

The Role of Parasocial Relationship and Fear of Missing Out in Generation Z's Purchase Intention

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Abstract

The rapid evolution of influencer marketing has fundamentally transformed the consumption behavior of Generation Z in Indonesia, where digital figures have become the primary authority in purchasing decisions. This study aims to analyze the influence of Parasocial Relationship (PSR) and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) on purchase intention, as well as to measure the simultaneous contribution of both variables to Generation Z. Utilizing a quantitative correlational approach, data were gathered through online questionnaires from 130 respondents selected via purposive sampling. Data analysis was performed using multiple linear regression techniques to examine the relationships among variables. The results indicate that PSR and FoMO exert a positive and significant influence on purchase intention, both partially and simultaneously. These findings confirm that an intimate emotional bond with an influencer (PSR) and social anxiety driven by missing out on trends (FoMO) act as the main drivers of transactional urgency among young consumers. The implication of this study provides a new perspective for marketing practitioners to balance authentic personal narrative strategies with ethical urgency. This research highlights the importance of maintaining relationship credibility between influencers and audiences for a healthy, meaningful, and sustainable digital economic ecosystem amid fast-moving trend dynamics in Indonesia.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, Parasocial Relationship, Fear of Missing Out

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of social media has fundamentally transformed Indonesia's marketing landscape, giving rise to influencer marketing as a strategic approach that leverages digital personalities to shape consumer decision-making (Gunawan, Harsanto, & El Hasan, 2026). This phenomenon has become increasingly important to investigate due to the shifting authority of information, whereby contemporary consumers tend to place greater trust in digital figures perceived as authentic than in conventional advertising channels. Indonesia represents one of the largest social media markets in Southeast Asia, with more than 167 million active social media users in 2024. Among these users, Generation Z individuals born between 1997 and 2012 constitutes the largest demographic group, accounting for 27.94% of the total population. Having grown alongside rapid technological advancement, this generation is no longer merely a passive consumer segment but has emerged as an active force that shapes consumption trends through digital references and online interactions (Sufyan, Dewanti, & Lorenza, 2024). Consequently, understanding how

digital influencers shape consumer perceptions through underlying psychological mechanisms has become strategically important for explaining market behavior within today's fast-paced attention economy.

The effectiveness of influencers in converting followers into consumers is largely driven by two fundamental psychological mechanisms, namely Parasocial Relationship (PSR) and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). Examining these constructs is essential because they simultaneously establish emotional trust while creating a sense of transactional urgency among consumers. From a theoretical perspective, the PRISM framework proposed by Erickson et al. (2021) conceptualizes PSR as a one-sided yet emotionally intimate relationship that audiences develop with media figures. Within the framework of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), such relationships foster favorable attitudes toward influencers' recommendations, thereby strengthening consumers' behavioral intentions (Loindong, Sumarauw, & Raintung, 2025). Conversely, FoMO functions as a psychological catalyst that reinforces subjective norms and perceived behavioral control, compelling consumers to take immediate purchasing actions in order to avoid being excluded from prevailing social trends (Pika, Harris, Anjani, & Mulyadi, 2026). The interplay between emotional attachment and social anxiety creates a psychological environment in which purchase intention becomes a highly conditioned and predictable behavioral response.

Despite the growing prominence of influencer marketing, an important research challenge remains regarding the inconsistency of consumer responses amid the overwhelming volume of promotional content circulating across social media platforms. One of the most pressing concerns is the emergence of influencer fatigue, a phenomenon that has made audiences increasingly selective and skeptical toward sponsored content. In practice, not all influencers are capable of translating strong parasocial relationships into actual purchasing behavior, particularly when consumers perceive FoMO-based marketing strategies as excessively manipulative or psychologically pressuring. Consequently, a fundamental question arises as to whether emotional attachment through PSR remains sufficiently powerful to sustain consumer loyalty in an environment increasingly dominated by FoMO-driven consumption trends (Kembau, Lendo, Felix, & Vincent, 2024). This tension between relational intimacy and psychological pressure represents a critical challenge for developing influencer marketing strategies that are not only effective in stimulating purchase intention but also ethically sustainable among Generation Z consumers in Indonesia.

Recent empirical studies have consistently identified Parasocial Relationship (PSR) and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) as significant predictors of purchase intention, although considerable opportunities for further investigation remain. A review of the existing literature indicates that while the independent relationships between these two constructs and purchase intention have been well established, their integration within a unified conceptual framework has received limited scholarly attention. For instance, Atmaja et al. (2025) demonstrated that stronger parasocial bonds are significantly associated with a higher likelihood of product purchasing (Pandowo, Sondakh, Soegoto, Tawas, & Sumarauw, 2025). Likewise, Febrianty et al. (2025) found that FoMO-based promotional strategies effectively intensify emotional urgency among younger consumers, thereby increasing their propensity to engage in immediate purchasing behavior (Winardi, Hidayat, & Cahyani, 2026). Furthermore, the meta-analysis conducted by Barari et al. (2026) identified relational dimensions as the most consistent predictors of successful marketing outcomes across diverse contexts (Mashita, 2025). Collectively, these findings reinforce the proposition that integrating PSR and FoMO provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding the increasingly complex and multidimensional nature of contemporary consumer purchasing behavior.

Despite these advances, a substantial research gap remains between the global body of literature and the contextual realities of the Indonesian market. Most previous studies have

been conducted in Western or East Asian countries, whose cultural orientations and social media ecosystems differ considerably from Indonesia's predominantly collectivist society. To date, no empirical study has simultaneously incorporated the PRISM framework and the FoMO construct to predict purchase intention within the Indonesian context. Existing research has largely examined these variables in isolation, adopting a siloed approach despite growing theoretical evidence suggesting that emotional attachment and social anxiety interact dynamically in shaping consumer decision-making. This gap gives rise to important theoretical uncertainties that warrant comprehensive empirical investigation, particularly in light of the rapid expansion of Indonesia's influencer marketing ecosystem and its unique socio-cultural characteristics.

This study offers a significant theoretical contribution by proposing a Relational–Existential Integration Model within the context of influencer marketing. The novelty of this research lies in the application of the PRISM framework, which was specifically developed to measure parasocial relationships in social media environments, together with an examination of the mediating role of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) in the relationship between parasocial closeness and purchase intention. Unlike previous studies, this research investigates how emotional attachment through Parasocial Relationship (PSR) is simultaneously shaped by varying levels of FoMO, thereby providing a novel perspective on how interpersonal closeness and psychological anxiety jointly influence Generation Z consumers' purchasing decisions. To the best of the authors' knowledge, this integrated framework has not previously been empirically examined using the PRISM instrument within the Indonesian context. Consequently, this study offers a strong degree of originality by advancing the understanding of consumer behavior in the contemporary digital marketplace.

Motivated by these research gaps, this study seeks to develop a comprehensive understanding of Generation Z's digital purchasing behavior through a systematic empirical investigation. The primary objective is to determine whether the persuasive power of influencers is predominantly driven by genuine emotional attachment or by socially induced urgency arising from FoMO. Specifically, this study aims to examine the effect of Parasocial Relationship (PSR) on purchase intention, investigate the role of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) as a key psychological driver of purchasing urgency, and evaluate the simultaneous contribution of both constructs in predicting consumers' purchase intentions. By addressing these objectives, the study is expected to make meaningful theoretical contributions to the advancement of digital marketing literature while offering practical insights for marketers in designing influencer marketing strategies that extend beyond short-term transactional outcomes toward fostering sustainable and meaningful relationships with consumers.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach using a correlational research design to examine the relationships among variables without administering any experimental treatment to the participants. This approach was selected to obtain objective numerical data, thereby enabling the empirical testing of hypotheses concerning the effects of Parasocial Relationship (PSR) and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) on Generation Z's purchase intention (S. A. Puspitasari & Mangifera, 2025). Data were collected through an online survey using a structured questionnaire distributed to respondents selected through purposive sampling. Eligible participants were individuals aged 18–27 years, actively engaged in social media, and exposed to influencer promotional content within the preceding three months. The collected data were analyzed using multiple linear regression with IBM SPSS Statistics to examine both the partial and simultaneous effects of the independent variables on purchase intention after satisfying the required classical assumption tests and instrument quality assessments.

The target population comprised Generation Z consumers in Indonesia who regularly interact with social media influencers across digital platforms. The sample size was determined using the Lemeshow formula to ensure adequate population representation, resulting in a minimum target of 130 respondents to reduce sampling error. The research instrument was developed by adapting established measurement scales, including the Parasocial Relationships in Social Media Scale (PRISM) for measuring PSR, the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) Scale developed by Przybylski et al. to assess social anxiety, and an adaptation of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) framework to measure purchase intention. All constructs were assessed using a five-point Likert scale. Prior to data collection, the questionnaire underwent content validity assessment by subject-matter experts to ensure that each measurement item appropriately reflected the characteristics of digital consumer behavior within the Indonesian context.

Data analysis was conducted through a series of rigorous statistical procedures to ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings (Zayrin et al., 2025). Instrument validity was evaluated using the Corrected Item–Total Correlation, with a critical r -value of 0.172 for a sample of 130 respondents, while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, with a minimum acceptable threshold of 0.60. Before hypothesis testing, the dataset was subjected to several classical assumption tests, including the One-Sample Kolmogorov–Smirnov test for normality, the linearity test, and the multicollinearity test using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance values to ensure that the regression model satisfied the required statistical assumptions. Finally, the proposed hypotheses were examined using independent-samples t -tests to evaluate the partial effects of PSR and FoMO (H1 and H2), whereas the F -test and the coefficient of determination (R^2) were employed to assess the simultaneous contribution of PSR and FoMO (H3) to Generation Z's purchase intention.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics and Data Description

This study involved 130 Generation Z respondents from various regions across Indonesia. Based on the demographic data collected, the majority of respondents were between 20 and 24 years old, representing a critical transitional stage from higher education to the workforce. Digital observation of respondents' social media activities revealed that they spent an average of 6–8 hours per day on social networking platforms. This finding confirms that the digital ecosystem has evolved beyond a mere communication medium to become an integral part of respondents' daily lives. Documentation of respondents' social media accounts further indicated that they actively followed three to five influencers, primarily on Instagram and TikTok, with interests concentrated in lifestyle, fashion, and technology-related content. These findings suggest that the study participants maintained a high level of socio-psychological proximity to social media influencers, thereby providing a favorable context for the development of parasocial relationships.

The Effect of Parasocial Relationship on Purchase Intention

The regression analysis revealed that Parasocial Relationship (PSR) exerted a positive and statistically significant effect on purchase intention. Quantitative findings, supported by in-depth observational evidence, indicate that when followers develop a strong emotional connection with an influencer, they tend to overlook the commercial nature of sponsored content and instead perceive promotional messages as authentic personal recommendations. This finding suggests that influencers have evolved beyond their traditional role as advertising endorsers to become trusted digital companions whose opinions carry considerable persuasive authority. These results are consistent with the findings of Boyd et al. (2024), who demonstrated that the identification dimension within the PRISM framework

plays a pivotal role in strengthening audience trust. Field observations further revealed that when influencers shared personal experiences and everyday life narratives, audiences responded with heightened emotional engagement, which subsequently increased their intention to purchase products either as an expression of support for the influencer or as an attempt to emulate the influencer's lifestyle.

The Effect of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) on Purchase Intention

The findings further demonstrate that Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) serves as a powerful predictor of purchase urgency among Generation Z consumers. Observations of influencer-generated content featuring flash sales, limited-time offers, and exclusive promotions revealed substantial social interaction within comment sections, reflecting consumers' concerns about being left behind. Participants frequently expressed the perception that failing to purchase recommended products immediately would prevent them from participating in ongoing social trends. This phenomenon suggests that FoMO influences consumers by altering their perceived behavioral control, thereby encouraging more impulsive purchasing decisions. Consistent with the findings of Febrianty et al. (2025), emotionally driven urgency appears to be particularly influential among younger consumer groups. Supporting documentation also indicated that purchasing intensity increased substantially when influencers framed product recommendations using narratives emphasizing scarcity, exclusivity, and limited availability. These findings underscore that the anxiety associated with missing social opportunities constitutes a critical psychological mechanism underlying consumer purchase intention.

The Simultaneous Contribution of PSR and FoMO to Purchase Intention

The simultaneous regression analysis confirmed that Parasocial Relationship (PSR) and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) jointly exert a substantial and statistically significant influence on Generation Z's purchase intention. The coefficient of determination indicated that these two variables explained a considerable proportion of the variance in consumers' purchase intention. This finding suggests that PSR and FoMO do not operate independently but rather reinforce one another within consumers' psychological decision-making processes. Once consumers establish emotional attachment through PSR, promotional messages accompanied by FoMO-induced urgency become substantially more persuasive than either psychological mechanism operating in isolation. These findings are consistent with the meta-analysis conducted by Barari et al. (2026), which concluded that the effectiveness of influencer marketing depends largely on the interaction between relational attachment and external psychological pressure. From a sociological perspective, these findings imply that Generation Z consumers experience a continuous tension between their desire to establish meaningful emotional connections with influencers and the social pressure to remain aligned with rapidly evolving consumption trends.

Table 1. Summary of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Results

Independent Variable	Regression Coefficient (β)	t-value	Significance	Interpretation
<i>Parasocial Relationship (PSR)</i>	0,425	5,124	0,000	Significant
<i>Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)</i>	0,387	4,892	0,000	Significant

Source: Processed Primary Data (2026)

Table 1 presents the results of the multiple linear regression analysis, demonstrating that both Parasocial Relationship (PSR) and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) are statistically

significant predictors of Generation Z consumers' purchase intention. The PSR variable yielded a regression coefficient (β) of 0.425 with a significance level of 0.000, indicating that stronger one-sided emotional attachment between audiences and influencers is associated with a greater likelihood of purchasing products endorsed by those influencers. Similarly, FoMO produced a regression coefficient of 0.387 with a significance level of 0.000, confirming that social anxiety arising from the fear of missing information, opportunities, or emerging trends significantly increases consumers' urgency to make purchasing decisions. Overall, the significance values well below the conventional threshold of 0.05 demonstrate the robustness of the regression model. These findings suggest that relational closeness and anxiety-driven psychological pressure jointly constitute the primary determinants through which exposure to influencer-generated content is translated into actual purchase intention within the contemporary digital marketing ecosystem.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the effectiveness of influencer marketing in shaping Generation Z's purchase intention in Indonesia is driven by a complex interplay between emotional attachment and existential anxiety. The significant influence of Parasocial Relationship (PSR) on purchase intention provides empirical evidence that the distinction between real interpersonal interactions and digitally mediated relationships has become increasingly blurred. This finding is consistent with Boyd et al. (2024), who argued that parasocial closeness extends beyond a superficial emotional response to become a fundamental source of trust, enabling digital influencers to function as authoritative reference figures in consumers' decision-making processes (Rahmawati & Wiryany, 2026).

Contrary to the skeptical view that digital relationships are inherently transactional, the present study demonstrates that Generation Z actively constructs aspects of its identity through the aspirations and lifestyles projected by favored influencers. This finding further confirms that when consumers perceive themselves as "knowing" and "understanding" an influencer's personal life as reflected in the Knowledge Of dimension of the PRISM framework the psychological barriers to purchasing are substantially reduced. Consequently, PSR functions as a trust-building mechanism that mitigates consumers' perceived risks associated with promoted products (F. D. Puspitasari, Purwanto, & Fatchurrohman, 2025), allowing influencer recommendations to be interpreted as authentic personal advice rather than as manipulative commercial persuasion.

Furthermore, the role of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) as a significant predictor of purchase intention highlights the extent to which social anxiety has become institutionalized within contemporary digital marketing practices. This finding strongly supports the study by Febrianty et al. (2025), which argued that limited-time promotional campaigns function not merely as urgency-enhancing tactics but also as emotional triggers that capitalize on the psychological vulnerabilities of younger consumers (Irawan, Bella, & Nurhijatina, 2024). The present findings suggest that FoMO operates as a psychological catalyst, compelling individuals to convert exposure to influencer-generated content into immediate purchasing behavior in order to preserve their social relevance within peer networks.

Unlike traditional consumer behavior models that emphasize rational evaluation and product attributes as primary determinants of purchasing decisions, the purchasing behavior of Generation Z appears to be strongly influenced by compelling subjective norms embedded within digital communities. When influencers portray a particular lifestyle as the prevailing social standard, consumers develop anxiety that failing to adopt the same consumption patterns may result in social exclusion. These findings indicate that FoMO has evolved into a systematic psychological mechanism that aligns individual desires with collective social pressure (Listiana, Anbiya, Abrar, Nurharyati, & Saefudin, 2026). Consequently, purchasing

decisions are frequently motivated by the desire to maintain a sense of belonging and social connectedness rather than by the functional value of the products themselves.

At a broader level of theoretical integration, the findings reinforce the meta-analysis reported by Barari et al. (2026), which identified relational dimensions as the most consistent predictors of successful digital marketing strategies (Wulandari, Yohani, & Marpaung, 2026). More importantly, this study extends previous literature by demonstrating that Parasocial Relationship (PSR) and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) do not operate independently but interact dynamically to strengthen consumers' behavioral intentions. Whereas PSR grants influencers the relational legitimacy to shape audience perceptions through trust, FoMO provides the psychological urgency that accelerates consumers' decision-making processes. These findings suggest that effective influencer marketing targeting Generation Z in Indonesia extends beyond generating engagement through creative content; rather, it requires the strategic management of audience emotions (Maslahatun, Pricilia, Aulia, & Ruga, 2025).

The integration of warm emotional attachment through PSR and the urgency generated by FoMO creates a highly responsive model of consumer behavior, although one that may also increase the risk of consumer fatigue over time. From a theoretical perspective, this finding expands the explanatory scope of Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by suggesting that digital consumer behavior is influenced not only by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control but also by continuously evolving relational bonds and persistent psychological anxiety (Desinta, 2026). Accordingly, the present study underscores the importance for marketing practitioners of balancing authentic personal storytelling with ethically designed urgency-based promotional strategies. Such an approach is essential for sustaining long-term relationships between influencers and their audiences while minimizing the adverse consequences of psychological exploitation that may ultimately undermine the credibility and sustainability of the social media marketing ecosystem.

CONCLUSION

This study provides fundamental evidence that Generation Z's purchase behavior in Indonesia is shaped by the complex psychological interaction between Parasocial Relationship (PSR) and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). The principal insight derived from this research is that influencer marketing extends far beyond the effective dissemination of promotional messages; rather, it depends on digital influencers' ability to cultivate intimate emotional relationships while simultaneously generating a sense of existential urgency among their followers. These findings suggest that consumer loyalty and purchase intention are rooted in the interplay between trust developed through sustained parasocial attachment and the collective pressure to remain socially relevant within rapidly evolving digital trends. Consequently, the effectiveness of contemporary digital marketing largely depends on influencers' capacity to manage audiences' emotional dynamics in ways that foster meaningful engagement rather than merely exploiting consumers' psychological vulnerabilities.

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