

Original Article

GENERATIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF DIGITAL DETOXIFICATION: A STUDY ABOUT THE 'COMPELLING CONSUMPTION PATTERNS' OF DIGITAL CONTENT AND ITS IMPLICATION AMONG THE DIGITAL NATIVES AND DIGITAL MIGRANTS

S. Augustin Jesuvadian ^{1*}, V. Venkatesh ¹, Dr. Gnana D. Hans ²

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Communication, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, India

² Assistant professor, Department of Communication, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, India



ABSTRACT

This study examines how different age groups view digital detoxification, with a particular emphasis on digital natives and migrants. People are struggling with the possible effects of technology on their social well-being, productivity, and mental health as it gets more and more ingrained in daily life. In-depth interviews with participants from two different age groups—digital migrants, who embraced digital tools later in life, and digital natives, who grew up with technology are used in this study to investigate the reasons behind, experiences with, and results of digital detoxification. Each group's distinct disconnecting factors coping strategies during the detox, and opinions on the difficulties or successes of cutting back on screen time are all included in the interviews. In-depth interview methodology was employed in this study. According to preliminary research, digital natives frequently seek digital detoxification for mental clarity and personal balance since they feel constantly connected and under pressure from social media. On the other hand, physical signs like eye strain or a desire to re-engage with offline events may prompt digital migrants to begin detoxing. Furthermore, older individuals worry about the impact of their decreased availability on their careers, whereas younger participants report higher levels of social worries, such as FOMO, during detox. The study shows subtle intergenerational differences in coping mechanisms and digital reliance, indicating that whereas digital migrants frequently take unplanned breaks, digital natives are more likely to use structured detoxification techniques. The research's findings advance our knowledge of digital well-being and have implications for developing age-appropriate interventions that encourage better intergenerational relationships with technology.

Keywords: Digital Detox, Social Media, Well-being, Detoxification

INTRODUCTION

Digital detoxification has gained importance in a time when technology and internet connectivity dominate every aspect of daily life. This study explores how different generation's view and approach digital detoxing, with a particular emphasis on the fascinating ways that digital natives and immigrants consume digital information. Since they have always had access to technology, digital natives frequently use structured techniques to control how much of it they consume. They understand the subtleties of digital overload and the methods that may be used to lessen it, such limiting screen time, using applications for digital well-being, and taking regular breaks from technology. Their high levels of compulsive internet consumption and the everyday pressure from social media

*Corresponding Author:

Email address: S. Augustin Jesuvadian (augustinaj05@gmail.com), V. Venkatesh (venkatvijaykumar05@gmail.com), Dr. Gnana D. Hans (gnanadhans@gmail.com)

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are the driving forces behind this planned strategy. Developing focused measures that can successfully alleviate the detrimental effects of digital media overload requires an understanding of these generational distinctions. The efficacy of digital detox initiatives can be increased, and healthy digital behaviors can be encouraged by customizing strategies to fit the unique requirements and preferences of various generations. Digital immigrants may benefit from education on the tools and strategies available to help people reduce their digital consumption more proactively, while digital natives may benefit from more structured programs that offer clear guidelines and support for controlling digital use.

The purpose of this study is to shed more light on the attitudes, actions, and difficulties that digital immigrants and natives encounter when attempting to establish a healthy relationship with digital media. We can better understand how to assist each group in reducing the negative consequences of excessive digital usage by looking at the particular elements that influence their digital detox tactics.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

DIGITAL MEDIA CONSUMPTION

The rise of social media and internet platforms demonstrates how traditional media has been disrupted by newer digital media formats. Platforms for content creation and delivery have increased as a result of cutting out intermediaries like editors and broadcasters. This has led to the democratization of media since anyone with an internet connection can access a large audience [Alzubi \(2023\)](#). The element of access is inclusive of the reality of participation of the users taking into consideration the motif of the media. The percentage of people turning to the internet for news has been rising consistently, especially among younger demographics [Baroutsis et al. \(2023\)](#). The media sector has been greatly impacted by the emergence of digital media. While new digital media platforms have emerged to compete with traditional media, established media sources such as tv stations and newspapers have had to adapt to the new digital era. Our media consumption patterns have been fundamentally changed by the digital revolution, which has also led to a dynamic interaction between traditional and digital media. Traditional media is still relevant and adds to the diverse media environment, even with the recent explosion in the popularity of digital media [Alzubi \(2023\)](#). All ages, from children to adults, can find entertainment and education on the internet. Social media is frequently used by college students and schoolchildren for research, project work, and education [Subudhi \(2021\)](#). Each generation has its specific requirements which may be easily satisfied by using the internet, various applications, smartphones, and other digital devices. The results showed substantial differences within and between generations. For example, to maintain a connection with friends and family, older generations are often referred to as digital immigrants on social media sites like facebook. They like acquiring followers on twitter, where they also use the platform [Fietkiewicz \(2017\)](#). Although they are able to adapt to their new environment, digital immigrants "still retain a certain amount of their accent." in contrast to digital natives, this "accent" of digital immigrants relates to particular information practices like using the internet as a secondary source of information instead of the primary source [Prensky \(2001\)](#). The internet has been adopted by both generation x and generation y as a convenient means of social interaction and communication. The emergence of social media has had an immense effect on generation z's generational identity. This generation especially appreciates how easy it is to share life events and communicate. For example, 71% of generation z use snapchat, 73% upload videos to youtube, and 84% regularly use one or more social networks. This generation's competitive nature has been heightened by the pervasive use of social networks, leading them to compare their online lives to those of their friends. Despite having adopted social networks as well, generation y is generally less concerned with maintaining their online personality [Taylor \(2017\)](#).

DIGITAL DETOXIFICATION

The term "digital detox," as defined by the Oxford Dictionary, refers to when a person does not use digital devices such as smartphones or laptops, mostly to reduce stress and decompress [Cambridge Dictionary \(n.d.\)](#). Excessive use of screens can have negative effects on people's health. Continuous Information technology use may result in "technostress," which is described as any negative impact on attitudes, thoughts, behaviours, or body physiology that is caused either directly or indirectly by technology [Pflügner et al. \(2021\)](#). The constant availability of social networking sites on smartphones has a high potential for distraction and may contribute to harmful usage behaviours, particularly among young people. The fundamental concept behind Digital Detox is to wholeheartedly disconnect from digital media by engaging in clearly defined "non-digital" activities that emphasize the physical environment [Subudhi \(2021\)](#). Using "digital detox" apps such as iOS Screen Time) has become popular as a solution to this problem. By encouraging users to take intentional pauses, these apps assist users in tracking and limiting their smartphone usage. It's unclear, though, if these digital detox apps can effectively lessen the negative consequences of social networking, such as increased smartphone use and compromised well-being. While digital detox applications appear to be a useful tool for reducing the harmful impacts of social networking sites on young people's well-being by reducing the possibility of compulsive use of phones, their long-term effectiveness has to be shown. Their potential to promote healthy digital behaviours and general well-being may be enormous, but further research is required to prove their genuine impact [Schmuck \(2020\)](#). Digital detox texts are based on the concept that digital tools and media consume too much time and divert attention away from what is meaningful and necessary for a successful life. Such texts frequently emphasise the concept of wasting online time, with phrases such as, "You're probably wasting at least a

few hours every day." [Zahariades \(2017\)](#). Digital detox texts frequently describe digital overload as a sort of addiction, both clinically and in daily usage. Many self-help books emphasize that dopamine plays an important role in this addiction: "Dopamine makes us feel excited, and we like feeling excited." Some even compare the "dopamine loop" caused by digital media to drug addiction, claiming that it leads to obsessive behaviours similar to those seen in people hooked to substances such as cocaine, caffeine, methamphetamines, nicotine, or alcohol [Snow \(2017\)](#). Furthermore, heavy internet users are thought to incur brain damage similar to that of drug addicts. This addiction is commonly connected to the Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO), described as a pervasive concern or worry about not being present while others are having fun [Formica \(2015\)](#). Social media is sometimes criticized for creating poor self-images since users tend to compare themselves to others: "feelings of inadequacy are stirred up by witnessing their friends' 'perfect' lives online." [Goodin \(2017\)](#). In this article, we try to understand the compulsive consumption habits of digital natives and digital immigrants and also their understanding of digital detox.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To comprehensively analyze the phenomenon of digital consumption and the subsequent necessity for media disconnection, this study integrates two complementary communication frameworks: cognitive dissonance theory and the uses and gratifications (uandg) theory.

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE THEORY

Originally formulated by Leon Festinger, Cognitive Dissonance Theory posits that individuals experience psychological discomfort when they hold conflicting beliefs, ideas, or behaviors. In the context of this study, this framework explains the internal friction users experience regarding their device usage. Both digital natives and digital migrants increasingly recognize the detrimental effects of over-connectivity—such as psychological distress, eye strain, and diminished productivity—yet they continue their compulsive consumption habits. This gap between the conscious awareness of technology's negative impacts and the behavioral compulsion to stay connected generates acute cognitive dissonance, acting as the primary catalyst that drives individuals to pursue digital detoxification.

USES AND GRATIFICATIONS THEORY

While cognitive dissonance explains why individuals seek to disconnect, the Uses and Gratifications framework helps illuminate the behavioral hurdles faced during the disconnection process. UandG theory shifts the focus from what media does to people, to what people do with media, assuming that audiences actively seek out specific media formats to fulfill distinct psychological and social needs. When users initiate a digital detox, the sudden removal of these platforms abruptly cuts off their primary sources of social validation, entertainment, and surveillance. Consequently, the framework provides a robust lens for evaluating the emotional discomfort, acute anxiety, and intense Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) that surface when individuals find their deeply ingrained gratification pathways suddenly obstructed.

HYPOTHESIS

H1: Digital natives are more likely to engage in structured digital detox strategies due to higher levels of compulsive digital consumption and social media pressure than digital migrants, who tend to adopt spontaneous detox practices driven by physical symptoms.

H2: Compulsive digital consumption is a stronger predictor of the need for digital detox among digital natives, while digital migrants are more influenced by concerns about physical well-being and the desire to reclaim time for offline activities.

H3: Digital natives experience greater emotional discomfort, such as anxiety and fear of missing out (FOMO), during digital detox compared to digital migrants, who report fewer social anxieties but may experience challenges related to professional availability.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes a qualitative research design executed through in-depth, semi-structured interviews. A qualitative methodology was selected because it allows for a nuanced exploration of the subjective experiences, underlying motivations, and distinct generational attitudes toward digital consumption and detoxification that quantitative metrics cannot fully capture.

PARTICIPANT SELECTION AND SAMPLE

Data collection was conducted using a sample of 15 participants, purposefully categorized into two distinct generational cohorts based on their developmental relationship with modern technology: Digital Natives (N = 8): Individuals who matured alongside the

proliferation of ubiquitous digital technology, characterized by high-volume, continuous baseline connectivity. Digital Migrants (N=7): Individuals who transitioned to digital infrastructure and tools during adulthood, adapting to these spaces later in life.

INSTRUMENTS AND DATA COLLECTION

The primary tool for data collection was a semi-structured interview protocol directly informed by and operationalized around the core research hypotheses. This format provided structural consistency across the sample while remaining flexible enough to allow participants to expand on unexpected personal insights. The inquiries focused on several specific operational dimensions: Baseline Beliefs and Conceptions:

- 1) Evaluating how each cohort perceives the utility and systemic drawbacks of digital device integration.
- 2) Notification Management Profiles: Investigating the explicit configurations and boundaries set on inbound communications.
- 3) Detoxification Dynamics: Capturing the specific prompts (physical strain vs. mental fatigue) that necessitate a detox, the concrete coping strategies deployed (structured software applications vs. spontaneous offline hobbies), and the emotional fallout (FOMO, social anxiety, or career-related availability concerns) endured throughout the disconnection cycle.

DATA ANALYSIS

The collected qualitative interviews were subjected to comparative thematic analysis. Responses were systematically categorized against the study's core variables—including behavioral adjustments, perceived internal control, justification of effort, and post-decision dissonance. This matrix allowed the researcher to contrast the structured, digitally managed boundary-setting of digital natives with the more spontaneous, physically prompted, and unstructured offline re-engagement patterns of digital migrants.

DATA INTERPRETATION

DIGITAL NATIVE'S BELIEFS ABOUT DIGITAL MEDIA/ DEVICES

Digital Natives have grown up in a digital era, having spent their entire lives surrounded by and actively engaging with various forms of technology. According to the researcher's data collection, every digital native agreed that digital media helps to connect with family and friends. useful to their educational purpose. Also, 7 out of 8 participants said that they feel psychologically disturbed by the overuse of digital media and digital devices.

Digital media provides access to an abundance of information, maintaining relationships with family and friends, and keeping up with the latest news, and educational materials. Digital media can be addictive, there is a chance of false information, cyberbullying, fewer in-person connections, and mental issues. (response of 20-year-old during the interview).

Digital media helps to stay connected with other people, having access to an abundance of information, playing games online, streaming movies and music, and using educational resources. Digital media can be extremely distracting, may result in less physical activity, raise the risk of stress and anxiety, and cause privacy problems. (response from a 17-year-old during the interview).

DIGITAL NATIVE'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF DIGITAL MEDIA/ DEVICES

Digital natives believe that taking breaks and involving in offline activities like playing, reading, and drawing can help reduce digital media stress or anxiety. And also they suggest the use of digital detoxing apps like Digital Wellbeing. These are stated by 6 out of 8 digital native participants.

I Have set time for using digital media, taking frequent breaks, and doing offline activities. This helps to reduce the stress caused by digital media. I turn off unnecessary notifications and use digital wellbeing apps as needed. (response of 21-year-old during the interview).

When I'm feeling stressed out by digital media, I would like to spend more time offline. Additionally, I utilize apps to control how much time I spend on screens(response from a 19-year-old during the interview).

ACTIONS TAKEN BY DIGITAL NATIVES TO OVERCOME DIGITAL MEDIA STRESS

Compulsive digital media consumption causes digital stress and anxiety. Digital natives take necessary actions to reduce digital media stress or anxiety. Mostly every participant agreed that they were involved in non-digital activities. And also they take structured actions to minimise screen time.

To reduce my digital stress, I try to play sports or go for a run, limit how much time I spend on social media, and spend time with friends and family in person (response from a 17-year-old during the interview).

I limit my screen time, go on walks, practice meditation, and concentrate on hobbies like reading and painting(response from a 21-year-old during the interview).

MANAGING DIGITAL NOTIFICATIONS OF DIGITAL NATIVES

Digital natives mostly like to customize their digital notifications. They don't like to get bombarded by notifications. They mostly give importance to the notifications that they receive from family and close friends or related to their education. These are stated by 7 out of 8 digital native participants.

I only maintain the most important notifications, such as college updates and messages from close friends, and then turn off the rest of them. I importance crucial academic updates, messages from friends and family, and information on my favourite sports teams (response from a 16-year-old during the interview).

I customize my notifications so that I only get necessary notifications, and I check the device at specific times rather than constantly checking it. I value notifications about events or important news, educational updates, and messages from family and close friends (response from a 20-year-old during the interview).

NEED FOR DIGITAL DETOXIFICATION FOR DIGITAL NATIVES:

A digital detox is necessary for several reasons. First of all, too much screen time has been connected to several health problems, including higher stress levels, problems with sleep, and eye strain. These issues can be minimized and general wellbeing can be enhanced by taking regular breaks from screens. According to 7 out of 8 digital natives believe that digital detox can reduce their stress and help to improve their focus.

Digital detoxification promotes higher mental wellness, improves productivity, minimizes stress, and improves focus (response from a 20-year-old during the interview).

Digital detoxification helps me focus better, sleep better, feel less stressed, and appreciate real-life connections more. (response from an 18-year-old during the interview).

CHALLENGES FACED DURING THE DIGITAL DETOXIFICATION OF DIGITAL NATIVES:

Digital detox is challenging for digital natives they mostly feel fear that they will miss something important during the process. They are also tempted to use their digital device during the digital detox. They feel compulsive digital media usage is the main reason for the temptation. These are statements from every digital native participant.

I find it difficult to put down my digital device when beginning my digital detoxification routine because of anxiousness or boredom, a sense of disconnection, and fear of missing out. (response from a 17-year-old during the interview).

Difficulties encountered during the process of digital detoxification Initial feelings included boredom, anxiety, a fear of missing out on online activities, and the urge to use a smartphone (response from a 21-year-old during the interview).

REASON FOR DIGITAL DETOX OF DIGITAL NATIVES:

Digital detox is a key to mental wellbeing. Digital native has their reasons to do a digital detox. 8 out of 8 digital native participants said that they doing digital detox to improve their focus on the study and doing offline activity to reduce stress.

My primary motivation for engaging in digital detoxification is to reduce stress, improve mental well-being, and improve concentration on academics and passions. (response from a 19-year-old during the interview).

Difficulties encountered during the process of digital detoxification Initial feelings included boredom, anxiety, a fear of missing out on online activities, and the urge to use a smartphone (response from a 21-year-old during the interview).

EFFORT AND OUTCOME OF DIGITAL DETOXIFICATION IN DIGITAL NATIVES

So much effort and self-discipline are required to do a digital detoxification. Most digital native participants 6 out of 8 said that it was really hard in the beginning but after the digital detoxification, they felt peace and improved focus but also they felt that fear of missing out.

Although it takes constant effort and self-control, particularly in the beginning, digital detoxification becomes easier with time. following the digital detoxification I feel like I'm missing out at first, but I eventually come to value the peace and increased focus. (response from a 17-year-old during the interview).

Sticking to the plan during a digital detox requires regular effort and discipline, especially at first, but it becomes easier with practice.The early phase may feel lonely or boring, with a constant fear of missing out on important updates. However, the

outcome of digital detoxification improves my mental health and reduces stress, which is really beneficial to my education because it increases my focus(response from a 20-year-old during the interview).

DIGITAL NATIVES FEELING ON FEAR OF MISSING OUT (FOMO)

Fear of missing out is when people do digital detox they feel the fear that they will miss an opportunity or event while they are not using digital media. Digital natives mostly fear that they feel like fear of missing out during digital detoxification. And 7 out of 8 digital participants agreed to the concept of FOMO.

I was in fear of missing out when I went through digital detoxification. After some time, I realized that not everything on the digital media is important. (response from an 18-year-old during the interview).

Fear of missing out is true, but as time passes, I understand that not everything online is important, and I begin to value real-life experiences more (response from a 21-year-old during the interview).

DIGITAL NATIVES ABOUT MISSING THEIR ONLINE FRIENDS

Digital media becomes a bridge for people to connect virtually and also helps to build friendships. Digital natives miss their digital friends during digital detoxification. Most of the digital native participants (6 out of 8 digital natives) say that they sometimes miss their online friends during digital detox.

I sometimes miss my digital friends, but digital detoxing allows me to grow my real-life relationships and have more meaningful talks with family and friends (response from an 18-year-old during the interview).

Yes, I do miss my digital friends during my digital detoxing but also scheduled my time to spend with them digitally (response from a 19-year-old during the interview).

DIGITAL NATIVES ABOUT THEIR MISSED OPPORTUNITIES/EXPERIENCES DURING DIGITAL DETOXING:

Digital detoxification can sometimes cause us to lose some opportunities or digital experiences. According to participants they missed some online activities and most of them (5 out of 8 digital natives) said they missed group chat during their offline activities.

During a digital detox, I may lose out on some online events and group chats, but I save more time for hobbies and personal improvement (response from a 17-year-old during the interview).

During a digital detox, I may have lost out on some unplanned online events and virtual meets while participating in physical activities, but I never thought I missed out on any opportunities to enhance my life. (response from a 20-year-old during the interview).

DIGITAL NATIVES ABOUT THEIR ONLINE SHARING BEHAVIOUR DURING DIGITAL DETOXIFICATION:

Nowadays most people are sharing everything via digital media. They feel the compulsion to update everything online. and also they mostly share emotions through digital media. According to the researcher's data collection, 7 out of 8 participants said that they missed sharing their activities during digital detoxification.

During a digital detox, I miss sharing about emotions via social media. And also have the temptation to share my everyday activities through social media (response from a 19-year-old during the interview).

During Digital Detox I occasionally miss sharing my emotions on digital media, but it encourages me to have deeper talks in person with close friends. Also, I miss sharing my everyday activities through digital media apps, but digital detoxification helps me to relax and be more present by removing the urge to share everything online. (response from a 21-year-old during the interview).

DIGITAL IMMIGRANT'S BELIEFS ABOUT DIGITAL MEDIA/ DEVICES

The term "Digital Immigrants" is used to refer to individuals who were born or grew up before the widespread adoption of digital technology and have had to adapt to it later in life. These individuals may not have grown up with digital technology as an integral part of their lives and have had to learn and adapt to digital technologies as adults. According to the researcher's data collection, every digital immigrant agreed that digital media helps to connect with family and friends. It has access to an abundance of information. Also, 5 out of 7 participants said that they feel physically disturbed by the overuse of digital media and digital devices.

Digital media Facilitates communication, provides access to a multitude of information, promotes professional networking, provides entertainment, and assists with online learning. Digital media consumption Can lead to addiction, raise the danger of

misinformation, have an impact on mental health, and eye strain, and limit face-to-face interactions with others(response of a 36-year-old during the interview).

Digital media Allows for quicker interaction with family members, quick access to information, professional connections, entertainment, and constant learning. Digital media usage Can lead to addiction, spread disinformation, have an influence on mental health, physical health, and reduce the quality of face-to-face interactions. (response from a 50-year-old during the interview).

DIGITAL IMMIGRANT'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF DIGITAL MEDIA/ DEVICES.

Digital immigrants believe that taking breaks and involving in offline activities like playing, reading, and cooking can help reduce digital media stress or overload. These are stated by 6 out of 7 digital immigrants' participants.

When I feel like having a headache or eye strain I will take breaks from digital devices and do offline activities like spending time with children or reading. This helps to reduce the stress caused by digital media. (response of 30-year-old during the interview).

Digital media can cause mental and physical illness to people who are all overusing it. When I'm feeling stressed out and overloaded by digital media, I would like to spend more time on offline activities. (response from a 33-year-old during the interview).

ACTIONS TAKEN BY DIGITAL IMMIGRANTS TO OVERCOME DIGITAL MEDIA STRESS:

Digital immigrants take necessary actions to reduce digital media stress or anxiety. Mostly every participant agreed that they were involved in any non-digital activities like spending time with family, reading, meditation or involved in gardening.

I spend more time with my family, engage in hobbies such as reading and gardening, practice meditation, and limit my social media use to specific times of day(response from a 30-year-old during the interview).

I spend quality time with my family and practice yoga and meditation (response from a 42-year-old during the interview).

MANAGING DIGITAL NOTIFICATIONS OF DIGITAL IMMIGRANTS:

Digital immigrants mostly don't customize their digital notifications. While they are at work they mostly don't give importance to digital notification. They mostly give importance to the notifications they receive from family and work-related notifications. These are stated by 5 out of 7 digital immigrants' participants.

I check my devices at specific times of day to avoid continual distractions. I prioritize work-related messages, family updates, important news, and notifications connected to my hobbies and interests(response from a 36-year-old during the interview).

I don't use a particular strategy to manage my notifications; however, notifications from family get my attention (response from a 55-year-old during the interview).

NEED FOR DIGITAL DETOXIFICATION FOR DIGITAL IMMIGRANTS:

A digital detox is necessary for several reasons. First of all, too much screen time has been connected to several health problems, including higher stress levels, problems with sleep, and eye strain. These issues can be minimized, and general wellbeing can be enhanced by taking regular breaks from screens. According to 6 out of 7 digital immigrants believe that digital detox can reduce their stress and help to improve their productivity.

It is important for decreasing stress, increasing productivity, and improving physical and mental health(response from a 30-year-old during the interview).

It leads to better mental health and physical health, increases focus and productivity, and improves the quality of sleep (response from a 42-year-old during the interview).

CHALLENGES FACED DURING THE DIGITAL DETOXIFICATION OF DIGITAL IMMIGRANTS

Digital detox is not challenging for digital immigrants they mostly feel fear that they will miss something important during the process. These are statements from 5 out of 7 digital immigrants' participants.

I don't feel any discomfort during digital detoxification but if my mobile rings that will create a diversion(response from a 33-year-old during the interview).

During the digital detox, I faced the worry of losing out on important notifications related to my work, as well as the compulsive checking of my phone (response from a 36-year-old during the interview).

REASON FOR DIGITAL DETOX OF DIGITAL IMMIGRANTS

Digital detox is a key to physical and mental well-being. Digital immigrants have their reasons to do a digital detox. 6 out of 7 digital immigrant participants said that they are doing digital detox to improve their productivity and doing offline activity to reduce stress.

My primary motivation for engaging in digital detoxification is to reduce stress, improve mental and physical well-being, and improve concentration and productivity. (response from a 42-year-old during the interview).

A digital detox helps to Enhance work-life balance, reduce stress, and improve my general well-being (response from a 30-year-old during the interview).

EFFORT AND OUTCOME OF DIGITAL DETOXIFICATION IN DIGITAL IMMIGRANTS:

So much self-discipline is required to do a digital detoxification. Most digital immigrant participants 5 out of 7 said that it was really hard in the beginning but after the digital detoxification, they felt peace and healthier wellbeing.

Digital detox needs a lot of self-discipline and persistence, especially at first, but it gets easier as healthy habits type. Although there may be a sense of missing out at first, digital detoxification gradually leads to improved concentration and focus (response from a 30-year-old during the interview).

It takes work, especially in the early days, because the habit of checking your phone is difficult to get rid of. I actively plan offline activities such as cooking and reading. Initially, I felt disconnected from my social network and missed being informed about current events (response from a 55-year-old during the interview).

DIGITAL IMMIGRANTS FEELING ON FEAR OF MISSING OUT (FOMO):

Fear of missing out is when people do digital detox, they feel the fear that they will miss an opportunity or event while they are not using digital media. Digital immigrants also fear that they feel like fear of missing out during digital detoxification. And 6 out of 7 digital immigrant participants agreed with the concept of FOMO.

Yes, there is a fear of missing out on family events or festivals. However, it seems worth it for the peace of mind digital detox provides (response from a 42-year-old during the interview).

Yes, Fear of missing out exists, especially when people around you discuss something popular or work-related essential while you are out of the circle (response from a 36-year-old during the interview).

DIGITAL IMMIGRANTS ABOUT MISSING THEIR ONLINE FRIENDS:

Digital media becomes a bridge for people to connect virtually and also helps to build friendships. Digital immigrants miss their digital friends during digital detoxification. Most of the digital immigrant participants (5 out of 7 digital natives) say that they sometimes miss their online friends during digital detox.

I sometimes miss my digital friends, but it's an excellent opportunity to deepen offline relationships and engage in more meaningful face-to-face interactions (response from a 30-year-old during the interview).

Yes, especially with the people I talk to regularly. It seemed like something was missing in my day without sharing information or checking in with them (response from a 33-year-old during the interview).

DIGITAL IMMIGRANTS ABOUT THEIR MISSED OPPORTUNITIES/EXPERIENCES DURING DIGITAL DETOXING:

Digital detoxification can sometimes cause us to lose some opportunities or digital experiences. According to participants they missed some online activities or work-related information and most of them (6 out of 7 digital immigrants) said they missed group chat during their offline activities.

During digital detoxification, I missed out on live discussions and instant notifications in WhatsApp groups (response from a 36-year-old during the interview).

During a digital detox, I missed Quick updates on work projects or opportunities offered in professional groups. A casual conversation with friends on WhatsApp or Instagram (response from a 42-year-old during the interview).

DIGITAL IMMIGRANTS ABOUT THEIR ONLINE SHARING BEHAVIOUR DURING DIGITAL DETOXIFICATION:

Nowadays most people are sharing everything via digital media. They mostly share emotions through digital media. According to the researcher's data collection, 5 out of 7 participants said that they missed sharing their activities during digital detoxification.

Yes, because internet platforms can be a convenient way to share your feelings with friends. during digital detox, I occasionally forget to share important achievements or interesting occurrences, especially when I see others doing so(response from a 30-year-old during the interview).

During Digital Detox I occasionally miss sharing my emotions on digital media, Yes, because sharing online can be a convenient method to seek advice or encouragement from friends.(response from a 50-year-old during the interview).

Table 1

Table 1 Theoretical Synthesis		
Variables	Digital Natives	Digital immigrants
Beliefs	Helps to connect with friends and family, and higher use of digital media psychologically disturbing them.	Helps to connect with friends and family, higher use of digital media can affect physical wellbeing
Attitudes	Involvement in offline activities can reduce digital stress, and use apps to monitor their screen time.	Taking a break from digital media or involving in offline activities helps them to reduce digital stress.
Behaviour	They use structured actions to reduce digital stress, and also they involved in offline activities.	They don't use any structured strategies to reduce digital stress, and they are involved in offline activities to reduce digital stress
Perceived Control	They customise their digital notification.	They don't customise their digital notification.
Perceived Importance	They give importance to their family and friends and also educational notifications	They give importance to family and work-related notifications.
Justification	They need digital detoxification to reduce their mental wellness and to improve their focus.	They need digital detoxification to reduce their physical wellness and improve their productiveness.
Magnitude of Dissonance	They felt that the compulsive consumption habit tempted them to use their mobile during digital detoxification, and fear of missing out.	They felt that they will miss something during the digital detoxification.
Selective Exposure	They are doing digital detoxification to maintain their mental wellness and to improve their focus on study.	They are doing it because they don't want physical disturbance and to improve their productivity.
Effort Justification	According to them, so much discipline is needed to do digital detoxification.	They also think so much discipline is needed.
Post-Decision Dissonance	After digital detoxification, they felt reduced stress and felt their focus was improved.	They felt peace and improved concentration
Integration and Social Interaction	They felt the fear of missing out on some online activities during the process of digital detoxification.	They felt the fear of missing out on work-related information.
Companionship	They miss their online friends during the digital detoxification.	They also sometimes miss their digital friends.
Surveillance	They missed some online activities during the digital detoxification.	They missed some online discussions(work-related) during the digital detoxification.
Affective Needs	They share their emotions via social media.	They share their emotions in digital media to get advice.
Social Needs	They have the temptation to share everything in digital media.	They share their achievements and milestones.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The empirical findings of this study reveal deep, structurally distinct variations in how Digital Natives and Digital Migrants experience digital media consumption, psychological distress, and the subsequent necessity for behavioral disconnection. By evaluating these dynamics through the lenses of Cognitive Dissonance Theory and Uses and Gratifications (UandG) Theory, we can better understand the underlying factors driving each generation's relationship with technology.

THE DICHOTOMY OF DISCONNECTION DRIVERS AND COPING MECHANISMS

A critical divergence identified in this research lies in the primary catalyst for pursuing a digital detox. As hypothesized in H-1 and H-2, Digital Natives are fundamentally driven by an internal, psychological overload stemming from continuous, baseline social media immersion and compulsive consumption habits. This state corresponds directly with Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance Theory : younger users are acutely aware that their perpetual connectivity induces stress, anxiety, and fragmented attention spans, yet they feel behaviorally locked into these platforms. To resolve this internal friction, Digital Natives rely on structured, highly digitized countermeasures—such as utilizing software applications like "Digital Wellbeing," customizing complex notification frameworks, and consciously allocating specific windows for offline activity. Conversely, Digital Migrants encounter an entirely different manifestation of cognitive dissonance. Their tipping point is primarily mediated by somatic and tangible disruptions, such as physical exhaustion, headaches, eye strain, or a conscious desire to reclaim hours for real-world interactions and hobbies. Because their psychological identity is not inherently intertwined with digital ecosystems, they do not require structured technological interventions to manage their boundaries. Instead, their detoxification strategies are inherently unstructured, spontaneous, and organic, relying on immediate shifts to offline domains like gardening, cooking, or direct familial engagement.

GRATIFICATION OBSTRUCTION, FOMO, AND THE DISCONNECTION PENALTY

When evaluating the obstacles faced during the detoxification process (\$H_3\$), the Uses and Gratifications Theory provides essential clarity. Both demographics experience a distinct "disconnection penalty," but the structural nature of this penalty varies by generation. For Digital Natives, digital platforms serve as the primary conduit for satisfying affective and social needs, including peer validation, identity performance, and real-time community engagement. When these channels are severed during a detox, their immediate gratification pathways are blocked, triggering intense emotional discomfort, acute boredom, and a highly synchronized form of social Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)—specifically regarding missing peer group chats or spontaneous online milestones. For Digital Migrants, the media gratification profile is historically centered around surveillance, utility, and instrumental information-seeking, particularly regarding professional networking and localized family coordinates. Consequently, their experience with FOMO is remarkably devoid of peer-status anxieties. Instead, their discomfort manifests as pragmatic or professional anxiety—the persistent worry that their offline status will compromise their career availability, cause them to miss time-sensitive workplace updates, or insulate them from critical macroeconomic or familial news events.

IMPLICATIONS FOR DIGITAL WELL-BEING AND SOCIAL INTERVENTIONS

Ultimately, these findings demonstrate that "digital over-saturation" is not a uniform monolithic condition, meaning that generic, one-size-fits-all digital well-being campaigns are fundamentally flawed. Because Digital Natives operate in a state of high-volume, compulsive immersion, they require institutionalized, highly structured frameworks—such as curriculum-integrated digital literacy programs and specialized software tools—to help them negotiate the psychological toll of social comparison and emotional over-sharing. Digital Migrants, on the other hand, require technical empowerment aimed at practical boundary management. Interventions for older generations should focus on navigating workspace communication applications, establishing corporate "right-to-disconnect" protocols to alleviate availability anxieties, and maximizing device-level utility without succumbing to accidental disinformation ecosystems. Recognizing these nuanced generational boundaries is crucial for designing empathetic, targeted strategies that foster sustainable, long-term health in an increasingly hyper-connected society.

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