

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON RUNNING OUTFIT PURCHASING DECISIONS WITH FEAR OF MISSING OUT (FOMO) AS A MEDIATING VARIABLE

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of social media on purchasing decisions for running outfits, with Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) as a mediating variable, among running community members in Sangatta, East Kutai Regency. The rapid advancement of digital technology has transformed consumer behavior, particularly through intensive use of social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, which serve as primary channels for product information and marketing promotion. In the context of running sports, social media not only shapes consumer preferences but also triggers the psychological phenomenon of FOMO the anxiety of being left behind in terms of trends and community experiences which may further drive purchasing behavior. This research employs a quantitative approach with purposive sampling. Data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed to one hundred and thirty active running outfit consumers aged eighteen to thirty-five years residing in Sangatta. Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software, grounded in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theoretical framework. The results confirm all four hypotheses. Social media has a positive and significant direct effect on purchasing decisions. Social media also positively and significantly influences the level of FOMO experienced by consumers. FOMO, in turn, has a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions and emerges as the most dominant predictor in the model. Finally, FOMO significantly mediates the relationship between social media and purchasing decisions, indicating that social media influences purchasing behavior not only directly but also through the psychological mechanism of FOMO. These findings contribute to the digital marketing literature in developing regions of Eastern Indonesia and provide practical insights for sportswear businesses in leveraging social media content strategies effectively.

Keywords: *Social Media, Purchasing Decision, Running Outfit, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has fundamentally transformed consumer behavior, particularly through the intensification of social media use in everyday life. Kemp (2024) affirms that global social media users have surpassed 5.17 billion, with individuals spending an average of more than two hours per day across various digital platforms. This transformation has shifted the marketing paradigm from a one-way communication model to a multidirectional interaction that actively engages consumers. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook are extensively utilized by businesses to showcase products through compelling visual content, user reviews, and influencer-based promotions. In Indonesia specifically, data from We Are Social and Hootsuite Digital (2025) reveal that YouTube and Facebook each command 143 million monthly active users, followed by TikTok with 108 million and Instagram with 103 million users, underscoring the enormous potential of social media as a marketing and promotional channel.

Consumers are increasingly exposed to product information through social media, which significantly influences their attitudes, perceptions, and purchase decisions (Lim et al., 2022). This influence is further reinforced by the growing consumer trust in digital recommendations, as content shared by fellow users and content creators is perceived as more authentic than conventional advertising (Kotler et al., 2021). In this context, social media has evolved into a marketing ecosystem that not only shortens the distance between producers and consumers but also creates a more personalized, interactive, and community based shopping experience. Understanding the influence of

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social media on consumer behavior has therefore become increasingly crucial for businesses seeking to design effective and adaptive marketing strategies in the digital era (Yang, 2024; Morshed & Hoque, 2025). One product category that has experienced significant growth in consumer interest is running outfit or running apparel. The rising public awareness of healthy lifestyles has made running a widespread trend, including in Sangatta, the capital city of East Kutai Regency, East Kalimantan. According to Statista (2024), the global sportswear market is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7.2% through 2027, driven by increased active lifestyles and post-pandemic health consciousness. In Sangatta specifically, local running outfit sales exhibited notable fluctuations over recent years: a 3% decline in 2020 due to pandemic-related mobility restrictions; a recovery of 8% growth in 2021 with the emergence of new running communities; a 12% increase in 2022 as community activities intensified; a 20% surge in 2023 driven by fun-run events; a peak of 35% growth in 2024 as local UMKM leveraged e-commerce and social media; and a sustained 15% growth in 2025 amid the expansion of local brands and running festivals (BPS Kutai Timur, 2025). This trajectory clearly indicates that consumer purchasing decisions for running outfits in Sangatta are not merely driven by economic factors but are also shaped by social influence, community activities, and social media exposure.

Alongside the direct influence of social media on purchase decisions, a psychological phenomenon known as Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) has emerged as a significant behavioral driver. FOMO refers to the pervasive fear of being left out of rewarding trends, information, or experiences enjoyed by others (Rachminda et al., 2025). In the context of consumer behavior, Hisbullah et al. (2023) describe FOMO as the tendency to purchase products or services out of the concern of missing out on popular experiences, even when such products may not align with personal needs or preferences. Within the context of running communities, social media content featuring influencers, fellow runners, and peers showcasing the latest running outfits can trigger FOMO, compelling individuals to purchase similar products to avoid feeling socially excluded. Noer et al. (2024) confirm that the more frequently individuals encounter product-related posts on social media, the greater the intensity of FOMO experienced, ultimately amplifying the drive to make purchases. This study is grounded in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Theory originally developed by Hovland in 1953 (Suryadi, 2023). The SOR model provides a framework explaining how external stimuli such as promotional campaigns and influencer content on social media interact with an individual's internal psychological states (organism) to produce specific behavioral responses (Jannah et al., 2024). Within this framework, FOMO functions as a mediating psychological variable that bridges the external stimulus of social media exposure and the consumer response of purchase decision-making. The application of the SOR model is particularly apt for this study, as it elucidates how psychological mechanisms such as FOMO shape consumer behavior and influence the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies.

Prior empirical studies have established a substantial relationship between social media, FOMO, and consumer purchase decisions. Borshalina et al. (2022) found that FOMO exerts a significant influence on purchase decisions, while Wulan and Widiastuti (2025) confirmed that FOMO significantly mediates the relationship between social media advertising and impulsive purchase decisions. Agustin et al. (2025) similarly demonstrated that FOMO serves as a strong mediator between advertising content value and purchase decisions. Hanushya and Mitra (2025) further revealed that increased time spent on visually rich social media platforms intensifies FOMO, which in turn amplifies impulsive buying behavior. Conversely, Permana et al. (2025) found that FOMO does not mediate the influence of social media on purchase decisions, indicating a significant research gap regarding the consistency of FOMO's mediating role across different product categories, consumer segments, and geographic contexts. This inconsistency in findings suggests the need for further investigation, particularly in developing regions such as Sangatta, East Kutai, which remain underexplored in the existing literature.

The specific context of Sangatta presents a unique setting for examining these dynamics. As the administrative capital of East Kutai Regency, Sangatta is home to a growing and digitally active running community whose members extensively utilize social media platforms particularly Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp community groups to share running experiences, product reviews, and outfit recommendations. The geographic limitations of the city, including restricted access to specialist running gear retail outlets compared to larger cities such as Samarinda or Balikpapan, render social media the primary channel for product information and purchasing decisions. The presence of prominent mining industry activities has also generated relatively high per-capita income levels, creating a consumer base with sufficient purchasing power and openness to lifestyle trends. Against this backdrop, social media exposure and FOMO driven psychology may play pivotal roles in shaping purchase decisions for running outfits among community members in Sangatta.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) Theory

The theoretical foundation underpinning this study is the Stimulus Organism Response (SOR) Theory, originally developed by Hovland in 1953 and subsequently adopted in communication and consumer behavior research (Suryadi, 2023). The SOR model posits that external environmental stimuli act upon an individual's internal psychological states to produce observable behavioral responses. In explaining human behavior, the model involves three interacting dimensions: cognitive (thinking), affective (feeling), and conative (action), which together constitute an individual's response to received stimuli (Suryadi et al., 2023).

Applied to the digital consumption context, the SOR framework provides a robust lens for interpreting how social media content as an external stimulus influences a consumer's psychological state, ultimately shaping behavioral outcomes such as purchase decisions. As Jannah et al. (2024) explain, when applied to the FOMO phenomenon, the model elucidates FOMO's role as a mediating variable within the organism stage, channeling the effect of external stimuli such as promotional campaigns or influencer content on social media toward consumer responses such as purchase intention. This tripartite structure makes the SOR model particularly suited for examining the sequential pathway from social media exposure (stimulus) through FOMO (organism) to purchase decision (response), which forms the structural backbone of this study.

2. Social Media

Social media has been variously defined in the literature as a set of internet-based applications enabling users to create, share, and exchange content, facilitating two-way interaction without spatial or temporal limitations (Yang, 2024). Morshed and Hoque (2025) describe social media as tools and platforms that allow individuals to share thoughts, insights, experiences, and perspectives with one another, while Noer et al. (2024) emphasize its role in enabling participation and collaboration across diverse activities. Collectively, these definitions converge on social media as a dynamic digital ecosystem characterized by high interactivity, user-generated content, rapid information dissemination, and community formation.

The literature identifies several characteristics of social media that are particularly consequential for consumer behavior: participation, openness, conversation, community, connectedness, user-generated content, viral information spread, and high interactivity (Yang, 2024). These characteristics collectively create an environment in which consumers are continuously exposed to product information, peer recommendations, and aspirational lifestyle content all of which can shape preferences and trigger purchase intentions. The commercial functions of social media extend beyond information sharing to encompass social interaction, entertainment, and online shopping facilitation (Yang, 2024). The operational indicators of social media in this study, as adopted from Putri et al. (2025), include: availability of engaging informative content, relational bonding between consumers and sellers, consumer-to-consumer interaction, product information seeking, ease of information dissemination, and platform credibility.

3. Purchase Decision

Purchase decision is defined in the consumer behavior literature as the process by which an individual determines which product or service to buy, based on personal needs, expectations, and evaluations of available alternatives (Aprelyani, 2023). Fauziah et al. (2025) describe it as the behavioral process whereby consumers decide whether to purchase a product or service to satisfy their needs, while Suhartini and Maharani (2023) characterize it as the act of selecting a product from multiple alternatives driven by a propensity toward a specific choice. These definitions collectively emphasize that purchase decisions are deliberate, process-oriented, and influenced by a multiplicity of internal and external factors.

Tjiptono, as cited in Pratiwi et al. (2023), identifies key factors influencing purchase decisions through four dimensions of value: emotional value (positive affect derived from product consumption), social value (enhanced social self-concept), quality value (reduction of costs), and functional value (utility provided by product attributes). These dimensions are particularly relevant to running outfit consumption, where products serve simultaneously as functional gear, social identity markers, and symbols of community membership. Empirically, purchase decisions are measured through indicators developed by Fauziah et al. (2025), encompassing: product type decision (category selection aligned with needs), brand decision (selection among competing brands), quantity decision (number of units purchased), and timing decision (when to make the purchase based on urgency, financial conditions, and promotional events).

4. Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is a psychological phenomenon characterized by the pervasive apprehension of being excluded from rewarding experiences, trends, or information enjoyed by others (Rachminda et al., 2025). Noer et al. (2024) define FOMO as the fear arising when an individual believes that others are enjoying pleasurable events or experiences from which they are absent. Hisbullah et al. (2023) further note that FOMO in a marketing context refers to the tendency to purchase products or services driven not by genuine need but by the anxiety of missing a popular or trending experience even when it may not align with the individual's actual preferences or financial capacity. In practice, FOMO in marketing makes consumers take impulsive decisions quickly because of social anxiety, the need for recognition, and the desire not to fall behind.

The sub-dimensions of FOMO relevant to consumer behavior, as modified by Intan et al. (2024), include: need to belong (motivation to form and sustain social relationships), need for popularity (desire to be perceived as socially current), anxiety (emotional discomfort arising from disconnection or non-participation in ongoing experiences), and addiction (a compulsive drive to remain continually engaged with social activities and trends). At the individual level, low self-control, low self-esteem, a high need to belong, and social comparison behavior are strong predictors of FOMO intensity (Saputra et al., 2025). At the environmental level, social media dependency, peer group influence, and repeated exposure to aspirational lifestyle content significantly amplify FOMO. Borshalina et al. (2022) operationalize FOMO through three primary indicators: fear (emotional threat of disconnection from events or conversations), concern (the feeling of having missed an enjoyable experience shared by others), and anxiety (emotional discomfort resulting from non-participation in ongoing events).

5. Hypothesis Development

5.1 The Influence of Social Media on Purchase Decisions

Social media has emerged as one of the most influential marketing communication channels shaping modern consumer behavior. Consumers who are active on social media are continually exposed to product information, user reviews, influencer-generated content, and trending visual narratives all of which collectively shape their perceptions, preferences, and, ultimately, their purchase decisions (Lim et al., 2022). In the context of running outfit consumption, social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube function as the primary arena in which the running community shares experiences, product recommendations, and aspirational content about running gear, enabling consumers to gather extensive product knowledge before committing to a purchase (Luo et al., 2023).

H1: Social media has a positive and significant influence on running outfit purchase decisions among consumers in Sangatta, East Kutai.

5.2 The Influence of Social Media on FOMO

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is fundamentally a socially constructed psychological experience, shaped in large part by the degree to which an individual is exposed to the activities, achievements, and consumption patterns of others (Rachminda et al., 2025). Social media platforms create environments of pervasive social comparison, where users are repeatedly confronted with curated portrayals of peers and influencers enjoying experiences, possessing desirable products, or participating in trending activities (Saputra et al., 2025). This continuous exposure generates a psychological awareness of what others have or are experiencing, which in turn produces the fear of being left out the defining characteristic of FOMO (Noer et al., 2024).

H2: Social media has a positive and significant influence on Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among running outfit consumers in Sangatta, East Kutai.

5.3 The Influence of FOMO on Purchase Decisions

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) represents a powerful psychological driver of consumer behavior, particularly in contexts where social comparison and trend-consciousness are salient. Consumers experiencing high levels of FOMO tend to be more impulsive in their purchase behavior, more susceptible to limited-time offers, and more likely to make rapid decisions without thorough deliberation motivated by the anxiety of losing out on a popular trend or experience (Hisbullah et al., 2023). In the running apparel domain, FOMO manifests as the compulsion to purchase the latest running outfit that peers or community leaders are wearing, driven not primarily by functional necessity but by the psychological need to remain current, socially included, and not visibly left behind (Rachminda et al., 2025).

H3: Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) has a positive and significant influence on running outfit purchase decisions among consumers in Sangatta, East Kutai.

5.4 The Mediating Role of FOMO in the Relationship between Social Media and Purchase Decisions

While the direct influence of social media on purchase decisions has been well-established in the literature (Yang, 2024; Morshed & Hoque, 2025), an emerging body of research suggests that this relationship is not solely direct but is also substantially mediated by the psychological mechanism of FOMO. Within the SOR theoretical framework, social media exposure (stimulus) does not automatically produce purchase behavior (response); rather, it first activates internal psychological processes within the consumer (organism) chiefly, the fear of being left out of trending experiences or products which then drive the behavioral response of purchase decision-making. FOMO thus functions as the critical mechanism through which social media's persuasive power is translated into consumer action (Borshalina et al., 2022).

H4: Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) significantly mediates the positive influence of social media on running outfit purchase decisions among consumers in Sangatta, East Kutai.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design aimed at analyzing causal relationships between variables through hypothesis testing (Sugiyono, 2022). Data were collected via questionnaire distributed through Google Form to 130 respondents running outfit consumers in Sangatta aged 18–35 years who actively use social media and have purchased running outfits online. The sample size was determined using Hair et al.'s (2018) formula: $13 \text{ indicators} \times 10 = 130 \text{ respondents}$, selected through purposive sampling.

The research instrument used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The questionnaire measured three variables: Social Media (X) with 6 indicators, Purchasing Decision (Y) with 4 indicators, and FOMO (Z) with 3 indicators. Data analysis was performed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) through SmartPLS software, evaluating both the measurement model (outer model: convergent validity, discriminant validity, composite reliability) and the structural model (inner model: R-square, Q-square, and hypothesis testing via bootstrapping).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

Of 130 respondents, 71.5% were female. The dominant age group was 26–30 years and 31–35 years (each 33.8%). Regarding marital status, 60.8% were married. By occupation, 34.6% were civil servants (PNS). Most respondents (43.1%) earned Rp 4,000,000–Rp 6,999,999 per month. TikTok was the most used social media platform (56.2%), followed by Instagram (31.5%). The most common purchase frequency was 2–3 times per month (40%).

Measurement Model (Outer Model)

Table 1 presents the convergent validity results. All indicators showed outer loading values above 0.70, confirming validity (Ghozali & Latan, 2015).

Table 1. Convergent Validity (Loading Factor)

Variable	Indicator	Loading Factor	Status
Social Media (X)	X1.1	0.849	Valid
	X1.2	0.832	Valid
	X1.3	0.858	Valid
	X1.4	0.880	Valid
	X1.5	0.870	Valid
	X1.6	0.800	Valid
Purchasing Decision (Y)	Y1.1	0.854	Valid
	Y1.2	0.834	Valid
	Y1.3	0.922	Valid
	Y1.4	0.822	Valid
FOMO (Z)	Z1.1	0.843	Valid
	Z1.2	0.863	Valid
	Z1.3	0.907	Valid

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2026

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Table 2. AVE and Composite Reliability

Variable	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Status
Social Media (X)	0.759	0.841	0.904	Reliable & Valid
Purchasing Decision (Y)	0.738	0.881	0.918	Reliable & Valid
FOMO (Z)	0.720	0.922	0.939	Reliable & Valid

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2026

All AVE values exceeded 0.50 and all composite reliability values exceeded 0.70, confirming the validity and reliability of all constructs.

Structural Model (Inner Model)

Table 3. R-Square Values

Variable	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted	Category
Purchasing Decision (Y)	0.346	0.351	Moderate
FOMO (Z)	0.531	0.524	Moderate

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2026

The Q-square value was calculated as $Q^2 = 1 - (1 - 0.346)(1 - 0.531) = 0.877$, indicating very strong predictive relevance of the model. The model explains approximately 87% of variation in the endogenous variables.

Hypothesis Testing Results

Table 4. Direct Effect Results

Hypothesis	Path	Coefficient	T-Statistic	P-Value	Result
H1	Social Media → Purchasing Decision	0.520	7.431	0.000	Accepted
H2	Social Media → FOMO	0.571	8.944	0.000	Accepted
H3	FOMO → Purchasing Decision	0.592	4.032	0.000	Accepted

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2026

Table 5. Indirect Effect (Mediation) Results

Hypothesis	Path	Coefficient	T-Statistic	P-Value	Result
H4	Social Media → FOMO → Purchasing Decision	0.168	3.406	0.001	Accepted

Source: SmartPLS Output, 2026

H1: Social Media → Purchasing Decision

Social media exerts a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions ($\beta = 0.520$, $t = 7.431$, $p < 0.05$), confirming H1. This finding aligns with Yang (2024), who found that social media significantly shapes consumer purchasing behavior. Morshed and Hoque (2025) further confirmed that social media use and influencer roles have strong positive correlations with purchasing decisions. In the Sangatta context, platform usage through Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp community groups has become the primary channel for running outfit information, directly shaping consumer preferences and decisions.

H2: Social Media → FOMO

Social media significantly and positively influences FOMO ($\beta = 0.571$, $t = 8.944$, $p < 0.05$), confirming H2. Hanushya and Mitra (2025) established that more time spent on visually rich social media leads to stronger FOMO experiences. Pika et al. (2026) confirmed that social media marketing positively affects FOMO. In Sangatta's running community, constant exposure to premium running outfit content and community event posts on Instagram and TikTok creates persistent feelings of being left behind, strengthening FOMO among consumers.

H3: FOMO → Purchasing Decision

FOMO has the strongest positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions among all paths in the model ($\beta = 0.592$, $t = 4.032$, $p < 0.05$), confirming H3. Wulan and Widiastuti (2025) found that FOMO significantly influences impulsive purchase decisions. Martinez and Robledo (2024) demonstrated that strong FOMO accelerates sportswear purchase decisions. In Sangatta's running community, where social belonging and identity are closely

tied to running gear, FOMO operates as a powerful psychological trigger that converts social media exposure into actual purchasing behavior.

H4: Social Media → FOMO → Purchasing Decision (Mediation)

FOMO significantly mediates the relationship between social media and purchasing decisions ($\beta = 0.168$, $t = 3.406$, $p = 0.001$), confirming H4. The direct effect (0.520) remains significant alongside the indirect path, indicating partial mediation. This is consistent with Ghinarahima and Idulfilastri (2024), who found R^2 increased from 33.6% to 49.3% when FOMO was introduced as a mediator. Agustin et al. (2025) and Pika et al. (2026) also confirmed FOMO's role as a significant mediator. The mediation mechanism demonstrates that social media first triggers FOMO in consumers, and this heightened FOMO subsequently drives purchasing decisions particularly relevant in Sangatta where limited physical store access makes online purchase through FOMO-triggering social media content even more influential.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that: (1) Social media positively and significantly influences purchasing decisions for running outfits in Sangatta, Kutai Timur; (2) Social media positively and significantly influences FOMO among running outfit consumers; (3) FOMO positively and significantly influences running outfit purchasing decisions, with the strongest effect among all tested paths; and (4) FOMO significantly and positively mediates the relationship between social media and purchasing decisions.

These findings confirm that social media operates through both direct (informational) and indirect (psychological-emotional via FOMO) pathways to drive purchasing behavior. For running outfit businesses in Sangatta, strategic social media content creation that incorporates community lifestyle, product reviews, and event promotions will be highly effective. Marketing strategies that activate FOMO through limited-edition offers, exclusive event promotions, and community trend highlights can accelerate purchasing decisions. Future research should examine the differential effects of specific platforms (Instagram vs. TikTok) and include additional variables such as influencer marketing, brand image, or social identity.

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