

Why Women Buy During Live Shopping? A Qualitative Study on Consumer Experience in Makassar City

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Abstract

The phenomenon of live shopping has grown rapidly in Indonesia, especially among women as the dominant consumer group. This study aims to explore women's experiences in shopping through live shopping on digital platforms managed by Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Makassar City. Using a phenomenological qualitative approach, this study involved 12 informants, comprising MSME owners and employees who actively managed live shopping sessions. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, hands-on observation, and documentation studies. Data analysis was carried out using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña thematic analysis model, which included data condensation, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The validity of the data is guaranteed through source triangulation and member checking. The results of the study revealed four main themes that drive women's purchasing decisions in live shopping, namely: (1) immersive interactive experiences create a sense of emotional involvement; (2) trust based on direct product demonstration; (3) psychological stress, time and stock limitations (fear of missing out / FOMO); and (4) community influence and social validation from fellow viewers. These findings contribute to the development of a theory of digital consumer behavior while providing practical implications for MSME marketing strategies in optimizing live shopping sessions oriented to the women's segment.

Keywords: Live Shopping, Female Consumer Behavior, MSMEs, FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), Digital Shopping Experience.

1. Introduction

The development of digital technology has fundamentally changed the trading landscape, giving rise to new business models that combine entertainment with commercial transactions in real-time. One of the most significant innovations in the e-commerce ecosystem is live shopping or live commerce, which is a sales format that allows sellers to demonstrate products directly through online video broadcasts while interacting with potential buyers simultaneously (Chen et al., 2022). This model has experienced exponential growth around the world, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic drove accelerated adoption of digital technology in various aspects of life, including shopping activities.

In Indonesia, the growth of live shopping is happening at a very fast pace. Based on data from the Indonesian E-Commerce Association and various industry reports, the value of live commerce transactions in Indonesia continues to increase from year to year, with platforms such as TikTok Shop, Shopee Live, and Instagram Live becoming the main arena for live-based digital commerce (Firmansyah & Prihatini, 2023). Demographically interesting is the fact that women dominate this activity as both sellers and buyers. This phenomenon not only



reflects changes in consumption behavior but also marks a paradigm shift in the way women access, evaluate, and make product purchase decisions.

The city of Makassar, as an economic and trade center in the Eastern Indonesia Region, is inseparable from the dynamics of this phenomenon. MSMEs in Makassar have massively adopted live shopping as their main marketing and sales channel. However, until now, there is still a limited understanding of the dynamics of the experience of female consumers in the context of live shopping managed by local MSMEs, especially from the perspective of managers or sellers who interact directly with these consumers.

Empirically, several previous studies have examined consumer behavior in the context of live commerce. Sun et al. (2022) found that interactivity features are a key factor that drives purchase intent in live streaming commerce. Wongkitrungrueng et al. (2023) identified the role of trust as a key mediator between the quality of interactions and purchasing decisions. Meanwhile, Zheng et al. (2023) show that the entertainment element in live shopping significantly affects consumer emotional engagement. However, such studies are generally conducted in the context of developed countries such as China, South Korea, and the United States, and tend to use survey-based quantitative approaches that are less able to capture the depth of consumers' subjective experiences.

There is a significant research gap in the existing literature. First, research that specifically examines the experience of female consumers in live shopping from the perspective of MSME managers in the context of Indonesia, especially the Eastern Indonesia region, is still very limited. Second, most of the existing studies use quantitative approaches that are not able to capture the nuances of consumers' lived experiences in depth. Third, the local dimension in the form of cultural characteristics, communication styles, and interaction patterns typical of Makassar has never been systematically analyzed in the live shopping literature. This indicates an urgent need for qualitative research that can fill these gaps.

The urgency of this research is increasingly prominent, considering that MSMEs are the backbone of the Indonesian economy, which absorbs more than 97% of the national workforce. The ability of MSMEs to adapt to live shopping trends and deeply understand the psychology of female consumers is a critical factor in the sustainability and growth of their business in the digital era. Without an adequate understanding of the motivations, barriers, and experiences of female consumers in live shopping, MSME marketing strategies will continue to run on a trial-and-error basis without a strong scientific foundation (Lim et al., 2022).

Based on the background and identification of the research gaps, this study aims to: (1) explore in depth the experience of female consumers in shopping through live shopping in MSMEs in Makassar City as observed and interpreted by MSME owners and employees; (2) identify key themes that explain women's motivation and purchasing drive in the context of local live shopping; and (3) formulate practical implications for the management and strategy of MSME live shopping that is more effective and centered on female consumers.

2. Literature Review

Live shopping, or live commerce, represents the latest development in the digital commerce ecosystem by combining online shopping activities with real-time interactions through live streaming. This model allows consumers to observe product demonstrations

directly, interact with sellers, and obtain immediate information before making purchasing decisions. From the perspective of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Theory, interactive features such as live communication, product visualization, and instant responses from hosts serve as stimuli that influence consumers' emotional and cognitive states, ultimately encouraging purchase intentions (Chen et al., 2022). Furthermore, Sun et al. (2022) found that the level of interactivity in live shopping is a critical factor in enhancing consumer engagement and purchase decisions.

Trust is a central element in the success of live shopping. Unlike conventional e-commerce, which relies primarily on product descriptions and customer reviews, live shopping enables consumers to evaluate products through real-time demonstrations, thereby reducing uncertainty in online transactions. According to the Commitment-Trust Theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), trust serves as the foundation for establishing long-term relationships between sellers and consumers. Wongkitrungrueng et al. (2023) found that the quality of interactions during live streaming significantly enhances consumer trust, which subsequently influences purchasing decisions. In addition, perceived authenticity of the host and transparency in presenting product information contribute substantially to building consumer confidence in the products being offered (Park et al., 2023).

Beyond interactivity and trust, purchasing decisions in live shopping are also influenced by psychological and social factors. The concept of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) suggests that consumers are more likely to make purchases when confronted with limited-time offers, scarcity of stock, or exclusive promotions that create a sense of urgency and fear of missing opportunities (Zheng et al., 2023). At the same time, community influence and social validation play significant roles in shaping consumer behavior. Positive comments, recommendations from fellow viewers, and visible indicators of high purchasing activity during live sessions can strengthen consumer confidence in the products being promoted (Wang et al., 2022). Therefore, purchasing behavior in live shopping can be understood as the result of a complex interaction among immersive experiences, trust formation, psychological pressure, and social influence, all of which collectively shape consumers' digital shopping experiences.

3. Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences of MSME owners and employees in managing live shopping activities and observing female consumer behavior. The research was conducted in Makassar, Indonesia, from October 2024 to March 2025. Informants were selected through purposive sampling based on their active involvement in managing live shopping sessions for at least six months. Data saturation was reached after interviewing 12 informants, consisting of seven MSME owners and five digital marketing employees (Guest et al., 2020).

Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, participatory observations of live shopping sessions, and documentation analysis. The data were analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020) thematic analysis model, including data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. To ensure the credibility of the findings, source triangulation and member checking were applied, allowing the researchers to verify interpretations and enhance the accuracy and trustworthiness of the results (Denzin, 2021).

4. Results and Discussion

The thematic data analysis process resulted in four main themes and twelve subthemes that comprehensively explain the experience of female consumers in live shopping as perceived and observed by the informants. The four themes are: (1) Immersive Interactive Experiences; (2) Direct Demonstration-Based Trust; (3) Psychological Pressure, Limitations, and FOMO; and (4) Community Influence and Social Validation. The following table 1 provides a summary of the themes, subthemes, and the frequency with which they appear in the data.

Table 1. Themes, Subthemes, and Frequency of Occurrence in Data

No.	Theme	Subtheme	f	Data Source	
1	Immersive Experiences	Interactive	Real-time interaction between host and audience	12	W, O, D
			Local language and cultural familiarity as emotional adhesives	11	W, O
			Visualization of three-dimensional products directly	10	W, O, D
2	Direct Trust	Demonstration-Based	Tangible evidence of the host's use of the product	12	W, O
			Transparency of product quality and authenticity	11	W, D
			Reviews and responses from other consumers are directly	9	W, O
3	Psychological Limitations, and FOMO	Pressure,	Flash sale and offer time countdown	12	W, O, D
			Limited stock as a trigger for purchase urgency	11	W, O
			Exclusive price for live sessions	10	W, D
4	Community Influence and Social Validation	and	Recommendations from fellow viewers in the comments section	11	W, O
			The bandwagon effect of the number of buyers seen	10	W, O
			Identity of the community of loyal buyers (repeat customers)	8	W, D

Description: W = Interview; O = Observation; D = Documentation; f = Frequency of appearance of 12 informants

Theme 1: Immersive Interactive Experiences

All informants in this study consistently emphasized that the factor that most distinguishes live shopping from conventional online shopping formats is the quality of direct and real-time interaction between hosts and female consumers. MSME owners observed that female consumers tended to be more responsive and stayed longer in live sessions when they felt personally recognized by the host. This interaction is not just transactional, but builds an experience that resembles shopping with a trusted friend.

This is reflected in the story of Informan 3, a fashion MSME owner who has been managing live shopping for two years: *"If we call their name one time live, or we answer the question directly in front of everyone, they are very happy. Mothers or mothers who just wanted*

to look around suddenly ordered. It feels like they need attention before they want to buy it." (Informant 3, Fashion MSME Owner, Interview, December 2024).

This dimension of interactivity is reinforced by the use of Makassar's local language, including vocabulary from the Bugis-Makassar language, which creates emotional closeness and a strong sense of community. Informant 7, an employee of the digital marketing department of a beauty MSME, explained that the switch from formal Indonesian to everyday language with a typical Makassar accent consistently increases the engagement of female audiences and extends their viewing duration.

Observations of ten live sessions managed by informants confirmed these findings. When the host used local greetings such as *"Iye, Kak, cantik ki itu bajunya di awak ta ta"* or inserted Makassar's culture-based humor, the number of active comments increased by an average of 43% compared to sessions that used fully formal Indonesian. In addition to the language aspect, the ability of live shopping to display products in three dimensions through live demonstrations was also identified as the main differentiator. Female consumers, according to the informants, rely heavily on the way products fall on the body, the texture of the material, or the accurate colors in different lighting, something they can't get from static photos in online catalogs.

Theme 2: Direct Demonstration-Based Trust

Consumer trust is the second theme that appears with high intensity in all research data. The informants identified trust not as an initial condition that pre-existed before the live session began, but as something that was actively and dynamically built up over the course of the broadcast. The most mentioned main mechanism of trust building is honest and transparent product demonstrations by the host.

Informant 1, an MSME owner who sells local skincare products, described his strategy: *"I always use the product myself when I live, show the texture, show if there are no defects, if there are shortcomings, I tell them directly. Precisely because I am honest, the female buyer believes it more. They say, 'We like it because you don't pretend.' Trust is the main capital, more important than price." (Informant 1, Skincare MSME Owner, Interview, November 2024).*

The second dimension of the trust theme is the role of spontaneous reviews from other consumers who watch the live session. The interviewees observed that when a viewer left a positive comment based on a previous purchase experience, it significantly influenced the decision of other viewers who were watching the session for the first time. This phenomenon creates a positive feedback loop where trust develops collectively and is social.

A documentation analysis of live session recordings revealed a consistent pattern: live sessions with high host openness, characterized by a willingness to point out imperfect product details, provide honest sizing guidance, or bluntly admit stock limitations, result in higher conversion rates (the number of viewers who end up buying) than sessions with overly perfect product presentations and excessive promotion. These findings show that female consumers have a keen inauthenticity detection ability in a live shopping environment.

Theme 3: Psychological Pressure, Limitations, and FOMO

The third theme that emerged predominantly was the psychological pressure mechanism created through the construction of scarcity and the urgency of time in live shopping sessions.

All 12 informants identified the implementation of flash sales with countdowns, limited stock announcements, and special prices that only apply during live sessions as the most effective strategies in driving purchase conversions among female consumers.

Informant 5, a marketing employee who manages live shopping for accessory MSMEs, described the behavior pattern he observed: *"There are moments in the live where we say 'only 5 stocks left' or 'this price is only until the 30-second countdown,' and it's like a signal for mothers to immediately type 'interest' in the comment column. Sometimes those who were scrolling while passing, as soon as they heard the 'flash sale', immediately focused on the screen. The fear of missing out is very real."* (Informant 5, Digital Marketing Employee, Interview, January 2025).

The informants emphasized that the effectiveness of this FOMO strategy is not universal, but rather depends heavily on the quality of trust that has been built beforehand. In the observation of live sessions managed by new sellers without a strong basis of trust, limited stock announcements tend to be ignored or even create suspicion among the audience. In contrast, for MSMEs with an established reputation, the same statement results in an almost instant purchase response. This indicates that FOMO serves as a decision accelerator, not as a stand-alone first trigger.

Further analysis uncovered an important nuance: female consumers who actively participated in live shopping sessions did not fully experience FOMO as an unpleasant stress. Several informants reported that for many of their loyal female consumers, the thrill of successfully getting a product in a flash sale became a satisfying and addictive experience, forming a pattern of regular participation in the next live session.

Theme 4: Community Influence and Social Validation

The fourth theme identified in this study highlights the social dimension inherent in women's live shopping experiences. In contrast to conventional online shopping that is private and individual, live shopping creates a shared social space where female consumers not only buy products but also participate in communities formed around specific brands or sellers.

Informant 9, an MSME owner who specializes in selling Muslim clothing, describes this phenomenon clearly: *"We have customers who are always present every time we go live, even before the session starts; they have set a reminder. They get to know each other from the comment column, sometimes recommending each other's products to fellow viewers. It is no longer just buying and selling; it has become a community. They are proud to be our 'loyal subscribers'."* (Informant 9, Owner of Muslim Fashion MSMEs, Interview, February 2025).

The social validation dimension was manifested in the comments section during the live session. When a viewer posts comments such as "I ordered it, the quality is very good" or "this is my third time buying, not disappointed," it serves as a real-time endorsement that directly influences other consumers' decisions. The informants reported that positive comments from fellow consumers were more trustworthy than claims made by the hosts themselves, because they were perceived as authentic and unbiased social proof.

The bandwagon effect was also identified as a powerful social validation mechanism. The display of a high number of viewers, publicly visible purchase notifications (e.g., "Siti from Makassar just bought this product"), and the accumulation of emoji reactions visible to all viewers create the perception that a product is worth buying. Observations of live sessions

show that female consumers who are initially hesitant tend to make a purchase decision after watching a number of other viewers make a purchase first.

4.1. Discussion

The findings of this study make an important contribution to understanding the behavior of female digital consumers in the context of MSME live shopping in Indonesia. The four themes identified, immersive interactive experiences, demonstration-based trust, FOMO, and social validation, form an interrelated and mutually reinforcing motivational system in driving female consumer purchasing decisions.

The findings regarding the centrality of real-time interaction in the live shopping experience are in line with the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Theory developed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) and later adapted in the context of e-commerce by a number of contemporary researchers. Within this framework, live shopping features such as live video broadcasts, interactive comment columns, and personal responses from hosts are environmental stimuli that affect the state of the consumer's organism (affective and cognitive), which ultimately drives responses in the form of purchasing decisions (Lim et al., 2022; Sun et al., 2022). This study enriches the application of S-O-R theory in the Indonesian context by adding the local cultural dimension as a significant moderator of consumers' emotional responses.

The theme of trust identified in this study is in line with the Trust-Commitment Theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), which emphasizes that trust is the foundation of sustainable marketing relationships. However, this study reveals a trust-building mechanism that is distinctive in the context of live shopping: instead of being built through brand reputation or formal quality certifications, trust is built through the performativity of honesty that occurs in real-time and publicly. These findings are relevant to the concept of parasocial interaction put forward by Ballantine and Yeung (2022), in which consumers develop a sense of personal connection with the host even in a commercial context.

The findings regarding FOMO as a psychological distress mechanism are in line with the research of Zheng et al. (2023), which shows that the construction of urgency and scarcity positively influences impulsive buying intent in live commerce. Within the framework of Regulatory Focus theory (Higgins, 1997), live shopping seems to activate a prevention focus system for female consumers where purchasing decisions are driven not only by the desire to benefit, but also by the fear of missing out on opportunities. However, the study adds an important nuance that FOMO is only effective as an accelerator, not as an initial trigger, a finding that has not been widely discussed in the existing literature.

The community dimension and social validation found in this study are in line with the research of Wongkitrungrueng et al. (2023), who identified the social aspect of live shopping as the main differentiator from other online shopping formats. From the perspective of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), regular participation in certain live shopping sessions allows female consumers to identify themselves as members of a community of consumers who share similar tastes, values, and preferences. This community identity, as observed by informants, creates a loyalty that goes beyond mere satisfaction with the product.

From the perspective of theoretical implications, this study contributes by proposing an integration model that connects the four themes in a causal sequence: demonstration-based trust

builds the necessary affective foundations, on top of which immersive interactivity creates emotional engagement, which is then amplified by community social validation, and is ultimately accelerated towards purchasing decisions by FOMO mechanisms. This model offers a new, more holistic perspective than previous studies that have tended to examine these factors separately (Chen et al., 2022; Kim & Kim, 2021).

In terms of practical implications for the management of MSME human resources, the findings of this study provide important concrete direction. First, host or streamer capabilities are the most critical HR assets in the MSME live shopping ecosystem. Warm interpersonal communication skills, emotional intelligence in managing public interactions in real-time, and competence in using local languages authentically are core competencies that must be developed through structured training programs. Second, MSMEs need to develop a digital community management system that allows the identification, appreciation, and involvement of loyal female consumers as marketing partnership assets. Third, a live shopping content strategy needs to be designed with the emotional cycle of female consumers in mind, starting with building trust, then building community connections, before activating the urgency of FOMO at the right moment.

5. Conclusion

This study explores the experience of female consumers in live shopping in MSMEs in Makassar City through the perspective of MSME owners and employees. Using a phenomenological qualitative approach with thematic analysis of the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña models, this study successfully identified four main themes that integratively explain why women buy when live shopping: (1) immersive interactive experiences, which create emotional engagement through real-time personal interactions and local cultural closeness; (2) a trust based on live demonstrations, which is built through the honesty and transparency of the host in presenting the product; (3) the psychological pressure of limitations and FOMO, which accelerates purchasing decisions through the construction of urgency and scarcity; and (4) community influence and social validation, which strengthens purchasing decisions through endorsements of fellow consumers and the formation of community identities.

These findings theoretically enrich the literature on digital consumer behavior by offering an in-depth qualitative perspective from the context of Eastern Indonesia, a perspective that has been underrepresented in international live commerce studies. In practical terms, these findings provide evidence-based guidance for MSMEs in designing more effective live shopping strategies, especially in optimizing HR capabilities, building a loyal consumer community, and integrating trust mechanisms with urgency strategies in a proportionate manner.

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