



# A Study on the Impact of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) on Impulsive Buying Behaviour of Consumers During the Festive Season (August–November) in the Indian Retail and E-Commerce Industry

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## 1. ABSTRACT:

This study examines the influence of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) on impulsive buying behaviour among Indian consumers during the festive season, particularly from August to November, a period marked by high emotional engagement and intense promotional activity. Based on primary data collected from 149 respondents, the findings reveal a significant positive relationship between FOMO and impulsive purchasing. Social media exposure, flash sales, influencer promotions and limited-time offers were identified as key drivers of unplanned buying behaviour, while traditional urgency tactics such as countdown timers showed limited impact. The study highlights a shift in consumer response patterns, where socially driven triggers are more effective than artificial scarcity cues. It provides practical insights into evolving consumer behaviour in India's festive, digitally influenced retail environment.

**Keywords:** *FOMO, Impulsive Buying, Festive Shopping, Social Media Influence, Consumer Behaviour, Indian Retail, E-Commerce*

## 2. INTRODUCTION:

Consumer behaviour in India has changed significantly over the past few years, largely due to the rapid growth of digital technologies, social media platforms, and e-commerce ecosystems. This transformation becomes especially visible during the festive season, which spans from August to November and includes major celebrations such as Onam, Navratri, Dussehra, and Diwali, along with large-scale online sale events like Amazon's Great Indian Festival and Flipkart's Big Billion Days. During this time, marketing activity reaches its peak, with consumers being



constantly exposed to advertisements, discounts, and promotional messages across multiple digital platforms, creating a highly stimulating shopping environment.

In such a setting, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) plays a crucial role in shaping consumer decisions. As defined by Przybylski et al. (2013), FOMO refers to the feeling that others might be experiencing rewarding opportunities that one is missing. During the festive season, this feeling is intensified by social media, where people frequently share their purchases, and influencers promote trending products, while platforms highlight limited stock and time-bound deals. This combination often leads consumers to make quick, unplanned purchasing decisions without thorough evaluation.

Although there is a growing body of research on FOMO and impulsive buying, several gaps still remain. Many studies are based on Western contexts, treat FOMO as a general personality trait, or do not consider time-specific situations like festive seasons. This study attempts to bridge this gap by focusing specifically on the Indian festive period, where cultural emotions, social influence, and aggressive marketing strategies come together to create a unique environment that strongly impacts consumer behaviour.

### 3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) has been widely studied as a psychological factor influencing decision making in digital environments. Hall (2023) emphasized that social media intensifies FOMO by creating continuous exposure to curated content, which shapes perceptions and influences behavioural responses. Zhang (2024) further established that FOMO significantly increases the likelihood of impulsive buying, especially when consumers are exposed to promotional cues such as limited-time offers and digital campaigns. Earlier work on impulsive buying highlights the role of emotions and situational triggers. Rook (1987) described impulse buying as a spontaneous action driven by emotional arousal, while Verplanken and Herabadi (2001) suggested that both internal states and external stimuli contribute to such behaviour. Dholakia (2000) and Kukar-Kinney et al. (2009) also found that marketing stimuli, particularly discounts and time pressure, play a critical role in influencing purchase decisions.

Recent studies in digital contexts (Aragoncillo & Orús, 2018; Hodkinson, 2019) indicate that online environments enhance emotional engagement and reduce rational evaluation, making consumers more susceptible to impulsive actions.

However, existing research largely treats FOMO as a general behavioural factor and does not sufficiently examine its role within specific high-intensity consumption periods. This study addresses this limitation by analyzing FOMO as a situational trigger influencing impulsive buying behaviour within a defined temporal context.

### 4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This framework is based on the idea that consumer decisions are not always rational, especially during high-emotion periods like festive seasons, where social and promotional influences are strong.

#### 4.1. Key Variables in the Framework

##### 1. Independent Variable (IV):

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

**FOMO refers to a psychological feeling where individuals believe they might miss rewarding experiences or opportunities that others are enjoying.**



Here, FOMO is:

- Driven by social comparison
- Intensified by digital exposure
- Triggered during festive promotions

It acts as the main influencing factor that pushes consumers toward impulsive buying.

## 2. Dependent Variable (DV):

Impulsive Buying Behaviour

**Impulsive buying is a spontaneous and unplanned purchase decision, often driven by emotions rather than logical thinking.**

Here,

- Consumers make quick decisions
- There is less evaluation of need or budget
- Purchases are influenced by urgency and excitement

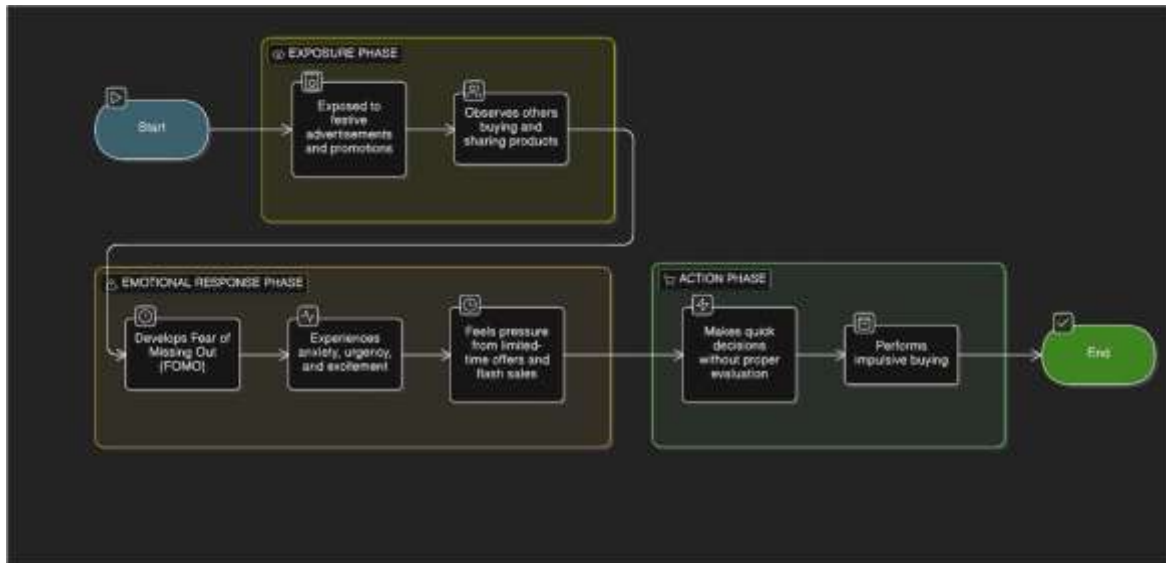
### 4.2. Triggering Factors :

These are the external stimuli that create or increase FOMO:

1. Social Media Influence
  - Constant exposure to posts, ads, and festive deals
2. Influencer Marketing
  - Influencers promote products as “must-buy”
  - Builds trust and urgency among followers
3. Flash Sales
  - Limited-time discounts create urgency
  - Encourages quick decision-making
4. Limited-Time Offers
  - “Offer ends soon” messaging increases pressure
  - Reduces time for rational thinking
5. Social Comparison
  - Seeing friends/family purchases
  - Creates a feeling of being “left out”



### 4.3. Conceptual Framework Showing the Relationship Between FOMO and Impulsive Buying Behaviour:



## 5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

### Primary Objective

- To examine the impact of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) on impulsive buying behaviour during the festive season.

### Secondary Objectives

- To identify key psychological and marketing-related triggers influencing impulsive buying.
- To analyze how different promotional strategies contribute to FOMO-driven decisions.
- To examine the relationship between FOMO intensity and purchase behaviour.
- To understand consumer response patterns toward various digital marketing stimuli.

### 5.1 HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY:

In order to examine the relationship between Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and impulsive buying behaviour, the following hypotheses are formulated:

- H<sub>0</sub> (Null Hypothesis):** There is no significant relationship between Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and impulsive buying behaviour among consumers during the festive season.
- H<sub>1</sub> (Alternative Hypothesis):** There is a significant relationship between Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and impulsive buying behaviour among consumers during the festive season.



## 6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive research design to understand the patterns and relationships between Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and impulsive buying behaviour during the Indian festive season. This design is appropriate as the objective is to analyze existing behaviour and identify associations between variables rather than establish cause-and-effect relationships.

### Population and Sampling

The target population for the study consists of Indian consumers who actively participated in festive shopping during the August–November period, either through online or offline channels. A convenience sampling method was used, as respondents were easily accessible through digital platforms. A total of 149 valid responses were collected. The sample is largely composed of young consumers, particularly those in the 20–25 age group and in the early stages of their careers. This demographic is highly relevant, as it represents the segment most actively engaged with digital shopping platforms and festive promotional campaigns.

### Source of Data

The study is primarily based on **primary data**, which was collected using a structured questionnaire.

## 7. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

### 7.1 FREQUENCY ANALYSIS ON GENDER:

Gender of Respondents	Frequency	Percent
Male	52	34.9
Female	97	65.1
Total	149	100.0

The frequency distribution of gender shows that out of the total 149 respondents, 52 respondents (34.9%) are male and 97 respondents (65.1%) are female. This indicates that the majority of the sample is composed of female respondents. The higher representation of females suggests that the findings of the study may be more reflective of female consumer behaviour during festive seasons.



## 7.2 FREQUENCY ANALYSIS ON WORK EXPERIENCE:

Work Experience of Respondents	Frequency	Percent
Fresher (Less than 1 year)	74	49.7
3-5 years	21	14.1
5-10 years	7	4.7
Above 10 years	4	2.7
Total	149	100.0

The distribution of respondents based on work experience shows that a significant proportion, 74 respondents (49.7%), are freshers with 0–1 year of experience, followed by 43 respondents (28.9%) with 1–3 years of experience. A smaller percentage of respondents fall into higher experience categories, with 21 respondents (14.1%) having 3–5 years of experience, 7 respondents (4.7%) having 5–10 years, and only 4 respondents (2.7%) having above 10 years of experience. This distribution indicates that the sample is largely dominated by individuals in the early stages of their careers. The higher representation of freshers and less experienced individuals suggests that the study primarily reflects the behaviour of younger, early-career consumers, who may be more influenced by digital platforms, promotional offers, and social trends during festive seasons.

## 7.3 FREQUENCY ANALYSIS ON AGE:

Age of Respondents	Frequency	Percent
20-23 years	47	31.5
24-25 years	62	41.6
26-44 years	40	26.8
Total	149	100.0

The age distribution of respondents shows that out of 149 participants, 60 respondents (40.3%) belong to the 24–25 age group, followed by 56 respondents (37.6%) in the 20–23 age group, and 33 respondents (22.1%) in the 26–44 age



group . This indicates that the majority of the respondents are concentrated in the younger age, particularly between 20 and 25 years. The dominance of this age group suggests that the study largely reflects the behaviour of young consumers, who are typically more active online and more exposed to digital marketing strategies during festive seasons.

7.4

**DESCRIPTIVE****STATISTICS:**

Variable	N	Mean	Std.Deviation
FOMO	149	3.0294	.68825
IMPULSE_BUYING	149	3.1148	.65968

The descriptive statistics table shows the average responses of the participants for both FOMO and impulsive buying. All 149 responses were valid and included in the analysis. The average score for FOMO is 3.0294, and for impulsive buying it is slightly higher at 3.1148. This means that people do experience FOMO and tend to make impulsive purchases during festive seasons, but only to a moderate level

7.5

**CORRELATION****ANALYSIS:**

Variable		FOMO	IMPULSE BUYING
FOMO	Pearson Correlation	1	.590**
	Sig. (2- tailed)		.000
	N	149	149
IMPULSE BUYING	Pearson Correlation	.590**	1
	Sig. (2- tailed)	.000	
	N	149	149

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation table explains the relationship between Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and impulsive buying behaviour among the respondents. The Pearson correlation coefficient is 0.590, indicating a moderate positive relationship between the two variables.

This means that as the level of FOMO increases, the tendency of individuals to



make impulsive purchases also increases.

### 7.5.1 HYPOTHESIS TESTING:

Hypothesis	Test Used	r-value	p-value	Decision	Result
H <sub>0</sub> : No significant relationship between FOMO and impulsive buying	Pearson Correlation	0.590	< 0.01	Rejected	Significant relationship exists
H <sub>1</sub> : Significant relationship between FOMO and impulsive buying	Pearson Correlation	0.590	< 0.01	Accepted	Supported

The Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.590$ ) indicates a moderate positive relationship between Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and impulsive buying behaviour. The significance value ( $p < 0.01$ ) shows that the relationship is statistically significant and not due to chance.

This means that as the level of FOMO increases, the tendency of consumers to engage in impulsive buying also increases during the festive period.

## 8. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

- The study found that FOMO has a significant positive influence on impulsive buying behaviour among consumers.
- Flash sales emerged as the most influential factor driving impulsive purchases during the festive season.
- Social comparison, especially seeing others' purchases, significantly contributes to FOMO.
- Influencer marketing plays a strong role in shaping buying decisions.
- Limited-time offers also encourage quick purchase decisions.
- Traditional urgency tactics such as countdown timers and stock scarcity messages were found to be less effective.
- No significant difference was observed between male and female consumers in terms of impulsive buying behaviour.
- The analysis revealed two major dimensions of FOMO: emotional triggers and platform-driven triggers.



## 9. SUGGESTIONS AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS:

### For Marketers

- Focus more on social proof and influencer-based strategies rather than artificial urgency tactics.
- Design campaigns across the entire festive period instead of concentrating only on peak sale days.
- Use authentic and transparent marketing practices to build long-term trust.

### For Consumers

- Plan purchases in advance to avoid impulsive decisions.
- Set a budget for festive spending.
- Be aware of the influence of social media and promotional tactics.

## 10. LIMITATIONS:

### 1) Limited Time Period (August–November):

The study focuses only on the festive season from August to November. Consumer behaviour during this period may be different from non-festive months, so the findings cannot be generalized to the entire year.

### 2) Sampling Technique Constraints:

The use of convenience sampling restricts the representativeness of the sample, as respondents were selected based on accessibility rather than randomization.

### 3) Geographical Limitation:

The study is limited to Indian consumers and may not be applicable to other countries with different cultural and economic conditions.

### 4) Lack of Longitudinal Perspective:

The study does not track behavioural changes over time, limiting the understanding of how FOMO-driven buying evolves across multiple festive cycles.

## 11. FUTURE SCOPE:

While this study provides valuable insights into the relationship between FOMO and impulsive buying during the festive season, there are several opportunities for further research.

Future studies can expand the scope by including a larger and more diverse sample, covering different age groups, income levels, and geographic regions such as rural and semi-urban areas. This would help in understanding how consumer behaviour varies across different segments of the Indian population.



A comparative analysis between online and offline shopping behaviour during festive seasons can also provide deeper insights into how digital environments uniquely influence FOMO-driven decisions. Additionally, future research can explore the long-term financial and psychological impact of impulsive buying, including post-purchase regret and satisfaction levels.

Another important direction would be to conduct longitudinal studies to observe how consumer behaviour evolves across multiple festive seasons, especially as digital literacy and awareness continue to grow. Researchers can also examine the role of emerging technologies such as AI-driven personalization, targeted advertising, and recommendation systems in amplifying FOMO. Further studies may incorporate experimental research designs to test specific marketing stimuli (such as flash sales vs influencer promotions) in controlled environments to establish causal relationships.

Overall, future research can build on this study by exploring FOMO not just as a behavioural trigger, but as a dynamic phenomenon shaped by evolving digital ecosystems and consumer awareness.

## 12. CONCLUSION:

The study reveals that FOMO is a key factor influencing impulsive buying behaviour among consumers during the festive season. It shows that modern consumers are more responsive to social influence and real-time digital engagement rather than traditional urgency-based marketing techniques.

These findings highlight a shift in consumer behaviour, where decision-making is increasingly shaped by social media and experiential triggers. This underscores the importance for businesses to adopt more meaningful and transparent strategies, while consumers need to be more aware of the factors influencing their purchasing decisions.

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