DIGITAL NOMADS AS RECIPIENTS AND USERS OF THE CITY'S OFFER. STATUS AND PROSPECTS OF RESEARCH

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Purpose: This paper aims to identify the current state of knowledge and ongoing research related to the digital nomad segment from the perspective of territorial marketing.

Design/methodology/approach: The Scoping Review method was used, and the research material was collected from 3 databases: Scopus, Web of Science, and the Google Scholar academic browser. In order to graphically present the research conducted by scientists relating to digital nomads, VOSviewer software was used to build a map of connections between keywords appearing in publications.

Findings: Based on the Scoping Review, the author notices a sudden interest in the academic community in the issue of digital nomads, particularly in business economics and social sciences. The analysis of the collected materials allows to conclude that the technological facilities offered by territorial units are one of the critical features of the city as a destination from the perspective of digital nomads. Moreover, the author indicates that the characteristics of the profile of the digital nomad group require constant updates to conduct effective marketing communication of cities with this target group. Place marketing theorists and practitioners looking for effective ways to attract digital nomads should also focus on the possibilities of cooperation with residents because their attitudes and opinions strongly influence the perception of the city.

Originality/value: So far, few studies have combined the issue of digital nomads as a group of consumers of the city's offer with the area of city marketing. This paper consolidates previous findings in this area. The last part of the paper proposes future research directions, the results of which may positively affect the effectiveness of marketing activities used by territorial units to gain the interest of digital nomads.

Keywords: digital nomads, territorial marketing, place marketing, destination marketing.

Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

Development of mobile technologies have revolutionized the modern labor market in recent years. In particular, the pandemic period contributed to the popularization and widespread use of the possibility of performing work duties remotely. Due to globalization and the digital

transformation of many places and job positions, digital nomadism has become a rapidly developing trend in the labor market (Fibinger, 2021). The phenomenon of digital nomadism itself is defined as a traveling lifestyle with simultaneous paid work, which is enabled by access to mobile tools and technologies (Hannonen, 2020). Digital nomads are fully mobile remote workers who constantly change their residence, combining work duties with exploring visiting place and local culture. It is noted that nomads are one of the newest and fastest-growing groups of potential consumers of urban offers. This trend has caused high interest in the academic community (de Almeida, 2021), which can be observed based on the dates of published research.

Researchers indicate that the perception of the city's image, which includes the urban offer (Glińska, 2012), varies depending on the target group (Zenker, Beckmann, 2013). This means that designing a city's marketing strategy, including modifications to its offer, should correspond to a given segment of recipients' expectations, needs, and perspectives of reception. Therefore, knowledge about the factors influencing the choice of destination or the use of urban space by digital nomads is an essential source to help local authorities attract nomads.

This paper summarizes the existing research linking the digital nomad segment and city marketing. Based on the collected data, author also indicates directions for further research, the results of which would deepen the current knowledge that could benefit cities' development and competitiveness.

2. Digital nomads in the context of territorial marketing

Territorial marketing can be perceived as a system supporting the implementation of the goals of local authorities, thus contributing to the development of a given place (Florek, 2006). Although the main focus of place marketing should be residents (Szromnik, 2007), designing and promoting an offer that attracts external stakeholders determines a place's competitiveness, including residents' living standards. Consciously constructing a city's marketing strategy that supports the effective implementation of important goals, the path to achieving them and monitoring the effects significantly affects the city's economic and social situation.

Digital nomads are remote workers who combine work with travel, constantly changing their location. The duration of stay in a given destination is approximately 1-3 months, and according to data from the previous year, their number is currently 35 million in the world and constantly growing (Tagliaferri, 2022). What is important from a marketing point of view is that digital nomads choose their destination based on issues related to an exciting culture and the opportunity to relax, and not because of the labor market in the visited destination (Müller, 2016), which distinguishes them from emigrant workers. However, the issue that distinguishes

their perception of the urban offer from the perspective of traditional tourists is the importance of the availability of digital infrastructure (Sari, Jason, 2023).

Digital nomads influence the development and competitiveness of destination on several levels, which is why they are perceived as a valuable group of potential consumers for territorial units. The most apparent benefit for cities hosting digital nomads is the economic value they bring during their stay. Due to the specificity of the trip, digital nomads consume tourist, gastronomic, cultural, residential, and gastronomic products offered by a given city. In particular, they bring economic value to the tourism and hospitality industry in the places they visit (Svobodová, 2022). Due to the desire to explore not only the visited area but also local culture and identity, they are often interested in purchasing local products, which may additionally influence the development of local businesses (Vagena, 2021). Moreover, benefits from the presence of digital nomads can be seen in city promotion area. Nomads are active social media users, describing the destinations they visit, sharing impressions and experiences from travel, providing recommendations, and popularizing this type of lifestyle (Bonneau, Aroles, 2021). By disseminating information about the cities they visit, nomads increase awareness, reputation, and image of the place among the recipients of the content they create, which indirectly affects, among others, the development of the tourism industry (Mladenović, 2016). Moreover, research shows that most digital nomads obtain information about their future destination from online sources, e.g., thematic groups and forums where nomads share experiences and photos from the places they visit (Sztuk, 2023). Thanks to this, cities hosting digital nomads who are satisfied with their stay can count on informal ambassadorial attitudes on their part, which can be an effective form of promoting a territorial unit, especially within this group.

3. Methodology and results of the study

In order to determine the current state of knowledge and research related to digital nomads from the perspective of territorial marketing, the scoping review method was used. This type of review, in its methodological foundations, assumes systematic analysis and registration of collected materials, including discoveries and definitions relevant to the researched issues. As a result, a scoping review of literature enables the synthesis of knowledge in the explored topic and the possible identification of research gaps. Unlike a systematic review, a scoping literature review allows for changing, expanding, or narrowing the topic of the review and, thus, the number and type of keywords used during the analysis. This type of review is recommended when the literature on the subject under study is scattered (Mays, Roberts, Popay, 2001).

The review began with formulating the topic to identify the current state of knowledge and prospects for future research related to digital nomads as potential city customers. The examined issues were set in the area of territorial marketing. The keywords used in the first stage of searching for appropriate sources were "digital nomads AND place OR city OR territorial marketing" (as synonyms often used by place marketing researchers). Then, three sources were selected to conduct the review: the licensed Scopus and Web of Science databases and the publicly available academic browser Google Scholar, due to the diverse scope of each database. The inclusion criterion included only limiting the searches to studies prepared in English. In the Scopus database, it brought 1 result; in the WoS database, the keywords used provided 3 results. Due to the relatively low return rate of the searched articles, it was decided to expand the search area using the following keywords in the databases: "digital nomads AND city." In this way, 19 records were obtained in the Scopus database and 6 in the WoS database, again using the criterion of inclusion of materials prepared in English. In each case, the research material for review was qualified based on abstracts. Articles whose content differed significantly from the purpose of the analysis were rejected, including those related to globalization and education, adapting national policies to remote work, or introducing the work hybridization process in companies. The keywords were also used in the Google Scholar browser, and the return of results was much higher compared to the two licensed databases. Ultimately, 28 articles and 4 post-conference materials were analyzed.

The largest group of analyzed studies contained information on the characteristics of digital nomads, which is critical data when designing offers addressed to them. Demographically, most nomads are Western citizens with relatively high incomes (Bonneau, Aroles, 2021) and are usually highly educated and specialized in their industry (Green, 2020). A feature that characterizes nomads is their high entrepreneurship (Jarrahi, 2019). Digital nomads are independent of the place of performance of their duties, and most of them are freelancers; these self-employed people perform specific work, projects, and commissioned orders without having a superior. Their most frequently performed professions include programming, education, marketing, journalism and travel reporting, translation, financial, banking, and legal consulting (Cook, 2020; Green, 2020).

Nomads consider themselves conscious travelers who care about in-depth knowledge of the local culture of the place they visit to a much greater extent than is the case with traditional tourists (Kannisto, 2014; Putra, Agirachman, 2016). On the other hand, research on how they spend their free time shows that they do not show any significant differences between ordinary tourists (Thompson, 2019). However, in marketing, knowledge of the target group's self-identification is crucial to adapting effective messages promoting the city. Multiple changes in place of stay, autonomy of action, and deciding on the time and scope of official duties have caused such a strong habit among many nomads that they want to avoid settling in a permanent residence (Fibingier, 2020). Therefore, the trend of digital nomadism may be relatively constant. From the perspective of the development of tourism in peripheral places, Almeida and

Belezas (2022) indicate that the trend of digital nomadism may be an opportunity, particularly for peripheral areas attracting nomads. However, Sztuk (2023) based on empirical research among an international group of digital nomads, indicates that although the size of the visited destination is unlikely to be important when choosing it, villages and peripheral areas are a rarely chosen type of territorial unit as a destination.

As a result of the literature review, a set of articles was also identified that indicated specific features of destinations that were particularly important from the perspective of digital nomads. In the context of climate and environment, warm destinations are a common choice for digital nomads (Thompson, 2018). Additionally, most nomads find attractive places that offer affordable accommodation prices, have an exciting culture, and are safe - having a low crime rate (Sztuk, 2023). However, in one of the latest analyzed articles, the authors (Sari, Jason, 2023) put forward the thesis that some existing theoretical frameworks for place branding require updating. This is due to a new but rapidly growing group of consumers interested in combining leisure with work. Currently, in addition to the generally attractive features of destinations (location, natural and cultural resources, heritage), digital infrastructure has become particularly important. The authors emphasize that cities should include information on the remote work opportunities offered within the territorial unit in their brand promotion strategy. Digital infrastructure is provided by facilities equipped with wireless Internet and coworking spaces, which are particularly popular among digital nomads. These facilities consist the possibility of paid use of space in the office, which is fully equipped and provides a working atmosphere conducive to productivity and establishing interpersonal contacts - professional and social (Brown, 2017). Vogl and Micek (2023) analyzed the relationship between coworking spaces and the hotel industry in Germany based on the collected data. The authors recommended changes in the strategies of hotel entities due to the emerging opportunity resulting from the growing demand for coworking spaces, including by digital nomads. The conclusion confirms the assumption about the necessary digital infrastructure in cities that strive to attract nomads. Also, Baluk et al. (2017), based on a case study of the Russian city of Tyumen, propose a model of an information system supporting the movement and use of the city by digital nomads, emphasizing primarily the importance of the Internet and its accessibility. Other researchers (Alekseevna et al., 2019), based on cartographic databases of two tourist regions, identified places where Wi-Fi was available and the possibility of practicing sports, thus indicating optimal points for nomads and proposing the creation of a nomad tourism cluster in these regions. Therefore, it should be recognized that the factor of digital infrastructure, and above all, the availability of high-speed wireless Internet, which is spread over numerous points of a given destination, is a crucial element influencing the attractiveness of the place from the perspective of digital nomads. Moreover, based on interviews with digital nomads in one of the Thai cities, Lhakard (2022) also distinguished another essential feature of the city: managing a territorial unit. The author points out the importance of transparency of the authorities' actions and the involvement of the local community, which makes efforts to develop the city.

A significant problem was addressed by Sánchez-Vergara, Orel, and Capdevila (2023), who discussed the issue of visa systems designed for digital nomads in the context of a destination strategy adapted to current trends, acquiring new customers and talents. The authors, in turn, pointed out that the choice of destination is not dictated only by the city's cultural, natural, or technological features but also by visa policy and residence regulations. This seems obvious, but the authors emphasized the transparency and understandability of these rules. Complicated regulations cause digital nomads to worry about their legal situation before departure (Orel, 2021). This, in turn, may result in giving up choosing a given destination. Svobodová (2022) analyzed visa policies in 23 countries to indicate the changes implemented in the context of attracting larger groups of nomads. It was observed that there has been an increase in countries that have already introduced special rules and visa preferences aimed at nomads or are in the process of designing these changes. Most often, the period of legal stay of digital nomads in the surveyed countries is one year, although the scope in all analyzed countries ranges from 3 months to 5 years. The author of the analysis also emphasized the need to monitor the relationship between the extension of visa facilities for digital nomads and the economic growth of individual industries in the host countries.

The last but essential identified aspect regarding digital nomads from the perspective of place marketing relates to the local community. Milano, González-Reverté, and Benet Mòdico (2023) analyzed residents' attitudes related to high tourist occupancy and the issue of local identity in one of Barcelona's tourist districts. Although digital nomads were not the focus of researchers' interest, one of the conclusions is that residents, despite their strong local identity and affiliation, express their concerns about the side effects of tourism, including the growing presence of digital nomads. Through their attitude towards external groups, residents significantly impact the city's image while being part of it. Moreover, the support of the local community towards the strategies adopted by the city authorities has a crucial impact on achieving the intended goals. Politicians who understand the local community's identity can better anticipate their reactions, attitudes, and concerns and be more effective in implementing their plans (Dampier et al., 2014).

The review was also complemented by identifying areas of research related to the issue of digital nomads and the definition of the scope of the issue of place marketing in this context. For this purpose, the VOSviewer mapping tool was used. The map created based on the collected data allows to observe the connections between keywords and list the sets in which the most common connections between terms are recorded. The procedure included 4 stages: data collection, filtration, mapping, and summary of results. In the licensed Web of Science database collected following key phrase was used: "digital nomads." This allowed to obtain 186 records in the database - 132 from the last 5 years. Business economics and social sciences predominate in the context of the studied fields. Then, the database search results were exported as a file (txt.) to the VOSviewer program. The number of all keywords was 958. Concept extraction was performed by analyzing words that appeared at least 3 times, obtaining

60 words. In order to create a clear map of the studied areas, the following terms were removed from the derived keyword database:

- indicating the country of origin of the research (e.g., Mongolia, China),
- being the plural of already qualified words (e.g., digital nomad-digital nomads, space-spaces, mobility-mobilities),
- synonyms (e.g. Covid-19 pandemic).

Ultimately, the database was reduced to 47 keywords, from which a map of connections was generated, creating 6 clusters (Figure 1).
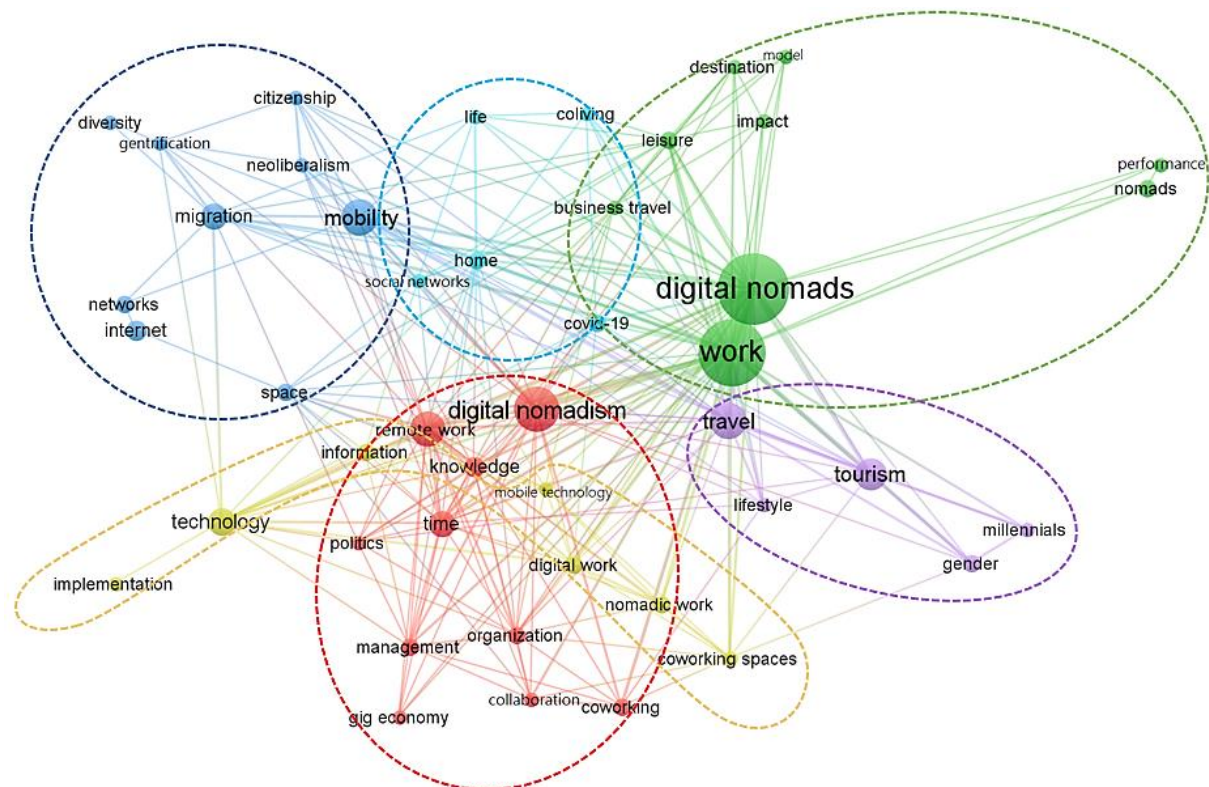

Figure 1. Map of the intensity of connections between keywords.

Source: own elaboration.

A keyword's membership in a cluster means the most considerable sum of connections within it but does not exclude links with words in other clusters. For a more precise interpretation of the map, names were proposed for the created clusters, which indicate the most common research areas related to digital nomads (Table 1).

Table 1.
Keywords and clusters appearing in the linkage map.

Cluster' number	Key words	Cluster' designation
Cluster 1	collaboration, coworking, digital nomadism, gig economy, knowledge, management, organization politics, remote work, time	specificity of work of remote workers and nomads
Cluster 2	business travel, destination, digital nomads, impact, leisure, model, nomads, performance, work	organization of time and work in the destination
Cluster 3	citizenship, diversity, gentrification, internet, migration, mobility, neoliberalism, networks, space	digital labor market
Cluster 4	coworking spaces, digital work, implementation, information, mobile technologoy, nomadic work, technology	digital nomads on the labor market
Cluster 5	gender, lifestyle, millennials, tourism, travel	characteristics of nomads and nomadism
Cluster 6	coliving, covid-19, home, life, social networks	the impact of the pandemic on relationships

Source: own elaboration.

The issue of digital nomads in the context of consuming the urban offer, shaping it, and promoting the destination fits best into cluster 2, considering the content of the terms "business travel, destination, leisure." However, this cluster is separate from the topic of the original review. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that even though the remaining clusters differ from the area of marketing, tracking the results of these studies may provide place marketing practitioners with valuable data that will contribute to better recognition of current trends or updating the profile of digital nomads (e.g., cluster 5). It could be helpful during construction of long-term goals in territorial units' marketing and branding strategies.

4. Conclusions and future research directions

The first information obtained from the conducted review is that most of the research on digital nomads, including those relating to city marketing, has been published in the last 5 years. A particular increase in research is noticeable during the COVID-19 pandemic and post-pandemic period. This means increasing interest in the issue of digital nomadism. By consolidating several studies, it is possible to confirm a vital factor of the technological infrastructure of cities, which should be included in strategies promoting destinations among digital nomads. Information about the number of coworking offices in a given city or other facilities enabling remote work may be a factor in the attractiveness of the city. Despite significant data supporting the design of activities and messages enabling cities to attract nomads, the perspective of territorial marketing occupies little space among the research on digital nomads.

As digital nomads constitute one of the newest groups of city users, and their number is constantly growing, popularizing an independent lifestyle, several research threads should be undertaken, which may result in support for city marketing practitioners. The first obvious issue concerns the ongoing monitoring and updating of the digital nomad's profile. Several years ago, empirical research indicated that nomads are mainly Western millennials with higher earnings. However, within 3 years, digital nomadism has become much more popular due to the end of the pandemic and the resumption and development of global transport. Up-to-date and accurate segment characterization is the first step in customizing marketing messages. A significant part of the problems of managers and people responsible for building effective strategies result from needing to know the complete profile of potential consumers or visiting guests (Orel, 2019). Secondly, research conducted among the city's internal groups, local entrepreneurs, investors, and residents may be helpful. In the context of local entrepreneurs, it could be interesting to study the real impact of the presence of digital nomads on the profitability and development of local businesses. Research on residents' attitudes and opinions towards digital nomads will help local authorities pursue a sustainable policy of accepting nomads.

From the perspective of place marketing, digital nomads are valuable recipients because they are consumers of the city's offer, promoters of the places they visit, and their lifestyle. However, city managers should consider specific risks related to the rapidly growing trend of digital nomadism and the mass nature of extended visits compared to traditional tourism. So far, overtourism has had negative consequences, including pollution and environmental degradation, overpopulation, resource consumption, inflated prices, and higher crime rates. In the context of digital nomads, residents' concerns may refer to cultural differences (Capocchi et al., 2021), which local authorities should consider.

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