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Making sense of distance

Mobility in staycation as a case of proximity tourism

Author: Alexandra Rosu

Supervisor: Hervé Corvellec

Examiner: Jan-Henrik Nilsson

Lund University, Sweden

Faculty of Social Sciences

Department of Service Management and Service Studies

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of this dissertation is to explore mobility in a proximity tourism context. Mobilities are being widely discussed in connection to society, everyday life, and tourism as a whole. Thus, it focuses on the staycation phenomenon as a case of proximity tourism. In particular on its representations in the digital media and as a local travel practice in Sweden. Considering that tourism implies mobility, the new mobilities paradigm presents interest for the study. It introduces a new way of thinking about tourism, as there is more to it than just movement between places. The concept of distance is subsequently central to its understanding.

Methods: The current study is of qualitative nature and regards social science research. On that account, a literature review on the staycation topic is presented. Afterwards, qualitative content analysis and netnography are employed as methods.

Results: The findings demonstrate the value of other understandings of distance in tourism, and moves beyond the physical distance. Moreover, the staycation phenomenon is challenging the tourist mobility, in particular the contrast between proximate and distant, home and away, host and guest. Different understandings of distance serve as indicators for it. In this context, romanticisation of staycation through the medium of detachment and environmental awareness is observed. It is found to be an essential factor in facilitating changes in tourist mobility, directed towards a more conscious and low-carbon consumption in tourism.

Implications: The study delivers contributions on both societal and theoretical levels. Thus, the findings are rather encouraging, with practical implications for local tourism marketing and regional development. Further research is suggested in order to establish how staycation and local travel has transformative potential directed towards reducing the vulnerability of the tourism industry.

Keywords: *tourism, mobility, distance, staycation, local travel*

Word count: 18 414

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Special thanks to all my friends for their kind words of support. Likewise, to my peer-review group for their helpful remarks.

Education was always valued in my family, hence I wish to say final words of gratitude to them. To my grandma for being the most outstanding role model of a strong woman and her emotional intelligence. To my mother for her unconditional kindness. To my aunt for her contagious optimism. To Jenny and Kristoffer for keeping my spirits up with all the laughs. To my beloved dog Akiko for her companionship over our family's video calls. Once more, I was fortunate that my family provided financial support throughout my studies. In such manner I could stay 100% focused on my education, and so I did.

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Helsingborg, May 2020

Alexandra

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Chapter I. Introduction

1. Mobility in tourism

Traveling across physical distances represents a conventional aspect ascribed to tourism (Robinson, 1976; Verbeek and Mommaas, 2008; Larsen and Guiver, 2013). Tourism implies mobility, therefore they are not mutually exclusive concepts that should be explored together (Coles, 2015). Mobility occurs as central, yet the meaning behind it is imperative. To begin with, getting an insight into the history of mobility is helpful to its understanding. This illustrates the significance that mobilities hold for this dissertation.

Cresswell (2006) presents a summary on it, where originally mobility was not common among the greater part of people. Those who were mobile were not trustworthy and attributed the status of outsiders, although this changed with the development of commercial activities and population growth (ibid). Eventually it all led to an increased regulation of movements, where these historical nuances shaped the future mobilities (Cresswell, 2012).

Moreover, increased general mobility is among the determinants that led to the growth of tourism as a social phenomenon (Robinson, 1976). In light of its historical context, it is natural for holiday-making to be closely linked to travel, or as Cresswell (2006: p.2) put it into words “the act of moving between locations”.

Research around mobility implies that it is a multidisciplinary subject in academia with a dynamic character (Cresswell, 2006). It is notable that research on mobility in tourism has a focus on (un)sustainability, and how it contributes to environmental degradation is a prevalent topic (Verbeek and Mommaas, 2008). Furthermore, Coles (2015) adds that the discourse on tourism and climate change seems to outweigh and dominate other topics.

Several premises regarding the significance of mobilities and its usage in tourism studies are outlined by Gale (2008), such as the acknowledgment of:

- tourism as a network of mobilities, more than just ‘tourists’ and ‘destinations’;
- the relevance of the neglected immobilities concept (including both who cannot and choose not to travel), that stands on the other extreme of mobilities;
- the recognition of different forms of mobilities;
- and the consequences and risks brought by it.

Coles (2015) also observes that most of the work on tourism mobilities tends to consider mainly the study of those mobile. Therefore, immobility as its counterpart is neglected in social research. Nevertheless, mobility and immobility are equally important. Positioned in a tourism context, what about those who prefer to engage in little mobility when vacationing?

Presently, society is facing hypermobility (Cohen and Gössling, 2015), where travel over long distances is associated with cosmopolitanism (Cresswell, 2006; Isenhour, 2012). Andriotis (2018) counters that argument by stating that mobility at shorter distances, together with minimal consumption are increasingly regarded as lifestyle changes. Therefore, this contradiction suggests that we are departing from prior associations of “underprivileged” often being attributed to immobility. The discussion on holidays at longer/shorter distances hints at another dichotomy of home/abroad.

Thus, this dissertation closely follows the new mobilities paradigm (Cresswell, 2006; Urry, 2007). Mobilities studies are central to learning how people construct the world around them by exhibiting different types of movements and adding importance in regards to both theoretical and empirical developments (Büscher and Urry, 2009; Hannam et al., 2014). It is also challenging some fundamental tourism “binary distinctions between home/away, work/leisure, host/guest, domestic/international and everyday life and extraordinary holidays” (Cohen and Cohen, 2015: p.11) — the reason why it is also regarded as suitable for this study. Implementing mobility concepts into studies concerning tourism (Moscardo et al., 2013) and its phenomena allows different perspectives of both societal and environmental relevance to be introduced.

2. Aim of the study and research questions development

The study focuses on the staycation phenomenon, that has been defined as the practice when one intends to have a holiday at home or in vicinity of domicile (Germann Molz, 2009; de Bloom et al., 2017). Staycation is, by definition “staying voluntarily”, and regarded in this paper as a domestic tourism market share. By evaluating its current context, it could be partially viewed as outbound tourism. This is because some may have their home near a country’s frontiers. Additionally, staycations are not viewed as a substitute for vacations, excluding it as an option for those with limited financial means.

Thus, staycation is a local travel practice, referred to as proximity tourism (Jeuring and Haartsen, 2017). It is noteworthy to point out that it appears to be different from other domestic tourism categories, e.g. distinct from second home tourism on account of ownership and frequency of visits. However, it does resemble day-tripping on account that the travelling person can choose to return and spend the night at home during a staycation.

Lately, there has been a growth of interest towards staycation as a tourism product, to which this dissertation makes a contribution. For instance, it is possible to book a staycation in Sweden with TUI, where the tour operator also provides information on what is a staycation, how to do it, and suggestions for a great staycation experience (TUI Sverige AB, n.d.).

Another company that allows booking a staycation through an website is The Staycation Guide (Recur AB d.b.a. Staycation.guide, n.d.), with a selection of local hotel offers in cities like Copenhagen, London, New York, Paris, San Francisco, Singapore, and Stockholm. Examples of staycation booking websites were identified in countries like Japan (STAYCATION Inc., 2020), Ireland (BargainBreaks.ie, 2020), and France (Staycation.co, n.d.). In addition, a range of hotels market staycation packages (see Appendix A). All things considered, the staycation phenomenon seems to contravene the conventional views on mobility in tourism so embedded in its traditional context and values.

Given the discussion above on the increasing interest towards staycation, the next research problems are elaborated. Thus, the study continues with the presentation of a practical problem and then a theoretical one. Finding a solution to the theoretical problem contributes further towards a clarification on the practical issue (Booth et al., 2008). In the current circumstances, some people are spending their holidays locally (Jeuring and Haartsen, 2017) and favour a staycation, where the number of staycation offers are increasing in popularity. It is also recognised how much the environment is affected through emissions caused by hypermobile lifestyles (Gössling et al., 2012), international tourism, and travelling long distances (Larsen and Guiver, 2013).

In this dissertation, I will build upon Sims et al. (2014) suggestions for additional studies positioned in social science, because “how and when people will choose to [...] avoid making unnecessary journeys is unknown” (in Sheller and Urry, 2016: p.20). Hence, the practical problem is being introduced through a short discussion on non-essential and excessive international travel. Once more, most studies disregard the relevance of those less mobile (Gale, 2008; Coles, 2015).

Moreover, Jeuring and Haartsen (2017) emphasise the importance of proximity tourism research in terms of the environmental impact that the tourism industry carries, including its unsustainable and accelerated development (Hall, 2009). Previous studies call for behavioural changes in the context of tourism mobility. Refraining from non-essential journeys and changes in attitudes are promising approaches in terms of climate change mitigation (Ram et al., 2013; Larsen and Guiver, 2013; Sheller and Urry, 2016). To my knowledge, no previous study has considered the staycation phenomenon as a study object and as a potential empirical source of data to address this issue. Acknowledging that its meaning is constructed by various actors, by those who promote it as a product and those who consume it — I consider a general perspective as suitable for this study.

By applying concepts grounded in the new mobilities paradigm, this paper *aims to explore the relationship between distance and tourist mobility in a proximity tourism context*. With this aim in mind, the study aspires to provide an answer to the following theoretical research question: *How does the meaning of distance within staycation as a case of proximity tourism challenge tourist mobility?* Three specific sub questions are defined and addressed further:

RQ (1) How are staycations depicted in the online media?

RQ (2) What are the drivers behind opting for practicing a staycation?

RQ (3) How is distance understood in the context of staycations?

Noteworthy is the position that social qualitative research is context-bound (Bryman, 2012). The process does “not take place in a vacuum” (ibid, p.5). It is rather dependable on certain factors and limitations, e.g. the chosen theoretical position and the scrutinised academic literature available on the topic, thus the research is influenced by it. Other factors are established in the selected methodological approach, preferred empirical material used, and are elaborated on later in this dissertation, together with the adopted epistemological and ontological positions. All factors characterise the way research is done, and thus are being influenced by the “training and personal values of the researcher” (ibid, p.7). World circumstances appertaining to Covid-19 outbreak are also considered while conducting the present study, as it does unintentionally affect it.

3. Outline of the paper

The current dissertation is composed of six chapters. After a succinct introduction to mobilities in tourism, a delineation of the proposed research issue is presented in *Chapter I*. This paper is structured as follows (see Figure 1) in order to attain the above mentioned aim of the study.

Chapter II presents a theoretical framework grounded in the new mobilities paradigm, the concept of distance and its stance in tourism. It also includes a review of current academic literature on staycation. This was achieved through a reflection on previous studies.

The prior positioned theoretical synopsis is subsequently central to the methodology section, encompassed in *Chapter III*. It discusses the research design and approach, and continues with data collection section and the relevant to the study methods: qualitative content analysis and netnography. A consideration of ethical issues and limitations of the study completes the chapter. The discussed methodology proves to be the most suitable approach for the current study, as it facilitates the answering of the proposed research questions.

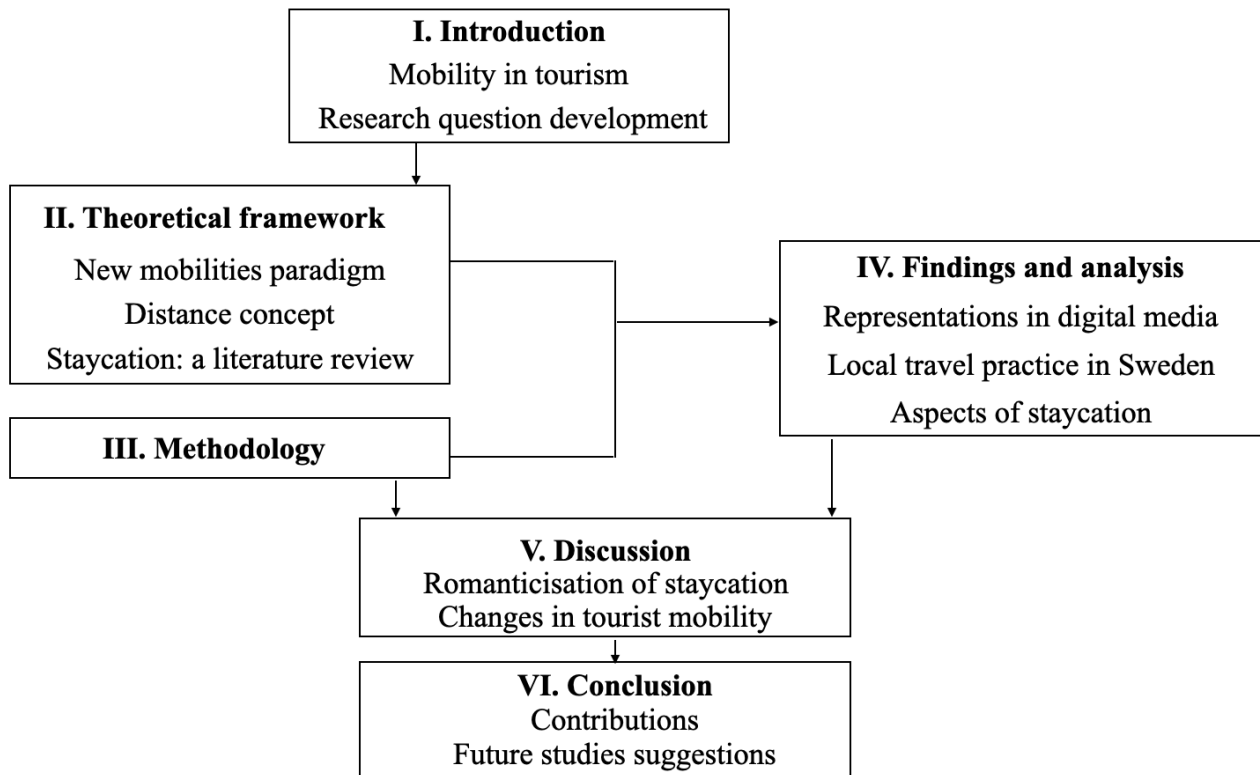


Figure 1. Illustration of the paper's structure. (Adapted from: Björklund and Paulsson, 2014)

Chapter IV covers the analysed empirical data and its findings. The findings prove to be imperative to fulfilling the research aim and bringing clarification in regards to the proposed research questions. Finally, the dissertation concludes with a discussion — *Chapter V*. A short overview of the theoretical and practical contributions brought by it, combined with further suggestions for future studies are developed in *Chapter VI*.

Chapter II. Theoretical framework

“Everything is related to everything else but near things are more related than distant things.”

Tobler (2004: p.304)

This chapter discusses relevant concepts that are part of a wider social theory context, specifically those of mobilities and distance. In addition, it presents a literature review on the staycation topic. The scope of this section is to serve as a conceptual basis, meant to aid in the understanding of phenomenon (Björklund and Paulsson, 2014). Subsequently, it is central to the methodology design, and to the analysis section.

1. New mobilities paradigm

As an epistemological framework that reformed the social sciences, the new mobilities paradigm is suitable for a variety of topics (Sheller and Urry, 2016). Tourism research is considered one of them (Moscardo et al., 2013). This paradigm introduces an ontological perspective as a necessary premise that adds value to the present study. It has been developed essentially by Urry (2007). Mobilities encompass ontological and epistemological relevance, because “these forms of movement show how the world comes to be seen, is sensed and experienced, seen and known about” (ibid, p.60).

Following Sheller and Urry (2006), the new mobilities paradigm position traditional social science as being fixed and respectively present a critique towards two current theories. The first being sedentarist theory, where distance is an out of the ordinary concept; and on its contrary — nomadic theory, where metaphors of fluidity are positive (ibid). E.g. the tourist is a mobile metaphor, giving the surrounding world a hedonistic purpose (Urry, 2007).

Moving beyond the mentioned theories has allowed for six theoretical influences to be deduced by Sheller and Urry (2006). One is considered as appropriate for this discussion, because it regards the “recentring of the corporeal body as an affective vehicle through which we sense place and movement, and construct emotional geographies” (ibid, p.216).

Thus, travel is more than just motion between places. Cresswell (2006) presents a simple interpretation of mobility as a movement that has ‘meaning’. It unfolds into different types of mobility in the new paradigm’s context (Urry, 2007: p.47): corporeal, objects, imaginative, virtual, and communicative travel.

Moreover, Sheller and Urry (2016) add that the paradigm has been considerably influenced by another three major social theories: complexity theory, transitions theory and social practice theory. The influence evoked from the transition theory and social practice theory brings further relevance to the present study. The proposed paradigm calls for change, where “social practices should be transformed or replaced by lower carbon intensity social practices” (ibid, p:13).

In spite of the fact that the paradigm is positioned as “new”, Cresswell (2010, 2012) recommends to be prudent with the choice of words. Movement has been a component of society for a long time. Therefore, what is new about the paradigm is a more serious approach towards mobility studies (ibid). Harrison (2017) presented a discussion that questioned it being a paradigm at all. Even so, it is considered an “addition to Western social science and tourism studies” (ibid, p.329).

Cresswell (2010) argues for a ‘holistic understanding’ of mobility through its theoretical separation into a network of physical movements, representations, and practices (see Figure 2). Cohen and Cohen (2015) approve on Cresswell’s classification, yet adjust these concepts to tourism studies. Movement is a network characterised by “etic” aspects and shows the perspective of the observer, while representation is “emic” and shows the perspective of those observed, both embedded in the actual practice (ibid).

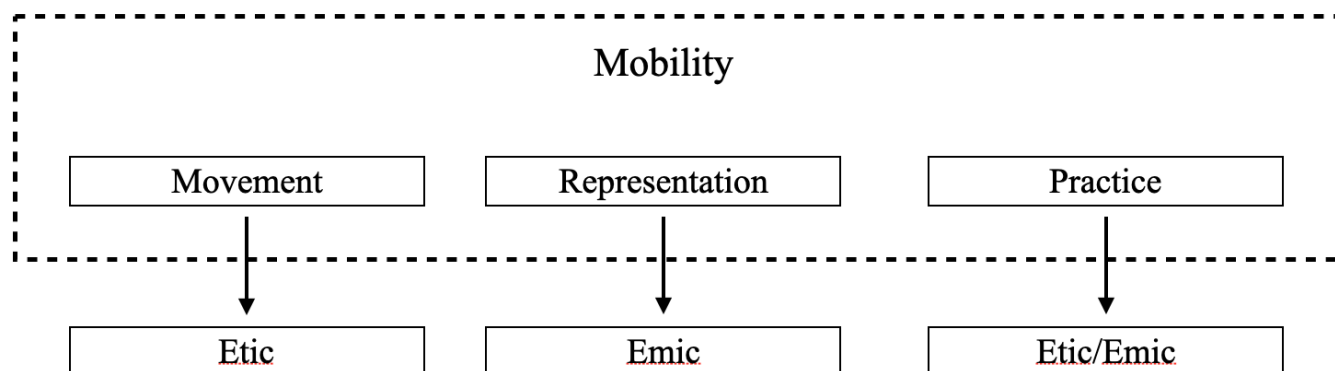


Figure 2. A holistic understanding of mobility. (Source: author’s elaboration based on Cresswell, 2010 and Cohen and Cohen, 2015)

Mobility of people must be understood alongside movement of ideas and things (Urry, 2007). In a given context, representations and advertisements harbour mobilities’ meaning (Cresswell, 2010), and can correspond or not to the later practice. Therefore, those can be contradictory. To clarify on the difference, representations depict expectations, while the practice suggests the fusion between representations, habits, and the experience of it (ibid).

Nevertheless, mobility is a question of accessibility and power. These beliefs are established in politics of mobility (Cresswell, 2010). Even so, it is presumed to be as mundane by those more advantaged as a circle of people (Cohen et al., 2015). Germann Molz (2009) also takes into consideration Cresswell's arguments for politics of mobility, by pointing out at how (im)mobility is shaped through current discourse. Cresswell (2010) argues that politics of mobility are articulated through six elements: force, velocity, rhythm, channels, experience, friction. Likewise, politics of representation are also constituted through discourse and undoubtedly have an impact on how the mobile practice is experienced (ibid). Considering that and adding the importance of mobility in the tourism sector, Moscardo et al. (2013) mentions that tourism studies should be integrated, because "tourism, everyday life and work are intertwined and inseparable" (p. 536). Gale (2008) adds to its weight through a discussion on the end of tourism as we know it, and the usual way tourism research is conducted.

To sum up, the new mobilities paradigm challenges the old way of understanding tourism, and eventually the knowledge we have about it (Gale, 2008; Coles, 2015). Urry (2007) claims that "this paradigm forces us to attend to this economic, social and cultural organization of distance, and not just to the physical aspects of movement" (p.54). Motion in time and space represent essentially the act of movement, as both concepts are central to it (Cresswell, 2006). However, there is much more to mobilities and not just a way to get from one point to another. Sheller and Urry (2006) add that through this it abandons the ontological distinction between destination and travellers.

Subsequently, the new mobility paradigm serves as a philosophical perspective for this dissertation, because it "enables us to question the very notion of distance, challenging its common reference as an abstract, natural, and measurable object" (Handel, 2018: p.474).

2. Distance as a "fluid" concept and its stance in tourism

Distance is a leading concept in mobility studies, but highly disregarded in social science (Urry, 2007; Handel, 2018). While investigating the literature on distance in tourism, studies that explore distance with a focus solely on its implications as a physical dimension are identified. Also, a brief literature review on distance is presented in a paper by Ahn and McKercher (2015). Several authors recognise the importance of the distance decay topic (McKercher and Lew, 2003; McKercher et al., 2008; Nyaupane and Graefe, 2008; Lee et al., 2012; McKercher, 2018). Prior studies validate the idea that travel is conventionally central to tourism, where travel involves covering long distances. Moreover, most studies have an international tourism context.

In contrast to that, let us reflect on distance in a proximity tourism context and how it influences travel choices. Certainly, early research on distance acknowledges the potential it carries in tourism studies. To expand on the thinking regarding distance, it seems to be an ambiguous concept with various meanings outlined by Hall (2005, 2008), such as:

- *Euclidian distance* (distant/proximate) — as in physical distance as it is, generally applied in studies considering its impact (McKercher et al., 2008);
- *time distance* (now/later) — relevant to the discussion on how time-space budget can have an effect on behaviour, as “how time is used is intimately bound up with human physical and mental needs, the constraints of the built environment and accepted societal timetables” (Thrift, 1977: p.413);
- *economic distance* (pricey/cheap) — entailed in the necessary costs;
- *gravity distance* (effortless/complicated) — also expressed in Lösch’s (1954) ‘law of minimum effort’ (cited in Hall, 2008: p.23) as travel behaviour seems determined by the connection between proximity and carefreeness;
- *network distance* (shortest/longest path) — also encountered in the literature as Manhattan/city block distance (Tobler, 2004) and route distance (Hall, 2008);
- *cognitive/perceived distance* — how physical distance is perceived in a subjective way can have an additional impact on tourist’s behaviour (Ankomah and Crompton, 1992);
- *social distance* and *cultural distance* — referring to the social (Thurot and Thurot, 1983) and cultural (Ahn and McKercher, 2015) contrast between the origin and the receiving destination;
- and *centre-periphery distance* — implying the economic, social, and cultural contrast between urban and sub-urban areas.

Ankomah and Crompton (1992) suggest that considering subjective distance might be a better approach when one tries to understand the reasoning behind travel choices. Findings of a study by Larsen and Guiver (2013) recognise that the understandings of distance can be relative. There are more dimensions beyond the physical distance that also play a role in the decision-making process and represents a determinant for holiday experiences (ibid). The subjectivity of distance seems to be translated into subjectivity of experiences. Considering the individuality of human beings where perceptions influence behaviour, as Handel (2018) emphasises — distance is socially constructed.

To clarify, the study does not attempt to depart from and reject the physical distance as well as its relevance. It instead attempts to add to the knowledge that it is perceived in an arbitrary way and subsequently affected by changing representations. Therefore it upholds the position that it is indeed socially constructed.

Distance stands on the contrary of proximity, both representing meaningful concepts in our social life (Larsen, 2013). Furthermore, Tobler (2004) argues that distance and proximity have various meanings determined by a considered context. Jeuring and Haartsen (2017) goes on and add a discussion on the distance/proximity dichotomy. The two concepts are “polarizing and relational, they attract and oppose, comfort and alienate, motivate and constrain, affecting touristic experiences and behavior in myriad ways” (ibid, p.123).

In tourism, distance is a closely related concept to mobility that may have multiple connotations, e.g. as in both physical distance and also (un)familiarity (Soria and Llurdés Coit, 2013; de Bloom et al., 2017). In their research on proximity tourism, Jeuring and Diaz-Soria (2017) also focus on the element of ‘unfamiliarity’ of tourist experiences in domestic destinations. This adds to the importance of what Larsen and Guiver (2013) referred to as “relative dimensions of distance” (p.971). Considering that, distance is at the centre of travel behaviour belonging to various tourist mobilities (Hall, 2005).

Ram et al (2013) introduces a model that targets tourist’s experiences, therefore suggestive of the connection between happiness in tourism and tourist mobility (see Figure 3). It seems like “any attempt to promote behavioral change in relation to sustainable tourist mobility behavior would face resistance because it may reduce happiness” (ibid, p. 1025).

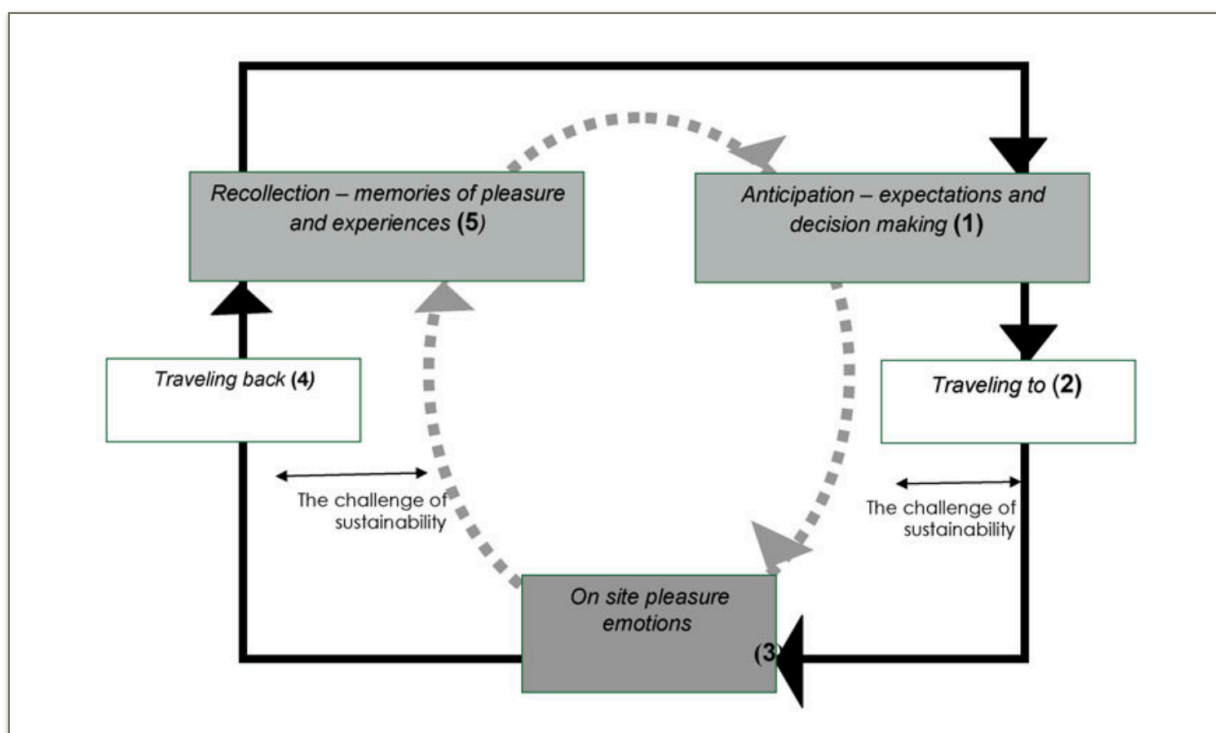


Figure 3. The tourism “happiness loop”. (Source: Ram et al., 2013)

However, Ram et al. (2013) considers that relative meanings of distance are factors that can affect the loop, and obstruct the initiation of desirable changes in tourist mobility. The model is considered relevant to this paper, because travel across distances is essential to tourism. Also relevant in terms that tourism is perceived as a hedonistic activity where we seek pleasure. The model is considered applicable, because the challenge of sustainability is encompassed in the travel factor and distance holds the potential to influence it.

Accordingly, distance contains potential and “often underappreciated impact on all aspects of tourism, extending well beyond the volume of tourist movements” (McKercher, 2018: p.905). Could different perceptions of distance, perhaps as human experiences (Handel, 2018), facilitate the happiness in tourism and overcome the challenges of sustainability?

Another implication of distance is illustrated by McKercher (2018), where distance is assumed to be affecting the segmentation of the tourist market (see Figure 4). It is especially evident in the comparison of long and short haul segments, where proximate trips to nearby destinations are believed to be available to a larger portion of travellers (ibid).

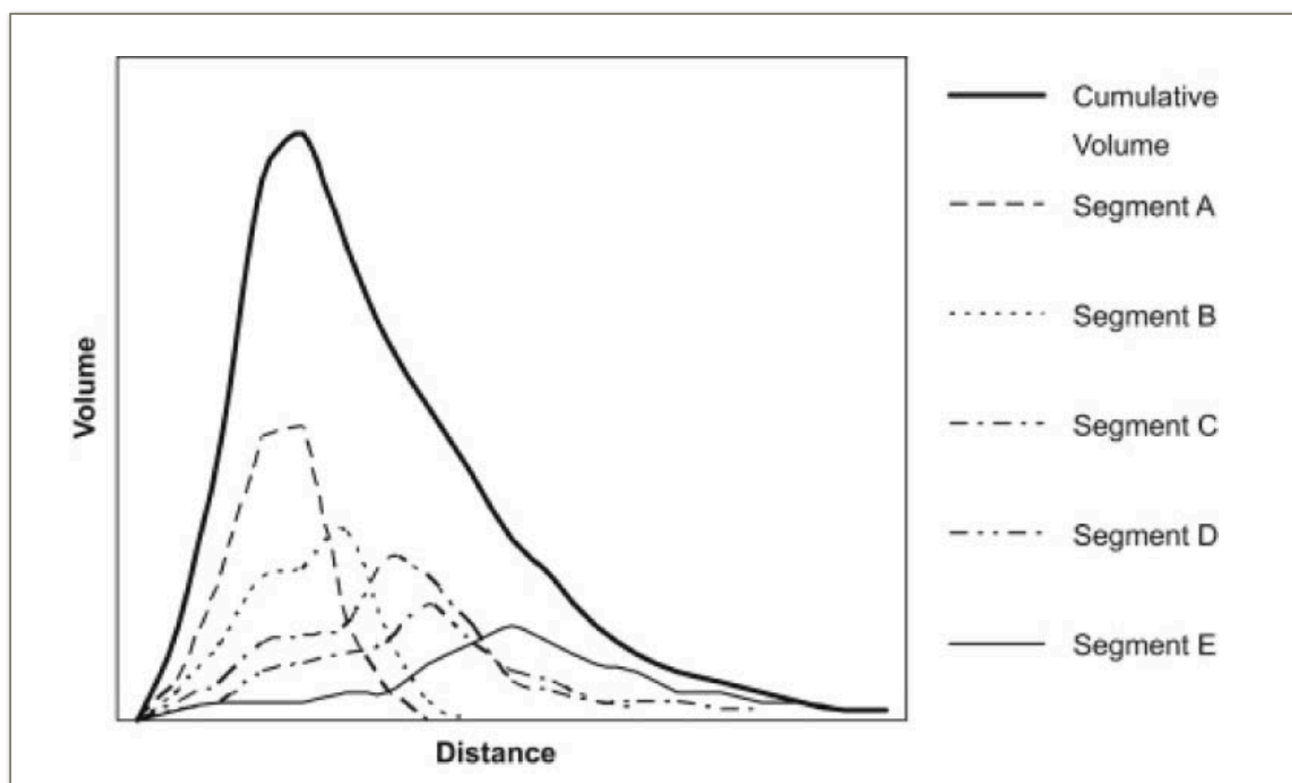


Figure 4. Segment transformation with distance. (Source: McKercher, 2018)

Previous studies identified on the topic of distance show the potential it carries as a concept. At last, Handel (2018) points out ontological perspectives on distance and how new constructed understandings of it can change its meaning. Therefore, the connection between distance and mobility in tourism continues to be a topic worth exploring. What follows is a literature review on the topic of staycation. The phenomenon is deemed relevant as a case of proximity tourism. Moreover, it suggests a contradiction between vacationing at home and away, where distance appears as central.

3. Introducing the staycation trend: a literature review

Let us reflect on the idea that so many dream about travelling the world, yet forget to explore their own surroundings. Is it less exciting to explore what is proximate, rather than long for faraway destinations instead? It seems that even scholars (Jafari, 1987; Pearce, 1996; Mazimhaka, 2007) acknowledge the fact that domestic tourism is presenting less interest compared to the strong support international tourism is receiving. But the global economic crisis of 2008 delivered some changes that had significant implications for tourism, where a growth in the domestic tourism category and new tourism initiatives were expected (Papatheodorou et al, 2010; Pawłowska and Matoga, 2016; Andriotis, 2018).

Consequently, a phenomenon defined as staycation started the same year predominantly in the UK (Webber et al., 2010; Coles and Hall, 2011) and in the USA (Germann Molz, 2009). It eventually gained popularity and expanded further throughout the world. If it was introduced as a neologism in tourism vocabulary (Hay, 2010), now staycation is quite a buzzword. Initially, in a study by Germann Molz (2009), staycations were represented through stillness and as ‘undesirable’ in the media, “a form of consumer mobility or as a failure of mobility” (p.282). In this manner it was demonstrated how representations of mobility are constructed, where immobility was ‘incorrect’ and ‘abnormal’ (ibid). In support to that, Cohen and Gössling (2015) note that both corporeal and imaginative travel are promoted by social media, also what Cohen and Cohen (2012) reasons as mediatization. It is clear that media plays an important role, for instance by aiding in the creation of tourism products (Pawłowska and Matoga, 2016), and by facilitating the movement of information and images (Hannam et al., 2006).

Picturing a world where hypermobility is glamorised (Cohen and Gössling, 2015), it is understandable how media and the web had a role in giving meaning to staycations. On one side it was through tips and ‘helpful how-to articles’, and through ‘stillness’ and home chores on the other (Germann Molz, 2009: p. 281-282). Indeed, it can be regarded as an (un)attractive vacation scene due to the subjectivity of choices (Jeuring and Haartsen, 2017), where experiences aid tourists in constructing the meaning of places (Jeuring and Diaz-Soria, 2017).

On a more positive tone, it can be implied that the phenomenon had certain benefic impacts on the domestic leisure tourism sector. An example being, it provided favourable circumstances for agri-tourism activities employed by local farmers in the UK (Bosworth and McElwee, 2014) and for activities in rural areas (Pawłowska and Matoga, 2016). Beneficial to the industry as well, Bömkes (2011) points out that promoting and practicing staycations could increase hotel's room occupancy through proper advertisements. Seemingly, the same reason why the French start-up "Staycation" chose Sunday as the optimal day for local hotel deals, available for booking just days before: affordable luxurious stays on a discount (Hamladji, 2018).

Considering the relative novelty of the term "staycation", it is noteworthy to point out that not all previous studies considered relevant for this paper mention the word "staycation" itself. Some studies possibly regard it as domestic/local travel, or to what Jeuring and Haartsen (2017) referred to as proximity tourism — where the geographical range is narrowed to local trips close to ones' domicile. As discussed in the introductory section, staycation is referred to as a case of proximity tourism.

In addition, Hay (2010) suggests that new words in tourism might not represent actual new segments of tourism. It would be incorrect to assume that people were not taking nearby getaways or planning cheap weekend escapes before the emergence of staycations. This thought is especially to the point if considering the similarity between staycations and day-trips.

Building on from the idea that staycation is presumably assigning new meanings to travel, a similarly emerging concept of slow tourism stands up. For instance, Dickinson et al. (2011) discusses travel beyond it as a way for movement, but as an essential component of the experience. Slow tourism "represents a way of consumer thinking about tourism, where there is a synergy between experiential aspects of travel and, for some tourists, discourses about the environment, in particular climate change" (ibid, p. 282). In addition, slow tourism "advocates travelling slowly and locally" (Germann Molz, 2009: p.270) and revolves around the element of pace.

Contrastingly, staycation phenomenon has the element of distance at its centre, a concept already discussed in detail. However, taking into consideration that a staycation can include local activities (Pawłowska and Matoga, 2016), e.g. cycling trips, concerts, visits to museums and parks — people are engaging and actively participating in such activities quite often. Moreover, cycling, walking, and local travel are also practices appertaining to slow tourism (Dickinson et al., 2011).

While discussing the possible development of staycations, Bosworth and McElwee (2014) mentioned that swapping vacations abroad for local holidays is an essential decision required from tourists. Another would be acknowledging the cost effectiveness (Germann Molz, 2009; Pawłowska and Matoga, 2016) of domestic low priced trips. Besides economic reasons, Isenhour (2012) adds perceptions

of sustainability and environmental awareness through a discussion on the Swedish staycation. Climate conscious Swedes seem more motivated to change their travel behaviour (ibid). It is especially relevant since recently Andriotis (2018) discussed staycation along degrowth inspired tourism. Moreover, Sørensen et al. (2019) regarded it as an evolving circular economy tourist practice.

Ceron and Dubois (2007) posit a forward-looking view regarding the future of tourism, where an increase in local leisure that will counterbalance the number of trips abroad is a must. Theuns (2013) suggests that it could indicate a downside and bring tourism to an end, since the staycation pattern implicates the transition from international towards regional. However, in the context of estimated growth of international tourism, having a vacation in the proximity of home could represent a shift in attitudes when it comes to holidaying (Jenkins, 2015).

Nonetheless, staycations still represent planned time-off intended for recreation. Having a staycation is also regarded as a more valuable experience than visiting numerous locations and covering long distances just for the sake of tourism — where more is not better (Andriotis, 2018). This is especially relevant on account that tourism is not a necessity, but envisaged as a hedonistic pleasure-seeking activity (Becken, 2017). Moreover, both staycations and vacations provide practically the same benefits concerning one's overall wellness state (de Bloom et al., 2017). Even so, it seems that people seek for new ways to escape their usual routine, as Ram et al (2013) points out — search for happiness through tourism.

To conclude, this chapter positioned staycation in the context of mobilities and distance. The new mobilities paradigm calls for a new way of understanding tourism mobility, and distance stands as a central concept. This is regarded as relevant for the reason that vacationing at home appears to be in contrast with the traditional way of vacationing. Thus, staycation is seemingly assigning new meanings to distance, respectively to travel and tourism.

Chapter III. Methodology

Subsequent to the previous chapters, the methodology section starts with the introduction of research design, together with the choice of approach for attaining the study aim (Björklund and Paulsson, 2014). It continues with detailed records on data collection and analysis. The chapter concludes with a presentation of ethical considerations and limitations.

1. Research philosophy and design

The earlier theoretical discussion on mobilities as a new approach calls for equally specific research philosophy and design in line with an abductive reasoning (Bryman, 2012; Björklund and Paulsson, 2014). The study is of qualitative nature and regards social science research. Therefore, it takes interpretivist symbolic interaction as an epistemological position, and constructionism as an ontological stance (Bryman, 2012), suggesting that the meaning of constructed actions are being interpreted. It is deemed as important because the world is seen as socially constructed and continually changeable.

Prior to discussion on the methods used and reasoning behind it, the research aim is restated: *to explore the relationship between distance and tourist mobility in a proximity tourism context.*

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, four criteria of assessment recognised by Bryman (2012: p.390) are adhered to: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility is achieved through the application of triangulation technique (ibid), specifically via diversity of methods and material used during the research.

The first implemented method is qualitative content analysis, which allows secondary data collection. Next, netnography is considered as appropriate. It is a method that permits primary data collection, especially if considering “the impressive range of social facts available on the Internet” suitable for qualitative research (Silverman, 2013: p.34). Furthermore, the collected information is determined as diversified data consisting of text, notes, images, and video, leading to what Costello et al. (2017: p.8) refers to as data triangulation, meant to also add trustworthiness to it. In order to obtain transferability, Bryman (2012) mentions generating abundant notes regarding the studied object. For this reason, reflective notes are taken while conducting the netnography, and are included in the gathered material.

The data used for this paper will be stored for one year after the completion of the study, thus adding dependability. This criterion is also guaranteed through constant supervision sessions, combined with peer-reviews provided by colleagues.

2. Data collection

The below table (see Table 1) is designed to ease the visualisation of the data collection process. As the next step essential to a research (Bryman, 2012), a more detailed data collection outline for both methods follows it.

Table 1. Data collection outline

Method	Amount	Data type
Qualitative content analysis	N = 50 (cca 44000 words)	Online articles: 26 blog entries, 9 news articles, 5 guides, 7 digital magazines, and 3 staycation lifestyle websites
Netnography	N = 200 posts	Online community: 1 Facebook group: “Hemestertips” + reflective notes

Considering the above mentioned aim of this study, qualitative content analysis is employed as a method. Content analysis provides “replicable and valid methods for making inferences from observed communications to their context” (Krippendorff, 1980: p.69). It is also regarded as unobtrusive and flexible (Bryman, 2012). These interpretations are meant to facilitate the understanding of constructed representations appertaining to the studied phenomenon. As a method, it is acknowledged as suitable for social science, including tourism research (Hannam and Knox, 2005; Stepchenkova et al., 2009; Camprubí and Coromina, 2016).

The secondary data collected from the web comprised of written text is further analysed. The gathered content (N=50) is easily accessible by and addressed to the general public. It consists of online articles (see Appendix B), such as blog entries, news articles, guides, magazines, and lifestyle websites. Google search engine was used to collect the data, by using the following two keywords: “staycation” and “staycationer”.

Subsequently, all the retrieved texts address the same topic — staycation. The content was produced by different groups, those who offer it, those who engage in it, and also other content creators.

All search results were in the English language, but a selection for the analysis was implemented as follows. Online dictionaries, booking websites, and websites/posts intended to solely market a specific hotel/product were disregarded. Articles regarding staycations based on travel restrictions from the Covid-19 outbreak were also excluded, due to the fact that it was not the scope of the study to observe the staycation phenomenon in a health crisis context.

A further understanding of the staycation trend and its practice are gathered through the second qualitative method proposed, netnography. Introduced by Kozinets (2002), “netnography is ethnography adapted to the study of online communities” (p.61). Heinonen and Medberg (2018) state that netnography is fast, simple, and flexible, especially if combining it with other methods, e.g. qualitative content analysis considering the present study. On account of the understanding that staycation is a rather new phenomenon, “between recognition of an opportunity for product or service innovation and the allocation of significant resources to its development — nonintrusive (or observational) netnographic techniques can facilitate the garnering of rich market research data” (Costello et al., 2017: p.4). This has allowed the collection of primary data through the analysis of a Facebook group, where posts and images regarding staycation tips in Sweden are shared, and communication between its members is permitted.

Considering the localised character of staycation as being practiced in proximity of ones’ home, it is rational that such communities would be narrowed to regions/countries. In this case, Sweden is favoured. Another reason being the current world situation, consisting of lockdowns due to the Covid-19 outbreak. The government in Sweden is not implementing forced lockdown on its residents. Therefore, less impact is expected on the study due to present circumstances. Moreover, it is the only identified group that could provide insights useful for the scope of this dissertation.

Kozinets (2002) recommends following certain steps when conducting a netnography: entrée, data collection and analysis, ethical concerns of the research, and review provided by members. It is also a flexible method that can be adjusted to the needs of the study, a point discussed by Costello et al. (2017). In order to maintain the role of a covert participant (Bryman, 2012), the initial entrée together with the final member check were disregarded. Particularly, since it is a public group where anyone can join and posts are visible, becoming a member was a simple start.

At the moment of the study, the group dedicated to staycationers in Sweden has 952 members. They can be characterised as staycation enthusiasts who exchange knowledge and tips on ‘where’ and ‘how’, but “netnographic sampling can be purposive rather than representative and therefore be inclusive of otherwise marginalized or hard to reach groups” (Costello et al., 2017: p.5). The selected group was created in May 2017 initially under a different name — “Deedsters - gruppen för alla användare av Deedster” and has changed several times. It was entirely dedicated to staycation later in March 2019 —

“Hemestertips” (Hemestertips, 2020). That is the reason why the final amount of retrieved and analysed posts (N=200) is limited to those written by the groups’ members between March 2019 and April 2020. The collected data also includes reflective notes and observations (see Appendix C) made by the author concerning the online community.

Therefore, both methods use purposive sampling for collecting the data suitable for qualitative research (Bryman, 2012). The selection of data was aimed at identifying material and communities with regards to the studied phenomenon — staycation. As expressed earlier, finding a substantial online community was somewhat challenging.

3. Data analysis

After collecting the necessary data, the study proceeds with data reduction by exercising a thematic analysis via coding (Bryman, 2012). This is done in order to fulfil the aim of the study, essentially by adopting and following an investigation design (see Figure 5).

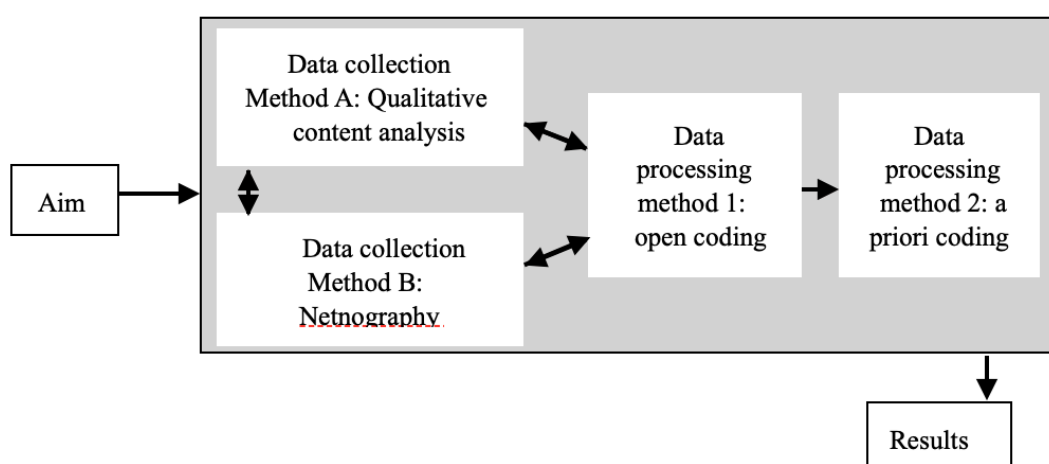


Figure 5. Investigation design. (Adapted from: Björklund and Paulsson, 2014)

Considering that there are two main coding techniques “emergent and a priori”, the study follows recommendations from a combined approach suggested by Blair (2015: p.16). The approach includes both techniques, and is claimed to be suitable for qualitative data research. To clarify, emergent codes are created during the analysis, while in an a priori technique codes are embedded in theory, set and preceding the process of data analysis (ibid). Combined coding proves to be a more efficient technique used to answer the following research questions.

Adopting the mentioned approach, open coding is applied first during the analysis of data collected through qualitative content analysis. Emergent categories are derived from the examined text. This is done in order to answer *RQ (1) How are staycations depicted in the online media?*, to see if and how representations of staycation changed compared to the discussion in a paper by Germann Molz (2009).

To ease the process for netnography, the posts were copied into a separate document and further analysed through manual coding again. Analysis is done in order to answer *RQ (2) What are the drivers behind opting for practicing a staycation?*.

Afterwards, the data derived from *RQ (1)* and *(2)* is integrated and further used to answer *RQ (3) How is distance understood in the context of staycations?*. The study proceeds with predetermined codes, consisting of the meanings of distance (Hall, 2008): Euclidian distance, time distance, economic distance, gravity distance, network distance, cognitive/perceived distance, social distance, cultural distance, and centre-periphery distance.

Manual assigning of the codes is preferred to coding software. This is due to the qualitative nature of the paper, following the rationale presented again by Blair (2015). Specifically, the study refrains from using a software tool in order to avoid errors associated with it. Moreover, it is considered more suitable for studies applying grounded theory (ibid), which is not the case of this paper.

4. Ethical considerations

“Ethics of encounters” (Pryke et al., 2003: p. 105) are taken into consideration while carrying out the research. Bryman (2012) also illustrates specific ethical considerations ascribed to research conducted online, especially “the distinction between public and private space on the Internet” through “anonymity and confidentiality” (p.679-680). While conducting the present study, no informed consent is attempted, due to the fact that all collected data has been considered as openly available and visible to the general public.

Nevertheless, in order to protect their anonymity, the names assigned to Facebook source posts are not given away during the discussion of the presented findings. Finally, the paper intends to be reported in an ethical way. It follows guidance from Booth et al (2008), by trying to be objective, accounting for genuine results, and acknowledging the subsequent limitations.

5. Limitations

Naturally, qualitative research and the employed methods may come with disadvantages. Bryman (2012: p.405-406) holds on to a viewpoint that approaching research from a qualitative perspective can result in general difficulties achieving objectivity, replicability, generalisation, and transparency. Yet the study attempts to address it as follows.

In regards to the methods used, Bryman (2012: p.306-307) mentions that content analysis is dependable to a great extent on the authors' subjective thematising and interpretation. Therefore, confirmability and objectivity of the study are also threatened by the authors' reflexivity (Pryke et al., 2003; Bryman, 2012). Intrinsic knowledge and values can influence the results to some extent.

Netnography is recognised to involve certain limitations as well. Specifically, by having a narrow focus, the online material risks a lack of authenticity and data quality (Heinonen and Medberg, 2018). A similar argument is brought up by Kozinets (2002), who implies that as an outcome, it might be problematic to generalise the results to other communities. Considering that the member check step is not completed, it affects the credibility of the study (Bryman, 2012). Another anticipated shortcoming of using netnography as a method is the fact that the Facebook group (Hemestertips, 2020) was initiated with a different scope by a start-up that promotes sustainable living. Therefore the posts could be influenced by that. In order to overcome this, only texts posted after the group re-directed towards staycation are retrieved.

Noteworthy to mention that identifying an online community of staycationers was rather complicated, presumably due to the developing nature of the phenomenon. The main language used among the community members is Swedish. To reduce this limitation, Google's automatic translation tool is used combined with the author's personal knowledge. Since both methods use digital material, it is worth noting that retrieved online data includes highly changeable content. That involves the chance of it being removed by the content creator at anytime. Thus, compromising replicability and transparency of the study (Bryman, 2012).

Chapter IV. Findings and analysis

In this chapter, the collected data is processed through the medium of previously discussed theoretical framework (Björklund and Paulsson, 2014). Findings prove to be imperative to fulfilling the research aim and bringing clarification in regards to proposed research questions. This is accomplished by following Cresswell's (2010) separation of mobilities into three theoretical elements: the movement, representations attributed to it, and the actual practice.

The first sub-chapter introduces six categories as current representations of staycation in digital media. An additional eight categories of staycation as a local travel practice in Sweden are developed in the second sub-chapter. Representations and practices are then thematised, and merged into six aspects of staycation discussed in the third and respectively last sub-chapter. Finally, the aspects of staycation are examined in relation to distance and its various understandings, a classification defined by Hall (2008). The results are described as follows.

1. Representations of staycation in digital media

The findings cast a new light on how staycations are represented. The following is required in order to answer *RQ (1) How are staycations depicted in the online media?* — because it is necessary to have a clear vision on the (un)attractiveness of staycations as a domestic tourism experience. Respectively, this sub-chapter reveals emerging categories from qualitative content analysis. It enables six categories to develop as appropriate representations of staycation: (1) affordable luxury and cheap alternative, (2) help and giving something back, (3) immediacy through local travelling, (4) distancing, (5) personal development, (6) sustainable alternative.

There are always two sides of a story: positive and negative. Indeed, a couple of articles that present staycation from a rather negative angle are noticed during the analysis *“it's a way for people to convince themselves they are doing something when they are really just staying home from work — a little mental maneuver to convince them they are on holiday”* (Appendix B, #10). Some are even somewhat sarcastic *“Why would you go abroad, with all the awful flights and nightmare early starts, just so you can lie in the sun on white sand next to warm, clear blue sea?”* (Appendix B, #35). Nevertheless, the majority are actually quite positive and encouraging the trend.

Therefore, when comparing the visualisation of staycation embedded in the current online narratives with those found in a previous study conducted by Germann Molz (2009), it can be implied that its meaning changed over time. The main categories suggested were “‘disdain’, ‘doubt’, ‘duty’, and ‘helpful how-to’s’” (ibid, p.281). However, by applying the open coding technique, the findings have different key categories emerging, where staycations are wrapped up in new media induced representations.

Representation 1: Affordable luxury and cheap alternative

Considering good budgeting and planning, a staycation is portrayed to be much cheaper than a usual vacation abroad: *“a lot of people paying off bills for sumptuous spas and seahorse snorkeling months after the actual trip [...] you can enjoy your time off without blowing off your finances [...] you can go the budget-friendly staycation route”* (Appendix B, #17). As also pointed out in the introductory discussion, a growing number of hotels offer staycation deals and discounts: *“sometimes, all we need is a hotel to get into vacation mode”* (Appendix B, #50).

This sounds promising as a great alternative, without costing too much, and hint at luxurious opportunities: *“yes, luxury has a price tag, but hey — it’s just for one night [...] think about all the money you’re saving on gas and travel expenses! Want to make the most of your five-star staycation? Check in as early as possible and take advantage of every complementary service the hotel offers”* (Appendix B, #18).

Apparently, saving on costs will allow to have a higher budget for splurging: *“since you’re not paying for airfare or spending a large amount of money on fuel, a staycation is a good excuse to spring for an indulgent experience that otherwise is too expensive”* (Appendix B, #40); such as self-care and other preferences: *“that’s why your staycation should include a spa day, whether it’s a relaxing massage, facial, time spent in steam rooms and saunas, or all of the above”* (Appendix B, #30).

Various segments of tourists with various budget types recognise it as a good substitute, quick and convenient, e.g. families, both with children and just couples: *“with its family-friendly facilities, proximity to tourist attractions, and easy access to complimentary Wi-Fi and breakfast, it came as no surprise that hotels are the preferred staycation option among Singaporeans”*(Appendix B, #11). Apart from hotel stays, families can opt for other affordable options: *“family bonding and bowling go hand in hand! Who can resist a little friendly competition? Going to a bowling alley during the middle of the week can be surprisingly affordable. Did you know many bowling alleys even let kids bowl for free?”* (Appendix B, #15).

By replacing one usually expensive trip abroad with multiple getaways during the year, staycations is a good alternative for those with both limited available time and money: *“This is why a quick road trip or short flight across the country for the weekend can offer a good alternative for the time-poor [...] For some, the option of international travel simply doesn’t exist because of the costs involved. Even with cheap flights and a great hotel rate, other costs like car rental push expenses up. So instead of saving all year for one expensive trip, travellers are finding they can take multiple refreshing getaways and enjoy it just as much”* (Appendix B, #19); *“Rather than one large trip during the summer, the same amount of time “away” can be enjoyed as periodic mini-vacations sprinkled throughout the year”* (Appendix B, #25).

It appears also as a hassle-free option: *“staycations are as popular as ever, with many people opting to enjoy their time off at home and skip the hassle (and cost) of a traditional vacation”* (Appendix B, #42), and with less arrangements to take care of *“yet, the hassle of planning a holiday – booking of leave, travelling back and forth the airport, half the excitement fizzles away just thinking of everything you have to go through. But what if there was a way to go on vacation without leaving the country?”* (Appendix B, #46).

Sometimes important arrangements such as concerning companion animals: *“it’s much easier (and cheaper) to travel with a dog in a car than on a plane, so many staycationers will choose to bring their pets”* (Appendix B, #14), making it a pet friendly vacation.

Representation 2: Help and giving something back

A staycation does not seem to be about “duty” anymore, but rather help: *“get involved with a local community project, even for a day. You’ll come away feeling better for having given something back”* (Appendix B, #9); *“if you want to spend your downtime making a difference in the world, why not plan your staycation around helping others? Check for local volunteer opportunities and participate in one together. This could be anything from tidying up a local park to preparing and serving meals at a shelter to working on a house with Habitat for Humanity”* (Appendix B, #27).

Volunteer opportunities are suggested as a way to pay back the community: *“sign up to volunteer at a soup kitchen, homeless shelter, library, or other community program during your staycation. Giving back helps remind us all of how much we have, so it’s a great way to spend a little bit of your time off”* (Appendix B, #3); *“break out of the norm and go help others with your time. There are many people who need help right now — including people in your own community”* (Appendix B, #10). This all adds to the value of a vacation spent in proximity of home.

Additionally, it helps local business owners stay afloat: *“by spending your valuable vacation at home, you can help sustain your local businesses and natural habitats throughout the year”* (Appendix B, #9), *“this is a biggy for me and I try in my daily life to support my local economy by shopping from local producers when possible. I also try and do this whenever I travel to support the economy of the place I am visiting by again shopping from local producers and by also opting for independently owned boutique hotels”* (Appendix B, #32).

Helping not only from the staycationer’s perspective, but also business to business and business to society: *“so co-promoting with other local businesses is a great way to gather the attention of more local travelers [...] Again, not only will this benefit independent hoteliers, but neighboring businesses and the community as a whole”* (Appendix B, #13).

Local hotels necessitate to increase off-season room occupancy and decrease seasonality: *“Staycation bookings help properties reduce reliance on seasonality”* (Appendix B, #14). It seems to be the perfect strategy recommended to hotels to achieve it: *“beyond dropping room rates there are more resourceful ways to boost reservations — marketing your property to staycationers is one of them”* (Appendix B, #14).

The popularity of staycations as a tourism product is suggestive to why an increasing number of hotels are trying to take advantage of its popularity and involve domestic travellers: *“hotels that position themselves as prime staycation destinations will gain an increasing advantage in the coming years”* (Appendix B, #25).

Representation 3: Immediacy through local travelling

While boosting local economy, it gives the impression that it increases recognition for the local environment: *“staying at home for vacation means you’ll likely develop a better appreciation for your local environment. You may discover things you never knew were there, which is always exciting”* (Appendix B, #9).

It is suggested to pretend being a tourist and (re)discovering local cultural activities, museums, hiking activities, shows, cinema, and exploring other places that usually are visited by tourists: *“somebody probably visits the place you live—or places within an hour or two—on their vacation”* (Appendix B, #7), *“their own country is also a tourist destination with its own unique history and natural beauty”* (Appendix B, #19).

Beneficial is also the fact of familiarity with the region and language: *“you don’t have to struggle with the unfamiliar. You won’t have to cope with the unfamiliarity of new surroundings, or another*

language, or different time zone” (Appendix B, #22); *“the strangeness of different cultures or languages, figuring out foreign currencies or worrying about lost luggage can take a toll”* (Appendix B, #34).

The aspect of immediacy attributed to staycation is portrayed as positive: *“you can maximize your time off. Traveling far means more time getting there and less time actually relaxing”* (Appendix B, #22). A break can be taken when needed: *“sometimes when you need a vacation, you need a vacation, and you need it NOW! No if, ands, or buts. The beauty of a staycation is that when you decide you need a break, you can actually take it hours later”* (Appendix B, #50).

Long-haul travelling itself can be weary: *“travel stress can quickly quash the bliss”* (Appendix B, #7), *“travelling can sometimes be exhausting. Have you ever felt that you needed a vacation after a vacation?”* (Appendix B, #8). A staycation seems to exclude the travel stress, such as packing, making arrangements for the time away: *“the time spent on planning and traveling drains your personal energy. Booking flights and hotels, packing, unpacking, traveling time, etc, all deplete your mental and physical energies”* (Appendix B, #16), and *“the stress of travel sometimes defeats the purpose of vacation”* (Appendix B, #50).

The distant became dreadful and stressful, while the proximate is all of a sudden full of things to explore: *“even though I have lived here for 34 years, there are a number of museum, churches, restaurants, bars that I have never visited and certainly streets that I have never walked down”* (Appendix B, #32). Moreover, a marketing campaign using lookalike destinations proves that local travelling can be just as breathtaking as going abroad: *“German Rail (Deutsche Bahn) has used photos of picturesque German locations that mirror famous foreign tourist destinations to encourage Germans to holiday in their home country”* (Appendix B, #23).

Representation 4: Distancing

In the provided narratives, physical distance is represented as tiresome, and the feeling of detachment is more important: *“you’re not far from home, but the point of a staycation is to feel as if you got away, and staying at a high-end hotel is a good way to do that”* (Appendix B, #40).

“Unplugging” is a must-do, where detoxing from media is one of the features of staycation: *“I did unplug from the Internet and my calendar, and it was, of course, freeing not to look at a screen”* (Appendix B, #7); *“a staycation is the perfect way to really ‘switch off’ from a day job”* (Appendix B, #19), *“don’t forget the goal: to unplug, unwind and enjoy the company of your loved ones in the moment”* (Appendix B, #27).

Though it might be off-putting for some to totally disconnect: *“just make sure you’re able to put the rest of the world (emails, calls, chores) on hold for a bit so you can actually feel like you’re taking a break from the hustle and bustle of life”* (Appendix B, #27) , *“the fresh air, exercise, and lack of email will do wonders for your body and your mind”* (Appendix B, #18).

As the main goal is to take a break from the usual routine and hectic life, mundane errands are left aside: *“if you love to garden, spending a morning perusing plants is great. Dropping off the dry-cleaning? Not so much”* (Appendix B, #7), *“when you’re on a real vacation, you don’t cook, clean, or do chores. Your staycation should be no different. Hire a cleaning service, send out your laundry, and order in or dine out to feel like you’re on vacation in your own living room”* (Appendix B, #30).

Moreover, *“travel is more than moving from place to place [...] move out of your mental comfort zone and travel to new ideas”* (Appendix B, #10), and *“let’s be real: An escape is an escape, whether you fly around the world or stay here in NYC [...] A staycation is an excuse to check out and recharge without feeling bad about it”* (Appendix B, #50).

Trying new perspectives is also mentioned: *“taking photos of the familiar will help you see things in a new light”* (Appendix B, #7), *“experience your home city from a different point of view, getting to know new areas and neighborhoods”* (Appendix B, #8), *“even for places you’ve been to before, a new mindset will bring you new experiences”* (Appendix B, #16), *“you can take a helicopter ride or a private boat tour, for example, to see where you live from a different perspective”* (Appendix B, #40).

Even redecorating the house or apartment could be an idea: *“buy a new piece of art or furniture, add a few succulents to your windowsill, or Kondo out your closet — trust, it just might be the cleanse you need!”* (Appendix B, #5).

Representation 5: Personal development

Regarding the escape of the usual routine, staycations imply doing something different and exotic: *“try to do something different each day to keep things interesting. Why not make a game out of it? Promise yourself each day to try one new type of ethnic food, or see a movie from a different country, or visit one new part of town. Travel is a great personal development tool. It’s about experiencing new things and trying something different. Doing it home still captures that essence”* (Appendix B, #10).

Or to enjoy something that was always postponed: *“visit free museums, bookstores and that coffee shop you’re always meaning to check out”* (Appendix B, #15). Things such as cooking classes: *“you probably have a bucket list of to-dos that you just never have the time for (cooking classes, anyone?). Now’s the perfect time to dust off the list and start checking those boxes”* (Appendix B, #5), *“great time*

to explore that hobby you never seem to have time for” (Appendix B, #50), or gym/yoga: *“take a yoga retreat in your living room [...] all you need is a couple of blankets or towels and the right instructional video”* (Appendix B, #1), *“recreate at least part of those lush yoga retreats in faraway locations without leaving your living room”* (Appendix B, #3).

Narratives suggest that there is more free time for learning new skills as well: *“focus on hobbies and personal enjoyment, relax and recharge, or take a short course and learn new skills”* (Appendix B, #19), *“you can catch up on your stay-at-home hobbies or interests that you don’t have time for during the hectic work and school year”* (Appendix B, #22).

Representation 6: Sustainable alternative

Environmental awareness among tourists increases its appeal to a new level: *“it is synonymous with less pollution, saving money and not contributing to the overwhelming chaos that takes place in some of the world’s most touristic areas [...] Staycation appears like a great solution for the challenges above mentioned”* (Appendix B, #26).

Am option is saying no to flying and preferring the train instead: *“the much-discussed concept of flygskam, meaning 'shame linked to flying', was touted as one possible reason for the change [...] local train operators including Stockholm's SL and Skånetrafiken in the south have also invested in promoting the concept of hemester (staycation) through cheap, flexible tickets that allow locals to explore their region by train over summer”* (Appendix B, #41). This suggests that it is not only better for the environment, but also a more enjoyable view during the trip: *“book a scenic, festive holiday train ride”* (Appendix B, #30).

In addition to taking the train, a staycationer seems to be encouraged towards cycling: *“take a scenic bike ride. Hop on a local bike trail or bring your bike to a nearby waterfront or park. The combination of fresh air, nature and exercise will be invigorating and relaxing at the same time”* (Appendix B, #42). Local transportation options are suggested: *“why not discover your neck of the woods by bike or local transport instead”* (Appendix B, #9).

Though the car is mentioned as well: *“rent a convertible and take the scenic route. Sometimes you want to answer the call of the open road, but it’s hard to make travel exciting in the same car you drive to work every day”* (Appendix B, #18).

Another understanding captured during the analysis is that a staycation is about maintaining eco-friendly habits. Those are usually either hard to follow abroad, or left behind because the responsibility for ecology flattens when far from home: *“people tend to change their habits when they’re on vacation.*

Most people will produce more waste and often forgo recycling, purely because they don't have their usual bin to hand. Or they might adopt a different attitude, in that they don't have to really worry about the waste/it's not their problem, especially if the destination they're visiting isn't that hot on recycling themselves. On a staycation, you don't have to give up your eco-friendly habits in order to have a good time” (Appendix B, #9).

The findings show how representations of staycation changed in comparison to those presented in the paper by Germann Molz (2009). Considering the old representations, staycations changed from ‘disdain’ to affordable luxury, from ‘doubt’ to a new alternative, from ‘duty’ to giving the community back, and from ‘helpful how-to’ pass the time towards personal development. A rather new element appertaining to representations is staycation as a sustainable alternative. Accordingly, it is clear how the current representations are in contrast with the former ones. The following sub-chapter continues with staycation as practice. The representations derived from the analysis for *RQ (1)* are used to elicit further findings.

2. Staycation as a local travel practice in Sweden

Now that representations are made clear, it is necessary to identify how the actual practice takes place, and if it corresponds or contradicts to the former. For this purpose, the following question is proposed: *RQ (2) What are the drivers behind opting for practicing a staycation?* It allows to get an insight into the actual practice of staycation and the motivation of travellers towards it in a highly mobile society. Through *RQ (2)* the study attempts to identify the essential factors of staycation as practice within a motivational context.

To do so, understandings gathered from the conducted netnography are further presented. Therefore, this sub-chapter will reveal eight main categories as relevant to staycation as practice: (1) enjoy and appreciate the surrounding natural landscape, (2) hobbies and cultural activities, (3) cost effectiveness, (4) using environmentally friendly transportation, (5) alternatives, (6) distancing through new perspectives, (7) local traveling, and (8) hotel stays.

Practice 1: Enjoy and appreciate the surrounding natural landscape

Members recommend each other to enjoy and appreciate the surrounding natural landscape: *“enjoy the beautiful nature we have by hiking part of Sörmlandsleden”* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #9), *“Paradiset, Gömmaren, Flemingsbergsskogen or any other of Huddinge municipality's 13 nature reserve! [link]*

worth mentioning is that Huddinge municipality has been voted to the Stockholm region's best outdoor municipality several years in a row" (Hemestertips, 2020: post #178).

Nature reserves are mentioned quite often: *"in Vallentuna there is everything from rune-stones to fantastic nature reserves — Angarnsjöängen is really worth a visit"* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #2), *"if one likes to hike or just be in the nature, there is Sandsjöbacka nature reserve. Beautiful and very big!"* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #15), *"put on the snowshoes and visit Skulebergets nature reserve"* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #17) *"visit a national park - visit Skärалid! Regardless of the season, a visit to Skärалid is an experience"* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #185).

Practice 2: Hobbies and cultural activities

A variety of interests are voiced. For instance, hobbies to pursue: *"you can rent kayaks at Helgö"* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #11), *"staycation tips: Bohusläns archipelago can be the most beautiful place on Earth. Boat, kayak, climbing, hiking, history and culture is offered"* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #21). Additional cultural and sport activities to engage in are also mentioned: *"suggestions for activities; renting stand up paddleboard, kayak or fatbike"* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #181).

Some group members advise on visiting local museums: *"there are many museums to visit in Uppsala"* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #13), *"we spent many days last summer at Jönköping's county museum"* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #51), *"take a trip to the Air Force museum"* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #57). Moreover, the suggested activities are recommended for families and people of any age: *"Värmdo [...] a place that works for all ages!"* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #51), *"Umeå - cozy place for the whole family"* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #92), *"perfect for families with children"* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #176).

Practice 3: Cost effectiveness

Cost effectiveness is mentioned in a rather subtle way. Some refer to activities that do not require expenses, or through a comment such as: *"perfect for the day when you are a little bored and still don't want to spend a fortune!"* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #98).

Other examples are shown in comments that give tips on local transportation deals: *"for 300 SEK you can take the train unlimited times [...] in Dalarna, Västmanland and Örebro county for three days this summer"* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #76), *"staycation Värmland: [...] you have to buy a "Glaskogenkort" and then get free access to everything during the stay"* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #38).

Practice 4: Using environmentally friendly transportation

It is noted that ways of using environmentally friendly transportation are mentioned: *“easy to get to by bus or tram”* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #1), *“by ferry, bus and train you get a long way!”* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #21), *“take the bike around “the three lakes” (Väsman, Bysjön and Björken) or why not take the boat?”* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #23).

Some destinations are even suggested to be reached by boat: *“Lurö is a gem in the middle of Värnen. Reached with canon/kayak, own boat or by turboat from Spiken or Ekenäs”* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #196).

Practice 5: Alternatives

Few, but still some discuss alternatives and information against more air travel/car driving: *“I guess many of you staycationers do not want to see an expansion of Arlanda as this would lead to double the number of flights”* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #45).

More recommendations regarding public transportation as an alternative to the personal car are noticed: *“it is possible to take the commuter train [...] and bus or train [...] for those who do not want take the car”* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #9), *“place you can get to by bus, so leave the car at home!”* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #96), *“travel: train to Strömstad (2h from Gothenburg) and then 40 min ferry. The island is car free and there are a lot of bikes to rent”* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #152). What can be inferred from these excerpts is that people are considering engaging in less international travel. This is due to their awareness in regards to the negative influence flying has on climate, and prefer less harmful modes of transportation.

Practice 6: Distancing through new perspectives

Members are suggesting distancing through new perspectives: *“on the theme of staycation, I would like to tell you to see your own city from the water. New perspectives make it feel like you traveled somewhere else”* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #3).

Home exchange seems to be an option too: *“take into a hotel or change your home with friends and vacation seriously for a few days in your own hometown. I promise you will discover new unknown pages”* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #5).

Practice 7: Disconnection through local travelling

Disconnection is recommended through local travelling: *“get away a bit. It is usually about getting a small change of scenery, and not about traveling far”* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #54). Taking a break from the city life is also regarded as an option: *“Stockholm: Travelling away doesn’t mean travel far. Rent a cabin for a weekend and disconnect the city life”* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #111). Some suggest to become a tourist in your own city: *“it’s easy to go home blind. A cure is to consider the hometown with the eyes of the tourist”* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #144).

Practice 8: Hotel stays

Suggestions regarding hotel stays in the local area are also popular: *“Sundbyholm is one of the gems of Eskilstuna and you can choose to live in a caravan or castle [link]”* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #40), *“book a weekend or a week in hostels somewhere in the country”* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #54). Short hotel visits during the day are mentioned without an overnight stay: *“go for afternoon tea at the Stadshotellet”* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #53).

Recommendations are given for different areas across the country, tips which can be easily accessed through the staycation map (Google Maps, 2020) created by the group: *“staycation in Ludvika — take in a few nights at a local B&B with all the charm outside the door [link for B&B]”* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #23), *“staycation in southern Sthlm: Hellasgården is a nice place. Nice small cabins and a variety of activities”* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #36), *“Norrbotten. Harads: visit Tree Hotel or Arctic bath. Works both summer and winter and can be done in the form of day trip or with overnight stay. Fascinating, unique & serene”* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #183).

The findings reveal that the way a staycation is practiced corresponds to its general representations in media. For instance, staycation being cost-effective correlates to narratives of it as affordable luxury and cheap alternative, while enjoying the immediate surroundings hints at representations of the phenomenon as local travel. The above excerpts from the Facebook group members posts generally indicate associations with the categories of representations identified earlier in the study. What follows is a synthesis of the gathered data for a comprehensive understanding of staycation.

3. Aspects of staycation

Considering the developing understanding of staycations, the study continues with *RQ (3) How is distance understood in the context of staycations?* — because distance and its several dimensions are central to tourism mobilities. The meaning of distance in a staycation context adds to the understanding of challenges that tourist mobility is facing considering the happiness loop (Ram et al., 2013).

In exploring the research questions and after consolidating the reduced data (see Figure 6), six broad aspects are derived from merging the distinguished categories identified before: (1) convenience, (2) societal benefits, (3) local travel, (4) detachment and change of scenery, (5) individual benefits, and (6) environmental sustainability. This was done in order to better integrate the analysed data.

Specifically, the final aspects are attained by combining the emerged representations and practices. Afterwards, the aspects are associated with the predetermined codes (see Table 2): Euclidian distance, time distance, economic distance, gravity distance, network distance, cognitive/perceived distance, social distance, cultural distance, and centre-periphery distance. The thematic analysis suggests that the concept of distance is significant for understanding tourist behaviour and mobility in context of staycation.

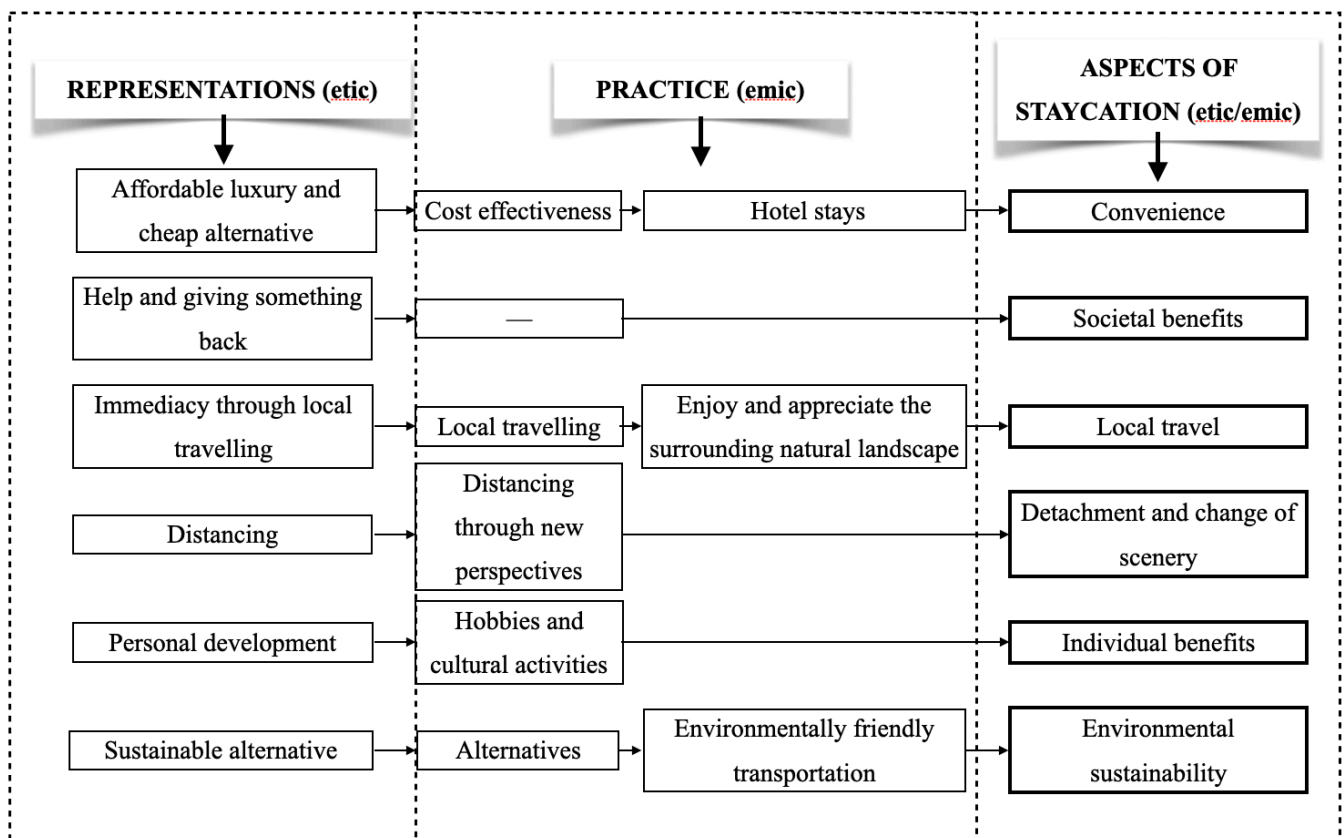


Figure 6. Categorisation of themes: aspects of staycation model. (Source: author's elaboration)

The analysis follows recommendations proposed by Cohen and Cohen (2015) of implementing emic and etic concepts, yet those are adjusted to the present study. Firstly, suggested representations depict etic features of staycation, as it involves the perspective of the observer through interpretation. Secondly, practices depict emic features, now that the perspective of staycationers is taken into consideration. Finally, applying both etic and emic perspectives allows the development of the emerging aspects appertaining to staycation. Respectively, it follows Cresswell's (2010) reasoning for a holistic understanding of mobility. This is achieved by merging staycation as an actual movement with its representations and practices.

Table 2. The relationship between distance and staycation

	Convenience	Societal benefits	Local travel	Detachment and change of scenery	Individual benefits	Environmental sustainability
Euclidian distance			X			
Economic distance	X		X			
Time distance	X		X			
Gravity distance	X					
Network distance						
Cognitive distance				X		
Social distance		X	X			X
Cultural distance		X	X		X	X
Centre-periphery						

The list of notions regarding distance suggested by Hall (2008) is simple, and especially useful in providing new interpretations that influence mobility in relation to staycation. From the standpoint that distance is a fluid concept as discussed in the theoretical section, it is not difficult to observe some of its central meanings.

Noteworthy that network distance and centre-periphery distance are the least relevant notions to the following discussion. No clear effects or connections are identified between the aspects of staycation and these two types of distance. This could also be an indicator that the tourist generating and the tourist receiving region are hypothetically the same or are similar to each other. What follows is an elaboration on each of the main aspects of staycation. Its connection with different understandings of distance is briefly discussed.

Aspect 1: Convenience

The convenience theme is developed based on representations of staycation as affordable luxury/cheap alternative and how it is practiced through cost effectiveness. The prospects of a cheaper way of vacationing seems to be a strong motivating factor. Not only the financial budget is considered, but also the possible time limit as a constraint. Provided that, hints of economic and time distance occur. Staycation provides several advantages compared to overseas vacations, such as hassle-free opportunities, effortless and easy experiences illustrated in gravity distance. Accordingly, staying at a local hotel as a staycation practice can be just as rejuvenating as a stay away. Changing travel behaviour towards favouring a staycation is influenced by the relation between proximity and effortless practices.

Aspect 2: Societal benefits

Societal benefits theme depict staycation as a way to payback the local community. It essentially refers to social and cultural distance. Notable that this particular theme was the only one not identified in the actual practice. Even so, it holds a strong position in the identified representations of staycation. The theme indicates that staycation is also about being benefic to other people through investment of both time and money into the local community. It is about helping the society becoming somehow better. Cultural distance is illustrated by means of learning something new about the multicultural society a staycationer might reside in, especially considering the perspectives of globalisation.

Aspect 3: Local travel

What can be inferred from the local travel theme is that by excluding long distance travel, the costs contained in economic distance are minimised and the holiday time is maximised. The holiday time represents time distance as one that influences the decision towards favouring staycations. Moreover, it is important to highlight the fact that Euclidian distance is hinted to be rather negative in narratives about staycations. What is near is exciting, while undertaking long physical distances can be portrayed as tiresome. The analysis also detects notions of familiarity. Staying in a familiar environment hints at cultural distance. Vacationing in a place that shares the same habits and views can be attributed to both cultural and social distance. Immediacy is another rather important aspect highlighted expressed in time distance. Staycation is acknowledged as a more accessible and instant type of vacation.

Aspect 4: Detachment and change of scenery

The next uncovered theme is detachment and change of scenery. The mental perceptions of distance here are embedded in notions of cognitive/perceived distance. Again Euclidian distance is represented as tiring and stressful. Thus, cognitive distance appears as desirable, providing feelings of getting away and detachment from the usual environment. All possible while still in a physical proximity to home. Cognitive distance seems rather essential to the phenomenon, suggesting that the act of “distancing” is what makes it particularly interesting, providing unique outlooks on local travel. The reason why and in-depth understandings of it may be somewhat missing.

Aspect 5: Individual benefits

In addition to previously mentioned societal benefits, a staycation gives the impression that it brings individual benefits as well. The individual benefits theme is developed from representations of staycation enclosed in the personal development category. In this theme, staycations are practiced through hobbies and other cultural activities, and are meant to add practicality to it. Cultural distance is relevant here in narratives of partaking in new activities, leaving one’s comfort zone through personal development and improving or mastering new competences.

Aspect 6: Environmental sustainability

The environmental sustainability theme hints at cultural and social distances. A staycation allows to maintain eco-habits by staying in a regular environment. Moreover, it excludes the necessity of long-haul travel. It eliminates the contrast between the origin and receiving destination, as it stays essentially the same or somewhat a familiar setting. Narratives of staycations as a sustainable alternative are a new representation of it revealed during the analysis.

These findings show that proximity and distance are indeed subjective notions, especially put in the context of staycation. However, in this specific case, understandings of distance add to the importance of the concepts and how it challenges mobility. What follows now is a discussion chapter on staycation as a change in tourist mobility.

Chapter V. Discussion

“Why do people travel? They leave happy homes, good food, and the folks they love for the exact opposites” Florence Luscomb (in Cresswell, 2006: p.210)

1. “Romanticisation” of staycation

The staycation phenomenon explored during this study demonstrates the connection between tourism and mobilities, and why it is relevant to position mobilities concepts in tourism contexts (Coles, 2015). Specifically how tourism should not be viewed as static, but with its components in motion. Reflecting on the quote by Luscomb, a further question comes to mind: Why do people stay? In this respect, the theoretical separation of mobility suggested by Cresswell (2010) allowed to understand the importance of each component: the movement of staycation, its representation, and the phenomenon as practice. Following the above analysis, the conversation leads to the final discussion of this dissertation. Firstly, it answers the next three proposed sub-questions.

RQ (1) How are staycations depicted in the online media?

Through the emerged six themes and its relation to different meanings of distance, common views on staycation are revealed. Especially considering Cresswell’s (2010) arguments for a politics of mobility, where (im)mobility is shaped through current discourse. Opinions regarding staycations did not stop spreading with the economic amelioration, as media predicted a decade ago (Germann Molz, 2009). Surprisingly, if initially the economic crisis led to the popularity of staycation, increased environmental awareness is a new aspect of it.

The narratives about staycation seem to resemble the discussion on walking, initially associated with a burden by the wealthy class until “Romantic poets turned walking into an experience of virtue” (Cresswell, 2010, p.25). Similarly, staycation is encoded in changing representations. Going local is preferred over excessive long-haul travel in a staycation context. Perceived understandings of distance are of equal significance compared to the usual Euclidian distance, all reinforced by increasing environmental awareness. Thus, “relative dimensions of distance” (Larsen and Guiver, 2013: p.971) are capable of challenging the actual tourist mobility.

Indeed, environmental sustainability theme seems rather significant. This, considering the climate change crisis so widely discussed in academia (Coles, 2015), and around the world in general. Moreover, findings show that the phenomenon gains recognition, and that it is advertised as a new tourist product.

All things considered, the above narratives cohere with what is presented in the discussion by Isenhour (2012). Perhaps the cosmopolitan sense given by travelling is still desirable (ibid) (e.g. noted in the individual benefits theme) and will be hard to renounce. Nonetheless, the staycation trend shows that other aspects are increasingly emphasised (e.g. the local travel aspect and the increased awareness towards environmental sustainability).

RQ (2) What are the drivers behind opting for practicing a staycation?

Representations incorporate the meaning of mobilities (Cresswell, 2010). In the given context of staycations, the established representations both can or cannot correspond to the practice. This sub-question aimed at finding out if it is or is not in contradiction. In general, findings show that the way a staycation is practiced corresponds to its representations.

The practice of staycation is emphasised in local travelling in the surrounding natural landscape. It allows the enjoyment of a variety of hobbies and stimulates personal development, while simultaneously being cost effective. Unplugging and distancing from the usual routine is exercised through narratives of detachment and change of scenery, especially through the medium of hotel stays in order to avoid the familiar settings. These findings are in agreement with Andriotis (2018), where he further implies that staycations can prove to be more rewarding in comparison with long haul trips.

Discussion around sustainability is a new aspect present in narratives of staycation developed during this study. Indeed, practicing a staycation and avoiding high-carbon travel could be an aspect characteristic to sustainable lifestyles (Verbeek and Mommaas, 2008). “Sustainable tourism consumption does not necessarily mean people holidaying or travelling less [...] but it will mean people travelling more locally” (Hall, 2009: p.56).

Previously, minimal consumption and self-restraint was associated with financial struggles. However, currently it can be related to having a specific lifestyle aiming at having a lower negative impact and a new approach to simple living (Andriotis, 2018). Attitudes towards engaging in low-carbon lifestyles reached different levels of recognition, but it requires the willingness to act and accept self-restrictions (Gössling et al., 2012), especially limitations in regards to mobility (Ceron and Dubois, 2007).

RQ (3) How is distance understood in the context of staycations?

Indeed, distance could be “an element in holiday recollection through being the spatial separator between the tourist’s home and their holiday space” (Larsen and Guiver, 2013). However, in the context of staycations, further understandings of distance are involved as disconnecting factors. The challenge of sustainability in the happiness loop in tourism (Ram et al., 2013) can be phased out or minimised (see Figure 7). To do so, replacing travelling to/back from a destination with physical proximity and other understandings of distance is desired. This stands for a change towards a more practical tourism mobility (de Bloom et al., 2017). Physical proximity and distance are not mutually exclusive if considering staycations. New implications for Euclidean distance are added together with additional understandings of distance.

McKercher (2018) remarks that participating in travel at short distances is available for anyone willing to do so, unlike long distance trips. Short and long destination trips both require available time, and the tourist must choose between “time spent getting to the destination” or “time spent at the destination” (McKercher and Lew, 2003: p.160). This pattern seems central to staycations as a way of holidaying. Economic distance is emphasised through the convenience theme, while time distance through the local travel theme and immediacy. These both represent a way to maximise the value of time spent. The use of time is an essential component that affects the decision to take a staycation, as time is considered a restraint (Thrift, 1977). This is achieved by merging the origin with the receiving destination.

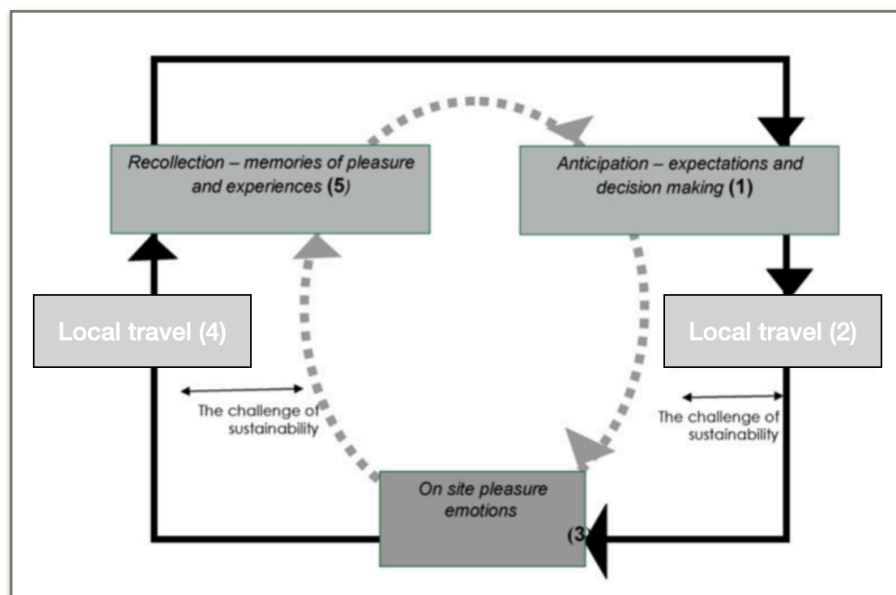


Figure 7. The “happiness loop” adjusted to staycations. (Adapted from: Ram et al., 2013)

Findings illustrate how “distance represents a proxy variable that embodies a range of physical and human geographic conditions and also takes into consideration many consumer behaviour variables” (McKercher, 2018: p.908). Thus, having a clearer understanding of the geographical context of the studied object would permit a better perspective on the subjectivities of proximity and distance concepts (Jeuring and Haartsen, 2017). This being specifically positioned in the context of staycation as a case of proximity tourism.

At last, let us consider the romanticisation of staycation once more. Evidently, what is new about staycation is the term itself. Taking that into account, could staycation rather be a fresh interpretation of an existing practice embedded in daily tourist mobilities? Or is it an attempt to promote domestic tourism contrary to the prominent hypermobile international travel? Without doubts, “romanticisation” occurs through the medium of changing representations. The previously established aspects play a further role in it. In particular via convenience, detachment through change of scenery, and environmental sustainability through increasing awareness. Thus this discussion suggests that tourism deviates from its traditional outlook on travelling across physical distances. Moreover, it is moving beyond it through romanticisation of staycation. It is found to be an essential factor in facilitating changes in tourist mobility, discussed as follows.

2. Towards a change in tourist mobility

This study had a focus on distance and its understandings in the context of staycation. The new mobilities paradigm provided a fresh philosophical perspective on tourist mobilities. Whereas distance proved to be a useful tool to answer the main theoretical research question proposed in the introduction. Provided that, *How does the meaning of distance within staycation as a case of proximity tourism challenge tourist mobility?*

Currently, dominant leisure mobility patterns and travel behaviour are indeed recognised as unsustainable (Ram et al., 2013), especially in the light of given negative effects of hypermobility (Cohen and Gössling, 2015). Climate change awareness and a change in attitudes/behaviour towards a more sustainable mobility could potentially diminish its consequences (Ceron and Dubois, 2007). Though, Larsen and Guiver (2013) question whether changes in travel behaviour will happen on a voluntary basis, indicating that a combination of strategies are needed in order to shift towards a more sustainable mobility in tourism.

By departing from quantitative growth in tourism towards more qualitative aspects of it, the staycation phenomenon closely relates to the steady state tourism paradigm (Hall, 2009). Likewise, it is discussed along with the low-carbon tourism paradigm as it suggests less non-essential overseas trips and more localised tourism (Becken, 2017). As well as degrowth inspired tourism (Andriotis, 2018).

If a transition from ‘growth’ to ‘steady-state economy’ (Hall, 2009) is to occur, the rationale behind it will not be a decline in leisure oriented consumption based on economic reasons, but rather due to the potential climate shift impacts it implies (Theuns, 2013). Following the academic literature, this perspective seems to create a discrepancy with the usual values promoted in tourism (Jeuring and Haartsen, 2017). Evidently, if international tourism increases, the staycation trend and its changing representations add to the list of existing practices in domestic tourism. Thus, making it more diversified and appealing to travellers.

Emissions generated by highly mobile lifestyles are estimated to only escalate with time, where hypermobility is becoming fashionable (Gössling et al., 2012). The staycation phenomenon pursues the advantage of excluding air travel from the tourist usage due to lack of necessity (de Bloom et al., 2017). Considering that, staycation is another rising holidaying trend, and a local travel option positioned on the other side of hypermobility. However, quoting Germann Molz (2009), it might just be an attempt to “re-appropriate stillness into a more marketable ‘staycation’ that could mobilise citizens through consumption, even as they stayed at home” (p.282).

In the event of re-appropriation, staycation may have social, economic, and environmental implications for tourism. A growing interest in local travel will allow domestic/national tourism departments to regain their recognition that was reduced with the growth of international tourism (Pearce, 1996). Isenhour (2012) argues that a staycation would limit the potential obtainment of cultural capital offered by international tourism. Yet this study introduces another side of its social implications, e.g. sustaining the local community, rejuvenation of local culture, and reconsideration of the host-guest relationship. Staycation hints at a sustainable consumption in tourism through its local travel aspect (Hall, 2009), where tourism is challenging climate change, and not facilitating it. For this reason, staycation may be an attempt to reappropriate proximity and make domestic tourism more attractive. All mentioned implications add up to the phenomenon as meaningful and far-reaching.

Following recommendations from tourism scholars, individual change towards travelling at a reduced distance is desirable. Gössling et al. (2012: p.147) believe that persuading highly and (at the moment) less mobile travellers to engage in low-carbon movements are both important without exception. Though influencing those already highly mobile travellers to limit emissions caused by travel seems more

complicated than the other (ibid). A transition towards a more local lifestyle requires a change of habits, and renouncement of the hypermobile social lives that we are so used to (Larsen, 2013).

Another line of thought is the promising intention of slow tourism, where “there is considerable potential for slow travel as a climate change mitigation and adaptation strategy for tourism” (Dickinson et al., 2011: p. 285). Similarly, staycation alters the understandings of distance, and is more likely to be able to address these issues. The results of a study conducted by Becken (2017: p.841) reveal “getting people to reduce activities that cause carbon” and “dominance of new patterns” as associations mentioned by tourism experts regarding emerging changes in behaviour and low-carbon tourism challenges. Surely, the staycation phenomenon advocates for such behavioural changes through its romanticisation.

Chapter VI. Conclusion

This dissertation provided further insights into how dynamic representations of staycation in tourism are constructed. Subsequently it added to the knowledge regarding relative meanings of distance, and its relationship with proximity tourism. Thus, it achieved the initial aim developed in the beginning of the study.

Reflecting on the introductory discussion on tourism binary distinctions outlined by Cohen and Cohen (2015), the phenomenon of staycation blurs the abstract boundaries between some of the mentioned dichotomies (e.g. proximate and distant, home and away, host and guest). It demonstrates the possibility of experiencing vacationing through different understandings of distance, as the concept stands central to the phenomenon.

By potentially rejecting the use of high carbon types of transportation, it is to some extent similar to 'slow tourism' (Germann Molz, 2009; Soria and Llurdés Coit, 2013). The difference represented in the central concepts appertaining to each, pace for slow tourism and distance for staycation. The practice of staycation does resemble and favour the low-carbon transition scenario discussed by Larsen (2013). In the context of staycations, long-haul trips are rather on the opposite side of status and cosmopolitanism, and going local is promoted through positive outcomes.

Also, it highlights how people can enjoy local travel while still being in physical proximity to their home through sensations of detachment and change of scenery. On a final note, the results of the study seem rather encouraging, particularly by bringing additional societal, theoretical, and practical contributions elaborated as follows.

1. Contribution of the dissertation

Past research has shown the place that travel holds in tourism, where physical distance is considered as a central aspect. However, more clarification was needed regarding other meanings of distance, and how it challenges tourist mobility. To my knowledge, no study has attempted to address this issue in the context of staycation. This paper had one of its main focuses on how understandings of distance might influence travel behaviour towards preferring a staycation, considering the circumstances of growing international tourism where hypermobility is favoured. Thus, it adds significance to the study on a societal level.

By presenting a fresh perspective on domestic tourism through distance in staycation, the current dissertation adds importance to the new mobilities paradigm in tourism studies. The identified themes form a model that represents the main aspects of staycation. The model is respectively the main analytical contribution of this paper. It also contributes to the knowledge on distance concepts. Another contribution to the academic literature is adding to the number of papers that call for behavioural changes that depart from non-essential travel towards a more efficient tourism mobility (de Bloom et al., 2017).

Although the study has a relatively new and still growing phenomenon as a study object, it encompasses practical contributions that contain marketing and managerial implications. The discussion agrees with Jeuring and Haartsen (2017) in their statement on the value that proximity tourism studies holds for local tourism marketing and regional development. Therefore, the results can be used by local tourism offices and destination marketing organisations, as well as by individual businesses that promote local travel. It also holds implications for hotels that are looking into optimising their image on the market by considering staycation as a tourism product. Finally, the findings of the study can be generalised even to an individual level, as it can present interest for travellers themselves. For instance, by having a better understanding of distance, travellers can adopt it towards a different option in their travel choices.

2. Future research suggestions

Despite the promising findings and its contributions, this study calls for further research. Some suggestions are looking into the growing worry towards pandemic outbreaks (e.g. Covid-19). The staycation market could be encouraged, contributing through minimising the vulnerability of tourism in health crisis contexts, while also increasing interest towards domestic travel.

Even if the decision to disregard material involving the Covid-19 crisis was taken prior the study, it was difficult to avoid. Indisputably, the discussion revolving around it in context of staycation is a promising topic: *“what is extra nice about hiking is that it is excellent to do despite the coronatimes [emoji] a good alternative in these times to more public places!”* (Hemestertips, 2020: post #192). It can be observed how staycations thrive in crisis contexts, e.g. economic, environmental, and health. Considering the findings presented in this study and the world circumstances of Covid-19 lockdowns, the staycation trend is likely to continue increasing, especially in the summer of 2020.

In future studies, staycation phenomenon can be explored considering a different theoretical frameworks and by following a different methodology. The study did not aim to gain comprehensive understandings of distance coming directly from staycationers. Therefore, it would have been more interesting if in-depth interviews as an applied method were conducted, but due to time limitations it was

not possible to implement. More work is required to establish the value staycation holds for academia, and its managerial implications.

Other narratives regarding staycation can be revealed if another study object was chosen, e.g. those who cannot afford a vacation. The outcome could be a different experience of staycations, hinting at the politics of mobility (Cresswell, 2010) again. The study does not include a wide view of the world and is partially limited to Sweden in terms of geographical range. Future studies concerning staycation in other locations, that depart from a Eurocentric view (Cohen and Cohen, 2015) could generate different results, bringing further contribution to the topic.

Finally, the study did not establish the geographical context of the studied object. This limitation occurred due to the digital nature of the material and methods chosen. The gathered data from qualitative content analysis has a universal character belonging to a general perspective, while netnography was used to retrieve data with a more narrow direction, specifically focusing on Sweden. Obtaining subjective understandings of far/near distance perceptions in an accurate geographical context would have brought more significance to this paper, especially considering that “subjectivities of proximity and distance are central to one of the main paradoxes of tourism” (Jeuring and Haartsen, 2017: p.123).

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Appendices

Appendix A. List of hotels that market staycation

1. <https://hotelatsix.com/offers/staycation/>
— *Staycation – for two*, Hotel At Six. Stockholm, Sweden
2. <https://hotelstockholm.com/stockholm/staycation/>
— *ICEBAR STAYCATION*, Hotel C. Stockholm, Sweden
3. <https://www.nordicchoicehotels.se/kampanjer-och-erbjudanden/staycation/>
— *Staycation - bo borta hemma*, Nordic Choice Hotels. 169 available locations
4. <https://www.hotelkungstradgarden.se/staycation/>
— *Staycation*, Hotel Kungsträdgården/The King's Garden. Stockholm, Sweden
5. <https://hotelj.com/en/special-offers/weekend-staycation>
— *WEEKEND STAYCATION*, Hotel J. Stockholm, Sweden
6. <https://www.elite.se/sv/hotell/vaxjo/staycation-i-vaxjo/>
— *STAYCATION I VÄXJÖ*, Elite Stadshotellet and Elite Park Hotel. Växjö, Sweden
7. <https://fizeaustraat.hotelv.com/rooms/staycation>
— *Staycation at Hotel V Fizeaustraat*, Hotel V. Amsterdam, Netherlands
8. <https://novotel.accor.com/promotions-offers/package-offers/owm009309-003-novotel-staycation.en.shtml>
— *It's staycation time! You don't need to travel far to disconnect!*, Novotel. Multiple locations
9. <https://curtisshotel.com/buffalo-staycation/>
— *Buffalo Staycation*, Curtiss Hotel. Buffalo (NY), USA
10. <https://www.scandichotels.com/weekend-packages-and-offers/grand-staycation>
— *GRAND HOTEL STAY IN OSLO*, Grand Hotel Oslo by Scandic. Oslo, Norway
11. <http://www.carlia.com/staycation.aspx>
— *Staycation - ett erbjudande för dig i närområdet!*, Best Western Hotel Carlia. Uddevalla, Sweden
12. https://www.niccolohotels.com/en/niccolo/hotels/hongkong/central/the_murray_a_niccolo_hotel_hong_kong/offers/murray_staycation.html
— *MURRAY STAYCATION*, The Murray, Niccolo. Hong Kong SAR, China

Appendix B. Material used for qualitative content analysis

Online magazines:

1. <https://www.realsimple.com/work-life/life-strategies/staycation>
— *“Time for a Staycation: How to Kick Back, Relax, and Vacation at Home”*, by Real Simple Editors (July 09, 2019)
2. <https://www.bustle.com/p/11-staycation-ideas-for-adults-that-feel-ultra-luxurious-9564258>
— *“11 Staycation Ideas For Adults That Feel Ultra Luxurious”*, by KYLI RODRIGUEZ-CAYRO (July 6, 2018)
3. <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/travel/g30549533/staycation-ideas/>
— *“15 Amazing Staycation Ideas That Won't Blow Your Budget”*, by LIZZ SCHUMER (Jan 21, 2020)
4. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/steveodland/2012/05/31/16-things-to-do-on-a-staycation/#432f17496819>
— *“16 Things To Do On A “Staycation”*”, by Steve Odland (May 31, 2012)
5. <https://www.cosmopolitan.com/lifestyle/g29625922/best-staycation-ideas/>
— *“12 Actually Fun Staycation Ideas That Are Waaay Better Than Standing in a Security Line Eating Airport Food”*, by EMMA BAKER (Oct 30, 2019)
6. <https://driftermagazine.ca/staycations-are-an-excellent-alternative-to-world-explorations-1f27785b9ab8>
— *“Staycations are an excellent alternative to world explorations”*, by TStreet Media (Aug 4, 2017)
7. <https://www.fastcompany.com/3062808/how-to-go-on-a-staycation-without-feeling-cheated>
— *“How To Go On A Staycation Without Feeling Cheated”*, by LAURA VANDERKAM (Aug 17, 2016)

Blog entries:

8. <https://medium.com/@kehruba.imran/my-staycation-holistay-essentials-for-2019-2c7110edee59> —
“My ‘Staycation’/‘Holistay’ Essentials for 2019”, by Kehruha Imran (May 28, 2019)
9. <https://www.verdemode.com/discover-the-benefits-of-a-staycation/>
— *“Discover the Benefits of a Staycation”*, by Linda McCormick (Aug 14, 2012)

10. <https://www.nomadicmatt.com/travel-blogs/staycation/>
— “*STAYCATIONS: 5 WAYS TO EMBRACE YOUR NEXT HOLIDAY AT HOME*”, by Nomadic Matt (Feb 22, 2019)
11. <http://merlionwayfarergoesworld.blogspot.com/2018/09/expedia-study-parents-as-top-staycationers.html>
— “*Expedia Study - Parents with Kids Emerge as Top Staycationers in Singapore*”, by Merlion Wayfarer Goes World (Sep 29, 2018)
12. <https://mitsueki.sg/category/mitsueki/my-staycations/>
— “*Category: My Staycations*”, by Mitsueki (multiple dates)
13. <https://www.innroad.com/blog/2015/03/how-independent-hoteliars-can-capitalize-on-the-staycationer-trend/>
— “*How independent hoteliers can capitalize on the “staycationer” trend*”, by innRoad (n.d.)
14. <https://www.webrezpro.com/boost-off-season-occupancy-with-staycation-bookings/>
— “*Boost Off-Season Occupancy with Staycation Bookings*”, by WebRezPro (Oct 10, 2019)
15. <https://www.daveramsey.com/blog/i-need-a-staycation>
— “*How to Plan a Staycation*”, by Ramsey Solutions, Lampo Licensing, LLC (n.d.)
16. <https://www.lifehack.org/633905/why-staycation-is-the-new-vacation-for-every-travel-lover>
— “*Why Staycation Is the New Vacation for Every Travel Lover*”, by Brian Lee (n.d.)
17. <https://www.everydollar.com/blog/staycation-ideas>
— “*12 Staycation Ideas That Won’t Bust Your Budget*”, by EveryDollar, Lampo Licensing, LLC (n.d.)
18. <https://smartcaro.org/5-staycation-ideas-to-save-your-summer/>
— “*5 Staycation Ideas to Save Your Summer*”, by Caro Federal Credit Union (n.d.)
19. <https://www.siteminder.com/r/trends-advice/hotel-travel-industry-trends/staycation-hotels-domestic-bookings/>
— “*The Global Staycation Trend: How can independent hotels secure domestic bookings?*”, by SiteMinder (n.d.)

20. <https://www.planday.com/blog/marketing-your-business-to-staycationers/>
— “*Marketing your business to “staycationers”*”, by Jonne Tanskanen (n.d.)
21. <https://socialnomics.net/2019/03/08/uk-staycation-travel-trends-2019/>
— “*UK Staycation Travel Trends 2019*”, by The Socialnomics Team (Mar 8, 2019)
22. <https://blog.sleepnumber.com/the-upside-of-a-summer-staycation/>
— “*THE UPSIDES OF A SUMMER STAYCATION*”, by Sleep Number Corporation (n.d.)
23. https://www.contagious.com/news-and-views/doppelganger-destinations-sell-staycations-to-germans?fbclid=IwAR3Binl5Q1jpmsWxc4qOlirmGuYCFXzys2kD1s7oJF18QRNAwwk8fi_bb2s
— “*Doppelganger destinations sell staycations to German holidaymakers*”, by Contagious Communications (Jul 30, 2019)
24. <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2018/03/22/inside-mindset-staycationers>
— “*Inside the mindset – Staycationers*”, by Amelia Brophy (Mar 22, 2018)
25. <https://www.regency-mgmt.com/resources/newsroom/staycations>
— “*Staycations: Backyard Getaways on the Rise*”, by Regency Management (n.d.)
26. <https://youmatter.world/en/staycation-definition-stay-vacations-sustainable/>
— “*What Is Staycation: Discover The Latest Trend In Sustainable Tourism*”, by André Gonçalves (Jan 28, 2020)
27. <https://clark.com/travel/staycation-ideas/>
— “*7 Amazing Staycation Ideas for Any Budget*”, by Clark.com Staff, Clark Howard Inc. (Feb 20, 2020)
28. <https://womenwhomoney.com/staycation-vacation/>
— “*Can A Staycation Be Just As Good As A Vacation [Or Better]?*”, by Women Who Money, Infinity Pro On (n.d.)
29. <https://www.verywellmind.com/have-a-truly-relaxing-staycation-3145216>
— “*How to Make Sure You Have a Relaxing Staycation*”, by Elizabeth Scott, MS (Jan 23, 2020)
30. <https://www.eventbrite.com/blog/staycation-ideas-ds00/>
— “*11 Sensational Staycation Ideas for the Holiday Break*”, by Katie Sawyer (Dec 14, 2018)

31. <https://www.moneyunder30.com/summer-staycation-guide>

— “*How To Create An Epic Summer Staycation*”, by Credit Sesame (Jul 11, 2019)

32. <https://eatsleeplovetravel.com/2018/04/14/what-are-the-benefits-of-a-staycation/>

— “*What Are The Benefits Of A Staycation?*”, by Team Eslt (Vicky, Mr Eslt, Junior Eslt & Mini Eslt) (April 14, 2018)

33. <https://home.barclays/news/press-releases/2019/05/staycation-boom-driven-by-millennials/>

— “*Staycation boom driven by millennials*”, by Barclays (May 23, 2019)

News:

34. <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/LIVING/worklife/06/12/balance.staycation/index.html>

— “*Staycations: Alternative to pricey, stressful travel*”, by Debra Alban, CNN (Jun 12, 2008)

35. <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2017/apr/29/modern-tribes-the-staycationer-catherine-bennett>

— “*Modern tribes: the staycationer*”, by Catherine Bennett, The Guardian (Apr 29, 2017)

36. <https://www.totalbusinessmagazine.com/2019/08/marketing-your-business-to-staycationers/>

— “*Marketing Your Business To ‘Staycationers’*”, by Total Business (Aug 27, 2019)

37. <https://www.businessinsider.com/how-to-plan-the-perfect-staycation-2018-8?r=US&IR=T#2-create-a-staycation-budget-2>

— “*10 tips for planning the perfect staycation*”, by Natalia Lusinski (Aug 5, 2018)

38. https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/travel/how-to-take-a-staycation-this-summer/2019/06/20/90e13492-9217-11e9-b58a-a6a9afaa0e3e_story.html

— “*How to take a staycation this summer*”, by Christopher Elliott, The Washington Post (Jun 20, 2019)

39. <https://www.independent.ie/life/travel/travel-news/6m-push-for-staycationers-to-keep-discovering-as-tourism-softens-38680016.html>

— “*€6m push for staycationers to ‘Keep Discovering’ as tourism softens*”, by Pól Ó Conghaile, Independent (Nov 11, 2019)

40. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/02/travel/how-to-make-the-most-of-a-staycation.html>

— “*How to Make the Most of a Staycation*”, by Shivani Vora, The New York Times (May 2, 2017)

41. <https://www.thelocal.se/20190716/swedes-travel-overseas-package-holidays-staycation-flygskam>
— “*Flygskam: Are Swedes really going green and swapping overseas travel for 'staycations'?*”, by The Local Sweden (Jul 16, 2019)

42. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/enjoying-a-staycation-15_b_5543286?utm_campaign=share_twitter&ncid=engmodushpmsg00000004
— “*Enjoying a Staycation? 15 Tips to Keep It Frugal and Fun*”, by WiserAdvisor.com, Huff Post (Sep 7, 2014)

Lifestyle websites writing about staycation:

43. <https://thestaycationers.com/>
— “*The Staycationers*”, by THE STAYCATIONERS team (multiple dates)

44. <https://thehoneycombers.com/singapore/travel/staycations/>
— “*Staycations*”, by HONEYCOMBERS PTE LTD (multiple dates)

45. <https://life.staycation.co/>
— “*Staycation life*”, by Staycation (multiple dates)

Online guides and blog entries on hotels websites:

46. <https://www.stayfareast.com/en/staycation-guide/what-is-great-about-staycations-and-why-you-should-go-on-one>
— “*What's Great About Staycations & Why You Should Go On One*”, by Far East Hospitality (n.d.)

47. <http://innonthedrive.com/what-is-a-staycation-and-why-you-need-one/>
— “*What is a Staycation? – And Why You Need One!*”, by Inn On The Drive (n.d.)

48. <https://traveler.marriott.com/tips-and-trends/plan-staycation-thats-actually-worth-vacation-days/>
— “*Plan a Staycation That's Actually Worth the Vacation Days*”, by Mandy Donovan (n.d.)

49. <https://blog.staypineapple.com/blog/2017/10/26/make-a-staycation-your-best-vacation>
— “*Make a Staycation Your Best Vacation*”, by StayPineapple (Oct 30, 2017)

50. <https://www.duanestreethotel.com/blog/5-reasons-to-make-your-next-break-a-staycation/>
— “*5 Reasons to Make Your Next Break a Staycation*”, by Duane Street Hotel (n.d.)

Appendix C. Reflective notes

While conducting the netnography, some brief observations were made and also included in the collected material. The “Hemestertips” group found on Facebook is administered by Deedster, a start-up based in Stockholm, Sweden that promotes sustainable living by means of a mobile application with the same name (Deedster, 2019). Initially, the Facebook group was for those who were using the mobile application, but later in March 2019 it was finally dedicated to staycation.

Through staycation, the members of the group aim to generally inspire each other towards enjoying local travelling, e.g.: *“Sörmlandsleden for those who are craving an environmentally friendly adventure”* (post #77). Usually, the structure of an analysed post consisted of a destination in Sweden, followed by some tips on “what” one can see there, and sometimes accompanied with some images of it. Some posts were shorter, consisting of just one sentence, and others could be more extensive, up to two small paragraphs.

Initially, the group (Hemestertips, 2020) was established on May 31 in 2017, under the name “Deedsters - gruppen för alla användare av Deedster”, changed names a few times, only to be named “Hemestertips” on March 27, 2019 (see Figure 8). Also, it is identified as a public “social learning group” with visible online content.

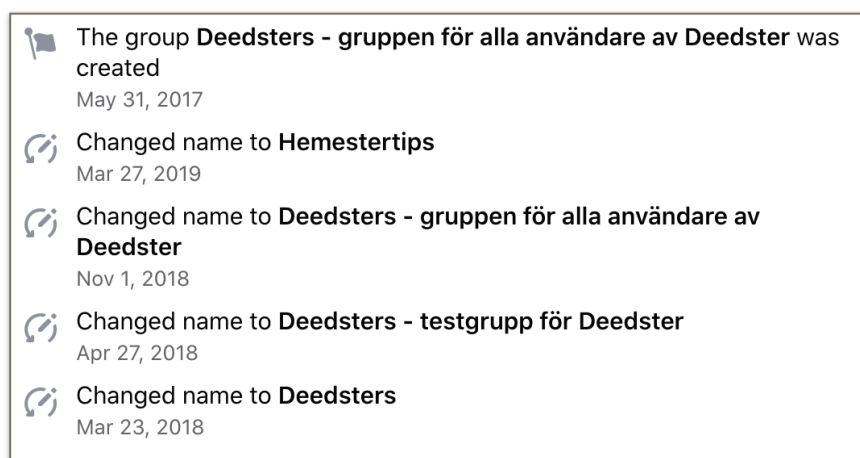


Figure 8. Group history (Hemestertips, 2020). Screenshot by author.

The administrators of the group also informed the members that the shared pictures will also be seen on the a staycation map (see Figure 9) available on Google Maps (Google Maps, 2020) — an approach to help visualise the recommended activities and also useful when looking for relevant tips based on location. The map at the moment includes 247 tips in total with 2283 views.

Some tips/activities are organised in topics (see Figure 10) and can be found following the next popular categories: outdoor life, child friendly, city life, food & drinks, culture, sea & lake.



Figure 9. Staycation map (Hemestertips, 2020).

Screenshot by author

During the study, it was observed that the group expanded, with the members number increasing with approximately 400 people, with members being added almost on a daily basis — also being suggestive of how interest in the phenomenon is growing. Currently, the group has nine admins and moderators, and 952 members. The discussions in the group are not very dynamic, but the number of members is growing, and new posts are observed quite often.



[Translation: outdoor life (27), child friendly (14), city life (11), food & drinks (8), culture (7), sea & lake (7)].

Figure 10. Popular topics (Hemestertips, 2020).

Screenshot by author