

FOMO EFFECT AND GENERATION Z'S SENSITIVITY TO MARKETING COMMUNICATION TOOLS IN THE CLOTHING INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the influence of the FOMO effect (Fear of Missing Out) on the consumer behaviour of Generation Z in the clothing industry. The aim is to identify factors influencing purchasing decisions with an emphasis on the role of FOMO and to formulate recommendations for marketing communication differentiated according to consumer types. Empirical data come from a quantitative questionnaire survey conducted in October 2025 (n = 295) among respondents born in 1995–2010. Using hierarchical cluster analysis (Ward's method, Euclidean distance), respondents were divided into four segments according to the degree of FOMO experienced. Six hypotheses were tested using multiple linear regression (H1–H3) and Spearman's correlation coefficient (H4–H6). The results show that FOMO is a statistically significant predictor of sensitivity to time limited offers and sales promotions ($p < 0.001$) and sensitivity to brand communication content ($p < 0.001$). At the same time, a positive association was confirmed between the level of FOMO, the intensity of social media use and the frequency of following influencers. On the other hand, FOMO did not appear to be a predictor of the frequency of online purchases or the consideration of sustainability. The results suggest differentiated recommendations for brand communication, which for individuals with high FOMO emphasizes urgency and visual dynamism, while for segments with low FOMO, credibility, transparency and value content.

Keywords: consumer behaviour, generation Z, FOMO effect, marketing communication, clothing industry, cluster analysis, consumer segmentation, social networks, limited time offer

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1 INTRODUCTION

Generation Z, defined in this study by the year of birth 1995–2010 (Suryadi *et al.*, 2025), represents a significant purchasing group whose consumption behaviour is shaped by constant contact with digital technologies and social networks. Young consumers respond to a rapid flow of information, visual content and short interactions with brand content, with the clothing industry being one of the segments in which their preferences are most pronounced. Studies focusing on the purchasing behaviour of this cohort in fashion confirm that Generation Z combines rational choice attributes (price, quality) with high sensitivity to visual stimuli on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok (Djafarova and Bowes, 2021; Wojdyla and Chi, 2024).

In the context of the digital environment, the psychological phenomenon known as FOMO – the fear of missing out on an experience, opportunity or social event – is gaining importance. This construct was psychometrically operationalized by Przybylsky *et al.* (2013) using the FoMOS scale, which has become the dominant measurement tool in subsequent research. Studies published in the last decade show that FOMO is associated with impulsive buying tendencies, higher sensitivity to marketing strategies that work with scarcity and exclusivity, and increased influence of influencers on purchasing decisions (Bekman, 2022; Dinh *et al.*, 2023; Oak and Markandeya, 2025).

In the clothing industry, FOMO is gaining particular importance. Rapidly changing trends, limited collections, visual inspiration on social media, and marketing communications emphasizing exclusivity create an environment in which the feeling of missing out can immediately turn into impulsive buying. Bläse *et al.* (2023) describe in this context that the FOMO effect supports unsustainable purchasing behaviour in the fast fashion segment, as it increases the pressure to react quickly and weakens the influence of value considerations. Pham *et al.* (2023) confirm that FOMO increases the intention to purchase trendy fashion products among young consumers on social media, Wu *et al.* (2021) experimentally demonstrate the effect of scarcity-based promotional strategies on impulsive buying in an online environment.

Empirical research on the impact of the FOMO effect in the Czech Generation Z remains limited in the professional literature. The Czech context has so far been described primarily from the perspective of the general purchasing behaviour of Generation Z (Kunc *et al.*, 2024), not focusing on the psychological factors of sensitivity to marketing stimuli. This contribution is trying to fill this gap. The aim of the study is to identify factors influencing the consumption behaviour of Generation Z in the clothing industry with an emphasis on the role of the FOMO effect, and based on the results, to formulate recommendations for brand marketing communication. It is assumed that the degree of FOMO is not homogeneous among consumers and that differences in the intensity of experiencing this phenomenon are reflected in different sensitivity to marketing tools, digital behaviour and the role of social networks in the purchasing decision-making process. To empirically verify these assumptions, six hypotheses (H1–H6) were formulated, which are specified in the following section.

2 METHODOLOGY AND DATA

The empirical part of the study is based on a quantitative questionnaire survey conducted online on the Google Forms platform. The questionnaire was intended for members of Generation Z born between 1995 and 2010 (Suryadi *et al.*, 2025); respondents outside this interval were excluded from the analysis by a filter question. Data collection took place between 17 and 26 October 2025, distributed primarily via social networks with subsequent dissemination by respondents. Due to this method of collection, the research sample cannot be considered representative of the entire population of Generation Z in the Czech Republic, which is a limitation of the study that must be considered when interpreting the results. Before starting the collection, a pilot study was conducted on a sample of five respondents to verify the comprehensibility of the items. The total number of valid observations was $n = 295$.

The questionnaire was structured into thematic blocks focusing on digital behaviour, frequency and method of clothing purchase, factors influencing choice, attitudes towards sustainability, influence of social environment, marketing stimuli and brand communication tools. The key component was the scale for measuring FOMO, translated from the original ten-item FoMOS scale by Przybylský *et al.* (2013). Most items were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = disagree / does not motivate, 5 = agree / motivates). The final part contained identification questions.

The internal consistency of the multi-item scales used was verified using Cronbach's α coefficient (Rabušic *et al.*, 2018), with $\alpha \geq 0.7$ being considered the minimum acceptable limit. A composite average score was then created for each scale, which was used in hypothesis testing.

Hierarchical cluster analysis was used to identify consumer segments, as it does not require a predetermined number of clusters and allows for the selection of a solution based on visual inspection of the dendrogram (Meloun and Militký, 2004). Euclidean distance was chosen as the distance metric, and Ward's method (Ward.D2) was used for the merging process, which minimizes intra-cluster variance. The input variables were ten items of the FoMOS scale. The calculations were performed in the Jamovi program.

Two statistical techniques were used to test the hypotheses. Hypotheses H1–H3, expressing the relationship between the level of FOMO and sensitivity to a specific type of marketing or product stimuli, were tested by multiple linear regression with control variables (age, gender, education) and an accompanying F-test of the overall model (Hendl, 2012). Hypotheses H4–H6, expressing the relationship between the level of FOMO and the frequency of a specific behaviour measured on an ordinal scale, were tested by Spearman's correlation coefficient ρ as a non-parametric measure of monotonic relationship (Rabušic *et al.*, 2018).

Hypotheses stated:

- (1) **H1: Higher levels of FOMO are associated with higher sensitivity to time-limited offers and sales promotions.**
- (2) **H2: Higher levels of FOMO are associated with higher sensitivity to brand communication content.**
- (3) **H3: Higher levels of FOMO are associated with stronger consideration of ethics and sustainability when purchasing clothing.**
- (4) **H4: Higher levels of FOMO are associated with more intensive use of social media in purchasing decisions.**
- (5) **H5: Higher levels of FOMO are associated with higher frequency of following influencers.**
- (6) **H6: Higher levels of FOMO are associated with higher frequency of online shopping.**

3 RESULTS

The research sample ($n = 295$) consisted mainly of women (75.3%), men represented 24.7%. The most numerous age groups were 24–26 years (42.7%) and 21–23 years (32.9%); 53.9% of respondents reported a university education. In terms of the size of the place of residence, large urban agglomerations with over 100,000 inhabitants prevailed (47.8%). Almost half of the sample came from the South Moravian Region (49.5%), which reflects the nature of the questionnaire distribution.

Descriptive results showed that Generation Z buys clothes mostly several times a year (43.4%) or about once a month (34.2%). E-shops ($M = 3.59$) and brick-and-mortar stores ($M = 3.38$) dominate among sales channels; purchasing via shopping buttons on social networks is among the least used channels ($M = 1.64$). When choosing clothes, the key attributes are the quality of the material ($M = 3.96$) and the price ($M = 3.95$), while sustainability and production ethics ($M = 2.83$), trendiness ($M = 2.75$) and brand ($M = 2.54$) play a secondary role. Purchasing decisions are most strongly influenced by the Instagram platform (74.2% of respondents) and brand websites (49.2%).

The internal consistency of the scales used was satisfactory to good: FOMO $\alpha = 0.814$, time-limited offers and sales promotion $\alpha = 0.786$, brand communication $\alpha = 0.744$, sustainability $\alpha = 0.716$. All values met the minimum threshold of $\alpha \geq 0.7$. Within the sustainability scale, the item related to personalized offers was removed to improve consistency, and the item “I would rather buy

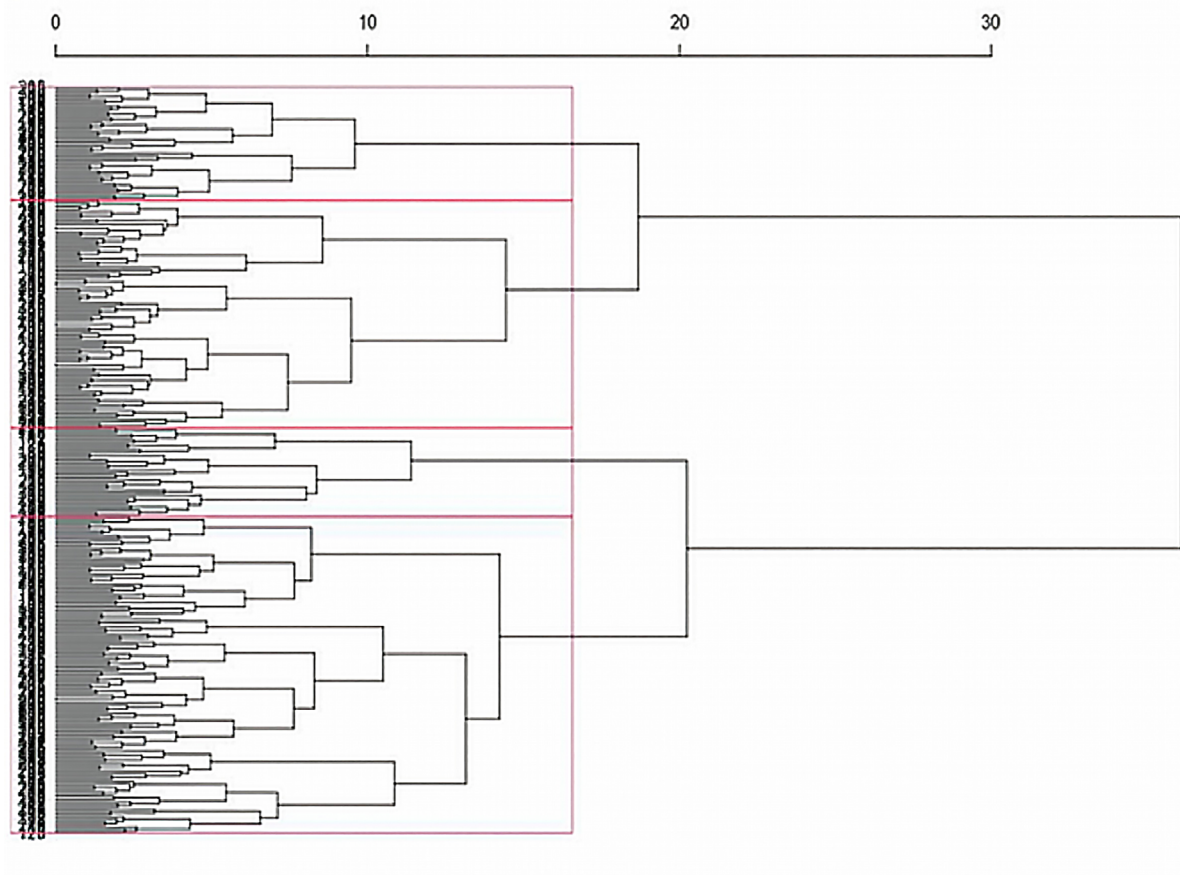


Fig. 1: Dendrogram of hierarchical cluster analysis with four segments marked according to the FOMO measure

trends than sustainable products” was reverse-coded. Hierarchical cluster analysis of the ten items of the FoMOS scale led to the division of respondents into four clusters based on visual inspection of the dendrogram (see Figure 1). Segment 1 ($n = 35$) represents individuals with a high level of FOMO – emotionally sensitive, socially impressionable and impulsively reacting to stimuli from the digital environment. Segment 2 ($n = 125$) includes individuals with a medium level of FOMO, characterized as socially engaged but rationally making decisions based on value alignment with the brand. Segment 3 ($n = 45$) represents individuals with a low to medium level of FOMO, whose decision-making is pragmatic and oriented towards price and quality. Segment 4 ($n = 90$) includes individuals with a low level of FOMO, who are value-based, plan purchases and place an above-average emphasis on sustainability.

The results of hypothesis testing are summarized in Table 1. Hypothesis H1 was confirmed: multiple regression showed a statistically significant model ($F(8, 286) = 6.83$; $p < 0.001$) explaining 16.0% of the variability in sensitivity to time-limited offers and sales promotion ($R^2 = 0.160$). FOMO turned out to be a strong positive predictor ($p < 0.001$). Of the control variables, only gender showed a statistically significant effect – women showed slightly higher sensitivity than men ($p = 0.030$). Hypothesis H2 was also confirmed: the model was statistically significant ($F(8, 286) = 4.38$; $p < 0.001$) and explained 10.9% of the variability in sensitivity to brand communication content ($R^2 = 0.109$). FOMO was the strongest predictor ($p < 0.001$), gender and the age group 18–20 also showed a significant effect. Hypothesis H3 was not confirmed: FOMO did not appear to be a significant predictor of considering ethics and sustainability when purchasing clothing; only gender showed a significant effect. Hypotheses H4 and H5 were confirmed: Spearman's coefficient showed a positive correlation between the level of FOMO and the intensity of social media use (H4) and the frequency of following influencers (H5). The strongest manifestation of this connection was recorded in the segment with high FOMO. Hypothesis H6, which assumes a higher frequency of online shopping in individuals with higher FOMO, was not confirmed; preferences for online and offline channels were similar across segments.

Tab. 1 Summary of hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Method	Key indicators	Result
H1:	Multiple linear regression	$F(8, 286) = 6.83$; $R^2 = 0.160$; FOMO $p < 0.001$	Confirmed
H2:	Multiple linear regression	$F(8, 286) = 4.38$; $R^2 = 0.109$; FOMO $p < 0.001$	Confirmed
H3:	Multiple linear regression	FOMO statistically insignificant; gender significant	Not confirmed
H4:	Spearman's ρ	Positive correlation; $\rho = 0.3009$; $p = 0.00001$	Confirmed
H5:	Spearman's ρ	Positive correlation; $\rho = 0.1969$; $p = 0.00067$	Confirmed
H6:	Spearman's ρ	Correlation statistically insignificant; $\rho = 0.1032$; $p = 0.07669$	Not confirmed

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The results of the empirical investigation confirm that the FOMO effect represents a significant psychological factor modulating the reactions of Generation Z to selected marketing communication tools, while in other areas – the choice of sales channel, sustainability orientation – its influence was not observed. These mixed findings are in line with the current literature. The importance of the mechanism of scarcity, exclusivity and time pressure for purchase intention is confirmed by the meta-analysis of Barton *et al.* (2022), specifically for FOMO in Generation Z in fast fashion by Oak and Markandeya (2025) and Pham *et al.* (2023). Wu *et al.* (2021) experimentally show that scarcity-based sales promotion directly increases impulse buying in an online environment, which corresponds to the positive relationship between FOMO and sensitivity to time constraints captured in hypothesis H1.

Confirmation of hypothesis H2 completes the framework in brand communication. Higher FOMO is associated with higher sensitivity to visually attractive, emotionally tuned and exclusivity-evoking messages. This result corresponds with the observation of Djafarová and Bowes (2021), according to which Instagram intensively shapes impulsive purchases in fashion among Generation Z, as well as with the work of Dinh *et al.* (2023), who identify FOMO as a moderator of the influence of influencers on purchase intention. Bekman (2022) states that communication practices, working with the feeling of missing out, generate higher engagement, and strengthen short-term purchase motivations.

The failure to confirm hypothesis H3 deserves more detailed discussion. The literature suggests that FOMO may weaken sustainable purchasing behaviour, as it promotes quick and impulsive reactions that contradict the consideration of the long-term consequences of consumption (Bläse *et al.*, 2023). However, in this research, FOMO did not emerge as a statistically significant predictor of sustainability-oriented behaviour; gender showed a more significant effect. The outcome of the segmentation analysis is interesting: the segment with the highest FOMO declared a relatively strong interest in sustainability and at the same time a preference for trendy products, which corresponds to the phenomenon of a discrepancy between declared values and actual behaviour. The segment with the lowest FOMO, on the other hand, attached the highest importance to sustainability and showed the highest level of purchase planning. In this context, Wojdyla and Chi (2024) state that Generation Z declares sustainability attitudes, but their translation into purchasing behaviour remains inconsistent.

Confirmation of hypotheses H4 and H5 shows that a higher level of FOMO is systematically linked to more intense movement in the digital environment and higher exposure to influencer content. Because of the cross-sectional design of the survey, it is not possible to decide on the direction of causality – it is likely a mutually reinforcing relationship, which is also pointed out by Dinh *et al.* (2023). On the contrary, failure to confirm hypothesis H6 shows that FOMO does not differentiate Generation Z in terms of the choice of shopping channel. This result corresponds to the observation of Kunc *et al.* (2024), according to which the shopping behaviour of Czech Generation Z is primarily omnichannel and searching for products online is naturally combined with shopping in brick-and-mortar stores.

From a marketing practice perspective, the results provide differentiated recommendations. For segments with higher FOMO, short visually dynamic videos, time-limited discounts, promo codes and communication of limited collections appear to be effective. For segments with medium FOMO, linking price incentives with brand authenticity, story campaigns and “behind the scenes” content is effective. Segments with low FOMO respond best to content focused on the quality of materials, transparency of origin, certification and production ethics; brand websites are a key verification channel for them.

The study's limitations lie mainly in the unrepresentativeness of the sample, the predominance of women (75.3%) and the regional concentration of respondents in the South Moravian region. Gender inequality could have influenced mainly the results regarding the sensitivity to communication content and sustainability, where gender turned out to be a significant variable. Furthermore, the cross-sectional design does not allow for a causal interpretation of the observed relationships. Future research suggests longitudinal monitoring of the stability of FOMO in the same consumer over time and intergenerational comparison with the emerging Alpha generation, which can be expected to have even more intense exposure to digital stimuli.

The main contribution of the study lies in demonstrating that the FOMO effect in the Czech Generation Z does not act as a universal consumption driver, but rather as a specific modulator of sensitivity to selected categories of marketing stimuli. The segmentation framework based on the intensity of FOMO experience allows for the formulation of an empirically based differentiation of the communication strategy of clothing industry brands.

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