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The Influence of Viral Marketing and Buy Now, Pay Later Promotion on Impulsive Buying of Sneakers in E-commerce: The Mediating Role of Hedonic Motivation and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

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Abstract: Post-pandemic economic recovery in Indonesia has posed significant challenges to the fashion industry, especially footwear. Although the sector grew by 44.02% in 2022, it sharply declined to only 2.65% by Q2 2024. This research investigates how viral marketing campaigns and Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) promotions influence impulsive buying behavior among e-commerce consumers, with hedonic motivation and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) as mediating psychological mechanisms. Using a quantitative approach based on the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework, data from 339 valid respondents aged 25–44 in Jabodetabek who have experience purchasing sneakers online were analyzed using PLS-SEM. The findings reveal that both viral marketing and BNPL promotions directly enhance impulsive buying tendencies. BNPL significantly strengthens hedonic motivation, which mediates its effect on impulsive purchasing. FOMO directly influences impulsive buying, but does not mediate the impact of viral marketing. However, descriptive statistics show that perceptions of BNPL and hedonic motivation remain neutral to low. These findings highlight the critical role of emotionally resonant marketing in stimulating consumer response in digital platforms.

Keywords: Impulsive Buying, BNPL Promotion, Viral Marketing, Hedonic Motivation, FOMO.

INTRODUCTION

In the post-pandemic era, consumer behavior in digital markets has undergone dramatic shifts, particularly within the fashion and footwear industries. Although the Indonesian footwear industry experienced substantial growth of 44.02% in 2022, it witnessed a steep decline to only 2.65% by the second quarter of 2024 (Statista Research Department, 2024). This regression indicates weakening purchasing power among middle-income consumers—a group that previously contributed significantly to consumption growth (CNBC Indonesia, 2024). The increased economic vulnerability of this segment, as seen in the reduction of middle-class population from 57.33 million in 2019 to 52 million in 2023 (Kompas, 2024), underscores the

urgent need for innovative marketing strategies that can reignite consumer interest and drive sales.

One growing behavioral pattern in e-commerce is impulsive buying, defined as an unplanned and emotionally triggered purchasing decision (Rook & Fisher, 1995; Verhagen & van Dolen, 2011). In digital settings, impulsive buying is amplified by various stimuli—especially emotionally evocative content and instant gratification mechanisms (Zhao et al., 2022). Sneakers, as part of fashion consumption, are particularly prone to this behavior due to their symbolic role in identity expression and their popularity among youth-driven subcultures (O'Cass, 2004; Thomas et al., 2021).

Amidst this context, viral marketing has emerged as a dominant strategy that leverages user networks to disseminate engaging content. Viral campaigns featuring influencers, celebrities, and aesthetic storytelling have been shown to stimulate consumers' hedonic motivation by creating emotionally pleasurable brand experiences (Hinz et al., 2011; Fard & Marvi, 2019; Vu et al., 2023). Hedonic motivation—driven by enjoyment, excitement, and escape—plays a key role in triggering spontaneous purchases in e-commerce environments (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003; Iyer et al., 2019).

In addition to viral strategies, the emergence of Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) promotions has reshaped digital retail landscapes. BNPL facilitates purchases by offering installment plans, often interest-free, thus enhancing consumers' perceived financial flexibility. Research shows that BNPL schemes can not only stimulate purchase intention but also drive unplanned buying behavior due to reduced perceived financial risk (Guttman-Kenney et al., 2023; Juita et al., 2024; Ashby et al., 2025). Importantly, BNPL may also amplify hedonic responses, as consumers perceive easier access to desirable products (Kassim & Hussin, 2016; Zhu et al., 2023).

A key emotional mechanism in digital consumerism is Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)—a psychological condition where individuals feel anxiety about missing valuable experiences, trends, or opportunities (Przybylski et al., 2013). In e-commerce, FOMO is intensified by limited-time offers, social proof, and trend-centric content, all of which pressure consumers to act quickly and impulsively (Good & Hyman, 2020; Chetioui & Bouzidi, 2023). Particularly among Millennials and Gen Z, FOMO acts as a powerful driver of online impulsive behavior (Bläse et al., 2023; Kang et al., 2019).

While prior studies have examined the independent effects of viral marketing (Ilyas et al., 2022), BNPL (Violita, 2022), hedonic motivation (Pranata et al., 2024), and FOMO (Tanveer et al., 2022) on impulsive buying, few have explored their integrated impact on a specific product category like sneakers. Moreover, the mediating role of hedonic motivation and FOMO, as emotional constructs within the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), remains under-explored in Indonesian digital retail contexts.

1. Thus, this study seeks to fill that gap by investigating:
2. The direct impact of viral marketing and BNPL promotion on impulsive buying.
3. The mediating roles of hedonic motivation and FOMO.

The relative strength of these psychological mechanisms in facilitating consumer decisions. By applying a PLS-SEM approach to data from Indonesian urban e-commerce consumers, this research aims to offer new empirical insights for both academia and industry, particularly in crafting emotionally responsive digital marketing strategies for lifestyle products such as sneakers.

METHODS

This research adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional design grounded in the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) theoretical framework, which conceptualizes how external stimuli influence internal psychological states and ultimately affect consumer behavior. The

primary aim of this study was to examine the relationships between viral marketing, Buy Now Pay Later (BNPL) promotion, hedonic motivation, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), and impulsive buying behavior in the context of online sneaker purchases. A structured online survey was distributed to assess the effects and mediating roles of these constructs among Indonesian e-commerce consumers.

The study targeted individuals residing in the Greater Jakarta area (Jabodetabek), aged between 25 and 44 years, who had previously purchased sneakers via e-commerce platforms and were familiar with viral marketing content and BNPL services. Using a non-probability convenience sampling technique, a total of 339 valid responses were collected. Respondents were recruited through WhatsApp distribution lists, social media communities, and online forums related to fashion and sneakers. Screening questions ensured that participants had exposure to both viral sneaker campaigns and BNPL offers, making them suitable for analysis.

The research instrument comprised multiple reflective indicators, each measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5). All measurement items were adapted from prior validated scales and adjusted for linguistic accuracy through a back-translation process. Viral marketing was measured using twelve indicators adapted from Vu et al. (2023), covering entertainment, source credibility, informativeness, and visual appeal. BNPL promotion was assessed through nine indicators derived from studies by Kassim and Hussin (2016), Zhu et al. (2023), and Juita et al. (2024), focusing on financial flexibility, installment plans, and promotional incentives. Hedonic motivation was measured using twelve indicators capturing consumers' emotional and experiential drive to shop, based on Ozen and Engizek (2013). FOMO was measured using seven indicators derived from Munawar et al. (2021), representing anxiety about missing out on limited-time offers or social experiences. Lastly, impulsive buying behavior was assessed with six indicators based on Rook and Fisher (1995), capturing spontaneous and unplanned purchasing tendencies.

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS 4.0 software. This technique was selected due to its suitability for complex models with multiple constructs and its robustness in handling smaller sample sizes. The evaluation followed a two-stage modeling approach. First, the measurement model was validated through reliability and validity tests, including factor loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Cronbach’s alpha, and Composite Reliability. Discriminant validity was examined using the Fornell–Larcker criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. Second, the structural model was assessed for coefficient of determination (R^2), effect sizes (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). Hypothesis testing was performed using a bootstrapping procedure with 5000 subsamples, and significance was determined at p-values less than 0.05.

Through this methodological approach, the study aimed to provide empirical evidence on how viral marketing and BNPL promotions influence sneaker consumers' impulsive buying behavior, both directly and through emotional mediators such as hedonic motivation and FOMO.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed to investigate the impact of viral marketing and Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) promotion on impulsive buying behavior in e-commerce, with hedonic motivation and fear of missing out (FOMO) as mediating variables. To validate the structural model, both the measurement and structural components were rigorously evaluated through a series of statistical tests using PLS-SEM.

The evaluation began with the reliability analysis of the reflective constructs. As summarized in **Table 1**, all constructs demonstrated strong internal consistency. Cronbach’s Alpha values ranged from 0.857 (Impulse Buying) to 0.940 (BNPL Promotion), and Composite

Reliability values ranged from 0.894 to 0.950. These results exceed the accepted threshold of 0.70, confirming that all constructs are reliable.

Reliability Test of Reflective Constructs

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Status
Viral Marketing	0.927	0.938	Reliable
BNPL Promotion	0.940	0.950	Reliable
Hedonic Motivation	0.932	0.941	Reliable
FOMO	0.888	0.912	Reliable
Impulse Buying	0.857	0.894	Reliable

Next, the coefficient of determination (**R^2**) was assessed to evaluate the amount of variance in the endogenous variables explained by their predictors. As shown in **Table 2**, hedonic motivation had an R^2 of 0.155, indicating that viral marketing and BNPL promotion explained 15.5% of the variance. Meanwhile, FOMO and impulsive buying showed weak predictive power, with R^2 values of 0.025 and 0.074 respectively. These low values suggest that while the predictors have statistically significant effects, their explanatory power is limited.

R^2 of Endogenous Variables

Endogenous Construct	Predictor(s)	R^2
Hedonic Motivation	Viral Marketing, BNPL Promotion	0.155
FOMO	Viral Marketing	0.025
Impulsive Buying	Hedonic Motivation, FOMO	0.074

To complement the R^2 findings, the **effect size (f^2)** was calculated to measure the individual contribution of each exogenous variable. Referring to **Table 3**, viral marketing had a small effect on both hedonic motivation ($f^2 = 0.082$) and FOMO ($f^2 = 0.025$), while BNPL promotion had a small effect on hedonic motivation ($f^2 = 0.085$). Hedonic motivation also showed a small effect on impulsive buying ($f^2 = 0.048$), while FOMO's influence on impulsive buying was negligible ($f^2 = 0.020$). These results confirm the mediating role of hedonic motivation, albeit at a modest level, and reaffirm the limited behavioral relevance of FOMO in this context.

Effect Size (f^2) of Exogenous Variables

Predictor Variable	Hedonic Motivation	FOMO	Impulsive Buying
Viral Marketing	0.082	0.025	–
BNPL Promotion	0.085	–	–
Hedonic Motivation	–	–	0.048
FOMO	–	–	0.020

The model was also tested for multicollinearity using the **Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)**. As reported in **Table 4**, all VIF values were substantially below the critical threshold of 3.3, with the highest VIF recorded at only 1.026. These results indicate no multicollinearity issues among the predictors, affirming that each variable contributed uniquely to the model without redundancy.

Multicollinearity Test (VIF Values)

Predictor Pathway	VIF
BNPL Promotion → Hedonic Motivation	1.008
FOMO → Impulsive Buying	1.026
Hedonic Motivation → Impulsive Buying	1.026
Viral Marketing → FOMO	1.000

Predictor Pathway	VIF
Viral Marketing → Hedonic Motivation	1.008

Taken together, these findings suggest that while all tested paths are statistically significant, their explanatory power is modest, and practical effects are small. **Hedonic motivation emerges as the strongest mediator**, bridging promotional and emotional stimuli to consumer impulse. However, **FOMO's influence appears minimal**, and **impulsive buying behavior** is only partially explained by the model, suggesting the presence of other relevant factors such as personal traits, urgency cues, or scarcity perception. The model thus provides a foundational framework but encourages future research to expand on these behavioral dimensions.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the influence of viral marketing and Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) promotion on impulsive buying behavior of sneakers in e-commerce platforms, with hedonic motivation and fear of missing out (FOMO) as mediating variables. Through the application of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), several meaningful insights were uncovered regarding the dynamics of online consumer behavior in Indonesia's digital retail environment.

The results confirmed that both viral marketing and BNPL promotion positively influence hedonic motivation, suggesting that emotionally engaging content and flexible payment schemes can enhance consumers' pleasure-driven shopping tendencies. In turn, hedonic motivation significantly contributes to impulsive buying, underscoring its role as a key psychological trigger in spontaneous online purchases.

However, FOMO was found to exert only a minimal influence—both descriptively and structurally—on impulsive buying. This suggests that consumers in the study sample are less likely to be driven by social pressure or trend-related anxiety when making purchase decisions. Furthermore, BNPL promotion did not significantly affect FOMO, indicating that financially appealing promotions alone may not be sufficient to generate urgency or social comparison among shoppers.

The explanatory power of the model, as indicated by low R^2 and small f^2 values, reflects that impulsive buying behavior is influenced by a broader set of factors not fully captured in this framework. These may include individual impulsivity traits, mobile user experience, scarcity messaging, or time-limited offers.

In conclusion, the study validates the central role of hedonic motivation as a bridge between marketing stimuli and impulse buying, while simultaneously challenging the overreliance on FOMO as a universal driver. These findings offer practical guidance for marketers to invest more in creating emotionally rich and pleasurable shopping experiences rather than depending solely on urgency-driven tactics.

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