

DIGITAL NOMADS AS CONTEMPORARY FORM OF BUSINESS TOURISM

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Abstract

Business tourism is a term used to describe all travel that results directly from work duties or indirectly in the performance of work-related activities. This includes activities related to daily work duties, but also travel for corporate or organizational meetings, conventions and congresses. Digital nomad is a term used to describe people who use telecommunication technologies in their work and live a nomadic life. Digital nomads work from different countries, in different spatial conditions such as cafes, libraries, recreational vehicles, etc. The subject of this paper is the digital nomads as contemporary form of business tourism. The paper presents review of research concerning digital nomads and business tourism. For the purpose of the paper, a research methodology and secondary data sources have been used by consulting literature, studies, statistical data and official web pages of institutions concerning digital nomads and business travel. An analysis and review of different types of nomads and destinations offering digital nomad visa in selected Mediterranean countries has been made, based on a systematic evaluation of the current content of relevant literature using methodology of content analysis.

Key words: *travel, work, visa, MICE, freelancer.*

JEL Classification: L83

INTRODUCTION

Business tourism includes people who travel to a certain destination for business (professional) reasons (Jovanović, 2022). According to data from the World Tourism Organization, in 2019 the number of tourists at the international level was 1,460 million, of which 11% were business trips (about 150 million tourists) (UNWTO, 2021). A large part of business tourism is related to the organization of events and is called MICE tourism (Mai, 2014). MICE is an acronym for Meetings; Incentives; Conferences and Exhibitions (Papathanassis, 2011). It is a term often used in the travel industry when it comes to business travel. The historical development of business tourism is directly related to the development of international tourism. Throughout history we have numerous evidence and archaeological discoveries of trade travel. The world's great geographical discoveries are based on the search for alternative trade routes. Business trips are also found in ancient civilizations. Between the 3rd and 4th centuries Rome was a city that was a popular destination in the summer and attracted many tourists. Visitors came to the city to relax in the baths, play games of chance, and visit the Colosseum where they would attend gladiator fights, visit restaurants and try local specialties, see a musical performance or a marketplace where they could buy slaves from Africa (Walton, 2005). Also, tourists visited Rome to admire the grandiose and imposing buildings, monuments, palaces, forums, etc. On the other hand, for the same reasons, the Romans visited the cities of Greece, Egypt and other developed countries at that time. We will mention the Silk Road and the Industrial Revolution as significant historical moments in the development of business tourism. Due to its nature and characteristics,

business tourism is more prone to changes in national and international economic conditions, and it stagnates during world economic recession and crises (Jafari & Xiao, 2016).

Business tourism is a term used to describe all trips that result directly from work duties or indirectly when performing work-related activities (Методијески & Голаков, 2013). This includes activities related to daily work duties, but also travel for corporate or organizational meetings, conventions and congresses. Incentive tours that companies use to reward their best employees also fall into this group. Business travel, by its very nature, can involve last-minute bookings, frequent travel changes and cancellations. Since the costs are generally covered by the company or organization, price plays a big role. This does not imply that companies are not interested in managing their travel costs. Companies, government institutions and other types of organizations are taking ever greater steps in cost control through official reports and through negotiations to obtain the most favorable offers from airlines and hotel chains. Business travel is different from pleasure travel for several reasons. Their preferred destination is generally cities, not famous destinations. For that reason, regions with well-developed industrial or service economies attract the largest share of business travel. Such journeys are less seasonal and more concentrated in the middle of the week where transport is used in the morning before and in the evening after working hours. Consequently, the hotels that accommodate these tourists are faced with the challenge of how to fill the facility during the weekends. Due to their professional status, business tourists are generally highly educated and wealthy. These characteristics make them desirable by the offer that encourages them to take a vacation in the destination for a few days before or after meetings or conferences. People traveling for business may decide to bring their partners with them or return to the same place for vacation at another time. Business tourism is a significant factor for many cities. In Brussels, for example, where the seat of the European Union is located, 74% of overnight stays are made by business tourists (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2001).

The State Statistics Office defines business trips in the following way (ДСЗ, 2017): A business trip is any trip outside the place of permanent residence for business purposes, at the expense of the employer (enterprise or other organization) or at one's own expense (private individuals), during which at least one night was spent in a catering or similar accommodation facility (including overnights in sleeping cars and couchette cars) in the country or abroad. Business trips include traveling to business meetings, seminars, congresses, etc. Working on construction sites and other facilities outside the place of permanent residence, for which the employee receives a special field allowance from his organization, is not considered a business trip. More so, traveling of our citizens abroad is not considered as an official trip if the expenses for those trips are met by the foreign country.

Table 1 presents the structure of business tourism, that is, the three significant segments of the tourist market from the aspect of business tourism: demand, mediation and supply (Методијески et al., 2022).

Table 1. Structure of business tourism

Demand	Individual clientele Companies Associations
Intermediaries	Travel agencies for business trips Event management companies Fair and conference organizations Destination Management Bodies Travel agencies for incentive arrangements
Offer	Transport companies Fair and conference organizations Facilities for event organization Accommodation facilities Food and beverage facilities

Business tourism achieves more positive impacts in the development of tourist destinations such as:

- Business tourists visit the destination out of season, not during school holidays or public holidays.
- Business tourists generate a relatively high cost daily (higher than the average consumption of classic tourists).
- Business tourists behave well and create less problems for the local community.
- Business tourists create more employment opportunities for the local population and use different services such as photos, printing services, dry cleaning, florists, etc.
- Destinations increase the visibility of leisure facilities among the local population, such as shops, cinemas, theaters, etc., because they are also used by business tourists.
- Destinations justify investments in their local infrastructure, because it is also used by business tourists.

In terms of destinations, business tourism has the following characteristics (Rabotić, 2013):

- Quality and profitability. In business tourism the basic rule is to use services of high category hotels as well as catering and other various services (car rental, shopping, sports and recreation, wellness, etc.), air transportation using regular lines, individual transfers, diverse on-site content (culture, art, etc.) with professional organizers, such trips also generate higher revenues resulting in higher tax benefits; Business tourists are more inclined to increased personal consumption, since their basic expenses (travel and accommodation) are covered by the companies, i.e. the employers.
- Sustainability. Business tourism has the characteristics of sustainable tourism, overall it is mainly realized outside the peak season, which means that the accommodation and other facilities continue with operations and employment due to the fact that their total occupancy increased. As a result of the modern needs and demands of customers, tourist facilities are included in various programs of energy conservation, waste recycling, water consumption, etc.
- Catalyst for the resuscitation of the local community. Business tourism encourages new investments, whether it is for the improvement of existing infrastructure or the construction of new facilities (congress centers, hotels, marinas, sports and recreational facilities, etc.), in previously unattractive locations. Therefore, certain peripheral zones in cities are successfully revitalized hence the new contents are being introduced and used by the local population.
- Promotion of the destination. Business travelers could become acquainted with the local tourist and other attractions of the destination. Large business gatherings are supported by destinations and tourism organizations, seeing that it is an opportunity to directly present their offer to potential future tourists (brochures, cocktail presentations, etc.).

According to the research of the International Association for Congresses and Conventions, the following results related to the organization of events from the aspect of business tourism can be observed worldwide (International Congress and Convention Association, 2019): in 2019, 13,254 international meetings were organized, and the most common period of these events are held in the months of June, September and October.

Table 2. Top 10 countries and cities according to the number of held international meetings (2019)

Country	Meetings	City	Meetings
USA	934	Paris	237
Germany	714	Lisbon	190
France	595	Berlin	176
Spain	578	Barcelona	156
England	567	Madrid	154

Italy	550	Vienna	149
China	539	Singapore	148
Japan	527	London	143
Netherlands	356	Prague	138
Portugal	342	Tokyo	131

In the top 10 countries according to the number of held international meetings in 2019, 7 countries are from Europe, 2 from Asia and the USA which are in first place according to the number of held meetings. It is interesting that in the top 10 cities according to the number of held international meetings, no cities from the USA are represented. Among the cities in the top 10, European capitals prevail, Paris is in first place according to held meetings, and two of the 10 cities are in Asia (Tokyo and Singapore). In the relevant world literature related to business tourism, based on different criteria, the following types of business tourism have been determined (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2001):

- Traveling daily outside his permanent place of residence.
- Local, regional and national meetings and conferences (associations and business entities).
- International congresses.
- Training courses.
- Fairs.
- Introduction of new products on the market.
- Incentive trips.
- Short-term migration due to work.
- Volunteering.
- Mobility of students and academic staff.
- Delivery of goods and services to customers and markets.
- Military service outside the permanent place of residence.
- Non-governmental organizations that operate projects outside the territory where they are registered.
- Civil servants traveling for work, diplomats, etc.
- Individual business trips.

The development of different types of business tourism is stimulated by various factors which are presented in table 3.

Table 3. Factors that stimulate the development of different types of business tourism

Type of business tourism	Factors
Incentive Arrangements	Introduction of human resource management theories and practices based on stimulating work performance by offering non-monetary rewards to recognize the contribution of key individuals.
Training	The growth of new technologies that require personnel to be trained or retrained. Emphasis on quality and service for which training is carried out.
Introducing new products	The growing globalization of the markets and the need to place products in more countries. Growth of competition and need to introduce new products to raise awareness of new products in the market in a very quick time.
Education	Growth of transnational cooperation in education. Increasing student exchange. Growth in field visits in all levels of education.

There are several characteristics that separate individual business travel from business tourism. With individual business trips, there is no choice of destination (the work dictates the choice), the trips are regular and necessary, i.e. related to work, the trips are

frequent and mostly individual. In business tourism, there is a flexible choice of destination, they come occasionally as a reward, etc., and group trips are frequent. Business tourism related to events includes a variety of events such as: conferences, conventions and meetings, product marketing, fairs, company celebrations, anniversaries, etc. The World Tourism Organization defines meetings as the gathering of 10 or more persons for a minimum period of 4 hours in a suitable meeting facility (UNWTO, 2014). Business trips may vary according to the time available to tourists. On some trips, business travelers do not have free time for tourism activities, while on many other trips they have a few hours of free time or a day off after work (Leiper et al., 2008). The most significant characteristics of business tourists are the following (Association of Corporate Travel Executives, 2016): increased concern for work-life balance; combine travel with rest; increased concern for environmental protection; increasing trips where they are accompanied by a family member; increased number of days off due to business trips; share transportation and accommodation services with colleagues; increased concern for security, etc. Worldwide, many destinations at the local, regional and national level promote and make efforts to attract business tourists and position the destination on the global map of business tourism. Primarily, business tourism is promoted through national tourism organizations and convention bureaus, as well as individually by convention centers and event management companies.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Defining digital nomads

Digital nomad is a term used to describe people who use telecommunication technologies at work and live a nomadic life. These people work from different countries, in different space conditions such as cafes, libraries, recreational vehicles, etc. The term derives from the words digital and nomad. The term digital implies working with the touch of the fingers, with buttons and using computers, the Internet and digital tools. A nomad is a person who does not have a permanent place of residence or often changes his residence.

The concept of "teleworking" is broad, and at its core is the idea of a worker providing services while not physically present at the office or premises of his employer and where such distance is not a necessary function of his work tasks (as opposed to a worker who helps the client out of the office or temporarily attends an event or forum). Telecommuting focuses on three types of workers: In-country telecommuter; Hybrid Worker; Digital nomad (Business Advisory Group on Migration, 2024).

Table 4. Working remotely

Type of remote worker	Place of work and residence
In-country telecommuter	- Lives in the same country as his employer. - He never (or rarely) works in an office.
Hybrid worker	- Lives in the same country as his employer. - He divides his time between working in the office and working remotely, mostly from home.
Digital Nomad	- Lives in a different country from his employer and most often in another country outside his home country. - Works exclusively remotely.

Digital nomads differ from permanently employed individuals who work from home or work remotely (remote work). Working from home is a way of working in which the worker fulfills the basic tasks of his job while staying at home with the help of information and communication technology (ICT). ICT advances in some sectors have enabled alternative ways of working, including work from home, teleworking, telecommuting and remote work. The remote work can include different locations outside the primary workplace or the employer's premises such as mobile work (Бизнис конфедерација на Македонија, 2020). Digital nomads in their work often use wireless internet, smartphones, internet telephony and cloud computing applications to work remotely from where they live or travel. Digital nomads

continue to work with clients and their employers during their travels or extended stays abroad. A digital nomad is a type of work and lifestyle that creates certain problems such as maintaining international health and pension insurance on a global level, complying with different local laws in the destinations where you stay, obtaining a work visa, tax obligations and maintaining connections with friends and family. Other problems that arise with this type of work and life are the differences in time zones, the difficulties in finding safe and fast internet, as well as the absence of sick days and longer holidays because digital nomads do not have a permanent and reliable source of income, and in some countries, the legislation does not treat freelancing (freelancer) as employment, but as free provision of services with special rules and rates for taxation. The term freelancing means freelance or non-permanent work, so the person who deals with this work is a freelancer, that is, he works as a freelancer with a contract for a company but is not an employee of that company. Most often freelancers are people who do not have their own company and function as natural persons, and usually freelancers are marketing managers, project managers, podcasters and YouTubers, tiktokers, bloggers, designers, video and audio production, architects, programmers, journalists, translators, tutors, artists, craftsmen, photographers, etc. Among the main advantages of being a freelancer are the following:

- The freelancer is his own boss – this means that he himself determines the working hours and the place where he will work. He could choose for whom and with whom he will work.
- The freelancer does not need big investments – sometimes, to work, the freelancer needs a laptop, internet connection, software for work. There is no need to invest in expensive equipment, a business facility and additional activities that would incur additional costs.
- The freelancer has more time for private life – because they mostly work from home, they don't have expenses for daily travel from home to work and vice versa.

In recent years, influencers have become more and more popular. An influencer is a person who has influence; that inspires or directs the actions of others; which can generate interest in something (like an ad for a consumer product) by promoting it on social media. Influencers are respected, seen and heard in a specific industry by a large audience (Hudders et al., 2020). They are categorized by their ability to influence the opinions of their listeners. Influencers are people who have gained fame thanks to their interest, knowledge or skills in a certain field and who, through frequent postings on social networks, create a wide circle of followers. On social media, influencers can help get a product, post or event well received by a large audience. In the last few years, together with the development of technologies and due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which mainly resulted in the digitization of many functions and jobs, the number of digital nomads is increasing (Orel, 2021). The term "digital nomad" was introduced at the end of XX to describe the vision of technological progress for human life and work (Makimoto & Manners, 1997). A digital nomad can be defined as a fully mobile/mobile worker (usually an intellectual) who uses digital technologies that allow him to work at any time and from any place in the world (Liegl, 2014). The lifestyle of the digital nomad is also characterized by a commitment to travel. Therefore, it is emphasized that it is not only the form of work, but also the way it is organized and the general understanding of the way of life. In this context, a distinction should be made between the term "digital nomad", which means a mobile worker who performs work tasks from any and a voluntarily chosen location in the world with the support of digital technology; and "digital nomadism" meaning the lifestyle these mobile workers lead and develop (Hanonen, 2020).

Methodology

The subject of this paper is the digital nomads as contemporary form of business tourism. The paper presents review of research concerning digital nomads and business tourism. For the purpose of the paper, a research methodology and secondary data sources have been used by consulting literature, studies, statistical data and official web pages of

institutions concerning digital nomads and business travel. An analysis and review of different types of nomads and destinations offering digital nomad visa in selected Mediterranean countries has been made, based on a systematic evaluation of the current content of relevant literature using methodology of content analysis (Ritchie et al., 2005).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Types of nomads

The digital nomad lifestyle is one of the fastest growing and most popular social trends. Currently, it is estimated that the number of digital nomads in the world is from 40 to 80 million. During the next ten years, the estimated number of nomads in the world will increase continuously (Sztuk, 2023). Digital nomads differ from home-based workers in that digital nomads have a desire to gain new experiences while traveling abroad. On the other hand, the main issue that distinguishes the digital nomad from the traditional tourist is that tourists usually travel as part of their vacation without the need to perform official duties during their stay. In addition, a significant proportion of tourists are often unaware of the social situation in the destination they are staying in. Most tourists also avoid direct integration and contact with local communities, which could potentially present a place's identity to a much wider extent and show its unique characteristics (Thompson, 2019). Digital nomads are more involved in exploring destinations and local culture than traditional tourists. They engage in slow tourism to a much greater extent than traditional tourists during their stay in the destination. The distinction between full-time telecommuters and digital nomads should also be emphasized. The mobility of nomads motivates the search for new experiences, adventures, meaning and discoveries rather than economic or political factors related to the work performed (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009).

Table 5. Types of nomads

Types of nomads	Characteristics
Digital nomads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - new destinations - move constantly - work in places that have good access to the Internet on weekdays - related to technology - building startups - free time on weekends
Spiritual Nomads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - spiritual Goals - meaning and inspiration - communicate and share their spiritual ideas
Quick Time Nomads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - employees who are allowed to travel frequently - they travel quite intensively - high price
Corporate nomads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - work in large companies - work does not require physical presence (remote workers) - work from home or from other places (with the status of regularly employed persons)
Half-half nomads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a balanced activity between work time and free time during the trip - seasonal employees (specific season/specific destination) - once their contract is over, they can take full vacation
Offline/Classic Nomads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - classic nomad type - skills such as street performers, English teachers, chefs and diving instructors - destinations with a low salary, according to the local salary - become part of the local community

Volunteers/ Domestic nomads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no money exchange in this nomad model - a traveler visiting a place as a volunteer (free accommodation and food)
Wealthy nomads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - free and flexible in their travels - wealth and prosperity - have acquired financial means through a lottery, through inheritance or through a successful career
Retired Nomads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - travel nomadically - seek a nomadic lifestyle - realizing the dream after completing their family obligations - the pension is their only income for travel
Homemade nomads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - spend a significant life without travel - find adventure and attractions in their local community

In the existing literature, there are several different divisions of the types of nomads, and for the purposes of this paper we will stick to the classification of 10 types of nomads (Poulaki et al., 2023).

Visa for digital nomads

Visa is an official document issued by the appropriate authorities that allows a foreign citizen to enter, stay or leave the territory of a certain country. As the number of digital nomads is expected to grow steadily in the coming years, many countries around the world have started competing with creative policies to attract digital nomads. Hence the emergence of the so-called "digital nomad visa", which is a special category of visa, residence and work authorization outside the standard procedures that a foreigner has to fulfill. In this case, we are not talking about a visa in the classic sense, but about a residence permit for professionals who will be able to live temporarily in a certain country, while continuing their work remotely. At the same time, certain tax reliefs and exemptions are provided for them.

Table 6. Visa for digital nomads in selected Mediterranean countries (Poulaki et al., 2023).

Visa Information	Spain	Portugal	Croatia	Italy	Greece
Digital Nomad Visa	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Visa costs in euros	80	75-90	80-130	To be determined additionally	75-150
Duration	1 year	4 months to 1 year	1 year	1year	1year
Minimum stay	At least 6 months	None	None	None	At least 6 months
Possibility of extension	Up to 5 years	Up to 5 years	New application	To be determined additionally	Up to 2 years
Minimum income	2332	3040	2539	To be determined additionally	3500
Visa issuance time	20 working days	3-4 months	3-4 months	To be determined additionally	30 working days
Visa for family members	For wife and children	For wife and children	Increase 10% of minimum income for	To be determined additionally	For wife and children

			each family member		
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The economic logic of these visas is that digital nomads will spend a large part of the funds they earn during their stay in the destinations, they will enter the local economy, and at the same time they will bring with them to the destination skills and knowledge that can be applied in the local startup eco-system. We will explain this with several examples:

- Mexico City authorities estimated that digital nomads (remote workers, mostly from the US) contribute 523.4 million US dollars to the city's economy (Alfaro, 2023);
- Government officials from Madeira, Portugal estimated that the average digital nomad spends \$2,100 per month in the local economy (The Economist, 2021);
- In Barbados, the authorities annually generate 6 million US dollars from visa fees for digital nomads and 100 million dollars in income from this type of tourism (OECD, 2022).

Worldwide, the largest number of digital nomads come from the United States. Although there is no centralized database for the destinations where digital nomads stay (more than 50 countries), several specialized websites for digital nomads point out that a dozen countries stand out according to the conditions they offer, but also other advantages such as a favorable climate, relatively the low cost of living compared to IT hubs like San Francisco and Silicon Valley. It is estimated that the most popular destination for digital nomads in terms of numbers is Mexico, and this is primarily due to the large number of Americans who temporarily live in the southern neighbor due to the lower costs of accommodation and living, as well as the availability of attractive tourist spots. Among the European destinations, Lisbon in Portugal, Tallinn in Estonia, Budapest (Hungary), Prague (Czech Republic), the coast and larger cities in Croatia, tourist cities in Greece, Spain and Italy stand out. Recently, the Serbian capital Belgrade with its benefits for IT experts from abroad, Tbilisi in Georgia with its low taxes intended for digital nomads and Malta's openness to foreigners including digital nomads and the simple path to citizenship through entrepreneurial investments have received excellent marks. The authorities in the Republic of North Macedonia announce the introduction of a special "visa for digital nomads", but this reform is still in its initial phase.

Some of the Caribbean countries, as well as some countries in South America (Argentina and Colombia) appear as an attractive destination for digital nomads. Dubai (UAE) offers the possibility of a one-year stay for people who work for a foreign employer or independently, and the presence of numerous entrepreneurs and investors in this destination is a positive aspect. In Asia, countries such as Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, South Korea and Vietnam are listed best.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Business tourism is a term used to describe all travel that results directly from work duties or indirectly in the performance of work-related activities. This includes activities related to daily work duties, but also travel for corporate or organizational meetings, conventions and congresses. A digital nomad is a term used to describe people who use telecommunications technologies at work and live a nomadic life. Digital nomads work from different countries, in different spatial conditions such as cafes, libraries, recreational vehicles, etc. Research for the purposes of this paper shows that there are different types of nomads, and the following 10 types have been identified in the relevant literature: Digital nomads, Spiritual nomads, Fast-time nomads, corporate nomads, Half-half nomads, Offline / Classic nomads, Volunteers / Domestic Nomads, Wealthy Nomads, Retired Nomads and Domestic Nomads. As the number of digital nomads is expected to grow steadily in the coming years, many countries around the world have started competing with creative policies to attract digital nomads. Hence the emergence of the so-called "digital nomad visa", which is a special category of visa, residence and work authorization outside the standard procedures that a foreigner has to fulfill. For the needs of this thesis, a tabular review was made that shows possibilities and procedures for

obtaining a visa for digital nomads in selected Mediterranean countries such as Spain, Portugal, Croatia, Italy and Greece. The economic logic in issuing these visas is that digital nomads will spend a large part of the funds they earn during their stay in the destinations, they will contribute to the local economy, and at the same time they will bring with them skills and knowledge that can be applied in the local startup eco-system of the destination.

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