

eISSN: 2981-1554

Original Article (Qualitative)

Designing a model of Fear of missing out festival shopping opportunities with a grounded theory approach

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Receive:

18 May 2025

Revise:

22 June 2025

Accept:

26 July 2025

Abstract

The aim of this research is to design a model of fear of missing festival shopping opportunities with a grounded theorizing approach. This research is fundamental and exploratory in terms of its purpose, and qualitative in terms of its implementation method. The research participants include ten people, including marketing and sales consultants as well as professors in the fields of commerce, marketing, and e-commerce; and the theoretical sampling method is used. The data collection tool is a semi-structured interview. The grounded theory method was used for analysis. The results showed that the frequency of codings is 922, which is obtained for 160 open codes. The results showed that the concepts of positive customer perception of the brand, deceptive advertising, customer experience, customer emotional intelligence, lack of understanding of personal needs and desires and economic disorders were selected as causal conditions; brand community, brand uniqueness, brand love, buyer confusion, buyer anxiety disorders, customer thirst for shopping, brand responsibility, brand respect for the customer and attachment to the product brand as central phenomena; market rumor management, smart and responsible shopping and strengthening the buyer's financial knowledge and awareness as strategies; digital age and immersion in technology as background conditions, perceived benefit of shopping, buyer personality traits, demographic factors, marketing campaigns and frenzied shopping behavior as intervening conditions; and finally negative brand advertising, negative internal feelings, customer anxiety, customer distrust, interaction-communication problems, customer resentment, customer loss, customer benefit and positive emotions were selected as outcome factors.

Keywords:

Fear of missing out on opportunities, Festival shopping, Mental distress, Customer trust, Buyer personality traits

Please cite this article as (APA): Zeinalitajani, F., Gholipour Soleimani, A., Baba Jafari Esfandabad, R. and Chirani, E. (2025). Designing a model of Fear of missing out festival shopping opportunities with a grounded theory approach. *Journal of New Approaches in Management and Marketing*, 4(2), 148-176.



<https://doi.org/10.22034/jnamm.2025.560771.1207>



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Publisher: Research Center of Resource Management Studies and Knowledge-Based Business

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

Many brands use a marketing strategy to increase sales and expand market share of their products by creating a state of fear of missing out and a feeling of deprivation from pleasurable shopping activities in customers. Hence, through social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, they intensify the fear of missing out by displaying ideal customer experiences and time-limited shopping (Hussain et al., 2023). Therefore, understanding the fear of missing out is crucial to reduce anxiety, vulnerability, and uncontrollable behavior of consumers that arise from the desire to conform to trends (Japutra et al., 2025). Various theories can explain the fear of missing out, but social comparison theory is particularly suitable for explaining the relationship between fear of missing out and brand attachment, as fear of missing out often stems from a sense of perceived inadequacy through social comparison (Hussain et al., 2023).

Existing research suggests that when fear of loss is combined with brand attachment and loyalty, it can lead to various desirable outcomes (Roberts & David, 2020). Given the interactions and connections that fear of loss originates, fear of loss can strengthen people's social connections and encourage them to seek out more information and social inclusion (Harrison & Mead, 2024). In fact, consumers who experience fear of loss are usually very loyal to the brand and actively interact with brands, often trying to educate others about the positive benefits of the brand by following, sharing, and commenting on social media platforms (Japutra et al., 2025). This increased engagement, visibility, and interest in brands can lead to brand attachment. On the other hand, this phenomenon can also pose risks for consumers, as in extreme cases, fear of missing out can have the potential to increase consumer debt. An American study supports this, showing that almost half of millennials incur debt to keep up with their peers, mainly due to the fear of missing out on unique experiences or feeling left out (Ward, 2019). Accordingly, the present study seeks to answer the following question: How to design a grounded theory model of fear of missing out on festival shopping opportunities?

Theoretical framework

Fear of missing out

Fear of missing out is essentially a common type of anxiety and is a subset of anxiety disorder and can be defined as a fear of regret that arises from individuals' general anxiety about missing out on social interactions, new experiences, or other positive events (Wan et al., 2025).

Lu & Sinha (2024) conducted a study titled "How Social Media Use and Fear of Loss Affect Consumption." This study aimed to investigate the impact of social media use on minimalist consumption and how fear of loss affects this impact. The results show that excessive use of social media makes consumers susceptible to fear of loss, leading to impulsive purchases and careless product purchases. However, when campaigners promote minimalism as a social media movement, they can activate fear of loss and encourage consumers to engage in activities related to solitude.

Song et al. (2024) conducted a study titled "Fear of Loss of Financial Gain: The Relationship between Fear of Loss and Speculative Trading." Fear of loss in short-term financial gains through speculative trading has been highlighted as a driving force behind financial behaviors. The results of binomial regression and model analyses showed that fear of financial loss is associated with participation in stock market and cryptocurrency trading. Fear of financial

loss was also associated with the scope of stock market trading. The results indicate that fear of loss may be a prominent risk factor among young adults.

Research Methodology

This research is fundamental and exploratory in terms of its purpose, and qualitative in terms of its implementation method. The research participants include ten research participants including marketing and sales consultants as well as professors of business, marketing, and e-commerce, and the theoretical sampling method is used. The data collection tool is a semi-structured interview.

Research findings

The grounded data method was used for analysis. The results showed that the frequency of codings is 922, which is obtained for 160 open codes. The results showed that the concepts of positive customer perception of the brand, deceptive advertising, customer experience, customer emotional intelligence, lack of understanding of personal needs and desires and economic disorders were selected as causal conditions, brand community, brand uniqueness, brand love, buyer confusion, buyer anxiety disorders, customer thirst for shopping, brand responsibility, brand respect for the customer and attachment to the product brand as central phenomena, market rumor management, smart and responsible shopping and strengthening the buyer's financial knowledge and awareness as strategies, digital age and immersion in technology as background conditions, perceived benefit of shopping, buyer personality traits, demographic factors, marketing campaigns and frenzied shopping behavior as intervening conditions and finally negative brand advertising, negative internal feelings, customer anxiety, customer distrust, interaction-communication problems, customer resentment, customer loss, customer benefit and positive emotions were selected as outcome factors.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to design a model of fear of missing out on festival shopping opportunities using a grounded theory approach. The results of this study are consistent with the results of Shim et al. (2024); Irwansyah et al. (2024); Okoro et al. (2024); Mialkovska et al. (2024); Rojíková et al. (2023); Jang & Hsieh (2021); Boccoli et al. (2024); Correia et al. (2024); Rodrigues et al. (2023); Armutcu et al. (2023); Pang & Quan (2024); Brailovskaia & Margraf (2024); Wuersch et al. (2024); Irwansyah et al. (2024); Ai et al. (2024); Lacarcel & Huete (2023); Armutcu et al. (2023); Molina-Collado et al. (2022); Wei & Yu (2024); Zhu et al. (2024); and Tao et al. (2024).

According to the results of the study, the following suggestions were made:

Customers should be aware of unrealistic advertisements by sellers and make purchases in accordance with their prioritized needs and desires.

Customers should conduct specific investigations regarding the shortage of the desired product by fully examining the conditions of the products they need in the market, considering the time series of a few years ago and the past few months, in order to control their shopping anxiety. They also, should manage their shopping behavior by prioritizing monthly and weekly shopping needs.