

THE EFFECT OF FEAR OF MISSING OUT (FOMO) AS AN INDICATOR OF VIRAL PRODUCT PURCHASE DECISIONS BY HEDONICALLY ORIENTED STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the influence of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and hedonic orientation on the purchasing decisions of viral products among college students. The main issue raised is how the psychosocial dynamics of college students in the digital era affect impulsive consumption patterns, especially when exposed to viral trends on social media. This study uses a quantitative explanatory approach with a questionnaire survey method supported by literature studies. The research sample consists of active social media students who have purchased viral products. The results of the study show that both FOMO and hedonic orientation have a significant simultaneous influence on purchasing decisions of viral products, with hedonic orientation having a greater influence than FOMO. This finding is different from several previous studies that highlight the dominance of FOMO. This study confirms that college students' consumption motivation is more influenced by the search for pleasure and emotional satisfaction than simply anxiety about being left behind. The implication of these results is the need for a digital marketing strategy that emphasizes the emotional experience aspect, as well as the development of rational consumption literacy for the younger generation amidst the ever-growing flow of viral trends.

Keywords: *Fomo, Hedonism, Viral Products, Consumer Behavior, Students*

INTRODUCTION

The expansion of digital platforms has created a significant transformation in the contemporary consumption ecosystem, giving rise to the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) phenomenon which is increasingly strengthening among hedonistic-oriented students. This psychological manifestation encourages students to participate in the trend of consuming viral products, often not based on functional needs, but rather on the desire for existence and emotional pleasure. Products that are popular on social media such as TikTok, Instagram are often acquired in response to social pressure and the urge to participate in dominant trends. The significance of this study lies in the effort to understand the mechanism of the influence of FoMO and hedonic orientation on the decision to purchase viral products, as well as its implications for marketing strategies and rational consumption literacy in the digital era. By identifying the reactive consumption patterns of students, this study is expected to be the basis for developing educational and ethical interventions in digital consumption behavior.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The construct of FOMO as a psychological phenomenon was scientifically introduced by Przybylski et al. (2013) who characterized it as acute anxiety when individuals feel excluded from valuable experiences enjoyed by others. In the realm of consumer behavior, Abel et al. (2016) identified that FOMO can be a significant driver of unplanned transactions as a form of social adaptation to growing trends in the digital space. Empirical investigation conducted by Hodgkinson (2019) revealed a significant relationship between FOMO and impulsive consumption patterns, with a higher prevalence in young consumer groups. This finding is supported by Aydın's (2020) research

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which documented that exposure to viral content on digital platforms substantially increases the psychological urge to make a purchase, even though the product has no relevance to the consumer's fundamental needs. Hedonistic consumption orientation, as conceptualized by Hirschman and Holbrook (1982), is the tendency to prioritize aspects of pleasure, fantasy, and emotional experience in the product acquisition process. Arnold and Reynolds (2003) found that consumers with hedonistic preferences showed higher susceptibility to emotional stimuli such as FOMO because of their priority on the symbolic and experiential dimensions over the utilitarian function of the product. Despite the substantial accumulation of research on FOMO and consumption patterns, integrative exploration linking FOMO, the viral product phenomenon, and hedonistic consumer segmentation in one analytical framework is still limited. Most previous studies have not comprehensively examined how the contemporary digital platform ecology acts as an accelerator of FOMO with its massive and rapid penetration characteristics. This study attempts to bridge the literature gap by focusing on the student population as a relevant representation in the dynamics of viral product consumption. The contribution of this study includes theoretical and practical dimensions in understanding digital consumer psychology and developing ethical and responsible marketing strategies.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative explanatory method based on a questionnaire supported by literature studies (secondary data). Primary data were collected through online questionnaires, while secondary data were obtained from related scientific journals. A multiple linear regression model was used to test the effect of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and hedonic orientation (independent variables) on the decision to purchase viral products (dependent variable) in students. Theoretically, this study is based on the findings of Diana Sari et al. (2024) which states that FOMO in students encourages involvement in consumptive behavior that is not always based on functional needs, but on existential drives in social media. Saputri et al. (2023) showed that hedonic orientation is a significant psychological variable in encouraging impulsive buying among students. Meanwhile, Manilang et al. (2025) explained that digital consumption is often influenced by social validation, self-image, and the appeal of viral trends.

Code	Variables	type	Number Indicators	of Scale
X1	Fear of Missing Out	Independent	5	Likert 1-5
X2	Hedonistic Orientation	Independent	5	Likert 1-5
Y	Buying decision	Independent	5	Likert 1-5

Image:Research Variables

The research instrument was a questionnaire consisting of three main variables: FOMO, hedonic orientation, and purchasing decisions. Validity tests showed that all items in the FOMO and hedonic orientation variables were valid, while two items in the purchasing decision variable were invalid ($r\text{-count} < r\text{-table}$). All items were still used in the analysis to maintain instrument consistency, and this was noted as a limitation of the study. Reliability tests showed that all variables had a Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.7 so that they were declared reliable.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents Based on Faculty

Faculty	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Economics and Business (FEB)	20	32.26
Social Sciences and Political Sciences	15	24.19
Medical	10	16.13
Law	9	14.52
Education	8	12.90

The study population was students from various faculties in the university environment, with a purposive sampling technique based on the following criteria: active on social media, having purchased viral products, and

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showing emotional consumer tendencies. A total of 62 questionnaires were collected via Google Form, but after verification of completeness and validity, only 51 data were analyzed. The distribution of respondents included the Faculties of Economics and Business (32.26%), Social and Political Sciences (24.19%), Medicine (16.13%), Law (14.52%), and Education (12.90%). The research instrument consisted of 5 FOMO indicators (Diana Sari et al., 2024), 5 hedonic indicators (Saputri et al., 2023), and 5 purchasing decision indicators (Manilang et al., 2025), using a Likert scale of 1–5. Validity and reliability tests were conducted prior to the main analysis; two items in the purchasing decision variable were found to be invalid, but were still used with the note that they were research limitations. Data analysis was performed using the latest version of SPSS.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to examine the influence of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and hedonic orientation on the purchasing decisions of viral products by students. Based on the results of multiple linear regression, it was found that both independent variables have a significant influence, both partially and simultaneously, on the dependent variable. This finding strengthens the results of previous studies and provides the latest empirical evidence regarding the dynamics of student consumer behavior in the digital era.

Table 1. Validity Test

Statement Items	r-count	r-table	Information
Fomo_1 to Fomo_5	0.38-0.58	0.254	Valid
Hedonist_1 to 5	0.32-0.52	0.254	Valid
Decision_3&5	0.18-0.27	0.254	Invalid

Validity Test Results show that most of the items in the research instrument are declared valid because the r-count value is $>$ r-table (0.254). All items in the FOMO and hedonic orientation variables are declared valid, while two items in the purchasing decision variable (items 3 and 5) are invalid. However, all items are still used in the analysis with the note as a limitation of the study.

Table 2. Reliability Test

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Information
Fool	0.78	Reliable
Hedonistic Orientation	0.74	Reliable
Buying decision	0.80	Reliable

The results of the Reliability Test show that all research variables have a Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.7, which indicates that the internal consistency of the instrument is very good. This means that each construct - both FOMO, hedonic orientation, and purchasing decisions - has a high level of reliability in measuring the behavior and tendencies of respondents. Thus, the instruments used are worthy of being maintained for further statistical analysis.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Test

	Fool	Buying decision
Fool	1	-0.152
Buying decision	-0.152	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	-	0.286
N	51	51

The results of the Pearson Correlation Test showed that there was no significant relationship between FoMo and the decision to purchase viral products in students ($r = -0.152$; $p = 0.286$).

Table 4. Multiple Linear Regression Test (t-Test)

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Variables	Coefficient (b)	t-count	Sig. (p)	Information
Fool (X1)	0.234	3.51	0.001	Significant
Hedonist (X2)	0.389	5.12	0,000	Significant

The results of the Multiple Linear Regression Test (t-TEST) show that both FOMO and hedonic orientation have a significant effect on the decision to purchase viral products simultaneously. Hedonic orientation has a greater influence than FOMO.

Table 5. F Test and Determination Coefficient

F-count	F-table	Sig.	R2	Information
20.78	-	0,000	0.372	Significant regression model

The results of the F-Test and Determination Coefficient show that the overall regression model is significant (F-count = 20.78; $p < 0.05$) and can explain 37.2% of the variation in purchasing decisions through the FOMO and hedonic orientation variables.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze the influence of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and hedonic orientation on the purchasing decision of viral products in college students, as described in the introduction. Based on the results of the validity test, most of the instrument items were declared valid ($r\text{-count} > r\text{-table } 0.254$), although two items in the purchasing decision variable (K3 and K5) were invalid and needed further evaluation. The reliability test showed that all variables had high internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha > 0.7), so the instrument was suitable for use.

The results of the Pearson correlation analysis showed that there was no significant direct relationship between FOMO and purchasing decisions ($r = -0.152$; $p = 0.286$). However, through multiple linear regression tests, it was found that both FoMO ($b = 0.234$; $p = 0.001$) and hedonic orientation ($b = 0.389$; $p = 0.000$) had a significant simultaneous effect on purchasing decisions for viral products, with hedonic orientation having a greater influence. The regression model built was able to explain 37.2% of the variation in students' purchasing decisions.

The difference in results shows that, compared to the reference research that emphasizes the dominance of FOMO, in the context of student respondents in this study, the hedonic aspect is more dominant in driving the decision to purchase viral products. The practical implication of this finding is the importance of developing a digital marketing strategy that emphasizes the pleasure and emotional experience aspects of young consumers. For future development, the results of this study can be the basis for a rational consumption literacy campaign and the development of digital education services that balance the emotional needs and rational considerations of students in shopping in the era of viral trends.

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