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Original Article

Beyond the chimarrão: the influence of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) on conspicuous consumption among gauchos

Além do chimarrão: a influência da FOMO (medo de ficar de fora) no consumo conspícuo dos gaúchos

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aimed to analyze the influence of the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)—understood as the fear of being excluded or missing out—on conspicuous consumption, which is defined as a strategy to elevate social status through the public display of wealth.

Design/methodology/approach: The research employed a survey method with 389 consumers in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, employing descriptive statistical analysis and simple linear regression techniques. An online questionnaire divided into four blocks was administered via Google Forms, using a five-point Likert scale.

Findings: Results underscore the significant presence of the fear of being left out within individuals' psychology, emphasizing its relevance in contemporary society, where constant connectivity and access to information amplify this feeling. The analysis revealed that participants exhibited conspicuous consumption behaviors, pursuing products that symbolize status and affiliation with specific social groups. FOMO demonstrated a significant impact on this behavior, with a direct relationship of 19.3%, highlighting the link between FOMO and the propensity for conspicuous consumption.

Originality: This study provides relevant insights for marketers, who can leverage these findings to develop targeted strategies that foster emotional connections with consumers, crafting more effective campaigns that consider FOMO's influence on purchasing decisions.

Keywords: FOMO; Fear of missing out; Conspicuous consumption

RESUMO

Finalidade: Este estudo teve como objetivo analisar a influência da Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) - medo de perder ou ficar de fora - no consumo conspícuo, que é compreendido como uma estratégia para elevar o status social por meio da exibição pública de riqueza.

Desenho/metodologia/abordagem: A pesquisa foi conduzida por meio de uma survey com 389 consumidores do estado do Rio Grande do Sul, utilizando técnicas de análise estatística descritiva e regressão linear simples. Um questionário online, dividido em quatro blocos, foi aplicado através do Google Forms e incluiu uma escala tipo Likert de cinco pontos.

Constatações: Os resultados evidenciam a presença significativa do medo de ficar de fora na psicologia dos indivíduos, realçando sua relevância na sociedade contemporânea, onde a conectividade e o acesso contínuo a informações intensificam essa sensação. A análise revelou que os participantes demonstraram um comportamento de consumo conspícuo, buscando adquirir produtos que simbolizem status e pertencimento a grupos sociais específicos. A FOMO apresentou um impacto significativo nesse comportamento, com uma relação direta de 19,3%, evidenciando a conexão entre o medo de ficar de fora e a propensão ao consumo conspícuo.

Originalidade: As descobertas deste estudo têm implicações relevantes para profissionais de marketing, que podem utilizar essas informações para desenvolver estratégias direcionadas que promovam uma conexão emocional com os consumidores e direcionem campanhas mais eficazes, levando em consideração a influência do FOMO na tomada de decisão de compra.

Palavras-chave: FOMO; Medo de ficar de fora; Consumo conspícuo

1 INTRODUCTION

Technological advancements have significantly impacted society, increasingly fostering dependence on devices such as smartphones, which offer various functionalities (Castro et al., 2018). With this ongoing digitization, a growing number of people can connect to the online world and stay updated on current trends and activities, as described by Przybylski et al. (2013).

In this context, the concept of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) emerges, defined as the fear of being left out or missing out. According to Przybylski et al. (2013), this phenomenon occurs when individuals fear losing access to important or meaningful experiences. Consequently, they may feel pressured to keep up with others, continuously seeking involvement in activities and acquiring products to avoid the feeling of missing out. A study by Hamizar et al. (2024) on FOMO's influence on consumer behavior in the digital era demonstrates that FOMO intensity is closely tied to an emotional need to avoid missed opportunities, often resulting in impulsive rather than rational purchasing decisions.

The proliferation of digital content, driven by advancements in remote data access (e.g., Wi-Fi) and declining smartphone prices, has further fueled consumption growth

(Freire, 2020). Excessive use of these devices directly affects user behavior, ultimately impairing the ability to adequately evaluate such behavior over time (Castro et al., 2018). Consequently, conspicuous consumption is expected to continue its global rise.

FOMO and conspicuous consumption are interconnected through technological evolution, which facilitates access to information and experiences. Smartphone dependency exacerbates the pressure to stay updated, creating a cycle where the fear of missing out drives impulsive purchases motivated by social validation (Castro et al., 2018). Thus, technology not only enables consumption but also shapes consumer behavior, amplifying FOMO and fostering conspicuous consumption in today's society.

Given this scenario, the research question for this study is: What is the influence of FOMO on the conspicuous consumption of consumers in Rio Grande do Sul? Consequently, the primary objective of this study is to investigate the influence of FOMO on conspicuous consumption. The specific objectives include describing the sample profile, characterizing respondents' levels of FOMO and conspicuous consumption, and examining FOMO's influence on conspicuous consumption.

The relevance of this study lies in addressing the limited literature on FOMO, especially regarding its relationship with conspicuous consumption. A review of academic publication platforms such as Scopus, Spell, SciELO, and Web of Science identified only one article addressing both FOMO and conspicuous consumption: "The Delicate Balance of Social Influences on Consumption: A Comprehensive Model of Consumer-Centric Fear of Missing Out", by Argan et al. (2022). This study focused on consumer behavior in the United States and Turkey, revealing a research gap in the Brazilian context.

Furthermore, the influence of FOMO on conspicuous consumption is crucial for understanding contemporary consumer behavior. In the digital age, where social media and constant connectivity expose individuals to others' activities and experiences, analyzing how FOMO impacts conspicuous consumption is essential for uncovering motivations behind consumer decisions.

This study also focuses on a specific context—the Gaucho culture—adding a regional perspective to the understanding of the relationship between FOMO and conspicuous consumption. Insights from this research may benefit marketing professionals and companies aiming to tailor their strategies to meet the unique needs of Gaucho consumers.

Thus, the findings of this study hold significance for both academia and professionals seeking to understand and respond to consumer behaviors influenced by FOMO.

The study is structured as follows: after this introduction, which outlines the research problem, justification, and objectives, the theoretical framework is presented. Next, the methodological procedures are described, followed by data presentation and discussion. Finally, the concluding remarks and references are provided.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter presents the main concepts relevant to the study, beginning with an exploration of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) and followed by a discussion on conspicuous consumption.

2.1 FOMO - Fear of Missing Out

Social media platforms have provided users with unprecedented ease in discovering the variety of online and offline social activities others may engage in (Przybylski et al., 2013). These tools offer numerous opportunities for interaction and real-time access to information about events, consumption, experiences, and daily conversations (Przybylski et al., 2013).

Consequently, the constant flow of updates and sharing on the internet is linked to the fear of being excluded or missing out—popularly known as FOMO. Riordan et al. (2020) define FOMO as a pervasive apprehension that others might be enjoying rewarding experiences from which one is absent, characterized by a strong desire to remain connected with what others are doing.

According to Alabri (2022), FOMO encompasses mental and emotional stress, driven by an ongoing concern about missing socially gratifying experiences, often intensified by social media platforms.

Theoretical perspectives suggest that individuals strive to develop a complex and well-defined sense of identity while simultaneously shaping their persona through connections with others (Maxwell, Tefertiller, & Morris, 2021). Recent studies highlight that unmet basic psychological needs can trigger FOMO. For instance, Alabri's (2022) research examining the effects of belongingness needs, perceived centrality, and fear of social exclusion on FOMO found that the need to belong emerged as the strongest predictor of FOMO. This effect was mediated by significant social media usage. Women, in particular, reported higher levels of belongingness, greater social media engagement, and higher perceived group centrality, all contributing to increased FOMO.

Przybylski et al. (2013) suggest that social media can serve as an outlet for emotional and social frustrations. Their findings indicate that FOMO plays a crucial role in connecting variability in factors such as psychological needs satisfaction, mood, and life satisfaction to social media engagement.

Research by Riordan et al. (2020) demonstrates that FOMO significantly influences consumer behaviors. Their study found a relationship between FOMO and an increased incidence of alcohol-related negative consequences, as well as a notable correlation between FOMO and the quantity of alcohol consumed per session.

Moreover, FOMO has been linked to increased television viewing habits. Conlin, Billings, and Averset (2016) showed that FOMO predicts how quickly people choose to watch television and consume related media, driven by the social aspects of these activities, including the ability to discuss shows with friends and participate in cultural conversations.

Przybylski et al. (2013) reveal a connection between low levels of basic needs satisfaction and FOMO, as well as engagement in social media. Individuals with unmet psychological needs may turn to social media as a tool for social connection, skill development, and relationship building. Additionally, FOMO may mediate this relationship, acting as a link between psychological deficiencies and social media usage.

Hodkinson (2019) identifies FOMO as a well-established phenomenon in modern culture and commercial industries. Marketing strategies leveraging FOMO-driven appeals have generated significant sales revenue across various product and service domains. Despite this, limited academic attention has been given to consumer responses to FOMO marketing strategies. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the relationship between FOMO and conspicuous consumption.

2.2 Conspicuous Consumption

Over time, the discourse on consumption has expanded beyond economics to include fields such as Business Administration, Marketing, Psychology, and Sociology (Barbosa & Campbell, 2006). Today, consumption is recognized as a socially rich practice that informs concepts and theories in economic development (Camatta, 2014).

According to Kassiola (1990), modern society is immersed in a "consumption ideology" where material possessions are equated with happiness, encouraging individuals to accumulate goods and organize their lives around consumption. This phenomenon gives rise to the "consumer society" (Baudrillard, 1995; Bauman, 2008), a social structure that prioritizes consumption, turning individuals into commodities within the societal system (Baudrillard, 1995).

Thorstein Veblen first introduced the term "conspicuous consumption" in his 1899 work *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. It describes behaviors aimed at showcasing wealth and achieving social status through visible acquisitions. According to Veblen (1994), conspicuous consumption often disregards product utility, focusing instead on constructing personal image and distinguishing social classes.

O'Cass and McEwen (2004) expanded the concept, defining conspicuous consumption as individuals' tendency to enhance their image through the visible consumption of goods that convey social status. Research shows that conspicuous consumption even occurs in economically disadvantaged nations, where individuals prioritize such behavior over meeting basic needs (Belk, 1988).

A recent study by Siepmann, Holthoff, & Kowalczuk (2022) analyzed conspicuous consumption of both luxurious and non-luxurious experiences. It found that perceptions of social status varied by gender, with women's profiles linked to higher status perceptions. This study, along with others like Assimos et al. (2019), highlights the connections between conspicuous consumption, status consciousness, and self-expression.

Given these insights, this study seeks to explore the influence of FOMO on conspicuous consumption.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To achieve the objectives of this study, a descriptive, quantitative research approach was employed, conducted via a survey (Hair, Bush, & Ortinau, 2014). The target population comprised consumers residing in Rio Grande do Sul.

A non-probabilistic convenience sampling method was adopted (Hair, Bush, & Ortinau, 2014). Using accessibility as a criterion, the target population was reached by distributing questionnaires to consumers in Rio Grande do Sul.

The research instrument was developed based on established measures from previous studies and structured into four blocks. Block 1 included a screening question "Do you reside in Rio Grande do Sul?" to ensure that only data from residents of this state were collected. Block 2 featured the FOMO scale by Przybylski (2013), consisting of 10 items. Block 3 presented the Conspicuous Consumption Scale by Chaudhuri, Mazumdar, & Ghoshal (2011), comprising 11 items. Block 4 contained questions about respondents' sociodemographic profiles (e.g., education, gender, marital status, and income). The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree. While the Conspicuous Consumption Scale had been previously used in Brazilian contexts (e.g., Santos, 2017), the FOMO scale required translation and adaptation for Brazilian use.

A pretest was conducted to evaluate the research instrument's clarity. According to Boateng et al. (2018), an ideal pretest sample size ranges from 5 to 15 individuals.

Accordingly, 15 consumers of varying ages and regions within Rio Grande do Sul completed the questionnaire individually and were subsequently interviewed to assess content validity. After minor adjustments, the finalized questionnaire was used in the field survey.

Although a non-probabilistic convenience sampling method was employed, an additional sample size calculation was performed using SurveyMonkey's platform (https://pt.surveymonkey.com/mp/sample-size-calculator/) to ensure confidence in subsequent analyses. The following parameters were used: a) Error margin: 0.05. b) Statistical power: 95%. c) Number of predictors in the model: 3. Given Rio Grande do Sul's population of 10,880,506 inhabitants (IBGE, 2022), a minimum sample size of 385 observations was estimated. The data collection occurred in June 2023, yielding 400 responses, of which 389 were valid.

Data analysis techniques included descriptive statistics and simple linear regression (SLR). SLR was performed using the JASP software (2023), version 0.17.1. Descriptive statistics were used to characterize respondents' sociodemographic profiles, while SLR was applied to measure the influence of FOMO on conspicuous consumption. The Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) method was employed to estimate regression coefficients (Gujarati & Porter, 2011). The coefficient of determination (R²) was calculated, ranging from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating greater explanatory power of the regression model (Field, 2009).

To assess the influence of FOMO on conspicuous consumption, the following regression equation was established:

 $Y_{conspicuous consumption} = \propto + \beta_{fomo} X_{fomo} + \square$

Where:

Y _{conspicuous consumption} = Dependent variable (conspicuous consumption scale).

∝ = Intercept.

 β_{fomo} = Coefficient for FOMO.

 X_{fomo} = FOMO level.

 \Box = Error term.

The maximum significance level was set at 1%, and the statistical hypotheses tested were: a) H_0 : $\beta = 0$ (No linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables). b) H_1 : $\beta \neq 0$ (A linear relationship exists between the independent and dependent variables).

Having outlined the methodological procedures, the next section presents and discusses the results.

4 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The analytical findings are presented in this section, which is divided into four subsections. The first subsection addresses the profile analysis of the respondents.

4.1 Respondent Profile

To fulfill the first specific objective, Table 1 illustrates the respondents' profiles. Based on a sample of 389 Gaucho consumers, the descriptive analysis provided the following demographic insights:

Table 1 – Respondent Profile

VARIABLES	ALTERNATIVES	PERCENTAGE
GENDER	Female	67.4%
	Male	32.6%
EDUCATION	High school diploma	44.5%
	Bachelor's degree	28.5%
	Elementary school or postgraduate degree	27%
MARITAL STATUS	Single	56%
	Married	26.7%
	Common-law marriage, divorced or widowed	17.3%

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the study data (2023)

From this analysis, most respondents identified as female (67.4%), while only 32.6% were male. The participants' ages ranged from 17 to 76 years.

Regarding educational attainment, 173 respondents (44.5%) reported having completed high school, followed by 111 individuals (28.5%) with postgraduate degrees, 99 (25.4%) with bachelor's degrees, and 6 (1.5%) with only an elementary school education.

Concerning marital status, 218 respondents (56%) were single, 104 (26.7%) were married, 46 (11.8%) were in a common-law marriage, 17 (4.4%) were divorced, and 4 (1%) were widowed.

Similarly to the work conducted by Vieira, Viana & Alves (2019), this analysis confirms the diversity of the sample in terms of demographic characteristics such as age, income levels, education, and gender distribution, providing a wide range of profiles within the population studied.

Having outlined the respondents' profiles, the next section delves into the descriptive analysis and reliability of the constructs examined.

4.2 Variable Descriptions

This subsection aims to describe respondents' levels of FOMO and conspicuous consumption. Table 2 below displays the mean, mode, median, standard deviation, and coefficient of variation for the studied variables:

Table 2 – Mean, mode, median, standard deviation, and coefficient of variation of variables

VARIABLES	MEAN	MODE	MEDIAN	STANDARD	COEFFICIENT OF	
				DEVIATION	VARIATION	
FOMO	2.675	3.000	2.700	0.710	26.6%	
CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION	2.044	1.545	2.000	0.717	35.1%	

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the study data (2023)

The mean FOMO score (2.675) suggests moderate levels among respondents, closely aligned with the midpoint of the Likert scale (3). The mode (3.000) indicates that the most frequently reported FOMO score corresponds to the midpoint, while

the median (2.700) confirms a balanced distribution. The standard deviation (0.710) indicates relatively low variability in FOMO levels. The coefficient of variation (26.6%) further supports the conclusion of moderate variability in the data.

For conspicuous consumption, the mean score (2.044) also indicates moderate behavior among Gaucho consumers. The mode (1.545) and median (2.000) highlight a slight skew toward lower conspicuous consumption levels. The standard deviation (0.717) reflects moderate variability, while the coefficient of variation (35.1%) suggests slightly higher variability relative to the mean.

These descriptive statistics reveal moderate FOMO and conspicuous consumption levels among respondents, with minimal variability. The following subsection addresses the results of the simple linear regression analysis.

4.3 The Influence of FOMO on Conspicuous Consumption

To examine the influence of FOMO on conspicuous consumption, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted, as shown in Table 3:

Table 3 – Simple Linear Regression

SIMPLE LINEAR REGRESSION	VALUE
Model Significance (ANOVA p-value)	<0.001
Coefficient of Determination (R ²)	19.3%

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the study data (2023)

The ANOVA test for model significance yielded a p-value of <0.001, validating the regression model. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, confirming a linear relationship between FOMO and conspicuous consumption at a 1% significance level.

The coefficient of determination (R2) indicates that FOMO accounts for 19.3% of the variability in conspicuous consumption. While this value demonstrates a moderate relationship, it also implies that other factors, such as personal values, prior consumption experiences, and socioeconomic characteristics, contribute to conspicuous consumption behavior.

Despite the moderate average FOMO levels, regression analysis revealed a significant relationship, highlighting its influence on consumer decisions. This aligns with previous studies emphasizing the impact of psychological constructs on consumer behavior.

These findings validate theories suggesting that FOMO drives consumption behaviors aimed at social validation and status, especially within the context of online exposure.

5 CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze the influence of FOMO on conspicuous consumption. To achieve this, a survey was conducted with 389 Gaucho consumers, employing descriptive statistics and simple linear regression techniques. The data collection approach allowed the first objective to be met, providing valuable insights into Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). The findings revealed that, overall, participants reported low FOMO levels, suggesting that this feeling is not highly prevalent in the sample studied.

Another key finding was the multiple R-value, indicating that 19.3% of the variations in respondents' conspicuous consumption behavior can be explained by variations in FOMO.

This study contributes to academic knowledge by complementing previous research in the fields of consumer behavior and social psychology, providing additional evidence on consumption behaviors influenced by FOMO.

The findings thus deepen our understanding of this phenomenon. Furthermore, this study is among the few to simultaneously investigate FOMO and conspicuous consumption. From a managerial perspective, the results have implications for the Brazilian market. Companies can develop marketing strategies tailored to a segmented and personalized audience. Additionally, by exploring the influence of FOMO on conspicuous consumption, the study provides valuable insights into the factors driving consumer choices. These findings can help companies and marketing professionals better understand consumer motivations and adapt their strategies accordingly. From

a societal standpoint, this research raises awareness of the values and behaviors associated with status-driven consumption. It encourages individuals to reflect on their consumption attitudes and preferences and critically consider the social and environmental impacts of their choices.

Regarding the limitations, this study was conducted with a relatively small sample size, which suggests that the results should be interpreted with caution. These findings provide preliminary insights and serve as a starting point for future studies involving larger and more diverse samples. Another limitation was the absence of questions about respondents' cities in the data collection instrument, which could have enriched the analysis. Future research should explore broader drivers and effects of phenomena beyond FOMO that may influence conspicuous consumption. Expanding the analytical scope to include additional motivational factors and alternative engagement strategies will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of conspicuous consumption.

Moreover, investigating FOMO and its impact on consumer behavior in diverse contexts could yield valuable insights for marketing strategies. Potential areas of exploration include the consequences of FOMO on purchasing decisions, market segmentation based on FOMO, the relationship between FOMO and social media behaviors, strategies to mitigate FOMO, and its impact on consumer well-being. Examining these aspects in different Brazilian regions or with additional psychosocial variations could offer a more holistic view of conscious consumption and its relation to FOMO. These areas of inquiry provide valuable insights into consumer behavior and can guide more effective marketing actions.

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1. Definition of research problem	√	√	√
2. Development of hypotheses or research questions (empirical studies)	\checkmark	\checkmark	
3. Development of theoretical propositions (theoretical work)	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
4. Theoretical foundation / Literature review	\checkmark	\checkmark	
5. Definition of methodological procedures	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
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Conflict of Interest

The authors have stated that there is no conflict of interest.

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