

FOMO, BRANDS AND CONSUMERS – ABOUT THE REACTIONS OF POLISH INTERNET USERS TO THE ACTIVITIES OF BRANDS IN SOCIAL MEDIA (BASED ON CAWI REPRESENTATIVE RESEARCH)

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Abstract

Fear of Missing Out is mainly a subject of psychological research; however, due to its specific nature, it gains an interdisciplinary character. Thanks to this, it can also be analysed from the perspective of media or business. This paper focuses on the threads of the relationship between FOMO and marketing communication online. It realizes the following objectives: it presents the scale of FOMO in Poland; it analyses the phenomenon in the context of consumers' reactions to basic brand activity on social and it shows differences between the answers given by all the respondents and those with high FOMO. In order to clarify the scope of the research work, four research questions are answered: how do social media users react to the use of particular features of social platforms by brands? What form of posts coming from brands are preferred by Polish Internet users? What is the attitude of the respondents towards advertisements posted on social media portals? Does FOMO influence the answers in any way? The research was based on the nationwide, representative sample of Internet users aged 15+ (N=1060). The tool was the CAWI questionnaire.

Keywords: FOMO, Fear of Missing Out, brand, social media, social media marketing, marketing communication, FOMO marketing

1. Theoretical outline as an introduction

1.1 Social media and FOMO

The range of social media is growing year by year, as well as their thematic specialization and the number of functionalities offered to recipients. As informed by the authors of *Digital 2019* and *Digital 2019: Poland* reports [We are social/Hootsuite, 2019, pp. 7-8], the Internet is used by almost 57% of mankind, and 45% are social media users.

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In Poland, 79% of the population uses the Internet, and 47% use social media. Therefore, it can be stated that Poles are in line with the global trend and are willing to use social networking platforms [We are social/Hootsuite, 2019a, p. 15-16]. The social media landscape is very diverse: except from social media tycoons like Facebook or Youtube, it also includes messengers, which are already used more often than traditional platforms [ibidem, 2019, p. 81; 2019a, p. 33]. The Influencer Marketing Hub lists 52 of the most popular social media sites [2019]. Their ranking presents more specialised platforms, focused either on specific forms of communication (e.g. Tagged, Wattpad), or on target groups (e.g. Deviantart, Nextdoor). It's worth emphasizing that all these media fulfil the fundamental role of social media: they create communities by letting people publish their own content, comment, share, discuss and keep in touch with all over the world.

Therefore, considering the widespread use of the above-mentioned media, their availability, dynamically growing popularity, new or upgraded features, immediate adaptation to the expectations of users, or more and more noticeable diversification based on the needs of specific consumer groups, it can be stated that social networking platforms have been changing not only communication but also the whole societies. Their influence on human life, although undeniable, is not unambiguous. Scientists, experts, marketers, politicians and users themselves see both their positive and negative sides [Siddiqui & Singh, 2016, p. 71; Vogel & Rose, 2016, p. 294; Van Dijck, 2013, p.13], which makes social media the subject of numerous scientific studies, journalistic materials, electoral, social and promotional campaigns, films etc.

On the one hand, for example, there is an emphasis on their directness, current nature, dynamism, informativeness and interactivity [Qiao, 2019, p. 9-10; Ariel & Avidar, 2015, p. 25]; open access to everyone or the fact that they make it possible to reach a large number of users. Educational values, e.g. in the area of informal learning, are also important [Flynn et al., 2015, pp. 558-559; Greenhow & Lewin, 2015], as well as developing a sense of belonging, which is particularly important for young people [Allen et al., 2014, pp. 21-22]. Other impact on users, i.e. motivating them to create and share their own content, can be considered valuable [LaRose et al., 2014, p. 60].

On the other hand, social media are too time-consuming and simply addictive [Monacis et al., 2017, p. 183; Wegmann et al., 2015, pp. 158-159; Andreassen et al., 2012]. It's argued that they distract users from real life and undermine their self-esteem [Woods & Scott, 2016]. Moreover, they can also aggravate bad moods [Aalbers et al., 2019], or even lead to depressive states [Lin et al., 2016]. Social networking platforms also entail a number of negative phenomena, e.g. cyberostracism [D'Amato et al., 2012, p. 403], cyberbullying [Kircaburun et al., 2019, p. 903] or exhibitionism [Staszanek & Czarna, 2018, p. 31]. They are also increasingly being linked to the phenomena of fake news, information bubbles and echo chambers [Allcott et al., 2019, p. 4-6; Flaxman et al., 2016, p. 298-320]. It should be added, that one of the most important research threads related to the specificity of social media, is *Fear of Missing Out*. Although it was not initially associated with the digital world so strongly [Herman, 2010; McGinnis, 2006], since 2013 these relationships have become inseparable. This was due to a scientific article by Andrew K. Przybylski et al., who not only put forward a definition of the phenomenon, but also referred to its links to social media and developed the so-called "FOMO scale", which can be treated as a tool for estimating the extent of this phenomenon. He described *Fear of Missing Out* as "a pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent. FOMO is characterized by the desire to stay continually connected with what others are doing" [Przybylski et al, 2013, p. 1841]. It should be stressed that this is the most frequently quoted definition of the phenomenon in the scientific literature to date. Since 2013, it has been referred to by other researchers as a starting point for further analysis [e.g. Alt, 2015, p. 111; Lai et al., 2016, p. 517; Fuster et al., 2017, p. 24; Milyavskaya et al., 2018, p. 726]. FOMO is usually the subject of research associating it with the negative effects of social media use, i.e. compulsive checking of new infor-

mation [James et al., 2017, p. 31-32], excessive and addictive use of the Internet and/or the above-mentioned applications [Metin-Orta, 2019, p. 15-16; Oberst et al., 2017, p. 58; Gil et al., 2016, p. 52; Blackwell et al., 2017, p. 71], a sense of depression [Hunt et al., 2018, p. 763-764], sleep disorders [Gezgin, 2018, p. 7], or simply fear of losing contact with others. It is also increasingly being viewed from the perspective of technology use, which enables establishing contacts on the Internet, but also increases the susceptibility to addictions. In the latter case, the villain of scientific analyses is the smartphone, which makes it easier to use social media 24 hours a day without any limitations [Elhai et al., 2016, p. 513-514; Oberst et al., 2017, p. 57].

FOMO is mainly a subject of psychological research; however, due to its specific nature, it gains an interdisciplinary character. Thanks to this, it can also be analysed from the perspective of media or business. Further attention will be paid to the threads of the relationship between FOMO and marketing communication online.

1.2 Social media marketing and FOMO-marketing

As it can be read in *Digital 2019* [We are social/Hootsuite, 2019, p. 191] and *Digital 2019: Poland* [We are social/Hootsuite 2019a, p. 52] reports, 84% of Internet users searched online for a product/service to buy (in Poland: 86%), 91% visited an online retail store (in Poland: 92%), 75% purchased a product/service online (in Poland: 76%). In view of such significant data, today it's difficult to imagine any company or commercial/public institution which wouldn't run at least one profile on any of the most well-known portals. However, it should be remembered that it is not enough just to have social media profiles. Of course, one can limit their activity to plain graphic and text posts or simple advertisements. Nevertheless, it is better to take a more difficult approach, which brings better results; the point is that social media content should be differentiated in terms of form and message, they should interweave and reinforce one another. They ought to adjust to the specific nature of a given platform (as the manners of communication are different on Facebook, YouTube or TikTok) and tell a story about a brand in a way that engages and stimulates the audience to react [Jania, 2019, p. 25; Ławrowski, 2019, p.44; Dębowska-Lenart, 2019, p. 49]. In order to carry out such far-reaching activities, it is essential to plan them. Currently, a strategic approach to social media marketing, seen as "an interdisciplinary and cross-functional concept that uses social media (...) to achieve organizational goals by creating value for stakeholders" [Felix et al, 2017, p. 123], "the utilization of social media technologies, channels, and software to create, communicate, deliver, and exchange offerings that have value for an organization's stakeholders" [Tuten & Solomon, 2016, p. 21] or "a process by which companies create, communicate, and deliver online marketing offerings via social media platforms to build and maintain stakeholder relationships that enhance stakeholders' value by facilitating interaction, information sharing, offering personalized purchase recommendations, and word of mouth creation among stakeholders (...)" [Yadav & Rahman, 2017, p. 3] is being discussed. All of the three example definitions are an expression of a holistic approach to the use of social media in communication, in which a stakeholder is a partner for a company and not just a recipient. Simona Vinerean (2017, p. 31-32) writes about the advantages of a strategic approach to social media management, pointing to obvious benefits, such as building brand awareness, brand image improvement, minimalizing the promotion cost in comparison with traditional media costs, sales stimulation, gathering and evaluating feedback. She also emphasises the role of word-of-mouth and its contribution to strengthening consumer experience resulting from interacting with brands, claiming that "by creating, posting and sharing various types of content on social media platforms, consumers are more likely to engage with brands in online settings, thus, cultivating their level of interactivity and involvement in a more profound relationship with an organization" [p. 32]. Advertising on these platforms is also important. It is positively received by practitioners who indicate low running costs in comparison to traditional

Internet media, selection of content in terms of precise demographic variables, flexible optimisation, creativity or resistance to ad-blocking browser extensions [Smaga, 2019, p. 14]. Of course, it is not only advertising that constitutes a marketing communication tool on social media. Experts recommend linking, graphic and video forms (including stories) and hashtagging [Ławrowski, 2019, p. 45-46]. As far as video is concerned, shorter materials are still preferred; experts point out that productions lasting more than a few minutes will remain the domain of influencers [Roguski, 2019].

As Rafał Tuziak points out, users, “taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the Internet, generate more and more diverse, widely available data” [2016, p. 37]. There is no denying, since as early as 2016, every minute, Facebook recorded over 700,000 logins, Twitter recorded more than 367,000 tweets, YouTube - almost 3 million views, and Snapchat - almost 528,000 shared photos [Leboeuf, 2016]. This huge amount of data leads to an overload of communication and/or information (also called *infobesity* or *infoxication*) which may be associated with the *Fear of Missing Out*. This is confirmed by Dominik Batorski, who notes that the problem “intensifies with the development and expansion of the Internet. This is due to such phenomena as FOMO” [2011, p. 24]. Several years later a similar feeling was expressed by Eoin Whelan et al., who proved that FOMO “had significant influence on communication overload”, which along with information overload, is “one of the two dimensions of social media overload, felt by millions of social media users” [2017, p. 7]. B. Alexander’s team recognizes that FOMO is a result of this overload: “lack of productivity, anxiety, fatigue, and *Fear of Missing Out* are examples of reactions and emotions experienced when coping with overload” [2016, p. 4]. It is therefore no exaggeration to say that all active social media users, including brand owners who produce posts every day, are involved in the process of information and/or communication overload. At the same time, there are also entrepreneurs who conduct online activities directly on the basis of *Fear of Missing Out*. These activities are so common that they have been given the term FOMO marketing. Marketers regard it as a strategy used to strengthen sales by stimulating emotional reactions among consumers [Carly, 2019] or activating “anxieties and encouraging action” [Featherstone, 2018]; for them it is also a technique thanks to which users are more willing to use services and products [Medialnaperspektywa.pl, 2018] and a message “that triggers an innate fear in your audience of missing out, but it needs to be told in an implicit way” [Libertymarketing.co.uk, 2018].

The relationship between FOMO and marketing communication has already become an area of scientific research. Some of them point to the cultural diversity of the links between *Fear of Missing Out* and consumption, where “in the UK FOMO is driven by social status and social norms, whereas in Brazil (...) most consumers are driven by a desire to discover *which is the best product* (...). In China, FOMO has its own terminology, *Changxin*, which is translated as *tasting new*” [Wilson-Nash & Xiao, 2019, p.4]. Christopher Hodgkinson analyses the phenomenon from the point of view of consumer reactions (including purchasing decisions). The researcher claims that “while the current application of FOMO appeals is evidently successful during the pre-purchase phase (...) there are further opportunities to stimulate demand during the consumption and post-consumption phases (...)” [2019, p. 81]. The role of the phenomenon in the purchasing process is also confirmed by the studies of Michelle van Solt et al. [2018, p. 2] as well as Işıl Karapınar Çelik et al. The latter authors additionally emphasise the importance of the digital world, pointing out that “the rise in the number of virtual and social media led to an increase in the sharing of food or events such as holidays, parties, organizations, and weddings, which, in turn, sets stage for FOMO-induced purchasing behaviour” [2019, p. 133]. David G. Taylor proves that FOMO “is positively related to the conspicuous consumption of products and experiences”, and that it motivates social media users to this consumption [2019, p. 857]. Inwon Kwang et al. write about *Fear of Missing Out* in a similar context, highlighting its conformist aspect related to consumer behaviour

towards their reference group. As they claim, “FOMO has a significant positive effect on conformity consumption of culturally associated brands, especially leading to the collective following-up conformity tendency on certain groups” [2019, p. 15]. It is worth noting that the phenomenon understood in this way is associated with purchasing decisions made under the influence of the reference group. Moreover, the authors indicate how to use their observation in practice: “It’s strategic to provide the advertising message that something is desirable for consumption to consumers who are in a high level of FOMO (...)” [ibid.].

As can be seen, the relationship between social networking platforms, marketing communication on the Internet and *Fear of Missing Out* is very clear. However, despite the increasing number of academics taking up this topic, it can be noticed that research on it’s still in its infancy: FOMO itself, social media marketing and social media are discussed a lot, while FOMO marketing is not. The available literature, so far, has focused on the general approach - what is analysed is the relationship between the phenomenon and consumers’ purchasing decisions rather than the specific behaviours of FOMO-recipients in relation to brand activity in social media. there’s a lack of precise numerical data documenting the scale of the phenomenon as well as representative studies comparing *FOMO-affected* people (i.e. the ones who feel FOMO the most strongly) with average representatives of the Internet community. Taking into account the above considerations, the following objectives have been formulated for this text: 1) presenting the scale of *Fear of Missing Out* in Poland (including discussing the process of recalculating the collected survey data); 2) analysing the phenomenon in the context of consumers’ reactions to basic brand activity on social media (including the impact of selected demographic variables, i.e. age and gender) and 3) showing differences between the answers given by all the respondents and those with high FOMO.

In order to clarify the scope of the research work, three questions were raised: 1) how do social media users react to the use of particular features of these platforms by brands? 2) what form of posts coming from brands are preferred by Polish Internet users? 3) what is the attitude of the respondents towards advertisements posted on social media portals? 4) does FOMO influence the answers in any way?

No hypothesis was put forward, because the research is mainly extrapolatory. Certainly, one could aim at proving/falsifying the claim that people with a high FOMO are more eager to respond to brand activities on social media. However, such a thesis would be too obvious, especially since the aim was to show the scale of symbiosis between social media, FOMO and brands rather than to prove that such a symbiosis exists (after all, this has already been verified).

2. FOMO in Poland – methodology and the process of data recalculation

Despite the increasing scale of FOMO, relatively few studies have so far been based on representative research. Exceptions include one of the three stages of the studies carried out by A.K. Przybylski et al. [2013], comprehensive research done in Germany [Reinecke et al., 2017] and in the USA [Hampton et al., 2016; Bright & Logan, 2018]. Polish studies on the phenomenon are therefore one of only a few worldwide. Their first edition took place in 2018. The actual research, after the pretest and corrections, was conducted

on the Ariadna panel² in March 2018, on a nationwide sample of Internet users aged 15+ (N=1060). The quotas were selected on the basis of the representation in the population of Polish Internet users for gender, age and size of the place of residence. The tool was the CAWI online questionnaire, which consisted of 499 questions. To clarify the analysis, they were divided into the following thematic groups: FOMO scale by A.K. Przybylski et al.; general use of social media (analysed, among others, in terms of reaction to brand activities); the purposes of using them (where questions about brands also appeared); effects of using them; influence of them on building one's own image; approach to marketing communication implemented on social media, and general questions concerning the mental and physical condition of the respondents. The main aim of the study was to investigate the scale and nature of the phenomenon in Poland. The starting point for further analysis was the FOMO scale designed and verified by A.K. Przybylski et al. [2013]. For each of these statements a five-point Likert scale was implemented, where 0 = not true at all and 4 = completely true. Then the answers of each respondent were divided by 4. After summing up the average partial values, the average results were obtained for each of the ten questions in the range from 0 to 4. On this basis, a 'FOMO index' was developed, aggregating the results of the questions from the FOMO scale, and the obtained values were recoded into percentage values. This made it possible to classify the phenomenon at a low, medium and high level. These ranges were identified through the analysis of standard deviations, where SD equal and greater than ($> 1\sigma$) indicated a high value of FOMO, reaching a range of 60-100 on the scale, while SD equal and smaller than (-1σ) indicated a low value of FOMO, reaching a range of 0-20 on the figure 1.

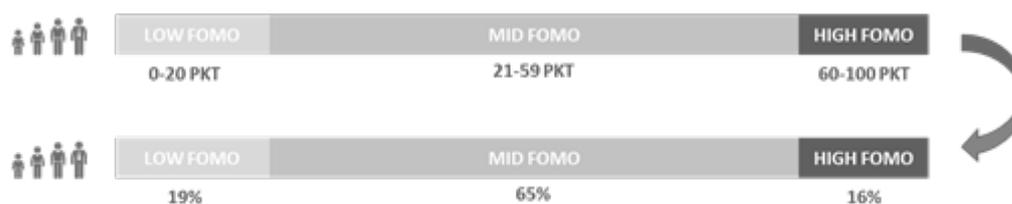


Figure 1. Recoding 0-100 values into % values: low, medium and high FOMO.

Source: own source.

The data recoding process and the most important results were discussed in detail in the "FOMO. Polacy a lęk przed odłączeniem" report (Jupowicz-Ginalska et al., 2018). However, for this text, a marketing communication threads from the research project were only selected.

3. Brands, FOMO and social media users - presentation of research results

The data are presented according to one key, i.e. first adding up the 'frequently' and 'always' answers, both for the general group (all respondents) and for those with high FOMO (selected by means of the FOMO index), and then comparing their results. Then,

² The Ariadna online panel is an online research panel that combines software used in planning and carrying out consumer and experimental surveys with a Poland-wide research panel with 110 000 registered users (to-date in the 15 years old+ demographic). Actual respondents with verified identities take part in all research projects conducted via the panel. The identities of all participants of the panel are validated, but in return all respondents on the panel are anonymous and their personal details remain confidential in line with ECC/ ESOMAR codes of conduct and with Polish data protection laws. The Ariadna panel is PJKPA-quality certified and this quality certificate is awarded following a comprehensive audit by Organizacja Firm Badania Opinii i Rynku (www.ofbor.pl, Polish Association of Public Opinion and Marketing Research Firms). OFBOR is a key organization that operates in the area of public opinion and marketing research in Poland.

after indicating the differences/similarities between the respondents with and without FOMO, an analysis of a given thread in the context of demographic variables is carried out, this time based on the respondents from the general group. Such a solution facilitates a clear presentation of the information on the basis of a clear comparison of *fomers* (as people who experience high FOMO) with *non-fomers*. It also allows for a detailed description of relations between brands and Internet users, not only in the context of fear of disconnection.

Accordingly, the questionnaire included questions about the reasons for using social media. Among many answers there were also those which directly referred to the marketing communication. It turned out that 25% of the respondents from the general group use social media to find out what is happening with their favourite brands. It is more often declared by women than men (30% vs 20%), as well as by people aged 15-24 (34%) and 25-34 (28%). The oldest respondents, those aged 45-54 and 55+, respond at the same level, in both cases at around 15%. However, this type of behaviour is confirmed by as many as 52% of *fomers*. They also remain in constant contact with brands even on holiday. This was admitted by 28% of them and only 11% of those in the general group.

The second 'marketing' factor encouraging Poles to use social media is the desire to find bargains. This approach is often or always close to 62% of high-FOMO people and 39% of average Internet users. As far as gender is concerned, this approach is confirmed by 47% of females and 32% of males, while in the case of age it's confirmed by 44% of the youngest Internet users, 42% between 25-34 years of age, 35% between 35 and 44 years of age, 33% of Poles aged 45-54 and 40% over 55 years of age.

Similarly, noticeable differences between the subgroups of respondents can also be observed in the answers given to other questions concerning marketing issues. In the further part of the article, the data referring to the following issues will be presented: 1) basic reactions of users to brands on social media; 2) preferred forms of brands' posts; 3) the respondents' approach to advertisements on these platforms.

3.1 Brands, FOMO and users – the reactions on social media

Looking at the data presented on Figure 2, a few conclusions can be drawn. First of all, it's clear that those who are FOMO-affected, in comparison to the representatives of the general group, are more willing to engage in brand activities on social media. Secondly, in the case of both subgroups, the activities which don't require too much effort seem to be the most popular (following posts quite passive, just like the confirmation of participation, liking or rating – it involves just clicking on the content). *Fomers* seem to prefer more absorbing - mainly in terms of time and concept - social media features, which are commenting, using chat rooms and reviewing. On the other hand, average Internet users, apart from reviewing, prefer to watch and share. The last place on the list is occupied by tagging, but people with strong FOMO reach for this function more often than the representatives of the general group. It should be specified that 33% of *fomers* admit that they use brand hashtags. The # sign is more willingly used by women (15% of women surveyed compared to 11% of men) and the youngest (almost 19% of people aged 15-24, 18% of people aged 25-34, less than 13% of people aged 35-44 and less than 5% of people aged 45+).

It is worth looking at the activities related to the evaluation of brand activity in social media. As it turns out, both people from the general group and those with high FOMO are more likely to appreciate brands (24% of Internet users and 44% of *fomers*) than criticise them (9% vs. 22%, respectively). This is important information because it proves that the respondents are quite positive about brand communication in social media and that the FOMO-affected Internet users are more active here (i.e. they are more willing to express their opinions). Looking at the demographic data, it can be concluded that gender does not differentiate the results obtained: 25% of women in the brand praise brands

(and 22% of men), while 8% (and 10% of men) criticise them. On the other hand, the answers presented in terms of age are interesting. For example, the youngest respondents most strongly declare affirmative approach (28%), but also older age groups do the same (respondents between 25 and 44 years of age responded at 26%). People over 45 years of age are less positive towards brands (around 15%). This does not mean, however, that their critical attitude is growing unambiguously: this one can be seen among 3% of the 45-54 age group and 1% of those surveyed over 55. The youngest consumers most often criticise brands - this is declared by 14% of Internet users up to 24 years of age.

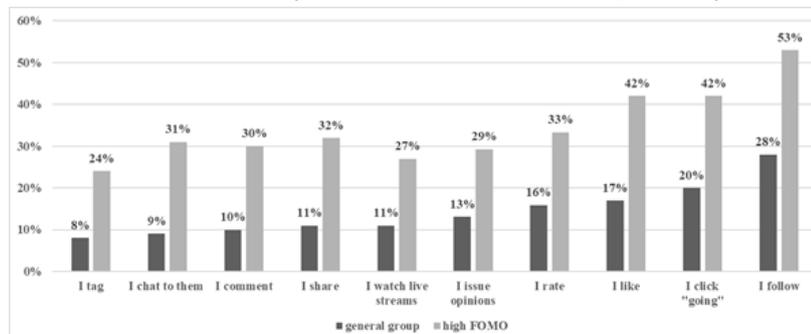


Figure 2. Typical social media features (general group and high FOMO comparison)

Source: own source.

At the same time, it is worth referring to whether demographic variables affect the reactions of the respondents to the standard brand activities on social media. As regards the gender of the respondents (Figure 3), there's a strong similarity between the responses of women and men. Differences in the approach are noticeable when responding to three statements: it turns out that women more often than men follow brand profiles, like their posts, and announce participation in events. This is valuable information for marketers to help them diversify their product and service offer according to the gender of consumers.

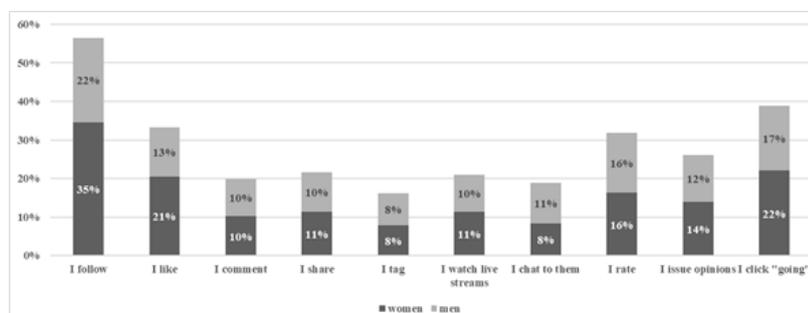


Figure 3. Typical social media features (general group: gender)

Source: own source.

As far as the age of respondents is concerned, its influence on the differentiation of the indicated answers should be highlighted (Figure 4). The representatives of the 15-24-year-old group follow such profiles most frequently, announce their participation in events and like marketing posts. However, this responsiveness is based on uncomplicated behaviours, where a post of a brand - like an impulse stimulus - activates short and dynamic reactions. It turns out that in terms of commenting on brand posts, the youngest do not differ from people aged 35-44, and when it comes to reviewing, they even yield to them. Interestingly, the respondents aged 55+ are familiar with ratings: the level of their responses is similar to the statements made by other age groups. It should also be emphasized that seniors - despite the fact that they are most often ranked last in the discussed survey - are not completely excluded from communication. As many as 16% of them follow brands, 10% announce their participation in various events and

13% rate brands. The lowest score in this context is given for the use of chats (2% of responses), but it may be related to poor knowledge of social media features and difficulty with their fluent use. Moreover, respondents aged 45-54 often do not differ much from younger respondents. This can be seen in the case of reviewing, but also rating, chatting, watching live streams, sharing content and commenting. This may reflect the level of digital competences of more mature Internet users, which - apart from obvious following and liking - does not differ from the level presented by the youngest respondents. It is also worth noting carefully the significant interactivity of brand relationships with older customers (over 35 years of age): it occurs that the mature social media users are just a little bit more responsive. This is valuable information for marketers who have recently noticed the growing potential of age groups other than Millennials and Generation Z.

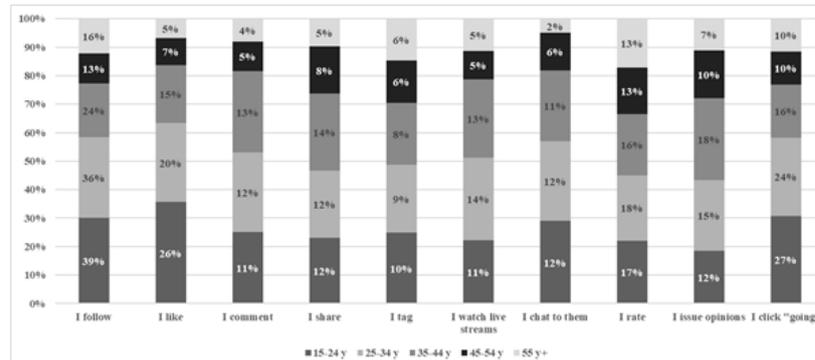


Figure 4 Typical social media features (general group: age)

Source: own source.

3.2 Brands, FOMO and users – the form of posts on social media

The effectiveness of marketing communication, also on social media, is significantly influenced by the appropriate form of communication and its adjustment to the expectations of the recipients. In this subchapter the users' preferences concerning the form of messages placed on social media are analysed. A comparison of the answers given by the general group and the *fomers* is presented in Figure 5. An obvious regularity can be observed: the respondents who feel high FOMO are more likely to point to any possible form of post published by brands (which may prove their greater involvement in social media, and on the other hand - their consent to a variety of activities performed there).

It is worth emphasizing, however, that this time the answers of both groups - analysed in the order in which they are arranged - are similar. As can be seen, both *fomers* and average Internet users most often choose graphic or photographic forms of messages. The second place is occupied by text, and the third by combinations of texts and images. Further on, the respondents choose video materials: short or enriched with text or illustrations, while live streams and long video broadcasts attract the least interest. Looking at the data collected, one can risk saying that they are in line with the current trend in marketing communication: after all, formats that require time and focus aren't as popular as short multimedia feeds. The exception is the text, which is still accepted by *fomers* and Internet users alike.

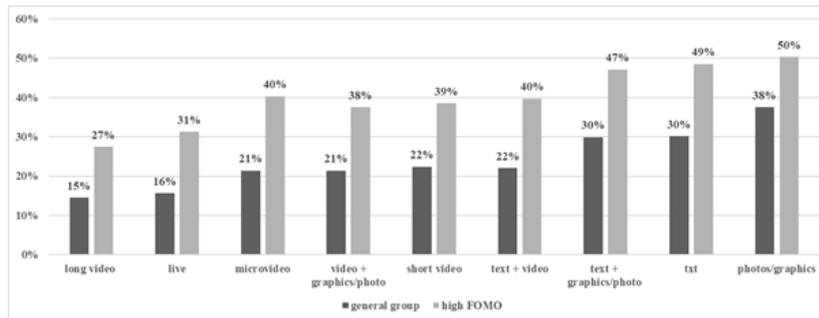


Figure 5 Post formats on social media (general group and high FOMO comparison)

Source: own source.

Considering the gender of the respondents, there is a similarity between the responses. The results for preferences relating to the combination of text and graphics, video and live streaming are basically the same. The most noticeable change is the one which proves that women definitely prefer photographic or graphic posts. Details are shown in Figure 6.

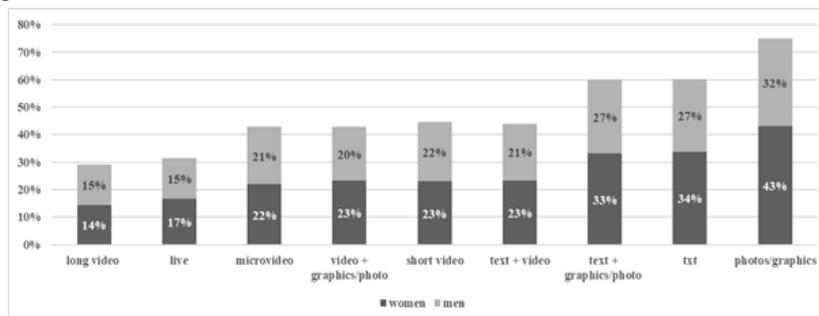


Figure 6. Post formats on social media (general group: gender)

Source: own source.

As far as the age of the respondents is concerned (Figure 7), some correlations can also be found. As it could be assumed, in the case of the two youngest groups of the respondents, graphic and multimedia posts play a significant role: a considerable similarity can be observed between the responses of people aged 15-24 and 25-34. However, a major difference should be emphasised, i.e. the reactions to microvideo materials. Nearly 30% of respondents up to 24 years of age declare their choice, thus outclassing the indications of other age groups. It seems that the inclination of the youngest towards maximally shortened forms of multimedia visual communication is a constant trend. The evidence may be the growing popularity of the Tik Tok social networking platform, based on creating and sharing short videos. The answers of the elderly are also worth noting. Although live streams are accepted by only 9% of them, the level of indication for posts combining text and video, text and images is higher than the results of the 45-55 age group, and similar to the data for people aged between 35 and 44. Therefore, it is not entirely true that the oldest prefer text-based posts – it should be remembered when creating a marketing message to the baby boomer's generation.

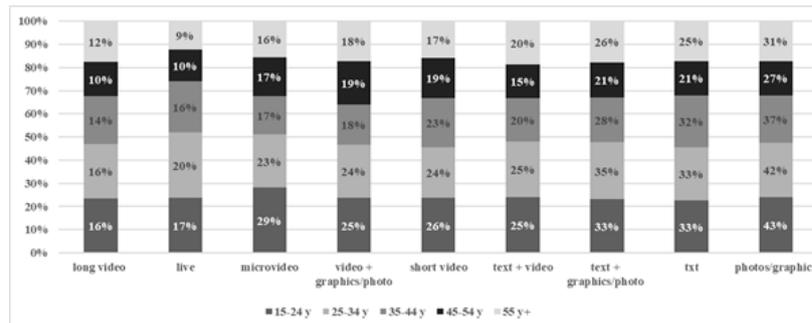


Figure 7 Post formats on social media (general group: age)

Source: own source.

3.3 Brands, FOMO and users in the context of advertisements on social media

One of the *forms* of marketing communication on social media are advertisements. As can be seen in Figure 8, fomers (compared with the general group) are definitely more willing to confirm their positive attitude towards the discussed form of promotion. Of course, there is no denying that brand advertisements on social media raise negative emotions - they bother almost half of the *fomers* and almost the same number of *non-fomers*. However, despite the strong pejorative attitude of the users, it should be stressed that in other cases advertising is not so critically judged. For example, it arouses interest among people with a high FOMO, encouraging them to click (this is done by as much as 36%: for marketers, it may be a valuable hint referring to the effectiveness of activities aimed at those who are afraid of being disconnected). Interestingly, almost 30% of them declare that they are fond of advertisements, which is an encouraging result in comparison to only 10% of confirmations articulated by the general group of the Internet users.

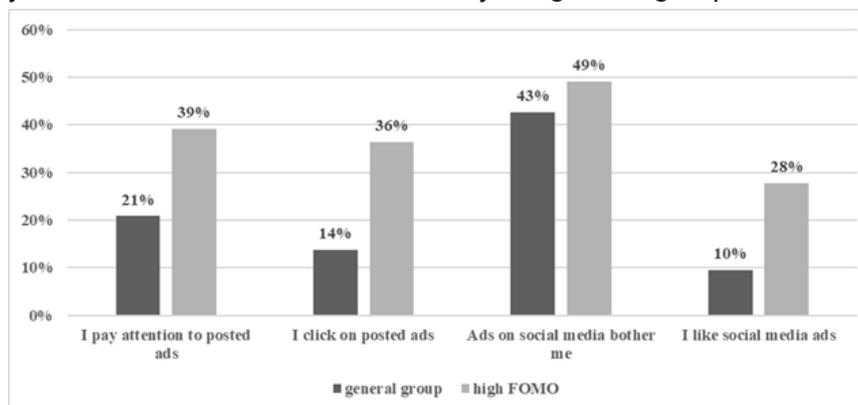


Figure 8 Social media ads (general group and high FOMO comparison)

Source: own source.

As regards the impact of the gender on the perception of brand advertising on social media, it can be said that it is virtually insignificant. As can be seen in Figure 9, 46% of women and 39% of men are bothered by these forms of marketing. The other answers are very similar.

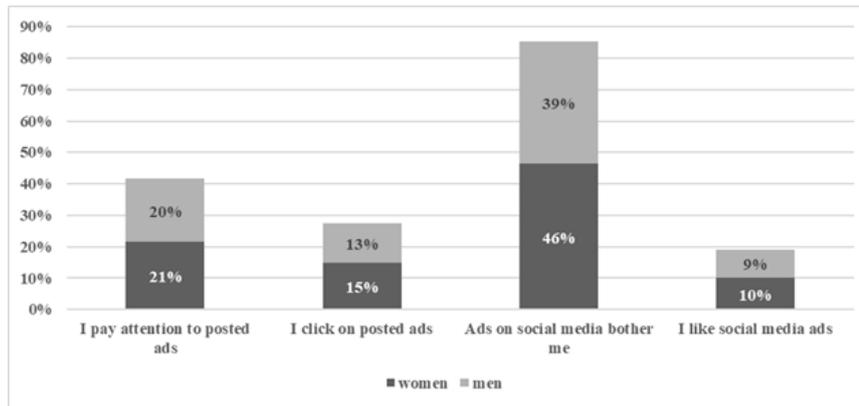


Figure 9 Social media ads (general group: gender)

Source: own source.

In terms of the relationship between the age of the respondents and their reception of advertising content, it's worth pointing out that it's the 45+ group that likes such messages the least; the remaining age groups respond at almost the same level. The oldest people also most often claim that advertisements bother them. On the other hand, seniors, to a similar extent as respondents aged 15-24, pay attention to ads and click on them. These are further arguments in favour of precise planning of marketing activities on social media, which must take into account the opinions, preferences and behaviours of mature respondents, who are slowly becoming aware users of the Internet.

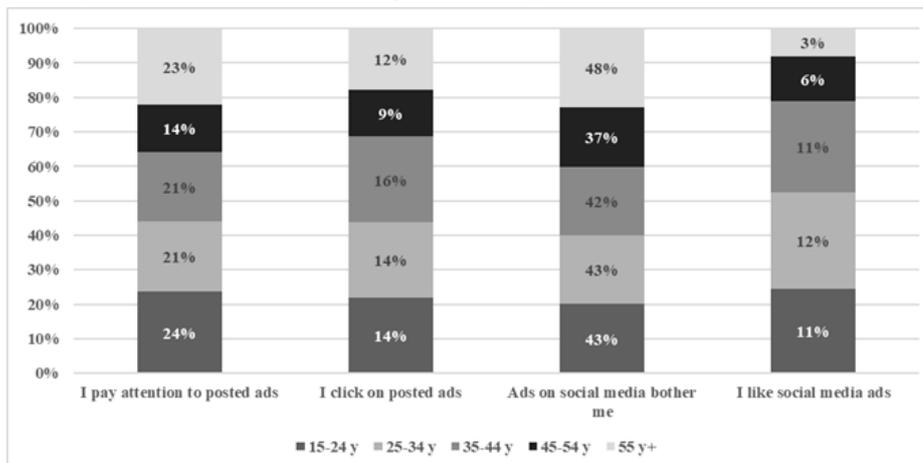


Figure 10 Social media ads (general group: age)

Source: own source.

4. Conclusions

All research objectives have been achieved. Firstly, the process of recalculating the survey data was discussed, which in the future may serve other researchers who would wish to implement the scale of FOMO in their works. Secondly, the phenomenon was analysed in the context of consumers' reactions to basic brand activities on social media, and at the same time the general observations were deepened by demographic variables. Thirdly, the differences in the attitude towards brands between the general group and the *fomers* were shown.

As far as the reasons for using social networking platforms are concerned, *fomers* are more interested in what happens with their favourite brands - even during holidays (it's more often admitted by women and the two youngest age subgroups). The stronger stimulus to reach for social media is the desire to find bargains for products.

Again, women and respondents up to 34 years of age are the leaders here. However, an interesting change takes place here, as the oldest people are also familiar with the search for inexpensive goods.

In the case of respondents' reactions to brand activity, there is a greater involvement of *fomers* in virtually every social media feature. Sometimes they seem to prefer slightly more absorbing activities, requiring something more than a simple click. It can also be carefully stated that people with a high FOMO are more skilled in having differentiated relationships with brands, e.g. using commercial hashtags. As for the impact of demographic variables on user responses, gender (despite a few exceptions) is not as significant as age. It was shown that the youngest are naturally active in responding to brand messages; however, their behaviours remain superficial. On the other hand, activities such as commenting or giving opinions are willingly done by older respondents. The data referring to the elderly are certainly important, as they clearly show that this group has a marketing potential (which, due to demographic processes in Poland, will certainly increase).

Preferences over the form of posts, mainly images and short videos, are not surprising: they are chosen by all groups of respondents. At this point it is worth highlighting two conclusions: firstly, the importance of microwideo among the youngest respondents and the opinions of seniors, more and more eager to use multimedia formats.

The presented data may also be important for marketers running advertising campaigns on social media. As it turns out, *fomers* are less critical towards them: not only do they more often declare that they like such advertisements, but they also pay attention to them and click on them. This responsiveness, especially in the context of performance-based advertising, seems to be valuable, e.g. to estimate the effectiveness of actions.

The presented research results, which are an extract from the opinions on FOMO in Poland, may be valuable not only in the academic context (where they should be known as a supplement to the literature on the subject), but also in the practical context. They are a collection of information on the marketing and social media preferences of not only Internet users, but also *fomers*. Since they spend a lot of time on the Internet [Jupowicz-Ginalska et al., 2018, pp. 19-20] and at the same time are more responsive to brand activities, they may be treated as trendsetters who, even on a micro-scale, are able to spread knowledge about products and services. The key to their effective engagement seems to be to find out about their reactions and preferences, which was one of the objectives of this text.

The presented study has some limitations. The data was treated selectively due to editorial limitations. FOMO marketing, presented here as an introduction to further planned scientific work, is a much more complicated and morally problematic phenomenon. Given its universality and ambiguity, separate studies should certainly be devoted to it in order to analyse it more thoroughly. Also, the results discussed, although representative, are based on quantitative studies. In order to fully reflect the relationship between users, social media and FOMO marketing, it would be worthwhile to enrich it with qualitative. These are, of course, some of the possible future scenarios, worth considering for a very simple reason: FOMO will not disappear. Permanently associated with social networking sites, it will be a part of the Internet landscape, whose integral feature is the presence of brands and their communication activity.

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