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COMO OS NÓMADAS DIGITAIS AFETAM O DESENVOLVIMENTO SOCIAL, CULTURAL E ECONÓMICO LOCAL? REVISÃO DA LITERATURA

HOW DO DIGITAL NOMADS AFFECT LOCAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC (CULTURAL) DEVELOPMENT? A LITERATURE REVIEW

¿CÓMO AFECTAN LOS NÓMADAS DIGITALES AL DESARROLLO SOCIOECONÓMICO Y CULTURAL LOCAL? REVISIÓN BIBLIOGRÁFICA

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RESUMO

Introdução: Até 2019, o trabalho remoto estava limitado a uma pequena fração da força de trabalho, sobretudo nos setores da tecnologia e da informação. No entanto, a pandemia de COVD-19 acelerou o nomadismo digital, expandindo as oportunidades de trabalho remoto e aumentando a procura de destinos com uma forte infraestrutura tecnológica e uma elevada qualidade de vida.

Objetivo: O principal objetivo deste estudo é examinar as oportunidades e os desafios do fenómeno, explorando o impacto multidimensional do nomadismo digital em fatores sociais, culturais e económicos. A importância desta investigação reside na necessidade de compreender como o nomadismo digital influência e remodela as estruturas sociais e económicas das comunidades de acolhimento.

Métodos: Baseado na teoria do capital social de Putnam (2000), este estudo adota uma Revisão Narrativa da Literatura (NLR) para fornecer uma visão abrangente dos conhecimentos atuais sobre os impactos socioculturais e económicos do nomadismo digital em diferentes regiões. A revisão sintetiza a investigação existente em áreas complexas, permitindo uma análise crítica e a identificação de futuras direções de investigação.

Resultados: esta tendência global está a remodelar o trabalho, a mobilidade e os estilos de vida, com os nómadas digitais a influenciarem as dinâmicas sociais, culturais e económicas. Embora contribuam para as economias locais e para a transferência de conhecimentos, também colocam desafios como a gentrificação e o aumento dos custos de habitação.

Conclusão: o nomadismo digital promove o intercâmbio cultural e o crescimento económico, mas também alimenta a gentrificação e as tensões sociais. Embora os nómadas impulsionem as economias locais e a inovação, sobrecarregam as infraestruturas e aumentam as disparidades de rendimentos. Com os *millennials* e a geração Z a liderar esta tendência, são necessárias políticas eficazes para equilibrar os benefícios e os desafios.

Palavras-chave: nómadas digitais; desenvolvimento local; impacto social; impacto cultural; impacto económico

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Until 2019, remote working was limited to a small proportion of the workforce, mainly in the technology and information sectors. However, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digital nomadism, expanding remote work opportunities and increasing demand for destinations with strong technological infrastructure and high quality of life.

Objective The main goal of this study is to examine the opportunities and challenges of the phenomenon, exploring the multidimensional impact of digital nomadism on social, cultural, and economic factors. The significance of this research lies in the need to understand how digital nomadism influences and reshapes host communities' social and economic structures.

Methods: Grounded on Putnam's (2000) social capital theory, this study adopts a Narrative Literature Review (NLR) to provide a comprehensive overview of current knowledge on digital nomadism's sociocultural and economic impacts across different regions. The review synthesizes existing research in complex areas, enabling critical analysis and the identification of future research directions.

Results: This global trend reshapes work, mobility, and lifestyles, with digital nomads influencing social, cultural, and economic dynamics. While they contribute to local economies and knowledge transfer, they pose challenges like Gentrification and rising housing costs.

Conclusion: Digital nomadism drives cultural exchange and economic growth and fuels Gentrification and social tensions. While nomads boost local economies and innovation, they strain infrastructure and widen income disparities. With millennials and Gen Z leading this trend, effective policies are needed to balance the benefits and challenges.

Keywords: digital nomads; local development; social impact; cultural impact; economic impact

RESUMEN

Introducción: Hasta 2019, el trabajo a distancia se limitaba a una pequeña proporción de la población activa, principalmente en los sectores de la tecnología y la información. Sin embargo, la pandemia del COVID-19 aceleró el nomadismo digital, ampliando las oportunidades de trabajo a distancia y aumentando la demanda de destinos con sólidas infraestructuras tecnológicas y alta calidad de vida.

Objetivo: El objetivo principal de este estudio es examinar las oportunidades y los retos del fenómeno, y explorar su impacto multidimensional en los factores sociales, culturales y económicos. La relevancia de esta investigación radica en la necesidad de comprender cómo el nomadismo digital influye y reconfigura las estructuras sociales y económicas de las comunidades de acogida.

Métodos Basándose en la teoría del capital social de Putnam (2000), este estudio adopta una Revisión Narrativa de la Literatura (RNL) para ofrecer una visión global de los conocimientos actuales sobre las repercusiones socioculturales y económicas del nomadismo digital en diferentes regiones. La revisión sintetiza la investigación existente en áreas complejas, lo que permite realizar un análisis crítico y identificar posibles líneas de investigación futuras.

Resultados: Esta tendencia mundial está transformando el trabajo, la movilidad y los estilos de vida, y los nómadas digitales influyen en la dinámica social, cultural y económica. Aunque contribuyen al desarrollo económico local y a la transferencia de conocimientos, también plantean retos como el aburguesamiento y el aumento del coste de la vivienda.

Conclusión: El nomadismo digital fomenta el intercambio cultural y el crecimiento económico, pero también puede alimentar el aburguesamiento y las tensiones sociales. Por un lado, los nómadas impulsan las economías locales y la innovación, pero, por otro, sobrecargan las infraestructuras y amplían las disparidades de ingresos. Con la generación del milenio y la generación Z a la cabeza de esta tendencia, se necesitan políticas eficaces que equilibren los beneficios y los retos.

Palabras Clave: nómadas digitales; desarrollo local; impacto social; impacto cultural; impacto económico

INTRODUCTION

Until 2019, remote working was limited, covering only a small percentage of the workforce in both the US and the UK (MBO, 2019; ONS, 2020). Occupations mainly included those related to technology and information. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a major driver of digital nomadism (Xiao & Lutz, 2024). The need to work remotely due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, which affected most professional sectors, opened up the possibility of working remotely in many areas beyond this very restricted group. With this change, there has been a growing search for destinations that offer the conditions for this new segment of professionals to settle, namely a technological structure that allows teleworking and an environment that offers a good quality of life (UNWTO, 2023).

Digital nomadism, a global trend, is redefining the relationship between work, mobility, and lifestyle, driven by technological advances, labor market changes, and the search for flexibility and personal experiences. Professionals such as freelancers and content creators who work remotely while traveling form a skilled workforce that impacts the communities and economies of their temporary destinations. Based on a literature review that explores the opportunities and challenges of the phenomenon, this article analyses the multidimensional impact of digital nomadism on social, cultural, and economic factors. The relevance of research lies in discussing how digital nomadism can and does affect host communities' social and economic structures, particularly in a post-pandemic scenario that has accelerated the expansion of remote work and exposed pre-existing inequalities. Socially, digital nomads can act as catalysts for cultural exchange and community cohesion but also as agents of tension and Gentrification, as analyzed through Putnam's theory of social capital (2000). Culturally, their presence promotes diversity and the globalization of local heritage, albeit sometimes at the expense of community identity. Economically, digital nomads have significant impacts, both positive and negative. In the short term, they contribute to local economies through high spending on accommodation, food, and services, creating a multiplier effect that stimulates sectors such as retail and transport (Matsushita, 2023; Annamalah & Paraman, 2023). In the long term, they can revitalize rural areas by introducing new skills and economic activities, promoting sustainable development and local innovation (Kókai & Rétfalvi, 2024; Latif, 2024). However, they also create challenges such as pressure on infrastructure, rising housing costs, and economic inequalities due to income disparities between nomads and residents, which can exacerbate social and economic tensions (Miočević, 2024; Parreño-Castellano et al., 2022). These economic elements complement the social and cultural analysis, providing a holistic view of the impact of this phenomenon.

The literature review that structures this article is based on a narrative approach, synthesizing contributions from authors such as Cook (2023), Hannonen (2023), and Ji et al. (2024), among others, to outline who digital nomads are, their motivations and the impact of their choices. Putnam's social capital theory (2000) serves as the primary theoretical basis, allowing us to assess how interactions between digital nomads and local communities strengthen or weaken trust, reciprocity, and cohesion networks.

The analysis ranges from the definition and characteristics of digital nomads - including their demographic profile and typologies - to social impacts such as community integration and tensions, cultural impacts such as exchange and potential loss of local identity, and economic impacts such as financial benefits and structural challenges.

The economic aspects include (1) the direct financial contribution of digital nomads to local economies, including spending on accommodation, services, and tourism; (2) the public costs associated with investing in technological and co-working infrastructure to attract these professionals; (3) the impact on the local labor market, such as competition with resident workers and potential knowledge transfer; and (4) the long-term macroeconomic effects, such as the economic sustainability of destinations dependent on this transient population. These issues will be discussed throughout the article, complementing the social, cultural, and economic impacts already identified, such as Gentrification and the strengthening of bridging social capital to the detriment of bonding social capital.

The article is structured as follows: first, the literature review presents a detailed characterization of digital nomads, their motivations, and profiles, followed by an analysis of the social and cultural impacts from the perspective of Putnam (2000). Subsequently, a section dedicated to economic aspects expands the discussion, integrating preliminary data and identified gaps. Finally, the conclusion synthesizes the findings and proposes directions for future research, emphasizing the need for balanced policies that maximize the benefits of digital nomadism while mitigating its challenges. With this approach, we aim to contribute to understanding this rising phenomenon, offering relevant insights for academics, policymakers, and affected communities.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital nomadism is a relatively new lifestyle trend with growing support, offering individuals the opportunity to experience numerous benefits, including greater flexibility (Yu, Zhang & Hannam, 2024) and access to global job opportunities (UNWTO, 2023; Xiao & Lutz, 2024) add that this phenomenon involves individuals who wish to combine work and travel, using their technological skills to pursue their ambitions. According to Makimoto and Manners (1997), a digital nomad is someone who uses technology to work remotely while taking the opportunity to travel and experience different places. The concept of a digital nomad is proposed by Cook (2023:271), who states that "Basic definition: Digital nomads use digital technologies to work remotely, can work and travel simultaneously, have autonomy over frequency and choice of location, and visit at least three locations per year other than their own home or the home of a friend or family member."

Digital nomads are characterized by high levels of digital literacy and skills, making them a highly sought-after and valued workforce in the technology labor market. However, the shortage of skilled workers in this area makes recruiting and retaining them challenging (MBO, 2024). According to MBO Partners 2024 State of Independence, digital nomads combine remote work and travel and are motivated by the search for cultural and adventurous experiences, often in technology fields. After several academic and professional reviews, Cook (2023) proposes five types of digital nomads: digital nomad freelancers; digital nomad business owners; salaried digital nomads; experimental digital nomads; and armchair digital nomads.

1.1 Demographic profile
Comparing the pre-pandemic period with the post-pandemic period, we find significant differences in the characteristics of digital nomads, namely in terms of generation, gender, ethnicity, and context. The Baby Boomer generation (born between 1946 and 1964), representing 27% of digital nomads in 2019, will represent 13% of this group in 2022 due to the pandemic's impact and labor market reasons. Generation X (1965-1980) represents 23% of digital nomads in 2022, which has remained constant since 2019. Meanwhile, Millennials (1981-1996), already a large group in 2019, grew to 47 percent in 2020 and fell to 38 percent in 2024, possibly because they have taken on family responsibilities incompatible with their previous mobility. Finally, Generation Z (1997-2012), which represented less than 1 percent of digital nomads in 2019, now represents 17 percent and 26 percent of digital nomads in 2020 and 2024, respectively, a change brought about by the traveling nature and entry into the labor market of the individuals who make up this group. Although there are no absolute figures, it should be noted that most digital nomads are male and that there is an increase in digital nomads of African American ethnicity in 2024 (MBO, 2022; MBO, 2024).

1.2 The motivations of digital nomads
Digital nomads are driven by various motivations that reflect the intersection of work, mobility, and lifestyle. One of the key motivations is this lifestyle's autonomy and flexibility. These professionals value the freedom to manage their schedules, to work from any location, and to balance the time devoted to their work and personal life according to their needs (Mancinelli, 2020). In addition, the ability to make independent decisions without hierarchical constraints is attractive (Zumbusch & Lalicic, 2020). This working model allows them to explore the world while maintaining their professional responsibilities, promoting a lifestyle that does not exchange time for money in the traditional way, which contributes to greater happiness and fulfillment (Mancinelli, 2020; Zumbusch & Lalicic, 2020). Another important motivation is related to professional development and self-employment. Digital nomads, often freelancers and content creators, seek to explore global markets, work opportunities, and projects in different parts of the world, favoring their professional development and growth (Prabawa & Pertiwi, 2020). The ability to promote self-employment is a key factor, as this trend allows them to combine benefits such as autonomy and flexibility (Prabawa & Pertiwi, 2020). They also tend to seek out environments that encourage concentration on their projects, away from the distractions of traditional offices and are often driven to travel by work inspiration (Prabawa & Pertiwi, 2020). Networking also plays a crucial role, as traveling allows them to meet new people, share ideas, and create collaborations that benefit both their careers and personal lives (Zumbusch & Lalicic, 2020; Prabawa & Pertiwi, 2020). The search for cultural, personal, and adventurous experiences is also a key motivation. Digital nomads are attracted by the opportunity to explore new places, engage in cultural experiences, broaden their perspectives, and enrich their personal experiences (Zumbusch & Lalicic, 2020). Destinations with unique qualities like beautiful landscapes, vibrant culture, and creative environments appeal to their desire for aesthetic and creative stimulation (Prabawa & Pertiwi, 2020). Leisure activities such as local cultural events, nature exploration, or social gatherings contribute to the attractiveness of a destination (Prabawa & Pertiwi, 2020). In addition, the possibility of adventure travel is in line with the lifestyle of these professionals, who see digital nomadism as a way to realize this desire (UNWTO, 2023; MBO, 2024). Finally, structural and technological facilitators are essential in expanding digital nomadism. Technology is a key factor, as it enables remote working and, thus, greater flexibility in schedules and location, making it possible to maintain a career while exploring different tourist destinations worldwide (Mancinelli, 2020; Zumbusch & Lalicic, 2020). The emergence of special visas for digital nomads has made it easier for these professionals to stay in destination countries, while investment in tourism infrastructure - such as comfortable and suitable accommodation for living and working - has created a welcoming and motivating environment (UNWTO, 2023; Prabawa & Pertiwi, 2020). Together with the recognition of the economic power of digital nomads, who often earn high salaries, these factors have contributed to the continued growth of this trend (UNWTO, 2023).

1.3 Putman's theory of social capital (2000)
This literature review analyses digital nomads' social, cultural, and economic impacts. Firstly, the social and cultural impacts will be analyzed, explicitly integrating digital nomads into local communities, cultural exchange, social tensions, and Gentrification. This analysis is based on the social capital theory proposed by Putman (1995, 2000). This author defines social capital as a set of collective characteristics, including community networks, civic engagement, cultivating a strong civic identity, and developing trust and reciprocity among community or group members. Thus, social capital is a resource that community members can draw on in an adverse situation, i.e., social capital moves from individual to collective characteristics. This theory asserts that when the characteristics of social capital are activated - through civic engagement, regular interactions, and cooperation - its positive effects, such as more significant community interaction, cohesion, and resilience, are enhanced. Conversely, when community members lack interaction and involvement, social capital is weakened and unable to deliver collective benefits. Putnam's (2000) theory of social capital distinguishes between bonding social capital (strong ties between homogeneous groups, such as family) and bridging social capital (weak ties between heterogeneous groups, such as neighbors). It emphasizes that social capital is a dynamic resource and that for it to work positively, there must be interactions between community members. Hence, the absence of these

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interactions leads to the weakening of this resource. Social capital theory is particularly relevant to understanding how digital nomads interact with local communities and influence the formation of support networks.

2. METHODS

This research constitutes a narrative literature review (NLR), which was conducted to achieve a comprehensive overview of the current state of knowledge regarding the sociocultural and economic impacts of digital nomadism on various regions. The review method employed was synthesizing existing knowledge in complex areas to facilitate critical analysis and the identification of new research directions. Despite adopting a more flexible approach, it is recommended that this NLR implement practices to enhance the quality of the narrative review. This involves the explicit delineation of the research scope, the strategic selection of relevant articles, and the implementation of effective bibliographic strategies. The review process was guided by the following Research Question (RQ):

- RQ1: How does digital nomadism impact tourist destinations in the sociocultural and economic dimensions?

A non-systematic process was employed to conduct thorough research of relevant literature on the subject, utilizing online article databases to allow for a broader scope. To select studies relevant to the research question, the eligibility criteria, selection of information sources, search strategy definition, selection, and data collection process were defined. Finally, both the abstracts and the full text of the extracted articles were screened to define those to be included in the review. The present study utilized the Elsevier Scopus database, and the selection was limited to peer-reviewed scientific articles written in English and published in the following areas: Social Sciences, Business, Management and Accounting, Environmental Science, Economics, Econometrics and Finance, and Psychology. The timeframe for the study was from 2018 to 2025, with the aim of considering the pre- and post-pandemic periods. The search for research keywords was conducted in the "article title", "abstract", and "keywords" fields. Initially, the keyword "digital nomads" was searched, but the analysis of the results revealed other similar terms. Thus, the Boolean operator "OR" was employed to consider the keywords "digital nomad" and "digital nomadism". To narrow the results relevant to the research question, the Boolean operator "AND" and the keyword "tourism" were also used to assess the relation to tourist destinations and their impacts. The search query used was: TITLE-ABS-KEY ("digital nomads" OR "digital nomad" OR "digital nomadism" AND tourism) AND PUBYEAR > 2017 AND PUBYEAR < 2026 AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English")) AND (EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA , "ENER") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA , "MULT") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA , "ENGI") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA , "EART") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA , "COMP") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA , "ARTS") OR EXCLUDE (SUBJAREA , "DECI")) AND (EXCLUDE (PUBSTAGE , "AIP"))

A total of 38 records were obtained, and all of these were screened and included in the review. The data gathered from the bibliographic database is also helpful for conducting a bibliometric analysis. This can enhance qualitative research by facilitating the retrieval of important information, as follows. As demonstrated in Figure 1, the digital nomad theme has become a subject of interest in the post-pandemic era, with a substantial increase in the publication of articles on the topic.
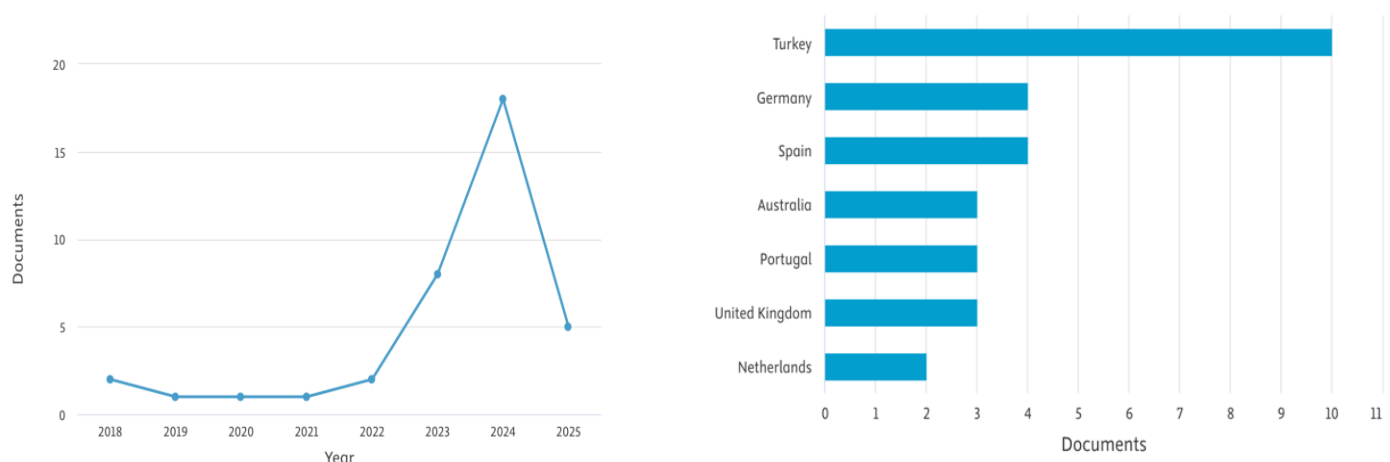
Figures 1 and 2 – Number of publications by year and country (more than 1 publication)

Source: Scopus

A total of 77 authors were responsible for the publication of these 38 articles, which suggests that investigations are being made by teams of investigators and are in the early stages because most authors have just one publication in this timeframe, and only four of them have published two articles. Publications came from 23 countries from different geographies, mainly Europe and

Asia, which suggests a vast and geographically diversified field of study. As can be seen in Figure 2, Turkey leads with 10 publications, followed by Germany and Spain with 4 articles, Australia, Portugal and the UK with 3, the Netherlands with 2 and Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Poland, Switzerland, China, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Ukraine with one publication.

Different and diverse approaches to digital nomadism phenomena were made during this period, mainly in social sciences and business, management, and accounting.
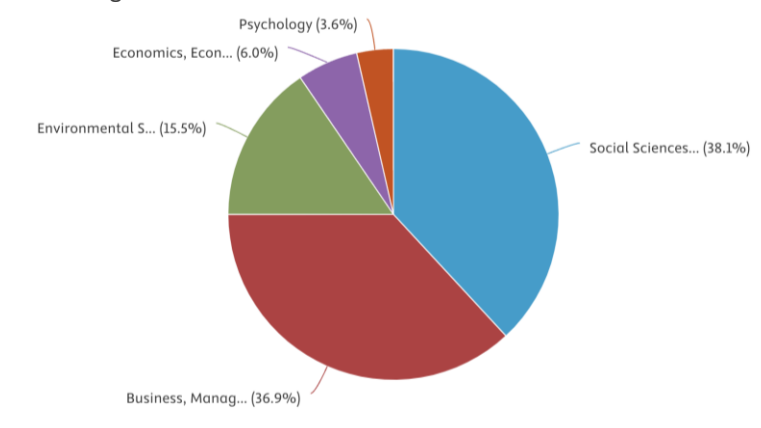

Figure 3 – Publications by Subject Area

Source: Scopus

The following research stage involved critically evaluating the retrieved literature to ensure the review was objective and balanced. In this process, the sociocultural and economic impacts of digital nomadism were considered, and the studies reviewed were discussed in terms of their strengths and limitations. The final stage of the research involved drawing conclusions, summarizing the main findings, and identifying areas for future research and implications for practice.

3. RESULTS

The following section will analyze digital nomadism's social, cultural, and economic impacts.

3.1 Social and Cultural Impacts

The study by Matsushita (2023) found that the involvement of the local community with digital nomads creates a support network that not only benefits the local economy but also mitigates the adverse effects of mass tourism. It also suggests that the work of digital nomads can help solve social problems such as urban concentration and revitalize areas where tourism has declined since the COVID-19 pandemic. To this end, the study suggests developing local programs to support remote work and increasing incentives for digital nomads. From the perspective of Putman's (1995) theory of social capital, previous findings suggest that digital nomads have the potential to strengthen social capital by fostering community networks and stimulating civic engagement. The interaction described by Matsushita (2023) indicates the activation of social capital, creating support networks that promote community cohesion. In the same vein, Mourato, Dias, and Pereira (2023) and Ji et al. (2024) found that digital nomads enjoy community life and are particularly concerned about social and environmental issues, leading them to engage in socially responsible businesses and projects. Poulaki et al. (2023) add that digital nomads tend to engage in practices that promote the reduction of their carbon footprint, known as 'slowmaidsm' so that their actions can have a positive impact on the social and environmental development of the community in which they are involved.

The involvement of digital nomads in socially responsible projects, as described by Mourato, Dias, and Pereira (2023) and Ji et al. (2024), is in line with what Putman (2020) considers essential in his theory of strengthening social cohesion and civic engagement. The 'slowmaidsm' practices reported by Poulaki et al. (2023) demonstrate the sensitivity of digital nomads to sustainability values, which in Putman's (2000) theory correspond to the characteristics of trust and reciprocity that positively influence community well-being. However, Putman (2000) argues that benefits can only accrue if they are sustained through regular interactions, which may not be conducive to the nomadic lifestyle of digital nomads.

3.1.1 Cultural exchange

Regarding cultural exchange, Yıldırım and Kaya (2024) found that digital nomads promote cultural heritage on a global scale by sharing on social media the experiences in which they are actively involved, such as religious rituals and culinary practices, among

others. Similarly, Jiwasiddi et al. (2024) found that digital nomads are perceived differently from other types of visitors and contribute to the local cultural identity in the city of Chiang Mai, Thailand. In addition, Hannonen (2023) found that digital nomads reproduce the experiences they bring from their countries of origin in destinations, while Poulaki et al. (2023) and Ji et al. (2024) believe that by promoting cultural exchange and the diversity of their accumulated experiences around the world, digital nomads have made life in destinations more vibrant and dynamic, with more significant interaction between different groups, as well as fostering mutual understanding between them and local communities. Yıldırım & Kaya (2024) add that the interaction of digital nomads with intangible cultural heritage promotes the reinterpretation and development of cultural identity, transforming it into a more personal experience. This global phenomenon can be adopted or appreciated by different cultures worldwide. However, Khawas, Kumar, and Kumar (2025) warn that this process could lead to a loss of local identity if local businesses become overly attuned to the needs of these transient populations, which could affect local behaviors and traditions.

Putman (2000) frames the interactions described by Yıldırım and Kaya (2024) and Hannonen (2023) in terms of integration with local communities and cultural exchange as bridging social capital. These behaviors show how digital nomads can strengthen social capital by creating bridging ties with residents, leading to community cohesion and diversity. Similarly, the promotion of cultural heritage by digital nomads, as described by Yıldırım and Kaya (2024), is also included in the definition of bridging social capital that connects local communities to various global networks.

Regarding social interactions and identity formation, Andino-Frydman (2023) argues that digital nomads develop close relationships with other long-term travelers, which helps to reduce loneliness and homesickness while shaping their identity around shared passions and interests rather than conventional social factors.

3.1.2 Social tensions

The interactions with the local community described above, however, are contradicted by Hannonen (2023), who found that digital nomads primarily interact with their peers, i.e., other individuals who experience the same lifestyle and values (Andino-Frydman, 2023). This alienation from the community can even lead to unfair competition, as digital nomads are not subject to the same tax obligations and can offer services at more competitive prices than local businesses. Miočević (2024) also stresses that relations between digital nomads and locals are not always peaceful and can lead to conflict. These conflicts may arise due to cultural differences, diverging expectations, or negative impacts perceived by locals, such as the rising cost of living or the struggle for resources such as housing and labor. For example, digital nomads may be perceived as a risk to the local economy due to their greater purchasing power, leading to conflict.

On the other hand, Khawas et al. (2025) point out that the influx of digital nomads can cause social friction, as local residents may feel that their communities are becoming less inclusive, as evidenced by the shift in focus of local businesses to cater to the interests of digital nomads and tourists, marginalizing the interests of the community. Hannonen's (2023) and Andino-Frydman's (2023) descriptions can be understood in terms of Putnam's (2000) theory of social capital, particularly concerning the negative social impacts of digital nomads. Digital nomads' preference for interacting with like-minded individuals reflects the bonding social capital that Putnam (2000) warns can exclude outsiders, as seen in residents' alienation. On the other hand, a lack of bridging social capital can lead to conflict and feelings of exclusion, as seen by Miočević (2024) and Khawas, Kumar, and Kumar (2025) respectively, reflecting the decline in social cohesion in modern societies identified by Putman (2000).

3.1.3 Gentrification

In addition, Hannonen (2023) warns that while government policies to invest in technological and digital infrastructure and other coworking and co-living-related policies may have positive economic returns, they may also carry risks related to Gentrification, with the exacerbation of rent increases (Yang, 2024) and the increase in short-term rentals leading to the displacement of local businesses and residents (Ji et al., 2024). This increase in demand may cause long-time residents to feel alienated as their neighborhoods become less accessible and more globalized (Khawas et al., 2025). This population replacement could weaken existing community networks and reduce social capital by dissolving previously defined bonds of trust and reciprocity. According to Putman's theory, investment in various infrastructures - technological, housing, and employment centers - will increase bridging social capital, i.e., it will help connect different groups and promote greater diversity and inclusion. However, it will damage the bonding social capital of local communities, which is Putman's concern in the sense that external groups will benefit at the expense of the loss of pre-existing community structures and community cohesion.

3.2 Economic impacts

The digital nomad lifestyle, characterized by remote working and mobility, has a significant economic impact on local communities. Even during the pandemic, the flow of digital nomads continued, albeit with much less intensity, mitigating the dramatic decline in international tourism (Parreño-Castellano et al., 2022). In the short term, digital nomads boost local economies through increased demand for services and accommodation, while in the long term, they contribute to sustainable development and cultural exchange. Their extended stays and higher spending than traditional tourists positively impact the hospitality industry. However, these benefits come with challenges, including infrastructure demands and potential social conflicts. In the short term,

Digital nomads make significant contributions to local economies, primarily through increased spending on housing, food, and leisure, which in turn stimulates local businesses and creates new opportunities for service providers (Matsushita, 2023; K. Mao & Xu, 2024; Kókai & Rétfalvi, 2024). Extended stays typical of digital nomads result in sustained expenditure on accommodations, food, and local services, further bolstering regional economic health (Heo et al., 2025; Choi & Qu, 2024). This spending also produces a multiplier effect, where initial expenditures stimulate broader economic activity across interconnected sectors such as retail and transportation (Annamalah & Paraman, 2023). Their presence often leads to the development of coworking and co-living spaces to support extended stays for workcation participants, which, being an emergent market, revitalizes underutilized properties and generates additional business prospects (Matsushita, 2023; Vogl & Micek, 2023; Jaiswal et al., 2024). Furthermore, the increasing demand for those customized facilities has contributed to establishing a local digital ecosystem, as evidenced in Bali, thereby enhancing the area's economic resilience (Christiansen et al., 2023; Hatifa et al., 2024). Finally, the arrival of these digital workers suggests enhancing cultural exchange and diversity and increasing visibility for local tourism through social media, thereby enriching local communities and attracting more tourists (Matsushita, 2023; Yang, 2024). However, there are concerns about its real economic impact and sustainability (Matsushita, 2023). In the long term, Digital nomads have the potential to play a crucial role in the revitalization of rural areas by introducing new skills, technologies, and economic activities that help to counteract depopulation and economic decline in these regions (Mao & Xu, 2024; Kókai & Rétfalvi, 2024). This phenomenon is already evident in locations such as Pécsdevecser, Hungary, where digital nomads are regarded as pivotal agents of rural development, generating novel sources of income and stimulating local economies (Kókai & Rétfalvi, 2024; Buława et al., 2024). Furthermore, the integration of digital nomads into local economies has been demonstrated to promote sustainable development through eco-friendly practices and infrastructure improvements (Jaiswal et al., 2024). Additionally, their presence has fostered knowledge transfer, skill development, and innovation among local populations, encouraging entrepreneurship (Latif, 2024). Challenges also arise from digital nomadism. The influx of digital nomads can exert pressure on local infrastructure and housing markets, resulting in increased costs and the potential displacement of residents (Kókai & Rétfalvi, 2024; Miočević, 2024). In addition, the accommodation industry has had a moderate impact on the emergence of coworking spaces in peripheral districts of Germany (Vogl & Micek, 2023). Prolonged stays may also give rise to social conflicts with locals, emphasizing the necessity for strategies that promote cooperation and integration (Miočević, 2024). Additionally, the remarkably high income of digital nomads when compared to other workers (Vogl & Micek, 2023) can promote unequal access to resources, as seen in regions with historical power imbalances, with companies prioritizing to meet their needs, instead of locals' (Hannonen, 2023). Thus, their lifestyle can create disparities between those who can afford this lifestyle and those who cannot, potentially leading to social and economic inequalities (Parreño-Castellano et al., 2022). These authors also argue that, like tourism, digital nomadism is influenced and driven by international income disparities, which lead many individuals to take advantage of the lower standard of living in these destinations compared to their country of origin to sustain their digital nomad lifestyle. Furthermore, if not managed sustainably, the increased presence of digital nomads can contribute to environmental degradation, emphasizing the necessity for implementing eco-friendly policies and practices (Yang, 2024; Jaiswal et al., 2024). Regions must invest in robust infrastructure and technology to capitalize fully on the economic benefits that digital nomads can bring, including reliable internet connectivity and suitable accommodation options. These are essential for attracting and retaining these professionals (Kókai & Rétfalvi, 2024; Orel, 2020). Tax-related challenges are also an issue when dealing with these professionals. Although digital nomads benefit from non-rivalrous and non-exclusive public goods like public services or infrastructures, they frequently do not contribute directly through taxes to the government or other public entities that provide them. Chavarria (2024) states that the only contribution digital nomads make to the government is through indirect taxes, i.e., through consumption, because in most cases, they enter a country or region with a tourist visa or, instead, with a digital nomad visa, which exempt holders from personal income taxation. Furthermore, digital nomads frequently encounter challenges related to cultural integration and legal uncertainties that can influence their spending habits and overall economic contributions. Consequently, addressing these issues is imperative for enhancing their experience and encouraging more significant participation (Haking, 2017).

3.3 Literature gaps

The literature on digital nomadism has expanded significantly, but important gaps remain, particularly concerning the long-term implications for rural areas and their impacts (Yang, 2024). While most studies focus on urban environments, there is growing interest in the role of digital nomads in rural revitalization, although research in this area is still limited (Kókai & Rétfalvi, 2024; Mao & Xu, 2024). There is also a lack of research on long-term sustainability and public policy considerations. Previous research has examined short-term economic and cultural impacts, but little is known about how digital nomads affect urban infrastructure, housing, and community dynamics over time (Sousa et al., 2025). Another under-researched aspect is the impact of legislation and public policy on digital nomadism. While digital nomad visas are becoming more common, their economic and labor market consequences remain uncertain (Bednorz, 2024). In addition, more research is needed on the structural challenges faced by rural areas, such as access to high-quality internet and coworking spaces, as well as the social and cultural integration of digital nomads into local communities (Mao & Xu, 2024). In the broader field of digital nomadism, challenges include the lack of a unifying theoretical framework that connects this phenomenon to larger socio-economic contexts (Wang et al., 2018; Hannonen, 2020).

The literature emphasizes the benefits of digital nomadism while underplaying issues such as job insecurity, social isolation, and legal uncertainty (Hall et al., 2019). Furthermore, research has primarily focused on the experiences of digital nomads rather than government policies and visa regulations from an institutional perspective (Bednorz, 2024). Other underexplored topics include workplace surveillance and privacy concerns in digital environments (Bishop, 2024) and the role of technology in sustaining this lifestyle (Nash et al., 2018). In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of digital nomadism, its long-term viability, and its broader implications for work, global mobility, and society, it is crucial to address these gaps through interdisciplinary research.

4. DISCUSSION

The narrative review of digital nomadism reveals a complex phenomenon that integrates individual characteristics, motivations, and social, cultural, and economic impacts. Based on Putnam's theory of social capital (2000), the analysis explores the definition, demographic profile, motivations, and impacts of digital nomads, highlighting benefits such as cultural exchange and community cohesion but also challenges such as social tensions and Gentrification, revealing the complexity of interactions with local communities.

Digital nomads use technology to work remotely while traveling and are characterized by their flexibility and access to global opportunities. Cook's typology (2023) divides them into five profiles, and the MBO Partners report (2024) highlights their high level of technological literacy.

Following the pandemic, there has been a significant generational shift, with Generation Z growing to 26 percent in 2024, while Baby Boomers fall to 13 percent. Generation X remains stable (23%). Millennials remain the majority (38 percent) but with a declining trend. There is also more significant gender and ethnic diversity in the profile of digital nomads. Digital nomads seek freedom, personal and professional growth, and cultural experiences, relying on technology, special visas, and tourist infrastructure to facilitate this lifestyle (UNWTO, 2023; MBO, 2024). Exploring global markets and working independently attract freelancers, while traveling and adventure reflect aspirations for personal enrichment.

At the social and cultural level, Putnam's (2000) social capital theory distinguishes between 'bridging social capital' and 'bonding social capital'. The integration of digital nomads into local communities can strengthen bridging social capital by promoting support networks, cohesion, and cultural exchange, as Matsushita (2023), Mourato et al., Matsushita (2023), Mourato et al. (2023), Ji et al. (2024), Yıldırım and Kaya (2024) and Hannonen (2023) point out. Their presence also increases the visibility of destinations through social media, attracting more tourists and enriching local communities (Matsushita, 2023; Yang, 2024). However, the tendency of digital nomads to interact mainly with each other (Hannonen, 2023; Andino-Frydman, 2023) can weaken bonding social capital, leading to exclusion, social tensions (Miočević, 2024; Khawas et al., 2025) and Gentrification (Hannonen, 2023; Yang, 2024; Ji et al., 2024) and weakening social networks, echoing Putnam's warning about the imbalance between the two types of social capital. Furthermore, the difficulties of cultural integration and legal uncertainty faced by digital nomads may affect their consumption patterns and economic contributions, highlighting the need for strategies to promote more meaningful participation (Haking, 2017).

On an economic level, the lifestyle of digital nomads, characterized by remote working and mobility, significantly impacts local communities. Even during the pandemic, although less intense, the influx of digital nomads helped mitigate the decline in international tourism (Parreño-Castellano et al., 2022). In the short term, they contribute to local economies through high spending on accommodation, food, and leisure, creating a multiplier effect that stimulates sectors such as retail and transport (Matsushita, 2023; Annamalah & Paraman, 2023). Their more extended stays, with higher spending than traditional tourists, benefit the hotel industry and encourage the development of coworking and co-living spaces, revitalizing underused properties and creating new business opportunities (Heo et al., 2025; Vogl & Micek, 2023; Jaiswal et al., 2024). In destinations such as Bali, the demand for this personalized infrastructure has contributed to creating a local digital ecosystem, increasing the region's economic resilience (Christiansen et al., 2023; Hatifa et al., 2024). In the long term, digital nomads can promote sustainable development, especially in rural areas, by introducing new skills, technologies, and economic activities that counteract depopulation and economic decline, as observed in Pécsdevecser, Hungary (Kókai & Rétfalvi, 2024; Buława et al., 2024). Their integration into local economies promotes knowledge transfer, skills development, and innovation and encourages entrepreneurship (Latif, 2024). However, they also create economic challenges, such as pressure on infrastructure and property markets, leading to increased costs and potential displacement of residents (Kókai & Rétfalvi, 2024; Miočević, 2024). Income disparities between digital and local nomads, exacerbated by international disparities in purchasing power, can exacerbate economic and social inequalities, with companies prioritizing the needs of nomads to the detriment of local populations (Vogl & Micek, 2023; Hannonen, 2023; Parreño-Castellano et al., 2022). In addition, due to visas exempting nomads from income taxation, the lack of direct contribution through direct taxes raises questions about long-term economic sustainability (Chavarria, 2024). Furthermore, if not managed sustainably, the increased presence of digital nomads could contribute to environmental degradation, highlighting the need for green policies and practices (Yang, 2024; Jaiswal et al., 2024).

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CONCLUSION

Digital nomadism is complex, combining personal characteristics, motivations, and impacts on local communities, as discussed in the narrative review. Based on Putnam's social capital theory (2000), the analysis highlights digital nomads' social, cultural, and economic opportunities and challenges.

Putnam's theory (2000) shows that nomadic inclusion fosters bridging social capital, creating unity and cultural exchange in the social and cultural realm. The presence of destinations on social networks attracts more visitors, generating wealth for communities.

However, the interaction between nomads, which creates bonding social capital, leads to the exclusion of residents, causing social tensions and Gentrification, threatening community unity, as Putnam warned.

From an economic perspective, digital nomads revitalize local communities, mainly rural areas, through high spending on accommodation, food, and entertainment, creating a knock-on effect that benefits local trade and transport sectors. Longer stays foster digital ecosystems, which stimulate entrepreneurship and innovation. In the long term, they can promote sustainable growth and combat rural desertification. However, they also create obstacles such as pressure on infrastructure and property markets, increasing living costs, and displacing residents.

Income inequalities are exacerbated as companies favor nomads over locals, while tax exemptions raise questions about economic sustainability. The presence of nomads can also lead to environmental degradation if not managed sustainably.

Following the pandemic, the profile of nomads has changed, with Generation Z reaching 26 percent, Millennials dominating (38 percent), Baby Boomers declining (13 percent), and Generation X remaining stable (23 percent). Gender and ethnic diversity are increasing, and motivations such as freedom and cultural experiences are driving nomadism, supported by technology and tourism infrastructure.

In summary, digital nomadism has transformative potential but requires careful management. Policies that promote integration, stimulate social bridge capital, and reduce tensions are essential. Fiscal regulation, green tourism, and cultural exchange initiatives can align interests, ensure inclusive progress, and reduce impacts such as Gentrification and environmental degradation.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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