

The Communication Strategy of Utilizing Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) to Popularize Padel at Padel Pro Kemang

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of padel in Indonesia, particularly among urban communities, has been closely associated with the emergence of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), a phenomenon that encourages individuals to participate in activities perceived as popular and socially valuable. This study aims to analyze the communication strategies employed by Padel Pro Kemang in utilizing FoMO to popularize padel among upper-class communities in Jakarta. A qualitative descriptive approach was applied, with data collected through in-depth interviews involving Padel Pro Kemang management, coaches, influencers, and padel players. The findings indicate that Padel Pro Kemang strategically leverages FoMO through social media exposure, community development, event and tournament organization, social proof generated by high participation rates, and the construction of an exclusive image supported by premium facilities and international standards. These strategies successfully shape public perceptions of padel as a modern, prestigious, and socially desirable sport. The study further reveals that FoMO acts as an initial driver encouraging individuals to try padel, while long-term participation is sustained by positive playing experiences, health benefits, social networking opportunities, and a sense of belonging within the padel community. The findings demonstrate that FoMO-based communication strategies play a significant role in increasing public awareness, participation, and the popularity of padel among Jakarta's urban upper-class society.

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Introduction

Active and health-oriented lifestyles have become increasingly important among urban communities, including those in Jakarta. The rapid development of digital technology and social media has accelerated the dissemination of information regarding various sports and recreational activities, influencing lifestyle consumption patterns among urban populations (Suárez-Cadenas et al., 2023). For upper-class communities, sports function not only as a means of maintaining physical health but also as a medium for constructing social identity,

expanding social networks, and representing a particular social status and lifestyle (Pérez-González et al., 2023).

One sport that has experienced remarkable growth in recent years is padel. As a hybrid sport combining elements of tennis and squash, padel has become one of the fastest-growing sports worldwide. More than 30 million padel players are currently spread across over 150 countries (Conde-Ripoll et al., 2025). According to Deloitte (2023), the number of padel courts worldwide has surpassed 63,000 and continues to increase annually. In Indonesia, this growth is reflected in the emergence of padel facilities in premium areas such as Senayan, Kemang, and Pantai Indah Kapuk. The International Padel Federation (FIP) has even ranked Indonesia among the fastest-growing padel markets in Southeast Asia.

The popularity of padel is driven not only by its accessibility and recreational nature but also by the social image attached to the sport. Padel is increasingly associated with modern lifestyles, exclusivity, and upper-middle-class social activities. This phenomenon is reinforced by the involvement of public figures, influencers, and communities that actively share their padel experiences through social media platforms. Ruiz-Esteban et al. (2025) found that social factors, group affiliation, and community interaction play significant roles in encouraging participation in recreational padel activities.

This phenomenon is closely related to the concept of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). McGinnis (2020) defines FoMO as the anxiety individuals experience when they perceive themselves as being excluded from rewarding experiences, activities, or opportunities enjoyed by others. In the social media era, FoMO is increasingly prevalent because individuals are continuously exposed to the activities and experiences shared online by their peers. Within the fields of marketing and communication, FoMO has been widely utilized as a strategy to increase audience engagement, create a sense of urgency, and encourage participation in products, services, and social activities (Mollen & Wilson, 2023).

In the context of padel, FoMO can be observed through the extensive exposure of padel-related content on social media, the growing number of padel communities, increasing participation in tournaments, and the perception of padel as a trendy and desirable sport. The presence of padel facilities in elite urban areas, high court occupancy rates, and the participation of celebrities and influencers further strengthen the social construction of padel as an integral part of Jakarta's urban lifestyle. These conditions indicate that the popularity of padel is shaped not only by the sport itself but also by communication strategies that leverage social symbolism, exclusivity, and collective experiences.

One facility that actively capitalizes on these dynamics is Padel Pro Kemang. As one of Jakarta's pioneering padel venues and a facility officially licensed by the Indonesian Padel Association (PB Padel Indonesia), Padel Pro Kemang offers international-standard courts, an active community network, and a strong digital presence. In addition, the venue regularly organizes tournaments, community events, coaching clinics, and various promotional activities that enhance padel's visibility on social media. These characteristics make Padel

Pro Kemang an appropriate setting for examining how FoMO is utilized as part of a communication strategy to popularize padel.

Although studies on FoMO have expanded across marketing, social media, and consumer behavior research, investigations into the strategic utilization of FoMO within sports communication remain limited. Existing studies primarily focus on the effects of FoMO on individual behavior, consumption decisions, and social media usage. Meanwhile, research exploring how FoMO is socially constructed through interactions, communities, digital media, and symbolic representations within premium sports contexts such as padel remains scarce, particularly in Indonesia. This situation highlights a significant research gap that warrants further exploration.

This study focuses on the utilization of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) by Padel Pro Kemang in popularizing padel among upper-class communities in Jakarta. Specifically, the research examines communication strategies implemented through social media, community activities, events, and symbols of exclusivity that shape perceptions of prestige and social value surrounding padel. To maintain a focused scope, this study is limited to the communication practices of Padel Pro Kemang and the experiences of individuals representing the venue's primary market segment, namely upper-class communities characterized by premium lifestyles, high purchasing power, professional occupations, and active participation in exclusive social and recreational activities. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with Padel Pro Kemang management, coaches, players, and influencers actively involved in the padel ecosystem.

To understand this phenomenon, the study adopts the Symbolic Interactionism perspective. According to Mead (1937, as cited in Haris & Amalia, 2018), meaning is constructed through social interaction and interpreted through symbols. The concepts of mind, self, society, role of the other, and social construction of reality are employed to explain how symbols, social experiences, communities, and social media contribute to the formation of perceptions and the emergence of FoMO within the context of padel.

Based on this background, the research question is formulated as follows: How does Padel Pro Kemang utilize Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) in its communication strategy to popularize padel among upper-class communities in Jakarta? Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the communication strategies employed by Padel Pro Kemang in constructing FoMO through social media, communities, events, and symbols of exclusivity to promote padel. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of sports communication, digital communication, and Symbolic Interactionism studies, particularly in understanding the role of FoMO in shaping the popularity of sports within urban communities.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study research design. The qualitative approach was selected to gain an in-depth understanding of how Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) is constructed through the communication strategies implemented by Padel Pro

Kemang in popularizing padel among upper-class communities in Jakarta. The case study design was considered appropriate because the research focused on a specific case, namely Padel Pro Kemang, which was examined through various sources of evidence, including interviews, observations, documentation, and social media analysis.

The research focused on the communication strategies utilized by Padel Pro Kemang, particularly through social media activities, community engagement, events, and symbols of exclusivity that contribute to the construction of FoMO. Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their involvement in the padel ecosystem and their relevance to the research objectives. The participants consisted of Padel Pro Kemang management representatives, padel coaches, players, and influencers actively involved in playing and promoting padel.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, field documentation, observation, and literature review. In-depth interviews were conducted using semi-structured interview guidelines to obtain detailed information regarding the communication strategies employed by Padel Pro Kemang. Supporting data were gathered from scientific journals, books, articles, organizational documents, and social media content related to padel activities.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative research is an approach used to explore and understand the meanings individuals or groups attribute to social phenomena. Therefore, this study adopted an inductive process to interpret participants' experiences and perspectives regarding the role of FoMO in the growing popularity of padel.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis techniques, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analysis was guided by the Symbolic Interactionism perspective, particularly the concepts of mind, self, society, role of the other, and social construction of reality, to explain how social meanings, interactions, and symbolic representations contribute to the emergence of FoMO and the increasing popularity of padel among Jakarta's upper-class communities.

Results and Discussion

FoMO Phenomenon in Padel Pro Kemang's Efforts to Popularize Padel

Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) is a communication strategy that creates a feeling of being left behind from trends, experiences, or social activities. In the context of Padel Pro Kemang, FoMO is implemented through social media exposure, community activities, tournaments, and the promotion of an exclusive lifestyle associated with padel.

Through Instagram content, event documentation, and player reposts, Padel Pro Kemang continuously presents padel as a growing and desirable activity among Jakarta's upper-class society. This strategy encourages audiences to participate in order to avoid feeling excluded from a popular social trend.

The findings show that FoMO plays an important role in attracting new participants. As stated by Diko: "*FOMO, ngikut, karena nonton di Instagram, terus akhirnya ikut sampai sekarang.*" (Diko, personal communication, 2026)

Similarly, Coach David explained: “2024 itu ada yang namanya Padel Pro di Kemang. Mulai dari situ padel booming. Istilah FOMO lah ya, padel dari situ.” (Coach David, personal communication, 2026)

These findings support McGinnis (2020), who argues that FoMO emerges when individuals feel they may miss valuable experiences enjoyed by others. In the case of Padel Pro Kemang, FoMO serves as an initial trigger that encourages participation and contributes to the growing popularity of padel.

Mind

Within Symbolic Interactionism, *mind* refers to the process through which individuals interpret social symbols and assign meaning to them. The findings indicate that audiences construct their understanding of padel through social media content, tournaments, community activities, and premium facilities.

Several participants first became aware of padel through Instagram and digital exposure. Diko stated: “Sebelumnya tau dari Instagram-Instagram doang, nonton pemain-pemain Spanyol.” (Diko, personal communication, 2026)

Gilang similarly explained: “Pertama kali iklan ya, karena disini turnamen gede.” (Gilang, personal communication, 2026)

Social media functions as a symbolic medium that shapes perceptions of padel as a modern and growing sport. This interpretation is strengthened by the visibility of tournaments, crowded courts, and active community participation.

According to Coach Donny: “Kalau ada acara atau event pasti blast di media sosial.” (Coach Donny, personal communication, 2026)

The findings also reveal that crowded courts act as a form of social proof, while premium facilities reinforce the perception of padel as an exclusive sport. Furthermore, tournaments and community events create experiences that strengthen public interest and participation. Through these symbolic interpretations, audiences perceive padel as a popular, valuable, and socially relevant activity, ultimately generating FoMO.

Self

The concept of *self* explains how individual identity develops through social interaction and personal experience. The findings indicate that many participants initially joined padel because of FoMO but gradually incorporated the sport into their personal lifestyle.

Coach Arti explained: “Awalnya memang FOMO tapi akhirnya ketagihan untuk bermain lagi.” (Coach Arti, personal communication, 2026)

Similarly, Coach Okky stated: “Awalnya iya, tapi kalau sekarang mereka main karena memang sudah lebih suka bukan karena FOMO saja.” (Coach Okky, personal communication, 2026)

Participants reported that padel eventually became part of their identity as active and socially connected individuals. Beyond physical exercise, padel provides opportunities for networking, friendship, and self-development.

As stated by Gilang: “Olahraga iya, gaya hidup iya, koneksi orang-orang juga penting juga.” (Gilang, personal communication, 2026)

These findings suggest that FoMO acts as an entry point, while positive experiences and social interactions transform participation into a long-term lifestyle.

Society

The findings demonstrate that the popularity of padel is reinforced through collective social interactions. Communities, tournaments, and social gatherings contribute to the formation of a shared perception that padel is a modern and desirable activity.

Coach Arti explained: "*Awal FOMO tersalurkan dari komunitas, karena banyak orang yang awalnya FOMO kemudian membuat komunitas dan mengajak orang lain untuk ikut.*" (Coach Arti, personal communication, 2026)

Similarly, Coach David emphasized: "*Kalau nggak ada komunitas, padel nggak akan jalan sih.*" (Coach David, personal communication, 2026)

Community activities and tournaments create repeated social interactions that strengthen the collective meaning of padel. In addition, players often use padel venues as spaces for networking and socializing.

According to Coach David: "*Instead of mereka nongkrong di mall atau cafe, mereka lebih prefer nongkrong di lapangan padel.*" (Coach David, personal communication, 2026)

These interactions contribute to the social construction of padel as a lifestyle activity rather than merely a sport.

Role of the Other

The findings reveal that participation in padel is strongly influenced by both significant others and generalized others. Significant others include friends, coaches, and community members, while generalized others consist of influencers, celebrities, and social media audiences.

Several participants acknowledged that they first joined padel through recommendations from friends.

Opic stated: "*Dari temen aja, diajak temen.*" (Opic, personal communication, 2026)

Abi similarly explained: "*Dari temen tau ini.*" (Abi, personal communication, 2026)

In addition, influencers and public figures contribute to increasing public awareness and curiosity toward padel.

Coach Donny explained: "*Kita memanfaatkan KOL, influencer, artis, tanpa diminta mereka sudah inisiatif promosi dan kita repost.*" (Coach Donny, personal communication, 2026)

The findings indicate that both interpersonal relationships and broader social influences contribute to the development of FoMO and encourage individuals to participate in padel.

Social Construction of Reality

The findings demonstrate that the perception of padel as a modern, exclusive, and popular sport is socially constructed through continuous interaction, communication, and symbolic representation. Instagram content, community activities, tournaments, and premium facilities collectively shape public understanding of padel. These elements create a consistent narrative that padel is an attractive activity associated with prestige, social interaction, and contemporary urban lifestyles.

Coach Arti explained: "*Padel Pro resmi pada tahun 2024 yang punya lisensi Dubai.*" (Coach Arti, personal communication, 2026)

Meanwhile, Coach David emphasized the role of tournaments in increasing public interest: "*Turnamen-turnamen kayak Padel Pro Series meningkatkan minat orang-orang.*" (Coach David, personal communication, 2026)

The repeated exposure to these symbols creates a shared reality in which padel is perceived as a valuable social activity. As a result, FoMO emerges as individuals seek to participate in experiences that are increasingly recognized and valued by their social environment.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Padel Pro Kemang utilizes Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) as an effective communication strategy to popularize padel among upper-class communities in Jakarta. Through digital exposure on social media, community engagement, event organization, social proof, and the creation of an exclusive image, Padel Pro Kemang successfully encourages public interest and participation in padel.

From the perspective of Symbolic Interactionism, the findings demonstrate that the popularity of padel is not solely driven by the sport itself but is socially constructed through interactions, symbols, and shared experiences. Social media content, community activities, premium facilities, and tournaments function as symbolic elements that shape perceptions of padel as a modern, prestigious, and socially valuable activity. These meanings encourage individuals to participate in padel and become part of the growing community.

The study also finds that FoMO primarily serves as an initial trigger that motivates individuals to try padel. However, long-term participation is sustained by factors such as enjoyment of the sport, health benefits, social relationships, self-development, and a sense of belonging within the padel community. Therefore, FoMO can be understood as an entry point that accelerates the adoption of padel, while meaningful experiences and social interactions play a more significant role in maintaining continued engagement.

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