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ADVANCES IN CO-WORKING, CO-LIVING & COMMUNITY LIVING SPACES FOR DIGITAL NOMADS

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Abstract: Remote working has moved beyond a temporary trend and is now firmly embedded in the global employment landscape, largely due to rapid digitalization and the growth of the gig economy. This shift has led to a steady rise in digitally independent professionals, commonly referred to as digital nomads. These individuals work remotely while traveling, often across national boundaries, without a permanent place of residence and with short stays in multiple destinations. Their work depends heavily on reliable internet access and digital tools, enabling them to operate outside traditional office environments while maintaining flexible and mobile lifestyles. The growing phenomenon of digital nomadism has created a distinct segment within travel and tourism, characterized by needs that differ significantly from those of conventional tourists. Rather than traditional hotels or resorts, digital nomads favor co-working, co-living, and community-based spaces that combine accommodation with work facilities, social interaction, and networking opportunities. Such spaces support a balanced integration of professional responsibilities and leisure experiences and are sometimes described as "hostels for grownups" due to their hybrid nature. Despite its rapid expansion, digital nomadism remains underexplored in academic research. There is a clear need for deeper understanding of digital nomads' preferences and behavioral patterns to help tourism and hospitality providers design suitable services and to enable policymakers to develop effective regulatory frameworks. Accordingly, this study seeks to examine digital nomadism as an emerging tourism trend, assess destination suitability for this group, and identify accommodation features that attract this global digital community.

Keywords: Alternative accommodation; Digital nomads; Co-working; Co-living & Community living

Introduction

Steve K. Roberts (who presented himself as technomadic) is characterized as world's first digital nomad who travelled 17,000 miles across USA on bicycle but the term 'Digital Nomad' were popularized by researchers Makimoto & Manners (1997) (Arslan 2024). As cited by (Vagena 2021) (Fig 1), According to Bloomberg, the term "digital nomad" first appeared for referring to the generation of millennials traveling globally with a smartphone in hand.

Fig 1 : (Source: Smith, D. (2024)

Technology is the greatest disruptor across the globeaffectingseveral people's routine lives along with their lifestyles. In the past few years, work-based developments have taken place in the traditional style of working mainly due totechnological aberrations, changing lifestyle trends, work from home culture adopted by most of the I.T MNCs, rise in purchase and hypermobile travel interests.More people than ever are now leveraging the digital technology. The digital nomad lifestyle continues to evolve in the Gig economy(Green 2020) marking a shift in focus from all leisure to hybrid approach of hospitality offerings due to this metamorphosis (Orel 2020). The core concept related to digital nomads include: COVID-19, co-working, digital work, gig economy, internet, lifestyle, lifestyle migration, location independence, mobile technology, mobility, networks, nomadic work, remote work, tourism, work, work practices and youth travel (Šímová 2022)

Table 1: Types of nomads:

S. No.	Type	Description
1	*Digital nomad*	Nomad preferring new destination, move consistently and actively using technology heavily relying on internet
2	*Spiritual nomad*	Nomad opting for nomadic lifestyle mainly for interacting and sharing their spiritual accomplishments at new places
3	*Quick time nomad*	Working professionals who opt and get permitted from their employer for pursuing nomadic lifestyle frequently such as 1 week off after 2 months work. It requires high cost.
4	*Corporate (Remote work) nomad*	Professionals working in a large company and are available for work mainly away from their office premises (such as from home or other places)
5	*Half and half nomad*	People who can easily manage balanced lifestyle between work time and leisure activities in their trip
6	*Offline or classic nomad*	Group of professionals possessing certain competencies such as artists, cooking experts, driving instructors and migrate from one place to another as per their competency, becoming part of local community
7	*Volunteer/ House sitting nomad*	This nomadic model is opposite to classic nomad. This involves no exchange of money but generally settle on volunteer basis for free accommodation and food
8	*Rich nomad*	This nomadic lifestyle is a dream of many and generally demands free and flexible travel plans. These people have lots of money either from lottery, family affiliations or out of a successful career
9	*Retired nomad*	These are retired people who opt for nomadic lifestyle due to inner desire to experience nomadic lifestyle and secondly due to their inability to choose nomadic lifestyle for their work commitments while they were younger. They use retirement money so rarely work while travelling
10	*Home nomad*	Home nomads are those who stay in their home country and are able to build meaning and self-conscious life without having to travel.

Source: (Become Nomad 2015)

Review of Literature

Digital Nomads-Who are they?

Mobile workers (teleworkers) travelling indefinitely from one place to another with extreme geographic mobility while regularly fulfilling their work-based commitments from anywhere, enabled with their digitalized factors of production (Wang et al 2018). Digital nomads are the people who use digital telecommunication technologies (such as cloud computing and wireless digital technologies) for their means of earning in nomadic fashion, working remotely from foreign destinations, coffee shops, public libraries and co-working spaces.(Jha Bhat Kaur & Darekar 2020) & (Vagena 2021) suggested that the term "digital nomad" also known as 'global nomads') relates to those people who no longer rely on work in a conventional office; rather they can decide freely when and where to work. They can essentially work from anywhere, as long as they have their laptop along with them having an access to a proper internet connection. (Haking 2022) found digital nomads predominantly as millennials, from advanced economies and having varied academic backgrounds.

The professional freedom include control over selection and structure of work, spatial freedom means locational independence and personal freedom include focus on self-development and maintaining life priorities, as per freedom motivations to opt digital nomadic lifestyle as cited in p.4 by Dreher & Triandafyllidou 2023.

Professions of digital nomads

The professions and form of digital nomads' employability vary but are mostly working in International firms, entrepreneurs or are freelancers such as programmers, copywriters, journalists, graphic designers, photographers, fashion designers, teachers, lawyers, personal coaches etc and basically are those people 'who work in order to live' not 'live in order to work' (Jha et al 2020)

Hospitality industry and digital nomadicity

Digital nomads look for spaces with design elements and social activities integrated by lodging accommodations supported with office environment which are mostly considered as vital elements fostering to interpersonal relationships amongst each other's as staying guests. Hospitality industryhas started modifying their facilities adapting to the changing needs of growing nomadic workers (Orel 2021).

Ideal destinations for digital nomads

Urban destinations such as cities of Berlin and Prague in Europe, Medellin or Antigua in South-America and Seim Reap Town and Ubud in Asia are considered as world's leading digital nomads cities (Orel 2021). The most visited cities are located mostly in Asia followed by Europe and America showcase a similar pattern to traditional tourists. The percentage out of total digital nomads visiting Oceania and Africa is the least. Countries located South-east of Asian continent represents most visited destinations by digital nomads. Approximately 70% of total visitors profile of digital nomads

visiting Asia are mainly from Thailand (30%), Indonesia (12%), Vietnam (11%), Malaysia (8%) and Singapore (6%). The digital nomads' visits throughout the Europe but mainly concentrated in Southwest part in areas such as Spain (21%), Portugal (16%), Germany (11%), France and Neitherlands (14%). In the Americas, US (approximately 30%) is the most visited destination followed by Mexico (19%), Brazil (15%) and Canada (9%). In Oceania, 97% of the digital nomads prefer visiting either Australia or New Zealand. In Africa, 81% of digital nomads prefer South Africa (28%) followed by Morocco (26%), Egypt (17%) and Nigeria (10%) (Akgiş İlhan et al 2024). (Green,2020) do found several digital nomads belonging to US, Australia and parts of Europe.(Dreher & Triandafyllidou 2023) found top destinations for nomads include: Buenos Aires (Argentina), Bangkok (Thailand), Mexico city (Mexico), Lisbon (Portugal), Canggu, Bali (Indonesia), Timisoara (Romania), Gran Canaria, Canary Islands (Spain), Penang (Malaysia), Madeira (Portugal) and Medellin(Colombia)

Major factors affecting destination selections

The safety in all aspects (such as physical safety, data safety, information safety, internet safety) enabling to execute work plays a major role when comes to destination choices made by the nomads(Ilhan et al 2024) Emotional well-being supported sentiments, trust factor and joy are crucial that supports their emotional preferences. The connectivity of destination, local culture, infrastructure (Özgen Çiğdemli et al 2024), climate, affordability and local culinary offerings (gastronomy) play a vital role when it comes to destination selection by digital nomads. (Yayla 2024). Availability of kitchen area in their accommodating space along with chance given to them for preparing own meals are some important phenomenon exhibited by digital nomad's behavior. Religious rituals play a major role in selection of destinations by digital nomads (Yildırım & Kaya 2024). (Green,2020), (Fuzi 2015) observed digital nomads prefer tourism-based destinations those offering infrastructural support in terms of work productivity, socialization opportunities, co-working spaces having material infrastructure of flexible, shared or private desk and office space), wide accommodation,café and coffee shop options. (Prabawa & Pertiwi 2020) named push factors for destination search by digital nomads include motivational factors related to work, enlarging network whereas pull factors include inspiring destination, supportive place to stay-work together and enjoyable activities.

Activities to be planned for Digital Nomads' Engagement

Participation in cooking classes, visit to culinary museums, visit to local food market, local food festivals, participation in cultural cuisine preparations, chance provided for connecting with local vendors and artisans (Yayla 2024), religious rituals, travelling more and meeting locals for spending time with them by learning their language, eating with them and participation in localized rituals and traditions along with non-touristic activities such as shamanic practices, grave visits and mourning (Yeıldırım & Kaya 2024)

SWOT Analysis

Strengths & Opportunities: The 5 types of digital nomad's typology identified on gastronomic basis are: local flavor hunters, Gastronomy adventurers, budget conscious food lovers, cultural explorers and health and sustainability based (Yayla et al. 2024)

Digital nomads show a higher preferential view to local eateries, street food, traditional cuisine where they also prefer restaurant offering International cuisine (Yayla et al 2024)

Affordability is the key element for digital nomads' destination choices that also includes affordable and healthy food options and an opportunity given to them for preparing own meal options(Yayla 2024)

Engagement (before, during and after the stay) of digital nomads is necessary (Yayla et al 2024)

Digital nomads get motivated by networking, business opportunities, staying with like-minded people around (socialization opportunities), co-working living, freedom, getting inspired, lifestyle, novelty seeking, curiosity and cultural exchange (Arslan 2024)

Digital nomads play a major role in destination marketing and do create intentions to visit destinations(Ay &Guzel 2024)

The common push factor that motivates digital nomads are working related material and enlarging network while common pull factors are inspiring destinations, support features to stay-work and enjoyable activities (Prabawa & Pertiwi 2020)

Freedom to work from place of interest brings higher productivity for digital nomads (Jha et al.,2020)

Weakness &Threats

Digital nomads often step outside their comfort zones as they adopt highly mobile and flexible lifestyles that differ markedly from conventional forms of work and residence. While this mobility offers freedom, it also exposes them to a range of structural and social challenges across destinations. In many regions, the absence of clear regulations to attract digital nomads, limited or no tax incentives, weak communication systems, frequent visa runs, and insufficient opportunities for social interaction make long-term stays difficult. These constraints further complicate the maintenance of a healthy work–life balance. As digital nomadism continues to expand globally, there is a growing recognition that new and dedicated legislation may be required across major destinations to address visa frameworks, taxation, and residency conditions more effectively.

Inadequate digital infrastructure remains another major barrier, particularly in emerging or remote destinations where reliable internet connectivity and technology-friendly environments are limited. Harsh seasonal conditions and unstable internet services further restrict the inflow of digital nomads. At the same time, digital nomads significantly influence destination image, as they frequently act as informal brand ambassadors through social media and online platforms, shaping perceptions among global audiences.

Social challenges also persist, including gender-, racial-, and ethnicity-based discrimination, as well as cultural and communication barriers. On a daily operational level, digital nomads require laptop-friendly ecosystems with accessible plug points, strong Wi-Fi, and conducive workspaces. Additionally, they face practical and personal challenges such as limited access to quality food, inadequate public transport, security and privacy concerns, financial uncertainty, visa-related stress, and mental health pressures. Consequently, successful digital nomadism demands a high degree of self-motivation, adaptability, and self-discipline.

Observations and Discussion

Younger individuals are increasingly drawn to digital nomadism, influenced by a combination of push and pull factors such as dissatisfaction with conventional work settings and the attraction of flexibility, autonomy, and location independence. Working from remote or unconventional locations does not necessarily reduce productivity; rather, higher job engagement and personal freedom often enhance efficiency and overall happiness. As digital nomadism continues to expand, it demands more focused and systematic research attention. Countries must formulate clear digital policies, including virtual work or digital nomad visas, along with well-defined tax implications or incentives to attract this workforce. Future research should also examine the concept of workcation and explore how major tourist destinations can be developed into nomad-friendly hubs through robust IT infrastructure and digital marketing, capitalizing on geoarbitrage opportunities. Additionally, longitudinal studies are essential to assess the long-term socio-economic and political impacts on individuals who adopt a digital nomadic lifestyle over extended periods.

Limitations and future directions

This study provides valuable insights about digital nomadism but may not represent every digital nomad due to their presence in a complete diversified global geographical arena where each country has unique culture, language, climate, behavioral preferences, etc.

For a comprehensive study about digital nomads, longitudinal study must be incorporated by future researchers to find interesting facts, how they evolve with their changing lifestyles, needs and preferences.

This study did not used empirical data. In future, empirical studies could be considered by reaching larger number of digital nomads. The findings could be backed by lot of quantitative methods

Survey method can be a preferred mode of future studies targeting diversified data sources to gain more insights

The impact on the local culture, local community, infrastructure and sustainability factors due to digital nomadism may be studied in detail to present reverse side of the coin

Exclusive study on typology of digital nomads could be undertaken in future studies

Experiencescape researches in future could reveal perspectives of digital nomads who share their experiences in virtual platforms

Ethnographic research could be conducted in future making participatory observations by travelling along with digital nomads, in certain destinations

The social media and other digital posts of digital nomads could be analyzed to extract different themes of research

The impact of digital nomadism on their temporary host communities may be explored in future studies

A separate study on challenges faced by digital nomads can be undertaken

Conclusion

The impact of ICT on tourism can be comprehensive to an extent it has created a new kind of traveleri.e. digital nomads, that may come between a business traveler and recreational traveler. (Reichenberger,2017). There is a long way for this phenomenon called digital nomadism ever becoming a norm as this does not suit most of the people, also its effects vary from person to person (Mouratidis,2018). The global nomad and digital nomad are developing day by day and has an influencing effect on many young travelers (Richards,2015). Digital nomadism possesses both strengths-opportunities as well as weaknesses-threats so a new wave of studies and lot of researches need to be carried out to harness it benefits as well as for planning, creating the infrastructural set-up, policies and administrative set-ups required to attract such travelers in any particular destination.

Implications for the business and Policy makers

Destination Management Organizations should develop strategic, digitally driven marketing plans to enhance destination appeal for digital nomads, using holistic and emotion-based campaigns across online platforms. Destinations must offer engaging in-house and outdoor activities, affordable long-stay options, cultural and gastronomic experiences, business ecosystems, pre-arrival support, high-speed internet, and wellness facilities such as gyms and yoga spaces.

To support the growth of digital nomadism, destinations must prioritize infrastructural upgrades, particularly faster and affordable internet connectivity. Regional development around co-living and co-working hubs should be strengthened, with special focus on youth engagement. Ensuring personal safety, data security, efficient transportation, and supportive taxation policies is essential. Close coordination between tourism planners and digital nomads can further enhance destinations through positive influencer-driven visibility.

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