

Research Article

The Phenomenon of FOMO as Consumptive Behavior of Generation Z in Purchasing Traditional Food (Case Study of Lawar Macho Rena)

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Abstract. Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), or the fear of missing out on new information or trends that emerge, is one of the phenomena that emerge as a result of the influence of social media. In terms of food, FoMO makes Generation Z want to try viral foods so as not to be considered out of date. This case study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach, using observation and interviews. A qualitative method with a phenomenological approach was used to collect and interview ten Gen Z informants. The results showed that Generation Z's social media content encouraged 85% of respondents to try or follow trends on social media. However, this study found that it was not only Generation Z's social media content that created a desire to try or follow trends on social media; among them, Hedden influenced Gen Z's interest in buying traditional food by 60%, unique or ancient names influenced Gen Z's interest by 70%, and traditional food stalls that were legendary influenced Gen Z's interest by 75%. Generation Z believes that legend food is delicious because it still exists today.

Keywords: FoMO, Consumer Behavior, Generation Z, Traditional Food

1. Introduction

William Strauss and Neil Howe define Generation Z as a population group born between 1996 and 2010. They possess unique characteristics that distinguish them from other generational groups. They grew up during a time of rapid development in digital culture and technology. The way they choose, enjoy, and appreciate food is influenced by their ability to access instant information and social media, (Zakiyah et al 2024). "Generation Z is highly interested in traditional food, which is influenced by trends and social media influencers, as well as their need for identity and self-expression. A study by Qur'ani found that Instagram can attract Gen Z's interest in dining places, and innovations in presenting traditional food can increase the appeal of these places (Qur'ani and Pinontoan)."

Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), or the fear of being left behind in terms of information or recent trends, is one phenomenon caused by the influence of social media. In the context of food, FoMO encourages Generation Z to try new viral foods to avoid being considered out of touch. Food influencers on media platforms like TikTok fuel this phenomenon. According to research by Anan et al. (2025), FoMO and food trends influence Gen Z's desire to consume traditional food. The study found that 78% of respondents felt no need to follow viral food trends, although 58% said that trends affect their taste preferences. This suggests that while FoMO is present, other factors, such as knowledge about traditional food and their love for it, also influence their decisions (Anan et al 2025).

"Additionally, research by Putri (2024) found that Generation Z has a positive

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perception of the benefits, diversity, uniqueness, and usefulness of traditional foods such as lawar plek and babi guling, among others. This means that, despite the potential impact of FoMO, traditional food can attract Generation Z in the right way (Karuni et al). The culinary industry can utilize the FoMO phenomenon positively to introduce and popularize traditional food to Generation Z. They can make traditional food remain relevant and appealing to young generations through innovation in presentation, promotion through social media, and emphasis on cultural values. Traditional restaurants in Bali have not widely utilized social media to introduce or promote their menus, but they remain resilient amidst the onslaught of modern food. According to an interview with the owner, they do not conduct promotions on social media, yet they still manage to sell an average of 250-300 portions of Lawar Macho Rena daily, with prices ranging from Rp. 20,000 to Rp. 30,000 per portion, and 85% of their customers are from Generation Z. Based on the above explanation, the author wants to know: "How does FoMO (Fear of Missing Out) influence consumptive behavior of Generation Z in purchasing traditional food?"

2. Method

This research was conducted using a descriptive qualitative method. The purpose of this methodology is to understand social phenomena or human behavior that falls under the category of phenomenology. The phenomenological method is a type of research that emphasizes interpretation to gain an understanding of the existential structure of a phenomenon and then presents it as it is. Phenomenological research aims to explain or reveal the meaning of concepts or phenomena of experience based on individual consciousness. By using interview methods with respondents, phenomenological research employs a qualitative approach to strengthen analysis and provide a deeper understanding of FoMO (Fear of Missing Out) as consumptive behavior of Generation Z when buying traditional food (Case Study of Lawar Macho Rena). A total of 10 Generation Z respondents, customers of Lawar Macho Rena, were involved in this study to further understand FoMO (Fear of Missing Out) as consumptive behavior of Generation Z when purchasing traditional food."

3. Literature Review

Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) is a feeling of anxiety or worry that others are having enjoyable experiences or opportunities that we don't have. Often, this phenomenon triggers a desire to stay digitally connected to avoid feeling left behind from social developments (Deniz 2021). According to Elhai, Yang, and Montag (2020), the origin of the term FoMO is defined as "a feeling of anxiety that others may be having enjoyable experiences that we are not a part of." Patrick J. McGinnis first used this term in an article in The Harvard Business School magazine, The Harbus, in 2004.

3.1 Consumptive Behavior

According to Sugianto and Erdiansyah (2020), consumptive behavior occurs when someone is unable to fulfill their needs and desires in a rational way. As a result, this behavior becomes a lifestyle. This shows that emotional and social factors often influence consumption decisions more than just functional needs. According to Khaidarsyah and Haruna (2021), consumptive behavior is caused by the desire to fulfill one's wants. They emphasize that irrational desires often drive this behavior rather than rational considerations (Purwati et al 2023). Consumptive behavior refers to an individual's tendency to spend excessively on goods or services, often driven by desires or excessive lifestyles rather than basic needs. This phenomenon has become a major concern in consumer behavior research in the digital era, especially among Gen Z."

1) Generation Z

Generation Z refers to a demographic group of people born from the mid-1990s to the early 2010s. They are often referred to as digital natives because they are a generation that grew up alongside advancements in digital technology. The characteristics of this generation distinguish them from previous generations (Jayatissa 2023). According to Ramadhani and Khoirunisa (2025), Generation Z is a group of people who grew up in an

era of rapid digital technological advancements, making them highly dependent on technology. This study shows that Generation Z leads a very digital lifestyle, is independent, and prioritizes flexibility in work and communication. Social media becomes their primary tool for interacting, sharing experiences, and forming their social identity.

Generation Z is a group that grew up in the digital era and has several features that distinguish them from previous generations. They are highly dependent on technology, prioritize flexibility, and prefer interacting through digital platforms. Therefore, it is essential to understand the characteristics and needs of Generation Z to make approaches in education, the workplace, and social interactions more efficient and relevant.

2) Purchase

According to Zubaidah and Latief (2022), customer behavior significantly influences their decisions. Consumers go through five stages in the purchasing decision process before deciding to buy a product: recognizing their needs, searching for information, evaluating alternatives, making a purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior. Factors that Influence Purchasing Decisions:

- a. Psychological factors: motivation, perception, learning, and experience.
- b. Social factors: reference groups, family, and social status.
- c. Personal factors: age, occupation, lifestyle, and economic condition.
- d. Cultural factors: values, beliefs, and habits.

Marketers must understand the various types of purchasing behavior and the consumer decision-making process (Harahap et al).

3.2 Traditional Food

According to Sukerti, Marsiti, and Suriani (2016), traditional food consists of various side dishes, vegetables, snacks, and drinks, which showcase the heritage of our ancestors. Food is not only consumed but also serves as a medium for building relationships with nature, fellow humans, and the divine or ancestral spirits, and possibly with food itself. Acculturation is considered a combination of various cultures. The role of culture, which includes skills, creativity, artistic touch, tradition, and taste, is crucial in the preparation of traditional food. The higher the culture of a community, the more variations in food types, the more complex the preparation, and the more intricate the presentation. Soekarto (in Harsana et al., 2018) states that the appeal of food, such as taste, color, shape, and texture, is essential in evaluating food that is ready to be served.

4. Results And Discussion

4.1 Overview of Lawar Macho Rena

Lawar Macho Rena is a lawar stall located in East Denpasar, established in 2000 but focusing on Lawar Plak menu since 2018. Lawar Plak Macho Rena serves unique lawar, specifically pork and beef lawar made with fresh ingredients. The stall is open from 11 am until sold out. The types of lawar provided are white and red lawar, always made with fresh ingredients, which is evident from the fact that new ingredients are purchased or taken from suppliers at 6: 30 am and processed immediately. This makes the freshness of the lawar and affordable prices a hallmark of Lawar Macho Rena, along with family-like service from the owner. This is based on an interview conducted on April 6, 2025. Interviews with customers named Made and Sri revealed that they have been customers of Lawar Macho Rena since it opened. They stated that when they lived in the Kesiman area, they would buy Lawar Macho Rena twice a week on average. However, since they moved to a farther location, they now enjoy Lawar Macho Rena every two weeks or when they crave the lawar plak. Interview conducted on April 6, 2025.

They mentioned that the consistent taste, fresh menu, and simple yet family-like service make customers feel comfortable. The atmosphere of the Macho Rena stall is also

designed to feel like home. The interview with the owner showed that 85% of Lawar Macho Rena's customers are from Generation Z, and 15% are from older generations. This indicates that Generation Z has not forgotten or abandoned traditional cuisine. This is likely due to the influence of FoMO, which is a trend on social media, and Gen Z feels the need to follow these trends to show their existence. Meanwhile, Lawar Macho Rena has not utilized social media effectively to promote or increase sales of their menu.

Consumptive behavior of Gen Z based on interviews with ten Gen Z individuals who actively use social media and buy traditional food at Lawar Macho Rena. This study focuses on how social media content influences their consumer behavior. The interview results show that 85% of respondents are driven to buy because of content created by others, such as peers, independent influencers, or online communities, rather than content created by the business owner. If content is presented directly at the location and shows the expression of people enjoying the food, it will be more convincing to social media users and grab their attention, not because of famous influencers. If regular customers are packaged in attractive content, social media users can be interested in trying the menu shared. This shows a complex social phenomenon where a broader social network takes over the narrative rather than the product owner. This is outlined as follows:"

4.2 Phenomenology of Social Media Content

The phenomenological approach focuses on the subjective experience of individuals in understanding social phenomena. As digital natives, Generation Z lives in a dynamic and interactive world of social media. They consume content not only from official sources like the Lawar Macho Rena business account, although the owner of Lawar Macho Rena does not conduct significant social media promotions like:

- a. Food review videos by food vloggers that show an appetizing eating process
- b. Beautiful photos with attractive filters that enhance visual desire • Short stories and reels that create an urge to try it immediately
- c. Relevant and authentic user testimonials

However, most content comes from real user experiences, such as Instagram stories from friends, viral TikTok videos, and reviews in community groups. With content formats like this, a sense of urgency and social need to "try it out" is built to maintain the discussed experience. From a phenomenological perspective, this is not just a desire to buy a product, but a subjective experience that includes social identity, existential search, and recognition in the digital community. One participant said: "I'm not interested in ads or posts from the owner, I trust and am more interested in videos from customers, communities, and friends who eat Lawar Macho Rena. It feels closer and more authentic." This experience shows that content not owned by the owner provides strong social validation and reduces the impression of "forced" promotion. Curiosity and fear of missing out (FoMO) arise from such content, which encourages consumers to try the food."

4.3 The Role of Content and Its Impact on FoMO

Because it is considered authentic and reliable, user-generated content (UGC) has higher persuasive power. In phenomenology, the lifeworld of Generation Z consists of social interactions that shape meaning and real experiences, not just formal marketing (Schutz 1967). Through UGC, the experience of eating Lawar Macho Rena becomes part of social identity and lifestyle that the Gen Z community wants to follow, and also makes a significant contribution with authentic and inspiring content. Strong FoMO arises from individuals who become role models and create social pressure not to miss out on viral experiences. Emotional appeal can be easily generated by social media content, especially interactive and visual content, such as Lawar Macho Rena.

4.4 FOMO Mechanism in Gen Z's Consumptive Behavior

Gen Z experiences FoMO due to the social need to stay up-to-date with current trends. In this context, social proof emerges as evidence that the traditional food product

Lawar Macho Rena has become part of the social experience that must be tried (Cialdini). In this case, social media content created by fellow users or independent influencers serves as highly effective social proof. In the digital era, social media becomes the main arena for Gen Z.

The data provided by the business owner shows a significant number of sales, between 250 and 300 portions per day, with 85% of buyers from Generation Z and 15% from older groups. These numbers indicate that the FoMO phenomenon caused by social media content not owned by the owner really influences consumptive behavior. Social closeness and the authenticity of other users' experiences successfully drive buying interest consistently."

4.5 Theoretical and Practical Implications

Safitri found (2024) that the level of social media usage greatly influences the feeling of being left behind and social pressure perceived by individuals. Therefore, it is essential to emphasize the crucial role played by user-generated content in triggering FoMO and impulsive consumption among Generation Z. This suggests a strong correlation between the intensity of social media usage and the emergence of FoMO among Gen Z. They found that continuous exposure to content about certain lifestyles, such as culinary trends, triggers social anxiety and consumptive drive. Andreassen (2016) also agrees that FoMO is related to the need for social validation, which is often reinforced by social interactions in digital media. He states that FoMO can drive individuals to take action to stay relevant in their social networks.

From a practical perspective, traditional food entrepreneurs like Lawar Macho Rena should focus more on building a community and encouraging customers to share their experiences organically. Relying on official promotional content is not effective. Popular figures like Hedden Legend can increase engagement and enhance the viral effect, impacting sales. Additionally, as stated by Adinda (2025), in the case of Lawar Plak Macho Rena, social media content serves as social proof that reinforces the perception of the product as something that "must be tried" and encourages individuals to follow what the majority does so they don't lose their social status.

Although the phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) is often associated with Gen Z's consumptive decisions, including choosing food, it is essential to understand that Gen Z's reasons for trying traditional food are not solely driven by the fear of missing out on trends. According to the interview results, there are several other factors that influence their desire to eat traditional food:"

a. Hedonism

Generation Z is known to prioritize enjoyable and satisfying experiences. They tend to seek sensory satisfaction and pleasure in the food they eat, including traditional food. This generation enjoys traditional food that has a distinctive taste, authenticity, and a unique experience when consuming it. The experience of culinary pleasure is not just about following trends. 60% of Gen Z try traditional food because they enjoy it, and they are motivated by hedonistic reasons to visit locations that offer hedonistic experiences. This is consistent with research in Indonesia that shows that hedonistic attitudes have a significant influence on the intention to consume traditional and local food, although the influence is actually small. However, the influence is statistically significant in the structural model tested (Kristia et al 2024).

b. Unique Name

Generation Z can be more attracted to and want to try food or stalls with unique and interesting names. For example, food with unusual names or having cultural stories behind them often attracts attention. In addition, stall names that become the identity of the stall, such as Macho Rena, Men Sabru, and Babi Guling Celagi, have a 70% influence on Gen Z's decision to try traditional food. However, there is no specific research that investigates this issue.

c. Legends

Food vloggers, social media influencers, and content creators who are not famous also have a significant influence. The results of interviews conducted with Gen Z who try legendary traditional food show that 75% of respondents believe that legendary traditional food is definitely delicious because it has been able to survive for years."

5. Conclusion

Based on phenomenological analysis, social media content is a key driver of FoMO that motivates Generation Z to buy Lawar Macho Rena. 85% of participants reported that visual and social content on digital platforms significantly influences their interest in traditional food. FoMO is not just an individual psychological phenomenon; it's a collective social experience that shapes identity, sense of existence, and need for recognition within Gen Z's digital community. Besides social media influence, three other factors drive young people's consumptive behavior towards traditional food: hedonism (60%), unique names (70%), and legends."

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