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FROM PERSUASION TO PURCHASE: EXAMINING FEAR OF MISSING OUT (FOMO) AS A MEDIATOR IN INFLUENCER MARKETING

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of social media influencers in shaping consumer behavior, specifically focusing on TikTok creator Niky Cu. We explore how persuasive communication, particularly through urgency and social proof, triggers the fear of missing out (FOMO) and influences purchase intentions. Data were collected through an online survey of 400 respondents exposed to the influencer's content. Findings indicate that message quality and the influencer's appeal significantly impact FOMO and purchase intention. The results highlight the importance of emotional urgency and social influence in digital marketing, which often drives impulsive buying behavior without thorough consideration.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of digital platforms has fundamentally transformed the way individuals seek, process, and respond to information, particularly in the realm of consumer behavior. Among these platforms, TikTok has rapidly gained prominence as both a cultural and commercial phenomenon. With its algorithm-driven content feed and visually engaging short-form videos, TikTok has empowered social media influencers (SMIs) to shape audience preferences and consumption patterns at an unprecedented speed. One striking example of this influence is seen within Indonesia's fragrance community, where certain products become highly sought-after or even disappear from e-commerce listings shortly after being endorsed by popular influencers such as Niky Cu. This phenomenon, often referred to as the "parfum ghoib" (ghost perfume) trend, illustrates how scarcity and social proof can drive impulsive consumer behavior.

This study aims to examine how persuasive communication by influencers, especially messages that convey urgency and social proof, can trigger emotional responses like the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and, in turn, influence followers' purchase intentions. FOMO has become a significant psychological driver in modern consumer behavior, often catalyzing immediate, unplanned purchasing decisions when accompanied by persuasive messaging that emphasizes exclusivity or limited availability [1] [2]. However, while previous studies have explored the role of influencers in shaping consumer behavior, there remains a gap in understanding how FOMO mediates the relationship between persuasive influencer messages and purchase intentions, particularly in the context of Indonesian consumers and TikTok.

Prior research has primarily focused on the individual elements of persuasive marketing, such as the message's structure or the influencer's appeal [3], without addressing the cognitive and emotional processes that drive impulsive buying behavior. Few studies have explored the interaction between these components and how they collectively influence purchase intentions through the psychological mechanism of FOMO. Moreover, most studies have examined influencers in broad contexts, without considering the specificities of Indonesia's rapidly growing social media landscape, where influencer marketing is a crucial element of consumer engagement.

This research aims to fill this gap by integrating the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which distinguishes between central and peripheral routes of persuasion, to explore how both message quality and the influencer's attributes influence purchase intention, mediated by FOMO. By focusing on TikTok, a platform that has become a central hub for influencer marketing in Indonesia, this study will provide insights into how influencers' persuasive communication can trigger FOMO and impact consumer decisions in the digital age. Ultimately, this study seeks to contribute both to the theoretical understanding of FOMO in consumer behavior and offer practical implications for digital marketers seeking to leverage influencers to drive consumer engagement and sales.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a quantitative explanatory approach using Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) to examine the causal relationships between persuasive message components, the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), and purchase intention. SEM-PLS is particularly suitable for testing complex theoretical models, as it allows for the analysis of both direct and indirect effects among latent constructs. The research targets TikTok users who follow Niky Cu, a prominent influencer in Indonesia known for endorsing fragrance products. The sample was selected using a non-probability purposive sampling method, focusing on followers who have interacted with or been exposed to fragrance-related content shared by the influencer. The sample size was determined using Slovin's formula, ensuring a minimum of 400 valid responses, which were collected through Google Forms.

The data collection instrument was an online questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale to measure key constructs: persuasive message characteristics (message quality and source credibility), FOMO (including fear of exclusion, social pressure, and anticipatory involvement), and purchase intention. The data were analyzed using SmartPLS 4.0 software, with a two-step process: first, evaluating the measurement model for reliability and validity, and second, assessing the structural model to determine the relationships between constructs. The analysis focused on path coefficients, R-squared values for explanatory power, effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2), ensuring the robustness and accuracy of the results. To ensure validity and reliability, the study utilized pilot testing, data triangulation, and statistical tests such as Cronbach's Alpha and Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

In this study, the researcher analyzes the influence of persuasive messages from social media influencer Niky Cu on his audience's FOMO and purchase intention. Furthermore, this study also tests the role of FOMO as a mediating variable in the relationship between persuasive messages and purchase intention. Data were collected through the distribution of questionnaires to 400 respondents who met the following research criteria: (1) being a TikTok user, (2) following Niky Cu's TikTok account (@niky.cu), and (3) having been exposed to or interacted with the perfume promotion content uploaded by Niky Cu. The following are the results from the various data analysis techniques using SmartPLS 4.0 in this study, along with the research model shown below.

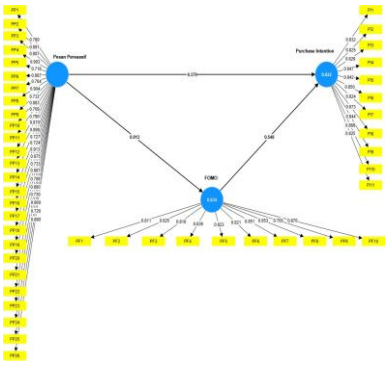

Figure 1. Research Model (Source: SmartPLS 4.0, 2025)

The research model will be analyzed using the SEM-PLS method and processed with SmartPLS 4.0. The presentation of the research findings is divided into two main stages: the evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model).

Evaluation of the Measurement Model (Outer Model)

The evaluation of the measurement model in this study consists of three tests: convergent validity, discriminant validity, and a reliability test. The first test assesses convergent validity and reliability, which is useful for determining whether the data collected through the questionnaire is valid and reliable. Convergent validity is assessed through the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) with a threshold of > 0.50, while reliability is assessed using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability with a threshold of > 0.70 [4]. The test results can be seen in the following table.

Table 1. Results of Convergent Validity and Reliability Tests (Source: SmartPLS 4.0, 2025)

Variabel	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_a)	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	AVE
FOMO	0,947	0,950	0,954	0,677
Persuasive Message	0,981	0,983	0,982	0,677
Purchase Intention	0,959	0,963	0,964	0,709

The table above shows that the AVE value for each latent variable is > 0.5. Therefore, it can be concluded that all the indicators used adequately represent their respective variables. Additionally, the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values are > 0.70. Thus, it is concluded that all indicators are valid for measuring their respective variables and that the research instrument is reliable and consistent.

Next, the analysis proceeds with the discriminant validity test, which is used to determine the extent to which a construct is distinct from other constructs. According to this criterion, the correlation of a construct with itself should not be smaller than its correlation with other constructs [5]. The results of the discriminant validity test are shown in the Fornell-Larcker Criterion results as follows.

Table 2. Results of Fornell-Larcker Criterion (Source: SmartPLS 4.0, 2025)

	FOMO	Persuasive Message	Purchase Intention
FOMO	0,823		
Persuasive Message	0,913	0,823	
Purchase Intention	0,893	0,879	0,842

The table above indicates that, according to the Fornell-Larcker Criterion, the value for each construct's correlation with itself is not smaller than its correlation with other constructs. This signifies that there are clear distinctions among the constructs used in the research, thereby fulfilling the requirement for discriminant validity.

Evaluation of the Structural Model (Inner Model)

The structural model, or inner model, is used to determine how well the designed model can explain the correlation between latent variables in the study [6]. The evaluation of the structural model is conducted by testing the Coefficient of Determination (R^2), f-square (f^2), Path Coefficient (β), and Predictive Relevance (Q^2). The first test, the Coefficient of Determination, is performed to measure the extent of the independent variables ability to influence the dependent variables. According to Hair [7], R^2 values above 0.75 are categorized as substantial, 0.26-0.74 as moderate, and below 0.25 as weak.

Table 3. Results of Coefficient of Determination (R^2) (Source: SmartPLS 4.0, 2025)

	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
FOMO	0,834	0,833
Purchase Intention	0,822	0,821

Based on the analysis of the coefficient of determination (R-square) in the structural model, the FOMO variable was found to have an R-square value of 0.834 and an Adjusted R-square of 0.833. This indicates that 83.4% of the variance in FOMO is explained by the independent variables in the model, while the remaining 16.6% is explained by other factors outside of this research model. This value falls into the high R-square category, as values above 0.75 are categorized as substantial or strong in a PLS-SEM model [8].

Meanwhile, the Purchase Intention variable has an R-square value of 0.822 and an Adjusted R-square of 0.821. This means that 82.2% of the change in purchase intention can be explained by the independent variables within the model, with the remaining 17.8% being influenced by other variables outside the model. This value also falls into the substantial category, indicating that the model has a very good explanatory power for the purchase intention variable.

The very small difference between the R-square and Adjusted R-square for both variables indicates that the model does not suffer from overfitting and possesses a good level of generalization to the population. Thus, the model used in this study is reliable for predicting consumer behavior related to FOMO and purchase intention in the context of digital marketing or e-commerce [9]. Next, the effect size, or f-square (f2), is measured to determine the magnitude of an independent variable's influence on a dependent variable. F-square values of 0.02,

0.15, and 0.35 are considered small, medium, and large, respectively. Values less than 0.02 can be disregarded or considered to have no effect [10]. The following are the f-square results from the research.

Table 4. Results of f-square (f^2) (Source: SmartPLS 4.0, 2025)

	F-Square
FOMO -> Purchase Intention	0,280
Persuasive Message -> FOMO	5,020
Persuasive Message -> Purchase Intention	0,134

Based on the output, the relationship between FOMO and Purchase Intention has an f-square value of 0.280. Referring to the interpretation guidelines from Cohen (1988), this value falls into the medium effect category as it is within the 0.15–0.35 range. This means that FOMO has a sufficiently significant and relevant influence on consumers' purchase intention decisions.

Next, the relationship between the Persuasive Message and FOMO shows an f-square value of 5.020, which is categorized as a very large effect. This value far exceeds the threshold for a large effect (above 0.35) according to Cohen (1988). This result indicates that persuasive messages in the context of digital marketing communication contribute dominantly to the increased feeling of FOMO among consumers. This finding is consistent with literature stating that communication strategies based on urgency, scarcity, or exclusivity effectively trigger FOMO in the context of online marketing [11] [12].

Meanwhile, the direct influence of the Persuasive Message on Purchase Intention has an f-square value of 0.134, which is at the lower boundary of the small effect category as it falls within the 0.02–0.15 range [13]. This shows that although the persuasive message has a direct influence on purchase intention, its influence is not as large as its effect on FOMO. This indicates that FOMO plays a significant role as a mediator, strengthening the effect of the persuasive message on the purchase decision.

Overall, these f-square test results show that the Persuasive Message is more effective in shaping FOMO than in directly influencing purchase intention, while FOMO itself provides a reasonably strong contribution to consumers' purchase intention. This finding is important for digital marketing strategies as it confirms the importance of creating communication that elicits a fear of missing out as a way to increase sales conversions [14].

The researcher then proceeded to the path coefficient (β) test, which serves to determine the direction of the relationships between the variables used in the study. A path coefficient value in the range of -0.1 to 0.1 is considered to indicate a weak or inverse relationship. Meanwhile, a value considered to represent a positive and direct relationship must be greater than 0.1 [15].

Table 5. Results of Path Coefficient (β) (Source: SmartPLS 4.0, 2025)

	Path Coefficient
FOMO -> Purchase Intention	0,548
Persuasive Message -> FOMO	0,913
Persuasive Message -> Purchase Intention	0,379

The results of the path coefficient analysis show the magnitude of the direct influence between variables in this research model. The relationship between FOMO and Purchase Intention has a path coefficient of 0.548, which indicates that an increase in consumers' feeling of FOMO contributes positively and quite strongly to an increase in purchase intention. This means that the higher the level of FOMO experienced by consumers, the greater their tendency to make a purchase.

Next, the Persuasive Message variable has a very strong influence on FOMO, with a path coefficient of 0.913. This value indicates that an effective persuasive message in marketing communication can significantly increase consumers' fear of missing out (FOMO). In other words, the strength of the persuasive message is a key determinant of the intensity of the resulting FOMO.

Additionally, the direct influence of the Persuasive Message on Purchase Intention was also found to be significant, with a path coefficient of 0.379. Although this influence is smaller than the indirect influence via FOMO, the value shows that the persuasive message also contributes directly to shaping consumers' purchase intention.

Overall, these results demonstrate that the persuasive message not only plays a primary role in increasing FOMO but also exerts a direct influence on purchase intention. This confirms the importance of communication strategies that combine persuasive elements to trigger feelings of urgency while also encouraging consumers to make a purchase [16] [17].

The researcher then conducted the Predictive Relevance (Q2) test. This test is useful for determining the extent to which the research model can accurately predict the dependent variables; a high Q2 value indicates that the research model has a good ability to predict the dependent variables [18]. The Predictive Relevance results of this study can be seen as follows.

Table 6. Results of Predictive Relevance (Q^2) (Source: SmartPLS 4.0, 2025)

	SSO	SSE	Q^2(=1-SSE/SSO)
FOMO	4000.000	1625.308	0,548
Persuasive Message	10400.000	3628.225	0,913
Purchase Intention	4400.000	1596.375	0,379

Based on the results of the Q2 (predictive relevance) test using the Stone-Geisser method, a value was obtained that indicates the model's predictive ability to explain the endogenous variables. The Q2 value is calculated using the formula: Q2 = 1 – (SSE/SSO), where SSE is the Sum of Squares Error, and SSO is the Sum of Squares Observations [19].

For the FOMO variable, an SSO value of 4000.000 and an SSE of 1625.308 were obtained, resulting in a Q2 value for FOMO of 0.594. This value indicates that the model has a reasonably strong predictive ability, as a Q2 value above 0.5 suggests that the model has good predictive relevance [20].

The Persuasive Message variable has an SSO value of 10400.000 and an SSE of 3628.225, yielding a Q2 value of 0.651. This value falls into the strong category, indicating that the model is significantly capable of predicting the persuasive message variable within the context of this research.

Meanwhile, the Purchase Intention variable obtained an SSO value of 4400.000 and an SSE of 1596.375, resulting in a Q2 value of 0.637. This value is also considered strong, showing that the model can effectively predict consumer purchase intention based on the variables used in the study.

Overall, the Q2 values obtained for all three variables are above 0.5, which signifies that this research model has high predictive relevance. This strengthens the validity and predictive capability of the model in explaining the relationships between the variables within the context of digital marketing [21] [22].

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing, or the t-test, in this research indicates the magnitude of the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The result of the t-test is considered significant if it is greater than 1.96, with an alpha value of 5%. Therefore, the criterion for rejecting or accepting a hypothesis is that if the p-value is < 0.05, the hypothesis is accepted. Conversely, if the p-value is > 0.05, the hypothesis is rejected [23].

Table 7. Results of Hypothesis Testing (Source: SmartPLS 4.0, 2025)

	Original Sample	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T - Statistic	P - Values
FOMO -> Purchase Intention	0,548	0,552	0,079	6,895	0,000
Persuasive Message -> FOMO	0,913	0,913	0,010	91,123	0,000
Persuasive Message -> Purchase Intention	0,379	0,374	0,076	4,981	0,000
Pesan Persuasif → FOMO → *Purchase Intention*	0,500	0,505	0,074	6,748	0,000

Based on Table 6, all P-Values are 0.000 (< 0.05) and the T-Statistics are well above 1.96. Overall, all hypotheses in this model are proven to be significant at a 95% confidence level. This finding supports the conceptual model, which underscores the important role of persuasive messages in shaping FOMO that ultimately increases consumer purchase intention, as well as the direct influence of persuasive messages on purchase intention [24] [25].

Analysis of the Influence of Persuasive Messages on Purchase Intention with FOMO as a Mediator

SMI (Social Media Influencer) is an individual who actively uses social media platforms to share information and product reviews according to their lifestyle, and is thus perceived as a credible third party by their audience. In this study, the effectiveness of messages delivered by SMIs is evaluated using the ELM (Elaboration Likelihood Model) framework, which distinguishes message processing through two routes: the central route, which emphasizes argument quality, and the peripheral route, which relies on cues such as the source's credibility and attractiveness. The context of this research focuses on an SMI in the fragrance industry, namely Niky Cu.

Niky Cu is a content creator on the TikTok platform (@niky.cu) known as one of the top SMIs in the perfume sector based on his follower count. His content, which focuses on perfume reviews and fashion tips, is delivered with a persuasive persona. His popularity and influence are evident from his collaboration with the Mykonos brand, which resulted in the "California" product, where the product became so scarce and sought-after that it created the "parfum ghoib" (ghost perfume) phenomenon. This phenomenon serves as the primary backdrop for understanding how his messages can shape an audience's purchase intention.

The results of this study show that all proposed hypotheses were proven significant, providing a clear picture of the influence mechanism behind the "parfum ghoib" phenomenon. The first and most prominent finding is the influence of the Persuasive Message on FOMO, which was proven to be very strong and significant (β =

0.913; T = 91.123). The effect size (f2) of 5.020 indicates that the contribution of the persuasive message in generating FOMO is categorized as very large. This finding empirically supports the argument from Przybylski et al. (2013), who defined FOMO as the anxiety that arises from the sense that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent. Niky Cu's content, which presents a perfume as an ongoing trend or a scarce item, effectively creates a perception of a "rewarding experience" that the audience should not miss.

Furthermore, FOMO was proven to have a strong positive influence on Purchase Intention (β = 0.548; T = 6.895). The medium effect size (f2 = 0.280) shows that FOMO plays a relevant role in driving purchase intention. This result confirms the findings of Dinh et al. (2023), who stated that FOMO can convert interest into an impulse to buy in order to keep up with trends. Additionally, this finding is in line with the research by Hasanah & Hermawan (2024), which found that FOMO acts as a mediator between social comparison and purchase intention, showing that this psychological mechanism is also relevant in the context of Indonesian consumers. Thus, the social anxiety triggered by SMI content is successfully transformed into a motivation to make a purchase.

This study also proved a significant direct influence from the Persuasive Message on Purchase Intention (β = 0.379; T = 4.981). This supports the research by Putri et al. (2023), which found that persuasive communication from influencer Fadil Jaidi had a significant influence on the purchase interest for Scarlett Whitening products, where message quality and communicator attractiveness were important factors. This finding is also consistent with Euodia & Oktavianti (2023), who found that influencers' persuasive messages on TikTok have an influence on consumer purchase interest. However, it is important to note that the effect size for this direct path is considered small (f2 = 0.134). In comparison, the influence of the persuasive message is far more powerful in creating FOMO than in directly creating purchase intention.

Overall, these findings underscore the central role of FOMO as a strong mediating variable. The persuasive messages delivered by Niky Cu are indeed capable of directly encouraging purchase intention, but their main strength lies in their ability to trigger an emotional response in the form of FOMO. This response then becomes the most significant primary driver for the audience to intend to purchase the product. In assessing the overall influence of the model, the coefficient of determination (R-Square) value shows that the Persuasive Message variable can explain 83.4% of the variance in FOMO. Meanwhile, the Persuasive Message and FOMO variables together can explain 82.2% of the variance in Purchase Intention. This figure indicates that the proposed model has very high explanatory power, affirming that within the TikTok marketing ecosystem, generating a sense of urgency and social anxiety through a credible influencer is a highly effective strategy.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results, this study concludes that persuasive messages from social media influencers, especially on platforms like TikTok, significantly impact consumers' purchase intentions, with FOMO playing a crucial mediating role. The quality of the message and the credibility of the influencer shape perceptions, while emotional urgency and social proof drive impulsive buying behavior. The "parfum ghoib" trend exemplifies how scarcity and social influence boost product desirability. This research emphasizes the importance of leveraging psychological triggers such as urgency, scarcity, and social proof in marketing strategies. It also highlights the need for brands to select influencers who can authentically engage audiences emotionally, building long-term loyalty. Content creators must use their influence responsibly to avoid causing panic and maintain trust. Future research should explore other variables affecting purchase intentions and test these findings across different platforms and product categories. In conclusion, influencer marketing goes beyond product promotion, tapping into psychological drivers of consumer behavior and offering valuable insights for refining digital marketing strategies.

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