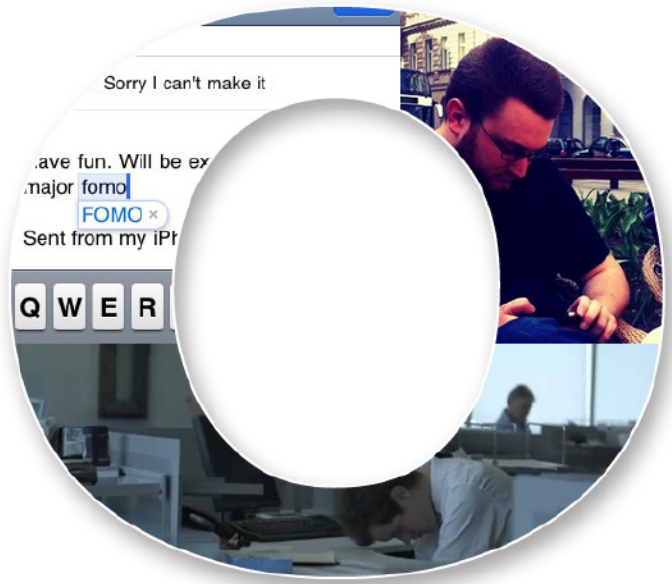


J W T

FEAR OF MISSING OUT



MAY 2011

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO)	4
Trend	5
Drivers	6
Who's Afraid of Missing Out?	9
Manifestations	12
Significance/Relevance	17
Potential	17
Appendix	19
Learn More About Our Experts and Influencers	20
Additional Charts	21

A note to readers: To make the report easy to navigate, we've added hyperlinks to the Table of Contents, so you can jump immediately to the items that most interest you (or, alternatively, you can read the material straight through).

This is a report from JWTIntelligence. Go to JWTIntelligence.com to download this and other trend research.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We're in a FOMO state of mind, and it isn't pretty. That's Fear Of Missing Out, for those unfamiliar with the acronym. Quiet nights in are turning into nerve-racking and unproductive hours spent refreshing newsfeeds. We get too many emails with offers on everything from designer duds to soap, yet we can't bring ourselves to unsubscribe. We go to parties but keep our gaze affixed to our phones, checking email, texts and posts.

Today we are exposed more than ever before to what others around us are doing, and we're filled with a gnawing uncertainty about whether we've made the right choice about what to do or where to be—not just in a given moment, but in stages of our lives as well. And our friends aren't helping, touting their every FOMO-worthy move in real time.

We've always had a fear of missing out, but it's exploding with the onset of real-time, location-based and social media tools. This report identifies which cohort is most prone to FOMO and how they respond to it, spotlights how FOMO is manifesting in the zeitgeist, and looks at the wide-ranging potential for brands seeking to tap into FOMO.

METHODOLOGY

Our trend reports are the result of quantitative, qualitative and desk research conducted by JWTIntelligence throughout the year.

Specifically for this report, we conducted a quantitative study in the U.S. and the U.K. using SONAR™, JWT's proprietary online tool, from March 4-15, 2011. We surveyed 590 Americans and 434 Britons aged 18-plus (data are weighted by age and gender); we also polled 87 teens aged 13-17 residing in the homes of adults surveyed.* In addition, we interviewed experts and influencers in technology and academia.

*All teen data shown combines U.S. and U.K. respondents; splitting the data by country would render unreliable base sizes.

EXPERTS AND INFLUENCERS*



BIANCA BOSKER, senior technology editor at The Huffington Post



DAN HERMAN, CEO of international strategy consulting firm Competitive Advantages



MARC A. SMITH, sociologist and chief social scientist at Connected Action Consulting Group

*See Appendix to learn more about these experts and influencers.

FEAR OF MISSING OUT

DRIVERS	TREND	MANIFESTATIONS
Radical Transparency meets Life in Real Time	<p>Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO) is the uneasy and sometimes all-consuming feeling that you're missing out—that your peers are doing, in the know about or in possession of more or something better than you. FOMO may be a social angst that's always existed, but it's going into overdrive thanks to real-time digital updates and to our constant companion, the smartphone.</p> <p>As social media makes people aware of things to which they otherwise might not have been privy, it can spark a sense of vicarious participation or motivate real-world behavior. Conversely, it can be a curse, fostering anxiety and feelings of inadequacy.</p>	Growing media buzz
Digital natives		Smirnoff, "Be There"
Social one-upmanship		Apple, FaceTime
Hashtag-friendly events (SXSW, TED, Coachella, etc.)		Citysearch Australia, "FOMO"
Social media feeding into relative deprivation		Road Safety Council of Western Australia, "Enjoy the Ride"
Life in overdrive: too much to do, read, buy, watch, etc.		How I Met Your Mother, "The Curse of the Blitz"
		Portlandia, "Did You Read?"
		Digital rudeness
		Facebook groups for FOMO
SIGNIFICANCE/RELEVANCE		

As the adoption of social media, location-based tools and mobile devices continues to surge, so too will FOMO, as well as FOMO-awareness. For brands, this has powerful potential. FOMO has the potential to drive spending, since it heightens participation on social media platforms and motivates consumers to do more.

On social media, FOMO helps fuel a craving to not only become part of the conversation online and not miss a moment of it but to do things that will induce FOMO in others and, of course, spread the word about them. On the other hand, FOMO can be quite paralyzing—people can become caught up in their fears, unable to decide just what they should be doing at any given moment. And FOMO sufferers are often so distracted from the here and now that they fail to fully experience the moment and appreciate whatever it offers.

TREND

Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO) is the uneasy and sometimes all-consuming feeling that you're missing out—that your peers are doing, in the know about or in possession of more or something better than you. FOMO may be a social angst that's always existed, but it's going into overdrive thanks to real-time digital updates and to our constant companion, the smartphone.

Once social media makes people aware of things to which they otherwise might never have been privy, it can spark a sense of vicarious participation or motivate real-world behavior. Conversely, it can be a curse, fostering anxiety and feelings of inadequacy.



Catharine Smith

“FOMO is the sometimes energizing, sometimes terrifying anxiety that you are missing out on something absolutely terrific. It could be a TV show, it could be a

party, it could be a gadget, it could be that really good burrito from the food cart. The important thing to keep in mind with FOMO is that it's not just a state of mind; it is also a physical reaction. So as a FOMO sufferer, I can report sweating, itching, pacing and compulsive refreshing of my Twitter feed.”

—BIANCA BOSKER, senior technology editor at The Huffington Post

The acronym is infiltrating vocabularies as more than just an amusing expression. FOMO encapsulates an increasingly pronounced phenomenon in the age of social media—an ageless concept that's reaching a tipping point. With 600 million-plus active users on Facebook, not to mention Twitter and other social platforms, today's unprecedented awareness of how others are living their lives will only heighten, ultimately leaving people predisposed to FOMO.

While the fear of missing out has always been essential for marketers to understand, it's growing more significant for brands, since today's intensified FOMO drives behaviors on social media sites and, subsequently, real-world consumer actions and self-perceptions.

FOMOLGY EXAM ROOM



CartoonStock

FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out): Constant anxiety over missing out on something important. The patient may not actually know of anything specific he or she is missing but can still possess a fear that others are having a better time.

Symptoms: Procrastination, indecision, anxiety, shortness of breath, pacing, racing heart, nail-biting, hair-twisting

Treatment: FOMO treatments vary by patient, ranging from De-Teching to logging onto Facebook.

Side effects: More FOMO

“FOMO is a great motivator of human behavior, and I think a crucial key to understanding social software, and why it works the way it does.”

—Hunch and Flickr co-founder CATERINA FAKE, “FOMO and Social Media,” Caterina.net, March 15, 2011

DRIVERS

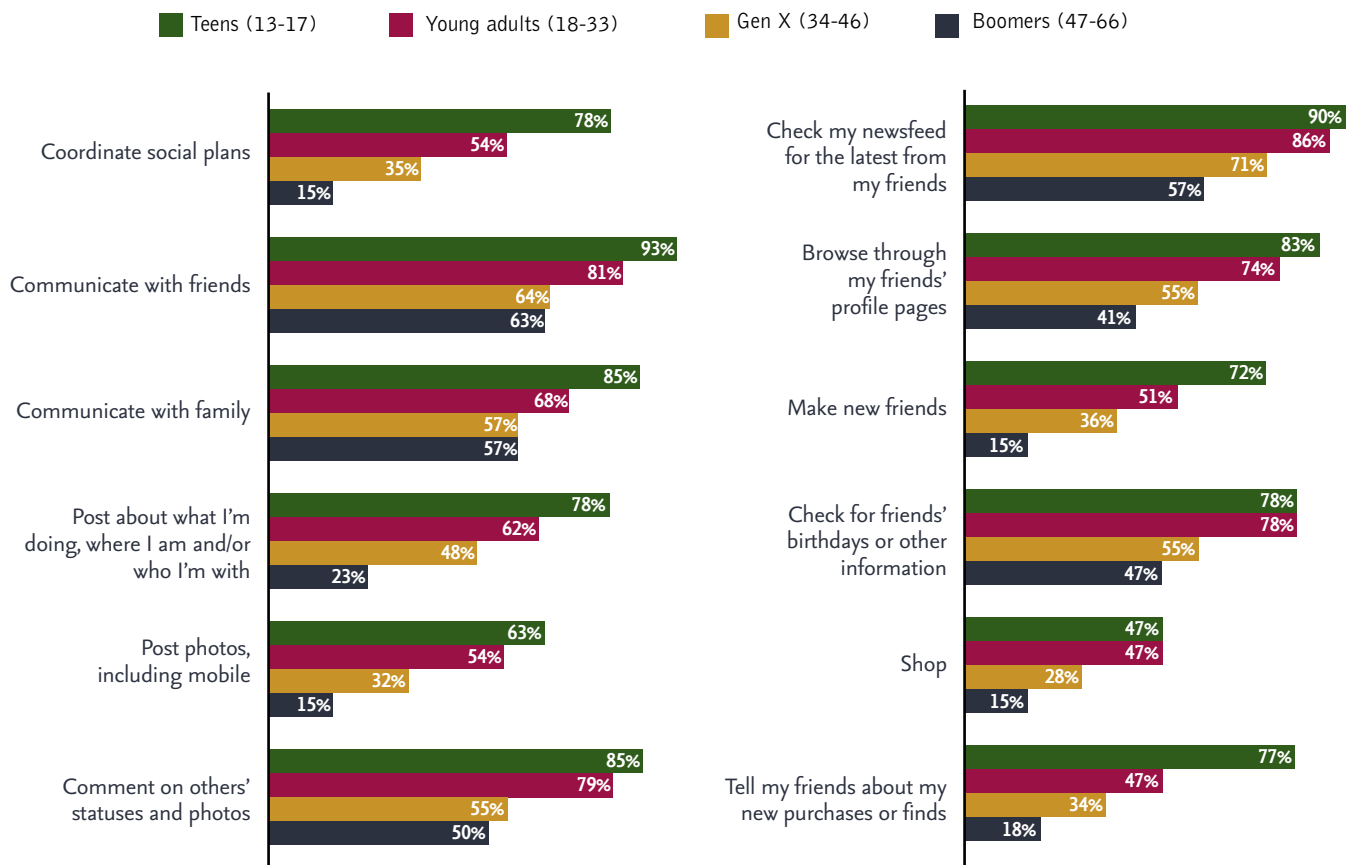
Radical Transparency meets Life in Real Time: Social media, mobile devices and location-based tools are facilitating conspicuous living—with people clamoring to show and tell all as it’s happening—and helping to drive the Web’s evolution into a constantly updating stream of real-time information, conversation, memes and images. And the proliferation of smartphones means this stream is seamlessly accompanying more people around the clock and in almost any given location.

Real-time radical transparency is cultivating a more mass culture and shifting perceptions of “private” and “current,” moving modern life into the “open” and “now.” Today’s unprecedented awareness of how others are living their lives will only heighten.

Digital natives: Our survey findings show that FOMO is most apparent among Millennials (respondents aged 13-33), as they’ve been using FOMO-inducing tools from a young age. They’re on sites like Facebook more than any other generation, and the Web is a goes-without-saying part of life that’s automatically configured into their “real” lives (see figure 1a; for country breakdowns see Appendix, figures 1e-f).

Figure 1A: **ACTIVITIES ON FACEBOOK (U.S. AND U.K.)**

Percentage who do each of the following at least once a week on Facebook



While FOMO may be most relevant to younger, social media-hooked generations, it is trickling up to older cohorts as they continue to adopt social tools. The Futures Agency CEO Gerd Leonhard has said that with smartphones, “Everyone will be on social media” in the near future.

Social one-upmanship: In broadcasting their behaviors online, people consciously or unconsciously engage in social one-upmanship (“I’m more witty, worldly, in-the-know, on-the-go, etc.”), instilling a sense of missing out in others.

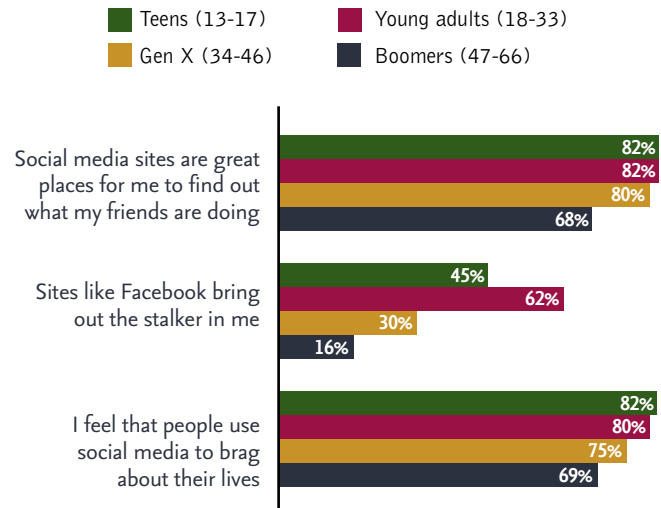
Just over three-quarters of respondents to JWT’s survey said they feel people use social media to brag about their lives, a sentiment that rang especially true among the younger generations. At the same time, people are constantly checking up on their friends, setting themselves up for FOMO. Of the young adults aged 18-33 we surveyed, 62% said sites like Facebook bring out the stalker in them (see figure 1b).

Hashtag-friendly events: People all over the world are making their social networks aware of where they are and what they’re doing. In recent months some key events, including Coachella, SXSW and TED, have elicited hashtags galore, with some bragging about being there and those not in attendance expressing FOMO.

TWEETS ABOUT #COACHELLA

suffering from big time #Coachella post-#FOMO with all these recaps online **Coachella FOMO**
 @KanyeWest delivered One of Greatest Hip-Hop Sets of All TIME at #Coachella Major #FOMO
 Double #FOMO @fredwilson Going for some @kogibbq at Coachella
 death from above 1979 was insane #coachella. **#Coachella is still being talked about. Yup it was THAT #EPIC. +3**
i would have given a vital organ to see bon iver with kanye #coachella #fomo
I hate to prove a silly trend story right, but these Coachella tweets are making me envious #FOMO
 @catQB Coachella FOMO?! (Fear Of Missing Out?) next year cat...100% we HAVE to go. i can't believe i was this close to getting you to come!
youtube vids from #coachella with @jordynphisher and fomo-ing HARD
I'm fomo-ing at the mouth. #coachellalive
 so , im watching @kanyewest @ #Coachella **Still basking in my #coachella high.**
 Coachella FOMO cured! RT @allisonmcnamara I love you @Coachella, but The Strokes were much better @TMobile SK4 party last night
 Oh god. At Coachella. Passed out in a portapotty from drinking too much. What time Strokes go on? #Coachella #WhereisEveryone
#Coachella is my true girlfriend

Figure 1B: **ATTITUDES TOWARD SOCIAL MEDIA (U.S. AND U.K.)**
 Percentage who agree with each of the following



Social media feeding into relative deprivation: Relative deprivation is a sociological term that refers to the dissatisfaction people feel when they compare their positions to others and grasp that they have less. When we glean information through social media, we compare it with our own experiences. Today we have access not only to Dad’s tweet about the awesome lobster pasta he whipped up last night but to a behind-the-scenes view of the rich and famous. Social media brings us closer to other echelons yet simultaneously back down to reality. But the tweets most likely to escalate FOMO are not from Paris or Gaga but from peers—people are more susceptible to feeling relative deprivation when they see that those with whom they compare themselves are engaging in enviable experiences.



Marc A. Smith

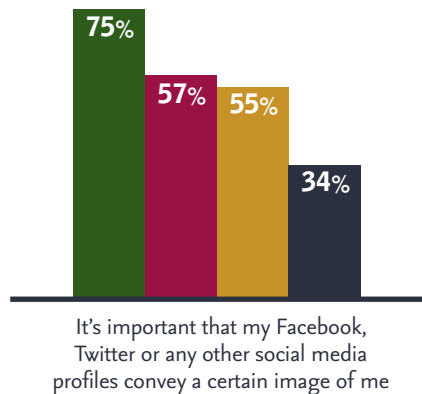
“Those who used to dine behind thick stone walls and had caviar now do so, Tweet about it and can be seen by those sitting down to dinner at Chipotle.”

—MARC A. SMITH, sociologist and chief social scientist at Connected Action Consulting Group

Figure 1C: **SOCIAL MEDIA AND SELF-IMAGE (U.S. AND U.K.)**

Percentage who agree with the following

Teens (13-17) Young adults (18-33)
Gen X (34-46) Boomers (47-66)



The impact of this goes beyond social activities in real time; it stretches to self-perceptions and how people formulate longer-term goals. More than half our survey respondents told us that it's important for their Facebook, Twitter or any other social media profiles to convey a certain image of them; three-quarters of teens felt this way (see figure 1c; for country breakdowns see Appendix, figures 1g-h).

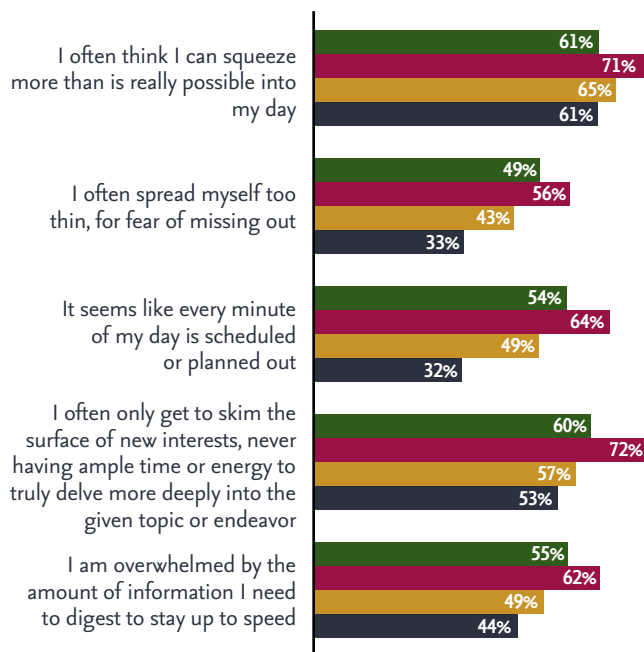
“A friend who works in advertising told me that she felt fine about her life—until she opened Facebook. ‘Then I’m thinking, I am 28, with three roommates, and oh, it looks like you have a precious baby and a mortgage,’ she said. ‘And then I wanna die.’”

—JENNA WORTHAM, “Feel Like a Wallflower? Maybe It’s Your Facebook Wall,” *The New York Times*, April 9, 2011

Figure 1D: **LIFE IN OVERDRIVE (U.S. AND U.K.)**

Percentage who agree with each of the following

Teens (13-17) Young adults (18-33)
Gen X (34-46) Boomers (47-66)



Life in overdrive: too much to do, read, buy, watch, etc.:

People like to be in the know (86% of our respondents said as much; see Appendix, figure 1i, and figures 1j-k for what they like to be in the know about), which is harder than ever to achieve with exponentially more video to watch, information to read, goods to sift through, etc. It's next to impossible not to miss out on something.

Around 60% of our survey respondents said they never have ample time or energy to delve into topics or endeavors and often only get to skim the surface of new interests. People are overwhelmed, especially the hyper-connected Millennials aged 18-33, 62% of whom said they're overwhelmed by the amount of information they need to digest to stay up to speed.

Constant planning and iCal-ing make people want to say yes to everything for fear of missing out. The result: 71% of young adults said they often think they can squeeze more than is really possible into their day, and almost two-thirds said it seems like every minute of their day is scheduled or planned out, a feeling that's especially strong (71%) in the U.K. (see figure 1d; for country breakdowns see Appendix, figures 1l-m).

WHO'S AFRAID OF MISSING OUT?

Fear Of Missing Out spans generations and cultures. Who can forget getting grounded and missing the high school dance? What parent doesn't want to see their children produce grandkids aplenty? No teenager wants to be the last of his friends to get a cell phone, and it's hard to spend a Friday night working when you can see your friends checking into bars on Foursquare. FOMO means something different to everyone.

While just 7% of our survey respondents had heard of the term, many displayed clear signs of social media-induced FOMO—most notably the constantly connected Millennials and our male respondents.

The young and the fearful: Once FOMO was explained in our survey, as many as 72% of young adults (18-33) said they could completely or somewhat relate to the expression, with 4 in 10 saying they experience FOMO often or sometimes. Teens (13-17) were the second most likely cohort to relate to the concept (56%), with about a quarter of them saying they experience FOMO often or sometimes. Gen Xers followed closely behind, with 53% able to relate to it and 18% experiencing it at least sometimes (see Appendix, figure 2e).

When it comes to social media specifically, all Millennials (13-33) feel more left out than any other generation when they learn their friends are doing something they're not, buying something they're not or finding out about something sooner than they do (see figure 2a).

It's no surprise that Millennials, a generation shaped by online tools and social media, are most closely linked with FOMO—they're the most exposed to what their network of peers is doing. On Facebook, this cohort is by far the most active when it comes to posting about what they're doing and who they're with, uploading photos, commenting on friends' posts, checking their newsfeeds, shopping and telling their network about new purchases or finds (see page 6).



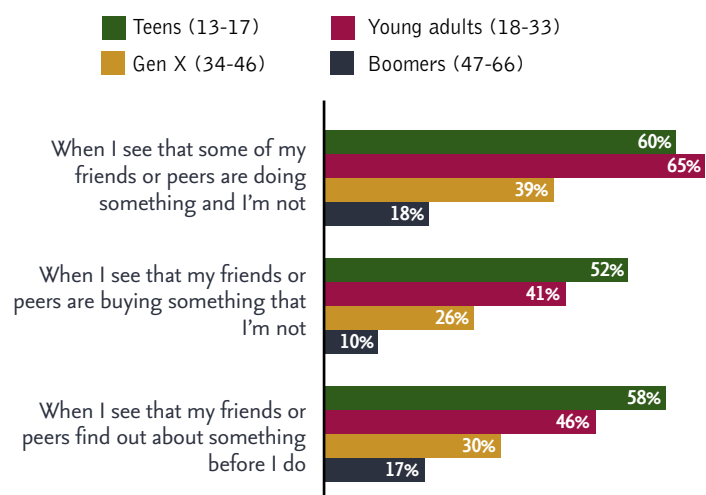
@MSG



stefan.erschwendner

Figure 2A: FOMOFEED (U.S. AND U.K.)

Percentage who would feel very or somewhat left out on social media in the following situations



Millennials appear fairly well aware of the FOMO-inducing impact of their online behavior. In the U.K., 63% of young adults agreed that it's easy to feel left out on a site like Facebook, and 61% said social media has amplified any fear of missing out they might have; in the U.S., around half said the same about both.

Among teens specifically, both British and American respondents expressed similar sentiments, with 64% saying it's easy to feel left out on a site like Facebook and 60% saying social media has amplified their FOMO. Compare this with Gen Xers in the U.S. (31%) and the U.K. (41%) who said social media has increased any fear of missing out they have, and with Boomers (25% in the U.S. and 21% in the U.K.) (see figures 2b-d).

Millennials' link to FOMO is in part a function of their age and life stage: This is a more narcissistic time that's focused on defining identity and exploring others'; Millennials tend to look to others to influence their opinions and decisions; and this generation in particular belongs to expansive networks that include both real- and virtual-world friends, both of which they solicit for advice.



"Younger people are more engaged in identity formation than older people. They may be more open to the experience of FOMO because they are

engaged in relative deprivation. Younger people have fewer resources to consume identity-forming products and experiences while simultaneously having the most time and desire for them."

—MARC A. SMITH, sociologist and chief social scientist at Connected Action Consulting Group

FOMO might be about fear, but Millennials aren't afraid of facing it—they embrace the good, the bad, the ugly and everything in between and readily recognize what FOMO does to them. Indeed, when experiencing FOMO, they are more likely than any other generation to go to Facebook, the foremost FOMO perpetrator, to help alleviate it (see Appendix, figures 2f-h). What might seem like a vicious

Figure 2B: SOCIAL MEDIA'S EFFECT ON FOMO (U.S.)

Percentage who agree with each of the following

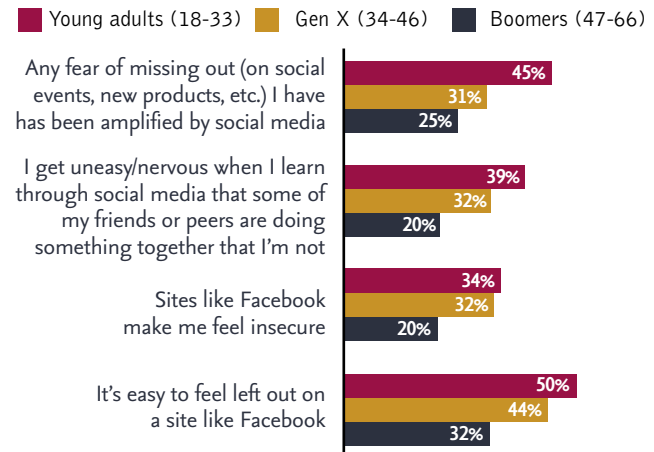


Figure 2C: SOCIAL MEDIA'S EFFECT ON FOMO (U.K.)

Percentage who agree with each of the following

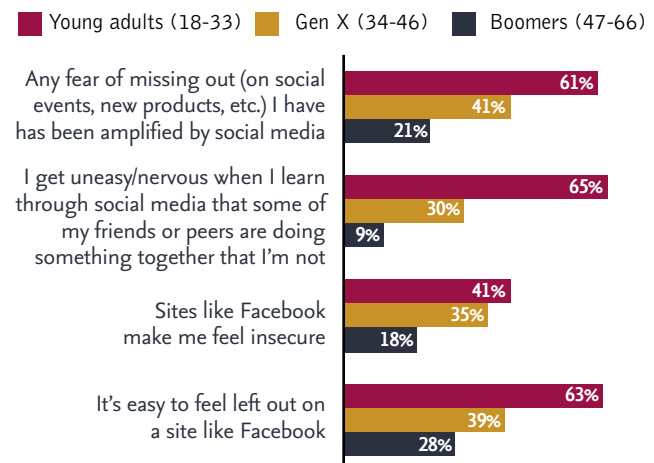
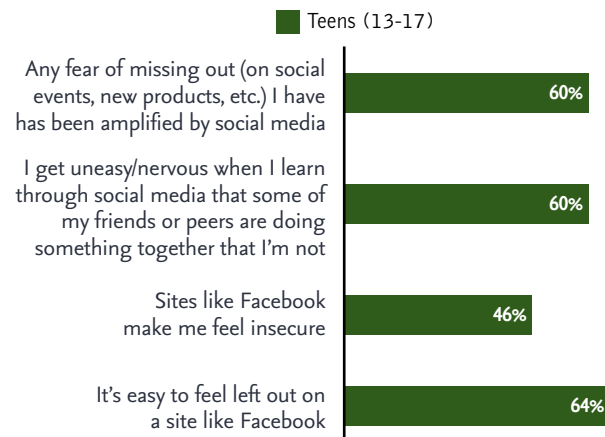


Figure 2D: SOCIAL MEDIA'S EFFECT ON FOMO (U.S. AND U.K.)

Percentage who agree with each of the following



circle is in fact how Millennials cope with radical transparency and real-time information—they face it head-on.

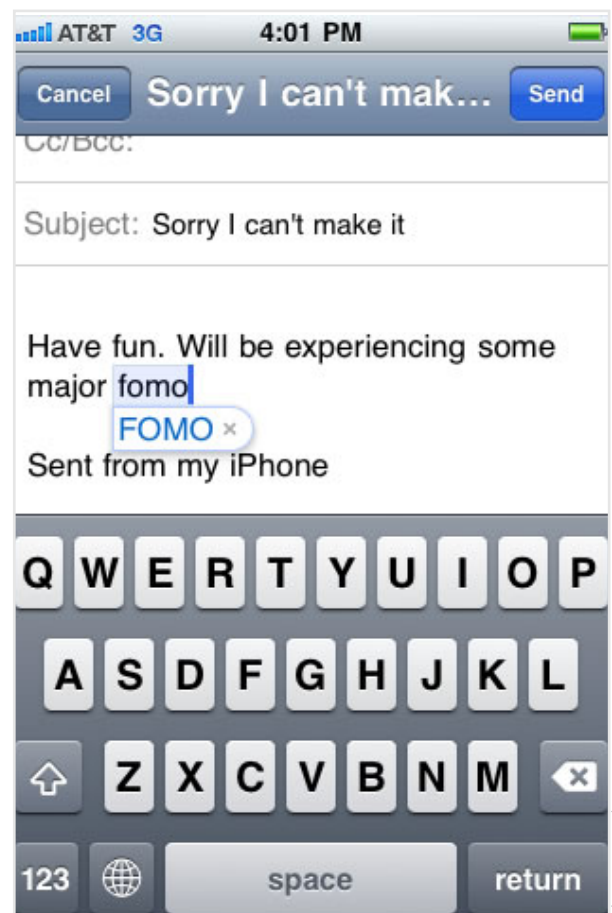
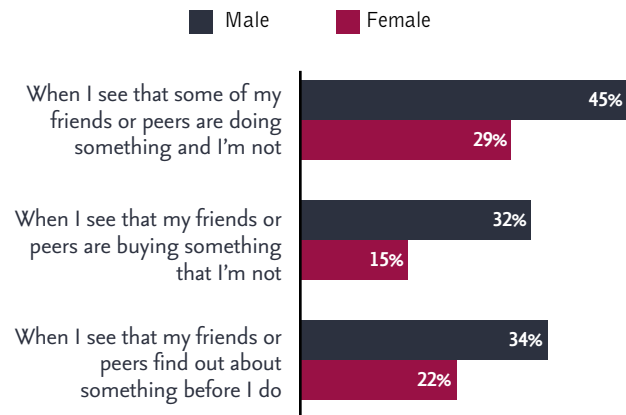
Man's best frenemy? Overall, our male respondents were more prone than female respondents to feelings of missing out via social media: 45% said they would feel somewhat or very left out when they see via social media that their peers are doing something they're not, compared with 29% percent of women. Men are also more likely to feel they're missing out when seeing via social media that friends or peers are buying something they're not or finding out information before they do (see figure 3a).

This male skew toward FOMO is most pronounced in the U.S. More American men than women could relate to FOMO—51% vs. 40% (see Appendix, figure 3c). And as with Millennials, more FOMO correlates with more Facebook activity: American men are more apt to post status updates and photos, even shopping more on Facebook than American women (36% vs. 21% at least once a week) and telling Facebook friends about their purchases or finds (41% vs. 24% of women at least once a week). U.S. men are also more likely than women to coordinate social plans on Facebook (42% said they do so at least once a week vs. 23% of women; see figure 3b). Finally, in a circular pattern similar to that seen among Millennials, a third of American men said they turn to Facebook to alleviate FOMO, vs. just 16% of women (see Appendix, figure 3d).

These U.S. numbers are somewhat surprising given research findings that portray women as the real social media addicts. For example, an Oxygen Media and Lightspeed Research study last year found that one-third of women 18-34 check Facebook first thing after getting up in the morning, even before brushing their teeth or going to the bathroom. A more recent study found that women spend more time on Facebook and post more photos on the site in an effort to boost their insecurities. *The Atlantic* then bemoaned the fact that “gender stereotypes persist on the Internet.”

In an interesting twist, although social media prompts more FOMO among British men than women, the gender gap is less consistent. British women can relate more to FOMO (52%) than their male counterparts (43%) and are more active on Facebook than men when it comes to certain activities (see Appendix, figures 3e-g).

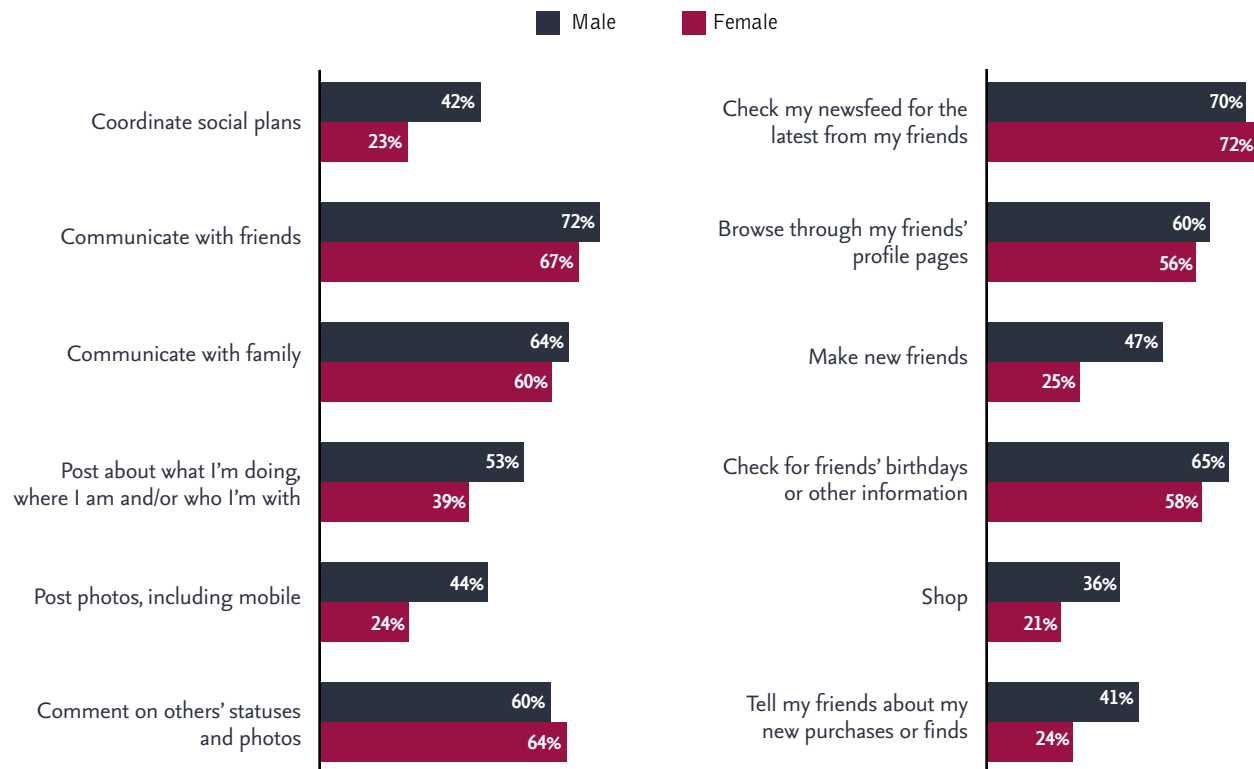
Figure 3A: **FOMOFEEED BY GENDER (U.S. AND U.K.)**
Percentage who would feel very or somewhat left out on social media in the following situations



Christine Miranda

Figure 3B: **ACTIVITIES ON FACEBOOK BY GENDER (U.S.)**

Percentage who do each of the following at least once a week on Facebook



MANIFESTATIONS

Growing media buzz: While the expression “FOMO” goes back some time—marketing strategist Dan Herman began conducting studies on it in the mid-’90s—media and other online buzz around it has been building just recently. It was last summer that SFGate.com’s Mark Morford called FOMO “a niggling madness,” and the attention mounted this year on the heels of hashtag-friendly, FOMO-inducing events like TED and SXSW.

Huffington Post senior technology editor Bianca Bosker told us that when she learned of FOMO late last year, she said to herself, “Yes, I finally have an alliterative, two-syllable acronym to describe this panic I feel on the weekends.” In April *The New York Times*’ Jenna Wortham deemed FOMO “emblematic of the digital era,” describing a recent night when her phone relayed social media notifications while she was relaxing at home: “Suddenly, my simple domestic pleasures paled in comparison with the things I could be doing.”

Cosmopolitan in Australia published a self-help feature of sorts in its March 2011 issue, soliciting Dr. Tim Sharp from The Happiness Institute to share advice for the FOMO-afflicted. Meanwhile, social media consultant and blogger Annie Stamell has humorously called FOMO an “epidemic,” and Hunch and Flickr co-founder Caterina Fake described it as “an age-old problem, exacerbated by technology” in a recent blog post.



Making peace with staying in

Has your fear of missing out left you physically unable to make any time for yourself? Don't worry, we're here to help...

When a big night out on the town, partying, Trisha, 28, was heading home. As she waited through the front door, ready to go to sleep, her mobile phone rang. "It was my friends asking me to join them for a quick drink, so I went back out," she says. "But it was so uneventful... I should've just stayed in." So why did Trisha turn around for a second crack at a good time despite being tired? Easy. It's a classic case of fear of missing out (FOMO), which many of us know too well...

DIAGNOSIS: DESPERATE
If you ever find yourself saying "yes" to every single invitation you receive, or spending all night wondering what everyone else is up to, there's a good chance you've fallen prey to this social virus. There are loads of different ways you can catch FOMO, but one of the biggest causes is the concern that Mr Right is out there at a bar or restaurant somewhere, waiting for you to walk in and knock his socks off. "Being single, I have this idea that even if I'm completely

happy with having a sanna night in with a DVD, I've missed a chance to meet new people," explains Amber, 25. "I know Prince Charming isn't going to come knocking on my door while I'm sitting at home watching *Gossip Girl*!"
Amber's answer is to plan every minute of her weekends, whether she feels like going out or not. However, sometimes even a weekend jam-packed with social events isn't enough to calm her anxieties. "When I hear about friends moving overseas, I imagine they're having life experiences that I can't have," she says. "I feel like I'm not meeting the deadlines I've set for myself, like living abroad by the time I'm 30."

HOW BAD HAVE YOU GOT IT?
For most of us, FOMO ebbs and flows, but Dr Tim Sharp, from The Happiness Institute, says it has potential to become a serious problem if symptoms persist. "Relationships and social connectedness are important for our wellbeing, so it's not a completely inappropriate fear," he points out. "However, if it's having a significant impact on your life, at home or at work, then we'd start to wonder if the normal anxiety was crossing over into the abnormal."

"Recognise what's feeding your FOMO and you can tune in to what you really want..."

significantly reduce anxiety," he says. Clinical psychologist Dr Lisa Johnson says that when your FOMO surfaces, it's very important to dig deep and listen to your inner voice. "The more you recognise what it is that's feeding your FOMO, the more you can step back from the situation and tune into what you really want."

NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT
For some people, resisting the urge to accept every invitation is a lot easier said than done.

Or, follow Cosmopolitan beauty and lifestyle editor Leigh Campbell's lead. Her daily schedule is so packed with work commitments – both during and after hours – that personal time has become extremely precious. "I crave downtime, which is opposite to a lot of my friends," she says. "My solution is to organise a large group get-together, so I can see everyone at once."

Before you start cancelling plans and RSVP'ing "no" to everything you're invited to on Facebook, keep in mind that FOMO – in moderation – has its positive points, too. "I wouldn't want to not have FOMO because it forces me to step out of my comfort zone," admits Trisha. "Recently, I made myself go to a social media event and I'm really glad I did because that led to an opportunity to blog for a swearwear label. I wouldn't be doing that if it wasn't for FOMO."

So, if you can somehow remain in control of your FOMO, it might just be a virus worth catching. However, as soon as you find yourself looking in back-to-back brunch dates, or allocating only 15-minute allotments to catch up with friends, it might be time to put down your mobile phone, step away from your iCal, and give yourself a rest. **Penny Carroll**

For more expert advice on dealing with FOMO, visit cosmo.com.au/relationships.

That just might be the case for 25-year-old Helen, who recently moved far enough away from her usual circle of friends to be struck with chronic FOMO. "Because I'm not around anymore, I lose invitations to things," she says. "I take it personally because I feel like my friends don't want me to hang out with them. I know it's silly and I have to tell myself to snap out of it."

LEIGH CAMPBELL

However, once you realise that it's highly unlikely that you're missing out on something spectacular, claiming back some all-important down time is actually possible.

The best cue for a condition like FOMO is to enjoy and connect with the present situation, advises Dr Johnson. "Appreciate that there are opportunities going on right here and now for you, even if it's just an opportunity to get to know the person you're talking to better," she says. "Another good trick can be thinking of one thing you're grateful for every day."

Saying "no"

Find it hard to turn down an offer? Follow Leigh Campbell's tips and do it with class...

- 1 Always think the invitee for thinking of you.
- 2 Explain that you're unable to attend, but don't give a reason why – they don't need to be privy to that.
- 3 Fresh by sending them the best for their event.

SEND TO A FRIEND! Get a friend who suffers from FOMO? Send her this story. cosmopolitan.com.au

73

FOMO in marketing: Marketers have always warned consumers not to miss out on products and deals; today, we're seeing more brands tapping into consumer anxiety over missing out on experiences their peers are having, frustration over an inability to do everything and be everywhere, and the struggle to keep up with the fast pace of life.

- **Smirnoff, "Be There":** Launched in 2009, this campaign relies on the heightened appeal of FOMO-inducing, "you had to be there" experiences. Ads depict underground parties or slightly illicit activities (e.g., partying in an abandoned subway tunnel or turning pickup trucks into mini-swimming pools for an impromptu pool party in downtown L.A.). Smirnoff has also hosted contests—usually aimed at generating the most off-the-wall event or project ideas—as well as large-scale, one-of-a-kind events, most notably November's Nightlife Exchange Project, intended to up the jealousy quotient among those stuck at home refreshing their newsfeeds. Following the event, attendees talked about the amazing time they had on blogs, Facebook and other online outlets.

- **Apple, FaceTime:** Apple provides a very actionable way for consumers to alleviate FOMO by inviting them to be there via FaceTime with loved ones and friends, no matter where they are geographically. In one spot, a father away on a business trip sees his

"If you weren't at one of Smirnoff's ravishing Nightlife Exchange Project parties, then where the bloody hell were you?"

—MICHELLE WILDING, "Smirnoff Nightlight Exchange Party, Bangalore," *Lost at E Minor Blog*, December 8, 2010



son crawling; in another frame, a young man stationed in the army is able to virtually accompany his pregnant wife to her sonogram. Now if that doesn't tug at your FOMO-riddled heartstrings, we're not sure what will.

- **Citysearch Australia, "FOMO":** In a humorous spot, a fictional Dr. Dale Chandapaul, "foremost authority on Fear Of Missing Out," discusses a patient's symptoms: "He was literally paralyzed by indecision about what to do on a Friday night." The remedy? Citysearch, of course. Side effects? A great Friday night.
- **Road Safety Council of Western Australia, "Enjoy the Ride":** This campaign taps into a growing desire to slow down and savor the moment, a countertrend to the FOMO-aggravating race to keep up. Its ambitious aim is to "redefine the way Western Australians think about speeding, creating a cultural shift and real behavioural change to a more relaxed, considered and purposeful way of life." The spot warns that "humans just aren't designed to go that fast," observing that slowing down means "we may do fewer things, but what we do, we do well." The message for the FOMO-inclined: Your life may be enriched if you purposefully miss out on things. With more than 90,000 YouTube views in six weeks, the message seems to be striking a chord.

FOMO in entertainment:

- **How I Met Your Mother, "The Curse of the Blitz":** This curse—i.e., being the one who's never around when fun or amazing stuff happens (often right after one leaves)—is well-known by fans of the American sitcom. The character who is cursed with being the Blitz is consumed with FOMO, always trying to make sure not to miss out on the next cool thing. In one clip, Barney (Neil Patrick Harris) agonizes over missing events, including a coin toss that defies the laws of physics.
- **Portlandia, "Did You Read?":** In one bit from this IFC sketch series created, written by and starring Saturday Night Live's Fred Armisen and musician Carrie Brownstein, the two try to one-up each other with the



Citysearch Australia



EnjoyTheRideWA



CBS

things they've read. They cite magazines and newspapers, fortune cookies and the Bible, until their rapid-fire volley winds up in a race for reads the other hasn't yet seen, including the phone book across the street.

Digital rudeness: FOMO helps drive our addiction to texting, checking social media and other digital habits, since we don't want to risk missing out on the most current bits of information. Instead of being fully present at social situations or during events, people are increasingly absorbed in their mobile devices, inducing FOMO in others.

As noted in *The New York Times*, Anthony De Rosa, a product manager and programmer at Reuters, received a huge round of applause at a SXSW panel this year after urging, "When people are out and they're among other people, they need to just put everything down. It's fine when you're at home or at work when you're distracted by things, but we need to give that respect to each other back." Rampant rudeness even inspired the project *My Phone Is Off For You*, which encourages people to wrap their phones in a "phonekerchief" that blocks service.



ifc

My Phone Is Off For You

FOMOs to Watch



Mindy Kaling, *Is Everyone Hanging Out Without Me? (And Other Concerns)*: The recently released cover of this book of humorous essays, to be published in November, is evocative of FOMO to a tee. Feeling like a wallflower and wondering what others are doing? FOMO at its best. The marketing effort is tapping into the growing meme. Kaling, who has written for and appears in the U.S. version of *The Office*, tweeted that *New York Magazine's* *Vulture* blog finds the cover "zeitgeisty"—and that it is.

Thenewnoz, *The Fear of Missing Out*: The L.A.-based alternative rock band from England is working on their sophomore album, to be titled *The Fear of Missing Out*. In April, Thewnewnoz singer and lead guitarist Dhani Harrison (son of The Beatles' George Harrison) explained the album name to *Esquire*:

"Everything in life boils down to FOMO. It's what makes you go to a party when you're tired. It's behind broken relationships. And war. And I have FOMO about music. I like so many disparate types of music, so by understanding FOMO I can bring whoever I want to an album. Why not put it all together and see what happens?"

Liam Finn, *FOMO*: The second solo album from this New Zealand musician (son of Crowded House's Neil Finn) is due out in June. It's titled *FOMO* because the artist has said *Fear Of Missing Out* is at the heart of the record—which he made while out of the spotlight, in a New Zealand beach cottage—and his life, since his musician friends and family are accustomed to catching up with each other by phone, email and Facebook photos while touring. He says of *FOMO*, "It's a very natural way to be, but it's also a slightly tragic term, because you should never wish you were somewhere else."

@mindykaling

Facebook groups: Have FOMO? There are quite a few Facebook groups for that.



FOMO, Fomo Connect, FOMO disorder (fear of missing out disorder), Victims of FOMO, FOMO: it's why you are in this group

FOMO OP

Young people are teasingly reminding absent friends that they're missing out on something by posting photos in which they spell out "FOMO" with their arms.



SIGNIFICANCE/RELEVANCE

As adoption of social media, location-based tools and mobile devices continues to surge, so too will FOMO, as well as FOMO-awareness. For brands, this has powerful potential. FOMO has the potential to drive spending, since it heightens participation on social media platforms and motivates consumers to do more.

On social media, FOMO helps fuel a craving to not only become part of the conversation online and not miss a moment of it but to do things that will induce FOMO in others and, of course, spread the word about them. This in turn drives consumer awareness and inclination to buy in. FOMO about a concert? “I’ll buy that overpriced ticket on StubHub.” FOMO about the latest designer jacket popping up in everyone’s photos? “I can’t afford it, but I’ll search out a good knockoff.”

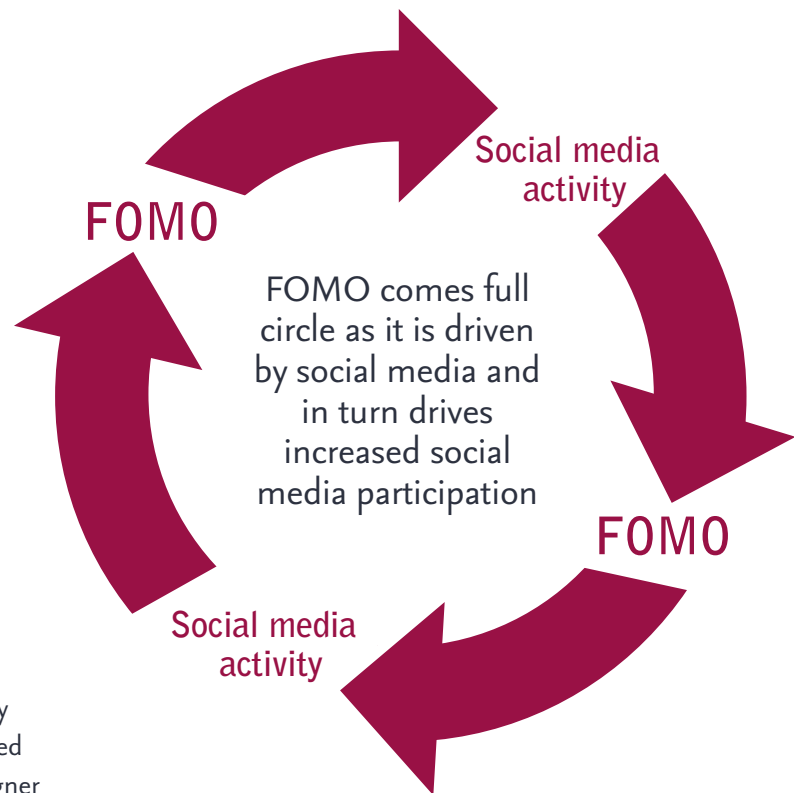
Conversely, FOMO can be quite paralyzing—people can become caught up in their fears, unable to decide just what they should be doing at any given moment. And FOMO sufferers are often so distracted from the here and now that they fail to fully experience the moment and appreciate whatever it offers.

POTENTIAL

Brands have many opportunities to fine-tune messaging, offers, contests and more to tap into fears of missing out. Although there’s no cure for the common FOMO, brands can focus on easing it, escalating it, making light of it or even turning it into a positive.

One tactic for marketers is to help ease anxiety around FOMO. Brands can assure the afflicted that they’re not missing out on much after all; those offering simple pleasures, for example, can convey that stepping back from the fray rather than following the crowd can be a smarter choice. Another tactic is to explain that the brand’s offering is just as fabulous as whatever’s inducing FOMO, pointing out how and why it delivers the same or similar satisfactions.

Alternatively, a brand might offer tools for avoiding FOMO to consumers who act on their feelings rather than festering in them. Going to the hottest restaurant in town and afraid of missing out on the menu’s best options? An app like Foodspotting



“The fear of missing out might become a self-fulfilling prophecy. The futile attempt to exhaust all available options can lead us to not realizing any option at all and to missing all options altogether.”

—DAN HERMAN, CEO of international strategy consulting firm Competitive Advantages



“We’ve always had this fear of missing out, but what’s different is that

now these tools give us a sense that we can actually do something about it and catch what’s going on in real time so that we don’t miss out on it.”

—BIANCA BOSKER, senior technology editor at The Huffington Post

provides tips and recommendations from other diners. (Indeed, real-time tools can create FOMO, but they can also help people circumvent it.) Or brands can address FOMO woes by encouraging people to join in on the things that make them feel left out or showing consumers how to get a taste of what they’re missing (e.g., with more affordable or more convenient choices).

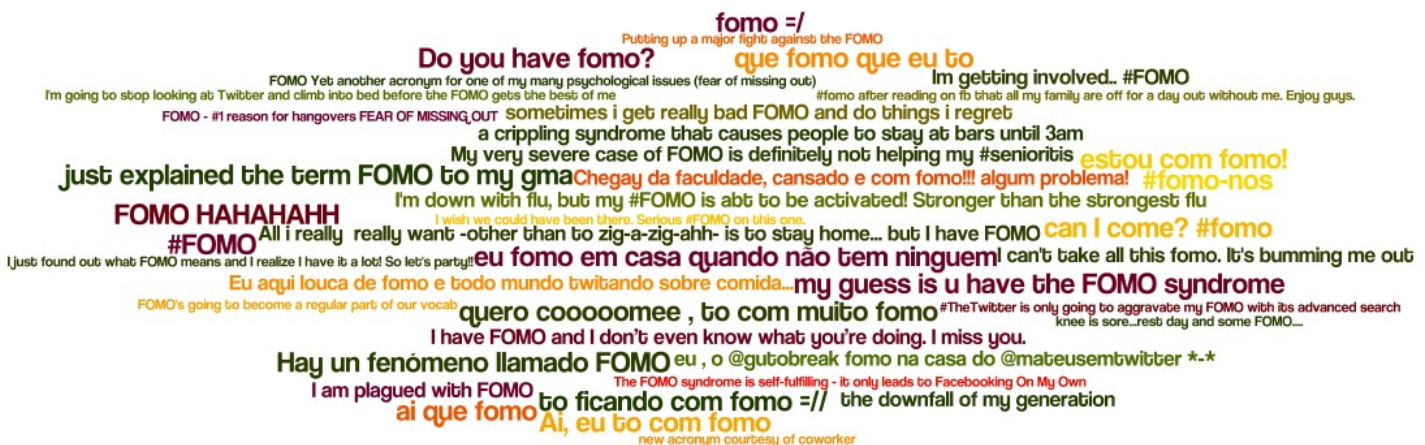
Brands can also offer exclusive, unique or over-the-top experiences likely to inspire FOMO in nonparticipants. Or messaging can escalate FOMO in order to motivate desired actions. Millennials especially tend to share openly and likewise hear what everyone else is up to, no matter how FOMO-inducing. Brands can facilitate this by providing platforms for showing and telling.

Brands can tap into the rising importance of the social currency that experiences provide people: contextual advertising on social networks (since consumers are motivated to “get in on the action” after reading about friends’ activities); incentives for name-dropping in photo tags, check-ins and the like

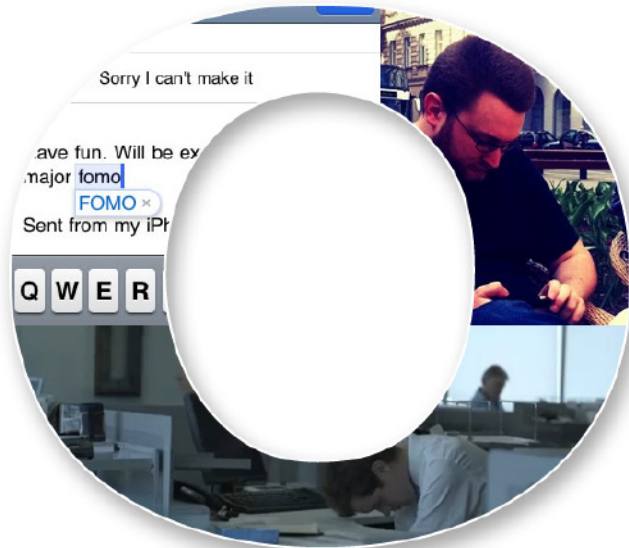
through programs like Facebook’s Sponsored Stories; or simply making direct connections between the brand’s offering and its potential cachet on social media.

Note that when tapping into FOMO, marketers must retain some sensitivity—this state of mind can be a sore spot for many consumers. So while FOMO has great potency as a marketing tool, it also has the potential to twist the knife for those especially sensitive to it. The appropriate tone will depend greatly on the audience and the category.

FOMO IN THE TWITTERSPHERE



APPENDIX



LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR EXPERTS/INFLUENCERS



Catharine Smith

BIANCA BOSKER, senior technology editor at The Huffington Post

Bosker oversees and contributes to The Huffington Post's Tech section, which she helped launch in 2009. Her work has appeared in publications including *The Wall Street Journal*, *Fast Company*, *Far Eastern Economic Review* and *The Oregonian*. She is the co-author of a book on the cultural history of bowling, *Bowled Over: A Roll Down Memory Lane*, and at work on a second book, *Original Copies: Architectural Mimicry in Contemporary China*. She graduated from Princeton University and lives in New York City.

**DAN HERMAN**, CEO of international strategy consulting firm Competitive Advantages

Herman began studying FOMO in the mid-'90s. Now, in conjunction with his consulting practice, he is a seminar leader, workshop moderator and a keynote speaker. He has written numerous articles and academic textbook chapters, and has published three books, which have been translated into several languages. His recent book *Outsmart the MBA Clones* was published in the U.S. by Paramount Books.



Marc A. Smith

MARC A. SMITH, sociologist and chief social scientist at Connected Action Consulting Group

Smith specializes in the social organization of online communities and computer-mediated interaction. He founded and managed the Community Technologies Group at Microsoft Research and led the development of social media reporting and analysis tools for Telligent Systems. He currently leads the Connected Action Consulting Group in Silicon Valley.

Smith is also a co-founder of the Social Media Research Foundation, dedicated to open tools, open data and open scholarship related to social media, and contributes to its NodeXL project, which adds social network analysis features to the Excel spreadsheet. He is co-editor of *Communities in Cyberspace* (Routledge), a collection of essays exploring the ways identity, interaction and social order develop in online groups.

ADDITIONAL CHARTS

Figure 1E: **ACTIVITIES ON FACEBOOK (U.S.)**

Percentage who do each of the following at least once a week on Facebook

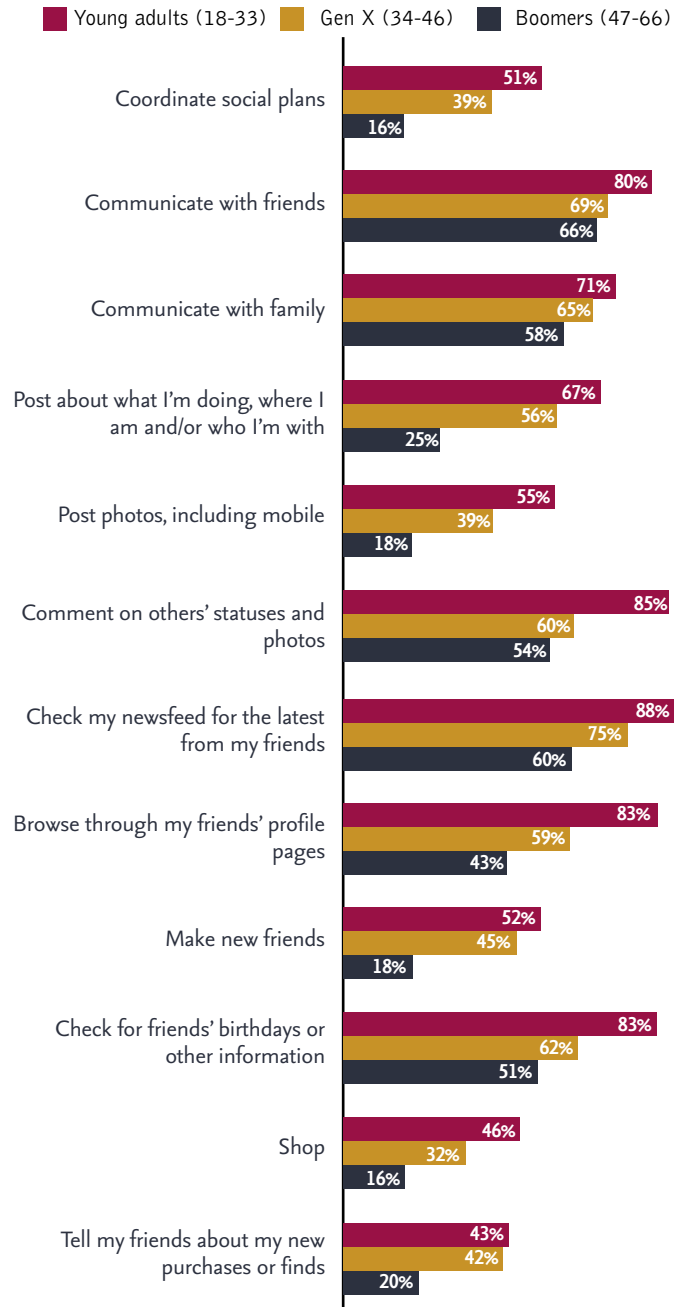


Figure 1F: **ACTIVITIES ON FACEBOOK (U.K.)**

Percentage who do each of the following at least once a week on Facebook

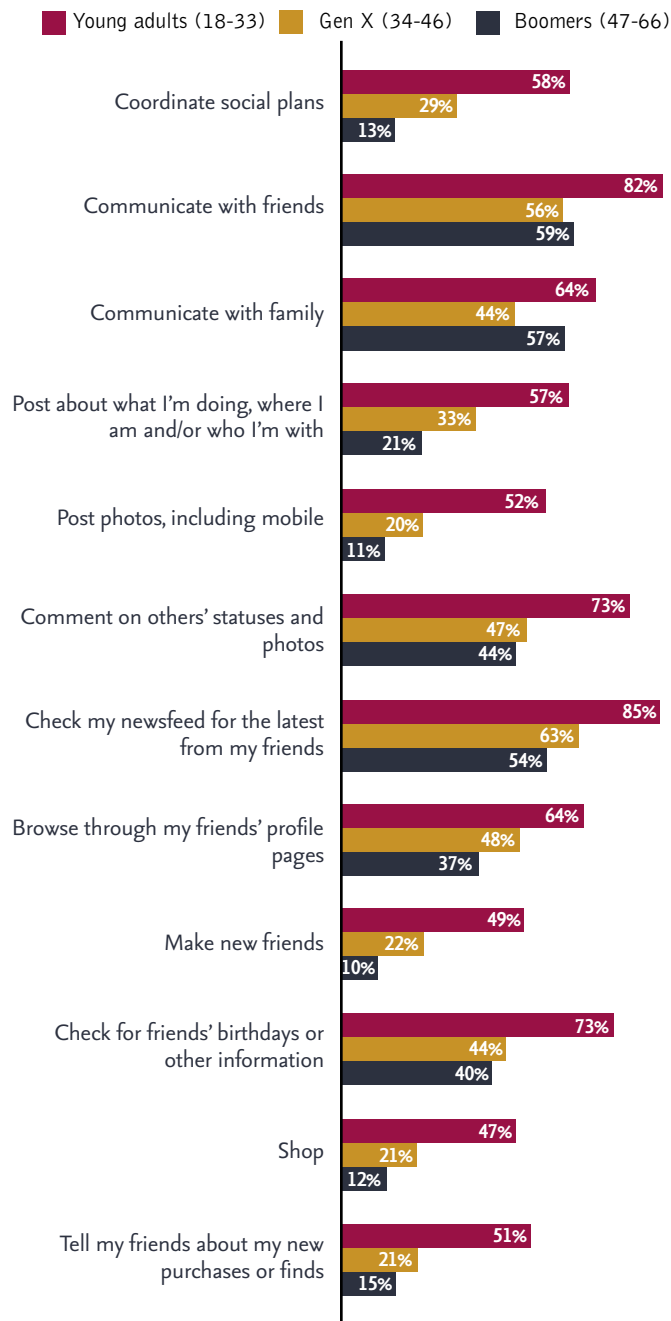


Figure 1G: SOCIAL MEDIA AND SELF-IMAGE (U.S.)

Percentage who agree with the following

■ Young adults (18-33) ■ Gen X (34-46) ■ Boomers (47-66)

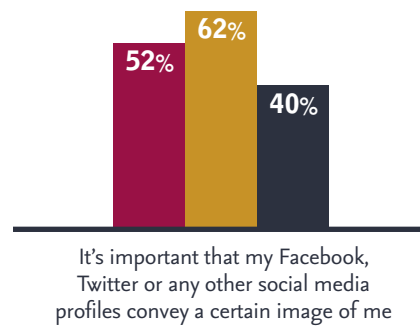


Figure 1H: SOCIAL MEDIA AND SELF-IMAGE (U.K.)

Percentage who agree with the following

■ Young adults (18-33) ■ Gen X (34-46) ■ Boomers (47-66)

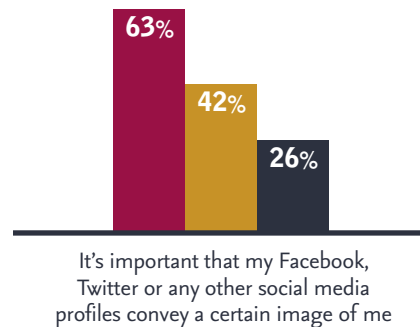


Figure 1I: BEING IN THE KNOW (U.S. AND U.K.)

Percentage who agree with each of the following

■ Teens (13-17) ■ Young adults (18-33)
■ Gen X (34-46) ■ Boomers (47-66)

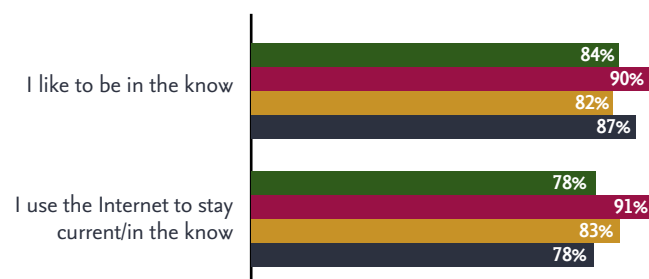


Figure 1J: TOP AREAS TO BE IN THE KNOW BY GENERATION (U.S. AND U.K.)

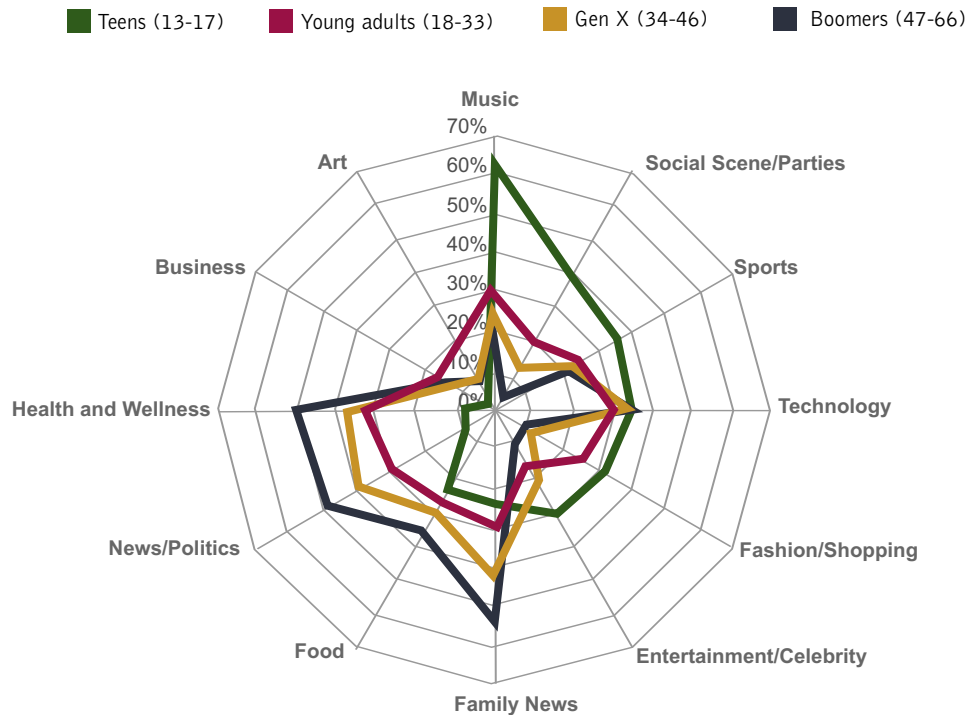


Figure 1K: TOP AREAS TO BE IN THE KNOW BY GENDER (U.S. AND U.K.)

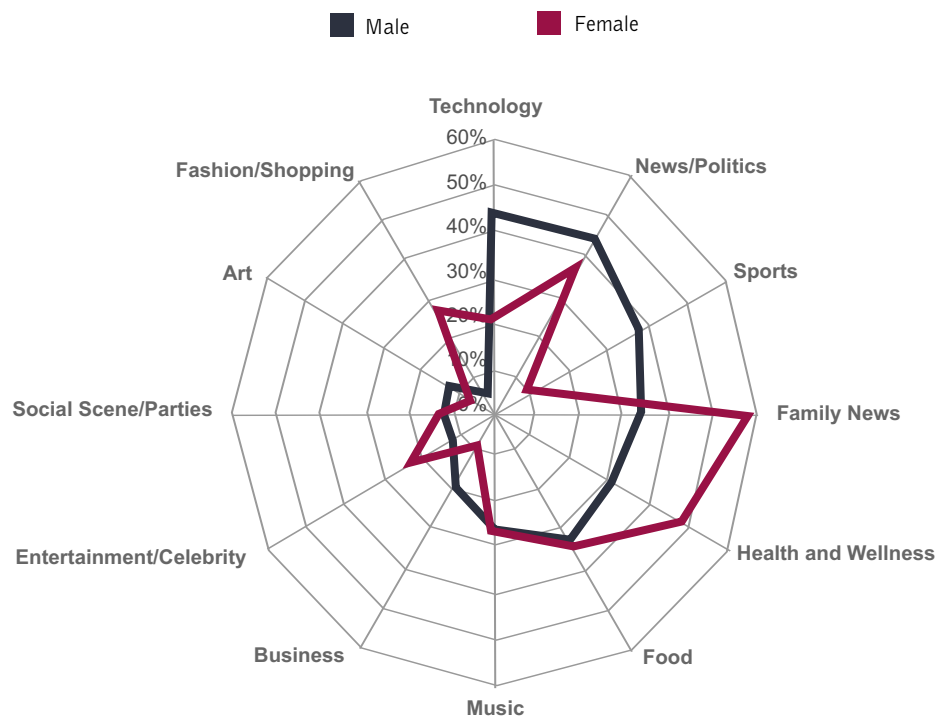


Figure 1L: LIFE IN OVERDRIVE (U.S.)

Percentage who agree with each of the following

■ Young adults (18-33) ■ Gen X (34-46) ■ Boomers (47-66)

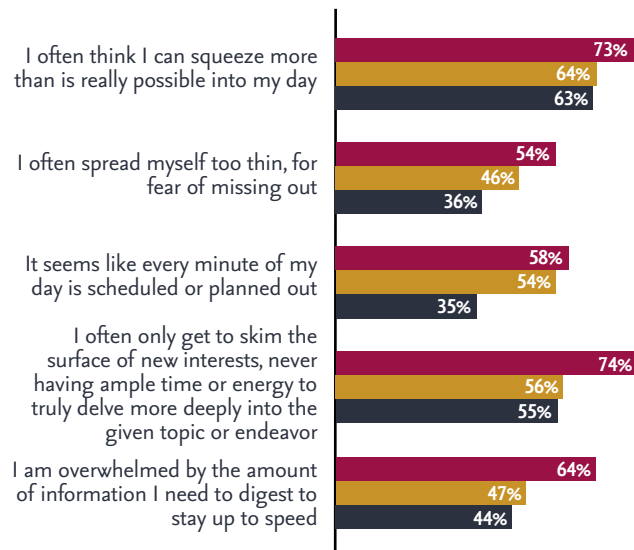


Figure 1M: LIFE IN OVERDRIVE (U.K.)

Percentage who agree with each of the following

■ Young adults (18-33) ■ Gen X (34-46) ■ Boomers (47-66)

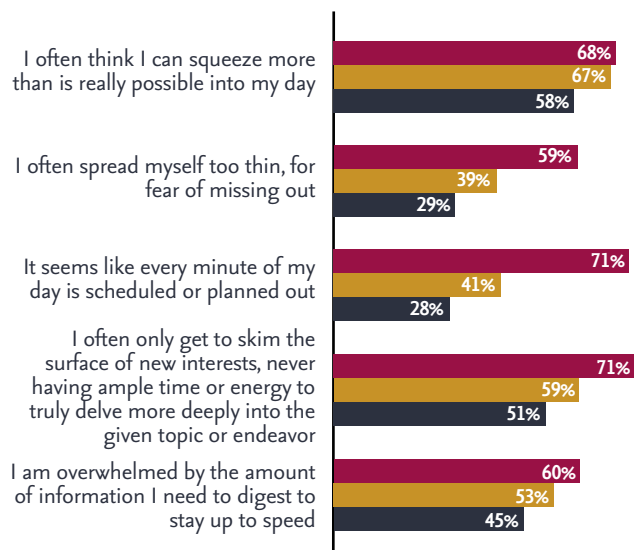


Figure 2E: RELATING TO FOMO AND EXPERIENCING IT (U.S. AND U.K.)

Percentage who can relate to FOMO and experience it

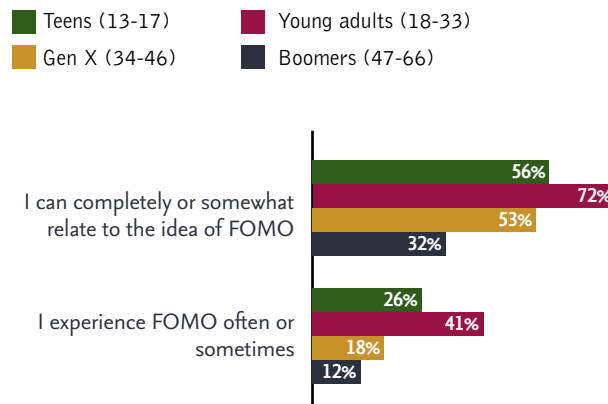


Figure 2F: HOW PEOPLE ALLEVIATE FOMO (U.S. AND U.K.)

Legend:

- Teens (13-17)
- Young adults (18-33)
- Gen X (34-46)
- Boomers (47-66)

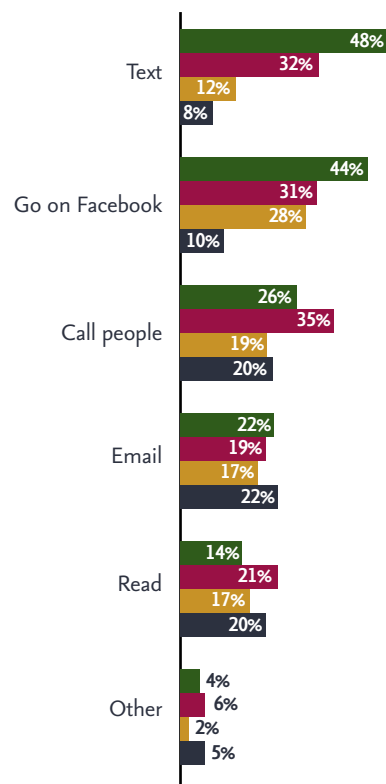


Figure 2G: HOW PEOPLE ALLEVIATE FOMO (U.S.)

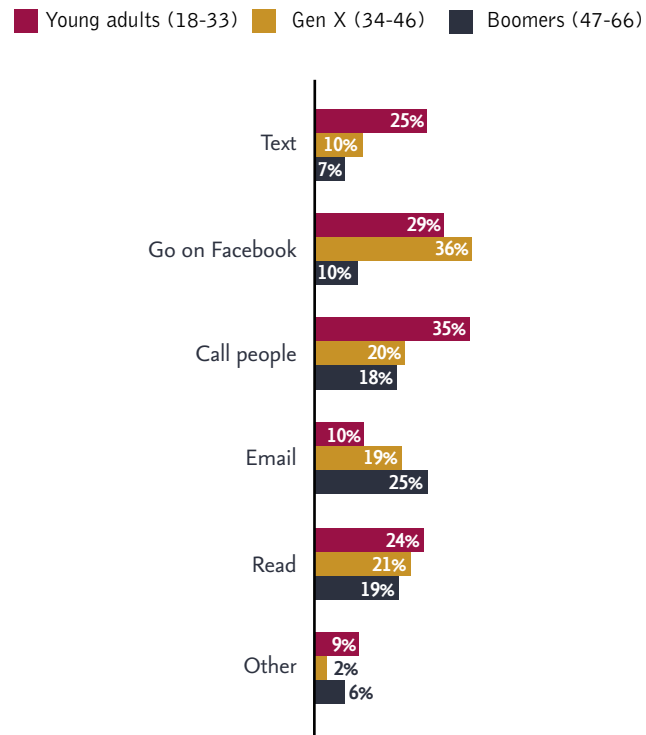


Figure 2H: HOW PEOPLE ALLEVIATE FOMO (U.K.)

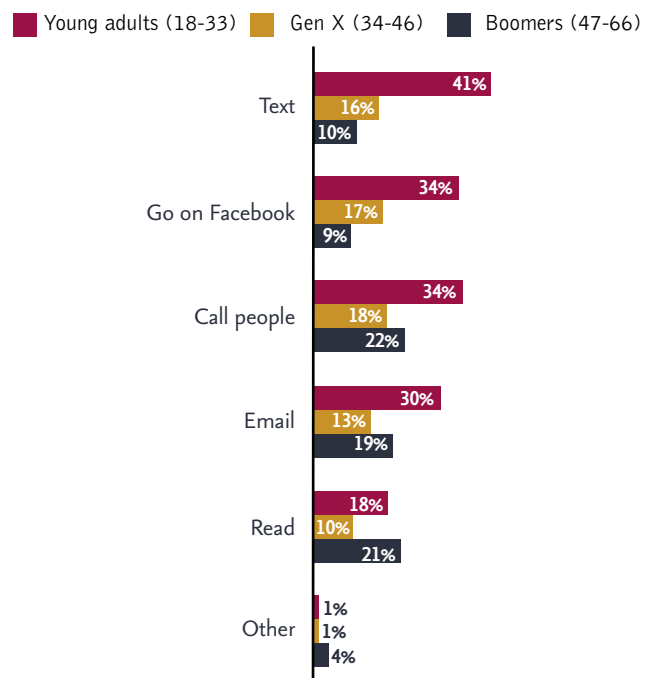


Figure 3C: MEN VS. WOMEN: RELATING TO FOMO AND EXPERIENCING IT (U.S.)

Percentage who can relate to FOMO and experience it

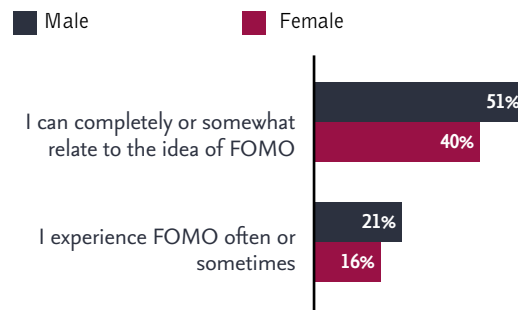


Figure 3D: MEN VS. WOMEN: HOW PEOPLE ALLEVIATE FOMO (U.S.)

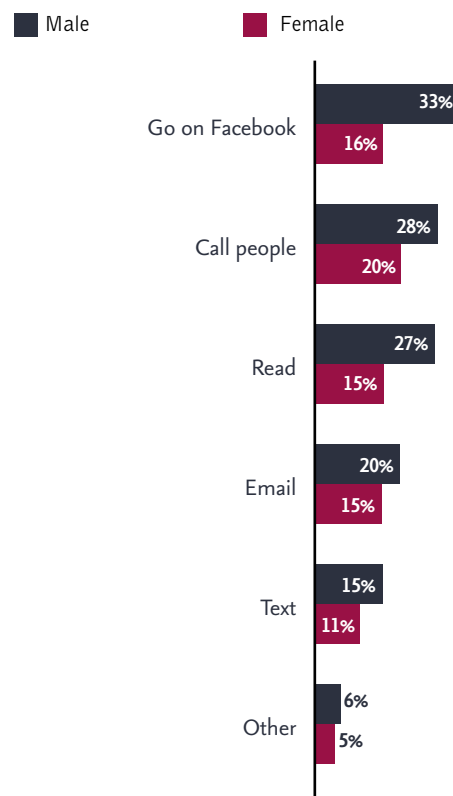


Figure 3E: MEN VS. WOMEN: RELATING TO FOMO AND EXPERIENCING IT (U.K.)

Percentage who can relate to FOMO and experience it

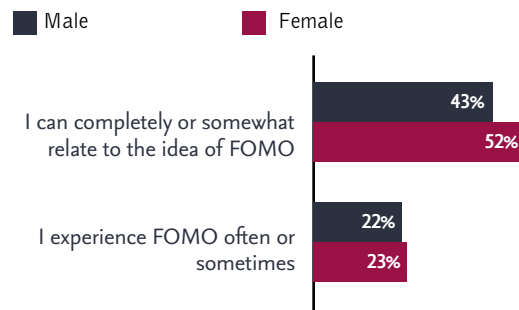


Figure 3F: MEN VS. WOMEN: HOW PEOPLE ALLEVIATE FOMO (U.K.)

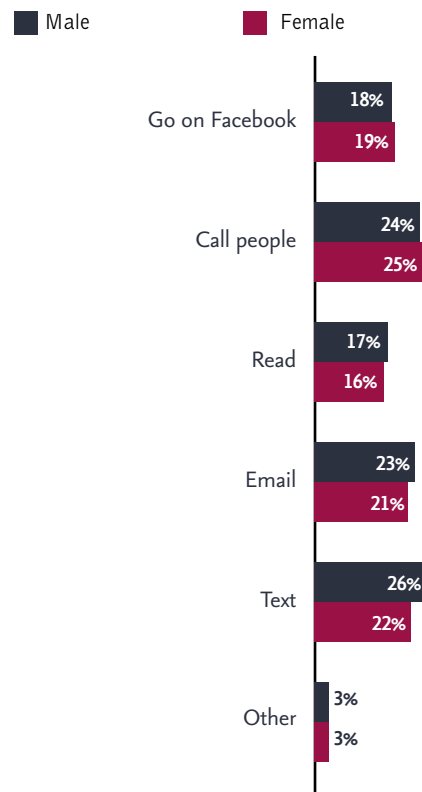
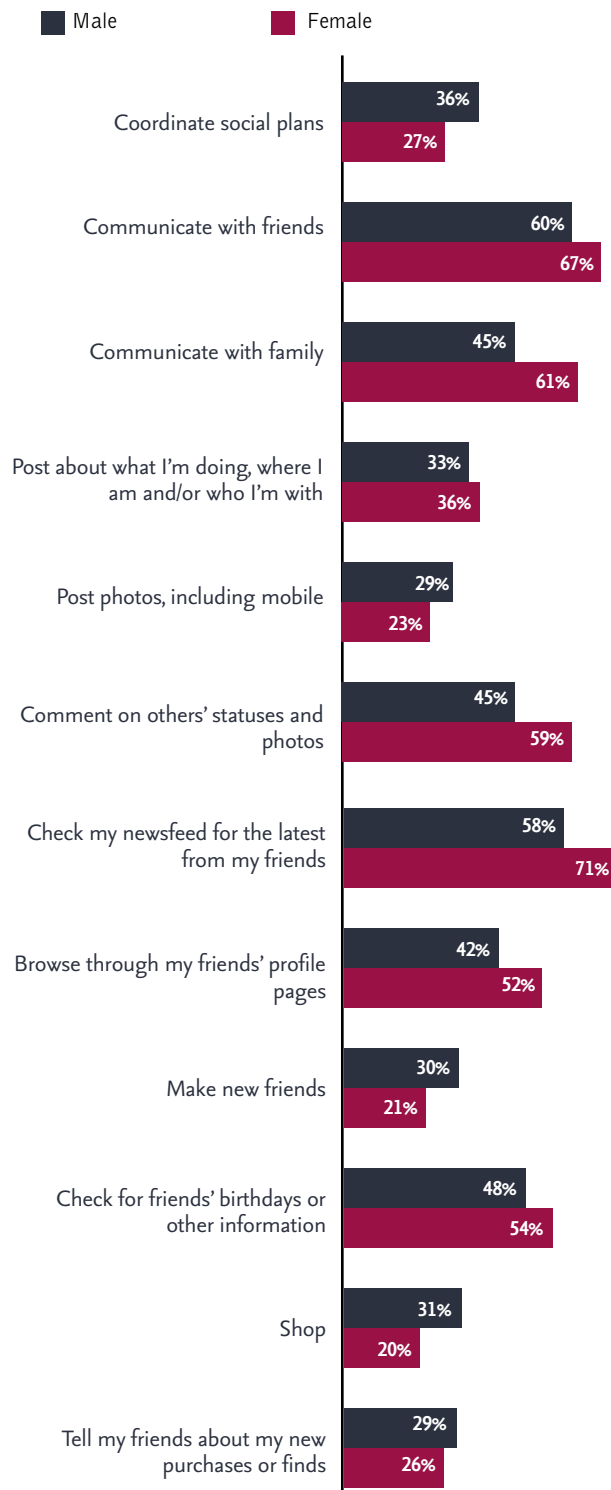


Figure 3G: **ACTIVITIES ON FACEBOOK BY GENDER (U.K.)**

Percentage who do each of the following at least once a week on Facebook



About JWT: JWT is the world's best-known marketing communications brand. Headquartered in New York, JWT is a true global network with more than 200 offices in over 90 countries employing nearly 10,000 marketing professionals.

JWT consistently ranks among the top agency networks in the world and continues its dominant presence in the industry by staying on the leading edge—from producing the first-ever TV commercial in 1939 to developing award-winning branded content for brands such as Freixenet, Ford and HSBC.

JWT's pioneering spirit enables the agency to forge deep relationships with clients including Bayer, Bloomberg, Cadbury, Diageo, DTC, Ford, HSBC, Johnson & Johnson, Kellogg's, Kimberly-Clark, Kraft, Microsoft, Nestlé, Nokia, Rolex, Royal Caribbean, Schick, Shell, Unilever, Vodafone and many others. JWT's parent company is WPP (NASDAQ: WPPGY).



466 Lexington Avenue
New York, NY 10017

www.jwt.com | [@JWTWorldwide](https://twitter.com/JWTWorldwide)

www.jwtintelligence.com | [@JWTIntelligence](https://twitter.com/JWTIntelligence)

www.anxietyindex.com | [@AnxietyIndex](https://twitter.com/AnxietyIndex)

FEAR OF MISSING OUT

Written by	Christine Miranda
Director of trendspotting	Ann M. Mack
Editor	Marian Berelowitz
Trends strategist	Jessica Vaughn
Design	Paris Tempo Productions
Proofreader	Nick Ayala

CONTACT:

Ann M. Mack
212-210-7378
ann.mack@jwt.com
[@annmmack](https://twitter.com/annmmack)

Christine Miranda
212-210-7225
christine.miranda@jwt.com
[@xtinemiranda](https://twitter.com/xtinemiranda)

(c) 2011 J. Walter Thompson Company.
All Rights Reserved.