



FOMO, PEER PRESSURE AND SOCIAL COMPARISON: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF SMARTWATCH PURCHASE INTENTION AMONG YOUTH CONSUMERS IN CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJI NAGAR, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Smartwatches have become everyday lifestyle products among young Indian consumers, yet little is known about the psychological forces behind their purchase in Tier-2 cities. This study examines how social comparison orientation and peer pressure influence smartwatch purchase intention among youth, and whether fear of missing out (FOMO) mediates these effects. Drawing on Social Comparison Theory and the Theory of Planned Behaviour, seven hypotheses were developed and tested. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire from [N] respondents aged 18 to 30 years in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, Maharashtra, and analysed using reliability testing, correlation, multiple regression and bootstrapped mediation analysis. [Add two sentences on the main findings after analysis, for example which predictor was strongest and whether FOMO mediated the effects.] The study adds a psychological perspective to research on wearable technology adoption in a Tier-2 Indian setting and offers practical direction to marketers who target young buyers through social media.

KEYWORDS : Fear of Missing Out, Social Comparison, Peer Pressure, Smartwatch**INTRODUCTION**

Smartwatches have moved from niche gadgets to everyday lifestyle products among young Indian consumers. A smartwatch is worn for step counts and sleep tracking, but it is also worn to be seen, signalling taste and belonging to a peer group. The purchase decision is therefore shaped by more than features and price. Young consumers make many choices amid a constant stream of peers' posts and short videos. When a classmate shows a new watch, the viewer is nudged to compare, to feel behind, and sometimes to buy. Two psychological forces are relevant here: social comparison, the tendency to evaluate oneself against others, and fear of missing out (FOMO), the anxiety of being left out of what peers are experiencing.

Most Indian studies on smartwatch buying focus on metropolitan cities and on functional attributes or influencer credibility. Little is known about how these psychological drivers operate in Tier-2 cities, where aspirations are high, social networks are close and digital exposure is rising quickly. Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, with its large student population and growing retail market, is a suitable setting. This study therefore examines whether social comparison orientation and peer pressure influence smartwatch purchase intention among youth, and whether FOMO mediates these effects.

Review of Literature and Hypotheses**Social Comparison**

Festinger (1954) proposed that people evaluate themselves by comparing with others when objective standards are absent. Gibbons and Buunk (1999) showed that individuals differ in how strongly they compare. On social media, upward comparison is linked with lower self-evaluation (Vogel et al., 2014), which may push people towards possessions that restore a sense of standing. A visible product such as a smartwatch is a natural target of such comparison.

Peer Pressure

People conform both to be accurate and to be accepted (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). Bearden et al. (1989) measured this tendency as susceptibility to interpersonal influence. In the Theory of Planned Behaviour, the subjective norm directly predicts intention (Ajzen, 1991), and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology likewise treats social influence as a determinant of technology use (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

Fear of Missing Out

Przybylski et al. (2013) defined FOMO as a pervasive apprehension that others are having rewarding experiences from which one is absent. Hodgkinson (2019) proposed that FOMO appeals shape attitudes and purchase behaviour, particularly for products visible within a peer group. Comparison and peer expectations are likely to heighten this feeling, which can then convert into buying intention.

[Add 4 to 6 recent studies (2020 to 2025) on smartwatch or wearable purchase behaviour in India, summarised in your own words, and state the research gap: limited work combining FOMO and social comparison in a Tier-2 Indian city.]

Based on this reasoning, the following hypotheses are proposed. H1:

Social comparison orientation (SCO) positively affects purchase intention (PI). H2: Peer pressure (PP) positively affects PI. H3: SCO positively affects FOMO. H4: PP positively affects FOMO. H5: FOMO positively affects PI. H6: FOMO mediates the relationship between SCO and PI. H7: FOMO mediates the relationship between PP and PI.



Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

Source: Author's conceptualization

Research Methodology

A descriptive, cross-sectional survey design was used. The population comprised young consumers aged 18 to 30 years in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar who own or intend to buy a smartwatch. Respondents were selected through [purposive / convenience / stratified] sampling, and [N] usable responses were obtained from [number] questionnaires distributed. Of these, [x]% were male and [x]% female, and [x]% were students.

A structured questionnaire measured four constructs on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree), using scales adapted from established instruments: social comparison orientation from Gibbons and Buunk (1999), peer pressure from Bearden et al. (1989), FOMO from Przybylski et al. (2013), and purchase intention from Ajzen (1991), with [n] items in total. Reliability was assessed through Cronbach's alpha, with values above .70 considered acceptable (Nunnally, 1978); the values ranged from [] to []. Data were analysed using [SPSS / SmartPLS version], applying correlation, multiple regression and bootstrapped mediation analysis (Hayes, 2018) with [5000] resamples. Participation was voluntary and responses were anonymous.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics and correlations among the variables. [Comment on the strength and direction of the correlations and mark significance.]

Table – 1 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variable	M	SD	SCO	PP	FOMO	PI
1. SCO	[]	[]	1			
2. PP	[]	[]	[]	1		
3. FOMO	[]	[]	[]	[]	1	
4. PI	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	1

Source: Primary data. N = [N]. Mark significance as $p < .05$ or $p < .01$.

Table 2 reports the regression and mediation results. [State which hypotheses were supported with beta, t and p values, and report R-square for each model. State whether FOMO was a full or partial mediator, based on whether the confidence interval excludes zero.]

Table – 2 Regression and Mediation Results

Path	Estimate	t	p	95% CI	Decision
H1: SCO to PI	[]	[]	[]	-	[]
H2: PP to PI	[]	[]	[]	-	[]
H3: SCO to FOMO	[]	[]	[]	-	[]
H4: PP to FOMO	[]	[]	[]	-	[]
H5: FOMO to PI	[]	[]	[]	-	[]
H6: SCO to FOMO to PI	[]	-	-	[]	[]
H7: PP to FOMO to PI	[]	-	-	[]	[]

Source: Primary data. H1 to H5 show standardised beta; H6 and H7 show bootstrapped indirect effects.

DISCUSSION

[Write after results are final: which predictor was stronger; whether FOMO predicted intention and how this compares with Przybylski et al. (2013) and Hodkinson (2019); whether FOMO was a full or partial mediator; what is specific to a Tier-2 city; and reasons for any unsupported hypothesis.]

Implications

Theoretically, the study integrates Social Comparison Theory with the Theory of Planned Behaviour and positions FOMO as the psychological channel linking social forces to purchase intention, extending wearable research beyond functional attributes and metropolitan samples. Practically, brands can build campaigns around community and shared experience, use limited-period offers with care so that consumers are not misled, and work with campus communities and peer referral schemes to build trust in Tier-2 cities. Communication should also balance social appeal with real functional benefits so that purchases lead to satisfaction.

Limitations and Future Research

The study covers one city and respondents aged 18 to 30, so generalisation requires caution. The cross-sectional design does not establish long-term causality, and self-reported data may carry social desirability bias. Future studies can compare several Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, use longitudinal or experimental designs, and add moderators such as income or intensity of social media use.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how social comparison and peer pressure shape smartwatch purchase intention among young consumers in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, with FOMO as a mediator. [Add two or three sentences summarising the confirmed findings.] Youth wearable purchases are better understood when psychological and social drivers are considered together with product features.

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