

EFFECTIVE FESTIVAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

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Abstract: In light of growing interest on social media in the festival industry, this study examines relationships among perceived festival attributes, fear of missing out (FoMO), anticipated emotion, brand equity, and behavioral intention through a structural equation model. Social interaction, self-enhancement, and festival authenticity represent different aspects of festival attributes. Results identify their effects on FoMO are positive. FoMO then influences customers' anticipated emotion and brand equity, which influences their behavioral intention. Results of this study provide suggestions to festival marketers how to encourage customers' visit intention in the pre-consumption stage.

Keywords: Fear-of-missing out (FoMO), Social interaction, Self-enhancement, Festival authenticity, Anticipated emotion, Brand equity, Self-determination theory (SDT).

I. INTRODUCTION

Festivals increased in number, types, and popularity since the 1980s and the festival industry is one of the fastest growing event industries (Getz, 2008). With multiple benefits to hosting a festival, destination marketers are interested in promoting festivals to attract more customers. Social media becomes an important marketing communication platform in the festival industry (Lee, Xiong, & Hu, 2012). Social media fosters easy access to real-time information about the festival, including different activities and events happening among social networks (Lee et al., 2012). In general, almost 69% of the public uses at least one type of social media (Pew Research Center, 2017). In the event industry, 3.5 million event pages are created per month on Facebook (Facebook, 2010). Reflecting on the extensive use of social media, a relatively new phenomenon called Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) has emerged (Przybylski, Murayama, DeHaan, & Gladwell, 2013). FoMO refers to "a pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent" (Przybylski et al., 2013, p.1841).

FoMO is a well-established phenomenon in psychology (Blackwell et al., 2017), human-computer interaction (Elhai, Levine, Dvorak, & Hall, 2016; Przybylski et al., 2013), and commercials (Gotter, 2016). Prior research investigated FoMO as a personality trait related to media usage (Przybylski et al., 2013). Examples of this approach include mobile phone checking behavior (Elhai et al., 2016), use of social media engagement (Blackwell et al., 2017; Przybylski et al., 2013), and Internet addiction behavior (Vaidya, Jaiganesh, & Krishnan, 2016). The idea of FoMO applies to many different contexts, including human-computer interaction, retailing, and tourism.

In spite of growing interests on the effects of FoMO, scant academic research has incorporated FoMO as a marketing approach. Even though FoMO stimulates customers' prompt action, enhancing marketing effectiveness, there is a lack of understanding on

when FoMO can be triggered and how customers respond to it. When promoting festivals through social media, festival marketers need to understand how customers respond to those social media marketing communications. Scholars also call for more research in the pre-festival stage (Wilson, Arshed, Shaw, & Pret, 2017). This exploratory study is the first attempt to address what triggers customers' FoMO and how their behaviors are developed in the context of the festival industry. The objectives of this study are to investigate (1) the relative importance of festival attributes, including social interaction, self-enhancement, and festival authenticity on FoMO and (2) outcomes of FoMO by examining anticipated emotion, brand equity, and behavioral intention.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

FoMO explains people's desire to stay connected with others' activities because they do not want to miss others' rewarding experiences (Przybylski et al., 2013). The proliferation of options and possible experiences in the festival industry lead to a phenomenon known as FoMO. The festival industry has so many different festival options (i.e., number of festivals), resulting in various experiences (i.e., theme of festivals); thus, customers come to fear missing out on such festivals. Hodgkinson (2016) identifies various social events and unique experiences as examples of FoMO appeals. Participants in his study list music concerts, parties, and birthday parties as examples of FoMO contexts.

FoMO occurs when customers think about outcomes of the event, before they attend the event (i.e., festivals, social gathering events, parties, etc.) (Hodgkinson, 2016). The level of uncertainty inherent in the decision-making process influences how customers think about the decision (Hodgkinson, 2016). When the outcomes of customers' decisions are uncertain, they are more likely to have a greater level of fear in the hopes of achieving the best outcome. For instance, customers tend to spend more time searching festival information before they

attend, since they cannot evaluate the quality and value of the festival beforehand. People who fear missing out rely on social media because they prefer to be up-to-date on the event in their life and to fulfill their basic need satisfaction (Przybylski et al., 2013). Self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985), a macro-theory of human motivation, provides a useful theoretical background to understand FoMO. Prior research advocates SDT is relevant to explain FoMO marketing and customers' responses toward FoMO (Hodkinson, 2016; Przybylski et al., 2013).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The goodness-of-fit statistics for the structural model were $\chi^2(218) = 649.76$, $p = 0.00$; $\chi^2/df = 2.98$; NFI = 0.96; NNFI = 0.97; IFI = 0.97; CFI = 0.97; GFI = 0.85; and RMSEA = 0.079. Results of SEM confirmed an acceptable value for each model fit index. As antecedents of FoMO, social interaction ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < 0.00$) positively influenced FoMO, supporting H1. Self-enhancement ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < 0.00$) also positively influenced FoMO, supporting H2. In addition, festival authenticity ($\beta = 0.50$, $p < 0.00$) positively influenced FoMO; thus, H3 was supported. Different from the proposed hypothesis, FoMO negatively influenced anticipated emotion ($\beta = -0.06$, $p < 0.00$); therefore, H4 was not supported. FoMO positively influenced brand equity ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < 0.00$) and behavioral intention ($\beta = 0.11$, $p < 0.00$); thus, H5 and H6 were supported.

Anticipated emotion positively influenced behavioral intention ($\beta = 0.55$, $p < 0.00$), supporting H7. H8 was supported because brand equity positively influenced anticipated emotion ($\beta = 0.82$, $p < 0.00$). Brand equity positively influenced behavioral intention ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < 0.00$); therefore, H9 was supported.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined FoMO as a useful marketing tool in the pre-consumption stage to encourage customers' behavioral intention towards festivals, examining antecedents and outcomes of FoMO in the festival industry. Results identified different festival attributes were used as a way of triggering FoMO, further influencing customers' anticipated emotion, brand equity, and behavioral intention. Three different festival attributes were investigated as antecedents of FoMO that fulfilled customers' different needs, derived from SDT. FoMO was expected to influence customers' anticipated emotion, brand equity, and their behavioral intention. Interestingly, FoMO had a negative effect on anticipated emotion. FoMO had negative effects on customers' anticipated emotion because FoMO alerted customers not to miss the opportunity. Customers imagined a situation when they missed the festival, so the relationship between

FoMO and anticipated emotion was negative. Since FoMO was relevant to customers' urge to do something, it was related to negative emotions, such as anticipated regret. Prior research also identified negative effects of FoMO on happiness (Przybylski et al., 2013) and consumption enjoyment (Rifkin et al., 2015); therefore, customers had negative emotional feelings after experiencing FoMO. However, anticipated emotion positively influenced customers' behavioral intention. A result of this relationship was consistent with previous theories (i.e., appraisal theory, affective expectations model) that proposed the importance of anticipated emotion on customer behavior.

FoMO served as a useful marketing tool to stimulate customers' attention and interests. FoMO had positive effects on cognitive and behavioral responses. Customers did not want to miss the festival and developed favorable evaluations toward the festival. Brand equity, as a cognitive response, also had positive effects on customers' anticipated emotion and behavioral intention. When customers developed favorable evaluations toward a festival, a positive emotional status was created. Moreover, customers' built a strong desire to attend a festival since they did not want to miss it.

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