FOMO in the Shadow of Dark Traits: The Impulse to Buy and the Temptation of Counterfeit Luxury

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the psychological and behavioural mechanisms underlying counterfeit luxury product purchase behaviour in digitally active consumers. Specifically, it explores how social media exposure and dark personality traits trigger Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), which subsequently influences impulse buying and counterfeit purchasing behaviour, with self-control examined as a moderating variable.

Design/methodology/approach

Using a cross-sectional design, data were collected from 100 Instagram-active participants aged 18–35. Standardized scales measured constructs including Dark Tetrad traits, FOMO, impulse buying, and counterfeit luxury product purchase intentions. Structural Equation Modeling via SmartPLS assessed path relationships, explanatory power (R^2), effect sizes (f^2), and model fit.

Findings

Social media exposure and dark traits significantly predicted FOMO. FOMO significantly influenced impulse buying but had only marginal influence on counterfeit purchasing. Self-control significantly moderated the FOMO–counterfeit link, attenuating impulsive unethical behaviour. Overall model fit was modest (SRMR = 0.097), with moderate R^2 values for FOMO (0.249) and counterfeit purchasing (0.230).

Practical implications

Marketers should integrate ethical communication strategies that minimize FOMO triggers, segment audiences psychographically, and promote mindful consumption. Brands targeting young consumers must foster digital wellness and collaborate with regulators to curb manipulative design practices.

Originality/value

This study contributes a nuanced, theory-driven framework that links dark personality traits, FOMO, and self-control to unethical consumer behaviour in digital ecosystems. It advances interdisciplinary dialogue at the intersection of behavioural psychology, digital marketing, and consumer ethics.

Keywords: *Dark Personality Traits, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), Impulse Buying, Counterfeit Luxury Goods, Social Media Influence, Digital Consumer Behaviour, Self-Control, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), Gen Z and Millennial Consumers, Consumer Psychology*

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital marketplace, social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok have reshaped consumer behaviour, often fueling impulsive buying and the demand for counterfeit luxury items (Andreassen et al., 2017; Wilcox, Kim, & Sen, 2009). Impulse buying, defined by unplanned purchases driven by immediate gratification (Rook, 1987), is frequently triggered by peer influence and curated online content (Reddy et al., 2022). The role of personality, particularly Dark Tetrad Traits Machiavellianism, Narcissism, Psychopathy, and Sadism has emerged as a critical factor in predicting unethical and impulsive consumption (Paulhus, 2014; Jonason & Webster, 2010). Additionally, FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) intensifies emotional responsiveness and purchasing urgency (Przybylski et al., 2013; Blackwell et al., 2017), while self-control operates as a moderating safeguard against such tendencies (Tangney et al., 2004). This study explores the mediating role of FOMO and moderating

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role of self-control in linking social media exposure and Dark Tetrad Traits to impulsive buying and counterfeit luxury consumption.

Dark Tetrad

The Dark Tetrad, Machiavellianism, Narcissism, Psychopathy, and Sadism represents a set of socially aversive traits linked to exploitative and unethical behaviours (Paulhus, 2014). These traits offer a sharper lens than traditional models like the Big Five when examining manipulative and impulsive consumer actions. Individuals high in these traits often show diminished empathy and moral reasoning, predisposing them to unethical decisions (Jonason & Tost, 2010). Research has found that the absence of deterrence can amplify fraudulent intent among those with high Dark Triad traits (Harrison, Summers, & Mennecke, 2018). Moral disengagement further facilitates unethical consumer behaviour by enabling cognitive justifications for manipulation (Egan, Hughes, & Palmer, 2015). The "fast life strategy" marked by impulsivity and focus on short-term rewards helps explain these tendencies (Jonason & Tost, 2010), and low self-control intensifies them (DeLisi, Pechorro, & Nunes, 2024). Consumer reactions in crises, such as panic buying during the COVID-19 pandemic, have also been linked to heightened dark traits, suggesting psychological vulnerability under stress (Yousaf, Tauni, & Khan, 2022). Narcissism, specifically, has shown genetic ties to impulsive purchasing behaviours (Cai et al., 2015). Early indicators in adolescents highlight a potential trajectory toward deviant actions, reinforcing the need for early intervention (Dubas et al., 2017).

Social Media Exposure

Social media plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer behaviour, influencing how individuals discover, evaluate, and purchase products (Michelle & Susilo, 2023). Peer-generated feedback on platforms such as Instagram and Facebook significantly affects decision-making, particularly during information search and evaluation stages (Bedraoui, 2019). Exposure to both brand-driven and user-driven content—what Klein et al. (2020) term "media entropy"—has been shown to heighten purchase intent, especially when brand loyalty is weak. User-generated content continues to drive high-involvement decisions, allowing consumers to shape brand perceptions through shared experiences (Varghese & Agrawal, 2021). However, such influence is not without risk. Studies show FoMO is positively associated with problematic social media use, particularly among young women (Varchetta et al., 2020), while inconsistent conceptualization of FoMO calls for interdisciplinary approaches to assess its impact on well-being (Tandon et al., 2021). Dark personality traits also interact with online behaviour. Machiavellianism and narcissism correlate with problematic usage and excessive self-disclosure, suggesting that social platforms may serve as conduits for self-enhancement and control-driven engagement (Kircaburun, Demetrovics, & Tosuntaş, 2019; Sanecka, 2021). Together, these dynamics reveal how social media exposure intersects with psychological traits to drive both adaptive and maladaptive consumer actions.

Impulse Buying

Impulse buying is a spontaneous, unplanned purchase triggered by emotions and immediate desire (Rook, 1987). It bypasses rational decision-making, often driven by visual appeal, mood, or environmental cues (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998). Hausman (2000) adds that it reflects a temporary loss of self-control influenced by situational factors. Is has become increasingly prevalent in digital environments, shaped by psychological and technological factors. Online marketplaces, such as Shopee in Indonesia, demonstrate that platform security and user trust are key drivers of impulsive purchases (Darmawan, 2021). Digital features that enhance interactivity and social presence-like vivid media and immersive content also intensify impulsivity (Zhang & Shi, 2022). Demographic and psychographic influences play a notable role. Discounts, emotional gratification, and instant rewards fuel impulse buying, particularly among consumers with higher disposable incomes (Meena Rani & Rex, 2023). Cultural factors, such as hedonic motivations and self-esteem, further drive these behaviours, while self-control acts as a moderating force (Ahmadova & Nabiyeva, 2024). Interestingly, materialism and income levels show weaker associations, reflecting nuanced consumption patterns. Life satisfaction inversely correlates with impulse buying, with higher satisfaction enhancing rationality and restraint (Ata & Sezer, 2021). Among younger consumers, low self-control especially when combined with social media exposure—serves as a direct

and indirect trigger (Nyrhinen et al., 2023). Instagram's visual appeal and peer dynamics significantly influence Gen Z and Zillennials, though financial literacy helps mitigate vulnerability (Iranto, Suparno, & Nisa, 2023).

The S-O-R model provides further insight, demonstrating that influencers and emotional cues in social media marketing act as stimuli that lead to impulsive responses (Djafarova & Bowes, 2020; Koay, Teoh, & Soh, 2021). In collectivist cultures, aesthetic elements and promotions drive emotional engagement and purchase intent (Muhammad, Adeshola, & Isiaku, 2024). Influencer type micro vs. macro can moderate credibility's effect on purchasing behaviour (Fadhilah & Saputra, 2023), while gender differences reveal opportunities for tailored digital strategies (Bhinde et al., 2023). Together, these findings underline the multifaceted nature of impulse buying in the digital age, shaped by psychological predispositions, digital marketing cues, and socio-cultural contexts. Financial literacy and self-control remain key in counterbalancing impulsive tendencies.

Counterfeit Luxury Purchase Behavior

Counterfeit luxury purchase behaviour refers to consumers knowingly buying fake high-end products to gain social status, self-expression, or perceived value (Wilcox et al., 2009; Penz & Stöttinger, 2005). It often involves moral disengagement and psychological justification, reinforcing identity while downplaying legal or ethical concerns (Gino et al., 2010). The issue of counterfeit luxury consumption has drawn extensive scholarly focus due to its ethical, cultural, and psychological implications (Mayasari et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2021). Attitudes toward counterfeits, shaped by novelty seeking, status consumption, and social motives, predict purchase intention, while risk perception and vanity exert limited influence (Mayasari et al., 2021). In collectivist cultures, factors like materialism, subjective norms, and self-perception as "smart shoppers" encourage favourable attitudes (Singh et al., 2021). Cultural constructs such as "face" also shape behaviour-mian-zi promotes status-seeking, whereas lian deters it (Shan et al., 2021). Influencers legitimize counterfeit purchases, surpassing traditional consumer rationality (Dahlia, 2023). Dark personality traits and moral disengagement heighten unethical purchase intentions (Koay & Lok, 2024). Compliments reinforce behaviour, while social sanctions diminish appeal (Stoner & Wang, 2014). The "counterfeit self" leads to broader moral erosion (Gino et al., 2010), and online anonymity lowers ethical accountability (Samaddar et al., 2024).

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) is a psychological state marked by anxiety that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent (Przybylski et al., 2013). It is strongly associated with emotional urgency and social comparison, especially in digital environments. FoMO influences consumer behavior by driving impulsive purchases and digital engagement (Alfina et al., 2023; Morsi et al., 2025). Although typically considered a negative emotion, FoMO can be leveraged strategically in marketing to amplify desire and accelerate buying decisions (Sari & Darma, 2024).

Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) has become a key topic in consumer behavior research. Studies show that FoMO can make people feel anxious when they think others are enjoying something without them. This feeling often leads to quick or impulsive purchases, especially on social media or during limited-time offers. FoMO is tied to emotions like regret and pressure, and while it can drive engagement and buying, it can also cause stress. Researchers also found that influencers and digital campaigns can increase FoMO, making people more likely to buy things they don't need just to feel included. Pusenius (2023) argues that personal and social FoMO do not significantly impact impulse buying, contrasting earlier claims. Alfina et al. (2023) find FoMO can foster engagement and digital purchases when triggered strategically. Morsi et al. (2025) show FoMO marketing leads to immediate buying and long-term emotional effects. Adamková (2022) notes that young adults respond strongly to FoMO on social media. Sari and Darma (2024) show FoMO mediates influencer marketing, while Mahmud et al. (2023) suggest purchases may stem from trust rather than urgency. Rachman et al. (2024) link live commerce to FoMO-like urgency. Bläse et al. (2022) warn FoMO may override sustainable values. Hussain et al. (2023) tie FoMO to compulsive buying via depression and anxiety, with mindfulness as a buffer. Hamizar et al. (2023) highlight social media trends fueling urgency and impulsivity.

Self – Control

Self-control is a foundational psychological mechanism that enables individuals to resist short-term impulses in favour of long-term goals (Tangney et al., 2004). Baumeister et al. (1994) define it as the ability to override internal responses and align behavior with standards such as morals and ideals. In consumer contexts, self-control plays a critical role in moderating impulsive buying tendencies (Moayery et al., 2019). Research on self-control highlights its essential role in managing impulsive buying behavior. Moayery et al. (2019) argue that internal conflicts, poor self-monitoring, and ego depletion drive lapses in self-control, suggesting that impulse buying stems more from regulatory failure than emotion. Pradipto et al. (2016) find that young adults transitioning to financial independence rely heavily on self-regulation to avoid impulse purchases, reinforcing its importance during formative stages. Romagnoli (2021) critiques Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior for overlooking impulsive buying, proposing a refined framework that includes ego depletion as a key variable. Horváth et al. (2015) explore compulsive buying and reveal that while such consumers attempt self-regulation, their strategies differ significantly from cautious buyers, often failing under pressure. Together, these studies underscore that self-control is not fixed but context-dependent, and successful regulation varies across individuals and situations. This body of literature supports tailored interventions to strengthen self-regulation and reduce impulsive spending.

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development

This study integrates key psychological constructs to examine counterfeit luxury product purchase behaviour. Drawing upon the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model, Moral Disengagement Theory, and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), it conceptualizes Social Media Exposure and Dark Tetrad traits as stimuli provoking the emotional response of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). FOMO functions as the central organismic state, influencing both impulse buying and counterfeit purchasing behaviour. Self-control is posited as a moderator that weakens FOMO's influence on these behaviours. The proposed hypotheses are grounded in prior empirical literature and seek to advance understanding of consumer behaviour in the digital era.

Social Media Exposure and FOMO

Social media platforms enhance the visibility of idealized lifestyles, leading to heightened upward social comparisons. Frequent exposure to luxury items through peers and influencers cultivates feelings of exclusion and anxiety, defined as Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). Studies indicate a strong connection between passive engagement with social media and increased FOMO levels (Przybylski et al., 2013; Elhai et al., 2020). According to the S-O-R model, social media acts as a stimulus that triggers emotional reactions (organism) in the form of FOMO. Thus, we hypothesize:

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between social media exposure and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO).

Dark Tetrad Traits and FOMO

Individuals exhibiting high levels of Dark Tetrad traits (which include narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy) tend to demonstrate egocentric, manipulative, and emotionally impulsive behaviours. These traits have been associated with increased social comparison and status-related anxiety, making individuals more susceptible to FOMO (Jonason et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2022). For instance, narcissistic individuals are more likely to feel overlooked when others receive attention or validation, prompting behaviours related to FOMO. Thus, we hypothesize:

H2: There is a significant positive association between Dark Tetrad traits and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO).

Dark Tetrad Traits and Counterfeit Luxury Product Purchase

The Moral Disengagement Theory (Bandura, 1999) suggests that individuals with elevated dark traits often rationalize moral self-regulation through mechanisms such as moral justification or displacement of responsibility. Consequently, these individuals are more inclined to engage in unethical consumption practices,

like purchasing counterfeit luxury items, without feeling guilt or cognitive dissonance (Sharma & Chan, 2017). Thus, we hypothesize:

H3: There is a significant positive correlation between Dark Tetrad traits and Counterfeit Luxury product purchase behaviour.

FOMO and Counterfeit Luxury Product Purchase Behaviour

FOMO creates a sense of urgency, conformity driven by peers, and a need for social inclusion. Consumers experiencing FOMO may choose counterfeit luxury products to meet social belonging needs or to replicate perceived societal norms (Zhang et al., 2020; Good & Hyman, 2020). When genuine luxury items are financially out of reach, counterfeits become an appealing alternative to alleviate social exclusion. Additionally, moral disengagement mechanisms may further justify this choice. Thus, we hypothesize:

H4: There is a significant positive relationship between Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and counterfeit luxury product purchase behaviour.

FOMO and Impulse Buying Behaviour

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) explains that external stimuli (such as social media exposure) provoke emotional states (FOMO), which can lead to impulsive behaviours. Empirical research supports the idea that FOMO promotes unplanned purchases, particularly for products associated with symbolism and status (Balta et al., 2020). The immediate gratification associated with impulse buying can help alleviate feelings of FOMO. Thus, we hypothesize:

H5: There is a significant positive correlation between Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and impulse buying behaviour.

Self-Control as a Moderator

According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), perceived behavioural control is crucial in shaping intentions and actions. Self-control, serving as a form of internal regulation, assists individuals in resisting temptations and focusing on long-term consequences instead of short-term benefits. Therefore, it is anticipated that self-control will mitigate the effects of FOMO on both impulse buying and the purchase of counterfeits (Baumeister et al., 2007). Individuals with high levels of self-control are less likely to be influenced by FOMO-driven behaviours. Thus, we hypothesize:

H6: Self-control moderates the relationship between Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and counterfeit luxury product purchase behaviour, such that the relationship weakens at higher levels of self-control.
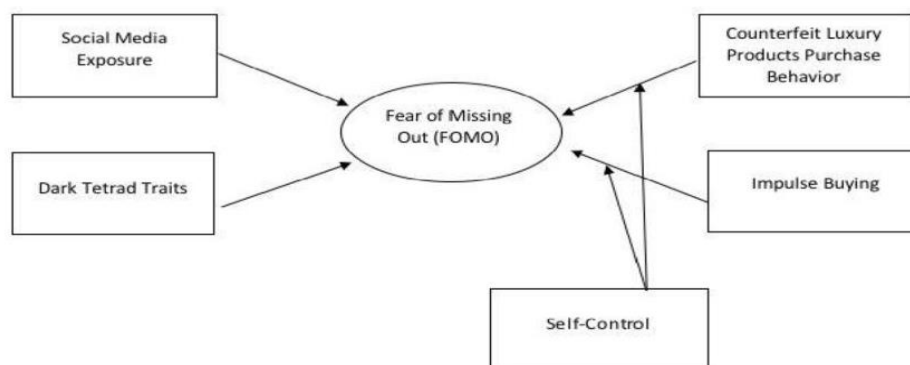

Figure 1: Conceptual Model

In addition, the direct role of Self-Control on Counterfeit Luxury Purchase behavior was assessed, building on emerging literature which indicates that individuals with low self-control are more inclined toward unethical, impulsive, and socially disapproved consumption patterns (Tangney et al., 2004; Horváth et al., 2015). This behavioral tendency stems from diminished capacity to resist temptation and consider long-term consequences,

making self-control a potentially influential factor in counterfeit purchase decisions. Therefore, it was hypothesized (H7) that self-control would exert a direct negative effect on the likelihood of engaging in counterfeit luxury consumption.

Research Design

This research utilised a quantitative, cross-sectional survey approach to investigate the psychological and behavioural factors influencing the purchase of counterfeit luxury items and impulse buying behaviour on Instagram. Data were evaluated using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4 to assess both direct and moderating effects. A sample of 100 participants was obtained through snowball sampling. The survey was first shared among the researcher's peers and academic circles, with a request for further distribution. Participants were qualified if they actively used Instagram and were able to understand English. While Instagram is typically more popular among younger users, the age range was broadened to include those 60 and older since Dark Tetrad traits can appear in individuals of all ages. This inclusive age sampling facilitated a more thorough psychological assessment regardless of digital behaviour patterns.

To evaluate the proposed research model, eight key constructs were measured. Demographic variables included age, gender, income level, and educational background. Instagram usage was assessed using six self-developed items tailored to platform-specific behaviors, such as frequency of use, exposure to advertisements, influencer engagement, brand discovery, browsing duration, and influence on purchasing decisions.

Social Media Exposure was measured using four items adapted from the Internet Addiction Test (Young, 2009), capturing the intensity and frequency of digital engagement. Dark Tetrad traits—Machiavellianism, Narcissism, and Psychopathy—were assessed using the 27-item scale adapted from Jones and Paulhus (2014), comprising nine items per subscale. Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) was measured with four items adapted from Przybylski et al. (2013), reflecting emotional discomfort linked to social exclusion or missed experiences.

Impulse Buying Behavior was evaluated using the four-item scale developed by Rook and Fisher (1995), capturing spontaneous and unplanned consumption tendencies.

Counterfeit Luxury Product Purchase behavior was measured using four items adapted from Krishnan et al. (2017), focusing on willingness and behavioral inclination toward counterfeit goods. Self-Control was assessed using the abbreviated four-item version of the Brief Self-Control Scale (Tangney et al., 2004), reflecting individuals' ability to regulate thoughts, emotions, and actions.

All constructs except for demographics and Instagram usage—were measured using established Likert scales ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Reliability analyses were conducted on all measurement instruments, with Cronbach's Alpha values confirming acceptable internal consistency. Data analysis was carried out in two stages using SmartPLS 4: first, the measurement model was evaluated for reliability and validity; second, the structural model was assessed to test the hypothesized relationships.

Data Analysis and Findings

Assessment of Measurement Model

Reliability analysis was conducted using SPSS, where Cronbach's Alpha values assessed internal consistency across all constructs, ensuring acceptable reliability levels before advancing to structural modeling in SmartPLS, in accordance with Hair *et al*. (2019). The factor loadings of all the included items passed the recommended threshold (>0.60). The reliability of the construct was tested using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR). Cronbach's alpha and CR values of each construct exceeded 0.70. The average variance extracted (AVE) values were over 0.50; hence, the convergent validity was confirmed. Factor loading, reliability and AVE values of all the scales and their items are presented in Table 1. Discriminant validity was also confirmed based on

criteria of the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio and Fornell-Larcker criterion, both of which are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 1: Scale Items, Loadings, Reliability and Validity

Constructs and Scale Items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Counterfeit Luxury Purchase Behaviour		0.947	0.948	0.654
CFPLP1	0.820			
CFPLP2	0.660			
CFPLP3	0.849			
CFPLP4	0.800			
Dark Tetrad Traits		0.917	0.920	0.603
DTM2	0.792			
DTM3	0.732			
DTM4	0.691			
DTM5	0.834			
DTM6	0.725			
DTM9	0.581			
DTP1	0.798			
DTP3	0.637			
Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)		0.917	0.920	0.603
FOMO2	0.890			
FOMO3	0.769			
FOMO4	0.766			
Impulse Buying Behaviour		0.917	0.920	0.603
IB1	0.729			
IB2	0.937			
IB3	0.890			
IB4	0.893			
Self-Control		0.917	0.920	0.603
SC2	0.857			
SC3	0.834			
SC4	0.903			
Social Media Exposure		0.917	0.920	0.603
SME1	0.876			
SME4	0.678			
SME5	0.625			

Table 2: Discriminant Validity – Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Constructs	CFPLP	DTT	FOMO	IB	SC	SME
Counterfeit Luxury Purchase (CFPLP)	**0.809**					
Dark Tetrad Traits (DTT)	0.423	**0.777**				
Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)	0.487	0.531	**0.777**			
Impulse Buying Behaviour (IB)	0.591	0.418	0.549	**0.818**		
Self-Control (SC)	-0.375	-0.287	-0.412	-0.445	**0.804**	
Social Media Exposure (SME)	0.456	0.397	0.522	0.468	-0.388	**0.778**

To evaluate the proposed hypotheses and directional relationships, the structural model was assessed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The first diagnostic involves estimating path coefficients, which reveal the strength and direction of influence between latent constructs. The significance of these paths was tested via bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples, as shown below.

Table 3: Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	β-value	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	Social Media Exposure → Fear of Missing Out	0.323	3.417	0.001	Supported
H2	Dark Tetrad Traits → Fear of Missing Out	0.299	2.885	0.004	Supported
H3	Dark Tetrad Traits → Counterfeit Luxury Purchase Behaviour	0.139	1.019	0.308	Not Supported
H4	Fear of Missing Out → Counterfeit Luxury Purchase Behaviour	0.227	1.814	0.070	Marginal/Not Supported
H5	Fear of Missing Out → Impulse Buying Behaviour	0.253	2.784	0.006	Supported
H6a	Self-Control × FOMO → Counterfeit Luxury Purchase	−0.052	2.212	0.027	Supported (Moderation)
H6b	Self-Control × FOMO → Impulse Buying Behaviour	0.016	0.439	0.666	Not Supported
H7a	Self-Control → Counterfeit Luxury Purchase Behaviour	0.276	2.752	0.006	Supported

As depicted in table 3, several hypothesized relationships were statistically supported, confirming core mechanisms within the model especially the impact of social and personality-driven stimuli on psychological responses and behavior. The presence of marginal or unsupported paths also highlights opportunities for theoretical refinement and further exploration.

Beyond individual path estimates, the explanatory power of the model was assessed through R² values, which indicate the proportion of variance in each endogenous construct explained by its predictors. These are summarized in the table 4.

Table 4: Coefficient of Determination (R²) for Endogenous Constructs

Endogenous Construct	R² Value	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
Counterfeit Luxury Purchase	0.230	3.690	0.000	Moderate explanatory power
Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)	0.249	3.056	0.002	Moderate explanatory power
Impulse Buying Behaviour	0.123	1.618	0.106	Low explanatory power

R² values of .19–.33 are considered **moderate**, while values around .13 or lower are **weak** according to Chin (1998). Both **FOMO** and **Counterfeit Luxury Purchase Behaviour** are moderately explained by their predictors. **Impulse Buying Behaviour** shows a weaker explained variance, suggesting the model captures less of its behavioural determinants possibly a cue for introducing new predictors or moderators.

Overall, The R² values suggest that the model accounts for a substantial share of variance in FOMO and counterfeit purchasing behavior, supporting the robustness of the model structure, though the relatively lower variance explained in impulse buying behavior may warrant the inclusion of additional variables in future research.

To understand the relative contribution of each exogenous variable to the variance in the endogenous constructs, Cohen's (1988) f^2 effect sizes were computed. These values help distinguish which predictors had the most meaningful impact, table 5.

Table 5. Effect Size (f²) of Exogenous Constructs

Predictor Construct	Outcome Variable	f² Value	Effect Size Interpretation
Social Media Exposure	Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)	0.104	Small
Dark Tetrad Traits	Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)	0.079	Small
Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)	Impulse Buying Behaviour	0.093	Small
Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)	Counterfeit Luxury Purchase Behaviour	0.053	Small
Dark Tetrad Traits	Counterfeit Luxury Purchase Behaviour	0.020	Small
Self-Control	Counterfeit Luxury Purchase Behaviour	0.082	Small
Self-Control × FOMO (Interaction)	Counterfeit Luxury Purchase Behaviour	0.017	Negligible

Table 5 summarizes how much each predictor uniquely contributes to the variance of its outcome variable. While many relationships show small effects (*Cohen's thresholds: 0.02 = small, 0.15 = medium, 0.35 = large*), they collectively support your model's theoretical structure. Though most effects were in the small range, their consistency across constructs supports their theoretical relevance. Even minor contributors offer value in cumulative behavioral models, particularly in complex psychological frameworks.

Overall model adequacy was evaluated using global fit metrics such as the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and Normed Fit Index (NFI). These indices reflect how well the theoretical model aligns with the observed data patterns, table 6.

Table 6. Model Fit Indices (Saturated and Estimated Models)

Fit Index	Saturated Model	Estimated Model	Recommended Threshold	Interpretation
SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual)	0.093	0.097	< 0.08	Slightly Above Threshold
d_ULS (Unweighted Least Squares Discrepancy)	2.835	3.040	—	For descriptive insight
d_G (Geodesic Discrepancy)	0.958	0.965	—	For descriptive insight
Chi-square	5044.349	5054.690	—	Not used for model fit
NFI (Normed Fit Index)	0.664	0.663	> 0.90	Below Acceptable Level

Both SRMR values exceed the conventional cutoff of 0.08, suggesting a **modest fit** that may benefit from theoretical or empirical refinements. The low **NFI** (< 0.90) further indicates room for improving comparative model fit—perhaps through trimming insignificant paths or respecifying latent constructs. While **d_ULS** and **d_G** aren't tested against fixed thresholds, they're helpful to compare alternate model structures or complexity reductions.

While SRMR fell slightly above the conventional threshold, the fit remains within acceptable limits for exploratory models. The NFI, though modest, reflects the complexity of psychological constructs and the nuanced relationships captured in the structural model.

To reinforce the reliability of the structural model's conclusions, 95% bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence intervals were generated for each path coefficient, table 7. These help determine whether each estimated effect is statistically distinguishable from zero.

Table 7: Bootstrapped Confidence Intervals for Path Coefficients

Path	β-value	t-value	p-value	95% CI: Lower	95% CI: Upper	Significance Interpretation
Social Media Exposure → Fear of Missing Out	0.323	3.417	0.001	0.136	0.489	Significant ($p < 0.05$)
Dark Tetrad Traits → Fear of Missing Out	0.299	2.885	0.004	0.107	0.482	Significant ($p < 0.05$)
Dark Tetrad Traits → Counterfeit Purchase	0.139	1.019	0.308	–0.134	0.405	Not Significant (CI includes zero)
Fear of Missing Out → Counterfeit Purchase	0.227	1.814	0.070	–0.018	0.470	Marginal (CI barely includes zero)
Fear of Missing Out → Impulse Buying	0.253	2.784	0.006	0.075	0.425	Significant ($p < 0.05$)
Self-Control × FOMO → Counterfeit Purchase	–0.052	2.212	0.027	–0.121	–0.006	Significant ($p < 0.05$)
Self-Control × FOMO → Impulse Buying	0.016	0.439	0.666	–0.067	0.111	Not Significant (CI includes zero)
Self-Control → Counterfeit Purchase	0.276	2.752	0.006	0.084	0.465	Significant ($p < 0.05$)
Self-Control → Impulse Buying	0.168	1.486	0.138	–0.063	0.377	Not Significant (CI includes zero)

The confidence intervals strengthen the robustness of significant paths by excluding zero, thereby confirming their stability across resamples. Paths that include zero reflect less certainty and may benefit from model refinement or larger sample validation. This table confirms the robustness of your key paths and helps justify which hypotheses are supported.

DISCUSSION

The structural model assessment provided both statistical rigor and theoretical insights, building upon the validated measurement model. Path coefficient analysis (Table 3) revealed that **Social Media Exposure (SME)** significantly influenced **Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)** ($β = 0.323$, $t = 3.417$, $p = 0.001$), supporting H1. This aligns with prior literature suggesting that heightened digital engagement amplifies the perception of exclusion from others' experiences, reinforcing the S-O-R model by identifying SME as a salient environmental stimulus. Similarly, **Dark Tetrad Traits (DTT)** significantly predicted FOMO ($β = 0.299$, $p = 0.004$), supporting H2. This highlights that individuals with socially aversive personality traits are more susceptible to emotional reactions like FOMO—likely due to higher sensitivity to status and envy-driven comparison.

However, DTT did not exert a significant direct effect on **Counterfeit Luxury Purchase Behaviour (CLP)** (H3; $β = 0.139$, $p = 0.308$), suggesting its impact is more likely mediated through FOMO or other psychological triggers. Likewise, FOMO's influence on CLP approached significance ($β = 0.227$, $p = 0.070$), but the confidence interval included zero, implying marginal support for H4. This could be attributed to the distinction between desire and behavioural translation—while FOMO may initiate an urge, actual counterfeit purchasing might also depend on rationalizations or contextual affordances.

In contrast, FOMO significantly predicted **Impulse Buying (IB)** ($β = 0.253$, $p = 0.006$), affirming H5. This supports the idea that anxiety stemming from perceived social exclusion often leads to spontaneous consumption behaviours, particularly in digital commerce settings.

Moderation analysis further enriched the model. The interaction term **Self-Control × FOMO** significantly and negatively influenced CLP ($β = –0.052$, $p = 0.027$), supporting H6a. This suggests that higher levels of self-regulation buffer the effect of FOMO on unethical purchasing decisions. However, H6b (moderating FOMO → IB) was not supported. These findings refine the role of **Self-Control**, showing its moderating impact is construct-specific. Self-Control itself had a significant direct effect on CLP ($β = 0.276$, $p = 0.006$; H7a), but not

on IB (p = 0.138; H7b), indicating its relevance in decisions involving moral disengagement rather than impulsive tendencies.

In terms of predictive strength , the model accounted for **24.9% of the variance in FOMO**, **23.0% in CLP**, and **12.3% in IB**. While moderate for FOMO and CLP, the explained variance for IB is relatively low—suggesting the presence of additional variables (e.g., emotional arousal or mood states) that may better explain impulsive behaviours.

Effect size analyses demonstrated that while most effects were small (f^2 = 0.02–0.10), they were theoretically meaningful. The largest effect came from SME on FOMO (f^2 = 0.104), reinforcing its salience as a digital stimulus.

Model fit statistics revealed **SRMR values** slightly above the 0.08 threshold (Saturated: 0.093; Estimated: 0.097) and an **NFI** below the preferred cutoff (>0.90), indicating a **modestly acceptable** fit. While not perfect, these results remain consistent with exploratory PLS-SEM research standards, particularly for complex psychological models.

The results confirmed that curated, aspirational digital content heightens emotional vulnerability, especially in individuals with high self-image sensitivity. DTT's predictive link to FOMO suggests that narcissistic or Machiavellian personalities are prone to status anxiety, elevating their susceptibility to digital exclusion. Although DTT did not directly predict CLP, its indirect role via emotional reactivity (e.g., FOMO) supports a latent vulnerability model.

FOMO emerged as a cross-cutting predictor of both ethical and impulsive behavior, triggering reactions to perceived social disadvantage. Consumers driven by FOMO often prioritize emotional relief over rational evaluation, especially when trying to conform to digital trends. These dynamics highlight the urgency and intensity of FOMO in shaping modern consumer behavior.

Luxury brands, in particular, should consider promoting not just the exclusivity of their products, but also the ethical value of authenticity and the emotional reward of mindful ownership. For mass-market or lifestyle brands, embedding digital interventions—like purchase pause features, emotion-based prompts ("Are you buying this because it makes you happy or because you feel left out?"), or post purchase satisfaction surveys can serve to align consumer behaviour with longer-term brand loyalty rather than short-term gratification.

Moreover, marketers can take strategic advantage of insights about dark traits— not to exploit but to anticipate behavioural responses. For instance, personalized marketing that appeals to a narcissistic consumer's desire for uniqueness or visibility (e.g., limited customization, social media recognition) can ethically fulfill their psychological needs while encouraging genuine purchases over fakes. At the same time, platforms can design digital experiences that reduce exposure to excessive comparison by diversifying the algorithmic feed to show balanced content, not just aspirational luxury. Overall, this research contributes a nuanced understanding of how darker aspects of human personality interact with emotional and cognitive drivers to shape modern consumer behaviour. It reveals that while social media and emotional pressure can spark unplanned or unethical buying behaviours, psychological traits and self-regulation capacities play a critical role in shaping the outcome. Marketers and policymakers alike must therefore approach the consumer not just as a target of promotion, but as a psychologically complex individual navigating an emotionally charged marketplace.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study offer actionable insights for marketing professionals navigating the digital consumer landscape. First, brands should prioritize ethical marketing strategies by avoiding manipulative tactics that exploit consumer vulnerabilities such as FOMO and impulsivity. Leveraging psychographic segmentation allows marketers to understand deeper motivational drivers, enabling more responsible and targeted engagement. Crafting messages that support mindful consumption and align with values like self-control can foster long-term trust and brand loyalty. Additionally, integrating wellness-oriented narratives and authenticity into brand positioning can resonate strongly with emotionally aware consumers. Firms targeting young, digitally

active audiences should invest in educational outreach that builds resilience against emotionally driven purchases. Lastly, collaboration with regulatory bodies and compliance with ethical advertising guidelines will not only mitigate reputational risks but also position brands as socially responsible leaders. Together, these strategies can enhance consumer satisfaction while promoting sustainable and ethical growth in digitally mediated markets.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study provides valuable insights into the psychological and behavioural drivers of counterfeit luxury product purchase behaviour, several limitations warrant consideration. The sample primarily consisted of Instagram users aged 18–35, potentially limiting generalizability across age groups. The reliance on self-report measures may introduce biases like social desirability and reduced accuracy in reporting sensitive traits. The cross-sectional design also restricts causal interpretations. Although validated scales were used, reported intentions may not always reflect actual behaviour. Additionally, the study's cultural context may influence the findings, limiting their applicability across regions. To address these concerns, future research should consider longitudinal designs to examine behavioural progression over time, use experimental methods to isolate social media effects, and incorporate behavioural data for validation. Including culturally diverse samples and exploring newer platforms like TikTok can further expand understanding. Finally, examining additional moderating and mediating factors can deepen insight into the psychological mechanisms at play.

Conclusion

This study offers a comprehensive understanding of the psychological and behavioural factors influencing counterfeit luxury product purchase behaviour in the digital age. Anchored in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model, Moral Disengagement Theory, and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), the research highlights how Social Media Exposure and Dark Tetrad traits act as key stimuli that trigger Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). FOMO, in turn, significantly influences both impulse buying and counterfeit luxury purchase behaviours. The moderating role of self-control provides additional insight, revealing that higher self-regulation can weaken FOMO's impact on consumer decisions. The use of validated measurement scales and a robust analytical approach through SPSS and SmartPLS enhances the reliability and credibility of the findings. Overall, the study contributes to the growing body of literature on digital consumer psychology and offers valuable implications for marketers, psychologists, and policy-makers seeking to understand or influence consumer behaviour in online environments.

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