# Logotyp Mittuniversitet. Digital technocultures in Naturebased tourism

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This thesis investigates the influences of digital technologies on nature-based tourism (NBT) experiences. I acknowledge that the holistic digitalization of human lives increasingly impacts nature-based tourism. Particularly, I argue that it impacts tourists’ experiential valuation of nature, as well as tourists themselves as experiencers of nature in NBT in ways that need to be further understood.
Following contemporary consumer-dominant perspectives on tourism experiences, I argue that tourists’ multi-dimensional valuation of experiences depends greatly on ex-situ factors that exist outside service encounters in NBT and within digitally networked lifeworld experienced by tourists, which informs how they value themselves and what they experience. However, such lifeworlds are poorly acknowledged in research on NBT experiences. Building on consumer culture theory, I argue that NBT tourists are cultural agents, and their NBT experiences are highly affected by how their lifeworlds are ingrained in marketplace cultures that discipline what is valuable and experienced in NBT. Such marketplace cultures, which are becoming increasingly digital and technological, can be conceptualized as digital technocultures. More than simply enhancing experiences, as extant literature suggests, digital technology provides lifestyle scripts, ideologies, identity myths, symbolic universes, and stories associated with the everyday, tourism, and consumption of nature. The latter are powerful actors in shaping consumers’ meaning making, sensescapes, emotions, behaviors, and ultimately experience valuations of nature in NBT.
Across the four papers and the additional discussion that compose it, this thesis investigates how digital technocultures shape the identity of tourist experiencers in NBT and how they impact the valuation of nature in NBT. The thesis adopts a mix of novel, in-depth, thick, and interpretive methodologies to gain such knowledge. Findings offer thick consumer knowledge and a high-level consumer insight into NBT tourists. In digital technocultures, NBT tourists and their experiences of nature are contested among different digital and disconnected selves. Tourists appropriate digital technocultures and NBT according to identity projects that aim to assemble valued digital “experiencers” and at taking part in valued in e-tribes reflecting them in one’s lifeworld. At the same time, tourists negotiate digital technocultures disciplining their lifeworlds in order to build a valued escapist, liberated and disconnected Self in nature. Moreover, digital technocultures discipline, abstract, and extremify specific aspects of nature. These are sought, desired, imagined, and experienced as digital hyperrealities in NBT. This thesis explores the implications of digital technocultures of experience for NBT, which have so far been insufficiently acknowledged.

##### Keywords

Nature-based tourism; digital technology; tourism experience; consumer culture; technoculture