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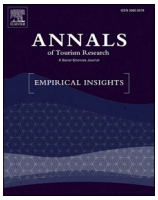

Remotely researching leisurely settings

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1. Introduction

Identifying creative ways to collect data remotely has and continues to be embraced by researchers, primarily influenced by three factors. First, travel restrictions imposed due to, for example, political instability, war, security concerns, infections, and pandemics, including the most recent COVID-19 global lockdown. These conditions make physically collecting data difficult or impossible. Second, environmental concerns, particularly those around the need to reduce travel-related carbon emissions, both directly and in-directly, places pressures on limiting travel (Doran, Pallensen, Bohm, & Ogunbode, 2021). Third, the availability of online data sets, for example large quantitative big data sets to rich qualitative social media data, inclusive of text, still and video imagery is increasing in popularity and use. Together, incorporating remote methods can help researchers overcome logistical, financial, geographical and cultural barriers. They can also increase the *volume* and enhance the *variety*, *velocity*, *veracity* and therefore *value* of one's analysis and information achieved by fusing data sets for triangulation purposes. Additionally, adopting a more flexible approach to data collection provides an opportunity for *extensional* work as new data sources can be added to buttress one's data analysis and strengthen arguments; and *relational* work as new data sets can reveal new relations between, for example, people, places, events and spaces. Reñosa et al. (2020) argues the novelty of remote data collection "represents a substantive adaptation or pivot from the status quo" (p.2) integrating new evidence to tackle contemporary research problems.

Although there is some excellent practice of remote methods published, there is little structured guidance and synthesis for the options available to study leisure settings. This article contributes by bringing together a simple yet diverse set of remote methods and data analysis techniques according to the type of data generated, as presented in the 'Remote Methods in Leisure Settings Framework' below (Fig. 1).

2. Remote methods available and previously deployed

Fig. 1 outlines five alternative remote data gathering approaches that researchers studying leisure settings from a distance can deploy. We examine some examples below. Digital ethnography is a method of tackling social issues through cyberspace (Kaur-Gill & Dutta, 2017), and can closely replicate physically observing individuals through traditional ethnographic approaches, whilst offering new advantages too. Examples here include the use of live cameras and recorded film, Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) data. Third party providers (e.g. https://www.earthcam.com) to study tourist hotspots, cities and other local environments and the behaviour of visitors have become increasingly used (e.g. Pink, Sumartojo, Lupton, & Labond, 2017; Postill, 2017). Recruiting local researchers with 360-degree cameras and Go-Pros, or other recording devices for example can help study in situ how leisure spaces are formed and how visitors interact with them (Duignan & McGillivray, 2019), without requiring additional researchers (e.g., Pink et al., 2017). Installing static cameras to record and watch back afterwards was a

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particularly novel method deployed by Sampson and Raudenbush (1999) to assess public disorder in Chicago.

Scholars have used live webcams (e.g., Jarratt, 2020a) and uploaded content to YouTube allowing researchers to slow-down footage and interrogate specific visual elements frame-by-frame (Paterson, Bottorff, & Hewat, 2003). This was applied by Timothy and Groves (2001) who identified how "weather, crowd density, changes in facilities and infrastructure" (p.99) impacted visitor behaviour and how managers respond. Furthermore, Gómez-Martín and Martínez-Ibarra (2012) also used webcams to examine visitor crowd response to weather conditions to predict demand for attractions to facilitate accurate demand-planning measures for popular Spanish beach resorts. This illustrates how webcams have been "re-purposed as a tool to evaluate patterns of population-level physical activity behaviour" (Hipp et al., 2014, p.2).

Yet, despite thousands of publicly available live broadcasts (e.g. www.webcamtaxi.com and 'Twitch' where researchers can crowd fund users to cycle around cities, often providing tours), little work draws on the power and potential of webcams as a way to enhance data collection and analysis. This is surprising as live steams, either facilitated by a local (or not) can provide access to local insights [as opposed to a researcher who may not be geographically or culturally familiar with local settings] to drive remote data collection too (Paterson et al., 2003). Though this may be changing as Jarratt (2020a) notes how COVID-19 has stimulated webcam use by utilizing affordable technology, easy access, low cost. Furthermore, Jarratt (2020b) argues how subjects of live place-based webcams e.g., crowds or wildlife are typically oblivious to their presence, therefore may provide unfiltered images neither staged nor manipulated.

The use of social networking data becoming increasingly popular too. Social networks are defined as "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 211). In terms of alternative means to gather opinion and attitudes, given the popularity of video conferencing, researchers can conduct online interviews with anyone, anywhere and at any time. This is similar to online surveys and online discussion forums that afford researchers to gather open and closed responses and conduct focus groups with a global audience (Evans & Mathur, 2005). New technologies have allowed video interviews to be not only easily conducted with subjects around the world but also transcribed in real-time with high accuracy, saving time and financial resource. For example, Kolotouchkina (2018) conducted online elite interviews with senior managers at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics who were less inclined to meeting face-to-face; and Ramchandani, Davies, Coleman, Shibli, and Bingham (2015) completed initial physical surveying by utilizing online surveys to connect with event visitors a year later to analyse post-travel behaviour.

GPS or GNSS data generated by applications like Strava (www.strava.com) have been increasingly used to track visitor behaviour and movement too (e.g. walking, running, cycling data and route choices). For example, Domènech, Gutiérrez, and Clavé (2020) provided cruise passengers with GNSS devices to monitor movements and cultural habits at each port and complemented this data with visitor experience questionnaires. Location data only is often not enough (Chaix et al., 2013) but when combined with other remote methods can reveal new and

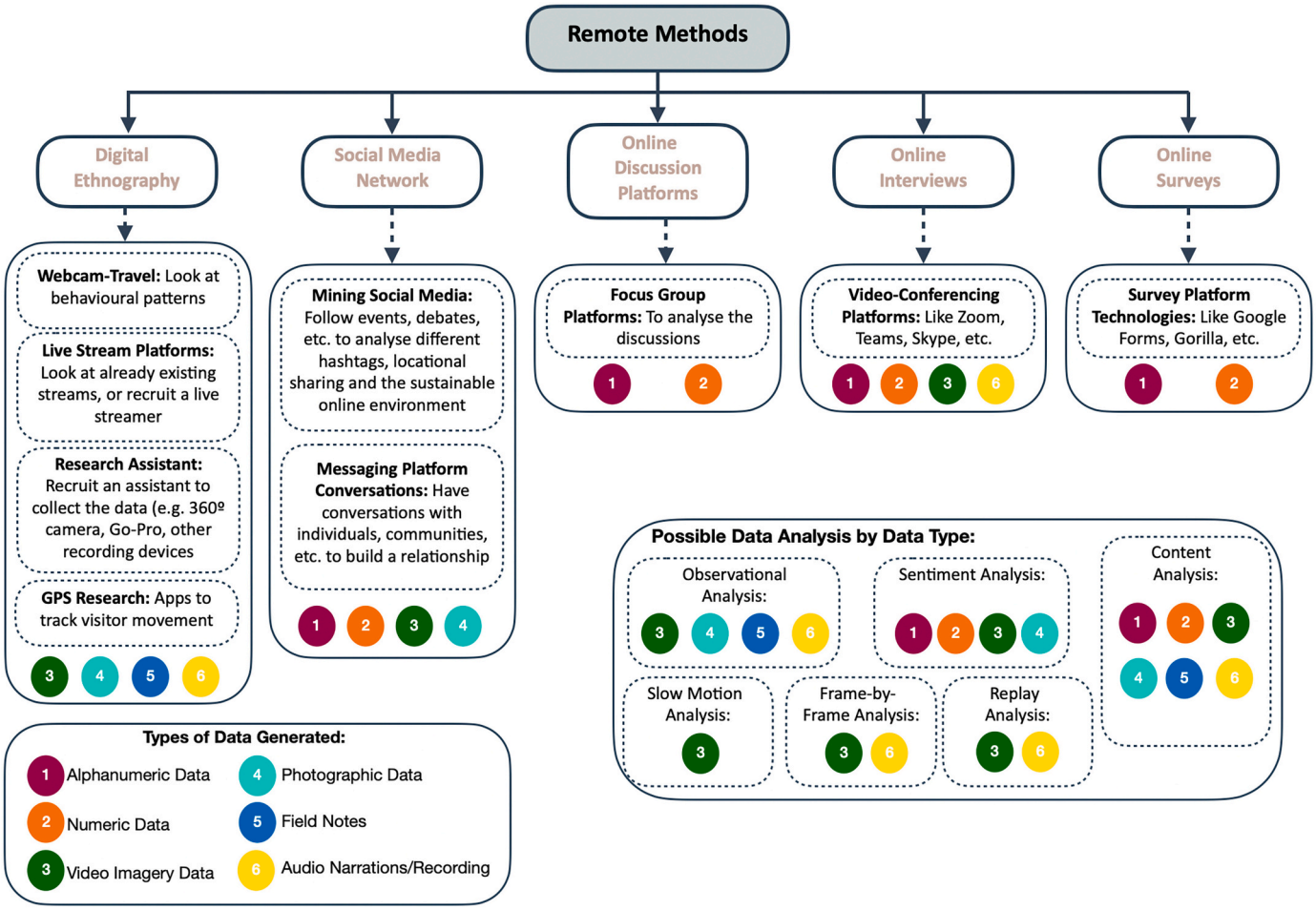

Fig. 1. Remote Methods in Leisure Settings Framework.

complex visitor behaviour insights (Lewis, Hardy, Wells, & Kerslake, 2021). This is evidenced by Galily and Clavio (2016) and Clavio and Frederick's (2014) work using social media data to study visitor motivations in mega-event cities using location sharing, as well as following events, debates and sentiments via Twitter hashtags and accounts. The abundance of text, still and video imagery generated on social media networks can provide significant opportunity for observational, sentiment and content analysis (Postill & Pink, 2012). For example, Leung et al. (2012) exampled how mega-events can influence tourist flows by examining 500 online trip diaries to evaluate movement patterns in Beijing before, during and after the 2008 Olympics. Furthermore, this is particularly useful for researchers studying unsafe locations increasingly use remote fieldwork across "conflict ridden or otherwise hazardous locations" (Postill, 2017), p.3). Some have utilized simple communication software like WhatsApp to share data insights through to building and maintaining relationships with gatekeepers and subjects like Cade, Everett, and Duignan's (2019) work studying tourism development impacts on penurious favela zones during the Rio 2016 Olympics, through to Gray's (2016) use of social media to study public protests in Russia. This article provides a selection of both established and novel and under-utilized remote methods to help researchers incorporate new data collection methods into their work, graphically illustrated by the 'Remote Methods in Leisure Settings Framework' (Fig. 1).

3. Concluding thoughts

This article brings together well-established remote methods and new and under-utilized ones to create a structured framework for researchers to consider for future methodological choices. We suggest these methods can be standalone and combined together with other methods to gather the necessary data to achieve one's research aims and objectives. They also offer a more agile and dynamic approach to collecting data, a process that often requires "continual decision making about what to observe and record" in response to emerging data themes (Paterson et al., 2003, p.32). This is critical as contemporary research problems call for robust and innovative data collection and analytical techniques to identify and interrogate them. Aligned to the benefits of utilizing bigger data sets to inform data collection and analysis, we argue a novel synthesis of traditional and non-traditional methods like those detailed could potentially lead to greater *volume*, *variety*, *velocity, veracity*, *value*, and help enable researchers to engage in greater *extensional* and *relational* work to iteratively add new sources of data and obtain new and potentially deeper findings. This is critical for informing rigorous social science approaches, whilst simultaneously reducing a researcher's carbon footprint, saving research time and financial resource, and reduce risk of travel restrictions for business continuity purposes. We call on researchers to build on and extend our Remote Methods for Leisure Settings framework to advance our collective understanding as to how and why to research all types of people, places and spaces at a distance.

Declaration of Competing Interest

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