

Price Promotion and Ease of Use on Generation Z Impulsive Buying through Fear of Missing Out

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Abstract

Purpose: This study develops and explains a conceptual model of how price promotion and application ease of use influence impulsive buying among Generation Z e-commerce users, with the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) acting as an intervening variable that links marketing and technological stimuli to spontaneous purchasing.

Research Methodology: This study uses an integrative literature review. Peer-reviewed articles on price promotion, technology acceptance, FoMO, and impulsive buying were collected, compared, and synthesized to construct a theoretical framework and a set of testable propositions, together with a proposed measurement model for future empirical validation using partial least squares structural equation Modeling.

Results: A four-path model was synthesized. Price promotion is proposed to raise FoMO; application ease of use and FoMO are each proposed to increase impulsive buying; and FoMO is proposed to mediate the effect of price promotion on impulsive buying.

Conclusions: FoMO functions as a central psychological mechanism that converts promotional and technological stimuli into unplanned purchases among young digital consumer.

Limitations: The model is conceptual and has not yet been validated using primary data.

Contributions: This study connects the Technology Acceptance Model with FoMO research and offers a ready framework for empirical testing, alongside practical guidance for e-commerce managers and consumer-protection scholars.

Keywords: *Application Ease of Use, Fear of Missing Out, Generation Z, Impulsive Buying, Price Promotion*

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1. Introduction

The growth of digital commerce has changed how young consumers find, judge, and buy products. In mobile-first marketplaces, the distance between wanting something and paying for it has been narrowed to a few seconds. A purchase that once required a trip to a store, a comparison of options, and a moment of reflection can now be completed with a single tap on a smartphone. In this context, impulsive buying, which refers to an unplanned purchase accompanied by a sudden and strong urge to buy, has become a common feature of online consumption rather than an occasional lapse in self-control ([Verplanken & Sato, 2011](#)).

Generation Z is the first cohort to grow up entirely in a connected digital environment and is especially exposed to these dynamics. Members of this generation are comfortable with mobile applications, are constantly exposed to social signals, and pay close attention to what their peers do and buy. These traits make them an important population for understanding how online consumption decisions are formed ([N. Putri, 2024](#); [T. A. W. Putri & Hapsari, 2024](#)). E-commerce platforms are aware of this sensitivity

and design experiences that take advantage of it, combining frequent price promotions with smooth, low-effort interfaces that encourage rapid purchases.

Two stimuli stand out in this regard. The first is price promotion, which includes discounts, flash sales and bundled offers. Such promotions create a sense of economic opportunity that consumers are reluctant to lose, especially when the offer is limited by time or stock ([Al Mutanafisa & Retnaningsih, 2021](#); [Hao & Huang, 2025](#)). The second is the ease of application use, which covers intuitive navigation, fast loading, visual search, and one-click payment. When an application is easy to use, the practical barriers that would otherwise give a consumer time to reconsider are removed ([Davis, 1989](#); [Vahdat, Alizadeh, Quach, & Hamelin, 2021](#)). Together, these two factors lower the point at which an urge becomes a completed transaction.

Beyond their direct influence, these stimuli may also work through a psychological route, namely, the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). FoMO is the uneasy feeling that other people are enjoying rewarding experiences, opportunities, or deals from which one is absent. In e-commerce, FoMO is heightened by real-time cues such as countdown timers, low-stock warnings, and live displays of how many people are viewing a product ([Li, Wang, & Cao, 2022](#); [Zhang & Rosli, 2025](#)). The central argument of this study is that price promotion and platform design do not simply persuade consumers; they create urgency, and that urgency, captured here as FoMO, is an important pathway to impulsive buying.

The scale of online consumption among young people gives these questions practical significance. E-commerce now accounts for a large share of retail activity in many emerging markets, and Generation Z forms a substantial part of the digital buyer base ([Catană, Imbrișcă, & Veith, 2025](#)). For many members of this generation, shopping is woven into the daily routines of browsing, scrolling, and watching content, so that exposure to promotions and product cues is almost continuous. In this environment, an unplanned purchase is rarely the result of a single advertisement. It is more often the cumulative result of repeated stimuli that lower resistance over time and reach the consumer through a device that is always within reach ([Diego & Hidayat, 2025](#); [Maqsood & Javed, 2019](#)).

Although earlier research has studied promotion, technology acceptance, and FoMO separately, few studies have combined marketing stimuli and technological usability within a single model that places FoMO as the connecting mechanism for Generation Z ([Huwaida et al., 2024](#)). Empirical work on FoMO has also tended to focus on live streaming or social commerce, while the joint role of price promotion and general application usability has received less attention. This study addresses this gap by building a conceptual framework rather than reporting a single empirical test. This study had three objectives. First, we explain how price promotion is expected to raise FoMO among Generation Z consumers. Second, we explain how the application's ease of use and FoMO are each expected to increase impulsive buying. Third, it explains why FoMO is expected to mediate the relationship between price promotion and impulsive buying ([Wulandari, Saladin, & Mulyani, 2024](#)). By meeting these objectives, the study offers a framework that scholars can test empirically and practitioners can use to understand the behavior they are shaping.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Impulsive Buying

Impulsive buying is a sudden and emotionally charged purchase in which the speed of the decision leaves little room for weighing alternatives or consequences. It is marked by spontaneity, a powerful urge to act, and a tendency to set aside longer-term outcomes in favor of immediate satisfaction ([Verplanken & Sato, 2011](#)). In physical stores, this behavior is shaped by displays, atmosphere, and the presence of other shoppers. In digital settings, the drivers are different but no less powerful because emotional and social cues are present at all times and because the friction that usually separates intention from action is minimal ([Diego & Hidayat, 2025](#); [Maqsood & Javed, 2019](#)).

Researchers have approached impulsive buying from various perspectives. Some treat it as a trait that varies across individuals, while others treat it as a state triggered by the situation ([Badgaiyan & Verma, 2015](#)). The view adopted here is that situational stimuli, such as promotions and platform features,

interact with the consumer's emotional state to produce an urge to buy. This perspective fits the online context well because platforms can adjust their stimuli in real time and present them to large numbers of users simultaneously.

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework provides useful theoretical grounding for online impulsive buying. This framework proposes that external stimuli in the environment act on the internal state of the individual, which, in turn, produces a behavioral response. Applied to e-commerce, marketing, and platform features serve as the stimulus, the consumer's emotional state serves as the organism, and the purchase serves as the response. The framework is well suited to the present study because it allows price promotion and application ease of use to be treated as stimuli, FoMO to be treated as the internal state, and impulsive buying to be treated as the response. Recent studies on live-streaming and social commerce have used this logic to explain how design and promotional cues lead to unplanned purchases ([Li et al., 2022](#); [Zhang & Rosli, 2025](#)).

2.2 Price Promotion

Price promotion refers to discounts, flash sales, and limited-time offers designed to accelerate purchasing. The effectiveness of these promotions does not rest solely on price reduction. It also rests on how the offer is framed as scarce and temporary ([Al Mutanafisa & Retnaningsih, 2021](#); [Gamaya & Suardana, 2024](#)). When a discount is tied to a deadline or a limited quantity, consumers perceive a risk of loss if they fail to act, and this perceived risk raises emotional arousal and shortens deliberation ([Hao & Huang, 2025](#)). For Generation Z, who encounter promotional messages across many platforms every day, these mechanisms are particularly strong, and repeated exposure can make the urge to seize an offer feel routine ([Adhiati, Palupiningtyas, & Samtono, 2025](#)).

Scarcity is the conceptual thread that connects price promotions to psychological urgency. A promotion that is abundant and permanent carries little pressure, whereas a promotion that is rare and fleeting signals that the opportunity may not return. This signal is precisely the kind of cue that gives rise to anxiety about being left out, which links price promotion to the fear of missing out, as discussed below. Price promotion can take several forms, and the form often matters as much as the discount size. A direct price cut lowers the stated price, a bundled offer rewards the purchase of more items, and a flash sale combines a discount with a strict deadline to make a purchase. Each form works in part through a reference point because consumers judge a current price against a remembered or expected price and treat the gap as a gain. Flash sales add a second layer by attaching urgency to the gain because the window in which the gain is available is short. For digital natives accustomed to comparing prices across platforms, these signals are read quickly, and the combination of a perceived gain and a closing window is what makes time-bound promotions so effective at prompting fast decisions ([Gamaya & Suardana, 2024](#); [Hidayah & Marlana, 2021](#)).

2.3 Application Ease of Use and the Technology Acceptance Model

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) holds that the perceived ease of use of a system, defined as the degree to which using it is believed to require little effort, shapes a user's attitude and behavior toward that system ([Davis, 1989](#)). When applied to e-commerce, ease of use captures intuitive navigation, quick loading, visual search, and integrated, one-click payment. When an application is highly usable, the procedural barriers that would allow a consumer to pause and reconsider are removed, which raises the likelihood that an urge will result in a purchase ([Budiman, Tanjaya, Zulkarnain, & Rosman, 2023](#); [Vahdat et al., 2021](#)).

Ease of use affects impulsive buying in two ways. It reduces the cognitive effort needed to complete a transaction and the time available for second thoughts ([Escobar-Farfán et al., 2025](#)). A consumer who must enter card details, confirm an address, and navigate several screens has many chances to abandon the purchase process. A consumer who can complete the same purchase with a stored payment method and a single confirmation is almost nonexistent. In this sense, a well-designed application acts as an enabler that converts momentary desires into actions before reflection can intervene.

2.4 Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) as an Intervening Variable

It is worth distinguishing the perceived ease of use from perceived usefulness, the second core construct of TAM. Usefulness concerns whether a system helps a person achieve a goal, whereas ease of use concerns how effortless the system is to operate. In the context of impulsive buying, ease of use is the more relevant construct because impulse purchases are driven less by careful goal pursuit and more by the absence of obstacles at the moment of desire. A useful but cumbersome application may still serve a planned purchase, yet it is the effortless application that most readily turns a fleeting urge into a sale. This is why mobile applications, with stored payment details and persistent log-in, are particularly associated with unplanned buying, as they compress the path from impulse to checkout to a single motion ([Budiman et al., 2023](#); [Vahdat et al., 2021](#)).

FOMO is a form of social anxiety in which a person fears being excluded from rewarding experiences that others enjoy. In the context of consumption, it appears as an emotional drive to participate in trends and seize favorable offers before they disappear ([Asyifa, Hidayah, & Haryanto, 2024](#); [Harahap, Soemitra, & Nawawi, 2023](#)). E-commerce platforms deliberately engineer FoMO through real-time awareness. Messages such as a warning that only two items remain in stock, a counter showing how many people are viewing a product, and live-streamed sales all translate platform design and promotional pressure into a feeling of urgency ([Li et al., 2022](#); [Qu, Khan, Su, Tong, & Zhao, 2023](#)).

Positioned as an intervening variable, FoMO is theorised to carry the influence of price promotion toward impulsive buying ([Ibrahim, Ariyanti, & Iskanto, 2025](#)). A time-bound discount does not act on behavior in a vacuum. It first produces a feeling that the opportunity is slipping away, and this feeling pushes the consumer toward a spontaneous purchase. Treating FoMO as a mediator therefore captures a mechanism that a direct-effect model would miss, and it explains why two consumers facing the same promotion may behave differently depending on how strongly they experience the fear of missing out ([Hao & Huang, 2025](#)).

2.5 Hypotheses Development

FoMO is especially relevant to Generation Z because of how this cohort relates to social media and peer activity ([Hai & Xiong, 2025](#)). Constant connection means that members of this generation are continuously aware of what others are buying, wearing, and experiencing, and this awareness can turn ordinary consumption into a matter of belonging. When a platform signals that a product is popular or that an offer is nearly gone, it taps into a pre-existing sensitivity to social comparison, resulting in a stronger pull toward immediate action. Research on young consumers reports that those who score higher on FoMO tend to engage more in impulsive online buying, and that the effect is amplified by features that make scarcity and popularity visible in real time ([Asyifa et al., 2024](#); [Harahap et al., 2023](#); [T. A. W. Putri & Hapsari, 2024](#)). This pattern strengthens the case for treating FoMO as an organism that links external cues to purchase responses.

Based on the discussion above, four hypotheses are proposed. The first concerns the relationship between price promotion and FoMO. Because time-bound and quantity-bound promotions frame an offer as scarce and fleeting, they are expected to increase anxiety about missing a worthwhile deal ([Al Mutanafisa & Retnaningsih, 2021](#); [Hao & Huang, 2025](#)). Accordingly:

H₁: Price promotion has a positive and significant effect on FoMO

The second hypothesis concerns the ease of application use and impulsive buying. Because a frictionless interface removes the procedural and cognitive barriers that allow for reflection, it is expected to increase the likelihood of unplanned purchases ([Budiman et al., 2023](#); [Davis, 1989](#); [Vahdat et al., 2021](#)). Accordingly:

H₂: Application ease of use has a positive and significant effect on impulsive buying

The third hypothesis concerns the relationship between FoMO and impulsive buying. Because FoMO converts anxiety about exclusion into a drive to act quickly, it is expected to push consumers toward spontaneous purchases ([Li et al., 2022](#); [N. Putri, 2024](#)). Accordingly:

H₃: FoMO has a positive and significant effect on impulsive buying

The fourth hypothesis concerns the mediating role of the FoMO. Because price promotion is expected to raise FoMO and FoMO is expected to raise impulsive buying, the influence of price promotion on impulsive buying is expected to operate, at least in part, through FoMO ([Andrade, Montañez, Salabao, & Gamotin, 2025](#); [Zhang & Rosli, 2025](#)). Accordingly:

H₄: Price promotion has a significant effect on impulsive buying through FoMO as an intervening variable

2.6 Conceptual Framework

The relationships described above are combined in the conceptual framework shown in Figure 1. In this framework, price promotion (X_1) and ease of use (X_2) are independent variables, and FoMO (Z) is the intervening variable on the promotional pathway, and impulsive buying (Y) is the dependent variable. The model captures both a direct route, in which ease of use influences impulsive buying, and an indirect route, in which price promotion influences impulsive buying through FoMO.

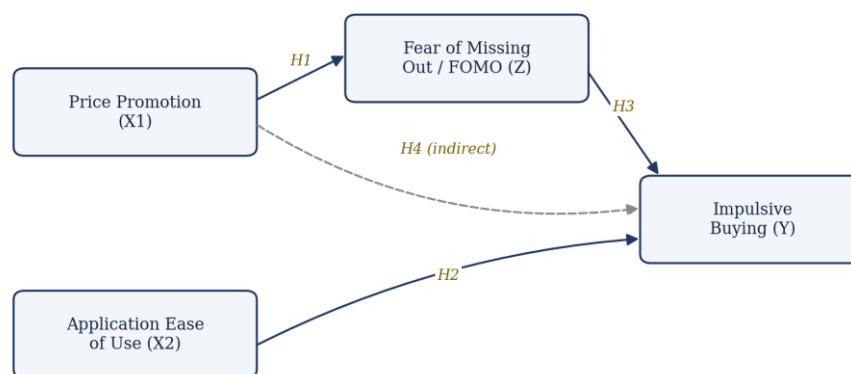


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

3. Methodology

This study is a conceptual paper that uses an integrative literature review to develop a theoretical framework. A conceptual approach is appropriate when the aim is to organize existing knowledge, clarify relationships among constructs, and propose a model that can later be tested. Rather than reporting primary data, this study synthesizes findings from prior empirical and theoretical work and arranges them into a coherent set of hypotheses ([Luft, Jeong, Idsardi, & Gardner, 2022](#)).

3.1 Literature Selection

Articles were gathered from peer-reviewed journals that addressed price promotion, technology acceptance, fear of missing out, and impulsive buying, with particular attention to studies conducted in e-commerce and among younger consumers. Priority was given to recent work and studies that examined the relationships among two or more focal constructs. The selected sources were then compared to identify points of agreement, tension, and gaps that the proposed framework could address.

3.2 Proposed Operationalisation for Future Testing

To prepare the framework for empirical validation, each construct was given an operational definition drawn from established instruments. Price promotion can be measured through perceptions of discount attractiveness, frequency of promotions, and time pressure attached to offers. Application ease of use can be measured through items adapted from TAM, covering navigation, clarity, and effortless payments ([Davis, 1989](#)). FoMO can be measured using items reflecting anxiety about missing deals and the urge to keep up with trends, whereas impulsive buying can be measured using items reflecting spontaneity, urge intensity, and disregard for consequences ([Li et al., 2022](#); [Verplanken & Sato, 2011](#)). All constructs were assessed using a five-point Likert scale.

3.3 Proposed Analysis

For future empirical work, the model is well suited to Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) because it contains an intervening variable and aims to estimate both direct and indirect effects ([Hair et al., 2021](#)). The recommended procedure consists of two stages. The measurement model was first assessed for indicator reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The structural model was then evaluated using path coefficients, bootstrapped t-statistics, the coefficient of determination, and effect sizes, with the indirect effect of price promotion on impulsive buying through FoMO examined to test mediation. A purposive sample of Generation Z e-commerce users, with a size that follows the accepted PLS-SEM guidance, would provide the data.

4. Results and Discussions

The result of this conceptual study is the integrated framework summarised in Figure 1 and Table 1. The discussion below explains the reasoning behind each proposed relationship and draws on prior research to support this. Because this study is conceptual, the propositions are presented as theoretically grounded expectations intended for empirical testing rather than as confirmed findings.

4.1 Price Promotion and FoMO

The link between price promotion and FoMO is based on scarcity. When an offer is framed as limited in time or quantity, it signals that the opportunity may not return, and this signal produces anxiety about being left out of the offer. Studies on flash sales and discount strategies report that time-bound promotions heighten emotional urgency among young consumers, and that this urgency is closely related to the fear of missing a worthwhile deal ([Al Mutanafisa & Retnaningsih, 2021](#); [Andrade et al., 2025](#)). Research on scarcity messages in live-streaming commerce reaches a similar conclusion, finding that the pressure created by limited availability strengthens the impulse to act ([Hao & Huang, 2025](#)). Taken together, this body of work supports the expectation stated in H_1 .

4.2 Application Ease of Use and Impulsive Buying

The link between the ease of application use and impulsive buying follows the logic of TAM. An easy-to-use system reduces the effort required to complete a task and removes the steps at which a consumer might reconsider ([Davis, 1989](#)). Research on mobile applications shows that the perceived ease of use shapes attitudes and behaviors toward purchasing, and that smooth interfaces and one-click payments are associated with a greater tendency to buy on impulse ([Budiman et al., 2023](#); [Vahdat et al., 2021](#)). This implies that usability is not a neutral convenience. It actively shortens the window for reflection and, therefore, supports the expectation stated in H_2 .

4.3 FOMO and Impulsive Buying

The link between FOMO and impulsive buying is well-documented across digital settings. When consumers fear missing out, they are more likely to make quick, unplanned purchases to relieve their anxiety about exclusion. Studies in s-commerce and live-streaming commerce report that FoMO has a positive and significant effect on impulsive buying and that real-time awareness cues amplify this effect ([Asyifa et al., 2024](#); [Li et al., 2022](#); [N. Putri, 2024](#)). This evidence positions FoMO as a proximal emotional driver of spontaneous purchasing and supports the expectation stated in H_3 .

4.4 The Mediating Role of FoMO

The mediating role of FoMO is based on the combination of the previous three relationships. If price promotion raises FoMO and FOMO raises impulsive buying, then part of the effect of price promotion on impulsive buying should travel through FoMO. Several studies that examine promotion and FoMO together report this pattern, finding that the influence of promotional cues on spontaneous purchasing is carried by the urgency that those cues produce ([Andrade et al., 2025](#); [Zhang & Rosli, 2025](#)). This reasoning supports the expectation stated in H_4 and highlights why a mediation model offers a richer account than a model of direct effects. Table 1 presents a summary of the four propositions and their supporting literature.

Table 1. Summary of hypotheses and supporting literature

Code	Proposed Relationship	Key Supporting Studies
H_1	Price promotion positively affects FoMO.	(Al Mutanafisa & Retnaningsih, 2021 ; Andrade et al., 2025 ; Hao & Huang, 2025)
H_2	The ease of application has a positive effect on impulsive buying.	(Budiman et al., 2023 ; Davis, 1989 ; Vahdat et al., 2021)
H_3	FoMO positively affects impulsive buying.	(Asyifa et al., 2024 ; Li et al., 2022 ; N. Putri, 2024)
H_4	FoMO mediates the effect of price promotion on impulsive buying behavior.	(Andrade et al., 2025 ; Zhang & Rosli, 2025)

4.5 Theoretical and Practical Implications

From a theoretical standpoint, this framework contributes to the literature by integrating the Technology Acceptance Model with research on the fear of missing out. Most studies have treated usability and psychological urgency as separate concerns. By placing them within one model, this study suggests that the design of a platform and the marketing presented on it act together and that FoMO is the mechanism that ties promotional pressure to behavior. The framework also responds to calls for impulse-buying research that goes beyond single live-streaming settings by considering price promotion and general application usability.

From a practical standpoint, the framework has implications for managers and those concerned with consumer welfare. For e-commerce managers, this indicates that scarcity-based promotions and easy interfaces are powerful levers and that their combined effect on impulsive buying may be larger than either alone ([Soomro & Habeeb, 2025](#)). For consumer-protection scholars and policymakers, the same mechanism raises concerns because design choices that exploit FoMO can lead young consumers toward spending they may later regret. Therefore, the framework offers a basis for discussing ethical design, such as features that encourage a brief pause before purchase or make spending more transparent ([Moghddam, Carlson, Wyllie, & Rahman, 2024](#)).

The framework is also relevant to the Indonesian e-commerce setting, where a young, mobile-first population engages heavily with marketplaces, social commerce and live-streaming sales. Local studies have reported that promotional cues, PayLater features, and platform design all contribute to impulsive buying among Indonesian Generation Z consumers ([Asyifa et al., 2024](#); [Budiman et al., 2023](#); [Harahap et al., 2023](#)). Placing FoMO at the center of the model helps to explain why these various features point in the same direction, since each of them, in its own way, raises the fear of missing a worthwhile opportunity. For local platforms, this suggests that the competitive advantage created by aggressive promotions and frictionless design carries a parallel responsibility to consider young buyers' welfare.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Conclusion

This study set out to explain how price promotion and application ease of use shape impulsive buying among Generation Z e-commerce users and clarify the role of FoMO as an intervening variable. Through an integrative review of prior research, a four-path framework was developed in which price promotion was expected to raise FoMO, application ease of use and FoMO were each expected to raise impulsive buying, and FoMO was expected to mediate the effect of price promotion on impulsive buying. The central conclusion is that psychological urgency, captured as FoMO, serves as a bridge connecting marketing and technological stimuli to spontaneous purchasing. By integrating the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) with FoMO research, this study contributes a clear and testable account of online impulsive consumption.

5.2 Research Limitations

The main limitation of this study is that it is conceptual and has not yet been validated with primary data; therefore, the proposed relationships remain expectations rather than confirmed results. The framework also focuses on a single generational cohort, which limits its generalization to older

consumers, and considers a focused set of constructs rather than the full range of factors that influence impulsive buying. The reliance on existing literature means that the framework reflects the contexts and measures used in the studies reviewed, which were concentrated in e-commerce and social commerce.

5.3 Suggestions and Directions for Future Research

Future research should test the framework empirically using survey data and PLS-SEM, as outlined in the methodology, to estimate the proposed direct and indirect effects. Future studies could broaden the sample across generations and regions to examine whether the mechanism holds beyond Generation Z and adopt longitudinal or experimental designs to strengthen causal claims. Additional variables, such as hedonic shopping value, social influence, and self-control, could be incorporated to enrich the model in future studies. Comparative studies across platform types, including marketplaces, social commerce, and live-streaming commerce, would also help show how different digital environments shape FoMO and impulsive buying.

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Author Contributions

SM was responsible for the conceptualization, study design, literature review, framework development, manuscript drafting, revision, and final approval of the manuscript.

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