

Exploring bandwagon and conspicuous consumption in Indonesian domestic tourism: A millennial perspective through SOBC

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Abstract

This study examines the psychological drivers behind Indonesian millennials' consumption in domestic tourism. Using the Stimulus-Organism-Behavior-Consequence (SOBC) model, it explores how dark personality traits—particularly Machiavellianism and Narcissism—foster Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and social comparison, which in turn lead to bandwagon and conspicuous consumption. Data from 524 respondents revealed that while both Machiavellianism and Narcissism significantly drive FoMO, Narcissism plays a more prominent role in amplifying social comparison and driving subsequent consumption behaviors. Social media intensity moderates these dynamics, enhancing the Narcissism – FoMO link but reducing Machiavellianism's impact on FoMO. This research emphasizes the interplay between social media environments and personality traits in shaping millennial consumption patterns, providing valuable insights for developing marketing strategies that align with millennials' psychological motivations. Additionally, the study underscores the pivotal role of social comparison in driving bandwagon and conspicuous consumption, deepening our understanding of how social media engagement fuels the desire to conform to or stand out in popular trends. By combining psychological principles with tourism marketing, these findings provide actionable insights for marketers to leverage digital platforms in appealing to millennial consumers.

Keywords: Machiavellianism, Narcissism, FOMO, Bandwagon consumption, Conspicuous consumption.

Introduction

The recovery of Indonesia's tourism sector post-pandemic is evident through significant milestones, particularly in domestic tourism, where a 20% increase in visits was recorded by the end of 2023. This growth aligns with earlier trends, including a 19.82% rise in domestic tourist trips in 2022 compared to the previous year and a 1.76% increase compared to 2019 (Statistics Indonesia, 2023). The sector's resurgence is further demonstrated by the 749.1 million domestic trips taken between January and November 2023, marking an 11.99% year-over-year increase and surpassing pre-pandemic levels by 14.84% (Rachmawati, 2024). Key strategies such as digital transformation and the *Bangga Berwisata Indonesia* (Proud to Travel Indonesia) campaign, which aims to achieve 1.25-1.5 billion domestic tourist movements in 2024, have played a critical role in revitalizing the industry, contributing to a 12% boost in domestic tourism revenue (Krisda and Widyanti, 2023). Central to this recovery is the engagement of millennials, who represent 60% of Indonesia's active social media users and play a crucial role in driving domestic tourism demand (IDN Research Institute, 2024). By effectively leveraging millennials' unique traits such as their strong social media presence and emphasis on self-expression these strategies have successfully created compelling narratives that resonate across digital platforms, further accelerating the growth of the domestic tourism sector.

Prior research highlights the distinct traits of millennials particularly their strong social media presence and emphasis on self-expression which have been effectively utilized in digital marketing strategies for domestic tourism. As Manchón and Dávila (2022) note, millennials' pursuit of self-esteem often aligns with dark personality traits such as narcissism and selfishness, influencing their online behaviors. These traits frequently overlap with Machiavellian tendencies, leading to a rise in impulsive and intense social media engagement. This makes millennials particularly responsive to tourism campaigns that appeal to their desire for validation and social status. However, this dynamic is not uniform across all individuals, as Brailovskaia et al. (2023) show that factors like fear of missing out (FoMO) sensitivity and social media intensity can moderate these effects. The widespread use of visually driven platforms like Instagram further amplifies these issues, particularly among millennials with high levels of narcissism and Machiavellianism traits strongly linked to FoMO (Servidio et al., 2021). This leads to increased anxiety and compulsive behaviors, forming a cycle of social media addiction and psychological distress (Tandon et al., 2021b). Constant exposure to idealized vacation content via stories, reels, and livestreams fosters upward social comparisons, triggering feelings of inadequacy and diminished self-esteem (Vogel and Rose, 2016). As millennials struggle to keep pace with these curated portrayals, their mental health and genuine engagement with tourism experiences may be compromised, underscoring the need for more nuanced and ethically informed marketing strategies.

In this context, understanding the psychological underpinnings of millennial behavior is crucial for developing effective tourism marketing strategies. Research shows that FoMO significantly predicts social media addiction, particularly among younger populations, driving them to engage in behaviors that seek social validation and status (Tan and Fauzi, 2024), dark personality traits such as Narcissism and Machiavellianism have been linked to specific social media behaviors, including conspicuous consumption and bandwagon tendencies, as these individuals are more likely to engage in manipulative and self-centered activities online (Preotiuc-Pietro et al., 2016). The

Stimulus-Organism-Behavior-Consequence (SOBC) model offers a comprehensive framework (Sreen et al., 2023) for exploring how these psychological dynamics influence millennial consumption in Indonesia's domestic tourism sector. By examining the interplay between dark personality traits, FoMO, and social comparison, the SOBC model provides valuable insights into the mechanisms that drive bandwagon and conspicuous consumption, highlighting the importance of these factors in shaping tourism-related decisions and the potential long-term effects on consumer well-being (Jabeen et al., 2023; Servidio et al., 2021).

This study contributes to the understanding of Indonesian millennial consumption behavior in domestic tourism by applying the Stimulus-Organism-Behavior-Consequence (SOBC) model, emphasizing how dark personality traits like Machiavellianism and Narcissism drive FoMO and social comparison, leading to bandwagon and conspicuous consumption. It highlights the critical role of social media in propagating travel trends and the demand for authentic experiences that enhance social image, which is pivotal for crafting effective communication strategies that resonate with millennials while supporting sustainable tourism goals. By uncovering the psychological mechanisms behind these behaviors, the study offers valuable insights for developing targeted marketing strategies and destination management practices that appeal to this influential demographic (Preotiuc-Pietro et al., 2016).

Literature Review

SOBC Model

The SOBC model, grounded in social learning theory, refines the understanding of human behavior by integrating elements from earlier models like the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974; Vieira, 2013) and the Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence (ABC) model (Skinner, 1963). This model captures the dynamic interplay between environmental stimuli (S), internal cognitive processes (O), behavioral responses (B), and resulting consequences (C) (Davis and Luthans, 1980; Talwar et al., 2020), extending the SOR framework by highlighting the role of internal thoughts and ideas (Whelan et al., 2020). Applied in this study, the SOBC model helps explain how dark personality traits, like Machiavellianism and Narcissism, trigger internal states such as FoMO (O), which then drive behaviors like social comparison (B) and result in bandwagon and conspicuous consumption (C).

Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)

FoMO, or "fear of missing out," first coined in the Oxford English Dictionary in 2013 and popularized by a 2014 Forbes article, reflects a modern anxiety tied to social media-fueled disconnection and dissatisfaction (Hedges, 2014). This phenomenon, conceptualized through Self-Determination Theory (SDT), arises from unmet psychological needs competence, autonomy, and relatedness leading to compulsive social comparison and social media use as a coping mechanism (Przybylski et al., 2013). In marketing, FoMO is leveraged to enhance brand excitement and engagement (Alfina et al., 2023), highlighting its powerful impact on consumption behaviors (Kang et al., 2020).

Machiavellianism and Narcissism Personality in Tourism Consumption Behavior

Machiavellianism and Narcissism are socially aversive personality traits that significantly influence tourism decision-making (Akat et al., 2023). Machiavellianism is characterized by manipulation, emotional detachment, and a strong desire for control and social dominance (Leite et al., 2023). Individuals high in Machiavellianism tend to engage in calculated behaviors, using social media strategically to manage their image rather than seek attention. In tourism, they are more likely to plan exclusive, curated travel experiences that elevate their status while minimizing social risks (Kapoor et al., 2021; Rauthmann and Will, 2011). Instead of impulsive travel decisions, Machiavellians rely on social media surveillance observing others to inform their choices and maintain a competitive advantage (Ankit and Uppal, 2021). Narcissism, on the other hand, is defined by grandiosity, a strong need for admiration, and a focus on self-enhancement (Besser et al., 2024). Narcissistic individuals are highly driven by social validation and tend to make impulsive tourism decisions that maximize visibility and reinforce their perceived superiority. They prefer luxury or status-symbol destinations and actively share these experiences online to gain admiration from others (Hollebeek et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2024). Their reliance on social comparison and sensitivity to FoMO often results in a cycle of continuous, attention-seeking travel consumption (Servidio et al., 2021; Wien et al., 2024).

Stimuli-Organism

Machiavellianism – FoMO

The interaction between Machiavellianism and FoMO is rooted in strategic social manipulation and the desire to maintain social dominance through controlled digital engagement. Machiavellians, who are driven by self-interest and skilled at influencing others, use social media as a tool to monitor peers, shape perceptions, and strengthen their status (Sheldon et al., 2019). Their fear of missing out is not driven by emotional insecurity but by the potential loss of opportunities to gain leverage in social situations (Tan and Fauzi, 2024). This is especially evident in tourism, where they curate and share exclusive travel experiences as a form of status signaling to reinforce their influence (Hollebeek et al., 2022). Unlike those who use social media for personal enjoyment, Machiavellians engage in calculated self-presentation, using FoMO to justify continuous monitoring and content sharing that serves their strategic goals (Wien et al., 2024). Research shows that FoMO can lead to problematic smartphone use, particularly in tourism, where Machiavellians feel compelled to document and share their travels to maintain control over how they are perceived (Elhai et al., 2016; Tandon et al., 2021a).

Machiavellians actively seek opportunities to showcase exclusivity, luxury, and social distinction, using travel as a means of asserting dominance within their social circles (Servidio et al., 2021). The fear of missing out on such opportunities—whether it be exclusive events, luxury destinations, or high-status networking—drives their persistent engagement with social media, reinforcing the feedback loop between high social media intensity, image curation, and status preservation (Fox and Rooney, 2015). As Machiavellians strategically engage with tourism-related social media content, they experience a heightened form of FoMO, not merely from the desire to partake in experiences but from the fear of losing control over their constructed social narrative.

H1 Machiavellianism has a positive influence on FoMO among millennials.

Narcissism – FoMO

Narcissism, marked by an inflated self-image and a constant need for admiration, has been strongly linked to FoMO due to narcissists' deep reliance on external validation to maintain their sense of superiority (Casale and Fioravanti, 2018; Servidio et al., 2021). Social media serves as a primary outlet for narcissistic individuals to showcase their curated lives and seek approval, but this dependence also makes them highly vulnerable to FoMO when they perceive others engaging in status-enhancing activities (Brailovskaia et al., 2023). Since FoMO stems from the fear of missing out on socially rewarding experiences, narcissists experience significant distress when they feel excluded from events that could affirm their relevance and boost their perceived status (Akat et al., 2023). This psychological tension fuels a compulsive cycle of digital engagement, where they continually post and monitor feedback to protect their self-worth and maintain dominance in social spaces (Servidio et al., 2021). As a result, FoMO not only intensifies their anxiety but also drives them to engage in increasingly attention-seeking and image-focused behaviors to stay visible and admired (Carone et al., 2023).

This pattern suggests that narcissism and FoMO operate in a mutually reinforcing cycle, where FoMO amplifies narcissistic tendencies, and these tendencies, in turn, increase FoMO-driven behaviors. The emotional fragility associated with narcissism further exacerbates this dynamic, as individuals experience distress when they feel excluded from experiences that could enhance their perceived prestige (Carone et al., 2023). The psychological mechanisms underlying this relationship align with theories on defense mechanisms, where narcissistic individuals engage in unconscious strategies to maintain self-esteem by curating and controlling their perceived image (Song et al., 2019). As a result, their response to FoMO is not simply a reaction to missing events but a deeper psychological need to preserve their self-concept and dominance within social hierarchies (Pincus and Roche, 2011). Given this interplay, it is evident that narcissism significantly intensifies FoMO by fostering an insatiable need for validation and relevance, leading to compulsive behaviors aimed at mitigating perceived threats to their self-worth (Brailovskaia et al., 2023; Servidio et al., 2021).

H2 Narcissism has a positive influence on FoMO among millennials.

Social Media Intensity as Moderating Variable

Social media intensity, characterized by frequent and immersive engagement, significantly moderates the relationship between personality traits like Narcissism and Machiavellianism and the experience of FoMO in tourism contexts. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter shape perceptions of status and satisfaction by continuously displaying curated travel experiences, exotic destinations, and exclusive events. This visibility encourages users to compare their lives with idealized portrayals, triggering FoMO through feelings of inadequacy and validation-seeking behaviors (Durmuş et al., 2024). For narcissists, whose behavior is driven by the need for admiration and self-promotion, high social media intensity heightens the desire to showcase luxury and exclusivity. This leads to compulsive posting, monitoring others'

reactions, and relying on feedback to reinforce a positive self-image (Carone et al., 2023). As their sense of worth becomes increasingly dependent on external approval, the gap between real and idealized experiences grows, intensifying FoMO and diminishing well-being through social comparison and anxiety (Valkenburg, 2022).

For individuals high in Machiavellianism, social media intensity reinforces their strategic and manipulative tendencies. Unlike narcissists, Machiavellians use social media not for attention, but as a tool to monitor others and craft a controlled image that supports their social influence. In tourism, this manifests through the selective presentation of exclusive travel experiences aimed at enhancing status and shaping perceptions (Marengo et al., 2018). High social media engagement increases their exposure to competitive social cues such as trending destinations or influencer-endorsed experiences leading to FoMO driven by missed opportunities for social leverage rather than emotional insecurity (Fox and Rooney, 2015). Their behavior is marked by strategic vigilance, where high social media intensity amplifies the motivation to stay ahead in social hierarchies, reinforcing a dependence on digital platforms to maintain perceived superiority and control within travel-related social dynamics (Abell and Brewer, 2014).

H3a Social media intensity strengthens the relationship between Machiavellianism and FoMO among millennials.

H3b Social media intensity strengthens the relationship between Narcissism and FoMO among millennials.

Organism-Behaviour

FoMO – Social Comparison

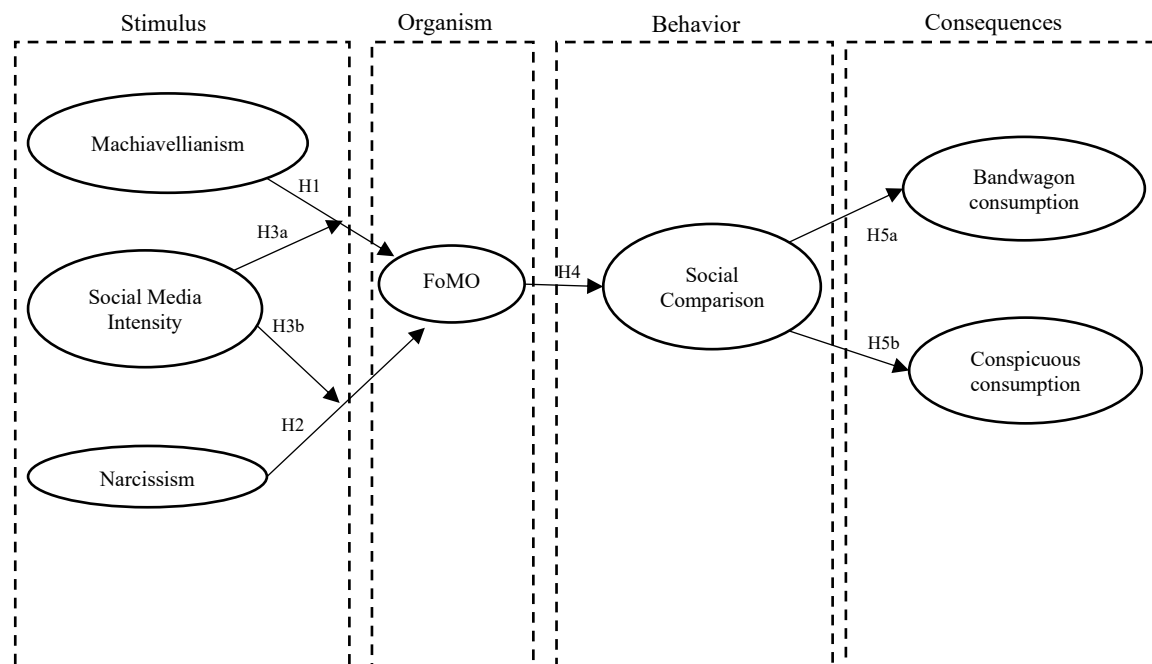
FoMO, defined as the anxiety of missing out on rewarding experiences enjoyed by others, significantly influences social comparison behaviors, particularly in the tourism context. Millennials, as digital natives, are particularly vulnerable to FoMO due to their high engagement with social media platforms, where curated travel experiences and exclusive events are constantly showcased (Aurel and Paramita, 2021; Przybylski et al., 2013). This heightened exposure fosters an emotional dependency on digital platforms, where individuals compulsively check and post updates, driven by the fear that they are missing out on important social interactions or opportunities (Burnasheva and Suh, 2021). Within tourism, this manifests in compulsive documentation and sharing of travel experiences, reinforcing a cycle where social validation becomes a primary motivator for travel-related decisions. The urgency to remain digitally visible and relevant amplifies FoMO-driven behaviors, compelling individuals to not only observe but actively participate in experiences perceived as socially rewarding.

FoMO-driven social media engagement plays a central role in shaping tourism behavior through its strong connection to social comparison. In tourism, where experiences are often commodified and used as symbols of status, social media intensifies this dynamic by showcasing curated, idealized travel content that invites upward comparison (Tandon et al., 2021a; Verduyn et al., 2020). According to Social Comparison Theory, FoMO acts as a motivator, pushing individuals to compare themselves with others to assess their social standing, especially when they perceive exclusion from desirable

experiences (Robinson et al., 2019; Song et al., 2019). This can lead to anxiety, particularly among those prone to FoMO, as they feel pressured to keep up with socially rewarding travel trends. In response, many users turn to self-promotion as a coping strategy strategically crafting content to present their lives as desirable, maintain relevance, and boost perceived social value (Burnasheva and Suh, 2021; Tandon et al., 2024). Thus, FoMO not only heightens emotional distress but also drives image-conscious behaviors that reinforce the performative nature of travel consumption on social media.

H4 FoMO has a positive influence on social comparison among millennials.

Figure 1: Hypothetical research model based on S-O-B-C framework



Behaviour – Consequences

Social Comparison, Bandwagon Consumption, Conspicuous Consumption

Social comparison, particularly within the visually driven and curated environments of social media platforms, significantly shapes consumer behavior among millennials (Siegel and Wang, 2019). These platforms offer numerous opportunities for self-presentation, such as sharing life events and achievements, which fosters a continuous cycle of social comparison where individuals measure their experiences against idealized portrayals online (Reer et al., 2019). This comparison drives two key consumption behaviors: bandwagon consumption, where individuals purchase products to gain social acceptance, and conspicuous consumption, where purchases are made to project wealth and status. Bandwagon consumption is particularly prevalent among Millennials who are influenced by the consumption patterns of celebrities, influencers, and peers, often adopting these behaviors to gain recognition within their desired social circles (Kang and Ma, 2020). The bandwagon effect is especially strong in the context

of luxury goods, where social media amplifies the visibility and perceived endorsement of these trends, compelling millennials to prioritize social validation over personal preference or financial capability (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2012).

Conspicuous consumption is driven by the desire to project wealth and status, often intensified by social comparison, especially when individuals perceive a status gap with wealthier peers (Chen et al., 2022). Millennials, exposed to idealized portrayals on social media, may feel compelled to acquire and display luxury goods as symbols of social standing (Aurel and Paramita, 2021). The visibility of these goods on social media enhances their symbolic value, turning them into markers of success and social capital (Liu et al., 2019). This behavior aligns with the “keeping up with the Joneses” phenomenon, where individuals strive to match the consumption levels of those around them to close the perceived status gap (Siegel and Wang, 2019). Research on Korean millennials shows that social media strongly influences conspicuous online consumption by facilitating self-image congruity and public displays of luxury goods, often mediated by self-esteem (Burnasheva and Suh, 2021).

H5a Social comparison has a positive influence on bandwagon consumption among millennials.

H5b Social comparison has a positive influence on conspicuous consumption among millennials.

Methodology

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection involved distributing 625 questionnaires via Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp to reach a broad base of digitally active Indonesian millennials, resulting in a strong response rate of 84% with 524 completed surveys. Respondents were selected based on age, and the focus was on urban centers in Java due to their economic relevance and high concentration of millennial social media users. To address the challenge of collecting data on behavior and outcomes simultaneously, we followed prior research by using techniques such as framing questions around recent actions to reduce bias. We also applied statistical tests for common method bias, ensuring that participants reflected on typical behavior within a familiar timeframe, which enhanced the reliability of our cross-sectional design. Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to analyze the data, as it is well-suited for examining relationships between constructs with nonnormal data, such as Likert-scale responses (Hair et al., 2019). PLS-SEM involves two stages: evaluating the measurement model for validity and the structural model for path relationships (Hair Jr et al., 2020).

Instrument Development and Measurement

The study adapted questionnaire items from established literature to fit this study’s context, modifying measures for Machiavellianism and Narcissism using the Dirty Dozen scale (Jonason and Webster, 2010), FoMO items from Kang et al. (2019), social comparison items from Gibbons and Buunk (1999), bandwagon consumption items

from Kastanakis and Balabanis (2012), and conspicuous consumption items from Marcoux et al. (1997), with responses measured on a five-point Likert scale. To ensure content validity, the items were translated into Indonesian and refined through face validity by consulting six marketing experts, as suggested by Tandon et al. (2021b). The experts recommended reducing questions to improve response quality, condensing items with similar meanings while preserving each variable's operational definition, and adjusting phrasing to align with the Indonesian cultural context. To mitigate social desirability bias, following Ried et al. (2022), measures included: ensuring respondent anonymity by avoiding identity-related questions, explaining the study's purpose in the introduction, using indirect questions for sensitive variables like the light and dark triad, and rephrasing terms such as "manipulation," "lying," and "exploitation" with equivalent terms to reduce potential bias while maintaining the original intent.

Results

Sample Characteristics

We received a total of 547 responses, of which 23 were excluded because they did not meet the criterion of having seen others post about domestic travel activities on social media. This left 524 valid respondents for further analysis. Of these respondents, approximately 36.6% were male, and 37.6% reported accessing social media for more than 3 hours per day.

Common Method Bias

To address potential common method bias (CMB) in our self-administered questionnaire, we first ensured participant anonymity and encouraged honest responses, minimizing the risk of bias. We then applied Kock's (2015) method, examining Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs) for collinearity. With all VIFs below the 3.3 threshold, the risk of CMB was deemed negligible, affirming the robustness of our data and allowing us to proceed confidently with our multivariate analysis.

Assessment of Measurement Model

In evaluating the reliability and validity of our measurement model, we rigorously assessed factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE), ensuring each construct met established thresholds (Table 1).

Table 1: The result of the measurement model assessment

Construct	Statement	Loadings	CR	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha
Machiavellianism	It's acceptable to control everything to get what I want.	0.848	0.903	0.701	0.858
	Sometimes lying can be used to get what I want.	0.882			
	Flattery can be used to get what we want.	0.771			

Construct	Statement	Loadings	CR	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha
Narcissism	Personal goals can often be achieved by exploiting others.	0.843			
	It is natural to have a desire to be admired by others.	0.928	0.915	0.844	0.816
	It is natural to have a desire to be noticed by others.	0.909			
Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)	I want others to know when I go to domestic tourist destinations.	0.916	0.948	0.858	0.917
	I want to receive praise from others when visiting domestic tourist destinations.	0.929			
	I want to be able to interact with most people (mainstream group).	0.934			
Social Comparison	I try to find out if others also want to visit domestic tourist destinations.	0.764	0.890	0.670	0.837
	I observe how others travel to domestic tourist destinations.	0.860			
	I compare how well my holiday activities are compared to others.	0.866			
	I try to find out how others feel when vacationing at domestic tourist destinations.	0.779			
	I travel to domestic tourist destinations that are frequently visited by others on social media.	0.923	0.944	0.849	0.911
Bandwagon Consumption	I travel to domestic tourist destinations that are recognized by many people on social media.	0.926			
	I travel to domestic tourist destinations that are liked by others on social media.	0.915			
	Traveling to domestic tourist destinations can show social status.	0.880	0.926	0.808	0.881
Conspicuous Consumption	Traveling to domestic tourist destinations can be seen as an activity that shows wealth.	0.901			
	Traveling to domestic destinations can be seen as a classy activity.	0.915			

Table 2 presents the results of the Fornell–Larcker discriminant validity assessment, confirming that each construct in the model is distinct. The square root of the AVE for each construct (shown diagonally) exceeds its correlations with other constructs.

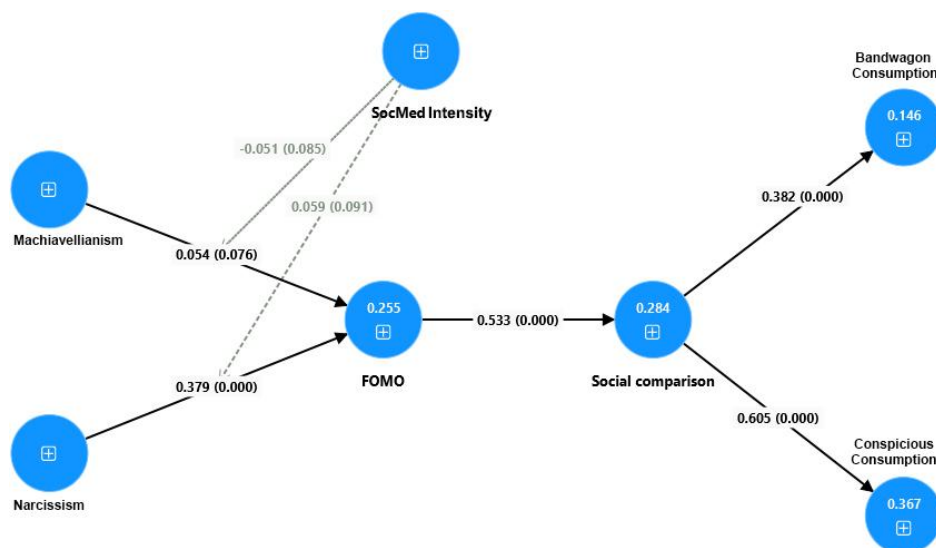
Table 2: Assessment of the discriminant validity

Construct	BC	CC	MAC	NAR	FOMO	SMU	SC
BC	0.922						
CC	0.516	0.899					
MAC	0.088	0.253	0.837				
NAR	0.217	0.482	0.469	0.919			
FOMO	0.699	0.797	0.245	0.443	0.926		
SMI	0.210	0.371	0.053	0.175	0.305	1.000	
SC	0.382	0.605	0.069	0.307	0.533	0.331	0.819

Note: BC: Bandwagon Consumption; CC: Conspicuous Consumption; MAC: Machiavellianism; NAR: Narcissism; FOMO: Fear of Missing Out; SMU: Social Media Intensity

The evaluation of the PLS-SEM model's fitness revealed that the measurement model aligns well with established goodness of fit criteria, indicating its suitability for structural equation modeling. The standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) for the saturated model was 0.059, comfortably below the recommended threshold of 0.10, reinforcing the model's adequacy. This aligns with recent literature, which has emphasized SRMR as a critical measure of fit in PLS-SEM since 2014 (Henseler et al., 2014; Hu and Bentler, 1999). Additionally, the normed fit index (NFI) of 0.832 for the saturated model suggests a strong model fit, approaching the ideal value of 1 as noted by Lohmöller (1989). Although the estimated model's SRMR was higher at 0.160 and the NFI slightly lower at 0.744, the overall indicators affirm that the measurement model is sufficiently robust for further analysis within the PLS framework.

Figure 2: Results of hypothesis testing and influenced

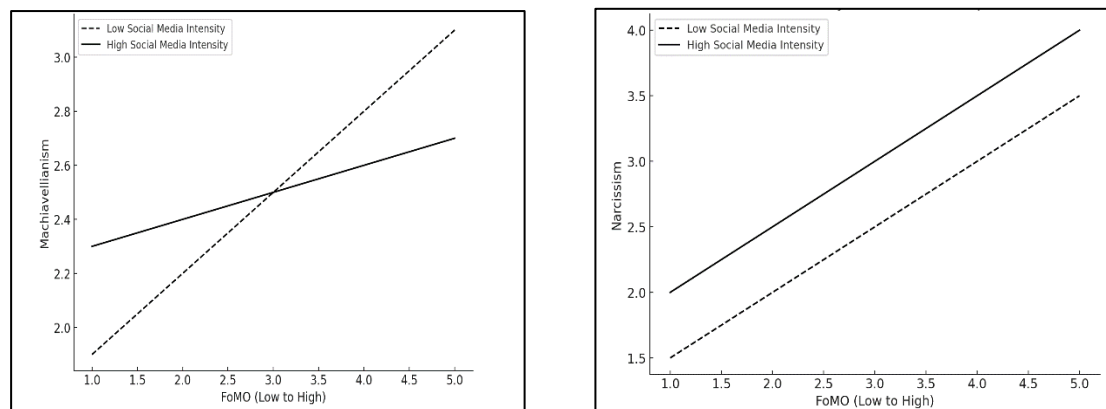


Hypotheses Testing through Analyzing Structural Model

Using PLS-SEM and SmartPLS 4, we conducted a comprehensive analysis of our structural model, employing bootstrapping with 5000 subsamples to rigorously test the hypotheses at a 10% significance level. The structural model's results, illustrated in Figure 2, revealed significant paths that align with our theoretical expectations. The hypotheses testing indicated both main effects and moderating effects, some of which were supported while others were rejected. In this study, Machiavellianism was found to have a positive influence on FoMO among millennials, with hypothesis H1 being supported ($\beta = 0.054$, $t = 1.432$, $p = 0.076$), though its significance is marginal at the 10% level. Narcissism, on the other hand, showed a strong and significant impact on FoMO, with hypothesis H2 confirmed ($\beta = 0.379$, $t = 8.592$, $p = 0.000$), reinforcing the robust relationship between narcissistic traits and fear of missing out.

The moderating effects of social media intensity yielded interesting findings (Figure 3). Hypothesis H3a, which posited that social media intensity would strengthen the relationship between Machiavellianism and FoMO, was not supported. The results showed a negative and significant effect, indicating that social media intensity diminishes the strength of this relationship ($\beta = -0.051$, $t = 1.371$, $p = 0.085$). On the other hand, H3b was supported ($\beta = 0.059$, $t = 1.337$, $p = 0.091$), suggesting that social media intensity weakly strengthens the relationship between Narcissism and FoMO, though with modest significance. The analysis further confirmed that FoMO has a strong positive influence on social comparison among millennials, as evidenced by the support for hypothesis H4 ($\beta = 0.533$, $t = 15.688$, $p = 0.000$). This significant impact underscores the role of FoMO in driving social comparison behaviors. Moreover, social comparison was shown to have significant positive effects on both bandwagon consumption (H5a supported, $\beta = 0.382$, $t = 9.166$, $p = 0.000$) and conspicuous consumption (H5b supported, $\beta = 0.605$, $t = 20.221$, $p = 0.000$), further validating the hypothesized pathways.

Figure 3: Graph of moderating effect of H3a and H3b



Discussion

This study reveals the distinct influences of dark personality traits on FoMO among millennials, highlighting that while both Machiavellianism and Narcissism contribute to FoMO, Narcissism shows a more pronounced association. This closer link can be attributed to Narcissism's underlying psychological traits, such as an inflated self-image, a persistent need for admiration, and a heightened sensitivity to external validation (Casale and Fioravanti, 2018; Servidio et al., 2021). While Machiavellian individuals use social media strategically to manipulate others and expand their influence, their engagement is calculated and transactional rather than emotionally driven. In contrast, narcissists are inherently motivated by their need to be admired and socially recognized, making them acutely vulnerable to FoMO. The distress they experience when they believe they are missing out on socially rewarding or self-enhancing experiences fuels a compulsive cycle of engagement (Brailovskaia et al., 2023). Unlike Machiavellians, who maintain a degree of emotional detachment from their social media interactions, narcissists exhibit a heightened fear of exclusion, as their self-worth is contingent on continuous external validation (Akat et al., 2023). This fundamental difference explains why narcissists are more prone to FoMO—missing out threatens their constructed superiority, whereas for Machiavellians, social media serves as a means to an end rather than an extension of their self-worth (Abell and Brewer, 2014; Pincus and Roche, 2011).

FoMO-driven digital behaviors are especially prominent in narcissists' tourism consumption, where travel serves not for personal enrichment but as a stage for social validation. Narcissists use luxurious and exclusive trips to showcase their elevated status, and missing out on such experiences triggers anxiety, prompting impulsive, status-driven travel decisions to maintain admiration and visibility (Besser et al., 2024; Leung et al., 2013; Zhou et al., 2021). Unlike Machiavellians, who strategically use travel to manage perceptions and maintain control, narcissists are emotionally driven by the need for external validation. This dependency creates a cycle where FoMO intensifies their craving for attention, reinforcing compulsive digital behaviors supported by social media algorithms that reward engagement (Brailovskaia et al., 2023; Servidio et al., 2021). In contrast, the study reveals that increased social media intensity reduces Machiavellians' susceptibility to FoMO. This is because Machiavellians approach social media with emotional detachment, using it as a tool for surveillance, impression management, and strategic influence rather than for self-promotion (Abell and Brewer, 2014; Ankit and Uppal, 2021). Higher engagement reinforces their sense of control over the digital space, allowing them to manipulate narratives and maintain dominance without experiencing anxiety over missed social experiences (Durmuş et al., 2024; Tandon et al., 2021a). This distinction highlights how narcissists seek admiration while Machiavellians seek control, resulting in fundamentally different responses to FoMO.

High social media intensity enables Machiavellians to engage in surveillance, impression management, and selective content curation to sustain their social positioning (Ankit and Uppal, 2021). Rather than feeling left out when peers share luxurious travel experiences, Machiavellians view these interactions as opportunities to assess trends, monitor competition, and strategically position curated travel content that enhances their perceived superiority (Marengo et al., 2018). For instance, rather than impulsively booking trips due to FoMO, they may carefully plan highly exclusive travel

experiences designed to reinforce their elite image and strategically shape how others perceive their status. Their engagement with social media in tourism is thus less about emotional reactivity and more about strategic long-term positioning (Preotiuc-Pietro et al., 2016). Machiavellians are characterized by premeditation and rational judgment to further their self-interests, making their social media engagement in tourism an extension of their broader manipulative and strategic behaviors (Jones and Paulhus, 2009). As they become more immersed in digital spaces, they grow increasingly detached from the emotional drivers of FoMO, viewing experiences not as personal milestones but as strategic assets to maintain dominance and control (Akat et al., 2023; Jones, 2013; Rauthmann and Will, 2011).

Social media intensity amplifies the connection between Narcissism and FoMO by increasing the need for social validation, especially on platforms like Instagram and Facebook where curated content dominates (Ryan and Xenos, 2011). Narcissists, driven by an inflated self-image and a strong desire for admiration, are drawn to tourism as a way to enhance their social status. According to Goffman's (1959) Self-Presentation Theory, people curate their experiences to shape public perception, and for narcissists, travel is an ideal form of self-promotion. Luxurious and exotic destinations serve as visible symbols of status, helping them reinforce their perceived superiority. Since FoMO stems from the fear of being excluded from meaningful experiences, narcissists feel compelled to engage in tourism to maintain relevance and secure validation from their peers. This link is especially strong among millennials, who are deeply embedded in digital culture and experience heightened FoMO when exposed to peers' idealized travel content (Zhou et al., 2021). For narcissists, travel offers not just enjoyment but a platform for self-branding using photos, likes, and shares to reinforce their self-worth and perceived dominance. Research confirms that narcissists often travel to display exclusivity, gain admiration, and boost their social media presence (Leung et al., 2013).

Millennials, as digital natives, are especially vulnerable to the emotional effects of social media, where platforms like Facebook and Instagram promote idealized self-presentation and encourage constant social comparison. Research by Siegel and Wang (2019) shows that viewing peers' posts can trigger envy and comparison, which this study builds on by highlighting FoMO as a key driver behind such behaviors. Social media's design promotes upward comparisons, intensifying feelings of inadequacy as users compare their real lives to idealized portrayals online (Robinson et al., 2019; Vogel et al., 2015). This cycle often leads to reduced psychological well-being, with millennials feeling increased pressure to keep up socially and avoid missing out (Bergman et al., 2011). The need for validation, amplified by FoMO, fuels frequent engagement and makes millennials more susceptible to anxiety and emotional strain tied to social comparison (Przybylski et al., 2013; Tandon et al., 2021b).

The observed positive effects of social comparison on both bandwagon and conspicuous consumption in domestic tourism underscore the significant role that social dynamics play in consumer behavior, aligning with established theories of social influence and identity formation (Festinger, 1957; Suls and Wheeler, 2000). Social media amplifies these effects by exposing consumers to the curated experiences of their peers, driving the desire to conform or differentiate through travel choices. This is particularly evident in the bandwagon effect, where individuals are motivated to align with popular trends to gain social validation (Shaikh, 2019), and in conspicuous consumption, where the pursuit of luxury experiences serves as a means to display

wealth and social status (Liu et al., 2019). While both behaviors are rooted in social comparison, they cater to distinct psychological needs belonging versus superiority highlighting the complex interplay between social identity and consumerism in the context of domestic tourism (Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2012).

Limitation and Future Research

This study offers valuable insights but has several limitations. First, the lengthy 60-item questionnaire may have caused respondent fatigue, affecting data quality; future research should streamline survey instruments. Second, using convenience sampling from urban areas in Java limits generalizability, as behavioral patterns may differ across Indonesia's diverse regions. Third, responses on sensitive topics like dark personality traits may have been influenced by social desirability bias; employing indirect questioning could help mitigate this (Ried et al., 2022). The study also lacked screening for actual domestic tourism experience, which may have impacted results related to bandwagon consumption. Additionally, not segmenting respondents by income, travel habits, or spending reduced the depth of behavioral insights. From a practical perspective, leaders in tourism firms should focus on maximizing entrepreneurial orientation to drive innovation while remaining mindful of organizational slack to ensure efficient use of resources and sustainable growth (Maharani et al., 2024a, 2024b). Lastly, the analysis of social media intensity did not differentiate between platforms; future research should examine how specific SNS (e.g., Instagram vs. TikTok) and user roles (influencer vs. follower) affect the link between personality traits and FoMO-driven tourism behavior.

Practical Implications for Asian Business

This study provides valuable implications for tourism marketers in Asia, particularly in Indonesia, where millennials represent an influential and digitally immersed market segment. These consumers are highly active on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok, where travel-related content shared by peers frequently triggers social comparison and aspirational desires. Within this environment, psychological elements such as Narcissism and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) play crucial roles in shaping decision-making. Millennials with higher narcissistic tendencies are motivated by admiration, uniqueness, and the desire to present themselves as socially successful, which often manifests in their willingness to share visually appealing travel experiences online (Casale and Fioravanti, 2018; Servidio et al., 2021). Thus, tourism marketers should design campaigns that emphasize exclusivity, visibility, and prestige to align with these motivations.

Positioning travel as a status-enhancing activity can elevate both engagement and loyalty. Strategies such as promoting luxury accommodations, curated "Instagrammable" destinations, unique cultural attractions, and VIP experiences help millennials portray a desirable image to their social circles (Leung et al., 2013). In addition, FoMO-driven techniques like limited-time offers, exclusive membership access, scarcity-based promotions, and first-come-first-served experiences can heighten urgency and encourage quicker purchasing decisions. However, these pressure-based tactics must be managed carefully. When individuals feel overwhelmed by constant expectations to participate and remain visually relevant in digital

communities, they may experience social media fatigue, which can reduce long-term engagement.

To address this challenge, tourism marketers should also highlight the emotional and personal well-being aspects of travel by promoting what scholars refer to as “authentic luxury.” This form of luxury not only symbolizes exclusivity but also emphasizes tranquility, mindfulness, self-development, and cultural enrichment (Zhou et al., 2021). Experiences such as wellness retreats, nature-based journeys, cultural immersion programs, or self-care-focused travel offer intrinsic value by fostering emotional recovery and personal meaning. This dual approach balancing status signaling and psychological fulfillment allows tourism brands to appeal to both the extrinsic and intrinsic motivations of millennial travelers.

Influencer marketing continues to be one of the most influential communication methods in Indonesia, where peer endorsement strongly affects consumer choices (Gaffar et al., 2022). It is therefore important for tourism businesses to collaborate with a diverse range of influencers. Aspirational influencers can effectively promote prestige-oriented travel, while wellness or lifestyle influencers can encourage mindful and balanced tourism. These narratives help consumers connect travel not only with image enhancement but also with personal growth and life satisfaction. Furthermore, encouraging user-generated content enhances brand visibility, as millennials are eager to share meaningful experiences and gain validation from peers (Reer et al., 2019).

Finally, offering flexible trip financing options, such as “pay later” plans, can support conspicuous consumption while easing financial barriers. Many millennials seek luxurious and socially recognized travel experiences but may not have the financial means to pay upfront. By making high-status travel more accessible, tourism brands can stimulate both demand and inclusivity, ensuring that consumers continue to engage while maintaining financial flexibility.

Overall, this research underscores the importance of understanding how personality traits, social comparison, and FoMO influence digital tourism behavior. Tourism marketers who combine strategies grounded in exclusivity, emotional well-being, peer influence, and financial accessibility will be well-positioned to create deeper and more lasting connections with millennial consumers, ultimately enhancing destination competitiveness in a fast-evolving digital environment.

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