INSTITUTO
UNIVERSITÁRIO
DE LISBOA

Digital nomads' workation choice: A study on push factors, pull factors, and relative freedom

Daniela Sofia Carvalho Teixeira

Mestrado em Políticas de Desenvolvimento dos Recursos Humanos

Orientador:
Doutor Nelson Ramalho, Professor Associado,
Iscte-IUL

Co-Orientadora:
Doutora Teresa Almeida, Professora Auxiliar Convidada,
Iscte-IUL

August, 2024

CIÊNCIAS SOCIAIS
E HUMANAS

Departamento de Economia Política

A escolha de Workation por parte dos nómadas digitais: Um estudo sobre fatores push, fatores pull e a liberdade relativa

Daniela Sofia Carvalho Teixeira

Mestrado em Políticas de Desenvolvimento dos Recursos Humanos

Orientador:
Doutor Nelson Ramalho, Professor Associado,
Iscte-IUL

Co-Orientadora:
Doutora Teresa Almeida, Professora Auxiliar Convidada,
Iscte-IUL

Agosto, 2024

To family, friends and memories

Acknowledgement

"*To make a dream come true, one must have a dream, believe in it, and work toward it. Often it is essential that another significant person believe in it too. Dreams are most powerful when they are shared*." (Jean Shinoda Bolen, 2021)

As with most realized dreams, this one was also embraced by countless people who accompanied me in friendship and, in a way, had the power to influence my journey.

My first thanks go to Professor Nelson Ramalho and Professor Teresa Almeida, my supervisors. For their encouragement and guidance in the development of this dissertation, which has been crucial in achieving the objectives of this work.

To my parents, a deep and sincere thank you for your unconditional love, support and life lessons. Thank you for being my foundation. Without you, my academic success would be meaningless.

To my sister, my biggest fan and critic. Thank you for keeping me humble, for reminding me that you'll always be there, and for being a constant example of strength and resilience.

To my cousin, thank you because, even without knowing it, you were the first to inspire me to follow this path.

To Mariana, my oldest friend, thank you for all the light-hearted moments and laughter.

To my dear friends, Ana Rita, Diana, Tatiana and Teresinha, who kept our friendship strong even after listening to me vent for months about my thesis, and realized how far behind they were compared to me. I would like to express my gratitude for everything you have done for me.

To my master's partners, Ana Carolina and João, thank you for making everything memorable.

To all the other colleagues and friends who, directly or indirectly, contributed to the realization of this work, my sincere thanks.

It's nice to be seen in the eyes of each and every one of you.

Abstract

Due to technological advancements that affect lifestyle and consequently facilitate mobility, there is a shift from sedentary routines toward Digital Nomadism, resulting in a location-independent way of life. Adding to this, a recent trend shows workation as a new form of remote work, that blends work and leisure. Despite its popularity, workation remains under-explored, particularly in understanding the motivations behind these practices and how these motives may vary according to the type of digital nomad, specifically regarding employment freedom.

Accordingly, based on a sample of 112 digital nomads, we tested which personal motivations (push factors) and location characteristics (pull factors) influence the decision to choose workation. We then examined the moderating effect of digital nomad freedom. Findings show that push factors do not explain the choice of workation, which is influenced by pull factors related to outdoor recreational activities. Moreover, the results also demonstrate a moderating effect of digital nomad freedom on the relationship between a pull factor related to incentives and the choice of workation. This work adds important conceptual insights into the novel topic of workation while providing practical implications and discussing potential limitations of current instruments used to assess this phenomenon.

Keywords: Digital Nomads, Workation, Digital Nomadism Freedom, Push-Pull Factors; Self-Determination Theory

JEL code: M12 Personnel Management, J20 Demand and Supply of Labor (General)

Resumo

Graças às metamorfoses tecnológicas que afetam o curso de vida e, consequentemente, facilitam a mobilidade, verifica-se um abandono do estilo de vida sedentário em prol da adesão ao Nomadismo Digital, culminando num estilo de vida independente de localização. Assim, surge uma nova modalidade de trabalho remota, denominada de workation, que facilita a combinação do trabalho e do lazer, tendo um impacto na vida dos nómadas digitais. Apesar da popularidade em torno do tema, este continua a ser pouco explorado, nomeadamente na compreensão das motivações subjacentes a estas práticas e à forma como estas motivações podem variar consoante o tipo de nómada digital, especificamente no que diz respeito à liberdade de emprego.

Assim, com base numa amostra de 112 nómadas digitais, testámos quais as motivações pessoais (fatores push) e as características da localização (fatores pull) que influenciam a decisão de escolher o workation. Em seguida, examinámos o efeito moderador da liberdade dos nómadas digitais. Os resultados mostram que os fatores push não explicam a escolha do local de workation e que a mesma é influenciada por fatores pull relacionados com as atividades recreativas ao ar livre. Além disso, os resultados também demonstram um efeito moderador da liberdade dos nómadas digitais na relação entre um fator pull relacionado com os incentivos e a escolha do local de workation.

Este trabalho acrescenta importantes perspetivas conceptuais ao novo tópico do trabalho remoto, ao mesmo tempo que fornece implicações práticas e discute potenciais limitações dos instrumentos atuais utilizados para avaliar este fenómeno.

Palavras-chave: Nómadas Digitais, Workation, Liberdade do Nomadismo Digital, Fatores Push-Pull e Teoria da Autodeterminação

JEL code: M12 Gestão de Pessoas, J20 Procura e Oferta de Trabalho (Geral)

Table of Content

List of Tables

List of Figures

CHAPTER 1
Introduction

The current networked society (Castells, 2002), targeting success and *savoir-faire*, both inseparable from knowledge dependent on technological development, takes on an invisible and intangible nature, manifesting in cyberspace (Thompson, 2018). By reshaping social life, the combination of these factors has contributed to the emergence of a new type of worker (Hannonen, 2020), with specific competencies in ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) – digital nomads. Iliescu (2021) uses the term *Knowmand* – an emerging subset of knowledge workers – coined by Moravec (2013), to characterize digital nomads, associating them with idiosyncrasies such as creativity, innovation, and imagination, combined with the ability to work from anywhere, anytime.

This category of professionals represents a vanguard of rejection of the requirements forced on workers (*e.g*. physical presence in the office), aiming instead to achieve personal, professional and spatial freedom (Reichenberger, 2018). Using the internet as a catalyst that enables professional activities (Mouratidis, 2018), they adopt a multilocal lifestyle. Thus, a new form of remote work emerges – workation (Voll *et al*., 2023), characterized by the simultaneous coexistence of work and vacation experiences, breaking with the existing dichotomy. Despite its appeal, the concept raises uncertainty regarding its nature and explanatory models.

Literature has been informative on the motivations to become a digital nomad (*e.g*. Mouratidis, 2018; Woldoff & Litchfield, 2021) but the choice of workation is understudied with scarce evidence of such drivers (*i.e.* push and pull factors). Literature has also been treating digital nomads as a homogeneous population referring to like-minded people who opt for a mobile work life (Gomes, 2019; Hannonen, 2020; Arifa *et al*., 2022; Mancinelli & Molz, 2023). However, there are several types of digital nomads with varying degrees of freedom in choosing their lifestyle, ranging from freelancers to employees (Cook, 2023) which questions if, indeed, this population should be conceived in the same manner or if each one of these categories has its own nature, motivations and dynamics.

Given the state of the art it is relevant to question: What are the drivers of workation choice for digital nomads? In this regard, this study will provide an overview of the emergence of the workation, and its drivers based on Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), to understand the operating motivations underlying this choice, while exploring the type of digital nomad as a boundary condition.

Considering the outlined plan, this thesis will start by reviewing digital nomadism as an emergent phenomenon, focus on digital nomads and their idiosyncrasies and profiles, and then highlight the concept of workation and its nature. Self-determination theory is introduced to provide

a background on the choice motivations together with exploring the push and pull factors that drive individuals to opt for such a lifestyle. After presenting the conceptual model, the thesis proceeds with explaining the methodological options made and findings pertaining to the hypotheses entailed by the conceptual model. Results are discussed at the light of the theory that informs the drivers, and their predictive power in interacting with digital nomad freedom (as an expression of a continuum between digital nomad types). Conclusions are drawn highlighting the contributions to both practice and theory as well as to the future development of this research field, with an emphasis on existing measures and the advantages of considering boundary conditions.

CHAPTER 2
Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

2. 1. Digital Nomadism

In the late 20th century, alongside the culmination of ICT, society underwent a bold development. This was highlighted by the revolutionary role of the internet, capable of altering various aspects such as communication, economy and our self-perception (Gomes, 2019; Hannonen, 2020). This landscape has fostered a growing mobility driven by the ambition to change lifestyles, also manifesting in the form of digital nomadism (Matos, 2018).

Some scholars locate in the 1990s the emergence of this phenomenon (Matos, 2018; Mouratidis, 2018; Thompson, 2018; Gomes, 2019; Getman, 2021; Woldoff & Litchfield, 2021; Dreher & Triandafyllidou, 2023) when David Manners and Tsugio Makimoto published in 1997 a futuristic manifesto which marked the spread of the possibility of adopting a new lifestyle. Despite this publication, digital nomadism became a mainstream phenomenon only in 2014 (Schlagwein, 2018), mostly recognized in West and Southeast Asian countries (Mouratidis, 2018; Cook, 2020).

It has since become a rapidly growing trend (Thompson, 2018) characterized by the synergy of three elements (Richter & Richter, 2020): individual preference, determined by the demand for high flexibility; organizational progress, resulting from the implementation of a more agile labor market, enabled by digital platforms; and technological advancement stemming from wireless communication and access to portable devices. This perspective was also inferred in Müller (2016) and Hannonen (2020), who conclude that this combination of factors has fostered the emergence of new social patterns and opportunities.

An example of this newness is the mobile lifestyle (Woldoff & Litchfield, 2022), which can be seen as an extension of teleworking and remote work (Thompson, 2018). However, these are opposing concepts; telecommuting concerns balancing family responsibilities and employment, while digital nomadism is based on harmonizing leisure and work, providing more freedom and independence (Reichenberger, 2018). This autonomy changes sedentary perspectives and relates to residence and employment (Nash *et al*., 2018; Hannonen, 2020). As a result, mobility takes the form of slow travel as against Fast Travel, practiced by tourists who typically visit a location for a few days or weeks (Dreher & Triandafyllidou, 2023). Slow travel applies as digital nomads stay in one location for an extended period and perform remote tasks (Shin *et al*., 2023).

Besides being physical, thanks to the movement between various locations, spatiotemporal mobility can also be virtual, as workers also navigate the online space through virtual environments

(Rainoldi *et al*., 2022). Therefore, it takes on characteristics as it adapts to the economic and social transformations observed (Matos, 2018) namely the decrease in the price of long-haul flights and the emergence of online companies like Amazon (Getman, 2021).

The definition of a mobile lifestyle indicates a nonexistence of desire to return home, resulting in the recognition of multiple "homes" (Hannonen, 2020), which digital nomads preferentially visit. But what exactly are Digital Nomads?

2.2. Digital Nomad

Originating from the Paleolithic Era, the term "nomad" was used to characterize the way of life of peoples devoid of a fixed residence who remained in the same geographic space as long as they had the resources for their subsistence (Galli, 2011). Similarly, digital nomads also stay in a particular location as long as it is advantageous for them. Despite the need to work in order to acquire resources to meet their needs, they question the principle of "living to work" that ruled previous generations (Gomes, 2019). Furthermore, social networks, seen as a vehicle for standardization (Mancinelli & Molz, 2023), unpretentiously celebrate digital nomads as workers equipped with their computers on a beach (Dreher & Triandafyllidou, 2023).

Being a growing concept that has caught the attention of researchers in different social sciences, for portraying extreme mobility, it is important to reflect on it in order to provide research support. Academic literature also tends to give it less attention than deserved (Nash *et al*., 2018; Reichenberger, 2018; Hannonen, 2020; Getman, 2021), being fragmented across various disciplines, with the majority focusing on the field of tourism, given that travel is a significant aspect (Arifa *et al*., 2022). Thus, knowledge is found to be limited, resulting in a scarcity of information (Reichenberger, 2018).

Without detracting from the popularity of the phenomenon, the concept of a digital nomad remains ambiguous, lacking defined parameters (Matos, 2018; Gomes, 2019; Cook, 2020; Hannonen, 2020; Arifa *et al*., 2022; Dreher & Triandafyllidou, 2023; Mancinelli & Molz, 2023). Most definitions are provided by the digital nomads themselves (Gomes, 2019).

There has been a semantic evolution of the term, incorporating a new class of professionals marked by meritocracy (Mouratidis, 2018), denominated as digital nomads, to describe the result of technological advances in people's lives (Woldoff & Litchfield, 2021), and their extensive use, along with their own skills, in favor of a mobile lifestyle (Matos, 2018), which is the premise that sets them apart from traditional workers.

Digital nomads, whose primary occupation occurs in an online environment (Thompson, 2018), embody a new lifestyle characterized by autonomy and frequent travel (Gomes, 2019; Arifa *et al*.,

2022), combining tourism (Gomes, 2019; Hannonen, 2020) with their mobile activities (Mancinelli & Molz, 2023). Since leisure expectations are a requirement (Thompson, 2018; Arifa *et al*., 2022), the choice of destination often focuses on comfortable and welcoming spaces (Thompson, 2018), and/or on places where there is a community of people with similar interests (Schlagwein, 2018), forming transient multilingual communities (Getman, 2021).

With the demand for this lifestyle format, they reject the status of being tourists (Matos, 2018) as they stay in destinations for a relatively long period of time (Slow Travel), although not long enough to become residents or expatriates (Getman, 2021; Woldoff & Litchfield, 2021). Additionally, they seek resources that enable them to carry out their professional activities (Hannonen, 2020). This approach contradicts conventional thinking, as there is no need to return to their home country or another place where they have settled, going against the basis of everyday life. As world workers, as many identify themselves (Matos, 2018), they tend to interact with residents and avoid tourist spots (Getman, 2021).

These features highlight some of the attributes associated with digital nomads, including location independence, as evident in the scalar definition developed by Reichenberger (2018), which explores different degrees of mobility intensity. The concept of permanent residence or Homebase is introduced as a defining characteristic of digital nomads. Level 0 refers to working from home, and level 1 extends to working in different spaces. Level 2 includes occasional travel with a return to their homebase. Level 3 is attributed to individuals without a permanent residence base, serving as the highest classification of digital nomad identity. Unlike the authors, Chevtaeva and Denizci-Guillet (2021) do not consider level 0 due to the privation of mobility elements.

Related to definitional efforts, Cook (2023) contribution highlights another important aspect of the digital nomad characterization: Types. Founder of the "Nomad Gate" website (https://nomadgate.com/), Cook (2023) takes Reichenberger's definition (2018) and proposes a distinction between levels 2 and 3 where the author envisages five types of digital nomads: (1) Digital Nomad Freelancers are independent professionals who work for themselves and typically have specialized skills, offering services to clients or companies in exchange for remuneration. They maintain a high level of flexibility and autonomy in their activities; and (2) Digital Nomad Business Owners are entrepreneurs who own their own business or startup. They use technology to create and manage their business remotely. Also to control their operations, they rely on service providers, employees, and product suppliers; (3) Salaried digital nomads, who differ in terms of contract type, as they are hired by a company rather than working independently; (4) experimental digital nomads refer to someone who wants to become a Digital Nomad Freelancer or Digital Nomad Business Owner, nevertheless hasn't made a profit yet; and (5) armchair digital nomads that refer to for those who plan to become digital nomads in the near future. Among these types, the last couple are arguably digital nomads in the sense that experimental and armchair types lack spatial freedom.

Of the categories listed, Freelance Digital Nomads have the most control over their work compared to the others (Cook, 2023), followed by Digital Nomads Business Owners. Salaried Digital Nomads, given their subordination to a higher authority, end up being subject to various types of restrictions (*e.g*. working hours, location and responsibilities), which results in less control over their work and exposes them to possible dismissals or changes in their working conditions. Therefore, we can infer a continuum in freedom of choice linking freelancers to business owners and salaried digital nomads.

Despite the advantage that consent digital nomads to travel the world, precariousness has emerged as an integral part of the experience (Thompson, 2018; Cook, 2023). Instability (*e.g*. short-term jobs), lack of autonomy, irregularities in terms of labor protection and the social and economic vulnerability inherent in low incomes are all characteristics of the precarious work faced by digital nomads and make them more prone to poverty and insecurity (Gomes, 2019).

The activity of digital nomads is based on the application of digital technologies in the execution of work, resulting in a proliferation of different forms of labor. Simultaneously, it promotes the principle of efficiency associated with task conclusion, regardless of time, location, or organizational structure (Rainoldi *et al*., 2022). Thus, they are allowed to escape the traditional work structure (Reichenberger, 2018; Schlagwein, 2018; Arifa *et al*., 2022), exploring other work modalities, giving rise to the concept of workation.

Before delineating the differences between a digital nomad who opts for workation and one who does not, it is important to first explore the concept of workation.

2.3. A novel concept: workation

During the Agrarian State, the coexistence of life and work typically took place in the same location, but the emergence of the Industrial State has disrupted this premise (Goldin *et al.,* 2011). Additionally, with the digital transformation, a term that portrays the transition from physical to digital, workers started to question the need to perform all professional tasks in a shared physical workplace due to the advancement of ICT (Voll *et al*., 2023). Before the pandemic outbreak only a small group of individuals was allowed to be labor mobile, namely highly skilled or high net worth workers (Beretta, 2022). After the outbreak there was a steep increase, with people connected to the internet 24/7.

With the occurrence of more flexible structures, limitations are then eliminated, allowing work to be done remotely, regardless of location (Müller, 2016; Nash *et al*., 2018; Hannonen, 2020; Voll *et al*., 2023). In this sense, productivity is managed based on performance, disregarding physical presence. There are advantages associated with this new way of working, such as satisfaction, autonomy, and spatial freedom (Reichenberger, 2018).

As stated, thanks to the application of digital technologies, new ways of carrying out professional tasks emerge (Rainoldi *et al*., 2022), leading to a blurring of the boundaries between leisure and work (Voll *et al*., 2023). However, it wasn't until 1990 that the importance of incorporating the term "leisure" as an additional dimension in the work context was recognized. The early attempts to conceptualize this notion were based on the absence of professional activities (Reichenberger, 2018). So, leisure was considered the opposite of work, and work was seen as a temporal obligation, whether remunerated or not (Lewis, 2003).

With the intersection of work and leisure, balance is seen as a variable susceptible to variations depending on individual experiences, so any activity can be framed as both work and leisure (Clark, 2000). However, the demand for opportunities favorable to harmonizing both spheres through leisure becomes a herculean task, especially when work holds substantial magnitude for the digital nomad (Muller, 2016), playing a fundamental role in their life and offering various rewards such as remuneration and social interaction (Ramos, 2000). In this way, there arises the need to eliminate dissatisfaction stemming from perceived limitations to freedom through a lifestyle that turns travel into a prominent, if not frequent, part of life (Reichenberger, 2018).

Technological impacts go over ICT as the advancement of transportation systems and the disintermediation of the tourism industry enable people to move physically in an affordable and more controlled way, *e.g*. by planning their own trips using online platforms. This is a crucial element for mobility no longer being a response to environmental changes, as it was for analog nomads. Instead, mobility is a free choice and the core of new mobile behaviors (Nash *et al*.,2018).

According to Shin *et al*. (2023), the operational definition of workation establishes a synergistic blend of vacation stay with supplementary work stages. The vacation destination includes various accommodations, such as an apartment or an Airbnb (Voll *et al*., 2023), with the duration of their stay being moderate, during which digital nomads are able to attend to their professional obligations (Shin *et al*., 2023) while also taking a break from their normal work routines to enjoy the trip and leisure activities.

As a special feature in workation, it is possible for the digital nomad who makes such a choice to integrate a community, which is formed when work is done together (Matsushita, 2021), allowing nomads to share knowledge.

While the benefits of workation may be debated, the truth is that flexible work concepts are expected to gain more momentum, becoming considered as new strategies to optimize more flexible labor arrangements (Voll *et al*., 2023). The distinctive lifestyle and skill set of workers can foster positive social and cultural changes, rendering them valuable assets in shaping the future of both work and society (Kim & Kim, 2024).

Besides workers, companies also benefit from such practices. According to Kim and Kim (2024), firms are making a serious effort to adopt remote work to save resources and manage risks. Examples include tax advantages, or saving costs as outsourcing projects to temporary workers who may not require health insurance or other cessation benefits, often resulting in lower operational costs (Nash *et al*., 2018). As this work setting has been believed to foster greater job satisfaction, there is often an expectation it will productivity and efficiency (Shin *et al*., 2023; Voll *et al*., 2023). Companies that benefit from this advantage are more attractive to employees and have a greater opportunity to retain talent, consequently reducing turnover.

Therefore, the overall advantage of workation seems to be its ability to provide everything digital nomadism provides (*i.e.* professional freedom and personal liberty by combining an individualized work style with an investment in one's own lifestyle, particularly spatial freedom) with the choice for a location that is expected to be conducive to such harmony between work and non-work (Voll *et al*., 2023).

Additionally, workation is also valued as an ecologically sustainable tourism product, capable of reducing various environmental impacts and side effects caused by temporary tourism (Pecsek, 2018; Kim & Kim, 2024). Digital nomads become relevant as industries move towards remote digital work. For instance, Shin *et al*. (2023) highlights the example of PwC (PricewaterhouseCoopers), which encouraged employees to enjoy an 8-week workation period to increase productivity and well-being.

2.4. Self-Determination Theory

With the need to gain insights into the motivations underlying the choice of this lifestyle characterized by mobility and blending work and leisure, the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is seen as relevant. Introduced in 1985 by Deci and Ryan, the SDT theorizes the existence of three crucial psychological requirements in human behavior: competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

The first - competence - is based on the feeling of effectiveness in tasks performed and the achievement of desired goals. On the other hand, autonomy corresponds to the ability to develop or choose one's own actions without direct constraint from outside decision makers. Finally, relatedness refers to the sense of connection and understanding with others with a psychological feeling of belongingness to a group. These needs are interdependent (Deci & Ryan, 2002), and only their satisfaction promotes intrinsic motivation.

SDT posits that an individual may lack motivation (is amotivated) or, conversely, may be extrinsically or intrinsically motivated. When motivation is extrinsic, the action is driven by external factors, especially quantifiable rewards such as monetary ones (Armstrong, 2010). In contrast, when

motivation is intrinsic, the action is propelled by internal factors, making it an end in itself due to the pleasure associated with it.

Intrinsic motivation occurs when individuals act based on internal reasons rooted in intrinsic needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness). This approach is characterized by goals perceived as meaningful, and the action is viewed as inherently rewarding. It represents the highest degree of autonomy (Bancilhom, 2020).

As mentioned, extrinsic motivation includes four categories, which progressively increase in terms of autonomy and as they aim to meet others' expectations or external rewards. These are: external regulation, based on punishments or rewards; introjection, which involves feelings of guilt or anxiety leading to action; identified regulation, occurring when the individual evaluates the action as temporarily convenient beforehand; and integrated regulation, which is the most internalized form of extrinsic motivation, as the action is interpreted as aligning with personal values, yet since the action itself holds no meaning for the individual, it is still considered extrinsic (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

It should be noted that motivation follows a continuum, with the extreme pole being occupied by amotivation, adjacent to extrinsic motivation (four categories of extrinsic motivation) and ending on intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). According to SDT motivational states closer to amotivation pole are considered low quality motivation while towards the intrinsic motivation pole, they are considered high quality.

Through SDT, we understand that the practice of workation allows digital nomads to meet their intrinsic needs, so it is important to analyze each one.

As regards competences, based on the research by Voll *et al*. (2023), which focuses on the practice of workation, we conclude that, according to the results presented, the need for competence is fulfilled, given the opportunity for digital nomads to encounter challenges and growth opportunities during workation. While working in a different environment, there is also the possibility of acquiring new skills, structure to face obstacles, and adaptability to different triggers. Such experiences contribute to expanding their sense of competence and, consequently, their motivation.

Regarding autonomy, with a clear desire to break free from the limits imposed by traditional work (Reichenberger, 2018), especially micromanagement and daily commuting (Cook, 2020), the practice of workation offers digital nomads the freedom to choose where and when to work. Furthermore, it allows them to determine their work environment and speed according to their preferences. This autonomy can provide a sense of control over their work and intensify their intrinsic motivation.

Lastly, in terms of relatedness, during workation, digital nomads have the opportunity to meet and interact with other professionals who share similar interests, forming the transient multilingual communities (Getman, 2021). Engagement in social and/or professional activities results in networking

promotion and new social bonds. These interactions contribute to satisfying the human need for belongingness and connection.

Digital nomadism with a workation focus can also activate extrinsic motivation as individuals that engage in this lifestyle may find they have higher purchasing power due to moving from a high level to low level income location while retaining (at least partially) their original compensation. Likewise, also within the scope of extrinsic motivation, digital nomads in workation can relate internally with an image of having adopted a lifestyle that is consistent with a positive social image within their professional setting (*e.g*. IT) or a lifestyle that is coherent with their representation of the world as a place that should strive for freer forms of living.

From the viewpoint of SDT, digital nomads that opt for workation versus those that opt not to, can be characterized based on how they approach their travels. A digital nomad practicing workation typically seeks to balance work with leisure, giving tourism a crucial role which might be intrinsically motivating if such individuals take pleasure in both activities and not separately. They deliberately set aside specific periods for work while also dedicating time to explore and enjoy their chosen destination. On the other hand, a digital nomad who disregards the practice of workation may travel solely for the purpose of remote work, without necessarily taking time to enjoy the destination, spending most of their time focused on work because their motivational profile may derive sufficient pleasure from work in order to the work itself being an intrinsic motivator. Eventually, the need for novelty with a social embeddedness nature is more typical of digital nomads that are eager for workation.

2.5. Push and Pull Factors

The main model informing the SDT is the Push-Pull Theory (Bancilhom, 2020), which holds particular significance to this study. Introduced by Dann in 1977, this theory posits, in simplified terms, that the Push factor is associated with the desire to escape and enjoy rest periods, while the Pull factor leans to select the destination (Prabawa & Pertiwi, 2020). In this regard, individuals are either stimulated by negative influences stemming from within themselves, such as the urge to break away from daily routines, or attracted by positive factors external to themselves, like culture, services, and natural landscapes. It should be noted that the decision to visit a destination is not dissociated from the information acquired through friends or other promotional means (Prabawa & Pertiwi, 2020).

Initially, it was presumed, perhaps prematurely, that the factors were settled chronologically, with the decision to want to travel coming first, followed by the search for destination characteristics. In other words, Pull factors followed Push factors (Dann, 1977). However, Klenosky (2002) argues that these elements do not operate independently, so people travel because they are "pushed" by internal

forces (Push factors) while simultaneously being attracted by the external forces of the destination (Pull factors). Thus, destination attributes strengthen internal motivations.

It is assumed that Push factors are similar for individuals, regardless of the destination, meaning, they can be the same for both the digital nomad travelling from Portugal to Poland or from France to Greece. On the other hand, Pull factors vary according to each specific destination.

In his study, Stickel (2020) establishes five primary criteria that guide digital nomads in choosing their next destination, namely cost of living, weather conditions, cultural attractions, internet connectivity infrastructure, and visa requirements. As an example, the United Arab Emirates has initiated a Remote Work Visa scheme, granting professionals a one-year residency in the country so to attract remote workers. However, concerns about visa limitations hindered nomadic travel and affected the duration of stay (Hannonen, 2020; Mancinelli, 2020). According to these parameters, digital nomads prioritize aspects related to leisure when making this choice, rather than criteria related to employment.

Some digital nomads emphasized that internet connectivity emerges as the predominant condition, as it is crucial for establishing themselves in an environment that allows them to meet all the requirements of their work activities (Nash *et al*., 2018; Prabawa & Pertiwi, 2020). In this regard, it is also mentioned that digital nomads travel to a destination to feel in a welcoming, accessible environment with social spaces, not just to carry out their professional activities. Therefore, digital nomads' choices have been attributed to a judgment about the destination quality of internet connectivity and a welcoming community of workers like themselves (Getman, 2021).

The second factor mentioned by Stickel (2020), the weather, is also an important point; however, it is not always a determining factor. Nash *et al*. (2018) observed that some digital nomads prefer seasonal travel; for example, they choose to spend winters in warm regions and summers in Europe.

From this, it should be inferred that there is a considerable collection of attraction factors, so regardless of the chosen destination, it demands, at the very least, one appealing condition (Getman, 2021). Thus, destinations that comprehend a greater number of factors offer a greater opportunity to attract and compete for the attention of these digital nomads. Overall, both push and pull factors must be accounted for in order to understand the choice for workation by digital nomads. We, therefore, hypothesize that:

H1: Push factors have a positive association with workation choice

H2: Pull factors have a positive association with workation choice

However, all the empirical research conducted on digital nomads' destination choice has treated digital nomads as a homogeneous population, thus ignoring their profiles, as featured by Cook (2023). When considering Cook's (2023) types of digital nomads (salaried nomad, business owner, freelancer)

and revising the continuum that links these types as an expression of freedom (from lower to higher), then it is possible that these push and pull factors do not operate in the same manner for all these types of digital nomads, but rather, are sensible to the degree of freedom the individuals have. The rationale that sustains this proposition is based on the idea that a digital nomadic lifestyle is in line with higher sense of freedom, rather than lower. We therefore hypothesize that:

H3: Digital nomad freedom interacts in the positive association between push factors and workation choice in such a way that the freer it is, the stronger the relation becomes.

H4: Digital nomad freedom interacts in the positive association between pull factors and workation choice in such a way that the freer it is, the stronger the relation

From integrating these four hypotheses, a conceptual model emerges with a focus on two direct effects and two interactions as depicted in Figure 1.

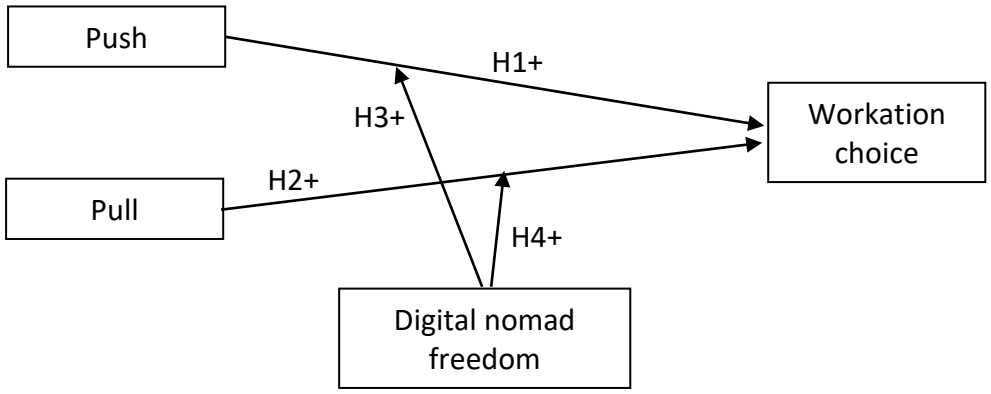


Figure 1 - Conceptual model

CHAPTER 3
Method

3.1. Procedure

The combination of distancing and engaging tools, selected by the researcher concerning their study object, influences how results are presented and conclusions expressed, implying that the choice of a methodological option is not merely based on preference (Augusto, 2014). The ubiquity of this logic is observed in the research process, affecting the data quality as well as their subsequent analysis and interpretation.

In this context, characterized by the fragmentation of literature and the intrinsic ambiguity of core concepts to the project – such as digital nomads and workation – a quantitative approach is suitable to obtain and measure empirical data with tools that allow testing measurement error. The extensive methodology follows a corollary that begins with pre-existing theoretical knowledge and/or previous empirical results, as explained by Duarte (2009), where theory precedes the object of investigation.

Therefore, questionnaire surveys were used. This instrument is supported for its numerous advantages when applied online. Firstly, it is justified by the congruence between the empirical object and the subjects under study – the attractiveness of workation for digital nomads. Additionally, its suitability to obtain sincere responses closely aligned with the social context is emphasized. This is facilitated by the individual data input, eliminating communication with the interviewer, which can mitigate response distortion. Thirdly, the online survey closely matches the digital environment where digital nomads operate.

Given the assumption that scientific knowledge can be formulated, approached, and developed through different theoretical and methodological perspectives, and being aware of the choice of a quantitative method using a questionnaire, with its potential limitations or instant functionality, it is important to reflect on the procedure.

This instrument for observing primary data (Moreira, 2007) is based on a series of questions directed to a group of agents, aiming to address their opinions, representations, beliefs, and factual information about themselves and their environment (Quivy & Campenhoudt, 2008). The applicability will be direct, as the digital platform where the questions and answers are recorded is provided to the respondent, who is responsible for completing it.

Supporting the advocated principle of prior validation applied to all data collection instruments (Moreira, 2007), the questionnaire, in its final form, was subjected to a pilot test following recommendations by Ghiglione and Matalon (1997) and Moreira (2007). After conducting these tests

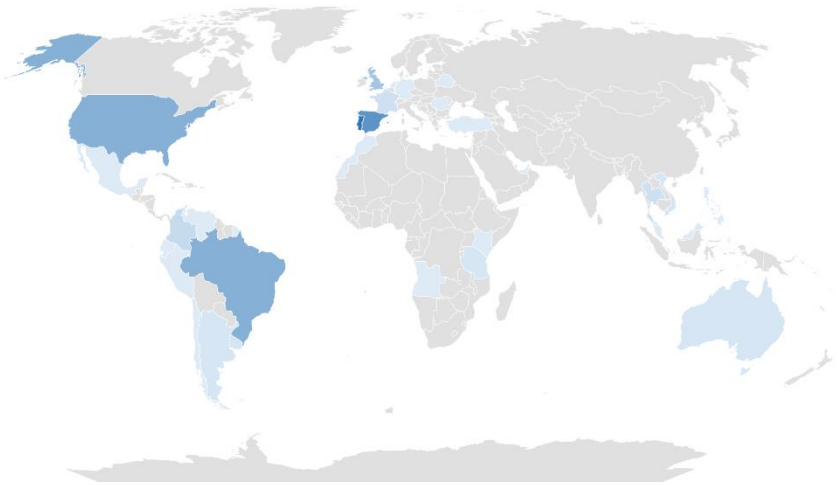
and gathering feedback, improvements were made, refining language and adjusting the layout of the questions. Additionally, the pilot tests helped to determine the time required to complete the questionnaire. In total, two pilot tests were conducted before the final administration of the questionnaire, using the Qualtrics platform.

The questionnaire was posted on digital groups and forums, as well as on social media platforms, namely on LinkedIn and Facebook, given the presence of online communities formed by digital nomads. Regarding data analysis, SPSS Statistics and Jamovi software were utilized to compute statistics and test the relationship between the constructs of the model.

3.2. Sample

Once chosen the survey as the most appropriate method, the question that should be addressed is: "Whom to survey?" (Ghiglione & Matalon, 1997). Given the lack of a list of digital nomads, it is impractical to specifically identify them, and it is also unfeasible to achieve a probabilistic and representative sample. This is a hidden population, and therefore, following Babbie (2014), and taking these factors into account, a non-probabilistic or non-directed sampling approach was adopted, known as snowball sampling. In this procedure an initial set of participants is selected based on criteria (*e.g.*, belonging to a certain demographic group) and asked to refer other relevant, similar, individuals for the study. These new individuals, in turn, can refer others, and so on, creating a "snowball" of participants. The expansion of the network through referrals may indicate a diverse and representative sample of certain groups.

The sample comprises 112 digital nomads who have answered the questionnaire, from which most are female (53.6%), and the remaining 45.5% are male, while 0.9% reported “other gender”. These digital nomads vary in age, ranging from 21 to 67 years-old (M=34.4, SD=9), and represent current living locations from 33 countries around the world, mostly in Portugal, Spain, Brazil, and the USA (cumulating over half of the sample) but also from many other countries in the African continent, Asia, Oceania, with larger coverage in South America (Figure 2). Most are single or divorced (59.4%) and the remaining are married or cohabiting. The vast majority (85%) report not having underaged children, 8.4% reports having one, and the remaining reported having 2 or more underaged children. Most digital nomads in the sample have a bachelor's degree (53%), followed by a master’s degree (30%).



Country (%)

Portugal	20.5	Uruguay	1.8	Malaysia	0.9
Spain	15.2	Vietnam	1.8	Mexico	0.9
Brazil	10.7	Albania	0.9	Morocco	0.9
USA	10.7	Angola	0.9	Netherland	0.9
UK	7.1	Belarus	0.9	Pakistan	0.9
Colombia	3.6	Chile	0.9	Peru	0.9
France	2.7	Ecuador	0.9	Philippine	0.9
Thailand	2.7	F.Guiana	0.9	Romania	0.9
Argentina	1.8	Germany	0.9	Turkey	0.9
Australia	1.8	Israel	0.9	UAE	0.9
Tanzania	1.8	Kenya	0.9	Venezuela	0.9

Figure 2 - Geographic coverage

3.3. Data Analysis Strategy

Data analysis starts with the test of the validity and reliability of the measures. Following Bryman (2016), we tested for construct validity with Principal Component Analysis PCA), which is a data analysis technique that extracts patterns of association between items contrasting variances between items to identify potential components (also named factors in some literature). Components are mathematically distinct from factors, but they tend to be treated as latent variables that help explain the choices made by participants. Each component expresses a plausible latent factor (*e.g*. an idea or conceptual representation) that is the true construct behavioral sciences are interested in. Technically, a given PCA is valid if the amount of shared variance is sufficient to infer at least one latent construct. This is measured with KMO which should achieve at least .500, as well as commonalities (that have the same cutoff) and additional with the X^2 Bartlett's statistic that must have a sufficiently low p-value to reject the null hypothesis ($p<.01$). In case more than one component is extracted (usually based on Kaiser criterion, *i.e.* having an eigenvalue higher than 1.00) a rotation should be applied to maximize

the differentiation between components but also reflecting the theoretical nature between them (*i.e*. if they are independent among each other or if they are expected to share variance also).

Therefore, a Varimax rotation was applied, and were cross-loadings analyzed. Additionally, a measure's reliability (*i.e.* internal consistency within the same component) is measured with Cronbach's alpha which should reach 0.70. Data descriptors (mean and standard deviation), as well as bivariate correlations, were computed, and the hypotheses were tested with Generalized Linear Models (GLM), which is a more comprehensive technique to deal with error distributions and variable type (*e.g.* ordinal) that are not fully in line with the assumptions of the OLS multiple linear regression (Coxe *et al*., 2013). Additionally, the relatively small sample size disavows interaction effects with the OLS.

3.4. Construct Measurement

According to Ghiglione and Matalon (1997), questions should be formulated to ensure clarity and neutrality, using concise sentences with simple syntax. Thus, following the proposed guidelines and aiming to ensure measurement validity, a preamble text was shown as a strategy to screen respondents, serving as an exclusionary principle for individuals who do not fit the description.

The questionnaire itself was structured around the following topics: a) Sociodemographic Characteristics (gender, age range, and nationality); b) Location (place where the participants are currently living); c) Push-Pull Factors (considering the current location); d) Workation; e) Sociodemographic Data (type of digital nomad, duration of activity, marital status, and dependents under the age of majority).

It is possible to discriminate between variables that are factual (age) and those that are attitudinal (shown on a Likert scale), both of which are worth reflecting on.

As the risk of breaching anonymity based on crossing individual data to nominally find out the respondent's identity is zero in the case of a large worldwide survey, we opted to collect the exact age, instead of age groups. This option also avoids the loss of information by grouping it into broader and more reductive subclasses.

The respondents answered on a 6-point Likert scale, transformed into emojis, where 1 means 'I don't agree at all' and 6 means 'I agree very much', and anchors were based on emojis as follows (1= 🤮, 2= 😣, 3=🙁, 4= 🙂, 5= 😊, 6= 😻). The choice of 6 points was due to the need to control the central tendency effect.

Push factors were measured with Yousefi and Marzuki (2015) and Crompton and McKay (1997) scales comprising 10 items. A principal components analysis suggested a valid (KMO=.886, Bartlett X2 (45) =611.599, p<.001) bi-factorial solution that accounts for 63.9% of total variance after rotation

(Varimax). All communalities are found to be above .500, and the solution has high loadings although in one case there is a cross-loading. We opted not to exclude the item due to its qualitative relevance. Still, this implies future care is needed to gauge possible variance inflation due to shared variance between these components. The solution comprehends two factors (Table 1): 1) Exploration seeking (6 items, *e.g*. "I want to get to know new cultures", "I want to experience adventures") and Meaningful Escape seeking (4 items, *e.g*. "I want to relax physically", "I want to escape from routine").

Table 1 - Solution matrix for Push factors

	Exploration	Meaningful Escape
I want to get to know new cultures	**0.833**	0.198
I want to see new places	**0.795**	0.244
I want to experience adventures	**0.778**	0.246
I want to discover new lifestyles	**0.759**	0.288
I want to fulfill a dream and curiosity	**0.752**	0.309
I want to be happy	**0.674**	0.154
I want to relax physically	0.223	**0.782**
I want to visit a destination that most people value	0.108	**0.729**
I want to escape from routine	0.333	**0.616**
I want to promote my intellectual enrichment	0.481	**0.531**
Cronbach's alpha	.892	.701

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

Pull factors were measured with Yousefi and Marzuki (2015) and Crompton and McKay (1997) scale that comprises 17 items.

A principal components analysis suggested a valid (KMO=.859, Bartlett X2 (153) =1045.791, p<.001) factorial solution with four components that account for 64.2% of total variance after rotation (Varimax). All communalities are found to be above .500 to the exception of language but that is only slightly below the threshold. The four factors comprehend (Table 2): 1) Outdoor recreation (4 items, *e.g*. "Nature and Landscapes", Cronbach alpha=.829), 2) Quality of infrastructure (7 items, *e.g*. "Transportation", "Infrastructure / Technological conditions", Cronbach alpha=.861), 3) Livability (4 items, *e.g*. "Nightlife", "Sanitary conditions", Cronbach alpha=.796), and 4) Incentives (2 items, i.e. "Taxes/fiscal advantages ", r_{SB}=.646). Thus, this solution is both valid and reliable.

Table 2 - Solution matrix for Pull factors

	Outdoor recreation	Quality of Infrastructure	Livability	Incentives
Nature and Landscapes	**.811**	.021	.167	.184
Beach / Coast	**.765**	.278	.131	-.129
Climate / Weather	**.760**	.114	.251	.207
Sports (*e.g*. surf)	**.671**	.266	.206	.125
Transportation	-.043	**.729**	.312	.251
Infrastructure / Technological conditions	.082	**.695**	.439	.018
Social environment	.311	**.649**	.289	.217
Quality of life	.484	**.593**	-.023	.347
Safety and security	.444	**.571**	.077	.390
Cultural diversity	.395	**.555**	.241	-.158
Affordability	.461	**.538**	.036	.190
Nightlife	.218	.190	**.723**	-.126
Gastronomy	.350	.149	**.711**	.046
Sanitary conditions	.180	.234	**.671**	.349
Access to health care	.081	.167	**.628**	.478
Language/ ease of communication	.045	.172	**.591**	.288
Taxes/fiscal advantages	.122	.107	.125	**.835**
Hospitality	.177	.331	.326	**.562**
alpha / r_{SB}	.829	.861	.796	.646

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

The digital nomad freedom was measured based on Cook (2023) typology that comprises five types (freelance digital nomad; digital nomad business owners; salaried digital nomads; experimental digital nomads and armchair digital nomads) of digital nomads from which the last couple were removed. For each type a description was written as follows:

- **Freelance digital nomad:** Workers who have control over their mode of employment;
- **Digital nomad business owners:** Run more complex business with contractors, employees or business infrastructures;
- **Salaried digital nomads:** Employed by a company, have a salary and contract.

After reading the three descriptions, participants were requested to signal which one better described their situation. The variable was registered in an ordinal fashion freelancer-business owner-employee which can be indicative of decreasing freedom. Therefore, this variable is reversed to express higher levels of freedom inferred from the type of digital nomad order.

Experienced workation was measured with a single item questioning: *How well does your current location allows you to experience workation?* after showing the following description of this construct (adapted from Voll *et al.*, 2023): *Workation is a combination of work and vacation where*

individuals or professionals temporarily relocate to a destination, such as a scenic or leisurely location, to work remotely while also enjoying recreational activities during their stay. It blends professional responsibilities with relaxation and exploration. Participants were invited to answer on a 6-point scale (1=Not at all to 6=Total).

Sociodemographic for descriptive and control purposes the questionnaire included gender (1=Male, 2=Female; 3=Other), age (in full years), nationality (nominal variables with country's name), residency (city), length of staying in current location (in full years), years as a digital nomad (in full years), marital status (1=Single; 2=Married/Cohabiting; 3=Divorced/Separated; 4=Widow/Widower), number of underaged children (integer variable), Education (1=No formal education; 2=Primary/Elementary school; 3=Secondary/High school; 4=Vocational/Technical training; 5=Bachelor's degree; 6=Master's degree; 7=PhD; 8=Other education without formal degree), and Industry (nominal).

Considering the partition for both push and pull factors, the hypotheses should be updated to accommodate. Therefore, the hypotheses are now:

H1: Push factors have a positive association with workation choice

H1a: Exploration has a positive association with workation choice

H1b: Meaningful Escape have a positive association with workation choice

H2: Pull factors have a positive association with workation choice

H2a: Outdoor Recreation have a positive association with workation choice

H2b: Quality Infrastructure have a positive association with workation choice

H2c: Livability have a positive association with workation choice

H2d: Incentives have a positive association with workation choice

H3: Digital nomad freedom interacts in the positive association between push factors and workation choice in such a way that the freer it is, the stronger the relation becomes.

H3a: Digital nomad freedom interacts in the positive association between Exploration and workation choice in such a way that the freer it is, the stronger the relation becomes.

H3b: Digital nomad freedom interacts in the positive association between Meaningful Escape and workation choice in such a way that the freer it is, the stronger the relation becomes.

H4: Digital nomad freedom interacts in the positive association between pull factors and workation choice in such a way that the freer it is, the stronger the relation

H4a: Digital nomad freedom interacts in the positive association between Outdoor Recreation and workation choice in such a way that the freer it is, the stronger the relation

H4b: Digital nomad freedom interacts in the positive association between Quality Infrastructure and workation choice in such a way that the freer it is, the stronger the relation

H4c: Digital nomad freedom interacts in the positive association between Livability and workation choice in such a way that the freer it is, the stronger the relation

H4d: Digital nomad freedom interacts in the positive association between Incentives and workation choice in such a way that the freer it is, the stronger the relation

CHAPTER 4
Results

Findings are shown starting with the descriptive statistics, namely means and standard deviations, to show bivariate statistics which can offer an overview of the associations moving to the hypothesis testing.

4.1. Descriptive and Bivariate Statistics

Among the push factors, "exploration" is the expected top motivator (M=4.9, SD=1) with "meaningful escape" closely following (M=4.28, SD=1.04). Pull factors have a wider array of magnitudes with the most acknowledged being "quality of infrastructure" with a means of 4.82 (SD=0.82), followed by "outdoor recreation" (M=4.52, SD=1.30), "incentives" (M=4.24, SD=1.21), and "Livability" (M=4.15, SD=1.13). All these push- and pull-factors have means above the midpoint of the scale (3.5) as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 - Mean differences for scale's midpoint

			Sig.	Mean	95% CI of Diff.	
	t	df	(2-tailed)	Difference	Lower	Upper
Push1 – Exploration	15.887	108	<.001	1.42202	1.2446	1.5994
Push2 – Meaningful Escape	8.174	108	<.001	.78211	.5925	.9718
Pull1 – Outdoor Recreation	8.464	108	<.001	1.03440	.7922	1.2766
Pull2 – Quality Infrastructure	19.142	108	<.001	1.36239	1.2213	1.5035
Pull3 – Livability	6.395	108	<.001	.67431	.4653	.8833
Pull4 – Incentives	6.885	108	<.001	.77523	.5520	.9984

As regards the profile of digital nomads, the sample comprises 42.6% freelancers, 21.3% business owners, and 36.1% salaried, which, ordered reversely, suggest a slight predominance of the freer pole in the sample (M=2.06, SD=0.88). When inquired about the degree to which the current living location matches the provided definition of workation, participants mostly recognize such experience (M=4.49, SD=1.56) with 76% falling in the right side of the scale ($t(107)=6.593$, $p<.001$, 95% CI [.692; 1.288]).

The bivariate correlations crossing sociodemographic variables with those included in the conceptual model show an almost inexistent association to the exception of education with both

livability (r=-.329, p<.01) and incentives (r=-.235, p<.05) suggesting the most educated participants tend to report lower levels of these two pull factors in their current location. Overall, sociodemographic variables do not seem to compete as explanatory factors in the conceptual model. In an expectable manner, push and pull factors are mostly positively associated with one another. Workation is associated with three factors, namely with “Exploration” (r=.246, p<.05), “Outdoor recreation” (r=.366, p<.01), and “Quality of infrastructure” (r=.203, p<.05). The moderator variable “digital nomad freedom” has no association with any of the variables in the model.

Table 4 - Descriptive and bivariate statistics

	Scale	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Age	-	34.38	9.02	1											
2. Gender	1-3	-	-	-.098	1										
3. Marital status	1-4	-	-	.444**	-.016	1									
4. Underaged children	-	1.25	.70	.256**	-.179	.189	1								
5. Education	1-7	5.13	.76	.153	.079	.188	-.024	1							
6. Push1 – Exploration	1-6	4.90	1.00	-.075	-.024	-.075	-.005	-.025	1						
7. Push2 – Meaningful Escape	1-6	4.28	1.04	.032	-.007	-.019	.028	.027	.671**	1					
8. Pull1 – Outdoor Recreation	1-6	4.52	1.30	.026	-.060	-.045	-.080	-.178	.417**	.360**	1				
9. Pull2 – Quality Infrastructure	1-6	4.82	.82	.084	.100	.024	-.078	-.173	.349**	.463**	.537**	1			
10. Pull3 – Livability	1-6	4.15	1.13	-.013	.099	-.015	-.039	-.329**	.330**	.483**	.489**	.668**	1		
11. Pull4 – Incentives	1-6	4.24	1.21	.131	.084	-.030	-.018	-.235*	.159	.359**	.371**	.618**	.436**	1	
12. Dig. Nomad Freedom	1-3	2.06	.88	.064	.024	-.044	.007	.046	-.063	.130	-.181	-.067	.167	-.007	1
13. Workation	1-6	4.49	1.56	-.159	-.080	-.039	-.095	-.157	.246*	.135	.366**	.203*	.099	.050	-.003

*p<.05; **p<.01

4.2. Hypotheses testing

As stated, hypotheses are tested with GML estimates, whose significance is judged based on p-value and bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals. Table 5 shows these figures together with the decisions pertaining to each hypothesis, for clarity's sake.

Table 5 - GLM coefficients for workation predictors

Variables	Estimate	SE	95% confidence interval		*p*	HH	Decision
			Lower	Upper			
(Intercept)	4.4711	.16	4.1575	4.7847	< .001		
Control variables							
Age	-.014	.0179	-0.0491	0.0212	.439		
Gender	-.281	.2977	-0.8644	0.3024	.348		
Child	-.1678	.217	-0.5931	0.2575	.442		
Education	-.3041	.2208	-0.7369	0.1288	.172		
Direct effects							
Push1 – Exploration	.2724	.2404	-0.1989	0.7436	.261	H1a	Not supp.
Push2 – M. Escape	-.0217	.248	-0.5077	0.4643	.930	H1b	Not supp.
Pull1 – Outd.recreat	.4404	.1534	0.1398	0.741	.005	**H2a**	Supported
Pull2 – Qual.Infrastr	.121	.3006	-0.4681	0.7101	.688	H2b	Not supp.
Pull3 – Livability	-.169	.2093	-0.5791	0.2412	.422	H2c	Not supp.
Pull4 – Incentives	-.1086	.165	-0.4321	0.2148	.512	H2d	Not supp.
Dig.NomadFreedom	.0715	.1786	-0.4215	0.2785	.690		
Conditional effects							
Push1✻DNFreedom	.0617	.2675	-0.5861	0.4627	.818	H3a	Not supp.
Push2✻DNFreedom	-.1561	.2672	-0.3676	0.6797	.561	H3b	Not supp.
Pull1✻DNFreedom	-.1241	.1793	-0.2272	0.4755	.491	H4a	Not supp.
Pull2✻DNFreedom	.3012	.3195	-0.9274	0.3250	.349	H4b	Not supp.
Pull3✻DNFreedom	-.1880	.2217	-0.2465	0.6226	.399	H4c	Not supp.
Pull4✻DNFreedom	.4082	.1766	0.0621	0.7543	.023	**H4d**	Supported

Note: Push 1 (exploration), Push 2 (meaningful), Pull1 (outdoor), Pull2 (quality), Pull3 (livability), Pull4 (incentives), DNFreedom=Digital Nomad Freedom

Findings show a non-significant association between Exploration and workation (B = 0.272, 95%CI[-0.1989; 0.7436]), and between Meaningful Escape and Workation (B =- 0.022, 95%CI[-0.5077; 0.4643]), thus not supporting H1a and H1b. Outdoor Recreation has a positive association with workation (B =-0.440, 95%CI[0.1398; 0.741]), thus supporting H2a. However, neither Quality infrastructure (B =0.121, 95%CI[-0.4681; 0.7101]), Livability (B =0.169, 95%[-0.5791; 0.2412]), nor Incentives (B =- 0.022, 95%CI[-0.5077; 0.4643]) are related to Workation.

The interaction effects were tested for all the push and pull factors crossed with digital nomad freedom. Among these interactions only one was significant, namely with Incentives (B =-0.4082, 95%CI[-0.0621; 0.7543]). Thus, only H4d is supported.

The simple slope values (the estimates for each level of the moderator's cutoff (-1 SD; +1SD), and considering its dispersion) show that only when the digital nomad has low freedom, will the incentives predict the experience of workation (Table 6). Namely, the stronger incentives are felt as a Pull factor, the weaker the experience of being a workation situation.

Table 6 - Simple slope estimates for Pull4*Digital Nomad Freedom

Mod. Levels			95% Conf. Interval					
DigNomFreed.	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	exp(B)	df	t	p
Mean +1SD	0.255	0.245	-0.233	0.7428	1.29	81	1.038	0.302
Mean	-0.109	0.165	-0.437	0.2197	0.897	81	-0.658	0.512
Mean -1SD	-0.472	0.209	-0.888	-0.0561	0.624	81	-2.258	0.027

Note. Simple effects are estimated keeping constant other independent variable(s) in the model.

The depiction of the interaction effect can be seen in figure 3 where the regressed lines for high and low digital nomad freedom (high corresponds to freelancers, and low to salaried) are shown.

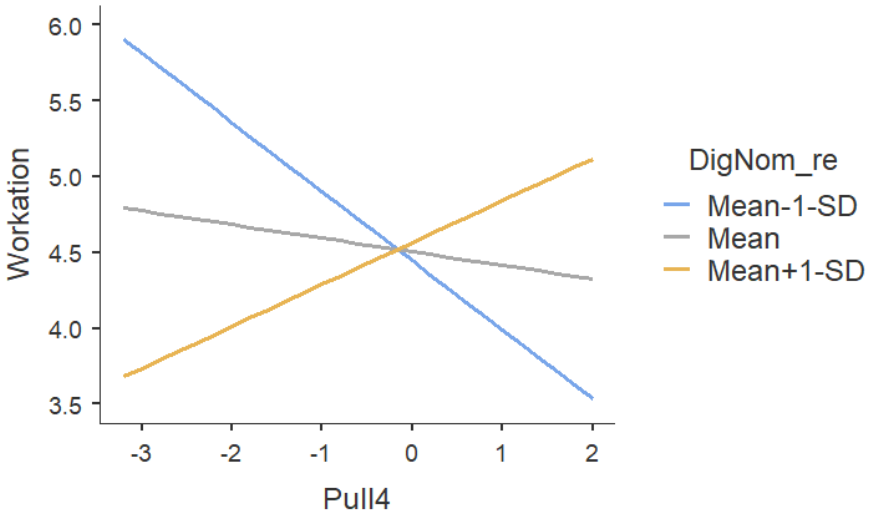


Figure 3 - Simple slope estimates for Pull4*Digital Nomad Freedom

CHAPTER 5
Discussion

Considering the mobility driven by the evolution of means of transport and communication technologies (Matos, 2018), the perpetual travelers - the digital nomads - have emerged. By taking advantage of ICT, these professionals can work remotely from anywhere, using their freedom to explore the world (Mancinelli, 2020). In this way, they end up ignoring the idea of a permanent home (Nash *et al.*, 2018) or a 'home base' (Reichenberger, 2018).

We can distinguish digital nomads into several categories: freelancers, business owners, salaried (Cook, 2023), who bring together aspirations that combine tourism, leisure and professional activity, thus ending up creating a unique lifestyle based on remote work, travel and multi-residential practices (Mancinelli, 2020). As a result, a new type of remote work is emerging in response to the growing digitalization and flexibilization of work - workation (Voll *et al*., 2022), and facilitates the combination of these aspirations.

Any destination choice, be it for tourism or work purposes, can be influenced by push and pull factors, as described by Dann (1977). Pull factors are those that capture the traveler's interest in a specific destination, and their value is intrinsic to the place itself. In contrast, push factors refer to the one's personal motivations that lead them to travel, such as the need to escape from routine.

Despite the popularity of this topic, there is a lack of empirical and academic research examining the motivations behind digital nomads' choice of workation. In order to address this gap, we formulated a conceptual model that brings together push and pull factors as predictors of workation experience under the boundary condition of the degree of freedom associated to types of digital nomads.

It is often observed in akin empirical research that the specific push or pull factors, i.e. the items, are included in regression models, which may neglect their reflective nature as a construct. By submitting these items to a principal components analysis, one can measure the underlying motivation or feature which is a preferred approach from a psychometric viewpoint (Boateng *et al*., 2018). Our results from this exercise showed logical latent constructs, namely that pull factors were organized around four latent constructs: outdoor recreation, quality of infrastructure, livability, and incentives. All of these have both construct validity and reliability. As regards push factors, the principal components analysis also extracted a valid and reliable solution for two factors: exploration (relating with the search for novelty and curiosity) and meaningful escape (relaxing and escaping routine while enriching oneself). These two factors have also acceptable validity and reliability.

After identifying the specific aggregations of push and pull factors, the first couple hypotheses posit that both push factors (exploration and meaningful escape) are positively related to workation

choice. However, these were not supported. Literature clearly indicates that the transition to digital nomadism began with a yearning for new experiences and cultures (Arifa *et al*.,2022). Schlagwein (2018) states that digital nomads have an intense desire to travel and acquire cultural and personal experiences, which is in line with Stickel's (2020) proposal, stating that this desire is one of the main motivators for becoming a digital nomad. In interviews, this point is emphasized. Digital nomads seek to explore new cultures (Gomes, 2019) and try to live like the locals (Galli, 2021; Messerschmidt & Antal,2022), thus demonstrating the importance of new experiences, which do not have to be merely touristic (Araujo, 2023).

Additionally, digital nomads are unanimous in their motivation for freedom, which generally leads them to adopt a nomadic lifestyle. This manifests itself in their sense of adventure and their desire to live and work anywhere in the world, escaping office life and its limited flexibility (Arifa *et al*., 2022). Therefore, the H1a was truly expected to be supported. Likewise, as regards H1b, literature is also clearly motivating this hypothesis as shown by Thompson (2018) report that digital nomads do travel to places where they can 'simply' relax, which allows them to feel more intellectually enriched by being stimulated by a new culture (Arifa *et al*., 2022). Thus, in the discourses of digital nomads, freedom is often evoked in reference to the system they oppose - routine (Mancinelli, 2020). They end up highlighting the lack of freedom in their previous lives and express their happiness at not knowing what tomorrow will bring (Gomes, 2019). This freedom is linked to the desire to live and work anywhere in the world, escaping the rigidity of traditional office hours and the predictability of everyday life (Schlagwein, 2018).

However, a closer examination of the push scale suggests the in the scale itself may lie the explanation for this lack of support. Although the scale makes sense, it has not originally been produced for the digital nomadic experience where some other motivations may play an important role but have not been previewed. For example, from work motivation such as self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002) there is no measurement in the scale used concerning autonomy or a sense of competence or relatedness specifically related to the conditions workation offers. Therefore, the main drivers of the workation choice might be missing from the model.

The hypothesis pertaining to the explanatory role of pull factors was only partially supported. The only sub hypothesis supported was H2a that relates outdoor recreation as a feature that motivates the digital nomad choice for that place from a workation viewpoint. Indeed, digital nomads are individuals who emphasize moving to places with certain characteristics, usually places with a low cost of living (Mancinelli, 2020; Araujo, 2023) and with mild climates (Mancinelli, 2020; Messerschmidt & Antal, 2022; Araujo, 2023). In addition, climate is not the only important factor, and the need to be in contact with nature, such as beaches or mountains, also stands out (Chevtaeva & Denizci-Guillet, 2021; Messerschmidt & Antal, 2022). In other words, these individuals tend to prefer places outside urban

centers (Galli, 2021; Woldoff & Litchfield, 2021). Nash *et al*. (2018) observed that some digital nomads prefer seasonal travel, for example, spending winters in warm tropical locations and summers in Europe. This reveals an interesting pattern of seasonal migration that seeks to maximize climatic comfort. The issue of sports or the gym also plays a leading role, both are highly valued by digital nomads (Araujo, 2023). These additional factors reinforce the importance of a healthy and active lifestyle, which is facilitated by the favorable environmental conditions and outdoor leisure opportunities found in these preferred destinations.

As per the non-supported sub hypotheses, H2b (pertaining to the quality infrastructure) can be interpreted as a fundamental condition for any kind of worker that is considering relocation. In addition to the preference for remote work, some digital workers make their decisions based on the availability and quality of technological infrastructure (Galli, 2021; Nash *et al*., 2018; Prabawa & Pertiwi, 2020), as they are highly dependent on it. Indeed, the relative high mean (4.82) associated with a low dispersion (SD=0.82) reinforces this interpretation. Empirical evidence of this is provided by online forums where many digital nomads ask about the best way to access the internet in different countries. Some discussed using public WIFI, while others would use their mobile data, depending on various factors such as affordability, accessibility and secure connection (Nash *et al*., 2018). Other infrastructural components cost/affordability, transportation (Messerschmidt & Antal, 2022) and security (Araujo, 2023) are also commonly mentioned as basic conditions. Indeed, Stickel (2020) highlights the decisive role of the cost of living, stating that digital nomads are generally price sensitive, which manifests itself in the search for reasonably priced accommodation. Thus, in addition to the quality of the internet, the affordability and safety of the location are crucial to digital nomads' choice of destination.

As regards H2c lack of support, concerning livability (targeting two main aspects: pleasure and health), literature mentions gastronomic experiences, but this factor is absent in some findings (*e.g*. Araujo, 2023). This suggests gastronomy is not a commonly shared concern, and the same seems to occur with nightlife. Likewise, health care might not be at the center of the decision due to the age group being less prone to health issues (Thompson, 2018). Lastly, although peripheral, ease of communication due to language is also included in this factor, but, as Messerschmidt and Antal (2022) and Gomes (2019) stated the desire of digital nomads to learn new languages makes communication not a significant barrier, to which one should consider the universal use of English (Rahman, 2015).

Lastly, incentives were also not a driver for workation choice (H2d not supported). This should reflect some inconsistencies in the systems, as on the one hand bureaucratic processes can be complicated, as many countries don't facilitate banking procedures and charge high taxes. The most complicated is income tax, regardless of the country (Galli, 2021). However, on the other hand, many countries have produced legislation to attract digital nomads by granting a special Visa associated with

many tax incentives as reported by Casi *et al*. (2023) which makes this a non-issue. Incidentally, Casi *et al*. (2023) mapping of countries with a digital nomad visa greatly overlaps with this study's sample origin.

The third hypothesis posits that digital nomads' freedom leverages the effects stated in the first hypothesis (push factors have a stronger relationship with workation choice as freedom of digital nomad's increase) but was not supported. This can ultimately relate to the same reason for the lack of support found for the first hypothesis which relates to the unsuitability of the push factors for the digital nomad situation. Likewise, in the same vein, being motivational in nature self-determination theory's autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2002) is already guaranteed in a digital nomad condition.

The fourth hypothesis posits that digital nomads' freedom also leverages the effects of pull factors. This interaction effect was only observed for H4d (incentives) with a decrease in workation choice when incentives gain relevance but only for those who have less freedom, i.e. for those whose choice was conditioned by an employer (salaried digital nomad). This is reasonable as an employer will give precedence to cost-benefit analysis and therefore the incentives are not only for the employee (digital nomad) but also (if not mostly) to the employer under the tax provisions of each location.

As per the non-supported sub-hypotheses, H4a (outdoor recreation) is easily explained as this pull factor has a main positive effect on workation choice thus showing it is a universal feature for all sorts of digital nomads, independent of their work arrangement. As for the H4b (quality of infrastructure) the reasons stated for the lack of empirical support discussed above, remain valid for this hypothesis due to its fundamental nature in choosing where to live. The fact that a digital nomad may have less freedom in work duties (*e.g*. as a salaried employee) does not exclude the importance of infrastructure as a *sine qua non* condition. As for the H4c (livability, pleasure and health) the same reasoning applies to this finding because health care saliency is cushioned both by the age protecting from sickness in all cases, and by the usual requirements on healthcare insurance on employers in the case of those digital nomads that fall in the lower-freedom group.

CHAPTER 6
Conclusion

Working in the digital era has made location-independence possible and this trend is growing and gaining more followers. This phenomenon has led to a new class of workers (Hannonen, 2020), the digital nomads. Technology and freedom are two of their demands, as freedom is the main reason for wanting to change their lives, and the internet has made this lifestyle possible. Therefore, digital nomads' lifestyle is ultimately shaped around the internet, from the choice of destinations to the place of accommodation (Nash *et al.*, 2018).

In this context, this study aims to understand the attractiveness of the concept of workation (a combination of work and holidays) for digital nomads, analyzing both the factors that drive this choice (push factors) and the factors that attract to destinations (pull factors), in the context of the freedom of work that these professionals have. The results suggest that workation experience is widely recognized and directly associated only with one pull factor, namely outdoor recreation. Likewise, the freedom of digital nomads plays a role by interacting with incentives, where this pull factor is a predictor of workation choice only for those who have more freedom. The necessary conclusion from these findings is that workation choice is mostly determined by outdoor lifestyle and among the types of digital nomads, freelancers are those that can relate incentives as a true option since paid employees will be interpreting incentives as unrelated to workation typical locations.

At the same time, this research is not without its limitations, which also point to directions for future research. The main limitation originates from the lack of information, given the novelty of the subject. Not only digital nomads, but also the concept of workation is missing a clear classification and ignores the different domains involved in different types of work. Moreover, despite the snowballing data collection strategy was used, the number of participants is relatively small, which makes it impossible to generalize to other realities and also creates fragilities in data analysis involving complex relations such as those created in several simultaneous interactions. Therefore, some non-significant relationships may be explained by an eventual low ratio of observation per estimated parameter. Eventually the strongest limitation in this study originates from the scales used to measure push and pull factors. These have not been produced specifically targeting the digital nomad phenomenon but stem from tourism research.

Further research would therefore be useful not only for academic purposes but also for use by market players. Future studies may benefit from revising these scales to adapt them to the specific motivations of digital nomads. This would involve including dimensions of autonomy, competence and relatedness, as suggested by self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

Likewise, a larger sample will be beneficial to test boundary conditions such as those we tested on digital nomad freedom as we reason that simpler predictive models will not capture the reality of these choices for workation, but a much larger sample is required to test that sort of models with both mediators and moderators. Studies that use a variety of methods and consider emerging factors will be crucial to deepen the understanding of this evolving phenomenon, and/or examine the emergence of new workation destinations and how they compete with traditional destinations. Alternatively, conducting comparative studies between digital nomads from different cultural backgrounds may help untangling how perceptions of one's own freedom modulates the relative importance of workation attractors (pull) and one's driving options (pull). Lastly, future studies will benefit from a longitudinal analysis because the nature of this population may be only understood when the workation choices are considered as a set in time and not specifically at a given point of time.

References

Araujo, N. (2023). *Nómadas digitais: perfil, tendências e desafios para o futuro do turismo em Portugal* [Doctoral dissertation]. IPC - Instituto Politécnico de Coimbra.

Arifa, Y., Khapova, S., & El Baroudi, S. (2022). Digital nomading as identity work: Career change shapes what they love about work and life. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology, 48*(0), 1-10.

Armstrong, M. (2010). *Armstrong's essential human resource management practice: A guide to people management*. Kogan Page Publishers.

Augusto, A. (2014). Metodologias quantitativas/metodologias qualitativas: mais do que uma questão de preferência. *Forum Sociológico,* 24, 73-77.

Babbie, E. R. (2014). *The Practice of Social Research*. Nelson Education.

Bancilhon, A. (2020). *Work, lifestyle and location: An exploratory study on the motivations of digital entrepreneurs* [Doctoral dissertation]. CQUniversity - Central Queensland University.

Beretta, G. (2022). Work on the Move: Rethinking Taxation of Labour Income Under Tax Treaties. *International Tax Studies, 5*(2), 1-26.

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford University Press.

Campenhoudt, L., & Quivy, R. (2008). *Manual de investigação em ciências sociais*. Gradiva Publicações.

Casi, E., Mardan, M., & Stage, B. (2023). *Citizenship/Residence by Investment and Digital Nomad Visas: The Golden Era of Individual Tax Evasion and Avoidance?*. Working paper, FOR 12/2023. Norwegian School of Economics.

Castells, M.(*2002). A Era da Informação: Economia, Sociedade e Cultura* (Vol. I). Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.

Chevtaeva, E., & Denizci-Guillet, B. (2021). Digital nomads' lifestyles and coworkation. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management, 21,* 1-33.

Clark, S. C. (2000). Work/Family Border Theory: A New Theory of Work/Family Balance. *Human Relations, 53*(6), 747-770.

Cook, D. (2020). The freedom trap: digital nomads and the use of disciplining practices to manage work/leisure boundaries. *Information Technology & Tourism, 22*(3), 355-390.

Cook, D. (2023). What is a digital nomad? Definition and taxonomy in the era of mainstream remote work. *World Leisure Journal, 65*(2), 256-275.

Coxe, S., West, S. & Aiken, L. (2013). Generalized linear models. *The Oxford handbook of quantitative methods, 2*, 26-51.

Crompton, J., & L., M. (1997). Motives of visitors attending festival events. *Annals of Tourism Research, 24* (2), 425-439.

Dann, G. (1977). Anomie, Ego-Enhancement and Tourism. *Annals of tourism research, 4*(4), 184-194.

Deci, E , & Ryan, R. (2002). Self-determination research: Reflections and future directions. In E. L. Deci & R. M. Ryan (Eds.), *Handbook of self-determination research* (pp. 431-441). University of Rochester Press.

Deci, E., & Ryan, R., (1985). Conceptualizations of intrinsic motivation and self-determination. In *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior* (pp.11-40). Perspectives in Social Psychology. Springer.

Dreher, N., & Triandafyllidou, A. (2023). Digital Nomads. Towards a future research agenda. *In Working paper no. 2023/04.* Toronto Metropolitan Centre for Immigration and Settlement and the Canada Excellence Research Chair in Migration and Integration.

Duarte, T. (2009). A possibilidade da investigação a 3: reflexões sobre triangulação (metodológica). *Revista Lusófona de Educação, 13*, 155-173.

Galli, S. M. (2021). *O Nomadismo Digital e a Comunicação: os efeitos da mobilidade e das tecnologias na produção e propagação da informação* [Master dissertation]. FEUP - Faculdade de Engenharia da Universidade do Porto.

Getman, N. (2021). *Developing a digital nomads destination from the ground up* [Master Dissertation] Iscte - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa.

Ghiglione, R., & Matalon, B. (1997). *The Inquiry-Theory and Practice*. Celta Publisher.

Goldin, I., Balarajan, M., & Cameron, G. (2011). *Exceptional people: How migration shaped our world and will define our future.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Gomes, N. S. (2019). *Nômades digitais: quem são estes novos turistas?* [Master dissetation]. Universidade de Évora.

Hannonen, O. (2020). In search of a digital nomad: defining the phenomenon. *Information Technology & Tourism, 22*, 335-353.

Iliescu, A. N. (2021). The Emergence of Knowmads from the Knowledge Workers. *Management Dynamics in the Knowledge Economy, 9*(1), 94–106.

Ji, Y., Kim, S., & Kim, Y. (2024). A way to attract digital nomads to tourist destinations in the new normal era. *Sustainability, 16*(6), 1-16.

Klenosky, D. (2002). The "pull" of tourism destinations: A means-end investigation. *Journal of Travel Research, 24* (2), 385-395.

Lewis, S. (2003). The integration of paid work and the rest of life. Is post-industrial work the new leisure?. *Leisure studies, 22*(4), 343-345.

Mancinelli, F. (2020). Digital nomads: freedom, responsibility and the neoliberal order. *Information technology & Tourism, 22*(3), 417-437.

Mancinelli, F., & Germann Molz, J. (2023). Moving with and against the state: digital nomads and frictional mobility regimes. *Mobilities*, *19*(2), 189-207.

Matos, P. (2018). Nómadas digitais e a era dos sujeitos móveis: questões de mobilidade, comunicação e trabalho num estilo de vida location independent. In E. Araújo, R. Ribeiro, P. Andrade & R. Costa (Eds.), *Viver em|a mobilidade: rumo a novas culturas de tempo, espaço e distância* (pp. 36-48). Livro de Atas.

Matsushita, K. (2021a). Workations and their impact on the local area in Japan. In M. Orel, O. Dvouletý, & V. Ratten (Eds.), *The flexible workplace* (pp. 215–229). Springer International Publishing.

Moravec, J. W. (2013b). Knowmad society: The “new” work and education. *On the Horizon*, 21(2), 79–83.

Moreira, C. (2007). *Teorias e práticas de investigação*. Instituto Superior de Ciências Sociais e Políticas

Mouratidis, G. (2018). *Digital Nomadism: Travel, Remote Work and Alternative Lifestyles* [Master dissertation]. Lund University.

Müller, A. (2016). The digital nomad: Buzzword or research category?. *Transnational Social Review, 6*(3), 344-348.

Nash, C., Jarrahi, M., Sutherland, W., & Phillips, G. (2018). Digital nomads beyond the buzzword: Defining digital nomadic work and use of digital technologies. In *International conference on information* (pp. 207-217). Springer International Publishing.

Pecsek, B. (2018). Working on holiday: the theory and practice of workcation. *Balkans Journal of Emerging Trends in Social Sciences Balkans, 1*(1), 1-13.

Prabawa, I., & Pertiwi, P. (2020). The digital nomad tourist motivation in Bali: Exploratory research based on push and pull theory. *Athens journal of tourism, 7*(3), 161-174.

Rahman, M. (2015). English for Specific Purposes (ESP): A Holistic Review. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, *3*(1), 24-31.

Rainoldi, M., Ladkin, A., & Buhalis, D. (2022). Blending work and leisure: A future digital worker hybrid lifestyle perspective. *Annals of Leisure Research, 27*(2), 215-235.

Reichenberger, I. (2017). Digital nomads - a quest for holistic freedom in work and leisure, *Annals of Leisure Research, 21*(3), 1-17.

Richter, S., & Richter, A. (2020). Digital nomads. *Business & Information Systems Engineering, 62*, 77-81.

Schlagwein, D. 2018. Escaping the Rat Race: Justifications in Digital Nomadism. *European Conference on Information* Systems, 26, 1-8.

Shin, H., Lee, J., & Kim, N. (2023). Workcation (Workation) Travel Experiences, Satisfaction and Revisit Intentions: Focusing on Conceptualization, Scale Development, and Nomological Network. *Journal of Travel* Research, *63*(5), 1150-1168.

Stickel, M. (2020). *Challenges and opportunities of digital nomadism and its implications for tomorrow´ s workforce* [Doctoral dissertation]. NOVA – School of Business and Economics.

Thompson, B. (2018). Digital nomads: Employment in the online gig economy. *Glocalism: Journal of Culture, Politics and Innovation, 1*, 1-26.

Voll, K., Gauger, F., & Pfnür, A. (2023). Work from anywhere: Traditional workation, coworkation and workation retreats: A conceptual review. *World Leisure Journal, 65*(2), 150-174.

Woldoff, R., & Litchfield, R. (2021). *Digital nomads: In search of freedom, community, and meaningful work in the new economy*. Oxford University Press.

Yousefi, M., & Marzuki, A. (2015). An analysis of push and pull motivational factors of international tourists to Penang, Malaysia. *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration, 16*(1), 40-56.

Makimoto, T., & Manners, D. (1997). *Digital nomad*. John Wiley & Sons.

Messerschmidt, A. M., & Antal, F. (2022). *Where should I go next?* [Master dissertation]. Lund University.