International Journal of Current Economics & Business Ventures, 5 (2) 2025, 591-596
International Journal of Current Economics & Business Ventures
https://scholarsnetwork.org/journal/index.php/ijeb

JOURNAL

THE INFLUENCE OF HEDONIC MOTIVATION, FOMO, MATERIALISM, PRICE DISCOUNTS, AND E-REVIEWS ON IMPULSIVE BUYING IN ONLINE GAMES MODERATED BY AGE

Alvin Maulana[1]
Dr. Terrylina Arvinta Monoarfa, SE., MM[2]
Annisa Lutfia, S.Pd., M.Pd[3]
alvinmaulana2210@gmail.com
Jakarta State University

Abstract:
This study investigates the determinants of impulsive buying of virtual items in online games among Generation Z in DKI Jakarta by examining the effects of hedonic motivation, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), materialism, price discount, and e-reviews, as well as the moderating role of age. Grounded in Impulsive Buying Theory and the UTAUT2 framework, this research adopts a quantitative survey design with data collected through an online questionnaire distributed via social media platforms. A total of valid responses were analyzed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to assess both the measurement and structural models. The empirical findings reveal that hedonic motivation, FOMO, materialism, price discount, and e-reviews each exert a positive and significant influence on impulsive buying behavior. Furthermore, age significantly moderates the relationship between hedonic motivation and impulsive buying, indicating that younger individuals are more susceptible to affective-driven purchasing impulses. These results underscore the importance of psychological and contextual factors in shaping online consumer behavior and provide meaningful implications for game developers and digital marketers seeking to design effective strategies in the virtual goods marketplace.

Keywords:
Hedonic Motivation; Fear of Missing Out (FOMO); Materialism; Price Discount; E-Reviews; Impulsive Buying; Virtual Items; Online Games; Generation Z; Age Moderation; Digital Consumer Behavior.

BACKGROUND

The rapid growth of online gaming in Indonesia follows the advancement of digital technology and the increasing internet usage among the population, particularly Generation Z, who represent the most active user group. This trend encourages game developers to introduce various paid virtual items that influence players' purchasing behavior. Top-up activities or in-game item purchases are often performed spontaneously without careful consideration, leading to impulsive buying. This behavior not only affects players' financial conditions such as post-purchase regret or excessive spending but may also trigger psychological pressure and harmful actions, as illustrated by several real cases where individuals misused money to buy game items.

Multiple psychological and situational factors have been shown to drive impulsive buying in online gaming contexts, including hedonic motivation, FOMO, materialism, price

discount, and e-reviews. However, previous studies have rarely examined demographic characteristics such as age as a moderating factor that may strengthen or weaken these relationships. This research integrates Impulsive Buying Theory and UTAUT2 to address this gap by introducing age as a moderating variable to explore behavioral differences among age groups in digital consumption. Through this approach, the study aims to provide new insights into Generation Z's consumptive tendencies and offer valuable implications for game developers in designing more responsible and consumer-oriented strategies.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Impulsive Buying Theory (Stern, 1962) provides the foundational lens for understanding unplanned and emotionally driven purchasing decisions. The theory posits that impulsive buying is triggered by both internal emotional states and external situational stimuli such as discounts, promotional cues, and environmental influences. In the context of online gaming, these stimuli are amplified through digital features such as visual design, virtual item offerings, and time-limited promotions. Thus, factors like hedonic motivation, FOMO, materialism, price discount, and e-reviews operate as external and internal triggers that can create a sudden urge to purchase virtual items without rational evaluation. These elements collectively align with Stern's view that impulsive purchases arise from spontaneous reactions to stimuli embedded in the shopping environment.

To enrich this theoretical foundation, the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) explains how individual characteristics influence behavioral responses in technology-driven environments. UTAUT2 introduces hedonic motivation as a key determinant of technology use behavior, highlighting the role of enjoyment in shaping user actions. In gaming contexts, hedonic motivation intensifies players' emotional gratification, which increases the likelihood of impulsive buying. Furthermore, UTAUT2 recognizes age as a moderating variable that shapes behavioral responses to technology-related stimuli. Younger users, particularly Gen Z, are more responsive to emotional and experiential triggers, suggesting that age may strengthen or weaken the relationship between hedonic motivation and impulsive buying. By integrating Impulsive Buying Theory and UTAUT2, this study proposes a comprehensive model wherein psychological, situational, and demographic factors interact to influence impulsive buying behavior for virtual items in online games.

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach with a survey design to examine the influence of hedonic motivation, FOMO, materialism, price discount, and e-reviews on impulsive buying of virtual game items, with age functioning as a moderating variable. Data were collected from January to July 2025 in the DKI Jakarta area, targeting Generation Z online gamers as the research population, using a Google Forms questionnaire distributed via social media as the primary data source. The research instruments were developed from validated indicators in prior studies, with all variables measured using a five-point Likert scale. Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), including evaluation of the measurement model, structural model, and hypothesis testing to ensure validity, reliability, and the strength of relationships among variables in the proposed research model.

RESULT

1. Respondent Profile

The study involved 200 online game users who had previously engaged in impulsive buying behavior. The sample was dominated by male respondents (55%), while the largest age group was 17–20 years (37%), followed by those aged 21–24 (32.5%) and 25–28 (30.5%). Most respondents were high school and university graduates, with employment dominated by employees and students. In terms of monthly income, the majority earned IDR 1,000,000–5,000,000 (50%). All administrative regions of Jakarta were represented, with the highest concentration coming from Central Jakarta (25.5%)

2. Descriptive Analysis of Research Variables

All variables obtained high mean scores, indicating strong tendencies toward impulsive buying behavior.

- Hedonic Motivation (mean = 3.98): purchasing virtual items is perceived as enjoyable and part of the gaming experience
- FOMO (mean ≈ 4.00–4.10): respondents feel compelled to stay relevant in the gaming community, although negative emotional aspects are relatively low
- Materialism (mean = 4.02): virtual item ownership is associated with symbolic value and status within the game community
- Price Discount (mean ≈ 3.99–4.01): discounts, especially flash sales, strongly trigger unplanned purchases
- E-Reviews (mean = 4.05–4.10): high-quality reviews enhance trust, although influencer impact is not always decisive
- Impulsive Buying (mean = 4.42): impulsiveness is highly prevalent, marked by spontaneous and unplanned purchases

3. Model Testing Results (Outer and Inner Models)

a. Outer Model

All indicators met validity and reliability criteria. Most loading factors exceeded 0.70, and all constructs demonstrated strong reliability (Cronbach's Alpha ≥ 0.70). The Impulsive Buying construct showed the highest reliability (0.921), followed by FOMO (0.884) and Price Discount (0.840)

b. Inner Model

The model achieved an R-square value of 0.698, indicating that Hedonic Motivation, FOMO, Materialism, Price Discount, and E-Reviews collectively explained 69.8% of the variance in impulsive buying behavior toward virtual items in online games. The Adjusted R-square of 0.687 also indicates strong explanatory power. Moreover, a Q^2predict value of 0.644 confirms high predictive accuracy of the model.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study offer a comprehensive understanding of the determinants of impulsive buying behavior among Generation Z online game users in Indonesia, particularly in their purchase of virtual items. Overall, the results demonstrate that hedonic motivation, fear of missing out (FOMO), materialism, price discounts, and e-reviews collectively shape impulsive purchasing decisions, with the model explaining 69.8% of the behavioral variance. This indicates that impulsive buying in the digital gaming environment is a multidimensional

psychological and situational phenomenon, consistent with prior research on digital consumer behavior.

First, the strong role of hedonic motivation highlights the experiential value of online games. Respondents perceived virtual item purchases as a source of pleasure, excitement, and immersion. This aligns with hedonic consumption theory, which posits that sensory enjoyment and emotional gratification drive spontaneous purchasing decisions. In the context of online games, virtual items are not merely functional but enhance storytelling, aesthetics, and identity expression, which strengthens impulsive tendencies.

Second, FOMO emerged as a powerful social-psychological determinant. Gen Z respondents—who are highly embedded in digital communities—reported a strong desire to stay relevant within gaming peer groups. While emotional anxiety was not dominant, the need for social inclusion and trend alignment drove purchase impulses. This finding is consistent with studies showing that social comparison, real-time notifications, and community visibility amplify impulsive tendencies through heightened perceived social pressures.

Third, materialism significantly influenced impulsive buying, reinforcing the symbolic and status-oriented nature of virtual item ownership. Respondents viewed exclusive or rare items as markers of prestige within gaming environments. This parallels previous literature that associates materialistic values with consumption driven by self-enhancement and identity reinforcement. The digital space replicates real-world materialistic behaviors by transforming virtual goods into social capital.

Fourth, price discount had the strongest influence among all predictors. Time-limited offers, flash sales, and exclusive promotions were found to trigger spontaneous purchases, even when respondents had no initial intention to buy. These findings support established behavioral economic principles where perceived savings, scarcity cues, and urgency amplify impulsive decision-making. For Gen Z players with varying income levels, discount-based incentives become a highly attractive trigger.

Fifth, e-reviews played a significant role by strengthening trust and reducing perceived risk. Respondents relied heavily on high-quality reviews from other players, especially when evaluating new or limited-time items. This suggests that social proof is a crucial mechanism in shaping impulsive decisions. Interestingly, influencer endorsements played a lesser role, indicating that peer-generated content may be more credible for this demographic.

Taken together, the results emphasize that impulsive buying in online games is not purely spontaneous; instead, it is the outcome of interactions between emotional pleasure, social belonging, psychological values, price perceptions, and peer information. Generation Z's digital nativity amplifies these influences, as they navigate virtual environments with high exposure to marketing cues and social interaction.

This study contributes to theoretical development by strengthening the integration of hedonic motivation theory, FOMO frameworks, and materialistic consumption models within the context of digital gaming economies. It extends the UTAUT-based understanding of technology-mediated consumption by demonstrating that psychological and social variables can act as strong behavioral predictors even beyond utilitarian considerations.

Overall, the findings illustrate that impulsive buying in virtual marketplaces reflects broader shifts in digital consumer culture, where identity, emotion, social presence, and perceived value blend seamlessly within gamified environments. Future research can further explore additional moderating factors such as self-control, in-game engagement, or socio-economic background to deepen the understanding of this rapidly evolving phenomenon.

CONCLUSION

1. **Hedonic Motivation → Impulsive Buying**
   Hedonic motivation has a positive and significant effect on impulsive buying. Players who experience greater pleasure and emotional enjoyment while gaming are more likely to make spontaneous purchases of virtual items.
2. **FOMO → Impulsive Buying**
   Fear of Missing Out positively and significantly influences impulsive buying. Players who fear being left behind trends or peer activities tend to purchase virtual items quickly to maintain social belonging within the gaming community.
3. **Materialism → Impulsive Buying**
   Materialism shows a positive and significant effect on impulsive buying. Individuals with stronger materialistic orientations are more inclined to buy virtual items to express status, self-image, or achievement within the game environment.
4. **Price Discount → Impulsive Buying**
   Price discounts significantly and positively affect impulsive buying. Limited-time promotions and discounted prices create urgency and perceived value, triggering spontaneous purchasing decisions.
5. **E-Reviews → Impulsive Buying**
   E-reviews have a positive and significant influence on impulsive buying. Positive reviews from other players enhance trust and perceived product quality, encouraging unplanned purchases.
6. **Moderating Effect of Age on Hedonic Motivation → Impulsive Buying**
   Age significantly moderates the relationship between hedonic motivation and impulsive buying. Older individuals tend to make more deliberate purchasing decisions, while younger users—especially Gen Z—are more easily driven by hedonic impulses during gameplay.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abassi, J., & Thøgersen, J. (2021). Return on Capital Investment in Carbon Reduction Projects. Cambridge University Press.

Ahmed, A. (2020). Understanding shopping behaviour of smartphone users. Journal of Retail Marketing, 12(3), 44–59.

Al-Emadi, F. (2019). Promotional discount impact on customer buying decisions. International Journal of Consumer Studies, 43(2), 123–132.

Barnett, V., & Lauf, S. (2020). Consumer Psychology in Digital Markets. Oxford University Press.

Baumeister, R. F. (2023). Social influence in digital consumption. Journal of Social Behavior, 28(1), 66–80.

Daymon, C., & Holloway, I. (2020). Qualitative Research Methods in Business. Routledge.

Hwang, J., & Lee, K. (2021). Consumer responses to online price promotions. Marketing Insights Review, 16(2), 88–101.

Kaur, G. (2022). Online reviews and purchasing decisions among young adults. Digital Commerce Journal, 5(4), 199–210.

Khan, T. (2019). Influence of hedonic motivation on online impulsive buying. Journal of Interactive Marketing Research, 7(1), 55–70.

Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). Marketing Management (15th ed.). Pearson Education.

Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. Educational and Psychological Measurement, 30(3), 607–610.

Lai, H., & Wang, J. (2022). Fear of missing out and impulsive online buying. Journal of Behavioral Research in E-Commerce, 14(2), 101–120.

Parasuraman, A. (2019). Consumer trust and digital information. Journal of Service Theory, 29(3), 200–215.

Santoso, W. (2019). Digital promotion strategies in Southeast Asia. Asian Journal of Marketing, 13(1), 33–48.

Sekaran, U., & Bougie, R. (2016). Research Methods for Business (7th ed.). Wiley.

Shah, A., & Hashmi, M. (2019). The rise of virtual goods purchases in mobile games. Global Journal of Gaming Studies, 9(2), 142–159.

Solomon, M. R. (2018). Consumer Behavior: Buying, Having, and Being (12th ed.). Pearson.

Stern, H. (1962). *The significance of impulse buying today*. Journal of Marketing, 26(2), 59–62. https://doi.org/10.2307/1248439

Sugiyono. (2017). Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D. Alfabeta.

Yoon, S., & Vargas, P. (2020). Materialism in virtual communities. Journal of Digital Behavior, 6(3), 77–90.