



Social Influence and Fear of Missing Out: Understanding Audience Psychology in the Re-Release Film Trend

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ABSTRACT

Re-released films have gained renewed popularity in contemporary cinema, yet the psychological mechanisms that drive audiences to revisit familiar content remain underexplored. This study examined the relationship between social influence and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among individuals in Kerala who had previously watched at least one re-released movie. A sample of 109 participants is used for this research. Data were analysed using Pearson's correlation and simple linear regression. The results revealed a strong positive correlation between social influence and FOMO indicating that individuals who are more responsive to socially driven cues tend to experience heightened concern about missing shared cultural experiences. Regression analysis further showed that social influence significantly predicted FOMO. These findings suggest that in the context of cinematic re-releases, social environments play a decisive role in shaping emotional responses associated with participation and belonging. The study contributes to the growing literature on collective consumption and highlights the relevance of socially constructed pressures in entertainment behaviour. Future research may expand upon these insights by incorporating additional psychosocial variables and exploring diverse audience groups.



Introduction

The modern cinematic market operates within a dynamic tension, balancing the perpetual demand for novel, pioneering content with a profitable resurgence of established intellectual property. This latter category, compressed by the phenomenon of the limited-run theatrical re-release, offers a compelling case study in contemporary consumer psychology. Unlike standard content consumption which occurs asynchronously and privately through streaming services. The re-release transforms familiar media into a synchronous, scarce and communal experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). It is not merely a film viewing but is a accurately crafted social event, the success of which pivots on external psychological levers rather than intrinsic cinematic novelty.

Understanding the drivers behind a consumer's willingness to expend time and capital to attend a film they have likely already seen is paramount to the economic feasibility of this model. This inquiry specifically focuses on two dominant external variables like audience excitement and social influence. Audience excitement is functionally defined here as the collective, affective resonance created by the promotional campaign, often connecting the deep-seated nostalgia associated with the original release (Holbrook & Schindler, 1994). This emotional orchestration generates an intense buzz, converting passive cultural memory into active behavioural intention. Film marketing, through its emphasis on the ephemeral nature of the re-release event, actively cultivates this generalized sense of emotional urgency.

Complementing this internal emotional pressure is social influence, which operates by establishing powerful injunctive and descriptive norms (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). As digital and conventional media channels amplify the visible intention of peers to attend, the individual consumer perceives attendance as the socially validated course of action. This influence is powerful because it links the discretionary decision of buying a ticket not just to the film itself, but to the maintenance of one's social connection and cultural standing within a relevant reference group (Bearden & Etzel, 1982).

In spite of the recognized power of these external forces, the precise psychological mechanism that bridges this gap between external pressure and the resulting behavioural outcome remains significantly underexplored. We suggest that the translation of social pressure and affective resonance into the final intent to purchase is critically mediated by the construct of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). Defined as a persistent apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent, FOMO is a powerful motivator in collective consumption contexts (Przybylski et al., 2013). In the context of a limited-run re-release, FOMO transforms the viewing into a scarce social resource. The consumer does not merely risk missing the movie itself, but risks being excluded from the shared,



ephemeral social experience, the subsequent group dialogue and the immediate nostalgia-sharing moment.

Importance of the Study

Despite the commercial success of re-released films, there remains a critical gap in the academic literature regarding the specific psychological pathways that convert artificial excitement and observed social influence into the intent to attend. This study aims to address this discrepancy by developing and testing a conceptual model that illuminates the relationship between these variables. Specifically, we investigate the extent to which audience excitement and social influence exert their effect on interest in attending re-released movies indirectly, through the mediating psychological mechanism of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). The findings will provide theoretical clarity for the psychology of collective consumption and offer practical insights for time-sensitive marketing campaigns in the entertainment sector.

Conceptual Model for the Study

The model is built on the idea that people often respond to the social atmosphere surrounding the events especially when friends, peers and online communities actively discuss or participate in them. As the visibility of these social cues increases through conversations, shared content or collective enthusiasm, the individuals begin to feel a subtle push to align with what others are doing.

Within this context, FOMO appears as an emotional reaction to the social climate. When people sense that others are involved in something exciting, they experience a stronger need to stay connected to that moment. In the context of re-released movies, this often takes the form of wanting to join the shared theatre experience not because the event is new for them but because others seem to be part of something meaningful. In this model social influence acts as the driving force, shaping the level of FOMO people experience.

Social Influence → FOMO

Individuals who are more affected by social influence through peer behaviour, group expectations or community-level excitement are expected to report higher levels of FOMO. As people observe others preparing for or celebrating a film's re-release, the social pressure increases their emotional concern about missing a shared experience.



Methodology

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there any relationship between social influence regarding a re-released movie and a consumer's level of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)?

RQ2: To what extent does the presence of social influence predict a consumer's likelihood of experiencing Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) concerning the re-release event?

Hypothesis

H1: *Social influence will show a positive correlation with FOMO, such that individuals who are more sensitive to social cues will report higher levels of FOMO related to film re-release experiences.*

H2: *Social influence will significantly predict FOMO, with higher levels of implicit social influence leading to higher FOMO scores in relation to film re-release events.*

Sample and Procedure

A total of 109 participants took part in the study. All individuals were residents of Kerala and had watched at least one re-released movie at any point in time. Data were gathered using an online Google Form, which allowed participants to respond at their convenience. The study employed a convenience sampling method and relying on individuals who were accessible and willing to participate within the defined population group.

Inclusion Criteria

Participants were required to be residents of Kerala and individuals who had watched at least one re-released movie at any point in time. Only those who met this viewing criterion were included in the final sample, as the study focused on audience responses related to the re-release trend.

Exclusion Criteria

Anyone who had never watched a re-released movie was excluded from the study, as they could not provide relevant responses for the research purpose. Participants residing outside Kerala were also not considered. There were no age-based exclusions in the final dataset, as no responses were received outside the intended range.



Tools Used

The study used two primary instruments. Social influence was assessed using a three-item scale adapted from the normative components of the Reference Group Influence framework developed by Bearden and Etzel (1982). These items reflect conformity-oriented behaviour, capturing the extent to which individuals are influenced by group expectations and socially driven approval. FOMO was measured using the Fear of Missing Out Scale created by Przybylski et al. (2013), which evaluates the emotional discomfort and concern that others may be engaging in rewarding experiences without one’s involvement. Both scales were delivered through an online questionnaire, ensuring uniform administration and accessibility for all participants.

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted with careful attention to participant privacy and data protection. All individuals were informed about the purpose of the research and provided their consent before responding. No identifiable personal information was collected, ensuring that responses could not be traced back to any participant. The data were stored securely and accessed only for research purposes, maintaining full confidentiality throughout the project.

Analysis

Data analysis was carried out using Jamovi (Version 2.3.26). The study focused on two primary statistical procedures: Pearson’s correlation to examine the relationship between social influence and FOMO, and simple linear regression to assess whether social influence predicts FOMO. These analyses were used to address the research questions and evaluate the proposed hypotheses.

Table

Table 1 Descriptive s for Fear of Missing Out and Social influence.

	FOMO	Social Influence
N	109	109
Mean	23.4	12.2
Median	23	11
SD	7.10	4.40
Minimum	12	1
Maximum	42	20



Table 2
Fear of Missing
influence.

Variable		Social Influence	Fomo
Social Influence	Pearson's R	-	
	Df	-	
	p-value	-	
Fomo	Pearson's R	0.812	-
	Df	107	-
	p-value	<0.01	-

Correlations for
Out and Social

*Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001*

Table 3 *Simple Linear Regression Predicting FOMO From Social Influence*

Predictor variable	t- value	P Value	SE	Model summary
Intercept	6.19	<0.001	1.1860	R = 0.812
Fear of missing out	14.	<0.001	0.0912	R ² = 0.659
				Adjusted R ² = 0.656
				F = 206.52

*Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001*

Discussion

From Table 1, The correlation analysis revealed a strong positive association between social influence and FOMO among individuals who have experienced film re-releases. The magnitude of the correlation (r = .812) indicates that participants who are more responsive to socially driven cues tend to report markedly higher levels of fear of missing out. Because the probability value (P) was below .001, the relationship is statistically good, allowing the null hypothesis to be confidently rejected. This pattern suggests that social influence operates as a powerful psychological driver of the FOMO experience especially within collective cultural events such as re-released movie screenings. The strength of this association resonates with earlier work linking social influence dynamics to emotionally charged online



and offline behaviours. Research has consistently shown that individuals who are adjusted to the behaviours and expectations of their social groups are more vulnerable to heightened FOMO (Przybylski et al., 2013). Similar findings have been observed in studies where peer comparison and perceived social pressure amplified individuals' urgency to stay connected with trends or group activities (Riordan et al., 2020). These reports stay closely with the present results indicating that when a social environment becomes energised such as during a popular movie re-release, individuals sensitive to social influence experience greater emotional tension about missing the shared experience. Studies on media behaviour further support this interpretation. Socially reinforced events tend to amplify a person's desire to stay involved, and this effect is intensified when group norms, excitement, or participation cues are visible through peers or digital networks (Vaterlaus et al., 2016). The present findings resonate with this pattern by showing that the psychological pressure created by social influence is strongly reflected in FOMO scores. Research on FOMO has repeatedly highlighted that exposure to activities particularly in social or entertainment contexts can heighten anticipatory anxiety about not participating (Baker et al., 2016; Abel et al., 2016). The strong correlation observed in this study fits within this broader literature, underscoring the deep emotional connection between social cues and fear of being left out. The connection between social influence and FOMO also aligns with research showing that social approval motives increase susceptibility to comparison-based emotional responses (Barry et al., 2017). The data and supporting literature point to a consistent conclusion that social influence is strongly tied to FOMO and this relationship is especially noticeable in settings shaped by shared cultural enthusiasm. The pattern observed in this study supports existing psychological evidence by reinforcing the idea that social environments play a central role in shaping emotional responses related to belonging, participation and collective experiences.

From Table 2, the regression analysis provided further evidence for the strong connection between social influence and FOMO in the context of film re-release experiences. The model displayed an excellent fit, with $R = .812$ and $R^2 = .659$, indicating that social influence alone accounted for nearly 66% of the variance in FOMO scores. This level of explained variance is substantial in behavioural research and reinforces the interpretation that social influence plays a decisive role in shaping individuals' emotional reactions to socially charged cultural events. The regression coefficient showed that social influence significantly predicted FOMO ($\beta = 1.31, p < .001$), meaning that even a small increase in perceived social influence was associated with a notable rise in FOMO levels. This pattern highlights the psychological weight of socially driven cues in environments where group enthusiasm, peer involvement and shared excitement are prominent. When individuals sense that others are participating in or



celebrating a re-release event the social momentum appears to fuel a stronger fear of being left out of the collective experience. This finding aligns with earlier studies showing that social influence processes amplify emotionally reactive states such as FOMO. Przybylski et al. (2013) reported that FOMO intensifies when individuals feel that others around them are engaging in rewarding experiences, especially in socially visible settings. Similar evidence has shown that conformity pressures and perceived group norms can heighten the need to stay involved in shared activities (Koudstaal et al., 2020). These findings resonate with the current result, suggesting that socially driven expectations can create an internal push toward emotional vigilance about missing out.

Research on social comparison and group-driven behaviour supports the interpretation that FOMO is highly sensitive to social context. Studies have found that people who closely track peer behaviour are more likely to experience anxiety when they perceive that others are participating in meaningful events (Baker et al., 2016; Abel et al., 2016). The strong predictive value observed in this study mirrors those findings, highlighting the emotional pathway through which social influence shapes the desire to stay connected to group activities. More broadly, research on collective participation and cultural engagement shows that socially shared events often trigger heightened emotional responses because individuals derive meaning from belonging to a group experience (Vaterlaus et al., 2016).

The regression results show that social influence is not simply correlated with FOMO is a powerful predictor of it, explaining a major portion of the emotional variance observed among individuals who follow film re-release trends. The strength of this effect, supported by existing literature, suggests that FOMO functions as an emotional response to socially constructed expectations, particularly in cultural settings where shared participation is celebrated. These findings deepen the understanding of how social environments shape emotional decision-making and provide strong evidence that FOMO emerges directly from socially driven psychological pressures.

Conclusion

The findings of this study show that social influence has a strong and meaningful association with Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among individuals who watch re-released films in Kerala. The high correlation and strong predictive effect indicate that socially driven cues such as peer behaviour, communal excitement and group messaging play a major role in shaping FOMO within this cultural context. The results highlight the importance of social environments in driving emotional responses to shared entertainment events, especially when participation is perceived as a collective or time-sensitive experience. These



insights contribute to a clearer understanding of how audience behaviour is shaped during cinematic re-release trends.

Limitations

Although the study produced strong results, it is limited by the use of convenience sampling, which may reduce the generalizability of the findings. The sample consisted of participants exclusively from Kerala, which restricts cultural diversity. Self-report measures also introduce the possibility of response bias, particularly because FOMO and social influence are socially sensitive constructs. Also, only two psychological variables were examined and other influential factors like nostalgia, marketing exposure or group identity were not included.

Recommendations

Future research should include larger and more diverse samples to enhance generalizability beyond regional boundaries. Incorporating additional variables such as nostalgia intensity, digital engagement patterns or group belongingness may provide a broader understanding of audience psychology during re-releases. Longitudinal or experimental designs could also help clarify how social influence develops over time and how FOMO shapes actual attendance behaviour in real-world cinematic events.

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