

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54663/2182-9306.2025.SpecialIssueMBP.158-169>

Research Paper

An insight into the Journey of Digital Nomads in Portugal

Madalena Eça de Abreu*

Luana Pinheiro Sampaio**

ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand the reasons why digital nomads are increasingly choosing Portugal as their temporary home, while also mapping their consumer journey — a lifestyle that blends work, leisure, travel, and personal fulfillment. The methodology included a literature review and the use of questionnaires to assess the profile, lifestyle, and decision-making process of digital nomads living in Portugal. The results show that Portugal is selected primarily for its ability to offer a balance between work and life. Factors such as strategic geographic location, ease of access to other countries, safe transportation, and cost of living play a key role in the decision-making process. The study also found little variation between genders within this group, which is mostly composed of individuals aged between 25 and 49, holding at least a tertiary education, and often working in administrative roles. However, the study faced significant limitations, including the scarcity of literature on this specific topic and challenges related to sampling — particularly due to the mobile and dispersed nature of digital nomads, which makes it difficult to engage participants. Despite these limitations, the study presents a valuable opportunity to understand and harness the potential of digital nomads in connection with Portugal and local businesses, while contributing scientific data to the literature. This insight can help strengthen the relationship between these professionals and the country, supporting economic growth and national development.

Keywords: Digital Nomadism, Remote Work, Leisure, Tourism, Portugal

*Polytechnic University of Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal. CEOS.PP-Coimbra, Portugal. E-mail: mabreu@iscac.pt

**Polytechnic University of Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal. E-mail: a2021107173@alumni.iscac.pt

Received on: 2025.01.13

Approved on: 2025.04.16

Evaluated by a double-blind review system

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, technology has changed the world around us. As a result, the way of life and the organisation of work in society have had a profound impact. According to Hannonen (2020), contemporary processes of global market formation and the development of transport and communication technologies are leading to the emergence of new social formations, patterns and opportunities. The COVID-19 pandemic was a catalyst for these changes. It restricted the movement of people and forced the market to adapt more quickly to remote work.

Digital nomads constitute a distinct subset within the broader category of remote workers, defined by their unique integration of professional engagement with a lifestyle centered around leisure and tourism. This mode of work is fundamentally enabled by access to reliable technological resources, particularly a functional computer and a stable internet connection. Leveraging this technological independence, these individuals opt to transcend the conventional constraints of a fixed domicile, adopting a nomadic existence that facilitates extended periods of travel across diverse global destinations. This lifestyle reflects a deliberate convergence of work and mobility, offering a novel redefinition of professional and personal boundaries.

Portugal, recognizing the potential economic and social contributions of this group, has recently enacted policies aimed at facilitating their access and prolonged stay within the country. These measures include the introduction of specialized visas and the provision of tax incentives designed to attract digital workers (Bloomberg, 2022). While these initiatives signal a progressive shift towards integrating digital nomads into the national economy, they have also elicited questions and criticisms from the Portuguese populace. A notable concern is the perceived correlation between the influx of digital workers—often earning significantly higher incomes than the local population—and the escalating cost of living. This disparity has fueled debates over the broader socio-economic implications of policies tailored to this demographic, particularly in terms of equity and affordability within local communities.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of this emerging phenomenon and its broader implications for territorial marketing strategies, this study will undertake an in-depth examination of the lived experiences of digital nomads in Portugal. By exploring their motivations, behaviors, and

interactions within the local context, the research aims to illuminate the ways in which this demographic engages with and contributes to the socio-economic and cultural landscape of the host country. Furthermore, the findings will offer valuable insights into how Portugal's policies and initiatives influence the attractiveness of its territories to this mobile and increasingly influential group, providing a nuanced perspective on the intersection of global mobility and place-based marketing.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Digital nomads

The concept of "nomadism" traces its origins to the Paleolithic era, reflecting a way of life deeply rooted in the search for sustenance and survival. The term "nomad" derives from the Greek word *nomos*, meaning "law" or "custom," and historically referred to groups of people who lacked a permanent residence, settling temporarily in specific areas only as long as local resources sufficed for their needs (César & Santos, 2017). Over time, the notion of nomadism has evolved to encompass various forms, ranging from those who continue to migrate in pursuit of necessities such as food and shelter, to those who voluntarily embrace mobility to explore new places, often for a finite period. Even within these modern variations, the defining feature remains the deliberate abandonment of fixed domiciles in favor of a transient lifestyle (Oliveira, 2019).

In this context, the phenomenon of digital nomadism represents a contemporary iteration of nomadism, one uniquely enabled by advancements in technology. As defined by Reichenberger (2018), digital nomads are predominantly young professionals who adopt a location-independent lifestyle, leveraging remote work capabilities to seamlessly integrate professional responsibilities with global travel. This mode of living is characterized by the freedom to traverse diverse locales while maintaining a productive connection to the digital economy (Araújo, 2023).

Digital nomadism stands as a significant development within the broader trajectory of technological and societal change. It epitomizes the intersection of technological progress and evolving socio-economic structures, challenging traditional conceptions of work and residence. Scholars such as Wang et al. (2019) and Schlagwein (2019) emphasize that this phenomenon reflects a paradigm shift in how societies and economies are organized, marking a critical juncture in the history of technology and human mobility. Understanding this emerging social group is

essential for grasping the broader implications of a lifestyle that prioritizes flexibility, autonomy, and a redefined relationship with place and labor (Bozzi, 2024).

In this context, a younger generation of professionals, increasingly disenchanted with the processes, routines, perspectives, and values of the traditional labor market, is actively embracing a new lifestyle made possible by technological innovation (Pacheco & Azevedo, 2023). Advances in digital technologies, along with the proliferation of online services such as virtual banking, remote work platforms, temporary accommodation marketplaces, and co-working environments, have created a seamless infrastructure that facilitates this modern nomadic existence (Neves, 2020).

A significant driver behind this shift, as highlighted by Pereira and Gosling (2019), is the intrinsic human desire for exploration and growth. Key motivations for adopting a nomadic lifestyle include the yearning to experience cultural diversity, embark on adventurous journeys, overcoming challenges, and accumulate unique stories to share. This perspective aligns with the ethos of the nomadic universe, where life is viewed as a continuous journey of discovery and reinvention.

For these individuals, each new experience serves as an opportunity to engage with alternative lifestyles, explore innovative avenues for work and learning, and cultivate personal growth. The challenges and adaptations encountered in this lifestyle foster resilience, creativity, and a deeper connection to the environments they traverse. Moreover, the nomadic lifestyle encourages the formation of expansive professional and social networks, creating an interconnected and dynamic global community. This blend of mobility, exploration, and self-improvement underscores the broader appeal of modern nomadism, reshaping conventional notions of work, identity, and community in the digital age.

As Miranda (2023) points out, it is important to understand that digital nomadism is not limited to a specific occupation, but rather to a comprehensive lifestyle. This includes a wide range of earners, from those with a substantial income to those facing significant financial difficulties. Furthermore, the variety of options available to nomads is not limited to the 'adventurous' lifestyle and search for new experiences but also extends to everyday choices. Many digital nomads choose to work in coworking spaces, live in colivings, or simply rent a house to experience their unique moment. The diversity of lifestyle choices not only boosts local economies but also creates market opportunities to meet the growing demand of this population. As a result, this target group is generally attracted to destinations that offer a solid infrastructure. The search for a balance between

work and private life is a key priority for them. It is also important to recognise the diversity of financial situations of digital nomads. In Europe, the promotion of remote working has been notable, with a predominance in the banking sector. In addition to reducing costs, it helps employees achieve a better balance between their personal and professional lives.

2.2 The current Portuguese scenario of digital nomadism

The Portuguese government has demonstrated a clear commitment to positioning the country as a prime destination for digital nomads through the introduction of targeted programs and initiatives that provide tax benefits and other forms of support. In 2022, this commitment was solidified with amendments to the country's immigration laws, specifically through the creation of a visa designed exclusively for digital nomads. This visa, established under Article 61° B of Law No. 23/2007, permits individuals to reside in Portuguese territory while performing professional activities remotely for entities based outside the national jurisdiction (Western Union, 2023). This legal innovation reflects a strategic effort to accommodate the unique needs of remote professionals and capitalize on the growing trend of digital nomadism.

Portugal's proactive measures have not gone unnoticed (Garcez Seabra, 2022). According to the *Voyages et Travail Index* published by Kayak, Portugal ranks as the most favorable country in the world for digital nomads. This recognition is based on a comprehensive analysis of 22 criteria, in which Portugal achieved a perfect score of 100/100 (Lenzi, 2022). Among the factors evaluated, the country excels in safety, access to quality healthcare, a favorable climate, political stability, widespread English proficiency, affordable living costs, and seamless travel options. These attributes collectively enhance Portugal's appeal to remote professionals seeking an optimal environment for both work and leisure.

The promotion of Portugal as an attractive destination for digital nomads is not merely a policy trend but a calculated economic strategy. By appealing to this demographic, the government seeks to stimulate economic recovery and foster growth across various sectors, including tourism, real estate, and local commerce. Portugal's unique combination of advanced digital infrastructure, relatively low cost of living, high quality of life, and supportive legal frameworks positions it as a leader in the global competition to attract remote workers. These efforts underscore the country's determination to consolidate its reputation as a premier hub for digital nomads, creating a mutually beneficial scenario that supports both the national economy and the lifestyle aspirations of this modern workforce.

Digital nomads not only contribute to local economies through their consumption of goods and services but also act as catalysts for business development. Their presence stimulates the creation of new spaces, such as coworking hubs, and encourages the enhancement of existing infrastructure to accommodate their needs. Furthermore, this demographic is highly active in sharing their experiences online, a practice that amplifies their impact. By showcasing their lifestyles and interactions with local communities, digital nomads attract additional visitors, creating a ripple effect that boosts regional economies, promotes cultural exchange, and enhances the visibility of Portugal as a destination for remote workers. This form of organic marketing significantly expands the ways in which the country can be promoted to a global audience, solidifying its appeal as a vibrant and modern hub for this emerging workforce.

In conclusion, Portugal provides an array of advantages that make it exceptionally appealing to digital nomads. The country boasts a robust and reliable digital infrastructure, offering fast internet speeds essential for remote work. Additionally, Portugal's cost of living is comparatively affordable relative to other European nations, making it an attractive option for professionals seeking to balance quality of life with financial sustainability. The high standard of living is further enriched by the country's temperate climate, stunning landscapes, and rich cultural heritage.

Urban centers such as Lisbon, Porto, and Faro have become key hubs for digital nomads, fostering vibrant communities that offer coworking spaces, networking opportunities, and an entrepreneurial atmosphere. These cities exemplify Portugal's ability to combine modern amenities with historical charm, creating an environment that seamlessly integrates professional productivity with personal enrichment. This unique blend of factors ensures that Portugal not only meets but exceeds the expectations of digital nomads, reinforcing its status as a premier destination for this dynamic and growing demographic.

3. METHODOLOGY

The principal research question is to gain insight into the phenomenon of digital nomads and the primary factors that have led to Portugal being selected as a destination for this demographic in recent years. Additionally, the study aims to assess the consequences of this decision.

Following the literature review, a questionnaire was developed comprising closed and multiple-choice questions. These were designed to elicit information on the topic in question, with a particular focus on profiling the profile, lifestyle and decision-making process of digital nomads.

A series of questions were developed, organised into four blocks of analysis. The first block focused on profiling digital nomads and remote workers, collecting information on gender, age group, region of origin, level of education and area of professional activity. The second block of analysis aimed to ascertain the primary factors influencing the decision of digital nomads to choose Portugal, both currently and in the future. The third block of analysis sought to elucidate the decision-making process of this target group in relation to Portugal. The fourth block of analysis aimed to investigate the relationship between digital nomads' experiences and their levels of satisfaction.

The questionnaire was disseminated on digital platforms frequented by digital nomads, where experiences are typically shared and information sought. These platforms include What's App groups and Facebook communities. The data collection period spanned four weeks, concluding in the last month of 2023. All data collected was treated in strict confidence and was used exclusively for statistical purposes.

Table 1 below summarizes key results from the questionnaire, offering a clearer view of the participants' profiles and decision-making criteria.

4. RESULTS

The sample consisted of 68 participants, with no restrictions on gender, age or nationality, to obtain the greatest possible number and diversity of participants. In addition, the sample included people who had already been to Portugal, as well as those who were planning a visit soon.

In the profile of the nomads analysed, there is a slight predominance of the male profile. Most of the population studied is in the 35-49 age group, followed by the 25-34 age group. The 18-24 age group is smaller, followed by the other age groups. In terms of academic training, more than 80% of the respondents have a university education, most of them in Europe. In terms of the economic sector, various sectors were identified, including business intelligence, finance, marketing, tourism, communications and logistics. Among the reasons given for adopting the digital nomad and remote worker lifestyle, flexibility was highlighted as the most important. The second was the global professional opportunity and the third was the search for geographical freedom and personal satisfaction, and the reduction in the cost of living was the least selected reason. The first criterion for the choice of location is the identification of an environment that balances the necessities of daily life, such as transport, supermarkets, health services and green spaces, with an area that is

conducive to work, that is, a satisfactory quality of life. On the other hand, the simplification of bureaucratic procedures in connection with the establishment of a place of residence is an important factor. Thirdly, the availability of high-quality internet and resources is crucial.

In response to the second block of questions on the criteria for choosing Portugal as a destination, the representative highlighted that the country's strategic location acts as a gateway to other European destinations, offering convenient and accessible transport options. In addition, the country's mild climate is an attractive feature for those in search of a destination with favorable weather conditions for most of the year. The country's cultural diversity, rich history, distinctive architecture, varied cuisine and local traditions are also appealing.

About the third block of questions, namely those pertaining to critical factors during the decision-making process, it is necessary to consider the essential expenses required to maintain a basic standard of living as the starting point when considering Portugal as a destination. The assessment of the quality of local infrastructure, accommodation, and security was found to be of a similar weight. The relationship between available transport, access to health services and quality public services, including drinking water, electricity, gas, telephone, internet, as well as varied environments such as co-living, hostels, houses, apartments and rooms for leasing, was also considered important. Furthermore, the significance of the locations to be visited was also highlighted. Furthermore, issues pertaining to documentation and legalization were also discussed, including the search for lawyers specializing in immigration and an understanding of the necessary processes for gaining access to the country.

To attain public satisfaction, it is necessary to consider the most important experiences. In the professional context, networking opportunities and proximity to technology companies were identified as two of the most important aspects. It is also of great importance to consider the relationship between professional experiences, which can be defined as networking opportunities, and personal experiences, which can be defined as exploring local culture and leisure.

Table 1 below summarizes key results from the questionnaire, offering a clearer view of the participants' profiles and decision-making criteria.

Table 1. Results from the questionnaire

Aspect	Main Findings	Observations
Gender	Slight male predominance	Most are aged 35–49
Education	Over 80% have university education	Mainly in administrative sectors

Motivations	Flexibility, global opportunities, personal satisfaction	Cost of living ranked low
Selection Criteria	Quality of life, bureaucracy, internet access	Portugal's climate and culture highly valued

5. DISCUSSION

The profile of respondents originating from Europe, primarily employed in administrative roles, offers a rich base for market analysis, especially considering their desire for flexibility in both professional and personal spheres. Administrative roles often require diverse skill sets, ranging from organizational and communication skills to analytical thinking, which can contribute to an individual's preference for flexible work arrangements. This flexibility could be reflected in their preferences for work-life balance, remote or hybrid working models, and varied career paths.

The primary considerations underlying the decision to select Portugal as a temporary residence are related to the pursuit of a harmonious equilibrium between one's professional and personal lives. Portugal offers a unique combination of advantages, combining a robust infrastructure with a vibrant cultural and entertainment landscape. Its infrastructure provides a conducive environment for professionals to thrive in their careers, while its diverse leisure options, rich culture, and diverse forms of entertainment provide a balance between work and leisure. Moreover, its advantageous geographical position facilitates convenient access to other countries and ensures the reliability of transport networks. Furthermore, the country's strategic location provides convenient access to other countries and reliable transportation networks.

The analysis of the local cost of living also had a significant impact on the decision-making process. The recent decline in purchasing power and growth in income levels in Portugal present a challenge to both the transient population in the country and the general population.

Additionally, the simplicity of obtaining or resolving issues related to residence, visas, and documentation serves as a motivating factor for workers to remain or expand their access to desired locations.

Regarding the most significant experiences that contribute to satisfaction, there is a correlation between professional experiences, which are perceived as networking opportunities, and personal experiences, which are seen as an opportunity to explore local culture and leisure. Once more, the pivotal equilibrium between life and work is brought to the fore. These experiences extend beyond the mere accumulation of moments; rather, they represent a quest for personal and professional

growth and development, achieved through the expansion of horizons and the establishment of new connections.

Furthermore, the lack of significant gender differences within this group is also an important consideration. It suggests that gender does not strongly influence their career choices or lifestyle preferences, which could imply that both men and women in these administrative roles are equally open to exploring flexibility in their professional lives. This can be advantageous for marketers, as products or services aimed at this demographic do not need to be gender-targeted but instead should focus on the shared characteristics of flexibility, adaptability, and career versatility.

6. CONCLUSION

In general, there is a correlation between professional experiences, which are regarded as networking opportunities, and personal experiences, which are viewed as an opportunity to explore local culture and leisure. It is evident that the delicate equilibrium between one's professional and personal lives is of paramount importance.

Marketing plays a pivotal role in establishing a connection between the target audience and their desires through the implementation of well-designed strategies. In this study, the exploration of local culture was emphasized in conjunction with the dissemination of professional opportunities, with the objective of attracting and retaining digital nomads.

Furthermore, this study highlights the significance of exploring local culture in conjunction with the dissemination of professional opportunities in order to attract and retain digital nomads. In addition to identifying appealing content for this specific demographic, the variety of communication channels and the creation of tailored activities to balance work and leisure are effective strategies for attracting and retaining remote workers.

This audience represents a potential demand to be met, particularly for companies and regions that seek to offer differentiated products and services. There is a potential for adaptation of strategies and approaches to meet the specific needs of this diverse group of digital nomads, considering their varying skills, experiences, and work preferences.

In addition, it is possible to examine factors such as work-life balance. Understanding how respondents perceive and manage the balance between their professional obligations and personal interests could guide the development of offerings that address this need. There should also be an analysis of how career development and mobility can be optimised. With a broad and diverse

career profile, there may be a high demand for resources or platforms that support career growth, skill diversification or transitions between different sectors. Personal Interests and Hobbies have also been and should be analysed to see what's trending and what's possible to offer. The demographic appears to be open to flexibility. Their personal interests outside work could be a valuable area to explore. This could have an impact on the types of leisure activities, travel options or lifestyle products that might be of interest to them. Finally, technology and remote working solutions need to be addressed. As administrative roles are often adaptable to digital working, this group may have specific preferences or needs in terms of technological solutions that enable remote working, collaboration and productivity.

A deeper understanding of the actual needs and preferences of digital nomads is crucial to addressing this growing demographic effectively. However, this study faced certain limitations that must be acknowledged. The primary constraint was the lack of extensive sampling, which limited the ability to generalize the findings to the broader global population of digital nomads. Additionally, the study's geographical focus was largely confined to Europe, which, while significant as a popular region for remote workers, excludes valuable insights from other key regions such as Asia, the Americas, and Oceania.

This regional focus potentially overlooks the diversity of challenges and opportunities faced by digital nomads operating in different cultural, economic, and infrastructural contexts. For instance, variations in visa policies, cost of living, technological infrastructure, and community support across regions could have significant implications for the experiences and preferences of digital nomads. Future research would benefit from a more expansive sampling approach and a broader geographic scope, enabling a more comprehensive analysis of this rapidly evolving phenomenon. Such efforts would provide a richer and more nuanced understanding of the global digital nomad landscape, informing targeted strategies and policies to better accommodate their unique lifestyle and professional requirements.

REFERENCES

- Araújo, N. (2023). *Nómadas digitais: Perfil, tendências e desafios para o futuro do turismo em Portugal*. Escola Superior de Educação - Politécnico de Coimbra.
- Bozzi, A. (2024). Digital nomadism from the perspective of places and mobilities: a literature review. *EUROPEAN TRANSPORT RESEARCH REVIEW*. 16 (1) 50. DOI: 10.1186/s12544-024-00663-z.

- Bloomberg. (2022, October 18). *Portugal terá visto para nômade digital este mês; conheça as regras*. O Globo. <https://oglobo.globo.com/economia/noticia/2022/10/portugal-tera-visto-para-nomade-digital-este-mes-conheca-as-regras.ghtml>.
- César, R. V. de M., & Santos, S. V. C. de A. (2017). Nomadismo digital e educação. *Simpósio Internacional de Educação E Comunicação - SIMEDUC*, 8(8). <https://eventos.set.edu.br/simeduc/article/view/8567>.
- Hannonen, O. (2020). In search of a digital nomad: Defining the phenomenon. *Information Technology & Tourism*, 22(3), 335–353. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40558-020-00177-z>
- Lenzi, T. (2022, novembro 7). *Visto para nômade digital em Portugal: como tirar a residência*. Nacionalidade Portuguesa Assessoria. <https://www.nacionalidadeportuguesa.com.br/visto-nomade-digital-em-portugal>.
- Miranda, L. (2023). Nômade Digital: o que é, quanto ganha e como se tornar um. *Quero bolsa.com.br*. <https://querobolsa.com.br/revista/nomade-digital>.
- Oliveira, A.P. (2019). Vida em fluxo: Nomadismo digital como forma de ser e estar na contemporaneidade. *Tese de graduação, Universidade de Brasília, Faculdade de Comunicação, Curso de Comunicação Social - Publicidade e Propaganda, Brasília, Brasil*.
- Pereira, G., & Gosling, M. (2019). Push and pull motivations of Brazilian travel lovers. *Brazilian Business Review*, 16(1), 63–86. <https://doi.org/10.15728/bbr.2019.16.1.5>.
- Pacheco, C., Azevedo, A. (2023). Mapping the journey of the CoLiving experience of digital nomads, using verbal and visual narratives. *World Leisure Journal*. 65, 2, 192-217. DOI: 10.1080/16078055.2022.2156593
- Reichenberger, I. (2017). Digital nomads – a quest for holistic freedom in work and leisure. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 21(3), 364–380. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2017.1358098>.
- Garcez Seabra, A. C. (2022). *Digital Nomadism: the Case Study of the Lands of Trás-Os-Montes*. Instituto Politecnico de Braganca (Portugal) ProQuest Dissertations & Theses,.
- Schlagwein, D. (2018, dezembro 13). *The History of Digital Nomadism*. ResearchGate. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329182172_The_History_of_Digital_Nomadism
- Wang, B., Schlagwein, D., CecezKecmanovic, D., & Cahalane, M. (2019). *Digital Nomadism and the Market Economy: Resistance and Compliance*. Conference: International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS).
- Western Union. (2023, agosto 4). *Como funciona o visto de nômade digital em Portugal*. Blog | Western Union. <https://www.westernunion.com/blog/pt/visto-nomade-digital-portugal/>.

How to cite this article:

Abreu, M.; & Sampaio, L. (2025). An insight into the Journey of Digital Nomads in Portugal. *International Journal of Marketing, Communication and New Media, Special Issue on Marketing & Business Perspectives: Transformative Insights for Marketing and Communication in the Digital Era*, May 2025, pp. 158-169.