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Research Article

Beyond FOMO: Toward a Theory of Joy of Missing Out (JOMO) in Spiritual Tourism Marketing

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Abstract: Destination marketing increasingly relies on visibility, popularity and urgency and social media amplifies all three. For spiritual tourism this raises a question: must visitors pursue every promoted experience to value their journey? Existing tourism research treats Joy of Missing Out (JOMO) as a preference for quiet, offline travel, an escape from technology, or a response to influence messages, but it has not explained how tourists appraise the options they leave behind. This paper defines JOMO in spiritual tourism as satisfaction with deliberately un-pursued experiences and distinguishes it from fear of missing out (FOMO), digital detox, mindfulness, slow tourism, avoidance, contentment and satisfying. Using theory synthesis, which draws on self-determination theory, social comparison, decision research and existential authenticity, we argue that JOMO arises when a tourist experiences the choice as autonomous and appraises the chosen experience as sufficient for the purpose of the journey. We then identify the limit of this account: where a foregone experience carries sacred obligation, as a pilgrimage rite does, JOMO is unlikely. Ten propositions link presence-oriented destination communication to JOMO and to authenticity, wel lbeing, attachment and recommendation, with digital documentation orientation and sacred significance as conditions and one proposition addresses the cost to itinerary breadth. The paper offers tourism marketing a testable theory of presence-oriented positioning and an agenda for measurement and experimental work.

Keywords: Joy of Missing Out, Fear of Missing Out, Spiritual Tourism, Destination Marketing, Sufficiency Appraisal, Sacred Significance, Perceived Autonomy

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INTRODUCTION

Sacred Places in the Attention Economy

Destinations are now seen before they are visited. Posts, reviews, travel blogs and influencer content give prospective tourists a steady view of what others have done and enjoyed and the visual consumption of places long predates the smartphone [1]. Destination marketing has met this attention with an experience-economy logic: stage memorable experiences and multiply the occasions to have them [2,3]. Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), the apprehension that others are having rewarding experiences from which one is absent [4], supplies the psychological fuel. FOMO appeals use scarcity, popularity and urgency to convert visibility into participation [5].

Spiritual tourism sits uneasily with this logic. Journeys to pilgrimage towns, sacred landscapes, yoga centers and meditation retreats are driven by religious observance, cultural participation, reflection and the search for meaning [6]. Many are organized around a few experiences that carry personal or religious weight and have no ready substitute: a ritual, a darshan, an evening aarti. For such visitors the value of a journey does not rise with the number of attractions completed. A marketing logic that rewards completeness and a visitor for whom one experience is enough may pull in opposite directions.

Consider a visitor who spends an extra day at one sacred site instead of visiting three others promoted online. Her behaviour shows what she did. It does not show how she feels about what she left. She may be at peace with the choice,

or she may keep checking her phone for the places she missed. Marketing theory has a well-developed account of the second state in FOMO and a much thinner account of the first. This paper develops one, using the concept of Joy of Missing Out (JOMO).

What Existing JOMO Research Leaves Open

JOMO is not new to tourism research. Putra [7], set JOMO against the pull of iconic landmarks and tied it to relaxation motives. Fusté-Forné and Hussain [8], approached it as an escape from technology and a slow, digital-free way of experiencing food and rural place. Wojcieszak-Zbierska [9], compared JOMO and FOMO among university students, who leaned towards quiet, offline holidays. Steils and Toti [10], showed experimentally that influencer discourse about overtourism changes FOMO, JOMO and intentions to visit over touristed destinations, with both feelings acting as mediators.

Across these studies JOMO is defined by what the tourist escapes (technology, crowds, famous landmarks) or by the message that prompts it. Three questions remain open. First, the construct is not separated from digital detox, quiet-seeking and general contentment, so it is unclear what JOMO adds. Second, no account explains the appraisal that makes a foregone option a source of satisfaction instead of regret. Third, JOMO has not been developed as a basis for destination positioning and sacred settings, where some foregone options are matters of duty, have not been examined. To our knowledge no study addresses all three.

We argue that JOMO is best understood as an appraisal of foregone options and that spiritual tourism is where this appraisal meets its sharpest boundary. In leisure travel, foregone options are mostly interchangeable. In sacred settings some are not, because skipping them means leaving a duty undone.

Research Questions, Contributions and Structure

The paper addresses four research questions

- **RQ1:** How can JOMO be defined and separated from related constructs in spiritual tourism
- **RQ2:** What explains when a tourist is satisfied, instead of regretful, about foregone experiences
- **RQ3:** How does sacred significance shape this appraisal and what outcomes follow for tourists
- **RQ4:** What positioning logic follows for spiritual tourism destinations and what does it cost

The paper makes three contributions. First, it redefines JOMO in terms of two components, intentional non-pursuit and satisfaction with that choice and separates it from eight neighboring constructs. Second, it proposes sufficiency appraisal as the mechanism behind JOMO and identifies sacred obligation as the boundary of that mechanism, a boundary specific to sacred settings. Third, it links JOMO to destination marketing by specifying presence-oriented communication and ten testable propositions, including the cost of this positioning for itinerary breadth.

We follow the theory synthesis approach to conceptual articles [11]. Section 2 reviews the conceptual background and states the gap. Section 3 builds the theoretical foundations. Section 4 defines JOMO. Section 5 presents the framework and propositions. Section 6 discusses contributions and implications, Section 7 sets out limitations and future research and Section 8 concludes.

Conceptual Background

Spiritual Tourism and Sacred Experience: Spiritual tourism covers travel motivated by religious observance, cultural participation, personal reflection and the search for meaning. It overlaps with pilgrimage and religious tourism but is wider: a pilgrim may be bound by vow and tradition, while a visitor to a yoga centre may have no religious affiliation [6]. Cohen [12], showed that tourists relate differently to a centre of meaning, from recreational diversion to existential commitment, so the same place is a different experience for different visitors.

Marketing research on spiritual destinations has examined appeals to transformation and wellbeing [13] and has developed measures of the spiritual tourism experience [14]. The question we pursue is different: how visitors appraise the experiences they decline.

Two features of sacred settings matter for that question. First, experiences differ in sacred significance, the importance a visitor attaches to them in relation to the purpose of the journey. Second, some experiences carry obligation: a rite, vow or custom that the visitor feels bound to perform. Optional viewpoints, markets and excursions carry neither. Section 3.6 builds on this distinction.

FOMO in Digital Tourism Marketing

Przybylski et al. [4], defined FOMO as apprehension that others are enjoying rewarding experiences from which one is absent and linked it to unmet psychological needs and heavier social media use. In marketing, FOMO appeals use scarcity, popularity and urgency to move audiences from interest to action [5]. In tourism, Steils and Toti [10], treat FOMO as a mediator of visit intentions.

FOMO is not a universal response to visibility. Tourists also use online content to gather information, plan trips and stay in touch with others and interest in a destination does not show that a person fears missing it. We therefore treat FOMO as a point of comparison. It concerns anxiety about what others have. JOMO, as we define it, concerns satisfaction with what one has deliberately left.

JOMO in Tourism Research

JOMO entered public discussion as a counter to constant connectivity. In tourism research it has so far been framed in four ways. Putra [7], treats it as a travel trend set against iconic landmarks. Fusté-Forné and Hussain [8], treat it as an escape from technology and a slow, digital-free mode of travel. Wojcieszak-Zbierska [9], records a preference for quiet, offline places among students. Steils and Toti [10], treat it as a feeling that influencer messages can move: in their first experiment, dissuasive discourse lowered FOMO and visit intention towards over touristed places while raising JOMO.

These studies establish that JOMO is relevant to tourism and the last shows that communication can shift it. What they leave out is the appraisal that makes missing out joyful instead of regretful. Without it, JOMO cannot be told apart from detox, quiet-seeking or contentment and a destination marketer has no basis for deciding what a JOMO-oriented message should do.

JOMO and Its Conceptual Neighbors

Construct clarity requires saying what a construct includes and excludes [15,16]. Using the working definition formalized in Section 4, satisfaction with deliberately unpursued experiences, Table 1 sets JOMO against eight neighbors. These distinctions are conceptual arguments, not evidence of discriminant validity.

The closest boundaries are with contentment and satisfaction with choice. Our answer is that JOMO is tied to specific foregone options and rests on an appraisal of sufficiency, whereas contentment is a general state and satisfaction with choice concerns the option chosen. Section 7 sets out how future research can test whether JOMO predicts outcomes beyond these constructs.

The Gap

Three gaps follow from this review. The conceptual gap is that JOMO in tourism has no defined components and no clear separation from its neighbors. The mechanism gap is that no account explains how foregone options come to be evaluated with satisfaction. The positioning gap is that JOMO has not been developed as a basis for destination communication and the sacred context, where some foregone options are obligatory, has not been examined. The sections that follow address each in turn.

Theoretical Foundations

Approach: We follow the theory synthesis approach [11], which brings together perspectives not previously combined to explain a phenomenon. We choose theories by the work each does in the argument.

Table 1: Conceptual boundaries of JOMO

Neighboring concept	Primary focus	Distinction from JOMO
FOMO	Apprehension that others are enjoying rewarding experiences one is missing	JOMO is satisfaction with deliberately foregone options. The two attach to options, so they can coexist toward different options.
Digital detox	Reducing or pausing technology use	JOMO does not require reduced use. A detox can occur without satisfaction.
Mindfulness	Present-moment attention and awareness	Concerns the quality of attention. JOMO concerns the evaluation of foregone options.
Slow tourism	Slower pace and deeper engagement with place	A style of travel. A slow traveler can still regret what was missed and a fast one can feel content.
Avoidance and withdrawal	Refraining from situations or reducing social contact	Non-participation without intention or satisfaction is not JOMO.
General contentment	Satisfaction with one's circumstances	Not tied to foregone options. JOMO is option-specific.
Satisficing	Accepting an option that meets a threshold (Simon, 1956)	A decision rule. JOMO is the evaluation of what the rule leaves out.
Autonomy and satisfaction with choice	A choice felt as one's own (Ryan & Deci, 2000)	Concerns the choice. JOMO concerns feelings about the alternatives. Autonomy is an antecedent, not the construct.

Self-determination theory explains how communication can be experienced as supporting choice. Social comparison theory explains the pressure that FOMO appeals exploit. Decision research explains how a person can be satisfied with options left behind. Existential authenticity supplies an outcome that matters in spiritual tourism. Sacred significance, drawn from tourism and pilgrimage scholarship, sets the boundary of the account.

Self-Determination Theory: Choice That Feels One's Own

Self-determination theory distinguishes behaviour experienced as volitional from behaviour experienced as controlled and names autonomy, competence and relatedness as basic psychological needs [17]. Social contexts can support or undermine autonomy. Language that pressures, such as "only a few places left" or "you cannot leave without seeing this", tends to be experienced as controlling, while language that explains and offers choice tends to be experienced as supportive. Scarcity and urgency appeals belong to the first group. Presence-oriented communication, defined in Section 5, belongs to the second.

Autonomy is necessary for JOMO but not sufficient. A visitor can freely decide to skip a ghat and still regret it. The theory tells us when a choice is felt as one's own. It does not tell us how the visitor feels about what the choice excludes. That requires an account of appraisal, which Section 3.4 provides.

The other two needs also bear on spiritual travel. Relatedness is often met through shared ritual, which is why many visitors want group participation and would not call it a loss of autonomy. Competence matters when a visitor feels equipped to take part in a rite. Presence-oriented communication that explains what each experience involves and how to take part, can therefore support all three needs, not autonomy alone.

Social Comparison Theory: The Pressure to Match

Festinger [18], proposed that people evaluate their opinions and abilities by comparing themselves with others when objective standards are missing. Digital tourism content supplies a constant stream of such comparisons. Other people's itineraries become a standard against which a visitor's own plan looks thin. FOMO is the affective result when the comparison turns on rewarding experiences one is not having [4].

JOMO does not require that a tourist stops comparing. It requires that other people's experiences are not used to judge whether one's own journey is adequate. Social comparison therefore explains the pressure that JOMO contrasts with. It does not explain why a visitor might be satisfied after declining. That is the work of the next section.

Decision Research: Sufficiency Appraisal

Every itinerary is also a list of things not done. Decision research describes how people live with that. Simon [19], described satisfying: choosing an option that meets an acceptable threshold instead of searching for the best. Schwartz et al. [20], found that maximisers, who aim for the best possible outcome, report lower happiness and more regret than satisficers. Regret theory explains why: an outcome is judged against what another choice would have delivered [21]. More options make this comparison easier to run and large option sets can reduce motivation and satisfaction [22]. Digital platforms enlarge the option set and make each foregone option vivid.

Satisficing alone does not explain JOMO. It describes when a search stops, not how the person feels about the options left behind and a satisficer can still regret. We therefore propose a further step, sufficiency appraisal: the tourist's judgement that the chosen experience adequately fulfils the purpose of the journey, so that foregone options are not used as a standard of loss. When sufficiency appraisal is high, a foregone experience can be acknowledged as attractive without becoming a reference point for regret and satisfaction with its omission follows. This is the mechanism we propose for JOMO. It separates JOMO from satisficing, which is a decision rule and from contentment, which is a general state.

The spiritual setting makes this mechanism more important, not less. A pilgrimage town presents an unusually dense option set: several ghats, temples, aartis, discourses and day trips within a short distance, each backed by tradition and by posts from earlier visitors. A visitor can easily conclude that missing any of them means doing the visit wrongly. Sufficiency appraisal is the judgement that stops this inference.

Existential Authenticity: The Experience of Being True to Oneself

Existential authenticity is a state of being, felt in tourism activity, in which people experience themselves as true to themselves, whatever the objective authenticity of the site [23]. It differs from the staged authenticity that tourist settings may present [24]. It matters here for two reasons. It is subjective, so it can be shaped by how a tourist relates to her own choices. And it is not the same as silence or solitude: a crowded, photographed ritual can feel authentic and a quiet one can feel hollow. We therefore treat authenticity as an outcome to be explained, not as part of JOMO.

Sacred Significance: Sufficiency and Obligation

Sacred significance is the importance a tourist attaches to an experience in relation to the purpose of the journey. Pilgrimage scholarship has long stressed that sacred journeys are organized around transformation and particular rites, not the accumulation of sites [6,25]. We separate two forms of sacred significance that act in opposite directions.

The first is the significance of the chosen experience. When a visitor treats a chosen ritual, place or period of reflection as central to the journey, it is easier to judge it sufficient. The outcomes of JOMO, such as a sense of authenticity and wellbeing, should also be stronger because the chosen experience carries more meaning.

The second is the obligation attached to the foregone experience. Some experiences are felt as duties: a rite of the route, a vow, a custom that family or community expects. Skipping them is not a choice among attractions but the omission of something owed. Satisfaction is unlikely here however autonomous the decision. The same act of non-pursuit that is JOMO at an optional viewpoint becomes loss at an obligatory rite.

This asymmetry makes spiritual tourism more than a convenient setting. In leisure travel, foregone options are mostly interchangeable. In sacred settings they are not and JOMO has a boundary that general theory does not predict. We expect the same boundary wherever foregone options carry duty, such as family rituals or heritage observances, so the account may travel beyond spiritual tourism. Taken together, the five perspectives give a chain: communication shapes felt autonomy, autonomy and sufficiency appraisal produce JOMO, sacred obligation limits it and JOMO shapes how the journey is experienced.

Conceptualizing JOMO in Spiritual Tourism

Definition: We define JOMO in spiritual tourism as a tourist's satisfaction with deliberately choosing not to pursue one or more available experiences, while recognizing that they may be desirable.

Three features follow. First, JOMO concerns specific foregone options, not a general disposition. A tourist can feel it toward one excursion and not toward another. Second, it requires both intentional non-pursuit and satisfaction. Missing an attraction through cost, access or illness is not JOMO and a deliberate skip followed by regret is not JOMO either. Third, it is defined by how the tourist evaluates the choice, not by what she does. The same itinerary can reflect JOMO, regret or indifference in different people, so observed behaviour cannot stand in for the construct.

The definition does not require silence, solitude, offline travel or a slow pace. Spiritual tourists differ: some attend many rituals and visit several sites and may still feel JOMO toward options they decline. Sufficiency appraisal is deliberately kept out of the definition. It is the mechanism proposed to explain JOMO and defining the construct through its cause would make the explanation circular.

Defining Components and Correlates

The two defining components are intentional non-pursuit, a deliberate decision not to undertake an option the tourist knows is available and satisfaction with that decision, a positive evaluation that persists despite recognizing the option's appeal. They are separable in practice, since deliberate non-pursuit often ends in regret, which is why the construct cannot be read from behaviour.

Three characteristics often accompany JOMO but do not define it: intentional disconnection from digital platforms, present-moment engagement and reflective receptivity, an openness to letting an experience unfold instead of completing a set list. Each can occur without JOMO. A visitor can switch off her phone and still regret the missed ritual, or attend fully to one ceremony while mentally counting the others. We treat these as correlates and as candidates for empirical separation, not as dimensions of the construct.

JOMO and FOMO

FOMO and JOMO are often treated as opposite ends of one scale. We argue they are not. Both attach to specific foregone options, so one tourist can feel FOMO about a viewpoint promoted by an influencer and JOMO about an excursion she chose to skip, within the same journey. Low FOMO is also not JOMO: indifference to an option produces no apprehension and no satisfaction in having left it. Table 2 compares the two.

Because both attach to options, not persons, we state as a conceptual claim, not a proposition, that FOMO and JOMO can coexist within one journey. Empirical work can test this by measuring both toward the same set of options.

Four Responses to a Foregone Experience

The definition implies a simple typology. Two questions sort any foregone experience: did the tourist deliberately choose not to pursue it and how does she evaluate the outcome? Table 3 shows the four resulting responses.

Only the first row is JOMO. The typology shows why a count of activities cannot identify it and why intention and evaluation have to be measured separately. Section 5 now uses the definition and mechanism to build the framework.

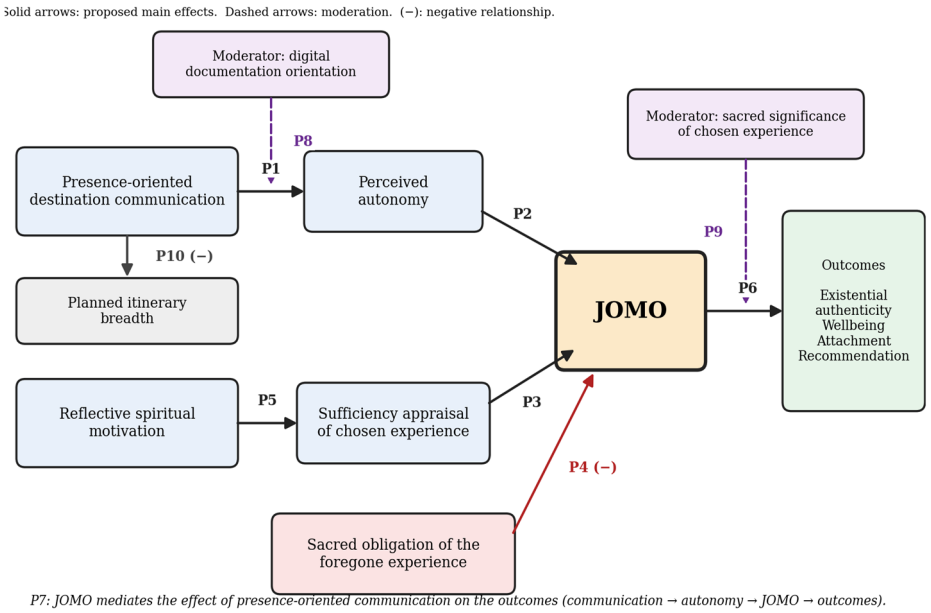


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of JOMO in Spiritual Tourism Marketing

Table 2 FOMO and JOMO Compared

Dimension	FOMO	JOMO
Core concern	Apprehension that others enjoy what I am missing	Satisfaction with what I deliberately left
Appraisal of the foregone option	A standard of loss	An acknowledged attraction that is not a standard of loss
Others' experiences	A salient reference point (social comparison)	May be noticed but not used to judge the adequacy of my journey
Link to choice	Choice may be driven by apprehension	Choice is deliberate and self-endorsed
Marketing logic it responds to	Scarcity, popularity and urgency [5]	Explanation of significance and legitimized selective itineraries
In sacred settings	Concern about missing visible rites or sites	Contentment with options left, bounded where the foregone option is obligatory

Table 2. Four Responses to a Foregone Experience

Response	Intentional non-pursuit	Evaluation	Illustration
JOMO	Yes	Satisfied	A visitor skips an optional excursion and is content to have spent the time at one sacred site.
Reluctant non-pursuit	Yes	Regretful	A visitor skips the same excursion but keeps thinking about it and checks other people's posts.
Indifference	No	Neutral	A visitor never considered the excursion or had no interest in it.
Exclusion or FOMO	No (constraint or pressure)	Dissatisfied	A visitor misses the excursion through cost, access or time and feels left out.

Conceptual Framework and Propositions

Overview: The framework separates three elements: how a destination communicates, how the tourist appraises what she leaves and what follows. Figure 1 shows the full model.

Presence-oriented destination communication is messaging that explains the significance of the experiences a destination offers, gives practical information about options and treats selective itineraries as legitimate, without relying on scarcity, rankings or completion cues such as "must-see", "don't miss" or "only a few left". It differs from three related

ideas. Autonomy-supportive messaging is a property of how a message is worded, whereas presence-oriented communication is a positioning choice that includes autonomy support and also legitimizes doing less. Demarketing aims to reduce demand [26], while presence-oriented communication keeps visibility and invites visitation. Mindful marketing concerns the ethics of consumption in general [27], whereas the present concept is specific to how options are presented. We treat it as an analytical type, not a validated scale.

The framework applies to tourists who have discretion over their itinerary. It does not apply to visitors on a fixed group programmed, where non-pursuit is not a choice. The unit of analysis is the tourist–option pair: JOMO is felt toward particular foregone experiences, so studies can model several options within one respondent and aggregate them if a journey-level score is needed.

Antecedents of JOMO

Communication and Perceived Autonomy: Messages that rely on scarcity and completion cues tell a visitor what she ought to do. Presence-oriented messages tell her what each option offers and leave the decision to her. From a self-determination perspective the second is more likely to be experienced as autonomy-supportive [17]. Autonomy in turn makes it easier to treat a foregone option as one's own decision, a precondition for satisfaction with it. Because autonomy does not guarantee satisfaction (Section 3.2), we expect it to raise JOMO without determining it.

- **Proposition 1 (P1):** Presence-oriented destination communication increases tourists' perceived autonomy in itinerary decisions
- **Proposition 2 (P2):** Perceived autonomy increases JOMO

Sufficiency Appraisal, Spiritual Motivation and Sacred Obligation

The core mechanism is sufficiency appraisal. When a visitor judges the chosen experience adequate for the purpose of her journey, foregone options lose their force as a standard of loss. Reflective spiritual motivation, the wish for contemplation and personal meaning, should make such a judgement more likely, because the purpose it sets is depth in a few experiences. This is not a claim that spiritual visitors prefer less. A visitor whose purpose is a full pilgrimage circuit has a purpose that requires many experiences and sufficiency for her means completing them.

Sacred obligation marks the limit. Where a foregone experience is felt as owed, as a rite of the route or a vow, sufficiency of the chosen experience cannot remove the sense of omission.

Take two visitors in the same town who both skip an evening aarti. The first has come to sit by the river and judges that enough. For her the aarti is an optional attraction, so sufficiency is high and obligation is low. The second is on a vow-bound route of which the aarti is a stage and the sufficiency of her riverside time cannot offset the omission. The same behaviour is JOMO for one and loss for the other and the framework locates the difference in the two appraisals.

- **Proposition 3 (P3):** Sufficiency appraisal of the chosen experience increases JOMO toward foregone experiences
- **Proposition 4 (P4):** The greater the sacred obligation attached to a foregone experience, the lower the tourist's JOMO toward it
- **Proposition 5 (P5):** Reflective spiritual motivation increases sufficiency appraisal of the chosen experience

Outcomes of JOMO

We propose four outcomes, each marking a different layer of the visit: meaning, affect, bond and a marketing result. Tourists who are not measuring the journey against missed options can attend to what they chose, which should strengthen existential authenticity [23]. Foregone options that are not a standard of loss are a smaller source of regret, which should support experiential wellbeing [20,21]. A journey valued for the meaning of chosen experiences should build attachment to the place and satisfied visitors should be more willing to recommend it. Each outcome can arise without JOMO, through ritual participation, social bonds or religious commitment, so the propositions concern the added contribution of JOMO. Recommendation intention is the outcome closest to marketing practice, but it should be paired with behavioral data where possible, since stated intentions often overstate action.

- **Proposition 6 (P6):** JOMO Increases (a) Existential Authenticity, (b) Experiential Wellbeing, (c) Destination Attachment and (d) Recommendation Intention

Mediation and Conditions

Presence-oriented communication does not produce outcomes directly in this framework. It works through the tourist's appraisal.

- **Proposition 7 (P7):** Through perceived autonomy, JOMO mediates the effect of presence-oriented destination communication on the outcomes in P6

Table 4: Summary of Propositions

No.	Proposed relationship	Theoretical basis
P1	Presence-oriented communication → perceived autonomy (+)	Autonomy-supportive versus controlling messages (self-determination theory)
P2	Perceived autonomy → JOMO (+)	Self-endorsed choice is a precondition for satisfaction with what the choice excludes
P3	Sufficiency appraisal → JOMO (+)	Regret, satisficing and maximising research: foregone options cease to be a standard of loss
P4	Sacred obligation of the foregone experience → JOMO (−)	Pilgrimage rites and vows turn non-pursuit into omission of a duty
P5	Reflective spiritual motivation → sufficiency appraisal (+)	A purpose of depth makes a few experiences adequate
P6a–d	JOMO → authenticity, wellbeing, attachment, recommendation (+)	Existential authenticity; regret; place attachment; marketing outcome
P7	Communication → autonomy → JOMO → outcomes (mediation)	Communication acts through the tourist's appraisal
P8	Digital documentation orientation weakens P1	Shareable itineraries and audience completeness cues
P9	Sacred significance of the chosen experience strengthens JOMO → outcomes	A more central experience carries more meaning
P10	Communication → planned itinerary breadth (−)	Sufficiency in fewer experiences implies fewer planned

The first condition concerns the visitor's relationship to digital media. Digital documentation orientation is the extent to which a tourist plans a trip around producing and sharing records of it and it differs from the frequency of platform use. A visitor planning to document a visit works to a visible, shareable itinerary and completeness cues come from her audience as well as from the destination. Messages that legitimize selectivity should therefore have less effect on her felt autonomy.

- **Proposition 8 (P8):** Digital documentation orientation weakens the effect of presence-oriented communication on perceived autonomy (P1)

The second condition is the sacred significance of the chosen experience (Section 3.6). The more central the chosen experience is to the journey, the more meaning JOMO can transfer to the outcomes.

- **Proposition 9 (P9):** The positive effects of JOMO on the outcomes in P6 are stronger when the chosen experience has high sacred significance

The last proposition states the cost. If tourists feel sufficient in fewer experiences, they will plan fewer. This may lower spending at peripheral attractions and with vendors even where visit and recommendation intentions hold. Stating the trade-off as a proposition makes it testable instead of an afterthought.

- **Proposition 10 (P10):** Presence-oriented destination communication reduces tourists' planned itinerary breadth, meaning the number of attractions and activities they intend to pursue.

Two cautions apply to the whole framework. First, messages may be read differently from how they are intended. Steils and Toti [10], report that responsible messages, despite good intentions, can amplify FOMO among some consumers. Presence-oriented communication may likewise be read as under-promotion or as a restriction and the effect on perceived autonomy in P1 depends on how credible and non-controlling the message appears. Second, JOMO is one route from communication to outcomes, not the only one. Clearer information, reduced crowding and greater trust in the destination could each improve outcomes without JOMO. P7 therefore predicts mediation and future studies should test it against these rival mechanisms (Table 4).

DISCUSSION

Theoretical Contributions

First, the paper reconceptualizes JOMO. Prior tourism work treats JOMO as a travel trend, an escape from technology or a preference for quiet [7-9] or as a response to messages [10]. We define it by two components, intentional non-pursuit and satisfaction and explain it through sufficiency appraisal. This gives researchers a construct that is separate from detox, mindfulness, slow tourism and contentment and a mechanism that can be measured and manipulated. It also shows why behaviour alone, such as a shorter itinerary, cannot identify JOMO.

Second, the paper identifies a boundary specific to sacred settings. The distinction between the sacred significance of the chosen experience and the sacred obligation of the foregone one predicts when JOMO is likely and when it is not. This addresses a criticism that applying a psychological concept to a new context adds only a label. Here the context changes the theory: where foregone options carry duty, the appraisal that produces JOMO does not hold. The idea may extend to other obligation-laden settings, such as family rituals and heritage observances.

Third, the paper develops a positioning logic and states its cost. FOMO appeals link visibility to urgency [5]. We argue that the two can be separated and that presence-oriented communication offers visibility without scarcity cues. By stating the effect on itinerary breadth as a proposition (P10), the framework treats the economic trade-off as part of the theory. Whether presence-oriented positioning is distinct in effect from existing practice in destination branding and responsible marketing is an empirical question the propositions make testable.

The paper also offers a general move for marketing theory. It shifts attention from the options a consumer chooses to the options a consumer leaves and asks when leaving is felt as loss and when as satisfaction. Sufficiency appraisal and obligation are not specific to tourism. They can be examined wherever consumers face dense option sets, such as festival programmers, heritage sites and wellness retreats and spiritual tourism is an unusually clear case because the status of foregone options runs from trivial to obligatory.

Managerial and Policy Implications

These implications follow from the framework and have not been tested. They are offered as hypotheses for practice, not as findings.

Destination marketing organisations can separate experiences that are obligatory within a tradition from those that are optional and describe each honestly. Presence-oriented communication then removes completion cues from optional experiences while giving obligatory ones their due weight. This classification should be developed with religious institutions and local communities, not imposed on them.

Digital content can explain the significance of a site, outline different ways to visit it and give practical information on access, timing and conduct, without ranking attractions or implying that a visit is incomplete without a particular activity. Sacred symbols and practices need respectful treatment and should not be used as attention devices.

Four design principles follow. Explain significance before popularity. Say what each option involves and who it suits. State plainly which experiences are customary or obligatory within a tradition and which are optional. Avoid wording that makes completeness a measure of a good visit. These are hypotheses for testing, not tested guidance.

Destination managers and policymakers should not treat presence-oriented communication as a substitute for capacity management. Crowding, infrastructure and site protection depend on transport, regulation and visitor flow and the effect of messaging on any of these is unproven. They should also weigh the cost in P10: if visitors plan fewer activities, vendors and peripheral attractions may lose income and mitigation, such as supporting a wider range of local offers, should be considered.

Illustrative Application: Uttarakhand

Uttarakhand offers an illustrative setting, with no data claimed. Its destinations, including Haridwar, Rishikesh, Kedarnath and Badrinath, differ in sacred significance and in the obligations attached to them. For a visitor on a pilgrimage circuit such as the Char Dham yatra, the stops are not interchangeable and the framework predicts little JOMO toward skipping one (P4). For a visitor to Rishikesh seeking yoga or reflection, excursions and cafés are optional and presence-oriented communication that explains what each offers without ranking them is where P1 to P3 apply. A destination could present obligatory and optional experiences differently and a study could test whether visitors respond as the framework predicts. The setting also shows why the account is not a recommendation to do less: for many visitors, doing everything is the purpose.

Limitations and Future Research

Limitations: This is a conceptual paper and offers no empirical test. The propositions are theoretical expectations and the framework does not show that communication causes JOMO or that JOMO produces its outcomes. The boundary between

JOMO and satisfaction with choice or general contentment is argued, not demonstrated. The theories drawn on come largely from Western psychology and tourism scholarship and sacred obligation varies across traditions, so the account needs testing beyond the contexts we illustrate. Finally, our claim that prior research has not addressed the three open questions rests on our reading of the literature and should be checked against the growing body of work on JOMO.

Directions for Future Research

Measurement: Interviews with spiritual tourists can explore situations in which they chose not to pursue an experience and how they felt afterwards, separating satisfaction, regret, indifference and exclusion. Scale development should then follow established procedures [28,29], testing discriminant validity against contentment, satisfaction with choice and FOMO. Existing short JOMO measures used in tourism experiments should be examined for whether they capture intentional non-pursuit of specific options.

Experiments

Vignette and field experiments can manipulate message type (urgency versus presence-oriented) and the status of the foregone experience (optional versus obligatory) to test P1 to P4 and P8. Measuring FOMO and JOMO toward the same set of options tests the coexistence claim in Section 4.3. Table 5 sets out designs for each proposition.

Comparison Across Traditions

The obligation boundary should be compared across pilgrimage traditions, such as Hindu tirtha circuits, the Camino de Santiago and Buddhist routes and with non-pilgrim spiritual visitors, to test whether the account generalizes or is culturally specific.

Outcomes and Trade-Offs

Mixed-methods studies with destination stakeholders can test P10 and examine effects on spending, visitor distribution and community livelihoods, alongside the visitor outcomes in P6.

CONCLUSION

Digital platforms have made sacred places visible before visitors arrive and destination marketing has often treated that visibility as a reason to promote more: more attractions, more activities, more urgency. This paper asked whether that logic must hold in spiritual tourism, where many journeys rest on a few experiences that matter deeply and cannot be replaced by others.

Our answer starts from what existing research on Joy of Missing Out leaves open. Tourism studies have treated JOMO as a trend, an escape from technology, a preference for quiet places or a response to messages. None of these explains why a tourist can feel satisfied and not regretful, about what she leaves behind. We defined JOMO as satisfaction with deliberately unpursued experiences. Two things must be present: the tourist chose not to pursue the experience and she is content with that choice. Behaviour alone, such as a shorter itinerary, cannot show it.

We then explained how this satisfaction arises. When a tourist experiences her choices as her own and judges the chosen experience sufficient for the purpose of her journey, foregone options stop serving as a standard of loss. We called this judgement sufficiency appraisal. It separates JOMO from satisficing, which describes when a search ends and from general contentment, which is not tied to any option left behind.

The paper's central argument concerns the limit of this explanation. In sacred settings, foregone experiences are not equal. Some are optional. Others are owed: a rite of the route, a vow, a custom the family expects. Skipping an optional experience can be JOMO. Skipping an obligatory one is an omission, however freely it was decided. This is why the sacred context changes the theory and does not merely supply an example. It also gives the framework a boundary that general leisure theory would not predict.

From this we derived ten propositions. They link presence-oriented communication to perceived autonomy, autonomy and sufficiency to JOMO and JOMO to authenticity, wellbeing, attachment and recommendation. They also state conditions (digital documentation orientation, sacred significance) and a cost: if visitors feel sufficient in fewer experiences, they will plan fewer, which matters for local vendors and peripheral attractions.

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