

# DISCONNECTING BY CHOICE: A MICRO-NETNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF SMARTPHONE-TO-FEATURE PHONE MIGRATION FOR DIGITAL DETOX

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## ABSTRACT

*In an era marked by hyperconnectivity and digital saturation, this study explores the phenomenon of feature phone adoption as a form of digital detox among Indonesian users. Drawing on a micro-netnographic methodology, the research analyses user-generated commentary on a high-engagement Instagram post by a verified media outlet, examining the discursive meanings and affective tensions underpinning the rejection of smartphones. Unlike temporary digital fasting or app-based self-regulation, the adoption of low-tech devices represents a more radical, embodied, and symbolically charged act of consumer resistance. Thematic analysis reveals that this behavioural shift is driven by emotional exhaustion, a desire for cognitive clarity, and a search for authenticity in digitally saturated environments. By foregrounding culturally situated narratives from a mobile-first emerging market, the study challenges dominant techno-optimist assumptions and contributes to theoretical conversations on digital minimalism, anti-consumption, and youth technology cultures. The findings offer both conceptual insight and practical implications for international marketers, particularly in designing psychologically attuned and culturally resonant strategies within emotionally fatigued digital landscapes. This research advances a more nuanced understanding of technological agency, centred not solely on innovation and access, but on intentional disconnection and value-based simplicity.*

## INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century has been marked by the deep entrenchment of digital technologies across all dimensions of contemporary life (Amrita et al., 2024; Suryawan et al., 2024; Suryawan & Santikasari, 2024; Wagner, 2021). Among these, the smartphone has become a ubiquitous object, no longer serving merely as a communication tool, but as a multi-functional gateway to social interaction, digital consumption, productivity management, entertainment, and personal identity curation (Fortunati, 2023; Fullwood et al., 2017). Through this device, users are embedded within continuous flows of content, notifications, and algorithmically curated experiences, a phenomenon widely characterised as hyperconnectivity. While often celebrated as a signifier of modern efficiency and

technological progress, this condition has drawn increasing scrutiny from psychologists, sociologists, and critical technology scholars alike. Mounting empirical evidence links excessive digital immersion to diminished attention spans, heightened anxiety, sleep disruption, decision fatigue, and emotional exhaustion, giving rise to an emergent cultural ambivalence towards digital saturation, particularly among younger generations (Ayadi & Djelassi, 2023; Deepa & Shelby, 2024).

As digital natives, this generation has been immersed in networked environments since birth. Yet, as Liang (2024) observes, they paradoxically emerge as among the most critically self-aware and psychologically burdened by hyperconnectivity, an internal conflict further illuminated by Rathod et al. (2022). In response, many adopt digital detox practices: voluntary reductions or suspensions of online engagement intended to restore cognitive clarity, emotional balance, and social authenticity (Neelakandan, 2024; Radtke et al., 2022). Among the most radical expressions of this trend is the deliberate replacement of smartphones with feature phones, basic devices devoid of internet, social media, or app-based functionality (Rothschild & Lindqvist, 2024). As Radtke et al. (2022) argue, this shift represents not merely technological regression, but a purposeful, ideologically charged enactment of digital minimalism that resists prevailing norms of constant connectivity and algorithmic immersion.

While such countercultural practices have been documented primarily in Western contexts, they are now gaining visibility in emerging markets. In Indonesia, one of the world's most digitally saturated nations, with over 212 million internet users and a predominantly mobile-first population, this trend is becoming particularly pronounced (Hamidah, 2023). As Chia & Beattie (2021) suggest, the adoption of feature phones within this setting does not signify a nostalgic return to the past, but rather a purposeful act of digital recalibration; an effort to reclaim agency, presence, and intentionality in the face of algorithmic media noise. Notwithstanding the growing appeal of digital detox discourse, scholarly inquiry has, to date, centred predominantly on short-term and individualised interventions, such as digital fasting, wellness retreats, or mindfulness apps, often overlooking more profound structural behavioural shifts, including hardware abandonment and the symbolic performance of disconnection (Nassen et al., 2023). Furthermore, as highlighted by Cecchinato et al. (2019), there remains a paucity of research examining how such practices are discursively constructed and socially negotiated within digital communities themselves.

To address these gaps, this study adopts a micro-netnographic approach, a focused, fine-grained adaptation of netnography, designed to capture culturally situated and symbolically dense user-generated discourse (Hewer & Brownlie, 2013; Liyanage et al., 2015). Unlike traditional longitudinal netnography, micro-netnography privileges depth over duration (Whalen, 2018), enabling close analysis of a single, high-engagement digital artefact embedded within broader cultural currents. In this case, the object of inquiry is an Instagram post by a verified outlet, documenting the shift among Gen Z to feature phones. The user comment section of this post, comprising organically generated responses, offers a rich site for exploring how users articulate experiences of digital fatigue, psychological relief, and technological resistance through the symbolic act of technological downgrading.

This methodological lens allows for the amplification of young, emergent voices who are actively renegotiating their relationships with technology in ways that disrupt dominant narratives of innovation, connectivity, and progress. These discourses are not simply reactions to overuse, but deliberate meaning-making practices through which users redefine wellness, autonomy, and belonging. In doing so, this study contributes to three interconnected theoretical domains: (1) the psychology of digital disconnection and mental well-being; (2) consumer resistance and anti-consumption behaviour; and (3) the sociology of youth technology cultures.

From an international marketing standpoint, this study offers both conceptual and practical significance. Conceptually, it challenges linear models of technological adoption that presume a natural progression towards increasingly sophisticated, feature-laden devices. By foregrounding consumer resistance in favour of simplicity and intentional disengagement, it reveals shifting value systems in digital consumption. Practically, the findings bear relevance for global marketers navigating culturally diverse and emotionally nuanced markets. In Indonesia, where techno-fatigue intersects with identity construction and affective labour (Wibisono & Purwanto, 2020), marketers must transcend simplistic binaries of inclusion versus exclusion. A nuanced engagement with these complexities facilitates the

design of ethically informed, culturally embedded, and psychologically responsive strategies, particularly in sectors shaped by technology, wellness, and telecommunications.

Guided by this backdrop, the present study addresses three interrelated research questions: (1) How do Indonesian users interpret the rejection of smartphones in favour of feature phones, and what socio-cultural and psychological meanings underpin this decision? (2) In what ways do users frame this behavioural shift as a form of digital detoxification, and how do their narratives reflect broader tensions between hyperconnectivity and holistic well-being? (3) What do these discursive expressions reveal about the shifting contours of digital consumer culture in emerging economies, and how might such insights inform more adaptive, inclusive, and ethically grounded international marketing strategies?

In answering these questions, the study pursues a dual objective: to advance scholarly understanding of digital detox as a culturally embedded, symbolically charged form of consumer resistance; and to offer theoretically grounded, managerially relevant insights for international marketers operating in saturated and affectively complex digital environments. By reframing the feature phone as a medium of disconnection and symbolic dissent, the research enriches conceptualisations of technological agency, foregrounding not only innovation and access, but also intentionality, restraint, and cultural resonance.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Rethinking Digital Engagement***

The unprecedented acceleration of digital transformation, particularly within emerging market contexts, has intensified scholarly interest in the multifaceted ways through which consumers engage with, negotiate, or deliberately withdraw from pervasive digital technologies. While digital connectivity is frequently framed as a conduit for aspirational consumption, socio-economic advancement, and social mobility (Chen, 2018), an increasingly salient counter-narrative has begun to surface. This alternative discourse foregrounds the psychological, emotional, and sociocultural tolls of hyperconnectivity (Tintori et al., 2024), prompting critical reappraisal of the normative assumption that greater digital immersion necessarily leads to enhanced well-being or value creation.

Central to this discourse is the concept of digital detox, which refers to the intentional reduction, interruption, or abstention from digital technologies as a means of regaining psychological balance, self-control, and cognitive clarity (Neelakandan, 2024; Radtke et al., 2022). Among younger cohorts in particular, especially digital natives embedded within emerging economies, this practice has emerged not merely as a personal coping mechanism, but as a culturally resonant critique of the prevailing logic of constant connectivity.

### ***Digital Detox within Anti-Consumption and Resistance Theory***

The phenomenon of digital detox can be theoretically positioned within the broader framework of anti-consumption and consumer resistance. Ziesemer et al. (2021) conceptualise anti-consumption as the intentional rejection, minimisation, or substitution of consumption behaviours, enacted as a challenge to dominant market ideologies or as a reaffirmation of personal values. Within this paradigm, the adoption of feature phones in lieu of smartphones can be interpreted as a symbolic and material form of resistance against the encroachment of algorithmic control, surveillance capitalism, and the psychological exhaustion associated with digital saturation.

This behavioural shift represents a movement from passive technological acceptance to critical and reflexive disengagement. Among digital natives, ironically, the very generation most closely identified with ubiquitous connectivity, there is growing recognition of the need to construct boundaries around digital practices (Millham & Atkin, 2018). Bucher (2020) argues that such refusal is not only behavioural but ideological, signalling a desire to assert autonomy and preserve mental sovereignty in an increasingly monitored and monetised digital environment.

### ***Voluntary Simplicity as a Lifestyle and Consumption Ethos***

Closely intertwined with the discourse on anti-consumption is the concept of voluntary simplicity, a lifestyle orientation that privileges minimalism, psychological well-being, and authenticity over

material excess and technological overload (Hook et al., 2023). In the context of emerging economies, the choice to use a feature phone is not solely driven by economic limitations but frequently operates as a conscious expression of introspection, agency, and identity formation (James, 2020). It becomes a symbolic act of reclaiming one's time, attention, and values from the continuous demands of digital connectivity. This behaviour reflects the formation of alternative consumer cultures, or what Kozinets (2006) refers to as 'consumer tribes', communities of individuals bound together by shared meanings, rituals, and ideologies. Within such tribes, consumption serves not only functional or hedonic purposes, but becomes a vehicle for articulating identity, contesting dominant norms, and cultivating a sense of belonging predicated on shared rejection of digital excess.

### ***Technologies of the Self: Digital Detox as Ethical Self-Formation***

Beyond psychological and behavioural models, digital detox practices can also be interpreted through the lens of Foucault's concept of technologies of the self, as highlighted by Aagaard (2021) and Pedersen et al. (2022). This framework conceptualises the ways in which individuals engage in practices of self-regulation, ethical reflection, and subject formation in response to dominant socio-technical structures. Within this view, the decision to adopt a feature phone is not reducible to consumer preference or utility optimisation; rather, it is a form of ethical self-fashioning through which individuals seek to cultivate autonomy, mental clarity, and intentional living in the face of systemic digital distraction. Such an interpretation aligns with broader developments in Consumer Culture Theory (Arnould et al., 2020), particularly those strands which foreground resistance, subjectivity, and reflexivity in the construction of postmodern consumer identities. The act of digital disconnection thus emerges as a practice of care, control, and critique, embedded within wider socio-cultural currents that challenge the hegemony of digital immersion.

## **METHODS**

### ***Research Design***

Anchored within an interpretivist epistemological framework, this study employs a qualitative micro-netnographic methodology to investigate the symbolic, affective, and behavioural dimensions of feature phone adoption as a contemporary practice of digital detoxification. Micro-netnography, as a focused derivation of traditional netnography (Kozinets, 2019), enables high-resolution analysis of socially embedded digital discourses within bounded online artefacts, thereby offering both analytical depth and contextual specificity. Given the emergent nature of digital disconnection among younger cohorts and the limited depth of existing research, this study adopts a micro-level analytical strategy. Emphasising conceptual depth over data breadth, this approach facilitates the exploration of nuanced meaning-making within digital culture.

### ***Data Source and Data Collection***

This study analysed a publicly accessible Instagram post from @bushcoo, a verified organisational account. As the post was publicly available and originated from an institutional source, its inclusion aligns with established ethical standards for observational netnography (Moreno et al., 2013). The unit of analysis was a thematically salient post explicitly addressing the trend of Gen Z users reverting to feature phones. Featuring a captioned image and narrative, the post garnered over 71,000 likes and counting, reflecting strong public engagement and relevance to the phenomenon under investigation.

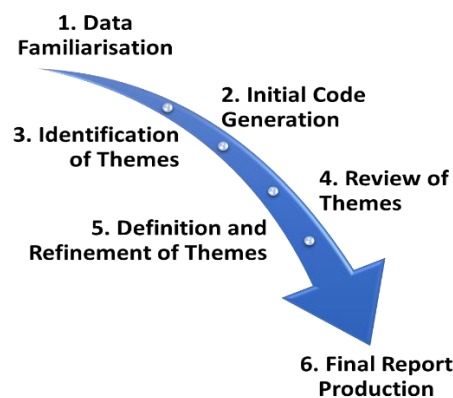
The post was purposefully selected based on three pre-established inclusion criteria: (1) direct relevance to the themes of hyperconnectivity, voluntary simplicity, and digital well-being; (2) clear indicators of community resonance, demonstrated not merely by quantitative metrics, but by the presence of discursively rich user engagement; and (3) thematic saturation evidenced in the comment section, offering interpretive breadth and depth for qualitative exploration.

Data collection was conducted passively through non-intrusive screenshot documentation and observational notes. A total of 30 user comments were strategically selected for thematic analysis. The sampling approach prioritised discursive variation, semantic richness, and representative authenticity. Comments containing emotive or cognitive depth, behavioural signalling, or culturally situated

reflections were retained, while repetitive, superficial, or irrelevant responses were excluded. This volume is methodologically appropriate within netnographic research, which values interpretive depth over sample size (Kozinets, 2019).

### Data Analysis

An inductive, multi-phase thematic analysis was conducted in accordance with the six-stage model outlined in Figure 1. The process was carried out using a structured coding matrix, thereby ensuring consistency, transparency, and traceability across all stages of analysis. Themes were iteratively refined and validated through triangulation with data drawn from multiple online platforms, thereby enhancing the overall robustness of the findings.



**Figure 1. Six-Stage Sequential Model for Multi-Phase Thematic Analysis**

Source: Braun & Clarke (2006)

Subsequently, to enhance conceptual granularity and interpretive depth, the coding process was iterative and reflexive, allowing for the organic emergence of nuanced patterns and thematic categories. Particular attention was paid to rhetorical framings, affective resonances, and expressions of digital subjectivity. While no computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) was used, the approach remained reflexively engaged and epistemologically grounded.

## RESULTS

Thematic analysis of 30 purposively selected Instagram comments revealed five dominant themes reflecting the socio-psychological complexities behind the shift from smartphones to feature phones as a form of digital resistance. These narratives highlight deeper values, emotions, and identity negotiations underpinning users' pursuit of intentional digital minimalism. To ensure rigour, transparency, and thematic saturation, all comments are represented within their respective categories. While sourced from publicly accessible content, all user data have been fully anonymised and pseudonymised, to uphold ethical research standards (Ford et al., 2021).

### **Theme 1: Nostalgia and Yearning for Human Connection**

Many Instagram users express longing for the pre-smartphone era, wherein face-to-face interactions, spontaneity, and genuine interpersonal moments were perceived to be more prevalent. Feature phones are seen not merely as functional devices but as conduits to recover lost social values. This emotional yearning is tied to sentiments of nostalgia and a desire for more meaningful human interaction in both public and private spheres. Such discourse is rooted in affective memory, cultural sentimentality, and idealised retrospection.

**Table 1. Expressions of Nostalgia and Desire for Human Connection**

User	Comment
IG_User1, 2025	So cool! Hope this spreads worldwide!



IG_User2, 2025	Exciting... It was better before when we could chat face-to-face without gadgets. Phones should only be for essential communication.
IG_User3, 2025	So good! I miss humans being human... At airports or public places, people used to chat. Now everyone's glued to their phones like robots.
IG_User4, 2025	Best news today. I miss the 90s... hope the trend lasts.
IG_User5, 2025	Awesome, totally agree! Nostalgic too.
IG_User6, 2025	Really? Not here yet. Smartphone and social media use is still maxed out. If true, hope it spreads fast in Indonesia, especially to Gen Z.
IG_User7, 2025	I really want this! Hope the whole world follows 🙏.
IG_User8, 2025	Let's go back to that era! Wasting time on smartphones harms us and future generations 😞.

Source: Data processed (2025)

The comments gathered under this theme (see Table 1) reflect more than simple nostalgia. They embody a socio-cultural critique, where digital communication is perceived as a disruptor to genuine human relations. These statements offer insights into how users view the shift toward digital minimalism not just as a functional adjustment, but as a means of reclaiming a sense of emotional and social authenticity.

### ***Theme 2: Digital Fatigue and Psychological Burden***

This theme encapsulates user dissatisfaction with the constant connectivity imposed by smartphones, often perceived as mentally exhausting, socially invasive, or counterproductive to wellbeing. Comments highlight digital burnout, emotional fatigue, and the psychological effects of perpetual accessibility. The remarks here reflect deep concern about digital dependency and its implications for mental health and behavioural autonomy.

**Table 2. Digital Overload and Psychological Implications**

User	Comment
IG_User9, 2025	GREAT THEY'RE AWARE 👍 ... INTERNET & A.I MAKE YOU ADDICTED, LAZY, AND JUST SCROLLING SOCIAL MEDIA ALL DAY!!
IG_User10, 2025	It definitely damages nerves in the long term.
IG_User11, 2025	Waiting for this to reach Indonesia. Tired of being on call 24/7. No holidays—always online.
IG_User12, 2025	I want this too (even if I'm not Gen Z). Smartphones make saving impossible 😞. Always tempted to shop, scroll... brainwashing.
IG_User13, 2025	This is cool. I feel like smartphones control our lives—social interactions fade, moments lose meaning. Phones lower life quality, honestly.
IG_User14, 2025	Please save my kids from social media standards. Can't we just use WhatsApp for selling?
IG_User15, 2025	I want to join... but work demands everything be connected through smartphones.

Source: Data processed (2025)

The testimonies (see Table 2) point toward an escalating mental burden experienced by digital natives and digital migrants alike. These users articulate a shared frustration with the always-online culture that erodes boundaries between work and personal life, suggesting that digital detox represents a necessary intervention rather than a transient trend.

### ***Theme 3: Technological and Functional Constraints***

This theme reflects the practical limitations associated with the transition to feature phones, especially with regard to the indispensability of smartphones in financial transactions, social communications, and infrastructural services. Responses in this category are grounded in rational considerations and the challenges posed by the ubiquity of digital systems in daily routines.

**Table 3. Functional Barriers to Feature Phone Adoption**

User	Comment
IG_User16, 2025	Nah, they'll probably just use two phones—a Nokia and an Android.
IG_User17, 2025	What about making calls with prepaid credit? Expensive. Better to call via WhatsApp—cheaper with data plans.
IG_User18, 2025	Not possible yet—all finance and payment apps are on phones 😊.
IG_User19, 2025	If this news is true, it's good—but proper research is needed.
IG_User20, 2025	Including Indonesia? Which Indonesia? Here, people even rent iPhones to show off 😊.
IG_User21, 2025	This is a good trend. But corporations won't like it... they can't force people to respond 24/7.
IG_User22, 2025	Not every place has ATMs, Boss. Then it's a hassle to go to the ATM again to pay for parking... rain, heat, ugh.
IG_User23, 2025	IMPOSSIBLE... YOU READY TO LEAVE EVERYTHING ON YOUR PHONE? MOBILE BANKING, E-COMMERCE, EASY PAYMENTS... YOU JUST TALK, WON'T ACTUALLY DO IT.

Source: Data processed (2025)

These functionally grounded insights underscore the infrastructural entanglement of smartphones in modern life. Commenters reveal the paradox of detox aspirations, while emotionally appealing, such shifts remain structurally constrained by existing digital infrastructures and institutionalised dependency (see Table 3).

#### ***Theme 4: Perceived Societal and Generational Impact***

Commenters also connected the digital detox phenomenon with broader socio-cultural shifts and intergenerational consequences. Some offered a nuanced view that smartphones are not inherently negative but depend on usage patterns, while others questioned society's capacity for sustained behavioural change.

**Table 4. Sociocultural Reflections and Generational Views**

User	Comment
IG_User24, 2025	It depends. Some use smartphones only when needed, not endlessly scrolling. You can learn useful things, like religion, through phones too.
IG_User25, 2025	As long as YouTube exists, people will keep scrolling. YouTube Shorts hypnotises users.
IG_User26, 2025	Just a temporary trend. When no one's looking, people secretly check Instagram or WhatsApp. Has technology ever regressed? Never, as far as I know.
IG_User27, 2025	Good move, but influencers won't approve.
IG_User28, 2025	Seriously. Want to see how long Gen Z can last without social media.

Source: Data processed (2025)

These comments (see Table 4) reveal both scepticism and conditional optimism regarding society's ability to reverse entrenched digital habits. The generational lens also reveals a growing concern about the long-term consequences of ubiquitous digital exposure on youth behaviour, cognitive health, and moral development.

#### ***Theme 5: Affirmative Engagement and Aspirational Responses***

A smaller subset of users provided overtly optimistic, action-oriented responses. These individuals advocate for digital simplicity, embracing the movement with a proactive and aspirational mindset. Their tone is motivational, signalling behavioural intention and potential community-level influence.

**Table 5. Proactive Attitudes toward Digital Detox**

User	Comment
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IG_User29, 2025	This is great, keep it up!
IG_User30, 2025	I really want this! Hope the whole world follows 🙏.

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Source: Data processed (2025)

While less numerous, these comments (see Table 5) reflect a critical strand of user sentiment that emphasises proactive lifestyle change. They suggest that despite infrastructural and behavioural challenges, a cultural shift remains possible if driven by intentional communities and aspirational ideals.

## DISCUSSION

### *From Nostalgia to Resistance: Memory as Moral Critique*

The first thematic cluster, ‘Nostalgia and Yearning for Human Connection’, speaks directly to the first research question by illustrating how participants frame the rejection of smartphones not merely as a utilitarian choice but as a symbolic act imbued with emotional depth and cultural memory. The recurring evocations of the pre-digital era signal a collective longing for perceived authenticity, spontaneity, and face-to-face human engagement. These expressions transcend simple reminiscence; they articulate a moral critique of the dehumanising effects of algorithmic communication and platform capitalism. This finding reflects and enriches the literature on voluntary simplicity, suggesting that digital detoxification is not merely instrumental but affectively and ethically motivated (Hook et al., 2023). In this context, feature phone use becomes a mode of ideological resistance, a symbolic refusal to acquiesce to the logics of distraction, surveillance, and commodification that define contemporary smartphone culture, as noted by (Rothschild & Lindqvist, 2024).

### *The Weight of Hyperconnectivity: Emotional and Cognitive Burnout*

The second theme, ‘Digital Fatigue and Psychological Burden’, reveals the intensifying psychological costs associated with ubiquitous connectivity, a concern that maps closely onto the second research question. Participants articulate a profound sense of exhaustion, anxiety, and cognitive fragmentation arising from the unrelenting demands of being “always-on.” These narratives resonate strongly with extant work on digital disconnection and mental well-being, underscoring the psychosocial toll of continuous partial attention. What is particularly noteworthy here is the convergence of individual distress and collective critique; digital detox is not solely framed as a personal coping strategy, but as a shared cultural imperative. This aligns with Foucault’s concept of technologies of the self, whereby individuals engage in self-regulative practices to reassert autonomy and reclaim mental sovereignty within systems of pervasive digital governance (Aagaard, 2021; Pedersen et al., 2022).

### *Constraints, Contradictions, and Consumer Pragmatics*

Despite the aspirational tone of many user narratives, the third theme, ‘Technological and Functional Constraints’, foregrounds a sobering counterpoint. While participants express desire for digital simplicity, they simultaneously acknowledge the infrastructural and socio-economic embeddedness of smartphones in daily life, ranging from financial transactions and e-commerce to social validation. This paradox highlights a fundamental tension: the symbolic appeal of detox is often undermined by the pragmatic realities of contemporary digital infrastructures. This complexity supports and extends the literature on consumer resistance (Kaun, 2021; Mannell et al., 2024), demonstrating that acts of disconnection are often partial, negotiated, and contextually contingent. It also reveals that digital detox, while discursively compelling, may struggle to transition into sustainable behavioural change without systemic institutional and technological reform.

### *Intergenerational Tensions and the Fragility of Detox Culture*

The fourth theme, ‘Perceived Societal and Generational Impact’, addresses the third research question by illustrating the broader cultural contestations surrounding digital detoxification. Several participants adopt a sceptical stance, questioning both the feasibility and durability of the detox movement, particularly among younger cohorts. Others acknowledge the nuanced role of smartphones



as both tools of empowerment and vectors of distraction. These insights reflect a complex and evolving digital consumer culture in emerging markets, where resistance and resignation coexist. This ambivalence aligns with Chandrasekara et al. (2022) critique of postmodern consumer identities as inherently fragmented and reflexive. The findings thus suggest that while detox discourse is gaining cultural traction, it remains vulnerable to co-optation, performativity, and generational divergence.

### ***Hope, Aspiration, and the Role of Intentional Communities***

Finally, the fifth theme, 'Affirmative Engagement and Aspirational Responses', reveals a smaller but significant cluster of proactive users who embrace digital detox as a means of self-actualisation and communal transformation. These respondents frame their actions not only as forms of resistance but as aspirational commitments to a more intentional and value-driven lifestyle. Here, the notion of digital detox is less a critique of the present and more a vision for the future, a rallying point for community formation and identity articulation, akin to what Kozinets (2006) describes as 'consumer tribes'. This suggests that within the broader landscape of digital resistance, there exists a fertile ground for constructing alternative value systems, marketing narratives, and consumption practices grounded in simplicity, authenticity, and human connection.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study explored digital detox through a micro-netnographic examination of user narratives surrounding the shift from smartphones to feature phones in Indonesia. Rather than a mere retreat from technology, this transition reflects a deeper renegotiation of identity, autonomy, and emotional well-being amid digital oversaturation. Feature phones emerge as symbolic tools of resistance, enabling users to reclaim attentional control, authentic interaction, and intentional living in response to hyperconnectivity.

Theoretically, this research contributes by elevating user-generated discourse as a lens into digital fatigue, extending consumer resistance theory through ideologically grounded anti-consumption practices, and embedding digital detox within frameworks of voluntary simplicity and post-materialist values. Drawing from Foucauldian notions of ethical self-care, the study positions disconnection as an active identity project. Practically, it offers actionable insights for marketers, designers, and policymakers, highlighting the demand for non-invasive, minimalist, and ethically attuned digital alternatives, while advocating for the integration of detox literacy within broader digital literacy agendas.

While the micro-netnographic method provides rich contextual depth, its specificity limits generalisability. Future research should incorporate methodological triangulation, combining ethnography with interviews, diaries, or participatory methods, to better capture the lived realities of digital disengagement. Cross-cultural comparisons are also needed to examine how digital detox is interpreted and enacted across sociotechnical systems, and to explore how institutions and brands are responding to the rise of disconnection discourses within the context of sustainability, ethical consumption, and post-growth lifestyles.

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