

Mobile Shopping Festivals and Temporal Scarcity: Evidence from China's Singles' Day and Korea's Chuseok

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the impact of temporal scarcity (TS) on mobile purchase intention (MPI) in the context of Asia's biggest shopping festivals, China's Singles' Day and Korea's Chuseok sales. Based on the principles of scarcity and the stimulus–organism–response (SOR) model, this study explores the mediating effects of perceived urgency (PU) and fear of missing out (FoMO). Data of 600 mobile consumers (300 consumers in each country) were analyzed using PLS-SEM and Multi-Group Analysis (MGA). Results show that TS has a positive influence on stimulating both urgency and FoMO, which in turn drive mobile purchase intention. Indirect effects are larger compared to the direct scarcity effect, illustrating the psychological processes at play. Cross-cultural comparisons indicate that time sensitivity is more important for Korean consumers, whereas FoMO is more important for Chinese consumers. The results hold theoretical and practical implications for targeted mobile marketing strategies by region in Asia's online shopping industry.

Keywords: Temporal scarcity, cross-cultural marketing, mobile commerce, perceived urgency, fear of missing out (fomo), cultural moderation, mobile shopping festivals, consumer purchase intention, singles' day, chuseok.

INTRODUCTION:

Over the past several years, mobile commerce has transformed how consumers shop, especially during time-sensitive retail sales promotions called shopping festivals. With the advent of mobile apps and AI-powered interfaces, companies now design interactive, time-sensitive campaigns to elicit instant consumer response. Nowhere is this more evident than in Asia, where mobile-first economies like China and South Korea have culturally cultivated mega-sales events like Singles' Day and Chuseok sales, respectively. These mobile shopping festivals are not merely transactional; they are a synthesis of tradition, culture and digital immediacy, reshaping how consumers make choices under circumstances of TS.

One of the most salient strategies used in these festivals is the use of TS cues, communication indicating limited-time offer on products or promotions. Scarcity theory (Cialdini, 2001) posits that perceived scarcity enhances the psychological value of a product and consequently, the urge to act. Whereas scarcity has been studied online in the literature (Aggarwal, Jun, & Huh, 2011), its psychological effect in real-time mobile shopping contexts and more particularly, in the case of culture-significant shopping festivals, is not well understood.

Psychological concepts are at the core of explaining how TS works: FoMO and PU. Urgency is the psychological pressure to respond with haste to time-restricted opportunities (Inman, Peter, & Raghubir, 1997), whereas FoMO is an affective reaction related to the

FoMO out on rewarding experiences that others are having (Przybylski et al., 2013). These kinds of responses are especially potent in mobile commerce, where real-time notifications and social sharing enhance decision velocity and social comparison.

In spite of the applicability of these constructs, no research has synthesized them within one framework to account for purchase intention in mobile shopping festivals. In addition, cultural context could influence consumers' interpretation of scarcity cues. For instance, South Korean consumers with their uncertainty avoidance might be more time-pressure sensitive and Chinese consumers with their collectivistic and longer-term orientation might be more susceptible to socially induced FoMO (Hofstede, 2001; Rossi, 2018). Understanding these nuances is critical as marketers increasingly tailor mobile campaigns to culturally diverse audiences.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Mobile shopping festivals in Asia

Mobile shopping festivals are now retail forces to be reckoned with throughout Asia, led by e-commerce giants like Alibaba, Coupang and Naver. China's Singles' Day and Korea's Chuseok-themed promotions are prime examples of how mobile-first shopping events co-opt seasonality to generate epic traffic and sales (Li et al., 2022; Sebata & Mollah, 2022; Chen & Li). This rise in shopping festivals that are mobile-first is both commercial and behavioral. Research indicates that these festivals trigger peer effects, herd behavior and

emotion-based consumption at large scales, particularly for Double 11 (Wang, 2024, Woo et al., 2023). Moreover, cultural contexts and promotional timing influence behavioral outcomes during seasonal shopping events (Emiliya & Swetha, 2024). App-exclusive offers, limited-time promotions and flash sales typically turn what used to be conventional cultural celebrations into commercial events of heightened fervor (Zhang & Kim, 2022; Zhao & Wan, 2017).

Their popularity is being enhanced by gamified interfaces, influencer promotion and social media sharing features that heighten consumer engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2021; Hughes et al., 2019). We suggest that mobile shopping festivals also leverage consumers' emotional drivers like social competition, bargain-hunting behavior and the need for cultural or collective consumption (Van Winkle et al., 2016; Xu et al., 2017).

2.2. Temporal scarcity (TS) and consumer reactions

TS is the perception that a product or offer exists only for a limited duration. Scarcity theory argues that these time constraints increase perceived value and psychological urgency and change consumer behavior (Cialdini, 2001; Hmurovic, 2023). In mobile shopping festivals, limited-time promotions and countdown timers can heighten cognitive tension, generating PU, a state in which shoppers are compelled to respond swiftly or risk missing out (Aggarwal, Jun, & Huh, 2011; Inman, Peter, & Raghubir, 1997). Scarcity signals can also provoke FoMO, an affect-based reaction linked to expected regret or social ostracism (Przybylski et al., 2013).

In mobile commerce settings, TS is usually operationalized by countdown timers, one-day flash sales, or one-day-only promotions. Such cues are highly salient in mobile settings where convenience and immediacy matter most to the user experience (Marjerison, 2022). Moreover, consumers in high-context cultures such as Korea and China would be most likely to be highly vulnerable to such manipulations because of collectivist tendencies and social norm sensitivity (Hofstede, 2001).

1. H1: Temporal scarcity positively influences mobile purchase intention.
2. H2: Temporal scarcity positively influences perceived urgency.
3. H3: Temporal scarcity positively influences fear of missing out.

Perceived urgency (PU) and fear of missing out (FoMO)
PU is the psychological tension that consumers experience when they believe something is a time-limited opportunity. It is commonly elicited in marketing using time-limited promotions and is strongly associated with impulsive and emotionally driven purchasing (Inman et al., 1997; Sun et al., 2023). Research indicates that PU is a mediator of the effect of TS on consumer buying behavior, especially in the instance of promotional activities (Soomro & Habeeb, 2025).

FoMO, or fear of missing out, is also a significant driver of festival online shopping. FoMO can be defined as a prevalent fear that others are having worthwhile experiences without you (Przybylski et al., 2013; Modzelewski, 2020; Hodkinson, 2019). Social proof and real-time notification capabilities of mobile devices enhance it. For online shopping festivals, FoMO can result in spontaneous decisions and overconsumption when shoppers see others availing themselves of limited-time deals (Celik et al., 2019).

PU influences buying behavior by triggering goal-directed behavior in time-scarcity situations. Consumers are less inclined to indulge in elaborate thinking and more inclined to generate speedy choices to evade loss when there is high urgency (Ali et al., 2025). In the same manner, FoMO has the potential to heighten impulsiveness and buying intentions, particularly under mobile conditions where offers appear to be socially contagious or limited (Celik et al., 2019).

1. H4: Perceived urgency positively influences mobile purchase intention.
2. H5: Fear of missing out positively influences mobile purchase intention.

2.4. Mediating effects of psychological mechanisms

Evidence substantiates that the influence of external stimuli such as scarcity is indirect and works through internal psychological states (Zhao, Lynch, & Chen, 2010). Consistent with this view, both urgency and FoMO should act as mediators of the relationship between TS and behavioral outcomes.

- H6: Perceived urgency mediates the relationship between temporal scarcity and mobile purchase intention.
- H7: Fear of missing out mediates the relationship between temporal scarcity and mobile purchase intention.

2.5. Cultural moderators: China vs. Korea

Cultural background is also likely to moderate how consumers are going to perceive and respond to marketing stimuli. Based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Korean consumers, with their high uncertainty avoidance, are more likely to respond to urgency cues. Chinese consumers, with the prevalence of collectivism and high power distance, on the other hand, are likely to be influenced by FoMO, since the latter leverages social comparison and conformity (Hofstede, 2001; Rossi 2018).

- H8a: The effect of temporal scarcity on perceived urgency is stronger for Korean consumers than for Chinese consumers.
- H8b: The effect of temporal scarcity on fear of missing out is stronger for Chinese consumers than for Korean consumers.
- H9a: The effect of perceived urgency on mobile purchase intention is stronger for Korean consumers.

- H9b: The effect of FoMO on mobile purchase intention is stronger for Chinese consumers.

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design

This research takes a quantitative, cross-sectional research approach in investigating the way time scarcity affects mobile purchase intention, with PU and FoMO as mediating variables and cultural context (China vs. Korea) as moderating variable. The research protocol is based on the stimulus–organism–response (SOR) model, which suggests that stimuli from the external environment (e.g., signals of scarcity) activate internal psychological states (e.g., perceptions of urgency and FoMO), which in turn influence behavior (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974).

China and South Korea were chosen as selection groups intentionally because both nations have excellent mobile commerce penetration and active participation in culturally ingrained shopping celebrations, China's Singles' Day (November 11th) and Korea's Chuseok sales (September). Both offer a fine setting for someone to examine the real-time impact of digital scarcity on consumer behavior.

The research uses PLS-SEM to test mediation and moderation effects and to assess the suggested model. It is a highly appropriate method for exploratory and predictive research with intricate models and latent constructs (Hair et al., 2022). Furthermore, MGA was used to examine if the path coefficients significantly vary between the two cultural groups.

3.2. Research model

The theoretical background of the study is based on the scarcity theory and stimulus–organism–response (SOR) paradigm. The model aims to investigate the psychological process through which TS affects MPI in the context of mobile shopping festivals, with particular

emphasis on the mediating effects of PU and FoMO and the moderating effect of culture (China vs. Korea) (see Figure 1).

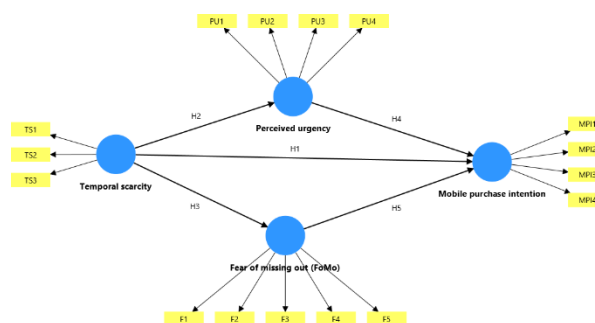


Figure 1. Conceptual model

3.3. Measurement instruments

All the constructs were measured with tested scales, modified to fit the scenario of mobile shopping festivals. All the items used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

- Temporal Scarcity (TS): On a 3-item scale adapted from Aggarwal et al. (2011), it assesses perceived time restriction of offers during the festival.
- Perceived Urgency (PU): 4-item Inman et al. (1997) scale, assessing psychological pressure to respond with speed.
- Fear of Missing Out (FoMO): Measured through a 5-item scale developed by Przybylski et al. (2013), with a focus on consumer FoMO on special offers.
- Mobile Purchase Intention (MPI): It was measured using 4 items adapted from Dehghani and Tumer (2015) to understand the consumer's purchase intention through mobile apps while shopping during the festivals.

RESULTS

4.1. Indicator reliability: factor loadings

To assess indicator reliability, we looked at standardized factor loadings of each item in the measurement model. Item loadings need to be above 0.70, as proposed by Hair et al. (2022), implying more than 50% of the variance in each item is explained by its underlying latent construct. Loadings between 0.60 and 0.70 can be accepted if composite reliability and AVE thresholds are met.

As shown in Table 1, all of the items had large factor loadings ranging from 0.832 to 0.897, which were all statistically significant at $p < .001$. These findings attest that every observed item significantly loads on its construct.

Table 1. Factor loadings.

Construct	Item	Loading	Construct	Item	Loading
Temporal Scarcity	TS1	0.867	Perceived Urgency	PU1	0.881
	TS2	0.873		PU2	0.876
	TS3	0.897		PU3	0.861
				PU4	0.886
Fear of Missing Out	F1	0.859	Mobile Purchase Intention	MPI1	0.832

	F2	0.863		MPI2	0.841
	F3	0.872		MPI3	0.879
	F4	0.856		MPI4	0.865
	F5	0.865			

4.2. Measurement model assessment

To assess the measurement model's quality, the study considered internal consistency reliability, convergent validity and construct reliability.

Table 2. Measurement model's quality.

Construct	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Temporal Scarcity	0.87	0.91	0.76
Perceived Urgency	0.89	0.92	0.74
Fear of Missing Out	0.91	0.93	0.78
Mobile Purchase Intention	0.86	0.90	0.73

As shown in Table 2, all the constructs showed excellent internal consistency. The Cronbach's alpha (α) values were between 0.86 and 0.91, higher than the commonly accepted figure of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). The high values indicated that the items under each construct were strongly correlated with one another and measured the same thing consistently. For composite reliability (CR), the ranges were from 0.90 to 0.93, once more well above the recommended minimum of 0.70. This confirms that all constructs meet the criterion of internal consistency beyond the traditional alpha measure. Convergent validity was confirmed by checking the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). All the AVE values were above the 0.50 level suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981), which suggests that most of the variance for every construct came from its indicators and not from error. Collectively, these findings provide solid evidence for the fit of the measurement model, indicating that the constructs employed in the structural model are valid and reliable.

4.3. Structural model assessment

As revealed in Table 3, all the direct hypotheses within the structural model were confirmed. The path TS to PU ($\beta = 0.280$, $p < .001$) was significant and it indicates that shoppers who view promotions as limited in time perceive greater urgency, as anticipated by scarcity-evoked consumer psychology (Aggarwal et al., 2011; Inman et al., 1997).

Likewise, TS had a strong positive influence on FoMO ($\beta = 0.248$, $p < .001$), demonstrating that limited-time promotion contexts activate FoMO on bargains, a result consistent with more recent work on digital shopping catalysts (Celik et al., 2019).

Both mediators, PU ($\beta = 0.463$, $p < .001$) and FoMO ($\beta = 0.367$, $p < .001$), exerted significant and strong influences on Mobile Purchase Intention, confirming their essential functions in the behavior decision-making process in the mobile shopping festival context.

While TS had a direct influence on Purchase Intention ($\beta = 0.091$, $p = .014$), the effect size was minimal. This indicates that part of the influence of scarcity is mediated through urgency and FoMO as laid out in the hypothesized mediation model.

Table 3. Direct Effects

Path	Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	Result
TS $\rightarrow$ PU	0.280	7.188	0.000	Supported
TS $\rightarrow$ FoMO	0.248	6.369	0.000	Supported
PU $\rightarrow$ Mobile Purchase Intention	0.463	15.215	0.000	Supported
FoMO $\rightarrow$ Mobile Purchase Intention	0.367	10.917	0.000	Supported
TS $\rightarrow$ MPI (Direct)	0.091	2.453	0.014	Significant but modest

4.4. Mediation analysis

Table 4 displays the outcome of the mediation test conducted to see if PU and FoMO are psychological processes mediating TS and MPI.

The indirect influence of TS → PU → MPI was large ($\beta = 0.130$, $t = 6.185$, $p < .001$), whereby TS enhances urgency, which results in higher purchase intention. This pathway is consistent with previous studies on time-limited marketing and psychological tension research, whereby urgency compels consumers to make faster decisions (Cialdini, 2001; Inman et al., 1997).

In the same vein, the route TS → FoMO → MPI also emerged as significant ($\beta = 0.091$, $t = 5.570$, $p < .001$), corroborating the view that shoppers who are facing TS are likely to suffer from a FoMO that results in affective or impulsive buying (Przybylski et al., 2013; Celik et al., 2019).

Table 4. Mediation Analysis

Indirect Path	Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	Result
TS → PU → MPI	0.130	6.185	0.000	Supported
TS → FoMO → MPI	0.091	5.570	0.000	Supported

4.5. Multi-group analysis (MGA)

In order to test if consumer responses to TS differ across different cultural backgrounds, a permutation-based MGA was conducted between China (Singles' Day) and Korea (Chuseok) (Henseler et al., 2009). The test was used to examine if the structural path coefficients significantly differ between these two samples (see Table 5).

Table 5. Multi-Group analysis results (China vs. Korea)

Path	β (China)	β (Korea)	$\Delta\beta$ (KOR–CHN)	p-value (MGA)	Significant
TS → PU	0.240	0.422	+0.182	0.007	Yes
TS → FoMO	0.210	0.284	+0.074	0.182	No
PU → MPI	0.361	0.439	+0.078	0.093	Directional
FoMO → MPI	0.391	0.303	−0.088	0.095	Directional
TS → MPI (Direct)	0.048	0.131	+0.083	0.131	No
TS → PU → MPI (Indirect)	0.087	0.185	+0.099	0.007	Yes
TS → FoMO → MPI (Indirect)	0.082	0.086	+0.004	0.455	No
R ² (PU)	0.057	0.178	+0.121	0.002	Yes
R ² (MPI)	0.318	0.433	+0.115	0.036	Yes

The MGA findings reveal significant cultural variations in the impact of TS on the psychological and behavioral reactions of consumers.

TS → PU relationship was more intense in Korea ($\beta = 0.422$) compared to China ($\beta = 0.240$), where p-value 0.007 shows that there is a statistically significant difference. It implies that Korean consumers respond more intensely to time-based promotional pressure because of cultural inclinations toward greater uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 2001).

The indirect route TS → PU → MPI was also stronger in Korea ($\beta = 0.185$ vs. 0.087, $p = 0.007$), which further corroborates the hypothesis that urgency plays a stronger mediating role in the effect of TS for Korean consumers.

TS → FoMO and TS → MPI pathways were not found to significantly differ across cultures, indicating that FoMO is triggered by scarcity to an equal extent in China and Korea but was found to be slightly more influential among Chinese consumers on purchase behavior.

PU → MPI and FoMO → MPI paths showed moderate differences ($p \approx 0.093$ –0.095), not traditionally significant but indicating directional cultural trends: FoMO is more prevalent in China, whereas urgency is more prevalent in Korea.

Last but not least, explained variance (R^2) was higher in Korea for both PU (0.178 versus 0.057) and MPI (0.433 versus 0.318), attesting that the model fits Korean consumers more when urgency is the prevailing mediator.

DISCUSSION

5.1. Overview of key findings

This research examined the psychological processes by which TS affects mobile purchasing intention in culturally embedded shopping festivals, China's Singles' Day and South Korea's Chuseok sales. Using a multi-group PLS-SEM method, we uncovered two essential mediators: PU and FoMO. The study offers strong empirical validation of the theoretical model and both mediators significantly connected TS to purchasing intention.

The structural model indicated that TS has positive effects on urgency ($\beta = 0.280$) and FoMO ($\beta = 0.248$), which both exert strong effects on MPI (PU $\rightarrow$ MPI: $\beta = 0.463$; FoMO $\rightarrow$ MPI: $\beta = 0.367$). Moreover, both indirect pathways, TS $\rightarrow$ PU $\rightarrow$ MPI and TS $\rightarrow$ FoMO $\rightarrow$ MPI, were significant, indicating partial mediation. These results highlight the roles of both cognitive (urgency) and emotional (FoMO) reactions in accounting for consumer behavior under time pressure.

5.2. Theoretical contributions

This study contributes in the following ways to the literature on digital marketing and consumer psychology:

First, it extends scarcity theory (Cialdini, 2001; Aggarwal et al., 2011) into the context of mobile shopping festivals by incorporating two differentiated psychological mediators, urgency and FoMO. Whereas most prior studies have considered scarcity as a singular construct, our dual-path approach reveals that its influence is multifaceted.

Second, using partial least squares multi-group analysis (PLS-MGA), we add to the limited but increasing number of cross-cultural comparative studies on digital consumer behavior. Our results confirm that urgency is a stronger mediator for Korean consumers, whereas FoMO is more prominent for Chinese consumers, reflecting differences in uncertainty avoidance and collectivist orientation (Hofstede, 2001; Rossi, 2018).

Third, the research validates that TS has larger indirect effects than its direct impact on consumer purchase behavior ($\beta = 0.091$), which supports theoretical models like stimulus-organism-response (SOR) and dual-process models of persuasion (Zhao et al., 2010; Hair et al., 2019).

5.3. Cultural insights and interpretations

The MGA findings indicate that the TS $\rightarrow$ PU $\rightarrow$ MPI route is much stronger in Korea, which corroborates the observation that Korean consumers are extremely time-sensitive to stimuli, possibly because social culture in Korea emphasizes discipline and efficiency. Chinese consumers were more likely to experience FoMO, possibly because in China there is already a competitive and social comparative online shopping culture.

While the TS $\rightarrow$ FoMO trajectory did not differ greatly between groups, patterned dominance of mediators corroborates the contention that scarcity-based

persuasion is not always perceived and requires cultural adaptation in e-commerce strategy.

5.4. Integration with prior literature

These results are consistent with research demonstrating that time-limited promotions evoke emotional arousal capable of overwhelming deliberative decision-making (Celik et al., 2019; Ngo et al., 2025). They are also in line with the psychological significance of mobile environments, where the immediacy of interfaces and notification-induced urgency enhance scarcity effects (Hollebeek et al., 2021).

Notably, our findings indicate that one-size-fits-all promotion strategies would be inferior in both markets. Marketers ought to prioritize urgency mechanisms in high-uncertainty cultures such as Korea but implement social signals and exclusivity in collectivist cultures such as China.

CONCLUSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1. Conclusion

The present study explored the effects of TS on mobile buying intentions during China's Singles' Day and Korea's Chuseok shopping festivals. Based on scarcity theory and psychology, the study found PU and FoMO to be the principal mediators and made use of multi-group analysis to bring out cultural variation. The results revealed that time scarcity increases urgency and FoMO, with the latter augmenting mobile shopping intention, indirect effects proving to be larger compared to the direct one from scarcity. Urgency cues had a stronger influence on Korean consumers, whereas FoMO had an effect on Chinese consumers, highlighting the need for culturally-specific marketing strategies. In general terms, the results contribute to the theoretical development of digital consumer behavior when faced with scarcity by confirming the mediational roles for cognitive as well as affective factors.

6.2. Managerial implications

The research provides multiple actionable takeaways for e-commerce strategists and online marketers working in culturally disparate markets. Marketers must Customize scarcity cues by culture, amplifying time-based cues for Korean customers and highlighting social proof or "trending" signals for Chinese customers to evoke FoMO. Mobile app and website designers can incorporate micro-interactions, like countdowns or limited-time alerts, to increase felt scarcity and impulsive purchasing. Companies must segment customers by behavioral responsiveness to urgency or FoMO and customise promotions accordingly. Strategically ordering scarcity strategies, from preliminary FoMO-based previews to late urgency-based flash sales, can maintain momentum. Nevertheless, marketers must deploy scarcity responsibly, refraining from overuse that may bring about consumer fatigue or mistrust.

6.3. Limitations and future research directions

This work provides worthwhile observations on the psychological processes underlying mobile-commerce-

enabled TS but recognizes some drawbacks. The cross-sectional survey design only records consumer attitudes at one moment in time and does not allow for causal inference. Subsequent studies need to take up longitudinal designs to capture the dynamics by which urgency and FoMO develop during various shopping-festival phases. Further, given the work's specialize consideration of China's Singles' Day and Korea's Chuseok, the conclusions are not necessarily generalizable to other cultural or market settings. Comparative studies on various festivals and cultural backgrounds, individualistic versus collectivist societies, for example, are recommended for further cultural development of the effects of TS.

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