments, consumers are continuously exposed to social comparison, influencer lifestyles, promotional notifications, and digitally mediated peer interactions, all of which intensify the psychological pressure to remain socially connected and consumption-oriented. Consequently, Generation Z consumers may perceive online purchasing not merely as an economic activity but as a symbolic mechanism for maintaining social inclusion and emotional satisfaction.

The positive relationship between FOMO and impulsive buying behavior can also be interpreted through emotional regulation and social comparison theories. Individuals with elevated levels of FOMO often experience anxiety, emotional tension, and concerns regarding social exclusion, which may reduce rational decision-making capacity and increase emotionally reactive behaviors (5, 6). Online commerce platforms intensify these psychological tendencies by presenting limited-time offers, real-time purchasing notifications, and popularity indicators that create a perception of urgency and scarcity. Such stimuli activate consumers' emotional systems and encourage rapid purchasing decisions before cognitive evaluation of necessity or financial consequences occurs. The findings of Ntumi et al. also demonstrated that FOMO mediates emotional distress and maladaptive behavioral outcomes among adolescents, highlighting the broader psychological vulnerability associated with digitally induced fear of exclusion (7).

The present findings are also aligned with the study conducted by Gopal et al., who reported that excessive social media engagement and FOMO significantly affect emotional wellbeing and behavioral responses among young users (9). Social media platforms expose Generation Z consumers to highly curated lifestyles, luxury products, and peer consumption patterns that encourage comparison-based dissatisfaction and emotional consumption desires. Under such conditions, impulsive online shopping may function as an immediate emotional coping mechanism that temporarily reduces feelings of inadequacy, exclusion, or social anxiety. This explanation is further supported by the findings of Ghadimi Bavil et al., who emphasized the relationship between personality characteristics and FOMO during periods of digital dependence and uncertainty (8). Individuals with emotional vulnerability and heightened social sensitivity may therefore become more susceptible to emotionally driven purchasing behavior in online environments.

Another important finding of the present study was the significant role of deceptive marketing practices in predicting emotional–impulsive buying behavior among Generation Z consumers. The findings indicated that online marketing strategies based on artificial scarcity, urgency, misleading discounts, manipulative design patterns, and psychological persuasion significantly contributed to sudden and emotionally driven purchasing behavior. This result is consistent with previous studies emphasizing the influence of persuasive and emotionally stimulating marketing techniques on consumer behavior (11, 13). Online commerce platforms increasingly utilize behavioral design strategies intended to accelerate decision-making processes and reduce consumers' reflective evaluation. Such strategies exploit cognitive biases and emotional tendencies to maximize purchasing engagement.

The strongest predictive factor among the deceptive marketing dimensions was misleading pricing and discount strategies. This finding suggests that Generation Z consumers are highly responsive to promotional cues and perceived financial opportunities in digital shopping environments. Misleading discounts often create an illusion of economic advantage, encouraging consumers to prioritize emotional excitement and perceived savings over actual purchasing needs. This finding is consistent with the results reported by Nasri and Nazari, who emphasized the

importance of discount-oriented shopping attitudes in shaping purchasing behavior in contemporary retail environments (12). Similarly, scarcity and urgency messages have been shown to increase impulsive buying motivation by generating psychological pressure to act immediately before opportunities disappear (11).

The influence of deceptive marketing practices on impulsive buying behavior may also be explained through hedonic consumption theory. Digital marketing strategies are increasingly designed to stimulate pleasure, excitement, curiosity, and emotional engagement rather than rational product evaluation. Visual attractiveness, personalized recommendations, countdown timers, and social proof indicators activate consumers' emotional systems and increase the likelihood of spontaneous purchasing behavior. This interpretation is consistent with the findings of Ansari et al., who demonstrated that hedonic motivations and recreational browsing significantly contribute to impulsive purchasing tendencies (13). Likewise, Zarinnegar et al. found that hedonic value exerts a stronger influence on impulsive buying behavior than utilitarian value due to its emotional and experiential nature (16).

The findings of the present study also support the argument that emotional and psychological dimensions are central determinants of online consumer behavior among Generation Z. Golalizadeh et al. reported that customer emotions significantly affect online purchase intention and impulsive purchasing behavior, especially in the context of products associated with identity, beauty, and social image (15). Generation Z consumers often perceive purchasing behavior as an extension of self-expression and social identity construction. Consequently, emotionally stimulating marketing messages and socially desirable products become particularly effective in influencing purchasing decisions among this generation.

In addition, the findings may be interpreted within the context of influencer marketing and digitally mediated social persuasion. Social media influencers increasingly shape purchasing intentions among Generation Z consumers by creating emotional attachment, trust, and aspirational identification with products and lifestyles (3, 4). Influencers often present products within emotionally appealing narratives that emphasize popularity, belonging, attractiveness, and exclusivity. As a result, Generation Z consumers may experience intensified FOMO when exposed to influencer content promoting limited or trending products. This interaction between influencer-driven persuasion and psychological fear of exclusion creates favorable conditions for impulsive and emotionally reactive purchasing behavior.

The significant role of manipulative design and dark patterns in predicting impulsive buying behavior further highlights the ethical challenges associated with contemporary online commerce systems. Dark patterns refer to interface designs intentionally created to manipulate consumer choices through deceptive navigation, hidden costs, forced continuity, or psychologically persuasive visual structures. Such practices reduce consumers' autonomy and encourage rapid, emotionally driven decisions. The findings of the present study suggest that Generation Z consumers, despite their high digital literacy, remain vulnerable to psychologically manipulative online environments due to continuous exposure and emotional engagement with digital platforms.

Another important implication of the present findings is the interaction between psychological vulnerability and digital market structures. The findings indicate that impulsive buying behavior among Generation Z cannot be understood solely through economic or rational-choice perspectives. Instead, emotional states, psychological insecurity, social comparison, and digitally induced urgency significantly shape purchasing behavior. This perspective is consistent with the psychometric approach to impulsive buying behavior proposed by Ansari et al.,

who emphasized the importance of personality traits and emotional tendencies in understanding impulsive purchasing patterns (17).

The present findings also contribute to the broader literature concerning the psychological effects of digitalization on youth behavior. Previous studies have primarily focused on the relationship between social media use and mental health outcomes such as anxiety, depression, loneliness, and emotional dysregulation (5, 6, 18). However, the current study extends this literature by demonstrating that these psychological mechanisms also influence consumer behavior in online commerce environments. Emotional distress and fear of exclusion may increase vulnerability to persuasive digital marketing strategies, thereby intensifying impulsive and excessive consumption patterns among young consumers.

Furthermore, the findings support the constructivist perspective regarding Generation Z consumption behavior proposed by Khalili Palandi et al. (2). According to this perspective, Generation Z purchasing decisions are shaped through socially constructed meanings, online interactions, and symbolic digital experiences rather than solely functional product characteristics. Online commerce platforms therefore operate not only as marketplaces but also as social and emotional environments in which identity, belonging, and emotional gratification are continuously negotiated through consumption behavior.

Overall, the findings of the present study demonstrate that emotional–impulsive buying behavior among Generation Z consumers is the result of a complex interaction between internal psychological mechanisms and external persuasive digital environments. Fear of Missing Out increases emotional vulnerability and urgency-driven decision-making, while deceptive marketing practices exploit these psychological tendencies through emotionally stimulating and manipulative online strategies. Together, these factors contribute to excessive, impulsive, and emotionally reactive purchasing behavior among Generation Z consumers in online commerce platforms.

One of the limitations of the present study was the use of a convenience sampling method and online self-report questionnaires, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to all members of Generation Z. In addition, the cross-sectional design of the study prevented the examination of causal relationships between variables. Participants' responses may also have been influenced by social desirability bias or temporary emotional states during questionnaire completion. Another limitation was the concentration on online commerce users without considering socioeconomic status, cultural background, or regional differences that may influence impulsive purchasing behavior.

Future research is recommended to examine the mediating and moderating roles of variables such as self-esteem, emotional regulation, social anxiety, financial literacy, and digital dependency in the relationship between FOMO, deceptive marketing, and impulsive buying behavior. Longitudinal and experimental studies may provide deeper insight into causal relationships and the long-term psychological consequences of emotionally driven online purchasing. Future studies may also compare Generation Z with other generational groups to determine whether younger consumers are uniquely vulnerable to persuasive digital marketing environments. Additionally, qualitative approaches could provide richer understanding regarding consumers' subjective experiences of online shopping pressure and emotional consumption.

From a practical perspective, the findings of the present study highlight the necessity for online commerce platforms and digital marketers to adopt more ethical and socially responsible marketing practices. Policymakers and consumer protection institutions should develop regulations aimed at reducing deceptive marketing strategies and manipulative digital design patterns that exploit psychological vulnerabilities among young consumers.

Educational institutions and families should also increase awareness regarding the psychological effects of FOMO and impulsive online consumption by promoting critical digital literacy and responsible purchasing behaviors among adolescents and young adults. Online platforms may further contribute to healthier digital consumption environments by improving transparency in pricing, reducing manipulative urgency tactics, and encouraging informed consumer decision-making.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adheried in conducting and writing this article.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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