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Whose experiences shouldn't be missed? Influence of social media endorsers and FOMO content on travel decisions

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Abstract

While fear of missing out (FOMO) laden content influences audiences' perceptions and sense of urgency, using FOMO appeals to impact decisions among social media audiences remains largely unexplored. This paper addressed this research gap by presenting the findings of two studies investigating the influence of various endorsers and the interaction with audience demographics on travel-related decisions. Study 1 (n=238) was a cross-sectional survey to validate the hypothesized model. The findings from Study 1 indicate that anticipated elation, anticipated envy, and social influence are associated with personal FOMO, which in turn predicts intentions to visit and recommend. The same pattern is observed for social FOMO, although anticipated elation does not serve as a predictor. Study 2 (n=746) was an online experiment to examine the interaction effect of FOMO content endorsers and audience gender and age on travel decisions. Results indicated that travelers' FOMO-laden reviews are more effective in influencing males, whereas influencers are more influential than other endorsers in affecting females. While younger audiences are more susceptible to FOMO content than mature individuals, no interaction with endorsers is observed, suggesting a consistent and more potent effect across different endorsers. This research contributes to the growing knowledge of FOMO advertising on social media. Specifically, it provides an understanding of the interaction of FOMO content endorsers and audience demographics on travel decisions.

Keywords: FOMO; social media influencer; content endorser; travel decisions; online review

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Introduction

Marketers have long acknowledged the power of urgency and scarcity appeals in influencing consumption behaviors. For example, phrases such as "limited availability," "limited supply," or "the offer ends today" are examples of advertising messages that have encouraged consumer purchases over the past few decades (Kim et al., 2021; Byun and Sternquist, 2012; Verhallen, 1982). Fear of missing out on discounts, offers, or popular

products is a strong psychological motivator of consumer purchase. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in investigating fear of missing out (FOMO) related consumer behavior in social media marketing and advertising (Alfina et al., 2023; Tandon et al., 2021), particularly in the tourism and hospitality contexts (Kumar and Kumar, 2025; Kurniawan and Susilo, 2024; Wut et al., 2024; Uslu and Tosun, 2023).

Fear of missing out (FOMO) refers to the anxious feelings about not engaging in an experience or something valuable, which triggers anxiety and compulsive behaviors (Gupta and Sharma, 2021; Przybylski et al., 2013). Many studies have been conducted to investigate the positive and negative consequences of FOMO on compulsive social media usage behaviors and consumer well-being (Dogan, 2019; Gupta and Sharma, 2021; Xi et al., 2022). Marketing and advertising studies have also examined how constant visibility into peers' activities on social media can amplify feelings of FOMO and purchase decisions (Ulucan, 2024; Alfina et al., 2023; Anaza et al., 2024). By highlighting the potential rewards and benefits that others are experiencing, marketers can instill a sense of desire and aspiration in their target audience. This can significantly impact purchase intentions and drive consumers to take action, whether it is making a purchase, participating in promotions, or sharing content. FOMO-laden content on social media has proven to be an effective strategy for influencing consumer behavior, brand engagement, and purchases in a vast context, including travel and tourism (Ulucan, 2024; Mohanan and Shekhar, 2021; Zaman et al., 2022), investment (Anaza et al., 2024), hospitality (Lau et al., 2022), retail (Çelik et al., 2019), services (Good and Hyman, 2021; Munawar et al., 2021) and fast fashion (Bläse et al., 2024).

The growing body of research on FOMO appeals in social media marketing signifies the importance of understanding and leveraging psychological motivators in advertising strategies, particularly for the travel industry. Social media platforms have

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become a significant conduit for travel-related content, influencing audiences' perceptions and decisions about travel destinations (Pop et al., 2022; Chu et al., 2024). Fear of missing out (FOMO) has emerged as a compelling advertising appeal on social media platforms, effectively stimulating travel planning and purchases (Ulucan, 2024; Mohanan and Shekhar, 2021; Patria and Rahtomo, 2020; Kim et al., 2020; Wut et al., 2024; Kumar and Kumar, 2025). Travel companies have harnessed the power of FOMO by utilizing tactics such as promoting limited-time offers or exclusive experiences, accompanied by persuasive slogans like "Book your trip before it's too late!" These strategies capitalize on consumers' anxieties about missing out on unique travel opportunities. However, researchers and practitioners have yet to fully capitalize on the endorser effects of influencers through FOMO in tourism advertisements.

While previous studies have primarily focused on exploring the effects of brand-driven FOMO content on social media, there is less understanding of how marketers can strategically utilize FOMO content shared by other social media endorsers to shape consumer attitudes and behaviors. In contrast to the traditional FOMO marketing that presented a bounded and marketer-crafted narrative, social media facilitates an immersive FOMO environment by allowing consumers to become active participants in curating, sharing, and endorsing experiences (Tandon et al., 2021; Alfina et al., 2023). This inclusive and perpetual cycle of user-generated social proof may intensify FOMO's persuasive effects. According to previous tourism research, online reviews serve as a significant source of social proof that individuals use to develop their attitudes and behaviors toward a travel decision (Kim et al., 2023). Social media reviews function not only as a source of information but also as a medium for social proof. When individuals visit places recommended by reviewers, they may feel they attain the same status as those reviewers. For example, a popular US YouTuber IShowSpeed, with 3.9 million

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subscribers, recently livestreamed his tours in China. Most of his China tour videos have approximately 10 million views and over 15,000 comments. Many viewers expressed interest in visiting the locations that IShowSpeed visited and having similar spectacular experiences, such as becoming a Shaolin Monk and learning Chinese Kungfu (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBL_5DkiXCk). The impacts generated from FOMO content from a social proof perspective highlight the importance of conducting research on FOMO.

As digital communal spaces, social media platforms host an array of endorsers, including celebrities, influencers or key opinion leaders (KOLs), travelers, local people, travel agents, and tourism offices, who shape the narrative around specific travel destinations through their shared content. Travel influencers on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok play a crucial role in creating a sense of urgency and FOMO around must-see attractions and destinations. By showcasing their exciting experiences and adventures, influencers trigger a desire in their followers to be a part of those experiences, motivating travel planning and bookings (Kumar and Kumar, 2025). Despite the noted importance of FOMO in influencing consumer behavior and the growing use of influencer marketing in the travel industry, limited research has investigated how different types of social media endorsers employing FOMO content influence potential travelers' intention to visit the destinations mentioned in their posts. Some recent studies have attempted to explore the impact of influencers in generating FOMO-inducing content in travel marketing (e.g., Zhang, Jiménez, and Cicala (2020), Lee et al. (2023)). Yet, the comparative influence of different endorser types is poorly understood (Hudders et al., 2021; Hudders and Lou, 2022). Given that advertisers can influence audiences using a mix of these endorsers on social media platforms, understanding their relative influence in posting FOMO-laden content could provide valuable insights for tourism

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marketers. By expanding the scope of research to encompass multiple sources (or endorsers) of FOMO-inducing content, scholars can gain a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics in travel marketing (Chu et al., 2024). This knowledge can inform marketers on strategically leveraging FOMO appeals from various sources, enabling them to create compelling narratives and experiences that resonate with travelers and drive engagement, ultimately leading to increased travel bookings and customer satisfaction.

This study addresses these research gaps by investigating the interaction effects of FOMO content and social media endorsers (influencers/KOLs, travelers, friends/families) on audiences' travel intentions and decisions. While the extent and nature of FOMO-laden social media content influence remains underexplored, this study advances the current body of knowledge on FOMO social media marketing, especially considering the variety of endorsers involved in shaping travel decisions. Examining these interaction effects will provide novel theoretical and practical insights into crafting targeted and impactful FOMO messaging in social media travel advertising. Theoretically, the findings will advance knowledge on the endorser factors and the interaction effects in shaping FOMO emotions and subsequent actions. Practically, by recognizing how FOMO content disseminated by various types of endorsers can shape audiences' emotional and behavioral responses, the findings of this research can assist companies in crafting FOMO-based advertising strategies by selecting the appropriate types of endorsers that resonate with their target audience, driving increased consumer engagement and purchase.

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Theoretical background

The Fear of missing out (FOMO) advertising appeal in social media

Fear of missing out (FOMO) is a phenomenon that has gained considerable attention in recent years, especially in the context of social media, where users often present idealized versions of their lives (Przybylski et al., 2013). FOMO in social media contexts extends beyond simply feeling excluded or promoting scarcity and urgency commonly employed in traditional marketing tactics (Gupta and Sharma, 2021). Gupta and Sharma (2021) posited that FOMO also explains how individuals perceived to be left out will perform subsequent compulsive behavior to maintain social connections. Differ from the traditional idea of just the fear of missing out on events, FOMO in social media settings is contextualized as a modern phenomenon intricately linked to social media usage patterns and compulsive behaviors (e.g., checking posts and likes, refreshing pages), psychological needs (e.g., autonomy, relatedness, constant connectedness), and technological drivers (e.g., social media interactivity and information overload) (Gupta and Sharma, 2021; Bui et al., 2022; Ulucan, 2024). Currently, the use of FOMO marketing and advertising appeals on social media to influence consumer behaviors has been investigated in several areas and fields, including impulse purchases (Çelik et al., 2019; Ilyas et al., 2022), travel decisions (Patria and Rahtomo, 2020; Hodkinson, 2019), event ticket purchases (Good and Hyman, 2021), re-enrolment of events (Hayran et al., 2020), luxury goods purchase (Kang and Ma, 2020), and restaurant dining (Lau et al., 2022). Hence, research on the effects of FOMO content on audiences should encompass its influence on personal consumption decisions and its impact on other social media actions, such as liking, sharing, commenting, or reposting information.

Based empirically on self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci and Ryan, 2013), Przybylski et al. (2013) illustrated the FOMO phenomenon on social media using the

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framework of SDT. SDT focuses on human motivation and well-being, emphasizing the importance of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When FOMO creates a sense of urgency or scarcity, it can manipulate individuals' decision-making processes, potentially reducing feelings of autonomy and making them more susceptible to impulsive actions driven by the fear of missing out on experiences or something valuable. Social media content highlighting exclusive experiences, limited opportunities, or popular trends may create a sense of inadequacy or inferiority in individuals who perceive themselves as missing out. This can impact their perception of competence and self-worth, potentially leading to negative emotional consequences. Moreover, FOMO tactics often rely on social comparison and the desire for social inclusion, which is closely tied to the need for relatedness. Social media content showcasing others' experiences, achievements, or connections can trigger FOMO by making individuals feel excluded or left behind, inducing purchases or actions to stay socially included (Liu et al., 2019). Promotion tactics and advertising appeals can manipulate individuals' decision-making processes by exploiting the fear of missing out, evoking feelings of inadequacy, and creating a sense of social exclusion. Particularly in the post-pandemic period in which individuals have experienced years of travel bans, FOMO-laden social media content is one of the forces to advertise and boost tourism (Zaman et al., 2022; Mohanan and Shekhar, 2021; Uslu and Tosun, 2023). In the realm of social media, effective advertising should involve more than just encouraging audiences to make purchases; it also entails inspiring them to become ambassadors for the message to generate viral engagement. Thus, FOMO-laden travel advertisements or promotional messages on social media should evoke feelings in consumers that they must not miss out on the actual experience, as well as the opportunity to share these messages with others on social media.

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Personal and social FOMO vs the bandwagon effect

Although prior research has widely examined the consequences of FOMO on consumer decisions and actions, FOMO was predominantly investigated as a single factor triggered by social media exposure. However, Zhang et al. (2020) suggested that FOMO-laden content influences audiences through two components of FOMO: personal and social. Personal FOMO is an individual's anxiety associated with social media usage and is a self-focused concern about being left behind on rewarding experiences (Dogan, 2019). The critical difference is that personal FOMO centers around one's experiences and staying updated, while social FOMO emphasizes missing out on connections with others through shared experiences (Kim et al., 2020). Thus, personal FOMO is driven more by intrinsic needs, whereas social FOMO is driven more by belongingness and relationship needs (Zhang et al., 2020).

FOMO advertising appeals and the bandwagon effect, while sharing some similarities, do have distinct influences on consumer behavior. Although both FOMO advertising appeals and the bandwagon effect can drive consumer behavior, their mechanisms differ regarding the underlying motivations involved (Alfina et al., 2023; Tandon et al., 2021). FOMO appeals capitalize on the fear of missing out on unique experiences, whereas the bandwagon effect leverages the desire for social conformity and the need for acceptance (Bindra et al., 2022). Hence, the bandwagon effect affects consumer behavior through a mechanism that shares similarities with social FOMO but differs from personal FOMO in certain aspects.

Social FOMO refers to anxiety about being absent from social interactions and bonding opportunities with others and focuses more on worries about missing out on experiences that will make one left behind by others (Zhang et al., 2020). The bandwagon effect pertains to individuals' inclination to adopt certain beliefs or behaviors simply

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because they observe that a large number of others are doing the same (Schmitt-Beck, 1996). Like social FOMO, it relies on social influence and normative influence through implied social consensus (Argan et al., 2022). In the context of advertising, both bandwagon and social FOMO appeals aim to compel purchase by suggesting the consumer may be left out if they do not join or buy into the popular trend.

Unlike the bandwagon effect, FOMO emphasizes missing experiences or opportunities rather than just the popularity of products. It threatens relatedness and competence by implying that consumers feel excluded or incapable without the product (Tandon et al., 2021). However, the bandwagon effect purely emphasizes assimilation to social norms and does not threaten basic psychological needs in the same way (Bindra et al., 2022). As a result, FOMO may undermine intrinsic motivation and induce a more controlling form of extrinsic motivation than mere conformity pressures underlying bandwagon appeals, according to self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This suggests that personal FOMO could have more detrimental long-term effects on well-being, relationships, and sustained behaviors. In summary, while relying on similar social influence tactics, personal FOMO differs from the bandwagon effect and social FOMO in its focus on missing experiences and tremendous potential to disrupt self-determined motivation. Given that social media posts can trigger both personal and social FOMO, which arise from distinct psychological motivations, it is essential to empirically unravel and examine the impact of FOMO-laden content on social media users. Specifically, whether such content influences users by eliciting personal FOMO, social FOMO, or both.

Antecedents and consequences of FOMO

This research built upon established social psychology theories, including social

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comparison theory and cognitive dissonate theory (Festinger, 1957) , to explore the psychological drivers that elicit corresponding FOMO emotions and subsequent outcome behaviors. Travel FOMO often originates from browsing online reviews showcasing idealized experiences, which activate social comparison processes. Users evaluate their own travel plans against others' posts, fostering perceived inadequacy or envy (Liu et al., 2019). According to Kurniawan and Susilo (2024), eWOM in travel reviews shared by reference groups serves as a significant antecedent to FOMO feelings, especially among individuals who experience high levels of perceived loneliness. These triggers initiate a cycle where unmet psychological needs (autonomy, competence, relatedness) outlined in SDT (Deci and Ryan, 2013)drive compensatory behaviors. For instance, individuals may over-plan trips (seeking competence) or follow featured itineraries to mitigate FOMO-induced anxiety. Previous research examining the influence of FOMO appeals on social media users' purchase behaviors has identified three significant factors that contribute to the emotions of FOMO (Alfina et al., 2023; Good and Hyman, 2020): anticipated elation, anticipated envy, and social influence.

Anticipated elation

Anticipated elation refers to the intense sense of exhilaration that individuals envision experiencing upon completing a transaction (Brandstätter and Kriz, 2001). Consumers cognitively evaluate the potential value associated with a prospective exchange by considering whether it can elicit excitement or pleasure. Consequently, individuals tend to opt for the alternative they perceive as more likely to generate such emotional states. Consequently, the magnitude of the anticipated elation arising from a particular transaction engenders heightened consumer apprehension regarding the potential loss of the anticipated exhilaration. This, in turn, triggers an amplified personal fear of missing

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out, which significantly influences individuals' decision-making processes when contemplating a purchase (Good and Hyman, 2020).

Anticipated elation influences FOMO (Munawar et al., 2021; Good and Hyman, 2021), which pertains to concerns about being absent from rewarding experiences and left behind by others regarding experiences or opportunities. The prospect of missing out on such exhilarating experiences can trigger feelings of being outdated and a fear of missing an opportunity for personal fulfillment and growth. When individuals anticipate experiencing high levels of elation from a particular exchange, they are more likely to associate it with positive social outcomes. They may envision sharing their exciting experiences with others, garnering admiration, and strengthening their social connections. Thus, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis H1a: Anticipated elation positively affects personal FOMO.

Hypothesis H1b: Anticipated elation positively affects social FOMO.

Anticipated envy by other people

Anticipated envy by others refers to individuals' expectation that their peers will experience envy or jealousy upon seeing their rewarding experiences shared on social media (Good and Hyman, 2020). This anticipation of envy can positively impact personal FOMO. When individuals believe that their experiences, achievements, or possessions have the potential to evoke envy in others, they may develop a heightened sense of self-importance and validation. The anticipation of others' envy reinforces their self-worth and contributes to a sense of superiority or uniqueness (Yen et al., 2013). Consequently, these individuals may experience a stronger personal FOMO as they seek to maintain their perceived status by constantly engaging in rewarding experiences and sharing them on social media. The fear of missing out becomes driven by the desire to validate their self-worth and receive recognition from others continually.

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Moreover, Good and Hyman (2020) posit that anticipating that others will experience envy or jealousy when seeing them engaged in rewarding experiences can strengthen social connections and increase the perceived social desirability of these interactions. Individuals may anticipate that their presence in these experiences will be valued and sought after by others, leading to increased social inclusion and a sense of belonging. Consequently, the fear of missing out socially becomes heightened as individuals strive to avoid being absent from such experiences to maintain their social connections and avoid feeling excluded or left behind. Hence, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis H2a: Anticipated envy by other people positively affects personal FOMO.

Hypothesis H2b: Anticipated envy by other people positively affects social FOMO.

Social influence

Social influence refers to the impact that others' behaviors, opinions, or experiences have on an individual's change in feelings, thoughts, or behaviors (Eckhardt et al., 2009). Social influence manifests in diverse forms, such as conformity, compliance, peer pressure, and obedience to authority. These forms of influence have been employed to forecast and shape consumer decisions about hospitality and travel (Eckhardt et al., 2009; Good and Hyman, 2020; Sedera et al., 2017; Tanford and Montgomery, 2015; Xie et al., 2016). Fueled by massive travel-related content shared on social media and review websites, social influence has become a powerful force in travel decisions (Mauri and Minazzi, 2013). In the context of personal FOMO, social influence refers to the impact of others' behaviors, opinions, or experiences on an individual's fear of missing out. When individuals observe their peers or social contacts engaging in exciting or rewarding activities, it creates a sense of social comparison. The positive experiences and

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accomplishments of others can lead individuals to perceive a gap between their own lives and the perceived ideal or desirable experiences, triggering a heightened personal FOMO as individuals strive to attain similar experiences or achievements to bridge that gap.

In the case of social FOMO, social influence plays a significant role in shaping individuals' anxieties about the impact of others' presence or absence in social activities and the perceived social desirability of such interactions (Xie et al., 2016). Observing their peers or social contacts participating in social gatherings, events, or bonding activities creates a sense of social comparison and a desire for social inclusion. The positive experiences and social connections others enjoy can intensify individuals' fear of missing out on valuable social experiences. They may worry about being left behind, excluded, or disconnected from their social networks, triggering individuals to engage in activities or purchase and maintain their social connections to avoid feelings of isolation or social disconnection (Tanford and Montgomery, 2015; Wu et al., 2021). Thus, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis H3a: Social influence positively affects personal FOMO.

Hypothesis H3b: Social influence positively affects social FOMO.

Effects of FOMO emotions on intentions to visit and recommend

Research has repeatedly confirmed that FOMO affects consumer perception and urgency in tourism decisions. At the same time, they browse social media (e.g., Instagram, Tiktok, YouTube) and social networking sites, including reviews on online tourism agents (OTA) (e.g., hotels.com, booking.com, trip.com, tripadvisor.com) (Król and Zdonek, 2021; Patria and Rahtomo, 2020). While personal FOMO prioritizes individual experiences and social FOMO prioritizes interpersonal interactions and togetherness, individuals driven by fear of missing out may be more inclined to engage in impulsive or excessive consumption. In the context of travel experiences, this behavior stems from the belief that

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participating in the same experiences as their peers will enhance their needs to pursue personal fulfillment (i.e., P-FOMO) and align themselves with the perceived social norms (i.e., S-FOMO), alleviating their anxieties about being left behind. Although they aroused distinct consumer needs, both FOMOs influence similar travel intentions, including choosing and recommending destinations featured in social media (Zaman et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2023; Mohanan and Shekhar, 2021). Thus, we hypothesize that FOMO also has a positive effect on tourism decisions:

Hypothesis H4: Personal fear of missing out (P-FOMO) positively affects (a) intention to visit and (b) intention to recommend.

Hypothesis H5: Social fear of missing out (S-FOMO) positively affects (a) intention to visit and (b) intention to recommend.

The interaction effects between FOMO content and endorsers

Advertisers employ various tactics to enhance the effectiveness of advertisements and content marketing on social media. One commonly utilized approach is to engage suitable endorsers for their brands, products, or services. Besides sharing content on official brand or brand community pages, advertisers of travel products or destinations also monetize or incentivize celebrities, influencers, consumers, and travelers to endorse their brands on social media content or online reviews. Prior studies identified different types of social media advertisement endorsers elicit different levels of influence on audiences (Shareef et al., 2019; Chu et al., 2024). Although FOMO-laden content is more influential, FOMO-laden content shared by different influencers might not affect alike. Given the limited understanding of the impact of FOMO content endorsers, this research seeks to experimentally examine the influence of various types of FOMO content endorsers on travel-related decisions, including travel influencers, consumers, travelers, and friends and family members.

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Influencers

Influencers with expertise in specific areas (such as food, travel, beauty, or fashion) and a significant number of followers on social media platforms wield considerable influence over audiences' travel decisions and choices. (Magno and Cassia, 2018). Influencers' recommendations are perceived as more authentic and reliable than traditional advertising, leading to higher consumer engagement (Lou and Yuan, 2019). Zhu et al. (2022) found that influencers are more effective social media advertising endorsers than celebrities for familiar brands. A significant portion of existing research has focused on crucial travel opinion leaders (KOLs), recognizing their sway over consumer decisions in various sectors, including travel (Dinh and Lee, 2021; Gretzel, 2018). In tourism advertising on social media, travel influencers significantly influence their followers' perceptions and decisions (Magno and Cassia, 2018; Cosenza et al., 2015; Gretzel, 2018). They are often seen as trusted sources of information, and their posts can incite feelings of FOMO in followers, who become motivated to experience the highlighted destinations (De Veirman et al., 2017). A FOMO-laden social media post effectively induces consumer anxiety when imagining the possibility of losing the chance to excel and share the experience with these friends (Good and Hyman, 2020).

Travelers

Travelers (i.e., users of travel-related products and services) are important contributors to online reviews or travel-related content on social media. According to prior research, user-generated content (UGC) on social media and online reviews can significantly influence audiences' travel-related behavioral outcomes (Zaidi et al., 2023). Exposure to positive UGC about travel destinations and services enhances audiences' perceptions and attitudes toward these entities (Gretzel, 2018). For example, other travelers' likes and

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positive comments about a hotel build confidence and trust in the hotel's quality. Positive UGC stimulates purchase intentions and travel-related behaviors such as making reservations, selecting a destination or activity, and sharing eWOM about experiences (Mauri and Minazzi, 2013). Audiences report UGC as highly influential on their travel planning and decision processes compared to marketer-generated content (Shareef et al., 2019). Nevertheless, it is essential to note that not all online reviews positively impact brands. Negative UGC can have the opposite effect by diminishing favorable attitudes and behavioral intentions towards destinations and travel businesses. Thus, FOMO-laden content plays a critical role in influencing key travel purchase behaviors and decisions because the content triggers a sense of urgency to act in addition to the positive content shared by other travelers.

Friends and Family members

Friends and family members often play a significant role as endorsers of travel-related content on social media platforms. We frequently encounter their recommendations and experiences, which greatly influence our perceptions and decisions regarding travel. Shareef et al. (2019) examined the comparative effect of social media advertising endorsers and revealed that friends and family members who have "strong ties" with the audiences on social networking sites can significantly shape behaviors and decisions compared to other content sources. According to the social networking theory (Granovetter, 1973), different types of influencers with varying strengths of tie may induce different levels of influence on social media users' travel decisions. Although influencers and fellow travelers are perceived to have "weak ties" (relationships characterized by infrequent interaction) with the audiences, they are still capable of inducing FOMO emotions and impacting one's behavior (Granovetter, 1973; Shareef et al., 2019).

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While FOMO social media content fosters a sense of urgency and exclusivity that enhances consumer engagement and prompts immediate actions more effectively than non-FOMO content(Alfina et al., 2023; Tandon et al., 2021), endorsements from friends and family members should have a more significant impact on audiences than other endorsers, such as influencers and travelers. Hence, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis H6: FOMO content has a significantly greater impact than non-FOMO content on

(a) antecedents of FOMO emotions (anticipated elation, anticipated envy, and social influence),

(b) FOMO emotions (personal and social FOMO), and

(c) outcome behaviors (intentions to visit and recommend).

Hypothesis H7: When exposed to FOMO social media content, audiences will demonstrate stronger intentions to (a) visit and (b) recommend the content if it is shared by friends/family rather than by influencers or travelers.

Behavioral variations among social media users based on demographic characteristics

Extensive research has shown that audiences respond differently to traditional advertising (Darley and Smith, 1995) and online advertising (De Battista et al., 2021), depending on age, gender, and education level. Research suggests distinct differences in how individuals of different genders respond to social media (Hudders and De Jans, 2022). Assaker (2020) reported that UGC is more influential to young males than females and mature males. Recent studies explored how audiences' gender and age affect their receptivity and response to FOMO-laden content on social media and found that males may be more driven to outperform others or engage in unique and adventurous experiences (Alfina et al., 2023). Sun et al. (2021) reported that female consumers are

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more directly affected by the social media KOLs they follow in attitudes and behaviors than males. In assessing the effectiveness of FOMO-inducing content on Facebook advertisements, Weideinger et al. (2021) found that FOMO-laden content substantially impacts advertising recall and recognition among female audiences. Moreover, extensive literature has consistently demonstrated that FOMO-laden social media content exerts a more significant influence on audiences belonging to the younger generation (Tandon et al., 2021; Alfina et al., 2023; Mohanan and Shekhar, 2021). Following the practice of extant FOMO research (e.g., Anaza et al. (2024)), demographic characteristics, including age, gender, and education level, will be incorporated as control variables in this study.

Methodology

This research used two studies to examine the hypotheses of the theoretical model illustrated in Figure 1. Study 1 was a cross-sectional survey examining the hypothesized relationship between variables adopted from existing FOMO studies in the context of travel-related social media content (i.e., hypotheses H1 to H5). Study 2 was a 2 x 3 factorial between-subjects online experiment investigating the interaction effects of FOMO appeal and endorser type on audiences' personal and social FOMO emotions, as well as respective travel and recommendation intentions.

< insert Figure 1 and Figure 1 alt-text here >

Common method bias

To minimise common method bias (CMB) from same-respondent replies using a single instrument, procedural and statistical remedies posited by Podsakoff et al. (2003) were applied. First, this study employed procedural methodologies to design and administer the questionnaire, incorporating various scale types and varying the order of questions.

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Second, this study applied the marker-variable technique, a common statistical method for addressing CMB in tourism advertising research (Malhotra et al., 2017). This study's questionnaire included an unrelated marker variable, introduced across all constructs when evaluating the hypothesised model using SmartPLS (Ringle et al., 2015). The R^2 values of all constructs were examined both prior to and following the inclusion of the marker variable. As there was no significant difference observed in the R^2 values after accounting for the effect of the marker variable, it can be concluded that there is no substantial common method bias present.

Study 1

Design, participants, and procedures

Study 1 used a cross-sectional survey to investigate factors influencing FOMO emotions and subsequent outcome behaviors. The hypothesized model (Figure 1) was adapted from previous FOMO studies, specifically focusing on the context of travel-related social media. Data was collected from a Chinese panel data using a professional marketing research firm, wenjuanxing (www.wjn.cn), with panel covers over 300 million Chinese consumers and is widely representative of the population. Given the significant number of social media users and the vibrant context of social media in travel promotion (Zhang et al., 2023; Shan et al., 2020), Chinese respondents with travel experience (either international or local travel) were recruited to participate in the study. The minimum sample size calculated using the G*power software for a two-tailed test significance at a 5% level, a power of 95%, and an effect size f^2 of 0.25 should be greater than 138 (Brysbaert, 2019; Faul et al., 2007; Cohen, 1992). Study 1 recruited 238 respondents to complete the online survey. Table 1 summarises the sample composition of Study 1.

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The study began with a screening question, "*What is your average frequency of travel in a year?"* to screen out non-traveler respondents. Eligible participants were randomly exposed to FOMO and non-FOMO appeal conditions. Following prior FOMO studies (Friederich et al., 2024; Good and Hyman, 2021), participants were exposed to a vignette that assumed they were being exposed to social media posts about a novel travel destination while they browsed for travel ideas. In the FOMO condition, participants were informed through the vignette that the travel destination was considered "not to be missed out." Conversely, in the non-FOMO condition, participants were exposed to the same content, but the posts did not explicitly emphasize that the travel destination should not be missed. After reading the assigned conditions, participants were asked to complete a manipulation check question, followed by the questionnaire measuring the hypothesized model's variables, including anticipated envy, anticipated elation, social influence, personal FOMO, social FOMO, and intentions to visit and recommend the destination. Additionally, respondents' demographic information (including gender, age, and educational level) was collected.

Measures

The measurement items for all variables were adapted from validated scales used in previous studies. Appendix A shows the measurement items used in the survey. Anticipated elation (Brandstätter and Kriz, 2001) was measured by four items. An example of the measurement items is, *"If I travel to the featured destination, I expect I would feel elated."* Anticipated envy (Good and Hyman, 2020) was measured by four items. An example of the measurement items is, *"If I travel to the featured destination, people who don't go will be jealous."* Three items measured social influence (Wu et al., 2021). An example of the measurement items is, *"People around me are involved in similar tourism travel."* Adopted from the FOMO scale developed by Zhang et al. (2020),

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personal and social FOMO was measured using 5 and 3 items, respectively. An example of the measurement items for P-FOMO is *"I feel anxious when I do not experience similar travel." For* S-FOMO, *"I think I do not fit in social groups when I miss similar travel experiences."* Participants' intention to visit *(e.g., I have a strong intention to visit the featured place on my coming trip)* and recommend *(e.g., I would recommend that someone go to the featured place for travel)* the destination were measured by 3 items using established scales adopted from the studies of Papadimitriou et al. (2015). All items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree).

Results and discussion

Manipulation checks

The manipulation check question asked whether participants recognized the correct FOMO conditions they were assigned. The manipulation was effective as 84% of participants correctly identified the FOMO condition, and 90% correctly identified the non-FOMO condition. Responses from participants who were unable to identify the correct conditions were excluded.

Hypothesis testing

PLS-SEM analysis was conducted to evaluate the path relationships between the constructs in the theoretical framework using SmartPLS 4 (Ringle et al., 2022). The measurement and structural models were assessed following the guidelines of Hair et al. (2019). Table 2 shows the reliability and validity of the proposed reflective measurement model. The factor loadings of all measurement items exceed the 0.708 thresholds, Cronbach's alpha and the composite reliability of all constructs is between 0.70 and 0.90, indicating internal consistency reliability. Convergent validity is also established as all constructs' average variance extracted (AVE) is greater than 0.5. The discriminant

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validity was evaluated using the Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT). The HTMT values are all less than 0.90 (Table 3), showing that the discriminant validity test was passed (Sarstedt et al., 2022). While the reliability and validity of the measurement model were confirmed, the structural model was then analyzed using bootstrapping with 5,000 sub-samples. All VIFs are lower than 3, showing no critical collinearity issues among the constructs. Moreover, Q^2 values are greater than zero, and $PLS_{predict}$ gives $Q^2_{predict}$ values greater than zero, substantiating the model's explanatory and predictive power. Additionally, model fit is assessed by fit indices standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) and normed fit index (NFI) (Ringle et al., 2024). The fit indices SRMR = 0.068 (below the 0.08 threshold) and NFI = 0.906 (above the 0.90 threshold), indicating that the hypothesized model has a 'good fit' (Schuberth et al., 2023). While the structural and measurement model of the theoretical framework is confirmed to be reliable, valid, and with good predictive power, PLS-SEM path analysis among variables was examined.

< insert Table 2 and Table 3 here >

The hypothesized model explained 33.0% of the variance in personal FOMO, 24.3% in social FOMO, 17.7% in recommendation intentions, and 28.0% in visit intentions. Table 4 shows the PLS-SEM path analysis. Personal FOMO is significantly affected by anticipated elation ($\beta = 0.205$, $p < 0.001$), anticipated envy ($\beta = 0.401$, $p < 0.001$), and social influence ($\beta = 0.102$, $p < 0.001$), supporting hypotheses H1a, H2a and H3a. Social FOMO is significantly affected by anticipated envy ($\beta = 0.401$, $p < 0.001$) and social influence ($\beta = 0.164$, $p < 0.001$) but not by anticipated elation ($\beta = -0.024$, $p = 0.412$). Thus, hypotheses H2b and H3b are supported, but H1b is rejected. Personal FOMO positively affects visit intention ($\beta = 0.476$, $p < 0.001$) and recommendation intention ($\beta = 0.562$, $p < 0.001$), supporting hypotheses H4a and H4b. Lastly, social FOMO affects visit intention ($\beta = 0.105$, $p < 0.01$) and recommendation intention ($\beta =$

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0.059, $p < 0.05$), supporting hypotheses H5a and H5b.

< insert Table 4 here >

Discussion

Study 1 confirmed that FOMO-laden reviews are effective in inducing the psychological emotions of personal and social FOMO through anticipated elation (H1a), anticipated envy (H2), and social influence (H3), resulting in audiences' intention to visit (H4) and recommend (H5) the destination endorsed in the online reviews. The findings align with the concepts of FOMO-appeal advertising, as demonstrated in prior studies (Alfina et al., 2023). The impact on consumers' intentions to visit or recommend the destination featured on the FOMO-laden review is induced by the feeling of personal and social FOMO. The results agree with the Social Comparison Theory, in which social norms and comparison strongly influence consumers' purchase decisions (Pop et al., 2022).

Anticipated envy and social influence affect audiences' personal and social FOMO, but anticipated elevation only affects personal FOMO. Anticipated elation, characterized by the excitement and pleasure individuals envision deriving from a potential exchange, plays a pivotal role in shaping individuals' perceptions of desirability and opportunities for personal growth rather than belongingness or social inclusion. The findings echo Dogan (2019)'s study that social influence is associated with the need for belonging rather than a motivation to elate and construe a better self.

Anticipated envy by others can positively affect both personal and social FOMO, albeit in different ways. For personal FOMO, the anticipation of others' envy reinforces individuals' self-worth and validation, continually driving them to engage in rewarding experiences. In the case of social FOMO, the anticipation of others' envy strengthens social connections and the perceived desirability of social interactions, leading

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individuals to fear missing out on bonding opportunities and social inclusion. These dynamics highlight the complex interplay between anticipated envy, FOMO, and the role of social media in shaping individuals' anxieties and motivations in contemporary society. Social influence has a positive impact on both personal FOMO and social FOMO. Regarding personal FOMO, social influence stimulates a sense of social comparison, motivating individuals to seek comparable experiences or accomplishments to meet perceived societal standards. As for social FOMO, social influence shapes individuals' concerns about missing out on social interactions and opportunities for bonding as they strive to maintain social inclusion and avoid feelings of exclusion or disconnection.

Study 2

Design and participants

Upon examination of the hypothesized model (i.e., H1 to H5) in Study 1, Study 2 further examines the interaction effects of FOMO content and content endorser on the relationship between antecedents and behavioral outcomes of FOMO emotions (i.e., H6 to H7). A 2 (FOMO vs. non-FOMO content) x 3 (influencer vs. traveler vs. friend/family endorser) factorial between-subjects online experiment was conducted. Data was collected from a Chinese panel data using a professional marketing research firm (www.wjn.cn). Respondents with prior travel experience who had not participated in Study 1 were recruited to participate in this study. Using G*power software to calculate the sample size for the online experiment with 6 experimental groups, at least 323 total samples should be recruited considering a two-tailed test significance at a 5% level, a power of 95%, and an effect size f^2 of 0.25 (Brysbaert, 2019; Faul et al., 2007; Cohen, 1992). Study 2 obtained 600 valid samples with 100 samples per condition, showing that

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an adequate number of valid samples were collected to secure adequately powered experiments. The sample composition is summarized in Table 1.

Procedures, stimuli, and measures

Study 2 randomly assigned participants into one of the six experimental conditions of social media posts featuring travel ideas: (1) FOMO content posted by an influencer; (2) FOMO content posted by a traveler; (3) FOMO content posted by a friend/family; (4) non-FOMO content posted by an influencer; (5) Non-FOMO content posted by a traveler; (6) non-FOMO content posted by a friend/family. The visual design across all experimental conditions remained consistent, with only the endorser and message content varying according to each condition. The experimental stimuli are shown in Appendix B.

After exposure to the assigned experimental conditions, participants were asked to answer the manipulation questions. For FOMO vs. non-FOMO content, participants were asked to indicate whether it was correct that the social media post mentioned that the food should not be missed". The manipulation check used a nominal scale (a) correct, (b) incorrect, and (c) not sure to validate whether the experimental conditions were manipulated. Participants assigned to FOMO (conditions 1 to 3) and non-FOMO (conditions 4 to 6) content should answer (a) correct and (b) incorrect respectively to pass the manipulated check. For the endorser conditions, participants were prompted to identify the individual "who shared the social media post" they were exposed to. The manipulation check used a nominal scale (a) influencer, (b) traveler, (c) friend or family, and (d) not sure to validate whether the experimental conditions were manipulated. To pass the manipulation check, participants in conditions (1) and (4) should select option (a) influencer, participants in conditions (2) and (5) should choose option (b) traveler, and participants in conditions (3) and (6) should select option (c) friend or family. Upon successfully manipulating the experimental conditions, participants completed the

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questionnaire validated in Study 1. All measures, including anticipated elation, anticipated envy, social influence, personal and social FOMO, and intentions to visit and recommend, were the same as in Study 1 (refer to Appendix A). Respondents' demographic information, including gender, age, and educational level, was collected as control variables to reduce the error terms, eliminating the covariates' effect on the relationship between the independent variables (content and endorser types) and the continuous dependent variables in the hypothesized model.

Results and discussion

Manipulation checks

The manipulation was effective as an average of 88% participants correctly identified all the conditions. In condition (1), 87% of participants correctly identified that the post was FOMO laden and was shared by an influencer. In condition (2), 85% of participants correctly identified that the post was FOMO laden and was shared by other traveler on the social media platform. In condition (3), 93% of participants correctly identified that the FOMO-laden was shared by a friend or family member. In condition (4) to (6), 93%, 90%, and 84% of participants correctly identified that the posts were non-FOMO laden and were shared by influencer, traveler, and friend/family respectively. Study 2 collected responses from participants who passed the manipulation check questions to ensure the experimental conditions were successfully manipulated.

Hypothesis testing

Study 2 investigated the interaction effects of FOMO content and endorser on social media audiences' emotions of personal FOMO, social FOMO, and their intentions to visit and recommend the featured places. First, a one-way MANCOVA was conducted to examine the effect of FOMO vs. non-FOMO content on the FOMO emotions and

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outcome behaviors. Audiences' gender, age, and education level are included as covariates in the analysis. Table 5 summarizes the results of the MANCOVA analysis. For effect on antecedents of FOMO emotions, FOMO content is also found to significantly affect audiences' anticipated elation ($M_{FOMO} = 5.55$, $M_{non\text{-}FOMO} = 5.26$, $F = 8.615$, $p = .003$, $\eta^2 = 0.014$), anticipated envy ($M_{FOMO} = 3.97$, $M_{non\text{-}FOMO} = 3.74$, $F = 5.517$, $p = .019$, $\eta^2 = 0.009$), but not social influence ($M_{FOMO} = 5.30$, $M_{non\text{-}FOMO} = 5.27$, $F = 0.096$, $p = .756$, $\eta^2 = 0.000$). Hypothesis H6a is accepted for anticipated elation and envy but rejected for social influence. Moreover, FOMO content exposure is found to significantly affect audiences' personal FOMO ($M_{FOMO} = 4.21$, $M_{non\text{-}FOMO} = 4.18$, $F = 3.170$, $p = .024$, $\eta^2 = 0.012$) but not social FOMO ($M_{FOMO} = 2.62$, $M_{non\text{-}FOMO} = 2.49$, $F = 1.488$, $p = .223$, $\eta^2 = 0.002$). Hypothesis H6b is accepted for personal FOMO but rejected for social FOMO. The results showed that FOMO-laden content significantly elicited stronger visit intention ($M_{FOMO} = 5.65$, $M_{non\text{-}FOMO} = 5.41$, $F = 8.241$, $p = .004$, $\eta^2 = 0.014$) and recommendation intention ($M_{FOMO} = 5.32$, $M_{non\text{-}FOMO} = 5.11$, $F = 4.223$, $p = .040$, $\eta^2 = 0.007$), confirming hypothesis H6c.

< insert Table 5 here >

Next, a two-way MANCOVA analysis was conducted to evaluate the interaction effects of endorser types (KOL vs. traveler vs. friend/family) and content (FOMO vs. non-FOMO) on the intentions to visit and recommend the places featured on the social media posts. Audiences' gender, age, and education level are included as covariates in the analysis to control for the effects of these demographic variables. Table 6 illustrates the results of the ANCOVA analysis on all dependent variables. The results showed that there is no statistically significant interaction between content and endorser on visit

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intention while controlling for age, gender, and education level ($M_{FOMO\ x\ influencer}$ = 5.46, $M_{non\text{-}FOMO\ x\ influencer}$ = 5.19; $M_{FOMO\ x\ traveler}$ = 5.81, $M_{non\text{-}FOMO\ x\ traveler}$ = 5.41; $M_{FOMO\ x\ friend/family}$ = 5.69, $M_{non\text{-}FOMO\ x\ friend/family}$ = 5.63, F = 1.844, p = .159, η^2 = 0.006). Thus, hypothesis H7a is rejected. Although the two-way interaction effect is not statistically significant, FOMO content shared by all endorsers is more effective in affecting visit intention ($M_{FOMO\ x\ influencer}$ = 5.46, $M_{FOMO\ x\ traveler}$ = 5.81, $M_{FOMO\ x\ friend/family}$ = 5.69, F = 7.012, p = <.001, η2 = 0.023).

Alternatively, statistically significant interaction is found between content and endorser on recommendation intention while controlling for age, gender, and education level (F = 3.105, p = .046, η2 = 0.010), accepting hypothesis H7b. Figure 2 illustrates the two-way interaction effect of FOMO content and endorser types on audiences' intentions to visit and recommend the featured place. The profile plot shows that audiences are less likely to recommend a place shared by friends or family members in a non-FOMO tone ($M_{FOMO\ x\ friend/family}$ = 5.37, $M_{non\text{-}FOMO\ x\ friend/family}$ = 5.48), but are significantly intended to recommend a place shared by influencers or travelers in a FOMO tone ($M_{FOMO\ x\ influencer}$ = 5.12, $M_{non\text{-}FOMO\ x\ influencer}$ = 4.75; $M_{FOMO\ x\ traveler}$ = 5.47, $M_{non\text{-}FOMO\ x\ traveler}$ = 5.10).

< insert Table 6, and Figure 2 and Figure 2 alt-text here >

Discussion

The findings from Study 2 provide several important insights into how FOMO-laden social media content impacts audiences. First, the results of hypothesis H6 highlight the influential role that FOMO-laden content plays in inducing FOMO emotion and driving behavioral intentions, compared to non-FOMO content. Specifically, the impact of FOMO on intentions to visit and recommend the place featured on social media content is mainly driven by personal FOMO rather than social influence or social FOMO. The

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findings support the theoretical assumption of this research that FOMO influences audiences differ from the bandwagon effect, which affects consumer behavior through a mechanism that shares similarities with social FOMO (Bindra et al., 2022).

The findings from hypothesis H7 provide insightful revelations about the dynamics of audience susceptibility to FOMO content and how it influences their behavioral intentions. It becomes evident that while audiences are generally more receptive to FOMO-driven messaging, the effectiveness of this content in shaping their intentions to visit or recommend a destination varies significantly based on the type of endorser disseminating the information. As illustrated in Figure 2, which graphically represents the interplay between social media content and endorsers, it is clear that influencers tend to have less impact on the audiences' behavioral intentions compared to travelers and friends or family members. This observation holds for both FOMO and non-FOMO content, suggesting that the endorser of the social media travel content plays a critical role in its reception. The familiarity and perceived authenticity of travelers and personal connections through friends and family appear to resonate more with audiences than endorsements from influencers, who may be viewed as less relatable or genuine (Chu et al., 2024; Shareef et al., 2019; Cosenza et al., 2015).

Influencers have a lesser effect on audiences' intentions to visit and recommend compared to travelers and friends/family, regardless of whether FOMO or non-FOMO content is used. When using a non-FOMO tone, the effect of content shared by friends and family significantly surpasses travelers in driving visit and recommendation intentions. However, when utilizing a FOMO tone, reviews from travelers are significantly more persuasive than those shared by friends and family in driving visit intention. Additionally, audiences show a greater propensity to recommend a location when it is shared by travelers using FOMO-laden content. Notably, the intention to

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recommend declines significantly when audiences encounter FOMO content shared by friends or family compared to non-FOMO content.

General discussion

Through two studies involving 838 travelers as participants, this paper investigated how anticipated elation, anticipated envy, and social influence impact both personal and social FOMO emotions and how these emotions subsequently influence the behavioral intentions of social media audiences. Additionally, this paper investigated the interaction effects of FOMO content and the type of endorsers on the relationship between FOMO emotions and behavioral intentions. It aimed to understand how the specific characteristics of the content, infused with FOMO elements, interact with different social media endorsers (ie. influencers, travelers, or friends and family) to either amplify or diminish the impact of FOMO emotions on audiences' intentions to visit or recommend a destination.

Social media content can effectively evoke strong emotional and behavioral motivations among viewers by tapping into their fear of missing out. The results confirm the power of FOMO as a marketing and communication tool in affecting travel decisions on social media as per previous research (Good and Hyman, 2020; Alfina et al., 2023). However, FOMO and non-FOMO social media content contributed similar impacts on social influence and social FOMO emotions. Social FOMO, theoretically similar to the bandwagon effect observed in social media advertising, encourages consumers to engage in behaviors that prevent them from being excluded from popular trends (Zhang et al., 2020; Argan et al., 2022; Kang and Ma, 2020). However, social FOMO is not the driving factor that compels consumers to respond to FOMO content. Motivation from personal FOMO to achieve personal growth and elation may be of higher priority in individuals' decision to visit a travel destination. This finding aligns with previous research on FOMO

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(Dogan, 2019), suggesting that individuals' need to construe their own identity (self-construal theory) plays a more significant role in shaping their FOMO-related experience than the need for social belonging (social conformity theory).

This study also sought to uncover whether certain combinations of FOMO content and endorsers are more effective in eliciting strong emotional responses, thereby influencing intentions to visit or recommend the place featured in the reviews. Influencers are the least effective endorsers of travel content on social media, as both FOMO and non-FOMO appeals generate consistently weaker behavioral responses. Interestingly, travelers and friends have significantly different effects on audiences' behaviors when sharing reviews, depending on whether those reviews are delivered in a FOMO tone or not. When the content adopts a FOMO tone, the influence of travelers' reviews significantly surpasses that of friends and family members regarding driving visit intentions. This indicates that travelers, when positioned as endorsers, can effectively leverage FOMO to evoke a sense of urgency and desire in potential visitors, making them more compelling advocates for the destination. Audiences are also more inclined to recommend a place when it is presented by travelers using FOMO-laden content, highlighting the power of user-generated content (UGC) in the context of social media. Conversely, it is noteworthy that the intention to recommend declines substantially when audiences are exposed to FOMO content shared by friends or family compared to non-FOMO content. This decline may suggest that while personal connections are typically influential, the pressure and urgency associated with FOMO do not translate as effectively when the endorsers are familiar figures, potentially due to a perceived lack of urgency or novelty in their recommendations. This nuanced understanding of how different types of endorsers interact with FOMO content can inform marketing strategies aimed at

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maximizing audience engagement and behavioral intentions through targeted social media campaigns.

Ultimately, understanding these interaction effects is crucial for developing effective marketing strategies that leverage social media dynamics. By identifying the most impactful combinations of content and endorsers, marketers can tailor their approaches to better resonate with audiences, heightening their emotional engagement and motivating them to act on their intentions. This investigation into the nuances of FOMO content and its endorsement offers valuable insights into the complex interplay of social influence and emotional drivers in shaping consumer behavior in the context of travel and social media.

Theoretical and practical implications

The current research findings carry several theoretical implications contributing to a growing body of knowledge on using FOMO appeals to drive audience responses on social media. The results support and extend theoretical perspectives of self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 2013) that feeling left out of experiences one's social circle partakes in triggers a sense of urgency or scarcity that highlights one's deficiencies and threats to one's need to belong. By appealing to audiences' fear of missing out, FOMO-laden social media content can activate these fundamental human motives to take action to satisfy psychological needs. While earlier studies have primarily examined how social factors and influences affect audiences, this study advances our understanding of personal factors by dissecting their impact on the influence process into distinct components of personal FOMO. It also contributes to the development of theories in the tourism and hospitality contexts, such as the Self-Determination Theory, in the context of determining travel decisions in the era of social media, which causes netizens to be vulnerable to FOMO. Building on the existing focus of tourism studies on consumer well-

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being and satisfaction (Uslu and Caber, 2022; Uslu and Tosun, 2024; Kurniawan and Susilo, 2024; Tandon et al., 2021), understanding the psychological impacts of FOMO on consumers will contribute to the advancement of theory by incorporating considerations of consumer well-being.

This study offers insights into the role of endorsers who share FOMO-laden content and the impact on travel decisions, thus contributing to the expanding body of literature on social media influencer marketing within the travel industry. While the role of celebrities and KOLs has received considerable attention, the influence of non-celebrity or non-KOL social media endorsers, such as friends and family, remains relatively understudied. Despite the potential significance of their influence, this aspect has been largely overlooked in existing research, despite the implications highlighted by the Social Networking Theory. Therefore, this study addresses this research gap by providing nuanced insights into travel-related influencer marketing, shedding light on the role and impact of non-celebrity social media users in shaping travel decisions and behavior. Additionally, our study represents one of the initial attempts to experimentally examine differences in audiences' responses to FOMO content shared by various endorsers. Previous research has primarily concentrated on the overall impact of content endorser types, disregarding the effects of FOMO message appeals.

The findings of this study carry significant practical implications for marketers and content creators in the travel industry. By dissecting the influence of personal FOMO into distinct components, marketers can tailor their strategies to evoke specific emotional responses that resonate more deeply with their target audiences. From a managerial perspective, the finding that anticipated elation does not significantly impact social FOMO suggests that tourism marketers may need to reconsider strategies that rely heavily on creating emotional anticipation as a way to drive FOMO and engagement. Instead,

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marketing efforts might focus on other aspects that could enhance social FOMO more directly, such as emphasizing exclusivity, limited availability, or social validation. Moreover, since emotional responses like elation do not automatically lead to FOMO, managers could consider segmenting their audience by psychological traits or social media behaviors to tailor their campaigns. For instance, campaigns could leverage testimonials or influencer partnerships that resonate more strongly with audiences prone to FOMO, potentially enhancing engagement without relying solely on anticipated emotions. This study underscores the need to consider the type of endorsers used in social media campaigns. Moreover, The decision to employ a FOMO tone should be made thoughtfully, taking into account the types of endorsers used. Our study suggests that travelers and friends have a more significant impact than influencers, particularly when FOMO appeal is involved. This insight encourages brands to leverage relatable endorsers who can authentically communicate the excitement of travel experiences. By utilizing real travelers or even satisfied customers to share their stories, brands can create a sense of urgency and connection that encourages audiences to engage with their content and ultimately make travel decisions. In conclusion, this study's practical implications emphasize the necessity for marketers to adopt a more nuanced understanding of emotional triggers in their strategies. By focusing on personal elation, employing relatable endorsers, and carefully crafting the FOMO tone of their content, travel brands can enhance their influence over audience behavior, ultimately driving engagement and increasing the likelihood of travel decisions.

Limitations and future research directions

It is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this study, which can serve as potential avenues for future research. This lack of significance found in this research suggests that the dynamics between anticipated emotional responses and social FOMO may vary across

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contexts, and it would be beneficial to explore these relationships further in different tourism settings or with diverse sample groups. Future studies could investigate whether specific types of tourism experiences—such as adventure, cultural, or luxury travel—might elicit stronger associations between anticipated elation and social FOMO. Additionally, examining other psychological or contextual factors, like personality traits, social media usage intensity, or cultural influences, could yield insights into why anticipated elation does not always translate into heightened FOMO. Understanding these nuances could offer a more comprehensive perspective on how emotions influence social FOMO in tourism contexts, ultimately aiding in the development of targeted marketing strategies that resonate with various traveler motivations. There is insufficient research on FOMO-driven content's long-term effects on consumers' travel behaviors. While FOMO may initially drive consumers to particular destinations, the effects of repeated exposure to such content and the potential for resulting desensitization have not been thoroughly studied. Moreover, social media platforms differ in their user demographics and content types, possibly affecting the degree and nature of FOMO experienced by users. Limited studies have attempted to examine FOMO appeals in popular video content. Nevertheless, this study did not examine the role of different social media platforms in propagating FOMO-laden content and influencing travel decisions. Future studies are needed to dissect the impact of platform differences on FOMO-driven travel decisions.

Conclusions

Firstly, our study provides empirical support for the previous finding that FOMO-laden social media content exerts a more substantial influence on travel decisions than non-FOMO-laden content. Secondly, we found that although the influence of FOMO-laden content primarily stems from two underlying processes (personal FOMO and social

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FOMO), the impact of FOMO emotion and subsequent behaviors are mainly driven by personal FOMO. Thirdly, we discovered that the impact of influencer-generated FOMO content is less pronounced across both FOMO and non-FOMO content. Friends and family are more influential when using non-FOMO content, whereas the influence of fellow travelers is more significant in a FOMO tone. Thus, our research contributes to the existing literature on the influence of different types of endorsers using FOMO-laden content on social media in shaping travel decisions.

To summarize, while the importance of FOMO in influencing consumer behavior and the role of influencers in the travel industry are established, research gaps exist. These include the role of non-influencer social media endorsers, the relative influence of different social media actors, the effect of different social media platforms, and the long-term effects of FOMO-driven content. This study filled gaps in understanding the varying influence of different social media endorsers when they use FOMO and non-FOMO appeals. Addressing remaining gaps can provide a more comprehensive understanding of FOMO message appeal in shaping travel behaviors and inform more effective influencer marketing strategies in the travel industry.

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Table 1. Profile of the respondents

Demographic Variables	Category	Study 1 (n = 238) Frequency (%)	Study 2 (n = 600) Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	113 (43%)	281 (47%)
	Female	123 (57%)	319 (53%)
Age	18 - 25	63 (27%)	72 (12%)
	26 - 30	103 (43%)	166 (28%)
	31 - 40	57 (24%)	314 (52%)
	41 - 50	10 (4%)	35 (6%)
	51 - 60	5 (2%)	13 (2%)
Education Level	Secondary or below	15 (6%)	12 (2%)
	Sub-degree	27 (11%)	58 (10%)
	Degree	183 (77%)	472 (78%)
	Master's or above	13 (6%)	58 (10%)
Frequency of travel	Less than once a year	16 (7%)	18 (3%)
	Once a year	48 (20%)	77 (13%)
	2-3 times a year	136 (57%)	379 (63%)
	4 times or more a year	38 (16%)	126 (21%)

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Table 2. Reliability and validity of the constructs

Constructs and items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Anticipated elation (AE)		0.876	0.898	0.727
AE1	0.873			
AE2	0.882			
AE3	0.875			
AE4	0.776			
Anticipated envy (ENVY)		0.772	0.779	0.594
Envy1	0.735			
Envy2	0.822			
Envy3	0.726			
Envy4	0.796			
Social influence (SI)		0.898	0.901	0.83
SI1	0.905			
SI2	0.914			
SI3	0.915			
Personal FOMO (P-FOMO)		0.889	0.892	0.693
P-FOMO1	0.816			
P-FOMO2	0.814			
P-FOMO3	0.864			
P-FOMO4	0.879			
P-FOMO5	0.788			
Social FOMO (S-FOMO)		0.898	0.901	0.831
S-FOMO1	0.909			
S-FOMO2	0.925			
S-FOMO3	0.901			
Visit intention (VI)		0.835	0.843	0.752
VI1	0.876			
VI2	0.900			
VI3	0.824			
Recommendation intention (RI)		0.732	0.733	0.652
RI1	0.749			
RI2	0.846			
RI3	0.825			

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Table 3. Discriminant validity (HTMT)

	AE	ENVY	SI	P-FOMO	S-FOMO	VI	RI
Anticipated Elation (AE)							
Anticipated Envy (ENVY)	0.562						
Social influence (SI)	0.484	0.519					
Personal FOMO (P-FOMO)	0.428	0.696	0.443				
Social FOMO (S-FOMO)	0.164	0.623	0.197	0.609			
Visit intention (VI)	0.677	0.605	0.637	0.518	0.224		
Recommendation intention (RI)	0.643	0.677	0.683	0.502	0.253	0.870	

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Table 4. Summary of PLS-SEM path analysis

	Hypothesis	Path coefficients	t-statistics	p-values	Supported?
Anticipated elation -> Personal FOMO	H1a	0.205	7.105	0.000	Yes
Anticipated elation -> Social FOMO	H1b	-0.024	0.820	0.412	No
Anticipated envy -> Personal FOMO	H2a	0.401	14.400	0.000	Yes
Anticipated envy -> Social FOMO	H2b	0.415	14.411	0.000	Yes
Social influence -> Personal FOMO	H3a	0.102	3.082	0.002	Yes
Social influence -> Social FOMO	H3b	0.164	4.945	0.000	Yes
Personal FOMO -> Intention to visit	H4a	0.476	14.773	0.000	Yes
Personal FOMO -> Intention to recommend	H4b	0.562	19.117	0.000	Yes
Social FOMO -> Intention to visit	H5a	0.105	3.065	0.002	Yes
Social FOMO -> Intention to recommend	H5b	0.059	2.102	0.036	Yes

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Table 5. one-way ANCOVA results (hypothesis H6: FOMO vs. non-FOMO content)

Dependent variables	Content	Mean	SD	ANCOVA		
				F-value	sig.	η^2
Anticipated elation	FOMO	5.55	1.05	8.615	0.003	0.014
	Non-FOMO	5.26	1.25			
Anticipated envy	FOMO	3.97	1.19	5.517	0.019	0.009
	Non-FOMO	3.74	1.16			
Social influence	FOMO	5.30	1.10	0.096	0.756	0.000
	Non-FOMO	5.27	1.08			
Personal FOMO	FOMO	4.21	1.33	3.170	0.024	0.012
	Non-FOMO	4.18	1.27			
Social FOMO	FOMO	2.62	1.48	1.488	0.223	0.002
	Non-FOMO	2.49	1.37			
Visit intention	FOMO	5.65	0.89	8.241	0.004	0.014
	Non-FOMO	5.41	1.01			
Recommendation	FOMO	5.32	1.18	4.223	0.040	0.007
	Non-FOMO	5.11	1.24			

The analysis included age, gender, and education level as covariates.

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Table 6. Two-way ANCOVA results (hypothesis H7: interaction of endorser x content)

Dependent variables	Endorser type	Content				ANCOVA (endorser x content)		
		FOMO		Non-FOMO				
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F-value	sig.	η^2
Visit intention	Influencer	5.46	1.04	5.19	1.12	1.844	0.159	0.006
	Traveler	5.81	0.85	5.41	0.93			
	Friend/family	5.69	0.76	5.63	0.95			
Recommendation	Influencer	5.12	1.30	4.75	1.38	3.105	0.046	0.010
	Traveler	5.47	1.22	5.10	1.24			
	Friend/family	5.37	1.01	5.48	0.97			

The analysis included age, gender, and education level as covariates.

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Figure 1: The theoretical framework

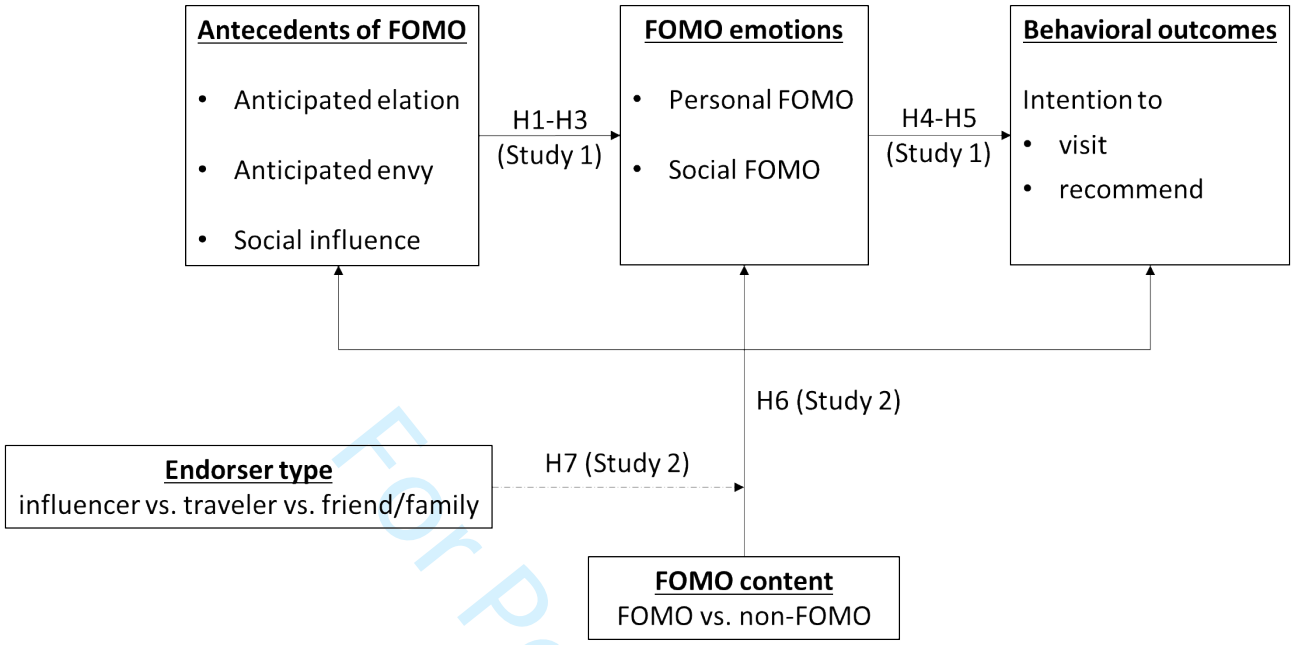

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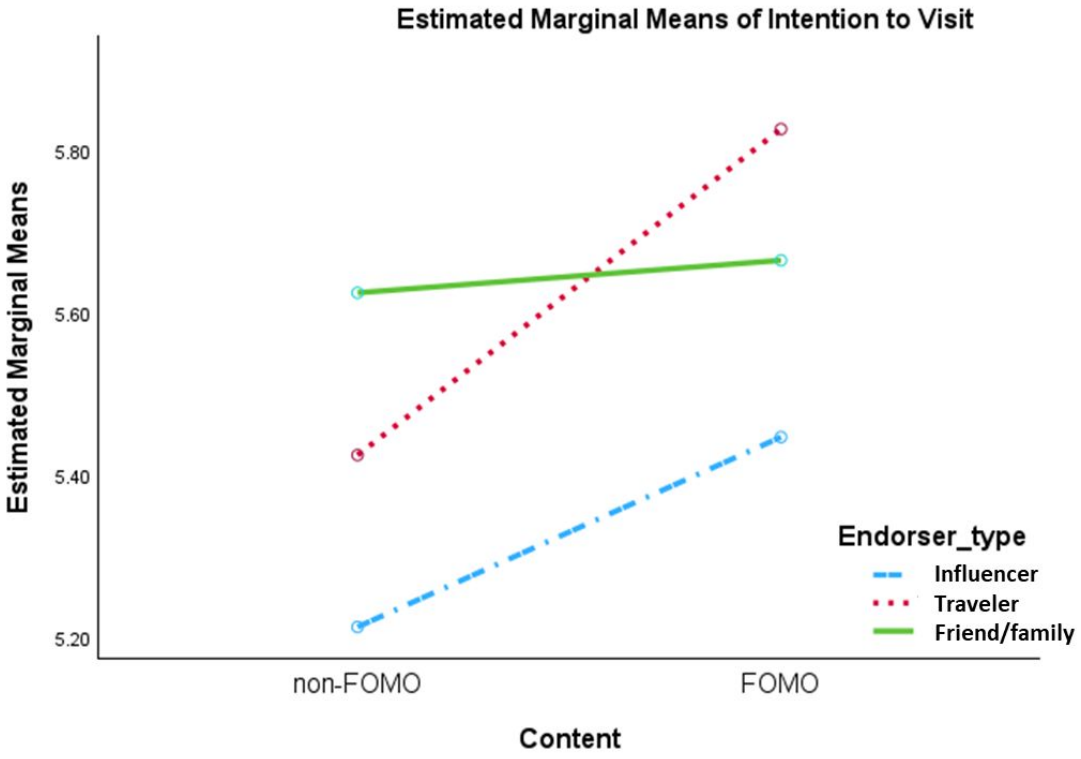
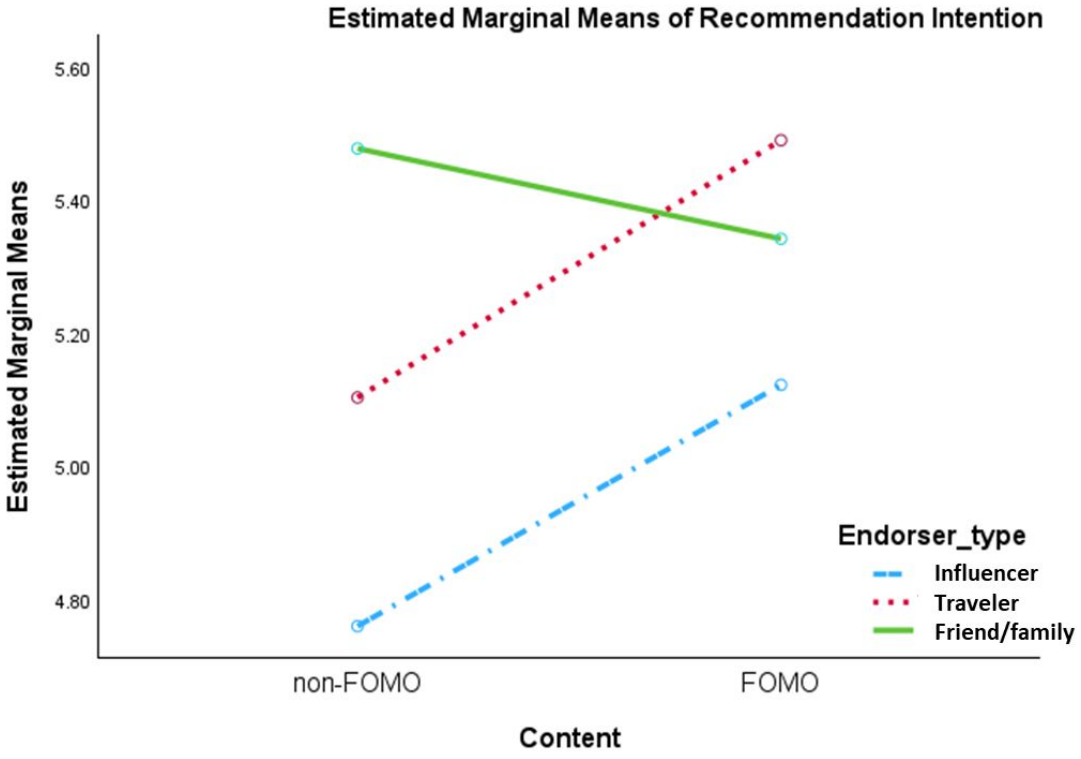
Figure 2: The interaction effects of content and endorser on behavior intentions





Appendix A – Measurement items

Constructs	Items	Source(s)
Anticipated Elation	If I travel to the featured place, _____ AE1: I expect I would feel elated AE2: I anticipate I would feel excited AE3: I would feel exhilarated AE4: I expect I would feel happy about going	Brandstätter and Kriz (2001)
Anticipated Envy	If I travel to the featured place, _____ Envy1: people close to me will be jealous I got to go Envy2: people close to me will envy me because I got to go Envy3: people who don't go will be jealous Envy4: people who don't go will envy me	Good and Hyman (2020)
Social influence	SI1: People around me are involved in similar travel SI2: My neighbors participate in similar travel SI3: My relatives/friends are involved in similar travel	Wu et al. (2021)
Personal FOMO	P-FOMO1: I feel anxious when I do not experience similar travel P-FOMO2: I believe I am falling behind compared with others when I miss the featured travel experience P-FOMO3: I feel anxious because I know something important or fun must happen when I miss a similar travel experience P-FOMO4: I feel sad if I am not capable of participating in similar travel experience due to constraints of other things P-FOMO5: I feel regretful for missing a similar travel experience	Zhang et al. (2020)
Social FOMO	S-FOMO1: I think my social groups view me as unimportant when I miss similar travel experience S-FOMO2: I think I do not fit in social groups when I miss similar travel experience S-FOMO3: I feel ignored or forgotten by my social groups when I miss similar travel experience	Zhang et al. (2020)
Intention to visit	VI1: I consider the featured place as my first choice compared to other places VI2: I have a strong intention to visit the featured place on my coming trip VI3: I have a strong intention to visit the featured place in the near future	Papadimitriou et al. (2015)
Intention to recommend	RI1: I would say something positive about the featured place to other people RI2: I would recommend that someone go to the featured place for travel RI3: I would encourage friends and relatives to go to the featured place for travel	Papadimitriou et al. (2015)

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Appendix B – The stimuli of Study 2

Endorser: influencer (left), traveler (middle), friend/family (right)

FOMO-laden content:

Food that one shouldn't miss when traveling in city X

Food that one shouldn't miss when traveling in city X 🔥

🍳🍜🧋 must-eat food 📷 popular spots for shots

Endorser: influencer (left), traveler (middle), friend/family (right)

Non-FOMO-laden content:

Food guide road map for traveling in city X

What are the cuisines of city X? 🔥

🍳🍜🧋 food guide 📍 popular spots direction map