

## Digital nomads: consolidating a trend

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Every year, the Royal Spanish Academy (RAE) makes a list of all the words that have taken on new meanings and which it considers the most important. This year it should come as no surprise that words like “cuarentena” (self-isolation or quarantine), and “confinamiento” (lockdown) have become widely used (RAE, 2020). The list also includes the word “teletrabajo” (remote working or homeworking) for the first time (RAE, 2020), but people were already talking about the underlying concept of “working remotely” and moving their desk to paradise before the internet and its future potential for communication became part of the collective imagination. In 1997, Tsugio Makimoto and David Manners published their *Digital Nomad* manifesto (Makimoto and Manners, 1997), which predicted a future situation where people wouldn't need to be in a specific place to do certain jobs and could, therefore, decide to move somewhere else and discover the world. The fact of combining leisure/business, with “travel” as the backbone of the entire concept, made this group of digital nomads a focus of research, in order to find out if they were a theoretical segment of the population, a passing fad or a lifestyle (Müller, 2016).

Discovering how digital nomads combine working remotely from their laptop while they enjoy living in a chosen place, while looking at their behaviour and the activities they engage in (Thompson, 2019), has not been relegated to the field of research. The destinations that are the objects of desire for travellers wanting to live this lifestyle have begun to cater to this group, but not just as potential clients who are the product of circumstances, but as a trend that has become established as a way of life and is attracting more and more people every day as digital technologies are becoming more democratic (Hannonen, 2020) and we see the future economic, social and environmental benefits (Kylili *et al.*, 2020).

This group could potentially account for 25% of the population of Barcelona's main tourism markets, as they are already working remotely on a permanent or frequent basis. However, due to the current circumstances, their number has increased by 45% (Turisme de Barcelona, 2020). If we conflate the trend towards digitalisation with work-life balance, it is estimated that, year on year, there will be a rise in the proportion of people who are working from home. In the long term, this could mean that over 30% could work from home (Kylili *et al.*, 2020).

However, the right conditions are needed for a remote worker to consider becoming a digital nomad, and travel while working remotely. The desire to do this already exists and is approaching 80%.

In addition to this, if we safeguard the personal reasons and consider the age of the children in their care, we must ensure the destination has the necessary requirements for them to make this lifestyle change, with connectivity and medical insurance being the main deciding factors (Turisme de Barcelona, 2020).

Finally, in order to guarantee the competitiveness of the dreamt-of destination, we need to work on the aspects that make it unique compared with the alternatives. This means that, if a place can't change its inherent, and defining characteristics, such as the climate and housing prices, it must reinforce the message in aspects such as the cultural and artistic offer, the possibility of learning languages and enjoying activities in the open air. Although these may not be the main factors, they influence the decision-making process to a large extent. In short, we must create a set of ideas that clearly sets out those intrinsic characteristics that will make it possible for any nomad to choose our destination and experience its way of life for more than six months on average, and on equal terms (Turisme de Barcelona, 2020).

## Bibliography

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