

The Phenomenon of 'Fear of Missing Out' (FOMO) in Tourism: A Sociolinguistic Review of Language Trends in the Travel Vlogger Community

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Abstract: The proliferation of digital media has fundamentally transformed tourism, giving rise to the 'Fear of Missing Out' (FOMO) phenomenon among travelers. Travel vloggers play a pivotal role in this dynamic, acting as digital mediators who construct tourist realities through specific linguistic strategies. This article explores the tourism FOMO phenomenon through a sociolinguistic lens, analyzing the language trends and speech acts utilized by the travel vlogger community. Utilizing a qualitative descriptive method, this study analyzes the transcripts of highly viewed travel vlogs across major social media platforms (YouTube and TikTok). The findings reveal that travel vloggers construct FOMO through distinct sociolinguistic features, including the heavy reliance on hyperbolic evaluative adjectives, the strategic use of imperative speech acts to create urgency, and frequent code-mixing to establish an exclusive yet aspirational digital register. The study concludes that the language of travel vloggers is not merely descriptive but highly performative, designed to trigger psychological urgency and shape contemporary travel behaviors.

Keywords: FOMO, Sociolinguistics, Travel Vloggers, Tourism, Digital Language.

Introduction

In the contemporary digital era, the intersection of social media and tourism has birthed new behavioral paradigms, most notably the 'Fear of Missing Out' (FOMO) (Mkono & Tribe, 2020). In the context of tourism, FOMO manifests as a pervasive anxiety that others are experiencing highly rewarding travel experiences from which one is absent. Central to the dissemination of this phenomenon is the travel vlogger community (Yoo & Gretzel, 2021). Through platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, these digital creators do not simply showcase destinations; they curate and construct them.

While much of the existing literature on tourism FOMO approaches the subject from psychological or marketing perspectives, there is a distinct gap in understanding the linguistic mechanics that drive this anxiety (Brookes & Baker, 2022). Sociolinguistics offers a vital framework for this analysis, as it examines how language is used within social contexts to establish identity, influence audiences, and construct social realities. This study aims to investigate the linguistic trends of travel vloggers, exploring how their lexical choices, syntactic structures, and distinct digital registers act as linguistic catalysts for tourism FOMO.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, grounded in sociolinguistic and discourse analysis frameworks. **Data Collection:** The data consists of transcriptions from 20 popular travel vlogs (10 from YouTube, 10 from TikTok) published between 2022 and 2025. The selected videos feature high engagement rates (views, likes, and comments) and specifically focus on destination recommendations. **Data Analysis:** The collected linguistic data was analyzed by categorizing speech acts, lexical choices, and stylistic variations. The analysis focused on identifying recurring linguistic patterns used by vloggers to frame destinations and invoke emotional responses from the audience. **Theoretical Framework:** The study utilizes

theories of expressive and directive speech acts, as well as the concept of digital registers, to interpret how the vloggers' language constructs urgency and exclusivity.

Result and Discussion

Results

The sociolinguistic analysis of the travel vlogger community reveals three primary linguistic strategies utilized to induce FOMO among viewers:

1. Hyperbolic Lexicon and Evaluative Adjectives

Travel vloggers frequently employ an inflated and dramatic lexicon to describe destinations. This register relies heavily on absolute and extreme evaluative adjectives. Examples: Terms such as *unreal*, *mind-blowing*, *insane*, *majestic*, and *life-changing* are used repeatedly. Sociolinguistic Impact: By using language that elevates a standard travel experience to an "unreal" standard, vloggers establish a benchmark of experience. Viewers who have not visited the destination are linguistically positioned as missing out on something extraordinary, thereby triggering FOMO.

2. Directive Speech Acts and Urgency Markers

The syntax of travel vlogs is heavily populated with imperative sentences and temporal urgency markers, shifting the language from descriptive to prescriptive.

Examples: Phrases like "You **MUST** visit this place before it gets crowded," "Add this to your bucket list **NOW**," and "Stop scrolling and book your ticket." Sociolinguistic Impact: These directive speech acts function as psychological commands. The inclusion of temporal markers (e.g., *before it's too late*, *now*, *hidden gem*) creates an artificial scarcity. The language suggests that the value of the destination is fleeting, compelling the audience to act immediately to secure social capital.

3. Code-Mixing and the Creation of an "In-Group" Register

Vloggers frequently engage in code-mixing (typically blending the local language with English internet slang) to establish a specific digital persona.

Examples: The integration of terms like *hidden gem*, *aesthetic*, *healing*, *vibes*, and *aesthetic* into non-English discourse. Sociolinguistic Impact: This hybrid language creates a modern, cosmopolitan "in-group" register. To understand and participate in this lifestyle, the viewer feels compelled to consume the experiences dictated by this register. The fear of being excluded from this linguistic and cultural in-group directly feeds into travel FOMO.

Discussion

The findings of this study reinforce that the language utilized by travel vloggers is not merely descriptive but highly performative, specifically designed to trigger psychological urgency and shape contemporary travel behaviors. This presents a significant theoretical consequence by addressing a distinct gap in the existing literature; while most previous studies have approached tourism FOMO primarily from psychological or marketing perspectives, this study confirms that specific linguistic mechanics actively drive this anxiety.

Travel vloggers act as digital mediators who construct tourist realities for their audiences through three primary linguistic strategies: **Establishing Expectation Standards via Hyperbolic Lexicon:** The heavy reliance on an inflated, dramatic lexicon and extreme evaluative adjectives (such as *unreal*, *mind-blowing*, and *majestic*) sets an extraordinary benchmark for travel experiences. Sociolinguistically, viewers who have not visited the destination are linguistically positioned as missing out on something exceptional, thereby triggering FOMO. **Creating Artificial Scarcity through Directive Speech Acts:** The syntax of travel vlogs is heavily populated with imperative sentences and temporal urgency markers (such as *before it's too late* or *now*), which shifts the vloggers' narratives from descriptive to prescriptive. These phrases function as psychological commands that create artificial scarcity, suggesting the destination's value is fleeting and compelling the audience to act immediately to secure social capital.

Driving Social Exclusion via Code-Mixing: The frequent blending of local languages with English internet slang (e.g., *hidden gem*, *healing*, and *vibes*) establishes a modern, cosmopolitan "in-group" digital register. To understand and participate in this lifestyle, viewers feel compelled to consume the experiences dictated by this register; the fear of being excluded from this cultural and linguistic in-group directly feeds into travel FOMO. Ultimately, this discourse highlights the broader issue of why the linguistic mechanics of digital media are crucial to examine within a sociolinguistic framework. The specific lexical choices, syntactic structures, and digital registers curated by content creators act as the primary linguistic catalysts that exacerbate tourism FOMO in the contemporary digital era.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of FOMO in contemporary tourism is not merely a byproduct of visual stimulation on social media; it is actively constructed through the sociolinguistic strategies of the travel vlogger community. By employing hyperbolic lexicons, directive speech acts loaded with artificial urgency, and an exclusive digital register through code-mixing, travel vloggers create a compelling narrative of scarcity and social capital. From a sociolinguistic perspective, the language of travel vlogging has evolved into a highly persuasive tool that manipulates audience behavior by framing travel not as a leisurely choice, but as an urgent social necessity. Recognizing these linguistic mechanisms provides a deeper understanding of how digital communication continues to shape modern consumer psychology and travel trends.

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