

# **Fear of Missing Out' (FOMO) Marketing appeals to Young Consumers: A Response Model**

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**Abstract:** This paper researches the “Fear of Missing Out” (FOMO) concept known to young consumers. FOMO appeals have been used commercially to stimulate demand among young adults for a wide range of products however, travel appears to be the most common marketing application. This is evidenced by the 1.3 million results yielded by the simple Google enquiry “FOMO” and “travel” (05/05/2014). FOMO appeals are often used by travel agents specialising in youth and student airfares and holiday packages, thus the development of a better understanding of FOMO appeals and consumer responses to them is financially significant. While FOMO-type appeals have attracted practitioner interest (e.g. JWT, 2011, 2012) they largely have appeared to have escaped academic interest.

A five-stage methodology was adopted for this exploratory research into FOMO appeal responses. Stage I: Depth interviews; Stage II: Focus groups. Stage III: Manual and automated content analysis of the focus group transcripts to produce a thematic analysis. Stage IV: Identification and analysis of the response variables, and; Stage V: The construction of an operational model of FOMO appeal responses and a proposed research agenda.

The data showed that consumers had both cognitive and emotive responses to FOMO appeals pre, and post-decision. Salient consumer insights included: the source and proximity of the FOMO appeal initiator was instrumental to its valence; FOMO was most keenly felt when known others would attend a function or purchase a resource perceived as ‘scarce’; opportunity costs were recognised as drivers; tension rather than ‘fear’ was typically felt, most often due to cognitions of anticipated regret. In addition, post-decision cognitive and affective responses may involve the re-visitation and reassessment of the ‘anticipated regret’ and other affective responses which preceded the original decision.

(References supplied on request)