

# FEAR OF MISSING OUT AND EPHEMERAL SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING: EXPLORING CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT AND PURCHASE INTENTION

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**Abstract:** The focus of the present research has been the exploration of relationship which exists between fear of missing out (FOMO), with ephemeral content engagement (ECE) and purchase intentions of the consumers. With the growth of technology and consumers heavy reliance on smart phones and social media, ephemeral content in platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat has grown drastically. The use of this form of content in marketing can boost productivity, create a sense of urgency and exclusivity among the people. In the present research, a quantitative survey has been performed with 103 participants, the SPSS analysis that has been performed has provided detailed accounts of the reliability, correlation and regression analysis. The engagement has been found to have a strong influence on the purchase intention, likewise, FOMO also positively influence ECE. However, no connection was found between FOMO and purchase intention, the findings thus reveal the critical role which ephemeral content have for driving consumer behaviour towards engagement caused by FOMO.

**Keywords:** FOMO, ephemeral marketing, social media, purchase intention, consumers

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has been an integral part of the digital age, and it dictates how people communicate, consume information and engage with different brands. Many social media marketers use fear of missing out (FOMO) to establish a sense of urgency among consumers to generate more traffic and engagement. FOMO is a psychological phenomenon which is driven by anxiety of others having a rewarding experience (Gupta & Sharma, 2021). Ephemeral social media content, on the other hand, is essentially temporary content lasting between 15 seconds and 24 hours, popularised through platforms such as Snapchat and Instagram stories (Mavilinda, Rosa & Putri, 2025). This form of content allows individuals to engage with creators and brands through responses, polls and swipes, driving engagement and attracting more daily users. Ephemeral marketing is particularly designed to create a sense of exclusivity. Ephemeral marketing is utilised by brands while launching and promoting new products and putting pressure on consumers to influence their decision-making (Maar, Kefi & Orhan, 2023). FOMO is crucial in marketing because it drives consumer interest and motivation towards ephemeral content and stimulates their satisfaction. User engagement can be built with ephemeral content, and it can also influence consumers' purchase decisions. The purpose of the present research is to examine how FOMO among consumers influences their ephemeral content engagement (ECE) and subsequent purchase intentions. The objectives to address the said aim are:

- To investigate the impact of FOMO on customer engagement with ephemeral content (ECE).
- To investigate the influence of ECE on consumers' purchase intention.
- To analyse whether FOMO has a direct influence on purchase intention beyond engagement.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Review of key concepts

#### FOMO

FOMO can be defined as the negative emotions an individual experiences about others having a better life than they; it is a new form of disorder, a product of the digital age. FOMO negatively affects the life of a person and is the leading source of depression, reduced quality of life, poor psychological health and increased anxiety and stress (Tanhan, Özok & Tayiz, 2022). Continuous experience with FOMO can increase the risk of psychopathology, addiction and

the development of an intense relationship with their smartphones, comparing their lives with their friends and other individuals whom they follow.

### **Ephemeral Content Engagement (ECE)**

Ephemeral content is highly influential on consumers and drives engagement, leading to the development of the brand. This form of content has been popularised by Instagram and Snapchat, providing unique opportunities to the brand for interacting with its consumers and driving narrative creation (Nguyen et al. 2025). Consumer engagement with ephemeral content is still in its early stages, but early signs show a positive attitude towards this form of content, necessitating the incorporation of ephemeral content in marketing.

### **Purchase Intention**

Purchase intention can be seen as the willingness of a consumer to purchase a specific product within a limited time frame. Identifying the purchase intention of consumers is considered important as it can lead to studying the different factors which influence consumers and incorporating them in the marketing strategies of the company (Zhuang, Luo & Riaz, 2021). Past studies define purchase intention to be the embodiment of purchase behaviour and thus can be used for the prediction of future purchase intention of the consumers.

### **2.2 FOMO and Engagement with Ephemeral Content**

FOMO plays a major role in influencing user engagement with ephemeral content. As FOMO is linked with the fear of missing out on opportunities, ephemeral marketing strategies on social media platforms can motivate consumers to stay connected with such content. The limited time availability of ephemeral content adds to the FOMO experienced by the users (Luria & Foulds, 2021). Satisfaction is often identified as a crucial factor which connects FOMO with ephemeral marketing, making consumers satisfied with limited type content (Mavilinda, Rosa & Putri, 2025). Past studies have proven that ephemeral content increases FOMO among individuals and leads to users spending more time on the website exploring new updates and other content (Zhang et al. 2021). The short duration of the content also reduces the pressure to curate posts that are appealing towards the consumer. Consumer associate ephemeral content with fast consumption, and users of Instagram and other social media platforms associate the feature with relaxation and entertainment (Dange et al. 2021). The stories are also effective because they offer the opportunity to organisations to deliver information rapidly, in contrast to the traditional feed-based content, which is much slower. Thus, FOMO acts as a significant predictor of how consumers interact with ephemeral content, leading to the following hypothesis.

H1: FOMO has a significant impact on (ECE).

### **2.3 Engagement with Ephemeral Content and Purchase Intention**

Ephemeral content has been prevalent in recent times; studies carried out on the subject have stated that this form of content provides a less perfect and raw experience to the consumers, increasing their willingness to engage. The limited nature of these interactions and the brief period during which they are accessible contribute to shaping the purchase intention of the consumer (Mei, Brataas & Stothers, 2024). Customer engagement has a direct impact on the purchase behaviour of consumers; real-time engagement leads to a positive perception towards the brand (Giertz et al. 2022). Ephemeral posts lead to creating attention and awareness, establishing a sense of urgency and making the marketing attempts more connected (Maran & Raj, 2024). Although these types of posts are only available for a limited time on the platform, they offer a glimpse into the progress or the movement of the event. The brief tenure of the stories holds the attention of the viewer; they do not provide background context, creating a sense of intrigue and desire, which ultimately translates to purchase intention of the consumer (Arda, 2021). The high consumer engagement which are generated as a result of this leads to a strong brand relationship and higher purchase intention. The temporal nature of the products also promotes impulsive decision-making; thus, higher engagement increases chances of purchase intention, confirming the following hypothesis.

H2: ECE has a significant impact on purchase intention.

### **2.4 FOMO and Purchase Intention**

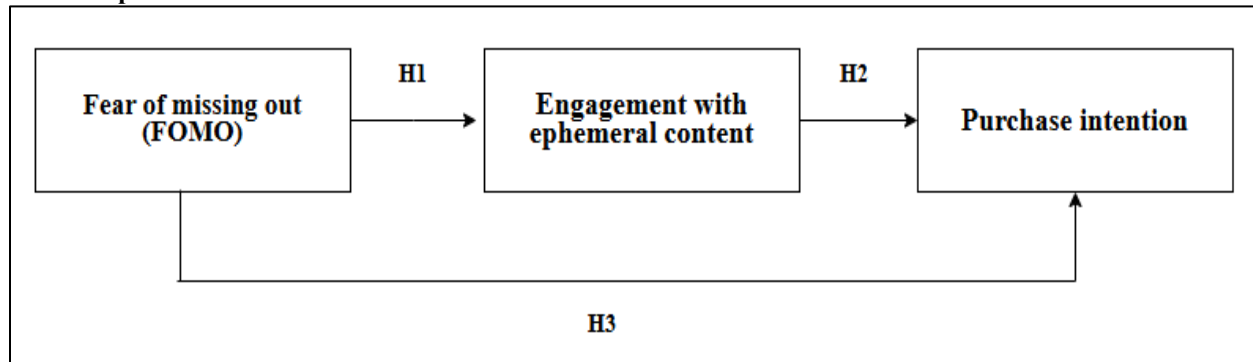
Individuals who experience FOMO might have a stronger tendency to be influenced by others' purchase intentions, and this increases the likelihood and makes them more inclined towards purchasing certain products (Bläse et al. 2024). Using FOMO in marketing is thus highly effective in increasing the purchase intention of consumers, which boosts brand credibility, causes a positive perception of the brand in front of the consumers and increases the purchase intention among the consumers (Dwisuardinata & Darma, 2023). In recent years, influencers have served as a major part of marketing, and influencer endorsements boost FOMO, causing consumers to purchase the products. FOMO, therefore, has a moderating role in this context as it influences desire among consumers to get certain products (Dinh, Wang & Lee, 2023). Under the influence of FOMO, consumers fear getting socially excluded and thus stay updated on current trends, boosting their intention and desire to purchase what others are purchasing (Mert & Tengilimoğlu, 2023). FOMO thus not only boost the consumption of content but also directly influences the purchasing behaviour of people, causing people who fear missing out to immediately purchase products, aligning the findings with the following hypothesis.

H3: FOMO has a significant impact on purchase intention.

## 2.5 Research gap

The existing literature that has been studied in the present research has provided valuable insight into the role of FOMO, ephemeral engagement and purchase intention individually, but several gaps were identified. While the studies have focused on the psychological phenomenon caused by FOMO, limited research has focused on the direct impact of engagement with ephemeral content. Most of the studies have addressed the context of FOMO from a general context from a content consumption perspective, but this has created gaps in the time-limited role of ephemeral content. While there are studies that have discussed the impact of FOMO on purchase intention, a direct link between consumer intention and ephemeral marketing has not been discussed in detail. The purpose of the present research is to fill these gaps and establish a relationship between all three variables. This integrated approach will help in understanding consumer behaviour in a broader marketing context.

## 2.6 Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1: Conceptual framework**  
(Source: Self-developed)

## 3. METHODOLOGY

An online survey has been conducted in this research with consumers in Delhi and NCR. A self-developed questionnaire was used to develop the survey form using Google Form and the link was shared to the participants through e-mail and WhatsApp. The participants were recruited for the study through social media sites Facebook and Instagram and were provided with the necessary details of the research. After getting their consent for the research, the link to the form was shared to collect the required. A total of 103 responses were collected and the analysis of the collected data was done using IBM SPSS software. Rahman et al. (2023) states that a sample of 100-200 is appropriate for a simple research model to get accurate insights. This study has used 103 responses and the considering that the research model is simple as outlined previously, the sample is appropriate. The software was used to perform correlation and regression analysis to test the above developed hypothesis.

## 4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Reliability analysis

The reliability analysis for the present research has been carried out with Cronbach's Alpha, in this context, an alpha of more than 0.7 is considered ideal. If the value falls below the threshold, it can show insufficient consistency between the variables (Izah, Sylva & Hait, 2023). Reliability over 0.9 is an indication of high reliability. Of the three variables of the study, purchase intention has the highest Cronbach's Alpha of 0.19, showcasing the high reliability. On the other hand, engagement with ephemeral content has also scored 0.901, showing consistency. The Cronbach's alpha of FOMO has also been recorded to be 0.890, an indication of high internal consistency for all three of the variables.

Variable	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
FOMO	4	0.890
Ephemeral content engagement (ECE)	4	0.901
Purchase intention	4	0.919

### 4.2 Demographic characteristics

The data collected from the 103 participants has revealed crucial information on their demographic characteristics, it can be seen that 42.7% of the participants belong to the age group of 31-45, 39.8% are in the 18-30 range and only around 17.5% of the participants are 45 and above. This reveals that the participants belong to a younger demographic. Gender representation can be seen to be equal as 50.5% of the participants were male while females represent the 49.5%. the participants have revealed that 48.5% or nearly half of the participants spend 4-6 hours on their phone,

24.3% spend 1-3 hours, while 18.4% of the participants more than 6 hours. The data indicates consumers to be spending a large amount of time on their phones, scrolling social media. Among the different social media platforms, consumers have revealed Instagram and Facebook to be the most used with 32% and 27.2% users on the platforms. Snapchat and TikTok also have a significant number of users, accounting for 19.4% each. The participants were asked about their familiarity with ephemeral content 36.9% reported that they view this form of content multiple times a day. 24.3% and 25.2% of the participants have shared that they view ephemeral content 24.3% and 25.2%.

<b>Age</b>	18-30	39.8%
	31-45	42.7%
	45 and above	17.5%
<b>Gender</b>	Male	50.5%
	Female	49.5%
<b>Hours Spent on social media</b>	Less than 1	8.7%
	1-3	24.3%
	4-6	48.5%
	More than 6	18.4%
<b>Social media Used</b>	Instagram	32%
	Snapchat	19.4%
	TikTok	19.4%
	Facebook	27.2%
	Others	1.9%
<b>Viewing ephemeral content</b>	Multiple times a day	36.9%
	Once a day	24.3%
	Few times	25.2%
	Rarely	12.6%
	Never	1%

### 4.3 Correlation analysis

The following table analyses the connection between the three variables of FOMO, ephemeral content and the purchase intention of individuals. The Pearson Correlation Coefficients has been used in this context and the significance of the connections are determined under the null hypothesis and threshold being  $p < 0.01$ . FOMO can be observed to have a strong positive correlation with ECE. The findings of the research indicates that high FOMO can lead to better engagement with ephemeral content. It can also be seen that consumer engagement with ephemeral content also has a strong correlation with purchase intentions. This is indicative that purchase intention of consumers can be influenced when they possess high level of ECE. From this analysis it can concluded that H1 and H2 are both support as strong correlation was found between both. A moderate correlation can also be found between FOMO and purchase intention with a score of 0.779, this shows FOMO can have some connection and contribution towards purchase intention but the correlation is not as strong as the other two.

	FOMO	ECE	Purchase Intention
FOMO	1		
ECE	0.878	1	
Purchase intention	0.779	0.878	1

### 4.4 Regression analysis

A regression analysis has been carried out in the following tables to showcase the effect which FOMO has on engagement achieved through ephemeral content as well as the connection shared between ephemeral content and purchase intentions. From the model summary, it can be observed that in Model 1, FOMO and ECE have a 77.2% variance ( $R^2 = 0.772$ ). In model 2 however, it is seen to decrease slightly to 77.1%. The change in  $R^2$  is very minute and therefore it can be concluded that FOMO has significant contribution towards ECE. The ANOVA table also confirms that both of the models are significant with p-value being less than 0.01. This shows that the predictors that have been fixed for the research are capable of explaining the dependent variables.

Next the regression coefficients have been examined, it has been found that FOMO does not significantly impact purchase intentions in Model 1, with the beta coefficient being 0.034 and the p-value being 0.735. In Model 1, the connection between FOMO and engagement with ephemeral content with purchase intention has also been analysed, it has been found that the beta coefficient is 0.849 and p-value is 0.000, suggesting strong connection between the two variables. However, in Model 2, when the relationship between FOMO and ECE has been analysed, the beta coefficient has been found to be 0.878 and the p-value is 0.000, confirming that there is a positive connection. The findings from the data analysis have helped in confirming H1 and H2, FOMO has a significant impact on engagement

with ephemeral content, and while on the other hand, engagement with ephemeral content also shares a strong relation with purchase intentions. Contrarily, H3 has been rejected as p-value is significantly higher than 0.01. The study therefore insists on organisations investing on ephemeral content as not only does it create FOMO among consumers but also bears strong influence on purchase intentions.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.879	0.772	0.767	0.53781
2	0.878	0.771	0.769	0.51659
a. Predictors: (Constant), FOMO, ECE				
b. Predictors: (Constant), FOMO				

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	98.236	2	49.118	169.253	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	29.020	100	.290		
	Total	127.256	102			
2	Regression	90.756	1	90.756	340.777	.000 <sup>c</sup>
	Residual	26.954	101	0.267		
	Total	117.710	102			
a. DV: Purchase intention (Model 1), ECE (Model 2)						
b. Predictors: (Constant), ECE, FOMO (Model 1)						
c. Predictors: (Constant), FOMO (Model 2)						

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.287	0.215		1.332	.186
	FOMO	0.039	0.114	0.034	.339	0.735
	ECE	0.882	0.104	0.849	8.505	0.000
2	(Constant)	0.030	0.206		0.147	0.883
	FOMO	0.964	0.052	0.878	18.441	0.000

## 5. DISCUSSION

The findings from the study have shown that FOMO has a significant connection with influencing consumer engagement with ephemeral social media content. Both the correlation and regression analysis that has been carried out on FOMO has shared strong predictive engagement with ephemeral content, supporting Hypothesis 1. This also aligns with the past studies carried out by Mavilinda, Rosa & Putri (2025), in the study, the authors have shared satisfaction to be an integral part of engagement. The limited time availability of ephemeral content on social media has a significant influence on this aspect and influences consumers to engage with these. The research by Dange et al. (2021) considers ephemeral content as fast consumption, something which consumers can consumer during periods of relaxation and entertainment. The study has also provided compelling evidence that the engagement with ephemeral content has direct implications on the purchase intentions of the people, confirming Hypothesis 2 to be accurate. The findings also align with those of Mei, Brataas & Stothers (2024) and Giertz et al. (2022), in both of these, the past research has shown ephemeral content to have real time engagement opportunities with the consumers, the limited nature of this content also motivates consumers into purchasing them. Therefore, the findings of the present research align with the past literature and enhance impulsive buying with ephemeral content. However, the final hypothesis or H3 has been proven to be false, the findings of the study were not able to find a positive connection between FOMO and purchase intentions. Even though the studies discussed in the literature review were able to find connections between the two variables, the present research does not find any connection. Bläse et al. (2024) presented the argument that FOMO has a strong tendency in increasing purchase intention., while Dinh, Wang & Lee (2023) showed a moderating connection between the two. In the present situation, while FOMO is seen to influence engagement in the regression analysis, direct connections to purchase intention has not been found.

## 6. Conclusion



As concluding remarks for the present research, the study has concluded FOMO to be a significant predictor for the engagement of individuals with ephemeral content. These findings showcase the idea that the fear of missing out aspect of temporary posts drives sales and willingness of consumers to purchase these products. Contrary to this idea however, the findings also reveal that the direct impact of FOMO on purchase intentions is pretty insignificant. The role of FOMO is therefore indirect, as while it does drive consumers to engage with content, which then results in purchase decisions. From a marketing perspective, the study has revealed FOMO to boost user engagement among the people, providing consumers with an interactive experience through the social media pages, creating a sense of exclusivity and providing them with real-time update on products can essentially enhance the efforts towards digital marketing. The study has added to the literature that connect all three of these variables, future research on the subject thus need to focus more on investing these phenomena in different countries and cultures to understand the regional impact.

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