

Advertising joy of missing out (JOMO): the roles of brand authenticity, self-brand congruity, and social comparison orientation

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Abstract

Purpose – Joy of missing out (JOMO) reflects a deliberate and joyful choice to opt out of socially normative activity, yet evidence on whether and how JOMO-oriented advertising shapes purchase intention remains limited. This study aims to examine that effect through brand authenticity and self-brand congruity, with social comparison orientation tested as a boundary condition.

Design/methodology/approach – Three between-subjects experiments ($n = 625$) with social media users compare JOMO-oriented against non-JOMO-oriented advertising across three product categories and estimate mediation, serial mediation and moderated serial mediation models.

Findings – Study 1 shows JOMO-oriented advertising raises purchase intention indirectly through self-brand congruity. Study 2 reveals a serial pathway in which such advertising strengthens brand authenticity, which corresponds with greater self-brand congruity and, in turn, purchase intention. Study 3 shows social comparison orientation strengthens the effect of JOMO-oriented advertising on brand authenticity, thereby carrying its influence on purchase intention through brand authenticity and the serial pathway.

Originality/value – This research establishes JOMO-oriented advertising, as operationalized here, as an appeal distinct from FOMO, mindfulness, escapism and digital detox messaging, grounded in intentional nonparticipation as self-expression and value-driven enrichment. The findings extend self-congruity theory by showing that brand authenticity is associated with self-brand congruity within a proposed ordering linked to purchase intention. They also position social comparison orientation as a boundary condition that shapes identity affirmation among comparison-oriented consumers and offer practical guidance for brands tailoring JOMO messaging.

Keywords Advertising, Brand communication, Consumer behavior, Joy of missing out, Brand authenticity, Self-brand congruity, Social comparison orientation, Purchase intention

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Extant research has consistently demonstrated the effectiveness of social comparison-based appeals, particularly those rooted in the fear of missing out (FOMO), defined as anxiety over being excluded from rewarding social experiences (Przybylski *et al.*, 2013). FOMO-based messages that rely on scarcity or social proof can heighten perceptions of manipulative intent, generating negative cognitive and emotional effects even as they succeed in prompting immediate purchases (Morsi *et al.*, 2025). FOMO also operates through subtler mechanisms,

mediating the effect of message framing on purchase intention, with loss-framed appeals proving more persuasive for material purchases and gain-framed appeals more effective for experiential purchases (Li *et al.*, 2026). These same dynamics have also been connected to loneliness, anxiety and depression among frequent social media users (Reer *et al.*, 2019), a pattern

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that coincides with growing consumer preference for more mindful and intentional lifestyles (Chan *et al.*, 2022).

Against this backdrop, the joy of missing out (JOMO) has emerged as a countermovement to FOMO. JOMO reflects a deliberate and joyful choice to disengage from socially normative participation, framing disengagement as an intentional pursuit of self-enrichment and value-driven autonomy rather than passive withdrawal (Tan *et al.*, 2025). This framing contrasts with earlier psychological evidence suggesting that JOMO's effects depend on individual differences, appearing linked to positive self-perception for some individuals but to internalizing difficulties for others (Barry *et al.*, 2023). This contrast reinforces the need to examine JOMO specifically as a deliberate advertising appeal rather than as a uniformly positive psychological state. While recent marketing research has begun to examine JOMO appeals and their consumer effects (Eitan and Naor, 2025), empirical evidence on how JOMO appeals shape brand-related judgments remains limited.

This gap is consequential for both theory and practice. Emerging work links JOMO with gratitude (Tan *et al.*, 2025) and with positive brand-related emotions and engagement (Eitan and Naor, 2025), but the psychological pathways through which JOMO-oriented advertising translates into brand-related outcomes such as brand authenticity and self-brand congruity remain underexamined. For practice, consumers seek authenticity for different underlying goals, including control, connection and virtue (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010) and increasingly evaluate brands against a backdrop of digital well-being concerns that position technology as both empowering and threatening (Silchenko, 2025). Brands that respond poorly to these evolving expectations around authenticity and digital well-being risk being perceived as manipulative and may struggle to resonate with consumers navigating a post-FOMO landscape. Understanding how JOMO-oriented advertising works and for which consumer segments is therefore particularly relevant for brand managers seeking to engage this shifting consumer context.

This research addresses the gap by investigating how JOMO-oriented advertising shapes consumer responses through brand authenticity and self-brand congruity. Self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000, 2017) provides the motivational foundation for this argument, as JOMO appeals affirm autonomy through voluntary nonparticipation, competence through self-directed fulfillment and relatedness through a more meaningful connection with the self. Building on attribution theory (Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1967), such appeals should encourage consumers to infer intrinsic, values-driven brand motives rather than purely commercial intent, thereby enhancing perceptions of brand authenticity. Drawing on self-congruity theory (Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy *et al.*, 1997), authenticity perceptions should, in turn, strengthen consumers' sense that the brand reflects their own values, raising purchase intention. These responses, however, are unlikely to be uniform across consumers. Individuals high in social comparison orientation appear to represent a particular at-risk group for developing FOMO (Reer *et al.*, 2019), suggesting that JOMO messaging may be particularly effective for these consumers.

This research distinguishes itself from prior research on consumer-brand relationships by positioning brand authenticity as the central psychological mechanism through which JOMO appeals operate. Earlier studies emphasized trust and satisfaction as key relational drivers (Uysal and Okumuş, 2022), with more recent work extending this by treating brand authenticity as a boundary condition shaping how brand identification translates into relational outcomes such as brand love and hate (Donavan *et al.*, 2026). A gap nonetheless remains in understanding how specific message framings activate authenticity perceptions and translate them into consumer behavioral outcomes. This research addresses that gap by demonstrating that JOMO messaging functions as a signaling cue that conveys brand sincerity and value congruence, triggering a proposed sequential process through which perceived authenticity and self-brand congruity jointly shape purchase intention.

This research makes three contributions. First, it establishes JOMO, as operationalized here, as a distinct advertising appeal that demonstrably raises purchase intention, differentiating it from mindfulness (Errmann, 2025), escapism (Ponsignon *et al.*, 2024) and digital detox (Galvan and Newman, 2025) messaging. Second, it advances attribution theory (Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1967) and self-congruity theory (Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy *et al.*, 1997) by showing that autonomy-framed appeals elicit inferences of brand sincerity and value alignment. This contribution extends beyond identifying brand authenticity as a mediator by showing that perceived brand authenticity is associated with self-brand congruity within a proposed sequential process. Third, it positions social comparison orientation as a boundary condition that strengthens the effects of JOMO-based appeals, qualifying the view that comparison-oriented consumers respond mainly to FOMO-based appeals (Jabeen *et al.*, 2023).

2. Literature review

2.1 Joy of missing out appeal

JOMO represents a distinctive advertising appeal whose persuasive mechanism is grounded in voluntary social absence experienced against the implicit backdrop of others' participation (Tan *et al.*, 2025). Experiential products such as wellness centers, tourism destinations and restaurants frequently employ taglines like "Live the moment" or "Unwind and rejuvenate" (Kim and Yang, 2021), narratives that can align with JOMO's psychological core when they frame absence as chosen rather than merely restful. Unlike mindfulness advertising, which promotes present-moment awareness (Errmann, 2025), JOMO derives meaning from a deliberate and joyful choice to opt out of socially normative activities. Whereas escapism centers on avoiding unpleasant stimuli (Ponsignon *et al.*, 2024), JOMO directs consumers toward a valued identity state. Digital detox messaging emphasizes screen time reduction (Galvan and Newman, 2025), but JOMO requires positive affect attached to deliberate nonparticipation. In this regard, JOMO's distinctiveness rests on three elements:

- 1 contentment rooted in intentional nonparticipation;
- 2 nonparticipation as self-expression and identity affirmation; and

3 a value-driven orientation toward personal enrichment over social conformity.

Self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000, 2017) provides a theoretical foundation for explaining why JOMO appeals should satisfy autonomy, competence and relatedness needs (Table 1). JOMO frames consumption as a self-directed act of intentional disconnection, through which consumers consciously reject socially normative pressures (Tan *et al.*, 2025). This autonomy-affirming quality should increase consumers' willingness to engage with the brand, consistent with evidence that JOMO-oriented marketing elicits positive brand-related emotions while sustaining consumer engagement (Eitan and Naor, 2025). Beyond autonomy, JOMO-oriented advertising can promote competence by presenting products as tools for self-fulfillment without external validation, as reflected in messages such as "Master your moments" (Brinkmann, 2019). This sense of competence is reinforced through self-regulation, as consumers oriented toward future consequences respond to self-directed goals when supported by appropriately specific implementation plans (Buhrau and Sujun, 2015), allowing the product to be framed as a step toward personally meaningful, long-term outcomes. Finally, JOMO can satisfy relatedness by shifting the basis of connection from social approval to personal relevance, consistent with evidence that appeals emphasizing self-care and disconnection cultivate authenticity and durable brand engagement (Eitan and Gazit, 2024).

Attribution theory offers a complementary mechanism for explaining how JOMO appeals strengthen purchase intention through brand authenticity and self-brand congruity. Consumers draw on internal attributions (rooted in personal values) and external attributions (rooted in situational pressure) to judge whether a brand appears authentic and identity congruent (Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1967). FOMO-based messages that rely on scarcity or social proof can heighten perceptions of manipulative intent (Morsi *et al.*, 2025). JOMO appeals, by contrast, should promote internal attributions by linking purchase interest to intrinsic motives such as self-care and intentional disconnection. This attributional shift should strengthen brand authenticity by signaling genuine self-expression rather than social conformity while also strengthening self-brand congruity by aligning the brand with the consumer's aspirational identity. These effects may operate through a discrete emotion pathway, as identity-relevant emotions are theorized to exert distinct behavioral effects relative to general positive affect, a distinction that advertising research has begun to examine closely (Poels and Dewitte, 2019). JOMO appeals may therefore trigger identity-relevant

internal attributions that provide a distinct route to purchase intention:

H1. Advertising messages featuring JOMO (vs non-JOMO) appeals will increase consumer purchase intention.

2.2 Self-brand congruity

Self-brand congruity refers to the extent to which consumers perceive a brand as reflecting their own self-identity and values (Sirgy, 1982). Empirical evidence indicates that higher self-brand congruity is associated with greater consumer attention, more favorable brand attitude and stronger purchase intention (Holmes, 2021), while related work on congruity-based brand imagery shows that user-image and personality-based congruity can differentially predict brand attitude depending on brand type (Parker, 2009). Congruity effects also extend beyond conventional branding contexts, as self-congruity has been shown to shape brand warmth, psychological ownership and repurchase intention in green branding settings (Sehgal *et al.*, 2023) and to influence eudaimonic well-being through its effects on attitude and emotional regulation in collaborative consumption services, particularly when brands are highly rather than minimally anthropomorphized (Bhalla and Zeba, 2026). Brand-value fit more broadly shapes how consumers respond to brands (Michel *et al.*, 2022), suggesting that JOMO-oriented advertising may enhance self-brand congruity by positioning the brand as validating consumers' preference for intentional disengagement and reinforcing an authentic extension of their identity.

Self-congruity theory (Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy *et al.*, 1997) suggests that individuals are drawn to brands that reflect their actual and ideal selves. This is especially relevant in digital environments where FOMO-related engagement and compulsive buying remain salient concerns (Bui *et al.*, 2022; Hussain *et al.*, 2023), leaving consumers seeking brands that instead validate autonomy and self-directed choice. JOMO-oriented advertising can respond to this environment by linking the brand to identity alignment and self-directed disengagement from socially normative activities. As consumers come to see the brand as reflecting their own values and aspirational identity, this heightened self-brand congruity should strengthen emotional connection and translate into greater purchase intention. Accordingly:

H2. Self-brand congruity will mediate the relationship between JOMO-oriented advertising and consumer purchase intention, with higher congruity leading to increased purchase intention.

Table 1 Conceptualizing joy of missing out (JOMO) appeal based on self-determination theory (SDT)

SDT constructs	JOMO characteristics	Explanation	Examples of ad messages
Autonomy	Disconnectedness	Emphasizes freedom from societal pressures and the joy of personal choice	"Unplug and unwind", "embrace the joy of missing out"
Competence	Self-fulfillment	Promotes personal growth and skill-building through personally validated mastery	"Master your moments", "discover the joy of personal achievement"
Relatedness	Personal relevance	Strengthened self-connection and identity alignment	"Connect with yourself", "rediscover the joy of self-care"

Source(s): Authors' own work

2.3 Brand authenticity

Brand authenticity has been conceptualized through multiple perspectives in marketing literature, including iconic and indexical cues (Grayson and Martinec, 2004) and existential cues reflecting self-referential brand characteristics (Joo and Guèvremont, 2024). Authenticity is consistently understood as a consumer judgment regarding whether a brand genuinely reflects its true essence and sincerely upholds its stated values (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010; Ilicic and Webster, 2016). Building on Cinelli and LeBoeuf (2020), this research conceptualizes brand authenticity as a consumer inference rather than an inherent brand trait. This inference may not be symmetrical, however, as authentic brands elicit more favorable responses than inauthentic brands but do not differ from a neutral baseline, suggesting that authenticity operates as an expected standard rather than a rewarded premium, with penalties reserved for brands perceived as inauthentic (Kokkoris and Kamleitner, 2026). JOMO-oriented advertising may thus influence purchase intention not by appearing exceptionally authentic, but by avoiding inauthenticity signals tied to manipulative, urgency-based appeals like FOMO, activating authenticity through internal, identity-relevant attributions grounded in autonomy and self-enrichment rather than mere positive affect.

Drawing on self-congruity theory (Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy *et al.*, 1997), this study theorizes that these authenticity judgments are linked to self-brand congruity, as consumers may find a brand more self-relevant when they also judge it to be sincere. This proposed association builds on evidence that self-congruence moderates how brand authenticity shapes consumer engagement (Kumar and Kaushik, 2022), though the directional relationship between the two constructs was not empirically tested. Prior research suggests that authenticity encourages consumers to internalize brand meanings and develop stronger emotional and attitudinal connections with the brand (Oh *et al.*, 2019; Tseng and Wang, 2023). Heightened self-brand congruity can, in turn, reinforce brand preference and purchase motivation (Li *et al.*, 2022; Zhang, 2022). This research proposes that JOMO-oriented advertising influences purchase intention through a process in which JOMO appeals activate brand authenticity judgments based on identity-relevant attributions. Authenticity, in turn, is expected to correspond with self-brand congruity, which is proposed to shape purchase intention:

- H3.* Brand authenticity and self-brand congruity serially mediate the relationship between JOMO-oriented advertising and purchase intention.

2.4 Social comparison orientation

Social comparison orientation comprises distinct motivational tendencies that shape how individuals interpret and respond to social media content. Ability-based comparison orientation involves evaluating oneself against others to assess competence or achievement, whereas opinion-based comparison orientation centers on validating one's beliefs and social standing (Gibbons and Buunk, 1999). These tendencies carry different emotional consequences, as ability-based comparisons are more likely to elicit negative emotions such as envy and

depression through upward contrastive processes, while opinion-based comparisons are more often associated with favorable emotional responses (Park and Baek, 2018). Upward comparison is not uniformly negative, however, as it can also serve a self-enhancing function by providing consumers with information and motivation for self-improvement (Collins, 1996). Nonetheless, individuals high in social comparison orientation tend to use social media more heavily while simultaneously experiencing more negative psychological outcomes, including poorer self-perceptions and lower self-esteem, reflecting a tension between the desire to engage in comparison and its emotional costs, which extends to behavioral outcomes such as increased social media fatigue from frequent comparison (Jabeen *et al.*, 2023; Vogel *et al.*, 2015).

JOMO appeals are particularly relevant under this motivational tension. Although individuals high in social comparison orientation remain attentive to others' participation, JOMO messaging reframes nonparticipation as a deliberate expression of autonomy and self-assurance. Rather than reducing the salience of the social context, JOMO changes how it is interpreted, positioning the brand as endorsing self-determined choice rather than social conformity. As a result, the social context remains salient, but its meaning shifts from a potential source of negative self-evaluation to an opportunity for identity affirmation. This mechanism distinguishes JOMO from relaxation or distraction-reduction appeals. Consistent with research linking JOMO to mindfulness, self-care, simplicity and gratitude (Eitan and Naor, 2025; Tan *et al.*, 2025), JOMO messaging is likely to signal self-expression rather than conformity.

Identity is shaped by both intrinsic values and external validation (Chowdhury, 2020; Rabbane *et al.*, 2020), with consumers high in social comparison orientation experiencing strain when they rely on comparison to affirm self-worth (Reer *et al.*, 2019). For these consumers, JOMO resonates less with the actual self anchored in external approval and more with the aspirational self characterized by autonomy and confidence (Sirgy, 1982). This alignment should strengthen self-brand congruity and make the brand appear more credible as a supporter of self-directed choice. Individuals high in social comparison orientation face recurrent comparison pressures (Exline and Lobel, 1999), which can make them more motivated to embrace messages that validate autonomy and self-assurance. In contrast, individuals low in social comparison orientation depend less on social validation (Vogel *et al.*, 2015), which implies that JOMO messaging may align with their existing orientation and generate weaker incremental effects. Consequently, this research advances three moderation hypotheses:

- H4a.* The effect of JOMO (vs. non-JOMO) advertising messages on brand authenticity will be stronger among consumers with higher (vs. lower) levels of social comparison orientation.
- H4b.* The effect of JOMO (vs. non-JOMO) advertising messages on self-brand congruity will be stronger among consumers with higher (vs. lower) levels of social comparison orientation.

H4c. The effect of JOMO (vs. non-JOMO) on purchase intention will be stronger among consumers with higher (vs. lower) levels of social comparison orientation.

The research framework integrating the above hypotheses and their theoretical lenses is presented in Figure 1. The framework adopts a matched theory configuration rather than a loose multi-theory assembly, consistent with extant guidelines for theory selection (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2025), with self-determination theory explaining why JOMO carries motivational value, attribution theory explaining how consumers infer brand motives from JOMO appeals and self-congruity theory explaining how those inferences translate into identity fit and purchase intention.

3. Methodology

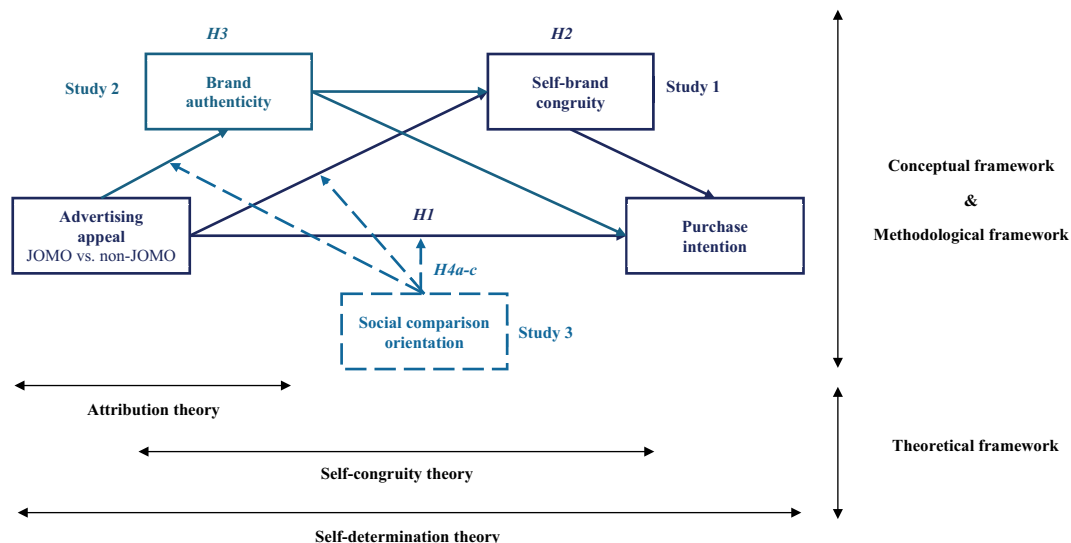
Three experimental studies tested the hypotheses sequentially, with each study building on its predecessor. Study 1 (JOMO versus non-JOMO (control) appeals) tested *H1* and *H2*, Study 2 (JOMO versus non-JOMO (control) appeals) tested *H1* and *H3* and Study 3 (JOMO versus non-JOMO (control) appeals with social comparison orientation as moderator) tested *H1*, *H3* and *H4a-c*. Across all studies, Malaysian social media users were recruited as participants. Malaysia provides a theoretically appropriate context for two reasons. First, social comparison, FOMO and online social network usage have been documented among Malaysian youth (Ma'rof and Abdullah, 2024). Malaysia also ranks among the highest globally in social media engagement, with users watching an average of 123 TikTok videos per day (Choudhury, 2024). Second, Malaysia's collectivist cultural orientation, marked by sensitivity to social norms and peer conformity (Sumari *et al.*, 2020), provides a

suitable test of JOMO effects given that the appeal explicitly challenges such normative pressures.

Each study used a different product context to test JOMO appeals: participants evaluated social media advertisements for a wellness center (Study 1), a bookstore (Study 2) and a furniture brand (Study 3). These contexts were selected as experiential consumption domains where personal values, identity expression and lifestyle orientation are central to purchase decisions (Varshneya *et al.*, 2017). To avoid preexisting brand associations, all studies employed fictitious brands, consistent with prior experimental research (Park and Minton, 2025). Purchase intention served as the dependent variable in all studies (Supplementary Table A1). Ethical approval was obtained prior to distributing the online survey. Participants first reviewed a study information sheet detailing the research purpose, procedures, confidentiality measures and their right to withdraw without penalty, after which they provided informed consent electronically by selecting "I agree to participate" before accessing the survey.

All stimuli and survey items underwent pretesting with participants sharing characteristics similar to the target sample (Study 1: $n = 35$; Study 2: $n = 43$; Study 3: $n = 64$), with JOMO framing perceived as intended across all pretests (all $p < 0.05$) and all materials were refined for clarity prior to main data collection. Stimuli were presented as social media posts featuring taglines designed to frame disconnection as a deliberate, identity-affirming choice relative to normative social participation, including "Unplug, unwind, embrace joy of missing out," "Embrace the joy of missing out, unwind with a book," and "Embrace the joy of missing out with cozy furniture" across Studies 1, 2 and 3, respectively. Control condition stimuli featured equivalent product messaging

Figure 1 Research framework



Note(s): This study adopts a matched theory configuration rather than a loose multi-theory approach in line with extant guidelines for theory selection (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2025), whereby self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000, 2017) explains why joy of missing out (JOMO) carries motivational value, attribution theory (Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1967) explains how consumers infer brand motives from JOMO appeals and self-congruity theory (Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy *et al.*, 1997) explains how those authenticity inferences translate into identity fit and purchase intention

Source: Authors' own work

without JOMO framing. In line with Tan *et al.* (2025), each study included a manipulation check after stimulus exposure to assess participants' enjoyment of intentional disengagement from distractions. In addition, Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratios fell below Henseler *et al.*'s (2015) conservative 0.85 threshold across the three studies, including brand authenticity and self-brand congruity (Study 2 = 0.66; Study 3 = 0.24), with a single exception between self-brand congruity and purchase intention in Study 2 (0.91), for which the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the additional checks reported in Study 2 supported discriminant validity (Supplementary Tables A2, A3, A4 and A5).

4. Study 1

4.1 Design and participants

Study 1 adopted a one-factor, two-level (JOMO- versus non-JOMO-oriented advertising) between-subjects design to test the direct effect of JOMO-oriented advertising on purchase intention and its mediation through self-brand congruity. The participant pool consisted of Malaysian social media users recruited through an online survey on Qualtrics. Screening questions ensured participants had relevant social media experience, yielding a final sample of 221 individuals (60.2% female). The age distribution was concentrated among participants aged 18–24 years (78.3%), with the remainder aged 25–34 years (18.1%), under 18 years (2.3%) and 35–44 years (1.4%). Daily social media usage varied, with 62% spending 3–6 h, 24% spending more than 6 h and 14% spending less than 3 h.

4.2 Procedure and measures

Consistent with prior advertising and JOMO research (Tan *et al.*, 2025), participants were exposed to one of two conceptual advertisements for a wellness center (Supplementary Figure A1 Panel A). To measure the mediator, self-brand congruity, participants responded to four statements adapted from Sirgy *et al.* (1997), with a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = 0.95$ (Supplementary Table A2). Purchase intention was measured using three statements on a 7-point Likert scale adapted from Ajzen (1991), yielding a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = 0.94$. The manipulation checks assessed participants' recognition of the JOMO theme in the advertisement.

4.3 Results and discussion

Manipulation check. The manipulation of the JOMO appeal (JOMO = 1, non-JOMO = –1) based on the question “The ad makes me feel a sense of enjoyment in disconnecting from distractions” on a 7-point Likert scale was successful, as participants in the JOMO condition reported a significantly higher sense of enjoyment in disconnecting from distractions ($M = 4.82$, $SD = 0.86$) compared to those in the non-JOMO (control) condition ($M = 2.30$, $SD = 0.86$; $t(219) = -21.57$, $p < 0.001$). This result confirms that participants perceived the intended difference between the experimental conditions.

Main effects. Consistent with H_1 , participants exposed to the JOMO-oriented advertisement exhibited a significantly higher intention to purchase ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 1.14$) than those who viewed the non-JOMO-oriented advertisement ($M = 2.52$, $SD = 1.46$; $F(1, 219) = 84.02$, $p < 0.001$), with a large effect

size ($\eta^2 = 0.28$; Cohen's $d = 1.24$). This finding suggests that JOMO-oriented advertising resonates with consumers by connecting disconnection and personal well-being to the advertised product, which raises purchase intention.

Mediation effects. Supporting H_2 , the JOMO appeal increased self-brand congruity ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 1.16$ for JOMO versus $M = 2.67$, $SD = 1.43$ for non-JOMO; $t(219) = -8.13$, $p < 0.001$). Hayes's (2022) PROCESS Macro Model 4 with 5,000 bootstrap resamples tested the indirect effect of advertising appeal on purchase intention through self-brand congruity. Advertising appeal significantly predicted self-brand congruity ($B = 0.71$, $SE = 0.09$, 95% CI: 0.54–0.88) and self-brand congruity, in turn, significantly predicted purchase intention ($B = 0.63$, $SE = 0.05$, 95% CI: 0.53–0.74). The direct effect of advertising appeal on purchase intention remained significant ($B = 0.36$, $SE = 0.08$, 95% CI: 0.20–0.51), indicating partial mediation. The total effect was significant ($B = 0.80$, $SE = 0.09$, 95% CI: 0.63–0.98), with the indirect effect through self-brand congruity likewise significant ($B = 0.45$, $SE = 0.07$, 95% CI: 0.31–0.60), supporting self-brand congruity as a mediator (Figure 2). These results show that JOMO-oriented advertising boosts purchase intention through greater self-brand congruity.

Discussion. Study 1 provides initial evidence that JOMO-oriented advertising increases purchase intention and that self-brand congruity partly carries this effect. The theoretical implication is specific: JOMO does more than make the advertisement feel pleasant, rather, JOMO makes the advertised brand feel closer to the consumer's self-concept, which, in turn, converts the appeal into greater purchase intention. This finding supports the argument that disconnection-based messaging can be persuasive when the brand is read as an identity-relevant choice rather than a generic well-being cue.

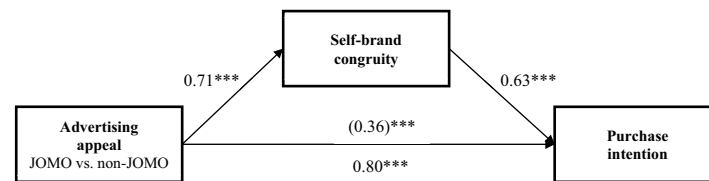
5. Study 2

5.1 Design and participants

Study 2 employed a one-factor, two-level design to test how JOMO appeals influence consumer behavior with an added focus on brand authenticity. Malaysian social media users participated in this phase and completed a survey similar to Study 1. The survey yielded 202 responses, predominantly from women (65.8%), with a large representation of the 18–24 age group (75.2%) and the remainder aged 25–34 years (19.8%), under 18 years (4.0%) and 35–44 years (1.0%). Social media usage remained consistent with Study 1, with 58.4% spending 3–6 h daily on these platforms, 26.2% spending more than 6 h and 15.3% spending less than 3 h.

5.2 Procedure and measures

Similar to Study 1, participants viewed one of two advertisements, this time promoting a bookstore (Supplementary Figure A1 Panel B). They next evaluated self-brand congruity using four items adapted from Sirgy *et al.* (1997), with $\alpha = 0.90$ and purchase intention using the established Study 1 scale ($\alpha = 0.87$). Study 2 added brand authenticity as a mediator. Participants evaluated brand authenticity on a 7-point Likert scale using five items ($\alpha = 0.91$) adapted from Cinelli and LeBoeuf (2020) and Warren *et al.* (2019) (Supplementary Table A2). They next completed the

Figure 2 Mediation analysis (Study 1)

Note(s): The path diagram reports unstandardized B coefficients. The direct effect of advertising appeal on purchase intention is shown in two forms: the coefficient without parentheses indicates the effect before the indirect path is included and the coefficient in parentheses indicates the effect after the indirect path is included. A triple asterisk (***) = $p < 0.001$ denotes statistical significance at the 0.1% level. JOMO = Joy of missing out

Source(s): Authors' own work

manipulation check assessing the advertisement's JOMO resonance.

Though the HTMT ratio between self-brand congruity and purchase intention in Study 2 (0.91) exceeded the 0.85 threshold, several additional checks supported the distinctiveness of the two constructs. The Fornell-Larcker criterion indicated discriminant validity, as the square roots of average variance extracted (AVE) for both constructs (0.87 and 0.89) exceeded their inter-construct correlation (0.81; Supplementary Table A3). A nested confirmatory factor analysis further showed that a freely estimated two-factor model fit the data significantly better than a constrained one-factor model that combined both constructs, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 22.50$, $p < 0.001$. In addition, the bootstrapped 95% confidence interval for the HTMT estimate excluded 1.00 (95% CI: 0.85–0.97; Supplementary Table A5). The elevated HTMT value likely reflects the conceptual proximity of self-brand congruity and purchase intention, as self-brand congruity is a well-established antecedent of purchase-related outcomes (e.g. Tseng and Wang, 2023). Considered alongside the item loadings (Supplementary Table A2), these results support retaining the constructs as conceptually and empirically distinct.

5.3 Results and discussion

Manipulation check. The manipulation checks again confirmed the effectiveness of the advertising stimuli. Participants who viewed the JOMO-oriented advertisement were significantly more likely to recognize and resonate with the concept of enjoying disconnection ($M = 4.37$, $SD = 1.02$) compared to those in the non-JOMO condition ($M = 2.01$, $SD = 0.81$; $t(200) = -18.20$, $p < 0.001$).

Main effects. Consistent with *H1*, participants who evaluated the JOMO-oriented advertisement reported a higher intention to purchase ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 0.86$) than those who saw the non-JOMO version ($M = 2.11$, $SD = 0.96$; $F(1, 200) = 171.74$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.46$, Cohen's $d = 1.84$). This result reinforces the conclusion that JOMO appeals can increase purchase intention.

Serial mediation effects. The serial mediation analysis, using Hayes's (2022) PROCESS Macro Model 6, tested the pathway from advertising appeal to purchase intention through brand authenticity and self-brand congruity. The results supported

H3, revealing a significant indirect effect ($B = 0.13$, $SE = 0.04$, 95% CI: 0.04–0.21). This finding indicates that JOMO-oriented advertising increases purchase intention through a sequential process whereby JOMO messaging enhances brand authenticity, which corresponds with stronger self-brand congruity and, in turn, with higher purchase intention (Table 2).

Discussion. Study 2 reinforces the positive effect of JOMO-oriented advertising on purchase intention (*H1*) and extends Study 1 by showing a serial pathway consistent with the proposed authenticity-to-congruity ordering. Consistent with the proposed serial pathway (*H3*), JOMO appeals appear to make the brand seem more sincere and value-driven, which, in turn, corresponds with stronger self-brand congruity and greater purchase intention. This proposed ordering is theoretically important, as the mediation results are consistent with authenticity functioning as a brand-level evaluation that is conceptually prior to and associated with consumers' perceptions of self-brand congruity. This suggests that authenticity is more than simply another favorable brand judgment.

6. Study 3

6.1 Design and participants

Study 3 employed a one-factor, two-level design to test how JOMO appeals influence consumer behavior through brand authenticity and self-brand congruity, with social comparison orientation examined as a boundary condition. Malaysian social media users participated in this phase and completed a survey similar to the previous studies. The survey yielded 202 responses, predominantly from women (57.9%), with participants aged 18–24 years (50.0%), 25–34 years (18.3%), 35–44 years (16.3%), 45–54 years (9.9%), 55–64 years (3.5%) and 65–74 years (2.0%). Social media usage remained substantial, with 48.5% spending 3–6 h daily on these platforms, 24.8% spending more than 6 h and 26.7% spending less than 3 h.

6.2 Procedure and measures

Consistent with the previous studies, participants viewed one of two conceptual advertisements promoting a furniture brand (Supplementary Figure A1 Panel C). Participants first

Table 2 Main, mediation and serial mediation effects (study 2)

Panel A. Main effects	Brand authenticity (M1)				Self-brand congruity (M2)				Purchase intention (Y)			
	B	SE	t	p	B	SE	t	p	B	SE	t	p
Constant	2.97	0.06	52.12	0.000	2.09	0.23	9.30	0.000	0.76	0.23	3.36	0.0009
Advertising appeal (X)	0.68	0.06	11.86	0.000	0.62	0.08	8.06	0.000	0.25	0.07	3.37	0.0009
Brand authenticity (M1)					0.30	0.07	4.07	0.000	0.10	0.06	1.48	0.1396
Self-brand congruity (M2)									0.64	0.06	10.72	0.000
Panel B. Mediation effects	B	SE	95% LLCI	95% ULCI								
Advertising appeal → brand authenticity → purchase intention	0.06	0.06	−0.07	0.17								
Advertising appeal → self-brand congruity → purchase intention	0.40	0.07	0.27	0.55								
Panel C. Serial mediation effects	B	SE	95% LLCI	95% ULCI								
Advertising appeal → brand authenticity → self-brand congruity → purchase intention	0.13	0.04	0.04	0.21								
Model summary	$R^2 = 0.4131$, $F(1, 200) = 140.78$, $p < 0.001$				$R^2 = 0.5144$, $F(2, 199) = 105.40$, $p < 0.001$				$R^2 = 0.6815$, $F(3, 198) = 141.22$, $p < 0.001$			

Source(s): Authors' own work

completed established measures of purchase intention ($\alpha = 0.93$) and brand authenticity ($\alpha = 0.88$). Study 3 retained self-brand congruity as a mediator, assessed through four items adapted from Sirgy *et al.* (1997) on a 7-point Likert scale ($\alpha = 0.87$). To assess social comparison tendencies, participants completed five items adapted from Gibbons and Buunk (1999). One item was removed due to a low factor loading, resulting in a four-item scale ($\alpha = 0.84$; Supplementary Table A2). Social comparison orientation scores were well distributed across the full-scale range ($M = 5.05$, $SD = 1.32$, range = 1.00–7.00), with acceptable skewness and kurtosis values and no evidence of substantial variance restriction. Additional checks across social media usage intensity and age cohorts yielded consistent results (Supplementary Tables A6 and A7). Finally, participants completed a manipulation check assessing the advertisement's JOMO resonance. Discriminant validity between brand authenticity and self-brand congruity in Study 3 was supported by the Fornell-Larcker criterion (square root of AVE = 0.82 and 0.84, respectively, both exceeding their inter-construct correlation of 0.20; Supplementary Table A3) and the HTMT ratio (0.24), which fell well below the 0.85 threshold (Supplementary Table A4), confirming that the two constructs are empirically distinguishable.

6.3 Results and discussion

Manipulation check. The manipulation check confirmed the effectiveness of the advertising stimuli. Participants who viewed the JOMO-oriented advertisement were significantly more likely to recognize and resonate with the concept of enjoying disconnection ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 1.42$) compared to those in the non-JOMO condition ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.46$; $t(200) = -2.66$, $p = 0.008$).

Main effects. A one-way ANOVA examined the effect of JOMO-oriented advertising on purchase intention and showed a significant effect ($F(1, 200) = 9.29$, $p = 0.003$, $\eta^2 = 0.04$, Cohen's $d = 0.43$). Consistent with $H1$, participants who evaluated the JOMO-oriented advertisement reported a higher

intention to purchase than those who saw the non-JOMO version ($t(200) = -3.05$, $p = 0.003$). This result provides further support for the purchase intention effect of JOMO appeals.

Serial mediation effects. A serial mediation analysis using Hayes's (2022) PROCESS Macro Model 6 examined whether the relationship between JOMO appeal and purchase intention was mediated sequentially by brand authenticity and self-brand congruity. The analysis included 202 participants and used 5,000 bootstrap samples to estimate confidence intervals for the indirect effects. The total effect of JOMO on purchase intention was significant ($B = 0.29$, $SE = 0.09$, 95% CI: 0.10–0.47). The direct effect of JOMO on purchase intention was non-significant ($B = -0.09$, $SE = 0.09$, $p = 0.27$, 95% CI: −0.26–0.07), which suggests that the total effect is transmitted through the modeled indirect paths rather than through a residual direct path. The indirect effect through brand authenticity was significant ($B = 0.42$, $SE = 0.08$, 95% CI: 0.28–0.58). The indirect path through self-brand congruity alone was negative and close to zero at the upper confidence bound ($B = -0.07$, $SE = 0.04$, 95% CI: −0.15 to −0.002). The serial indirect effect was significant ($B = 0.03$, $SE = 0.02$, 95% CI: 0.001–0.08), providing support for H_3 and indicating a pattern consistent with brand authenticity and self-brand congruity sequentially transmitting the effect of JOMO on purchase intention.

To evaluate the relative plausibility of this ordering against alternative specifications, Supplementary Table A8 compares three model structures. Reversing the mediator sequence flipped the serial effect to negative ($B = -0.06$, $SE = 0.03$, 95% CI: −0.11 to −0.02), with the parallel specification similarly producing a negative self-brand congruity effect ($B = -0.04$, $SE = 0.02$, 95% CI: −0.09 to −0.001). Only the model specifying authenticity as the first mediator and self-brand congruity as the second yielded a positive, significant serial effect, which supports the plausibility of the proposed authenticity-to-congruity ordering. However, given that this

comparison involves measured rather than manipulated mediators, it should be interpreted as consistent with this causal ordering rather than as confirmation of it.

Moderated serial mediation effects. Hayes's (2022) PROCESS Macro Model 85 with 5,000 bootstrap resamples tested *H4a*, *H4b* and *H4c* (Table 3). The model examined how advertising appeal (JOMO = 1, non-JOMO = -1) affected purchase intention through brand authenticity and self-brand congruity, with social comparison orientation entered as a continuous moderator and conditional effects probed at representative values of the moderator (-1 SD, mean, +1 SD).

Table 3 Panel A showed that the JOMO $\times$ social comparison orientation interaction on brand authenticity was significant ($B = 0.29$, $SE = 0.05$, $F(1, 198) = 31.61$, $p < 0.001$). Table 3 Panel B showed that JOMO appeals increased brand authenticity at higher (+1 SD) levels of social comparison orientation ($B = 0.91$, $SE = 0.09$, 95% CI: 0.72–1.09) and at mean levels ($B = 0.52$, $SE = 0.07$, 95% CI: 0.39–0.66), but not at lower (-1 SD) levels ($B = 0.14$, $SE = 0.10$, 95% CI: -0.05–0.33), supporting *H4a*. The JOMO $\times$ social comparison orientation interaction on self-brand congruity was not significant ($B = -0.09$, $SE = 0.07$, $F(1, 197) = 1.60$, $p = 0.208$), leaving *H4b* unsupported. The interaction on purchase intention was similarly not significant ($B = -0.05$, $SE = 0.06$, $F(1, 196) = 0.76$, $p = 0.384$), leaving *H4c* unsupported.

Although *H4a*, *H4b* and *H4c* test whether social comparison orientation moderates each individual path, PROCESS Model 85 also estimates indices of moderated mediation, which assess whether the indirect effects of JOMO on purchase intention

vary across levels of social comparison orientation. These indices provide a fuller understanding of how social comparison orientation shapes the overall mediation process and are reported to complement the direct tests of *H4a*–*H4c*. As shown in Table 3 Panel B, the index of moderated mediation was significant for the indirect effect through brand authenticity (index = 0.24, $SE = 0.05$, 95% CI: 0.14–0.35) and the serial indirect effect through brand authenticity and self-brand congruity (index = 0.02, $SE = 0.01$, 95% CI: 0.004–0.05), but not for the indirect effect through self-brand congruity alone (index = -0.02, $SE = 0.01$, 95% CI: -0.05–0.01). Overall, these findings indicate that social comparison orientation shapes the influence of JOMO appeals on purchase intention primarily through the formation of brand authenticity.

Discussion. Consistent with Studies 1 and 2, Study 3 showed that JOMO-oriented advertisements increased purchase intention, supporting *H1*. Brand authenticity mediated the effect and formed a significant serial pathway through self-brand congruity, providing support for *H3*. The moderated serial mediation analysis showed that social comparison orientation became influential at the brand authenticity stage (*H4a*), where individuals higher in social comparison orientation appeared more likely to read JOMO's restraint-based message as a credible signal of a brand's sincerity (Figure 3). In contrast, social comparison orientation did not moderate the JOMO-to-self-brand congruity path (*H4b*) or the JOMO-to-purchase intention path (*H4c*), which implies that comparison orientation shapes behavioral responses through authenticity inferences rather than through an immediate identity-fit or buying response. This observation is theoretically

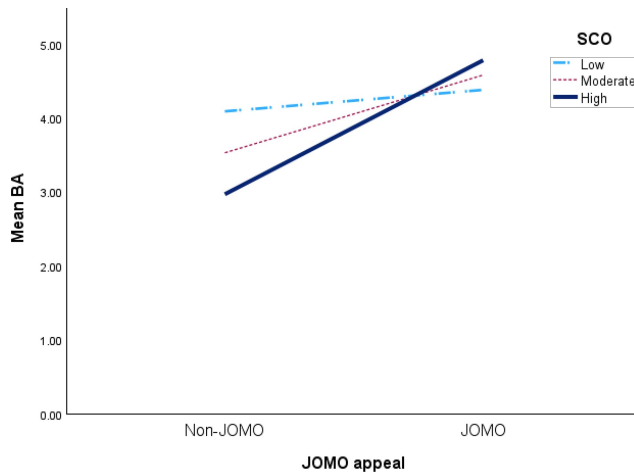
Table 3 Moderated-mediation results (study 3)

Antecedent	Brand authenticity (BA)			Outcome			Purchase intention (PI)		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
Panel A. Path estimates from PROCESS Model 85									
Constant	4.06	0.07	0.000	1.68	0.36	0.000	-0.24	0.33	0.461
Joy of missing out (JOMO)	0.52	0.07	0.000	-0.52	0.09	0.000	-0.09	0.09	0.291
Social comparison orientation (SCO)	-0.14	0.05	0.009	-0.19	0.06	0.003	0.16	0.06	0.005
Brand authenticity (BA)				0.43	0.09	0.000	0.82	0.08	0.000
Self-brand congruity (SBC)							0.18	0.06	0.004
JOMO $\times$ SCO	0.29	0.05	0.000	-0.09	0.07	0.208	-0.05	0.06	0.384
Panel B. Conditional effects and moderated-mediation indices									
Effect	Estimate	SE	95% LLCI	95% ULCI	<i>p</i>				
JOMO $\rightarrow$ BA at low SCO (-1 SD)	0.14	0.10	-0.05	0.33	0.141				
JOMO $\rightarrow$ BA at mean SCO	0.52	0.07	0.39	0.66	0.000				
JOMO $\rightarrow$ BA at high SCO (+1 SD)	0.91	0.09	0.72	1.09	0.000				
Index: JOMO $\rightarrow$ BA $\rightarrow$ PI	0.24	0.05	0.14	0.35					
Indirect via BA at low SCO (-1 SD)	0.12	0.08	-0.04	0.27					
Indirect via BA at mean SCO	0.43	0.07	0.30	0.58					
Indirect via BA at high SCO (+1 SD)	0.75	0.12	0.52	1.00					
Index: JOMO $\rightarrow$ SBC $\rightarrow$ PI	-0.02	0.01	-0.05	0.01					
Index: JOMO $\rightarrow$ BA $\rightarrow$ SBC $\rightarrow$ PI	0.02	0.01	0.004	0.05					

Note(s): Panel A reports unstandardized B coefficients. Panel B reports conditional effects and indices of moderated mediation. Indirect effects and indices use 5,000 percentile bootstrap samples. *p*-values are shown for conditional JOMO $\rightarrow$ BA effects only. JOMO = Joy of missing out. BA = Brand authenticity. SBC = Self-brand congruity. SCO = Social comparison orientation. PI = Purchase intention

Source(s): Authors' own work

Figure 3 Interaction effect of JOMO appeal and social comparison orientation (SCO) on brand authenticity (BA) (Study 3)



Note(s): JOMO = Joy of missing out; BA = Brand authenticity; SCO = Social comparison orientation. Levels of SCO are plotted at Low (-1 SD), Moderate (Mean) and High (+1 SD)

Source: Authors' own work

noteworthy, as consumers higher in social comparison orientation did not simply become more purchase-oriented when exposed to JOMO. Instead, the results are consistent with an authenticity judgment that relates to purchase intention both directly and through self-brand congruity.

7. General discussion and conclusion

The emerging preference for JOMO tactics reflects a shift toward consumer well-being, contrasting with FOMO approaches that can drive consumer action (Friederich *et al.*, 2024; Good and Hyman, 2021) but have also been linked to social media fatigue and well-being concerns (Bright and Logan, 2018; Hussain *et al.*, 2023). Across three studies, the findings show that JOMO-oriented advertising, as operationalized in the present research, strengthens brand authenticity perceptions and self-brand congruity, which, in turn, raises purchase intention. Study 1 demonstrates that this process operates through self-brand congruity, suggesting that consumers are more motivated to purchase when they perceive the brand as a mirror of their values.

Study 2 positions authenticity perceptions as the first step in the proposed serial pathway, in which stronger authenticity corresponds with greater self-brand congruity and, in turn, higher purchase intention. Unlike FOMO, which often relies on external pressure and can feel manipulative (Ortiz *et al.*, 2024), the JOMO appeals examined in this research resonated by validating consumers' intrinsic desire for autonomy and authentic self-expression, fostering the perception that the brand aligns with who they are and aspire to be.

Study 3 demonstrates that consumer responses to JOMO appeals are shaped by social comparison orientation. Consumers high in social comparison orientation perceived JOMO-framed brands as more authentic, whereas their evaluations of self-brand congruity and purchase intention were not directly affected. Moderated mediation analyses

further showed that social comparison orientation strengthened the indirect effect of JOMO on purchase intention through brand authenticity, indicating that its influence operates primarily through authenticity judgments. These findings challenge the view that highly comparison-oriented consumers are mainly responsive to FOMO-based appeals (Jabeen *et al.*, 2023; Vogel *et al.*, 2015). Instead, they suggest that such consumers may also value brands that emphasize autonomy, intentional disconnection and self-expression when these messages are perceived as genuine. This highlights the central role of authenticity in shaping comparison-oriented consumers' responses to JOMO appeals and offers a promising direction for future research.

7.1 Theoretical contributions

This research establishes JOMO-oriented advertising, as operationalized in the present studies, as a distinct advertising appeal, differentiating it from mindfulness (Errmann, 2025), escapism (Ponsignon *et al.*, 2024) and digital detox (Galvan and Newman, 2025) messaging. The JOMO appeals examined here derived their persuasiveness from framing deliberate nonparticipation as a source of joy and self-identity affirmation rather than mere restraint or withdrawal. While prior research has examined nonparticipation and anti-consumption primarily as broad well-being-oriented behaviors (Anderson *et al.*, 2024; Maseeh *et al.*, 2022), this research contributes to consumer well-being literature by clarifying how JOMO occupies a distinct motivational space within advertising appeals, one in which restraint is reframed as autonomous and value-driven self-expression rather than social compliance or avoidance. This research thereby also demonstrates, within the evidential scope of the present studies, that JOMO-oriented advertising is not merely conceptually distinct but empirically consequential, given its observed effect on purchase intention.

This research also advances the consumer-brand relationship literature by clarifying the proposed ordering of brand authenticity and self-brand congruity in JOMO-oriented advertising. Although self-brand congruity has been linked to outcomes such as self-brand connection (Li *et al.*, 2022), psychological reactance (Zhang, 2022) and brand attachment (Rabbaneh *et al.*, 2020), its relationship with authenticity has received limited empirical attention. Building on Kumar and Kaushik (2022), this research provides evidence consistent with authenticity functioning as an upstream mechanism associated with self-brand congruity, which, in turn, relates to purchase intention. Drawing on attribution theory (Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1967), this process reflects JOMO's ability to elicit internal attributions that frame consumer engagement as self-directed and genuine, reinforcing brand authenticity and facilitating identity alignment. The findings extend self-congruity theory (Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy *et al.*, 1997) by showing that congruity perceptions are associated with brand-level authenticity judgments, positioning the two as theoretically interdependent rather than independent. This proposed relationship is theoretically interesting (Lim, 2026b), as it suggests that consumers' sense of self-brand congruity does not arise in isolation but corresponds closely with their interpretation of the brand as authentic, thereby extending prior accounts that treat authenticity and congruity as independent or parallel (e.g. Tseng and Wang, 2023).

This research also reframes social comparison orientation as more than a dispositional liability, highlighting its role as a lens through which consumers engage with countercultural brand narratives. Prior work emphasizes the maladaptive consequences of high social comparison orientation, including anxiety, envy and diminished self-worth (Collins, 1996; Jabeen *et al.*, 2023). The findings reveal that individuals high in social comparison orientation can instead use JOMO messaging as a resource for identity affirmation when restraint is framed as self-directed and socially legible. Rather than engaging in downward comparison, these consumers appear to redirect comparison away from self-deficit and toward authenticity-based distinctiveness, positioning social comparison orientation as a boundary condition that amplifies the authenticity-signaling potential of value-driven advertising. This finding is counterintuitive (Lim, 2026b), given that consumers most attuned to social comparison are not necessarily most responsive to FOMO, as they can respond just as strongly to JOMO when nonparticipation is framed as authentic, agentic and socially meaningful. This repositions social comparison orientation as a boundary condition that can strengthen authenticity-based persuasion rather than only intensify vulnerability to comparison-driven appeals.

7.2 Managerial implications

The growing consumer emphasis on conscious consumption and mindful living (Schieber, 2020) creates a timely opportunity for brand owners and marketers to reassess advertising strategies. This research shows that JOMO-centric campaigns can offer an alternative to FOMO-style pressure while enhancing brand authenticity perceptions, self-brand congruity and purchase intention. This logic is particularly relevant for industries tied to relaxation and personal enrichment (e.g. cultural experiences, hospitality and wellness). Hotel brands, for instance, could craft narratives highlighting serenity and fulfillment through disconnection, using messaging such as “Unwind and unplug. Embrace the disconnect” or “Find tranquility in solitude. Discover the joy of missing out.” Such messaging positions brands as facilitators of authentic, rejuvenating experiences, differentiating them in crowded markets while aligning with evolving consumer values around authenticity and well-being.

In crafting JOMO narratives, advertisers and marketers can draw on strategies promoting presence (Chan *et al.*, 2022), escapism (Dodds *et al.*, 2021) and self-care (Hawkins and Thyroff, 2023). Evocative language such as “unplug,” “unwind,” and “embrace the joy of missing out” can cultivate contentment and subtly position the brand as a facilitator of meaningful experiences. Campaign design should also account for consumers’ social comparison orientation. For consumers lower in social comparison orientation, JOMO messages should avoid relying only on comparison-based contrast and should make the personal benefit of disconnection concrete. For consumers higher in social comparison orientation, JOMO appeals are most effective when restraint is portrayed as a deliberate, credible choice that differentiates them from others and signals brand sincerity. Rather than positioning nonparticipation as withdrawal, such messaging frames it as a positive expression of who they are. When advertisers and marketers align a brand’s JOMO communication with these

authenticity- and identity-based motivations, they can cultivate stronger and more enduring consumer-brand relationships that resonate with the cultural shift toward authenticity and mental well-being.

7.3 Limitations and future directions

This research offers novel insights into brand-relevant JOMO-oriented advertising, but several limitations point to useful directions for future inquiry.

First, purchase intention serves as the primary outcome, making it suitable for examining psychological mechanisms and boundary conditions but insufficient for inferring actual purchasing behavior (Lim, 2026a). Future studies should strengthen intention-outcome alignment by clearly distinguishing intention from behavior, specifying intended purchases in terms of target, action, context and timing, accounting for constraints such as affordability and availability and validating findings with behavioral measures (e.g. click-throughs, cart additions, coupon redemptions, sales or field experiments). Such work could determine whether JOMO advertising drives actual consumer action. Future research should also directly compare the psychological mechanisms and decision-making effects of JOMO and FOMO advertising.

Second, fictitious brands controlled extraneous variables but may not fully capture real-world consumer-brand complexity. Given that the mediators were measured rather than manipulated, the proposed authenticity-to-congruity ordering should further be interpreted as consistent with, rather than confirmatory of, causal or temporal precedence. Future research should address these limitations through field experiments with real brands that manipulate or temporally separate mediators and validate JOMO’s affective and social comparative components via multi-item checks to rule out alternative explanations such as general positive affect.

Third, this research concentrated on specific phrasings associated with JOMO, such as “Embrace the joy of missing out” and “Unwind and unplug.” Alternative messages that evoke similar sentiments, including phrases that emphasize joyful absence (e.g. “Embrace joyful absence”), mindfulness (e.g. “Find peace in being present”) or self-care (e.g. “Indulge in self-care serenity”), represent a useful area for exploration. Future research could examine a wider set of JOMO-related messages to clarify how varied narratives influence brand authenticity and self-brand congruity.

Fourth, these findings may not generalize uniformly across all sectors, particularly in contexts where FOMO is intrinsically less salient. For instance, utilitarian products or purely functional offerings (e.g. broadband services, household appliances) may not elicit the same psychological responses as experiential or identity-driven purchases (e.g. holidays, fashion or skincare products). Future studies should examine the boundary conditions of JOMO appeals by assessing their efficacy across a wider range of sectors (e.g. commodity goods, healthcare and financial services) to establish where and to what extent such messaging strategies prove most persuasive.

Finally, the relatively young and digitally immersed sample was theoretically appropriate given the salience of peer comparison and participation pressures in digital environments (Vogel *et al.*, 2015). However, the focus on Malaysian social media users, particularly younger and heavier users, limits the

generalizability of the findings. Although Malaysia provides a theoretically appropriate context due to its high social media intensity and collectivist cultural orientation, future research should examine whether the effects of JOMO appeals replicate in more individualist cultural settings, where attitudes toward peer conformity and social disconnection may differ substantially. Future studies should also extend sampling to older social media users to assess whether the observed effects are age-attenuated among consumers with different social media motivations and social comparison orientations.

Ethics statement

This study was approved by the Sunway University Institutional Review Board (Approval Code: SUREC 2023/017).

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During the preparation of this work, the authors used Anthropic Claude, OpenAI GPT and Microsoft Editor to check and improve language and readability, including expression, tone and style of writing. After using these tools/services, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

Credit authorship contribution statement

Ser Zian Tan: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Formal analysis, Visualization, Writing – original draft, review and editing. Poh Ling Tan: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Data curation, Writing – original draft, review and editing. Weng Marc Lim: Conceptualization, Investigation, Visualization, Validation, Writing – original draft, review and editing. Boon-Liat Cheng: Conceptualization, Data curation, Investigation, Writing – original draft.

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Supplementary material

The supplementary material for this article can be found online.

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