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JOMO and FOMO in tourism as seen by university students

Abstract. Today, the tourism industry offers a broad variety of innovative products and services, and witnesses the emergence of FOMO and JOMO as an interesting phenomenon. These concepts provide strict guidelines for defining new products and services intended for use by the tourists. Hence, this paper attempts to describe both of these behaviors in the context of tourism.

It also focuses on presenting selected results of research carried out with a group of students of the Poznań University of Life Sciences. The study provides grounds for concluding that the students are inclined to spend their holidays in quiet offline places. While they find it attractive to stay in a location with no Internet connection, they also believe that holidays with no access to social media can take no longer than 1–2 days.

Keywords: tourism, JOMO, FOMO, students, product, service

Introduction

Modern technology and its innovations change not only the way people travel but also the very definition of traveling and tourism. The diverse forms of travels make tourists seek increasingly exciting solutions for spending their free time. The emergence of virtual traveling modifies all steps of the journey people got used to, from preparing the booking process to staying at the destination. The emerging new, innovative kinds of traveling and ways of interacting with the local realities become increasingly popular as they have the potential to thoroughly redefine the very essence and goals of a traveling experience. As emphasized by a number of researchers (Bec et al., 2021; Lu et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2023; Geng, 2023), today's tourism should address market demand for traveling styles and the preference for certain categories of tourism products while taking into account the context of continuous digitization and creation of virtual services.

Currently, a scientific discussion is ongoing on two phenomena witnessed in the tourism sector, namely FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) and JOMO (Joy of Missing Out). The comparison of these two trends together suggests that both JOMO and FOMO provide the customers with the right products and services intended for a specific audience. Importantly, the COVID-19 pandemic has made JOMO and FOMO a very topical problem

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of social importance, not only because of its scale but also due to excessive use of the Internet, smartphones, social media, phubbing and nomophobia. These factors grew in importance during the pandemic, largely because of the restrictions in place and the inability for people to move freely.

The purpose of this paper is to present two concepts, JOMO and FOMO, in the context of tourism. This paper attempts to describe both trends, i.e. JOMO (Joy of Missing Out) and FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), and presents the results of a survey conducted at Poznań universities.

An attempt to define FOMO and JOMO in the context of tourism

The tourism industry offers a wide variety of traveling options and experiences related to visiting a specific destination. Currently, it witnesses an interesting trend referred to as FOMO and JOMO (Fusté-Forné et al., 2012; Hodgkinson, 2019; Putra, 2019). The first one, the Fear of Missing Out (abbreviated as FOMO) is a concept which means anxiety and fear of being disconnected from the virtual world (Edelman, 2018; Putra and Kusnadi, 2019). Due to rapid development of social media, today's consumers (especially young ones) want to follow interesting events in real time. The fear of being disconnected from the virtual world often triggers negative emotions or even frustration. FOMO is a term created in the 1990s by Dan Herman (2010), a marketing strategist. Although initially it was not related to the Internet, the rapid development of IT and digitization, followed by social media and consumer mobility, made FOMO an interdisciplinary issue. According to ample literature on the subject (Przybylski et al., 2013; Baker et al., 2016; Taylor, 2018; Kang et al., 2019), FOMO means:

- “the fear that other people have more satisfactory experiences in their lives,
- feeling concerned when my friends have a great time without me, or if I do not know their plans; fearing that I might miss a planned or ad-hoc meeting,
- checking one's friends activity on a continuous basis; having a desire to know what they do at any moment,
- the need, or sometimes the constraint, to report how one spends his/her life (primarily including positive events) in the Internet (by posting blog, Instagram or Facebook entries),
- the need for having a phone always at the ready” (Kusnadi and Putra, 2019, p. 18–22).

FOMO is very often combined with what is referred to as phonoholism, which largely consists in an addictive use of phones and smartphones. While it can affect people at different ages, the youth and children are particularly at risk. The pandemic was also a period where many people suffered from information overload (IO) because of the excessive amount of content to be dealt with, also in the context of remote work and study (FOMO Report, 2021, p. 14). In their research project, Hayran and Anik (2021) emphasized that during the pandemic, FOMO was related to online activities, and threatened the sense of wellbeing by triggering mental and physical health issues, such as lack of sleep, loss of concentration, or reduced productivity (FOMO Report, 2021, p. 14).

In tourism, FOMO refers to the anxiety experienced by an individual upon realizing that he/she cannot go online, use social media or phone when traveling and spending holidays (Dieck et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2022). Being unable to use virtual tours of museums, art galleries or facilities of interest to those individuals is something they cannot imagine. FOMO sufferers have a defined plan and know exactly what they want to visit, experience and taste. When unable to do so, they become highly irritated because they failed to meet the predefined goals, and feel extremely disappointed. In the context of FOMO, the tourists want to get the most out of they stay, not caring about fatigue, the intensity of visiting, the perpetual hurry and costs. At the same time, when seeking to visit as many destinations as possible, take pictures and post them in social media, the tourists no longer enjoy the moment and lose the pure pleasure of peacefully experiencing the surrounding landscape.

The second phenomenon, the Joy of Missing Out (abbreviated as JOMO), is the opposite of FOMO and means “enjoying being out of reach” (Friman, et al. 2017; Kusnadi and Putra, 2019; Fusté-Forné and Hussain, 2021; Hussain, 2021). Today, JOMO is defined as a travel where being isolated from the technology plays an important role (Table 1).

Table 1. JOMO vs. FOMO: basic information

Specification	Description	
	JOMO	FOMO
Motives for traveling	Escape/relax Enhancement of kinship relationships Novelty seeking; isolating oneself; actualized autonomy	Digitization and continuous monitoring of the travel Posting information in real time Looking for novel tourism services
Kind of travel	Venture Personality: singles / FIT, families, Small groups, high-end tour packages	Social group Families Tour packages
Tourism products, services, actions	Singular and specific leisure (recreation, natural/outdoor sports), retreat, personal quest (wellness, SPA, yoga, spiritual/cultural experience), nature (private, remote, island)	Virtual tours Questing and LARPs A holiday full of emotions and experiences

Source: Wojcieszak-Zbierska (2021) based on: Kusnadi i Putra (2019).

For the tourists, the key is to relax in a quiet place and escape from daily chores and responsibilities. “Dickinson, Hibbert and Filimonau (2016) found that viewing a tourist in the context of the dilemma posed by having a limited access to digital technologies when visiting tourism destinations could encourage tourism operators to propose a new product or service bundle” (Wojcieszak-Zbierska, 2020). This kind of holidays makes the tourists experience extraordinary emotions as they focus on their destination. A study by Dickinson et al. (2016, p. 194–200) confirmed that according to the interviewees, a total or considerable restriction of Internet access has a positive effect on how an individual feels because it allows to relax properly and free themselves from the daily

routine. Indeed, for the tourists, relaxing away from social media, telephones and smartphones is a way to have an extraordinary traveling experience.

Another study by Fusté-Forné and Hussain (2021) found JOMO to be related to actions which largely generate intellectual memories based on the sense of self-fulfillment, on emotions and on experiences they believe can be derived from culinary tourism, for instance. Increasingly often, some services proposed by the tourism industry, such as beauty treatment, days of recollection and retreat or rural spa in remote parts of the world, are designed to isolate people from digitization. As shown by the comparison of JOMO and FOMO, consumers are guided by different preferences and needs. While some of them prefer being isolated from the digital reality when traveling, others cannot think of traveling without contacting the virtual world.

Material and method

The purpose of this paper is to present two concepts, JOMO and FOMO, in the context of tourism. The analysis was based on available JOMO and FOMO data, and on industry reports, literature on the subject and selected results of the “FOMO and JOMO in tourism: a students’ perspective” research project. The study relied on a survey questionnaire administered to a group of 100 students of the Poznan University of Life Sciences. The study was carried out between January and June 2022. The questionnaire was composed of 20 questions divided into three parts. The first part was focused on the very definitions of JOMO and FOMO, whereas the second addressed the respondents’ preferences for spending their free time. The last part consisted of questions on determining the scale of FOMO in the context of tourism.

Results of the author’s own study

The study covered 100 students of the Poznań University of Life Sciences of different ages (from 20 to 48). Women represented 56% of the group, and the remaining part was composed of men. In the sample, people aged 20–22 formed the largest group (68.5%), followed by 23–25-year-olds (23.5%) and over-26-year-olds (8%). The first part

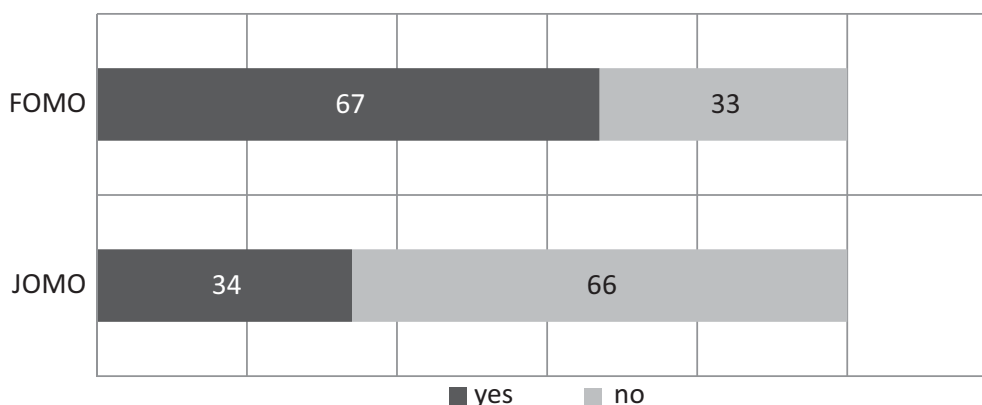


Figure 1. Knowledge of the terms JOMO and FOMO among students [%]

Source: own study.

of the study largely consisted of questions on the knowledge of the terms FOMO and JOMO, and on what the respondents associate with them, if anything.

The study carried out with students (Fig. 1) demonstrated that young people knew terms FOMO (65%). Generally, the respondents declared that they knew these two topics mostly because of having seen them *in the headline of a web article or when browsing web information on a daily basis* (as indicated by more than 52% of interviewees). In turn, 45% confirmed to have heard these two terms on the *radio and television*. The interviewees were asked about what they associate with these two phenomena in the context of tourism (Fig. 2).

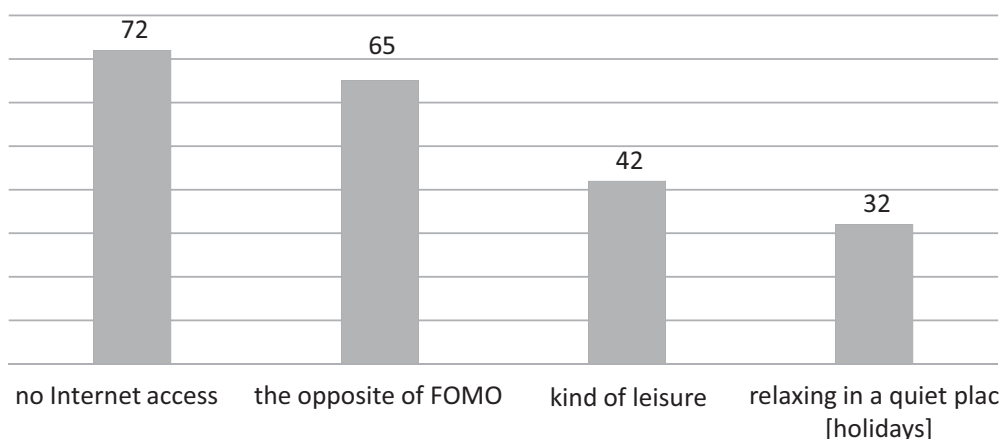


Figure 2. What do the students associate JOMO with (most frequent replies) [%]

Source: own study.

As regards JOMO, 3/4 of the respondents mostly associated it with *taking a break from the Internet* (Fig. 2). One of their most frequent replies was *I like to relax without social media; I want to relax so as to spend at least one day without using my phone*. Very often, the interviewees viewed this phenomenon as *the opposite of FOMO*. *A kind of leisure* was another association. According to the respondents, it consists in *cutting off social media, cutting off Facebook, or having no access to Instagram*. Only 1/3 of the interviewees associated JOMO with *relaxation and silence*. The most frequent replies included statements such as *I feel calm when having no access to the Internet, when on holidays, I enjoy the relaxing silence of mountains without my phone, I like to spend my holidays with my loved ones rather than with my phone and smartwatch*.

When it comes to FOMO (Fig. 3), most respondents associated it with the *Internet* (90%). *I use social media, I check what my friends do and where they travel to, I like to stay informed of the news* were the most frequent replies. *Phone* was another association, and was related to such statements as *I use my phone because I access the Booking app, I have the Travelist, I follow travel bloggers, I check activity on Instagram and want to know where my friends spend their holidays*. More than 3/4 of the interviewees said that for them FOMO means *being online*. In this context, they stated *I need to access social media on holidays and I use travel applications*. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic which lasted from March 2020 to 2022, people shifted to a remote (and then hybrid)

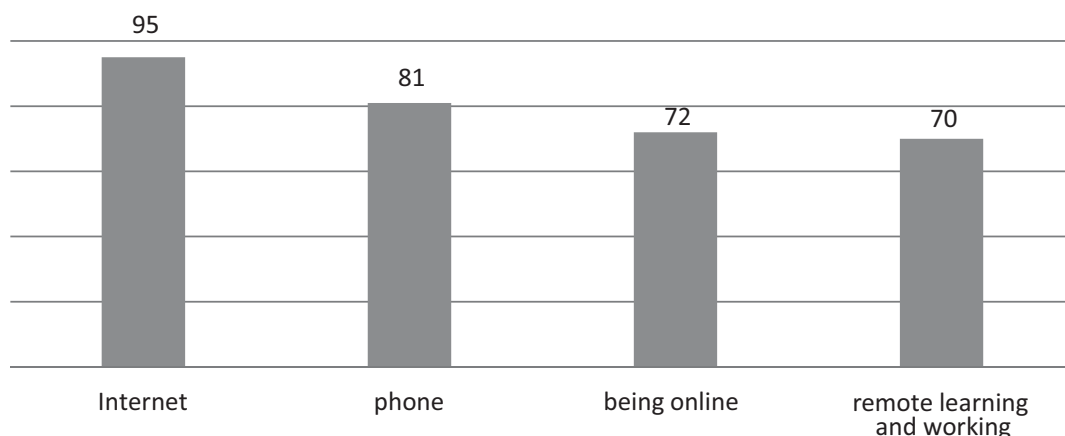


Figure 3. What do the students associate FOMO with (most frequent replies) [%]

Source: own study.

working and learning pattern. Therefore, it was what 70% of interviewees associated FOMO with. Also, many students said they *read about FOMO on websites or in social media which posted articles about it*. Other statements made by the respondents were as follows: *I traveled by browsing web pages and watched the world when working remotely, I watched interesting travel facts during lectures*. The study also checked the students' holiday preferences in the context of JOMO. It turns out that 3/4 of the interviewees equate JOMO with *staying at a luxury resort or hotel*, which means they are willing to relax with no access to the Internet and social media but need an attractive way of spending their free time. 45% of students view *staying in an agritourism farm* as an interesting and attractive form of leisure (Fig. 4).

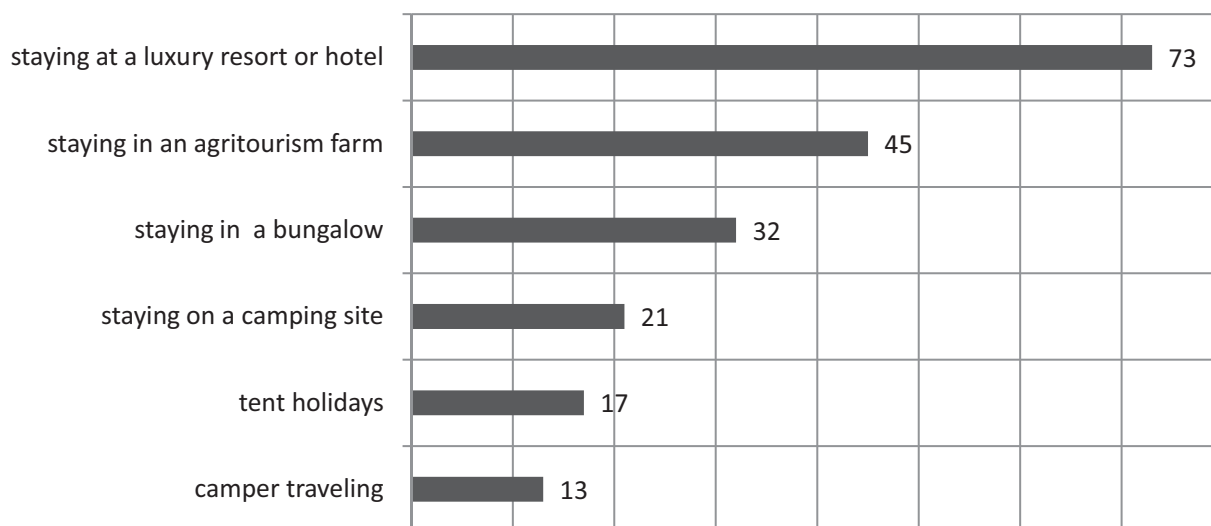


Figure 4. Holidays preferences in the context of JOMO [%]

Ranked next were staying in a bungalow (32%), staying on a camping site (21%), tent holidays (17%) and camper traveling (13%). The above means the students prefer spending their holidays in locations where they can feel the nature, and want to relax away from urban life.

Source: own study.

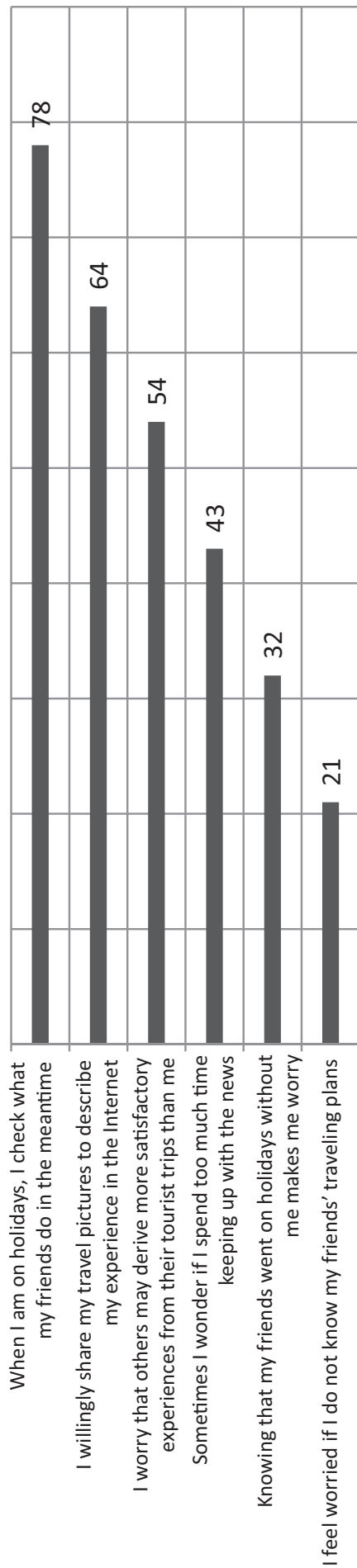


Figure 5. FOMO scale vs. tourism [%]

Source: own study

Ranked next were staying in a bungalow (32%), staying on a camping site (21%), tent holidays (17%) and camper traveling (13%). The above means the students prefer spending their holidays in locations where they can feel the nature, and want to relax away from urban life.

In analyzing FOMO in the context of tourism, the author of this paper made an attempt to define the scale of FOMO. To do so, she used 6 statements the respondents could identify themselves with on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1: fully disagree, 2: rather disagree, 3: no opinion, 4: rather agree, 5: fully agree.

Nearly 80% of the respondents confirmed they use such portals as FB, Instagram and Twitter during holidays to check how are their friends and relatives doing. Over 60% of the students willingly post online their holiday pictures or show how they spend their free time. More than half of the respondents fear that others might relax in a more attractive way. Around 43% of the students wonder if they make an excessive use of the benefits of modern technology and check their phone too often to access social media and applications. More than 1/3 of the interviewees experience negative emotions because *their friends went on holidays without them*. Anxiety and resentment are frequent forms of FOMOholism which, unfortunately, carries a heavy load of bad feelings. The last statement was confirmed by 21% of the respondents. It means that the students are anxious because they lag behind their peers in planning or making tourist trips. The above is also corroborated in a study by Jupowicz-Ginalska and her team (2012), which suggests that “the group of teenagers (aged 15–19) and young adults (aged 20-24) saw considerable growth in the percentage of highly FOMOized individuals, i.e. persons who fear being disconnected from the network, information and social media events” (FOMO Report, 2022, p. 16). At the same time, note that the scale shown above needs to be enhanced with more statements. However, its

purpose was to signal the FOMO-related problem in the context of tourism. While the high levels of FOMO among students were certainly driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, the rapid development and availability of new technologies are also an impactful factors. Some activities will probably change their form forever, and will certainly become attractive to specific user and consumer segments.

Summary

In today's world dominated by modern technologies and a rapidly growing virtual reality, tourism takes on another meaning. The development of many social portals and potentially unlimited number of users are the reasons why people address their needs including tourism needs through the Internet. Currently, an international debate is ongoing on two phenomena, which indisputably gained in importance during the COVID-19 pandemic, namely JOMO and FOMO. These two trends are present in the tourism market and are followed by young people, too. This study demonstrated that while the students prefer to relax in line with the JOMO concept, they need to be surrounded by nature in order to achieve this. In the case of FOMO, the respondents cannot imagine being on holidays without accessing social media and surfing web pages.

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