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MASTER THESIS

WHAT IF WE RECHARGED OURSELVES AS OFTEN AS OUR DIGITAL DEVICES?

INVESTIGATING WORKERS' AND WORKING STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES WITH DIGITAL DETOX USING THE TRANSTHEORETICAL MODEL OF CHANGE

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Preface

The main reason to choose the topic "digital detox" as my thesis subject, stemmed from my interest in the digital age. After reading multiple experiences of people who limited their digital usage, I was fascinated by the amount of passion with which they talked about it. This made me curious: is doing a digital detox really as beneficial as it is presented, or are there also difficulties and obstacles that are not mentioned? Therefore, I wanted to analyze several digital detox experiences to provide a full and considered image of this practice. In order to create this image, I needed to write a master thesis, which was the icing on the cake in obtaining my master's degree Strategic Communication at the University of Antwerp. The realization of this thesis was an intense and long process that required a lot of hard work, which made the final result even more rewarding.

In truth, I would like to show my appreciation to the people who were involved in this thesis. First of all, I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Wannes Heirman for providing me with useful feedback on the right moments. He was always available for giving valuable advice and was willing to answer my queries. Also, I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Steven Malliet for taking the time to read and evaluate this master thesis. The respondents who participated in this study deserve a special thanks as well, without whose cooperation the research goal could not have been fulfilled. I also want to thank Luna Staes for helping me with the interobserver reliability and Christine Wittoeckx of the Digital Detox Academy for assisting me in finding the right amount of participants. Lastly, I would like to thank my family and friends for supporting me and believing in me throughout the whole process.

Kristof Smet, May 20th, 2020

Abstract

Steeds vaker nemen mensen bewust maatregelen om het gebruik van digitale toestellen te limiteren, ook wel bekend als een digitale detox. Deze studie onderzoekt de ervaringen van werkenden en werkstudenten die in het verleden bewust een digitale detox hebben ondernomen. Om inzicht te verkrijgen in de ervaringen van deze groep, werden 14 face-to-face interviews afgenomen. Uit de resultaten blijkt dat er verschillende vormen bestaan van een digitale detox, afhankelijk van de duur, de mate van extreemheid en de plaats van de detox. De redenen om een digitale detox te ondernemen zijn meestal gezondheidsgerelateerd of vloeien voort uit opmerkingen vanuit de omgeving. Digitale detox wordt gezien als een proces waarbij de verschillende fasen vaak door elkaar gebeuren. Tijdens dit proces spelen de werkomgeving en de sociale omgeving een belangrijke rol. Hoewel de meeste deelnemers soms ook negatieve ervaringen hadden met hun digitale detox, zoals de angst om bepaalde zaken te missen of onbegrip vanuit hun omgeving, benadrukte iedereen dat ze dankzij hun digitale detox nieuwe inzichten hebben opgedaan en hun digitaal gedrag hebben aangepast. Vervolgonderzoek kan deze trend verder bestuderen. Bedrijven en werkgevers zouden op basis van de bevindingen hun beleid kunnen optimaliseren indien nodig.

Keywords: digital detox; disconnection studies; smartphones; workers; working students; TTM

Word count: 12.167

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1 Introduction

Digital detox, defined as "a disconnection from social or online media, or strategies to reduce digital media involvement" (Syvertsen & Enli, 2019, p. 1), is a relatively new term in our technological world. Mobile devices, especially smartphones, have taken a central place in our lives (Dickinson, Hibbert, & Filimonau, 2016). The advent of smartphones has altered our way of communicating with each other, such that more users feel almost inseparable from their mobile devices (Kneidinger-Müller, 2019). Multiple times a day, people feel the urge to look at their smartphones (Lin et al., 2015). Although it has positive aspects, the ubiquity of smartphones potentially leads to phubbing (see section 2.2.1: being on your smartphone while having a face-to-face conversation), continuous connection and blurred boundaries between work and private life (Fox & Moreland, 2015; Vanhaelewyn & De Marez, 2018). In response, a countermovement has arisen. Stories of people who have intentionally attempted to limit their smartphone use are progressively emerging (Paisley, 2018; Sutton, 2017).

Because most academic literature focuses on the use of digital technologies rather than the trend to step away from them, this thesis wants to shed light upon this under-explored latter phenomenon. The few pieces of research that have studied digital detox (Hoving, 2017; Neuhofer, Buhalis, & Ladkin, 2017), do not give attention to the development of digital detox, while even less is known about the interpretation that digital detoxers themselves give to the phenomenon. Given that the understanding of the intentional non-use of technology is rather scattered, this thesis seeks to expand knowledge about it.

The study is relevant to behavioral scholars through its application of the transtheoretical model of change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983). This model has been applied to several social phenomena, such as smoking (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983), adolescent physical exercise behavior (Nigg & Courneya, 1998) and travel behavioral change (Friman, Huck, & Olsson, 2017), but this study is the first to implement this model in the context of digital detox. In addition, media scholars have more knowledge about digital refusal and digital disconnection. Moreover, digital users, and more specifically smartphone users, are provided with insights that could give them a better understanding of the nature of digital detox and how to approach it. Furthermore, the results are also relevant to work-related contexts. Employers and employees receive tips that could help them in making digital use at work healthier when needed.

The first part of the study consists of a literature study, which is conducted to review current knowledge on the topic, as well as to assess what research gaps still need to be filled. The main goal of the study is to investigate workers' and working students' experiences with digital detox. To achieve this objective, the following three research questions have been listed:

- **<u>How</u> do digital detoxers <u>define</u> digital detox?**
- **<u>Why</u> did digital detoxers <u>decide</u> to do a digital detox?**
- **<u>To what extent</u> does the process of digital detoxing <u>coincide</u> with the <u>stages of the transtheoretical model of change</u>?**

The second part of the study includes the research methodology. This section begins by explaining the usefulness of a pilot study, followed by describing the chosen research method, namely face-to-face in-depth interviews. Then, the sample is characterized alongside the criteria participants have to meet in order to be selected. This is followed by a description of the recruitment of the participants. Thirdly, to analyze the interviews, the qualitative program Nvivo is used. To measure the degree of consistency for around 10% of the interview transcripts, interobserver reliability is applied. In the results section, the findings from the interviews are described. Lastly, the discussion section provides an answer to the three research questions and indicates some limitations of the study as well as some suggestions for future research. Then, both academic and practitioner implications are mentioned, ended by the conclusion.

2 State of the Art

This literature review begins by identifying the emergence of digital detox in the academic literature. In this part, the concept will be put into context, mentioning different forms digital detox could contain and discussing a typology of digital detox forms. To shine more light upon the different types of digital non-users, both Wyatt's (2003) and Aranda and Baig's (2018) typologies will be used. Then, the positive as well as the negative effects of digital detox will be listed. The latter part will form the bridge to a discussion of smartphones, which are often closely associated with digital detox (Floros, Cai, McKenna, & Ajeeb, 2019; Li, Pearce, & Low, 2018). This section offers a nuanced view of smartphone use, with attention to the pros and cons of smartphones. To end the literature review, the process that digital detoxers may go through when trying to adapt their digital behavior will be illustrated. The transtheoretical model of change provided by Prochaska and DiClemente (1983) is used to detail this process.

2.1 Digital detox: an increasingly prevalent term

In recent years, the term "detox" has been extensively used by health scientists, most frequently in the context of food restriction (Kim, Hwang, Ko, Na, & Kim, 2015; Klein & Kiat, 2015). However, "digital" detox is an emerging phenomenon in the current era of digitization. The topic is becoming an important area of interest within the fields of behavioral and social sciences and even in the tourism industry (Cai, McKenna, & Waizenegger, 2019; Dickinson et al., 2016).

2.1.1 Digital detox contextualized

Digital detox can be placed in the tradition of media resistance (Syvertsen & Enli, 2019) and disconnection studies (Kaun & Treré, 2018). The associations several authors make with digital detox exemplify this, which include "virtual suicide" (e.g. Brubaker et al., 2016; Stieger et al., 2013), "absent presence" (e.g. Floros et al., 2019; White & White, 2007), "cold turkey" (e.g. Melton, Verhulsdonck, Shah, & Dunn, 2019) and "media refusal" (e.g. Portwood-Stacer, 2013). A paradox exists which makes it difficult to clearly understand the topic (Wiederhold, 2017). Numerous authors mention that fully unplugging is impossible and suggest that the desire to detox differs from the ability to do so (Ayeh, 2018; Dickinson et al., 2016; Floros et al., 2019). Others argue that digital "detach" is a more appropriate term (Jones, 2018; Szablewicz, 2019), noting that digital "detox" is too extreme. It needs to be understood that "uninstalling is not leaving, and deleting is not departing" (Brubaker et al., 2016, p. 386). In sum, academics hold different views toward digital detox.

The complexity of digital detox is also visible in the variations it has (Hoving, 2017). First, digital detox can vary in duration (Aranda & Baig, 2018). People can do a temporary digital detox, for example for four weeks (Allcott, Braghieri, Eichmeyer, & Gentzkow, 2019). However, they can also opt to make a lifestyle of it (Portwood-Stacer, 2013), which would imply the consideration of digital detox as a long-term rather than a short-term practice. Second, digital detox can be extreme or moderate (Miksch & Schulz, 2018). In the first case, digital users abandon their digital tools completely. They withdraw from them and completely cease their use (Tams et al., 2018). A milder form of digital detox is social media detox, whereby an individual cuts down their time spent on social media platforms like Facebook or Instagram, without fully abandoning digital media (Lepik & Murumaa-Mengel, 2018). Last, digital detox can vary in place: it can be done during holidays or daily life (Woodstock, 2014). Nowadays, there are holiday destinations that are specifically designed to detox mind and body from digital (over)use (Ayeh, 2018; Floros et al., 2019; Voase, 2018). A real digital escape market has arisen (Paris, Berger, Rubin, & Casson, 2015). Thus, digital detox ca spatiotemporal (Kuntsman & Miyake, 2019) and situational (Hesselberth, 2018). In order to understand what this means for the different types of digital non-users, it is useful to take a closer look at the typologies of Wyatt (2003) and Aranda and Baig (2018).

Duration	Short period or long period
Level of extremeness	Abandoning digital tools completely or use them in a limited way
Place	At home or on holiday

Table 1: Different forms of digital detox

2.1.2 Typologies of digital non-users

Whereas various taxonomies of digital users exist in the literature (Brandtzæg, 2010; Dutton & Reisdorf, 2019), few typologies of digital non-users exist. Nevertheless, Wyatt's two-by-two typology pays sufficient attention to digital non-users (Wyatt, 2003). His typology is highly influential in the differentiation of digital users from digital non-users (Baumer et al., 2013; Birnholtz, 2010; Hesselberth, 2018; Portwood-Stacer, 2013). Wyatt (2003) clarifies that digital non-use can either be chosen or enforced. Furthermore, he distinguishes whether or not an individual was a previous user. These two dimensions result in four types of people who (choose to) disconnect (Wyatt, 2003):

1. "Resisters" are people who never used digital tools in the first place and who remain disconnected voluntarily.
2. "Rejecters" are former users who purposely choose to disconnect.
3. "Excluded" people are prevented from using digital technology against their will.
4. "Expelled" people are forced to stop but have used digital technology before.

While worthy of scholarly attention, "resisters", "excluded" and "expelled" people will not be considered as relevant to the objective of this thesis, which is restricted to "rejecters", people who intentionally choose to digitally disconnect. Baumer et al. (2013) note that Wyatt's typology has been nuanced by Satchell and Dourish (2009), who expanded Wyatt's four categories to six and specified that these categories refer to human-computer interactions: lagging adoption, active resistance, disenchantment, disenfranchisement, displacement and disinterest (Satchell & Dourish, 2009). The typology of Satchell and Dourish would be more useful if it accounted for whether the non-user was ever a user, which is an important recruitment criterion for selecting respondents. For this reason, Wyatt's typology is preferred.

Of mention, Wyatt's typology dates from the early 2000s and consequently does not take into account current digitization trends. Aranda and Baig (2018) came up with a more contemporary typology that also uses two dimensions: long-term versus short-term disconnection and forced versus voluntary disconnection (Figure 1). Contrary to Wyatt (2003), the typology of Aranda and Baig (2018) does not separate digital users from non-digital users; everyone is considered a user. Besides its recentness, the typology of Aranda and Baig (2018) was also chosen because it focuses on smartphone behavior, which fits well with the core of this thesis. Aranda and Baig (2018) found that most of their participants decided to use a short-term approach to perform the detox. Again, not all the categories are useful for this thesis. Only the dimension "voluntary disconnect" is suitable because of the reason mentioned above.
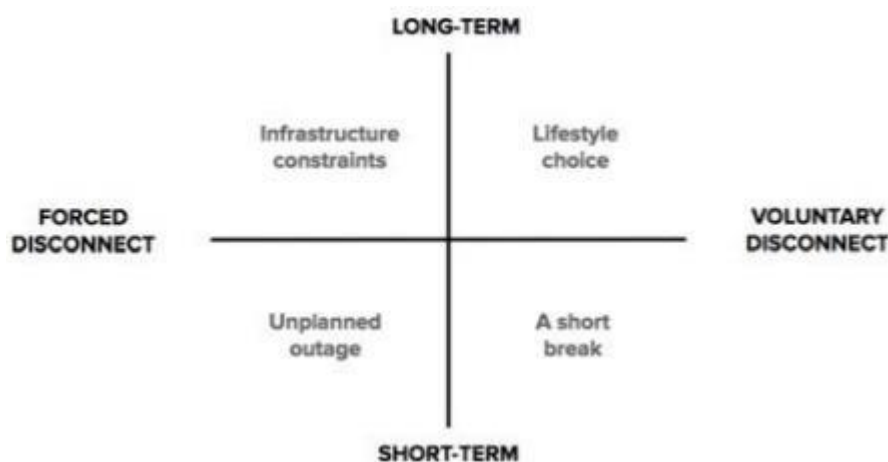

Figure 1: Four conditions of disconnection (Aranda & Baig, 2018, p.4)

2.1.3 Digital detox: a miracle cure to solve digital maladaptation?

Since we now have an idea of what digital detox involves, it is useful to assess its advantages and disadvantages. The possible benefits of digital detox have been well documented. It improves sleep, enhances mindfulness and reduces feelings of stress (Kushlev & Dunn, 2015). In addition, digital detox practitioners pay more attention to real-life interactions and are more socially connected (Kushlev, Proulx, & Dunn, 2016). An experiment performed by Allcott et al. (2019) revealed that the deactivation of Facebook increased personal well-being and created more intense contact with people in real life. Some people stated they had more time to do useful things (Alcott et al., 2019).

These results are similar to those reported by Vanman, Baker, and Tobin (2018), who found that taking a detox from Facebook improved subjective well-being and lowered stress. Importantly, this was mostly observed in frequent Facebook users (Vanman et al., 2018). One difference with the study of Alcott et al. (2019) is that Vanman et al. (2018) assessed participants who deactivated their accounts for five days, whereas the participants of Alcott et al. (2019) deactivated theirs for four weeks. This difference in deactivation time could lead to different feelings and behavior. Another critical remark is that all the respondents originally used Facebook intensively (Vanman et al., 2018). Other effects might be observed in less-active Facebook users, such as a smaller difference in stress level.

Assuming that digital detox only has positive effects, however, is somewhat short-sighted. Research indicates that people could experience feelings of fear of missing out, also known as FoMO - being afraid to miss important information by not consulting a smartphone frequently enough (Hodkinson, 2019; Przybylski, Murayama, DeHaan, & Gladwell, 2013; Roberts & David, 2019). Cheever, Rosen, Carrier, and Chavez (2014) say that FoMO is a reality for all generations, not only for young adults. People do not want to be socially excluded (Floros et al., 2019). Instead, they want to belong somewhere and do not want to miss out on an event (Beyens et al., 2016). This could make it difficult for people to maintain their digital detox (Van Velthoven, Powell, and Powell, 2018).

Researchers state that FoMO is a very important factor contributing to nomophobia (Gezgin, Hamutoglu, Sezen-Gultekin, & Gemikonakli, 2018). When people put their phones away, they often experience nomophobia (Deyan, 2019), defined as "the discomfort or anxiety caused by the non-availability of a mobile phone" (King et al., 2013, p. 1). Nomophobia is an abbreviation for no mobile phone phobia (Yildirim, Sumuer, Adnan, & Yildirim, 2016), a concept that has only recently emerged (King, Valença, & Nardi, 2010). Nomophobia was even ranked the people's word of 2018 (Cambridge Words), indicating the relevance of the word for the

current, digitized era. Four dimensions of nomophobia have been described: being unable to communicate, losing connectedness, not being able to access information and giving up convenience (Yildirim & Correia, 2015).

Given the novelty of digital detox, it has no clear conceptualization (Hesselberth, 2018; Kuntsman, & Miyake, 2019). Nonetheless, there are several elements that occur repeatedly in authors' definitions that can give us some impression of what digital detox is about. Digital detox is often related to the overuse of digital devices (Varma, 2018), a mental state of destress (Syvertsen & Enli, 2019) and smartphones (Floros et al., 2019; Li et al., 2018). This combination enables us to take a deeper look into the role smartphones play in digital detox.

2.2   Smartphones: more harmful than helpful?

Many people perceive their smartphones as indispensable (Vanhaelewyn & De Marez, 2018) and think they are smartphone-reliant (Pew Research Center, 2019). Such smartphone use is defined by Van Velthoven(2018) as "an inability to regulate one's use of the mobile phone, which eventually involves negative consequences in daily life" (p.1). The 2019 Digimeter shows an increase in the number of people who are imposing rules to control their smartphone usage (Vanhaelewyn & De Marez, 2019), which is why the smartphone is often the central digital tool in digital detox.

2.2.1   Phubbing

More than 80% of Flemish people feel annoyed when a friend is on his or her smartphone during a face-to-face conversation (Vanhaelewyn & De Marez, 2018). Paying less attention to a conversation partner because of the need to check a smartphone is referred to as "phubbing" (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016; Kelly, Miller-Ott, & Duran, 2019). When someone phubs, the behavior is often perceived as presenting a disrespectful attitude toward the conversation partner (Karadağ et al., 2015), who feels ignored and socially excluded (David & Roberts, 2017). In addition to social relationships, phubbing could also affect romantic relationships. When a partner phubs and is thus perceived to be distracted during conversation, conflicts may arise (Roberts & David, 2016). The romantic partner may feel neglected and jealous (Krasnova, Abramova, Notter, & Baumann, 2016). In short, phubbing could create emotional distance between people (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016). The ability to connect with people in the flesh has been compromised.

2.2.2 Constant connection

A possible explanation of why people phub is that they may feel pressured to be constantly available and permanently connected (Fox & Moreland, 2015). Even though being continuously available can lead to quickly responding to certain matters, it can also impair work performance (Andreassen, 2015), which is the case for working people (Li & Lin, 2019). Derks and Bakker (2014) indicated that constant connection blurs boundaries between work and private life, making it harder for employees to disconnect from work in their free time (Floros et al., 2019). They may overthink work and multitask, which could be detrimental for mental health (Kotera, Green, & Sheffield, 2019; Lastovkova et al., 2018).

Derks and Bakker (2014) demonstrate that, to be able to experience less work-home interference, employees should psychologically detach from work, which may allow for improved focus and more energy. The authors indicate that especially intensive smartphone users would benefit from the practice of disconnecting from digital media during time away from work (Derks & Bakker, 2014). When these kinds of measures are not taken, it may lead to severe implications (Derks & Bakker, 2014). For example, related feelings of stress could arise (Reinecke et al., 2017) and in extreme cases may even lead to a burn-out (Hooftman et al., 2019; Scott et al., 2017; Van Zoonen & Rice, 2017).

Constant smartphone users tend to worry more about social media negatively affecting their mental health than those who visit their smartphones less frequently (Bethune & Lewan, 2017). Unlike other researchers, Bethune and Lewan (2017) also considered parents' points of view. Parents indicated that they felt mentally separated from their children, even while physically being in the same room (Bethune & Lewan, 2017), a phenomenon also known as "symbolic compartmentalization" (Van Rompaey & Roe, 2004, p. 233). At the same time, constant users of smartphones are concerned about the leakage of personal information (Choi, 2016). Companies such as Google utilize personally released data to provide targeted content, to predict thought and even to monitor it (Sharma & Ahuja, 2019). Most people, however, want to be able to choose for themselves which information becomes public and which should remain private (Sharma & Ahuja, 2019). Surprisingly, such concerns do not affect user enjoyment (Choi, 2016). When people use, for instance, Facebook, they are more satisfied with their lives because likes and positive comments enhance feelings of social support (Brailovskaia & Margraf, 2016).

2.3   Conceptual framework: the transtheoretical model of change

According to Brubaker et al. (2016) and Cai et al. (2019), digital detox is a gradual process that elicits different emotions. The transtheoretical model of change (Figure 2) could be a useful model to illustrate the process by which healthier behavior and a healthier state of mind are achieved: in the case of this master thesis, healthier smartphone behavior. Prochaska and DiClemente (1983), the creators of the cyclical model, originally used it to describe the stages smokers go through while trying to stop smoking without professional intervention. However, later research has applied this model to varied behaviors and populations, for example to those people quitting cocaine, attempting to reduce body fat or wanting to exercise more (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). It is important to note that this model assumes that behavioral change is intentional and that it takes some time; it does not happen quickly.

The initial model, as illustrated in Figure 2, has five stages: precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action and maintenance (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983). In time, a sixth stage was added, namely termination. This stage is not often mentioned, as it rarely occurs in real life (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). To progress through the different stages, ten processes of change have been identified: consciousness raising, dramatic relief, environmental reevaluation, helping relationships, reinforcement management, self-liberation, self-reevaluation, social-liberation, counterconditioning and stimulus control (Clark, 2013). Despite the relevance these processes have, for practical reasons the focus will lie on the stages instead of the processes of change. Hereafter, each stage will be elucidated while also briefly discussing the limitations and strengths of the model.
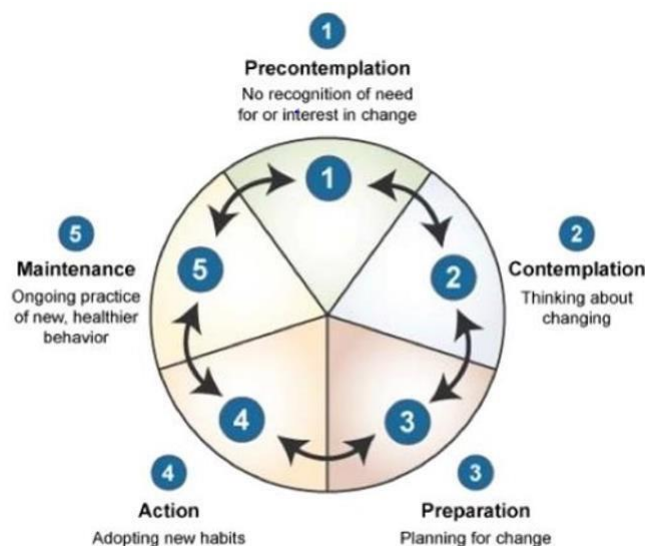

Figure 2: Transtheoretical therapy: Toward a more integrative model of change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1982, p. 283).

2.3.1 The stages of change

People who are in the first stage, precontemplation, have no intention to take action within the next six months (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). They are unaware that their behavior possibly needs to change because they have not yet experienced unhealthy outcomes (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). They put great emphasis on the disadvantages and underestimate the advantages of the change in behavior (Sholl, 2019). Thus, they are not ready to change. They feel unmotivated and reject information about their high-risk behavior (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). When people reach the second stage, contemplation, there is an intent to change within the next six months (Sholl, 2019). However, they still lack commitment and do not know how to begin; they procrastinate. Still, they begin to realize that their current behavior may be unhealthy (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). They give equal weight to the advantages of change as to the disadvantages, although they still experience ambivalence (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). Positively, people in the second stage identify unaddressed obstacles.

During the third stage, preparation, people feel ready to take action in the immediate future (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). They begin to set goals, make arrangements and inform others about their plans. They show greater self-confidence and commitment (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). People in the preparation stage are increasingly aware of overuse. The process at this point is not about gaining major benefits; rather, progress is made in small steps (Sholl, 2019). Although the advantages of a digital detox are felt to outweigh the disadvantages, there is still work to be done. People may get stuck in this stage if they are impatient or if they are not yet ready (Sholl, 2019). The fourth stage, action, is the least stable stage of change and therefore has the greatest risk of relapse (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). In this stage, the behavior has been overtly altered within the last six months; people have acted differently and intend to maintain such behavior (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). External support is crucial here (Sholl, 2019). People focus on progress; they know that it takes time and energy to change to healthy behavior.

Maintenance, the fifth stage, is characterized by the avoidance of obstacles that could result in relapse into old, unhealthy behavior (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). During maintenance, people are confident they can abide by their changes and have sustained their behavior for a minimum of six months (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). Yet, there are events that could trigger recurrence, such as boredom, stress or a major life event (Sholl, 2019). Hence, taking precautions can be necessary. As mentioned, the sixth stage, termination, is rarely reached, which is why it is not often considered in other research. People who reach this stage are fully sure they will not relapse; the new, healthy behavior has become part of their identity

(Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). They have continued this behavior for at least two years (Sholl, 2019).

2.3.2   Strenghts and limitations of the model

The transtheoretical model of change has several strengths. First, it is used by professionals around the world, indicating global relevance (Van Leer, Hapner, & Connor, 2008). Second, the model has experienced breakthroughs and changes over the years, which makes it adaptable to environmental changes and appropriate for several contexts (Burkholder & Nigg, 2002; Friman, Huck, & Olsson, 2017). Third, it accounts for relapse during the stages of change and considers this a normal part of the process if it happens (Gökbayrak, Paiva, Blissmer, & Prochaska, 2015). Last, it can be used to provide tailored suggestions for public health. For example, people who are still in the first stage will to be approached differently than people who are already in the third stage (Wilson & Schlam, 2004).

Despite these upsides, it is important to mention a few limitations of the model. First, people do not always make logical and coherent decisions and progress is often nonlinear (Van Leer et al., 2008). Second, the model ignores social context, including factors such as socioeconomic status (SES) and income. Third, the model uses an arbitrary separation of stages (Friman, Huck, & Olsson, 2017). Last but not least, the model mentions timeframes of six months and two years, whereas those timeframes in fact depend on numerous factors and can vary in length (Romain, Horwath, & Bernard, 2018).

3   Problem formulation

As demonstrated at the start of the literature study, only a small number of studies have addressed digital detox. Digital detox is not an easy term to grasp, given its many variations (Hoving, 2017). The nature of digital detox can namely differ according to duration (Aranda & Baig, 2018), level of extremeness (Miksch & Schulz, 2018), place (Woodstock, 2014) and voluntariness (Aranda & Baig, 2018; Wyatt, 2003). With this complexity in mind, it is opportune to understand more specifically how digital detox is perceived by those that have performed one. This leads to the first research question of this thesis.

> **Research question 1: How do digital detoxers define digital detox?**

In the previous paragraphs of this study it has become clear that maladaptation with smartphone use has already received sufficient attention from academics and behavioral scientists. The ubiquity of smartphones could create an environment where people feel they must be available constantly (Fox & Moreland, 2015). When people rely on their smartphone, it is difficult for them to put their phone aside (Vanhaelewyn & De Marez, 2018). Further, research has also been applied to negative effects of smartphone use, such as addiction (Baumer et al., 2013), jealousy (Stieger, Burger, Bohn, & Voracek, 2013), privacy concerns (Baumer et al., 2013; Portwood-Stacer, 2013) or work tensions (Paris et al., 2015). However, an open question in the literature remains what reasons and motivations people have to decide to do a digital detox. Our second research question aims to elucidate and specify the reasons and motivations for which people choose to limit their smartphone use.

> **Research question 2: Why do digital detoxers decide to do a digital detox?**

As illustrated, the transtheoretical model of change has little empirical support and has never been applied to digital detox before. Thus, this thesis seeks to contribute to the academic literature by being the first study to apply the transtheoretical model of change to the concept of digital detox. The objective is to see how the digital detox process is constrained. The few qualitative studies that exist about digital detox, point out that it would be useful to better understand the experience of digital detox (Neuhofer, Buhalis, & Ladkin, 2017) and to investigate the aftermath (Hoving, 2017). This leads to the third and final research question.

> **Research question 3: To what extent does the process of digital detoxing coincide with the stages of the transtheoretical model of change?**

These three research questions will help the reader to gain more insight into the objective of this thesis, which is to investigate the experiences of workers and working students with digital detox using the transtheoretical model of change.

4   Research methodology

4.1   Pilot study

To test whether the questionnaire was feasible, comprehensible and workable, a pilot study was conducted (participant 1). Importantly, the participants in a pilot study match the profile of the participants in the main study (Dikko, 2016). Such accurate representation helps to provide a clear assessment of the quality and efficiency of the questionnaire (In, 2017). The pilot study was conducted with a 49-year-old male working student. As the interview went on, it became clear that some questions needed to be adjusted or excluded. These were questions where the design disrupted the rhythm and flow of the interview or were questions that felt more appropriate to a survey. After having made these particular final changes, the questionnaire (see appendix) was ready to be used for the participants. We followed the advice of Kim (2011), who states that the results of a pilot study should not be incorporated in those of the main study.

4.2   Face-to-face interviews

Since the aim of the study is to explore the experiences of workers and working students with digital detox, the present study is a qualitative study. In-depth interviews and a semi-structured questionnaire helped to formulate answers to the three research questions. The reason to choose in-depth interviews is because they provide more detailed information than would, for example, focus groups (Stokes & Bergin, 2006). An individual's reasons for doing a digital detox could stem from personal circumstances and choices (Kneidinger-Müller, 2019), which some participants might not like to share in front of several strangers during a focus group. Moreover, in-depth interviews enable the researcher to gain more insight into the experiences and underlying motives behind digital detox, which could not be provided to a sufficient extent using, for example, a survey. However, in-depth interviews are individual, which is why the interviewee has to rely on his views alone. This would not be true with focus groups, where the different participants can inspire each other to enrich their arguments through group dynamics effects (Stokes & Bergin, 2006). To solve this during the interview, the interviewer asked additional questions when the interviewee gave unclear or unelaborated answers.

During face-to-face-interviews, the interviewer is able to keep the interviewee focused and can capture nonverbal emotions and behaviors. Performing interviews online, for example, would require more motivation on the part of the interviewee, as during this kind of interview the interviewer has weaker contact with the interviewee (Opdenakker, 2006). Also, technical issues such as a poor internet connection can frustrate the interview.

The semi-structured questionnaire functioned as a guideline for the interviews. On some occasions, deviation from the questionnaire was applied to when a certain question had already been sufficiently answered or when new questions spontaneously arose that asked for more detailed information (e.g. "Hoe bedoelt ge dan 'opzoeken'?"). It was estimated that the face-to-face interviews would take approximately one hour, but it turned out that this was slightly less according to the interviewee's willingness to answer and the degree of detail of the answers. The shortest interview took 20 minutes whereas the longest one lasted almost 55 minutes. Judging by the length of some answers, the interviews sometimes felt like story-telling, which lead to interesting information but also, in some cases, to participants diverging from the original question, as is shown in the following example:

Participant 7 (24 year, female): *"Yeah, it's not possible because of my job, but I find that really fascina… I don't remember the question, I've deviated so much, haha."*

Regarding the number of interviews, Hennink, Kaiser, and Marconi (2016) recommend conducting a maximum of 20 interviews. However, we followed the advice of Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) who recommend conducting interviews until the point of theoretical saturation. After 14 interviews, no new information arose, which meant that the point of theoretical saturation had been reached.

4.3 Sample selection

Not everyone was eligible for the in-depth face-to-face interviews. Individuals had to meet certain criteria in order to be selected. First, they had to be sampled from the working population, because individuals in this group are at the highest risk of burn-out due to unhealthy smartphone behavior (Mellner, 2016; NCES, n.d.). Working students were also relevant because they form a group that can potentially face some maladaptation with their digital devices when working permanently in the future. As mentioned earlier, only individuals who have used digital technologies in the past - in particular, smartphones - were considered. This is in accordance with Wyatt's (2003) category of "rejecters", in which people choose to do digital detox instead of being forced to. Due to his/her status as an experienced expert in digital

detox, participant 11 had a slightly divergent profile from the others. Consequently, fewer quotes from this participant were selected in the analysis. Sufficient attention has been paid to statements of other participants as well.

Participant No.	Nationality	Date	Worker or working student	Age	Location
Participant 1	Belgian	29/01	Working student	49	University
Participant 2	Belgian	9/02	Working student	27	At home
Participant 3	Dutch	10/02	Working student	24	University
Participant 4	Belgian	11/02	Worker	50	University
Participant 5	Belgian	12/02	Worker	46	Turnhout
Participant 6	Belgian	15/02	Worker	27	University
Participant 7	Belgian	17/02	Working student	24	University
Participant 8	Dutch	19/02	Working student	48	University
Participant 9	Dutch	20/02	Worker	26	University
Participant 10	Belgian	21/02	Worker	44	University
Participant 11	Belgian	22/02	Worker	51	Hotel
Participant 12	Belgian	24/02	Worker	22	At home
Participant 13	Belgian	26/02	Working student	54	University
Participant 14	Belgian	26/02	Working student	24	University

Table 2: Information about the participants and interviews

4.4   Procedure

It was difficult to find enough participants for the study, given that having performed an extreme digital detox might render subjects less accessible. To recruit enough participants, the snowball technique was used (Etikan, Alkassim, & Abubakar, 2016). In this technique, a relevant participant spreads a message to other relevant participants who meet the required qualifications for selection (Dusek, Yurova, & Ruppel, 2015). The founder of the Digital Detox Academy in Flanders offered to spread a message on LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook, which brought in five participants. Then, a message was posted on the author's Instagram and Facebook, which was shared a few times, and yielded three extra participants. One relevant family member also volunteered to be interviewed. Lastly, an e-mail was sent to all FSW working students of Antwerp University, gaining another seven participants. Two participants ceased to respond and were therefore excluded from the participant list. In the e-mail that was sent to the participants, the definition of digital detox that Syvertsen and Enli (2019, p. 1) was used, namely "a disconnection from social or online media, or strategies to reduce digital media involvement". To increase response rate, a single participant was to receive two cinema tickets. The winner was chosen randomly after the fourteen interviews had been conducted.

After reading the informed consent document, which lists all relevant and ethically required information, individuals voluntarily signed the declaration of consent. If they decided not to, which did not happen, the interview would not take place. To ensure anonymity, the names of the participants were not used in the analysis. Instead, we used general terminology (e.g. participant 1, participant 7) followed by the age and gender of the participant. The audio recordings of the interviews were deleted once the interviews were transcribed. The data will be stored and protected on the promotor's laptop and will be deleted after ten years.

4.5 Data analysis and interobserver reliability

Unlike quantitative data, qualitative data is not directly measurable. Therefore, the interview transcripts had to be coded first in order to be analyzed in greater detail (Mortelmans, 2007). The qualitative software program NVivo was used to code the data. To begin the analysis, the first step was to determine which part would be used as a label (Mortelmans, 2007). Depending on the amount of relevant information, this was either a sentence or a paragraph. Next, codes were used to label these sentences and paragraphs. Importantly, during the open coding, interpretation was not allowed (Mortelmans, 2007). Afterwards, the open codes were elevated to a higher level of abstraction, which is the axial coding (Mortelmans, 2007). At this level, concepts arose and patterns became visible. To end the analysis in NVivo, the concepts were joined to form a whole (Mortelmans, 2007). This combination created insights that were highly useful to explain and illustrate the findings.

This thesis has also applied interobserver reliability. After coding the interview transcripts and making the codebook, the codebook and Nvivo file were sent to a fellow FSW student, who coded approximately 10% of each of the 13 interviews (the pilot study was excluded), where a different part of each interview was to be coded to ensure variety. Afterwards, the author coded those parts himself. Then, Cohen's Kappa was calculated, which amounted to 0.62, implying a substantial agreement (McHugh, 2012). The student also wrote several memos that were useful in the discussion of the codes. For example, the parent node "INFL Family" was extended with a child node "INFL Family\Opinion". A new node was also added, namely "INFL Others", to clarify that a person performed a digital detox because somebody in his environment also did so. The student observed that digital detox is a process with ups and downs and experimentation, whether or not such experiments are of help. Twice the student did not know where to code a specific fragment, so we discussed together where we thought it was best to put the fragment. To meet the ethical requirements, the student signed a document (see appendix) where she promised to keep the data to herself and would delete it at the appropriate moment.

5 Results

In this research, fourteen in-depth interviews were conducted and formed the fundaments for the results. In this section, the three research questions (How do digital detoxers define digital detox? Why did digital detoxers decide to do digital detox? To what extent does the process of digital detoxing coincide with the stages of the transtheoretical model of change?) will be answered.

5.1 Definition of digital detox

Contrasts in visions emerged during the interviews concerning the duration, level of extremeness and place of digital detox. First of all, there were different perspectives on the duration of the detox. A minority of participants, both workers and working students, saw digital detox as something temporary. They thought it is a practice to do for a few days or a few weeks at most, because it would be ineffective for them to be absent for a long period of time. In one case, a digital detox was compared to going on a diet, which suggests that it is a short-term action. However, the majority of participants saw digital detox as a long-term action, because they believed that doing a detox for a short period will maybe help users temporarily, but in the long run they will more easily relapse into their old routines. According to them, digital detoxing needs to become a lifestyle. One participant believed that doing a digital detox from a short-term approach will eventually be beneficial on a long-term basis, as this quote illustrates:

> Participant 6 (27 year, male): *"I think that doing a digital detox for a short period of time will help in the long run. If I can say every day 'I will put my phone aside for the next three hours because I have to work on a certain task' and I can maintain that constantly, it will help me on the long-term to grow and improve."*

Furthermore, contrasts arose on the level of extremeness of digital detox. On the one hand, some participants had a radical perception of digital detox, namely abandoning their smartphones completely and not going on them. On the other hand, some participants saw digital detox as a practice in which users continue to use their smartphone but limit their use. A few participants believed that the intensity of a digital detox is related to the level of smartphone dependency a person exhibits. According to them, when a person is very reliant on their smartphone, that person will be more likely to perform an extreme digital detox. When someone is less dependent, one will likely opt for a moderate digital detox. This demonstrates that the degree of smartphone dependency could influence someone's choice for a moderate or an extreme form of digital detox.

Participant 10 (44 year, female): *"I personally think there is a huge difference between 'I am going offline for one or two weeks' versus 'I try to handle my smartphone usage consciously'. I have done the 'cold turkey', which is very pleasant to do. At the same time it is not possible to do this in daily life as well. Living without a smartphone is just not realistic anymore. But trying to deal with it wisely is something else."*

Participant 14 (24 year, female): *"That detox should become a part of your life rather than being a quick phase to make you feel better for just a while."*

Moreover, digital detox varied in place. Most of the participants performed their digital detox in daily life. Three participants did their detox while being on holiday. Two of those went offline for one week during a hike in Lapland in the context of digital free travel. The participants who did a digital detox holiday had a different type of detox compared to someone who incorporated it into their daily life. When doing a digital detox in daily life, it appeared that there were more triggers that had to be resisted to if the detox was to be a success, as mentioned by participant 12. On holiday, people could have more time to think and reflect upon the things that are going on in their lives. The fact that many participants decided to do a digital detox in daily life may imply that they want to change their way of life.

Participant 12 (22 year, female): *"Actually, it happens automatically on holiday, so you do not have to think about it that much. […] During the daily grind it is much easier to take your smartphone."*

Regardless of the perception the participant had of digital detox, all but one participant acknowledged that a smartphone has positive aspects (e.g. staying in touch with people, compactness and practical matters). Whether a person did a digital detox for a long or short period, an extreme or a moderate one, the smartphone was still perceived as a useful tool, as long as the participants did not feel controlled by it. Notwithstanding the positive attitudes towards smartphones, participant 8 showed an aversion towards them. An explanation for this aversion could be that, because of her age, this person has lived through the evolution of digitization. She knew what life was like before smartphones and was therefore able to compare it to the current condition. She felt that a smartphone controlled everything. Some participants mentioned that there are generational differences. For example, younger participants had the impression that older people were using smartphones for different reasons or that they did not spend much time on a smartphone, which could mean that there may be age differences in the perception of digital detox.

Participant 2 (27 year, female): *"I believe that people in their twenties use it as a form of relaxation and against boredom."*

Participant 8 (48 year, female): *"From the start I just have an aversion towards smartphones, I kind of hate them. It is just that I do not want to be controlled by such a device."*

A factor that research does not mention but appeared to have an impact on the type of digital detox one chose, is the kind of job someone has. Participant 7 - a working student - who owns a webshop needed her smartphone a lot for work and therefore purposefully did a digital detox during her free time. Now, she also wants to implement her digital detox into her work life by posting on Instagram at regular intervals. Another participant, who is self-employed, chose to perform a digital detox on holiday and abandoned his smartphone completely as a way of escapism. Therefore, depending on participants' work situation, they may choose a different form of digital detox that suits them best.

5.2 Reasons to do a digital detox

A majority of participants stated they decided to do a digital detox because of health considerations. The habit-forming technology that companies use played an important role here; the participants said that apps are designed such that the attention of their users is captured and maintained, because of which they are distracted and therefore spend more time on their phones than they initially wanted to. This means they have knowledge about the persuasion techniques that companies apply. The distraction also negatively influenced their productivity: several respondents indicated that their work performance went down by virtue of jammers. For example, they saw an incoming e-mail or a sound that let them know they had a notification, which eventually led to them being less productive. They needed to work longer. Most participants felt they had to be constantly connected for work, leading to high pressure and expectations. One participant even suffered from a burn-out. Another time, a participant made the comparison with rehab. Other health issues that were mentioned were decreased sleep quality and troubles with eye sight.

Participant 4 (50 year, male): *"Technology is not really helping. Technology is made to keep our attention there. It is my attention that they are somehow going to measure and sell."*

Participant 7 (24 year, female): *"You are busy, but you are not productive. So when you are busy with e-mail or social media, you are not really busy, you are not really doing useful stuff."*

What did not yet come up in research, is that the participants' decision to do a digital detox was influenced by several social factors, such as family, friends, work and society as a whole. Participant 14 saw that her father was always working on his smartphone and did not want to become like him. Participant 8 saw that her daughter was always on her phone and thought this was not the right behavior. Someone else was influenced to do his detox because a friend did one as well. Also, one participant said that a friend of his did not care much about his phone and envied him because of this fact. In a rather extreme case, participant 4 was told by his friends that he always went to the toilet to check his e-mails, behavior that was perceived as odd.

> Participant 4 (50 year, male): *"My awareness must have been triggered by a number of comments made by my environment. By getting feedback 'Is your behavior normal? This is the fifth time you are going to the toilet, do you feel sick?' I do not tell them I go to the bathroom to check my e-mails. Of course that is not normal behavior. If you receive feedback from somebody who says 'I find your behavior odd', it helps you realizing that."*

Two perceptions of the role that friends play in the choice to do a digital detox arose from the interviews. Half of the participants felt like they received support and understanding from their friends. Although their friends did not feel the need to do a digital detox themselves, they showed respect for the reason that person wanted to do it. Also, in some cases, friends adapted their own smartphone behavior when being with that person. They did not take their smartphone out of their pockets but send pictures to their friends to keep them up to date. The other half of the participants said that their friends did not comprehend why they were doing a digital detox. Their friends thought it was exaggerated and minimized the seriousness of it. There was a feeling among the participants that they had to justify themselves for doing a digital detox. Their friends had certain expectations, such as answering immediately, but the participant no longer wished to be constantly connected.

> Participant 3 (24 year, female): *"And if there were really important matters such as 'celebrities breaking up' then I got screenshots from my friends."*

The working environment also played a crucial role in the reason to perform a digital detox. More than half of the participants felt stressed or pressured by their work. They felt they had to live up to expectations and no longer desired constant connection. The aspect that caused most stress was e-mail. When the participants saw an incoming e-mail, they felt as if they were required to answer it immediately, regardless of what they were doing. They were busy doing one task and then they heard a notification of an incoming mail because of which their focus was disrupted. In other words, receiving e-mails was distracting and stressful. The

participants no longer desired such a state of affairs, they wished to decide themselves when to answer.

> Participant 6 (27 year, male): *"Because of that you are running behind with work. That one incoming e-mail is not the most important thing at that moment, but I still answer that e-mail, or at least take a look at it and think about it, resulting in having lost my focus."*

In addition to family, friends and work, the society had an impact on the decision to do a digital detox as well. Participants felt obliged to buy the most recent smartphone and to be on Instagram, where they sometimes compared themselves with others. Some decided to do a digital detox as a statement. They wanted to make clear that it is acceptable to not answer immediately or that it is not obligatory to have all kinds of social media. Lastly, in some cases a specific life event triggered the person to do a digital detox, such as a midlife crisis or seeing a documentary about the use of personal data.

> Participant 13 (54 year, female): *"The disadvantage is that I feel like people do not always understand me. It is like I am perceived as old-fashioned. I sometimes hear comments like 'You can see you have a message, right? Then why don't you answer it right away?' I do not have to do anything haha. That is a discussion I have had multiple times."*

5.3 Applicability of the transtheoretical model of change

The transtheoretical model of change begins with precontemplation (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). Specifically, to change their behavior, people must first be aware that their current behavior needs improvement (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). Such precontemplation was visible when the participants were asked about the first tip they would give to people who intend to do a digital detox but who do not manage to do so. Often, participants said that it was important to first have insight into the behavior. A way to help gain these insights that was often mentioned was looking at screen time. Occasionally, the participants said that, before doing their digital detox, they went on their smartphones out of automatism. They were not consciously aware of their smartphone behavior, such that they did not intend to change it.

> Participant 7 (24 year, female): *"I feel like scrolling on that smartphone the whole time mostly happens unconsciously."*

This changed in the second stage - contemplation, during which their level of consciousness was raised. Importantly, it became apparent that such a change could also occur when a person had already done a digital detox but relapsed into old habits. In such a case, they obtained new insights from their digital detox that helped them when they did another one. For example, participant 12 concluded that she had set too strict limits and adjusted them next time. The participants also began to feel the impact on their brain, resulting in sleeping troubles and difficulties to stay focused and concentrated. They became more aware that most of their time went to actions such as scrolling on social media. Two respondents even talked about experiencing symbolic compartmentalization (Van Rompaey & Roe, 2004). In short, awareness about their smartphone behavior increased.

Participant 11 (51 year, female): *"Well, Facebook is really tricky there. Facebook has infinit scroll and it keeps on going, which is a problem to our brain. Because our brain says, for example 'I will stop when I finish my coffee'. I use my rational, conscious part of my brain for this and decide whether I will drink another coffee. But if that cup stays full the whole time, I keep on drinking. There is no more saturation so you just keep on going."*

Participant 12 (22 year, female): *"Actually I have set the bar a little too high."*

Once people have realized that their behavior needs to change, they start making preparations (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). A common preparation that stood out was clear communication. All participants were convinced of the need to let their environment know, both professional and social, that they were going to do a digital detox. This reduced the chance of having to meet implicit expectations of the other person. For example, they sometimes had the impression that a task needed to be done instantly, while this was not the case. As to the working environment, people made agreements with their colleagues or bosses. They agreed to only check e-mail once a day or on fixed time frames and let their working environment know they should not expect immediate replies. By making these clear agreements, they avoided false expectations. Regarding the social environment, most participants let their partner, family and friends know about their digital detox. The few participants who did not inform them, got questions of their friends, which was the case for participants 11 and 14.

Participant 11 (51 year, female): *"So I did not do that third step, metacommunication. People were used to me replying instantly on e-mails and suddenly I stopped doing it. And that is really important with a digital detox: if you change anything in your manner of communicating with others, you really have to let them know this."*

Participant 14 (24 year, female): *"[…] At some point my friends said: we cannot find you anymore, have you deleted us? Then I thought: no, that is not my intention at all. I said: no, just deactivated. But some people find that behavior weird or believe that I do it for attention."*

Half of the participants informed themselves about how to start their digital detox by, for example, reading books about time management or reading books of authors who study the use of digital devices. A few people started their digital detox at a specific time. These people only included participants who saw digital detox as a short-term action. One participant did his detox during the summer holidays because it was a quieter period at work. Another participant did it on the first day of the month because she wanted to do her digital detox for one month and the first day represented an easier measuring point. Other preparations involved turning off sound and notifications, turning on flight mode and "do not disturb" mode to eliminate distraction triggers, or using an app that informed them about time spent on social media. Still, the main preparation was communication with others.

After preparations have been made, people started with their behavior change. This is the action stage (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). The participants faced some difficulties while doing their digital detox. They first needed to adapt to and get used to their new behavior. During their digital detox, they initially felt that letting go of their old habits was quite uncomfortable. Most people experienced FoMO. They felt like they missed out on appointments with friends, were not informed about things that went on in somebody else's life or were not on standby for customers at work. However, this feeling went away after around a week. Also, some experienced no FoMO at all, like participant 5. Another frequently mentioned feeling was boredom, which stemmed from participants having trouble in finding alternatives to fill the moments when they were not on their smartphone. This also depended on the personality of the person: some found it easier to, for instance, look outside while being on the train, while others were quickly bored and had difficulties to resist the temptation of going back on their smartphone or on social media accounts.

Participant 5 (46 year, male): *"It happens, but life does not depend on it. Sometimes it is even a good thing to miss out on certain things. You cannot attend everything."*

Participant 6 (27 year, male): *"I genuinely felt like I would experience fear of missing out and, as a result, would have my work suffer from it. While that is a completely wrong mindset, but that is just how my mind works at that moment."*

A few participants had feelings of nomophobia. When they did not have their smartphones with them, they felt bare and anxious. They were convinced they would miss important information or were stressed about being unavailable to others. Mentionably, this feeling occurred only temporary and faded with time.

Participant 9 (26 year, female): *"When I do not have my smartphone with me? Yeah I feel kind of naked. […] It feels weird. Having the idea of being unreachable makes me feel stressed."*

The three participants who did a digital detox holiday appeared to be having fewer of these issues because they were in some sort of holiday setting and were excluded from all sorts of triggers that a daily environment may present. They indicated they were living in the moment with an intensity that made them forget the routine of daily life. Having time for inner conversations led in one case to important insights: participant 10 decided on her digital detox trip that she would apply for the job she was always so scared to apply for. However, when she got back home, she experienced acclimatization feelings; she needed to adapt to daily life again.

Participant 10 (44 year, female): *"At that trip I was like: it is my job for god's sake. I come home and the first thing I do is applying for that job. Three months later I could let people know they had chosen me. If I had not done that trip, I would not have been standing where I stand today. Mentally it has brought me so much mentally."*

In spite of some difficulties at first, eventually there were several positive aspects as a consequence of doing a digital detox. Participants ultimately found alternative activities to do, such as exercising, reading or walking. When doing these activities, they did not have the urge to look on their phones but were able to enjoy the activity for what is was, also resulting in less phubbing behavior. Several participants expressed they actually did not miss anything important, people would call them for something that could not wait. They realized that not being constantly connected and spending less time on their phones resulted in some form of

liberation. Setting their own boundaries by talking to others gave a sense of control. Moreover, it was beneficial for their productivity. They got things done more quickly because they had less distractions. Overall, the participants said they had more mental rest. Importantly, this feeling did not occur right away but after a few days.

>Participant 5 (46 year, male): *"Actually you also need these dumb empty moments to let your mind be creative. Those are the times when I personally get good business ideas or solutions for problems. So I do not want to fill these moments with mess."*

The maintenance stage is about avoiding obstacles that could result in relapse into old behavior (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). Judging by the answers of the participants, it was not always clear whether the applied strategies to avoid relapse happened in the action or maintenance stage. However, when asked about the period after their digital detox, some participants admitted they read more books or put their smartphone out of sight (for example in the car) in order to resist temptation. Their digital detox seemed to enable them to actively seek activities that would help them prevent relapse. Relapse itself was often mentioned by the participants, suggesting that digital detox is a trial and error process. Apparently, it was not easy for participants to hold on to their intentions. Once again, friends and the working environment played a role: when the participants' friends started to use their smartphones when together, the participants were more likely to do so as well. When someone from work constantly sent them e-mails or texts, they felt more pressured and stressed to answer, resulting in relapse. Informing the environment about doing a digital detox seemed to reduce the chances of relapsing, because it gave the environment the opportunity to pay attention to the specific situation that the digital detoxer was in.

>Participant 8 (48 year, female): *"When I take my smartphone, I sometimes realize I am checking my e-mail for the third time. Then I am like: that is totally unnecessary."*

>Participant 12 (22 year, female): *"Now I grab it immediately when I get out of bed. So that habit has become worse as well."*

Although the termination stage is not often mentioned in research (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997), two participants (participant 5 and 11) appeared to turn their new smartphone behavior into a lifestyle. They now give training sessions to other people and companies regarding the use of digital tools. Through the implementation of their own experiences, they want to help others to identify where potential improvements lie and how to tackle them. Both of them have integrated their behavioral changes into new areas of their lives and are fully sure they will not relapse.

6 Discussion and conclusion

The research goal of this study was, as previously mentioned, to explore the experiences of workers and working students with digital detox using the transtheoretical model of change. 14 in-depth face-to-face interviews with 7 workers and 7 working students between the age of 22 and 54 were conducted to formulate an answer to the following three research questions: How do digital detoxers define digital detox? Why did digital detoxers decide to do a digital detox? To what extent does the process of digital detoxing coincide with the stages of the transtheoretical model of change?

Consistent with the existing literature (Hoving, 2017), the answers revealed that there are different forms of digital detox. Participants who perceive digital detox as a short-term practice abandon their smartphone completely for their detox, which is in line with "virtual suicide" (Brubaker et al., 2016; Stieger et al., 2013; Tams et al., 2018) and "cold turkey" (Melton et al., 2019), while participants who see digital detox as a long-term activity still want to use their smartphone but in a controlled way. This corresponds with Jones (2018), Lepik and Murumaa-Mengel (2018) and Szablewicz (2019), who acknowledge that there are also milder forms of digital detox. In other words, full prohibition is associated with a short-term detox, whereas maintaining some device use is associated with a long-term vision.

A minority of people see digital detox as a short-term practice, which is in contrast to the findings of Aranda and Baig (2018) where the majority of their participants chose their digital detox using a short-term approach. The fact that most of the participants studied in this thesis perceive digital detox as a long-term practice means that they strongly desire to permanently change their digital behavior. It shows that digital detox is not always a one-time or limited-period activity, but can also be a practice that has to evolve into a way of life. Moreover, digital detox is performed in daily life as well as on holiday, proving that digital detox is relevant for tourism (Cai et al., 2019; Dickinson et al., 2016). A digital detox holiday seems to go smoother than a digital detox in daily life because people on holiday are less exposed to stimuli that daily life poses, such as answering e-mails or constant connectivity. When coming back home, however, it is not always easy for these participants to get back into their daily routine. The fact that they gain important insights during their time away that would have an impact on their daily lives could be a reason for this kind of acclimatization.

Most participants choose to do a digital detox because of health considerations. Before doing the digital detox, they had trouble to concentrate themselves, felt stressed or were not as productive as they would like to be. In some cases, specific life events, such as seeing a documentary about the use of personal data, make people realize that they need to do a digital

detox. The latter is in correspondence to the findings of Baumer et al. (2013) and Portwood-Stacer (2013), who stated that privacy concerns could make people decide to do a digital detox. Overall, these consequences are in line with Andreassen, (2015), Hooftman et al. (2019) and Scott et al. (2017). However, what research up until now does not acknowledge is that the environment plays a crucial role in the digital detox process. Expectations from friends and pressure from work make people consider doing a digital detox as well. They no longer wish to be constantly connected or live up to expectations; participants want to do their own thing, which can be seen as some kind of statement.

The transtheoretical model of change proves to be a useful model to illustrate digital detox. People need to be aware of their digital behavior first in order to change it. They also do not start their digital detox right away, but inform themselves or think about preparations they can make before doing the detox. Considering the relapse that often occurs between the action and the maintenance stage, digital detox is a process with ups and downs. The comparison of digital detox with a diet supposes that a digital detox is a way to react to an addiction (Baumer et al., 2013) and that it is associated with withdrawal symptoms. Although the original model of Prochaska and DiClemente (1983) does not have a termination stage, two participants seem to fit well into this category. Importantly, these people are over 40 years old, implying that age and life experience can play a role in successfully integrating the new digital behavior into daily life.

After doing their digital detox, the participants develop a sense of perspective: digital detox is seen as an aid for realizing the impact a smartphone has in their lives and for identifying what precautions can help them in maintaining their new behavior. Essential to prevent relapse is communication: by letting their environment know that they are doing a digital detox, a person and those around them are informed and therefore more relaxed because there no longer exist false expectations. In the beginning, participants feel the urge to look at their smartphones, but this feeling fades with time. They experience feelings of FoMO (Cheever et al., 2014) and nomophobia. Given that some participants indicated they might miss something when not having their smartphones, it could indeed be that FoMO is a factor contributing to nomophobia (Gezgin et al., 2018). Experiencing negative aspects when doing a digital detox was also established by Hodkinson (2019), Przybylski et al. (2013) and Roberts and David (2019). Apparently, it is not easy to find what works for a person and to resist temptations and triggers. Doing a digital detox requires discipline and perseverance.

6.1   Limitations and future research

As in any study, this study has a few noteworthy limitations. First of all, we specifically looked at digital detox for smartphones, while other digital tools, such as a laptop or an iPad, could be relevant as well in this context. Second, we only looked at "rejecters" – people who intentionally chose to digitally disconnect (Wyatt, 2003) – leading to purposeful sampling. Therefore, the sample was very specific, which led to biased recollections. Third, only workers and working students were questioned, leaving out the perceptions and experiences of other populations. Fourth, we relied on retrospective data of past events, meaning that some information, such as the first time people started their digital detox, was not remembered accurately sometimes. Fifth, only the stages of change were treated in detail, whereas the transtheoretical model of change also has processes of change that this thesis did not deal with. Lastly, the corona crisis did not affect this research because all the interviews were conducted before the pandemic.

The study raises a number of opportunities for future research to refine the current findings. Future research could look into the other three categories outlined in Wyatt's paper (2003). Those groups may have other experiences with a digital detox. Another suggestion for future research is looking at other digital devices related to digital detox, such as laptops or iPads. Further, another research method, such as diary studies, in which people have to write down their feelings and thoughts about their digital detox, could give a better insight into their experiences and would probably not lead to memory issues. The study could also be extended in comparative ways. For example, a differentiation in the degree of digital use beforehand could be useful to discover a potential difference in digital detox experiences afterwards. Also, because this study uncovered some contrasting visions related to the age of the participants, a study that specifically focuses on age-related differences in digital detox experiences could be of value as well. Given that some participants of this study were Dutch, it opens up opportunities to compare digital detox experiences cross-nationally. Finally, the transtheoretical model of change could be further adapted in order to represent the stages of digital detox even better. More specifically, the initial model can integrate the sixth stage – termination – since this study discovered that this stage is reached by two participants.

6.2 Implications

6.2.1 Academic implications

Our study offers the opportunity to both behavioral and media scholars to pay further attention to the intentional non-use of digital technologies. This countermovement has only recently arisen, which is why research about this topic is still limited. To expand knowledge, media scholars can investigate which impact this trend might has on our media landscape and on our society as a whole. It could be that the intentional non-use of technology changes the relationship between employers and employees on the workfloor, or that companies alter their e-mail policy. Those are aspects worth investigating, because they would most likely provide valuable insights for work-related contexts.

Since the study found that doing a digital detox often resulted from health-related reasons such as stress or productivity issues, health scientists could explore to what extent a digital detox affects our brain. Respondents mentioned that a digital detox changed their beliefs and feelings about digital behavior, so it would be useful if we could find out what these changes could mean for the functioning of our brain.

The transtheoretical model of change of Prochaska and DiClemente (1983) has proven to be a solid representation of the stages digital detox practitioners go through when changing their digital behavior. Thus, behavioral scholars can use this model when investigating digital detox. Furthermore, it would be interesting to examine whether the processes of change, that are part of the model, coincide with people moving from one stage to another when doing a digital detox.

6.2.2 Practitioner implications

The results of this study are of social relevance as well. People who are thinking about doing a digital detox should bear a few things in mind. The answers from the interviews showed that identifying one's own smartphone behavior could be a good first step to get insight into the area's one might want to reconsider doing. Furthermore, a commonly mentioned aid that came up during the interviews is involving digital detox practitioners' environment in their digital detox. By asking their environment what they think about their digital behavior, digital detoxers may hear things that could help them to get deeper awareness of their digital use. Moreover, when people inform their work and personal environment about the digital detox, expectations and feelings of pressure could be avoided and possibly lead to a healthier state of mind.

Additionally, employers can implement measures to make digital use at work healthier if necessary. For example, they can get in touch with companies or counselors who are specialized in digital training and in assisting people at the workplace. Employers should also communicate their expectations clearly to the employees, because it seems that this is really appreciated by the employee. For instance, indicating that employees are not expected to be e-mailing outside of working hours will likely be beneficial for employees' mental health state, which in turn could be positive for mental healthcare because of the possible reduction in burn-outs. The participants also allocated a role to employees, who should speak out when they would like to see certain things changed. They can ask for a second phone if that would come in handy or can talk to their superiors about the amount of workload they get. In short, both employers and employees will need to play their part when trying to optimize the usage of digital devices at work.

6.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, the results show that the experiences of workers and working students with digital detox are positive. Some participants interpret digital detox as a short-term activity, whereas others perceive digital detox as a practice to do for a longer period. When doing a digital detox for a limited period, people often do not use their smartphone anymore, while there is still some device use when people intend to make a lifestyle of it. The reasons and motivations that influence people to do a digital detox, are mostly health-oriented or stem from comments from their close environment. After being aware of their digital behavior, people take several precautions before starting their digital detox. Those precautions are, in some cases, also applied to after their digital detox. Although digital detox practitioners should be aware for difficulties during the digital detox process such as relapse, FoMO or incomprehension from their environment, in general they develop new healthier behaviors, beliefs and feelings about their digital usage.

7 Reference list

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8   Appendix

8.1   Attachment 1: Questionnaire (in Dutch)

Introductie

Dag [naam], fijn dat ik vandaag een interview van jou mag afnemen. Zoals aangekondigd, wordt het interview opgenomen maar het audiobestand wordt nooit openbaar gemaakt. De inhoud van het interview wordt uitgetypt en zal enkel voor wetenschappelijke doeleinden gebruikt worden. Jouw naam zal hierbij nooit vermeld worden. Er zal gebruik worden gemaakt van gepseudonimiseerde gegevens, bv. "respondent 9 zei…". Op die manier blijf je anoniem. De opname dient dus vooral voor mijzelf zodat ik achteraf het interview makkelijk kan uittypen.

[Respondent het 'informed consent'/toestemmingsverklaring laten lezen en ondertekenen -> indien respondent alsnog zou beslissen om niet deel te nemen, stopt het hier]

Het interview zal focussen op het proces rond digitale detox. Eerst zullen we focussen op de periode voor de digitale detox, gevolgd door de periode tijdens de detox. We eindigen met de periode na de digitale detox. Aangezien jij aangaf reeds een digitale detox te hebben gedaan, ben ik erg geïnteresseerd in jouw ervaringen omtrent dit hele proces.

Zou je om te beginnen jezelf even kort kunnen voorstellen?

- o   Wat doe je van werk/studies?

Hoe definieer jij digitale detox?

- o   Waar denk je het eerst aan als je digitale detox hoort?
  Vind je dat een digitale detox locatiegebonden is? Hiermee bedoel ik: kan het zowel op vakantie als in het dagelijks leven worden ondernomen?
    - –   Kan je jouw keuze toelichten?
- o   Zie jij digitale detox als iets op korte termijn of als iets op lange termijn?
    - –   Waarom?

Hoe lang is het geleden dat je gestart bent met je digitale detox?

Ik had graag met jou teruggegaan naar de periode vóór de digitale detox.
Waren er momenten dat je je smartphonegedrag nog niet wou aanpassen?

- o   Waarom?
- o   Welke gevoelens had je op dat moment? (nog geen nood aan, nog niet klaar voor…)

Wanneer zag je in dat het tijd was om een digitale detox te ondergaan?

- o   Was er een specifieke aanleiding? Hiermee bedoel ik: was er een plotse gebeurtenis of een concreet voorval die je deed beslissen om een digitale detox te ondergaan?
- o   Was er een bepaalde reden? Hiermee bedoel ik: waren er zaken die al lang aan het sluimeren waren en waarvan je dacht: "dit moet echt eens stoppen?"

Welke plannen had je je op voorhand gemaakt om te starten met jouw digitale detox?

- o Zijn er bepaalde apps of sites die je minder of niet meer ging gebruiken?
    - – Welke?
- o Heb je daarbij hulp gekregen van je familie en/of vrienden?
    - – Waaruit bestond die hulp dan?

Wanneer je met iemand face-to-face in gesprek was, was je dan ook soms bezig met je smartphone?

Indien 'ja' => onderstaande vragen stellen.
Indien 'nee' => verder gaan naar de volgende vraag.

- o In welke mate hing dit gedrag af van het soort relatie had je had met die persoon (bv. goede vriendin versus baas)?
- o Irriteerde dit de gesprekspartner?
- o Wat deed je dan juist?
    - – Stond je stand-by voor berichten over je werk en/of privé?
    - – Scrolde je op social media?
- o Had dit gedrag een invloed op andere situaties of mensen?
- o Als je hier nu op terugkijkt, wat vind je zelf van dergelijk gedrag?

Vind je dat je 24/7 bereikbaar moet zijn?

- o Vind je dat je buiten de werkuren ook beschikbaar moet blijven voor je werk? *(Hangt af van het soort beroep de persoon doet)*
- o Welke impact heeft deze bereikbaarheid op je privacy?
- o Heb je al eens mentale problemen ondervonden door te veel met je smartphone bezig te zijn?
    - – Zo ja, welke?

Je haalde daarnet al kort aan wat je doet van werk. Gebruikte je, voor je besloot om een digitale detox te doen, jouw smartphone veel voor jouw werk?

- o Welke gevoelens komen hierbij kijken?
- o Is het jouw eigen smartphone of is het er één van je werk?
- o Welke voordelen heeft een smartphone voor jouw werk?
- o Welke nadelen heeft een smartphone voor jouw werk?
    - – Heb je maatregelen genomen om je smartphonegebruik in te perken voor je werk?
    - – Leidde je privéleven hieronder?
- o Voelde je buiten de werkuren de behoefte om te controleren of er nieuwe (professionele) berichten op je smartphone binnengekomen waren?
- o Kon je hierover open spreken met je collega's en je werkgever/baas?

Heb je soms ervaren dat je bepaalde zaken miste wanneer je even niet op je smartphone keek?

Indien 'ja' => onderstaande vragen stellen.
Indien 'nee' => verder gaan naar de volgende vraag.

- o Hoe voelde je je hierbij?
    - – Had je moeite om je te concentreren?
    - – Viel je moeilijker in slaap?
- o Wilde je van alles op de hoogte blijven zodat je kon meepraten in een gesprek?

Om nog even samen te vatten: waarom heb je besloten om een digitale detox te doen?

> We hebben net een gesprek gehad waarin we hoofdzakelijk gefocust hebben op de periode VOOR de digitale detox. Omdat mijn onderzoek focust op het proces rond digitale detox, wil ik nu graag eens peilen naar hoe je de digitale detox zelf hebt ervaren (= "tijdens").
> **Hoe verliep de digitale detox voor jou?**

Ondervond je op een bepaald moment moeilijkheden of obstakels toen je begonnen was met je digitale detox?

- o Indien ja, welke? (bv. de drang om weer in te loggen)
- o Wanneer vonden deze moeilijkheden/obstakels plaats?
    - – Hoe ging je daarmee om?
    - – Heb je periodes gekend waarin je je vooropgestelde doelen schond (bv. kort even kijken)? Hoe ging je hiermee om?

Wat was de rol van familie en vrienden tijdens jouw digitale detox?

- o Kreeg je steun of was er ook onbegrip?
- o In hoeverre had je het gevoel dat je netwerk jouw situatie begreep?
- o Heb je hen erbij betrokken?
    - – Hoe gingen zij hiermee om?

Kan je mij uitleggen hoe je je voelde wanneer je jouw smartphone niet bij de hand had?

- o Zou je zeggen dat je verslaafd was aan je smartphone?
- o Voelde je je oncomfortabel wanneer je niet continu toegang had tot het internet via jouw smartphone?
- o Voelde je je zenuwachtig omdat je minder contact had met de virtuele wereld?

Heb je bepaalde strategieën toegepast om de digitale detox voor jezelf draaglijker te maken?

- o Hoelang duurde het vooraleer je er een positief gevoel bij had?
- o Wat werkte voor jou?
- o Wat werkte niet voor jou?
    - – Hoe heb je dit proberen aan te passen?

Na de periode voor en de periode tijdens de digitale detox te hebben besproken, ben ik benieuwd naar de periode nà de digitale detox. **Hoe kijk je hierop terug?**

Heb je je gedrag aangepast? (bv. meer boeken lezen, meer afspreken met vrienden, …)

- o Voel je hierdoor nu meer mentale rust?

Zijn er bepaalde zaken die je anders zou hebben aangepakt?

Indien 'ja' => onderstaande vragen stellen.
Indien 'nee' => verder gaan naar de volgende vraag.

- o Welke?

Was er een periode waarvan je kan zeggen: nu ben ik echt gewoon geraakt aan mijn nieuw gedrag?

- o Welke elementen maken het voor jou moeilijk om niet te hervallen in je vroegere smartphonegedrag?
    - – Wat doe je hier aan?
- o In welke mate kan je van jezelf zeggen dat je nieuwe gedrag een levensstijl is geworden?
    - – Indien geen levensstijl: zou je hier in de toekomst nog verder in willen gaan? Kan je dit toelichten?

Ben je tevreden dat je digitale detox hebt ondergaan?

Nog enkele slotvragen:

Waar zie je nog mogelijkheden voor werkgevers om de werknemer te ondersteunen bij de regulering en controle van hun smartphonegebruik?

Wat zou jij als tip nummer 1 willen meegeven aan mensen die overwegen om een digitale detox te starten?

Je hebt me heel wat interessante inzichten bezorgd. Is er na dit gesprek nog iets wat je zelf zou willen toevoegen of vertellen?

Als je later nog vragen zou hebben in verband met het onderzoek mag je me altijd een mailtje sturen op Kristof.Smet@student.uantwerpen.be

Zoals je weet, maak je kans op 2 cinematickets. De loting wordt gedaan wanneer alle interviews afgenomen zijn.

Bedankt voor je medewerking!

8.2 Attachment 2: Declaration of honor (in Dutch)

Ik, ondergetekende, aanvaard de volgende voorwaarden en bepalingen van deze verklaring:

In het kader van het uitvoeren van mijn Masterproef aan de UAntwerpen binnen de faculteit Sociale Wetenschappen, onderzoeksgroep Communicatiewetenschappen, met als promotor Wannes Heirman tijdens het Academiejaar 2019-2020 zal ik toegang krijgen tot (technische en andere) Informatie van UA en/of derde partijen, in geschreven, elektronische, mondelinge, visuele of eender welke andere vorm, met inbegrip van (maar niet beperkt tot) documenten, kennis, know-how, data, tekeningen, foto's, filmmateriaal, modellen, materialen en prototypes. Deze Informatie wordt gezamenlijk met informatie voortkomend uit het door mij uitgevoerde onderzoek beschouwd als "Vertrouwelijke Informatie".

Ik zal de **Vertrouwelijke Informatie** uitsluitend aanwenden voor het uitvoeren van het onderzoek in kader van mijn Masterproef binnen UAntwerpen. Ik zal:
    a) de Vertrouwelijke Informatie voor geen enkele andere doelstelling gebruiken;
    b) de Vertrouwelijke Informatie niet zonder voorafgaande schriftelijke toestemming van UAntwerpen op directe of indirecte wijze publiek maken of aan derden bekendmaken.
    c) de Vertrouwelijke Informatie noch geheel noch gedeeltelijk reproduceren.

Ik verbind mij ertoe om alle onderzoeksdata, ideeën en eventuele uitvindingen niet vrij te geven buiten de Onderzoeksgroep tenzij met uitdrukkelijke toestemming van mijn promotor.

Na de beëindiging van mijn Masterproef zal ik alle verkregen en gecreëerde Vertrouwelijke Informatie en kopieën daarvan, die nog in mijn bezit zouden zijn, aan UAntwerpen terugbezorgen.

Naam: Kristof Smet
Adres: Hof ter Rijen 6, 2070 Zwijndrecht
Geboortedatum: 29/11/1997
Geboorteplaats: Antwerpen
Handtekening:

8.3 Attachment 3: Declaration of honor for interobserver reliability (in Dutch)

Verbintenis tot geheimhouding

Ik, ondergetekende, aanvaard de volgende voorwaarden en bepalingen van deze verklaring:

In het kader van het uitvoeren van de masterproef van student Kristof SMET aan de Universiteit Antwerpen binnen de faculteit Sociale Wetenschappen, onderzoeksgroep communicatiewetenschappen, met als promotor prof. dr. Wannes HEIRMAN tijdens het Academiejaar 2019-2020 zal ik toegang krijgen tot (technische en andere) informatie van UAntwerpen en/of derde partijen, in geschreven, elektronische, mondelinge, visuele of eender welke andere vorm, met inbegrip van (maar niet beperkt tot) documenten, kennis, know-how, data, tekeningen, foto's, filmmateriaal, modellen, materialen en prototypes. Deze Informatie wordt gezamenlijk met informatie voortkomend uit het uitgevoerde onderzoek beschouwd als "Vertrouwelijke Informatie".

Ik zal de **Vertrouwelijke Informatie** uitsluitend aanwenden voor het uitvoeren van het onderzoek in kader van de masterproef van student Kristof SMET binnen UAntwerpen. Ik zal:
   a) de Vertrouwelijke Informatie voor geen enkele andere doelstelling gebruiken;
   b) de Vertrouwelijke Informatie niet zonder voorafgaande schriftelijke toestemming van UAntwerpen op directe of indirecte wijze publiek maken of aan derden bekendmaken.
   c) De Vertrouwelijke Informatie noch geheel noch gedeeltelijk reproduceren.

Ik verbind mij ertoe om alle onderzoeksdata, ideeën en eventuele uitvindingen niet vrij te geven buiten de Onderzoeksgroep tenzij met uitdrukkelijke toestemming van de promotor.

Na de beëindiging van de masterproef van student Kristof SMET zal ik alle verkregen en gecreëerde Vertrouwelijke Informatie en kopieën daarvan, die nog in mijn bezit zouden zijn, aan UAntwerpen terugbezorgen.

Naam: Luna Staes

Adres: Manebruggestraat 354, 2150 Borsbeek

Geboortedatum: 02/11/1998

Geboorteplaats: Antwerpen

Handtekening:

8.4   Attachment 4: Master dissertation ethics form (in Dutch)

Universiteit
Antwerpen

A. Algemene inlichtingen over het projectvoorstel

- Titel: What if we recharged ourselves as often as our digital devices? Investigating workers' and working students' experiences with digital detox using the transtheoretical model of change
- Verwachte startdatum: 2 oktober 2019
- Verwachte einddatum: 25 mei 2020
- Uitvoerende onderzoekers (benoem *alle* uitvoerende onderzoekers en neem waar mogelijk de link op naar de UAntwerpen-pagina):
- Promotoren (benoem de promotoren en neem de link op naar de UAntwerpen-pagina): Prof. Dr. Wannes Heirman, https://www.uantwerpen.be/nl/personeel/wannes-heirman/

B. Documenten ter beoordeling van iedere studie

Verplichte bijlagen voor elke aanvraag:	Aanwezig
Document 1: Methodologie van de studie (mag in het Nederlands of het Engels): zie thesis	X
Document 2: Inlichtingenblad voor de deelnemers	X
Document 3: Toestemmingsformulier voor de deelnemers	X

C. Risicoanalyse:

	Ja	Nee	Opmerkingen:
1. **Verzamelt u persoonsgegevens?** Zo ja, op welke rechtsgrond (bv. algemeen belang, toestemming)?	X		Via een toestemmingsverklaring zal ik hun naam te weten komen.
2. Als **deelnemers vergoed worden** voor deelname, verloopt deze vergoeding dan geheel **anoniem**? (m.a.w. kan u vergoeden zonder enig gebruik van persoonsgegevens?)		X	Deelnemers kunnen twee cinematickets winnen. Ik zal uit alle namen willekeurig 1 naam trekken, die dan de winnaar is.
3. Bestaat de beoogde populatie (ook) uit **minderjarigen**? Vermeldt onder 'opmerkingen' de specifieke leeftijdscategorie.		X	Alle deelnemers zijn boven de 18 jaar.
4. Bestaat de beoogde populatie (ook) uit **kwetsbare groepen en personen?**		X	
5. Handelen vragen uit de studie over **gevoelige onderwerpen**?		X	
6. Houdt het onderzoek het maken van **foto/audio/video opnames** in?	X		De interviews zullen via mijn laptop worden opgenomen (niet gefilmd, enkel audio).
7. Vereist het onderzoek het uitvoeren van langdurige of **herhaalde testen** op verschillende tijdstippen waarbij **persoonsgegevens** nodig zijn voor het **koppelen van de data**?		X	
8. Bestaat het risico dat de deelnemers tijdens het onderzoek zullen worden blootgesteld aan **fysieke of psychische nadelen** (stress, angst, vernedering, gebruik van experimentele methodes als hypnose?)		X	

9. **Misleid** je de deelnemers bij de start van de studie (omdat je het exacte doel van de studie niet van bij de start kan vermelden).	X	
10. Zal u (nu of later) data delen met partners uit andere landen (i.e. doet u aan **grensoverschrijdend onderzoek**)?	X	
11. Zouden er zich tijdens het onderzoek ethische risico's kunnen voordoen die hierboven nog niet werden vermeld?	X	Als mensen de naam van het bedrijf waarin ze werken niet zouden mogen zeggen, en ze zeggen deze toch, dan zal deze verwijderd worden in de transcriptie.

D. specifieke inlichtingen over het projectvoorstel

DEELNEMERS

1. Wie zijn de deelnemers (aantal, geslacht, leeftijd,…)? Op basis van welke criteria worden ze geselecteerd? Als de doelgroep uit **minderjarige** en/of **kwetsbare groepen en/of personen** bestaat, vermeld de nodige details.

Aantal: na te streven = 20.

Geslacht: zowel mannen als vrouwen (vrouwen zijn oververtegenwoordigd)

Steekproef = enkel werkenden en werkstudenten

2. Worden de deelnemers vergoed? Zo ja, hoeveel en wat houdt deze vergoeding juist in?

Ja, één deelnemer zal twee cinematickets winnen.

3. Wat zijn de mogelijke risico's voor de deelnemers?

Deelnemers zouden eventueel kunnen terugdenken aan hun periode voor de digitale detox, een periode waarin ze misschien een bepaalde vorm van smartphoneverslaving, angsten of stress hebben ervaren. Om dit op te lossen, zullen er op het einde van het interview enkele contactgegevens worden aangereikt van organisaties en instanties waarbij de deelnemers hiervoor terecht kunnen.

PERSOONSGEGEVENS & ANDERE DATA: VERZAMELEN, OPSLAAN & VERWERKEN

4. Op welke wijze worden **persoonsgegevens en/of andere data** van de deelnemers verzameld en verwerkt? (bijvoorbeeld door foto/audio/video-opnames). Gelieve dit aan te geven vanaf het rekruteren tot afloop van de studie, stap voor stap. Structureer uw antwoord aub; geef helder en logisch weer waar in het verzamelings- en verwerkingsproces persoonsgegevens aan bod komen. Wie zal hierbij als verwerkingsverantwoordelijke optreden?

1) Eén deelnemer, een experte in digitale detox, heeft naar haar netwerk een bericht verstuurd via LinkedIn, Facebook en Instagram. Hierbij heeft ze mijn e-mailadres gebruikt zodat de beoogde doelgroep mij kon contacteren. De experte heeft me dus niet zelf gegevens doorgestuurd, maar ik heb ze zelf gekregen doordat geïnteresseerden mij uit zichzelf contacteerden.

2) Ik heb een e-mail verzonden naar alle FSW-studenten van de UA en heb hiervoor mijn UA-e-mailadres gebruikt.

3) Audiopnames tijdens de interviews.

5. Zullen data **<u>gepseudonimiseerd</u>** worden tijdens de studie? Hoe zal u dit doen? En wanneer zal u dit doen? Geef dit opnieuw duidelijk en stap voor stap weer.

Ja. Hiervoor zal ik niet de echte namen van de respondenten gebruiken, maar wel 'respondent 1, 'respondent 1' enz. Dit zal gebeuren tijdens de interviews, het coderen in NVivo en ook bij de analyse/discussie.

6. Wie zal <u>data verzamelen</u>? Heeft (hebben) deze onderzoeker(s) reeds ervaring met de geplande methoden? (Indien niet gelieve te duiden hoe dit zal worden opgevangen). Kennen deze onderzoekers de EASHW richtlijnen? (Hebben ze de leidraad doorgenomen of zullen ze dat doen?)

Ik (Kristof Smet) heb drie jaar geleden reeds een interview afgenomen voor het vak "Kwalitatieve Onderzoeksmethoden". Verder heb ik vorig jaar focusgroepen gehouden in het kader van mijn bachelorproef. Ik heb de EASHW-leidraad grondig doornomen.

7. Wie zal <u>data verwerken</u>? Heeft (hebben) deze onderzoeker(s) reeds ervaring met de geplande methoden? (Indien niet gelieve te duiden hoe dit zal worden opgevangen).

Ik (Kristof Smet) ga de gegevens verwerken in NVivo, een programma dat ik al twee keer heb gebruikt. Ik ken de werking van het programma dus goed.

8. Voor niet-anonieme studies: Zullen alle medewerkers die data verzamelen en/of verwerken een <u>vertrouwelijkheidsverklaring</u> ondertekenen (U moet een template hiervoor in bijlage steken)?

Ja.

INFORMATIE, TOESTEMMING EN RECHT OP STOPZETTEN DEELNAME

9. Wordt de toestemming van de deelnemers bekomen na een heldere en objectieve uiteenzetting van het doel en de risico's van het onderzoek? Indien dit niet het geval is, wat is dan de reden waarom deelnemers niet op de hoogte worden gesteld? <u>Voeg het inlichtingenblad voor deelnemers toe.</u>
Ja.

10. Maakt het onderzoek aanvankelijk gebruik van misleiding om de onderzoeksdoelstellingen te behalen? Op welke manier worden de deelnemers nadien geïnformeerd over deze misleiding? <u>Gelieve het debriefingformulier bij te voegen bij deze aanvraag</u>.
Nee.

11. Op welke manier zal er expliciete toestemming worden bekomen van de deelnemers? Indien er geen toestemming kan worden bekomen, gelieve dit te beargumenteren en aan te geven hoe dit probleem zal worden opgevangen. <u>Voeg het toestemmingsformulier, of een beschrijving van hoe u expliciete toestemming zal bekomen toe.</u>
Deelnemers zullen een toestemmingsverklaring te lezen krijgen met alle noodzakelijke informatie over hun deelname. Daarna zullen ze de keuze hebben om de studie stop te zetten (niet akkoord gaan) of verder te doen (akkoord gaan).

12. In geval van onderzoek bij kinderen, wordt de toestemming aan de wettelijke vertegenwoordigers gevraagd? <u>Voeg het toestemmingsformulier voor de ouder/voogd of een beschrijving van hoe u expliciete toestemming van de ouder/voogd zal bekomen toe.</u>
Niet van toepassing.

13. Indien er wegens hoogdringendheid geen schriftelijke toestemming kan bekomen worden, wordt zodra mogelijk de toestemming gevraagd aan de deelnemer of wettelijke vertegenwoordiger?
Ja.

14. Worden de deelnemers gewezen op het recht de deelname aan de studie op elk moment te onderbreken?
Ja.

BEWAREN VAN DATA & BEHEER ACHTERAF

15. Op welke manier zullen de data <u>tijdens het verloop</u> van de studie worden <u>bewaard</u>?

De data zullen op mijn laptop staan. De gehele masterproef zal op een stick worden bewaard.

16. <u>Op welke manier en voor hoelang</u> zal u de data na het vervolledigen van het onderzoek <u>archiveren</u>?

Op een stick, tot vijf jaar na het einde van de studie.

17. Kunnen/zullen diverse data van uw onderzoek <u>voor andere doeleinden</u> gebruikt worden dan die van het beschreven onderzoeksproject (bv. hergebruik van data)? Zo ja: worden deelnemers op de hoogte gebracht van het feit dat de door hen aangeleverde data mogelijks zullen worden hergebruikt na afloop van de studie?

Nee.

18. Met wie zal u de data na afloop van de studie mogelijk delen? Denk hierbij aan het (her)gebruik van de data door collega onderzoekers. Als dit buitenlandse collega's zijn (i.e. grensoverschrijdend onderzoek): leg dan uit hoe u welke data zal delen. En zullen deelnemers hiervan op de hoogte gebracht worden bij aanvang van de studie?

Indien de deelnemers de resultaten van de studie wensen te raadplegen, zal ik hen deze doorsturen.

INZAGERECHT & INFORMATIE OVER ONDERZOEKSRESULTATEN

19. Rekening houdende met de gekozen rechtsgrond voor de verwerking van de persoonsgegevens: Worden de deelnemers op de hoogte gebracht van het feit dat zij (i) inzage hebben in de over hen verzamelde **persoonsgegevens** en (ii) deze eventueel kunnen laten aanpassen?

Ja. Ze zullen enkel inzage krijgen in documenten waarin hun echte naam (dus niet een geanonimiseerde naam) vermeld wordt.

20. Zullen de deelnemers na afloop van het onderzoek worden geïnformeerd over de resultaten van het onderzoek. Zo ja, op welke manier? Zo nee, waarom niet?

Ik zal hen vragen of ze de resultaten willen bekomen. Indien ja, dan zal ik hen deze doorsturen.

E. Aanvullende documenten ter beoordeling van de studie na invullen luik D

Verplichte bijlagen als u luik D invulde	Aanwezig
Document 5: Alle informatie die zal worden gebruikt bij het contacteren van de deelnemers	X
Document 6: Alle reeds beschikbare dagboeken of vragenlijsten die aan de deelnemers worden voorgelegd	X