

EXPLORING THE FEASIBILITY OF ADAPTING A DIGITAL NOMADIC LIFESTYLE

by

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## ABSTRACT

The objective of this exploratory research was to identify factors that may impact the feasibility of adapting a digital nomadic lifestyle. A literary review was completed in order to better identify the scope of digital nomadism today. Secondly, primary research was collected via interview from ten digital nomads under IRB standards. Insights gathered from three different variables including planning preparation, monetization, and costs were explored in order to identify variables that may affect the feasibility of adopting a digital nomadic lifestyle. The results of the study identified twelve possible barriers to entry to a digital nomadic lifestyle.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	3
INTRODUCTION.....	4
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	6
History of Social Media & Digital Nomads.....	6
Definition of Digital Nomads & Variations.....	8
A Digital Nomadic Framework.....	12
The “Sponsored Nomad”.....	12
The “Niche Nomad”.....	13
The “Novice Nomad”.....	13
Industry Standards.....	14
OUTLINE OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	15
Define Research Question, Analysis Objectives, and Technique to be Used.....	15
Develop the Analysis Plan.....	15
Evaluate the Assumptions Underlying the Technique.....	16
Estimate the Model and Assess Overall Model Fit.....	16
Interpret the Results.....	16
Validate the Model.....	17
IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST.....	17
RESULTS AND ANALYSIS.....	19
Overview.....	19
Variable One: Planning Preparation.....	22
Personal Planning.....	23

Personal Planning: Travel Purpose.....	23
Personal Planning: Defining Longevity of Travels.....	25
Personal Planning: Identifiable Character Traits.....	27
Logistical Planning.....	29
Logistical Planning: Logistical Research.....	29
Logistical Planning: Safety and Health Concerns.....	30
Logistical Planning: Packing Regimens.....	35
Logistical Planning: Site Selection.....	36
Variable Two: Monetization.....	37
Freelancers.....	38
Digital Nomadic Social Media Influencers.....	39
Trade Professionals.....	43
Variable Three: Costs.....	44
Cost of Living.....	44
Startup Costs.....	47
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS.....	49
CONCLUSION.....	57
REFERENCES.....	58
APPENDIX.....	62
IRB Consent Form.....	62
Interview Questionnaire.....	65

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## INTRODUCTION

Globalization, one theme of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is rapidly changing the business environment. Due to the high density of human movement, information has become more readily available than ever before in history. One facet of information, social media, fundamentally changed the way that internet users choose to interact and exchange information. Unlike other modes of communication, such as mass communication or advertisement, social media provides an online platform for users to consume entertainment and information at will. Solo entrepreneurs, independent contractors, and employees, also known as content creators, produce customized content for an intended target audience.

Content created by individuals or businesses can range in medium including photographs, videos, gifs, infographics, blogs, and memes. The goal behind producing content is to attract an audience to complete a call to action, known as a conversion. There are several variations of conversions, including clicks, likes, and shares. The type of conversion is dependent upon the goal of the content creator's campaign and can be measured through statistical analyses using key performance indicators (KPI's). Content creators measure KPI's for benchmark purposes, such as how much awareness and attraction is generated online. Content creators typically specialize in a particular industry, such as travel or fitness, to position themselves as credible sources of information. Users typically consume information and entertainment relevant to lifestyle habits and classify creators into aspirational groups.

Among numerous niche content creator communities lies a specific travel genre that is termed, "digital nomadism." These specific content creators, called digital nomads, are solo entrepreneurs that travel indefinitely to produce location-based content as a primary source of income independent of a fixed location. Digital nomads frequently produce niche content such as

lifestyle vlogs on YouTube, travel blog articles on Wix, and photographs on Instagram. For instance, Sawyer Hartman, a professional filmmaker and photographer, is a digital nomad and monetizes by posting travel vlogs online, offering professional cinematography advice via Instagram, and selling personally branded camera filters via a personal website (Graser).

Similar to Hartman, thousands of other digital nomads are monetizing from establishing awareness and credibility among large segmented audiences. The internet publishing and broadcasting industry is viable, with revenue estimated at \$111.9 billion and a growth rate of 8.9% annually until 2022 (Hadad). In particular, digital nomads can monetize on content in several ways including advertisements, sponsorships, and paid content. Nomads create a pay structure that allow them to produce content over an extended period of time while traveling indefinitely. Content that is paid for by the content creator consists of exclusive or custom content, such as fan merchandise or an e-book. As of 2017, paid content comprises an estimated 33.6% of industry revenue (Hadad). Other forms of monetization, such as advertisements and sponsorships, occur between contracts with businesses to promote a service or product. Businesses invest in digital nomads that have similar demographics as an extension of product placement marketing, word of mouth (WOM) marketing, and influencer marketing on the internet to reach a desired target market. Converse to paid content, advertisements comprise the majority of industry revenue at an estimated 51.1% (Hadad).

Adopting the digital nomadism lifestyle is not simple and involves mitigating several unknown variables prior to adoption. This study will seek to identify factors that impact the feasibility of adopting a digital nomadic lifestyle, exploring variables such as planning preparation, monetization, and costs. First, a conduction of a literary review on the history of social media and digital nomads, further taking a look into digital nomadism and its several



variations, providing an explanation of a digital nomadic framework and an explanation of the digital nomadic industry standards will be necessary. Next, methodology and results will be compiled into an effective guide for the beginner digital nomad. Finally, the discussion and conclusion will contain implications for the future.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **I. History of Social Media & Digital Nomads**

In order to examine the optimization of digital nomadic industry practices, it is first important to understand a brief history of technology nomads and social media. A brief examination of the use of social media is necessary since it is the platform that digital nomads use to post content, interact with users, and generate revenue. Today, social media is defined as, “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content” (Kaplan).

Although social media, specifically e-commerce, is relatively innovative in accordance to human history, the concept is not. Humans created marketplaces in 1,000 AD in Europe, allowing for commerce to spur. According to Mark W. Schaefer, Director of Schaefer Marketing Solutions and digital educator, there are four primary characteristics that defined original marketplaces: (1) bazaars that allowed for efficient communication, (2) markets that occur in real-time, (3) requirement that vendor’s revenue was dependent upon WOM, and (4) that “there was a primal need to connect” (Schaefer). With the advent of advertising and mass communication, however, the four defining characteristics of the commonplace market vanished. Later, the introduction of social media flourished because it replicated the four primary characteristics developed by the same 1,000 A.D. European markets. In fact, social media also

(1) allows for efficient communication and customization, (2) operates in real-time, (3) rates businesses allowing for WOM, and (4) allows users to relate to one another, connecting to the primal desire to communicate (Schaefer). These innate characteristics, the same foundational features found in European marketplaces, are variables that determined the success of social media and e-commerce.

Interestingly, digital nomadism, also can be traced back to primal human characteristics. In fact, nomadism is fundamentally embedded in primal human nature, and movement is a common theme that exists among all able-bodied species. In fact, the earliest forms of civilization display similar nomadic characteristic traits by displaying the tendency to move frequently (Nomadism). This movement is logical; according to Professor John L. Meyers, nomadism's root definition translates to, "a pastoral community habitually or intermittently mov[ing] with its herds over a wide area of essentially similar and continuous pasture" (Meyers). Only with the later introduction of domestication were communities able to fixate in one location. Although today's content creators may be chasing conversions instead of cattle like distant ancestors once had, the archaic definition of nomadism quickly evolved with technology. Similar to today's marketing sponsorship contract that digital nomads typically enter into with businesses, historical explorations were financially sponsored by government or private entities as well. For example, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain financially sponsored Christopher Columbus' expedition to the Americas in 1492. In fact, Columbus was granted governor of the foreign lands, appointed Spain's Admiral of the Ocean, and one-tenth of all of the foreign valuables including gold, silver, pearls, gems, and spices in the contractual agreement (Garr). Similarly, President Thomas Jefferson commissioned explorers Lewis and Clark to explore the United States of America. More recently, a joint United States-French exploration,

commissioned by the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution and the French Institute for Research and Exploration of Sea, discovered the sunken R.M.S Titanic in 1985 (Wreck). Each example serves as context for the modern sponsored digital nomad. The sponsored nomad will be further explained later; however, it is worth noting that these individuals are paid by companies to promote products, brands, and companies in exchange for monetary rewards.

Since the discovery of the Titanic in 1985, the economic, social, and digital landscape had evolved tremendously. According to an Intuit, a financial software infrastructure company, market research report, “[By 2018 we] will see a re-emergence of artisans as an economic force. Like their medieval predecessors in pre-industrial Europe and Asia, these next-generation artisans will ply their trade outside the walls of big business, making a living with their craftsmanship and knowledge.” Unlike medieval ancestors, today’s artisans, experts in a specialized field, utilize technology and rely on personal knowledge to solve global issues and create new ideologies (Intuit Future). Historically, information has never been easier or more affordable to access than it is today. The internet and social media platforms, in particular, have continued to dominate the digital landscape. Projections provide evidence that more than two-thirds of the global population will have access to the internet by 2020. Today, more than 4 billion individuals have access to cellular devices and over 500 million users populate Facebook. The twenty-tens has allowed for the adoption of personal devices, which in turn has increased globalization at a rate that the world has never experienced before (Intuit 2020).

## **II. Definition of Digital Nomads & Variations**

Today, nomadism has continued to evolve with technological advancement, such as the introduction of the internet and social media platforms. The term “digital nomad” was first identified as the industry standard definition in 1997 by authors Tsugio Makimoto and David

Manners defining it as, “a new lifestyle in which people have been freed from the constraints of time and location, thanks to the progress of mobile intelligent devices and high-speed communication networks” (Makimoto). Makimoto, in a later publication, explains that certain technologies were necessary for the modern phenomenon of nomadic living to occur including a smart personal device, a speedy internet connection, and cloud infrastructure.

Further implications of the term “Digital Nomadism” have been reiterated into several different definitions since Makimoto’s 1997 publication; the two most notable iterations include 1099 independent contract workers and “knowmadism.” First, independent contractors and benefits of this worker classification will be explored. Contractors are also known as “1099 workers” due to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) taxation form. According to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, an independent contractor (IC) differentiates from an employee by the following definition, “an independent contractor contracts only for a specified result, exercising little or no control over the execution of the job. An independent contractor works according to his own methods. Typically, he is a craftsman or pursues a particular trade or profession, and often he maintains an independent business operation.” Conversely, an employee-employer relationship has the defining characteristic of “right of control,” meaning that the employer, also known as the principal, has the discretion over the scope of the employee’s, also known as the agent, work.

The use of independent contractors is increasing and is expected to reach over 40% by 2020, according to an independent study by Intuit (Intuit 2020). Independent contractors are attractive hires for employers today due to their lower investment, reduced liability, and temporary employment. Independent contractors reduce numerous expenditures including federal payroll taxes, unemployment compensation insurance, workers’ compensation insurance, office space

and equipment, and tangible and intangible employee benefits. Unlike employees, independent contractors minimize liability since 1099's cannot require a minimum wage, require overtime expenses, argue in court of law against an employer for discrimination acts, unionize, or allow employers to hire illegal immigrants knowingly. Lastly, employers have more flexibility in hiring since independent contractors are typically specialized in one area of profession and, therefore are hired for a temporary period of time. Expenses including training and separation are not included in the estimation of the cost of an independent contractor (Fisherman).

Similar to an independent contractor, a relatively new term has emerged in relation to the academic field termed as a "knowmad," which also diverges from the formal definition of a traditional job. John W. Moravec, founder of Education Futures, along with eight co-authors have produced an e-book and several TED talks defining the predicted future of the human work experience through the use of the term "knowmad." A "knowmand" is "a nomadic knowledge worker- that is [a], creative, imaginative, and innovative person who can work with almost anybody, anytime, and anywhere" (Moravec). The inspiration for the term "Knowmad" was taken from Peter Drucker's, known as father of modern management, "Knowledge Workers," which was built upon the idea of an evolving work environment through the evolution of globalization and technology. "Knowmads" are held responsible for personal future endeavors and are known for creating change through their work whether it is through apprenticeship, entrepreneurship, or social activities.

In the e-book, "Knowmad Society," three iterations of society were introduced using a past, present, and future framework including society 1.0, society 2.0, and society 3.0. Society 1.0, the past, is defined as the 18<sup>th</sup> century period to the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the economy was solely dependent upon family businesses where the trade was taught by doing. The paradigm of society

2.0 was introduced with web 2.0 tools that gave creators the medium to publish creative content online via blogs and videos. As Drucker explains, knowledge workers are useful to convert ambiguous data into meaningful marketing knowledge. The final iteration of civilization, known as society 3.0, is projected as the future state of employment and defined as the true “knomadic paradigm” in three defining characteristics including the following: “(1) Accelerating technological and social change, (2) continuing globalization and horizontalization of knowledge and relationships, and (3) innovation fueled by knowmads” (Movarac). Furthermore, knowmads are described by the following ten characteristics: (1) are not defined by an age demographic, (2) are persons of professional expertise and personal knowledge, (3) are able to apply personal knowledge to real-world scenarios, (4) are highly ambitious individuals with a natural tendency to communicate among large communities, (5) are able to leverage technology regardless of location, (6) are natural learners and problem solvers, (7) are first movers on new trends, (8) are individuals that value egalitarianism workplaces, (9) are habitual humans, and (10) are not afraid to fail (Movarac).

The adoption of “knowmadism” in the western work culture is on the rise. In fact, Moverac projects that 45% of western culture will convert to “knowmadic” work principles. Now more than ever, individual professional ability is crucial for future employment. In the future, employers will only contract individuals that can create internal growth. Individuals who cannot, however, will be replaced by technology, outsourced, or forced to compete (Moverac). These trends provide evidence that individual workers including digital nomads, independent contractors, and “knowmadic” workers will continue to grow to become an exceedingly large proportion of the western working population.

### **III. A Digital Nomadic Framework**

Although current publications feature outlier digital nomads, the industry is highly fragmented with nomads specializing in segmented niche communities, such as web design, graphic design, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) consulting, photography, or writing. Kelley Dunning, a journalist for *Monday Magazine* and digital nomad, further explains the fragmentation by stating, “Google the words “digital nomad” and you will come across a slew of inspiring blogs from people who have unplugged from the traditional cubicle and are working from exotic locations all over the world.” In order to best comprehend the differing types of digital nomads, a three-pronged classification framework will be utilized based on revenue generation tactics using the following terminology recognized in proceeding order: the “sponsored nomad,” “niche nomad,” and “novice nomad.” It is worth noting, however, that nomadism is not clear-cut and the following examples are not strictly mutually exclusive.

#### **The “Sponsored Nomad”**

The sponsored digital nomad produces revenue by entering a contractual agreement with a company. Legally, a sponsorship is defined by, “a cash and/or in-kind fee paid to a property (typically a sports, entertainment, non-profit event or organization) in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with that property” (Cornwell). Therefore, the marketing implication is “the orchestration and implementation of marketing activities for the purpose of building and communicating an association to a sponsorship” (Cornwell). A company might hire a digital nomad as an employee for a long-term position, or more likely, as an independent contractor for a shorter period of time to promote a product and/or brand. Andrew Evans, for example, was hired by National Geographic to promote creative content via company social media platforms, such as Twitter and Instagram, on a sponsored “trans-Atlantic journey

from South America's Cape Horn to Africa's Cape of Good Hope" (National). Alternatively, Nathan Buchan, branded as "WorldNate," created an online business via blogging three years ago. Like Evans, Buchan produces revenue through business sponsorships, but instead promotes products via blog posts and makes a commission on sale referrals (Buchan).

### **The "Niche Nomad"**

Conversely, the niche digital nomad produces revenue through other promotional avenues, such as awareness and self-branding. Niche digital nomads typically acquire unique, specialized skills for the purpose of entertainment, to encourage others to adapt the lifestyle, or both. For example, engaged digital nomads, Kyle Zuvella and Andrea Cortina, specialize in "travel hacking." By managing dozens of credit cards, Zuvella and Cortina were able to rack up two million airline miles together. The couple currently maintains an online blog that teaches individuals how to rack up credit cards strictly for the promotions (Cross).

### **The "Novice Nomad"**

The rarest form of digital nomadism, the novice, is an individual or group of individuals chosen by a company through a promotional program, such as a sweepstakes or contest, to embark on a funded short-term trip to share experiences with a large audience. These individuals are not professional content creators, but, more or less, representative of the target market. Red Bull, for example, will renew its "Can You Make It Campaign" for 2018 where two hundred college aged groups from over sixty countries will travel Europe over seven days using only Red Bull cans as currency. While en route, students are required to post updates to social media via photographs and videos (Red Bull). Similarly, Pacific Sunwear (PacSun), a teenage clothing store, launched its Golden State of Mind (GSOM) campaign in 2014 featuring a photography



contest via social media platform, Instagram. Pacsun awarded selected winners with an all-expense paid trip to an American city to create content to share with friends (PacSun's Summer).

#### **IV. Industry Standards**

Although digital nomadism is a relatively new industry, the field is beginning to take form. In a 2003 publication on employment-at-will, Tara J. Radin and Patricia H. Werhane predicted, “[a rise in contingent workers] could lead to the formation of new professional associations...” Although a digital nomadic professional association has not yet formed, conferences have begun. Specifically, the “Digital Nomad Conference,” known as DNX, was the first European conference designed specifically for digital nomads. Since 2012, DNX has offered annual keynote speakers, workshops, and conferences in three languages. Today, DNX strives to “support all the digital nomads worldwide and connect them with each other. We not only help people live free, self-determined lives from anywhere around the globe, but also try to help them improve all other areas of their lives” (Hargarten). Despite the efforts of DNX, the digital nomadism industry remains highly fragmented.

Previous publications on the subject of digital nomadism advertised the lifestyle as easily adaptable, allowing individuals to decrease expenditures while accomplishing the aspiration of traveling. A popular framework for existing academic publications is to create awareness of digital nomadism through the use of one content creator's anecdote. Personal stories, although intriguing, provide only one narrow outlook on the field of digital nomadism and are not representative of a population. One area of improvement in the digital nomadism industry, however, is a comprehensive feasibility report for beginners covering variables such as planning preparation, expense projections, health and safety concerns, and content monetization and optimization.

## OUTLINE OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Current academic literature pertaining to digital nomadism is precise and contains information about a particular content creator's experience as a digital nomad. However, this research will attempt to provide several first-hand insights into digital nomadism. The first-hand insights will be aggregated into one holistic document. The research methodology will be defined using the following framework for conducting primary research.

### **I. Define Research Question, Analysis Objectives, and Technique to be used**

The objective of this primary research will be to determine the feasibility of the adoption of a digital nomadic lifestyle for a beginner. The best way to collect data for this specific research is by conducting semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interview yields multiple benefits that other research techniques do not. According to professional researchers, Michael Jay Polonksy and David S. Walker, "The semi-structured interview differs from the personally administered questionnaire because it gives you the opportunity to gather in-depth responses that reflect the insights of the interviewee. It also allows you to probe into issues and pursue unexpected revelations" (Polonksy 186). Finally, the semi-structured interviews will most likely take place online or electronically via mediums such as Skype, Google Hangouts, or Facetime.

### **II. Develop the Analysis Plan**

Without a budget for paid interviewees, at least fifty potential participants should be contacted to yield beneficial results. The types of variables necessary for this analysis will be qualitative, non-metric. These variables, unlike metric, are limited in statistical application and can only be coded to a certain extent prior to analysis. The highest level of computation will be an aggregation of results, such as means.

### **III. Evaluate the Assumptions Underlying the Technique**

Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted, administered, and analyzed by the researcher in order to gather primary information on each variable of exploration. Prior to conducting the interviews, the international review board (IRB) approved the study to protect the rights of participants. The consent of the interviewee was obtained prior to collecting data. An example of a consent form is provided in the appendix of this study. The resulting information was collected qualitatively. Interview questions were pre-determined and standardized for each interviewee. Questions were sent electronically to the digital nomad prior to the interview for preparation purposes. Probing techniques were used when necessary. The interviews were recorded for validity and documentation purposes.

### **IV. Estimate the Model and Assess Overall Model Fit**

Interview techniques best fit in the study because the resulting data is unstructured. In order to gain the most knowledgeable understanding of the feasibility of digital nomadism, gathering personal evidence on each variable was necessary. Fitting the interpretations into a structure, such as a survey, would result in loss of necessary detail and validity.

### **V. Interpret the Results**

Interpretation of the data was conducted after all interviews have concluded. The interpretation methods selected were unbiased in interpretation. Direct quotes were used for qualitative data collected. The goal of the interpretation was to yield aggregated results consisting of multiple digital nomad's experiences.

## VI. Validate the Model

For large data sets testing hypothesizes that want to generalize the findings of a sample to the population, validation is often required or preferred. In other sets of data, however, validation is not required since it is exploratory research. Since this research is exploratory in nature, validation will not be conducted in this analysis.

### IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

Prior to conducting interviews, the following checklist was obtained from a resource entitled, “Designing and Managing a Research Project: A Business Student’s Guide” by Michael Jay Polonsky and David S. Waller. The primary objective of the checklist is to ensure that the interviews were conducted with an appropriate and professional tone.

#### **In-Depth Semi-Structured Interviews Variables**

<b>Structure</b>	The structure was planned logically and sensitively. A hierarchical method was used for the basis. In other words, broad questions were asked before detailed questions.
<b>Participants</b>	The sample is clarified. Ten professional digital nomads were interviewed. The basis on which the digital nomads were included is dependent upon the preliminary research conducted on the definition of digital nomadism and the depth of the work they have previously conducted in the field.
<b>Interviewer(s)</b>	Time was taken to confirm skills, practice, and use of “fishbowl” technique for practice so that the observers can give constructive feedback prior to conducting interviews. As the interviewer, I dressed business casual and consulted with my thesis advisor on dress prior to conducting interviews.
<b>Questions</b>	The questions were structured hierarchically beginning with broad and ending with detailed covering content on each variable. The questions prompted for open-ended responses by beginning with phrases such as, “Tell me more about...” or “Can you explain...”

<b>Decide on Analysis</b>	Pre-coding was not necessary for this type of analysis. Since the sample is relatively small, participants were chosen carefully and pre-coding would not generate useful results.
<b>Pretest</b>	The analysis questions were pre-tested on a sample of TCU undergraduate students and were reviewed by the thesis supervisor prior to distribution.
<b>Timing / Appointment</b>	<p>It was appropriate to send the questions to the interviewees prior to the interview time and date. This allowed the interview's time and effectiveness to be maximized. Interviewees gained a scope of the objectives of the interview prior to answering.</p> <p>I was transparent with the interviewees about the advanced date and time of the appointment. Time zones were an important factor in the determination of interview times and dates. I alerted each interviewee that the interview would take about 30 minutes to an hour to complete prior to conducting interviews.</p>
<b>Location</b>	<p>I was clear that I was the only interviewer.</p> <p>I consulted with my thesis supervisor, Professor Sherrod, about the location of the interviews prior to conducting each interview. All of the interviews took place via internet channels of communication. My location when conducting the interviews was placed in a neutral, professional setting.</p>
<b>Consent</b>	Each interviewee was given the choice to either opt in or opt out of the interview at any point in time. Verbal consent was required prior to conducting the interview. Information regarding the details of the interview were distributed via e-mail.
<b>Confidentiality</b>	Confidentiality was maintained with the interviewee and stressed prior to interviewing. Names and specific details were changed for the purpose of the study.
<b>The Interview</b>	<p>I was prepared at least 10 minutes prior to the interview. Technology was tested such as the video camera, volume, microphone, and recording device.</p> <p>I conducted interviews in a professional manner, similar to a professional job interview.</p> <p>An explanation of the purpose of the interview was provided prior to conducting the interview.</p>

<b>Closure</b>	<p>I concluded the interview by asking the interviewee if they have any last comments or questions.</p> <p>After concluding with questions and concerns, the interviewee was prompted to provide a summary of their responses to highlight the main points of the interview.</p> <p>After transcription, the interviewee was sent a summary of the interview in order to correct any mistakes or provide more detail.</p> <p>I thanked each interviewee and expressed appreciation for their time and contribution of expertise.</p>
<b>Transcription</b>	<p>After the interview concluded, a summary was produced within one week of the initial interview. The recording will serve as documentation for details and direct quotes.</p>
<b>Input to Next Phase</b>	<p>The question results were input directly into the paper when appropriate under confidentiality.</p>

## RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

### **I. Overview**

Over the course of three weeks, I researched, identified, and contacted forty-six digital nomads globally. Out of a total of forty-six possible respondents, twenty-four did not respond, nine respectfully declined due to a myriad of reasons, and three were accepted but unable to complete. Therefore, a total of ten digital nomads were selected, accepted, and successfully interviewed. The following two tables provide a count of the responses observed and the respondents' alias information, respectfully.

In order to qualify potential research candidates, I relied upon the first general definition of digital nomadism identified in 1997 by Tsugio Makimoto and David Manners. The following definition of digital nomadism was adapted from Makimoto and Manner's publication, "The Age of the Digital Nomad: Impact of CMOS Innovation," by stating, "[digital nomadism is] a

new lifestyle in which people have been freed from the constraints of time and location, thanks to the progress of mobile intelligent devices and high-speed communication networks.”

Interview leads were generated through a variety of mediums, including personal blogs / websites, Facebook digital nomad group communities, YouTube channels, and even, referrals. Typically search engines revealed optimal results for potential candidates, while some candidates were leads from previous primary research. Typically the source provided an e-mail address to contact or a form e-mail embedded in a website. A portion of identified potential contributors had barriers to communication, such as required payment, sophisticated rules regarding solicitation, or simply not providing contact information at all. Digital nomads that publically communicated that they preferred not to be contacted were not asked to participate in the study. The most successful source of lead e-mail generation was by far personal blogs / websites (six), while few interviews were generated from YouTube (two), Facebook digital nomad communities (one), and a referral (one).

#### **Survey Response Data**

<b>Accepted and Completed</b>	10
<b>Accepted and Never Completed</b>	3
<b>Respectfully Declined</b>	9
<b>No Response</b>	24
<b>Total Requested</b>	<b>46</b>

**Interviewee Index**

Alias Name	Lead Generation Source	Current Traveler?	Number of Countries Visited	Number of Years of Experience	Gender
<b>Liam Brooks</b>	Personal Website	Semi-Nomadic	50	7	Male
<b>Lydia Young</b>	Personal Website	Nomadic	50	8	Female
<b>Claire Hogan</b>	Facebook Group	Nomadic	15	5	Female
<b>Victoria Bennett</b>	Personal Website	Nomadic	39	4	Female
<b>Doug Bennett</b>	Personal Website	Nomadic	39	4	Male
<b>Stephanie Campbell</b>	Personal Website	Semi-Nomadic	52	9	Female
<b>Sam Wheeler</b>	Personal Website	Semi-Nomadic	95	7	Male
<b>Elliot Turner</b>	YouTube	Nomadic	60	12	Male
<b>Isabella Perez</b>	YouTube	Nomadic	27	8	Female
<b>Owen Fost</b>	Referral	Nomadic	18	7	Male
<b>COUNT /</b>		<b>7 Nomadic</b>			<b>50% Male</b>
<b>AVERAGE /</b>		<b>to 3 Semi-</b>	<b>44.5</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>to 50%</b>
<b>PROPORTION</b>		<b>Nomadic</b>			<b>Female</b>



As per IRB standards, all of the interviewee names were changed to an alias in an effort to protect privacy. In the study, digital nomad's professions ranged dramatically from commissioned artist to professional motivational speaker, for instance. The interviews spanned in time from twenty-six minutes to one hour and five minutes, for an average of 45.5 minutes per interview. The majority of respondents identified their current lifestyle as nomadic, whereas three individuals identified as "semi-nomadic." For the purposes of this study, "semi-nomadic" participants are defined as nomads that travel only periodically throughout the year. For example, a semi-nomad may indicate only moving throughout the duration of one season, such as summer. Additionally, on average respondents stated that they had visited 44.5 countries, which indicates that the majority of the sample are considered professional travelers. The number of years of experience also lends credibility to the digital nomads included in the interview, as interviewees indicated 7.2 years of experience, on average. Lastly, the sample was divided equally among male and female participants.

It is important to consider three variables including planning preparation, monetization, and costs in order to determine the feasibility of adopting a digital nomadic lifestyle. Furthermore, the feasibility of adapting a digital nomadic lifestyle was determined qualitatively and the final findings will be presented in the discussion and implications section. Now the following discussion will consider planning preparation, monetization, and costs in depth.

## **II. Variable One: Planning Preparation**

According to the research found in this study, digital nomads divided planning preparation into two subsets including personal planning and logistical preparation. Personal planning is likened to the degree in which the digital nomad has mentally prepared for a change in lifestyle. For personal preparedness, consideration of variables such as why an individual might become a

nomad or for how long becomes critical to the discussion of planning. Conversely, logistical preparation consists of more procedural planning, such as selecting locations and packing routines. Both mental preparedness and logistical planning were considered in the planning preparation section and described in more detail in the following discussion.

### **Personal Planning**

Personal planning is categorized by the amount of preparation conducted by the digital nomad prior to adapting a digital nomadic lifestyle. In this section, personal planning will explore travel purpose, longevity of travel, and identified digital nomadic traits more in depth.

#### ***Personal Planning: Travel Purpose***

A large part of the planning preparation involved in becoming a digital nomad is first deciding whether to become one. When prompted to answer, “What led you to become a digital nomad,” respondents stated a myriad of diverse answers. Three key insights emerged including freedom, self-exploration practices, or work commitments.

Certainly the first and most popular answer that arose when prompted what decisions led one to become a digital nomad was simply stated as a one-worded answer, “freedom.” In fact, four digital nomads responded with the resounding one-worded answer. Yet even more interesting, the word “freedom” resonated with each corresponding digital nomad differently. For example, in response to why he became a digital nomad, Liam Brooks responded, “Freedom. I was curious about experiencing freedom on a deeper level and not having to go back to where I started. When I go and travel, there’s always a flight back [home]. I was curious to explore the world without ever having to go back” (Liam Brooks). Although Liam’s perspective of freedom is just one example, others had agreed differently. Other digital nomads stated that freedom meant a longing for the sense of discomfort, freedom to understand another culture on a deeper level, or freedom

from organizational hierarchy. Claire Hogan, a ghostwriter and freelancer for an advertising agency, explains her freedom in a sense of job flexibility by stating, “I never really liked the nine to five lifestyle. I’m really not a morning person. I am always looking for a way to escape from that and to be my own boss” (Claire Hogan).

A second typical answer gathered from asking why digital nomads changed lifestyles was a discussion based upon self-exploration and growth. Uniquely, the digital nomads interviewed had a developed sense of self-awareness. The nomads were comfortable with listening to and fulfilling what their inner-soul had craved all along. For example, Brooks’ change occurred when he decided one night shortly after turning thirty to write down one hundred life goals that would rapidly change the course of his life. For a decade, Liam Brooks learned how to listen to his inner self, recommending that, “if you’re connected to your body, you feel it. In order to feel your body, you have to get out of your head via meditation. When there is synchronicity between the body and soul, sometimes there is a calling. That something is calling you [to a location]. If you ignore it, it will repeat itself. Pay attention to meaningful coincidences” (Liam Brooks).

Others emphasized more career driven motivations, while still promoting a sense of self-exploration. The careers of the digital nomads were diverse, ranging from a professional horse trainer to an entrepreneur running an entire advertising agency from abroad. For example, Stephanie Campbell, traveling professional artist and blogger explains, “I had just always had that passion to get to know the world. My first decision to move abroad was out of the desire to get to know the world and myself better. That’s when I started to discover my professional vocation as an artist” (Stephanie Campbell). For others, such as Sam Wheeler, it is a pure coincidence that their career required them to adapt a digital nomadic lifestyle. Sam explains

further, “The whole thing began as a sabbatical or exploration for 18 months and an adoption of a new way of working really came out. It was by chance” (Sam Wheeler).

This research, such as the insight collected from Sam, aligns with the previous secondary research that suggested that digital nomadism is growing and that 45% of Western culture will eventually convert to a nomadic lifestyle (Moverac). Additionally, the general consensus from the digital nomads interviewed revealed that digital nomadism is growing in popularity due to an influx in a desire for freedom. Liam Brooks confirms by stating, “[Digital Nomadism is] 100% going to take off because economics moves in that direction. Companies prefer to hire freelancers and they are adapting to digital nomads” (Liam Brooks). In light of motivation, each digital nomad has adapted the lifestyle with a unique purpose in mind. This research suggests that in order for a digital nomadic lifestyle to be feasible, an individual must first identify the purpose of the journey ahead.

### ***Personal Planning: Defining Longevity of Travels***

Individuals should also define the longevity of their travels. Out of the digital nomads interviewed, seven are still actively pursuing digital nomadism, three classify themselves as “semi-nomadic,” and zero no longer consider themselves digital nomads. In response to the longevity of his lifestyle as a digital nomad, Liam Brooks responds, “I personally feel like it’s like a phase to experience something and then move away from something else. It’s a really valuable phase and beneficial, even if it’s just an experiment to see if you like it or not” (Liam Brooks). Stephanie Campbell, one of the most experienced digital nomads of the sample, adds, “There’s highs and there’s lows. I think that the open-ness is thrilling and it’s so fun to call the world your home. But we’re hardwired and after a while, you start to long for more stable connections. For me I’m really glad I got to do it” (Stephanie Campbell). Conversely, other

individuals, such as Lydia Young, would disagree by stating that the digital nomadic lifestyle is adaptable for long periods of time as long as the migration is slow. According to Young, the key to success lies in moving at a slower rate of every eight months to two years to avoid getting burnt out. Young expands by stating, “For me personally, it’s more of a lifestyle and nomadism is in my personality and blood. I don’t think that I will ever settle down in a normal context.... It’s part of my passion and it’s not uncomfortable for me [to constantly travel]” (Lydia Young).

Each digital nomad, connected only by choice of lifestyle and having differing sets of experiences, had their own opinion regarding whether or not a digital nomadic lifestyle is sustainable for long-term implementation. Although there was not a consensus on whether or not the lifestyle was sustainable for a lifetime, there were two identifiable insights. First, none of the digital nomads interviewed identified themselves as no longer nomadic or planning to fully quit anytime soon. Secondly, three digital nomads identified their lifestyles as “semi-nomadic.” Out of the three identified, two reported that they were beginning to transition into a more stable lifestyle with the goal of finding a companion. Stephanie Campbell expands on her longing for companionship by stating, “I don’t think my lifestyle is sustainable for a long time unless you do it with a partner. After a number of years, it ceases to fulfill you” (Stephanie Campbell). The outlier reported that a level of non-movement was necessary to accomplish the amount of work that they would like to achieve in their lifetime. Overall, adapting a digital nomadic lifestyle may or may not be sustainable for long periods of time depending upon the individual. For younger individuals, digital nomadism may not be sustainable for long periods of time due to a longing for companionship. Additionally, a digital nomadic lifestyle may also not be recommended for older individuals that are concerned with whether or not they have successfully contributed enough to society. Conversely, digital nomadism appears to be more sustainable for individuals

traveling with a partner, as six out of ten digital nomads responded that they traveled with a partner. Overall, age and relationship status appear to be primary contributors as to whether or not adapting a digital nomadic lifestyle is sustainable for longer periods of time.

### ***Personal Planning: Identifiable Character Traits***

Sustainability of a digital nomadic lifestyle may not only be dependent upon the individual's age and marital status, but also on individual personality traits. Despite each having wildly different experiences, each digital nomad interviewed revealed possessing empathy for diverging cultural beliefs and a general willingness to seek out the unknown. The research gathered from the interviews revealed that a tolerance for humanity and ability to cope with ambiguous situations act as a pre-requisite to the feasibility of adapting to a digital nomadic lifestyle.

Specifically, the digital nomads interviewed revealed a sense of tolerance, humanity, and empathy for other cultures. Upon being asked whether or not they were exploiting cultures for monetary purposes, the digital nomads responded with a resounding "no." Despite being complete strangers, the digital nomads shared a unique sense of interconnectedness and sought for the greater good of community. Sam Wheeler disputes the misconception that digital nomads exploit culture by stating, "It's tough because although digital nomads are concerned first about making money or acquiring experience, but there's something to be said with balancing that self-concern with the people in the communities" (Sam Wheeler). Victoria Bennett adds, "As long as people (digital nomads) have grace and are open minded, it's just about being respectful and most [nomads] are good at not exploiting or painting cultures in a bad light" (Victoria Bennett). The general consensus among the digital nomads interviewed was that the majority of American

nomads respect differences in culture, but that the character of the digital nomad also depended on maturity level.

Additionally, all of the nomads expressed a general willingness to seek out the unknown and possessed the ability to manage an ambiguous schedule. This finding suggests that the proper personality required to become a full time digital nomad is converse to the feeling of comfort and stability in both work and personal life. Doug Bennett expresses the notion of a flexible work schedule by stating, “For me personally, routine is really uncomfortable. Waking up at the same time, going to the office, and doing the same routine for five days a week does not agree with my soul. [My wife and I] still do work 40+ hours a week, having the freedom and flexibility to stay up for as long as we want, and that’s really important for mental health” (Doug Bennett). Ambiguity not only plays a role in work, but also in personal life. Claire Hogan, for instance, expressed her frustration by explaining that the adaptation of a digital nomadic lifestyle restricts routine activities from occurring, such as going to the gym or even making long-term friendships (Claire Hogan).

In a sense, digital nomads can be nonconformists to society. Lydia Young, for instance, considered herself as a black sheep when she stated the following,

“For me personally, I think that there are a lot of Americans that need that sense of stability or security – that is what they classify as normal. For me, those things were never normal. . . . When I was growing up in California, I knew at a very early age that I didn’t fit in there. I traveled a lot at a young age. I went to 13 different schools. For some reason I just never fit in or belonged there. It was more of this feeling that I needed to go see the world and find a place for myself. I’ve always had the desire for travel.... There

wasn't a specific moment in my life [in which I knew I wanted to be a digital nomad], it was more of a natural thing for me to do.”

According to the evidence gathered, a portion of an individual's success of adapting a digital nomadic lifestyle appears to be dependent upon the individual's current character development, including the ability to adapt to ambiguous situations and empathize with cultural differences. Without these character traits, digital nomadism may not be a feasible opportunity to consider. As a consequence, this finding potentially limits the feasibility of adapting to a digital nomadic lifestyle.

### **Logistical Planning**

Logistical planning is categorized by the amount of research conducted prior to traveling to a new destination, safety and health concerns, packing regimens, and the decision making model used by digital nomads to select new destinations. The discussion below expands upon each subset in detail.

#### ***Logistical Planning: Logistical Research***

Surprisingly, eight out of ten digital nomads interviewed stated that they did little to no research about a new travel destination prior to traveling. Of the little research that was conducted, digital nomads primarily focused on Internet availability and booking living space accommodations. For instance, Doug Bennett shared that he only conducts a quick Google search prior to booking a flight, being sure to filter for information regarding cellular service availability and which neighborhoods to avoid. Bennett even alluded to the Travel Channel as a reliable source of information (Doug Bennett). Some digital nomads went as far as to say that they would just book a one-way ticket to a new destination prior to even contracting work. Lydia Young explains, “When I was working with horses, I would just book a one-way ticket and when



I was there I would just start contacting the horse stables in that area [for work]” (Lydia Young). For experienced individuals like Liam Brooks and Lydia Young, logistical research is as simple as booking a flight and leaving. Conversely, the nomad that did the most research, Owen Fost, explained that he and his wife explore more variables online prior to booking, including Internet reliability, affordability, food quality, safety, transportation, health amenity accessibility, tourism rates, and loyalty air mile deals (Owen Fost).

From this qualitative analysis, it appears that conducting research prior to visiting a new travel destination is of little importance to experienced digital nomads. However, prior research is still important for the beginner nomad. All digital nomads included in this study possessed four or more years of experience, which qualifies them to travel with little to no prior knowledge of a new travel destination. Victoria Bennett explains the importance of research as a beginner nomad by stating, “In the first year, we (my husband and I) did a lot of research. Now we’ll get off the plane and have no idea” (Victoria Bennett). According to this insight, travel research does not appear to be a barrier to entry to becoming a digital nomad. Beginner nomads, however, often have to research more than experienced ones. Therefore, prior conduction of research does not limit the feasibility of becoming a digital nomad.

### ***Logistical Planning: Safety and Health Concerns***

Safety and health concerns closely align with the same logic used for researching a new travel destination for digital nomads. Since all countries have at least one form of risk involved, the majority of digital nomads responded with hesitancy to traveling safety questions. Liam Brooks pointed out that in some cases, for instance, Bali is safer than the United States and that safety is simply an outcome of perception (Liam Brooks). In relation to general safety concerns,

Owen Fost was particularly helpful in identifying how he and his wife mitigate potential risk factors when visiting a new country:

“Thankfully the Peace Corps taught us a lot about this. It’s important to be aware of what the risks are in each country, to think about how to conduct yourself in a way that matches the place you are in and to have basic common sense about valuables and personal behavior. Avoid seedy areas and activity. Don’t display your valuables or leave them out like you might at home. We try to avoid countries or cities that might have more risk or concerns than others altogether.” (Owen Fost)

Conversations regarding basic safety concerns spurred additional conversations regarding a niche set of safety skills necessary for women traveling alone, self-defense training, and life threatening encounters.

An interesting insight was sparked when a noticeable difference occurred between male and female participants. In particular, a larger proportion of female digital nomads were more concerned with mitigating potential risk factors and emphasizing safety than male digital nomads. Lydia Young uses her knowledge that she has gained from traveling to produce instructional safety content specifically for women travelers. Young hopes to reach a female target demographic in order to empower solo women to travel with confidence. For example, Young gives an example of a time that she visited India to express her experience traveling alone as a single female by stating, “There is nothing I can do to pretend I am a local person. I am automatically the most interesting thing on the street and every man is staring at me [because of my blue eyes, blonde hair, and fair skin tone].” Lydia expresses the importance of being aware of her surroundings and learning the boundaries of a culture prior to visiting to avoid getting taken advantage of. Young says the best tip that she can give a solo woman traveler is to always recruit

a native woman, because she has the knowledge to “defend you like a momma bear.” Young’s content can be purchased online, which shows that there is a need in the market for solo women digital nomads to educate themselves about safety prior to traveling (Lydia Young).

In line with this finding, an additional insight was gathered in accordance to encountering life-threatening dangers. Of those individuals surveyed, 80% of nomads responded that they had previously been in a near-death experience while traveling abroad. Males were more likely to have reported physical danger, while females were more likely to have reported sexual harassment. Furthermore, male digital nomads were less concerned with the life-threatening dangers they had encountered, and overall reported to have experienced less trouble while traveling. Liam Brooks, for instance, recounts a time he was bitten by a venomous snake, but quickly softened the statement by stating, “The snake [incident] can happen anywhere, you don’t have to travel really” (Liam Brooks). Conversely, female digital nomads tended to be more passionate about safety issues while traveling and had more occurrences involving sexual harassment. For example, Victoria Bennett revealed in her interview that not only was she attacked in Turkey, but that she also encountered a near-death experience in South Africa where she had befriended an individual that intended to murder her. The conversation about safety stopped abruptly after she revealed that she could no longer go back anytime soon (Victoria Bennett). This critical insight reveals that gender is an important determining factor in whether the adaptation of a digital nomadic lifestyle is feasible. Sixty percent of the women interviewed, or three out of five women, revealed that they had either been sexually or verbally harassed while on their travels. Likewise, zero men in the study revealed that they had encountered sexual harassment during their experience as a digital nomad. According to the individuals interviewed,

females appear to travel at a higher risk than men do and appear to be more likely to be taken advantage of.

Additional safety tactics for both men and women were also discussed, including self-defense training. Defense training was perceived by digital nomads as being “a good skill to have” in foreign countries, as it is anywhere in the world. Doug Bennett further explains the slippery slope of recommending self-protection training by stating, “For us to recommend someone to do that, it puts out this image that the world is more dangerous than staying in your home country” (Doug Bennett). Overall, none of the respondents were trained in self-defense, but were interested in learning more about it. This research suggests that self-defense training may not be necessary to learn prior to the adaptation of a digital nomadic lifestyle.

Evidence collected from conversations regarding general safety while abroad revealed more information about niche issues, such as safety differences between men and women, near-death experiences, and self-defense training. Many concerns about whether the adaptation of a digital nomadic lifestyle is realistically feasible arise from these discussions. Despite the fact that a certain level of risk will always be present in any location, it was found that female digital nomads are at higher risk of sexual harassment and had a larger awareness for self-protection than male counterparts. Solo women digital nomads should be aware of safety issues arising from traveling in diverse sets of cultures prior to making a change in lifestyle to digital nomadism. Conversely, male counterparts were at a higher risk for encountering physical dangers, such as motorbike accidents or hiking disasters. Male digital nomads should take more caution in activities that involve adventure and rapidly changing climates. Despite the fact that 80% of digital nomads interviewed reported experiencing a life-threatening encounter while traveling, digital nomads perceived being at relatively low risk for hazardous events. This

finding suggests that although the probability of at least one life-threatening danger occurring is high, the amount of times that it does occur is relatively low. Additional precautions, such as self-defense, are rarely taken into consideration as part of the digital nomadic lifestyle. In fact, none of the digital nomads interviewed were trained in self-defense. Overall, safety concerns, particularly for solo women travelers, present a general danger to the feasibility of the adaptation of a digital nomadic lifestyle. The individual considering adapting a digital nomadic lifestyle must take these safety concerns into account.

In relation to safety comes another variable that needs to be taken into consideration, which is maintaining a healthy lifestyle while traveling. Twenty percent of nomads in the study, including Stephanie Campbell, responded that they regularly make trips back to their origin city in order to receive healthcare and only visit foreign hospitals upon emergency. Another popular answer was that the key to maintaining good health was to refrain from eating processed foods and consuming food groups that were high in nutrients. Conversely, two digital nomads were quick to admit that they do not maintain good health: “We’re extremely unhealthy people. That’s the answer” (Victoria Bennett and Doug Bennett). Another unexpected answer occurred when Liam Brooks responded, “Visiting doctors is not health. Health is something way deeper than that in the sense that it is the question of balance. You can be unhealthy in your mind or in your finances” (Liam Brooks). Of the digital nomads surveyed, none of the respondents ever developed a serious illness.

From the findings concerning maintaining a healthy lifestyle, it can be concluded from the sample that the majority of digital nomads are able to maintain their health while abroad when it is seen as a priority. There is a foreseeable problem regarding the feasibility of the maintenance of health, however, due to perceived travel expenses and delayed response time. The majority of

nomads surveyed still require flights home in order to receive proper healthcare, which may become expensive and time-consuming in the long run. From a feasibility aspect, this healthcare solution may not be sustainable for long periods of time. An individual considering adapting a digital nomadic lifestyle should be aware of this potential downfall.

### ***Logistical Planning: Packing Regimens***

The last attribute explored in the planning preparation process is ownership of belongings and packing styles, in particular. Although the majority of nomads interviewed reported living minimalistic lifestyles, packing style was primarily dependent upon the nomad's accessibility to personal transportation. The majority of digital nomads interviewed, eight out of ten, relied on living out of a suitcase or backpack, while two replied that they owned personal transportation that helped them to store belongings. Owen Fost represented the majority of the digital nomads in the sample by simply stating, "We live out of a bag of clothes" (Owen Fost). This minimalistic lifestyle allows digital nomads to travel to the next destination as quickly as possible. Liam Brooks explained his science of packing by stating, "If I want to go anywhere, forty minutes and I'm out. I know how to pack it so fast. If I need to experience something and I need to go, theoretically I can do that. It's the idea that I don't have to ask for permission" (Liam Brooks). Packing lightly also allows the digital nomad to experience the culture in a new way by buying necessities on location. For instance, Stephanie Campbell explained her deep connection for the objects that she has collected traveling by stating, "I hoard memorabilia because everything becomes very memorable and my notebooks that I've filled with notes. I could live with four shirts and be fine" (Stephanie Campbell).

A valuable insight gathered from the interviews, Stephanie Campbell's in particular, suggests that digital nomads find more value and happiness in the accumulation of experiences

rather than financial wealth. Even the nomads that have accessibility to personal transportation, such as a car or recreational vehicle, still promote living a minimalistic lifestyle. In addition, minimalists are often speculated as frugal, however that assumption is far from the truth. For example, Liam Brooks explained that he could have the most expensive laptop yet still be a minimalist (Liam Brooks). Minimalistic principals are applied elsewhere as well. For Elliot Turner and his partner, minimalism is defined as living out of a traveling 200-square-foot Airstream recreational vehicle (Elliot Turner).

Transitioning to a minimalistic lifestyle is a personal choice and does not appear to prevent an individual from becoming a digital nomad. Travel baggage is scalable and dependent upon the individual's comfort level. However, the adaptation of a minimalistic lifestyle and packing style is dependent upon an individual's willingness to reduce. From a scalability standpoint, the digital nomadic lifestyle appears to be feasible to obtain if the individual is willing to reduce belongings.

### ***Logistical Planning: Site Selection***

Lastly, the decision-making model that nomads use to select new travel destinations is highly dependent upon the type of work each digital nomad is involved in. The majority of digital nomads interviewed responded that they choose a new travel destination based upon work requirements, word of mouth, or simply desire. For some nomads, work determines where their next location will be because it requires the individual to be on-site. For instance, the commission she makes from her art guides Stephanie Campbell to her next destination, just as a new horse-training client guides Lydia Young to hers. Similarly, a portion of nomads interviewed revealed that company sponsorships or tourism boards will determine their path to the next location. For others, location is not an important contributing factor in completing work

objectives. For example, all Claire Hogan needs to keep her freelance business up and running is a reliable computer and Internet access. Hogan states that she and her husband, travel frequently based upon desire to visit a location. Attributes in Hogan's decision-making model often include affordability, weather, and the potential to meet individuals that have similar interests. In particular, Claire Hogan points out that she and her husband frequently use "meetup.com" or Facebook events to make friends while on-the-go (Claire Hogan).

Overall, the decision making model that digital nomads use to plan their next location appears to be highly dependent upon their career. In light of primary business principles, it is critical for a digital nomad to earn more revenue than their expenses. In a sense, every digital nomad is considered an entrepreneur or independent contractor. At this time, monetization and cost of living become critical factors in the discussion of whether digital nomadism is a sustainable lifestyle.

### **III. Variable Two: Monetization**

Digital nomads must generate a form of income in order to sustain an on-the-go lifestyle. Contrary to popular belief, all digital nomads' primary income does not result from content published online about their lifestyle. In fact, many digital nomads interviewed in the study did not monetize from the content posted about their lifestyle or chose not to be included in sponsorships. Thus, three different forms of revenue streams were identified from the results of the digital nomad interviews, including five freelancers, three social media influencers, and two trade professionals. It is important to note that digital nomads in the study may monetize from multiple sources of income, but were classified into one of three separate segments for the purposes of this study.



## Freelancers

Half of the digital nomads interviewed responded that their primary income was attributed to freelancing activities. From the interviews conducted, freelancers can be loosely defined as professionals that specialize in digital marketing services such as content creation, website optimization services, or campaign metric monitoring. Freelancers differ from social media influencers, who often execute similar digital activities, in that freelancers are hired by clients to execute services on behalf of the client's campaign objectives. Digital nomadic freelancers are nomadic in a sense that their career affords them the opportunity to adapt to a nomadic lifestyle instead of requiring them to do so. For example, Claire Hogan lives a digital nomadic lifestyle with her husband working as an off-site freelancer for an advertising agency writing blog posts, product pages, and optimizing website landing pages. Hogan relies on writing blog posts as her main source of income and is paid a flat rate per post. Freelancers are primarily focused on the optimization of their client's campaigns first and with their own online presence second.

However, it is not rare for freelancers to maintain an online social presence as well. Four out of five freelancers in the study choose to outwardly share their personal life and digital nomadic lifestyle on online mediums such as blogs, micro blogs, or video blogs. Although digital nomadic freelancers may appear to monetize from the content produced on their personal blogs, this is not always true. Doug Bennett reflects on his choice to not monetize on the content he posts about his lifestyle by stating, "I am not sponsored. I have done different little campaigns for people, but I realized that I hated it. There is one company that gives us free gear, but we don't even do anything for them. I don't monetize any of the content that I promote" (Doug Bennett). Another digital nomad, Stephanie Campbell also chooses not to monetize because she

wants to respect the relationship she has with her readers. Thus, monetization of content appears to have a kickback that most freelancers are not willing to risk. It appears as though monetization tactics, such as sponsorships, de-value the trust and credibility of the digital nomad's online presence. Overall, the majority of freelancers interviewed were risk-adverse by making an intent decision to prohibit monetization practices for fear of losing credibility and degrading their reputation.

### **Digital Nomadic Social Media Influencers**

For some digital nomads, however, sponsorships are a viable source of income. Three out of the ten participants in the study indicated that their main source of income can be attributed to company sponsorships. Digital nomadic social influencers are perceived as travel gurus, and often produce content focusing on awareness and education of digital nomadic lifestyles. Since there are not any regulations regarding professional certification, social influencers are often self-positioned in the market and focus on branding to build credibility. Liam Brooks explains, "Good entrepreneurship is always validated in the market. You don't have to have the best website. You don't need a certificate or anything, you say it and go" (Liam Brooks). Stephanie Campbell explains that there were not many barriers to creating the career that she envisioned. The best advice that Campbell could give an aspiring digital nomad was to "make that really clear to the world that I am an artist [or] that I am for hire. . . . The moment that you declare it to the world, it sets it in motion that you're able to get new clients." Campbell added that for an aspiring digital nomad to become successful, he or she must take his or her profession seriously by setting the tone on his or her media (Stephanie Campbell).

Once a social influencer has set the tone, the next goal is to gain traction by captivating an audience so that businesses perceive that individual as an organic opportunity to promote new

products. For example, Sam Wheeler previously monetized from signing contract deals with tourism boards to highlight new destinations on his highly visible blog. When Wheeler and his wife began traveling, he explains, “We weren’t sponsored at all. We felt as though that work was a demonstration of our skills. It was the popularity and the demonstration of the skills is when companies began sponsoring us” (Sam Wheeler). This evidence suggests that it is imperative for social influencers to create captivating content that attracts a following and, ultimately, business sponsorships. How they optimize content, however, is dependent upon strategies like content production and search engine optimization.

First, the optimization of content was found to be highly dependent upon the digital nomad’s campaigns. In regards to content, Isabella Perez recommended using a mixture of video and imagery on multiple platforms to attract brands. Although creating content may sound easy, digital nomads mentioned that it was often hard to stay inspired. Perez opened up about her Instagram modeling career:

“Many people tell me they love travel and would love to do what I do; however, travel isn’t the main part you need to love. You have to genuinely love creating videos and photographs in order to do this. A sponsored trip is nothing like a vacation [because] it’s often rushed and most time is spent behind the camera, but I’m inspired by the content that is out there and what others are creating so that is what keeps me going. There is always room for improvement and I get inspired by watching those more experienced than I am.” (Isabella Perez)

Another social influencer, Elliot Turner, agreed that inspiration is hard to come by partly because it is so hard to take breaks. Turner and his partner have not taken a proper vacation in years (Elliot Turner). Others included in the sample stated that inspiration was driven by other factors,

such as the income or the continuous challenge to always stay innovative with new content offerings.

In addition to always creating new content, social influencers often optimized content online using search engine optimization or Google Keywords. The key insight found from interviews in regards to search engine optimization was that digital nomads must have the ability to write content that is simple to understand while demonstrating their level of expert knowledge.

Sam Wheeler explains:

“It’s really about writing content that can be digested by human beings, but yet be understood by Google. That’s it, but first you have to understand that you’re speaking to human beings. The deeper, longer lasting content that leads to greater results is that content that thinks about the audience in those terms. Answering questions that they have, speaking in plain language, and then secondarily thinking about Google. . . . It’s frustrating. We’ve seen colleague’s businesses virtually disappear overnight based on an algorithm change.” (Sam Wheeler)

As Wheeler suggested in regards to search engine optimization, it is important to appeal to the reader first and then focus on how it is interpreted by technology.

Once a digital nomad has positioned and optimized his or her content online, companies will begin to request his or her services. Sam Wheeler, companies are primarily looking for an individual that will be, first and foremost, reliable since digital nomads are moving frequently. The company will begin to search for a digital nomad once it has determined what the scope and objectives are for the campaign. Sam continues to say that companies will interview, determine whether the digital nomad matches the job description, check for availability, and then decide whether the pairing will be a good fit (Sam Wheeler). Social influencers that were interviewed

emphasized the importance of the sponsorship being mutually beneficial prior to entrance of a contract. Elliot Turner spoke passionately about his experience with sponsorships:

“We work with a lot of sponsorships, but make sure that they’re always aligned with our core values. They understand that if we don’t believe in them or their product, then we can’t promote them. Some companies just want to send us product and expect a video or content. That’s not the way we work. It has to be organic. I have to really like your product in order to promote it properly.” (Elliot Turner)

If a sponsorship is deemed to be mutually beneficial between the digital nomad and the company, then a contract will be issued. According to Isabella Perez, contracts are dependent upon the size of the company and vary from extremely long, detailed legal documents to one-page Microsoft Word documents (Isabella Perez). Elliot Turner adds that the contract is in place to outline exactly what is expected of the business and of the digital nomad. For instance, it would be reasonable for a business to outline a content production schedule for the length of a campaign, while the digital nomad might be paid in the form of a plane ticket to the destination to create the content (Elliot Turner). Additionally, Isabella Perez explained that she often uses social media platforms, such as Instagram and Facebook, to promote her sponsors. Perez elaborates by stating, “Companies hire me to produce content for them whether it be takeovers, posting on my own platforms, producing content for them, or even being a presenter and working with their own production team.” Perez’s main source of income is dependent upon the sponsorship project and differs by contract (Isabella Perez).

Once the campaign is complete, digital nomads often report on the key statistics and results. The key performance indicators are highly dependent upon the type of campaign and sponsorship. For example, Sam Wheeler emphasized that he often reports on the number of

booked tours as a result of his influence if he is working for a tourism board. Additional variability in reporting capabilities occurs depending on sophistication of the client's technology. In other words, some clients will be better positioned from a technological standpoint, such as infrastructure and investment spent on tracking services, than others to gather results in the form of insights. However, freelancers and social media influencers are not the only business models for digital nomads.

### **Trade Professionals**

The final type of digital nomad interviewed in the sample were trade professionals. Two out of the ten digital nomads interviewed monetized primarily through the application of a professional skill. In order to monetize, the digital nomads were required to be on location to complete projects. Thus, trade professionals acquired a digital nomadic lifestyle due to the nature of their careers instead of choice. For instance, Lydia Young received certification from a specialized equestrian college, which allowed her to train horses internationally. Similarly, Stephanie Campbell works as a commissioned artist that travels globally to paint murals. Campbell often stays in one place until the next job becomes available. For instance, when Campbell was asked to go to Greece to create a mural for a conference, she recounted the experience as the best month of her life despite the conference only lasting a weekend. Although Young and Campbell's professions are completely different, what unifies their work is the required on-site location for work. Commission is highly dependent upon the type of expertise that is being offered. However, another key insight showed that since physical work is being conducted, it is not unlikely for a barter to occur. Oftentimes Young recalls that she would get paid in the form of meals and living accommodations rather than currency. Other times, such as in Campbell's case, nomads are paid per project or on commission basis.

According to business acumen principles, revenue minus expenses equals income. Therefore, it is important to make the distinction of typical digital nomadic expenses prior to determining whether the lifestyle is completely feasible for beginners.

#### **IV. Variable Three: Costs**

In the study, two different costs were identified, including cost of living and startup costs. Startup costs were not perceived to be included in cost of living expenses. While startup costs were often one-time sunken expenses attributed to business, cost of living expenditures were reoccurring personal expenses that allowed digital nomads to maintain their nomadic lifestyle. The following discussion will provide more detail into the cost of living and startup costs for the digital nomads interviewed.

##### **Cost of Living**

The largest insight from the interviews was that the cost of living to maintain a digital nomadic lifestyle was perceived by interviewees as being considerably lower than that of a stationary lifestyle. Digital nomads were able to reduce their cost of living by reducing reoccurring expenses, such as utility bills or car insurance. Essentially this allows nomads to allocate more funds towards savings accounts, which often acted as buffers for unexpected events that occur by the nature of maintaining a digital nomadic lifestyle. In fact, Liam Brooks was not only able to pay off more than \$30,000 of credit card debt, but to build a six-figure business during the time he spent as a full-time nomad (Liam Brooks). Although not all digital nomads were as successful as Brooks in eliminating expenses, most nomads interviewed have careful spending habits and a minimalistic lifestyle. Claire Hogan captures the essence of financially maintaining a digital nomadic lifestyle by stating, "I have savings, I make more money than I spend, I try not to waste money, and I don't live a very lavish lifestyle. I'm

conscious not to spend my whole paycheck. When you're traveling, you always have to be aware of the unknown situations. If I were living paycheck to paycheck, it would be harder." Claire Hogan also mentioned that she often uses an online tool to help project cost of living expenses called "Numebo.com" (Claire Hogan).

Furthermore, the cost of living for digital nomads was primarily variable and dependent upon location, desired comfort level, and variability of travel. First, the variability in the cost of living for digital nomads was mostly attributed to location. The majority of digital nomads relied on their insider knowledge for cost of living indices by location, which were often rough estimates. In general, Asian countries were identified as more affordable locations to live in than European. From the information gathered, different expense projections were estimated. Lydia Young explained that it would be reasonable to budget \$10 USD a day in Asia, whereas it would be practically impossible to do so in Europe and England. Liam Brooks concurs by stating, "It depends on the destinations of where they (the digital nomad) are going. If you are committed to building an online business, you may want to start in inexpensive countries. If you are going right into travel mode and want to live comfortably in Thailand, it would be about \$6,000 [in total]. If you plan to travel in Europe, you probably need more" (Liam Brooks). Other digital nomads estimated their expenses on an average monthly basis. Owen Fost said that he regularly budgets \$1,500 USD per month for two people.

Additionally, the cost of living for digital nomads was highly dependent upon the comfortability of the digital nomad. The majority of respondents indicated that they lived a minimalistic lifestyle and that rapid travel prevented them from collecting items that would potentially weigh them down. However, budget was highly dependent upon the scalability of resources, such as housing accommodations. Some digital nomads preferred to book apartments



months in advance, while others had relied on couch surfing. For instance, Claire Hogan elaborated on her experience when she said, “[Booking] is quite far in advance. I am annoyed about it because my boyfriend is organized. He wants it planned at least one year in advance” (Claire Hogan). In contrast, Liam Brooks stated that he began his career as a digital nomad as a couch surfer, which allowed him to dramatically decrease expenses. Brooks was careful to insinuate that there are cultural expectations when staying with a host, however. “The downside with couch surfing is that you’re supposed to spend time with the host. You still bring something, like wine or whatever they request. There’s still some kind of a cost associated,” states Brooks.

Lastly, frequency of travel can affect a nomad’s cost-of-living expenses. Digital nomads expressed that flight were rarely negotiable, unless paid for by a sponsor. Therefore, the more variability in movement via flying, the more expense a digital nomad would be expected to pay. Lydia Young was able to save on flight expenses eventually and expanded on this notion by stating, “When I started traveling, my budget wasn’t very high because I had to actually work. The more that I started traveling and made my reputation, the more that those jobs were willing and ready to pay for my flights so I no longer had to pay for the flight, accommodations, etc.” (Lydia Young). Liam Brooks emphasized that he was able to save more money on his lifestyle than with flights. Brooks states, “A lot of the time, it’s the question of comfort, then you’ll be able to save” (Liam Brooks). However, the cost of living is not the only expense that a digital nomad needs to take into account. Other expenses associated with starting and maintaining a business also should be considered. An assessment of the feasibility of adopting a digital nomadic lifestyle continues in the following discussion of startup costs.

## Startup Costs

Startup costs associated with owning a digital nomadic business were different per case. However, some identifiable key insights were conclusive via the interviews including utilizing savings accounts for startup expenses, the importance of entrepreneurial thinking, and passion driving profit. First, the majority of digital nomads stated that they had used savings in order to start their own digital businesses. Sam Wheeler recounts, “[My wife and I] had saved money in advance of traveling. We launched the blog not certain what it would look like.” Unlike other business models that may require a significant amount of capital, it was revealed via interviews that withdrawing from an individual savings account could start the majority of small online businesses.

Additionally, one skill that was mentioned several times throughout interviews as a skill of high importance was the ability to think entrepreneurially in order to cover costs. “Starting your own business is exciting and terrifying at the same time.... You have to become entrepreneurial and thinking entrepreneurially will open yourself up to new ideas, [allowing yourself to] be flexible, finding revenue streams, and then when those revenue streams dry up, being flexible [again] in your environment,” explains Sam Wheeler.

However, the digital nomads interviewed mentioned that they felt empowered in their careers. Digital nomadism allowed them to create a career fueled by passion and purpose. Liam Brooks explains the importance of following a passion and not the revenue by stating,

In the beginning everyone is worried about it (finances). The revenue can come out of it if you're really committed and passionate about a meaningful project. If it (content) creates value for other people, then money can flow to you rather than constantly thinking about how to constantly generate revenue. It's an evolution because in the

beginning of the journey [and] you focus on money or the business you've created. The more I grew, the more I became conscious of what I put out there in terms of content or product. (Liam Brooks)

Like Liam, the majority of digital nomads included in the study spoke only briefly about finances, as though it were a product of their passion. The interviewees generally felt a deep-seated connection to their careers and proud of their lifestyle. Liam Brooks also expanded on his previously held notion by emphasizing the importance of understanding the basic principles of business acumen, which is revenue minus profit equals net income. Brooks explained that the digital nomadic lifestyle is not a far-fetched idea and that essentially it is adaptable for anyone who understands that the outcome must outweigh the expenses. The largest barrier to entry for most people, however, was the ability to change their reference point. Stephanie agrees with Brooks by stating, "At the very beginning, I did work holidays. I worked in different countries on different working visas and that's when I realized, I was just working like everyone else does, but it just so happened that I was working in different countries" (Stephanie Campbell). All in all, the digital nomads interviewed understood that at the core of their lifestyle was the pursuit of their passion expressed in a manifestation unique to the individual.

Now that the three revenue and expense sources have been identified, it is now possible to determine whether each source of income is feasible to adapt. Taking into account that half of the digital nomads interviewed in the sample identified freelance work as their main source of income lends credibility to the feasibility of adapting a digital nomadic lifestyle as a freelancer. Of the three avenues of monetization identified in the study, freelancers appeared to have the most flexibility and thus had one of the more feasible business model identified in the study. Conversely, social media influencers were ruled by popularity, constant content creation,

contractual agreements, and search engine optimization results. Social media influencers often were required to build credibility prior to the monetization of content. Often times there is also risk associated with the social media influencer monetization model, such as variability in Google page ranks or the failure to produce captivating content. As such, the social media influencer business model is not as easily adaptable for first-time digital nomads and thus is less feasible than freelancing. Lastly, trade professional digital nomads relied on their unique skillset to cater to new clients. This lifestyle is easily adaptable for an individual who has acquired a rare professional skillset. If the individual does not possess a unique skillset that can be offered to a wide variety of communities, then the digital nomad's business model is void as a trade professional. According to the findings in the study, the most adaptable business models in order of feasibility were freelancing activities, trade professionals, and social media influencers.

### DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Now the feasibility of adapting a digital nomadic lifestyle has been explored in depth via three overarching variables including planning preparation, monetization, and costs. Despite the exploratory findings found in the study, it is important to note that the findings are not statistically proven. Further research would be required to either reject or fail to reject statistical hypotheses surrounding statistical significance. In fact, the determination of the feasibility of adopting a digital nomadic lifestyle would greatly benefit from additional statistical research. A cohesive discussion focusing on the results and implications of the exploratory study will now be determined via further qualitative analysis.

### Planning Preparation: Personal Planning

<p><b>Travel Purpose</b></p>	<p>The determination of why a digital nomad has selected to become nomadic was one of the largest variables of importance to consider. The feasibility was dependent upon whether the adaptation of a digital nomadic lifestyle was filled with purpose. Therefore, the study found that a digital nomadic lifestyle appears to be feasible if there is an underlying purpose as to why an individual is adapting said lifestyle.</p>
<p><b>Defining Longevity of Travels</b></p>	<p>All of the participants in the study responded that their current lifestyle was either “nomadic” or “semi-nomadic.” While the majority of respondents were unsure of the sustainability of a digital nomadic lifestyle over a lifelong period, variables including age and relationship status were determinants in the feasibility of adapting a digital nomadic lifestyle. In fact, 70% of participants reported that they were currently traveling with a committed partner. Therefore, the study found that age and relationship status appear to be primary contributors as to whether or not adapting a digital nomadic lifestyle is a sustainable for longer periods of time. Specifically, respondents had a higher rate of feasibility when they were middle-aged and traveling with a partner.</p>
<p><b>Identifiable Character Traits</b></p>	<p>The evidence gathered in interviews with digital nomads revealed identifiable character traits that contributed to the success of adapting a digital nomadic lifestyle. The study found that the ability to adapt to ambiguous situations and express empathy for cultural differences was of high importance when considering adapting a digital nomadic lifestyle. Therefore, a digital nomadic</p>

lifestyle appears to be more feasible when an individual is able to adapt to unknown variables and express understanding for cultural differences. As such, these identifiable character traits appear either limit or foster potential within an individual to commit to a digital nomadic lifestyle.

Within the discussion of personal planning preparation, it was found that nomads exert tremendous intangible planning preparation. Factors such as age, marital status, and character traits may be contributing factors in the determination of whether a digital nomadic lifestyle will be adaptable for a specific individual. The variables that were found to be most discouraging were traveling individually and at tail end distributions of age, young or old. Additionally, if an individual is not adaptable to volatile environments, then the feasibility of adapting a digital nomadic lifestyle is at risk. This study, however, would greatly benefit from further quantitative research to determine whether feasibility of adapting a digital nomadic lifestyle is dependent upon variables such as age, marital status, and possession of character traits. Overall, within the scope of intangible planning preparation, the feasibility of an individual adapting a digital nomadic lifestyle appears to be highly dependent upon internal factors of an individual's current lifestyle, such as age or marital status.

### **Planning Preparation: Logistical Planning**

<b>Logistical Research</b>	Few to no digital nomads interviewed in the study conducted in-depth research prior to visiting a new location. In fact, 80% of participants reported conducting little to no research prior to traveling to a new destination. Therefore, logistical research appeared to be of little to no importance to professional digital nomads.
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However, nomads expanded by stating that research was necessary as first time travelers. Overall, prior logistical planning does not appear to act as a barrier to entry to adapting digital nomadic lifestyles.

## **Safety and**

### **Health**

### **Concerns**

Safety concerns identified in the study were differing safety experiences for male and females, near-death experiences, and self-defense training. It was found that female nomad participants experienced more sexual harassment while traveling than male nomad participants, which indicates that women may be at a higher risk while traveling. Specifically, 60% of women interviewed reported having been sexually or verbally harassed while traveling. Additionally, 80% of digital nomads interviewed responded that they had experienced a near-death incident while traveling abroad. Lastly, none of the digital nomads interviewed were trained in self-defense, but would recommend it. Despite these findings, the majority of digital nomads interviewed responded that danger is a persistent force in the world that is unavoidable and not dependent upon their lifestyle. Overall, safety is a variable that needs to be taken into consideration when adapting a digital nomadic lifestyle. In regards to practicing a healthy lifestyle, the majority of the sample perceived maintenance of health to be of importance. The participants in the study indicated scheduling regular flights back to their home country to receive proper medical care, however. Therefore, maintenance of health poses a threat to the adaptability of a digital nomadic lifestyle due to the traveling cost associated and delay in medical attention.

### **Packing**

### **Regimens**

Packing habits varied and appeared to be dependent upon personal preference. In fact, 80% of digital nomads interviewed lived out of travel bags. One key insight

	revealed that a minimalistic lifestyle is required of digital nomads to allow for optimal travel. Therefore, adaptability of a digital nomadic lifestyle may be dependent upon the individual's willingness to become minimalistic.
<b>Site Selection</b>	Site selection appeared to be dependent upon the digital nomad's career and was not foreseen as barrier to entry.

In regards to logistical traveling, the largest threats to adopting a digital nomadic lifestyle were safety and health concerns. While female digital nomadic travelers may be at higher risk for sexual harassment, male nomadic travelers may encounter more physical danger. It is foreseeable that a digital nomad may have a high risk of encountering a life-threatening danger while traveling. This study would benefit from additional analysis to statistically determine the probability and volatility of life-threatening danger occurring to digital nomads on average. It is important to note, however, that danger is prevalent everywhere. While danger may be perceived as higher in some locations than others, it is never completely unavoidable. Therefore, safety concerns appeared to be somewhat dependent upon the location in which digital nomads were traveling. Further research would be necessary to determine which locations are of higher risk than others. However, one location's risk factor may change over time, preventing such a study to be conducted. Healthy lifestyle practices were also of concern, as digital nomads may be required to return home to receive proper care from physicians. Of lesser impact, the adaptation of a minimalistic lifestyle is required of an individual pursuing a digital nomadic lifestyle. Overall, the variables included in the logistical planning of digital nomadism are sophisticated and appear to be dependent upon the individual's perceived risk of safety, ability to maintain a healthy lifestyle, and capability to adapt a minimalistic lifestyle.



## Monetization

<b>Freelancers</b>	The majority of freelancer digital nomad participants responded that they monetized from producing content or optimizing online presence for clients. Freelancers were paid by clients in exchange for their work spent on special projects.
<b>Digital Nomadic Social Media Influencers</b>	Digital nomadic social influencers responded that their primary income came from producing content about their lives online and receiving company sponsorships after building credibility. Influencers perceived inspiration being a potential problem, as constant content creation is a requirement of the job. Digital nomadic social media influencers primarily monetized through sponsorship contracts with companies.
<b>Trade Professionals</b>	Trade professionals relied upon physical skill sets, such as horse training or mural painting, to monetize. Trade professionals were more likely to barter than other digital nomadic business models, but also had the capability of being paid in exchange for special projects.

In relation to monetization, digital nomadic social media influencers may be the hardest business model to adopt. Influencers often have to build credibility prior to attracting businesses to sponsor traveling activities. During this time, credibility is not guaranteed and often increases expenses. Additionally, influencers are required to create new content for users and limited by platform results, such as Google. Trade professionals and freelancers were required to be specialized in an area of expertise, but freelancers were able to choose travel destinations while

trade professionals were not. Therefore, it appears that freelance activities may be the most feasible digital nomadic business model for monetization.

### Costs

<b>Cost of Living</b>	<p>The cost of living for digital nomads appeared to be highly dependent upon location, but perceived by digital nomads as lower than stationary expenses. Furthermore, the cost of living for digital nomads appeared to be variable and dependent upon location, variability of travel, and desired comfort level. Projected expenses provided by respondents were general estimates. For instance, European regions were perceived by nomads as more expensive to live in than other regions of the world, such as Asian countries. Cost of living appeared to also be affected by the variability of traveling. For instance, digital nomads that moved more often than others required more capital for travel expenses. Lastly, the cost of living appeared to be dependent upon desired comfort level. While the majority of nomads described their lifestyle as minimalistic, few actually opted for couch surfing. The majority preferred booking travel accommodations in advance.</p>
<b>Start Up Costs</b>	<p>The majority of startup costs came from digital nomads' personal savings accounts. Of the digital nomads interviewed, the majority of participants focused on their passion for entrepreneurship, often stating that monetization will flow as long as an individual is passionate about his or her work.</p>

In relation to costs, the cost of living and startup costs appear to act as barrier to entries. However, there is opportunity for digital nomads to become successful. It appears as though the cost of living is dependent upon location, desired comfort level, and variability of travel. Additionally, startup costs act as a barrier to entry for new digital nomads. Startup costs appear to be primarily supplied from an individual's savings account. As long as a digital nomad is receiving more revenue than expense, then the adaptation of a digital nomadic lifestyle appears to be feasible.

Taking into account all three sections including planning preparation, monetization, and costs, the feasibility of adapting a digital nomadic lifestyle appears to be dependent upon a myriad of internal and external factors in relation to the individual. Elements that were identified as possible barriers to entry to a digital nomadic lifestyle were the following:

Age	Relationship Status	Ability to Adapt to Ambiguity	Expression of Empathy for Other Cultures
Harassment	Life Threatening Dangers	Ability to Maintain Healthy Lifestyle Principles	Ability to Adapt a Minimalistic Lifestyle
Location	Variability of Travels	Desired Comfort Level	Amount of Savings

Largely, the variables that impacted the feasibility study the most were associated with individual and locational concerns. The study would benefit largely from additional analytical

research to confirm or deny statistical hypotheses surrounding the twelve variables that were found to impact the feasibility of adapting a digital nomadic lifestyle. Further, a large survey could be conducted and distributed to a nomadic population. Once the results are coded, cleaned, and prepped for statistical analysis, I believe that an unforced multiple regression model would be able to identify which of the twelve variables have enough explanatory power to explain the likelihood of success among digital nomads. However, statistical research is beyond the scope of this study and theoretical for the time being.

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, digital nomads appear to possess a unique outlook on life that fundamentally diverges from normal Western societal norms. American citizens, in particular, have not adopted migratory patterns since western expansion. In western culture, the majority of citizens often employ the use of a primary decision heuristic in regards to lifestyle choice, often overlooking any other avenue of lifestyle. Digital nomads, however, act as a societal stimulant by bringing awareness and education of the feasibility of adopting a digital nomadic lifestyle. Further, evidence compiled from this study suggests that younger generations are seeking value in experience more than tangible objects. The conversion to a digital nomadic lifestyle appears to signify a rebirth or pivotal moment for individuals to seek out what is perceived as most valuable. As a larger proportion of western society becomes aware of digital nomadism, more will perceive the lifestyle as a viable option and convert. The variables that determine success for the individuals that are courageous enough to adapt digital nomadism as first movers may be dependent upon internal variables such as age, relationship status, character development. External variables may also play a contributing role in a nomad's success, such as safety and health concerns, cost of living, and startup costs.

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APPENDIX

**I. IRB Consent Form**



**Texas Christian University Fort Worth, Texas**

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

**Title of Research: Exploring the Feasibility of Technology Nomads: A Guide for Beginners**

**Funding Agency/Sponsor: None**

**Study Investigators: Sarah Setlak (Student), Professor Michael Sherrod (Advising Professor and Principal Investigator), and Dr. Stacy Grau (Committee Member)**

**What is the purpose of the research?**

The purpose of this research is to get information on a trending topic in business called digital nomadism. The research from this study will be in a senior honors paper that will be published only at Texas Christian University (TCU).

**How many people will participate in this study?**

About 10-25 participants will be in the study.

**What is my involvement for participating in this study?**

You will be asked the interview questions in section II of the appendix based upon your personal life experiences. You are not required to answer a question that you do not wish to answer for any reason at all.

**How long am I expected to be in this study for and how much of my time is required?**

The interviews will last thirty minutes to an hour. The interviews will take place electronically via a video chat or phone interview.

After the interview is over your responses could be used in the final published paper

anonymously. There is nothing else required of you once the interview is done.

**What are the risks of participating in this study and how will they be minimized?**

There are no physical, psychological, or social risks beyond what one would encounter in day-to-day existence. Maintaining complete confidentiality of all private data mitigates privacy risks. Private data such as names, dates, and places will be altered or changed to prevent potential violation of privacy.

**What are the benefits for participating in this study?**

The benefit of participating in this study is knowledge creation and to form a better understanding of digital nomadism.

**Will I be compensated for participating in this study?**

No, you will not be compensated for participating in this study. There is no form of compensation for the study.

**What is an alternate procedure(s) that I can choose instead of participating in this study?**

The only alternative procedures that you can choose instead of participating in this study are to not participate. There are no other alternatives.

**How will my confidentiality be protected?**

Confidentiality will be protected by using an alias name in the published document. In other words, you will be identified in the study with a given fake name. Resources gathered from the study will be kept private and not distributed amongst anyone beyond the research team.

**Is my participation voluntary?**

Yes, your participation is completely voluntary.

**Can I stop taking part in this research?**

Yes, you can stop taking part in this research at any time.

**What are the procedures for withdrawal?**

If you would like to withdraw from the study, you may do so immediately by contacting the student researcher via email or phone at s.setlak@tcu.edu or 402-810-3011, respectively. Once withdrawn from the study, any and all evidence of correspondence will be destroyed appropriately.

**Will I be given a copy of the consent document to keep?**

Yes, you will be given a copy of the consent document to keep as required by the federal guidelines of this study.

**Who should I contact if I have questions regarding the study?**

You may contact any or all of the following:

- Student Researcher Sarah Setlak at s.setlak@tcu.edu or at 402-810-3011
- Advising Professor Michael Sherrod at m.s.sherrod@tcu.edu or at 817-257-5735
- Faculty Committee Member Dr. Stacy Grau at s.grau@tcu.edu or at 817-257-6540

**Who should I contact if I have concerns regarding my rights as a study participant?** Dr. Cathy R. Cox, Chair, TCU Institutional Review Board, (817) 257-6418, c.cox@tcu.edu. Dr. Bonnie Melhart, TCU Research Integrity Office, (817) 257-7104, b.melhart@tcu.edu. Your signature below indicates that you have read or been read the information provided above, you have received answers to all of your questions and have been told who to call if you have any more questions, you have freely decided to participate in this research, and you understand that you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

**Participant Name (please print):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Participant Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Investigator Name (please print):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Investigator Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **II. Interview Questionnaire:**

### **I. Introduction**

- i. Introduce myself as the proctor of the interview. Let participant know that their time is appreciated and valued by thanking them.
- ii. Remind the participant of the primary objectives of the study and the time frame of completion will be between thirty minutes to an hour. Ask the participant if they are comfortable with both the objective and timing.
- iii. Confirm that the participant is willing to answer questions for the study and that their answers will be recorded for validity and documentation purposes.

### **II. Questions**

#### **i. General Overview Questions**

- i. Describe your background prior to your digital nomadic lifestyle. (Formal Schooling, Previous Jobs or Independent Contracts, etc.)
- ii. Please list all of the countries and corresponding cities that you have traveled to as part of your digital nomadism profession.
- iii. Do you travel alone, with a partner, as a group, or in another form?

#### **ii. Variable 1: Planning Preparation**

- i. Tell me about your process for planning a new travel destination. What is the consumer buying map? How much do you research?

- ii. How do you choose a new travel destination? Do you choose or does a company choose? Do you reach out to companies to reduce expenses?
  - iii. Tell me more about your packing habits. Do you have a central location for the majority of your belongings?
  - iv. How do you stay connected? Do you have a phone plan or rely on access to wifi?
- iii. **Variable 2: Expense Projections**
- i. What is your monthly budget while traveling? Does it vary? If so, by how much?
  - ii. How are you able to minimize expenses, such as flight costs or hotel stays?
  - iii. How would you describe your lifestyle? Is it minimalistic, equivalent to American society, or lavish?
- iv. **Variable 3: Safety and Health Concerns**
- i. Which country(s) are you a citizen of? Do you have a passport? Are you a dual-citizen?
  - ii. How many languages can you speak fluently?
  - iii. Do you prepare for countries that may involve risk?
  - iv. Are you certified in self-protection training? Would you recommend self-protection training for beginner digital nomads?
  - v. Have you ever felt unsafe while traveling? If so, can you please elaborate on your experience(s)?
  - vi. How do you maintain good health while traveling?
  - vii. Tell me about the level of consciousness required for food preparation and potential allergies.

viii. Have you or a peer ever been injured while traveling? If so, please elaborate on your experience.

v. **Variable 4: Content Monetization and Optimization**

- i. What content do you produce online and on what platforms do you post on?
- ii. What devices do you use to produce content with? Are you high-tech or low-tech?
- iii. Are you or have you been sponsored by any companies in the past? If so, please elaborate your sponsorship(s). What does a typical sponsorship contract look like?
- iv. How do you monetize on the content that you produce?
- v. What type of content produces the most income and why?
- vi. How do you stay inspired to continue to create content?
- vii. What do you do to stay up to date on the optimization of your income?

III. **Conclusion**

- i. What would you recommend for the beginner professional digital nomad?
- ii. Ask the participant if there are any remaining questions or concerns.
- iii. Ask the participant to summarize their key points / experience of the interview.
- iv. Thank the participant for their time and input in the study. Let them know that their information will be used and is valued.
- v. Notify the interviewee that a summary will be sent to them within one week of the initial interview for potential corrections.
- vi. Finally, send the interviewee a formalized thank you card or digital notification.