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Understanding News Media Viewing and Selection Patterns: FoMO and User Consumption of News Content on Social Media Interfaces

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UNDERSTANDING NEWS MEDIA VIEWING AND
SELECTION PATTERNS: FOMO AND USER CONSUMPTION
OF NEWS CONTENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA INTERFACES

by

NICOLETTE D.

CHRISTOPHER

A thesis submitted to the Burnett Honors College as partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the Honors in the Major
Distinction in the College of Sciences in the Department of
Nicholson School of Communications.

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ABSTRACT

The current study employs a regional sample in order to investigate the phenomenon of fear-of-missing-out (FoMO), the awareness associated with the fear that other individuals are having a more pleasurable experience that one is not a part of. The current study uniquely examines the role that FoMO plays in viewing patterns associated with news content on social media interfaces. The 10-item scale created by Przybylski, Myrayama, DeHaan, and Gladwell in 2013 was used as a basis to discover the degree of FoMO participants experience while online, while other questions of the survey serve to collect data about participants sociodemographic's, engagement with soft and hard news content, and overall social media usage. (Przybylski, Myrayama, DeHaan, Gladwell 2013). The objective is to demonstrate the influential effects that FoMO poses on media consumer viewing patterns and behaviors.

For my partner Noah. You have shown me admiration, gratitude, and patience. It is only through your constant support that I have been able to achieve my wildest dreams. You are my favorite part.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Rationale

The fundamental reasons for this research are to better understand and analyze the potential implications associated with online media consumption and the fear-of-missing-out, or FoMO. In order to contribute to the pre-existing research of FoMO, this study uniquely analyzes participant's socio-demographics, social media usage, engagement with hard and soft news content, and degree of FoMO. Soft news is determined for participants as the following genres: entertainment, arts, sports, lifestyle, and education. Hard news is determined for participants as the following genres: global, national, local and political news, debate, economy, accidents/crime and weather. The relationships between the concepts of FoMO and user data could help explain why some individuals are more predisposed to experiencing FoMO while online. A study conducted in 2018 by the Pew Research Center showed that 72% of Hispanic U.S. adults use at least one social media site, 68% of White or Caucasian adults use at least one social media site, and 69% of Black or African American use at least one social media site. (Demographics of Social Media Users and Adoption in the United States 2018).

This study focuses particularly on the user's consumption of hard and soft news content while on social media. The Pew Research Center investigated news use across social media platforms in 2018 and found that "about two-thirds of American adults (68%) say they, at least occasionally, get news on social media..." (Matsa, Shearer). This single genre of content will be consumed in different ways, on different applications, at a different pace, and with a differing level of FoMO by each participant. In the same study conducted by the Pew Research Center they found that the demographics of the social media news consumers varied greatly; "the majority of news consumers on Instagram are nonwhite, three-quarters of Snapchat's news consumers are ages 18 to 29 more than any other site..." (Matsa, Shearer). The current study also aims to understand how foregoing social groups derived from one's

socio- demographics and a desire to stay relevant in those groups could potentially impact the degree of FoMO one has while online. A section of the survey is dedicated to identifying these foregoing social groups which will be categorized according to age, gender, ethnicity, annual income and religious preferences. Through this categorization, it is hypothesized that participants in the same foregoing social groups (category) will show similar levels of assumed FoMO. Survey questions also ask participants about the various applications and platforms used to access their preferred news content, as well as the frequency of consumption. It is hypothesized that each of these will support evidence for altering or influencing one's viewing patterns of news content on social media interfaces.

Purpose Statement

The concept of fear-of-missing-out (FoMO) was conceived in recent years as a “pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent,” (Przybylski, Murayama, DeHaan & Gladwell, 2013). This means that FoMO can be characterized as the yearning to stay digitally connected and relevant while surveying what others are experiencing. FoMO maintains significance as technology becomes increasingly pervasive. Resources like social media networking sites, live-streaming, and subscription-based media platforms provide a constant environment of connectivity.

FoMO is typically researched as it pertains to technology-based behaviors, however, with the successful integration of technology into nearly all facets of our contemporary existence there is the potential to link FoMO to other non-behavioral factors. FoMO survives on user engaging technology-based behaviors like posting statuses, uploading photos, following accounts and live streaming at the same time, FoMO persists on the knowledge that other users are simultaneously engaging in the same behaviors. This knowledge, although not an actual behavior based in technology acted out by an individual contributes to the sensation of FoMO.. Przybylski, Murayama, DeHaan & Gladwell (2013) studied the negative implications associated with FoMO and general mood as well as overall life satisfaction and

found that they were negative associated. This supports the notion that individuals indicating “the elevation of negative social and emotional states such as boredom and loneliness linked to social media usage also relate to FoMO.” (Burke et al., 2010, Lampe et al., 2007) (.. Przybylski, Murayama, DeHaan, Gladwell 2013). The experience of FoMO by an individual can influence the genre, amount, frequency, and medium through which content is consumed by that individual. The current study investigates this idea cross-sectionally, noting that the genre, amount, frequency, and medium through which content is consumed by an individual can influence the degree of FoMO experienced by that individual. This observation is integrated into the current study by analyzing participant’s individual experience with soft and hard news content on social media interfaces and determining if a correlation exists between content preference and degree of FoMO among participant’s. For the purposes of this research, the degree of FoMO experienced by participants will be analyzed as the continuous variable.

The current study investigates whether audience viewing patterns of news content on social media interfaces can determine the degree of FoMO experienced by an individual. The focus will not only be on the degree of FoMO that one experiences using the 10-item Likert scale developed and verified in the study conducted by Przybylski, Murayama, DeHaan & Gladwell in 2013, but it will also analyze participant’s socio-demographics, social media usage, and engagement with soft and hard news content. Participants will also reveal which social media applications they use for soft news content versus hard news content. The genre of news content was specifically studied with the assumption that news media content would be readily accessible on most social media interfaces that potential study participants would have access to. The current study aims categorize participants based on their existing socio-demographic characteristics and consumption patterns, and will analyze how these variables correlate to the degree of FoMO one experiences while engaging in behavior on social media interfaces. In sum, FoMO has the potential to influence audience viewing patterns, but with

the additional collection of personal user data we will be able to determine if certain social groups are more predisposed to experiencing FoMO online. The current study will also analyze if the number of applications and platforms used by an individual to access social media will be an influencing factor on the degree of FoMO experienced by that individual.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Fear of Missing Out

FoMO can be defined as the sensation one feels when missing out on some experience or event that is part of a greater cultural conversation. The concept of FoMO has long existed within our society, as individuals have always found a need to connect with others. However, with the integration of technology into everyday life the potential for a more constant engagement with FoMO exists. Individuals want to ensure that their online experience is not inferior to other individuals online and to do so, users are constantly checking various social media applications on internet-enabled devices. The Pew Research Center conducted a survey in January 2018 documenting the viewing trends of social media site users. Results found that 74% of Facebook users, 63% of Snapchat users, 60% of Instagram users, 46% of Twitter users, and finally 45% of YouTube users check that site daily. (Demographics of Social Media Users and Adoption in the United States 2018).

The digital explosion of real-time sharing, social media networking sites, and subscription-based platforms have sustained the experience of FoMO among users. In a study conducted by Conlin, Billings, and Averset (2016) researchers examined the impact FoMO has on TV viewing habits, specifically binge-watching habits. The results found that FoMO can predict social media usage as it relates to TV, the pace of watching TV, and if individuals are more or less likely to watch some one-time TV programs. (Conlin, L. Billings, A.C. & Averset, L. 2016). Examining different media behaviors through the lens of FoMO will be useful in understanding audience patterns and similarities. Conlin, Billings, and Averset used the same scale created and verified by Przybylski, Murayama, and DeHaan (2013) to determine the degree of FoMO experienced by each of their participants. In their research using this scale they determined that FoMO survives on the basis that connectivity never ceases. Individuals may constantly converse, share, and respond to online media content. Results found that FoMO seems to be a driving force in the alteration of media consumption

patterns. Once television was consumed on an appointment basis, where all viewers would sit down and watch a show at the same time. There was no potential to digitally record a show and watch it later and accidentally seeing the spoiler alerts of a series finale on a social media application was not probable. In their final results section the researchers state that their “study highlights how these factors are, indeed, related. They are influenced by one’s personality, by the television program genre, by the duration of a media offering, and by the desire to discuss media content via social media platforms.” (Conlin, L. Billings, A.C. & Averset, L. 2016). Analyzing audience patterns as they relate to the consumption of news content online will provide a more in-depth analysis of the degree of FoMO experienced by an individual. Each individual will engage with soft and hard news media content differently on social media interfaces which could potentially correlate to the degree of FoMO one experiences. To properly analyze FoMO is to understand that FoMO itself is influenced by one’s personality, the platform of distribution, the genre of content, and the desire to engage with peers about media content.

Socio-demographic and Structural Similarities

Age, ethnicity, geographical region, gender, income and other characterizing variables help to cultivate individual preference when it comes to viewing online content. Similarities can be drawn from these variables to group audiences together and understand their behavior. (Choi 2016). A study conducted by Choi (2016) to determine the socio-demographic and structural similarities among audiences found “that socio-demographic affinities are statistically significant predictors of television viewing pattern similarity” (Choi 2016). Audience polarization also has implications on viewing patterns, since the current media environment allows users to self-select content. This is increasingly important when studying FoMO-induced behavior on social media. Choi’s research, conducted in South Korea, which studied socio-demographics and structural similarities not only “confirmed the existence of differences in viewing patterns based on socio-demographic factors, but it also determined the

relative impact of socio-demographic and structural variables on viewing patterns in general as well as on viewing patterns by channel type” (Choi 2016). Analyzing user socio-demographics is imperative to understanding audience viewing patterns. This is on the grounds that socio-demographic factors have the capacity to influence and establish similarities among individuals. Socio-demographic similarities are related to media preference choices as exemplified in the study conducted by Choi. Exploration of the implications of user socio-demographics and the degree to which audiences experience FoMO will be utilized in the current study.

News Sharing and Shared News in Social Media

The diffusion of news content over social media is shared by the media organizations themselves and the media consumers who share, re-post, and distribute their content. The rare landscape of social media applications encourages users to share, create, and post content which potentially challenges the credibility and reliability of some news sources. A survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in July and August of 2018 showed that 57% of social media news consumers say they expect the news they see on social media to be largely inaccurate. From the same study, 20% of U.S. adults indicated that they often get their news from social media. (Matsa, Shearer 2018).

A study conducted by Ödmark and Wadbring (2016) used a representative survey and quantitative content analysis to analyze the importance of news-sharers and news shared and discovered “...that about 12% of the population can be regarded as news sharers: sharing some kind of news several times in the last year.” (Ödmark, Wadbring 2016). The advancements of media technology have offered a multitude of avenues for individuals to gain knowledge and interact with peers. Negative implications exist with social media as well, often overloading consumers with information and content than can be chased, given feasible time restraints and conditions.

One of the primary concerns of this study is to determine notable characteristics of digital opinion leaders or the 12% of the population that can be regarded as news sharers and concluded on three significant factors: age, political interest, and marital status. In Ödmark and Wadbring's study, digital opinion leaders are more active on social media during the week when compared to the majority. Digital opinion leaders use social media several days a week while only 1/3 of the majority do. This data is not surprising as one would anticipate that someone who is more active on social media is also more actively engaged in sharing content. (Ödmark, Wadbring 2016). The current study uses this information by asking participants the frequency at which they re-share soft or hard news content on social media interfaces. Participants will also note how many social media applications they use to access soft or hard news content.

Ödmark and Wadbring also investigated the characteristics of spreadable news content or rather the news that gets shared. This study was conducted in Sweden so it is important to note that the majority of their popular news sources are tabloids or the viral sites of these tabloids. The characteristics of shared news content were investigated by Ödmark and Wadbring by observing which genres of content had the most interaction over a 3-year time period. Results found that "traditional news value criteria seem to be as valid in the most interacted news in social media as it is in the traditional media." The same content that gains popularity and dispersal in traditional print news sources will be popular and dispersed on social media. A potential explanation for this result is that the original sources of spreadable news media content online (social media applications) are typically coming from traditional print news companies. (Ödmark, Wadbring 2016). Considering the characteristics of digital opinion leaders while inspecting which genres of media content are easily spread on social media will offer a thorough analysis of shared news in social media. This idea is used in the current research to determine if participant's who engage in a certain type of news content viewing experience a higher degree of FoMO. Additionally, participants indicate the rate at

which they share content via social media interfaces, as well as the genre of content they prefer to share.

News Consumption via Social Media

The epidemic of sharing, accessing, and consuming news via social media has created a few important relationships for its consumers. First, the perceived news information overload, the relationships among news access via social media, and how it impacts journalistic norms and practices. In a study conducted by Kim, Lee, and Lindsey (2017) it was hypothesized that “the level of perceived news information overload would moderate the relationships between consumers’ news access via social media and news consumption patterns” (Kim, Lee, Lindsey 2017). The results supported that perceived news information overload was a significant moderator. Participants of media consumption have an endless amount of content at their fingertips, so it is through their own personal selection and avoidance process that they narrow down their search for content. The attribution of FoMO will guide users towards a specific interface or publisher in order to release themselves of this feeling. FoMO has the ability to skew audience viewing patterns in this sense. “When individuals expose their peers to information through social media, they motivate their friends and followers to become involved within public spheres of news information flow” (Kim, Lee, Lindsey 2017). In the current study participants are asked how often they re-share hard or soft news content, along with if they share content with their peers through direct messages, or tagging them in the comment of a post.

The sharable nature of news content invites the opportunity for decreased credibility, as anyone can create a profile to start creating and sharing. However, the same is true for the opposite and when an individual who is recognized by the public as a digital opinion leader re-shares content, the potential to gain credibility increases. Research conducted by Turcotte, York, Irving, Scholl, and Pingree (2015) investigated news recommendations from social media opinion leaders and potential implications it poses on media trust and information

seeking. They employed an online survey experiment in the 2 X 3 X 2 design: 2 (social recommendation of news vs. mainstream media) by 3 (adjudication in favor of Republicans, Democrats or on adjudication) by 2 (polarized elite or bipartisan elite). “The nature of this interaction reveals that recommendations from friends who are perceived as very poor opinion leaders have a negative effect on respondents’ trust in the new outlet that was recommended. On the other hand, recommendations from those perceived to be excellent opinion leaders have a positive effect on news outlet trust.” (Turcotte 2015). The results from this research reveal a positive relationship between credible digital opinion leaders and the degree of trust placed in their news outlet recommendations. This creates a problem for journalistic practices and norms when certain stories involuntarily gain attention among social-users. (Kim, Lee, Lindsey 2017). These associations influence the consumption of news media by individuals and will be examined in the current study; participants indicate if they share content with their peers which is inclusive of the genre of news media content (soft/hard) they prefer to share. The fear of missing out succeeds alongside user engagement of content so imaginably relationships might exist between a social media user’s perceived digital influence and the degree of FoMO they experience.

Research Questions

RQ1: Do sociodemographic characteristics significantly predict the degree of FoMO experienced by an individual?

RQ2: Does the number of social media applications used by an individual significantly predict the degree of FoMO experienced by that individual?

RQ3: Does the selection and viewing of soft news social media content significantly predict the degree of FoMO experienced by an individual?

RQ4: Does the selection and viewing of hard news social media content significantly predict the degree of FoMO experienced by an individual?

CHAPTER 3 METHODS

Procedure

To examine the perceived impact FoMO has on audience news viewing patterns on social media interfaces, the current study employs a regional online survey with a sample of University of Central Florida students. The researcher's exercised the resources provided by a survey company Qualtrics. The survey was posted online in five University of Central Florida affiliated Facebook groups. The Facebook groups are categorized based upon anticipated graduation date, with dates ranging from 2018-2022. Participants offered their time voluntarily and no compensation was awarded for completion of the survey. There were no demographic requirements for participations in this survey, so no respondents were excluded from the sample. This research complied with human subject's research protocol and all methods and survey questions were approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Central Florida.

Survey Design

After agreeing to voluntarily participate in the survey, participants were first instructed to answer questions regarding their own socio-demographic characteristics. The second block of questions asked participants about their own social media usage, including the applications currently used by that individual, as well as the platform used to access those applications. Participants options for social media applications were listed as the following: Facebook, Google+, Groupme, Instagram, LinkedIn, MySpace, Office 365, Pintrest, Reddit, Snapchat, Twitter, YouTube, None, Other(specify). Only one participant wrote in another social media application for hard news media content access-The New York Times. Participant options for platforms of access to social media interfaces were listed as the following: Smartphone, Tablet, Personal Computer, Smart TV, Desktop Computer, Other(specify). Questions also asked participants about their frequency of consumption of social media, and the genres of content searched for on their social media applications. The third block of questions asked

participants about their own personal consumption of soft and hard news content on social media interfaces. Frequency, application of access, re-sharing behaviors, and consumption behaviors associated with soft and hard news content on social media interfaces were recorded. The final block of questions included the 10-item scale created and verified by Przybylski, Murayama, DeHaan, and Gladwell in 2013. Supplemented with four additional questions, two of which regarded experiencing FoMO in conversation among an individual's peers, and the remaining questions asking participants if they had consumed hard or soft news media content due to the rationality that not doing so would leave them feeling left out. The items were presented to participants in a random order, and none of the ten questions used in the measure were reverse coded. Participants indicated their level of agreement with the statements on a 5-point Likert scale where (1) represented not at all true of me and (5) represented extremely true of me.

CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS & RESULTS

Results

A total of twenty-one people participated in the survey for this study. A regional sample was collected from the University of Central Florida's student population including two males, seventeen females, one non-gender binary, and one prefer not to say. Fourteen individuals stated that they were Caucasian (66.7 percent), two participants indicated that they were Asian/Pacific Islander (9.5 percent) while two also indicated that they were Hispanic or Latino (9.5 percent) and the remaining three indicated that they were Black or African American (14.3 percent). All participants were from the Central Florida area. The average age of participants was 20.95 years old (SD = 1.286) and ages ranged from eighteen to twenty-three.

Before any analysis was conducted, reliability for the continuous variable (FoMO) was tested. A normal P-P plot of regression using standardized residuals determined that all questions used in this scale variable were reliable to work together. The 10-item scale was combined to create a single variable for the degree of FoMO experienced by an individual. This variable was determined to be normally distributed with skewness and kurtosis falling between -1 and 1. A similar reliability and normality test has been conducted in the work done by Conlin, Billings, and Averset 2016.

Analysis

Research Question 1 asked whether sociodemographic characteristics significantly influence the degree of FoMO experienced by an individual. One-way ANOVA analyses were run for the following socio-demographic characteristics: gender, income, religion, employment, birth order, ethnicity, and family dynamic. Socio-demographic characteristics are not a significant predictor of the degree of FoMO experienced by an individual while using social

media applications. This could be due to the fact that there was not much variation in participants socio-demographics attributing to the low power shown in the analyses.

ANOVA Summary Table for Socio-demographics:

	F	p
Gender	(2,14) = 2.03	.174 ns
Income	(4,14) = .295	.875 ns
Religion	(2,14) = .079	.970 ns
Employment	(2,14) = .655	.537 ns
Birth Order	(2,14) = .228	.800 ns
Ethnicity	(2,14) = .474	.633 ns
Family Dynamic	(3,14) = 1.09	.394 ns

Table 1

Research question 2 asked if the number of social media applications used by an individual predicts the degree of FoMO experienced by that individual. Every participant agreed to using Facebook and Instagram as a social media application. 23.53% of participants (4) access their social media accounts 1-3 times daily. 70.59% of participants (12) access their social media accounts 4-6 times daily and 5.88% of participants (1) access their social media account 10-12 times daily. All participants have been on social media application for more than four years, 72.22% (13) participants have been on social media applications for more than seven years. Linear regression analysis was used to test if the number of social media applications and platforms used to access social media applications significantly predicted participants degree of FoMO. When degree of FoMO was predicted it was found that the number platforms ($\beta = .591$,

p= .042) used by a participant to access social media applications was a significant predictor.

The number of applications currently used by a participant did not significantly predict degree of FoMO ($\beta = -.356$, $p = .194$). The overall model fit was $R^2 = .314$ with $F = 2.749$.

Descriptive statistics summary table for linear regression with number of applications and platforms:

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	β	t	Sig.
Degree of FoMO	29.60	12.877	15			
Number of Applications	7.40	1.957	15	-.356	1.375	.194
Number of Platforms	2.27	.704	15	.591	2.281	.042

Table 2

Using the same linear regression model, significance was tested for the predictors of applications used by a participant for soft news media consumption versus hard news media consumption on social media interfaces. Participants were given the following statement and asked to rate their agreement on a 5-item Likert scale from strongly agree-strongly disagree: “I have experienced the fear of missing out of FoMO while engaging on social media” 40.00% (6) of participants strongly agreed, 26.67% (4) agreed, 13.33% (2) were neutral, 13.33% (2) disagreed, and 6.67%(1) strongly disagreed. Participants were instructed to indicate which platforms they use to access their various social media applications, 64.71% of participants (11)

used two platforms, 23.53% (4) used three platforms, 5.88% (1) used four platforms and 5.88% (1) used one platform. More than 60% of participants (11) indicated they currently used seven or more social media applications, the greatest number of social media applications used by a participant was eleven and the least was four . The results of the regression analysis indicated that the number of applications used by a participant for consumption of soft news media content significantly predicted the degree of FoMO experienced by that individual. (R squared = .336, $F(2,13) p = .105$) ($\beta = .769$). Significance for soft content = .040 and for hard content = .236. The results from this linear regression analysis show that when a participant uses more platforms of access to social media applications, they will also experience a higher degree of FoMO.

Platforms of access were listed as the following: smartphone, tablet, personal computer, desktop computer, smart TV, and other. The results of this linear regression analysis also show that the number of applications being used for soft news content viewing significantly predict the degree of FoMO experienced by that individual, however the number of applications used for hard news content viewing does not. The overall model fit was $R^2 = .336$ with $F = .105$.

Descriptive statistics summary table for linear regression with number of SMA for hard/soft news media content:

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	β	t	Sig.
Degree of FoMO	29.71	13.36	14			
Number of SMA for hard	1.86	1.17	14	-.415	-1.253	.236
Number of SMA for soft	2.36	1.45	14	.769	2.234	.040

Table 3

The final research questions aim to understand if a participant's selection of hard or soft news content while on social media applications is a significant predictor of the degree of FoMO experienced by that individual. Participants responses to the questions about following hard/soft news accounts, daily interaction with soft/hard news media content, re-sharing hard/soft news media content on their own personal profiles, and whether or not they seek out and consume trending hard/soft news media content on social media applications was once again analyzed through the linear regression model. None of these variables were significant predictors of the degree of FoMO experienced by an individual on social media interfaces.

Descriptive statistics summary table for linear regression user engagement with hard/soft news media content.

	F	p
Follow hard news accounts	(8,14) = .863	.815 ns
Follow soft news accounts	(8,14) = .863	.146 ns
Re-share hard news media content	(8,14) = .863	.789 ns
Re-share soft news media content	(8,14) = .863	.757 ns
Seek/consume trending hard news media content	(8,14) = .863	.646 ns
Seek/consume trending soft news media content	(8,14) = .863	.632 ns

Table 4

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

Findings

The current study aids in understanding how the degree of FoMO experienced by an individual is influenced by technology-based behaviors. Results of the regression analysis reveal that the number of platforms accessed by an individual for social media applications will significantly predict the degree of FoMO experienced by that individual. For example, participants that access their social media applications on numerous internet-enabled devices like smartphones, tablets, and personal computers experience a greater amount of FoMO. Rationality could be that the individual is connected on multiple platforms thus manifesting in them a greater need to constantly engage with and seek out content for the potential fear of being excluded from a cultural conversation. The consciousness of being connected on a multitude of social media enabled devices also comes with the consciousness of being disconnected when one is away or logged off from those same devices.

The current study also supports the idea that the genre of content sought after by an individual will impact their degree of FoMO experienced. The number of social media applications accessed by a participant for viewing soft news media content significantly predicted the degree of FoMO experienced by that individual. Soft news media content is defined in the current research by the following parameters: entertainment, arts, sports, lifestyle, and education. Perhaps this can be attributed to the notion that hard news media content is so readily available that there is no fear that can attributed to missing out on those stories. Hard news media content was defined in the current research as global, national, local, political, debate, economy, accidents/crime, and weather news is pervasive in nature, streaming on multiple platforms like cable, radio, and online resources. “Hard news refers to coverage of

break events involving top leaders, major issues, or significant disruptions in the routines of daily life, such as an earthquake or airline disaster. Information about these events is presumably important to citizens' ability to understand and respond to the world of public affairs.” (Shoemaker and Cohen 2006). No exact scientific definition exists for hard or soft news despite that these terms have made their way into academic literature since the earliest times of journalism. Hard and soft news media content are determined based in the understanding of others and in one's own perception. (Patterson 2000). In the current research when participants accessed soft news media content on a variety of social media applications it significantly predicted the degree of FoMO experienced by that individual, although the number of applications used for hard news media content viewing was not a predictor. This supports the hypothesis that the genre of content, in this case soft news media content, has the ability to influence the degree of FoMO experienced.

Significance

By nature, humans are social creatures and part of the satisfaction that is derived from social media behavior is the ability to converse about it with our peers. This is one of the sustaining factors of social media applications – the capacity to stay connected. With the inclusion of the phenomenon of FoMO into our technology-based behaviors we find that part of the enjoyment is associated to what others deem to be worthy content. Every participant agreed to experiencing some degree of FoMO while on social media applications. There is now, more than ever, a need to stay relevant. A survey conducted in March 2017 by the Pew Research Center revealed that “eight-in-ten U.S. adults now get news on a mobile device (85%).” (Lu 2017). The findings in the current research support the sentiment that degree of FoMO experienced by an individual is influenced by their own individual social media viewing habits

and consumption behaviors.

Future Research

Future research could take a more in-depth analysis on the various ways that individuals access social media applications as well as frequency. The current research found that the number of platforms used to access social media applications by an individual and the number of applications used for soft news media content viewing were significant predictors of the degree of FoMO experienced. Further investigation could allude to the notion that different applications used by an individual (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc) result in different degrees of experienced FoMO. Prospective research, knowing that the number of platforms used to access social media applications by an individual, could take a more definitive approach by looking at the implication's frequency would have on user's degree of FoMO. Future investigations could ask how often participants connect to each platform, noting any significant predictions of the degree of FoMO experienced by an individual.

The current research was positioned to find correlations between user socio-demographic's and the degree of FoMO experienced. However, no significant findings were made, although this could largely be due to the small sample size. Pre-existing literature, like the study conducted by Choi (2016), support the concept that socio-demographics can determine similarities in viewing patterns among audience members. (Choi 2016). The current research did not support the theory that audience members with similar socio-demographics experienced the same degree of FoMO. A larger sample size would benefit in the continued research of this relationship. Future work could further investigate how an individual's genre of content selection correlates with their experienced degree of FoMO. The current research found that a greater number of applications used for soft news media content determined a higher degree of FoMO.

The data from the current research can be analyzed cross-sectionally, in the current research the degree of FoMO of participants is analyzed as the continuous variable in order to better understand the variables and outside factors that predict FoMO. It can be argued that because an individual experiences FoMO they are on social media, in the same instance, it can be argued that because an individual is on social media, they are inviting the opportunity to experience the fear-of-missing-out. Social media applications allow for simultaneous connectivity amid all its users, but the reality stands that users must log-off or turn-away from viewing at some point. Social media application consumers, when pulled away from social media, will inherently miss out on some content that could have potentially been brought to their feed and eyes. FoMO has been developing alongside technology-based behaviors since its early origin, the current research supports this belief. Two media behaviors examined in this study significantly predicted FoMO, the number of platforms used to access social media applications and the number of social media applications used for soft news media content consumption.

Application

Social media applications create an environment for instantaneous conversation allowing the fear-of-missing-out to perpetuate its consumers constantly. Social media applications grant a way for individuals to stay connected with friends and family which can certainly be tied to FoMO, enticing users to constantly check-in, or update one another. (Conlin, Billings, Averest 2016). Consumers exercise social media applications as a news outlet, even credible news sources have profiles and pages to follow on these interfaces. Social media has made a successful integration into the contemporary lifestyle, changing the landscape of the telecommunications field just as the birth of television made fundamental shifts in the market that was only radio. The digital age propels forward as do the technology-based behaviors that occur with it and the

current research aims to highlight one of the divergent phenomenon's maturing alongside these behaviors. The fear of missing out experienced by an individual can be influenced based upon their own interactive behaviors with internet-enabled devices and social media applications. Furthermore, the current study demonstrates how an individual's personal selection to view soft news media content on multiple social media applications forecasts their degree of FoMO experienced.

APPENDIX

In the first set of questions you will be prompted to answer about your own socio-demographics.

1. What is your age?
2. What is your sex?
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Gender Fluid
 - d. Intersex
 - e. Transgender Man
 - f. Transgender Woman
 - g. Prefer not to say
 - h. Other (please specify) _____
3. What is your race or ethnicity?
 - a. Asian/Pacific Islander
 - b. Black or African American
 - c. Caucasian
 - d. Hispanic or Latino
 - e. Native American or Alaskan Native
 - f. Middle Eastern or Arab
 - g. Other (please specify) _____
4. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
 - a. No education
 - b. Primary Education
 - c. Some high school
 - d. High School Diploma or equivalent

- e. Trade/technical/vocational training
 - f. Some college
 - g. Bachelors
 - h. Some graduate
 - i. Masters
 - j. Doctorate
 - k. Currently enrolled - please specify class standing
 - l. Other (please specify) _____
5. If you are currently enrolled at a University, please state your major. If you are not currently enrolled please write N/A. _____
6. If you are currently enrolled at a University, what is your expected graduation date? If not, please write N/A.
7. What is your current religion, if any?
- a. Atheism
 - b. Christian
 - c. Jewish
 - d. Orthodox – Greek or Russian
 - e. Protestant
 - f. Mormon
 - g. Muslim
 - h. Roman Catholic
 - i. No religious preference
 - j. Other (please specify) _____
8. What is your marital status?

- a. Divorced
 - b. Married
 - c. Single/never been married
 - d. Separated
 - e. Widowed
 - f. Prefer not to say
 - g. Other _____.
9. What is your employment status?
- a. Full time
 - b. Part time
 - c. Unemployed
 - d. Retired
 - e. Prefer not to say
10. Please list the city and state of your current residence. _____
11. Including yourself, how many people live within your household? For example: If you have 3 roommates, including yourself the correct numerical representation is 4. _____
12. Are there any children under the age of 18 years currently living in your household?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Prefer not to say
13. What is your household's income?
- a. Below \$10K
 - b. \$11K-50K
 - c. \$51K-100K
 - d. \$101K-150K

- e. Above \$151K
- f. Prefer not to say

In the next set of questions, you will be prompted to answer about your childhood.

14. Please choose the answer that is most representative of your family dynamic during childhood.
- a. A married heterosexual couple with one or more dependent children
 - b. A married homosexual couple with one or more dependent children.
 - c. A family group that is more than two generations living the same household with one or more dependent children.
 - d. A single parent family with one or more dependent children.
 - e. A non-married heterosexual couple with one or more dependent children.
 - f. A non-married homosexual couple with one or more dependent children.
 - g. A family group that consisted of children from previous marriages.
 - h. Other (please specify) _____
15. Please indicate your birth order
- a. First
 - b. Middle
 - c. Last
16. Who was the most important caregiver or major parental influence in your life? Please specify their relationship to you.
17. I grew up in a religious household.
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Prefer not to say
18. I feel that my family displayed affection for me as a child.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Somewhat agree
- d. Neither agree nor disagree
- e. Somewhat agree
- f. Disagree
- g. Strongly disagree

19. I was disciplined as a child.

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Somewhat agree
- d. Neither agree nor disagree
- e. Somewhat disagree
- f. Disagree
- g. Strongly agree

20. On average, how often do you have face-to-face interactions with immediate family? Immediate family is defined as parents, siblings, and grandparents.

- a. Daily
- b. Weekly
- c. Monthly
- d. Several times each year
- e. Never
- f. Prefer not to say

21. On average, how often do you have face-to-face interactions with extended family? Extended family is defined as Aunts, Uncles, and cousins.

- a. Daily
- b. Weekly
- c. Monthly
- d. Several times each year
- e. Never
- f. Prefer not to say

In the next set of questions, you will be prompted to answer about your personal use of social media applications.

1. Which of the following social media application(s) do you currently use? (Select all that apply).

- a. Twitter
- b. Facebook
- c. Instagram
- d. YouTube
- e. Google+
- f. Office 365
- g. LinkedIn
- h. Reddit
- i. Snapchat
- j. MySpace
- k. Pinterest
- l. GroupMe
- m. None
- n. Other (please specify) _____

2. How do you access your social media accounts? (Select all that apply).

- a. Smartphone
 - b. Tablet
 - c. Personal Computer
 - d. Smart TV
 - e. Desktop Computer
 - f. Other (please specify) _____
3. How long have you been using various social media applications?
- a. Less than a year
 - b. 1-3 years
 - c. 4-6 years
 - d. More than 7 years
 - e. I do not use social media applications
 - f. Other - please specify_____
4. What content do you primarily search for when using social media applications? (Select all that apply).
- a. Blogs
 - b. Entertainment - award shows, celebrity news, fashion, food, talk shows, music
 - c. Education - research, case studies, free resources, video training, tips & tricks
 - d. Feel good - meme's, animals, comedy, conversation, inspiration, travel, viral videos
 - e. Gaming
 - f. Global news
 - g. Local news
 - h. National news
 - i. ing and career opportunities
 - j. Political news

- k. Promotion – webinars, products, services, discounts, contests & giveaways
 - l. Sports
 - m. Weather
 - n. Videos/photos of friends and family
 - o. Other (please specify) _____
5. How frequently do you access your social media account(s)?
- a. 1-3 times per day
 - b. 4-6 times per day
 - c. 7-9 times per day
 - d. 10-12 times per day
 - e. More than 13 times per day
 - f. I do not access my social media accounts daily
 - g. I do not have social media accounts
 - h. Other (please specify) _____
6. What is your primary use for your personal profile on social media applications? Select all that apply.
- a. Entertainment
 - b. Information – sharing pictures/videos of oneself
 - c. News gathering
 - d. Relationship development
 - e. Relationship maintenance – keeping up with friends and family
 - f. Trend-following
 - g. Other (please specify) _____
7. Do you have more friends on your social media applications when compared to real-life?
- a. Yes

- b. No
 - c. Unsure
 - d. Prefer not to say
8. I have experienced the “Fear of Missing Out” or FoMO while engaging on social media.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
9. I have consumed content on social media applications that a peer has recommended to me.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
10. I have consumed content on social media that I saw an advertisement for.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
11. I am most active on social media applications at night.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral

- d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
12. I am most active on social media applications during the day.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
13. I am most active on social media applications during the morning.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
14. Everyday, I post something on a social media application.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
15. I share content with my friends on social media applications. (Tagging them in the comments, sending them a video, sharing a tweet, etc)
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral

- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

16. If your answer to the above question was “Strongly Agree, Agree, or Neutral” how often do you share content with your friends?

- a. 1-3 times per day
- b. 4-6 times per day
- c. 7-9 times per day
- d. 10-12 times per day
- e. 13 or more times per day

In the next set of questions you will be prompted to answer questions about your consumption of news content on social media interfaces. For the purpose of this study, news Content will be categorized into two different genres: Hard news and Soft news. Hard news will consist of global, national, local, and political news, debate, economy, accidents/crime and weather. Soft news will consist of entertainment, arts, sports, lifestyle, and education. Please use both of the above definitions of and “hard/soft news” when answering the following questions.

1. Which social media accounts do you consume hard news content on? (Select all that apply).
 - a. Facebook
 - b. Google+
 - c. Groupme
 - d. Instagram
 - e. LinkedIn
 - f. MySpace

- g. Office 365
 - h. Pintrest
 - i. Reddit
 - j. Snapchat
 - k. Twitter
 - l. YouTube
 - m. None
 - n. Other _____
2. Which social media accounts do you consume soft news on? (Select al that apply).
- a. Facebook
 - b. Google+
 - c. Groupme
 - d. Instagram
 - e. LinkedIn
 - f. MySpace
 - g. Office 365
 - h. Pintrest
 - i. Reddit
 - j. Snapchat
 - k. Twitter
 - l. YouTube
 - m. None
 - n. Other _____
3. How frequently do you consume hard news?
- a. 1-3 times per day

- b. 4-6 times per day
 - c. 7-9 times per day
 - d. 10-12 times per day
 - e. 13 times or more per day
 - f. I do not consume hard news.
 - g. I do not consume hard news daily (please specify) _____
4. How frequently do you consume soft news?
- a. 1-3 times per day
 - b. 4-6 times per day
 - c. 7-9 times per day
 - d. 10-12 times per day
 - e. 13 times or more per day
 - f. I do not consume soft news.
 - g. I do not consume soft news daily (please specify) _____
5. I follow accounts that post hard news content on some or all of my social media applications.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
6. I follow accounts that post soft news content on some or all of my social media applications.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree

- e. Strongly Disagree
7. I often share hard news stories on my social media profiles.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
8. I often share soft news stories on my social media profiles.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
9. I use social media as my primary news outlet.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
10. I seek out and consume hard news stories on social media that are trending among my peers.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

11. I seek out and consume soft news stories on social media that are trending among my peers.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

In the final set of questions, you will be prompted to answer about the “Fear of Missing Out” or FoMO. FoMO involves the feeling that missing out on an opportunity to engage with your peers (at a party, at class, at a concert) could result in being excluded from a cultural conversation or seminal moment (Przybylski, Murayama, DeHaan and Gladwell 2013). Underlined questions indicate they are taken from the 10-item scale.

1. I fear others have more rewarding experiences than me

- a. Not at all true of me
- b. Slightly true of me
- c. Moderately true of me
- d. Very true of me
- e. Extremely true of me

2. I fear my friends have more rewarding experiences than me

- a. Not at all true of me
- b. Slightly true of me
- c. Moderately true of me
- d. Very true of me
- e. Extremely true of me

3. I get worried when find out my friends are having fun without me.

- a. Not at all true of me
 - b. Slightly true of me
 - c. Moderately true of me
 - d. Very true of me
 - e. Extremely true of me
4. When I go on vacation, I continue to keep tabs on what my friends are doing.
- a. Not at all true of me
 - b. Slightly true of me
 - c. Moderately true of me
 - d. Very true of me
 - e. Extremely true of me
5. I get anxious when I don't know what my friends are up to.
- a. Not at all true of me
 - b. Slightly true of me
 - c. Moderately true of me
 - d. Very true of me
 - e. Extremely true of me
6. Sometimes, I wonder if I spend too much time keeping up with what is going on.
- a. Not at all true of me
 - b. Slightly true of me
 - c. Moderately true of me
 - d. Very true of me
 - e. Extremely true of me
7. It is important that I understand my friends "in jokes".
- a. Not at all true of me

- b. Slightly true of me
 - c. Moderately true of me
 - d. Very true of me
 - e. Extremely true of me
8. It bothers me when I miss an opportunity to meet up with friends.
- a. Not at all true of me
 - b. Slightly true of me
 - c. Moderately true of me
 - d. Very true of me
 - e. Extremely true of me
9. When I have a good time, it is important for me to share the details online (e.g. updating status).
- a. Not at all true of me
 - b. Slightly true of me
 - c. Moderately true of me
 - d. Very true of me
 - f. Extremely true of me
12. When I miss out on a planned get-together it bothers me.
- a. Not at all true of me
 - b. Slightly true of me
 - c. Moderately true of me
 - d. Very true of me
 - e. Extremely true of me
13. I am fearful of being “out-of-the-loop” during conversation with my peers.
- a. Not at all true of me
 - b. Slightly true of me

- c. Moderately true of me
 - d. Very true of me
 - e. Extremely true of me
14. I feel embarrassed when I do not know what my peers are referencing in conversations.
- a. Not at all true of me
 - b. Slightly true of me
 - c. Moderately true of me
 - d. Very true of me
 - e. Extremely true of me
15. I have watched soft news content because I was afraid of being excluded from a conversation about it.
- a. Not at all true of me
 - b. Slightly true of me
 - c. Moderately true of me
 - d. Very true of me
 - e. Extremely true of me
16. I have watched hard news content because I was afraid of being excluded from a conversation about it.
- a. Not at all true of me
 - b. Slightly true of me
 - c. Moderately true of me
 - d. Very true of me
 - e. Extremely true of me

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