Digital Nomadism - Implemented policies

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Abstract: In the last two years, the global tourism and hospitality industry has experienced an unprecedented shock from the COVID-19 pandemic. Challenges across different fields in these industries worldwide became an important topic as well as remote forms of work. This study aims to investigate and compare what digital nomad policies have been implemented in twenty-three various countries of the world to attract a legal digital workforce. The author reviewed countries' nomad visa requirements using official governmental and visa information and contacted national visa offices where clarification was needed. The findings showed significant differences in obtaining these visas in the countries that offer these visas. It has also been shown that the number of countries providing access to these specifically tailored visas has grown fast in the past two years, and governments are crediting increasing importance to this significant trend. Additionally, this paper proposes a framework for future research agenda for the digital nomad form of work and its links to the host country's international tourism and hospitality industry challenges.

Keywords: Digital nomads, Hospitality, Tourism, Trends, Visa

JEL Classification codes: J61, L83, Z32

INTRODUCTION

The global mobile workforce has been rising rapidly in the past years (Ameen et al., 2021). The quick expansion of digital nomads has been connected with tremendous technological improvement, including wireless connectivity, ease of travel, and general advancement in worldwide mobility (Olga, 2020). Nomads who work from home cannot maximize their lifestyle since they do not have access to other essentials such as social connections and recreational activities (Orel, 2019). Nowadays, many countries have decided to embrace the spreading trend of digital work in their economies, thanks to Covid-19. However, the Covid-19 pandemic saw the intensification of what was referred to as digital nomadism by Makimoto and Manner (1997) in the last two years. Different professionals are working in the digital space, ranging from teleworkers to freelancers. For instance, 15.7% of workers worked in digital platforms in Spain in 2017 (Boavida & Moniz, 2019). While many may consider this concept an impossible merger between tourism, leisure, and work, it has been there, and many countries support the idea of digital nomadism. Policies are being formulated to grant travellers visas allowing them to work from foreign countries and legally contribute to their workforce. This begs the question, why would many countries support this? The most straightforward answer to this question would be the economic value digital nomads bring to the tourism and hospitality sectors. It would be wrong to compare digital nomads and "volunteer tourists" because they work and earn while enjoying their travelling (Jarvis & Peel, 2013). In the majority of cases, they pay taxes to the host country and tourism fees. The economic importance of this hence cannot be ignored. This is increasingly important in the times when the possibilities to travel were seriously disrupted on one side. The majority of the workforce was forced to work from

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their home on the other side. Digital nomads are people who have chosen to utilize the availability of stable internet connections and advanced technological gadgets such as laptops and work remotely.

Having observed and realized that several countries such as Bahamas, Brazil, Croatia, Georgia, Greece, and Spain among others, have started to invest in attracting digital nomadism recently, this study aims to investigate and compare what digital nomad policies and practices have been implemented in twenty-three various countries of the world to attract a legal digital workforce.

1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Many researchers have written and defined digital nomadism or nomads. Although there seems to be no specific definition, the rationale of the explanations revolves around working on the internet in foreign countries. According to de Almeida et al. (2021), digital nomadism has begun to get the significant attention of academic researchers. Despite the economic value of digital nomadism in tourism, the definition of digital nomads varies from one researcher to the next (Chevtaeva & Denizci-Guillet, 2021; Olga, 2020; Reichenberger, 2018; Hall et al., 2019).

The mention of the term "digital nomad" to someone triggers different meanings and understanding depending on the listener's knowledge. The term 'digital nomad' comprises two words; digital and nomad. The word ‘digital’ refers to that which is related to electronic technology, while the word 'nomad' refers to people who move from one place to another or rather do not stay in one place (Mouratidis, 2018). A digital nomad is a person who chooses a vocation that allows for international travel, regular breaks from the conventional office environment, and flexibility in working hours (Nash et al., 2018; Boavida & Moniz, 2019). Schlagwein (2018) defines digital nomads as a group of professionals who live a traveling lifestyle and do their work digitally over the internet at the same time. Mancinelli (2020) says that digital nomads are people who can work from any location in the world because they take advantage of the fast internet connection and work while traveling around the globe. According to Richter & Richter (2020), digital nomads give work a new meaning by showing the possibility of global travel and remote working simultaneously. Digital nomads travel worldwide and stay in a particular country for a shorter period (Tyutyuryukov & Guseva, 2021). The focal point of all these definitions by different researchers is that digital nomads use portable computing technologies to work remotely from any part of the globe.

Digital nomads are characterized as having the behavior of moving from one location to another and are always found hanging out in areas with stable internet connectivity (Prabawa & Pertiwi, 2020). There is a typology of various nomads ranging from spiritual nomads, digital nomads, and corporate nomads. Other researchers like Thompson (2018) further define in specificity what digital nomads do. Thompson (2018) says that digital nomads specialize in online marketing, web design, and programming. Green (2020) states that some work as travel bloggers, online teachers, or lifestyle coaches. While there isn't any established standard that the three areas of specialization mentioned above are what digital nomads do, this shows just an example of what working in the digital space may entail.

Although digital nomads need more than just room, source of network, portable devices, they also require sociability with other coworkers and the ability to find a balance between time spent doing things for enjoyment and time spent working (Orel, 2019). They spend a substantial amount of time searching for and researching workplaces appropriate for their working modes, and they can pay a premium to access these locations (Nash et al., 2018).
For all digital nomads, the most necessities are a laptop and a workstation with reliable internet connectivity, both of which may be situated anywhere you choose (Hannonen, 2020 p. 338). In contrast, if you do not have a regular desk, you may find yourself without these necessities.

Digital nomads are widespread in European nations such as Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Iceland, Germany, and Spain. Different nations have different rules and regulations in place regarding digital nomad visas. Some may need petitioners to go via an embassy or bring their application in person to their offices, while others may enable eligible nationals to apply online (Jarvis & Peel 2013). For example, in Croatia, a remote worker may apply for a one-year residency visa after arriving, as per their legislation (Waterbury 2014, P. 37). They are not permitted to give services to Croatian firms during their stay and are not subject to income tax.

2 METHODOLOGY

This study analysed data from twenty-three countries and their existing digital nomad policies. Based on the literature review, these countries were randomly selected from those offering legal possibilities to work for digital nomads. Namely this study includes Australia, Bahamas, Bali, Barbados, Bermuda, Brazil, Cayman Islands, Croatia, Czech Republic, Dominica, Estonia, Georgia, Greece, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Malta, Mexico, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Thailand. The study draws on qualitative methods using secondary data and information analysis. The data were analysed and compared using official governmental and visa information, individual national visa offices, and a literature review. A table of studied countries with implemented visa policies was drafted to make the obtained data visually more straightforward (Table 1). The author's original intention was also to gather the available data on the number of nomad visas issued in the studied countries. However, the efforts to obtain credible data from at least half of the studied countries have unfortunately failed. These data are not available in most countries up to date.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Following the examples of countries that had already implemented digital visa policies, many countries joined the global trend after the 2020, thanks to Covid-19. In March 2020, the Bahamas government launched the Extended Access Travel Stay policy, which allowed alien citizens to study and work in the Bahamas. This policy allowed students and professionals to freely travel around the 16 islands of the Bahamas as they work remotely (Department of Immigration, 2020). This policy, however, had a limit of up to one year. Other countries such as Thailand have visa policies allowing for a longer period compared to the Bahamas' one year. Thailand introduced the Thailand Elite Visa Program in 2003 to allow tourists, businessmen, and professionals to stay in the country for longer periods, of up to 10 years. Although digital nomadism may not have been rampant by then, researchers perceive this as a digital nomad policy because it allows for travel and leisure and remote working. The Indonesian government established a tourist destination and digitalization scheme to promote digital nomadism in 2018 in Bali. The program defined various types of nomads, including digital nomads. The government formulated several visa policies to facilitate this. They included: the first option, which has 30 days maximum on arrival, the second option, which has 30 to 60 days maximum, and the third option, which has multiple alternatives to choose from. The republic of Estonia launched the E-residency visa policy, which allows digital nomads to work remotely for up to one year (E-residency, 2020). The policy enables one to become an 'electronic resident' of Estonia from its name. This may sound like an awkward term, but it
primarily refers to individuals staying in Estonia while using electronic means to work for their employers in foreign countries. The Estonian government enacted this policy to mitigate tourists' common challenges while working abroad using tourist visas. This move would also see an increment in revenue collection in Estonia. The Croatian government first issued Croatia Digital Nomad Visas in January 2021. The visa allows one to work for up to 12 months (GoVisaFree, 2021). The policy recognizes a digital nomad as an individual who doesn't work for any company or employer registered under the Croatian government, does not contribute to the labor market of Croatia, and utilizes communication technology to work (European Migration Network, 2021). Such individuals, however, are bound to pay taxes to the Croatian government. Other republics offering digital working visas with a validity period of up to one year include Barbados, Bermuda, Australia, and Spain. The Global Citizen Concierge Program was launched in October 2020 in the Cayman Islands to give global citizens a chance to work there remotely. This program gives one a permit to work for non-Cayman employers while in the Cayman Islands for up to two years. Some other countries do not have digital nomad visas per se but allow remote working using valid tourist visas. These include Mexico's 6-month tourist visa policy, Schengen visa for travel, visit, and tourism in Poland, and applicability of any passport issued within the last ten years in the Czech Republic. Additionally, other countries like Portugal do not have any official digital nomad visa policies. Malta has a work and residency nomad permit policy to allow digital nomadism. Germany and Dominica don't have any remote working visa policies but have a short-stay visa policy with a maximum of 90 days. Like Germany's policy, Iceland has a Schengen visa policy allowing for a maximum of 180 day working days. Following the same trend, Georgia launched its 'Remote from Georgia' digital nomad visa policy, which will enable one to work in Georgia for at least 180 days up to one year remotely. As for Latvia, the draft legislation about digital nomads is still under review and waiting for approval. Hotels provide a more significant number of main amenities that make staying in more convenient and enjoyable. Because hotels are considered one of the most desirable possibilities for digital nomads, there is a current opportunity to promote digital nomads in the hospitality industry. An online study of 500 digital nomads conducted by FlexJob indicated that 51 percent prefer to stay in hotels over another lodging such as Airbnb and hostels (Satterstrom 2019). In addition to staying in a hotel, 16 percent of travelers prefer to stay in a hostel, and 36 percent prefer to stay in an Airbnb rental (Simon 2017; Tyutyuryukov & Gusev, 2021). As a result, it seems that not all digital nomads have the financial wherewithal to spend the whole length of their voyage in high-end hotels. Consequently, some nomads prefer to stay in lower-cost accommodations or find a traveling companion to share expenditures to save money (Nash et al., 2018). Various nomads have a solid connection to social media platforms (Willment, 2020). They use social media to capture their daily activities and inspire their followers with the ideal lifestyle they lead. Accordingly, having digital nomads stay at hotels is considered free marketing since it would promote awareness among other digital nomads who want to be in the vicinity. Moreover, hotels that provide amenities geared toward attracting digital nomads do not limit themselves to this market segment but instead attract other visitors and residents as well; as a result, the hotel may still be able to generate revenue from market segments other than digital nomads.

The bulk of problems for managers is caused by a lack of awareness of the visitor profile of their customers. Orel (2019) stated that some of the drawbacks of being a flexible worker include a lack of vital infrastructure, a loss of social connection, and a lack of emotional support from colleagues (Hill et al., 2003). Accordingly, hotels can take the initiative to create an online platform for digital nomads by delivering programs that include activities that are customised ideally for remote professionals; this will enable them to connect emotionally with one another. In the future, this will entice digital nomads to identify the hotel that best matches their criteria, as shown below. Nash et al. (2018) study on digital nomads revealed that media sources fail to comprehend that nomadic work is significantly reliant on location and technology, which
may severely restrict this lifestyle. The hotel industry can bridge the gap in this market by offering various services and providing perfect settings for digital nomads, such as working areas equipped with desktop PCs. The elimination of the necessity for nomad guests to separate their lodging from their company office will save them both time and money in the long run.

The hospitality sector has been renovating its infrastructure in responding to the increase in digital nomads and their need for co-working space; as a result, the notion of a "coworking" hotel has been established. Coworking hotels blend working, sleeping, and living areas that allow visitors to save time by removing the need to travel to and from their destinations. This proposal proposes a comfortable area for digital nomads to dwell in that contains facilities that encourage relaxation and leisure time and a workspace for them to do their business. This will boost production while easing the restricting forces associated with a nomadic existence. Specifically, this research aims to become more aware of the rising trend of digital nomadism and how it is continuing to emerge due to technological improvement, especially in more-developed nations (Green 2020). Nomads need more than just portable equipment and workspace when it comes to their necessities; they want human connection and leisure time to operate correctly (Chevtaeva & Denizci-Guillet, 2021). Due to an increase in the number of digital nomads, the hotel business is seeing increased lucrative chances to leverage. Therefore, the coworking hotel idea drives competitiveness within the sector since it addresses physical and emotional demands in a single place, promoting and enriching this way of life and encouraging others to do the same. In the end, this study will be enhanced further by critically assessing how hotels may gain a competitive edge by attracting digital nomads and by offering measures that can boost the number of nomad guests to their facilities (Yang et al., 2019). Aside from that, more study into the different sorts of digital nomads and how their needs may change will most certainly aid in improving the advice of marketing techniques in the future.
Table 1: An outline of nomad visa policies overview in various countries across the globe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Existing Visa policy</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Work and holiday visa. Digital nomads to work and live in the country for a maximum of 1 year. Only between 18 and 35 years old to qualify for this visa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahamas</td>
<td>Bahamas Extended Access Travel Stay (BEATS). Proof of employment for remote workers is needed. Proof of self-employment or an employment contract is accepted. Maximum of 1-year visa, but it can be renewed twice. Maximum total stays up to 3 years. Based on the country of origin, additional requirements may apply.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bali</td>
<td>Business visa valid for 60 days if the applicant is not in the country yet. Otherwise, it's 30 days. The maximum length of stay is 120 days. A temporary stay permit may be applied for after that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbados</td>
<td>Up to 12 months Barbados Welcome Stamp Visa for digital nomads. It is possible to reapply. Introduced in June 2020.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bermuda</td>
<td>Work From Bermuda Certificate. Maximum of 1-year visa with possibility of a new application.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Brazil digital nomad visa for 12 months which can be renewed for another 12 months. Launched in January 2022.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cayman Islands</td>
<td>Global Citizen Concierge Program (GCCP) is valid for up to 2 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>Temporary residency permits up to 12 months. It can be reapplied after six months outside of the country. Introduced in January 2021.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>6-12 months business visa &quot;Živnostenské oprávnění&quot;. Hard to get for foreign nationalities, but possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominica</td>
<td>The Work in Nature (WIN) visa. Relocation for up to 18 months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>Digital nomad and freelancer visa, well organized and inspirational e-residency program for up to 12 months. It was introduced in June 2020.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Remotely from Georgia program, 1-year maximum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Nomad visas for non-EU/EEA residents. It is allowed to work for a foreign employer or own a foreign registered company. 1-year visa, which can be extended twice to up to 3 years. It was introduced in October 2021.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>&quot;Aufenthaltsverlaubnis für selbständige Tätigkeit&quot; for up to 3 years. Not easy to get, like in the Czech Republic, but possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>White card, One-year residence permit, which can be extended by another year. One of the easiest to get in the EU. It launched in February 2022.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>Long term visas for remote workers. Six months validity, and if applied whilst in the Schengen area, it's only 90 days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>Latvia Digital Nomad Visa. Currently in the process of Government draft. The nomad visa holders will not be permitted to work for a Latvian-registered employer or seek social assistance in Latvia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>Nomad Residency Permit targeting non-EU workers for up to 1 year. This can be renewed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Temporary Resident Visa. Up to one year of stay and can renewed be for up to 3 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>Independent workers and entrepreneurs visa for up to 12 months, can be renewed up to 5 years with possible permanent residency status following that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>Digital nomad visa for 12 months. It can be renewed for another 12 months. It was approved in December 2021.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>In plan: &quot;Startups Law&quot;. Twelve months visa with up to 24 months of possible extension. It was proposed in July 2021.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>Special Tourist Visa (STV). 90-day tourism visa that can be extended twice for a total of 270 days. This is a type of tourist visa, and it comes with a tax and working status. It was introduced in October 2020.</td>
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CONCLUSION

This study showed significant growth of countries offering some forms of digital nomad visas. This is, among other factors, fostered by the rampant technological advancement across the globe today. Noting the economic value digital nomads bring to tourism and hospitality, many governments have recently formulated policies to attract and allow digital nomads to work in their countries for periods between 120 days (Bali) up to five years (Portugal). Other countries are still in the process of developing such policies, while some have not even begun. While it may seem as easy as just having a laptop and travelling to the preferred destination of work, it is not the reality for digital nomads because they have to condone the challenges of the tourism and hospitality sectors of the host countries.

During the pandemic and linked to significant travel restrictions, attracting digital nomads was one of the few ways to promote tourism and hospitality and at least partially subsidise the lack of economic income in these sectors. While in the run-up to the pandemic, digital nomadism was a relatively marginal issue, in times of severe travel restrictions, the possibility of such work became more important for many. Forced work from home and a complete revolution in the concept of labour worldwide have made both companies and workers think about work differently. It was almost impossible to travel from one country to another, but moving for a longer time, although temporarily to another country from where one could do the work, was feasible. As a result, we could witness the growing possibilities of digital nomad visas, which also met people's need not to work from home. This has also allowed many people to experience a sense of normality in their lives again.

In some countries, it has been possible for a long time to work remotely on different types of visas, allowing any job, for example, in Australia or Portugal. Other countries such as Brazil, Croatia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Romania, Spain, and Thailand have introduced visas specifically designed to attract digital nomads in the past two years. The conditions to obtain the nomad visas in these countries are very different across the researched countries, especially in the amount of the visa fee, the need to prove a minimum income and the opportunity to have the whole family joining the visa. In the case of entire families, there are also fundamental differences in whether children have free access to local schools and, for example, in the possibility of receiving health care. Additionally, the conditions of entry also change constantly depending on the coronavirus measures. In many cases, the process and the speed of issuing a visa depend on the applicant's country of origin.

The findings of this study have to be seen in the light of some limitations, mainly due to the unavailability of credible data on the number of nomad visas issued in the studied countries and the fact that digital nomad policies may change promptly based on fast-changing rules for travelling into studied countries.

Further research needs to be done in the future to identify with specificity the forms of work that digital nomads do and ways of mitigating challenges related to the tourism and hospitality sector of the host country. Additionally, when there is a sufficient amount of data on a number of permits issued more detailed research can demonstrate the economic impact of nomad visas on individual countries tourism and hospitality sector.
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