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The Effectiveness of “Only Few Left” in Triggering FOMO and Its Influence on Online Purchasing Decisions via TikTok Shop (Case Study: Generation Z in Palu City)

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Abstract: This study examines the effectiveness of scarcity-based marketing strategies in triggering Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and its impact on online purchasing decisions through TikTok Shop among Generation Z in Palu, Indonesia. This research employed a quantitative methodology with a descriptive-verification strategy. Data were collected from 150 Generation Z respondents who had shopped at TikTok Shop and were exposed to the limited quantity label, using a purposive sampling approach. Data analysis was conducted through Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS 4.0. The findings indicate that the minimum quantity remains, exerting a beneficial and significant influence on FOMO and purchase decisions. FOMO positively impacts purchase decisions and mediates the correlation between minimum availability and purchase choice. The combination of Only Few Left and FOMO explains 80.5% of the variation in online purchasing decisions. These findings confirm that real-time stock scarcity signals effectively trigger emotional responses and drive impulse buying behavior among Generation Z, thus providing practical implications for optimizing marketing strategies on social commerce platforms.

Keyword: Only Few Left, FOMO, Purchasing Decisions, TikTok Shop, Generation Z

INTRODUCTION

Especially among the younger generation, who grew up in the digital era, there has been a dramatic shift in consumer habits driven by the proliferation of digital technology. One phenomenon emerging in the current digital marketing landscape is the emergence of social commerce, the integration of social media and real-time online buying and selling activities. TikTok Shop is a prime example of this development, combining short video-based entertainment, live streaming features, and easy transactions in one platform that is highly appealing to young consumers, particularly Generation Z (Alfarisi & Sukaris, 2024).

Unlike conventional e-commerce platforms like Shopee or Tokopedia, which focus on conscious product discovery (search-based), TikTok Shop utilizes a content-based recommendation algorithm system that is spontaneous and emotional. This makes consumers more likely to make purchases based on exposure to viral content on the main page (For You Page), rather than rational needs (Putri & Apriadi, 2024). In this context, purchasing decisions

are often influenced by psychological factors such as social pressure, emotional impulses, and even the fear of missing out or missing out on opportunities, known as the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO).

One marketing strategy widely used on TikTok Shop is the "Only Few Left" label, which functions as a form of scarcity marketing—a scarcity strategy designed to create the impression that a product will soon run out. This strategy creates time pressure (urgency) and encourages consumers to buy immediately without further thought (Rosiqin & Pambudi, 2022). This strategy is considered highly effective in triggering FOMO, especially among Gen Z, who are known to be highly emotionally and socially connected through digital platforms. This generation also has a high tendency towards trend-based consumer behavior and is influenced by e-WOM and interactive visual content (Fitrianingsih et al., 2024).

Various studies have shown that the use of visual elements such as "Only Few Left" labels can significantly influence consumer purchasing behavior. Research by Kurnaesih et al. (2023) found that live streaming, discounts, and time pressure simultaneously increased impulse purchases among TikTok Shop users. Meanwhile, research by Widodo (2023) showed that scarcity-based promotions packaged in short video format effectively triggered FOMO and strengthened purchase intentions, especially when delivered by influencers or via live broadcasts.

However, research specifically examining the influence of the "Only a few Left" label on FOMO and its impact on online purchasing decisions through TikTok Shop is still very limited, especially in a local context such as among Generation Z in Palu City. Most previous studies are general in nature or focus on promotional aspects without exploring the interaction between visual scarcity strategies, FOMO psychology, and purchasing behavior within the unique TikTok ecosystem.

This study aims to leverage this background to experimentally investigate the efficacy of the "Only a Few Left" label in inducing FOMO and to assess the impact of FOMO on online purchasing choices among Generation Z in Palu City. This study anticipates theoretical and practical contributions to the literature on digital consumer behavior. The former will help businesses and marketers better understand the characteristics of today's youth and develop appropriate marketing strategies.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative research methodology, namely examining social phenomena by measuring variables quantitatively and using statistical tools for data analysis to obtain generalized predictions (Sahir, 2022). The research sample consisted of Generation Z individuals in Palu City who had purchased merchandise through TikTok Shop. This study used purposive sampling, a non-probability methodology that selects participants based on specific criteria related to the research objectives (Memon et al., 2025). The sample requirements are as follows: (1) respondents must be 17-27 years old (Generation Z); (2) residents of Palu City; and (3) have made online purchases at TikTok Shop, especially if influenced by the "Only a Few Left" approach. The sample size in this study is in accordance with the criteria set by Hair et al. (2021), requiring a minimum of ten times the number of indicators used. The minimum sample size required for 15 indicators is 150 respondents. Data collection was carried out through online survey dissemination via Google Forms. The research instrument used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) to assess the efficacy of the "Only Few Left" approach, the severity of FOMO, and online shopping choices (Sugiyono, 2022). Validity and reliability assessments were conducted on 30 initial respondents (trial) and assessed using SPSS software. After data validation and confirmation of reliability, analysis was conducted using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach based on Partial Least Squares (PLS) through the SmartPLS 4.0 program. This approach was used because of its ability to evaluate relationships among complex latent variables, including mediation effects. Testing of this

research model included evaluating convergent and discriminant validity, reliability (composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha), coefficient of determination (R²), and the significance of path coefficients to assess the research hypotheses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Respondent Characteristics

Participants in this study were Generation Z individuals living in Palu who had made online purchases on TikTok Shop, primarily influenced by the "Only a Few Left" label, comprising a total of 150 responses. The majority of respondents were female, with 115 individuals (76.7%), while males accounted for 35 individuals (23.3%). In terms of age group, respondents aged 17-22 years old constituted the largest group, amounting to 85 people (56.7%), followed by respondents aged 23-27 years old with 50 people (33.3%), and the remaining 15 people were in the 12-16 years old range with 10%. Based on their most recent educational level, the majority of respondents were university students or high school graduates or equivalent, amounting to 67 people (44.7%), followed by Diploma and Bachelor's graduates with 45 people (30%), and junior high school graduates or below with 38 people (25.3%). Furthermore, the majority of respondents admitted that they were motivated to purchase products on TikTok Shop because they didn't want to miss out on limited-time offers that suddenly appeared in content or live streams, especially when they saw the "Only Few Left" label. Ninety-seven (64.7%) respondents stated that FOMO was the primary reason they made impulse purchases.

Measurement Model Analysis (Outer Model)

Validity Test

The validity of the research indicators was tested using convergent and discriminant validity. Based on the analysis, all indicators had outer loading values above 0.7, thus meeting the convergent validity criteria, and the sieve was used for further analysis (Muhson, 2022). Furthermore, to test discriminant validity, a cross-loading approach was used. The test results showed that each indicator met the requirements for discriminant validity (Umar et al., 2024).

Reliability Test

Reliability assessment was conducted using composite reliability metrics and Cronbach's alpha. The variables in this study had reliability values above 0.7, indicating good internal consistency (Khairani et al., 2023). Thus, the questionnaire data can be relied upon to measure the latent variables Only Few Left, FOMO, and Online Purchasing Decisions.

Structural Model Analysis (Inner Model)

Structural models, or deep models, are used to evaluate and predict causal relationships between latent variables, which are assessed by observable indicators in this study.

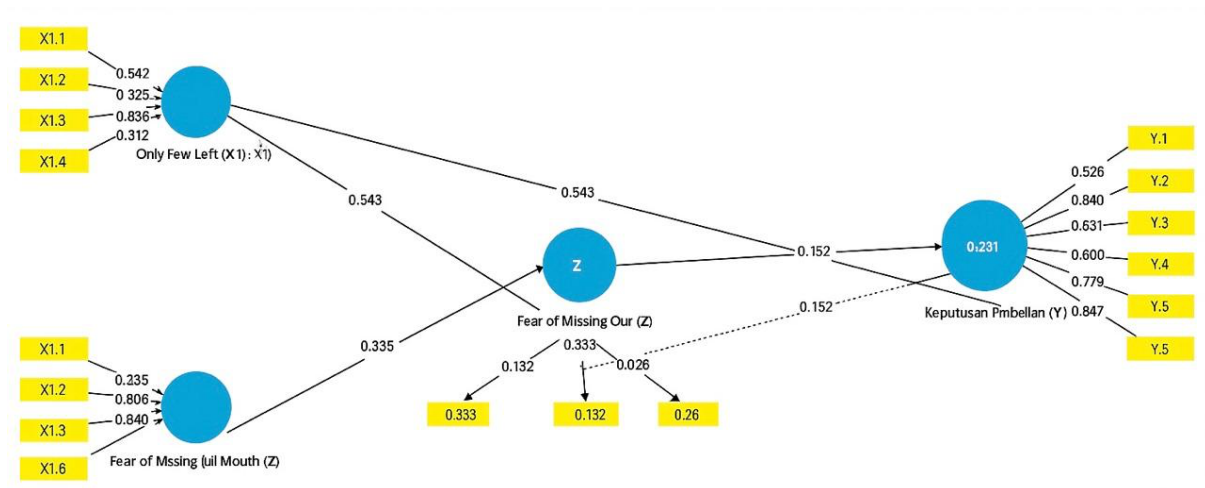


Figure 2. Structural Model
Source: Processed data, 2025

R-Square

The R-squared value assesses the contribution of independent variables to the dependent variable and evaluates the strength of the structural model. According to Chin's (1998, in Hair et al., 2021) standard, R-squared values are classified as weak (0.25), moderate (0.50), and strong (0.75). The R-squared value findings in this study are as follows:

Table 1. R-square value

Variabel	<i>R-square</i>	<i>R-square adjusted</i>
<i>Fear of Missing out (FOMO)</i>	0.620	0.615
Keputusan Pembelian Online	0.805	0.801

Source: Data processed, 2025

The R-squared value for the FOMO variable is 0.620, indicating that the Left Some variable accounts for 62% of the variance in FOMO, with the remaining variation attributed to external variables not included in the model.

The R-square value for the online purchasing decision variable is 0.805, indicating that 80.5% of the variance in online purchasing decisions can be attributed to Left and FOMO factors, while the remaining 19.5% is accounted for by other variables not included in this study. Based on the interpretation of the R-square value, both models are considered strong.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted to ensure the relationship between variables in the research model, thus allowing statistical acceptance of the presented hypothesis. This study used Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with a bootstrap technique. The P-value was less than 0.96, and the P-value was less than 0.05 at the 5% significance threshold (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 2. Hypothesis Testing

Variables	<i>Original Sample</i>	<i>T-statistic</i>	<i>P-value</i>	Decision
X1 → Z	0.543	5,353	0,000	Accepted
X1 → Y	0.285	2,987	0.003	Accepted
X → Y	0.293	2,189	0.029	Accepted
X1 → Z → Y	0.182	2,187	0.026	Accepted
Z → Y	0.511	6,458	0,000	Accepted
(total effect)				

Source: Data processed 2025

The PLS output in Table 2 shows that the test of hypothesis h_1 : Only Few Left on FOMO yields a T-statistic of 5.353, above 1.96, with a P-value of 0.000 (<0.05). The findings indicate that Only Few Left has a beneficial and substantial effect on FOMO. This result is in line with the studies of Zhang & Li (2020) and Wang et al. (2023), which show that scarcity increases customers' psychological urgency, thus triggering FOMO. Consequently, the first hypothesis (H1) is confirmed.

H2: The T-statistic value for purchase decisions, which is 2.987, exceeds 1.96, and the P-value is 0.003 (<0.05). This finding indicates that Only a Few Left has a beneficial and substantial influence on purchase choices. The results of Chen et al. (2021) show that scarcity signals accelerate purchase decisions on social commerce platforms. Consequently, the second hypothesis (H2) is confirmed.

H3: The T-statistic value for FOMO in purchase choice is 2.189, above 1.96, with a P-value of 0.029 (<0.05). The data indicate that FOMO has a beneficial and substantial impact on purchase choice. This finding is in line with the study by Islam et al. (2022), which identified FOMO as a significant catalyst for impulse buying in e-commerce. Consequently, the third hypothesis (H₃) is confirmed.

H4: Only Few Left on purchasing decisions through FOMO has a T-statistic value of 2.187 which is greater than 1.96 with a P-value of 0.026 (<0.05). These results indicate that FOMO significantly mediates the influence of Only Few Left on purchasing decisions, which is stronger when mediated by FOMO. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis (H4) is accepted.

H5: The total influence of FOMO on purchasing decisions shows a T-statistic value of 6.458 which is greater than 1.96 with a P-Value of 0.000 (<0.05). This confirms that FOMO plays an important role in increasing purchasing decisions. This finding is supported by research by Liu et al. (2024) which explains that FOMO has a cumulative effect that increases purchase intentions on digital shopping platforms. Thus, the fifth hypothesis (H5) is accepted.

Consequently, the hypothesis proposed in this study was validated at a 95% confidence level. There are only a few strategies that can be implemented to mitigate FOMO and reduce the risk of online fraud among Generation Z in Palu City through TikTok Shop.

Discussion

The Effect of Only Few Left on Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)

Research findings indicate that the "Only a Few Left" variable significantly influences fear of missing out. This indicates that the more customers see a product's limited availability label (Only a Few Left) on TikTok Shop, the greater their fear of missing out on the opportunity to purchase that product. This phenomenon aligns with the characteristics of FoMO, where individuals are driven to make immediate purchases to avoid feeling left out or regretting it later (Alhabash et al., 2023).

In the context of Generation Z in Palu City, the "limited stock" indicator that appears when shopping on TikTok Shop triggers a perception of scarcity, which ultimately increases purchase urgency. This finding aligns with a study by Susanti & Rahmawati (2022), which states that scarcity-based marketing strategies can trigger a fear of missing out, especially among young consumers active on social media. Furthermore, research by Sari et al. (2021) revealed that visualizing near-depleted stock increases psychological pressure to make immediate purchase decisions. Thus, "Only Few Left" can be seen as a powerful stimulus in creating FoMO (Focus on Missing Out) among digital generation consumers.

The Influence of Only Few Left on Purchase Decisions

The evaluation findings of the second hypothesis indicate little basis for making substantial purchase decisions. This means that stock scarcity signals can encourage consumers to accelerate purchase decisions without much consideration of alternatives. This effect aligns

with the findings of Aggarwal et al. (2019), who stated that stock scarcity increases urgency, shortens consideration time, and increases sales conversions.

In the context of Generation Z in Palu City, exposure to low-stock indicators on TikTok Shop serves as a psychological trigger to quickly secure products before they run out. A study by Chen & Ng (2022) also confirmed that the use of stock-scarcity strategies on e-commerce platforms consistently increases impulse buying rates, especially among younger consumers who tend to seek the latest trends.

The Influence of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) on Purchase Decisions

The findings of the third hypothesis test indicate that FoMO has a beneficial and substantial impact on purchasing choices. Consumers experiencing high levels of FoMO are more likely to make immediate purchases to avoid regret over missed opportunities (Przybylski et al., 2021).

In this study, Generation Z members exposed to a combination of limited-stock signs, viral reviews, and short-term promotions on TikTok Shop tended to make faster purchasing decisions. Kaur et al.'s (2022) research also found that FoMO can trigger impulsive buying and override rational evaluation, as consumers' primary focus shifts to potential missed opportunities rather than cost-benefit analysis.

The Influence of Only Few Left on Purchase Decisions through Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)

The findings of the fourth hypothesis test indicate that Only a Few Left Affects Purchase Decisions through the mediation of FOMO. The impact of stock scarcity on purchase choices manifests itself both directly and indirectly through increased anxiety about missed opportunities. This finding corroborates the study by Shi et al. (2023), which explains that scarcity signals can increase perceived urgency, thereby triggering FOMO and encouraging accelerated purchases.

Generation Z who see signs of low stock experience increased FoMO intensity, which then accelerates the decision to purchase before the product runs out. Research by Darmawan & Wibowo (2023) supports this mechanism, where FoMO acts as an emotional trigger that links the perception of scarcity with purchasing behavior.

The Influence of Total Fear of Missing Out on Purchase Decisions

The total effect analysis shows that FoMO plays a significant role in explaining variations in purchasing decisions. When combined with triggers such as "Only Few Left," the total effect of FoMO becomes even stronger. This is consistent with the scarcity marketing model of consumer behavior, which states that negative emotions resulting from fear of missing out can strengthen the overall purchase impulse (Zhang & Luo, 2021). Thus, FoMO acts not only as an intervening variable but also as a primary driver of purchasing decisions, especially in online shopping environments that emphasize scarcity and rapidly changing trends.

CONCLUSION

The study and discussion show that the variable Only a Few Left has a positive and significant effect on Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and Purchase Decisions. The variable Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) has a positive and substantial effect on purchase choices. This study shows that Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) mediates the impact of Only a Few Left on purchase choices. The findings indicate that a marketing method centered on stock scarcity (Only a Few Left) effectively elicits an emotional response of FOMO, which subsequently impacts online shopping choices through TikTok Shop among Generation Z in Palu City.

Based on the research findings, it is recommended that businesses or brands marketing products through TikTok Shop utilize the Only Few Left strategy optimally, by delivering

limited stock information in real-time and relevant to the Generation Z target audience. This strategy will be more effective if combined with other marketing techniques such as limited-time promotions, positive consumer reviews, and collaboration with influencers or micro-influencers who have close ties with the audience. In addition, brands need to maintain product and service quality to ensure that purchasing decisions triggered by FOMO can be followed by consumer satisfaction and potential repeat purchases. Implementing this strategy consistently and interactively will build positive perceptions of the brand while increasing loyalty among Generation Z consumers.

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