EVALUATION OF TOURIST EXPERIENCE WITH FoMO AND JoMO CONCEPTS: A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

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Abstract

Purpose – The excessive use of the internet and social media tools can lead to feelings of anxiety and stress. The inability to satisfy basic psychological needs may trigger the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). In contrast to FoMO, when individuals purposefully detach from technology, it is referred to as the Joy of Missing Out (JoMO). The aim of the research is to investigate tourist experience through the concepts of FoMO and JoMO within the framework of Self Determination Theory and to explore which concept resonates more strongly with tourists during their travel experiences.
Methodology/Design/Approach – Semi-structured interviews were employed as the data collection method to gain in-depth insights into travelers' experiences and emotions. The study's data collection process involved a comprehensive application of thematic analysis to interpret participant responses.
Findings – This research reveals that social media posts are perceived as indicators of social status. From the perspective of self-determination theory, when social relationship needs are not met, individuals' life satisfaction is negatively impacted.
Originality of the research – This research highlights the influence of social media content on vacation choices and underscores the importance of social relationships in avoiding the negative effects of excessive social media use.
Keywords FoMO, JoMO, Tourist Experience, Self Determination Theory

Original scientific paper
Received 14 March 2025
Revised 28 April 2025
05 July 2025
07 August 2025
26 September 2025
Accepted 30 September 2025
https://doi.org/10.20867/thm.32.3.5

INTRODUCTION

People experience various fears that can shape their emotions, behaviors, and overall lifestyle. Przybylski et al. (2013) describe *FoMO*, the fear of missing out, as a modern form of anxiety closely linked to frequent internet and social media use. Since this concern stems from the belief that others might be engaging in rewarding experiences in one's absence, individuals feel compelled to remain updated on others' activities to avoid missing out. Heightened anxiety reinforces this tendency, prompting more frequent checking of social media and other online platforms, which in turn contributes to greater smartphone use and overall online activity. FoMO promotes social comparison, often resulting in excessive internet and smartphone use, and has been linked to various psychopathological symptoms (Casale & Fioraventi, 2020; Elhai et al., 2020; Dhir et al., 2018; Wegmann et al., 2017). While social media platforms may give chance to individuals to have social connections, FoMO commonly mediates the relationship between individual characteristics and social media participation (Oberst et al., 2017). In response to the negative consequences of FoMO, the concept of Joy of Missing Out (JoMO) has emerged as a potential counterbalance.

While FoMO is characterized by anxiety and compulsive behaviors driven by the fear of being left out, JoMO highlights a sense of calm and fulfillment that comes from deliberate disconnection and mindful living. JoMO challenges the societal norm of constant connectivity and questions the necessity of following every trend or event. Individuals experiencing FoMO often report that digital disconnection may be advantageous (Rautela & Sharma, 2022). Empirical evidence suggests that excessive social media use increases the risk of depression and reduces social capability (Stead & Bibby, 2017), whereas limiting smartphone usage is associated with improved well-being (Eitan & Gazit, 2023). Although FoMO and JoMO have been examined in psychology and marketing literature (Neumann, 2020; İlyas et al., 2022; Erciş, Deligöz, & Mutlu, 2021), their application within tourism research remains limited (Zaman et al., 2022a). This research gap emphasizes the importance of understanding how these emotional constructs influence tourist behavior.

Social media platforms are transforming the tourism sector by altering how individuals search for, discover, and evaluate travel information, plan and organize trips, experience destinations, co-create travel experiences, and reflect on and share their journeys (Sigala, 2019). Wut, Lee & Wan (2024) found that exposure to FoMO-driven content significantly increases individuals' travel intentions compared to neutral content. Likewise, Lee, Wut & Wan (2024) reported that FoMO-based reviews, especially those shared by influencers or fellow travellers, exert a stronger impact on travel-related decisions.

This study employs Self-Determination Theory as a framework to examine visitor experiences through the dual perspectives of JoMO and FoMO.According to Deci and Ryan (2012), Self-Determination Theory asserts that when people's fundamental psychological needs are not satisfied, harmful behaviors result. Ulucan (2024) argues that FoMOurists are motivated by the psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. These individuals pursue unique travel experiences to achieve independence, participate in adventurous activities to demonstrate competence, and engage with social media to satisfy social connection and validation needs. The relevance of Self-Determination Theory to tourism research is underscored by its focus on individual autonomy and personal growth (Buzinde, 2020). Lo and McKercher (2015) further noted that tourism can provide travelers with social recognition among peers.

This study aims to enlighten how FoMO and JoMO, as related yet contrasting constructs, influence emotional responses and behaviors in tourism settings. Although FoMO has been widely studied in relation to digital behaviors, the combined impact of FoMO and JoMO on travel experiences stays limited. While previous quantitative studies have established prevalence, a qualitative approach is required to capture the complexity of tourists' emotional and behavioral experiences (Osman, Brown, & Phung, 2020). Few investigations have addressed the interaction between digital connectivity, FoMO, and JoMO in shaping travel perspectives (Lyu, 2016; Gretzel, 2017). Understanding this relationship is essential for developing tourism practices that address travelers' psychological needs. Through qualitative analysis, this research offers practical insights for stakeholders aiming to balance connectivity and mindful disconnection, thereby enhancing tourist satisfaction, well-being, and overall experience in the digital era.

1. TOURISM AND FoMO/JoMO

The tourism sector has seen digital upheavals as a result of technological advancements. Hotels, travel companies, and service providers primarily deliver their goods and services through online platforms and mobile applications. The demand and expectations of tourists are impacted by social media comments made about travel firms, lodging facilities, or attractions (De Bruyn & Lilien, 2008). These platforms are used by tourism-related enterprises to advertise and promote their services, products, and offerings (Özhasar, Oğuz, & Yılmaz, 2020). Individuals who manage social media complaints and recommendations regarding travel-related products and services may also be motivated to participate in such experiences, as social media content and images can evoke strong emotional responses. In the post-consumption stage, FoMO may further stimulate travel demand as an emotional reaction, leading to constructive behavioral decisions (Song, Wang, & Guo, 2023).

In the context of tourism, FoMO reflects travelers' inclination to pursue similar destinations and experiences after being exposed to others' vacation photos online (Zaman, 2024). Its influence extends across both the pre-purchase and post-purchase stages of travel-related decisions (Song, Wang, & Guo, 2023). Three predecessors, including electronic word-of-mouth, reference groups, and perceived loneliness, influence the concept of FoMO, even though it first appears in the context of travel. These factors motivate individuals to plan trips, seek travel-related information, and validate their social status (Kurniawan & Susilo, 2024). Tan et al. (2023) indicated FoMO moderates the relationship between negative experiences and revisit intentions at music festivals, with higher levels of FoMO intensifying the detrimental effect of such experiences on the likelihood of returning.The concept of FoMO can be utilized as a marketing strategy to increase travel intention, and tourism organizations/ businesses can leverage it to attract potential visitors and design promotions and offers accordingly by understanding and anticipating customers' FoMO-related behaviours (Harahap et al., 2024).

Although FoMO has been extensively studied in psychology, business management, and marketing, its role in the tourism sector remains underexplored (Zaman et al., 2022b). Uslu and Tosun (2024) found that FoMO positively influences learning motivation; individuals with a strong drive for continuous learning are more susceptible to FoMO, as this motivation is linked to intrinsic aspirations such as personal growth and the need for competence. These findings provide a novel perspective by framing FoMO as a self-regulatory emotion that can enhance intentions to visit destinations.

Recent studies have highlighted the influence of social media on vacation purchase intentions (Özhasar, Oğuz, & Yılmaz, 2020; Çetinkaya & Şahbaz, 2019; Biçer & Yıldız, 2022). Karaca and Akın (2024) explored the impact of travel influencers on social media and found that the credibility, interest, and personal image representation of prominent influencers have a positive effect on both individual and social FoMO. Individuals who frequently purchase branded goods or engage in conspicuous consumption often experience heightened anxiety when they are inactive on social media. The addictive nature and negative consequences of excessive internet and social media use have fostered a growing inclination to disconnect from these platforms. The pervasive saturation of technology has prompted many to seek temporary reprieves, with some even aspiring to achieve complete freedom from the pressures it generates (Putra, 2019). Especially, individuals with a high level of mindfulness may control social media flow without the development of addictive use tendencies. According to Brailovskaia and Margraf (2024), the preventive benefits of mindfulness may be particularly significant for young people who have a propensity for high levels of FoMO. As a result, mindfulness training is being considered as a possible measure to lessen compulsive social media use. Wojcieszak-Zbierska (2023) found that students often take short vacations in locations with limited or no internet connectivity. This aligns with the emerging concept of JoMO, which promotes intentional digital disconnection as a source of joy and mental well-being. Instead of selecting Instagram-worthy destinations, many travelers prefer low-traffic places and off-peak seasons (Jacobsen, 2021). JoMO embodies a conscious choice to prioritize joy, presence, and mindfulness over anxiety and comparison (Al-Aufar, 2024).

Individuals who experience JoMO, demonstrate a reduced concern for their peers' activities on social media; when exposed to posts depicting enjoyable experiences, they tend to acknowledge their own situational limitations and exhibit a preference for returning to their daily routines and fulfilling their life obligations (Aurel & Paramita, 2021). Contrary to common assumptions, JoMO-driven consumers may actually spend more, as they view consumption as a source of personal enjoyment rather than a means of social comparison. In contrast, FoMO can have a detrimental psychological impact, and marketing strategies that rely on it may not always be effective. Conversely, JoMO enables customers to experience greater happiness when purchasing goods or services (Jacobsen, 2021). Marketing campaigns have begun to reflect this shift. For example, Domino's Pizza's 'You are good right where you are. Say no to FoMO and try JoMO'. IKEA's 'The Place to Be' encourages mindfulness and present-moment awareness (Tan, Tjiptono & Tan, 2024). These messages encourage gratitude, authenticity, and a deeper appreciation for personal choices. The concept of digital-free tourism first emerged at luxury resorts in the United Kingdom and North America, where high-end travel packages were designed to help tourists disconnect from the internet. These offerings, commonly known as "digital downtime" or "black hole" resorts, allow travelers to disconnect from constant connectivity and fully immerse themselves in their surroundings (Li, Pearce & Low, 2018; Putra, 2019). Putra (2019) described JoMO travel trends as being closely associated with fundamental travel motivations such as escape and relaxation, which underpin the broader travel career pattern. This concept offers elements of novelty, emotional support, and rejuvenation, while addressing deeper, secondary motivations such as isolation, self-actualization, and autonomy. It reflects a growing desire to vacation in digital-free environments, where individuals seek meaningful experiences and interactions, often enriched by, yet consciously distanced from, constant technological engagement. The philosophy of JoMO is particularly well-suited to less crowded destinations, often found in peripheral areas such as coastal and rural environments. JoMO is most effective as a short-term digital disconnect, especially within the framework of slow tourism (Fusté-Forné & Hussain, 2021). Fusté-Forné and Hussain (2021) found that JoMO is associated with activities that generate "intellectual memories," fostering a sense of personal fulfillment. Visitors' backgrounds and their pursuit of meaningful, memorable experiences are key motivators behind JoMO practices, which in turn contribute to community development within rural tourism settings. JoMO aligns well with destinations that offer seclusion from the crowds while still providing comfort and a cosmopolitan lifestyle. Non-traditional accommodations, such as nature lodges and Japan's ryokans, have seen remarkable growth (up to 700% in 2018), highlighting a growing interest in unique stays. Visiting such places offers travellers a refreshing escape from their daily routines and a chance to experience something new (Putra, 2019).

Djafarova and Kim's (2025) research highlights that FoMO significantly influences behaviours such as travel choices and tourist activity. The pressure to share visually appealing moments online has led to a rise in FoMO-driven travel, where shareability often takes precedence over cultural depth. While this trend is reshaping tourism, its long-term impact on traveller satisfaction and destination marketing remains unclear. In contrast, it is explained that JoMO offers a refreshing and underexplored perspective by emphasizing mental well-being, relaxation, and freedom from digital pressures. It opens new avenues for tourism, such as digital detox retreats, mindfulness-focused travel, and experiences centred on presence and reflection rather than online validation. These JoMO-inspired experiences attract travelers who seek deeper and more meaningful connections with their journeys (Djafarova & Kim, 2025).

2. SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY

Self-Determination Theory posits that individuals have three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy entails feeling in control of one's behaviors and goals, and the theory explains that autonomously motivated behavior is likely to result in better adoption and maintenance, as well as a more positive well-being state. The degree of autonomy motivation varies depending on the support received from the social environment in meeting basic psychological needs (Stenberg, Gillison, & Rodham, 2022). Additionally, relatedness includes sentiments of connection and belonging, whereas competence is having faith in one's ability to succeed (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Jeno, Egelandsdal, & Grytnes, 2022). Meeting these needs supports psychological well-being, while their deprivation prevents optimal functioning (Knittle, Fidrich, & Hankonen, 2023). Zeigler-Hill and Dehoghi (2023) explained that in cases where these needs are not met, strong and consistent relationships with narcissism may emerge. Self-Determination Theory assumes that individual growth and development are shaped by the interaction between a development-oriented personality and the surrounding social environment (Ahshanul Mamun, 2023), emphasizing that human nature inherently requires activity and that individuals are motivated to grow, learn, and change (Pynnönen et al., 2023). Moreover, the theory defines individuals' motivation as either intrinsic or extrinsic. While intrinsic motivation involves engaging in inherently exciting or rewarding activities, extrinsic motivation requires following actions due to external factors (Ahshanul Mamun, 2023) and is mostly performed as a means to achieve a goal (Wang & Demerin, 2023).

Self-Determination Theory offers a robust, widely recognized, and evidence-based framework for examining how emerging forms of travel may contribute to individual well-being (Buzinde, 2020). Li et al (2024) indicated that if the requirements of self-determination theory are satisfied, it may enhance visitors' sentiments toward vacations. They explained these requirements in the context of tourism as follows: a tourist's autonomy is shaped by the freedom to choose their itinerary and accommodations, allowing them to make independent decisions that enrich their travel experience. Competence reflects the desire to feel capable and effective in one's surroundings; this need is often fulfilled through activities like exploring nature or engaging with diverse cultures, which allow travellers to demonstrate and develop their skills, resulting in personal growth and satisfaction. Relatedness, the need for meaningful social connections, is met through interactions with locals, travel staff, and companions, helping tourists build relationships and feel a sense of belonging during their journey. In the context of tourism, holiday travel offers experiences that fulfil psychological needs, leading to enhanced hedonic and eudemonic well-being.

When consumers' psychological needs are met, they are more inclined to return to the destination and share positive recommendations with others (Kim, 2026).On the other hand, unfamiliar destinations can reduce tourists' sense of comfort and control, leading to a decrease in participation in tourism activities. This, in turn, can affect the overall quality and satisfaction of their travel experiences. Interpersonal interactions during travel help meet the need for social connection and support tourists' sense of control (Lin, Zhang & Gursoy, 2022).

FoMO can be seen as a link between deficiencies in psychological needs and increased social media use (Przybylski et al., 2013). The connection between Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and FoMO (Przybylski et al., 2013) lies in individuals' need for relatedness. Although the Self-Determination Theory emphasizes the importance of genuine social connections, FoMO reflects an attempt to fulfill this need through online interactions. Alt (2015) demonstrated that FoMO plays a significant role in explaining social media use, extending beyond individual factors, such as levels of need satisfaction. Individuals who have not satisfied their basic emotional needs may tend to use social media tools more intensively because these tools allow them to socialize, even online. It is believed that social competence can be developed through socialization and interaction. When basic emotional needs are not met, social competence cannot be achieved, and it is possible to instill a dread of losing communication and connection. By increasing autonomy through personal choice, enhancing competence through skill development without outside validation, and promoting relatedness through meaningful connections with oneself and one's surroundings, self-determination theory largely aligns with the JoMO concept. This relationship is characterized by a higher sense of fulfillment and life satisfaction (Tan, Tjiptono & Tan, 2024). In this context, the present study aims to address the following research questions:

- How does the tourist experience differ for individuals who experience FoMO or JoMO?
- Does the concept of social status influence tourists' preferences for tourism products and services?
- Do vacation-related social media posts impact individuals' life satisfaction?

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Context

This qualitative study was conducted in İstanbul/Türkiye with 16 participants. Türkiye is among the countries experiencing growing challenges related to excessive internet and social media usage. Social media addiction and problematic internet use are on the rise both in Türkiye and globally. Kırık et al (2015) conducted research in Türkiye, and they indicated that social media addiction level shows a dramatic increase, and also daily time spent on the Internet increases. Bozanta and Mardıkyan (2017) emphasized the importance of social media in supporting educational communication and collaboration between students and faculty members. It is often viewed as a problem of the young generation, but the issue stems from the frequency of daily use. Patria and Rahtomo (2020) included university students to their research and revealed that Generation Z students show high levels of dependence or compulsive behavior towards their smartphones to access the latest information on social media, in order not to miss a moment or important data and this situation reveals the FoMO concept; students are also more inclined to look for and share information with others, including on tourism experiences and places, according to the study. The important part of understanding excessive internet use lies in the framework of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). According to this theory, if an individual can meet the basic psychological needs, they will not feel the need to socialize online, and the rate of feeling social media addiction will remain low. In this context, to understand the effect of social media use on tourist experience, this study was conducted in light of the self-determination theory.

3.2 Research Design

The aim of this study is to investigate the concepts of JoMO and FoMO in relation to travel experiences by using a qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research is particularly suitable for exploring individual experiences, meanings, and perspectives; it provides detailed insights that quantitative methods may overlook (Hammarberg, Kirkman & Lacey, 2016). Laachach, Mumtaz, and Andaloussi (2024) emphasized the importance of qualitative research by explaining how it effectively captures the complex and detailed aspects of tourism experiences. Quader, Hassan, and Mahbub (2025) proposed that qualitative research can improve reliability by examining the coherence of answers to related questions and evaluating the extent to which these responses reflect the core issues being explored.

The semi-structured interview method was chosen for data collection as it allows for flexibility in exploring participants' perspectives while maintaining a structured emphasis on the research objectives (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Bailey (1987, 1994) demonstrated the advantages of interview studies, such as flexibility, response rate, nonverbal behavior, control over the environment, question order, spontaneity, completeness, time of interview, and greater complexity of the questionnaire. Through semi-structured interviews, the study investigated which ideas resonate more with travelers during their travel experiences. Numerous researchers have evaluated the concepts of FoMO and JoMO in various disciplines using quantitative surveys. As Osman, Brown, and Phung (2020) noted, "*insight into the behavior and attitudes of tourists is difficult to gain in a quantitative approach*," the semi-structured interview method was chosen to provide an understanding of the experiences, motivations, emotions, and feelings of travelers.

The interview questions were developed based on a comprehensive literature review of FoMO, JoMO, and tourist experiences (Przybylski et al., 2013; Rautela & Sharma, 2022; Tandon et al., 2021; Diener et al., 1985). A total of ten open-ended questions were designed to capture participants' experiences, emotions, and reflections. During the interviews, additional probing questions were asked to elicit richer and more detailed responses where necessary.

3.3 Sampling and Data Collection

A purposive sampling strategy was applied to select participants who met the following criteria: being at least 18 years old, active users of social media and the internet, having traveled at least once in the past year, and being willing to participate voluntarily. A total of 16 participants meeting these criteria were recruited. The interviews were conducted in person between December 24, 2024, and January 15, 2025. Each interview lasted approximately 20 to 30 minutes. All interviews were conducted in Turkish, audio-recorded with participants' consent, and subsequently transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were then translated into English by the author, with verification by a faculty member from the English Translation and Interpreting Department to ensure linguistic accuracy. The Istanbul Gelisim University Ethics Committee approved the suitability of the questions' ethics. Participants were informed about the research's objectives, confidentiality measures, and their right to withdraw at any time. Participant numbers were used to categorize the information submitted by the participants. The data collection process involved a thorough examination and application of the thematic analysis technique to the participant responses. The data collection process was deemed to have ended when participants started to give similar answers, indicating that data saturation had been achieved (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006).

3.4 Data Analysis

The method of analysis used in the research was a hybrid approach combining qualitative methods, specifically thematic analysis. Thematic analysis signifies an interactive process of interpreting a set of messages, with a thematic structure as the typical outcome (Neuendorf, 2018), and it identifies the themes that are important in describing the phenomenon under study (Joffe, 2011). Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) describe it as '*a form of pattern recognition within the data, where emerging themes become the categories for analysis'*.

Table 1: **Indicative example of the data analysis process**

Excerpt	Initial coding	Themes	Concept
I want to learn what my friends doing on their vacations. If there are not posting anything, I ask them what are they doing, how are they spending their time. I want to be included happy time with my friends because of that I want to learn what are they doing. (P5)	FoMO	The Effect of FoMO on Tourist Experience	Overusing internet and social media
If I realize that I spend too much time on social media, I immediately put the phone down and focus on my vacation, because for me, the less I look at my phone, the more fun I am having. (P11)	JoMO	The Effect of JoMO on Tourist Experience	Having control on internet use
...Some of my friends think that If they have same vacations like some people in high society, they will be accepted to that society group. But people's intellectual level or economic level should support this manner. (P16)	Social Status	The Effect of Social Status idea on Tourist Experience	Following the trend products
When individuals see a post on social media, they accept as a real life so they start to question their own life. (P6)	Life Satisfaction	The Effect of Tourist Posts on Life Satisfaction	Feeling inadequate or incomplete

The hybrid approach of the research is grounded in Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), and a deductive coding scheme was used as a template (Crabtree & Miller, 1992). Additionally, the research employed an inductive approach (Boyatzis, 1998) by collecting data to inform the interpretation of the theory. In a thematic analysis, three levels of codes are generally recognized, ranging from the basic descriptive level to a more interpretative level (Terry et al., 2017). Braun and Clarke (2006) outlined a six-phase approach to thematic analysis. These steps include familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming them, and producing the report. In this research, firstly, tourist experience and the effect of tourist post were described, secondly, the interaction of FoMO and JoMO with tourist experience and the interaction of tourist post with life satisfaction were analyzed, and finally, this whole relationship (including social status, too) was interpreted.

4. FINDINGS

The participant profile is summarized as follows: Interviews were conducted with eight male and eight female participants. Thirteen held a university or graduate degree, while three had completed high school. Most participants were in their late 20s to early 30s, whereas the three high school graduates were over 50 years old.

Table 2: **Descriptive profile of participants**

No	Gender	Age	Education	Nationality	Marital Status
P1	Male	24	College	Türkiye	Single
P2	Male	56	High School Graduate	Türkiye	Married
P3	Male	27	College	Türkiye	Single
P4	Female	61	High School Graduate	Türkiye	Married
P5	Female	31	Master's	Türkiye	Single
P6	Female	55	High School Graduate	Türkiye	Married
P7	Male	30	Master's	Türkiye	Single
P8	Female	28	Master's	Türkiye	Single
P9	Female	30	College	İran	Single
P10	Female	29	College	İran	Single
P11	Male	28	Master's	Türkiye	Single
P12	Male	28	Master's	Türkiye	Single
P13	Female	27	College	Türkiye	Single
P14	Female	30	Master's	Türkiye	Married
P15	Male	31	College	Türkiye	Married
P16	Male	32	College	Türkiye	Married

4.1 Tourist Experience with FoMO

When tourists experience FoMO, they are motivated to replicate others' vacation experiences and visit the same destinations in order to avoid missing out on meaningful moments (Zaman, 2024). On the other hand, individuals may feel compelled to remain active on social media during their vacation to stay up-to-date with trends and social developments. To explore this, participants were asked about their frequency of social media usage during vacations.

> *I share the places and natural beauties I visit on vacation on my social media account, and my posting frequency increases as a result. (P1)*
> *I rarely post something on social media in my daily life… Most of my posts are shared when I'm on vacation. I use social media more on my vacations because I take more photos and videos and want to share them with others. So I spend more time on social media when I'm on vacation. (P3)*
> *I use social media much more, as I only share my vacation photos and videos. (P7)*
> *I share more photos and videos during my holidays because we're having good times together with family and friends, and I want to share them on social media. We're going to nightclubs, nice restaurants, beautiful places, and of course, taking lots of pictures and sharing them. (P14)*

Most participants reported a substantial increase in social media use during vacations, attributing this to the availability of more content to share. Higher engagement, such as increased likes and comments, further motivated their sharing behavior. Some participants indicated that this pattern resulted in continuous monitoring of social media, even during periods intended for leisure.

> *When I'm on holiday, I spend less time on social media because I focus on spending time with my family. (P4)*
> *I use social media less during my vacations. I do not share the places that I visited. I mostly spend time on social media at home...(P6)*

Participants over the age of 50 reported using social media more at home and less during vacations. In contrast, younger participants reported greater social media activity during travel, frequently capturing and posting photos and videos to monitor social interactions and responses. The Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and the concept of FoMO (Przybylski et al., 2013) intersect in the human desire for social connection. While Self-Determination Theory emphasizes the importance of fulfilling this need for connection, the use of social media as a means of achieving it has led to the emergence of the FoMO phenomenon. Participants appear to use vacation posts as a way to fulfill their need for social connection, suggesting that social media engagement during travel serves as a tool for meeting emotional needs.

Several participants identified social media posts as sources of inspiration, whereas others reported experiencing anxiety about missing significant events. Both responses are consistent with patterns associated with FoMO.

> *I don't compare my vacation to the vacation posts on social media, but I do take inspiration from them. (P2)*
> *When I see a post, I feel that I missed some important events, like a concert or a festival. However, I do not compare my holiday experience in a negative way; I think that I wish we could have been together there with my friends. (P3)*
> *...if you start comparing your holiday with others, you could be unhappy because on social media, it looks like everybody is on vacation forever. (P13)*

Most participants expressed a desire to be part of their social circle's vacation experiences. When this information was not available via social media, they frequently sought it directly from peers. This behavior exemplifies the central dynamic of FoMO, characterized by concern over missing valuable social interactions. Conversely, some participants expressed indifference toward others' posts, reporting acceptance of personal limitations and a preference for focusing on their own lives. This perspective is consistent with the JoMO concept, in which individuals experience contentment without the need for continual monitoring of others' activities.

> *I want to learn what my friends are doing on their vacations. If they are not posting anything, I ask them what they are doing, how they are spending their time. I want to be included in happy times with my friends, so I want to learn what they are doing. (P5)*
> *Yes, I'm curious about it. If they don't share any posts, I ask for them, and they send me the pics privately. (P7)*
> *Yes, I want to see the pictures or videos. If they are not posting, I ask for them. Because when they have a good time, I feel good too, I want to share that emotion. (P9)*

4.2 Tourist Experience with JoMO

The tourist experience associated with JoMO involves intentional disconnection from technology, including smartphones and social media. This approach is recognized as a prominent travel trend (Jacobsen, 2021), closely linked to mindfulness, and is regarded as a means of pursuing pleasure rather than fear (Al-Aufar, 2024). Participants were asked to describe their attitudes toward limited internet access during vacations.

> *The internet restriction during the holiday period affects me because I need the internet not only for social media use but also to stay informed about global news and to stay in touch with my loved ones. It bothers me to stay away from the agenda and news because the internet provides me with access to information. (P1)*
> *Well, it is important… Whenever I go abroad, I always buy international internet use, even though it is 1 GB. It is kind of an obligation for me to have internet. (P3)*
> *Internet connection is a must for me... If I have a problem with it, I would not prefer that place for my vacation. (P5)*
> *It would affect me positively. Because on my last vacation, there was a problem with Instagram, and my husband was happy about it. (P9)*
> *It is not so important to me; I can sleep, swim, and relax. (P10)*

Most participants considered internet access essential, not only for social media but also for remaining informed and maintaining communication. Although social media was not always the primary concern, the expectation of continuous online connectivity persisted. Only two participants (P9 and P10) reported positive attitudes toward disconnection, indicating that limited internet access enhanced their holiday experience. This response aligns with the JoMO perspective, in which individuals are comfortable being offline and prioritize present-moment engagement.

4.3 The Relation of Tourist Experience with Social Status

Yılmazdoğan, Özhasar, and Kılıç (2021) explained that FoMO influences individuals' vacation preferences, particularly within the context of conspicuous consumption and social visibility. They noted that the FoMO effect may drive participants to pursue tourism products and services perceived to enhance their social status and prestige. In this study, participants were asked whether they consider the social meaning of their vacation posts and how they perceive the reactions to them.

> *I believe that taking a holiday in popular holiday destinations is now perceived as a status indicator. If you go to those very expensive places and have a holiday there, it is understood that you belong to a certain social class. So, if you follow these trendy destinations, you can belong to the high social club in people's minds. (P1)*
> *...some of my friends use social media to outshine in their society. (P4)*
> *....I do not accept it in terms of social status, but many individuals do. (P10)*
> *Not for me, but society accepts this way, especially the younger generation, who are easily affected by social media. (P14)*
> *...Some of my friends think that if they have the same vacations as some people in high society, they will be accepted into that society group. However, people's intellectual and economic levels should support this manner. (P16)*

Participants indicated a tendency to vacation in well-known locations, with posting about these trips on social media perceived as a means of conforming to their social group. According to recent research, social comparison orientation and the concepts of JoMO and FoMO are related, with varying age groups having an impact. Young individuals, especially those with a high social comparison orientation, are more affected by the FoMO concept in terms of purchase intention through pride (Tan, Tjiptono & Tan, 2024). Shen (2019) explains that Gen Z and Millennials are considerably engaged with social media, and they tend to feel pressure to compare themselves to others, making them more likely to be attracted to FoMO appeals. On the contrary, Gen X and Baby Boomers are less concerned with social comparisons; they feel a sense of peace, appreciation, and self-assurance, and this situation resonates with the JoMO concept (Goldring & Azab, 2021).

4.4 The Impact of Tourist Posts on Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction is a concept that reflects individuals' basic cognitive assessment of their lives, necessary for subjective well-being (Song & Li, 2023), encompassing depressive symptoms and cognitive functioning, and is closely tied to psychological health (Jeong et al., 2024). The degree to which individuals positively evaluate the overall quality of their lives summarizes their life satisfaction, showing how satisfied they are with their current state of life (Lv et al., 2024; Veenhoven, 1996). The influence of tourist posts on social media users has been examined to assess whether they generate positive effects or elicit negative emotions, such as envy or feelings of inadequacy. Additionally, these posts may enhance individuals' quality of life by providing opportunities to observe others' travel experiences, or conversely, they may prompt unfavorable comparisons with one's own experiences.

> *Yes, and it affects mostly in a negative way. When individuals see a post on social media, they tend to accept it as real life, which prompts them to start questioning their own lives. (P6)*
> *Yes, especially if you're living in a country where working hours are long and most of the population faces economic difficulties, but you see posts on social media showing that nobody is working, always on vacation... This makes people feel unhappy because they think that if they worked harder, they could live the same life, or worse, if they quit their job and became an internet celebrity, they would be happier. (P15)*
> *On social media, I think there are two kinds of posts. One way is to share your happy moments and focus on your life, and the other is to share your wealth just to show off. The first way does not negatively affect society, but the second way has a profoundly negative impact, as individuals feel jealous and want to have the same kind of life. (P16)*

Participants reported that social media posts about travel can create unrealistic expectations and contribute to negative emotions such as envy, dissatisfaction, and aspirations for unattainable lifestyles.
Vacations offer a temporary respite from daily routines and are typically associated with increased happiness, tranquility, and motivation. However, the end of a vacation often results in disappointment and frustration due to limited leisure time. This contrast demonstrates that, while holidays are restorative, they also highlight the challenges and constraints of everyday life. Broader societal issues, including work-life balance and the prioritization of personal well-being, are evident in the widespread desire for more vacation time and the sense of sadness experienced upon returning to routine.

> *When I go on holiday, everything seems more positive; I feel as if everything is fine in my life, and I feel very happy. (P1)*
> *Yes, I mostly feel more motivated for life and for my goals. (P7)*
> *Of course, I feel happy with my life, especially on vacation, but when my vacation is over, I feel sad, and I don't want to return to my daily routine. I feel at peace on vacation, but at the same time, I don't feel truly peaceful because I know it is a limited time and it will come to an end. (P9)*
> *When I go on vacation, yes, I feel happy, but at the same time, I wonder why I cannot go on vacation more, why I cannot spare more time for vacation. (P13)*

Social participation, or being actively engaged in social activities, is generally linked to better physical and mental health. Conversely, social isolation is associated with lower mental and physical well-being. However, if an individual intentionally seeks limited isolation and loneliness, and manages this process with their mindset, they may show lower stress, anxiety, and depression symptoms and may feel higher awareness and higher overall life satisfaction (Barry et al., 2023). According to Dhir et al. (2018), individuals who are in a necessary emotional state and are satisfied with their lives are more likely to struggle with the idea of FoMO. Studies have demonstrated a strong correlation between FoMO and low life satisfaction, anxiety, depression severity, and negative mood (Elhai et al., 2018; Can & Satici, 2019). However, FoMO has a beneficial effect on well-being if it encourages social media use that fosters connections with others (Roberts & David, 2020).

5. DISCUSSION

Roberts and David (2020) found a positive relationship between social media intensity and FoMO, while social connection was negatively associated with FoMO. A lack of social media connections can induce anxiety, as individuals may feel that their communication, interaction, or social engagement is being disrupted (Aitamurto et al., 2021; Xie et al., 2018; Perrone, 2016; Çopuroğlu, 2021). According to the study, participants were motivated by social media posts about the holidays, but they also seemed to be experiencing FoMO, or the fear of missing out on worthwhile experiences. Since FoMO is a retroactive sense of missing past events, it encompasses more than just worrying about simultaneously accessing experience or news (Hayran & Gürhan-Canli, 2022). The majority of participants emphasized the importance of being included in their social circle's holiday experiences. This reflects the influence of the FoMO, as individuals are motivated by a desire to avoid missing out on meaningful social events or experiences. Additionally, this behavior aligns with the principles of Self-Determination Theory, particularly the basic psychological need for relatedness, as individuals seek connection and interaction within their social groups.

Although JoMO has been described as a popular travel trend by Jacobsen (2021), the findings of this study do not corroborate this assertion. While disconnecting from technology, including smartphones and social media, is often framed as a desirable practice, the findings of this study indicate that the majority of participants did not express such a need, even when specifically asked. Only a small proportion of participants reported that they would feel satisfied without internet access during their vacation, suggesting that internet connectivity is perceived as a crucial component of their overall travel experience. The studies (Stead & Bibby, 2017; Eitan & Gazit, 2023; Crook, 2014; Barry et al., 2023; Chan et al., 2022) focused on explaining JoMO and its relationship to well-being and mindfulness, explained negative effects of excessive internet use, which can cause FoMO, dull social skills, and create difficulties in face-to-face communication. However, for the majority of participants, they feel the need for a time break from the internet. The best aspect of holiday posts is gathering information from them, and the worst aspect is making people feel depressed, jealous, and contributing to the over-tourism issue. At this point, the importance of the self-determination theory came out. According to Tan, Tjiptono, and Tan (2024), self-determination theory aligns with the JoMO concept by promoting autonomy through personal choice, enhancing competence through skill-building without external validation, and fostering relatedness by encouraging meaningful connections with oneself and one's environment. This relation follows along a higher sense of fulfillment and life satisfaction.

The findings of this study align with those of Yılmazdoğan, Özhasar, and Kılıç (2021), who also concluded that individuals' vacation preferences are influenced by their desire for social visibility and susceptibility to FoMO. Vacationing in popular locations and sharing these experiences on social media is commonly viewed as a means of signaling social status. Tourist posts were found to have a significant impact on life satisfaction. Participants reported that such posts often evoke negative emotions, including envy, discontent, and aspirations for lifestyles that may be unattainable, creating unrealistic expectations. Many participants indicated that these experiences can lead to feelings of depression, jealousy, and dissatisfaction with their work-life balance and personal well-being. Previous research has demonstrated strong correlations between FoMO and lower life satisfaction, heightened anxiety, increased depression severity, and negative mood (Elhai et al., 2018; Dhir et al., 2018; Can & Satici, 2019). For individuals not intentionally seeking isolation, engaging in social activities and maintaining social participation is recommended to enhance both mental and physical well-being (Barry et al., 2023).

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Theoretical Implications

This research advances theoretical understanding within tourism research by incorporating the constructs of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and Joy of Missing Out (JoMO) into the examination of tourist experiences, social status, and life satisfaction. While FoMO has been widely investigated in relation to digital behaviours and psychological well-being (Djafarova & Kim, 2025; Eitan & Gazit, 2023), its application to tourism contexts remains underexplored. By employing semi-structured interviews, this research provides nuanced insights into tourists' subjective experiences, motivations, and perceptions; an approach Rubin and Rubin (2011) emphasize as particularly effective for capturing the complexities of human behaviour.

Previous research on FoMO has predominantly relied on literature reviews (Kurniawan & Susilo, 2024), online surveys (Zaman, 2024), or student samples (Wojcieszak-Zbierska, 2023; Patria & Rahtomo, 2020), limiting the generalizability of the findings. In contrast, the present study positions FoMO and JoMO within the broader context of tourism experiences, thereby extending the theoretical discourse beyond digital usage patterns to examine their relational effects on social recognition and subjective well-being. This is consistent with Lo and McKercher's (2015) assertion that tourism can confer social recognition, suggesting that FoMO-driven travel behaviours may be partially motivated by a pursuit of peer acknowledgment. Importantly, the findings also provide meaningful insights for Self-Determination Theory, which posits that human motivation is driven by the fulfillment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs (Deci & Ryan, 2012). FoMO can be interpreted as a response to unmet relatedness needs, manifesting as a compulsion to stay connected with peers. In contrast, JoMO represents a reclaiming of autonomy through intentional disengagement from social and technological pressures. This dual perspective refines Self-Determination Theory in a tourism context by illustrating how travel behaviors can simultaneously reflect the pursuit of social connectedness and the desire for autonomous, self-directed experiences.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the emergent theoretical framing of digital detox tourism by illustrating how the saturation of technology in daily life (Putra, 2019) has prompted some travelers to actively seek disengagement from digital pressures, reflecting JoMO-oriented motivations. The findings thereby extend existing conceptualizations of FoMO by positioning JoMO as a complementary yet counterbalancing force, shaping travel behaviours in ways that enhance well-being while resisting the compulsion to engage in socially driven consumption patterns (Zaman, 2024).

In summary, this study addresses a key gap in tourism research by refining the conceptual understanding of FoMO and JoMO as dual mechanisms shaping tourist behavior, with important implications for theories of travel motivation, social recognition, and life satisfaction.

6.2 Practical Implications

The concept of FoMO is a useful approach for product promotion and marketing in the tourism sector. FoMO, which is felt to a certain degree by individuals, encourages people to visit museums and learn new information (Uslu & Tosun, 2024), but excessive feelings of FoMO can lead to some negative emotions (Casale & Fioraventi, 2020; Elhai et al., 2020; Dhir et al., 2018; Wegmann et al., 2017). Djafarova and Kim (2025) suggested that industry stakeholders can enhance destination marketing, event promotion, and digital engagement by leveraging the concepts of FoMO and JoMO, thereby promoting wellness tourism, slow travel, and more mindful leisure experiences. However, marketing strategies for these two concepts need to be different. While FoMO-driven tourists are more likely to respond to vibrant, high-intensity experiences shared on social media, JoMO-oriented travellers may seek peace, solitude, and digital detox experiences. Marketing content should be tailored accordingly, emphasizing exclusivity, urgency for FoMO travelers, and tranquility, mindfulness, and disconnection for JoMO travelers. Li, Pearce, and Low (2018) mentioned digital-free tourism, a concept aligned with JoMO, as a niche market receiving increasing media attention. They explained it as a rising social trend, contrasting with earlier perceptions that it appealed only to a small group of niche travellers. Destinations and accommodation providers may consider implementing digital balance features, such as optional device-free zones, digital detox packages, or apps that encourage mindful engagement. These offerings resonate with JoMO-seeking tourists and can also reduce the negative emotional impacts of FoMO.

De Souza, de Queiroz Barbosa, and de Guimarães (2025) expressed that travellers often shape their virtual identities around their tourism experiences. Therefore, tourist destinations may utilize their official social media platforms to motivate visitors to share their travel stories, they can repost tourists' photos or videos, and they can organize online contests to select the most creative content and provide special perks or promotions to those who actively share and engage with content related to the destination. Lim et al. (2023) highlight the advantages of partnering with influencers who resonate with target audiences, especially when promoting less-developed destinations. Such partnerships can connect service providers with eager travellers. To support this growth, tourism businesses should invest in local infrastructure, which can boost visitor numbers through positive word-of-mouth. Policymakers should be encouraged to implement strategies that enhance trade and livelihood opportunities for locals. Additionally, developing niche tourism types, such as heritage, rural, or adventure tourism, can help unlock the potential of these destinations.

Lin, Zhang, and Gursoy (2022) recommended that tourism service providers attend not only to tourists' demands for products and services but also to their psychological needs as social beings. Self-Determination Theory plays a vital role in tourism research and practice. By offering services that align with tourists' psychological needs, tourism providers can create personalized experiences that enhance overall satisfaction and enjoyment. Allowing tourists the freedom to make their own choices fosters a sense of autonomy, making their experiences more meaningful. Additionally, offering opportunities for skill development and social interaction can further boost tourists' sense of fulfilment and enjoyment (Çıkı & Tanrıverdi, 2023). As Putra (2019) mentioned, if tourists create a refreshing, relaxing, and escape-like atmosphere, learn new skills, and remain fully connected to the original settings, it will create a unique tourist experience.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the impact of tourist posts on life satisfaction, as well as the relationships between the tourist experience and social status, and between the tourist experience and the concepts of JoMO and FoMO. To avoid missing anything or to interact with others through social media posts, it was discovered that participants used social media significantly more during their vacations. This situation is connected to Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes the importance of meeting the need for social connection (Deci & Ryan, 2012).

This study contributes to the existing body of literature on the tourist experience, incorporating concepts of FoMO/JoMO. The study found that while social media posts about holidays inspire participants, they also trigger feelings of FoMO, fear of missing out on meaningful experiences. The findings reveal that FoMO-driven tourists often seek out popular, high-profile experiences and tend to engage more actively with social media during their travels, driven by a desire for inclusion and recognition. In the current situation, the role of the internet and social media in our lives is indispensable; however, the controllability of this situation and its effects on the holiday process have not been thoroughly investigated. It has been revealed that posts made in these media are associated with social status. From the perspective of self-determination theory, if social relationship needs are not met, people's life satisfaction is negatively affected.

When an individual's need for social connection is unmet, it can negatively impact their overall life satisfaction. Although some people express a desire to disconnect from technology during vacations, most participants did not feel the need to take a digital break. Holiday-related content on social media was seen as beneficial for gathering information, but was also criticized for causing negative emotions, such as envy and sadness, and for contributing to over-tourism. Recognizing differing motivations is essential for tourism stakeholders seeking to deliver meaningful and satisfying travel experiences. By integrating an understanding of FoMO and JoMO into experience design, marketing, and service delivery, destinations can better address the evolving emotional and psychological needs of modern tourists.

LIMITATIONS

First, the data were predominantly collected from individuals with a university education or higher, which may limit the sample's diversity. Second, the sample size was relatively small. The qualitative approach research design employed in this research prioritizes in-depth understanding over generalizability; therefore, the findings cannot be extrapolated to the broader tourist population. Future validation of these results may be achieved through require application of quantitative methods. Additionally, the qualitative data collection process may be subject to recall bias and personal interpretation.

Future research may address these limitations by employing mixed-method approaches, expanding the sample diversity, and exploring cross-cultural comparisons to enhance both the validity and applicability of the findings. Additionally, it may be beneficial to consider including psychological or socio-cultural factors that shape tourist experiences, such as cultural background.

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Please cite this article as:
Çetinkaya Ö. (2026). Evaluation of Tourist Experience with FoMO and JoMO Concepts: A Qualitative Approach. *Tourism and Hospitality Management*, *32*(3), 391-403, https://doi.org/10.20867/thm.32.3.5



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