

# Digital Aspiration or Social Anxiety? The Accelerating Role of FOMO in Gen Z Influencer Marketing

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**Abstract** – In the rapidly evolving digital era, influencer marketing creates a complex tension between digital aspiration and social anxiety, but the impact on the psychological responses of Generation Z remains underexplored. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the influence of social media influencer exposure on purchase intention, reporting the mediating roles of the desire to mimic and materialism collectively defined as digital aspiration, as well as examining the moderating effect of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). A quantitative method was applied with 385 Generation Z respondents in Indonesia selected through purposive sampling, and the data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results showed that influencer exposure did not directly drive purchase intention, but the effect was fully mediated through the internalization of digital aspirations. This study identified FOMO as a significant emotional accelerator that strengthened the relationship between influencer exposure and materialism, showing a defensive response to social exclusion. However, FOMO failed to moderate the direct relationship between exposure and purchase intention, reporting a level of digital skepticism and sophisticated cognitive filtering inherent in Generation Z. The tension between digital aspiration and social anxiety was also clarified within the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework. Managerially, the results advised a strategic shift from urgency-based tactics to aspiration-focused strategies to improve deep social identification.

**Keywords:** digital aspiration, influencer marketing, FOMO, SOR framework, purchase intention.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, social media marketing and the use of influencers have grown rapidly (Han & Balabanis, 2024) as the most effective marketing strategies. This phenomenon is changing the methods used by companies to interact with consumers (Dwivedi et al., 2021) and significantly influencing purchasing decisions and consumer behavior (Hudders et al., 2021). Social media influencers, with large and loyal followers, have become trusted voices (Ao et al., 2023).

The success of Influencers is in the ability to build close and personal relationships with followers (Lou, 2022), through platforms like TikTok and Instagram. Influencers can share relevant experiences and recommendations (Yenita & Cintalia, 2023), creating more intimate communication compared to traditional advertising (Martínez-López et al., 2020), which is often seen as inauthentic (Kurdi et al., 2022). Furthermore, the rise of short-video platforms has increased the dissemination of idealized lifestyles, making influencers a primary reference for social standards of Generation Z (Venciute et al., 2023). In an increasingly competitive market, companies are constantly seeking new methods to reach consumers (Trivedi & Sama, 2020), and social media influencers have been reported as a promising solution (Tandon et al., 2021).

Data shows that approximately 80% of marketers consider influencers trustworthy and contributing to a better brand reputation (Joshi et al., 2023). Furthermore, influencers are able to increase consumer purchase intent more effectively than traditional marketing methods (Hanandeh et al., 2023). Despite the great potential of influencer marketing, challenges remain (Suprawan & Pojanavatee, 2022). This includes the importance of selecting the right and relevant influencers for the brand to avoid damaging the reputation (Al-Sous et al., 2023). However, not all content shared by influencers

reflects authentic personal experiences or opinions (Tafesse & Wood, 2021). Some engage in paid collaborations or sponsorships (Schouten et al., 2020) with specific brands to present exaggerated or biased information to meet brand expectations (Boerman & van Reijmersdal, 2020). This phenomenon presents challenges in assessing the credibility of messages delivered by influencers (Boerman, 2020) since the audiences are often unaware that the content is part of a hidden marketing strategy (Belanche et al., 2021).

Some studies emphasize that emotional closeness and the process of consumer identification with public figures play an important role in increasing purchase intention and brand loyalty. Lady et al. (2024) found that consumers' emotional attachment to celebrities as brand ambassadors positively and significantly influenced brand loyalty and purchase intention. Furthermore, Lady et al. (2025) stated that digital stimuli, such as social media marketing and electronic word-of-mouth, had a significant influence on purchase intention through emotional and social factors, while price was a relatively less dominant factor. These results show that constant exposure to influencers can drive a desire to imitate, increase materialism, and trigger social anxiety, where the fear of being left behind in digital trends becomes a prevalent psychological burden among young consumers (Dwisuardinata & Darma, 2022; Ilyas et al., 2022).

A systematic gap remains in understanding the non-linear role of social anxiety, even though previous studies have examined the effect of influencers on purchase intention. First, existing literature predominantly treats FOMO as a direct driver of impulsive buying, dismissing the potential as an emotional accelerator that restructures internal values before any behavior occurs. Second, there is a lack of integrated frameworks that explain how Generation Z's digital skepticism translates into a defensive response, where purchasing products endorsed by influencers serves as a symbolic method to mitigate social isolation (Le & Ngoc, 2024).

Based on the description above, this study addresses the gaps by formally developing the construct of "Digital Aspiration." Grounded in the process of

parasocial identification, digital aspiration is manifested through two primary psychological bridges, namely the desire to mimic and materialism. By conceptualizing digital aspiration as the "Organism" phase within SOR framework, this study moves beyond seeing mimicry and materialism as isolated variables, treating the variable as the primary internal process connecting influencer exposure to actual purchase intention.

The theoretical foundation for the relationships is provided by the Theory of Influence (Scheer & Stern, 1992). This theory explains that social influence is a multi-stage process including evaluation, attitude formation, and response. In the context of Generation Z, influence occurs when followers perceive influencers as credible models, leading to a desire to emulate lifestyle while triggering social anxiety through FOMO. This framework explains the effects of digital aspiration and social anxiety on the consumption patterns of the digital generation. The following hypotheses are developed to test these dynamics.

Influencers serve as aspirational models whose curated content triggers a parasocial identification in followers. Based on the Theory of Influence, this identification improves a strong desire to emulate the influencer's traits and lifestyle (Ao et al., 2023; Chen & Yang, 2023).

H1: Exposure to influencers positively influences the desire to mimic.

Authentic and personalized content delivered by influencers can directly stimulate interest in endorsed products. Perceived message credibility directly influences followers' willingness to buy (Hanandeh et al., 2023).

H2: Exposure to influencers positively influences purchase intention.

Frequent exposure to luxury and status symbols in influencer content can restructure a follower's value system. Individuals may connect happiness and success with the possession of items shown by influencers (Dinh & Lee, 2024; Lady et al., 2025; Tuominen et al., 2022).

H3: Exposure to influencers positively influences materialism.

Acquiring endorsed products becomes a symbolic method to achieve identity when an individual aspires to an influencer's lifestyle. This psychological identification is a key driver for turning admiration into actual purchase behavior (Ki & Kim, 2019; Koay et al., 2022; Xiao et al., 2021). Thus:

H4: The desire to mimic positively influences purchase intention.

For materialistic individuals, purchasing products is a primary tool for self-expression and showing social success. High materialistic values increase the likelihood of following influencer-led consumption trends (Dinh & Lee, 2024; Koay et al., 2022).

H5: Materialism positively influences purchase intention.

The idealized narratives shown by influencers can trigger anxiety about falling behind social standards. This comparison leads to FOMO, specifically when Generation Z perceives others are having more rewarding experiences (Belanche et al., 2021).

H6: Exposure to influencers positively influences FOMO.

FOMO creates a sense of social urgency, where failing to own a trending product is equated with social exclusion. This anxiety motivates individuals to purchase as a method to maintain social relevance (Ampornklinkaew, 2025; Hussain et al., 2023).

H7: FOMO positively influences purchase intention.

In SOR framework, the desire to mimic serves as an internal psychological state that translates digital stimuli into responses. Exposure influences purchase intent by

building a desire to emulate the influencer's lifestyle (Bonus et al., 2022; Xiao et al., 2021).

H8: The desire to mimic mediates the relationship between exposure and purchase intention.

Materialism acts as a critical mediator where exposure first restructures the individual's value system before manifesting as purchase intent. This process reinforces the role of internal values in shaping consumption (Lou & Kim, 2019; Shammout et al., 2022).

H9: Materialism mediates the relationship between exposure and purchase intention.

Social anxiety is proposed as an emotional accelerator. High levels of FOMO may amplify the direct impact of influencer exposure on buying intent, but the effect can be moderated by the digital skepticism of the audience (Dinh et al., 2023; Le & Ngoc, 2024).

H10: FOMO moderates the relationship between exposure and purchase intention.

FOMO is expected to drive a defensive response, where individuals adopt materialistic values more rapidly to avoid social exclusion when exposed to high-status influencer content. Social emotions play an essential role in increasing the internalization of consumerist values (Hattingh et al., 2022; Li et al., 2021; Piko et al., 2025).

H11: FOMO moderates the relationship between exposure and materialism.

Figure 1 shows the conceptual model based on the hypotheses development and the theoretical framework described above. This framework summarizes the relationships between influencer exposure, digital aspiration, social anxiety (FOMO), and purchase intention.

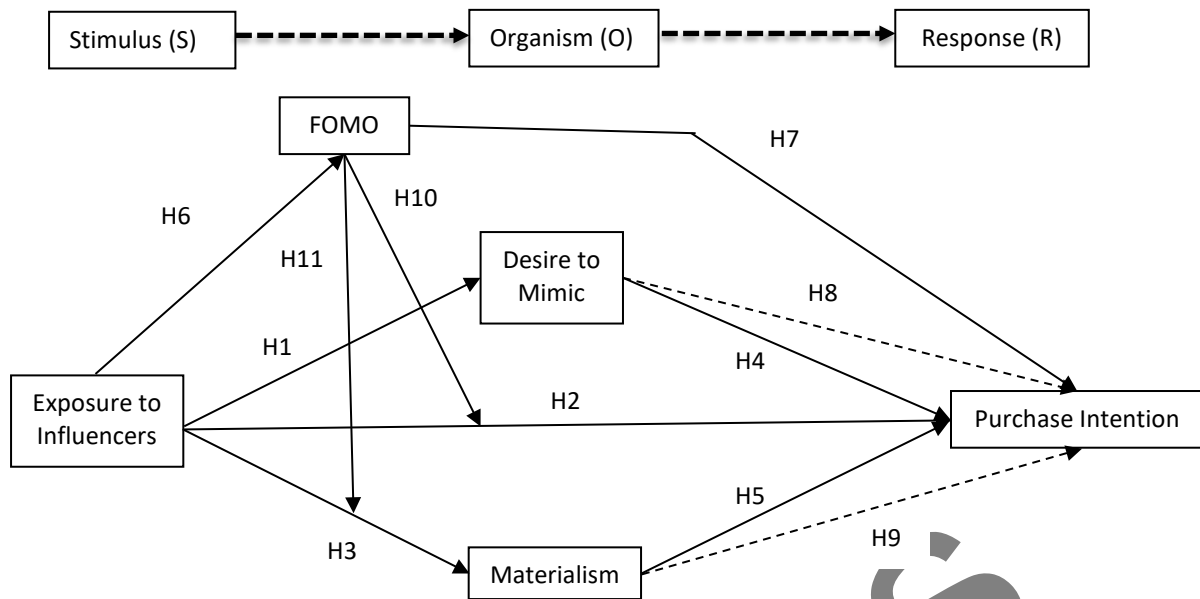


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

## II. METHODS

This study adopted a quantitative method using a survey design. The method allowed for the collection of measurable data that could be statistically analyzed, providing a more objective and accurate relationship between variables. The survey design permitted the collection of data from respondents through structured questionnaires compiled based on the indicators of each variable. The population consisted of active social media users who followed influencers on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook. These platforms were selected because users were most exposed to influencer content and exhibited potential changes in consumption behavior. The majority of respondents belong to Generation Z (born 1997–2012), a group characterized by high social media activity and a tendency to use influencers as a reference for lifestyle and purchasing decisions, as previously shown by K S and Massand (2025).

Purposive sampling was applied to ensure the sample met specific criteria in line with the required objectives. At the beginning of the questionnaire, a screening question—"Have you ever felt interested in purchasing a product or service because of an influencer's content?"—was used to verify that respondents had relevant experience with the phenomenon.

Only individuals answering "Yes" were permitted to continue the process. The sample size was determined to ensure sufficient statistical power and stability of the estimates. According to the rule of thumb proposed by Joseph F. Hair Jr. et al. (2022), which recommends a minimum sample-to-indicator ratio of 10:1, this study required 310 respondents based on the 31 measurement items used. A power analysis conducted using G\*Power version 3.1.9.4 confirmed that the minimum required sample size was 138 for a model with five predictors, a medium effect size ( $f^2 = 0.15$ ), and a statistical power of 0.95. The final sample of 385 respondents successfully satisfies the criteria, providing robust data for the PLS-SEM analysis.

The study instrument consisted of a Google Form-based questionnaire designed to measure exposure to social media influencers, desire to mimic, materialism, FOMO, and purchase intention. All items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale, and the instrument was developed to capture two primary conceptual dimensions, namely digital aspiration and social anxiety. In this study, digital aspiration was operationalized through the constructs of desire to mimic and materialism, while social anxiety was represented by FOMO construct. The questionnaire comprised measurement items adapted from established and validated scales, including exposure to influencers, assessing the

frequency and emotional closeness of interactions (Ross et al., 2009), desire to mimic, referring to the aspiration to emulate influencers' traits and lifestyles (La Ferle & Chan, 2008), Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), reflecting anxiety about missing influencer-endorsed products and experiences (Good & Hyman, 2020), materialism, measuring the importance of possessions as indicators of success (Richins, 2004), and purchase intention, examining consumers' willingness to buy endorsed products (Khan et al., 2019).

Data was collected through an online questionnaire distributed across various social media platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp. Data analysis was performed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) through SmartPLS 4.0 software. The analysis followed a two-stage procedure, namely 1) The measurement (outer) model was evaluated to assess the validity and reliability with the criteria of outer loadings, Cronbach's alpha, Composite Reliability (CE), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). 2) The structural

(inner) model was examined through bootstrapping to test path coefficients and determine the significance of the hypothesized relationship.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic characteristics of the 385 respondents are reported in Table 1. The sample exhibits a nearly equal gender distribution and is heavily dominated by Generation Z (92.73%), consistent with the focus on digital natives. More than half of the participants are full-time students (52.73%) with a monthly expenditure typically ranging from Rp1,500,000 to Rp3,000,000 (55.58%). The respondents show high digital intensity, with 46.49% spending over 3 hours daily on social media, predominantly using TikTok (70.65%) as the primary reference for lifestyle and purchasing decisions. Fashion (45.71%) and skincare (25.97%) were identified as the most frequently purchased product categories influenced by social media content.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

| Category                 | Sub-Category                            | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender                   | Male                                    | 204       | 52.99%     |
|                          | Female                                  | 181       | 47.01%     |
| Occupation               | Full-time Student                       | 203       | 52.73%     |
|                          | Private Sector Employee                 | 92        | 23.90%     |
|                          | Unemployed / Not Currently Working      | 38        | 9.87%      |
|                          | Others (Freelancer, Entrepreneur, etc.) | 52        | 13.50%     |
| Age                      | 15 – 25 Years (Generation Z)            | 357       | 92.73%     |
|                          | 26 – 35 Years                           | 26        | 6.75%      |
|                          | > 35 Years                              | 2         | 0.52%      |
| Monthly Expenditure      | Rp1,500,000 - Rp3,000,000               | 214       | 55.58%     |
|                          | Rp3,000,001 - Rp5,000,000               | 99        | 25.71%     |
|                          | Rp5,000,001 - Rp8,000,000               | 43        | 11.17%     |
|                          | > Rp8,000,000                           | 29        | 7.54%      |
| Highest Education        | High School / Vocational School         | 278       | 72.21%     |
|                          | Bachelor's Degree (S1)                  | 79        | 20.52%     |
|                          | Others (Diploma, Master, Doctorate)     | 28        | 7.27%      |
| Daily Social Media Usage | < 1 Hour                                | 61        | 15.85%     |
|                          | 1 – 2 Hours                             | 64        | 16.62%     |
|                          | 2 – 3 Hours                             | 81        | 21.04%     |
|                          | > 3 Hours                               | 179       | 46.49%     |
| Preferred Platform       | TikTok                                  | 272       | 70.65 %    |
|                          | Instagram                               | 82        | 21.29%     |
|                          | Others (Facebook, X, YouTube)           | 31        | 8.06%      |
| Top Purchased Items      | Fashion and Apparel                     | 176       | 45.71%     |
|                          | Skincare and Cosmetics                  | 100       | 25.97%     |
|                          | Others (Food, Tech, Travel)             | 109       | 28.32%     |

Source: Processed Data (2025).

Table 2. Validity and Reliability Test Results

| Variables                    | Outer Loadings | Cronbach's Alpha | Composite Reliability ( $\rho_c$ ) | AVE   |
|------------------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------------------------|-------|
| Desire to Mimic (DTM)        |                | 0.857            | 0.896                              | 0.634 |
| DTM 1                        | 0.842          |                  |                                    |       |
| DTM 2                        | 0.783          |                  |                                    |       |
| DTM 3                        | 0.775          |                  |                                    |       |
| DTM 4                        | 0.821          |                  |                                    |       |
| DTM 5                        | 0.757          |                  |                                    |       |
| Exposure to Influencer (ETI) |                | 0.859            | 0.896                              | 0.590 |
| ETI 1                        | 0.653          |                  |                                    |       |
| ETI 2                        | 0.782          |                  |                                    |       |
| ETI 3                        | 0.778          |                  |                                    |       |
| ETI 4                        | 0.833          |                  |                                    |       |
| ETI 5                        | 0.756          |                  |                                    |       |
| ETI 6                        | 0.792          |                  |                                    |       |
| FOMO                         |                | 0.949            | 0.958                              | 0.739 |
| FM 1                         | 0.797          |                  |                                    |       |
| FM 2                         | 0.865          |                  |                                    |       |
| FM 3                         | 0.872          |                  |                                    |       |
| FM 4                         | 0.894          |                  |                                    |       |
| FM 5                         | 0.868          |                  |                                    |       |
| FM 6                         | 0.837          |                  |                                    |       |
| FM 7                         | 0.862          |                  |                                    |       |
| FM 8                         | 0.879          |                  |                                    |       |
| Materialism (MTR)            |                | 0.818            | 0.868                              | 0.523 |
| MTR 1                        | 0.674          |                  |                                    |       |
| MTR 2                        | 0.671          |                  |                                    |       |
| MTR 3                        | 0.715          |                  |                                    |       |
| MTR 4                        | 0.723          |                  |                                    |       |
| MTR 5                        | 0.793          |                  |                                    |       |
| MTR 6                        | 0.757          |                  |                                    |       |
| Purchase Intention (PI)      |                | 0.826            | 0.875                              | 0.540 |
| PI 1                         | 0.675          |                  |                                    |       |
| PI 2                         | 0.598          |                  |                                    |       |
| PI 3                         | 0.790          |                  |                                    |       |
| PI 4                         | 0.759          |                  |                                    |       |
| PI 5                         | 0.821          |                  |                                    |       |
| PI 6                         | 0.744          |                  |                                    |       |

Source: Processed Data (2025).

The measurement model was evaluated for convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability. As shown in Table 2, all constructs, namely Desire to Mimic (DTM), Exposure to Influencer (ETI), FOMO, Materialism (MTR), and Purchase Intention (PI), exhibited strong reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values exceeding the threshold of 0.70. For convergent validity, the AVE for all variables was above the 0.50 limit. Even though indicator PI2 in the Purchase Intention construct showed an outer loading of 0.598, the indicator was retained in the model in line with the recommendation of Joseph F. Hair Jr. et al. (2019), since the removal did not significantly

affect (AVE = 0.540) or (CR = 0.875) of the construct. The measurement model reported a high degree of validity and internal consistency.

The visual representation of the measurement model is shown in Figure 2. This shows the outer loadings for each indicator, along with AVE and R-square values for the latent constructs. As shown in the diagram, all indicators exhibit robust loadings that satisfy the established criteria for convergent validity, ensuring that each construct is accurately measured by the respective items. This graphical overview confirms the structural integrity of the measurement model before proceeding to the hypothesis testing phase.

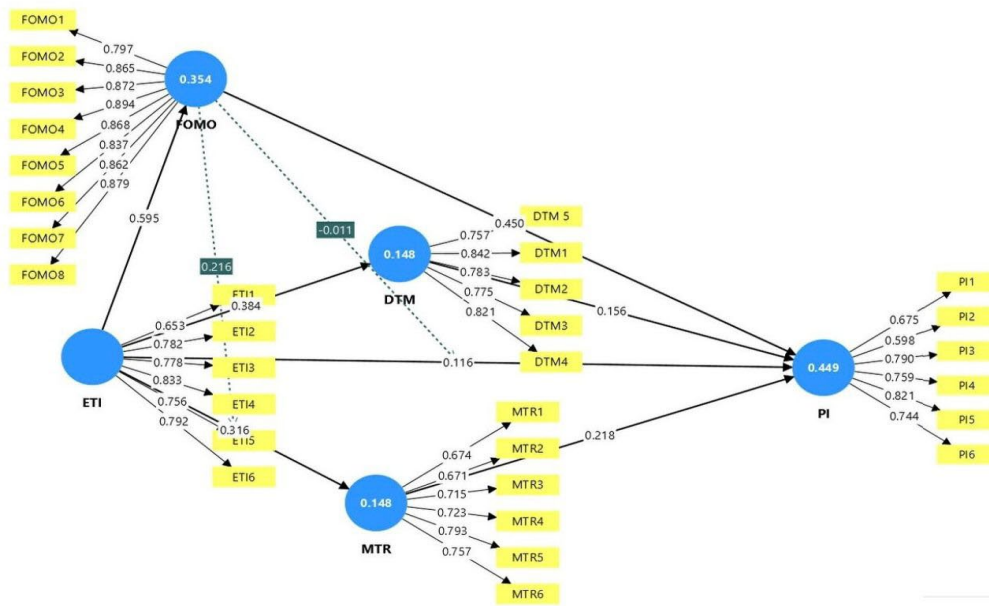


Figure 2. Outer Model

Table 3. Path Coefficients

|                                                               | Original<br>Sample<br>(O) | Original<br>Sample<br>(M) | Standard<br>Deviation | T<br>Statistics | p<br>Values | Result   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------|----------|
| Exposure to Influencer → Desire to Mimic                      | 0.384                     | 0.387                     | 0.045                 | 8.507           | 0.000       | Accepted |
| Exposure to Influencer → Purchase Intention                   | 0.116                     | 0.114                     | 0.062                 | 1.869           | 0.062       | Rejected |
| Exposure to Influencer → Materialism                          | 0.316                     | 0.321                     | 0.069                 | 4.559           | 0.000       | Accepted |
| Desire to Mimic → Purchase Intention                          | 0.156                     | 0.158                     | 0.054                 | 2.898           | 0.004       | Accepted |
| Materialism → Purchase Intention                              | 0.218                     | 0.222                     | 0.056                 | 3.883           | 0.000       | Accepted |
| Exposure to Influencer → FOMO                                 | 0.595                     | 0.595                     | 0.040                 | 14.915          | 0.000       | Accepted |
| FOMO → Purchase Intention                                     | 0.450                     | 0.451                     | 0.054                 | 8.354           | 0.000       | Accepted |
| Exposure to Influencer → Desire to Mimic → Purchase Intention | 0.060                     | 0.061                     | 0.022                 | 2.713           | 0.007       | Accepted |
| Exposure to Influencer → Materialism → Purchase Intention     | 0.069                     | 0.071                     | 0.023                 | 2.960           | 0.003       | Accepted |
| FOMO X Exposure to Influencer → Purchase Intention            | -0.011                    | -0.011                    | 0.031                 | 0.341           | 0.733       | Rejected |
| FOMO X Exposure to Influencer → Materialism                   | 0.216                     | 0.214                     | 0.038                 | 5.735           | 0.000       | Accepted |

Source: Processed Data (2025).

The structural model was assessed using the bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS 4.0 to test the significance of the 11 proposed hypotheses. The results of the path coefficients and hypothesis testing are presented in Table 3. The direct effect analysis shows that exposure to influencers has a significant positive influence on the desire to mimic (H1:  $\beta = 0.384$ ,  $\rho = 0.000$ ) and materialism (H3:  $\beta = 0.316$ ,  $\rho = 0.000$ ). The direct path from exposure to purchase intention was found to be statistically non-significant (H2:  $\beta = 0.116$ ,  $\rho = 0.062$ ), suggesting that exposure was insufficient to trigger buying behavior without psychological

mediators. Furthermore, exposure to influencers was found to be a strong predictor of FOMO (H6:  $\beta = 0.595$ ,  $\rho = 0.000$ ). In terms of purchase intention drivers, the desire to mimic (H4:  $\beta = 0.156$ ,  $\rho = 0.004$ ), materialism (H5:  $\beta = 0.218$ ,  $\rho = 0.000$ ), and FOMO (H7:  $\beta = 0.450$ ,  $\rho = 0.000$ ) showed significant positive effects.

Referring to the indirect and interaction effects in Table 3, the mediation analysis confirms the critical role of psychological internalization. The results show that the desire to mimic significantly mediates the relationship between exposure and purchase intention (H8:

$\rho = 0.007$ ), as does materialism (H9:  $\rho = 0.003$ ). Regarding the moderation effects, the interaction between FOMO and exposure to influencers on purchase intention was non-significant (H10:  $\rho = 0.733$ ), leading to the rejection of the hypothesis. However, FOMO significantly moderated the relationship between exposure to influencers and materialism (H11:  $\beta = 0.216$ ,  $\rho = 0.000$ ), proving that social anxiety increased the

internalization of materialistic values. A simple slope analysis was performed following the methodology recommended by Hair et al. (2022) to provide a more granular interpretation of the interaction effect for H11. This analysis shows how varying levels of FOMO alter the strength of the relationship between influencer exposure and materialism.

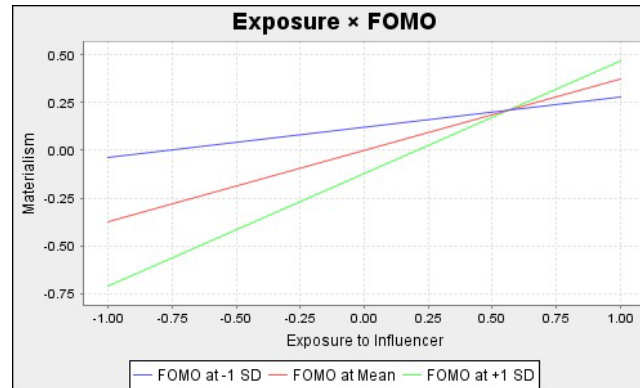


Figure 3. Simple Slope Analysis of Exposure to Influencer and Materialism moderated by FOMO

The plot shows that the positive relationship between exposure to influencers and materialism is significantly intensified when individuals experience high levels of FOMO, as shown by the steeper slope of the green line (+1 SD). For individuals with low FOMO (represented by the blue line, -1 SD), the impact of influencer exposure on materialism remains positive but is considerably weaker. This visual evidence confirms that FOMO functions as a psychological catalyst required to increase the internalization of materialistic values among respondents.

The results provide a nuanced understanding of the psychological landscape within the influencer ecosystem through SOR framework. In this model, exposure to influencers serves as the Stimulus (S), which activates the Organism (O), represented by the dual dimensions of Digital Aspiration (mimicry and materialism) and Social Anxiety (FOMO). Specifically, exposure significantly drives the desire to mimic (H1), reinforces materialistic values (H3), and acts as a strong predictor of FOMO (H6) (Ao et al., 2023; Chen & Yang, 2023; Venciute et al., 2023). From a social learning perspective, curated influencer content acts as a critical reference for social and

economic comparison (Belanche et al., 2021; Dinh & Lee, 2024; Tuominen et al., 2022).

A significant theoretical contribution is the rejection of the direct path from exposure to purchase intention (H2). In line with the Theory of Influence (Scheer & Stern, 1992), social influence is a multi-stage process requiring evaluation and attitude formation for digital natives. For Generation Z, exposure is insufficient to trigger buying behavior due to inherent digital skepticism (Le & Ngoc, 2024). The behavioral Response (R) of purchase intention only developed after the stimulus is internalized within the "Organism" phase through the desire to mimic (H4) and the adoption of materialistic orientations (H5). This internal process is confirmed by the significant mediation roles of mimicry (H8) and materialism (H9) in connecting exposure to actual purchase behavior (Bonus et al., 2022; Lou & Kim, 2019; Xiao et al., 2021).

The core conceptual insight is in redefining the role of FOMO within SOR chain. Even though the literature often views FOMO as a direct driver of impulsive buying (H7), this result repositions the concept as a potent emotional accelerator (Ampornklinkaew, 2025; Hussain et al., 2023). The rejection of FOMO as

a moderator for the direct path (H10) emphasizes the cognitive buffers of Generation Z against direct marketing pressure. However, the significant moderation of FOMO on the relationship between exposure and materialism (H11) proves that social anxiety functions as a catalyst for value internalization. In high-FOMO conditions, individuals become significantly susceptible to status symbols, where social emotions increase the adoption of consumerist values (Hattingh et al., 2022; Li et al., 2021; Piko et al., 2025).

The interaction plot confirms that materialism functions as a defensive response to social anxiety. In this context, acquiring products endorsed by influencers is a symbolic method to mitigate the fear of social isolation. This interaction proves that the "Organism" state of high social anxiety amplifies the impact of digital stimuli, turning curated influencer content into an urgent social benchmark. The theoretical distinction explains that Generation Z's consumption behavior represents a sophisticated response to digital social pressure, where psychological internalization serves as the essential connection between media exposure and purchase behavior.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the consumption behavior of Generation Z in the influencer ecosystem is driven by a deep process of psychological internalization rather than simple impulsive social pressure. Grounded in the SOR framework, "digital aspiration," manifested through the desire to mimic and materialism, serves as the primary "Organism" phase connecting influencer exposure to purchase intention. Exposure does not directly trigger buying behavior, but successfully restructures the audience's ideal standards and status-based values. A central result is the non-linear role of social anxiety, while FOMO acts as a potent emotional accelerator that strengthens the relationship between exposure and materialism, without moderating the direct path to purchase intention. This shows a unique "defensive response" among Generation Z, where social anxiety speeds up the adoption of materialistic mindsets to avoid social exclusion. Theoretically, SOR framework and the Theory

of Influence are advanced by identifying the multi-stage nature of digital persuasion. Unlike previous assumptions that FOMO directly triggers impulsive buying, social anxiety functions more as a catalyst for value internalization among Generation Z. Digital aspiration is a more robust and consistent predictor of purchase intention than the immediate fear of being left behind, providing a more sophisticated understanding of psychological filters in the digital marketing ecosystem.

For digital marketers, the results suggest a strategic shift from urgency-based tactics to aspiration-focused strategies. Since materialism and the desire to mimic are the primary drivers, campaigns should prioritize building exclusive, high-credibility brand stories that enhance deep social identification. Brands should collaborate with influencers who represent an "attainable ideal" to mitigate digital scepticism of Generation Z. Even though FOMO can reinforce brand relevance, marketers must avoid over-manipulating social anxiety to prevent brand fatigue or defensive avoidance toward overt psychological pressure.

This study has several limitations. First, the use of purposive sampling focused on active social media users may not capture the perspective of more passive or sceptical users. Second, the cross-sectional nature of the data provides only a "snapshot" of behavior. Longitudinal studies are needed to observe the evolution of materialistic values. Future studies should consider adding variables, such as influencer authenticity or parasocial relationship strength, and expanding the demographic scope to compare the variation of dynamics across different generations.

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