

## **Consumer Anxiety Management Strategies on Purchasing Decision Making Against the Impact of Digital Advertising In the E-Commerce Era**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The e-commerce era has fuelled the rise of persuasive and aggressive digital advertising, influencing the way consumers make purchasing decisions. This study aims to identify the strategies used to manage anxiety triggered by exposure to digital advertising. A qualitative approach was used with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with six informants who actively shop on e-commerce platforms. The results show that consumers experience various forms of anxiety, such as fear of running out of products, regret for not buying immediately, and social pressure due to the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) phenomenon. The main cause of anxiety comes from digital advertising elements such as time countdowns, limited stock, celebrity testimonials, and bulk purchase notifications. To manage anxiety, consumers use active, interactive, and passive strategies. The conclusion is that emotional control and awareness are very important in dealing with psychological distress caused by online advertising. The theoretical implications of this research enrich the application of Uncertainty Reduction Theory in the context of digital consumer behaviour, particularly in understanding active, interactive, and passive strategies as a form of uncertainty management accompanied by emotional anxiety. Practically, the findings provide insights for e-commerce industry players and advertisers to be wiser in designing advertising communication strategies by considering the psychological impact on consumers.

**Keywords:** Consumer Anxiety; Decision-Making; Digital Advertising; E-Commerce; Uncertainty Reduction Theory



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## INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has significantly changed consumer behaviour, especially in terms of the search and purchase decision-making process. One of the fastest-growing industries worldwide, including in Indonesia, is e-commerce. According to the e-Conomy SEA 2023 report by Google, Temasek, and Bain & Company, Indonesia's digital economy is projected to reach USD 109 billion by 2025, with e-commerce as a major contributor. The term "e-commerce" refers to business transactions that occur over the internet. E-commerce is an evolving set of technologies that includes applications and business processes that connect companies, consumers, and communities through electronic transactions, enabling the electronic exchange of goods (Anita Sinaga, 2020). Indonesians prefer to buy goods online, which is likely why e-commerce in Indonesia is expected to become very popular.

The lifestyle of modern society has changed due to technological advances such as devices and the tendency to do activities in cyberspace, such as online shopping, also known as "online shopping". Online shopping provides customers with more choices, preferences, and information about products, price comparisons, and convenience in finding things online (Mauludin *et al.*, 2022). Alongside the phenomenon of the e-commerce era, digital advertising plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions, preferences, and decisions (Rifathurrahman *et al.*, 2024). E-commerce advertising influences buyer behaviour by attracting attention, providing clear information, and increasing the desire to buy (Maurisni & Lesmana, 2024).

In addition to the phenomenon of e-commerce and digital advertising, consumer decision-making models have undergone significant changes in the current digital era. Interactive and personalized digital advertising influences the traditional model of decision-making, which consists of the stages of problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase, and post-purchase. Digital advertising reaches customers directly through various social media platforms to increase brand awareness. For example, digital advertising often uses persuasive techniques such as urgency, which means encouraging quick and immediate purchases, and fear arousal techniques, which means using fear techniques to encourage consumer purchasing actions. In a previous study (Saputra & Hidayat, 2025) found that digital advertising affects the cognitive, affective, and conative aspects of the audience by using persuasive strategies such as cognitive dissonance, association, and emotion generation. Therefore, while e-commerce digital advertising helps increase sales, there are psychological dynamics that are often overlooked, such as customer anxiety when making a purchase decision.

Anxiety is a person's feeling of worry about frightening things that will happen in the future that they cannot control, and are considered terrible if they happen (Nugraha, 2020). Anxiety is an unpleasant feeling, worry, and fear. It encompasses the physical sensations and emotions we may experience when we are worried or nervous about something. Psychologically, in consumer behaviour, consumer anxiety is defined as fear and worry in certain situations, such as shopping. (Arifianti & Gunawan, 2021) said that this fear affects the way people make purchasing and shopping decisions. (Muchnisa & Sulaiman, 2020) stated that when customers often experience anxiety, they often make decisions that could potentially lead to rash actions when shopping. This can lead to negative impacts, such as an extravagant lifestyle that leads to complacency, because consumers feel anxious as a result of impulsive purchases. Anxiety is characterized by the fear of unforeseen danger in the future.

Tension is a symptom of the negative emotion called anxiety. Fear of the unknown consequences of a purchase and lack of control over the outcome of consumption is

known as anxiety. The main factor that inhibits customers' response to online shopping is anxiety; 18% of customers feel anxious when purchasing goods from websites because of the unknown consequences of the purchase. Uncertainty is the result of the difficulty of predicting the actions of others in an online transaction activity. Meanwhile, there is a large amount of uncertainty associated with the buying process that is considered to jeopardize their interests. Uncertainty is a person's perceived inability to predict something accurately, which results in a person's lack of trust and knowledge about the circumstances. Uncertainty means a lack of complete information about something that cannot be accurately predicted. Uncertainty is described as an aversive feeling that a person experiences when they are unsure of themselves. Uncertainty reduction theory seeks to predict and control events to overcome the fear of the unknown and perceived success in prediction through active strategies, through information seeking, interactive strategies by engaging in direct communication, and passive strategies through observation and postponement of decisions (Bevan, 2022). Online shopping is often accompanied by uncertainty that is not present offline and affects how certain aspects of the experience can influence the purchase. This uncertainty tends to make the experience of choosing a product more indecisive and anxious (Putri & Efawati, 2025).

Algorithm-based digital advertising that is highly personalized and instantly attention-grabbing often causes emotional distress, such as uncertainty that creates consumer anxiety. The flood of information, infinite product options, and urgent promotional messages make customers feel afraid of missing out. Psychosocial phenomena such as FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), for example, also exacerbate this anxiety. FOMO is not just about the fear of missing out on an opportunity to buy something, but also describes the socio-cultural dynamics of modern consumers who are heavily influenced by digital narratives such as trends, influencer testimonials, and other customer reviews.

According to Hodkinson (Sasongko *et al.*, 2023), FOMO in digital advertising can cause psychological distress that triggers impulse buying, guilt, and regret, especially in young users who are active on social media. In previous research (Zharifah *et al.*, 2025; Rachman *et al.*, 2024) found that FOMO has a significant influence on customer purchasing decisions, both partially and simultaneously, because FOMO encourages customers to make immediate purchases so that they can follow trends. Under these circumstances, the decision-making process becomes unstable and fearful. As a result, persuasive techniques such as urgency and fear can make customers feel scared, which can affect the decision-making process. Social pressure can be triggered by the impact shown by influencers or testimonials. This can encourage customers to rush into purchasing items that do not actually suit their needs.

In a recent marketing psychology survey, quantitative studies showed that digital advertising using this method can increase purchase rates by 20-30 per cent and increase consumer anxiety by 15 per cent (Rimbano, 2025). Digital consumers may experience anxiety as an emotional response to the uncertainty, social pressure, and perceived risk experienced when choosing goods and services over the internet. Fears about the quality of digital products sold without physical inspection, transaction fraud, and misuse of personal data are likely to occur (Emiliana & Efawati, 2025). For example, media reports in Indonesia recount cases of fraud through digital adverts that promise high-quality products but end up disappointing customers. As shown by recent survey data, around 58% of Indonesian consumers experience the same anxiety. Digital advertising, which often contains information overload and aggressive promotional pressure, is a major contributing factor to this anxiety.

Modern-day consumers face a lot of information and social pressure from algorithms that advertise based on their online activities. According to research conducted (Nakshine *et al.*, 2022), constant exposure to digital advertising can lead to information fatigue, cognitive hesitation, and decision anxiety, also known as decision anxiety. All of these can impact the quality of decision-making and post-purchase satisfaction. Consumers may feel like they are being 'watched', 'targeted', or even 'manipulated' by ad systems that know more about their preferences than they do.

According to research conducted by (Yin *et al.*, 2025), when customers feel a loss of control over their personal preferences, they experience feelings of discomfort and anxiety, which ultimately reduces consumers' trust in advertising and their purchasing choices. When combined with the fact that Indonesian digital consumers have collective tendencies and are sensitive to social norms, this phenomenon becomes even more complex. In these cases, personal preference is not the only factor that influences their purchasing decisions (Mulyadi & Efawati, 2024). It also considers their status, self-image, and social acceptance. As a result, anxiety is not only individualized but also stems from collective social pressures shaped by digital interactions. Clear and informative digital advertising messages can help reduce anxiety by building trust. On the other hand, adverts that use manipulative strategies, such as making consumers feel like they have to buy a product immediately due to scarcity or promoting false social proof, can actually exacerbate anxiety.

Based on the above issues, the phenomenon of e-commerce development and digital advertising has caused psychological tension and pressure caused to easy access. Consumers experience anxiety, confusion when choosing, and fear of making the wrong decision. In this situation, consumers will quickly make decisions and shop without thinking carefully. If the result does not match the consumer's expectations after purchase, the consumer may experience post-purchase regret. This can have an impact on consumers' shopping experience, satisfaction, and loyalty to the consumer platform.

This study aims to reveal strategies or mechanisms that consumers can use in managing anxiety when making purchasing decisions on the impact of digital advertising in the e-commerce era. The contribution of this research is to add insight, knowledge, and understanding of consumer strategies in managing anxiety when making purchasing decisions on the impact of digital advertising in the e-commerce era. In addition, this research is expected to help improve consumer well-being by reducing anxiety and emotional distress caused by excessive or false digital advertising.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Uncertainty Reduction Theory

This theory was created by Charles Berger and Richard Calabrese in 1975. The focus of this theory is to reduce the level of uncertainty that exists between two strangers, both mentally and behaviourally. In this theory, Berger and Calabrese suggest what will happen in the first meeting, namely, prediction and explanation. Berger and Calabrese mention two types of uncertainty reduction: proactive uncertainty reduction, which occurs when a person considers the options available in communication before committing to the other person; and retroactive uncertainty reduction, which occurs when a person attempts to explain behaviour after the encounter.

This theory resulted in three information-seeking strategies: a passive strategy, an active strategy, and an interactive strategy. All of these were created to reduce uncertainty. Passive strategies are information-seeking methods where the target is

observed without knowing that they are being observed. Active strategies involve asking people close to a person to get information related to the person being sought. By using a third party, this approach can answer certain questions by incorporating risks. One of the risks included in this approach is that the third party may divulge what is being observed to the target. Interactive strategies are the most commonly used and can reduce uncertainty directly. However, this strategy requires individuals to open up to each other, which can lead to embarrassment or feelings of discomfort.

Through this strategy, individuals can disclose information in the hope that they can equalize the information (Azzahra & Yuliarti, 2024). Research by (Wijayanti *et al.*, 2024) in a study on the forms of uncertainty experienced by teachers with students with special needs shows that to reduce uncertainty, teachers carry out passive strategies by looking at student behaviour directly, active strategies seek information from the media and talk to colleagues, and interactive strategies involve direct communication through oral and non-verbal language. (Widodo, 2024) research on desk collection uncertainty in collecting arrears from pay-later customers found that the success rate in reducing uncertainty increased with the use of passive non-procedural techniques such as searching for information and tracking through social media, Google Maps, and pretending to be a field collector.

Research (Malestha & Kusumaningtyas, 2020) research on reducing uncertainty in deaf workers in serving new customers found that deaf salon workers use three strategies to reduce uncertainty, namely passive strategies, where workers make observations to find out about new customers and what they should do, secondly active strategies, where workers use third people to help or ask about others through others and thirdly interactive strategies, where workers interact directly with customers to reduce distrust.

### **Consumer Anxiety**

Anxiety can be defined as a state of mind that represents an individual's short-term negative emotional response to a situation or an individual trait that refers to a constant condition that is under the pressure of the situation, the inhibiting effect of this anxiety has an impact on several values that the individual considers important as a person (Liu & Shi, 2023). Consumer anxiety is defined as fear and worry in certain situations, such as shopping. In previous research (Saputri & Supriyanto, 2024) stated that this fear affects consumers' actions when they shop. Consumers usually feel anxious and often make potentially dangerous decisions when shopping. This can lead to negative impacts, such as an extravagant lifestyle that leads to complacency, because consumers feel anxious as a result of impulsive purchases.

Like anxiety, anxiety is characterized by fear of unexpected danger in the future (Saragih & Pusvitasari, 2022). This statement is reinforced by the results of (Julianti, 2020) previous research shows that there is a significant positive relationship between anxiety and impulse buying during the COVID-19 pandemic. The higher the anxiety a person feels, the more they make impulse purchases. (Saragih & Pusvitasari, 2022) showed a positive and significant correlation between anxiety variables and impulse buying behaviour ( $r = 0.528$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). In other words, the higher the anxiety, the more impulse buying behaviour. The main factor that inhibits customers' response to online shopping is anxiety. This occurs when they buy goods from websites due to the uncertainty of quality, promotion, and safety.



## **Purchasing Decision**

Purchasing decision is a procedure carried out by the customer before purchasing a product or service. According to the opinion of Kottler & Keller (2021), a purchase decision is defined as a choice from two or more alternatives. This can mean that consumers can make decisions after being given two or more alternatives. Purchasing decisions made online are a purchasing behaviour carried out by customers after going through the selection stage, combining knowledge to evaluate two or more alternative behaviours (Putri & Marlien, 2022).

The consumer decision-making process consists of three interrelated phases: the input phase, the process phase, and the final phase. The process phase affects how consumers identify product needs, and this phase consists of two main sources of information, namely the marketing activities of the company, such as products, costs, promotions, and distribution channels, and non-business influences in the social environment, such as friends, neighbours, family, social class, culture, and subculture. What consumers buy and how they use it is provided by these two main sources of information. The process steps are related to the customer decision-making process (Lutfianti, 2022). Research from Pratiwi (2024) explains that the On-Time Guarantee is closely related to the formation of consumer behavior in making purchasing decisions, such as recognizing problems, searching for information, evaluating alternatives, making purchasing decisions, and evaluating post-purchase behavior.

The results of previous research by (Akhyar, 2023) found that digital advertising strongly influences consumer purchasing behaviour. Some of the factors that influence consumer choices to buy are features such as attractive ad displays, content suitability, and social media interaction. Other research also provides evidence that attention, understanding, acceptance, and retention of social media advertising have a positive and significant impact on consumer purchasing decisions at Bali International University. These findings indicate that not only conventional advertising but also advertising on Instagram can increase consumer purchasing decisions (Larson, 2021). Research from (Monica & Triyanto, 2025) shows that digital service quality significantly influences purchasing decisions at Cafeteria Labbis, with reliability and responsiveness emerging as the most dominant elements. In addition, high-quality digital services contribute to increased customer loyalty.

## **Digital Advertising**

Advertising has become an important component of a company's marketing strategy. Kotler and Kevin state that the definition of advertising itself includes various forms of non-personal presentation and promotion of products, concepts, goods, or services by paid sponsors (Suryawijaya & Rusdi, 2021). Advertising is currently considered the most effective method to increase sales of certain goods or brands. According to Bagaskara *et al.* (2021), digital media in business is defined as a means of business communication that uses the benefits of online activities. Digital advertising is a type of marketing carried out by a company or brand to promote its goods or services using digital media or the internet with the aim of reaching consumers or potential consumers faster and more widely.

Internet advertising, also known as online advertising, involves many media that can be used for digital advertising. Even digital advertising tends to be cheaper and only requires an internet or social media account. Consumers can directly enquire about the products they want through the internet. Effective digital advertising is advertising that considers and understands customer needs, conveys specific benefits, and emphasizes

actions that customers should take (Thariq & Efawati, 2024). Good digital advertising also understands that people do not buy products, but buy the benefits of those products. More than that, effective digital advertising is advertising that gets noticed and remembered and makes people interested in buying the product (Darmawati *et al.*, 2025).

Research by (Akhyar, 2023) found that digital advertising strongly influences consumer purchasing behaviour. Factors such as the visual excellence of the advertisement, the appropriateness of the content, and social media interaction play an important role in determining the consumer's decision to buy something.

## **E-Commerce**

All forms of trade transactions of goods and services through electronic media are called e-commerce. E-commerce trading activities are only connected through one public network, the internet. The rapid development of information technology, especially the internet, contributes to the growth of e-commerce in Indonesia. In e-commerce, businesses or groups can market and communicate their goods or services around the world without being limited by regional boundaries. Without meeting, the existence of e-commerce can directly form a virtual world market. In the e-commerce era, to market products, one of the main things is information (Alwendi, 2020).

The arrival of e-commerce is the answer to the modern lifestyle of humans who demand convenience and speed in the field, so it can be concluded that e-commerce is a transaction process without a meeting between sellers and buyers within regional boundaries but carried out online. One of the important things to know when using e-commerce to market products is information. The results of research from (Homepage, 2025) show that e-commerce has not only changed the way transactions are carried out, but has also changed the way businesses interact with consumers.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

In researching Consumer Anxiety Management Strategies on Purchasing Decisions Against the Impact of Digital Advertising in the E-Commerce Era. This research uses a qualitative research method with a grounded theory approach because researchers not only want to describe existing strategies, but also want to identify factors that influence anxiety, how consumers manage anxiety, and how these strategies ultimately influence purchasing decisions. Libarkin et al in Fitrah (2017) define qualitative research methods as research procedures that use descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and actors that can be observed.

The location of this research was conducted in Medan City. This research was conducted from October 2024 to May 2025, with a period of eight months until the researchers obtained saturated data. In this study, researchers conducted focus group discussions and interviews directly with six informants using open-ended and structured questions to get some views from informants (Creswell, 2018: 254). The information provided by informants is then collected. The information is usually in the form of words or text. The data in the form of words or text is then analyzed. The results of the analysis can be in the form of a depiction or description, which will then be explained in the research results.

The research subjects were selected based on the required informant criteria using purposive sampling, namely, informants were selected based on predetermined criteria. The characteristics of the informants chosen by the researcher are informants who actively use digital media (for example Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, e-commerce

applications) that contain advertisements or promotions, informants who have shopped on E-Commerce Platforms such as Shopee, TikTok Shop, Lazada, Tokopedia, etc., informants have made purchases more than three times in the past three months. Informants who have experienced confusion or anxiety in decision making, totaling 6 informants. This research uses data collection techniques in the form of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. One of the main weaknesses in qualitative research is researcher bias. In this study, researchers used triangulation of data sources from as many as one person to get a broader perspective.

## **RESEARCH RESULTS**

### **Forms of Anxiety Felt by Consumers**

The form of anxiety felt by consumers towards the impact of digital advertising is the emergence of excessive fear of running out of products offered by sellers in digital advertising, with the pressure of time limits set by advertisers, for example, irrational promo times because the promo time given is quite short, and product stock is limited. Informants also said that they often feel worried that if the products offered in digital advertisements are not purchased immediately, they will feel tremendous regret later because they did not make a purchase decision immediately. In addition, informants also feel tremendous confusion in choosing and determining which product to buy because they are influenced by the large selection of varied products at competitive prices offered by advertisers with a variety of persuasive messages that urge informants to make purchasing decisions immediately, for example the appearance of the words 'must have' and the words 'only 1 minute discount' which make informants experience feelings of panic, fear of missing out, and feel guilty if they miss the opportunity. Even though at that time, the informant was still not sure about the authenticity of the product and quality of the product offered, whether or not it was in accordance with the informant's needs, and the suitability of the advertising message. Informants said there was a feeling of fear of being wrong in choosing and buying the products offered, but they were continuously urged by advertisers to make a purchase decision immediately, which made informants feel uncomfortable. This is because consumers are concerned about the authenticity of the product and its conformity to expectations if the information provided in the advert is incomplete or unrealistic.

### **Causes of Anxiety in Digital Advertising**

Digital advertising elements such as countdown timers, for example, the appearance of the sentence from the advertiser, 'we count down together 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 time is up' often makes informants feel tremendous fear because they have lost the opportunity to buy the product. In addition, the existence of promos in the form of flash sales by providing limited time and product stock often increases informants' emotional distress, such as feelings of confusion, fear, and panic. For example, when the informant saw a notification that read 'three products left', the informant felt panicked and rushed to make a decision immediately. In addition, notifications about the number of product sales that have been purchased by other consumers also often cause anxiety in informants, for example a thousand people have checked out and successfully made payments, which makes informants feel guilty and regret if they do not decide to buy the same product. In addition, the influence of celebrity reviews is also a cause of anxiety in digital advertising. Informants feel afraid of missing out on trends if they do not buy the same product as



their idols and feel the need to buy the product immediately so as not to feel socially left behind.

### **Anxiety Management**

1. **Informants Actively Seek Additional Information to Reduce Uncertainty and Risk**  
As a way to reduce uncertainty, informants actively seek reviews related to product quality and compare prices from various digital media such as Google, e-commerce, and discuss with trusted friends or closest family who have purchased the same product by sending product information to family groups or via WhatsApp to get opinions and support, before making a purchase decision. In addition, informants also watch various testimonial videos and product unboxing videos on YouTube and e-commerce sites to ensure that the products they will buy are of the quality, price suitability and suitability of the advertising messages offered by advertisers. In addition, informants also ventured to contact the seller through the comments or chat column to ask questions related to the product information offered to prevent mistakes in choosing products and reduce anxiety before deciding on a purchase.
2. **Delaying Purchases by Creating Time-Lagging Tactics**  
Some informants avoid stress, fear, and anxiety by delaying the immediate purchase of products. Informants said they would put the product in their basket and wait for a day to check if the product was really what they needed and at the price offered by the advertiser.
3. **Limiting Exposure to Advertisements**  
Some informants said they always limit their use of social media to avoid constant exposure to advertisements that can cause anxiety. Informants only spend a maximum of one to two hours using their social media, especially e-commerce, to avoid excessive exposure.

### **DISCUSSION**

Consumers experience various types of anxiety due to exposure to digital advertising. Not only functional issues, such as uncertainty of product quality, but also emotional issues, which are influenced by advertising stories, digital social pressure, and limited time. Even before customers have enough time to consider their needs, words such as "1-minute-only discount" or "must have" trigger panic buying. This condition is in accordance with the idea of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) developed by Przybylski, which states that FOMO gives rise to a great desire to stay connected to other people's social media activities (Marsya *et al.*, 2022). When a person believes that others have had a better, more satisfying, or more profitable experience than they have, and wants to continue to follow the behaviour of others. Consumers in this situation may experience FOMO when they see limited offers, flash promotions, or notifications that thousands of people have bought something. This creates an emotional urge felt by the consumer to act immediately in making a purchase decision, which then causes anxiety if the decision is not made immediately.

In today's e-commerce era, digital advertising has also evolved into a highly active, complex, and emotional persuasion tool. Digital advertising is no longer just a passive promotional medium. There are now countless ways to make customers feel the urgency to make an immediate purchase decision on a product, such as countdown timers, striking colour designs (such as red on discounts), limited stock symbols, or sound effects in direct

sales, such as a salesperson's urgent shout or a strong voice spoken many times. This urgency is certainly likely to grab consumers' attention and affect customers' mental health, causing stress, tension, and even decision uncertainty. When customers see adverts with messages such as 'only 1 minute left!' or 'only 2 in stock, hurry up and check out!', the limbic system, the part of the brain that regulates emotions and reactions to threats, is activated. Advertisements are perceived as time and social pressures instead of product information. This drives the decision-making process from rational (cognitive) to emotional (affective), where logic is often abandoned in response to time pressure and fear of missing out (fear of missing out or FOMO).

The Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT) by Berger and Calabrese (1975) states that people naturally seek to reduce uncertainty in social interactions or in ambiguous situations. This emotional tension is highly relevant to this theory. Consumers face many uncertainties in digital advertising such as cognitive uncertainty, such as uncertainty about whether the product they are about to buy is in line with consumer expectations or not, affective uncertainty, such as feeling fear, confusion, or overwhelming panic due to the amount of time spent considering the quality and benefits of the product, behavioural uncertainty, such as not knowing whether to wait or buy the product right then or later. This condition will certainly make customers always be in a cognitive and emotional dilemma where one party feels compelled to buy immediately for fear of losing something, and the other party still doubts whether the decision is correct. This internal conflict causes constant anxiety, which can sour their online shopping experience. Consumers do not have enough time or space to conduct a mature evaluation (analytical mind). Quick and impulsive emotional impulses inhibit systematic and logical thought processes.

According to Daniel Kahneman (2022), there are two systems that drive human thinking, namely, first, the fast or intuitive thinking system. Kahneman explains that intuitive thinking systems are fast, instantaneous, automatic, intuition-dependent, and emotion-led. By utilizing a large store of learnt cues and signals, this system assists consumers in making everyday decisions and reactions to immediate threats. However, it is prone to errors and biases, making it difficult to rely on during the decision-making process. Second, the slow or deliberative thinking system. Kahneman explains that the deliberative mode of thinking is slower, more conscious, more logical, and more critical. Daniel Kahneman emphasizes that this system is activated when we need to focus on things that require attention, such as critical reasoning or complex calculations. Deliberative systems require more energy and are often slower than intuitive systems. Intuitive systems usually result in faster systems unless specifically accelerated. The more analytical and reflective mode of deliberative thinking requires more effort, but can help us make critical and logical decisions in both our personal and professional lives. Intuitive thinking and deliberative thinking are the so-called ways of thinking that make consumers' purchase decisions when their emotions are suppressed.

Social media and e-commerce platforms are also responsible for increasing consumer emotional distress by displaying social metrics such as "10,000 people have bought, the product went viral on TikTok, the product is being used by artists A and B". According to these metrics, there is social conformity pressure where customers believe that they should make decisions that go with the flow of the majority. Psychologically, this phenomenon is in line with the bandwagon effect, which is the tendency to do what many people are doing without considering their reasons. The bandwagon effect is when most people do or believe something because most people do it. According to Roger Fisk, this common belief, although not always true, serves to make people believe (Reski Tama, 2024).

In addition, the platform's algorithm is crucial to shaping the repeated exposure to these digital ads. The algorithm will always present similar adverts every time people click on a product. Anticipatory anxiety, where a person feels uneasy just because they are faced with an unfinished choice, can be caused by this overexposure. If these repetitive online adverts are not managed well, they can cause emotional strain, e.g., post-purchase anxiety, purchase impulses without rational awareness, digital burnout, and mental exhaustion caused by constant exposure to promotional content. Advertising has socially transformed from economic persuasion to a psychosocial pressure tool that capitalizes on individuals' emotional gaps. Therefore, consumers should realize that digital advertising not only "sells" product information but also controls their emotions.

Digital advertising involving visual and narrative elements is one of the main causes of customer anxiety. To change the perception of urgency and scarcity, digital marketing strategies such as countdown timer tools, stock scarcity claims, mass testimonials, and celebrity endorsements are used to encourage immediate consumer purchase decisions. Not only do consumers respond logically to information, but they also react to narratives of social exclusivity and time pressure. According to Charles Berger and Richard Calabrese, in uncertainty reduction theory (Azzahra & Yuliarti, 2024). When people are in situations with a lot of uncertainty, they tend to exhibit information-seeking behaviour to reduce uncertainty. However, in this case, the information provided by digital adverts adds to the ambiguity and makes consumers feel heavily. For example, while the notice '3 products left' seems to provide clarity, the advertiser also instills pressure on the customer that the opportunity will soon be gone. Information such as '1000 people have already checked out' increases the pressure and raises doubts, such as 'will I regret it if I don't buy?' Here, reactions to adverts and social comparisons in the digital world cause anxiety. Consumers believe that they must act immediately to avoid being socially left behind, in addition to missing out on the product.

Aggressive and stressful digital advertising has shown that customers are not always passive when experiencing ad-induced anxiety. Instead, they develop systematic and conscious anxiety management strategies. These strategies include active strategies, interactive strategies, and passive strategies. Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT), coined by Berger and Calabrese, refers to this classification. Uncertainty reduction theory explains how people strategically reduce uncertainty in ambiguous communications or situations.

According to Charles Berger and Richard Calabrese (Azzahra & Yuliarti, 2024) there are three ways a person can help reduce uncertainty. The first strategy is a passive strategy with efforts to seek information secretly, where the target is observed without realizing it. To reduce fear and anxiety before deciding to buy a product, informants seek product information by looking for reviews related to the quality and quality of the products contained in digital advertisements and comparing them with the quality of other products. In addition, price comparisons for the same type of product offered by each seller on different e-commerce platforms are also the target of informants in seeking information as an effort to reduce uncertainty and manage anxiety. Each e-commerce platform offers strong price competition that influences informants' purchasing decisions.

In addition, to find information passively, informants also search for information through Google, watch unboxing videos on social media such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram and e-commerce platforms such as Shopee, TikTok Shop and Tokopedia to read some honest reviews or complete positive or negative comments given by other consumers who have already bought the same product so that informants feel that they have not made a mistake in choosing and buying products offered by advertisers so that

informants can feel calm and reduce their uncertainty and anxiety before deciding to buy a product.

Emotion management is more important than just gathering information. By delaying the decision, customers avoid FOMO, fear, or impulsive pressure caused by marketing strategies. This allows them to have time to think rationally and take the time to think further. Passive strategies for URT are used by observing silently and waiting for additional information to emerge naturally without direct intervention. This suggests that some consumers recognize the importance of digital attention management, a type of digital literacy designed to reduce mental fatigue caused by dense and manipulative information flow. In addition, time pause tactics, also known as time lag tactics, give consumers the opportunity to consider the relevance of the product to their own needs rather than relying solely on external prompts. This strategy is crucial to avoiding purchase regret, which occurs when people buy something impulsively.

The second strategy is called an active strategy, by asking and involving third parties or trusted close people to get information about the target being observed. Informants seek information about products by asking and sending information and product photos to close friends who can be trusted and family who have bought the same product through a WhatsApp group chat to get certainty, confidence, and support before deciding to buy products offered by advertisers. Informants felt that support and validation from family and close friends helped informants in reducing uncertainty and managing anxiety because family and friends are the closest environment that can provide positive input regarding decision making.

This method demonstrates consumers' ability for digital literacy, where they not only accept information from advertisements, but also critically assess the source of the information and the reputation of the seller. This strategy demonstrates a type of digital autonomy where consumers use technology for consumption and protect themselves from advertising manipulation. According to URT, this active strategy is used when people face cognitive uncertainty, such as the quality of goods or the accuracy of advertisements, and seek to obtain as much information as possible from multiple sources to build their own beliefs and convictions. One way to protect oneself from digital advertising pressure is to use data-driven decision-making rather than emotions.

The third strategy is called an interactive strategy by asking directly to the source of information/target. However, this strategy can make a person feel embarrassed or uncomfortable because it requires them to open up about their uncertainty. Informants utilize the comment and chat features to contact advertisers and ask clear questions regarding product information and the quality of the products offered, although sometimes advertisers are not quick to respond to questions regarding product information and specifications. However, informants felt that asking directly to advertisers could help informants get information and make purchasing decisions with the short time given by advertisers in flash sales.

In this strategy, consumers actively participate in the marketing communication process. Consumers are not just objects of persuasion; they also participate in the conversation and take over control to reduce emotional tension and clarify ambiguity. The most direct form of reducing uncertainty in URT is the interactive strategy, which involves an individual's interaction with a key source of information, such as a brand or seller. These strategies also show that today's consumers are bolder and more aware of their rights as buyers, and they tend to be more skeptical of one-way advertising. Interactions like these not only make you feel better emotionally but also help you feel more confident and in control of your own purchasing decisions, both of which are very important in stressful situations.

In addition, the tension between emotionality and rationality is also seen when someone decides to buy something. On the other hand, customers prefer to make logical decisions that are based on information and comparison. In contrast, emotional pressures caused by digital advertising, such as time demands, scarcity, and social pressure, often take over their cognition. As a result, people experience psychological ambivalence, which consists of the fear of making the wrong decision as well as the fear of missing out on opportunities. This suggests that economic logic and the way consumers interact also influence e-commerce decisions.

## CONCLUSIONS

In today's e-commerce era, digital advertising can create anxiety for customers, especially through marketing approaches that emphasize urgency, scarcity, and social pressure. Fear of running out of products, confusion in choosing, and FOMO are some of the types of anxiety felt. Consumers use active (seeking additional information), interactive (talking directly to sellers), and passive (delaying purchases and reducing exposure to adverts) strategies. The results suggest that emotional control and awareness are critical in the purchase decision-making process in the onslaught of digital advertising. Consumer anxiety when making purchase decisions is not only due to individual choices, but also due to responses to digital architectures designed to trigger quick action. Amidst the increasing pressure from e-commerce systems, consumer management strategies show the important role of cognitive and social skills to maintain control over consumptive decisions. Further research is recommended to look at how digital advertising causes anxiety to consumers' mental health and well-being in the long run.

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