

Exploring digital-free tourism: Insights from Chinese tourists in Bang Krachao, Thailand



Mingjing Qu *

Department of Business Administration, International College, Krirk University, Bangkok, Thailand

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 3 January 2024

Received in revised form

17 April 2024

Accepted 18 April 2024

Keywords:

Digital-free tourism

Chinese tourists

Bang Krachao

Qualitative research

Tourism marketing strategies

ABSTRACT

This research examines how Chinese tourists understand and experience 'Digital-Free' tourism in Bang Krachao, Thailand. It uses a detailed approach to gather and analyze opinions, experiences, and thoughts on taking a break from digital devices during their trips. The study methodically collected detailed responses from interviews with 22 Chinese tourists who visited Bang Krachao several times in recent years. The results show that Chinese tourists have a complex view of what it means to travel without using digital technology. Their experiences and thoughts on 'Digital-Free' tourism offer important insights for developing marketing strategies in tourism. This research adds to our knowledge about the role of digital technology in tourism, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, as travel preferences shift towards more significant and health-focused vacations.

© 2024 The Authors. Published by IASE. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

In today's world, where we are constantly connected digitally, there is a growing trend towards 'Digital-Free' tourism. This type of tourism encourages people to disconnect from their devices and enjoy a unique and refreshing experience, especially in natural settings. The term "digital-free" highlights the overuse of technology by tourists, emphasizing the need to take a break from electronic devices (Egger et al., 2020). This trend is particularly relevant in the tourism industry, where the desire to disconnect from digital engagement is evident, albeit with varying degrees of impact (Dickinson et al., 2016). The global tourism industry is strongly influenced by the development of IT technologies and the ongoing digitalization and transformation processes in this sector (Zvaigzne et al., 2023). Further, the evolving technological environment in the tourism sector is impacted by the forthcoming development trends of digital tourism (Luo et al., 2022). Bang Krachao, Thailand, also known as the 'Green Lung' near Bangkok, provides an ideal backdrop for studying this type of tourism experience.

The Chinese outbound tourism market has significantly impacted the global tourism sector with its remarkable expansion and evolving preferences. Chinese outbound tourism trends encompass various aspects, such as exploring tourists' environmentally responsible behavior, the influence of Chinese culture in tourism research, and the underlying psychological mechanisms of Chinese tourists at entertainment events. This underscores the complex and diverse characteristics of outbound tourism from China, emphasizing the importance of acquiring a thorough comprehension of its cultural, psychological, and behavioral dimensions (Enosawa, 2022; Han et al., 2016; Li and Lu, 2016). As digital natives, Chinese tourists' responses to 'Digital-Free' tourism settings offer intriguing insights, especially considering their extensive use of technology in their daily lives. The impact of digital technology on different sectors in China has been subject to investigation, reflecting the diverse applications and implications of digital usage (Xu and Campbell, 2021; Yu et al., 2015). Past investigations have analyzed the impacts of digital innovation on different variables, including loneliness, mental burden, and personal satisfaction of life among elderly adults, revealing the perplexing impacts of consumption utilization propensities among various demographics (Liu et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2022). Researchers like Liu and Yi (2022) and Rahim et al. (2021) have shed light on the mental and behavioral effects of digital technology usage.

This study is guided by the following four objectives: 1) To examine the perceptions and

* Corresponding Author.

Email Address: paulqu911@gmail.com

<https://doi.org/10.21833/ijaas.2024.04.020>

Corresponding author's ORCID profile:

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0905-8212>

2313-626X/© 2024 The Authors. Published by IASE.

This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license

(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>)

attitudes of Chinese tourists towards 'Digital-Free' tourism in Bang Krachao. 2) To analyze the marketing effectiveness of 'Digital-Free' concepts among Chinese tourists. 3) To explore the ramifications of 'Digital-Free' on the holistic tourist experience. 4) To identify potential challenges and opportunities in promoting 'Digital-Free' tourism to Chinese tourists. The research questions aim to uncover the different aspects of perception, impact, and potential of 'Digital-Free' tourism among Chinese tourists.

Understanding the dynamics of 'Digital-Free' tourism experiences among Chinese tourists is crucial for stakeholders in eco-tourism destinations like Bang Krachao. The insights derived from this study can inform targeted marketing strategies and enhance the overall tourist experience, aligning with the increasing global interest in sustainable and responsible tourism practices. Eco-tourism destinations can foster a more sustainable and pleasurable tourism sector by accommodating the preferences and requirements of Chinese visitors.

2. Literature review

2.1. The concept of 'digital-free' tourism

The concept of digital-free travel is theorized as a process of negotiating and rejecting the dominant discourse of technology, emphasizing effective personal strategies for disconnection and reflection on embodied feelings and self-transformations in power relations (Cai and McKenna, 2023). The use of digital technologies in times of uncertainty and crisis has led to changes in organization, communication, and business innovations, impacting family businesses in the tourism sector (Melović et al., 2023). Furthermore, the act of participating in digital-free tourism has been associated with the cultivation of various qualities of character, including self-control, social acumen, and receptiveness to new ideas. Participants' development as people is significantly impacted by these personality traits when they engage in these types of tourist activities (Li et al., 2020). Moreover, engaging in digital-free tourism has been associated with the cultivation of several character strengths, including self-control, social acumen, and receptiveness to new ideas. This approach highlights the incorporation of digital information into the physical environment as a means to communicate customer advantages and accomplish organizational objectives (Russo et al., 2022). Additionally, the implementation of business intelligence and data mining for data analysis, including forecasting, has emerged as a key digital trend and a primary digital marketing strategy for digital tourism (Saura et al., 2023). Prior work has examined the effects of time constraints on the tourism industry, shedding light on the purchasing behavior of individuals who are typically not inclined towards impulsive purchases within the specific context of tourism (Li et al., 2023). Moreover, the development of smart tourism

and smart villages, digitalization, and innovation opportunities have been explored, shedding light on the factors influencing and challenges facing smart tourism in various regions (Garanti et al., 2023). The influence of social media influencers, YouTube marketing, and tourism vlogging on green tourism promotion has stimulated traditional marketers for tourism promotion, reflecting the evolving landscape of digital marketing trends (Yaqub et al., 2022). The bibliometric review of existing research on digital disconnection and digital-free tourism has uncovered the extent to which this new trend affects technology users and the tourism market, highlighting the growing significance of digital disconnection in the tourism industry (Arenas Escaso et al., 2022). The emergence of the Metaverse and the digitalization of tourism operations have provided new perspectives on the capitalization of digital content and the transformation of physical tourism experiences into potential additional incomes, contributing to a country's reputation and tourism sustainability (Folgeri et al., 2022). Borysova et al. (2022) delved into the realms of digitalizing the tourist sector, unlocking the infinite potential of circular economy technology in the realm of hospitality enterprises. Moreover, they embarked on a captivating journey to unravel the intricate interplay between tourism and the ever-evolving eco-friendly economy. Their findings highlight the capacity of digital technologies to facilitate sustainable environmental progress in various regions.

2.2. Chinese outbound tourism market

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have led to a reevaluation of travel choices, with tourists showing an unwillingness to participate in mass tourism and a preference for more deliberate trips with extended experiences and holidays (Wen et al., 2021). This shift in preference indicates a growing emphasis on safety, well-being, and meaningful travel experiences among Chinese outbound tourists. The pandemic has also influenced the perception of risk and safety, leading to a preference for rural tourism as a top choice for relaxation and enhancing parent-child relationships, with both cost and safety being taken into account (Zhu and Deng, 2020). This trend suggests a growing interest in nature-based and rural tourism experiences, reflecting a desire for tranquility and a closer connection to nature among Chinese travelers. Liu et al. (2021) posited that the apprehension surrounding COVID-19 exerts an adverse influence on individuals' inclination to travel once the pandemic subsides. This indicates a heightened awareness of health and safety considerations, influencing travel decision-making and destination choices among Chinese outbound tourists. One further thing the pandemic has done is make Chinese visitors reevaluate their dream vacation places and the types of things they wish to do when they travel (Huang et al., 2021). This

exemplifies the necessity of adjusting to the post-COVID-19 global tourist scene in response to shifting customer tastes and habits. The changing behavior of Chinese tourists in package tours has shed light on future trends and challenges, especially in the post-COVID era (Ren, 2022). Subsequently, organizations taking care of Chinese outbound guests should change their game to meet the changing preferences and assumptions of this segment. Zhu et al. (2022) observed that as a result of the persistent pandemic, there has been a reevaluation of traveler tactics, encompassing the assistance rendered to nations in their recuperation from the aftermath of the Coronavirus pandemic and their adaptation to the ever-changing dynamics of the worldwide tourism sector. Cultural distance boosts outbound tourist flow, according to post-pandemic studies of China's outbound tourism market, whereas geographical distance has the opposite effect (Wu et al., 2023). Especially in large tourist source communities, the COVID-19 epidemic has significantly slowed the growth of the tourism industry (Qin et al., 2023). This reflects a need for strategic and diplomatic initiatives to navigate the post-pandemic tourism landscape and foster international cooperation.

2.3. Marketing 'digital-free' tourism to Chinese tourists

The success or failure of 'digital-free' tourism marketing targeting Chinese tourists hinges on several crucial factors. The aforementioned factors encompass the influence exerted by digital marketing on the promotion of tourism (Hassan et al., 2022), the consequences of digitalization on the exportation of tourism services (Buhalis, 2022), and the preferences displayed by Chinese tourists regarding destination factors, which comprise income, exchange rate, digital marketing, environmental consciousness, and sports activities (Adinugraha, 2022). Additionally, the study on millennial tourists' experiences of digital-free tourism (DFT) holidays suggests that tourists' locus of control (LOC) plays a significant role. Millennial tourists with an internal LOC are more likely to perceive the advantages of DFT holidays, while those with external LOC can change their attitudes and perceive the benefits through self-efficacy enhancement (Rahmoun and Baeshen, 2021). These factors should be considered when developing effective DFT marketing strategies for Chinese tourists.

The rise of digital marketing and technology in the tourism industry presents both challenges and opportunities for destination marketing organizations and tourism enterprises (Kaur, 2017). The impact of branding and brand equity is also crucial in attracting and retaining tourists, especially from China, which represents a significant inbound tourist market for various destinations (Kim and Lee, 2018). Furthermore, the evaluation of possible risks in tourist sites can have a substantial influence on the attitudes and behaviors of visitors, perhaps

resulting in alterations to their travel arrangements (Zhang et al., 2019). While considering the points of view of Chinese travelers, it is fundamental to recognize that the social feeling of a spot could influence how guests see the neighborhood culture (Zhou et al., 2022). In addition, the view of the travel industry and the general insight of vacationers can be affected by the nature of administrations, which influences their inclination to participate in various activities (Li et al., 2021). It is crucial to comprehend the influence of digital marketing and technology on the behavior and preferences of visitors, particularly Chinese tourists, who are progressively dependent on digital platforms for their trip planning and booking activities (Kapiki et al., 2015). The use of digital precision marketing based on tourists' consumption behavior big data can provide opportunities for destination marketers to tailor their strategies to attract Chinese tourists to "digital-free" tourism destinations (Cao et al., 2022). Instead, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, digital marketing is important for how travelers act and for the growth of the tourist business (Wahyuningsih et al., 2022). The development of digital technology has triggered significant changes in marketing strategies and patterns, emphasizing the need for innovation and adaptation in the tourism industry (Adveni and Razali, 2022).

2.4. Research gap

The impact of 'Digital-Free' tourism on personal growth and character development has been thoroughly examined (Cai and McKenna, 2023; Li et al., 2020); however, there is limited knowledge regarding the perceptions and responses of Chinese tourists towards this emerging trend. Research on how technological improvements in tourism marketing match with or contradict the 'Digital-Free' tourism ambitions of Chinese visitors is lacking. However, studies by Russo et al. (2022) and Saura et al. (2023) have explored this topic. Views on foreign travel among Chinese people shifted during the coronavirus epidemic, according to Wen et al. (2021) and Huang et al. (2021). They enjoyed traveling in a way that made them feel at home. Family vacations were very important to them. According to their research, there is a clear trend in people's travel choices, where they value returning to familiar places more for the purpose of creating lasting memories. The exact nature of the relationship between this change and the concept of "Electronics-Optional" travel is still unclear, though. Although there is evidence of a preference for rural and nature-based locations among Chinese tourists (Zhu and Deng, 2020), there has not been enough investigation into the specifics of how these tourists understand and incorporate digital disconnection into their choices. Existing research has indicated that detaching oneself from technology can be advantageous for travelers (Li et al., 2021; Melović et al., 2023). Nevertheless, there is a scarcity of studies that specifically investigate the potential benefits

that Chinese tourists, possessing their distinct cultural and technological backgrounds, can derive from adopting this practice. It is still mostly unknown how Chinese tourists' levels of digital disengagement affect their happiness and the ways they travel. It is difficult to promote "Digital-Free" tourism to a digitally-minded population, such as Chinese visitors, despite the well-documented efficiency of digital marketing in the tourism sector (Buhalis, 2022; Hassan et al., 2022). The strategy adjustment needed to sell 'Digital-Free' experiences to this group has not been sufficiently tackled, despite the insights provided by studies on digital precision marketing (Cao et al., 2022) and the impact of digital marketing on tourist behavior (Kapiki et al., 2015).

The literature review has identified several key themes: the growing trend of 'Digital-Free' tourism and its impact on character development, the post-COVID shifts in the Chinese outbound tourism market, and the evolving role of digital technology in marketing and tourism experiences. However, there is a clear paucity of studies on how Chinese visitors perceive and feel about "Digital-Free" tourism, particularly when considering their cultural norms and online behaviors. Moreover, while the benefits of digital disconnection are acknowledged, its specific implications for Chinese tourists' satisfaction and behavior require further exploration. The challenge for marketers in effectively promoting 'Digital-Free' tourism to a digitally engaged Chinese audience also presents an area ripe for research. The purpose of this research is to fill these knowledge gaps by providing fresh information on the dynamics of "Digital-Free" tourism as it pertains to Chinese outbound visitors and by adding to our overall comprehension of responsible and sustainable tourism.

3. Methodology

The selection of a qualitative technique for this study was based on its suitability for examining a novel and unexplored social phenomenon. Moreover, a qualitative approach could provide an enriched insight into how participants perceived and represented 'Digital-Free' tourism to themselves, focusing upon processes and 'reasons why' (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The study adopts a qualitative research approach, focusing on understanding the perspectives and experiences of Chinese tourists regarding 'Digital-Free' tourism in Bang Krachao. This methodology is very appropriate for obtaining comprehensive, subjective observations of individual behaviors, motives, and perceptions.

3.1. Data collection

The Chinese tourism market holds significant global influence due to its size and impact. Analyzing Chinese tourists offers valuable knowledge about their preferences and actions, including their inclination toward digital-free tourism. Grasping

these preferences can assist tourism enterprises in places such as Bang Krachao in customizing their marketing approaches effectively. In this study, 22 Chinese tourists who had visited Bang Krachao more than twice in the previous three years were chosen (Table 1). Their repeated visits provide valuable insights into the evolution of their perceptions over time, making them especially pertinent for evaluating the effectiveness of digital-free tourism marketing strategies and their influence on the tourist experience.

Table 1: The information of participants

Occupation	Code of participants
Student	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8
Freelancer	T9, T10, T11, T12, T13
Retiree	T14, T15, T16
Entrepreneur	T17, T18, T19, T20, T21, T22

Bang Krachao is an artificial island situated in the Phra Pradaeng District of Samut Prakan Province, located to the south of Bangkok, Thailand. Positioned by a bend in the Chao Phraya River and a channel at its western extremity, the island spans 16 square kilometers. Historically, it has primarily been used for agriculture with a relatively small population. Referred to as the 'Green lung of Bangkok,' Bang Krachao positively impacts the city by containing a vast number of trees that help cleanse a significant amount of pollution. The island is encircled by numerous mangrove trees, while its interior is characterized by dense jungle foliage.

One method for picking participants is the utilization of a deliberate testing technique (purposive sampling technique), which searches for individuals who meet specific standards. This method ensures that the sample is representative of the experience and perspectives relevant to the study's objectives (Tongco, 2007). The purposive sampling method was chosen deliberately to gain deep, qualitative insights into the perceptions and behaviors of a specific group of Chinese tourists towards "Digital-Free" tourism in Bang Krachao. Emphasize that the goal was to explore the nuanced attitudes and experiences of individuals who are already somewhat acquainted with the area, thereby offering richer, more informed perspectives than a broader, less focused sample might provide.

The aims of this study are to 1) examine the perceptions and attitudes of Chinese tourists towards 'Digital-Free' tourism in Bang Krachao; 2) analyze the marketing effectiveness of 'Digital-Free' concepts among Chinese tourists; 3) explore the ramifications of 'Digital-Free' on the holistic tourist experience; and 4) identify potential challenges and opportunities in promoting 'Digital-Free' tourism to Chinese tourists. Three research site visits were conducted between the middle of March 2023 and late September 2023, a total of six months, to gather data from interviews. This data was used to achieve these aims. Because of their adaptability, semi-structured interviews are ideal for in-depth explorations that nevertheless benefit from some degree of conversational framework (Adams, 2015).

In mid-March 2023, investigators directed their first field strip in the Bang Krachao region. Through discussions with local people, they acquired an underlying comprehension of the island's facilities, culture, and customs. This incorporated an individual encounter of a 3-hour "Digital-Free" bike visit around the island. During this time, they distinguished areas visited by travelers, particularly spots famous with Chinese guests. Between June 1 and 5, as well as from August 25 to September 2, 2023, researchers conducted their second and third visits to Bang Krachao. During these visits, they interviewed 22 Chinese tourists, focusing specifically on "Digital-Free" tourism.

3.2. Data analysis

The data analysis process for this study is designed to methodically interpret the qualitative data gathered from interviews with Chinese tourists who have visited Bang Krachao. The goals and research questions of the study will guide this procedure, which aims to discover themes, designs, and insights. The steps of data analysis are as follows:

- **Transcription and organization:** All interviews are transcribed verbatim. Transcripts are checked for accuracy against the audio recordings. Each transcript is coded with the participant's unique identifier from [Table 1](#) for easy reference.
- **Initial coding:** Employing open coding to break down the data into manageable segments. Assigning codes to specific phrases, sentences, or paragraphs that capture the essence of the participant's response. This stage is crucial for identifying preliminary themes and patterns.
- **Thematic analysis:** Themes are developed by grouping similar codes together. This involves a careful review of the codes and considering how they relate to the research objectives and questions. Particular attention is given to aspects related to 'Digital-Free' tourism experiences, perceptions, attitudes, and the impact of marketing strategies.
- **Comparative analysis:** Comparing and contrasting responses across different participants. This step is vital for understanding variations in experiences and viewpoints among the diverse group of tourists.
- **Interpretation and synthesis:** Interpreting the data in the context of the study's objectives. Synthesizing findings to construct a coherent narrative that addresses the research questions. Connecting themes to the existing literature to either corroborate, expand, or challenge previous findings.
- **Validation of findings:** Ensuring reliability and validity through techniques such as member checking, where participants are given a chance to review and comment on the findings. Cross-referencing findings with existing literature and theoretical frameworks.

- **Presentation of findings:** Findings are organized and presented in a manner that clearly addresses each research objective. Use of direct quotes from participants to illustrate key themes and provide authenticity to the findings.
- **Reflection and reflexivity:** Reflecting on the research process and the researcher's role in interpretation. Make note of any biases and how they may have affected the analysis.
- **Ethical considerations in data analysis:** Maintaining confidentiality and anonymity of participants by using their assigned codes. Checking sure the data is accurately and fairly represented.

The data analysis for this study aims to extract meaningful insights into the perceptions, experiences, and attitudes of Chinese tourists toward 'Digital-Free' tourism in Bang Krachao. This study attempts to add to the existing body of knowledge on responsible and sustainable tourism by methodically examining qualitative data. It focuses on the expanding outbound tourist business in China.

3.3. Results

Thematic analysis was utilized to assess the participants' comprehension. This method involved analyzing all the transcripts and extracting three fundamental concepts from the data ([Lochmiller, 2021](#)). The allocation of these groups has been designated in accordance with the research investigations as "perceptions of 'Digital-Free' tourism," "marketing effectiveness of 'Digital-Free' concepts," "impact of 'Digital-Free' on the holistic tourist experience," and "challenges and opportunities in promoting 'Digital-Free' tourism" ([Fig. 1](#)).

3.3.1. Perception of 'digital-free' tourism

Chinese tourists have several initial perceptions and attitudes towards 'Digital-Free' tourism in Banf Krachao; these include the following:

- **Emergence of appreciation for nature:** Participants expressed a newfound appreciation for natural environments, often contrasting it with their technology-intensive urban lifestyles. This aligns with the shift towards nature-based tourism post-COVID-19 ([Wen et al., 2021](#)). Nearly every participant conveyed a deep sense of gratitude for the Bang Krachao region's natural surroundings. One respondent stated, for instance, "Even though I was studying in Thailand, the pandemic forced me to take online classes most of the time. Being at home all day was really miserable. I was drawn in by the natural setting here. It was amazing to be riding a bicycle here, away from the metropolis, video games, and cell phones" (T4, T5, T8). One more responder stated, "We frequently visit Thailand after retiring. Our previous visit was a long time ago because of the epidemic. We

purposely came here this time, staying at a guesthouse nearby. Here, we frequently ride and stroll. It has the perfect amount of relaxation—exactly what we've been searching for” (T14, T15, T16).

- Digital detox as a refreshing experience: Many participants described the experience of digital disconnecting as ‘liberating’ and ‘refreshing,’ echoing the character development traits such as self-control and open-mindedness identified by Li et al. (2020). Every interviewee discussed their experience unplugging from electronics. Some entrepreneurs said, for example, “It’s unbelievable that I can leave my phone and all other electronics

here and just concentrate on traveling. It’s only for three or four hours, but what a beautiful sensation it is. I feel instantly worry-free after abandoning all official responsibilities and immersing myself in the breathtaking natural setting” (T18, T20, T21). Some freelancers also expressed their emotions in a similar way. One such developer of self-media material stated, “I’m constantly coming up with new ideas for short videos. I felt like a new person when I came here, far away from the computer screen and without needing to create anything. Even though I was physically exhausted, going for a walk in the woods gave me newfound energy” (T12).

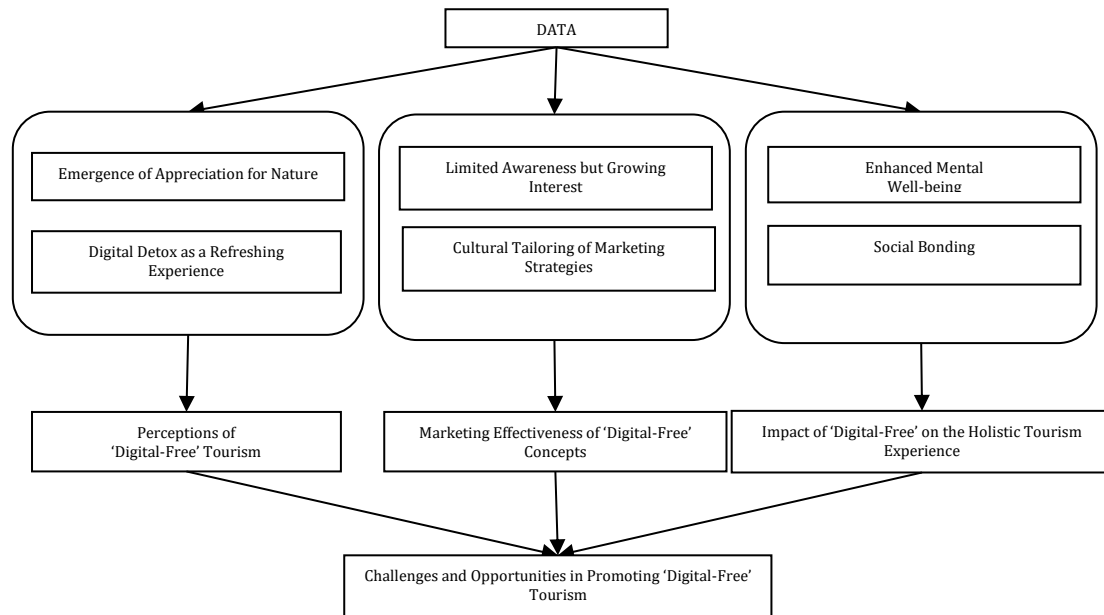


Fig. 1: Thematic system

3.3.2. Marketing effectiveness of ‘digital-free’ concepts

The market impact of the “Digital-Free” tourism concept among Chinese tourists includes the following aspects:

- Limited awareness but growing interests: The findings from the interviews indicated that the vast majority of Chinese visitors who were interviewed had limited or no understanding of the idea of ‘Digital-Free’ tourism. Several students inquired about the concept of ‘Digital-Free’ tourism. “Our understanding is currently limited. This is the initial encounter with the concept, and it evokes a sense of novelty. Our primary motivation for visiting this location was to seek proximity to natural surroundings, respite from the fast-paced urban environment, and the pervasive presence of modern gadgets. However, we were initially unaware that this particular mode of transport held certain characteristics and merits” (T1, T2, T3). “Several students expressed their hesitation about completely embracing ‘Digital-Free’ tourism, citing their inability to resist capturing several photographs and excitedly

sharing them on internet platforms” (T7). Nevertheless, several freelancers hold the belief that despite their lack of clarity regarding the precise nature of ‘Digital-Free’ tourism, they find themselves passionately drawn to its offerings. For example, “The experience of disconnecting from digital devices is really enjoyable; if this is the essence of digital-free tourism, we wholeheartedly endorse and advocate for it” (T9, T11).

- Cultural tailoring of marketing strategies: Effective marketing strategies resonated with Chinese cultural values and preferences, emphasizing family-oriented and health-focused experiences. It was determined through the interviews that every Chinese tourist questioned possessed a strong sense of family or collective consciousness. As an illustration, a few students stated, “I am marking my third visit to Bang Krachao. I always invite a large number of classmates or acquaintances to accompany me. We ride bicycles collectively, take pleasure in the scenery, and typically dine when we become exhausted. As international students, it brings us great pleasure to discover a group of like-minded individuals to travel within a foreign country. Collaborating in our native tongue is extremely reassuring. That’s amazing” (T4, T5,

T6). "With the intention of 'health and wellness,' particularly in Bang Krachao," stated a number of retired interviewees (T15, T16). "On my initial visit with companions, I was profoundly captivated. After that, I always bring my family with me on my visits so that they can partake in this incredible experience" (T14). Even entrepreneurs expressed their opinions, stating, "This location is well worth a visit. My intention is to arrange a retreat for the executive team of my organization, wherein they may partake in the sensation of detachment from all electronic devices" (T17, T22).

3.3.3. Impact of 'digital-free' on the holistic tourist experience

To assess the impact of "Digital-Free" on the overall travel experience of Chinese tourists, the evaluation mainly focuses on the following aspects:

- **Enhanced mental well-being:** Participants frequently mentioned feeling more relaxed and mentally rejuvenated, supporting the findings of mental health benefits associated with digital disconnection (Liu et al., 2021). The majority of the Chinese visitors who were questioned expressed that Bang Krachao induced a sense of relaxation and liberation in them. A few freelancers expressed that they visit this place sometimes for leisure, and after each visit, they feel revitalized in both their physical and mental state. For example, "I pondered and endeavored to ascertain the reason behind it. It appears that the reason might be attributed to my absence from my phone, computer, and other technological gadgets since I was solely immersed in the delight of traveling. Undoubtedly, this mode of transportation provided me with a distinct and unique trip experience" (T9, T13). Several retirees also expressed their perspectives, such as stating, "Whenever we visit this place, we have a profound sense of physical and mental bliss. Upon retiring and returning to our homeland in China, we dedicate our days to utilizing our mobile devices and engaging in recreational activities, resulting in inadequate sleep throughout the night. However, the situation is distinct in this particular context. In the morning, we arrive to inhale clean air and consume fresh meals. During the afternoon, we engage in physical activity such as exercising, taking a stroll, or cycling. In the evening, we visit a neighboring Thai massage establishment to unwind. Since departing from urban areas and abstaining from technological gadgets, our general well-being has been enhanced, and our sleep quality has elevated. This experience is very fascinating" (T14, T15, T16).
- **Social bonding:** Traveling without digital distractions fostered deeper connections with fellow travelers and locals, enhancing the social aspect of their travel experiences. The interviewed Chinese tourists unanimously agreed that the

'Digital-Free' form of tourism is very worthwhile and provides them with a whole new experience. The student group mentioned, "Whether in China or Thailand, most of our free time is spent at home playing games or on phones. We hardly have time to communicate with family and friends. But whenever we gather to travel here, we feel very happy. Everyone naturally puts down their phones, and we gather to chat and sing. Especially when new friends join, we are even happier, with endless topics to talk about. This experience is much better than what we feel in the virtual world" (T2, T5, T7, T8). Some entrepreneurs also shared their views, "Before coming here, I was on the phone almost every moment, always with endless messages to reply to, feeling I couldn't be away from electronic devices. But arriving here, I realized I had missed so many beautiful things and moments. Work should not occupy our entire life. I started to notice many things I had never paid attention to before, like the local cuisine here. Putting down my phone, I am no longer a boss, just an ordinary tourist. Communicating with locals using simple body language and broken English, understanding their culture through observation, and tasting their seemingly plain food. Through communication, I also made many new friends. At night, enjoy the local cuisine with friends while watching fireflies. This travel experience is truly wonderful" (T17, T19, T21).

3.4. Discussion

This study aimed to explore the challenges and opportunities in marketing 'Digital-Free' tourism to Chinese tourists in Bang Krachao, Thailand. To address the three research questions, this discussion draws upon the research findings, including perceptions of 'Digital-Free' tourism, the effectiveness of marketing 'Digital-Free' concepts, and the impact of 'Digital-Free' experiences on the overall tourist experience.

3.4.1. RQ 1. What are the perceptions and attitudes of Chinese tourists towards 'Digital-Free' tourism?

Nature appreciation and shift toward rural tourism

- The findings that Chinese tourists express a deep appreciation for natural environments in Bang Krachao reflect the literature's emphasis on the post-COVID-19 shift towards nature-based tourism (Wen et al., 2021). This trend aligns with the broader reevaluation of travel preferences among Chinese outbound tourists, who increasingly seek tranquility and meaningful experiences (Zhu and Deng, 2020).
- The participants' narratives highlight a contrast between their typical technology-centric lifestyle and the serenity of Bang Krachao, indicating a conscious effort to seek environments that offer a respite from digital saturation.

Digital detox experience

- The expressed feelings of liberation and refreshment during digital disconnection experiences echo the literature's findings on the benefits of digital-free tourism, such as self-control and open-mindedness (Li et al., 2020). This shows a clear understanding among Chinese tourists of the personal growth opportunities that arise from such experiences.
- The positive reception of digital detox aligns with the literature's depiction of digital-free tourism as a means to negotiate the overuse of technology and focus on personal well-being (Cai and McKenna, 2023).

3.4.2. Critical analysis**Cultural and behavioral shifts**

- The study's findings suggest a nuanced understanding among Chinese tourists of the concept of 'Digital-Free' tourism. It indicates a cultural and behavioral shift, driven in part by the pandemic, towards valuing experiences that offer mental health benefits and a deeper connection with nature.
- The participants' reflections on their digital disconnection experiences showcase a growing trend among Chinese tourists to seek tourism experiences that contrast with their everyday digital lives, suggesting a deeper societal change.

Implications for tourism marketing and development

- The insights from Chinese tourists on their perceptions of 'Digital-Free' tourism in Bang Krachao have significant implications for tourism marketing strategies. As digital marketing remains crucial (Saura et al., 2023), it's essential for marketers to balance digital strategies with the promotion of digital-free experiences.
- The desire for nature-based experiences and mental rejuvenation presents an opportunity for destinations like Bang Krachao to cater to this emerging market by highlighting their natural assets and promoting digital detox experiences.

3.4.3. RQ 2. What is the marketing effectiveness of 'Digital-Free' concepts among Chinese tourists?**Post-COVID-19 shifts and digital-free tourism**

- The COVID-19 pandemic has led to significant changes in travel preferences among Chinese tourists, with an increasing emphasis on safety, well-being, and meaningful experiences (Wen et al., 2021; Zhu and Deng, 2020). These shifts dovetail with the appeal of 'Digital-Free' tourism, which promises a safe, tranquil environment away from crowded, technology-driven urban settings.
- The growing interest in rural and nature-based tourism experiences among Chinese tourists mirrors their curiosity about 'Digital-Free'

tourism, as both cater to a desire for tranquility and a deeper connection with nature.

Cultural resonance in marketing strategies

- The effectiveness of marketing strategies that align with Chinese cultural values, such as family orientation and health focus, is evident in the research findings. This cultural tailoring is crucial, considering Chinese tourists' collective consciousness and preference for experiences that can be shared with family or friends (T4, T5, T6).
- Such culturally nuanced marketing approaches are supported by literature emphasizing the significance of understanding the socio-cultural dynamics of Chinese tourists (Kim and Lee, 2018; Zhou et al., 2022).

Challenges in marketing 'digital-free' tourism

- Despite the growing interest, there remains a challenge in marketing 'Digital-Free' tourism to a demographic accustomed to digital connectivity (Hassan et al., 2022). The reluctance to fully embrace a digital disconnect, as indicated by some participants (T7), highlights the complexity of altering deeply ingrained digital habits.
- This challenge underscores the need for innovative marketing strategies that acknowledge and gently challenge these habits, possibly by offering gradations of digital disconnection to cater to varying levels of readiness among tourists.

3.4.4. Critical analysis

- Balancing novelty and familiarity: While the novelty of 'Digital-Free' tourism is appealing, there's a need to balance it with elements of familiarity and comfort, considering the apprehensions surrounding complete digital disconnection.
- Strategic marketing emphasis: The study suggests that marketing strategies should emphasize the unique experiences and personal growth opportunities that 'Digital-Free' tourism offers (Cai and McKenna, 2023; Li et al., 2020). This could involve highlighting stories of personal transformation and enhanced well-being due to digital disconnection.
- Customization in marketing: Given the diverse responses to 'Digital-Free' tourism, marketing efforts may benefit from a more segmented approach, targeting different sub-groups within the Chinese tourist demographic with tailored messages.

3.4.5. RQ 3. What are the ramifications of 'Digital-Free' on the holistic tourist experience?**Enhanced mental well-being**

- The research findings resonate with the literature on the mental health benefits of digital disconnection (Liu et al., 2021). Chinese tourists reported a significant improvement in mental

well-being, echoing the concept of digital-free travel as a form of self-care and mental rejuvenation.

- This aspect of the research aligns with the broader discourse on the need for digital detox in today's technology-dominated world (Cai and McKenna, 2023; Melović et al., 2023). The findings suggest that the psychological benefits of disconnecting from digital devices are particularly pronounced among tourists who are habitually engaged with technology in their daily lives.

Social bonding

- The increase in social interaction and bonding among tourists during 'Digital-Free' experiences aligns with the literature that highlights the importance of human connections in tourism (Li et al., 2020). The findings suggest that the absence of digital distractions enables deeper, more meaningful interpersonal interactions.
- This element of the research challenges the dominant discourse of technology, where digital connectivity often supersedes face-to-face interactions. The results underscore the value of personal encounters and shared experiences in enhancing the quality of tourism (Russo et al., 2022; Saura et al., 2023).

3.4.6. Critical analysis

Contrast with pre-pandemic trends

- The preference for digital disconnection contrasts with pre-pandemic trends, where digital engagement was a significant component of the travel experience (Huang et al., 2021; Zhu et al., 2022). This shift may reflect a broader societal transformation in response to the pandemic's impact on lifestyles and values.

Relevance to the post-pandemic tourism market

- The findings are particularly relevant in the context of post-pandemic tourism. The desire for tranquility and nature-based experiences aligns with the increasing preference for rural tourism and meaningful travel among Chinese tourists (Wen et al., 2021; Zhu and Deng, 2020).
- The research results suggest that destinations like Bang Krachao could capitalize on this trend by promoting 'Digital-Free' experiences that align with the evolving preferences of the Chinese outbound tourism market.

Implications for tourism marketing

- The study highlights a potential niche in the tourism market for 'Digital-Free' experiences, challenging traditional digital marketing strategies (Buhalis, 2022; Hassan et al., 2022). Marketing efforts may need to be reoriented to emphasize the mental health benefits and the opportunity for authentic social connections that 'Digital-Free' tourism offers.

Reflection on the sustainability of 'digital-free' tourism

- The findings also raise questions about the sustainability of 'Digital-Free' tourism. As technology continues to evolve, destinations and marketers must consider how to balance the allure of digital advancements with the growing demand for disconnection and simplicity in travel experiences.

3.4.7. RQ 4. What are the potential challenges and opportunities in promoting 'Digital-Free' tourism to Chinese tourists?

To address research question 4, it is necessary to integrate the research findings and discussions from research questions 1 to 3 as follows:

From perceptions to promotion

- The findings from RQ1 show that while there is an appreciation for nature and a desire for a digital detox, translating these perceptions into effective promotional strategies poses a unique challenge. The cultural shift towards valuing experiences that offer mental health benefits (as highlighted in RQ3) needs to be mirrored in marketing strategies.
- RQ2's insights into the marketing effectiveness of 'Digital-Free' concepts underscore the importance of culturally resonant marketing strategies, which align with Chinese tourists' preferences for family-oriented and health-focused experiences.

Challenges in promoting 'digital-free' tourism

- Balancing digital habits with the desire for disconnection: The ingrained digital habits of Chinese tourists, as highlighted in RQ2, present a challenge. Overcoming the digital dependency to fully embrace the concept of 'Digital-Free' tourism requires innovative marketing approaches.
- Overcoming skepticism: As indicated in RQ3, while tourists appreciate the mental well-being benefits of digital disconnection, there is still skepticism about completely letting go of digital connectivity, especially among those who see digital devices as indispensable to their daily lives.

Opportunities in promoting 'digital-free' tourism

- Leveraging post-pandemic travel trends: The shift towards rural, nature-based tourism experiences post-COVID-19 (RQ1) opens up opportunities. Promoting Bang Krachao as a serene, natural retreat can align with these evolving preferences.
- Highlighting mental health and social bonding: Findings from RQ3 can be leveraged to promote the mental health benefits and the opportunity for enhanced social bonding that 'Digital-Free' tourism offers.
- Culturally tailored marketing: Understanding the socio-cultural dynamics of Chinese tourists, as discussed in RQ2, can guide the development of marketing strategies that resonate with this demographic.

3.4.8. Critical analysis

Market segmentation and customization

- Different segments of the Chinese tourist market may respond differently to 'Digital-Free' tourism. Tailoring marketing strategies to address the varying levels of readiness and preferences among these segments can be more effective.

Strategic communication and storytelling

- Utilizing storytelling in marketing, emphasizing narratives of personal transformation and rejuvenation experienced by others can make the concept of 'Digital-Free' tourism more relatable and appealing.
- Showcasing testimonials and experiences of past tourists could be a persuasive tool in marketing these unique experiences.

Balancing technology and disconnection

- Employing digital platforms to promote 'Digital-Free' tourism presents a paradox but is a necessary strategy in today's digital world. The key lies in how these platforms are used to communicate the value of unplugging.

Long-term sustainability

- As technology continues to evolve, maintaining the relevance and appeal of 'Digital-Free' tourism will require constant innovation in marketing and experience design.
- Continuously monitoring changing trends and preferences in the Chinese outbound tourism market is crucial for the long-term sustainability of 'Digital-Free' tourism.

4. Conclusion

4.1. General conclusion

This study explored the dynamics of 'Digital-Free' tourism from the perspective of Chinese tourists visiting Bang Krachao, Thailand. The research revealed significant insights into their perceptions, attitudes, and experiences, highlighting a growing interest in nature-based and tranquil tourism experiences post-COVID-19. The findings underscore the mental health benefits and enhanced social bonding associated with digital disconnection. Despite an apparent readiness to embrace 'Digital-Free' experiences, there remains a palpable tension between the desire to disconnect and the ingrained digital habits of Chinese tourists. Marketing strategies that effectively communicate the benefits of 'Digital-Free' tourism while respecting the cultural nuances and personal preferences of Chinese tourists emerged as crucial in promoting this tourism concept. This study contributes to the understanding of how digital disconnection shapes the tourist experience, especially in a post-pandemic context where preferences are evolving towards more meaningful and health-oriented travel.

5. Limitations of the study

1. Sample representation: The study relies on a purposive sample of Chinese tourists who have visited Bang Krachao more than twice, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of Chinese outbound tourists.
2. Cultural specificity: The focus on Chinese tourists' perceptions might not fully capture the diverse range of perspectives that tourists from other cultural backgrounds may hold towards 'Digital-Free' tourism.
3. Dynamic nature of the tourism market: The rapidly evolving nature of the tourism industry, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, means that the findings may require continual updating to remain relevant.
4. Methodological approach: The study exclusively employs qualitative methods. Incorporating quantitative approaches could provide a broader statistical context to support the findings.
5. Technology integration: The study could explore how emerging technologies like virtual or augmented reality could be integrated into digital-free tourism experiences without compromising their essence.

6. Suggestions for future studies

1. Broader demographic research: Future research could expand the demographic scope to include tourists from various cultural backgrounds, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the global appeal and perception of 'Digital-Free' tourism.
2. Longitudinal studies: Conducting longitudinal studies to track changes in tourists' attitudes and behaviors towards 'Digital-Free' tourism over time, especially as the world continues to adapt to the post-pandemic reality, would provide valuable insights.
3. Quantitative approaches: The exploratory nature of the study on "Digital-Free" tourism—a relatively under-researched area—necessitated a qualitative approach to first understand the phenomenon from the perspective of Chinese tourists before any quantification could be meaningfully applied. Future research endeavors may employ a mixed-methods approach, integrating the comprehensive nature of quantitative data with profound qualitative insights. This could involve surveying a larger sample of Chinese tourists to validate and generalize the findings from the qualitative phase.
4. Impact of marketing strategies: Further research could focus on evaluating the effectiveness of different marketing strategies in promoting 'Digital-Free' tourism, particularly those that balance digital engagement with the promotion of disconnection.
5. Technological integration: For future investigations, we should know how VR could be used before the actual visit to provide potential tourists with immersive previews of Bang

Krachao. This pre-visit engagement tool can enhance anticipation and preparation for the digital-free experience, allowing tourists to familiarize themselves with the destination and its natural beauty without detracting from the essence of being digitally unencumbered during the actual visit. Emphasize the importance of selectively integrating technology to ensure it supports, rather than undermines, the digital-free tourism concept. The connection with nature, culture, and introspection, which are fundamental to the digital-free experience, should be strengthened rather than diminished by technological advancements.

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References

- Adams WC (2015). Conducting semi-structured interviews. In: Newcomer KE, Hatry HP, and Wholey JS (Eds.), *Handbook of practical program evaluation*: 492-505. Jossey-Bass and Pfeiffer Imprints, Wiley, San Francisco, USA. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119171386.ch19>
- Adinugraha HH (2022). Digital marketing in tourism destinations. *Jurnal Ekonomi dan Bisnis Airlangga*, 32(2): 130-137. <https://doi.org/10.20473/jeba.V32I2022.130-137>
- Adveni LV and Razali G (2022). Hypercapitalism and product commodification through digital-based marketing communications in Komodo National Park. *International Journal of Travel, Hospitality and Events*, 1(2): 140-149. <https://doi.org/10.56743/ijothe.v1i2.14>
- Arenas Escaso JF, Folgado Fernández JA, and Palos Sánchez PR (2022). Digital disconnection as an opportunity for the tourism business: A bibliometric analysis. *Emerging Science Journal*, 6(5): 1100-1113. <https://doi.org/10.28991/ESJ-2022-06-05-013>
- Borysova O, Gryniuk O, Mykhailenko T, Shparaha T, and Hryniuk T (2022). Global trends in tourism and imperatives of the circular economy in the context of sustainable environmental development of states. *Review of Economics and Finance*, 20(1): 196-202. <https://doi.org/10.55365/1923.x2022.20.23>
- Buhalis D (2022). *Encyclopedia of tourism management and marketing*. Edward Elgar Publishing Northampton, USA. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781800377486>
- Cai W and McKenna B (2023). Power and resistance: Digital-free tourism in a connected world. *Journal of Travel Research*, 62(2): 290-304. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00472875211061208>
- Cao Z, Xu H, and Xian BTS (2022). Chinese tourists in Malaysia: An analysis of spatio-temporal behavior based on tourism digital footprints. *IEEE Access*, 10: 122047-122060. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ACCESS.2022.3217916>
- Dickinson JE, Hibbert JF, and Filimonau V (2016). Mobile technology and the tourist experience: (Dis)connection at the campsite. *Tourism Management*, 57: 193-201. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2016.06.005>
- Egger I, Lei SI, and Wassler P (2020). Digital free tourism—An exploratory study of tourist motivations. *Tourism Management*, 79: 104098. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2020.104098>
- Enosawa Y (2022). Psychological mechanism underlying the manners of Chinese tourists at entertainment events. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Hospitality and Tourism Management*, TIIKM, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 7(1): 19-29. <https://doi.org/10.17501/23572612.2022.7.103>
- Folgieri R, Gričar S, and Baldigara T (2022). NFTS: What opportunities and challenges in tourism? In the 26th Biennial International Congress, *Tourism and Hospitality Industry 2022: Trends and Challenges*, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Opatija, Croatia: 83-96. <https://doi.org/10.20867/thi.26.3>
- Garanti Z, Zvaigzne A, and Berjozka G (2023). Introduction: Smart tourism: What developments and issues are important to the Baltic States? *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*, 15(5): 463-467. <https://doi.org/10.1108/WHATT-06-2023-0071>
- Han JH, Lee MJ, and Hwang YS (2016). Tourists' environmentally responsible behavior in response to climate change and tourist experiences in nature-based tourism. *Sustainability*, 8(7): 644. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su8070644>
- Hassan TH, Salem AE, and Saleh MI (2022). Digital-free tourism holiday as a new approach for tourism well-being: Tourists' attributional approach. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(10): 5974. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19105974>
PMid:35627511 PMCID:PMC9141969
- Huang SS, Shao Y, Zeng Y, Liu X, and Li Z (2021). Impacts of COVID-19 on Chinese nationals' tourism preferences. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 40: 100895. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2021.100895>
PMid:34642624 PMCID:PMC8498700
- Kapiki ST, Fu J, and Mou L (2015). Strategic framework showcasing Greece in the Chinese tourism market. *EuroMed Journal of Business*, 10(3): 311-326. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EMJB-09-2014-0031>
- Kaur G (2017). The importance of digital marketing in the tourism industry. *International Journal of Research-GRANTHAALAYAH*, 5(6): 72-77. <https://doi.org/10.29121/granthaalayah.v5.i6.2017.1998>
- Kim HK and Lee TJ (2018). Brand equity of a tourist destination. *Sustainability*, 10(2): 431. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su10020431>
- Li C, Wang Y, and Li H (2023). Effect of time pressure on tourism: How to make non-impulsive tourists spend more. *Journal of Travel Research*, 62(7): 1411-1426. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00472875221138054>
- Li J and Lu Y (2016). Chinese culture in tourist research: A review and comparison of Chinese and English studies in 1993-2012. *Tourism Review*, 71(2): 118-134. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-0279-3>
- Li J, Pearce PL, and Oktadiana H (2020). Can digital-free tourism build character strengths? *Annals of Tourism Research*, 85: 103037. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2020.103037>
PMid:32905012 PMCID:PMC7462583
- Li R, Wang H, and Zhang H (2021). Chinese tourists' perception of the tourism image of North Korea based on text data from tourism websites. *Sustainability*, 13(21): 12205. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su132112205>
- Liu G, Li S, and Kong F (2022). Association between social support, smartphone usage and loneliness among the migrant elderly following children in Jinan, China: A cross-sectional study. *BMJ Open*, 12(5): e060510. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2021-060510>
PMid:35613788 PMCID:PMC9174823
- Liu Y and Yi H (2022). Social networking smartphone applications and emotional health among college students: The moderating

- role of social support. *Science Progress*, 105(4).
<https://doi.org/10.1177/00368504221144439>
PMid:36529902 PMCID:PMC10450471
- Liu Y, Shi H, Li Y, and Amin A (2021). Factors influencing Chinese residents' post-pandemic outbound travel intentions: An extended theory of planned behavior model based on the perception of COVID-19. *Tourism Review*, 76(4): 871-891.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-09-2020-0458>
- Lochmiller CR (2021). Conducting thematic analysis with qualitative data. *The Qualitative Report*, 26(6): 2029-2044.
<https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2021.5008>
- Luo C, Jiang S, Pu R, Li L, and Yang H (2022). Knowledge map of digital tourism: A bibliometric approach using CiteSpace. *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, 20(4): 573-587.
[https://doi.org/10.21511/ppm.20\(4\).2022.43](https://doi.org/10.21511/ppm.20(4).2022.43)
- Melović M, Baynazoğlu ME, and Šerić N (2023). Family businesses in tourism—The use of digital technologies in times of uncertainty and crisis. *Journal of Family Business Management*, 13(1): 185-209.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/JFBM-06-2022-0086>
- Qin L, Fang ES, Lai IKW, and Abbas SK (2023). Cultural distance and Chinese outbound tourism: Exploring the moderating effect of geographical distance. *Sustainability*, 15(2): 1689.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/su15021689>
- Rahim NAA, Siah YH, Tee XY, and Siah PC (2021). Smartphone addiction: Its relationships to personality traits and types of smartphone use. *International Journal of Technology in Education and Science*, 5(1): 128-140.
<https://doi.org/10.46328/ijtes.165>
- Rahmoun M and Baeshen YB (2021). Marketing tourism in the digital era and determinants of success factors influencing tourist destinations preferences. *Asia-Pacific Management Accounting Journal*, 16(1): 163-181.
<https://doi.org/10.24191/APMAJ.V16i1-07>
- Ren L (2022). Chinese tourists' changing behavior in package tours: The suppliers' account. *Tourist Studies*, 22(4): 328-347.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/14687976221129644>
- Russo V, Bilucaglia M, and Zito M (2022). From virtual reality to augmented reality: A neuromarketing perspective. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13: 965499.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.965499>
PMid:36160557 PMCID:PMC9501971
- Saura JR, Palacios-Marqués D, and Ribeiro-Soriano D (2023). Digital marketing in SMEs via data-driven strategies: Reviewing the current state of research. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 61(3): 1278-1313.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00472778.2021.1955127>
- Strauss A and Corbin J (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, USA.
- Tongco MD C (2007). Purposive sampling as a tool for informant selection. *Ethnobotany Research and Applications*, 5:147-158.
<https://doi.org/10.17348/era.5.0.147-158>
- Wahyuningsih W, Suparman S, Bachri S, and Muzakir M (2022). The marketing strategy for tourism industry post COVID-19 pandemic. In the Proceedings of the 2021 Tadulako's International Conference on Social Sciences, Atlantis Press, Palu, Indonesia: 1-4.
<https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.220707.001>
- Wen J, Kozak M, Yang S, and Liu F (2021). COVID-19: Potential effects on Chinese citizens' lifestyle and travel. *Tourism Review*, 76(1): 74-87.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-03-2020-0110>
- Wu L, Liu Y, Liu K, Wang Y, and Tian Z (2023). Analysis of tourist market structure and its driving factors in small cities before and after COVID-19. *ISPRS International Journal of Geo-Information*, 12(6): 243.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/ijgi12060243>
- Xu S and Campbell HA (2021). The Internet usage of religious organizations in Mainland China: Case analysis of the Buddhist association of China. *Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies*, 3(2): 339-346.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/hbe2.215>
- Yaqub RMS, Ali NS, Ramzan N, and Murad M (2022). Effect of social media influencers, YouTube marketing and tourism vlogging on green tourism promotion: Evidence from Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 10(4): 1301-1313. <https://doi.org/10.52131/pjhss.2022.1004.0289>
- Yu LL, Asur S, and Huberman BA (2015). Trend dynamics and attention in Chinese social media. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 59(9): 1142-1156.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764215580619>
- Zhang H, Cho T, and Wang H (2019). The impact of a terminal high altitude area defense incident on tourism risk perception and attitude change of Chinese tourists traveling to South Korea. *Sustainability*, 12(1): 7. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12010007>
- Zhang Z, Wei W, Zhu T, Zhou M, and Li Y (2022). New dimension on quality of life differences among older adults: A comparative analysis of digital consumption in urban and rural areas of China. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(22): 15203.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph192215203>
PMid:36429922 PMCID:PMC9691223
- Zhou X, Guo Y, Xie X, Liu C, and Zhang F (2022). The influence of a destination's red cultural atmospherics on tourists' confidence in Chinese culture. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13: 992125.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.992125>
PMid:36051205 PMCID:PMC9426675
- Zhu H and Deng F (2020). How to influence rural tourism intention by risk knowledge during COVID-19 containment in China: Mediating role of risk perception and attitude. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(10): 3514.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17103514>
PMid:32443430 PMCID:PMC7277590
- Zhu J, Siriphon A, Airey D, and Mei-lan J (2022). Chinese tourism diplomacy: A Chinese-style modernity review. *Anatolia*, 33(4): 550-563.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2021.1978515>
- Zvaigzne A, Mietule I, Kotane I, Sprudzane S, and Bartkute-Norkuniene V (2023). Digital innovations in tourism: The perceptions of stakeholders. *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*, 15(5): 528-537.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/WHATT-06-2023-0080>