

## **"Swipe, Click, Buy: The Role of FOMO Marketing and Emotional Arousal in FMCG Impulse Purchases in India's Digital Era"**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) in the digital commerce to quickly evolve due to Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) marketing and the emotion arousal. This is a conceptual paper that examines the trade-off between India's digital economy FOMO marketing, emotional arousal, and impulse purchase behaviour. We draw from existing literature and propose a theoretical model relating these constructs and their effect on the consumer decision making. The paper then merges the theories, such as Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) & Self Control Theory, to explain the integrated effect of digital marketing tactics on impulsive buying behaviours. This study provides strategic insights for marketers that seek ways of boosting digital engagement and converting consumers.

Keywords: FOMO Marketing, FMCG, Consumer behaviour, ELM, Self-control theory, Impulse buying behaviour.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of digital commerce and social media has altered shopping behaviour of the consumers greatly, especially in the realm of the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry. Psychological triggers shape the online purchase decisions through impulsive digital marketing tactics which tend to rely on Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) (Przybylski et al., 2013). According to Oxford's learners dictionary, FOMO means "a feeling of worry that an interesting and exciting event is happening somewhere else".

In the past, impulse buying has been extensively studied in traditional retail contexts (Rook, 1987). Yet, during the era of digital, it doesn't just deal with impulse purchases but real time notifications, endorsements by influencers, and recommendations based on algorithms all combined to make the situation of heightened emotional arousal (Luo, 2005). And FOMO marketing profits off consumer fear of missing out on deals, time sensitive discounts and trending products, making up for an unplanned purchase (Hodkinson, 2019). The link between FOMO marketing and impulse buying behaviour is mediated by emotional arousal (whereas heightened states of excitement and urgency), in line with Bailey et al. (2003). This is consistent with Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) finding that consumers process marketing messages through central (deliberate) and peripheral (impulsive driven) routes (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

The issue of these digital marketing strategies comes during India's growing internet user base that is forecasted to rise to 1.1 billion (Statista, 2023). The main goal of this paper is to introduce this important marketing concept of FOMO marketing market and emotional arousal to illustrate how they influence impulse buying behaviour in India's digital FMCG landscape. Using psychological and consumer behaviour theories, this study provides an answer of how marketers can best digital strategies for better engagement and sales conversion to the consumers.

## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To conceptually explore the role of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) marketing in shaping impulse buying behaviour within the digital FMCG space in India.
- To investigate the mediating role of emotional arousal in the relationship between FOMO marketing and consumer impulse purchases.
- To integrate the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) and Self-Control Theory in explaining consumer susceptibility to impulsive buying under digital marketing stimuli.
- To propose a conceptual framework that links FOMO marketing, emotional arousal, and impulse buying through theoretical grounding.

## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 4.1 FOMO Marketing and Impulse Buying

As much as fear of missing out (FOMO) marketing can be considered an essential tool in digital commerce, it involves resorting to scarcity, urgency, and social influence to stimulate consumer behaviour (Hodkinson, 2019). According to studies, FOMO marketing works by creating a psychological discomfort in the consumers through stimulating the

urge of action impulsively (Przybylski et al., 2013). FOMO marketing is highly effective in online retail contexts where limited time offers, exclusive product drops, countdown timers serve to create the illusion of urgency and further raise the impulse buy (Hoyer et al., 2020).

Although FOMO exists, research has shown that the effect is magnified by the real time posting of purchase experiences, reviews, and endorser endorsements on social media platforms (Pentina & Taylor, 2020). This is consistent with Social Comparison Theory that consumers compare their own purchases with their peers (Festinger, 1954). Therefore, the social validation is perceived, which in turn reinforces impulsive purchase behaviours more so in younger digital consumers (Dhir et al., 2021).

FOMO marketing also ties closely to Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) that states how consumers process persuasive messages. Consumers who are not as much involved with the content are at a higher propensity to engage in peripheral processing, where they rely less on rational decision making and more so on emotional cues (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). In addition, studies also show that the effect of high arousal emotions such as anxiety and excitement on the consumer response to FOMO messaging is significantly related to the force to purchase (Luo, 2005).

In view of the growing role of technology for India, marketers must understand the implications of the intersection between FOMO marketing and impulse buying. Through real time engagement tactics, personalized recommendations, social proof mechanisms, brands can strategically drive conversions and keep consumer relationships long term (Chatterjee & Kumar, 2022).

The recent comprehensive reviews about FOMO have not only dealt with their psychological and emotional aspects but also expanded the meaning of behaviour dimensions. Tandon et al. (2021) witnessed the change in FOMO from social exclusion anxiety to an adjunct to digital engagement and compulsive behaviours in media consumption. Their study corroborates that the unmet psychological needs, such as relatedness and autonomy, underlie FOMO and how emotional arousal works according to consumer behaviour theories. Hence, this theoretical precedence can prove that campaigns of digital FMCG may make consumers more vulnerable to impulsive acts by steepening the emotional cues and salience of the social comparison processes.

Further according to Rozgonjuk et al. (2020), FOMO directly predicts social media use disorder, which mediates the negative effects of social media on daily life and efficiency. Findings from the latter study also attest to the proposition that FOMO not only results in emotional reactions but motivates compulsive and unregulated behaviours that stem from the incapacity of the users to resist digital stimuli. FOMO marketing schemes may be important in enhancing the decreased self-regulation independent of rational processing mechanism central to the Elaboration Likelihood Model and Self-Control Theory.

#### **4.2 Emotional Arousal in Consumer Behaviour**

Especially in the case of impulse buying, emotional arousal is tremendously important in influencing consumer behaviour. Physiological and psychological arousal often precedes spontaneous purchasing behaviours when decision making is influenced (a term known as arousal; Baumeister, 2002). In marketing, high aroused emotions like excitement, urgency and anxiety enhance the consumers' susceptibility to impulse purchasing of persuasive stimuli (Luo, 2005).

Limited time offers and flash sales are found in research to generate emotional arousal by digital marketing strategies (Dholakia, 2000). These emotions can interfere with cognitive deliberation and result in their inability to exercise self-control thereby increasing likelihood of unplanned purchase (Vohs and Faber, 2007). Furthermore, studies demonstrate that arousal elicited from social media interaction, e.g., envy or excitement of peer purchases, will further enhance arousal and lead to impulsive consumer activity (Hoyer et al., 2020).

ELM is in line with the role of emotional arousal in which consumers are more likely to rely on peripheral cues when they are emotionally aroused (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Marketers will have a better understanding of emotional arousal and how to target emotional reappraisals in consumer behaviour to manipulate impulsive tendency for shopping and maximize their engagement as well as conversion rate in consumer behaviour.

#### **4.3 FOMO Marketing and FMCG**

FOMO marketing has played an important role in leading the impulse buying behaviour in the FMCGs sector that is typically bought in an instant due to emotional triggers. Research has also proven that FOMO works and there are other ways that FMCG brands leverage FOMO to push sales through limited time promotions, flash sales and influencer driven trends (Gogoi, 2021).

In the digital commerce landscape in India, FOMO marketing is influential especially in the categories of snack, beverage, and personal care products, given that the consumer switching of preferences is driven rapidly by social media trends and peer influence (Singh & Srivastava, 2020). Such quick-commerce platforms such as Blinkit, Zepto, and Swiggy Instamart further exaggerate FOMO effects by boasting real-time inventory updates and showing deals as expiring causing the users to make immediate purchase decisions (Mehta & Patel, 2023).

Studies have also shown that when FMCG brands do employ some forms of gamification such as exclusive member only deals and referral programs, they do add more social pressure and increase purchases on FOMO driven basis (Verma et al., 2022). Additionally, the portion of FMCG sector where personalized marketing by AI driven algorithms capturing the customers buying behaviour and promoting hyper-relevant promotions pushes FOMO further (Kumar & Sharma, 2021). It gives marketers the ability to fine tune the digital strategies to figure out ways to have better conversions and building stronger brand loyalty.

#### **4.4 Theoretical Framework**

### **Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)**

Petty and Cacioppo (1986) claimed that the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) explains communication of persuasive messages via two processes: central (high involvement, cognitive), peripheral (low involvement, emotion) and the rarity of combination of the two processes. FOMO is often used in digital marketing to be engaging consumers through the peripheral route since consumers are aroused through emotional arousal and their time constraints, and social proof affects impulsive decision making (Dhir et al., 2021). In addition, research shows that since FOMO stimulates emotional arousal, the consumers may easily fall into the heuristic cues, which means the social validation and limited time offers (Hodkinson, 2019). In addition, online shopping environment encourages low effort decision making with visually appeal ads and endorsed by influencers leading to impulsive purchase (Hoyer et al., 2020).

### **Self-Control Theory**

The main theory by Baumeister (2002) on Impulse control is that the process of impulsive control is a finite resource that is being depleted with the economical exposure to the temptation. When products are high in arousal and consumers' self-control is low, they are more likely to make impulsive purchases (Vohs & Faber, 2007). In direct digital retail, culture of recommendations driven by algorithms and ads personalized to the consumer comport even more to an impulse spending, due to increases in cognitive load that not only make it harder for consumers to resist inefficiency spending (Luo, 2005). In addition, research has shown that FOMO marketing take advantage of self-control depletion by creating urgency and consumers are let off from the thought of decision making rationally (Przybylski et al., 2013).

In this study, this is conceptualized by amalgamating ELM and Self-Control Theory, which integrates ELM to Self-Control Theory to explain how FOMO marketing, emotional arousal comes into play for impulse buying in the FMCG sector. This allows marketers to know to design these effective engagement strategies while offering them insights into how much they could be paying attention to their consumer's vulnerabilities to impulsive digital spending.

## **4. CASE STUDY ANALYSIS**

The internationally renowned confectionery brand Kinder Joy took advantage of its limited-edition Harry Potter themed toys through FOMO marketing. This campaign rode the nostalgia train, the exclusivity train, and the emotional arousal train to impulsive children and the adult collector like nowhere before it.

### **FOMO Marketing & Emotional Arousal**

Kinder Joy parent company Ferrero strategically released a special Harry Potter special edition featuring collectible figurines of Harry, Hermione and Voldemort. These toys were offered into only small quantities created a short need that result consumers to buy randomly over reasoning that stocks may be ended. (Hodkinson, 2019.) The result is consistent with Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), where consumers processed information on the periphery and proceeded with their fast purchases using emotions (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

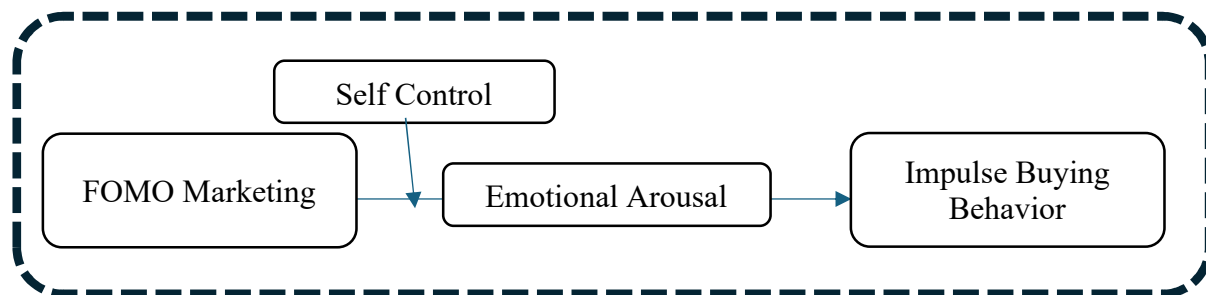
### Social Validation & Digital Amplification

The social media sharing helped this campaign grow through gaining social proof (Festinger, 1954) via unboxing videos, toy collections posts, and trading requests. It also accords with Social Comparison Theory, which states that consumers compare with others to validate themselves and wanted to show that they had these purchases by sharing on social media (Dhir et al., 2021).

### Impulse Buying & Self-Control Theory

This success of the campaign also ties into the Self Control Theory, that is, consumers with lower self-control had greater difficulty resisting each purchase in hope of completing their collection (Baumeister, 2002). Equally, more impulsive pre-obstinate purchases occurred when the figurine was thought to be rare, and arousal levels were heightened by the discovery of such a find (Luo, 2005).

## 5. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



## 6. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this paper, we uncover the insights of the impact of the use of the FOMO and emotional arousal in the digital marketing strategies that drive impulse buying behaviour. We can use urgency, so called social validation, and algorithmic recommendations strategically in marketers' campaigns to optimize them. Finally, the underlying key process of responsible purchasing is also a function of self-control, allowing businesses to suggest actions for instance in the form of personalized reminder and expenditure ceiling, to encourage appropriate purchasing behaviours.

This research is informative for policymakers prone to their populations spending too much money while on sale, without even thinking about how it's possible. Such tactics exploit consumer emotions and can be dealt with through development of regulatory frameworks that bring some levels of transparency into the use of promotional strategies. Moreover, consumer education campaigns can be launched aiming to improve the financial literacy of the people to develop methods of avoiding impulsiveness when buying. A symbiotic relationship can be created when businesses strike a balance between ethical practice and persuasive marketing strategies to sustain long term faith from the consumers while also ensuring the responsible practice of consumption.

## 7. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

FOMO marketing is becoming a prominent force in turning the impulse buying behaviour of digital FMCG in India, and this conceptual study highlights it. These results point to the need for ethical, data-based marketing that entails driving consumer engagement without allowing consumer spending to go wrong. Finally, this framework should be empirically validated using consumers surveys, experimental studies and digital analytics in future research. Moreover, cross cultural comparisons could help in generalizing the finding to other markets. Yet understanding the ways in which that FOMO-driven purchases of emerging technologies like AI driven recommendations and virtual shopping experience even more influence future purchases is still an exciting space to explore.

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