

THE INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT AND FOMO ON THE INTENTION TO PARTICIPATE IN COMMUNITY BASED RUNNING EVENTS

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of digital engagement and the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) on individuals' intention to participate in community-based running events. As digital platforms increasingly shape how runners connect, share experiences, and follow community activities, understanding their behavioral impact becomes essential. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed to active and potential members of running communities and analyzed using PLS-SEM. The results show that both digital engagement and FOMO significantly and positively affect participation intention, with digital engagement also acting as a partial mediator that strengthens the effect of FOMO. These findings highlight how interactive digital content and social exposure play a vital role in encouraging physical event participation. The study contributes to the literature on sports participation behavior in the digital era and offers practical insights for organizers and sports marketers to optimize digital strategies, enhance community connection, and design more compelling communication to increase event participation.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of the digital economy has transformed not only how people consume products and services, but also how they participate in social and lifestyle-related activities. In Indonesia, particularly in urban areas such as Jakarta, this transformation is strongly reflected in the rising trend of healthy living, where running has become one of the most popular lifestyle sports. Community-based running events such as fun runs, charity runs, and weekly Runs organized by communities like Bogor Runners, NSRC, BKT Runners, and IndoRunners have experienced significant growth in participation over recent years.

Importantly, this growth cannot be explained solely by increasing health awareness. Instead, participation in running communities today is deeply embedded in a digital ecosystem. Digital platforms such as Instagram, Strava, and WhatsApp function not only as communication tools, but also as spaces where runners interact, construct identity, gain social recognition, and stay connected to community activities. Event information, registration processes, performance sharing, and post-event storytelling are predominantly mediated through digital channels. As a result, participation in offline running events increasingly reflects patterns of digital consumer behavior.

In the context of business digital studies, this phenomenon highlights a shift in the role of digital platforms from transaction-oriented tools to mechanisms that actively shape behavioral intention in offline activities. However, broad discussions of digital marketing or online behavior remain insufficient unless translated into specific, measurable constructs. Prior research emphasizes the importance of operationalizing digital phenomena into concrete

variables in order to examine their causal influence on consumer decision-making (Mikalef et al., 2021). Therefore, rather than addressing digital behavior in general terms, this study focuses on digital engagement and fear of missing out (FOMO) as two central drivers of participation intention in community-based running events.

Digital engagement refers to the extent to which individuals are cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally involved in digital platforms and online communities (Brodie et al., 2011). Within running communities, digital engagement is reflected through frequent interaction with community content, participation in online discussions, sharing running results, and involvement in digital challenges. High levels of digital engagement increase exposure to event-related information, strengthen emotional attachment to the community, and reinforce a sense of belonging. Consequently, digitally engaged individuals are more likely to perceive participation in running events as socially meaningful and personally relevant, which strengthens their intention to participate.

Alongside engagement, FOMO represents a powerful psychological mechanism in digitally mediated social environments. Defined as the apprehension that others may be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent (Przybylski et al., 2013), FOMO is frequently triggered by exposure to peers' activities on social media. In running communities, seeing friends participate in events, earn finisher medals, or appear in group photos can generate a fear of being left out of shared social experiences. This fear encourages individuals to participate in future events in order to maintain social inclusion and visibility within the community. Thus, FOMO functions as a social pressure mechanism that translates digital exposure into participation intention.

The relationship between digital engagement, FOMO, and participation intention can be explained through the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), which posits that behavioral intention is influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In digital contexts, online engagement and FOMO strengthen subjective norms by reinforcing community expectations and social comparison. As individuals become more digitally active and increasingly aware of others' participation, their intention to take part in community-based running events is likely to increase.

This study makes a significant contribution to digital business by extending existing research beyond online purchasing or digital service adoption. Specifically, this research demonstrates how digital social dynamics drive offline participation in physical sports activities, positioning digital platforms as key facilitators of value creation within community-based ecosystems. By examining digital engagement and FOMO as drivers of participation intention, this study provides empirical evidence that digital platforms play an active role in shaping lifestyle-related decisions in a platform-based economy.

Furthermore, this research offers contextual insight into Indonesia's rapidly growing healthy lifestyle trend, particularly in urban settings where digital exposure is highly dominant. By operationalizing digital engagement and FOMO into measurable constructs, this study provides a robust empirical framework for understanding how online interaction and psychological responses influence participation intention in community-based running events.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review aims to establish a clear theoretical and empirical foundation for examining the influence of digital engagement and fear of missing out (FOMO) on individuals' intention to participate in community-based running events. To enhance conceptual clarity, this section assigns specific explanatory roles to the theories employed. Social Identity Theory is used to explain how digital engagement fosters a sense of community belonging, Social Comparison Theory is applied to explain the emergence of FOMO in digital environments, and the Theory of Planned Behavior is utilized as the main framework for understanding the formation of participation intention. Through this structured approach, the literature review develops a coherent line of reasoning that leads to the formulation of research hypotheses grounded in theory and empirical evidence.

2.1 Theoretical and Conceptual Background

Digital engagement has become a key construct in understanding consumer behavior in digital environments. Brodie et al. (2011) conceptualize digital engagement as a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement in digital platforms. This concept reflects the extent to which individuals actively interact with content, communities, or brands through activities such as sharing experiences, participating in online discussions, and engaging in digital challenges. Contemporary studies emphasize that digital engagement is not merely passive exposure but an interactive process shaped by platform features, social influence, and community dynamics (Calder et al., 2022).

In the context of community-based running events, digital engagement plays an important role in strengthening social connection and community attachment. Platforms such as Strava, Instagram, and WhatsApp groups allow runners to document their activities, interact with fellow members, and stay informed about upcoming events. Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) provides an explanatory framework for this process by suggesting that individuals derive part of their self-concept from group membership. Through repeated digital interactions, runners begin to identify themselves as part of a specific running community, which increases their willingness to support and participate in collective activities organized by that community. Therefore, digital engagement functions as a mechanism that reinforces group identity and social belonging within running communities.

Fear of missing out (FOMO) has emerged as a significant psychological construct in digital consumer behavior. Przybylski et al. (2013) define FOMO as a persistent apprehension that others may be experiencing rewarding events without one's involvement. This phenomenon can be explained through Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954), which posits that individuals evaluate their own behaviors and experiences by comparing themselves with others. In digital environments, constant exposure to curated social media content intensifies social comparison, making individuals more aware of what others are doing and achieving.

Within running communities, digital platforms increase the visibility of participation in events through posts related to race participation, finisher medals, group photos, and achievement badges. Such exposure can heighten individuals' perception of being left out of socially valued experiences. As a result, FOMO emerges as a motivational force that encourages individuals to participate in future events in order to maintain social inclusion and relevance within the community. In this sense, FOMO represents a socially driven psychological response to digital exposure rather than a purely individual emotional state.

Participation intention refers to an individual's readiness or willingness to engage in a specific behavior. The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) serves as the primary framework for explaining intention formation in this study. According to this theory, behavioral intention is influenced by attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In digitally mediated environments, subjective norms are strongly shaped by online interactions, peer behavior, and community expectations communicated through digital platforms.

In the context of community-based running events, digital engagement and FOMO can be positioned as antecedents that strengthen subjective norms and social pressure. High digital engagement increases awareness of community activities and reinforces perceptions of normative participation, while FOMO intensifies concern over social exclusion. Together, these mechanisms influence individuals' intention to participate in running events by shaping how socially expected and personally relevant the behavior is perceived to be.

2.2 Empirical Review and Hypothesis

Empirical research consistently demonstrates a positive relationship between digital engagement and behavioral intention across various contexts. Studies in event and digital marketing indicate that frequent interaction with event-related content, active participation in online communities, and emotional involvement with digital platforms enhance individuals' intention to attend or participate in events (Hollebeek et al., 2019; Mariani & Borghi, 2021). In sports-related contexts, digital engagement has been found to strengthen emotional attachment, perceived value, and commitment to sport events, thereby increasing willingness to participate (Chang et al., 2020). Additionally, engagement within online communities reinforces social identity, which has been identified as a key predictor of participation in community-based activities (Delia & James, 2018). Based on these findings, it can be expected that individuals who are more digitally engaged with running communities will exhibit stronger intention to participate in community-based running events.

H1: Digital engagement has a significant positive effect on participation intention in community-based running events.

Recent empirical studies also identify FOMO as a significant driver of consumer and participation behavior in digital environments. Prior research shows that FOMO positively influences purchase intention, event attendance, and participation in social activities due to individuals' desire to avoid social exclusion and missed experiences (Good & Haines, 2020; Stead & Bibby, 2017). In sports and fitness contexts, FOMO has been found to encourage participation in challenges, virtual races, and community events, particularly when individuals are exposed to peers' achievements and milestones through social media (Wang et al., 2022). These findings suggest that the motivation to remain socially connected and relevant can directly increase individuals' intention to join similar activities. Accordingly, higher levels of FOMO are expected to enhance participation intention in community-based running events.

H2: Fear of missing out has a significant positive effect on participation intention in community-based running events.

Several studies further suggest that digital engagement and FOMO may operate in a complementary manner. Individuals with high levels of digital engagement are more frequently exposed to social content that can trigger social comparison and FOMO, which in turn strengthens behavioral intention (Fernandes et al., 2020). This integrated perspective aligns with digital consumer behavior literature, which emphasizes that engagement and psychological drivers jointly influence decision-making processes. Consequently, participation intention in community-based running events is likely to be stronger when individuals experience both high digital engagement and elevated levels of FOMO.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative explanatory research design aimed at examining the causal relationships between digital engagement, fear of missing out (FOMO), and participation intention in community-based running events. A quantitative approach is considered appropriate as it enables hypothesis testing and allows the measurement of the magnitude and direction of influence among the variables under investigation.

3.2 Research Approach

A survey based approach was employed to collect primary data from respondents who met specific criteria related to running activities. The survey method allows efficient data collection from a broad group of participants and is suitable for capturing perceptions, attitudes, and behavioral intentions related to digital engagement and participation in running events.

3.3 Research Location and Period

This research was conducted in Indonesia with a primary focus on the Jabodetabek area, which represents one of the most active regions for running activities and community based running events. Jabodetabek was selected due to the high concentration of runners, running communities, and organized running events. Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed to runners both affiliated and not affiliated with running communities. The data collection process took place in 2025 and continued until all valid responses were obtained.

3.4 Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of individuals in Indonesia who actively engage in running activities and have experience participating in running events, regardless of their membership in formal running communities. A sample represents a subset of the population that reflects its general characteristic

The minimum sample size was determined using the margin of error formula proposed by Arikunto (2017) with a 95 percent confidence level and a 10 percent margin of error, as follows:

$$n = Z^2 / (4 \times moe^2)$$

$$n = 1.96^2 / (4 \times 0.1^2)$$

$$n = 3.8416 / 0.04$$

$$n = 96.04, \text{ rounded to } 97 \text{ respondents}$$

To enhance data reliability and anticipate incomplete or unusable responses, the number of respondents was increased to at least 100 participants.

3.5 Sampling Technique

This research applied a purposive sampling technique. This method was chosen because it allows the selection of respondents based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives.

The criteria for respondents included:

1. Individuals aged minimal 18 years.
2. Individuals who are active in running activities.
3. Individuals who have participated in at least one running event.
4. Individuals who have been engaged in the running community for at least three months.

These criteria aim to ensure that the respondents are active participants in the running ecosystem and provide accurate perceptions regarding running events.

3.6 Data and Data Collection Technique

This study utilized both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms to runners in the Jabodetabek area. Secondary data were obtained from academic journals, books, and previous research related to digital engagement, fear of missing out, and participation intention. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions to facilitate quantitative analysis.

3.7 Measurement Scale

This study used a Likert scale to measure respondents' attitudes, perceptions, and behavioral tendencies. The Likert scale converts subjective opinions into numerical data that can be analyzed statistically (Sugiyono, 2017).

Response scale used:

- 1 – Strongly Disagree
- 2 – Disagree
- 3 – Neutral
- 4 – Agree
- 5 – Strongly Agree

3.8 Operationalization of Variables

Variables represent characteristics or attributes that vary between individuals or objects (Hatch & Farhady, 1981). Operationalization refers to converting variables into measurable indicators. This study consists of the following variables:

A. Demographic Indicators

- Age
- Are you actively participating in running activities?
- How long have you been joining running events?

B. Social Media Engagement Toward Running Events (X1)

Indicators:

1. I often see running event content on social media (Instagram, TikTok, etc.).
2. I follow social media accounts related to running communities.

3. I frequently like, comment, or share running event content.
4. I feel connected to the running community through social media.

C. Digital Information-Seeking Behavior (X2)

Indicators:

1. I search for running event information through digital platforms.
2. I feel the need to stay updated on trending running events.
3. I consistently monitor social media to find new running events.
4. I feel concerned about missing out if I do not join the same events as my peers.

D. Social Influence & FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) (X3)

Indicators:

1. I feel more motivated to join running events because I want the same experience as my friends.
2. I feel satisfied when I can join the same running events as my friends.
3. I feel encouraged to participate when many people around me are joining.

E. Intention to Participate in Running Events (Y)

Indicators:

1. I am interested in participating in running events.
2. I plan to join upcoming running events soon.
3. I will recommend running events to my friends.
4. I feel that running events provide enjoyable experiences.
5. I want to continue participating in running events in Indonesia in the future.

All indicators were measured using a Likert scale (1–5).

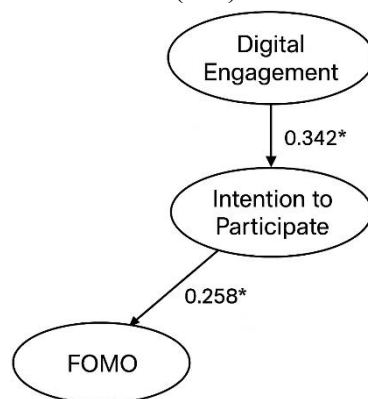


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Study
Source: Authors (2025)

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Result

This section presents the main findings of the study concerning the influence of Digital Engagement and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) on the Intention to Participate in community-based running events. The results are structured by emphasizing the key outcomes first, followed by supporting statistical evidence.

Overall, the findings reveal that Digital Engagement and FOMO both have positive and significant effects on individuals' intention to participate in community-based running events. These results indicate that digital interaction and psychological social influence are important factors in shaping participation intention within the running community context.

Before conducting hypothesis testing, instrument validity and reliability tests were carried out to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the measurement tools. The validity test was conducted using item-to-construct correlation values, and all indicators met the acceptable criteria. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha showed that all constructs exceeded the minimum threshold, confirming that the research instruments were statistically reliable and valid.

Descriptive analysis was then used to examine respondent characteristics, including age, running activity status, and experience in participating in running events. The majority of respondents were active runners, both community members and non-community runners, who frequently engaged with running-related digital content through social media platforms. This respondent profile supports the relevance of the data to the research objectives and strengthens the representativeness of digitally engaged runners in Indonesia, particularly in the Jabodetabek area.

Furthermore, hypothesis testing using quantitative statistical analysis demonstrated that Digital Engagement has a significant positive effect on participation intention. This result suggests that individuals who actively consume, interact with, and seek information about running events through digital platforms tend to exhibit stronger intentions

to participate. In addition, FOMO was also found to significantly influence participation intention, indicating that social exposure, peer involvement, and the fear of being left out motivate individuals to engage in community-based running events.

4.2 Discussion

The results indicate that both Digital Engagement and FOMO significantly influence the intention to participate in community-based running events. This suggests that digital platforms are not merely communication tools, but also function as drivers of behavioral intention by shaping perceptions, motivations, and social dynamics. In the context of the rapidly growing running trend in Indonesia, particularly in urban areas such as Jabodetabek, digital ecosystems play a crucial role in connecting individuals to running communities and events.

The significant influence of Digital Engagement implies that individuals who frequently interact with digital content related to running events such as following running community accounts, viewing event promotions, and engaging through likes, comments, or shares are more likely to develop a strong intention to participate. From a business digital perspective, this finding supports the idea that digital platforms serve as both information channels and engagement mechanisms that stimulate offline behavior. High levels of engagement increase familiarity, emotional attachment, and perceived relevance, which ultimately translate into participation intention. This result is consistent with prior studies in digital consumer behavior, which emphasize that active digital engagement enhances behavioral readiness and decision-making.

The significant effect of FOMO further highlights the role of social influence and psychological motivation in participation decisions. Individuals who experience fear of missing out particularly when peers participate in popular running events tend to show higher intention to join similar activities. This aligns with FOMO theory, which explains that individuals are motivated by a desire to maintain social inclusion and avoid being excluded from shared experiences. In community-based running events, participation is often publicly displayed through social media posts, stories, and shared achievements, intensifying social comparison and emotional pressure. As a result, FOMO acts not only as an emotional response but also as a motivational trigger that encourages participation.

The contribution of this study lies in its application of Digital Engagement and FOMO within the context of community-based running events in Indonesia. While previous research has examined these variables in areas such as online purchasing behavior, social media usage, and digital lifestyles, limited studies have explored their influence on sports participation, particularly in running events that heavily rely on community interaction and digital promotion. Therefore, this research extends digital business literature by demonstrating how digital engagement strategies and psychological drivers influence participation intention in offline recreational activities.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The use of self-reported questionnaires may result in response bias, as participants may overestimate their level of engagement or intention. Additionally, the sample primarily consists of digitally active runners, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to individuals who are less exposed to digital platforms. Moreover, the cross-sectional design restricts the ability to capture changes in engagement and intention over time.

Future studies may consider using longitudinal approaches to observe behavioral changes, expanding the sample to include broader geographic areas, or incorporating qualitative methods to gain deeper insights into participant motivations. Additional variables such as community identification, perceived event value, digital trust, or brand attachment could also be explored to enrich the understanding of participation behavior.

Overall, the findings confirm that digital engagement and psychological social influence significantly shape participation intentions in community-based running events. From a business digital perspective, this study highlights the importance of leveraging digital platforms and social dynamics to enhance engagement, strengthen community connection, and encourage sustained participation in sports events.

5. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Digital Engagement and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) have significant and positive influences on individuals' intention to participate in community-based running events. Beyond confirming these relationships, the findings highlight a central insight that digital social exposure does not only function as a channel for information sharing, but also actively motivates offline sports participation through psychological and social mechanisms. Digital platforms shape emotions, perceptions, and social comparisons that translate into real-world behavioral intentions.

From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to the digital business and consumer behavior literature by explaining how online engagement and socially driven emotions affect participation in community-based sports activities. Digital Engagement strengthens emotional attachment, familiarity, and perceived relevance of running events, while FOMO amplifies motivation through social comparison, peer involvement, and the desire for social inclusion. These findings demonstrate that digital environments can extend their influence beyond virtual interaction and encourage active lifestyle behaviors.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The use of self-reported data may lead to response bias, and the sample primarily consists of digitally active runners in Indonesia, which limits the generalizability of

the findings. In addition, the cross-sectional research design restricts the ability to observe changes in digital engagement and participation intention over time. Future studies are encouraged to adopt longitudinal designs, expand demographic and regional coverage, and incorporate additional variables such as community identity, perceived event value, or digital trust.

In practical terms, the findings provide meaningful implications for event organizers, sports communities, and digital marketers. Digital engagement strategies such as interactive content, community storytelling, and user-generated media can strengthen emotional connections and increase participation intention. Furthermore, emphasizing social participation, shared experiences, and peer involvement can activate FOMO as a positive motivational factor.

Overall, this study underscores the strategic role of digital platforms in influencing offline participation behavior. By aligning digital communication strategies with the psychological and social dynamics of runners, stakeholders can enhance community engagement and support the development of a more active and sustainable running culture in Indonesia.

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