FOMO AND INSTAGRAM INFLUENCERS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW ON MILLENNIAL BUYING BEHAVIOR IN DIGITAL MARKETING

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ABSTRACT

This systematic literature review examines the influence of Instagram influencers and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) on millennial consumer behavior. Analyzing 45 studies published between 2019 and 2024, the review highlights that influencer credibility enhances trust and purchase intentions, while FOMO acts as a strong emotional trigger for impulsive buying. Parasocial interactions between consumers and influencers further strengthen brand engagement and advocacy. Bibliometric analysis indicates a research convergence on emotional marketing and social influence. The findings underscore the need for ethical strategies that balance emotional appeal with consumer well-being, offering insights for future research and digital marketing practices.

Keywords: **Instagram Influencers, FOMO, Millennial Consumers, Digital Marketing, Impulse Buying.**

1. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of digital technologies and the proliferation of social media platforms have transformed the landscape of marketing and consumer behavior. Millennials, often defined as those born between 1981 and 1996, represent a generation deeply immersed in digital ecosystems, exhibiting distinct consumption habits that diverge significantly from previous generations (Pratiwi et al., 2023) As digital natives, millennials are highly influenced by content shared on social media, making platforms like Instagram not just communication tools but powerful arenas for marketing and brand influence. The transition from traditional to digital marketing paradigms has led to a reconfiguration of consumer-brand relationships, where authenticity, relatability, and peer endorsement increasingly outweigh conventional advertising techniques (Şanlı et al., 2025)

This shift is evidenced by the decline in traditional media consumption and the concurrent surge in social network usage, especially among millennials who actively seek out product information, experiences, and social validation through digital platforms (McCulloh & Cohen, 2023; Murari et al., 2024). Social media marketing represents the integration of social media utilization practices and principles into brand strategies and activities, becoming a critical medium for conveying information, enhancing brand awareness, and fostering consumer engagement (Murari et

al., 2024). Among these strategies, influencer marketing has gained notable traction, leveraging individuals with substantial and engaged followings to disseminate brand messages to targeted audiences (Fitriati & Madu Siwi, 2023; Rolando, 2025c; Setiawan & Rolando, 2025; Winata & Rolando, 2025).

The effectiveness of influencer marketing lies in the trust and credibility that influencers build with their followers, who often perceive them as authentic and relatable sources of information (Gil-Quintana & Vida de León, 2021; Rolando, 2025g, 2025b) In this digitally mediated environment, Instagram has become a dominant platform for influencer activity due to its visual nature and high millennial engagement. Alongside the rise of influencer culture, the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) has emerged as a powerful psychological construct that significantly shapes online consumer behavior. FOMO is characterized by the apprehension that others are enjoying rewarding experiences without one's participation, often triggered by curated content on social media platforms (Putri et al., 2023) The perpetual exposure to idealized representations of lifestyles, exclusive events, or trending products heightens millennials' sensitivity to social comparison, compelling them to stay connected and engage in consumption as a means of social inclusion or self-validation. These emotional triggers can result in impulsive buying behaviors and increased susceptibility to time-sensitive marketing strategies (Kumar & Kumar, 2025; Rolando, 2025d, 2025a; Wigayha & Rolando, 2024, 2025)

This systematic review is motivated by the growing interdependence between Instagram influencer marketing and FOMO as joint forces shaping millennial buying behavior. While the literature provides evidence on the standalone impacts of influencers and FOMO, a holistic understanding of how these variables interact is still lacking. The review aims to bridge this gap by synthesizing existing research that explores their convergence in influencing digital purchasing behavior. The primary problem addressed in this study is the lack of integrated insights into how social and psychological influences, particularly from Instagram influencers and FOMO, drive consumer decision-making processes among millennials. Although both constructs have been independently examined in prior research, few studies have attempted to analyze how they operate together within the digital marketing ecosystem. Understanding this relationship is increasingly important as consumer-brand interactions become more socially constructed and psychologically nuanced in online environments (Maciel-Saldierna et al., 2024) The review is justified by the increasing importance of influencer marketing strategies in digital commerce. With millennials constituting a dominant share of the digital consumer base and displaying high levels of online engagement, marketers are compelled to understand the deeper psychological motivators behind their purchasing behaviors (Rolando, 2024d, 2024a, 2025f; Rolando & Chondro, 2025).

Integrating the role of FOMO into this analysis allows for a more comprehensive exploration of emotional persuasion in digital campaigns (Barari, 2023) To that end, this review has three main objectives: to examine how Instagram influencers impact millennial purchasing decisions, to explore how FOMO mediates the interaction between influencers and consumers, and to identify the theoretical and practical implications for marketers operating in digital spaces. The research questions guiding this study are: How do Instagram influencers affect millennial consumer behavior? What role does FOMO play in shaping this influence? What are the broader implications of this relationship for digital marketing strategies targeting millennials? The scope of this review is limited to studies published between 2019 and 2024 that focus on influencer marketing, FOMO, and

millennial consumer behavior within the context of Instagram. Articles were selected based on methodological rigor, relevance, and contribution to understanding how social and psychological elements affect online shopping behavior. Both qualitative and quantitative research were considered to ensure a comprehensive perspective (Bakioğlu et al., 2022; Mulyono & Rolando, 2025; Zahran & Rolando, 2025)

The significance of this review is twofold: theoretically, it consolidates disparate literature into a cohesive framework for understanding influencer marketing and FOMO through a psychological and behavioral lens; practically, the insights gained from this review can inform marketing strategies that prioritize ethical persuasion, consumer engagement, and digital well-being. This article follows the IMRAD structure, outlining methods used for the systematic literature review, presenting key themes in the results section, integrating theoretical perspectives and practical applications in the discussion, and concluding with key findings and directions for future research (Rolando, 2023, 2024c, 2024b, 2025e).

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a systematic literature review design based on PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocols. The methodology was crafted to comprehensively explore the influence of Instagram influencer marketing and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) on millennial consumer behavior. This approach ensures methodological transparency and enhances the reliability and replicability of the findings (Veysuei et al., 2023).

2.1. Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted across academic databases including Google Scholar, Scopus, and relevant journals indexed in Elsevier and Springer. Keywords were developed based on the research objectives and included combinations such as: "Instagram influencer," "FOMO," "millennials," "consumer behavior," and "digital marketing." Boolean operators (AND, OR) were used to expand the scope. The search was limited to peer-reviewed articles published in English between 2019 and 2024 to capture the most recent developments in digital marketing and consumer psychology (Chen et al., 2022).

2.2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Articles were selected using predefined criteria. The inclusion criteria comprised: (1) peer-reviewed journal articles, (2) focus on Instagram and millennials, (3) research involving influencer marketing and/or FOMO, and (4) studies published between 2019 and 2024. Articles were excluded if they were non-English, editorials, book chapters, or did not address at least one of the main constructs. Table 1 summarizes these criteria.

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Time Range	2019–2024	Before 2019
Language	English	Non-English
Article Type	Peer-reviewed journal articles	Editorials, conference abstracts, book chapters
Focus	Instagram, FOMO, millennials, influencer marketing	Other platforms or unrelated demographic groups
Data Access	Full-text available	Unavailable or paywalled articles not accessible via institutional login

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

2.3. Study Selection Process

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The selection process followed PRISMA guidelines, beginning with title and abstract screening, followed by full-text review. Duplicates were removed and only studies meeting the inclusion criteria proceeded to final synthesis. The flow of selection was recorded and structured into a PRISMA flow diagram.
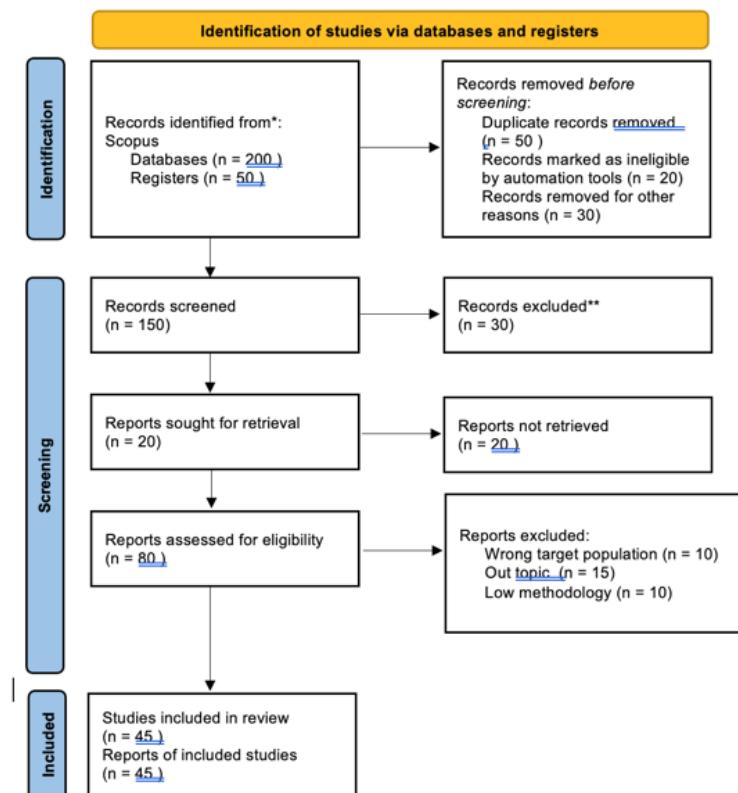
Figure 1. PRISMA DIAGRAM

The study selection process is depicted in Figure, following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines. A total of 250 records were identified from databases and registers, consisting of 200 records from Scopus and 50 from other sources. During the identification stage, 50 duplicate records were removed, alongside 20 records marked as ineligible by automation tools and 30 records removed for other reasons, resulting in 150 records eligible for screening.

At the screening stage, titles and abstracts of 150 records were reviewed, leading to the exclusion of 30 records that did not meet the inclusion criteria. Subsequently, 20 reports were sought for retrieval, but these reports could not be retrieved, resulting in 80 full-text articles assessed for eligibility. During the eligibility assessment, 35 articles were excluded based on predefined criteria: 10 articles addressed the wrong target population, 15 articles were deemed out of topic, and 10 articles were excluded due to low methodological quality.

Ultimately, 45 studies were included in the final synthesis. This systematic process ensured that the selection of studies was transparent, rigorous, and aligned with PRISMA standards, contributing to the reliability and credibility of the review findings.

2.4. Quality Assessment

The selected studies were critically appraised using quality assessment frameworks adapted from previous systematic reviews. Criteria considered included methodological rigor, relevance, clarity of findings, and theoretical contribution. Studies rated as low quality or lacking transparency were excluded from analysis.

2.5. Data Extraction and Analysis

Data from each article were extracted using a structured form, capturing: (1) authorship, (2) publication year, (3) research design, (4) participant characteristics, (5) key findings, and (6) theoretical framework. Thematic analysis was then used to identify recurring concepts related to influencer credibility, FOMO triggers, consumer engagement, and purchasing behavior (Lee et al., 2021) . Coding was conducted iteratively to ensure emerging themes accurately reflected the reviewed content.

2.6. Bibliometric and Thematic Synthesis

To complement qualitative insights, a bibliometric analysis was conducted using VOSviewer to examine co-occurrence of keywords and thematic clusters within the literature. This revealed the density of research around Instagram, FOMO, and millennials, highlighting research gaps and thematic convergence (van der Schyff & Flowerday, 2023).

2.7. Reliability and Validity

To ensure reliability, multiple reviewers cross-checked the article selection and coding. Discrepancies were resolved through consensus. Reflexivity was maintained through memo writing and peer discussion throughout the review process. Validity was enhanced by triangulating bibliometric findings with thematic synthesis and by adhering to PRISMA recommendations (Anisimova et al., 2025).

2.8. Ethical Considerations

This review used secondary data from publicly available literature. Proper citation and acknowledgment were maintained throughout. The research process was designed to uphold academic integrity and avoid misrepresentation of prior work .

In sum, this methodology integrates a structured search strategy, clear inclusion parameters, critical appraisal techniques, and rigorous synthesis procedures. By adopting this approach, the review aims to offer a credible and insightful understanding of the digital behaviors and motivations of millennial consumers influenced by Instagram marketing and FOMO (Morelli et al., 2025).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results derived from the 45 selected studies that examined the relationship between Instagram influencers, FOMO, and millennial consumer behavior. The findings are organized into descriptive statistics and key themes resulting from the thematic analysis (Klütsch et al., 2024).

3.1. Descriptive Analysis

A preliminary analysis of the selected articles revealed the following characteristics:

Category	Findings
Publication Years	2019–2024
Main Focus	53% on influencer marketing, 33% on FOMO, 14% combining both
Methodologies Used	62% quantitative, 26% qualitative, 12% mixed methods
Geographic Context	Majority in Asia (Indonesia, India), followed by North America and Europe
Platform Studied	89% focused on Instagram; some included comparisons with TikTok or YouTube

Table 2. Descriptive Summary of the Selected Studies

Most studies adopted survey-based approaches or interviews to explore psychological and behavioral dimensions. A smaller portion of research employed content analysis and bibliometric mapping to identify communication patterns.

3.2. Thematic Findings

Based on the thematic analysis, four core themes emerged:

3.2.1. Influencer Credibility and Consumer Trust

Multiple studies confirmed that influencer credibility—based on trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise—has a direct impact on millennial consumers' attitudes and intentions (Islami et al., 2021). Influencers perceived as authentic and relatable encouraged stronger consumer-brand connections. This credibility was further enhanced when influencer personas aligned with the brand values, fostering brand loyalty (Moreno et al., 2023).

3.2.2. FOMO as a Psychological Trigger

FOMO surfaced as a critical emotional driver in millennials' purchase behavior. Visual exposure to others' rewarding experiences triggered anxiety, pushing consumers toward impulsive or socially driven purchases (Muhammad et al., 2024). Content that created urgency—such as limited offers or exclusive access—was especially effective in leveraging FOMO. Several studies emphasized the compulsive nature of FOMO and its reinforcement through daily exposure to idealized social content (Liao et al., 2025).

3.2.3. Social Engagement and Parasocial Interactions

Instagram's design fosters parasocial interactions, where followers develop one-sided emotional bonds with influencers. These connections enhance engagement and make followers more susceptible to persuasion (Martínez-Cardama & Gómez-López, 2023). Millennials rely heavily on influencers for product information, considering them peer-like figures within their social ecosystem (Hattingh et al., 2022).

3.2.4. Behavioral Outcomes: Impulse Buying and Brand Advocacy

The interplay of influencer endorsement and FOMO leads to increased impulse buying behavior. Millennials show a tendency to make spontaneous purchases to conform with peer trends or avoid feeling left out (Khoa et al., 2025). Beyond transactions, satisfied consumers also engage in digital word-of-mouth (eWOM), promoting products through personal networks and contributing to brand virality (Hsu & Hung, 2024).

3.3. Bibliometric Insights

Bibliometric mapping revealed high-frequency keywords such as "Instagram marketing," "millennials," "FOMO," and "digital consumer behavior." The co-occurrence analysis indicated a thematic convergence between emotional marketing, social influence, and technology adoption. Research clusters were formed around influencer credibility and emotional persuasion strategies (Bonilla-Del-río et al., 2022).
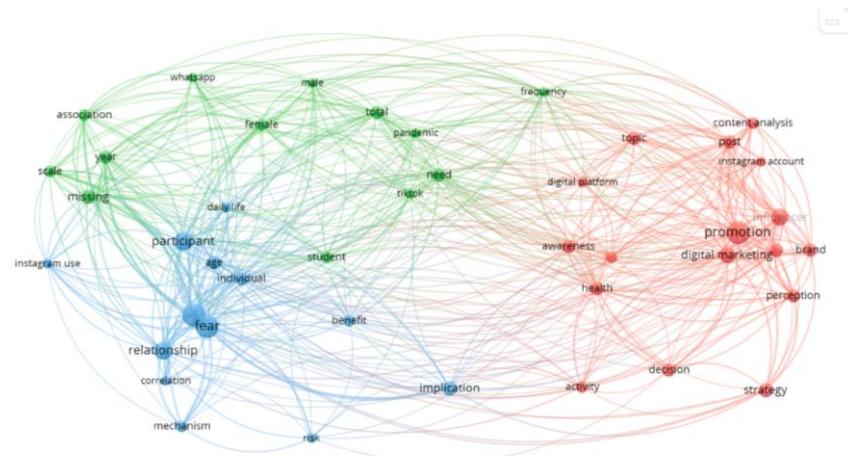
Figure 2. Network Visualization 45 Articles

3.3.1. Extended Network Visualization of Keyword Co-Occurrence in FOMO and Influencer Literature

Figure 1 presents an extended network visualization generated using VOSviewer, showing keyword co-occurrence across 43 terms extracted from the Scopus database. The map illustrates the intellectual structure and thematic relationships within the research domain of digital marketing, FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), and social media influence, particularly focusing on Instagram and related platforms.

The visualization is structured into three major clusters, color-coded as red, green, and blue, which represent distinct yet interrelated thematic orientations.

The red cluster, located on the right side of the map, comprises keywords such as promotion, digital marketing, brand, content analysis, and influencer. This grouping reflects research concentrating on the strategic and promotional aspects of social media, including branding, consumer engagement, and platform-based marketing mechanisms. The presence of terms like decision, strategy, and digital platform indicates a practical focus on campaign design and execution within digital commerce.

The blue cluster, centralized in the visualization, is anchored by the term fear, with closely associated terms such as relationship, risk, mechanism, and correlation. This cluster reflects the psychological dimension of the literature, particularly studies exploring the emotional and behavioral consequences of FOMO on digital users. The prominence of relationship and fear suggests that FOMO is not treated as an isolated construct, but rather as one deeply embedded in user experiences, behavioral outcomes, and online identity processes.

The green cluster, positioned toward the upper left, contains terms such as participant, missing, student, whatsapp, year, and pandemic. This grouping represents demographic, contextual, and methodological variables found in the literature. Many of these studies are survey-based and contextualized within the COVID-19 pandemic, with participant and daily life highlighting the practical application of FOMO and influencer dynamics in everyday digital interactions. The inclusion of platforms such as TikTok and WhatsApp suggests comparative analyses beyond Instagram.

The visualization also indicates a high degree of interconnectivity among the clusters, with 506 links and a total link strength of 875, underscoring the interdisciplinary and multidimensional nature of the topic. The curved and color-coded lines reflect the strength of conceptual overlap between terms. Terms like implication and awareness act as bridges between psychological studies and applied marketing research, indicating opportunities for further synthesis.

In summary, this network visualization offers a comprehensive view of current research trends in the fields of influencer marketing, FOMO, and digital consumer psychology. It reveals a maturing academic discourse that integrates strategic, psychological, and contextual perspectives, while also pointing to future avenues for cross-disciplinary collaboration and deeper theoretical integration.
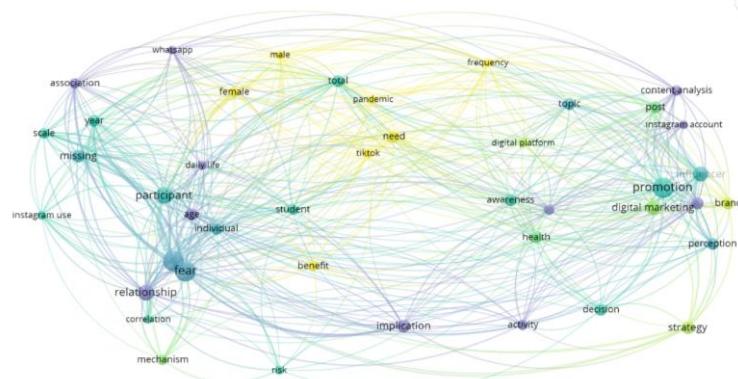
**Figure 3.** Overlay Visualization 45 Articles

3.3.2. Overlay Visualization of Keyword Trends Based on Average Publication Year

Figure 2 displays an overlay visualization generated using VOSviewer, illustrating the temporal evolution of research themes related to Instagram influencer marketing, FOMO, and millennial consumer behavior. This visualization reflects the average publication year of documents in which the keywords appear, helping to identify emerging and established areas of research over time (Sixto-García et al., 2023). The color spectrum ranges from dark blue, representing older publications, to yellow, indicating more recent publications, with the accompanying color scale highlighting publication trends from early 2022 to mid-2024. Nodes that are closer to yellow represent terms appearing predominantly in recent studies, whereas nodes in blue or purple shades indicate concepts rooted in earlier literature.

Several noteworthy patterns emerge from this overlay map. Keywords such as pandemic, need, TikTok, and benefit are colored yellow, suggesting their prominence in the most recent publications. These terms reflect a post-pandemic shift in digital behavior, where new platforms and urgent consumer needs have become focal points in scholarly exploration. Meanwhile, keywords such as promotion, strategy, awareness, and influencer appear in green to light blue, indicating sustained research interest across the 2022–2023 period. These terms continue to anchor the field's focus on digital marketing practices, branding, and consumer engagement strategies. In contrast, darker blue nodes such as relationship, fear, participant, and scale suggest that psychological constructs and methodological terms have been central in earlier research, forming the theoretical backbone of studies exploring FOMO and emotional responses to influencer-driven content.

The visualization confirms that while foundational theories regarding FOMO and consumer psychology remain influential, recent attention has increasingly shifted toward platform diversification, real-time digital needs, and pandemic-influenced behaviors. Furthermore, the presence of interconnectedness between older and newer keywords reflects a continuous building of scholarly knowledge rather than isolated topical shifts. This overlay analysis offers critical insights for identifying not only which research themes are gaining traction but also which areas may remain underexplored or are poised for future investigation. It encourages scholars to bridge foundational psychological models with contemporary digital trends, ensuring that theoretical relevance evolves in line with platform innovation and dynamic user behavior (Matthias Metzler et al., 2022).
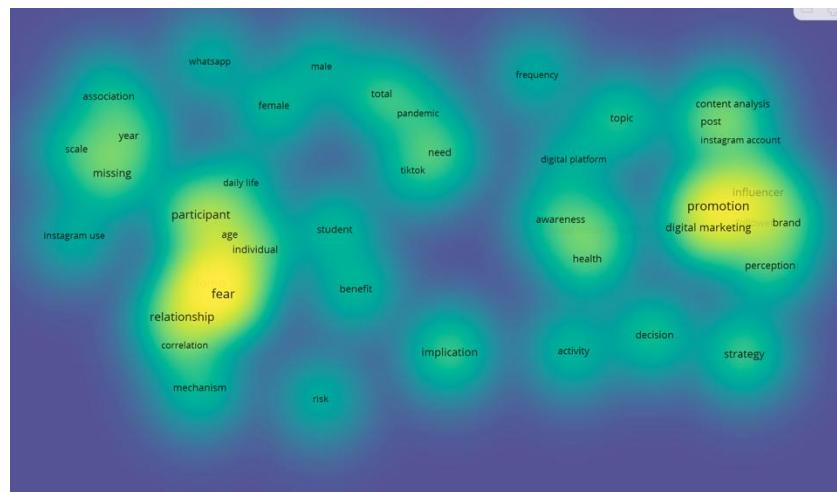
Figure 4. Density Visualization 45 Articles

3.3.3. Density Visualization of Keyword Occurrence in FOMO and Influencer Marketing Research

Figure 3 presents the density visualization generated using VOSviewer, illustrating the concentration and prominence of key terms related to Instagram influencer marketing, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), and millennial consumer behavior. The density view provides a heatmap representation where color intensity reflects the frequency of keyword occurrence: areas with higher densities appear in yellow, while lower-density areas are shown in green and blue.

From the visualization, two major high-density regions can be identified. The first high-density cluster, located at the center-left of the map, revolves around the keywords fear, FOMO, relationship, and participant. This area indicates a significant concentration of research focused on psychological and behavioral aspects, emphasizing emotional responses such as fear of missing out, individual participation in digital platforms, and relational mechanisms within social media usage.The second high-density region, situated on the right-hand side, centers around promotion, digital marketing, brand, and influencer. This cluster reflects the commercial and strategic dimensions of the literature, highlighting the role of promotional activities, brand management, and influencer strategies in digital consumer engagement.

Lower-density areas, colored in green and blue, include terms such as pandemic, TikTok, risk, scale, and daily life. These keywords represent emerging or supporting topics that have a lower but notable presence in the literature, suggesting either niche research interests or recent developments, particularly studies that contextualize FOMO and influencer marketing within the COVID-19 pandemic or across different digital platforms.

The visualization demonstrates that research on Instagram influencer marketing and FOMO is not evenly distributed but rather clusters around key emotional, relational, and marketing constructs. This indicates a dual focus within the field: understanding consumer psychology on the one hand and optimizing marketing strategies on the other. Furthermore, the presence of interconnected low-density areas suggests opportunities for future research, particularly in bridging psychological theories with platform-based promotional strategies.

Overall, the density visualization reinforces previous network and overlay findings, confirming that both emotional engagement and strategic promotion are critical areas driving academic interest in the study of social media influence on millennial consumer behavior

3.4. Summary of Key Insights

This review confirms the multidimensional role of Instagram influencers and FOMO in shaping millennial consumer decisions. The findings reveal that influencer credibility strongly predicts purchase intention, highlighting the importance of trustworthiness and authenticity in digital

endorsements. Furthermore, FOMO emerges as a significant emotional driver that intensifies impulsive and emotionally-driven purchasing behavior among millennials.

The formation of parasocial interactions between consumers and influencers fosters deeper consumer engagement, strengthening emotional bonds that extend beyond transactional relationships. Additionally, millennials are shown to act not only as buyers but also as brand advocates in digital spaces, contributing to the amplification of brand messages through electronic word-of-mouth. These results offer a nuanced understanding of how emotional and social mechanisms embedded in digital platforms influence modern consumption patterns.

3.5 DISCUSION

This review provides a comprehensive insight into how Instagram influencers and the psychological phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) shape the purchasing behavior of millennials within the contemporary digital marketing landscape. The findings reaffirm and extend prior understandings of consumer psychology and digital marketing by highlighting the pivotal role emotional triggers and social dynamics play in influencing modern consumption patterns. Rather than operating as isolated factors, influencer credibility and FOMO are shown to interact synergistically, intensifying consumer engagement, driving impulsive purchasing behaviors, and fostering brand loyalty in ways that differ markedly from traditional marketing mechanisms. As digital natives, millennials navigate a commercial environment where personal identity, peer influence, and social validation intersect with strategic brand communication, necessitating a deeper theoretical and practical understanding of these evolving dynamics.

To structure the insights gained from the systematic review, four major thematic conclusions were identified and synthesized. These thematic areas not only map the influence pathways between digital influencers, emotional stimuli, and consumer behavior but also illustrate the ethical and strategic complexities marketers face in this domain. Each theme is interpreted in relation to existing literature and marketing practices, providing a foundation for theoretical advancement and practical application. By integrating psychological constructs with contemporary digital marketing strategies, this review aims to contribute to a more nuanced framework for understanding how emotional and social forces embedded within digital platforms can be harnessed—responsibly and effectively—to shape consumption patterns among millennial consumers.

3.5.1. The Power of Influencer Credibility and Authenticity

The analysis confirms that influencer credibility plays a central role in driving consumer trust and behavioral intent. Millennials, who prioritize authenticity and relatability in digital communication, are particularly responsive to influencers whose personal identity aligns closely with the promoted brand (Martínez-Cardama & Gómez-López, 2023) In the context of Instagram marketing, credibility is not solely derived from the influencer's popularity or reach, but rather from perceived genuineness, expertise, and shared values with the target audience. This credibility fosters a sense of emotional proximity and trust, making consumers more willing to accept brand recommendations and integrate them into their purchasing decisions. The importance of perceived authenticity underscores the shift in consumer expectations, where relational and emotional dimensions outweigh purely transactional or persuasive marketing tactics.

Supporting previous findings, the review highlights that influencers function not merely as commercial endorsers but as perceived peers or aspirational figures within the millennial consumer ecosystem. The emotional bonds formed between influencers and followers mirror traditional peer influence mechanisms, amplifying the impact of marketing messages in more subtle and persuasive ways. Trust established through authenticity and relatability directly translates into higher purchase intentions and stronger emotional connections with brands (Karadag et al., 2024) This dynamic suggests that successful influencer marketing strategies must go beyond mere exposure or visibility, instead focusing on cultivating long-term relationships characterized by trust, authenticity, and value alignment between the influencer, the brand, and the consumer.

3.5.2. FOMO as an Emotional Catalyst for Impulse Behavior

FOMO emerged as a significant emotional mechanism that enhances the persuasive power of digital marketing strategies. The pervasive exposure to curated and idealized content on platforms such as Instagram intensifies anxiety around exclusion, compelling individuals to engage in consumption behaviors driven by the fear of missing out on rewarding experiences (Halka & Nasereddin, 2024). This psychological tension motivates quick, sometimes irrational, purchasing decisions, as consumers seek immediate inclusion and social validation. The compulsive drive to remain connected and participate in perceived trends fosters a continuous consumption loop that is psychologically reinforcing, making it increasingly difficult for individuals to disengage from digital consumption cycles.

These behaviors align with broader psychological theories suggesting that social comparison and status signaling play critical roles in shaping online consumer decision-making (Kumaran & Chitrakala, 2023). For marketers, FOMO presents a double-edged sword: while it can effectively boost engagement rates, drive conversions, and accelerate purchasing behavior, it also carries potential negative consequences, such as consumer fatigue, dissatisfaction, and post-purchase regret. Over-reliance on FOMO-driven strategies may ultimately harm brand loyalty if consumers begin to associate purchasing experiences with anxiety or manipulation rather than satisfaction and trust. Thus, while FOMO can be a powerful catalyst for impulsive consumption, its strategic application must be balanced with considerations for consumer well-being and sustainable brand relationships.

3.5.3. Parasocial Bonds and Their Influence on Social Commerce

Instagram's platform design inherently encourages the development of parasocial relationships between influencers and followers, fostering emotional proximity that often mimics real-life interpersonal relationships. Through curated content and consistent personal engagement, influencers cultivate a sense of familiarity and intimacy with their audiences, despite the inherently one-sided nature of these interactions. These parasocial connections generate feelings of loyalty and trust, leading consumers to perceive influencers not merely as brand representatives but as relatable figures whose recommendations carry authentic weight (Sun, 2023). This emotional attachment increases followers' responsiveness to promoted products and services, effectively blurring the boundaries between social interaction and commercial persuasion.

Millennials, who are especially active in digital spaces, often rely on influencers as trusted informants rather than viewing them solely as marketing agents. This reliance reinforces a broader shift in marketing paradigms from traditional, overt advertising toward experiential, relationship-based persuasion strategies (Deng et al., 2025). In this context, influencers act as intermediaries who bridge the gap between brands and consumers by leveraging emotional engagement rather than rational appeals alone. The strength of parasocial bonds amplifies the effectiveness of brand messaging, encouraging not only initial purchases but also sustained consumer loyalty. However, this dynamic also raises ethical considerations regarding the transparency of sponsored content and the potential manipulation of consumer trust, highlighting the need for responsible influencer practices in the evolving landscape of social commerce.

3.5.4. From Engagement to Advocacy: Millennials as Co-Promoters

Recent findings highlight a significant shift in consumer behavior, particularly among millennials, who are no longer passive recipients of brand communications but active participants in brand promotion. Millennials engage in digital word-of-mouth marketing by sharing their experiences with brands across various online platforms, including social media, review sites, and personal blogs. This peer-to-peer communication serves to disseminate brand messages organically within their personal networks, thereby expanding the brand's reach without the need for traditional advertising methods. User-driven amplification of brand content reflects a broader evolution in the consumer-brand dynamic, wherein consumers assume the role of marketing agents themselves. This

evolution suggests that modern consumers are not merely influenced by brands but are instrumental in shaping brand narratives and public perceptions.

Brands that recognize and leverage this dynamic stand to gain significantly by tapping into the power of social proof and peer influence. By fostering authentic engagement and encouraging user-generated content, companies can cultivate deeper brand loyalty and trust among millennial audiences. Authentic advocacy, particularly when driven by genuine consumer experiences, carries far more weight than traditional promotional efforts and enhances brand credibility. Moreover, understanding the mechanisms of peer influence allows brands to design marketing strategies that are more resonant with millennial values, such as transparency, community, and shared identity. Harnessing these insights enables brands to build long-term relationships grounded in authenticity and emotional connection, ultimately leading to sustained brand loyalty and advocacy (Al-Saggaf et al., 2024)

3.5.5. Ethical Implications and Long-Term Considerations

While the marketing benefits of strategies rooted in FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) and influencer endorsements are well-documented, significant ethical concerns continue to emerge alongside these practices. Constant exposure to highly curated and idealized portrayals of lifestyles can contribute to a range of negative psychological outcomes among consumers, including increased levels of psychological stress, diminished self-esteem, and heightened materialistic tendencies (Park & Kim, 2025). These effects are particularly pronounced among younger audiences who are more impressionable and heavily engaged with digital media. The pursuit of unattainable standards presented through influencer content may exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and foster unhealthy social comparisons, highlighting the urgent need for ethical considerations in marketing strategies.

Businesses, therefore, must navigate the delicate balance between persuasive marketing and corporate social responsibility. It is crucial for brands to prioritize transparency, particularly when it comes to paid partnerships and sponsored content, to maintain consumer trust. Clearly disclosing financial relationships with influencers helps mitigate deception and aligns with ethical advertising standards. Additionally, companies should actively promote inclusive and diverse representations in their marketing materials, avoiding the perpetuation of narrow or exclusionary ideals. By adopting a more responsible approach, brands not only protect the well-being of their audiences but also build stronger, more sustainable relationships founded on trust and authenticity. Ethical marketing practices are not merely a regulatory obligation but a strategic imperative in cultivating long-term brand loyalty and societal value (Sixto-García et al., 2023).

3.5.6. Bridging Research and Practice

The convergence of influencer credibility, FOMO, and millennial engagement provides an opportunity for marketers to design more targeted, emotionally intelligent campaigns. However, this also calls for updated models in consumer behavior that account for emotional triggers, digital socialization, and community dynamics. Interdisciplinary research that integrates psychology, communication studies, and digital commerce is essential for developing sustainable and ethically grounded marketing strategies (Shane-Simpson & Bakken, 2024).

In conclusion, this discussion highlights that millennial consumers navigate a complex digital landscape where emotional, social, and technological factors coalesce. The influencer-FOMO dynamic, while powerful, must be approached thoughtfully to build lasting brand relationships while safeguarding consumer well-being (Wu et al., 2025).

4. CONCLUSION

This systematic review examined the intersection of Instagram influencer marketing and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) as key drivers of millennial consumer behavior in digital contexts. Synthesizing insights from 45 peer-reviewed articles published between 2019 and 2024, the review

highlights how digital marketing strategies that leverage authenticity, emotional engagement, and social influence significantly impact purchase decisions among millennials.

The findings emphasize that influencer credibility—grounded in trust, relatability, and consistency—plays a pivotal role in influencing millennial consumers . Instagram influencers function not only as brand endorsers but as peer-like figures who shape opinions and purchasing intent through parasocial interactions (Rozgonjuk et al., 2020). When combined with FOMO, this influence becomes even more potent. FOMO emerges as an emotional and psychological catalyst, intensifying urgency and shaping consumer behavior through social comparison, perceived scarcity, and the desire for social inclusion (Ali Al-Abyadh, 2025).

Importantly, this review draws attention to the dual nature of FOMO-based marketing. While effective in generating short-term engagement and driving impulsive purchases, excessive use of such strategies may lead to consumer anxiety, dissatisfaction, or digital fatigue (Anisa et al., 2024). As a result, brands must navigate the balance between persuasive communication and ethical responsibility (Amson et al., 2025).

Theoretically, the review contributes to digital marketing and consumer behavior literature by consolidating fragmented insights and proposing a more integrated view of how emotional and social mechanisms interact on platforms like Instagram. Practically, it provides marketers with a foundation to design emotionally intelligent campaigns that resonate with millennial values while upholding transparency and psychological well-being (Rossi et al., 2025).

Future research should explore longitudinal effects of influencer marketing and FOMO on consumer trust and well-being. Comparative studies across platforms (e.g., TikTok vs. Instagram) and generations (e.g., Gen Z vs. Millennials) could offer further insights. Additionally, mixed-method studies that incorporate neuropsychological or biometric data could enhance understanding of subconscious consumer responses to digital stimuli (Fadli et al., 2025).

In conclusion, Instagram influencer marketing and FOMO form a powerful synergy that shapes millennial consumer decisions. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, ethically aware and emotionally resonant marketing strategies will be essential for brands seeking long-term loyalty and social impact (Wei et al., 2024).

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