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Master's Degree Program in  
**Data-Driven Marketing**

## **The Impact of Location-Related Attributes to Portugal's Brand Image**

*Motivating Factors for Digital Nomad Relocation*

Evangelia Kiki

Master Thesis

presented as partial requirement for obtaining a Master's Degree in Data-Driven Marketing

**NOVA Information Management School**  
**Instituto Superior de Estatística e Gestão de Informação**

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Master Thesis presented as partial requirement for obtaining the Master's degree in Data-Driven Marketing, with a specialization in Marketing Intelligence.

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## **STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY**

I hereby declare having conducted this academic work with integrity. I confirm that I have not used plagiarism, any form of undue use of information or falsification of results along the process leading to its elaboration. I further declare that I have fully acknowledged the Rules of Conduct and Code of Honor from the NOVA Information Management School.

*[Lisbon, 31/05/2024]*

## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this work to my parents. Their unconditional love and continuous support throughout this journey are what gave me strength and allowed me to complete the journey of my Master's Degree and submit this research.

Thank you for always being by my side in everything I do, I love you.

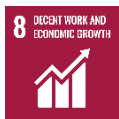
## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this Investigation is to discover if the motivation of Digital Nomads to relocate to Portugal is subject to the location-related factors that influence their initially perceived image of Portugal, using the push and pull theory. The study is focused on the pull factors which are categorized into environmental, economic, political, infrastructure and social. An exploratory research design is used, where the participants are interviewed in-depth to discover their attitudes on Portugal and how external factors influenced their initial perception. A theme-content analysis was integrated using a convenience sampling technique by contacting digital nomads through groups in social media. The results show that digital nomads with a positive destination image accompanied by a level of high awareness of Portugal cannot be demotivated easily by negatively perceived location-related factors as they feel more emotionally connected. This study contributes to the existing literature by exploring the motivations of Digital nomads, focusing only on the extrinsic pull factors that made the segment choose Portugal as one of its popular go-to destinations.

## KEYWORDS

Digital nomads; Push and Pull theory; Pull factors; Location attributes; Portugal; Nation Branding; Brand image

### Sustainable Development Goals (SDG):



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

**DN** Digital Nomads

## INTRODUCTION

Digital Nomads, a very popular term nowadays, was first introduced in Tsugio Makimoto's and David Manners' book with the same title in 1997, envisioning a future where the division between "work, leisure, travel, and home" would cease to exist due to globalization and the emerge of new technologies (Makimoto and Manners, 1997). Today, according to Mouratidis (2018), the essential prerequisites to use the term are to describe the mobility of professionals from a place to another which has been enabled by the use of technology which allows them to successfully complete their occupational activities.

The number of digital nomads is on the rise; therefore, many countries have identified the new opportunities the digital nomads bring, as this segment can contribute to the growth of their economy in sectors such as, but not limited to, hospitality and service, thus trying to gain a competitive advantage to attract this segment. Although there has been extensive research on the motivation related to tourism, the difficulty this segment presents in such analysis, is that digital nomads cannot be classified as tourists, as they tend to stay longer in a place and work either remotely or even at times seeking jobs or becoming entrepreneurs in the country they are temporarily choosing to stay (Müller, 2016). Digital nomads are standing between the sphere of migration and tourism. For this reason, this study aims to explore the extrinsic motivations related to a location, in this case Portugal, that attracts the segment and that could be leveraged in the future marketing efforts surrounding the country's nation branding strategy to appeal to Digital Nomads.

The perceived image of a country has a significant impact on capturing the interest of travellers towards a certain destination. According to Gallarza (2002) the country image is the culmination of an individual's perceptions of a location. That perception can influence the decision of a traveller and his motivation to visit a location (Doosti et al., 2016). The perceived image of Portugal in relation to the location-related attributes that motivate travellers are assessed in this study to explore its impact, contributing to the relocation context.

The importance of the country's image highlights the dialectical relationship between the state and the private sector, which is always present, by setting the terms under which the businesses conduct their activities and/or by offering support to the private sector or setting up barriers. Establishing a favourable environment for the mobility of digital nomads is the *raison d' être* of a Nation Branding strategy that will make all these actions known to the broader public and manipulate the perceived image of a country of the targeted segment.

Nation Branding can become a powerful tool for a location to attract digital nomads. Nation Branding is defined as "the unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all its target audiences" (Keith Dinnie, 2008). In today's highly competitive and globalized environment, applying branding techniques to nations can give them a significant competitive advantage by moulding

a desirable perceived image that can contribute to attract not only more tourists but also more investors, skilled workers, etc. (Keith Dinnie, 2008).

The growing popularity that the lifestyle has gained and the constant increase of the number of people who identify themselves as digital nomads, has ignited the interest of academics to explore the topic to gain valuable insights. It is identified through the literature review that the majority of scholars dedicated their studies on the matter of the disruption that digital nomads bring to employment, work force and market (Aroles & Granter & De Vaujany, 2020; Nash & Jarrahi & Sutherland, 2018; Wang & Blair & Schlagwein & Cecez-Kecmanovic & Cahalane, 2019), the examination of the phenomenon of co-working and co-living and its consequences for the hospitality sector (Chevtaeva, 2021; Orel, 2020;) and the impact on the digital nomads themselves (Von Zumbusch & Lalicic, 2020; Chevtaeva & Denizci Guillet, 2021), as well as exploring the emergence of phenomenon itself (Olga, 2020; Thompson, 2018, Mouratidis, 2018). The intrinsic motivations to become digital nomads have been also researched (Hall & Grant & Sigala & Rentschler & Boyle, 2019; Reichenberger, 2018) however to the best of our knowledge there has been identified a gap analysing the perceived image of Portugal and the influence of extrinsic motivations for the digital nomads to relocate there, despite of the country's popularity amongst the digital nomads.

The structure of the research is divided into four sections. In the first section, the literature review is presented, which covers the subject of digital nomads and the sphere of the segment between tourism and migration, the image of a destination and its brand personality and the push and pull theory, delving deeper into the pull factors used by other authors on both the migration and tourism literature. The second section presents the methodology of the study, the next section is dedicated to the results of the study. The results are followed by the conclusions which also involve some recommendations. The last section is dedicated to the limitations of the work, and proposals for future research.

# 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study addresses the following research question: Why digital nomads are motivated to move to Portugal and to what extent does the perceived image of Portugal, and the influence of environmental, political, economic, infrastructure and social factors, contribute to the desire of digital nomads to relocate to the country?

The main objective of this research is to explore and assess the importance of the extrinsic motivations, the “pull” factors, of Portugal that make it an attractive location for the mobility of digital nomads. Since in the existing literature, there has been identified a gap in the digital nomads’ image perception of Portugal and the extrinsic factors that can impact that decision, the study uses both tourism and migration literature for the analysis, as digital nomads stand in the middle of these two grounds.

## 1.1. DIGITAL NOMADS AND THE BLURRED LINE BETWEEN TOURISM AND MIGRATION

Despite of the fact that the subject of digital nomads is brought up in the literature quite early from Tsugio Makimoto and David Manners (1997) it wasn’t until the recent years that research was conducted to understand the phenomenon and its impact on society and economy. As a result, many areas of digital nomadism have not been explored yet.

One of the first interesting observations that the researchers started to make were in an indirect relationship with digital nomadism and it was around the subject of the contemporary liquid society where because of the globalization, technological advancements and the lower cost of transportation in comparison to the past, as well as more flexible working arrangements, the people of this society are always traveling (Bauman, 2006; Urry, 2007; Müller, 2016; Reichenberger, 2018; Sutherland & Jarrahi, 2017). Naturally, these are all reasons that contributed to the emergence of digital nomads. The underlying inner desires that “nudged” the people towards the adaptation of this lifestyle have been also researched by authors. The desire to be location independent, is attributed to an individual’s quest for freedom, adventure or escaping from a restrictive and repetitive routine in an office (Müller, 2016; Reichenberger, 2018; Sutherland & Jarrahi, 2017). According to Müller (2016) the desire of a digital nomad to relocate from one place to another is due to one’s search of “the good life” and not by professional opportunities since the majority of the segment is already employed full-time or are being self-employed.

Aside from location independence, when it comes to DNs what separates them from other types of travellers is the employment factor (Korpela, 2019). While many of the DNs are self-employed or working remotely, authors have supported that with the appearance of the gig economy, a considerable number of digital nomads have “taken gigs” and worked part-time (Thompson, 2018). The difficulty of placing DNs clearly in the category of migrants or tourists for policymakers is the problem of defining the duration of their stay. This is subjective for every DN, and it can vary from a few weeks to months (Dreher & Triandafyllidou, 2023).

According to UNWTO “ A visitor is a traveller taking a trip to a main destination outside his/her usual environment, for less than a year, for any main purpose (business, leisure, or other personal purpose) other than to be employed by a resident entity in the country or place visited” (2023). Many countries have adopted specific DN visa schemes to answer to this phenomenon while others have expanded the coverage of tourist visas to include the specificities of this segment. Usually, most of the countries provide tourism visas, for a duration of three up to six months (UNWTO,2023). There are many variations between countries with the example of Canada offering the shortest duration which is 30 days while on the other hand, Portugal provides a non-tourism visa to DNs, offering 24 months which could be renewed for 3 consecutive years and could be turned into a residence permit in the future (UNWTO, 2023).

With the increasing numbers of people who become digital nomads, there has been changes not only in the political sphere but there is also an increased number of supporting services in the market to cater their needs. As a result the subject of co-living and co-working spaces has been thoroughly explored from the economy aspect as well as the nomad’s aspect in relation to his/hers wellbeing (Chevtaeva, 2021; Orel, 2020; Von Zumbusch & Lalicic, 2020; Chevtaeva & Denizci Guillet, 2021) showcasing that shared workspaces are part of the necessary infrastructure to support the move of digital nomads as apart from the obvious use it is a space to network and meet other like-minded people, contributing to their overall need for socialization. Although the nomadic lifestyle appears to be ideal, often nodding towards the perception of a stress-free reality, there has been a study showing that digital nomads require discipline to not be derailed from their professional activities, as the separation between free time and work is not always an easy task (Cook, 2020).

## **1.2. THE IMAGE OF A DESTINATION – BRAND PERSONALITY**

The impact of the Tourism sector in the economic development of the countries, positions it as one of the most important sectors globally. During the years, the growing global tourism industry has created strong competition amongst destinations which has forced places to cultivate a positive destination image in order to draw more tourists (Gartner, 1993; Goodall, 1990; Sahin and Baloglu, 2011).

The research on destination image began in the 1970s (Hunt, 1975; Gunn, 1972; Mayo, 1973) and has continued to be a popular topic in academia specifically in the field of tourism studies (Hosany et al., 2006; Stepchenkova and Morrison, 2008; Nghiêm-Phu, 2014). The concept presents difficulties in its definition, despite its continuing importance. This has led to several different approaches from different authors (Gallarza, Saura, and Garcia, 2002; Grosspietsch, 2006; Castro et al., 2007; Stepchenkova and Morrison, 2008; Balogu and Sahin, 2011; Nghiêm-Phu, 2014) and as a result, many studies have concluded that the destination image and destination personality are connected between them.

The study of brand personality was first conducted by Jennifer Aaker (1997), who defined it as a group of human traits associated with a brand. The Brand Personality Scale, developed by Aaker, was the first empirical measure of brand personality (Klabi, 2012; Mathur, Jain, and Maheswaran, 2012). Aaker (1997) applied human psychology to the business world, identifying “*sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness*” as essential elements of brand personality. This scale was later used in research surrounding the topics of image destination and brand personality of destinations, as well as broader nation branding studies. Essentially, the general consensus is that a tourist destination's image is a reflection of a thorough and multifaceted impression (Crompton, 1979; Phelps, 1986; Gartner and Hunt, 1987; Mackay and Fesenmaier, 1997; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a, b; Tapachai and Waryszak, 2000; Kim and Richardson, 2003; Kotler and Gertner, 2004; Stern and Krakover, 1993; Luque-Martínez et al., 2007). The important influence the perceived image of a location has upon the attraction of a segment makes it a powerful component in the creation of a competitive advantage against other locations and is in fact what can make it distinguish from other competitors and win over the desired segment (Sahin and Baloglu, 2011, Aaker, 1997) as the positive image of a location can turn it into the preferable choice amongst other locations and can increase the number of a traveller’s visits to that certain location (Darnell & Johnson, 2001).

### **1.3. TOURIST MOTIVATION AND PUSH AND PULL THEORY**

One of the most used theories in consumer research when it comes to tourist motivation is the Push and Pull theory originally introduced by Dann in 1977. The theory suggests that there are intrinsic factors such as a desire for escape, etc. that “push” an individual to travel and extrinsic factors related to the characteristics of a location that “pull” an individual towards certain locations (Chan et al., 2018; Dann, 1977; Crompton, 1979; Wen & Huang, 2019). The intrinsic factors that motivate a person to travel are immaterial and related to the deeper needs of a person that may become a powerful incentive to seek hedonism through a trip (Chan et al., 2018; Kim & Lee, 2002). The most important push factors are the need to flee or to get inspired by new ideas (Dann, 1977; Iso-Ahola, 1982).

In contrast with the push factors, the pull factors are tangible and consist of all the attributes of a location that makes it attractive to the eyes of the traveller (Chan et. Al., 2018; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Uysal & Jurovski, 1994). The extrinsic factors are different for some authors and change depending on the variables of a study however it is safe to assume that they involve a location’s culture, scenery, weather, etc. focusing mainly on the entertainment and overall environment of a location (Baloglu & Uysal, 1996; Mitchell et. Al., 2012; Kim et. Al., 2003; Wen & Huang, 2019). Other authors have increased the pull factors that should be taken into consideration. According to Sirakaya, Sheppard & McLellan (1997), these include “local hospitality and services, trip cost and convenience, perceptions of a safe environment, change in daily life environment, recreation and sporting activities, entertainment, personal and historical link, cultural and shopping services, and unusual and distant vacation spot”. Over

the years there have surfaced two schools of thought on the Push and Pull theory. The academics belonging to one school of thought argue that the push and pull factors are diverse units that affect the decision-making process in different periods (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977; Kim et. Al, 2003; Sirakaya, Sheppard & McLellan, 1997) while on the other hand, the academics belonging in the other school of thought argue that there is no difference between the push and pull units (Baloglu & Uysal, 1996; Mutinda & Mayaka, 2012; Phau et al., 2013).

#### **1.4. PULL FACTORS THAT MOTIVATE DIGITAL NOMADS TO TRAVEL TO A LOCATION**

In the literature there has been extensive research on the intrinsic motives of a digital nomad to become one, this study focuses only on the location related attributes that have the power to motivate a DN to visit a certain country. As stated earlier digital nomads stand between the spheres of tourism and migration. For this study it was necessary to investigate the push-pull motivation framework literature for these both areas of research, as due to the relatively recent emergence of the segment there is a research gap when it comes to a push-pull framework that combines these two spheres by taking into consideration the unique characteristics of the segment regarding the assessment of factors that impact their motivation.

Many authors in tourism literature have listed different factors in their analysis on the extrinsic motivation related to the attributes of a certain location. Dunne et al. (2011) place a big importance on the environment of a location as they argue that the 3'S namely the Sea, Sun, and Sand, play the most vital role in choosing a travelling destination. Yousefi and Marzuki (2015) list as pull factors in their research a location's history and culture, safety, facilities, environment, and its cleanliness. Seebaluck et al. (2015) Also included the travel costs in his research. Prior to these authors, the activities a location offers were considered a main driving force behind the motivation of travellers to visit a destination (Gunn, 1994; Canter, 2023). Yuan and McDonald (1990), used in their research the following six factors: cost, culture, and history, traveling convenience, scenery, cosmopolitan environment, facilities, and activities to analyze the traveling motivation. Crouch et al. (2000) summed a wide list of factors many authors prior to them had used and that together have the power to attract travellers but placed the highest importance on the environment of a destination and the service infrastructure. When it came to the destination environment, he listed not only the scenery or climate, but also the political and legal factors, technological factors, cultural and social as well as economic factors. While on the service infrastructure list of factors included: Transportation and travel services, accommodation, food and beverage services, activities, and shopping. The pull factors used in literature were rarely the same between authors as different ones were utilized depending on the subject of the research to fit its context. However, the cost, environment – including both the climate of a location and the scenery – as well as the history and culture of a location, the services/ infrastructure and safety were deemed as the ones with the highest impact on attracting travellers during the literature review and these were used in the current study.

In migration literature, most of the factors can fit under the political, economic, and social categories. Political factors may include protection against the law, safety, and the right to vote (Urbański & Mariusz, 2022), political crises and the need to escape from them (Zanabazar et. al, 2021), while sometimes infrastructure is also listed under the political factors as for many authors this is part of regional development where infrastructure needs to be created by the government (Schürmann et al., 2022). According to research done by Zoelle (2011) the economic factors seem to include not only the better economic prospects a relocation may bring in relation to income and career advancement opportunities but overall higher living standards which includes accommodation and overall, a higher level of welfare. The social factors usually concern “social networks” (Black et al., 2011) or the attraction to diverse cultures to expand one’s experiences (Zanabazar et. al, 2021). Of course, depending on the research, these factors can differ and can include others e.g., in the case of forced migration where sometimes the climate and overall environment of a country could be considered as a motivating factor to relocate (Black et. al, 2011), but the three categories mentioned above are the ones used the most in research, to understand the motivation behind migration.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The motivation of digital nomads to relocate to Portugal is subject to a positive initial perceived image of the country, however the evaluation of the pull factors can ultimately change that positive perception into negative and demotivate a digital nomad to relocate to Portugal.

### **2.1. RESEARCH DESIGN**

For the purpose of this study, which is to explore the impact of pull factors on the initially perceived image of Portugal that influenced the digital nomads to move to Portugal an exploratory research design was chosen. The exploratory design is the most appropriate to identify motivations, and gain insights on the attitudes and opinions the digital nomads have which lead them into choosing Portugal for their mobility.

### **2.2. INTERVIEWS AS A RESEARCH METHOD**

Interviews were conducted with digital nomads who live in Portugal. The interviews followed a semi-structured format, meaning that even though there were designed pre-determined questions to help navigate the discussion for the topics that needed to be covered, the interview did not follow a standard order, to allow participants to reveal freely their attitudes, opinions, and beliefs, encouraging conversation. A pre-test was realized before the interviews with an experimental group of 2 participants to identify any issues that may cause a problem to the research, before proceeding with the actual participants where all the data were gathered from.

The interviews were recorded and hand-coded to track down patterns in the data collected to carefully examine the data, the three components of Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (2001) of thematic content analysis were integrated. Then, using the themes that had been discovered, the interviews were analysed to find similarities and differences among each participant. This method allowed for a thorough investigation of personal experiences that led to unbiased results (Percy, Kostere, & Kostere, 2015). The interviews were conducted with the participants online through Zoom and every interview lasted approximately 45 minutes.

### **2.3. SAMPLING TECHNIQUE**

Because of the nature of the segment and their constant mobility participants were recruited by contacting various digital nomad groups through social media, more specifically through Facebook. For that reason, a convenience sampling technique was utilized. As stated by Sedgwick (2013) the convenience sampling technique helps the researcher choose participants for a study based on proximity and convenience as well as their disposition to participate.

## **2.4. SAMPLE BACKGROUND**

Data were collected from 16 participants who agreed to take part in the research. Respondents were let know that their participation in the research would be guaranteed by confidentiality and anonymity.

The respondents' ages varied from 23 to 41 and the average age of the participants was 28. When it comes to the nationality of the interviewees most of them making up 43.75% of participants were originally from the USA. When it comes to the place of stay 56,75% of them are staying in Lisbon and all the participants had higher education with the vast majority (75%) having a bachelor's degree. Their occupations varied but they were all IT-related including graphic designing, marketing, software development, etc., as well as the number of years they have experienced as digital nomads ranging from 1 year to 10 years.

### 3. RESEARCH RESULTS

The research explores the influence of the location related pull factors that can alter the initial perceived image of Portugal for Digital Nomads and affect their desire to relocate to the country. The interviews realized search this phenomenon and the responses were analysed to draw conclusions. The responses focus on the initial perceived image of Portugal before the individuals started delving into the details of the possibility of relocating, meaning before the environmental, economic, infrastructure, social and political factors came into perspective to influence their decision, to assess the role that played the level of country awareness and positive nation image played into their decision. The other part focuses on the specific pull factors which were grouped under five wider categories: “environmental, economic, infrastructure, social, political” to assess which ones played the most important role for their mobility decision. The study’s results offer a deeper view on extrinsic motivations for digital nomads, and they can be utilized by national tourism authorities in their branding strategies to attract the segment as it presents a wonderful opportunity to boost the overall economic growth and has the power to turn Portugal into an innovative hub that attracts skilled workers, businesses, and investments.

#### 3.1. THE INITIAL PERCEIVED IMAGE OF PORTUGAL

While only half of the participants had travelled to Portugal prior to their mobility, 93,75% of them described their initial image of Portugal as a positive one with only one person describing it as neutral. The main themes that were repeated when discussing the root of these positive attitudes were: scenery, safety, history, and culture as well as the existence of an already established community of digital nomads. Despite their positive image of Portugal, 31,25% of the respondents described their level of awareness as moderate, being recipients of the exposure Portugal has on their local media or a former trip of someone in their environment that helped them shape some opinions about Portugal. On the other hand, the majority, specifically 56,25% of the participants had a high level of awareness and in these cases, their positive image was further reinforced by local friends, multiple trips to Portugal and their coming across news regarding Portugal becoming a digital nomad hub.



**Figure 1:** Keywords describing initial perceived image of Portugal.

Portugal has done a great job in the past years through its international promotional campaigns of establishing itself as one of the most popular summer destinations and since 2017 has put more and more effort to bring light into other less known sides of Portugal and promote what it can offer in different seasons too as people tend to associate only summer with Portugal (Oliveira Moreira, 2018). This was showcased also in the results of this study as people also mentioned the good weather.

Another repeated theme when it comes to describing Portugal was the adjective authentic/genuine. This touched the sphere of the “brand personality” which is according to Jennifer Aaker (1997), “a set of human characteristics associated with a brand.” This shows that these people have formed a more intimate relationship with Portugal surpassing only the mere functional characteristics but tapping into a more symbolic range where psychological impressions dominate the impression of a location (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991 & 1993).

### **3.2. THE EVALUATION OF THE PULL FACTORS**

For the evaluation of the pull factors, these were divided under five categories to cover various reasons that may influence the perceived image of Portugal and consequently, the decision to relocate there.

The first category was the environmental factors to assess in what ways the information on climate and overall beautiful scenery of Portugal plays a key role in the selection of the location. The next category was the economic factors specifically, the cost of living in Portugal and the opportunities presented for economic activity. The third category was the infrastructure-services factors, where the participants assessed the importance of the digital infrastructure as well as the existence of facilities that will enable them to work such as co-working spaces, lodging etc. The fourth category was the social factors where the focus of the discussion would surround the existence of a digital nomad community as well as networking

opportunities. Lastly the fifth category was political factors, more specifically the safety of the location and the official procedure to obtain a digital nomad visa.

According to 65% of the participants some of the pull factors were quite demotivating to allow them the mobility to Portugal. The infrastructure was the one that had the least influence in their decision outcome. The main identified issues were namely housing options/ accommodation and the cost of living linked to the economic factors. In the duration of the interviews many participants talked about how accommodation has been their biggest struggle. Housing especially for the participants that are located in Lisbon, has become increasingly expensive while most of the houses available didn't seem to be up to the expectations the digital nomads had for the price it was requested by them to pay. When it came to accommodation, 25% of the participants experienced discrimination, as many of the landlords would refuse to rent houses to digital nomads or foreigners. In general, regarding the cost of living for the majority of the respondents (56,25%) that are living in Lisbon, they all believed that the cost of living in Portugal would've been lower than what they found out to be mostly due to housing as stated already but also utilities. With the expensive housing in bigger cities like Lisbon or Porto, the cost of living is now deemed way higher than in the past years when the first digital nomads started relocating to Portugal. Many people within the digital nomad community in Lisbon had urged other digital nomads to seek another country for relocation as the costs have increased significantly post the Covid-19 pandemic.

Regarding the impact of the prospect of professional opportunities in their relocation decision, 37,75% of the respondents claimed that it did in fact impact their decision. These people were mostly self-employed freelancers who already work remotely but they were also actively seeking employment opportunities in Portugal. When the interview delved more into the topic the people that seek employment in Portugal listed different reasons but the most common of them was networking and meeting locals as well as their decision to stay in Portugal in the long term. The last one seems to be repeated among the respondents who originally are from the USA, as a way to gain an EU citizenship that will allow them to travel and work in the EU without any restrictions.

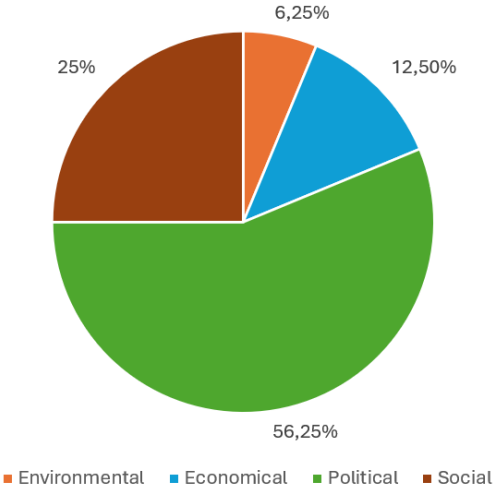
When it came to the assessment of the impact of the environmental factors, most of the respondents claimed that although it is something they took into consideration it was listed by only one person as the most important factor that pulled them to Portugal. The scenery was found to be more important to 57% of the participants, than the climate, as they said that it was Portugal's cliff beaches and unique architecture that came instantly across their minds when they thought of the destination.

Regarding the infrastructure factor, for 75% of the participants, the quality of the digital infrastructure wasn't taken into consideration for their relocation to Portugal although they do recognize the importance of it. When it came to infrastructure in general, again for 75% of the respondents, it was deemed attractive because of the existence of many co-working spaces in Portugal.

On the other hand, the most motivating categories of pull factors that attracted approximately 56,25% of the participants were the political factors, followed by social factors where 25% listed them as the most important.

Considering the political factors, Portugal according to the participants, has done an excellent job of facilitating the movement of digital nomads as the procedure to apply and obtain a visa was straightforward to understand. The participants felt that they had the necessary support, and they didn't feel that bureaucracy was a problem for them. In addition, safety was another influencing factor, especially for the female participants. The sense of safety, meaning the lack of serious crimes, made the digital nomads feel welcomed and not afraid in the country.

When it came to social factors, approximately 73% of the participants felt that Portugal's social scene aligns with their preferences as digital nomads. Many described Portugal's social scene as warm and fun. There are many activities that they felt they could do and connect with other people through them both locals and other expats. When it comes to networking that was one of the most common listed factors. Portugal in recent years is trying to establish itself as an innovation hub hence for the DNs that work in IT-related fields, it has become one of the main reasons they decided to temporarily move to Portugal, as they intend to meet other innovators and connect with them. Another important element was the big community of expats and digital nomads in Portugal. They felt supported in their move by other people who had experienced what they were going through. Many online groups on social media help DNs with every question or difficulty they encounter. There are also bi-monthly meetings planned for them to network between them and meet new people. Many participants also talked about the local culture. They found locals very warm, welcoming, and kind despite the barrier of language that they sometimes encountered in their interactions.



**Figure 2:** The most contributing factor that impacted their decision to relocate to Portugal.

When taking into consideration all the answers given, the factor that didn't play any role in their decision to move to Portugal, was the infrastructure. During the interviews it was discovered that since Portugal is a developed country in the EU and most of the participants have chosen cities, the infrastructure, meaning fast internet connectivity, co-working spaces or cafes that could provide connection to the internet, was in their minds guaranteed, unlike other destinations that are more rural and may lack proper access to digital infrastructure.

The negative influence of some of the pull factors was quite significant for 52% of the participants however due to their positive initial image of Portugal that had evoked in most cases an emotional connection they were not demotivated by the challenges they encountered. This is a very important finding as it further proves the results of the research made by Jennifer Aaker (1997), where a positive brand image with high awareness that reaches the height of a person forming a psychological bond can make the people overlook certain elements that could be negatively associated with that brand. Hence 52% of the participants when they were asked if those pull factors had influenced their initial perception of Portugal, felt that they didn't even though in the previous questions they had verbalized dissatisfaction with some of the realities they encountered.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

The research shows that for digital nomads with a positive initial perceived image of Portugal and high awareness their motivation to relocate to Portugal won't be decreased by the external location-related factors that are assessed negatively by them.

It was discovered that only entry-related obstacles could shake such a strong brand image, as the political factors had the biggest impact on their motivation to move to Portugal. As mentioned, Portugal has made great adjustments to its tailored-to-DNs migration policy regarding the facilitation of their movement, providing them also with the opportunity to consider a permanent relocation in the long term. However, this didn't come with consequences, as this migration has contributed to already existing issues that brought up social inequalities (Dreher & Triandafyllidou, 2023) which impacts not only the locals but overall raises the living costs for the digital nomads as well. The higher living costs were a sore point for them.

The social aspect was also viewed as a very important one when it came to reinforcing their already positive brand image of Portugal. The country has established itself as a popular digital nomad hub, offering communities in multiple locations in Portugal. Although some studies support that, digital nomads tend to create their community and do not integrate into the greater community of the country they are a part of (Korpela, 2019), others disagree and argue that digital nomads attempt to integrate with locals and their culture (Kannisto, 2014). The results of this study stand in between these two arguments, as the participants did claim that they became a part of the DN community in Portugal and interacted with them before their relocation to seek support, however, they highlighted their continuous desire to blend with the locals either to befriend them or purely for business purposes to expand their professional network.

The reason behind the strong motivation of these digital nomads to move to Portugal was the personal connection they formed with the country. As stated above in the research findings, respondents gave personality traits to Portugal when they were describing it, a sign that shows that a psychological bond was formed. Once this psychological bond is created with a brand it is harder for extrinsic factors to affect someone's attitude negatively. Portugal should focus on reinforcing its location brand image emotionally through storytelling in its tourism campaigns integrating its attributes that give the location its competitive advantage but also emphasizing the uniqueness of its culture and the people as according to the collected data the social factor was also very important for DN and Portuguese people were described by them as friendly, warm, and fun. Infrastructure wasn't deemed as an influential factor by any of the participants, which perhaps could prevent Portugal from attracting DNs that are skilled, looking for investment opportunities and interested in staying and contributing to the long term. Portugal could invest in practices that enable the knowledge exchange between skilled DNs and local communities and bring them together. Practices like these can strengthen

Portugal's image as an innovation hub but also help smaller local businesses with knowledge and digital tools to grow by forging a mutual community and not distinguishing them as a community of their own.

## 5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The results of this research contributed to the literature by offering insights on the ways location-related attributes (pull factors) can influence the initial perceived image of Portugal for the digital nomads that consider relocating to Portugal. As with every research, there are limitations, and it is important to keep that in mind to avoid using the presented results to make generalizations.

This study's limitations are mainly linked to the sample used. As mentioned in the methodology section, a convenience sampling method was used, which although cost-effective and time-effective method to draw conclusions can lead to biases as the sample pool may not be representative enough to lead into more generalized results and can be biased (Golzar, Tajik, & Noor, 2022). Future studies could select a random sampling statistic method to increase the generalizability of the results.

Another limitation of this study was the size of the sample. The number of participants in this study was 16 and even though it is an acceptable size when conducting in-depth interviews, having a bigger sample pool would allow to draw more data and consequently more reliable conclusions. Future studies should focus on a bigger sample pool that will allow more diversity when it comes to their demographic background especially age and nationalities, as older ages may offer different insight when it comes to the evaluation of the pull factors that attracted them to Portugal. On the other hand, nationalities from more distanced places where the level of awareness of Portugal is non-existent or significantly low, may offer different views on the perceived image of Portugal.

Additionally, all the digital nomads interviewed were living in Portugal. To further understand the relationship between the pull factors and the initial perceived image of Portugal it would've been valuable to interview digital nomads who haven't yet travelled or stayed there to assess different perceptions of the country as some of them could be strongly negative and this could've been the main influencing factor for their choice to avoid mobility there.

Lastly, another recommendation for future studies on the subject would be instead of using Portugal as a location for the analysis to focus on specific areas for example, Madeira, Azores, Lisbon, etc. that have become digital nomad hubs in Portugal for different reasons. This would further help authorities to tailor a more personalized approach to these locations and take them into consideration for their international exposure.

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## APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF SAMPLE

Participants	Gender	Age	Nationality	Education	Occupation	Current location	Years of experience as DN
Interviewee 1	Female	26	Australia	Bachelor	Graphic Designer	Azores	3
Interviewee 2	Male	23	USA	Bachelor	Software Developer	Lisbon	1
Interviewee 3	Non-binary	32	France	Master Degree	Software Developer	Lisbon	5
Interviewee 4	Female	41	UK	Bachelor	Content Creator	Lisbon	10
Interviewee 5	Female	28	USA	Post graduation	Graphic Designer	Lisbon	3
Interviewee 6	Female	23	USA	Bachelor	Marketeer	Lisbon	1
Interviewee 7	Female	30	USA	Bachelor	Project Manager	Lisbon	5
Interviewee 8	Male	25	USA	Bachelor	Marketeer	Azores	2
Interviewee 9	Male	31	Brazil	Bachelor	Graphic Designer	Madeira	4
Interviewee 10	Male	30	Brazil	Bachelor	UX/UI Designer	Madeira	6
Interviewee 11	Male	27	Brazil	Master Degree	Marketeer	Madeira	2
Interviewee 12	Female	29	France	Bachelor	Graphic Designer	Porto	4
Interviewee 13	Male	31	France	Master Degree	Entrepreneur	Porto	7
Interviewee 14	Male	23	Romania	Bachelor	Freelance copywriter	Lisbon	1
Interviewee 15	Male	23	USA	Bachelor	Data Analyst	Lisbon	1
Interviewee 16	Female	25	USA	Bachelor	Data Analyst	Lisbon	3

## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) What attributes came to your mind when you thought of Portugal prior to your relocation?
- 2) Did you visit Portugal before relocating here as DN?
- 3) How would you describe the level of awareness when it comes to information about Portugal prior to your mobility?
- 4) When it comes to your decision to relocate was the scenery of the location a factor?
- 5) When it comes to your decision to relocate was the climate of the location a factor?
- 6) How did the cost of living, impact your decision to choose Portugal as a digital nomad?
- 7) How did professional opportunities, impact your decision to choose Portugal as a digital nomad?
- 8) In what ways do you perceive Portugal's economic factors as attractive for digital nomads?
- 9) To what extent does the quality of digital infrastructure influence your decision to consider Portugal as a destination for remote work?
- 10) In what ways do you perceive Portugal's infrastructure as attractive for digital nomads?
- 11) To what extent does the quality of services influence your decision to consider Portugal as a destination for remote work?
- 12) How important are social factors such as community, networking opportunities in your decision to relocate?
- 13) How does Portugal's social scene align with your preferences as a digital nomad?
- 14) To what extent did the local culture influence your decision to consider Portugal as a destination for remote work?
- 15) To what extent did the procedure of obtaining a digital nomad visa influence your decision to relocate?
- 16) To what extent did safety influence your decision to relocate?
- 17) Which of the beforementioned factors contributed the most to your decision to relocate to Portugal?
- 18) To what extent did your research to relocate to Portugal alter your initial perception of Portugal?

