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NO SIGNAL HERE:

**Self-Development and Optimal Experience from
Digital-Free Tourism**

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Amazingly, this is the end of my PhD journey. Knowledge is boundless like the sea; but being a student must end. I hope this is not the end of thinking, reasoning, researching, and creating; I wish the previous sentence is not just a hope. Although three years and six months are only hopefully a small part of my academic career, a small part of my finite life and nothing seen from a universal perspective; this period of time resembles the course of life from newborn to completeness. I have started from being curious, grown by encountering challenges, persisted because of the confidence obtained from individual achievements, slowed down to reflect, found the way to proceed, and now experience some completeness and fulfilment. Being at the end of the PhD course is also a wonderful start.

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Jing Li (Lydia)

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ABSTRACT

The present research aims to establish a conceptual understanding of the benefits tourists may gain from digital-free tourism. The concept of digital-free tourism was proposed to represent situations characterised by the absence of or severely limited access to information and communication technology. There has been a contemporary concern over the sustained use of the internet and digital technologies, in terms of the side-effects on individuals' physical, psychological and social conditions and the possible deterioration of tourist experience. Therefore, the assumption of the potential of reduced technology use in tourism to improve tourist well-being has been claimed. Four interrelated studies were conducted to investigate the topic both as a social phenomenon and a niche tourism market. The rewarding outcomes of digital-free tourism were examined by addressing three specific questions.

The first research question “is digital-free tourism rising in prominence?” was answered by the first study – *media representation of digital-free tourism: a critical discourse analysis* included in Chapter 2 of this thesis. Archival data, that is online media documents focusing on the broad topic of digital detoxing on holiday, was analysed at three levels, including linguistic characteristics, temporal diachronic interpretation and socio-cultural explanation. Media discourses around digital-free tourism were found to be evolving. Specifically, vacations and tourism are discoursed as ideal situations for managing technology use behaviours. The value of digital-free tourism over time has moved from relieving stress to life flourishing. Multiple digital-free tourism providers now offer diverse experiences to a growing broad market.

The second research question “what are the positive experiences and impacts of digital-free tourism?” was answered by conducting the second study – *exploration of benefits from digital-free tourism: a grounded theory approach* in Chapter 3. Sixty five carefully selected

key informants with expert knowledge or personal experience of digital-free tourism were asked to report their experience, observations and perspectives about reduced technology use on holiday. Based on the patterns in the data, a theoretical model was developed to display the positive changes of tourists' psychological, behavioural and life conditions through the process of digital-free tourism.

The third research question "in what ways does digital-free vacation experience contribute to people's well-being?" was addressed in two further in-depth studies. These studies were developed in Chapters 4 and 5.

The third study in Chapter 4 - *self-development in digital-free tourism: building character strengths through coping with challenging* investigated the correlations between digital-free tourism and the development of character strengths and virtues which build personal well-being. Key-informants' statements obtained in the previous study were re-coded by employing a catalogue of twenty four character strengths in positive psychology as a priori coding scheme. In the results, twenty three character strengths were found to be related to digital-free tourism. They were perceived to be the strengths that were utilised to cope with issues faced in the digital-free contexts. A tiered model was built to outline the core, secondary and peripheral strengths in digital-free tourism.

The fourth study in Chapter 5 - *optimal experience: the role of reduced smartphone use in increasing perception of restorative environments and producing flow* attempted to develop measures for the levels of perceived restorative quality of digital-free tourism environments and the flow tourists experienced when technology use was reduced; as well as to examine the nexus among critical variables by testing a Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM). The hypothesised positive correlation between restorative environment and flow was confirmed. Smartphone dependence was found to be effective in reducing the level of flow and moderating the relationship between restorative environment and flow. A

trend of high dependence on smartphone weakening tourists' ability to perceive restorative digital-free environment was also revealed by this empirical study.

Consequently, the value and significance of positive changes of tourists' psychological, social, behavioural and life conditions arising from disconnection are suggested in these findings about the understudied concept of digital-free tourism. Such knowledge can make important theoretical contributions to the understanding of the intricate relationship between technology and tourism, the rewarding outcomes of vacation time involving reduced technology engagement, and the well-being from positive tourist experience. Digital-free tourism can provide individuals opportunities to experience a new way of being in this digital era, reflect on and regulate the technology use behaviours of themselves and their families, as well as increase well-being through selecting unplugging vacations. The present research also introduced digital-free tourism as a new style of tourism product and service that can be an effective strategy for remote regions to develop innovative forms of tourism.

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PUBLICATIONS FROM THIS THESIS

Chapter NO.	Details of publication(s) on which chapter is based	Nature and extent of the intellectual input of each author, including the candidate
Chapter 2	<p>Li, J., Pearce, P., & Low, D. (2018). Media representation of digital free tourism: a critical discourse analysis. <i>Tourism Management</i>. 69, 317-329. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2018.06.027. [SSCI; A* in Australian Business Deans' Council journal list]</p>	<p>The authors co-developed the research question. Jing Li, the candidate and Philip Pearce developed the research design. Jing Li collected the data and performed the data analyses with assistance from Philip Pearce and David Low. Jing Li wrote the first draft of the paper which was revised with editorial input from Philip Pearce and David Low.</p>
Chapter 3	<p>Li, J., Pearce, P.L., & Chen, T. (2019). New connections from being disconnected; digital free tourism and rewarding experiences. Paper presented and winning the Best PhD Paper Award at the conference <i>CAUTHE 2019 Sustainability of Tourism, Hospitality and Events in a Disruptive Digital Age</i>, 10-15 February 2019, in QLD Australia.</p>	<p>Jing Li and Philip Pearce co-developed research question and research design. Jing Li collected the data; Tingzhen Chen coded the data into concepts; Jing Li organised concepts into themes. Jing Li wrote the first draft of the paper which was revised with editorial input from Philip Pearce.</p>

Chapter 1

Introduction, Theoretical Foundations, Literature Review, Aims and Research Structure

1.0 CHAPTER OUTLINE

1.1 Research Focus

1.2 Research Background

1.2.1 Contemporary Vigilance against Overwhelming Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

1.2.2 ICT Reshaping Tourist Behaviours and Experience

1.2.3 Predominant Endorsement of ICT Adoption in Tourism

1.2.4 Tourism and Hospitality Products and Services Fitting the Rising Demands for Digital Detox

1.3 Theoretical Foundations

1.3.1 Reflexive Modernity

1.3.2 Positive Psychology

1.4 Literature Review

1.4.1 Side-Effects of Sustained ICT Use on Tourist Experience

1.4.2 Fragmented Investigations on Tourism Situations involving Digital Disconnection

1.5 Knowledge Gaps

1.6 Research Aims and Significance

1.7 Research Paradigm

1.8 Research Structure and Thesis Outline

1.1 Research Focus

The present research focuses on benefits from vacations characterised by reduced usage of information and communication technology (ICT). The concept of “digital-free tourism (DFT)” is proposed to represent tourism situations that feature the absence of or severely limited access to ICT (Li, Pearce & Low, 2018). This conceptualisation is based on two other terms. One is the concept of “technology dead zones”, which was described in a seminal work studying disconnection in tourism, as “locations with limited or no internet technology access” (Pearce & Gretzel, 2012). The other foundation for the work is the real-world term “digital detox” which has been included in the Oxford Dictionary in 2013 and refers to “a period of time during which a person refrains from using electronic devices such as smartphones or computers, regarded as an opportunity to reduce stress or focus on social interaction in the physical world” (Lexico, 2019).

Drawing on the exogenously oriented dead zones and spontaneously oriented digital detox, I propose “digital-free tourism” in a more positive sense to highlight the positive impacts of vacation experience featuring disconnection. I hope to improve technology users’ holiday experience and well-being; rather than viewing them as patients or addicts who need treatment. The rationale is that I agree with supporting technology development in tourism; but suggest unplugging for a selected time and in certain settings can also be seen as valuable.

The research scope is further articulated as follows. The central concerns of the research are tourists not using and not wanting to use ICT during their travels. In particular, the discussed ICT functions of note include social contacts, information consumption and continuing entertainment on digital devices; all of which are facilitated by the internet. More specifically, technology use in this thesis refers to tourists’ use of smart phones and other portable digital devices to access social media, instant messaging services, synchronous emails, web-based multiplayer gaming, information searching and on-line consumption

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during their travels. The interest of this research does not extend to the use of cameras, music players, e-readers, GPS devices, and wearable fitness trackers, although they are also usually owned by tourists and may require connectivity (MacKay & Vogt, 2012). The usage of ICT for decision-making, post-trip sharing and information searching before and after travels will not be addressed in this research. It is the on-site digital-free tourism which is in the focus of concern.

Four types of digital-free tourism contexts are of interest and can be categorised along two dimensions; level of connectivity and tourists' motivation to disconnect. Digital-free tourism settings either exist because of technical constraints; or occur because of conscious management efforts to restrict technology access. Further, some tourists may be motivated to disconnect from digital technology while others happen to travel to disconnected locations. Figure 1.1 presents the classifications of tourism contexts based on digital connectivity and tourists' motivations. The four shaded areas represent the digital-free tourism situations which will be studied in the current research.

		Level of Connectivity		
		No or limited connectivity because of technical problems	Restricted connectivity	Full connectivity
Motivation	Self-motivated	Travel selected to remote areas and nature-based space for digital detox	Connectivity is technically possible but restricted by providers or tourists themselves	Tourists want connectivity
	Imposed	Travel to locations without a signal for other motivations than digital detoxing	Connectivity is technically possible but restricted by providers or upon others' requirements	Tourists do not want connectivity but are connected reluctantly

Figure 1.1 Classifications of connectivity-based tourism contexts with the shaded areas representing digital-free tourism

Note: drawn by author

1.2 Research Background

1.2.1 Contemporary Vigilance against Overwhelming Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Habitual use of the internet and digital technologies has become a widespread phenomenon among families, in businesses, and across leisure contexts. There has been a contemporary concern over the sustained use of the internet and digital technologies. The ubiquitous technologies transform the ways people live, work and experience leisure; in many ways these connections definitely facilitate and enrich the modern life. On the other hand, the side-effects of technology adoption have been demonstrated and are reviewed in the following sections.

The voluntary adoption of the innovative technologies has been driven by both utilitarian and hedonic goals (Turel & Serenko, 2012). Undoubtedly, technologies make life easier and more efficient while the enjoyment of using technologies drives further use, and in turn, develops enduring habits (Cyr, Head, & Ivanov, 2006; Kirillova & Wang, 2016; Limayem, Hirt, & Cheung, 2007; Van der Heijden, 2004).

The adverse effects of excess technology use, over dependence and possible solutions to this social problem have received wide attention and been studied in multiple disciplines, such as Public Health, Medicine, Psychology, Sociology and Information and Computer Science (Harwood, Dooley, Scott, & Joiner, 2014; Konok, Gigler, Bereczky, & Miklósi, 2016; Turel & Serenko, 2012; Turel, Serenko, & Bontis, 2011).

The adverse impacts of very frequent ICT activities have been richly demonstrated. The risks include the interference with physically-based tasks, increased anxiety and stress, health issues, decreased family engagement, problematic social relationships, and lack of self-awareness (Byun et al., 2009; Harwood et al., 2014; Konok et al., 2016; Turel et al.,

2011; Turel, & Serenko, 2012). In Donnolly's poll among social media users (2012), half of the participants admitted that their lives and moods were altered for the worse, revealing lower level of confidence, inability to fully relax, sleep disorders and problematic relationships.

Technology/internet spectrum addiction disorders are a plausible contemporary phenomenon as one of the side-effects of technology development (Block, 2008; Kakabadse, Porter, & Vance, 2007; Karaiskos, Tzavellas, Balta, & Paparrigopoulos, 2010; Turel & Serenko, 2012). In particular, technology artefacts which produce thrills or fill social-psychological needs are the most addictive; social media, video games, messaging applications, on-line shopping and internet gambling are of great concern (Pierce, 2009; Fenichel, 2004; Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009; Young, 2010; 1998a; 1998b). Adopters of technologies, especially communication technology users, may develop harmful psychological conditions and social isolation when digital activities dominate daily life and real-world relationships become secondary to on-line contacts (Byun et al., 2009; Ferraro, Caci, D'amico, & Blasi, 2006; Tanti & Buhalis, 2016; Young, 1998a).

The increasing focus on side-effects of technology adoption in other research fields, prompts critical consideration of people's ICT use behaviours on vacation. The negative outcomes from excessive technology use spill over into holiday contexts due to the ICT-induced reduction of the boundary between routine life and holidays.

1.2.2 ICT Reshaping Tourist Behaviours and Experience

The prevalent ICT adoption by both holiday makers and tourism and hospitality businesses have led to the adaption of tourist behaviours and experience in various ways. Technology-aided means are reshaping the ways that people make travel decisions, plan, live tourist experience and share. Such influential technology-induced changes of tourism include on-

line marketing, digital word-of-mouth, electronic commerce, technology-enhanced tourism products, instant networking on social media, innovative virtual tourism, and so forth (Dhaigude, Kapoor, & Ambekar, 2016; Lee, 2016; Wang, Wu, Luo, & Lu, 2017; Wiltshier & Clarke, 2017; Yılmaz & Olgaç, 2016).

There has been much focus on the usefulness of ICT in tourism contexts and the drivers for technology adoption by tourists. Fundamentally, habitual technology use, the tendency to work on holidays, the functional demands in unfamiliar settings, and certain social-psychological needs are factors encouraging tourists' usage of digital technologies (Wang, Xiang, & Fesenmaier, 2014). Several background reasons explain the rise of technology use on holiday. Firstly, there is ownership and affordability. Contemporary tourists clearly own more digital devices because they are affordable and woven into the fabric of daily life (MacKay & Vogt, 2012; Wang, Xiang, & Fesenmaier, 2016). Secondly, some people have a strong specific need to manage work issues while on holiday (Pearce & Gretzel, 2012; Tanti & Buhalis, 2016; Kirillova & Wang, 2016). Thirdly, many tourists seek to maintain links to friends and families as well as to share memorable/thrilling experiences (Minazzi & Mauri, 2015; Tanti & Buhalis, 2016; Wang, Xiang et al., 2014). Fourthly, some tourists also resort to digital devices to take a break from physical interactions at tourism settings or fill downtime during their trips (Neuhofer, 2016; Wang, Xiang et al., 2016). A further driver is the convenience, efficiency and flexibility of using ICT to facilitate their travels (Wang, Xiang et al., 2014; 2016; Minazzi & Mauri, 2015; Tanti & Buhalis, 2016; MacKay & Vogt, 2012).

Activities that tourists conduct on digital devices are mainly related to searching for information, maintaining a link with work routines and social networks, providing entertainment, and enhancing and interpreting tourism activities (MacKay & Vogt, 2012; Neuhofer, 2016; Wang, Xiang et al., 2014). As to the prevalent digital tools, smartphones, PDAs with internet function, wireless laptops, music players and GPS are the most

frequently used digital devices during travels (MacKay & Vogt, 2012; Wang, Xiang et al., 2014). Desktop computers were frequently reported to be available even when their availability was not anticipated and used spontaneously (MacKay & Vogt, 2012). The specific locations where internet is frequently used vary less in tourism than at home and workplace, despite of the similar types of places. Specifically, commercial accommodation is the most prevalent places for internet use by vacationers, followed by public venues (hot spots and cafe), personal vehicles, homes of visited friends and relatives, airports and travel information centers (Wang, Xiang et al., 2014).

Changes in tourist behaviours induced by ICT adoption essentially reside in the unlocked distinctive ‘pre-’, ‘en-’ and ‘post-’ travel stages (Wang, Xiang et al., 2014). For example, an increased proportion of time during travels can be spent on information searching, planning and decision making and booking which were mostly done before departure (MacKay & Vogt, 2012). Similarly, the ubiquitous connectedness allows instant sharing which used to be predominantly a post-trip activity. Social media postings and blogs in particular have gained prominence in tourism and hospitality research (Xiang, Du, Ma, & Fan, 2017). The particular roles that social media is playing include access to information, awareness of products, experience sharing through a variety of platforms, and evaluation postings (Hudson & Thal, 2013; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010; Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). Some people are even more involved in social media while travelling than usual because memorable tourist experiences motivate them to share (Minazzi & Mauri, 2015; Tanti & Buhalis, 2016).

1.2.3 Predominant Endorsement of ICT Adoption in Tourism

Side-effects of continued ICT engagement on individual and social well-being have been well studied across disciplines, such as Public Health, Medicine, Psychology, Sociology and

Information and Computer Science (Harwood et al., 2014). By way of contrast, tourism researchers have tended to enthusiastically endorse the benefits of technology adoption rather than evaluate or warn against the subtle psychological and well-being impacts of travel-based technology devotion (Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2015; Dhaigude et al, 2016; Gretzel, Koo, Sigala, & Xiang, 2015; Ivanov, Webster, & Berezina, 2017; Lee, 2016; Li, Hu, Huang, & Duan 2017; Murphy, Hofacker, & Gretzel, 2017; Wiltshier & Clarke, 2017; Yilmaz & Olgaç, 2016). There is an implicit assumption that digital technologies will be increasingly embraced by both tourists and tourism industry (Dickinson, Hibbert, & Filimonau, 2016).

The perspective that technology confers substantial advantages are certainly prevalent in the studies of digital connectivity and tourism (Akaka & Vargo, 2014; Chathoth, Altinay, Harrington, Okumus, & Chan, 2013; Neuhofer, Buhalis, & Ladkin, 2014). Studies about the relationships between technology and tourism are still highly biased to emphasise the power and possibilities of the linkages (Buonincontri, Morvillo, Okumus, & van Niekerk, 2017; Akaka & Vargo, 2014; Chathoth et al., 2013; Neuhofer et al., 2014). The endorsement of “smart tourism” and the strategies to develop “informationisation” dominate in the tourism literature (Gretzel, Sigala, Xiang, & Koo, 2015; Li, Hu, et al, 2017). Technology-enhanced experiences and value creation by ICT adoption have been the most frequently studied issues in recent tourism research (Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2015; Gretzel, Werthner, Koo, & Lamsfus, 2015).

Furthermore, remote regions without reliable ICT facilities and tourist sites where internet and mobile signal is not provided are often considered to be disadvantaged (Neuhofer et al., 2014). Similarly, the demands of tourists with lower levels of technology adoption are often neglected by tourism providers and researchers (Minghetti & Buhalis, 2010; Van Dijk, 2006).

However, it should be noted that “there are not only ‘have-nots’, but also ‘want-nots’” exist as explanations for digital divide issues (Van Dijk, 2006, pp. 226). Motivational factors should be taken into account for the use or non-use of technology (Minghetti & Buhalis, 2010; Van Dijk, 2006). Leisure, especially vacation and tourism, may be the domains where motivational components play critical roles in forming individuals’ attitudes to and behaviours of digital adoption because most technology uses in leisure are voluntary.

1.2.4 Tourism and Hospitality Products and Services Fitting the Rising

Demands for Digital Detox

There are widening demands worldwide for taking time out from the virtual world although utilising technology to make life easier is the main trend. For example, the National Day of Unplugging, a movement initiated in America which spreads rapidly to many countries, advocates a 24 hour global respite from technology. It highlights “the value of disconnecting from digital devices to connect with ourselves, our loved ones and our communities in real time” (National Day of Unplugging, 2019).

In particular, vacation situations are viewed as ideal for digital detoxing. The Scottish tourism sector revealed that more and more holiday makers are seeking “digital downtime” in a survey report (Visit Scotland, 2015). Individuals who demonstrate desire for disconnection range from pressured workers to young generations or early technology adopters who feel less connected with friends and families.

Pragmatic efforts by tourism practitioners have preceded academic analysis in grasping the growing market demand for digital downtime. The notion of “digital detox” has been utilised to market remote and isolated destinations. For instance, the mountainous high land regions in Scotland and villages in Morocco without mobile signal are promoted as the

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perfect places for escaping and in turn improving mental health (Visit Scotland, 2015). Similarly, “digital detoxing” holiday programs during which guests are weaned from technology become the selling points of many island destinations, such as the Maldives, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Little Palm Island in Florida (Anita Jain, 2016; Discover SVG, 2016; Little Palm Island, 2016).

Moreover, a growing number of specialised businesses in tourism and hospitality industries are providing off-line environments and digital-free experiences. Lack of Wi-Fi, limited cell service, or even the absence of electricity, all once unforgivable for any tourist site and hotel, have become selling points. Such special forms of luxury accommodation range from tents nestled between sand dunes at La Pause, Morocco to select Caribbean resorts at Petit St. Vincent (Secret Energy, 2017). “Black hole” resorts featuring the lack of internet and mobile reception also become the greatest luxury vacation choices in the United Kingdom and North America because they help vacationers escape from usual digital communications (Carrier, 2016). Some hotels and resorts for the family market encourage holiday makers to cut down their online screen time, and offer multiple activities for family members to connect with one another (Family Traveller, 2017).

A diversity of travel packages and holiday programs weaning tourists off the internet are gaining popularity globally among tourists with special interests or motivations. For example, lifestyle-oriented retreat programs, where participants are temporarily deprived of digital devices, are prevalent as a way to treat internet addiction, manage stress and enhance work and life resilience (Smith & Puczkó, 2015). There are also a wide range of camping sites popular among tourists travelling with families and those interested in the nature and adventurous activities. Digital-free space and detoxing experiences are also gaining popularity among business travelers, especially those always-online executives who choose to switch off from the barrage of constant work communication in their free time (Executive Style, 2017).

In addition, the ideas similar to digital-free tourism have also been accepted and developed by tourism authorities and official destination marketing organisations. For example, Tourism Thailand has collaborated with Dream Jobbing, a vocation consultant team for university students, to experiment with international millennials about leaving smartphones and social media behind when travelling in Thailand. Their rewarding experiences and the positive outcomes in the volunteers' physical and mental states were filmed in a tourism documentary to remind audiences of the significance of unplugging on holiday (Dream Jobbing, 2017).

The cases are interesting and instructive, but the possibilities of enhancing tourists' well-being through restricting tourists' ICT engagement have not been considered in systematic theoretical terms. Taken collectively, the present research is situated within four themes; 1) the rising vigilance against the tyranny of technology in modern societies worldwide; 2) the great influences of technology adoption on tourist behaviours and experience; 3) the predominant endorsement of technology adoption in tourism research; and 4) the emerging tourism and hospitality programs offering opportunities for digital detoxing.

The possibilities of digital-free tourism are still unstudied despite emerging research attentions on the subtle adverse impacts of travel-based technology devotion on tourists' experience. It is significant and urgent to explore the ways to help tourists minimise the side-effects of technology use (Neuhofner, 2016; Pearce, 2011a). Moreover, it is valuable to develop the conceptual understanding of the benefits from digital-free tourist experience to enhance tourist experience and improve well-being.

1.3 Theoretical Foundations

The topic of the research, benefits of digital-free tourism, has been clarified and focused in the above sections. In this section, the selected theories will be stated which lay the foundation for the research studies. In particular, Reflective Modernity and Positive Psychology work together to provide critical perspectives from which we will view the topic of digital-free tourism.

Firstly, the knowledge of reflexive modernity will facilitate to understand the social and cultural backgrounds where the phenomenon of digital-free tourism has emerged. For example, the embeddedness and socio-cultural explanation of the evolving media representation of digital-free tourism will be discussed by linking media discourses to the development of modernity in the second chapter of this thesis. Secondly, the principle concerns of positive psychology, that is individual well-being, will be considered as the ultimate study aim of the current research. More technically, key constructs of positive psychology will be used as approaches to investigating the experience and beneficial outcomes of digital-free tourism. For example, character strengths will be employed as the theoretical approach for Study 3 in the fourth chapter; flow will be the focus of study 4 in the fifth chapter.

1.3.1 Reflexive Modernity

Contemporary society has been and will continue to be experiencing a radical transition to what has been labeled “modernity”. The term modernity signifies a historical period in which reason, function and scientific rationality become the fundamental ideologies to orient social activities and everyday behaviours (Giddens, 1990). It is characterized by a teleology which advocates endless progress and growth (Lefebvre, 2000). However, although modernity endows social members with greater freedom to pursue personal

advancement arguably, it also leads to negative experiences, especially the loss of stable and authentic social life. Ironically, modernity seems not to contribute to the increase of human well-being directly (Touraine, 1995). The emphasis on abstract advancement and instrumental rationality leads to the difficulties in satisfying humans' demands for emotional fulfilment and spiritual belonging (Heidegger, 1977; Rabinbach, 1998).

Technology development, particularly the growth of information and communication technologies (ICT), is one of the most important visible characteristics of modernity. ICT itself is useful rather than harmful. However, the ways modern tools are applied can lead to problematic consequences. The most discussed negative outcome caused by ICT advancement is that people are relying on abstract and symbolic knowledge to instruct their social life. In other words, more emphasis is placed on the roles people are playing than on who the individuals are, in terms of their own identities. Inter-personal friendships and emotional bonds are nowadays built and influenced through technology; rather than depending on ties of consanguinity or geographical relationships. It has been suggested that an increasing standardisation of lifestyles has been developing for some time (Lefebvre, 2000). Technology-mediated relationships advance this trend. Some have argued that the uncertainty of modern roles leads to the lack of ontological security and a lack of authenticity among contemporary citizens (Bauman, 1990; 2007). Therefore, frequent anxiety is not uncommon. More and more people are trying to avoid encounters with others and confining themselves to restricted (technology) spaces due to the sense of insecurity about unstable and "electronic" social relationships (Sennett, 1998; 2017).

It is consistent with these views of modernity and social transformation that particular sections of the global society have embarked on an endless search for places which seem to be "uncontaminated" by modernisation. This phenomenon is a representation of the reflexive nature of modernity. The term "modern subject" is used to represent the group of

people whose identity is unavoidably shaped by modernisation but who often strive to flee from modernity (Giddens, 1991; Oakes, 1997). People who realise the negativity of modernisation are consciously seeking to alienate from modern routines. This is not passive escaping but a way of actively responding to modernity.

In the view of the sociologists who write about tourism, escape was seen as a way of actively responding to modernity by “reversing” of (Cohen, 1979a;b) or “taking time-out” from mundane daily life and work (Hottola, 2004; Smith, 1989; Turner & Ash, 1975; Urry, 1990). Tourists, as modern subjects, are trying to find new possibilities of being which are beyond the tyranny of modernity through temporarily crossing a distinct threshold from home into tourism contexts (Graburn, 1989; Hottola, 2004). However, being a social phenomenon emerging in modern times, leisure and tourism too are shaped by modernisation. The advancement of digital technology has led to the blurring of the essential “binaries” of holidays (home and away, work and leisure, presence and absence) (Hannam, Butler, & Paris, 2014; Hannam, Sheller, & Urry, 2006). Consequently, modern tourism involving constant digital connectivity impedes vacationers from detaching themselves from regular routines. Some concepts representing the characteristics of modernity in tourism and leisure domains are digital elasticity (Pearce, 2011a, pp. 41), spill-over effects (Burch, 1969; Currie, 1997; MacKay & Vogt, 2012; Wang, Xiang et al., 2016), de-exoticising tourism (Larsen, Urry, & Axhausen, 2007), and decapsulation (Jansson, 2007).

How can people respond to the negative experience of modernity by active social, cultural and spatial practices? For many people, the best way to take a break from modernity may be travelling to and even emigrating to “places” that lag behind the development of modernisation. That is, some people keep seeking experiences very separate from daily life in leisure and tourism. Several commentators argue that tourists are consciously experiencing modern alienation, which is represented by concepts, such as the tourist gaze on the exotic, products and services of staged authenticity, disneyisation of social life, and

tourists' appreciation of hypermodality and hyperrealities (Bryman, 1999; Lemke, 2002; MacCannell, 1973; 2013; Oakes, 2005; Umberto, 1990; Urry & Larsen, 2011). These "outdated" spaces are believed to be undeveloped, seemingly frozen in time, so they can provide people with a sense of controllability and security. Such "places" do not only refer to geographical spaces but also localities constructed subjectively. For example, developing digital-free tourism is a means of making places separate from the tyranny of modernity.

1.3.2 Positive Psychology

1) A New Area of Psychology: the Scientific Study of Well-Being

Positive Psychology can be understood as the modernisation of conventional psychology which builds new theories of well-being. In the words of Martin Seligman, the founder of positive psychology, the new area of psychology is developed "to catalyze a change in psychology from a preoccupation only with repairing the worst things in life to also building the best qualities in life" (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014, pp. 5). In particular, Positive Psychology has been defined as the scientific study of optimal human functioning which aims to discover and promote factors allowing individuals and communities to thrive (Carr, 2013; Gable & Haidt, 2005; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014; Sheldon & King, 2001).

Well-being, generally defined as a desirable state to maximise life experiences and function very effectively, has been substantially studied as the core goal of positive psychology research and practices (Uysal, Perdue, & Sirgy, 2012). Positive Psychology operationalises the issue of well-being by considering positive aspects of life, such as happiness and flourishing. Specifically, there are three threads or core ideas of positive psychology; firstly, positive experience, such as satisfaction and flow, secondly, individual strengths facilitating a "good life", such as character strengths and virtues, and thirdly, contributors to the

development of citizenship and communities, such as work ethics and social responsibilities (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).

The terms hedonic (subjective pleasure) and eudaimonic (self-actualisation) well-being characterise two approaches to this field (Delle Fave, Brdar, Freire, Vella-Brodrick, & Wissing, 2011; Ryan & Deci, 2001). As positive psychology has emerged as a study area within mainstream psychology, human well-being studies have shifted from an emphasis on hedonistic (pleasure oriented) assessments to eudaimonic (flourishing) approaches (Carruthers & Hood, 2004; Huta & Waterman, 2014; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 2000). In particular, studies emphasise on the pursuits that are directed towards building strengths conducive to personal growth (Huta, & Ryan, 2010)

Some pathways for psychological well-being, especially eudaimonic components, include: coping with challenges, adapting to extraordinary or changing environments, working through hardship and challenging situations, engaging fully with the present, undertaking activities which fit with one's values, and building autonomy, competence, and relationships (Fredrickson, 2004; Ryan, 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryff & Singer, 2000; Waterman, 1993).

2) Resonance between Tourism Research and Positive Psychology

Positive psychology research resonates in a rich and rewarding way with tourism study since the well-being and happiness of individuals are core and common concerns. Three developments aligned under the positive psychology umbrella are 1) the rich study of emotions (Frederickson, 2004); 2) the assessments of the way people respond to time in their life (Zimbardo & Boyd, 2008); and 3) the delineation of character strengths which are valued ends for human well-being (Filep, 2009; Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005; Pearce, Filep, & Ross, 2011).

Tourism has these concerns but has approached these topics by rather diffuse and less well organised strands of research. For example, the topic of personal development and growth has featured in some studies of learning from travelling (Pearce & Foster, 2007; Falk, Ballantyne, Packer, & Benckendorff, 2012). Tourists' approaches to time are also beginning to be considered (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010). Furthermore, the topic of improving well-being has also entered academic discussions in the field of tourism, following a paradigm shift in psychology towards positive psychology (Seligman et al., 2005; Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008; Langer, 2009). Positive impacts of vacations on well-being have always been assumed to exist. For example, there has been research on tourism and welfare (Hall & Brown, 2006).

Leisure is regarded as an important life domain providing contexts and opportunities for enhancing well-being through achievement of enjoyment, meaning and growth (Anderson & Heyne, 2012; Iwasaki, 2007; Yolal, Gursoy, Uysal, Kim, & Karacaoğlu, 2016). The broaden-and-build theory is of particular relevance here as it stresses that playful and exploratory activities can boost psychological well-being (Fredrickson, 2004). Tourism situations are ideal for individuals to broaden their experience and expand their usual daily contacts by learning and building skills, connecting with different people and experiencing new ways of being (Durko & Petrick, 2016; Laing & Frost, 2017; Pearce, 2012; Pearce & Foster, 2007; Pearce & Packer, 2013).

However, most studies in tourism have focused on hedonic well-being, thus equating positive experience such as satisfaction. By way of contrast, only a few studies have revealed the capacity of tourism to produce eudaimonic benefits characterised by meaning, engagement and fulfilment (Filep, 2012; 2014; Smith & Diekmann, 2017). Research on well-being induced by vacations can be richly informed by developments in positive psychology (Pearce, 2009; Pearce et al., 2011). For example, Matteucci and Filep (2017)

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identified the strong links between the experience of tourists' sense of self-realisation and fulfilment when travelling to participate in Flamenco dancing. These emerging research endeavours are leading to a focus on enhancing human flourishing through vacationing in demanding tourism situations.

In particular, the absence of digital connectivity, the concern of the current research, offers another kind of challenging context for tourists. The situations where internet connection and electronic devices are restricted can be very mentally demanding for contemporary tourists who are so accustomed to using their devices for enjoyment, information, socialisation, and checking on their work world (Turel & Serenko, 2012; Wang, Xiang et al, 2014; 2016). Like the physical challenges in demanding leisure activities, the extraordinary experience of unplugging provides the potential for eudaimonic well-being (Scott, Cayla, & Cova, 2017; Huta & Ryan, 2010; Quinlan, Swain, & Vella-Brodrick, 2012).

Figure 1.2 displays the theoretical foundations on which the research is based.

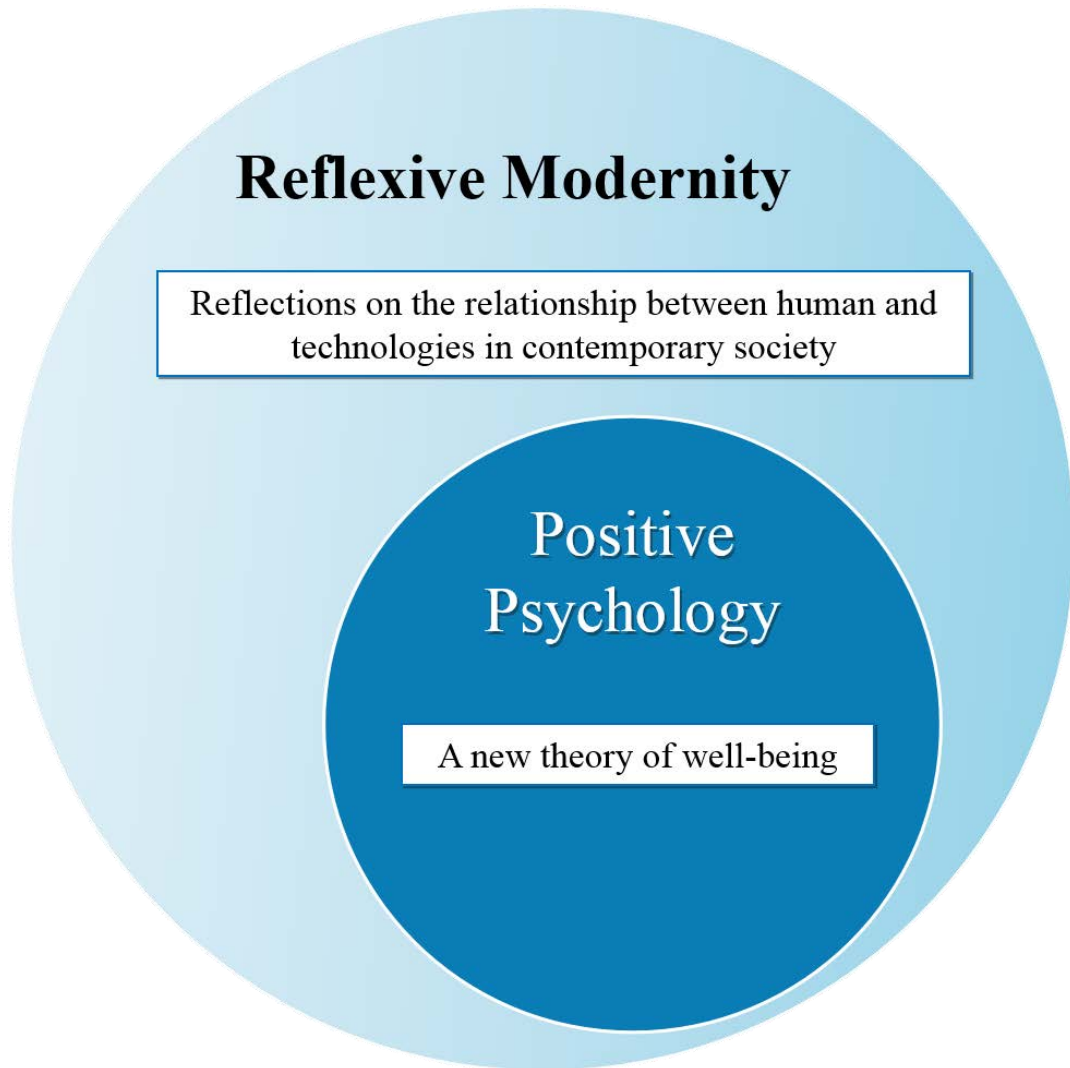


Figure 1.2 Theoretical foundations

Note: drawn by author

1.4 Literature Review

1.4.1 Side-Effects of Sustained ICT Use on Tourist Experience

As noted previously, there is a predominant endorsement of technology adoption in tourism research (Minghetti & Buhalis, 2010; Wang, Xiang et al., 2014; Wang, So, & Sparks, 2017; Willis, Ladkin, Jain, & Clayton, 2017). On the other hand, there have also been attempts to conceptualise the potential negative impacts of technology use (Gretzel, 2014). In the last five years, negative impacts of ubiquitous ICT application in the tourism domain are gaining increasing attention, especially constant smartphone use and social media checks by holiday makers (Lalicic & Weismayer, 2016; Neuhofer, 2016; Neuhofer & Ladkin, 2017; Paris, Berger, Rubin, & Casson, 2015). Some questioning of the value of sustained use of digital communication devices on holidays have emerged (Neuhofer, 2016; Neuhofer & Ladkin, 2017; Pearce, 2011a). For example, the effects of digital elasticity represent how technologies threaten vacation experience by making travel and daily life inextricably linked. (Pearce, 2011a, pp. 41).

It is arguable that ubiquitous accessibility to the internet and digital resources in tourism and leisure contexts does not necessarily result in rewarding experiences. Instead, there is a convincing message that tourists should not be understood as “always connected” or “always desiring connection” (Dickinson et al, 2016). Depending on the way that the technology is used, ubiquitous connectivity, or the perceived need for that resource, may frustrate tourists and limit the benefits of their holidays (Wang, So, et al., 2017). There is also empirical studies demonstrating that some tourists do dislike the “digital leash” and even feel stressed by the expectations surrounding being connected (Fitzpatrick, 2008; Tanti & Buhalis, 2016; Wang, Xiang et al., 2014).

The adverse effects of being digitally interconnected with regular-life context while on holidays are often studied (Dickinson et al., 2016; Neuhofer, 2016; Paris et al., 2015; Pearce & Gretzel, 2012; Smith & Puczkó, 2015; Tanti & Buhalis, 2016). The possible deterioration of tourist experience can be expressed as follows.

Firstly, tourists are distracted by constant pop-up messages and overwhelming information on smartphones or frustrated by the perceived need for digital resource when they want to refrain from its use (Tanti & Buhalis, 2016; Wang, So, et al., 2017). The incredibly overwhelming amount and variety of online content can make information searching time-consuming and inefficient. Digital communications, especially addiction-prone social media applications, are also barriers to fully enjoying the present tourism environment (Pierce, 2009). The loss of concentration can potentially shrink tourists' perception of tourism settings. Further, the pleasure of discovery will be reduced when tourists can obtain vast amount of information from the internet easily. Tourists can miss valuable opportunities to explore unfamiliar places by wandering around, chatting with locals and so on. For example, campers view mobile technology as a barrier to be fully involved in the natural environment (Dickinson et al., 2016).

Secondly, the breakdown of the division between work and holidays causes continuing and increased pressure, which reduces the effectiveness of escape from emotional (particularly work-based) stressors. There are growing voices which argue for limiting technology usage on holidays to keep the life-work balance.

Thirdly, when tourists keep on socialising online they limit immediate opportunities for face-to-face communication and interaction with companions and those encountered on travel (Lalicic & Weismayer, 2016; Neuhofer, 2016; Neuhofer & Ladkin, 2017; Paris et al., 2015; Tanti & Buhalis, 2016). Tourists can find it difficult and challenging to converse with

fellow travellers and those encountered on the trip; whereas they can easily get lost in a digital world (Tanti & Buhalis, 2016). Considerable importance is often attached to enhancing family bonds and friendship during holidays. Face-to-face communication and physical interaction are viewed as the most effective ways to reinforce harmony, a positive outcome that extends distant contacts (Dickinson et al., 2016; Smith & Puczko, 2015). Further, conflicts among travel companions has also been reported due to companions focusing on their digital screens (Dickinson et al., 2016).

Fourthly, the pressure induced by obligatory social connections while on holiday frustrates some tourists. Ubiquitous ICT can make tourists feel that they are forced to “show and live” tourism experiences for others. Some tourists are stressed because they lack an excuse for shutting down or ignoring the external “ever-present expectation” in this digital era (Tanti & Buhalis, 2016). Such additional self-inflicted pressure renders tourists “a slave of technology” (Neuhofer, 2016). In particular, some tourists dislike and even feel stressed with remaining available to others on holidays while others feel happier, more satisfied and secure (Wang, Xiang et al., 2014).

Fifth, less physically involved tourists can miss valuable learning and adventuring opportunities to build their skills such as expressing themselves, solving travel problems, and learning from others (Pearce & Gretzel, 2012).

In addition, the dichotomous consequences of adopting technology in tourism have also been articulated from a value-creation/destruction perspective. According to the service-dominant (S-D) logic, Neuhofer (2016) alleges that there is a risk of destroying value in service systems. There may be a failure to integrate diverse resources (people, information and technology) in specific context (Chathoth et al., 2013; Meuter, Ostrom, Bitner, & Roundtree, 2003).

1.4.2 Fragmented Investigations on Tourism Situations involving Digital

Disconnection

Contrasting reflections on the effects of technology adoption in tourism basically prompt the need for research on disconnected tourism situations. In their seminal work, Pearce and Gretzel (2012) used the term “technology dead zones” to label “locations where there is limited or no internet technology access”. Participants in focus groups were asked to reflect on or imagine travelling to dead zones and predict possible tensions arising from disconnected tourism situations. The tensions travelers believed to arise from unexpected disconnection were problems in social communication, work communication, immediacy versus connectedness and the dilemma between security and escape (Pearce & Gretzel, 2012). In particular, an interest in travelling to dead zones emerged from this study.

Tourists’ differentiated responses to dead zone tourism and the previously neglected self-motivated selection of digitally disconnected holiday circumstances have been further confirmed in some recent studies. Tourists’ responses have been found to be dependent on particular travel intentions, tourism environments, and daily ICT use behaviours. Tanti and Buhalis (2016) explored both intrinsic and extrinsic factors explaining vacationers’ strategies of internet (non-)usage on the island of Malta where some actively connected, others selectively unplugged and a few absolutely disconnected.

In an outdoor leisure study, a higher proportions of campers and backpackers, compared to other tourists, were reported as craving disconnection because of either desire to “get away” or concerns over “surveillance” of social media applications (Dickinson et al., 2016; Germann, Molz & Paris, 2015). Many parents encourage their children to go camping in off-line environments in attempts to manage young children’s engagement in technology (Dickinson et al., 2016). Some international tourists chose to stay off-line rather than

connecting to free Wi-Fi or using local cell service because they did not trust unfamiliar providers due to concerns about privacy and information security issues (Tanti & Buhalis, 2016).

Another main reason for disconnecting in vacation contexts is to decrease ICT interference into family time. Kennedy-Eden (2014) claims that only households which set rules of using digital devices at vacation time can successfully maintain and strengthen family bonds. The intention to address work related stress is another important motivator to disconnect (Kirillova & Wang, 2016). The perceived lack of control over ICT usage and institutional culture of work-life separation at workplaces have also encouraged holiday makers to set boundaries for technology use.

An implicit corollary here is that a conscious digital-free tourism experience is useful for producing higher levels of mindfulness, authenticity, savouring, gratification and virtuousness. Duncan (2014) linked low level of digital technology involvement to mindful experience of visiting museums.

There have been a few studies demonstrating tourists' responses to the disconnected tourism situations. Emerging tourism research has now sometimes endorsed the significance of reducing technology use in vacation and tourism situations. However, empirical research on the motivations, experience and outcomes of participating in digital-free tourism is scarce. There has not been any research particularly focused on the beneficial outcomes of participating digital-free tourism. Therefore, the present research attempts to explore situations where people can experience their holiday time without internet connection or digital devices. Particular attention will be focused on the benefits from digital-free tourism; rather than continuing to simply compare the gains and losses of (dis)connection.

1.5 Knowledge Gaps

Based on the substantial review of seminal literature and attending to the tourism research context, we have identified four knowledge gaps where research opportunities emerge. Largely, there is the lack of comprehensive research on non-use of technology in tourism which can be significant for a full understanding of the relationship between technology and tourism. Figure 1.3 depicts the imbalanced research on tourism and technology.

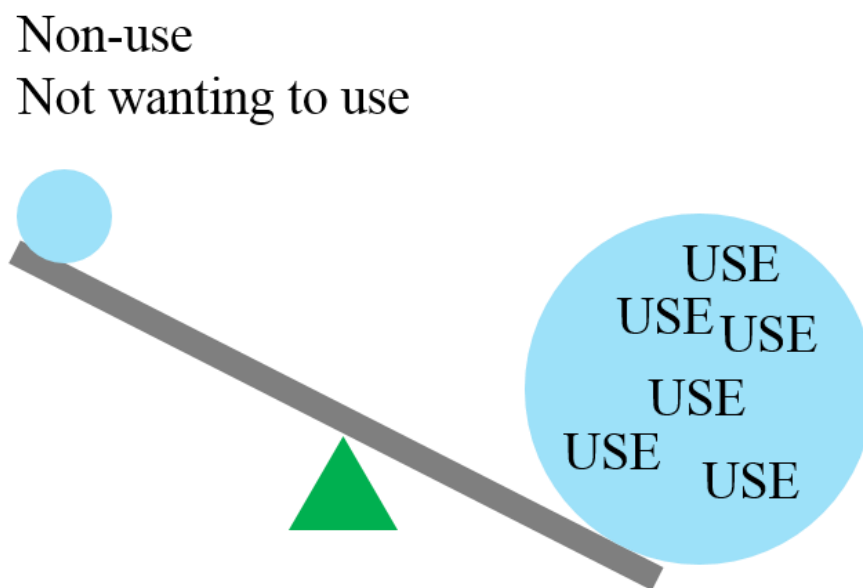


Figure 1.3 Knowledge gap

Note: drawn by author

- 1) **Heavy bias of tourism research towards looking at using and wanting to use technology in tourism.**

The literature documenting research on the relationship between tourism and technology is highly favourable to the advantages of digital technology. Tourism research has a traditional focus on the powerfulness and possibilities of building close relationships between ICT and

tourists. Scholars and experts in the tourism field have been predominantly endorsing and promoting the positive impacts of ICT adoption, automatically assuming that technology-mediated tourism experiences are superior to non-mediated ones (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009). Substantial knowledge has been accumulated about why and how technology is used in tourism and by tourists. However, there remains the relatively neglected question of the full impacts of this untrammelled push for connectivity.

Therefore, the present research will attempt to explore situations where people can create positive holidays without internet connection or digital devices. In particular, the research will focus on the lack of connectivity, limited usage and not wanting to use ICT in tourism and vacation contexts. It is anticipated that the research will open up new perspectives on conceptualising the role of technology in tourism experience facilitation.

2) Investigations on disconnection in tourism are piecemeal and fragmented.

The value of disconnection in tourism has not been stoutly stated by tourism scholars, despite of the growing research attention on tourists' response to dis-connectivity, both positively and negatively. As noted throughout the review on the foundation literature, little research has been done to build a comprehensive understanding of tourist experiences in disconnected situations. Moreover, the potential benefits from digital-free vacationing time in certain contexts is unstudied. It is unclear whether the lack of technology and digital dis-connectivity does enhance tourist experience, improve tourists' overall well-being, or provide competitive advantages for communities and business by being able to offer rewarding tourism experiences as a longer term outcome of the present studies.

Therefore, the current empirical research will focus particular attention on the benefits of digital-free tourism; and systematically examine the rewarding outcomes of building holidays in digital-free ways. The potential for developing digital-free tourism in remote regions and possibilities of novel styles of tourism products will be discussed.

3) Narrow views of tourist experience involving disconnection.

While few tourism studies pay attention to the lack of digital connectivity, they are limited to the description of tourists' on-site responses, such as anxiety and sense of escaping. However, there is no research taking into account rich assessments of rewarding components of tourist experience, such as skill development, changes in time perspectives and social intelligence. This study will go beyond simple satisfaction and activities and extend to people's well-being.

4) Paucity of research on the rising social phenomenon of digital detox.

As already noted, digital detox has been included in the online version of Oxford Dictionary since 2013 as a term referring to “a period of time during which a person refrains from using electronic devices such as smartphones or computers, regarded as an opportunity to reduce stress or focus on social interaction in the physical world (Lexico, 2019). The phenomenon of holiday makers switching off electronic devices or disconnecting from the internet has also been extensively promulgated in personal blogs and public communications. Additionally, there are more and more tourism and hospitality products and services characterised by providing opportunities for tourists to get off-line. However, scarce academic research has been conducted to study this rising phenomenon from theoretical perspectives. Therefore, the current research will attempt to establish a comprehensive conceptual understanding of the social reality of seeking digital downtime on vacation.

Taken collectively, the previous literature has revealed the threats and risks that ubiquitous ICT adoption exerts on people's physical, psychological, social well-being and their quality-of-life as a whole. The demands among holiday makers for digital-free experience are observed from the rising global phenomenon of self-motivated unplugging. However, the value of getting off-line and travelling to digital-free environments has not been fully

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researched. Neither the conceptual constructions of digital-free vacation experience, nor the significance of holiday making in disconnected contexts for general well-being have been addressed. These topics and opportunities explain the directions of the present thesis.

1.6 Research Aims and Significance

Drawing on the research background and gaps in knowledge, the guiding generic aim of the current research is **to build a comprehensive understanding of the benefits of digital-free tourism**. Digital-free tourism will be approached from two perspectives; as a broad social topic and niche tourism style. By doing this research, experiential outcomes will be conceptualised in a broad and holistic sense, taking into account new findings from positive psychology. In particular, attempts to investigate the linkages between digital-free tourism experience and the improvement of people's well-being will be made.

More specifically, three research questions can be expressed:

Question 1: Is digital-free tourism rising in prominence?

Question 2: What are the positive experiences and impacts of digital-free tourism?

Question 3: In what ways does digital-free vacation experience contribute to people's well-being?

1.7 Research Paradigm

An overarching paradigm is very useful to guide researchers in their efforts. Being aware of the prevailing paradigms can help researchers position themselves in relation to a topic, encourage reflexivity and the validity and credibility of their findings. This guidance is especially crucial for research on an understudied phenomenon, such as digital-free tourism. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify our research paradigm to avoid researcher bias and inconsistency between multiple studies that are integrated into a systematic research project.

The paradigm of realist constructivism is adopted in the current research which is based on the acknowledgement of compatibility between realistic ontology and constructive epistemology (Barkin, 2003; Cupchik, 2001; Hollinshead, 2006). Ultimately, the position taken is to join the realists holding the worldview that realities in general and social realities in particular both exist objectively, independent from researchers' knowing (or not). Social realities are not only comprised of physical materials, but also of human and cultural entities, that is dynamic and "soft" elements (Cupchik, 2001). The emic view is adopted consistently across all the stages of the research and mixed methods will be employed, in terms of methodology (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2018; Heimtun & Morgan, 2012; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Figure 1.4 depicts the paradigm structuring these inquiries for the phenomenon of digital-free tourism. Paradigm background, suitability of realist constructivism for the current research, and the way of applying our paradigm to the studies will be considered in the following section.

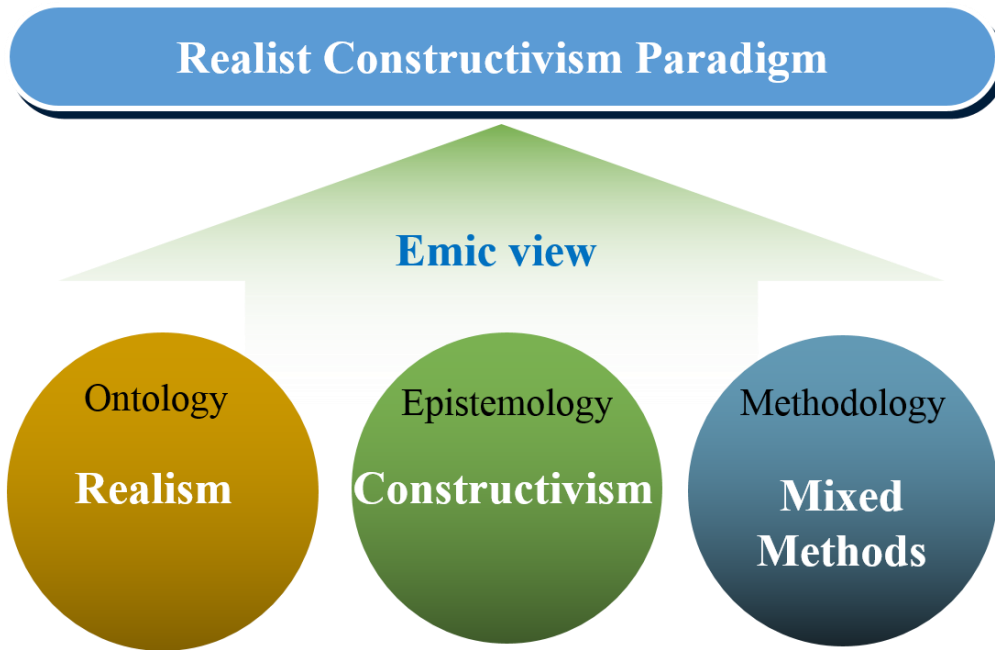


Figure 1.4 Research Paradigm

Note: drawn by author

In formal terms, paradigm is a basic belief system, an unconscious worldview or foundation thoughts that structure the routines of scientifically knowing about reality (Guba, 1990). It is accepted that a paradigm involves three major foci, specifically, ontology, epistemology and methodology (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Ontology is concerned with assumptions about reality, entities and things that exist or may exist; epistemology is the assertions about the nature, origins and limits of knowledge, in effect the ways scientists get to know about the world; and methodology shapes the strategies to achieve what one sets out to do in a research project (Pernecky, 2012, pp.1121). The concept of paradigm has been applied in scientific research at two levels: firstly, representing the fundamental assumptions shared by a cohesive community of scientists which a discipline abides by; and secondly, guiding a researcher to position himself properly and be reflexive in an ongoing research agenda (Slevitch, 2011).

In broad terms, there are two types of classical approaches to scientifically knowing, namely positivism and its variant- post-positivism, as well as constructivism (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Hollinshead, 2006). Positivist philosophy emphasises the objectivity and unity of reality, founded upon beliefs about reality driven by natural laws and independent from human influences (Guba, 1990). Post-positivism is differentiated from positivism by acknowledging that objective reality is apprehensible rather than impossible to know (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Research governed by positivism/post-positivism is inclined to falsify or confirm deductive modes of inference by focusing on directly measuring cause-effect relationships (Rabinow & Sullivan, 1987). By comparison, constructivism is often conceived as related to relativist ontology which holds that multiple realities are mentally constructed by value-laden humans (Hollinshead, 2006). Constructivism paradigm arose in the domain of social science when the rigid positivism/post-positivism paradigms impeded research about the meanings of social phenomenon from multiple and changing perspectives (Guba, 1990; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Constructivism is typically characterised by interpretive methodology and qualitative materials.

In addition, other paradigms, such as critical theory and pragmatism, have emerged due to the limitations of these two major paradigms. Critical theory is defined as “the dialogic approach towards ideologically oriented inquiry in pursuit of true consciousness and emancipation” (Guba, 1990, pp. 24). Pragmatism paradigm is oriented to problem-solving, being tolerant of shifting perspectives and adopting whichever works to serve pragmatic purposes (Biesta, 2010; Henderson, 2011; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Powell, 2001). Pragmatism underpins the mixed method approaches which have been prevalent in a range of research fields, especially in humanities (Heimtun & Morgan, 2012; Yvonne, 2010).

In the late twentieth century, there was a rise of a fundamental “constructivist turn” about the conceived nature of things, space, time and self in the field of human and cultural sciences (Barkin, 2003; Hollinshead, 2006). This shift is seen a call for richer and wider

options for organising solid scientific work as opposed to conventional positivism, alone, which seems insufficient to underpin a rich social and contextual understanding of everyday life (Hollinshead, 2006; Lincoln, 1990). Tourism, as a field of research in social science about human, culture and social realities, commenced by abiding by post-positivism but demonstrating a shift towards constructivism in the last decade (Ayikoru, 2009; Hollinshead, 2006). The paradigm shift towards constructivism in tourism is explicitly characterised by the turn from etic to emic approaches (Cohen, 1979 b; Tribe, Dann & Jamal, 2015). The emic view advocates participant-driven approaches that stress insiders' points of view rather than adopting a researcher-driven perspective.

Digital-free tourism, like other modes of tourism, features mixed cultural and varied social settings where highly-contextualised encounters differ and even compete. The present research is concerned with what digital-free tourism means socially and contextually to different individuals and groups. This interest extends to how tourists relate to technologies, how they encounter particular vacation space, and how they meaningfully practice or condemn disconnection (Crouch, 2005). Therefore, constructivism fits the aim of the current research. In this thesis, an attempt to meaningfully capture the full range of participants' views and attitudes will be made (cf. Peace, 2012).

In particular, the realist constructivism will be a guide. Although the realities of widespread technology and triangular human-technology-tourism interactions exist objectively; such complex realities are culturally and socially constructive in nature (Barkin, 2003; Jackson & Nexon, 2004; Young, 2007). Furthermore, the process of unfolding the realities is regarded as a cognitive and affective process within people's consciousness.

Guided by the realism ontology and constructivism epistemology, the current research will adopt mixed methods at the methodological level (Biesta, 2010; Creswel, 2009). The "third

wave” of scientific research philosophy is a movement towards legitimating the use of multiple approaches in answering research questions (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In such complex and dynamic research fields as tourism, the integration of qualitative and quantitative techniques is necessary for superior research (Cupchik, 2001; Heimtun & Morgan, 2012). Therefore, an eclectic approach to method selection will be used; rather than restricting our choice by the method conventionally associated with constructivism paradigm. The research is designed by following the steps for an across-stage mixed-method research model where the linking of methods takes place across the stages of the research process. (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). Figure 1.5 shows the research design.

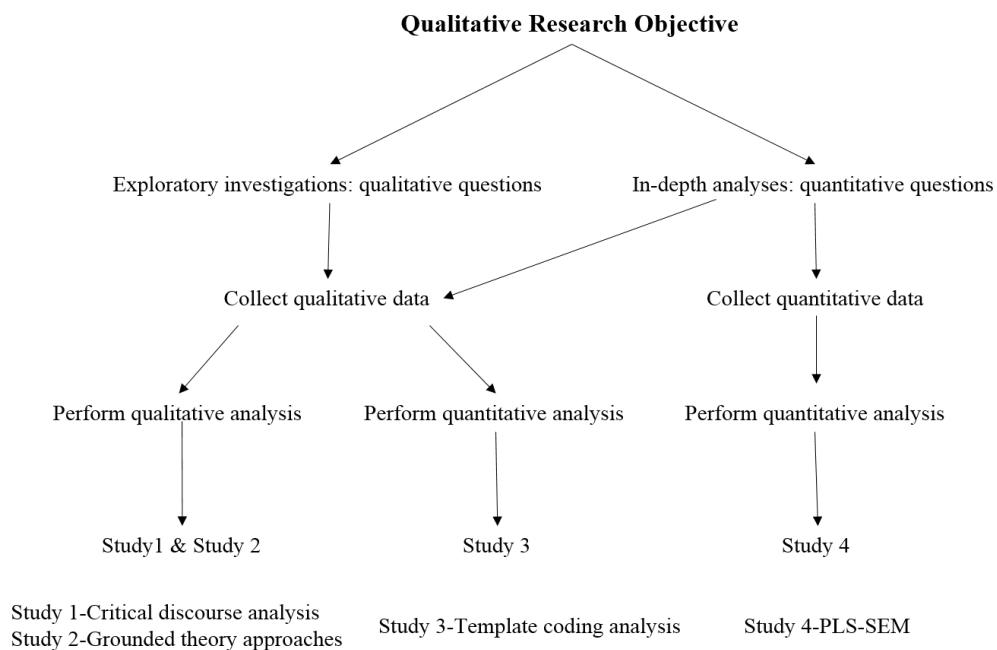


Figure 1.5 Research methodological design

Note: drawn by author

More specifically, qualitatively oriented methods will be applied to exploratory studies to uncover the new topic of digital-free tourism. Both qualitative and quantitative methods will

be employed in more in-depth investigations. Importantly, the numerical data and confirmatory analysis are applied in an attempt to reveal nuanced characteristics of digital-free tourism experiences as a reality rather than stressing the causal relationships or predictive effects. The perspectives of participants (tourists) will be paramount; sensitive coding schemes and the structural modelling technique will follow as further steps.

1.8 Research Structure and Thesis Outline

Systematic theoretical framework and soundly designed research studies are required to address the three specified research questions. This section will present an overview of the structure of the research and outline of this thesis. Considering the very limited knowledge of digital-free tourism, an initial panoramic perspective is employed to identify key issues and critical factors for further study. Based on the preliminary findings from studying the overall situation, the researchers will be able to narrow the focus and deepen the understanding of the beneficial digital-free tourism experience. The research project incorporates four interrelated studies addressing three research questions.

This PhD thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter introduces the background where the current research is situated, the conceptual foundation on which our research is laid and displays the structure of research project and an overview of the thesis. Chapter 2, Chapter 3, Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 embody each of the four studies. The final Chapter 6 will synthesise the findings from studies as well as discuss on the contributions and limitations of the research. Figure 1.6 presents the outline of this thesis.

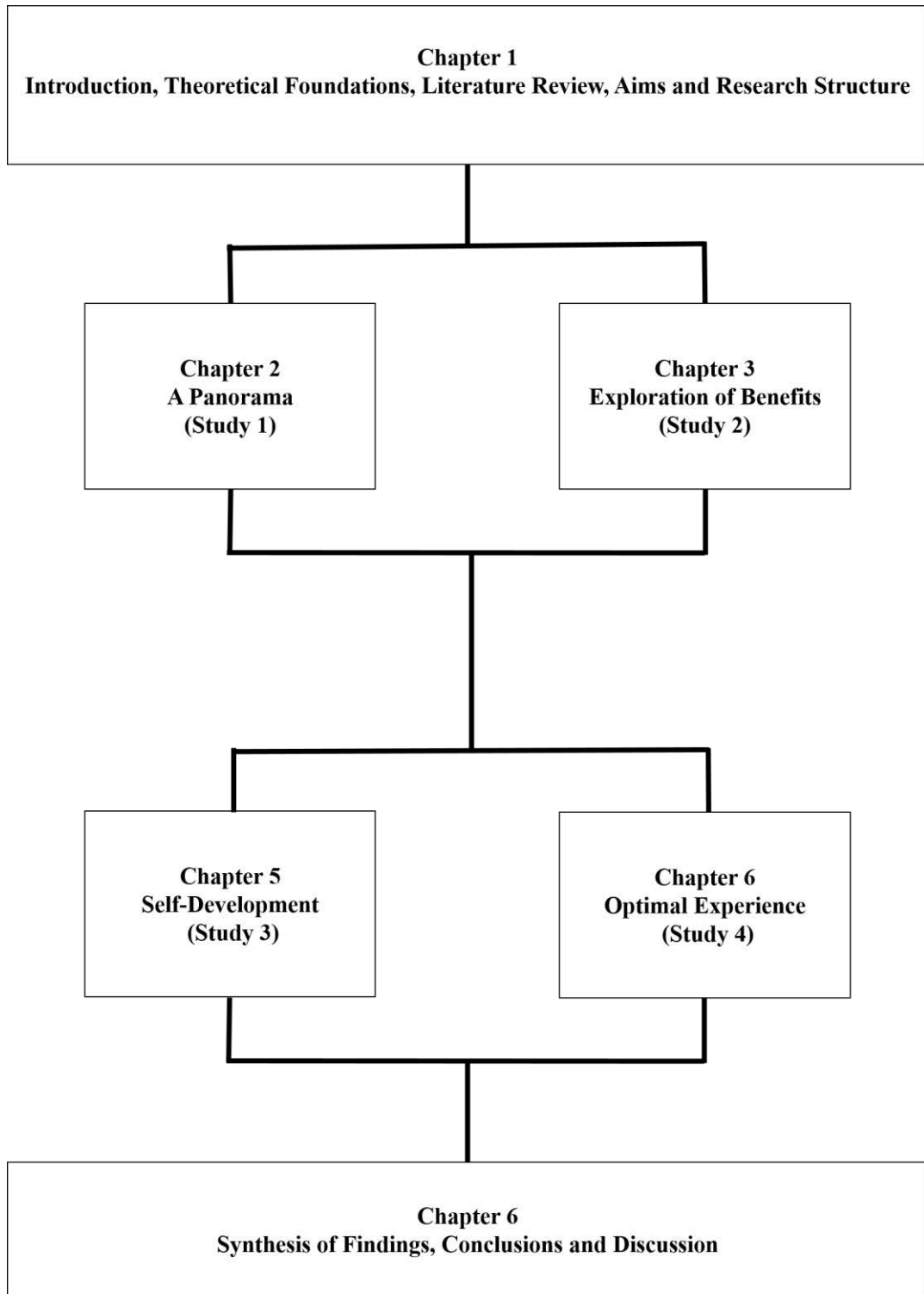


Figure 1.6 Thesis outline

Note: drawn by author

Chapter 2

Media Representation of Digital-Free Tourism: A Critical Discourse Analysis (Study 1)

2.0 CHAPTER OUTLINE

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Media Influences and Tourism

2.3 Framework for Critical Analysis of Media Discourse

2.4 Methodology

2.4.1 Data Collection

2.4.2 Data Analysis

2.5 Results

2.5.1 Texture Analysis

2.5.2 Process Interpretation: Time-Based Comparison

2.5.3 Contextual Explanation: Social Embeddedness

2.5.4 Synthesis of Characteristics of the Evolution of Media Discourses on Digital-Free Tourism

2.6 Discussion

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is a modified version of a publication in *Tourism Management*:

“Li, J., Pearce, P. L., & Low, D. (2018). Media representation of digital-free tourism: A critical discourse analysis. *Tourism Management*, 69, 317-329. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2018.06.027>”

As introduced in the first chapter, the first study attempts to capture a panorama of digital-free tourism as both a social phenomenon and a niche tourism market. The research question “Is digital-free tourism rising in prominence?” will be addressed. In particular, the researcher seeks to capture the current situation and prospects for digital-free tourism through the lenses of media.

Media discourses not only reflect social practices; but also contribute to forming certain phenomenon and shaping the audience’s opinions and behaviours (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000; Habermas, 1989; Koller, 2005; Wu, Xue, Morrison, & Leung, 2012). Social and cultural changes are largely alterations in the ways that institutions and public media deliver discourses (Fairclough, 1995, pp. 96). Therefore, Fairclough (1995) suggests serious attention to pressing discourses, in order to understand social changes. In particular, media representations of vacation and travel issues impact much tourism development. Media discourses contribute to constructing destination image, growing or shrinking markets and shaping tourist behaviours (Mercille, 2005; Stepchenkova & Eales, 2011; Ponting, 2009). Therefore, the understanding of media representation can offer clues to the prediction of future trends in tourism, ranging from tourists’ concerns to emerging market (Cheng, 2016).

The present study investigates media discourses about holidays in the environments where internet and mobile signal are absent or digital technology usage is controlled. The guiding

generic aim can be articulated as: to comprehensively understand how the media is representing digital-free tourism through a critical discourse analysis of web-based documentary.

The following specific aims will be tackled in the study:

Firstly, I attempt to gain a conceptual understanding of digital-free tourism as presented in the media. The second intent is to figure out the evolutionary process of media discourses constructing the concept of digital-free tourism. Thirdly, I strive to inquiry into the broad social context where digital-free tourism emerges and the relevant media discourses are produced. Specifically, I will examine various online written records, including news articles, business statements and reports, advertisements, magazine articles, novels, expert reviews and personal travel dairies.

The present research is important because an insight into the media discourses will help to clarify the current trends of using technology on holidays and better understand the significance and value of digital-free tourism. In addition, the market tendencies revealed in the media discourses will indicate future opportunities for regional tourism development. Last but not the least, the researcher attempts to develop a methodological framework for critical media discourse analysis. It is the intention to contribute to tourism research by providing a useful approach to systematically analyse large volumes of media discourses.

2.2 Media Influences and Tourism

Public discourses can be viewed as powerful systems for forming and articulating socially shared realities (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000). A close analysis of media representation can locate a phenomenon in its particular historical, social and cultural background (Koller, 2005). Discourse analysis approaches have already been applied in multiple fields to examine the ways that media communications systematically construct social practices (Gale, 2004; Gee & Green, 1998; Lupton, 1992). For example, Gale (2004) employed media discourse analysis in his study about Australian media statements describing refugees. Three dominant themes were identified from the Australian media coverage, namely humanitarian, national interest and human rights. All these themes were seen as linked to the country's populist culture. Moreover, persuasive media discourses are powerful in framing knowledge; they serve to illuminate, constitute, negotiate and even modify the experience, beliefs, stereotypes, values, feelings and ideas of the public (Cukier, Ngwenyama, Bauer, & Middleton, 2009; Habermas, 1989; Koller, 2005; Lupton, 1992). Therefore, analyses of the media statements and expressions can demonstrate trends in social practices (including tourism practices).

In the tourism field, media discourses are regarded as important information sources to help tourism researchers grasp an overview of current issues and clarify the relationships among powerful voices (Cheng, 2016; Schweinsberg, Darcy, & Cheng, 2017; Wu, et al., 2012). For example, the examination of media coverage on global medical tourism depicted the integration of the healthcare and tourism industries and associated gradual power changes (Mainil, Platenkamp, & Meulemans, 2011). Initially, ethical objections in medically oriented discourses dominated media coverage of medical tourism. Such discourses questioned the implicit hedonistic lifestyle of medical tourists, made assertions about the

quality of the medical services, and argued that undeveloped supplier regions were misdirecting their medical effort. A multitude of trade and service discourses appeared after 2011 and began to outweigh the ethical emphasis, focusing on industrial development, socioeconomic benefits and tourists'/patients' well-being. This shift of emphasis over time was seen by Mainil et al. (2011) as effectively characterising the debate overall and legitimising medical tourism.

Secondly, the media representation shapes tourists' perceptions, attitudes and behaviours because influential terms and language are used (Iwashita, 2003). One obvious influence of media discourse is building tourists' image of a place. Mercille (2005) confirmed the congruence between tourists' perception of Tibet and the repeatedly produced, hence crystallised, images in novels, tour guide books and geography magazines. Mercille's study also highlighted that the varied perceptions that tourists held were due to the kinds of media to which people had been exposed. In a similar style of work, Stepchenkova and Eales (2011) found significant correlations between British news coverage on Russia and tourist flows from the UK to Russia during the same period.

The present study seeks to extend the link between media discourses and tourism. The goal of the study is to examine the media representations of tourists' technology usage and the advisable ways of using ICT on holidays. The themes and issues in this media discourse will be examined to understand why and how digital-free tourism has become a meaningful issue. Secondly, the ways the media representation has changed over time will be analysed by noting the shift in prominent concepts and themes. Thirdly, the study will explore how the significance and value of making holiday without digital connection has been positioned in relation to broader sociocultural circumstances. Building on these outcomes, the researchers will present key directions for digital-free tourism.

2.3 Framework for Critical Analysis of Media Discourse

A critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach was used to examine the media representation of digital-free tourism. Multiple web-based documentary resources were analysed. Using the Google search engine, the researchers collected diverse information about digital free holidays; that is, those vacations where tourists are without the internet connection and/or digital devices. The data set included news stories, industry and survey reports, magazine articles, expert reviews, tourism advertisements, editorials and travel dairies. The analytical framework was established based on Fairclough's (1995) critical approach to discourse analysis and modified by introducing Carvalho's (2008) scheme of media discourse analysis (MDA).

Fairclough's critical discourse analysis fundamentally seeks to reveal how discourses and their strategic presentation relate to, particularly instantiate, constitute or reflect, the evolutionary sociocultural realities. CDA is suitable for research into social and cultural changes because it facilitates the integration of discourse analysis and the analysis of macro contexts. Moreover, CDA is critical in the sense that it focuses on the links between a phenomenon and communication languages and makes the implicit and obscure more apparent. Fairclough suggested a three-dimensional analytical framework for critical analysis, including linguistic description, interpretation of discourse practice (producing and interpreting text), and explanation of sociocultural embeddedness.

This nested model incorporates three different types of analyses, namely textual, processing and social analyses, which are simultaneous but interdependent (Fairclough, 1995; Janks, 1997). However, the grammar, semantics and syntax features of discourse (e.g., word use, transitivity, rhetoric) were not of concern in the present study because this research pursues the wider social issues rather than pursuing a close linguistic examination. Carvalho (2008)

clarified and restated three significant components of CDA, in relation to media texts, including time sequence, strategies of social actors and the constructive effects of media discourses. The time sequence accounts for the historical trajectory of discourses including attending to changes in the way that media presents an issue, and the ways the meaning of concepts evolve. The topic of the strategies of social actors includes considering the roles of different parties and their ways of framing social knowledge. The suggested constructive component pursues the links between the text and the circumstances of its production and interpretation.

In this study, a comprehensive Critical Media Discourse Analysis (CMDA) framework was developed by integrating Carvalho's (2008) media discourse analysis into Fairclough's (1995) CDA approach. Fairclough's CDA approach provides a skeletal frame; while Carvalho's scheme offers analytical components for each dimension of CDA. In particular, Carvalho's textual analysis programme was applied to text description. The contextual analysis was used for interpretation of processes. Both textual and contextual analyses facilitated social explanation (See Figure 2.1). The critical analysis of media discourses about digital-free tourism was conducted with the guidance of this CMDA framework. Importantly, different categories of analyses (text, process and sociocultural) were carried out simultaneously by moving backwards and forwards among them; rather than separately or sequentially. Such cross-referencing was useful because analytic comments for each kind of analysis can inform subsequent moves and assist with other levels of the analysis. Open-ended reading, unsupervised content analysis by Leximancer and manual coding were combined to build the CMDA.

Contextual analysis

- *Comparative-synchronic Analysis*
- *Historical-diachronic Analysis*

Textual analysis

- *Layout and Structural Organization*
- *Objects*
- *Actors*
- *Language and Rhetoric*
- *Discursive Strategies*
- *Ideological Standpoints*

Figure 2.1 Components of media discourse analysis

Source: based on Carvalho (2008)

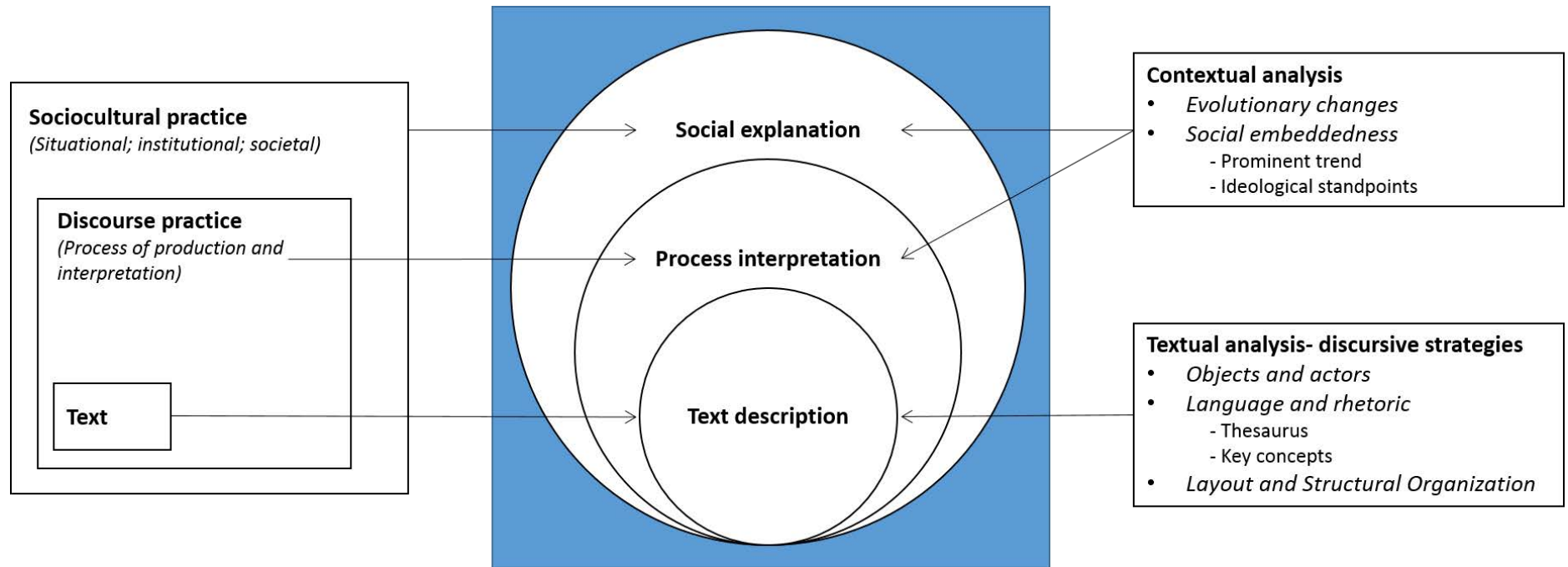


Figure 2.2 Framework for critical media discourses analysis (CMDA)

Source: Adapted based on Carvalho's (2008), Fairclough's (1995) and Janks (1997)

2.4 Methodology

2.4.1 Data Collection

Keyword queries using Google search engine were applied to obtain the archival media documents about digital-free tourism. Prevalent search engines are effective in providing clues for the understanding of potential tourists' interests, opinions and intentions of (Bangwayo-Skeete, & Skeete, 2015; Dotson, Fan, Feit, Oldham, & Yeh, 2017; Li, Pan, Law, & Huang, 2017). Data collection began with selecting keywords. At first, five terms representing technology (digital, technology, smartphone, internet, ICT) and three words indicating disconnected conditions (disconnect, free, no) were used in combination with tourism, holiday, vacation, travel or trip. A total of seventy five possible inquiries were created and typed in sequence, such as “digital free tourism”, “internet disconnected travel”, “no smartphone holiday” and “disconnect holiday”. Compounds which appeared most frequently in the trials were selected as the keywords for data collection. In addition, another three terms, namely detox, social media and tech-free also appeared frequently in the query results; they were also used to generate keywords. Consequently, twenty four compound keywords were used in queries to search for media discourses on digital-free tourism (Figure 2.3).

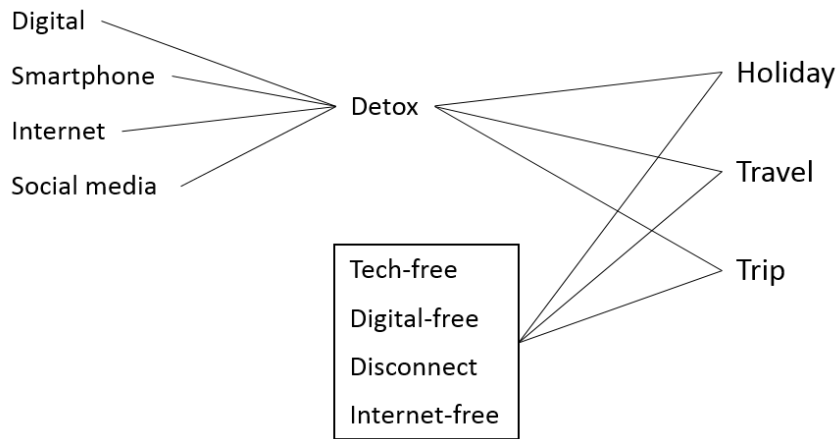


Figure 2.3 Key words of search queries for digital-free tourism

Note: Drawn by author

The data collection was a rolling process between 16 December 2016 and 4 April 2017. A total of sixteen rounds of searching and downloading was repeated week by week in order to achieve a critical volume of data and cover the entire course of media coverage on digital-free tourism. In each search-collect round, the researcher submitted pre-set querying keywords to Google search engine and then visited all of the returned URLs. The majority of the web documents about digital-free tourism were returned by the queries using “digital detox holiday”. Therefore, “digital detox holiday” was firstly used in every round of searching; the following queries using the other keywords provided supplementary results. New documents retrieved in the next searching round a week later were also incorporated into the data set. Consequently, a total of four hundred and fifty six documents was assembled by reviewing the archival materials and filtering out any irrelevant or duplicated items.

2.4.2 Data Analysis

The researcher employed thorough reading and reviewing of the texts, unsupervised (automatic) Leximancer analysis, and manual coding. Analytical comments for the

appropriate dimensions of CDA (text, process, social) were recorded whenever relevant terms appeared throughout these three phases. Firstly, the researcher read the sampled media discourses without specific questions or a tight study scheme to avoid constraining and filtering effects. This phase assisted in providing an overview of the relationships between technology and tourism as well as identifying some significant features of digital-free holidays (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Janks, 1997).

Secondly, Leximancer 4.50 software was employed to conduct an automatic content analysis. Minimal researcher driven directives were used in the application of the Leximancer program. The dominant concepts, themes and their correlation nexus informed both textual and contextual analyses. The Leximancer results offered evidence for summarising the text, as well as stimulating interpretation of the processes at work and providing clues for sociocultural explanations.

Finally, thorough manual coding was carried out. In this phase of the analysis, the researcher was able to use the terms identified by Leximancer as a guide and focus on discussing digital life and describing digital-free tourism experience. This coding approach is purposive and integrative. It is, as Glaser (1978, pp. 72) suggested, able to “weave the fractured story back together again”.

In addition, Leximancer’s function of producing inter-group comparison maps assisted historical-diachronic analysis which revealed changes in the ways that the media has represented digital-free tourism over time.

Leximancer is a suitable tool for efficient CMDA basically because it is built on the attributes of the texts and seeks to reveal underlying concepts and relationships (Leximancer Pty Ltd, 2017, pp.8). Leximancer’s systematic “words to meanings to insights” approach to understanding textual material is accomplished through phenomena observation, pattern

analysis and relationship formulation (Tkaczynski, Rundle-Thiele, & Cretchley, 2015). This process of categorising, refining and generalising texts fits well with the three dimensions of CDA. Secondly, Leximancer is superior to many other manual techniques due to the lack of researcher bias which is premised on the principle of minimal analyst intervention (Cretchley, Rooney, & Gallois, 2010). In addition, Leximancer deals with the text information within each controllable coding block. In this study, very few changes were made to the default setting of Leximancer. Only very basic variations on the automatically extracted concept seeds (such as think and thought) were combined. The coding resolution was set as one sentence per coding block in the current research; instead of the normal two-sentence blocks because the published media discourse is effectively already edited and more concise and efficient than everyday conversations.

2.5 Results

2.5.1 Texture Analysis

This section considers the features of concepts and key terms used about holidays without digital technology. The researchers examined objects (as in key terms), actors involved, language employed for communication, and the way that the texts were organised (Carvalho, 2008).

3) Objects and actors

The core object to be constructed was digital-free tourism and its value; and as a broader topic, digital lifestyle. The latter term was often discussed in the media's textual communication. Firstly, the topic of digital detox vacations appeared online for the first time in 2009 and subsequently has gained increasing coverage. The sheer number of media discourse items is the first indicator of the relative salience and public attention awarded to an issue. There were three hundred and eighty seven documents with an identifiable publish

time among the four hundred and fifty six searchable articles on digital-free tourism. This material covered the period from 2009 to the end of data collection on 31 March 2017.

Figure 3 illustrates the increasing trend of media reports on digital-free tourism.

Secondly, the pressing phenomenon of ubiquitous digital technology use in business fields, everyday life and vacation time was commonly discussed in relation to the rise of digital-free tourism. Discussion about the digital lifestyle in the media discourses ranged from the perceived usefulness of technology to the adverse impacts of excess usage. The disadvantages surrounding pervasive technology/internet adoption were presented to convince audiences of the significance of digital detoxing. Examples of frequently reported events include: luxury resorts and hotels encouraging customers to surrender digital devices; the Scottish tourism authority pointing out the demands of holiday makers for digital down time and boosting its highland areas as a perfect destination for escaping; the rise of some companies specialising in designing and organising digital-free travels; and famous figures practising digital detox when on holiday.

Digital-Free Tourism

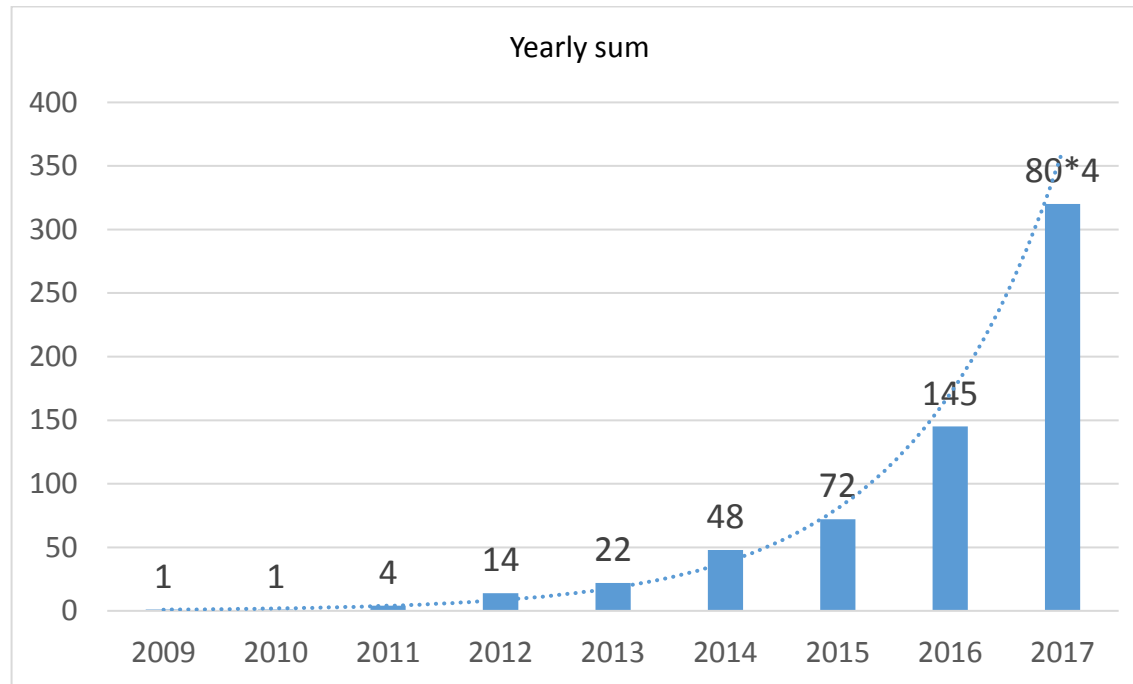


Figure 2.4 Distribution of the media documents about digital-free tourism

Note: the number of publications in 2017 were represented by the quadruple of the number for the first three months.

Source: Returned items by key word queries by Google search engine

Among the actors and producers of the discourses there were bloggers who recorded and shared their experiences, advertisers who strived to promote products, journalists who aimed to present investigations about the ideas of the public, and magazine columnists who introduced attractive options to boost readership and also profit from commercial income. Apart from the writers, there are other actors involved in the construction of digital-free tourism. The media frequently considered the providers of digital-free tourism. Those consumers who were tired of the digital leash as a social condition were highlighted. A number of individual figures were also mentioned. This group included experts whose views were quoted and iconic popular figures who set an example by vacationing without digital connectivity. Moreover, some public sector reports and institutions contributed to the construction of digital-free tourism when their findings or practices were represented by the media. An additional, long and itemised list of information about these objects and actors can be viewed in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Attributions of media discourses on digital free tourism

Type of articles	2009-2013	2014-2015	2016-2017
Advertisement	4.8%	17.5%	32.9%
Magazine column	31%	30%	17.3%
Editorial, Expert reviews, News story	42.9%	32.5%	24%
Business statements and survey reports	2.4%	5.8%	13.8%
Travel dairies	19%	14.2%	12%
Geographic distribution (%)	2009-2013	2014-2015	2016-2017
North America	61.1%	39.4%	23.2%
South America	3.3%	2.8%	4.6%
Europe	13.3%	14.2%	21.2%
Asia	12.2%	17.4%	31.3%
Australia	5.6%	13.8%	8.6%
Africa	4.4%	6.4%	10.6%
Antarctica	0%	0.9%	0.50%

Category of digital-free environment	2009-2013	2014-2015	2016-2017
Natural/ remote/ rural areas	23.3%	30.1%	34.1%
Resort/ hotel/ retreat/restaurant	76.7%	69.9%	65.9%
Means of disconnecting	2009-2013	2014-2015	2016-2017
Self-concession/confiscation	64.0%	67.2%	47.2%
Artificial digital-free settings	18.0%	10.4%	21.6%
Remote/ wild technology dead zones	18.0%	22.4%	31.2%
Activities (substitutes for digital use)			
Natural/ outdoor sports	Safari, adventure, trekking, hiking, horseback riding, bike riding, climbing mountains, fly-fishing, wild camping, fishing, swimming, golf, kayaking, zip-line canopy tours, high ropes obstacle courses, sail, tie-die, water ski, tennis, soccer, kite surfing, trap and skeet shooting, GPS treasure hunts skylight/sunrise/sunset watching (e.g., northern lights), star-gazing, wildlife watching, jet blasting, husky/reindeer sledding, sled ride, scavenger hunting, taking a survival challenge, etc..		
Skill development	Working farms, mango harvesting, tree planting, crafting workshops, art classes, group therapy session, painting, cooking, watercolour classes, glass mosaic workshops, pond studies		

Digital-Free Tourism

Wellness/retreat	Yoga, Spa massage, body treatment, fitness classes, meditation, healthy eating, organic facials, detoxifying scrubs, stretching, Tai-Chi, Qi Gong, deep water running, hot spring bath, Finnish sauna, etc..
Group games	Board games, fireside sing-alongs, chitchat, conversation, capturing the flag, rock wall, kicking ball, talent shows, etc....
Spiritual/ cultural	City tours, participating events and festivals, listening to folklore, archaeological exploration, visiting museums and heritage sites, visiting religious holy lands, temples and monasteries, doing pujas/ prayers, etc..
Others	Shopping, gourmet meals, organic fresh farm meals

4) Layout and structural organisation

Many of the media discourses on digital-free tourism were delivered with images. Providing a visual impression is effective in portraying a concept with which the audiences are unfamiliar. Furthermore, writers tended to organise the texts to progressively build cognitive, affective and conative reactions of the recipients (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961). A typical discourse often attempted to arouse audience's awareness of digital-free tourism as an emerging mode of travel through using powerful slogans in headlines complemented by other engaging expressions in the leading and first few paragraphs. The main body often began with a depiction of life and holiday scenarios where there is continuing heavy use of digital technology. The presented digital lifestyle usually led readers to consider the costs and benefits of people being constantly connected to the internet and attached to their electronic screens. The next section reported either the favourable or adverse effects of ubiquitous ICT, depending on the standpoint - endorsement or objections to the idea of digital-free tourism. In the discourses which were supportive of digital-free tourism, the conviction was reinforced by further reminding audience of the negative tourist experience of excessively using technologies. The text then moved on to the description of exciting tourism experience of suspending digital communication and staying away from electronic devices. There were three main types of discourse closure: leaving it open for discussion, advocating the audiences to switch off on holidays, or providing methods of accessing digital-free tourism products particularly in commercial documents.

5) Language and rhetoric

The vocabulary used to present a certain phenomenon is a significant component of the constitution of meanings. Close attention was paid to the thesaurus of terms labelling digital detox holidays in headlines and the first paragraphs of media articles which directs the

preferred reading. Many enchanting phrases beside “digital detox” were employed to represent vacation situations where digital communication technology is limited or absent. The list is extensive and is reported here to capture the style of this communication. The terms used included Digital Sabbaths, PTDD: the “Partial Travel Digital Detox”, Tech-Free Getaways, Such a Turnoff, Holidays Unplugged, Hotel without Wi-Fi, Travel without Technology, “I am Here” Day (2009-2013), On Disconnecting, A Trip without My iPhone and the Internet, Digital Detox Getaways, Tech-Free Tourism, Tech-free Travel, Detox Tourism, Internet-free Family Holidays, Child-friendly Digital Detox, One Day Offline, “Off Grid” Camping, Summer without Social Media, Smartphone-free Vacation, Digital Detox Breakaways, Unplugged Travel (2014-2015). Locations to Disconnect and Disappear, Tech-free Family Holidays, Internet-free: a Family Detox, Far-Flung Digital Detoxes, Unplugged Hotels for a Truly Relaxing Vacation, Digital Detox at the End of the World, Changing Lanes, Detox- a Literal Eye-Opener, Off-the-grid Places to Hide at after a Social Media Scandal, Digital Detox Escape from Reality, Nature Wellness Getaway, Cosy & Offbeat Places for a Digital Detox, A Travel-Enforced Digital Detox, Chalo Offline, Trips that Encourage You to Lose Your Phone, The Cold-Turkey Option for Tech-Obsessed Travelers, No-tech Destinations, Tours for the Digitally Overwhelmed, New Luxury of Switching Off, Tech-free Holidays for A Real Escape, No Wi-Fi, Ultimate Digital Detox Escapes to Help You Feel More Human Again, National Day of Unplugging, A Silent Retreat, A Thai Beach Escape, Signal-Free Holidays, Cord-cutting Experiences, and finally ‘Back to Basics’ Tourism (2016-2017).

Some other persuasive expressions were also used in headlines to convey the idea of holidays without ICT, such as Surrender Your Gadgets at Check-In, Leaving Technology Behind, Unplug & Recharge, Turning Off the Noise, Powering Down (2009-2013). Go Off the Grid, Less Screen, More Green, Switch Off, Avoid a Modern Meltdown, Taking Time to Disconnect (and Connect), Unplugging From Technology, Disconnect To Reconnect,

Turn Off, Shut Down, Log Out, Going Offline, Unplug and Unwind, Turn off, Tune Out and Drop Out, Abandon Your Smartphones, Put Down that Smart Phone; Checking in on Facebook is Definitely a No-No, Resist the Lure of Facebook, Kick Back and Relax (2014-2015). No Internet was Actually a Bliss, Escape to the Best Off-grid Destinations, Navigate Your Digital Anxiety, Learn How Recharging Can Be A Huge Accelerator for You, Leave the Phone at Home for An Offline Adventure, Beyond Just Proper Sleep, Shut Down & Take Off, Unplug From a Virtual World and Live in the Real One, Go on a Digital Detox and Find Your Perfect Lifestyle, Tackles Stress with its New Digital Wellness Program, Finding “Me Time”, Escaping Technology, Ditch Smartphones, Rejoin Real World, Take a Break from Your Phone, Travel Smart, Instagram Nirvana, Recharge and Reconnect, Leave Your Smartphone at Home, Taking Overachievers to African Bush for Digital Detox (2016-2017).

A small selection from across the years reveals the commonality of the addiction metaphor. The Internet Addicts, Tech-addicted Adults, Gadget Junkies, Stressed Executives (2009-2013). Tech Geek, Social Media Addict, Those Who Have Everything- Except Willpower, iPhone Addict (2014-2015). The Digitally Overwhelmed, the Mobile-Fixated, Overachievers, Tech Savvy, A Slave to Your Device (2016-2017).

6) Conceptual themes

The identification of key concepts and their relations is an essential part of discourse analysis. Unsupervised content analysis was carried out with the sampled documents by employing Leximancer software to identify essential concepts and dominant themes of media discourses on digital-free tourism. As a result, 94 concepts emerged from the text which were refined into 12 themes, namely digital, phone, social, guests, experience, night, free, beach, email, natural, service and Wifi. Figure 2.5 displays these 12 discoursing themes

in order of the levels of their relative importance to the entire discourse. Table 2.2 shows the groups of highly interlinked concepts that were collected within each theme.

Figure 2.6 depicts the relationships among the concepts and themes. In particular, the connecting thread runs from the discussion on digital lifestyle to the specification of the digital-free tourism experience. Theme “free” lies in between these two groups as a mediator and defines the border between digital life and disconnected holidays.

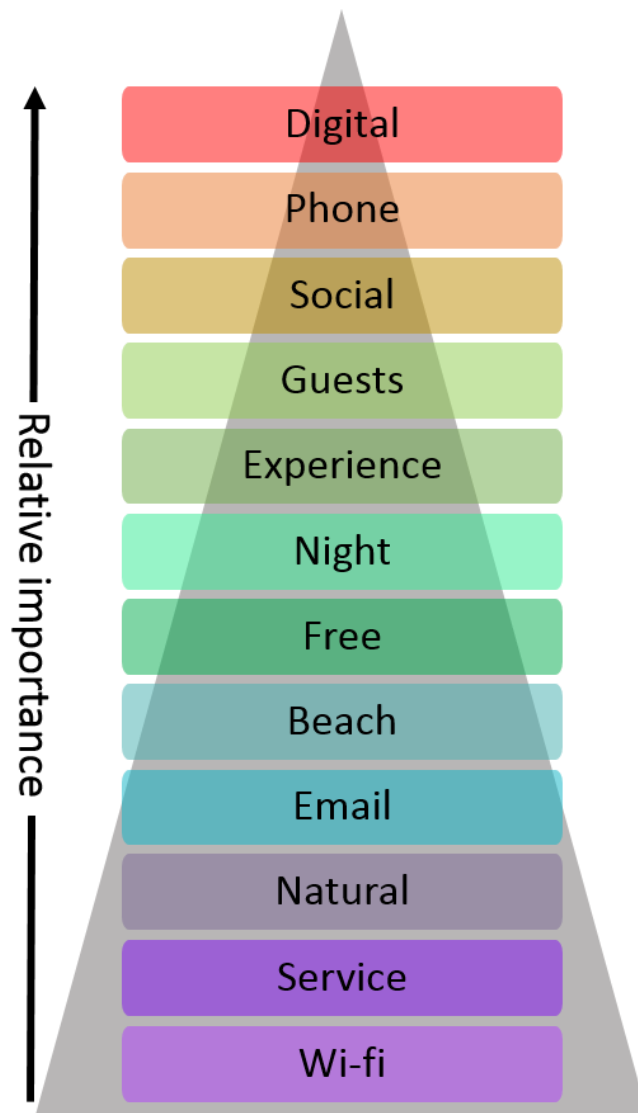


Figure 2.5 Discourse themes in order of relative importance

Source: drawn by author based on outputs of Leximancer program

Table 2.2 Highly interlinked concepts collected in each theme

Themes	Hits	Concepts
Digital	6045	Digital, detox, time, technology, devices, world, take, life, holiday, travel, need, break, trip, Digital Detox, things, year
Phone	3851	Phone, day, home, during, check, mobile, leave, down, hours, internet, stay, cell, access, spend
Social	3032	Social, media, people, vacation, work, use, online, family, feel, connected
Guests	2169	Guests, yoga, spa, activities, enjoy, hotel, offers, relax, resort, daily, full, outside, luxury
Experience	1834	Experience, place, perfect, retreat, mind, nature, best, body, country
Night	1253	Night, room, private, island, camp, walk, local, food
Free	1199	Free, taking, looking, package, weekend, long
Beach	892	Beach, views, head, including, visit, water, area
Email	638	Email, friends, Facebook
Natural	470	Natural, beautiful, remote, city
Service	418	Service, book, morning
Wi-fi	13	Wi-fi

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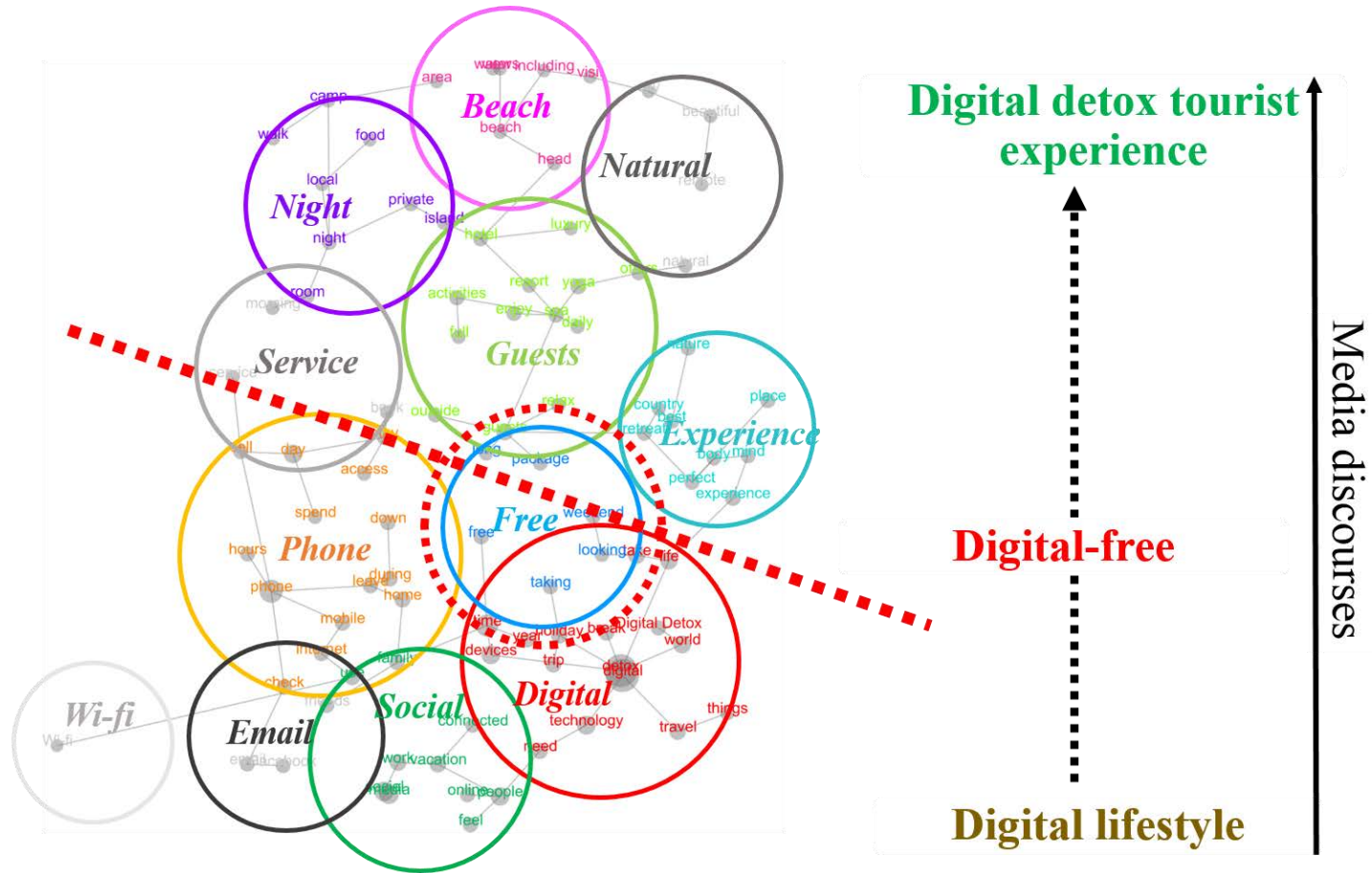


Figure 2.6 Conceptual networking maps of media representation of digital-free tourism

Source: drawn by author based on outputs of Leximancer program

In Figure 2.6, the researchers were able to identify coherent patterns in the clustering of the themes. In the lower half of the image, five themes, namely digital, phone, social, email and Wi-fi, were seen as involving the penetration of digital technologies into everyday life and vacation time. The theme *digital* reflected people's habitual usage of electronic devices and the internet; and the frequent compound word "digital detox" presented the ideas of breaking away from the virtual world on vacations. Theme *phone* was related to the technique and machinery issues of digital communication, revealing the prevalence of smartphones as a medium device connecting users to the internet. Theme *social* concerned the impacts of digital communication on interpersonal relationships. Social media usage has dominated many people's social life, but it is arguable whether ICT makes people more connected or isolated. Theme *email* comprised concepts email, friends and Facebook which altogether stood for the influential digital-communication applications. These tools play significant roles in maintaining constant connections to work places and social networks. The concept *Wi-fi* emerged as a theme by itself, indicating the prominence of wireless internet in daily information and communication activities; and the overwhelming necessity that people feel about Wi-fi connection.

Another group of six conceptual themes, namely guests, experience, night, beach, natural and service, were oriented to the detoxing of the tourist experience. The theme *guests* incorporated digital-free environments offered by resorts, hotels, retreat centres, and travel packages. The theme *experience* represented situations where holiday makers appreciate exotic places, marvellous scenery, and engaging culture as substitutes for digital usage. The theme *night* comprised digital detoxing experience featuring tranquillity and privacy. Concepts related to island and coastal destinations, which are some of the prevalent physical environments hosting digital-detox holiday resorts, were subsumed under the broad heading of *beach*. Additionally, the theme *natural* identified being close to nature-based

environments and wild animals, which were regarded as distractions from digital screens. Finally, the theme *service* identified facilities and supportive incentives provided by digital-free accommodation, such as hotels offering discounts to customers who surrender digital devices.

2.5.2 Process Interpretation: Time-Based Comparison

One focus of the current research is understanding the timeline of the treatment of digital-free tourism by the media. In the terminology of critical discourse analysis, this level of consideration is referred to as a part of social context and explanation. In particular, the researchers considered shifts in the wider sociocultural environment over time where the topics of particular importance to the discussion include developments in ICT facilities and rates of adoption of digital devices by the public.

Three phases of media coverage can be identified: the introduction stage (2009-2013), a growth stage (2014-2015) and a development stage (2016-2017). Particular events characterise the stages. One article in 2009, and another in 2010, noted the value of the digital detoxing experience. This information was presented by a writer from a solo travel community and appeared in a travel diary format. Serious media presentation of digital-free holidays started in 2011 with debates about the practices of resorts and hotels offering digital-free rooms or confiscating customers' electronic devices in the United States and the United Kingdom. In this year, a digital-detox travel story was posted on the official homepage of the British Tourism Authority (Visit Britain). From that point, there was a blossoming of online messages about holidays without digital devices or internet connection. The media reports acted to construct the idea of digital-free tourism fuelled in part by heated discussion on technology (non-) usage in daily life.

The number of digital-free tourism discourses soared sharply in 2014, with frequent discussions on the establishment of enterprises specialising in providing digital detox experience. Also in 2014, Scottish Tourism marketed their highland regions as ideal off-line destinations for people seeking digital detox settings. Multiple promotional efforts appeared in 2014 and 2015 when commercial marketers started to play active and deliberate roles in defining the concept of digital-free tourism. From 2014 on, diverse digital detox options, such as finding peace at a Buddhist monastery, and vacationing beyond connected resorts and hotels were stressed. The second surge of media coverage about digital-free tourism was in 2016. The media discourses revealed keen competition among digital-free tourism providers and the diversification of digital-free holiday products. Both tourism authorities and private businesses were promoting and reporting various digital-free tourism experiences, such as watching the northern lights and travelling to remote, off-the-digital-grid places to view wildlife. Importantly, by 2016 and in 2017, there was an obvious transformation of emphasis about digital-free tourism from a niche product to an offering appealing to a broader consumer base.

The changes throughout time in the way that media represented digital-free tourism are revealed by the time-based Leximancer analysis. Both evolutionary conceptualisation of digital-free tourism and changes in sociocultural contexts were represented by the visual output in Figure 2.7 and those prominent concepts featuring each period.

Three hundred and eighty seven documents were used in the analysis and the figure employs time tags to locate connections between a time period and concepts. In particular, when a time based tag is located closer to a theme/concept, the link is stronger. It can be seen in the time based comparative outputs that articles published in the first two stages are more closely associated with themes framing digital lifestyle (digital, work, phone). Discourses in the most recent years are more relevant to themes and concepts constituting digital-free

tourism experience (visit, trip, private, place). In addition, the first stage was situated nearest to the theme “boutique” which characterised the first kinds of digital detox holidays.

Moreover, quantitative-focused information was reported in the Dashboard of Leximancer project which supplemented the impression generated by the visual conceptual nexus. The concepts were ranked by their prominence scores which are determined by both strength and relative frequency, in relation to each discoursing stage.

Table 2.3 includes concepts with prominence scores over 1.0¹ for each time period which characterised certain discoursing stages and revealed the evolutionary trend of media's conceptualisation of digital-free tourism. The Dashboard also reported prominent concept pairs which occurred closely together at each stage. The quadrant below (Figure 2.8) displays top 30 prominent concepts for each time period. Basically, concepts towards the top of the figure are most characteristic of the discourse during certain time; and concepts to the right were discussed most frequently at that stage (Leximancer Pty Ltd, 2017, pp.123). Time and work. These two concepts located in the upper-left quadrant given the time from 2014 to 2015; and therefore they featured discourses in that period and occurred frequently then.

¹ https://www.leximancer.com/faq/display_and_output.html

Table 2.3 Ranked concepts for discoursing stages

Introduction 2009-2013		Growth 2014-2015		Development 2016-2017		
Ranking	Concept	Prominence	Concept	Prominence	Concept	Prominence
1	Boutique	2.0	Email	1.5	Yoga	1.2
2	Offers	1.8	Work	1.5	Trip	1.2
3	Leave	1.6	Check	1.2	Internet	1.1
4	Break	1.5	Technology	1.2	Spa	1.1
5	Free	1.5	Holiday	1.2	Place	1.1
6	Guests	1.4	Mobile	1.1	Take	1.1
7	Technology	1.4	Use	1.1	Digital detox	1.1
8	Facebook	1.3	Connected	1.1	Experience	1.1
9	Mobile	1.2	Phone	1.1	Feel	1.1
10	Need	1.2	Facebook	1.1	World	1.1
11	Travel	1.2	Vacation	1.1	Home	1.1

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12	Holiday	1.2	Hours	1.1	People	1.1
13	Email	1.1	Digital	1.1	Social	1.0
14	Check	1.1	Detox	1.1	Down	1.0
15	Life	1.1	Travel	1.1	Days	1.0
16	Vacation	1.1	Devices	1.1	Need	1.0
17	Online	1.1	World	1.1	Time	1.0
18	Digital	1.1	Time	1.0	Devices	1.0
19	Detox	1.1	Days	1.0	Life	1.0
20	Down	1.0	People	1.0	Phone	1.0
21	Time	1.0	Home	1.0	Use	1.0
22			Life	1.0	Detox	1.0
23			Social	1.0		
24			Guests	1.0		

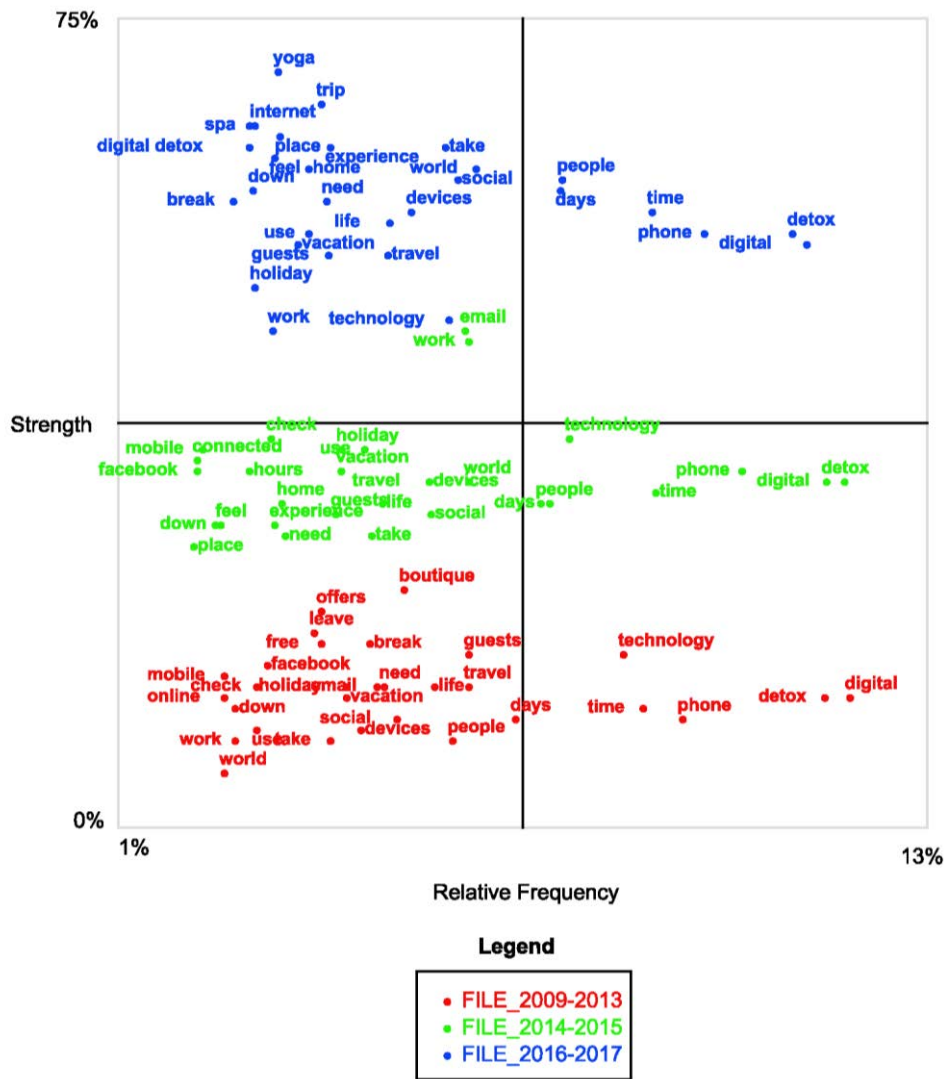


Figure 2.8 Quadrant report of historical-diachronic analysis

Source: outputs of Leximancer program

Figure 2.9 was drawn to visualise the core information delivered by the quantitative-focused results of Leximancer. Figure 2.8 displays the ranked prominent concepts for each time period. Concepts with high prominence scores and unique concepts (highlighted in red) for each time period best characterised certain discoursing stages.

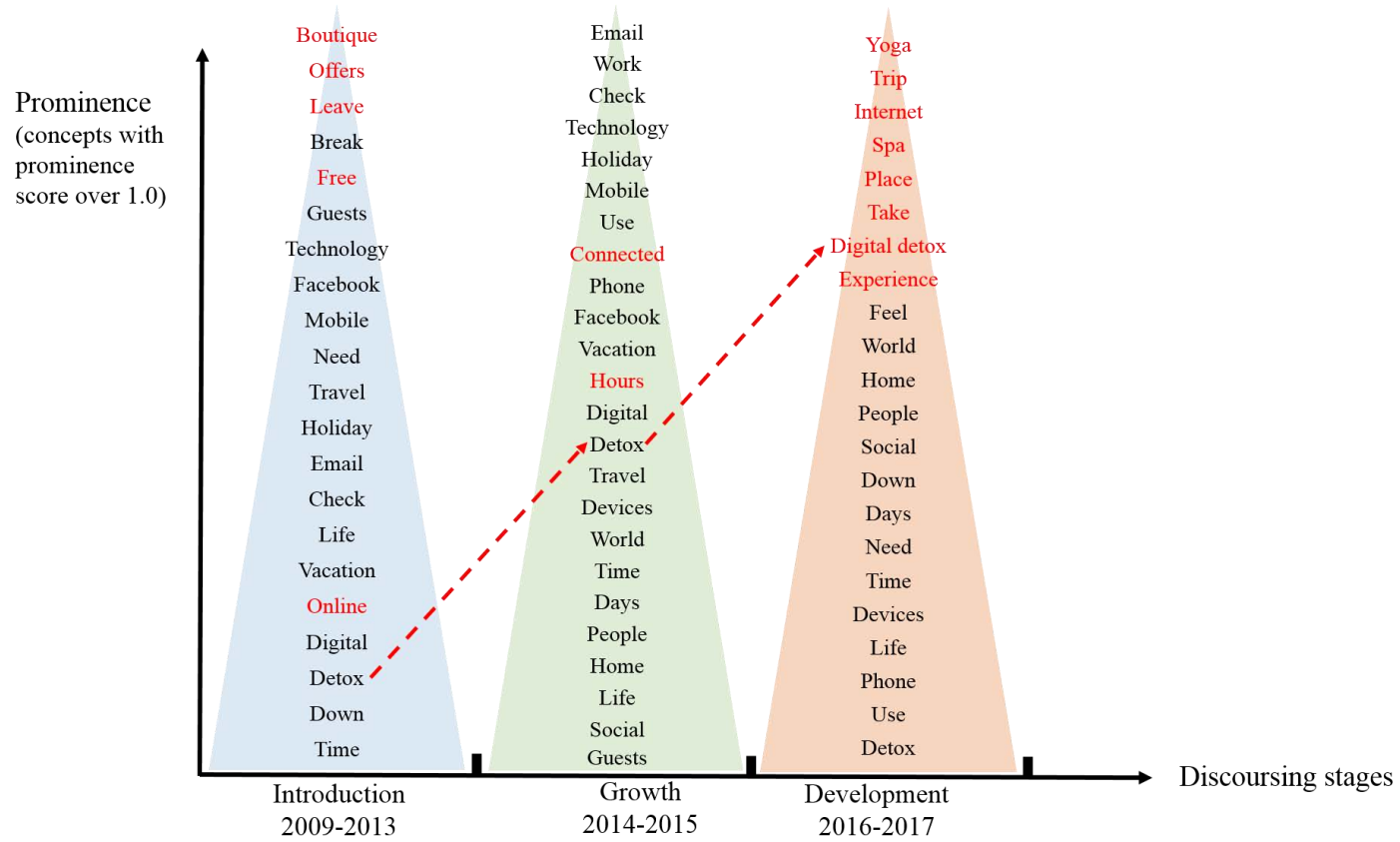


Figure 2.9 Ranked prominent concepts for each digital-free tourism discursing stage

Note: drawn by author based on Leximancer dashboard results

To begin with, “digital detox” was not identified as a noun phrase (name-like concept) until the third stage. “Digital detox” was prominently used as an established term in tourism discourses from 2016; although it became an entry in the Macquarie Dictionary Online in 2014. Secondly, “life” and “time” are common prominent concepts shared by all the three stages. The concept ‘life’ recognised the use or non-use of technology as an issue relevant to lifestyle and life wellbeing. The directions of discussions on “life” shifted from life-work balance to broader and deeper concerns about essential life choices such as the problematic “always online”. The concerns here were about the comprehensive impacts of digital connectivity on all social life. The concept “time” indicated that people’s attitudes to and behaviours of time management are both shaping and altered by their technology usage. Texts related to time mainly discussed the trend that digital activities deprive people of time and attention; and therefore degrade their performance in other tasks. Great importance was attached to “quality time” which is directed at ensuring valuable “me time” and time for interactions with real others.

Thirdly, each discoursing stage had its own characteristic concepts which were either outstanding or unique to that period. “Boutique”, “offers”, “leave”, “free” and “online” were unique to the introduction stage of the ICT discourse (2009-2013). “Boutique” and its frequent combination with other concepts such as “luxury” and “private” indicated that digital-free tourism was introduced as a superior holiday product targeting the high-end travel market. Moreover, there were many discourses identifying a growing popularity of digital-free tourism following its first unveiling in the introductory discoursing stage. The many examples of overusing ICT were referred to as the major antecedents of vacation demands for getting rid of electronic devices.

The concepts “connected” and “hours” were unique to the growth stage of the digital-free tourism discourse (2014-2015). “Internet”, “world”, “life” and “feel” are connected intimately with the unique concepts. Texts surrounding these concepts revealed the

situations where advanced internet technology has reinforced the perception of being compelled to maintain constant access to information, the workplace and social networks. In particular, “email” and “work” stood out as prominent concepts characterising discourses in 2014 and 2015. The texts around “email” were mainly about the powerful erosion of the line between work and life by digital technology. Email served as the most important means of making workers contactable whenever and wherever, which lead to the expansion of work time and associated stresses. Other concepts which co-occurred with “email” and “work”, such as “check”, also presented the realities that people felt the need to respond to work contacts during free time. In addition, there are some other concepts characterising the growth stage of ICT discourses, such as “social” and “Facebook”. Together these terms indicate that work and social activities were the dominant use of technology by holiday makers.

Compared with the first stage, Even –handed debates and rational, logical discussions were relatively fewer in 2014 and 2015. Discourses at the second stage stressed prevalent “burnout” and noted the mental state of being “always stressed”. These texts explicitly advocated digital-free tourism as a solution.

“Yoga”, “trip”, “internet”, “spa”, “digital detox”, “place”, “experience”, and “take” are unique and prominent concepts in the development stage of digital-free tourism discourse (2016-2017). “Digital Detox” has been accepted as an established term by the third stage and a clear definition appeared then in the tourism field: “a period of time during which a person refrains from using electronic devices such as smartphones or computers, regarded as an opportunity to reduce stress or focus on social interaction in the physical world.” (East West Retreat, 2017). Compared with the general definition of digital detox by the Macquarie dictionary in 2014, this vacation-oriented digital detox extended the value of detoxing to include benefiting relationships and social life beyond the process of de-stressing.

In this third phase, the concepts “internet” and “take” particularly revealed the rising demands for digital-free experience among tourists. “Internet” and other closely associated concepts, such as “access”, “cell”, “phone” and “service”, together represented two sides of the issue of ubiquitous internet connectivity. On one hand, the modern societies have become constantly wired due to the internet penetration driven by easier access to computers and an increased use of smartphones. On the other hand, there is a recognition of “new escapism” emerging in this always-wired society: to escape is not only to stay away from the physical home environment; but also to disconnect from the digital world of routine work and life. “Take” was used mainly in two situations: as taking a break from ICT as an important digital-free tourism motivation; and discussing tourists’ behaviours of taking travel photos. The majority of excerpts from the concept “take” addressed “take a break” from digital engagement.

The third stage of media discourses also frequently presented the rising market demands for digital-free tourism and the rapid growth of businesses and institutions offering digital-free holiday products. Concepts which constituted the character of digital-free experience were aggregated into two groups, each of which presented a distinctive category of digital-free tourism products. In particular, the dominant concept “experience” and other highly associated concepts, namely “nature”, “local”, and “remote”, promoted the experience of nature-based digital-free tourism. The nature-based digital-free tourism encouraged people to travel in remote, rural or wild regions where internet connection and mobile signal are unreliable due to the lag in technology and facility development. The other group consisted of dominant concepts “yoga” and “spa” which were paired with concepts such as “activities”, “retreat”, “resort”, “guests” and “mind”. This group of concepts presented the other type of digital-free tourism environments- consciously designed digital-free settings. This idea is to achieve physical and mental recharge through intentionally refraining from digital communication use by self-control or removing network reception. Importantly, artificial

digital-free space does not contradict the idea of going back to nature. Many wellness centres and luxury resorts are situated in natural environments and stick to the nature-oriented principles.

2.5.3 Contextual Explanation: Social Embeddedness

The hints for the concepts representing social situations are manually coded to further understand the social-cultural embeddedness of media discourses about digital-free tourism. Consequently, four issues are identified as explanations of the broad contexts of digital-free tourism, including technology adoption, time management and life-work balance, relationships and social life, and leisure and travel motivations.

1) Digital technology reshaping people's lifestyle

A digital revolution of human lifestyle has swept the earth when technologies, especially the internet and devices facilitating information and communication activities, spread rapidly in much of the world. According to the study by Statista, 3.81 billion people are active internet users as of April 2017 with the 48% global online access rate². The modern societies have become constantly plugged-in and wired due to the internet penetration which are propelled by easier access to computers, modernization of countries and an increased utilization of smartphones. In media discourses on digital-free tourism, being “always online” was regarded as a busy lifestyle among technology users; but also presented as a rising culture. As the BBC reported in 2014, psychologists argued that we are living in an “always on” culture that are often cited to discuss the digital saturation:

“People are constantly connected, always online, digging through data and endlessly downloading. We're bombarded by an unrelenting torrent

² <https://www.statista.com/statistics/617136/digital-population-worldwide/>

of information, made available on the internet and at our fingertips on laptops, smartphones and now even TVs.” (*Going unplugged: 4 things we learned on a digital detox*, 2017))

“The Pew Research Centre says 73 per cent of us are online daily. One in five people admits to being online “almost constantly.” (*Make your next trip a digital detox*, 2017)

Habitual usage of ICT features the current always-online society and makes “much of our daily lives revolve around a digital connection”. It is common worldwide for individuals to check any alert of emails, texts, social media likes, etc. which pop up reminders on their electronic devices continually.

“Starting when we’re teenagers, we grow up with our smartphone in our hands and checking it becomes as unconscious a response as taking a breath. A normal phone user touches their phone 2,167 times a day, while the top 10% of phone users click, tap or swipe on their phone 5,427 times a day, according to researcher Dscout.” (*Can a Digital Detox Enhance Your Work Performance?*, 2017)

There are an increased number of discourses mentioning the concerns of experts, authorities and other parties over such digital saturation. Adverse effects on physical health, technology induced stress, and conflicts between digital and personal contacts were the most discussed worries. The ordinary technology users themselves also gain the awareness of problematic overuse of digital devices.

“This constant connectivity has been linked to increased levels of stress and reduced productivity at work, while excessive smartphone usage has been linked to insomnia, antisocial behaviour and decreased attention spans.” (*Mongolia’s digital detox*, 2017)

“A sizeable proportion of adult users claimed their internet habit was actually having negative effects on their lives. They blamed it not only for their sleep deficits and tiredness, but also for neglected chores and diminished social communication with family and friends. Social interaction and manners were not the only things to suffer: even safety seemed jeopardised with a quarter of respondents recounted having collisions with another pedestrian who was focused on the phone, rather

than looking where they were going.” (*Unwind and unplug: Time for a digital detox!*, 2017)

Many discourses wrote about people’s dependence on digital technology in relation to the difficulties of surrendering smartphones, iPods, iPads, personal computers, and so on. The aggravated technological obsession is even proven to be symptoms of addiction to the internet and ICT. Such technological addiction has coined some new terms, such as “nomophobia”-the fear of being out of mobile phone contact. Moreover, the younger generations are more used to daily grind which seems their livelihood because the always-wired society is just the way it has always been for them. According to the Statista, millennial internet users worldwide spent an average of 185 minutes on mobile internet services every day in 2016, with one hundred and ten for generation X and forty three for baby boomers³.

“But the downside is that it can easily infiltrate every part of a person’s life to a debilitating degree. In essence, it becomes addictive behaviour, hard-wired into the psyche, and as difficult to tackle as perhaps alcoholism, gambling and compulsive eating.” (*The Future is Mental Wellness*, 2017)

“Half the adult users admitted they would feel lost without the internet, whilst some sixty percent confessed to feeling “hooked” on it. Some people went so far as to classify themselves as “very” or “completely” hooked, whilst over 40% thought they spend too much time online!” (*Unwind and unplug: Time for a digital detox!*, 2017)

“Many of us of us would like to spend less time online but show signs of anxiety once we’re far from the smartphone. About three quarters of young adults separated from their smartphone for a short period experienced so-called displacement behavior such as fidgeting or scratching, according to researchers from Hungarian Academy of

³ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/428425/daily-time-spent-online-mobile-age/>

Sciences and Eotvos Lorand University in Budapest.” (*Can't unplug? Here's how to navigate your digital anxiety*, 2017)

Based on coverage on these social issues induced by excessive ICT usage, the media presented “the new trend with the essence of promoting the decrease of mobile devices use”. The voice of building healthy relationship with technology emerged earlier but has risen much in the recent two years. In a survey by the Harris Poll among two thousand one hundred and ninety three American adults in 2016, over 45% respondents said they try to unplug at least once a week and around 67% said they would make an attempt to do so during the year.

“Dr Croeser says it is not surprising demand is growing for cord-cutting experiences. The digital detox trend is rapidly growing in popularity and it is all about putting away the electronic devices, including smart phones, and connecting offline.” (*Switch off Time for a digital detox It's good for us ... - The West Australian_ Unplug from a virtual world and live in the real one*, 2017)

The National Day of Unplugging which was created in 2010 and gain popularity worldwide in 2017 indicates the rising popularity of reducing digital engagement:

“The National Day of Unplugging is a concept born in America, during which people are encouraged to ignore their devices for 24-hour period from sundown on Friday March 6.” (*National Day of Unplugging: 10 of the best technology-free holidays*, 2017)

In addition, young adults are particularly aware of the side-effects of technology engagement although they are more reliant on digital technologies to obtain information, communicate and entertain. There are significant demands among millennials for making digital-free holidays:

“In fact, 41 percent of millennials feel that their phones are keeping them from living in the moment when traveling, according to a JWT Intelligence consumer trends survey.” (*We're So Addicted to Our Gadgets That 'Unplugged' Tourism Is Booming*, 2017)

“Survey revealed 49 percent of millennials are more willing to leave their smartphone at home while on vacation than those in their 40s and 50s.” (*Intel Security Study Reveals Millennials Are More Likely to Unplug While on Vacation Than Gen X*, 2017)

2) Time management and life-work balance

It is common in this “always online” society that digital connection breaks the balance between the virtual world and the real one with too much time spent on electronic devices. The amount of time when people immerse themselves in digital screens was frequently referred in the media discourses to reveal how much technologies are intruding into human life. According to a study done by CAMH, people are spending over 11 hours a day on digital commitment. There is a trend that digital activities deprive people of time and attention; and therefore degrade their performance in other tasks. Many people are struggling with “low energy, low productivity, low motivation, decreased happiness and an inability to focus” every day.

“I’m someone who normally spends around about seven hours per day online, and I’m hardly alone. In a survey, ad agency The Buntin Group found that the average American clocks in 23 hours per week online.” (*Digital Detox Vacations: How A Trip Without My iPhone And The Internet Helped Me Disconnect From -- And Then Reconnect With – Reality*, 2017)

“I was rather alarmed to discover that the need to be connected and in touch has succeeded in displacing what Arianna Huffington describes as a ‘fundamental and non-negotiable need’-sleep.” (*Unwind and unplug: Time for a digital detox!*, 2017)

“Nearly half (48 percent) of internet users said they had neglected housework, 47 percent said they had missed out on sleep or were tired the next day, rising to 17 percent for 16 to 24 year olds. A third (31 percent) said they had missed out on spending time with friends and family, while 22 percent said they had been late for a meeting with friends or family. 60% of surveyed teenagers admitted to neglecting school work because of their attachment to their devices, while 25%

were late for school.” (*Millions on a ‘digital detox’ because the internet is ruining everything*, 2017)

The omnipresence of digital connection makes workers contactable whenever and wherever, even on their long-awaited holidays. Such constant connectivity and the paired anxieties of disconnection, such as FOMO (fear of missing out), altogether lead to the expansion of work time which is common nowadays.

“We’re overworked and over connected. Smartphones very quietly break down the barriers that once existed between our professional and personal lives.” Says technology analyst Carmi Levy. (*How to detox from your smartphone*, 2017)

The following shows the life state of ordinary employees in this digital era when we lack an excuse not to be on call for workplaces:

“I’m also a workaholic, and since my job knows no fixed location or work hours, that usually means if I’m awake I’m working. There is always something that can be done, something that can be written or edited. We has a culture can’t stop working. We lack the ability to completely ‘be off’ and to enjoy leisure time and ultimately, that tendency to overwork actually harms us in the long run.” (*Digital Detox Travel Experiment – Can I Do It?*, 2017)

The powerful erosion of the line between work and life by digital technology has aroused much attention from various fields. The topic “*How Technology-Enabling 24/7 Work-Is Killing Us*” was discussed at a Global Web Index Round Table in 2015, which was reported on several media platforms. The ubiquitous reliable ICT have reinforced people’s perceptions of being supposed or even compelled to respond to work contacts at free time, which produces stress rather than necessarily productivity. The prevalent state of “burnout” and “always stressed” are most discussed among negative impacts of the “always on” culture in occupational fields. For example:

“Pandemic Imbalance, so named by an Industrial and Consulting Psychologist, Professor Johann Coetsee, refers to the state of feeling like

‘you are always behind’ or ‘still not done’ with work or work related projects. This ‘imbalance’ is propelled by the Digital Age-where smartphones, tablets and laptops constantly vibrate, ping and pop up reminders of projects, meetings and additional work that require attention. The portability and connectivity of technology means that work goes beyond the office realm into private spaces and personal lives. All of which is increasing the prevalence of burnout in the workplace. (*Why the “Pandemic Imbalance” in Your Life Means it’s Time for a Digital Detox*, 2017)

“Dr Christine Grant, an occupational psychologist at Coventry University's Centre for Research in Psychology, Behaviour and Achievement, told the BBC: ‘The negative impacts of this 'always on' culture are that your mind is never resting, you're not giving your body time to recover, so you're always stressed. "And the more tired and stressed we get, the more mistakes we make. Physical and mental health can suffer.’” (*Smartphone stress: Are you a victim of 'always on' culture?*, 2017)

Problems resulted from overworked and always-available employees have encouraged a significant culture change in many organisations, that is more importance being attached to employee’s life-work balance. For example, several discourses included the case of German car maker Daimler which:

“Introduced a ‘mail on holiday’ programme which automatically deletes emails for its holidaying employees, in recognition that they may not have the willpower to switch off from work. An out-of-office reply would also be issued indicating that the email would be deleted and offering the contact information of another employee.” (*Travel companies are pitching 'digital detox' trips for the tech addicted--but there are better ways to deal with information overload*, 2017)

Further perspectives report that more and more elite executives themselves desire to break free from constant digital connection and many of them have practised digital-free holidays:

“As he prepared to board a plane for a two-week family vacation to Hawaii last month, Visit Indy Vice President Chris Gahl did something he had never done before. The 36-year-old took out his iPhone 5 and

deleted his work email account so he couldn't see the icon with that annoying number of emails waiting to be read. He cut off his work texts and put a message on his voice mail directing callers to two co-workers. He powered down his iPad. He even deleted local news sites from his list of favorite Web addresses." (*Digital detox: More executives want break from 24-hour connectivity*, 2017)

"Though the drive to succeed at work is strong, Gahl said he had a bigger motivator in his desire to digitally disengage while on vacation. "I know my kids are going to grow up in the blink of an eye and I don't want to have any regrets about having one eye on the kids and one eye on the phone," he said. "It occurred to me that, all this time I was worried about missing something at work. And I should have been worried about missing something else." (*Digital detox: More executives want break from 24-hour connectivity*, 2017)

3) Relationships and social life

Networking activities, particularly instant messaging and posting/checking updates on social media, are the other favourite usage of digital devices connected to the internet beside responding to work emails. The number of social media users keeps ever increasing and has accounted for over 70% of internet users in 2017. The penetration of mobile devices, particularly smartphones, contributed much to the sharp increase of the time when people are engaged in digital socialisation. Actually, the average time that is spent on social media has amounted to 135 minutes daily. The other new trend of networking applications is that many traditional messaging apps have been transformed into social apps by including add-on functions such as profile timelines. Most popular social networks include Facebook, WeChat, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, Sina Weibo and so on. Social media is the most addictive usage of digital technology because these applications are designed to fill participants' emotional and other essential psychological needs. Therefore, it is the most difficult for ICT users to leave their social media accounts behind. Two media discourses in 2016 cited the result of a survey among 2,466 British people which found high attachment to social media:

The top five reasons for returning to their screens was to check or post on social media (32 per cent), to read or reply to work emails (27 per cent), forgetting they were trying to break the habit (21 per cent), they needed to call or send a message back home (16 per cent) or simply boredom (2 per cent). (*Feeling Wired: The Truth About Digital Detox Holidays*, 2017)

Firstly, social media commitment makes users feel themselves as sociable and provides a sense of belongings in a more convenient and efficient way compared with traditional face-to-face interactions. As written in an article, “it’s simply a way of connecting with like-minded people to feel validated”. A joint study by New York Times and Latitude Research found that people share their experience online mainly to “achieve self-fulfilment, define ourselves to others, and to nourish and grow our relationships”. Many discourses claimed that the digital networks create an “online validation society” where:

“We crave the notification, we update our statuses and upload our photos for social validation via comments and likes/plus 1’s. We tweet and hope for responses, after all if no one responds you feel the opposite to when they do. You keep checking, over and over, surely someone will respond...? When someone does reply you feel validated and get a minor buzz that’ll keep you posting and keep you checking.” (*Digital Detox – Travel Without Technology*, 2017)

Secondly, the needs to kill time is another driver of people’s high level of involvement in social media. It is a norm that “multiple social media accounts and apps dilute our downtime when we should be living it up.” People tend to fill every spare minute with scrolling, liking, tweeting, and posting no matter where they are. The idea of “smart boredom” is also fuelling the addiction to social media throughout the society which basically advocates making use of boring time to do something useful. This is a state where:

“You’re stuck on a train or even walking around you can use your phone to do active things like paying a bill, checking a bank account or sending a message to someone” (*Are you an internet and social media addict? A digital detox may be for you*, 2017)

However, it is asserted in many discourses that the tendency to seek for others' approval of a social media post often impairs people's self-identity and dignity. Jennifer Thompson, a certified iridologist and nutrition and health coach used the metaphor "emotional roller coaster of social media" to indicate how networking in the virtual world is ruling some people's mood and life:

"Most people attach real emotions now to social media," she said. "You get a negative comment on Facebook and it cuts you to the core. Then your whole day is off balance. You're thinking, 'Should I respond or delete them?'" Her advice? "Don't spin this out to be a big drama," she said. "And remember that choosing NOT to respond is also a very powerful choice." (*Participants in digital detox weekend at Strip resort ditch smartphones, rejoin real world*, 2017)

Moreover, being too connected to Facebook, Twitter, or other social media could increase isolation and sometimes ruin relationships although people feel themselves sociable online. Firstly, loneliness, jealousy and fear can generate if digital communication dominates one's social life because the friendships rooted in social media are not regarded as quality relationships. Usually what people tend to post on social media only includes the beauty and brightness of their life when it feels right. Unlikely, it is vital for the establishment of real relationships to invest time and energy in exchanging and sharing with each other at every stage of our life. In a research report, Dr. Hanna Krasnov declared that:

"This is the virtual life to which so many of us subscribe-a world of social media, happy facades showing ourselves living the good life, connected, adventurous, creative." (*A digital detox on safari*, 2017)

However, surveys also manifested that:

"33 percent of Facebook users feel unhappy during use and envy is the most significant source of this unhappiness." (*Digital Detox Vacations: How A Trip Without My iPhone And The Internet Helped Me Disconnect From -- And Then Reconnect With -- Reality*, 2017)

Over-engagement in social media also makes ICT dependents lose opportunities for connection with others in the real world which dismisses communication and mess up relationships. According to the survey “Coping in a Connected World” among 2050 adults and five hundred teenagers, 40% reported that they had felt neglected by a friend or relative who was preoccupied by their tablet or phone. A separate survey also revealed the collapse of interpersonal relationships:

“Many people, when asked to choose, would rather leave their partner at home than their technology when they go on holiday.” (*Switch off Time for a digital detox It's good for us ... - The West Australian_ Unplug from a virtual world and live in the real one*, 2017)

The advantages of communication and interaction in person over digital contacts are shown in an interview reported on newspaper:

“When you use your phone to guide you, it’s a very individual experience,” she says. “But when you have to rely on actual people, you need to have conversations, and pay more attention to possibilities and coincidences and luck and all of that,” she reasons. And those coincidences and possibilities could end up leading to a situation that produces a far better memory than a five-star review ever would. (*Is The Internet Ruining Travel?*, 2017)

Therefore, there is a tendency of media discourses to present the value and significance of reducing technological involvement and manage the attachment to the virtual networks.

Practices of celebrities who quit social media or strive to manage their usage of digital technology were more frequently reported in recent two years. For example:

“Award-winning British singer/songwriter, Ed Sheeran who had 16 million Twitter followers and 5.5 million subscribers on Instagram, has opted out of “seeing the world through a screen”. The singer announced his withdrawal from social media saying that although he was travelling the world, he wasn’t actually seeing it.” (*Bookings for digital detox weekends on the rise in the UAE*, 2017)

4) Leisure and tourism motivations

The tourism world is not an exception in digitalisation. Media discourses also presented much about the technological application in tourism business and ICT usage among holiday makers. The general relationship between technology and tourism has become symbiotic because ICT provide the ease of information, efficiency, and accessibility which are crucial for both doing tourism business and travelling. A description in media discourses displayed the penetration of digital technology in tourist experience:

“Gadgets have become a right hand to travelers hoping to sightsee, navigate, and find great things to do while in unfamiliar locations (not to mention document vacations in pictures).” (*Digital Detox: Could You Surrender Your Gadgets at Check-In?*, 2017)

However, maintaining constant technology use and digital connectivity is not entirely beneficial for making holiday. Travellers’ claims that “traditional vacation does not relieve their stress” were frequently presented in the media discourses. The internet penetration and people’s addictive level of ICT usage makes it nearly impossible for travellers to have the “reversing” of or “time-out” from mundane daily life and work (Cohen, 1979 b; Smith, 1989; Turner & Ash, 1975; Urry, 1990). Therefore, “digital elasticity” causes everyday life and vacation time to be less clearly delineated and tourists find it difficult to achieve the long-stated essential escaping value of tourism (Pearce, 2011a, pp. 41). As presented in a discourse:

“Travelling is the essence of escapism – it’s the only road to unplugging from your everyday life and stumbling across the globe to meet wild, memorable people who spark crazy adventures. These days however, it can be pretty difficult to lean on our instincts and intrepid nature when social media and technology are such a distracting part of our lives.” (*The Case For Leaving Your Phone At Home When Travelling*, 2017)

Actually, many tourists dislike the digital tether/leash and even feel more stressed when travelling than at home because of the pressure of “documenting experience”, “feeding others’ expectation” and “validating ourselves”.

“Live-documenting your trip can change the experience by turning it into a performance,” explains Jean Twenge, a social media expert, psychology professor, and author of *Generation Me*. “When it’s a performance, there’s all this pressure to get likes, for other people to enjoy what you’re doing. So what will happen is if you think something is cool but most people don’t, they may not like your stuff — so you subconsciously start to doubt your own experience,” she says. “When you’re live documenting your trip, you’re essentially focusing on the people who aren’t there, rather than the people who are- and that can take away the benefit of your personal experience,” explains Twenge. After all, it’s a lot harder to feel like you’re ‘away from it all’ when ‘it all’ is still right there at your fingertips.” (*Is The Internet Ruining Travel?*, 2017)

“It’s always just been the pressure of editing photos and posting at the optimal time and adding the hashtags and replying to comments and tagging the right people, places and things and (admittedly) checking the number of likes - that has nearly ruined my vacations.” (*5 Amazing Things That Happened When I Took A Digital Detox*, 2017)

“When we take a photo of a scene for social media, message a friend about where we are, or flip through the news instead of observing our surroundings, we’re often denying ourselves the opportunity to fully absorb the moment. As a result, the refreshing and stimulating effect of vacations can become diminished.” (*Survey: More Than Half of Travelers Couldn’t Unplug on Vacation*, 2017)

Moreover, there is a recognition of “new escapism” which emerged in this always-on society. The majority of media discourses presented this developed concept of escaping: to escape is not only to stay away from physical home environment; but also to disconnect from the digital world of routine work and life. Being offline and digital detox are regarded as supreme luxury in this digitally wired 21 century when human lives are greatly consumed by screens and the invisible tether of social media and messaging.

“In today’s world the ultimate luxury is to just be able to escape your cell phone, your emails and the need to photograph (and subsequently Instagram) everything that you see, eat and do, even if it’s only for a few hours. So imagine how relaxing a trip can be that’s designed around this concept of entirely escaping and the idea that you can’t truly relax and immerse yourself in a new land until you’ve escaped the technology connecting you to home as well.” (*The New Luxury: 4 Digital Detox Tours Around The Globe To Get You Off The Grid*, 2017)

Many holiday makers’ intentions on escaping technology and reconnecting with the nature and others in the real world were included in media discourses. Many media discourses reported stories of celebrities who tried digital detox on holiday, in order to convince the public of the significance of digital-free vacation experience. Holiday time and travel are viewed as valuable opportunities for controlling technology use and treating technological dependence. A discourse titled by “Unplug: Baratunde Thurston Left The Internet For 25 Days, And You Should, Too” is a typical example.

2.5.4 Synthesis of Characteristics of the Evolution of Media Discourses on

Digital-Free Tourism

A succinct way to present the time based information lies in highlighting the common themes associated with each time period for the wider circumstances prevailing in the media discourses and then identifying the associated discussion about tourism. In Figure 2.10, the main themes in the community discourses appear in the top of the figure under the heading life and time and the tourism linked discussions appear in the lower half of the figure with the title digital free tourism. The evolution of digital free tourism from a specialist idea to a broader concept, with wider social relevance involving the values of reconnecting with friends and families is depicted.

The understanding of media representation of digital-free tourism should be grounded into broader social circumstances because both the (non-) use of ICT on holidays and the

production/reception of media discourses are socially embedded. Technology adoption in modern society, humans' attitudes to using digital communication, and the impacts of digitalisation on individuals and their social life are particularly meaningful for analysing the strategies of media discourses on digital-free tourism. Following the review of Reflexive Modernity in first chapter of this thesis, modernisation is a process of inspection and analysis characterised by new eras reflecting, competing and even revolting from its predecessors in some ways (Bauman, 2012; Giddens, 1990). Importantly, such reflexion is a spiral underpinning advancing development. The modern and the traditional may merge and coalesce rather than the former neatly replacing the latter.

The reflexive characteristics of modernity in ICT and tourism fields are represented by the emergence of conscious digital detox on holiday in societies worldwide. Moreover, the evolution of the construction of such a contemporary phenomenon is in accordance with the changing ideology and pressing socio-cultural trends as shown on the top axel in Figure 2.10. Specifically, the annual volume of discourses on digital detox holiday revealed that media representation on digital-free tourism have occurred and developed in line with the advancement of technology adoption. Leximancer conceptual analysis also indicated that the media built their discourses in close connection to sociocultural issues. The conceptual themes not only depicted the situation where digital technology dominates modern life and penetrates into vacation time; but also revealed the media's strategies of linking digital-free tourism to the rise of technology overuse and ways to deal with relationships in the contemporary era.

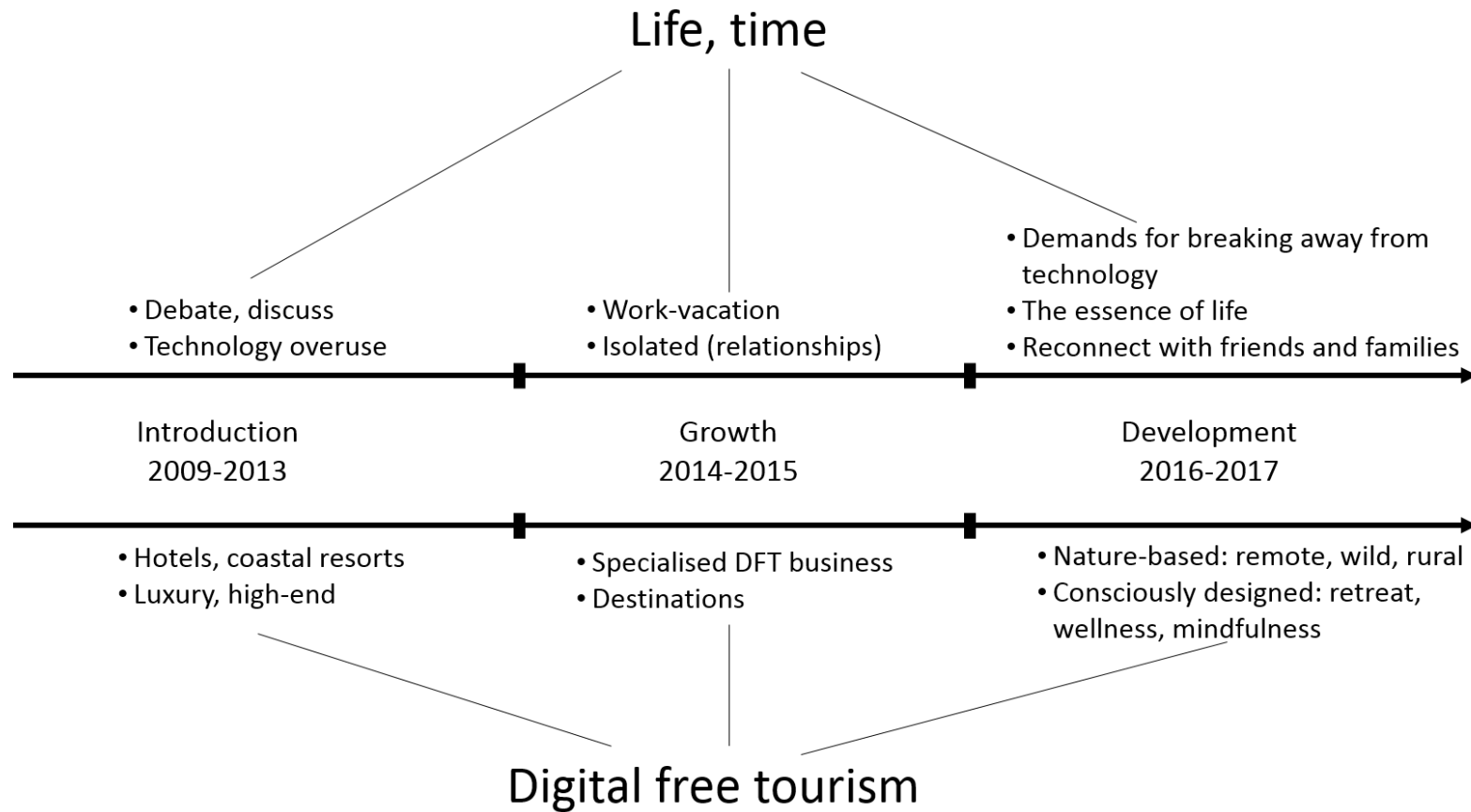


Figure 2.10 Evolutionary characteristics of three stages of media digital-free tourism discourses

Note: Drawn by author

2.6 Discussion

The researchers adapted a critical discourse analysis approach for media texts about digital free holidays. The work was driven by three aims: to build a conceptual understanding of digital-free tourism as presented in the media; to review the ways the media representation has changed over time by noting any shifts in prominent concepts and themes; and to inquire into the broad social context where digital-free tourism emerges and the relevant media discourses are produced. The researchers collected 458 articles about making holiday with limited technology usage mainly presented two objects: experience of digital-free tourism as the core issue and digital lifestyle as a broader topic.

In serving the first aim of the study, the discourses about the core idea- making holiday with limited or controlled technology usage have evolved. Generally, travelling to areas where digital connection is unreliable has been constructed as a growing social trend; rather than individual behaviours of a minority of people with special interests as presented at the beginning. The National Day of Unplugging in America and the increasing number of celebrities who make news by practising digital detox are seen as representatives (and possibly leaders) of the widespread demand for at least some digital downtime. Academic research has not studied this phenomenon in detail beyond individual tourists' perceptions, although media discourses have presented digital-free tourism as a social behaviour (Chen, Huang, Gao, & Petrick, 2018; Dickinson et al., 2016; Pearce, & Gretzel, 2012). The increased public acceptance and popularity can be evidenced by both the presentation strategies and the characteristics of digital free tourism products that are advanced in the media and now available to tourists everywhere.

In the process and social analyses, which served the second and third aims of the study, it was found that media discourses presented some overarching sociocultural phenomenon to

construct the circumstances for a trend towards digital-free tourism (cf. Alvesson & Karreman, 2000). With a rising technology adoption rate, and increasing digital involvement and attachment among ICT users, the content of media discourses surrounding digitalisation and digital-free vacation changed through time. Older discourses mainly presented the stress and overwork induced by the “always-on” culture in the digital era; while articles in the last two years have covered various effects of ICT on social life and harmonious interpersonal relationships. Such shifts revealed not only the changes in the way that people are using digital technology, but also a more nuanced understanding of the impacts of digital engagement.

The adverse effects of constant digital connection and excess technology use have been firmly asserted in recent discourses. Initially, there were more tentative discussions about the negative effects, while now, the disadvantages of constant digital connection are fully expressed. These findings from media discourses are consistent with ideas of academic studies (Byun et al., 2009; Ferraro et al, 2006; Tanti & Buhalis, 2016; Young, 1998a). Human society is becoming less connected through presence; although the internet makes individuals more closely linked in virtual space. Almost twenty years ago, Putnam (2000) reported on the decline of social capital in his much cited work “*Bowling alone*”. It is not yet clear how the social capital of being online together works to meet human needs for flourishing traditionally achieved through the company of others. Certainly, in the texts analysed by the researchers, greater importance has been attached over time to how to live well with technologies, and prevent social isolation induced by digital connection.

The rhetoric has changed from one that mainly focused on surrendering electronic devices to one that now contains a number of messages to build various elements of tourism experience. The media represented the digital detox ideas at the introductory stage mainly by delivering the fact that some luxury hotels and resorts offered incentives to guests who surrendered electronic devices. Better relaxation was claimed as the primary outcome. In

contemporary offerings, a tailored range of tourism experiences in digital-free environments have been represented. The emphases have included ways tourists can have richer sensory, emotional, cognitive, and relationship experiences through digital free activities (Pearce, & Zare, 2017). For example, sensory experiences have been highlighted by focussing on the direct visions, sounds, comfortableness, taste of cuisines of the physical setting.

Attention to emotions has been stressed, some of which such as quiet contemplation, and a sense of freedom have been seen as uniquely achievable in digital-free tourism. In terms of fulfilling cognitive goals, development of abilities to learn about settings first hand, explore unfamiliar environments, know how to communicate with unfamiliar others, and maintain self-discipline are claimed as digital-free tourism experiential benefits. Behavioural and relationship components of digital-free tourism experience were often represented in discourses on digital-free tourism. The behavioural element has been extensively addressed by presenting alternative activities to technology usage. The relationship benefits stressed in digital-free tourism experience are related to not only interactions happening during travels but also longer term benefits for partners, families and friendships are mentioned.

The implications of the findings above lie in three directions: providing clues for the prediction of future digital-free tourism tendencies; advising tourists of appropriate behaviours for digital-free travels; and offering information to tourism and hospitality business and organisations for the design and management of digital-free tourism experience.

A continued rise of digital-free tourism market demand can be forecast. Further, some characteristics of the needed digital-free tourism experience in the near future, such as temporary disconnection, engaging alternative activities, personalised digital-free experience and special programs for certain groups (family with children, colleagues) can be conceived as likely developments. All importantly, abandoning technology usage does

not mean discouraging technology adoption in tourism industry. It may initially appear paradoxical, but further studies are required as how to make use of advanced technologies to assist the development and management of digital free tourism. As noted in one of the media pieces, “in the Mongolian grasslands, tech is now fuelling tech-free tourism”.

Substantial advice is emerging for tourists to optimise their digital-free on-site experience through a raft of pre-visit and post-travel actions. For example, organising both the home and work world to advise of the time away from digital connectivity have become all important actions to reduce the constancy of connectivity expectations. Even practising using less screen time has been recommended as a form of digital detox training. Such behaviours coupled with a full itinerary of what to do and how to occupy holiday time enjoyably are seen as keys to detox vacation success.

The present study has the limitation of studying only the English language discourse. For example, a number of heavily populated Asian countries such as China, India, Thailand, Japan, Indonesia and South Korea have high levels of mobile phone use across the community and strong expectations of connectivity (Pearce, 2011a, pp.39). Studies within these language groups may add to the international awareness of the generalisability of the English language discourses and the changes over time observed in this study. Some specific communication behaviours, such as sending on-site holiday photographs, which were not a strong focus in this study may be of special importance to select tourist groups. The frustrations and negativity of being disconnected for this behaviour may be a special case study for further work.

The potential areas of future research on digital-free tourism can also be directly developed from the media discourses. The benefits of digital-free tourism on tourists' wellbeing after travel is a first direction. What are the specific outcomes from digital-free tourism and how long can these effects last? These issues need longitudinal study and with a broad range of

consumers from different countries. Secondly, the digital-free tourism market can be segmented, and it is valuable to identify the differences in the digital-free experience between groups with greater or lesser felt dependence on their devices. Thirdly, it is important to work out how digital-free tourism can make contributions to regional development. A discourse in the New York Times has presented the concerns of communities in the village of Cabo Polonio, Uruguay which is marketed as a remote, digital-free destination. Seasonal travellers are adamant that Cabo Polonio maintain its quaint charm (without electricity); whereas local residents complain that the preserved primitive lifestyle is unnecessary and detrimental to the development of their businesses and the society in general. A singular focus on the tourist is never enough in tourism development studies, and the implications of digital free tourism for wider sets of stakeholders can be identified as pivotal for further work.

Chapter 3

Exploration of Benefits from Digital-Free Tourism: A Grounded Theory Approach (Study 2)

3.0 CHAPTER OUTLINE

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Methodology

3.3.1 Data Collection and Sample

3.3.2 Scenario construction

3.3.3 Grounded Theory Analysis

3.3 Results

3.3.1 Descriptive Analysis

3.3.2 Comparison between Stakeholders' Attitudes

3.3.3 Positive Changes through the Process of Digital-Free Tourism

3.4 Discussion

3.1 Introduction

A modified version of this chapter has been published in the proceedings of CAUTHE 2019 Conference and major results from this study were presented at the conference.

“Li, J., Pearce, P., & Chen, T. (2019). New connections from being disconnected; digital free tourism and rewarding experiences. In *CAUTHE 2019: Sustainability of Tourism, Hospitality & Events in a Disruptive Digital Age: Proceedings of the 29th Annual Conference* (pp. 149-159). Cairns, Australia: Central Queensland University.”

The present study extends our interest in possibilities of digital-free tourism (DFT) (Li, Pearce et al., 2018). The first study included in Chapter 2 of this thesis has concluded that digital detoxing is a growing holiday fashion worldwide. It has been extensively reported by the media and utilised to market tourism destinations and programs. The potential of digital-free tourism to enhance tourists’ psychological states and their perceptions on destination surroundings have been widely presented. Few studies, however, have paid particular attention to the benefits from temporarily unplugging in tourism situations. Studies of the potential of dis-connectivity to enhance on-site experience, and the rewarding impacts on individual well-being have not yet been underpinned by any conceptual frameworks or detailed empirical work.

Therefore, it is timely to build a conceptual understanding of tourist experience featuring the limited ICT resources or absence of digital devices and the internet. The aims of the study are to examine systematically the suggested benefits from temporarily unplugging and to connect these explanations and considerations with a model of the processes.

Grounded Theory is selected as the approach for assessing the rewarding digital-free tourism experiences due to the lack of structured knowledge on such an emerging phenomenon. Key

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informants who possess either personal digital-free tourism experiences or expert knowledge on tourist experience and people's relationship to technology were consulted as information providers. Considering the common concerns between digital-free tourism and Positive Psychology research, including individuals'/tourists' positive emotions, well-being and QOL, the researcher will understand the findings through the lens of positive psychology (Filep & Pearce, 2014; Pearce, 2009).

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Data Collection and Sample

Key informants who possessed specialised knowledge; or had mostly relevant personal experience of digital-free tourism were selected to investigate the views about digital-free tourism benefits. The sample was accessed through a chain of advisers and links - principally advice from organisation of digital-free tourism businesses, as well as experienced consumers who responded to the researchers' call for participants and finally, scholars working in tourism and IT. I justify this sample as a knowledgeable, international, and diverse set of key informants. The overall sample consists of forty three tourists (66.2%), six digital-free tourism operators (9.2%) and sixteen tourism and ICT scholars (24.6%) from all over the world. Sample sizes of this scale are commonly viewed as appropriate for eliciting insights in less well studied tourism areas (DeCrop, 2004).

The proportions of genders are nearly even with a few more females (52.3%). Residential locations and the working location of informants covered five continents. Specifically, 40% of the informants are in the USA and Canada; 23.1% are in the UK and other European countries; 21.5% are in Australia and New Zealand; 12.3% are in Asia; and the other 3.1% are in Africa. The geographical distribution of the key informants were consistent with the distribution of digital-free tourism items identified in a media representation study (Li, Pearce et al., 2018).

The age distribution of the sample included four groups between eighteen and seventy three and resembles the structure of ICT user population. The informants aged under twenty four accounted for a large proportion in the sample (42.9%), 32.7% of the sample are from twenty

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five to forty four years old; 18.4% are from forty five to sixty five; and 6.1% of the informants are older than sixty five.

Web-based surveys were used in the data collection and a total of eighty questionnaires were distributed through Qualtrics, a professional online survey tool. Participants responded by reading digital-free tourism scenarios, making choices from multiple-option questions and writing paragraphs for open-ended questions. Sixty five informants completed surveys from 30 January to 5 May in 2018; and the valid returned rate was 81.25%.

Respondents were firstly asked to respond to two scales which identified the prevalence of ICT over-use among tourists; and their belief in the significance of digital-free tourism. The second part of the survey presented four favourable digital-free tourism scenarios as a preface to a set of open-ended questions. In the third section, five open-ended questions required participants to write paragraphs about their observations, experiences and perspectives for digital-free tourism. A fourth section collected demographic information about the respondents, including ICT use and travel experience.

The informants' responses to the two questions about their habits of using technology showed that most tourists used ICT in work and daily life at high level. Specifically, 9.3% of the tourist respondents self-reported that they were addictive to ICT; 65.2% used ICT at high or very high level; 16.3% used ICT at a moderate level; and the other 9.3% reported low or very low level of ICT adoption. As for informants' travel experience, the majority (51.2%) of the sixty five informants were highly or very highly experienced tourists; 30.2% of the sample were moderately experienced in travelling; and the other 18.7% were at low or very low level of travel experience.

Table 3.1 Profile of key-informant sample

Subtotal (N=65)		Gender (N=65)		Tourists and DFT operators age group (N=49)	
DFT tourists	43 (66.2%)	Male	31 (47.7%)	Under 24	21 (42.9%)
				25-44	16 (32.7%)
DFT operators	6 (9.2%)			45-64	9 (18.4%)
		Female	34 (52.3%)	65 or above	3 (6.1%)
Tourism and ICT academia	16 (24.6%)				
Living and working location (N=65)			Tourists and DFT operators (Cultural origin)		
USA and Canada	26 (40%)			American	23 (46.9%)
European countries (UK, Bulgaria, Spain)	15 (23.1%)			European (UK, Portugal, French, Russia, Sweden, Scotland, Germany and Greek)	12 (24.5%)
Australia and New Zealand	14 (21.5%)			Oceanian	6 (12.2%)
Africa	2 (3.1%)			African	1 (2.0%)
Asian countries (China, Indonesia, Japan)	8 (12.3%)			Asian (China, Korea, Thailand, Sri Lanka)	7 (14.3%)

3.2.2 Scenario construction

In the current study, four favourable digital-free tourism scenarios were presented to participants to provoke their thoughts about holiday situations disconnected from internet and electronic devices. Scenarios, especially narrative descriptions of plausible future situations, have been widely applied to make strategic plans, development decisions and designs involving human experience (Hertzum, 2003; Peterson, Cumming, & Carpenter, 2003). The scenarios make researchers and respondents realise potential aspects of the studied subjects that otherwise they would ignore due to knowledge limitation or prevailing mindsets. The technique of scenarios also facilitates building a common comprehension of the contexts among participants; and permits concentration on the central subject under study (DeWeerd, 1974).

Four distinct digital-free tourism scenarios were constructed based on actual digital-free tourism episodes that were reported in the media, such as news stories and travel dairies. These scenarios basically synthesised features of digital-free tourism situations on three dimensions: characteristics of digital-free environments; travel themes; and tourists' attributions.

Scenario 1 presents a group of young adults travelling through Thailand without using internet or digital devices. Scenario 2 includes businessmen tired of being always online; and therefore, holidaying at a luxury resort that provides digital-detox space and well-being retreats. Scenario 3 is about family travels in nature-based environments in which outdoor activities and adventures are involved. Scenario 4 introduces a remote European historic village that tourists visit in the pursuit of both authentic heritage and building personal well-being.

Scenario 1

Thailand Tourism chose international millennials and gave them the chance to have a digital detox adventure. They had to leave their digital devices and social media behind and travel in group of unknown others. From navigating a new country, rappelling down the side of a cliff, kayaking, exploring ancient beaches, learning from monks, to staying with a local Muslim family, they were forced to connect fully with their surroundings and the people in front of them.



Figure 3.1 An example of digital-free tourism scenario presented in surveys

Source: Drawn by author based on the discourses of Thailand Tourism and Dreaming

Jobbing

<https://kristengill.com/2016/11/28/escape-a-digital-detox-in-thailand/>;

https://www.tourismthailand.org/landing/coronation_k10_en.html;

<https://www.dreamjobbing.com/>

3.2.3 Grounded Theory Analysis

A constructivist grounded theory approach, which lies within the interpretive tradition, was employed to conceptualise digital-free tourism experience (Zhang, Tucker, Morrison, & Wu, 2017). The first level of coding was conducted through memo-writing. The researcher used the original phrases from the key informants' answers to label meaningful groups of information. This could be at the level of common words, phrases or sentences with that topic. Adopting this process one hundred and thirty nine concepts emerged from the research data.

Secondly, the generic descriptive concepts were grouped into thirty five analytical categories by repetitive comparing, merging and refining those one hundred and thirty nine concepts. Concise terms were designated to name these higher level of codes. Thirdly, the thirty five categories were further refined into 12 categories by connecting the work to key positive psychology values related to this (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, pp.143; 1998). Finally, researchers specified the relationships between the twelve theoretical categories and attempted to produce a coherent story by organising these categories. As a result, a model was established capturing the rewarding experiences and impacts of digital-free tourism.

The validation and saturation of the constructed theoretical framework of digital-free tourism experience was justified through a further and different step. Specifically, researchers coded twenty documents obtained online, including blogs about digital-free holidays, advertisements for digital-free tourism, and expert reviews on digital-detox holiday phenomenon. No further unique or distinctive concepts were added from this reference material.

3.3 Results

3.3.1 Descriptive Analysis

Firstly, the responses varied greatly in length, from twenty four words to one thousand one hundred and thirty five words written by each informant; with a median of two hundred and twenty words ($SD=257.3$). Secondly, the descriptions are rich in the language of character strengths; therefore the two coders did not need to resort to deep or symbolic inferences. The median of the number of strengths that each key informant used was 13 ($SD=3.61$). As would be expected, there is a significant correlation between description length and the number of strengths mentioned (Spearman's $Rho=0.649$, $P<0.001$).

Thirdly, key informants' perceptions on the levels of tourists' ICT overuse and the significance of digital-free tourism were very high. Specifically, the median of the value for the level of ICT overuse is 4.00 representing "very common"; and the median of the value for the significance of proposed digital-free tourism is 4.00 which represents "digital-free tourism can benefit tourists a lot" (see details in Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 Distribution of key informants' evaluation on tourists' ICT overuse; and the significance of digital-free tourism

How common is ICT overuse	Frequency (%) N=65	How much can DFT benefit tourists?	Frequency (%) N=65
1-Very uncommon	0	1- None at all	1 (1.5%)
2-Neither common nor uncommon	3 (4.6%)	2- A little	3 (4.6%)
3-Somewhat common	18 (27.7%)	3-A moderate amount	18 (27.7%)
4-Very common	44 (67.7%)	4- A lot	27 (41.5%)
		5- A great deal	16 (24.6%)
Median (SD)	4.00 (0.57)		4.00 (0.911)

In addition, the forty three tourists were asked to identify the levels of their daily ICT usage; and all the sixty five informants were asked to indicate how experienced they are in travelling. Their responses revealed that firstly, most tourists (65.2%) use ICT in work and daily life at levels from high to addictive. Sixteen percent of tourist respondents use technologies at a moderate level; and less than 10% at low level or below. As for travel experience, moderately and highly experienced tourists prevail in the sample; 23.3% are very experienced in travelling; and the other 19% are at low and very low levels (see details in Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 Levels of key informants' routine ICT use and travel experience

Level of routine ICT use	Frequency (%) N=43	Level of travel experience	Frequency (%) N=65
1- Never	0	1- Very low level	2 (4.7%)
2- Very low level	1 (2.3%)	2- Low level	6 (14.0%)
3- Low level	3 (7.0%)	3- Moderate level	13 (30.2%)
4- Moderate level	7 (16.3%)	4- High level	12 (27.9%)
5- High level	14 (32.6%)	5- Very high level	10 (23.3%)
6- Very high level	14 (32.6%)		
7- Addictive level	4 (9.3%)		
Median (SD)	5.00 (1.17)		4.00 (1.14)

3.3.2 Comparison between Stakeholders' Attitudes

The non-parametric statistic technique - Kruskal-Wallis H test was applied to compare the three groups of informants in terms of their perception on the prevalence of ICT overuse and evaluation on the significance of digital-free tourism. Consequently, the output from Kruskal-Wallis H test (Figure 3.2) revealed that responses' selection on "How common is ICT overuse among tourists" were not significantly different between three groups but it did present a pressing trend towards inter-group discrepancy because of the P value close to 0.05 ($H=5.717$, $P=0.057$). The scores for "How much can digital-free tourism benefit tourists" were significantly different between groups at the confidence level of 99% ($H=13.965$, $P=0.001$). Therefore, it is meaningful to compare the appraisals on the significance of digital-free tourism between groups.

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.
1	The distribution of "Number of CS mentioned by each informant" is the same across categories of Groups.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.146
2	The distribution of "How common is ICT overuse among tourists" is the same across categories of Groups.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.057
3	The distribution of "How much can DFT benefit tourists" is the same across categories of Groups.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.001

Asymptotic significances are displayed.

Figure 3.2 Hypothesis test summary of Kruskal-Wallis H test

Note: the significance level is 0.05.

Specifically, the pairwise comparison of responses to “how much digital-free tourism can benefit tourists” (Figure 3.3) reveals that tourists and academia evaluated the significance of digital-free tourism consistently; and the medians of their selected values are both four representing “a lot” ($SD_{Tourist}=0.93$; $SD_{Academia}=0.68$). Comparatively, operators suggest a significantly higher level of benefit of digital-free tourism ($Adj.Sig.=0.01$ and 0.027); with the median of 5 representing “a great deal” ($SD_{Operator}=0.00$).

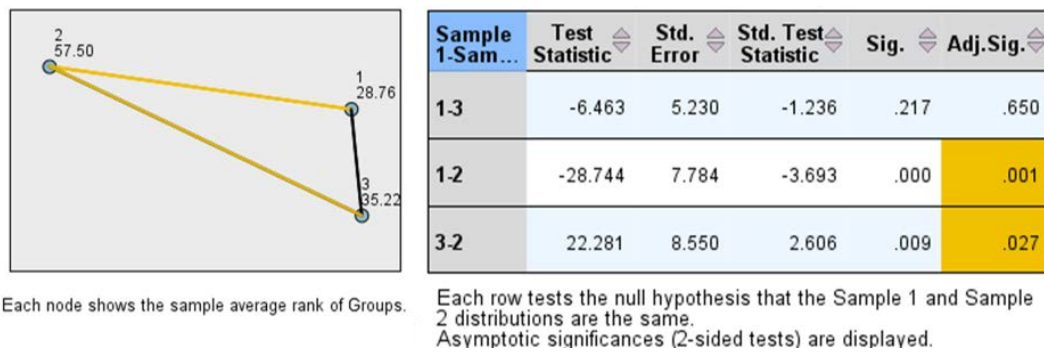


Figure 3.3 Pairwise comparison of responses to “how much can digital-free tourism benefit tourists” among three groups

Note: the significance level is 0.05

3.3.3 Positive Changes through the Process of Digital-Free Tourism

The analysis of research data examined positive changes in tourists’ psychological, behavioural and life conditions in the process of digital-free tourism. In particular, daily situations, positive experience and impacts occurred when tourists cross the threshold from routine to digital-free environment. Rewarding outcomes after travels were identified. Digital-free tourism offers tourists new intrapersonal conditions, options for building interpersonal relationships and trials new lifestyle choices across the trajectory of holidays. There were twelve theoretical categories linked to positive psychology concepts. These theoretical categories are: self-perception (in daily life), ongoing connectivity, dependence

on social media, motivation and decision, activating own strengths, disruption to digital work-life problem, face-to-face interactions, self-growth (in digital-free tourism), mindful balance, social intelligence, rewarding tourist experience, savouring experience.

Table 3.4 presents the total of one hundred and thirty five concepts obtained from informants' description of digital-free tourism, the thirty five analytical categories that resulted from clustering parallel concepts, and the formation of the twelve core categories with theoretical significance.

Table 3.4 Conceptualisation and categorisation of “digital-free tourism” experience

Theoretical categories	Analytical categories	Clustering concepts
Self-perception (in daily life)	Physical and mental issues	Physical well-being; experiencing setbacks; desire to find true self; private time; loving the nature; enjoying rural life; seeking for freedom; nostalgic; romantic; being a human; self-challenge; willingness to detox; voluntary; bored.
	Setbacks	
	Intrapersonal pursuits	
	Willingness to detox	
Ongoing connectivity	Excessive technology use	ICT has integrated into all of life domains; use their devices to find places to eat, places to go, and places to see; endless, all sorts of information every moment; rapid life pace; modern lifestyle, urban life
	Information explosion	
	Busy and rapid life	
Dependence on social media	Dependence on social media	being too committed to social media; reliance on the social media.
Motivation and decision	Escape	holiday spirit; escaping routine; switch off from work; expecting an unexpected; novel experience; well-planned and organised; reliable transport; living supplies(food, water, clothes, sleeping bag, pillow, first aid kit); inform others with your DFT plan; be mentally prepared for disconnection.
	Novelty seeking	
	Preparation	

Activating own strengths	<p>Rest and recovery</p> <p>Getting along with oneself</p> <p>Abilities and characteristics</p>	<p>De-stressing; total relaxation; better sleep and rest; work out for eyesight and rest for brain; enjoying alone; having hobbies; ability to self-entertain; knowing yourself well; adaptable; resourceful; intelligent; self-confidence; independence; shy/introverted; extroverted; optimist; curiosity; playful; friendly; adventurous; determined; open; creative; cooperative; patience; conscientious; bravery; perseverance; self-control; mentally-strong; mindful; ability to communicate; don't need much to be happy; problem-solving abilities; reading maps; don't have language barrier; culture knowledge; enjoy the nature; occupation difference; economic status; education background; the baby boomers until Gen Y groups; different situations suit different personal characteristics.</p>
Disruption to digital work-life problem	<p>Routine-holiday boundary</p> <p>Gradual adaptation to disconnected situation</p>	<p>Drawing a clear line between tourist experience and daily life; stay away from complicate and rapid life; slowing down; progress</p>
Face-to-face interactions	<p>Enjoying corporeal interaction</p> <p>Group engagement</p>	<p>Companions; family trip; common interests; types of trips(independent, group, family trip, etc.); shared (real) experience; better (real) communications; enjoying face-to-face</p>

		communication; deep communication with locals; intercultural exchange; making new friends; enjoying face-to-face communication; group engagement.
Self-growth (in DFT)	Positive emotions	Relaxed; more positive emotions; less worried; understanding what and who are really important in our life; discover himself; listening to inner voice; self-esteem; more independent; wider mind; develop mental maturity; develop situation exploration skills; improve ability of dealing with different situations; more productive and energetic back to work; encourage them to overcome challenges; creativity.
	Better understanding the meaning of life	
	Finding oneself	
	Developing capacities and positive qualities	
Mindful balance	Mindful technology use	Behaviour change; help form good habit of having digital-free time; continue to travel and live in digital-free ways; less email checking; more time; quality leisure time; making better use of time; general well-being; QOL; starting thinking of the mobile phone in my pocket upon reclaiming it back after the holiday
	Sense and control of time	
	General well-being	
	Duration of impacts	
Social intelligence	Closer and more meaningful relationships	Social well-being; more caring and empathy; kids learn better social intelligence; more harmonious family life post-trip; closer and more meaningful relationships; don't need social approval from social media; do not have to compare myself to others on social media.
	Less reliance on social media	

Rewarding tourist experience	<p>Concentration and immersion</p> <p>Better perception of surroundings</p> <p>Engaging activities</p> <p>Holiday value actualisation</p>	<p>Deepening experience; immersion into holiday environment; concentrated on the here and now; a transformation from “body on travel” to “mind on travel”; authenticity; explore the nature; appreciate landscapes and sceneries, and food; learning local culture; better perception of surroundings; discover a new world; engaging activities provided; travel is a wonderful form of education; true holiday; quality vacation.</p>
Savouring experience	<p>Memory</p> <p>Share</p> <p>Revisit</p>	<p>Remember all the sensational experience; sharing knowledge and experience; return visit.</p>

Next, the linkages and relationships among these 12 theoretical categories were identified. The work was developed by drawing together two dimensions, namely the process of digital-free tourism participation (pre-trip, on-route, and post-trip); and the key perspectives of life conditions influenced by ICT (self-regard, technology-mediated life-style, and relationships). The digital-free tourism option is beneficial because tourists' psychological and life conditions change (positively) through the process of holidaying with limited ICT engagement. A model of positive changes in digital-free tourist was established by organising the categories systematically according to the two dimensions (see Figure 3.4).

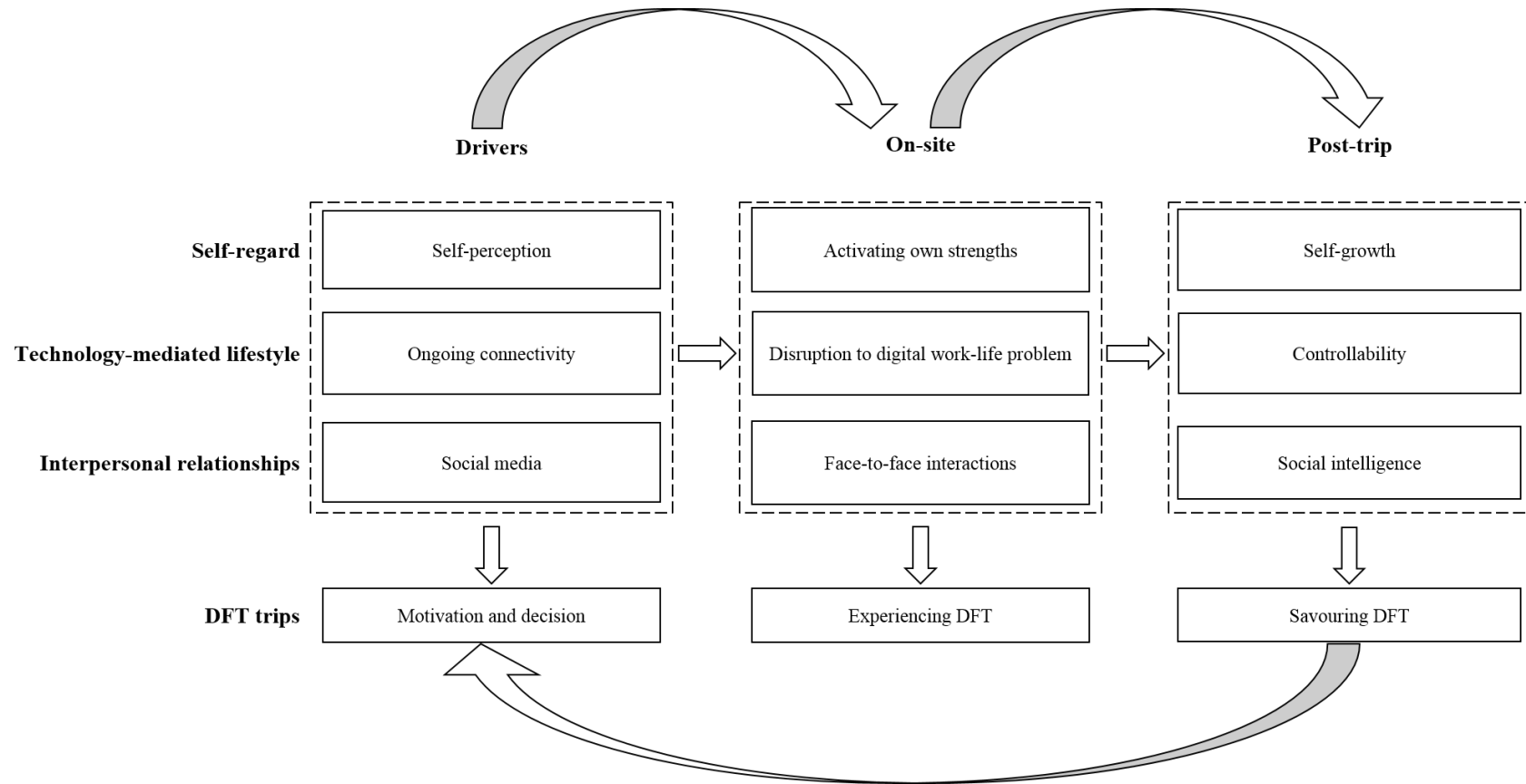


Figure 3.4 Positive changes through the process of digital-free tourism

Note: drawn by author

3.4 Discussion

The researchers studied the digital-free tourist experience by collecting, coding and organising key informants' views on digital-free tourism (DFT). The assembled information was classified along two broad themes, namely the enhanced tourist experience due to disconnection; and the positive impacts of digital-free tourism on individuals' well-being. Key informants were concerned with the characteristics of contemporary lifestyles mediated by ICT, the individual physical and psychological conditions, and interpersonal relationships. Informants tended to describe benefits of digital-free tourism by comparing tourists' conditions in three perspectives before, during and after travelling.

Our findings resonate with positive psychology research and the theory of therapeutic leisure. Firstly, the ultimate goal of digital-free tourism is the same as the aims of positive psychology and leisure participation; that is to improve both hedonistic (pleasure oriented) and eudaimonic (self-actualisation and flourishing) well-being by focusing on potentials and strengths (Seligman, & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014; Caldwell, 2005). Secondly, the impact of digital-free tourism is consistent with positive psychology and leisure studies in that researchers work to not only explore and promote the positive benefits accruing through digital-free tourism; but also prevent and modify the negative tourist behaviours. Thirdly, digital-free tourism, positive psychology and therapeutic leisure have the common research objectives, including building a good life through positive emotions, behaviours, thoughts and relationships (Pearce, 2009). Furthermore, some important constructs of positive psychology provide valuable angles to study digital-free tourism, such as character strengths, people's sense of time, and life-work balance.

The effects of digital-free tourism can be understood in some more detail by considering the changes in tourists' self-perception, the transformation of technology use habits and

lifestyles, and the variation of social life across the process of vacation involving digital disconnection.

Firstly, contemporary lifestyles feature ongoing connectivity to the internet, and to some extent distance people from their immediate setting. The key informants observed that for some ICT users it is very common to be excessively committed to their electronic devices. ICT products and services indeed carry the risk of addiction because they are designed to hook users by producing thrills and filling functional or socio-psychological voids in daily life (Young, 2010). The prevalent phenomenon of reliance on web-based communication and dependence on social media platforms were highlighted by informants as a key characteristic of ICT-mediated lifestyle. Another emphasis was the overwhelming information delivered by ICT. The very often habitual technology use speeds up the pace of life because everything is running constantly, and multiple tasks are carried out at the same time when the physical distance does not impose limitations.

Informants suggested that people would like to choose digital-free tourism when they perceived the negative conditions themselves. For example, the desire for digital down time will be any growing appreciation of physical impairment and the extra stress related to work and daily life tasks. It was also argued that those who have experienced setbacks or frustrating life events will also be main beneficiaries. In a more positive way, people with satisfying life conditions may also be interested in digital-free tourism if they are seeking novelty, having special interests such as wildlife and outdoor sports, or seek to pursue a spiritual experience.

Motivated by both the push factors of negative routine experience and the pull factors of positive expectations for digital-free tourism, tourists are willing to switch off digital devices or visit remote destinations without reliable ICT resources. Some importance is also attached

to making preparation before digital-free tourism, including not only materials needed to assure successful travel; but also mental preparation and organisation of routine tasks. Specifically, informants suggested that it was a substantial advantage if tourists knew about limited or no digital connectivity travel in advance. Mental preparation will decrease the possible anxiety or frustration when tourists are exposed to digital-free environments. Tourists would also be more relaxed in digital-free tourism if they have informed others about their “get-away” and organised work and life responsibilities at home.

A second detailed consideration and process concerns the on-site experience. A restricted digital link sets a clear boundary between holiday situations and life-work environments. It was suggested by the informants that tourists were likely to adapt to the digital-free environments gradually. For example, a holiday maker wrote that he was worried about missing out on emails and thinking of who would message him at the beginning of a Zen meditation tour when his smartphone was confiscated. However, he forgot the smartphone from the second day when he was engaged in the wellness activities. The owner of an off-line guesthouse in Portugal observed and interviewed her customers, finding that most of them were concerned in the first twenty four hours but they all became more carefree after the first night.

Tourists may benefit when they contemplate themselves and their lives. They can be recharged and recover their physical and mental capacities when entirely relaxed and well rested. Moreover, tourists’ strengths and positive qualities are activated when they have to rely on themselves and have fewer technology based resources to deal with various travel situations. For example, they need to be optimistic and curious to overcome the uncomfortable feelings of the need for digital devices at the beginning. Some valuable abilities which may be slowly diminishing in this digital era, such as reading paper maps, identifying direction and finding ways in unfamiliar destinations, are employed more often in digital-free tourism than in contemporary life. Independence and the ability to enjoy one’s

own company are important for solitary tourists in digital-free tourism. They need to know how to entertain themselves and have hobbies that they enjoy spending time on. There are a wide range of opportunities for face-to-face interactions with travel companions and others encountered on travel. Communication abilities involving eye-contact, changes of voice and tone, and participating in group activities were extensively described by informants.

Some sensory benefits were also suggested by the informants. These possibilities included greater awareness of sounds (birds singing in natural environments for example) and the freshness of the air in some rural areas. Many informants wrote that they had richer and longer-lasting memories of tourism environments, people they encountered on the way and what happened on travel. They also felt more like sharing their holiday stories and what they learned from the travel through talking to friends and families or writing travel dairies online. The willingness to continue some digital-free time in daily life and re-purchase digital-free tourism holidays were both noted. A few digital-free tourism operators reported that they had loyal customers despite just beginning their digital-free tourism operations.

The awareness of managing behaviours of using technology can persist after travelling which may lead to transformations of the way people live their life. The mindful ICT use makes people strengthen the sense of time and reclaim the control of their hours. Some informants wrote that they felt they had more time every day; experienced more quality leisure time and had extra “me time”. They also reported that they knew better how to arrange their schedules after the trial of digital-free holiday time. The change of ICT use behaviours was also believed to be important in the improvement of overall well-being. The question informants asked about this subject and one which requires further research attention is how long can these positive changes last; and in what ways can operators and others help tourists obtain sustainable rewarding outcomes.

The self-development effects of digital-free tourism experience were extensively reported in the data. Individuals' self-awareness is enhanced because they find themselves mindfully identifying their real desires and listening to their inner-selves without the overstimulation from the outside world. Some informants wrote that they understood what is really important to them in life when they "lived" their experiences in such a simple way.

Tourists were seen as likely to be physically and mentally recharged and therefore potentially would return home to be more productive and with extra energy. That is, the likelihood of positive emotions being generated more often by a more balanced life was suggested. Furthermore, the character strengths practised in digital-free tourism may be carried on into post travel life. As noted before, these points must at this time all remain the province of strong suggestions and possibilities and it is the opportunity for longitudinal testing of these benefits which can confirm the suggested long and interesting list of potential benefits.

Chapter 4

Self-Development in Digital-Free Tourism: Building Character Strengths through Coping with Challenging Situations (Study 3)

4.0 CHAPTER OUTLINE

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Character Strengths and Virtues Building Well-Being

4.3 Research Framework

4.4 Methodology

4.4.1 Template Analysis

4.4.2 Coding Procedures

4.5 Results

4.6 Discussion

4.1 Introduction

The previous two studies included in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 of this thesis have demonstrated the significance of reducing technology use in vacation and tourism situations. The current study aims to deepen the understanding of the rewarding components of digital-free tourism experience. We have identified two key links between digital-free tourism and personal benefits from the first two studies, namely coping with challenging situations by tourists relying on their own abilities as well as restoring and redirecting their concentration. This study is particularly focused on the first point – the outcome from dealing with tourism situations with very limited digital resources. The factor of concentration will be addressed in the next chapter.

Specifically, this study will investigate the links between reduced digital connectivity in tourism contexts and the development of character strengths. The core of this argument is that the activities and experiences available in digital-free tourism situations may develop some of the key character strengths which have been shown to be building blocks of human flourishing and well-being. The value of the work lies in the potential for individuals to build their strengths to support their overall well-being. This assessment offers one mechanism to explore the genesis of well-being in digital-free tourism.

I will analyse the data collected in the study two, that is the content reported by sixty five key informants, including digital-free tourism providers, experts in tourism and IT, and tourists who have experienced digitally disconnected situations. The goals are to identify the character strengths that can be activated by participation in digital-free tourism; and examine the contributions of digital-free tourism experience to nurturing positive personal traits. The twenty four character strengths which have been described in rich detail in positive psychology literature will form a basis for categorising the claims for beneficial digital-free tourism experiences (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

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Findings will shed light on the approaches to designing digital-free tourism settings and experiences which can cultivate personal growth and flourishing. As a mechanism to explore the characteristics of digital-free tourism experience, which might be generating beneficial outcomes, I will also consider the facets of the orchestra model of experience.

4.2 Character Strengths and Virtues Building Well-Being

Character strengths, defined as positive traits reflected in thoughts, feelings and behaviours, lead to human excellence and help characterise a flourishing life (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004; Yearley, 1990, pp. 13). The work of Peterson and Seligman (2004), writing from the perspective of positive psychology, represents a detailed attempt to catalogue human character strengths and virtues. They distinguish three levels of analysis in assessing the nature of character strengths and the attributes leading to well-being. At the most abstract level, they use the term virtues which are core characteristics valued cross-culturally by philosophers and religious thinkers. The six broad categories of virtue identified from extensive source materials are wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence.

At a slightly more pragmatic and assessable level, which corresponds to what Rosch, Mervis, Gray, Johnson, and Boyes-Braem (1976) have called a natural level of categorisation, twenty four character strengths are identified. The character strengths can be seen as the routes to the virtues with each virtue typically having three to five character strengths. Examples of the character strengths include social intelligence, self-regulation, curiosity, creativity, appreciation of beauty and excellence, open-mindedness, vitality, and love of learning.

The third level of character analysis outlined by Peterson and Seligman is referred to as situational themes. Themes are habits and specific behaviours thoroughly tied to different settings such as workplaces, domestic life, or public environments. Thus a situational theme, such as patience when waiting in line, is a specific habit underpinning the character strength of self-regulation which in turn contributes to the virtue of temperance. In the current research, the specific behaviours of consciously reducing ICT use on vacation is a situational

theme for positive psychology, which may require and affect several of the character strengths outlined.

Of particular interest to tourism study, there is a view that experience in various life domains can build or shape the character strengths (Peterson and Seligman, 2004). Peterson and Seligman use tonic strengths for traits relating to broadly stable ways individuals respond; and phasic strengths for those contextualised traits rising and falling in response to the demands of specifiable situations. The current research is concerned with all of the twenty four strengths; but more attention is focused on the phasic strengths which are often encouraged through experiencing new and educating settings.

There is solid documentation that the recognition and active deployment of character strengths in essential life domains are important approaches to improving well-being (Park et al., 2004). For example, employers and volunteers were found to be more satisfied with work experiences and perceive increased well-being when they recognised the use of their character strengths (Littman-Ovadia & Steger, 2010). In education contexts, students' fulfilment and future well-being are boosted when teachers endorse virtues and encourage students to deploy their character strengths (Park & Peterson, 2009). Importantly, virtues (character strengths) can be developed and changed by intentionally displaying, sustaining, increasing, or creating certain traits (Park & Peterson, 2009; Quinlan et al., 2012).

Studies exploring the relationships between leisure/tourism experience and strengthening well-being are limited (Wan, De, & Hekkert, 2016). One focus has been on how specific strengths, such as humour and gratitude function in social interactions in leisure and tourism circumstances (Frew, 2006; Pabel, 2014; Pabel & Pearce, 2016; Pearce & Pabel, 2015). For example, the kindness provided by strangers encountered on travels has been observed; and

the feeling of gratitude generated profound and eudaimonic impacts on both providers and recipients of kindness (Pearce, 2009).

Secondly, the effects of different leisure and tourism pursuits in building particular character strengths have been explored (Laing & Frost, 2017; Passarelli, Hall, & Anderson, 2010; Wan et al., 2016). For example, participation in sport charity events were found to be predominantly related to kindness/generosity, citizenship, loyalty and teamwork, hope and optimism, and passion and enthusiasm (Coghlan & Filo, 2016).

Thirdly, character strengths as influences on behaviour in tourism rather than as outcomes have been considered (Coghlan & Filo, 2016; Filep, Macnaughton, & Glover, 2017). For example, Pabel & Pearce (2016) identified that humour helped tourists better connect with others and cope with difficult or stressful travel situations. In addition, the value of tourist experience in contributing to character strengths has been found to continue and intensify in daily life after travels (Laing & Frost, 2017).

It can be concluded from the literature, that building well-being requires responses in terms of character strengths to challenging situations (Littman-Ovadia & Steger, 2010). Personal character strengths can be developed when individuals pursue extraordinary, challenging, physical but non-travel related leisure activities (Huta & Ryan, 2010; Scott et al., 2017). An example of developing strengths in demanding tourism situation is the personal growth in Flamenco travels (Matteucci & Filep, 2017). The hardship and sacrifice involved in learning Flamenco resulted in perceived improvements in self-confidence and willpower.

Admittedly, it can be challenging for tourists to travel in technology-free locations. They may anxiously wait to reconnect and be plagued by overwhelming feelings of the need for digital resources. However, such experiences of technology “deprivation” and attendant negative feelings can force people to rely on their inner strengths to manage their present situation; a process which improves character strengths and increases well-being. Moreover,

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in everyday work and life, participants may be able to use newly developed personal strengths from the digital-free tourism experience; such social benefits assist human flourishing (Park & Peterson, 2009).

In this study, the researchers seek to identify the core strengths that are demanded/enacted to cope with digitally disconnected circumstances. Further, the study will explore the favourable qualities and facets of the tourist experience which support the development of character strengths and virtues.

4.3 Research Framework

This study seeks to meet two specific interconnected aims: firstly, to explore the potential benefits of having some digitally disconnected vacation time; secondly, to investigate the linkages between positive digital-free tourism experience and the development of character strengths and virtues valuable for increasing well-being.

An existing Leisure and Well-being Model which captures both intrapersonal and external resources in leisure production fundamentally informs our understanding of rewarding digital-free tourism experience (Anderson & Heyne, 2012; Bornstein, Davidson, Keyes, & Moore, 2003; Carruthers & Hood, 2007; Hood & Carruthers, 2007; Kleiber, 1999). Firstly, the internal resources include personal strengths, ranging from character strengths/virtues to skills/competencies; and the external resources contain environmental and contextual elements. The character strengths are particularly recognised as an important capacity for leisure participation. In the meanwhile, the distal goal of leisure pursuits includes to build strengths which are conducive to well-being enhancement. Secondly, the environmental components include not only physical space; but also other supportive factors, such as inter-personal relations.

The summary research framework in Figure 4.1 illustrates the hypothesised mechanism of digital-free tourism contributing to the improvement of well-being. Particularly, character strengths play a crucial role in this process. The digital-free holiday environments require and encourage tourists to make use of their strengths to cope with the challenging disconnected situations. On the other hand, the rewarding outcomes from the participation in digital-free tourism are related to the positive tourist experience; and the developed character strengths.

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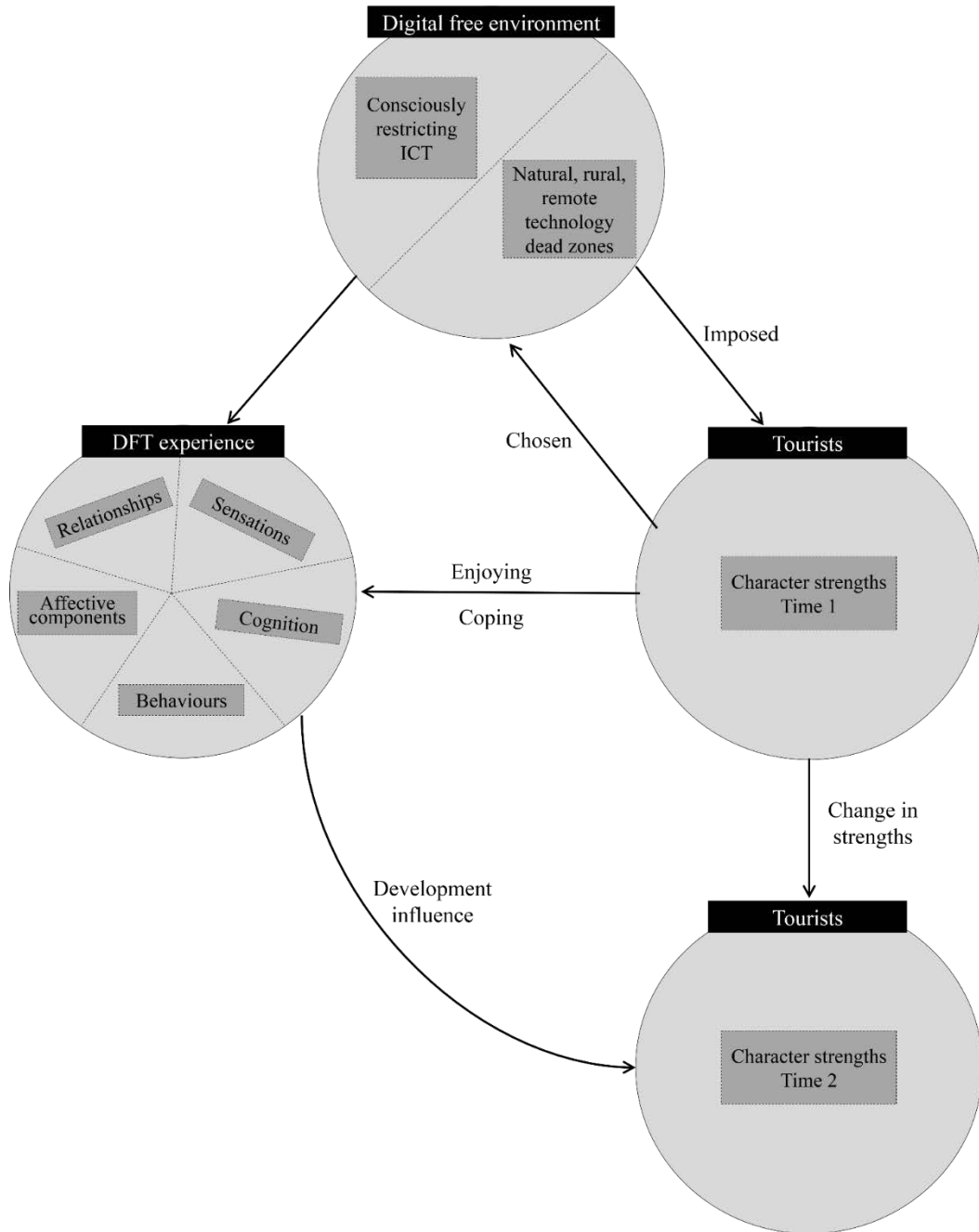


Figure 4.1 Conceptual framework for positive linkages between digital-free tourism and the development of character strengths

Note: drawn by author

4.4 Methodology

4.4.1 Template Analysis

The template approach was utilised to analyse the text drawn from key informants' written content in response to open questions. Template approaches to content analysis are characterised by a priori (semi-) structured codebooks established before in-depth analysis. Such coding templates are usually constructed based on research questions, hypotheses, conceptual/theoretical understandings, or preliminary text exploration (Crabtree & Miller, 1992; Waring & Wainwright, 2008).

The goals of current research are clear: to examine the relatedness between digital-free tourism experience and practising character strengths. Template analysis is suitable for this research because it permits qualitative studies to retain inductive components; but also apply the elements of structural knowledge (Waring & Wainwright, 2008).

In particular, the catalogue of virtues and character strengths was adopted as a priori scheme for substantial manual coding (Table 4.1). The researchers slightly revised Peterson and Seligman's categorisation to form the template codebook for the current digital-free tourism study. Firstly, the descriptions for strengths given by Peterson and Seligman were adapted according to the particular contexts of tourism and ICT adoption. Secondly, the strength of *self-regulation* was divided into three codes, including one for controlling one's behaviours, one for controlling one's attention, especially focus, and one for controlling mind and emotion, especially being disengaged and carefree.

Table 4.1 Coding book/template of the virtues and character strengths in digital-free tourism circumstances

Virtues	Character strengths	Notes
Wisdom and knowledge <i>[Highlights-being smart, using and seeking ideas]</i>	Creativity	Thinking and doing in original and ingenious ways.
	Curiosity	Being interested in exploring and discovering fascination and novelty.
	Open-mindedness	Being open to any rational possibilities without bias, discrimination or paradigm limiting mindset.
	Love of learning	Being enthusiastic about new knowledge, skills and topics.
Courage <i>[Highlights-being strong to achieve your goals]</i>	Perspective	Assessing things, judging situations and commenting wisely in relation to everything else.
	Bravery	Being physically and mentally free from fear to deal with threats, dangers, challenges and difficulties.
	Persistence	Sticking to plans and goals; never giving up easily.
	Integrity	Being honest to others and oneself; presenting authentic feelings, ideas and attitudes.
Humanity	Vitality	Being full of vigour and energy; doing things actively.
	Love	Liking and caring others; valuing the importance others; being close to people.

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<i>[Highlights-valuing close relationships with others]</i>	Kindness	Doing favours for others; providing benefits to others.
	Social intelligence	Being able to comprehend feelings, thoughts and behaviours of others and oneself; interacting with people in mutually beneficial ways in different situations.
<i>[Highlights-promoting community harmony]</i>	Citizenship	Contributing to a group as a member; doing one's share.
	Fairness	Treating all people equally without discrimination; offering everyone a fair chance.
	Leadership	Capacity to take the charge of a team; being able to managing personnel, organising activities and regulating teamwork.
<i>[Highlights- controlling excess]</i>	Forgiveness and mercy	Understanding and accepting others' shortcomings; permitting mistakes; giving others chances to mend and improve.
	Humility/modesty	Not showing off one's abilities, capacities or accomplishments; not thinking of oneself outstanding.
	Prudence	Thinking twice before acting; being cautious in what to say and to do.
	Self-regulation (Behaviours)	Disciplining oneself; controlling one's behaviours.
	Self-regulation (Focus)	Controlling one's attention.

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Transcendence <i>[Highlights- connecting to a bigger meaning]</i>	Self-regulation (Emotion)	Controlling one's emotions, being disengaged and care-free; relaxing, slowing down and resting; chilling out and emptying time.
	Appreciation of beauty and excellence	Noticing, praising and enjoying the wonders of nature, people, events and experiences.
	Gratitude	Finding out what is good for oneself; acknowledging and expressing thankfulness.
	Hope	Believing in the brightness of the future; being optimistic and willing to work to make good things happen.
	Humour	Enjoying laughing and making jokes; not taking all of life too seriously.
	Spirituality	Having beliefs about the higher meaning and purpose of the universe that individuals should respect and act accordingly for harmony.

4.4.2 Coding Procedures

Texts returned by key informants were coded based on the template--the scheme of twenty six codes for character strengths. Two researchers closely read the key informants' written paragraphs. They marked and assigned a code for any lexical expressions, descriptions, and conceptual equivalents in the data which resembled the connotation of strengths. Coding units ranged from a word to a sentence wherever a meaningful resemblance to character strength(s) was identified. The starting point of the coding scheme was the strength names and their obvious synonyms as presented in Peterson and Seligman's classification. Moreover, the behavioural trends in descriptions that reflected the strength of interest were also coded to capture the ways respondents described various strengths in digital-free tourism situations (see examples of coding in Table 4.3).

The coding reliability was ensured by three rounds of coding; the first author coded at two different times; there was a checking between two authors; and an inter-coder assessment undertaken with a third researcher. Before coding, the three researchers had undergone coding training and panel discussion in reference to materials in the work by Peterson and Seligman (2004) until they agreed on all the allocations of strengths to example texts.

Inter-coder consistency was confirmed by high level of category agreements (CA) between two coders across all the twenty six strengths. Specifically, 7 questionnaires were randomly drawn from the sixty five valid surveys (10.8%) which contained four thousand two hundred forty three words (21.1% of the total word counts). Written answers in these seven questionnaires were coded by the third researcher. The index of concordance was computed to estimate the category agreements by the formula: $CA = 2 \times \text{number of agreements between coders} / [\text{Number of Coder A's codes} + \text{Number of Coder B's codes}]$ (Winter, 1991; Schultheiss, & Brunstein, 2001). The category agreements ranged between 75% and 92%

with the mean of 83.2% which indicates high consistent and reliability (Boyatzis, 1982, pp. 52) (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Inter-coder category agreements

Sample	Number of Coder A's codes	Number of Coder B's codes	Number of agreements	CA
1	71	65	52	76.5%
2	50	46	36	75%
3	67	64	57	87.0%
4	25	25	23	92.0%
5	45	43	36	81.8%
6	53	50	43	83.5%
7	26	27	23	86.8%
Overall				83.2%

4.5 Results

The frequency of each character strength can be represented by the number of key informants who referred to this strength in their answers. The repetitiveness is defined by the median number of times that a strength appeared in each key informant's response. The values of frequency and repetitiveness for the character strengths; and examples of the quotes coded for the strengths are displayed in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Prevalence and density of comments for character strengths in digital-free tourism description and examples of coding

Character Strengths	Prevalence of character strength among informants (%) N=65	Examples
1. Creativity	9 (13.8%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You need to be more flexible and creative. • Without the internet you have to be creative with how to pass time by.
2. Curiosity	47 (72.3%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I wonder what it would be like not to use smartphones for days. • You also need to be willing to try new things that don't involve the internet. • It's important that people want and desire to adventure the environment.
3. Open-mindedness	52 (80%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It makes me realise how many things I miss every day because of my "addiction" to digital. • Some other may view this as a cool and freshly novel experience. ... • It is a very important part of embracing a different path. • The ability to adapt to new and unfamiliar situations, and to strangers, will be crucial.

4. Love of learning	34 (52.3%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The main reason to travel is to observe, experience, and learn.• This will increase the knowledge gained from travel.
5. Perspective	46 (70.8%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being without technology on holiday would really show you how little you actually need to be dependent on technology.• It may teach us what really is important in our life.• Self-growth I learnt was that I do not have to compare myself to others on Instagram.
6. Bravery	43 (66.2%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Here comes the courage to do these things.• Confidence• Being adventurous and independent may be helpful.
7. Persistence	35 (53.8%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The benefit I personally found was I felt more productive.• Perseverance.
8. Integrity	38 (58.5%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take some time for internal reflection away from social media.• It is hopefully helpful in getting to know yourself.• To communicate with families and friends straightforwardly by showing the real you;

		rather than pretending under the mask of social media.
9. Vitality	50 (76.9%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I could ensure a restorative mind and body.• I would participate in more outdoor activities.• More active physically.
10. Love	46 (70.8%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We spend more time on appreciating our friendship.• Closer relationships with families and friends.• Develop more positive emotions-like feeling love and supported.
11. Kindness	11 (16.9%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Great empathy and consideration for others through conversation and shared experiences.• Become to be a more care and empathy people.• Humanity will develop.
12. Social intelligence	57 (87.7%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Abilities to communicate and form real personal relationships with others.• Kids learn better how to socialise.• I will need to develop communication skills to interact with local people.

13. Citizenship	12 (18.5%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through discussion, setting a vision, set a strategy together by using a very limited equipment, their social value will develop. • Cooperative. • Make your own contribution to this group.
14. Fairness	2 (3.1%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same amount of attention should be given to families/friends and those in the screen. • I realised the need to wisely distribute time on communication with friends on social media and those around me.
15. Leadership	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ×
16. Forgiveness and mercy	4 (6.2%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patience. • DFT is a place to remind us to be human again, understand native behaviour and be more tolerant.
17. Humility/modesty	2 (3.1%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You need to think you are not very important. • For people who are really shy and introverted, this is easy.
18. Prudence	10 (15.4%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourists has to think carefully about what to say and how to do. • Without social media killing your time automatically, you need to rethink about how to arrange your time and plan carefully.

19.1 Self-regulation (behaviours)	56 (86.2%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I could hold myself no to check smartphones.• This is about behaviour change and potentially, nudge theory.• Characteristic: well-planned/organised• I used to check my work emails quite often even I know there might not be something important. During my stay there, I was forced not to check due to the wi-fi disconnection.
19.2 Self-regulation (focus)	60 (92.3%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Environment that promotes self-care and focus.• I can concentrate easier on whatever I am doing.• Help them to recover from stress and pressure that we carry every day.• The mind learns to calm down.• We were not distracted by phones or TV.• The results of such process also emphasised on affective aspects (relating to moods, feelings and attitudes).• Learn to overcome the feeling of loneliness.
19.3 Self-regulation (emotion)	47 (72.3%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This is undoubtedly enhanced by emptying the mind (and their time).

20. Appreciation of beauty and excellence	59 (90.8%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Slowing down, properly relaxing and decompressing a cluttered mind.• Let go of all the unnecessary.• Taking a break.
21. Gratitude	24 (36.9%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appreciate the culture and the unique nature of the country.• I truly believe that those moments are actually the best.• I enjoyed the quality time with families and will remember and savour the experience.
22. Hope	36 (55.4%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Memories with friends and families.• Often our cherished memories are ones that only you have.• I am able to appreciate just how beautiful life is and all of the amazing experiences I can gain from.• Some families in particular than us for the chance to spend time together and enjoy the great outdoors and relax.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hopefully, it could change the way I usually live.• How could digital-free time be brought into daily life to help with work-life balance.

Digital-Free Tourism

23. Humour	1 (1.5%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For the Thailand scenario, such characteristics like..., humorous,... may be helpful to enjoy the situation and holiday.
24. Spirituality	28 (43.1%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many health and well-being, mind and body and soul attributes that you can attend often don't allow digital devices.
Median (SD)	35.50 (20.93)	

Twenty five out of the twenty six character strengths appeared in key informants' description of digital-free tourism circumstances, in relation to their personal experience, observation and attitudes around this study subject. The strength of leadership is the only one that was never mentioned in the surveys.

In-depth analyses were undertaken based on the counted prevalence and calculated relative density of comments for character strengths. The ranking prevalence for the strengths among key informants is presented in Figure 4.2. The higher prevalence, means more informants mentioning a strength, and implies higher confidence in confirming the relatedness of the strength to digital-free tourism situations. The median of prevalence of all the twenty six strength codes is 35.50 (SD=20.93), which means each strength is used by an average of 35.50 informants to write about digital-free tourism. Furthermore, the twenty five strengths (excluding leadership) are clustered into two prevalence groups; that is a high-prevalence group including strengths with prevalence value over 35.50; and a low-prevalence group containing strengths with prevalence below 35.50.

Firstly, the median of frequencies of the twenty five strengths is 35.50 (SD=20.93), which means each of the strengths was used by thirty six out of sixty five informants on average to write about digital-free tourism. The higher frequency, thus more informants mentioning a strength, implies higher confidence in confirming the relatedness of the strength to digital-free tourism.

Digital-Free Tourism

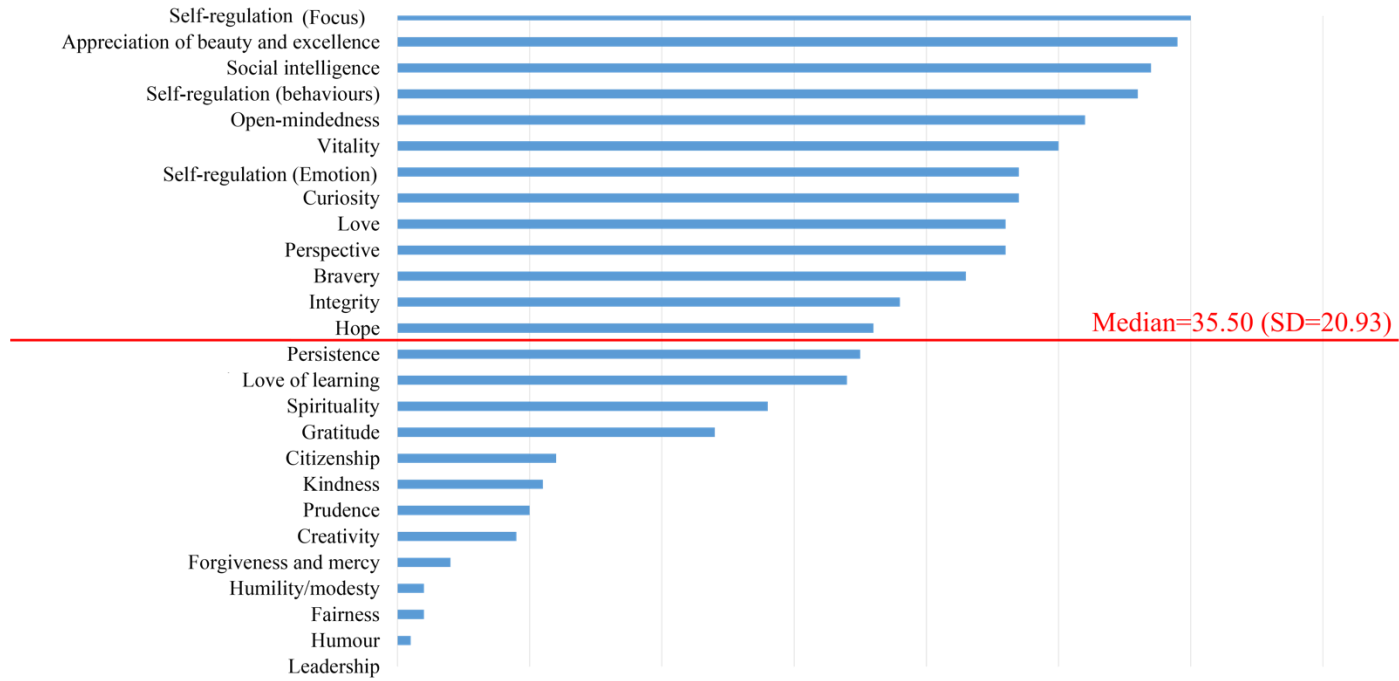


Figure 4.2 Character strengths ranked by prevalence

Note: generated based on coding results

Secondly, the twenty five DFT-relevant strengths were categorised into three groups according to their repetitiveness. Specifically, the high-repetitiveness group includes strengths which appeared twice or three times in an informant's answer; the moderate-repetitiveness group comprises strengths used only once by each informant; and the low-repetitiveness group consists of strengths appearing less than once on average.

Thirdly, the twenty five character strengths were clustered into three groups based on both of their frequencies and repetitiveness. Figure 4.3 represents the paths for forming groups. Strengths with high frequency (35 and above) and high repetitiveness were identified as core DFT-relevant strengths; and those with low frequency (below 35) and low repetitiveness were grouped as peripheral strengths in digital-free tourism situations. Other strengths formed the group of secondary DFT-relevant strengths.

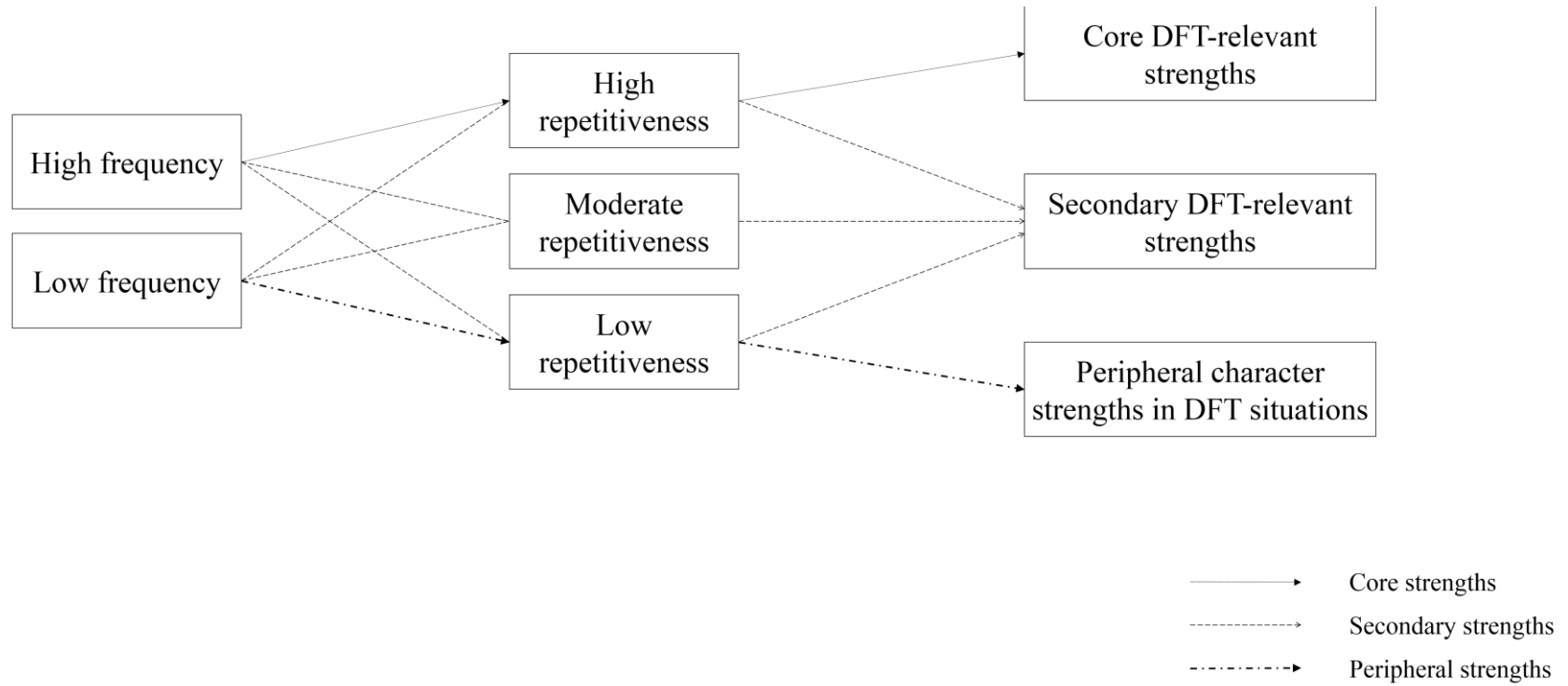


Figure 4.3 Clustering paths

Note: drawn by author

Consequently, a core-periphery model was drawn to visualise the relative importance of different character strengths for digital-free tourism (Figure 4.4). In particular, five character strengths on the top layer were most closely related to digital-free tourism situations. They were open-mindedness, social intelligence, self-regulation (behaviours), self-regulation (focus), and appreciation of beauty and excellence. The next layer of important character strengths for digital-free tourism are curiosity, lover of learning, perspective, bravery, persistence, integrity, vitality, love, self-regulation (emotion), and hope. Another ten strengths at the third layer were also used by informants but they were not as prevalent or frequently mentioned as those in the core and secondary groups.

Digital-Free Tourism

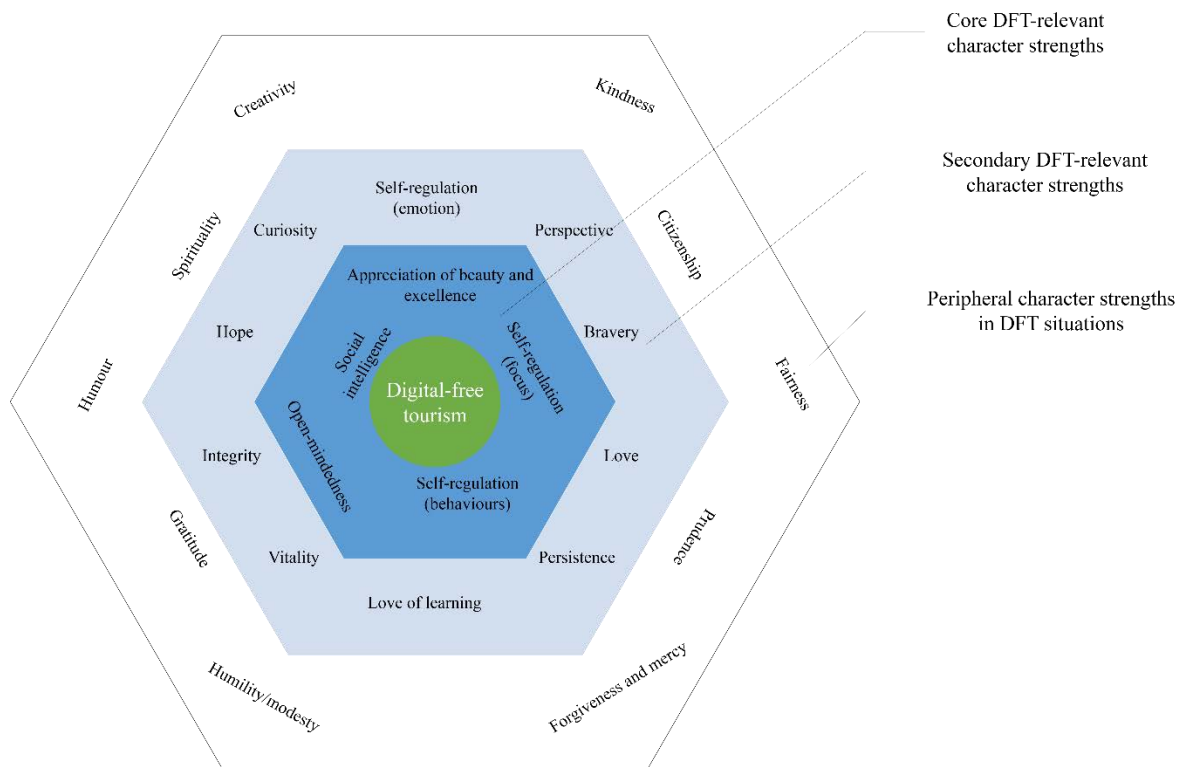


Figure 4.4 The core-periphery model of DFT-relevant character strengths

Note: drawn by author

4.6 Discussion

The current research explored the positive experience of digital-free tourism and its significance for the development of character strengths. Tourism researchers have tended to endorse enthusiastically the usefulness of information and communication technology (ICT) in tourism; rather than evaluate or warn against the subtle psychological and well-being side-effects of travel based technology devotion. The idea of digital-free tourism implies the potential of tourism to deal with the risks of excessive use of ICT which have been common social concerns (Li, Pearce, et al., 2018). This research contributes to broadening perspectives on the role of ICT in tourism.

Web-based surveys with sixty five key informants produced rich texts around digital-free tourism, including respondents' personal experience and observation, and their attitudes towards digital-free tourism. Character strengths relevant to digital-free tourism experience were identified through coding informants' written answers according to the categorisation template of strengths introduced from positive psychology. Consequently, digital-free tourism was perceived as powerful for building character strengths by encouraging tourists to rely on their abilities to deal with conditions featuring restricted digital resources.

The nuanced relationships between digital-free tourism experience and the development of character strengths can be understood further through the lens of the Orchestra Model which captures five integrated components of tourist experience (Pearce, 2011a; Pearce & Zare, 2017). The model offers the idea that tourists' on-site experiences are a summary of the confluence of sensations, emotions, cognitions, and behaviours in the content of reward relationships (c.f. Pearce, Wu, & De Carlo, 2013). These categories of on-site experience are applied in this Discussion to express the way digital-free tourism situations build character strengths.

Emotion/affection

Self-regulation (emotion), the capacity for overcoming the feelings of loneliness, anxiety and desire for digital connection, is the most important strength for digital-free tourism situations. Digital-free tourism also demands that tourists deploy their strength of being brave, in the sense of being courageous and confident in facing the challenging digital-free situations. Another strength is that of self-regulation (emotion) which highlights tourists' mental liberation: that is the ability to control the emotions of worry and nervousness. Digital-free tourism environments are ideal for disengaging or escaping where tourists gradually slow down and empty their time without the fear of missing out. Spirituality and mindfulness are developed in digital-free tourism when tourists meditate on the relationship between human beings and nature.

Sensation

The sensation-based strengths include appreciation of beauty and excellence. Tourists' attention is shifted from digital screens to the present circumstances in digital-free tourism; therefore they better capture their direct senses of seeing, smelling, hearing and touching locales. Peaceful environments, such as the nature-based, remote and rural destinations, wildlife habitats, uplifting holy lands and historical heritage sites, are most frequently mentioned as the macro senses stimulating environment for digital-free tourism.

Relationships

Digital-free tourism is powerful in drawing attention to interpersonal relationships and strengthening tourists' social intelligence. Personal interactions, without distraction from electronic devices, involve more focused communication, more talk, vivid gestures, additional eye contacts, and subtle changes in tone and voice. which produce better

understanding among families and friends who travel together. The character strength of love may follow the closer relationships and build psychological satisfaction and well-being.

Digital-free tourism situations also provide opportunities for tourists to acquaint themselves with others, such as travellers and residents in the hosting communities. To start conversations, approach strangers, and enter a group are valuable social abilities, which arguably, have become more difficult in this digital era. Kindness and gratitude were highlighted in digital-free tourism where tourists might need help and support each other due to the absence of online resources. In addition, informants stressed the significance of digital-free tourism for children, claiming that children can learn really valuable social skills by participating in personal interactions and face-to-face communications.

Behaviours

The strength of self-regulation (behaviours) in digital-free tourism suggests that tourists manage their behaviours of using ICT and reflect on their habitual usage when being deprived of connectivity. As the strength vitality implies, tourists were seen as likely to take part in more grounded and engaging digital-free tourism activities as alternatives to digital engagement. Such behaviours included outdoor sports, group games, and exploring. Alternatively, some tourists may prefer to take a break by simply resting, staying alone and leaving the busy world behind. Successful behaviour management often follows positive emotional and sensational experience when the passive resistance of ICT use has turned into mindful selection (Hoving, 2017).

The strength of hope is about transforming digitalised lifestyles to have more control over technology use behaviours in future daily life. Such conscious control of behaviours is especially significant in reclaiming the work-life balance (Kirillova & Wang, 2016; Chen et al., 2018).

Cognition

The cognitive strengths most closely related to digital-free tourism are open-mindedness, curiosity, love of learning, creativity and perspective. Informants tend to define the digital-free tourism experience by adventure and exploration, all of which require tourists to adapt to different situations with limited resources. Multiple solutions to difficulties and various ways of entertaining oneself are necessary in digital-free tourism. Deploying curiosity, using one's creativity and shifting perspective are valuable mechanisms in this process. Moreover, digital-free tourism provides opportunities to learn about new topics, ranging from the culture of the visited communities to traditional skills which modern people are gradually losing, such as reading paper maps, identifying directions and even using handwriting.

The strengths of perspective in digital-free tourism is also related to integrity, in the sense of individuals evaluating themselves critically and being honest. Web-based networking instead of direct socialisation can tend to dominate the social life of contemporary individuals. Many people are so dependent on social media for pursuing recognition that they become “a slave of technology” constantly showing and living life and tourism experience for others (Neuhof, 2016). Entering the grounded digital-free tourism situations and staying away from the digital-based networks was seen by the stakeholders as having the potential to help tourists recognise the importance of a perspective on life, thus finding out more about who they are and what they want.

The application of the components of the orchestra model has identified a cluster of components which contribute to the core and mid-level character strengths benefits of digital-free tourism. Most especially, the approach highlights the widespread influence of the digital-free tourism settings and the variety of consequences for tourists' lives and well-being.

Chapter 4 (Study 3: Building Character Strengths)

The current study has the limitations of consulting only key informants to represent tourists, operators and experts. It is an exploration of the hypothesised relationships between digital-free tourism and the development of character strengths and offers a basis for direct and wider inquiries. Further research is needed to reveal more nuanced correlations and form a truly international, participant based understanding of the benefits of digital-free tourism.

Chapter 5

Optimal Experience: the Role of Reduced Smartphone Use in Increasing Perception of Restorative Environments and Producing Flow (Study 4)

5.0 CHAPTER OUTLINE

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Conceptual Background

5.2.1 Restorative Vacation Environment

5.2.2 Psychological Attributions of Flow

5.2.3 Attentional Regulation for Flow

5.2.4 Leisure and Tourism Studies of Flow

5.3 Hypotheses and Research Model

5.4 Methodology

5.4.1 Study Sites, Data Collection and Sample

5.4.2 Survey Instruments

5.4.3 Data Analysis

5.4 Results

5.4.1 Descriptive Analysis

5.4.2 Measurement Model

5.4.3 Structural Model

5.5 Discussion

5.1 Introduction

Findings from the earlier studies in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 have revealed the power of digital-free tourism in enhancing tourist experience and improving well-being. In particular, the potential of mindful disconnection in digital-free tourism to restore people's concentration has been identified. This link is one of the most important connections between digital-free tourism and personal benefits. This study will concretise the positive outcomes from refreshing the ability to concentrate due to digital-free tourism. I attempt to establish a conceptual understanding of the optimal experience by incorporating multiple components of the digital-free tourism situation, including perceptions of the environment, tourist behaviours and psychological states. The findings will help explain the mechanism (s) through which reduced technology engagement benefits tourists. The aim of the study is therefore to build our knowledge of how vacation experience with reduced technology engagement contributes to people's well-being.

The construct of a restorative environment is selected to represent the person-environment transaction in digital-free tourism. The approach focuses on individuals' recovery from mental fatigue and attention recovery through engaging with restorative environments (Lehto, 2013). In addition to restoring attention, the theme of stressful life conditions in the digital era were identified as principle motives for participating in digital-free tourism in the previous two studies reporting media discourses and key-informants' perspectives. Therefore, investigating tourists' perception of the restorative qualities of the vacation environment is a suitable pathway for developing a deeper understanding of digital-free tourism benefits.

Flow, a construct in positive psychology that represents a state of optimal life experiences when people are fully concentrating, is employed to assess rewarding experiences in digital-free tourism (Csikszentmihalyi, & Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; 1988; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989;

Kaplan, 1995). The attributions of flow, including focused concentration, total immersion and deep satisfaction resonate with the features of digital-free tourism.

Moreover, the current research focus is narrowed by considering the reduced usage of mobile internet on smartphones as representative of less technology engagement. The habits of using smartphones are taken into consideration as a factor influencing outcomes from unplugging on vacation.

The environmental, behavioural and psychological factors constituting digital-free experience are brought together to analyse the formation of optimal experience. Specifically, the environmental component will be assessed by measuring the level of perceived restorative qualities of the environment; behavioural components appraised by measuring the level of dependence on smartphones and the usage of mobile internet in tourism contexts; and the optimal experience induced by disconnection will be represented by the level of flow. Measurements for the levels of restorative environment, flow and smartphone dependence will be developed by drawing on the items embedded in previous literature. The smartphone use behaviour will be measured by scales introduced from IT research. Relationships among the variables will be incorporated into a structural model. Drawing on empirical data, the research model will be estimated by employing partial least squares structural equation modelling technique (PLS-SEM).

5.2 Conceptual Background

5.2.1 Restorative Vacation Environments

Tourists' perception of the restorative properties of environments is one of the key ideas employed to study the mechanism of digital-free tourism contributing to well-being. It has been found in exploratory studies that disconnection results in tourists' better perception of tourism surroundings; and digital-free tourism settings help stressed people to recover from fatigue. The rationale of the application of the concept of restorative environment lies in its emphasis on person-environment transaction and the function of reduced technology in restoring people's attention capacity (Hartig, Kaiser, & Bowler, 2001; Kaplan, 1995; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989).

Relaxation and rest, are the baseline pursuits of tourists switching off digital devices although more profound benefits may also exist (Pearce, 2011b). Problems with attention and fatigue caused by fragmented attracting information are the most common side-effects of sustained use of smartphone and internet (Korpela, Hartig, Kaiser & Fuhrer, 2001; Berto, 2005). Therefore, providing digital-free environments characterised by factors promoting recovery should be associated with a reduction of attention fatigue and/or stress. Assessment of the restorative effects of vacation environments, as founded in the Attention Restoration Theory, could help link theoretical factors to specified outcomes of experiences in digital-free tourism settings (Kaplan, 1995). It could also be used to assess the restorative potential of existing and proposed settings, and so inform various kinds of design efforts (Hartig, Korpela, Evans, & Gärling, 1997).

Four qualities characterise restorative environments: including being away, extent/coherence, fascination and compatibility (Hartig et al., 2001; Hartig, Korpela et al., 1997; Lehto, 2013; Staats, Kieviet & Hartig, 2003). Being away, the first condition for

directed restorative attention, features the sensation-based component of distance from routine life. The supportive environment should be able to direct attention to some other concerns/situations separate from usual obligations, purposes, information and thoughts (Hartig, Kaiser & Bowler, 1997). Secondly, the extent component is the characteristic of the environment where structured activities or the perceived connectedness to environment can occupy people's minds (Hartig, Kaiser et al., 1997; Kaplan 1995). Thirdly, fascination is required to hold attention effortlessly for a period (Lehto, 2013). The last element of restorative environments refers to the fit between people's motives and activities facilitated by the settings (Lehto, 2013). Following these features, digital-free tourism settings have the potential to help tourists recharge and recover from psychological stress.

Furthermore, the perception of restorative environmental properties has been found to be a predictor of flow experience in a leisure study on mountain hiking (Wöran & Arnberger, 2012). This approach offers opportunities for more applications in tourism. Therefore, disconnection from the virtual space will be viewed as one of the components of restorative environments and will be taken into consideration for the formation of flow in DFT situations.

5.2.2 Psychological Attributions of Flow

Flow, the positive psychological state happening when individuals are fully involved in the present moment, was proposed by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and colleagues (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; 1988). In Csikszentmihalyi's studies of the subjective experience of artists, athletes, chess players and so on, the optimal exhilaration was described by analogy as the feeling of "being in flow" (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). Such intensive enjoyment was therefore conceptualised as flow experience, an outcome of the intense focused involvement.

There are two essential conditions of flow, including an appropriate level of challenge and a clear goal. Recent advancement of flow research features an emphasis on person-environment interaction which is now a leading perspective in understanding the flow experience (Magnusson & Stattin, 1998; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009). The process of flow is regarded as a dynamic system composed of environment, people in a context, and the phenomenology of person-environment interactions.

The challenges and goals required for generating flow are therefore understood as subjective and emergent in nature (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). Firstly, the subjectively perceived challenges and one's own skills, rather than objective determinants, shape the quality of experience. The close matching between individuals' perception of challenges and appraisal of their abilities are necessary for entering flow. Flow is likely to happen when the perception of demanding situations makes individuals realise the opportunities by relying on their own skills.

Secondly, the goal of participating in activities, the other condition of flow, has to be identified and reviewed by progressive feedback. Unlike the pre-existing intentions, "emergent goals" are responsive to the sequential interactions between individuals and the environment. Therefore, certain stimuli in the environment induce goals for participation in an activity and influence the structure of the goal from moment to moment. Importantly, extrinsically motivated, freely chosen leisure have been found to be more closely related to flow experience than the intrinsically motivated "pure leisure" (Mannell, Zuzanek & Larson, 1988). The reason for extrinsically motivated leisure being more likely to produce flow is that such activities involve more demands for effort, commitment and obligation.

Under these conditions, experience unfolds seamlessly and flow is the optimal part of the experience characterised by intense and focused concentration, merging of action and awareness, loss of concern for oneself, sense of control, distortion of time perception, and

intrinsic motivation (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; 2014; Filep, 2008; Koufaris, 2002; Guo & Poole, 2009). These “elements of enjoyment” are common characteristics of flow across contexts, cultures, and social backgrounds (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991, pp. 48). The further rewarding outcomes of flow experience, especially contributions to self-growth and general well-being, have also been manifested. For example, a higher level of flow is identified in freely chosen leisure activities and is accompanied by increased positive affect, potency, concentration, and lower levels of tension (Mannell et al, 1988).

5.2.3 Attentional Regulation for Flow

Intense concentration as the defining quality of flow plays a core role in entering and staying in the flow state. As Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2009) claimed “flow is largely a function of how attention has been focused in the past and how attention is focused in the present by the activity’s structural conditions” (pp. 92). Regulating attention is a process of choosing information to attend to/invest in. Consciousness and the sense of self come into being when people pay attention to their bodies, subjective states, memories, present surroundings and personal future (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). Consciousness and self-awareness are important for discovering intrinsic motivations and behaving as proactive individuals (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009). Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1988) used the metaphor of the “clutch between programmed instructions and adaptive behaviours” to document the role of consciousness in finding flow in self-motivated free-chosen activities (pp. 21). In addition, staying in flow requires a limited stimulus field where concentration can be held.

The use of internet and digital devices, especially when smartphones and the mobile internet brings an overwhelming amount of information, can lead to fragmented and distracted attention (Harwood et al., 2014). Engagement in purposeless internet surfing, unchallenging

entertainment and unconscious use of smartphones may be an obstacle to finding flow states in the physical holiday contexts. Moreover, the results from the exploratory studies included in the second and third chapters of this thesis revealed the power of digital-free tourism environments to restore tourists' concentration and re-direct their attention. Therefore, it is assumed that users' habits of using smartphones influences the frequency of experiencing flow. Following it does appear that reduced smartphone use can facilitate vacationers to experience flow.

5.2.4 Leisure and Tourism Studies of Flow

A model of the flow process portrays the properties of flow in leisure settings that are interconnected and developing through four stages (Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). The stages include antecedent conditions shaping the motivations to participate in an activity, a threshold for focusing attention, experience of flow, and consequences from flow.

Disconnection from the mobile internet, which maybe challenging for contemporary tourists, will be considered as the stimulus potentially making tourists transcend the threshold of flow experience. Pearce (2012) noted the ease of recall when tourists are in unscripted situations as distinct from the scripted. Felip (2008) also found that surprise accompanied flow experience when visitors experienced the sudden and unexpected situations. Digital-free tourism is challenging and unscripted occasions for modern tourists who are very accustomed to having ubiquitous digital resources. In this regard, flow experience in digital-free tourism situations can be a clutch or threshold between the habitual digitalised leisure lifestyle and the proactive pursuits of rewarding leisure experiences.

Intrinsic motivation, free choice and pursuit of enjoyment are commonalities of leisure and typical activities helping flow, and together lay the foundation for tourism studies of flow. Ryan (Ryan, 1991; Ryan & Glendon, 1998) first suggested the usefulness of the concept of

“flow” in tourism by claiming tourists tend to experience higher level of satisfaction when the challenges posed by unfamiliar external contexts are congruent with individuals’ capacities to deal with them. Under such circumstances, tourists’ behavioural and affective responses are the same as flow experienced by artists and athletes (Ryan & Glendon, 1998).

A few previous works have linked flow state to adventure tourism, food tourism, cultural heritage tourism and virtual tourism settings (Filep, 2007; Quan & Wang, 2004; Priest & Bunting, 1993; Ryan, 1995). Despite the promise of possible relationship between tourist experience in specific contexts and flow characteristics, studies of sophisticated links of tourism to flow are scarce.

Studies of flow in tourism have been developing since Filep (2008) attempted to improve the conceptualisation of satisfactory tourist experience by incorporating a dimension of flow in addition to the traditional assessment of service quality. The similarities between meaningful and cherished tourist experience and characteristics of flow were identified by analysing tourists’ narratives (Filep, 2008). These new perspectives for evaluating tourist experience have been adopted to conceptualise the experience of some novel leisure and tourism products, such as the game of escaping room (Kolar, 2017). Fowler, Meng and Xu (2012) confirmed the hedonic value of shopping trips when tourists were immersed in a steady flow of fantasies, fun and enjoyment.

Furthermore, repetitive participation and destination loyalty have been revealed as consequences of flow experienced in tourism. Perceived flow has been found to be effective in strengthening the relationship between satisfaction and destination loyalty (Kuo, Chang, Cheng & Lin, 2016). Flow experienced in nature-based tourism can be conducive in promoting environmentally responsible behaviours (Kim & Thapa, 2018). Flow experiences

also encourage continuing participation in virtual travel communities (Gao, Bai & Park, 2017).

Moreover, the contributions of subjective flow experienced in personal growth and improving well-being have been confirmed in leisure and tourism contexts (Bryce & Haworth, 2002; Cheng & Lu, 2015; Felip, 2007; Wu & Liang, 2011; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009). The eudaimonia and self-development accompanying flow experience have been manifested in specific categories of tourism demanding personal efforts and skills, such as surfing (Cheng & Lu, 2015).

Some recent studies have examined the antecedents of flow in tourism by analysing correlations among flow and other critical factors in structural models. Firstly, travel motivations are often considered as factors shaping tourists' flow experience (Kolar & Čater, 2018; Lee & Yoo, 2011; Wöran & Arnberger, 2012). Secondly, some psychological variables have been incorporated to understand flow particularly in tourism and leisure contexts, in addition to the core factors identified in positive psychology research, such as challenge, skill, control and involvement. For example, perceived service quality, emotional and social values, and playfulness have been found to affect flow (Kim & Thapa, 2018; Kuo et al., 2016).

Situational and behavioural factors, such as arousal and exploratory behaviour, have been identified as effective factors to promote flow (Lee & Yoo, 2011). Studies of interventions to form flow have also focused on shaping environments and structuring activities to foster flow and reduce obstacles to it (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009). However, there is lack of empirical research to investigate the contextual and behavioural factors of flow in tourism studies. Only one similar analysis of the relationships between mountain hikers' perception of flow, recreation specialization and restorative qualities of leisure environments exists (Wöran & Arnberger, 2012). The current study will adopt the

perspective of person-environment interaction to examine the state of flow in digital-free tourism. It is proposed that increases in the experiencing flow in digital-free tourism exist because of more opportunities to explore destinations and utilise skills/strengths (as found in study 3 and 4), as well as being less disrupted by digital inputs or messaging.

In addition, social/group relevant factors are underappreciated in tourism studies of flow although it has been claimed in psychology that people can enter flow when engaging in interactions with others (Larsen, 2013). Kolar and Čater (2018) also confirmed the effectiveness of flow experienced by group members to establish group cohesion and strengthen family bonds in the context of escape room games. The changing ways to interact and increase level of interactivity in digital-free tourism will be considered as a behavioural factor with the potential to promote tourists' flow.

5.3 Hypotheses and Research Model

Firstly, it is assumed that reduced technology use in digital-free tourism could raise the level of tourists' perception of the restorative quality of vacation environments, as well as produce opportunities for experiencing flow. The differences induced by other factors, such as destination characteristics, activities and companions, are excluded by focusing on specifying switching off mobile phones as the principle contributor to the assessed psychological experience. The influence of reduced technology use on opportunities for perceiving restorative environment and experiencing flow will be assessed in this study by developing measurements for the levels of restorative environments and flows that are induced by not using smartphones on vacation.

Secondly, the levels of restoration and flow that tourists can perceive in digital-free tourism situations are hypothesised to be influenced by the habits of using technology. Therefore, dependence on smartphones in daily life is taken into account in this study. In particular, three correlations and a moderating relationship are hypothesised among the three variables, including perceived level of the restorative quality of the digital-free vacation environment (Restorative Environment), the level of flow experienced in digital-free tourism (Flow) and the level of habitual dependence on smartphones (Smartphone Dependence).

The research model in Figure 5.1 incorporates these hypotheses. Plus (“+”) on the path means the relationship is hypothesised to be positive; and plus/minus (“+/-”) was used where the researcher cannot determine whether the variables are negatively or positively correlated based on the literature review.

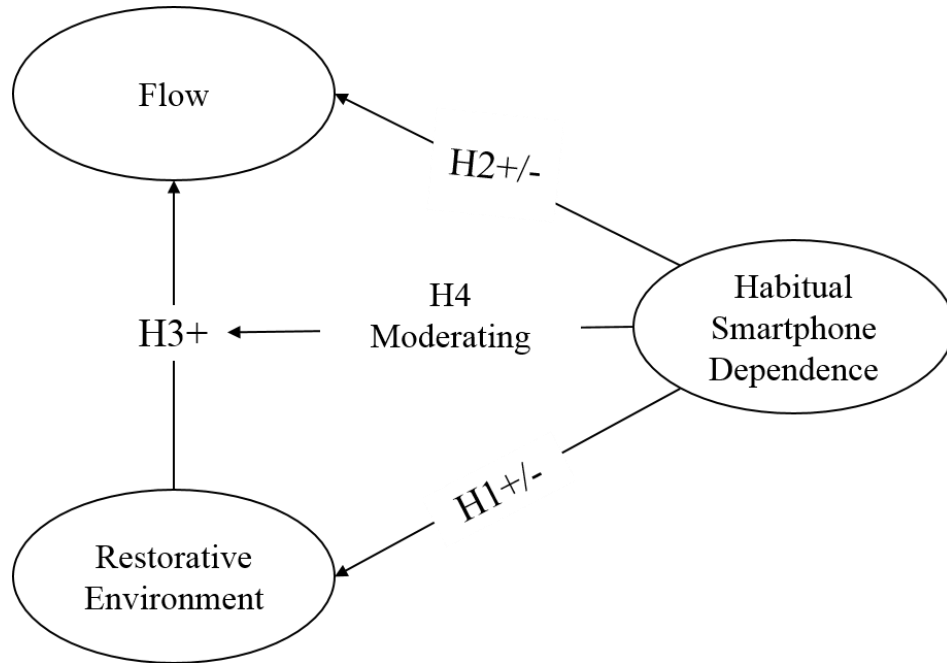


Figure 5.1 Hypothesised research model

Drawn by author

Firstly, dependence on smartphones is hypothesised to affect the level of the perceived restorative quality of the vacation settings (H1). Secondly, smartphone dependence is hypothesised to affect the level of flow experienced in digital-free tourism contexts (H2). Thirdly, the ease of finding flow in digital-free tourism situations is hypothesised to be related to the potential of an environment to provide a restorative experience. Therefore, the levels of restorative environment and flow are arguably, positively related (H3). In addition, habitual dependence on smartphones is hypothesised to be a moderator on the relationship between restorative environment and flow (H4). Given the lack of literature documenting research on the relationships between technology use, restorative environment and flow in

tourism, it cannot be unambiguously assumed that smartphone dependence influences the other two variables positively or negatively.

5.4 Methodology

5.4.1 Study Sites, Data Collection and Sample

This empirical study was conducted in China. A pilot study was carried out through face-to-face questionnaire surveys with sixty residents in Urumqi, a media size regional city. Fifty seven completed questionnaires were returned. The structure of the measurements and the expressions of each item were adapted based on results from pilot study and respondents' feedbacks.

A total of five hundred and fifty formal on-site surveys were administrated in three big Chinese cities, specifically Beijing, Chengdu and Guangzhou. Respondents were randomly recruited in public leisure spaces in each city, such as shopping centres, cafes and parks. Four hundred and ninety six surveys were completed with help from supervised research assistants during the whole course. As the organiser of this study, I collected the majority (55%) of the sample myself. The profile of the sample is shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Sample profile

		Frequency	Percentage			Frequency	Percentage
Locations	Beijing	196	39.5%	Education	Middle school or lower	44	8.9%
	Guangzhou	150	30.2%		College	85	17.1%
	Chengdu	150	30.2%		University degree	266	53.6%
Total		496		Graduate degree	98	19.8%	
Gender	Male	225	45.4%	Missing value	3	0.6%	
	Female	269	54.2%	Household income monthly	Under 5,000 CNY	108	21.8%
	Missing value	2	0.4%		5,000-10,000	136	27.4%
					10,001-15,000	87	17.5%
Age	Under 20	52	10.5%	15,001-20,000	65	13.1%	
	20-29	270	54.4%	20,001-25,000	22	4.4%	
	30-39	110	22.2%	25,001-30,000	15	3.0%	
	40-49	47	9.5%	>30,000	51	10.3%	
	50-59	11	2.2%				

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	60-69	4	0.8%		Missing value	12	2.4%
	Over 70	0	0				
	Missing value	2	0.4%				
Occupation	Student	133	26.8%	Occupation	School teachers	11	2.2%
	Technician	96	19.4%		Researcher or university educator	15	3.0%
	Administration officer	58	11.7%		Farmer	4	0.8%
	Manager	48	9.7%		Freelance	58	11.7%
	Waiter/waitress	7	1.4%		Doctor or nurse	11	2.2%
	Outdoor workers	6	1.2%		Unemployed, retired or housewife/househusband	11	2.2%
	Others	33	6.7%		Missing value	5	1.0%

5.4.2 Survey Instruments

The questionnaires administered in the face-to-face surveys were designed to obtain precise information about tourists' perceptions on restorative environments, flow experiences and dependence on smartphones. The measurements used as approaches to the theoretical constructs of concern were adapted from existing literature. Demographic information, information about the holiday involving restricted digital connectivity and attitudes towards digital-free tourism were also collected.

The measurements for flow experience were developed based on the general flow state scale which assesses the level of flow by thirty six items on nine dimensions, including challenge-skill balance, merging of action and awareness, clear goals, unambiguous feedback, concentration on the task at hand, sense of control, loss of self-consciousness, transformation of time and autotelic experience (Csikszentmihalyi, & Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; 1988; Jackson & Eklund, 2002; Jackson, Eklund, & Martin, 2008; Jackson, & Marsh, 1996). Twenty out of thirty six items of the classic flow scale were selected by deleting or merging the very similar items to constitute the measurements for perceived flow when switching off smartphones on vacation.

The tool to measure the perception of restorative environment was adapted from the five-dimensional measurement developed in environmental psychology which includes the dimensions of being away, fascination, compatibility, extent and discord (Letho, 2013; Hartig, Evans, Jamner, Davis, & Gärling, 2003; Hartig et al., 2001; Hartig Kaiser et al., 1997; Hartig, Korpela et al., 1997). Eighteen items representing conditions that can apparently be influenced by using or not using smartphones were selected from those used in previous studies to measure the perception of restorative environment when switching off smartphones.

The habits of using ICT were measured by a five-item measurement including four applied in IT research and one developed to indicate psychological response, that is “I would feel worried and anxious if I could not find smartphone around me” (Venkatesh, Thong, & Xu, 2012).

Importantly, the original items of the measurements were modified for digital-free tourism situations by specifying that the switching off smartphones was the reason for having particular assessment. Each of the thirty one items was measured by a seven-point Likert scale.

5.4.3 Data Analysis

1) Analysis Procedure

Three methods were employed to analyse the collected data, including: firstly, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) identifying valid items for constructs and fitness of the data for factor analysis; secondly, a factorial model capturing relationships between each pair of extracted factors in SmartPLS to examine the reliability and validity of the measurement model; and thirdly, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Model evaluation testing the hypothesized correlation paths. Programs of SPSS 25.0 and SmartPLS 3.2.8 were used to conduct the data analyses (Chin, Peterson, & Brown, 2008; Patwardhan et al, 2019; Prayag, Suntikul, & Agyeiwaah, 2018; Roni, Djajadikerta, & Ahmad, 2015).

2) PLS-SEM Approach

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM) has emerged as an alternative technique to traditional Covariance Based Structural Equation Model. It has been widely adopted in studies examining the nexus among latent variables in various disciplines, including tourism and hospitality (Ali, Rasoolimanesh, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Ryu, 2018;

Antón, Camarero, & Laguna-García, 2018; Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Mena, 2012; Kim, Kim, & Petrick, 2019; So, Wu, Xiong, & King, 2018). Advantages of PLS-SEM principally lie in its tolerance of abnormal distribution of data, flexibility for sample size and ease of generating results and evaluation indices (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt 2011; Prayag et al., 2018).

Furthermore, PLS-SEM is advisable especially if the evaluated model includes moderating effects and higher order variables (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016; Hair, Matthews, Matthews, & Sarstedt, 2017). The current research aims to understand the relationships between perceptions of restorative environment and flow in digital-free tourism contexts; the impacts of habitual smartphone dependence on the ease of perceiving restorative and flow experience; and the role of smartphone dependence as a moderating factor. Therefore, PLS-SEM is selected as the most suitable modeling approach.

5.5 Results

5.5.1 Descriptive Analysis

Respondents were asked to recall whether they have had digital-free tourism experience at the beginning of surveys. Most respondents have had digital-free holiday experiences when they did not use a smartphone for four hours or longer, thus a whole morning, afternoon or evening (Figure 5.2).

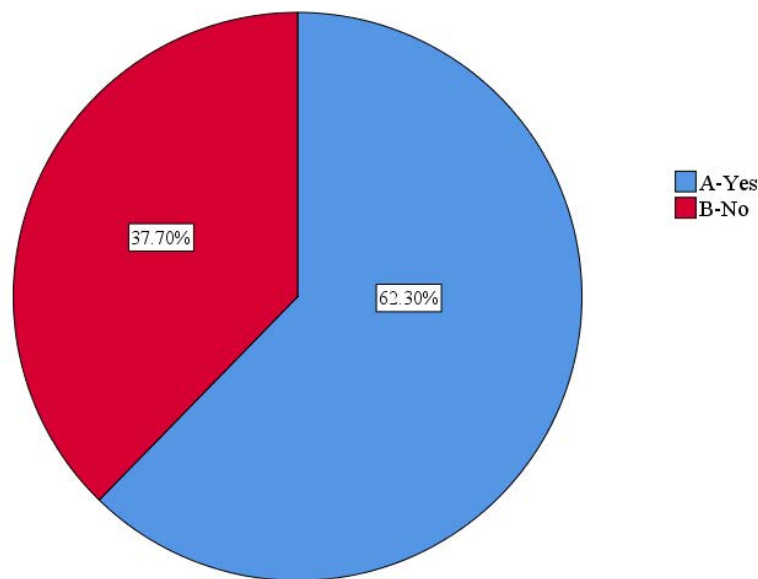


Figure 5.2 Have you had a holiday when you did not use smartphones for four hours or longer?

Respondents' interest in and preference for digital-free tourism were asked in the survey. Most respondents were fascinated with the idea; about 18% interested, more than 16% very interested and 12.6% selected "this is exactly what I want" (Figure 5.3). Furthermore, the largest proportion of respondents (22.98% and 21.57%) have thought of digital detoxing on vacation or already administrated digital-free holiday time by themselves. Respondents who planned to do so accounted for about 15% (Figure 5.4).

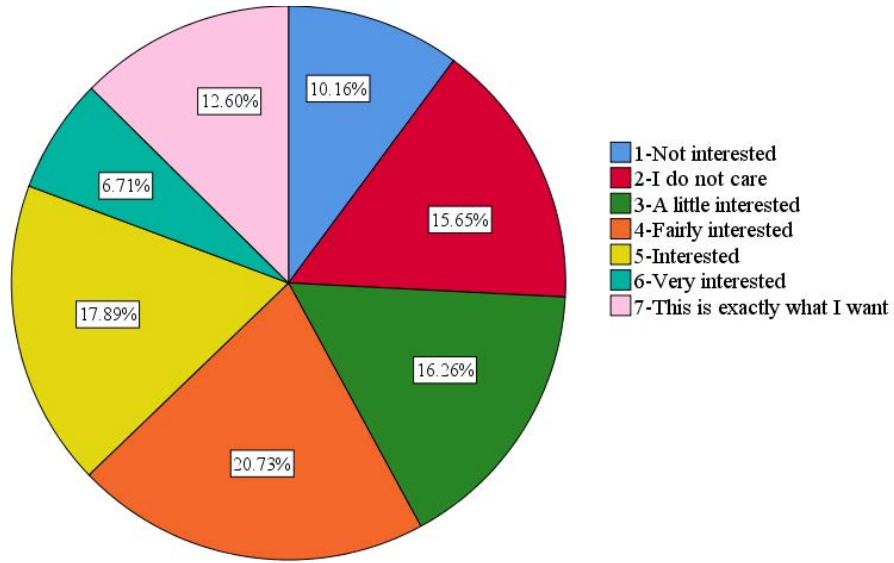


Figure 5.3 How interested are you in NOT using your smartphone?

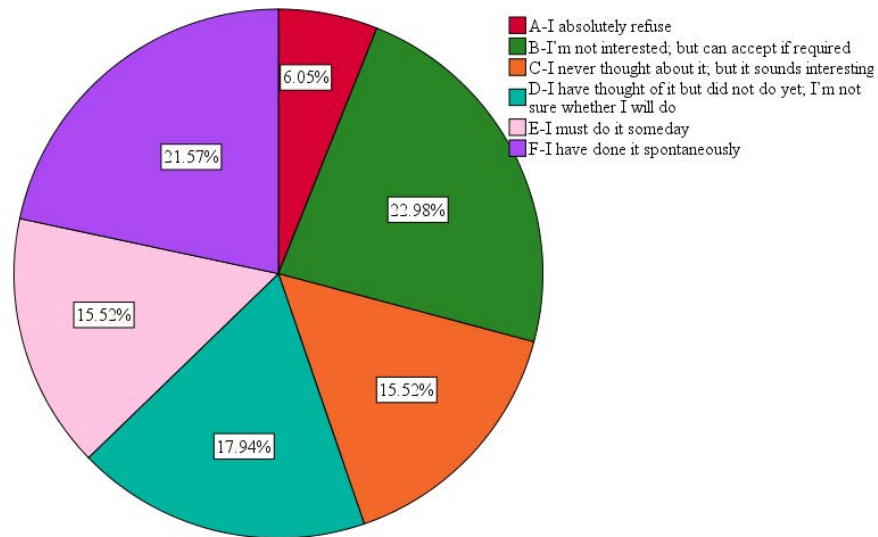


Figure 5.4 Which expression fits your thoughts about temporarily switching off smartphone on holiday?

The survey also collected information about the travel where at least four hours of digital-free experiences were involved. Specifically, the largest proportion of reported digital-free holiday time happened in normal environments with available internet connectivity and mobile signals. Tourists selectively switched off or did not have a chance to use their smartphones (Figure 5.5).

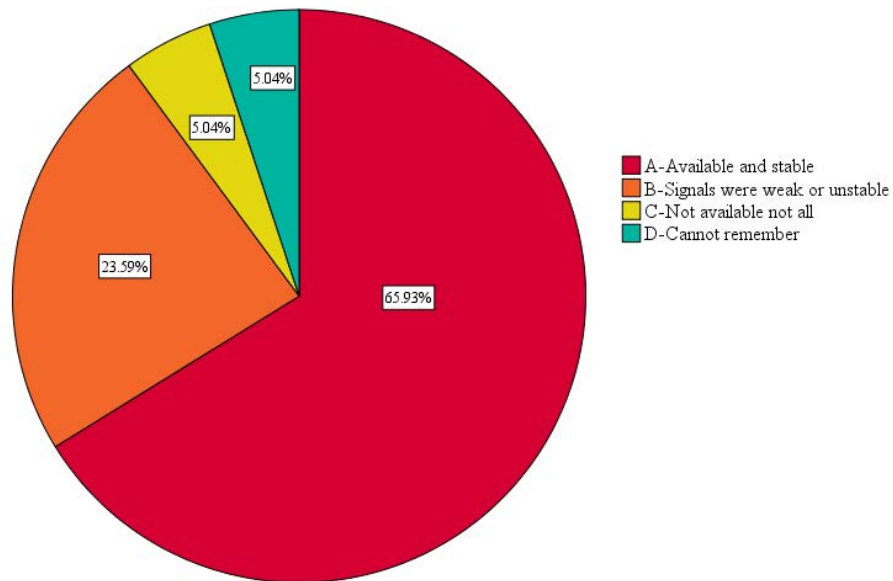


Figure 5.5 Was mobile internet available at the place where you spent that holiday?

Tourists’ smartphone use behaviours in tourism were inquired in the survey. The overall frequency of using smartphones on that whole holiday of which digital-free time is a part revealed the high level of usage. More than half of respondents used smartphones very frequently (Figure 5.6). The most used functions of smartphones were related to facilitating travel, such as payment, information searching and navigation. Taking photos is another important usage (Figure 5.7).

In addition, companions travelling together were reported; most respondent were spending a holiday with families, including parents, children and spouses (Figure 5.8).

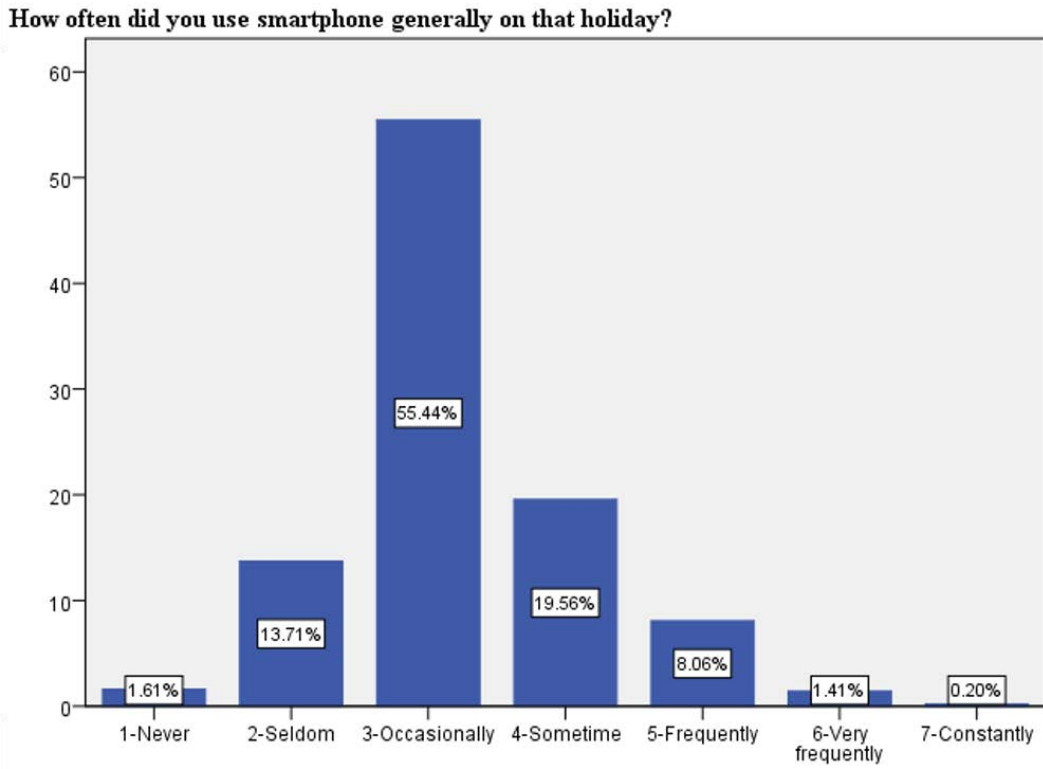


Figure 5.6 How often did you use your smartphone overall on that whole holiday?

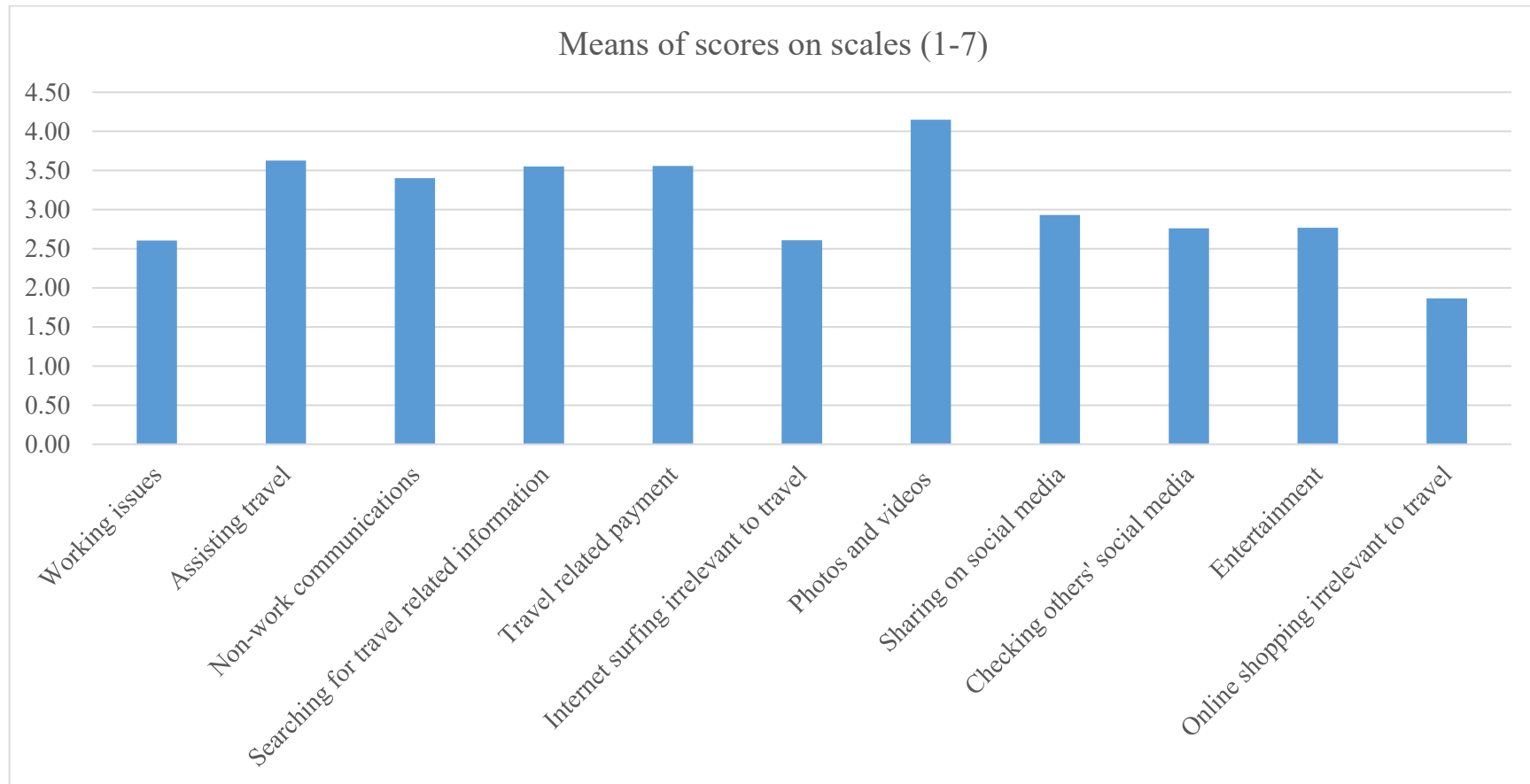


Figure 5.7 What did you do with your smartphone on that holiday?

Note: Usage of each function was assessed by a 7 point scale ranging from 1-Never to 7-Constantly.

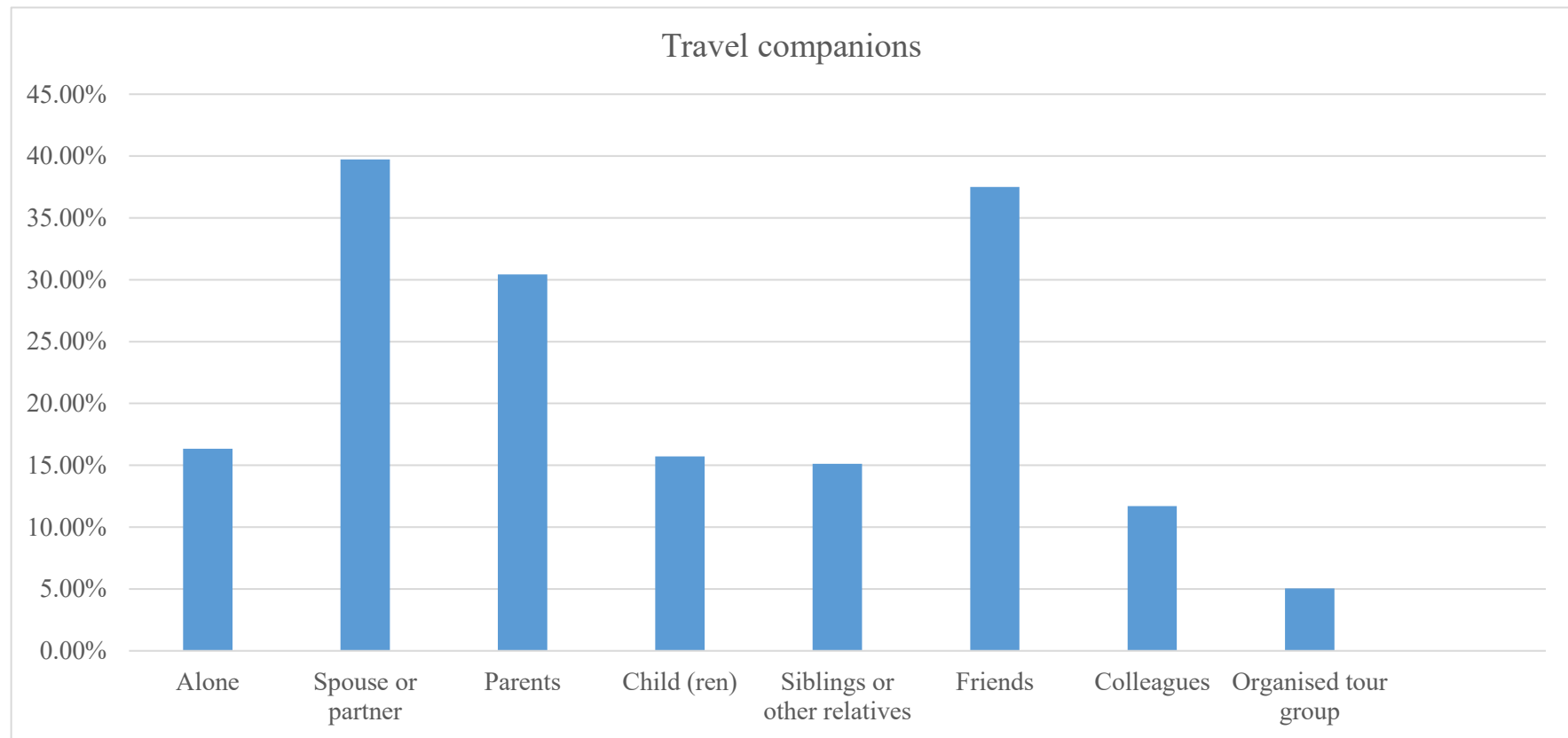


Figure 5.8 Who did you spend that holiday with?

Respondents were asked to recall and list the main activities they participated in when not using smartphone in tourism. The most popular activities included water activities at coastal destinations, sports such as skiing and climbing mountains, fitness activities such as walking, talking with others, museum visits, music festivals, and playing cards and board games.

5.5.2 Measurement Model

The preliminary measurements for restorative environment, flow and habitual dependence on smartphones were appraised by using the fifty seven person samples in the pilot study to identify valid items and confirm structural facets of the formal instruments. Cronbach's alpha values of these three constructs were 0.963 (restorative environment), 0.932 (flow) and 0.870 (smartphone dependence) respectively, and the overall scale was 0.956. They all exceeded the minimum hurdle of 0.7, indicating acceptable internal consistency (Gliner, Morgan, & Leech, 2011).

The revised version of the measurements were used in formal surveys. Firstly, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was calculated and Bartlett's test was carried out. The suitability for performing factor analysis with the data was confirmed by satisfactory results; KMO = 0.956 and $p < 0.001$. Secondly, internal reliability of measurements were re-checked with the data collected from the sample of 496 participants. Alpha values confirmed the internal reliability of measurements and the fitness between data and measurement model; with 0.948 for restorative environment, 0.849 for flow, 0.870 for smart phone dependence, and 0.945 for the overall scale.

Thirdly, an Exploratory factor analyses (EFA) was performed with forty three first-order variables by employing principal components analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation methods. The indicators that loaded prominently on only one factor with loading values over 0.40 were regarded as reliable given the large size of the sample (Comrey & Lee, 2013;

Tabachnick, Fidell, & Ullman, 2007). A total of thirty one items were retained by removing twelve items.

Ten items were removed due to either loadings lower than 0.40 on any factor or higher than 0.40 on more than one factor, including four for flow experience and six for restorative environment. They are “My goal was clearly defined when switching off smartphone”, “I want to capture the feeling I experienced when switching off smartphone again”, “It was really clear to me how I was going when switching off smartphone” and “I found the experience extremely rewarding when switching off smartphone” . The deleted indicators for restoration were “Using smartphones made the destination not very different from my home environment”, “The place was more different from my daily environment when I switched off smartphone”, “I could forget about my obligations there when switching off smartphone”, “I felt free from all the things that I normally have to do there when switching off smartphone”, “Switching off smartphones there (could) gave me a better break from my day-to-day routine” and “There was more variety of things to do at the destination when I switched off smartphone”. In addition, another two items for flow were excluded because they appeared in the cluster of indicators for restorative environment. They are “I did things spontaneously and automatically without having to think” and “I felt like I could control what I was doing”.

Next, the factors extracted from EFA were subject to a first-order factor analysis in SmartPLS to appraise reliability and validity of the measuring scales (Figure 9). Consequently, seven factors were extracted with Eigen values greater than one and named for the digital-free tourism context. Firstly, all of the twelve items measuring the perception of restorative environments were convergent on one single dimension - Factor 1: the engaging restorative environment. Secondly, fourteen items for flow experience were clustered into five dimensions, including Factor 2: Feelings of control with five items, single-item Factor 3: Enjoyment, Factor 4: Loss of Self-Consciousness with two items,

Factor 5: Challenge-ability balance with four items and Factor 6: Time transformation with two items. Thirdly, the five items for the habits of using smartphones loaded on one dimension – Factor 7: Smartphone dependence. The structure of the scale and loadings of each item on the factor are shown in Table 5.2. A total of 66.46% of the variance was explained by the extracted seven factors. None of them explained a substantial portion of the variance, which indicates breadth and good quality of the adapted structure of measurement (Saleem, Eagle, & Low, 2018).

The reliability and validity of the measurement model was confirmed with all of the indices above critical thresholds. Firstly, the internal consistency of the overall measurement and all multi-item constructs (factors) except Factor 6 were examined through checking Cronbach's Alpha (α) and composite reliability (CR). Factor 6 had negative covariance because it included two items measuring contrary time perceptions (time seemed slower or faster). The internal consistency of the individual constructs were all acceptable with α higher than 0.7 and CR over 0.8. Reliability of the overall measurement was ideal with the α value of 0.906 (Gliner et al, 2011).

Secondly, the convergent validity of all constructs was confirmed by the average variance explained (AVE) ranging from 0.580 to 0.77. (see in Table 2) (Saleem, et al., 2018; Chen, & Dwyer, 2018; Field, 2013; Wixom & Watson, 2001). Moreover, the discriminant validity was assessed via Heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT_{0.85}), a new criterion for variance-based SEM (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). The statistical independence among the measurements was confirmed because the HTMT values ranged from 0.100 to 0.792, well below the threshold of 0.85 (Table 5.3) (Hosany, Buzova, & Sanz-Blas, 2019).

Table 5.2 Reliability and validity of measurement model

Indicators	Factors	Mean	Standard deviation	Factor loading	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Composite reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Factor 1-Engaging Restorative environment (ERE)					0.950	0.957	0.651
ERE1	I found the place more fascinating when (if) not using smartphone.	5.32	1.229	0.689			
ERE2	I would like to spend more time looking at the surroundings...	5.18	1.321	0.725			
ERE3	My attention was (could be) drawn to many interesting things about that place...	5.46	1.216	0.708			
ERE4	There was much to explore and discover there...	5.26	1.222	0.704			
ERE5	It was my kind of place...	5.13	1.240	0.734			
ERE6	I had a sense of oneness with the place ...	5.11	1.216	0.715			

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ERE7	I could find ways to enjoy myself in a place like this...	5.13	1.211	0.781
ERE8	I can do things I like there...	5.07	1.249	0.779
ERE9	The place was large enough to allow exploration in many directions...	5.41	1.108	0.796
ERE10	I did different things in different areas at the destination...	5.08	1.194	0.803
ERE11	It was more likely a chaotic place if I used smartphone there...	5.11	1.177	0.704
ERE12	Using smartphone (could) produced more distractions at the destination...	4.46	1.297	0.609

Factor 2- Feelings of Control (FC)

0.866

0.903

0.652

FC1	I did things correctly without thinking about trying to do so when (if) not using smartphone.	4.71	1.329	0.658
FC2	I knew clearly what I wanted to do...	4.73	1.270	0.779
FC3	It was really clear to me how I was going...	4.65	1.215	0.707

FC4	My attention was focused entirely on what I was doing...	5.18	1.228	0.612			
FC5	I had a sense of control over what I was doing...	4.61	1.266	0.724			
Factor 3-Enjoyment (E)					1.00	1.000	1.000
E1	I really enjoyed the experience of what I was doing when (if) not using smartphone.	5.24	1.279	0.717			
Factor 4-Loss of Self-Consciousness (LSC)					0.712	0.873	0.774
LSC1	I was not concerned with how others may have been evaluating me when (if) not using smartphone...	4.73	1.350	0.684			
LSC2	I was not concerned with how I was presenting myself ...	4.58	1.271	0.736			
Factor 5-Challenge-ability balance (CAB)					0.760	0.846	0.580
CAB1	I was challenged, but I believed I could meet the challenge when (if) not using smartphone.	4.85	1.279	0.428			

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CAB2	My abilities and mental strengths matched the challenge of what I was doing...	4.51	1.223	0.736
CAB3	I felt I was competent enough to overcome psychological challenges ...	4.82	1.196	0.798
CAB4	It was no effort to keep my mind on what was happening...	5.17	1.200	0.446

Factor 6-Time transformation (TT)		-	-	0.777
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TT1	I felt time seemed to speeded up when (if) not using smartphone.	4.09	1.428	0.803
TT2	I felt time seemed to slower down...	4.03	1.433	-0.883

Factor 7-Smartphone dependence (SD)		0.849	0.890	0.618
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SD1	The use of mobile Internet has become a habit for me.	5.59	1.081	0.798
SD2	I am addicted to using mobile Internet.	4.01	1.395	0.732
SD3	I must use mobile Internet.	5.11	1.406	0.795

SD4	Using mobile Internet has become natural to me.	5.29	1.178	0.861
SD5	I would feel worried and anxious if I could not find smartphone around me	4.63	1.468	0.716

Table 5.3 Discriminant validity of first-order variables confirmed by HTMT_{0.85} criterion

	ERE	FC	E	LSC	CAB	TT	SD
Engaging restorative environment (ERE)	1						
Feelings of control (FC)	0.654	1					
Enjoyment (E)	0.559	0.558	1				
Loss of self-consciousness (LSC)	0.560	0.539	0.429	1			
Challenge and ability balance (CAB)	0.611	0.792	0.643	0.581	1		
Time transformation (TT)	0.339	0.416	0.304	0.262	0.390	1	
Smartphone dependence (SD)	0.108	0.246	0.123	0.100	0.207	0.287	1

Notes: All HTMT ratios are significant at $p < 0.01$ level; HTMT_{.85} rule was employed

5.5.3 Structural Model

The hypotheses constituting the research model were empirically tested by estimating a second-order PLS-SEM model and an interaction model with one thousand bootstrapping sub-samples. The hierarchical components model was employed to test the relationships between second-order theoretical constructs; and the interaction model tested the moderating effect. Results are shown in Table 5.4. Consequently, the resulted standardized path coefficients (β) and their significance levels (p values) supported H2, H3 and H4 at the 99.9% confidence level. Although H1 was slightly outside the margins of significance at the 95% confidence level. However, H1 was significant at 90% confidence level with a P value between 0.05 and 0.1. Therefore, it is argued that the result reveals a tendency to support the hypothesised relationship between smartphone dependence and restorative environments. Figure 5.9 presents the integration of estimated structural model and interaction model.

Table 5.4 Estimates of paths for Hierarchical Components Model and hypotheses testing

Hypothesised paths	Coefficients (β)	T Statistics	P values	Hypotheses supported?
H1: Habitual smartphone dependence \rightarrow Perception of restorative environment	-0.087	1.707*	0.05<P<0.1	Not supported
H2: Habitual smartphone dependence \rightarrow Flow Experience	-0.170	4.401***	<0.001	Supported
H3: Perception of restorative environment \rightarrow Flow Experience	0.655	22.566***	<0.001	Supported
H4: Perception of restorative environment \times Habitual smartphone dependence \rightarrow Flow Experience	-0.079	4.33***	<0.001	Supported

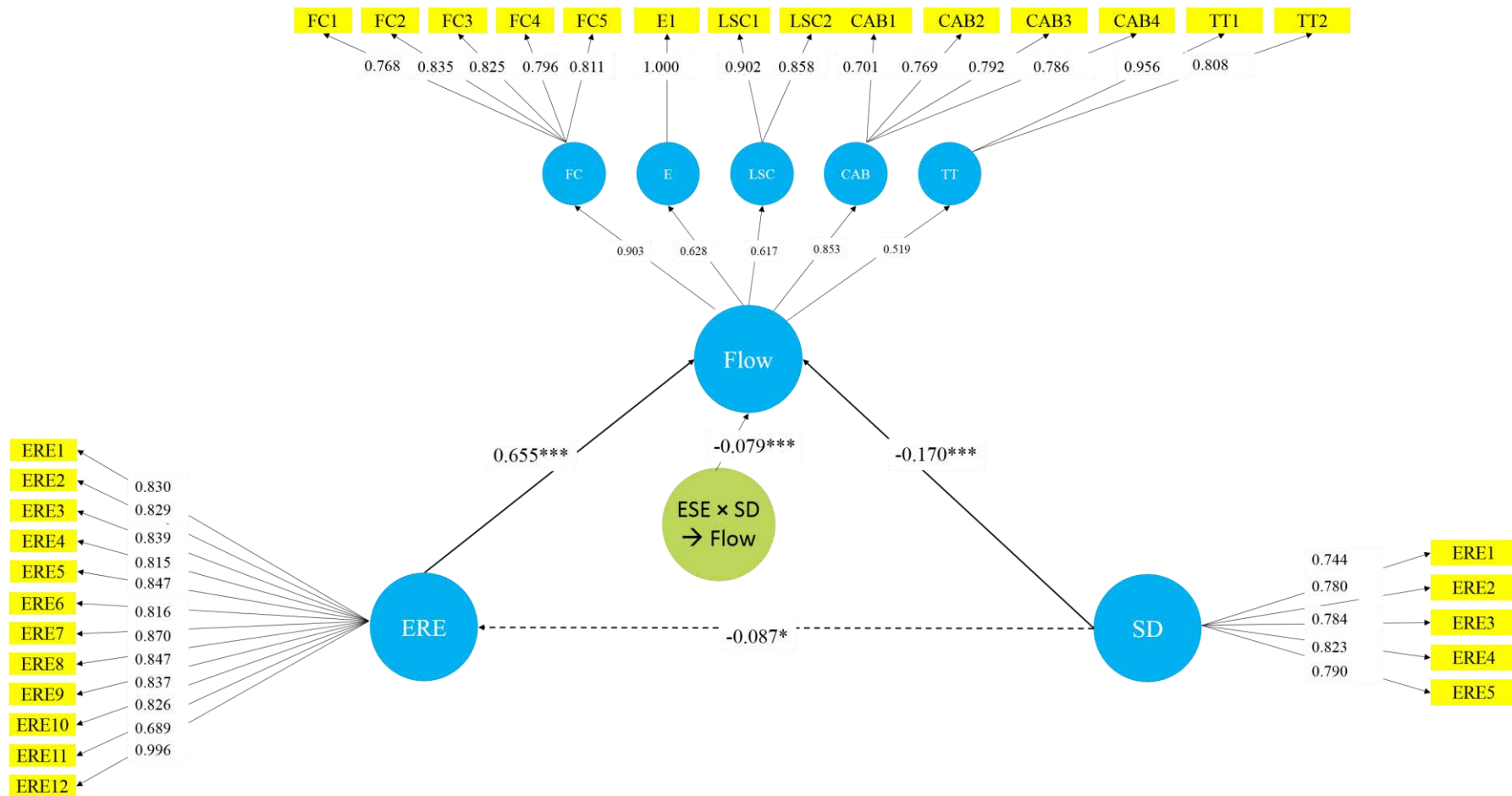


Figure 5.9 The estimated second-order structural model and moderating effect

Notes: re-drawn by author based on outputs of SmartPLS programs.

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* $p < 0.1$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Firstly, the hierarchical components model was evaluated. The hypothesised relationship between habitual smartphone dependence and flow experience was supported and found to be negative ($\beta_2 = -0.170$, $p < 0.01$). The smartphone dependence also tended to negatively influence the perception of restorative environments although the correlation was not significant at the 95% confidence level ($\beta_1 = -0.087$, $0.05 < p < 0.1$). Therefore, the more dependent individuals are on their smartphones, the lower levels of restorative environment and flow they tend to perceive when smartphone usage on holiday is reduced. Moreover, the level of the perceived restorative environments and the level of flow experience were shown to be positively associated ($\beta_3 = 0.655$, $p < 0.001$). In digital-free tourism, the higher level of restorative quality of vacation environments perceived by tourists can facilitate the experience of flow.

Secondly, an interaction model was performed after the path between smartphone dependence and restorative environment was removed. As a result, smartphone dependence was confirmed to be effective in moderating the relationship between restorative environment and flow ($p < 0.01$; $\beta_4 = -0.079$). The empirical data revealed that high dependence on smartphones in daily life can weaken the contribution of restorative environment to producing flow experience although the effect is not very strong.

5.6 Discussion

The aim of the study was to examine the levels of restorative quality of digital-free tourism environment and flow that individuals can experience when technology usage is reduced during holiday time. Participants' habits of using technology in daily life and work were taken into account for their perception of the environment and subjective flow.

Firstly, measurements were developed which can be used in future research to assess tourists' perceptions of restorative environment and flow in digital-free tourism settings. In line with previous knowledge, restorative environments are basically characterised by an engaging atmosphere (Hartig, Kaiser et al, 1997; Hartig, Korpela et al, 1997; Lehto, 2013). Moreover, better perceptions of the destinations and stronger people-place bonds were described by informants in the preceding qualitative study in this thesis. These kinds of subjective general perceptions were confirmed empirically by quantitative data in this study. Tourists tend to perceive the restorative quality of an environment if they can engage easily. Being in such vacation environments, tourists can concentrate better, have a sense of compatibility with the place, perceive the space as expansive, and realise increased opportunities to explore the destination (Berto, 2005; Korpela et al., 2001; Staats et al, 2003).

Unlike the previous research on restorative environments, items representing the dimension "being away" were not included in the measurement for digital-free tourism settings. This adaption can be explained by participants' additional comments at the end of the survey. Tourists did not believe switching off a smartphone can make them really get rid of their routine obligations or provide a vacuum chamber. Participants did doubt the usefulness of a temporary escape in making life easier. However, they believed that investing attention away from routines in digital-free situations improved their physical and psychological capacity to deal with daily life and work. For example, a typical comment was that

“obligations are still there; work does not reduce; it is myself who need to deal with all the issues after holiday. However, taking a break from the routines does make me restored and recharged. I will be more energetic and capable”.

The flow experience in digital-free tourism can be assessed on five dimensions, including the feelings of control, enjoyment, loss of self-consciousness, balance between challenge and ability, as well as the sense of time transformation. In particular, controllability was felt in terms of structured activities and regulation of one’s own behaviours and emotions (Novak, Hoffman, & Duhachek, 2003). The components characterising structured activities in previous flow research were merged into the feelings of control in the current study. Specifically, the structured activities in digital-free tourism contexts feature the identification of clear goals by participants, self-assessment of their progress, and their own performance as feedback. Tourists tend to concentrate better on what they are doing and in turn enter and stay in flow. These are results from mindful regulation by redirecting attention from digital screens to the present circumstances and simultaneously overcoming feelings of anxiety (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009).

In line with previous knowledge about flow, enjoyment is another factor contributing to flow, as well itself a consequence from flow. Moreover, the loss of self-consciousness is another critical element of the flow state that is represented by the disregard of others’ comments and reduced possibility of being influenced by others (Mao, Roberts, Pagliaro, Csikszentmihalyi, & Bonaiuto, 2016). The distortion of time perception was confirmed in this study with some tourists feeling that time was flying faster while others felt time past more slowly when not using smartphones on holiday. Either of the contrary distorted time perceptions may accompany flow experience; a result consistent with existing knowledge (Filep, 2007).

In addition, the perception of the challenge of dealing with digital-free tourism situations and the associated confidence in one's own ability to overcome the challenges are critical for experiencing flow. This finding is in line with the existing knowledge that has been expressed in the form of a flow channel model (Figure 5.11) (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Pomfret, 2006). In this model, flow is the balance of challenges and skills when both are at above average levels for the individual. That is, flow is expected to occur when individuals perceive the match between challenge and skills both of which are at higher levels than the usual (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009). Greater opportunities for action which facilitates flow only occur when tourists also perceive their capacities as adequate for their engagement. Otherwise, the unbalanced challenge and skill could lead to states that are the inverse of flow, such as boredom, apathy or anxiety (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Elliot & Dweck, 2013). It can be challenging for tourists to deal with tourism issues and overcome emotional discomfort when smartphone is unavailable as modern people have been very accustomed to digital tools. On the other hand, the motivations to regulate their own technology use habits and the character strengths that were found to be useful in digital-free tourism in the third study of this thesis can make tourists perceive the opportunities to face the challenge.

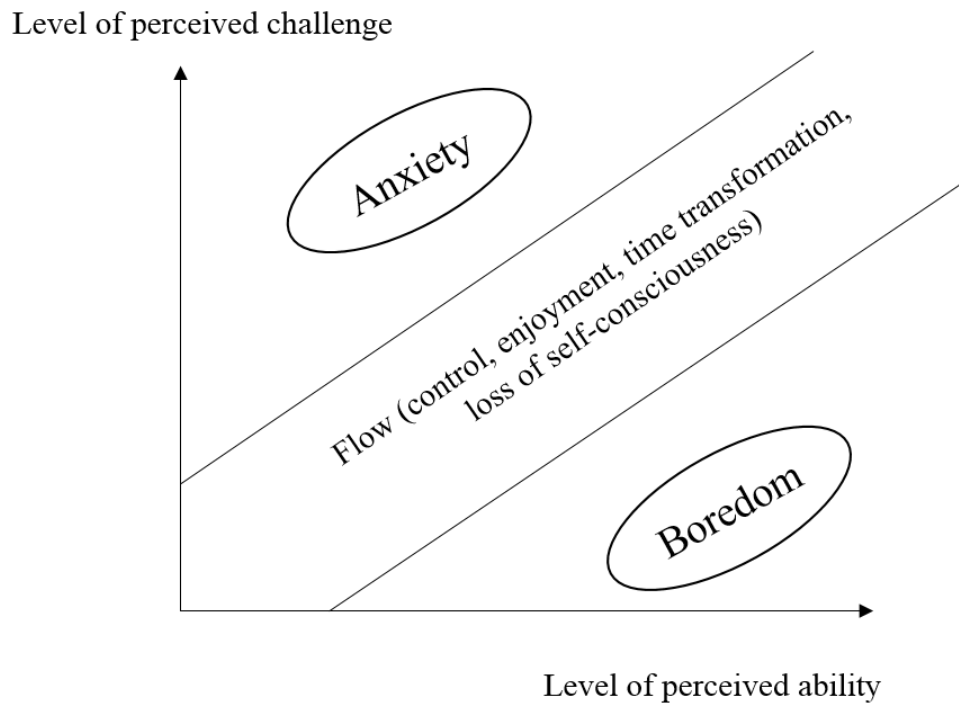


Figure 5.10 Challenge and ability balance for flow

Note: adapted from Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi (1975)

Secondly, the conceptual model developed and tested in this study confirmed the major hypothesised link between perception of restorative environment and flow, as well as the impacts of habitual smartphone dependence. Specifically, the empirical data in this research supported the positive relationship between the perceived restorative quality of digital-free tourism environments and the level of flow. In literature documenting flow in tourism, the restorative environment has been considered to be related to flow (for example, Wöran & Arnberger, 2012). Moreover, an engaging atmosphere, which was found in this study as the essential feature of restorative digital-free tourism environments, assists the perceived level of restorative environment and flow. The correlation between engagement and flow has been highlighted in some existing research in leisure and tourism (for example, Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Filep, 2008; Rupayana, 2008).

Furthermore, the habits of using technology in daily life and work, represented by self-reported smartphone dependence, was hypothesised to be a critical factor influencing the tendency to perceive restorative environments and flow in digital-free tourism. This empirical study revealed the negative effect of high level of smartphone dependence on the easiness to find and stay in flow state when technology use was reduced on vacation. However, the impact of smartphone dependence on the perception of restorative environment was not supported although a trend of high dependence decreasing the restorative perception was revealed (P value for the path being between 0.05 and 0.1). Therefore, it is possible to argue that both restorative environment and technology use habits are antecedent factors explaining the experience of flow in digital-free tourism; rather than that technology dependence work to influence flow through the restorative environment. Moreover, the level of smartphone dependence was found to be effective in moderating the relationship between perceptions of restorative environment and flow. High technology dependence could weaken the contribution of restorative environment to flow experience in digital-free tourism.

Three messages can be concluded from the findings of empirical study. Firstly, environments characterised by restorative qualities can contribute to flow experiences for tourists when technology use is restricted no matter how dependent they usually are on electronic devices and internet technology. The knowledge of restorative environments in the environmental psychology field can be borrowed to design and manage digital-free tourism settings. For example, nature-based environments, favourite places and so on have been identified as ideal locations to pursue restoration (Kaplan, 1995). Different methods of making restorative space in natural or urban areas suggested by urban designers can be adopted to build digital-free tourism environments (Hartig et al., 2003). Furthermore, the knowledge of how restorative environments serve as motivators of certain behaviours, such

as self-regulation and an eco-friendly lifestyle, can be used to further understand the benefits of digital-free tourism for personal well-being and destination development (Hartig et al, 2001; Korpela et al., 2001). Therefore, the flow generated by participating in digital-free tourism can work to encourage individuals to protect destination environments and adapt their lifestyles.

Secondly, those individuals less dependent on digital resources can find it easier to find flow than those who are highly dependent in various digital-free tourism situations. This can be understood by considering the different attention habits among people who use digital devices in different ways. Overuse of internet and digital devices, especially when smartphones and mobile internet bring an overwhelming amount of information, can lead to fragmented and distracted attention (Harwood et al., 2014). Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder has been used as a better predictor for problematic internet use behaviours than any other emotional responses, such as depression and anxiety (Harwood et al., 2014; Sariyska, Reuter, Lachmann, & Montag, 2015). As mentioned in preceding literature review about flow research, concentration and the ability to manage attention are critical for entering and staying in flow state (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009, pp. 92). Therefore, individuals highly dependent on smartphones can find it difficult to concentrate on what they are doing no matter in digital-free tourism or any other situations. The less focused and lasting concentration can inhibit them from finding and experiencing flow state.

Thirdly, tourists' dependence on technology is not as important as the intrinsic attributes of the vacation environment, in terms of helping tourists feel restored. Much efforts are needed to study the pathways to planning, designing and making restorative space in leisure and tourism contexts. On the other hand, high levels of technology dependence can make it difficult to find flow even in a restorative environment. Engaging tourism activities and involving interpretations can work to guide tourists dependent on smartphones to better perceive the destination environment.

Chapter 6

Synthesis of Findings, Conclusions and discussion

6.0 CHAPTER OUTLINE

6.1 Synthesis of Findings

6.2 Contributions to Knowledge

6.3 Pragmatic Implications

6.4 Limitations and Future Research Areas

6.1 Synthesis of Findings

The aim of the current research project was to build a comprehensive understanding of the benefits of reducing technology involvement during vacation time. The rewarding outcomes in regards to enhanced tourist experience and potentially increased well-being were unwrapped progressively by approaching the topic of digital-free tourism from both the perspective of a rising social phenomenon and a niche tourism market. Specifically, findings from four interrelated studies facilitated the conceptual understanding of the value of digital-free tourism from general to specific, from a panorama to a nuanced view. Findings from the first two exploratory studies suggested three key links between digital-free tourism and personal benefits and provided directions for the subsequent focused investigations. Figure 6.1 displays the structure of this research and connections between the four interrelated individual studies.

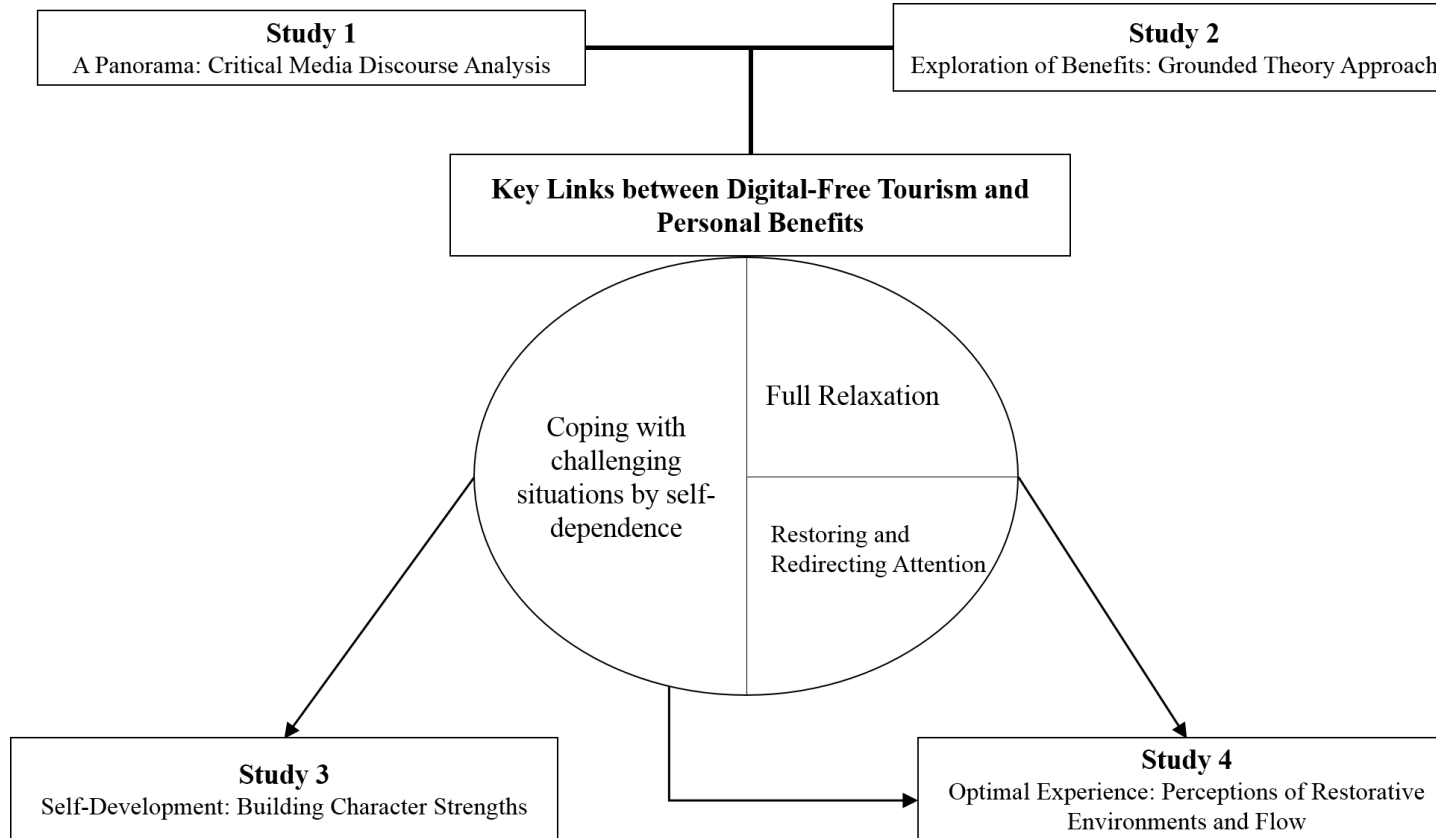


Figure 6.1 Research structure

Note: drawn by author.

Firstly, key features of the evolving phenomenon and market for digital-free tourism were identified from the outcomes of the first exploratory study - Media Representation of Digital-Free Tourism: A Critical Discourse Analysis. To address the first research question **“Is digital-free tourism rising in prominence?”**, the media representation of the broad topic of digital detoxing on holiday was examined to gain a comprehensive understanding of its development. Five highlights were extracted from the three-level critical discourse analysis which involved systematic text description, process interpretation and social-cultural explanation. The findings included: firstly, media discourses about the global trend of digital detoxing have evolved; secondly, digital detox has shifted from a marginal to a central topic in the media discourse; thirdly, vacations and tourism are presented as ideal situations for managing technology use behaviours; fourthly, the value of DFT over time has moved from relieving stress to life flourishing; last but not the least, multiple DFT providers now offer diverse experiences to a growing broad market. See details in Figure 2.10 on Page 93.

The second study - Exploration of Benefits from Digital-Free Tourism: A Grounded Theory Approach attempted to address the question **“What are the positive experiences and impacts of digital-free tourism?”** The study explored a rich range of potential benefits. A Grounded Theory approach was employed due to the lack of structured knowledge on such an understudied phenomenon. Carefully selected key informants with either expertise knowledge or personal experience of digital-free tourism reported on their experience, observations and perspectives about digital-free tourism. The patterns underlying the data were identified by undertaking inductive analysis of the textual response from the key-informants. Based on the results, a theoretical model was developed to display the positive changes of tourists’ psychological, behavioural and life conditions through the process of digital-free tourism. See details in Figure 3.4 on Page 120.

As a result from the critical discourse analysis in the first study and the constructive exploration in the second study, the core linkage between digital-free tourism experience and the benefits for tourists' well-being were identified. These three key links are also the most important features characterising digital-free tourism experience, including restoring attention, full relaxation, and dealing with challenging situations by relying on one's own capacity.

In particular, individuals' often fragmented attention is focused and redirected to the present circumstances when the distractions of overwhelming information are reduced because of the restriction or absence of digital connectivity. Tourists can relax more easily because links to their routine life and work are temporarily unavailable. Although the usual obligations will not change because of disconnection on holiday, digital-free tourism does provide a realistic opportunity for people to take a break. Nevertheless, digital-free situations can be challenging for contemporary tourists who have become very accustomed to resorting to handy digital tools and easy-access information on the internet. Tourists are encouraged, in digital-free tourism, to cope with the challenging situations by depending on their own abilities due to the very limited digital resources.

The three links between digital-free tourism and personal benefits emerged in the studies also indicated specific mechanisms to investigate the genesis of well-being in digital-free tourism. Firstly, given the Attention Restoration Theory in Environmental Psychology, digital-free tourism environments featuring attention restoration can be the settings that help increase well-being by restoring and reenergising individuals (Kaplan 1995; Korpela et al., 2001; Lehto, 2013). The other core attribute of digital-free tourism- full relaxation, also fits the notion of restorative environment. Therefore, tourists' perceptions of the restorative quality of digital-free tourism settings were taken into account as the basis for improvements in well-being from digital-free tourism. Furthermore, drawing on the work from Positive

Psychology, it was established that self-dependence in digital-free settings can cultivate personal growth and self-development through building strengths, especially the character strengths (Park et al., 2004; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). In addition, concentration and coping with challenges are also closely related to flow experience, a foundational concept in positive psychology that represents the optimal experience of exhilaration important for well-being (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; 1988; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).

Investigations focusing on these three linkages were organised into two further studies. These two studies attempted to deepen the understanding of the genesis of well-being in digital-free tourism by focusing on the three constructs - character strengths, perceived restorative vacation environment and flow experience. The third research question **“In what ways does digital-free vacation experience contribute to people’s well-being”** was addressed by establishing the mechanism that digital-free tourism enhances well-being through promoting self-development and optimal experience.

The third study - Self-Development in Digital-Free Tourism: Building Character Strengths through Coping with Challenging - analysed key-informants’ written statements about experience, observations and perspectives about digital-free tourism in a different way from the grounded theory approach in the second study. Specifically, textual data were re-coded by using the catalogue of twenty four character strengths as a coding scheme. In this way, the research explored the specific links between reduced digital connectivity and the development of personal character strengths in tourism contexts. In the results, twenty character strengths were found to be related to digital-free tourism. These strengths were seen as being developed through employing them to cope with issues faced in the digital-free contexts. A tiered model was built to show core strengths that are the most important strengths in digital-free tourism. Secondary and peripheral strengths were also outlined. See details in Figure 4.4 on Page 154.

In the fourth study, the research focus was narrowed down to non-use of smartphones on vacation. Drawing on empirical data obtained by surveys in China, the measurements for levels of perceived restorative environment and flow experience in digital-free tourism were developed by specifying not using smartphones on holiday as the reason for the reported perceptions. Moreover, the tested PLS structural model confirmed the hypothesised positive correlation between perceived restorative environment and flow. The moderating effect of habitual smartphone dependence on this restorative environment-flow relationship was found to be significant. In addition, it was found to be more difficult for tourists who self-reported high level of smartphone dependence in daily life to find flow in digital-free tourism. The trend of high levels of smartphone dependence weakening tourists' ability to perceive restorative quality of digital-free tourism environments was also revealed. See details in Figure 5.9 on Page 197.

6.2 Contributions to Knowledge

Findings from the current research can make important theoretical contributions to the understanding of the intricate relationship between technology and tourism. This is a leading study on the rewarding outcomes of vacation time involving digital disconnection and well-being from positive tourist experience.

Firstly, the current research findings broaden the perspectives on the role that information and communication technology can play in tourism experience facilitation. As reviewed in Chapter 2, the existing literature in tourism and technology is heavily biased towards looking at positive impacts of technology use. It is often automatically assumed that technology-mediated tourism experiences are superior to those without technological facilitation (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009). Drawing on some research attempts to conceptualise the potential negative impacts of use, an alternative view has also been developed (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). In line with the concerns over technology use in tourism which stimulated this research project, some more evidence has emerged in developing this research supporting the view that technology adoption does not always provide favourable experiences. For example, high involvement in the virtual world through internet and digital devices in tourism may weaken tourists' perceptions of destination authenticity (Tribe & Mkono, 2017).

Moreover, some recent studies also revealed that tourists did not always want to use digital technology in tourism. In one exploration of this topic, 12% of the Taiwanese interviewed did not use smartphones on their most recent travels; another 50% took smartphones but avoided work communications (Chen et al, 2018). Various strategies of (non-) using ICT resources are being adopted by tourists to create digital-free trips. The tactics include selectively switching off or fully disengaging; visiting digital-free destinations for detoxing and setting rules for using electronic devices among families and friends (Tanti, & Buhalis,

2016; Hoving, 2017; Kennedy-Eden, 2014). The present research works together with these studies to call for close attention to digital down time by introducing a smarter style of smart tourism- digital-free tourism which features mindful technology (non) use. In this regard, the current research is helpful to advance ways for researchers to think about tourist behaviour, particular the market demand. Typically, studies in tourist behaviour seek to understand what tourists want to experience and consume. By way of contrast, the current research considers tourists not having access to or not wanting to participate in select consumption behaviours. While facets of this redirected interest can be found in sustainable tourism research (e.g. Swarbrooke, 1999), in social marketing (e.g. Hoek & Jones, 2011) and in the general psychology literature on self-control (e.g. Karoly, 1995), understanding choices to limit/restrain everyday activities in the tourism context is both novel and potentially enriching for the ways we think about tourist behaviour.

Furthermore, the current research achieved a comprehensive understanding of the factors driving tourists to unplug, which is arguably deeper and more profound than the existing knowledge base. There are few contemporary studies with the research offering reasons why some tourists do not, on occasions, use smartphones. For example, some of Dutch tourists were described as passively resistant to ICT when they unexpectedly lost connection; some others selectively rejected electronic devices to seek temporary escape; while others mindfully disconnected when pursuing for physical or spiritual rest (Hoving, 2017). Avoiding work related communications and reducing habitual social-media engagement are particularly seen as desirable experiences for some holiday makers (Chen et al., 2018). The current research provided deeper explanations by accounting for the social-cultural embeddedness and offering philosophical considerations relating to the themes of modernity. Secondly, the present research establishes the first conceptual understanding of the genesis of well-being in vacation time that is characterised by reduced usage of technology. There

is no readily available discussion in the literature addressing positive benefits of non-use although attention has been paid to the disadvantages of continuing use and the potential of unplugging on holiday. Therefore, the research revealed new perspectives on conceptualising rewarding experience from digital-free tourism. In a recent study of disconnected tourism settings, tourists' perceptions on losing connectivity were found to be distributed on a scale from "anxiety" to "relaxation" (Chen et al, 2018; Upadhyay & Mishra, 2017). This is in line with the findings of the thesis research about on-site experience that full relaxation is one of the key links between digital-free tourism and personal benefits. Moreover, the research in this thesis provided a more comprehensive understanding of outcomes from disconnection. The present work moved beyond merely assessing satisfactory on-site experience, particularly emotional first responses, to incorporating components of well-being.

Thirdly, by employing critical constructs in positive psychology and adopting multiple approaches to examine the well-being outcomes of disconnection, this research also promotes new ways for describing and measuring positive experiences in the context of tourism. This is an important contribution to a more holistic conceptualisation of positive experience in tourism contexts. New interests in a broad range of tourist experiences have confronted researchers accustomed to standard satisfaction measures with fresh challenges (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Kozak, 2001). In investigations of such a novel tourism style as digital-free tourism, the current research adopted promising new approaches to experience measurement that incorporate rich assessments of cognition, emotions, self-growth, skill development, people-environment interactions and changes in time perspectives. The work thus advances studies of tourists' outcomes beyond activity patterns and satisfaction appraisals.

The research in this thesis found that digital detox holidays were presented in the media as effective approaches to reclaiming true selves (Tribe & Mkono, 2017; Li, Pearce et al, 2018).

Digital-free tourism settings were found to be valuable in the development of individuals' character strengths, tourists' perceptions of restorative quality of vacation environments and assisted in finding the optimal life experience - flow. Arguable, as well as other well-cited economic benefits to communities, the essential significance of leisure and tourism lies in new situations where participants can escape, recover, and perhaps build better versions of themselves (Graburn, 1989; Hottola, 2004). Therefore, the present research contributes to the knowledge of the mechanism of tourism (and tourists) building well-being.

6.3 Pragmatic Implications

The pragmatic value of this research project lies in three directions; suggesting the ways in which individuals can manage their technology dependence and increase their well-being through digital-free tourism; introducing digital-free tourism as a touristic offering for regional and remote regions; and providing new strategies for tourism businesses to innovate their tourist products and service.

Firstly, the knowledge of benefits of digital-free tourism helps individuals reflect on their technology use behaviours on vacation and in daily life, work and leisure. The idea also encourages tourists to mindfully regulate their and their families' usage of information and communication technology to get the most out of vacations. There is the need for better understanding of the response to disconnected situations among tourists who are highly dependent on digital technologies in daily life. In particular, more solutions should be found to help those highly dependent tourists to find flow in digital-free environments, in addition to making physical settings restorative. This is important from an individual as well as social point of view given the importance of vacations and sustainability concerns associated with travel impacts.

There has been a contemporary concern over the widespread phenomenon of habitual use of the internet and digital technologies in multiple life domains. Excessive involvement in the virtual world can interfere with physically-based tasks, produce mental stress and influence interpersonal relationships. Managing people's relationships to digital technology, especially dealing with addiction, is an important subject of contemporary research for individuals, culture and society. In tourism, the concept of e-lineation was defined by Tribe and Mkono (2017) to capture the deleterious effects of excessive engagement in information and communication technology, particularly collapsing social norms, superficiality or meaninglessness, isolation and powerlessness. It has been confirmed by the key-informants

of the current research that over-use of digital technology is very common among contemporary tourists. Therefore, participation in digital-free tourism is an advisable way of fostering positive changes of psychological, behavioural and life conditions for some people, especially those who are affected by the negative experiences of a digitalised lifestyle. The work also informs public discussions on work-to-life balance and initiatives such as “Take back your time” (<http://www.timeday.org/>) that promote vacations as central to human well-being.

Secondly, the comprehensive understanding of positive benefits from “unplugging”, and the factors that influence it, are important in staging positive tourist experiences. Therefore, from a practical perspective, this research opens up new avenues for the creation of tourism product and services. Generally, digital-free tourism is a novel tourism style with a widening market base, as evidenced by the findings from analysing media representations in Chapter 2 of this thesis. More particularly, rich details included in this research can inform the establishment of a genealogy of digital-free tourism products. A range of digital-free tourism products and services are needed depending on multiple factors, such as tourism environments, tourists’ travel motivations, companions and habits of using technology in daily life. Specifically, there are the need for different levels of digital-free tourism that are distributed on a spectrum of dis-connectivity, ranging from being fully connected to the challenging, wilderness dead zones. Given the restorative quality of digital-free tourism that was identified in this research, tourism environments can be designed by introducing the knowledge and approaches of building better restorative environments. For example, nature-based environments are typical spaces fostering restoration; therefore, digital-free tourism can be organised in select eco-tourism settings, such as recreation space in national parks. Theories and practices of facilitating individuals to find flow can also be introduced by tourism providers when designing experiences in digital-free tourism.

Thirdly, the idea of digital-free tourism raises new marketing perspectives for destinations located in remote regions. That technology dead zones are good for the economy is counter-intuitive (Pearce & Gretzel, 2012). Rather than conforming to common assumptions about the need to offer technology for enhancing tourist experiences, the current research offers a fresh view on tourism development for locations seeming lagging behind modern technology advances. Beyond the creative marketing strategies of destinations is their potential to actually foster economic development of communities in remote regions. The research provides evidence that lack of technology might provide important competitive advantages for communities by being able to offer more positive tourism experiences than other destinations. This is in line with Morris (2010), who has suggested that some locations and communities derive special advantages by not being in the centre of innovation and new technologies. He labels the skills and capacities retained or developed in such peripheral communities as “the advantages of backwardness” (pp. 194). In the context of an interest in digital-free tourism, an understanding of the benefits of “backwardness” may serve to highlight valuable behaviours and styles of interaction between tourists and authentic environments, culture and lifestyles of societies less involved in the technology revolution. In addition, digital-free tourism destinations can be the modern liminality (Pearce, 2005, pp. 25), a realistic context where tourists who are nostalgic for the “old days” can experience a contemporary recreation of earlier communication linkages.

6.4 Limitations and Future Research Areas

The major limitation of the current research consists in treating different segments of digital-free tourism in a sweeping way. It has been noted that the market is comprised of different types of tourists with different demographic attributions, habits of using technology and travel motivations. However, they were not carefully distinguished due to the exploratory nature of the research and the general aim of building a comprehensive understanding of such an unstudied topic. As with many topics of interest in contemporary interactions between tourists and information and communication technology, the research findings do need to continue to be situated in cultures and for national groups. Moreover, tourists participating in digital-free tourism are sensitive to the level of dis-connectivity, the time duration of unplugging and the background environment. Therefore, the segmentation of digital-free tourism is critical. This topic needs to be studied in specific settings in future research. A genealogy of digital-free tourism products can be established by drawing a spectrum of digital dis-connectivity, special and temporal dimensions together (Li, Fang, Huang, & Goh, 2015). The potential areas for further study include but are not limited to the comparison between different types of environments where digital-free tourism takes place; and the investigation of the perceptions and attitudes for digital-free tourism in different societies.

Another limitation of this research is the ambiguity about the duration of positive impacts fostered in digital-free tourism resulting from the sampling approaches and assessments employed. Although all of the studies included well-being components in post-travel life, the psychological and behavioural conditions were self-reports by respondents based on their memory and perceptions. In such future studies and in testing what has been suggested by key informants, it will be desirable to pursue longitudinal work and directly access the

rising number of tourists who experience the various forms of digital-free tourism. More reliable approaches can be utilised to investigate ongoing experiences before, during and after digital-free tourism, such as experience sampling methods (ESM), case studies of the contacted digital-free tourism sites and experiments facilitated by psycho-physiological techniques (Csikszentmihalyi, & Larson, 2014; Hektner, Schmidt, & Csikszentmihalyi, 2007; Li, Walters, Packer, & Scott, 2018; Scott, Green, & Fairley, 2016).

The third limitation of the research lies in the limited interactions between the researcher and tourists. This was caused by the use of questionnaires as principal study technique in two studies and secondary data as the information source in one study. Actually, a small portion of respondents to the surveys in China of Study four were re-visited and interviewed. Beyond this thesis, the findings from analysing the data obtained by these interviews will hopefully begin to remedy this limitation. Nevertheless, direct embodied involvement in the topic awaits researchers' effort.

For now, it appears appropriate to suggest that new and valuable psychological and social connections arise from being disconnected and are possible in digital-free tourism. Being off-line does not have to be a holiday disaster.

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Appendix

I. Questionnaire for Key-informants (used in Study 2 and Study 3)

Benefits of digital free tourism



This study investigates the benefits that tourists can get from digital free tourism (DFT). DFT describes holiday situations where internet and mobile signals are either absent; or usage of digital devices and social media is controlled. We are exploring the positive impacts of temporarily abandoning long-distance social contacts and web-based information search when travelling.

Q1 How common do you think over-use of ICT is among tourists? (ICT refers to information and communication technologies)

- Very uncommon
- Neither common nor uncommon
- Somewhat common
- Very common

Appendix

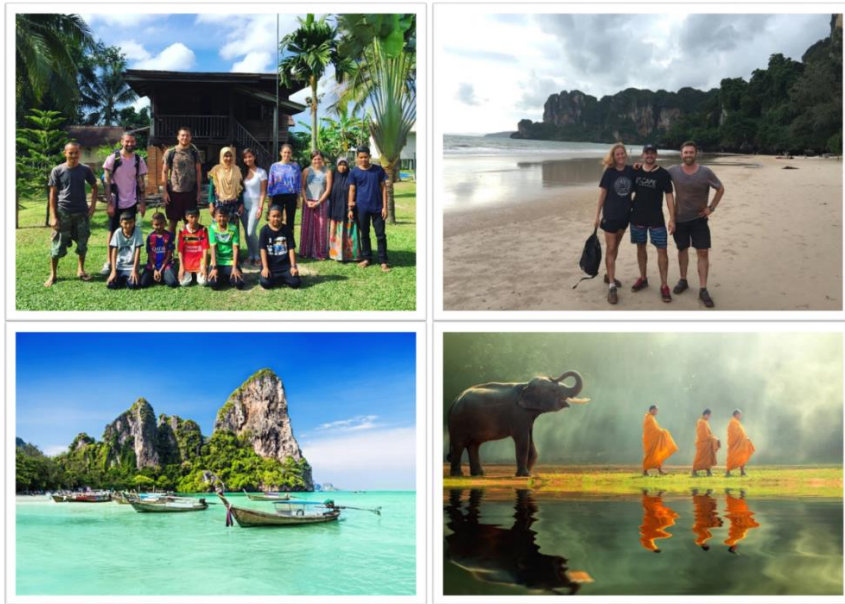
Q2 How much do you think digital free tourism can benefit tourists?

- None at all
- A little
- A moderate amount
- A lot
- A great deal

We are interested in your perspectives on the benefits of digital free tourism. A paragraph for each open question is helpful; it would be highly appreciated if you write as much as you can. Before the questions, we will present you with four scenarios to help arouse your sense of digital free circumstances.

Scenario 1

Thailand Tourism chose international millennials and gave them the chance to have a digital detox adventure. They had to leave their digital devices and social media behind and travel in group of unknown others. From navigating a new country, rappelling down the side of a cliff, kayaking, exploring ancient beaches, learning from monks, to staying with a local Muslim family, they were forced to connect fully with their surroundings and the people in front of them.



Scenario 2

Mobile smart phones have ensured that business folks are now on-call 24/7. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and other social media platforms are ubiquitous and nobody is unreachable, even on holidays. Alex, a burnt-out executive, chose to switch off digital devices and enjoyed wellness retreats at the eco Nihiwatu Resort in Sumba, Indonesia. Nor is there internet coverage and his mobile phone could not find reception on the 400 hectares of private bushland on the white sand beach. Alex encountered the French fashion Hermes family who book in eco Nihiwatu Resort for a month every year.



Scenario 3

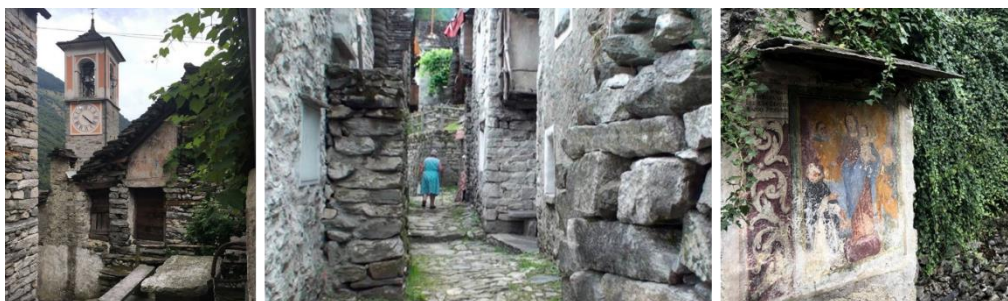
Appendix

Busy family lives are seeing kids bunkering down indoors and the whole family experiencing digital overload. Peter, a father who raised tech savvy and curious kids, read an article about how Apple's Steve Jobs restricted his kids' tech use and didn't really want them to have iPads. Peter therefore took his wife and three children to camp at Barrington Tops National Park in NSW, Australia. They stayed at bush campgrounds in the remote sub-alpine wilderness and enjoyed outdoor activities including swimming, bushwalking, mountain biking, fishing, canoeing, picnicking and star gazing, etc..



Scenario 4

Sophia, a writer used to typing on keyboards, spent two nights at Corippo, the smallest village in Switzerland located 30 minutes' drive from bustling Locarno. There has been a community in Corippo for more than 600 years but it hosts only 16 residents now after decades of depopulation. The entire village of Corippo is now protected as a historic monument. Corippo has more than 60 traditional stone houses, with dry stone roofs, original fireplaces, and chestnut wood floors. Sophia stayed at a hotel modified from the empty old houses. Guests here live side-by-side with villagers and the experience for visitors is very similar to what it was in the 19th Century in Corippo.



We will ask about your perspectives on the benefits of digital free tourism. A paragraph for each open question is helpful; it would be highly appreciated if you write as much as you can.

Q3 Please describe your experience of the digital free holiday circumstances where you TEMPORARILY chose to switch off digital devices, stayed in a disconnected environment (including accommodations) or unexpectedly lost mobile reception and internet connection.

Q4 What personal characteristics and individual qualities do you think tourists use to cope with digital free situations?

Q5 Please think of the benefits you personally have got from having some digital down time on holidays; and the impacts on your families, friends and colleagues.

Q6 Please think of in what ways digital free tourism experience could help with your self-growth and post-trip wellbeing?

Q7 Please write down your any other ideas or stories about digital free tourism if you have.

We are interested in some of your information for the better understanding of your responses.

Q8 What is your gender?

Male

Female

Q9 What is your age group?

Appendix

Under 18

18-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-64

65 or above

Q10 Where are you from (city and country)? _____

Q11 Where are you living and working (city and country)?

Q12 At what level do you use information and communication technologies (digital devices, social media, etc.)?

Never

Very low level

Low level

Moderate level

High level

Very high level

Addictive level

Q13 At what level are you experienced in travelling?

Very low level

Low level

Moderate level

High level

Very high level

Many thanks for your valuable information😊

II. Survey questionnaire for restorative, flow, smartphone dependence and digital-free tourism experience (Chinese version, used in Study 4)

1.您在度假或休息时，有过至少连续四小时不使用手机的经历吗？（睡觉时间除外）



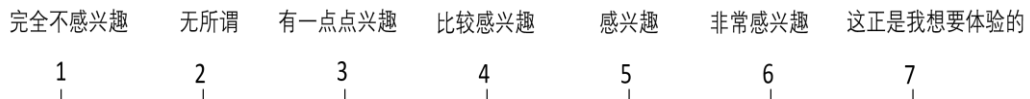
您好，我是一名博士生，正在进行一项关于手机使用习惯和度假体验的社会学研究，诚邀您帮忙回答以下问题。问卷不记名，且不涉及隐私问题，请放心作答。您的答案对该研究十分重要，感谢您的配合！问卷完成后，我们将向您发放 10 元微信红包，以致谢意。

- A. 有过 B. 没有

2.如果有，您当时为什么没有使用手机，可多选？如果没有这种经历，请问您在以下哪些情况下想要尝试暂时不用手机，可多选？

- A. 频繁使用手机使我感到疲惫；或我对手机产生了厌烦情绪
- B. 当时我不需要用手机处理工作事务或进行工作相关的联络
- C. 当时我不需要用手机与家人或朋友保持联系
- D. 其他人建议或要求我不使用手机
- E. 手机没有信号或移动网络无法连接
- F. 使用手机会影响我度假的乐趣
- G. 其他原因（请说明具体原因）： _____

3.您有兴趣体验一下在假期中暂时不使用手机的感受吗（至少四个小时或您可接受的更长时间）？请在下面的量表上圈出一个数字，1-7 分别代表您感兴趣程度由小到大的七个级别。



4.以下哪一个表述最符合您对“度假时不使用手机”这种体验的态度？

- A. 我坚决反对，不接受
- B. 我没有太大兴趣，但尝试一下也可以
- C. 我以前没有想过，但这听起来是个不错的主意

- D. 我自己也有过这个想法，但还没有机会尝试
- E. 很好的主意，我决定改日一定要尝试一下
- F. 我已经尝试过在假期自发地放下手机

请您回想一次至少四小时没有使用手机的度假经历，并根据能回忆起的感受回答以下问题。如果没有这种经历，请根据您能记起的使用手机最少的一次度假经历作答。

5.您正在回忆的度假体验，是否包括连续四小时以上不使用手机的行为？

- A. 是
- B. 否

6.您和谁一起度过那次假期？（可多选）

- A. 独自一人
- B. 配偶或男/女朋友
- C. 父母
- D. 子女
- E. 兄弟姐妹或其他亲戚
- F. 朋友
- G. 同事
- H. 旅行社组织的团队
- I. 其他，请说明您与同伴的关系： _____

7.您在哪里度过那次假期？请说明度假地点所在城市和吸引您前去的主要景点或原因：

8. 那次度假中您做了些什么？请列举最主要的活动：

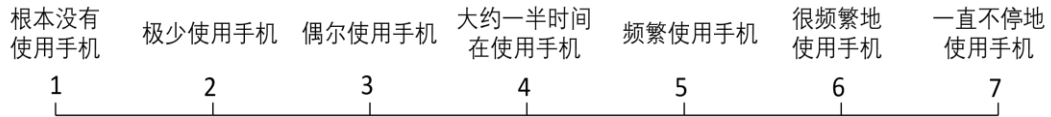
9.在您回忆中的度假地点，您的手机能否连接到互联网（无论通过 Wi-Fi 还是手机移动数据）？

- A. 有稳定的网络连接

Appendix

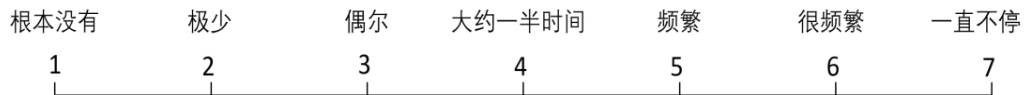
- B. 能上网，但信号微弱或不稳定
- C. 无法通过手机上网
- D. 不记得了

10. 在那一次度假时，您使用手机的大致频率是什么？请根据您使用手机的时间占**总度假时间**的比重，在下面的量表上圈出一个数字，1-7 代表由低到高的七个级别的使用频率（时间多少）。

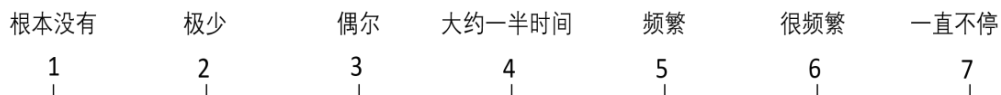


11. 在那次度假期间，您都用手机做了些什么？请根据您使用以下用途的时间占**使用手机的总时间**的比重，在各量表上圈出一个数字，1-7 代表由低到高的七个级别的使用频率（时间多少）。

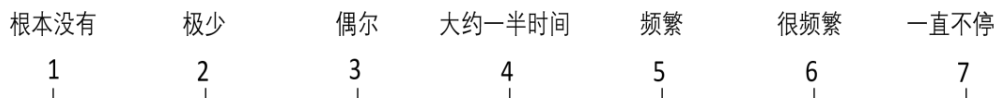
①处理工作相关的事务：收发邮件、接打工作电话、工作相关的短信联系等。



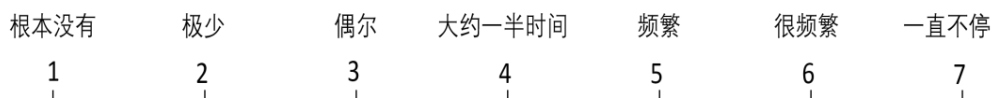
②把手机用作辅助度假活动的工具，为了顺利完成度假活动而必须使用的功能（如：预定、支付、使用手机接听讲解等等）



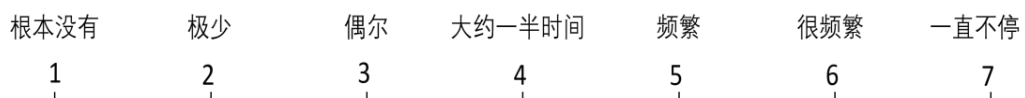
③与工作无关的沟通行为：与朋友、家人进行电话聊天、发送文字、图片、语音、视频消息等。



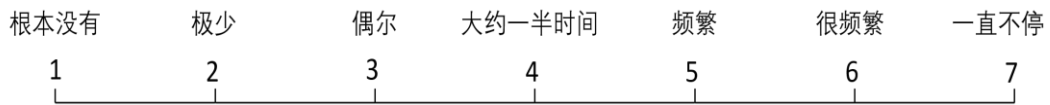
④度假相关的信息查询：目的地历史文化、景区景点地址、交通食宿、导航等。



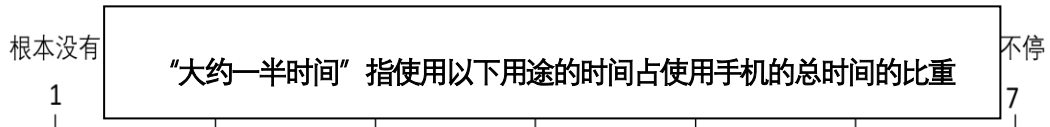
⑤与度假有关的支付行为：酒店预订、门票预订、餐饮预订、其他支付行为等



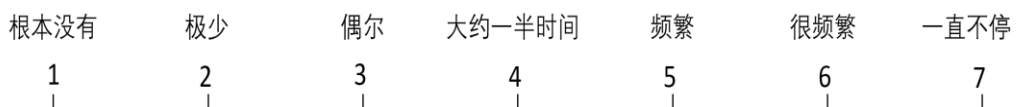
6浏览与本次度假无关的网页、查看新闻、其他信息。



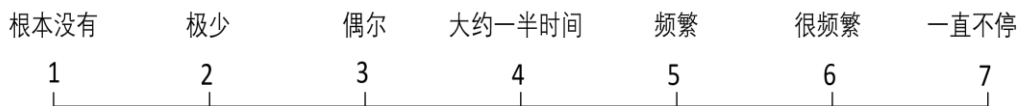
7影像记录：拍照、摄像、录音等。



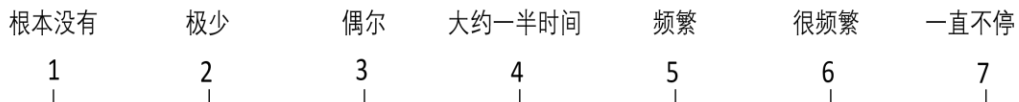
8分享自己的生活或度假体验：如：发朋友圈新鲜事、发微博等。



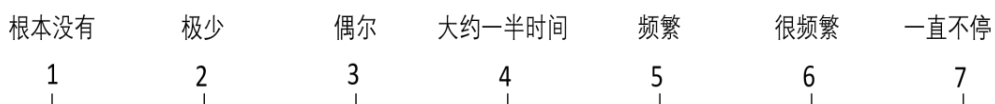
9关注别人的社交媒体状态（如：刷朋友圈、微博等）。



10打发时间、排解无聊的娱乐消遣行为：听音乐、玩游戏、看电影、观看小视频等。



11与度假无关的网上购物。



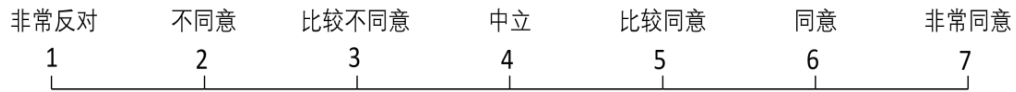
12其他用途/功能。请说明具体用途： _____

以下各项描述了您度假时，不使用手机，可能会有的感受和想法。请根据您至少四小时没有使用手机的度假经历，回答以下问题。如果没有这种经历，请根据您能记起的使用手机最少的一次度假经历作答。您也可以通过想象，预测自己度假时不使用手机的反应，根据您最有可能的感受作答。

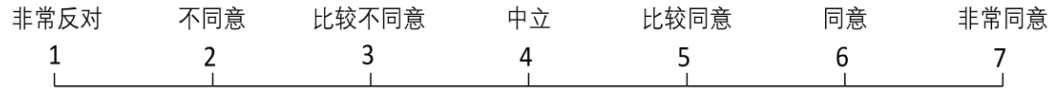
12.您同意以下各项说法吗？请根据您的感受（或可能的感受）与表述内容的相符程度，在各量表上圈出一个数字，1-7 代表由低到高的七个同意度级别，（1-非常反对；4-中立；7-非常同意）。

Appendix

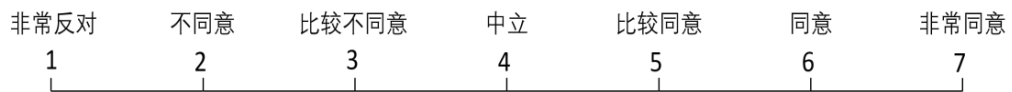
1 度假时四个小时或更久不使用手机具有挑战性，但我相信自己可以应付。



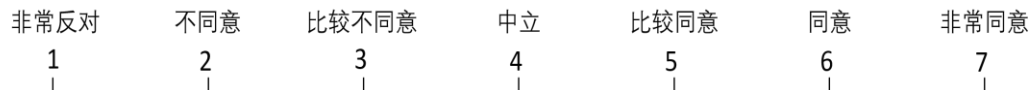
2 度假时不使用手机，我更有可能跟着感觉走，自然而然地做正确的事。



3 度假时不使用手机，我可以很清楚地知道自己真正想做些什么。



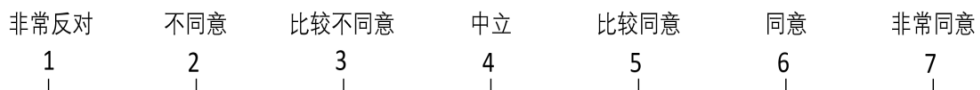
4 度假时不使用手机，我可以很清楚地判断自己的事情完成得怎么样，或在各项活动中的表现如何。



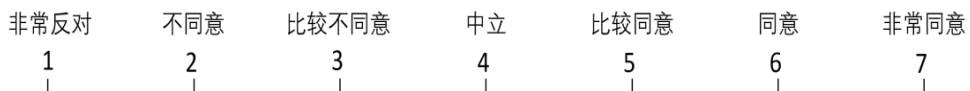
5 度假时不使用手机，我的注意力可以完全集中在自己正在做的事情上。



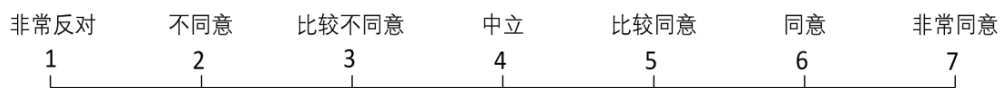
6 度假时不使用手机，我感觉自己对所做的事情具有一定的掌控力。



7 度假时不使用手机，别人在作什么、想什么，对我的影响就更少一点。



8 度假时不使用手机，时间仿佛过得更快了。



9 度假时不使用手机，时间仿佛过得更慢了。

非常反对	不同意	比较不同意	中立	比较同意	同意	非常同意
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

10 我的能力、性格、心态等使我能够解决不使用手机所带来的实际问题和困难。

非常反对	不同意	比较不同意	中立	比较同意	同意	非常同意
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

11 我的能力、性格、心态等使我足以应对度假中不使用手机所带来的负面情绪。

非常反对	不同意	比较不同意	中立	比较同意	同意	非常同意
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

12 度假时不使用手机，我可以很轻松地把精力集中在眼前、身边正在发生的事上。

非常反对	不同意	比较不同意	中立	比较同意	同意	非常同意
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

13 度假时不使用手机，别人的评价和议论对我的影响就更少了。

非常反对	不同意	比较不同意	中立	比较同意	同意	非常同意
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

14 我很喜欢在度假时放下手机一段时间的感觉。

非常反对	不同意	比较不同意	中立	比较同意	同意	非常同意
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

15 我会期待再次享受一段不使用手机的度假时光。

非常反对	不同意	比较不同意	中立	比较同意	同意	非常同意
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

16 度假时不使用手机，我会不由自主地，随心所欲地做一些事。

非常反对	不同意	比较不同意	中立	比较同意	同意	非常同意
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

17 度假时不使用手机，我做事的目标很明确。

非常反对	不同意	比较不同意	中立	比较同意	同意	非常同意
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix

18度假不使用手机，通过自己内心的感受，我可以更加敏锐地觉察到自己的（身体和精神）状态。

非常反对	不同意	比较不同意	中立	比较同意	同意	非常同意
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

19度假不使用手机，我对自己的言行具有较强的自制力。

非常反对	不同意	比较不同意	中立	比较同意	同意	非常同意
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

20我认为度假时暂时不使用手机十分有意义。

非常反对	不同意	比较不同意	中立	比较同意	同意	非常同意
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

21放下手机后，我更加觉得度假的地方和我日常的生活环境有所不同。

非常反对	不同意	比较不同意	中立	比较同意	同意	非常同意
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

22放下手机后，我更有可能摆脱日常生活或工作责任的束缚。

非常反对	不同意	比较不同意	中立	比较同意	同意	非常同意
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

23放下手机后，我可以暂时忘却那些平时不得不做的繁琐事务。

非常反对	不同意	比较不同意	中立	比较同意	同意	非常同意
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

24放下手机后，我更有可能打破平时的例行日程，尝试不同的生活节奏。

非常反对	不同意	比较不同意	中立	比较同意	同意	非常同意
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

25放下手机后，我更有可能领略到度假地的吸引力或魅力。

非常反对	不同意	比较不同意	中立	比较同意	同意	非常同意
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

26放下手机后，我更想去充分了解自己度假的地方，会更加细致、深入地感受度假地的自然景观和文化内涵。

非常反对	不同意	比较不同意	中立	比较同意	同意	非常同意
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

27放下手机后，我的注意力会更多得集中在度假地有趣的事物上面。

非常反对	不同意	比较不同意	中立	比较同意	同意	非常同意
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

28放下手机后，我更有兴趣对度假的地方进行探索，想要在那里获得更多的新发现。

非常反对	不同意	比较不同意	中立	比较同意	同意	非常同意
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

29放下手机后，我的心态更加符合度假地的氛围。

非常反对	不同意	比较不同意	中立	比较同意	同意	非常同意
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

30放下手机后，我更有可能完全融入度假地自然环境，体会天人合一（人与自然和谐共处）的感觉。

非常反对	不同意	比较不同意	中立	比较同意	同意	非常同意
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

31放下手机后，我更有可能在度假的地方找到自得其乐的方式，去享受假期。

非常反对	不同意	比较不同意	中立	比较同意	同意	非常同意
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

32放下手机后，我在度假的地方更有可能去做自己真的想做的事。

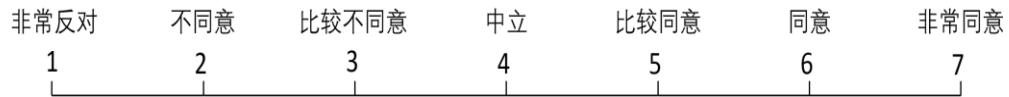
非常反对	不同意	比较不同意	中立	比较同意	同意	非常同意
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

33放下手机后，度假的地方依然有丰富多彩的事情可以做。

非常反对	不同意	比较不同意	中立	比较同意	同意	非常同意
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

34放下手机后，我能感受到的空间范围变大了，我会发现度假地更多值得探索的方面。

Appendix



35放下手机后，我在度假的地方可以做更多不同的事情，体验更加丰富。



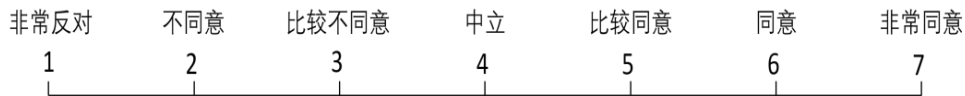
36放下手机，我更有可能对度假的环境具有掌控力，而更少产生混乱和迷茫感。



37使用手机会分散我在度假环境中的注意力。



38使用手机，让我觉得度假地和在家里没什么区别，只是换个地方打游戏、刷朋友圈。



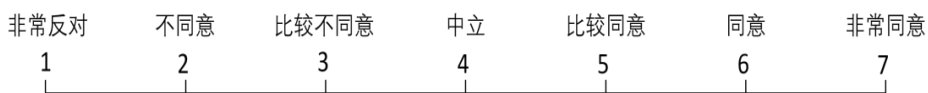
以下各项将询问您平时使用手机上网的习惯，请根据您的日常生活习惯作答。

13.您同意以下各项说法吗？请根据您的手机上网习惯与表述内容的相符程度，在各量表上圈出一个数字，1-7代表由低到高的七个同意度级别，（1-非常反对；4-中立；7-非常同意）。

1使用手机上网已经是我的日常习惯了。



2我对手机上网上瘾了。



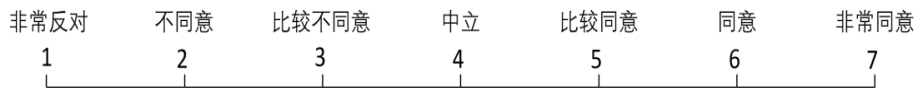
3我的生活不能没有手机网络。



4使用手机上网已成为我很自然的下意识行为了。



5一时找不到手机我的心里会很不安甚至惶恐。



以下问题与您的基本信息相关，不涉及隐私，匿名回答。您的这些信息是我们分析大众手机上网习惯和度假体验的重要依据，目的是为了统计和分析不同人群

的差异

14.您的性别

- A. 男 B. 女 C. 其他

15.您的教育背景（学历）

- A. 中学或以下
- B. 大专
- C. 本科
- D. 硕士生或博士生
- E. 其他： _____

16.您的年龄

- A. 10岁-19岁
- B. 20岁-29岁
- C. 30岁-39岁
- D. 40岁-49岁
- E. 50岁-59岁

Appendix

F. 60岁-70岁

G. 70岁以上

17.您的职业

A. 学生

B. 国、私企职员（行政岗）

C. 国、私企职员（技术岗）

D. 国、私企管理人员

E. 普通公务员（行政岗）

F. 普通公务员（技术岗）

G. 政府部门领导

H. 服务员

I. 工人

J. 幼儿园、中小学教师

K. 大学教师或科研人员

L. 农民

M. 自由职业者

N. 无业、退休、全职主妇

O. 医护人员

P. 其他（请填写）： _____

18.家庭月收入（单身者个人、已婚者夫妻二人）

A. < 5,000 元

B. 5,001-10,000 元

C. 10,001-15,000 元

D. 15,001-20,000 元

E. 20,001-25,000 元

F. 25,001-30,000 元

G. >30,000 元

19.您的常住城市是:

20.如您有任何其他想法, 可在此页或问卷背面写下您的留言:

非常感谢您的时间和耐心! 祝您新年快乐!

如您不方便现场收取微信红包奖励, 请留下您的微信账号, 我们将立即向您转账。

III. Survey questionnaire for restorative, flow, smartphone dependence and digital-free tourism experience (English version)



I am a PhD student from Australia, conducting a social science study on holiday experience. Your responses will be of great value and highly appreciated. You will be rewarded with a bonus on the completion.

1. Have you had a holiday time when you did not use smartphones for four hours or longer (a whole morning, afternoon or evening)?

A. Yes

B. No

2. If YES, Please choose the most important reason why you did NOT use smartphone. If NO, please skip this question.

A. I was tired of using smartphone

B. I did not have the desire to use

C. I did not need to use

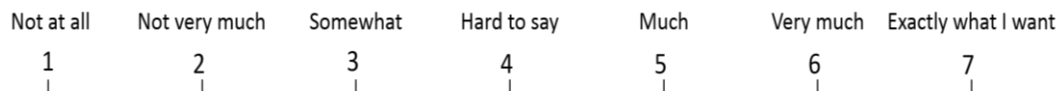
D. Others request or suggest me not to use

Appendix

E. I cannot connect to mobile internet or mobile service.

F. Other reasons. Please specify:

3. Would you likely be interested in NOT using your smartphone temporarily (about four hours or as long as you want) on future holiday?



4. Which expression dose fit your thoughts about temporarily switching off smartphone on holiday?

A. I absolutely refuse

B. I'm not interested; but can accept if required

C. I never thought about it; but it sounds interesting

D. Neutral

E. I have thought of it but did not do yet; I'm not sure whether I will do

F. I must do it someday.

G. I have done it spontaneously.

The following questions are about one of your holidays. Please think of the holiday time when you did not use smartphone when answering. Otherwise, if you never had given up using smartphones for four hours on holiday, please think of the most memorable, meaningful or special holiday you have had.

5. Does the holiday experience you are thinking about cover four hours or longer when you did not use smartphone?

A. Yes

B. No

6. Who did you spend that holiday with? (You can choose multiple answers)

A. Alone

B. Spouse or partner

C. Parents

- D. Child (ren)
 - D. Siblings or other relatives
 - E. Friends
 - F. Colleagues
 - G. Organised tour group
 - H. Others, please specify:
-

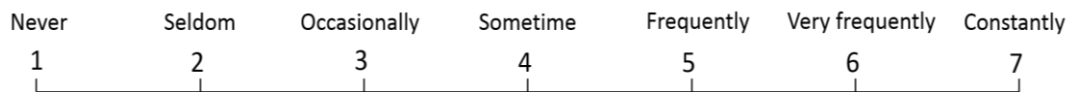
7. Where did you go? Please list the destination city and main attractions.

8. What did you do? Please list the most important activities:

9. Was mobile internet available at the place where you spent that holiday?

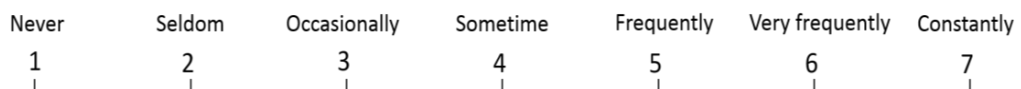
- A. Available and stable
- B. Signals were weak or unstable
- C. Not available not all
- D. Cannot remember

10. How much time on the holiday did you use your smartphone?



11. What did you do with your smartphone on that holiday? Please circle a number on the scales according the frequencies of doing each activity on smartphone on the holiday.


⊕ Work related communication.



Appendix


⊗ Facilitating travels.

Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Sometime	Frequently	Very frequently	Constantly
1	2	3	4	5	6	7




⊗ Non-work related communications

Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Sometime	Frequently	Very frequently	Constantly
1	2	3	4	5	6	7




⊗ Searching for holiday-related information.

Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Sometime	Frequently	Very frequently	Constantly
1	2	3	4	5	6	7




⊗ Holiday-related payment

Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Sometime	Frequently	Very frequently	Constantly
1	2	3	4	5	6	7




⊗ Browse websites irrelevant to the holiday.

Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Sometime	Frequently	Very frequently	Constantly
1	2	3	4	5	6	7




⊗ Taking photos and videos.

Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Sometime	Frequently	Very frequently	Constantly
1	2	3	4	5	6	7




⊗ Posting on social media

Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Sometime	Frequently	Very frequently	Constantly
1	2	3	4	5	6	7



⊗ Check others' social media updates

Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Sometime	Frequently	Very frequently	Constantly
1	2	3	4	5	6	7



⊗ Entertainment.

Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Sometime	Frequently	Very frequently	Constantly
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Ⓚ Online shopping.

Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Sometime	Frequently	Very frequently	Constantly
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Ⓛ Other usage. Please specify what did you do:

12. The following expressions relate to your feelings about the place where you spent that holiday. Please circle a number according to the extent to which you agree with each expression.

Ⓜ I was challenged, but I believed I could meet the challenge.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Ⓨ I did things correctly without thinking about trying to do so.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Ⓩ.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

ⓐ It was really clear to me how I was going.

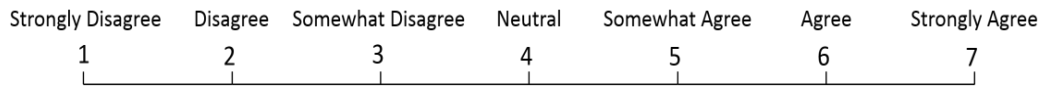
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

ⓑ My attention was focused entirely on what I was doing.

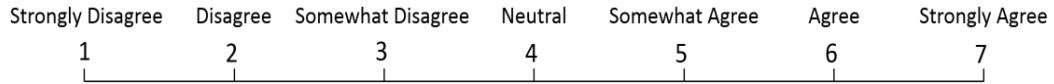
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

ⓒ I had a sense of control over what I was doing.

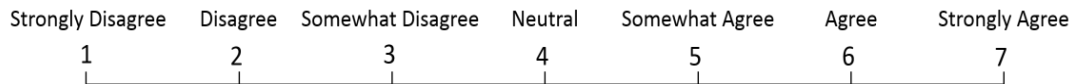
Appendix



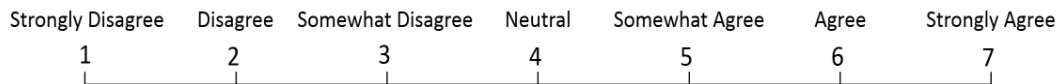
Ⓒ I was not concerned with what others may have been thinking of me.



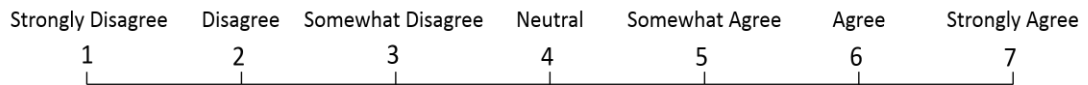
Ⓓ Time seemed to speed up.



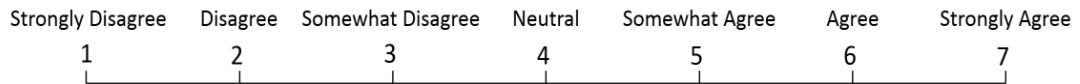
Ⓔ Time seemed to slow down.



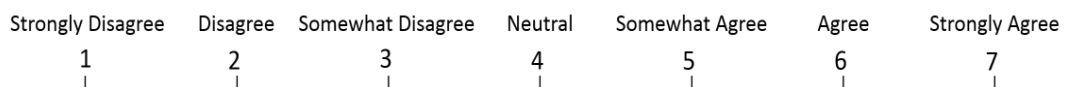
Ⓚ My abilities and mental strengths matched the challenge of what I was doing.



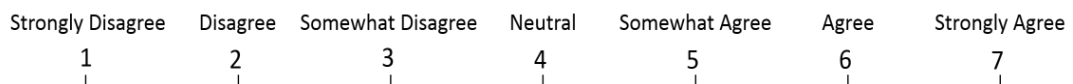
Ⓛ My abilities and mental strengths made me capable to overcome negative feelings.



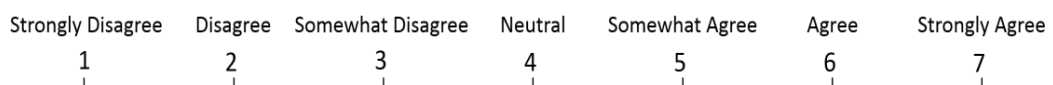
Ⓜ It was no effort to keep my mind on what was happening.



Ⓨ I was not concerned with how others may have been evaluating me



Ⓩ I really enjoyed.



15 I loved the feeling of what I was doing, and want to capture this feeling again

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

16 I did things spontaneously and automatically without having to think.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

17 My goal was clearly defined.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

18 I could tell by what I felt how well I was doing.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

19 I had a feeling of total control over what I was doing.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

20 I found the experience extremely rewarding.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

21 The place was felt to be more different from my daily environment when I did not use smartphone.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

22 I felt free from all the things that I normally have to do when staying there.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

23 I could forget about my obligations there more easily.

Appendix

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neutral Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

24 Switching off smartphones there (could) gave me a better break from my day-to-day routine.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neutral Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

25 I found the place more fascinating.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neutral Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

26 I would like to get to know this place better.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neutral Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

27 My attention was (could be) drawn to many interesting things about that place when (if) I switched off smartphone..

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neutral Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

28 I wonder about many things there.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neutral Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

29 It was my kind of place.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neutral Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

30 I had a strong sense of what I wanted to do without using smartphone.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neutral Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

31 I could find ways to enjoy myself in a place like this when (if) switching off smartphone.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neutral Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

32 I can do things I like there.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neutral Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

33 I did different things in different areas at the destination.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neutral Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

34 There was much to explore and discover there.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neutral Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

35 The place was large enough to allow exploration in many directions.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neutral Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

36 I felt it was a chaotic place when (if) using smartphone.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neutral Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

37 Using smartphone (could) produced more distractions at the destination.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neutral Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

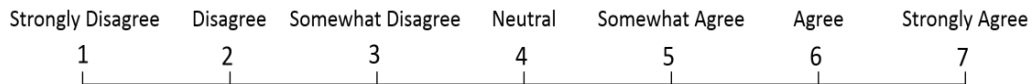
38 Using smartphone on holiday makes the destination less different from home.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Somewhat Disagree Neutral Somewhat Agree Agree Strongly Agree
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

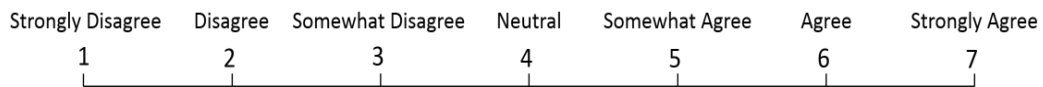
Appendix

13. The following expressions relate to your daily habits of using electronic devices and the internet. Please circle a number according to the extent to which you agree with the expressions.

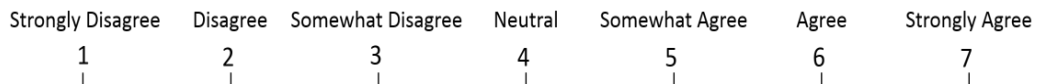
⊖ The use of mobile Internet has become a habit for me.



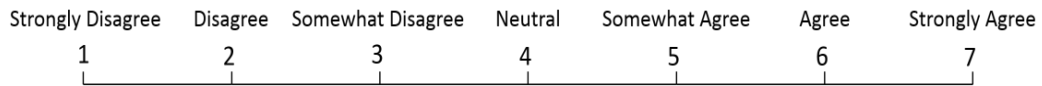
⊖ I am addicted to using mobile Internet.



⊖ I must use mobile Internet.



⊖ Using mobile Internet has become natural to me.



Information about yourself:

14. Gender:

Female

Male

15. Education Level:

A. High school or lower

B. Technical/trade qualification

C. University degree

D. Postgraduate degree

E. Other (Please specify): _____

16. Age

- A. Under 10
- B. 10-19
- C. 20-29
- D. 30-39
- E. 40-49
- F. 50-59
- G. 60 or above

17. Occupation

- A. Student
- B. Cadre at a governmental department
- C. Governmental official
- D. Manager of private company
- E. Office employee of private company
- F. Worker in service or industry sector
- G. Teacher
- H. Professional or technical
- I. Self-employed
- J. Farmer
- K. Retired or unemployed
- L. Others (Please specify): _____

18. Monthly family income

- A. < 5,000
- B. 5,001-10,000

Appendix

C. 10,001-15,000

D. 15,001-20,000

E. 20,001-25,000

F. 25,001-30,000

G. >30,000

19. Which city are you from: _____

20. Any other ideas:
