

"FoMO or Fear of Missing the Sale?" Correlation on Social Media Addiction and Online Purchases among Sports Students

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ABSTRACT

In increasingly commercialized digital environments, users are continuously exposed to both social and purchase cues, raising questions about what truly drives their behavior. Social media addiction drives online purchasing behaviors among sport-program students, revealing a distinct tension between Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and Fear of Missing the Sale. A quantitative approach was employed, involving 350 respondents from sport-based academic programs. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation to determine patterns of use and relationships among variables. The findings indicate that both social media addiction and online purchasing behavior are present at high levels among respondents ($r=.757^{**}$, $p<.001$). The results point to a digital environment in which social interaction, emotional experience, and consumer behavior are closely interconnected. In this context, purchasing decisions are shaped not only by functional needs but also by a sense of urgency driven by continuous exposure to content, trends, and time-sensitive promotions. This study contributes to the growing body of literature by offering a more nuanced perspective on how social media environments influence both emotional and consumption-related outcomes, particularly within the domain of sports merchandise.

Keywords: social media addiction, online purchasing behavior, sports students, FoMO

INTRODUCTION

Shopping without long queues or the hassle of finding parking represents an excellent opportunity for consumers. The advancement of technology through gadgets, applications, and social media platforms has just made dreams come true. The expansion of e-commerce and online business has grown rapidly over the years (Sharma, Mishra, & Srivastav, 2023). The use of social media is no longer focused solely on communication but is now known for its role in digital marketing and e-commerce (Samenda et al., 2024; Purnomo, 2023). The effect of social media as a digital marketing platform has evolved commercial and marketing ecosystems, shaping perceptions, preferences, and purchasing decisions (Antczak, 2024; Wilfred, 2023). Social media significantly influences consumer decisions regarding product materials, colours, and specific service requirements. Globally, the use of social media as a medium in consuming behaviour is undoubtedly. Each year, the number of users and consumers who make online transactions increases (Threadgold et al., 2025). Reports suggest that most consumers were young adults (Threadgold et al., 2025; Krupa & Buszko, 2023). Young populations are known to be in a vulnerable age, making them easily targeted by social media marketers (Livinstone et al., 2026). Additionally, the new era of marketing has included digital marketing as one of the most successful and influential marketing strategies (Rajendran, 2024). The display of products, goods, and services greatly affected consumer decisions, especially through the imagery and visual effects of the commercial. To make things interesting, Jin (2024) mentions that the evolution of online shopping and e-commerce was also affecting the sports industry. Well-established brands had proposed and developed their own websites and social media accounts to promote and sell their products (Kumar & Nanda, 2023). The most popular sports products includes shoes, shirts, sports equipment, and more. Aligned with this, young people who actively engaged with social media usually purchased sports products online to reduce their time spent and increase their emotional satisfaction (Nguyen &

Van Nguyen, 2025). However, the most common problem associated with this excessive engagement is social media addiction. Compulsive digital platform use and online spending characterize this addiction, according to Montag and Elhai (2023). The time spent was not only on money, but also on screen. The adapted behaviour through social media addiction not only reduces self-control, but it can also lead to higher levels of impulsivity and emotional responses (Błachnio et al., 2023). As a result, those who suffer from higher level of social media addiction will be more vulnerable to marketing stimuli, time-sensitive promotion (usually applied by most of the social media and digital marketing platforms) and trend-driven consumption. In a similar vein, the most worrying and discussed phenomenon on this is called Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). Garg (2023) links the pervasive fear of missing out on others' enjoyment to a compulsive desire for continuous connectivity. For active social media users, FoMO is a common desire that needs to be satisfied, as not doing so can lead to feelings of restlessness, loneliness, and a sense of inadequacy, as if not, it might result in feeling restless, lonely, and inadequate at not being able to do what others can (Nesbit & Lole, 2025; Shuvo, 2024). This FoMO phenomenon also results in overcommitment, such as saying yes or hitting the buy now button. The desire to participate in significant events or to create lasting memories drives this behaviour. Pertinent to the issue, FoMO has also extended beyond social experiences; in the consumer context, it is now known as "Fear of Missing the Sale" and has become a growing trend among individuals making impulsive purchases driven by urgency and perceived scarcity. Intimately connected, the sports industry has also been known for its FoMO experiences, especially through sports identity, brand, affiliation and lifestyle (Choi et al., 2025; Keplinger, 2022). Students in sports science and recreation programs **frequently encounter** FoMO in their academic environment. Because of this, sportsOwingsports students are more likely to engage with sports brands, athletic trends, sporting-event-related influencers, reviews, and more (Basso, 2023). Conversely, though the FoMO phenomenon is a hype in the sports field and industry, limited research has explored how social media addiction influences purchasing behaviour within the sports student population. Therefore, this study aims to examine the connection between social media addiction and purchasing behaviour among sports students merely from the Faculty of Sports Science and Recreation (FSR), Universiti Teknologi MARA, Perlis Branch (UiTM Ps). By introducing the notion of "Fear of Missing the Sale," this research contributes to the growing body of literature on digital consumer behaviour. It provides valuable insights for sports marketers and academic researchers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media Addiction

Azzaakiyyah (2023) stated in a study that the rapid expansion of social media has transformed the way individuals communicate, interact, and consume information. While these platforms offer convenience and connectivity, a growing body of research highlights their potential to foster addictive patterns of use (Jo & Baek, 2023). Tullet-Prado et al. (2023) revealed that individuals with social media addiction often engage excessively, lose control over their usage, and continue using it despite experiencing negative consequences. Unlike casual usage, addictive behaviour reflects a deeper psychological attachment, where individuals feel compelled to remain constantly connected. Recent studies suggest that platform design reinforces such patterns rather than leaving them to occur accidentally (Rainy & Dhanekula, 2025; Avallé et al., 2024). Adding to the statement, Atalatti and Pawar (2024) mention that features such as endless scrolling, personalised content, and instant feedback mechanisms (e.g., likes and comments) create continuous engagement loops that encourage prolonged use. Over time, this repeated exposure may shape habitual behaviour, making disengagement increasingly difficult. Recent research highlights that problematic social media use disrupts daily functioning, interpersonal relationships, and overall well-being (Khan & Gautam, 2024; Chemnad et al., 2023). Furthermore, contemporary literature points to the psychological dimensions of social media addiction, linking it to personality traits, emotional regulation, and mental health outcomes. Individuals who rely heavily on social media for validation or social connection may be more vulnerable to compulsive use patterns. Young adults particularly feel this impact as they forge their identities and seek social belonging in digital spaces.

Online Purchasing Behaviour

Online purchasing behaviour has evolved significantly alongside the growth of digital technologies. For younger

consumers, especially Generation Z, online shopping is no longer a convenience but a preferred mode of consumption (Rana et al., 2024; Lina, Hou & Ali, 2022; Agrawal, 2022). The ability to browse, compare, and purchase products instantly has reshaped traditional decision-making processes, making them faster and often more impulsive (Goswami & Kumari, 2024). A growing body of literature highlights the role of social media as a key driver of this shift. Social platforms now act as integrated marketplaces, actively pushing products, brands, and promotions to users. Studies indicate that social media use significantly influences purchase intentions by enhancing perceived usefulness, trust, and product visibility (Ahmad, Azman, & Mingxia, 2023). In addition, digital literacy and familiarity with online environments further strengthen consumers' willingness to engage in online transactions. Importantly, purchasing decisions in online environments are often shaped by social and emotional cues rather than purely rational evaluation. Exposure to peer recommendations, influencer marketing, and trending products can create a sense of urgency or desirability. Studies also revealed that Generation Z consumers found their purchasing behaviour to be highly influenced by digital interactions, convenience, and social validation, reflecting a shift toward more experience-driven consumption patterns (Koneti, Seetharaman & Maddulety, 2025). Taken together, these findings suggest that for Generation Z, purchasing decisions are no longer driven solely by product needs but are increasingly shaped by how engaging, effortless, and socially affirming the digital shopping experience feels, highlighting a broader transition toward a consumption deeply embedded in online social environments.

Connecting Social Media Addiction and Online Purchasing Behaviour

Recent research has increasingly focused on the intersection between social media addiction and consumer behaviour (Uppal, 2024). Rather than functioning as separate constructs, these two phenomena appear to be closely interconnected within digital environments (Hung et al., 2026; Leite et al., 2024). Individuals who spend extended periods on social media are more likely to encounter marketing stimuli, product recommendations, and peer-driven consumption trends, which may influence their purchasing behaviour. Empirical studies provide evidence supporting this connection (Theocharis, 2025; Ayebale, 2025). Social media addiction increases users' intentions to purchase, demonstrating that high engagement drives consumer activity (Leite et al., 2024; Ji, Miero & Huang, 2022).

Similarly, research on impulsive buying highlights that addictive social media use can foster materialistic tendencies and spontaneous purchasing decisions, particularly when individuals are emotionally engaged or psychologically invested in the platform (Kumar & Kumar, 2025). One key mechanism underlying this relationship is the role of continuous exposure. Social media algorithms target users with repetitive, personalised content, leading to frequent encounters with appealing products (Adepoju et al., 2024). This repeated exposure can reduce decision-making effort and increase familiarity, both of which are known to influence purchasing behaviour. Additionally, the concept of social comparison plays an important role in shaping consumption patterns. Users are frequently exposed to curated lifestyles, branded content, and peer achievements, which may influence their perceptions of what is desirable or socially acceptable. In this context, purchasing behaviour may be driven not only by functional needs but also by symbolic and emotional motivations, such as identity expression or social belonging.

Understanding "Fear of Missing Out" and "Fear of Missing the Sale"

In social media contexts, Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) drives user engagement through psychological pressure. FoMO reflects a concern that others may be experiencing rewarding events without one's participation, prompting individuals to remain constantly connected (Jacob, 2026). This phenomenon is particularly relevant in social media environments where updates, trends, and interactions occur in real time (Littman-Ovadia & Russi-Netzer, 2024). However, in increasingly commercialised digital spaces, FoMO may extend beyond social experiences to include consumption opportunities.

Rahmah, Julianto, and Suhariyanto mentioned that the emergence of time-limited promotions, flash sales, and exclusive online deals introduces a related but distinct phenomenon that affects psychological distress. This

phenomenon represents a 'fear of missing the sale.' While social belonging drives traditional FoMO, economic loss and missed opportunities fuel this newer version (Khan, 2025). The overlap between these two forms of fear highlights the blurred boundaries between social interaction and commercial engagement on digital platforms. Social media users now worry about missing social experiences alongside consumption opportunities, particularly those that brands market as urgent or popular (Sahakyan & Boberg, 2025). This dual influence creates a powerful motivational force that may drive both prolonged platform use and increased purchasing behaviour.

Although prior studies have examined social media addiction and online purchasing behaviour independently, limited research has explored how these constructs interact within specific contexts, such as sports-related consumer behaviour (VI De Araujo et al., 2026; Akoğlu, 2025). Despite the vast literature on FoMO, the 'fear of missing the sale' receives little scrutiny regarding social media environments. This study seeks to address these gaps by examining the nexus between social media addiction and purchasing behaviour among sport students, offering a more nuanced understanding of how digital engagement shapes both emotional experiences and consumption patterns.

METHODS

Study Design

A quantitative approach was used in this study to examine the relationship between social media addiction (independent variables) and online purchasing behaviour (dependent variables) among sports students. This study uses a correlational approach to determine the degree and direction of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

Population and Sampling

This study targets the Faculty of Sports Science and Recreation (FSR) at Universiti Teknologi MARA, Perlis Branch (UiTMPs). We surveyed 350 respondents using a proportionate stratified random sampling technique. This method categorizes students by study level and academic program to guarantee an equitable representation of the population

Instrumentation

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire comprises three distinct sections:

Section A: Demographic Information

This section captured respondents' background information, including gender, age, study level, academic program, daily frequency of social media use, and preferred social media platforms.

Section B: Social Media Addiction

Social media addiction was measured using an adapted version Social Network Addiction Scale with a Cronbach alpha value of 0.87. This study employs the 10-item scale from Gökdaş and Kuzucu (2019), where participants options on a 5-point Likert Scale (1 = Never to 5 = Always).

Section C: Online Purchasing Behaviour

We employed an adapted Online Shopping Addiction Scale (OSAS) to measure purchasing behaviour; the scale demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.90). The scale, developed by Zhao, Tian, and Xin (2017), consists of 14 items. Respondents responded using a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)

Data Collection Procedure

The faculty's research committee granted ethical clearance before data collection began. The researchers informed participants about the study's objectives, confidentiality measures, and the voluntary nature of their participation. Participants provided informed consent before starting the survey. To ensure accessibility, the team distributed questionnaires in class and via Google Forms. The researchers completed data collection within three weeks. They maintained anonymity and assured all participants that their responses would be used solely for academic research. Finally, the team screened the data for completeness and accuracy before beginning the analysis.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to established ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. The researchers secured ethical approval from the Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Research Ethics Committee (Ref: REC/554/2024).

Data Analysis

We analyzed the data using SPSS Version 27.0, beginning with descriptive statistics to summarize participant demographics. After the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test confirmed normality ($p > .05$), this study used Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient (r) to examine the relationship between social media addiction and online purchasing behaviour. We maintained a significance level of 0.05 for all tests.

RESULTS

Demographic Profiles of Respondents

To describe the characteristics of the sample, demographic data were analyzed, including gender, age, faculty, social media usage, and preferred platforms.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 350)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	200	57.14
	Female	150	42.86
Age	18–20 years	180	51.42
	21–24 year	170	48.58
Study Level	Diploma	180	51.42
	Bachelor's degree	170	48.58
Academic Program	Diploma in Sport Studies	80	22.90
	Diploma in Sports Management and Recreation	100	28.60
	BSc (Hons) Sports Management	100	28.60
	BSc (Hons) Sports Science	40	11.43
	BSc. (Hons) Health and Fitness	30	8.47
Social Media Usage	< 2 hours/day	18	5.14
	2–4 hours/day	175	50.0
	5–7 hours/day	125	35.71
	> 7 hours/day	32	9.15
Preferable Social Media Platforms	TikTok	185	52.9
	Instagram	120	34.29
	X	20	5.71
	Thread	25	7.1

A total of 350 respondents participated in the study. Table 1 shows that males accounted for 57.14% of the sample, while females accounted for 42.86%. In terms of age, 51.42% of respondents were aged 18-20, and 48.58% were aged 21-24. Regarding academic level, 51.42% were diploma students, whereas 48.58% were pursuing degree-level studies. The respondents were drawn from several academic programs, with the largest proportions coming from Diploma in Sports Management and Recreation, (28.60%) and Bachelor of Sports Management (28.60%), followed by Diploma in Sports Studies (22.90). Smaller representations were observed in the Bachelor of Sports Science (11.43%) and the Bachelor of Health and Fitness (8.47%). In terms of daily social media usage, half of the respondents (50%) reported spending between 2 and 4 hours per day on social media. Additionally, 35.71% of respondents spent 5 to 7 hours daily on social media, and 9.15% spent more than 7 hours. A small minority (5.14%) recorded less than 2 hours of daily usage.

Regarding platform preferences, TikTok was the most frequently used platform (52.9%), followed by Instagram (34.29%). Lower usage was reported for Threads (7.1%) and X (5.71%).

Descriptive Statistic of Study Variables

Descriptive statistics were computed to determine the mean level of social media addiction and online purchasing behaviour among respondents.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variable

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Level
Social Media Addiction	3.83	0.968	High
Online Purchasing Behaviour	3.70	0.930	High

Table 2 indicates the mean level of social media addiction and online purchasing behaviour. Respondents demonstrated high levels of both variables. Specifically, social media addiction averaged 3.83 (SD = 0.968), and online purchasing behaviour averaged 3.70 (SD = 0.930).

Correlation Analysis between Social Media Addiction and Online Purchasing Behaviour

A Pearson correlation analysis examined the relationship between social media addiction and online purchasing behavior

Table 3: Pearson Correlation between Social Media Addiction and Online Purchasing Behaviour

Variables		Online Purchasing Behaviour
Social Media Addiction	Pearson Correlation	.757**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	350

Note: ** $p < 0.01$ (sig. 2-tailed)

Table 3 demonstrates a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between social media addiction and online purchasing behaviour ($r = .757^{**}$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that a higher level of social media addiction is associated with compulsive buying symptoms among sports students.

DISCUSSION

This study sets out to explore a timely question captured in its title: whether young consumers are driven more by a fear of missing out socially or by the fear of missing commercial opportunities. These results reveal how social media shapes students' emotional and consumption patterns in sport-related programs. To begin with, the high levels of social media addiction observed in this study reinforce the idea that digital platforms are no longer peripheral but central to students' daily routines (Wu & Liu, 2025). Most respondents reported spending several hours each day on social media, with TikTok and Instagram emerging as the most preferred platforms. These environments are highly visual, fast-paced, and algorithmically curated, making them particularly effective at capturing attention and sustaining engagement (Friesen, 2025; Alamyar, 2025). In sports culture, identity, trends, and brand affiliation dictate students' preferences and behaviours. Such platforms may serve as continuous touchpoints for both social interaction and consumption cues. In parallel, the findings also indicate a high level of online purchasing behaviour, suggesting that engagement with social media extends beyond passive browsing. Instead, it extends into active consumer participation, particularly in the context of sports merchandise (Westerbeek, 2025). The overlap between content exposure and purchasing opportunities on these platforms may blur the boundary between social experience and commercial behaviour. Limited time offers, influencer endorsements, and visually appealing product displays can create a sense of urgency that encourages immediate action (Begum, 2024). In this sense, the notion of "fear of missing the sale" becomes highly relevant, as purchasing decisions may be influenced not only by need but also by perceived scarcity and timing. More importantly, the strong and significant relationship between social media addiction and online purchasing highlights a critical psychological dimension underpinning these behaviors.

The strength of the correlation suggests that greater social media engagement is closely associated with greater emotional strain. This study interprets the relationship through the lens of constant comparison, validation-seeking, and idealized representations. Sport students experience even greater pressure because they live and work in performance-oriented environments. At the same time, emotional vulnerability may also shape consumption patterns (Liao, Wu & Chiu, 2025). Individuals experiencing low mood or psychological discomfort may be more inclined to engage in online purchasing as a form of coping or self-reward (Akin, 2025).

When combined with the persuasive design of social media platforms, this creates a cycle in which emotional states and consumer behaviour reinforce one another. In this context, the distinction between fear of missing out (FoMO) and fear of missing the sale becomes increasingly blurred. Digital environments amplify the urgency and perceived loss that drive both social and economic FoMO. Taken together, the findings suggest that social media operates as more than just a communication channel, functioning as an ecosystem where identity, emotion, and consumption intersect (Espelita & Atento, 2025). The constant visibility of brands, teams, and athletic lifestyles heightens this intersection for students in sport-related fields. The study, therefore, contributes to a growing understanding of how platform-driven engagement can shape not only what individuals feel but also how they act as consumers.

CONCLUSION

This study sheds light on the interconnected nature of social media use, psychological well-being, and consumer behaviour among students in sport-related programmes. The findings confirm that both social media addiction and online purchasing behaviour are present at notably high levels within this group. More importantly, the strong association between social media addiction and depression highlights a meaningful link between digital engagement and emotional health. In the context of this study, the question of whether individuals fear missing out socially or commercially does not yield a simple answer. Instead, the results suggest that these experiences are closely intertwined. Social media platforms blend social belonging, identity expression, and consumption opportunities into a single environment. As a result, the fear of missing out and the fear of missing the sale may operate simultaneously, shaping both emotional responses and purchasing decisions. From a practical standpoint, these findings underscore the importance of fostering greater awareness of digital habits and their potential implications. Encouraging more mindful engagement with social media, alongside promoting financial and emotional self-regulation, may help students navigate this environment more effectively. For educators and institutions, integrating discussions on digital well-being and consumer awareness into sport-related curricula could provide students with valuable support.

In conclusion, this study contributes to ongoing conversations about the role of social media in shaping contemporary lifestyles.

By highlighting the overlap between emotional experiences and consumption behaviour, it offers a nuanced perspective on how digital environments influence young adults today. Future research may build on this work by examining underlying mechanisms, such as FoMO, impulsivity, and self-identity, to further deepen our understanding of this evolving phenomenon.

LIMITATION

While the findings of this study offer useful insights into the relationship between social media addiction and purchasing behaviour, several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the results. This study focused the study on students enrolled in sport-related programs. Although this focus provides meaningful context, particularly given their exposure to sports merchandise and digital content, it also means the findings may not fully reflect the experiences of students from other academic disciplines or the broader population. Context influences social media and consumption patterns; apply these results to other samples only after evaluating these differences.

In addition, a cross-sectional design captures behaviour and perceptions at a single point in time. While the analysis identifies a strong association between variables, it does not allow for conclusions about direction or causality. It remains unclear, for instance, whether higher social media engagement contributes to changes in emotional well-being and purchasing behaviour, or whether existing psychological states influence how individuals interact with social media. A longitudinal approach may provide a more complete picture of how these relationships evolve.

This study depends on self-reported data, a method that subjects findings to the biases of individual perception and recall. Although respondents were able to provide direct insights into their own behaviours, there is always the possibility of underreporting or overestimating certain activities, particularly time spent online or purchasing habits.

Finally, while this study introduces the idea of “fear of missing the sale” as a relevant consideration, it was not measured as a distinct construct. This approach relies on inference rather than a direct test of its role. Future research may benefit from developing and validating specific measures to capture this dimension more precisely, alongside established constructs such as fear of missing out (FoMO).

Taken together, these limitations do not diminish the value of the findings but rather highlight areas where further investigation could deepen understanding. Expanding the scope of participants, employing different research designs, and refining measurement approaches would help to build a more comprehensive view of how social media shapes both emotional experiences and consumer behaviour.

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