

8 Invisible chains in motion: Technology-facilitated family violence and the overlooked tourism context

*Nadia Faisal, Mehmood Chadhar, and
Smareen Mahmood*

Introduction

For many, travel and holidays symbolise freedom, escape, and renewal. Tourism promises a temporary break from daily routines and an opportunity to restore well-being (UNWTO, 2022; Cohen & Cohen, 2019; Filep & Laing, 2019). Yet for some, the very technologies that make mobility easier, smart-phones, GPS trackers, social media, and smart home devices, transform travel into another site of control and surveillance. Instead of offering respite, holidays can become extensions of coercive control, where perpetrators exploit technology to monitor, intimidate, and restrict victims' choices (Dragiewicz et al., 2021; Stark, 2007).

Consider 'Sophie', in a hypothetical but increasingly common scenario. Sophie, a 32-year-old mother of two, plans a short family holiday after separating from her partner. She imagines the trip will provide rest and distance. Instead, she notices unusual log-ins to her accommodation's smart door system and receives messages from her ex-partner, commenting on her location in real time. Sophie realises that her former partner has infiltrated her devices and travel accounts, turning what should be a restorative holiday into yet another arena of fear. Sophie's story is not an isolated case of imagination; rather, it reflects a broader reality in which technology-facilitated abuse can follow survivors anywhere, even when they seek escape through travel (Afrouz, 2023; Mitchell et al., 2025).

In Australia, such behaviours are recognised under family violence law, where coercive control includes not only physical but also psychological, economic, and technological forms of abuse (Douglas, 2021; Walklate et al., 2022). The risk is heightened during and after separation – times when travel for