

## **The Pop-up Store Marvel: An Exploration of Consumers' Motivations to Seek Contemporary Pop-up Stores**

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**Introduction.** Pop-up shops are expected to become part of the new normal. According to a recent study, pop-up shops collectively bring in between \$45 billion and \$50 billion in revenues annually (Novellino, 2015). Given that consumers respond better to pop-up shops that offer memorable shopping experiences, current pop-up shops are focused on delivering exceptional experiences. For example, recent pop-ups use visually appealing design elements, create a sense of curiosity, offer details about the company or brand, and/or evoke a sense of urgency by encouraging potential customers to quickly respond via purchase or a connection through social media postings. These types of pop-up shops are called *contemporary pop-up shops*. Even though the topic of pop-up shops has been studied before, existing studies have mainly focused on the retailer's perspective (Rosenbaum et al., 2021), and research on consumer behavior regarding the contemporary pop-up shop is limited. Going further, in recent years, brands are recognizing the importance of offering an "instagrammable" experience that can generate word-of-mouth online. Thus, the purpose of this research is to explore the different consumer's motivations behind visiting contemporary pop-up shops and their intention to post their experiences on social media.

**Literature Review and Hypotheses.** Pop-up shops are defined as temporary shops, stalls, or brand experiences that offer goods and services that are either exclusive, distinct, or special to the shop for a limited time (Jones et al., 2017). They are designed to involve the consumer in a series of memorable, hedonistic, theatrical experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Pomodoro, 2013); which have emerged as new experiential marketing (Niehm et al., 2007; Pomodoro, 2013). These types of pop-up shops often include unique interactive experiences, activities, art installations, and/or photo-opp setups. That said, these pop-up shops focus on delivering an "experience" within a "limited timeframe."

According to the hedonism theory, having material objects or experiences helps an individual attain pleasure (Waterman et al., 2008). Pleasure refers to the degree to which a person feels good, joyful, happy, or satisfied in a situation (Kao et al., 2007). Since contemporary pop-up shops are known to be pleasurable experiences, it is expected that customers with need for pleasure are likely to visit contemporary pop-up shops and post their experiences on social media. **H1.** The need for pleasure is positively related to the (a) intention to visit and (b) intention to post.

Commodity theory suggests that a commodity is valued to the extent that it is unavailable and deals with the psychological effects of scarcity (Lynn, 1991). In this study, fear of missing out, scarcity, and materialism are used to capture the commodity aspect associated with contemporary pop-up shops and how these variables influence intention to visit and intention to post. Fear of missing out refers to the anxiety social media users feel when they perceive their peers are doing, experiencing, or possessing something rewarding while they are not (Gil et al., 2015; Przybylski et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2020). Scarce commodities are likely to produce positive feelings of distinctiveness (Brock, 1967). Given that contemporary pop-up shops are offered in a limited time and space, consumers who value distinctiveness are likely to be motivated to engage in contemporary pop-up experiences. **H2.** Fear of missing out is

positively related to the (a) intention to visit (b) intention to post. Scarcity is defined as something that is real or assumed to be and is a threat to consumers' ability to meet their needs and desires because of a lack of having access to those goods, services, or resources (Hamilton et al., 2019). Thus, when individuals perceived scarcity is higher, they are more likely to be motivated to achieve the product or service. **H3.** Scarcity is positively related to the (a) intention to visit and (b) intention to post. Materialism is defined as “the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions” (Belk, 1988, p. 291). Those with high materialism are likely to visit these shops due to the offering of limited-edition products. **H4.** Materialism is positively related to the (a) intention to visit and (b) intention to post.

The theory of uniqueness suggests that the need to see oneself as being different from other people is aroused and competes with other motives in situations that threaten the self-perception of uniqueness (Snyder & Fromkin, 1977; Tian et al., 2001). In this study, need for uniqueness is used to capture the uniqueness associated with contemporary pop-up shops. Those with a higher need for uniqueness are more likely to visit contemporary pop-up shops because pop-up shops allow customers to visit something unique/one-of-a-kind, momentary, and unreproducible (Catalano & Zorzetto, 2010). **H5.** The need for uniqueness is positively related to the (a) intention to visit and (b) intention to post.

**Method.** To test the hypotheses, a self-administered online survey was used, which were adapted from existing literature (Ki et al., 2017; Chan et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2020; Brock, 1967; Cunningham & Kwon, 2003; Saenger et al., 2013). This study recruited those 18+ years of age with prior experience visiting contemporary pop-up shops. The participants were recruited from two separate online platforms, Amazon MTurk (*Study 1*) and Prolific (*Study 2*), which intention to re-validate the Study 1 results.

**Results and Discussion.** For both Study 1 and Study 2, two multiple (i.e., one for Intention to Visit and one for Intention to Post) regressions were conducted to test the hypotheses using Pleasure, Scarcity, FOMO, Need for Uniqueness, and Materialism. For Study 1, the regression model ( $R^2=0.61$ ,  $F_{5, 108} = 33.49$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) revealed that both Pleasure ( $\beta=0.21$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and Need for Uniqueness ( $\beta=0.61$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) positively predicted Intention to Visit but not Fear of missing out, Scarcity, and Materialism. Thus, H1a and H5a were supported, but H2a, H3a, and H4a were rejected. Additional regression model ( $R^2=0.79$ ,  $F_{5, 108} = 80.93$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) revealed that Pleasure ( $\beta=0.56$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and Need for Uniqueness ( $\beta=0.29$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) significantly predicted Intention to Post, but again, Fear of missing out, Scarcity, and Materialism did not predict Intention to Post. Therefore, H1b and H5b were supported, but H2b, H3b, and H4b were rejected. For Study 2, the regression model ( $R^2=0.345$ ,  $F_{5, 116}=12.23$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) revealed that similar to Study 1, both Pleasure ( $\beta=0.45$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and Need for Uniqueness ( $\beta=0.21$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) again significantly predicted Intention to Visit, but Fear of missing out, Scarcity, and Materialism did not. Further, the regression model ( $R^2=0.375$ ,  $F_{5, 116}=13.95$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) revealed that Pleasure ( $\beta=0.33$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), Fear of missing out ( $\beta=0.45$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), and Scarcity ( $\beta=-0.20$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) were significant predictors, but Need for uniqueness and Materialism were not significant influencers of Intention to Post.

The results suggest that Pleasure plays the most important role in both studies for both intention to visit and intention to post consumers' experiences on social media. Need for Uniqueness was also an influential motivator driving consumers to visit a pop-up shop. That said, when designing a pop-up, marketers should focus on delivering a pleasurable and unique pop-up shop experience. Materialism was not significant in either studies. Future research can explore different types of pop-up shops (e.g., luxury vs. commercial) or conduct qualitative research method to get more insights into pop-up shops.

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