

The Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) in a Fast Scrolling World: Gen Z's Social Experience with Tiktok Velocity

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to understand how Generation Z experiences FoMO in the context of their participation in the Velocity trend on TikTok. The Velocity trend, characterized by rapid transitions, visual aesthetics, and audio synchronization, has become a dominant creative expression among young users. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were obtained through in-depth interviews with five Gen Z informants who actively use TikTok and reside in the South Tangerang area. The results show that TikTok's FYP is the main gateway that shapes users' consumption patterns and engagement with digital trends. FoMO appears in various forms, such as passive, such as simply observing to stay socially relevant, and active, such as the urge to create and improve technical skills. This study also found that FoMO encourages participation and can cause emotional distress, especially when users feel unable to meet digital performative standards. These findings are relevant to theories of cultural digital involvement and algorithmic distribution, strengthening the understanding of Gen Z's emotional dynamics in social media spaces.

KEYWORDS: Algorithm, Digital Communication, FoMO, Generation Z, Participatory Culture

I. INTRODUCTION

Short video-based social media platforms like TikTok have revolutionized how Generation Z (Gen Z) interacts, expresses themselves, and digitally builds their social identity. (Bhandari & Bimo, 2020; Chen, 2023; Bhashanjaly, 2024). Unlike previous platforms that were more static or text-based, TikTok emphasizes a dynamic visual-audio format, allowing every user to simultaneously be both creator and audience. With over one billion monthly active users worldwide (He et al., 2021), TikTok presents a highly competitive and hyperactive digital environment, where users are constantly exposed to a stream of new content in a very short time. The platform's uniqueness lies in its AI-based algorithmic recommendation system, which adapts real-time content to user preferences and behavior (Zhang & Liu, 2021; Zhou, 2024). As a result, users not only access information, but are also subconsciously shaped by content curated specifically for them.

One of the most prominent content phenomena in the TikTok landscape is the "velocity" trend. This video editing style combines slow-motion and rapid-fire movements in sync with the rhythm of popular music. This style creates a dramatic, aesthetic, and visually captivating cinematic feel. The velocity trend not only reflects the technical creativity of its users but also serves as a symbol of social status and a new digital culture embedded in the logic of collective participation. Users, particularly Gen Z, are driven to follow this trend as a form of social affiliation- an effort to remain visible and connected within the rapidly changing digital social ecosystem. In this context, Velocity is not merely a content aesthetic but also a symbolic mechanism for maintaining existence, gaining social recognition, and maintaining relevance within the maelstrom of algorithms and viral culture that dominates the TikTok platform (Feldkamp, 2021).

However, this velocity trend's emergence and continued existence are also closely related to a psychological phenomenon called Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). FoMO is a negative feeling or perception that arises when someone believes others enjoy more enjoyable or fulfilling experiences than they do, particularly when not participating in certain social activities. (Barry & Wong, 2020; Neumann, 2020; Al-Saggaf, 2021). FoMO is the anxiety or fear a person feels when they feel left out or excluded from seemingly enjoyable and meaningful social activities, especially those seen on social media. Individuals experiencing FOMO feel pressured by not being involved in the social moments experienced by others, resulting in feelings of dissatisfaction with their own lives. Social media amplifies this feeling because users are constantly exposed to highlight reels of other people's lives-the most enjoyable and successful parts of a person's life-which often do not fully reflect reality (Alutaybi et al., 2020).

According to Sommantico et al. (2024), FOMO is a form of fear that others may be experiencing pleasant and meaningful experiences that the individual is not experiencing themselves, primarily through exposure to social media. FOMO is a form of social anxiety characterized by a persistent desire to stay connected to what others are doing, due to the fear of missing out on

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important information, experiences, or social relationships (Sommanitico et al., 2024). FoMO is common among Gen Z and often affects adults growing up in a digital ecosystem of social pressure and algorithm-based validation (Parveiz et al., 2023; Chakrabarti, 2024). Other studies have shown that FoMO contributes to high levels of anxiety, stress, and even compulsive social media use that interferes with daily functioning and psychological well-being (Wegmann et al., 2017; Gupta & Sharma, 2021; Fuat Tanhan, Halil İbrahim Özk, 2022).

In the context of TikTok, FoMO is further complicated by the platform's architecture, which is designed to foster repeated engagement through rapidly changing content and high virality. A study by Chiossi et al. (2023) revealed that exposure to short videos with rapid context changes, such as those seen in the velocity trend, can impair users' prospective memory function and increase levels of cognitive distraction (Chiossi et al., 2023). This is compounded by implicit social pressure from digital communities where not following trends can lead to feeling left out or irrelevant (Barton & Smyth, 2025). Thus, participation in the velocity trend is not merely an expressive act, but also a response to social pressure driven by the need for recognition and social presence in cyberspace.

Although the phenomenon of FoMO has been widely researched in the general context of social media use, very few studies have delved deeply into Gen Z's subjective experiences when participating in viral trends like Velocity. However, a phenomenological understanding of how individuals interpret digital social pressure and FoMO is crucial for developing contextual digital literacy and mental health strategies. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring Gen Z's experiences of navigating digital social pressure through a phenomenological approach, specifically about their engagement in TikTok's velocity trend, a cultural landscape that illustrates the rapid pace of social change, the demand for connection, and the tension between self-expression and social conformity.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)*

The concept of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) was first popularized by Przybylski et al. (2013), who defined it as the fear that others are having more enjoyable or meaningful experiences than oneself, which then triggers a strong desire to stay socially connected (Przybylski et al., 2013). as "a pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent." In the past decade, FoMO has been a powerful motivational mechanism driving intense engagement and compulsive use of social media, particularly among Generation Z and young adults. According to Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), humans have three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and social connectedness. FoMO often arises when these relatedness needs are unmet, driving people to remain digitally active and connected. Recent studies have shown that trait-FoMO (general anxiety) and state-FoMO (contextual anxiety specific to social media) are functionally distinct, with state-FoMO playing a more direct role in triggering problematic social media use (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

A longitudinal study in China (two waves, two months apart) found a bidirectional relationship between FoMO and social media fatigue (SMF), which describes emotional exhaustion resulting from excessive social media use. The results showed that initial FoMO levels significantly predicted later SMF levels, suggesting a reciprocal cycle that exacerbates digital stress if left unaddressed (Yao et al., 2025). Meanwhile, another international study reported that metacognition of social media use, anxiety, FoMO, and loneliness directly influence social media addiction, and are treated as mediators between negative emotional states and addictive behavior (Meynadier et al., 2025). Furthermore, theoretical models such as I-PACE (Interaction Person Affect Cognition Execution) explain that FoMO, particularly state-FoMO, works through social cognitive and emotional mechanisms to trigger digital addiction. In this case, FoMO triggers curiosity and persistent engagement in social media, exacerbating weak self-control in already vulnerable users (Brand et al., 2019). Mediation studies in Italy also show that the effect of FoMO on problematic engagement results from social comparison processes and decreased self-esteem (Servidio et al., 2024).

With the increasing role of social media in everyday life, particularly platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, which produce fast-moving and viral content, FoMO has become increasingly relevant. Constant exposure to content and the implicit pressure to stay updated create a unique social pressure that continuously reinforces the urge to participate in popular trends or events. A thorough understanding of FoMO is crucial for designing digital literacy and mental health interventions for Gen Z and young adults.

B. *TikTok Algorithm and Architecture*

TikTok is built on a machine learning-based algorithmic system that dynamically tailors content to each user through the For You Page (FYP). This algorithm relies on three main sets of signals: user behavior (watch time, completion rate, likes, shares, rewatches), video attributes (captions, hashtags, audio, visual objects), and the user's device context and location. (Bhandari & Bimo, 2020; Zhou, 2024). Ranking models are built in tiers, where content is tested on a small audience based on initial performance. The content is promoted to a broader audience if it meets certain engagement thresholds such as completion rates and interactions (X. Chen, 2024). This hierarchical structure allows long-tail views that allow small or niche accounts to go viral suddenly if engagement performance exceeds initial expectations.

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Another study by Baumann et al. (2025) showed that algorithmic amplification of content that matches a user's interests can occur quickly within the first 200 videos watched; however, content diversity decreases significantly over time as user preferences are gradually reinforced. (Baumann et al., 2025). This indicates the potential for a strong filter bubble to emerge, particularly in particular trends like TikTok's velocity content. TikTok's algorithm also shapes the digital behavior of users and communities, including in the context of politics and viral trends. For example, audit research during the 2024 US election found that accounts fed partisan content were more likely to receive videos aligned with their political affiliation; accounts targeted toward Republican content were promoted ~11.8% more intensely than Democratic accounts, while Democratic accounts were sent ~7.5% more opposing content on average (Fischer, 2020). Meanwhile, in the context of velocity trends, the algorithm prioritizes videos with short durations and interesting beginnings to increase completion rates, because the algorithm gives greater weight to videos that are completed, rewatched, or shared, generally Velocity videos (Zeligs, 2025).

Personalization features also give users more control over their content. In 2024–2025, TikTok introduced a content preference slider in the Content Preferences menu, allowing users to manually filter categories like art, humor, or news to customize their FYP (Sato, 2024). However, despite these controls, TikTok's core architecture continues to pursue a middle ground between extreme personalization and exploration of new content, maintaining a balance between relevance and diversity. This model confirms that TikTok's algorithmic distribution is highly efficient at increasing engagement and amplifying trends like velocity content, which is continuously powered by micro-interaction signals and ongoing user learning.

C. TikTok Algorithm and Architecture

Generation Z is a digital natives who naturally use the online world as a space for identity and social expression. They consume content and actively produce it as creators, commentators, and prosumers. A study by Paganelli (2025) highlights how Gen Z forms a digital identity through memes, videos, and visual narratives reflecting both personal and collective identities globally. Digital media participation is considered a powerful form of self-representation, where Gen Z pursues alignment between authentic expression and their group identity (Sitompul et al., 2023). Gen Z's participatory digital culture is characterized by active online community engagement, rather than passive consumption. They use platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Discord to explore interests, build social connections, and improve digital literacy and collaborative skills. A study by the Indonesian Center Journal of Gen Z showed that more than 80% of respondents engaged in content collaboration or group discussions through digital platforms during their academic or professional studies (Jaya & Yustika, 2025). This demonstrates how digital media serves as both a creative arena and a peer-to-peer social space.

Furthermore, Gen Z strongly needs social validation and symbolic status within digital communities. Research by Falgoust, Winterlind, and Zinzow (2022), using the Uses and Gratifications Theory approach, found that Gen Z's motivations for participating in viral TikTok challenges include factors such as seeking entertainment, broad communication, social interaction, peer support, and a desire to share information. However, they also feel pressure to stay relevant and up-to-date to avoid being perceived as outdated, a pressure that often arises from the expectations of the digital community itself (Soyudoğan & Abdalli, 2023).

These digital social pressures create a dilemma between authentic self-expression and the need to escape from trend norms. Gen Z users consciously curate the self-image they project through social media privacy. Research by Ebert et al. (2023) revealed Swiss teenagers' privacy management strategies related to TikTok use, including using multiple accounts and sharing on private platforms to avoid public scrutiny. They also recognize that recommendation algorithms can quickly expose their videos to a broad audience, making the resulting image resonance crucial in shaping their digital social perception. (Ebert et al., 2023)

III. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore Generation Z's subjective experiences following the Velocity trend on the TikTok platform. This approach was chosen because phenomenology allows researchers to understand how participants interpret an experience in their lives, personally and contextually. In line with Creswell's (2018) perspective, phenomenological research seeks to capture participants' lived experiences to uncover the essential meaning of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2018). The primary focus of this research is to explore the perceptions, motivations, and socio-psychological dynamics that emerge when Gen Z engages with the Velocity trend, especially in a participatory and rapidly changing digital environment like TikTok.

The research subjects comprised five Generation Z individuals aged 17–25 residing in South Tangerang and its surrounding areas. They were actively using TikTok, particularly those following the Velocity trend. Informants were selected purposively, considering the suitability of their characteristics to the needs of in-depth data exploration. The primary data collection technique was flexible yet directed semi-structured interviews, allowing participants to share their personal experiences and reflections. In addition to the interviews, researchers also conducted light digital observation of the participants' TikTok accounts to understand how the Velocity trend was represented and contextualized in visual content.

Data were analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to identify key themes from participants' experiences (Smith, 2022). The analysis process included multiple readings of interview transcripts, coding meaningful statements, grouping

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emerging themes, and writing interpretive narratives based on the findings. To enhance the credibility of the results, member checking with participants and peer debriefing with fellow researchers were conducted. This approach effectively captures the complex nuances of Gen Z's experiences in a digital space rife with social pressure, public validation, and the dynamics of ever-changing trends, as demonstrated in contemporary qualitative studies of youth behavior on social media. (Lindgren, 2017; Moisander et al, 2020).

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Content Consumption Patterns and Participation in the Velocity Trend

As part of the digital native generation, Gen Z actively engages in various social dynamics online, including following emerging trends on social media platforms. One prominent trend is Velocity on TikTok, a form of visual content that relies on a combination of fast transitions, synchronized audio, and dynamic visual effects that showcase the creativity of its users. This trend represents aesthetic appeal and demonstrates Gen Z's distinctive communication and participation style, which is highly responsive to algorithms and internet visual culture. In this context, this sub-chapter examines how informants recognize the Velocity trend, consume it, and interpret its presence in their daily digital lives. The analysis will focus on the emerging forms of appreciative and productive-creative engagement to better understand Gen Z's consumption and participation patterns.

One of the key findings of this study is that informants quickly and spontaneously recognized the Velocity trend through TikTok's algorithmic feature known as the For You Page (FYP). The FYP plays a central role in shaping the TikTok user experience by displaying content tailored to users' preferences and interaction history. Informant 2 confirmed this in a statement:

"Usually, when you open TikTok, you immediately see the latest trends, like sounds or fast transitions, appearing on the FYP. So we know they're trending." (Informant 2)

Similarly, Informant 4 stated that he did not need to actively search for these trends because Velocity content was automatically present on his TikTok homepage when he opened the application.

"When I opened TikTok, I immediately saw a lot of content using transitions or fast movements. That's when I realized, 'Oh, this is what's trending.'" (Informant 4)

This statement demonstrates that the FYP serves as a passive medium for content consumption and a key driver in introducing trends and influencing users' participation decisions. In this regard, the FYP is a curated space that structures visual streams relevant to Gen Z consumption patterns. It is a crucial part of the digital sensemaking mechanism, through which users understand what is "happening" and "valuable" in their online social context.

More than simply following the flow of popularity, the Velocity trend on TikTok offers engaging technical and visual challenges, especially for Gen Z interested in digital content production. In this context, TikTok is no longer simply a platform for passive entertainment consumption, but instead functions as a space for visual experimentation, self-development, and creative expression. The informants in this study indicated that their involvement in the Velocity trend was driven by a desire to improve their technical skills, explore editing applications, and produce content that follows trends and reflects their personal qualities and identities. As Informant 4 expressed, the Velocity trend has motivated her to learn more about editing processes and visual transitions.

"Following the velocity trend has allowed me to explore video editing apps more. It's like training myself to create smooth and cool content. I didn't understand that transitions had to match the beat of the song before, but seeing so many cool ones on FYP has challenged me to learn. Now I've started to understand tempo, video cutting, and sometimes using additional effects to make it more dynamic. It's also a learning experience for me, even if it's just on my phone." (Informant 4)

Meanwhile, Informant 5 also expressed a strong interest in the technical aspects of this trend. For him, following the Velocity trend was both a challenge and a demonstration of his abilities.

"I was drawn to the trend because it felt like a challenge. I wanted to be able to create transitions as fast and smooth as the ones on FYP. At first, I was confused about how to make it look effortless, but I gradually learned the trick. Making a single video can involve repeating takes several times, sometimes to the point of exhaustion, but it's fun. It's satisfying when the final result meets expectations. Especially when it gets a lot of views or friends say it's good, it makes me even more enthusiastic about editing." (Informant 5).

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This statement confirms that the Velocity trend is not only a tool for social engagement, but also a medium for learning and self-actualization for Gen Z. They are not just trend consumers, but also producers of visual meaning, actively developing technical skills and strengthening their digital identities in the online public space. Although the Velocity trend has attracted many TikTok users to participate in content production, not all informants demonstrated direct involvement as creators. Some, like Ahmad Mawardi (Informant 1) and Wahyu Wijayanti (Informant 3), prefer the role of active viewers. They enjoy Velocity content as visual entertainment without needing to participate in the production process directly.

"I like to just watch, seeing how creative people are in creating quick transitions. Sometimes the results are so cool, it makes me curious about how they do it. But honestly, I've never tried making my own, because I find it very effortful. You have to understand timing, camera movements, and the editing has to be neat. I'm more comfortable as a spectator, but from there I can still follow trends, know what's trending, and sometimes like or share with friends."
(Informant 1)

This statement shows that while Informant 1 appreciates Velocity content, he believes the creative process behind the trend requires a significant commitment of time and technical skills. This was also confirmed by Informant 3, who explained:

"I mostly just watch, because creating content seems like it requires a lot of dedication and technical understanding. I tried it once or twice, but the results didn't meet my expectations. Finally, I thought, 'I guess it's not the right time for me to create something like that.' But from watching, I can also learn. I see how other people create their transitions, the music they use, and how they appear confident. So even though I don't create the content, I still feel like I'm part of the trend." (Informant 3)

These two quotes emphasize the diversity of Gen Z's participation patterns in trends, ranging from active creators to passive observers. Both remain socially engaged through consuming and appreciating content, without necessarily producing it themselves. This reflects that presence in the digital space is not always manifested through creation, but also through critical and selective observation, depending on the user's interests, abilities, and comfort. The overall narratives from these informants demonstrate that consumption patterns and participation in Velocity trends are determined by personal preferences and TikTok's algorithmic dynamics, technical factors, and perceptions of the trend's expressive value. Through its FYP and content ecosystem, TikTok has shaped Gen Z's behavioral patterns in quickly and responsively exploring visual trends. This reinforces TikTok's role as a space for digital cultural participation, allowing users to shift between consumers and producers dynamically.

To understand the dynamics of Gen Z's engagement in Velocity trends on TikTok more systematically, it is important to examine their content consumption and participation patterns based on the experiences of each informant. Although all informants accessed the trend through the For You Page (FYP) algorithmic feature, their level and form of engagement varied, ranging from passive observers to active creators who technically and creatively produced content. The following table compares five informants' consumption and participation patterns in the Velocity trend, including the concrete activities they engaged in when interacting with content on TikTok.

Table 1. Content Consumption Patterns and Participation in Velocity Trends by Gen Z

Informant	Content Consumption Patterns	Things to Do	Participation Patterns in the Velocity Trend	Participation
Informant 1	Watching velocity content from FYP, interested in seeing other people's creativity, but have not participated in making it yet.	Watch trending content, like and share videos, and keep up with visual trends.	Not actively participating because they feel the technical effort is too great.	Be a selective observer and passively understand trends.
Informant 2	Knowing the latest trends directly from FYP makes FYP the primary reference for visual and audio trends.	Access FYP every day and find viral content instantly.	Sometimes, following trends that are considered interesting leads to more consumption than production.	Adjust to your mood and the times, following trends when appropriate.
Informant 3	Watching as a primary activity, interested in seeing other people's	Observe other users' transitions, use of music, and confident style.	I have tried creating content, but was not satisfied with the results; I	I passively learn from other people's content for future reference.

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	editing techniques, and learning from the videos watched.		ultimately chose to be an active viewer.	
Informant 4	Driven by FYP to learn new trends, I see FYP as a window of visual reference and personal challenge.	Identify trends directly from FYP without manual searching, observing popular visual styles.	Actively producing Velocity trending content as a means of technical and artistic exploration.	Learning editing, adjusting transition tempos, experimenting with various effects, and uploading work to TikTok.
Informant 5	Follow FYP to find out what trends are currently popular, and learn techniques from videos that are considered interesting.	Watch trending content as a production reference, observe visual quality, and audience response.	Significantly actively following the Velocity trend as a form of challenge and self-expression.	

Table 1 illustrates the complex and diverse spectrum of engagement in Gen Z's consumption and participation patterns in the Velocity trend on TikTok. On the one hand, informants 1 and 3 are more comfortable as active viewers. They stay connected to trends and follow developments through the FYP, but choose not to produce content due to technical reasons, time, or personal preference. Nevertheless, this passive engagement still demonstrates significant social participation, such as liking, sharing videos, or using content as a visual learning resource.

On the other hand, informants 4 and 5 demonstrate intense active participation, using the Velocity trend as a space for creative exploration and self-development. They produce content and self-taught themselves technical skills such as editing tempo, transitions, audio synchronization, and influencing public engagement. This indicates that TikTok has transformed into a space for visual and technological literacy, rather than simply an entertainment medium. Meanwhile, Informant 2 occupies a middle ground as a flexible user, sometimes engaging as a creator but comfortable simply as a viewer. Table 1 shows that Gen Z's consumption patterns and participation in the Velocity trend are shaped by the interaction of personal preferences, technical capabilities, and the influence of the platform's algorithm. TikTok encourages engagement through engaging visuals and allows users to determine their level of involvement as consumers and content producers. This role flexibility is a hallmark of Gen Z's digital participation in the algorithm-based social media ecosystem.

B. The Dynamics of FoMO in Gen Z's Digital Practices

In an era of increasingly intense digital connectivity, FoMO has become a psychological dynamic deeply embedded in the lives of Generation Z. Particularly in social media ecosystems like TikTok, FoMO reflects not only curiosity but also a social fear of being left behind by trends, experiences, or conversations trending among peers. In the context of the rapidly evolving and algorithmic Velocity trend, FoMO is a primary driver of Gen Z's consumption and participation behavior, consciously and unconsciously. One concrete manifestation of this FoMO is the habit of opening TikTok daily, which is not always based solely on a desire for entertainment but on a drive to stay relevant. Informant 2 explained:

"Sometimes if I don't open TikTok for a day, I feel like I'm missing out on new information or trends. Especially if my friends have already discussed it, and I don't understand what they mean. So I usually open it every day, even if it's just a quick scroll." (Informant 2)

This statement demonstrates that FoMO drives a reactive and persistent digital presence. Gen Z must stay connected to the digital social rhythm to avoid feeling out of place when discussions or trends rapidly evolve within their social circles. This habit creates a digital social reflex where checking the Facebook Page (FYP) becomes an automatic activity, performed multiple times a day, even without a clear purpose. Thus, FoMO in Gen Z's practice is not only about not wanting to be left behind, but also about maintaining social presence and connectivity in a fast-paced, algorithmically demanding digital public space. FoMO drives intensive content consumption and significantly influences Gen Z's decision to engage in content production, particularly within the Velocity trend. For most users, the decision to create content is not always driven by intrinsic motivations like creativity or aesthetic exploration, but also by social pressures arising from their digital environment. As Informant 5 put it:

"Sometimes, when I see a lot of people participating in the Velocity trend and their videos are so cool, I feel like I have to make one too so I don't look out of touch. Especially if my friends have already uploaded, it feels like I have to join in." (Informant 5)

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This statement reflects how the fear of being perceived as irrelevant or out of touch becomes a primary driver of engagement. The desire to stay abreast of digital social trends and not be left behind makes participation in trends like Velocity a symbolic obligation. In this situation, the content produced is not simply an individual expression, but also a symbol of social connectedness and group recognition. The Velocity trend itself, with its fast, visual, and easily replicated format, creates a rhythm of urgent virality, where any delay in responding can be perceived as a form of digital absence. Consequently, there is a compulsion to jump in immediately, even without careful technical planning. This phenomenon demonstrates that participation in Gen Z digital culture does not necessarily stem from creative readiness, but rather from the pressure to maintain social presence amidst the fast-moving flow of trends. In this context, FoMO becomes more than just anxiety; it transforms into a social mechanism that regulates the rhythm of digital participation and determines who is considered in the flow or left behind.

However, FoMO does not always positively impact Gen Z's digital engagement. Behind the enthusiasm to follow trends and show off, there are emotional consequences for some users. The pressure to look perfect, produce content worthy of appearing on the FYP, and garner positive responses from audiences in the form of likes, comments, or views often triggers anxiety, self-doubt, and feelings of inferiority. For some informants, the Velocity trend is not just about participating in editing challenges and how their digital environment will perceive them. As Informant 3 expressed it:

"I've tried creating content before, but the results don't seem good enough. Seeing other people's cool stuff makes me feel inferior. So now I prefer to just look around, but sometimes I'm still afraid of missing out on trends." (Informant 3)

This statement indicates that although Informant 3 expressed interest in participating, his confidence declined when he compared his work to the content of others who appeared more professional. On the one hand, he wanted to participate to keep up, but on the other hand, he felt inadequate or did not have the same technical skills. This inner conflict manifests as a paradoxical form of FoMO: the desire to join in on trends, yet hindered by the pressure of unspoken social standards in the digital space. This situation emphasizes that digital participation is not only a matter of technical ability or visual creativity, but also involves vulnerable emotional and psychological dimensions, especially in comparative cultures like TikTok. FoMO, in this context, exhibits a dual face: it serves as both a driver of engagement and a source of emotional instability if not accompanied by adequate digital literacy and psychological resilience. Furthermore, although Informant 1 (Ahmad Mawardi) did not explicitly state that he felt pressured to follow trends, his narrative indicates a more subtle and passive form of FoMO. In his interview, Informant 1 explained:

"I just like watching trending videos, I really enjoy browsing through trending videos, and I often think the videos I make are really cool, even though I'm curious and want to create content. But honestly, I've never tried making my own." (Informant 1)

This statement reveals a tendency to stay connected to trends, not through content production, but through active observation and consumption. When Informant 1 stated that he felt curious about creating content, it indicated that he still maintained a sense of curiosity, an interest in understanding trends, and an awareness of the social value of Velocity content. While it did not drive him to create his videos, the desire to stay informed and up-to-date on information is a form of FoMO that is no less significant than active engagement. In this context, FoMO does not always manifest as pressure to perform or produce, but rather manifests as a need to stay abreast of social trends, keeping up with popular content to avoid feeling out of place in the digital world. This reflects the highly spectral nature of Gen Z's participation in digital culture, ranging from active creators to mere observers who remain mentally and emotionally engaged.

Informant 1 is an example of how someone can express FoMO through cognitive engagement, feeling connected to the digital world without necessarily being a primary participant. This behavior demonstrates that observation has become a legitimate and meaningful form of social participation in the algorithmic era. Meanwhile, Informant 4 represents a more active and productive form of FoMO. In contrast to the passive approach demonstrated by Informant 1, Informant 4 views the Velocity trend on TikTok as more than just a spectacle, but rather a space for expression, learning, and technical and creative development.

"After seeing a lot of cool video content on FYP, I learned to create content. Following the Velocity trend allows me to explore video editing apps more. It's like training myself to create smooth and cool video content." (Informant 4)

This quote demonstrates that the presence of trends on FYP is a trigger for consumption and a stimulus for personal capacity development. Informant 4's FoMO does not stop at a fear of missing out, but develops into an initiative to pursue new skills. Informant 4 responds to the social pressure of popular trends by transforming it into motivation for learning, viewing, exploring, and editing as a form of positive self-actualization. For Informant 4, engaging with trends is not simply about going with the flow, but rather part of a creative journey to prove one's abilities in the digital public sphere.

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Comparatively, the statements from Informant 1 and Informant 4 illustrate two polarities of FoMO experiences among Gen Z. Informant 1 expressed FoMO in a passive and observant manner, wanting to stay relevant and know what is trending, but not feeling the need or confidence to produce content. Meanwhile, Informant 4 embodied active and reflective FoMO, which encourages participation, enhances digital skills, and strengthens creative identity.

To gain a more structured understanding of the forms of FoMO experienced by Gen Z in the context of participating in the Velocity trend on TikTok, the following table presents a comparison summarizing the FoMO characteristics of each informant. Table 2 displays the type of FoMO experienced, how they responded to digital social pressure, and their involvement or disengagement in content production. With this approach, it is clear that FoMO among Gen Z is not a single entity, but ranges from passive to highly active and productive. Table 2 also reveals that FoMO is not only an individual psychological issue, but is also influenced by social, technical, and algorithmic factors that shape their experiences in digital spaces.

Table 2. FOMO Dynamics in Gen Z's Digital Practices through Velocity Trends on TikTok

Informant	Types of FoMO	Characteristics of FoMO	Things to Do	Impact of FoMO
Informant 1	Passive FoMO	Feeling the need to know about trends to stay socially connected, even if not directly involved in content production.	Watching velocity content on FYP, being curious about the editing process, and sharing videos with friends.	I still feel like part of the trend, even though only as a viewer; I am socially connected, but not creating.
Informant 2	Functional FoMO	Fear of missing out on information and conversations with friends, opening TikTok daily as a response to mild social pressure.	Regularly consume FYP, monitor daily trends, and occasionally join in.	Increasing daily engagement and reducing social awkwardness during discussions within digital friendships.
Informant 3	Ambivalent FoMO	Wanting to get involved but anxious about poor results, comparing yourself to other creators to the point of feeling inferior.	Have tried creating content but given up because you felt inadequate compared to others.	Experiencing emotional distress and decreased self-confidence, but still watching to stay updated.
Informant 4	Active and Productive FoMO	Feel challenged and motivated to follow trends and improve your editing skills to compete with other creators.	Learn editing, explore video applications, and create smooth and creative content.	FoMO is a catalyst for self-development, increasing competence and confidence in the digital space.
Informant 5	Competitive FoMO	The pressure to perform on par with peers and gain social recognition drives participation in trending content.	Creating velocity content, repeating takes repeatedly, and pursuing aesthetically pleasing results that resonate with the TikTok audience.	FoMO increases productivity and technical ability but can also lead to burnout or performance pressure.

Table 2 above shows that the dynamics of FoMO in Gen Z's digital practices are complex and layered, reflecting differences in motivation, technical capacity, and psychological responses to the pressures of digital culture. Although all informants are within the same social ecosystem, TikTok, their forms of engagement vary widely, from passive appreciation and the drive to stay relevant to seeking social recognition through content creation. These differences indicate that FoMO does not always result in uniform participation; instead, it can encourage self-reflection, skill development, or even create emotional barriers. Therefore, understanding FoMO in the context of social media requires considering the personal and social dimensions that interact to shape Gen Z's digital behavior patterns.

C. Theoretical Reflection on the Dynamics of FoMO and Gen Z's Digital Participation

These findings are closely related to the theories outlined in the literature review. The results of this study reinforce and expand the understanding of the FoMO theory proposed by Przybylski et al. (2013), which states that FoMO is a form of social anxiety that arises when someone feels left behind by the experiences of others who are considered more enjoyable or meaningful. In the context

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of TikTok, FoMO arises not only from being absent from trends but also from the pressure to produce visually and technically comparable content. This is evident in the narratives of several informants who felt inferior or pressured when comparing their work to that of other creators. This demonstrates how FoMO leads to complex emotional experiences, acting as both a motivator and a barrier to participation.

Furthermore, the results of this study align with the concept of participatory digital culture (Jenkins, 2006), where Gen Z is not merely a passive consumer but also actively produces and disseminates content as part of their identity and social interactions. Informants involved in the Velocity trend demonstrated that social media has become a space for creativity and self-actualization and a medium for autonomous technical learning. However, this study also demonstrates the paradoxical side of such participation, where the pressure to be relevant and "on trend" can disrupt young users' emotional balance. Furthermore, this study is also relevant to theories regarding the role of algorithms in shaping digital exposure and behavior (Bucher, 2018). TikTok's FYP, as a representation of an algorithmic system, has proven to be a primary gateway for Gen Z in recognizing trends and determining their engagement. Algorithms filter information and create hidden social pressures that encourage users to follow trends to keep up with digital social dynamics. Thus, the findings of this study not only confirm the theories used and provide a contextual contribution to understanding new forms of digital participation and social pressure in the era of algorithm-based platforms, especially in the context of the experiences of Generation Z.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research findings outlined in the previous discussion, the Velocity trend phenomenon on TikTok reflects Gen Z's digital consumption patterns and the social, psychological, and algorithmic dynamics that shape their experiences in the digital media space. This research uncovers various dimensions of engagement, from creative motivation to emotional distress influenced by FoMO, as well as TikTok's role as an active visual culture ecosystem that shapes the participation of the younger generation in a complex and multi-layered manner. The main conclusions of this research are as follows:

- 1) Gen Z exhibits digital engagement patterns highly responsive to the TikTok algorithm, particularly through the FYP feature, which actively features trends like Velocity. This tendency to consistently follow trends suggests that the algorithm significantly shapes their content consumption patterns.
- 2) The Velocity trend serves as visual entertainment and a means of self-expression and creative skill development, particularly in editing and visual-audio synchronization. Several informants saw this trend as a personal challenge to produce engaging and high-quality content.
- 3) FoMO (Focus on Feelings of Mood) is a key psychosocial factor driving Gen Z's engagement with TikTok trends through active participation and passive consumption. FoMO manifests in various forms, ranging from the need to stay socially connected to emotional distress caused by comparisons with other content creators.
- 4) The level of participation in the Velocity trend varies between individuals, influenced by internal factors such as self-confidence and technical skills, and external factors such as social pressure and performative expectations. This suggests that Gen Z's presence in the digital space is not always manifested through content production but through active observation and appreciation.
- 5) Social media platforms like TikTok have become a volatile digital cultural space, where young users, such as Gen Z, consume content and shape their identities, social status, and technical skills. This space presents a dialectic between the desire to perform, the need for acceptance, and the challenges of mental and emotional survival.

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