

Reflections: how can the emergence of digital nomadism be operationalized in tourism development?

Theme Editors Semra Günay and Öznur Akgış İlhan share their reflections on the significance and outcomes of the theme issue with Managing Editors Hale Özgüt and Ali Öztüren.

Overview

A symbiotic dance between digital nomadism and tourism results in a beneficial relationship. The rise of digital nomadism coincides with the evolution of tourist destinations, providing an ideal foundation for reimagining destination development. An essential challenge as locations compete for the attention of digital nomads is how to use new techniques to advance tourist development. This investigation digs into the practical use of digital nomadism in the tourism industry, paving the way for long-term growth and prosperity. Theme Editors Semra Günay and Öznur Akgış İlhan encourage research into the revolutionary possibilities of this intersection. Through their thoughts on the consequences of this discussion, they shed light on the complex interplay between digital nomadism and tourist development, revealing avenues to a dynamic and adaptive future for destinations worldwide.

Why, in your view, is your theme-issue strategic question important?

The strategic question of the theme issue is how to operationalize digital nomadism in the tourism industry. Answering this question is important for developing future strategies in the tourism sector and for destinations to gain a competitive advantage.

Thinking about your theme-issue plan and approach, what worked well?

We were aware of various gaps in the literature on digital nomadism concerning sectors such as the food and beverage industry, travel agencies, insurance sector and tourism labor market, and we designed this thematic issue to address these knowledge gaps. Methodologically, we prioritized using geographic information systems (GIS) in addition to qualitative techniques.

Focusing on managing operational processes, we established a dedicated email address to communicate with authors and reviewers effectively. We prepared a folder on Google Drive to organize our files systematically and created a detailed work plan and schedule. We constantly communicated with the journal editors, who provided unwavering support during the preparation process. Subsequently, adhering to the journal's policy and the requirements of the thematic issue, we selected our authors and requested structured abstracts from them. We subjected the abstracts to preliminary evaluation and initiated the peer review process. Finally, we completed the editorial checks.

How did you engage with different stakeholder groups?

We ensured the participation of stakeholders in the thematic issue through two strategies:



- (1) The first strategy involved stakeholders contributing as authors to the thematic issue. In this regard, we solicited two types of viewpoint articles. One author was an expert from the Bursa Eskişehir Bilecik Development Agency (BEBKA) in Turkey, while the other was a representative from the Executive Committee of the TOBB Insurance Agents Association.
- (2) The second strategy involved stakeholder-focused data collection methods for research articles and case studies. In this direction, data were collected using various techniques from stakeholders in the food and beverage industry, the accommodation sector, tourist guides, travel agencies, insurance representatives and the tourism labor market.

What were the highlights from stakeholder group interactions?

By involving stakeholders from different sectors, the thematic issue likely benefited from diverse perspectives, experiences and expertise. This diversity could lead to a more comprehensive understanding of digital nomadism's challenges, opportunities and trends and its impact on the tourism industry.

Thinking about your peer review process: what went well and why?

Positive aspects of the review process:

- (1) Requesting reviewers to prioritize themes resulted in stronger thematic consistency in the articles.
- (2) Focusing on improving articles rather than rejecting them allowed authors to enhance their contributions.
- (3) Two or more reviews improved the quality of articles and ensured a comprehensive evaluation.
- (4) The involvement of the editorial team provided additional support in managing reviewers' evaluations and feedback.

Positive aspects of the review process:

- (1) Some difficulties were encountered with timing, leading to longer-than-expected evaluation processes for the articles.

What are the most significant outcomes of your theme issue in terms of the contributions to knowledge and/or professional practice?

- (1) The COVID-19 pandemic, while halting traditional tourism, is encouraging the rise of digital nomadism. Digital nomads act as influencers by sharing their experiences on social media, providing a source of information for potential digital nomads, and potentially influencing destination promotion.
- (2) Psychological support and safety play a significant role in destination selection for digital nomads. Well-functioning healthcare services and secure living spaces are critical in destinations digital nomads prefer.
- (3) Despite seeking an independent lifestyle, digital nomads also feel the need to form communities and socialize. Therefore, safe and social living spaces are important in determining their preferred destinations.

- (4) The rise of digital nomadism affects the economic structure of destination countries. Digital nomads can contribute to local economies or stimulate the development of certain sectors. Therefore, destination countries need to align their economic strategies with the changes brought about by digital nomadism.
- (5) Digital nomads experience various cultural interactions in their travel destinations, enriching their experiences and fostering closer relationships with local communities.
- (6) Beyond defining the phenomenon of digital nomadism and this new tourist typology, it suggests that tourism should also be reconsidered. Traditional tourism definitions may need to be updated to align with new trends, such as the rise of digital nomadism.

What are the implications for management action and applied research from your theme issue outcomes?

- (1) To manage the digital nomadism trend and mitigate its impacts, collaboration and partnerships should be developed between destination managers, local businesses and civil society organizations. This presents an important opportunity to strengthen the local economy, provide social services and support environmental projects.
- (2) The digital nomadism trend may not be compatible with traditional legal regulations. Therefore, updating legal regulations in the tourism sector and migration policies may be necessary. Research can contribute to this by identifying existing legal gaps and helping to align the legal framework with digital nomadism.
- (3) Marketing and promotion strategies tailored to the preferences and needs of digital nomads should be developed. Special products and services for digital nomads should also be developed, including innovative solutions such as flexible workspaces, healthcare packages and social activities. Additionally, special services such as insurance products suitable for digital nomadism can be developed in the tourism sector.
- (4) Destinations preferred by digital nomads should have a strong and reliable digital infrastructure. This may include fast internet access, workspaces and digital services.
- (5) The environmental impacts of digital nomadism should be managed, and sustainable tourism policies should be developed. This may include strategies to reduce carbon footprints, preserve natural resources and support environmental projects contributing to local economies.
- (6) Education and awareness programs should be organized for tourism sector employees and other stakeholders to help them understand and manage the impacts of digital nomadism. This can help them become competent in providing services tailored to digital nomads' specific needs and preferences.
- (7) Digital nomads may want to integrate culturally and socially into their destinations. Therefore, managers should organize various activities and programs to promote cultural interaction.

Having served as a *WHATT* theme editors, what did you enjoy about the experience?

As a *WHATT* theme editors, we thoroughly enjoyed the unique experience of undertaking this role for the first time. It was fascinating to witness how the topics, once allocated,

gradually formed a cohesive whole as the drafts of the articles arrived, with their findings supporting one another. The process was well-managed, demonstrating effective planning. Finally, seeing everything come together like pieces of a puzzle was truly exhilarating.

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About the Theme Editors:

Professor Dr Semra Günay is Academician with a geography background at the Faculty of Tourism at Anadolu University. Her research interests include tourism planning, geographic information systems (GIS), gastronomy and tourism, tourism geography and food geography. She has worked on numerous national and international tourism projects and has publications in this field.

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Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes (WHATT) aims to make a practical and theoretical contribution to hospitality and tourism development, and we seek to do this by using a key question to focus attention on an industry issue. If you would like to contribute to our work by serving as a *WHATT* theme editor, please contact the Managing Editors Hale Özgüt and Ali Öztüren via the Emerald website.